

MIDWESTERN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

Vol. 10

Spring 2011

No. 1

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Editorial

Welcome to the Spring, 2011, *Midwestern Journal of Theology*. The core theme for this issue is Biblical Theology. Our annual Sizemore Lecturer this year was the New Testament scholar G. K. Beale, well known author of numerous books, commentaries, and scholarly articles. Beale delivered two lectures on the subject of the implication of Inaugurated Eschatology for Christian life and ministry. Both these lectures are included here, and are, in a slightly different form, to be included in Dr. Beale's forthcoming *New Testament Biblical Theology*, published by Baker. We are also pleased to be able to include as well a response, appreciation, and critique of Beale's presentation by Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's James M. Hamilton. As a happy coincidence, William R. Osborne, a Midwestern Old Testament doctoral candidate provided for this issue a review of James M. Hamilton's *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology*. Rounding out our theme section we include a translation of Johann Philipp Gabler's "On the Proper Distinction Between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology" (1787). This historic discourse is often credited with being the first step toward establishing Biblical and Systematic Theology as separate and distinct disciplines. We present it here without any intention of endorsement, but merely for its historic interest in relation to the development of the concept and practice of Biblical Theology. The English translation first appeared in 1980 in the *Scottish Journal of Theology*, and is reprinted here by the kind permission of the original translators.

In addition to our four major theme articles a number of other items of interest are included as well. Midwestern Professor J. Alan Branch discusses a controversial rendering of Malachi 2:16 in the *Holman Christian Standard Study Bible*, and Dr. Daniel Watson, also of Midwestern, follows up by providing an extensive text-critical evaluation of this passage.

In the interest of timeliness in relation to the recent appearance of Rob Bell's controversial new book *Love Wins*, Midwestern professor Rustin Umstatt and the editor have scrambled to put together two articles of critique and response to what represents a very troubling book.

Another article included also relates to Rob Bell, but less directly. For many years a myth has been circulated that in the early Christian

period several gods besides Jesus were said to be virgin born “Crucified Saviors.” For the last couple of centuries this myth has been promoted primarily by Christianity’s most vocal opponents. Regrettably, Bell himself recently embraced and positively taught a version of this myth in the 15th installment of his Nooma film series. In this issue we challenge that myth in its historic origins, focusing on one ancient figure in particular who is often erroneously put forth as a “crucified savior,” namely the Greek god Prometheus.

One of *Midwestern’s* New Testament doctoral candidates, Todd R. Chipman, also contributes a piece on the epistle to the Hebrews as Exhortation. This paper was accepted and presented in a well-attended session at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Atlanta this past November. (Readers will also find a number of interesting book reviews by a number of authors, including three of our own doctoral students, Russell Meeks, C. Eric Turner, and William R. Osborne).

Following up on the theme of Justification in our Spring 2010 issue, we include now a very intriguing article by Joel R. Beeke, President of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, on *Pilgrim’s Progress* author John Bunyan’s defense of the doctrine of Justification in his historical context and its bearing on current debates relating to that variegated collection of opinions now traveling under the general heading “New Perspective on Paul.”

The final article of this issue explores the significance of a remarkable story from the life of early Bible translator, Jerome, to Christian life and iconography.

Finally many thanks are due to Assistant Journal Editor Joshua L. Mann for his careful editorial work, insightful suggestions, and the contribution of an introduction to the Johann Philipp Gabler piece, and to our new Journal secretary Jessica Vanderford for her crucial help with logistics and proofreading.

Blessings and Good Reading!

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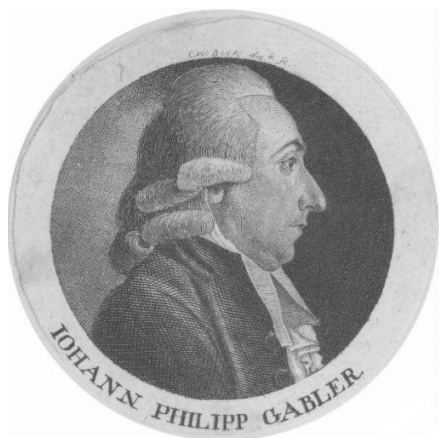
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**Theme Classic:
Johann Philipp
Gabler: “On the
Proper Distinction
Between Biblical and
Dogmatic Theology”
(1787)**

In 1787 Johann Philipp Gabler gave his inaugural address, *De justo discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae regundisque recte utriusque finibus*, at the University of Altdorf. In what Gabler judged a “brief speech” (and surely it was), he attempted to distinguish between biblical theology and dogmatic theology—the former an attempt in understanding the “sacred authors” on their own terms (and subsequently in relation to one another) using historical methods and reason; the latter an attempt to systematize those universal truths mined by biblical theology for application in a contemporary time and situation. Though Gabler’s ideas were shared by others during his time, his address crystallized a viewpoint and shift in thought in his day that continues to be observed by many theologians today: not only is biblical theology distinct from dogmatic theology, it should be the foundation on which dogmatic theology is built. Most scholars recognize the address as significant in the development of biblical theology as a discipline in and of itself. Not all are equally impressed with Gabler’s distinction, but in any case, it surely raises important questions inherent to biblical interpretation and theology. Further, what Gabler delineated as the task of biblical theology is the sort of undertaking that G. K. Beale and James Hamilton have each respectively attempted in their recent scholarly works, the ideas of which appear in their respective articles in this issue of the *MJT*. The English translation is reprinted here with the kind permission of Professor John Sandys-Wunsch.¹ Here, then, is the famous address of J. P. Gabler who is known by some as the father of biblical theology.

¹ The translation, along with an extensive analysis of its history and significance, originally appeared in John Sandys-Wunsch and Laurence Eldredge, “J. P. Gabler and the Distinction Between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology: Translation, Commentary, and Discussion of His Originality,” *SJT* 33 (1980): 135-158 (esp. 134-44).

An Oration

ON THE PROPER DISTINCTION BETWEEN BIBLICAL AND DOGMATIC THEOLOGY AND THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF EACH

[W]hich was given on March 30, 1787, by Magister Johann Philipp Gabler as part of the inaugural duty of the Professor Ordinarius of Theology in Alma Altorfina

Magnificent Lord, Rector of the Academy;
Most Generous Lord, prefect of this town and surrounding area; Most revered, learned, experienced and esteemed men;
Most excellent and most celebrated professors of all faculties;
Patrons of the college, united in your support; and you, students, a select group with respect to your nobility of both virtue and family;
Most splendid and worthy audience of all faculties:

All who are devoted to the sacred faith of Christianity, most worthy listeners, profess with one united voice that the sacred books, especially of the New Testament, are the one clear source from which all true knowledge of the Christian religion is drawn. And they profess too that these books are the only secure sanctuary to which we can flee in the face of the ambiguity and vicissitude of human knowledge, if we aspire to a solid understanding of divine matters and if we wish to obtain a firm and certain hope of salvation. Given this agreement of all these religious opinions, why then do these points of contention arise? Why these fatal discords of the various sects? Doubtless this dissension originates in part from the occasional obscurity of the sacred Scriptures themselves; in part from that depraved custom of reading one's own opinions and judgments into the Bible, or from a servile manner of interpreting it. Doubtless the dissension also arises from the neglected distinction between religion and theology; and finally it arises from an inappropriate combination of the simplicity and ease of biblical theology with the subtlety and difficulty of dogmatic theology.

Surely it is the case that the sacred books, whether we look at the words alone or at the concepts they convey, are frequently and in many

places veiled by a deep obscurity—and this is easily demonstrated; for one thing it is self-evident and for another a host of useless exegetical works proclaims it. The causes of this state of affairs are many: first the very nature and quality of the matters transmitted in these books; second, the unusualness of the individual words and of the mode of expression as a whole; third, the way of thinking behind times and customs very different from our own; fourth and finally, the ignorance of many people of the proper way of interpreting these books, whether it is due to the ancient characteristics of the text as a whole or to the language peculiar to each scriptural writer. But before this audience it is of little importance to describe each and every one of these causes, since it is self-evident that the obscurity of the Holy Scriptures, whatever its source, must give rise to a great variety of opinion. Also one need not discuss at length that unfortunate fellow who heedlessly dared to attribute some of his own most insubstantial opinions to the sacred writers themselves—how he increased the unhappy fate of our religion! There may even be some like him who would like to solidify the frothiness of such opinions about the sacred authors; for it is certainly something to give a divine appearance to their human ideas. Those completely unable to interpret correctly must inevitably inflict violence upon the sacred books; truly we even notice that often the wisest and most skilled of interpreters goes astray, so much so that, disregarding the laws of correct interpretation, they indulge their own ingenuity for its own sake. And let us not think then that it is suitable and legitimate for those who use the sacred words to tear what pleases them from its context in the sacred Scriptures; for it happens again and again that, when they cling to the words and do not pay attention to the mode of expression peculiar to the sacred writers, they express something other than the true sense of these authors. And if they continue to use metaphors when the context demands universal notions, then they may persuade themselves to say that some meaning which they brought to the sacred texts in the first place, actually comes from the sacred texts.²

Another cause of discord, a most serious one, is the neglected distinction between religion and theology; for if some people apply to

² The best things to read in this connection are the observations truly and learnedly made by the late immortal J. A. Ernesti in his learned work *Pro grammatica interpretatione librorum sacrorum* and *De vanitate philosophantium in interpretatione librorum sacrorum*, in *Opuscula Philologica* (2nd ed.; Leiden, Luchtman, 1764), 219-32 and 233-51; and the very distinguished Morus in *Prolus. de discrimine sensus et significationis in interpretando* (Leipzig, 1777).

religion what is proper to theology, it is easy to understand that there would be enormous room for the sharpest differences of opinion, and these differences will be even more destructive because each party to the quarrel will only with great reluctance surrender what he considers to pertain to religion. However, after the work of Ernesti, Semler, Spalding, Toellner, and others, most recently the venerable Tittmann³ has shown us brilliantly that there is considerable difference between religion and theology. For, if I may quote this excellent scholar, religion is passed on by the doctrine in the Scriptures, teaching what each Christian ought to know and believe and do in order to secure happiness in this life and in the life to come. Religion then, is every-day, transparently clear knowledge; but theology is subtle, learned knowledge, surrounded by a retinue of many disciplines, and by the same token derived not only from the sacred Scripture but also from elsewhere, especially from the domain of philosophy and history. It is therefore a field elaborated by human discipline and ingenuity. It is also a field that is advanced by careful and discriminating observation that experiences various changes along with other fields. Not only does theology deal with things proper to the Christian religion, but it also explains carefully and fully all connected matters; and finally it makes a place for them with the subtlety and rigor of logic. But religion for the common man has nothing to do with this abundance of literature and history.

But this sad and unfortunate difference of opinion has always been and, alas, always will be associated with that readiness to mix completely diverse things, for instance the simplicity of what they call biblical theology with the subtlety of dogmatic theology; although it certainly seems to me that the one thing must be more sharply distinguished from the other than has been common practice up to now. And what I should like to establish here is the necessity of making this distinction and the method to be followed. This is what I have decided to expound in this brief speech of mine in so far as the weakness of my powers allows and in so far as it can be done. Therefore, most honored listeners of all faculties⁴ I strongly beg your indulgence. Would you grant me open ears and minds and be so kind as to follow me as I venture to consider these increasingly important matters. I pray and ask each and every one of you for your attention as far as is necessary so that I may speak my mind as clearly as possible.

³ C. C. Tittmann, *Progr(amm) de discrimine theologiae et religionis* (Wittenberg, 1782).

⁴ [A.O.O.H. Presumably an abbreviation for *Auditores omnium ordinum honorabilus.*]

There is truly a biblical theology, of historical origin, conveying what the holy writers felt about divine matters; on the other hand there is a dogmatic theology of didactic origin, teaching what each theologian philosophises rationally about divine things, according to the measure of his ability or of the times, age, place, sect, school, and other similar factors. Biblical theology, as is proper to historical argument, is always in accord with itself when considered by itself—although even biblical theology when elaborated by one of the disciplines may be fashioned in one way by some and in another way by others. But dogmatic theology is subject to a multiplicity of change along with the rest of the humane disciplines; constant and perpetual observation over many centuries shows this enough and to spare. How greatly the churches of the learned differ from the first beginnings of the Christian religion; how many systems the fathers attributed to each variety of era and setting!⁵ For history teaches that there is a chronology and a geography to theology itself. How much the scholastic theology of the Middle Ages, covered with the thick gloom of barbarity, differs from the discipline of the fathers! Even after the light of the doctrine of salvation had emerged from these shadows, every point of difference in theology was endured even in the purified church, if I may refer to Socinian and Arminian factions. Or if I may refer to the Lutheran church alone, the teaching of Chemnitz and Gerhard is one thing, that of Calov another, that of Museum and Baier another, that of Budde another, that of Pfaff and Mosheim another, that of Baumgarten another, that of Carpov another, that of Michaelis and Heilmann another, that of Ernesti and Zachariae another, that of Teller another, that of Walch and Carpzov another, that of Semler another, and that of Doederlein finally another. But the sacred writers are surely not so changeable that they should in this fashion be able to assume these different types and forms of theological doctrine. What I do not wish to be said, however, is that all things in theology should be considered uncertain or doubtful or that all things should be allowed according to human will alone. But let those things that have been said up to now be worth this much: that we distinguish carefully the divine from the human, that we establish some distinction between biblical and dogmatic theology, and after we have separated those things which in the sacred books refer most immediately to their own times and to the men of those times from those pure notions which divine providence wished to be characteristic of all times and places, let us then construct the foundation of our philosophy upon religion and let us designate with

⁵ [The translation here represents a conjectural emendation of the untranslatable Latin text. *Quanta* has been added before *Patres*.]

some care the objectives of divine and human wisdom. Exactly thus will our theology be made more certain and more firm, and there will be nothing further to be feared for it from the most savage attack from its enemies. The late Professor Zachariae did this very capably,⁶ but I hardly need to remind you of the fact that he left some things for others to emend, define more correctly, and amplify. However, everything comes to this, that on the one hand we hold firmly to a just method for cautiously giving shape to our interpretations of the sacred authors; and on the other that we rightly establish the use in dogmatics of these interpretations and dogmatics' own objectives.

The first task then in this most serious matter is to gather carefully the sacred ideas and, if they are not expressed in the sacred Scriptures, let us fashion them ourselves from passages that we compare with each other. In order that the task proceed productively and that nothing is done fearfully or with partiality, it is necessary to use complete caution and circumspection in all respects. Before all else, the following will have to be taken into account: in the sacred books are contained the opinions not of a single man nor of one and the same era or religion. Yet all the sacred writers are holy men and are armed with divine authority; but not all attest to the same form of religion; some are doctors of the Old Testament of the same elements that Paul himself designated with the name 'basic elements';⁷ others are of the newer and better Christian Testament. And so the sacred authors, however much we must cherish them with equal reverence because of the divine authority that has been imprinted on their writings, cannot all be considered in the same category if we are referring to their use in dogmatics. I would certainly not suggest that a holy man's own native intelligence and his natural way of knowing things are destroyed altogether by inspiration. Finally since especially in this context it is next asked what each of these men felt about divine things (this can be understood not from any traditional appeal to divine authority but from their books) I should judge it sufficient in any event that we do not appear to concede anything which lacks some proof. I should also judge that when it is a case of the use in dogmatics of biblical ideas, then it is of no consequence under what authority these men wrote, but what they perceived this occasion of divine inspiration clearly transmitted and what they perceived it finally meant. That being the case

⁶ G. T. Zachariae in his noted work *Biblische Theologie* (5 vols.; Göttingen and Kiel, 1771, 1772, 1774, 1775, 1786).

⁷ [The expression from Gal 4.9 is cited in Greek in Gabler's text. It is translated here as Gabler understood it but many modern commentators would interpret it otherwise.]

it is necessary, unless we want to labor uselessly, to distinguish among each of the periods in the Old and New Testaments, each of the authors, and each of the manners of speaking which each used as a reflection of time and place, whether these manners are historical or didactic or poetic. If we abandon this straight road, even though it is troublesome and of little delight, it can only result in our wandering into some deviation or uncertainty. Therefore we must carefully collect and classify each of the ideas of each patriarch—Moses, David, and Solomon, and of each prophet with special attention to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Zachariah, Haggai, Malachi, and the rest; and for many reasons we ought to include the apocryphal books for this same purpose; also we should include the ideas from the epoch of the New Testament, those of Jesus, Paul, Peter, John, and James. Above all, this process is completed in two ways: the one is in the legitimate interpretation of passages pertinent to this procedure; the other is in the careful comparison of the ideas of all the sacred authors among themselves.

The first of these two involves many difficulties.⁸ For not only must we consider here the linguistic problem of the language then in use, which in the New Testament is both graeco-Hebrew and the vulgar Greek of the time; we must also consider that which is peculiar to each writer; that is, the uses of the meaning that a particular word may have in one certain place whether that meaning be broader or narrower. Also we should add the reason for the divergence of these uses and explain, if possible, the common meaning in which several instances of the same word fall together.⁹ But we must also investigate the power and reason of the meaning itself; what is the primary idea of the word, and what merely added to it. For the interpreter who is on his guard must not stop short at the primary idea in the word, but he must also press on to the secondary idea which has been added to it either through long use or through ingenuity or through scholarly use of the word, and in so doing one may certainly make the most egregious of blunders. Let us not by applying tropes¹⁰ forge new dogmas about which the authors themselves

⁸ The late Professor Ernesti warned us of this problem in his distinguished fashion in his two works *De difficultatibus N.T. recte interpretandi* and *De difficultate interpretationis grammatica N.T.*, in *Opuscula Philologica*, 198-218 and 252-87.

⁹ That excellent man S. F. N. Morus in his *Prolus. de nexu sigificationum eiusdem verbi* (Leipzig, 1776) has taught us what caution must be observed in interpreting the relationship amongst meanings of the same word.

¹⁰ [This is a technical term referring to allegorical or similar methods of extracting a 'spiritual' meaning from a text.]

never thought. Not only in prophetic or poetic books but also in the writings of the Apostles there are often improper uses of words which should be traced either to an abundance of genius or to the traditional usage of opponents, or to the use of words familiar to the first readers.¹¹ Up to now this is mostly done when we are comparing carefully many opinions of the same author, such as Paul; in comparing many things and words, we reduce to one idea and thing the many passages which, although variously expressed, show the same meaning. Morus¹² recently showed and illustrated all this in a distinguished fashion—a very great man whose reputation is his monument. Finally one must properly distinguish whether the Apostle is speaking his own words or those of others; whether he is moved only to describe some opinion or truly to prove it; and if he wants to do the latter, does he repeat the argument from the basic nature of the doctrine of salvation, or from the sayings of the books of the Old Testament, and even accommodating them to the sense of the first readers? For although the opinions of the Apostles deserve our trust, so that we may easily get along without some part of their argument, the first readers nonetheless wanted the proofs that were appropriate to their own sense and judgment. Therefore, it is of great interest whether the Apostle proposes some opinion as a part of Christian doctrine or some opinion that is shaped to the needs of the time, which must be considered merely premises, as the logicians call them. If we rightly hold on to all these things, then indeed we shall draw out the true sacred ideas typical of each author; certainly not all the ideas, for there is no place for everything in the books that have come down to us, but at least those ideas which the opportunity or the necessity for writing had shaped in their souls. Nonetheless, there is a sufficient number of ideas, and usually of such a kind that those that have been omitted can then be inferred without difficulty, if they constitute a single principle of opinion expressly declared, or if they are connected to the ideas that are stated in some necessary fashion. This process, however, requires considerable caution.

At this point we must pass on to the other part of the task, namely to a careful and sober comparison of the various parts attributed to each testament. Then, with Morus, the best of men, as our guide, each single

¹¹ The distinguished J. A. Noesselt did this in his *Disp. de discernenda propria et topica dictione* (Halle, 1762).

¹² That great man dealt with this first in his *Disp. de notionibus universis in Theologia* and then in his *Prog. de utilitate notionum universarum in Theologia* (Leipzig, 1782).

opinion must be examined for its universal ideas, especially for those which are expressly read in this or that place in the Holy Scriptures, but according to this rule: that each of the ideas is consistent with its own era, its own testament, its own place of origin, and its own genius. Each one of these categories which is distinct in cause from the others should be kept separate. And if this cautionary note is disregarded, it may happen that the benefit from the universal ideas will give way to the worst sort of damage to the truth, and it will render useless and will destroy all the work which had been brought together in diligently isolating the opinions of each author. If, however, this comparison with the help of the universal notions is established in such a way that for each author his own work remains unimpaired, and it is clearly revealed wherein the separate authors agree in a friendly fashion, or differ among themselves; then finally there will be the happy appearance of biblical theology, pure and unmixed with foreign things, and we shall at last have the sort of system for biblical theology that Tiedemann elaborated with such distinction for Stoic philosophy.

When these opinions of the holy men have been carefully collected from Holy Scripture and suitably digested, carefully referred to the universal notions, and cautiously compared among themselves, the question of their dogmatic use may then profitably be established, and the goals of both biblical and dogmatic theology correctly assigned. Under this heading one should investigate with great diligence which opinions have to do with the unchanging testament of Christian doctrine, and therefore pertain directly to us; and which are said only to men of some particular era or testament. For among other things it is evident that the universal argument within the holy books is not designed for men of every sort; but the great part of these books is rather restricted by God's own intention to a particular time, place, and sort of man. Who, I ask, would apply to our times the Mosaic rites which have been invalidated by Christ, or Paul's advice about women veiling themselves in church? Therefore the ideas of the Mosaic law have not been designated for any dogmatic use, neither by Jesus and his Apostles nor by reason itself. By the same token we must diligently investigate what in the books of the New Testament was said as an accommodation to the ideas or the needs of the first Christians and what was said in reference to the unchanging idea of the doctrine of salvation; we must investigate what in the sayings of the Apostles is truly divine, and what perchance merely human. And at this point finally the question comes up most opportunely of the whys

and wherefores of theopneustia.¹³ This matter, to be sure very difficult, is, in my opinion at least, rather incorrectly inferred from the sayings of the Apostles, in which they make mention of a certain divine inspiration, since these individual passages are very obscure and ambiguous. However, we must beware, if we wish to deal with these things with reason and not with fear or bias, not to press those meanings of the Apostles beyond their just limits, especially since only the effects of the inspirations and not their causes, are perceived by the senses. But if I am judge of anything, everything must be accomplished by exegetical observation only, and that with constant care, and compared with the things spoken of and promised by our Savior in this matter. In this way it may finally be established whether all the opinions of the Apostles, of every type and sort altogether, are truly divine, or rather whether some of them, which have no bearing on salvation, were left to their own ingenuity.

Thus, as soon as all these things have been properly observed and carefully arranged, at last a clear sacred Scripture will be selected with scarcely any doubtful readings, made up of passages which are appropriate to the Christian religion of all times. These passages will show with unambiguous words the form of faith that is truly divine; the *dicta classica*¹⁴ properly so called, which can then be laid out as the fundamental basis for a more subtle dogmatic scrutiny. For only from these methods can those certain and undoubted universal ideas be singled out, those ideas which alone are useful in dogmatic theology. And if these universal notions are derived by a just interpretation from those *dicta classica*, and those notions that are derived are carefully compared, and those notions that are compared are suitably arranged, each in its own place, so that the proper connection and provable order of doctrines that are truly divine may stand revealed; truly then the result is biblical theology in the stricter sense of the word which we know the late Zachariae to have pursued in the preparation of his well-known work.¹⁵ And finally, unless we want to follow uncertain arguments, we must so

¹³ [This is a transcription of the term Gabler uses in Greek script. ‘Theopneustia’ was often used for ‘inspiration’ in the eighteenth-century debates on the subject.]

¹⁴ [This is a technical expression that refers to the standard collection of proof texts in the orthodox theology of the eighteenth century. G. T. Zachariae had been the first to challenge the usefulness of these lists of texts isolated from their context.]

¹⁵ [The remainder of Gabler’s address is not concerned with biblical theology but with the polite formalities of the occasion. Merk translates this section in his work.]

build only upon these firmly established foundations of biblical theology, again taken in the stricter sense as above, a dogmatic theology adapted to our own times. However, the nature of our age urgently demands that we then teach accurately the harmony of divine dogmatics and the principles of human reason; then, by means of art and ingenuity by which this can happen, let us so elaborate each and every chapter of doctrine that no abundance is lacking in any part—neither subtlety, whether in proper arrangement of passages or the correct handling of arguments, nor elegance in all its glory, nor human wisdom, primarily philosophy and history. Thus the manner and form of dogmatic theology should be varied, as Christian philosophy especially is,¹⁶ according to the variety both of philosophy and of every human point of view of that which is subtle, learned, suitable and appropriate, elegant and graceful; biblical theology itself remains the same, namely in that it deals only with those things which holy men perceived about matters pertinent to religion, and is not made to accommodate our point of view.¹⁷

¹⁶ J. G. Toellner, *Theologische Untersuchungen* (Riga, 1772) 1. 264ff.

¹⁷ [Here our translation differs from Merk's 'biblical theology in a stricter sense than Zachariae followed'. The Latin is ambiguous at this point, but in the next sentence the expression 'stricter sense' is used without any direct comparison. Furthermore, Gabler is very dependent on Zachariae here in his reference to the *dicta classica* and therefore he seems to be making this remark in connexion with rather than as a contrast to Zachariae's position. At all events there is no real difference between Gabler's and Zachariae's approach to biblical theology on this point.]

The Inaugurated Eschatological Indicative and Imperative in Relation to Christian Living and Preaching



Photo: A. Mayfield

Sizemore Lecture I
Midwestern Baptist
Theological Seminary
November 2, 2010

G. K. BEALE
*Professor of New Testament
Westminster Theological Seminary
Philadelphia, PA*

INTRODUCTION

The lectures today and tomorrow represent a rehash and minor revision of parts from a couple of chapters in a forthcoming book to appear next fall through Baker Book House. The book is titled, *A New Testament Biblical Theology* and subtitled, *Transformation of the Old Testament in the New*. The thrust of the book is to show that eschatology was not a mere doctrine of futurology for Jesus and his followers but was a present reality, which shaped their thinking about every facet of the Christian faith. Many understand “eschatology” to refer only to the “end time events” directly preceding the church’s rapture, the coming Great Tribulation and subsequent millennium.

Such a *popular* understanding that the latter-days refers only to the yet future end of the world needs radical adjustment. On a scholarly level, New Testament scholarship over the past few decades has made great strides in increasing our understanding that the beginning of Christian history was perceived by the first Christians as the beginning of the end-times. There is, however, still much study that must be done in

synthesizing this work, developing a New Testament theology in the light of such work, and refining the focus of eschatology in its relation to New Testament Theology. This is what I will attempt to do in my forthcoming book on New Testament Biblical Theology.

This lecture will start by briefly summarizing the basic thesis of the book and then focusing on one particular aspect of theology and seeing how “inaugurated eschatology” sheds rich light on this doctrine. The particular theological idea is the relation of the indicative to the imperative in the New Testament. Put simply, how does “inaugurated eschatology” help us understand the relationship of the commands to the reality of who people are in Christ.

So, let’s begin.

I. THE CONCEPT OF THE LATTER DAYS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Before one can begin to understand eschatology in the New Testament, the eschatology of the Old Testament must first be apprehended. In the Old Testament the wording “latter days” and synonyms are prophetic and refer to a future time when a number of things will happen. The phrase “latter days” and its synonyms in the Old Testament refer to the following: (1) there will be a tribulation for Israel consisting of oppression (Ezek 38:14–17ff.), persecution (Dan 10:14ff.; 11:27–12:10), false teaching, deception and apostasy (Dan 8:17, 19; Dan 10:14ff.; 11:27–35, 40); (2) after the tribulation Israel will seek the Lord (Hos 3:4–5), they will be delivered (Ezek 38:14–16ff.; Dan 10:14ff.; 12:1–13) and their enemies will be judged (Ezek 38:14–16ff.; Dan 10:14ff.; 11:40–45; 12:2); (3) this deliverance and judgment will occur because a leader (Messiah) from Israel will finally conquer all of its Gentile enemies (Gen 49:1,8–12; Num 24:14–19; Isa 2:2–4; Mic 4:1–3; Dan 2:28–45; 10:14–12:10); (4) God will establish a kingdom on the earth and rule over it (Isa 2:2–4; Mic 4:1–3; Dan 2:28–45) together with a Davidic king (Hos 3:4–5); (5) after the time of tribulation and persecution, Dan 11–12 says there will be a resurrection of the righteous and unrighteous (so Dan 11:30–12:3ff.).¹

Of course, the Old Testament expresses eschatological hopes without using the technical vocabulary of “latter days,” “end-times,” etc. For example, Joel 2:28ff. refers to the “pouring out of God’s Spirit” in the coming period of restoration, and this hope can be found elsewhere in the

¹ In my forthcoming book, *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, I discuss most of the passages in more depth.

Old Testament as well. Likewise, Isa 65:17–18 and 66:22 refer to the coming new creation of the cosmos without utilizing formal eschatological terminology.

II. THE CONCEPT OF THE LATTER DAYS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament repeatedly uses precisely the same phrase “latter days” as found in the Old Testament prophecies. The meaning of the phrase is identical, except for one difference: in the New Testament the end-days predicted by the Old Testament are seen as beginning fulfillment with Christ’s first coming. All that the Old Testament foresaw would occur in the end-times has begun already in the first century and continues on into our present day. This means that the Old Testament prophecies of the great tribulation, God’s deliverance of Israel from oppressors, God’s rule over the Gentiles, and the establishment of his kingdom have been set in motion by Christ’s life, death, resurrection, and formation of the Christian church. The resurrection marked the beginning of Jesus’ messianic reign, and the Spirit at Pentecost signaled the inauguration of His rule through the church (see Acts 1:6–8; 2:1–43). On the other hand, persecution of Jesus and the church indicated the beginning of the final tribulation. What the Old Testament did not foresee so clearly was the ironic reality that the kingdom and the tribulation could co-exist at the same time: e.g., John says in Rev 1:9, “I, John, your brother and fellow-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus.” Therefore, the latter days do not take place only at some point in the future but occur throughout the whole church age, which means we in the twentieth century are still experiencing the latter days, as strange as that may sound to some people.

The first time the wording “last days” appears in the New Testament is Acts 2:17. Here Peter understands that the tongues being spoken at Pentecost are a beginning fulfillment of Joel’s end-time prophecy that a day would come when God’s Spirit would gift not merely prophets, priests, and kings, but all of God’s people. Peter says,

For these men are not drunk as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: “And it shall be in the last days, God says, that I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind . . .” (Acts 2:15–17a; cf. Joel 2:28).

In 1 Cor 10:11 Paul says that the Old Testament was written to instruct the Corinthian Christians about how to live in the end-times, since upon them “the ends of the ages have come.” And in Gal 4:4 he refers to Jesus’ birth as occurring “when the fullness of the time came” in fulfillment of the messianic prophecies. Likewise, in Eph 1:7–10 and 1:20–23 “the fullness of the times” alludes to when believers were redeemed and Christ began to rule over the earth as a result of his resurrection. The expression “the last times” and “end days” in 1 Tim 4:1ff. and 2 Tim 3:1ff. refer to the presence of tribulation in the form of false, deceptive teaching. That the latter days in 1 and 2 Timothy is not a reference only to a distant, future time is evident from recognizing that the Ephesian church is already experiencing this latter-day tribulation of deceptive teaching and apostasy (see 1 Tim 1:3–4, 6, 7, 19–20; 4:7; 5:13–15; 6:20–21; 2 Tim 1:15; 2:16–19; 2:25–26; 3:2–9).

The author of Hebrews proclaims in his opening two verses that in his own day, “in these last days,” Jesus had begun to fulfill the Psalm 2 prophecy that God’s Son would judge the evil kingdoms and receive the earth as an inheritance from His Father (cf. Ps 2:1–12 with Heb 1:2–5). In like manner, in Heb 9:26 he says “at the consummation of the ages He (Christ) has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” And James 5:1–9 warns its readers not to trust in riches because the “last days” have come. James attempts to motivate his audience to trust in Christ and not worldly possessions by imparting to them a comprehension of what God has accomplished through Christ in these “last days.”

In identical fashion 1 Pet 1:19–21 says that Christ has died as a sacrificial lamb and been resurrected “in these last times.” 2 Pet 3:3 also reflects Paul’s outlook on the end days when he pronounces that “in the last days mockers will come with their mocking” (see 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 3:1). That this is not mere prophecy of the future but description of the present is clear from noticing that Peter recognizes that the mockers are presently spreading false teaching in the church which he is addressing (2 Pet 3:16–17; note the imminent threat of false teachers in 2:1–22). Jude 18 has exactly the same idea (cf. Jude 4, 8, 10–13). In a similar context of false teaching 1 John 2:18 says, “Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour.” These “antichrists” were manifesting themselves by attempting to deceive others through erroneous teaching (see 1 John 2:21–23, 26; 4:1–5). Indeed, one of the indications that the latter-day tribulation is continuing

during the present inter-advent period is the pervasive presence of false teaching within the purported covenant community.

This brief survey demonstrates that the last days predicted by the Old Testament began with Christ's first coming, although there is other terminology besides "latter days" in many other passages which could also be adduced as further evidence (e.g., see Paul's use of "now" in 2 Cor 6:2; Eph 3:5, 10; etc.). There are also many passages conveying eschatological concepts but which do not use technical eschatological expressions. Christ's life, death, resurrection, and establishment of the church community have ushered in the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of the tribulation, the Messiah's conquering of Gentile enemies, Israel's deliverance, and the long-expected kingdom. In this initial phase of the end-times Christ and the church begin to fulfill the prophecies concerning Israel's tribulation and end-time kingdom because Christ and the church are seen by the New Testament as the true Israel (see 2:25–29; 9:6, 24–26; Gal 3:29; 6:15–16; Eph 2:16–18; 3:6; 1 Pet 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 3:9; 5:9–10.)² This notion of radical inaugurated fulfillment is best expressed by 2 Cor 1:20: "For as many as may be the promises of God [in the Old Testament], in Him [Christ] they are yes."

Of course, there are passages in the New Testament which speak of the future consummation of the present latter-day period. That is, there are still many end-time prophecies which have not yet been fulfilled but will be when Christ returns a second time: e.g., the bodily resurrection of all people, the destruction of the present cosmos, the creation of a completely new heavens and earth, the final judgment, the eternal Sabbath, etc.

The New Testament writers assert that Christians experience only a part of what will be completely experienced in the final form of the new heavens and earth. There is what some call an "already-and-not-yet" dimension of the end-times. In this respect Oscar Cullmann has metaphorically described Jesus' first coming as "D-day" since this is when Satan was decisively defeated. "V-day" is the second coming when Jesus' enemies will totally surrender and bow down to Him. Cullman says it this way: "The hope of the final victory is so much more the vivid because of the unshakably firm conviction that the battle that decides the victory has already taken place."³

² See further H. K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983).

³ Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1964), 87.

But the point of the present discussion is that the great end-time predictions have already begun the process of fulfillment. William Manson has well said,

When we turn to the New Testament, we pass from the climate of prediction to that of fulfillment. The things which God had foreshadowed by the lips of His holy prophets He has now, in part at least, brought to accomplishment . . . The supreme sign of the Eschaton is the Resurrection of Jesus and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Church. The Resurrection of Jesus is not simply a sign which God has granted in favour of His son, but is the inauguration, the entrance into history, of the times of the End. Christians, therefore, have entered through the Christ into the new age . . . What had been predicted in Holy Scripture as to happen to Israel or to man in the "Eschaton" has happened to and in Jesus. The foundation-stone of the New Creation has come into position.⁴

Therefore, the apostles understood eschatology not merely as futurology but as a mindset for understanding the present within the climaxing context of redemptive history. That is, the apostles understood that they were already living in the end-times and that they were to understand their present salvation in Christ to be already an end-time reality. Every aspect of their salvation was to be conceived of as eschatological in nature. To put this another way, every major doctrine of the Christian faith is charged with eschatological electricity. Just as when you put on green sunglasses, everything you see is green, so Christ had placed eschatological sunglasses on his disciples so that everything they looked at in the Christian faith had an end-time tint. This means that the doctrine of eschatology in New Testament Theology textbooks should not merely be one among many doctrines. Furthermore, eschatology should not be placed at the end of New Testament theology textbooks or at the end of chapters dealing with the different New Testament corpora because it purportedly describes only the very end of the world as we know it. Rather, the doctrine of eschatology should be part of the title of such a textbook, since every major theological concept

⁴ Manson, "Eschatology in the New Testament," (*Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers* No. 2; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1953), p. 6 (my italics in the last sentence). Though this sounds like "over-realized eschatology," Manson qualifies it by saying, "The End has come! The end has not come!" (Ibid., 7).

breathes the air of a latter-day atmosphere. Perhaps, the title of a Biblical Theology on the New Testament could read “New Testament Theology as Eschatology.” For the same reason systematic theology textbooks should not place eschatology as the last chapter but should integrate it into discussion of other New Testament doctrines.

It is important to say that our understanding of most of the traditional doctrines is not so much changed but radically enriched by seeing them through end-time sunglasses. But how are some of the crucial doctrines of our faith so enriched when seen as eschatological doctrines? To put it another way, “how can our hermeneutical glasses be re-ground in order to see better the end-time reality of the New Testament?” I believe that the concluding part of W. Manson’s above quotation is a good place to start answering this question. He said the resurrected Christ as “the foundation-stone of the New Creation has come into position.”

We should think of Christ’s life, and especially his death and resurrection and his sending of the Spirit as the central events which launched the latter days. These pivotal events of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection are eschatological because they launched the beginning of the new creation. The end-time new creation has not been recognized sufficiently heretofore as the basis of a Biblical Theology of the New Testament, and it is this concept which I believe has the potential to refine significantly the general scholarly view of the eschatological “already and not yet.”

Of course, the Old Testament prophesied that the destruction of the first creation and the re-creation of a new heavens and earth were to happen at the very end of time. Christ’s work reveals that the end of the world and the coming new creation have begun in his death and resurrection: 2 Cor 5:15 and 17 says Christ “died and rose again . . . so that if any are in Christ, they are a new creation, the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come.” Rev 1:5 refers to Christ as “the first-born from the dead” and then Rev 3:14 defines “first-born” as “the beginning of the [new] creation of God.”⁵ Likewise, Col 1:18 says that Christ is “the first-born from the dead” and “the beginning” so that “he himself might come to have first place in everything.” In Gal 6:14–15 Paul says that his identification with Christ’s death means that he is a “new creation.”

⁵ For the notion of new creation in the 2 Corinthians 5 and Revelation 3 texts, see G. K. Beale, “The Old Testament Background of Reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5–7 and Its Bearing on the Literary Problem of 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1,” *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989): 550–581, and idem, “The Old Testament Background of Rev 3.14,” *New Testament Studies* 42 (1996): 133–152.

Indeed, the resurrection was predicted by the Old Testament to occur at the end of the world as part of the new creation. God would make redeemed humanity a part of the new creation by recreating their bodies through resurrection (cf. Dan 12:1–2). Of course, we still look forward to the time when our bodies will be raised at Christ’s final parousia, and we will become part of the consummated new creation. Christ’s resurrection, however, placed him into the beginning of the new creation. The resurrected Christ is not merely spiritually the inauguration of the new cosmos, but he is literally its beginning, since he was resurrected with a physically resurrected, newly created body. Recall that when Matt 27:50 narrates Jesus’ death, Matthew immediately adds in vv. 51–53, “the earth shook; and the rocks split, and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.” These strange phenomena are recorded by Matthew to signal to his readers that Christ’s death was the beginning of the end of the old creation and the inauguration of a new creation. Likewise, 1 John 2:17–18 can say “the world is passing away . . . it is the last hour.” You see, Christ’s death is not just any death but it is the beginning of the destruction of the entire world, which will not be consummated until the very end. Likewise, 1 Cor 15:22–24 says the resurrection launched in Christ will be consummated when he returns.

New creation is in mind wherever the mention of resurrection or the concept occurs, since it is essentially the new creation of humanity. The equivalence of resurrection with new creation is apparent also from noticing that three of the four most explicit new creation texts in the New Testament refer to Christ’s resurrection (2 Cor 5:14–17; Rev 1:5 and 3:14; Col 1:15–18), while the fourth refers to His death (Gal 6:14–15; 2 Cor 5:14–17 likely also includes both the death and resurrection as a part of the new creation). These are significant observations, since the idea of resurrection occurs so much throughout the New Testament; likewise Christ’s death can be seen as part of the process of new creation, as hinted at just above in the Matthew 27 discussion, and as will be explained further below. Likewise, mention of Christ’s death throughout the New Testament probably carries connotations of the beginning destruction of the old world which paves the way for the new. In the light of these observations, new creation also can be seen as a more dominant notion than one might at first think.

In the light of what we have said so far, we can state the overriding storyline idea of New Testament theology, especially in Paul and the Apocalypse but also in the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament.

The storyline is this: Christ's life, and especially death and resurrection through the Spirit launched the end-time new creation reign, propelling worldwide mission, resulting in blessing and judgment, all for God's glory.

It is at this precise point that I hope to build on the foundational work of such theologians as Geerhardus Vos,⁶ Oscar Cullmann,⁷ Herman Ridderbos,⁸ and George Eldon Ladd,⁹ among others.¹⁰ They also saw that Christ's redemptive work inaugurated the latter days and that the eschatological period would be consummated at some point in the future.¹¹ These scholars understood that eschatology was a crucial

⁶ Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979); see also *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos* (ed. R. B. Gaffin; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), *passim*.

⁷ Cullmann, *Christ and Time*.

⁸ Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishers, 1962).

⁹ George Eldon Ladd, *Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974).

¹⁰ C. M. Pate has developed view of eschatology like Vos's as the framework within which to understand best Pauline theology, though interestingly he does not interact with Vos (*The End of the Ages Has Come: The Theology of Paul* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995]).

Here also should be included Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1991), which also sees the new creation and kingdom as the thrust of the Bible's redemptive-historical and eschatological development, and is written explicitly at a popular level for people in the church. See, e.g., also H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003); Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; London: SCM, 1952–1955), who in his first volume integrates already and not yet eschatology into such topics as Christ's message, justification, reconciliation, the Spirit, and the church's existence; however, he does not conduct penetrating studies on the eschatological nature of these ideas (though, of course, he demythologizes the supernatural aspects of these notions).

¹¹ Though there were a few others who held this view. These scholars brought together the polar positions of A. Schweitzer and C. H. Dodd, who believed respectively that the end-times were imminent but not yet fulfilled, and, on the other hand, that the latter-days had fully arrived in the coming of Jesus (for a brief overview of the two positions, see D. E. Aune, "Eschatology, Early Christian," *ABD* 2:599–600, who also cites J. Jeremias and W. G. Kummel as holding a synthesis of the two perspectives). Interestingly, Vos appears to be the first European or American scholar to espouse an "already and not yet eschatology" as a major theological approach to Paul! Recently, C. M. Pate has

influence upon the thinking of the New Testament writers. More specifically, Richard Gaffin in his book *The Centrality of the Resurrection*¹² affirms that the resurrection as an end-time event is the all-encompassing thought in Paul. Seyoon Kim in his *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*¹³ explains why the resurrection dominated Paul's thinking: it was because the risen Christ's confrontation with Paul on the Damascus Road left such a lasting impact on Paul that it continued to dominate his thinking when writing his epistles.

But these scholars did not attempt to explain in programmatic fashion how inaugurated eschatology relates to and sheds light on the major theological doctrines of the New Testament.¹⁴ Nor did they see that the controlling conception of eschatology was the kingdom of the new creation. William Dumbrell is the only consistent exception to this, since he sees creation and kingdom as the central theme of both Old and New Testaments: all of the Old Testament works toward the goal of the new creation reign, and the New Testament begins to fulfill that primary goal.¹⁵

There are, nevertheless, weaknesses in Dumbrell's approach. His work is too much of a sweeping brush stroke which surveys broad themes (with brief summaries of important passages), does not work trenchantly at the exegetical level¹⁶ (though it was not intended to be such a work), does not try organically to relate the major New Testament doctrines specifically to Christ's life, death, and resurrection, nor does it attempt to explain specifically how the notion of new creational kingdom relates organically to the major New Testament ideas and doctrines. Nowhere is there a sufficiently precise explanation of how Christ's life, death, and resurrection relate to or inaugurate the new creation. Despite

developed Vos's view of eschatology as the framework within which to understand best Pauline theology in a more thoroughgoing manner than before, though he does not interact with Vos (*The End of the Ages Has Come: The Theology of Paul* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995]).

¹² (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1978).

¹³ (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982).

¹⁴ Though Pate, *End of the Ages Has Come*, has made a better attempt at this in Paul than have others.

¹⁵ See his *The Search for Order* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994); *The End of the Beginning* (Homebush West NSW, Australia: Lancer, 1985); cf. his Old Testament theology, *Covenant and Creation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984).

¹⁶ E.g., there needed to be serious discussion of texts in the New Testament which actually associate Christ with the language of new creation (especially Gal 6:14–18; 2 Cor 5:14–17; Eph 2:13–25 [cf. 1:20–23 and 2:10]; Col 1:15–18; Rev 3:14 [cf. with 1:5]).

these weaknesses, Dumbrell's is one of the best canonical Biblical Theologies which I have read.

My own view is broadly similar to Dumbrell's, but I am trying to establish the centrality of new creation in a much more exegetical and theologically trenchant manner. My thesis is that the major theological ideas of the New Testament flow out of the storyline that Christ's life, and especially death and resurrection through the Spirit launched the end-time new creation reign, propelling worldwide mission and resulting in blessing and judgment for God's glory.

Every significant theological idea in the New Testament gains its fullest meaning within the framework of this overriding storyline and are but facets of it. We can think of Christ's life, and particularly death and resurrection as a diamond which represents the new creation reign. The various theological ideas are the facets of the diamond, which are inseparable from the diamond itself.

This idea of new creational kingdom is clearest in Paul and the Apocalypse, but apparent, I believe, also elsewhere in the New Testament. It must also be acknowledged that the actual terminology "new creation" does not occur much even in Paul, but, as we have said above, the notion of resurrection is central in Paul, it is the climactic goal of the four gospels, and resurrection is essentially a piece of new creation; indeed, resurrection is the new creation of humanity.

Though the phrase "new creation" does not appear often,¹⁷ we must be careful of deducing that the idea is not pervasive. We should beware of always assuming that for an idea to be prevalent the technical term usually associated with the idea must be used numerously.

¹⁷ In fact, the actual phrase *καινή κτίσις* occurs only twice (2 Cor 5:17 and Gal 6:15), though paraphrastic variants of the phrase occur six times ("creation itself will be set free" in Rom 8:20, "new heavens and a new earth" in 2 Pet 3:13, "beginning of the creation of God" in Rev 3:14, "a new heaven and a new earth" in Rev 21:1, and "I am making all things new" in Rev 21:5), and the theme occurs explicitly (along with the word "create" and synonyms) in several other passages: Eph 2:10–17; Col 1:15–20; 3:10–11; Matt 19:28 has *παλιγγενεσία* ("regeneration, rebirth") which likely refers to the creation of a new cosmos (so D. C. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew* [SNTSMS 88; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996], 111–114), and Titus 3:5 employs the same word to refer to the believers' part in the regenerated cosmos, which is emphasized by the directly following phrase in 3:5, "renewing by the Holy Spirit," a likely reference to the Spirit's creation of people by giving them new life (which is made explicit in the "eternal life" of 3:7); cf. also Jas 1:18: "He brought us forth by the exercise of His will through the word of truth in order that we should be a certain firstfruit among His creatures."

Doubtless, some will conclude that to reduce the centre of the New Testament down to the hub of the new creation reign is to add to the already too many reductionistic New Testament theologies previously proposed, and that we must be content with a multiperspectival approach.¹⁸ It is important to recall that I am not contending that this is the “centre” of the New Testament but that it is the penultimate part of *the storyline* leading to mission, blessing, judgment and, finally, divine glory. I think, however, that the storyline that I am proposing is supported by the broad sweep of canonical thought, wherein the Bible begins with the original creation and kingdom which is corrupted, and the rest of the Old Testament is a redemptive-historical process working toward a restoration of fallen creation in a new creation where the triune God reigns. I believe partial validity of this approach is borne out in the simplicity of its narrative story-line that begins in Genesis 1–3 and ends climactically in Rev 21:1–22:5.

Now, I want to give some examples of how the lens of the new creational kingdom as the hub of the NT storyline enhances our understanding of various aspects of Christian theology, and how this eschatological enhancement of the various doctrines also gives insight into the practical application of these doctrines to our lives.

III. CHRISTIANS AS RESURRECTED NEW CREATIONS AND HOW THIS RELATES TO THE PROBLEM OF THE INDICATIVE TO THE IMPARATIVE

The way the inaugurated eschatological lens sheds significant light on the connection between the indicative and the imperative can be observed in three classic Pauline texts:

- A. Eph 4:20–24 (the indicative) in comparison to 4:25–32;
- B. Col 3:1–4 in comparison to 3:5–9a, followed again by the indicative of 3:9b–11;
- C. Rom. 6:1–11 in comparison to 6:12–14.

¹⁸ Of course, though I have mentioned some other New Testament theological approaches, the limits of the present study prohibit a serious attempt to survey and evaluate these and additional approaches, but it is a worthy task, and some have done it (e.g., G. Hasel, *New Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978], and Scobie more recently, but not as thoroughly).

Again and again in these passages, Paul first refers to the reality of the believers' identification with Christ's death and especially resurrection and then speaks of the behavior the believers should have, which can only be performed by having the power of the indicative of Christ's resurrection.

Consequently, for example, Paul's affirmation of the believers' possession of "eternal life" (Rom 6:22–23) is likely an "already and not yet" reality. Hence, saints are not merely like resurrected beings, but they actually have begun to experience the end-time resurrection that Christ experienced, since they are identified with him by faith. Though Paul can use the language of being in "the likeness of his resurrection" (supplying the ellipsis in Rom 6:5b), he does not mean this in some purely metaphorical way, as some scholars such as dispensationalists and as Tom Wright, among others, contend—strange theological bed-partners.¹⁹ That Paul intends to refer to literal resurrection is apparent from observing that he parallels it with being in "the likeness of his death" in Rom 6:5a, which refers to real identification with his death, such that "our old man was crucified with him" (v. 6) and that believers have really "died" (vv. 7–8). Paul does not refer to identification with Christ's death in a metaphorical manner. So, likewise believers are in the "likeness" of Christ's resurrection because they actually have begun to be identified with it and participate in it. Of course, they are not fully identified with Christ's resurrection, since he has experienced full physical resurrection life and those identified with him have experienced only inaugurated resurrection life on the spiritual level. Nevertheless, this inauguration is the beginning of true resurrection existence and is not metaphorical only because it is spiritual, as evident from John 5:25–29's use of Dan 12:2. If saints are only like Christ's resurrection, then Paul's exhortation to them to live as resurrected beings is emptied of its force: if Christians have begun to be end-time resurrected creatures, then they have resurrection power not to "let sin reign in [their mortal bodies] . . . but present [themselves] to God as those alive from the dead" (Rom 6:12–13).

The relation of the "indicative" to the "imperative" in Paul has been an issue of some debate. But if the above is a correct analysis of the saints' resurrection life, then the basis of Paul issuing commands to people is that such people have the ability to obey the commands because they been raised from the dead, regenerated, and are "new creatures," reigning with the risen Christ, who have the power to obey. In fact, Paul

¹⁹ E.g., most recently, see N. T. Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 347.

refers to this resurrection life with new creation language, “newness [*kainotēti*] of life” (Rom 6:4, or “new life”), a cognate of the word *kainos* found in 2 Cor 5:17 and Gal 6:15 in the well-known inaugurated eschatological expression “new creation,” where in both cases it refers to resurrection life.²⁰ Not coincidentally, one of the early references to “resurrection” in Romans directly connects resurrection and creation: “God, who makes alive the dead ones and calls into being that which does not exist” (4:17). This statement is not a mere gnomic saying about God’s attributes but likely connects resurrection to *new* creation (not merely the first creation), since Rom 4:17 prepares for the conclusion that such a God not only can bring life from Sarah’s dead womb (vv. 18–21), but also he can, and has, brought Jesus up from the dead (vv. 24–25).

Thus, Paul does not give commands to live righteously to those outside the community of faith. This is because they do not have this power of the inbreaking age of the new creation, but are still part of the old age (the “old man” [6:6]), in which they are dominated by sin, Satan, and the influence of the world (so Eph 2:1–3).

Not taking seriously enough the resurrection language applied to the Christian’s present experience to designate real eschatological resurrection existence, albeit on the spiritual level, has unintentionally eviscerated the ethical power of church teaching and preaching, since Christians need to know that they have resurrection power to please and obey God! This is why in Romans 6 and elsewhere Paul employs Christ’s latter-day resurrection to be the basis for the believer’s resurrection identity and for his exhortations that they rule over sin.

IV. THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF THE RESURRECTION –NEW CREATION FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING AND PREACHING: PRACTICAL/PASTORAL/RHETORICAL IMPLICATIONS

If the end-time new creation has truly begun, how should this affect the way Christians live? Recall that for the Christian, to be a new creation is to begin to experience spiritual resurrection from the dead, which will be consummated in physical resurrection at the very end of time. This stage of spiritual resurrection is the beginning fulfillment of

²⁰ On which see discussion below in this article. *Kainos* also appears in Eph. 2:15 and 4:24 with reference to the new creation (see below), and in 1 Cor 11:25 and 2 Cor 3:6 in the phrase “new covenant,” which also refers to the beginning of the new age, in allusion to Jer 31:31–34.

the Old Testament prophecy of the resurrection of God's people, whereby both the spirit and the body were to be resurrected. Therefore, while being only a spiritual resurrection, it is not a metaphorical or figurative resurrection but a literal beginning resurrection from the dead.

We have seen, for example, that throughout his epistles Paul views true believers as those who have begun to experience true eschatological resurrection existence. By the way, this is not a mere new creation existence but in the above three passages this is identity with Christ's resurrected *reign!* Paul's affirmation of this is absolutely critical, since the many commands and exhortations that he gives assume that true saints can obey them because they have the resurrection power to do so. This is why Paul and other writers emphasize the readers' participation in eschatological realities in the midst of exhorting them to obedience to God. Those who merely profess to be saints, but are not truly regenerate, have no persevering desire to do God's will because they do not have the power of the new creation to obey. Genuine eschatological saints have both the desire and the ability to obey and please God. We have given a number of examples illustrating how having the power to do something gives one the desire to do it.

This notion is important for all Christians to know, but those who teach and preach in the church should especially have an awareness of the inaugurated end-time new creation. Such awareness should color all that they exposit from God's word. It is especially important that pastors make clear to their congregations the eschatological resurrection power that they possess, because awareness of this power enables believers to realize that they have the ability to carry out God's commands. On this basis, God's "commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). And, as we have seen, it is God's life-giving Spirit that empowers his people to carry out his commands, which would otherwise be too burdensome to obey.

Such an "already and not yet" end-time framework for knowing who we are and what God consequently expects from us cannot be communicated effectively in just a few sermons or Sunday school lessons, but must be part of the warp and woof of a pastor's teaching and preaching over the years. Only then can such a notion be absorbed effectively by God's grace. One should be aware of passages that are not normally understood as eschatological. When one becomes more aware of this possibility, it can affect the preacher's interpretation of the text and the congregation's desire to carry out the commands of Scripture that are preached upon. For example, take the following texts:

For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and delivered himself up for me (Gal 2:19–20).

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit (Gal 5:24–25).

The “living” mentioned in these texts is not mere Christian living in this world but resurrection living, which gives believers the desire and the power to do what God commands them to do. Many think “inaugurated eschatology” is some ivory tower theoretical academic notion, but it is a crucial biblical idea, which has immense practical, pastoral and homiletical implications.

Consequently, the New Testament’s interpretation of the Old has been “written for our instruction” because “upon us the ends of the ages have come,” giving us the ability “to stand and endure and not fall into sin” (1 Cor 10:11–12).²¹

A book on practical theology and preaching could be written on this topic, but we must leave that task to others. C. S. Lewis pictures this theological reality putting off the “old Adamic man” and “putting on new Adamic man” in his *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*.²² The character, Eustace, was a very spoiled boy, who had become so enamored with a dragon’s treasure that he became the dragon itself. Lewis’ point is that Eustace’s transformation into a dragon represented his dragon-like heart. In a subsequent scene, Lewis depicts Aslan, the messianic lion, leading Eustace the dragon up to a mountain, at the top of which was a garden (echoing the Garden of Eden) and a big pool of water, which had marble steps leading down into it (reflecting a baptismal scene). Aslan tells Eustace to undress himself by shedding his dragon skin and go into the water. Eustace realizes that he has no clothes, except for his dragon skin. So, he begins to scratch off a layer like a snake casts off its old skin. But, after doing so, he still looks like a dragon, with dragon skin. So he scratches off the next layer, but he still appears as a dragon, so he scratches off yet a third layer of scales, but he cannot change the fact that he is still a dragon. No matter how hard he tries, Eustace has no ability to

²¹ This is a highly interpretative paraphrase of 1 Cor 10:11–13.

²² C. S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 88–92.

change his dragon-like nature. Finally, Aslan tells Eustace to lay down and he will remove his dragon skin once for all:

The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt . . . Well, he peeled the beastly stuff right off – just as I thought I'd done . . . and there it was lying on the grass: only ever so much thicker, and darker, and more knobbly looking than the others had been . . . and [he] threw me into the water . . . After that . . . I'd turned into a boy again. After a bit the lion took me out and dressed me

Afterward, Eustace rejoins his friends, and he apologizes for his bad, spoiled behavior: "I'm afraid I've been pretty beastly." With regard to Eustace's subsequent behavior, Lewis concludes:

It would be nice, fairly nearly true, to say that "from that time forth Eustace was a different boy." To be strictly accurate, he began to be a different boy. He had relapses. There were still many days when he could be very tiresome. But most of those I shall not notice. The cure had begun.

Lewis' description is clearly his attempt to represent the biblical portrayal of the reality that people, on the basis of their own innate ability, cannot do anything to take out their old, fallen sinful heart and create a new heart for themselves. Only God can bring people back to Eden and create them anew in the last Adam, and when he does, the bent of one's desires and behavior begins to change and to reflect the image of the God who has recreated them into a new creation. Immediate perfection does not come about, but a progressive growth in doing those things that please God occurs. That is, people who have been made into a new creation continue to develop as a new creation until at the end of the age that development reaches full maturity in the final resurrection of the body and the spirit.

Consequently, while there are "ups and downs" in the Christian life, Christians can be confident that they will progressively conquer the remaining sin in their lives, though in this age that victory will never be complete. Believers as "already and not yet" new creations may be compared to an incomplete puzzle. We have all had the experience of trying to put a puzzle together and reached a stage whereby we have put

together much of the central part of the puzzle and some of the outer parts. Nevertheless, there were still some significant pieces that we have not yet been able to put into their place to complete the full picture. God has constructed believers into new creations at the core of their inner, unseen beings, but that core is not perfected nor are their bodies until the final resurrection, when all the parts of the believer will be pieced together by God in Christ (cf. Phil 1:6).

It is this theological and anthropological outlook about the new man that Paul and other New Testament writers use as the rhetorical basis to exhort and encourage believers on to godliness. Again and again, the indicative new creation (or resurrected status in Christ) is given as the foundation for believers being able to perform God's commands. The point is that "because you Christians have the power to obey and please God, you should be motivated and desire to do so when God's commands are issued to you." Sometimes this basis for obedience is supplemented with the additional basis that since God has planned that his newly created eschatological people will be faithful, they should have even more motivation to please him, since he will give them the ability to fulfill his plan: e.g., Eph 2:10, "For we are his creation, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."²³ At other times this basis is seen as God actually active "to will and to work" in a Christian to bring about that Christian's obedience:

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; because it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *his* good pleasure (Phil 2:12–13).

Here Paul tells his readers to continue to "obey" in "working out their salvation" in v. 12, and then in v. 13 he explains that the ground for how they are able to do this is God "willing and working" in them (which is likely a development of Phil 1:6 and 1:29). Here the order is reversed: the commands come first, then the basis for doing the commands is given.

²³So likewise 1 Thess 3:12–13 in relation to 4:1; 5:15 in relation to 5:23–24, where a series of commands comes first, then the basis for fulfilling them; 2 Thess 2:13–14 in relation to 2:15; 2:16–17 in relation to 3:1–2; 3:3 in relation to 3:4.

Some might respond and say, “Since I have the power, I don’t need to be motivated to obey, since God’s power will work through me regardless of whether or not I am motivated to obey; I can just sit back and do nothing, and God will nevertheless work through me.” On the contrary, those who are not motivated to obey God’s commands are those who have no power to do so but are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1), are captive to the powers of evil (Eph 2:2), and “by [their fallen] nature” do sin (Eph 2:3).

Instead, true saints should be psychologically motivated to fulfill God’s precepts because they know that God has given them the power to do so. Commands by themselves do not imply that people have the strength innately within themselves to obey (as Pelagius and later Erasmus contended), but they only set a standard of what is expected. Rather, the reason Paul so often mixes the commands with the believer’s standing in Christ is to show that the basis for fulfilling the commands is in Christ’s and God’s power, which provides the motivation to obey (on which see Martin Luther’s responses to Erasmus²⁴).

This kind of motivation is comparable to my neighbor’s desire to remove snow from his driveway. He has a fine snow-blower in his garage and after it snows a few inches, he hops right out of his house and starts up his snow-blower and gets his driveway cleaned off quickly. On the other hand, I do not own a snow-blower but have only a rusty snow shovel. When it snows a few inches, I have no desire to go out and shovel the snow. After it keeps on snowing and I still don’t go out to clear it off, my wife gives me a polite implied command by way of questioning, “When are you going to shovel the driveway?” But I have no desire to respond positively to her command. I continue to let the snow build up until after the snow has finished falling, and then I go out rather reluctantly to shovel. I don’t have the motivation to clear off the snow because I don’t have the power to do it effectively. On the other hand, my neighbor has all the desire in the world because he has the power to remove the snow effectively. When one has the power to do something, the motivation for doing it follows.

I often fly on a jet to get to various destinations. However, I would have no desire to get to those destinations if I had to walk or ride a bicycle because it would take a ridiculous amount of time and effort to do so. But because I can board a jet and fly to my destinations, I have motivation to travel. When you have the power to do something, this then wells up into a desire to do it.

²⁴Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (trans. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston; Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1957).

It is the same with the commands of Scripture, which are addressed to the believer. The authentic Christian, who is a true new creation, has the moral power to please God and is therefore typically motivated to fulfill God's commands when those commands are heard. Christians should want to please God because he is their Father who has created them as adopted sons. All of this is why Paul and other writers repeatedly assert their readers' participation in eschatological realities in the midst of exhorting them to be obedient to God.

The concluding thesis of my address this morning is that only people who are part of the new creation and kingdom have the ability to obey the commands. It was in the light of such texts we are about to study that St. Augustine formulated his famous prayer, "Grant what Thou dost command and command what Thou wilt" (*Confessions*, Book 10, chap. 29).

The Inaugurated End-Time Tribulation and Its Bearing on the Church Office of Elder and on Christian Living in General

Sizemore Lecture II, Midwestern Baptist
Theological Seminary, November 3, 2010

G. K. BEALE
Professor of New Testament
Westminster Theological Seminary
Philadelphia, PA

I. INTRODUCTION

The lecture yesterday and today represent a rehash and minor revision of parts from a couple of chapters in a forthcoming book to appear next fall through Baker Book House. The book is titled *A New Testament Biblical Theology* and subtitled *Transformation of the Old Testament in the New*. The thrust of the book is to show that eschatology was not a mere doctrine of futurology for Jesus and his followers but was a present reality, which shaped their thinking about every facet of the Christian faith.

There is debate in the Pastoral Epistles about how normative certain things are for the church. Some commentators think that the office of “elder” is due to time-bound circumstantial factors, so that this office is not normative for all churches in all times and places throughout the church age. I will contend that the origin of the creation of the office of elder is likely related, at least in part, to the inaugurated latter-day tribulation. We discussed only very briefly at the beginning of yesterday’s lecture how the expected eschatological tribulation prophesied in the Old Testament had begun in the early church but was not consummated. It is important to go into some depth on that topic here in order to see how it could form a background against which the church position of elder can be seen as arising. Therefore, I ask for the reader’s patience in elaborating on this topic for the majority of this essay. Afterward I will discuss how this inaugurated end-time tribulation relates to the office of elder and how it may help shed light on the debate about whether or not this office is one limited to Paul’s churches in the first

century and possibly to certain churches thereafter that suffer the precise problems found in the Pastoral Epistles but is not mandated for all churches in all times and places during the inter-advent age. In addition, at the end of the essay, there will be reflection on how the inaugurated latter-day tribulation affects Christian living in general. This last section looks at a motivation for godly, alert Christian living from another angle than the one looked at in yesterday's lecture (on the relation of the indicative to the imperative).

II. THE INAUGURATION OF ESCHATOLOGICAL TRIBULATION IN THE NEW COVENANT COMMUNITY

The Old Testament predicted that a final tribulation would precede the dawning of the new cosmos. For example, Dan 12:1–2 ff. prophesies a time of great distress before the climactic resurrection of the righteous and wicked. We have noted earlier that Daniel refers to the coming trial as one in which there will be deception within the covenant community and persecution of non-compromisers. In addition, other Old Testament and New Testament texts affirm that the final tribulation will be one in which there will be a breakdown of various parts of the natural order of the cosmos, which will be culminated by complete destruction of the heavens and earth.¹ Against this background, one can see how the final tribulation is but an inextricable prelude to the eventual destruction and recreation of the cosmos. Actual phenomena of cosmic dissolution are not the typical characteristic of the inaugurated phase of the tribulation, rather false teaching and deception are among the predominant expressions of this initial stage. Nevertheless, we have seen above that literal physical phenomena of cosmic breakup were expressed at Christ's death: "darkness fell upon all the land" (Matt 27:45) and "the earth shook; and the rocks were split, and the tombs were opened" (Matt 27:51–52a). Such literal expressions of initial destruction will again occur at the very end of history when the body of Christ, the Church throughout the world, will experience climactic, universal persecution like Christ before them (cf. Rev 11:3–13; 20:7–10). The apparent Old Testament prophetic perspective about the coming tribulation was that (1) deception and persecution were seen to occur at the same general

¹For New Testament examples, cf. Mk. 13:8 and Lk. 21:11, 23–26 ("earthquakes" and "famines," which are "the beginning of birth pangs"), which are inaugurated before the very end of the age. For some Old Testament and especially scattered early Jewish texts which depict similar convulsions of nature, cf. Allison, *End of the Ages*, 5–25.

period as (2) the convulsions of nature. The New Testament, however, understands these to occur in stages in which the first feature predominates throughout the age but then the two converge at the very end.

Throughout the Synoptics, Paul, 1 Peter, and Revelation, false teaching, deception, and Christian “suffering” as a result of “persecution”² is an essential feature of the inaugurated end-time tribulation. When saints refuse to compromise with false teaching, they often must face persecution (cf. Dan 11:30–35; Rev 2:8–17). Every manner of suffering is part of the scheme of the overlap of a fallen world which is passing away in the midst of an inaugurated new world.³ It is important to note that even the saints’ persecution must be seen against the background of their resistance to compromising with false teaching, whether within or outside the covenant community (e.g., the latter, for example, when Roman authorities would threaten Christians with death lest they compromise and worship idols, especially the Emperor).

*Specific Evidence of the Inaugurated End-Time Tribulation in the
New Testament*

The Son of Man in the Synoptics

Identification of the “Son of Man” in Daniel 7

When I lecture on Daniel 7, I first ask my students to read very carefully and silently in class verses 15–28 of Daniel 7. Before they read, however, I summarize for them verses 1–14: Daniel has a vision of four beasts arising from a wind-blown sea, one after another. The vision

² Accordingly, in the Synoptics, suffering is related to following the Son of Man, whose own suffering is rooted in the prophecy of Daniel 7 (and 8, 11–12), where the Son of Man, representing true Israel, must be confronted with the deception and suffer hardship for not compromising (among the closest equivalents in the Synoptics, cf. Matt 8:18–22; Mark 8:31; 14:21, 53–65); Paul also links the church’s sufferings as the “body” of Christ with her identification with “Christ’s afflictions” (Col 1:24), as does Hebrews (cf. 9:26 with 12:1–7), James (cf. 1:2–4 with 5:1–11), 1 Peter (cf. 1:5–6 and 1:20 with 2:19–23 and 3:14–5:10), and Revelation (e.g., cf. 1:5–6 with 1:9 and 5:6 with 6:9).

³ Cf. Rom 8:18–23 with 8:35–39, where in the former text suffering of believers, and of all creation, is viewed as a result of being part of a new creation emerging from the old corrupted creation, which is portrayed by the image of suffering birth pangs.

continues with a description of “the Ancient of Days” on his throne (vv. 9–10), then the last beast undergoing judgment (vv. 11–12) and, finally, the “son of man” approaching the Ancient of Days’ throne and receiving eternal rule over all the earth (vv. 13–14). I then explain to my students that verses 15–28 are the formal interpretation of the vision. Then I say something quite apparently unprofound. I tell them that visionary literature typically has a pattern of vision followed by interpretation, and that the interpretative section interprets the vision; accordingly, I declare to them that the interpretative section of Dan 7:15–28 simply interprets the preceding vision. The students sometimes look at me as if I thought I were teaching first-grade students. Then I tell them to start reading the interpretative section and to tell me how it interprets the “son of man” figure of the vision, since such a key figure in the last part of the vision would certainly be identified in the interpretative section.

After they have finished reading, I ask them to tell me whom the interpretative part of Daniel 7 identifies as the “son of man.” It is clear that many students have experienced hermeneutical and theological anxiety because they have discovered that the interpretation does not apparently identify the “son of man” as an individual messianic figure. In fact, the expression “son of man” does not even occur in the interpretative section. The anxiety of the students is intense because the students, of course, know that Jesus himself repeatedly identifies himself as the “son of man” in all four gospels. After a few minutes of reflection some of the students offer an answer about the identification: some timidly and tentatively propose that the “son of man” is identified as the “saints of the Highest One,” i.e., faithful Israel. Their reasoning is that the “son of man” receiving an “eternal kingdom,” found in the vision of 7:13–14, is not mentioned in vv. 15–28 but only the “saints” of Israel “receiving the kingdom forever” is found repeatedly:

But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come (Dan 7:18).

Until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom (Dan 7:22).

Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of *all* the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; his kingdom *will be* an everlasting

kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey him (Dan 7:27).

I then say, “yes, you are right. The ‘son of man’ is the saints of Israel.” Of course, the question then arises, “What do we make of Jesus’ claim in the gospels that he is ‘the son of man’?” My answer is that, while the interpretative section does identify the “son of man” with the saints of Israel, there are indications both in the vision itself and in the following explanation that the “son of man” is also an individual messianic-like figure. First, the fact that the figure “comes with the clouds of heaven” is a curious portrayal, since elsewhere it is only God who flies on the clouds⁴ (indeed, the rabbis sometimes called God the “cloud rider”). This means that the son of man is portrayed as a divine being as he approaches the Ancient of Days’ throne. One major version of the Greek Old Testament (the Old Greek) interprets this in the following manner: “upon the clouds of heaven one like a son of man came and as the Ancient of Days he came” (whereas the Aramaic and Theodotonic Greek Old Testament have “he [the son of man] came *up to* the Ancient of Days”). Thus, the earliest extant interpretation of Dan 7:13 depicts the “son of man” as deity like the Ancient of Days!⁵

There is also a part of the interpretation that suggests how both an individual messianic king and the Israelite saints could be the “son of man.” Verses 17 and 23 refer to the four beasts both as “kings” and “kingdoms,” thus apparently distinguishing between individual kings and the kingdoms over which they rule and which they represent, though there is also some kind of identification of these kings together with their kingdoms. Some Old Testament theologians have referred to this kind of relationship as “the one and the many” or “corporate representation,” whereby a king, priest or father represents respectively a kingdom, a nation or a father his family. Even though the king, priest or father is, of course, technically distinct from the kingdom, nation or family, they nevertheless are corporately identified and represent the kingdom, nation or family. Such representation means that what is true of the representative is true of the represented. In the case of Daniel 7, the interpretative section refers to the “son of man” as the faithful nation Israel, presumably because he as the individual king of Israel representatively sums up the people in himself. Consequently, certain of

⁴E.g., see 2 Sam 22:10–12; Job 22:14; Ps. 97:2–5; 104:3; Jer 4:13; Nah 1:3.

⁵Other early interpretations of Dan 7:13 in Judaism will be addressed in the chapter on “Christology” of the forthcoming volume mentioned in the opening of this lecture.

his actions become representative of them and vice versa. Their general identity is also the same. Both can be conceived of as Israel (just as when David was battling Goliath, one could refer to the battle as Israel vs. the Philistines, since both nations were represented in the battle by these two individuals).

There is one last possible hint about an individual “son of man” in the latter part of v. 27: “Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of *all* the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; his kingdom *will be* an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey him.” A few commentators identify “his kingdom” and “him” at the conclusion of the verse to be an individual “son of man” from vv. 13–14. But, first of all, this presupposes that the figure of vv. 13–14 is only an individual. While this is possible, especially in the light of the above-discussed indications of such an individual in Daniel 7, the last part of v. 27 is, at least, ambiguous. The more likely identification is either that “his” and “him” refers to the directly preceding antecedent “the Highest One” or, plausibly, the singular pronoun is a corporate reference to the closely preceding “saints” of v. 27a (as the ESV, e.g., takes it). Thus, the “kingdom” at the end of v. 27 either refers to the kingdom of “the Highest One” or of “the saints.”

The “Son of Man,” the “Saints,” and the Tribulation in Daniel 7

Having identified the “son of man” as focused primarily on the saints and secondarily on an individual king, we are now ready to address the issue of the tribulation depicted in Daniel 7. We saw above that three times Daniel prophesies that the saints would receive a kingdom (vv. 18, 22, 27). Verse 21 says that Israel would suffer severe trial from the end-time opponent directly before possessing the kingdom (v. 22):

I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them (Dan. 7:21).

Until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom (Dan. 7:22).

Verses 23–27 affirm the same thing, as v. 25 highlights: “he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they

will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.”⁶ Likewise, vv. 17–18 imply the same pattern of the saints’ oppression followed by their reception of the kingdom. Now, if we remember that the saints of Israel are the primary interpretative identification that vv. 15–28 give of the “son of man” in vv. 13–14, then vv. 15–28 are portraying that Israel as the “son of man” must go through the end-time trial before receiving the kingdom. Furthermore, if we have been correct in saying that Daniel 7 also, though subtly, identifies the “son of man” to be an individual end-time king who represents Israel, then it would appear likely that he also must go through the final distress imposed by the eschatological enemy before he receives the kingdom.⁷

The “Son of Man’s” Trial and Kingdom in the Gospels

A fuller study of the “son of man” in the gospels, as well as in early Judaism must await the publication of my forthcoming *NT Biblical Theology*. There I discuss, though still in briefer form, those references in the gospels that refer to the “son of man’s” suffering or apparently ignoble life. There are two types of these sayings: those that pertain to Jesus’ (1) pre-crucifixion ministry and (2) death on the cross. A number of these sayings contain allusions to Daniel 7 in combination with reference to the “son of man,” which shows that Jesus has in mind the Daniel 7 “son of man.” These sayings show that Jesus begins to fulfill the end-time prophecy of the “son of man” who would suffer eschatological tribulation. Since I do not have time to cover this, I refer the reader, not only to my forthcoming book, but also to the following scholars who have shown that Jesus himself first began to fulfill the end-time prophecies of Israel’s prophesied tribulation: Dale C. Allison, *The End of the Ages Has Come* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985, e.g., pp. 128–141; and Brant Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005).

⁶Recall that several LXX mss. and versions, as well as fathers, replace “wear down” (= *katatribō* [LXX] / *palaioō* [Theod.] = Aram. *y^eballē*) with *planaō* (“deceive”), so that the end-time opponent is portrayed as “deceiving” the saints here. See the textual apparatus of *Septuaginta XVI/2: Susanna, Daniel, Bel et Draco* (ed. J. Ziegler; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999).

⁷I first came across this interpretation of the son of man in relation to the saints’ ordeal in R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1982), 128–130, though at the time of writing France himself did not hold the view.

For example, Jesus' eschatological tribulation that he began to experience during his ministry was consummated for him by his death on the cross. And this is what the second set of suffering "son of man" passages focus upon:

For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matt 12:40).

As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead" (Matt 17:9 = Mark 9:9).

But I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands (Matt 17:12; cf. Mark 9:12–13).

And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men" (Matt 17:22).

Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death... (Matt 20:18).

Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt 20:28).

You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is *to be* handed over for crucifixion (Matt 26:2).

The Son of Man *is to go*, just as it is written of him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born (Matt 26:24 = Mark 14:21; Luke 22:22).

Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners (Matt 26:45 = Mark 14:41).

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again (Mark 8:31).

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day” (Luke 9:22).

Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men (Luke 9:44).

But Jesus said to him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” (Luke 22:48).

“The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again” (Luke 22:48).⁸

2 Thessalonians 2 and the Great Tribulation⁹

Apparently in Thessalonica, as elsewhere, false teachers were claiming that Jesus’ future advent had already happened in some spiritual manner: either by his coming in the person of his Spirit (perhaps at Pentecost) or in conjunction with the final (spiritual!) resurrection of the saints. In response, Paul exhorts the church not to be disturbed by such false teaching (so 2 Thess 2:1–2). Paul summarizes in verse 3 what he has just said in verses 1–2: “Let no one in any way deceive you” (v. 3a). The first reason why they should not be deceived is that Christ will not come back finally until there has “first” come a “falling-away” (*apostasia*) from the faith, primarily within the worldwide community of the church, though the unbelieving world will, no doubt, also be affected

⁸Also included in this list of references could be reference to the “son of man” being “lifted up,” which is likely a double entendre, alluding to lifting up on the cross followed by the lifting up of resurrection and ascension (John 3:14; 12:32, 34).

⁹For fuller discussion of the following section, see G. K. Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians* (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 199–221.

(v. 3c). In addition to the sign of “apostasy,” a second reason why the readers should not be misled in believing that Christ has already come is because the eschatological appearance of the Antichrist must also precede the Messiah’s last advent: “the man of lawlessness” must be “revealed” first (v. 3c). Therefore, Christ cannot have come back yet, since these two signs have not yet come about in their full form.

In verse 4, Paul develops the prophecy about the Antichrist from Daniel 11.¹⁰

Dan 11:31, 36	2 Thess 2:3–4
<p>“forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation” (v. 31; so also see Dan 9:27; 12:11).</p> <p>“he will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods . . .” (v. 36).</p>	<p>“the man of lawlessness . . . who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he sits in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.”¹¹ (my translation)</p>

In addition, the expression “man of lawlessness” (*anthrōpos tēs anomias*) echoes Dan 12:10–11 (Theod.), which is strikingly similar to Dan 11:29–34, and refers to the end-time trial as a period when “the lawless ones [*anomoī*] will do lawlessness, [*anomeō*] and all the lawless ones [*anomoī*] will not understand” (i.e., they will mislead or be misled, or both). This doing of lawlessness in Daniel is directly linked to, if not partly explained by, “the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and

¹⁰Among those who discern some degree of Danielic influence in verse 4, see O. Betz, “Der Katechon,” *NTS* 9 (1963), 282–284; F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians* (WBC 45; Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 168; I. H. Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 190–191; C. A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 246–247; Lars Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted: The Formation of Some Jewish Apocalyptic Texts and of the Eschatological Discourse Mark 13 Par.* (CBNTS 1; Lund: Gleerup 1966.), 198–205.

¹¹See J. E. Frame, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians* (ICC 36; New York, NY: Scribner, 1912), 255, for verbal parallels.

the abomination of desolation is set up” (Dan 12:11; cf. 11:31) by the end-time enemy *in the temple*.¹²

As we have already seen, according to the prophecy of Dan 11:30–45, a final enemy of God will attack the covenant community. In addition to persecution, the attack will be in the form of deception: the end-time opponent will execute a subtle attack of deception by influencing with “smooth words” some within the community “who forsake the holy covenant” (v. 30) and “who act wickedly toward the covenant” (v. 32), all of which stands behind Paul’s reference to “the apostasy” in verse 3.¹³ The fiendish adversary will influence these people to become “godless” themselves (v. 32), to compromise, and to foster deception and further compromise among others. Daniel says that “many will join with them [the faithful] in hypocrisy,” claiming to be faithful but in fact are not (v. 34). This end-time antagonist will appear openly before the community, “exalt and magnify himself above every god” (v. 36), and then meet his final end under God’s judicial hand (v. 45). Hence, Paul is developing the Daniel 11–12 prophecy in verses 3–4 and following.¹⁴

Paul has said in vv. 3–4 that the readers should not be led astray in thinking that Christ’s coming has already happened because the two signs of the final apostasy in the Church and the final appearance of Antichrist have not yet occurred.¹⁵ He states emphatically in verse 5 that a third reason they should not be deceived about this is because what Paul has just told them is not new information. Already Paul had

¹²So also Dan 7:25 speaks of Israel’s persecutor as opposing God’s “law” (so W. Hendriksen, *Exposition of I and II Thessalonians* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979], 176).

¹³G. Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1930; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979), 111.

¹⁴This is not the place to attempt to answer the question about whether or not the satanic figure “takes his seat” in a literal temple of God or whether or not his deceiving and desecrating activities occur within a physical temple that will be rebuilt at some future point from the time of Paul. This topic will be addressed in a chapter of my forthcoming volume on the subject, dealing with the temple in the New Testament, where the conclusion will be reached that the church community of Paul’s time and at the end of history composes the true temple of God.

¹⁵There is a theological problem of relating 2 Thess 2:1–4 to 1 Thess. 5:1 ff., the former affirming that there are signs presaging Christ’s coming and the latter saying there are no signs but that Christ’s coming will occur unexpectedly for all. Though the scope of the present discussion does not allow further elaboration, see Beale, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 143–157, 199–211, for possible resolution of the problem.

repeatedly told them about the coming apostasy and Antichrist: “Do you not remember that when I was still with you I was telling you these things?” Verses 3–4 were a reminder of what they already knew. The implication of the reminder is that Paul has perceived that the readers were becoming vulnerable to false teaching because they were in process of forgetting the truth he had already taught them.

Though Paul has underscored that the final manifestation of the Antichrist is yet future, in verses 6–7 he warns them that they cannot relax and let down their guard against his deceptive powers in the present. In fact, Paul makes the radical statement that they are not any safer from deception now than when Antichrist will actually come! Consequently, saints must not suppose that because the Antichrist has not yet come in physical form that he cannot mislead them now.

We saw in vv. 3–4 that Dan 11:30–45 prophesied that a final foe of God would attack the covenant community in the latter days. The attack was to take three forms: persecution, desecration of the temple, and deception through the subversion of divine truth. Paul first says in verse 6 that this antagonist has not yet come in full consummate form because something “is restraining him now, so that in his time he may be revealed.” The purpose of the restraining force is to hold back the manifestation of the lawless one until it is the right time for his appearance. This also they should know because it is part of the instruction he had given them during previous visits (so v. 5). There are, at least, seven different identifications of the “restrainer,”¹⁶ though it is likely a good and not an evil force.¹⁷

Though Paul says the prophesied “man of lawlessness” has not yet come in full incarnate form, he nevertheless claims there is a sense in which he has come: “the mystery [*mysterion*] of lawlessness is already at work” (v. 7). What does Paul mean by this? As with the majority of New Testament uses of “mystery” (*mysterion*), this one also is placed in close connection with an Old Testament reference, this time to Daniel 11 in 2 Thessalonians 2:4. The word elsewhere, when so linked to Old Testament allusions, is used to indicate that prophecy is beginning

¹⁶See the excellent summary and evaluation of Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 196–200.

¹⁷See Beale, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 213–221, for the view that the “restrainer” is the angel Michael.

fulfillment but in an unexpected manner in comparison to the way Old Testament readers might have expected these prophecies to be fulfilled.¹⁸

The reason Paul uses the word “mystery” in verse 7 is that he understands the Antichrist prophecy from Daniel as beginning to be fulfilled in the Thessalonian church in an enigmatic manner not clearly foreseen by Daniel. In fact, the word “mystery” (*mysterion*) occurs with an eschatological meaning only in Daniel 2 (see 2:18–19, 27–30, 47), which points here to further allusion to Daniel, in addition to Dan 11:31, 36 noted above. Daniel says that the final Antichrist would appear in full force and openly to all eyes (“to exalt and magnify himself”), when he would attempt to deceive and persecute. Paul sees that, though this fiend has not yet come so visibly as he will at the final end of history, he is *nevertheless* “already at work” in the covenant community through his deceivers, the false teachers. We would expect from Daniel’s prophecy that when this fiend’s deceivers are visibly on the scene, he would be visibly present as well. The revealed “mystery” in the church at Thessalonica is that the prophecy of Daniel 11 is starting to be fulfilled unexpectedly, since the devilish foe has not come in bodily form, but he is already inspiring his “lawless” works of deception by his spirit through false teachers (on which see also 1 John 4:1–3)!

Paul is saying that even now the false teachers that have been prophesied by Daniel and Jesus (cf. Matt 24:4–5, 23–24, etc.) are with his readers. This means that the end-time “Great Tribulation” prophesied by Daniel 11 has begun in part! The prophecy of the “apostasy” and coming of “the man of lawlessness” (into the temple, as we will argue later)¹⁹ of the new covenant Church has started fulfillment!

Indeed, the sign of Jesus’ death together with what 1 John 2:18 and 2 Thess 2:6–7 have said makes it clear that the Great Tribulation, when Antichrist would come, has already begun to take place. The prophesied Antichrist has already begun to enter the covenant community and to defile it. Daniel predicted that there would be three telltale marks of the Great Tribulation: persecution, desecration of the temple, and deception through false teachers within the temple and in the covenant community. It is clear that persecution and deception in the ecclesiological community started in the first century and has continued ever since. The

¹⁸So see Beale, *John’s Use of the Old Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 215–272, where a survey and discussion of all the uses of *mysterion* in the New Testament occurs.

¹⁹For full argument of this point, see G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, (NSBT 17; Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 269–292.

desecration of the covenant community is the entry of the unclean and deceptive spirit of the Antichrist into the sacred community of faith, which attempts to alter God's laws. Therefore, the end-time tribulation has been going on throughout the age of the Church (for persecutions in Thessalonica see Acts 17:5–8; 1 Thess 1:6; 2:14; 3:3–4).

To be sure, this tribulation has not yet reached its climax. There will be an escalation of the present tribulation when *the* incarnate Antichrist appears at the end of history (Apoc. Elijah 4:20–23 says that the “son of lawlessness” will severely persecute the saints during this time of trial²⁰). At that time, persecution and deception, which have formerly affected only part of the Church throughout history, will be present throughout the worldwide Church, at which point Christ will return a final time (see Rev 11:1–13; 20:1–10).

1 John and the Great Tribulation

Earlier we saw that the use of “hour” in the Old Greek version of Daniel 8–12 was a translation of “end-time” language from the Hebrew. We concluded that this repeated reference to the end-time “hour” of trial and deception inspired by the end-time adversary²¹ stands behind 1 John 2:18: “Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour.” Thus, though the Antichrist has not yet come in his incarnate form at the very end of the age, his “spirit” is here inspiring his false teachers. Consequently, the prophecy of the Antichrist has begun fulfillment in that his “spirit” has begun to come and inspire his false teachers to do their deceiving work. The prophecy has begun literally also in the sense that the prophesied deceptive teachers are working in the covenant community, as they were literally prophesied so to do by Daniel.

This means that the eschatological tribulation began in the first century church and is not something that will happen only at some climactic point in the future.

This sheds light on a significant passage later in the epistle. 1 John 3:4 says, “Every one who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.” Some systematic theologians adduce this passage as a

²⁰See also Apoc. Elijah 1:10; see as well 2:41, which reaffirms the idea of 2 Thess 2:3–4: “the lawless one will appear in the holy places” (so also 3:5; 4:1–2).

²¹Sometimes even the reference “hour of the end” (*hōran synteleias*) is used (Dan 11:40).

nice summary of what “sin” is—it is transgressing God’s law. While this is true, the background of this passage enriches our understanding of it, especially in relation to the beginning of the antichrist prophecies by Jesus and Daniel. It should be observed that Dan 11:32 and 12:10 (Old Greek) equate eschatological “sin” (the *hamartia* word group) with eschatological “lawlessness” (the *anomia* word group) and that 1 John 3:4 likely reflects this equation. Thus, there is more to John’s use of “lawlessness” (*anomia*) than merely it being a definition of “sin.” Rather, “sin” is being identified as “the iniquity” which is the prophesied and expected state of hostility in the latter days. In addition to the highly charged notion of the already and not yet coming of the Antichrist in 2:18 and 2:22, 2:28 and 3:2–3 continue to focus on latter day themes, particularly the yet future final coming of Christ. Therefore, the equation of “sin” and “lawlessness” in 3:4 continues to ring with end-time associations.

In this regard, Matt 24:11–12 speaks of the latter days as a time when “lawlessness” (*anomia*) will be multiplied: “love will grow cold”²² (Matt 7:22–23 and 13:41 may also speak of the same thing). Jewish tradition speaks of the latter days as “the time of the iniquity of Israel” in which there will be a struggle between the angel of peace and Satan (Test. Dan. 6). So, more clearly, Didache 16:3–4:

For in the last days the false prophets and corrupters will abound, and the sheep will be turned into wolves, and love will be turned into hate. For as lawlessness [*anomia*] increases, they will hate and persecute and betray one another. And then the deceiver of the world will appear as a son of God and “will perform signs and wonders,” and the earth will be delivered into his hands, and he will commit abominations the likes of which have never happened before.

The Epistle of Barnabas 4:1–6a associates the works of “lawlessness” (*anomia*) with the “deception of the present age” as constituting the fourth kingdom foretold by Daniel:

²²See Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted*, who argues that Mark 13 (and parallels) are based on a coherent exposition or mediation on Daniel 7–9, 11–12 (e.g., 158, 207; see the full discussion on 145–252); Hartman also proposed that this Danielic “midrash” was developed by Paul in parts of 1 and 2 Thessalonians (178–205) and in 1 John (237–238).

We must, therefore, investigate the present circumstances very carefully and seek out the things that are able to save us. Let us, therefore, avoid absolutely all the works of lawlessness lest the works of lawlessness overpower us, and let us hate the deception of the present age, so that we may be loved in the age to come. Let us give no rest to our soul that results in its being able to associate with sinners and evil men, lest we become like them. The last stumbling block is at hand, concerning which the Scriptures speak, as Enoch says. For the Master has cut short the times and the days for this reason, that his beloved might make haste and come into his inheritance. And so also speaks the prophet: "Ten kingdoms will reign over the earth, and after them a little king will arise, who will subdue three of the kings with a single blow." Similarly Daniel says, concerning the same one: "And I saw the fourth beast, wicked and powerful and more dangerous than all the beasts of the earth, and how ten horns sprang up from it, and from these a little offshoot of a horn, and how it subdued three of the large horns with a single blow." You ought, therefore, to understand.

According to Daniel 11–12 and Jesus' view of it, the "latter days" were to be characterized by rebellion against God in the form of covenant apostasy in terms of denying the true God and in terms of unrighteousness. Jesus repeatedly emphasizes this in Matthew 24:

And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you" (Matt 24:4).

For many will come in my name, saying, "I am the Christ," and will mislead many (Matt 24:5).

At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another (Matt 24:10).

Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many (Matt 24:11).

Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold (Matt 24:12).

But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved (Matt 24:13).

Then if anyone says to you, “Behold, here is the Christ,” or “There *he is*,” do not believe *him* (Matt 24:23).

For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect (Matt 24:24).

Behold, I have told you in advance (Matt 24:25).

So if they say to you, “Behold, he is in the wilderness,” do not go out, *or*, “Behold, he is in the inner rooms,” do not believe *them* (Matt 24:26).

Jesus’ forecast itself is based on Daniel 7–12, and, in particular, the following:

A king will arise, Insolent and skilled in intrigue (Dan 8:23b).

And through his shrewdness he will cause deceit to succeed by his influence; And he will magnify *himself* in his heart . . . (Dan 8:25).

He will return and become enraged at the holy covenant and take action; so he will come back and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant (Dan 11:30b).

By smooth *words* he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action (Dan 11:32).

Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy (Dan 11:34).

But the wicked [in the covenant community] will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand (Dan 12:10b).

Even Jesus' notion of "lawlessness" (Matt. 24:12) appears to derive from Daniel 11 and 12.

In light of the above parallels and in view of 1 John 2:18 and 22, 1 John 3:4 speaks of the "lawlessness" that was to occur in the latter days, which was to be inspired by the latter-day opponent and spread especially by his false teachers. John identifies the false teachers whom he is combating and particularly their false teaching about Christ as part of the beginning fulfillment of the prophesied "lawlessness" that was to occur in the community of the saints in the eschaton.

III. THE OFFICE OF ELDER AND THE INAUGURATED ESCHATOLOGICAL TRIBULATION

The origin of ecclesiology, particularly with respect to the hierarchical structure of the church, can be viewed partly within this context of the latter-day tribulation of false teaching.²³ "Elders" or "bishops" are needed in order to maintain the doctrinal purity of the covenant community, which is always either being influenced by or threatened from the infiltration of fifth columnist movements. Titus 1:5–16 gives this as the formal reason for the establishment of elders throughout the churches of Crete, and the same rationale is apparent in 1 and 2 Timothy (cf. 1 Tim 1:3–7, 19–20 and 4:1–7 with 3:1–15, 5:11–17 and 6:20–21; cf. 2 Tim 2:14–18, 23–26; 3:1–13).

The presence of tribulation in the form of false, deceptive teaching at the church of Ephesus is one of the signs that the long-awaited latter days had finally come (1 Tim 4:1 ff.; 2 Tim 3:1 ff.). The wording in 2 Tim. 3:1 (*en eschatais hēmerais*) is a general echo of the repeated corresponding phrases "in the latter days" of the Greek Old Testament.²⁴ That this idea in 1 and 2 Timothy is not a reference only to a distant, future time is evident from recognizing that the Ephesian church is already experiencing the latter-day tribulation of deceptive teaching and apostasy (see 1 Tim 1:3–4, 6, 7, 19–20; 4:7; 5:13–15; 6:20–21; 2 Tim 1:15; 2:16–19; 2:25–26; 3:2–9). That these latter-day expressions are not exclusively future but indicate the beginning of the end-time tribulation of false teaching and deception is apparent from noticing that the directly following descriptions of false teaching in both passages portray the false

²³In this respect, note the overt references in 1 Tim 4:1–3 and 2 Tim 3:1 (cf. 3:2–9) to the end-time trial of deception within the church community.

²⁴Though they all, except Isa 2:2 [*en tais eschatais hēmerais*], begin with the Greek preposition *ep'* instead of *en* and *are in the genitive*, so that the 2 Timothy phrase is closest to the Isaiah passage.

teaching as presently happening with present tense verbs (see 1 Tim 4:4–7 and 2 Tim 3:6–9). These trials will continue on into the future (e.g., see 2 Tim 3:13, 4:3–4). This understanding of a latter-day tribulation characterized by false teaching and unbelief is in line with the expectation in Daniel 7–12 and in early Judaism (especially DSS and Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs), which I elaborate on in another chapter of my forthcoming book.

On the other hand, such an ecclesiastical authority structure ensured the Christian community that it was continuing in the truth and life of the kingdom, which would enable it to be strong in accomplishing its mission of witness to the world, which is likely as significant a theme in the Pastorals as is the concern about false teaching.²⁵ This positive element of “mission” is part of the larger positive role of the church in its responsibility of carrying out the original Adamic commission to subdue the ends of the earth and Israel’s similar commission to be priests for and a light of witness to the world.²⁶ Of course, Acts highlights this eschatological light-bearing mission of the new creation more than any other New Testament book.²⁷ In fact, the mention of deacons in Acts 6 and elders in Acts 20, at least in part, is to indicate their role in speeding on the spread of the kingdom, and in the latter case also to encourage the elders to guard against false teaching.

This notion that the interadvent age is one during which the eschatological tribulation and the new creation continue throughout and not just at particular moments has some interesting implications. For example, one scholar has argued that the prohibitions in 1 Tim 2:11–15 for women to teach authoritatively in the church at Ephesus were a response to women who had become influenced by the rampant false teaching there. However, it is often argued that since this situation of false teaching was a local and unique problem and was the occasion causing Paul to issue the prohibition, then his prohibition does not apply to other churches in places and times throughout the age where false

²⁵Indeed, R. G. Gruenler, “The Mission-Lifestyle Setting of 1 Tim 2:8-15,” *JETS* 41 (1998), 215–238, has plausibly contended that “mission” is the dominant theme and concern of the Pastorals, especially highlighting the significance of 1 Tim 1:10–16 and 2:1–4, among other passages.

²⁶ See F. Hawkins, “Orders and Ordination in the New Testament,” in *The Study of Liturgy* (ed. C. Jones et al.; rev. ed.; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 344–345, which has helped crystallize my own thoughts on these negative and positive factors leading to the establishment of church offices in the New Testament.

²⁷E.g., see Acts 1:6–8 and 2:17–3:26; 13:47; 26:16–18.

teaching is absent.²⁸ But, if false teaching is a part of the inaugurated end-time tribulation that continues throughout the whole pre-parousia epoch, then Paul's prohibitions are not just a response only to a local situation but to that situation as it is an expression of the broader end-time trial. Since the inaugurated latter-day trial means that the churches will be either affected or, at least, threatened by false teaching and deception, Paul's prohibitions are always valid. Therefore, Paul's prohibitions are a part of eschatological ethics pertinent to the entire church age, during which the end-time tribulation of false teaching is either actually affecting churches or is always a potential threat to corrupt them.

For the same reason the office of elder is not due to occasional or temporarily unique conditions²⁹ but is one that owes its existence to the ongoing, uninterrupted eschatological tribulation of false teaching and deception. In addition, we saw that the office was also created to protect the church's doctrine in order that it remain healthy as it goes out on its mission into the world to expand the invisible boundaries of the new creation. Such an office is needed until the time when the new creation is consummated.

In general, it appears that the elder office in the church is the continuation of the position of elder in Israel. Whereas the elders in Israel had both civil and religious authority, the elders in the new covenant have full religious authority over the sphere of the new Israel, the church. Several observations point to this equivalence. Besides the use of the same word "elders" (*presbyteroi*), the Book of Acts repeatedly juxtaposes the phrase "rulers and elders" of Israel (Acts 4:5, 8) or "chief priests and elders" (4:23; 23:14; 25:15) or "elders and scribes" (6:12) with "apostles and elders" of the church (15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4). Just as the Jewish "rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in

²⁸See, e.g., Gordon Fee, "Issues in Evangelical Hermeneutics, Part III: The Great Watershed – Intentionality and Particularity/Eternality: 1 Timothy 2:8–15 as a Test Case," *Cruce* 26 (1990), 31–37, who shows that 1 Timothy is shot through with false teaching, which is an occasion that must control the interpretation of the epistle. Unfortunately, Fee assumes that such false teaching is evidence of a unique, local situation to which Paul's prohibitions to women teaching in 1 Tim 2:11–12 is partly a response. Accordingly, for Fee, this prohibition cannot be universalized for all times and places, since it is an ad hoc response to such a local and limited occasion.

²⁹Against the argument by Gordon Fee, "Reflections on Church Order in the Pastoral Epistles, with Further Reflection on the Hermeneutics of Ad Hoc Documents," *JETS* 28 (1985), 141–151.

Jerusalem” to judge about the validity of the emerging Christian movement (Acts 4:5–23), so in “Jerusalem . . . the apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter” about the Jewish-Christian teaching that new Gentile converts had to keep the Law of Moses (Acts 15:1–6). The function of the Jewish elders in Acts 4 and the Christian elders in Acts 15 appears virtually identical. Both are in an official position in their respective covenant communities to adjudicate whether or not a new theological teaching is valid.

Acts 15 may have light shed on it by the earlier discussion that the position of elder was created, at least partly, to help protect the church’s theological health in the midst of an inaugurated end-time tribulation of deceptive teaching. Accordingly, it would appear not to be coincidental that directly before the Acts 15 Council of Jerusalem account that Paul and Barnabas exhorted the believers “to continue in the faith” by saying, “Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). And the very next verse asserts that “And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” (14:23). This is significant, since it is the first reference to appointing elders outside of Jerusalem, and it leads directly into the dispute needing judgment by the Jerusalem elders in Acts 15. This dispute was none other than a false teaching that, if allowed to continue, would destroy the emerging Christian movement. So the connection of the elders in Acts 14 to “tribulations” and false teaching is reflective of their eschatological role to guide the church theologically through the end-time theological threats. Likewise Acts 20:27–32 develops this inextricable link of false teaching with elders:

For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

In laying the foundation for the church in Ephesus, Paul explained to them “the whole counsel of God” (v. 27; see also v. 20). A part of this “counsel” was to remind them that “the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God,” especially to “be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock” (v. 28). They are to “guard” against false teachers who arise “from among your own selves” (vv. 29–30). This “guarding” is to be done by being faithful to God’s “word” (the gospel and the Scriptures testifying to that gospel; vv. 31–32). While it is true that the imminent false teaching was to be a local problem, it is also implicit that the function of the “overseers” to “guard” the Ephesian church from error is a function also for elders in every church, since the reference to the Ephesian church is generalized by “the church of God which he purchased with his own blood” (v. 28).³⁰ Such a description is likely intended to go beyond merely the local situation of the Ephesian church, which is pointed to further by our above observation about the purpose of “appointing elders for . . . every church” in Acts 14:23.

Thus, once again we find a major New Testament notion, the office of elder, to be an important feature of inaugurated eschatology. The origin of this office is best understood in the light of the beginning end-time tribulation, as well as of the new creation (though the former has been the focus here).

IV. WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING THAT THE LATTER-DAY TRIBULATION THAT THE TRIBULATION HAS BEGUN?

Jesus temptation by the Devil in the wilderness reflected those that Adam endured, which is apparent from recalling Luke’s ending his genealogy with “the *son* of Adam, the *son* of God” (Luke 3:38), which is followed directly by the temptation narrative (beginning with “and Jesus”), thus portraying Jesus as an Adam figure undergoing temptation. Likewise the temptations are comparable to those in Eden, involving, for example, the temptation of food (Gen 3:6; Luke 4:3) and temptation of the eyes (Gen 3:6; Luke 4:5–7). Christ succeeded in just those temptations where Adam and Israel failed because he remembered God’s word and obeyed it. Jesus is also seen as true Israel by succeeding in the very temptations in which Israel failed to resist (note the Deuteronomy background of several of the citations in Matthew 4 and Luke 4).

³⁰This universal scope is pointed to further by the conclusion of v. 32 that if the elders are faithful to Paul’s admonition, then they will receive “the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

If it is true that Jesus and then his followers underwent a recapitulation of the deceptive trial launched by Satan against Adam and Eve, then the patterns of sinful behavior in that primal tribulation should be helpful as warnings not to repeat the same thing again. What was the sinful conduct in Eden that is beneficial for the church today to contemplate? How should this affect the way Christians conduct themselves today? To observe Satan's first deception and the response to it can contribute understanding about the nature of the present and future eschatological deception.

(1) First, Satan deceived Adam and Eve into breaking their covenant relationship with God.

(2) Second, part of Satan's deceptive method was to tell Eve that if she did what he said, she could "know" in a much deeper way than before and be much more enlightened (cf. Gen 3:5).

(3) Satan deceived them about their own marriage relationship, so that they did not function as "helpmeets" to help meet one another's need to defend against the Devil's attack. One way this occurred was that they did not help one another remember God's word that Satan was opposing, as we will see directly below.

(4) Satan deceives them about the lethal danger he posed. He is able to bring them into dialogue with himself without them realizing how dangerous such an apparently casual conversation like this could be.

(5) Satan contradicts God's word in Gen 2:17, denying the reality of God's coming judgment and saying, "you surely shall not die" (Gen 3:4).

(6) Satan made evil seem good, which is a mark of the latter-day Antichrist. In particular, he passes himself off as a being who posed no danger and he made sinful disobedience to God's word appear as a good course of action. He also made God to appear to have jealous motives in commanding them not to eat of the tree (Gen 3:5).

(7) Eve was deceived because she did not know God's word sufficiently or did not esteem it highly enough.

Remember that after God put Adam into the Garden in Gen 2:15 “for serving [cultivating] and guarding,” he gave Adam a threefold statement to remember by which he would be helped to “serve and guard” the Garden-temple: in Gen 2:16–17, God says, “From any tree of the garden (1) you may eat freely; but (2) from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, (3) for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.” When confronted by the satanic serpent, Eve either failed to remember God’s word accurately or intentionally changed it for her own purposes. First, she minimized their privileges by saying merely “we may eat,” whereas God had said “you may eat *freely*.” Second, Eve minimized the judgment by saying, “lest you die,” whereas God said, “you shall surely die.” Third, she maximized the prohibition by affirming, “you shall not . . . touch it,” becoming the first legalist in history (for God had originally said only that they “shall not eat . . . it”).³¹ If Adam did remember God’s word, then he did not trust in it, since he did not come to Eve’s aid when she did not recollect the word rightly in the face of the Serpent’s accusations. Adam and Eve did not remember God’s word adequately, and they “fell.” When the defense of God’s word is taken away, then all kinds of satanic lies come to fill the void, the desire to resist temptation breaks down, and sin inevitably occurs.

Jesus Christ, the Last Adam and true Israel, however, knew the word and obeyed it. Remember when the Devil tried to tempt Christ in Matthew 4? With each temptation Jesus responded to Satan by quoting from the Old Testament, from passages in Deuteronomy where Moses rebuked Israel for failing in their task. In contrast to Adam and Eve, Jesus overcame the temptations by knowing and trusting in God’s word.

Likewise, Christ’s followers “follow him wherever he goes” (Rev 14:4), including down the path of satanic temptations. The same onslaught of devilish deceptions is directed against the church as was directed against Adam and Eve and Jesus: e.g., see 2 Cor 11:2–4 and 1 Tim 2:11–14). The same kind of deceptions that entered the Garden (note again the deceptions in Eden discussed above) also enter into the church today. Like Jesus, his “body of believers” goes through the eschatological trial of deception about various aspects of God’s truth, both in the family, the covenant community, and in other areas of life. Through all manner of deception, the evil one attempts to tear us away from our faith in and loyalty to Christ. But we are to identify with

³¹See Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 134–135, who has noticed these three changes in the original wording of Gen 2:16–17.

Messiah Jesus in his “faithful witness” (Rev 1:5) through tribulation, even unto death.

The upshot is: do Christians know God’s word, do they believe it, and do they do it? If not, then the lies of the evil one will slip into our lives and churches ever so subtly. When this happens and the process is not checked and corrected, then the deceptions begin to pour in like an overflowing river (cf. Rev 12:15: “and the Serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman [the church], so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood”). Do Christian families make God’s word the center of their homes? Do pastors set aside sufficient time to study God’s word in preparation for Sunday sermons in order to “be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15)? If not, the false teaching of those “who have gone astray from the truth” will make inroads into the church (2 Tim 2:18).

I remember some years ago that I made an appointment with an oral hygienist to check and clean my teeth, since I had not been for a checkup in a long time. While sitting in the dental chair during a two-minute break in the procedure, I glanced at some pictures on the wall directly opposite me. They pictured the progressive stages of gum disease, from healthy gums all the way to gums that appeared to be rotted. When the hygienist came back in to continue, I asked her where I was located in the series of pictures. She said that my gums were on the road heading toward the set of pictures that depicted the rotted gums. I said, “But my gums feel fine; how can they be diseased, since they do not hurt?” She responded, “That is the genius of gum disease—it does not hurt badly until it is too late.” The pictures of the stages of gum disease together with her interpretative commentary shocked me into the reality of my condition. Since then I have brushed my teeth typically two times a day and flossed every day. By so doing, I was able to halt the onset of imminent gum disease and have been able to maintain healthy gums. Sometimes deception and sin leading from it is like gum disease: we may not feel the spiritual hurt until significant harm has happened. We need God’s word to shock us into perceiving the reality of our deception and sin and spark us back into a healthy relationship with God. God’s word can shock us into the reality that there is an inaugurated end-time tribulation and that its deceptive character in our midst can cause us to be deceived.

Therefore, God’s word can jolt us back into the reality of our relation with God, when we are being lulled to spiritual sleep and into deception. The defense of God’s word will keep out the flood of the evil one’s lies

that spiritually anesthetize people and keeps them in a dazed state, which causes them to be insensitive to the destructiveness of sin.

It is at this precise point that believing that the “great tribulation” has partially begun should inspire believers to be even more on guard against sin and satanic deception. If danger from the Antichrist is believed to be a reality only for some future generation of saints, then such people now will be more susceptible to the dangerous influence of the Antichrist that is *already* at work in the present age (e.g., 2 Thess 2:7; 1 John 2:18). If you do not believe that an enemy is present, but he really is, then you will not worry about protecting yourself from that enemy. Belief in the inaugurated end-time tribulation and Antichrist should cause the church to be more vigilant about making sure she is not torn from her trust in Christ and his word. Thus, though it may not always appear that the church is presently suffering “the great tribulation,” at any given time there are always sectors of it that are suffering it and the other sectors are always under the threat.

Appreciation, Agreement, and a Few
Minor Quibbles:
A Response to G. K. Beale



JAMES M. HAMILTON
*Associate Professor of Biblical
Theology
The Southern Baptist Theological
Seminary
Louisville, KY 40280
jhamilton@sbs.edu*

G. K. Beale is a balsam tree. Balsam is a fragrant aroma of the tree that produces it, and from these trees comes an oleoresin that has medicinal value: balm. G. K. Beale is a balsam tree planted by streams of living water, bearing fruit in season and out, leading people to the balm of Gilead. In my initial experience of theological education, I was taught that the authors of the NT make illegitimate appeals to the OT in ways that should not be imitated. The two tall scholarly trees that God used to point me to the Emmaus road, the path one travels to understand that the authors of the NT rightly understood the OT, were Drs. Thomas R. Schreiner¹ and G. K. Beale.² Beale's book, *The Temple and the Church's*

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001); Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008); Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (NAC; Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2003); Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, forthcoming); Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998).

² G. K. Beale, "Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? An Examination of the Presuppositions of Jesus' and the Apostles' Exegetical Method," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (ed. G. K. Beale; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 387–404; G. K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish*

Mission, is a paradigm shifting, seminal work;³ his book, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism*, is a faithful diagnosis from a loving physician;⁴ and his forthcoming *New Testament Biblical Theology* will stand with the titans of the genre.⁵

I am deeply grateful for the writings of G. K. Beale and for the opportunity to offer this response. Professor Beale requested that this response to the two lectures he gave at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary be done in light of his forthcoming *New Testament Biblical Theology*, so I make no apology for the fact that some of my comments will result as much from my reading of that book as from his lectures. I will begin with words of appreciation for the important and courageous work Beale has done and is doing, summarize aspects of the deep resonance I feel when I read Beale, and conclude with some complaints and minor objections.

I. IMPORTANT AND COURAGEOUS WORK

Paul wrote to Titus that overseers must hold firmly to the trustworthy word as taught, give instruction in sound teaching, and be able to refute those who contradict it (Titus 1:7, 9). Beale's scholarly work is important and courageous because he is doing precisely these things. Beale is holding firmly to the trustworthy word as he takes pains to understand the Bible. Unlike some scholars who become impatient with the Scriptures and declare that the Bible is strange, Beale seeks the contours of the biblical authors' perspective. It takes patience and work to understand the broad-angle rationale for the statements made by prophets such as Hosea and Daniel. One must understand the Torah that formed the mind of the prophets and the use of foundational Mosaic texts elsewhere in both the Prophets and the Writings. Beale is willing to forge through the shallows into depths of understanding. Whether dealing with

Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984); G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007); G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008).

³ G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004).

⁴ G. K. Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

⁵ G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Transformation of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011).

the use NT authors make of the OT or recent challenges to inerrancy, Beale patiently shows the way to real understanding. On the surface some things appear contradictory or erroneous, but the conclusion that the NT misuses the OT or that the Bible is in error would be rashly drawn from a failure to recognize what the texts mean to communicate.

Of necessity, this kind of work must be detailed at points. It also requires courage because contending for the inerrancy of the Scriptures and the validity of the NT's interpretations of the OT will always partake of the reproach of the cross. Beale's willingness to shoulder this reproach, to be regarded by the worldly-minded in academia as a fool for Christ's sake, shows that he understands that there are more important things than one's standing in the eyes of worldly scholars.

G. K. Beale seeks to do biblical theology. That is, he is attempting to understand the presuppositions and perspectives from which the biblical authors write. This leads him to the view that later biblical authors rightly understand the earlier biblical texts they quote, and it also leads him into controversial disputes about inerrancy. Beale admirably enters the fray on these issues, understanding that those who receive the teaching of Jesus will receive the teaching of those who follow Jesus, while those who reject Jesus will also reject his followers.

II. BASIC AND WIDESPREAD AGREEMENT

One of the challenges for me in writing this response is the fact that my agreement with Beale is so massive and widespread. This is so much the case that the objections I do have may seem trivial, even nitpicky. In this section I want to highlight my agreement with Beale in terms of both methodology and interpretive conclusions. At points as I discuss our common methodology I will note places where we differ on interpretive conclusions, but the discussion here is nevertheless intended to highlight what I perceive as a deep level of agreement in the conclusions we have reached and the way we got to them.

Perhaps the biggest thing on which Beale and I are in agreement is our understanding of what is central and ultimate. I have argued that God's glory in salvation through judgment is the center of biblical theology.⁶ Compare this with what Beale writes:⁷

⁶ James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010); James M. Hamilton, "The Glory of God in Salvation Through Judgment: The Centre of Biblical Theology?" *Tyndale Bulletin* 57 (2006): 57–84.

we can state the overriding storyline idea of New Testament theology, especially in Paul and the Apocalypse but also in the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament. The storyline is this: Christ's life, and especially death and resurrection through the Spirit launched the end-time new creation reign, propelling worldwide mission, resulting in blessing and judgment, all for God's glory.⁸

This is essentially what I argue in *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology*, though I pursue it through the whole Bible not just the NT. Beale's statement includes many details that the catch-phrase in my book's title is meant to summarize.

I want to draw attention to three related statements Beale makes, quoting and commenting on them. Beale writes,

But these scholars did not attempt to explain in programmatic fashion how inaugurated eschatology relates to and sheds light on the major theological doctrines of the New Testament. Nor did they see that the controlling conception of eschatology was the kingdom of the new creation.⁹

Three comments: First, at points Beale stresses the uniqueness of his work almost to the detriment of others who have not done what he is now doing,¹⁰ but there are a variety of valid approaches. One author's neglect is another's opportunity. Second, I wonder whether the new creation is not one among several ways of speaking of the glorious eschatological restoration. Does it deserve to be seen as controlling? Third, and most importantly for my purposes here, note the way that Beale sees inaugurated eschatology "shedding light" on other themes and the new

⁷ Beale emailed PDF's of the Midwestern lectures to me prior to their being formatted for the journal, so the page numbers I reference here reflect the pre-publication version. [I.e., They do not correlated to the pagination given here.]

⁸ G. K. Beale, "The Inaugurated Eschatological Indicative and Imperative in Relation to Christian Living and Preaching," (paper presented during the annual Sizemore Lectures of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO, 2 November 2010), 9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 10–11.

¹⁰ See his comments on Dumbrell's "weaknesses," acknowledging, however, that Dumbrell did not set out to do these things (*ibid.*, 28).

creation as the “controlling conception” of eschatology. I draw attention to this because this is how I, too, see the center of biblical theology functioning. The display of God’s glory is most poignant in the ways he makes known his justice and his mercy (cf. Exod 33:18–19; 34:6–7),¹¹ and this theme should be regarded as central precisely because it “informs, organizes, and is expositied by all the other themes in the Bible,”¹² because “all the Bible’s themes flow from, exposit, and feed back into the center of biblical theology.”¹³ Note how similar Beale’s statement is to mine on the methodological level. Beale writes:

I am trying to establish the centrality of new creation in a much more exegetical and theologically trenchant manner. My thesis is that the major theological ideas of the New Testament flow out of the storyline that Christ’s life, and especially death and resurrection through the Spirit launched the end-time new creation reign, propelling worldwide mission and resulting in blessing and judgment for God’s glory.¹⁴

We are both pursuing what is central and ultimate by seeking to identify the source from which major themes *flow*, and we are both identifying the ultimate goal as salvation/blessing and judgment for God’s glory. We both seek to be exegetically and theologically trenchant, though in slightly different ways. I pursue this by moving book by book through the whole canon, while Beale pursues it by focusing in on the use of the OT in the NT.

We differ slightly in our responses to objections to the possibility of there being one definitive center of biblical theology. On this point, Beale writes,

Doubtless, some will conclude that to reduce the centre of the New Testament down to the hub of the new creation reign is to add to the already too many reductionistic New Testament theologies previously proposed, and that we must be content with a multiperspectival approach. It is important to recall that I am not contending that this is the “centre” of the New Testament

¹¹ Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 63.

¹² *Ibid.*, 48.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁴ Beale, “Eschatological Indicative and Imperative,” 11.

but that it is the penultimate part of the storyline leading to mission, blessing, judgment and, finally, divine glory.¹⁵

Beale has thus nuanced his earlier contention that the new creation was the central penultimate center of biblical theology,¹⁶ with God's glory being ultimate.¹⁷ So perhaps Beale would now quibble with me (as I will with him) by noting that whereas I am contending for the *center* of biblical theology, he is now discussing the penultimate goal of the *storyline*. Since we are both talking about the controlling aspects of the storyline and its termination points, I think we are basically saying the same thing. There are two things in his statement that seem to move him from speaking of the center to speaking of the storyline. First, he notes that there are already too many "reductionistic" centers, and second, he nods to those who have advocated the multiperspectival approach. I maintain that the biblical authors speak of God's glory when they make ultimate statements to explain the way things are (e.g., Rom 11:33–36), when they appeal to what most concerns God,¹⁸ and when they depict how all things will resolve,¹⁹ thus it is broad enough to avoid the charge of reductionism, even as it is central to every perspective represented in the writings of the Bible. Moreover, by narrowing in on the glory of God *in salvation through judgment*, I seek to avoid the complaint that my proposed center is too broad to be useful.²⁰ I remain convinced that the glory of God in salvation through judgment is the center of biblical theology.

Moving to Beale's second lecture, my main response is to voice a hearty "Amen." Anyone who has contemplated the way John, for

¹⁵ Ibid., 12–13.

¹⁶ G. K. Beale, "The New Testament and New Creation," in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (ed. Scott J. Hafemann; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 159: "the kingdom of the new creation is a plausible and defensible center for NT theology."

¹⁷ See G. K. Beale, "The Eschatological Conception of New Testament Theology," in *Eschatology in the Bible and Theology: Evangelical Essays at the Dawn of a New Millennium* (ed. Kent E. Brower and Mark W. Elliott; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 51–52; which I quote in Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 558.

¹⁸ Cf. the appendix (§7) to chapter 4, table 4.9, "Old Testament Prayers Appealing to God's Concern for His Own Glory," in Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 352–53.

¹⁹ See, e.g., the appendix (§5) to chapter 6, table 6.7, "Doxologies in the New Testament," in *ibid.*, 538–39.

²⁰ See the discussion in *ibid.*, 37–59 esp. 51–56.

example, in the book of Revelation brings the future to bear on the present for Christian living will agree with Beale when he writes of his forthcoming book: “The thrust of the book is to show that eschatology was not a mere doctrine of futurology for Jesus and his followers but was a present reality, which shaped their thinking about every facet of the Christian faith.”²¹ In his second lecture Beale insightfully applies the concept of the messianic woes to the institution of elders in the churches.²² Beale brings out a hugely significant ramification of this: it means that Paul’s instructions in the Pastorals, including his comments about women not teaching men in 1 Tim 2:9–15, cannot be viewed as local, ad hoc instructions.²³ The danger of false teaching is not limited to Ephesus but is a constant reality throughout the time of the church, the time of affliction and tribulation, the time of the messianic woes. Elders are given to “shepherd the church through the messianic woes to glory.”²⁴

III. COMPLAINTS AND MINOR OBJECTIONS

John Gardner has written, “Where lumps and infelicities occur in fiction, the sensitive reader shrinks away a little, as we do when an interesting conversationalist picks his nose.”²⁵ As unpleasant as it is to point out lumps and infelicities (it would be easier to act as if they had not happened), discussions such as the present one are the place to note them. I have my own bad habits,

²¹ G. K. Beale, “The Inaugurated End-Time Tribulation and Its Bearing on the Church Office of Elder and on Christian Living in General,” (paper presented during the annual Sizemore Lectures of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO, 3 November 2010), 1. See further G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999); and for my own attempt to exposit Revelation, see James M. Hamilton Jr., *Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches* (Preaching the Word; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

²² On the messianic woes, see Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 492–94, esp. 493, which is a table listing texts that deal with “The Messianic Woes in the Old and New Testaments.” Beale writes: “I will contend that the origin of the creation of the office of elder is likely related, at least in part, to the inaugurated latter-day tribulation” (“The Inaugurated End-Time Tribulation and Its Bearing on the Church Office of Elder and on Christian Living in General,” 1).

²³ *Ibid.*, 20–21.

²⁴ Cf. the subtitle of the discussion of 1 Pet 4:12–5:14 in Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 527–28.

²⁵ John Gardner, *The Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft for Young Writers* (New York, NY: Random House, 1984), 99.

and I would rather a friend address them than an enemy assure me they do not exist (cf. Prov 27:5–6).

My biggest objection to what Beale has written is not prompted by a point of interpretation or methodology but by his insistence on the uniqueness of what he is doing. Beale seeks to distinguish his forthcoming *New Testament Biblical Theology* from “the usual New Testament theologies” on nine enumerated points:

1. It “addresses more directly the theological storyline of the Old Testament.”
2. “The main facets of the Old Testament narrative story are then traced into and throughout the New Testament.”
3. It “attempts to elaborate on the main plotline categories of thought through surveying the places in the New Testament where that thought is expressed. Such a survey occurs through studying the use of key words and concepts relevant to the major category of focus. Also, discussion of each category will occur through exegetical analysis of crucial passages and of Old Testament quotations, allusions, and sometimes of discernible Old Testament themes. Such concentrated studies like this, especially of the New Testament’s use of the Old, are not characteristic features of most New Testament theologies.”
4. “In contrast with other New Testament theologies is that it is concerned with how important components of the Old Testament storyline are understood and developed in Judaism.”
5. “This approach to New Testament biblical theology will focus more on the unity of the New Testament than its diversity.”
6. “It is not usual to find a concise definition of what is a classic New Testament theology. On the other hand, my working definition of New Testament biblical theology is the following, in dependence on Geerhardus Vos’s definition of a whole Bible biblical theology: ‘Biblical Theology, rightly defined, is nothing else than the exhibition of the organic progress of supernatural revelation in its historic continuity and multiformity.’ ”
7. “The scheme of this book is generally closer to a couple of works that also style themselves as New Testament biblical theologies”
8. “As alluded to briefly above, another distinction between several New Testament theologies in comparison with the

scheme of the present project is that they conduct their discussions generally corpus by corpus.”

9. “In light of the above so far, I would categorize my biblical-theological approach to be canonical, genetic-progressive (or organically developmental, as a flower develops from a seed and bud), exegetical, and intertextual. This approach could be summarized as a “biblical-theological-oriented exegesis.” My different methodology from such New Testament theologies as Stuhlmacher’s, Ladd’s, Guthrie’s, Marshall’s, Thielman’s, and Schreiner’s, among others, does not indicate a weakness on their part but only the different nature of the projects.”²⁶

It may be that Beale’s book incorporates *more of* the things that he enumerates here than other New Testament theologies, but the difference is one of degree not kind. For Beale to insist that his book is of a “different nature” than other NT theologies strikes me as being akin to the man who insisted that his method of *ambulating* was to be distinguished from the mere *walking* done by other bipedal humans. Told that *ambulating* is just another word for *walking*, the man then explains that unlike others he moves from left foot to right foot, swings the opposite arm, rolls from heel to toe, and brings it all together in a way that can only be described as *ambulating* not *walking*.

My point is that New Testament theology is a subset of *biblical theology*, and adding the word *biblical* to the title and then laying out the ways one seeks to combine existing approaches and bring in unique emphases to contribute to the discipline does not mean that one is doing something different from what everyone else writing in the field has done. It is natural for an author to point out the unique emphases of his work, but consider the claim on the Baker webpage for Beale’s forthcoming book: “This comprehensive exposition is the first major New Testament *biblical* theology to appear in English in fifty years.”²⁷ I grant that Beale probably did not write this statement, but it is not a huge step from the way that he distinguishes his work from that of Ladd, Marshall, Thielmann, and Schreiner, who have all produced recent New Testament theologies. Anyone who thinks that Beale’s book is so

²⁶ Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, forthcoming.

²⁷ Baker Publishing Group Website, n.p. [cited 29 March 2011]. Online: <http://www.bakerpublishinggroup.com/ME2/dirmod.asp?sid=0477683E4046471488BD7BAC8DCFB004&nm=&type=PubCom&mod=PubComProductCatalog&mid=BF1316AF9E334B7BA1C33CB61CF48A4E&tier=3&id=DD845AA3B3994EFBA8BB3B414367C62D>.

different from these as to warrant the claim that it is the first of its kind to appear for fifty years should read some poetry and fiction, plays and essays, biography and political commentary. These forays into the world outside the limited field of New Testament theology would enable the recognition that these books on New Testament theology—Beale’s included—are all doing basically the same thing in very similar ways. So I do not want to minimize the real contribution Beale’s book makes, but again, the difference between his book and other NT theologies is one of degree and emphasis not kind. Perhaps Schreiner’s work is closest in terms of outlook, method, and conclusions,²⁸ but Thielman’s perspective is not that different,²⁹ and N. T. Wright is at least moving in a similar stream.³⁰

Before turning to a token interpretive disagreement, I want to register a stylistic complaint. Beale is prolix. It’s as though he is exclaiming, “Why should I say in three words what I can expand to ten?! In the “Introduction” to “the little book,” E. B. White epitomizes Professor Strunk: “‘Omit needless words!’ cries the author on page 23, and into that imperative Will Strunk really put his heart and soul.”³¹ Imagine the pleasure Strunk would take eliminating words from Beale’s oeuvre. To take one example, consider the title of his second lecture, “The Inaugurated End-Time Tribulation and Its Bearing on the Church Office of Elder and on Christian Living in General.” Edwardsian in its fullness, but would not “Elders and the End-Times” have been sufficient? I love the ideas that Beale communicates, but I wonder whether he hopes to be paid on the Dickensian wage (critics of Charles Dickens complain that his books are so long because he was paid a penny a word).

Lest this response be all commendation and superficial nitpicking, let me address one interpretive matter on which I would differ with Beale. There are others,³² but this one will suffice. Discussing the son of man in

²⁸ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*.

²⁹ Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).

³⁰ N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (vol. 1, Christian Origins and the Question of God; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992); N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (vol. 2, Christian Origins and the Question of God; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996); N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (vol. 3, Christian Origins and the Question of God; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003).

³¹ William Strunk and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style* (3rd ed.; New York, NY: Macmillan, 1979), xiii.

³² Okay, I’ll mention one here. Beale writes, “Not taking seriously enough the resurrection language applied to the Christian’s present experience to

Dan 7, Beale relates a typical dialogue between himself and a student, beginning with the student's answer to Beale's question about how Dan 7:15–28 interprets the son of man in 7:1–14:

“The ‘son of man’ is the saints of Israel.” Of course, the question then arises, “What do we make of Jesus’ claim in the gospels that he is ‘the son of man’ ”? My answer is that, while the interpretative section does identify the “son of man” with the saints of Israel, there are indications both in the vision itself and in the following explanation that the ‘son of man’ is also an individual messianic-like figure.”³³

Beale then offers his take on Dan 7:27, “Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of *all* the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom *will be* an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him” (NASB):

A few commentators identify “his kingdom” and “him” at the conclusion of the verse to be an individual “son of man” from vv. 13–14. But, first of all, this presupposes that the figure of vv. 13–14 is only an individual. While this is possible, especially in the light of the above-discussed indications of such an individual in Daniel 7, the last part of v. 27 is, at least, ambiguous. The more likely identification is either that “his” and “him” refers to the directly preceding antecedent “the Highest One” or, plausibly, the singular pronoun is a corporate reference to the closely preceding “saints” of v. 27a (as the ESV, e.g., takes it). Thus, the “kingdom” at the end of v. 27 either refers to the kingdom of “the Highest One” or of “the saints.”³⁴

designate real eschatological resurrection existence, albeit on the spiritual level, has unintentionally eviscerated the ethical power of church teaching and preaching, since Christians need to know that they have resurrection power to please and obey God!” (Beale, “Eschatological Indicative and Imperative,” 15). Perhaps Beale would agree that human sinfulness is so pervasive and complex that it is a serious oversimplification to suggest that lacking nuance on the empowering force of inaugurated eschatology *eviscerates* the ethical power of the church's teaching.

³³ Beale, “The Inaugurated End-Time Tribulation and Its Bearing on the Church Office of Elder and on Christian Living in General,” 5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

I agree with Beale that corporate personality is a relevant consideration here, whereby the people are represented by the king, who embodies the nation in himself.³⁵ What I want to observe is the way that intertextual factors increase the likelihood that the son of man in 7:13–14 is an individual, Davidic figure who receives the kingdom, *his* kingdom, in 7:27.

In Dan 7:1–8 the beasts have taken over. These beasts represent the rulers of empires (7:17), and their rule will be ended when the son of man comes. Daniel’s vision is of a scene whose imagery reaches all the way back to Genesis 1:26–28, where the one in the image and likeness of God was given dominion over the beasts. This is undone when the beast deceives the woman and the man sins in Gen 3. God promises Abraham, however, that blessing will overcome cursing,³⁶ and the promises will be realized through the seed of the woman.³⁷ David arises as king, and in Ps 8 he interprets his Adamic role (cf. Ps 8, superscription). He is the “son of man” (8:4) who has received dominion (8:6) over the beasts named in Gen 1:28 (8:7–8). Though weak like a babe, God has ordained strength in weakness (8:2), and David understands that it is God’s purpose to cause his name to be majestic in all the earth (8:1, 9). Given the promise to David that the throne of his seed would be established forever (2 Sam 7:12–13; Ps 89:4), when Daniel sees a son of man arise (Dan 7:13; cf. Ps 8:4) who receives everlasting dominion and a kingdom that will not be destroyed or pass away (Dan 7:14; cf. 2 Sam 7:13)—and in this kingdom the dominion is taken away from the usurping beasts (Dan 7:12) and restored to the rightful ruler, the son of man (7:13–14)—how can we not see the son of man as the one who will triumph over the beasts, crushing the serpent’s head, bringing to fulfillment the blessing of Abraham and the promise to David? How can “his . . . everlasting kingdom” and the obedience rendered to “him” (Dan 7:27; cf. Ps 72:8–11, 17, 19) not be exactly what God promised to David in 2 Sam 7, to Abraham in Gen 12, and to the serpent in Gen 3:14–15?

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 5–6. See further H. Wheeler Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel* (Rev. ed.; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1980).

³⁶ See further James M. Hamilton Jr., “The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 58 (2007): 253–73.

³⁷ See James M. Hamilton Jr., “The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10.2 (2006): 30–54.

IV. CONCLUSION

I am so grateful for the stimulating work of G. K. Beale. Complaints and objections registered, anyone interested in biblical theology should read his work. Anyone interested in the use of the Old Testament in the New must digest Beale's contention that the Apostles are not preaching the right doctrine from the wrong text,³⁸ and his discussion of intertextuality in *We Become What We Worship*³⁹ is a significant contribution to the work of Hays in *The Conversion of the Imagination*.⁴⁰ While at points complexity and detail are certainly necessary, we should also guard those starting into this field against the mistaken conclusion that understanding the Bible is far too complicated and difficult for ordinary Christians. Describing the whole process of ambulating might make someone think walking is too complicated and difficult for the ordinary human. But he can just take a step and start walking. The same goes for understanding the Bible: the best thing to do is start reading and keep doing that, meditating on it day and night (cf. Ps 1). Congratulations and gratitude to G. K. Beale for these lectures and the forthcoming *New Testament Biblical Theology*.

³⁸ Beale, "The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts."

³⁹ Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 22–32.

⁴⁰ Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans, 2005) esp. 34–45.

The Holman Christian Standard Study Bible and Malachi 2:16: A Brief Response



ALAN BRANCH

Assistant Professor of

Christian Ethics

Midwestern Baptist Theological

Seminary

Kansas City, MO 64118

abbranch@mbts.edu

The *Holman Christian Standard Bible* (HCS), completed in 2004, is a commendable English translation of Scripture. Yet, many people are surprised to discover the *Holman Christian Standard* translation of Mal 2:16 is somewhat different from the familiar injunction against divorce found in most English translations. For example, the NASB translation of Mal 2:16 says, “‘For I hate divorce,’ says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘and him who covers his garment with wrong,’ says the LORD of hosts. So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.” In contrast, the HCS translation of Mal 2:16 says, “‘If he [the husband] hates and divorces his wife,’ says the LORD God of Israel, ‘he covers his garment with injustice,’ says the LORD of Hosts. Therefore, watch yourselves carefully, and do not act treacherously.” Two other recent English translations render Mal 2:16 in a way similar to the HCS: The ESV (2001) and the recent revision of the NIV (2010). The *HCS Study Bible*, released in the Fall of 2010, offers a brief explanation of the HCS rendering of Malachi 2:16:

This verse [Mal 2:16] ends by repeating verse 15b with one significant change. After speaking to “you” in verses 13–15a, verse 15b switches back to third person “he” as in verses 11–12, ending literally, “and with the wife of your youth let *him* not act treacherously.” Then after a conjunction opening verse 16 (meaning “because,” “if,” “when,” “that,” or “indeed”) is a verb that clearly means “*he hates*,” although most translations change it to “*I hate*.”

But the subject apparently is the one who “acts treacherously,” and who also **covers his garment with injustice**. The one speaking is **the LORD God of Israel**, and contrary to the KJV, NKJV, etc., there is no indication of indirect discourse [“says that”], so God cannot be the subject of “he hates.”¹

Thus, the *HCS Study Bible* argues strongly in favor of the HCS translation of Malachi 2:16a and infers that other translations are wrong. The author of the *HCS Study Bible* notes on Malachi is E. Ray Clendenen, who also was the Associate General Editor/Translator for the HCS project. Clendenen’s arguments in the study notes are a summary of his more extensive comments in his 2004 commentary on Malachi in the *New American Commentary* series.

Is the *HCS Study Bible* note correct? I suggest the *HCS Study Bible* offers an unbalanced presentation of the questions at hand. Thus, I contend that the *HCS Study Bible* would better serve its intended audience by reflecting balance in its study notes. To demonstrate this, I will offer a brief response to the *HCS Study Bible* comments on Mal 2:16. I will do this by comparing different translations of Mal 2:16, summarizing translation difficulties associated with the verse, and offering a brief comparison of the ethical implications of the different translations of Mal 2:16. In this article, I will refer to the translations of Mal 2:16 that say something like “I hate divorce” as the “common” translation and I will refer to translations that say something like “If the husband hates and divorces his wife” as the “recent” translation. These terms are not meant to imply the superiority of one translation over another, but are intended to be neutral terms. The majority of my comments will focus on Mal 2:16 and I will not attempt to exegete the entire textual unit of Mal 2:10–16.

I. MALACHI 2:16: DIFFERENT TRANSLATION

Mal 2:16 is the concluding verse of the larger textual unit, Malachi 2:10–16. The whole context is a denunciation from God of the treachery, profanity, violence, and selfish approach to marriage held by the men in post-exilic Israel. The Hebrew text of Mal 2:16 has been described as “quite clipped, and several words must be supplied by any translation to

¹ E. Ray Clendenen, “Study Notes on Malachi,” *The Holman Christian Standard Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2010), 1593.

make readable English.”² One should remember that the vowel points are a relatively late rabbinic commentary on the unpointed Biblical text, the vowel points being added sometime between 500–800 AD by the Masoretes. This noted, the MT of Mal 2:16a reads:

כִּי־שָׂנֵא שְׁלַח אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכִסָּה חָמֶס׃
עַל־לְבוּשׁוֹ אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת׃

The difficulty of translating Mal 2:16a centers more specifically around the Hebrew verb שָׂנֵא (*sānē*), which is a Qal masculine third-person singular meaning “he hates” according to the Masoretes. Because שָׂנֵא is a third person singular, translating Mal 2:16a as “‘I hate divorce,’ says the LORD God of Israel” is difficult because the pronoun “I” in reference to Yahweh is first person singular. With this in mind, a somewhat wooden, word-for-word translation of Malachi 2:16a would be, “‘For he hates divorce,’ says the LORD God of Israel.” As I will show later, the competing English translations represent different solutions to the grammatical difficulties inherent in the text.

The Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS), LXX, Vulgate, and Targum Jonathan all include textual variants of Mal 2:16. A variant reading of Mal 2:16a found in 4QXII says, “But if you hate [your wife] divorce [her]!”³ The LXX textual tradition has two different readings. The majority of the LXX family of witnesses to Mal 2:16 (LXX LW) say something similar to 4QXII: “If you hate her . . . divorce her.”⁴ A different tradition of the LXX (LXX^{ABQV}) reads, “‘But if, having hated, you divorce,’ says the Lord God of Israel, ‘then iniquity will cover his garments.’”⁵ The

² Robert Alden, *Malachi* (ed. Frank Gaebelin; 12 vols.; *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 7:717.

³ This translation is from *The Jewish Study Bible* (eds. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999). 4QXII is a manuscript consisting of twenty-one fragments and was at one time a complete scroll of the Minor Prophets (Russell Fuller, “Text-Critical Problems in Malachi 2:10–16,” *JBL* 110.1 [1991]: 47). Seven manuscripts were found in Cave 4 of Qumran and they are labeled 4QXIIa–g. In many discussions of Mal 2:16, the text in question is often simply called “4QXII.”

⁴ This translation from Douglas Stuart, *Malachi*, in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary* (ed. Thomas E. McComiskey; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 1342.

⁵ This is Clendenen's translation in E. Ray Clendenen, *Malachi* (New American Commentary 21a; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 363.

Vulgate preserves a reading of Mal 2:16a very similar to the majority tradition of the LXX and says, *Cum odio habueris dimitte*, or “If you hate, divorce!”⁶ Targum Jonathan is an Aramaic translation of *Nevi'im* (prophets) from sometime in the 4th–5th Century AD. It preserves a variant reading of Mal 2:16a similar to those found above and says, “For if you hate her, divorce her.”⁷

How do we account for the variant readings of Mal 2:16? The most common explanation among scholarship is that the MT is in fact closest to the original and the other variants represent later attempts either to lessen the force of the strong condemnation of divorce in Mal 2:16 or to bring Mal 2:16 more in line with particular understandings of Deut 24:1–4. For example, in her 1972 commentary on Malachi Joyce Baldwin commented on the textual variants and suggested, “Evidently the text [of Mal 2:16] suffered early at the hands of some who wanted to bring Malachi’s teaching into line with that of Deuteronomy 24:1, which permitted divorce.”⁸

Some early English Bibles followed the textual variants of the LXX and Vulgate. The Matthew’s Bible was an English translation first published in 1537 by John Rogers, Thomas Matthew being his pseudonym. Roger’s translation of Malachi was based on the Vulgate and his translation of Mal 2:16a reflects this, saying, “If thou hateth her put her away sayeth the Lord God of Israel.” The 1560 edition of the Geneva Bible had a similar reading of Mal 2:16: “‘If thou hateth her, put her away,’ saith the Lord God of Israel, ‘yet he covereth the injury under his garment,’ saith the Lord of holies: therefore keep yourselves in your spirit and transgress not.”⁹

As noted above, most English translations now fall into two categories concerning the translation of Mal 2:16. The common English translation understands Yahweh to be the subject of the first clause of Mal 2:16 with “hate” functioning as a verb and “divorce” as an object.

⁶ This reading is maintained in the Catholic Douay-Rheims version (completed 1610) which says: “When thou shalt hate her, put her away, saith the Lord the God of Israel.”

⁷ Leivy Smolar and Moses Aberdach, *Studies in Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* (ed. Harry M. Orlinsky; New York, NY and Baltimore, MD: Baltimore Ktav, 1983), 3.

⁸ Joyce Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1972), 262.

⁹ I have not maintained the older spelling found in the text of the 1560 Geneva Bible. The footnote supplied for Mal 2:16 in the Geneva Bible says, “Not that he allows divorce, but of two faults he shows which is the less.”

The “recent” English translations understand a devious husband to be the subject of the first clause of Mal 2:16 with “hate” and “divorce” serving as parallel verbs in some way (see the chart below for which versions support the “common” or “recent” translation).

In the chart below, it can be seen that most English translations prior to the last decade favor the common translation in which God is the intended subject of the verb *hate* in Mal 2:16. However, the last decade has seen momentum gaining for the recent translation. One of the earliest references in English to the recent translation is the 1881 English translation of Ewald’s 1868 *Commentary on the Prophets of the Old Testament*: “For he who from hatred breaketh wedlock, saith Yahvé Israel’s God, —he covereth with cruelty his garment, saith Yahvé of Hosts: so take heed for your spirit’s sake and be not unfaithful!”¹⁰ Powis suggested similar wording in his 1912 volume in the *International Critical Commentary* and translated Mal 2:16 as follows: “For one who hates and sends away covers his clothing with violence, says Yahweh of hosts.”¹¹ More recently in 1995 David Petersen suggested Mal 2:16 be translated, “‘Divorce is hateful,’ says Yahweh, God of Israel. ‘It is like a garment that covers wrongdoing,’ says Yahweh of hosts. ‘Preserve your vitality! Don’t act faithlessly.’”¹²

Two of the translations that favor the recent approach, the English Standard Version and the Holman Christian Standard, include textual footnotes for Mal 2:16 acknowledging debate about the passage:

ESV: Probable meaning (compare Septuagint and Deuteronomy 24:1–4); or “The LORD, the God of Israel, says that he hates divorce, and him who covers.”

HCS: Or The LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce and the one who. . .

The ESV note indicates that the translation team arrived at its conclusion based on the LXX and Deut 24:1–4. As I will show shortly,

¹⁰ Georg Heinrich August von Ewald (1803–1875), *Commentary on the Prophets of the Old Testament* (trans. J. Frederick Smith; 5 vols.; London: Williams & Norgate, 1881), 5:81.

¹¹ John Merlin Powis Smith, *Malachi* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 55–56.

¹² David L. Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi* (Louisville, KY; Westminster John Knox, 1995), 194. Petersen is Professor of Old Testament in the Candler School of Theology of Emory University.

many advocates of the recent translation perceive an inconsistency between the divorce stipulations of Deut 24:1–4 and the criticism of divorce inherent in the common translation of Mal 2:16.

II. TRANSLATION DIFFICULTIES

The grammatical arguments for and against the common and recent translations revolve primarily around the Hebrew conjunction *kî*, and the Hebrew words *sānē'* and *šallah*.

The Hebrew Conjunction kî

Mal 2:16 begins with the with the Hebrew conjunction כִּי (*kî*). The recent translations of Mal 2:16 understand *kî* in a conditional sense, thus the HCS begins Mal 2:16a as “**If** (*kî*) he hates and divorces his wife.”¹³ However, the Hebrew word *kî* can also carry a causal sense, thus the majority of translations (the LORD as the subject) begin Mal 2:16a with something like, “**For** (*kî*) I [the LORD] hate divorce.” Both the NIV and NET understand the LORD as the subject and simply leave the *kî* untranslated and render Mal 2:16 as, “I hate divorce,” says the LORD God of Israel.”¹⁴

The Hebrew verb סָנֵה (sānē')

Debate over the proper English translation of Mal 2:16a centers more specifically around the Hebrew verb סָנֵה (*sānē'*), a Qal perfect, masculine third person singular meaning “he hates.” As noted above, because סָנֵה is a third person singular, advocates of the recent approach question translating Mal 2:16a with the LORD as the subject since “the LORD” would require first person singular. So, to translate in the common sense (“I hate divorce,” says the LORD God of Israel) means that one has a first person noun connected with a third person verb. The HCS attempts to rectify this problem making an unscrupulous husband the subject of the verb “hates,” resulting in the translation, “If he hates and divorces [his wife],’ says the LORD God of Israel, ‘he covers his garment with injustice,’ says the LORD of Hosts.”

¹³ The LXX also translates the *kî* in a conditional sense. See above discussion concerning the LXX and Mal 2:16.

¹⁴ The conjunction *kî* can be adversative too, introducing a clause that expresses strong opposition.

The Hebrew Word שָׁלַח (šallah)

Debate about the English translation of Malachi 2:16 also involves how to understand the word שָׁלַח (*šallah*), which means “putting away” or “divorce.” Here in Mal 2:16a, שָׁלַח (*šallah*) is a Piel infinitive. The basic meaning is “to send away,” which is clearly used with the idea of divorce in mind.¹⁵ Both the HCS and the ESV understand “divorce” to be another verb connected with the husband, thus the translation “He [the husband] hates and divorces.” In contrast, the common view understands שָׁלַח (*šallah*) as the object of the verb “hates.”

Other Translation Issues

Other translation issues surrounding the correct English rendering of Mal 2:16a are related to the relationship between Mal 2:15 and 2:16 and the relationship between Malachi 2:16a—“I hate divorce” or “If he hates and divorces”—and the next clause in Mal 2:16 which makes reference to covering one’s garment with violence.

Clendenen’s note in the *HCS Study Bible* is not as clear as one would hope concerning the relationship between Mal 2:15 and 2:16. In the *HCS Study Bible* note, Clendenen says, “But the subject apparently is the one who ‘acts treacherously.’”¹⁶ In this context, Clendenen is referring to the subject of the second clause of Mal 2:15 (HCS): “So watch yourselves carefully, and do not act treacherously against the wife of your youth.” This phrase is repeated almost verbatim at the end of 2:16 (HCS): “Therefore, watch yourselves carefully, and do not act treacherously.” Clendenen’s point is obscured in the *HCS Study Bible* because the HCS arrangement of verses contradicts the point he is trying to make: Clendenen believes that Mal 2:15b–16 should be considered as one textual unit, a point he clearly makes in his commentary on Malachi.¹⁷ However, in the HCS, Mal 2:14–15 is set apart as one paragraph while Mal 2:16 is set off as an individual unit of thought. Because of the contradiction between the HCS’s demarcation of paragraphs and Clendenen’s comments, the average reader may find Clendenen’s explanation difficult to follow.

¹⁵ See the same word also in reference to divorce in Isa 50:1.

¹⁶ Clendenen, “Study Notes on Malachi,” 1593.

¹⁷ Clendenen, *Malachi*, 357ff. Petersen also arranges Mal 2:15b – 16 as one textual thought-unit (Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 & Malachi*, 204).

Mal 2:16 also connects divorce to a man “covering his garment with violence.” Explanations abound for the meaning of the phrase. Andrew Hill comments on the difficulties associated with the phrase and says, “The expression ‘for violence covers his clothing’ is unique to Malachi 2:16 in the MT . . . The meaning of the clause is disputed and the culling of interpretive stances among biblical commentators yields no consensus (as attested by the diverse translations in the English versions).”¹⁸ “Covering his garment with violence” possibly alludes to the practice of a man throwing his garment over a woman he intends to marry such as is seen in Ruth 4:9. The common translation understands the phrase about “covering one’s garment with violence” to be an explanation of the LORD’s hatred for divorce. The recent translations of Mal 2:16 see 2:16a—“If he hates and divorces his wife”—to be the protasis and Malachi 2:16b—“he covers his garment with injustice”—to be the apodosis in the conditional clause.

III. ADVOCATES PRO AND CON

Two professors from Covenant Theological Seminary have been very influential advocates of the recent translation of Mal 2:16: David Clyde Jones¹⁹ and C. John Collins. In a very brief 1989 article in *The Journal of Biblical Literature* titled “A Note on the LXX of Malachi 2:16,” Jones argued that the LXX rightly understood actually supports the recent translation of Mal 2:16. Jones says the correct translation of the LXX for 2:16a is not, “If you hate, divorce!” but instead should be translated, “If hating you divorce.”²⁰ C. John “Jack” Collins²¹ advocated the recent translation of Mal 2:16 in a 1994 *Presbyterion* article titled, “The (Intelligible) Masoretic Text of Malachi 2:16, or, How Does God Feel About Divorce?” Building on the previous article by his colleague Jones, Collins argues against the way the common translation addresses the oddities in the MT and instead offers his own resolution:

¹⁸ Andrew E. Hill, *Malachi* (AB 25D; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 252.

¹⁹ David Clyde Jones is now Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology and Ethics at Covenant Theological Seminary.

²⁰ David Clyde Jones, “A Note on the LXX of Malachi 2:16,” *JBL* 109.4 (1990): 683.

²¹ Collins is currently a professor of Old Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary.

Suppose we took *šallah* as a Piel perfect, with a rare but not wholly unattested *a* in the first syllable rather than the usual *i*. We would then have two asyndetic perfects following the *kî* (that is, perfects denoting consecutive past actions, without conjunction). The subject of the verbs is not specified; it is simply “he” or “someone” (presumably a hypothetical member of the restoration community).²²

Collins then argues that his resolution of the difficulties related to the Hebrew text explains the LXX reading more clearly. Thus, Collins arrives at a translation that is quite different from “I hate divorce” or “God hates divorce”: Instead, the subject of “hates” is a husband who is treating his wife badly. It is of some interest to note that Collins was also the OT chairman for the ESV translation team.

Andrew E. Hill suggests a slightly different approach to the common translation of Mal 2:16. In a manner slightly similar to Clendenen, Hill looks to Mal 2:15 to supply the subject for the first clause of Malachi 2:16. But Hill suggests that the reference to God as “the One” in Malachi 2:15 supplies the right noun for the phrase of 2:16 which he translates as following: “‘Indeed, [The One] hates divorce!’ Yahweh, the God of Israel, has said. ‘For he covers his clothing with violence,’ Yahweh of Hosts has said. So guard yourselves in your own spirit! You shall not break faith!’”²³ Hill addresses the arguments of both Jones and Collins and comments on his own translation by saying:

This reading [using the “One” from verse 15 as the subject] preserves the integrity of the MT, rendering “cosmetic surgery” of the text unnecessary . . . Furthermore, this reading reveals still another example of the prophet’s literary artistry in the juxtaposition of “The One” (Yahweh) and “sending away” (i.e., the dissolution of “one” through divorce).²⁴

The following chart summarizes the different approaches to translating Mal 2:16:

²² C. John Collins, “The (Intelligible) Masoretic Text of Malachi 2:16 or, How Does God Feel About Divorce?” *Presbyterion* 20.1 (1994): 37–38. “Asyndetic” refers to the omission of conjunctions from constructions in which they would normally be used.

²³ Hill, *Malachi*, 221.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 250.

	Common	Recent
Conjunction	Causal- “For”	Conditional – “If”
Subject	Yahweh / “I”	Husband / “He”
Verb(s)	Hate	Hates and Divorces
Object	Divorce	"His Wife" (Supplied/ Understood)
Advantage	Majority of Modern English Translations prior to Twenty-First Century	If LXX is understood in a particular way, the LXX supports
Difficulty	3rd Person verb with 1st person subject	Makes divorce another verb; Must Supply object not in text; Awkward rendering of direct speech from God.
Bibles	KJV ²⁵ (1611), ASV (1901), RSV (1952), NASB (1971), CEV (1995), NIV (1978), NKJV (1982), NRSV (1989), NLT (1996), NET (2005)	<i>The Old Testament: An American Translation</i> ²⁶ (1927), NEB (1972), ESV (2001), HCS (2004), NIV 2010
Scholarly Advocates	Walter Kaiser, Pieter A. Verhoef, Andrew Hill	E. Ray Clendenen, C. John Collins, David Clyde Jones

IV. POSSIBLE ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF COMPETING TRANSLATIONS OF MALACHI 2:16

Both the common and recent translations of Mal 2:16 place a casual attitude towards divorce in a very negative light. Advocates of the

²⁵ The 1611 edition of the KJV including the following footnote for Mal 2:16: “Or, if he hate her, put her away” (*The Holy Bible 1611 Edition King James Version* [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1982]).

²⁶ *The Old Testament: An American Translation* (ed. J. M. Powis Smith; Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1927). This version was later published with the NT edited by Goodspeed and is known as *The Complete Bible: An American Translation* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1935, 1939).

common approach understand Mal 2:16 to be a reflection of God's basic attitude towards divorce. In his major work *True Sexual Morality*, Heimbach favors the common translation of Mal 2:16 and says, "[God] truly hates divorce because he sees it as a form of violence (Mal. 2:16)."²⁷ Walter Kaiser advocates the common translation and concludes, "Yet when God emphatically states, 'I hate divorce' (Mal. 2:16), we may also gather how passionately strong is his deep desire to see that marriage covenants succeed. Everything that frustrates that goal is the object of his holy hatred—no more and no less. This statement of Mal. 2:16, however, must not be taken to mean that there is *nothing* that could provide grounds for any divorce."²⁸

Most advocates of the recent translation of Mal 2:16 find the moral application to be a warning about the destructive nature of hatred in a marriage along with the corollary practice of easy divorce. Clendenen himself follows his explanation of the HCS translation for Mal 2:16 with this moral application:

This verse specifies how wives were being betrayed. Their husbands were "hating" so as to "divorce" (a Hb infinitive) them for no legitimate reason (Dt 24:3), which was a heinous injustice. Such a cold-blooded and unscrupulous traitor to his marital responsibilities, who would deny his wife the very things he had pledged to provide—devotion, care, companionship, protection, intimacy, peace, justice (Gn. 2:24; Ex 21:10; Dt 22:13-19; Pr 5:15-20)—stood condemned by God, and he wore the stain of his crime like a garment for all to see (Ps 73:6).²⁹

In a similar train of thought, Collins concludes his article in favor of the recent translation by saying, "He who is wise will watch for the first stirrings of resentment, which might turn into dislike, and repent of it immediately, lest he deal treacherously with her whom the Lord has given to be a blessing."³⁰ Köstenberger and Jones in *God, Marriage, and Family* favor the recent translation of Mal 2:16 and assert the passage

²⁷ Daniel Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality: Recovering Biblical Standards for a Culture in Crisis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 202.

²⁸ Walter Kaiser, "Divorce in Malachi 2:16," *Criswell Theological Review* 2.1 (1987): 80. Emphasis in original.

²⁹ Clendenen, "Study Notes on Malachi," 1593.

³⁰ Collins, "The (Unintelligible) Masoretic Text of Malachi 2:16," 40.

teaches “God does not approve of divorce motivated by hatred.”³¹ Douglas Stuart favors the recent approach and concludes his discussion by saying: “Finally, what constitutes the ethical teaching of this verse? Does it really prohibit God’s people from ‘no-fault’ divorces based on ‘irreconcilable differences,’ as Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 5 and 19 also does at the very least? The answer must be that it does. . . . Aversion divorce is unfaithfulness. ‘Don’t be unfaithful!’ warn the final words of the disputation.”³² David Clyde Jones goes further and suggests the recent translation of Mal 2:16 does not weaken the moral stance against divorce, but actually strengthens it by being more definite and concludes by saying, “Divorce for ‘hatred’ is a radical breach of fidelity; it is ‘violence’ against the companion to whom one has been joined in marriage.”³³

Both approaches to Mal 2:16 communicate a strong warning from God concerning the practice of frivolous divorce.³⁴ The ethical implication of the common translation is that Mal 2:16 reflects God’s basic attitude towards divorce. The ethical implication of the recent translation is that Mal 2:16 is a warning to men who divorce their wives for frivolous and self-centered reasons. Both the common and recent translations provide a needed corrective in our society.

V. CONCLUSIONS

There are good reasons why Mal 2:16 is translated in both the traditional and recent ways. Therefore, one’s stance concerning the correct translation should not be a test for “ethical” orthodoxy. Both approaches to Mal 2:16 infer strong moral aversion to divorce. The entire textual unit of Mal 2:10–16 has several well-documented translational difficulties, but clearly criticizes the flippant attitude towards marriage

³¹ Andreas J. Köstenberger with David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundations* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 46. See also note 12 on page 404 where the authors make clear that they favor the recent translation of Mal 2:16.

³² Douglas Stuart, *Malachi*, in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary* (ed. Thomas McComiskey; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1999), 1343–1344.

³³ David Clyde Jones, *Biblical Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 192.

³⁴ The widely read Christian Ethics textbook, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, only addresses Mal 2:16 very briefly in both the 1993 and 2010 editions (John Feinberg and Paul Feinberg (1938–2005), *Ethics for a Brave New World* [2nd ed.; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010], 808, n. 43).

among men in the post-exilic community. The main concern in Mal 2:10–16 seems to be the close parallel between marriage and God’s relationship with His people. Therefore massive dysfunctions in marriage are illustrative of massive problems in the relationship with God.³⁵ More broadly, a theme within Malachi is that God’s people should give their very best to God, not their second best. Mal 2:10–16 stresses that faithfulness to one’s marriage vows is a way we give our very best to God.

A strong tradition within English Bible translations understands Mal 2:16a to say something like, “I hate divorce,” says the LORD God of Israel” or “The LORD God of Israel says He hates divorce.”³⁶ While I understand and appreciate the seriousness of those who advocate the recent translation, I favor the common approach and reject the idea that translating Mal 2:16a with Yahweh as the subject is “arbitrary.”³⁷ I do not believe the MT pointing of אָשֵׁן necessarily precludes the common translation since there is precedence for God referring to himself in the third person within the text of Malachi itself at Mal 1:9. The NRSV comes close to the intent: “For I hate divorce, says the Lord, the God of Israel, and covering one’s garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless.” Instead of being arbitrary, the common translation fits as a strong conclusion to the entire passage. Though both the recent and common translations have difficulties, I think that the common translation is in fact much closer to the intent of Malachi. I concur with Verhoef who says, “We prefer the reading according to which God is the subject, and only the Masoretic punctuation is altered to provide a participle with a suppressed personal

³⁵ I am indebted to my colleague Blake Hearson for this insight.

³⁶ In an online article, C. John Collins defends at length the ESV’s translation of Mal 2:16 and places blame for confusion about the correct English translation of the verse on the KJV (C. John Collins, “Malachi 2:16 Again.” [cited 16 Dec 2010]; Online: <http://www.esv.org/assets/pdfs/malachi.2.16.collins.pdf>). Collins says a similar thing on the Crossway Publishing website, “The translation of this verse found in the AV . . . with God hating divorce, represents a departure from the translation tradition of the previous centuries. (C. John Collins, “FAQ: Malachi 2:16,” [cited 16 Dec 2010]; Online: www.crossway.org/blog/2005/08/faq-malachi--16-collins. I find Collins’ argument here to be frustrating because he *does not* tell the reader that the “translation tradition of the previous centuries” to which he refers was confused as well.

³⁷ This is one of Beth Glazier-McDonald’s critiques of the traditional translation. See Beth Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger* (Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1987), 110.

pronoun: ‘I hate, I am hating.’”³⁸ This also makes sense when the fact that Mal 2:16a is intended to be a first person speech from the God of Israel, as is made clear in the verse as a whole.³⁹ Verhoef’s argument is partly based on the reality that both the common and the recent translations will have to supply some words to smooth out the translation. For example, consider the HCS translation of the first clause of Mal 2:16: “‘If he hates and divorces [his wife],’ says the LORD God of Israel.” Notice that words “his wife” are in brackets, indicating they have been added by the HCS translators in order to supply an object for the verb “hates”.

At the same time, Clendenen seems to be correct when he argues that Mal 2:15b–16 should be seen as one textual unit. The phrase, “Therefore, watch yourselves carefully, and do not act treacherously,” forms a kind of *inclusio* and brackets the conclusion of the entire passage, Mal 2:10–16. In this way, God’s aversion to the divorce practices of the post-exilic men is more clearly emphasized.

Perhaps some of the textual ambiguity in the passage is related to Malachi’s indignation at the men of the post-exilic community. The terse response of Malachi grows progressively more intense throughout Mal 2:10–16 reaching a crescendo with unequivocal exclamation that “Yahweh hates divorce!” The strength of God’s condemnation is reinforced by the fact that Mal 2:16 is one of only two places in the Minor Prophets where God is called, “LORD God of Israel.” Furthermore, it does not seem that a new topic is being introduced in 2:16a, which a conditional translation of *kî* could possibly, but not necessarily, infer. On the contrary, Mal 2:16 is the climax to all that has been said previously in 2:10–15, thus the causal sense of *kî* seems to be the right translation. Mal 2:16 provides the cause for God’s strong moral disapproval of the low view of marriage described in 2:10–15: Because the LORD hates divorce, your actions are wrong! Malachi blends an incisive theological critique of a sloppy approach to marriage and divorce with appropriate moral indignation—a message delivered with startlingly blunt force.

Some disinclination towards the common translation lies in the way Mal 2:16 has been abused within some churches to imply that God not only hates divorce, but He also hates divorced people. This misguided understanding of Mal 2:16 is certainly inconsistent with the broader

³⁸ Peter A. Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 278.

³⁹ Andrew Hill’s view may work better with a participle: “The One hates.” See comments above.

witness of Scripture. Jesus Christ himself demonstrated grace and mercy to a woman who had been divorced five times (John 4), clearly showing God's love for divorced people. But if the common translation is correct, then two questions of moral importance emerge: First, why does God say He hates divorce and, second, how does one reconcile the traditional understanding of Mal 2:16 with other passages of Scripture (e.g., Deut 24:1–4; Matt 5:31–32, 19:1–12; 1 Cor 7) which seem to allow for divorce in limited circumstances?

The answer to the first question lies within Mal 2:16 itself: God hates divorce because of its consequences. Specifically, Mal 2:16 says divorce “covers a man's garment with violence.” In Malachi's day, the post-exilic men treated their wives in such a terrible manner that God refers to their actions as “violent.” Thus in some way, Mal 2:16 insists frivolous divorce is itself a form of domestic violence, a moral inference one can draw from both translation approaches. I suggest the exploitation of women condemned in Mal 2:10–16 is tangent to the current exploitation of women in our culture in which men often use easy divorce as a way to exchange a faithful wife for another woman. There are also possible parallels to modern domestic violence in which a woman lives with an intimate terrorist who uses violence as a tool of manipulation.

The second question concerning the supposed incompatibility of the traditional translation of Mal 2:16 with other passages about divorce in Scripture is an often repeated objection from those favoring the recent translation. For example, one reason Gordon Hugenberger rejects the common translation is it “necessarily involves a conflict with the seemingly lenient attitude toward divorce in Deut 24:1–4.”⁴⁰ In response, it is not inconsistent for God to express His disapproval of divorce in general while allowing for divorce in narrow situations. In fact, God's moral disapproval of men “covering garments with violence” seems consistent with a narrow allowance for divorce. Davis reflects my own thoughts when he comments on Mal 2:16 and says, “While God might tolerate divorce under some circumstances (Deut. 24), he hates the sinful conditions that produce it. In this text the prophet reaches back beyond the concessions of Deuteronomy 24:1–4 to the creation accounts of

⁴⁰ Gordon P. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 65. I disagree with Hugenberger's description of Deut 24:1–4's stance towards divorce as “lenient.” While God does grant the allowance of divorce in limited circumstances, the entire textual unit is not a mandate for divorce, but is intended to be a restraint upon frivolous divorce and remarriage. See Keil and Delitzsch, 1:417–18.

Genesis 1–2 and anticipates the teachings of Jesus set forth in Matthew 5:31–32 and 19:4–9.”⁴¹ Walter Kaiser’s comments on Mal 2:16 are also helpful: “Scripture here records one of its strongest protests against divorce, the putting away of wives. In no uncertain terms, God is represented as loathing the practice and the results.”⁴²

I am sympathetic to the confusion many Christians have when they read the recent translations of Mal 2:16. Since California legalized “no-fault” divorce in 1969, marital dissolution has increased exponentially. Combined with the sexual revolution, abortion on demand, and the radical homosexual agenda, we now live in a toxic environment for the family. It is not hard to imagine the consternation of a conservative Christian who purchases a recent translation of the Bible only to discover Scripture’s strongest statement about divorce, Mal 2:16, has been changed! All study Bibles are only intended to give cursory explanations and editorial demands related to space certainly limit the extent of discussion on any text. These constraints noted, the *HCS Study Bible* itself contains several articles that give extended discussion of important issues. Mal 2:16 deserves this type of extended discussion. In its present form, the *HCS Study Bible* oversimplifies the complex debate surrounding Mal 2:16 and can do a better job of explaining the issues. The note sounds defensive and sidesteps crucial issues of genuine disagreement among translators.⁴³ The *HCS Study Bible* would better serve its intended audience by reflecting balance in its study notes on Malachi 2:16.

⁴¹ John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics* (3rd ed.; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2004), 104.

⁴² Walter Kaiser, *Malachi: God’s Unchanging Love* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 73. The recent translation owes at least a part of its substrata to the Documentary Hypothesis. I do not mean to infer that all advocates of the recent translation accept the Documentary Hypothesis. On the contrary, I am quite certain that many of them do not. But the supposed contradiction between the common translation of Mal 2:16 and Deut 24:1–4 originally emerged from the theory because a key component of the documentary hypothesis is that Deuteronomy is late, usually dated to the reforms of Josiah. Since Malachi is a post-exilic prophet perhaps around 150 years removed from Josiah’s reforms, then liberal scholarship attributes the very real parallels to Deuteronomy within Malachi to the relative late emergence of Deuteronomistic theology.

⁴³ In contrast, *The ESV Study Bible* provides a more balanced approach and nicely summarizes the ethical implications of both the recent and common translations of Mal 2:16 (Gordon P. Hugenberger, “Study Notes for Malachi,” in *The ESV Study Bible* [ed. Wayne Grudem; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008], 1776–1777).

Who Hates . . . Divorce? A Text-Critical Examination of Malachi 2:16



DANIEL R. WATSON
*Associate Professor of Old
Testament
Midwestern Baptist Theological
Seminary
Kansas City, MO 64118
dwatson@mbts.edu*

Malachi 2:16 is one of those “standard” Bible verses regarding divorce commonly heard in sermons and lessons. Most believers probably are familiar with the traditional King James-style rendering of the initial clause: “For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce” (NKJV). Still another familiar translation is represented by the NIV and the updated edition of the NAS (the NAU): “‘For I hate divorce, says the LORD God of Israel.’” However, the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) has a notably different translation: “‘If he hates and divorces his wife,’ says the LORD God of Israel.” So the KJV and NAU agree on God being the one who hates divorce, though they differ in the person of the statement (i.e., speaking of God versus God Himself speaking). In the HCSB, however, the subject of “hate” is the man doing the divorcing, and the object of the hate is the wife being divorced. Those not only are different translations, they are two different ideas.

The purpose of this article is to offer the reader some help in evaluating these translations by examining the primary evidences for the original text of this verse in the Hebrew Old Testament. This will be done by considering the options for the original reading indicated by the ancient textual evidence and their support, followed by a suggestion about which (if any) is mostly likely correct. The article then will conclude with comments about the significance of this matter for exegetical theology. It should be noted that this investigation will be a general text critical examination, not a detailed exegetical analysis.

Studies of the latter kind on this passage already are readily available, particularly in the commentaries.¹ The examination will focus mainly on the first half of the verse, since the translation of the other half does not seem to be in question. Further, the present writer has no particular personal interest in which reading of the text is correct, nor does he seek to influence readers for or against a particular Bible translation.²

I. THE CONTEXT OF MALACHI 2:16

The Book of Malachi contains the messages of and is attributed to the prophet of that name. Little is known of the author; indeed, some question whether “Malachi” is a proper name at all.³ If it is, the nearest meaning would be “my messenger.” The book generally is dated to the latter 5th century BC. This would make Malachi’s audience post-Exilic Judah, about a century after the initial return from the Exile. It also would make him a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah. The ministry of Malachi would have provided prophetic support for the reforms of both leaders.

What is the central message of the book? One reasonable suggestion would be that Yahweh continues to be a covenant-keeping God who expects covenant obedience from His people, or else there will be purging of the covenant breakers.⁴ Throughout the book, the faithfulness of the Lord stands in marked contrast with the faithlessness of His people (3:6–7). In 2:10–17, this message is developed by showing that the people were failing in their covenant obligations to the Lord by failing in their covenant obligations to one another—specifically in the area of marital fidelity. Verse 16 falls within this segment and thus is concerned with this issue.

¹ Two examples are Richard Taylor and Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, (NAC; Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 357–370; and Andrew Hill, *Malachi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New York, NY: Doubleday, 1998), 249–259.

² The writer also should emphasize that this article is not intended as a response of any kind to the piece contributed to this journal by his distinguished faculty colleague, the Rev. Dr. Alan Branch. While there has been awareness of each other’s efforts and eventual exchange of drafts by mutual interest, each article has been researched and written independently.

³ Raymond E. Brown, et. al., eds., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 359.

⁴ Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (WBC; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984), 301.

II. THE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Generally, the primary sources for establishing the reading of the OT text are the following in order of importance: the Masoretic Text (MT), Qumran (the Dead Sea Scrolls, indicated here by Q), the Septuagint (LXX), the Peshitta (Syriac translation, indicated by P), the Targums (Aramaic translations of the Hebrew text, indicated by Targ.), and the Vulgate (the “official” Latin translation of the Western Church, done originally by Jerome and indicated by Vulg.).⁵

The procedure here is simple. The readings of the primary sources will be presented and examined, with some evaluation of these readings. All translations of primary texts are those of the present writer unless otherwise stated or noted.

The MT⁶

כי שנא שלח אמר יהוה אלהי ישראל וכסה חמס על לבושו אמר
יהוה צבאות ונשמרתם
ברוחכם ולא תבגדו:

“For He hates divorce,” says the LORD God of Israel, “since it covers violence (or, violence covers) upon his garment,” says the LORD of Hosts. “So be careful in your spirit, and do not deal treacherously.”

⁵ Textual critics and exegetes may vary slightly with regard to this ranking. The one used in this article is suggested by Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament* (2nd ed.; trans. Erroll F. Rhodes; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 114. One other witness is the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP), generally considered next in importance after the MT. As its name indicates, however, it contains only the first five books of the Bible and so contributes nothing to this study.

⁶ The Masoretic Text presented here is the critical edition of the Leningrad Codex (c. early 11th century) used by most scholars in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1984), generally abbreviated *BHS*. The “fifth” edition of this work, known as *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* or *BHQ* gradually is being made available in parts. Other critical editions—such as the Hebrew University project based on the Aleppo Codex, which is about a century older—are in production but are not yet readily available for consultation for this text. Nor do there seem to be significant differences in text between *BHS* and *BHQ*.

As mentioned, the translation of the first clause given by the NKJV is “For the LORD⁷ God of Israel says that He hates divorce.” Grammatically, this seems problematic. If the clause *ky śn’ ślh* is taken as an object clause of verb *’mr*, it would be more conventional for the object clause to follow the verb of saying, not precede it.⁸ The NKJV translation also is unclear about whether the particle *ky* is a causal conjunction (“for, because”) or a conjunction introducing an object clause (“that”). It cannot be both simultaneously.

The critical apparatus of BHS suggests the text be emended to read *śn’ty*, which would make the verb first person—“I hate”—and turns what was an object clause into a quote or direct speech. This seems to be the basis of the NIV and NAU translations. Emendations, however, by definition are theoretical reconstructions and thus do not exist in the manuscripts or versions. Further, it is not at all clear how the last two letters of the proposed emendation might have just dropped out in transmission.

There might be another basis for a first-person translation. The classic reference grammar by Gesenius lists a few passages in which a participle with a pronoun subject sometimes omits the pronoun, and it cites Mal 2:16 as an example. So, it maintains, the MT should be understood to read effectively [*’ny*] *śn’*, hence “I hate (with wooden literalness, “I am hating) . . .”. But the grammar concedes that all examples listed are “more or less doubtful.”⁹

Still, it tends to be a working rule for most exegetes that emendation of the MT—which is the accepted starting point for investigation—is the last resort, something to be done only when one is convinced the correct reading has not been preserved in the available evidence.¹⁰ That may not be the case given other evidence yet to be considered.

⁷ For convenience, the present writer follows the convention of most English Bibles in representing the Divine Name (YHWH, generally given as Yahweh) by “the LORD.”

⁸ In the NIV Application Commentary, David Baker remarks that “it appears unnatural for Yahweh to speak of himself impersonally in his own direct speech” (*Joel, Obadiah, Malachi* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006], 258).

⁹ E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, eds., *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), §116s.

¹⁰ Ellis Brotzman says it well in his highly useful book on OT textual criticism: “But a case of not knowing which of two or more attested readings is original is far better (in my opinion) than the ‘unknown’ evil of suggesting an emendation that has no attestation in any manuscript whatever. In other words, it is better in these cases that exegesis rest on a plausible and attested reading than

Another point for consideration is the relation of *śn'* to the following word, *ślh*. As vocalized by the MT (*šallah*), it could be taken either as imperative or an infinitive. With the latter, *ślh* would be either the complement or the object of *śn'* "He hates [the act of] divorce." The conjunctive accent on *śn'* combined with the disjunctive accent on *ślh* indicates that the Masoretes understood these two words to go together somehow. John Collins, who argues for accepting the MT reading as it is, offers an interesting suggestion. He believes *ślh* should be read as a perfect tense verb. This would make "hate" and "divorce" two parts of a composite action, something he believes to be mirrored in Deut 24:3. The coordinating conjunction would be understood. Thus the translation would be, "he hated [and] divorced."¹¹ The suggestion does seem preferable to what has been the usual emendation.

In the MT, the first verb of the following clause (*wksh ħms 'l bwšw*) is vocalized as a conjunction prefixed to perfect tense verb, third masculine singular. BHS offers a couple of alternative suggestions: either emend the text to read *wksh* (which would make it a prepositional phrase; it is not clear how this helps), or revocalize the word to read *wakassē(h)*. The latter option—which is supported by the Kohler-Baumgartner lexicon¹²—would yield the translation "and he covered" or "he covers." In either case, it seems clear that the subject of the verb is third person. Of greater interest is the question of its relationship to the first clause. If the first clause is causal, this latter one beginning with *wksh* would be explanatory: "For . . . since." But if the first clause is conditional, then this clause would be the "then" part (i.e., the apodosis): "If . . . then." If God is the subject of the verb "hate," however, the

on no attested reading" (*Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994], 130–131). The reader should note that the term "emendation" refers to alteration of the consonantal text. Exploration of alternate vocalizations—which is what Collins' suggestion involves—is less of an issue.

¹¹ John C. Collins, "The (Intelligible) Masoretic Text of Malachi 2:16; or, How Does God Feel about Divorce?" *Prebysterion* 20.1 (1994): 38. This would require understanding *ślh* (vocalized *šallah* in the MT) to have preserved the original a-vowel under the first consonant of the verb root (cf. P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* [Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000], §52a). Markus Zehnder concurs with this proposal to some extent ("A Fresh Look at Malachi II 13-16," *Vetus Testamentum* 53.2 [2003], 254).

¹² Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Study Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 488.

former idea is the one that makes the most sense: “For He hates divorce . . . since it covers [the divorcer’s] garment . . .”.

This reading, then, provides the base line for determining the original reading. But there are other lines of evidence to consider. What do those other lines of evidence indicate?

Qumran

The evidence of Qumran comes from manuscript 4QXII^a. The suggested date for it is mid to latter 2nd century BC. The text reads as follows.¹³

כי אם שנתה שלח [אמר יהוה] אל ישראל יכסו חמס על [לבון] שי
אמר יהוה צבאות ונשמרתם ברוחכם [ול] א תבגדו

“For if you have hated (and) divorced,” [says the LORD] God of Israel, “they cover My [garment] with violence,” says the LORD of Hosts. “So be careful in your spirit and do [not] deal treacherously.”

The words contained in brackets are missing from the manuscript and thus reconstructed. This text offers an interesting reading. Instead of just *ky*, the text gives *ky ’m*, which here could be rendered “for if” or conceivably “but if.” The beginning of the verse then would be not an affirmation but a conditional statement. The letters *śnth* indicate a perfect verb in the second masculine singular, thus “you.”¹⁴ The most notable difference from the MT about this word is the absence of the letter aleph, but this happens occasionally with a verb having that letter as the final consonant of the root.¹⁵

So there are two significant points about this reading. The first is the change from the casual conjunction to a conditional one. The second, more significantly, is that it changes the subject of the verb “hate”—not only from first person to second person, but from God to the individuals being addressed in the context of 2:13–17.

¹³ This text is published with notes in Ulrich, E., F. M. Cross, R. E. Fuller, J. E. Sanderson, P. W. Skehan, and E. Tov, *Qumran Cave 4.X: The Prophets* (DJD XV; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 221–226.

¹⁴ Though normally written without the final *h*, its presence with this verb form occurs “sporadically” (e.g., Gen 21:23; I Sam 15:18; II Sam 2:26; Joüon and Muraoka, *Grammar*, §42f).

¹⁵ Joüon and Muraoka, *Grammar*, §78e.

In the MT, the word *šlh* is vocalized as an infinitive, which can have various uses and nuances in biblical Hebrew. The *Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*, an edited translation of the biblical texts from Qumran, offers this rendering: “For if you hate [and] divorce . . .”.¹⁶ This appears to take *šlh* coordinately with *šnth*, even though there is no coordinating conjunction (the prefixed particle *wə-*, “and”), just as Collins proposes for the reading of the MT.

In the next clause, this manuscript differs from the MT in its reading of the word for “cover” in two ways. It gives the verb as an imperfect instead of a perfect, and also has it as a plural instead of a singular. Further, the word for “garment” has a first person possessive morpheme instead of a third person one as in the MT (thus “my garment” instead of “his garment”). However, while the editors of this text as published by *Discoveries in the Judean Desert (DJD)* are confident in their transcription, they acknowledge that in Qumran script the letters that would distinguish the first person possessive from the third are very similar in appearance.¹⁷

The evidence from Qumran thus presents the exegete with a reading distinctively different from the MT. The major difference is that it indicates not God but the divorcer as the one doing the hating, which presumably makes the wife being divorced the object of the hating. It also gives the first half of this verse as a conditional sentence.

LXX¹⁸

ἀλλὰ ἐὰν μισήσας ἐξαποστείλης λέγει κύριος ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ καλύψει ἀσέβεια ἐπὶ τὰ ἐνθυμήματά σου λέγει κύριος παντακράτωρ καὶ φυλάξασθε ἐν τῷ πνεύματι ὑμῶν καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐγκαταλίπητε

¹⁶ Martin Abegg Jr., et al., eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999), 477.

¹⁷ Ulrich, *Prophets*, 222.

¹⁸ There are different editions of the Septuagint available, some more detailed in their presentation of variants than others. This article uses the text given in *Septuaginta* (ed. Alfred Rahlfs; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979). It is important to remember that the textual transmission of the LXX is a rich and extensive field of investigation to itself. A good introduction is provided by Karen Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000). The use made of it here thus is quite basic.

“But if having hated, you should divorce,” says the LORD, the God of Israel, “then ungodliness will cover your thoughts,” says the LORD Almighty. “So guard yourselves in your spirit and by no means desert.”

A standard procedure when considering the evidence of the versions is to retrovert (“back translate”) their readings into Hebrew to see how they differ from the Hebrew texts themselves. In this case, it would seem the Hebrew text might have started *ky 'm šn(')t šlh*. This would agree with the Qumran text. Perhaps it takes the initial clause less as conditional than circumstantial (“if indeed, since”); the word for “hate” here is not a conjugated verb but a participle. Its use as a modifier of the verb “divorce” (ἐξαποστειλής) however, indicates this participle refers to a second person subject, since that is the subject of this verb.

More intriguing are the possible meanings suggested by the mood of the verb. The form of the verb is in the subjunctive mood. It can be used for exhortation, in which case the translation would be “you should divorce.” But this sentence begins (effectively) with the conditional particle ἐάν, so it appears that this is a sentence of general condition: “If . . . then.”¹⁹ The idea, then, being conveyed is not “you ought to divorce,” but rather “if you divorce.”²⁰

The Greek text also makes another notable contribution: the word for “ungodliness” (ἀσέβεια) is in the nominative case, and thus would be the subject of the verb “will cover” (καλύψει). That differs from the MT and Q, which usually are understood to make either the divorcer or the act of divorce itself as the subject of the verb “cover.” Assuming that *hms* (“violence”) was the word in the Hebrew text being translated by ἀσέβεια, this suggests the translator took *hms* as the subject of the verb—grammatically arguable, since in the MT *hms* both follows the verb and also matches the verb’s person-gender-number referent. So the translator understood violence to be the thing which does the covering of the garment, rather than being the thing with which the garment is covered as the MT reads.²¹

¹⁹ N. Clayton Croy, *A Primer of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), §164.(5).

²⁰ David Clyde Jones has the same analysis and draws the same conclusion in his article, “A Note on the LXX of Malachi 2:16,” *JBL* 109.4 (1990): 683.

²¹ As Collins notes, however, there is no meaningful distinction between the two (“Masoretic Text,” 38). “Violence” might seem like a strong word, but Collins points out that it is used elsewhere in a domestic situation (*Ibid.*, n. 14 cf. Gen 16:5).

There are a couple of other points of interest. One is the verb *καλύψει*, which is a future tense verb in the indicative mood. This again agrees with Q, where the corresponding verb is imperfect. The two witnesses differ in the number of the verb; Q gives it as a plural while the LXX has it as singular. The other point of difference is the word *ἐνθυμήματά*. This is the word translated “thoughts,” but the standard lexicon of the LXX takes this as a scribal error for *ἐνδύματά* (“garments”), as does the most recent publication of the LXX in English translation.²² The pronominal referent also is different. It is second person, hence “your garments” instead of the MT’s “his garments.”

The LXX reading, then, adds to the evidence from Qumran that there was a reading distinctly different from the one contained in the MT. It agrees that the subject of the verb “hate” is “you,” not God. The Greek text also takes the first half of this verse as a conditional sentence. That would seem to strengthen the case in favor of the Qumran reading over the MT.

Targum²³

ארי אם סנית את לה פטרה אמר יוי אלהא דישראל ולא תכס חטאה
בלבושך אמר יוי ותסתמרון ברוחכון בנפשתכון ולא תשקרונ:

“But if you hate her, divorce her,” says the LORD God of Israel, “and do not conceal sin in your garment,” says the LORD. “So guard your spirit, your soul, and do not act deceitfully.”

Retroversion generally is unnecessary here due to the close linguistic similarity between Hebrew and Aramaic. Interestingly, the translation is “But if you hate her, divorce her.” The word for “garment” is modified by a second person possessive morpheme, thus yielding a reading in agreement with the LXX.

²² J. Lust, et al., *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (rev. ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), 204; Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Oxford: University Press, 2007), 821.

²³ The particular text here is known as *Targum Jonathan*, which may date c. 3rd century AD (Philip S. Alexander, “Targum, Targumim,” *ABD* 6:324–325). The consonantal reading is taken from Alexander Sperber, ed., *The Bible in Aramaic, Vol. 3: the Latter Prophets* (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 503.

This rendering is interesting for several reasons. To begin with, the Targum agrees with Q and LXX in taking the initial clause as the protasis (the “if” part) of a conditional sentence. But then it interprets the heart of it not as a condemnation of divorce but a concession to it, as something preferable to a situation in which a woman is hated and mistreated, or otherwise denied her marital rights under the Mosaic Law. Again, the verb “hate” is held to have a second person subject. Another point of interest lies in translating the part about “covering” as a prohibition against “concealing” sin.

That is a markedly different idea than the one usually derived from this verse. Some regard this as a case of “converse translation,” a way of making the source text say something different from what may have been intended. The purpose of such a rendering may be to bring the text in line with a theological viewpoint deemed to be authoritative.²⁴

The Targum appears to be the only avenue of a useful line of evidence from an Aramaic source. The Syriac version (Peshitta) omits the initial clause and so offers no help in this case. It must be remembered a targum is an interpretive translation and therefore can be expansionistic. But in this case the translation is markedly literal and what can be discerned from it again seems to favor the Qumran/LXX reading over the MT.

Vulgate²⁵

Cum odio habueris dimitte dicit Dominus Deus Israhel operiet autem iniquitas vestimentum eius dicit Dominus exercituum custodite spiritum vestrum et nolite despiciere

“When you have hatred, divorce,” says the LORD God of Israel. “But iniquity will cover his garment,” says the LORD of Hosts. “Guard your spirit and refuse to despise.”

²⁴ Kevin J. Cathcart and Robert P. Gordon, *The Aramaic Bible: the Targums, Vol. 14: the Targum of the Minor Prophets* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989), 235. Cathcart and Gordon note that a rabbinic discussion of Mal 2:16 can be found in the Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 90b.

²⁵ Again, readers should remember the present writer is making a simplified use of this version. The Vulgate has undergone more than one revision and “redaction” since the time of Jerome. He is identified as the translator here both out of tribute to his labors and for convenience. The Latin text being used is *Biblia Sacra iuxta versionem vulgata* (ed. Robert Weber, et al.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994).

Again, the translation here is that of the present writer, though it is very close to that of the Douay-Rheims rendering. The word *dimitte* is a simple imperative, meant to render the Hebrew *šlh*—which as vocalized in the MT, also could be taken as an imperative.²⁶ The next sentence notes a consequence that will follow: *operiet* is a future indicative tense. This suggests that the corresponding word in the Hebrew text Jerome used may have had an imperfect verb form. That would agree closely with the Quman text, differing only in the number of the verb. The Vulgate agrees with the LXX on another point: *iniquitas* is the translation of ἀσέβεια and is the subject of *operiet*. It is the iniquity that does the covering of the garments.²⁷ Retroverted to Hebrew, the reading represented by the Vulgate might be *ky šn(')t šlh . . . wyksh ħms 'l-lbwšw*, a reading closer to Q than to the MT.²⁸

So the Vulgate here seems to agree with the Targum in taking the verse as a directive that if the man hates his wife, it is preferable to divorce her. Otherwise, this version follows the LXX. This may not seem surprising, since the Greek version of the OT often was accepted more than the Hebrew text in the Western Church during Jerome's time.²⁹ It is not clear, however, that when Jerome undertook his translation work that he worked primarily from the LXX for more than a few books in the

²⁶ Jones observes that there are a few LXX manuscripts that give the verb for divorce as a direct imperative, ἐξαποστείλον, "Divorce!" ("Note," 684). But he regards this reading as secondary.

²⁷ This might surprise Greek students who have not studied Latin, since in Greek a feminine noun ending in *-ᾱς* is the accusative case (plural) for the first declension (indicating an object of the verb rather than a subject). But in Latin, *iniquitās* is a feminine noun of the *third* declension and one of a group whose nominative (subject) singular case form has an *-v̄s* ending, where *v̄* is a long vowel (Frederick M Wheelock, *Wheelock's Latin* [6th ed. rev.; ed. Richard A. LeFleur; New York: Collins, 2005], 44 n. 2). Another example of such a noun is the term that expresses the first core value of MBTS: *v̄eritās* ("truth").

²⁸ According to a Catholic website (www.vatican.va), the "New Vulgate" offers an updated version: *Si quis odio dimittit, dicit Dominus, Deus Israel, operit iniquitas vestimentum eius, dicit Dominus exercituum.* "If anyone divorces with hatred, says the LORD, the God of Israel, iniquity covers his garment, says the LORD of Hosts." This does not differ appreciably from the reading under analysis.

²⁹ Würthwein notes that when Jerome eventually resorted to the Hebrew text as the basis for his work, among his critics was none other than Augustine. In contrast to Jerome but in agreement with others of his time, the bishop of Hippo held that the LXX itself was inspired (*Text*, 96).

Writings (*Kethuvim*).³⁰ The major stage of his effort was the translation of the entire OT from Hebrew. If indeed his work on Malachi was based on whatever Hebrew text was available to him, then the Vulgate may represent another vote in support of a reading—and interpretation—different from the one given in the MT.

III. CONCLUSIONS

This article has attempted to provide the reader with information useful for evaluating the translations found in differing English versions of Mal 2:16, a verse notable for its contribution to biblical teaching regarding divorce. Based on the foregoing examination, here are some observations.

1. The weight of the evidence seems to agree that, *contra* traditional translations of the MT, God is not the subject of the verb “hate,” whether in first or third person. The subject is the man doing the divorcing. Qumran points to a second person referent, and that reading is supported by the LXX, the Targum and the Vulgate (the Peshitta, as noted, omits the clause). It is possible, however, to read the MT as referring to the divorcer in the third person. God is indeed speaking, but He either is speaking to the divorcer or speaking of him. That would seem to fit the context of 2:13ff generally and the flow of thought in particular. The word “divorce” itself should be taken not as a noun or noun-type word, but as an actual verb in coordination with “hate.” The next clause describes the consequence of this action—that “violence covers the garment,” whatever that means.³¹

³⁰ D. C. Parker, “Vulgate,” *ABD* 6:860. The Writings are the third division of the Old Testament in Jewish tradition. Though the NT usually uses a twofold designation—“the Law and the Prophets” (e.g., Matt 7:12, Rom 3:21)—the threefold division of Law, Prophets, and Writings had developed by the time of Christ (Luke 24:44; Philo, *De Vita Contemplativa* 3.25; Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.8). A listing of these books can be found in any work on general Bible introduction, OT introduction, or OT survey.

³¹ Determining the meaning of this phrase is a matter not for textual criticism but for lexical analysis. Collins mentions a suggestion from Keil: because dress reflects the inward condition of the heart, the text is saying that divorce for dishonorable reasons reveals a brutish character (“Masoretic Text,” 38). The *HCSB Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Holman, 2010) gives the same interpretation (p. 1593). Commentators provide ample discussion on the matter (Zehnder, “Fresh Look,” 265; Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, 368–369).

2. It appears that the two best options are either a reading that largely follows the MT or one that largely follows the Qumran text. Here, in the judgment of the present writer, is what the best translation of each reading would be:

MT: “Because he has hated and divorced,” says the LORD God of Israel, “violence covers his garment (or, he covers his garment with violence),” says the LORD of Hosts.

Qumran: “But if you hate and divorce,” says the LORD God of Israel, “then violence will cover (or covers) your garment,” says the LORD of Hosts.

These two translations do not differ greatly, and therefore choosing between them does not seem to be a significant exegetical-theological matter. The difference lies mainly in the opening clause. The MT takes it as causal, Q takes it as conditional. Either one fits the context of Mal 2:13–16 well. The first translation does have the advantage of leaving the MT consonantal text undisturbed. But if pressed, the present writer would be inclined to choose the Qumran reading because of its intrinsic readability, its agreement with the LXX against the MT, and a slightly better fit with the flow of thought (such as a more consistent use of second person). Another factor will be an exegetical judgment about whether God is condemning a behavior actually performed or admonishing against a behavior being contemplated.

Unfortunately, it is not clear just how the Qumran reading, if original, became “corrupted” to the one found in the MT. That, after all, is the main test for identifying the correct reading: *Which one best explains the others?*³² It is conceded readily that an argument can be made for preferring the MT on the grounds that it is the “shorter” and “more difficult” reading. The Qumran reading may seem vulnerable to the objection that it “smooths out” the text, which is what the scribal copyists—it is said—might be more likely to do.³³ On the other hand, the evidence from Qumran and the LXX is at least as ancient as whatever the

³² P. Kyle McCarter Jr., *Textual Criticism: Recovering the Text of the Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1986), 72.

³³ Fuller, after giving his own thorough analysis, votes in favor of the MT reading, believing the other readings arose out of attempts to make sense of it (“Text-Critical Problems in Malachi 2:10-16,” *JBL* 110.1 (1991): 56. Likewise, Hill apparently agrees with those who hold that the versions were “corrected” in order to conform to Deut 24 (*Malachi*, 249).

MT represents, and when they agree against the MT that is not to be discounted lightly.³⁴ The proposed reading requires no more emendation than the one apparently adopted by the NAU and some commentators. As John Collins observes, one cannot get the customary translations without altering the MT.³⁵ Indeed, technically the reading preferred here is not an emendation at all, since unlike the NAU rendering it is a reading attested by two important witnesses.³⁶

3. This study provides an apt illustration about the value of Qumran for text critical work. Evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls can call attention to a reading previously unknown, or give support from a Hebrew manuscript for a reading known previously only in a given version.³⁷ The latter is important particularly when the version is the LXX. Curiously, the *HCSB Study Bible (HCSB)* does not reference Qumran or any other textual evidence in its notes on this verse, despite

³⁴ It should be noted that the editors of 4QXII^a consider this text “nonaligned”—i.e., displaying an independent text type as opposed to an MT or LXX text type—so the Qumran and the LXX are counted as separate witnesses (Ulrich, *Prophets*, 221).

³⁵ Collins, “Masoretic Text,” 36. As was mentioned in the analysis of the MT reading, his solution is not to revise any of the consonantal text but to revocalize some of it.

³⁶ Again, another commentator states that “It is only with great difficulty and some changes” that the reading “I hate divorce [says the LORD . . .]” can be derived. Gordon P. Hugenberger, “Malachi,” *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition* (ed. G. J. Wenham, et. al.; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 887. Cf. Brotzman’s comment in footnote 10 above.

³⁷ Here is a good example. A major and widely used reference resource in biblical studies is the six volume *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, edited chiefly by the late David N. Freeman (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992). The article on the Book of Malachi was contributed by Andrew Hill. His discussion about the textual transmission of the book contains the following statement: “The published Qumran materials make no significant contribution to the Hebrew text of Malachi” (4:480). This was true when *ABD* was published, as the Qumran text of Malachi was not published in *DJD* until five years later. Years later, however, when Hill wrote his commentary on Malachi for the *Anchor Bible* series—published a year after the Qumran text appeared in *DJD*—he takes 4QXII^a into account in his textual analysis (*Malachi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB; New York, NY: Doubleday, 1998], 249ff). Still, he chooses his own reading of the MT over the Qumran text.

reaching the same conclusions given here about translation.³⁸ More curiously, this also is true of commentaries written in recent years.³⁹

4. Among expositors, exploration of the various options for the reading of the text has led to two major opinions about the nature of its exhortation. One sees Mal 2:16 as based upon the Deuteronomy passage and thus in harmony with it, and therefore not to be taken as an absolute prohibition against divorce. The other sees the passage as based—in a manner similar to the pronouncement of Christ in Matt 19—upon the original creation of man and woman in Gen 2 (cf. Mal 2:15), and thus much more stringent.⁴⁰

5. But whatever the reading, translation, or interpretation, it seems safe to say that this passage is clear that God is not a fan of divorce, and none of the possible translations indicated by the textual evidence teaches otherwise. Even the Targum and Vulgate translations actually do not favor such a suggestion, since their language reflects the stipulations of Deut 24:1ff. That text is not a *carte blanche* for divorce at will, but a provision for divorce as a regrettable expedient when (to use a popular expression) “life happens”: as the Lord noted, human hearts can be hard (Matt 19:3–8).

Unfortunately, there are those who exploit such a provision for selfish or otherwise dishonorable reasons at the expense of their spouse.⁴¹ Those individuals appear to be the target of Malachi’s indictment. Further, the description “the wife of your *youth*” in Mal 2:14–15 suggests the offenders specifically might be older men who were abandoning their wives of presumably similar age for younger, more appealing women—something not unknown in contemporary culture. Another possibility is that these men were abandoning Judean wives for foreign women with whom marriage was deemed more advantageous for some reason (cf.

³⁸ HCSB, 1593.

³⁹ Baker, for example, does not incorporate 4QXII^a in his text critical analysis of v. 16, even though his commentary appeared almost a decade after the Qumran manuscript was published in *DJD*.

⁴⁰ Taylor and Clendenen would be advocates of the first opinion (*Haggai, Malachi*, 359), while Hill favors the second (*Malachi*, 250–251).

⁴¹ As the Gospels indicate, this had become a considerable controversy by Jesus’ day. When the Pharisees questioned Him about it (Matt 19:1ff and Synoptic parallels), they essentially were asking the Savior to “arbitrate” a difference of opinion between the schools of two great Tannaitic rabbis, Hillel and Shammai. Readers can find the Talmudic discussion (*Gittin* 90a–b) online at the following URL: http://www.halakhah.com/gittin/gittin_90.html. The discussion of the interpretation of Deut 24:1ff, and Mal 2:16 is cited toward the end. Among the participants are notable sages such as Akiva and Meir.

Ezra 9:1–2; Neh 13).⁴² On the other hand, to take this passage as a stringent condemnation of divorce under any circumstances probably is an overreach, as such a view is difficult to reconcile with the rest of the OT.⁴³ Or with the NT: even Christ seems to acknowledge infidelity as legitimate grounds for ending a marriage. Paul, while firmly upholding marriage as a lifelong commitment, also allows divorce when there is abandonment by an unsaved spouse (1 Cor 7:10–16).

This text, then, clearly upholds the general biblical teaching that God places a high sanctity upon marriage and expects His people to do so as well. The Lord expects His faithfulness to them to be modeled and mirrored in marital fidelity to their spouses. This is an important element for His blessing upon their home: it is difficult to miss the thematic continuity between Mal 2:13 and the NT admonition that marital strife undermines the effectiveness of prayer (1 Pet 3:7).

⁴² Zehnder, “Fresh Look,” 255.

⁴³ This caveat is shared by other commentators as well, e.g., Taylor and Clendenen, *Malachi*, 359; Zehnder, “Fresh Look,” 253–254.

Bell's Hell: A Dialogue With *Love Wins*



RUSTIN UMSTATTD
*Associate Academic Dean and
Assistant Professor of Theology
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Kansas City, MO 64118
rumstattd@mbts.edu*

The evangelical world is all a twitter (literally) with the release of Rob Bell's book *Love Wins*.¹ For many it is a bold, Emergent declaration of God's love triumphing over evil, while for others it is merely repackaged Protestant Liberalism. It is my hope in this review to move beyond the labels that either side uses, labels that will leave most readers scratching their heads anyway about what exactly is Protestant Liberalism or the Emergent Movement. Instead, I want to focus on both the positive things that Bell has to say, and also those areas where he misses the point of the Biblical story, or leaves out part of the story, or appears to intentionally mischaracterize people who are discussing the issue of heaven, hell, and the fate of every single person on earth. Before we get into the heart of the review, it might be helpful to give a brief overview of the author, Rob Bell.

I. WHO IS ROB BELL?

Rob Bell is the forty year old founding pastor of Mars Hill Bible Church, the author of several books including *Velvet Elvis* and *Drops Like Stars*, and is probably most recognized for his prolific *Nooma* videos. He is an influential pastor that has had and is having an impact upon the evangelical landscape, and as such his book *Love Wins* must be addressed, as in it Bell sets out to establish the fate of every single person who has ever lived. As a side note to the title, the word "fate" is probably a poor choice given the fatalistic baggage that the word carries, and in

¹ Rob Bell, *Love Wins* (New York: HarperOne, 2011).

light of Bell's clarion call that a person's future is completely in his or her own hands. There is no outside force dictating a person's fate.

Bell was educated at Wheaton for his undergraduate degree and at Fuller Theological Seminary for his M.Div. He is a wonderful communicator and knows how to speak to his postmodern culture, and it is this ability to connect people with his message that proves to be one of the difficulties in reviewing his book. He knows how to strike the right chords in a person, but I don't think he ends up playing the right melody by the end of his song, at least when it comes to hell and judgment.

II. THE BIG PICTURE THAT BELL PAINTS

So what is the big picture of Bell's new book? To begin with, one must embrace two foundational assumptions to follow Bell on his journey. The first is that God loves everyone and desires everyone to be saved. While most Christians will follow Bell in this position, others will want to argue that God only loves the elect. For the latter sort Bell's book can be dismissed by the end of the first page. But if you are not willing to follow that path, then you will have to continue reading.

The second foundational assumption for Bell is that people are free at any time, before or after death, to turn to God. This freedom is absolute and is neither limited by any outside force, nor is it predicated upon a clear presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. A person can turn to God without explicit knowledge of Jesus, for all that is needed is a desire for truth, justice, and righteousness. The desire for these things will lead a person home. While God is the source of goodness and offers goodness to people, he does nothing in the person to enable them to come to him. In other words, Bell rejects the doctrine of total depravity and opts instead for a Pelagian, or at best semi-pelagian, understanding of human nature. Bell does not explicitly say this in the book, but the sum total of his argument leads one in this direction. His lack of discussion about the effect sin has upon a person's very nature given Paul's repeated claims that people are enslaved to sin is a decided weakness of the book. The issue of how enslavement to sin impacts a person's ability to come to God underlies the entire discussion of the book, but Bell never clearly addresses the issue, and in so doing leaves the reader to guess what his position is.

With these two foundational beliefs Bell sets out to show that at the end of the story, most, if not all people, will come home to God. He bases this upon the twin assertions that repentance is possible post-mortem and that all judgment is remedial and never retributive. Since God loves everyone and desires all to be saved, he will pursue people for

eternity, if need be, to have them repent and come home. Bell seems to believe that no one will be able to outlast the love/judgment of God, and therefore in the end everyone will come around to God's love, but he does leave open the real possibility that someone could resist God forever. It is this possibility that leaves Bell open to a confused understanding of this age and the coming new age, a confusion that results in a clash of the ages that ultimately leaves the new age's arrival in the hands of rebellious humans.

III. WHAT ABOUT THE FLAT TIRES Or, the art of deconstruction

In the first chapter of the book, Bell is at his postmodern finest. Now don't take that as a criticism against him. One thing that postmodernity does well is deconstruct established paradigms. It has a way, like sand, of getting into the tiniest cracks and slowly opening them up and exposing the structural fault lines in a person's belief. It is a position of skepticism, which can be helpful at times, but ultimately leaves a person only with deconstruction and no construction. Deconstruction is relatively easy, you just tear things down. Construction on the other hand takes more skill and precision, more patience, and a greater eye to detail. This is why youth groups often do demolition work on mission trips and adults do construction work.

One thing Bell does well in his book is ask questions, deconstruct. In almost every chapter the reader is bombarded with questions piled on top of questions like a wonderfully large deli sandwich. In many a good turn of phrase he is able to capture the questions that skeptics, as well as believers, are asking, or are wanting to ask, or don't know they should ask. By his raising these questions he allows a person who might have these questions, but be afraid to ask them, a chance to get an answer. Alas, however, he leaves many of his questions unanswered, like so much left over sandwich that was too big to finish. It looks appealing on the front end, but Bell does not seem to be up to task of finishing the sandwich he built. Nevertheless, the questions are still valid ones that deserve an answer, and those people who are asking questions also deserve answers, but this is an area where Bell and I may tend to disagree as to what the answers are.

Bell states in the preface of his book that "ancient sages said the words of the sacred text were black letters on a white page—there's all that white space waiting to be filled with our responses and discussions and debates and opinions and longings and desires and wisdom and

insights.”² I wonder if for Bell the white space is not more important than the black letters. While the white space opens up room for dialog, the dialog should point us toward an understanding of the black letters. Words on a page have meaning, they are not free floating texts that can be interpreted as the reader desires. While a reader-response approach is clearly the hermeneutic of choice for the postmodern age, it is also clearly a hermeneutic that does not seek meaning, but opinion. The quest for knowledge, while perhaps enjoyable and enriching is not the same as arriving at the knowledge after which one quests, any more than a road trip is the destination. Bell appears to value the journey as much as the destination, but in so doing he leaves the destination undefined and the signs on the road have no clear meaning, but are only spaces meant to elicit discussions and questions. This approach to textual meaning might work well in Starbucks as one sits safely with a group of friends, but ignoring a red light at a busy intersection can have disastrous results. Semi-Trailers don't care much for what one's opinion is of the variegated meanings that can be inferred from the color red. Semi-Trailers simply plow through the intersection when they have a green light. Red lights have meaning and black letters do also, and ignoring the meaning of either for the joy of open debate and free discussion can ultimately be disastrous.

When Bell asks about flat tires hindering missionaries from getting the gospel to a group of people in his first chapter he is asking the question about how people come into a saving relationship with God. Bell adeptly shows the complex and varied ways in which people come to God in Scripture. From being let down through a rooftop by friends, to crying on Jesus' feet and wiping them dry, Bell reveals the richness of the biblical narrative and leaves the reader aware that there is no formulaic method of coming to God. There is no fixed paradigm that a person must follow, no standard prayer that one must pray to come to God. In presenting this multidimensional picture of how people come to God, Bell asks the simple question what if the missionary who is heading to a village to tell them about Jesus gets a flat tire? What happens to those people in the village? Bell never answers the question, but suggests that God has it covered somehow. What Bell fails to wrestle with is God's providence over creation. Bell presents the flat tire as if it throws a kink in God's plan as it related to the gospel being presented. Since a flat tire happened, those people will perhaps need to come to God through some other mechanism than a clear gospel presentation.

² Bell, *Love Wins*, x.

Additionally, Bell struggles with the concept of the many and the “few.” And by the ‘few’ Bell is pejoratively talking about the understanding that wide is the gate that leads to destruction and many are they who take it, while narrow is the gate that leads to life and few there are who find it. While I sympathize deeply with Bell’s concern over the many, and we should all feel this concern for people, it is Jesus himself who talked about the narrowness of the way. And Jesus who says that only a few will find it. So for Bell to use this phrase in the rhetorical fashion that he does is simply disingenuous. At the least, he should address why Jesus would use this type of language and why in fact the road is not narrow and those who find it are not few, if indeed it is not and they are not. What exactly did Jesus mean by this phrase? Bell does not address this verse. This is but one example of a pattern in the book in which he does not address those verses that cause his position difficulty. By ignoring verses though, one is not embracing the whole story of Scripture. It would have been more helpful if Bell was upfront with those verses that point away from his conclusion, even if he only admitted that he does not know what to do with them. At the least, he would leave the reader with the full story of what Scripture presents, but as it is, he leaves the unsuspecting reader only hearing a partial account of the biblical evidence. This selective use of scripture is a problem for both liberals and conservatives, for both moderns and post-moderns, and it is a practice that should be avoided by all people who want to hold that the entire Bible is needed for a full picture of our doctrinal positions.

One highlight of the chapter is that Bell introduces a recurring theme that appears throughout the book, and that is the tension he sees in the North American church between orthodoxy and orthopraxy, right belief and right practice. Bell is concerned because he sees many people who claim to be orthodox in their beliefs, but seem to have little or no concern for the suffering in the world. To Bell’s credit, he is deeply concerned with what the church is doing for “the least of these” among us. He is not willing to leave his spirituality as an internal reality that refuses to see suffering in the world and do nothing about it. While I agree with Bell that there are people and churches that have orthodox beliefs, but are unconcerned with the suffering in the world, this caricature cuts across the belief spectrum. While Bell wants to imply that if a person embraces the traditional view on hell, then most likely they will not care about the suffering in this world, he never proves this point, and I don’t think that he can. Nevertheless, his call for the church to reach out to a hurting world with the love of Christ is one that we all need to hear and take seriously. All of us, both individually and as churches, should take a

long, hard look at our budgets to see if in fact we are unduly neglecting those who are suffering in this world.

IV. HERE IS THE NEW THERE Or, how Bell got it Wright and wrong

In Bell's second, and what I feel to be his best, chapter in the book, he describes his view of heaven. If you ever read the wonderful book by N.T. Wright called *Surprised by Hope* you will find much familiar here. Bell asserts that many people (a rather vague phrase that Bell throws around quite often) have an escapist understanding of heaven, in which we get saved in this world only in order to have our ticket punched for the next one. With this perspective, people place all their future in this "other" world and sit back to await the arrival of the bus that will take them to that location. The bus could either be their own deaths or the return of Jesus, but either way, they are simply biding time until they go to the shiny, bright new place. Bell counters this perspective with one in which this fallen, broken age is renewed, recreated in the new age. There is a strong overlap between these two ages, while there is also a stark difference. What Bell wants to emphasize is that our eschatological perspective should impact our current ethic. What we think about the future will impact how we live today, and from this perspective Bell wants to urge a life of present concern for the weak and suffering in this world. Bell is nothing if he is not concerned for those who are down trodden in this life, and for that he should be applauded, regardless of his position on hell.

The Bible is clear that God has a soft spot for the weak and those suffering from injustice in this present world, and that we are called as his people to do something about it now, in this life, and not merely to await a glorious future in which suffering will be vanquished for good. While there is coming an age in which God will wipe the tears from every eye, we are not to sit idly by waiting for that time, but are to be wiping those tears ourselves, even if it makes us cry in the process. Love is costly, love is painful at times, but God has called us to love the world that he loves, to suffer for the world as his Son suffered for the world. As David Platt has written, God has called us to a radical life of service for Him. (As a side note, I wonder if Bell would lump an author like David Platt in with the caricature he creates of those who endorse the traditional view of hell as uncaring of this present world). This eschatological ethic can have a deep motivational factor as we seek to bring God's love and justice into a dark world. There are times when we might be tempted to

give up in the face of darkness, but we can rest assured that one day justice will roll down like waters and cover the earth. It is this eschatological hope of a better dawn that impels us to continue the struggle in the dark night to reveal that dawn, however imperfectly and fragmentary the revealing might be, in the present time. I give Bell a hearty amen to his concern for this present world and his ethical connection between the coming age and present age in which we live.

While I found most of what Bell says in this chapter to be quite helpful and inspiring, there is chaff among the wheat, and it is the chaff that is directly related to Bell's thesis about the fate of every single person who ever lived. So while I think he gets heaven right, he plants the seeds for his thesis in this chapter and so we need to uncover those seeds to see exactly what might grow from them.

First, Bell presents the story of the rich young ruler in an attempt to describe how a 1st century Jewish person would understand heaven not as some other place, but as life in the age to come. It is not Bell's description of heaven though that is the problem, but his truncation of scripture. Let me quote Bell directly in order to show you what I mean. When describing Jesus' answer to the rich young ruler about what he needs to do to have eternal life Bell writes that, "Jesus then tells him, "Go sell your possessions, and give to the poor, and you will have treasures in heaven," which causes the man to walk away sad, "because he had great wealth."³

If a person did not pick up the Bible to check and see if that is what Jesus said they would not have a problem with Bell's quote, it sounds right, and in fact it is right, just not complete. If one looks at the entirety of Jesus' statement one finds the following. "'If you want to be perfect,' Jesus said to him, 'go, sell your belongings and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me.' When the young man heard that command, he went away grieving, because he had many possessions."⁴ It is the final clause, the "come, follow me," that is truncated.

Bell might be assuming that if the rich young ruler sold his possessions he would in fact be following Jesus, even if he did not physically follow Jesus. Bell does not say this though, he merely leaves the reader with a partial quote. Now while it might be acceptable in the world of political talk radio shows and TV pundits to selectively quote people to score political points, it should have no place in our formulation of doctrinal beliefs. If Bell's move is innocent, it leaves his

³ Ibid., 29

⁴ Matt 19:21-22

readers with the picture that all Jesus demanded of the rich young ruler was to give up his greed and selfishness, when in fact Jesus also added the stipulation that the rich young ruler needed to follow him; both are necessary, the selling of his goods and the following of Jesus. The rich young ruler could not follow Jesus without selling his possessions, but conversely, it does not appear that he could sell his possessions and by so doing claim that he was following Jesus. Jesus' command to follow comes on the heels of the command to sell and is a separate, albeit connected, command. In order to have eternal life the rich young man must sell everything, give up his idol in other words, and follow Jesus. He must turn from his false idol to the true God. If all he did was give up his former idol by selling his possessions, but refused to follow Jesus explicitly, then another idol would arise in the place of Christ and the man would be back in the same position, if not a worse one.

Another bit of chaff in this chapter is Bell's assertion that "heaven has the potential to be a kind of starting over. Learning how to be human all over again."⁵ The problem that Bell creates for himself with this statement is that he is clear that in the new heaven and new earth there will be no injustice or evil. Bell writes that heaven is "a real place, space, and dimension of God's creation, where God's will and only God's will is done. Heaven is that realm where things are as God intends them to be."⁶ I believe Bell is referring to that heaven to which we go in the intermediate state between death and resurrection that will one day be manifested completely on this earth when heaven and earth come together in the new age. Bell describes this new age as "the day when earth and heaven *will be the same place*."⁷ If Bell is correct—and I think that he is—that in the new age there will not be any evil or injustice, then he has a problem with how people can be in the new age and still have desires that are contrary to God's will.

Bell asserts that heaven has teeth and sharp edges for those who are not ready for it. He gets this idea from C.S. Lewis' book *The Great Divorce*, but unlike Lewis, Bell thinks most people will return to heaven from hell. But Bell's real problem in his understanding of how the Day of the Lord impacts humanity comes when he expands Paul's imagery in 1 Corinthians 3 of a believer's work for the kingdom being judged by fire to include all of humanity. In context, Paul is addressing how a person builds upon the foundation of Christ that was laid in the Corinthian church. A person should check his work to make sure it is not

⁵ Bell, *Love Wins*, 50.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

wood, hay, stubble, but instead precious stones. The fire at the end of the age will test the believer's work, and if the work has value it will pass through the fire, while if the work does not have value it will not survive, but the person will escape as one jumping through fire with only his own life. Bell expands this fire to include all of humanity, a universal purgatory in other words, and in so doing he argues that each person will pass through this fire and have his or her evil burned off. Of course, in Bell's system a person could choose to remain in this fire for all eternity.

Bell posits an end time conflagration that will prepare people for the new age. The new age is on the other side of the fire and so to get to the new age one has to pass through the fire. Bell further asserts that much of the confusion about heaven "comes from the idea that in the blink of an eye we will automatically become totally different people who 'know' everything. But our heart, our character, our desires, our longings—those things take time."⁸ It would appear that Bell is willing to have people in the new age, in the age where only God's will is done, who have desires and longings that are not fully in line with God. But how can this be if in fact in the new age only God's will is done? Bell has confused our present sanctification, in which we are seeking to throw off the sin that so easily entangles, and our future glorification, in which the entanglements of sin are removed completely. In so doing, he has left the arrival of the new age, where God's will is completely done, in the hands of humans who are completely free to accept or reject God.

As long as one person holds out against God the new age cannot fully dawn and God cannot put an end to injustice. So in Bell's effort to keep everyone out of hell, he has also potentially kept everyone out of the new age also. I simply disagree with Bell that heaven, the new age, is the slow burn of a divine do over? When Christ returns he puts down evil decisively and it is this exclusion of evil and all who do evil from the new age that demands, not a slow burn, but the consuming fire of which Peter spoke in his second letter. God is not a divine chauffeur who will wait endlessly for people to stop being evil before he removes evil from his creation, but quite the contrary, God will end evil on his own timetable, not ours. It is our job to be awake and watchful for his return, and so show ourselves as wise and not foolish. This does not mean that God is unloving, but that God is so loving that he will not allow injustice to continue indefinitely, but will bring it to a decisive end.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

V. HELL
Or, now! and later?

I love to buy candy when I go to the movies. ‘Now and Laters’ are one of my favorites. Rob Bell’s conception of hell fits well with the brand-name of that candy with a few punctuation changes. For Bell, hell is Now! And Later? As Bell unfolds his argument for hell, one is tempted to rise to his feet and applaud how he describes the deep desire that we have for a God of wrath who judges the evil in the world. In our post-judgmental culture we prefer to ignore those things that cry out for judgment, but when rape, genocide, murder, or child abuse rear their demonic heads in our faces we long for someone to put an end to these crimes, to restore the victims and bring justice. Bell sounds the clarion call that deep down people need and crave a God who is not apathetic to the evil in the world, and unless one thinks that Bell only majors on the high profile sins, he also says that each of us in our own ways, from our dismissive eye rolls to that well-placed verbal jab that cuts so deep, adds to the misery and suffering in the world. No one is exempt from the defendant’s dock.

We have all created hell on earth! Hell is indeed Now! All you have to do is turn on the TV to see that, whether it is the news or our voracious appetite for entertainment that glorifies evil. Bell is clear that there is hell on earth Now, but he is not sure if there will be hell Later. He gains this perspective on the future harrowing of hell from a multitude of passages from the Bible that speak of a final restoration of the earth, a grand coming home of God’s rebellious creation. There is a famous poem called *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and one of the lines reads “water, water, everywhere and all the boards did shrink.” I feel much the same way about how Bell uses Scripture in this chapter, “texts, texts everywhere, and all the contexts did shrink.”

Bell routinely offers the reader a single verse to prove his point, but fails to consider the wider context of the verse. As one example, Bell highlights that Ezekiel 16:53 says Sodom will be restored, and this gives him confidence to say that restoration is available for all people. In context, however, Ezekiel is talking about the collective nation of Israel, both in how it committed greater sins than Sodom and how it would be restored. It is clear though that not everyone in the nation was restored, but only a few. Bell disregards this context and suggests that this verse shows that Sodom, and by this he means every single person who ever lived in Sodom throughout time, would be restored. While this might be a possible interpretation of the passage, although I highly doubt it, he

never addresses that Ezekiel is talking about Sodom as a collective entity, and therefore every single individual might not be in view. It is clear that the nation of Israel would come back into the Promised Land from this passage, but that does not include ever individual. There were many Jews that died in Babylon and never saw the restoration promised in Ezekiel 16.

In all the verses he mentions he see a pattern of judgment leading to restoration. He then applies this to each and every individual in the world. God's judgment is always for restoration according to Bell, but he ignores those passages in the Bible where judgment does not lead to restoration. Furthermore, Bell's confidence in judgment always leading to a person or nation repenting is unfounded. Bell uses Jeremiah 5:3 to show that judgment is for correction, but what he does not address is that they refused correction. In spite of this verse, Bell is confident that if God cranks up the correction/judgment pressure enough that everyone will eventually give in. But this assumption is not based upon the biblical text, but instead upon Bell's own hope that people would eventually succumb and allow themselves to be saved.

Bell clearly describes God actively bringing judgment to a sin filled world. On the Day of the Lord God will say ENOUGH to injustice and all those who practice it. He will bring judgment. Bell also posits that all judgment is meant for restoration. All judgment is motivated by love for the person being judged. It is in this light that he can talk about God's love eventually melting every human heart and breaking down all resistance through painful judgment.⁹ But what I would like to know is if a person feels love as judgment, as sharp and painful, what would make them melt and return to God, what would make them see the judgment as love? Would they not see this love/judgment as torture, as God forcing them to do something they do not wish to do, and if that is the case, would they not become more steeled against this God who is loving/judging them? While I would affirm with Bell that we should desire and hope that every person would succumb to the love/judgment of God, the Bible does not show us that they will, but that there will be people who will never see God's judgment as love, but only as judgment. They will never see his judgment as remedial, but only retributive.

⁹ Bell, *Love Wins*, 106.

VII. DOES GOD GET WHAT GOD WANTS? Or, rhetoric meets reality

In a great flourish of rhetorical prowess Bell begins his fourth chapter by describing church websites that affirm that the unsaved will be separated from God for all eternity. After lightly mocking these doctrinal affirmations by saying “welcome to our church,” he goes on to say that these same church websites talk about the love and greatness of God. He points out these apparently contradictory declarations to ask the question, “Does God get what God wants?” I agree with Bell that God desires all people to be saved, but I strongly disagree with his use of rhetoric in this chapter. The manner in which Bell establishes his questions leads the reader down a path to conclude that if God is indeed great then people could not be in hell at the end of the story, for if they were then God is not great or loving. In fact, Bell asks, “is God our friend, our provider, our protector, our father – or is God the kind of judge who may in the end declare that we deserve to spend forever separated from our Father?”¹⁰ The not so subtle hint from Bell is that God is indeed not a judge who would declare that we should spend an eternity separated from him, but Bell’s rhetoric does not match his reality for he clearly states that if a person wants to remain away from God for all eternity they are free to do just that. God will love/judge them for all eternity.

While Bell’s rhetoric presents God one way, his reality about the very nature of God points in a different direction. So the false rhetorical dichotomy that Bell establishes between God as father and God as judge falls apart under his own construction. According to Bell, God is indeed the type of father who will eternally declare that we deserve to spend forever separated from him. So while Bell wants to caricature how people who believe in the traditional doctrine of hell understand God’s nature, he ends up in the exact same place, but somehow feels better by having asked the question. I guess asking the question can make you feel better, but the proof is in the pudding, and the pudding of God’s nature that Bell makes has a God that will eternally punish a person.

As Bell runs through all the options of what happens after a person dies from judgment with no hope of change, to a person completely losing the image of God, to annihilationism, and finally, to his own position of endless opportunities of repentance, he finally arrives at the

¹⁰ Ibid., 102

conclusion that love wins. It feels though that Bell has stacked the decks. If a person returns to God then love wins, but if a person rejects God forever then love wins. Let me explain. For love to be love, it has to allow the other person to be free to reject or accept love. I am sure you remember the poster with some animal on it, take your pick of your favorite pet, which says if you love something let it go, if it comes back to you it was meant to be. That is the picture that God has hanging up in his room under Bell's scheme, it is not a pet in the picture though, but each one of us. Love demands freedom to not love, so God has to let people not love him. At the end of the story Bell believes all people will come home, but he can't say this with supreme confidence, because maybe it was not meant to be, maybe people won't love God in the end, but even if they don't, love wins because God honored their freedom. Of course, that does not feel much like winning to most people and it is not consistent with the rhetoric that Bell pursues, but it is the conclusion that he has to reach given his assumptions.

Bell's conception of love having to be free to reject the other in order to be truly love also has other difficulties. If one were to apply this criterion to the Trinity, then the Son must be free to reject the Father if the Son is to truly love the Father. In essence, God must be able to deny Himself in order to truly love Himself. On a human level, there could be no assurance that in the new age people will not turn away from God, for as Bell asserts for love to truly be love one must be able to reject the beloved. I assume that Bell sees this as true in this age and in the next. The problem with this position, as I see it, is that perfect love casts out fear, that love never fails. If in the new age we cannot fall away from God because all evil is removed, then we cannot cease to love him. Therefore, a love that can walk away, that can reject the beloved is a broken, defective love. Bell's idea that love, true love, must be able to reject the beloved simply will not hold as a universal truth for all time.

I want to mention one final thing Bell does in this chapter that betrays his ignorance of history at best or a clear intent to deceive at worst. I want to give Bell the benefit of the doubt, so I am going to assume he is ignorant of Martin Luther's position on post-mortem repentance. As Bell argues for the possibility of a person repenting after death he calls upon Martin Luther to support his position. Bell writes, "In a letter Martin Luther, one of the leaders of the Protestant Reformation, wrote to Hans von Rechenberg in 1522 he considered the possibility that

people could turn to God after death, asking: 'Who would doubt God's ability to do that?'"¹¹

It seems harmless enough until you actually read the letter that Martin Luther wrote. In the letter Luther is addressing the question of whether or not a person can come to God apart from faith. Luther is clear that a person cannot come to God apart from faith, but he does further entertain the question of whether or not God could give a person faith after they die. Let's hear Luther in his own words. He writes,

It would be quite a different question whether God can impart faith to some in the hour of death or after death so that these people could be saved through faith. *Who would doubt God's ability to do that?* No one, however, can prove that he does do this. For all that we read is that he has already raised people from the dead and thus granted them faith. But whether he gives faith or not, it is impossible for anyone to be saved without faith."¹²

Two things are clear from this fuller quote, one is that Luther does not really entertain the possibility that people will repent after death and the other is that even if someone did repent after death it would be because God gave them faith to do so. In Bell's understanding of how love operates God cannot give a person faith in order to believe, because this would jeopardize the freedom of love. Yet again we see Bell truncating a quote to fit his agenda. It is historically inaccurate and unfair to imply that Luther is on the side of Bell, when in context Luther's quote not only renders Bell's assertion fallacious, but also undermines Bell's own understanding of faith.

VIII. DYING TO LIVE

Or, substitute another metaphor for substitution

In the fifth chapter Bell argues that we need to embrace the rich array of metaphors that the Bible presents in regard to the atonement. The atonement is cast in terms of ransom, victory of evil, cleansing from sin, reconciliation, and sacrifice, but it is the last one with which Bell takes issue. He argues that in our culture we do not understand the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, and as such it is a metaphor that will not

¹¹ Ibid., 106

¹² Martin Luther, "A Letter to Hans von Rechenberg," (*Luther's Works* 43; ed. and trans. G. Wienke and H. T. Lehmann; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 54 (italics mine).

easily be grasped by people. He further states that the writers of the New Testament explained the cross in language and metaphors that they understood. The point is not to focus on one metaphor as the right one, but to let each metaphor contribute to the total picture. I wholeheartedly agree with Bell on this, but one gets the feeling that he dispenses with the sacrificial metaphor, which is the basis for the substitutionary atonement, a bit too quickly. He does not seem willing to allow this metaphor to have as much room in the total picture as the Biblical writers give it.

From this reduction of substitution Bell moves to challenge the idea that on the cross Jesus in some way rescued people from God. Bell writes:

Many have heard the gospel framed in terms of rescue. God has to punish sinners, because God is holy, but Jesus paid the price for our sins, and so we can have eternal life. However, true or untrue that is technically or theologically, what it can do is subtly teach people that Jesus rescues us from God. Let's be very clear, then: we do not need to be rescued from God. God is the one who rescues us from death, sin, and destruction. God is the rescuer.¹³

Bell is right that God is the rescuer, but he fails to consider that God is also rescuing us from the just judgment that we should receive from God from our sins that bring destruction and misery into His creation. Paul says as much in Romans 3:26 that by Christ's death on the cross he became a propitiation for sins so that God could be both just and the justifier of those who have faith in Christ. Our sin does not create a merely horizontal, anthropocentric problem, but it also creates a vertical, theocentric one as well. Because God is holy he cannot pass over the damage we have done to his creation. God is too good and loving to allow injustice to stand. God is love though, and so God himself steps into time in the incarnation to achieve that which humanity could not achieve, the reconciliation between a holy, righteous, loving God and fallen, rebellious sinners. In the cross God both upholds his holiness and his love.

While Bell has much that I don't agree with in this chapter, he does beautifully portray the biblical truth that we must die in order to live, that a seed must be buried in the ground before it can grow into new life. At times his writing sings and it is at those moments that I thoroughly enjoy

¹³ Ibid., 182.

Bell and find myself caught up in his message. To give a brief example, Bell writes:

He [Jesus] calls us to let go, turn away, renounce, confess, repent, and leave behind the old ways. He talks of the life that will come from his own death, and he promises that life will flow to us in thousands of small ways as we die to our egos, our pride, our need to be right, our self-sufficiency, our rebellion, and our stubborn insistence that we deserve to get our way.¹⁴

Now those are words to stir the soul, but after the soul has been stirred, one has to ask just how we go about doing all this dying. It is at this point that one wishes Bell would address Paul's claim in Romans 7 about how before he came to Christ he wanted to do good, but couldn't and the very things he did not want to do he did. Paul said he found himself enslaved to sin and asked who would deliver him from this body of death. The answer for Paul comes in Romans 8 where it is Christ through the Spirit that frees the sinner from his slavery.

Bell, however, offers no such answer, at least not directly. He leaves the reader with the impression that Jesus' death did something, although it's hard to determine exactly what it accomplished. Instead, Bell sidesteps a person's allegiance to Jesus and posits that one should be committed to doing good in order to die so as to truly live. It reminds me of the song from the old Christmas cartoon *Santa Claus is Coming to Town* in which a young Kris Kringle gave a choo-choo train to the Winter Warlock. After the evil Warlock received the train he asked Kris how he could change from being such an evil person to a good one, and Kris tells him it is as easy as putting one foot in front of the other and soon you'll be walking out the door. At least that is how the song goes: One step at a time, one good deed at a time, one choice at a time, and you will find that you have died and are now living the life that Jesus offers. This sounds good, right, and helpful, especially when set to a catchy tune, whether it's coming from Santa Claus or Rob Bell, but the Bible does not tell us that we must pull ourselves up by our moral boot straps in order to be saved. It tells us repeatedly that we are trapped in sin and need someone to rescue us, to free us, to deliver us. The Bible tells us we cannot do this for ourselves, but for Bell I think the cross functions for humanity much like the choo-choo train did for old Winter Warlock. It

¹⁴ Ibid., 136.

lets us know that we can change, but does not actually give us the ability to do so. We must find that ability within ourselves.

IX. THERE ARE ROCKS EVERYWHERE Or, what does Emeth have to do with Aslan?

In a chapter in which Bell borrows heavily from both C.S. Lewis and Clark Pinnock, without mentioning either though, we learn that an explicit allegiance to Christ is not necessary to be in Christ. Bell agrees with Karl Rahner that there are a large number of anonymous Christians in the world; people who are in fact followers of Christ, but have no idea that they are such. C.S. Lewis in the final book in the Narnia series entitled *The Last Battle* presents a scene in which Emeth, a person who had outwardly served the evil Tash all his life, but inwardly strived to be righteous and honest, finds himself in the presence of Aslan, who he believed all his life was the enemy. Emeth, realizing the truth, is prepared to be judged by Aslan, but finds instead that Aslan accepts him into his kingdom. Aslan tells Emeth that all the good deeds he did in the name of Tash were actually in service to Aslan. Emeth responds that he had been seeking Tash all his days, but Aslan tells him that in truth he had been seeking Aslan. Bell believes at the end of the story there will be many Emeth's standing before Jesus.

In order to ground this doctrine in the Bible, Bell has an interesting interpretation of 1 Corinthians 10:4 in which Paul writes that the rock that followed the Israelites during the desert wanderings was Christ. The story of the rock that gave water is found in Exodus 17. This story, interestingly does not say anything about the rock moving with the Israelites from place to place. Paul, however, says the rock followed the people and the rock was Christ. Paul was drawing a parallel between crossing the Red Sea and baptism, and the drinking from the rock and the Lord's Supper in order to warn the Corinthians that their baptism and participation in the Lord's Supper was not a guarantee that they would not be judged by God. Bell, however, takes Paul's statement about the rock that followed the Israelites and interprets it to mean that there are in fact rocks everywhere. No one in Exodus 17 knew the name of Jesus, yet he was there as lifesaving water. Bell states, "Paul finds Jesus there, in that rock, because Paul finds Jesus everywhere."¹⁵ This is indeed a bold claim to make given that Paul was not inclined to see Jesus in the pagan worship of the Corinthians' past, nor in the worship of those he

¹⁵ Ibid., 144.

encountered on Mars Hill. Paul did not confront people with the message that they already knew God, they just needed to get his name right, but that they were enemies of God and needed to come to him for salvation.

In effect, Bell wants to connect the immanence of God in His creation, with the various religions found throughout the world, at least the ones that appear to be morally upright. Since God is everywhere, that means that as people tap into their religious nature they will find God. Paul, however, argues in Romans 1 that although people have a true knowledge of God they suppress the truth that they have and become idolaters. He does not say that they become authentic worshippers of the true God. Bell must address this passage from Paul in his attempt to convince us that other religious/spiritual paths are valid expressions of worship from God's perspective. This is especially needed from Bell given the Bible's repeated warnings about worshipping other gods. I, like Bell, have deep questions about what happens to the unevangelized. I struggle with the tension between God's holiness, justice, and love, and humanity's sin. It would be comforting to adopt Bell's perspective, to believe that there are rocks everywhere that are secretly Christ, but I don't think the Bible gives us grounds to see all these rocks as manifestations of Jesus Christ, by another name

X. THE GOOD NEWS IS BETTER THAN THAT Or, a good story isn't always a true story

In his final chapter Bell wants to argue that the story he has presented in his book is a better story than one which says large numbers of people will end up in hell for eternity. On one level I agree completely with him, in that I too long to see everyone return to God. The question though is not what story we think is better, but what story the Bible actually tells. Bell's omission of the large number of verses that speak of people being in hell for eternity or his straining attempts to reinterpret verses to fit his agenda simply do not convince. In the end, the Bible leaves us with a tension that we cannot resolve. God loves everyone, but there will be people who do not return to God.

As Bell explores his understanding of the good news, he employs the parable of the Prodigal Son to show that what ultimately separates people from God is an unwillingness to trust their Father's version of their story. Both the prodigal son and his older brother are confronted with the father's version of how he loves them. The prodigal must put away his own version of the story in which the father has rejected him because of his sin and embrace the truth that he is indeed his father's son. The older

brother must put aside his bitterness at his father accepting the younger son back into the family. He must come to realize that all the father has is his and that he could have had a fattened calf party at any time. To arrive at this conclusion, Bell adopts the position of Karl Barth that God has already forgiven everyone; all someone needs to do is realize this truth.

In employing the parable of the Prodigal Son Bell does two things. The first is to have both the prodigal and the older brother at the party. It is being at the party that makes hell so hellish for the older brother. Bell also continues his confused intertwining of this fallen age and the coming new age. I am not sure which heaven/hell Bell is discussing in this section, whether he is talking about the heaven/hell that is now present on earth or the coming new age heaven/hell. It is this confusion that I believe will lead most readers to assume Bell is talking about the final coming together of heaven and earth. If this is the case, then many people will have a version of the new age in which people who reject God, who don't want to trust him will be intermingled with those who do trust God. In turn this will lead to a new age in which there is still suffering and rebellion. In Bell's last chapter though he uses imagery from other parables that speak of separation; goats being sent away, wedding guests turned away, and outer darkness. Bell needs to clarify which image goes with which age.

In this final chapter Bell also seeks to show that both our badness and our "goodness" can keep us from God. The younger brother must realize that he is forgiven and the older brother must realize that his "goodness" does not earn the father's love. This love can only be embraced by trust. Bell writes,

Your deepest, darkest sins and your shameful secrets are simply irrelevant when it comes to the counterintuitive, ecstatic announcement of the gospel. So are your goodness, your rightness, your church attendance, and all of the wise, moral, mature decisions you have made and actions you have taken. It simply doesn't matter when it comes to the surprising, unexpected declaration that God's love is simply yours. There is nothing left for both sons to do but to trust.¹⁶

The question that lingers for me at the end, though, is what exactly Bell wants his readers to trust?

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 187-88.

Does he want them to trust in the message of Jesus as their Savior and Lord?

Or maybe it's that we should seek beauty?

Or is it that we should seek love?

Who gets to define love anyway? Does the Buddhist's definition work, one in which ceasing to love frees one from the entangling desires of this life?

Or what about the love that says only love those who love you? That love?

Or maybe it's the kind of love that makes us tingly inside, but doesn't lead to action? That love?

Would love of country qualify as a valid love? Or maybe love of family? Or love of hot dogs?

Which love?

What love?

Whose love?

Maybe we are to trust in God's love? And if it is God's love, then which god?

And what would that god's love look like, so that when I see it I can trust it?

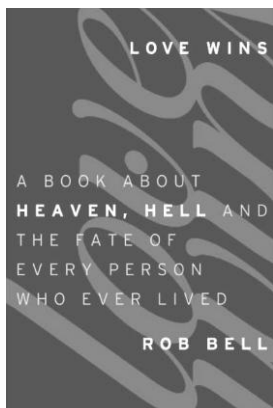
Maybe Bell would answer yes to all these questions, maybe he wouldn't, and therein we see the major problem with Bell's book. He leaves his reader with no clear direction to God. He leaves the reader to respond with his own interpretation of what God demands, with his own definition of love, with his own god in which to trust. The reader is then left to hope that this undefined trust will be sufficient in the end. While this postmodern reader response plays well in our culture, ultimately red lights have meaning that is extrinsic to our opinion. Bell has left his readers hoping that their understanding of the shade of red will get them

through the busy intersection that is ahead for each of us. I prefer to hold to the belief that:

If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. With the heart one believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth one confesses, resulting in salvation. Now the Scripture says, No one who believes on Him will be put to shame, for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, since the same Lord of all is rich to all who call on Him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how can they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe without hearing about Him? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How welcome are the feet of those who announce the gospel of good things!¹⁷

¹⁷ Romans 10:9-15

Cutting-Edge Obsolescence: Rob Bell's Reliance on a Long-Discredited Universalist Rendering of Matthew 25:46 in *Love Wins*



RONALD V. HUGGINS
Associate Professor of NT and Greek
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Kansas City, MO 64118
rhuggins@mbts.edu

In his new book, *Love Wins*, popular pastor Rob Bell repeats a number of familiar Universalist arguments. The present note focuses on one of these that is particularly problematic. It has to do with Bell's interpretation of Matthew 25:46, where Jesus concludes his teaching on the separation of the sheep from the goats by saying "Then they [the goats] will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life" (v. 26). Bell claims that "the Greek language" in that passage refers to "an *aion of kolazo*"¹ which, he says, ought to be translated not "eternal punishment" but "a period of trimming" or "a time of pruning." Bell asserts that the "word *kolazo* is a term from horticulture" and that it "refers to the pruning and trimming of the branches of a plant so it can flourish." Before getting started discussing Bell's proposed translation we need to set a few things straight in relation to what he seems to think is going in the Greek. In the first place, the word in the passage usually translated either "eternal" (e.g., ASV, NASV, RV, RSV, NRSV, NEB, NLT, NAB, NIV, ESV, *The Message*²) or "everlasting" (e.g., Tyndale,

¹ Rob Bell, *Love Wins* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), 91.

² Eugene H. Peterson, who, by the way, plugs Bell's book on its dust jacket, has Christ say in *The Message* that the fate of the goats is "eternal doom." Interestingly even the translators of *The Inclusive New Testament*, who felt compelled to discretely remove all gender references to the Whore of Babylon

Bishops, Geneva, and Great Bibles, KJV, NKJ, Goodspeed) is not the noun *aion*, as Bell seems to think, but the adjective *aionios*. The distinction is meaningful, but we won't be spending time on it in the present note. Also, the word he translates "pruning," "trimming" is not *kolazo*, which is a verb, but the related noun *kolasis*. Now that we have gotten the words turned round right we are in a better position to investigate the connection between Bell's statements and those of older Universalist sources. One source from the nineteenth century that comes to mind is M. J. Steere's 1862 book *Footprints Heavenward: Or Universalism the More Excellent Way*, which says:

The leading idea of the word *kolasis* is, then, that of pruning, correction. And I submit whether, to speak of endless *pruning* or endless *correction* of a *hopeless* soul, at the hands of the perfect God, were not *absurd*...Certainly, the punishment which is *corrective* cannot be *endless*. The word *kolasis* is used to express punishment, nowhere else in the New Testament. Under the definition above given, it takes the adjective, *aionion*, most naturally, as an indefinite modifier, merely expressing the fact that the punishment will continue, till its object is fully gained.³

Although Bell's interpretation was common among 19th century Universalists, he could also have gotten it from some more recent advocate of universalism like William Barclay, a writer well known for his popular Daily Bible Study Series. *Kolasis*, Barclay wrote,

was originally a gardening word, and its original meaning was pruning trees...*Kolasis* is remedial discipline. *Kolasis* is always given to amend and to cure...*Aiōnios kolasis* is therefore the disciplinary punishment, designed for the cure of men, which may last throughout many ages, and which only God can give.⁴

from their translation of the book of Revelation due to their conviction that "The offending phrases—'Whore of Babylon' and 'Great Prostitute'—are both sexist and genderist"—calling her "it" for example in 17:5—were still willing to consign the goats "to eternal punishment" in Matt 25:46 (Priests for Equality, *The Inclusive New Testament* [Oxford: AltaMira, 1996], xv).

³ M. J. Steere, *Footprints Heavenward: Or Universal Salvation the More Excellent Way* (Boston: James M. Usher, 1862), 331-32.

⁴ William Barclay, *The Apostles Creed* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998 [1967]), 189. Barclay describes himself as a "convinced universalist" in his *A Spiritual Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975),

Notice how Steere had stated that *kolasis* refers specifically to “punishment which is corrective,” and Barclay, to “remedial discipline...always given to amend and to cure.” Barclay explains the rationale behind this claim by appealing to Aristotle:

In Greek there are two words for punishment, *timōria* and *kolasis*, and there is a quite definite distinction between them. Aristotle defines the difference; *kolasis* is for the sake of the one who suffers it; *timōria* is for the sake of the one who inflicts it (*Rhetoric* 1.10).⁵

If *kolasis* referred to pruning *and* to punishment of a kind strictly limited to corrective or remedial action, then clearly Bell and the Universalists might well have a point about the way Matt 25:46 ought to be rendered. And there was a time when Universalists could confidently refer their readers to trusted non-Universalist sources for support. Should a late 19th century Universalist, for example, want to make the point Barclay and Bell are making all he would have had to do is point his readers to the 1882 7th edition of Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott’s massive and magisterial *Greek-English Lexicon*, where they would find the verb *kolazo* defined as “Properly, *to curtail, dock, prune*” and *kolasis* as “*a pruning or checking the growth of trees.*” He would also find in the entry for *kolazo* the following note on Aristotle which seemingly confirmed what Barclay would later say:

The difference between *κολάζω* [*kolazo*] and *τιμωρέομαι* [*timoreomai*] is stated in Arist. Rhet. 1.10, 17, to be that the former regards *correction of the offender*, the latter *the satisfaction of the offender*.

By the time the 9th edition of Liddell & Scott appeared in 1940, however, the situation had changed. The words “Properly, *to curtail, dock, prune*” were dropped from the definition of *kolazo*, to be replaced by “a drastic method of checking the growth of the almond-tree.” As for *kolasis*, the definition “*a pruning or checking the growth of trees,*” was shortened to read instead “checking the growth of trees,” with the additional clarification: “esp. almond-trees.”

58, where he also gives this same argument in defense of his Universalist position (p. 60).

⁵ Barclay, *Apostles Creed*, 189.

In addition to all this the entire reference to the distinction between *kolazo* and *timoreomai* (i.e., *timōria* and *kolasis*), along with its supportive appeal to Aristotle, were removed. This change of opinion reflected in Liddell & Scott signaled an apparent loss of confidence concerning an assumed historical connection between *kolazo/kolasis* and *kolos* (“docked”)/*kolouo* (“to dock,” “prune”). Liddell & Scott had originally derived their affirmation of this assumption from their German source, Franz Passow’s *Handwörterbuch der griechischen Sprache*. In the earliest edition of Liddell & Scott I have access to (1848), they are very confident about the connection, saying in reference to *kolazo* that it is “No doubt akin to *κολούω* [*kolouo*]” and as a result “strictly to *curtail*, *dock*, *prune*.” In subsequent editions the “No doubt” was downgraded to a “Prob. [Probably],” and then, ultimately, dropped altogether.

I cannot help but suspect that part of the difficulty lay in the fact that the only examples offered where there was any sort of clear horticultural connection with *kolazo/kolasis* derived from a single author, namely Theophrastus of Eresos (3rd/4th cent. BC), and in particular to a passage in a work where he used *kolazo* in a sense in which the concept of punishment appears already to be there. Consider Arthur Hort’s Loeb Classical Library translation of the crucial passage where *kolazo* is used: “Into the almond tree they drive an iron peg, and, having thus made a hole, insert in its place a peg of oak-wood and bury it in the earth, and some call this ‘punishing’ the tree, since its luxuriance is thus chastened (ὁ καὶ καλοῦσί τινες κολάζειν ὡς ὑβρίζον τὸ δένδρον).”⁶ More directly, that final phrase would read something like: “which some call ‘to punish,’ as the tree was running wild.” It is primarily this passage that provided the current edition of Liddell with its revised definition “a drastic method of checking the growth of the almond-tree.” And please note that Theophrastus’s language has more to do with *stunting* growth than, to recall Rob Bell’s words, “the pruning and trimming of the branches of a plant so it can flourish.”

Unfortunately some outdated works continue to exercise influence on New Testament scholars. If you go online for example to the Perseus Project and look up *kolazo* on their online version of the Liddell & Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, you will be told the old story about the verb probably being derived from *kolos*, akin to *kolouo*, and that it means “to *curtail*, *dock*, *prune*.” The reason for this is that even though Oxford University Press keeps reprinting that lexicon, it has not updated it since 1889. The Perseus Project version says the same thing as my own 1975 reprint. Both are derived from the 1882 full-sized 7th

⁶ Theophrastus, *Enquiry into Plants (Historia plantarum)* 2.7.6 (LCL).

edition of Liddell & Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*, and both are out of date at this point.

Similarly older works that continue to exercise influence over interpreters of Scripture also continue to give currency to the older view. An example is Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, which again derives *kolazo* from *kolos*.⁷ Happily all three editions (1957, 1979, 2000) of the most authoritative lexicon of New Testament Greek, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BDAG), says nothing about "pruning," nor for that matter about any sort of horticultural background for *kolazo* and *kolasis*. Nor do they assert a historical connection between these words and *kolos/kolouo*. Furthermore, the 3rd edition actually moved a step beyond the 2nd by explicitly addressing the appeal regularly made to Aristotle in order to establish, as Barclay said, that "*Kolasis* is always given to amend and to cure."⁸ That Aristotle's distinction implies what Barclay and older editions of Liddell & Scott claimed has always been conspicuously false.⁹ One need only recall statements using the verb or noun in cases where the total destruction of the individual being punished is in view in order to see this, as for example, when 4 Macc 8:9 uses *kolasis* as follows: "If you provoke me to anger by your disobedience, you will compel me to the use of dreadful punishments (*deinai kolasesin*) to destroy each and every one of you by torture."¹⁰ Liddell & Scott did well by dropping the claim about the Aristotelian distinction and it is somewhat disappointing to find that a scholar like

⁷ "κολάζω, κόλασις," *TDNT* 3:814.

⁸ William Barclay, *The Apostles Creed* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998 [1967]), 189. Barclay describes himself as a "convinced universalist" in his *A Spiritual Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 58, where he also gives this same argument in defense of his universalist position (p. 60).

⁹ Liddell and Scott appear to have taken the claim over from Passow, who had written in his entry for *kolazo*: "Den Unterschied zwischen *κολάζω* u. *timwrew* bestimmt Arist. Rhet. 1,10,17. So dass *κολ.* von der Züchtigung zur Besserung des Fehlenden, *τιμωρέω* von der Strafe zur Aufrechthaltung des Rechts u. Gesetzes gebraucht wird." This Liddell and Scott translated as follows: "The difference between *κολάζω* and *τιμωρέομαι* is stated by Arist. Rhet. 1.10, 17 to be, that the former regards *the correction of the offender*, the latter *the satisfaction of the offended*." It does appear though that Liddell and Scott adjusted their translation to reflect more accurately what Aristotle said, the German focusing more on the maintenance of law and order generally, whereas Aristotle was actually speaking about the satisfaction of the wronged.

¹⁰ *OTP* 2:553.

Barclay was out of date in his discussion. In any case, as was said, the following clarifying comment has been added to the entry for *kolazo* in the 3rd edition of BDAG: “Aristotle’s limitation of the term *κόλασις* to disciplinary action Rhet.1,10,17 is not reflected in gener[al]. usage.”

There is of course much more that could be said about Rob Bell’s attempt to translate “eternal punishment” in Matt 25:46 as “a period of pruning.” Since the mention of “eternal punishment” for the goats there is followed immediately by a contrasting mention to “eternal life” for the sheep, we are left wondering how we are to translate the latter. Would Bell prefer that we render it “a period of life” to go along with “a period of pruning”? And if so what happens after that? Do the sheep and the goats trade places? Furthermore, how are we to correlate Bell’s suggested translation to the departure of the goats into the “eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” a little earlier in verse 25? Should we regard that as a refining fire and look forward hopefully for the eventual salvation of the devil and his angels? Bell doesn’t say. Our point in the present note has simply been to attempt to demonstrate that Bell and his precursors have been working with information that has been known in some circles at least to have been inadequate for more than seventy years now, and this, we would suggest, weakens the credibility of their arguments significantly.

Where Is Exhortation in Hebrews? Discourse Analysis and Genre Division in the Epistle to the Hebrews



TODD R. CHIPMAN

Ph.D. Student (New Testament)

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Kansas City, MO 64118

toddchipman@yahoo.com

I. (WHIMSICAL) INTRODUCTION

Marcos could not imagine a happier day. Bright sunshine illuminated the park and ΠΠΟΣ ΕΒΠΑΙΟΥ put a spunk in his stride. Marcos, a Master's student at the local seminary, had enrolled in an exegesis of Hebrews course. Early in the semester the professor challenged the students to memorize the text in Greek. Mustering the courage, Marcos set out on what would become for him an assignment of pleasure.

As Marcos listened to the text on his iPod while walking that crisp October morning he was greeted by William, a fellow student at the seminary. William was working on his PhD in NT literature, and happened to be out for a jog that beautiful fall morning.

"Hey, Marcos! Good to see you," William said. "What are you listening to?" he asked as he gasped between deep breaths.

"I read Hebrews in Greek on my iPod recorder," Marcos replied, "and now I can listen when I exercise or drive or whatever. Dr. Rubenstein challenged us to memorize the text in Greek and promised a pizza party for whoever could finish by the end of the year."

"Are you in exposition or exhortation?" William asked.

Marcos gazed back with a grey stare. “Uh, I don’t know. It’s talking about Melchizedek as high priest and that we can go to God through Him.”

William, still breathing deeply from his jog, broke the awkward silence, “Uh, well, you’ll get to it later. It’s all genre shifts with Hebrews, exposition then exhortation, back and forth. First and second person pronouns, subjunctives, imperatives, warnings, that’s how things fit together. Well, have a good walk, Marcos. I’ll see you around.”

William set out again on his jog. Marcos stood for a moment, and noticed that clouds had just begun to form on the horizon.

II. HEBREWS’ STRUCTURE AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Among the modern proposals regarding the structure of Hebrews, few have received as much attention as the genre-division scheme(s) most recently associated with discourse analysis. In his informative survey of the structural approaches to Hebrews, Barry C. Joslin takes the reader through eight proposals.¹ He concludes with an affirmation of George H. Guthrie’s visual presentation of Hebrews’ structure according to discourse analysis, noting Guthrie’s argument that the author shifts from exposition to exhortation repeatedly throughout his discourse.

Guthrie calls his work a “text-linguistic analysis.”² In short, he proposes that several types of cohesion fields, along with inclusios, indicate shifts in the discourse; these become his methodology for investigating Hebrews.³ The body of his proposed structure can be summarized as alternating units of exposition/exhortation: 1:5–14/2:1–4; 2:5–18/3:1–4:13; (4:14–16 overlap); 5:1–10/5:11–6:12; 6:13–20 unmarked; 7:1–10:18/(10:19–25 overlap)/10:26–13:19.⁴ Guthrie suggests

¹ Barry C. Joslin, “Can Hebrews be Structured? An Assessment of Eight Approaches,” *CBR* 6.1 (2007): 99–129.

² George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis* (SNT 73; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 45.

³ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 144. The influence of Guthrie’s analysis is seen in D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *Introduction to the New Testament* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), who comment concerning Hebrews: “Perhaps the most detailed and consistent outline is that of Guthrie” (598). Likewise Peter T. O’Brien states in the introduction of his recent commentary, “The outline I have adopted in this commentary follows that of Guthrie, with minor variations . . . He has made a substantial contribution to our understanding of Hebrews’ structure, and to date his treatment is the most satisfying approach” (*The Letter to the Hebrews* [PNTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010], 34).

that these genre divisions serve the overall hortatory purpose of the letter but maintains that each genre plays a distinct role in Hebrews.⁵

In his analysis exposition and exhortation remain independent to the degree that each has its own center. He labels Heb 8:1–2 as the expositional center: “Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man” (NAS). The hortatory center is found in the warning passage in Heb 6:4–8:

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.⁶

It is noteworthy for the purpose of this study that the sections Guthrie labels as “exhortation” are grounded in the famous “warning passages” of Hebrews.⁷ He gives special emphasis to these in his outline, placing them in capital letters, and bold, underline, and italic fonts. For Guthrie, Hebrews clearly identifiable exhortations never occur without a warning passage: **WARNING:** Do Not Reject the Word Spoken Through God’s Son! (Heb 2:1–4); **WARNING:** Consider the Power of God’s Word (Heb 4:12–13); **WARNING:** The Danger of Falling Away from the Christian Faith (Heb 6:4–8); **WARNING:** The Danger of Rejecting God’s Truth and God’s Son (Heb 10:26–32); **WARNING:** Do Not Reject God’s Word! (Heb 12:25–29).

But Guthrie is not the first to apply discourse analysis methodology to Hebrews. Previously Linda L. Neeley employed Robert E.

⁵ Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 115–16, 143.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 144. For an overview of theological interpretations of Hebrews’ warning passages, see Herbert W. Bateman IV, ed., *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2007).

Longacre's⁸ linguistic approach in her "A Discourse Analysis of Hebrews."⁹ Neeley, like Guthrie, is concerned to distinguish the parts which comprise the whole of Hebrews. She proposes four criteria for recognizing embedded discourse units: (1) change in genre; (2) transition introductions or conclusions; (3) use of relatively rare linguistic devices; and (4) evidence of the unity of the preceding embedded discourse.¹⁰ Neeley's genre analysis of Hebrews is comprised of several embedded discourse units: 1:1–2:18, exposition (save 2:1–4, which she calls a hortatory introduction to chapter two); 3:1–4:13, exhortation; 4:14–6:20, exhortation; 7:1–28, exposition; 8:1–10:18, exposition; 10:19–39 exhortation; 11:1–40, exposition; and 12:1–29, exhortation.¹¹

Cynthia L. Westfall¹² has followed Neeley and Guthrie in attempting a discourse analysis of Hebrews, emphasizing systemic-functional linguistics.¹³ Westfall proposes that linear and vertical relationships must be examined in a text by noting: (1) the author's noun and verb choices within a grammatical system; (2) the connectives which create units of thought; (3) the use of lexis in grouping; (4) semantic emphases; and (5) repetition.¹⁴

Analyzing linear and vertical relationships Westfall recognizes divisions organized around the triplet of hortatory subjunctives in Heb 4:11–16 and 10:19–25. She labels these sections the "thematic peaks" of the discourse,¹⁵ and notes that each plays a significant structural role in the development of the author's argument. Westfall proposes that Heb 4:11–16 provides a summary of the discourse to that point and at the same time points forward to the author's next theme. Likewise, Heb

⁸ See especially *The Grammar of Discourse* (New York, NY: Plenum Press, 1996).

⁹ Linda L. Neeley, "A Discourse Analysis of Hebrews" (OPTAT 1.3–4; Dallas, TX: SIL, 1987). In brief, Neeley follows Longacre's view that four primary systems of information organization carry a discourse: (1) the combining of sentences into larger units; (2) the function of these units; (3) distinction between backbone, or primary, and support material; and (4) semantic organization; (1–4).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹² Cynthia L. Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning* (LNTS 297; London: T&T Clark, 2005).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39–55.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 300.

10:19–25 summarizes the author’s flow¹⁶ of thought and lays a foundation for the remainder of Hebrews. Westfall thus concludes that Hebrews has three main sections, divided by the two aforementioned units of hortatory subjunctives: “The occurrence of the hortatory subjunctive involves thematic repetition so that each occurrence is linked to one of three themes: ‘let’s hold on to the confession’, ‘let’s go forward spiritually’, and ‘let’s draw near to God’.”¹⁷ Westfall thus does not divide the epistle by genre as categorically as her predecessors. She notes the significance of specific grammatical forms which have prominence when compared to the rest of the discourse, but maintains that Hebrews is mono-generic.

Neeley, Guthrie and Westfall have contributed to the structural analysis of Hebrews by opening new arenas of research. No longer does it seem sufficient to follow the various themes of the discourse. One must investigate how those themes are articulated in light of the author’s arrangement of repeated words and phrases, marked grammatical forms, and internal literary genre.

Here it will be argued that as τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως, “this word of exhortation” (Heb 13:22), Hebrews resists genre division as a part of its structural analysis. This is so for at least two reasons. First, AH states toward the conclusion of Hebrews that the whole of his discourse is exhortation. Thus setting certain sections as the loci of exhortation, at the exclusion of the rest of the discourse, is to extricate portions of the text which AH wished to be viewed as hortatory in character. Second, the fact that Hebrews resists genre division can be seen in the variety of opinions about supposed genre shifts in the text at both the micro and macro level. Three scholars have applied similar discourse analysis methodologies to Hebrews. They often identify embedded discourse units in the same location, but they diverge in labeling those units as exposition or exhortation (or overlap). It will be argued that this lack of agreement results from some discourse analysis proponents’ attempts to identify units as exposition when AH composed a singularly hortatory discourse.

The present study is not an exhaustive treatment of discourse analysis and Hebrews, nor of the broader structural approaches,¹⁸ nor the

¹⁶ After, the convention “AH” will signify the longer phrases “the author of Hebrews” and the like.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 298.

¹⁸ For an historical survey of the more prominent approaches, see Joslin, *Assessment*. For the influence of discourse analysis approaches even upon thematic approaches to Hebrews structure, see e.g., Paul David Landgraf, “The

continuing debate of whether Hebrews is an epistle or a sermon.¹⁹ The focus here is genre division and discourse analysis, and even this should be considered a feeble introduction to the matter.

III. THE GENRE OF HEBREWS AS τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως

Hebrews resists genre division because AH states that the whole of his discourse is “this word of exhortation” (τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως, Heb 13:22). The genitive singular παρακλήσεως in Heb 13:22 functions as the direct object of the verb ἀνέχεσθε, “bear with,” thus, “bear with this word of exhortation.”²⁰ AH sees his discourse holistically, using τοῦ λόγου in the singular. This accords his statement in the following phrase, that, “I have written to you briefly” (διὰ βραχέων ἐπέστειλα, [Heb 13:22]). Though often cited as a point of humor, as if AH suddenly grew sarcastic at the end of his discourse, one should take his statement in the context of the pastoral tone of Hebrews. What pastor, hoping to encourage his congregation, does not want to say more than the limitation(s) of the situation may allow? AH considers his exhortation brief.

Though not employing discourse analysis methodology, Lawrence Wills is among those proposing cycles of genre shift between exposition and exhortation in Hebrews.²¹ He observes generic shifts within other ancient texts, including the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, and among the Church Fathers, 1 Clement and Ignatius’ epistles Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, and Philadelphians.²² To validate dividing Hebrews between exposition and exhortation, he points up the fact that

Structure of Hebrews: A Word of Exhortation in Light of the Day of Atonement,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts* (LNTS 387; ed. Richard Bauckham et al.; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 19–29.

¹⁹ David Aune, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment* (LEC 8; ed. Wayne A. Meeks; Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1989), 197–98, 213–4; George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 24–25; Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (PNTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 20–22.

²⁰ Here a second person plural imperative of ἀνέχω. The verb takes the genitive as the direct object, as it does in 2 Tim 4:3, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine (τῆς ὑγιαίνουσας διδασκαλίας οὐκ ἀνέξονται).”

²¹ Lawrence Wills “The Form of the Sermon in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity,” *HTR* 77:3–4 (1984): 277–99.

²² *Ibid.*, 291–92.

“in a description of the liturgy for the ordination of a bishop, the Apostolic Constitutions calls the address (from Heb 13:22) ‘words of exhortation’ (λόγους παρακλήσεως, 8.5).”²³ Yet, removing the definite articles from these two genitives, τοῦ λόγου and τῆς παρακλήσεως in Heb 13:22, and changing the singular λόγου to the accusative plural λόγους, changes the meaning in no small way.

The genitive singular τοῦ λόγου in Heb 13:22 emphasizes that AH views his work holistically. But what of the qualifying genitive τῆς παρακλήσεως? Here τῆς παρακλήσεως functions attributively to τοῦ λόγου.²⁴ As a genre label, ‘exhortation’ has a broad field of meaning. While the scope of this study does not include a thorough analysis of the term in ancient literature, a brief survey of two places where the forms of λόγος and παράκλησις are paired is in order.

This formulation occurs in 1 Macc 10:24. When Demetrius I Soter was King of Syria and Alexander was king of Ptolemias, the two rulers courted the support of Jonathan, and the people of Judea. Demetrius first sought his aid, but when Alexander won Jonathan’s support, Demetrius upped his offer to Jonathan, saying: “I too will send them cordial messages (λόγους παρακλήσεως) and offer honors and gifts to keep them on my side.”²⁵ Demetrius’ message to the Jews was a series of promises he would afford them for their support, including independence to the High Priest, freedom from certain taxes, freeing of prisoners, and funding for the temple. The plural λόγους παρακλήσεως is an apt description of the list of benefits Demetrius hoped would sway Jonathan in his favor.

Perhaps the nearest parallel to the use of παρακλήσεως in Heb 13:22 is its location in Acts 13:15. There the leaders of the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia inquired of Paul and his companions, “if you have any word of exhortation (λόγος παρακλήσεως) for the people, say it.” Here the phrase λόγος παρακλήσεως, “a word of exhortation,” differs from Demetrius’ aforementioned letter to Jonathan in that the singular λόγος παρακλήσεως requires viewing Paul’s message holistically; παρακλήσεως, as an attributive genitive paralleling its use in Heb 13:22, functions as a generic label for the whole of Paul’s discourse. Paul’s message in Acts 13:16–41 is dominated by an historical review of salvation history from the redemption of Israel in the exodus to the

²³ Ibid., 280.

²⁴ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 86-88.

²⁵ John R. Bartlett, *The First and Second Books of the Maccabees* (CBCNEB; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 133.

resurrection of Jesus Christ. F. F. Bruce comments, “Paul’s exhortation takes the form of a historical retrospect, as Stephen’s defense did.”²⁶

Paul’s *λόγος παρακλήσεως*, “word of exhortation,” in Acts 13:16–41 manifests the broad range of the term *παρακλήσεως*. It includes the quotation of six Old Testament texts,²⁷ passages which cited in his message would have encouraged and edified his audience. Paul’s word of exhortation announced that forgiveness of sins was available to all, and that through Christ one could be justified from everything they could not be justified from through the law of Moses. His exhortation concluded with the warning that the message of salvation in Christ be received with faith and humility. Paul’s *λόγος παρακλήσεως* in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch displays the broad range of the term: encouragement, edification, warning, exhortation, and appeal.

The same is true in Hebrews. AH’s genre description *τῆς παρακλήσεως* includes themes of the text which appeal to the audience by way of providing edification, even apart from the warning passages. In his final homily on Hebrews, Chrysostom noted of AH: “And observe his wisdom. He says not, ‘I beseech you, suffer the word of “admonition,” (warning, rebuke, reprimand)’ but ‘ “the word of exhortation,” ’ that is, of consolation, of encouragement.”²⁸

The argument of the present study is not without practical concern. If a local pastor were to preach through Hebrews, stating, along with Neeley, Guthrie, Westfall (and others),²⁹ that the thrust of the text is exhortation, but locating exhortation only around the warning passages, the believers in the pew may not receive all the encouragement, edification, and comfort AH intends. Those passages typically labeled, “exposition,” are a part of Hebrews’ overall exhortation. They exhort the hearer(s) to believe all that God has done from them in Christ so that they can remain strong in the face of opposition and persecution (Heb 10:32–34).

²⁶ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (rev. ed; NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 253.

²⁷ 1 Sam 13:14 and Ps 88:21 (LXX) in Acts 13:22; Ps 2:7 in Acts 13:33; Is 55:3 in Acts 13:34; Ps 15:10 (LXX) in Acts 13:35; and Hab 1:5 in Acts 13:41.

²⁸ Chrysostom, *Homily XXXIV*, Heb 13:17, (ET: Schaff).

²⁹ Wolfgang Nauck has influenced many in this regard, and Westfall’s structure reflects his emphasis of the hortatory subjunctives in 4:11–16 and 10:19–25; “Zum Aufbau des Hebräerbriefes,” in *Judentum Urchristentum Kirche: Festschrift für Joachim Jeremias* (BZNW 26; ed. Walter Eltester; Berlin: Alfred Topelmann, 1960), 199–206.

Harold W. Attridge proposes that the thrust of AH's hortatory emphasis is to augment the faith of his listeners.³⁰ According to Attridge, AH's concept of faith has two components: static, that the audience in view maintain their confession; and dynamic, that they move forward to and with God. Attridge's framework provides a window for seeing the hortatory value of passages once thought outside the range of exhortation, passages that encourage and edify the static faith of the audience. These texts exhort the audience to consider all the benefits God has bestowed upon them in Christ. Consider thus the hortatory value of Hebrews' repeated presentation of Jesus Christ as High Priest, noted in the following three passages; none of these are labeled "exhortation" by Neeley or Guthrie.³¹

Heb 2:17–18 describes the help God provides believers in temptation: "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered (πέπονθεν, perfect active), He is able to come to the aid of those who are (presently) tempted (δύναται τοῖς πειραζομένοις βοηθῆσαι)." This is an exhortation to believe that Jesus is the High Priest who can help in the present crisis because of His past sufferings.

In Heb 7:26–28 AH exhorts his audience to trust in the perfection of Christ as High Priest. Placing himself alongside the audience, he writes: "For it was fitting for us (Τοιοῦτος γὰρ ἡμῖν, first-person plural) to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens" (v. 26). He goes on to say that unlike priests under the law, our priest is "a Son, made perfect forever" (υἶὸν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τετελειωμένον [v. 28]). This is an exhortation for the audience in view to believe all that God had done for them in

³⁰ "Paraenesis in a Homily: The Possible Location of, and Socialization in, the 'Epistle to the Hebrews,'" *Semeia* 50 (1990): 221.

³¹ Alan H. Brehm notes that Guthrie's genre division scheme does not explain fully the function of the sections he labels exposition; review of *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis*, *SJT* 38.1 (Fall 1995): 61. The three examples noted above demonstrate that units of discourse categorized as "exposition" in Hebrews actually have hortatory in and of themselves, calling the audience to faith in particular aspects of AH's Christology.

Christ, the One who is unchanging and secures them even in the present moment.

In Heb 10:12–14 AH exhorts his audience to acknowledge and rely upon the holy and perfected status God has granted believers because of Christ’s high priestly work: “He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God . . . For by one offering He has perfected (τετελείωκεν, perfect) for all time those who are sanctified (τοὺς ἁγιαζομένους, present)” (Heb 10:12, 14).

These texts exhort the listener to consider all the benefits God has bestowed upon them in Christ. In Attridge’s aforementioned scheme, Heb 2:17–18; 7:26–28; and 10:12–14 exhort the hearer to static faith. Should not their hortatory value be considered just as significant as that of the warning passages? The argument of the present study is that, in light of AH’s genre label in Heb 13:22, these texts too, apart from the warning passages of Hebrews, should be considered for their hortatory implications. Todd S. Still notes the hortatory significance of the texts of Hebrews which describe the High Priesthood of Christ:

Hebrews makes a unique contribution to the New Testament canon. In this anonymous “word of exhortation,” Christ is lauded as one who trusts in God and is trustworthy before God. What is more, Christ is set forth in the letter as the example of one who lived a faithful life and died a faithful death. More than simply a model for believers, however, Jesus is presented in Hebrews as the mediator between God and humanity and is viewed as the pure High Priest who makes expiation for People’s sins and who has compassion upon their earthly plight (2.18; 4.15; 12.2).³²

IV. THE SUBJECTIVITY OF GENRE DESIGNATION IN HEBREWS

But what if the author of Hebrews had not stated his genre designation? What if, like 1 Clement or the Epistles of Ignatius, interpreters simply witnessed a cyclical pattern of exposition and

³² Todd S. Still, “*Christos as Pistos: The Faith(fulness) of Jesus in the Epistle to the Hebrews*,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts* (LNTS 387; ed. Richard Bauckham et al.; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 48–49.

exhortation? Could discourse analysis methodology guide the interpreter in generic divisions of chapter and verse? Perhaps, but the data accumulated by discourse analysis does not always indicate whether a particular embedded discourse unit should be considered as exposition or exhortation.³³ This is a second reason Hebrews resists being broken into clearly marked generic divisions. In short, the data is open to subjective interpretation. As C. Adrian Thomas writes: “It seems not only artificial, but also too subtle and sophisticated where discussions attempt to dismantle the book into its various parts, especially dissecting it into expository and paraenetic materials for the purpose of independent analyses.”³⁴

Though Neeley, Guthrie, and Westfall demonstrate individuality in their discourse analysis philosophy, their approaches mirror one another at several points. They propose that a specific matrix of lexical and grammatical factors signal shifts in the discourse and thus transitions from one unit to another.³⁵ Like other discourse analysis proponents, Neeley, Guthrie, and Westfall seek to identify units within the broader discourse.³⁶ While one should not expect exact correspondence between

³³ In his article “Linguistics and Rhetorical Criticism,” in *Linguistics and the New Testament: Critical Junctures* (JSNTSS 168; ed. Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 63–92, Stanley E. Porter notes discourse analysis’ openness to subjective conclusions. He cites the contradictory conclusions of D. A. Black, “The Discourse Structure of Philippians: A Study in Text-linguistics,” *NovT* 37.1 (1995): 16–49, and W. Schenk, *Die Philipperbriefe des Paulus* (Stuttgart: W. Kohnhammer, 1984), 13–28. The former argues for unified structure of the Epistle, the latter that Philippians lacks unity. Porter concludes: “It appears that unity or coherence is something that the interpreter demonstrates rather than discovers in the text, or vice versa” (89).

³⁴ C. Adrian Thomas, *A Case for Mixed-Audience with Reference to the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2008), 8–9, n. 14.

³⁵ Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 45–75; Neeley, *Discourse Analysis*, 1–19; Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 22–87.

³⁶ Johannes P. Louw, “Discourse Analysis and the Greek New Testament” *BT* 24.1 (1973): 101–18; Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1989), 230–56; D. A. Black, Katharine Barnwell, and Stephen Levinson, eds., *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1992); Stanley Porter and D. A. Carson, eds., *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek* (JSNTSS 113; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); Jeffrey T. Reed, “Discourse Analysis,” in *Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 189–217; George H.

multiple authors' conclusions even when working within the same general theory, Neeley, Guthrie, and Westfall disagree in categorization of exposition and exhortation. For Westfall these features mark units within the broader hortatory genre of the whole of Hebrews. Concerning the author's concluding statement, τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως, in Heb 13:22, she writes, "Many have taken this description to mean that the discourse has a paraenetic purpose, but 'exhortation' is an apt description for the entire structure of Hebrews."³⁷

For Neeley and Guthrie though, the grammatical and lexical composition of Hebrews can be interpreted to identify shifts in genre.³⁸ Within this rubric it is difficult to overstate the role of verbal tense-forms.³⁹ By the general standards of discourse analysis, the present and the perfect are the more marked tense-forms when compared to the aorist and imperfect; the former are employed by the author to set the scene before the reader and engage him in it.⁴⁰ Units of text dominated by the present and perfect are thus inclined toward the genre of exhortation; aorist and imperfects toward exposition. While Neeley and Guthrie agree on the role of tense-forms in the genre designation of units of discourse, they disagree at a few significant points as to whether a unit is exposition or exhortation.

Generally speaking Guthrie posits more repeated genre shifts than Neeley. For instance, Neeley labels Heb 4:14–6:20 as hortatory, where

Guthrie, "Discourse Analysis," in *Interpreting the Text of the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues* (eds. D. A. Black and David S. Dockery; Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 253–271.

³⁷ Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 294.

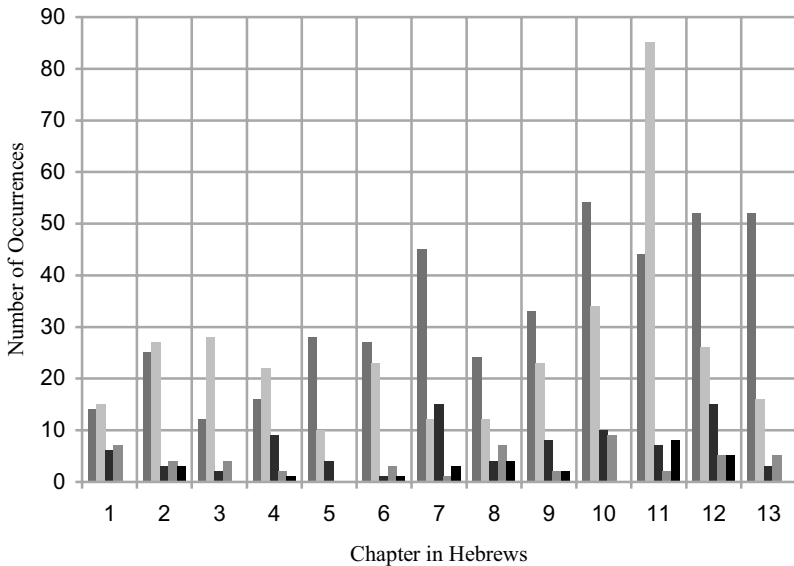
³⁸ Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 61–74; Neeley, *Discourse Analysis*, 2–8.

³⁹ Westfall, though disagreeing with Neeley and Guthrie regarding genre shifts in Hebrews, presents a more thorough grammatical investigation, especially regarding tense forms; *Discourse Analysis*, 28–78. Stanley E. Porter questions Guthrie's conclusions because of his more superficial grammatical analysis; "How can Biblical Discourse be Analyzed?: A Response to Several Attempts," in Porter and Carson, *Discourse Analysis*, 111.

⁴⁰ Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 56–7; Porter, "How can Biblical Discourse be Analyzed? A Response to Several Attempts," in Porter and Carson, *Discourse Analysis*, 111–14.; Jeffrey T. Reed "Identifying Theme in the New Testament: Insights from Discourse Analysis," in *ibid.*, 85. Though limited to narrative texts, Constantine R. Campbell likewise notes the relationship between the present and perfect tense-forms; *Verbal Aspect, the Indicative Mood, and Narrative: Soundings in the Greek New Testament* (SBG 13; New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2007), 241–42.

Guthrie proposes an expository interruption at 5:1–10.⁴¹ Further, he does not see 6:13–20 fitting under either genre heading, and labels this unit as a bridge from exhortation to exposition.⁴² But perhaps the most significant disagreement between Neeley and Guthrie concerns Heb 11. As one might expect, Heb 11 is dominated by the aorist tense-form, numbering roughly ninety occurrences, as compared to less than fifty present tense-forms. Hebrews' tense-form distribution is demonstrated in fig. 1.

FIGURE 1. OCCURRENCES OF TENSE-FORMS IN HEBREWS⁴³



■ Present ■ Aorist ■ Perfect ■ Future ■ Imperfect

According to the aforementioned discourse analysis methodology, the verbal landscape of Heb 11 indicates exposition, and Neeley concurs

⁴¹ Neeley, *Discourse Analysis*, 48; Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 144.

⁴² Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 144.

⁴³ Statistics are based on searches conducted with the software tool *BibleWorks 8.0*, using the BNM database, which is an electronic version of the Nestle-Aland 27th edition of the Greek New Testament.

arguing that Heb 11 is definitely expository.⁴⁴ While Guthrie acknowledges that the aorist (normally past tense) indicates an expository, not hortatory, unit,⁴⁵ he interprets the list of the faithful in Heb 11 as part of the author's broader exhortation to endure and receive the promise, noting that the list of the faithful confronts the hearer with the absurdity of falling away.⁴⁶

The present study is not an exhaustive treatment of discourse analysis and Hebrews. It has been limited to considering how this emerging theory has been applied to Hebrews and the differences of opinion that have resulted, especially concerning internal genre designations. This paper has argued that Hebrews resists genre division as a part of its structural analysis. The brief exegesis of τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως in Heb 13:22, and the parallels in 1 Maccabees and Acts 13 show that παράκλησις includes encouragement and edification, not just warning. Thus, AH's presentation of the new covenant High Priest Jesus, and all of the benefits He offers, is an exhortation to faith, for the audience to maintain their adherence to the confession of the new covenant.

The fact that Hebrews resists genre division is further noticed by the lack of agreement among those who propose that units of text are one genre or another. Recognizing breaks in genre is a subjective endeavor. Concerning generic classification of whole texts, David Scholer writes: "Modern attempts to classify Greco-Roman literature by types or genres are fraught with difficulties and are in serious danger of anachronistic or rigid misrepresentation."⁴⁷ If this is true on the macro-level, how much more difficult within individual texts, especially something as brief as Hebrews, of which the author says, "I have written to you briefly," (διὰ βραχέων ἐπέστειλα, [Heb 13:22])?

Among the three discourse analysis proposals investigated here, Westfall's presentation is noteworthy for acknowledging the generic consistency of Hebrews. Although she argues that the triplet of hortatory subjunctives in 4:11–16 and 10:19–25 are prominent within the whole of the discourse and serve as its thematic peaks,⁴⁸ her outline of Hebrews is stated in a hortatory format also for units outside of these two significant sections of the text. Her outline includes the headings: "Let's hold on to the message that our apostle gave us" (1:1–3:1); "Let's respond to Jesus'

⁴⁴ Neeley, *Discourse Analysis*, 56.

⁴⁵ Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 115.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 131, 144

⁴⁷ David Scholer, "Writing and Literature: Greco-Roman," *DNTB* 1:1284.

⁴⁸ Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 300.

voice today and enter the rest” (Heb 3:1–4:13); “Let’s press on to maturity with new teaching about Jesus’ priesthood” (4:11–7:3); “Let’s draw near to God” (7:4–10:25); “Let’s run the race” (10:19–12:2); “Let’s serve God as priests in heavenly Jerusalem” (12:1–29); and “Let’s go to Jesus and offer sacrifices of love, good works and sharing” (12:28–13:16).⁴⁹

V. CONCLUSION

What does the future hold for discourse analysis and Hebrews? Its proponents are split over whether it necessitates dividing the text generically into exposition or exhortation. This author proposes that further fruitful work will result as discourse analysis acknowledges the singular hortatory genre of Hebrews, and moves on to investigate other features of the text. Perhaps the most striking phenomenon of Hebrews is AH’s repeated use of the Old Testament to form the skeleton of his argument.⁵⁰ Guthrie provides a thorough and insightful analysis in his chapter on Hebrews in *Commentary on The New Testament use of the Old Testament*.⁵¹ One wonders how future discourse analysis in Hebrews could take into account the fruit of Guthrie’s work there, with a view to exploring the hortatory force in each use of the Old Testament.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 299–301.

⁵⁰ R. T. France, “The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor,” *TnyBul* 47.2 (1996): 245–76; William L. Lane, “Hebrews,” *DLNTD* 1:443–58; Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 140–65.

⁵¹ George H. Guthrie, “Hebrews,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 919–96.

Kersey Graves's Sixteen Crucified Saviors: Prometheus as Test Case



“Be advised! ’Tis shameful for
the wise to persist in error.”
Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* (1.1039).¹

RONALD V. HUGGINS
Associate Professor of NT and Greek
Midwestern Baptist theological Seminary
Kansas City, MO 64118
rhuggins@mbts.edu

If one wants to enter into the old discussion of the “dying and rising” gods, one must resign oneself to the idea of having to straddle the line separating real scholarship and pseudo-scholarly rubbish.² It comes with the territory. Claims that Prometheus is to be counted among the so-called “crucified saviors” hail almost exclusively from the rubbish side. As to the scholarly side, Prometheus’s name only appears once in the cumulative index of James George Frazer’s classic multi-volume work, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (1935), and then only in relation to his theft of fire from Olympus in the chapter “The Origin of

¹ *Aeschylus* (LCL; vol. 1 of 2; Cambridge, MA: trans. ET: Hubert Weir Smyth; Harvard University/London: William Heinemann, 1923), 311.

² My use of the term “rubbish” is not intended to be derisive but descriptive of a genre of literature that, first, is characterized by a pretense to scholarship that is not sustained by the substance of what is presented, and second, is not rooted in an authentic love or pursuit of truth or knowledge, but rather exists only to feed the prejudices and/or prurient interests (scandal, sensation, cynicism, hatred) of the readers who consume it. It is often characterized by (1) sensationalism and conspiratorial thinking, (2) demonization of religious people, (3) wide-ranging plagiarism, (4) bogus etymologies, (5) embellishment of sources, (4) preferring old, outdated scholarship, or long-debunked pseudo-scholarship to newer, better research.

Perpetual Fires.”³ Prometheus is not mentioned at all in the index of Tryggve N. D. Mettinger’s recent scholarly review and restatement *The Riddle of the Resurrection: “Dying and Rising God’s” in the Ancient Near East* (2001).⁴ In view of this we may at first be surprised to encounter the following statement in Martin Hengel’s classic study of crucifixion in the ancient world:⁵

The only possibility of something like a ‘crucified god’ appearing on the periphery of the ancient world of gods was in the form of a malicious parody, intended to mock the arbitrariness and wickedness of the father of the gods on Olympus, who had now become obsolete. This happens in the dialogue called *Prometheus*, written by Lucian, the Voltaire of antiquity.

One of the striking things about Hengel’s statement is that it implicitly rules out all crucified gods (besides Jesus) *except* Prometheus. Hengel did not, in other words, count the usual candidates, such as Attis, Adonis, or Tammuz, as really representing crucified gods.

I. KERSEY GRAVES AND HIS *THE WORLD’S SIXTEEN CRUCIFIED SAVIORS* (1875)

But before we come round to Hengel’s singling out Prometheus in connection with his being a “crucified god,” we must first address the history of that claim as a common-place in the literature, or to be more precise, the illiterature of rubbish. As we pass along that road into the past we are inevitably led back to a significant bottleneck at Kersey Graves’s, *The World’s Sixteen Crucified Saviors* (1875). The first thing to understand about Graves is that he was no scholar. What he wrote about Prometheus he took over more or less chunk by undigested chunk from earlier writers who were also, for the most part at least, not scholars. Still it would be Graves’s book, more than any of the earlier

³ James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (12 vols.; 3rd ed.; New York: Macmillan, 1935), 2.260 and 12.422.

⁴ Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *The Riddle of the Resurrection: “Dying and Rising Gods” in the Ancient Near East* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2001).

⁵ Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (trans. by John Bowden; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1977), 11.

books he had plundered for his content, that would become the main source of the story for those who followed after him.

It is uncertain how much Graves's reading carried him beyond the popular denunciations emanating from the rubbish presses of his day. From what he says it seems highly probable that he never actually read the myths of Prometheus in the texts of the classical authors themselves. As a result, Graves makes a number of outlandish claims, which we shall first summarize and then attempt to answer in turn.

Prometheus appears as the ninth on the list of Graves's sixteen crucified saviors. Graves claims that the traditional Prometheus story, which has him "bound to a rock for thirty years, while vultures preyed upon his vitals," is in fact a modern story and an "impious Christian fraud." The real story, he says, as given by the ancient authors, of whom he names most prominently Aeschylus, but then also Hesiod and Seneca,⁶ held, or so Graves claims, that Prometheus was "nailed to an upright beam of timber, to which were affixed extended arms of wood, and that this cross was situated near the Caspian Straits,"⁷ and in fact "that the whole story of Prometheus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection was acted in pantomime in Athens five hundred years before Christ, which proves its great antiquity." For the latter claim Graves credits Robert Taylor's *Syntagma of the Evidences of the Christian Religion* (1828), who, in his context, was discussing Aeschylus's tragedy *Prometheus Bound*. But by far the most remarkable feature of Graves's argument is:

II. AN ANCIENT HYMN CELEBRATING PROMETHEUS AS CRUCIFED SAVIOR?

Graves presents the following supposedly ancient hymn fragment celebrating Prometheus's "propitiatory offering," which he seems to want his readers to think came from Aeschylus:

"Lo, streaming from the fatal tree
His all-atoning blood,
Is this the Infinite; yes, 'tis he,
Prometheus, and a God.
"Well might the sun in darkness hide,

⁶ Kersey Graves, *The Worlds Sixteen Crucified Saviors* (4th ed. rev. and enl.; Boston: Colby and Rich, 1876), 110-11. Aeschylus is given prominence by being listed in the title of the section, Hesiod and Seneca in the body of the text.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 111.

And veil his glories in,
When God, the great Prometheus, died
For man the creature's sin."

If these really were authentic lines from an ancient hymn to Prometheus it would amount to serious evidence for Prometheus's being, to use Graves's terminology, a "sin-atoning, oriental Savior." But they are NOT authentic, nor were they originally written about Prometheus. Rather they represent rewritten lines to a much-beloved Christian hymn by the famous British hymn writer Isaac Watts (1674-1748): "At the Cross".

Graves was not the originator of this imposition upon and plagiarism of Isaac Watts. And despite the fact that he does not tell us his source, and that this falsified Prometheus hymn has had a very wide circulation both in Graves's day and ours, we are still able to trace its origin. It came from a writer named Robert Taylor. In the passage under discussion from Graves, explicit mention is made to Robert Taylor's *Syntagma* (1828), but the bogus Prometheus hymn is from another of Taylor's works: *The Diegesis* (1829).

One of the features of Taylor's recasting of Watts's hymn that gave me pause when I first encountered it was the slight variation of one line from the hymn as I knew it. Where Taylor had "Well might the Sun in darkness hide /And veil his glories in," the more familiar version had not "veil his glories in," but "shut his glories in."⁸ Yet happily it was just this variation that helped me establish that Robert Taylor did in fact know Isaac Watts's hymn and use it as the basis of his own falsified Prometheus hymn. In a Good Friday-Sermon entitled "The Crucifixion of Christ," which Taylor says he delivered in the Rotunda, Blackfriars-Road, on November 14, 1830,⁹ Taylor actually quoted the same passage from Watts's hymn in its original form, with the same variant I spoke of before intact, *and* he actually credits the hymn to Watts. I place the two Taylor passages next to one another below to make their literary interdependence absolutely plain:

⁸ *The Works of the Rev. Isaac Watts* (9 vols.; Leeds: Edward Baines, 1813), 9.162-63.

⁹ The difficulty is (1) why would you preach a Good-Friday Sermon in November, (2) November 19 fell on a Saturday not a Friday in 1830, and (3) the reprint of the same sermon appearing in *The Comet* 1.15 (Sun. Nov. 15, 1832): 225, has it occurring in the same place but on April 3, 1831, which was a Sunday not a Friday.

Taylor's "Good Friday" Sermon ¹⁰	Taylor's <i>Diegesis</i> ¹¹
<p>Lo! streaming from the fatal tree, His all-atoning blood: Is this the Infinite? 'tis He, My Saviour and my God. Well might the Sun in darkness hide, And veil his glories in; When God, the mighty Maker, died, For man the (Creature)'s sin"</p> <p><i>Watts Hymns, Book 2; Hymn 9.</i></p>	<p>Lo, streaming from the fatal tree, His all-atoning blood! Is this the Infinite? 'Tis he— Prometheus, and a God! Well might the sun in darkness hide, And veil his glories in, When God, the great Prometheus, died, For man, the creature's sin.</p>

To give Taylor the benefit of the doubt, however, we must note that he never actually represented his rewrite of Watts's hymn as an authentic ancient Prometheus hymn. Nor, on the other hand, did he make any effort to indicate that it was not. But even there he might be exonerated from the charge of intentional fraud on the ground that he may well have considered Watts's hymn to be far too familiar for anyone to miss his allusion to it. If that be the case, he seriously underestimated the level of cultural illiteracy that would characterize writers coming after him, writers like Kersey Graves.

¹⁰ "'The Crucifixion of Christ: A Good-Friday Sermon,' Preached by his Highness's Chaplain, The Rev. Robert Taylor, B.A. At the Rotunda, Blackfriars-Road, April 3, 1831"; in *The Devils' Pulpit* 1/14 (June 3, 1831): 209, repr. in Robert Taylor, *The Astronomical-Theological Discourses...Originally Published under the title The Devil's Pulpit* (vol. 1; London, Richard Carlisle; repr. W. Dugdale, n.d.), 209.

¹¹Robert Taylor, *The Diegesis: A Discovery of the Origin, Evidences, and Early History of Christianity, Never Yet Before or Elsewhere So Fully and Faithfully Set Fourth* (Boston: Abner Kneeland, 1834 [orig. ed. London: J. Cunningham, 1829]), 194.



**Fig. 1: Prometheus Tied/Impaled?
c. 600 BC, Louvre¹²**



**Fig. 2: Prometheus Tied
to Fluted Column
c. 560-550 BC, Vatican
Gregorian Etruscan
Museum**

III. PLAGIARIZING ROBERT TAYLOR'S BOGUS PROMETHEUS HYMN

Graves was scarcely alone in thinking that Taylor was presenting an authentically ancient hymn to Prometheus. And given that plagiarism and extensive block quoting have always been part and parcel of the rubbish genre, this culturally illiterate misimpression has been widely in evidence right down to the present. And wherever it has been repeated, only those lines originally given by Robert Taylor appear, indicating once again that Taylor was their ultimate originator. At this point a few examples of the coterie of plagiarizing copy-cats are in order.

1. *John Atwood*. This fisherman of Cape Cod, in his somewhat redundantly titled *The Pilgrimage of a Pilgrim Eighty Years* brings the falsified Prometheus hymn into his book as part of a larger chunk on Prometheus he plagiarizes from Taylor.¹³ This is a curious dependency, given Atwood's claims in his Prospectus that his book "contains a great variety of novel subjects not to be found in any other book now in print," and that the "author flatters himself that his path to wisdom has never before been trodden by any man of learning."¹⁴

¹² Picture credits: Figures 1 and 2 public domain at Wikimedia Commons (commons.wikimedia.org), Figures 3 and 4 public domain, accessed Aaron Atsma's www.theoi.com.

¹³ John Atwood, *The Pilgrimage of a Pilgrim Eighty Years* (Boston: By the author, 1892), 156.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

2. *D. M. Bennett.* Taylor's plagiarizers however are probably outnumbered by Graves's. D. M. Bennett, for example, reproduces the falsified Prometheus hymn in his *The Champions of the Church: Their Crimes and Persecutions*, published in 1878 for the grandly named Liberal and Scientific Publishing House, when plagiarizing directly from Graves. In the process Bennett makes the attribution of Taylor's falsified hymn to Aeschylus more explicit than Graves himself had done.¹⁵

3. *Frank B. Robinson.* Yet another example of a Graves plagiarizer is Frank B. Robinson, founder of the once well known but now, happily, defunct positive thinking mail-order religion from Moscow, Idaho, called Psychiana. It appears in a book entitled *GOD...and Dr. Bannister: This War Can Be Stopped* (1941),¹⁶ in which Robinson predicted the speedy downfall for Adolf Hitler when everyone got together and spoke the tyrant's overthrow into existence by shouting "The Spirit of God Will Bring Your Speedy Downfall" at his picture.¹⁷ In the process of transferring text without attribution directly from the pages of Graves to the lips of his main character, Dr. Bannister, Robinson transfers Taylor's falsified Prometheus hymn as well.

4. *James R. Morrell.* Finally there are those who reproduce the falsified hymn without our being able to easily establish where they got it, as in the case of James R. Morrell, who repeats it at the beginning of a chapter in his book *Spiritism and the Beginnings of Christianity* (1936), and credits it directly to Aeschylus.¹⁸

5. *J. M. Hill.* It was probably inevitable that even in the uncritical world of rubbish mongering someone would eventually discover the link between the falsified Prometheus hymn and the famous hymn by Isaac Watts. It was perhaps also inevitable that someone from that world would come up with the bright idea of trying to turn the facts on their heads by accusing Isaac Watts of plagiarizing the hymn from the worshippers of Prometheus. J. H. Hill, in his book *Astral Worship* (1895?) does this. He includes the falsified hymn, and interestingly attributes it to the "Potter's translation" of Aeschylus's, *Prometheus*

¹⁵ D. M. Bennett, *The Champions of the Church: Their Crimes and Persecutions* (New York: D. M. Bennett, Liberal and Scientific Publishing House, 1878), 17-18.

¹⁶ Frank B. Robinson, *GOD...and Dr. Bannister: This War Can Be Stopped* (Moscow, ID: "Psychiana," 1941), 147.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 285.

¹⁸ James R. Morrell, *Spiritism and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Goodland, IN., L. Morrell, 1936), 61.

Bound. He goes on to say that the hymn will be “readily recognized as the original of a Christian song.”¹⁹

Where did Hill come up with the idea of crediting the Prometheus hymn to a particular translation of Aeschylus? The translator he names is Robert Potter (1721–1804), who published an edition of the tragedies of Aeschylus in 1777, which was often reprinted afterward.²⁰ It seems a risky business if he knew the hymn wasn’t there, which he certainly would have known if he had troubled to check, as I have. It may be that Hill picked up the idea that the falsified Prometheus hymn came from Potter’s translation from Taylor himself, who in his discussions of Aeschylus’s *Prometheus Bound* in the *Diegesis* mentions using it.²¹

6. D. M. Murdock/ Acharya S. Finally we come to a contemporary author named D. M. Murdock, who writes under the name Acharya S. and who represents herself on her website (truthbeknown.com) as a member of the American School of Classical Studies, Athens, Scholar of Archaeology, History, Mythology and Languages, but who, despite her high flying claims, is actually just another regurgitator of long-debunked rubbish. In an online article entitled “The Origins of Christianity and the Quest for the Historical Jesus,” Murdock does not actually plagiarize from Taylor but she nevertheless treats his falsified hymn as authentic. In a lengthy footnote mentioning the problem of finding a source for the falsified Prometheus hymn Murdock writes:²²

Taylor, *The Diegesis*, pp. 192-4. Taylor indicates that the following stanza is found in "Potter's beautiful translation" of Aeschylus's play: "Lo, streaming from the fatal tree, His all-atoning blood! Is this the Infinite? 'Tis he - Prometheus, and a God! Well might the sun in darkness hide, And veil his glories in, When God, the great Prometheus, died, For man, the creature's sin." However, this stanza apparently does not appear in modern translations, including Potter's. It is well-known that the Christians mutilated or destroyed virtually all of the works of

¹⁹ J. H. Hill, *Astral Worship* (New York: Truth Seeker Company, [1895?]), 45.

²⁰ See, e.g., “Prometheus Chain’d,” *The Tragedies of Aeschylus* (trans. R. Potter; Norwich: J. Crouse, 1777), and frequently afterward: e.g.; Oxford: N. Bliss, for M. Bliss and R. Bliss, 1808. See further, J. Michael Walton, *Found in Translation: Greek Drama in English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 198.

²¹ Taylor, *Diegesis*, 192.

²² [Http://www.truthbeknown.com/origins4.htm#foot63](http://www.truthbeknown.com/origins4.htm#foot63).

ancient Greek and Roman authors, such that we might suspect this stanza has either been removed or obfuscated through mistranslation. On the other hand, it may be a mistake on Taylor's part or a result of his ambiguous language preceding the passage, or he may have been thinking of another "Prometheus Bound" written after the Christian era, perhaps by Milton. Taylor was in prison when he wrote *The Diegesis*, thereby having difficulty accessing books, so he is to be excused for errors that invariably creep into anyone's work.

Murdock is right to admit the problem of finding the falsified hymn in Aeschylus, but her rush to exonerate Taylor is out of place given the fact that Taylor did not explicitly say the hymn comes from Aeschylus. It is interesting in any case how she continues to endorse the authenticity of the erroneous hymn with another false claim, namely, that it is "well-known that the Christians mutilated or destroyed virtually all of the works of ancient Greek and Roman authors."

Since I initially copied the above footnote from Murdock's website she has removed it. That she still considers the hymn genuine, however, is suggested in the text of the current online edition of "The Origins of Christianity and the Quest for the Historical Jesus," where she quotes a bit of the hymn in her section on Prometheus when she says that "Taylor states that in the play [i.e., Prometheus Bound] Prometheus is crucified 'on a fatal tree.'" To this she attaches a footnote directing the reader to the same pages in Taylor as in the footnote cited above, but now with all her earlier additional comments removed.²³

IV. KERSEY GRAVES, GODFREY HIGGINS AND PROMETHEUS CRUCIFIED

As noted earlier, when introducing Prometheus as the ninth of his alleged sixteen crucified saviors, Graves had claimed that according to the classical sources, Prometheus "was nailed to an upright beam of timber, to which were affixed extended arms of wood, and that this cross was situated near the Caspian Straits," but that the "modern story of this

²³ Acharya S. "The Origins of Christianity and the Quest for the Historical Jesus Christ," excerpted from idem, *The Christ Myth Anthology* (19, and n. 183) (<http://www.stellarhousepublishing.com/originsofchristianity.pdf>) (accessed Dec. 6, 2009). At the time of writing (12.6.09), the original form of the Murdock's text of the footnote could still be found online at <http://www.mega.nu/ampp/acharyanotes.html#foot63>.

crucified God, which represents him as having been bound to a rock for thirty years, while vultures preyed upon his vitals, Mr. Higgins pronounces an impious Christian fraud. ‘For,’ says this learned historical writer, ‘I have seen the account which declares he was nailed to a cross with hammer and nails.’”²⁴

Graves asserts a little later, that on this cross Prometheus died, “gave up the ghost,” and that “the whole story of Prometheus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection was acted in pantomime in Athens five hundred years before Christ.”²⁵

Graves credits his dismissal of what he describes as the familiar Prometheus myth to Godfrey Higgins’s *Anacalypsis: An Attempt to Draw Aside the Veil of Saitic Isis* (1836). Like Graves, Higgins writings hailed from the rubbish side rather than the scholarly side. Even a friendly reviewer commented in reference to the *Anacalypsis*: “Never was there more wildness of speculation than in this attempt to lift the veil of Isis.”²⁶ Graves even offers his reader what is supposed to be a quotation from Higgins, for which he wrongly directs his reader to page 327 of the first volume of Higgins’s work. But he gets neither the page right (seemingly²⁷), nor the quotation right. What Higgins had actually said was:²⁸

Prometheus is said to have been nailed up with arms extended, near the Caspian Straits, on Caucasus...In our versions of the tragedy of Æschylus, Prometheus is always fraudulently said to be Bound. It is called *Prometheus vincetus*, He was nailed up in the form of a cross, with hammer and nails. The object of this impudent fraud need not be pointed out. In this case Protestants and Papists are all alike.

In his supposed quotation of Higgins, Graves over-specifies what the earlier author had actually said. Below I give first the part where Graves is apparently relying on Higgins as his source (= 1), followed by the place where Graves actually represents himself as quoting Higgins (=2):

²⁴ Graves, *Sixteen Crucified Saviors*, 111.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 111-112.

²⁶ “Godfrey Higgins,” in *A Critical Dictionary of English Literature and British and American Authors* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott 1988).

²⁷ Was Graves using an edition other than the ones I have seen?

²⁸ Godfrey Higgins, *Anacalypsis: An Attempt to Draw Aside the Veil of Saitic Isis; Or, An Inquiry into the Origin of Languages, Nations, and Religions* (vol. 2, London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, 1836), 113.

Higgins, <i>Anacalypsis</i> 2:113	Graves, <i>Sixteen Crucified Saviors</i> (p. 111)
<p>(1) Prometheus is said to have been nailed up with arms extended, near the Caspian Straits, on Caucasus...</p> <p>(2)</p> <p>He was nailed up in the form of a cross, with hammer and nails.</p>	<p>[Prometheus] was nailed to an upright beam of timber, to which were affixed extended arms of wood, and that this cross was situated near the Caspian Straits.</p> <p>(2) “For,” says this learned historical writer, “I have seen the account which declares he was nailed to a cross with hammer and nails.”</p>

The embellishments added by Graves are highly significant. Graves greatly expands Higgins’s statement about Prometheus’s being “nailed up with arms extended,” by turning it into an explicit statement about a wooden cross: “an upright beam of timber, to which were affixed extended arms of wood,” a “cross.” And even when presenting himself as quoting Higgins, Graves still takes the liberty of elaborating upon what Higgins had said about Prometheus’s being “nailed up in the form of a cross,” to have him instead actually being nailed “to a cross.” All this aids Graves’s program of representing of Prometheus as a pre-Christian crucified savior.

What Graves really seems interested in here is to be able to claim that Prometheus did not merely suffer, but, as he positively asserts a bit later, that Prometheus actually died, that he “gave up the ghost,” and that “the whole story of Prometheus’ crucifixion, burial, and resurrection was acted in pantomime in Athens five hundred years before Christ.”²⁹ If there was no cross, no death, no burial, no resurrection there, then Prometheus falls short as a dying and rising god.

In contrast, what Higgins had insisted was only that Prometheus had been nailed in the *form of* a cross, and he objected to what he saw as the implication of the common English translation of the name of Aeschylus’s play as *Prometheus Bound*, a point he makes explicitly

²⁹ Graves, *Sixteen Crucified Saviors*, 111-112.

elsewhere when he complains about “the plays of Æschylus, in which, as I have before remarked, we have the Prometheus *bound*, so called to disguise it, but which ought to be the Prometheus *crucified*.”³⁰

Taken together then Graves and Higgins make the following assertions which we shall attempt to answer in the remainder of the present discussion:

1. That the tradition myth, which, according to Graves, describes Prometheus “as having been bound to a rock for thirty years, while vultures preyed upon his vitals,” is in fact a modern story and an “impious Christian fraud.”
2. That Prometheus was really nailed either *in the form of a cross* (Higgins) or else *to a wooden cross* consisting of “an upright beam of timber, to which were affixed extended arms of wood” (Graves).
3. That calling Æschylus’s play *Prometheus Bound*, rather than *Prometheus Crucified* represents an “impudent fraud,” on the part of “Protestants and Papists.”
4. That Prometheus died and rose from the dead just like Jesus.

V. IS THE TRADITIONAL MYTH A MODERN INVENTION?

For an example of the traditional Prometheus story, I resort to a copy of a child’s book of mythology given to my children long ago by their grandparents:³¹

Zeus ordered that Prometheus be chained to the rugged Caucasus Mountains between the Black and Caspian seas. There one of Zeus’ birds, a gigantic eagle, would devour Prometheus’ liver every day. At night, his liver would miraculously restore itself, only to be eaten again the following day...Finally...Zeus allowed his son Herakles to prove his great skill by killing the wretched eagle.

³⁰ Higgins, *Anacalypsis*, 2.136.

³¹ Charles F. Baker III and Rosalie F. Baker, *Myths and Legends of Mount Olympus* (ill. Joyce Audy Zarins; Peterborough, NH: Cobblestone, 1992), 18.

1. *Vultures and Vitals?* The reader will immediately notice a number of details that are different in the above description of the traditional myth from what Graves says about it in assertion #1. Graves had spoken of “vultures” (plural) feeding on Prometheus’s vitals, yet in the ancient (and therefore also the traditional) tellings of the myth, it is not a number of vultures, but a single eagle (Greek: *aetos/aeitos* : Latin: Aquila)³² that gorges itself, and it is on Prometheus’s liver in particular (Greek: *hēpar* : Latin: *iecur*),³³ not his “vitals” generally, that it feeds.³⁴

2. *Thirty Years?* Thirty as the number of years Prometheus was bound is also not modern as Graves claims but is derived from one reading of the first-century Hyginus’s *Fabulae* 54 and 144 (“post traginta annos”),³⁵ which should probably read instead not *triginta*, “thirty,” but *triginta milia*, “thirty thousand,” to agree with what Hyginus himself notes in his *Astronomica* 2:15, where he says: “But Prometheus he [Zeus] bound with an iron chain to a mountain in Scythia named Caucasus for thirty thousand years, as Aeschylus, writer of tragedies, says.”³⁶ The confusion between thirty and thirty thousand arose from the fact that in the manuscripts of the *Fabulae*, thirty thousand was indicated not with words but with XXX with a line written over them. In

³² Greek: e.g., Hesiod, *Theogony* 523; Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 1022; Apollodorus, *Library* 1.7.1 and 2.5.11, Lucian, *Prometheus* 2, *On Sacrifices* 6, *Dialogues of the Gods* 5.1 / Latin: e.g., Hyginus, *Astronomica* 2.15, *Fabulae* 54, 144. It should be said that it was common in the nineteenth century to call the bird that gorged itself on Prometheus’s liver a vulture. See, for example, the article on Prometheus in John Lemprière’s *A Classical Dictionary* (6th American ed.; corr. and improved. by Charles Anthon; New York: Evert Duyckinck, Collins, Collins & Hannay, G. & C. Carvill, and O.A. Roorback, 1897), 676, which uses almost the precise words Graves used: “the fable of the vulture preying on his vitals.” Lemprière also speaks of the “vulture, or, according to others, the eagle, which devoured the liver of Prometheus.” Also note the translation of *aetoi* at Matt 24:28 and Luke 17:37 as “eagles” in the KJV and the ASV, but as “vultures” in the NRSV, NIV, NASB, NLT, ESV, and the NAB.

³³ Greek: e.g., Hesiod, *Theogony* 523; Lucian, *Prometheus* 2; Apollodorus, *Library* 1.7.1 and 2.5.11 / Latin: e. g., Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, 2.10.24.

³⁴ Although the Latin writer Hyginus (*Fabulae* 54, 144), who lived in the time of the emperor Augustus, has “heart” (*cor*) rather than “liver” (*iecur*).

³⁵ *Hygini Fabulae* (ed. Mauricius Schmidt; Jena: Hermann Dufft, 1872).

³⁶ Hyginus, *Astronomica* 2:15 (ET: Mary Grant, *The Myths of Hyginus* [Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1960]: *Prometheum autem in monte Scythiae nomine Caucaso ferrea catena vinxit; quem alligatum ad triginta milia annorum Aeschylus tragoediarum scriptor ait.*

manuscripts where the over-lining had been inadvertently left out, the figure was reduced to XXX or thirty.³⁷

3. *Did Prometheus Die?* Graves wanted to portray Prometheus as a dying and rising savior when in fact Prometheus did not, could not die. Indeed the engine that drives the plot of the story and makes Prometheus's situation so utterly wretched, is that he was immortal, and therefore could never hope to escape from his suffering through death. No matter how much the eagle gorged itself on Prometheus's liver one day, it would be whole again the next, and so on into perpetuity. Thus in Aeschylus, Prometheus contrasts his own potentially endless suffering with the mortal suffering of Io: "You'd have a hard time with my fate, then, for I can't die. Death would deliver me, but there is no limit to my suffering until Zeus falls from power" (752-56).³⁸ Then later, when asked by the Chorus why he is not afraid to hurl taunts at Zeus, Prometheus retorts: "If I can't die, what should I fear?" (934 [p. 190]).

4. *A Wooden Crucifix?* As for the second assertion, in its more explicit form, namely that Prometheus was nailed to a wooden cross consisting of "an upright beam of timber, to which were affixed extended arms of wood," that simply isn't true. In a few sources we encounter something like an "upright beam" but are given no encouragement to think it was made of timber or elaborated by "extended arms of wood." In the early account of Hesiod (8th/7th cent. BC) there is mention of the involvement of a shaft or pillar, but translators have had trouble deciding just how the pillar functioned. Thus in the new Loeb Classical Library edition of the *Theogony* 522-23, Glenn W. Most's translation has Hesiod saying that Zeus bound Prometheus "with distressful bonds, driving them

³⁷ See H. J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology* (6th ed.; London: Methuen, 1958), 72-73, n. 60. The overlining is included, for example, in the Latin edition of Marshall: Hyginus, *Fabulae* (2nd rev. ed.; ed. P. K. Marshall; Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana; Munich: K.G. Saur, 2002), 59 and 126. And is assumed in the recent English edition: *Apollodorus' Library and Hyginus' Fabulae: Two Handbooks of Greek Mythology* (trans. R. Scott Smith and Stephen M. Trzaskoma; Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2007).

³⁸ ET: William Matthews in *Aeschylus, 2: The Persians, Seven Against Thebes, The Suppliants, Prometheus Bound* (eds. David R. Slavitt and Palmer Bovie; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 550. The line numbers follow the Loeb edition and are at variance with those of the University of Pennsylvania edition. To compensate I also give the page numbers for the latter in each case.

through the middle of a pillar,”³⁹ while the older Loeb edition of H. G. Evelyn-White has the pillar being driven through the middle of Prometheus.⁴⁰ The word “pillar,” in Hesiod here is *kiōn*. It appears in the Septuagint four times, three in reference to the pillars that the blinded Samson pushed apart to bring down the Philistine theater (Judges 16:25,26, and 29), and the other in reference to a silver pillar placed in the temple by King Asa (1 Kings 15:15).

A similar item appears in Aeschylus’s *Prometheus Bound*. After he rivets Prometheus to the rock of the mountain Hephaestus is told: “Now straight through his [Prometheus’s] chest, drive the adamantine wedge’s stubborn edge with full force” (64-65). Here the word is not “pillar” *kiōn* but “wedge” *sphēn*, but the idea of Prometheus’s being run through is still present. Cicero, in the *Tusculan Disputations* (2.10.23), in a Latin translation of a fragment of a play by Aeschylus (perhaps the lost play *Prometheus Unbound*) has Prometheus describing himself as *transverberatus*, i.e., “pierced through.” Again the Latin term for “wedge” is involved, this time in the plural (*cunei*).

Having Prometheus either bound to or run through by a pillar or wedge is not a regular feature of the myth. In the literary sources he is usually described as being attached directly to the rock of the mountain. This is true even in Aeschylus’s *Prometheus Bound*, where the wedge comes into play only *after* Prometheus had already been fixed to the mountain. Prometheus was fettered (*ochmazō*), says Aeschylus in one place, to *petrai*, i.e., rocks or crags (5, 147), and in another, to a *pharanx*, i.e., a mountain, cleft, chasm, or gully (15, 142).

Still, given its presence in the two important early sources presence, Hesiod and Aeschylus, it is scarcely surprising to find some echoes of it running in both directions (i.e, bound and run through) in the ancient iconography of Prometheus as well, though, again, not very frequently.

5. *Iconography of the Pillar*. A famous Laconian kylix (drinking cup) dating c. 560-550 BC at the Vatican’s Gregorian Etruscan Museum shows Prometheus with his arms and legs tied with cords to a free-standing pillar or, more precisely, to a fluted column (fig. 2, cf. fig. 1).⁴¹

³⁹ Hesiod, *Theogony, Works and Days, Testimonia* (LCL; trans. Glenn W. Most; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 45.

⁴⁰ “Prometheus he bound with inextricable bonds, cruel chains, and drove a shaft through his middle” *Hesiod, Homeric Hymns and Homeric* (LCL; trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University/London: William Heinemann, 1914), 117.

⁴¹ Cat. 16592. See also the similar image in the black-figure vase (c. 500 BC) in the Louvre (MNE 1309), See fig. 1.

Similarly there are a number of depictions of Prometheus apparently impaled (the long way) on a pillar, which show him so arranged as to be essentially sitting on it with one end apparently entering at his fundamental aperture and apparently exiting between his shoulder blades at the base of his neck. (I say apparently because the depictions, which are in profile, could also appear to present Prometheus as simply superimposed on the pillar). In one of these, now at the National Museum, Athens (16384), Prometheus has his hands tied behind him and his feet tied together as well (fig. 3). In a second, at the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (F. 1722), his arms are outstretched in front of him with his wrists tied together but with his feet unbound. In a third, at the Museo Archeologico, Florence (76359), his arms *and* his feet are both free. Each of these images appears on black-figure amphorae (two handled ceramic vase with extended neck) from the sixth-century BC. Most pictures described that included the pillar depict the moment Heracles arrives and begins showering arrows in the direction of the eagle (figs. 1 and 3, not 2)

VI. PROMETHEUS BOUND...OR NAILED?

Both Graves and Higgins insisted that Prometheus was fixed in place with nails. As we have seen Higgins even went so far as to object to calling Aeschylus's play *Prometheus Bound* instead of *Prometheus Crucified*. In making this point Higgins had made the charge that "in our versions of the tragedy of Aeschylus, Prometheus is always fraudulently said to be Bound [*sic*]. It is called *Prometheus vincitus*, He was nailed up in the form of a cross, with hammer and nails."⁴² Here we are a bit confused by the structure Higgins's statement because it leaves us unclear as to whether he presents the Latin name of Prometheus's play as the corrective to the problem of the English title, or as its cause. If the former is the case, he would apparently have meant to say that the word *vincitus* in the Latin title meant "*crucified*" not "*bound*." But if that were so the Latin could have easily had some other reading, something like *Prometheus crucifixus*, since *vincitus* really does mean "bound." Perhaps then Higgins was treating *vincitus* as the source of the inadequate English word "bound" in the title. The problem there is that the Latin title fairly translates the Greek title *Prometheus desmōtēs*.

Desmōtēs in the Greek title echoes its use as an adjective meaning "fettered," "in chains," that is to say, "bound," in line 118 of the play

⁴² Higgins, *Anacalypsis* 2:113.

itself, where Prometheus says: “Behold me, an ill-fated god, immanacled (*desmōtēn*), the foe of Zeus.”⁴³ Furthermore in the play Aeschylus has Prometheus attached to the rocks in fetters or shackles (*desma/desmoi*) (6, 52, 141, 147). In line 54 these are called *psalia*, which Weir translated “bracelets” (= *pselia*?). These Haephaestus is instructed to place around Prometheus’s wrists before fastening him—presumably by fastening them—to the rocks “*passaleue pros petrais*” (56). Hesiod had also used the word *desmos* to describe what bound Prometheus (*Theogony* 522, 616). Two other words Aeschylus uses in his play to describe Prometheus’s bonds are *chalkeumata* “brass bonds” (19), and *pedai* “fetters” (76).

This way of describing Prometheus’s binding is also well attested in the iconography of the Prometheus myth, which regularly shows his wrists in shackles with the shackles riveted to the rock (fig. 4). An especially fine example of this is the sculpture of Prometheus being freed, from the first-century AD Sebasteion of Aphrodisias,⁴⁴ but several other examples could be mentioned.⁴⁵

1. *No Cross, Yet Still Cruciform?* Is there clear evidence of a consistent motif of presenting Prometheus affixed to the rock, as Higgins suggested, in the “form of a cross.” A perusal of the rich offerings of images of Prometheus in the seventh volume of the magisterial *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*⁴⁶ reveals that there was really no fixed way of portraying Prometheus bound in terms of the arrangement of his limbs. Sometimes his hands are bound above his head, as in the elegant Etruscan gem from the fifth century BC, now in the British Museum (1966.7-27.1).⁴⁷ Sometimes one arm is up and the other down.⁴⁸ Quite often his hands are tied behind his back.⁴⁹

⁴³ English translation: H. Weir Smyth.

⁴⁴ Marianne Bergmann, *Chiragan, Aphrodisias, Konstantinopel: Zur mythologischen Skulptur der Spätantike* (Weisbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1999), tafel (pl.) 69.

⁴⁵ E.g., Princeton University Art Museum y1989.30; Besançon, Musée des Beaux-Arts et d’Archéologie D 863.3.314; Rome, Musei Capitolini 329; Trier, Rheinisches Landesmuseum S T 2821a-b.

⁴⁶ Multivolumed: Zurich/ Dusseldorf and Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1981-2009.

⁴⁷ LIMC (= *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* 7.423.36. See also LIMC 7.425.63c and 63f.

⁴⁸ E.g., LIMC 7.424.42.

⁴⁹ E.g., LIMC 7.422.26; 7.423.30, 38, 39, 41, 41a.

Occasionally indeed his arms are outstretched, thus rendering his body more or less cruciform.⁵⁰ Tom Harpur, in his book, *The Pagan Christ*, asserts that Prometheus “was pinned by the wrists and ankles to a rock in the Caucasus Mountains.”⁵¹ But Harpur’s generalization is wrong. Usually Prometheus’s feet are left free.⁵² This is not surprising, since both Aeschylus and Lucian, though both have Prometheus affixed in an upright position,⁵³ speak only of his wrists being bound, not his feet.⁵⁴

One very interesting type of image in which the arms are outstretched but the feet left free has Prometheus standing in the middle of a rock arch (a cave’s mouth?) with one wrist chained to each side. One very beautiful example of this is a fourth century, BC, red-figure vase at the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (1969.9) (fig. 4 [below]). A very similar example of this motif can be seen at the Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptotek, Munich (9679).

With Prometheus’s arms outstretched, and with the uncharacteristically placid expression on his bearded face, these two images come closest of any I have seen to what early medieval portrayals of the crucified Christ looked like.⁵⁵ Conceivably images like these could influenced medieval Christian artists. But to admit this is certainly not to suggest that the idea of a crucified Jesus itself ultimately derived from such images. For one thing, they did not really portray a crucified Prometheus. In any case, given the preponderance of the pictorial and literary evidence, Higgins’s idea that Prometheus’s limbs had to be arranged cruciform can be definitively ruled out.

2. *Getting Prometheus Unstuck.* Another item that needs considering to make our discussion complete is the aid of Heracles, who comes and shoots Zeus’s eagle and then sets Prometheus free. This is a prominent feature in the various ancient retellings of the myth,⁵⁶ with the result that

⁵⁰ E.g., LIMC 7.424.45 g; 7.425.60; 7.427.72 bis, 77.

⁵¹ Tom Harpur, *The Pagan Christ: Recovering the Lost Light* (New York: Walker, 2004), 84-85.

⁵² Exceptions being, e.g., LIMC 7.427.72 bis and 7.424.54.

⁵³ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 29-34; Lucian, *Prometheus* 1.

⁵⁴ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 52-65; Lucian, *Prometheus* 2.

⁵⁵ LIMC Suppl. 2009 (2), pl. 209, add 2. A third related image is a mosaic floor from the Domus della Fortuna Annonaria which shows Prometheus chained not to a stone arch but to what look like two rock pillars that lean inward but do not join at the top (LIMC suppl. 2009 [2], pl. 208, add 1).

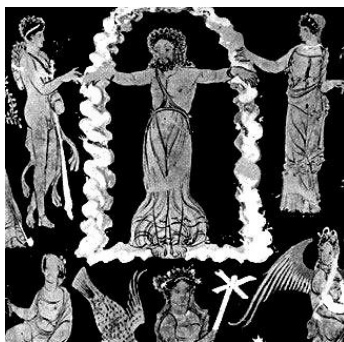
⁵⁶ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 771-74; Hesiod, *Theogony* 525-30; Apollodorus, *Library* 2.5.11; Hyginus *Fabulae* 54, 144 and *Astronomica* 2.15; Lucian. *Prometheus* 20.

the iconography of Prometheus represents not, as Graves and Higgins claimed, our being delivered from our sin by Prometheus, but Prometheus's being delivered from his chains and from Zeus's eagle by Heracles.

Most often, when Heracles is included, he is seen in the process of shooting the eagle,⁵⁷ although in the first-century AD sculpture from the Sebasteion of Aphrodisias discussed earlier we see the eagle already lying dead and Heracles actually helping Prometheus out of his bonds. Similarly an Etruscan engraved hand-mirror from Bolsena (early 3rd cent. BC) now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, shows Prumathe (Prometheus) already freed and being bandaged by Esplace (Asclepius) with the eagle lying dead and a seated Heracle (Heracles) at rest.⁵⁸



Fig. 3: Prometheus Impaled
6th cent. BC, National
Museum Athens



**Fig.4 : Prometheus Shackled
Cruciform? 4th cent. BC,**
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

VIII. HENGEL, LUCIAN, AND PROMETHEUS CRUCIFIED

If Prometheus is not the crucified savior Graves presented him to be, as we have sought to show, then whence comes Hengel's remark quoted at the beginning in connection with Lucian's *Prometheus*? Well, it comes from the simple fact that Lucian intentionally adopts the

⁵⁷ Eg., LIMC 7.425.60, 67, 69; 7.426.70, 71; 7.427.72 bis., 78a, 79.

⁵⁸ Larissa Bonfante, *Corpus Speculorum Etruscorum U.S.A. 3*, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1997), 40-43, pl. 11a-b (pp. [121-22]). Also, L. B. van der Meer, *Interpretatio Etrusca: Greek Myths on Etruscan Mirrors* (Amsterdam: J. C. Geiben, 1995), 76-79.

terminology of crucifixion as part of his program of belittling the gods. Three verbs are commonly translated “to crucify” in *Prometheus*: (1) *anastauraō* (chs. 1, 4, 17), (2) *stauraō* (ch. 1), and (3) *anaskolopizō* (chs. 2, 7, 10). The first two appear in the New Testament,⁵⁹ the third does not. The use of these words does not mean, however, that Lucian was expecting his readers to imagine that Prometheus had been crucified on a traditional cross, to say nothing of his ever having existed at all, he only uses the language analogically, and he does so in such a way as to leave his readers no room to suppose that he, in his second-century AD retelling of the already centuries old myth, was departing from its traditional form in any essentials. Lucian uses a number of terms to describe what Prometheus was actually affixed to, including *krēmnos*, “beetling crag” (ch. 1), *horos*, “mountain” (ch. 1), *petrai*, “rocks,” (ch. 1), *Kaukasos*, the name of the mountain: “Caucasus” (chs. 1, 4, 9). It is the mountain that Hermes refers to as *epikairotatos...ho stauros*, “a very fitting cross,” (ch. 1) not an actual cross (cf., chs. 9 and 10). And again as in the earlier versions we have Prometheus first placed in *desma* (ch. 1, cf., ch. 9) and only afterward attached to the mountain by them: “Now then,” says Hermes, “let us look about for a suitable rock (*krēmnos*), if there is a place anywhere that has no snow on it, so that the irons (*desma*) may be riveted in more firmly and he may be in full sight of everybody as he hangs there” (ch. 1).⁶⁰ The adoption of crucifixion language is part of the spoof and provides Lucian with fodder for mocking the absurdity of the vicious Zeus, while at the same time, as Hengel had pointed out, making Hermes and Haphaestus appear to “carry out their gruesome work like two slaves, threatened by their strict master with the same punishment if they weaken.”⁶¹ Thus when Prometheus asks Hephaestus and Hermes for pity for his unjust sentence, Hermes responds: “You mean, be crucified (*anaskolopisthēnai*) in your stead the instant we disobey the order! Don’t you suppose the Causcus has room enough to hold two more pegged up (*prospattaleuthentas*)?” (ch. 2).

All the other details in Lucian echo the traditional myth. An eagle comes to eat Prometheus’s liver (chs. 2, 4, 9, 20-21). There is, again, no question of his actually dying. He foresees both his misfortune and his future deliverance when “someone will come from Thebes, a brother of yours [i.e., Heracles], to shoot down the eagle” (ch. 20). The reasons

⁵⁹ *Anastauraō* (1x = Heb 6:6); *stauraō* (46x).

⁶⁰ *Lucian* (LCL; vol. 2 of 8; trans. A. M. Harmon; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University/London: William Heinemann, 1915), 243.

⁶¹ Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 11.

Prometheus is crucified are the three traditional ones: First, he had tricked Zeus into taking the inferior part of a sacrifice by wrapping bones in gleaming fat,⁶² second, he created humans and especially women,⁶³ and third, he stole fire from the gods and gave it to humans (ch. 3).⁶⁴ In the course of having Prometheus defend himself against the justice of his punishment, Lucian has him make an interesting point that touches upon the idea in the literature of rubbish that Lucian portrayed a Prometheus who was worshipped as a crucified god. It was a good thing for the Olympian gods, Lucian's Prometheus says, that he had made humans, because in doing so he had provided them with worshippers. His own lack of self-interest in doing this, Prometheus goes on to argue, is proven by the fact that although the humans build temples to many of the gods, they do not build temples to him: "In fact," he says, "there are temples to Zeus, to Apollo, to Hera and to you, Hermes, in sight everywhere, but nowhere any to Prometheus" (ch. 14). In Lucian's mind, then, Prometheus *was not worshipped*. Lucian had never heard Taylor's falsified Prometheus hymn sung in the streets and temples where he lived. In fact no one did prior to 1829.

⁶² Cf., Hesiod, *Theogony* 535-58.

⁶³ Cf., Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1:82 and 363; Lucian, *Dialogues of the Gods* 5:1.

⁶⁴ Hesiod, *Works and Days* 50-53, *Theogony* 565-707; Aescylus, *Prometheus Bound* 254; Lucian, *Dialogues of the Gods* 5:1.

John Bunyan on Justification



JOEL R. BEEKE
*President and Professor of Systematic
Theology,
Church History and Homiletics
Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary
Grand Rapids, MI
Jrbeeke@aol.com*

John Bunyan (1628–1688), author of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, is one of the best-known Puritans. While much of his work is eclipsed by *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, the famous “tinker” from Bedford possessed remarkable theological prowess. His ability to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3) is aptly demonstrated in such works as *Questions about the Nature and Perpetuity of the Seventh-Day Sabbath* and his *Exposition of the First Ten Chapters of Genesis*.¹ He had no university degree, yet he clearly grasped the central tenets of the Christian faith and masterfully applied them to his readers. Bunyan was also “very distinctly and consistently a teacher,”² whose schoolbook was the Bible. As J. H. Gosden says, “Other authority he seldom adduces...His appeal constantly is: ‘What saith the Scripture?’ ”³ Bunyan’s ability to wed orthodoxy and orthopraxy made him dangerous to his critics, beloved to his friends, and invaluable to future generations.

¹ *The Works of John Bunyan* (ed. George Offor; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991), 2:361–85, 413–501, henceforth cited by the title of the individual writing as well as *Works*, volume and page number. References to *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan*, (ed. Roger Sharrock; 13 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976–1994) will be cited as *MW*, volume and page number.

² A. R. Buckland, *John Bunyan* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1857), 97.

³ J. H. Gosden, *Bunyan: His Doctrine* (London: Sovereign Grace Union, 1929), 2.

Of particular interest to us here is Bunyan's concern for vindicating the doctrine of justification. Bunyan readily acknowledges that the term *justification* is used in various ways in the Scriptures; he is primarily concerned with the justification by which "a man stand[s] clear, quit, free, or in a saved condition before [God] in the approbation of his holy law."⁴ Justification is the act whereby a person may stand before God's law and be declared "not guilty" or, positively, be declared righteous.

Though Bunyan is not unique in his defense of the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone, he shows greater clarity and pastoral concern in expounding this doctrine than most of his contemporaries. For this reason alone, Bunyan's doctrine of justification is a worthwhile study. Let us look at how:

- Bunyan's own spiritual experience helped shape his views on justification,
- Bunyan's writings respond to his historical-polemical situation,
- Bunyan's doctrine of justification answers a variety of important questions, and
- Bunyan's pastoral concern to show the comforts flowing from justification is evident.

I. BUNYAN'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Though Bunyan experienced sporadic convictions of sin in his youth that helped restrain rebellion, he confessed that he was "filled with all unrighteousness" and had "few equals, both for cursing, swearing, lying, and blaspheming the holy name of God."⁵ God began to deal with Bunyan's soul in an abiding way when he was in his early twenties, when he realized, in his own words, that "I was lost if I had not Christ, because I had been a sinner; I saw that I wanted a perfect righteousness to present me without fault before God, and this righteousness was nowhere to be found but in the person of Jesus Christ."⁶

About that same time, God greatly blessed to Bunyan's soul the reading of Martin Luther's commentary on Galatians, which strongly

⁴ *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness* (*Works*, 1:301). In addition to this, Bunyan speaks of justification of actions and a justification before men. However, these two concerned Bunyan very little compared to our justification before God.

⁵ *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (*Works*, 1:6).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:16.

emphasized the necessity of basing the whole of one's salvation on the imputed righteousness of Christ. Bunyan later wrote: "I do prefer this book of Martin Luther upon the Galatians (excepting the Holy Bible) before all the books that ever I have seen, as most fit for a wounded conscience."⁷

Luther's book, together with the preaching and pastoral ministry of John Gifford, pastor of the Bedford Independent Church, brought Bunyan to see the necessity and beauty of the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Bunyan was particularly influenced by a sermon Gifford preached on Song of Solomon 4:1, "Behold thou art fair, my love, behold thou art fair." Nevertheless, Bunyan was greatly assaulted by the devil's wiles before being able to reach a comfortable degree of assurance that he was personally justified before God in Christ's righteousness alone. Happily, the day finally came when this great doctrine of imputed righteousness brought Bunyan into spiritual liberty. Bunyan writes of that unforgettable experience:

But one day, as I was passing in the field... this sentence fell upon my soul: Thy righteousness is in heaven; and methought withal I saw, with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ, at God's right hand; there, I say, as my righteousness; so that wherever I was, or whatever I was a-doing, God could not say of me, He wants my righteousness, for that was just before him. I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse; for my righteousness was Jesus Christ himself, the same yesterday, today, and forever. Now did my chains fall off my legs indeed, I was loosed from my afflictions and irons; my temptations also fled away...now I went home rejoicing, for the grace and love of God... I lived for some time, very sweetly at peace with God through Christ; Oh! methought, Christ! Christ! there was nothing but Christ that was before my eyes, I was not now only looking upon this and the other benefits of Christ apart, as of his blood, burial, and resurrection, but considered him as a whole Christ!...It was glorious to me to see his exaltation, and the worth and prevalency of all his benefits, and that because of this: now I could look from myself to him, and would reckon that all those graces of God that now were green in me, were yet but like those cracked groats and fourpence-halfpennies that rich men carry in their purses, when

⁷ Ibid., 1:22.

their gold is in their trunk at home! Oh, I saw that my gold was in my trunk at home! In Christ my Lord and Saviour! Now Christ was all.⁸

Michael Davies comments:

Bunyan's language, at the moment of saving faith in Christ, seems to approach something intensely mystical... [But] we should not let his rhapsodic, ecstatic prose cloud our understanding of the doctrinal point here. In clear, covenant terms Bunyan's conversion has been effected as a shift to grace from the law.⁹

Bunyan saw with the eyes of his heart that the living Christ was his righteousness, not his own works, and his heart rested upon Christ and found peace.

No wonder, then, that the doctrine of Christ's imputed righteousness lay at the center of Bunyan's teaching and preaching all his life. As Robert Oliver notes, this doctrine was

fundamental to the thinking of a man who took seriously the demands of the Law of God. He knew by painful experience that he had no hope of meeting those demands for 'there is none righteous, no not one.' Only as the Law's demands were met by Jesus Christ and imputed to him could he stand before God. The sufferings of Christ were endured for his sins and Christ's active obedience imputed to him ensured that the Law's demands were met. Only as he grasped these truths for himself could he see that there was 'Grace abounding to the chief of sinners.'¹⁰

II. BUNYAN'S HISTORICAL-POLEMICAL CONTECT

Bearing in mind, then, Bunyan's personal experience, let us consider the polemical context in which he found himself—a context that moved him to defend justification by faith alone in three of his books. Bunyan

⁸ Ibid., 1:35–36.

⁹ Michael Davies, *Graceful Reading: Theology and Narrative in the Works of John Bunyan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 101.

¹⁰ Robert Oliver, "'Grace Abounding': Imputed Righteousness in the Life and Work of John Bunyan," *The Churchman* 107.1 (1993): 79.

wrote on justification against both the Quakers and the Latitudinarian Anglicans.¹¹

The Quaker controversy with Bunyan was led by Edward Burrough (1634–1663) in his *The True Faith of the Gospel of Peace* (1656). Burrough was educated in the Church of England, then joined the Presbyterians, only to be converted to Quakerism by the preaching of George Fox in 1652. He was responding to Bunyan's first book, *Some Gospel-Truths Opened according to the Scriptures* (1656), written after Bunyan had participated in public debates with Quakers. Bunyan also published *A Vindication of the Book Called, Some Gospel-Truths Opened* (1657). Burrough then responded with *Truth (the Strongest of All) Witnessed Forth in the Spirit of Truth, Against All Deceit* (1657).¹²

Burrough accused Bunyan of approaching popish legalism by denying "the Christ within."¹³ He castigated Bunyan for denying that the light of conscience is a saving grace of Christ's Spirit given to all men. The Quakers asserted that Christ works His light and law in all people who are then saved by the choice of their own wills. By not resisting the inner light, men become holy and so are justified.¹⁴ Bunyan rebuked Burrough for confusing "justification wrought by the man Christ without, and sanctification wrought by the Spirit of Christ, within." Their debate was marred by heated and uncharitable language. Bunyan called the Quakers "painted hypocrites" and Burrough called Bunyan's teaching "wonderful trash, and muddy stuff."¹⁵

Bunyan's controversy with Latitudinarian Anglicanism was a little less rancorous. *A Defence of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith in Jesus Christ* (1672)¹⁶ is a polemical work that Bunyan wrote particularly against Edward Fowler (1632–1714), vicar of Northill near Bedford at that time, though ten years earlier he had been a Presbyterian, ejected from the Church of England as a result of the Act of Uniformity (1662). In the mid-1660s, Fowler conformed and was reinstated in the Church of England. Later, he would be appointed Bishop of Gloucester. Fowler

¹¹ Davies, *Graceful Reading*, 53–54, 75–77. Cf. I. M. Green, "Bunyan in Context: The Changing Face of Protestantism in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Bunyan in England and Abroad* (eds. M. Os and G. J. Schutte; Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 1990), 1–27.

¹² Richard L. Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory: John Bunyan and English Dissent* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 75–78; Oliver, "Grace Abounding," 73–77.

¹³ Davies, *Graceful Reading*, 17.

¹⁴ Oliver, "Grace Abounding," 77.

¹⁵ Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 82–85.

¹⁶ *A Defence of Justification*, (*Works*, 2:281–34).

wrote two books that deeply troubled Bunyan. In 1670, he published *The Principles and Practices of Certain Moderate Divines of the Church of England* as a defense of the growing Latitudinarian school of theology which promoted religious rationalism at the expense of the doctrines of predestination and Christ's imputed righteousness. Moreover, in this book, Fowler denigrated Puritan experiential theology—as did most Latitudinarians—as mere “enthusiasm.” Several months later, Fowler published *The Design of Christianity*, which taught among other errors that genuine Christianity only aims to purify men's natures and reform their lives so that they could be restored to the Adamic pre-fall state. Attacking the doctrine of justification directly, Fowler wrote, “The free grace of God is infinitely more magnified, in renewing our natures, than it could be in the bare justification of our persons.”¹⁷ Fowler said that the gospel teaches us “to perform good Actions,” as exemplified in Jesus whose life was “one Continued Lecture of the most Excellent Morals... He was a Person of the Greatest Freedom, Affability, and Courtesie.”¹⁸ He said it was “stupid folly” to think that Christ's righteousness is our own.¹⁹ In a word, Fowler preached a gospel of gentlemanly good manners rather than Christ's imputed righteousness.

In *A Defence of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith*, Bunyan strongly condemned Fowler for abusing Scripture and the doctrines of his own church—particularly articles 10, 11, and 13 of The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England.²⁰ If our holiness must derive partly from us and from the purity of our nature, then Fowler was really offering little else than “the religion of the Socinians, Quakers, etc., and not the religion of Jesus Christ.”²¹ Bunyan earnestly warned Fowler that his writing in such a vilifying manner of true religion, if not repented of, would bring the blood of the damned upon his own head.²²

Fowler responded to Bunyan caustically. Instead of refuting Bunyan's arguments, he called Bunyan a problematic schismatic whose book was ill-conceived, and goes on to suggest that someone else must have written the bulk of it for him, since this lowly tinker used all kinds of vocabulary and phrases beyond his capacity of understanding. Fowler even provides a list of these terms and phrases. He carries on for seventy

¹⁷ Quoted in Richard L. Greaves, *John Bunyan* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), 83. Cf. Oliver, “Grace Abounding,” 74.

¹⁸ Quoted in Davies, *Graceful Reading*, 75.

¹⁹ Quoted in Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 282.

²⁰ *A Defence of Justification* (*Works*, 2:232).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2:292.

²² *Ibid.*, 2:313–14.

pages replying to Bunyan, of whom he said at the beginning that he was not even worth replying to.²³ That is one way to do polemics!

Later, Bunyan wrote a shorter treatise, *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness*, which was found among his papers after his death in 1688 and was first published in 1692.²⁴ This book addresses the doctrines of justification and imputation more directly, in greater detail, and more pastorally than polemically, as we shall see. Throughout, Bunyan decries all self-righteousness and calls upon unbelievers to flee to Christ alone for justifying righteousness. He writes, “In the matter of thy justification thou must know nothing, see nothing, hear nothing, but thine own sins and Christ’s righteousness.”²⁵

Many of Bunyan’s other writings—such as *The Pharisee and the Publican*, *Doctrine of Law and Grace Unfolded*, *Light for Them that Sit in Darkness*, *Saved by Grace*, *A Vindication of Gospel Truths*, *The Work of Jesus Christ as Advocate*, *The Intercession of Christ*, and *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ*—are sprinkled with references to the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Not surprisingly, therefore, Bunyan considers justification essential for every believer, stating, “It is absolutely necessary that this be known of us; for if the understanding be muddy as to this, it is impossible that such should be sound in the faith.”²⁶

III. BUNYAN’S DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

Let us now turn to consider his doctrinal treatment of justification by faith alone. For Bunyan, that means answering six questions.

1. *What is the function of the moral law?*

From the time of the Reformation, not to mention the days of the apostles, a central question in the debate on justification has been: Can a sinner be justified by doing the works of the law? The answer to this question depends on how we view the gospel of grace. In Bunyan’s day, as in our own, many have proposed views that do not direct people to Christ and His accomplished work but to themselves and their own

²³ John Brown, *John Bunyan (1628–1688): His Life, Times, and Work* (London: Hulbert Publishing, 1928), 218–19.

²⁴ *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness*, (*Works*, 1:301–334). It may have been written in 1676 but hidden due to increasing government persecution (Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 339, 341–42).

²⁵ *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness*, (*Works*, 1:327).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:303.

works. George Offor says Bunyan offers “powerful arguments [to] counteract these errors.”²⁷

The need for justification arises from the nature of the law. Bunyan saw the law in the context of the two covenants between God and man: the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. The covenant of works laid upon Adam in the Garden of Eden the requirement for perfect obedience to God’s moral law, later expressed in the Ten Commandments.²⁸ To be right with God, a person must be perfectly righteous, meaning he or she is fully obedient to the law of God. Bunyan cites Moses in his *Exposition on Genesis*, saying, “It shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us.”²⁹ Our obedience is our righteousness, and this righteousness involves *negative* as well as *positive* holiness. Negative holiness means a person must cease from sin, or the transgression of the law;³⁰ positive holiness means a person must also perform the duties commanded in the law, or the practice of holiness: “For it is not what a man is not, but what a man does, that declares him a righteous man.”³¹ The requirement of the law is perfect righteousness.³²

The law demands obedience, but also threatens to punish disobedience. Bunyan asserts, “The law is itself so perfectly holy and good as not to admit of the least failure.”³³ Anything less than perfect obedience to this law brings upon the sinner the curse and condemnation of the law (Gal 3:10). In his *The Doctrine of Law and Grace Unfolded*, Bunyan says this law “doth not onely condemn words and actions...but it hath authority to condemn the most secret thoughts of the heart, being evil; so that if thou do not speak any word that is evil...yet if there should chance to passe but one vain thought...the Law taketh hold of it, accuseth, and also will condemn thee for it.”³⁴ Wherever this law shines, it exposes wrongdoing, even in the smallest measure, and pronounces a death sentence on the wrongdoer, for, as Bunyan says, “Sin and death is forever its language.”³⁵ In the vivid imagery of *Pilgrim’s Progress*,

²⁷ Ibid., 1:300.

²⁸ Davies, *Graceful Reading*, 22–23.

²⁹ *Exposition of Genesis*, (*Works*, 2:425–26), citing Deut 6:25.

³⁰ *Pharisee and the Publican* (*Works*, 2:222–23); 2 Tim 2:22; 1 Cor 10:14.

³¹ Ibid., 2:223; cf. 1 Tim 6:11.

³² *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness* (*Works*, 1:302).

³³ Ibid., 1:316.

³⁴ *Doctrine of Law and Grace Unfolded* (*MW*, 2:33).

³⁵ *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness* (*Works*, 1:317).

Moses cannot show mercy to a pilgrim, but can only punch his lights out.³⁶

In the light of the law, can anyone declare himself exempt from its curse and condemnation? Bunyan says, “If thou findest thy self guilty, as I am sure thou canst not otherwise choose but do, unless thou shut thy eyes against thy every dayes practice; then I say conclude thyself guilty of the breach of the first Covenant.”³⁷ The law daily exacerbates a person’s guilt. “Strike a steel against a flint, and the fire flies about you; strike the law against a carnal heart, and sin appears, sin multiplies, sin rageth, sin is strengthened!”³⁸ Davies writes, “To believe that one can attain righteousness by works is supreme folly for Bunyan, as the ability to fulfill the law was forfeited for everyone by Adam (mankind’s representative, or “publick person”) in his act of disobedience in the Garden of Eden.”³⁹ Pieter de Vries observes, “The doctrine of the justification of a sinner has its significance in the light of man’s total depravity...As long as we are strangers to the depravity of our hearts, we shall not esteem Christ.”⁴⁰

Since everyone has broken the law and lacks both negative and positive holiness, “therefore now for ever, by the law, no man can stand just before God.”⁴¹ Even works which might, at face value, seem ethically good are defiled because they are tainted by sin.⁴² Those who seek to come to God on the basis of their own righteousness are like the Pharisee who stood on a street corner thanking God that he was not a publican. Bunyan comments, “Indeed, thou mayest cover thy dirt, and paint thy sepulcher...But Pharisee, God can see through the white of this wall, even to the dirt that is within...nor can any of thy most holy duties, nor all, when put together, blind the eye of the all-seeing majesty from

³⁶ *Pilgrim’s Progress* (Works, 3:118–19).

³⁷ *Doctrine of Law and Grace Unfolded* (MW, 2:35). Bunyan, agreeing partly with the Federal Theology of his day, agrees that man was created in a covenant of works, which operated under the strict nature of law: “do this and live.” Therefore, to break that covenant is to break the law (*Exposition of Genesis* (Works, 2:426–27).

³⁸ *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness* (Works, 1:317).

³⁹ Davies, *Graceful Reading*, 23.

⁴⁰ Pieter de Vries, *John Bunyan on the Order of Salvation* (trans. C. van Haafden; New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1994), 149.

⁴¹ *Exposition of Genesis* (Works, 2:426).

⁴² *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness* (Works, 1:315).

beholding all the uncleanness of thy soul.”⁴³ God thus rightfully rejects “man’s righteousness, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.”⁴⁴

The law requires that a person be justified by perfect obedience, yet no one is capable of such perfection. The law thus demands the condemnation of all. As Bunyan says: “No, saith the Law, thou hast sinned, therefore I must curse thee; for it is my nature to curse, even, and nothing else but curse every one that doth in any point transgress against me, Gal. 3.10.”⁴⁵ In his autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, Bunyan expresses how many people feel when the law penetrates their conscience: “I had no sooner thus conceived in my mind, but suddenly this conclusion was fastened on my spirit...that I had been a great and grievous sinner, and that it was now too late for me to look after heaven.”⁴⁶ How then can a sinner find acceptance by a righteous and holy God? He cannot do it by his own merit, for his sins leave him void of any righteousness, and God thus rejects his obedience altogether.

2. How can a person be made right with God?

In this quagmire of sin, hopelessness, and helplessness, we find hope, Bunyan says, by looking to the righteousness of another. Bunyan directs his readers to the incarnate Mediator of the covenant of grace, who alone can justify. This is the gospel promise already offered to our first parents by God in the *protoevangelium* of Gen 3:15. Bunyan impersonates God as saying, “Now because I have grace and mercy, I will therefore design thy recovery.”⁴⁷ Sinners stand before the indictment of the law in need of supernatural help; they can by no means recover themselves from their fallen state. So God promises this recovery through the work of Jesus Christ, His beloved Son. Bunyan again uses impersonation: God promises that His Son will save sinners by “fulfilling my law, and by answering the penalties thereof. He shall bring in a righteousness which shall be ‘everlasting,’ by which I will justify you

⁴³ *Pharisee and Publican (Works, 2:229).*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* This will remind us of Christian’s journey in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* when he came upon By-path Meadow. Having ventured unto tough terrain he sought a different path to lead them to the Celestial Gate. They took the easier road and as they did it began thundering and lightning, reminding us of Sinai and not Zion. It was here that they stumbled upon Vain-confidence and later Doubting Castle and Giant Despair (see *Pilgrim’s Progress [Works, 3:138ff.]*).

⁴⁵ *Doctrine of Law and Grace Unfolded (MW, 2:36).*

⁴⁶ *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners (Works, 1:8).*

⁴⁷ *Exposition of Genesis (Works, 2:437).*

from sin, and the curse of God due thereto.”⁴⁸ Because the law has been transgressed, its demands have strengthened. For the Son to satisfy God’s justice, He must both pay the penalty for sin and fulfill the righteous requirements of the law. His obedience must be both active and passive, positive and negative: “for the accomplishing of righteousness, there was both doing and suffering; doing, to fulfill all the commands of the law; suffering, to answer to its penalty for sin.”⁴⁹

Within the economy of salvation, this promised Savior is considered “a *public* person, or one that presents the body of mankind in himself.”⁵⁰ Christ did not do what He did for Himself; rather, He was a representative—not for all mankind, but for His promised seed. Bunyan writes, “Christ stood as a common person, presenting in himself the whole lump of the promised seed, or the children of the promise; wherefore, he comes under the law for them, takes upon him to do what the law required of them, takes upon him to do it for them.”⁵¹ As representative of His chosen seed, Christ’s work is always *for them*. While affirming this doctrine, Bunyan also asserts the mystery of it, saying, “That one particular man should represent all the elect in himself, and that the most righteous should die as a sinner, yea, as a sinner by the hand of a just and holy God, is a mystery of the greatest depth!”⁵²

3. Why are Christ’s active and passive obedience both essential for justification?

As a public person, Christ’s vicarious obedience applies to both His life and His death. The Savior fulfilled the law both actively and passively, by works He performed and the things that He suffered, which are tasks delegated to Him from eternity. In Christ’s passive obedience, the penalty of sin is paid: as Bunyan says, “Thou hast sinned; the law now calls for passive...obedience.”⁵³ Suffering is necessary for justification because “the threatening of death and the curse of the law lay in the way between heaven’s gates and the souls of the children, for their sins; wherefore he that will save them must answer Divine justice,

⁴⁸ Ibid., 2:438.

⁴⁹ *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness* (Works, 1:323).

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1:303.

⁵¹ *Light for Them that Sit in Darkness* (Works, 1:406); for more on Bunyan’s view of particular redemption, see *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ* (Works, 1:242–43).

⁵² *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness* (Works, 1:303).

⁵³ Ibid., (Works, 1:317).

or God must lie, in saving them without inflicting the punishment threatened.”⁵⁴

The law, which is a reflection of God’s perfect justice, demands that all transgressions must be punished. Christ submitted to the punishment decreed by the law, dying for sin, in order to purge its guilt through the shedding of His blood. Citing Hebrews 1:3, Bunyan says Christ has “purged our sins...by his precious blood; for that alone can purge our sins.”⁵⁵ Christ’s death was designed to meet the demands of God’s justice. “Christ, when he died, died not to satisfy Satan, but his Father; not to appease the Devil, but to answer the Demands of the Justice of God...He redeemed us, therefore, from the Curse of the Law, by his Blood.”⁵⁶ Therefore, if Christ is to justify sinners, He “must...have suffered; the manner of the work laid a necessity upon him to take our flesh upon him, he must die, he must die for us, he must die for our sins.”⁵⁷

Likewise, Christ’s active obedience is necessary, for paying the penalty is only half of the equation. Had Christ only suffered punishment, obedience to the commands of the law would still be necessary, for the whole law, every jot and tittle of it, must be fulfilled to establish righteousness. So Bunyan writes, “That at the very time when Jesus Christ did hang on the cross on Mount Calvary, was buried, rose again from the dead, and ascended above the clouds from his disciples, at that very time was all the law fulfilled for righteousness. He is the end of the law, mark; he is the end of the law for righteousness.”⁵⁸ As a righteous man, Christ obeyed the law perfectly, fulfilling *all* the demands of the law, both in His passive obedience of paying for sin through His suffering and death, and in His active obedience by doing the things commanded, loving God above all and loving His neighbor as Himself.

4. *How are we justified by faith?*

In speaking of the first covenant God made with man in the Garden of Eden, Bunyan says that if man kept the law both positively and negatively, his obedience would be his righteousness. This is precisely

⁵⁴ *Light for Them that Sit in Darkness* (Works, 1:405).

⁵⁵ *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness* (Works, 1:323).

⁵⁶ *The Advocateship of Jesus Christ* (MW, 11:127). The second issue of the first edition of this work was retitled *The Work of Jesus Christ as an Advocate* (cf. Works, 1:151ff.).

⁵⁷ *Light for Them that Sit in Darkness* (Works, 1:405).

⁵⁸ *A Vindication of Gospel Truths* (Works, 2:189).

what Christ has done, for in Him there was no transgression, and in all that He did He lived a holy life. Therefore, we can say that Christ *is* righteous: He has done what man, weakened by flesh, could not do.

As a public man, Christ represented the promised seed; all that He did was done for them, on their behalf. His people are made righteous, not by their own righteousness, but by *His*. Bunyan writes, “For if he hath undertaken to bring in a justifying righteousness, and that by works and merits of his own, then that righteousness must of necessity be inherent in him alone, and ours only by imputation.”⁵⁹ Just as Adam’s sin was imputed to his physical posterity, so the righteousness of Christ is imputed to His spiritual posterity, or those who believe in Him. Of this Bunyan says: “It is improper to say, Adam’s eating of the forbidden fruit was personally and inherently an act of mine. It was personally his, and imputatively mine; personally his, because he did it; imputatively mine, because I was then in him.”⁶⁰ It follows that “the righteousness of the other [Christ] is reckoned the righteousness of those that are his.”⁶¹ Hence, “saving comes to us by what Christ did for us.”⁶²

Bunyan, therefore, is an avid promoter of the forensic character of justification. He believed that Christ’s righteousness is personally imputed to each and all of the elect as sinners. By that imputation of righteousness which they are justified individually and corporately before God. The believing sinner, led by the Spirit and Word of God, gives up the vain attempt to produce his own righteousness, and takes refuge in Christ’s righteousness.

Like John Owen (1616–1683) and Thomas Goodwin (1600–1679), Bunyan distinguished justification from the forgiveness of sin. As de Vries writes,

In his opinion the forgiveness of sin is the fruit of someone’s being covered with the righteousness of Christ. Quite consciously Bunyan refrained from equating justification and forgiveness, making a logical distinction between them in order to point out that Christ’s imputed righteousness is the sole legal ground for the forgiveness of sins. In doing this he sought to exclude any possibility for a Socinian interpretation of

⁵⁹ *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness* (*Works*, 1:324).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Christ a Complete Saviour* (*Works*, 1:207).

justification [as they defined justification exclusively in terms of forgiveness].⁶³

Bunyan taught that the imputed righteousness of Christ is received by us through *faith*, which is defined as “receiving, embracing, accepting, or trusting.”⁶⁴ Above all, faith appropriates Christ’s righteousness which is readily available in and from Christ Himself. Faith does not justify us by its own virtue, but by virtue of its object, Christ and His righteousness; hence, it always bears a relational character. Faith justifies us only because through it we rest on Christ’s work. This is the only way for Christ and His righteousness to become a personal, experiential reality for us. Bunyan thus says, “To be saved is to be brought to, and helped to lay hold on, Jesus Christ by faith.”⁶⁵ To trust in anything other than Christ, whether the merit of the law or the merit of faith, is to undermine the glorious doctrine of justification. Bunyan asks, “What, then, must it [faith] rely upon or trust in? Not in itself; that is, without Scripture; not in its works, they are inferior to itself...therefore it must trust in Christ.”⁶⁶ Because of what Christ suffered for us, He alone became the “meritorious cause of our justification...Thou art, therefore, as I have said, to make Christ Jesus the object of thy faith for justification.”⁶⁷

Bunyan emphasizes the relationship between faith and Christ, saying, “Faith, then, as separate from Christ, doth nothing; nothing, neither with God nor man; because what it wants is relative; but let it go to the Lord Jesus—let it behold him as dying, and it fetches

⁶³ De Vries, *John Bunyan on the Order of Salvation*, 148.

⁶⁴ *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness* (*Works*, 1:328). Bunyan taught that the imputation of Christ’s righteousness immediately precedes faith, which then apprehends Christ’s righteousness consciously. He argued that God must justify before He can bless the sinner with the grace of faith, for an unjustified sinner is under His curse, not His blessing. Faith was a sign of justification, not its cause (*The Pharisee and the Publican* [*Works*, 2:250–51]; cf. de Vries, *John Bunyan on the Order of Salvation*, 151–54; Davies, *Graceful Reading*, 30–31). However, Bunyan’s view is not the same as the later British Baptist John Gill (1697–1771), for Bunyan taught a justification logically prior but temporally simultaneous with faith, not an eternal justification innate in God. Bunyan did teach that the elect were saved in one sense before the creation of the world, but in another sense saved when drawn to Jesus Christ to trust in Him (*Saved by Grace* (*Works*, 1:338–39).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:339.

⁶⁶ *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness* (*Works*, 1:326).

⁶⁷ *Saved by Grace* (*Works*, 1:339).

righteousness, and life, and peace, out of the virtue of his blood.”⁶⁸ Faith is nothing more than trusting Jesus Christ and His righteousness to be *our* righteousness. Here we come full circle, for Bunyan defines justification as that act whereby man stands free and clear before God in the approbation of His law. This cannot be accomplished by any inherent righteousness in man, who by nature is a law breaker, but only by faith in Jesus Christ and His meritorious work.

Behind Christ’s meritorious work stands the irrevocable love of God to His elect. That love moves the Father to give Christ as heaven’s Savior for sinners. Thus, for Bunyan, the love of God is the first and ultimate cause of justification, the merits of Christ are the second, and then, Spirit-worked faith, which is only the instrumental cause—not the meritorious cause—of justification. Without the Spirit’s work, there is no possibility of our believing.⁶⁹ This faith, which is the gift of God, is not parceled out indiscriminately, but given to the elect alone. Faith has to be worked in our heart by the Spirit, or as Bunyan also puts it, we have to be “implanted into the faith of Christ.”⁷⁰ Only when understood this way can the Calvinist avoid falling into the Arminian and Socinian error of making faith itself the savior, instead of Christ.

5. How does justifying faith relate to obedience to the law?

Clearly Bunyan held that justifying faith does not look to one’s own good works in the least. However, Bunyan taught that justifying faith produces good works. Faith is “a principle of life by which a Christian lives,...a principle of motion by which [the soul] walks towards heaven in the way of holiness...It is also a principle of strength, by which the soul opposeth its lust, the devil and this world, and overcomes them.” Spirit-worked faith is an active grace; it fuels the believer’s engine all his lifetime. Greaves comments that Bunyan’s view of faith is “an all-embracing principle or source of the Christian life from its inception to its consummation.”⁷¹

Faith in Christ alone justifies a sinner before God. But since faith is invisible, good works justify us before men. Visible obedience to the law plays a crucial role in demonstrating our new spiritual state to our fellow men. Bunyan wrote,

⁶⁸ *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness (Works, 1:310).*

⁶⁹ Greaves, *John Bunyan*, 71.

⁷⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, 70.

⁷¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, *John Bunyan*, 71–73.

When I think of justification before God from the dreadful curse of the law; then I must speak of nothing but grace, Christ, the promise, and faith. But when I speak of our justification before men, then I must join to these good works. For grace, Christ, and faith, are things invisible...He that would shew to his neighbors that he hath truly received this mercy of God, must do it by good works; for all things else to them is but talk.⁷²

Faith initiates the believer into the enjoyment of the covenant of grace without abolishing the law from the believer's life. Bunyan believed that the moral law has a place in both the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. He noted that the Lord gave the law to Moses twice, once with thunder and fire in Exodus 19–20, and again with a revelation of grace in Exodus 34. He wrote,

I think the first doth more principally intend its force as a covenant of works, not at all respecting the Lord Jesus Christ; but this second time not, at least in the manner of its being given, respecting such a covenant, but rather as a rule, or directory [set of directives], to those who already are found in the cleft of the rock, Christ: for the saint himself, though he be without law to God, yet even he is not without law to him as considered under grace, not without law to God, but under the law to Christ. 1 Co. ix. 21.⁷³

Bunyan was so convinced that “good works must flow from faith” that he wrote, “The best way both to provoke ourselves and others to good works, it is to be often affirming to others the doctrine of justification by grace, and to believe it ourselves.”⁷⁴

6. In the order of salvation, which has priority, justification or sanctification?

Bunyan emphasized the necessity of imputed righteousness, personal righteousness, and practical righteousness in the true Christian. Anjov Ahenakaa observed that Bunyan “confirms the Reformed position of taking justification and sanctification together, not one at the expense of the other as the Antinomians and Arminians were rightly accused of

⁷² *A Holy Life the Beauty of Christianity (Works, 2:507).*

⁷³ *The Law and a Christian (Works, 2:388).*

⁷⁴ *Christian Behavior (Works, 2:570).*

doing—Antinomians emphasizing free justification at the expense of sanctification, and the Arminians emphasizing sanctification at the expense of justification.”⁷⁵ Bunyan wrote,

Thus, therefore, we have described the righteous man. First. He is one whom God makes righteous, by reckoning or imputation. Second. He is one that God makes righteous by possessing of him with [or putting him in possession of] a principle of righteousness. Third. He is one that is practically righteous...I dare not give a narrower description of a righteous man than this, because whoever pretends to justification, if he be not sanctified, pretends to what he is not; and whoever pretends to sanctification, if he shows not the fruits thereof by a holy life, he deceiveth his own heart, and professeth but in vain.⁷⁶

But Bunyan insisted that the righteousness of imputation must be kept distinct from the righteousness of personal transformation and that imputation must come first: “Righteousness by imputation must be first, that justification may not be of debt, but of mercy and grace.”⁷⁷ This is further necessary so “the sinner may stand just in God’s sight from the curse, and that God might deal with him both in a way of justice as well as mercy, and yet do the sinner no harm.”⁷⁸ Only after a person is counted righteous in Christ can he begin to live in holiness. Bunyan says, “Wherefore our holy actions are the fruits of righteousness, that is by Jesus Christ, not by our human nature, or the purity of it in us; yea, they are the fruits of the Spirit of God.”⁷⁹ For Bunyan, righteousness by imputation always and necessarily precedes holy works.

Consequently, sanctification may never precede justification (as in Roman Catholicism) and justification and sanctification may never be commingled (as in Baxterian neonomianism). No one may build his case for salvation on his own sanctification in even the smallest degree. In fact, building salvation on self-righteousness or on anything else in us is

⁷⁵ Anjov Ahenakaa, “Justification and the Christian Life in John Bunyan: A Vindication of Bunyan from the Charge of Antinomianism” (Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1997), 126.

⁷⁶ *The Desire of the Righteous Granted* (*Works*, 1:750–51).

⁷⁷ *Pharisee and Publican* (*Works*, 2:254).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, in *Works* (2:255).

⁷⁹ *A Defence of Justification* (*Works*, 2:285).

our greatest hindrance in exercising faith in Christ's imputed righteousness.⁸⁰

Excursus: Contemporary Justification Issues

It is obvious from what has been laid out above that Bunyan's view of justification is at odds with views about justification being published abroad today. One increasingly influential view is known as the New Perspective on Paul (NPP). Essentially it argues that the Reformers misunderstood Paul on two levels and that this misunderstanding has dominated later discussions of Paul's view of justification down to the late twentieth century, which would include Bunyan. First, the NPP maintains that when Paul discussed justification, he was not talking about how a sinner can find peace with a holy God. That perspective, NPP advocates maintain, is rooted in the guilty conscience of a Martin Luther or, one could say in the present case, the guilt-laden conscience of a John Bunyan. Besides, the argument continues, such a position is typical of a Western mindset beset with legal notions of sin and justice and beginning to be afflicted by the individualism that is so much a part of occidental *mentalité*. Rather, NPP asserts, when Paul talks about justification, he is not so much thinking about how one is saved from the wrath and judgment of God, but of the evidence that one is already saved. To be justified by faith means that the marks of true conversion are evident, namely, faith in the Lord Jesus and the good works of the Christian life. Justification is not about entry into the Christian life but about what that life looks like. Thus, Paul's polemic against "the works of the law" is not against the attempt to win God's favor by good works—which was very much the mindset of medieval Roman Catholic piety. Rather, "the NPP tells us, "the works of the law" are the marks of Judaism that indicate membership in God's covenant people: circumcision, the keeping of the foods laws, etc."⁸¹

In the NPP, then, Paul is attacking the idea that to belong to the corporate people of God one must keep the distinctive aspects of Judaism. It is faith in Christ that typifies the truly saved. Most advocates

⁸⁰ De Vries, *John Bunyan on the Order of Salvation*, 149.

⁸¹ N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 119–22; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 38A (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), lxiii–lxxii, 192; Mark M. Mattison, "A Summary of the New Perspective on Paul," <http://www.thepaulpage.com/a-summary-of-the-new-perspective-on-paul/> (accessed April 27, 2011).

of the NPP also go further and make a second assertion, namely, that Paul says nothing about imputed righteousness. The NPP is rooted in the idea that first-century Judaism was just as grace-oriented as early Christianity, that the final judgment is based on one's works and that the Greek word for faith means faithfulness, the equivalent of obedience.

But close examination of Paul's writings (for example, Eph 2 and Titus 3) reveal a theologian quite conscious that the onset of our salvation is always entirely a matter of grace, which runs against the human tendency to seek self-justification by works before a holy God. The Epistle to the Hebrews sets forth the weight of sin and clearly argues that nothing human beings can do by way of good works or obedient faithfulness can make us holy enough to stand before the majestic purity of the living God. Only Jesus' death and faith in that death, lead to salvation. Bunyan has rightly understood Paul and Hebrews at this point. First-century Judaism was no more grace-oriented than much of seventeenth-century Anglicanism that Bunyan contended with or the early twenty-first century secular confidence in the essential goodness of men and women that we must contend with today. Moreover, the doctrine of Christ's imputed righteousness is obviously central to Bunyan's understanding to justification and was the key to his conversion, in which he saw that the flawless righteousness he needed to stand before a holy God was to be found only in the Lord Jesus at the right hand of the Father. Recent studies like Brian Vickers' *Jesus' Blood and Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Imputation*, a close study of the Pauline writings that bear on this issue, show that Bunyan, not to mention the Reformers, rightly understood Paul.⁸²

⁸² For helpful short articles on the New Perspective, see J. Ligon Duncan, "The Attractions of the New Perspective(s) on Paul," http://www.alliancenet.org/partner/Article_Display_Page/0,,PTID307086_CHID560462_CIID1660662,00.html (accessed April 27, 2011); Paul F. M. Zahl, "Mistakes of the New Perspective on Paul," *Themelios* 27, no. 1 (2001): 5–11. For books on the topic, see Cornelis P. Venema, *The Gospel of Free Acceptance in Christ: An Assessment of the Reformation and New Perspective on Paul* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2006); Guy Prentice Waters, *Justification and the New Perspectives on Paul: A Review and Response* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2004). For investigations related to the New Perspective by New Testament scholars, see D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, eds., *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001, 2004).

IV. BUNYAN'S PASTORAL APPLICATIONS

We would be remiss if we ended the discussion of Bunyan on justification here, for Bunyan's trademark is his pastoral concern. This experimental emphasis is evident in most of his writings, in which he applies the truth of a doctrine to a believer's life. Bunyan was well acquainted with the weaknesses and temptations of the human heart, so his explanation of the doctrine of justification takes on a consoling and comforting tone.

In all that can be said regarding justification by faith, Bunyan notes many things that have "great power with the heart to bend it to seek life before God by the law."⁸³ In sinning, Adam and his heirs take on a new relationship to the law, which no longer promises them life but rather "shakes Mount Sinai, and writeth death upon all faces, and makes the church itself cry out, A mediator! else we die."⁸⁴ We need to stop turning to the law as if it might justify us before God, for in turning to it, "the law...doth veil the heart from Christ, and holds the man so down to doing and working for the kingdom of heaven, that he quite forgets the forgiveness of sins by mercy through Christ."⁸⁵

We must rather look to Christ as the end of the law. As Bunyan says, "He has done in his own person, and justified me thereby, and for my part, I will not labor now to fulfill the law for justification, least I should undervalue the merits of the Man Christ Jesus, and what he hath done without me."⁸⁶ Justifying righteousness is found only in the person of Christ apart from the law,⁸⁷ and we must thus warn ourselves not to seek righteousness in anything we do. For those who cling to Christ by faith, His righteousness *becomes* their righteousness. Bunyan quips, "Wherefore, in this sense, we are said to *do* what only was done by him."⁸⁸ Therefore, a justified man owes no more penalty or obedience to the law for his justification—indeed, he is in a better state than Adam since his state of acquittal before God is irrevocable in Christ! Fittingly then, Bunyan always points us back to Christ, the ground of our

⁸³ *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness* (Works, 1:320). Bunyan reasoned extensively that believers are no longer under the law as a covenant of works, but are under grace (see *The Doctrine of Law and Grace Unfolded* [MW, 2:83ff.]).

⁸⁴ *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness* (Works, 1: 317).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:321.

⁸⁶ *A Vindication of Gospel Truths* (Works, 2:194).

⁸⁷ *A Defence of Justification* (Works, 2:286–87).

⁸⁸ *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness* (Works, 1:304).

justification. He writes, “Look, then, upon Christ as the man, the mediator, the undertaker, and accomplisher of that righteousness in himself, wherein thou must stand just before God; and that he is the covenant or conditions of the people to Godward, always having in himself the righteousness that the law is well pleased with, and always presenting himself before God as our only righteousness.”⁸⁹

In Bunyan’s allegory of the pilgrim, Christian encounters two men who tumble over the wall into the narrow way instead of entering by the gate. One was named Formalist, the other Hypocrisy. Christian questions them and they tell him they are confident that they can perform “laws and ordinances” as well as he and say the only thing he has that they do not is his coat, which no doubt his neighbors gave him out of pity to cover his nakedness. In fact, Christian received that coat when he stood at the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ. Bunyan has Christian reply to these vain men:

By laws and ordinances you will not be saved, since you came not in by the door. And as for this coat that is on my back, it was given me by the Lord of the place whither I go; and that, as you say, to cover my nakedness with. And I take it as a token of his kindness to me; for I had nothing but rags before. And, besides, thus I comfort myself as I go: Surely, think I, when I come to the gate of the city, the Lord thereof will know me for good, since I have his coat on my back—a coat he gave me freely in the day that he stripped me of my rags.⁹⁰

Another benefit of justification by faith is that it serves as the ground for Christ’s advocacy before the Father. Whatever charge may be leveled against us, Christ takes upon Himself. Bunyan says, “He taketh the whole Charge upon himself, acknowledging the Crimes to be his own. ‘O God,’ says he, ‘thou knowest my foolishness, and my Sins; my Guiltiness is not hid from thee, Psal. 69.5.’”⁹¹ Christ then becomes our advocate before the throne of justice, for “[a]ll, then, that we, in this matter, have to do, is, to stand at the Bar by Faith among the Angels, and see how the business goes.”⁹² At the bar of God, Christ pleads the goodness of God, and “God is never weary of being delighted with Jesus Christ; his blood is always precious with God; his merits being those in

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:327.

⁹⁰ *Pilgrim’s Progress (Works, 3:104)*.

⁹¹ *The Advocateship of Jesus Christ (MW, 11:124)*.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 11:125.

which justice hath everlasting rest.”⁹³ God is pacified by the accomplished work of Christ so that no believer, whatever his sins, can be found guilty before the throne of God.

In the same way, Christ argues against Satan, our accuser. Illustrating this point from Zech 3, where Joshua the high priest stands before the Angel of the Lord and is confronted by Satan as his adversary. Bunyan writes, “Come, then, says the Lord Jesus, the Contention is not now against my People, but myself, and about the Sufficiency of the Amends that I have made for the Transgressions of my People; but he is near that justifieth me, that approveth and accepteth of my Doings...Who is mine Adversary? let him come near me.”⁹⁴ This challenge shuts the mouth of Satan, and he no longer can lay anything to the charge of the justified people of God. This should move us to praise God. Bunyan says, “Let us therefore by him offer praise for the gift of his Son, and for that we stand quit through him in his sight, and that in despite of all inward weakness, and that in despite of all outward enemies.”⁹⁵

Finally, justification by faith enables us to live in gospel obedience. While obedience is not the ground of our justification, it is a proper fruit of justification. Only after we receive the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ can we begin to live in a way that pleases the Heavenly Father. Once, we were nothing but law-breakers, but, through Christ and the continuing operation of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled more and more to live in holiness. Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is never alone.⁹⁶

In all of these applications, Bunyan is concerned that Christians never seek to move beyond Christ. They must not say, “I see not that in Christ now, that I have seen in him in former days. Besides, I find the Spirit leadeth me forth to study other things.”⁹⁷ Bunyan’s response is that the fault for this apathy toward Christ does not lie in Christ but in those who are no longer delighted with Him. He concludes, “God is never weary of being delighted with Jesus Christ, his blood is always precious with God; his merits being those in which justice hath everlasting rest,

⁹³ *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness (Works, 1:329).*

⁹⁴ *The Advocateship of Jesus Christ (MW, 11:128).*

⁹⁵ *Light for Them that Sit in Darkness (Works, 1:427).*

⁹⁶ Cf. Richard L. Greaves, “Amid the Holy War: Bunyan and the Ethic of Suffering,” in *John Bunyan and His England, 1628–1688* (eds. Anne Laurence, W. R. Owens, and Stuart Sim; London: The Hambleton Press, 1990), 63–75.

⁹⁷ Bunyan wrote this against the Quaker claim to immediate inspiration and Anglican appeals to reason, over against Scripture.

why shouldest thou wander or go about to change thy way?”⁹⁸ How we need to replay that same note today, stressing with professing Christians everywhere that there is nothing to be had beyond the doctrine of justification by faith alone, in Christ alone. To look anywhere beyond Christ is to look beyond where God looks.

V. CONCLUSION

The doctrine of justification is critically important in Bunyan’s writing. In his own confession, he places justification before calling and election.⁹⁹ Bunyan was a staunch defender of the forensic nature of justification. Salvation in Christ, by His righteousness alone, without the works of the law, is foundational in all his preaching.

Bunyan believed that the doctrine of justification by faith alone offers believers much practical comfort. His words offer guidance to us as we find ourselves engaged in a life-and-death struggle to maintain the truth of the gospel. The doctrines of the profound sinfulness of sin, the need for personal union with Christ, and the glorious truth of justification are being undermined today within and without the church. To rid ourselves of the truths that were so foundational in Bunyan’s writings is to rid ourselves of biblical Christianity. Bunyan says, “No man that buildeth forsakes the good foundation; that is the ground of his encouragement to work, for upon that is laid the stress of all; and without it nothing that is framed can be supported, but must inevitably fall to the ground.”¹⁰⁰

Christians must never abandon the doctrine of justification by imputed righteousness. They must build their confession, confidence, and life upon the glorious truth that Christ has become their righteousness. Bunyan writes, “Never think to live always on Christ for justification is a low and beggarly thing, and as it were a staying at the foundation; for let me tell you, depart from a sense of the meritorious means of your justification with God, and you quickly grow light, and frothy, and vain.”¹⁰¹ May we never “grow light, frothy and vain,” but take warning and encouragement from those who by faith have inherited the promises and daily live in obedience to their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

⁹⁸ *A Defence of Justification (Works, 2:327).*

⁹⁹ *A Confession of My Faith (Works, 2:597–99).*

¹⁰⁰ *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness (Works, 1:328).*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

To the unbeliever, the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ's righteousness alone contains both a note of warning and a note of invitation. Bunyan writes:

Ah how many thousands that can now glory that they were never troubled for sin against God, I say, how many be there that God will trouble worse than he troubled cursed Achan, because their peace, though false, and of the devil, was rather chosen by them than peace by Jesus Christ, than "peace with God by the blood of his cross." Awake, careless sinners, awake! And rise from the dead and Christ shall give you light. Content not yourselves with either sin or righteousness, if you be destitute of Jesus Christ, but cry, O cry to God for light to see your condition by; cry for light in the Word of God, for therein is the righteousness of God revealed. Cry therefore for light to see this righteousness by; it is a righteousness of Christ's finishing, of God's accepting and that which alone can save the soul from the stroke of eternal justice.¹⁰²

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 1:333.

The Repentance of Jerome: How the Great Translator of the Latin Vulgate Bible Got His Priorities Turned Round.

RONALD V. HUGGINS

*Associate Professor of NT and Greek
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Kansas City, MO 64118
rhuggins@mbts.edu*

***“Thou liest [Jerome]; thou art a
Ciceronian, not a Christian!”***

Where I came to know the Lord, a little college town nestled among the rolling hills on the Palouse in Northern Idaho, I never encountered any advocates of the King James Only position. I do seem to recall vaguely someone telling me early on how he preferred the King James over the translation I was using that day—I don’t remember which one it was—on account of the greater grandeur of its style, majesty of its cadences, dignity of its expression, and so on. I remember commenting at the time—it must have made me appear a hopeless North Idaho bumpkin—that what drew me to the Bible were its promises not its poetry. That’s still true...by the way. Years later I was helped in this regard (or, if you like, confirmed in this opinion) by Søren



Fig. 1 *Saint Jerome*
Attributed to Balthazar Permoser
(German, 1651-1732)
*Museum of Art and Archaeology
University of Missouri—Columbia*

Kierkegaard's continual warnings against confusing the aesthetically beautiful for the divinely inspired.¹ That's not to say that the two are mutually exclusive, that butt ugly is somehow "more inspired" than beautiful. As the scripture says: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Rom 10:15). But there the beauty of the feet has nothing to do with whether they are gnarled and corny, thick and horny-yellow nailed or smooth, pampered and elegantly manicured. Rather they receive their beauty from without, from the fact that they are viewed in the light of the good news they carry. Their beauty, in other words, only becomes visible through the ear not the eye of the beholder. And lest anybody get the wrong idea that I am getting ready to make a pitch here, for example, for the proliferation of cheap and tacky evangelistic materials, or cheesy Christian music. I am not arguing that aesthetics don't matter, only that we mustn't confuse the more aesthetic with the more divine.

To return to the theme of majestic cadences, dignity of expression, and so on, some may be surprised to learn that while some of the Bible as it was originally written did reflect that, a good deal of it did not. Indeed there have been times in history when the decoration of speech has been held in such high esteem that Christians of more refined rhetorical sensibilities have in fact found themselves being embarrassed, and even offended, by the plain dress God chose for his Word.

Such was the case, for example, for the great 4th-5th century Church Father, Augustine of Hippo, who describes his early dislike of the plainness of Scriptural language in the third book of his *Confessions*:

For then it was quite different from what I now feel. When I then turned toward the Scriptures, they appeared to me to be quite unworthy to be compared with the dignity of Tully [i.e., Cicero]. For my inflated pride was repelled by their style, nor could the sharpness of my wit penetrate their inner meaning. Truly they were of a sort to aid the growth of little ones, but I scorned to be a little one and, swollen with pride, I looked upon myself as fully grown.²

Part of Augustine's great story turns on how he learned to understand that truth is truth no matter how it's dressed. There are those who think

¹ See, especially, Søren Kierkegaard, "On the Difference Between a Genius and an Apostle," in *The Present Age* (trans. Alexander Dru; New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), 87-108.

² Augustine, *Confessions* 3.6.9 (ET: Albert C. Outler).

something is truer and better *because* it is expressed in beautiful words, just as there are others, who are so captivated by the idea of “calling a spade a spade,” that they are easily duped into believing false opinions plainly stated while at the same time rejecting true ones eloquently put. In reality the world is full of all kinds of people, and both truth and falsehood appears in all kinds of verbal attire. Augustine addresses this (as it happens very eloquently) in the fifth book of his *Confessions*, in a passage where he is describing his dissatisfaction with the finely-crafted defenses of Manicheanism—a heresy to which Augustine himself had been held captive for some years—put forward by the famous Manichaean, Faustus:

But what profit was there to me in the elegance of my cupbearer, since he could not offer me the more precious draught for which I thirsted? My ears had already had their fill of such stuff, and now it did not seem any better because it was better expressed nor more true because it was dressed up in rhetoric; nor could I think the man’s soul necessarily wise because his face was comely and his language eloquent. But they who extolled him to me were not competent judges. They thought him able and wise because his eloquence delighted them. At the same time I realized that there is another kind of man who is suspicious even of truth itself, if it is expressed in smooth and flowing language. But thou, O my God, hadst already taught me in wonderful and marvelous ways, and therefore I believed—because it is true—that thou didst teach me and that beside thee there is no other teacher of truth, wherever truth shines forth. Already I had learned from thee that because a thing is eloquently expressed it should not be taken to be as necessarily true; nor because it is uttered with stammering lips should it be supposed false. Nor, again, is it necessarily true because rudely uttered, nor untrue because the language is brilliant. Wisdom and folly both are like meats that are wholesome and unwholesome, and courtly or simple words are like town-made or rustic vessels—both kinds of food may be served in either kind of dish.³

Augustine of course never felt the need to abandon his ability to speak and write eloquently. But he did get over his early offence at the plainness of Scriptural language, and in doing so he became one of the Scriptures’ greatest defenders and expositors.

³ Augustine, *Confessions* 5.6.10 (ET: Albert C. Outler).

Throughout history there have been other people like Augustine in this regard. The famous Erasmus of Rotterdam, whose Greek text lies at the root of both our King James New Testament and of Luther's New Testament as well, also needed prodding before he was ready to surrender his considerable talents to the service of Christianity and the study of Scripture.

The occasion seems to have been a letter, now lost, from his friend, the scholar Jean Colet, a man who Erasmus recalled in the line: "A book was ever his companion on the road, and his talk was always of Christ."⁴

The reason for this man's having credibility with Erasmus and therefore also potential influence over him was that, according to E. Harris Harbison, "the one thing Erasmus had never yet experienced was to meet a thoroughly devoted Christian with a first-rate mind and scholarly tastes something like his own."⁵ Colet was that man. Harbison writes further that "Colet seems to have put squarely up to Erasmus [in a lost letter] the decision which would affect the whole future course of his life: Was he going to waste his extraordinary talents by devoting his life to secular Poetry and Rhetoric, as he apparently intended, or would he immediately join Colet in his battle with the sophists and obscurantists [at Oxford] who were hiding knowledge of the Gospel."⁶

Whether Erasmus ever got as far as he should have in escaping his devotion to secular poetry and rhetoric is something that can be debated, but the continuing value of the work he did do in editing and commenting on Scripture can never be adequately measured.

I. CHRISTIAN OR CICERONIAN?

By far one of the most remarkable "repentings" along these lines is that of Saint Jerome, the 4th century Father who originally translated the Latin Vulgate Bible. In his Epistle 22 to Eustochium, written in A.D. 384, Jerome recalls how he left Rome for Jerusalem with the purpose of adopting the life of a Monk. "Many years ago for the sake of the kingdom of heaven," he writes, "I cut myself off from home, parents, sister, relations, and, what was harder, from the dainty food to which I had been used." And yet, he confesses, "I could not bring myself to forgo the library which with great care and labor I had got together at Rome. And so, miserable man that I was, I would fast, only to read Cicero

⁴ Quoted in E. Harris Harbison, *The Christian Scholar in the Age of Reformation* (New York: Scribner's, 1956), 56.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

afterwards.” Not only so, but he would come back from his vigils only to enjoy himself with a volume of Plautus. What was worse, he says, is that “[w]henever I returned to my right senses and began to read the prophets, their language seemed harsh and barbarous.” But then Jerome fell seriously ill: “about the middle of Lent a fever attacked my weakened body and spread through my inmost veins. It may sound incredible, but the ravages it wrought on my unhappy frame were so persistent that at last my bones scarcely held together. Meantime preparations were made for my funeral: my whole body grew gradually cold, and life’s vital warmth only lingered faintly in my poor throbbing breast.” In this state Jerome reports having had the following extraordinary and life-changing experience:

Suddenly I was caught up in the spirit and dragged before the Judge’s judgment seat: and here the light was so dazzling, and the brightness shining from those who stood around so radiant, that I flung myself upon the ground and did not dare to look up. I was asked to state my condition and replied that I was a Christian. But He who presided said: ‘Thou liest; thou art a Ciceronian, not a Christian. “For where thy treasure is there will thy heart be also.”’

And then, straightway, the Judge ordered that Jerome be severely flogged, during which he cried out for mercy, until finally,

the bystanders fell at the knees of Him who presided, and prayed Him to pardon my youth and give me opportunity to repent of my error, on the understanding that the extreme of torture should be inflicted on me if ever I read again the works of Gentile authors. In the stress of that dread hour I should have been willing to make even larger promises, and taking oath I called upon His name: “O Lord, if ever again I possess worldly books or read them, I have denied thee.” After swearing this oath I was dismissed, and returned to the upper world.⁷

As strange as the experience seems, Jerome insisted that it was “no sleep nor idle dream, such as often mocks us,” and he even testifies that after he came to himself “my shoulders were black and blue, and that I felt the bruises long after I awoke from my sleep.” However we interpret Jerome’s experience, he himself claimed that it had its intended

⁷ Jerome, Epistle 22.30 (ET: F. A. Wright).

effect. "Henceforth," he says, writing perhaps a decade or so after the experience, "I read the books of God with a greater zeal than I had ever given before to the books of men."

In order to understand the Iconography of Saints one must know a little about how one becomes canonized, that is to say how one comes to be a saint, in the Roman Catholic Church. In the New Testament all believers are saints. Not so in Catholicism, nor in other ancient Churches, where people came to be recognized as saints for a number of reasons, which included, but didn't necessarily require, having lived a life characterized by great sanctity.⁸ Those who have read Jerome learn to appreciate him less for his heroic piety, than for his crusty pugnaciousness, his bad-tempered irascibility, or, to speak plainly, his downright all around cussedness. When one thinks of Jerome, in other words, the list of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5 and the love chapter of 1 Corinthians 13 don't spring readily to mind. What I am saying is that we are not talking Saint Francis of Assisi here! Truth be told, Jerome often wasn't very saintly in the traditional sense. Those he disliked experienced him as an opinionated, mean-spirited, acid-tongued, bad-tempered, nasty old coot. And that is what he was...on his good days! Even though Thomas J. Craughwell, includes Jerome in his, *Saints for Every Occasion: 101 of Heaven's Most Powerful Patrons*, he is nevertheless candid enough to say that "Jerome is a difficult man to like."⁹ He also tells us, by the way, that Jerome was the patron saint of students of the Bible, a curious contradiction, since students of the Bible, or at least those attentive to its teaching, will not want to have Saints they can pray to. The Bible's very conspicuous in its teaching on this point. There is, and can be, only one mediator between God and man, namely Jesus (1 Tim 2:5). But to continue, the question for us, then, is how can such an unpleasant old character come to be canonized?

Fact is, while some people became saints (in the Roman Catholic sense) because of their heroic piety, Saint Francis for example, others did so because of having been martyred. Still others, simply for some extraordinary service done on behalf of the Church. Such was the case

⁸ The current elaborate process of moving in stages of investigation first to beatification and then to formal canonization only came into existence many centuries after Jerome. For a convenient history of the development of this process see Richard P. McBrien, *Lives of Saints from Mary and St. Francis of Assisi to John XXIII and Mother Teresa* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 41-49.

⁹ Thomas J. Craughwell, *Saints for Every Occasion: 101 of Heavens Most Powerful Patrons* (C. D. Stampley Enterprises: Charlotte, NC, 2001), 55.

for Jerome, especially in view of his being the translator of the standard edition of the Latin Vulgate Bible. He was in fact one of the few men of his age who understood the implications of textual criticism and who troubled to master Hebrew so as to be able to understand the Old Testament. He was, in addition, a scriptural commentator as well as an energetic polemicist against anything he considered heresy, some of which actually was. For all this the Catholic Church, to say nothing of all the rest of us, is still indebted to him today.

II. THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE “SAINTS”

When it comes to iconographic representations of the saints, three considerations usually come into play in establishing the symbolic imagery relating to their representation. The first is their contribution to the Church, the second some miraculous, or at least remarkable, story told about them, and third, in the case of martyrs, the particular instrument used in putting them to death for the faith, which the saint is often portrayed holding in their hand. Thus for example, the Apostle, who was beheaded, is often depicted holding a sword, James the brother of Jesus a fuller’s club, and Andrew the brother of Peter, a cross in the shape of an X (i.e., Saint Andrew’s cross). One of the strangest of these is seen in depictions of Saint Bartholomew, who was supposedly skinned alive. One account, reported in the Medieval *Golden Legend* of Jacobus de Voragine, tells how Bartholomew’s “skin was pulled off as if to make a bag.”¹⁰

Sometimes Bartholomew is shown simply holding a knife. Occasionally he also appears not only with his knife, but also with his own skin draped over his arm. One of the most famous of these depictions comes from Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment* on the back wall of the Sistine Chapel at Rome, where we see Bartholomew just to the right of Christ. Art historians regularly claim that in painting Saint Bartholomew’s skin, Michelangelo had in mind to impress upon it, a self portrait of himself.¹¹

¹⁰ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Reading on the Saints* (2 vols.; trans. William Granger Ryan; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University press, 1993), 2:115.

¹¹ See Bernadine Barnes, *Michelangelo’s Last Judgment: the Renaissance Response* (Berkeley and Los Angeles; University of California Press, 1998), 155, n. 14.

However that may be, I include here instead an example I came across in the Jesuit church of Saint Xaver in Leoben, Austria (fig. 2).¹²

Jerome, however, was not martyred. He lived to the ripe old age of about ninety, and then quietly passed out of this world.

Consequently, his manner of dying was to have no formative influence on his iconography. His importance as a biblical scholar, however, did have influence, as is seen in his almost invariably being depicted with a book, and sometimes in a study. But it is the story told earlier about his repentance concerning worldly learning that was to dominate his iconography, such that the figure of Jerome was to become the patron saint, as it were, of repentance from worldly vanities, as represented in particular by the pagan authors whose stylistic refinement he had at one time preferred to the “harsh and barbarous” language of Holy Scripture. Paintings represented this by showing Jerome holding a stone, with which to beat his breast, a traditional symbolic act of repentance.

In this connection he is also very often depicted in a desert setting. Quite often Jerome’s breast is represented being covered with blood, as can be seen in the dark markings below his beard on the detail from a 16th century glazed Italian plate (fig. 3).



**Fig. 2: Saint Bartholomew with his skin draped over his arm
(Saint Xaver Church, Leoben, Austria)**

¹² Those interested in pursuing this curious theme further may enjoy (if “enjoy” is the right word) Sarah Kay’s article “Original Skin: Flaying Reading and Thinking in the Legend of Saint Bartholomew and Other Works,” *Journal of Medieval & Early Modern Studies* 36.1 (2006): 35-73.



Fig. 3 Detail of dish painted in Urbino, lustrated in Gubbio (1530)
Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, MO.



Fig. 3 *The Penitent Saint Jerome*, by
Antonio d' Enrico, Italian, c. 1627-30
Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, MO.



Fig. 5 *The Penitent Jerome*
Johann Veit Hauck
On the Baroque Pulpit (1710)
Graz Cathedral (Austria)

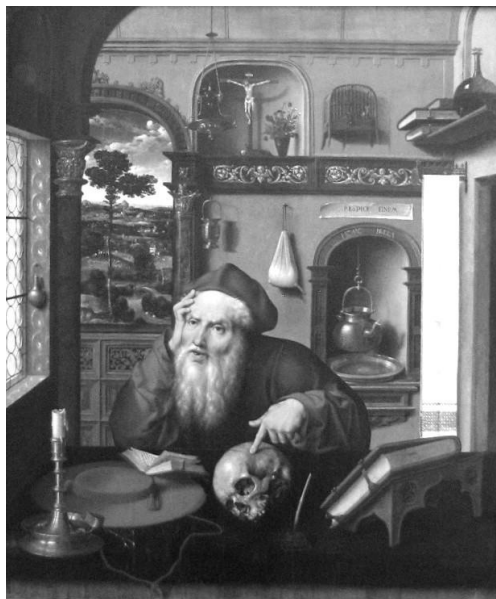


Fig. 4 Jerome in his Study (detail), Joos Van Cleve, c. 1424-1430. Fogg Museum, Harvard University.

Another feature typical of the iconography of Jerome, one indeed present in most of the examples looked at so far, is a human skull. It represents the impermanence of human life, as in 1 Peter 1:24-25 (quoting Isaiah 40:6-8): “All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.” The passage is most appropriate given both Jerome’s repentance from his preference for classical writers, and his dedication to Biblical scholarship. One Saint Jerome that brings this motif forward very emphatically is *Jerome in His Study* by Joos Van Cleve, now in the Fogg Museum at Harvard University (fig. 6). In this picture Jerome sits in his study (another common setting for him in view of his role as a great scholar) and leans on his desk holding his head with one hand and pointing to the skull with the other. Before him on the table stands an extinguished candle, also representing the brevity and transience of human existence. His face as well reflects the theme. His face is perplexed, and his eyes are not directed toward the viewer, but rather are troubled and distant. His mouth hangs open revealing that he is missing some teeth (fig. 7). Perhaps we should imagine he is muttering a prayer, acknowledging in the presence of the Lord and of the viewer that we are but grass. One of the most fascinating details however comes in the background where we see a kettle hanging in an arched recess in

the wall (fig. 8). Above the recess a piece of paper or cloth has been pasted up (and is already coming loose) upon which is written the Latin words *RESPICE FINEM* (“Look to the end”), below which, on the arch itself, appear the words of the well known saying from classical times: *HOMO BULLA* (“Man is a Bubble”).¹³ Wholesome words for all would-be bible scholars, and indeed, if you think about it, for us all.

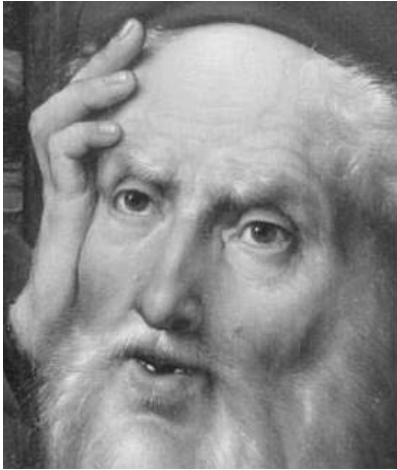


Fig. 7



Fig. 8



The author in present day Ljubljana, Slovenia (ancient Emona), a city not far from where Jerome’s hometown of Stridon, Dalmatia, is thought to have been.

¹³ Erasmus included a long discussion of this saying in his *Adages* 2.3.48 (see *The Adages of Erasmus* [selected by William Baker; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001], 171-177).

BOOK REVIEWS 201-228

David L. Allen and Steve W. Lemke (eds.) *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism*. Nashville: B & H Academic, 2010. 306 pages. \$24.99. ISBN-10: 9780805464160

Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism is a compilation of articles based on addresses delivered at the “John 3:16 Conference” held at First Baptist Church, Woodstock, GA on November 6–7, 2008. The work is edited by David Allen, Dean of the School of Theology at Southwestern Seminary, and Steve Lemke, Provost at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Beyond Allen and Lemke, contributors include Jerry Vines, long time pastor of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, FL; Richard Land from the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission; Jeremy Evans, Kenneth Keathley and Bruce Little from Southeastern Baptist Seminary; Paige Patterson, Kevin Kennedy and Malcolm Yarnell from Southwestern Baptist Seminary; and Alan Streett from Criswell College. All the contributors to *Whosoever Will* self-identify as non-Calvinist Southern Baptists and the book is a focused response to Calvinist soteriology. *Whosoever Will* is divided into two parts. Part one begins with a sermon on John 3:16 by Jerry Vines and then has articles critiquing each of the five points of Calvinist soteriology. Part Two has five articles and focuses on issues tangent with discussions of Calvinist soteriology such as the soteriology of Calvin himself, the practical out-workings of Calvinism in a local church, Calvinism and public invitations, determinism and human freedom, and the problem of evil and God’s sovereignty.

There is much to commend in *Whosoever Will*. Jerry Vines’s sermon in Chapter One on John 3:16 is a splendid mix of exegesis, theological background, and evangelistic passion. Patterson’s discussion of Total Depravity in Chapter Two is simultaneously entertaining and substantive. He affirms the reality that all people are sinners and argues for a Natural Headship view concerning the connection between Adam and humanity. Patterson also notes the importance of the debate concerning the relationship to regeneration and faith: “Some Calvinists (not all) take [total depravity] to mean that in order for a depraved human being to respond to God’s redemptive act in Christ, that person must first be regenerated. . . . Except for citing John 6:44, the argument garners little other biblical support but follows the logical demands of the Calvinistic system.” (35) Patterson then ends his discussion on this important point with a quote from Spurgeon, a noted Calvinist Baptist,

clearly indicating that Spurgeon himself had strong reservations about the idea that regeneration precedes faith.

Patterson's contribution could have been even more helpful if he had more clearly explained the connection between his discussion of regeneration and faith on pages 35–36 and his discussion of Ephesians 2:1–10 on pages 38–39. For adamant Calvinists, the two issues are clearly related. When the average Baptist hears a debate about “Calvinism,” they often assume it is just a debate about God's sovereignty versus man's free will. In reality, most Calvinists and non-Calvinists within SBC life eventually arrive at some theory of compatibility regarding the Divine and human wills: God is sovereign and humans are accountable for their decisions. The issue of the relationship between regeneration and faith seems to be more of a dividing line concerning evangelism and methodology. In fact, the most heated debates in Baptist life about Calvinism are often methodological: Should we give invitations and offer people the opportunity to pray a prayer of salvation? Quite often, these methodological implications of certain forms of Calvinism are the targets of criticism for non-Calvinist Baptists. Furthermore, Calvinists who become Hyper-Calvinists and thus non-evangelistic adopt a very extreme view of regeneration preceding faith. As a result, these Hyper-Calvinists see no need to ask sinners to respond to a message or pray a “sinner's prayer” since it is useless, in their thinking, to invite the unconverted to have faith. Furthermore, in the most extreme expressions of Calvinism, encouraging someone to pray the “sinner's prayer” is even labeled salvation by “works.” Calvinists reach some of these conclusions by inferences they make based on Ephesians 2:1–10. *Whosoever Will* could serve its intended audience better by making these connections more clear.

Richard Land's “Congruent Election: Understanding Salvation from an ‘Eternal Now’ Perspective” (Chapter Three) is remarkable for both its brevity and substantive content. Using an economy of words, Land moves quickly from an overview of Calvinism in Baptist history to his fascinating discussion of the way God views time and decisions made within time. Land says, “If God lives in the Eternal Now, then He has always had not just the knowledge of but experience with every individual” (57). Land differentiates between unconditional election and his own model by saying, “I would posit a distinction between unconditional election's “irresistible call” (one *must* be saved) and congruent election's “solicitous call” (one *will* be saved)” (59). Striking an irenic note, Land says, “If God had chosen to do it the way Calvinists say he did, He would still be a merciful and gracious God” (59). Of

further importance, readers should note that Land rightly emphasizes that ecclesiology and soteriology are not isolated issues within Calvinist thought, delineating the way Calvinists define the relationship between Israel and the Church and its implications for soteriology. Land's model deserves further reflection by all who engage in the debate.

David Allen's response to limited atonement (Chapter Four) is especially notable for his response to John Owen's claim that "world" in John 3:16 means the "elect" world. Allen rightly says, "Owen's arguments are not linguistic or exegetical but *a priori* theological arguments. He has committed the fallacy of begging the question" (80). Surprisingly, Allen does not spend as much time addressing the implications of 1 John 2:2 for the atonement. Though Allen mentions that Calvinists understand the word "world" in 1 John 2:2 to mean "the church" (82-83), he could have made his point even stronger by exegesis of 1 John 2:2. By this, I mean that advocates of limited atonement engage in special pleading and want the word "world" in 1 John 2:2 to mean something other than what it plainly means—the entirety of humanity. Allen's critique of Owen's understanding of John 3:16 apply equally to the Calvinist understanding of 1 John 2:2.

Of special interest to students of the Calvinist debate within SBC life will be Kennedy's intriguing discussion: "Was Calvin a Calvinist? John Calvin on the Extent of the Atonement" (Chapter 7). Kennedy admits that Calvin's comments on 1 John 2:2 do seem to affirm limited atonement. But Kennedy notes, "However, [Calvin's] comments also demonstrate that his greatest fear in regard to [1 John 2:2] was not that someone might interpret this verse as teaching that Christ died for all of humanity but rather that some *had* interpreted this verse to teach that the whole world, including Satan and his demons, will actually inherit eternal life with God." (211) Streett's discussion of "The Public Invitation and Calvinism" (Chapter Nine) is also helpful, but does not specifically address the way in which Calvinists often attribute the idea of giving invitations to Charles Finney.

Since *Whosoever Will's* basic purpose is to critique Calvinist soteriology within Baptist life, the work could be strengthened by a chapter interacting with Baptist statements of faith, in particular the "Abstract of Principles" for Southern Seminary and the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. The Founders Group within the SBC often reminds non-Calvinists that the original four faculty members at Southern Seminary were five-point Calvinists in their soteriology. Yet, the Abstracts of Principles drafted by Basil Manly and signed by the original faculty members omits the most debated aspects of Calvinist soteriology:

Irresistible Grace and Limited Atonement. So, even though the original faculty members—Boyce, Broadus, Manly, and Williams—were all five-point Calvinists, they did not make the most debated aspects of soteriology points of fellowship. In this way, many within the Founders Group go further than the “founders” they claim to follow, often suggesting The Second London Confession more accurately reflects SBC heritage. Also, though *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000* is referenced several times within *Whosoever Will*, it would be helpful to have an extended discussion about both Article IV “On Salvation” and Article V “God’s Purpose of Grace.” Too often people deeply involved in SBC life wrongly assume the average Baptist is cognizant of the actual content of our statement of faith. If the target audience of *Whosoever Will* is a broad spectrum of SBC pastors and laity, then a clear delineation of the middle-ground approach to soteriology expressed in *The Baptist Faith and Message* would strengthen the work.

Whosoever Will is a needed counterbalance to the endless pro-Calvinist publications within SBC life. The contributors offer a rigorous response to Calvinism. Calvinism also raises several ecclesiological issues within Baptist churches and it would be very interesting to see another volume dedicated solely to ecclesiology from a similar group of non-Calvinist Baptists.

J. Alan Branch

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity, Volume 9 (Mini-Obe). Cancik, Hubert and Schneider, Helmut. (eds.) Leiden: Brill, 2004. ISBN 9789004122727 Seires and Series Number BNP-009. List price EUR 228.-/List price US \$308.00.

Brill’s New Pauly is the English edition/translation of the *Der Neue Pauly*. This is considered by most scholars as the authoritative encyclopedic work of classical antiquity. This work presents up-to-date research and scholarly trends of the Greco-Roman world. It covers the eras from the prehistory of the Aegean (2nd millennium BCE) to late antiquity (600-800 CE). It also indirectly brings to an English speaking audience some of the best of European scholarship.

Brill’s New Pauly is a 20 volume encyclopedia of the ancient world originally published by Verlag J.B. Metzler beginning in 1996. Fifteen of the volumes (*Antiquity*) are dedicated to Greco-roman antiquity with

articles ranging from the second millennium BCE to early medieval Europe. There is a conscious effort by the editors to focus on the interaction between Greco-Roman culture and Semitic, Celtic, Germanic, and Slavonic cultural spheres; as well as ancient Judaism, Christianity, and to some extent Islam. The other five volumes (*Classical Tradition, I-V*) are devoted to the discipline and history of classical scholarship.

The name *Pauly* originates from the original work of the *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*. The founding editor was August Friedrich (von) Pauly (1796-1845) who was a German classicist. The *Pauly* was published in German in 68 volumes between 1839 and 1980. A popular, five volume, abridged version was published between 1964 and 1975 (*kleine Pauly*). The successor to these original works, *Der neue Pauly*, appeared in German in 15 volumes between 1996 and 2003. It is this successor to the original work that is now available in English.

Only one volume from the Antiquity series (Volume 9 MINE-OBE) was available for review. Nevertheless, an accurate picture of the whole can be obtained. The overall approach of the contributors places this work within the framework of the classical ancient historian. The entries are descriptive and centered on ancient historical sources, albeit incorporating the results of archaeological investigations.

While most of the articles address a specific place or person, several address broad issues covering a wide geographical and chronological field. For example, the entry on music is written by several experts in their area of expertise such as Aegean, Egyptian, Ancient Israel, Rome, and Christianity. In addition there are sections on musical instruments, notations, musical terms and musicians.

Each signed entry contains a succinct article that contains references to historical texts and the term in its original language (e.g. Greek, Latin). Each article also includes a bibliography. Naturally, there are references and links to other entries. Most of the entries reference persons, places, institutions, events, artifacts, technical terms, ideas and concepts.

Realizing that this is a reference work and encyclopedic in nature, the articles present the basic data and give the impression that the reference work takes a traditional cultural-historical approach to the ancient world. Most avoid scholarly disputes or theoretical discussions. It is assumed that these approaches are to be found in the volumes of the *Classical Tradition*—unavailable to this reviewer.

This is an impressive scholarly resource. The price of the encyclopedia will keep it out of the scholar's library as well as many

small colleges. Those who are studying the New Testament or the world of the Early Church will find this resource useful—especially since it provides a wider *western* view (e.g. western Europe) of the ancient world than most reference works. Ironically, for a current scholarly resource heavily influenced by European scholarship, the references to biblical history are positive. Unfortunately, the best of European scholarship will still be elusive to the average student of North America, and especially seminary students, as this work will only be found in discerning libraries.

Steven M. Ortiz
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Preaching the Cross.* By Mark Dever, J. Ligon Duncan, III, R. Albert Mohler, Jr., and C. J. Mahaney. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007, 176 pp. ISBN-10: 9781581348286**

In 2006 Mark Dever, J. Ligon Duncan, R. Albert Mohler, and C. J. Mahaney began a biannual conference called *Together for the Gospel*, which was formed to encourage pastors to stand together for the gospel. At their first conference they all spoke, and they also invited John MacArthur, John Piper, and R. C. Sproul to present messages. *Preaching the Cross* is a compilation of those messages in book form. All seven messages focus on a different aspect of pastoral ministry and preaching, but they are all united around the theme of keeping the gospel, the message of the cross, central in everything that a pastor says and does. In addition to the addresses from the conference, the book also contains a brief history of the conference written by Mark Dever, as well as the *Together for the Gospel Affirmations and Denials*, presented at the inaugural conference in 2006.

The seven messages can be divided into two groups. Four of the essays concern the pastor's preaching ministry in general, while three focus on a particular aspect of preaching. Beginning with the former group, Mark Dever opens the book with a sermon from 1 Corinthians 4 on the three marks of a real minister. The marks of a real minister are a cross-centered message, a cross-centered life, and producing cross-centered followers. A pastor's ministry in all ways must be centered on the cross. John Piper contributes a chapter on the kind of preaching that is based upon and portrays God's glory. Those who are familiar with Piper's work will not find anything new in this chapter, but it is still a powerful reminder of the primary purpose of preaching, which is to glorify God with the proclamation of the gospel. C. J. Mahaney bases his

chapter on Paul's admonition in 1 Timothy 4:16 to "keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching." His chapter is unique in that it focuses on the first part of the statement, the pastor's life, while all of the other chapters focus on the second part, the pastor's teaching. Mahaney offers some excellent practical suggestions on how pastors can preserve themselves from sin, and therefore be authentic preachers of the gospel. John MacArthur's essay is an autobiographical account of why he continues to preach expositively from the Bible. MacArthur gives ten reasons he still preaches from the Bible, and his chapter is a reminder of what faithful and consistent biblical preaching can accomplish in the life of a church.

Of the three chapters that focus on a particular aspect of preaching, the first is an essay by J. Ligon Duncan on preaching Christ from the Old Testament. Duncan notes that even those who practice expository preaching often neglect the Old Testament, and offers eight exhortations to preachers in the hopes of reversing this trend. His main message is that preachers can and should preach the gospel of Jesus Christ from the Old Testament, just as Jesus himself did (Luke 24:25-27). R. Albert Mohler addresses the topic of preaching with the culture in view. He offers a balanced and biblical view of addressing one's culture with the gospel. Preachers must be cognizant of their culture in order to reach it with the gospel, but they must also realize that they are first and foremost elect exiles, citizens of the City of God, not the City of Man. The last of the essays is a lecture by R. C. Sproul on the importance of the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Sproul presents the history of the debate between the Reformed faith and the Catholic Church over this doctrine. He concludes by emphasizing the importance of that debate and the need for preachers to recognize that the doctrine of justification by faith alone is the gospel. If that doctrine is missing from one's preaching, then the gospel is missing.

All seven chapters of this book are worth reading, and there is little in them to evoke disagreement. All preachers ought to have the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ at the center of every facet of their ministries. Perhaps the only drawback to the book is that as I read each essay, I found myself wanting to hear the messages straight from the authors. Several of the chapters, most notably Dever's, read as sermons. I have had the privilege of hearing each of these men preach, and as I read I could easily imagine all of them proclaiming these words. Fortunately, for those so inclined, one can find each of the messages available to download at the *Together for the Gospel* website. For those who would rather read the book, though, it is well worth the time. Pastors

will come away from these essays challenged, encouraged, and convinced of the necessity of preaching the cross.

Gary L. Shultz Jr.
First Baptist Church of Fulton, MO

***Who's Tampering with the Trinity: An Assessment of the Subordination Debate.* By Millard J. Erickson. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2009, 272 pp., \$19.99 paper. ISBN-10: 9780825425899**

Is the relationship between the Father, Son, and Spirit one of eternal authority and submission, with the Son in eternal submission to the Father and the Spirit in eternal submission to the Father and the Son; or is their relationship one of equal authority for all of eternity, with only temporary periods of submission necessary for the fulfillment of certain tasks? Within evangelical theology there are those who hold to both positions, with those on both sides claiming the support of Scripture, church history, and theological consistency. The purpose of Millard Erickson's book is to determine which one of these views is true. Erickson is well-qualified to investigate this issue, having written two previous books on the Trinity as well as several papers on this specific subject.

Erickson begins by carefully defining and explaining what he terms the "gradational view" (there is an eternal hierarchy of authority among the three divine persons) and the "equivalence view" (the three divine persons are eternally equal in authority). He thoroughly and fairly summarizes each view, particularly as it is presented by its contemporary advocates. Before he begins to weigh evidence for each view he includes a short and helpful chapter on the necessary criteria for evaluating theological alternatives, especially (as in this case) when each seems to be based in Scripture. The internal factors include the consistency and coherence of a view, while the external factors are its applicability (in the case of evangelical theology, how well a theory represents the Bible), its adequacy (how well a theory explains all of the available data), and its pragmatic value.

Having established his definitions and method, Erickson examines the biblical evidence for and against each position, the historical considerations pertinent to the debate, the philosophical issues involved, the theological dimensions of each view, and the practical implications of each view. On the basis of all his criteria, Erickson comes to the conclusion that, while neither view is fatally flawed or

unambiguously supported by all of the evidence, the equivalence view is considerably stronger than the gradational view. According to Erickson the strongest biblical argument in favor of the equivalence view is that no action of any person of the Trinity is done in isolation, meaning that each divine action is actually that of the entire Godhead. This means that all of the texts that refer to the Father's authority should not be taken as applying to the Father alone, but as applying to the entire Godhead, and therefore are not evidence of an inherent authority-submission structure within the Trinity. Some texts taken on their own could favor the gradational view (esp. 1 Cor 15:24-28), but in light of this biblical principle these texts are better interpreted as fitting the equivalence view. Erickson also believes that the historical evidence supports the equivalence view, and that this view has fewer problems theologically. Philosophically he believes that eternal function subordination logically leads to ontological subordination, and that gradationists have not yet explained why this would not happen. A major practical issue for Erickson is the idea that the gradational view implies that prayer should only be made to the Father, but the New Testament contains several instances of believers praying to the Son. He believes this gives the equivalence view a clear advantage when it comes to practical implications.

Erickson's book is valuable because it presents a reasoned and well thought-out critique of the gradational view while providing a defense of the equivalence position. Erickson lets the advocates of each view speak for themselves, represents each view accurately, and explains what he believes are the strengths and weaknesses of each. As one who holds the gradational view I was challenged by Erickson's fair and thorough work, though I disagreed with several of his conclusions (as those who hold the gradational view would), particularly concerning the biblical and theological evidence, and I fail to understand his genuine concern that the gradational view could easily morph into Arianism. I was, however, compelled to thoroughly think through the basis and implications of my position. There are a few areas where those who hold the gradational position will be pressed by Erickson to nuance and further explain their view, particularly in the practical and philosophical realms. In this way Erickson's book helps to advance the debate, and ought to be read by those on both sides of the issue.

Gary L. Shultz Jr.
First Baptist Church of Fulton, MO

***Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs.* Apollos Old Testament Commentary Series. By Daniel C. Fredericks and Daniel J. Estes. Downers Grove, IL: InverVarsity Press, 2010, 472 pp., \$40.00, cloth. ISBN-10: 9780830825158**

Daniel Fredericks is an evangelical scholar who has championed Ecclesiastes since he argued for an early dating of the book in his dissertation. This current work is largely an expansion of a short volume, *Coping with Transience*, which he wrote over 15 years ago. The purpose of this commentary series is to offer readers the best of evangelical scholarship concerning Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs in an accessible and usable format. It seeks to combine textual scholarship with real life application to the church. This volume does not fall short of that goal.

The section on Ecclesiastes begins with an extensive introduction in which Fredericks argues that biblical Wisdom Literature in general—and Ecclesiastes in particular—has been missing from contemporary sermons for too long. He argues that this book has often been viewed as either the musings of a pessimistic hedonist or the warnings of a man who strayed away from God. Instead, Ecclesiastes is the work of a sage who has sought to understand the ways of God, reconciling what he knows to be true with what he sees in everyday life. Fredericks' argument that the key word of Ecclesiastes, *hebel*, is best translated by “transient “ is important to his reading of the text. He gives sound support of this reading. This volume is important in the field of Ecclesiastes scholarship because Fredericks' understanding of the book's message provides readers with an understanding of the text that coheres with the theology of the Old Testament.

In the second portion of the commentary Estes also complains that Song of Songs has been missing from the life of the church. His commentary is an effort to rekindle interest in Song of Songs and provide pastors and laypeople with a book that will help them understand the meaning of the text. He argues that the book is a poem that celebrates erotic love within the boundaries of marriage, which is a gift from God. By celebrating this aspect of life, the book is meant to cause the reader to reflect on the love that one experiences in one's relationship with Christ. His adherence to a literal interpretation, which he then applies to the believer's relationship with God, is useful both for pastors and scholars alike.

Since this commentary series aim to reach a broad audience, it necessarily avoids lengthy discussion of more technical issues, such as

textual criticism. The commentators point the reader in the direction of resources that will help with these issues, but more interaction within the commentary itself would have been helpful, so that pastors would not have to look elsewhere for the information. Also, since interpretation history is becoming more popular in biblical studies, the Ecclesiastes section of the commentary would benefit by more thoroughly interacting with this area. It represents only a fraction of the introductory matters, and most of that is devoted to the history of the interpretation of *hebel*. By contrast, the Song of Songs section provides an extensive, thematically organized overview of the history of interpretation.

Both sections of the commentary are arranged in such a way that makes them helpful to readers at many levels. They begin with an original translation (which is much needed in Fredericks' case, as no major translations understand *hebel* the way he does). This is followed by a section that discusses more technical aspects of the text, such as form, grammar, and textual criticism. This is followed by a thorough exegesis of the passage, and a section that offers application to everyday life in the church. The organization, sound scholarship, and engaging writing style of the authors makes the commentary a fantastic resource for pastors, scholars, and laypeople alike.

Russell L. Meek
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology.* By James M. Hamilton, Jr. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010, 640 pp., \$40.00 hardcover, ISBN: 978-1-58134-976-4.**

In the field of biblical theology many have abandoned the quest for the Bible's one "theme to rule them all"—but not James M. Hamilton, Jr. In this substantial volume Hamilton presents a biblical theology that "highlights the central theme of God's glory in salvation through judgment by describing the literary contours of individual books in canonical context with sensitivity to the unfolding metanarrative" (p. 44). Hamilton demonstrates his expansive knowledge of the biblical corpus and proves to even the most skeptical reader that his motivation is not fool-hearty. Dr. Hamilton presently serves as Associate Professor of Biblical Theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and has authored numerous articles addressing biblical theological themes, as well as the book *God's Indwelling Presence: The Ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments*.

Chapter one begins by challenging the trends of modern scholarship to emphasize the diversity found in the Bible over against any sense of unity. Hamilton explains his pursuit of a “center” stating, “The center of biblical theology will be the ultimate reason that the Bible gives to explain what God has done” (p. 48). Immersed in the same theological stream as Jonathan Edwards and Thomas R. Schreiner, Hamilton argues that the central purpose of God in creation—his glory—is the central focus of the biblical writers. And God’s glory is most plainly displayed in saving his people through judgment. Hamilton recognizes that many have given up on the pursuit of a central theme and have resorted to multi-thematic approaches to biblical theology. To this he responds that other possible “centers” (such as creation, God’s self-revelation, the holiness of God, promise and fulfillment, and the love of God) fall underneath his proposal as secondary themes, all of which ultimately serve the greater focus of God’s glory. Hamilton organizes his theology according to the canonical divisions of the Hebrew Bible (Torah, Prophets, and Writings) and treats the New Testament in three sections—Gospels and Acts, Letters, and Revelation.

Hamilton’s discussion of the Old Testament covers three chapters—each devoted to one of the major divisions in the Hebrew text. In the section devoted to the Torah, Hamilton offers a theological commentary of the Pentateuch focusing on Gen 1-3 and the pattern of creation, fall, redemption which begins in these early chapters of the Bible. The divine response to sin in Gen 3:14-19 presents the first instance of salvation through judgment as the *protoevangelion* in Gen 3:15 holds out the hope that seed of the woman will one day crush the head of the seed of the serpent. After Pharaoh (seed of the serpent) is judged in the exodus, God reveals himself to Moses in Ex 34:6-7 as both a God of mercy and justice—the two motivating aspects of the divine nature behind salvation and judgment. Hamilton’s treatment of the Prophets and the Writings picks up the continuation of the pentateuchal narrative found in the Former Prophets. He highlights God’s persistent salvation in the conquest of Canaan, the appointment of judges, and the rise of David. However, even during David’s lifetime, it is evident that Israel needs a greater king, which becomes increasingly clearer with each subsequent generation. In Isaiah and the Latter Prophets, Hamilton notes the frequent undulations between salvation and judgment that all seem to be progressing to a final deliverance and reversal of the curse. “Yahweh’s glory will be seen in the rollback of the curses, when the nursing child plays by the hole of the cobra (Isa 11)...when [Yahweh] slays the dragon in the sea (Isa 27)...[and] when he makes the desert a new Eden (Isa 35,

51)” (p. 211.) Similar to the Prophets, the voice of wisdom found in the Writings passes judgment on the foolish ways of the world in order that the listener might live a blessed life that glorifies God and is spared future judgment. Throughout the Writings, wisdom calls people back to the message of the Torah and the Prophets because “The fear of judgment leads to salvation” (p. 273). According to Hamilton, the Old Testament ends in eschatological tension. He writes, “[The Old Testament] ends with the demonstration of God’s faithfulness to the promises he has made to his people. It also ends with the frank acknowledgement that not all the promises have been realized, and those with eyes of faith strain to glimpse their fulfillment” (p. 351).

Chapters 5-7 address the New Testament. Hamilton understands the gospels to declare that Jesus’ coming is the typological fulfillment of the seed of the woman who will overcome the seed of the serpent, the promised offspring of Abraham, the true Davidic king, the true Israel, a new exodus, and an eschatological return from exile. These various themes run throughout the gospels and all culminate in the ultimate picture of salvation through judgment—the cross and empty tomb. Acts and the New Testament letters preach this salvation. The letters teach growing churches that God’s glory is seen in the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises of Messiah and “that God has sent the Spirit, who has given new life to those who believe; and the Spirit will keep them to the end, so that on the last day, when Christ comes to save through judgment, they will be those who glorify God for his mercy” (p. 538). Hamilton concludes his survey of the New Testament in Revelation, focusing on new exodus themes seen in the apocalyptic bowls and trumpets and arguing that the literary and thematic centerpiece of the book lies in verse 11:15, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (ESV).

The final two chapters of the book include Hamilton’s brief but adequate attempt at anticipating challenges to his proposal. The chapter is built around the insightful critiques of I. Howard Marshall, and consequently does provide some needed clarification. The final chapter of the volume transitions the reader from theology to action, as Hamilton explores the applications of his biblical theology within the life of the individual believer and the church.

Two points of interaction are worthy of note. First, Hamilton reiterates his thesis at the end of each section, but such repetition does not overcome the sense of superficiality that arises in his discussion of Job, Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs. Like many other biblical

theologies, Hamilton appears to struggle with the Writings, where at times his exegesis wanes and his theology waxes. Secondly, Hamilton's use of the word "judgment" can be unclear or strangely used. It functions as an all-encompassing term that ranges in meaning from God's judgment upon sin to fuzzy abstractions like "God's glory renders judgments against the norms of Roman society" in the book of Philemon. Frequently, when judgment and salvation are not actually themes *in* the text, Hamilton steps back to the speech-act itself, with the author judging the readers behavior in order to lead them to salvation. This is not necessarily inappropriate, but sudden shifts in meaning like this render some sections unclear.

All "judgments" aside, much of the book is textually sound, theologically viable, and rather convincing. Hamilton helpfully illuminates the primacy of God's glory and demonstrates that the theology of the Bible demands both faith and obedience. *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment* offers a thorough theological commentary of the entire Bible which is easily accessible and will greatly reward anyone willing to work through it. The volumes clear book-by-book organization makes it a ready companion to personal Bible study or teaching preparation. Dr. Hamilton's work contributes greatly to the field of biblical theology, but in this reader's opinion, the search for a center continues.

William R. Osborne

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery.* By Greg Heisler. Nashville, TN: B&H, 2007, 156 pp., paper. ISBN-10: 9780805443882**

Spirit-Led Preaching is a book that every preacher of God's Word should read at least once. All preachers are helpless without the Holy Spirit's empowerment in the pulpit and the Holy Spirit's illumination in the minds and hearts of their hearers (cf. 1 Cor 2:4). Therefore all preachers need to be constantly reminded of the Holy Spirit's importance in preaching. The purpose of this book is to properly emphasize the Holy Spirit's role in the preparation and delivery of sermons. Sermons must not only be biblical, but they must also be Spirit-led if they are to make any impact upon their hearers. Greg Heisler, a professor of preaching at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, defines Spirit-led preaching as preaching that is "birthed and delivered by the powerful moving of the Spirit so that the Spirit takes hold of us and compels us to preach" (5).

The book can be divided into two sections. Chapters 1-5 explain the what and the why of Spirit-led preaching by building a theological foundation for the Holy Spirit and preaching. Chapters 6-9 then answer the how of Spirit-led preaching by exploring its practical implications.

Heisler maintains that Spirit-led preaching is expository, because expository preaching most faithfully reflects the relationship between the Word and the Holy Spirit. The intimate and inseparable relationship between the Word and the Spirit is the theological foundation for Spirit-led preaching, and Heisler emphasizes the importance of this relationship throughout the book. The biblical foundation of this truth is found in the preaching of the Old Testament prophets, Jesus, and Paul. Paul's preaching, for example, was in the power of the Spirit, based upon God's Word, and centered on Christ (1 Cor 2:1-16). The doctrines of inspiration and illumination also support this truth. The Holy Spirit inspired the Word of God (2 Tim 3:16), making it completely accurate and authoritative. He also illuminates the truth of the Word of God (John 16:13). Preachers who hope to bring a message in the power of the Spirit must therefore preach from the Word of God. Finally, the ministry of the Holy Spirit demonstrates the need for expository preaching. The Holy Spirit's ministry is to reveal Christ (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-14), and he does this through the Word. The Word and the Spirit both witness to Jesus Christ, and if the preacher hopes to witness to Christ he must preach from the Word in the power of the Spirit.

After establishing the biblical and theological basis for Spirit-led preaching, the latter half of the book focuses on particular aspects of the Holy Spirit's work in preaching. The Holy Spirit's work in preaching begins in the preacher's sanctification. The Holy Spirit is the one who converts the preacher, calls the preacher, prepares the preacher, and transforms the character of the preacher. Preachers first must live in the power of the Spirit before they can preach in the power of the Spirit. Much of the Holy Spirit's work in preaching takes place before sermons are even written. There is a special work of the Holy Spirit, however, in the preparation and presentation of sermons. As the preacher prepares his sermon, the Holy Spirit aids in the selection of the text, in the study, and in the shaping of the message. This is not an automatic work of the Spirit, however, because the Spirit works through the preacher's prayer, exegetical work, and effort at internalizing the message. The Holy Spirit's special work in the delivery of sermons is a result of the preacher's openness to the Spirit. Preachers must do all they can to prepare their messages, but at the same time must be open to the Spirit's leading during their messages. The Spirit helps the preacher and the

congregation to connect, and aids in the application of the sermon. Heisler closes the book with a chapter on the anointing of the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit's special empowerment for preaching. His treatment of this controversial issue is careful, clear, and biblically based, and deals with characteristics of the anointing, frequency of the anointing, and hindrances and helps to the Spirit's empowerment.

The strength of *Spirit-Led Preaching* is its solid biblical and theological basis. Heisler effectively demonstrates the necessity and the importance of the Holy Spirit's role in preaching by appealing to a number of important doctrines, including inspiration, illumination, original sin, sanctification, and the inter-trinitarian relationship between the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ. All of the book's practical application for preaching flows out of this theological base. Heisler is also careful to support and defend his conclusions with Scripture. There are times when he assumes a particular understanding of a verse without defending that understanding against other legitimate interpretations, such as with John 16:8 and 16:12 (e.g., 44), but the length and tone of the book seem to prohibit sustained exegesis. These times are few, however, and do not detract from the book's message.

Heisler's purpose is not to present a particular method for preaching, but to help preachers understand how the Holy Spirit is involved in preaching and how their preaching should be affected by that truth. He accomplishes his purpose. The book is well-written, with helpful chapter subdivisions and a number of engaging illustrations. It is an excellent theology of preaching, explaining not only the Holy Spirit's role in preaching but also the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. *Spirit-Led Preaching* could be used as a book in almost any preaching class, though it probably fits best in an introductory course, as it deals with issues of fundamental importance. It should not be limited to students, however. Even seasoned preachers and theologians need to be reminded of these truths again and again. As I stated at the beginning of this review, I would heartily recommend this book to any preacher. We all need to be reminded that without the work of the Holy Spirit our preaching is in vain.

Gary L. Shultz Jr.
First Baptist Church of Fulton, MO

***'The Sufferings of Christ are Abundant in Us' (2 Corinthians 1.5): A Narrative Dynamics Investigation of Paul's Sufferings in 2 Corinthians.* By Kar Yong Lim. LNTS 399. Editor Mark Goodacre. New York: T & T Clark, 2009, 240 pp., \$130.00 ISBN-10: 0567107280**

Kar Yong Lim is a current lecturer at Seminari Theoloji Malaysia (Malaysia Theological Seminary) in the area of New Testament studies. This work is a testimony to the paradox of strength in weakness (2 Cor 12.10) due to the experiences of his mother's illness, pain and hospitalizations. These occurred while he was researching and writing at Oxford, thus, the book in its finished form is an adaptation of his doctoral dissertation.

The issue of suffering is a subject that scholars are forced to address with respect to Paul and his letters. Lim takes on this issue within Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, a letter replete with descriptive catalogues of suffering. His method, explained in chapter 1, for examining Pauline suffering is a two phase narrative approach that locates the story of Jesus within the sufferings of Paul. In the first phase, Lim examines the discourse allusions to the story of Jesus in the vocabulary and imagery of five passages in 2 Corinthians: 1.3-11; 2.14-16; 4.7-12; 6.1-10; 11:23-12.10; and 13.4. The second phase of his study explores this discourse further through a close reading of the texts listed. This is accomplished through detailed exegesis leading to a discussion of how the passages relate to the overall argument of 2 Corinthians. His purpose is to discover what Paul is saying about his sufferings, how they lead Paul to respond and confront the Corinthians, and ultimately what bearing they have upon Paul's theology as reflected in the story of Jesus. Lim's belief is that the narrative approach is a fresh way of evaluating Paul's thought and theology. Included in this chapter is a well-thought out critical review of Pauline scholarship as it relates to suffering. This includes exegetical studies, historical and background studies, and topical and thematic studies.

Chapter 2 examines the epistolary function of the thanksgiving period in 2 Corinthians 1.3-11. Lim argues here that Paul's epistolary thanksgiving reveals major themes for the letter and as it should be well noted, that insufficient attention has been given to this area of Pauline study. Lim posits that Paul's suffering, because it is placed at such a crucial juncture, reveals its importance and significance as a controlling argument in the letter. This argument is expressed by five key motifs seen in the epistolary thanksgiving, but which are also traced through the

entire letter: suffering, comfort and deliverance, life and death, solidarity between Paul, the Corinthians and Christ, and hyperbolic language. In summation, Lim argues that these motifs can only be fully appreciated as they are grounded in the story of Jesus.

Lim builds on his argument from Chapter 1 by further examining 2 Corinthians 1.3-11 in Chapter 2. He seeks to accomplish this by analyzing the story of Jesus and the meaning of *περισσεύει τὰ παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς ἡμᾶς* (the sufferings of Christ are abundant in us). His goal is to scrutinize how this phrase contributes to Paul's understanding of suffering and as a result, his relationship to the Corinthian church. By giving attention to this expression, Lim establishes it as the crux of the interpretation for his study. He concludes that it cannot be understood as it has been historically, that is, within the categories of messianic woes, mystical union, or the imitation of Christ. His theory is that this phrase is only appreciated through the understanding associated with the story of Jesus in 2 Corinthians related to Paul's theology and apostolic mission. So, for example, the sufferings that Paul experienced in Asia are narrated in such a manner that the reader is directed to the story of Jesus' sufferings. Paul's motivation for doing this is to encourage Corinthian partnership in suffering and ministry.

Lim continues to advance his argument in Chapter 4 by exploring the story of Jesus in the Roman triumphal procession metaphor and fragrance metaphor in 2 Corinthians 2.14-16. He proposes a fresh reading for the Roman metaphors employed by Paul. Lim reasons that the focus of the imagery is not Paul (the object of the triumph), but rather God (the subject of the triumph). This shift in focus results in a new understanding of the metaphor, namely, that God is a Divine Warrior who leads a triumphal procession through the Messianic Servant as described in the Isaianic new exodus. Paul's role, therefore, is best seen as a cruciform servant of the gospel message rooted in the story of Jesus. Ultimately, Lim argues here for a *parenetic* reading of this text. Paul is pleading with the Corinthians to join in the narrative of God by suffering in the same manner as Jesus and Paul.

Chapter 5 delves into a oft-studied passage as it relates to Pauline suffering, 2 Corinthians 4.7-12, the first of Paul's *peristasis* catalogues. After an examination of the structure and line of thought of the passage, a rubric utilized consistently by Lim, he again attempts to connect the story of Jesus with the language of treasure in an earthen vessel. This paradoxical description is described as the most profound Christological interpretation in the letter. The interpretative statements of the metaphor are fleshed out in the story of Jesus in three ways: in relation to his

sufferings, in relation to his understanding of mission, and in relation to the Corinthians. If the Corinthians grasp this truth, they will participate with Paul in the story of Jesus.

Next, in the longest chapter in the book, Lim attempts to further substantiate the connection to the story of Jesus by comparing it with 2 Corinthians 6.1-10. He takes his study a step further by saying that Scripture is in view, not only the story of Jesus. Specifically, Scripture such as Isaiah 49:8. Lim explains that Paul has chosen this citation in order to make a link between his ministry and that of the Isaianic Servant. If this association can be made, Lim believes that Paul is pleading to the Corinthians to accept his sufferings as a necessary consequence of the apostolic ministry of the gospel.

The final chapter gives attention to the longest description of Paul's hardships, 2 Corinthians 11.23-12.10. Lim sees Paul's boasting referenced in the OT pericopae of Jer 9.22-23/1 Kgdms 2.10. This boasting in weakness has a theological purpose as it relates to the story of Jesus. Thus, the paradigm of Jesus crucified in weakness but raised with power is mirrored in Paul's suffering and heavenly vision. For Lim, the congruency between Jesus and Paul is complete through the narrative exploration of this crucial passage. To sum up, the narrative methodology he has adopted has demonstrated the connection between Jesus and Paul.

Kar Yong Lim's work deserves to be commended. His attention to detail is impressive. He leaves no stone unturned when examining historical interpretations of difficult passages before coming to his own conclusions. His marriage of narrative study and exegesis is tempered with a proper understanding of how intra- and inter-textuality operates. In the end, his conclusions merit attention by Pauline scholars who wrestle with and are perplexed by the motif of suffering located in 2 Corinthians.

C. Eric Turner

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Reception Theory and Biblical Hermeneutics.* By David P. Parris. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publication, 2009, 326 pp., \$38.00 softcover, ISBN: 978-1-55635-653-7.**

“Reception theory protects a text such as the Bible from being taken captive by the trained scholars and opens its interpretation and the history of its effects to a much wider community than a theory such as

the historical-critical method does.” (169) This statement underscores the strength of this book’s argument and its current relevance. It stands in the tradition of the Reformation by trying to place the biblical text in the hands of everyone, not only the scholarly elite. David Parris exemplifies this model by teaching courses in New Testament literature, Greek, biblical interpretation, and hermeneutics at Fuller Theological Seminary’s extension campus in Colorado. He completed his doctoral work under Anthony Thiselton, the father of modern hermeneutics.

Parris posits that reception theory or history of interpretation has received little of the attention it deserves. He argues that reception theory is vital to the church because the history of interpretation *is* the history of the church (x-xi). He seeks to build upon the work of Ebeling, Froehlich, and Luz in order to integrate reception theory into church history and commentaries. His rationale is two-fold. First, “if the post-history of the text functions as a hermeneutical bridge between our contemporary understanding of the bible and the text itself, then we ignore this historical dimension at our own peril” (xvi). Second, he argues that his forerunners can be “strengthened and advanced by incorporating recent work in philosophical hermeneutics and literary theory, specifically the work of Hans Robert Jauss” (xvii). Parris indeed strengthens our understanding of hermeneutics and the importance of reception theory for the church.

Reception Theory and Biblical Hermeneutics is divided into three sections. The first discusses Hans Georg Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics, giving special attention to those aspects that most influenced Hans Robert Jauss, including reception theory. The second section discusses Jauss’s appropriation and development of Gadamer’s thought as it relates to reception theory. The final section, the book’s primary strength, examines reception theory and applies it to specific biblical texts.

Two aspects of the section on Gadamer are worth noting. First, Parris is to be applauded for his masterful explanation of Gadamer’s complex thought. He boils down Gadamer’s work to its essential components while adequately explaining its importance for biblical hermeneutics. Throughout the section, as well as the book, he uses examples to explain difficult concepts and applies the concepts directly to biblical hermeneutics. His discussion of the I/Thou is particularly helpful. He argues that if the biblical interpreter is to understand the text correctly and apply it to his life, then he must subject himself to the text, allowing it to confront his preunderstanding and challenge the way he views the world. This application of Gadamer is cogent in light of the

hermeneutical theories currently in vogue—theories that often elevate the interpretation above the text.

Second, Parris offers a needed corrective to Gadamer's view of universal history, which is that there is none. Parris argues instead that the death and resurrection of Christ necessitates a view of universal history. Parris states, "the death and resurrection was an eschatological event that occurred in the middle of time...In the resurrection, we see the historically conditioned nature of truth and also an anticipatory, proleptic, understanding of universal history, which is still open" (29). This view of universal history means that one must take the future into account in one's hermeneutical circle. Christ is the lens that all hermeneutics must use.

Parris' discussion of Jauss also has several notable points. First, his examination of Jauss' lecture, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," demonstrate how each of the seven theses relates to biblical hermeneutics. For example, he shows how the importance of understanding a text's original context allows readers to compare past and present understandings of a text so that they can then correctly understand the text's meaning. Parris points out that this model allows multiple correct interpretations, but that this does not necessitate that *all* interpretations are correct. By examining texts in their original context and in view of their reception history, the interpreter is able to decide which interpretations are valid and which are invalid. This places an important guardrail around exegesis. Here Parris offers a vital expansion of Jauss' theory by introducing the role of the Holy Spirit in interpretation: "The Holy Spirit guides the Church by clarifying the truth through the communal life of the Church" (142). The Holy Spirit, through the church, plays an essential role in interpretation by ensuring that valid interpretations are adopted and invalid interpretations are rejected. Parris' argument is cogent and reminds the biblical interpreter of the importance of illumination in the hermeneutical process.

Second, Parris discusses Jauss' three levels of reading—understanding, interpretation, and application. Parris argues that these three readings are distinct and involve different types of investigation; but he also asserts that these three levels are interrelated and are never truly separated from each other. Each level is interested in each aspect of reading. This is important for biblical hermeneutics because it offers a hermeneutical model that forces the interpreter always to have the questions, "What did the text say" and "What does the text say, and what do I say to it" in mind as he engages the Bible in dialogue (165). Therefore, this model prevents the reader from relegating the text to an

ancient relic and also prevents him from jumping too quickly to application so that he misunderstands the meaning of the text.

Third, Parris examines macro and micro shifts within a tradition, arguing that changes in a tradition account for multiple correct interpretations of a text. He uses the story of the “moon-struck” boy in Matthew 17 as an illustration to illustrate how the prevailing scientific paradigm (following Thomas Kuhn) controls the way the text is interpreted. The illustration succeeds in showing the usefulness of reception theory, but Parris fails to criticize Kuhn for his view that those who operate within a particular paradigm are not necessarily wrong when they misunderstand texts. It seems that a wrong interpretation is a wrong interpretation, regardless of one’s place in history.

Finally, he discusses Jauss’ summit-dialogue, the conversation between the most significant interpretations of texts throughout history. Most of the chapter is devoted to a reception history of the Wedding Feast. This section is one of the strongest points of the book as it provides the reader with a useful example of how both reception theory and summit-dialogue affect biblical hermeneutics.

A few other aspects of the work deserve criticism. First, though it does not affect the book’s content, it is filled with typographical errors such as misspelled words, missing spaces between words, and missing verbs. This makes the reading more difficult as the reader stumbles over errors that should have been corrected during the copy-editing phase. Second, Parris does not transliterate Greek words, which is unfortunate in a book otherwise accessible to the non-technical reader.

Overall, *Reception Theory and Biblical Hermeneutics* is an excellent work. Parris succeeds in his goal of describing the thought of Gadamer and Jauss and applying it to biblical hermeneutics. He makes a sound case for the application of their hermeneutical philosophy to the Bible and issues the call for reception theory to be integrated into church history as well as biblical commentaries. Readers would be hard pressed to find such a lucid explanation of the issues involved in reception theory or such a clear delineation of the major contributions of these two theorists. This work is heartily recommended for anyone, from novice to expert, who wishes to understand reception theory and its importance for biblical hermeneutics.

Russell Meek
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation.
By James K. A. Smith. *Cultural Liturgies*, vol. 1. Grand Rapids:
Baker Academic, 2009, 238 pp., \$21.99 ISBN-10: 9780801035777

James K. A. Smith is Professor of Philosophy and Adjunct Professor of Congregational and Ministry studies at Calvin College, as well as serving as a Research Fellow of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. Additionally, Smith serves as the Executive Director of the Society of Christian Philosophers. His primary areas of academic interest are philosophy, theology, and cultural criticism. This volume is the first in a projected three-volume series in which Smith intends to set forth a philosophical theology of culture whose foundation consists of the primacy of worship. *Desiring the Kingdom* serves as the general introduction to the larger project, aimed at a slightly less scholarly audience than its sequels.

Smith has Christian educators and students clearly in mind in this volume. The more scholarly or technical arguments or elements are still present, but have been relegated to excurses as he intends to approach educators and students at a very practical level: anthropology and pedagogy. The book is Smith's opening argument for what amounts to a paradigm shift in the way education and formation are viewed and pursued.

In *Desiring the Kingdom*, Smith presents a vision of humanity in which the *primary* force behind decision-making, education, and all other aspects of how a life is lived in terms of desire, rather than cognition or belief. Smith does not deny the cognitive a role, but he wants to argue that people are not *primarily* driven by their adopted belief systems or philosophical commitments. At the most basic level, we are pulled and pushed about by our desire or longing for what we perceive to be the good life. Decisions and life-choices begin in the seat of desire or love, which Smith argues is the *kardia* of the NT and the "gut" of contemporary Western parlance (18). Human beings are creatures of love and worship, and it is the object of that worship and love that is at stake in Christian education. Competing educational/formative forces exist, and Christian educators must deploy appropriate "countermeasures" in order to produce Christians who worship and love in a manner consistent with the biblical witness and historic Christian orthodoxy.

People are not simply "thinking things" or "believing things." Instead, people are "worshiping things," what Smith labels *homo liturgicus* (40). In keeping with so much of contemporary apologetic

thought, Smith argues against a religious/nonreligious dichotomy. All people are religious. All people worship *something*. Therefore, all people are involved in some form of liturgy, sacred or secular. These liturgies are formative in ways that models of education that overemphasize “the life of the mind” cannot be. We are shaped by the practices in which we engage regularly, much more so than the ideas we seek to adopt into a carefully crafted “worldview.” These practices shape and become habits (55-62), and avoid a mind-body dualism that historically has been so damaging to the Christian faith by involving not just the mind in the process of Christian formation, but also involving the body. Worship is not simply a cognitive task to be undertaken, but rather a holistic experience that engages every part of what makes the worshiper human.

Education, then, is not so much about *information* as it is about formation. The typical Christian approach to education is lacking in efficacy precisely due to its misunderstanding of this foundational distinction. Since human beings are, at their core, “lovers,” the aim of education should be to shape what human beings will take as the object of their love, what vision of “the Kingdom” they will embrace and seek over the course of their lives. The love or desire of students does not reside in the intellect, asserts Smith while marshalling St. Augustine to support his contention. If this understanding is correct, and Smith argues quite convincingly that it just might be, then a great deal of reflection and revision is in order for educational institutions and individual educators that wear the label evangelical. As Smith points out, much of evangelical pedagogy focuses on worldview inculcation and analysis, both of which have come to be viewed in almost purely intellectual terms. Much evangelical education aims at getting the right ideas, perspectives, or interpretive lens in place within the mind of the student: “a pedagogy that thinks about education as primarily a matter of disseminating information tends to assume that human beings are primarily ‘thinking things’ and cognitive machines. Ideas and concepts are at the heart of such pedagogies because they are aimed primarily at the head” (28). Smith argues quite effectively that such an approach belies a paradigm that is distinctly “modern” (as opposed to “ancient” or “postmodern”) in its philosophical orientation and approach. It is, in other words, incorrigibly Cartesian (41-43). When one attempts to move from a “man as thinking being” anthropology toward a “man as believing” model, Smith again counters that no positive or constructive movement has occurred at all: “the person-as-believer model still gives us a somewhat reductionistic account of the human person—one that is still a tad bit heady and quasi-cognitive....Is the ‘believing’ pedagogy really going to

look much different from the ‘rationalist’ pedagogy? Insofar as the former still doesn’t seem very attentive to embodiment and formation by practice, it seems to me that the ‘believing’ pedagogy will simply be a tweaked version of the *informative paradigm*” (45).

How, then, must a distinctly Christian pedagogy be formulated and implemented? Smith’s answer may seem radical at first glance, but further reflection reveals its time-tested quality and simplicity. Educators must, first of all, be willing to undergo a serious revision of basic pedagogical principles and practices that seeks to understand, along with Marshall McLuhan, that “the medium is the message.” Educators and educational institutions must come to grips with the fact that *what* is being taught, is inextricably linked to *how* it is being taught (33). Content is important, of course, but methodology must never be mistaken for a neutral or purely pragmatic element of the overall educational endeavor. Smith’s model is characterized by four traits. First, it treats persons as “embodied actors rather than merely thinking things.” Second, it places a higher premium on “practices rather than ideas at the site of challenge and resistance.” Third, it understands human beings to be worshiping beings, and as such seeks to understand cultural practices and institutions through the lens of worship and liturgy.” Fourth, it maintains a sense of antithesis that is more robust than other models that can be properly termed “anti-cultural” or “anti-intellectual” (35).

There is much about *Desiring the Kingdom* that is commendable. Perhaps its greatest strength is Smith’s basic thesis regarding a needed paradigm shift in philosophical/theological anthropology as it relates to intentionally Christian education. Smith’s criticisms regarding the overly cognitivist or Cartesian flavor of much professional or institutional education in American evangelical circles certainly seem valid in many respects. One thinks of the multitude of educational research supporting the idea that lecture is probably the least effective pedagogical methodology, and yet the lecture, the sermon, and the contemporarily termed “talk” remain the primary means of reaching educational goals among North American evangelicals. If the goal is truly to make disciples rather than to engage in abortive attempts at doctrinaire downloading, might not Smith’s thesis and suggestions be a wise place to begin discussions regarding our methods as well as the content unconsciously inculcated by them?

The book is not without weaknesses, however. Chief among these weaknesses is Smith’s lack of concrete suggestions for the understanding or implementation of the alterations in methodology he assures practitioners that they must adopt. While the historic liturgical elements

Smith mentions remain quite common in more mainline-type churches, many individuals and churches within his target audience will find them either unhelpful in the ongoing quest for “relevant” worship or they will deem them too alien to allow for successful adoption. This may be more a weakness of the audience than of the book, but the disconnect will be felt, even within some churches in the Reformed tradition out of which Smith writes. Smith acknowledges these difficulties (151-54), and his irenic tone in dealing with them is helpful. Nevertheless, a gap of sorts remains between the worship language and forms Smith urges evangelicals to adopt and the language and forms with which so many are familiar.

All in all, the book is a great place to begin conversations about education or theological or philosophical anthropology. Smith’s thesis is interesting and, if as sound as it seems, could represent a significant change in the way education is pursued and received in the coming decades. The book will continue to be controversial among evangelicals of a certain theological or ecclesiological pedigree, but its content should be a topic of serious discussion, and its conclusions must be weighed carefully by both individual educators and educational institutions as both seek to better discharge the divine mandate to educate.

Kevin Dray
American Christian School

***Doctrine That Dances: Bringing Doctrinal Preaching and Teaching to Life.* By Robert Smith, Jr. Nashville, TN: B&H, 2008, 207 pp., paper. ISBN-10: 9780805446845**

Doctrinal preaching is an important, but often neglected, facet of homiletics. Thankfully, Robert Smith, professor of Christian preaching at Beeson Divinity School, has offered an engaging portrayal of what doctrinal preaching is and why it is important. In his first chapter, Smith defines doctrinal preaching generally as “the escorting of hearers into the presence of God for the purpose of transformation” and more specifically as “the magnifying of Jesus Christ through the explanation and application of the basic truths of the Christian faith” (25). These definitions bring together what Smith keeps together throughout the book, the head and the heart of preaching, or teaching and proclamation. Doctrine must not only lead people to learn more about God, but it also must lead them to worship God. Doctrinal preaching is therefore necessary for God’s people to be transformed by God’s truth.

Smith holds together the head and the heart of preaching with the metaphor of dancing. He develops and defends this metaphor in chapters 2 and 3. The preacher is to be both the “exegetical escort” who, through the teaching of Scripture, brings people to God, and the “doxological dancer” who leads people to “exult in the exalting of God” (36). The doctrinal preacher’s content must adhere to the text of Scripture, but his delivery also must reflect the style of the text. Doctrinal preaching must have both a vertical orientation, the Word of God, and a horizontal orientation, the human beings who need to hear a relevant word from God. Smith illustrates his idea of doctrinal preaching from how the Bible itself teaches doctrine. The Bible uses visual aids--such as creation and the incarnation, words, songs, pictures, biographical snapshots, proverbs, metaphors, discipline, symbolic actions, types, parables, secular images, and benedictions--to teach doctrine. The Scriptures communicate the truth of who God is and what he does in relevant, understandable ways and the doctrinal preacher must do the same.

Chapters 4 and 5 further develop the metaphors of exegetical escort and doxological dancer. An exegetical escort relates the truth of Scripture to the people in ways that they can understand. In chapter 4 Smith elucidates several problems that he sees with contemporary preaching, including the dilution of grace, the eclipse of the cross, the demise of doctrine, and the detachment of God’s mystery from God’s revelation. The solution to these problems is for the preacher to escort the congregation to the text. Jesus serves as the ultimate example of the exegetical escort, as this is what he did with the two disciples on the Emmaus road (Luke 24:13-36). God shows up in the message when our exegesis matches his meaning in the biblical text. The preacher as a doxological dancer keeps praise and application at the forefront of his preaching. A doxological dancer, through his passionate and fervent delivery of the sermon leads the congregation to take joy in God. This does not mean, however, that the delivery of the sermon trumps the content of the sermon. Smith helpfully employs the five canons of criticism to debunk this idea. Many preachers invert the canons by starting with delivery and then moving to invention, when doctrinal preachers ought always to start with the preparation and content of their sermons. Jesus again serves as the ultimate example of the doxological dancer, as Smith uses Luke 24:13-36 to demonstrate that Jesus not only leads the disciples to the biblical text, but also leads to exalt in God.

Smith offers additional explanations and illustrations of doctrinal preaching in chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 6 explains the need for maintaining balance in doctrinal preaching between the head and the

heart. Doctrinal preaching is where transcendence and immanence meet, where the Spirit and the Word meet, and where Christology and an intratrinitarian community meet. Chapter 7 illustrates doctrinal preaching with the metaphor of jazz music. Smith sees seven connections between jazz and preaching: earthiness, perpetuity with improvisation, camaraderie with the spirit, a collaborative community, organization and organism, spontaneity versus stasis, and Christological components. This final chapter essentially summarizes the themes that Smith has explored throughout the book. The book ends with two sample sermons that serve as examples of doctrinal preaching.

Smith's jazz metaphor is appropriate not only for doctrinal preaching, but his entire book as well. *Doctrine that Dances* is a delight to read, and like jazz music it introduces the main themes at the beginning and continually comes back to them, adding something new and different each time. This does lead to some repetition of the book's main themes, but in a manner that does not feel redundant. While some may be put off by the use of "escort" and "dancer" as metaphors for preaching, Smith carefully nuances these terms and show exactly why they are appropriate for the preacher and how they are based in Scripture. They are metaphors that are applicable to all biblical preaching. To that end, Smith perhaps could have focused more on what makes doctrinal preaching different from other kinds of preaching, as much of what he says about doctrinal preaching applies to biblical preaching in general. Also, those looking for a book on how to put together doctrinal sermons will be disappointed, as Smith focuses on what doctrinal preaching is and what it looks like, not on how to do it. His sample sermons accurately illustrate his idea of doctrinal preaching, but do not serve as templates for it. *Doctrine that Dances* is almost a theology of preaching, as it continually emphasizes the importance of the Word and the Spirit, preaching before God and preaching to human beings, and the purposes of preaching doctrine. I would recommend this book to any preacher who is struggling to see the importance of theology for preaching, and to any theologian who is struggling to see the importance of preaching for theology.

Gary L. Shultz Jr.
First Baptist Church of Fulton, MO

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