

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE



SOUTHWESTERN
JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

**BIBLICAL THEOLOGY:
PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE
(VOL. 2)**

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Biblical Theology: Past, Present, and Future (Vol. 2)

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Ever since Brevard Childs wrote *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (1970) and declared the discipline to be dead, the Biblical theology movement has, to the contrary, substantially grown. Indeed, it is thriving at present—especially amongst evangelicals who are committed to the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. This development is an excellent one primarily because it can aid the church in the making and equipping of disciples, and it is also timely, especially in a day when Biblical illiteracy has dramatically increased, even amongst church members.

Biblical theology clearly has its growing pains. Unsettled questions in the minds of many abound, like, “What exactly is Biblical theology?” “How is it different from the disciplines of systematic theology, historical theology, practical theology, and theological interpretation?” “What precise approach should be used to do Biblical theology?” “How can we be helped in our quest by the inquiries and discussions of those who have gone before us in the church’s history?” Theological conferences are regularly held for pastors and professors to explore and discuss answers to these kinds of questions. One such conference designed to benefit students, pastors, scholars, and the church, led to the publication of papers included in both the previous and the present issue of this journal.

This issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* (SWJT) marks our online debut and is the second of two volumes on the topic, *Biblical Theology: Past, Present, and Future*. Most of the articles in these volumes were initially presented on March 9-10, 2012, at the Southwest Regional Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), which met in the Riley Center on the campus of the host institution, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The plenary speakers for the conference were Gerald Bray from Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, and Andreas J. Köstenberger from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Southwestern Seminary and the editorial staff of SWJT would like to thank Herbert W. Bateman IV, formerly professor of New Testament at Southwestern, for serving as program chair for the regional ETS meeting in 2012 from which conference he helped to select the papers for these two journal issues on Biblical theology.

The present volume is devoted to *Biblical Theology Present and Future* and features five helpful articles. The lead article is presented by Andreas

Köstenberger entitled, "The Present and Future of Biblical Theology." In this essay he looks at what he thinks is the present and future of the discipline. Moreover, he offers survey and summary assessments of recent Biblical theologies. John Taylor, associate professor of New Testament at Southwestern, also contributes a paper titled, "The Freedom of God and the Hope of Israel: Theological Interpretation of Romans 9." In this article, he outlines some of the historical contours of the soteriological debate over the interpretation of Romans 9 and asks whether the passage can bear the weight of such discussion. He argues that theological interpretation of the chapter needs to consider properly in context the Roman believers' situation and Paul's concern for the status and fate of Israel. This editor contributes to this issue an article called, "Phoebe, the Letter-Carrier of Romans, and the Impact of Her Role on Biblical Theology," in which he contends that Phoebe is a courier and that Paul's recommendation of her in Romans 16:1-2 fits the pattern found in texts where letter-carriers are commended to the recipients of letters. The impact of this conclusion on a Biblical theology of women in ministry is then briefly considered. Steven Smith, Vice President for Student Services and Communications and Professor of Communication at Southwestern, provides an article in which he maintains that the Christology of the New Testament cannot be understood apart from the book of Hebrews. He views the portrait of Christ in Hebrews as overwhelming and focuses in his essay on the triad of Christ's exclusive work, superiority, and corporate nature. Lastly, Helmuth Pehlke, professor of Old Testament for Southwestern's Bonn, Germany extension, provides an article called, "Observations on the Historical Reliability of the Old Testament. He maintains that no reason exists to doubt that the Old Testament in its reports preserves historical facts. If the events were fictionally reported, as some claim, then it would have enormous theological implications because God would then no longer be the Lord of history, but a creature of one's own imagination. A close relationship exists between historical understanding and relationship with God. This issue also contains for your perusal several book reviews and abstracts of recent doctoral dissertations done at Southwestern.

We pray that these articles equip and assist you as you study Biblical theology. We hope you like what you read in this issue. If you would like to have one of our faculty members or students speak in your church, or lead your congregation in a study of any sort, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are more than happy to serve you. Further, if God has called you into his service please consider allowing us the privilege of preparing you for a lifetime of ministry. These are exciting times at Southwestern for the study of Biblical theology. God bless you.

Terry L. Wilder, Editor
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The Present and Future of Biblical Theology

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As a journal editor, I sometimes wonder if we should make it a rule that only those who have actually written a book may write book reviews; that only those who have written at least one commentary may review commentaries; and so forth. If that standard were applied to my topic today, I may not perfectly qualify, because even though I've written a Johannine theology and contributed several essays on Biblical-theological topics, I have yet to write a full-fledged Biblical or NT theology. Nevertheless, I appreciate the gracious invitation of the steering committee of this conference and will gladly pontificate for a few minutes on what I see to be the present and future of the discipline. Perhaps some of you will find my survey and summary assessment of recent Biblical theologies stimulating in your own work, and, who knows, maybe one day I might be able to put some of the insights I gained from reviewing Biblical theologies into further use myself.

In his influential address, "Discourse on the Proper Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology, and the Right Determination of the Aims of Each," Johann Philipp Gabler (1753–1826) lodged the programmatic proposal that scholars ought to distinguish between Biblical and systematic theology.¹ In his lecture, delivered at the University of Altdorf in 1787 (the year the Constitutional Convention met in Philadelphia), Gabler urged his colleagues to place their theological edifice more overtly on a scriptural foundation, stating, "There is truly a biblical theology, of historical origin, conveying what the holy writers felt about divine matters."² Gabler claimed that a Biblical theology conceived along these lines would provide

¹The Latin title was *Oratio de iusto discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae regundisque recte utriusque finibus*. For an excellent summary of Gabler's contribution, see William Baird, *History of New Testament Research*, Volume One: *From Deism to Tübingen* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 184–87.

²J. P. Gabler, "An Oration on the Proper Distinction Between Biblical and Dogmatic theology and the Specific Objectives of Each," in Ben C. Ollenburger, ed., *Old Testament Theology: Flowering and Future*, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study, vol.1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 501. Note, however, that what distinguishes Gabler's proposal from most recent evangelical works in Biblical theology is the belief in history's unified story and the unified story of Scripture rooted in that history.

the historical and rational scientific framework enabling systematic theology to relate Biblical truths to contemporary life and thought.³

At its core, Gabler's distinction between Biblical and systematic theology marks an important foundation stone to this day. Biblical theology is an essentially historical discipline calling for an inductive and descriptive method. A distinction between Biblical and systematic theology needs to be maintained carefully if we are to provide an accurate description of the theology of the Biblical writers themselves. Some of us may find this to be a truism hardly worth stating. But as a survey of the last decade of Biblical-theological research will show, the need to ground Biblical theology in careful historical work; to conceive of the discipline as essentially inductive and descriptive; and to distinguish Biblical from systematic theology continues to be relevant, even urgent, if the discipline is to continue its viability.⁴ In what follows, I will first survey the present state of Biblical theology, gauged by a selective survey of evangelical works produced during the past decade or so, and then discuss ramifications of this survey for the future of the discipline.

The Present State of Biblical Theology⁵

In one of his many important contributions to the subject, D. A. Carson remarked that how one navigates the tension between Scripture's unity and its diversity is the "most pressing" issue in Biblical theology.⁶ As the subtitle

³For a brief analysis of Gabler's address and its relevance for the present discussion, see Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 9–10.

⁴For a useful treatment of the history and nature of Biblical theology, see Peter Balla, *Challenges to New Testament Theology: An Attempt to Justify the Enterprise* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998). More briefly, see Hendrikus Boers, *What is New Testament Theology? The Rise of Criticism and the Problem of a Theology of the New Testament* (Phialdelphia: Fortress, 1979).

⁵For our present purposes, the focus will be on the most important works in whole-Bible theology over the last decade. This limitation will preclude coverage of works that focus on only one Testament. Noteworthy OT theologies include Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology*, vol. 15 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003); Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Nashville: B&H, 2006); and Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007). Significant NT theologies include I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004); Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005); and Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008). Owing to space and time constraints, we will limit ourselves to English-language works.

⁶D. A. Carson, "New Testament Theology," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, eds. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 810. In Carson's own words: "The most pressing of these [issues] is how simultaneously to expound the unity of NT theology (and of the larger canon of which it is a part) while doing justice to the manifest diversity; or, to put it the other way, how simultaneously to trace the diversity and peculiar emphases and historical developments inherent in the various NT (and biblical) books while doing justice to their unifying thrusts."

of the sequel to *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, a volume entitled *Central Themes in Biblical Theology*, has it, our challenge is that of “Mapping Unity in Diversity.”⁷ Virtually all evangelical Biblical theologians start their work with the assumption of essential Biblical unity. Most also realize that, within this unity, Scripture displays a certain amount of legitimate diversity.⁸ How to come to terms with this interplay between unity and diversity, is the challenge. In what follows, I will look at recent Biblical-theological works under four rubrics: (1) classic approaches; (2) central theme approaches; (3) single-center approaches; and (4) story or metanarrative approaches.⁹ Each of these seeks to navigate the unity-diversity question in its own distinctive way (though there are commonalities as well).¹⁰

Classic Approaches

New Dictionary of Biblical Theology. First in our taxonomy of Biblical theologies is what G. K. Beale recently called “the classic approach.”¹¹ This classic approach involves studying first the message and theological content of individual Biblical books, followed by an attempt at synthesis tracing overarching themes across various corpora. An example of this model is the

⁷Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House, eds., *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

⁸Regarding the term “legitimate diversity,” see chapter 3 in Andreas J. Köstenberger and Michael J. Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture’s Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010).

⁹Cf. Gerhard Hasel, *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), who in his section on methodology in NT theology lists the thematic approach; the existentialist approach; the historical approach; and the salvation history approach. Under basic proposals toward a NT theology, he discusses NT theology as a historical-theological discipline; NT theology based on the NT writings; NT theology presented on the basis of books and blocks of material; and NT theology presented on the basis of longitudinal themes.

¹⁰For a helpful assessment of the discipline almost two decades ago, see D. A. Carson, “Current Issues in Biblical Theology: A New Testament Perspective,” *BBR* 5 (1995): 17–41, originally an address delivered to the Institute of Biblical Research. After noting the need for definitional clarity, Carson suggested the following valid approaches to Biblical theology: (1) the theology of the whole Bible, descriptively and historically considered; (2) the theology of the various Biblical corpora or strata (e.g. OT and NT theologies); and (3) the theology of a particular theme across the Scriptures. He also urged the use of the following criteria for Biblical theology: (1) it should read the Bible as a historically developing collection of documents; (2) it should presuppose a coherent and agreed-upon canon; and (3) it should utilize an inductive approach to the individual books and the canon as a whole, making clear connections among the various corpora, and calling all people to a knowledge of the living God (pp. 27–32).

¹¹G. K. Beale, “A New Testament Biblical Theology: Interview by John Starke,” http://thegospelcoalition.org/book-reviews/interview/A_New_Testament_Biblical_Theology. Actually, Beale says that a number of “classic New Testament theologies ... conduct a consecutive theological analysis of each New Testament book within its corpus, usually in the canonical order of each corpus, and then draw up a final comparison of each of the theological emphases of each of the books. In so doing, at the end of the project sometimes a major theological thrust is attempted to be found” (e.g. Marshall’s *New Testament Theology* identifies mission as such a thrust, which Beale does not find comprehensive enough).

New Dictionary of Biblical Theology edited by T. D. Alexander and Brian Rosner, a reference work published in the year 2000.¹² In the introductory article, Brian Rosner describes the task of Biblical theology as follows:

Biblical theology is principally concerned with the overall message of the whole Bible. It seeks to understand the parts in relation to the whole and, to achieve this, it must work with the mutual interaction of the literary, historical, and theological dimensions of the various corpora, and with the interrelationships of these within the whole canon of Scripture.¹³

Only in this way that can we properly account for what God has spoken to us in the Scriptures. In summary, Rosner defines Biblical theology as theological interpretation of Scripture in and for the church. More specifically, "It proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to analyze and synthesize the Bible's teaching about God and his relations to the world on its own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible's overarching narrative and Christocentric focus."¹⁴ With this definition and analysis in place, the rest of the dictionary proceeds accordingly.¹⁵

Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect. Another edited work that contributes to the discussion of properly characterizing the discipline is the volume, *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, featuring selected addresses

¹²T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, eds., *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity, 2000).

¹³B. S. Rosner, "Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 3. Thus Biblical theology avoids an atemporal approach to the Bible and pays close attention to the Bible's overarching story (see *ibid.*, 4). See also Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011).

¹⁴Rosner, "Biblical Theology," 10. While one notes a bifurcation of Biblical theology into OT and NT theologies over the past couple centuries, it seems there is a growing trend toward the pursuit of a unified Biblical theology along the lines of Rosner's definition. For a brief survey of this phenomenon and of the history of the discipline, see C. H. H. Scobie, "History of Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 18–20. See also Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 867–88; Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Salvation Historical Fallacy? Reassessing the History of New Testament Theology* (Leiden: Deo, 2004); and H. G. Reventlow, "Theology (Biblical), History of," *Abingdon Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1, trans. Frederick H. Cryer (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 498–509.

¹⁵Two additional introductory articles deal with the NT use of the OT and the relationship between the Testaments. Both authors stress the continuity of the Scriptures without neglecting its diversity. Craig Evans avers, "One of the most important assumptions underlying the NT's use of the OT is that of fulfillment and continuity. ... This means that Christian biblical theology must take fully into account the theology of the OT and never develop NT theology apart from it" ("New Testament Use of the Old Testament," 79–80). Graeme Goldsworthy concurs, stating, "Understanding the relationship of the two Testaments involves understanding that the God who has revealed himself finally in Jesus has also revealed himself in the OT in a way that foreshadows both the structure and content of the Christian gospel" ("Relationship of Old Testament and New Testament," 89).

from the 2000 Wheaton Conference for Theology.¹⁶ In the first chapter, the editor, Scott Hafemann, discusses the issue of canonical unity and diversity. He believes that, in moving forward, scholars should focus on three central realities. First, they should look at each book of Scripture independently and take it *on its own terms* while affirming the unity of the structure of the Bible. Second, they should come to terms with the *eschatological* nature of the Bible, with the first and second coming of Christ serving as the midpoint and endpoint of redemptive history. Third, Biblical theology must be *rooted in history*, lest we replace the message of Scripture with our own experience.¹⁷ These three basic affirmations serve as general principles keeping interpreters grounded as they pursue their Biblical-theological work.

Later in the volume, Paul House offers a helpful perspective on the method of working toward a coherent Biblical theology that does justice to the text of Scripture. He begins by affirming that canonical Biblical theology requires a unitary reading strategy of the OT and NT canon which allows the Bible to be treated as one book of Scripture. Second, this unitary reading should proceed on a book-by-book basis in order to derive the specific message from each piece of writing. Third, this analysis should lead to the identification and collection of vital central themes allowing an overarching synthesis. Fourth, there must be a commitment to intertextuality, that is, to discerning instances where later passages in Scripture refer to earlier texts. Fifth, interpreters should treat major Biblical themes as they emerge from the whole of Scripture. Sixth and finally, Biblical theology ought to have as its goal the presentation of the whole counsel of God in various settings.¹⁸ Thus, Biblical theology has the potential of encouraging believers toward understanding and applying the coherent message of Scripture to their lives and ministry.

Assessment. The strength of the classic approach is that it takes into consideration the contribution of each individual book in the canon of Scripture while at the same time seeking to discern major themes across the canon. Another strength of this approach is that it allows specialists in various fields to contribute. As Biblical and theological studies become increasingly specialized, collaborative work is a growing necessity. A potential weakness of the classic approach is that unless book-by-book analysis and the identification of scriptural themes are related to Scripture's larger storyline, the needed synthesis remains incomplete. While, as I will seek to demonstrate below, positing a single center is precarious, the scriptural metanarrative provides a promising avenue of exploring the Biblical writers' message which involves unity as well as diversity.

¹⁶Scott J. Hafemann, ed., *Biblical Theology: Retrospect & Prospect* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001).

¹⁷Scott J. Hafemann, "Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect," in *Ibid.*, 20–21.

¹⁸Paul R. House, "Biblical Theology and the Wholeness of Scripture: Steps Toward a Program for the Future," in *Ibid.*, 271–78.

Central Themes Approaches

The Ways of Our God. Many have taken one important aspect of the classic approach to Biblical theology, the quest for major scriptural motifs, and sought to orient the whole Bible around a few central themes that can be traced across the canon. One of the most prolific, and in my judgment most successful, Biblical-theological works of the past decade exhibiting a central themes approach is Charles Scobie's massive work *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology*.¹⁹ Discussing the history, definition, and task of Biblical theology, Scobie believed that "[i]f progress is to be made in the study of Biblical Theology, the question of definition is clearly crucial."²⁰ Scobie sided with many others in the field in maintaining that Biblical theology is "the theology contained in the Bible, the theology of the Bible itself."²¹ Moreover, Scobie proposed what he called an "intermediate biblical theology," contending that Biblical theology is a bridge discipline between the historical study of the Bible and the use of the Bible as authoritative Scripture by the church.²² Scobie further suggested that Biblical theology ought to be concerned fundamentally with the horizon of the text and as such should attempt to provide an overview and interpretation of the shape and structure of the Bible as a whole. Along these lines, he wrote of his own work that "[i]t will seek the unity and continuity of Scripture, but without sacrificing the richness of its diversity. It will focus not on exegetical details but on the broad interrelationships between the major themes of the Bible, and above all on the interrelationship between the Testaments."²³

In seeking to delineate the structure of Biblical theology, Scobie cau-

¹⁹Charles H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

²⁰Ibid., 3. Scobie believes that necessary presuppositions for a coherent Biblical theology include "belief that the Bible conveys a divine revelation, that the word of God in Scripture constitutes the norm of Christian faith and life, and that all the varied material of the OT and NT can in some way be related to the plan and purpose of the one God of the whole Bible" (47).

²¹Ibid., 5. See also the discussion of the work of Adolf Schlatter below.

²²This intermediate Biblical theology stands in contrast to what Scobie describes as integrated Biblical theology, which, prior to Gabler's address, showed no distinction between what the Bible "meant" and what it "means," and independent Biblical theology, which is a Biblical theology dominated by historical criticism and pursued in radical independence from the church (See Ibid., 7–8).

²³Ibid., 47. Scobie speaks specifically to the distinctiveness and relationship between the Testaments in relation to Biblical theology. As for the OT canon, Scobie acknowledges the Christian stance regarding its importance: "[Christians] see in the [OT] the record of the period of preparation and promise that culminates in the Christ event. It is that Christ event, and not the Torah, that constitutes the supreme revelation of God for Christians.... Thus, whatever may be the case historically, theologically for Christians it is the Christ event that closes the canon of the Old Testament" (55). Regarding the NT canon, Scobie again asserts, "BT is not concerned with the details of the complex process of the development of the canon of the NT. But it is vitally concerned with the theology of the canon. From a theological point of view it is clear that the all-important factor in the closing of the canon of the NT was the belief that the Christ event constitutes the supreme, unique, and final revelation of God" (57).

tioned that scholars avoid imposing alien conceptual patterns onto Scripture and instead allow the structure of their Biblical theology to arise from the Biblical material itself, asserting, “The structure that is proposed here is one in which the major themes of the OT and NT are correlated with each other.” In Scobie’s approach, “Each theme is first traced through the OT. Although on the one hand the material is discussed with an eye to the way [in which] the theme is developed in the NT, on the other hand, every effort is made to listen to what the OT says on its own terms.”²⁴

Thus, Scobie believed that the procedure that seems to offer the most promise and the least risk of distorting the Biblical material is that of identifying a limited number of major Biblical themes, grouped around associated subthemes, and of tracing each theme and related subtheme(s) through the OT and into the NT, following the scheme of proclamation, promise/ fulfillment, and consummation.²⁵ These themes, isolated in interaction with various centers that have been proposed through the course of the discipline, are broken up into four categories: (1) God’s order; (2) God’s servant; (3) God’s people; and (4) God’s way.²⁶ Engaging with Biblical theology in this fashion allows one to trace demonstrably important themes across the canon with a view toward analysis and synthesis.²⁷

Central Themes in Biblical Theology. As mentioned, Scott Hafemann, subsequent to the publication of his edited work *Biblical Theology: Retrospect & Prospect*, partnered with Paul House and others to produce a sequel, entitled *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity*.²⁸ In Hafemann’s words, this book represents an attempt to “explore Biblical themes that contribute to the wholeness of the Bible.”²⁹ In this regard, the volume moves beyond a classic approach to a central themes model. The contributors share three convictions regarding scriptural unity. First, the Bible is a unity because it is the word of God who is a unified and coherent being. Second, Biblical theology should seek not only to unpack the content of Scripture but also to establish the conceptual unity of the Bible as a whole as it unfolds in human events. Third and last, doing whole-Bible theology should be a collaborative effort owing to the complexity of the discipline.³⁰ Once again, as with the works already discussed, we see specific principles guiding these

²⁴Ibid., 91–92. In this regard, Scobie anticipates the work of G. K. Beale, on which see the discussion below.

²⁵See Ibid., 93.

²⁶See Ibid., 94–99. See also Scobie’s chart on page 99 that helpfully illustrates these major categories and how they fit into the proclamation/promise: fulfillment/consummation rubric.

²⁷For an insightful summary and analysis of Scobie’s work, see Karl Möller, “The Nature and Genre of Biblical Theology: Some Reflections in the Light of Charles H. H. Scobie’s ‘Prolegomena to Biblical Theology,’” in Craig G. Bartholomew et al., eds., *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*, Scripture and Hermeneutics, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 41–64.

²⁸Hafemann and House, *Central Themes in Biblical Theology*.

²⁹Ibid., 15.

³⁰See Ibid., 16–18.

authors in delineating the unity and diversity characterizing the canon.

Perhaps most pertinent to the task at hand is Roy Ciampa's essay on the history of redemption. The author states that a central themes approach to Scripture "seeks to uncover the biblical authors' own understanding of the events and their significance within the unfolding narrative context in which they are found."³¹ Ciampa agrees with those who have argued for a creation-sin-exile-restoration motif³² and seeks to trace this pattern throughout the various corpora of Scripture. In so doing, Ciampa argues that the main structure of the Biblical narrative consists essentially of two creation-sin-exile-restoration structures whereby the second of these, which is national in nature (seen in the Israel narrative), is embedded within the first, which is global (seen in the Adam-Eve narrative and its accompanying consequences). The national creation-sin-exile-restoration pattern serves as the key to the resolution of the plot conflict of the global structure, and in the interplay between these two structures, God's kingdom intervention and promises are rightly understood.³³ This essay thus contributes a useful application of Biblical theology demonstrating the saving purposes of God throughout the canon.

Assessment. Central themes approaches can be helpful in tracing important motifs across the canon, but the organization of these central themes still requires further synthesis, in particular in relation to Scripture's overarching storyline. Hafemann's discussion of the covenant structure or Ciampa's treatment of the creation-sin-exile-restoration theme both constitute attempts to provide such a metanarrative framework in an effort to relate these central themes to one another. The central themes approach is a useful component of Biblical theology if one recognizes the place of central themes within the framework of the macrostructure of the entire canon.

Single-Center Approaches

Over the course of the discipline, there have been scholars who have sought to identify a single center of Scripture that constitutes *the* major theme around which the entire canon revolves. In effect, therefore, the single-center approach selects one from among a number of central themes and designates it as the sole center of Biblical theology. The fact that such an approach is fraught with considerable difficulty at the very outset has not kept at least one scholar in recent years from exploring the notion of a central organizing theme within the scope of Biblical theology.³⁴ In his

³¹Roy E. Ciampa, "The History of Redemption," in *Ibid.*, 255.

³²For an example of a Biblical theology that engages with this theme as the integrative motif for understanding the whole of Scripture, see C. Marvin Pate et al., *The Story of Israel: A Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004).

³³See Ciampa, "The History of Redemption," 257.

³⁴See Hasel, *New Testament Theology*, 140–78. See also Carson, "NT Theology," 810: "The pursuit of the center is chimerical. NT theology is so interwoven that one can move from any one topic to any other topic. We will make better progress by pursuing clusters of broadly common themes, which may not be common to all NT books"; and Andreas J. Köstenberger,

publication *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology*,³⁵ James Hamilton, as suggested by the title of his work, endeavors to show that God's glory in salvation through judgment serves as a Biblical center, that is, as a particularly prominent theme that holds the canon together. Invoking the systematians David Wells and Kevin Vanhoozer,³⁶ Hamilton states the purpose of his book as follows:

The purpose of this book, quixotic as it may seem, is to seek to do for biblical theology what Kevin Vanhoozer has done for hermeneutics and David Wells has done for evangelical theology. The goal is not a return to an imaginary golden age but to help people know God. The quest to know God is clarified by a diagnosis of the problem (Wells), the vindication of interpretation (Vanhoozer), and, hopefully, a clear presentation of the main point of God's revelation of himself, that is, a clear presentation of the center of biblical theology.³⁷

Hamilton, as mentioned, contends that the saving and judging glory of God³⁸ is the center of Biblical theology and as such is the primary theme uniting all of Scripture.

Hamilton describes his methodology as follows. First, he sets out to pursue 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 their canonical context with sensitivity to the unfolding metanarrative. Hamilton believes that this metanarrative presents a unified story with a discernible main point or center.³⁹ In defining a center in Biblical theology, a crucial part of his methodology, Hamilton states, with reference to Jonathan Edwards, "If it can be shown that the Bible's description of God's

"Diversity and Unity in the New Testament," in Scott Hafemann, *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, 154: "the search for a single center of the NT should be abandoned."

³⁵James M. Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010).

³⁶As will be seen further below, it may not be a coincidence that it is two systematians that serve as Hamilton's point of departure. In the same vein, Hamilton awards central place to Jonathan Edwards as mediated by John Piper, both of whose primary field is likewise systematic theology.

³⁷Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment*, 38.

³⁸While my focus here is the general methodology of deriving a particular theology of the Bible, it is important to understand what exactly Hamilton means by his phrase "God's glory in salvation through judgment." He asserts that God's glory refers to the weight and majestic goodness of who God is, as well as the resulting fame or renown that he gains from the revelation of himself (see *Ibid.*, 56–57). Regarding the latter part of the phrase, Hamilton suggests that "salvation always comes through judgment." Israel was saved through the judgment of Egypt; believers are saved through the judgment that falls on Jesus; and people repent of their sin as prophets and apostles vocalize the truths of God's justice: "All of this reveals God as righteous and merciful, loving and just, holy and forgiving, for his own glory, forever" (58).

³⁹See the story or metanarrative approaches discussed below.

ultimate end produces, informs, organizes, and is expositied by all the other themes in the Bible, and if this can be demonstrated from the Bible's own salvation-historical narrative and in its own terms, then the conclusion will follow that the ultimate end ascribed to God in the Bible is the center of biblical theology."⁴⁰ Thus one can identify the center of Biblical theology by identifying the theme that is prevalent, even pervasive, in all parts of the Bible and that serves as its ultimate end. Hamilton claims that this theme will be the demonstrable centerpiece of the theology contained in the Bible itself.⁴¹ Hamilton then moves into textual analysis, seeking to demonstrate the centrality of God's glory in salvation through judgment in the Torah,⁴² the Prophets,⁴³ the Writings,⁴⁴ the Gospels and Acts,⁴⁵ the New Testament Letters,⁴⁶ and Revelation.⁴⁷

Assessment. While it is instructive to see how Hamilton delves into the exegetical details to substantiate his thesis, the feasibility of trying to find a single center for the entire Biblical witness remains fraught with difficulty.⁴⁸ In the end, Hamilton's proposal fails to convince, because it proves unduly monolithic and frequently appears to be imposed artificially onto individual writings (e.g. Esther, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Matthew, Philemon). As a result, the canon of Scripture in its entirety is unable to bear the weight of "God's glory in salvation through judgment" serving as a single center. As D. A. Carson wisely observed with regard to single-center approaches, "How shall one avoid the tendency to elevate one book or corpus of the NT and

⁴⁰Ibid., 48. Hamilton appears to be influenced in his method for finding a center by Jonathan Edwards and how he speaks of "ends" in his "The End for which God Created the World," in John Piper, *God's Passion for His Glory* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1998), 125–251. See especially *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 48–49.

⁴¹Anticipating the objection of some scholars who believe that a center is not attainable, Hamilton responds, "In spite of the judgment of these respected scholars, it must be observed that their statements do not seem to take into account one theme that has only recently been put forward as the center of biblical theology: the glory of God.... Anticipating the charge that it might be too broad to be useful, I am sharpening the proposal to focus specifically on the glory of God manifested in salvation through judgment" (52–53). For a brief survey of other proposed centers in OT, NT, and Biblical theology, see James M. Hamilton, "The Glory of God in Salvation Through Judgment: The Centre of Biblical Theology?," *TynB* 57 (2006): 65–69. See also idem, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 52–53.

⁴²See Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 67–137.

⁴³Ibid., 139–269.

⁴⁴Ibid., 271–353.

⁴⁵Ibid., 355–441.

⁴⁶Ibid., 443–559.

⁴⁷Ibid., 541–51.

⁴⁸See Dempster's appreciate review of Hamilton's work in which he states, "All our best efforts can be described as seeing through a glass darkly. The fact that no theological centre has been found does not mean that there is none.... While God and his word are inerrant, all our theology partakes of errancy. As Hamilton has come back from his quest, in stressing the glory of God in salvation through judgment he has certainly pointed us all in the right direction." Stephen Dempster, "Book Review: God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment," 9Marks Articles and Reviews, available online at <http://www.9marks.org/books/book-review-gods-glory-salvation-through-judgment>.

domesticate the rest, putting them on a leash held by the themes of the one, usually the book or corpus on which the biblical theologian has invested most scholarly energy?”⁴⁹

At closer scrutiny, Hamilton’s center seems to work best in the prophetic literature which is replete with oracles of salvation and judgment. The opening chapters of Genesis, on the other hand, are virtually ignored. Strikingly, God’s glory *in creation* is excluded from Hamilton’s center, and thus the bookends of Biblical revelation remain unaccounted for. Another weakness of Hamilton’s proposal is that he uses pivotal terms such as “glory,” “judgment,” or “salvation” in multiple senses and then moves back and forth between various definitions of these key terms to establish his single center. The conclusion seems close at hand that “God’s glory in salvation through judgment” may well be one of Scripture’s central themes, perhaps even one that was underappreciated prior to Hamilton’s work, but that calling this theme the “single center” of Scripture overstates the case, because, as mentioned, other important themes such as God’s glory in creation and new creation are not included.

In light of such difficulties (and more programmatic underlying concerns that will be noted later on), the concluding verdict of Gerhard Hasel’s monograph *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, written decades ago, still stands: “The variety of problems to which scholars have pointed in their discussions of the center of the NT, one that functions as ‘a canon within the canon’ and serves as material principle of canon criticism, are apparently insurmountable. An approach to NT theology that seeks to be adequate to the totality of the NT cannot afford the arbitrariness, subjectivity, and reductionism inherent in the choice of a selective principle in the form of a center either from without Scripture (tradition) or from within Scripture on the basis of which value judgments are made with regard to the content of Scripture as a whole or in its parts.”⁵⁰

Story/Metanarrative Approaches

From Eden to the New Jerusalem. While the single-center approach has some obvious flaws, a related centering model is the metanarrative approach to Biblical theology. This approach does not identify one theme as

⁴⁹Carson, “NT Theology,” 810. As we will see further below, G. K. Beale is therefore wise to eschew the notion of a single center in favor of tethering his proposal to a broader construct, that of the Biblical storyline. This allows Beale to see a red thread running through the scriptural narrative without being equally vulnerable to the charge of being monochromatic and reductionistic. See the discussion in chapter 6 of G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011); and idem, “Interview,” 8: “I do not attempt to see a central theme in NT biblical theology.” Beale continues, “On the other hand, I don’t think the NT is composed of multiple themes that are merely unrelated to one another. I try to sail a middle course between these two perspectives.” It should be noted, however, that few evangelicals would say that the “NT is composed of multiple themes that are merely unrelated to one another.” For this reason, Beale’s claim to steer a “middle course between these two perspectives” is a bit curious.

⁵⁰Hasel, *NT Theology*, 177–78.

the the central idea but argues that there is an overarching metanarrative that unifies the Scriptures. One fairly recent exemplar of such an approach is T. D. Alexander's *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology*.⁵¹ In this work, Alexander, one of the editors of the *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, sought to explore the unfolding canonical trajectory of Scripture. In so doing, Alexander grounded his attempt to describe the content of the Biblical metanarrative in the conviction that the Word of God is in fact a unified story: "Produced over many centuries, the differing texts that comprise this library are amazingly diverse in terms of genre, authorship and even language. Nonetheless, they produce a remarkably unified story that addresses two of life's most fundamental questions: (1) Why was the earth created? (2) What is the reason for human existence?"⁵²

Alexander's overall method is thematic in nature as he seeks to demonstrate (similar to the central themes approach) that the Bible is essentially unified and held together by several overarching motifs. In defense of this approach, he asserts:

There is something of value in seeing the big picture, for it frequently enables us to appreciate the details more clearly. The scholarly tendency to "atomize" biblical texts is often detrimental to understanding them. By stripping passages out of their literary contexts meanings are imposed upon them that were never intended by their authors. I hope this study goes a little way to redressing this imbalance, for biblical scholarship as a whole has not articulated clearly the major themes that run throughout Scripture. Since these themes were an integral part of the thought world of the biblical authors, an appreciation of them may significantly alter our reading of individual books.⁵³

In a rather unique fashion, Alexander takes as his starting point the two final chapters of the book of Revelation, in the conviction that these chapters sustain a distinct connection with Genesis 1–3 and that these two portions of Scripture frame the entire Biblical narrative, providing the reader with an overarching framework for what the Bible is seeking to communicate throughout.⁵⁴ In this way, the reader looks at the end of the story to make better sense of the beginning, and in so doing traces a theme from its point of departure to its fulfillment in Christ and ultimately its consummation in the New Jerusalem. Alexander recognizes that while "there are limitations to this approach, it is nevertheless one way of attempting to determine the main

⁵¹T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008).

⁵²Ibid., 10

⁵³Ibid., 11.

⁵⁴Although Alexander sees direct parallels between Genesis 1–3 and Revelation 20–22, he notes that one finds significant progression as well as elements of continuity and discontinuity as the canon moves toward its completion (see Ibid., 14).

elements of the meta-story.”⁵⁵ Thus the study is not exhaustive but rather suggestive, seeking to outline some of the main themes running through Scripture. The contours of Alexander’s book adhere closely to the standard approach of summarizing the overarching narrative of the Bible in terms of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation.⁵⁶ While Alexander does not tease out every detail of his proposal, his work serves as a helpful guide to some of the most significant themes in the Bible and the canonical weight they carry in our interpretive efforts.

Christ-Centered Biblical Theology. Another instance of a story or metanarrative approach is Graeme Goldsworthy’s new book *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles*.⁵⁷ Goldsworthy seeks to contribute a measure of coherence to the discipline by formulating a Biblical-theological schema in accordance with the work of Donald Robinson and Gabriel Hebert.⁵⁸ He begins by pointing out some of the difficulties involved in defining the essence and nature of Biblical theology.⁵⁹ Goldsworthy defines Biblical theology as “the study of how every text in the Bible relates to every other text in the Bible” and as “the study of the matrix of divine revelation in the Bible as a whole.”⁶⁰ He further refines the definition by stating that Biblical theology is the study of how every text relates to Christ and the gospel.⁶¹ Goldsworthy also links his proposal with salvation history, underscoring the importance of Biblical revelation and its unified progression.⁶² In understanding Christ to be at the center of Biblical theology, Goldsworthy seeks to show how the incarnation of Jesus is the link between the Testaments and at the center of God’s plan begun at creation and to be completed in the new creation, epitomized by God’s presence with his people.⁶³ In keeping with this Christ-centered understanding, Goldsworthy posits the kingdom of God, “defined simply as God’s people in God’s place under God’s rule,” as the central theme in Scripture.⁶⁴

Unlike some of the other authors we have considered, Goldsworthy does not spend much time discussing method—though he affirms that there are a number of different approaches to the task of Biblical theology—but instead focuses on demonstrating what he believes is the essential structure of Biblical revelation to be captured by Biblical theology, properly conduct-

⁵⁵Ibid., 10.

⁵⁶See the above discussion of Roy Ciampa’s chapter in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology*.

⁵⁷Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Nottingham, UK: Apollos, 2012).

⁵⁸For an elaboration of Robinson’s impact on Goldsworthy, see Ibid., chapter 10.

⁵⁹Ibid., 39.

⁶⁰Ibid., 40.

⁶¹See Ibid. Goldsworthy also helpfully notes that one’s approach to Biblical theology will be affected by the degree to which a given scholar holds to the authority and inerrancy of Scripture.

⁶²See the discussion of salvation-history approaches in Hasel, *NT Theology*, 111–32.

⁶³See Ibid., 56–75.

⁶⁴Ibid., 75.

ed.⁶⁵ Goldsworthy urges that an exegete's presuppositions must be taken into account as he or she approaches the text.⁶⁶ With this in mind, Goldsworthy asserts, "Given our evangelical presupposition of the unity of Scripture with its central focus on Christ, we should expect that the different acceptable approaches will reflect that unity."⁶⁷ The methods for conducting this kind of Biblical theology include careful thematic or word study; contextual studies of individual texts, books, or corpora, OT or NT theologies; and theologies of the whole Bible as canon.⁶⁸ All of these investigations, Goldsworthy asserts, are performed in order to edify the people of God and to help them grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.⁶⁹

A New Testament Biblical Theology. A final work following a story or metanarrative approach to Biblical theology is G. K. Beale's recent tome *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*.⁷⁰ As to his purpose, Beale asserts, "My attempt in this book is not to write a NT theology, but rather a NT *biblical* theology."⁷¹ Beale's distinctive approach to Biblical theology is to identify the storyline that unfolds as one moves from the OT to the NT. In so doing, he engages in the exegetical analysis of key words, crucial passages, OT quotations, allusions, and prominent themes in order to elaborate on the main plotline categories. This specific approach to NT Biblical theology, according to Beale, is "canonical," "organically developmental," "exegetical," and "inter-textual."⁷² In this way, Beale is seeking to set his work apart as unique from the proliferation of NT theologies that have appeared in the last century.⁷³

Rather than postulating a center, Beale seeks to identify a particular

⁶⁵This may be due in part to the fact that Goldsworthy has already been developing his Biblical-theological approach to the text in previous works. See, e.g., *Graeme Goldsworthy, According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002).

⁶⁶See Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 217.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid., 217–27.

⁶⁹Ibid., 227.

⁷⁰Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*.

⁷¹Ibid., 19.

⁷²See Ibid., 19–33, for further details on this summary. Hamilton takes issue with these items being distinctive and unique in the world of NT theology. He maintains, "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. . . . 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. . . . 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, but Thielman's perspective is not that different, and N. T. Wright is at least moving in a similar stream." See James M. Hamilton, "Appreciation, Agreement, and a Few Minor Quibbles: A Response to G. K. Beale," *Midwestern Journal of Theology* 10/1 (2011): 66–67.

⁷³Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 1–25. See also idem, "Interview."

storyline arising from the Scriptures that can serve as a point of reference. His primary thesis is that in order to understand the NT in its richness, one must have a keen acquaintance with how the Biblical authors viewed the end times, since this topic forms an essential part of the NT story.⁷⁴ Building on this thesis, Beale delineates the specific ways in which the OT and NT articulate this kind of narrative. The OT storyline that Beale posits as the basis for the NT storyline is this: “The Old Testament is the story of God, who progressively reestablishes his new-creational kingdom out of chaos over a sinful people by his word and Spirit through promise, covenant, and redemption, resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this kingdom and judgment (defeat or exile) for the unfaithful, unto his glory.”⁷⁵

He follows this with the storyline of the NT, showing the transformation of the OT storyline: “Jesus’ life, trials, death for sinners, and especially resurrection by the Spirit have launched the fulfillment of the eschatological already-not yet new-creational reign, bestowed by grace through faith resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this new-creational reign and resulting in judgment for the unbelieving, unto the triune God’s glory.”⁷⁶ In this way, one can see in a brief description the way in which the OT is the basis *for* the NT storyline while at the same time being subject to transformation *by* the NT. While it is impossible to appraise Beale’s contribution in detail, it should be noted that by working from a reconstructed storyline of the OT and the NT Beale sets himself apart from the classic and central themes approaches and significantly advances the field both formally (in terms of method) and materially (in terms of content).⁷⁷

Assessment. In contrast to single-center approaches, Beale wisely avoids speaking of a “center” in his Biblical-theological proposal, attaching significance instead to the OT storyline as modified and transformed in the NT. This is certainly creative, and very likely more satisfying than a rigid application of a book-by-book approach (though care should be taken that the overall storyline does not completely crowd out more minor motifs). Beale’s approach also seems preferable to a more heavy-handed procedure in which a writer posits a center that he subsequently tries to validate by tying it to the message of every individual Biblical book.

Nevertheless, a couple of concerns may be noted. First, making the Biblical storyline central runs the danger of marginalizing Biblical material that is not central to the metanarrative of Scripture but nonetheless present in the canon. Its inductive and descriptive nature and its ability to synthesize not only major but also minor motifs is rightly considered to be one of the greatest strengths of Biblical theology. Care should be taken not to lose sight

⁷⁴See *Ibid.*, 35.

⁷⁵*Ibid.* Beale’s summary of the OT storyline bears some affinities with James Hamilton’s “single center.” I owe this observation to Mark Catlin.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*

⁷⁷For a helpful review that is both complimentary and critical, see James M. Hamilton, “Appreciation, Agreement, and a Few Minor Quibbles,” 58–70.

of minor (or not to minor) motifs simply because they do not seem to relate directly to the central storyline of Scripture.

Second, and related to the first, is a doctrinal concern. Evangelicals such as Beale believe that it is every word of Scripture that is inspired, not merely the Biblical storyline.⁷⁸ If so, what in practice helps us to avoid privileging the Biblical storyline (as construed by us) to the extent that less prominent portions of Scripture are unduly neglected? Here we must take care not to be similar in practice (though not in theory) to the approach of scholars such as N. T. Wright (not an inerrantist) in his work *The Last Word* or German content criticism which has also had a notable impact on the work of some British and other evangelicals.⁷⁹

The Future of Biblical Theology

What insights can we derive from this all-too-brief survey of recent contributions to the discipline of Biblical theology? Several observations may be noted. On the whole, it is evident that the discipline has come a long way in the last decade or so. G. K. Beale's recent work, in particular, shows a level of sophistication and creativity that is impressive and bodes well for the future of Biblical theology. On the shoulders of foundational efforts such as the *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, the compendium *Biblical Theology: Retrospect & Prospect* edited by Scott Hafemann, and programmatic studies such as T. D. Alexander's *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, a new generation of scholars will be able to produce Biblical theologies that are theoretically responsible, methodologically nuanced, and theologically refined.

In terms of content, there seems to be an emerging consensus that stresses Christological and eschatological fulfillment (whether in terms of creation–new creation, consummation, or restoration). Several of the works we surveyed contend that Christ is the centerpoint and pivotal figure of redemptive history. What is more, the underlying conviction in virtually all of these works is that the Bible constitutes a unity and therefore also exhibits a unified theology. Despite these similarities, however, there are still significant differences among the Biblical theologies written during the past decade. Most importantly, the question of the definition of Biblical theology requires urgent reassessment. Some recent works are more rigorously inductive while

⁷⁸See, e.g., G. K. Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008).

⁷⁹N. T. Wright, *The Last Word: Beyond the Bible Wars to a New Understanding of the Authority of Scripture* (San Francisco: Harper, 2005). See the discussion in Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Gender Passages in the NT: Hermeneutical Fallacies Critiqued," *WTJ* 56 (1994): 273–79, and the reference to works such as I. H. Marshall, "An Evangelical Approach to 'Theological Criticism,'" in *The Best in Theology*, Vol. 3, ed. J. I. Packer (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 1989), 45–60 (the article first appeared in *Themelios*). On the positive side, we should mention N. T. Wright's excellent inaugural volume in his quintology *Christian Origins and the Question of God, The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

others proceed from a systematic or confessional framework in exploring the teachings of Scripture. Also, the specific proposals made by various scholars differ as to what the theology of the Bible actually is and how it coheres. In part, this is a matter of setting different emphases or privileging a particular overall framework, whether the glory of God, eschatology, salvation history, or some other central topic.

The Definition of Biblical Theology

On the question of definition, Adolf Schlatter provided the following classic formulation of the nature of the discipline over a century ago:

We turn away decisively from ourselves and our time to what was found in the men through whom the church came into being [i.e. the New Testament writers]. Our main interest should be the thought as it was conceived by them and the truth that was valid for them. We want to see and obtain a thorough grasp of what happened historically and existed in another time. This is the internal disposition upon which the success of the work depends, the commitment which must consistently be renewed as the work proceeds.⁸⁰

This kind of definition can serve as a standard by which we measure the Biblical-theological work we produce in order to ensure that we are staying within the parameters of the field. Before addressing our own questions, we must first listen to the OT and NT writers and documents in order to understand the message of the Bible on its own terms, in its own language, and in its original cultural, historical, and ecclesial contexts.

The Distinction between Biblical and Systematic Theology

Another continuing need is that scholars give careful consideration to the unique characteristics of Biblical theology in relation to other fields, particularly systematic theology. David Clark asserts that each particular dis-

⁸⁰Adolf Schlatter, *The History of the Christ*, trans. Andreas J. Köstenberger (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 18. Gentry and Wellum also offer a helpful summary definition of the discipline of Biblical theology: "The hermeneutical discipline which seeks to do justice to what Scripture claims to be and what it actually is. In terms of its claim, Scripture is nothing less than God's Word written and as such, it is a unified revelation of his gracious plan of redemption. In terms of what it actually is, it is a progressive unfolding of God's plan, rooted in history, and unpacked along a specific redemptive-historical plot line primarily demarcated by biblical covenants. Biblical theology as a hermeneutical discipline attempts to exegete texts in their own context and then, in light of the entire canon, to examine the unfolding nature of God's plan and carefully think through the relationship between before and after in that plan which culminates in Christ. As such, biblical theology provides the basis for understanding how texts in one part of the Bible relate to all the other texts so that they will be read correctly, according to God's intention, which is discovered through human authors, but ultimately at the canonical level. In the end, biblical theology is the attempt to unpack 'the whole counsel of God' and 'to think God's thoughts after him' and it provides the basis and underpinning for all theology and doctrine." See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 15–16.

cipline—Biblical theology, systematic theology, historical theology, and so-called practical theology—“is a microperspective that limits its view of the object of study to a particular aspect or dimensions of the whole.”⁸¹ In other words, there is a unity of the theological disciplines in that they all contribute to a proper understanding of the larger macroperspective of Scripture, providing unity to the individual pieces by constituting them as a “symphonic theology.”⁸² While Clark’s comments are helpful, however, one must be careful to avoid a blurring of the lines between the disciplines so as to allow them to contribute to the Christian faith in their own distinctive ways.⁸³

Seeking to navigate the tension between an inductive and a preconceived conceptual approach, Hamilton affirms that Biblical theology is inductive in nature but cannot be divorced from one’s existing theological framework: “Our biblical-theological understanding will line up—implicitly or explicitly—with our systematic conclusions. This cannot be denied, and it should be embraced, with the two disciplines of biblical and systematic theology functioning to further our understanding of God and his word.”⁸⁴ He continues, “Some today are referring to biblical theology as a ‘bridge discipline’ that connects exegesis and systematic theology, but we can also view biblical theology, systematic theology, and historical theology as equal tools, each of which can be used to sharpen our exegesis and theology.”⁸⁵

Whatever the merits of Hamilton’s proposal, however, clearly this is no longer Biblical theology in the vein of Gabler’s distinction. Not only is the distinction between Biblical and systematic theology lost, in the end all theology is systematic theology. According to Hamilton, “[T]he reality is that all these methods are used in teaching Christians, which makes them

⁸¹David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), 182.

⁸²See *Ibid.*, 192.

⁸³A helpful article on this topic is Trevor Hart, “Systematic—In What Sense?” in *Out of Egypt*, 341–51.

⁸⁴Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation Through Judgment*, 46.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 47. Similar sentiments are made by Vern Poythress, who asserts, “One must get one’s framework of assumptions—one’s presuppositions—from somewhere. If one does not get them from healthy, biblical grounded systematic theology, one will most likely get them from the spirit of the age, whether that be Enlightenment rationalism or postmodern relativism or historicism.” Vern Sheridan Poythress, “Kinds of Biblical Theology,” *WTJ* 70 (2008): 134. Similarly to Hamilton and Poythress, Goldsworthy also presses his readers concerning the relationship between dogmatic and Biblical theology. “For a theologian to pursue a biblical theology implies some kind of already existing dogmatic framework regarding the Bible. Biblical theologians who insist that we do not need dogmatics simply have not examined their own presuppositions about the Bible. The issue is not really that of which comes first, dogmatics or biblical theology, because they are interrelated and involve the hermeneutical spiral. Because of the symbiotic relationship between them, I do not think it is possible to be competent in one without the other. A similar symbiosis exists between dogmatics and historical theology since dogmaticians cannot ignore the history of the discipline. Evangelical biblical-theological presuppositions will include some cognizance of the dogmas discussed below as the structure for progress in theologizing.” Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 42.

all dogmatic theology.”⁸⁶ In accentuating the ecclesial thrust of Biblical theology, Hamilton, whether consciously or not, is picking up on an implicit distinction made by Gabler who did, in fact, seek to separate the academy from the church when urging a distinction between Biblical and dogmatic theology. The fact that history matters, however, does not necessarily imply that in historical investigation the church is set aside. Rather, it is historical investigation that shows the church to be the central focus in God’s redemptive plan. History is not the exclusive domain of historical research (whether historical-critical or otherwise) set off from the ecclesiastical realm, nor is the history of redemption merely textual; it is the very history in which the church has a vital, even indispensable, part.⁸⁷

What is more, while it is doubtless correct that interpreters approach the text of Scripture with a set of presuppositions, the goal of Biblical theology, as mentioned, must continue to be the accurate perception of the convictions of the OT and NT writers. Despite the fact that the majority of scholars in both fields (Biblical and systematic theology) continue to support a distinction of the respective disciplines, drawing such distinctions is not always hard and fast. The need remains for definitional clarity and methodological vigilance lest Biblical theology becomes systematic theology in disguise, the lines between Biblical and systematic theology become unduly blurred, or the disciplines illegitimately collapse into one. If Biblical theology is systematic theology by another name, and systematic presuppositions, conscious or not, control one’s Biblical-theological work to such an extent that the end product bears more the imprint of the contemporary interpreter than that of the original Biblical writers, a line has been crossed.⁸⁸

There thus remains a need for a procedure by which interpreters move from exegeting individual texts in their original historical setting to a placement of the results of such exegesis into their proper canonical context before moving on to a systematization in light of contemporary concerns.

⁸⁶Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 47.

⁸⁷I owe this keen point to Mark Catlin.

⁸⁸Though seeking to carve out its own particular niche, one example of this blurring of the lines can be located in the more recent discipline known as the theological interpretation of Scripture. For examples of the literature in this field see J. Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entrway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed., *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005). One should also take note of the project known as the Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible, a set of commentaries written by “leading theologians” who “read and interpret Scripture creedally for the twenty-first century.” For helpful assessments and critiques of the movement as a whole, see Gregg R. Allison, “Theological Interpretation of Scripture: An Introduction and Preliminary Evaluation,” in *SBJT* 2 (2010): 28–37; Andreas J. Köstenberger, “Of Professors and Madmen: Currents in Contemporary New Testament Scholarship,” 2–6, http://www.BiblicalFoundations.org/pdf/professor_madman.pdf and now D. A. Carson, “Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Yes, But ...,” in R. Michael Allen, ed., *Theological Commentary: Evangelical Perspectives* (New York: T&T Clark, 2011); see below.

Along those lines, Grant Osborne, citing R. T. France, calls for “the priority in biblical interpretation of what has come to be called ‘the first horizon,’ i.e. of understanding biblical language within its own context before we start exploring its relevance to our own concerns, and of keeping the essential biblical context in view as a control on the way we apply biblical language to current issues.”⁸⁹ By reaffirming the distinction between the first and second horizons of Scripture, I do not intend to issue a call for the various Biblical and theological disciplines to separate even further—indeed, more dialogue needs to occur between Biblical scholars and theologians. Instead, my purpose is to register a plea for recognizing the place of each discipline in the overall process of interpreting and applying God’s Word.⁹⁰

In his recent assessment of the theological interpretation of Scripture, D. A. Carson, citing Graham Cole, distinguishes between four levels of Biblical and theological scholarship.⁹¹ First comes the exegesis of Biblical texts in their literary and historical contexts, with proper attention being given to literary genre, attempting to discern authority intent to the extent that this is possible. Second, the interpreter endeavors to understand the text within the entirety of Biblical theology, determining what it contributes to the unfolding storyline. Third, theological structures in a given text are sought to be understood in concert with other major theological scriptural themes. Fourth, all teachings derived from the Biblical writings are both subjected to and modified by the interpreter’s larger hermeneutical proposal. Carson notes that traditional interpreters have operated mostly on the first two levels, while many (if not most) recent practitioners of the theological interpretation of Scripture operate on levels 3 and 4.

I am content to let Carson appraise this latter movement. For our present purposes, it will suffice to note that the best Biblical-theological work

⁸⁹Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 415, citing R. T. France, “The Church and the Kingdom of God,” in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: The Problem of Contextualization*, ed. D. A. Carson (Nashville: Nelson, 1984), 42. Schlatter likewise argues, “Apart from the historical task there remains, constantly and necessarily, a second one, the doctrinal task, through which we align ourselves with the teachings of the New Testament and clarify whether or not and how and why we accept those teachings into our own spiritual lives, so that they are not only truth for the New Testament community, but also for us personally. The distinction between these two activities thus turns out to be beneficial for both. Distortions in the perception of the subject also harm its appropriation, just as conversely improper procedures in the appropriation of the subject muddy its perception” (*History of the Christ*, 18).

⁹⁰Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 66–67. Scobie helpfully comments on the needed distinction between BT and ST, along with any other ancillary discipline. He asserts, “Dogmatic [or systematic] theology is the final stage in the movement from the horizon of the text to the horizon of the interpreter. Professional theologians ought to be the servants of the church, continually aiding it in its thought and reflection on how biblical norms are to be applied in the contemporary situation.” Scobie also believes that the ever-increasing degree of specialization in the discipline of Biblical theology is good to a degree, but if Biblical theology is to serve as a legitimate bridge discipline, then more work needs to be done in opening up communication between the various theological disciplines.

⁹¹Carson, “Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Yes, But”

operates on all four levels (or at least the first three). On the one hand, Biblical theologians must not skip levels 1 and 2 in their haste to progress to the third and fourth levels. On the other hand, scholars should not stop at level 2, or even 3. Cole's model (as explicated by Carson) does not merely serve as a proper basis for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the theological interpretation of Scripture; it also provides a helpful grid against which a proper definition and method of Biblical theology can be assessed. There is no getting beyond Gabler's distinction, I am afraid. We must be careful to maintain the proper distinction between Biblical and systematic theology.

Conclusion

The past decade and a half has witnessed a tremendous amount of progress in evangelical scholarship on Biblical theology. Works such as G. K. Beale's *New Testament Biblical Theology* bear witness to the considerable degree of sophistication to which at least some of the evangelical practitioners of Biblical theology have attained. At the same time, there remains a need for scholars to be precise in defining what they mean when they claim to engage in Biblical-theological work and to distinguish carefully between Biblical and systematic theology. The notion of the Biblical metanarrative, in particular, holds considerable promise in anchoring the future of Biblical theology. At the same time, it will be important not to lose sight of the contribution of individual books of the Bible and of the variety of interrelated major and minor scriptural motifs. Biblical theology should remain a discipline where we would rather leave some loose ends untied than forcing them into a straitjacket and where interpreters are willing to heed the motto attributed to Albert Einstein, one of the most famous scientists of the past century: "Make everything as simple as possible, but not simpler." Thank you very much.⁹²

⁹²Thanks are due Jeremy Kimble for his diligent note-taking and argument-condensing assistance; and Mark Catlin for his help in grouping and categorizing recent Biblical-theological works. Thanks also to the students in the New Testament theology seminar at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary for many stimulating discussions on the subject in general and on the Biblical theologies by Hamilton and Beale in particular.

The Freedom of God and the Hope of Israel: Theological Interpretation of Romans 9

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Introduction

Romans 9, of course, concerns Israel, yet it has repeatedly been a battleground in theological debate over soteriology. The focus has been on issues of election, human freedom and divine sovereignty. Romans 9 has provided foundational material for the theologies of Augustine, Luther and Calvin. Augustine saw it as the heart of the whole letter.¹ Calvin called it “that memorable passage from Paul which alone ought easily to compose all controversy” —concerning the doctrine of election — “among sober and compliant children of God.”² This paper outlines some of the historical contours of the debate, and asks whether the passage can bear the weight that has been thrust upon it. A proper contextual reading needs to pay attention to the situation of the Roman believers, and to Paul’s concern for the status and fate of Israel, particularly as expressed in Romans chapters nine through eleven. The typical verse-by-verse commentary method has the danger of viewing texts in isolation, and that failing is certainly evident in treatments of Romans 9. Future theological interpretation of the passage should first be able to show how it addresses the Roman believers’ concern over the fate of Israel, and how it fits into its larger context.

Historical Overview

The following brief historical overview looks at some of the most significant commentators. Limitations of space prevent a more comprehensive survey.

¹See Peter Gorday, *Principles of Patristic Exegesis: Romans 9-11 in Origen, John Chrysostom, and Augustine*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, vol. 4 (New York: Edward Mellen Press, 1983), 176.

²Jean Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans. J.K.S. Reid (London: J. Clarke, 1961), 76.

Origen

Origen shows in his commentary on Romans³ that he is aware of the problem that Paul is dealing with, which is that the word of God has appeared to fail with regard to Israel. Israel, he says, “received its name by seeing God” (*Romans* 7.14.2, recalling Gen 32:30) and those who have not “seen” — that is, had faith in the Son — “cannot be called Israel” (7.15.2). The people of Israel “have been repudiated through unbelief.” Once Origen moves past 9:6, however, his focus largely comes off Israel and onto other philosophical or theological issues. Responding to the deterministic approach of the Gnostics,⁴ he places much of vv. 14-19 in the mouth of an interlocutor. Origen defends God’s freedom to judge, God’s foreknowledge as the basis of predestination, and the free will of human beings: “That we may be good or evil depends on our will; but that the evil man should be appointed for punishments of some sort and the good man for glory of some sort depends on the will of God” (7.16.7). Concerning vv. 19-24, the impudent person should not answer back to God, but the humble servant of the Lord can certainly enquire into the judgments of God, by diligently searching the scriptures (7.17.2-4). The choice of Jacob over Esau can be explained by God’s seeing the purity of Jacob’s soul by comparison to that of Esau.⁵

Origen’s approach shows two methodological features that reoccur in later scholarship. First, he brings in other passages from outside Romans which help him explain the text, showing no preference for explaining Romans from Romans. Second, the rather atomistic commentary format means that the meaning of larger portions of text is rarely considered, at least directly. Thus the Israel question tends to slide from view.

Chrysostom

Chrysostom’s treatment by contrast maintains an interest in the question of Israel’s destiny. Israel is responsible for its own condition; they are “of the works of the law,” while the Gentiles are justified because “they are of faith.”⁶ God knows in advance who “is worthy of being saved,”⁷ and freely adds grace to them. When Paul says that “it is not of the one who wills, not of the one who runs” (Rom 9:16), “he does not deprive us of free-will,” because grace is required. “It is binding on us to will, and also to run; but not to trust in our own labors, but in the love of God.”⁸ Like Origen, Chrysostom defends both the justice of God, and human free will. Paul could not be im-

³Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 6-10*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 104 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2002).

⁴Mark Reasoner, *Romans in Full Circle: A History of Interpretation*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 96.

⁵*Romans* 7.17.7. Drawing on imagery from 2 Tim 2:20-22 Origen suggests that Jacob’s soul had cleansed itself.

⁶Chrysostom, *Romans*, 465.

⁷*Ibid.*, 466.

⁸*Ibid.*, 469.

plying that free-will is under necessity, because humans would then be “free from all responsibility,” and this would be inconsistent with Paul’s emphasis elsewhere on free choice.⁹

Augustine and Pelagius

A significant debate about free will in the church took place between Augustine of Hippo and the British monk Pelagius, in the early fifth century. An ascetic,¹⁰ Pelagius was disturbed by what he considered lax morality in the Roman church, and was especially dismayed by the moral passivity he saw in Augustine’s prayer, in his *Confessions* 10.40; “Give what you command, and command what you will.”¹¹ It was Pelagius’ pastoral letter to the young Roman woman Demetria which first excited the wrath of Augustine.¹² Pelagius was concerned lest Demetria imbibe what he thought was false teaching, that if God wanted us to do good he should not have made us with the potential for evil, and so we have every excuse for evil (*Ad Demetria*, 3.1).¹³ He quotes Rom 9:20; “Why have you made me thus?” The teaching he opposes is, he says, a case of the pot complaining to the potter. Pelagius says that, “God wished to bestow on the rational creature the gift of doing good of his own free will and the capacity to exercise free choice, by implanting in man the possibility of choosing either alternative” (3.2). Thus Pelagius uses Romans 9 to justify absolute free will. Since virtue could even be seen in pagan philosophers, how much more able are Christians to do good, having Christ’s instruction and the aid of divine grace (3.3).

In his *Commentary on Romans* Pelagius explains election as due to foreknowledge of faith. On the choice of Jacob over Esau, he states: “He has now chosen those whom he foreknew would believe from among the Gentiles, and has rejected those whom he foreknew would be unbelieving out of Israel.”¹⁴ The whole passage concerns whether God chooses those who believe, or those who work for salvation through the law. Pelagius has a problem with verses 14-19, which appear to deny the importance of human will or exertion. His solution, like Origen, is to put much of these verses in the mouths of Paul’s opponents, with Paul’s answer starting in verse 20. By this ingenuity he changes the apparent meaning to its exact opposite, so that it

⁹Ibid., 468.

¹⁰John Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study* (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1956), 46.

¹¹Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. J.K. Ryan (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960), 255.

¹²Demetria, a member of Roman nobility, at the age of fourteen devoted herself to a life of chastity and good works. This caused a great stir, and much rejoicing in the church. Pelagius was among several who lent their advice to the new religious celebrity.

¹³Pelagius, *To Demetria*, in B. R. Rees, ed., *The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers* (Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell Press, 1991), 38-39.

¹⁴Pelagius, *Pelagius’s Commentary on St Paul’s Epistle to the Romans: Translated with Introduction and Notes*, trans. Theodore De Bruyn, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 116.

really does depend on the one who wills and runs, though also on the Lord.¹⁵ Justice requires that free will be absolute, so that every decision between good and evil could be fairly judged and rewarded. Grace, to Pelagius, was not an internal operation of the Spirit, but came through teaching, by the example of Christ.

In *Propositions from the Book of Romans* Augustine takes the same position as Pelagius on election and foreknowledge: "Therefore God ... chooses precisely him whom he foreknew would believe in him" (*Prop.* 60).¹⁶ God elects faith not works (*Prop.* 62). The hardening of Pharaoh (Rom 9:17) was because of his existing impiety, to lead him into his just punishment (*Prop.* 62). Thus Augustine upholds free will, but not an independently able will. Good works can only be done through the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is given to those who believe. Faith is not considered either a good work, or a gift (*Prop.* 44).¹⁷

Augustine's first main opponents were the Manichaeans.¹⁸ They viewed good and evil as eternally opposed principles in the universe, believing in reincarnation, asceticism, and the eternal predestination of an elect few.¹⁹ Augustine had been a Manichaean before going through neo-Platonism to Christianity, from which perspective he opposed Manichaean dualism, teaching that God was completely good, and that evil was not eternal but had its origin in the human will.²⁰

Within two years after writing the *Propositions* Augustine had substantially modified his position to a rigorous predestinarianism, though from his perspective he had barely changed at all.²¹ It is possible that in Augustine's later reaction to Pelagius he reverted to elements of the Manichaean principles he had previously opposed, or of the neo-Platonism he had never fully left, but the process had already begun, with the writing of *To Simplician - On Various Questions (De diversis questionibus ad Simplicianum)* in AD 396. Responding to a question about the interpretation of Romans 9:10-29, he starts by claiming to be guided by his understanding of the purpose of the whole epistle, namely that "no man should glory in meritorious works", that "works do not precede grace but follow from it" (1.2.1-11). But he cites no passage from Romans to support this, though he does mention 1 Corinthi-

¹⁵Ibid., 118.

¹⁶Paula Fredriksen Landes, ed., *Augustine on Romans: Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans, Unfinished Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Texts and Translations (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982).

¹⁷Significantly also, he interprets Romans 7 as referring to Paul's previous life under the law, not as describing the struggles of a Christian. He was later to change, viewing Romans 7 as referring to the Christian life.

¹⁸Mani had mixed elements of Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Buddhism with Gnostic dualism.

¹⁹Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967), 169.

²⁰F. W. Farrar and Robert Backhouse, *The Life of St Augustine* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993), 102.

²¹Ibid., xii.

ans 3:17 and John 3:5. Augustine then argues from Romans 9 that grace cannot be merited, even by foreknown faith, but that faith itself is a gift of God's irresistible grace. Unbelievers receive merited justice, while believers receive unmerited mercy, and therefore no one has any cause for accusing God of injustice. After a long meditation on why God chose Jacob over Esau, he concludes that the answer is unknowable, but we should not question God on his choice (1.2.22).

In the *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love*, written in AD 420, Augustine also treats Romans 9 with this new perspective. He still sees the chapter as teaching individual election, but gone is any mention at all of the foreknowledge of faith. Rather, all are lost in sin. Only a few will be saved by grace, to make up the numbers of the angels who fell (9.29), the small numbers making it obvious that they were saved by God's undeserved mercy.²² God could save more, but then the elect would not understand God's grace. In other words, the lost are damned for the sake of the elect, surely the opposite of the sentiment expressed by Paul in Rom 9:3.

Both Esau and Jacob (before birth) were "bound in the fetters of damnation originally forged by Adam" and "due the judgment of wrath," but God "loved Jacob in unmerited mercy, yet hated Esau with merited justice."²³ In this system those who are hardened and damned deserve it. Those who receive mercy do not merit it. This could seem unjust, and so the main thrust of Augustine's exposition of Romans 9 here is to deny this perception: "God forbid," he says, "that there should be unfairness in God."²⁴

Augustine for some time did not absolutely deny the existence of free will,²⁵ but insisted that the will must be "prepared by the Lord,"²⁶ and that the human will without grace is only free to do evil. True freedom is being enabled to do good. The will is not destroyed by grace, but is changed.²⁷ All human wills, whether good or bad, are subject to God's power, so that he does with them what he likes. These include the "vessels of wrath," which are "ready for destruction" (Rom 9:22).²⁸ Eventually though Augustine claimed, "I have tried hard to maintain the free choice of the human will, but the grace of God prevailed."²⁹ Grace became irresistible.³⁰

This was an innovation in the church, a profound break. The uniform

²²Ibid., 99.

²³Ibid., 98.

²⁴Ibid., 98.

²⁵"He has revealed through his sacred scriptures that there exists in man the free choice of the will." Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*, 2.2.

²⁶A frequent Augustinian quote from a version of Proverbs 8:35.

²⁷*On Grace and Free Will*, 19.40.

²⁸*On Grace and Free Will*, 20.41.

²⁹Augustine. *Retractions* 2.1.1.

³⁰Thus in his exposition of Luke 13:34: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" he interprets it to mean that despite her unwillingness, God did in fact gather children from Jerusalem. *Enchiridion*, 24.

testimony of the earlier Fathers was to significant human freedom.³¹ Tertullian comments: "I find then that man was by God constituted free, master of his own will and power; indicating the presence of God's image and likeness in him ... both the goodness and purpose of God are discovered in the gift to man of freedom in his will."³² Chrysostom likewise: "All is in God's power, but not so that our free-will is lost ... It depends therefore on us and on Him. We must first choose the good, and then he adds what belongs to him."³³

Augustine's exegesis is marked by careful attention to the details of the text. He remembers that Romans has an overall purpose and point.³⁴ Nevertheless, he displays, like Origen, an atomistic approach which tends to ignore the issue of Israel, the flow of thought in Romans 9-11, or the needs of the Roman church. He focuses instead on the philosophical questions which he sees in the text.³⁵ By comparison to modern commentators the ancient commentators are less inclined to privilege Romans, or even other Pauline letters in their interpretations of Romans, and more likely to mine resources found elsewhere in the canon in their explanations. We should not expect the church Fathers to play by modern rules, but it is important to understand their approach and its limitations.

Luther and Erasmus

One of the most notable of the many arguments over free will happened between Erasmus and Luther.³⁶ When Erasmus addresses Romans 9 his focus is on the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.³⁷ He quotes Origen to the effect that when people are given an opportunity to repent and do so, they

³¹Irenaeus says: "This expression, 'How often I would have gathered thy children together, and thou wouldst not,' set forth the ancient law of human liberty, because God made man free from the beginning, possessing his own soul to obey the behests of God voluntarily, and not by the compulsion of God. For there is no coercion with God ... God is possessed of free will in whose likeness man was created." Irenaeus, *Adv. Her.* 4.37.1-4.

³²Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, Book 2.5.

³³John Chrysostom, *On Hebrews*, Homily 12.

³⁴"The Letter of Paul to the Romans, in so far as one can understand its literal content, poses a question like this: whether the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ came to Jews alone because of their merits through the works of the law, or whether the justification of faith that is in Christ Jesus came to all nations, without any preceding merits for works. In this last instance, people would believe not because they were just, but justified through belief; they would then begin to live justly. This then is what the apostle intended to teach: that the grace of the Gospel of Lord Jesus Christ came to all people. He thereby shows why one calls this 'grace,' for it was given freely, and not as a repayment of a debt of righteousness." Landes, *Augustine on Romans*, 53.

³⁵Paul's compassion for his Jewish kinsmen evoked very little comment from Augustine. He passed at once to 9.6ff where the question of election continues the theme of chapter 8" (Gorday, *Patristic Exegesis*, 168).

³⁶It is important to note that Erasmus was reacting to Luther's assertion that literally everything, good or evil, happens by absolute necessity, whereas Luther's main concern was in the things concerning salvation. Erasmus reacted to Luther's *Assertio* with a *Diatribes or Discourse on the Freedom of the Will*. Luther replied with *On the Bondage of the Will*.

³⁷Erasmus, "On the Freedom of the Will," in E. Gordon Rupp, ed., *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1969), 64-74.

receive mercy, but if they refuse, their hearts are hardened. The patience of God in delaying punishment for sin gives some time to repent, but others are merely confirmed in their obstinacy against God. Thus he is saying that God hardens and has mercy by the very means of delaying judgment, depending on the response of the person involved. God could not have made Pharaoh wicked, since he made all things good. Rather, God raised him up that it might be seen that human striving against God's will is futile. God's government of the wicked turns their existing sinfulness to the benefit of the godly.³⁸ Erasmus also mentions Romans 9:16, "So it depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy." His explanation is that no one can do the good they intend without the aid of the free favor of God.³⁹

Erasmus then worries over Rom 9:19, "Who can resist his will," as to whether divine foreknowledge makes something necessary. He does not allow that evil could be caused by God, yet cannot see that foreknowledge could be contingent. He ends by limply saying that enough had been said about the verse.⁴⁰ He has an easier time with Jacob and Esau. The fact that God chose the older to serve the younger says nothing about eternal salvation. God's hatred for Esau was not malice, but his judgment on Edom as a nation. In the same way God's love for Jacob referred to the nation. God's choice of Israel did not grant automatic rights to grace, neither did it take away the free will of Jewish people.⁴¹ Erasmus also deals with 9:21: "Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?" He interprets it with reference to Is 45:9 and Jer 18:6, which picture Israel as clay pots in the hand of the potter, objecting to God's judgment. Erasmus says that the issue is not whether free choice is excluded, but whether God is righteous in excluding unbelieving Jews from grace.⁴² He resists an interpretation of the pottery metaphor which makes people inert lumps of clay, without a will.⁴³

Luther, drawing on Augustine, argues that the will is not free, for a number of reasons. First, because all people are bound in slavery to sin, the sinner is only free to sin. "Man without grace can will nothing but evil."⁴⁴ Second, Luther argues that free will is the possession of God alone. God acts in whatever way he pleases;⁴⁵ but attribution of such freedom to humanity deifies them. Third, Luther argues that God has both a revealed will and a

³⁸Ibid., 66.

³⁹Ibid., 68.

⁴⁰Ibid., 69.

⁴¹Ibid., 70.

⁴²Ibid., 71.

⁴³Here he quotes 2 Tim 2:20-21, in which people are referred to as vessels for noble or ignoble use, but urged to cleanse themselves. Their free will is not removed.

⁴⁴Martin Luther, "On the Bondage of the Will," in Rupp, ed., *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, 333. He goes on to say: "The loftiest virtues of the best of men are in the flesh, that is to say, they are dead, hostile to God, not submissive to the law of God and not capable of submitting to it, and not pleasing to God." Ibid., 317.

⁴⁵Ibid., 141.

hidden will. The hidden will overrules both human will and God's own revealed will and word. "He has not bound himself by his word, but has kept himself over all things."⁴⁶ The secret will consists of that which he foreknows and predetermines, which will inevitably come to pass. The secret will must not be questioned, only adored. What God wills is right simply because he wills it.⁴⁷ God "does not will the death of a sinner, according to his word; but he wills it according to that inscrutable will of his."⁴⁸ Human will, says Luther, is therefore not free.⁴⁹ He does reluctantly allow for freedom in regard to the ordinary decisions of life, "the things below," but not in regard to salvation.

Luther finds support for his views in Romans 9. The passage refers to individual salvation, and argues against trusting either in the heritage of birth, or in good works to save.⁵⁰ He upholds original sin. Esau and Jacob had not done any evil before birth, yet they were evil. He notes Paul's concern for the Jews at the beginning and end of the chapter, but sees the central section as concerning the doctrine of predestination. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," means, he says: "I will have mercy on whom I intended to have mercy, or whom I predestinated for mercy. ... On him I will have compassion and forgive his sin, in time and life, whom I forgave and pardoned from all eternity."⁵¹ Paul is confronting and condemning the very notion of free will.⁵² God's foreknowledge could not be consistent with freedom, because God's knowledge is immutable. Neither is God's power consistent with freedom. We do nothing of ourselves, but by God's omnipotence.⁵³

In the debate between Luther and Erasmus we see the beginnings of more recent discussion over whether Romans 9 should be interpreted in individual or corporate terms. Once again, however, discussion of Israel only takes place when it is directly mentioned in the text. The focus of discussion is, as may be expected, the pressing theological interests of the day.

Calvin and Arminius

Calvin and Arminius were not directly opposed in the same sense as Augustine and Pelagius, or Luther and Erasmus. Nevertheless they represent two main strands of reformed thinking on the issue at hand. Romans 9 is foundational to Calvin's philosophy. He sees the passage as an answer to Jews who were making the gospel dependent on their own works, in the same way that he felt the "papists" were currently doing.⁵⁴ Calvin is perfectly

⁴⁶Ibid., 201.

⁴⁷Ibid., 236.

⁴⁸Ibid., 201.

⁴⁹Ibid., 248.

⁵⁰Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, trans. J.T. Mueller (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 121.

⁵¹Ibid., 122-3.

⁵²Luther, "Bondage of the Will," 241.

⁵³Ibid., 242-3.

⁵⁴John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. H. Beveridge (Grand Rapids:

aware, of course of the Paul's concern with the fate of Israel. Israel has not generally embraced the gospel, but it cannot be that God's promise to Israel has proved false, or that Jesus was not the Messiah, but Calvin asks, "If this is the doctrine of the law and the prophets, how does it happen that the Jews so obstinately reject it?"⁵⁵ The reason, he said, that many Jews were excluded from salvation, was because of God's "special election." Like Luther, he viewed the hidden counsel of God as superior to and potentially even contradictory to God's revealed will: "The secret election of God overrules the outward calling."⁵⁶ Romans 9 really concerns the origin and cause of election, which, in the example of Jacob and Esau, are found in the secret counsel of God.⁵⁷ This election has to do with the eternal salvation of Jacob, not his earthly life, because Jacob's earthly life was full of trial and trouble. Romans 9 restricts grace to a few, chosen before creation in the secret will of God. The hardening of Pharaoh comes from the same secret will.⁵⁸ Like Augustine and Luther, he believed that whatever God wills is right because he wills it. Any inquiry into the reasons for God's predestining will is impious. Nothing is to be attributed to human will, and everything to God.

Arminius' position, outlined in the *Declaration of Sentiments*, was that free will, enabling humanity to choose true good, was endowed at creation; but even then was dependent on the assistance of divine grace.⁵⁹ After the fall the human will is in bondage, must be freed by regeneration and grace, and continues to be dependent on grace through the Holy Spirit. Grace, however, is not irresistible. The baseline of freedom is the ability of free will to resist grace.

Arminius shows interest in the setting of Romans 9. The scope of the chapter is the same as the scope of the letter: "That the Gospel, not the law, is the power of God to salvation, not to him that works, but to him that believes."⁶⁰ Jews were largely rejecting the gospel, and so it might seem that God's promise to them had failed, but Arminius insists that God has always chosen the children of promise over the children of the flesh. The children of the promise are those who seek righteousness through faith. The examples given in Romans 9 of Isaac, Jacob, Moses are types pointing to the gospel of Christ.⁶¹ Thus Paul is saying that God has chosen faith over works and

Eerdmans, 1989), 215.

⁵⁵John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, trans. Ross Mackenzie (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 190.

⁵⁶John Calvin, Romans, 198. Calvin claims at this point that the "secret election" does not oppose the "outward calling."

⁵⁷Calvin, *Institutes*, 216.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 226.

⁵⁹See Donald M. Lake, "Jacob Arminius' Contribution to a Theology of Grace," in Pinnock, Clark H., ed., *Grace Unlimited* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1975), 235.

⁶⁰James Arminius, "Analysis of the Ninth Chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans," in *The Works of James Arminius*, trans. William Nichols, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 487.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 494.

genetic descent, and we should not argue. It would be absurd for election to mercy or reprobation to take place before sin ever occurred.

Arminius emphasized that God had the right to do as he wished, but that not in every case was God's will done. God's foreknowledge still leaves room for contingency. Arminius denies that there are two wills in God, a hidden will which is never defied or revealed, and a revealed moral will which appears to be defied. Romans 9, in his view, says that no one can argue against God's chosen means of grace, not that only some individuals are able to enter by predestination. The ones God wills to harden are those who have persevered in sin, against God's invitation to repent.⁶² Hardening is a form of punishment. It is not the cause of divine wrath, but its result.⁶³

Karl Barth

Barth said that Paul wrote Romans 9 to deal with the problem of disobedience.⁶⁴ God's choice is not the problem, nor does God lack faithfulness to his word to Israel. Human autonomous freedom exists, but it is the problem of the world. True freedom is a gift from God, derived from God's own freedom. All are in some sense elect in Christ in eternity, and all rejected in time because of sin.⁶⁵ Barth reluctantly backs away from ultimate universalism, but insists that both election and rejection, for example of Jacob and Esau, or Moses and Pharaoh, are part of the same divine purpose of mercy in Christ.⁶⁶ Mercy is God's purpose even in judgment.⁶⁷

According to v. 22 the one will of God has indeed the form both of the manifestation of wrath and of the revelation of power. In showing mercy God is indeed also wrathful ... against the perversity that encounters him from the side of man.⁶⁸

Thus God's choices are not capricious but according to his eternal mercy, which is revealed through Jesus. God is free,⁶⁹ but he does not will or do anything arbitrarily, or according to a secret agenda which may be contrary to his open statements of intent, or contrary to his nature revealed in Jesus.

⁶²Ibid., 506.

⁶³Ibid., 516.

⁶⁴Karl Barth, *A Shorter Commentary on Romans* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960), 112. He considers that all things necessary to the gospel have been stated in Chapters 1-8, and Romans 9 marks a distinct change, as opposed to Arminius, who felt that Romans 9 made the same point as the rest of the epistle.

⁶⁵Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Sixth ed., trans. E. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 360.

⁶⁶Barth, Karl, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. 2.2, trans. G. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 219-221.

⁶⁷Barth, *Shorter Commentary on Romans*, 125.

⁶⁸Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 2.1, 225.

⁶⁹The phrase "the freedom of God", which I have used in the title of this paper, comes from Barth's second Romans commentary (Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. E.C. Hoskyns [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933], 355).

When he hardened Pharaoh it was an act of mercy, so that God's name would be proclaimed in all the earth (Rom 9:17). Christ himself is the one who is elect, and all human freedom and destiny is wrapped up in him. Nevertheless Barth, like Luther and Calvin before him, insists that God finally determines every person's destiny in a secret judgment of grace or disfavor, that the final obedience or disobedience of a person is not in his or her hands.⁷⁰

A few conclusions can be drawn from this very limited historical survey. First, commentators have tended to interpret Romans 9 in line with their presuppositions about divine sovereignty and human free will, and the reigning theological debates of the day. There is no reason to suppose this trend will cease. Second, commentators have acknowledged the Israel question when Israel is directly mentioned in a verse, but tend otherwise to ignore it. The atomistic structure of commentaries, focusing on a verse or two at a time, has likely contributed to this neglect. Third, Augustine's determinist reading marks a significant break in the interpretative history of the passage. Fourth, non-Augustinian readings have tended to give more importance to wider contextual issues, perhaps, depending on one's point of view, because they have difficulty with some of the details of the text, or more positively, because a contextual reading tends to discount the narrow Augustinian interpretation.

Modern Debate

Modern debate has focused in two main areas: first, whether Paul is concerned with corporate or individual salvation, or both, and second, the way in which the passage relates to Israel.

Commentators with a more Arminian orientation argue that corporate election is in view in Romans 9, and that this accords with both the Old Testament notion of Israel's election, and with a first-century outlook which is communal rather than individualistic.⁷¹ God's decision is to elect in Christ those who believe.⁷² Calvinistic scholars insist that the passage deals with individual salvation and upholds unconditioned individual election.⁷³ Schreiner, for example, argues that Romans 9-11 is about Israel's salvation, not just its historical destiny; and that the corporate election of Israel described in Romans 9 must include particular individuals, because certain individuals are mentioned in chapter nine, individual salvation is discussed in Romans

⁷⁰Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. 1.1, trans. G. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 201.

⁷¹Brian J. Abasciano, "Corporate Election in Romans 9: A Reply to Thomas Schreiner," *JETS* 49/2 (2006): 351-71.

⁷²Grant R. Osborne, *Romans*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, 6 (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 2004), 251.

⁷³Thomas R. Schreiner, "Does Romans 9 Teach Individual Election to Salvation? Some Exegetical and Theological Reflections," *JETS* 36/1 (1993): 25-40. John Piper, *The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1-23*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993).

10, and because the election of a corporate body without any particular individuals would be a nullity or an absurdity.⁷⁴ The tendency is still to view the passage primarily in the light of the free will/determinism debate, or as simply an extension to the faith/works discussion of Romans 3 and 4, and to integrate the Israel question only tangentially, though to a greater degree than that evident in patristic and reformation writers.

One positive contribution of some new perspective scholars has been a more consistent attempt to explain Romans 9 in terms of an Israel narrative,⁷⁵ though this kind of interpretation has earlier antecedents.⁷⁶ James Dunn cautions against “generalizing too quickly from this passage.” “Paul,” he says, “is thinking solely in terms of salvation-history, of God’s purpose for Israel.”⁷⁷ Romans 9 is an in-house Jewish argument.⁷⁸ N.T. Wright sees the passage as “telling the story of Israel’s patriarchal foundation (vv. 6-13), then of the exodus (vv. 14-18), and then of God’s judgment that led to exile and, through it, to the fulfillment of God’s worldwide promise to Abraham (vv. 19-24).⁷⁹ This focus on Israel marks a healthy move in the history of interpretation of the passage, even though Dunn and Wright come to different conclusions. Without embracing Dunn’s and Wright’s conclusions, I shall attempt to follow this methodological lead, and even press it a little further.

Romans 9 in Context

Romans 9-11 should be seen not as an appendix or afterthought but as key to understanding the entire letter. The issue in these chapters is the problem of a lack of Jewish response to the gospel. This is the core of his response to a concern of vital interest to the Roman believers. The entire letter can be understood as a defense of the gospel in the light of its apparent failure to save Israel. Has the word of God failed (9:6)? Is the gospel something to be ashamed of (1:16)? Paul has to establish how the gospel is good news for Israel, as well as for Gentiles. If the gospel of Israel’s Messiah has not saved Israel, how can it be considered good news at all? If the Gentiles are joining in large numbers, but Jews are not, perhaps there is something fundamentally wrong with the message, and with the Gentile mission. Some, probably Jew-

⁷⁴Thomas R. Schreiner, “Corporate and Individual Election in Romans 9: A Response to Brian Abasciano,” *JETS* 49/2 (2006); 373-86.

⁷⁵See Reasoner, *Romans in Full Circle*, 8-9, who distinguishes to some degree between new perspective and narrative approaches.

⁷⁶See Willibald Beyschlag, *Die paulinische Theodicee, Römer IX-XI: Ein Beitrag zur biblische Theologie* (Halle, Strien, 1868), 22-26; Johannes Munck, *Christ and Israel: An Interpretation of Romans 9-11* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967); Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 4, 28.

⁷⁷James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, vol. 38B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1988), 562. He refers specifically to Rom 9:14-23.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 555.

⁷⁹N. T. Wright, “Romans,” in *New Interpreter’s Bible Vol. 10*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2002), 635.

ish believers, are weakening in faith (14:1).⁸⁰ If the promises of God to Israel are not fulfilled in the gospel, then perhaps a return to faithfulness to the law is necessary after all. Meanwhile, Gentile believers respond with arrogance (11:18).

Paul has to show how the gospel is the promised good news for Israel. In order to do this he has to establish what Israel's fundamental problem is. It is the same as the Gentiles' problem, which is the problem of sin. Romans 1-8 shows that sin is universal, subject to judgment, but cannot be solved by the law, and only through Christ and by the Spirit. The gospel alone means salvation, for Jews first, and also for Greeks (1:16). Though the problems of sin, the suffering of the church, and Israel's resistance to the gospel loom large, Romans is full of hope. The gospel does not break God's promises to Israel; rather, Christ came to confirm these promises (15:8), *and* so that the Gentiles too would glorify God (15:9). Romans 9-11 specifically addresses the problem of Israel's unbelief, starting with a lament (9:1-5), but ending with the promise that through the deliverer from Zion — that is to say, Jesus Christ — all Israel will be saved (11:26).

Four matters of relevance to the destiny of Israel have already been raised in chapters two to four, each of which are picked up again in chapter nine. The first is the assumption, which Paul challenges, that there ought to be a particular eschatological advantage for Israel. There are certainly privileges for Israel. They have the law (2:17) and were given the very words of God (3:2). In the end, however, these gifts are of no ultimate advantage, because all are under sin (3:9), and all who sin while under the law will be judged by that law (2:12). The second is the concern that, despite having heard the oracles of God, some Jews have not believed (3:3). The third is that as a result of Jewish unbelief in Christ, questions have been raised as to the truthfulness, faithfulness and justice of God and his word (3:3-8). Paul responds that God is just to judge Israel, on account of sin (3:5, 9, 20). The fourth is the scriptural record of the promise to Abraham (4:13-21, cf. Gen 12:1-3, 15:5-6, 17:5), which gives hope to Israel. Paul insists that the promise was to be received by faith and not the law, and Abraham is set forth as the key example of one who did not weaken in faith (4:19), but held on to the promises of God in hope.

These same concerns frame and inform the argument of Romans 9. In regard to Jewish privilege, Paul acknowledges the legitimate concern of the Roman believers for the fate of Israel. Not only are they his kinsmen, they have been granted a long list of privileges (9:3-5), including "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of worship and the promises." Paul has already mentioned adoption (8:15, 23), glory (5:2) and the Abrahamic promise (4:14) as benefits of the gospel of Christ. He shares the anguish of the Roman Jewish believers that the ma-

⁸⁰See John W. Taylor, "Paul's Understanding of Faith" (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2004), 167-72.

majority of their brethren have not recognized Jesus as Messiah and Lord, and some are in active opposition (11:29). But he disagrees that Israel's privileges obligate God to treat Jews differently to Gentiles when it comes to faith in the gospel. In regard to Jewish unbelief in Jesus, Paul does not have to begin the chapter explicitly with this issue, suggesting that the Roman believers understand his lament (9:1-3). It is their concern too. He does, however, finish the chapter explaining that Israel did not pursue righteousness by faith, and instead "stumbled over the stumbling stone" (9:31-33), who is Christ (10:11-13); they did not believe in him. Concern to uphold the justice of God in his dealings with Israel dominates the central section of Romans 9 (9:14-18). With regard to the Abrahamic promise, it is this very notion by which Paul redefines Israel (9:6-13), and he insists that the gospel — the word of God — has not failed in regard to Israel. It does not lack credibility (9:6).⁸¹ Thus chapter nine reprises at greater length issues raised in chapters two to four.

It remains to illustrate in an exploratory manner how this approach might affect our reading of the chapter. Romans 9 can be divided into five sections. The first (9:1-5) establishes common ground between Paul and his readers. Israel has been truly blessed and privileged, but their current situation causes desperate concern. The list of blessings is not arbitrary; even the mention of "promises" points to a future hope.

The second section (9:6-13) explains how it is that the gospel has not failed with regard to Israel by reminding the Romans that Israel was always defined according to God's promise. Citing promises to Abraham and Isaac, he shows that not all the descendants of Abraham are the "seed" of Abraham, but the children of the promise (9:8). Paul has already established that the promise of righteousness is received by faith (4:14-16).⁸² In thus redefining Israel Paul is in company with other first-century Jewish writers such as those at Qumran, who understood their group to be the genuine faithful Israel. Like all of them, however, Paul also never forgot wider ethnic Israel, and anticipated their restoration. They may be presently hostile to the gospel, but they are still beloved for the sake of the patriarchs (11:28), and God will still show mercy to them (11:31).

The next section (9:14-18), in diatribe fashion, starts with an objection voiced as a rhetorical question: is there unrighteousness on God's part? Do Israel's privileges, promises and possession of the law create an obligation which God would be unrighteous to ignore? In typical Pauline fashion, the sharp negative answer *μὴ γένοιτο* is followed by an explanation. Paul has already said that God would not be unrighteous if he inflicted judgment upon Israel, because of unbelief (3:5). Here the focus is on the freedom of God in his granting of mercy, by way of a contrast between what God said to Moses

⁸¹For the phrase "the word of God" (ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ) as the gospel in Paul see 2 Cor 2:17, 4:2; Col 1:25; 1 Thess 2:13.

⁸²True Israel is the believing-in-Jesus Israel, the Israel of faith, and the church consists of believing-in-Jesus Israel, with the grafted-in addition of believing Gentiles (11:19-20).

about Israel, and what he said through Moses to Pharaoh. God's relationship to Israel, and therefore Israel's hope, is a matter of his choosing to act with mercy, not a matter of obligation. The quote from Exodus 33:19 comes after Moses' intercession for Israel, and as a response to Moses' request to see God's glory. It is God's free decision to forgive Israel, reflecting his character (cf. Ex 34:6-7). According to Rom 11:30-32, God's intention for wider ethnic Israel is still mercy. Even the word to Pharaoh (from Ex 9:16), and the assertion of God's freedom also to harden, needs to be read in the context of the Israel story in chapters 9-11, and the thrust of Romans' argument, which acknowledges Israel's unbelieving condition and undeserving state (3:1-20, 10:18-21), and yet provides hope for Israel's redemption (11:12, 15, 23-32). Israel's hardening, detailed in Rom 11:7-10, is not the end of the story. It is partial, not a final sentence. They have not believed, but they have not stumbled so as to fall (11:11). If they believe, they will be grafted back in again (11:23).

The fourth section (9:19-24), likewise in diatribe form, continues addressing the righteousness of God's treatment of Israel. Raising the issue which was brought up in 3:5-7, it asks whether God is right to judge Israel at all. The combined citation from Isaiah (29:66 and 45:9) addresses the insolence of presuming to quarrel with God. God is free to judge and save his people as he wishes, not according to Israel's notion of privilege, or its possession of the law. He is not obligated to treat every descendant of Abraham the same, even though they are like clay from the same lump. There is perhaps an echo here of the potter's house story from Jer 18:1-10, in which God asserts his freedom to judge the house of Israel, and any nation, as he sees fit. Paul has already asserted in 1:18, where the idolatrous Gentile nations are particularly in view, that God is even now revealing his wrath, at the same time as he is revealing his righteousness (1:17). In 3:25 we discover that God in his forbearance has passed over former sins so as to demonstrate his righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. Likewise here in 9:22-24, the assumption is that Israel, far from deserving to be saved, deserves to be judged, a point made at length in chapters two and three. Unbelieving Israel, like the Gentiles, is the object of God's wrath and judgment. God has patiently endured Israel's sin, even though he is willing to reveal his wrath, in order to display his glory upon Jew and Gentile (9:24).⁸³

The three prophetic Scriptures (9:25-29) support this perspective. The first passage, a modified and combined citation of Hos 2:23 and 1:10 (LXX 2:25, 2:1), Paul understands to incorporate the Gentiles as well as Israel. The outcast, both Jew and Gentile, will be restored. The second and third quotes explicitly concern Israel's future. The prediction of a remnant affirms that God's judgment on Israel is righteous, so that only a remnant survives, but also points to a hopeful outcome. The remnant of Israel (cf. Is 10:22-23) is

⁸³ἐξ ἔθνῶν here means simply "of the Gentiles," as in Gal 2:15. Thus ἐξ Ἰουδαίων similarly means "of the Jews."

also the seed of Israel (cf. Is 1:9). Likewise in Rom 11:1-5 the existence of the present remnant of believing Jews, including Paul, is used as evidence that God has not abandoned Israel. Otherwise he would not have sent preachers of the gospel (Rom 10:16-18), and there would be no remnant at all. All this is intended to give hope for a greater salvation for wider ethnic Israel, who, Paul predicts, will respond to the gospel because of jealousy over the success of the gospel among the Gentiles (Rom 11:13).

The final section of the chapter (9:30-33) draws an initial conclusion that places the blame for the current plight of Israel on their failure as a whole to believe in Christ. The coming of Christ was intended to redefine Israel's relationship to the law, but they stumbled over him, pursuing the righteous law but not attaining the righteousness that Gentile believers found in Christ.

But chapter nine is not the end of the story. Chapter ten shows that Israel's promised salvation comes only through faith in Christ, and not through the law. They have heard the gospel, but so far, most of them have not believed. In chapter eleven, Paul reveals that God has a plan, using Gentile faith, to bring Israel to faith (11:23), and eventually bring about the salvation of "all Israel" (11:26), however that might be defined.

Conclusions

Christian scholarship has focused on Romans 9 as source material for the free will/determinism debate, going back at least as far as Origen's dispute with the Gnostics. With Augustine the ground of debate moved, and after him a determinist reading of Romans 9 became dominant, continuing in Protestant churches through the writings of Luther and Calvin. Both this reading, with its emphasis on individual election as the thrust of the chapter, and the opposing reading, with its emphasis on free will and corporate election, stem largely from an atomistic and philosophical approach to the passage which has paid too little attention to the relevance of Romans 9-11 to the Roman believers to whom Paul writes, and to the flow of argument in Romans. This is not to suggest that the concerns of the tradition are illegitimate, or that such questions should not be asked of the text. But it is necessary to question whether Romans 9 can bear the weight of the theology which has been thrust upon it, and to investigate what theological emphases would emerge from a more contextual and unified reading.

Based on an approach to Romans which sees the interpretation of the phenomenon of Jewish unbelief in Jesus, by comparison to the growth of the church among the Gentiles, as the key factor behind the writing of the letter, an initial investigation leads to a number of conclusions. First, the fate of Israel is the focus of the entirety of chapter nine, and each section of the chapter. Future theological interpretation, and any universalizing of the teaching of Romans 9, should take full account of this in detail. Second, the passage reaffirms both the credibility of the gospel, and the promise of salvation to

Israel through Israel's Messiah, though only as Israel believes in the gospel. The believing remnant is at once the redefined Israel of promise, and a beacon of hope for a wider ingathering of ethnic Israel through Christ.⁸⁴ Third, the passage affirms the freedom of God in his dealings with Israel. Neither its privileges nor its pursuit of the law obligate God to grant ethnic Israel any special advantage, or to save Israel by fiat. Fourth, Israel's hope rests entirely on God's mercy, on the one hand because Israel, like the Gentiles, is subject to the wrath of God and can have no special claim on his grace, and on the other because, as Romans 9 emphasizes, God has been, is and will be merciful to them, and to all who believe in Christ, for "the one who believes in him will not be put to shame" (9:33).

⁸⁴Romans 11:23 holds out the possibility that the majority of Israel, who have not believed but have been hardened, can be added back in, if they believe.

Phoebe, the Letter-Carrier of Romans, and the Impact of Her Role on Biblical Theology

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Introduction

Scholars are not only divided along ideological lines but also clearly undecided or uncertain on what role Phoebe played in Paul's letter to the Romans.¹ In their discussions on this topic, they often particularly focus on how Paul used the word δῆκονος as it pertains to Phoebe, mentioned in Romans 16:1–2. On the one hand, the term may be used generically to denote a “servant,” i.e., one who performs various kinds of service.² On the other hand, the word can also designate the office of “deacon” (cf. Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8, 12; Ign., *Eph.* 2.1; *Magn.* 6.1). So, the question usually arises in Romans 16:1–2 whether Paul is commending Phoebe in his letter because she is a noteworthy “servant,” or because she is specifically a “deacon” of the church at Cenchrea. A third possibility exists; namely, Phoebe was the letter-carrier of Romans.³

A brief survey of commentaries written on Romans reveals that a majority of scholars say that Phoebe *may have been* the letter-carrier for Paul's epistle to the Romans, but then they often say, primarily on the basis of the word δῆκονος, that she was a deacon. For example, though he provides no proof that Phoebe was a letter-carrier, F. F. Bruce maintained that the letter to the Romans evidently was taken by her to the church; he then states

¹Paul wrote Romans to show that, in accordance with the gospel, “no distinction” exists in the impartial judicial administration of God—the law condemns everyone, yet all who believe, Jew or Gentile, are justified by faith (Rom 1–11). In light of Romans 1–11, the apostle provoked an acceptance of all justified believers, “born Jew” and “born Gentile,” within the body of Christ (Rom 12–16). I am grateful to my friend Alan Tomlinson for sharing this view with me several years ago.

²See e.g. Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida (*A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Romans* [London/NewYork/Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1971], 290) who say “it is doubtful that this had become a technical term for an office in the church at the time that Paul wrote, and it is better to use a general term rather than the specific term ‘deaconess.’”

³I have held that Phoebe was the letter-carrier of Romans as early as the year 2000. Scholars today are beginning to attribute this role to Phoebe more generally than they did then, but few have actually discussed the impact of her being a letter-carrier in a Biblical theology of women in ministry.

that she was a deacon.⁴ T. Schreiner also thinks that Phoebe was probably the bearer of the letter, but then he too goes on to say that she held the office of deacon.⁵ Though D. Moo strongly alludes to Phoebe being the letter-carrier of Romans, he likewise believes that she was a deacon—however, he is cautious about saying she held the office because he notes that regular offices in the church were still in the process of being established.⁶ J. D. G. Dunn is no different and holds a similar viewpoint to that of Moo.⁷ C. E. B. Cranfield says that it is highly probable that Phoebe was to be the bearer of Paul's letter to the Romans, but then he says it is virtually certain that Phoebe was a deacon of the church in question.⁸

I will briefly contend in this paper, however, that in Romans 16:1–2 Paul commended Phoebe as the letter-carrier for his epistle to the Roman church. That is to say, although Phoebe was clearly exercising a service-oriented task, she was specifically the courier of the letter to the Romans. To put forth a case for the latter view, I will first point out various Greek texts in which the word *διάκονος* unmistakably refers to one who is a letter-carrier or courier. Second, I will show that Paul's recommendation of Phoebe in Romans 16:1–2—though more extensive—nonetheless fits the pattern found in texts where letter-carriers are commended to the recipients of letters.⁹ Finally, the impact of this conclusion on Biblical theology will ever so briefly be considered.

The Use of *Διάκονος* as “Courier” in Ancient Texts

That the word *διάκονος* often refers in ancient texts to a messenger, courier, or letter-carrier is clear. A few examples should suffice to show that the latter statement is true.¹⁰

In Aeschylus' (c. 525/4–456/5 B.C.) Greek tragedy titled *Prometheus Bound*, Prometheus says that people should worship and adore those who rule them. He then expresses some considerable disdain for his ruler Zeus, before saying that he sees that god's messenger/courier (*διάκονος*) coming, no doubt to herald some news. At this point Hermes, the messenger of the gods, enters the scene.¹¹

⁴F. F. Bruce, *Romans*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 252.

⁵T. R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 786–87.

⁶D. J. Moo, *Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 913–14; cf. also Moo, “Romans.” Pages 2–99 in the *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 90–91.

⁷J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans*. WBC 38b (Dallas: Word, 1988), 886–87.

⁸C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans*. ICC, 2 Vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 1: 78–81.

⁹As E. R. Richards (“Silvanus Was Not Peter's Secretary: Theological Bias in Interpreting *dia Silouanou . . . egrapsa*,” *JETS* Vol. 43, No. 3 [Sept. 2000]: 421) has correctly noted.

¹⁰The list of texts highlighted below were found in LSJ, 398.

¹¹Aeschylus, *Prometheus Vincit* 942. Interestingly, the word *διάκονος* was translated as “servitor” in this Loeb Classical Library series volume.

In Sophocles' (b. 490s B.C.) play *Philoctetes*, the mythological leader of seven ships to Troy is left behind in Lemnos after being bitten by a snake. He is portrayed as pleading for Zeus either to take his life or rescue him from being an outcast. In his plea to Zeus, Philoctetes longs to see his father again. He says that he has sent people to implore his father to take him home in his own ship. He fears, however, that his father is either dead or the envoys/couriers (οἱ δῆκονοι) he sent cared little about his concerns and instead hurried to their homes.¹²

In his *Republic* Plato (c. 429-347 B.C.) discusses with Adeimantus the establishment of a city. After saying that a city cannot be set up in a place where it will not require imports, Plato stresses the necessity of persons who will bring to that city what it needs from other cities. He further opines that if the city's messenger/courier (ὁ δῆκονος) departs not taking with him anything needed by those from whom they will obtain their required imports, then he will also return from them empty-handed.¹³

In his *Antiquities* the Jewish historian Josephus (b. A.D. 37/8) records that when David learned of Absalom's plot and later fled from Jerusalem (cf. 2 Sam 15:12), he had persuaded the Levites to remain behind in that city (cf. 2 Sam 15:24). He instructed them to keep him secretly informed of events that took place there while he was away. Josephus reports that, in all of these matters, Achimas, the son of Sadok, and Jonathan, the son of Abiathar, acted as David's faithful couriers (δῆκονοι).¹⁴ Likewise, he later records that the high priests had kept their sons in hiding outside of the city so that they might bring word to David of Absalom's plans. When the priests instructed their sons to take news to David, Josephus describes Achimas and Jonathan as setting off without delay, like obedient and loyal couriers (δῆκονοι).¹⁵

The New Testament is also not without its other examples in which the word δῆκονος is used where letter-carriers are mentioned. For instance, Paul mentions Tychichus as the letter-carrier in Ephesians 6:21 and Colossians 4:7-8, and most scholars today recognize him as the courier.

Interestingly, though he did not do so in the second edition (1979), in Frederick Danker's 2003 revision of Bauer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (BDAG), he described the use of δῆκονος as it pertains to Phoebe in Romans 16:1 as "one who serves as an intermediary in a transaction, *agent, intermediary, courier*."¹⁶ For some reason, however, this meaning of courier has not yet readily carried over into New Testament scholarship.

¹²Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 497..

¹³Plato *Republic* 370e. Again, the word δῆκονος was translated as "servitor" rather than messenger in this older Loeb Classical Library series volume.

¹⁴Josephus, *Antiquities* VII, 201.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 224.

¹⁶BDAG, 230. This meaning was not present in the second edition (1979), but comes from one whom, as far as I know, had no theological ax to grind in the complementarian-egalitarian debate.

Paul's Recommendation of Phoebe as the Letter-Carrier

Now that sufficient evidence has been provided to show that the term *διάκονος* refers in several ancient texts to a courier, the question that needs to be asked is, "How might we know that this use of *διάκονος* is the one present in Romans 16:1?" Since context determines the meaning of words, it needs to be shown by other means that Paul is speaking of Phoebe as a courier or letter-carrier. If the latter can be done, then this demonstration would lend support to the viewpoint that the apostle is also using *διάκονος* in that sense. Thus, to demonstrate the hypothesis posed earlier, I will now briefly demonstrate that Paul's recommendation of Phoebe in Romans 16:1–2 fits the pattern found in texts where carriers are commended to the recipients of letters.

Before doing so, however, it would be prudent to consider briefly something of the function of letter-carriers in antiquity. Besides carrying the letters, couriers sometimes read the letters they delivered, elaborated upon their contents, if need be, and also answered any questions the recipients might have. Something of the latter functions can be seen, for example, in a letter from a woman who seeks to enlist Zenon's help against someone who has treated her son badly. After her complaint she wrote, "The rest please learn from the man who brings you this letter. He is no stranger to us."¹⁷ Or, consider a letter from Cicero in which he complains to one of his friends that a carrier did not provide some expected details for him.

I received your letter . . . and on reading it I gathered that Philotimus did not act . . . [on] the instructions he had from you (as you write) . . . [when] he failed to come to me himself, and merely forwarded me your letter; and I concluded that it was shorter because you had imagined that he would deliver it in person.¹⁸

The sender wrote a shorter letter because he expected the carrier to elaborate on the details for the recipient. He also did not have to say that the courier would provide additional information—most presumed this would be the case.

For letter-carriers to be accepted in the communities to which they were sent it was often necessary for the senders to provide the courier's credentials; thus, a letter or note of commendation would be provided.

Letters of recommendation like this were used by Paul (cf. 2 Cor 8:18–24; Eph 6:21–22; Phil. 2:25–30; Col 4:7–8; cf. also Acts 9:2; 18:27; 22:5; 1 Cor 16:3).¹⁹ In 2 Corinthians 3:1–2 he mentioned the practice and said that

¹⁷PCol 3:6 (cited from E. R. Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004], 183).

¹⁸Cicero, *Letters to Friends*, 4.2.1 (cited from Richards, *Paul*, 183).

¹⁹Chan-Hie Kim, *The Familiar Letter of Recommendation* (Missoula, MT: 1972), 119.

he did not need any letter of commendation. He told the Corinthians:

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? You yourselves are our letter of recommendation written on your hearts, to be known and read by all men.²⁰

As C. Kim has found, “For Paul, the act of commending someone actually meant sending credentials to the recipient on behalf of the recommended.”²¹

Given that Paul had never visited the church at Rome (cf. Rom 1:10; 15:22–23), the need to present Phoebe’s credentials as a letter-carrier was probably more important than usual; so, he commends her as a courier (διάκονος). Those who view Phoebe specifically as a deacon in Romans 16:1 should not see Paul’s recommendation of her as a courier as diminishing her role or importance. To the contrary, she is a highly trusted individual who is a vital part of the apostle’s missionary team; she is sent for the express purpose of delivering the letter to the Roman church, and in doing so may convey Paul’s apostolic presence (παρουσία).

Several scholars have written extensively on letters in antiquity and on letters of recommendation—notably, C. Kim,²² J. L. White,²³ S. Stowers,²⁴ and more recently, E. R. Richards.²⁵ Each finds that Paul’s commendation of Phoebe in Romans 16:1–2 shows some of the characteristics featured in Greek papyri letters of recommendation. One should also note here that scholars on letters generally acknowledge that passages of commendation often occurred within larger letters, as is the case in the text considered here.

What is the pattern found in texts where the couriers of letters are commended to their recipients? White is representative here when he states that the following kind and sequence of formulae are characteristic of letters of recommendation (*littera commendatica*): (1) a mention of the letter-carrier and his or her credentials; (2) the writer’s request with regard to the courier; and (3) and, usually, an expression of appreciation.²⁶ He provides the following letter of commendation as a representative example.

²⁰Translation mine.

²¹Kim, *The Familiar Letter of Recommendation*.

²²Ibid.

²³John L. White, “The Greek Documentary Letter Tradition Third Century B.C.E. to Third Century C.E.,” *Semeia* 22 (1981): 89-106.

²⁴Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter-Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986).

²⁵E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004).

²⁶John L. White, “The Greek Documentary Letter Tradition Third Century B.C.E. to Third Century C.E.,” *Semeia* 22 (1981): 95-97.

letter carrier/credentials

I think that you are aware about Aischylos, that he is far from indifferent to us. He has now sailed up the river to your party in order to be introduced to Kleonikos.

the request

Therefore, please make an effort to introduce him to Kleonikos; and if he does not find the latter in your company, get letters of introduction to him from his friends.

expression of appreciation

By doing this you would both favor me and the God. And write to me if you ever have need of anything, knowing that you will have it.²⁷

The description of Phoebe and Paul's request in Romans 16:1–2 fits White's description of the letter of recommendation, though, as Richards rightly points out, "Paul's citation of his carrier was never merely formulaic; he commended the person more than was common and in ways that were not common."²⁸

As far as the *letter-carrier and her credentials* are concerned in Romans 16:1–2 Paul says, "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a δῆκονος from the church which is at Cenchrea (v. 1) . . . for she herself has been a helper of many, and of myself as well (v. 2c)." Paul commended Phoebe as a fellow believer, as a faithful courier, and as a helper, a good friend of many, including Paul. This commendation tells the Roman church that she is someone who can be completely trusted—trusted to deliver Paul's letter without compromising and opening it and thus rendering its contents suspect, trusted to elaborate upon details, trusted to answer any questions that they might have of her, etc.

In Paul's *request* he asks "that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you . . ." (v. 2a–b). Paul asked his recipients to welcome this woman, to accept her in a worthy manner. Further, he instructed the Roman church to give her anything she needed while she was there. Paul was saying, "Receive this lady as my courier/envoy; take care of her; do whatever she asks."

The *expression of appreciation* that White mentions in his study on letters seems to be absent from Romans 16:1–2, but as he points out, and as others generally recognize, many letters which have a request as their primary

²⁷Ibid., 96. Other examples of the letter of recommendation may be found in Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter-Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 155.

²⁸Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing*, 189.

purpose do not employ the full three-part sequence. It may be that Paul has expressed his appreciation for the church elsewhere in Romans (e.g., Rom 1:8-13) and felt no need to do it here.

What might be concluded from this brief article? One certainly cannot draw the conclusion based on word-use alone that Paul used δῆκονος in the sense of “courier” as it pertains to Phoebe. When one combines, however, this potential word-use with the information that Paul commended Phoebe as a letter-carrier in this passage of recommendation (generally acknowledged by scholars who have written on ancient letters), then it stands to reason that δῆκονος should also be translated as “letter-carrier” or “courier” in Romans 16:1, as Danker has concluded in BDAG. If so, then scholars should probably stop thinking of Phoebe primarily as one who was a “deacon” in the church at Cenchrēa—at least on the basis of this text; for, if the explanation of the text put forth above is correct, then it does not necessarily support that translation and interpretation. Phoebe is clearly a “servant,” but here specifically involved in dispatch letter service, thus the rather generic use of δῆκονος does not specifically capture enough of what Paul said about her.

Some might object to the evidence put forth above by saying that couriers as the messengers of the gods is one thing, whereas calling a person like Phoebe a letter-carrier is quite another. Sufficient texts described above, however, also call various real people letter-carriers. The word δῆκονος may be used in that sense to refer to a courier.

Others might also protest the conclusion reached above because of the qualifying phrase, τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἐν Κεγχρεαῖς, which they translate to mean “of the congregation (church) which is in Cenchrēa.” In other words, for them the phrase localizes Phoebe’s position as a deacon in the church at Cenchrēa and strongly suggests that Paul had in mind her specific status as a deacon rather than her general disposition as a servant. The phrase τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἐν Κεγχρεαῖς, however, need mean nothing more than “from the church which is in Cenchrēa.” That is to say, the church at Cenchrēa was the church to which Phoebe belonged.

Paul also called Phoebe his “benefactor” (προστάτις; Rom 16:2), who has rendered assistance not only to him, but also to many others. This designation “implies that Phoebe was possessed of some social position, wealth and independence.”²⁹ She evidently “put her status, resources, and time at the services of traveling Christians, like Paul, who needed help and support.”³⁰ The trip to carry the letter to Rome from Corinth, the city of the letter’s origin, would be quite long and expensive. Phoebe may have had some business that she needed to conduct in Rome and it necessitated her traveling there to do so. If that was the case, it makes sense that she also carried the letter to Rome because she was headed that way.

²⁹Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2: 783.

³⁰Moo, *Romans*, 916.

The Impact of Phoebe as a Letter-Carrier on Biblical Theology

If this conclusion regarding Phoebe in Romans 16:1–2 is correct, namely, that she is a courier, then some rethinking obviously needs to take place regarding the prominent place these verses play in a Biblical theology, particularly with the role of women in ministry. Not surprisingly, some NT scholars, like Michael Bird and Scot McKnight for instance, have recently used the role of Phoebe as a letter-carrier and the responsibilities that came with that job to support egalitarian perspectives.³¹ For example, Bird poses the question, “Now, if Paul was so opposed to women teaching men anytime and anywhere, why on earth would he send a woman like Phoebe to deliver this vitally important letter and to be his personal representative in Rome?”³² He later says, “I’m careful to make the point that this is not the be all and end all of debates about women in ministry. . . . But I point out that taken at face value, Paul evidently had no problem with women having some kind of speaking and teaching role in the churches.”³³

Complementarians, however, readily acknowledge that Paul permitted women to have some kind of speaking or teaching roles in the churches, and they gladly encourage women to teach other women and children (cf. Titus 2:3–5). Moreover, they also recognize the fact that women prophesied in the early church (cf. 1 Cor 11:5; though in this text Paul points to an abuse in the practice).

Egalitarians object to the view of 1 Timothy 2:12 which arguably says that Paul restricted women from teaching men Christian doctrine and from exercising any kind of governing authority over men in the church. They typically claim that such an interpretation is ambiguous at best and that Paul’s words are actually limited in their scope just to the events in Ephesus. Complementarians usually maintain that the plain reading of the text is clear and that its reach extends beyond the events at Ephesus. The latter group views this verse and interpretation as prescriptive; the former group does not.

The primary difficulty with using Phoebe’s role and responsibilities as a letter-carrier to support the egalitarian perspective seems to be one of scope. One makes a huge jump from Phoebe’s role as a courier and its associated responsibilities of clarifying and explaining some of Romans’ content (if need be) to the conclusion that women are thus now permitted to teach men in the churches. Is there not a considerable difference in context between that of church worship (1 Tim 2:8–15) and delivering mail (as Phoebe did with Paul’s letter)? Three Greek words in 1 Timothy 2:8 also have bearing on this issue, and it is to those words to which we now turn our attention.

³¹See Michael Bird’s comments at <http://www.cbeinternational.org/?q=content/2011-06-16-fretting-over-phoebe-arise-e-newsletter>. Accessed: 9/16/2013. McKnight simply cites Bird’s blogpost in his article at <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/jesuscreed/2011/12/09/fretting-over-phoebe-mike-bird/>. Accessed: 9/16/2013.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

The words “in every place” (ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ) in 1 Timothy 2:8 bring into play this issue of scope when considering the restrictions Paul placed on women in 1 Timothy 2:12. Some questions follow, as Mounce has asked in summary fashion: “Is παντὶ τόπῳ, “every place” in Ephesus or more generally in the world? Does it refer to only public worship or also to conduct in the outside world?”³⁴ One’s answers to these questions also affect conclusions reached in 1 Timothy 2:8–15 concerning (i) a woman’s submission (v. 11); (ii) where a woman may or may not teach (v. 12a); and (iii) the men over whom she may not exercise governing authority.³⁵

Arguably, the phrase ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ means “in every place of worship,” i.e., in every place that Christian congregations are gathered for worship, not just the church at Ephesus. The latter conclusion is reached primarily on contextual grounds. In the purpose statement for the letter of 1 Timothy, Paul told his young associate that in the event he was delayed in visiting Ephesus he was writing so that he might know how people should behave in “the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.”³⁶ This description that Paul gave of the church seems to extend beyond just the churches in Ephesus. Moreover, the context of chapters two and three also indicates a more universal than specific interpretation. Paul’s instructions regarding prayer, men praying without anger, women exhibiting modesty and doing godly works, the appeal to creation in 2:13, and the insistence on overseers and deacons to be without reproach all seem to support a universal application;³⁷ thus, “in every place” refers to everywhere that Christian congregations are gathered for worship, rather than just strictly at Ephesus.

Did Phoebe perform her duties as a letter-carrier in the context of church worship? I say no. She is no doubt a very important person, but her delivery, and perhaps explanation, of the contents of the letter of Romans seem to be quite different from the context of local church worship.

³⁴William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 106–07.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Translation mine.

³⁷As Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 107, et al., have noted.

Jesus Christ, The Good to Great Shepherd

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The Christology of the New Testament cannot be understood apart from the book of Hebrews. Yet, the portraiture of Christ in the book is overwhelming. The introduction is perhaps the most provocative of any epistle as it launches into the famous Christology. What is, on balance, neglected is that the benediction of the book is equally provocative.

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight (Heb 13:20).¹

There are many notable commentators on the book of Hebrews including Peter O'Brien, F.F. Bruce, and David Allen. What is unique about Allen is that he is a linguist by discipline and often argues from a position of semantic structural analysis. His outline of Hebrews is helpful.

1. Prologue 1:1-4
2. Superiority of the Son (1:5-4:13)
3. Obligations of Jesus' Priestly Office and Saving Work (4:14-10:18)
4. Exhortations to Draw Near, Hold Fast, and Love One Another (10:19-13:21)
5. Conclusion and Final Greeting (13:22-25)²

So, to rephrase this outline of the book, Christ is better 1-4; Christ is the ultimate High Priest 4-10; and because of this the church is exhorted to obey 10-13.

It is this triad of Christ's exclusive work, superiority, and corporate na-

¹Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

²David Lewis Allen, *Hebrews* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 93-94.

ture that is addressed in this title. The title is definitive – *the* great Shepherd; it is specific and superior – the *great* Shepherd; it is corporate – *of the Sheep*.

It would be presumptuous to suggest that this template has authorial intent. However, this title, with its theological trajectory that runs through Scripture generally, and through Hebrews specifically, is a wonderful summation of the nature of Christ in the book of Hebrews. What follows is an examination of each of the implications of the title respectively.

Definitive

John Owens observes the connection between the title and the trajectory of the shepherding motif in Scripture when he writes, “He doth not say he is the great shepherd, but ‘that great shepherd;’ namely, he that was promised of old, the object of the faith and hope of the church from the beginning, - he who was looked for, prayed for, who was now come, and had saved his flock.”³ In other words, his greatness, at least in Hebrews, is lighted by his singular messianic role. This is the only one who could call himself the good Shepherd, and therefore is the only one who could be the great Shepherd. And the word order is important, τὸν ποιμένα τῶν προβάτων τὸν μέγαν; literally “the shepherd, of the sheep the great.” The adjective μέγαν, great, being last in the phrase, is given prominence.⁴ The emphasis is on the greatness of the Shepherd; a greatness that, again, seems tied to his messianic shepherding trajectory throughout Scripture.⁵ Bruce suggests that the title is “derived from the Septuagint version of Isa. 63:11: ‘Where is he who brought up out of the sea the shepherd of the sheep?’” This is an allusion that, if warranted, makes the messianic connection to the title stronger.⁶ Shepherds were seen as leaders. Moses was a shepherd, as was David, thus the Messiah would be one who would lead his people out of bondage like Moses, and bring military conquest like David.⁷

The author of Hebrews certainly affirms the messianic role of Jesus. This begins with an allusion to Psalm 110:1 in 1:3, he “...sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high”; then in 1:5 the author quotes Psalm 2:7,

³John Owen and W. H. Goold, *The Works of John Owen, vol. 7 Hebrews* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1991).

⁴See Allen, *Hebrews*, 627.

⁵From the adjective μέγαν one could make a lexical case, through perhaps strained, for the sovereign majesty of the Messiah; the word can be understood as, “great, greatly, greatness, to a great degree, intense, terrible.” μέγας: δυνάμει μεγάλη ‘with great power’ Ac 4:33; καῦμα μέγα ‘great heat’ or ‘intense heat’ Re 16:9.” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2 vols. (New York: United Bible Society, 1988), μέγαν. This is certainly the Messiah of Is. 63:1 who comes riding from Edom “marching in the greatness of his strength.” This is the rider on the white horse of Rev 19:11-16.

⁶F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 388.

⁷Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 534.

“You are my Son today I have begotten you.” This is explicit in 1:13, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet,” another quotation from Psalm 110:1. There are so many messianic references to the Psalms it is as if the entire book of Hebrews is an exposition on select Psalms. Still, the messianic nature of Christ is assumed as much as it is affirmed. In fact, these texts are used in service of other arguments such as Christ is better than the prophets (1:1-3), and the angels (1:4-14). Clearly the shepherding nature of the Messiah is a significant theme as there is an entire trajectory of messianic texts that contain the shepherding motif. So, while stopping short of looking at each use of the shepherding motif in the Scriptures, the following section will briefly examine select texts within the trajectory of the shepherding motif as it relates to the Messiah.

Ezekiel 34

In Ezekiel 34 the prophet Ezekiel exploits the shepherding metaphor in a shocking way: The shepherds are feeding themselves and not the sheep. Pointing to the failure of the shepherd leaders of Israel he notes,

The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep?’”³

The second issue that God has with the shepherd leaders is that they do not seek lost sheep, making them vulnerable for the prey.

You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.⁸

Finally, the gravity of their poor leadership is summed up in the fact that instead of protecting the sheep, and feeding the sheep, they actually eat the sheep.

⁸It is impossible not to see a connection with this text and the parable of the lost sheep in Matthew 18 and Luke 15. Jesus is the seeking Shepherd.

Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: “As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.

In fact this is what God decides he will do. He will shepherd them himself, and he will do so by using David as the Shepherd King to establish his rule over, and protection of, his flock.

I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.

And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken.

Psalm 78

Psalm 78 chronicles the history of Israel to the time of David the Shepherd King. Psalm 78:72 explains that David shepherded God’s people with an “upright heart and skillful hand.”⁹ This brings to mind Psalm 23 and a host of other Psalms that would connect the shepherding motif in David and bring it to Christ.¹⁰

David was the leader that God wanted to shepherd his people; however, David’s rule was limited by his humanity. His success and failures were profound. So Christ would come to be the Shepherd that David never could have been.

⁹Psalm 78:2 is quoted in Matthew 13:35. Christ is the one who would ultimately come in speak in “parables of old.” The fact that the Psalm ends with David is an interesting messianic connection.

¹⁰There are many other places in the prophets that could be searched for this motif. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and of course Amos all carry the shepherding motif; however Ezekiel 34 makes the connection the most explicit.

Gospels

There are many allusions to the shepherding motif in the Gospels. Jesus is the Shepherd that will arise out of Bethlehem (Matt 2:5, 6). Jesus weeps over Jerusalem like sheep without a Shepherd (Matt 9:36/Mark 6:34). Jesus is the Shepherd who is seeking the lost (Matt 18/Luke 15), and will ultimately be the Shepherd who eschatologically separates the sheep from the goats (Matt 25).

The reason Jesus was crucified was to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah 13:7 that if the Shepherd were stricken the sheep would be scattered (Matt 26:31/Mark 14:27).

The striking of the Shepherd is the explicit notion of John 10:1-18. This is the clearest explanation of the shepherding nature of Christ. Jesus is the sheep gate (v.7), the good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep (v.11), and the one Shepherd of one flock. (v.16). The description of the ultimate Shepherd is the exact opposite of the weak shepherds of Ezekiel 34. The contrast is so obvious it seems that Christ is in fact alluding to this Old Testament passage.¹¹ Jesus is the Shepherd who is greater than the OT shepherds of Israel and he is the Shepherd King to be what David could never be.

Epistles

Outside of Hebrews, the only other references in the epistles to Jesus as a shepherd are found at the hand of the apostle Peter. Jesus is “the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25), and he is the Chief Shepherd to whom all the other shepherds will answer (1 Peter 5:4). It is interesting that the one to whom Jesus commanded to feed his sheep (John 21:15-17) is the one apostle who charges the elders to act like shepherds.

Revelation

In a wonderful twist on the metaphor John sees the lamb in the midst of the throne (5:6-14) as their Shepherd (Rev 7:17). In Rev. 19:15 the rider on the white horse will overcome the enemy and “He will rule (ποιμαίνω) them with a rod of iron.” This is an allusion to Psalm 2:9. Yet there is a slight but significant change in the choice of words. In Psalm 2:9 the King/Son/Anointed One will “*break* them with a rod of iron”. The rider on the horse is not there to deal them a blow, he is there to shepherd (ποιμαίνω) them, to have absolute rule and dominion. As Osborne notes, “the ‘shepherding’ is not the care of the sheep here but the destruction of their predatory foes (as in 12:5, where Ps. 2:9 is also used).”¹²

Perhaps the western mind is thrown by the idea of a dominating shepherd. When we think of the shepherd we think of a gentle meek nurturer of the lambs, but that is a highly filtered image. Shepherds were tough, blue-

¹¹Andreas J. Köstenberger, “John,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Gregory K. Beale and Donald A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 461-67.

¹²Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 685.

collar workers who did difficult work in difficult circumstances. Part of that work was leading the sheep, but the other part of that work was beating the wolves. Both were involved. So, the truth is that the rugged view of a shepherd is closer to reality than the gentle view of the shepherd. More precisely, for Jesus graciously to protect the sheep, he must vigorously destroy the enemy. Ellingworth's comment on Hebrews 13:21 read as if it were a commentary on Revelation 19. He notes, "The image of a shepherd, inherited from the OT, is of one who both cares and rules. The author of Hebrews does not limit the work of Christ as shepherd to the ingathering of Israel (as, e.g., in Ezk. 34) but neither does he have the gentile mission in mind."¹³

In this way, the metaphor comes full circle. Jesus was the Shepherd sent to replace the weak shepherds of Israel. In order to do this he becomes the stricken Shepherd, but returns as the conquering Shepherd. It is not an overstatement to say that the trajectory of the humiliation and exaltation of Christ is portrayed in the shepherding motif as explicitly as anywhere else in Scripture. To say it another way, God wants us to think of Jesus as the Shepherd who nurtures and protects his sheep. It is this function, seen in his offering of himself, that fulfilled in his high priestly role in Hebrews. He is singular: *The* Shepherd.

This exclusive nature of Christ's role is a theme in Hebrews. Christ is better than the angels and better than the prophets; he is better than Moses; he is better than the priest; he is better than the tabernacle; he is better than Melchizedek, and he is the guarantor of the better covenant. Jesus is exclusive and definitive. He is *the* Shepherd.

Specific and Superior

Jesus is the Great Shepherd for many reasons in Hebrews, but most proactively because he is exclusive, superior and absolute.

Peter O'Brien, hints at this when he writes,

As Jesus is called the great high priest in Hebrews thus emphasizing his absolute and definitive quality, so here he is designated the *great* Shepherd, which underscores his incomparable superiority. He surpasses all other leaders of God's people, including Moses, and uniquely fulfills the role of Yahweh as he shepherds and leads God's flock...¹⁴

In this one brilliant rhetorical strike, the writer of Hebrews has captured not only the definitive nature of Christ's person, but the singular nature of Christ's work. This is most clear 9:23-26:

¹³Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 729.

¹⁴Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 2010), 535.

Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Note the language: “better,” “not copies,” “not repeatedly,” “once for all,” and “offered once.” The work of Christ is singular, definitive, absolute and superior. This text is not alone in establishing the definitive work of Christ. Jesus is better than the prophets, angels, and Moses, chapters 1-3. He is better than Melchizedek, leading to a better covenant, chapter 7.

Then, starting in 9:11 one sees the emerging superlative language, “but when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing eternal redemption.”

Here Christ is at once the High Priest, the Tabernacle, and the Holy Place in the very throne room of God.

Returning to 9:23-26, the idea is that Christ appeared before the very throne of God, not a copy on our behalf: “For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.”

The great vestiges of Jewish religious life were copies: the high priest was a picture of the great High Priest; the tabernacle was a foreshadowing of the great flesh of Christ; and the Holy of Holies was a picture of the great throne room of God.

It is as if Jesus is so great that when he steps out of heaven he casts an enormous shadow that precedes him, being manifested in buildings, and tents, and positions that are later explained ultimately in his great presence.¹⁵

¹⁵Ellingworth ties the superior nature of Christ to the title of “great shepherd” when he notes, “Christ is the great shepherd, as he is the great (high) priest (4:14; 10:21) by contrast with lesser levitical high priests, and perhaps with subordinate leaders of the Christian community, such as the ἡγούμενοι of vv. 7, 17; also of Moses, mentioned in Is. 63:11, and who is traditionally known as ‘the shepherd of Israel’ (P. R. Jones 101-103).” Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 729.

How, then, is the atoning work in this passage to be understood? One immediately reaches for metaphors: like a congressman before the legislature, like a family member paying bond, like a lawyer going before a judge to defend a guilty criminal, or like an ambassador representing people to a president. It is like all of those things, but not exactly like any of them, because of the descriptor, “great.”

He is the Great Shepherd. He is singular and superlative. That being the case, to understand this passage’s tone we must attach a superlative in front of each metaphor: It is the most significant congressman going before the most important session of Congress. This is a family member going to court to pay the highest sum ever, to release the worst criminal ever. This is a lawyer who has never lost a case, defending a criminal for a crime of which he is obviously guilty, going before a judge who always finds defendants guilty of this crime. If you were guilty of a crime that is always punished, and you went before a judge who always convicts, then you would need a lawyer who never lost a case.

He is the great and only Savior going to the most holy of all places, to defend the worst of sinners. The worst crime before the highest judge demands the greatest defense. There is no court higher than God’s; there is no judge higher than God; there is no crime worse than mine; and there is no Savior like Jesus.

Kistemaker sees the connection between the superlative title and the work of Christ when he writes, “In effect, the metaphor of the shepherd who dies for his sheep is equivalent to that of the high priest who offers himself as a sacrifice for his people. Especially the adjective *great* is telling, for the writer of Hebrews calls Jesus the great high priest (4:14).”¹⁶ Yes, Jesus is the good Shepherd, but more specifically he is the Great Shepherd. Jesus is the one who secures access to the Father for us and he is the one who sustains our access to the Father by the fact that he is always before the Father interceding for us. He is simultaneously the “way maker” and he is the way. He grants access and he is himself the access. He brings us to the throne and keeps us before the throne.

Now it becomes clear how this fits into the argument of the book. It is as if the superior nature of Christ, supported by the messianic passages is necessary to build the argument for his superior work in chapter 9. His nature is superior therefore his work is superlative. Jesus is the Great Shepherd.

Corporate

The definitiveness of the title helps us understand the implicit messianic role of Christ. The fact that it is singular helps us understand the superlative nature of Christ. Yet there is also a corporate aspect that cannot be overlooked. He is the Great Shepherd *of the Sheep*.

¹⁶Simon Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 430.

Hebrews is, as much or more than any other book, a corporate book. The book of Hebrews, like most of the epistles, is written to a congregation of believers. Christ is sovereign over all, therefore fallen sheep are comforted, and straying sheep are warned. Morris notes, "It is a piece of imagery that stresses the care of our Lord for his own, for the sheep are helpless without their shepherd. But an aspect we in modern times sometimes miss is that the shepherd has absolute sovereignty over his flock ..." ¹⁷ Thus the sovereignty of the shepherd embedded in the title motivates the flock to heed the warning passages.

Among the chief exegetical concerns is whether the warning passages were written to believers in a congregation, or to a community of believers within who are true and false believers. The answer to this question determines how one will interpret the warning passages.

The Warning Passages (2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:19-39; 12:14-29)

One approach to the warning passages is that the warning passages were written to believers. If so, the warning is to continue in faith or you will lose reward, or lose your salvation, depending on your exegetical approach or theological disposition.

Another option is to understand the warning passages as written to a community of faith more generally. In the community of faith there are those who are true believers, and some who think they are, but are not. They are in the community, but are not connected to its source. Thus they are warned not to stray away from the faith and in so doing prove that while they are in the community, they are not a part of the church. These general categories express the heart of the issue, but there are a number of approaches. ¹⁸

Whatever view one takes, the problem is extreme. They are not paying attention so they have neglected salvation (2:1-4); they have an unbelieving heart (3:7-19), therefore they fail to reach the promised land and will not enter the rest (4:6-13); they have fallen away from what they have heard (5:11-6:12); they do not endure (10:19-39), and they fail to receive the grace of God (12:14-29).

Now the tragic irony of all of this is that because it is true, those being warned cannot see that it is true. While the lack of evidence that they are truly in the faith should be shocking to them, it is lost on them due to their unbelief. They are in the community so that they have some semblance of corporate identity with this community, but no real relationship with Christ. The evidence of this missing relationship should alarm them, but they do not see it. Some will not heed the warning.

Again, the warning passages demonstrate the corporate nature of the book as the Sovereign Shepherd addresses the communal whole. It is the corporate nature made explicit in the title, the Great Shepherd *of the Sheep*.

¹⁷Leon Morris, *Hebrews*, Expositor's Bible Commentary (Zondervan, 1981), 154.

¹⁸See Herbert W. Bateman IV, *Four Views of the Warning Passages in Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007).

This nature is perhaps best seen in the Shepherd's Psalm.

In Psalm 23 the Psalmist paints a picture of Christ. Those afraid to press that point here are aided by John 10 where Jesus refers to himself as the Good Shepherd, forever linking the two images. The conclusion of the Shepherd's Psalm is vv. 5-6, where David writes,

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

All of these benefits flow from v. 1. "The Lord is my Shepherd," therefore "I shall not want."

Laying the shepherding language in the context of Hebrews, if the Lord is the Shepherd, he will give the grace to heed all the warnings. He will keep one from falling away, from lack of endurance, etc. So be warned! Don't fall away! It is in pressing in and heeding the warning that the grace of God is shown to be operative and confidence grows that the salvation secured objectively by the grace of Christ is not some esoteric vacuum, but an experiential presence. Thus, heeding the warnings give greater confidence that believers are in fact protected from the things that they warn against.

In sum, what we have in Hebrews are some who want to dwell in the house of the Lord forever, but they do not want the Lord to shepherd them. Hebrews is a warning to those who do not want Christ to shepherd them. Sadly, they want the fellowship of the fold without the governance of a Shepherd.

It was C.S. Lewis who said there are only two kinds of people. Those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, "Thy will be done." The warning is this, "Pay attention, and don't drift because if the Lord is not your Shepherd you will not dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

This wonderful, rich and precious title—Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd of the Sheep—this vanguard against all that would harm us—this protection and joy, is exclusive. It is only for those who heed his warnings. Those who will not be shepherded will not be saved. For, they are not sheep.

Conclusion

He is *the* great Shepherd. The exclusive nature of this title points to his messianic role as referenced in Psalm 110 that the writer is treating. He is the *great* Shepherd. The adjective is given to Christ for all that he effected for us in his high priestly and mediatorial role that is the bulk of the argument as to why Christ is, in fact, exalted and high. Finally, the corporate nature of the title, the great Shepherd *of the Sheep*, shows the true danger of the warning passages as warnings against infiltration into the flock without behavior that imitates the Great Shepherd of the Sheep.

What has not been addressed above is the obvious. Hebrews was sent as a word of encouragement and hope for believers who were being urged to endure in the light of the temptation to fall away. The title, while used here as a picture of Christ in Hebrews, had a very practical function of encouraging believers in the faith. A Christ who was the Great Shepherd, a Christ who was raised for that purpose, could surely "...equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Heb 13:21). He is that great.

In opposition to the idea of a Great Shepherd providing himself every good thing is the notion of trusting things to fate. The modern idea of fate is not unlike the medieval idea. The medieval idea was that individuals were riding on a large *rota fortunae*, or "wheel of fortune." Like riding on a large wheel, fate took you up and up. However, your ascendance was tempered by the notion that this was in fact a wheel and not a ladder. Going up only meant that as the wheel turned your descent was inevitable; up, then down without an avenue of recourse. This is a horrible way to think of life, a Christless way, a Shepherdless way. The soul of the believer is not trusted to hapless fate. Rather, we are secured to a singularly wonderful Shepherd, who is exclusive in his work, and whose watch care over us does not wax or wane. He is Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd of the Sheep.

*Observations on the Historical Reliability of the Old Testament*¹

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Preliminary Remarks

No other collection of books of antiquity has been criticized as much as the Old Testament. And it is undeniably so that many reported events, stories, and statements of the Old Testament seem to come from another world, which has hardly anything to do with my world and my way of thinking.

Obstacles to Understanding the Old Testament

The New Testament was written over a period of about 60 years. It is written in an Indo-European language: Greek. The philosophical environment of the New Testament is no stranger to us, because our Western educational system is based on the teachings and philosophies of ancient Greece and Rome. Athens, Corinth, Thessaloniki, Crete and Cyprus are for many household names and many have already been there. But who knows Nineveh or Elam or Zoar or Thebes? Most Bible readers do not know where Hazor is located, and why it was called the leader of the Canaanite kingdoms, and therefore, the most important city of the Canaanites (Jos 11:10).² In contrast to the New Testament, the Old Testament was written over a period of about 1000 years with different historical, cultural, and linguistic contexts. Strange and changing cultures—Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, Syr-

¹Written for Paige Patterson for his 70th birthday.

²The city of Hazor during the Bronze Age was about 200 acres large and was inhabited by probably 40,000 people. It is mentioned in Egyptian execration texts, in at least 15 documents from Mari (Abraham Malamat, "Mari and Hazor – Trade Relations in the Old Babylonian Period." *Biblical Archaeology Today 1990*, Suppl., Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society [1993]: 66-70), frequently in texts from the New Kingdom, in the Amarna letters, in the Papyrus Petersburg 1116A, and in the Papyrus Anastasi I. See Sharon Zuckerman, "Hazor," *New International Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 2 (Nashville: Zondervan, 2007). 752-53. For its socio-economic importance see Th. E. Levy, ed. *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land* (London and Washington: Leicester University Press, 1998). 306-308 and Abraham Malamat, "Hazor 'The Head of All Those Kingdoms,'" *JBL* 79 (1960): 12-19.

ia—influenced ancient Israel.³ The first testament was written in a totally foreign language, Semitic, and not in Indo-European vernacular. In many places in the Old Testament we encounter a strange way of thinking and an alien political culture. The geographic and historical backgrounds of many Old Testament books remain hidden to us, unless we strive to find it out. Therefore the messages of these books often remain hidden to us as well or at best we understand it partially, for God acts and speaks not into a historical vacuum, but always into a historical and particular situation. God's word is not a magic word that one should use regardless of the historical and literary contexts. God's word is inextricably bound up with the dawn of humanity, the beginning and duration of the history of Israel. God's word cannot be separated from the history of mankind. When God speaks, he discloses something of himself in the culture of ancient Near Eastern antiquity. All this promotes a very selective reading of the Old Testament.

Many Christians have difficulty understanding the Old Testament because of the variety of literary genres and the way it narrates events. The Old Testament contains prayers—many have learned to pray in using the Psalms—wisdom exhortations, philosophical discussions, royal novels, songs of mourning, war records, genealogies, laws, cultic regulations, and more. These were for the people of that time of great importance. Each literary genre has its special characteristics which must be taken into account, if one wants to understand them adequately.⁴

The Christian was and is not the primary addressee of the Old Testament, but the ancient Israelite. This should never be forgotten by Christians.

Thus it is not surprising that from the earliest times in church and secular history, the various statements and reports of the Old Testament have been criticized and misunderstood. Even active church members tend to approach the Old Testament with a Marcionistic method. Marcion, a wealthy shipowner, businessman, and son of the bishop of Sinope, which was located at the southern coast of the Black Sea in northern Turkey, was excommunicated by the church in Rome in A.D. 144, because he tried to free Christianity from its Jewish roots, and to determine the uniqueness of the Christian faith in antithesis to ancient Israel and Judaism. He was of the opinion that the Gospel revealed a new, until then unknown, God of love and kindness, which was proclaimed by Jesus as his father. The God of the Old Testament and the God of Jesus have nothing to do with each other. He also removed all references to the Old Testament in the New Testament.⁵

³Walter C. Kaiser, "Is the Old Testament Historically Reliable?" *In Defense of the Bible*, Steven B. Cowan and Terry L. Wilder, eds. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013), 202.

⁴See D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr. eds. *Cracking Old Testament Codes: A Guide to Interpreting the Literary Genres of the Old Testament* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 1995).

⁵Gerhard May, "Markion/Markioniten" in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 4th ed. Vol. 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 834-36.

The Philosophical and Theological Presuppositions of Modern Criticism on the Old Testament

The so-called scientific study of the Old Testament is very closely connected to the historical-critical method. With some scholars it is one and the same. The historical-critical method authenticates a scientific method insofar as on the one hand it preserves the historical and geographical distance between the researcher and his research object, the Old Testament, as well as the historical development and growth of the Old Testament. Furthermore its research results are based on the critical treatment of the Old Testament.⁶

The Basis of a Scientific Study of the Old Testament

In the humanities, and theology belongs to the humanities, accidental historical truth can never be a proof of rational truth.⁷ That is, past events cannot be obligatory for the present. Truth is only that which can be justified and explained by the present, and which makes sense to modern man.⁸ Miracles are only accepted if they can be proven by an actual miracle today. Thus today's criterion of plausibility is the norm for reality and truth.⁹

Baruch de Spinoza. For Baruch Spinoza rationality was the determining factor in deciding about the reality and truth of the Biblical accounts. In his *Tractatus-Theologico-Politicus* of 1670 he wrote, "... that the power of nature is the divine power and force itself."¹⁰ Whatever is against nature

⁶Hans-Jürgen Zobel, "Einleitungswissenschaft I," *Theologische Real Enzyklopädie*, vol. IX (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1982), 460: "Sie verbürgt insofern die Wissenschaftlichkeit, als sie einerseits den historischen (und geografischen) Abstand zwischen dem Forscher und seinem Forschungsgegenstand, eben dem Alten Testament, sowie das historische Werden und Wachsen des Alten Testaments wahrt und andererseits ihre Ergebnisse auf die kritische Behandlung des Alten Testaments gründet."

⁷Gottfried Ephraim Lessing, "Über den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft, 1777," in *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts und anderer Schriften* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1965), 31ff.

⁸Gerhard Maier, "Wahrheit und Wirklichkeit im Geschichtsverständnis des Alten Testaments", in *Israel in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Beiträge zur Geschichte Israels und zum jüdisch-christlichen Dialog. Bericht von der 9. Studienkonferenz des Arbeitskreises für evangelikale Theologie vom 20-23. August 1996 in Bad Blankenburg* (Wuppertal und Giessen: Brockhaus and Brunnen, 1996). 10. English version: "Truth and Reality in the Historical Understanding of the Old Testament," in *Israel's Past in Present Research*. V. Philips Long, ed. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 193.

About reality and truth in the OT see Heinrich von Siebenthal, "Wahrheit' bei den Althebräern. Anmerkungen zur Diskrepanztheorie aus linguistischer Sicht," in *Theologische Wahrheit und die Postmoderne*, H.H. Klement, ed. (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 2000), 208-32.

⁹Gerhard Maier, 10; English version, 193-94. *Gotthold Ephraim Lessings sämtliche Schriften* 10 (Bd. Hrsg.: Karl Lachmann, Berlin:Voß'sche Buchhandlung, 1839), 36: "zufällige Geschichtswahrheiten können der Beweis von notwendigen Vernunftwahrheiten nie werden." (accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason). Lessing's book: *Über den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft*. An den Herrn Direktor Schumann, zu Hannover (Braunschweig: Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1777).

¹⁰Baruch de Spinoza, *Theologisch-Politischer Traktat* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1984), 95. *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, trans. by Robert Willis from the Latin (London: Trübner, 1862).

is against God (*contra naturam est versus deum*). The general laws of nature are determined by reason, so the Biblical accounts and content can be validated only by reason. Thus the validity of the Biblical content can only be determined by human reason of today. If the Biblical accounts cannot be validated by reason they should be rejected. If the miracles of the Old Testament are not in accordance with the general laws of nature, then they have been either “inserted by an evildoer into Scriptures,”¹¹ or they reflect then-contemporary ideas.¹²

During the Enlightenment, human reason emancipated itself from the authority of religious traditions. The movement did not consider it as self-evident that the Bible speaks reliably of God and the world.¹³ The ecclesiastical authority was criticized. Kant urged people to have the courage to use their own mind.

But even before the Enlightenment, during the Renaissance, there existed a “militant humanism.”¹⁴ The theocentric world view was replaced by an anthropocentric one. The study of languages, literature, history, and philosophy was done for its own sake. A religious correlation is no longer seen.

Thus a different worldview, not newly developed critical methods, was responsible for the view that the Biblical accounts did not report real events in history. One tried to leave behind the supernatural and the miracle-like events; that which was not accessible to human rationality was left behind and only what made rational sense was acceptable. One could believe in God without a special revelation of God in Scripture or miracles.

Ernst Troeltsch. The nineteenth century supplemented this development with its view of historiography: the conviction was that the task of historians was to show how events actually happened. This reinforced the critical attitude towards the Biblical accounts. Leopold von Ranke propagated the greatest possible objectivity based on human rationality. Therefore, the sources were screened in accordance with human rationality. That is, the individual determined what is genuine and true in the Biblical accounts.

These critics were looking for criteria on the basis of which one could judge whether a report is historical or unhistorical:

- Any report that is not consistent with the well-known and universally accepted laws of nature is unhistorical. That is, each report, in which God intervenes in the natural course of things, is unhistorical.
- Every narrative report that cannot be supported by extra-Biblical sources is unhistorical.

At the beginning of the twentieth century (1913) the great Ernst Tro-

¹¹Spinoza, 106.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Robert Morgan and John Barton, *Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: University Press, 1991), 17.

¹⁴John H. Hayes und J.Maxwell Miller, *Israelite and Judean History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 34.

eltsch said that within the area of history only judgments of probability exist of various degrees of probabilities. Therefore, the degree of probability in any tradition has to be determined because there exists only a probable accuracy.¹⁵

However, he saw more clearly than others that the application of historical criticism to religious tradition changes profoundly the inner attitude toward it and the appreciation of it.¹⁶ In addition, the means by which criticism is made at all possible is the application of analogy.¹⁷ This means, that everything which is not verifiable by external evidence is non-historical, because it cannot be verified.

Hartmut Gese and Herbert Donner. In the second half of the twentieth century there was a new direction in the approach of the Old Testament. Professor Hartmut Gese from the University of Tübingen views the revelation of God in the Old Testament as a mere Jewish tradition. Thus the revelation of God in the Old Testament is only an Israelite tradition. The truth is not on the surface of the text but lies beyond the surface.¹⁸ No longer is it a question of whether something has really happened historically, but the fact that one recognizes the theological truth behind the reported event. For example, whether the events at Sinai really happened as reported is beside the point. What is important is that there was a revelation of God at Sinai.¹⁹ All this means that wrong facts could still allow true interpretations.²⁰

Herbert Donner, professor emeritus from the University of Kiel, goes even further in his book on the history of Israel.²¹ He maintains that it is methodologically not permissible to assume that something could have happened in the way it is reported.²² Whether the Old Testament is historically reliable is therefore subject to the approval of the researcher.

Minimalists. In recent decades, a small group of Old Testament schol-

¹⁵*Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II: Zur religiösen Lage, Religionsphilosophie und Ethik.* 2nd ed. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1922), 731.

¹⁶Ibid., 732 “die Anwendung historischer Kritik auf die religiöse Überlieferung wird die innere Stellung zu ihr und ihre Auffassung tief greifend verändert ...” (the application of historical criticism to the religious tradition is changing the inner attitude toward it and their views profoundly).

¹⁷Ibid. “... das Mittel, wodurch Kritik überhaupt erst möglich wird, ist die Anwendung der Analogie” (the means by which criticism is made at all possible is the use of analogy).

¹⁸“Das biblische Schriftverständnis” in *Zur biblischen Theologie. Alttestamentliche Vorträge* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2. Aufl., 1983), 24: “... die jenseits des Vorfindlichen liegende Wahrheit” (the truth lies beyond the existing).

¹⁹Ibid., 23.

²⁰Gerhard Maier, “Truth and Reality in the Historical Understanding of the Old Testament” In *Israel’s Past in Present Research. Essays on Ancient Israelite Historiography.* V. Ph. Long, ed. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 196. In the German original it reads: “Falsche Fakten ermöglichen dennoch wahre Deutungen.” (“Wahrheit und Wirklichkeit,” 13.)

²¹*Geschichte des Volkes Israel und seiner Nachbarn in Grundzügen.* 2 vol. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984-1986).

²²Ibid., vol. I, 26: “Vielmehr steht dahinter die methodisch unerlaubte Annahme der Möglichkeit, etwas könne sich so zugetragen haben, wie es berichtet wird” (Rather, behind it is the illicit methodological assumption of the possibility that events could have happened as reported).

ars at the universities of Copenhagen,²³ Sheffield,²⁴ Tel Aviv,²⁵ and Rome²⁶

²³See especially Nils Peter Lemche, *Early Israel*, VTS 37 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 415-16: He asserts, "... that the traditions about early Israel are so late that they are useless for a historical reconstruction." The Biblical account about early Israel is to be rejected in regard to its historical statements. It should be treated like other legendary material which is basically ahistorical. Only in exceptionally cases can it be verified through comparative material.

Similarly, in his book *Die Vorgeschichte Israels. Von den Anfängen bis zum Ausgang des 13. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. Biblische Enzyklopädie 1* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1996), 68-69: The pre-history of Israel, the Middle East and Egypt, as it is depicted in the Old Testament, cannot be considered as a historical source, but only as a literary fiction. "This is a statement which actually does not need to be corroborated with an accurate historical record" (69). A historical background for the pentateuchal narratives does not exist. The Biblical sources should be seen as what they really are: "... Adventure stories and legends that have been shaped by late narrators and written to entertain their audiences with stories 'from the old days' and to instruct them." ("... Abenteuergeschichten und Legenden, die von späten Erzählern geformt und geschrieben worden sind, um ihr Publikum mit Geschichten 'aus alten Tagen' zu unterhalten und zu belehren" [69].) Thomas L. Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People from the Written & Archaeological Sources*. (Leiden: Brill, 1992), especially 1-26, 77-126, and "Can You Understand This?" *BAR* 26.2 (2000): 36-37. See also the interview with Thompson and Lemche and the discussion with Dever and McCarter in *BAR* 23.4 (1997): 26-42.

²⁴Philip R. Davies, *In Search of Ancient Israel*. JSOT Suppl. 148 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1992). The historical statements in the Biblical narration are rejected, because they should be counted as ahistorical like other legendary material. This means that only in exceptional cases can they be verified. See Ian W. Provan and his critique on Davies and the minimalist positions in "Ideologies, Literary and Critical Reflections on Recent Writing on the History of Israel," *JBL* 114 (1995): 585-606. Very illuminating about the method of the minimalists is V. Philips Long, "How Reliable Are Biblical Reports? Repeating Lester Grabbe's Comparative Experiment," *VT* 52 (2002): 367-84.

²⁵Israel Finkelstein and Neil A. Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed, Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origins of its Sacred Texts* (New York: Free Press, 2001). Also by the same authors: *David and Solomon, In Search of the Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition* (New York: Simon & Schusters, 2006). A. Rainey, "Stones For Bread: Archaeology Versus History," *NEA* 64.3 (2001): 140-49. Thomas Pola, "Was bleibt von der älteren Geschichte Israels? Methodische und sachliche Bemerkungen zu neueren minimalistischen Positionen," *Theologische Beiträge* 34 (2003): 238-55. See also the debate between Finkelstein and Mazar in Brian B. Schmidt, ed. *The Quest for the Historical Israel. Debating Archaeology and the History of Early Israel* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007). In his contributions in this book Finkelstein dissociates himself from the minimalists like Lemche, Thompson and Davies., who think that most of the Old Testament books were written during the Persian or Hellenistic times. For a rebuttal of this position see Efraín Velázquez II, "The Persian Period and the Origins of Israel: Beyond the Myths," in Richard Hess, et al. eds. *Critical Issues in Early Israelite History* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 61-76.

In Finkelstein's view, the time of King Josiah (640-609 BC) is crucial. Everything that is reported before the time of Josiah in the Old Testament was written by scribes at the time of Josiah or rewritten so that it was consistent with the values and ideas of Josiah's time. Biblical accounts of events from the 7th, 8th, or 9th century BC are historically more reliable than those from the period before the 9th century. All reports before 9th century are historically of low value.

²⁶Giovanni Garbini, *Myth and History in the Bible*, JSOT, 362 (London / New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003). (Original: *Storia e ideologia nell'Israele antico* [Brecchia, 2001]). He writes that the Bible is only in its composition a historic document, but its content is mythical. To Garbini the author was someone from the 2nd-century BC, who came out of a priestly milieu. He imitated the Hellenistic genre of historiography. The texts that were

have drawn attention to their position on the historical reliability of the Old Testament. In the trade they are referred to as minimalists. They claim that there never was a land seizure under the leadership of Moses and Joshua, that David was not a historical person, and that a Solomonic empire exists only in the imagination of people who consider the statements and reports of the Bible as real and true. Moreover, they propose that the OT was written during the Hellenistic period, from the fourth-century BC onward. At best, only portions were written during the Babylonian Exile. If anything, the individual authors of the Biblical texts composed stories. They have to be equated with today's novella. Never was it their goal to write an objective history. What really happened in the Levant 3000 years ago is irrelevant for the Biblical stories.²⁷

Reply to Modern Historical Criticism on the Old Testament

The Old Testament is a Document of God's Revelation to Mankind

From the above brief history of the philosophical and theological premises of the modern scholarly understanding of the Old Testament,²⁸ it is clear that the Old Testament is not considered an instrument of the revelation of God, like the New Testament (Hebrews 1:1-3) does. In the reported history of the Old Testament about the people of God it is evident that the Old Testament does not want to give mere historical facts to the reader, but to interpret them in the light of faith in the God of Israel.²⁹ Reading the OT differently means to understand the Biblical texts and the Bible narrators and theologians differently as they wanted to be understood.³⁰ If one detaches texts from their original contexts, literary and historical, one must look for new contexts and then the text changes its meaning because the author, the time of writing, and the addressee change.

To concede to some OT scholars that the interpreter should decide whether the OT reports really happened is to open the door widely for radi-

available to him, he composed into a great story with a certain ideology in order to create a framework.

²⁷In contrast see the comments of Hubert Cancik, *Mythische und historische Wahrheit*, SBS 48 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1970), 71-78 and 91-95. Prof. Cancik is co-editor of the *New Pauly Encyclopedia of the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 2002-2011). A multi-volume standard work on the ancient world.

²⁸For a survey of the history of critical scholarship especially in the English speaking world see John H. Hayes, "The History of the Study of Israelite and Judean History From the Renaissance to the Present," in *Israel's Past in Present Research. Essays on Ancient Israelite Historiography*. V. Philips Long, ed. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 7-42.

²⁹ "...bloßen historischen Fakten dem Leser mitzuteilen, sondern sie im Licht des Glaubens an den Gott Israels zu interpretieren" (not to convey to the reader mere historical facts, but to interpret them in the light of faith in the God of Israel). Josef Schreiner, *Das Alte Testament Verstehen*, Neue Echter Bibel, Ergänzungsband 4 zum Alten Testament (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1999), 137.

³⁰Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Routledge, 1998), 137.

cal subjectivism. The OT has then no real historical and theological authority.

However, it must also be pointed out that the OT does not report facts without interpretation. The OT presents its interpretation with the claim that it is the correct interpretation. It cannot speak of God without connecting him with the history of the nations, since history is created by him.³¹ Whenever the OT reports historical events, it always puts them in relation to God and the relationship that people have with him.³²

The Old Testament Makes No Distinction between Truth and Reality

The contention of this paper is what is reported has actually happened, and it is reported truthfully. The ancient rabbinic exegesis and that of the New Testament writers does not know of any diastase, any cleavage of truth and reality of the reports of the Old Testament.³³ No doubt is expressed in these writings that historical events described in the Old Testament happened the way they are reported in the OT. In the Old Testament truth and reality are not in confrontational opposition to each other.

Old Testament history and disassociation of it from the relationship of mankind with God is impossible.³⁴ It is a characteristic of the Old Testament that Yahweh is one and of himself.³⁵ The God of the Old Testament shows and defines itself through history. He called the fathers to follow him and promised them the land (Gen 12:1-3; 15:18; 17:8; 50: 24; Ex 6:4; Num 26:53; Jos 1:6; Jer 3:18; etc.). He led his people from Egypt to the Promised Land (Ex 20:5; Deut 5:6).³⁶ He made with them a covenant, according to the form of Ancient Near Eastern treaties.³⁷

³¹Karl-Heinz Michel, "Gottes Wirken in der Geschichte," In *Glaube und Geschichte: Heilsgeschichte als Thema der Theologie*. Helge Stadelmann, ed. (Giessen: Brunnen-Verlag, 1986), 88-133.

³²Gerhard Maier, "Truth and Reality" in *Israel's Past*, 202-203.

³³There are 295 quotations of the OT in the NT 278 different verses of the Old Testament are quoted in the NT. Through the use of personal pronouns, with which the writers of the NT often start their OT quotes, it is clear that the information given by the Old Testament, including the historical statements, were for the writers of the New Testament and their times relevant.

The Apostle Paul used as the basis of his doctrine of justification in Romans such strange texts like Gen 3. But this text is considered in OT scholarship as a myth. But if Gen 3 is a myth and does not contain any historical truth, then the whole argument of Paul regarding justification is invalid.

³⁴Ibid., 19-20.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶G. Maier, "Truth and Reality," in *Israel's Past*, 203.

³⁷Markus Zehnder, "Building on Stone? Deuteronomy and Esarhaddon's Loyalty Oaths (I): Some Preliminary Observations," *BBR* 19.3 (2009): 341-74; "(II): Some Additional Observations," *BBR* 19.4 (2009): 511-35. Kenneth A. Kitchen and Paul J.N. Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East*, Part I-III (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012). Part I: The Texts, 695-910; Part II: Texts, Notes and Chromograms, 32-34; 71-86; 263. Part III: Overall Historical Survey, 69-74; 274-75.

The God of the Old Testament is a God of History

When the OT speaks about historical events initiated by God it is clear from the context that they are not individual works of God in history, but about the rule of God in the world, which the individual events portray throughout (Isa 10:12; 28:21, 45:11-13; 46:10-11; Hab 1:5; Psa 33:11; Jer 49:20ff; 50:45; etc.). The historical events are wrought by God's word, by his initiative. Rendtorff adds, "History in the Old Testament is never mentioned for its own sake. And as a rule it is not reported under conditions and with intentions as they are used in contemporary historical thinking."³⁸ History is not a random compilation of unconnected events, and not a series of historical facts, which are chronologically well organized and in the main without any gaps, but history is a complex structure of events which make sense in their given context. The sequence of events always incorporates interpretation. An objective historiography does not exist, therefore it is absurd to demand such.³⁹ In order to recognize the truth of ancient Near Eastern and Old Testament events or the existence of ancient customs and traditions, the historian insists that these are attested elsewhere at the same time. Thus, the Bible and especially the Old Testament is placed in a disadvantageous position because it stands alone in many of its statements. Nevertheless, there is material and written documents from the ancient Near East confirming events reported in the Bible, or at least make them likely.⁴⁰

Literacy in the Old Testament and Its Environment

The idea that the Old Testament was late and written in the exilic or post-exilic period because early humans were wandering nomads and ignorant of writing is without evidence; moreover, the notion that during their migrations they told each other legends around the campfire, which were changed again and again until they finally appeared in the exilic or postexilic period, likewise has no objective basis and contradicts what we know from the ancient Near East and the Old Testament.

Even the Biblical patriarchs from around 2000 BC were not pure nomads, but semi-nomadic people who practiced agriculture and stayed for long periods of time at one place. The ancient Near East had a highly developed literacy.⁴¹ From at least 3100 BC people were able to write. This does

³⁸Rolf Rendtorff, *Theologie des Alten Testaments. Ein kanonischer Entwurf*, Bd. II: Thematische Entfaltung, 243: "Geschichte wird im Alten Testament nie um ihrer selbst willen erzählt. Und sie wird in aller Regel nicht unter Voraussetzungen und mit Intentionen berichtet, wie sie neuzeitlichem historischen Denken entsprechen."

³⁹Hans Wildberger, *Jahwe und sein Volk. Gesammelte Aufsätze zum Alten Testament*. Zu seinem 70 Geburtstag, H.H. Schmid und O.H. Steck, eds. (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1979), 75.

⁴⁰Alan Millard, "Die Geschichte Israels auf dem Hintergrund der Religionsgeschichte des alten Vorderen Orients," in *Israel in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Beiträge zur Geschichte Israels und zum jüdisch-christlichen Dialog*, G. Maier, ed. (Giessen/Basel, 1996), 25.

⁴¹Klaas R. Veenhof, ed. *Cuneiform Archives and Libraries*. Papers read at the 30e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, 4-8 July, 1983. Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, Istanbul, 1986. Maria Brosius, ed. *Ancient Archives and Archival*

not mean that this was true of everyone. Even today there are in our highly developed countries illiterate people. The written documents of this early time are not limited to business administration. From the middle of the third millennium BC there existed literary texts of different types from different cities (Shuruppak, Tell Abu Salabich, Nippur, Lagash, Kish, Dschemdet Nasr, Gasur, Ebla, etc.). In Shuruppak part of the literary texts were found in private homes.⁴² In Nippur hymns from the middle of the third millennium BC came to light, and in Ebla (2500-2000 BC) two tablets with a myth.⁴³

Archives and libraries with their ingenious storage and catalog systems⁴⁴ have been unearthed suggesting that by the middle of the third millennium BC people did not just start to develop a written culture, but could read and write already many years before that time. The oldest written documents come from 3300 BC from Uruk, the Biblical Erech, and today's Warka.⁴⁵

The Old Testament itself attests a repeated call or a note that a variety of people should write down events or speeches. For example: Moses (Exod 17:14; 24:4-7; 34:27, 28; Num 33:2; Deut 28:58, 61), Joshua (Josh 24:26), Elijah (2 Chr 21:12), Samuel (1 Sam 10:25), Isaiah (Isa 8:1), Jeremiah (Jer 25:13; 29:1; 30:2; 36:1ff; 51:60-64), Ezekiel (Ezek 43:11), Habakkuk (Hab 2:2), Daniel (Dan 7:1; 12:4). They not only wrote down God's speeches to them, but also recorded hiking trails, camp sites (Num 33:2), victories and battles (Exod 17:14), songs (Deut 31:22; 2 Sam 1:18), divorces (Deut 24:1), land surveying (Josh 18:8, 9), letters (2 Sam 11:14; Jer 29:25, 29), laws (Deut 27:3), contracts (Jer 32:44), dreams and visions (Dan 7:1), advice (Prov 22:20), annals and chronicles of the rulers (1 Kgs 14:11, 29; 15:23; 1 Chr 29:12; 2 Chr 9:29; etc.). Furthermore the Old Testament refers again and again to professional writers (Num 11:16-26; 2 Sam 8:17; 20:25; 1 Kgs 4:3; 2 Kgs 12:11; Jer 52:25; 1 Chr 4:41; 24:6).⁴⁶ Exceptional space is devoted to the records of events from the various reigns of the Israelite kings. According to the testimony of the Old Testament there was a book of daily events from the reign of the kings of Israel (1 Kgs 14:19; 15:31; 16:5, 14, 20, 27; 22:39; 2

Traditions. Concepts of Record-Keeping in the Ancient World (Oxford: University Press, 2003).

In the ancient city of Nippur, located southeast of Baghdad, archaeologists found in 1949 a farmers' calendar, which gives rather exact instructions for the agriculture. This text was dated between 1700-1550 BC. See also Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sumerians* (Chicago: University Press, 1963), 340-342. This text only makes sense if the farmers could read it.

⁴²Horst Klengel, ed. *Kulturgeschichte des alten Vorderasien* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1989), 64-65.

⁴³Lionel Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World* (Yale: University Press, 2001), 3.

⁴⁴Helmuth Pehlke, "Schriftlichkeit im Alten Vorderen Orient und im Alten Testament," in *Zur Umwelt des Alten Testaments* (Holzgerlingen: Hänssler, 2002), 22-23. Maria Brosius, ed. *Ancient Archives and Archival Traditions. Concepts of Record-Keeping in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁴⁵André Lemaire, "Writing and Writing Materials," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 6 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 999.

⁴⁶For more information about writing see H. Pehlke, "Schriftlichkeit," 12-41.

Kgs 1:18; 10:34; 13:8, 12; 14:15, 28; 15:11, 15, 21, 26, 31). There was also a book with current events of the kings of Judah (1 Kgs 14:29; 15:7, 23; 22:46; 2 Kgs 8:23; 12:20; 14:18; 15:6, 36; 16:19; 20:20; 21:17, 25; 23:28; 24:5). In addition there existed a joint book of the kings of Israel and Judah (2 Chr 27:7; 35:27; 36:8) and a joint book of the kings of Judah and Israel (2 Chr 16:11; 25:26; 28:26; 32:32).⁴⁷

Controversy swirls around the matter as to whether there were early scribal schools in ancient Israel.⁴⁸ However, inscriptions found in recent decades make it likely that there were indeed such schools in ancient Israel.⁴⁹

Furthermore, the following facts should also be considered: The Biblical writers were almost obsessed with tying the reported events together with the geography and history of the ancient Near East. Not only do they point to written documents that they have used for preparing their reports, but also point to mementos that appear in the reported event and at the time of writing were still present, thus verifiable to the reader. For example, the 12 stones at the Jordan fording created memory of the passage (Jos 4:1-9) as did the stone in the field of Joshua of Beth-Shemesh, on which the Philistines had put the ark (1 Sam 6:18). Moreover, the poles of the Ark of the Covenant which reached through the curtain separated the inner sanctuary, i.e., the

⁴⁷These Biblical data can be confirmed by archaeological findings. See Richard S. Hess, "Literacy in Iron Age Israel," in *Windows into Old Testament History*, V. Philips Long, et al. eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 82-102. As early as 1995, the British assyriologist Alan R. Millard counted 485 texts from 47 different locations. Some texts were found in small farmsteads. See his essay: "The Knowledge of Writing in Iron Age Palestine," *TynB* 46 (1995): 207-217. Ron E. Tappy and Peter Kyle McCarter, eds. *Literate Culture and Tenth Century Canaan: The Tel Zayit Abecedarium in Context* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008). Nadav Na'aman, "The Contribution of the Amarna Letters to the Debate on Jerusalem's Political Position in the Tenth Century B.C.E." *BASOR* 304 (1996): 17-27, esp. 21-23.

⁴⁸For it are: Lorenz Dürr, *Das Erziehungswesen im Alten Testament und im Antiken Orient* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1932). Hans-Jürgen Hermission, *Studien zur israelitischen Spruchweisheit* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1968). André Lemaire, *Les écoles et la formation de la Bible dans l'ancien Israël* (Fribourg: Editions universitaires and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1981). Émile Puech, "Les écoles dans l'Israël préexilique; Données épigraphiques," in *Congress Volume: Jerusalem, 1986*. J.A. Emerton, ed. VTS 40 (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 189-203. Bernhard Lang, "Schule und Unterricht im alten Israel," in *La sagesse de l'Ancient Testament*, M. Gilbert, ed. (Leuven: Peeters, 1979), 186-201. Eric William Heaton, *The School Tradition of the Old Testament* (Oxford: University Press, 1994). Graham I. Davies, "Were There Schools in Ancient Israel?" In *Wisdom in Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of J.A. Emerton*, J. Day, et al., eds. (Cambridge: University Press, 1995), 199-211. Against it are: Friedemann W. Golka, *The Leopard's Spots: Biblical and African Wisdom in Proverbs* (London: T&T Clark, 1993), esp. 11. Stuart Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom* (Oxford: University Press, 1994), esp. 156. David W. Jamieson-Drake, *Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Judah: A Socio-Archaeological Approach*, JSOT 109 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1991). Roger Norman Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty in the Books of Proverbs*, JSOT 99 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1990), 69-71 admits that there might have been a scribal training in ancient Israel; however, there were only very few scribal families.

⁴⁹See Christopher A. Rollston, "Scribal Education in Ancient Israel: The Old Hebrew Epigraphic Evidence," *BASOR* 344 (2006): 47-74. *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel: Epigraphic Evidence from the Iron Age* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010).

Most Holy Place, from the room in front of it (1 Kgs 8:8).

The accumulated evidence from the ancient Near East and the Old Testament itself rejects the idea that nomads who told campsite legends, myths, and fairy tales were also responsible for inventing Biblical stories.

Biblical Characters and Events are Mentioned Outside the Old Testament

The Route of the Exodus. The list of campgrounds in Num 33 was nothing extraordinary in the ancient world. From the eighteenth century BC a Babylonian travel report has been preserved which describes a journey from Mesopotamia to the Syrian city of Emar in the north. It mentions the number of nights spent at each location.⁵⁰ From the same period exists a report from the Assyrian Shamshi-Adad I to his son Yasmah Adad about travel sections and stopovers for a planned trip to Mari, located on the middle Euphrates. We also have travel reports from the mid-Assyrian Empire (ninth century BC) and from the new kingdom of Egypt (fifteenth-thirteenth century BC).⁵¹ Graham Davies, who has analyzed some of these texts, concludes that this type of journey report was a well-documented and widespread literary genre of the time.⁵²

The list of the campgrounds in Num 33 is very detailed. The Egyptians “ruled” Palestine at the time of the Exodus, from about 1560 to 1200 BC. The Egyptians crafted very detailed topographical lists of Palestine.⁵³ All main roads inside and to Palestine were carefully listed. The Egyptian army moved north along the Via Maris, along the Mediterranean coast. But there was also a path through the Arabah rift to the satellite states of Transjordan, which led to the plateau of Moab. This road was very well maintained by the Egyptians. In lists the localities (for meals and accommodation) were registered.

The path of the Israelites, described in Num 33:44-49, was an Egyptian public road. Gen 50:11 already mentioned the inhabitants of the land; however, the Canaanites watched the funeral at the threshing floor of Atad, saying: “This is a grievous mourning for the Egyptians.’ Therefore it was named Abel-mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan” (NASB). Abel is “brook” and Mizraim is Egypt. Comparisons with an Egyptian topographical list from the Late Bronze Age shows—where the place names can be deci-

⁵⁰Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 197.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Graham I. Davies, “The Wilderness Itineraries: A Comparative Study,” *TynB* 25 (1974): 46-81; idem., *The Way of the Wilderness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); and idem., “The Wilderness Itineraries and Recent Archaeological Research,” *Studies in the Pentateuch*, VTSuppl. 41 (1990): 161-75.

⁵³Donald B. Redford, “A Bronze Age Itinerary in Transjordan (Nos 89-101) of Thutmose III’s List of Saiatic Toponyms,” *Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities* 12 (1982): 55-74.

phered—the same order of the locations as in Num 33:45b-50.⁵⁴

Israel. Repeatedly, rulers and events in the Old Testament are also mentioned in extra-biblical documents and therefore confirm the credibility of the Old Testament. Of course, there are events mentioned in the Old Testament, which do not appear in non-biblical documents. There are also events included in ancient Near Eastern written documents about which nothing appears in the Old Testament.⁵⁵

The Mer-en-ptah Stele is a victory pillar of Pharaoh Merneptah (1214-1204 BC). The text dates from the fifth regnal year of the king. It is reported that he fended off an attack of Libyan tribes and various Sea Peoples. The last third of the stele informs that he has pacified Hatti (the land of the Hittites) and conquered Canaan. Then the fortified towns Ashkelon, Gezer and Yeno'am are mentioned as having been taken. The last town has been located in the eastern Lower Galilee region.⁵⁶ Then, after a sign of determination, the name Israel follows immediately. The line reads: "Israel is laid waste, his seed is no more." The determinative before Israel says only that Israel is a majority. It says nothing about whether Israel was semi-nomadic or sedentary. Egyptologists agree that the phrase "his seed is no more," refers to grain seed. As was common at that time, the enemy was trying to destroy the livelihood of the people so that they could not rise up again. With respect to Israel this sentence means that it relied on grain for its sustenance. This could indicate that they were sedentary. It also means that Israel had settled in Canaan by at least the fifth year of the reign of Merneptah (1209).⁵⁷

In a recent publication of an Egyptian pedestal relief, housed in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, Peter van der Veen, Christian Theiss, and Manfred Görg, after a careful investigation of the hieroglyphic inscription, are of the opinion that the inscription likely refers to ancient Israel. This would mean that Israel is mentioned in an ancient Egyptian document long before Pharaoh Merneptah.⁵⁸

Saul. A fourth inscription on a piece of clay ostrakon was found in 2008 during excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa and only recently deciphered. Khirbet Qeiyafa, which has been identified with Shaaraim, is located near

⁵⁴Charles R. Krahmalkov, "Exodus Itinerary Confirmed by Egyptian Evidence" *BAR* 20:5 (1994): 55-62, 79.

⁵⁵To provide a full list is beyond the scope of this paper, so a selection is made. The reader is referred to Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) for further information.

⁵⁶Michael G. Hasel, "Merenptah's Reference to Israel: Critical Issues for the Origin of Israel," in *Critical Issues in Early Israelite History*, R.S. Hess, et al. eds. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 51.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 53.

⁵⁸Peter van der Veen, Christoffer Theiss and Manfred Görg, "Israel in Canaan (Long) Before Pharaoh Merneptah? A Fresh Look at Berlin Statue Pedestal Relief 21687" *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 2 (2010): 15-25. Hershel Shanks essay: "When Did Ancient Israel Begin?" *BAR* 38.1 (2012): 59-62, 67 is based on the above mentioned essay. Some scholars date it during the reign of Amenhotep III about 1400 BC. This is 200 years earlier than the Merneptah Stele. However this reading is not accepted by all scholars.

Bet Shemesh, 32 km west of Jerusalem, on a hill at the edge of the Elah Valley (1 Sam 17:2). Tel Zakariyeh, probably the old Azekah (Josh 10:10, 11; 15:35; 1 Sam 17:1; 2 Chr 11:9; Jer 34:7; Neh 11:30), also mentioned in an Assyrian inscription of Sargon II⁵⁹ and in the Lachish letter No.4,⁶⁰ is 2 km west and 2.5 km southeast of Khirbet Shuwayka, probably the old Socho (Josh 15:35; 1 Sam 17:1; 1 Kgs 4:10; 2 Chr 11:7; 28:18). Shaaraim is mentioned in Jos 15:36 together with Socho and Azekah. Some scholars question the identification of Qeiyafa with Shaaraim.⁶¹ This identification seems to be the most likely. The archaeologists, Y. Garfinkel and S. Ganor, who have excavated the Tel since 2007, have come to this equation because of the two gates, which allowed access to the city, because Shaaraim could mean in Hebrew “gates.” The osteological and ceramic small finds suggest that Qeiyafa is also not to be identified with the Philistine city of Gath. Among the hundreds of animal bones that have been found there were no pig or dog bones, but only goats, cattle, sheep, and fish skeletons. Pigs and dogs were eaten by the Philistines. No typical Philistine pottery was found. The fortification of the city indicates that she was a front-line city. The city wall, 700 meters long, was built as a casemate wall with a width of four meters. Some of the stones weight 4-5 tons. The overall weight of the stones of the city wall was 200,000 tons. A four-wing gate system appeared in the west. In 2008 a second gate was excavated east of the city. This gate probably formed the main entrance to the city, facing Jerusalem. In the east gate stones were used weighing about 10 tons.⁶² This achievement was only possible with a strong central government, especially as the situation bordered directly to Philistine territory. The original city on Tel Qeiyafa was probably built after the eighteenth century BC. In all likelihood the city was inhabited between 1051-969 BC.⁶³ So far it is the only city that has been excavated in Israel with two gates. Even cities that were three to four times larger had only one gate.⁶⁴ Therefore the excavators believe that they are digging at Shaaraim. If Khirbet Qeiyafa is Shaaraim, it would also explain the strong ramparts, because Shaaraim faced the powerful Philistine city of Gath.

Now to the ostrakon found there. Despite all the modern technology that is used today in deciphering ancient inscriptions, it has not been possible to restore completely the heavily faded and partially scraped letters.

⁵⁹Hayim Tadmor, “The Campaigns of Sargon II of Assur,” *JCS* 12 (1958): 80-84.

⁶⁰Johannes Renz und Walter Röllig, *Handbuch der Althebräischen Epigraphik*, vol. I (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), 419-22, esp. 422.

⁶¹Gershom Galil identifies Khirbet Qeiyafa with Neta' im (1.Chr 4:23); Yehuda Dagan in *TA* 36 (2009): 68-81 with Adithaim (Jos 15:36); Nadav Na'aman, “In Search of the Ancient Name of Khirbet Qeiyafa,” *JHS* 8 (2008): Article 21, with Gob (2 Sam 21:19). For alternative identifications see David B. Schreiner, “What are They Saying about Khirbet Qeiyafa?” *TJ* 33 (2012): 34-37.

⁶²Yosef Garfinkel und Saar Ganor, “Khirbet Qeiyafa: Sha'arayim.” *JHS* 8 (2008): 2-6.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 3. Also the C 14 studies which were carried out on the organic material point to these dates.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

Thus, each decipherment is preliminary. Some think the inscription is not a coherent text, but is a list of people's names the inexperienced writer has written on a piece of pottery.⁶⁵ To others, who seem to be in the majority, it is a coherent text; however, is not complete.⁶⁶ The language of the text could be Hebrew or Phoenician or Canaanite.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the reading direction is uncertain whether it is from right to left, from left to right, or from top to bottom.⁶⁸ Two scholars have tried to establish the full text of the ostrakon and decipher it.⁶⁹ Galil considers the text a request to take care of the most vulnerable groups (slaves, widows and orphans). Puech, an internationally recognized epigraphist of the prestigious *École Biblique et Archéologique Française* in Jerusalem, thinks the text is the end of an administrative document, maybe something like an administrative circular.⁷⁰ Galil and Puech agree that the inscription contains a demand to take care of the weak. Puech, who reads the text from left to right, thinks that all the essential points in the text are compatible with the Biblical account of the transition period from the time of the judges to the monarchy of Saul.⁷¹ The Biblical text says that Samuel's sons (1 Sam 8:1-5) were not just judges like their father, but they bent the law. That always meant in ancient Israel to discriminate against the weak. Therefore, the elders of the people went to Samuel and asked him to set up a king in Israel. Puech sees reflected in the text of the ostrakon all the essentials of the Biblical text (1 Sam 8-9): judges who do not oppress the weak; the installation of a king; officials who serve the king.⁷² Puech sees the note in line four as an indication that the setting up of the king by men and chiefs

⁶⁵Alan Millard, "The Ostrakon from the Days of David Found at Khirbet Qeiyafa," *TynB* 62.1 (2011): 1-13, esp. 11-12.

⁶⁶Haggai Misgav, "The Ostrakon," in *Khirbet Qeiyafa*, Bd. I. Excavation Report 2007-2008. Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor, eds. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2009), 255-56.

⁶⁷Alan Millard, "Ostrakon from the Days of David," 7.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 4.

⁶⁹Gérard Léval, "Ancient Inscription Refers to Birth of Israelite Monarchy," *BAR* 38.3 (2012): 41-43, 70. Gershon Galil, "The Hebrew Inscription from Khirbet Qeiyafa/Neta'im: Script, Language, Literature and History," *UF* 41 (2009): 193-242. Émile Puech, "L'Ostrakon de Khirbet Qeiyafa et les débuts de la royauté en Israël," *Revue Biblique* 117 (2010): 162-84. For alternative readings see Ralph K. Hawkins and Shane Buchanan, "The Khirbet Qeiyafa Inscription and the 11th-10th century B.C.E. Israel," *Stone-Campbell Journal* 14 (2011): 219-34.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 180.

⁷¹I will not give the French translation of Puech, but only an English translation of the French:

Line 1: oppress not, serve God ... they robbed him/her
 Line 2: The judge and the widows cried, he had the power
 Line 3: about the asylum seekers and the child, he removed them together
 Line 4: the men and the chieftains/officers have installed a king
 Line 5: He marked 60 (?) servants out of the communities/inhabitants/
 generation

⁷²Émile Puech, "L'Ostrakon de Khirbet Qeiyafa ..." *RevBib* 117 (2010): 182.

is not the result of succession, but obviously something very new.⁷³ Since the letters on the ostrakon are shaped differently than in the Gezer calendar, the inscription is older. He dates it to the late eleventh century BC.⁷⁴ This date is further supported by the assumption—always assuming that Khirbet Qeiyafa is Shaaraim—that the place mentioned is before David was crowned king (1 Sam 17:52; 1 Chr 4:31). If Puech's analysis can be confirmed,⁷⁵ this might be a reference to the appointment of Saul as king and a confirmation that the Biblical account is based on historical facts.

David. The Tel Dan Stele, found in 1993/94 in the ancient Israelite city of Dan, in the north of Israel, consists of three fragments.⁷⁶ The house of David is mentioned on the main fragment in line nine in connection with the killing of a son (successor) of the house (dynasty) of David. Since the ending of the name of the king has been preserved in line seven in the inscription (“... ram, son of [...], the king of Israel”), and only one king of the Israelite northern kingdom is known with this ending, it is most likely Joram son of Ahab. In line eight the writer says that he had killed someone else who was a son of the house of David.⁷⁷ As expected, the two kings were defeated at the same time. Therefore, it could only be king Ahaziah, a son (descendant) of the house of David. Both kings, Joram and Ahaziah, were related (2 Kgs 8:27) and both fought against the Syrian Hazael (2 Kgs 8:28). The Syrians were victorious (2 Kgs 10:32-33). The inscription is dated between 850-835.⁷⁸

⁷³Ibid., 161.

⁷⁴Ibid., 178-79.

⁷⁵See also the essay by Gérard Léval, “Ancient Inscription Refers to the Birth of Israelite Monarchy,” *BAR* 38:3 (2012): 41-43.

⁷⁶Avraham Biram und Joseph Naveh, “An Aramaic Stele from Tel Dan,” *IEJ* 43 (1993): 81-98. Also, “The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment,” *IEJ* 45 (1995): 1-18. Gary A. Rendsburg, “On the Writing ביהוד in the Aramaic Inscription from Tel Dan,” *IEJ* 45 (1995): 22-25. André Lemaire, “The Tel Dan Stele as a Piece of Royal Historiography,” *JSOT* 81 (1998): 3-14. Lawrence J. Mykytiuk, *Identifying Persons on Northwest Semitic Inscriptions of 1200-539 B.C.E.* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 110-32. Steven L. McKenzie, *König David. Eine Biographie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 14-19. Ingo Kottsieper, “Die Inschrift vom Tell Dan und die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Aram-Damaskus und Israel in der 1. Hälfte des 1. Jahrtausends vor Christus,” in *Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf*, Studien zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient. FS für Oswald Loretz zur Vollendung seines 70 Lebensjahres, M. Dietrich et al. eds. (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1998), 475-500. Also, *Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments, Ergänzungslieferung* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2001), 176-79. Manfred Weippert, *Historisches Textbuch zum Alten Testament*, Grundrisse zum Alten Testament (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 267-69.

⁷⁷Since the inscription was written in a pure consonantal script, as was customary at that time, the consonants *dvd* could be vocalized with an *o* instead with *a-i*; so instead of reading *David* one could also read *dođ*, because the *v* may also represent an *o* in ancient Hebrew. *Dođ* means “uncle” or “beloved.” But since the Aramean king said in the immediate context he defeated a king, the reading *David* is the most likely reading.

⁷⁸Josef Tropper, “Eine altaramäische Steleninschrift aus Dan,” *UF* 25 (1993): 395-406. William M. Schniedewind, “Tel Dan Stela: New Light on Aramaic and Juh's Revolt,” *BASOR* 302 (1996): 75-90. Baruch Margalit, “The Old-Aramaic Inscription of Hazael from Dan,” *UF* 26 (1994): 320. Shiego Yamada, “Aram-Israel Relations as Reflected in the Aramaic

But there is a difficulty. The Biblical account of the death of Joram and Ahaziah says that Jehu killed both kings (2 Kgs 9:21-27). How can these two contradictory statements be reconciled? Kitchen points out that there had been similar reports in other parts of the ancient Near East; namely, that a ruler claims credit for the death of his opponent, though he did not kill him.⁷⁹ Although the reading that Hazael killed Joram and Ahaziah, is preferred by most scholars, there are other interpretations that are possible. Since the reading of the stele is mainly based on restoration of illegible letters, the alternative reading would eliminate the contradiction between the Tel Dan stele and 2 Kgs 9.⁸⁰ There are also scholars who deny that the Davidic dynasty is mentioned at all on the stele.⁸¹

One other written document that might mention David is the Mesha Stele⁸² of the Moabite King Mesha.⁸³ It was discovered in 1868 near Diban, about 20 km east of the Dead Sea. Before the Bedouins of the area wantonly destroyed the basalt stele, the Frenchman Charles Simon Clermont-Ganneau made a poor copy of it in very difficult circumstances. From the stone pieces and the poor copy the stele was restored and is now on display in the Louvre Museum in Paris. Because of the destruction by the Bedouins not

Inscription from Tel Dan," *UF* 27 (1995): 611-25. Lawrence J. Mykytiuk, *Identifying Biblical Persons in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions of 1200-539 B.C.E.* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 110-32. Matthew J. Suriano, "The Apology of Hazael: A Literary and Historical Analysis of the Tel Dan Inscription," *JNES* 66 (2007): 163-76.

⁷⁹Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 37. André Lemaire, "The Tel Dan Stela as a Piece of Royal Historiography," *SJOT* 81 (1998): 3-14, esp. 10-11.

⁸⁰Alan. Millard, "The Tel Dan Stele," in *The Context of Scripture*, vol. II, Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World, ed. William W. Hallo und K. Lawson Younger, Jr. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 161-62.

⁸¹Frederik H. Cryer, "King Hadad," *SJOT* 9 (1995): 225-27. Thomas L. Thompson, "Dissonance and Disconnections: Notes on the *bytdwd* and *hmlk.hdd* Fragments from Tel Dan," *SJOT* 9 (1995): 236-40. Kitchen replied to it in "A Possible Mention of David in the Late Tenth Century BC, and Deity *Dod as Dead as the Dodo?" *JSOT* 76 (1997): 29-44, 39-41. See also Philip. R. Davies, "The Beginnings of the Kingdom of Judah," in *Israel in Transition 2*, Lester L. Grabbe, ed. (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 54-61, who thinks that the house of David is not mentioned on the Tel Dan Stele. He argues that *BYT DWD* in the Tel Dan inscription does not relate to the kingdom of Judah but rather to a polity that was subservient to the northern Israelite kingdom. But see the review by A. Maeir, http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/7805_9046.pdf; accessed August, 30 2013. He writes that Davies's attempt is desperate not to allow any evidence that is contrary to his previously published opinions. See also *BAR* 39.1 (2013): 22.

⁸²Translations of this stele might be found in *ANET*³, 320-21; Klaas A.D. Smelik, "The Inscription of King Mesha," in *The Context of Scripture*, Bd. II: 137-38. Lawrence J. Mykytiuk, *Identifying Biblical Persons*, 95-110. Shmuel Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period, Selected and Edited* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008), 389-418; *KAI*, II: 168-79. M. Weippert, *Historische Texte zum Alten Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 245-48.

⁸³King Mesha is also mentioned in another inscription, which was found in 1958 in the city of Kerak. See William L. Reed and Frederik V. Winnett, "A Fragment of an Early Moabite Inscription from Kerak," *BASOR* 172 (1963): 1-9. David N. Freedman, "A Second Mesha Inscription," *BASOR* 175 (1964): 50-51.

every line is clearly legible. Nevertheless, this stele is very valuable because it describes the perspective of the Moabite King Mesha regarding the events in 2 Kgs 3:4-27. The stele is dated around 840 BC. Its inscription agrees with the report of the Old Testament that the Moabite King Mesha revolted successfully against the Israelite Omride dynasty.

Specifically, lines 12 and 31 are important for our argument. Unfortunately, not every word in these lines is preserved. For line 31, André Lemaire⁸⁴ follows an old hint by Mark Lidzbarski⁸⁵ and read, "and the house of David lived in Horonen"; this is probably the Biblical Horonaim (Isa 15:5; Jer 48:3, 5, 34).

The reading of line 12 is more difficult. Lemaire reads, "And I brought hence the altar-hearth of his Beloved, and I dragged (13) it before Kamosh in Qirat/my town..." But Anson Rainey reads line 12 thus: "I carried from there its Davidic altar-hearth and I dragged it before Chemosh in Qeriot."⁸⁶ However, the importance of *dwd* is not completely clear.⁸⁷ Although Rainey's reading of line 12 is disputed, one can say with relative certainty that the reading in line 31 "House of David" may be regarded as secure.⁸⁸

Goliath. A potsherd with two words was found in 2005 in the ancient Philistine city of Gath (Tel eš-Šāfi). It turned out that the two words (*AWLT* and *WLT*) are most likely Philistine personal names and that they are of Greek or Anatolian origin. Behind the second word some assumed an etymological relationship to the name Goliath. From the Biblical account (1 Sam 17:4) it would have worked out fine because Goliath was from Gath, but a detailed linguistic analysis has revealed that both names cannot be related to the name Goliath.⁸⁹

Israeli Kings and Government Officials

Seals and seal impressions which have been found further confirm the existence of the kings and senior governmental officials mentioned in the

⁸⁴"House of David" restored in Moabite Inscription," *BAR* 20.3 (1994): 30-37.

⁸⁵"Eine Nachprüfung der Mesainschrift," in *Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik* I (Gießen: J. Ricker'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung [Alfred Töpelmann], 1900), 1-10. Also N. Na'aman, "The Campaign of Mesha against Horonaim," *Biblische Notizen* 73 (1994): 27-30 reads "House of David."

⁸⁶"Mesha and Syntax," in *The Land That I Will Show You*, J. Andrew Dearman and Patrick M. Greeham, eds. JSOT Suppl. 343 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 2001), 300-306.

⁸⁷Manfred Weippert, *Historisches Textbuch*, 246, fn. 25, is of the opinion that Siegfried Mittmann, "Zwei Rätsel der Mēša'-Inscription. Mit einem Beitrag zur aramäischen Steleninschrift von Dan (Tel el-Qādi)," *ZDPV* 118 (2002): 53-59 offers the best solution. However, in the entire inscription *matres lectiones* are not used once.

⁸⁸K.A. Kitchen thinks the heights of David are mentioned in an inscription of Pharaoh Shoshenq I in which he reports on his military campaign into Palestine (about 925 BC). According to Kitchen it is a place name in the Negev, "A Possible Mention of David in the Late Tenth Century BC, and Deity *Dod as Dead as the Dodo?" *JSOT* 76 (1997): 39-41.

⁸⁹Aren M. Maeir, Stefan J. Wimmer, Alexander Zukerman, Aaron Demsky, "A Late Iron Age I/Early Iron Age II Old Canaanite Inscription from Tel eš-šāfi/Gath, Israel: Palaeography, Dating, and Historical-Cultural Significance," *BASOR* 351 (2008): 39-71.

Bible.⁹⁰ Because there are much more than a thousand, only a few can be mentioned here.⁹¹

From the time of the United Kingdom no seal or seal impressions are known. The earliest seal impression comes from the reign of Jeroboam II. It was found at Megiddo in 1904.⁹² On it, the name Shema, a governmental official of Jeroboam II, is depicted.⁹³ Unfortunately, this officer is not mentioned in the Old Testament. Two bullae have come from the reign of the Judean King Uzziah/Azariah relative to two officials, Shebanyau and Abiyau.⁹⁴ Both names appear in the Old Testament many times, but are not to be identified with these two. A bulla is preserved from the Judean king Ahaz. The text reads, "Property of Ahaz (son of) Yehotam (long form of Jotam) King of Judah."⁹⁵ One of his officials, Ushna, had a seal whose impression is

⁹⁰Benjamin Sass counted in 1997 more than 1500 and since then hundreds have been added. Nahman Avigad und Benjamin Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities et al., 1997), 552.

⁹¹See also *Inscriptions Reveal. Documents from the Time of the Bible, the Mishna and the Talmud*. Jerusalem: Israel Museum, Catalogue No 100, (Winter 1973). Larry G. Herr, *The Scripts of Ancient Northwest Semitic Seal*, HSM 18 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978). Michal Hestrin and Ruth & Dayagi-Mendels, *Inscribed Seals, First Temple Period* (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1979). Nahman Avigad, *Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Jeremiah* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986). Yigal Shiloh and David Tarler, "Bullae from the City of David. A Hoard of Seal Impressions from the Israelite Period," *BA* 49.4 (1986): 196–209. Benjamin Sass and Christoph Uehlinger, eds. *Studies in the Iconography of Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals*, OBO 125 (Fribourg and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993). Robert Deutsch and Michael Heltzer. *Forty New Ancient West Semitic Inscriptions* (Tel Aviv-Jaffa: Israel Numismatics, 1994). Nahman Avigad und Benjamin Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1997). Robert Deutsch and Michael Heltzer, *West Semitic Epigraphic News of the 1st Millennium BCE* (Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publications, 1999). Robert Deutsch and André Lemaire, *Biblical Period Personal Seals in the Shlomo Moussaieff Collection* (Jaffa: Archaeological Center, 2000). Nahman Avigad, Michael Heltzer and André Lemaire, *West Semitic Seals. Eighth-Sixth Centuries BCE*. The Reuben and Edith Hecht Museum Collection (Haifa: Hecht Museum, 2000). Johannes Renz and Walter Röllig, *Handbuch der Althebräischen Epigraphik*, Bd. II/2: Materialien zur Althebräischen Morphologie. Siegel und Gewichte (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003), 81–433. Meir Lubetski, ed. *New Seals and Inscriptions, Hebrew, Idumean and Cuneiform* (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2007). Manfred Weippert, *Historisches Textbuch*, 372–96. Robert Deutsch, *Biblical Period Hebrew Seals, Bullae and Handles*, The Josef Kaufman Collection, Bd. 2 (Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publications, 2011).

⁹²Nahman Avigad and Benjamin Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* 49, Nr. 2. See also André Lemaire, "Name of Israel's Last King Surfaces in a Private Collection," *BAR* 21.6 (1995): 50. Ruth Hestrin and Michal Dayagi-Mendels, *Inscribed Seals* (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1979), 18, no. 3.

⁹³Avigad and Sass, *West Semitic Stamp Seals*, 49–50.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 50–51. Pierre Bordreuil, *Catalogue des sceaux ouest-sémitiques inscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale, du Musée du Louvre et du Musée biblique de Bible et Terre Sainte* (Paris, 1986): no. 40–41.

⁹⁵Robert Deutsch, "First Impression. What We Learn from King Ahaz's Seal," *BAR* 24.3 (1998): 54–56, 62. Ahaz is also mentioned in Assyrian documents with his full name Jehoahaz. Kurt Galling, ed. *Textbuch zur Geschichte Israels* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1979), 59. Manfred Weippert, *Historisches Textbuch*, 289.

preserved.⁹⁶ Also from his successor, Hezekiah, there are six seal impressions of the same seal and two bullae with another pictorial representation, but with the same text.⁹⁷ Four other seal impressions are from the time of Hezekiah, apparently from his officials;⁹⁸ however, their names do not appear in the Bible. There is a seal impression from his son and successor Manasseh.⁹⁹ From Shallum, the king of northern Israel, who reigned only for one month, a bulla has survived.¹⁰⁰ Another bulla is preserved from the days of Hoshea the king of the Northern Kingdom.¹⁰¹ Of particular interest is a seal of Ahab's wife Jezebel. The seal has many pictorial representations, which were typical of the Egyptian-Phoenician region as royal and divine symbols. Between the iconographic representations the letters *jzbl* appear; these could be read as Jezebel. Unfortunately, at the top a piece is broken off. The place is large enough to insert the Hebrew letters ז', the most common designation for possession in Hebrew. However, this interpretation is disputed by some.¹⁰²

Furthermore, the following Israelite kings are mentioned by name in the Mesopotamian cuneiform archives. They appear in the correct historical order. Thus king Ahab is not mentioned during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar but during the time of Shalmaneser III, who lived at the time of the Biblical king Ahab.

These kings are mentioned:

- Ahab (Israel) Shalmaneser III (Assyria)
- Jehu (Israel) Shalmaneser III
- Joash (Israel) Adad-nirari (Assyria)
- Menachem (Israel) Tiglathpileser (Assyria)
- Pekah (Israel) Tiglathpileser
- Jehoahaz (Judah) Tiglathpileser
- Hosea (Israel) Tiglathpileser
- Hezekiah (Judah) Sennacherib (Assyria)
- Manasseh (Judah) Esarhaddon, Ashurbanipal (Assyria)

⁹⁶Charles C. Torrey, "A Hebrew Seal from the Reign of Ahaz," *BASOR* 79 (1940): 27. Avigad and Sass, *West Semitic Stamp Seals*, 51.

⁹⁷Robert Deutsch, "New Bullae Reveal Egyptian-Style Emblems on Judah's Royal Seals" *BAR* 28.4 (2002): 42-51, 60-62.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 48-49.

⁹⁹Avigad and Sass, *West Semitic Stamp Seals*, 55.

¹⁰⁰Hershel Shanks, "Magnificent Obsession: The Private World of an Antiquities Collector," *BAR* 22.3 (1996): 22-35, 62-64; esp. 34, 64.

¹⁰¹André Lemaire, "Royal Signature: Name of Israel's Last King Surfaces in a Private Collection," *BAR* 21.6 (1995): 48-52. For further references of other bullae see Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 19-21.

¹⁰²Nahman Avigad, "The Seal of Jezebel." *IEJ* 14 (1964): 274-76. Marjo C.A. Korpel, "Fit for a Queen. Jezebel's Royal Seal," *BAR* 34.2 (2008): 32-37, 80. "Seals of Jezebel and Other Women in Authority," *Journal of Semitics* 15 (2006): 349-71. "Queen Jezebel's Seal," *Ugarit Forschungen* 38 (2006): 379-98. However, Christopher Rollston, "Prosopography and the זבל seal," *IEJ* 59 (2009): 86-91, doubts very much that this seal belongs to Jezebel: "... with neither patronymic nor title, it is precarious to argue that the owner of this seal was indeed Queen Jezebel" (87).

- Jehoiachin (Judah) Nebuchadnezzar (Babylon)

The 10 kings are mentioned directly in the Mesopotamian sources. On top of that come also indirect references. Quite apart from that, local places and events are mentioned in Assyrian inscriptions which also coincide with what is reported in the Old Testament.¹⁰³

Some Concluding Remarks

Based on the above facts, to which one could add many others, there is no reason to doubt that the Old Testament in its reports preserves historical facts. If the events were reported as fiction, as some claim, then it would have enormous theological implications because God would then no longer be the Lord of history, but a creature of one's own imagination.

A close relationship exists between historical understanding and relationship with God. Israel was trained to think historically. This is seen by the observance of their holidays, of which everyone was a historical memory of past events. By celebrating them they were forced to remember that their Lord proved himself in the history of his people time and again as the strong and mighty one. That was also a great concern for the narrators of the Old Testament. Therefore, the facts of history were reported with divine and prophetic interpretation. The prophets were the mouthpiece of Yahweh. Even the praise and laments of ancient Israel repeatedly refer to past historical events (Psa 22:5-6; 105:8-26; Dan 9; Neh 9). The New Testament makes constant reference to Old Testament events, thus showing continuity in the historical understanding of the Old and New Testaments. Old Testament narratives present historical facts which preclude the view that the Old Testament is a book of fables, myths, legends, and fairy tales. It would be strange for the same Scripture which requires a witness to tell the truth (Exod 23:1-3; John 21:24; 2 Pet 1:6), not to do so itself.

¹⁰³Olof Pedersén, "Foreign Professionals in Babylon: Evidence from the Archives in the Palace of Nebuchadnezzar II," in *Ethnicity in Ancient Mesopotamia: Papers Read at the 48th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Leiden, 1-4 July 2002*, edited by W. H. Van Soldt (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2005), 267-72. A general description of the texts can be found in Olof Pedersén, *Archive und Bibliotheken in Babylon: Die Tontafeln der Grabung Robert Koldeweys 1899-1917*, ADOG 25 (Berlin: Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft, 2005), 111-27.

Book Reviews

Biblical Studies

***Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary.* By Victor P. Hamilton. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. 752 Pages. Hardcover, \$54.99.**

The value of reading works by Victor Hamilton is his skill at making the complex practical and understandable. In this commentary on the book of Exodus, Hamilton has once again carefully and adeptly addressed the text with clarity and precision and produced a volume that is of value for the church as well as the academy.

The stated goal of the work is to engage in the discussion among academia, but also to serve as a resource for pastors (xi). He has accomplished that with relevant interaction with current scholarship and practical application for the church. While the scholarship of the text will make it useful, its very readable style and functional organization make it attractive.

The introduction of the work is brief, but does delineate some of the key themes of the book as well as demonstrate the contemporary relevance of the book of Exodus. At the end of the introduction (xxviii-xxix) Hamilton offers a simple and coherent (rhyming) outline of the book, though it is not the one that he uses in the commentary.

The organization of the commentary is clear and easy to follow. The work includes seven parts that are logically arranged around the key movements in the text. Within each part, the work is divided into smaller pericopies. Each section includes his translation, grammatical and lexical notes, as well as commentary. One of the strengths of the work is the frequent drawing of connections to the rest of Scripture. The commentary includes references to every book in the Old Testament and every chapter in the Pentateuch.

Hamilton demonstrates excellent interaction with the Hebrew in both the notes and commentary sections of the work. He interacts well on most of the critical positions within the book presenting all sides fairly, but offering compelling evidence for the positions he espouses.

Interested readers will find helpful the discussions on the Hebrew midwives (11-16), bridegroom of blood (80-83), the Red Sea (207), the offerings (495-508), and the golden calf incident (529-34), along with an excellent excurses on the hardening of Pharaoh's heart (170-74).

Some will find the absence of extended discussions on the date of the Exodus, the route of the Exodus, or the numbers of Israelites who left Egypt curious. On the question of the date of the Exodus, Hamilton sort of dismisses the question completely, and refers the reader to others "who have addressed the date of the exodus" (10), though he does recommend a couple of sources that do handle the discussion in detail. With regard to the route, only a brief non-descript reference can be found (206). He does mention the question of the numbers of people who left Egypt three times, twice parenthetically (8, 544) and once simply to conclude that "whatever size

the departing body of Israelites is, it is large enough for Pharaoh to say, "The Israelites have become more numerous for us/than we" (194).

The strength of this commentary is seen in its two most extended sections on Moses' confrontation with Pharaoh along with the corresponding plagues (97-196) and the Covenant at Sinai which is climaxed with the Decalogue (291-354). His unique style and insights will challenge students and pastors as they engage the text of Scripture. Those hungry for a fresh approach to the central story of the Exodus will not leave unsatisfied. It will not gather dust on anyone's bookshelf.

Deron J. Biles

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

I & II Samuel. In The Old Testament Library. By A. Graeme Auld. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011. 686 Pages. Hardcover. \$75.

One can turn to most any page at random in Graeme Auld's voluminous commentary on the books of First and Second Samuel and immediately discover that the strength of this work is its exegetical excellence. Through profuse interaction with the Hebrew text and thorough analysis, Auld has significantly advanced the study of these books revealing them as vital to the understanding of David, the monarchy, the Old Testament, and indeed, the rest of Scripture.

From the first words of the Introduction, the author makes it clear that the books of Samuel are about David. They present the key figures that prepare the reader for the life of David and help us "know him better" (2), intricately detail his life, and then reveal the monumental impact of his life on subsequent generations. One of the uniquenesses of Auld's approach to the understanding of the books of Samuel is his thesis that the books are read from beginning to end, but were written from end to beginning (9-14), with the book of first Samuel serving as a prequel to the story of David (12). Though the reference in the very first sentence of the Introduction to David as the "first king of Israel" (1) is curious and perhaps misplaced, the author advocates him as the most significant Old Testament figure.

The outline of the text is simple and clear. The author begins each section with his own translation and critical notes, followed by an explanation of the text. The selected bibliography at the beginning of the work reveals the sources on which the author relied in the composition of the commentary.

Throughout the book, Auld gives careful attention to textual criticism and also reveals the relationship of the books of Samuel to the rest of Scripture. The Index of Scripture and other Ancient Sources (631-62) demonstrates the meticulous interaction with the Hebrew Bible; though much more could have been said about the relationship of the books of Samuel with the New Testament. In spite of the book's depth, the significant text of Yahweh's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7 receives comparatively slight attention with oddly no reference to its Messianic implications (420-26).

Critical to the author's explanation of the book, and the reader's understanding of it, is Auld's theory of what he calls, "the Book of Two Houses (BTH)." With only a brief definition of it, Auld explains BTH as a hypothetical source which comprises the entire story of David and the "house of Yahweh from the death of Saul till the fall of Jerusalem" (10). Throughout the remainder of the commentary, Auld frequently refers to the work and believes it to have been the common source of information for both the authors of First and Second Samuel and the Chronicler

(cf. 11, 14, 16, 17, 19, 27-28, 29-30, etc).

Other useful features to the work include the Introduction and the Excurses. The Introduction outlines the book, analyzes the available manuscript texts for the books of Samuel, explains the author's translation, as well as discussing the question of authorship, the relationship of the books of Samuel to Chronicles, and the place of I and II Samuel in the Old Testament Historical Books. The excurses generally serve as after-works of key sections. The final and most helpful of which delineates the key themes and characters in the books of Samuel (622-30). Although it might have been clearer if it had been divided into two different excurses with one related to the people and another related to the themes, the section serves as a valuable discussion of seven important characters in the book and eight key themes, while also functioning as something of a conclusion to the work.

While the book will serve as a helpful resource for students, pastors, and scholars, it does presume a certain level of familiarity with the Hebrew text. Users will find it invaluable in exegesis, though less in application. In the end, anyone interested in a thorough, academic, and clear exegesis of the books of I and II Samuel will find this commentary an excellent addition to his or her library.

Deron J. Biles

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***Old Testament Wisdom Literature: A Theological Introduction.* By Craig G. Bartholomew and Ryan P. O'Dowd. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011. 336 pages. Hardcover, \$30.**

Well-known wisdom scholar Craig Bartholomew has teamed up with his former student, Ryan O'Dowd, to deliver readers an engaging, thought-provoking introduction to the Old Testament Wisdom Literature. Readers of this book benefit from Bartholomew's previous work on Ecclesiastes (*Reading Ecclesiastes: Old Testament Exegesis and Hermeneutical Theory* [Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1998] and *Ecclesiastes* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009]) as well as O'Dowd's excellent treatment of epistemology in Deuteronomy and the Wisdom books (*The Wisdom of Torah: Epistemology in Deuteronomy and the Wisdom Literature* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009]).

This volume is a valuable addition to the plethora of introductions to various segments of the Bible. However, the term "introduction" is perhaps misleading, as it does not cover in detail the typical topics included in introductions, such as such as authorship, date, *Sitz im Leben*, history of interpretation, and other critical issues, though the authors do include helpful outlines of each book. This text is also somewhat unique in its genre because it neglects Psalms and Song of Songs, both of which one would expect to find in this type of work. However, this lacuna is balanced by a thorough treatment of wisdom themes in the New Testament.

Whereas the term "introduction" may cause pause, the term "theological" is the operative word in the title, for it is the authors' theological treatment of Wisdom Literature that distinguishes this book from other introductions to Wisdom. That Bartholomew and O'Dowd focus their efforts on "readings of biblical texts that consciously seek to do justice to the perceived theological nature of the texts and embrace the influence of theology (corporate and personal; past and present) upon the interpreter's enquiry, context, and method"¹ is obvious in their exegesis of each

¹Christopher Spinks, *Scripture, Community, and Crisis of Meaning: Debates on the*

Biblical book. While some chapters (e.g. “Where Can Wisdom Be Found?”) include a section explicitly devoted to “theological reflections,” nearly every page includes rich reflection on the theology of Wisdom Literature.

The first three chapters lay the foundation for the rest of the book. “An Introduction to Wisdom Literature” outlines the major themes of Wisdom and its distinguishing characteristics. “The Ancient World of Wisdom” places Old Testament wisdom within the larger world of ancient Near Eastern Wisdom, noting the features of Biblical wisdom that make it unique in its historical and cultural setting. “The Poetry of Wisdom and the Wisdom of Poetry” announces a clarion call for Christians to rediscover the wonder captured in the Old Testament Wisdom Literature, most notably the wonder of creation—something that has been lost in our modern, Western culture (13). Furthermore, this chapter cogently argues for the usefulness of poetry for the Christian life, successfully resurrecting the notion that “[l]iterature and poetry are uniquely positioned to enable us to imagine what was and what could be, as well as to find meaning in the broken past” (69).

Bartholomew and O’Dowd spend the next six chapters examining Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. The authors first give an overview of each book (one chapter per book) and its major theological themes and emphases, then devote a second chapter to a particular issue within the book. For example, they analyze in detail Proverbs 31, Job 28, and Ecclesiastes 3. Homileticians will find these more detailed chapters invaluable for developing a methodology for understanding and communicating the theological import of the wisdom books. *Old Testament Wisdom Literature* is rounded out with three chapters that focus on wisdom in the New Testament, the overall theology of Wisdom Literature, and the application of wisdom’s theology to present-day life.

It is difficult to point to any significant flaws in *Old Testament Wisdom Literature*, though its expansion to include Song of Songs and the Psalms would make it more usable in a classroom setting. The book’s strengths, including its rigorous exegesis, faithfulness to the Biblical text, readability, recommended reading lists, thorough indices, and accessibility and applicability to Christians across the spectrum—laity, pastors, and scholars—make this an essential volume for studying the Old Testament Wisdom Literature.

Russell L. Meek

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***A Commentary on the Psalms: Volume 1 (1-41).* By Allen P. Ross. Kregel Exegetical Library. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011. 887 pages. Hardcover, \$44.99.**

Allen Ross is a professor of Old Testament at Beeson Divinity School and has designed this volume to be used by teachers and preachers of the book of Psalms. He aims to present in his commentary “what a pastor or teacher needs to have for the development of an expository message” (12).

To give an orientation to the study of the Psalms, Ross provides an introductory section that engages the requisite critical and hermeneutical considerations. He highlights both the value and difficulty of studying the Psalms. On the one hand, “the church is missing one of its richest experiences if it ignores the Book of Psalms or relegates it to a routine reading in a service without any explanation” (29). On the other hand, a student of the Psalter must also grapple with textual variants, divergent

translation traditions, a wide-ranging reception history, and the difficulty of discerning poetic forms and figures of speech. In his discussion of these technical issues, Ross consistently takes conservative, evangelical positions (e.g., affirming Davidic authorship of psalms attributed to him in the superscriptions, see 42-47).

A clear strength of this volume is its focus on the structure and literary features of each psalm. Ross begins by acknowledging that “there is no final word on the Book of Psalms” (11). People have used the Psalms for a stunning variety of purposes, so a work attempting to analyze them must have a specific task in mind. Ross focuses “on the chief aim of exegesis, the exposition of the text” (11). In pursuing this goal, Ross seeks to equip his readers to teach *all* the Psalms. “By exegetical exposition,” Ross means that “the exposition should cover the entire psalm, and that it should not only explain the text verse-by-verse but also show how the message of the psalm unfolds section-by-section” (12). Accordingly, the largest section of the introductory material focuses on the nature of Hebrew poetry and the literary form and function of the individual Psalms (e.g., Laments, Imprecations, Praises, Royal Psalms; see 81-145). Because these literary features form the warp and woof of the Psalter, they should receive careful attention. Ross provides here a helpful and straightforward literary orientation to reading Biblical poetry.

Once readers *understand* these literary features, they must then seek to *explain* them. This movement is a central concern for Ross. He notes in this regard that “the development of the exposition from the exegesis is basic to this commentary” (17). For each psalm, Ross gives a translation with discussion of textual variants and translational difficulties in the footnotes. He then briefly sets the psalm in its literary/thematic context within the Psalter and notes the structure of the psalm (through an exegetical summary and outline). Next he gives a “commentary in expository form” that articulates the main point of each section and sub-section of the exegetical outline. Ross concludes his treatment of each psalm by discussing its message and application. Here Ross usually tries to connect the meaning of the psalm both to the lives of contemporary readers and also to any relevant theological themes from the New Testament. In this focus and commentary structure, Ross connects a careful reading of the psalm with a fruitful preaching of the psalm. Because this connection exists, the structure of the sermon should mirror the structure of the psalm. The help that Ross provides for those attempting this task gives his commentary considerable value.

As noted, Ross highlights the importance of understanding individual Psalms in their own right. Recognizing that “the psalms were not arbitrarily added to the collection,” Ross also admits the need to relate them to the larger collection. Though he surveys recent work on the Psalter that seek to discern an overall shape and hermeneutically significant arrangement of the Psalms (52-63), Ross cautions against “the tendency to see connections and patterns that may not be there, or if they are there, are only slight” (62). “Until the details are worked out to satisfaction,” Ross argues, this type of study “will seem to be artificial and forced” (62). Because Ross is not interested in working out any of those details himself, his commentary will be more helpful in the study of individual psalms than in the study of their strategic arrangement within the Psalter.

In urging the value of the Psalms for the life of the church, Ross notes that in modern churches, “The use of the psalms has almost fallen by the way to the detriment of the spiritual life of the church, and the prayers, hymns, and songs that have replaced the psalms in worship do not have the substance, power, and beauty that

they have” (25). Through his warm and engaging exposition, Ross has done a part in helping these Psalms re-enter the life and worship of the churches. Praise the Lord!

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Enns, Peter. *Ecclesiastes. The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011. 238 pages. Paperback, \$25.*

The writer of Ecclesiastes queried, “What profit has the worker from that in which he labors?” In both his contribution to the field and commentary on the book of Ecclesiastes, Peter Enns has answered that question. Continuing the effort of the Two-Horizon series, which seeks to combine the foci of Biblical exegesis and theology, Enns has produced a helpful work for pastors, students, and anyone interested in the study of this enigmatic book of the Bible.

The writing style of the book is clear and easy to follow. Enns generally writes in first person as though including the reader on a journey of discovery with him in the text, pausing periodically to insert contemporary application. He explains that the difficulties and apparent contradictions of the text are real and intentional as the narrator allows the tension of swelling questions to lie unresolved until the Epilogue.

The structure of the book is clear and easy to follow. It is composed of an Introduction, Commentary, Theological Horizons, Contributions of Ecclesiastes to Biblical Theology, and the Significance of Ecclesiastes for Theology and Praxis today. The Introduction outlines the critical issues of the book and explains the author’s approach to the text. The main issues addressed in this section include questions of the purpose, authorship, narrator, date, and outline. Here, Enns also includes a list of key lexemes that are helpful in the understanding and organization of the book. Especially insightful is the discussion regarding the end of the book as key to the understanding of the book as a whole (7-16). Though Enns admits that the conclusion itself is “nothing new under the sun,” he demonstrates how the narrator has put Qohelet’s struggle in context, resolved to trust God, and shifts the focus to Israel’s responsibility (15, 115-16, 149, 170). The conclusion almost unexpectedly calls the reader back to faith in God “not despite the pain but through it” (116).

The Commentary section is based on the author’s division of the text into 16 pericopies. Each subsection includes an overview followed by an exegetical analysis. The commentary makes helpful use of Hebrew, as well as supportive footnotes for those interested in more in-depth study.

Due to the confines of the assignment of the series and the nature of the book of Ecclesiastes, Enns employs a variety of means of addressing the complex issues of the text. Sometimes, he offers his opinion on areas of difficulty, though not always giving multiple sides of the debate. At other times, he is content with living with a measure of ambiguity in the text. Still other times, the author pauses just long enough to identify areas of conflict, but leaves them unresolved.

In the Theological Issues section, Enns addresses nine themes apparent in Ecclesiastes. Here, he explains that the tension of Qohelet’s view of God is part of the fabric of the book, giving voice to the struggles of peaks and valleys of faith (124). The author’s discussion of “fearing God anyway” (149) may be one of the most valuable take-aways of the work. He describes Ecclesiastes as a “brutally honest book” (135) allowing the reader permission to conclude that harmony is not always better than tension (145). Enns elaborates on that issue by way of application in the

section, "Ecclesiastes and the People of God" (182-91), identifying further points of identification for readers today with the struggle of and lessons learned by Qohelet.

The last section, "Significance for Theology and Praxis Today" further identifies areas of application for readers today. While the section seems to overlap the previous section, as the author allows (192, 195, 201), it further emphasizes and calls for honesty in faith's journey (209).

The commentary, which encourages us to think of Solomon as we read it (133), reminds us of our own need for wisdom in life's journey and faith to trust in God. Enns' work will be a helpful contribution to anyone's library interested in understanding and applying Ecclesiastes.

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***A Liturgy of Grief: A Pastoral Commentary on Lamentations.* By Leslie C. Allen. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. 195 Pages. Paperback, \$21.99.**

Leslie Allen has set out to accomplish a significant task. Combining his years of chaplaincy experience with his expertise in scholarship, he has attempted to fuse the two worlds extracting truths from one which speak to the other. He uses Israel's tragedy as a backdrop to force the reader to confront the very real issues of pain and suffering and to reconcile them with faith. His book serves as a commentary on a very practical Old Testament book as well as a guide to dealing with suffering today.

Allen explains his goal for the book in the preface as an endeavor to "integrate biblical scholarship and pastoral care" (ix). From the very first pages and consistently throughout the text, he has achieved that goal. He helps the reader identify both the needs that are being expressed and the different perspectives of the voices who are expressing them.

The outline of the book is simple and clear. The introduction outlines the context by explaining the hurt behind the text, identifies the voices in the narrative, delineates some of the critical issues the book will address, and presents a challenge to caregivers today dealing with those who grieve. Next, the five chapters in the commentary correspond with the chapters in the book of Lamentations.

In the first two chapters, the author addresses the grief, guilt, and the need for prayer. In the third chapter, Allen explains how the writer of the third poem is personally identified with the grief, and throughout the chapter articulates the emotions behind their struggle to come to grips with the tragedy that has befallen them. Those emotions come across in the book, according to Allen as a "comprehensive mingling of ... nostalgic yearning, deep sadness, and angry protest" (20). The third poem, both in form and content, functions as a highlight and turning point in the nation's struggle. The genius of the structure of this poem draws the reader's attention to the anguish as well as the frequent personal interjections of the author's thoughts. Juxtaposing the poet's grief is his awareness of the character of God and his faithfulness in the past. Even calling that to mind, the author begins to show signs of hope and healing (3:22-24).

In chapter four, Allen explains how the community confronts the sins which caused God's judgment. Even the expression of the infliction of Yahweh's punishment lends hope to a time when the retribution will be completed and the nation will be restored.

Chapter five, according to Allen, realizes the goal of the previous four poems

(145). The nation turns its attention to the Lord. The crisis is not over, and neither is their frustration, but their focus is in the right direction. Their attention turns from the past to the present and the chapter ends with a hopeful look to the future.

One of the strengths of the book is Allen's use of imagery and illustration. Throughout the commentary, he helps the reader see how the issues with which Israel dealt are still relevant today. Moreover, his writing style is clear and easy to follow. The author builds the commentary on his own translation of Lamentations. The fruit of his language research is seen throughout with fresh word pictures. For example, Allen translates the Hebrew word *ekbah* as "how terrible that" (35). He explains that the word expresses emotional intensity. Moreover, his elucidation of the writer's use of Hebrew alliteration enhances the reader's understanding of Hebrew poetry. Finally, Allen demonstrates how Lamentations fits within the context of the Old Testament and how the book influenced and was influenced by other prophetic writings.

Allen's work will enhance the reader's understanding of the book of Lamentations as well as give them tools to equip them for dealing with grief and the theological questions it produces. The book is more than a commentary; it's a resource for training healers and for helping people heal.

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***The Book of the Twelve: Hosea-Jonah.* By James D. Nogalski. Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary. Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2011. 488 pages. Hardcover, \$60.00.**

The title alone of Nogalski's two-part commentary, *The Book of the Twelve*, shows the focus of his study and the uniqueness of his contribution. Nogalski stands out as a mature and steady voice in the conversation of the Twelve, noted since the publication of his influential dissertation. One can see his fingerprints in the creation and direction of the Book of the Twelve group in the Society of Biblical Literature. What is more, he has written and edited numerous articles, essays, and books specifically on the Twelve. Nogalski fills the commentary with decades worth of scholarly and, at times, groundbreaking insights. Given the length and depth of Nogalski's study of the Twelve, it would be tempting to cram all of his sagacious knowledge into a commentary, leaving it commendable only to a specialist. Such a commentary, however, would counter the purpose of the commentary series, which seeks to provide accessible scholarship for students and ministers.

The commentary commences with a brief introduction to the Twelve, laying the groundwork for comments on the redactional layers, intertextual links, and theological reflection found in the commentary proper. Nogalski then moves through each Biblical book by dividing the text into logical units based on the Hebrew Bible. In this sense, the commentary may seem conventional, allowing for innovation only by fresh translation, exegetical insights, or updated connections to contemporary life. The format of the series, along with Nogalski's scholarship, however, provides a highly innovative, educational, and easy-to-understand resource for students and ministers.

Let us take the ingenious hyperlink format as the point of departure. Two types of hyperlinks in the commentary are called "Sidebars" and "Interpretation." This commentary series puts a given topic (e.g. Intertextual Features of Hosea 13) in relief by using orange ink within the commentary proper, while placing the full

discussion in margin of the page using the same orange ink (177-78). The hyperlink format makes the work easy to follow. It also provides Nogalski the opportunity to discuss often intertextuality in a concise and easy-to-reference way.

Nogalski moves into fairly uncharted waters by programmatically introducing how each book functions within the Twelve, giving the commentary a distinctive mark. A few examples allow one to see this commentary as a weather vane of sorts, showing where Old Testament scholarship is likely heading. He begins the introductory section of Hosea and the Twelve with the claim, "It is no longer adequate to treat Hosea in isolation from the other writings in the Twelve" (30). He then moves to Joel, which, according to him, was compiled in order to be placed in its location within the Twelve (204). While discussing Joel, he puts forth an original argument that "this" in Joel 1:2 serves to connect to Hosea rather than a reflexive comment about Joel (206). He also positions Obadiah in an interpretative framework with Amos because of Obadiah's placement in the Twelve, linking the narratives about Israel and Edom to the Twelve (378). While the study of intertextuality within the Twelve seems to be early in its development, the implications of this study for preaching ministry could be extensive.

With his work, Nogalski serves students and ministers well. Highlighted, succinct discussions on literary features in the Hebrew Bible, such as parallelism (356), irony (419), word play (171), and catchwords (132) help the reader to become sensitive to important aspects of exegesis out of reach by English translations. Additionally, Nogalski appropriately introduces the reader to terms and issues related to Old Testament scholarship, such as imprecatory Psalms (394), synchronic and diachronic (9), tradition history (389), and woe oracle (320).

Several additions would have made the commentary even better: canonical and intertextual connections shared by the Old Testament and the Twelve; the plot(s) of the Twelve; further explanations of literary development (e.g. Joel); and summaries detailing the theological inter-connectedness of each prophetic book. Nogalski's work will stimulate one's thinking about the Minor Prophets. What is more, his comments on application will sober a reader to be sensitive to the theological message of these prophetic books. Nogalski models well for younger scholars how one deals firstly with the finer points of a discipline for a long time, then writes with expert knowledge for students and ministers. Nogalski's commentary gives clarity to ministers who desire to preach these significant yet neglected prophetic books.

Ethan Jones

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***Jesus among Friends and Enemies: A Historical and Literary Introduction to Jesus in the Gospels.* Edited by Chris Keith and Larry W. Hurtado. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. xxiii + 328 pages. Paperback, \$26.99.**

Chris Keith (Lincoln Christian University) and Larry Hurtado (University of Edinburgh), present a fascinating investigation. This edited volume of essays explores what one can learn about the historical Jesus from both his friends and enemies. It is a novel idea even though Scot McKnight and Joseph Modica already edited a study of Jesus' enemies accusations (xiii).² Of course, the canonical Gospels

²Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica, *Who Do My Opponents Say that I am? An Investigation of the Accusations against Jesus* (NY: T & T Clark, 2008).

contain information about Jesus that is both correct by his friends and incorrect by his enemies (2).

In each essay the author traces the information about each friend or enemy (or group of them, such as the Jewish leaders) from outside of Scripture and then from inside of Scripture. The outside sources include Jewish rabbinical writings, secular writers, the Apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, and agrapha (sayings of Jesus not contained in the four Gospels).

The essay writers are all published scholars in the area of Jesus research, such as Richard J. Bauckham, Michael F. Bird, Warren Carter, Anthony Le Donne, the two editors, and six others. Although the majority of these scholars are from the United Kingdom, there is a good variety of educational institutions represented.

The premise of the book is strong: the Gospels' full pictures of Jesus include the historical context as well as their portrayals of Jesus' friends and enemies (269). For instance, one gains much knowledge about Jesus in his arguments with the Jewish religious leaders (189). Each essay follows the same format of examining the noncanonical literature and then examining the Gospels one by one, which provides a helpful consistency in the study.

Periodic callout explanations are beneficial for students and lay people, covering basic explanations of subjects such as the Nag Hammadi Library (128), Caiaphas' Ossuary (229), Criteria Used in the Quest for the Historical Jesus (82), and Enochic Literature (190-91). However, some descriptions were simply too short, such as The "Longer Ending" of Mark (135) and The Jesus Seminar (154)—the latter one woefully lacking any negative criticism of that controversial group of Gospel critics.

A nice surprise was the concluding chapter. Rather than summarizing the previous essays, which editors of this type of book frequently do, Keith and Hurtado summarize and analyze recent trends in the Third Quest for the historical Jesus. The good news is the growing rejection of flawed criteria (that had led to claims that certain Gospel texts are inauthentic) and a positive emphasis on returning to the text itself. The bad news (from this reviewer's perspective) is the skepticism many scholars continue to have of the accuracy of the Gospel texts (287, fn. 61). The editors describe three current trends that indicate a return to the text: (1) modifications to the criterion of dissimilarity (276-81), (2) recognition of the failure of the criterion of inauthenticity (281-84), and (3) an examination of the Gospel texts as early Christian memory of Jesus (284-87).

Even though there is a connecting theme of returning to the text of the Gospels, unfortunately there are occasional disparagements on the historicity of what the texts mention. For instance, Anthony Le Donne claims the Gospels exaggerate how bad Jesus' enemies were (206-07). Michael Bird (67) and Helen K. Bond (223, 234) believe the accounts of John the Baptist's death were greatly embellished. Bond also claims the Gospel writers concocted elements in Jesus' trial narratives (228, 232, 241).

The primary weaknesses of this book are twofold. First, the subject matter is so vast that space does not allow adequate exegesis of the relevant Biblical texts. Second, there is inadequate application. The conclusions for each chapter were woefully brief—like the conclusions in many current undergraduate student term papers. At the end of each chapter, the reader is often left wondering, "So what? What does one do with this data?" For instance, what is the importance of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha being Jesus' friends when the Gospels rarely mention other friends

of his? What does their friendship reveal about Jesus? The chapter on Jesus' family does not contain a conclusion section (125), so these questions remain unexplored. Other unexplored questions include: what effect did having an unbelieving family have on Jesus? What may have led to the apparent unbelief of his siblings prior to his resurrection? Granted, the answers to these questions are speculative, but they remain within the purview of this book.

Although this essay collection could have delved deeper, it is nevertheless a volume that can be helpful to pastors, students, and teachers. The premise of this book could make a good sermon series, and it certainly reveals helpful information about Jesus.

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***Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament, Volume X, Galatians, Ephesians.* Gerald Bray, ed. Timothy George, General Editor. Downers Grove: IVP Academic. 2011. 446 pages. Hardcover, \$55.**

All those who love and admire the ancient Biblical Scripture along with maintaining a keen interest in Reformation scholarship need only to pick up the new volume of the *Reformation Commentary on Scripture (RCS), Volume X, Galatians, Ephesians*, to have their attraction profoundly satisfied. The *RCS* has set itself apart as a scholarly achievement with multitudinous insight and application for both the academy and the Church at large. Steeped in historical-critical-exegetical methodology and utilizing primary sources from the sixteenth century reformers' hands, the *RCS* amasses an impressive collection of unique sources from a wide-variety of Christian traditions within the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation movement. Calling upon the likes of reformation giants such as Erasmus, Luther, Calvin, and Tyndale, the *RCS* will claim its mark as the pinnacle of reformation-period Biblical commentaries due to its brilliant and needful inclusion of other lesser known reformers such as Bullinger, Bucer, Musculus, Brenz, Wigand, Cudworth, and Bugenhagen – all critically translated from Latin, German, French, Dutch and middle-English to be displayed potently after five hundred years of neglect. As such, the *RCS* exists to render dual access to the profound thoughts and Biblical-exegetical insights of key reformers with an aim of historical interpretation, appreciation, and modern-day comparison for contemporary expressions within the church and Christian society. The *RCS*, then, acts as a superb historical analysis of sixteenth-century Biblical, religious, and social scholarship while simultaneously serving the contemporary church with unique religious perspective and spiritual inspiration.

Mirroring its sister series, the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (ACCS)* also produced by IVP Academic, the *RCS* was produced with similar intention and audience in mind. Designed as a twenty-eight-volume series of Biblical-exegetical commentary covering both Old and New Testaments from the primary source writings of sixteenth century leaders, preachers, and scholars, the *RCS* duplicates the *ACCS* overall concept, method, and format ensuring the same quality and innovation expected by its eager audience. As the debut volume exudes, *Galatians, Ephesians* displays modern scholarship through hefty and helpful introductions, critical evaluation of both the sources and original authors, and extensive footnotes with a view toward aiding the modern reader to ascertain with ease the historical context, probable resources, and spiritual assumptions of the Protestant reformers'

writings. No doubt a pivotal source of inspiration for Luther's propagation of *sola fide* within the protestant reformation cry of "justification by faith alone," the series' general editor, Timothy George, has given great weight to both the Biblical books represented in this initial *RCS* production and their continual source of doctrinal development and ecclesiastical inspiration found uniquely in Galatians and Ephesians. Considered to be a concentrated source of the unadulterated gospel as proclaimed by the Apostle Paul, volume editor, Gerald Bray, perfectly captures the immediacy and urgency with which the reformers wrote concerning their protestant cause encapsulated and exegeted in Galatians and Ephesians as a means of conversion and Biblical cause toward Roman Catholics, heretics, and those spurned within the Lutheran and Reformed traditions through church discipline. More so, as a mark of brilliance exhibited within the design of the *RCS*, the contemporary reader can palpably sense the very weight of the place of Scripture itself amidst its compelling revolutionary message (given in the vernacular during the passionate sixteenth-century debate among competing religious societies), adding immense value and pleasure to the historian's reading of the *RCS Galatians* and *Ephesians* and the Christian's continual spiritual encouragement. As a measure of encouragement to buy and read this particular volume, Bray aptly demonstrates the critical nature which the Biblical books of Galatians and Ephesians played in the larger reformation movement for the reformers and their cause, strategically, doctrinally, and inspirationally captured in this inaugural *RCS* volume.

With a solid design to educate and reinforce modern reformation scholarship, the editors of the *RCS* have generously included extensive notes, commentary, maps, timelines, appendices, and voluminous bibliographical, authorial, scriptural, and subject indices within this first volume. Exhibiting large portions of primary source sixteenth-century literature, the reformer's vast exegetical corpus, newly translated and critically evaluated, is certain to intrigue and please the modern sixteenth-century historian among many others. Most helpful, the series general editor also details forty pages concerning the breadth and critical nature of the historical context of both the times and authors themselves of the reformation movement, useful historical context immediately employed for the scope of both books and no doubt all others in this series. Owing great awareness and exegetical scope to the purpose of this series, Bray brilliantly executes the unraveling of sixteenth-century theological and social insight comprised through Biblical exegesis from the sheer variety of reformed continental authors chosen—each upholding their nuanced platform of either Lutheran or Reformed positions. Attempting to cover even a restrained topic such as the Biblical-exegetical insights of sixteenth-century protestant reformers seems rather a straightforward and innocuous task, this project notwithstanding. However, in form of a critique, the early Anabaptist position is noticeably absent from Bray's protestant treatment and selection of possible reformed writers. Any number of selections from Hubmaier, Philips, and Simons among many possible others would lend further credibility and continuity to the current volume as these mentioned Anabaptist reformers represented evangelical protestant and reformational convictions (over-against dissenting Anabaptist spiritualists and humanists), being a recognized, though minor reformed voice and from whose leaders there exists a plethora of germane texts.

In sum, editor Timothy George notes in addition to the goal of producing helpful scholarly reformation research and highlighting obscure reformation primary sources as evidenced in this first volume, the *RCS* series also intends to enrich

contemporary Biblical interpretation through (1) the exposure to Reformation-era Biblical exegesis, insight, and preaching; and (2) the recovery of the robust spiritual theology and devotional treasures of the Reformation's engagement with the Bible. Speaking as a scholar and a dedicated Christian, I wholeheartedly feel that George succeeds on this front. Thus, a concerted strength of the *RCS* will be its utility among critical scholars and churchmen alike. Broadening its readership base and ensuring the creative posterity and potential success of the series and others like it, the *RCS* has produced an excellent product for the generally curious, spiritually interested, or the dedicated sixteenth-century scholar – all who stand to gain immensely as they read and enjoy each forthcoming volume.

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***Trinity, Revelation, And Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and its Interpretation.* By Scott R. Swain. T&T Clark Theology. London: T&T Clark, 2011. 168 pages. Hardcover, \$90.**

Is reading your Bible part of God's redemptive plan? Scott R. Swain teaches systematic theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Florida. In this volume, Swain seeks to lay the groundwork for answering this question in the affirmative. Swain seeks to provide "a theological introduction to the Bible and its interpretation" (1). He asks, "What roles do Holy Scripture and the reading of Holy Scripture play within the unfolding drama of the commerce and communion between God and humanity?" (1). Swain begins with the assumption that the nature and function of Scripture must be understood in relation to a host of theological realities (e.g., Trinity, revelation, providence, anthropology). His goal, though, is not to treat these areas comprehensively but rather to demonstrate their coherence. He aims to articulate a "coherent vision of how these themes fit together within the larger evangelical reality of God's relation to his people" (2). "The entirety of this book," Swain writes, "is devoted to tracing the place of Holy Scripture and its interpretation within the economy of trinitarian, covenantal self-communication and communion" (8).

Accordingly, the first part of the book focuses on the nature of Scripture within the context of God's "unfolding purpose for creation" (13). The God portrayed in the Bible is one who speaks; one who reveals himself to his creation. The Biblical narrative conveys a drama of "kingdom and covenant" that rehearses God's creation of humans and his purpose for them, mankind's rebellion in sin, and God's subsequent plan of redemption through a promised redeemer. In this drama of redemption, God extends a word of covenant to his people. Swain thus outlines God's covenant with Abraham, David, and the promise of a new covenant that is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. "By his covenantal Word," Swain reflects, "God creates, redeems, and consummates the world" (33).

Two major features of this divine communication are "double agency discourse" and "covenant discourse." As Swain puts it, the former aspect highlights that God himself communicates and the latter emphasizes that God communicates himself (35-36). To explain double agency discourse, Swain notes that "the history of God speaking is the history of God speaking through authorized agents or representatives, preeminently his prophets and apostles" (35). When the prophets and apostles speak, God himself speaks. The content of that speech involves a word of covenantal communication. In other words, "by means of his prophetic and apostolic

word, God binds himself to his people and his people to himself” (40). Through God’s written words, he “transmits and communicates his covenantal-Christological discourse to his people” (53). Scripture, in other words, is “the divinely authorized literary means whereby the living God continually speaks to his people” (56).

Regarding the nature of Scripture itself, Swain argues that because the written Word is communicated by means of the Holy Spirit (inspiration), it bears the qualities of divine perfection. It has authority because it communicates a word from a sovereign God. It is true and trustworthy because God is true and trustworthy. It is sufficient because “God has revealed all things necessary to know him in a saving way and to serve him in a pleasing way” (83). It is clear because “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (87, 1 Jn 1:5). Swain also reflects on the impact these attributes have on the interpretation of Scripture.

After this discussion of the nature of Scripture, Swain next outlines the nature of Scripture reading. Because the “commerce and communion between God and his people is an inherently textual phenomenon,” the actual reading of Scripture is an integral feature of the life of the church. For Swain, the act of reading is an “act of covenant mutuality,” as God’s ordained means of communing with his creatures. The reason Christians are a “people of the book” is because “Scripture is the supreme locus of God’s self-communication in the world” (95). In this light, the authority of the church and its interpretive traditions (e.g., the rule of faith) are “aids” in the pursuit of “renewed reading” (100ff). Swain urges that within the context of this interpretive community there must be both public and private reading. Swain ends his volume by arguing that the “characteristic shape of biblical interpretation” that should mark this community includes the practices of prayer, explication, meditation, and application (125-36).

Recent work in the field of bibliology has focused on the “role” or “dogmatic location” of Scripture within God’s plan of redemption. Swain’s volume represents a succinct synopsis of and contribution to this area of emphasis. Swain’s overall argument is to the point, and progresses in a clearly discernable fashion. On the whole, he provides a compelling articulation of Scripture’s integral function in God’s saving purpose in the world. This work will aid those with a high view of Scripture to account more fully for Scripture’s function in both personal and corporate contexts.

In his introduction, Swain outlines a number of elements that have shaped his thinking on Biblical interpretation (10-12). He writes within the Reformed tradition, is sympathetic to the concerns of the Theological Interpretation movement, and is willing to utilize “critical interpretive methods” when needed in the interpretive task. Indeed, Swain seeks to appropriate key insights from past and present thinkers in the Reformed tradition (e.g., Herman Bavinck, B. B. Warfield, Kevin Vanhoozer, John Webster). Swain’s discussion of the “covenantal context” for reading Scripture is also tied to the Covenant Theology of the Reformed Tradition (e.g., 7-8). However, most of his exposition of the covenantal language in Scripture and the covenantal nature of Scripture is drawn from an exposition of the Biblical covenants themselves (e.g., Abrahamic, Davidic, New) rather than the theological constructs of Covenant Theology. Thus, those from other theological traditions will still be able to benefit directly from Swain’s substantive insights about God’s covenantal purposes. Further, on the whole, this volume presents an accessible entry point into the Reformed tradition’s robust doctrine of Scripture.

One of the most helpful aspects of Swain’s volume is his emphasis on the act of reading itself. Having shown how reading is an act of “covenant mutuality” for the

believer, Swain observes that “the best way to become a good reader of the Bible is to become a reader of the Bible” (120). Taking note of the importance of God’s Word, Swain urges believers to mediate on the words within that Word. In the way he structures his work, Swain also draws attention to the theological significance of the careful and consistent reading of Scripture. By reading these divinely given words, believers commune with God himself. As Swain concludes, “Reading, is therefore a living conversation between an eloquent Lord and his attentive servants, a conversation in which the reader is summoned to hear what the Spirit of Christ says to the churches” (139). In the end, Swain provides a theological context for and a fresh impetus to the readerly mandate *tolle lege* (“take up, and read!”).

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Theological Studies

***God of the Living: A Biblical Theology.* By Reinhard Feldmeier and Hermann Spieckermann. Translated by Mark E. Biddle. Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2011. 612 + ix pages. Hardcover. \$59.95.**

God of the Living is a remarkable book. First, the book is a product of close collaboration between an established OT scholar, Spieckermann, and NT scholar, Feldmeier, both at Göttingen. Although the book deals often with the OT and NT distinctly, the work is seamlessly integrated from its overall structure to each individual chapter. This type of collaboration took the better part of a decade, but the work would not be possible without it.

Second, the book was written and published in German at virtually the same time as it was translated and published in English. Again, this amount of collaboration between German authors and English translator is remarkable.

Third, the book synthesizes the complex picture of God presented throughout the entire Christian Bible. The authors have synthesized this picture around Jesus’ proclamation about God: He is the God of the living (Mark 12:27). The authors draw two main points from Jesus’ statement. First, God is the one who makes alive, both in creation and again in resurrection and salvation. Second, God is the one who desires relationship with people. As the authors put it, “This fundamental, without which God would not be God, is his specific desire for relationship with human beings and the world” (12).

In order to arrive at a synthesis of the picture of God in the Bible, the authors have produced a Biblical theology. In other words, their task is theological and corresponds to the intent of the Bible “to transmit knowledge of God reliably” (2). In fact, they go so far as to say, “Scholarly exegesis must adhere to this intention of the biblical documents [to transmit knowledge of God reliably] if it wants to take seriously the true objective of the texts beyond the circumstances in which the texts originated” (2). At the same time, their work “is defined by the convictions that appropriate understanding of the voices of the biblical witnesses without scholarship in the history of literature and religion is deficient” (8). Based on these convictions, the authors discuss the Biblical documents according to the results of historical-critical methods in explaining the origin and development of the Biblical documents themselves and show great awareness of the religious developments in Ancient Near Eastern and Hellenistic-Roman cultures that form the backdrop to Old and New Testaments.

The book consists of two principal parts. The first part addresses God's being, who he is. The second part addresses God's activity, what he does. In the first part, each chapter addresses one aspect of God's being (e.g. as loving one, Almighty, spirit) by tracing the development of the picture of God usually from the earliest OT witnesses to the latest NT ones. In the second part each chapter addresses twin aspects of God's activity (e.g. Eternity and Time, Covenant and Promise, Salvation and Judgment), again by working from earliest to latest witnesses. By structuring their work in this way, they have intentionally chosen to describe the Biblical doctrine of God "in historical-genetic and systematic fashion" (12).

Let me summarize a couple of discussions in order to provide a sense for what the authors are arguing and how they are doing so. The first sample discussion addresses God's being as the Almighty, or in other words, his omnipotence. Their starting point is the common theological objection to God's omnipotence as the absolute power of a tyrant. In contrast they show how the Biblical witness consistently points to God's power in the context of salvation. They point out that the Gospels repeatedly use the expression "nothing is impossible" and that the "formulaic expression appears exclusively in the context of a promise or a request" (190). This observation, along with others throughout the Bible, lead them to conclude that in the Bible "almightiness is not unbounded omnipotence, but a power expressed in God's will for the salvation of his people" (197).

The second sample discussion is devoted to Hiddenness and Wrath. As they say, these themes "are deliberately not treated along with their respective positive counterparts, love and revelation" (339). Part of their rationale stems from New Testament language about God: "The New Testament says that God is a God of love (2 Cor 13:11), indeed, that he *is* love (1 John 4:8, 16), while the contrary statement, that he is a God of wrath, indeed, that he *is* wrath, is inconceivable" (339). Therefore, wrath and love are not two sides of a coin, but "God's wrath is his reaction to injustice and defiance" (339), that is, part of his activity, not of his being.

The above examples give a sense to the emphasis that the authors place on God's desire for salvation. I fear that the emphasis on God's intent to save may distort parts of the Bible, e.g. the final images recorded in Revelation, so that God's reckoning of the world, his judgment and wrath, eventually give way to universal redemption.

God of the Living is an ambitious work. For those who study the Bible academically, it stands as a model of collaboration needed for serious study of the Bible. For those interested in the discipline of Biblical theology, it is an example of Biblical theology carried out through historical-critical tools. For those just interested in the Bible's picture of God, it offers many insightful individual observations and helpful lines for synthesizing the complex portrait of God in the Bible.

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***Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church.* By Todd J. Billings. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. 192 pages. Paperback, \$19.99.**

Billings' purpose in this book is "to highlight key present-day implications of a Reformation doctrine of union with Christ" (3). In contrast to his former historical-theological work and other contemporary books written on union from a polemic, philosophical, or doctrinal perspective, Billings' book contributes not only

to academia, but also to the church through his resolution of problems posed by contemporary Western Christianity through the application of union with Christ to these dilemmas.

The main feature of Billings' method is his characterization of his approach as "a theology of retrieval" (2). The term "theology of retrieval," is a relatively new designation coined by John Webster to refer to "a mode of theology, an attitude of mind ... a cluster of theologies which reach a broadly similar set of judgments about the nature of systematic theology" and includes such more familiar theological designations as "post-liberal, post-critical, restorationist," palaeo-orthodox, intratextual [and] even postmodern" (Webster, *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, 584). Billings' "theology of retrieval" approach seems to be the mental attitude of engaging with pre-modern sixteenth-century Reformation texts as cross-cultural conversation partners. Through the cultural clash with contemporary Western Christianity, the conversation is aimed at enabling current theologians to see Scripture with "new eyes" or "shake up our modern categories" (3-8, 168).

A secondary feature of his method is to offer an exposition of union with Christ followed by an application of it to resolve one of two general types of contemporary Western Christian problems: "moralistic therapeutic deism" and the various false polarities created by the fundamentalist-modernist controversy (8-10).

Rather than being a carefully constructed argument that expands on a thesis, Billings' work is "a series of thematic essays" (2) which represent various "reflections" (114) on the theme of union with Christ. In one essay, by relating union to adoption and Calvin's double grace of justification and sanctification, Billings stresses that union involves the impartation of a new identity and the empowerment to "live into" it (15-21). Billings uses Christian Smith's two sociological studies (*Soul Searching* and *Souls in Transition*) to define the current American cultural theology as "moralistic therapeutic deism" (MTD) (21-22). In MTD, religion is moralistic because God only helps people to be good rather than saving them, and religion is therapeutic and deistic in that God is distant except to resolve the crises of individuals (22). Union resolves the problem of MTD by replacing moralism with salvation in justification, therapy with "living into" a new identity in sanctification, and God's distance in deism with intimacy in adoption (26-34).

In perhaps his most significant essay, Billings demonstrates from Scripture and the Reformed tradition that the bondage of the will or total depravity "mirrors" or is the necessary counterpart of union with Christ (36-40). A contemporary problem is that both Calvinists and their detractors misunderstand the TULIP acronym, with its emphasis on total depravity, as indicating that predestination is the "central dogma" (57-58) or "theological core" (170) of Reformed theology. Union with Christ clears up this misunderstanding when those in the Reformed camp and its detractors recognize that it was not the original Reformers or later Reformed scholastics who lost the parallel between the bondage of the will/total depravity and union with Christ, but rather contemporary Calvinists (57-58, 170-71).

In his closing essay, Billings argues that while the incarnational ministry model has developed a number of significant insights, it is based on the faulty theological premise of imitating the "unique and unrepeatable ... saving event" of the incarnation. As a result, its valuable insights are best preserved by basing them on the alternate foundation of ministry in union with Christ (14, 124).

Throughout the book, Billings demonstrates his expertise in the topic of union with Christ and historical theology. In his essays, Billings seems to cover

nearly the full multidimensionality of the concept of union with Christ by dealing with its soteriological (65), pneumatological (152-56), ecclesiological (15-27), mystical (67, 83), ethical (48), and eschatological (153-55) dimensions in the context of detailed arguments through the writings of various historical figures. However, this book seems better suited for those with at least some basic working knowledge of the discussion about union with Christ rather than beginners. One reason for this assessment is that Billings does not give an in-depth explanation of what union with Christ is, presumably because he assumes that his readers already know.

Billings's various analyses of contemporary Western Christianity seem to be on the mark. For example, Billings's summary of Smith's studies as "MTD" appears to be an accurate description of the current state of popular theology in America. While Billings does an excellent job of describing contemporary theological and cultural problems as well as expositing the various historical concepts related to union with Christ, the main value of his work does not seem to be his use of union to resolve contemporary issues. Rather, his work seems more important for its demonstration of how certain well-known theological and ministry ideas in Scripture are related to union with Christ.

One exception may be his second essay. While arguing on different grounds, Billings' claim that both Calvinists and their detractors misunderstand the TULIP acronym as indicating that predestination is the "central dogma" (57-58) or "theological core" (170) of Reformed theology mutually reinforces Kennedy's (*Union with Christ and the Extent of the Atonement in Calvin*) claim that union rather than predestination is central. Billings argues that TULIP is a bad summary of Dort and Reformed doctrine because: (1) Dort did not summarize the Reformed faith, but rather responded to the Arminian Remonstrance and "supplemented" the Dutch Reformed confession of faith found in the Belgic Confession, (2) Dort dealt with election, sin, and the assurance of salvation, but never mentioned the "limited" atonement, and (3) Dort emphasized sin more than communion with God, while the Belgic Confession placed more emphasis on the latter (58-59). Kennedy argues that the structure of Calvin's *Institutes* indicates that union rather than predestination is central since union is included in the main discussion of the application of the benefits of salvation in Book III of the *Institutes*, and predestination only occurs in the subsequent secondary location as an answer to the ancillary question of "why not all are saved" (151). An important question would be whether Billings and Kennedy represent a growing new consensus regarding the center of Calvin's thought.

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***For Calvinism.* By Michael Horton. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. 208 pages. Paperback, \$16.99.**

In *For Calvinism*, Michael Horton (Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics at Westminster Seminary California) explores Biblical and historical roots beneath the doctrines of grace—commonly referred to as Calvinism. Published by Zondervan alongside Roger Olsen's *Against Calvinism*, these two books speak to one of the theological trends that is (according to *Time* magazine) "changing the world."

Throughout the book, Horton encounters caricatures and stereotypes head-on—providing historical evidence through sermons, creeds, and catechisms—ex-

plaining that those who hold those certain positions stand on the fringes of Reformed theology, or are misunderstood assumptions by those outside of Calvinism about Calvinists.

An example of such misunderstandings is the Calvinistic understanding of depravity. Whereas critics of Reformed theology often argue that Calvinists begin theologically with Gen 3 (The Fall), rather than Gen 1 (The Creation), Horton contends that Reformed theology begins with the Creator God and His prize creation, man. Man was created with freedom of will, and chose sin, evil, and death, thereby shackling all of creation in sin. The result is that all of humanity now chooses sin freely, and—controlled by sin—cannot choose otherwise.

Another such example of confusion exists around the Calvinistic understanding of election. Horton writes, “It is impossible to read the Bible without recognizing God’s freedom to choose some and not others” (54). This does not, however, mean that God plays an active role in reprobation—that is, “God’s decision *not* to save some” (57). Horton states explicitly that, “God is not active in hardening hearts in the same way that he is active in softening hearts” (57).

Horton defends the doctrine of limited atonement, but only after sharing his preference for the terms “definite atonement,” or “particular redemption.” This is certainly the most hotly debated of the five points of Calvinism, and one that many Calvinists – both historic and modern – flatly deny. For Horton, however, the argument against the Calvinistic understanding of the atonement has lost its center. Whereas those in disagreement argue that Scripture plainly states that Christ died for all, Horton maintains that the question is not for whom did Christ die, but rather, does his atonement save, or merely make man saveable? Calvinists, according to Horton, believe that the atonement is limited in its extent, while unlimited in its efficacy, while Arminians maintain that it is unlimited in extent, while remaining limited in its efficacy. Rather than leading Calvinists to proclaim the gospel to only those elected for salvation, Horton maintains that, “we declare not only generally to all but particularly to each person that Christ’s death is sufficient to save him or her” (97).

Perhaps the most common objection to Calvinism is that a Calvinistic understanding of election and predestination leads to lax evangelistic and missionary zeal. Horton quotes the late Southern Baptist church historian William R. Estep as stating, “Calvinism is anti-missionary,” and that the doctrine of election forces evangelistic and missionary efforts to be “exercises in futility.” Responding to this accusation, Horton writes,

The premises in Estep’s article do indeed follow logically to his conclusion. If election eliminates personal responsibility for responding to the gospel and the gospel itself is not to be proclaimed indiscriminately to every person, of course the missionary enterprise would be a fool’s errand. However, none of the premises is actually held by Calvinists. But they are widely assumed by non-Calvinists. It is a caricature of Calvinism that leads to the conclusion that, on logical grounds, it is inimical to missions (151-52).

Horton then describes the rich history of Calvinist missions, from Calvin himself to Carey and Eliot, from Brainerd to Livingstone. This historical survey of the manner in which Calvinism has provided the impetus for innumerable missionary endeavors renders accusations to the contrary completely lacking in historical

fact. Horton further provides a compelling Biblical argument for the logic of Calvinism in missions.

Sadly, *For Calvinism* will primarily be read by the already-convinced, or the will-not-be-convinced. This is not due to the author's tone, as much as the topic. Few stumble upon books like *For Calvinism* without a predetermined (freely-chosen, of course) position in mind. However, even those predisposed against Calvinism will find in Dr. Horton a gracious host, welcoming them to explore the vast richness of the Calvinist theology.

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***Against Calvinism: Rescuing God's Reputation from Radical Reformed Theology.* By Roger E. Olson. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. 208 pages. Paperback, \$11.95.**

Roger Olson's book is as jarring as its title. Right from the start, he doggedly pursues his intention to challenge the juggernaut of American neo-Calvinism (what he calls "Radical Reformed Theology"), saying a firm "No" to this development within evangelicalism that he believes is bad for theology, bad for the church, and bad for evangelism. The first three chapters set the parameters for his critical analysis of this particular iteration of Calvinism. Olson utilizes Collin Hansen's description of the theology of the *Young, Restless, and Reformed* (those informed primarily by John Piper and R.C. Sproul who are functioning as a self-conscious theological movement) to define the problem. He characterizes this brand of Calvinism as that which insists on the middle three letters of TULIP along with "divine determinism" (which entails a compatibilist understanding of free-will) and the reprobation of the non-elect. Olson spends the rest of the book dismantling those key components of Radical Reformed Theology one-by-one, briefly concluding each chapter by offering the requisite component of classical Arminianism as a better alternative.

Olson's articulation of Radical Reformed Theology is extremely helpful. The debate surrounding neo-Calvinism often bogs down because of a lack of clarity over which form of Calvinism is under discussion. Calvinists often subtract whatever aspects of the system they find objectionable, so Olson settles the matter in his chapter entitled "Whose Calvinism? Which Reformed Theology?" Since Piper and Sproul have been the standard-bearers for neo-Calvinists, Olson determines that they should be the standard-setters as well. Those who advocate neo-Calvinism need to be prepared to defend Piper and Sproul's version or be able to articulate where they disagree and how their version remains both intelligible and still legitimately Calvinistic.

The main strength of the work is its devastating critique of Radical Reformed Theology. Olson's engagement with Calvin, Loraine Boettner, Sproul, Piper, Paul Helm and others is substantive, fair, and striking. From every angle, whether it be unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, or the decree of reprobation, Olson demonstrates that neo-Calvinism leads inevitably to a God who purposefully causes sin and evil (things like the Fall, the Holocaust, and childhood cancer). This God does not desire the salvation of all people. Moreover, he necessarily prohibits the redemption of the non-elect for the sole purpose of having an object upon whom he may display His wrath, which makes God's glory contingent upon creation. Olson is careful throughout to remind the reader that the overwhelming majority of Calvinists reject such an understanding of God. He convincingly dem-

onstrates, however, that this conclusion is the only logical outcome, and, of course, patently unbiblical.

The main weakness of the book is clear as well: Arminianism is not a viable alternative to Calvinism. Olson exposes the utterly speculative nature neo-Calvinism only to offer Arminianism's equally speculative concept of "prevenient grace." He dismantles four of the five points of Calvinism, but has no word for "perseverance of the saints." This is because Arminianism's position (or non-position) on the issue is dead wrong. Neo-Calvinism will continue to dominate the marketplace of (theological) ideas until a clearly superior paradigm for Biblical soteriology emerges.

Also, Olson speaks of "rescuing God's reputation," and he argues throughout that the God of Calvinism fails to be a God of love. Often, however, the problem with God's reputation is not God's problem but the culture's problem. The Bible portrays God in many ways that don't seem very loving from the culture's perspective, but evangelicals insist on that portrayal because it is Biblical. Calvinism's view of God is flawed because it fails to take seriously the Bible's own clear teachings about the importance, nature, and implications of God's love.

Roger Olson's courage in confronting what is, at least for now, an enormously popular theological program is admirable and much needed. As he points out in the book, neo-Calvinism's rise is due in large part to the dearth of serious theological engagement and education in evangelical churches over the last generation. Piper and others have filled that void passionately, purposefully, and with stunningly successful effect. But the dangers of that system are real and present and must be met with the same passion and purpose. Olson points the way.

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***Excellence: The Character of God and the Pursuit of Scholarly Virtue.* By Andreas J. Köstenberger. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011. 270 pages. Paperback, \$17.99.**

We live in a day in which superlatives are sometimes wasted on the ordinary. Sports figures are lauded as heroes and the common is elevated to the level of the exceptional. The danger of such exaggeration is the possibility of overlooking the truly extraordinary among the sheer volume of the common. Andreas Köstenberger has issued a passionate challenge to strive for more.

The book appertains to any audience, but targets scholarship, particularly young and aspiring scholars (44). Though the book is a charge to scholars, the author consistently reminds the reader that excellence extends beyond the realm of academia. Excellence, according to Köstenberger, must pursued in vocationally, morally, and relationally (232). As such, excelling in an academic setting, but failing in other areas (like the home) falls short of excellence (28, 232).

The author's goal is not just excellent scholars, but scholars of excellence. The book, in large part, seems to be the author's response to the claim by Michael Fox that faith and scholarship are incompatible (62). Köstenberger ardently denies and adeptly defeats this claim. He asserts that "believing scholarship is not only possible but in fact is more virtuous than critical, unbelieving, or supposedly objective academic work" (24). Indeed, he maintains that God is the source of all excellence (33).

The outline of the book grows out of 2 Peter 1:5-7. Peter begins this pericope by admonishing his readers to add to their faith virtue. Köstenberger proposes that the term often translated "virtue" is best translated "excellence" (45). From that, the

author begins by building a foundation for excellence. He describes the excellence of God and demonstrates the pursuit of excellence as a calling that believers share based on a consistent translation of the same word above used in 2 Peter 1:3. To complete the foundation, Köstenberger adds the virtues of holiness and spirituality.

For Köstenberger, excellence relates to the concept of holiness. As holiness expresses that which is set apart, excellence carries a similar denotation. Then, completing the foundation for excellence, Köstenberger addresses the issue of spirituality. He asserts that the primary disciplines of the Christian life are prayer and the study of God's Word (76, 84). Spirituality, moreover, compels the believer to active engagement with the world under the direction and leadership of the Holy Spirit and his work in our lives (75).

Building on that foundation of excellence, the balance of the book addresses those ingredients that the author argues comprise vocational, moral, and relational excellence. A consistent strength of the book is not only the author's consistent personal witness of his own faith, but his defense of Scripture and the application of Biblical truth to the academic world.

With each ingredient, Köstenberger addresses how they are revealed in the Old Testament and the New Testament, and how they related to excellence in scholarship. The book is filled with practical advice, relevant concerns, passionate challenges, and personal integrity. Its relevance to the academic world is apparent, though even the author undersells its relevance to other areas as well (148). This book is a challenge that aspiring Christian scholars should take to heart and seasoned scholars should apprehend and regularly monitor.

The translation of *aretē* as "excellent" seems well-founded and clearly articulated. Though, allowing that point, and conceding the remainder of the ingredients as "necessary for academic excellence" (27) as the author suggests, one wonders why Peter would be encouraging his readers to add anything to excellence (2 Peter 1:5), if in fact excellence would already encompass the remaining ingredients that Peter espouses.

Köstenberger should be commended for his clear refutation and debunking of Fox's unfounded conclusion. Indeed, the irony that Fox once served as the president of the Society of Biblical Literature is not missed.

In the end, the book is a summons. Like a watchman, Köstenberger has issued a call to all Christian academicians present and future. One can be a committed believer and a competent scholar. It's not an unreachable goal; instead, it is one that must be met. Moreover, this book serves as exhibit A. We must not settle for mediocrity when excellence is within our reach. The character of God demands it, our calling requires it, and our world needs it.

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Historical Studies

***Theologian Trading Cards.* By Norman Jeune III. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 315 cards. \$26.99.**

When taught well, the study of church history opens the door to two thousand years of doctrinal insight, political posturing, and intriguing personalities that shape the thought and theology of the modern church. In one sense, the study of church history is the study of such personalities and the manner in which they interacted in agreement and disagreement. The difficulty for students then, is the sheer volume of these historic figures, their contributions to theological thought, and discerning their rightful place in history.

In his *Theologian Trading Cards*, Norman Jeune III (M.A., Talbot School of Theology, Biola University) offers a unique study tool patterned after the American baseball card to assist Bible college and seminary students as they explore the leading voices from the early church councils to modern day. The 287 historical figures are divided among fifteen theological and historical “teams” such as the “Orthodoxy Dodgers” (heretics), the “Geneva Sovereigns” (Reformed), and the “Münster Radicals” (Anabaptists). Each card contains a picture or portrait on one side opposite brief biographical material and the historical significance of the figure. One immediately sees the value of such flashcards.

Upon further examination, one begins to notice peculiar inclusions that might not be expected. Contemporary theologians are well represented, including N.T. Wright and Kevin Vanhoozer, despite the fact that it is too soon to predict the impact of their theological contributions upon history. Their place in the collection at the expense of notably absent names such as Puritans Richard Baxter (who literally wrote the book on Reformed pastors) and William Gouge (whose work influenced centuries of believers’ understanding of the Christian home) may raise suspicion.

Anabaptists are particularly well represented, perhaps reversing the centuries old trend toward minimizing their contributions to Christian thought, while the first English Baptists, Thomas Helwys and John Smyth, are completely absent. John Bunyan, the author of one of the most influential books in all of Christian history, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, is not mentioned. One observes further that Baptists in general are marginalized and names such as Roger Williams (who championed religious freedom in the early United States), John Broadus, James P. Boyce, and B.H. Carroll (founders of Southern Baptist seminaries) are simply missing from the deck, as is the Prince of Preachers, Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

Further complicating matters is the reality that all history is interpretive, and that Jeune was, by the very nature of the project, required to make debatable decisions regarding the categorization of particular figures. Such decisions would lead him to categorize Jonathan Edwards as an “Evangelical / Fundamentalist” rather than Puritan, and to group the Anabaptists separately as a whole, despite the fact that many were condemned as heretics by the Roman Catholic Church, the Magisterial Reformers, or both. Jeune’s interpretation seems to have led him to conclude that theirs was not legitimate heresy, and was deserving of a separate category altogether. One may agree with his conclusion regarding the Anabaptists, but must still acknowledge that in this case, his is a re-interpretation of historical events, rather than that which was understood at that time.

This same critique extends to the author’s identification of some who are clas-

sified as martyrs despite the fact that they were executed by the church as heretics. Though one might quickly come to the defense of Balthasar Hübmaier's accusation as a heretic, one cannot deny that was the charge for which he was executed. While Jeune lists Hübmaier as an Anabaptist rather than a Heretic, he does not account his death as martyrdom.

Despite these critiques, the *Theologian Trading Cards* will serve students well as they begin to navigate church history. Jeune strives to help students understand historical figures in their proper theological context, which demands he make certain interpretive decisions. While some may disagree with specific decisions, none can deny the strength of this resource for students of church history.

David G. Norman, Jr.

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***Athanasius.* By Peter J. Leithart. Foundations of Theological Exegesis and Christian Spirituality. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. 204 pages. Paperback, \$ 22.09.**

Leithart acknowledges the limited role of Arius in the development of Arianism and the theological diversity among Arians. But the Reformed writer believes that one could still speak of various Arians as a homogenous theological group in that all were anti-Nicene. Refuting the modern revisionists of Arianism, Leithart favors Jenson's reconstruction of the traditional judgment on Arianism, which is truly "a form of Hellenistic theology or metaphysics" (19). In opposition to the Arians' rejection of the term *homoousios*, Athanasius, based on his Christocentric typology, defines biblicism not as strict adherence to Biblical words but as theological faithfulness to "the overall pattern of biblical usage" (36) or "the sense of Scripture" (38). Therefore, Leithart endorses Athanasius' blame for the Arians' theological kinship with the Jewish monotheism as accurate. The Arians' error is not only their heretical Christology but also their heretical patrology, because the denial of the eternal Sonship of Christ logically leads to the denial of the eternal Fatherhood of God. The god of the Arians is not the eternal god but "a God-in-progress" (51). Arianism presents its followers a false hope of deification that is only possible through the God-man Jesus Christ alone who could grant humanity, immortality, and incorruptibility.

In contrast to Augustine, who allegedly distinguished the Father's being as God from the Father's being the Father by presenting nature as "something additional to relation," Leithart claims that Athanasius' argument supports the Father is God due to his relation to the Son, not in himself, which is more recommendable (76-77). However, for this reviewer, Leithart still seems to be under the influence of Du Roy's old thesis that Augustine begins his Trinitarianism with the abstract divine essence apart from relations. Indeed, for Augustine, deity is not the result of the relational unity of Persons. In order for the Nicene phrases such as Light from Light or God from God to be true, according to Augustine, the Father and the Son ought to be fully divine respectively, not collectively. Even Leithart admits that the Father in Athanasian Trinitarianism is dependent upon the Son, not for his begetting the Son, but for "his status as Father" (87). If this is the case, however, Athanasius seems to this reviewer to make the later Augustinian distinction between the Father's divine essence and the Father's personal property. Interestingly, Leithart points out a theological agreement between Athanasius and Augustine concerning the Holy

Spirit. There is a hermeneutical parallel between the relationship of the Father to the Son and that of the Son to the Spirit. As the Son is the image of the Father, the Spirit is the image of the Son. Sending means functional hierarchy. Athanasius speaks of the Father's dependence upon the Son and, therefore, of a mutual and "reciprocal Thou" relationship among the three Persons (86). For Athanasius, the divine Persons are "equal" but "not identical individuals," and, moreover, they do not constitute a social "egalitarian democracy" in the Trinity (88).

With regard to nature and grace, Athanasius saw nature as something that already received grace by virtue of its being created and participated in the Holy Spirit from its very beginning. However, according to Leithart, Athanasius would not accept the Reformed systematician Horton's argument that the pre-fall Adam did not need any further grace other than his creation when he had to prove his obedience. The ancient bishop never believed that the beatific vision could be achieved by Adam's own virtue or his received initial grace. On the other hand, the grace of the incarnation, grace that perfects humanity, is not that of external to or from the top above human nature but "*later grace*" (115). Rather, the incarnation is the fulfillment of humanity, which was open to "receive the increasing inflow [of] God's self-communication" (114). Therefore, Athanasius also refuses a Catholic anthropology, whether from de Lubac or Rahner, which preserves any dualism between the natural and the supernatural, and still presents grace as something extrinsic to nature. This reviewer agrees with Leithart that even the pre-fall Adam needed grace for his obedience but wonders how Leithart's Athanasian view of grace and nature could explain the imputed righteousness of Christ in justification, righteousness that will be alien to humanity in eternity. In contrast to a common critique of Athanasius that his Christology was a sort of Apollinarianism, because of his ignorance of the human soul of Jesus, Leithart defends the Alexandrian champion of the Nicene faith by asserting that Athanasius indeed taught the human soul of Christ, although he did not articulate the relationship between Christ's logos and human soul in a way a modern reader might expect.

Contemporary readers of Athanasius would find his lesson on the Christological typology of Psalms as one of the methods for spiritual discipline very attractive and helpful. Augustine and Luther also found the Savior Jesus Christ who provided the righteousness of God apart from the law and challenged them to imitate him by participating in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This work deserves attention by all theological students of Athanasius. Leithart's work is not simply about the fourth-century Arian controversy or a theological apology for Athanasius. Leithart's critical evaluations of contemporary Trinitarian theologies such as Rahner's axiom, the Hegalian concept of the suffering of God, and social Trinitarianism in light of Athanasius' Trinitarianism are also insightful.

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***The Trinitarian Theology of St Thomas Aquinas.* By Gilles Emery, OP. Translated by Francesca Aran Murphy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. 440 pages. Paperback, \$ 45.**

Gilles Emery's present work is his historical, theological, and exegetical apology for Thomas' speculative or philosophical theology. His primary task here is

to show what Aquinas' Trinitarian theology really teaches in the *Summa Theologiae* by interpreting not only the medieval writer's theological but also philosophical arguments with regard to the triune God. In response to critiques of Thomas' Trinitarian theology as speculative and unbiblical, Emery contends that the medieval theologian's "speculative theology is not superimposed on or juxtaposed with the biblical texts, but is part and parcel of the biblical reading; it aims at disclosing the doctrinal meaning of the 'letter,' the literal sense, of the Gospel" (20). For Thomas, "it is not enough to produce Bible quotes" in clarifying the truth of the mystery of the Trinity and correcting Trinitarian heresies (27). If Thomas employs Aristotelian or Stoic terms and phrases, Emery points out, his intention is always to show the rationale of the truth of the Trinity, which the Bible presents and the church tradition defines.

This present work could also be a theological rebuttal to modern critiques of Aquinas' Trinitarian theology such as Karl Rahner, Catherine M. LaCugna, and Colin Gunton, who argue that Thomas dissolves the indissoluble connection between soteriology and the Trinity. By letting Thomas speak through his own *Summa*, Emery attests that like Athanasius, Aquinas' primary concern about the Trinity is soteriological. If Christ and the Holy Spirit are not God, we cannot be saved, or deified, through their ministries because salvation is the work of God. Like Basil, Thomas attempts to prove the divine personality of the Holy Spirit by demonstrating the divine works of the Spirit and to point out a theological parallel between Christ and the Spirit in their works. If Christ is God, the Spirit is necessarily to be God.

In answering the question as to why the deity has three Persons, not a single person, interestingly, Thomas rejects a rational approach of Richard of St. Victor and Bonaventure based on the divine fecundity and the divine goodness. Instead, Thomas is simply content that the threeness of the divine Persons is given to us as revelation. Like the Cappadocian Fathers, Thomas admits there is a Trinitarian order among the three Persons. However, for Thomas, the order that makes each Person distinct from the other is the order of opposed relations rather than that of origin. Departing from St. Victor and Bonaventure who saw the origin of being (generation and spiration) makes the Son and the Spirit distinct from the Father, Thomas sees the origin of being as the principle of constituting "the Son as a person" but relation as the principle of constituting "the Son in himself" (124). For Thomas, relation is not something that was "adventitiously added on to persons who have already been constituted in some other way" (125). Rather, relation is what God is. In other words, we cannot understand the Father apart from his paternity. The Father has never existed prior to his personal attribute of paternity. Each Person as a subsistent relation also denotes that paternity has no priority over filiation, and, likewise, filiation has no priority over the procession of the Spirit in deity.

Since the three Persons do not have their divine substance in a separate and material way that is applicable to humans, there is numerical unity of the divine essence preserving Trinitarian monotheism. The plurality of Persons in the Trinity is transcendental. Therefore, we do not have three gods but one God who is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Despite his awareness that the Greek fathers used *aitia* [cause] or *archē* [beginning] in order to describe the relational, not ontological, priority of the Father, Thomas points out a danger of the theological misapplication of the Latin word *causa* when used related to the Father. In Latin language, *causa* could imply "dependence plus externality" (158). That is why the Latin Fathers

preferred *principium* which could be rendered as “a point of departure” without connoting “inequality” (157). Personally, Thomas prefers the Augustinian phrase “principle” and intentionally avoids using the term “hierarchy” in relation to the Trinity. There must be no hierarchy of any Person except the priority of relation. Like Augustine, Thomas sees the Father as the principle of the Son and the Spirit and also the principle to whom we Christians must return through the missions of the Son and the Spirit.

Thomas finds theological legitimacy of the doctrine of the eternal *filioque* from the Bible, in particular, the Gospel of John and patristic traditions such as Hilary, Augustine, and Didymus the Blind. While recognizing a theological distinction between the historic mission of the Holy Spirit and the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit, nonetheless, Thomas argues that the *filioque* in the economy must be “the eternal procession encountered in time at the behest of grace” (273). Thomas’ justification of the *filioque* in the immanent Trinity based on the Christological and soteriological ministry of the Spirit in the economy is continued in Karl Barth.

Emery’s contribution in this work is not only that he presents Thomas’ speculative Trinitarian theology in a way that beginners of theology can understand but also that his work provides a succinct analysis of medieval Trinitarianism prior to Thomas. Emery’s work will be a valuable reference to those who study Thomas’ Trinitarian theology.

Dongsun Cho

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***Retrieving Doctrine: Explorations in Reformed Theology.* By Oliver D. Crisp. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 2011. 224 pages. Paperback, \$22.00.**

Oliver Crisp offers us an intellectually stimulating piece of theological engagement that is at once constructive and historical. Crisp’s method of theological retrieval is historically aware, presently engaged and philosophically articulate. Throughout *Retrieving Doctrine*, Crisp draws from Reformed Divines by transporting their thought into the contemporary dialogue. I mention three examples of Crisp’s method of retrieval.

In brief, Crisp covers the views of Calvin and Barth on “Creation and Providence,” in chapters 1-2; Edwards, Turretin, Campbell and Barth on “Sin and Salvation,” in chapters 3-6; and, finally, Calvin, Williamson-Nevin and Edwards on “The Christian Life” in chapters 7-9.

First, in chapter 1 Crisp argues that Calvin contributes to the recent attacks from “Open Theists” on traditional conceptions of God. Calvin held these related notions: God timelessly created with time; the creation radically depends upon God; God has “meticulous control” over the creation, and God’s glory is displayed in salvation history. Crisp shows Calvin’s distinctive model that upholds both God’s meticulous providence with man’s responsibility and freedom. The mechanism God uses is compatibilist freedom meaning that man is free to “act voluntarily” (20). Calvin’s system of Divine providence is contributory in that he sensibly integrates God’s aseity with meticulous providence that is dynamic because man is created in God’s image to participate in God’s glory through salvation history.

A second example of Crisp’s theological method in chapter 4 considers Turretin’s contribution to the contemporary philosophical-theological literature on the necessary or contingent nature of the incarnation. Crisp establishes Turretin’s

original argument for hypothetical necessity, responds to three contemporary charges and reformulates a slightly modified yet more satisfactory Turretin argument. Helpfully, Crisp mines the resources from Turretin and, also, draws from contemporary analytic philosophy, specifically modal philosophy, to achieve a more satisfactory argument in favor of the necessity of the incarnation.

A third example of Crisp's theological method is seen in chapter 7 from "The Christian Life." Here, Crisp considers Calvin's view on prayer and develops a metaphysically robust account that can handle the objection that a "Calvinian" God makes prayer pointless and redundant. Throughout, Crisp develops a view of prayer that is coherent, robust, satisfying and in keeping with the Reformed tradition. He concludes that there is no "two-way contingency (153)," which means that we are contingent upon God but he is not contingent on us. This view of prayer does have a two-fold value: it is individually therapeutic and prayer aligns our wills with God's will.

With all of its virtues *Retrieving Doctrine* has one potential problem that may stand out to many present-day protestant evangelicals. When offering a rational accounting of sin and salvation Crisp offers "realism" as a way of solving certain dilemmas (see especially chapters 3, 5, 8 and 9). This is the doctrine that we are somehow literally in Adam at the fall or literally in Christ at salvation; an attending benefit is that I am actually guilty or actually righteous. While it has some benefits many will find this to conflict with some deep-seated intuitions, such as my being distinct from Adam and Christ—where Adam is the federal head of fallen humans and Christ is the Head over the redeemed. This potentially minor shortcoming is an opportunity for evangelical theologians to think more carefully about federal headship.

Retrieving Doctrine has as its primary aim to encourage those in a broadly Reformed tradition to take seriously their historical roots and the extent of its theological legacy. Additionally, Crisp achieves other ends in the process. First, he demonstrates how to do analytic theology whereby theologians use analytic philosophy for clarity and detail. Second, he demonstrates how to do constructive theology. As evangelicals we must respond by taking seriously our history and interacting in the contemporary dialogue with lucidity and credibility.

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***A Following Holy Life.* Edited by Kenneth Stevenson. London: Canterbury Press, 2011. 220 pages. Paperback, 22.99.**

Kenneth Stevenson believes that one best understands Jeremy Taylor by reading his works rather than reading about them (28). To that end, Stevenson has introduced and edited some of Taylor's writings to allow readers to understand the 17th-Century Anglican priest in his words and context. In the brief introduction, the author tells the story of a life marked by scholarship, courage, and intrigue. He recounts how Taylor quickly rose to prominence and became chaplain to King Charles I. However, the victory of Oliver Cromwell over Charles I eventually cost Taylor his official position in the church. Taylor was later imprisoned on three occasions for supposed allegiances to the former King.

The book is primarily a collection of Taylor's writings with headings as the only interruption by Stevenson after the Introduction. The title comes from a dis-

course in Taylor's work, *A Great Exemplar of Sanctity and Holy Life*, which is not included in the excerpts of the book. The language of the title makes more sense in its original context, referencing a subsequent holy lifestyle one maintains upon genuine repentance and obedience to Christ. While Stevenson briefly acknowledges the source of the title of his book (31), a more clear explanation would have added clarity to the book and a stronger connection to the primary focus of Taylor's writing.

Stevenson's assessment of Taylor seems balanced. He details both strengths and weaknesses of Taylor's character and competence. The author seems impressed by the convictions and clarity with which Taylor wrote, though less impressed by how he spoke (3). He describes Taylor's interactions with others as sometimes disparaging (3) and, at other times, conciliatory (9, 37). Stevenson further notes that some of Taylor's works were written for an academic audience (14), yet was most known for giving theology to the laity (31).

The extracts recorded in the book suggest the primary heart of Taylor to be focused on a life changed by Christ. The book organizes the writings of Taylor into four sections, which are not always easily differentiated. Arranging the excerpts more clearly by topic and including a subject index in the back of the book would have greatly enhanced the work. In addition, a conclusion by the editor would have aided the work.

Two aspects of Taylor's style dominate the book: his theology and his focus on discipleship. At times in his theology, Taylor seems to read into Scripture (cf. 42), while at other times, suggests views that seem uninformed by the text altogether (cf. 52). However, his theology is nonetheless clear. Stevenson, citing Avis, appears to have described him accurately as something of a "liberal catholic" (16). His views on original sin, the work of the Holy Spirit in baptism, assurance of salvation, and Lord's Supper put him at odds with many theologians in his day.

Taylor's writing on the area of discipleship is the strength of this book. Stevenson includes selections from Taylor on humility, contentment, truth, faith, hope, love, fasting, prayer, worship, confession, simplicity, kindness, justice, holiness, the brevity of life, anger, self-examination, complaining, impatience, fear, care for the poor, guarding the tongue, and repentance. Taylor's writing style, though sometimes tedious, reflects a flowing and articulate style that earned him the nickname, "Shakespeare of English Prose."

One issue Taylor addressed more than once was on the issue of death bed repentance. Though his apparent complete denunciation of it seems beside the mark (176), his precaution that "God hath made no covenant with us on our death-bed distinct from that he made with us in our life and health" (59) is a point well-taken.

For anyone interested in learning about Jeremy Taylor's writing and theology, Kenneth Stevenson's work should be considered. It is likely the reader will finish wanting to know more about Taylor's life and read more of his writings. That appears to have been Stevenson's goal in the work.

Deron J. Biles
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***Venture All for God: Piety in the Writings of John Bunyan.* Edited by Roger D. Duke and Phil A. Newton. Profiles in Reformed Spirituality. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011. 196 pages. Paperback. \$10.**

In the Profiles in Reformed Spirituality series (edited by Joel Beeke and Michael A. G. Haykin), Reformation Heritage Books seeks to help the reader discover all that our Reformed forebears in the faith can teach us “about Christianity, its doctrines, its passions, and its fruit” (xi). Each brief volume presents a short biographical sketch of a historical figure within the Reformed tradition alongside excerpts from lesser-known tracts and publications in the hopes of stirring the reader to further study and immersion into Reformed writings. This volume, edited by Roger D. Duke, author and professor at Union University, and Phil A. Newton, senior pastor at South Woods Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, narrows its focus on the piety in the writings of John Bunyan, who authored almost sixty books and tracts in addition to his allegorical classic, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.

Bunyan was born in the midst of the English Reformation, during the reign of Charles I. England was suffering the pains of liberation from the Roman Catholic Church, and each new monarch took the crown with different ideas regarding the direction of the Church of England. Unlike the relative religious peace under Oliver Cromwell, Charles II sought to bring about peace through standardization. In 1662, the Act of Uniformity dictated specific doctrine and liturgy to be followed by all clergy. Jailed for preaching illegally, Bunyan could have been released at virtually any point provided he agreed to cease such preaching. He refused to make such an agreement.

His writing was clearly influenced by the political unrest and religious persecution by the English government of his day. Imprisoned for more than twenty percent of his life, much of Bunyan’s writing took place in the Bedford Jail. His writings attest to George Whitefield’s statement that “ministers never write or preach so well as when under the cross: the Spirit of Christ and of Glory then rests upon them” (41).

In *Venture All for God*, the reader gains insight into the thought and teachings of Bunyan. Collected under such headings as “Christ Our Advocate,” “Christ Jesus the Merciful Savior,” and “Hope for Sinners,” the first three sections reveal Bunyan’s meditations on the person and work of Jesus Christ. Imprisoned and deprived from all that is joyful in the world, Bunyan found his hope and satisfaction in savoring his Savior. Each word from his pen drips with the joy of one who has spent countless hours pondering the inexhaustible riches of Christ. The final four sections, entitled, “True Humility,” “Christian Ethics,” “The Gospel Applied,” and “Warnings,” provide the reader with examples of the manner in which Bunyan drew application from his meditations.

This collection is an enjoyable introduction to Bunyan’s life and writings. Upon completing the book, the reader is left pondering not that which is written of Bunyan, but rather, that which is written by Bunyan. The greatest strength of this little volume is not that it speaks of Bunyan to a new generation, but rather that it allows Bunyan himself to speak.

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***Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2nd rev ed. By William L. Lumpkin and Bill Leonard. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011. 548 pages. Hardcover, \$36.99.**

An unspecified contingent of second editions arrives on bookshelves *persona non grata*. The book under current consideration is no such book. There is a tremendous need, especially seen surrounding Baptist history and theology, to provide for accessibility into our theological predecessors and of those outside our sphere of familiarity. Professor Bill Leonard's revision, via addition, to Lumpkin's classic work of collecting and providing limited commentary on numerous major Baptist confessions of faith seeks to occupy this niche though allowing the 21st-century theologian ease in examining the formal documents of Baptist theology.

In this work, Leonard and Judson Press enlarge upon the 1969 version of Lumpkin's *Baptist Confessions of Faith*. Lumpkin acknowledges the pedigree of his volume in the forward to the present work. The two prior collections of Edward Underhill (1854) and Edward McGlothlin (1910) provided much of the material for Lumpkin's and, subsequently, Leonard's work. The continuity seen therein displays both positive and negative repercussions. On the positive side, historical continuity serves as an additional leg for Baptist theology upon which to rest. The Baptist movement is one born out of reading and seeking to apply the New Testament to the local church, nevertheless the movement has been given concrete manifestations in its statements of faith. Leonard's work allows us to see the continuity both of the confessions of faith themselves and of the desire to collate the confessions. Negatively, any weaknesses of prior collections are often passed on to later ones (i.e. Lumpkin's arrangement according to Associational/General confessions as opposed to the divisions of General/Particular Baptists and the omission of confessional preamble material) and dependence upon the original sources can be minimized.

Bill Leonard and the late William Lumpkin were both former professors at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Leonard currently teaches in both the Department of Religion and the Divinity School at Wake Forest University. In this work, he reformats Lumpkin's 1969 edition and adds two new sections. In the new introduction, Leonard continues the discussion regarding a (or *the*) Baptist position on the role of confessions and creeds in the modern Baptist church and the future roles for confessions. Therein, Leonard describes the "continuum of Baptist Identity" as including items such as "biblical authority" and "liberty of conscience" (4-5). These headings are helpful and also alert the careful reader to the tension in Baptist theology. Cases in point are the seemingly paradoxical positions of Biblical authority/liberty of conscience and congregational autonomy/associational cooperation.

Leonard does not present any new information in chapters 1-6. However, the typeset allows the reader a great comfort over the previous edition in reading the material and seeing the distinction between commentary, confession, and footnotes. The last chapter is entitled "Twenty-First-Century Confessions" and represents the only new material in the body of Leonard's book. The trend of global awareness seen in the 1969 edition of Lumpkin is continued in the present volume. Although the Baptist movement began in English speaking 17th-century Great Britain, the movement has mushroomed. Just as Baptists have spread, the awareness of Baptists in various countries around the world and their confessional formulations has also spread. Thus, the new chapter contains numerous confessions of chronological and geographic importance. The new additions range from the Nigerian Baptist Convention's statement of faith to documents from the Evangelical Baptist Convention

of Peru. This information proves very helpful to students of contemporary Baptist theology as it alerts readers to contentious areas of theology and practice for Baptists worldwide. An example would be the Nigerian statement containing four subsections (the fall of man, sin, Satan, and demons) under the title heading of “Evil” and the omission of an article on the church or ecclesiology.

Regarding the context of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), Leonard’s book leaves the 1963 *Baptist Faith and Message* (BF&M) in the section entitled “American Baptist Confessions.” The table of contents indicates the inclusion of the 1925 and 1963 BF&M’s, but this is misleading as the reader needs to go elsewhere to compare the 1925 and 1963 BF&M’s. The section on “Twenty-First-Century Confessions” includes a two-page introduction to the SBC and the body of the 2000 BF&M. The presentation is theologically even-handed. The reader looking for further information on the SBC and the “moderate” society founded in 1991 (the Co-operative Baptist Fellowship) will find footnotes only pointing to resources on one side of the theological divide (Leonard’s *Baptists in America* and Walter Shurden’s *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*).

In summation, Leonard’s revised edition of Lumpkin’s now classic text deserves consideration by students of Baptist history and theology. Students without a copy of Lumpkin’s 1969 work *should* purchase this book. However, for those following the available collections of Baptist confessions of faith, we are still awaiting an entirely *new* resource book which would contain items such as confessions, confessional commentary, brief annotation regarding groups and movements, a bibliography, the inclusion of preamble material, the publication of signatures (where applicable and practical), clearer chapter designations, and extensive reliance upon the original documents.

Patrick G. Willis

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Studies in Ethics and Philosophy

***Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God.* By Paul Copan. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011. Paperback, \$14.99.**

Making Old Testament ethics accessible and understandable to academics, as well as non-academics, is a challenge. Paul Copan has tackled the job with a consistent clarity and forthrightness that leaves any who try to train pastors and lay leaders with a healthy hermeneutic of Old Testament ethical issues in his debt. His claim is that he bases his work on “thoughtful, credible scholarship that offers plausible, sober-minded explanations and angles that present helpful resolutions and responses to perplexing Old Testament ethics questions” (11).

One of Copan’s first efforts is to place this discussion in the postmodern context of a “new atheism,” which is attacking Christianity as if it were a radical sect, compared to radical Islam. Their attack is a “cool-headed, scientific rationalism” that reflects what Michael Novak calls a kind of desperate defensiveness. Some of the primary targets for these atheists are the ethical problems of the Old Testament, thus the need to clarify the context for Copan’s hermeneutical effort. Copan’s approach to handling these neo-atheists is to attack them in like kind, with a confrontational apologetic that treats their arguments (like those attacking the existence of God) as “flimsy, often resembling the simplistic village atheist far more than the credentialed academicians” (17). The reason for taking this approach is because these neo-atheists

reflect some of the common, unreasoned thinking, that unfortunately is expressed by some modern Christians, especially those with limited Biblical knowledge and understanding. This text was written to help sincere believers understand the ethical problems and conundrums of the Old Testament and thus be able to defend it against these modern-day attackers.

Essential to the hermeneutic of Copan is to show that the God of the Old Testament is the same as the one in the New, and that Jesus Christ is the same God as well. Considerable scholarship is shown through careful explanations of ancient near eastern cultures and customs, which are the background for most, if not all, of the problematic actions and teachings which are usually misunderstood and misinterpreted. Even though it is a limited volume of 252 pages, the vast majority of the ethical problem areas of the Old Testament are given fair treatment. This is as healthy and handy a document as a pastor can have for guiding his church leaders and teachers in dealing with non-believers and new believers who have doubts about the validity of the Old Testament for their faith in God.

William E. Goff

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Doing Philosophy as a Christian. Christian Worldview Integration Series. By Garrett J. DeWeese. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011. 352 pages. Paperback, \$22.

Garrett DeWeese has provided students with a nearly comprehensive introduction to areas of philosophical thought in which he tries to explain where Christian philosophers can, should, or must land on various issues. The book breaks down into four parts. The first establishes his method, the second involves first-order questions (metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and aesthetics), the third part involves second-order questions (philosophy of mind and of science), and the fourth part discusses philosophy as a means of spiritual transformation for the Christian. DeWeese operates within the boundaries of “canonical theism,” which he defines as “the broad stream of orthodoxy traceable to the church fathers and the ecumenical councils and creeds” (36).

This book does well to lay before the student various opinions within each field of thought. Thus, within metaphysics there is realism and nominalism, among others, and DeWeese does well to present such options within a framework of the history of philosophy as well as surveying the various arguments. The reader therefore gets a balanced perspective that is not solely based on arguments, but also shows how philosophical doctrines have unfolded through history.

One problem is that DeWeese, in attempting to determine what positions are distinctively Christian, utilizes much Scripture, but some applications will seem contrived to students of Biblical studies. For example, DeWeese uses Hebrews 2:17 (Jesus was “made like his brothers in every way”) as a proof text to argue against those who would allow anthropological dualism for Jesus while positing monism for all other humans (259). It is hardly likely that the author of Hebrews had philosophy in mind as he penned this verse. This should be taken softly, though, since the work inevitably required the use of Scripture, which can be difficult to integrate into complex philosophical debates with exegetical integrity.

DeWeese holds, probably correctly, that metaphysical “realism fits best in a Christian worldview,” because “[n]owhere in the Bible is there a hint that the ex-

ternal world is unreal, that something like Berkeley's subjective idealism, or Kant's transcendental idealism, is correct" (129). But the author surprisingly opts for epistemological internalism in order not to divorce epistemic justification from rational decision making (170). He briefly mentions Plantinga's externalist view of warrant, but mentions it only as an opposing option and leaves it at that. Such a position is surprising since metaphysical realism is generally admitted inherently to require epistemological externalism. Nevertheless, DeWeese does follow through in letting his metaphysics determine his ethical theory, opting for virtue theory as the best Christian view, which is inherently objective rather than subjective. Whatever disagreements one may have with DeWeese, he is at least charitable and cautious throughout the book, continually hedging his conclusions (e.g., "I could be wrong" [260]).

The rest of DeWeese's discussions are shorter and more elementary, but still benefit the reader by introducing the subject and choosing which option seems to be more coherent within a Christian worldview. He is able to be less dogmatic about some of the later chapters since they are secondary issues, such as philosophy of science, on which someone holding a Christian worldview could take multiple legitimate positions. This work could be used well in a philosophy of religion class or general philosophy courses in seminaries and Bible colleges.

Todd Scaewater

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***If God, Why Evil?: A New Way to Think About the Question.* By Norman L. Geisler. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2011. 173 pages. Paperback, \$14.99.**

The problem of evil is one of the most pressing philosophical questions facing Christianity. The task of answering why evil exists if God is good has been the focus of many apologists. Unfortunately, much of the work on the problem of evil is just as difficult to read as the problem is to answer. The average reader may find himself drowning in a sea of philosophical argumentation into which even professional academics only carefully tread. By contrast, when someone attempts to develop a theodicy that is palatable for the average reader, it typically turns out to be less than satisfactory. For these reasons, the problem of evil remains an often unanswered question in the church pew or at the coffee shop. Norman Geisler has attempted to solve this conundrum in his book, *If God, Why Evil?: A New Way to Think About the Question*, by presenting a very readable, yet scholarly answer to the problem of evil.

Geisler divides the book into the major questions about evil—nature, origin, persistence, purpose, and avoidability of evil. Then he addresses some of the practical applications of the problem of evil, including physical evil, miracles, hell, and exclusivism. At the foundation of the book is a free will defense of the problem of evil. If one has read much of Geisler's other 70 books, then one is most likely not surprised that he approaches the problem in that way. Even though the chapters are not full of references to other scholarly works, it is clear that Geisler has condensed his own thoughts on the issue to make the book clear, concise, comprehensive, correct, and comforting (10).

Each main chapter of the book begins with a syllogistic presentation of a problem related to evil. Geisler first addresses the nature of evil by posing the problem this way:

God created all things.
Evil is something.
Therefore, God created evil. (17–18)

In keeping with an Augustinian approach to the nature of evil, Geisler then argues that the second premise is incorrect and that evil is actually “a real privation in good things” (25). This conclusion leads him to the origin of evil, which he argues is based in free will (28–30). Once Geisler establishes that evil originates in the free will with which God created humans and angels, he tackles the problem of the persistence of evil. Geisler believes that the argument against God from the persistence of evil “is one of the oldest and most difficult of all arguments” (36). At its heart, this argument asks why a good, omnipotent God has not destroyed evil. In answer to this question, Geisler proposes that “the only way God could literally destroy all evil is to destroy all freedom. However, to destroy all freedom is to destroy the possibility of all moral good. *All moral choices are free choices*” (38). Therefore, he believes that the question is posed in the wrong way. The way a Christian should look at this question is to ask whether or not evil is defeated, and Geisler’s answer is that evil has not yet been defeated, but it will be. In answer to the question of the purpose of evil, the author concludes that humans are unable to know all of God’s purposes, and that he has a good purpose in all things, even evil. Finally, he tackles the issue of the avoidability of evil. Geisler believes, “This present world is not the best of all possible worlds, but it is the best of all possible ways to the best of all achievable worlds” (68). In essence, a world without evil would be a world without free will, and Geisler believes that free will is a necessary element for a good world.

The book then moves from the major categories of the problem of evil to address the practical applications of evil, including physical evil, miracles, hell, and exclusivism. Geisler holds that physical evil, just like all other forms of evil, is the result of human free will and that God permits the existence of physical evil in part to accomplish his ultimate purposes. In response to physical evil, some have argued that God should miraculously intervene to prevent all physical evil. However, Geisler argues that “it is not possible to have a regular miraculous interruption of the natural order” (87). This would interfere with physical life, moral freedom, moral choices, moral improvement, moral warnings, and achieving the best world possible (87–91). The author then moves to address hell as an expression of God’s judgment. Some hold that the existence of an eternal hell denies the goodness of God, but Geisler argues that God’s justice, love, sovereignty, and human dignity demand an eternal hell (98–100). He also addresses several major objections to an eternal hell that have been offered throughout history. The main chapters of the book conclude with a discussion of exclusivism and universalism. He asks the question, “What about those who have never heard?” (115). In response, Geisler posits a very orthodox view on the exclusivity of Christ and rejects both universalism and inclusivism.

After the main chapters, Geisler adds three appendices that serve as more academic supplements to the content of the book. The first appendix offers varying views of the topic of animal death before Adam. Geisler never offers his own conclusion but provides various alternatives with both their strengths and weaknesses. The second appendix is a development of some of the classical arguments for God’s existence, including the cosmological argument, the teleological argument, and the moral argument. The final appendix is an in-depth critique of William P. Young’s book, *The Shack*.

Overall, Geisler superbly accomplishes his task of answering the problem of evil in a very readable fashion. Of course, there will be some who are not swayed by his free will defense, but his development of that particular defense for a general audience was excellent. The main drawback of the book comes only from the intended purpose of the book. Most works on the problem of evil provide ample documentation to historical and academic sources to build a case; however, Geisler provides only minimal references to other material. In fact, many of his references are to other books he has written. This is only a problem when this book is compared to other volumes on the problem of evil that are more academic in nature. Since Geisler was specifically trying to avoid an overly academic feel, the lack of outside references is understandable.

While this book may never become the standard academic reference text on the free will defense for the problem of evil, Geisler certainly accomplished his purpose. This is an excellent resource for the average reader looking for an understandable and easy-to-read book that will assist them in tackling one of Christianity's most difficult questions.

Evan Lenow

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***Defending the Faith: Engaging the Culture—Essays Honoring L. Russ Bush.* edited by Bruce A. Little and Mark D. Liederbach. Nashville, TN: B&H, 2011. 266 pages. Paperback, \$24.99.**

Having the correct answer at the right time is a vital tool for all religious adherents and leaders. For those who follow “the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” having the correct answer can be life changing. In *Defending the Faith: Engaging the Culture*, Christian theologians and philosophers honor the late Baptist philosopher, L. Russ Bush, by writing timely essays that seek to give answers to a skeptical culture.

Russ Bush finished his career at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary as professor of apologetics and philosophy. Bruce Little and Mark Liederbach write, “L. Russ Bush was a noted apologist, author, professor, pastor, and friend to many people, and he left a wonderfully rich legacy in terms of his personal story, his intellectual integrity, and his personal devotion to his Lord. He spent his life serving the church as a staunch defender of the Christian faith within the organizational framework of the Southern Baptist Convention” (xiii).

This book is a compilation of essays in memory and honor of Bush's superior intellectual and apologetic works. Each essay is written by an evangelical academic defending the orthodox beliefs of Christianity. Some of the authors were students of Bush's, while others were friends and co-workers. The editors of the book, Bruce A. Little and Mark D. Liederbach, are professors at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (at the time of this writing). Additionally, Little was also the director of the L. Russ Bush Center for Faith and Culture at Southeastern.

The book is organized into four sections; each section focuses on a particular aspect of Christian apologetics. Section one, titled “Christianity and the Bible,” concentrates on defending the Bible against a reductionist or liberal ideology. It begins with a chapter by Russ Bush arguing for the inspiration and validity of Scripture. Other authors in the section are Daniel L. Akin, Paige Patterson, and Thomas Nettles. Akin discusses the connection between Jesus and the Bible. He argues that one's view of the Bible is logically inferred from one's view of Jesus. Patterson com-

poses a chapter that discusses the necessity of the atonement and liberal theology's distortion of what the atonement entails. Nettles, in a style apropos of a historian, presents a chapter discussing the ancient church's system of apologetics, specifically the church's method of defending Scripture.

Section two discusses Christian apologetics *simpliciter*, beginning with an article by Russ Bush in which he details a 10-step pattern to Biblical apologetics. Other contributors to this section are Norman Geisler, Gary R. Habermas, and David P. Nelson. Geisler gives simple, yet clear, arguments for the need and benefit of Christian apologetics. Habermas discusses his token topic: the resurrection of Christ. He expands the focus by also discussing Paul's encounter with the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus. Nelson offers reflections upon the grand Biblical narrative of Scripture and its impact upon apologetics and missions.

Section three branches off into philosophy of science by discussing the impact of modern science upon the orthodox Christian faith. Again, as with every section in the book, an article by Bush begins the section. In the chapter titled "Is Evolution True?" Bush questions naturalistic evolution and points out certain incompatible features of evolution and the Christian faith. Other contributors to this section are James K. Dew Jr., Kenneth D. Keathley, and Robert B. Stewart. Dew writes on the current status of natural theology, specifically focusing on the work of Alister McGrath. Dew generally respects McGrath, though he has several concerns regarding McGrath's stance that theistic evolution is concurrent with an orthodox view of Scripture. The next chapter by Ken Keathley looks at the fine-tuning argument for the existence of God. Keathley argues that the parameters for life to exist as it does are so narrow that the best explanation for its existence is an intelligent designer. Stewart's chapter titled "How Science Works and What It Means for Believers" is a detailed dissemination on the limitations of modern science.

The last section of *Defending the Faith* best embodies the purpose of the book by focusing on Christianity's role in the culture. The purpose of the section is to argue that the church must engage the culture and the culture's array of ideas. The contributors are Russ Bush, Mark Coppenger, Richard Land, and Udo W. Middelman. Bush's chapter hones in on cultural aesthetics and the place of art in Christianity. Coppenger's chapter discusses virtue ethics in relation to friendliness. Land's chapter is one of applied ethics, discussing nuclear weapons and why America must possess such arms. Middelman's chapter, the last of the book, details the development of culture—both secular and Christian.

Defending the Faith is a popular level book that is readable by anyone interested in argumentation that defends orthodox Christianity against an onslaught of secular and humanistic philosophies. In this reviewer's opinion, *Defending the Faith* fulfills its purpose by disseminating thoughtful, yet readable, essays on the truthfulness of Christianity and its impact on the world.

Chad Meeks

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***As Christ Submits to the Church: A Biblical Understanding of Leadership and Mutual Submission.* By Alan G. Padgett. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011. 151 pages. Paperback, \$20.00.**

In the debate over gender roles in evangelicalism, there have been few books written with a more provocative title than Alan G. Padgett's *As Christ Submits to the*

Church. At first glimpse, the title drips with heretical undertones, and controversy may certainly be intended with the selection of such a title. Rather than embracing full-blown heresy, Padgett, who serves as professor of systematic theology at Luther Seminary, sets out to redefine the understanding of submission in this contribution to the gender-role debate.

In the opening pages of the book, Padgett asks the central question of his work: “Does Christ submit to the church, his body and bride?” (xiii). In order to offer an affirmative response to his question, he acknowledges that a specific definition of submission is required for Christ to submit to the church. As a central tenet, he proposes two types of submission—type I refers to obedience to an external authority while type II refers to giving up power voluntarily and taking the role of a slave (xiii). It is the second type of submission that Padgett believes has bearing on his central question.

With the key concept defined in the opening pages, Padgett uses the rest of the book to give a historical overview of the gender-role debate among evangelicals, to contemplate the place of Scripture in defining roles, and to address the key Biblical passages related to submission. In so doing, he wrestles with difficult concepts, such as dominion, sex, head coverings, and justice. While these concepts are not new to the debate, covering all of them in such a brief work is an ambitious task.

Padgett’s work is very readable, and he offers clear definitions for the concepts he employs in the book. The book is clearly written from an egalitarian perspective, and the author does not attempt to disguise his presuppositions. He acknowledges that the development of the egalitarian position was influenced by the women’s rights movement of the 1960s (7) and even goes so far as to call the position “revisionist” and “influenced by modern thought” (10). On the latter, he does so by comparison to the complementarian position, claiming that it too is revisionist and modern. In essence, he makes no claim that the egalitarian position is the historical or traditional understanding of gender roles in the church. Nonetheless, he argues that it should be considered the most Biblical position.

In order to reach his conclusion that Christ does indeed submit to the church, Padgett employs some unfortunate methods that undermine his claim that egalitarianism is the most Biblical position. First, Padgett completely redefines the term “submission” for the sake of avoiding a misstep into outright heresy. Traditionally speaking, submission has generally referred to a form of obedience to authority and implied an order or hierarchy of position. When related to the classic gender roles passage found in Ephesians 5, submission has historically been understood as a wife submitting to her husband’s authority as the church submits to Christ. However, Padgett desires to make submission in Ephesians 5 mutual. In order to do so, he has to deal with the issue of Christ’s relationship to the church. Thus, a new definition of submission is necessary to avoid placing Christ under the authority of the church. The result is a definition of submission that is characterized by servanthood. Even though this is the best definition that Padgett can offer, he is still not satisfied because the book occasionally acknowledges that “mutual submission and servant leadership are not identical” (32).

Second, Padgett promotes imaginative, midrashic interpretation as his model of hermeneutics. When discussing 1 Timothy 2:8–15, the author makes two consecutive statements that appear contradictory. He first states, “I suggest that we pay careful attention once again to what the text itself says instead of to what we already believe it says” (89). At this point, the reader is led to believe that the focus of this

section will be on exegesis of the words of the text. However, his very next sentence suggests, "Read carefully in its larger social and intellectual context, the teaching of Paul in this passage can be understood, but only with a bit of imagination and careful reflection" (90). He goes on to encourage imaginative, midrashic interpretation as the appropriate hermeneutic for interpreting Paul's letters (90–94). Freed from the rigors of meaning in the words of the text, Padgett finds hermeneutical license to interpret these texts within his pre-existing belief structure—in essence, committing the very mistake he previously admonished his readers to avoid.

Finally, Padgett exhibits inconsistency in his own application of submission. Throughout the book, he painstakingly applies his version of mutual submission through servanthood to every area of life. As he draws the book to a conclusion, the author focuses his attention to the commands of Christ to love God and love one's neighbor (127–28). He infers that believers have an obligation to abide by these two commands from Christ. In essence, Padgett places an obligation upon believers to obey an external authority. According to his definitions, this is type I submission, which he finds to be a violation of mutual submission. Padgett cannot have it both ways. Either the church submits to Christ's commands in obedience to an outside authority, or submission is simply servant leadership.

In conclusion, Padgett's work is a clear and readable example of the egalitarian position. He also offers an honest look at the logical implications of mutual submission for the relationship between Christ and the church. However, his work fails to deliver an internally consistent and exegetically faithful argument for egalitarianism.

Evan Lenow

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***Moral Formation According to Paul: The Context and Coherence of Pauline Ethics.* By James W. Thompson. Grand rapids: Baker Academic 2011. 272 pages. Paperback, \$25.**

A number of books are currently being written on Biblical issues which spend considerable energy in investigating if the Biblical documents were really all that original or to what degree they reflect the thought world of the times in which the authors lived. This text is one of those types of investigations. The primary concern is to determine the impact of contextualization in the presentation of the concepts addressed. The focus seems to be that the author of this kind of text wants to prove, or disprove, the reliability of the Biblical text in question. The sense in this volume is that James Thompson wants to prove the reliability of the Biblical text. That is, although he spends the majority of his time exploring the contemporary literature of the Biblical writer, his conclusions generally indicate that Paul's uses of concepts and word choices generally reflected a uniqueness that underscore that his writings were essentially faithful to the concepts of the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament. Thompson's perspective indicates that Paul's ideas also were used dynamically to express concepts that made those who lived in his times, and who knew the kind of literature and teachings of that epoch, able to recognize the uniqueness of his insights. Paul's concepts and word choices would make his first readers stop and reflect on the newness or freshness of his thought. Nevertheless, at times this kind of investigation proves to test the reader's faith in Thompson's quest to verify Paul's unique contribution in his inspired writings. The most interesting of this kind of exercise is chapter 8, in which he deals with Ephesians and Colossians, which are

“disputed letters of Paul.”

Thompson’s conclusion is that Paul’s letters were aimed at forming communities of Christian faith and challenged Christians to reject the culture of their time, while adapting their moral lives to create churches of righteous living people. His assessment is that Paul’s ethic only is functional in a cohesive moral community of believers, who live together in harmony, holding one another accountable and supporting each other. Thompson sustains that Paul’s “ethic of community cohesion is irreconcilable with the focus of individual autonomy in our culture and relevant only for those who live in a corporate identity of the believing community” (212). He asserts that Paul did not provide a comprehensive moral code, but he did set forth an important model for ethical reflection through interpreting the Old Testament in the light of the Christ event.

One of the most interesting contributions of Thompson’s text is that he analyzes the different kinds of moral constructions that Paul utilized for his writings. His introduction focuses on one of Paul’s key moral phrases: “Living worthily of the Gospel.” He then develops chapters that explore Hellenistic Judaism, moral instruction and formation of moral communities, the theology and ethics of the catechesis in 1 Thessalonians, and the role of lists of vices and virtues in the development of moral formation teaching (catechesis). He devotes two chapters to studies on Paul’s use of the Law, in the senses of moral formation of the churches and instruction on the proper use of human passion. He also includes a chapter on the classical issue of love and its proper practices in the formation of Christian communities. This text provides considerable opportunity to explore the thematic concepts in Paul’s writings, even if the underlying methodology is that of a literature comparison with those of his contemporaries.

William E. Goff

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Studies in Evangelism and Missions

***A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story.* By Michael W. Goheen. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. 242 pages. Paperback, \$22.99.**

God’s purpose for his people as displayed in the Biblical narrative is for them to be a light to the nations, a people on mission to spread his fame throughout the earth. So argues Michael Goheen in *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*. Goheen notes in the preface that although books on missional ecclesiology abound today, none of them base their conclusions on “sustained biblical-theological and exegetical work” (ix). He therefore intends to fill this particular lacuna in current missions scholarship, and suggests that the primary audience is “pastors, theological students, and educated church members” (ix).

The organization of the book is straightforward. Goheen introduces the issues, namely his definitions for mission and ecclesiology and the misunderstandings the church has about these terms, in chapter one. In the next six chapters he follows the contours of the Biblical narrative from Genesis 12 through the NT epistles and notes how that narrative demonstrates missional identity of the people of God. Chapters two and three focus on Israel’s calling, chapters four and five on Jesus’ work in gathering the church and the implications of his death and resurrection for missional ecclesiology, and chapters six and seven on the church in the NT story and images for the church in the NT epistles. Chapters eight and nine offer a summary

of the previous material and practical implications for the contemporary church.

In retelling the Biblical narrative, Goheen comes to a number of conclusions about missions and ecclesiology. First, mission defines the people of God in that it is God's purpose for them. Second, the Biblical narrative possesses an eschatological shape in which OT Israel, although given a missional identity by God, largely failed in its calling to be a light to the nations. This results in Jesus calling an eschatological people of God, a renewed Israel, who proclaims salvation to the nations. Goheen also notes here the more centripetal calling of Israel. Third, because redemption has been accomplished for the entire cosmos, the church is called visibly to demonstrate Christ's victory over the evil worldly powers at the cross and the restoration of all things in his resurrection. Fourth, and based on the previous points, the ontological nature of the church is the most important aspect of ecclesiology as opposed to polity and praxis. Finally, the dominant missional model for Goheen appears to be the attractational and contrastive community that simultaneously demonstrates God's restoration through Christ and the call of God to live holy lives in the midst of pagan nations.

A Light to the Nations is vitally important for scholars and pastors alike for a number of reasons. First, Goheen is careful in his attention to the Biblical narrative. He does not rush to conclusions but grounds his description of the missional identity of the church in a mostly comprehensive reading of the Biblical story. Second, Goheen aptly combines scholarship and pastoral sensitivity by having both an eye toward the Biblical text and an ability to apply it to the contemporary church. Finally, Goheen offers a number of correctives to today's sometimes individualistic, colonial, dualistic ideas about ecclesiology and mission. His picture of the church and of mission as communal, attractational, and comprehensive is at times refreshing and necessary.

Two serious omissions, though, stand out to this reader. First, there is a paucity of material on verbal proclamation. Although Goheen finally discusses preaching and evangelism, it is only in the last fifteen pages of the book and in certain places he seems to swing the pendulum to the opposite pole of a totally attractational model of evangelism. This is inexplicable in light of Romans 10 and its emphasis on the Gentiles coming to faith through hearing the gospel proclaimed verbally. Second, Goheen fails to root mission in the Adamic commission to be fruitful and multiply. The entire Biblical narrative, and especially the mission of Israel and the church, is predicated on the fact that Adam and Eve were created by God to be his image bearers and fill the earth but then failed at that task. Goheen only mentions Genesis 1–11 very briefly and there is hardly any focus on Genesis 1–2 as the foundation of mission in the creating purposes of God. This is puzzling given Goheen's constant attention to the grand narrative of Scripture.

Despite these two omissions, Goheen's book is still important and in many ways groundbreaking. He has firmly rooted the missional identity of the contemporary church in the Biblical narrative of God's people, a daunting task, but one that he deftly completes. It should be read and engaged by any who want to understand the Biblical theological foundation for the purpose and mission of God's people to be a light to the nations.

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Studies in Preaching and Pastoral Ministry

***Preaching and Teaching the Last Things: Old Testament Eschatology for the Life of the Church.* By Walter Kaiser. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. 208 pages. Paperback, \$19.99.**

With his usual style of consistency to the text and careful exegesis, Walter Kaiser has produced another excellent volume on preaching and teaching the Old Testament. The focus of this volume is on preaching and teaching the last things. Driven by the conviction that the Old Testament is too often overlooked in our communication of God's Word, Kaiser has addressed a critical issue in Biblical studies that will serve as an asset for preachers and teachers alike. Indeed, he reminds the reader that the Old Testament is replete with references to the future which implore diligent explication.

The book is divided into six parts beginning with a general discussion on how the Old Testament addresses the issue of last things. The next five parts deal with the specific eschatological issues of the nation of Israel, the new Davidic King, the Day of the Lord, the events of the last seven years, and the millennial rule of Christ.

Kaiser introduces the work with a curious statement. He contends that "almost one-half of the teaching of Scripture focuses on disclosures about 'last things' and prophecy" (ix). While Kaiser doesn't expound on that statement in the Preface, he proceeds to discuss briefly this "inaugurated eschatology" in the Introduction (xvi). Later, the author more thoroughly addresses what he means by the use of that phrase. He defines the "last days" as a reference to the coming of the Messiah for a second time on earth, but also includes the events related to the first coming of Christ (56). Indeed, his use of the Kingdom of the Lord as both inaugurated and anticipated is key to the understanding of the book. Kaiser uses the concept of the "Now" and the "Not Yet" (xii, xvi, 56, 66, 79) at several points to submit that both aspects are simultaneously present and work together.

One strength of Kaiser's work is that he doesn't simply pick and choose selected verses out of context, but addresses chapters and extended pericopies to demonstrate the Old Testament's grappling with things related to the "Last Things." The chapters develop and outline the passages under consideration and then provide insights to the truths of the text and how to communicate them.

Some of the important points Kaiser reveals in the book are how resurrection is taught in the Old Testament (9), a list of twenty passages from the Old Testament that figure in the discussion of the doctrine of the resurrection (14), how the Old Testament reveals two comings of the Messiah (52, 135), how the nation of Israel fits in God's plan (89), what will happen when the Messiah returns (138-41), and an explanation of the New Covenant (155).

The book is well-written with frequent cross-references throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Each chapter concludes with summary points in bullet form. These concluding points are informative, though more elaboration on them would have strengthened the application of the book. Additionally, a concluding chapter summarizing and applying the findings of the book would have helped the reader draw all the points of the work together.

This volume continues a consistent theme by the author related to the "promise-plan of God." Its insights are timely, the writing is compelling, and the foundation is firmly established in Scripture. It will not only be an encouragement to believers of the hope that we possess, but an asset to preachers and teachers in dem-

onstrating the authority of Scripture in its teachings related to the future.

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Studies in Christian Education

***C(H)AOS Theory: Reflections of Chief Academic Officers in Theological Education.* By Kathleen D. Billman and Bruce C. Birch, eds. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2011. Pp. xii, 399. Paperback. \$38.**

This collection of essays published by members of the Association of Theological Schools' Chief Academic Officers Society (CAOS) is appropriately titled *C(H)AOS Theory* as it represents the reflections and experiences of those serving in position commiserate only perhaps with the air traffic controller. In 33 chapters organized in three broad headings, "Reading Institutional Context," "Nurturing Commitments," and "Developing Competencies," this volume addresses a variety of issues facing those serving as Chief Academic Officers in the specific venue of theological education. Many of the authors cite Jeanne P. McLean's *Leading from the Center* (1999) as one of the more helpful interpretations of how the role of the CAO had grown in importance for theological schools in the late twentieth century. *C(H)AOS Theory* provides a up-to-date reference handbook for the student, the faculty member, the newly appointed dean, the veteran CAO, presidents, and board members. Particularly concise and worth reading are the chapters by Willie James Jennings of Duke Divinity School, "Leading from the Middle," on relating to the CEO, Dale R. Stoffer of Ashland Theological Seminary, "Lessons from the Anabaptist-Pietist Tradition," on faculty leadership and development, and Robin J. Steinke of Gettysburg Theological Seminary, "The Budget as a Mission Tool: Vision, Principles, and Strategies." Rare is it that compilation volumes offering reflections and instruction from a diverse group of people provide a finished product with a majority of recommendable chapters. *C(H)AOS Theory* has chaotic chapters worth skimming to be sure, but overall the interested reader will find help and wisdom here for the task.

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Technology

***BibleWorks 9: Software for Biblical Exegesis & Research.* BibleWorks. Norfolk, VA. \$359.**

BibleWorks continues to impress with new features and databases added to this affordable high-end software program. Among the most important new features are instantaneous usage statistics in the Use tab, instantaneous highlighting of differences between Bible versions, and an optional fourth column. Major new databases include the *BibleWorks* Manuscript Project and the Center for New Testament Textual Studies Critical Apparatus, both of which are included in the base cost of the program.

With the new Use tab, simply hovering over a word instantaneously reveals how frequently that word appears in the current book and in the entire version. Settings may be adjusted to show either the current form or the lemma (lexical

form). More than just lightning-fast information, this feature provides a significant psychological boost for the language student. While it can be discouraging not to know instantly the definitions for words when you translate, in reality there are many words which most students should not know. Of the 5,393 words in the Greek New Testament, 4,351 occur ten times or fewer, 3,767 occur five times or fewer, and 1,932 words occur only once (data quickly available through the Vocabulary Flashcard Module). While professors will disagree on the appropriate cut-off, there is a point at which vocabulary study is not time well spent. It is sometimes more effective simply to look up words when you don't know them, and with instant usage data, one can quickly determine if the word is one which he should have known or not.

The new fourth column allows one to view an additional set of data. While my recommended display order includes search results, the Biblical text, lexicons, and usage data, the third and fourth columns can be easily rearranged to show any of the available tabs (including the new images of Biblical manuscripts), or one may easily turn off the third and fourth columns. Instant difference highlighting can be turned on or off with a simple click in the browse window menu.

The *BibleWorks* Manuscript Project provides manuscript images and transcriptions for a growing number of important manuscripts such as Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, and Bezae, among others. When studying any verse, one can instantly see manuscript images by clicking into the Manuscripts tab. In addition, the manuscripts can be opened full screen and viewed with an impressive variety of visual filters. The transcriptions of each manuscript may be used in the same way as any Bible version, and morphological tagging of each manuscript is ongoing. Transcription and tagging tools accompany the manuscripts.

The CNTTS database is an extensive user-friendly critical apparatus which can be viewed in either the third or fourth column. In addition to a listing of variant readings and manuscript support, the data for each verse can be easily expanded to show manuscripts sorted by date and text type. Aside from the usefulness of the manuscripts and the apparatus, what is particularly amazing is that these items are added to the base package at no additional cost, while in another program the apparatus sells for \$100 and manuscripts sell for \$40 to \$60 each.

Among the 22 new Bible versions, notable additions include the 2011 NIV, the second edition of the Holman Christian Standard Bible, and updates to the NET Bible. New morphological versions accompany the Byzantine text, Westcott-Hort text, and Scrivener text. *The Moody Atlas of the Bible* is included at no additional charge, and new additional-cost modules include *The ESV Study Bible*, Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*, and Grudem's *Systematic Theology*.

Ongoing needs for the program include the ability to turn off parsing information while viewing lexical entries in the analysis window, modified morphological texts including second aorist and second future forms, and a syntax database along the lines of Wallace's *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (which is still included for free). Along with the new fourth column, users would benefit from the ability to create new tabs such as an additional lexicon or manuscript tab so that one could view multiple lexicons or manuscripts at the same time. Furthermore, since some of the tabs include submenus, this option would allow submenus to be moved to their own tab.

Most significantly, *BibleWorks* has not yet entered into the mobile world. Apps for phones, and more importantly for tablets, are desperately needed in order for *BibleWorks* to remain competitive with other companies. Since *BibleWorks* is

designed for Windows and since phones and tablets use other platforms, *BibleWorks* has chosen to wait for devices which use a Windows platform. Given *BibleWorks*' resources, this is a risky but likely a necessary decision.

BibleWorks remains my first choice for those who want to dig into the original text, yet I am becoming increasingly convinced that for the serious student of God's word, investing in multiple software programs is a wise investment indeed. Given that *BibleWorks* and *Logos* have different yet significant strengths, I find myself using both on a daily basis. While some may object that purchasing two programs is unrealistic, we live in a world where people regularly have two TVs, two suits, and two cars. If the combination of the two programs makes a qualitative difference in ministry (and it does), then how could one justify not spending the money?

As a final note, the time has come for churches to invest in the ministry of the Word by equipping all of its ministers and Bible teachers with software programs such as *BibleWorks*. We recognize that chairs and projectors and air conditioning are part of our costs of doing business for Bible study, yet somehow we have neglected to provide the tools which can best increase the quality of this ministry. It's time for our thinking to change. *BibleWorks* should be standard issue. The next time you are faced with the choice between new chairs or *BibleWorks* for your teachers, please choose *BibleWorks*.

David Hutchison
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***Pictorial Library of Bible Lands.* By Todd Bolen. 18-volume collection. 4 DVDs. Revised and Expanded. BiblePlaces.com, 2012. \$389.**

High quality pictures can add an indispensable dimension to teaching and preaching the Bible. However, finding appropriate, accurate, and high-quality pictures can often be beyond one's computer and Internet abilities or available time.

BiblePlaces.com comes to the rescue. This vast collection is an excellent resource with over 17,500 high-resolution photographs from Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, Crete, and Malta. The original collection is from Todd Bolen, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies at the Master's College. He taught in Israel for ten years, and his picture collection spans the last twenty years; however, there are also pictures in this collection from over forty other photographers.

Accuracy is extremely important in showing Biblical pictures. One can use Internet search engines to find pictures; however, a typical Internet search will give a number of false findings. For instance, searching Google Images for "Peter's house excavations Capernaum" produces only nine accurate results out of the first twenty. So, unless one has physically been to a site in order to recognize its picture, verifying accurate pictures from an Internet search engine can be a daunting task. However, in the *Pictorial Library* one can quickly find accurately identified and labeled pictures.

Accessibility is another helpful aspect of this DVD collection. The pictures are in two formats: jpeg (up to 2420 x 1600 pixels) and in 400 ready-made PowerPoint presentations. Most users will probably use the PowerPoint pictures because they are easy to add to one's PowerPoint presentation, and they have the caption and notes already attached to the slides. The pictures in the slide shows are 1029 x 768, which are the finest quality most projectors can display. One can build a professional picture slide show on a given Bible subject in mere minutes.

The annotations are a valuable feature of the *Pictorial Library*. They appear

in the Speaker's Notes section under a number of the PowerPoint slides. Not every slide has notes. For instance, they appear in the first picture in a group of pictures on the same subject. The notes are sometimes extensive, giving: (1) Biblical information, such as nine actions of Jesus in Capernaum from Mark 1-2 (Capernaum, slide 23), (2) historical citations, such as a translation of a quotation from Egeria's 4th-century diary that Peter's house was turned into a church (Capernaum, slide 26), and (3) archeological information, such as a discussion of the original location for Bethsaida: et-Tell, el-Araj, or el-Misadiyye (Bethsaida, slide 8). The notes attached to the last slide in most slideshows lists some helpful resources for further study; however, it would be helpful to give a larger list of resources and include a list in all slide shows.

Most of the slide shows begin with helpful maps that identify the cities and areas that appear in the slide show. Sometimes aerial views have labels that identify where ancient buildings once stood, such as the aerial picture of Hierapolis from the west (Hierapolis, slide 12). However, in the slide show the bare picture appears first, and the labels appear with the next mouse click. This arrangement is well thought out and handy for teaching purposes.

The pictures are of excellent quality. Each shot is well composed, with sharp images and vivid colors. Not only are they much better than the average shutterbug can take, they include 400 aerial shots that are beyond the ability and resources of most people. There is also a sufficient variety and quantity of pictures in this collection. This reviewer has led groups to most of the cities and countries that appear in the *Pictorial Library*, and Bolen has well covered each site.

Volume seventeen, *Cultural Images of the Holy Land*, is a noteworthy collection. One could visit the Holy Land on a tour group many times and not see many of the excellent cultural scenes in this collection. There is a wide range of subjects, such as a host of animal and bird pictures—each one properly labeled. Grouped pictures appear in sequence, ranging from the interesting process of sheep shearing to the bloody skinning and gutting of sheep in Jericho. Both Christian and Jewish holy days and holiday celebrations in Israel are well photographed and documented. The scribe slide show depicts a number of modern scribes copying the Hebrew Scriptures as well as tools of their trade and the finished product—certainly of interest to anyone who loves God's Word.

There are occasional typographical errors, such as "Bethsaid" (Bethsaida, slide 8, line 16) and "didrachamae" (Bethsaida, slide 21, line 4), and inconsistent capitalization ("el-Araj" and "El-Araj," Bethsaida, slide 8, lines 15, 18). However, Bolen welcomes feedback on errors or updates via e-mail. He plans to make corrections and update archeological information in future editions ("Annotations," line 17).

Here are three more suggestions for improvement. For pictures not covering an entire slide, a black background is easier on the eyes than the white background provided in these slide shows. Of course, one can easily change the background with PowerPoint editing tools. Next, there are times one could use more description, such as identifying the areas of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in the Easter processional (Christian Holidays—Easter), identifying the location of cities such as Kom Ombo—a city in Upper Egypt (Pottery Making, slides 11, 13-15), and explaining how an olive beam press works (Olive Harvest, slides 36-43). Finally, when conditions calm down, complete this collection with volumes on Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

Although anyone can view the PowerPoint slides with a free reader, one must

own the full PowerPoint software to read the annotations. One can also view the slides on free programs, such as OpenOffice, but there are sometimes issues with reading the slide labels. However, purchasing PowerPoint is a good investment and will give one the best usage of the *Pictorial Library*.

This collection of high-resolution pictures and PowerPoint slide shows is a superb resource for pastors and Bible teachers (ranging in effective use from Vacation Bible School to sermons to seminary classes). It is also a valuable tool for anyone interested in learning more about the Bible. Viewing each slide, reading its annotation, and looking up relevant Bible verses can provide weeks of valuable learning about the Bible. This is an excellent resource with a wide range of applications.

James R. Wicker
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***Logos 5*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2012.**

With the release of *Logos 5*, Logos Bible Software has offered the latest in their digital-library-based program. The software offers a plethora of tools which collate information from the user's library database with just a few clicks. Whether a user needs sermon ideas, basic exegetical information, or a thorough word study, Logos offers tools for each of these and much more. *Logos 5* makes a wealth of information accessible in seconds, though the sheer amount of material can occasionally make the search for relevant information laborious.

The *Logos* interface primarily functions as a customizable desktop of open books. The format of the digital books on *Logos* is easy to read and easy to navigate. Though some digital formats can be awkward to read and difficult to browse, *Logos* makes reading easy with an overall aesthetically pleasing design with easily-legible fonts and straightforward navigation. For example, each open book includes an expandable sidebar for contents as well as searchability both within volumes and among the entire library. The search function for the entire library allows the user to access quickly all of the material in the library on a certain topic (including journals like *Themelios* and even collections like *Perseus*). References within a volume to other volumes within the library are even linked for quick access. Moreover, users who need to document their research can toggle page numbers on and off and access footnotes simply by hovering the cursor over the superscripted number. *Logos* also includes a bibliography document creator which will automatically format according to a variety of major style guides (including SBL, Chicago, and Turabian). The bibliography can then be printed, exported, or even opened in Microsoft Word. A user's digital library can be expanded by upgrading to higher base packages or by purchasing from Logos' enormous selection of individual titles and special bundles. The base packages, however, include a significant number of out-of-date and seemingly nugatory works which sometimes can make it difficult to find just the right book when searching for a resource. Bundles can also frustrate, since they often will include either several volumes already owned or unneeded alongside a few especially useful ones.

Logos can make working with Greek and Hebrew extraordinarily streamlined. Browsing the NA28 or the BHS is easy on the eyes, and the user can quickly obtain morphological information by hovering over individual words with the cursor (lexical information is also available here for Greek, but not for Hebrew). Keeping the Exegetical Guide tool open in an adjacent window gives the user easy access

to grammatical and syntactical points relevant to the passage, further lexical data, and an at-a-glance translation. Perhaps the greatest feature is the ease of performing word searches from a text. Right clicking on a word opens a user-friendly, yet elaborate window of options for word searches based on lemma or morphology, or a variety of other possibilities, like opening to the selected word in a certain lexicon or simply opening the Bible Word Study tool. This latter tool displays basic lexical resources on the chosen lemma, a chart depicting how the lemma is translated in various editions, and links to some basic textual searches of the lemma in, say, the New Testament or Apostolic Fathers. Starting a word study from scratch, however, can be a challenge since *Logos* does not have built-in Hebrew and Greek keyboards, and its transliteration search can be a bit cumbersome at first. Searching for Greek or Hebrew words, thus, is easiest if the user has a base text in mind from which to start. On the other hand, when searching in Greek or Hebrew, *Logos* clearly displays the codes needed for basic searches and it guides the user through even long, complicated morphological searches.

An additional nice feature, the sentence diagramming tool, enables users to create text-flow or line diagrams with a simple, customizable interface. For example, it is easy to move lines of text around for a text-flow diagram without dealing with the troubles of tabs and spacing that can arise in a word processor. As a major drawback, though, these files can only be exported as XPS documents.

Logos 5 is generally user friendly, but sometimes the sheer amount of information overwhelms. The number of tools available means that there are several different utilities where the user can find desired information, though some of these utilities are better than others. For example, it is easier to ascertain a good list of commentaries on 1 John by simply searching the library rather than by utilizing the commentary list in the Passage Guide. Or, employing the Bible Word Study tool can be an ineffectual first step if a user simply wants to see how a word is used in a certain corpus. Sometimes the simplest information, like Biblical cross-references, seems difficult to find. The Explorer tool shows cross-references, but it also shows much additional material of mixed value. As an example, the Explorer tool lists a plethora of cross-references for Hebrews 2:4, but nothing for 2:6, which is an Old Testament quotation; information on the OT quotation can be found, however, in the Passage Guide under "Parallel Passages" amidst a long list of other data. A user might wish to see the specific cross-references listed in, say, the NASB or the NA28, but these are not available. Thus, *Logos 5* can feel like a shotgun approach to information retrieval. Numerous media can provide a given set of data but not all of the media are of equal value.

Ultimately, *Logos* provides a phenomenal tool for interacting with a virtual library. The display reads easily and the program enables swift movement among and within resources. However, finding the right information and sifting through the extraneous can prove tiring if the user chooses the pre-designed guides and tools. So, for the user interested primarily in exegesis, *Logos* can sometimes get in the way of the helpful information, and other software may prove more straightforward. But for the user primarily interested in a digital library, *Logos* proves indispensable.

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Camtasia Studio 8.1.0. Software. Okemos, Michigan: TechSmith. Released June 18, 2013. \$299.

Camtasia Studio is a screen-capture, video-editing software. This reviewer has created over six hundred short videos using Camtasia 6 and 7. It is a versatile, reliable, and easy-to-use product. However, with the new features in version 8.1.0, a great product is now even better.

There are a number of free screen-capture recording programs available online (such as *Jing* that TechSmith makes), but they all have no or very limited editing capabilities. However, *Camtasia Studio* has robust editing capabilities, allowing one to make a professional product fitting for any school, church, business, or personal setting. Here are the basics of what *Camtasia Studio* does. Anything viewable on a computer screen can be captured and edited in *Camtasia*: a PowerPoint slide show, a YouTube video, a webcam recording, a television show, a lecture while sitting at one's desk or standing in front of a class, a demonstration of how to use software, or the playback of a video recording. In addition to editing, such as omitting one's "uhs" and "ums," one can add music, audio, and callouts (such as arrows, underlines, highlight boxes, or text boxes, just to name a few). The Zoom-n-Pan feature allows one to zoom in to show small text better or pan across a picture, allowing for a nice Ken Burns effect. Also, a professional-looking cover screen then can be nicely transitioned (with twenty-five different effects) to the main body of the show, such as an effect in which the cover screen rolls up like a scroll to reveal the main video. One can insert markers into the video which enable the viewer to jump to specified sections of the video, such as various sections of a Table of Contents.

Editing is quick and easy. This reviewer has made videos for training faculty members in how to use software, training students how to do homework assignments, such as to explain how to use the *Logos* Bible study software or how to color code a passage in a Gospel harmony, and training students about grammar and syntax in Koine Greek. However, several features in release 8.1 make *Camtasia Studio* even more useful, and this reviewer is looking forward to producing many videos with this product.

The standout new feature is Hide a Color, also known as Green Screen or Chroma key, and it is an improvement over its Picture in Picture option. This tool allows one to insert a video of oneself into another video or picture because the original green background is erased, although any color background can be used. All of a sudden the person is lecturing by the Coliseum in Rome without ever leaving Bug Tussle, Texas. Or, he appears in a PowerPoint presentation, pointing to an important text, explaining a picture, or pushing text away text with a swishing of his arms. This is a professional, studio-quality effect now put into the hands of the average Joe for a reasonable price. With a four dollar, 6' x 6' green cloth from WalMart and no special lighting, this reviewer had great results. It may be asking too much, but it would be nice to remove more than one color. Then one could remove a background as well as one's shirt and just be a floating head to add to a picture of a Roman statue.

Two other very useful new features are quizzing and hot spots, and they make the completed video interactive with the user. Quizzing allows insertion of quizzes at any spot in the video. The producer can choose multiple choice, true-false, short answer, or fill-in-the-blank questions. This helpful feature allows the producer to help ensure the viewer understands the material. Scores can be sent to the teacher

via e-mail or using SCORM in a learning management system, such as Blackboard. Hot spots are another helpful feature. For instance, a video can contain instructions for how to do a project in a PC or Mac. At any point in the video, a message can appear with two buttons. Click on one button to jump to the PC instructions. Or, click on the other button to jump to the Mac instructions.

Other nice features are useful as well. Now there are an unlimited number of tracks one can add to a video. Each new video file, audio file, or image goes on a new track. The new Grouping feature allows one to group several images, such as a superimposed arrow, box, and a circle, treating them as one image so they can easily be repositioned. Stitching enables the merging of two video clips into one clip so that a special effect (such as a zoom in) can span across one clip to the next clip. Also, the TechSmith Smart Player is a nice tool one can use to view the completed video and use all of its special features. However, one can save a *Camtasia Studio* video in the following formats: MP4/FLV/SWF – flash outputs, Windows Media Video, QuickTime Movie, AVI, M4V, MP3, RM, CAMV, or GIF.

Adding more question types in the quiz option would be nice, such as a matching or a hot spot question. Also, it would help to give more quiz use options, such as an answer percent a person must achieve before proceeding to the next section of the video.

Here are four ways any classroom teacher can use *Camtasia 8.1*. First, flip the classroom. Record a lecture for students to watch prior to class so that they can discuss the subject in class. The lecture can be video only (using a camcorder or webcam), a video merged with a screen presentation, such as PowerPoint, or an audio added to a screen presentation. Insert quizzes on the video to keep students actively engaged in the learning process. Second, record a homework or assignment explanation. For a difficult assignment, it is nice to be able to let students rewatch the instructions as many times as needed. Third, record training videos on how to use software needed in class or how to use the learning management system. Fourth, produce a video about how to do good research on the Internet (yes, it is possible).

Camtasia 8.1 has many uses in church ministry. Put videos on the church website which introduce the church's staff, ministries, and special events, such as Vacation Bible School. A video can walk a visitor through the nursery and preschool policies and procedures of the church. A pastor or Sunday School teacher can post a video introducing a new sermon or Bible study lesson series. Transform the routine camp or mission trip slide show pictures and music to involve audio testimonies or video testimonies of participants as the pictures display.

For both the classroom and church ministry, *Camtasia 8.1* can easily change a YouTube video into a format that can be shown without an Internet connection. One can also involve students in video production. For instance, use *Hide a Color* to let students create a video placing them in biblical scenes.

This software is highly recommended for classroom, church, and personal use. It puts full-featured, studio-quality editing tools into an affordable, easy-to-use product. It has an excellent series of free training videos on the Internet—made, of course, using *Camtasia 8.1*.

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**Abstracts of Recently Published Dissertations in the
School of Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary**

“Jonathan Edwards and the Reinscripturation of the World.” By Robert Lee Boss, Jr. Supervised by Robert Caldwell.

This dissertation argues that Jonathan Edwards’s central text “Images of Divine Things” falls clearly within the emblem book genre and articulates a comprehensive emblematic worldview by which he reinscripturates the world. The first section introduces the thesis and its broad historical and theological context.

Chapter 1 investigates the origins of Jonathan Edwards’s worldview. The developments during the Renaissance that led to the rise, and later decline, of the emblematic worldview are canvassed. The emblem book genre is introduced and its development discussed.

Chapter 2 examines the emblematic worldview as embraced by early Evangelicals. It is argued that the emblematic theology of select Evangelicals is of the same purpose and scope as Edwards’s “Images of Divine Things.”

Chapter 3 argues that Edwards’s emblematics and his notebook “Images of Divine Things” bear distinct marks that place them within the emblematic worldview of the Renaissance. The role of exegesis and occasional meditation is discussed.

Chapter 4 introduces Edwards’s reinscripturation of the world. “Images of Divine Things” is reconfigured and summarized into theological categories in order to reveal the doctrinal precision and expansive nature of his vision and project. The closing section summarizes the conclusions of this project, as well as suggests some further areas of research.

“The Past is Yet to Come: Exodus Typology in the Apocalypse.” By Barbara Ann Isbell. Supervised by Paul Wolfe.

This dissertation examines the significance of Exodus typology upon the conclusion of Scripture, namely, John’s Apocalypse.

After a brief introduction to the project in chapter 1, chapter 2 focuses on intertextuality, defining key terminology including typology.

Chapter 3 examines the scriptural witness to determine that Exodus typology incorporates the events surrounding the departure from Egypt, including the wilderness wanderings, while excluding the Conquest of Canaan. Chapter 4 highlights the development of a new Exodus expectation within canonical and extracanonical writings, particularly the prophets and the NT. Attention is drawn to the eschatological nature of this new Exodus.

Chapters 5 through 7 represent the heart of the study. Analysis reveals that the Apocalypse typologically incorporates images from each major stage of the Exodus in its eschatological presentation. The Egyptian plagues function as the paradigm for the trumpet and bowl judgments, as seen in the repetition of the word *πληγή* (“plague”) as well as the cumulative allusions to the plagues in the descriptions of the judgments (Rev 8-9, 16). Passover allusions envelop the Christological figure of the Lamb, whose blood both redeems (Rev 5:6-10) and seals (Rev 7) believers from the disastrous consequences of God’s wrath upon the unrighteous. Wilderness connotations are prominent in the repetition of temple/tabernacle and Sinai imagery (e.g.

Rev 8-9, 15, 16), the summary of the salvation-historical conflict (Rev 12), and the eschatological blessings experienced by the redeemed (Rev 7).

Chapter 8 contains a hermeneutical analysis of Revelation's structured and purposeful use of Exodus typology, which enhances the reader's understanding of John's visions and exhorts believers to maintain allegiance to the Lamb in the face of persecution and a compromising culture.

Chapter 9 concludes the project with suggestions for further study.

The primary thrust of this dissertation is to demonstrate that Revelation's use of Exodus typology represents the eschaton as the culmination of salvation history, a reinstatement of God's initial purposes and ideals for his creation. At last, all that was inaugurated through Christ's redemptive death on the cross is completed, the covenants throughout Scripture are fulfilled, and the goal of the Exodus is accomplished.

“Pure Worship: The Early English Baptist Distinctive.” By Matthew W. Ward. Supervised by Malcolm B. Yarnell, III.

This dissertation argues that pure worship was the early English Particular Baptist distinctive. Their overwhelming desire to worship God purely drove the development of this group's theology and ecclesiology as well as their self-identity. Chapter 1 explains the goal of the argument, establishes a definition of worship, and clarifies the scope of the early Particular Baptists. Chapter 2 establishes the liturgical context of sixteenth and seventeenth-century England, drawing particular attention to the goals and motives of the Puritans and Separatists, and explaining their connections with the Particular Baptists. Chapter 3 describes how worship influenced the early Baptist doctrine of the church, focusing on their concepts of freedom, primitivism, and separatism. Chapter 4 describes how worship influenced the early Baptist doctrine of the Scriptures, particularly right hermeneutics. Chapter 5 describes how these Baptists wed their worship with the gospel. Chapter 6 introduces the hymn-singing controversy of the late seventeenth century as a recapitulation of the entire argument. It also draws conclusions and implications for further study and development.

“Justification by Faith and Early Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism.” By Michael Wayne Whitlock. Supervised by Malcolm B. Yarnell, III.

This dissertation argues that four particular Anabaptist representatives who stand at the headwaters of sixteenth-century Anabaptism adhere to the fundamental elements of the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone. The presentation focuses on the writings of Conrad Grebel, Michael Sattler, Hans Denck, and Balthasar Hubmaier. Chapter one introduces the thesis and delineates four fundamental elements or tenets of the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone. The argument for the thesis progresses through three chapters, each considering a primary element of the argument.

Chapter two examines representatives of the Lutheran and Reformed traditions in order to understand the core meaning in the representatives' presentations of justification by faith and affirm that the delineated tenets represent properly the heart of the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone. The chosen Lutheran representatives are Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, and Martin Chemnitz. Representatives chosen from the Reformed tradition are Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Bucer, and John Calvin. The chapter concludes that each representative shares the

common elements at the core of their doctrine and that the four tenets represent properly the key ideas.

Chapter three surveys the Anabaptist representatives' thought on justification in order to locate the four tenets. The chapter considers each representative's thought independent of the others and then ties together the core elements in each presentation with the four tenets delineated in chapter one. The chapter argues that while an absence of common Protestant terminology describing justification by faith alone exists among Anabaptist writings, the core aspects of Anabaptist thought on justification unwaveringly adheres to the core Protestant elements.

Chapter four considers three primary arguments that oppose the thesis of this dissertation. The chapter considers whether an Anabaptist emphasis on good works produced by faith constitutes works righteousness, whether the Anabaptists emphasize an ontological change as the core of justification instead of a forensic declaration, and whether the Anabaptist emphasis on free will precludes an understanding of justification by faith alone. The chapter concludes that none of these aspects form the basis for the Anabaptist understanding of justification.

Chapter five concludes the dissertation by briefly summarizing the major points in support of the thesis.

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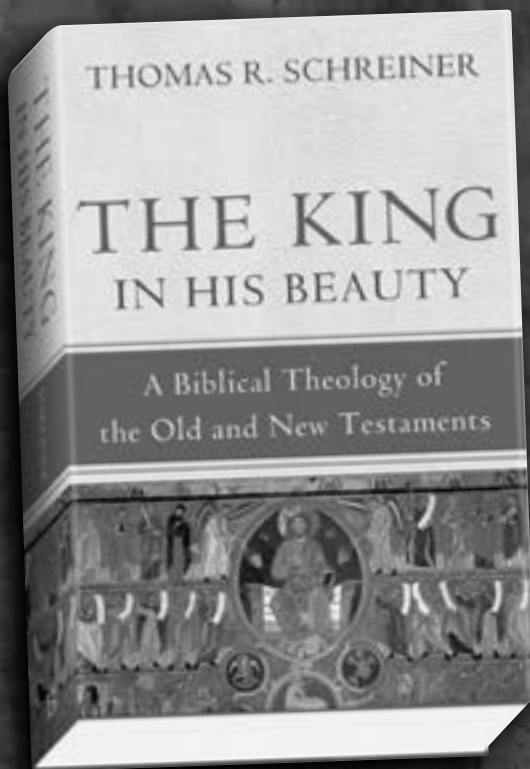
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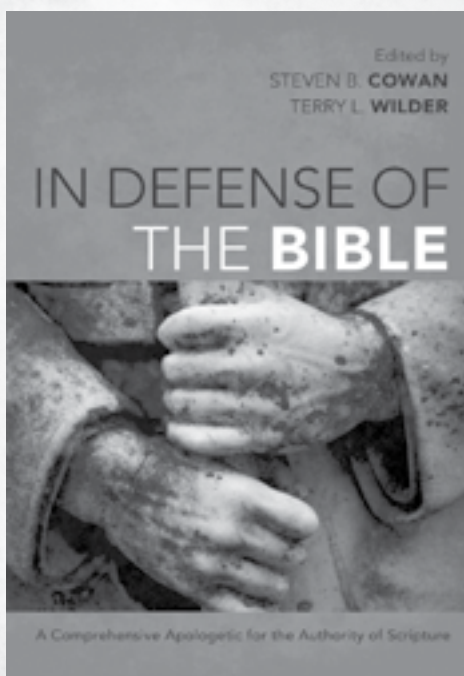


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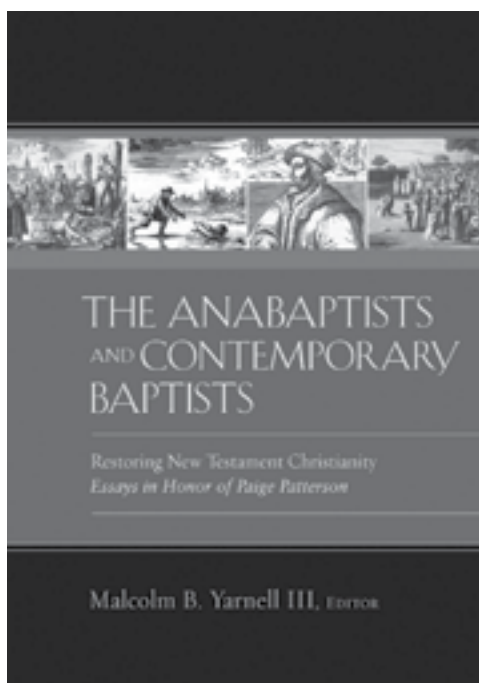
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