

CONCERNING
HUMANITY



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JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL: CONCERNING HUMANITY	1
W. MADISON GRACE II	
WHAT CAN SCIENCE TELL US ABOUT THE SOUL?	5
CHAD MEEKS	
GAY SEX AND GRACE: WHAT DOES GRACE HAVE TO DO WITH HOMOSEXUAL PRACTICES?	19
ROBERT V. RAKESTRAW	
IS IT ADULTERY? THE USE OF THIRD-PARTY GAMETES IN ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY	41
EVAN LENOW	
YOU TALKIN' TO ME? 1 PETER 2:4-10 AND A THEOLOGY OF ISRAEL.	59
JIM R. SIBLEY	
REVIEW ESSAY: A STRANGE SORT OF ORTHODOXY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE T4T AND CPM APPROACH TO MISSIONS	77
ADAM COKER	
BOOK REVIEWS.	89
ABSTRACTS OF RECENT DISSERTATIONS AT SOUTHWESTERN	119
INDEX OF BOOK REVIEWS	126

Concerning Humanity

W. Madison Grace II
Managing Editor
Southwestern Journal of Theology

Calvin stated at the beginning of his *Institutes* that “nearly all the wisdom we possess, . . . consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.”¹ This dual construction of wisdom points to the necessity of the study of ourselves—the study of anthropology—because the two are intimately connected. Though Calvin asserts that it is important to study humanity because it “is the noblest and most remarkable example of [God’s] justice, wisdom, and goodness . . .” he argues the greater importance of considering anthropology is because “we cannot have a clear and complete knowledge of God unless it is accomplished by a corresponding knowledge of ourselves.”² The study of God—theology—and the study of humankind—anthropology—are inextricably linked. How one understands one of these doctrines will effect the development of the other.

The study of humanity encompasses all of what a person is. How are we created? What makes up our person? What does it mean to male and female? It is important that we consider these, and many more questions, as we construct our own theologies. For if we do not give them the attention they deserve, or if we answer them incorrectly or inadequately, deficiencies will arise in our theologies as a whole.

For instance, a priority ceded to the immaterial (i.e. soul or spirit), part of the human person, over against the body, says something about the human person that has effects elsewhere in theology. The consequences of diminishing the body is perilous for a wholistic concept of the person. A misunderstanding of the theology of the body leads to misunderstandings in ethical issues such as sexuality, human reproduction, social relations, and the dignity in personhood to name a few.

In addressing anthropology, the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer understood the necessity of affirming a proper relation between body and soul as it relates to the Creator in whose image humanity was created. He states, “The body is not the prison, the shell, the exterior, of a human being; instead a human being is a human body. A human being does not ‘have’

¹John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1, edited by John T. McNeill, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2011), 1:35.

²*Ibid.*, 183.

a body or 'have' a soul; instead a human being 'is' a body and a soul."³ The essential nature of the person as body and soul is a direct reflection of the image of God in which humanity is created. Though the present state of a person exists in a state of sin, the formation of a person as body and soul remains God's purpose and plan for humanity. We cannot merely slough off one or the other to fit our theological ends. Moreover, the importance of such a construction of the person is evidence by the doctrine of redemption itself. If the entrance of sin marred the make-up of the human person then redemption must address the present deficiencies in human personhood. Thus the Son was sent to earth to become not only a human but the new humanity in and through which redemption is accomplished.

As we can see, the doctrines of salvation and Christ both find connection and importance with and to the doctrine of humanity. Needless to say that Christian theology, and the Christian doing theology, should be concerned with anthropology—concerned with humanity. This issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* is entitled "Concerning Humanity" and the articles that follow touch upon the various aspects of this important loci of theology.

The first article by Chad Meeks, "What Can Science Tell Us about the Soul?" addresses the anthropological conflict that exists between contemporary science, and especially materialists who see humans only as bodies, and a classic Christian position of dualism, which claims humans are composed of bodies and souls. In the article Meeks is less concerned with proving dualism over against materialism, rather he is asking if science is able to answer the question, Do humans have souls? In particular, scientific naturalism and its methods are explained and analyzed to show they are deficient in proving the existence of a human soul.

The next two articles address different issues in ethics relating to human personhood: sexuality and reproduction. Robert V. Rakestraw takes on the topic of "Gay Sex and Grace" and particularly addresses "What does Grace Have to Do with Homosexual Practices." It is an honest engagement with the question of homosexual practices, the biblical witness of such practices, and the grace of God. Following this article Evan Lenow writes on the question of third-party gametes in assisted reproductive technology. He asks the provocative question, Is this reproductive practice adultery? Lenow explains the particular practice of assisted reproductive technology and compares it to a biblical and theological definition of marriage to see if it violates the covenant of marriage.

The final article, "You Talkin' to Me?" finds its connection with anthropology as it considers the question of the ethnic people of Israel in relation to 1 Peter 2:4–10. In this article Jim R. Sibley questions the belief of some theologians who claim that the church has replaced Israel in God's plan. He

³Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, vol. 3 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, edited by John W. De Gruchy, translated by Douglas Stephen Bax (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 77.

particularly engages the pericope of 1 Peter 2:4–10 as a place to discuss these disagreements.

The concerns of humanity are highlighted in this volume in a variety of ways from engaging science to addressing sex and reproduction to looking at God's plan for an ethnic people. These are just some of the issues that concern humanity that Christians should consider as we engage the dual task of gaining a knowledge of God and a knowledge of humanity.

What Can Science Tell Us About the Soul?

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It is commonly argued that, due to advancements in contemporary physical science (specifically neuroscience), the existence of souls is implausible and any belief in such things is irrational. Ever since Gilbert Ryle's *deus ex machina* argument against Descartes, materialists (those who claim only material or physical things exist) have argued that dualism (the view that humans are composed of body and soul) is an archaic and scientifically unpractical stance.¹ Today, many contemporary thinkers default to physical science when thinking about human composition. Concerning questions about human nature, the default process is to look to scientific enterprises, garner answers through empirical research, and submit an explanation based on experimental studies. Even philosophers are known to place scientific methods and explanations prior to philosophical argumentation when exploring the depths of the mind. For example, Owen Flanagan writes, "we have no evidence whatsoever that there are any nonphysical things."² The "evidence" that Flanagan speaks of is scientific evidence. Since, via the scientific method, souls are undetected, souls, according to Flanagan *et al.*, probably do not exist.

This apotheosis of science has been propagated in large part by a philosophical idea I will call scientific naturalism (defined below). Adherents to scientific naturalism (SN) range from humanities professors to producers of popular documentaries to scientists; such purveyors generally jettison many semblances of epistemic humility and stamp the empirical method as the king of all knowledge acquisition—especially when it comes to human composition. Essentially, scientific naturalism's claim is that belief in an immaterial soul is incompatible with modern and/or contemporary science.³ Such a claim is at odds with the standard Christian position that human beings are composed of both physical body and nonphysical soul.⁴

So can science tell someone if he or she has a soul? I will argue that science (as defined by scientific naturalism) is no help to us when seeking to

¹Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (New York City: Barnes & Noble, 1959).

²Owen Flanagan, *The Science of the Mind*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991), 20.

³I take modern science to be one undergirded by Newtonian physics and contemporary science to be one undergirded by relativity and quantum mechanics.

⁴That is not to say that Christians agree or have historically agreed on the details of the composition.

affirm, disaffirm, or detect a nonphysical component of a human. Overall, I will argue, scientific naturalism fails to demonstrate that belief in the immaterial soul is incompatible with belief in the general trends of modern or contemporary science and it fails to show that belief in an immaterial soul is irrational. I will begin by giving a general overview of scientific naturalism and its claims. Then I will discuss the methods of science given the constraints applied by scientific naturalism. Finally, I will offer an argument against scientific naturalism.

Scientific Naturalism

Broadly speaking, naturalism can be defined as the philosophy that all things can be reduced to nature and no reality exists beyond nature. W.V.O. Quine, credited with developing naturalism (at least in a contemporary sense), writes that naturalism is “an inquiry into reality, fallible and corrigible but not answerable to any [tribunal outside of science], and not in need of any justification beyond observation and the [scientific] method.”⁵ Scientific naturalism goes one step further by claiming that something exists only if it is “describable and explainable in an ideal, complete science or, more specifically, physics.”⁶ The specific aim of scientific naturalism is to describe all of existence and reality by scientific explanations or processes, even the ego or conscious self. It does not simply adumbrate that we cannot know anything beyond the physical. According to SN, the natural world is all there is and to study the world, one must use some type of scientific method.

So why hold to scientific naturalism? What are the arguments for it? All forms of naturalism generally use the same argumentation, though scientific naturalists take the implications further. Essentially, most scientific naturalists argue that the success of science and the scientific pursuits, justify holding a naturalistic worldview.⁷

Regarding the explanatory power of science, Willem B. Drees writes “sciences provide an increasingly integrated and unified understanding of

⁵Quoted by Alan Weir, “Quine’s Naturalism,” in *Blackwell Companions to Philosophy: Companion to W.V.O. Quine*, edited by Gilbert Harman and Ernie Lepore (Malden: Wiley/Blackwell, 2014), 116.

⁶Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro, *Naturalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 14. Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro call scientific naturalism “strict naturalism.” I have chosen to use the term “scientific naturalism” because it seems to be a better descriptor of the idea. Intelligent Design advocates commonly use the term “scientific naturalism.” I prefer the term to “strict naturalism” because it helps clearly distinguish between the standard version of “naturalism.” Ronald Numbers claims that Thomas Huxley first coined the term “scientific naturalism;” either way, the term is a commonly used term in the literature and I am using it in a way that is concurrent with the literature, e.g., J.P. Moreland uses the term in his work *When Science and Christianity Meet* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 266.

⁷Willem B. Drees, “Religious Naturalism and Science,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, edited by Philip Clayton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 108–23. Drees lists four different arguments; however, I think that there are two main claims of the four.

reality, resulting in precise predictions which correspond to empirical results.”⁸ According to the naturalist, science is capable of giving an explanation to phenomena in a way that is more satisfying and sufficient. One need not conjecture that anything from outside the system causally influenced something inside the system. To do so, would be to overdetermine causally an effect beyond what is necessary. Focusing on physical explanations gives one the ability to simplify the causation of events without appealing to religious or spiritual beliefs that are complex and difficult to verify. Quine writes, “If the scientist sometimes overrules something which a superstitious layman might have called evidence, this may simply be because the scientist has other and contrary evidence which, if patiently presented to the layman bit by bit, would be conceded superior.”⁹

Likewise, science has made significant progress in explaining natural events that were once believed to be a product of divine action. Drees writes,

The epistemic success of the natural sciences as it developed in the last century or two, resulting in corroborated theories that have a wide scope, unifying the understanding of phenomena in various contexts, in combination with remarkable precision, is totally without equal with any cognitive understanding offered in previous human history, whether in religious myth, theological systems, or philosophical speculations. *This success makes it urgent to take these theories as our best available guides to the understanding of reality.*¹⁰

According to Drees and other naturalists, science has proven to be our most reliable epistemic mechanism to acquire knowledge of the world. Its success affirms that the general conclusions of the scientific enterprise can be trusted as the most reliable way of acquiring knowledge—more reliable than divine revelation, traditional religious speculations, and philosophical argumentation. It should also be noted, that the progress of science is generally given in contrast with what the naturalists consider as a lack of progress in religion and philosophy. For example, one could note the cosmological theories that bring together theoretical conjectures and data from particle physics to the universe at large—generally, providing a reliable, constructive path to knowledge of the cosmos from two disparate sources. On the whole, notes the scientific naturalist, when religions converge, wars and disputes break out, and there is little enhancement of understanding.¹¹

⁸Ibid., 109.

⁹W.V.O. Quine, *The Ways of Paradox* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 233.

¹⁰Drees, “Religious Naturalism and Science,” 114. Emphasis added.

¹¹Peter Atkins, “Atheism and Science,” in *The Oxford Handbook fo Religion and Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 131.

The scientific naturalist has taken the explanatory power of the scientific enterprise and the success of science to develop a more robust view of naturalism; a naturalism that does not stop at an epistemic claim, but broadens the claim to include an assertion about all existence. Thus, the advocate of SN claims that if something does indeed exist, in principle, science could detect it and study it (directly or indirectly). Conversely, the advocate of SN would claim, if science cannot detect something (directly or indirectly), then, in principle, it does not exist.

Components of Scientific Naturalism

As I see it, there are two essential components of scientific naturalism. One merely needs to show that these components are either false or untenable to defeat scientific naturalism. Here I will present the components and I will offer counters to them below. The first component to scientific naturalism is causal closure (or if one holds to scientific naturalism, one also holds to causal closure). This is the proposition that nothing has influence on events, conditions, and entities in time and space except for events, conditions, and entities within time and space. Also, there is nothing outside of time and space.¹² Thus, if something is in time and space, it must have a cause that is in time and space.¹³ This closure inhibits any thing outside the physical realm from being a cause of any event or agent in the physical realm.¹⁴ Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro write,

The study of the literature about [scientific] naturalism, however, leads one to believe that in the end [scientific] naturalists appeal to one central argument in support of their view “the argument from causal closure.” Philosopher of science Karl Popper’s comment about physicalism is apropos for naturalism as well: “the physicalist principle of the closedness of the physical [world] . . . is of decisive importance, and I take it as the characteristic principle of physicalism or materialism.”¹⁵

Thus, in the mind of the scientific naturalist the only possible cause of any effect is a physical cause. God, an immaterial soul, or anything non-physical is rejected as irrational or unknowable.

Whether it is due to the makeup of the universe or the physical limitations of the human brain, we are epistemically locked into knowing the

¹²Robert C. Koons, “The Incompatibility of Naturalism and Scientific Realism,” in *The Nature of Nature*, edited by Bruce Gordon and William Dembski (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2011), 216.

¹³If x (which can be substituted for events, entities, or beings) is in time and space, then x is closed to an explanation outside of time and space. Thus, x must have a physical cause c that happened at time t .

¹⁴This is assuming the intimate confluence of time and space.

¹⁵Goetz and Taliaferro, *Naturalism*, 26. Again, I am substituting what Goetz and Taliaferro call “strict naturalism” for “scientific naturalism.”

physical realm alone.¹⁶ When discussing this issue David Papineau writes, “The thesis of the causal closure of the physical thus argues that [at first glance] non-physical occurrences—all those that exert an influence on the physical realm—must themselves in fact be physical.”¹⁷ Perhaps an honest adherent to SN would claim that there might be a dimension beyond the physical; however, being that we are physical creatures with physical sensory apparatuses, we can only know the physical. Being physical locks us into the physical. Thus, any meaningful knowledge can only come through empirical investigation and physical proof. For example, suppose that a teenager loses his arm in a tragic car accident. His parents, being devout Christians, invite fellow believers to his bedside to pray for healing and recovery. That night, after the impromptu prayer service, while the teen slept, his arm unexpectedly and mysteriously reappears. According to a scientific naturalist, the only explanation for the mysterious growth of the appendage would be a natural explanation. One may quickly retort: Well, science cannot answer how the appendage reappeared. But according to the causal closure thesis, if one cannot supply a natural explanation, then one cannot supply any viable explanation.¹⁸ If one were to conjecture otherwise, according to a scientific naturalist, one would be in clear violation of the thesis of causal closure. Specifically regarding our focus here: if one were to conjecture an immaterial cause of a physical effect, he or she would be in clear violation of the most sacred principle of scientific naturalism.

The second component to scientific naturalism is scientism. Alex Rosenberg defines “scientism” as “[t]he conviction that the methods of science are the only reliable ways to secure knowledge of anything; that science’s description of the world is correct in its fundamentals; and that when ‘complete,’ what science tells us will not be surprisingly different from what it tells us today.”¹⁹ Thus, according to adherents of scientism, the only reliable epistemic acquisition process (i.e., the only way we can know anything there is to know) is by use of the scientific method. Jerry Fodor explains further,

Scientism claims, on the one hand, that the goals of scientific inquiry include the discovery of objective empirical truths; and on the other hand, that science has come pretty close to achieving this goal at least from time to time. . . . Scientism is . . . the scientist’s philosophy of science. It holds that scientists are trying

¹⁶As noted above, there would be some disagreement on this. Here I speak of it in general.

¹⁷David Papineau, “Physical Causal Closure and Naturalism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind*, edited by Brian P McLaughlin, Ansgar Beckerman, and Sven Walter, (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2011), 55.

¹⁸Even if one were apt to distinguish the disciplines of science and philosophy, it makes no difference to the causal closure thesis. All explanations (scientific, philosophical, or otherwise) must be natural explanations.

¹⁹Rosenberg, Alex, *The Atheist’s Guide to Reality*, (New York City: Norton, 2011), 6.

to do pretty much what they say that they are trying to do; and that, with some frequency, they succeed.²⁰

Here one can see the appeals to the authority and priority of natural (or physical) science.

According to scientism, our best picture of reality, the best picture of the world is a materialistic one. If immaterial souls exist, then natural science would discover or detect it. Physical science has never discovered or detected immaterial souls. Thus, according to the scientific naturalist, immaterial souls do not exist. Scientism leads its adherents to claim that science can tell us what J.P. Moreland calls the “Grand Story.”²¹ That is, it is within the capability of science to tell a narrative of our existence and the existence of the universe using the methods of science alone.

The orthopraxy of scientism is clear: If one is to answer life’s greatest questions, one needs look no further than the scientific practice. Furthermore, scientism takes the extra step of claiming that science is the only way one can find viable, true answers (or at least verisimilitudes) about our universe, our existence, ourselves.

So where does this leave us with the soul? Obviously, if the immaterial realm does not exist, then, according to SN, immaterial souls do not exist. Thus, given the entailments and constraints of SN, we are nothing more than our bodies. Under the guise of SN, there is no other reasonable explanation for a soul. For if our only mode of knowledge acquisition is via the scientific method (according to the adherent of scientism) and the scientific method can only detect and study the physical, then all explanations must be grounded in the physical.

Suppose I raise my arm. According to SN, raising my arm is merely the physical processes of my neurons firing in the motor cortex, the secretion of acetylcholine at the axon end plates of my motor neurons, the stimulation of the ion channels, which stimulates the cytoplasm of my muscle fibers, which

²⁰Jerry Fodor, “Is Science Biologically Possible?” in *Naturalism Defeated? Essays on Plantinga’s Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism*, edited by James Beilby (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 30. Fodor takes what could be classified as a robust view of scientism. He writes, “I’m inclined to think that scientism, so construed, is not just true but *obviously and certainly* true; it’s something that nobody in the late twentieth century who has a claim to an adequate education and a minimum of common sense should doubt. In fact, however, Scientism is tendentious. It’s under attack, on the left, from a spectrum of relativists and pragmatists, and, on the right, from a spectrum of Idealists and a priorists. People who are hardly otherwise on speaking terms—feminists and fundamentalists, for example—are thus often unanimous and vehement in rejecting Scientism. But though the rejection of Scientism makes odd bedfellows, it somehow manages to make them in very substantial numbers. I find it, as I say, hard to understand why that is so, and I suppose the Enlightenment must be turning in its grave. Still, over the years I’ve gotten used to it.” Ibid.

²¹J.P. Moreland and Scott B. Rae, *Body & Soul* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2000), 92.

leads to those muscles contracting, and as a consequence my arm goes up.²² That is, it is nothing more than a purely physical phenomenon. Furthermore, many naturalists would claim that what one perceives to be desire, intention, or free will is simply an illusion produced by certain features or functions in the brain.²³ They all can be reduced to physical characteristics of the brain and body. Given scientific naturalism's resolute stance that all explanations be nonpurposive in nature and that all human activity (even that of the intentional self) fall underneath the nexus of a determinative causal structure, scientific naturalists are unwilling to bifurcate the distinction between the mental life and the physical body. Hence, by the measure of the scientific naturalist, dualism is considered false.²⁴ A nonphysical cause bringing about a physical effect is not a viable solution.

Limitations of Physical Science

In this section, I will argue that science, as practiced and defined by naturalists, is inadequate to show that belief in a soul is irrational. To do this, I must first discuss the scientific method being practiced by naturalists.

Methodological Naturalism

There has been substantial discussion within philosophy of science on the sufficiency of science. How, exactly, is one to define and do science? What method(s) should be used to maintain the integrity of the experiment? Does science need methods (and does it have integrity, for the matter)? Even among naturalists, the definition and practice of science is varied and debated. Yet, one point seems to be agreed upon among naturalists, all practicing science must use the method commonly called "methodological naturalism" (MN).²⁵ The advocate of MN claims that when conducting experiments within science, as with any discipline, there are certain parameters within which one must work. A complete view of science may encompass more processes (e.g., testability, reproducibility, etc.), but MN is generally seen as a necessary component of any scientific method—at least within the physical sciences.²⁶ If one were to breach these parameters, the integrity of the experiment would be compromised; this is simply the nature of science. If there were no parameters, so the argument goes, then science would be inchoate and yield little to no information for the inquirer. Due to the nature

²²John Searle, *Minds, Brains, and Science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 93.

²³Examples include Daniel Dennett and Alex Rosenberg.

²⁴Goetz and Taliaferro, *Naturalism*, 18.

²⁵Ron Numbers notes that philosopher Paul de Vries coined the term. *When Science and Christianity Meet*, edited by David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 320.

²⁶Many proponents of MN would claim that methodological naturalism is not a sufficient indicator of the demarcation between science and philosophy; yet, MN is necessary when practicing science.

of scientific investigation, physical science is forced to the practice of methodological naturalism. Indeed, the atheist Michael Ruse argues, that science is best defined as methodological naturalism.²⁷

So what, exactly, is methodological naturalism? Before that question is answered, I need to note that an endorsement of methodological naturalism will not be given here. Whether MN is a proper scientific method is a worthy project, but it will not be explored here. My goal is to offer as precise a definition of MN as I can and then show how MN is an immoderate method in proving or disproving the existence of the soul.²⁸

One of the difficult aspects of understanding MN is that a precise definition is difficult to find. As Stephen C. Dille and Ernan McMullin point out, there are several different definitions of methodological naturalism.²⁹ Indeed, methodological naturalism seems to find various definitions among its opponents and advocates.

Two dominant theses seem to be at work within the discussion of MN. First, all scientific practice must be a study of the physical or natural world alone. Second, God cannot be assumed as a factor in any scientific explanation. Although, the second of the two theses seems to be less accepted—perhaps it would be more precise to say that the second thesis is qualified by some. For example, Ernan McMullin does not like the description that MN is some type of “provisional atheism.” According to McMullin, MN need

²⁷Michael Ruse, “Methodological Naturalism under Attack,” in *Intelligent Design Creationism and Its Critics*, edited by Robert T. Pennock (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001), 363–86. Ruse claims that if methodological naturalism is defined any way other than referencing the study of the physical world, it is not a proper definition. Also see, Keith Miller, “The Misguided Attack on Methodological Naturalism,” in *For the Rock Record: Geologists on Intelligent Design*, edited by Jill S. Schneiderman and Warren D. Allmon (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 117–40.

²⁸For more on the debate regarding methodological naturalism see: Kathryn Applegate, “A Defense of Methodological Naturalism,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* (2013): 27–45; Robert C. Bishop, “God and Methodological Naturalism in the Scientific Revolution and Beyond,” *Perspectives on Science and the Christian Faith* (2013): 10–23; Alvin Plantinga, “Methodological Naturalism?” *PSCF* (1997): 143–54; David J. Krause, “Response to Plantinga,” *PSCF* (1997): 285–86; Robert C. O’Connor, “Science on Trial: Exploring the Rationality of Methodological Naturalism,” *PSCF* (1997): 15–30; Harry Lee Poe and Chelsea Rose, “From Scientific Method to Methodological Naturalism: The Evolution of an Idea,” *PSCF* (2007): 213–18; *But Is It Science? Philosophical Questions In The Creation/Evolution Controversy*, edited by Michael Ruse and Robert T. Pennock (Amherst: Prometheus, 2009); Robert T. Pennock, *Tower of Babel*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999). Bradley Monton, *Seeking God in Science: An Atheist Defends Intelligent Design*, (Buffalo: Broadview Press, 2009); Alvin Plantinga, *Where The Conflict Really Lies*, (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2011); *Intelligent Design, Creationism, and Its Critics*, edited by Robert T. Pennock, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001); *Philosophy of Pseudoscience: Reconsidering the Demarcation Problem*, edited by Massimo Pigliucci and Maarten Boudry, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); and Philip Kitcher, *Abusing Science*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1982).

²⁹Stephen C. Dille, “Philosophical Naturalism and Methodological Naturalism,” *Philosophia Christi* (2010): 118–47. Ernan McMullin, “Varieties of Methodological Naturalism,” in *Nature of Nature*, edited by Bruce L. Gordon and William A Dembski (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2011), 82–94.

not reference or entail a hypothetical atheism. To reference or entail such a term, McMullin seems to say, MN would need a grander definition—one of which he is unwilling to give. A study of the physical world, however, need not entail that one presuppose a naturalistic ontology of the universe. Though McMullin may not claim that MN is simply an epistemic indicator of the demarcation between science and philosophy, it is quite clear that he would claim MN has no presuppositions regarding the ontology of existence (i.e., provisional atheism is not needed), which leads us to some additional confusion with MN.

Some naturalists who endorse MN claim that one must hold to a default atheistic position in scientific practice.³⁰ That is, some naturalists, disagreeing with McMullin, seem to indicate that to practice science, one must adopt some type of “provisional atheism.” That is, a scientific method viewed as strictly naturalistic (i.e., the study of nature) must also view naturalism as a true claim regarding the ontology of the universe—methodological naturalism entails ontological naturalism (ON). This entailment requires, according to its proponents, that one must be atheistic when practicing any type of scientific activity. God cannot, in anyway, factor into the cause and effect of scientific or philosophic explanation. It should be noted, however, that methodological naturalism is different from ontological naturalism—and many philosophers agree.

ON is the stance that “there is no such person as God or anything at all like God; there is no supernatural realm at all.”³¹ ON is a statement that goes beyond the scientific method. Of the definitions listed above, the ones that mention “God,” are only noting that God cannot be used as an explanation of physical effects. To claim that God does not exist or that one cannot know if there is a God is a different definition or stance entirely.

³⁰According to Michael Ruse, Phillip Johnson is guilty of making the same entailments. Ruse writes, “Phillip Johnson—an academic lawyer on the faculty at Berkeley—denies that one can thus separate methodological and metaphysical naturalism; at least, Johnson thinks that any such separation is bound to be unstable. In his opinion, methodological naturalism—however well-intentionally formulated—inevitably collapse within a very short time into metaphysical naturalism.” Ruse, “Methodological Naturalism under Attack,” 366. Ruse, however, does not supply a direct quotation, he only references Johnson’s work, *Reason in the Balance*. I could not find any direct reference verifying Ruse’s claim, though I will admit that Johnson’s work seems nuanced at times. For example, in it he writes, “The grand metaphysical story is the product of an epistemology—a way of knowing—called methodological naturalism.” Phillip Johnson, *Reason in the Balance* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995), 17. He later writes, “MN in science is only superficially reconcilable with theism in religion. When MN is understood profoundly, theism becomes intellectually untenable.” *Ibid.*, 208. And, “The point of theistic MN is to allow theists to survive in a naturalistic academy” (216). Kathryn Applegate also notes that William Dembski and Jonathan Witt make the same inference. She writes, “The ID community tells a different story . . . In a primer about ID, [Dembski and Witt] argue that methodological materialism (their term for methodological naturalism) is inherently atheistic.” Applegate, “A Defense of Methodological Naturalism,” 39. To be fair, Dembski and Witt do seem to use the same definition for methodological materialism that Applegate (*et al.*) use(s) for methodological naturalism.

³¹Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies*, 169.

Perhaps the best way to avoid this confusion is to offer an emended (yet consistent) definition of methodological naturalism. I will define methodological naturalism as the practice within natural science of looking for physical causes of physical effects.³² By “physical” I mean quantifiable substances and properties in space and time. Stanley Jaki claims something similar; he writes, “Nothing which is non-quantitative is the business of science. But everything which is quantitative is its business.”³³ Earlier, in the same work, he writes,

Science . . . is synonymous with measurements, which are accurate because they can be expressed in numbers. Those numbers relate to tangible or material things, or rather to their spatial extensions of correlations with one another in a given moment or as time goes on. All the instruments that cram laboratories serve the accurate gathering of those numbers, or quantitative data.³⁴

Hence, adherents to MN would claim that due to the ontology of the physical world and the epistemic restraints in studying the physical world, the practitioner of the natural sciences (biology, chemistry, classical physics, geology, etc.) must look for physical causes as the producer of physical effects (or as Jaki puts it “quantitative data”).

To define MN by claiming natural science must remain within the physical realm does not entail that epistemic ability ends with the physical (i.e., ON). The problem occurs when a physical scientist argues and espouses that science can answer all of humanity’s questions. Specifically, when a naturalist claims that science can garner any information necessary to explain life’s “Grand Story.”³⁵ If, as scientific naturalists claim, science is limited to the physical realm alone, I fail to see how one can use such a practice to deny the workings of God.

As with all disciplines, science is limited—this is simply the nature of science. If there were no parameters, the information science yielded would (or at least could) be bizarre and amorphous. Hence, with MN, physical science is limited solely to collecting data *via* empirical methods. Due to the nature of scientific investigation, physical science is forced to such a practice—MN is simply a rule to achieve a useful result.

Why does this matter to our thesis? Because MN is locked into studying the physical world alone, it is incapable of proving or disproving the existence of anything outside of the physical realm. That is, if MN is assumed, a scientist qua scientist cannot say anything meaningful about nonphysical

³²This version is very close to the second version of qualified methodological naturalism defined by McMullin, “Varieties of Methodological Naturalism,” 88–89. This is also almost equivalent to Kathryn Applegate’s “A Defense of Methodological Naturalism.”

³³Stanley Jaki, *The Limits of a Limitless Science* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2000), 54.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 2.

³⁵Moreland and Rea, *Body & Soul*, 92.

substances, entities, beings, or things. Perhaps one might claim that science need not be restricted to MN, but, as noted above, this is not an option for the scientific naturalist. According to such proponents, MN is the only way one can practice science. So, for our purposes, I will concede that MN, as defined above, is the proper method of scientific inquiry. That being the case, I hardly see how one can use such argumentation to deflect or dissuade from the belief in the soul. Let us look at each stance.

A Response to Scientific Naturalism

As Goetz and Taliaferro note, “The goal of [scientific] naturalism is to take the beliefs, desires, preferences, choices . . . that appear to make up conscious, intelligent, psychological life and explain them in terms that are non-conscious, nonmental, and nonpsychological.”³⁶ Indeed, scientific naturalists want to take that which is conscious and mental and explain it in terms of the nonconscious or nonmental. Here, the limitation of such a stance should be obvious. If one claims that the universe is closed (i.e., causal closure) and the only epistemically viable avenue of knowing our universe is the scientific method (i.e., scientism), then one is completely shrouded from knowing anything about existence outside of the universe or existence of the nonphysical.

As noted above, methodological naturalism does not entail ontological naturalism; however, ontological naturalism does entail methodological naturalism. It would be inaccurate to claim the ontological naturalist and scientific naturalist are identical; however, both would use the same scientific method—that is, MN. If one holds to ON and claims the only way we can garner information about the world is through MN, by what means would he or she discover or disprove the nonphysical—surely not by MN? MN is an immoderate and inadequate mechanism for studying anything other than the physical. Richard Fumerton says something similar when defending the existence on nonphysical mental states, “[I]f you are trying to convince me that I’m wrong [about nonphysical mental states] I wouldn’t suggest bringing a cognitive scientist into the discussion. It is just not their job to answer this sort of question.”³⁷

For example, imagine a scientist that believes the only light that exists is visible light (a spectrum between approximately 390–780 nanometers). His colleagues worked to convince him that there were many other forms of light (infrared, radio, etc.), but to no avail. He not only disbelieved the existence of any other wavelength, but he refused to use any instrument that might detect such a length (perhaps he thinks such instruments are faulty). By only using instruments that detect visible light, would our visible-light-only physicist even be in the position to detect any other light (assume, for illustration sake, the instruments for observing visible light are different than instruments for other wavelengths)? Would he even be able to appraise whether the other

³⁶Goetz and Taliaferro, *Naturalism*, 16.

³⁷Richard Fumerton, *Knowledge, Thought, and the Case for Dualism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 136.

light waves existed or not? I think the answer is clearly no. The same applies to the scientific naturalist. The only method the scientific naturalist has to detect information about our world is MN. If MN does not and cannot verify or indicate a certain phenomenon, then how is the practitioner able to use MN to ascertain information about the nonphysical?³⁸

My point is that the holder of scientific naturalism is locked into a scientific methodology that does not allow the adherent to affirm, disaffirm, discover, or detect anything immaterial.³⁹ The scientific naturalists cannot even *conjecture* the existence of an immaterial entity (whether that be a soul or immaterial being). For if everyday God tells the moon to rotate around the earth, it would be impossible for the adherent of SN to know. Or, more to our focus, if human souls do indeed exist and interact with human bodies, the adherent of SN would be unable to detect such an interaction. Why? He would be incapable because the scientific naturalist is married to a scientific epistemology that is cut off from knowing anything other than what the dictates of science can show us.

An illustration will help here. Imagine that a philosopher and neuroscientist are observing brain scans of a patient that is willfully (or at least, what the patient believes as voluntary) raising his finger sporadically in the period of 5 minutes. What is the explanation for the patient raising his

³⁸Perhaps the scientific naturalist using MN could conjecture indirect evidence for a nonphysical substance or entity? In doing so, however, he or she would violate a significant thesis of scientific naturalism—causal closure. It is argued by proponents of causal closure that the physical world is closed from any substances outside the physical realm. Scientific naturalism denies any causal action or agent from outside the physical system. Hence, a non-physical cause bringing about a physical effect is not even a possible solution with the naturalist. If one ascribes to the combination of ON, causal closure, and scientism, then I fail to see how MN is not the main method of acquiring information about existence. But MN does not attest that the *ultimate* cause is physical; indeed, MN is not a mechanism to determine ultimate causation.

³⁹Ultimately, the claims of SN rely upon the truth of SN. Allow MN_{only} to be the proposition that methodological naturalism is the *only* method of reliable knowledge acquisition (which is the claim of scientism), and let M be the proposition that materialism is true. I see the scientific naturalist argument for materialism to be as follows:

- (1) $SN \rightarrow MN_{\text{only}}$
 - (2) $MN_{\text{only}} \rightarrow M$
 - (3) Therefore, $SN \rightarrow M$
 - (4) SN
- Therefore, M

If scientific naturalism is true, then methodological naturalism is the only method of reliable knowledge acquisition. If methodological naturalism is the only method of reliable knowledge acquisition, then materialism is true. Therefore, if scientific naturalism is true, then materialism is true. Thus, one way to refute the scientific naturalist's argument for materialism is to refute SN. So the proponent of SN claims that materialism is the inevitable entailment of SN. But why think that the SN is true? Well, what argument do scientific naturalists present to defend such a claim? As best I can tell, the main reason for accepting SN is that it gives the most explanatory power of the workings of our world. But there is at least one thing that it does not explain: scientific naturalism. I have yet to find any explanation on how science or physics gives explanatory power to the definition of scientific naturalism. Thus, when the standards of SN are applied to itself, SN comes up empty.

finger? If the neuroscientist is a scientific naturalist, then the only explanation of the finger being raised is a physical explanation. The philosopher may conjecture: Sure, if one were solely to adhere to MN, then a physical explanation is the only explanation you can accept. The, neuroscientist (again, adhering to SN) should quickly agree; chiming in that a methodological naturalistic explanation is the *only* explanation for such an action—no other options are on the table. Thus, leaving no room for an immaterial explanation of the bodily movement.

Philosopher Jaegwon Kim explains, “Most physicalists [those who claim that human beings are merely physical beings] . . . accept the causal closure of the physical not only as a fundamental metaphysical doctrine but as an indispensable methodological presupposition of the physical sciences . . . If the causal closure of the physical domain is to be respected, it seems *prima facie* that [nonphysical] mental causation must be ruled out.”⁴⁰ But if one were to reduce all phenomena to physical causes, how would one go about proving that philosophical supposition that the universe is closed? One is arguing in circles if he claims the universe is closed because we have never detected anything outside of the universe while using MN. How can a method used to study and detect physical causation disprove nonphysical causation? This seems to be the fatal move of the scientific naturalist: one cannot use MN to claim or show that the universe is causally closed. To do so, one would not be using MN, one would merely be using philosophical argumentation. Thus, the claims of scientific naturalism seem self-referentially incoherent. Therefore, the scientific naturalist is hedged off from truly exploring the veracity of immaterial souls before the investigation has even begun.

The same goes for scientism. By what measure does one show that science is the only viable method of inquiry? To say one can prove scientism with science, is begging the question. To say that one can prove scientism by philosophy is to make scientism self-defeating. Roger Trigg writes,

The practice, and success, of science depend on the power of human reason to understand the nature of a world that was not constructed by humans. Metaphysics without science may not have its feet on the ground. So far, though dealing with meaningless abstractions, it provides the necessary and indispensable rational framework in which empirical science can be seen to succeed. Science without metaphysics flounders, as if lost in a vast and featureless ocean. It loses all sense of direction or purpose.⁴¹

One, however, need not jettison science in a denouncement of scientism. Science is a boon to humanity; the likes of which have been accentuated over the last three or four centuries. This, however, does not mean that science

⁴⁰Jaegwon Kim, *Philosophy of Mind* (Boulder: Westview, 1996), 147–48.

⁴¹Roger Trigg, *Beyond Matter* (West Conshohocken: Templeton, 2015), 148.

is the solution to all of mankind's problems or inquiries. Richard Williams writes,

Scientism is, in its basic form, a dogmatic overconfidence in science and "scientific" knowledge. But, more importantly, it is overconfidence in science, defined by, constructed around, and requiring that, the world must be made up of physical matter following particular lawful principles, and that all phenomena are essentially thus constituted.⁴²

Conclusion

So what can science tell us about the soul? Well, if one holds to the tenets of scientific naturalism, science cannot tell us anything about the soul.⁴³ Scientific naturalism is beholden to a method of inquiry that shields its advocate from detecting or refuting the existence of an immaterial soul. Furthermore, scientific naturalism cannot show that the belief in an immaterial soul is irrational. If one is arguing from the grip of a system that is inadequate or inept at determining the existence or non-existence of an immaterial entity, then all arguments given from said system against the non-existence of the soul are ineffective at eroding belief in the soul.

⁴²*Scientism: The New Orthodoxy*, edited by Richard N. Williams and Daniel N. Robinson (New York City: Bloomsbury, 2015), 10.

⁴³Granted, if one does not hold to methodological naturalism, then one would have to find a way to fairly and accurately determine and incorporate some nonphysical causation into scientific explanations. I will leave it to others to figure out how to do that.

Gay Sex and Grace: What Does Grace Have to Do with Homosexual Practices?

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What an odd question to ask in the midst of today's unrelenting, emotionally charged, torrent of books, articles, blogs, resolutions, votes, court decisions, debates, discussions, protests, boycotts, shouting matches, and hate crimes regarding LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) issues. What does grace have to do with homosexual practices? Further, what does grace have to offer in the raging wars over gay sexuality?

The short answer to both questions is "plenty." I would like to explain this answer by first looking at some terms. I am using "gay" to refer to all who include themselves within the LGBT rainbow, especially homosexuals: those who are romantically and exclusively attracted to persons of the same sex. Homosexuals as thus defined are said to have a homosexual orientation. They are also referred to as "constitutional" homosexuals. They firmly state that they have no romantic or sexual interest in those of the opposite sex.

In this article the noun "homosexual" refers to someone with the orientation. As an adjective, however, "homosexual" describes the actions themselves, whether these actions are by constitutional homosexuals or those who do not think of themselves as such (those in prison, for example, who engage in same-sex practices), or those who are not sure of their sexual identity.¹ I am using "gay sex" to refer to the consensual erotic activities of a gay couple.

¹A remarkable and encouraging work by Wesley Hill, a self proclaimed celibate homosexual Christian and New Testament seminary professor, is *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010). This small book, in the author's words, was written "to convey something of what it's like to have survived—or rather, to be surviving—the anguished journey of struggling with homosexuality" (14). Hill explains his terminology: "In this book I have chosen not to discriminate between various terms for homosexuality. So, for instance, I use 'same-sex attraction,' 'homosexual desires,' 'homosexuality,' and related terms interchangeably. Likewise, I've used a variety of designations for gay and lesbian people. Instead of sticking to one term, such as 'homosexual Christian,' I also refer to myself as a 'gay Christian' or 'a Christian who experiences homosexual desires.' . . . None of [these terms] should be taken necessarily to imply homosexual practice; in each case I am most often placing the emphasis on the subject's sexual orientation and not the corresponding behavior" (21). The terminology in this article is the same as that of Hill.

I am not going to discuss specific practices, but I will draw attention to gay and lesbian sexual actions in general, as a whole. My reason for narrowing the vast field of LGBT issues to the matter of erotic activities will become clear, I trust, as this essay progresses.

Even though most everyone knows—at least to some extent—what gay and lesbian sexual activities involve, hardly any of the debate focuses on the practices themselves. Except for crude comments in some places—perhaps a rowdy bar here or a macho locker room there—discussions of LGBT issues tend to focus on such matters as companionship, loyalty, covenant, marriage, human rights, civil rights, discrimination, justice, ordination of non-celibate homosexuals, coming out, individual freedom, sexual and gender identity, and personal happiness.

While most people are quite content—even relieved—to discuss the issues just listed without mention of specific erotic actions, others believe that the practices must be considered as well. After all, the activities themselves—whether in long-term relationships or one-time stands—are the reason for most of the debate in the first place. A very large percentage of the world's population finds the practices highly objectionable, and therefore to be opposed. This is simply a fact. Each of the issues listed above is certainly important, but so is the very basic matter of homoerotic acts.

I understand those who say that dwelling on the actions themselves misses the whole point—the fundamental concern—about being lesbian or gay in matters of everyday life and relationships. I think I get that. I agree that dwelling on the acts involved is not getting to the heart of LGBT issues, but not to bring them into the discussion at all is dishonest.² If we do not, we are avoiding a very large elephant in the living room.

I have no personal interest in writing on this subject apart from a deepening concern over the very serious matters at stake, especially the way some who call themselves Christian are now interpreting the Bible on these and other matters of sexuality.³ Due to the relentless and rapidly-growing

²Hill emphasizes this point throughout *Washed and Waiting*. He writes: “Somehow every part of my relational makeup was affected by this [homosexuality].” He wrote to a friend: “A sexual orientation is such a complex and, in most cases, it seems, intractable thing; I for one cannot imagine what ‘healing’ from my orientation would look like, given that it seems to manifest itself not only in physical attraction to male bodies but also in a preference for male company, with all that it entails,” such as “conversation and emotional intimacy and quality time spent together” (42). At times conservative Christians fail to grasp the intensity of a homosexual person's longings for same-sex relationships, even apart from sexual activity or lustful thoughts.

³It is for good reason that the most highly-regarded scholarly study of the biblical materials concerning same-sex relationships in serious dialogue with contemporary pro-gay research, is Robert A.J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001). As Gagnon, who defends the position of non-acceptance toward homosexual practices, indicates by his subtitle, the very serious matter of the science of scriptural interpretation (biblical hermeneutics) is at the core of today's raging debates. Not only studying a specific verse or passage in itself (exegesis), but also understanding the principles and approaches of biblical interpretation—one's own and those of others—is

pressure from so many directions on everyone to accept and affirm fully the rightness and goodness of (loving) homosexual practices, I believe I should put down some thoughts and trust that they will create more light than heat.

David Gushee, a noted ethicist and advocate of gay marriage—the most prominent writer and leader in ethics today who considers himself evangelical—has written recently: “Whether rightly or not, the LGBT issue has become the hottest of hot-button issues in our generation, so ultimately avoidism proves insufficient. Everyone will have to figure out what they will think and do about this.”⁴ Gushee argues strenuously but not belligerently in favor of full inclusion of LGBT individuals in church and society. His words here are entirely correct.

I believe it will be best to present my basic line of thought in the form of a personal account. I am a heterosexual man who has for many years—even before I became a seminary professor of ethics—studied much from all sides of the issues in question. I have paid close attention, in particular, to the perspectives of those who have grown up in conservative Christian churches. I write not as one who has all the answers, nor as one who refuses to consider arguments and personal stories from a variety of perspectives. Everyone who can speak or write thoughtfully on these matters should have a voice.

As indicated above, I write as one who recognizes the significance of homosexual orientation as different from homosexual practice. My concern here is with the actions, although I fully realize the two categories are closely related. But not every person with a gay orientation is involved in gay sexual activities, just as not every straight person is involved in straight sexual

crucial to a careful exposition of the Scriptures. Gagnon has also written, with Dan O. Via (who supports practicing homosexual relationships), *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003). Both books support the same overall position on homosexual practice, and supplement each other. In subsequent notes, Gagnon’s books will be referred to as *Texts* and *Two Views*.

⁴David P. Gushee, *Changing Our Mind: A Call from America’s Leading Evangelical Ethics Scholar for Full Acceptance of LGBT Christians in the Church*, 2nd ed. (Canton: Read the Spirit Books, 2015), 43. Gushee studied under now-deceased Glen H. Stassen at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, from 1984–87. He earned his Ph.D. in 1993 from Union Theological Seminary in New York, and taught for three years at Southern Seminary. He also served on the faculty of Union University, Jackson, Tennessee, and is now Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics at McAfee School of Theology, Mercer University, Atlanta, Georgia. In the spring of 2016 I had extensive e-mail correspondence with Gushee. Our dialogue was respectful even though we closed our correspondence with major disagreements on the issues. As I write, Gushee is the President-Elect of the Society of Christian Ethics and Vice President of the American Academy of Religion. He recently published, in the *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* “Reconciling Evangelical Christianity with Our Sexual Minorities: Reframing the Biblical Discussion” (2015, 141–58). Here he concludes: “The LGBT issue is a Gospel issue, . . . not fundamentally a sexual ethics issue” (153). Gushee and Stassen authored a major textbook, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), in which the authors upheld the conservative, non-affirming position on homosexual practices which Gushee now rejects and even repents of publicly. A revised edition of *Kingdom Ethics* is now available (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

activities. There are celibate gays and celibate straights. Those with a gay orientation, whether practicing or not, are as sought after by God as those with a straight orientation, whether practicing or not. Neither group should ever be demeaned. Furthermore, in this essay the focus is on gay people as they are now, not how they became such. There is a considerable amount of scholarship devoted to the study of homosexual causation, but this essay does not address that issue.⁵

What about the Bible?

The starting point and foundation for my beliefs on all sexual issues and sexual morality (hetero as well as homo) is the Bible, both Old and New Testament Scriptures. I realize that just saying this is a major turnoff for many. I am aware of the reasons—at least some of them—for this aversion. One major objection is that the Bible seems so out of touch with real life today. The objection is thus, no book written thousands of years ago, even if it is considered to be inspired by God, could possibly anticipate and address the complexities of sexual and gender issues and identities as we know them today. The relatively recent (in human history) research and findings regarding the homosexual orientation and loving, homosexual unions were not available to the Scripture writers, so obviously they could not have had such knowledge in mind as they wrote against homosexual practices.⁶ I take seriously this objection to the relevance of the Bible.

In this brief essay I cannot expound on why I ground my views on the Scriptures, other than to say that the wisest and holiest person who ever lived, the most merciful and just human being of all time, certainly in my opinion, the one called Jesus of Nazareth, based his personal life, teachings, and deeds on the Old Testament Scriptures, and commissioned his disciples to go and teach the nations his message. He also promised his followers that he would send his Spirit to lead them into all truth, which resulted in the New Testament Scriptures. Because I am 100% committed to this remarkable One sent from the Father, this crucified and resurrected Savior, and trust him completely, I choose to follow him without reservation as I learn from the blessed book that he embraced as the written center of his life, ministry,

⁵On causation, see the thorough discussion in Gagnon, *Texts*, 380–432. Two additional, highly valuable works on causation are Elizabeth R. Moberly, *Homosexuality: A New Christian Ethic* (Greenwood: Attic, 1983); and Jeffrey Satinover, *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996). Moberly received her Ph.D. in psychology from Oxford University for her study of homosexuality; her book, while slim (56 pages) is based on her eight years of research on the topic. Satinover is a psychiatrist and past president of the C.G. Jung Foundation. Theologian Karl Barth considered the primary causative factor in homosexuality to be human sin. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark: 1961), 166.

⁶These common objections are widely argued in contemporary pro-gay literature. See, for example, Via and Gagnon, *Two Views*, 1–39, and throughout the older but influential work by New Testament Professor L. William Countryman, *Dirt, Greed, and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and their Implications for Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

teachings, and promises, and commissioned his disciples to complete. Further, my personal experience with Christ supports hugely, as much and probably more than, my cognitive understanding of these matters.

The Bible has much to say about sexual issues. While these are not the most important matters in the Scriptures, they are by no means insignificant. Two of the Ten Commandments are concerned with our sexual lives (Deut 5:18, 21). After having read the whole Bible about 12–15 times (some Bible books many more times), and after studying in detail the numerous sections on human sexuality, I have reached an overall conclusion: every scriptural reference to interpersonal sexual activity approved (either explicitly or implicitly) by God is within the marriage of one man and one woman; every reference to interpersonal sexual activity outside of a heterosexual monogamous marriage is presented as improper or explicitly wrong.

Furthermore, I believe that this conclusion reveals God's loving heart and mind, his supreme goodness and holiness, his moral character and will, and his gracious intention and longing that these scriptural teachings be followed by all people everywhere in every age, for their overall way of life and for their eternal blessedness. God has not established this standard out of some arbitrary freakishness about sex. After all, God thought up the whole matter of our sexuality and said it was "very good" (Gen 1:26–31; 2:18–25; 4:1–2; Prov 5:15–23; Heb 13:4).⁷

I have learned from both personal experience and study of the Scriptures that God purposes true joy and happiness for human beings in every command he gives. He who made us knows us much more deeply than we know ourselves, and is infinitely wiser than the brightest among us. God gives his commands not to block our happiness but to give us true joy, freedom from every enslavement, and genuine peace in our inner being, even in the midst of the ever-present struggles and sufferings of life. In addition, God never expects anything of us that he is not willing and able to empower us to do. God's standard is not a carrot on the end of a stick. He longs to enter, with great power, the minds and wills of all who seek truth and desire to follow that truth wherever it leads.

What I am saying here is far broader and much more consequential than simply presenting moral guidelines on matters of gay and lesbian activities. The conclusion above actually has far more to say to heterosexuals than to homosexuals, since our world is populated mostly by heterosexuals. God's pattern for sexual morality is for everyone today, for our lasting benefit in this life and in the life to come.

Grace has much to do with gay sex, straight sex, and all matters of sexual identity, desire, and practice. God made us, and even though the entrance of sin into our world has led to terrible brokenness in the order of nature—and we are all part of the natural order—God is actively working, because

⁷Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New International Version, 2011.

of and through Jesus Christ, toward the restoration of all creation, including every person today who sincerely cries out to him for sexual wholeness, with faith as a little child.

What Exactly is Grace?

The word “grace,” and what it has to do with gay sex, calls for explanation, even as I keep the focus on erotic activities as mentioned above. One non-negotiable point here is that every discussion concerning the broad range of sexual identities and issues in our world needs to be conducted, by followers of Christ above all, in a spirit of grace.

As commonly used in our language today, “grace” refers to a nexus of attitudes (ideally followed by words and actions) such as kindness, generosity, favor, non-judgmentalism, patience, acceptance, goodwill, mercy, benevolence, and (especially in certain Christian circles) rejection of legalism. Each of these attitudes, when accompanied by appropriate language and deeds, is part of the total pattern of grace that characterizes truly gracious human beings.

When we consider *God’s* grace, however, as flowing (metaphorically) from his very being, the central biblical teaching is that grace is both God’s inexpressible favor toward human beings, because of Jesus Christ (Eph 1:5–8; 2:4–9), and God’s great power to work in us and through us more than we can ask or think (1 Cor 15:10; 2 Cor 12:9). Grace is both God’s unmerited favor and his mighty power on our behalf.

If God’s grace is only his favor and goodwill toward us, this attitude in itself does not provide what we actually need to live and flourish daily as we do our work and relate to others. We also need God’s power, energy, and strength flowing into us and through us, just as our bodies need nutrition and as engines need fuel. Both aspects of biblical grace are seen in the epistle to the Hebrews: “Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (4:16). God’s grace, then, in both senses, has much to do with gay sex or any kind of sex by extending to us both his pure kindness and his perfect strength to enable us to follow the scriptural pattern in our daily lives.

Our longings for relational and sexual intimacy are very real, and temptation to sin is sometimes very, very powerful. Every responsible person who has ever lived has faced temptation often. Even the man Jesus faced the full force of it, without relying on his deity for escape. But the good news, as expressed by the apostle Paul, is that “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it” (1 Cor 10:13). This is God’s almighty grace protecting and empowering us to live godly and radiant lives one day at a time.

What Are the Specific Bible Verses?

There are seven major Bible texts that mention homosexual actions: Genesis 19:4–5; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Deuteronomy 23:17–18; Romans 1:26–28; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10. (Other texts that are sometimes considered: Gen 9:20–27; Judges 19:22–25; 2 Sam 1:26; 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7; Job 36:13–14; Ezek 16:50; 18:12; 33:26; Acts 15:28–29; 2 Pet 2:7; Jude 7; Rev 21:8; 22:15). Most of my study has been in the verses found in Leviticus, Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 1 Timothy. These are the crucial texts that unmistakably reveal God’s attitude regarding homosexual activities, and these are the texts that ground my thinking on the subject.

Below I will quote the most pertinent words from these Scriptures, but I do so reluctantly because of the absolute necessity of studying any Bible text in the full light of its context—both the immediate and broader contexts. Probably the most common errors in Bible interpretation are due to the violation of this all-important guideline.

Because the work has been done so well elsewhere, I will not be offering an exposition of the following Scriptures, but I ask readers who have questions to at least read the whole biblical chapter in which each text is found, with a mind and heart open to the teaching of God’s Spirit.⁸ In the Bible version (NIV) I am using here, the translation of each text is accurate.⁹ The plain sense is the true sense in these cases. Even many gay–theology advocates acknowledge the accuracy of the translations below. They have objections to the traditionalist use of these texts, but not to the way they are translated.¹⁰

Leviticus 18:22: “Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable.”

Leviticus 20:13: “If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable.

⁸Excellent studies arguing convincingly for the non-affirming position on same-sex practices are the two volumes from Gagnon, as well as Donald J. Wold, *Out of Order: Homosexuality in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998); especially for Old Testament materials, see Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation; A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: Harper, 1996).

⁹Gushee argues that the translations in the NIV and other leading English Bible versions are not all accurate. Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 54–90.

¹⁰An example is from Dan O. Via: “The four pertinent Old Testament texts—two narrative and two legal—present an unambiguous and unconditional condemnation of homosexuality.” Via and Gagnon, *Two Views*, 4. Robin Scroggs, a major pro-gay scholar, admits that the various New Testament passages on homosexuality, including 1 Cor 6:9 and 1 Tim 1:10, condemn homosexual behavior, but he denies that these Scriptures apply directly to the contemporary debate. Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 123–29.

They are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.”

Romans 1:26–28: “Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done.”

1 Corinthians 6:9–11: “Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men [technically ‘nor those who are the passive partner in homosexual intercourse nor those who are the active homosexual partner’], nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”¹¹

1 Timothy 1:9–11: “We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.”

For many years I have researched and pondered these texts in their contexts and studied them from all sides of the controversies swirling about today, listening carefully and respectfully to each viewpoint and the support for that viewpoint. I have also paid close attention to numerous personal stories. One gay student from a liberal seminary in which I was guest teaching stayed up all night after the class session on homosexuality and wrote a ten page letter to me, worded strongly but respectfully, in which he expressed his opposition to my view. I have been willing and open to follow the truth wherever it leads.

¹¹See Gagnon, *Texts*, 306–32, and NIV text note on v. 9, “The words *men who have sex with men* translate two Greek words that refer to the passive and active participants in homosexual acts.”

Having said these things, I cannot in good conscience read these crucial texts after the study I have done and conclude that any interpersonal homoerotic actions, even within a covenantal, monogamous union (or marriage) have ever been or ever will be approved by God. To me and to millions like me the biblical viewpoint comes across loudly and clearly.

How Can the Bible Possibly Be Workable in Today's Modern Culture?

What about the point raised earlier? Even if the Bible is considered to be God's inspired Word that clearly opposes homosexual practices, are we simply to insert these ancient teachings into our modern world amid the complexities of sexual and gender issues as we understand them now?

To the objection that the biblical writers knew nothing of homosexual orientation as we know it, and therefore were not addressing the evident wholesomeness of many gay unions or marriages today, I reply that indeed there was no word for "homosexual" in ancient Hebrew or Greek—the two main biblical languages. However, this in itself is a non-issue, since the biblical prohibitions concern the actions only, in whatever context they may be practiced.

Furthermore, the objection is based on the logical fallacy known as "argument from ignorance" and therefore carries very little weight. One type of argument from ignorance says that the lack of evidence (proof) against some statement supports the truth of that statement. Many advocates for gay theology, even those who agree that the Scriptures mentioning homosexual behavior condemn the practices, argue that these biblical statements refer only to selfish, promiscuous, and/or abusive practices. These advocates point out that the Bible does not refer to—and therefore does not condemn—the activities of those with a homosexual orientation (constitutional homosexuals) who are seeking love within their own "kind," in the same way as heterosexuals seeking love within their own "kind." In this view, the Bible condemns only reckless, wanton, lustful, perverted eroticism, such as sex with children or sex that goes against one's sexual orientation (this last is the interpretation held by some gay theologians concerning the first chapter of Romans).

From the above considerations, the argument goes, because the Bible writers were ignorant of the homosexual orientation, and said nothing against gay sexual activities within loving, covenantal unions, one must conclude that such behaviors are not violations of God's moral law. Also, since so many people—straight and gay—are now approving of gay marriage (true, but this leads to the logical fallacy of "argument to the people"), and since many gay men and women are very fine people with real sexual desires (true, but this leads to the fallacy of "argument to pity"), the Bible cannot be used to oppose proper homoerotic behavior today. Further, because Jesus never mentioned homosexuality (true, but this leads to an "argument from silence") but taught love for God and neighbor, the loving attitude for Christians today must be

both welcoming and affirming of gays and their sexual behaviors, as long as these are consensual and not abusive or destructive.

My reply concerning the major scriptural materials on homosexuality and their applicability for today is that, while the writers do not address the matter of gay orientation as we know it, they were addressing behaviors, not matters of underlying predisposition. This is obvious from the major texts given above, from both Old and New Testaments. Further, it is extremely difficult to believe that, with homosexual desires and behaviors present as they were in certain ancient societies (Gen 19:16–19, 29; Lev 18:1–3, 22, 29–30; 20:13, 23–24; Judg 19:22), it did not enter at least some peoples' minds to think that some individuals in their communities had strongly—perhaps predominantly—homosexual longings.¹² (Among the Jewish people, of course, such tendencies would be kept very much hidden.)

Regardless of matters of orientation, the texts in Leviticus, Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 1 Timothy are plainly teaching that homosexual activities are sinful. If nothing else, the lists of sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 and 1 Timothy 1:9–11, which include the mention of homosexual offenders, make this point unmistakably. When homosexual offenders are listed right next to adulterers, thieves, those who kill their fathers or mothers, and slave traders, it becomes absolutely clear—even without the book of Leviticus—that such offenders are violating God's moral law. In these biblical materials God is concerned with the actions, and it is for this reason that I have chosen to focus on them. Moreover, since every other practice in the 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy lists is clearly sinful, then and now, we have no authority to extract only these references to gay sexual activities and pronounce such practices good in certain instances.

Even if the writers did not have the social-scientific studies we have today, God knew that some people had homoerotic desires, even exclusively, yet he still prohibited sexual relationships based on these longings, just as he prohibited heterosexual relationships with one's neighbor's wife, relatives, and animals (Lev 18:1–30). Whether individuals had longings for erotic relationships with those of the same sex, or with relatives or animals, God forbade such relationships because of (among other reasons) his loving desire to bless his people abundantly in the long term even though his prohibitions went against their preferences in the short term (Lev 18:5, 20–24).

Further, as Peter Mommsen, editor of *Plough Quarterly*, notes, when Jesus addressed the topic of marriage (Matt 5:27–32; see also 19:3–12), he did so “in terms so demanding that they've shocked Christians for two

¹²After a thorough review of the materials, Wold concludes that a “survey of Ancient Near Eastern sources regarding homosexuality reveals that the practice existed widely, although it was not mentioned in Mesopotamian legal texts before the Middle Assyrian laws at the end of the second millennium B.C. . . .” though “we have only scanty sources to determine the practice of homosexuality in antiquity.” Wold, *Out of Order*, 60.

thousand years. . . . As N.T. Wright points out, this teaching was just as hard to accept in the first century as in the twenty-first.”¹³

God knew all that was occurring then and today in this world of sexual relationships, orientations, very real confusion within some about their sexual identities, gay and straight marriages, academic studies, and court decisions, and yet he gave for all people in every age a set of standards for their sexual lives. The overarching standard I see, for biblical times and today, is that erotic activities between human beings are pleasing to God only within the context of a one-man, one-woman marriage. (This is not to say, of course, that all such activities are automatically pleasing to God, but that erotic activities are pleasing to him only within monogamous marriage.)

As mentioned earlier, this standard applies to far more people on earth (heterosexuals) than homosexuals. In the current debates it is important to keep this in mind. In fact, conservative Christians (especially pastors, writers, and other Christian leaders) who declare firmly that homosexually-oriented persons must, in their actions, live sexually pure lives, should also declare just as firmly that heterosexually-oriented persons must, in their actions, live sexually pure lives. Christian leaders need to contend just as strenuously against heterosexual fornication, cohabitation, and pornography use, as against gay sexual activities. This emphasis is often missing, however, in declarations concerning homosexual behavior. This double standard is tragic.

Fortunately, in whatever one’s situation, the Bible continues to be as relevant as it always has been and always will be, and God continues to offer his remarkable grace to everyone who comes to him for washing, sanctification, and justification, as shown above in the first letter to the Corinthians. Concerning the sinners listed (and we are all sinners), Paul says to the converts, “And that is what some of you were!”

Where is Grace in This Impossibly High Standard?

For those who believe that the biblical standard on sexuality is impossibly high (which it definitely is apart from God), and certainly without grace as they see it, a look at the world as a whole is important. In the broader picture of human life on earth there are hundreds of millions—probably billions—of people who are not in a monogamous heterosexual marriage, yet desire sexual relational intimacy.

Not only homosexuals, but also heterosexuals who long to be married but cannot find an appropriate partner, as well as those who are postponing or abstaining from marriage for important reasons, those who are divorced, those in unhealthy marriages, teenagers, widows, widowers, and spouses of sexually unresponsive partners (due either to emotional or physical disabilities) are all people with real relational needs that often involve hearty sexual longings.

¹³Peter Mommsen, “No Time for Silence,” *Plough Quarterly* (2015): 34.

Those with strong sexual desires, whether gay or straight, are not thereby inferior or less spiritual than those without intense sexual longings. There is not necessarily “something wrong” with the one who has a strong sex drive. Similarly, those who have same-sex attractions are not thereby lesser human beings than those who have opposite-sex attractions. We all live in, and are part of, a broken world, disordered in numerous ways—including our sexual ways, whether straight or gay.

Even if, for the sake of argument, we grant that one’s sexual orientation is not a matter of choice (as traditionalists are so often reminded), we must not overlook the obvious: there are far, far more individuals with opposite-sex attraction than those with same-sex attraction, who long for relational sexual intimacy but do not have it. For many of these their biblical convictions rule out certain possibilities for opposite-sex activities, including marriage. They may go through their lives without sexual relationships, not because they want to live in such a way, but because they resolve to follow God rather than their own will. Even though the world says, “follow your heart,” they choose to follow their Master.

There are godly gay Christ-followers who choose likewise. While it is true that the comparison here between those having opposite-sex attraction and those having same-sex attraction is not quite parallel, in that the former may marry if they have appropriate partners, the basic point remains: large numbers of people—far more straight than gay—are living within the biblical guidelines for sex and marriage even though they have real relational sexual longings that are not being fulfilled and may never be fulfilled.

Even as I contemplate this great segment of humanity, however, I can see no way, in good conscience, to set aside the biblical standard for such individuals. If I choose to do so, I will find it very difficult to know which erotic relational activities to be opposed to. Most religiously inclined individuals will draw the line on matters of age, consent, abuse, and (generally) adultery. Other than these, however, the prevailing ethical guideline, even among many prominent “Christian” ethicists, is to “act responsibly,” whatever that means in the heat of the moment. Some of these ethicists use the term “just love,” stressing “justice” and “fairness” (as they define these terms) to govern sexual activities. Others promote “appropriate vulnerability.”¹⁴

¹⁴It is highly revealing that Gushee, before he openly declared his support for the gay marriage position, wrote the following, after arguing for the covenantal understanding of marriage followed by historic Christianity since its beginning. In the quotation below he refers to a 2012 “Conference on Sexuality and Covenant” he helped organize under the auspices of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

At our conference last spring, I encountered gays and lesbians who simply want to be welcomed into the historic Christian covenantal understanding of marriage, some of whom are deeply committed to such relationships. They evoke in me an instinctive respect. But from other voices, including a few key platform speakers, I heard much greater discomfort with the constraints of a covenantal paradigm. And it is fair to say that most of the literature emerging in elite Christian sexual ethics today is not written

And what about bisexuals? It is significant that gay-marriage advocates who consider themselves Christian rarely mention bisexuality. Yet this is the “B” in LGBT, and presumably (for such advocates) appeals to love, kindness, and inclusivity should apply to bisexual individuals as they do to monosexuals. We hear often that people should be able to marry those they love, in the church. If a person is sexually attracted to men and women equally, we should then, it would seem, “welcome and affirm” such a person in a marriage ceremony. Why is bisexuality (conveniently?) omitted from most discussions of LGBT issues within churches?¹⁵

I maintain that God’s way is the best way, and that God is always willing and able to accompany those who long to do his will, even though we sometimes fail to do that as we should.

We have a grace-full God, one who restores us when we fall as we seek his forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Because we sin at times we have no warrant to accept or justify a lower standard of sexual morality. And we have no authorization from God to transform moral wrongs into human rights.

Just as there are millions of people right now with unfulfilled erotic relational longings, so there are millions of people right now within this category who are living, by God’s loving strength, lives of deep joy and deep contentment. They are living the truth of Paul’s words concerning the love of money, which are every bit as applicable to the love of sexual intimacy, “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim 6:6).

from a covenantal perspective, but from a “just love” (Margaret Farley) or liberationist perspective.

In such cases, the claim is not that gays and lesbians should be invited into binding, lifetime covenantal Christian marriage but that the entire Christian sexual ethic should be recast, for everyone. If “just love,” then the standard is not lifetime covenant but essentially a relationship (of whatever duration) that is non-exploitative, fair, reciprocal, and loving; if liberationist, then the paradigm is essentially throwing off the shackles of historic Christian sexual repressiveness, especially of previously marginalized groups.

So here is an acute dilemma. If we understand “the homosexuality debate” as about inviting gay and lesbian Christians to make the same kinds of deeply countercultural, permanent, exclusive, monogamous covenants that we are calling straight Christians to make, and thus as a path to strengthening Christian sexual ethics overall, that is one thing; but if the issue is instead accepting the final abandonment of covenantalism in Christian sexual ethics, that is quite another.

Many of us find ourselves enticed by the expressed desire for committed relationships—because we wish that was the agenda of the LGBT activist community and because we know and love some committed gay and lesbian couples and have a hard time denying them what we know to be the good fruit of committed relationships. But there is a growing suspicion among some of us that while we are allowing ourselves to be enticed by these appealing promises, what is actually taking up residence even more deeply among us as debates about homosexuality continue—thanks to academicians teaching liberationist and other noncovenantal perspectives—is an abandonment of Christian sexual ethics.

David Gushee, “On Covenant,” *Prism* (2012), 50.

¹⁵Gushee, in a 2016 message to me, stated that bisexuals, if they marry, are to marry only one person.

It may shock some readers when I suggest that Jesus quite likely desired sexual intimacy, and quite likely was tempted to sin in this area of life, if only in his thoughts. I say this (reverently, I trust) because of the scriptural teachings in the book of Hebrews that Jesus was made just like us, “fully human in every way,” and “because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Heb 2:17–18).

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (Heb 4:15–16).

It is extremely important for God’s people to know and to dwell on regularly that temptation in itself is not sin. A Christian may give in to a certain temptation because they think they have already sinned by having the temptation. Such a notion is often a successful tactic of the evil one, but is refuted by the Scriptures quoted above. Jesus triumphed over every temptation, but not because he switched on his deity mode when tempted (Phil 2:5–8).

While he was God in the flesh, Jesus lived victoriously as a fully human being through the power of the Holy Spirit in him as he exercised his human will to do his Father’s will. If this is not true, then the verses just quoted, presenting Jesus as our example and intercessor, are meaningless. If this is not true, Jesus did not face and overcome temptation in the same way we have to, and, in spite of 1 Peter 2:21–23 (regarding persecution), cannot be our example in temptation.¹⁶

The Scriptures—the written Word—are truly life giving. So is Jesus Christ—the living Word, who offers life in place of death. Yes, we will all die physically, unless we are alive when Jesus returns, but we are not bound by the power of death—either physical or spiritual. Once again, from the book of Hebrews, we find great encouragement.

Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. . . . Since the children have flesh and blood,

¹⁶Evangelicals and others reject outright the blasphemous suggestions—some by “Christian” thinkers and pastors—that Jesus, though unmarried, was sexually active, either with men, women, or both. William E. Phipps documents such statements in *The Sexuality of Jesus* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1996), 69–71. In his earlier book with the same title, Phipps erroneously suggests that Martin Luther—if Luther’s “table talk” as recorded by one of his disciples is accurate—“assumed that Jesus, unlike the ascetic saints, fully expressed his impulses. . . . Since Jesus had feminine companionship on his journeys, Luther believed that he engaged in sexual intercourse.” See William E. Phipps, *The Sexuality of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 96. Phipps presents this same erroneous interpretation of Luther in *The Sexuality of Jesus* on pages 1 and 168.

he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death (Heb 2:11, 14, 15).

Without such Scriptures as these, showing that the grace of God is available and sufficient for all our needs and fears, I believe it would be insensitive—perhaps even cruel—for any person or any religious body to establish a standard for sexual purity such as we find in the Bible. Sadly, even with God’s repeated offers to give us the will and the strength we need, many do not (perhaps because they think they cannot or simply because they will not) follow lives of sexual purity. The apostle Paul, however, offers genuine hope in one of my all-time favorite Scriptures: “I can do all things through him who gives me strength” (Phil 4:13).

What does grace have to do with gay sex? The same that it has to do with any sex, and with every area of our imperfect lives in this sinful and broken world. “But he said to me,” Paul declares, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9).

Is There Room for Both Conscience and Tolerance?

There are some, I realize, who will say that the conclusions in this essay are heartless, unfeeling, unloving, obscurantist, and even unjust. I may be accused of failing to demonstrate the very grace I so highly praise. I know that some wish I would change my mind. Others, even those who claim to regard the Bible highly, are “evolving” in their views and are now approving of gay marriage, so why can’t I?

I reply that to reverse my convictions because I do not want to be seen as unkind or out of date would be dishonest with myself (and therefore with God and, deep down, with others) and I would be violating my conscience. How can a person who studies an issue intensely from all perspectives simply discard his or her thoughtful conclusions because they are becoming increasingly unpopular? Would such a person be able to respect themselves when they violate their own intellectual integrity and conscience?

Mark Galli, editor of *Christianity Today*, states that “perhaps no false teaching is more confusing or divisive than that the church should bless same-sex relationships. It’s a good example of the doctrinal challenge before us.” Galli has some strong words:

Some scholars and popular writers have tried to make a biblical case for this teaching. But they are grasping at straws. As Richard Hays, former Duke Divinity professor who wrote the now-classic *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, puts it, the biblical passages that deal with this issue “are unambiguously and unremittingly negative in their judgment.” In a 2010 study commissioned by the Episcopal Church, even revisionists

acknowledged that same-sex marriage “exceed[s] the marriage practices assumed by Scripture,” justifying the new ethic because it “comports with the mission of God celebrated by the Spirit in the body of Christ.” Or, as those revisionists put it elsewhere, “The Holy Spirit is doing a new thing.”

Naturally, we remain unconvinced that the Holy Spirit would reverse course from a divinely inspired biblical teaching.

Whatever serious false teaching we are facing, the Bible is uncomfortably clear: When false teachers persist in their views, they will be subject to divine judgment (see especially 2 Peter). For the sake of these false teachers (that they might avoid God’s judgment) and church health (that we might flourish in God), we believe we need a shift in how we teach the Bible. In short, we need to spend more time teaching the Bible as first and foremost the revelation of God.

We understand the temptation to talk about the Bible mostly in terms of “what it means to me” and its “practical application to daily life.” But when this hermeneutic *dominates*—as it does today—Christianity becomes little more than self-help therapy. And it leaves people ignorant of Scripture’s deeper meaning, and therefore unable to spot false teaching.”¹⁷

Should I try to be wiser and kinder than God, even as I understand God’s revelation to be teaching the views I express here? I surely am not infallible on these matters. I readily acknowledge that, and I long to extend grace in every way I can to those who disagree. But I also ask for grace from such ones, at least grace to assume that I am writing with noble intentions, and trying to be honest with the issues as I see them.

Two much-used words in our culture today are “tolerance” and “intolerance.” The former is noble and the latter is ignoble. Those like me who do not condone gay and lesbian sex, either inside or outside of marriage, are said to be intolerant. However, those who oppose my views are often intolerant themselves: they will not tolerate my conclusions. These feel deeply hurt and angry over views such as mine, and in some cases will cry out, “Why do you hate us?” It is very sad that some who hold my views do hate homosexuals. These verbally and sometimes physically attack homosexuals with a severity they do not display toward other sexual transgressors. I

¹⁷Mark Galli, “The New Battle for the Bible,” *Christianity Today*, October 2015, 33. Concerning biblical texts and the moral life, prominent liberal Christian ethicist Christine E. Gudorf writes: “To the extent that we can discern the movement and activity of the Holy Spirit within the struggle [of women] for liberation, our individual and communal experience of the struggle . . . is the best source of criteria for guiding scriptural selection and interpretation. . . . [In addition,] It seems to me that natural law offers a much more useful basis for a sexual ethic than Scripture.” Christine E. Gudorf, *Body, Sex, and Pleasure: Reconstructing Christian Sexual Ethics* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1994, 62–63). Gudorf could not be clearer in placing human experience and reason above the Scriptures.

consider such attitudes and actions evil, and I renounce them completely. These are far worse than deplorable if they are in the name of Christ!

The intolerance and hate flow in both directions, however, and must be resisted and rejected wherever they appear. It is the responsibility of both camps, especially those who say that they base their beliefs on the Bible as the word of God, to renounce the hate language and nastiness from their own camp, although they regularly may be objects of the same vitriol from the other camp. Traditionalists need to respect as human beings—even though they may strongly disagree with—those who espouse gay theology, and non-traditionalists in turn should respect as human beings those who oppose their views.

What prompted me to write this essay was to explain to those who differ with my position, especially but not only within Christian circles, why millions of Christians worldwide believe they are conscience-bound to affirm and teach the traditional viewpoint on homosexual practices as they understand the Scriptures. God knows I have been willing to change my views if the evidence should lead me in that direction. I have definitely prayed about this. I have absolutely no animosity toward lesbians and gays. But I would like the other side to tolerate the integrity and freedom of conscience of those who disagree.

Just as in times of war, when some citizens have been tolerated as “conscientious objectors” by their fellow citizens and governments, so those with traditional views on sexuality should be tolerated in our society—religious and secular. If a person refuses to carry a rifle, refuses to perform a gay wedding, refuses to stop preaching the biblical view of sexual morality, or refuses to “solemnly swear” on the Bible in a courtroom (making a simple affirmation of truthfulness instead), because of their carefully thought-out convictions on these matters, should not tolerance accept and even respect freedom of religion and freedom of conscience in such cases? It is one thing for a government to punish conscientious objectors of various kinds; all citizens need to face the consequences of their decisions. But a punitive stance has no place within the Christian community. Indeed, grace has much to do with gay sex, and grace has much to do with tolerance and freedom of religion.

I regret that this essay will cause pain to some who read it.¹⁸ The farthest thought from my mind is to shame anyone—gay or straight or whoever—

¹⁸The pain is located in, and emerges from, several groups, three of which are: practicing homosexuals with Christian backgrounds who long to be affirmed in their lifestyle, pro-gay heterosexuals who work for the full acceptance of practicing homosexuals in the church, and those Christians who have studied the issues carefully and prayerfully and conclude that homosexual practices are against the moral will of God. Included in this third category is theologian and educator Marva Dawn. In her excellent work on sexuality Dawn reveals her very real pain in upholding the non-affirming view presented in her book (and in this article). She writes: “This [section on homosexuality] has been the most difficult chapter of the entire book to write.” I share her pain and highly recommend her work, especially the final two parts of her chapter on homosexuality: “How Should the Church Respond?” and “But Is It Fair?” See Marva J. Dawn, *Sexual Character: Beyond Technique to Intimacy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,

because of their sexual desires. God made us all as sexual beings and our longings for relational intimacy are part of our core selves. None of us is necessarily a “bad” person because of our particular sexual orientation, nor is any of us necessarily a “good” person for this reason. In addition, no one of us is without some sexual sin in our past—unless they are highly unusual!

God is infinitely more concerned about homosexual people than about homosexual practices. Indeed, his reason for concern about the practices is for the real and lasting happiness of the people. Regarding the moral law of God, there is no arbitrary standard “out there” to which God demands allegiance, that is separable from his own eternally good and holy being. Everything God commands, forbids, and does is inseparable from who God is. We may not be able to know fully the reasons behind God’s laws, but we can know, in part, the good God behind the laws. As Paul the converted Pharisee and champion of grace states concerning the system of Jewish laws in which he was trained, “So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good” (Rom 7:12).

Long ago I came to realize that two extremely important Bible passages concerning our sexuality—perhaps the most important in the Bible on this major area of life—are Proverbs 5–7 and 1 Corinthians 5–7. I strongly recommend them to every reader and quote here from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians.

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies (1 Cor 6:18–20).

These are truly life-giving words, even though many today—including a very large number of “celebrities” (especially in the entertainment industry)—have no regard for, and even mock, such “obsolete” notions. Some even mock God. However, those who desire to live for God—straight, gay, or whoever—understand both the solemnity and the safety in these inspired teachings. We also understand the struggle to live in obedience to them. We sometimes sin, but if and when we violate God’s will, his grace of forgiveness is always available and free for those who know Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord and come to him in repentance and trust. We do not have to plead for forgiveness, as if it is dependent on the emotional intensity of our confession. We simply have to admit our sin to God and receive his pardoning grace by faith, knowing that we will never deserve it.

We are all responsible to live in this broken world in such a way that we honor God with our bodies and promote not only our personal sexual wholeness but also that of others. All who accept these responsibilities will want

to live in the light of them, speaking and acting always with grace. As the apostle Paul urges, “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Col 4:6).

A Closer Look at Leviticus

Even though I have not considered the biblical texts on homosexuality in any detail, I want to call attention to the two verses in Leviticus (18:22; 20:13). This emphasis is due to the way these Scriptures, seemingly more than the others, are discarded so quickly in discussions about homosexual behavior, because, it is said, the texts are part of the temporary Jewish Law that has now been fulfilled—and done away with—in Christ.¹⁹ Yet these texts are of major importance for the current debate.

To be more specific, a widely-used argument from gay theology is that these two verses forbidding homosexual practices are found in the midst of a body of religious purity laws that was designed in large measure to keep the Jews set apart from the idolatrous and immoral cultic practices of Israel’s neighbors, especially the Egyptians and the Canaanites, thus demonstrating that the prohibitions are not necessarily due to some intrinsic sinfulness in the actions themselves. Because these purity laws also contain prohibitions regarding some clearly temporary matters (see below), they were obviously intended only for the Jews at one special time in their history, not for all people for all time. These laws, it is said, have served their purpose and are not God’s moral code for today.

This argument can seem quite persuasive, especially since the prohibitions against homosexual practices are found in a portion of the Bible (Lev 18–20) that also forbids such practices as wearing clothing of two kinds of material (Lev 19:19) and cutting one’s hair at the sides of one’s head or clipping off the edges of one’s beard (Lev 19:27).

Three contrary considerations, among others, reveal the serious flaws in such reasoning. One is that when we look at the context of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, and read the other prohibitions surrounding these two verses (such as forbidding sexual relations with one’s mother or with an animal, and the offering of one’s children in sacrifice to pagan gods), it is clear that these prohibitions as a whole (some see a possible exception regarding sex during menstruation) have to do with matters that are intrinsically wrong and abominable to the Lord.

God’s people then and now are to follow the instructions in Leviticus 18:1–30 and 20:1–24. A plain reading of these passages supports the truth of this statement and reveals how different the prohibitions are in these two

¹⁹Wold’s research on the Levitical texts in light of present-day objections is superb see, Wold, *Out of Order*, 91–158, as is the work of Gagnon in *Texts*, 111–57, and *Two Views*, 56–58. Gagnon states: “In taking such a severe and comprehensive stance toward male homosexual behavior, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 represent a level of revulsion toward same-sex intercourse without parallel in the ancient Near East.” Gagnon, *Texts*, 156.

passages from the obviously temporary regulations in parts of chapter 19, concerning such matters as sacrificing animals to God, eating from one's fruit trees, and cutting one's hair. It is crucial to look closely at the context of the two texts prohibiting homosexual behavior.

A second consideration is that, when one compares the penalties for most of the non-sexual transgressions and those for the most serious sexual offenses, there is a major difference. The penalties for the former, for the most part, involve the making of offerings or the banishing of the offender from the community (being "cut off" from one's people but not, in these instances, by death). However, the penalty for the most serious sexual offenses is death (Lev 20:10–16). This is the ultimate form of being "cut off" from one's people. The most serious sexual transgressions, such as adultery, bestiality, and homosexual actions, are said to be "detestable" and punishable only by death. This matter of comparing punishments argues strongly for the inherent sinfulness of the latter practices, both then and now.

Some may wonder why the death penalty should not be applied today for the most serious sexual offenses. This is a legitimate question, and the answer in brief is that the people of God today do not live under a theocracy, as Israel did, where God ruled directly (through his appointed leaders) in a chosen land devoted to his earthly people and purposes. Today God's people are scattered over the earth where we live under non-theocratic forms of government. We include these Levitical prohibitions in this article because they reveal God's consistent attitude toward the forbidden activities in themselves, not to argue for specific, localized punishments such as banishment and death.

A third argument against the view that the Levitical prohibitions are not applicable for people today, since we are under the new covenant rather than the old, is that the erotic acts forbidden in the Old Testament are also forbidden in the New, being listed alongside of such intrinsically wrong behaviors as adultery, idolatry, theft, and slave trading (1 Cor 6:9–11; 1 Tim 1:9–11). What was sinful in itself under the old covenant continues to be sinful under the new covenant. We have no authorization to extract, or re-explain without sound scholarship, the very clear mentions of homosexual offenders from the New Testament lists of people involved in other universally sinful practices.

Conclusion

One's motives for excluding or explaining away direct prohibitions in the revealed Word of God may be, in themselves, noble (such as compassion and love toward gay people, and full inclusion of those on the margins in the body of Christ). But motives divorced from the permanent teachings in God's revelation concerning sexual morality are no justification for the very serious and very bold choice to (in effect) remove the major Scripture texts

from decisions regarding gay sexual practices, especially decisions affecting Christian churches, Christian organizations, and Christian living.

Concerning present-day evangelical views on homosexual issues, Gushee states enthusiastically that “the landscape is changing dramatically.” He adds that space for conversation in evangelicalism is still very fragile, yet “a number of new books have been written and organizations founded by avowed evangelicals attempting to open up conversational space, plead for better treatment, reframe the issues, or revise the traditionalist posture”²⁰

If we choose, however, to “reframe” or “revise” certain explicit prohibitions in the Bible because of our desire to be more in line with contemporary thinking, and/or our desire to be more compassionate and inclusive, we are (perhaps without realizing it) considering ourselves wiser and more merciful than God. In addition, if we discard or distort the clear Bible verses discussed in this essay, how can we consistently accept and trust, as God’s inspired messages to us, the verses that explicitly teach us vital truths we would not otherwise know (including verses about our eternal destiny)? Setting aside or rejecting biblical teachings that make us and others uncomfortable—even sad and angry—will have consequences much more serious for the church of Christ than even those resulting from the acceptance and affirmation of gay sexual relationships.

²⁰David Gushee, “Reconciling Evangelical Christianity with Our Sexual Minorities: Reframing the Biblical Discussion,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* (2015): 141.

Is it Adultery? The Use of Third-Party Gametes in Assisted Reproductive Technology

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Every semester I teach a course entitled “The Christian Home.” I discuss a range of topics with my students, but one of the more controversial issues is that of assisted reproductive technology (ART) with the use of donor sperm and/or eggs. During the years of teaching on this subject, I have experienced interesting interactions with some of my students. In one instance, the question was raised of whether or not the use of third-party gametes in ART could be classified as adultery.¹ At that moment, one of my students (for our purposes, we will call him “Jack”) raised his hand. He proceeded to tell the story of how his wife (we will call her “Joan”) donated her eggs to his sister (whom we will call “Jill”).

Because “Jill” suffered from infertility related to the viability of her eggs, “Joan” and her husband decided they wanted to help her. After praying about the possibility of donating her eggs, “Jack” and “Joan” reached the conclusion that such an action would indeed be a great benefit to “Jill” and her husband (whose name will be “John”). “Joan’s” eggs were retrieved and fertilized with “John’s” sperm; the embryos were injected into “Jill’s” uterus where they developed into two healthy babies, a boy and a girl. “Jill” delivered these children without major difficulty. “Jack” then declared in class that he and “Joan” had a niece and a nephew as a result of their selfless act of donating “Joan’s” eggs to “Jill” and “John.”

At this point I offered a correction to his description of the situation. I told him, as gently as possible, that his wife “Joan” had two children with his brother “John.” “Jack” retorted, “No, we have a niece and a nephew.” I replied that basic biology and genetics would demonstrate that these two children were the biological offspring of “Joan,” his wife, and “John,” his brother.

As you can imagine, my description was not received well. The student left class at a subsequent break and did not return that day. I feared that he had gone to the registrar’s office to drop my class. Thankfully, “Jack” returned

¹Third-party gametes are sperm and/or eggs procured from a source other than the husband or wife for the purposes of reproduction. Such gametes are also called donor sperm and donor eggs (or ovum).

the next class period and approached me at the end of class. He told me that he had reported what I had said to his wife, who did not take very kindly to my biology lesson. However, they continued to discuss the situation, and now he had returned to ask me a question. “Do Jill and I have parental obligations to those children?” His question was heartfelt and filled with emotion. I could tell he and his wife had taken a hard look at what they had done and realized that these two children were not a niece and nephew. They were the children of his wife and the half-siblings of their own children. I wish I could have provided a better answer that day, but I had little to say other than the fact that while his wife might have parental obligations to the children, she had most likely given up her legal right to exercise such rights by donating her eggs.²

While many people believe that the ever-expanding use of ART and third-party gametes is a blessing,³ it is important to stop and consider if such donations violate the sanctity of marriage. The author of Hebrews admonishes his readers that “Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb 13:4).⁴ Procreation has historically been included as one of the purposes of marriage, and the expectation was that offspring would come from the one-flesh union of the husband and wife. However, ART with third-party gametes opens the door to the introduction of others into the procreative process. Thus, procreation is not necessarily the result of a union between husband and wife, but the product of spouses, donors, and even surrogates. Many Christians express concern over the use of third-party gametes, but they are reluctant to call it adultery.⁵ Why is that? Does the use of such gametes violate the one-flesh aspect of the procreative process? If so, should it be labeled as adultery?

This paper seeks to move the conversation about the use of third-party gametes by married couples in the procreative process toward the conclusion

²This interaction is based upon experiences from my classes. The details of this particular scenario have been merged from multiple encounters in order to preserve the anonymity of each individual circumstance.

³Generally speaking, the blessing of ART with third-party gametes comes from the idea that it serves as an answer to some types of infertility. Of course, we need to make clear that procreation is not an absolute requirement for marriage. Infertility in many instances is a tragic circumstance that couples experience through no fault of their own.

⁴Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible.

⁵While talking about artificial insemination (also called intrauterine insemination) with donor sperm, Dennis Hollinger notes, “With artificial insemination by a donor, however, there are significant ethical issues from a Christian perspective on sex, family, and parenting. Certainly AID should not be labeled adultery, for there is no physical union between the sperm donor and the wife of the couple desiring a child. There is, nonetheless, an intrusion of a third party into the marital unity, which has been consummated and set apart by the one-flesh union through sexual intercourse.” Dennis P. Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex: Christian Ethics and the Moral Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 204. While Hollinger stops short of labeling the use of donor sperm as adultery, he does note that the unity of marriage is disrupted by the introduction of the sperm donor.

that it is equivalent to adultery. While procreation in this way may not meet the technical definition of adultery, the use of these gametes violates the biblical expectations for procreation within the context of marriage and simply adds a scientific step to an action that could only be accomplished before through illicit sexual contact.

The Ever-Expanding World of Assisted Reproductive Technology

In order to demonstrate this thesis, we first need to survey the ever-expanding world of assisted reproductive technology. For many Christians, this is a realm of technology with which we are vaguely familiar but have not grasped the rate at which it is growing. ART involves a number of technologies including in-vitro fertilization, gamete intrafallopian transfer, zygote intrafallopian transfer, and surrogacy. However the specific definition of ART provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) excludes other technologies, such as intrauterine insemination. The CDC defines ART by stating:

ART includes all fertility treatments in which both eggs and sperm are handled. In general, ART procedures involve surgically removing eggs from a woman's ovaries, combining them with sperm in the laboratory, and returning them to the woman's body or donating them to another woman. They do NOT include treatments in which only sperm are handled (i.e., intrauterine—or artificial—insemination) or procedures in which a woman takes medicine only to stimulate egg production without the intention of having eggs retrieved.⁶

Added to this process is the possibility of gamete donation that brings a third (and potentially fourth) party into the procreative process. For the purpose of this paper, we will not explore the various technologies themselves but only speak of third-party gamete donation as part of these technologies.

The CDC reports that the use of donor eggs in ART increased nearly 32% between 2004 and 2013. In 2013, there were 19,988 ART cycles using donor eggs or embryos. This represents approximately 11% of all ART cycles performed in the United States. These ART cycles are especially prevalent among women over the age of 40, including approximately 73% of ART cycles among women over age 44.⁷ Numbers of ART cycles involving donor eggs are much more difficult to ascertain prior to 2003. The CDC does not

⁶Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "What is Assisted Reproductive Technology?" accessed 3 October, 2016, <http://www.cdc.gov/art/whatis.html>.

⁷Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Society for Reproductive Medicine, Society for Assisted Reproductive Technology, *2013 Assisted Reproductive Technology National Summary Report* (Atlanta: US Department of Health and Human Services, 2015), accessed 3 October, 2016, http://www.cdc.gov/art/pdf/2013-report/art_2013_national_summary_report.pdf.

report the number of cycles that use donor sperm. In addition, since intra-uterine insemination (IUI) is excluded from the ART statistics, we do not know how many cycles of IUI involved donor sperm. It is safe to say that the numbers are much higher than ART cycles using donor eggs simply because the retrieval method for donor sperm is much easier. As early as 1987, there were estimates that 30,000 children per year were born through IUI with donor sperm.⁸ No current numbers exist, and one can only speculate that such estimates would be higher today.

In popular culture, the use of anonymous sperm donors has been sensationalized in films such as the 2013 release “Delivery Man,” starring Vince Vaughn. The movie depicts a man who had fathered more than 500 children through anonymous sperm donation. Once he finds out that many of his children are suing to learn his identity, he sets out to find some of them and get involved in their lives.⁹ Lest one think that such stories are simply the product of Hollywood sensationalism, media reports about online registries such as www.donorsiblingregistry.com have documented multiple groups of more than 100 half-siblings fathered by the same sperm donor.¹⁰

Such reports demonstrate that the use of third-party gametes for ART is growing at exponential rates. However, many Christians, and especially evangelicals, are not thinking about the consequences of third-party gamete donation. There are a host of issues that rise to the surface when one considers the ethical implications: the rights of children to know their biological parents, knowledge of medical history, and potential incestuous sex with an unknown biological relative. But at the root of the issue are the theological ramifications of third-party gamete donations in relation to the purpose and design of marriage and procreation. Such theological reflection will lead to the question of whether gamete donation is equivalent to adultery.

Purposes of Marriage

The purposes of marriage are significant for answering the question of the thesis. In order to ascertain whether third-party gamete donation is adultery, we must understand the theological purposes of marriage and their subsequent connection to procreation. There are a number of different places we can go to generate a list of the purposes of marriage (and sexual inter-

⁸C. Ben Mitchell and D. Joy Riley, *Christian Bioethics: A Guide for Pastors, Health Care Professionals, and Families* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2014), 119.

⁹“Delivery Man (2013),” The Internet Movie Database, accessed 3 October, 2016, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2387559/>.

¹⁰For example, see Jacqueline Mroz, “One Sperm Donor, 150 Offspring,” *The New York Times*, 5 September 2011, accessed 3 October, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/06/health/06donor.html?_r=0; Susan Donaldson James, “Confessions of a Sperm Donor: Hundreds of Kids,” ABC News, 19 August 2010, accessed 3 October, 2016, <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/sperm-donors-admit-fathering-hundreds-children-call-regulation/story?id=11431918>; and “Genetic Lessons From a Prolific Sperm Donor,” *Newsweek*, 15 December, 2009, accessed 3 October, 2016, <http://www.newsweek.com/genetic-lessons-prolific-sperm-donor-75467>.

course within marriage), but for the purposes of this paper we will follow the work of Augustine in “On the Good of Marriage”¹¹ and *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*.¹² In these works, he provides three basic goods of marriage that serve as our purposes—fidelity, procreation, and unity. In *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Augustine succinctly notes, “Now this good is threefold: fidelity, offspring, and sacrament. *Fidelity* means that there must be no relations with any other person outside the marriage bond. *Offspring* means that children are to be lovingly received, brought up with tender care, and given a religious education. *Sacrament* means that the marriage bond is not to be broken.”¹³

The reason for starting with Augustine’s purposes of marriage is that he articulates a succinct summary of the biblical witness on the purposes of marriage. Rather than needing to build a case from the beginning regarding the biblical witness on marriage in this paper, Augustine provides us with a historical treatment of these purposes that has clear connection to the text of Scripture. Augustine’s purposes can clearly be seen in some of the classic passages regarding the institution of marriage. Fidelity is implied in the one-flesh language of Genesis 2:24, and infidelity is prohibited in the seventh commandment (Exod 20:14). Procreation, or offspring, as a purpose of marriage first appears in God’s command to the man and woman to be fruitful and multiply in Genesis 1:28. This command is repeated to Noah and his family in Genesis 9:7 after the flood. Unity, which Augustine identifies as the sacramental bond of marriage, also appears in Genesis 2:24 with the language of two becoming one flesh. This same language reappears in Matthew 19:5, Mark 10:7, and Ephesians 5:32 where Jesus and Paul offer extended commentary on marriage. Thus, moving directly to Augustine’s purposes of marriage is not to bypass Scripture. Instead, we can stand on Augustine’s shoulders where he has already derived these purposes from the text of Scripture. In the following pages, we will deal with each purpose individually.

Fidelity

There is little doubt that faithfulness in marriage is clearly communicated in the text of Scripture. The first place one might go is the seventh commandment. In Exodus 20:14 we read, “You shall not commit adultery.” This serves as the starting point for most conversations about fidelity in marriage. The theme of faithfulness—and avoidance of sexual sin—extends throughout the Old and New Testaments. In the Levitical Holiness Code, we find a similar prohibition against sexual intercourse with the wife of one’s neighbor (Lev 18:20). Such intercourse would result in

¹¹Augustine, “On the Good of Marriage,” in *St. Augustin: On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises*, vol. 3, edited by Philip Schaff, translated by C.L. Cornish, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 1st Series (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1887).

¹²Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, vol. 2, translated by John Hammond Taylor, vol. 42, Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation (New York: Newman, 1982).

¹³*Ibid.*, 78.

defilement and required the civil punishment of death (Lev 20:10). The prohibition against adultery extends into the spiritual realm as well because it was used as an analogy for idolatry.

The New Testament continues this strong prohibition against adultery, and, by extension, promotes fidelity. Paul includes adultery in his vice list of 1 Corinthians 6:9–11. The author of Hebrews promotes the honor and purity of the marriage bed and condemns adultery and fornication (Hebrews 13:4). Jesus even extends the seventh commandment's reach beyond literal sexual intercourse with someone who is not a spouse and condemns lustful thoughts and gazes with the term adultery (Matt 5:27–28). Thus, Scripture clearly prescribes an expectation of fidelity in marriage.

Augustine references faithfulness as a prominent good of marriage. He writes, "There is this further, that in that very debt which married persons pay one to another, even if they demand it with somewhat too great intemperance and incontinence, yet they owe faith alike one to another. . . . But the violation of this faith is called adultery, when either by instigation of one's own lust, or by consent of lust of another, there is sexual intercourse on either side with another against the marriage compact."¹⁴ In the 1930 papal encyclical, *Casti Connubii*, Pope Pius XI confirms Augustine's intent of conjugal faith as a reference to fidelity in marriage.¹⁵

Even in contemporary discussions of the purposes of marriage and sexual intercourse we find a commitment to fidelity as a purpose. John and Paul Feinberg write, "A final purpose of marriage and sex within marriage is the matter of curbing fornication and adultery."¹⁶ They further explain that a faithful and regular sexual relationship within the context of marriage "is an aid in quelling the temptation to commit adultery."¹⁷ Thus, marriage and the sexual relationship within marriage serve the function of maintaining fidelity for the spouses. This purpose of marriage is both biblical and historical in nature and will serve as a point of discussion related to ART with third-party gametes.

Procreation

The second purpose of marriage is procreation. Biblically, this purpose appears earliest in Scripture making procreation a primary purpose of marriage. Genesis 1:27–28 reads, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" At the outset

¹⁴Augustine, "On the Good of Marriage," 400.

¹⁵Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, 10, accessed 3 October, 2016, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121930_casti-connubii.html.

¹⁶John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 302.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 296.

of creation God's expectation for the newly created husband and wife is that they would have children and fill the earth. Adam and Eve fulfill the command to multiply in Genesis 1:28 as they have Cain, Abel, and Seth. A similar command is repeated to Noah and his family in Genesis 9:1 after the flood destroyed the rest of mankind.

Procreation is a common theme especially in the Old Testament as one generation of Israelites passes its faith and land to the next generation. Some of the clearest examples of a focus on offspring revolve around God's covenants with Abraham and Israel. In Genesis 12:2 God promises to make Abraham a great nation; however, years later he still has no child. Abraham and Sarah then take matters into their own hands, and he fathers a child with Sarah's handmaiden Hagar. Ultimately, God opens Sarah's womb so that she conceives. We find that much of the narrative of Scripture about Abraham relates to offspring.

When the people of Israel finally reach the land of Canaan following the exodus, we read about the division of the land according to tribes and families in Joshua 13–22. The land served as an inheritance to be passed from one generation to the next as tangible evidence of God's promises to Israel. Even laws regarding the sale of land and the year of Jubilee were reminders of the importance of offspring as any land that had been sold was to be returned to the family who had inherited it (Lev 25:8–34).¹⁸

Augustine offers his own perspective on the purpose of procreation in marriage as he writes:

Truly we must consider, that God gives us some goods, which are to be sought for their own sake, such as wisdom, health, friendship: but others, which are necessary for the sake of somewhat, such as learning, meat, drink, sleep, marriage, sexual intercourse. For of these certain are necessary for the sake of wisdom, as learning: certain for the sake of health, as meat and drink and sleep: certain for the sake of friendship, as marriage or sexual intercourse: for hence subsists the propagation of the human kind, wherein friendly fellowship is a great good.¹⁹

He goes on to make the point (as does Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:7–8) that it is better not to marry. Augustine claims that there is not a great need to continue populating the earth, but people may still marry without sin (1 Cor 7:9, 28). The good of procreation in marriage, according to Augustine, is a necessary good for the sake of begetting.

There is general agreement among contemporary scholars that one of the purposes of marriage is procreation as well. Feinberg and Feinberg

¹⁸For an interesting discussion on the role of marriage and offspring in ancient Israel, see Barry Danylak, *Redeeming Singleness* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 55–82.

¹⁹Augustine, "On the Good of Marriage," 403.

consider this to be the purpose of “rais[ing] up a godly seed.”²⁰ Dennis Hollinger notes, “God’s design is that humans enter the world through the most intimate, loving relationship on earth—the one-flesh covenant relationship of marriage. . . . God’s intention from creation is that children be born out of a sexual union that is covenantal, permanent, loving, enjoyable, and responsible.”²¹ When combined with the sexual relationship, marriage is certainly directed towards the purpose of procreation. Even though some marriages are infertile, that does not undermine the procreative purpose of marriage.²² It only points to the effect of the fall on the procreative process.

The connection between this purpose of marriage and ART is obvious. ART is a mechanism by which procreation is accomplished. The biggest question related to our thesis is whether the procreative purpose of marriage is violated when procreation involves a person outside the bond of marriage. This connection will be addressed in a subsequent section of the paper.

Unity

The final purpose of marriage to discuss is unity. This purpose should come as no surprise to most due to the intimate nature of marriage. Bringing a man and a woman into a close, intimate bond that leads to separation from parents and the formation of a new family unit is the essence of unity. Scripture introduces this purpose at the moment that God instituted the first marriage. Genesis 2:24 reads, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” The one-flesh union represents the epitome of unity as the two individuals form the most intimate union imaginable. The language of Genesis 2:24 points us to the unique nature of marriage and serves as a metaphor for how God relates to his people. Both Jesus and Paul quote this text in their teaching on marriage. Jesus uses this passage to demonstrate God’s design for the indissoluble nature of marriage in Matthew 19:5–6 (cf. Mark 10:6–9). Paul references it in Ephesians 5:31–32 to describe how a husband and wife relate to one another as well as the mystery of Christ’s relationship to the church.

Augustine invokes the theologically-loaded term “sacrament” to describe this purpose of marriage. However, we should be cautious not to read into his wording a full sacramental theology. In fact, Augustine clearly states

²⁰Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 302.

²¹Hollinger, *Meaning of Sex*, 102.

²²J. Budziszewski offers a helpful clarification between potentiality and possibility when it comes to procreation. Potentiality involves the ontological purpose of the physical nature whereas possibility involves the capacity of an individual to exercise that purpose. In the case of procreation, potentiality and possibility refer to fertility. The potentiality of procreation involves the idea that marriage points toward procreation due to the natural function of sexual intercourse in the institution of marriage. Possibility refers to whether or not that potentiality becomes an actuality. Physical possibility would be limited by various causes of infertility while not undermining potentiality since it is the institution of marriage as a whole that leads to procreation. See J. Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2012), 54–55.

what he means by sacrament when he writes, “*Sacrament* means that the marriage bond is not to be broken, and that if one partner in a marriage should be abandoned by the other, neither may enter a new marriage even for the sake of having children. This is what may be called the rule of marriage: by it the fertility of nature is made honorable and the disorder of concupiscence is regulated.”²³ The bond of unity is so strong that it serves as the overarching purpose of marriage even when one or both of the other two purposes are not upheld. Despite infidelity or infertility, unity remains and must not be violated.

Contemporary authors uphold a similar purpose of unity in marriage, but they do not have the force that Augustine attributed to it.²⁴ Many in evangelical circles would make an allowance for the dissolution of marriage and subsequent remarriage on the basis of abandonment or infidelity. Augustine, however, makes no such allowance; instead, he argues that neither infertility nor infidelity can break it. While most people would think of this purpose only being violated in the context of divorce, unity is perhaps the purpose most threatened by third-party gamete donation in ART.

Third-Party Gamete Donation and the Purposes of Marriage

Now that we have considered three biblical and teleological purposes of marriage—fidelity, procreation, and unity—we must now explore how the use of third-party gametes in ART interacts with these purposes. This discussion will set the stage for determining if this practice is indeed adultery. If these purposes are violated through the use of ART with donors, then we will be moving in the direction of adultery.

Gamete Donation and Fidelity

The first purpose of marriage discussed was fidelity. This purpose seems to raise the most potential conflict with third-party gametes. However, that conflict depends on how one identifies the infidelity that violates this purpose. The Augustinian explanation of fidelity directly identifies the violation of this purpose as illicit sexual intercourse. Augustine writes, “*Fidelity* means that there must be no relations with any other person outside the marriage bond.”²⁵ The most direct implication from such a definition is that an adulterous sexual relationship is what is prohibited. He more explicitly identifies an illicit sexual relationship as the violation of fidelity in “On the Good of Marriage.” Augustine states, “But the violation of this faith is called adultery,

²³Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 78.

²⁴Hollinger uses the terminology of “consummation of marriage;” Feinberg and Feinberg divide this purpose into “unity” and “companionship;” and J. Budziszewski calls it “union.” Budziszewski further states, “The other is union—the mutual and total self-giving and accepting of two polar, complementary selves in their entirety, soul and body.” See Hollinger, *Meaning of Sex*, 95–101; Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 301; and Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex*, 24.

²⁵Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 78.

when either by instigation of one's own lust, or by consent of lust of another, there is sexual intercourse on either side with another against the marriage compact."²⁶ Even without Augustine's definitions, most people would likely agree that an adulterous affair is the clearest example of infidelity.

Interpreting infidelity as physical, sexual adultery raises a couple of problems. First, we have to deal with the technical definitions of adultery in Hebrew and Greek. In both languages, the term translated adultery requires that the woman in the illicit relationship be married. נָאָפֶת (*nā'ap*) is the Hebrew term for adultery found in the seventh commandment. According to Leonard Coppes, "This root represents 'sexual intercourse with the wife or betrothed of another man.'"²⁷ We see something very similar in Greek. The term μοιχεία is the technical form for adultery, and it has the same emphasis as found in Hebrew. Louw and Nida state:

From the standpoint of the NT, adultery was normally defined in terms of the married status of the woman involved in any such act. In other words, sexual intercourse of a married man with an unmarried woman would usually be regarded as πορνεία "fornication," but sexual intercourse of either an unmarried or a married man with someone else's wife was regarded as adultery, both on the part of the man as well as the woman.²⁸

Thus, from the perspective of the various biblical languages, the sin of adultery could only occur if a married woman was involved in the act. Of course this problem is addressed fairly easily by the prohibition against fornication that we also find in the text of Scripture. In fact, it is often paired with adultery, especially in the New Testament.²⁹ In addition, Augustine's definition interprets adultery more broadly as sexual intercourse of either spouse with someone outside the marriage.³⁰ This is in keeping with how adultery is generally viewed in contemporary culture.

The more difficult question to address is the absence of sexual intercourse from the ART process. The reason that most couples undergo ART is because the natural procreative process through sexual intercourse is not working. Therefore, procreation is removed from the context of the marriage bed and placed within a lab setting. Sperm and egg are brought together

²⁶Augustine, "On the Good of Marriage," 400.

²⁷Leonard J. Coppes, "1273 נָאָפֶת," edited by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 542.

²⁸Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, "88.276 μοιχεύω; μοιχάομαι; μοιχεία, ας," *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 771.

²⁹See Matt 15:19; Mark 7:21; 1 Cor 6:9; and Heb 13:4.

³⁰Augustine states, "But the violation of this faith is called adultery, when either by instigation of one's own lust, or by consent of lust of another, there is sexual intercourse on either side with another against the marriage compact." Note his statement about "sexual intercourse on either side." This implies either the husband or the wife. Augustine, "On the Good of Marriage," 400.

through medical technology, and once fertilization has occurred, the embryo is injected into the uterus of the woman. Thus, the biggest hurdle to overcome in labeling third-party gamete donation as adultery is the fact that no sexual intercourse takes place.

There are two ways to answer this question—biologically and theologically. From a biological perspective, it is true that no sexual intercourse takes place in the fertilization of the egg. The process is completely outside the body, and the donors of the gametes are not even present for the process. However, an argument could be made that the fertilization process is still sexual in nature. The biological function of joining sperm and egg is considered to be a sexual process. A very basic encyclopedic definition of reproduction states, “The joining of haploid gametes to produce a diploid zygote is a common feature in the sexual reproduction of all organisms except bacteria.”³¹ Thus, the biological process of fertilization is sexual even though the ART process does not involve intercourse. The biological answer keeps the door open for identifying third-party gamete donation as adultery through the sexual process of fertilization. In addition to this biological answer to the question, we need to consider a theological answer.

The theological answer to this question involves Jesus’ treatment of the seventh commandment in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5:27–28 Jesus says, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” In this brief explanation of the seventh commandment, Jesus extends the force of the commandment beyond a requirement of illicit sexual intercourse. Admittedly, Jesus makes the application to one’s heart and specifically to lustful desires. However, in doing so, he applies the technical term for adultery to an act that does not include sexual intercourse. Therefore, it is not completely beyond the realm of possibility that a sexual function that takes place outside the context of marriage could receive the label of adultery.

In the Old Testament, the technical term for adultery, נָאָפַת (nā’ap), is also applied to the spiritual infidelity of the nation of Israel when they worship other gods. In addition, another Hebrew term זָנָה (zānā) meaning harlotry or fornication is used to describe Israel’s practice of worshiping false gods. As it relates to the description of Israel, the two terms are similar in their usage. Leon J. Wood notes, “A similarity between the two roots is found in the fact that both are used in a figurative as well as a literal sense; and also that, in the figurative, they are employed for the same basic concepts.”³² The words appear with great frequency in the prophetic literature to describe spiritual unfaithfulness (e.g., Jer 3:2, 6, 8, 9; 5:7; 13:27; Ezek 16:32–36; Hos 4:11–12). Mark Rooker writes, “Because the violation of the marriage bond

³¹“Zygote,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, accessed 6 October, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/science/zygote>.

³²Leon J. Wood, “563 זָנָה,” edited by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 246.

was a form of covenant breaking, adultery was employed to describe covenant unfaithfulness on the divine-human plane.”³³ The Old Testament usage of the adultery to describe spiritual unfaithfulness gives further credence to the theological idea that adultery need not include sexual intercourse. In the case of worshiping false gods, infidelity to the absolute loyalty demanded by the covenant relationship with God was enough to earn Israel the title of adulterer.

Gamete Donation and Procreation

The most obvious interaction between a purpose of marriage and ART is found with procreation. The entire ART industry is built around the idea of facilitating procreation for people who cannot procreate naturally or choose not to do so for any number of reasons. This may be the clearest connection to adultery that we find among the purposes of marriage.

In Augustine’s treatment of procreation as a primary purpose in marriage, we must note that it is within marriage where this function is to take place. He states, “This is what may be called the rule of marriage: by it the fertility of nature is made more honorable and the disorder of concupiscence is regulated.”³⁴ It is true that procreation can take place outside the bond of marriage. This happens all the time in the United States today. In 2014, over 40% of all births in the U.S. were to unmarried women. This amounted to 1,604,870 children born outside of wedlock.³⁵ The 2014 numbers actually represent a decline from the highest level of unmarried childbearing in 2008.³⁶ However, the fact that procreation can and does happen outside the context of marriage does not change the historical Christian position that marriage is the only appropriate context for procreation. Augustine believed that childbearing in marriage made fertility honorable. God gave his command to be fruitful and multiply to the man and woman within the context of the first marriage. Childbearing within marriage is affirmed throughout Scripture while non-marital childbearing is considered a stigma.³⁷

Introducing donor sperm and/or eggs into the procreative process brings another party into the procreative purpose of marriage. The child is no longer the biological offspring of the husband and wife into whose home he/she is born; instead, he/she is the offspring of the husband and egg donor, or the wife and sperm donor, or both egg and sperm donors. The marriage of a husband and wife in this scenario is, therefore, no longer the context for

³³Mark F. Rooker, *The Ten Commandments: Ethics for the Twenty-First Century*, (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 137.

³⁴Augustine, *Genesis*, 78.

³⁵Brady E. Hamilton, et al., “Births: Final Data for 2014,” *National Vital Statistics Reports* 64 (December 23, 2015), accessed 4 October, 2016, http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr64/nvsr64_12.pdf.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷See Deut 23:2.

procreation. Third-party gametes open the door to other contexts for procreation outside marriage, such as the use of gestational surrogates for birth.³⁸

The introduction of the gamete donor(s) into the procreative process complicates the family situation and imposes a new model upon God's design for procreation. Budziszewski notes, "What then are the natural meanings and purposes of the sexual powers? One is procreation—the bringing about and nurture of new life, the formation of families in which children have moms and dads."³⁹ From both Scripture and natural law, we see that the married couple is the mechanism by which children are designed to enter the world. Procreation apart from marriage introduces circumstances for both the child and the couple beyond God's original design. Budziszewski further states, "Plainly, the union of the spouses is at the center of our procreative design. Without it, procreative partnerships could hardly be expected to endure in such a way as to generate sound and stable families."⁴⁰

Another interesting critique of the use of third-party gametes for procreation comes from a distinction between procreation and reproduction. Although the terms are often used synonymously, Gilbert Meilaender challenges us to think of them differently. He states, "A child who is thus begotten, not made, embodies the union of his father and mother. They have not simply reproduced themselves, nor are they merely a cause of which the child is the effect. Rather, the power of their mutual love has given rise to another who, though different from them and equal in dignity to them, manifests in his person the love that unites them."⁴¹ Since having a child is procreation, it reflects the life-giving nature of the bond of marriage. Having a child is not simply the mechanical reproduction of a machine. With that in mind, Meilaender goes on to critique the use of third-party gametes by saying:

More fundamental, though, is the fact that use of donated gametes—whether in artificial insemination by donor or in fertilization in the laboratory—destroys precisely those features that distinguish procreation from reproduction. Lines of kinship are blurred and confused; the child begins to resemble a product of our wills rather than the offspring of our passion; and the presence of the child no longer testifies to and embodies the union of his parents.⁴²

³⁸Gestational surrogacy involves a woman who is not the biological mother of the child to carry the child and give birth. Hollinger clarifies, "In this form [gestational surrogacy] the gametes come from both the husband and wife of the couple wanting the child. The surrogate is merely the carrier of the child and has no biological tie to the child." Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex*, 212–13. In addition to the form Hollinger describes, the gametes could also be third-party gametes.

³⁹Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex*, 24.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 26.

⁴¹Gilbert Meilaender, *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 15.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 16.

Meilaender deems the lines of kinship established through the child-bearing process in the context of marriage to be an essential element to procreation. This is what moves us from reproduction to procreation, and the introduction of third-party gametes violates the procreative direction of marriage.⁴³ Thus, procreation using third-party gamete donation undermines the union of the married couple and violates the marital sanctity of the procreative process.

Third-Party Gametes and Unity

The intersection between third-party gamete donation and the purpose of unity is the most complicated issue for this paper to address. On one hand, someone may say that a husband and wife can remain in perfect unity with one another even while participating in the procreative process with donor sperm and/or egg. In fact, some may even say that having a child through this means could even increase the unity of marriage by fulfilling the purpose of procreation which is greatly desired.⁴⁴ On the other hand, the use of donor sperm or eggs could drive a wedge between the couple as one spouse is identified as the infertile partner and incapable of begetting children.

Augustine provides an interesting look at this particular good of marriage that can be applied to the question of gamete donation. While the primary good of marriage in his mind may be the begetting of children, he recognizes that it is not the only purpose. He says, “And this seems not to me to be merely on account of the begetting of children, but also on account of the natural society itself in a difference of sex.”⁴⁵ This “society” is the unique bond between a man and a woman. He continues to speak of the purity and sanctity of marriage even in the face of having no children. Whether the absence of children is caused by age, loss, or infertility, he highlights the fact that unity and fidelity in marriage are maintained through an exclusive relationship between husband and wife.

At a later point in the same treatise, Augustine specifically mentions the effect of barrenness on a marriage. He writes:

For it is in a man’s power to put away a wife that is barren, and marry one of whom to have children. And yet it is not allowed; and now indeed in our times, and after the usage of Rome, neither

⁴³Meilaender responds to a critique comparing the use of third-party gametes to adoption because it too blurs the lines of kinship. In contrast to the use of third-party gametes, Meilaender considers adoption to be an emergency measure to care for a child whose biological parents cannot or will not care for him/her. He states, “Its [Adoption’s] principal aim must not be to provide children for those who want them but are unable to conceive them. . . . The aim of adoption, by contrast, should be to serve and care for some of the neediest among us.” *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁴Gunilla Sydsjö, et al., “Relationships in oocyte recipient couples—a Swedish national prospective follow-up study,” *Reproductive Health* 11 (2014), accessed 4 October, 2016, <http://www.reproductive-health-journal.com/content/11/1/38>.

⁴⁵Augustine, “On the Good of Marriage,” 400.

to marry in addition, so as to have more than one wife living: and, surely, in case of an adulteress or adulterer being left, it would be possible that more men should be born, if either the woman were married to another, or the man should marry another. And yet, if this be not lawful, as the Divine Rule seems to prescribe, who is there but it must make him attentive to learn, what is the meaning of this so great strength of the marriage bond?⁴⁶

Augustine excludes both polygamy and divorce for the purpose of subsequent remarriage as options for producing offspring. This is due to the theological significance of the unity of marriage. The bond is so strong because it points to “some greater matter from out this weak mortal state of men.”⁴⁷ The greater matter is the bond between Christ and the church to which marriage points (Eph 5:31–32). In much the same way that Christ stays true to his bride and continues in unity despite her difficulties, the husband must stay true to his wife. Despite the difficulties that may come to the church, the bond between Christ and his bride grows deeper with time. Even when the pain of infertility hits home, a husband and wife grow deeper in unity by weathering the storms together. This is one way in which the husband and wife demonstrate the analogous unity of Christ and the church. The bond grows through both good times and bad.

Introducing third-party gametes into the procreative process violates the distinctive unity of marriage by introducing a third party into the bond of marriage for the purpose of attaining a particular end. Meilaender offers this extended commentary on the connection between unity and procreation with third-party gametes:

There are, then, good reasons for Christians to reject any process of assisted reproduction that involves sperm or ova donated by a third party. Even if the desire of an infertile couple to have children is laudable and their aim praiseworthy, even if we know of instances in which assisted reproduction seems to have brought happy results, it is the wrong method for achieving those results. What we *accomplish* may seem good; what we *do* is not. For in aiming at this desired accomplishment we begin to lose the sense of biological connection that is important to human life, we tempt ourselves to think of the child as a product of our rational will, and we destroy the intimate connection between the love-giving and life-giving aspects of the one-flesh marital union. We should not hesitate to regard reproduction that makes use of third party collaborators as wrong—even when the collaboration seems to be in a good cause.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Ibid., 402.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Meilaender, *Bioethics*, 18–19.

While the end of procreation is good and desirable, it is not something to be pursued with the use of third-party gametes, according to Meilaender, because it interferes with the unique bond that marriage brings. The connection between the love-giving and life-giving aspects of the union of marriage is essential to the nature of marriage. In short, the end does not justify the means because the means undermines a purpose of the institution of marriage. Therefore, pursuing procreation through the use of third-party gamete donation violates the distinctive concept of unity in all aspects of marriage, including procreation.

Conclusion

Using the three Augustinian goods, or purposes, of marriage, we have seen that the use of third-party gametes disrupts God's intended design for marriage. That leaves us with the final question of whether or not we should label such a disruption as adultery. The fidelity of marriage is violated by the use of donated gametes through the introduction of a third (and possibly fourth) party into the marriage relationship. Even if that person is an anonymous donor, he/she is a participant in the marital act that is intended to be exclusively between husband and wife. The procreative function of marriage is also violated by the use of donated gametes. Yes, procreation occurs in ART with third-party gametes, but it is not procreation within the God-designed context of marriage. The biological reality is that ART with donor gametes is a sexual function. Despite the lack of sexual intercourse between the parties, sexual reproduction does occur in this procreative process. Thus, the offspring of this sexual process come from a physiological joining of individuals other than the husband and wife. In every other context before ART technology was available, such procreation would have been the result of sexual immorality. Taking the sexual reproductive process out of the bedroom and into the medical lab simply changes the location, not the fact that the elements involved in reproduction (i.e., egg and sperm) have been joined. Finally, the unity of marriage is violated by third-party gamete donation. Scripture does not allow for the dissolution of marriage when one spouse is infertile. In addition, it does not allow for plural marriage in order to facilitate childbearing. Third-party gamete donation is most akin to open marriage. In open marriage, the spouses invite other sexual partners into their marriage bed. Since the biblical model of marriage is exclusive and monogamous, open marriage would clearly be considered adulterous. In third-party gamete donation, the spouses invite other partners into their relationship—even when such partners are anonymous—for the sake of procreation, which was exclusively reserved for marriage in Scripture.

In light of these violations of the goods and purposes of marriage, it seems that the use of third-party gametes in ART by a married couple could be labeled as adultery. In much the same way as the Old Testament prophets declared idolatry as adultery through the analogy of marriage, the

use of third-party gametes is analogous to adultery through its violation of the God-ordained purposes of marriage. If such a classification were made, it may be helpful to identify it as reproductive adultery in order to distinguish it from the act of illicit sexual intercourse, but the biblical prohibitions would remain intact. The use of third-party gametes should then be openly addressed by the church and discouraged due to its violation of the God-ordained purposes of marriage.

You Talkin' to Me? 1 Peter 2:4–10 and a Theology of Israel

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W.A. Criswell, well-known Baptist pastor and leader, once said, “The correct identification of Israel is a key to the true interpretation of the whole Bible. If Israel means God’s ancient people, the Bible becomes as clear as truth itself. If Israel means the New Testament church, the teaching of the Bible becomes obscure.”¹ Yet supersessionism, the view that the church has superseded or replaced Israel, seems to be increasingly popular. In spite of serious theological implications and weak exegetical foundations, it is the majority position in contemporary evangelicalism.² This can be explained only on spiritual and pastoral bases. Paul warned against a Gentile pride regarding the people of Israel (Rom 11:13–32), and a failure to heed his warning leads to supersessionism and, in addition, may lead to anti-Semitism.

One of the arguments often used to support a supersessionist reading of Scripture is that Old Testament terminology is applied to the church, usually citing 1 Peter 2:9–10. Scott McKnight claims, “There is no passage in the New Testament that more explicitly associates the Old Testament terms for Israel with the New Testament Church than this one.”³ John S. Feinberg charges dispensationalists with inconsistency in the interpretation of scriptural terms that originally applied to Israel. He asks rhetorically, “What dispensationalist thinks the references to a ‘holy nation,’ ‘chosen people,’ and

¹W.A. Criswell, *Israel in the Remembrance of God* (Dallas: Pasche Press, 2006), 4.

²Supersessionism is often popularly referred to as replacement theology. Some authors deny they espouse supersessionism, yet redefine Israel in such a way that the church ends up as the “new Israel.” Others claim that Jesus fulfilled all that Israel was to be; therefore, all who are in Him constitute the “true Israel.” All such maneuvers in which Israel becomes the church are included under the term “supersessionism.” For more on supersessionism see Darrell L. Bock, “Replacement Theology with Implications for Messianic Jewish Relations,” in *Jesus, Salvation and the Jewish People: The Uniqueness of Jesus and Jewish Evangelism*, ed. David Parker (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2011), 235–47; Ronald E. Diprose, *Israel and the Church: The Origins and Effects of Replacement Theology* (Milton Keynes: Authentic Media, 2000); Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007); R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg-Fortress Press, 1996); and Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel? A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010).

³Scott McKnight, *1 Peter*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 109–10.

'royal priesthood' in 1 Peter 2:9 are not references to the church?"⁴ For him the matter is settled, but is it really? Everything depends upon the identity of the original recipients. First Peter 2:4–10 reads as follows:

And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture: "Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed." This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner stone," and, "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.⁵

This passage and its interpretation affect a number of issues. These would include the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer and, most significantly, the relationship between the church and Israel. Again, a great deal depends upon the identity of the recipients. The current academic consensus holds that 1 Peter was written to the church. Can this claim be validated? If not, then to whom is Peter speaking? For a Gentile believer in Jesus, Robert De Niro's question, "You talkin' to me?" begs for an answer.

To Whom Is Peter Writing?

The History of Interpretation

A straightforward reading of the text indicates that the recipients were Jewish Christians. Karen H. Jobes maintains that "in contrast to modern interpreters, most ancient exegetes . . . understood the recipients of the letter to be converts from Judaism."⁶ Ramsey Michaels admits that the readers

⁴John S. Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments: Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.*, edited by John S. Feinberg (Westchester: Crossway, 1988), 72.

⁵Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible.

⁶Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 23.

“are addressed here as Jews.”⁷ He insists, “No NT letter is so consistently addressed, directly or indirectly, to ‘Israel,’ that is (on the face of it) to Jews.”⁸ He nevertheless concludes that “1 Peter was written primarily to Gentile Christians in Asia Minor, but that the author, for his own reasons, has chosen to address them as if they were Jews.”⁹ He adds, “So successful was the author of 1 Peter in appearing to write to Jews that the Christian historian Eusebius in the fourth century AD took him at his word.”¹⁰

Indeed, there is a long line of commentators who have also taken Peter at his word. Edward Gordon Selwyn says, “In the patristic age Origen, Eusebius, and the Greek Fathers generally maintained that they [i.e., the recipients] had been Jews, while Augustine, Jerome, and other Latin writers held the opposite view.”¹¹ He continues to suggest that due to the weight of Erasmus, Calvin, Bengel, and Grotius, it might not be improper to say that for centuries the consensus view was that the epistle was written to Jewish Christians.¹²

John Calvin, writing in the 1550s claimed that the recipients were Jewish Christians.¹³ Robert Leighton, writing in the 1650s believed that they were Jewish Christians.¹⁴ John Lightfoot, writing in 1679 agreed that the recipients were Jewish Christians. In fact, he found it incredible that anyone would deny that 1 Peter was addressed to Jewish believers. He asked rhetorically, “who indeed doth deny it?”¹⁵ In 1748, John Gill, although he allowed that there may have been some Gentile Christians included, nevertheless argued that the recipients were primarily Jewish Christians.¹⁶ John Peter Lange, in 1865, claimed that the recipients were Jewish Christians. In this, he was convinced by Bernhard Weiss, for he quotes from him and lists his reasons for this conclusion.¹⁷ More recently, Richard Longenecker refers to the epistles of Peter, as well as to all of the General Epistles, as

⁷J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, vol. 49, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1988), xviii.

⁸Ibid., xlv.

⁹Ibid., xlvi.

¹⁰Ibid. Apparently Erasmus and Calvin, in the sixteenth century, take him at his word. Cf. J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude*, Thornapple Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 4.

¹¹Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 2nd ed, Thornapple Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 42.

¹²Ibid.

¹³John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 25.

¹⁴Robert Leighton, *A Practical Commentary upon the First Epistle General of Saint Peter*, edited by P. Doddridge, vol. 1 (London: The Religious Tract Society, n.d.), 20–21.

¹⁵John Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*, vol 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1859; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 159.

¹⁶John Gill, *An Exposition of the New Testament in which the Sense of the Sacred Text is Taken, [etc.]*, vol. 2 (London: William Hill Collingridge, 1853), 804.

¹⁷John Peter Lange, *The First Epistle General of Peter*, Lange Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, translated by Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1867), 7–8.

“Jewish Christian tractates.”¹⁸ With reference to 1 Peter, he specifically draws attention to parallels with the Qumran community, the use of the Old Testament, and the “pesher interpretations” prominent in 1 Peter.¹⁹ Ben Witherington III has made one of the most spirited and serious recent attempts to defend the view that 1 Peter was written to Jewish believers.²⁰ Nevertheless, today, the thought that Peter was writing to Jewish Christians is held only by a very small number of commentators. In a recent work, Craig A. Evans, claims that 1 Peter was written to an audience “most of whom we should assume were Jewish.”²¹

Among those who favor a Gentile readership, there is a variety of views. John H. Elliott claims that the terms used in the text (παρεπιδήμιος, “exiles,” 1:1; παροικίας, “exile,” 1:17, cf. 2:11; and παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους, “aliens and exiles” 2:11) refer to the readers’ social status prior to conversion.²² So, for him, the readers were not aliens because of their faith, but by virtue of their actual social and political status. Moses Chin and Steven Richard Bechtler have responded to most of Elliott’s claims, and his hypothesis has been judged to be “improbable” by Thomas Schreiner.²³ Nevertheless, Elliott shifted much of the discussion on the recipients of 1 Peter, and his massive commentary has certainly strengthened his claim that the terms used of the recipients should not be overly spiritualized.²⁴

McKnight believes they were “Gentiles who had probably previously become attached to Judaism through local synagogues and other forms of Judaism.”²⁵ Some were likely proselytes and others may have been God-fearers. He does allow that some were Jewish: “It is also likely that some of the

¹⁸Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 186–204. See also Louis Barbieri, “1 Peter,” in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, edited by Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago: Moody, 2014), 1961.

¹⁹Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 200–04. Other, more recent scholars have also noted the Jewish exegetical methods used in 1 Peter. See especially Kelly D. Liebengood, *The Eschatology of 1 Peter: Considering the Influence of Zechariah 9–14* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 88–96.

²⁰Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, vol. 2, *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1–2 Peter* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2007). He ultimately abandons the position, however, as noted below.

²¹Craig A. Evans, *From Jesus to the Church: The First Christian Generation* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2014), 23.

²²John Hall Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1981), 37–49, 129–32.

²³Moses Chin, “A Heavenly Home for the Homeless: Aliens and Strangers in 1 Peter” *Tyndale Bulletin* 42 (1991): 96–112; Steven Richard Bechtler, *Following in His Steps: Suffering, Community, and Christology in 1 Peter*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 162 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1998); and Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2003), 40.

²⁴John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

²⁵McKnight, *1 Peter*, 23.

Christian converts were formerly Jewish in race and heritage.”²⁶ He clearly espouses a supersessionist view, and this informs his entire commentary.²⁷ If the majority of the readers, however, had been proselytes and God-fearers, it is curious that in the letter there is no mention of circumcision, a discussion of the Law, or any of its requirements, the issue of food offered to idols, nor anything about the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the body of Messiah. In Romans 11:13–32, Paul specifically addresses Gentiles, but here, the major issue is Gentile arrogance regarding the majority of the Jewish people who are yet in unbelief. Nothing like this is found in 1 Peter. Of course, nothing can be proven from Peter’s silence on these topics, but it should be noted nonetheless. Most of these identifications of the original recipients are based upon the highly questionable assumption that language that is reserved uniquely for Israel throughout the Hebrew Scriptures must necessarily refer to all Christians when it is employed in the New Testament.

In what initially appears to be a major departure, Witherington begins his commentary by stating, “We will be arguing that the early church fathers were right that 1 Peter is written to Jewish Christians. . . . We have done a disservice to Jewish Christianity if we think that it quickly disappeared due to the rising tide of Pauline and Gentile Christianity even as early as the first century AD. This is simply not so.”²⁸ In making this assertion about Jewish Christians, he may have had the position of Wayne Grudem in mind, “By this time [the time of the writing of 1 Peter], over thirty years after Pentecost, the rapid growth of the church would have meant that there were both Jewish and Gentile Christians in all of these churches.”²⁹ But Witherington argues persuasively that the recipients were Hellenized Jewish Christians. Perhaps it is also worth pointing out that Peter did not address his epistle to churches, but to individuals who had been “scattered abroad” (1 Pet 1:1). In spite of Witherington’s strong arguments in favor of a Jewish Christian audience, he nevertheless adopts a supersessionist reading, in which the letter is ultimately addressing Gentile Christians.³⁰ In contrast, one of the most consistent expositions, from the perspective that the original audience was composed of Jewish Christians, is that of Arnold Fruchtenbaum.³¹

When 1 Peter 1:1 claims Peter as the author, evangelicals are prepared to accept the claim at face value. But when the book claims to have been written to Jewish believers in Jesus, the claim is all too often dismissed out of

²⁶Ibid., 24. Apparently, he believes a Jewish person ceases to be Jewish upon acceptance of Israel’s Messiah.

²⁷Ibid. See also 31, 87–88, 109–11, etc.

²⁸Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 17.

²⁹Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: IV, 1988), 39.

³⁰Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 31. He is largely persuaded on the basis of other New Testament texts that seem to support supersessionism, as well as 2:5, which speaks of the believers being “built up as a spiritual house.”

³¹Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Messianic Jewish Epistles: Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, Jude*, Ariel’s Bible Commentary (Tustin: Ariel Ministries, 2005), 315–85.

hand. Those who are otherwise committed to a literal grammatical-historical hermeneutic show a surprising, though disappointing, willingness to abandon it when they come to 1 Peter.

The Textual Evidence

The available textual data most often cited that bears on the nature of the recipients are found in 1:1, 14, 18; 2:10; and 4:3–5. Most commentators who decide that the audience must have been Gentile base this decision on 1:14 and 18, and then fit the remaining evidence into this schema. Therefore, primary attention then must be given to these verses.

The Description of a Former Life (1:14, 18). In 1:14 and 18, Peter refers to his readers' former lives with the following phrases: "the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance" and "your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers." Selwyn is representative of the consensus when he says, "While, for example, the 'vain conversation' of the readers' life before conversion admits of the view that they had been lapsed Jews, the description of it as 'handed down by tradition from your fathers' could hardly have been used of any but Gentiles."³² So "lapsed Jews" might be described as "ignorant" or as having had a "futile way of life," but it is the comment that this way of life was handed down "by tradition" from their fathers that makes it completely inapplicable to a Jewish audience. Jobes expresses the argument like this:

It is argued that Diaspora Jews of the first century could never have been described in such spiritually bankrupt terms and that the ways of Judaism would never have been described as a "useless way of life." Therefore, most interpreters today conclude that the original recipients must have been Gentile converts.³³

How are we to evaluate this conclusion in light of Scripture? To begin with, in 1:14, Peter speaks of their "lusts" (ἐπιθυμίας). Paul, in Ephesians 2:3, says of his life before conversion, "Among them [i.e., trespasses and sins] we too all formerly lived in the lusts (ἐπιθυμίας) of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

Peter also speaks of their "ignorance" (ἀγνοία), and when he does, the theme of spiritual insensitivity, found throughout the book of Isaiah, must certainly come to mind. In Isaiah 1:3, God says, "An ox knows its owner, and a donkey its master's manger, but Israel does not know, My people do not understand." In Isaiah 44:18, the prophet says, "They [i.e., the majority of Israel] do not know, nor do they understand, for He [i.e., God] has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they

³²Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 43. In the same context, he also envisions them as "outside the pale of practicing Judaism."

³³Jobes, *1 Peter*, 23.

cannot comprehend.” In the New Testament, Paul affirms the same truth about Jewish unbelievers when he says, “For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God” (Rom 10:2–3). Of his own life before he met the Messiah, he says, “I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly (ἄγνοῶν) in unbelief” (1 Tim 1:13). This is the testimony of Paul, but what of Peter?

It is interesting that Peter and John are described in Acts 4:13 as “uneducated and untrained” (ἀγράμματοί . . . καὶ ἰδιῶται). Darrell Bock claims that this has reference to “religious instruction.”³⁴ Peter and John were laymen whose religious instruction had been outside of official channels, i.e., apart from Pharisaic tradition. Ironically, Peter refers to those who were schooled in these traditions as “ignorant.” His words are most telling, as he addresses a crowd in the temple: “And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance [κατὰ ἄγνοιαν], just as your rulers did also” (Acts 3:17). Here the very same Peter who later would write 1 Peter 1:14 is addressing, not Diaspora Jews or “lapsed Jews,” but Jerusalem Jews who were in the very precincts of the temple, and he says they acted in ignorance, even as the leaders of the nation. This usage is exactly parallel with what he says in 1 Peter 1:14 and should remove any hesitancy about the applicability of this term to the Jewish people in this context.³⁵

In 1:18, Peter also refers to their formerly “futile way of life inherited from [their] forefathers.” The word used here, πατροπαραδότου (literally: father-traditions, or traditions of the fathers) is unique in the New Testament, but there are many similar references to the “traditions” of the Pharisees, of the elders, or simply of men.³⁶ This oral law of the Pharisees had been passed down for a number of generations, and both Jesus and Paul actively opposed it. For example, Jesus referred to “the tradition of the elders” (Mark 7:3), and He claimed that these traditions caused the Pharisees and scribes to “transgress the commandment of God” (Matt 15:3) and “invalidate the word of God” (Matt 15:7). Paul also refers to “the ancestral traditions.” He says of himself (Gal 1:14), “and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions” (τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων). Here is Saul, “a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees” (Acts 23:6), describing his formerly futile way of life by speaking of his zeal for the traditions of his ancestors. His testimony should count for something, as well. This terminology in 1:18 is perfectly consistent with a Jewish audience.

³⁴Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 195.

³⁵Witherington says, “This theme of ignorance, however, is found elsewhere in the New Testament applied quite specifically to Jews alone.” Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 30.

³⁶Matt 15:2, 3, 6; Mark 7:3, 5, 8, 9, 13; Gal 1:14; and Col 2:8.

The Description of Outsiders (4:3–5). Nevertheless, many modern Gentile scholars simply refuse to believe that these things might have been applicable to a Jewish audience. Therefore, already having decided that terms formerly applied to Israel now apply to Gentiles, these scholars also decide that terms which ordinarily would apply to Gentiles (in 4:3–4), must apply to non-Christians.

For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. And in all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excess of dissipation, and they malign you.

Those outside of the circle to whom Peter is writing are referred to as “Gentiles” (ἔθνη). The pronouns are most significant: “You” are not a part of “them” and “they” are surprised that “you” do not run with “them,” and therefore, “they” malign “you.” It would hardly be possible to draw a sharper contrast between the Gentiles and Peter’s audience. The clear implication is that his audience is comprised of Jewish believers. Since, however, it has been concluded that the audience, though Gentile, is being addressed as the “true Israel,” then the word “Gentiles” is reinterpreted as “unbelievers,” or non-Christians.³⁷ This interpretation, however, is found nowhere else in the New Testament, and, therefore, it amounts to nothing more than special pleading. Redefinition, like allegory, is limited only by the creativity of the interpreter.

An objection might be raised: If 1 Peter is addressed to Jewish believers, what does it mean that they were carrying out the desire of the Gentiles, with these drunken parties and “abominable idolatries”? Witherington, after citing other passages in the Pauline corpus which refer to the same sorts of activities (e.g., 1 Cor 8–10, Acts 15:20, 29; and Rev 2:14), suggests social situations in which these very types of activities might have involved Jews, especially in connection with business and with trade guilds.³⁸ To leave these activities behind, as his readers have, would have led to negative social consequences (e.g., as described in 1 Pet 4:4).

The Description of a Change in Status (2:10). Once again, taking a backward glance, Peter describes his readers’ former status to contrast it with a change that has taken place. In 1 Peter 2:10, he says: “For you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” This certainly sounds as if it would apply to a Gentile readership, and indeed it might, but it is an allusion to Hosea 1–2, where it has reference to Israel. In the context of Hosea, God is speaking of the alienation of Israel from fellowship with Him. It is not that the

³⁷Michaels, *1 Peter*, 230; Grudem, *1 Peter*, 49. See also Jobes, *1 Peter*, 267.

³⁸Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 26, 30, 196–97, See also Elliott, 70.

covenantal relationship is broken, but that a functional relationship is not in place. The thought that this verse could refer to Gentile Christians is termed “very odd” by Witherington, “where Hosea is clearly speaking of and about *Jews*, and offering a prophetic critique of their behavior.”³⁹ By the way, the Greek text states, οἱ ποτε οὐ λαὸς νῦν δὲ λαὸς θεοῦ (“who once were not a people, but now are a people of God”). The translators have supplied the definite article, so that it reads, “the people of God,” but it is not in the original.⁴⁰

Some commentators not only ignore the continuing validity of the Abrahamic Covenant, but seem to be laboring under the idea that the Mosaic Covenant was dependent upon Israel’s faithfulness, and thus conclude that Israel no longer had a valid covenant relationship with God.⁴¹ The blessings of the Mosaic Covenant were linked to Israel’s obedience, but not the covenant itself. The covenant was based upon God’s faithfulness alone; it was not contingent on the behavior of mankind. In contrast to the Abrahamic Covenant, which was irrevocable (Rom 11:29), the Mosaic Covenant was revocable (Heb 7:11–19; 8:13), but only by God. In Galatians 4:4–5, Paul says, “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” Not only was the Law still in effect, Messiah had to have been born under the Law so that He could redeem us from the demands of the Law. It was necessary for Jesus to satisfy the demands of the Law so that He could suffer the curse of the Law on our behalf (Gal 3:13). In spite of the frequent lapses and continued rebellion of the nation against the Lord, the Mosaic Covenant remained intact until the establishment of the New Covenant. This is to say that the lifespan of the Mosaic Covenant was not determined by Israel’s obedience or disobedience, but solely by God’s purposes.

With this understanding, it becomes clear that Hosea is not presenting Israel as having broken the Mosaic Covenant, such that they were no longer the covenant people, but that although they were alienated from their God, He would overcome their rebellion, master their willfulness, and bring them to Himself (e.g., see Hos 1:10–11; 2:6–7, 14–23). This is the experience of Peter’s recipients. As unsaved Jews, living a “futile way of life inherited from [their] fathers” (1:18), they have now been redeemed “with the precious blood as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ” (1:19), to join the remnant of Israel. As such, they are the token and guarantee of the nation’s future salvation (Rom 11:16, 26). The emphasis is on God’s ability and resolve to restore the relationship and overcome Israel’s defection.

³⁹Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 28. Italics original.

⁴⁰See Diprose, *Israel and the Church*, 54–55.

⁴¹E.g., see Jobes, *1 Peter*, 163; W. Edward Glenny, “The Israelite Imagery of 1 Peter 2,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*, edited by Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 170, 181.

Because of the change in status described in verse 10 (“now you are the people of God . . . now you have received mercy”), the descriptive phrases of verse 9 make perfect sense. Peter tells his original readers, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” W. Edward Glenny provides valuable information about each of these terms and their Old Testament significance.⁴² In addition, it should be noted that the church is never referred to as a “race” or a “nation.”⁴³ The church is to be composed of many ethnicities and many nations. These verses have reference to the remnant of Israel that has put its trust in Jesus, the Messiah of Israel. What has not yet been actualized in the nation God is doing in the remnant. He is making them all that Israel was to have been and therefore a foretaste of what the nation will be one day.

The Designation of the Recipients (1:1). Peter addresses his recipients in fairly clear terms: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen.” The question is not what these terms mean but whether they should be taken literally or figuratively. Calvin writes regarding the word “aliens” in 1 Peter 1:1:

They who think that all the godly are thus called, because they are strangers in the world, and are advancing towards the celestial country, are much mistaken, and this mistake is evident from the word *dispersion* which immediately follows; for this can apply only to the Jews, not only because they were banished from their own country and scattered here and there, but also because they had been driven out of that land which had been promised to them by the Lord as a perpetual inheritance.⁴⁴

The readers are addressed more literally as “the chosen ones, exiles of the Diaspora.”⁴⁵ The first of these words, “chosen ones” (ἐκλεκτοί), is used in Romans 11:5 and 7 of the remnant of Israel who believe in Jesus. Barry Horner says, “For the apostle, [“chosen ones”] focuses principally on Israel’s

⁴²Glenny, “The Israelite Imagery of 1 Peter 2,” 156–57.

⁴³The translations of the NASB and the Holman Christian Standard Bible in such references as 1 Pet 2:9, “But you are a chosen *race* [etc.]” are questionable (cf. also Mark 7:26 and Acts 7:19). Γένος refers to the descendants of a common ancestor. When used with a small group, it means “family, relatives,” and, with a large group, as here, it means “nation, people.” See Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd rev. ed., edited by Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001), s.v. “γένος.” The people of Israel are not a race, but an ethnic group. It should also be noted that many of the theological statements about the Jewish believers who are addressed (e.g., the fact that they have been chosen, 1:2) are also true of Gentile Christians (cf. Eph 1:4 and Col 3:12–14).

⁴⁴John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, translated by John Owen (Bellingham, WA, 2010), Logos Bible Software, 25. Italics Original.

⁴⁵Translation is the author’s.

national election in which Jewish Christians individually participated.”⁴⁶ The next word, “exiles” (παρεπιδήμους), is only found one other time outside of 1 Peter, in Hebrews 11:13, and refers to the faithful remnant in the Old Testament. The last word, “Diaspora” (διασποράς), is a technical term that is used to refer to the scattering of Jewish people outside the land of Israel. Witherington comments:

Twelve times in the LXX *diaspora* is the rendering of the Hebrew *gôlâ*, and notably there is an instance where *paroikia* is also translated *gôlâ*, (2 Esd 8:35). In light of the highly Jewish character of 1 Peter anyway, it seems logical to conclude that, since in all the above references it is *Jews* who are called resident aliens, we should surely conclude that this is likely in 1 Peter as well.⁴⁷

Turning to the New Testament, the word is found here in 1 Peter, James 1:1, and in John 7:35, and in these other two instances it refers to the Diaspora of the Jewish people from the land of Israel. If the word means something different or is to be taken metaphorically in 1 Peter, it would be a departure from every other instance in the Bible. Witherington also points out that “especially since we have a list of actual locations in the Diaspora, it likely connotes both a physical place and a social condition.”⁴⁸ He says, “It didn’t mean being on earth as opposed to being in heaven. It meant being outside of Israel as opposed to dwelling in the Holy Land.”⁴⁹ There are no good reasons for a refusal to take any of these terms in their ordinary sense.

When the same verse claims that the author is Peter, evangelical scholars accept the testimony of the letter that it was written by Peter. Should they not also accept the testimony of the letter that it was written to Jewish believers, who constitute the remnant of Israel and who were scattered outside the land of Israel?

It is sometimes argued that, in any case, congregations at this time would not have been entirely Jewish or Gentile, so he had to have been writing to mixed congregations. The problem with this claim, as has been mentioned earlier, is that the letter is not addressed to congregations but to Jewish believers.⁵⁰ Peter says he is writing to Jewish believers in Jesus who constitute a part of the Diaspora in the geographical regions he specifies.

Of the five specific geographic areas in which his readers dwell (1 Pet 1:1), three (Pontus, Cappadocia, and Asia) are also mentioned as the places of origin of the Jewish people who heard Peter’s sermon on the Day of

⁴⁶Horner, *Future Israel*, 287.

⁴⁷Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 24. Italics Original

⁴⁸Ibid., 65.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰In passing, it should be noted that James addressed his epistle “to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad” (Jas 1:1). To identify the recipients of these epistles as congregations is to superimpose a Pauline pattern on James and Peter. This is also the most likely reason some claim a “mixed” audience—they are trying to fit the recipients into a congregational setting.

Pentecost (Acts 2:9). It is speculative, but not improbable, that they returned to establish churches in these areas and maintained a connection with Peter.⁵¹

Topical Evidence for a Jewish Audience

The subject matter of the letter also supports the thesis that they were Jewish Christians. Peter uses imagery and topics that betray not only his own background, but that of his readers as well. This is particularly evident when he discusses the Shepherd and the sheep and the Temple of Jerusalem.

The Shepherd of Israel. Peter tells his readers “For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls” (1 Pet 2:25), and he refers to “the Chief Shepherd” in 1 Peter 5:4. It is true that the Lord has “other sheep, which are not of this fold” (John 10:16), but He is preeminently the Shepherd of Israel. Messiah is called, “the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel” (Gen 49:24). The psalmist says, “Oh, give ear, Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who are enthroned *above* the cherubim, shine forth!” (Psa 80:1). Jeremiah says, “He who scattered Israel will gather him and keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock” (Jer 31:10). Regarding the Messiah, who is to be born in Bethlehem, Micah says, “And He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God” (Mic 5:4). Peter is speaking of the remnant of Israel in 1 Peter 2:25, when he says, “For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.” Regarding their former life, he makes allusion to Isaiah 53:6 (they had “gone astray”), but now they have returned to the Shepherd of Israel. Though the majority of the nation is still straying, the remnant has returned.

Temple Imagery. Peter also uses many references to Temple imagery. This begins with 1:2, where Peter tells his readers that they have been “sprinkled with His blood,” portraying Jesus as the ultimate atoning sacrifice. In Leviticus, following a discussion of the sacrifices (Lev 1–10), Moses turns to purity (Lev 11–20), and Peter likely has this section in mind in 1:14–16, as he quotes from Leviticus 19:26 in verse 16: “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” He speaks of his readers’ “redemption” in 1:18 “with the precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Messiah” (1:19). This has reference to the Passover Lamb that would provide ultimate atonement for sin, in contrast to the bulls and goats, which provided only temporary atonement. This was also expressed in Isaiah 53:4–9, and in the announcement of John the Baptist: “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). The Lamb of God has provided purification not merely for the body, as with the ritual baths near the Temple, but purification for the soul (1:22). In 1 Peter 3:18, Peter pictures Messiah as presenting us before the Lord. This is reminiscent of a phrase that recurs fifty-eight times in Leviticus, alone: “before the LORD.” Not only were sacrifices to be presented

⁵¹See Jobes, *1 Peter*, 27.

“before the LORD,” but also the accused (Num 5). In 2:5, Peter says, “you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” All of this and more, in the very topics addressed, point to a Jewish Christian audience.

Additional Evidence for a Jewish Audience

Although space does not permit a full examination of the evidence for Jewish Christian addressees, the major remaining points can be summarized as follows:

1. Witherington points out that the word “alien” in 2:11 “does not mean either ‘exile’ or ‘pilgrim’ and should not be so translated. It literally refers to someone who lives beside or outside the house. In other words, it refers to someone who is not part of the in-group in that particular social locale. The usage of *paroikos* to refer to an actual resident alien status of Jews in exile from Israel is prevalent in the LXX.”⁵² This language supports a Jewish Christian audience.
2. There is a greater concentration of Old Testament quotations and allusions in 1 Peter than in any other New Testament book. This is not proof that the recipients were Jewish, but it is evidence that should be considered. According to Lange, Weiss affirmed that “No portion of the New Testament is so thoroughly interwoven with quotations from and allusions to the Old Testament. (It contains, in 105 verses, twenty-three quotations, while the epistle to the Ephesians has only seven, and that to the Galatians, only thirteen).”⁵³ Judging by the author’s extensive use of the Old Testament, not only was his mind saturated with Scripture, but he expected his readers to be equally familiar with these texts. Michaels says, “Clearly the Jewish Scriptures are a major source for the author of 1 Peter, and an authority to which he appeals at decisive points.”⁵⁴ The widespread use of Old Testament Scripture supports the thesis of a Jewish Christian audience.
3. Galatians 2:9 indicates that Peter’s mission (along with those of James and John) was to the Jewish people. The recipients of the epistle of James are generally believed to have been Jewish Christians, so it would make sense that Peter’s epistle would have been to Jewish Christians, as well.⁵⁵

⁵²Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 24.

⁵³Lange, *The First Epistle General of Peter*, 8.

⁵⁴Michaels, *1 Peter*, xli.

⁵⁵E.g., see Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 28 and 63–

Peter was not trying to fool modern interpreters by writing as if he were writing to Jewish believers—he really was writing to Jewish believers.

Interpretive Implications for 1 Peter 2:4–10

Peter says that Jesus is the living stone (v. 4), the cornerstone (v. 6), the rejected stone (v. 7), and the stumbling stone (v. 8). The phrase, “living stone” (λίθον ζῶντα), is found in secular sources referring to unhewn stone in its natural state.⁵⁶ Perhaps Michaels is right when he suggests that “living” is being used by Peter to suggest that he is employing “stone” in a metaphorical sense. Nevertheless, it should be noted that according to Torah, the altar was to be built of unhewn, or “living,” stones (Deut 27:5–6).⁵⁷ Here in 1 Peter 2, “house” is being used with special reference to the temple and altar. It is “for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (v. 5). This should be a clue that Peter is not using the “house” imagery in the same way Paul does in Ephesians 2:19–22 to signify the church of Gentiles and Jews who believe in Jesus.

So, what does Peter intend with this “house”? First it should be noted that “house” can, and often does, refer both to a building and to a family or household.⁵⁸ In 1 Samuel 7, David wanted to build a “house” for God in the sense of a temple. God promised instead to build a “house” for David in the sense of a dynasty. Witherington notes that “the image of house as temple certainly does not exclude the image of house as household or family.”⁵⁹

Second, it will be necessary to answer a prior question: Who has stumbled and who has rejected the salvation offered by the Rock of Israel? Peter ties together a number of Old Testament references that have to do with the stone of stumbling. Psalm 118:22, Isaiah 8:14, and Isaiah 28:16 are all used in 1 Peter 2:6–8. Each of these speaks directly of the Messiah of Israel, the Son of David. He is the direct fulfillment of these prophecies. Psalm 118:22, for example, is cited by Jesus (Matt 21:42–44; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17), alluded to by Paul (Rom 11:11), and quoted by Peter (Acts 4:11). Each of these are given in a context where the contrast is not between Jews and Gentiles, or between believers and pagans, but between the obdurate majority of Israel and the righteous remnant.

This is also seen in Isaiah 8. Following the inauguration of the judgment of spiritual blindness or obduracy on the majority of the nation in chapter 6, Isaiah encounters the king, who exemplifies the blindness he has just pronounced. He nevertheless calls forth the remnant and gives the object of hope and salvation in chapter 7, the virgin-born Immanuel. In chapter

64. The recipients of the Johanne epistles are much more difficult to define.

⁵⁶See Michaels, *1 Peter*, 98.

⁵⁷Perhaps the stone of Dan 2:34, 45 is also relevant.

⁵⁸For this latter usage, see Exod 16:31; 19:3 (of Jacob//sons of Israel); 40:38; Lev 10:6; 17:3, 8, 10; 22:18.

⁵⁹Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 114–15.

8, the Lord provides instructions for Isaiah and his disciples who constitute the remnant of Israel. It is in this context that he speaks of the stone of stumbling, for the Lord will be a sanctuary for the remnant, but to the rest, He will become a “a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, and a snare and a trap” (v. 14, Isa 8:14).

Paul picks this up in Romans 11 and asks concerning the majority of the nation, “I say then they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous” (Rom 11:11). In verse 15, Paul refers to their “rejection” (ἀποβολή) of this “salvation [which] has come to the Gentiles” (v. 11).⁶⁰ Part of the nation has stumbled over Messiah, to be sure, but there is yet the certainty that God is still dealing with them, even in their unbelief. Paul says it is the “rest” of Israel, who were “hardened” (Rom 11:7). These are they who are used in opposition to the “remnant” of Israel (Rom 11:5). Here we have the only references in the New Testament where “stumble” and “rejection” are used together, outside of 1 Peter 2.⁶¹

In this pericope of 1 Peter, as in Psalm 118:22, it is clear that the contrast is not between Jews and Gentiles nor Christians and pagans, but it is between Jews who believe in Jesus and Jews who do not. This being the case, the “house” of verse five must refer to Jewish believers in Jesus. Fruchtenbaum says, “The ‘house’ is the Israel of God (Gal 6:16). The Israel of God is not comprised of the Church but of the Jewish believers. The term Israel of God is equivalent to the term the Remnant of Israel.”⁶² He adds, “In the New Testament, the Greek word for priesthood is found only twice: in this verse [v. 5] and again in verse 9. In the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, the word for priesthood is also found only twice: Exodus 19:6 and 23:22, where it is used to describe Israel as a royal priesthood.”⁶³ The conclusion, then, is that the “house” of 1 Peter 2:5 is not the same as the “temple” in Ephesians 2:19–22. Instead, it is speaking of the Jewish believers in Asia Minor who have joined the remnant of Israel that will be preserved in an unbroken chain until the redemption of the nation.

If 1 Peter, like the other General Epistles, was addressed to Jewish Christians, then in 2:9–10, Peter is saying that the remnant of Israel (i.e., Jewish Christians) have entered into the role God announced for the nation in Exodus 19:5–6. The nation was not able to assume this role following the Exodus from Egypt, but Paul reveals that it will in the future when the

⁶⁰For more on the interpretation of Rom 11:15, see Jim R. Sibley, “Has the Church Put Israel on the Shelf? The Evidence from Romans 11:15” in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, (215), 577–81.

⁶¹See Rom 11:1, 11, and 15. The vocabulary is not the same in Romans 11 (ἀπίστωτο, ἀποβολή/ἔπταισαν) and in 1 Peter 2:7–8 (ἀπεδοκίμασαν/προσκόμματος). The first set of words is not used together outside of Romans 11, neither is the second set of words used together outside of 1 Peter 2. Nevertheless, the concepts that they express are only used together in these two places.

⁶²Fruchtenbaum, *The Messianic Jewish Epistles*, 340.

⁶³Ibid.

nation is reborn (Rom 11:11–27). In the meantime, the remnant of Israel is fulfilling this role through the redemption which is theirs “with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ” (1 Pet 1:19). This is Israel’s calling, and Paul insists that, “the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom 11:29). Israel’s calling and mission did not end with the coming of the Messiah, otherwise Paul would have used the past tense. Of course, Gentile Christians now partake of this salvation as engrafted branches (Rom 11:17–24), and enjoy the same spiritual blessings, but these realities do not justify a supersessionist reading of this text in 1 Peter.⁶⁴

Some Theological Implications

Priesthood of the Believer

Some may believe that the significant doctrine of the priesthood of the believer is threatened by the interpretation of 1 Peter 2:4–10 given above. The priesthood of the believer is actually a phrase that suggests a cluster of related doctrinal truths, including the perspicuity of Scripture, soul competence, the essential equality of believers in the church, and the effectual prayer of the believer. Each of these can be fully justified on the basis of other texts. Certainly, these truths are not dependent upon 1 Peter 2:9–10. But what is lost when the priesthood of the believer is based upon this passage is its original significance regarding the remnant of Israel.

Supersessionism

Mountains of books and commentaries and file folders full of papers and articles, all reflecting erudite scholarship and prodigious effort are based upon the presumption that 1 Peter was addressed to Gentile Christians or to congregations of both Jewish and Gentile Christians. Several authors have suggested that the letter should be interpreted in light of a controlling metaphor.⁶⁵ In fact, several different “controlling metaphors” have been suggested. Others believe the book is to be interpreted typologically. But if 1 Peter was written to the remnant of Israel, all of this is swept away.

In today’s world, God’s dealings with the Jewish people on the stage of current events, drawing them back from the four corners of the earth to the Land of Israel and to their own state, and the rapidly growing numbers of Jewish believers in Yeshua (Jesus) increasingly amplify the cognitive

⁶⁴Ibid., 341.

⁶⁵E.g., see Glenny, “The Israelite Imagery of 1 Peter 2”; Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); Troy W. Martin, *Metaphor and Composition in 1 Peter*, SBL Dissertation Series 131 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992); Andrew M. Mbuvi, *Temple, Exile and Identity in 1 Peter* (London: T&T Clark International, 2007); Torrey Seland, “παροικος και παρεπιδημος: Proselyte Characterizations in 1 Peter?” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 11 (2011): 239–40; etc. James M. Hamilton, Jr. claims that 1 Peter should be understood in terms of new-exodus imagery. Some of his interpretations seem forced, but even so, in his and other such attempts the application would make more sense if applied to Jewish believers. See James M. Hamilton, Jr., *God’s Glory in Salvation Through Judgment* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 522–28.

dissonance inherent within supersessionist theology. If it were ever possible to make a credible case that the Jewish people were no longer uniquely relevant to God's purposes, that possibility is rapidly eroding.

Conclusion

The interpretations of, and conclusions based upon, 1 Peter are directly dependent on the question of the recipients of the epistle. Yet, strangely, there is seldom a rigorous review of the evidence. This article has attempted to suggest that such an investigation will indicate that the original readers were Jewish believers. This profoundly affects the epistle's interpretation. Just as when an old masterpiece is cleaned and restored, stripping away a supersessionist presupposition is sure to yield the surprising beauty intended by the author.

When 1 Peter is read in light of an original audience of Jewish believers in Jesus, nothing is lost, but much is gained. Reading this letter "over the shoulders" of the Jewish believers to whom it was originally addressed is deeply instructive for all believers today. Peter writes these Jewish believers as they are experiencing escalating persecution from both Jews and Gentiles, and he encourages them to endure faithfully and victoriously by living holy lives and by keeping their focus on Jesus, the Messiah, who died for them. This is the very message Jewish believers will need in times of future tribulation.

Review Essay:
A Strange Sort of Orthodoxy:
An Analysis of the T4T and
CPM Approach to Missions

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Introduction

When I joined the International Mission Board (IMB) over a decade ago, it felt in some ways like entering a foreign culture. I am not referring here to the Russian culture: a new language, different food, unfamiliar social clues, strict rules for standing in line, beginning a conversation, and making friends. This type of culture shock was to be expected and I was—at least intellectually—prepared for this cold and abrupt immersion into the unknown. I was less prepared for the fact that the organization itself had its own culture. Of course this is true of any large organization, but was new to me. Having previously been a public school teacher and bi-vocational minister, I had no experience in corporate business management, and the only Christian organization that I knew much about was the local church. This was something different. There were detailed policies and procedures to be followed, a well-developed structure relegating responsibilities and supervisory relationships, and a glossary full of acronyms to be learned. For an organization efficiently employing thousands of personnel in every region of the globe, it could hardly be otherwise, and this was actually a fascinating part of my entry phase. Before long, I was navigating the system like an old hat and fluently conversing about SCs, FPOs, STAS, and GCCs.¹ To this day, I am amazed by the sheer magnitude of the apparatus, and the caliber of people whom I get to call my colleagues.

There was, however, a third cultural shock that did not pass: a different way of thinking about evangelism, discipleship, and church-planting. The prevailing mentality in the IMB highly valued the rapid multiplication of small groups but seemed to me to disparage thorough, careful attention to doctrine or more traditional forms of evangelism and Bible teaching. While there was much that I appreciated in the new school of thought, there was

¹These acronyms are commonly used by the International Mission Board. SC stands for Strategy Coordinator, FPO for Field Personnel Orientation, STAS for Stateside Assignment, and GCC for Great Commission Christian.

also much that simply did not sit right with me biblically. At first, I thought this might be nothing more than my own growing-pains as a new missionary, getting past the short-sightedness that comes with being a “preacher-type” (a term I remember hearing during our orientation). Like the taste of borsht, rolling my R’s, sending and copying the right e-mails to the right people, and doing my monthly expense report, I expected that I would grow accustomed to this as well. But I never did. When the fog of other culture-shock lifted, my discomfort with some of the methodologies being advocated remained. If I had known all of this ahead of time, would I have even joined-up? Hence the present article. In it I attempt to narrow what I perceive to be a mis-siological information gap between the foreign mission field and the pew. Whatever else this article may be, it is an invitation to dialogue.

Towards gaining an insider understanding of the church-planting ethos of our foreign mission-field culture over the past twenty years or so, a stateside Southern Baptist could go a long way by reading two books: *Church Planting Movements* by David Garrison and *T4T: a Discipleship ReRevolution* by Steve Smith and Ying Kai.² In this article, I review the latter of the two.

T4T Methodology

It is important to test any ideology or methodology related to the gospel ministry based, first and foremost, on its faithfulness to Scripture, before commending its effectiveness. This is especially true when a method overtly claims to be biblical or, raising the bar further, purports to be a return to the real New-Testament way of doing things, getting back onboard to cooperate with “God’s vision”, etc., which this book does throughout. Such claims are effective in the sense that they demand our attention and obedience, but they also require that the author deliver on his sacred promise that what he is offering is a word from the Lord. (Which is what you are claiming when you say that something is “biblical” or “from God.”)

The book starts with a strong numbers-based appeal, citing the many millions of baptisms and thousands of new churches that have resulted from its approach. There are blanket statements about numbers that were “logged in faithfully and then recorded in the most conservative manner” (20), mention of researchers and their careful work and a table or two of numbers. It would be helpful if there were references to hard data that the reader could verify.

Perhaps I would not be so skeptical of the numbers if I had not spent more than a decade contributing to the system. For years, we turned in the numbers of those baptized by the Russian Baptist churches in our city as we were asked to do each year. I was surprised to hear reports presented to annual gatherings of the Southern Baptist Convention implying that our

²David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (Midlothian: WIGTake Resources, 2004); Steve Smith and Ying Kai, *T4T: a Discipleship ReRevolution* (Bangalore: WIGTake Resources, 2011).

missionaries are responsible for half a million baptisms overseas annually.³ I remember the stunning moment when I realized the source of those figures. They came from me and from others like me who had been asked to submit the local Baptist Union's numbers around the world. Since then, steps have been taken to ensure that statistics reported by the IMB more clearly reflect the ministry of its own missionaries.⁴ This experience cured me, however, of being dazzled by numbers related to overseas church-planting and evangelism.

If one assumes the numbers in T4T are all accurate, what is behind the numbers? To what extent are they actually a result of the approach advocated? What is meant by "church" and what do these churches believe? Surely any approach cannot be correct solely because of its numbers because numbers alone are not convincing. In the right situation, a numerical report can even be an encouraging testimony, but in itself is not a valid approach. Any model should be tested biblically and theologically apart from the numbers. In this case it is especially true since it purports to be the "rerevolution" back to real New Testament missions. If the approach is indeed biblically and theologically sound it should be adopted. If the approach is reasonable, but deals with practices not directly regulated by Scripture, then we may adopt it. If the approach runs contrary to the teachings of Scripture, we must reject it. With this methodological critique set, let us now turn to examine the approach of T4T itself.

Positives

Collection of Verses

Throughout the book biblical citations abound, and whether or not you agree with the author's interpretation of the selected texts, the inclusion of God's word is beneficial. I really enjoyed the sections from Acts at the beginning of the book's second chapter the highlighted the spread of the gospel across the Roman Empire. Just reading these selected verses was a joyful, worshipful experience that brought to remembrance how so many came to faith and began worshipping the Savior. Many other important passages related to discipleship and church-planting are included, especially from the Epistles. One of the benefits of this book is that it is written from the perspective of someone who has looked at the New Testament with evangelism and church-planting in mind. This makes the book's scriptural index a helpful tool (345-49).

Simple Approach to Group Bible-Study

Like many others, this book advocates a simple, discussion-based approach to studying the Bible in the context of small groups. These groups

³See, for example, Southern Baptist Convention, *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Southern Baptist Convention, 2005), 195.

⁴David Roach, "IMB addresses baptism numbers," *Baptist Press*, 21 March, 2016.

can be spiritually powerful and life-changing. By reading (or listening to) the Bible, responding to simple questions, and being encouraged actively to participate in informal discussions, believers and not-yet believers are exposed directly to God's Word.

Multiplication of Disciples

The notion of the multiplication of individual disciples as one Christian investing his life in another person is not only beneficial but is also biblical: the Bible speaks of spiritual replication over and over again. The T4T/CPM approach errs, however, when it goes beyond this clear principle and creates derivative principles. For example, the authors seem to state, "Well, logically, if the multiplication of *disciples* is biblical, then so must be the multiplication of *groups* of them, and therefore *churches*, and, while we're at it, God must want the multiplication of *movements*." The derivative aspirations are not clearly delineated in the Bible and possibly could distract from the real task of making disciples (Matt 28:19-20).

Gospel Sowing

Broad sowing of the gospel is advocated. Smith makes an important point that there is no command for soul-winners to prepare the soil before sowing (208). This perspective provides a good counter-balance to so-called "relational evangelism" that never quite gets around to presenting the gospel verbally and eliciting a response.

However, this could potentially neglect another truth. Being culturally sensitive, building relationships, investing time, and not treating people like projects are all good things. Assembly-line approaches to evangelism are problematic in that they typically do not take into account the spiritual process happening in a person's heart as he or she is confronted with the gospel by the Spirit. In light of the individual conversion testimonies actually found in the Bible, simplistic approaches to evangelism are too flippant. The gospel is too sacred and souls are too important for simplistic or flippant evangelism. For a balanced perspective on evangelism consider Sheldon Vanauken who was converted to Christianity after an extended period of long-distance mail correspondence with C.S. Lewis.⁵ The timetable of someone's conversion is in the hands of God. Often it seems to have more to do with exposure to Scripture than anything else. The bold-letter exhortation that "you must include a call to commitment" with every single gospel presentation should be tempered with sensitivity to the journey the person is on (219).

Baptism as a Profession of Faith

If there is one thing that does live up to the book's claim to be revolutionary in returning to New Testament norms, it is probably its perspective on baptism (237-47). In contemporary evangelism the outward profession of faith has been incorrectly removed from baptism to a simple act like signing

⁵Sheldon Vanauken, *A Severe Mercy* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980).

a card. Understanding the New Testament practice of baptism as a profession of faith actually helps us make sense of a number of otherwise difficult Bible verses. Salvation is a somewhat mysterious, spiritual act that God performs in an individual human heart. The New Testament authors utilize a variety of language to refer to salvation, such as “when you believed,” (Acts 19:2) or “repent and be baptized,” (Acts 2:38).⁶ There is no biblical precedent for training someone to a level of spiritual maturity before allowing them to be baptized. Truth be told, this is a particularly difficult one for those of us serving among Russian Baptists, where events in their history have led to this practice. I appreciated this section of the book and am challenged by it.

Problems with T4T

Making the Method the Message

Throughout the book the authors have made the method the message. Consider page 94:

2 Timothy 2:2 encourages multi-generational growth of trainers. The Great Commission itself commands us to teach others to obey all that Jesus commanded (which includes the Great Commission). Every generation is to be a training generation (94).

This short paragraph introduces the method of organizing training groups, witnessing to a certain number of people, and meeting for training (about starting more groups). The goal is to “Do whatever it takes to fill your schedule with training groups. This is the highest value activity of CPMs” (119). By contrast, Paul’s concept of multiplication in this text was not about reproducing the model, but about preaching the Word. What he intended for Timothy, Titus, and others to pass along was his teaching. He promised to send Timothy to Corinth to “remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” (1 Cor 4:17). The content of this teaching was not group multiplication. Paul’s content was the gospel: salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and exhortations to righteous living and right relationships. Paul’s approach was multifaceted but it was not about how to start groups or witness more.

The spiritual power of biblical discipleship is in Scripture, prayer, and the mutual encouragement of fellowship, not a multiplication model. In the T4T model, however, “the content is the most adaptable part of T4T” (92, 135). What is not adaptable in T4T is the mechanism. Each T4T session is divided into three thirds (look back/ look up/ look forward) which include a total of seven parts: pastoral care, worship, accountability (whether or not you witnessed), vision casting (how you are going to witness more), a new lesson from the Bible, practice (how you are going to witness), and setting

⁶Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

goals and prayer. Of these, accountability, vision casting, practice of the lesson, and setting goals are most integral to T4T (145).

Guilt-Based Motivation to Evangelism

T4T by far is not the only offender of guilt based motivation for evangelism. I recall speakers at evangelism conferences telling stories of people dying with cancer and then adding the punchline: “What if you had the cure for cancer in your pocket and you refused to share it with people. What would that make you?” Or there was the missionary trainer sharing statistics about the miniscule numbers of believers among a certain city or people group where the vast majority are lost. As the speaker’s voice rose in a crescendo, he pointed his finger in the face of a startled trainee and shouted “and it’s your fault!” On the mission field guilt-trip appeals are plentiful. Guilt does not provide boldness and it certainly does not inspire compassion. It just inspires feelings of guilt. T4T is not different in this regard. One case study gives the example of Little Moe, a fourteen-year-old boy who shamed the older members of his family for not being bold about evangelism and this was just “the breakthrough needed for a movement” (117). The New Testament does not present guilt-based appeals for Christians to evangelize. For the T4T model, the “fruitful soil people” are those that go on to become movement catalysts (a category of leadership absent in the New Testament) (111–14).

Church Leaders

T4T advocates a rapid turn-around time for the multiplication of churches and the training of leaders for those churches. “Every believer is empowered to start a new group or church” (155). The “20% principle” says that you train everyone (because anyone can plant and/or pastor a church) and roughly 20% will say “yes.” This should all happen the quicker as quickly as possible, resulting in very new Christians being assigned leadership over churches. This core-value of pursuing rapidity does not grow out of the New Testament, but out of expediency. But what qualifications does Paul give for a pastor?

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? *He must not be a recent convert*, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. (1 Tim 3:1–7, emphasis mine).

Smith deals with this passage by insisting that this is just one possible variation of the necessary qualifications of an elder. He admits that “The prohibition about new converts . . . is very important—for *the right setting*” (266). According to Smith, this is the list of qualifications where there are mature churches, but the list of qualifications that Paul gives to Titus are the ones intended for new churches. This is an implausible treatment of the text. First, Paul makes no distinction between mature and immature churches anywhere in any of his epistles. Second, the two pastoral qualification lists are remarkably similar. Consider Titus:

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. (Titus 1: 5–9)

In Timothy an elder must not be a novice. In Titus a potential elder “must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.” Clearly a pastor is to be one taught in the Word, holding firm to sound doctrine, and able to defend orthodoxy against heretics. Paul was not providing different qualifications for Ephesus and Crete. He was essentially saying the exact same thing to both Timothy and Titus using different words: an overseer needs to be spiritually mature and able to handle the Word well. In both lists, an exemplary moral life, strong family, and spiritual maturity are necessary prerequisites to pastoral ministry.

Jesus’ earthly ministry is also used in the book as an example of multiplying leaders. He did not call the disciples just to follow him but also to be “fishers of men.” Something important is left out, however. He said “Follow me *and I will make you* fishers of men” (Matt 4:19, emphasis mine). For a long time after the calling of the twelve, the disciples walked with Jesus, saw him preach repentance and heal the sick, listened as he taught publicly, spent special time with him that others did not get (when he explained the parables), and after a significant time of watching Jesus do ministry and listening to him teach, he told them, essentially, “go fish.” But even then, he started with a limited assignment: go into these cities by two’s, heal, preach, come back and report (Luke 10). There was a lot of water under the bridge before he finally said “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt

28:19). It is important not to undervalue the significant time investment of real life-on-life discipleship.

In response to the anticipated concern over this teaching, the author writes: “Perhaps the biggest concern about a CPM is that it feels out of control. It IS out of control—out of *your* control. But instead, you have commended it to the *King’s* control” (163). This sounds right at first, but it confuses “relinquishing control to the Lord” with shirking our responsibility to make disciples. Paul got all the way to the appointing of elders before relinquishing, not out of a self-serving desire to be in control, but out of a sense of responsibility to leave the church with mature leaders.

This urgency to make the multiplication happen faster seems to have led to a number of errors, cutting biblical corners, and forcing certain interpretations.

Obedience-Based Discipleship

Among these errors is a false dichotomy in biblical discipleship between knowledge and obedience (71–73, 78–80). True disciples are not those who know, but those who obey. According to this understanding, the important thing is to obey what you know, whether or not you know the whole story. The Bible, however, does not pit knowledge and obedience against each other in this way. Instead, spiritual maturity is described as a continuum of growth in a number of character traits, including knowledge. Here is what Peter wrote about the spiritual growth of the believer in Christ:

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, *you* will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Pet 1:5–8 NKJV).

There is no competition between the character traits here. They build on one another. One verse that might possibly be misinterpreted that way is 1 Corinthians 8:1: “Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.” Here, however, the contrast is not between knowing the right thing and doing the right thing, rather, it is a warning against pride. The contrast is between knowledge (in this case about meat sacrificed to idols) and love. At issue in both examples are internal character traits and our attitudes towards one another, not a concern for actions. This kind of discipleship leads to legalism and is man-centered rather than Christ-centered. Genuine spiritual maturity is more about character than performance. Even if doing the right things were key, what are those things? The T4T approach makes it seem like witnessing and starting new groups are the main commands of the New Testament. This simply is not true. Much more often in the New Testament are commands

about our attitudes, our treatment of one another, correct belief about salvation, avoiding moral sin, etc. The exhortation from James (quoted at the end of each chapter of T4T) to be a “doer of the word,” is a general exhortation to righteous living rather than a specific encouragement towards evangelism, group-formation, and training. The specific behaviors that James mentions include helping the poor, taming our tongue, avoiding pride, persevering amidst suffering, and various exhortations about how we believers should treat one another. These behaviors are barely mentioned in T4T. When we are growing in Christ in this way, the fruit will happen naturally. The valuable ones are those 20% who step up and do the right things. Everyone else—those who do not become trainers—are basically compared to the reprobates in the parable of the wheat and the tares. Though it is called “obedience-based discipleship” it really seems more like performance-based acceptance.

Starting with Pre-Existing Believers

An odd issue within the methodology of T4T is the idea of starting with pre-existing believers. The traditional churches are supposedly those that are not doing discipleship correctly and T4T practitioners are going to come and show how it is done. But we begin by using their members and training them to do T4T (186–91, 286–91). (This is accomplished in six steps: Mobilize the saved, finding the lost, evangelism, discipleship, church starting, and leadership development). Everything is supposedly reproducible, except for the first step, which only applies to the missionary (286). Though it might seem to be easier to first lead the lost to Christ and then train new converts, T4T seems to promote starting with pre-existing believers either because lost people are difficult to find for training, or because studies have shown that groups started by the existing churches are the ones that multiply. The biblical justification given for this is Acts 6:7 where a great number of Jewish priests came to faith (72). It is difficult to imagine national believers appreciating this parallel, and it certainly is not good hermeneutics. It is actually a strange sort of compliment that is being payed to these pre-existing churches: their members have a substantive knowledge of the Bible, are committed to the Lord, and are the best hope of starting a movement. Similar traditional churches won missionaries to (or reared us in) the faith, gave them much of our biblical education, sent them to the mission field where they provide financial support (though they do not yet understand the whole CPM thing). And here we missionaries are: the ones with the answers about how to do things the right way, a new way, a way that neither our senders, nor our receivers, nor we ourselves have ever seen in real life. I did not get it when I heard it at Field Personnel Orientation 13 years ago and I still do not get it now. You either partner with the national churches or you do not. This approach seems like nibbling around the edges of the church. If I were the national pastor, I would not appreciate it.

General Mishandling of the Scripture

The parable of the sower and the soils is interpreted to apply to our training of trainers (67–68, 110–11). According to the author, some people will be “good soil” and become trainers; others are not so good and are just workers, etc. This interpretation actually has nothing to do with the parable. The parable of the soils is about different responses to the gospel. Is the author saying that those who do not accept the T4T approach (or are not successful in it) are not saved? He seems to hint at this when citing the wheat and the tares in reference to those who do not become T4T trainers (69–70, 92–93, 159).

Finally, early on he makes the decision that “disciple” and “trainer” can be considered synonyms and used interchangeably (42–43). Explaining the passage in Matthew 10 where Jesus says “a disciple is not above his teacher,” the author writes, “We should use any English term that describes the true essence of the original Greek and Hebrew language of the Bible. In this case, we use the word ‘trainer’ instead of ‘disciple’ to denote that the follower of Jesus should be like his Master and emulate Him in all respects” (43). This is extremely forced. Beyond the fact that there is nothing here to suggest that disciple means “trainer,” this passage is not even talking about emulation. (Though, of course, we *should* emulate Jesus. There are plenty of passages that really do say that. Philippians 2 and Hebrew 13 come to mind). The purpose of the Matthew 10 passage is that we are *no better* than our Master and can expect no better treatment in this world than he received. We can expect to suffer like He suffered; be persecuted as He was persecuted; have our preaching rejected just as His was, etc.

These are some examples of taking verses out of context to support a preconceived point or reading more between the lines than the verse really says. This practice only weakens the overall argument of the book. This is especially true as it purports to be the “re-revolution” back to the New Testament. If this is really the case, it should not be difficult to make a case for the model biblically without doing damage to Scripture.

Listening is Not in the Program

One of the mantras often repeated to new missionaries is this: when engaging a new people-group or coming to the field for the first time, enter as a learner. This does not seem to be part of the T4T ethos. Instead, every person you meet falls into one of two categories—lost or saved. If they are lost you witness to them. If they are saved you offer to train them (35–36). However helpful this sounds it leaves something out. Is it possible that some of those saved people you meet might have something to teach you? For that matter, in our interaction with the unsaved, listening is a good activity. In both scenarios, however, the faithful T4T practitioner is the one who has his say with every person he meets. What about listening? Whether interacting with the lost, partnering with believers, or communicating with other missionary colleagues, an inability or unwillingness to listen is not

only a character flaw, but ultimately a real limitation. I am afraid that this weakness may be fostered by this approach.

Conclusion

T4T is one of the more recent manifestations of a church-planting ideology that has become ingrained in our foreign mission-field culture. I remember learning about CPMs as a new missionary. We were taught about various alternative notions of church. In these closed sessions, challenging questions were promptly shut down, and personnel were instructed that this was the program and they had better get with it. This was after everyone had already been through an appointment process that did not include this new teaching. New missionaries had been appointed by trustees who were largely unaware of this teaching, and had been educated in seminaries where they heard nothing remotely similar. After about a decade of most missionaries not seeing millions of converts and rapidly-reproducing “churches”—a season of significant burnout among the missionary force—the CPM rhetoric was toned down.

There is something vaguely familiar about the pro-T4T ethos today. Despite the fact that other more traditional approaches to evangelism and church-planting are actually seeing more results in Europe and Russia, belief in CPM ideology (of which T4T is a methodology) has become a strange sort of orthodoxy in some mission circles. To doubt the validity of CPMs is treated as an affront to the sacred. By contrast, solid biblical instruction, including pulpit preaching, is considered outdated and unnecessary. Concern for the spiritual maturity of a church’s leaders is undermined, and the concept of *church* itself has become rather fluid. Does this reflect the values or doctrine of the churches that have invested their prayers, members (both volunteer and career missionaries), and material support to the Task? It is only a matter of time before the rift between the senders and the sent surfaces. There is still time, however, for edifying dialogue between the two. Specifically, there is time for our stateside pastors to shepherd us again and speak into our methodology.

Book Reviews

Biblical Studies

***Jesus, the Temple, and the Coming Son of Man: A Commentary on Mark 13.* By Robert H. Stein. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014. 160 pages. Paperback. \$18.00.**

Robert H. Stein, senior professor of New Testament interpretation at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, has a career-long interest in the Gospel of Mark. His dissertation dealt with Mark and redaction criticism. Through the years he has authored a number of articles on Marcan studies. More recently, he wrote an excellent volume on Mark in the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament in 2008.

The current volume is a helpful commentary that takes the reader through the steps of a careful, conservative interpretation of the most difficult passage in Mark: chapter 13. This is often called “The Little Apocalypse” or “The Olivet Discourse” (although the latter title is more often given to Matthew 24).

This reader appreciates Stein’s attestations that: (1) there is “strong and convincing” proof of Marcan authorship of this Gospel (39), (2) there are clearly no post-70 AD elements in Mark 13, and the missing elements attest the Gospel was written pre-70 AD (35), (3) Marcan geography is correct (51), (4) Mark’s historical narrative is truthful—that he was a conservative editor of Jesus’ tradition (48), and (5) most relevant to this book: Mark faithfully recorded Jesus’ words to His Disciples in Mark 13, and this was not simply a Marcan creation. Stein provides a good brief overview of the three quests for the historical Jesus, a subject with which every student of the New Testament ought to be familiar (19–36). He also offers a valuable explanation of the warning against over-allegorizing of parables, showing the best way to interpret that genre as well as listing the different types of parables Jesus used (133).

One can easily cut to the chase and read the very helpful three-page chapter eight, which is Stein’s annotated interpretation of Mark 13 (136–38). However, the book is a fairly quick read, and it is greatly beneficial to let Stein take the reader through each interpretive step leading up to chapter 8. He says verses 1–23 refer to the coming destruction of the temple (which occurred in 70 AD), and he gives nine reasons for this assessment (66–69). He believes verses 24–27 refer to Christ’s return. Then the two parables refer to each future event again. The parable of the fig tree in verses 28–31 refers to the fall of the Temple, and the parable on watchfulness in verses 32–37 refers to Christ’s return.

In interpreting eschatological Scripture, there is much debate and disagreement—even among conservative scholars. In interpreting Mark 13 and Matthew 24 there are almost as many interpretive schemas as there are scholars. However, everyone greatly benefits when a scholar of Stein’s expertise leads the reader through a careful, thoughtful exegesis of the text. So, one does not need to agree with all of Stein’s conclusions to appreciate his excellent work and to benefit from reading his interpretation of the text.

Sometimes one can disagree with an idea while still appreciating it as interesting and thought provoking. For instance, Stein believes the best interpretation of the abomination of desolation (Mark 13:8) was the sacrilegious actions of the Zealots and their leaders prior to the fall of the temple (92). Of the other seven possibilities Stein lists (90–91), this reviewer prefers interpreting it as a future act of the anti-christ (2 Thess 2:3–4). Yet, Stein presents his argument well, is textually consistent, and gives good food for thought.

There are some minor areas in which this book could be improved. Although Stein makes brief references to Jesus' cleansing of the temple (54–55, 122–23) and cursing of the fig tree (Mark 11:12–26), more mining of the significance of Mark 13 in relationship with those acts would be helpful. The four indices (subject, author, Mark, and Scripture) are nice, but the subject index is lacking. For instance, none of these topics appear in the subject index even though they all appear several times in the book: genre, hyperbole, parable, theophanic signs, and watchman. "Because" is misspelled on page 130, and "Bar Kokhba" is misspelled in the subject index (147).

This excellent volume should interest and benefit any serious student of God's Word, and it deals with two important subjects. Much of this book deals with the 70 AD destruction of the Temple, a significant historical event for both Jews and Christians. This book also addresses the second coming of Jesus Christ—the blessed hope for all Christians.

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***Studies in the Pauline Epistles: Essays in Honor of Douglas J. Moo.* Edited by Matthew S. Harmon and Jay E. Smith. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 320 pages. Hardcover, \$49.99.**

Studies in the Pauline Epistles is a festschrift for Douglas Moo edited by two of his former students, Matthew Harmon and Jay Smith. The articles focus on two areas in which Moo had his most significant scholarly impact: Pauline studies and Bible translation. This volume is divided into three parts: (1) exegesis of the letters of Paul, (2) Paul's use of Scripture and the Jesus tradition, and (3) Pauline scholarship and its contemporary significance.

The first section, exegesis of the letters of Paul, begins with Ardel Caneday's article, where he argues that the phrase "will . . . reign in life" in Romans 5:17 refers to "the believer's present dominion over sin in these mortal bodies" (28). This is followed by Chris Valchos, who argues that in Romans 6–7, "deliverance from the law and its catalytic function occupies a seminal place in [Paul's] teaching regarding moral transformation" (48). Next, Moo's son, Johnathan Moo, argues that Paul transforms family relationships around his view of God and his love, which he describes quite well as "a counter cultural model" (61). Smith provides the next article, where he attempts to persuade Moo (and potential readers) that 1 Corinthians 6:18b constitutes a Corinthian maxim. Following Jay Smith, D.A. Carson examines the various reconstructions of the background of Galatians 2:11–14 and argues that the best understanding of οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς refers to unconverted Jews who were persecuting Christians in Jerusalem. To finish part one, Verlyn Verbrugge argues that in light of the construction μὴ . . . μόνον ἀλλὰ νῦν, in Philippians 2:12 the phrase "not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence" modifies the imperative, καταργήσεσθε, rather than the preceding indicative, ὑπηκούσατε.

Part two, "Paul's Use of Scripture and the Jesus Tradition" (127), begins with Craig Blomberg's article, "Quotations, Allusions, and Echoes of Jesus in Paul." Here, Blomberg uses Richard Hays's criteria for detecting Old Testament allusions in Paul to detect Pauline allusions to Jesus tradition. Next, Matthew Harmon adds to the debate surrounding Paul's use of the Old Testament in Galatians 4:21–5:1. He argues that instead of the usual either/or proposed here between allegory and typology, Paul is employing both methods. Osborne follows with his contribution, where he reverses his previous view on Paul's change of "received gifts" in Psalm 68:18 to "gave gifts" in Ephesians 4:7. He argues that this change is warranted based on the psalm as a whole.

Part three, "Pauline Scholarship and His Contemporary Significance" (179), begins with Robert Yarbrough, who argues that a salvation-historical approach to Paul is both beneficial and necessary to the interpreter. Beale follows by overviewing elements of Paul's eschatology that relate primarily to the idea that "the latter days" had already begun in Paul's time. The next two articles bear highly descriptive titles, James Dunn's "What's Right about the Old Perspective on Paul," and Stephen Westerholm's "What's Right about the New Perspective on Paul." N.T. Wright follows, arguing that a good translation of *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* should allow the reader to hear the resonant meaning, "covenant faithfulness," when reading it (250). Next, Thomas Schreiner discusses Paul's idea of truth and its relevance for postmodern culture. Mark Seifrid ends the volume by highlighting the contemporary application of Paul.

As a work honoring Douglas Moo, this volume fulfills its aim. In it, the authors engage in the contemporary debates surrounding Pauline studies and problems of translation, adding valuable insights to both fields. One of this book's overall strengths is that the contributors take widely divergent views, something that will be beneficial for students becoming acquainted with this area of study. Two articles are helpful here, "What's Right about the Old Perspective on Paul" by Dunn and "What's Right about the New Perspective on Paul" by Westerholm. These authors argue that there is some validity to their opponent's view and this in an area where authors seldom engage opposing views.

One article in particular stood out as an important contribution. Blomberg's article, "Quotations, Allusions, and Echoes of Jesus in Paul" is a much needed critique of Hays' assertion that it is difficult to prove that Paul had any knowledge of a Jesus tradition. By taking Hays' own criteria for detecting allusions, he showed that not only is it possible that Paul knew a Jesus tradition, but that applying Hays' method consistently nearly requires one assent that Paul knows that tradition. This adds a new point of legitimacy to a once-discarded theory.

While overwhelmingly positive in its contribution, one negative critique is noted. Beale's article, itself a helpful reminder of the already/not-yet concept in Paul, has some drawbacks. In some places, Beale asserts his ideas with no citation of Paul or other scholars to support his views. This is particularly striking in his assertion that the Sabbath continues and has been moved to Sunday (209). Also, when discussing justification, a central point of debate in Pauline studies, he provides a definition without at least acknowledging different views (207).

On the whole, however, this book is a positive contribution to Pauline studies. As mentioned above, it will aid the student who is entering this field by providing opposing views on Pauline studies. In addition, some articles, such as Blomberg's,

constitute valuable contributions to the field. *Studies in the Pauline Epistles*, then, is a fitting tribute to Douglas Moo.

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***Illustrated Life of Paul.* By Charles L. Quarles. Nashville: B&H, 2014. 300 pages. Paperback, \$29.99.**

The apostle Paul is one of the most important persons in the New Testament, and Charles Quarles has written a fine, well-illustrated introductory history of the ministry, writings, and theology of Paul (2, 37). In this book Quarles seeks to “wed deep love for the apostle Paul with deep love for the truth (ix),” and he certainly achieves his purpose. The book is aimed at lay people: the text is easy to understand, the Greek and Hebrew words are transliterated (e.g., 16, 31), and endnotes are used, although they are somewhat limited. However, this book will be of special benefit to beginning students of the New Testament.

The pictures and maps are excellent. The paper stock is a photographic quality on which the colors of the pictures are rich and vibrant. The pictures are top-notch. Fourteen of them are from the *Biblical Illustrator*, but most come from Wikipedia Commons (292). The full-color maps are excellent—not surprising since most of them appeared in the award-winning *Holman Bible Atlas* (see Thomas Brisco, *Holman Bible Atlas* [Nashville: B&H, 1998]).

This book has many strengths. First, Quarles shows a commitment to biblical inerrancy—in keeping with being a professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Second, he stays close to what the biblical text says. He is usually clear when he speculates beyond the text (e.g., 24, 57, 65), such as thinking that Paul may have been present to hear Gamaliel’s words in Acts 5:34–39 (21). However, other times Quarles does not indicate when he is speculating, which could mislead novices in Pauline studies (e.g., 5, 27, 64, 92, 127, 223, 226, 247). Third, the book deftly dovetails Paul’s travels and writings with the chronological order in Acts, so it is an excellent and quite complete introduction to Paul’s ministry and writings. Fourth, Quarles gives good descriptions of ancient practices, such as flogging (22) and stoning (23–24), and in describing places, such as the dangerous Sceironian Rocks near Athens (117). Fifth, he offers good analyses of some biblical events or teachings, such as the following: (1) three reasons Paul’s encounter with Jesus was more than just an internal revelation (it had external elements, 29–30), (2) two lessons from the conversion of Sergius Paulus (47–48), and (3) five aspects of justification (52–53).

The book is well written with a few minor mistakes. A picture caption should say “eleven miles” rather than “eleven mile” (47). The Damascus Gate depicted on page 193 was not the one Paul went through because this gate was built by Suleiman in AD 1537–41. The old Roman gate Paul went through has been excavated and visible for years, and this is the gate that is associated with Paul. Quarles indicates an ancient Jewish population needed to be sizeable to support a synagogue (99), but Jews formed synagogues with as few as ten Jewish men in a local area.

Here are some ways the book could be slightly improved. Give more information in the picture captions, such as (1) telling where the tomb of Gamaliel is (10), (2) explaining what a “tel” is (56), (3) noting that the mound at Derbe is a tel (83), and (4) stating that the picture of the Fortress Antonia is from a scale-model of Herodian Jerusalem at the Israel Museum. Adding a picture of the *bema* (judgment

seat) at Corinth would help since Paul appeared before Gallio at the Corinth *bema*. More explanation of a bronze prutah coin would help because most readers do not know what “1/1000 pound” means (214). It was worth 1/64 of a denarius, and a denarius was worth a day’s wage for a common ancient laborer. Also, a good discussion of the differences between a genuine site (such as the theater at Ephesus, scene of the riotous crowd in Acts 19:29, [167]) and a traditional site (such as the excavated prison at Philippi that *may* be the one in which Paul and Silas were imprisoned, [91]) would be helpful.

Quarles’s book makes an excellent companion volume to a similarly-illustrated book about Jesus by Herschel Hobbs (see Herschel Hobbs, *The Illustrated Life of Jesus* [Nashville: Holman Reference, 2000]). Also, Quarles’s book compares favorably with a similarly-illustrated book about Paul by Peter Walker (see Peter Walker, *In the Steps of Paul: An Illustrated Guide to the Apostle’s Life and Journeys* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008]). Both Quarles’s and Walker’s books on Paul are beneficial in different ways, so this reviewer recommends both of them. First, Quarles is more committed to the inerrancy of the biblical text, and this doctrinal stance is important. Second, Quarles’s book has better maps. Third, although Quarles uses fewer pictures, the paper is of better quality, so they look better. Fourth, Quarles’s text has more of a smooth narrative flow; whereas, Walker’s book is more episodic. However, Walker’s book has helpful excursus sections and includes helpful layouts of major buildings in ancient cities as well as key dates of historical events in those cities.

Charles L. Quarles has written an excellent, well-illustrated introduction to the apostle Paul. This reviewer highly recommends it to lay readers and Bible students.

James R. Wicker

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***The Story Telling God.* By Jared C. Wilson. Wheaton: Crossway, 2014. 192 pages. Paperback, \$14.99.**

In *The Storytelling God*, Jared Wilson demonstrates that the parables of Christ are tales designed to point to the glory of Jesus, rather than moral urgings for upright living. Working against the tendency to moralize these parables, Wilson drives home the parables’ primary purpose of providing a glimpse into the kingdom of God.

Among the introductory matters charted in the book, chapters 1–2 explain the issues in defining a parable and common errors that can result. Wilson argues that rather than seeing them as inspirational short stories, Christians should understand the parables as “wisdom scenes,” illustrations that are meant to “run alongside their points and reveal them in rather immediate ways” (28). If these parables are truly wisdom scenes, then what wisdom are they depicting? As chapter 3 states, Christ is the embodiment of the wisdom of God, and these wisdom scenes underscore “the centrality and supremacy of Christ” (55–57).

Continuing along these lines, chapters 4–7 examine the nature of the parables specifically, focusing on the glory of Christ as the underlying theme of each parable. Chapter 5 states that by making a lowly shepherd or a woman the heroes of these parables, Jesus is identifying with these kinds of commonplace people. He is not lording over them but rather debasing himself to say that the kingdom is specifically for them. Through examples such as these, Wilson makes a case for the gospel in the parables by stating that Christ is willing to be put in the place of people such as these, or rather, such as us. Setting forth the idea that Jesus is willing to be numbered

among the transgressors (Isa 53:12, Luke 22:37) to become like us, that we might become like Him (71).

Chapter 8 notes that even much of the old covenant prophecy could be labeled a parable, as Wilson recalls that the Hebrew word for parable (*mashal*) in the Old Testament is also used for proverbs, riddles, and similes. Here, he identifies parables in the Old Testament that connect to the kingdom of God and convey God's prophetic truths, such as the prophet Ezekiel's parables (Ezek 20:49). Wilson evaluates poetic stories and narratives in the Old Testament to conclude that they serve to reveal God's truth in a parabolic way to their hearers, just as the parables of Jesus do.

Wilson has not sought to address every clearly identified parable of Jesus, much less every momentous occurrence of metaphor and symbol found in the Gospels. However, the seven peculiar statements from the Johannine narratives demand inclusion into his book because of the way they so closely resemble a parable's subject and object. That is to say, the "I am" accounts that Wilson deems fit to list in the book exist there because of their complex comparisons to the kingdom of Christ and revelation of the kingdom, not unlike the rest of the parables told by Christ. In the last chapter of the book for instance, Wilson addresses specifically seven of these "I am" statements (e.g. "I am the light of the world," "I am the bread of life," "I am the door") since these sayings reveal that Christ is ultimately the living parable. One might consider this point the climax of the book. Just as the parables themselves contain the spiritual power of awakening or deadening within stories of human experience, so Christ is the Spirit-conceived power of God undergoing human experience. (144–60).

Wilson's treatment of parables is a good example of Bible reading that takes into account the impetus of the kingdom of Christ in Scripture. Ministers and those in training would benefit from the content of each chapter as well as Wilson's underlying challenge to understand these parables as a window into the kingdom of God, designed to drive us to Jesus in wonder, reverence, and worship.

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***Hidden But Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery.* By G.K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014. 392 pages. Paperback, \$30.00.**

One may be surprised to discover, as were G.K. Beale and Benjamin Gladd (hereafter, B&G), that until *Hidden But Now Revealed*, "a complete study of mystery in the New Testament" and reflection "on the biblical-theological implications of such a study" had not been attempted (7). As B&G also indicate, this dearth of studies is due to the project's sheer difficulty. The Greek term *μυστήριον* occurs in difficult passages concerning key doctrines and typically proving instrumental in the relationship between the two Testaments (7–8). Subsequently, one primary purpose of this study is "to unpack the relationship between the Old and New Testaments" (19). The two primary goals are: (1) to define the Old Testament and New Testament conception of mystery and to grasp its significance, and (2) to articulate as precisely as possible topics found in conjunction with "mystery" in its various uses throughout the New Testament (21–22).

Anticipating the charge of "illegitimate totality transfer" (a famous critique of James Barr against the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, and a danger

inherent in any word-focused project), B&G are quick to point out the technical nature of the term “mystery” and thus its general immunity from such a critique. Even so, B&G carefully undertake in each chapter an investigation of the immediate context of the passage where the term appears, and its connection with other words and phrases (20–21).

Chapters 1 and 2 are introductory. The former canvasses “mystery” in Daniel 2 and 4 while the latter examines evidence from various early Jewish texts. In Daniel the term “mystery” plays a pivotal role and informs use of “mystery” in the New Testament (29). B&G conclude that revelation of a mystery can be defined roughly as “God fully disclosing wisdom about end-time events that were mostly hitherto unknown” (43). Mystery in Daniel entails a twofold characteristic wherein an individual first receives a symbolic dream which is then fully interpreted, signaling “the hidden nature of the revelation and its subsequent interpretation—largely hidden but now more fully revealed” (43). Early Jewish texts explored in chapter 2 generally maintain the eschatological nature of “mystery,” as well as its twofold aspect (53).

Chapters 3–10 contain a detailed study of the twenty-eight instances of *μυστήριον* in the New Testament and their respective contexts and significance for biblical theology. B&G highlight that features of “mystery” laid out in chapter 1, that is, the eschatological emphasis and twofold characteristic, occur overwhelmingly in these contexts. They also emphasize the lines of continuity and discontinuity between testaments when discussing topics related to “mystery”. Frequently the “mystery” in the New Testament fulfills an Old Testament prophecy or prototype in a surprising way, remaining in continuity with the Old Testament but also introducing new elements.

Following their examination of the New Testament texts concerning mystery, they draw the work to a close. In part, they address the relationship, or lack thereof, between Christian mystery and pagan mystery religions, concluding that scholars who have attempted to draw parallels have been “overly confident and going in the wrong direction,” since “the biblical conception of mystery not only differs from the mystery religions, but also contradicts the pagan understanding of the term and concept in many ways” (312). Following the conclusion, Beale appends a thought-provoking essay addressing instances where a New Testament quotation of the Old Testament appears “on the surface to have a very different meaning than the Old Testament passages from which they come” (340). To reconcile this apparent disjunction, Beale proposes taking account of the author’s “cognitive peripheral vision,” recognizing that Old Testament authors “knew more about the topic of their speech act than only the explicit meaning they expressed about that topic” and that New Testament authors picked up on and developed the Old Testament author’s “implicit wider intention” (341). Though such an approach may seem speculative, Beale is convinced the speculation can be “controlled” and provides helpful insights into the New Testament authors’ use of the Old Testament (363).

This book may serve as a model for how word studies ought to be done, with the meaning(s) of the word drawn from the biblical text itself, both its immediate context and its place in salvation history. Such an approach eschews overly simplistic statements about the term’s definition, requiring the interpreter to account for every occurrence. Though B&G are right to emphasize the term’s technical nature and thus their ability to “overload” it with nuance, a few instances where attempts to fit a particular use of the term into the overarching scheme feel a bit forced (for instance, see discussion of 1 Cor 13:2 and 14:2).

Amidst chapters dealing with *μυστήριον* in the New Testament, it is easy for the reader to get bogged down in the technical details. But such attention to detail raises the book's potential as a future reference for specific passages. Some of the most outstanding chapters were actually the introductory and concluding chapters, and the appendix on "cognitive peripheral vision." These chapters help the reader see how extensive the implications of the study might be while Beale's appendix proves particularly thought-provoking.

In *Hidden but Now Revealed*, B&G provide an in-depth and useful examination of a very difficult and often confusing biblical theme, as well as thoughtful insights and potential paths forward in the discussion of the New Testament use of the Old Testament. In a field where the constant tug-of-war between unity and diversity is ever present, the authors do an excellent job of representing the diversity of the New Testament witnesses while still demonstrating their unified purpose and use of the Old Testament. Evangelicals hoping to contribute meaningfully to biblical theology should emulate this model.

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Theological Studies

Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity. Edited by Jason Sexton. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 240 pages. Paperback, \$19.99.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the central tenant of the Christian religion. With the advent of Social Trinitarianism, new work on the Trinity has been revived to counter this departure from traditional doctrine. Jason Sexton brings together four theologians offer their perspectives on new ways to think of the Trinity. Two theologians argue for the classical version of the Trinity while the other two argue for a new relational model of the Trinity.

Stephen Holmes argues that the doctrine of the Trinity has suffered throughout history from people redefining words such that the doctrine is reduced to incoherence; thus, he proposes to return to the roots of the doctrine (26–28). He does not believe that Eastern and Western Christianity developed different theories from each other as many have argued (28–30). Both groups see the relations between the divine persons as merely logical so as to point out the distinction between the persons of the Trinity. Rather than being persons with substantial divisions in the modern sense of the word, Holmes argues that each member of the Trinity is a subsistence in the divine being logically related to each other and nothing more (38–39). Any further understanding is impossible since God is ineffable (43, 46). Holmes also does not see the *filioque* doctrine as an important point of dispute (46). It is argued against Holmes that ineffability implies that God cannot be understood making Christianity useless and incoherent. Further, Scripture appears to imply personal as well as logical relations between the Godhead.

Paul Molnar argues that the Trinity is a mystery that cannot be fully understood; therefore, it should be taken in faith (73–74). We cannot understand the Trinity by appeal to anything human. There are three persons who all equally share the divine being. The Son and the Spirit are generated from the divine being, not made according to an act of the Father's will (85). Generation is different from creation in that God is free to will in respect to creation but not generation (89). Further, the

filioque doctrine is inconsequential since the Spirit proceeds from the divine being shared by both Father and Son (85). Against Molnar, the other respondents disagree over the generation of the Spirit from the divine being rather than from the other persons of the Trinity. Further, the notion of mystery is seen to bring up the problem of understanding the Trinity again. Lastly, it is argued that people use humanity to understand God all of the time; otherwise, no one would know anything about God.

Wanting to emphasize personal relations, Thomas McCall argues that the Trinity is a necessary relationship of love (113). The Persons share I-Thou relationships indicated by use of personal pronouns in speech by each Person in Scripture (117–18). While the actions of the Trinity are not divided, each act is performed by a different person with the other two operating in support or agreement. Thus, actions within the divine being are predicated to a particular person, but there is still one being, one mind, and one will shared by all three (121–24). The divine persons are necessarily related such that no one can exist without the other, yet they are distinct speech-agents who know and love each other in unity (130–33). A concern with McCall's theory is that it leads to tritheism by emphasizing three centers of consciousness with their separate parts. Further, it is argued that all biblical instances of personal pronouns in speech used by the divine persons do not actually indicate that the Persons are personal in McCall's sense of the word. Lastly, can the divine persons talk to each other if they share one intellect? It does not seem so.

Lastly, Paul Fiddes sees the divine subjects in the Godhead as movements in divine life (160). Divine persons are just relations in the divine being that are distinct from each other (164). These movements are seen in the acts of the divine being, particularly in the movements of generation of Son and Spirit (169–70, 175). Fiddes believes that people participate in the divine movements as the divine movement ultimately embraces creation in a very personal way and people join in that personal movement of divinity. Reality is described as a dance between God and humanity that involves personal interaction between the two such that the mysterious God comes to be known (182). Fiddes is charged by his companions as denying the personhood of God by reducing each subject to a mere relation. Such a move, it is argued, along with humanity's participation in divine movements, looks suspiciously like pantheism and endangers orthodox Christology.

The issues this book raises come down to how to understand the divine unity. Holmes and Molnar stress divine unity such that the modern understanding of personhood cannot be applied to the divine. As a result, it becomes difficult to draw real distinctions between the divine subjects. Therefore, they appeal to divine mystery. McCall and Fiddes downplay divine unity so as to incorporate some modern understanding of personhood as they believe Scripture indicates. As a result, Christian monotheism seems endangered. The book demonstrates the need for carefully balancing the issues, avoiding both inexplicability and unorthodoxy.

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***The Rapture and Beyond: God's Amazing Plan for the Church, Israel, and the Nations*, rev. ed. By John C. Whitcomb. Indianapolis: Whitcomb Ministries, 2014. 230 pages. Paperback, \$9.99.**

John Whitcomb espouses classical dispensationalism, futuristic premillennialism, and a pretribulational rapture. In this contribution, he shares his theological

conclusions regarding the culmination of world history, extending the research of his mentor and colleague, Alva J. McClain.

The book is divided into three parts: “The Destiny of the Church” (13–68), “The Tribulation and Christ’s Return” (69–139), and “The Millennium and Beyond” (141–214). Seven of the fourteen chapters are reprinted or adapted from other publications (4). An “Author Index” (215–17) and a “Scripture Index” (218–30) round out the volume.

Building on the first edition, the revised edition adds three chapters: chapter 10, “God’s People and the Future of Egypt” (147–50); chapter 13, “The Thousand-Year Reign of Christ over the Earth” (195–210); and, chapter 14, “Beyond the Millennium” (211–14). The new edition also includes two of Whitcomb’s previously available charts: “Israel’s 70th Week and Christ’s Second Coming” (106) and “The Thousand-Year Reign of Christ over the Earth” (210).

Concerning the interpretation of the prophetic corpus, this book offers a number of intriguing possibilities. As an example, Whitcomb suggests that God tests the Israelites in two time periods of 490 years—the first resulting in the seventy-year Babylonian exile, and the second consisting of Daniel’s seventy sevens. He reasons, “If 490 years of disobedience had brought 70 years of punishment, is it not *probable* that the testing period for Israel which was announced to Daniel would cover another 490 *years?*” (75, italics his).

The demise of Gog from Magog in Ezekiel 38–39 comes to fruition near the middle of the tribulation (91–100). Gog’s alternate appellations include the king of Assyria/the Assyrian (Isa 10:12, 24–27; Mic 5:5–6), the northerner (Joel 2:20), and the king of the north (Dan 11:40–45). He is also the king mentioned in Daniel 8:23–25. Whitcomb suspects Russia as his domain, but sagaciously adds, “The name . . . may indeed change with the flux of history, but the general location remains fixed” (95).

Ten lines of argumentation support the notion that Ezekiel 40–48 foresees a millennial temple on planet earth (152–65). Like the Jewish animal sacrifices of antiquity, the animal sacrifices of the millennial temple have nothing to do with salvation, but accomplish a ceremonial cleansing and temporal forgiveness so that a holy God can dwell among a sinful people (194). The two witnesses of Revelation 11, Elijah and Moses, minister during the first half of the tribulation period (107–29). Whitcomb lists three reasons why John the Baptist was not Elijah (117–18).

Certain facets of the book lack balance, organization, consistency, or substantiation. Three of the chapters only span four pages each (chaps. 9, 10, 14), whereas three different chapters exceed twenty-five pages each (chaps. 1, 6, 12). Sixteen characteristics describe the millennial age, but two of them (the sixth and seventh) transpire before the millennium (203). Inconsistently, pages 107–8 assign the 1,260 days of Rev 11:3 to the *first* half of the tribulation, but pages 76 and 90 designate them as the *last* half of the tribulation. Moreover, sometimes debatable and dogmatic conclusions appear without corresponding support. For example, the twenty-four elders represent the church (197), the antichrist reigns as the seventh king/kingdom in Revelation 17 (98), the abomination of desolation refers to a statue of the beast that comes to life (88, 98), and the two olive trees of Zechariah 4 denote Joshua and Zerubbabel (62, 108).

A few points of clarification might enhance the volume. First, Whitcomb suggests that the Jews will use the tribulation temple during the millennium. Immediately after the tribulation, “the Lord will set aside those THIRTY days to purge

and purify the temple for His people to use during the kingdom age” (104, emphasis original). He also anticipates a distinct millennial temple “located about ten miles north of Jerusalem” (159). Is Whitcomb proposing that the tribulation temple will serve as a makeshift temple during the millennium until the millennial temple is built?

Second, while distinguishing the church and Israel, Whitcomb implies that Christians remain partially under the Law of Moses. In his words, “The Church has been given . . . freedom from the nonnormative aspects of the Law of Moses” (65). In no way, however, is the church under the Law of Moses. The church submits to a different law, known as the Law of Christ (Gal 6:2), the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:2), the perfect law, the law of liberty (Jas 1:25), and the royal law (2:8).

A missed opportunity hobbles the discussion of what Nicodemus should have known about the new birth from the Old Testament (132–36). The author fails to mention the Old Testament excerpt that Jesus alludes to while talking with Nicodemus (cp. Prov 30:4 and John 3:8, 13). Furthermore, he bypasses the preeminent passage in the Old Testament concerning the new birth (Ps 87).

From cover to cover, this study of the eschaton highlights the unity of Scripture. As Whitcomb puts it, “The Bible is its own best interpreter” (32). For those interested in an eschatological treatise by a seasoned theologian, this book is full of interpretive insights and canonical correlations.

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***Systematic Theology and Climate Change: Ecumenical Perspectives.* Edited by Michael Northcott and Peter Scott. London: Routledge, 2014. 180 pages. Paperback, \$44.95.**

To date, there has been little formal work done to connect systematic theology to environmental ethics using traditional doctrinal headings. *Systematic Theology and Climate Change* is a collection of essays that approach Christian theology to discern how it intersects with climate change.

The goal of the volume is “to at least persuade the reader of the fruitfulness of systematic theology in developing and undergirding the Christian response to anthropogenic climate change.” (12) After the introductory chapter, the book includes nine additional chapters treating a different locus of doctrine. In Chapter 2, Timothy Gorringer begins the discussion of the Trinity. He argues for the necessity of the Trinity, but moves quickly to outline the relational nature of the Trinity with creation to inspire action against climate change. Niels Henrik Gregerson unpacks a Christology for climate change in the next chapter. The incarnation of deity and his participation in the created order should lead Christians to reenact the redemptive nature of Christ’s life before the world, drawing Christians into actions that mitigate climate change as acts of neighborly love. Chapter 4 is a connection between climate change and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Michael Northcott finds connections between Yahweh and animistic beliefs in the sun god, which he uses to explain the radiative power of the Holy Spirit. The Anthropocene period, according to Northcott, is caused by the Enlightenment abandonment of wonder in nature—a denial of the spiritual nature of God and his Spirit’s work in the world.

In the fifth chapter, Celia Deane-Drummond modifies the concept of *creatio ex nihilo*, proposing to adopt *creatio ex amore*. God creates all things, but the focus

becomes the purpose of creating instead of the nature of creating. This shift enables Deane-Drummond to emphasize the loving Creator-creation relationship, which inspires right living. Chapter 6 presents the nature of creatures in the created order, rejecting anthropocentrism and focusing on God's relationship with non-human, living creatures. This essay by Rachel Muers attempts to promote a deeper level of sympathy with the non-human creatures. In the seventh chapter Peter Scott delves into a theological discussion of the human relationship with creation. His emphasis is on understanding the human ability to disrupt natural processes in hopes of inspiring a curtailment of human freedom. Chapter 8 unpacks the doctrines of sin and salvation. According to Neil Messer, sin is a radical distortion of the human relationship with God and the rest of creation. Salvation is thus the renewal of both relationships, which must include ecologically friendly living. He asserts that to understand ourselves as sinners also enables us to understand ourselves as saved by God; that salvation should lead to repentance and hope. In the ninth chapter, Tamara Grdzeldze examines the doctrine of the church: the church exists to emphasize the restoration of relationships of creatures to God and to each other through the Eucharist. Thus the mission of the church is to embody and encourage the unity of all creation in anticipation of the coming salvation of all things by God. This mission will be carried out not just ecclesially, but politically through activism and lobbying. Chapter 10 discusses eschatology in greater detail than the previous chapters. Stefan Skrimshire emphasizes the cosmic hope in eschatology over personal hope. Eschatology is framed as a motivation to political action against climate change. Skrimshire, however, limits the divine participation in the renewal of all things because it allows forgiveness for present ecological sins and undermines motivation for climate action. Thus, eschatology motivates bringing in a desired order instead of inspiring future hope of divine restoration.

Systematic Theology and Climate Change is intended to bring voices from different backgrounds together to do systematic theology for climate change. Using a different author for each chapter leads to unevenness between the chapters. Many of the essays are informative, but taken as a whole, the project lacks cohesion. Additionally, although each chapter deals with a different theological heading, many seem to overlap with different perspectives on the value of creation, the human role in creation, and the fate of the created order. In some cases, as with the treatment of ecclesiology, the focus of the chapter seems to be somewhere besides the title doctrine. Also, notably absent from the volume is any appreciable treatment of the gospel. The chapter on sin and salvation assumes a general salvation while the chapter on Christology ignores the concepts of atonement and redemption. These seem to be significant oversights for a systematic theology, even one emphasizing climate change. To miss the essence of Christianity—Christ crucified and resurrected—points toward a methodological difficulty with this approach.

Environmental ethics is a theological enterprise, particularly for a faithful Christian. This volume brings together significant voices to relate systematic theology to climate change. There are some revealing points of application, but the book falls short of demonstrating a model approach to uniting concerns of climate change with traditional doctrinal headings of systematic theology. There is room for further development along these lines, but it may be helpful for future treatments to

focus on the major doctrines that influence systems of environmental ethics. Such an approach would have improved this volume significantly.

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Historical Studies

***Augustine Deformed: Love, Sin and Freedom in the Western Moral Tradition.* By John M. Rist. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. 430 pages. Hardcover, \$124.00.**

John M. Rist's purpose in writing this volume is to demonstrate that Western culture has, since Augustine's death, witnessed a continual attempt to build on Augustine and correct his errors. As Rist notes, *Augustine Deformed* is not necessarily a history of *good* ideas, but it does seek to present one plausible explanation for some trajectories in Western philosophy (16). The result has been an increase in false problems and false assumptions as each succeeding generation attempts to correct the preceding one without adequately evaluating the questions being asked. The progression of errors from Augustine's own have led to atheism and nihilism, according to Rist.

After the introduction, where Rist explains his purpose and qualifies his method, he begins by explaining some of the debates that were ongoing before Augustine came onto the scene. Of particular interest are the topics of love, sin, and freedom. Interest in these topics is perhaps both the cause and result of his choice of Augustine as a beginning point. Rist focuses on the various philosophical interpretations of each of these topics, setting the stage for this volume to focus on broader philosophical debates and not only Christian concerns. Augustine preserves features of his classical foundations within these topics of his thought. For this reason, many recent scholars have searched in detail for platonic themes in Augustine's work. Chapters 2 and 3 both deal with Augustine himself. The former focuses on those aspects of Augustine which Rist dislikes, such as Augustine's notion of original sin and of the nature of God's sovereignty in matters of salvation. The latter emphasizes Augustine's thoughts on love, desire and knowledge, which Rist finds more palatable.

Following these three foundational chapters, Rist moves into an in-depth, chronological analysis of major thinkers in the Western tradition. His trek through Western thought traces Augustine's influence through history from Anselm to Heidegger and Sartre. There is an amazing scope to this volume, but there is depth in Rist's writing as he carefully and accurately describes the major elements of each group's ideas without belaboring his explanations. Having concluded a whirlwind journey through Western tradition, Rist closes the book by first summarizing many of the points of philosophical error that developed through history. He then concludes by returning to Augustine's thought, pointing out the errors that, if properly addressed, he believes would rectify Augustine and allow for a truer philosophy that would be less caustic than the modernisms and postmodernisms that developed in the wake of Augustine's alleged errors.

A significant strength of this volume is its comprehensiveness. This book is an excellent commentary on a broad sweep of Western intellectual history. As with any commentator, each reader will find various points of disagreement, qualification, and confirmation. However, given the wide range of material covered in a succinct

manner, Rist's presentation is an agreeable approach. There are few scholars who could accomplish such a monumental task successfully. The chief strength of this volume is the unity of the themes considered. The concepts of love, sin, and freedom, which were significant emphases in Augustine's writing, are traced clearly through each chapter. Those ideas prove to be identifiable across the centuries and significant in describing the contemporary philosophical milieu. This provides cogency for the project.

Despite its many excellent qualities, this volume suffers from an overemphasis on philosophy as the driving force for theology. Thus Rist, himself primarily a philosopher, continues the popular focus on philosophical themes in Augustine's intellectual development, finding more continuity than discontinuity between Augustine's pre and post-conversion thought. This approach means that the role of classical Greek philosophy in Augustine's later theology is a bit overplayed in Rist's presentation. While it is clear that the Bishop of Hippo never fully resolved his platonic suspicion of matter, particularly with respect to his sexual ethics, on many topics a gracious, chronological reading of Augustine reveals a progressive growth in the influence of Scripture and a diminution of the influence of classical Greek understandings. Rist does not allow sufficient room for Augustine's growth in theology.

This book has explanatory power. It is not necessary to agree with every aspect of Rist's analysis to gain significant value from reading this volume. It is a text that will be useful in the seminary classroom or a scholar's library for years to come.

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***A Companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation.* Edited by Lee Palmer Wandel. Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, volume 46. Boston: Brill, 2014. 518 Pages, Hardcover, \$239.00.**

While *sola fide* and *sola scriptura* have historically been identified as the chief articles of debate which enveloped sixteenth-century Christendom, Lee Palmer Wandel and her team of contributors affirm that distinct eucharistic theologies and liturgies were significant contributing factors that further divided Catholicism and Protestantism. With a goal towards exploring "early modern thinking in texts written and sung, images, objects, architecture, music, and practices on the Eucharist," Wandel devotes ample space to each of the aforementioned themes (11).

Although Gary Macy's introduction on the Medieval Mass is helpful, it has two significant shortcomings. First, Macy's label of Berengar's eucharistic theology as "straightforward," in the sense that he staunchly denied any "real" presence of Christ, is misleading (23). Christopher Wild's later survey of Lessing's *Laocoön*, which attests Berengar's affirmation of a "pregnant sign," meaning that the eucharistic contains not merely the sign, but also the thing signified, directly contradicts Macy (494–95). Second, Berengar's personal reference to the eucharistic elements as the "true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ" confirms that his eucharistic theology was anything but straightforward (494).

Part one, a summary of Eucharist theologies, is useful for its inclusion of every major Reformation theology, but unsuitable for the reader who desires to track any possible development of eucharistic theology over the course of the Reformation. For example, while the Reformed Church is thoroughly represented through the writings of Calvin, Zwingli, and Bullinger, Luther is the sole Lutheran representative. Frankly,

it is inexcusable for Wandel to ignore both the later Lutheran development and the later reconciliatory attempts between the various Reformed parties. While the eucharistic divide between Luther and Zwingli has traditionally been oversimplified into a mere disagreement concerning Christ's presence, the contributors effectively demonstrate that their altercation rested more on Christology (52). John D. Rempel's emphasis on the centrality of Pneumatology for Anabaptist theology is helpful in analyzing their seeming preference for Johannine theology over Pauline theology (123). The significance of part one lies not in the publication of eucharistic theology, but instead in the affirmation that Christendom's rift rested far deeper than Christ's presence, for it centered on foundational differences in Christology, Soteriology, and Ecclesiology.

The nature of Wandel's work, twenty contributors discussing overlapping subject matter, makes discrepancies likely. Similar to Macy and Wild's earlier contradiction, Rempel and Michele Hanson clash concerning the influence of the Eucharist in early Anabaptist communities. While Rempel asserts, "the Eucharist remained for them the primal sign of Christ and the Church," Hanson claims, "Anabaptists in the 1520s did not make the celebration of the Eucharist central in their religious life" (119, 266). While Wandel acts appropriately in allowing disagreements, the extreme positions taken by each contributor ultimately prove irreconcilable.

Part two, a helpful companion to theology, focuses on the diversity of liturgical practices in the Reformation. Isabelle Brian's contribution on Catholic liturgy is insightful as it engages the reader in the Medieval Eucharist, answering both how and why the Mass possessed such a crippling hold on society. As the Feast of Corpus Christi and the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament developed, Christ's presence in the Mass became "an identifying mark of Catholicism," enveloping Catholics throughout life (203). Since the eucharistic celebration focused more on language for Lutherans and the Reformed, the imagery that encapsulated the Medieval Mass largely subsided (208). However, the difficulty in aligning one's theology with one's liturgy forced a struggle within Evangelicalism, leading a cautious Luther to maintain the elevation of the Host (222) and Thomas Cranmer to drastically alter the *Book of Common Prayer* between its 1549 and 1552 editions (276–77).

Part three briefly examines the effect of sudden theological and liturgical alterations on regional churches. For the most part, Evangelicals sought to undo the Medieval Mass systematically, specifically the high altar and rood screens (325–26). As Andrew Spicer rightly notes, the Evangelical church became less about "gradations of holiness" and more about a biblical, sacramental administration (331). While the Reformed took a hardened stance towards removing all semblance of the Mass, Lutheranism preserved the altar and the use of vestments, which "occasionally confused visitors to these churches" (342). Spicer's contribution is paramount for his imagery of woodcuts and communion tables, allowing the reader to engage in the Eucharist visually.

Parts four and five focus on the artistic elements of the Eucharist. Unfortunately, the breadth of Wandel's volume forces the reader to question the inclusion of certain chapters, and quite frankly, these chapters prove least crucial. Although presented from an artistic perspective, the underlying affirmations are essentially the same as previously provided. However, Wandel's chapter "The Reformation and the Visual Arts" in R. Po-Chia Hsia's *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Reform and Expansion 1500–1660*, manifests Wandel's interest in the subject, and thus, their

inclusion. Nevertheless, these chapters effectively manifest the frequent tendency for the Eucharist to shift between worship, ritual, and superstition.

In part six, Christopher Wild's chapter is a fitting conclusion to a volume dedicated to analyzing the theological and liturgical eucharistic elements and their possible influences. Utilizing Lessing's *Laocoön*, specifically the eucharistic relationship between Berengar and Lutheranism, Wild seeks to draw a seminal connection between religious media in the Reformation and aesthetic media in the Renaissance (491). While Wild abstains from affirming Lessing's conceptual link, he nevertheless finds a link between the Lutheran use of religious media and Enlightenment aesthetics (507). Even if one disagrees with Wild, he has nevertheless preserved Wandel's holistic goal by affirming that the chasms in Eucharistic theology ran far deeper than simple affirmations or denials of Christ's presence.

Overall, Wandel's focus on historical theology, art, media, and liturgics in the Reformation makes this volume a scholarly addition to historical studies. While the volume's length and cost will certainly be drawbacks to intrigued readers, the substance and usefulness of Wandel's work prove well worth the time and expense.

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***American Exceptionalism and Civil Religion: Reassessing the History of an Idea.* By John D. Wilsey. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015. 262 pages. Paperback, \$22.00.**

I am by birth an American and by baptism a Christian. Before reading this book, I was fairly sure that the only possible reaction I could have to that combination was profound guilt for the way American civil religion has co-opted faith. John Wilsey believes that there is another way.

Wilsey distinguishes in this book between "closed" and "open" American exceptionalism. The closed version, which is what I grew up distrusting, "involves at least five theological themes imported from Protestant Christian theology and applied to America: (1) chosen nation, (2) divine commission, (3) innocence, (4) sacred land and (5) glory" (18). The open version "points to moral and civil example" and "leads to compassion, justice, and general human flourishing" (19).

The book outlines both of these ideas through American history. Wilsey begins with the roots of exceptionalism. Theologically, it came from Puritan ideas of covenant (God was specially calling Puritans as his "chosen people with a divinely ordained mission" [42]), typology (Puritans saw themselves as God's new Israel and applied other scriptural imagery to the American experience), and millennialism (the idea that "history is progressing toward a Christian utopia, that God is using nations to bring about his kingdom on earth" [45]). Politically, it grew from the "Real Whig" ideology that stressed "religious toleration, liberty of the press, parliamentary supremacy, and rule by consent" (51) and a "Christian republicanism" that attempted to justify rebellion against England on biblical and theological grounds. Finally, American historiography up through the nineteenth century told of "a superior America serving the world as exemplar" (61).

According to Wilsey, this exceptionalism bifurcated in the nineteenth century into closed and open versions over the issues of slavery and manifest destiny. The closed version, which favored both those endeavors, centered on the idea that "God's business was about establishing the supremacy of the Anglo American race in North

America" (77). The open version, which Wilsey roots in Abraham Lincoln's thought, exalted American commitments to justice, the rule of law, and democracy but argued that God's providence only worked through American actions "insofar as the people were acting in accordance with God's moral laws" (89). Justice was always right and American commitment to it was a moral good, but Americans were not always just and righteous in practice.

The book then turns to the five theological commitments Wilsey identifies as central to closed exceptionalism, explains how each of them has worked out in American history, and presents an open exceptionalist response. To the idea of America as a chosen nation (including the idea that Anglo-Saxons are the chosen people and nonwhites are not) he responds that being chosen "does not deny religious people their prophetic voice" (116); prophets should criticize problems in order to "set the nation on a more sure moral footing" (117). To the idea that America has a national mission he responds that "if America has a mission in the world, it is the same mission given to all people. . . . found in Micah 6:8," i.e. to "do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God" (144). To the idea that America is an innocent nation he responds that "Christianity teaches that no one is innocent; all are guilty of unjust actions," including nations. To the idea that American land is somehow special, he responds that *all* land is a gift from God for human flourishing and that American land is only sacred because "its land is part of the good creation of God" (190). Finally, to the idea that America is glorious (which he illustrates from a selection of homeschooling curricula) he argues that our understanding of history must allow for the realities of "change over time, context, causality, complexity, and contingency. . . . It is not appropriate to consider American exceptionalism—closed or open—as an essential aspect of the Christian worldview" (214). He ends with a plea that American Christians engage the public square committed to the ideas of "liberty, democracy, world peace, and cultural tolerance" (231), proud of their country but also able to see its flaws and missteps and work to correct them; never tempted to identify the country as sacred, but instead working to "differentiate the church from the nation while situating [it] within the national community" (222).

Wilsey's grasp of American history is broad-ranging and his conclusions compelling. This is an important book at this particular moment. It is helpful in modeling to those of us who have been afraid to claim patriotism how a loving critique on Christian principles can co-exist with love for nation. I can only hope that it also reaches the over-patriotic audience I think Wilsey had more in his sights. He describes (through a perceptive analysis of W.E.B. Dubois) how closed exceptionalism can lead "well-meaning Christian people . . . to potential for wrong in the name of right. While the rock bottom of this progression was militant white supremacy, a key step was . . . the idea that America was always right and must be defended and justified at all costs" (229). That audience seems to be climbing in the polls. Read Wilsey's book, and you will know why. You will also have the tools to point out another way.

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Studies in Philosophy and Ethics

Apologetics Beyond Reason: Why Seeing is Really Believing. By James W. Sire. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014. 176 pages. Paperback, \$18.00.

If one has never seen God, then how can one properly believe that God is real? James Sire is a Christian author and apologist who argues that everything that exists is an argument for the existence of God as understood in biblical faith. He proposes the proof of God's existence is embodied both in God's revealed Word and within the created World. One way to transcend the limits of autonomous human reason, Sire argues, is to connect to the reality of God through literature which he views as distinct "signals of transcendence." This signal of transcendence provides an eclectic "apologetic beyond reason." Sire's objective is for readers to understand one's direct perception of the world, particularly as it is articulated in the worldviews espoused by authors who produce great literature. Such understanding allows one to intuit convictions about what is reality.

Sire states that adumbrations of God as Creator and the reality of Christ's presence can be detected in daily life. These foreshadows provide not only a rational apologetic, but one that is emotional and takes hold of both the heart and the head leading to a commitment to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Sire's apologetic approach is to make an argument for Jesus Christ from literary theory, an approach that is not necessarily dependent upon Descartes-styled rationalism, but can come via intuition. Sire offers this approach because literature projects a specific worldview when it tells a story and this worldview provides a meta-narrative. This meta-narrative brings one into another world and allows the reader to see, feel, and experience the power and significance of the story.

Stanislaw Lem's science-fiction work, *The Cyberaid* (1965), contends against the cosmological argument and goes on to consider naturalism as the basis for truth. In Lem's worldview, all ultimate views of reality are suspect. Lem's readers are forced to conclude that naturalism cannot be the foundation for trusting our senses and reason because it is also suspect. Present neo-atheists, including such notables as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, and Daniel Dennett, believe they have the basis for making up their own mind and grasp that which lies outside of oneself by their own autonomous reason. Sire points out that such autonomous human reasoning is actually a dead end. It is spiritual blindness and a failure to grasp properly the truth of reality. In contrast, Christians have a proper grounding for reason because they maintain that it is rooted in the ontological reality of God. Taking the biblical argument that man is made in the image of God (Gen 1:27) and that we are His creatures, it is our interactions in the Creation that surrounds us that inform our belief. That is to say that the general revelation of God's created cosmos provides evidence that points towards God (Rom 1:18-32). Sire maintains that the created surroundings humans find themselves in provide signals of transcendence that best explain how one came into and is sustained in existence.

Literature is a signal of transcendence that yields a window into a viewpoint, whereby the author has become a creator of a secondary world, a world of imagination and imitation. The reader allows himself to be transported into this secondary world and experience it. The worldview or system of reality in this secondary world is a representation of what the author believes to be the case about the primary world of reality.

Sire proceeds through a number of authors and provides a literary professor's insight into what is going on in their secondary world. Gerald Manley Hopkins' work *God's Grandeur* reflects a Christian worldview that incorporated the themes of Creation, Fall, and Re-Creation. Virginia Woolf writes of a world without God in *Jacob's Room* (1922), where a desire to escape the present world is reflected in despair and the emptiness of being and her characters in *The Waves* (1937), reflect her own loneliness, an inner despondence that ultimately led her to suicide. The greatness of the music of Johann Sebastian Bach is viewed by Sire as a testimony to the truth of the Christian faith and an aesthetic Christian apologetic. The arts and human pain may also be a signal of transcendence as they produce inside the heart a way for God to shout to the soul through a still small voice.

Sire concludes that the best argument for God is the meta-narrative of God's revelation to man through His Word (Scripture), Jesus Christ, and His ongoing presence. Jesus invites all people to come to Him and to know Him intimately and personally. Jesus is a transcendent signal to God. Jesus Christ is the Savior that mankind needs because He can forgive man of his sins while judging righteously. Jesus Christ makes human reason meaningful. The Bible is the ultimate work of literature because it is a giant beacon that points the way to God through faith and trust in Jesus Christ. The Bible is the literary work that provides mankind with the starting point for that which is real concerning God, creation, and humanity's situation. Sire invites the reader to come and see Jesus, the one who makes all reality real.

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***The Soul: How We Know it's Real and Why it Matters.* By J.P. Moreland. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014. 208 pages. Paperback, \$14.99.**

Few topics titillate the contemporary philosophical admirer more than the mind and body debate. Physicalists, believing they have the higher philosophical and scientific ground, are ever ready to defend their stance and castigate the dualist. Indeed, physicalists do have powerful and thoughtful arguments to bolster their claims, not to be taken lightly by the dualist. Nonetheless, the dualist is not left to the fate of philosophical obscurity. In his new book, *The Soul: How We Know It's Real and Why It Matters*, J.P. Moreland defends the existence of the non-physical soul, detailing why the belief in and existence of the soul is important to the social structure and its moral foundation.

Moreland begins the book with a brief introduction to the topic, noting that "[t]hroughout history, the vast majority of people, educated and uneducated alike, have been dualists" (9). This situation, however, has changed with contemporary philosophy. Today, dualism, at least within academia, seems to be the minority view. Moreland writes that the Bible clearly teaches that "consciousness and the soul are immaterial," and this reality has massive ethical implications for the Christian (18).

In chapter 1, titled "A Toolbox for the Soul", Moreland gives a general overview of the debate, explains basic terminology, and summarizes dualism and physicalism. He need not (and does not) delve into the nuances of contemporary scholarship that often obfuscate rather than elucidate. In fact, his explanations of "substances" and "properties" are probably the most difficult area of the chapter, but he writes with the clarity of an experienced educator.

Chapter 2, titled “The Bible on the Soul and Consciousness”, gives a detailed assessment of the biblical understanding of human nature. Moreland skillfully interprets not only Scriptural passages indicating the duality of human nature, but also the original words within the texts. While there are certainly different interpretations of Moreland’s selected texts, he shows that dualism has the stronger biblical defense.

Chapter 3, titled “The Nature and Reality of Consciousness”, analyzes the minutiae of consciousness. Here Moreland gives a quasi-defense and critique of property dualism, two objections to substance dualism, and lays out his best critique of a scientific defense of physicalism. Plus, it is within this chapter that he draws the specific conclusion that consciousness is non-physical. The chapter seems a little out-of-place, but in conjunction with chapter 4, the arrangement makes sense.

In Chapter 4, titled “The Reality of the Soul”, Moreland gives descriptions of three types of substance dualism: Cartesian, Thomistic, and Emergent. His preference is Thomistic dualism, but he is not concerned with defending his druthers here. His focus is to present arguments that prove the “self or ego is an immaterial substance that bears consciousness” (118). Here Moreland gives his most detailed arguments for dualism (for the most part, these arguments are for a specialist in the field).

Chapter 5, “The Future of the Human Person”, is a general (sometimes anecdotal) look at the afterlife (i.e., what happens to the soul after the physical body dies). The Christian reader will find Moreland’s defense for eternal punishment and eternal reward interesting; however, the chapter does not add to his overall claim; it simply discusses peripheral topics.

Moreland has at least one questionable claim that is difficult to overlook. In the last chapter, Moreland gives a defense to the question: Why would God create people that He knew would not choose Him? To answer this question, Moreland borrows a move developed by William Lane Craig’s defense of middle knowledge. Moreland writes,

Creating a world with a large number of people may have the result that a number of them may be permitted to be lost in order to respect human freedom and accomplish some task known by God . . . God prefers a world in which some persons freely reject Christ but the number of saved is maximized, over a world in which a few trust Christ and none are lost (184).

Thus, according to Moreland, “[t]he actual world contains an optimal balance between saved and unsaved, and those who are unsaved would never have received Christ under any circumstances” (185).

This proposition seems problematic. Assuming that middle knowledge is an accurate description of God’s foreknowledge, are we to postulate there is no possible world in which God both actualizes a maximal number of people that freely choose Christ and refrains from actualizing anyone who would freely reject Christ (and thereby be damned)? Given the standard parameters of possible worlds, it seems God could create this world. Middle knowledge certainly does not rule out such a world.

Ultimately, Moreland’s answer does little to alleviate these problems, and forces the Christian to bunt to mystery. To claim that it is possible God could not have created a world in which no one freely rejects Him, leaves open that He possibly

could have created such a world. And if God could have created such a world, then a middle knowledge move seems to be a philosophical stalemate.

Though there are many positive and important aspects of *The Soul*, three need be mentioned. First, since the depths of this topic are generally reserved for the specialist, it is advantageous for Christians to have a clear and simple (though intellectually stirring) description of dualism. The debate regarding this issue has become so philosophically nuanced that only the trained philosopher can understand much of the contemporary discussion. *The Soul* is a lucid, concise reflection that a novice in philosophy could understand. Second, Moreland keeps the subject focused and narrow. Thus, he gives the reader the essentials of the conversation by centering on the dominant points of the debate. Third, Moreland, having years of teaching and writing experience, does not simplify the topics to such an extent that he cheapens the depth of the given information. Readers can be sure they are getting a standard, precise explanation of the debate, articulated from the simple to more complex. Thus, *The Soul* is a valuable contribution to a conversation that commonly ostracizes the curious neophyte.

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***Beyond the Control of God? Six Views on the Problem of God and Abstract Objects.* Edited by Paul Gould. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014. 224 pages. Paperback, \$29.95.**

The debate over abstract objects goes back to Plato and is still heated today. Realists claim abstract objects exist while nominalists do not. Famed for its explanatory advantages, versions of Platonism eventually found their way into the Church. Platonism, however, raises crucial questions concerning God's relationship with abstract objects. Paul Gould states the problem with his Inconsistent Triad:

1. Abstract objects exist.
2. If abstract objects exist, then they are dependent on God.
3. If abstract objects exist, then they are independent of God.

Claim 1 is Platonism. Claim 3 is the traditional assumption of Platonism; however, claim 2 appears correct given orthodox theology. Christians are thus placed in a quandary. Which claim do they reject: that abstract objects exist, that all reality is dependent on God, or that abstract objects are outside God's control? Gould pulls together six views addressing this quandary along with critiques of each view.

Keith Yandell is a Platonist and argues that claim 2 is false. He believes that abstract objects (propositions) are necessary in order to explain human language, such as making claims about reality and interpreting speech. Further, abstract objects cannot be dependent on God since abstract objects are necessary, but God is not necessary; the necessary cannot be dependent on anything. Instead, God is dependent on abstract objects for his knowledge and being. The major criticism against this view is that it violates the doctrines of divine sovereignty, aseity, and creation of all reality.

Paul Gould and Richard Davis are Modified Theistic Activists and argue that claim 3 is false. They claim that propositions are by nature intentional, and only thoughts can be intentional. Subsequently, they equate propositions with divine ideas. Other abstract entities are by nature nonintentional, so they must be

necessarily created by God. Thus, abstract objects exist necessarily but depend on God for their existence. God's properties exist *a se* and are not dependent on anything outside God. Major criticisms against this view are that all abstract objects are by nature intentional and must be in the divine mind, that divine ideas are not abstract objects, and that God's mind would consist of inappropriate ideas if his ideas were propositions. Greg Welty argues for Divine Conceptualism and also rejects claim 3. Welty believes that a good theory of abstract objects will include the following aspects: objectivity, necessity, intentionality, relevance, plentitude, and simplicity of kinds. Welty believes this task can only be accomplished if the divine ideas function as abstract objects and provide the building blocks of reality. Further, such a theory gives us a good argument for God's existence. There are two major criticisms of this view. First, it is not certain that divine ideas can function as abstract objects. Second, God is not subject to abstract objects like human beings, which seems to make God a nominalist. If nominalism is true for God, why cannot nominalism be true for all of reality?

William Lane Craig argues for nominalism and rejects claim 1. He believes that abstract objects conflict with the doctrines of divine sovereignty and creation because God would not control and would be dependent on abstract objects. Furthermore, God would not be creatively responsible for all of reality. As a result, nominalism should be explored, particularly fictionalism where our talk of abstract objects is just a useful device for expressing ourselves. The major criticisms against this view are that Craig has misinterpreted Scripture creating a false conflict and that fictionalism gives us false knowledge of reality because our words and claims do not actually describe reality.

Scott Shalkowski believes that claim 1 is false. He sees no warrant for believing in abstract objects. Like Craig, language is merely a tool for communication, not ontological commitment. However, he does not believe that abstract entities are a threat to God. As necessary entities, abstract objects, like the laws of logic, are not things that God could control anyway, so no problem exists. Further, there is no reason to think that the writers of Scripture had abstract objects in mind when they claimed that God is the creator of all things. The major criticisms against Shalkowski are that language is more than a tool but does ontologically commit despite our lack of intention or ignorance in committing, that truths prior to human existence would have nothing to bear their truth if nominalism is correct, and that Shalkowski interprets Scripture incorrectly.

Graham Oppy argues that metaphysics favors neither theism nor atheistic naturalism. Abstract Reality is separate from Causal Reality; therefore, abstract objects cannot be caused/dependent nor can they cause anything. Both theists and atheists can accept this point. Nominalism involves only human beings and their speech; again both theists and atheists can accept this point. Major criticisms against Oppy include an incorrect definition of causation that biases the argument in atheism's favor, a misinterpretation of nominalism, and a confusion of dependency with contingency.

In short, the book comes down to two questions. First, do abstract objects exist? Second, what is the nature of abstract objects if they exist? Craig, Shalkowski, and Oppy are against abstract objects. Yandell, Gould/Davis, and Welty disagree over the nature of abstract objects. The question for the reader is who is correct if any.

Graham Floyd
Tarrant County College

***We Can Make the World Economy a Sustainable Global Home.* By Lewis Mudge. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. 176 pages. Paperback, \$18.00.**

In Lewis Mudge's book, *We Can Make the World Economy a Sustainable Global Home*, he argues that we need to reset our understanding of human spirit (*Geist*) after the wake of the Great Recession. Whereas modern culture has defined human spirit solely in terms of economic value, Mudge claims that we need to return to a political economy where everyone, including theologians, is involved in a public discussion on how the national and even world economy should be run (11–13). According to Mudge, humanity is *homo oeconomicus*, which means that human beings and their economic activities are primarily based in spiritual and familial relationships. Economics is not just mathematics but also cultural and humanistic. As a result, Mudge introduces his concept of covenantal humanism where followers of the Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) have a covenant with God to bring blessings to the earth and not a curse. Such faiths must covenant together to show the rest of the world the way forward (13–17).

Connected to this concept is the notion of stakeholderism where all humans have a stake in and right to the earth's resources and how they are used. Mudge argues that the global economy should look at all people as stakeholders in all international business. He believes such a view would change the way that business operates and would ensure a more equal playing field among earth's household of people as well as protecting earth's finite resources (17–19). He rejects what he calls the Western mindset of neoliberalism where society is reduced to rational market forces that can be plotted mathematically and interference in business is not tolerated or questioned. He considers such a model imperial (50–56).

Instead, we need a worldwide stakeholderism where people manage their resources with the global community in mind (common global good) and not for their own self-interests. We are all part of the global *oikos* (household), so we should treat the world as a global household. Instead of representing only ourselves, we represent the earth and all who live on it (77–81). Mudge claims that this is not a political system *per se* but a general attitude built into the economic system with minimum standards to uphold these attitudes (83). Such attitudes can be carried by national and international legislation as well as faith communities who are the drivers for such change (89). In this way, we can build a better global economy that ensures equality and justice for all mankind.

Unfortunately, Mudge's claims are simplistic, misguided, and inconsistent. Much of what he states concerning economic matters is lacking in careful attention to detail. His understanding of the causes of the Great Recession is very surface level, which is probably due to his death in 2009. While he accurately notes the banking scandal that led to the economic downfall, he is ignorant of the political issues that undergirded that scandal. Mudge's attention to detail is also lacking in his understanding of economic principles, particularly when it comes to free market economics. He consistently utilizes a caricature that most proponents of the free market system would reject. He always equates self-interest and rational choice with maximization of profit and a lack of ethical awareness, which is simply not true. He also rejects rational market forces as a means to correct ethical misconduct and establish a just system even though such forces have inspired him to seek for economic reforms. Such a lack of understanding serves to undermine Mudge's claims.

A surprising lack of theology is noticeable in Mudge's work though he himself is a theologian. He touches on theological and scriptural issues briefly. The majority

of his book is spent pontificating on economic and political issues. Even in the places where he deals with theology, he falls far short. He takes Scripture out of its context and uses it to make analogies to contemporary issues. He even states that justification by grace is just being sincere in one's beliefs (20–21). Though certain vices are mentioned as causes to economic distress and humanity's capacity for evil is acknowledged, Mudge never discusses the effects of sin on economics and the need for divine salvation in order to restore the global economy. He is content to let the rational and legislative powers of man solve the problem. This move is all the more bewildering since he is highly critical of Enlightenment rationalism and the reduction of humanity or rational considerations. What he denies with his right hand, Mudge reasserts with his left.

Mudge's work also lacks the necessary detail to demonstrate how such a system would work. Who will ensure that everyone's rights are maintained? Who will regulate the world economy? Who owns what? Who decides how resources and businesses are used? How will all of this be paid for? Mudge is content to only provide broad and unspecific suggestions. His writings seem to indicate two broad possibilities: 1) either the world will be controlled by an international organization that has the power to enforce regulations and protect individual rights for the common good or 2) all people will ultimately consent to Mudge's thesis and live in a perfect utopia where no one has an absolute right to their own property and everyone seeks his neighbor's good. The latter view is hopelessly naïve.

In the end, Mudge's thesis is untenable. While I appreciate his criticism of the maximization-of-profit-at-all-cost mentality, his replacement is neither well thought out or even original in thought. It is simply socialism warmed over.

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Studies in Preaching and Pastoral Ministry

***Recapturing the Voice of God: Shaping Sermons Like Scripture* by Steven W. Smith. Nashville: B&H, 2015. 230 pages. Paperback. \$24.99.**

If the Bible is full of literary variety, why is the preaching of the Bible often predictable and structurally repetitive? Three points and a poem was an overstated cliché a generation ago; unfortunately modified to three points and a story in many modern pulpits. But does it have to be so Sunday after Sunday? It should not be so according to Steven W. Smith in his latest work, *Recapturing the Voice of God: Shaping Sermons Like Scripture*.

Smith makes the case that the pitch, rate, and volume (literary genre) of the biblical text is often ignored in the excavation of a biblical text for preaching points. Once the truth is mined, the form of the text is discarded and the sermon is developed utilizing a propositional homiletical form. In the first chapter, Smith introduces an alternative grounded in the revelation of Christ. We encounter the full image of the Father revealed in both the person and ministry of Christ through the Spirit-given biblical text. The iconic nature of Christ as the image of the Father invites the preacher to avoid a false dichotomy between the propositional truth found in Scripture and the genre in which we receive that truth.

In the second chapter, Smith argues that our sermons should convey not only the substance of the text, but also be influenced by the structure (semantic shape of the passage) and spirit (emotive design of the biblical author) of the text. He offers a helpful caution that some biblical genres are not easily imitated in a sermon (such as a poetry and proverbs). The call is for re-animation and not slavish imitation of the genre structure at all times in the sermon.

Three axioms guide the development of the rest of the book: (1) The sermon should reflect the genre; (2) there are at least nine discernable genres; (3) preaching those genres may be facilitated by mastering three basic templates. The three literary templates are story, poem/wisdom, and letter. Story is further divided into Old Testament Narrative, Law, Gospel/Acts, and Parables (chaps. 4–7). Psalms, Wisdom Literature, and Prophecy are listed under the template of Poem/Wisdom (chaps. 8–10). The final letter template includes both the Epistles and Revelation (chaps. 11–12).

In each genre specific chapter, Smith provides broad hermeneutical guidelines specific to the genre along with specific steps for developing that particular genre into a sermon. He helpfully includes cautions and guidance in preaching Christ from each biblical genre. These often come in the form of exegetical fallacies to avoid. For example, we read that in historical narratives the preacher must avoid the three-fold temptation of moralizing, spiritualizing, and allegorizing.

One of the most helpful contributions of each genre chapter is the “sample sermon.” While a full sermon manuscript is not presented, the overall development and structure is given in an outline form. This reader would have benefited from a fully formed sermon manuscript to give more than the structure of the sermon but also to engage the full substance of the sermon.

For the pastor, Smith’s work offers a helpful guide that moves him from the interpretation of a text to the composition of a message. A pastor could consistently draw upon the insights of this work to stimulate the creative movement from interpretation to sermon development. One will not find hard and fast rules for sermon structure here, lest he be tempted to replace one predictable sermonic structure for another.

Another helpful contribution is the suggested readings at the end of each chapter along with a clearly organized bibliography. Smith points the reader to a broad array of current hermeneutical and homiletical works that expand his engagement with each literary genre. Every pastor would be served well by consulting these suggested readings prior to beginning (and during) a series in the appropriate genre of Scripture.

For the homiletician, Smith builds on the work of two previous contributions to the field of genre-sensitive preaching. He expands on both Thomas Long’s *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (1988) and Jeffrey Arthurs’ *Preaching with Variety* (2007). His decision to provide clear steps from interpretation to sermon composition along with the sample sermon outline are helpful improvements upon the previous works. Both Long’s and Arthurs’ works serve primarily as homiletical introductions to selected literary genres. Smith puts sermonic flesh on their homiletical and hermeneutical bones. Smith additionally expands the scope of coverage of Long and Arthurs by adding his chapters on the law, Gospel/Acts, and prophecy.

For both the preacher and the homiletician, Smith has provided a significant contribution that will aid many generations of preachers in creating sermons that are shaped by not only the substance, but also the structure and spirit of the text. I am

confident that the Spirit of God will use this work so that preachers and congregants will be shaped by the voice of God revealed in the preached Word.

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***Blessed are the Balanced: A Seminarian's Guide to Following Jesus in the Academy.* By Paul E. Pettit and R. Todd Mangum. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014. 112 pages. Paperback, \$13.99**

In *Blessed are the Balanced*, Paul E. Pettit and R. Todd Mangum hope to protect seminary students from the danger of losing spiritual vigor while increasing in spiritual knowledge. They write, “a good number of students graduate with a head full of biblical and doctrinal knowledge, but with a heart that has grown cold to God” (7). The authors, then, “[focus] on how students of God and the Scriptures can achieve a healthy balance between both rigorous academic scholarship and a growing piety” (8).

In order to assist seminarians in achieving the desired balance, the authors distinguish between Christian maturity and higher education. Christian maturity, they posit, is a matter of the heart: “(a) putting away childish things and becoming an *adult* in Christ, (b) partnering with the Holy Spirit to produce *good fruit*, and (c) walking in the *light* of God’s truths” (21). Higher education, however, is a matter of the mind (or head). The authors provide a brief primer on disciplines (spiritual and academic), before charging their readers to strive for balance.

The authors rightly emphasize the importance of prayer and spiritual discipline in the life of the student. Seminary students certainly may fall into the trap of rightly dividing the Word of truth (2 Tim 2:15), while failing to allow the Word to divide them (4:12). When done with proper motivation, spiritual disciplines have the power to provide the ballast needed when sailing the waters of higher education. The authors’ suggestions of academic disciplines are of equal importance. Seminary education is not an entitlement, but rather an investment entrusted to them. Students are given a stewardship with which they must demonstrate great care and responsibility.

The authors also emphasize church involvement while in seminary. Theological education exists for the sake of the church, and as such, must not be undertaken in the absence of church membership. Lessons learned in the classroom find their ultimate purpose in the sanctuary. The church is the laboratory in which the student teaches that which he has been taught, and develops relationships that provide perspective on his education. It is the place where friendships and accountability take place. These emphases were the strengths of the book.

There was, however, one point of concern. The author of chapter 1 introduces the analogy of a teeter-totter which is carried throughout the book: the desire is to help the seminarian achieve “the final goal of *balancing* the teeter-totter” (18). The danger of using this analogy is that it presents piety and knowledge—Christian maturity and Christian education—as ends of a spectrum at odds with one another, as though an increase in the one necessarily mandates a decrease in the other. It assumes that theological study leads to spiritual dryness, hence the need to “keep academics and spirituality, study, and godliness in balance” (137).

Balance, however, demands that one restrict one end to make allowance for the other: to restrict learning in order to make allowance for more piety, or to restrict piety in order to make allowance for more learning. Is the seminary student

faced with such a moral impasse? Perhaps it would be better to challenge seminary students to dive headlong into the Scriptures, wrestling with God's Word until they are held captive by it. Perhaps the seminary's mandate must be to teach the Word of God to the people of God in such a way that they are moved by God to share the love of God with the world—whether in the church, the mission field, or the academy. Perhaps it would be better to view exegesis as the method of interpreting the text that affects not only belief, but action and application as well. Perhaps managing our weight and maintaining, then, should not be the end goal. It may be that the problem is not a lack of balance, but a lack of truly being held captive and transformed by the Word of God.

Blessed are the Balance is a helpful little book, designed to assist the seminary student in maintaining his spiritual fervor while in classes. Its overarching analogy is a poor choice, but its message is of incredible importance: Christian growth is not a matter of the head *or* the heart. It concerns the whole person: heart, soul, strength *and* mind (Luke 10:27).

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***The Rise of the Nones: Understanding and Reaching the Religiously Unaffiliated.* By James Emery White. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014. 224 pages. Paperback, \$15.99.**

Many are disassociating themselves from formal religious groups, instead choosing “none of the above” as their religious affiliation. What does this mean for society and evangelism? In *The Rise of the Nones*, James Emery White argues that the rise of the “nones” indicates a significant cultural transformation that requires Christians reevaluate their understanding of society and alter their evangelistic out-reach strategies.

White organizes his work into two sections. Section one analyzes the rise, characteristics, and cultural impact of “nones” (i.e., the religiously unaffiliated, 7). Section two outlines “the new mentality and approach” necessary to evangelize this growing group (8). He shows that since the 1990s “nones” have been the “fastest-growing and second-largest religious category” (17). He attributes this to two factors. First, a “perfect storm” created by the church's recent activities and failures (37–41); second, to “secularization, privatization, and pluralization” (46–51). Religiously, he shows that “nones” are indifferent toward religion, though many consider themselves spiritual (ch. 2). Thus, a new paradigm and new evangelistic strategies are required.

In section two, White argues that churches must undergo a “paradigm shift” regarding church growth (73). They must strive for conversion growth rather than biological, transfer, and prodigal growth (ch. 6). This necessitates churches analyze their “atmosphere” as related to “nones” (ch. 7). Also, he proposes three changes: adoption of “cause” (ch. 8), focus on “grace and truth” (ch. 9), and a “new apologetics” (ch. 10). To help accomplish this, White calls for “unity” (ch. 11) and proposes churches “open the front door” to “nones” (ch. 12).

White offers a thorough analysis of the religiously unaffiliated by citing numerous studies. Furthermore, he shows that their recent growth requires new mind-sets and approaches to evangelism. Despite his evidence, however, there are two areas of weakness. First, he attributes the “perfect storm” in part to several headlines, social movements, and fads of the 1990s. He does not, though, show why these were more influential than the events of the 1960s (34–36). Second, in his analysis of the “nones,” White does not address a possible pushback. There will be some who

reject his conclusions regarding society and his call to reevaluate traditional outreach methods.

In section two White offers proposals to reach the “nones” with the gospel. First, he reminds his readers to focus on conversion growth (ch. 6). Second, he clearly articulates the error of some traditional outreach methods, brilliantly illustrating his point using car sales (76–79). As for specific application, four of White’s recommendations are noteworthy. First, he calls for a renewed emphasis on Christ and the cross (i.e., “grace and truth,” ch. 9). Second, he recommends adopting a “new apologetics” emphasizing meaning more than empiricism (ch. 10). Third, he calls for unity among believers (ch. 11). Finally, he offers five specific keys to creating a church welcoming to “nones” (ch. 12). Despite the helpful—and much needed—information, section two’s usefulness is limited. In chapter 7, White discusses six “atmospheres” but only clearly defines two: “none hostile” and “none indifferent.” Those that receive the greatest emphasis, “none targeted” and “no man’s land,” remain ambiguous.

Second, White focuses on “cause” as a means to reach the “nones” (ch. 8). However, his explanation of “cause” lacks clarity and thus invites misinterpretation. Although he attempts to distinguish social action from social transformation, his lack of clarity opens the door to social justice, the social gospel, and religious progressivism.

Third, although he rightly emphasizes “grace and truth,” he does not clearly define “truth” (ch. 9). White refers to “truth” as rules imposed by man (cf. Islam and Christian legalism). With only this definition offered, one is left wondering if “grace and truth” means preaching both the cross and imposing legalistic rules?

Finally, White overlooks two vital areas: small churches and submission to God. At times he calls for changes some may find difficult, e.g., changing musical instrumentation, building renovations, and implementing multimedia. However, he fails to help small churches understand how to make these adjustments. How will a small country church of fifty people with an average age of 65 implement these changes? Not only does White overlook small churches, he also omits submission to God. There is no specific discussion on submission to the Holy Spirit, the supremacy of Christ, or the sovereignty of God. Without submission a paradigm shift is unlikely and unity is unachievable.

James Emery White’s work, *The Rise of the Nones*, has the potential to be groundbreaking, especially section one, wherein he analyzes the rising group of the religiously unaffiliated. However, its usefulness in application is hindered by limited elaboration, undefined terms, and overlooked issues. As such, White accomplishes most, but not all, of his stated goal. Nevertheless, *The Rise of the Nones* offers insight into an unprecedented modern cultural phenomenon. He shows that “nones” are indifferent to religion and do not necessarily hold a Christian worldview. Thus, White’s work is pivotal to both understanding culture and devising new strategies to reach that culture.

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***Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive.* By Thom S. Rainer. Nashville: B&H, 2014. 112 pages. Hardcover, \$12.99.**

Many churches die every year all across the United States. While one might argue that some need to die, a church’s death is sad, and in many cases, preventable. In this brief work, Thom Rainer examines the conditions of multiple churches

that contributed to their ultimate demise. Based on his findings and the knowledge gained from years of research, Rainer outlines nine symptoms of sick or dying churches, then offers twelve “responses” intended to help the members of those churches confront their situation.

Despite the book’s brevity, the content is weighty and insightful, offering readers information to help identify areas within their churches that indicate sickness or impending death. The book is divided into two parts: the autopsy and the responses. In the first section Rainer explains that for many the journey toward death is slow and often goes unnoticed (ch. 2). Chapters 3–11 outline conditions, or symptoms, of a sick or dying church. Some of the symptoms Rainer discusses include idolization of the past, self-serving budgeting, being “preference-driven,” and a fixation on church facilities.

Although the book is intended for a more general audience, it can be a useful resource for church leaders. Rainer strips the information of illustrative fluff and provides church leaders—in a direct, yet loving, manner—the necessary information to recognize and address spiritual sickness in their church. Pastors will find the information useful in that it (1) provides a snapshot of the American church’s spiritual condition in the early twenty-first century, and (2) can work well in conjunction with Revelation 2–3 (and other passages) in identifying how the American church relates to churches of the first century.

Despite its usefulness, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church* is not without weaknesses. First, some of the individual symptoms seem forced. For example, based on his explanations, it is unclear how being “preference-driven” (ch. 7) is distinct from the church refusing to look like the community (ch. 4). In both cases, Rainer indicates that the congregation is self-serving rather than kingdom-serving.

In addition, one must ask whether the individual conditions are truly symptoms or merely byproducts of the symptoms of selfishness and pride. On the one hand, a case could be made that pride and selfishness are the disease and the nine issues Rainer addresses are the symptoms. On the other hand, one could argue that the disease is sin, selfishness and pride are the symptoms, and Rainer’s nine conditions are the byproducts. This lack of clarity is exacerbated by the fact that throughout the autopsy, Rainer repeatedly returns to the theme of the church being selfish and prideful.

Another weakness is Rainer’s dependence on his own ethos (i.e., “trust me” moments). Multiple times Rainer offers broad generalizations, especially regarding statistics, that he indicates are based on his overall research and experience. When discussing the nature of a pastor’s tenure, Rainer lists five stages (58–60). However, he precedes this section by referencing his “more than two decades” of research. He then admits that although his time-designations are “not precise,” he has “some level of confidence” in them.

A second example of Rainer’s ethos-dependence is in chapter 12. Rainer estimates that 10% of churches are healthy, 40% have some symptoms, 40% are very sick, and 10% are dying. The given basis for these numbers, which he admits are “not precise,” is simply “I believe they reflect the actual condition” (86).

The final weakness comes in part two: the “responses” to spiritual sickness. Although the subtitle states that the book will include “twelve ways to keep yours alive,” Rainer actually only offers eight. The final four responses recommend letting the church die, albeit gracefully (ch. 14). Furthermore, Rainer qualifies his recommendations for a “very sick” church (ch. 13) by indicating that change would require

a miracle because, though not impossible, it is very unlikely that such a church can avoid death (94).

Thom Rainer's work, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, offers tremendous insight into the spiritual conditions that plague many churches in America. A few are healthy, some have early symptoms, while others are very sick or dying. It can be difficult to recognize sickness in a church at any stage, especially for the members of that church. Rainer's work offers insight and information to help laity and church leaders identify and address areas of spiritual sickness. Despite its brevity, the book is a tremendous value to Christians willing to read it with an open mind and help slow the rate of church death in this nation.

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**Abstracts of Recently Completed Dissertations in the School of Theology at
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary**

**“Two Cases of Allusion to the Torah in Zechariah 9–10.” By Justin L. Allison.
Supervised by Joshua E. Williams.**

This dissertation argues that in Zechariah 9:14 and 10:1–2 the author deliberately alludes to words of Moses in the Torah in order to specify how those texts in the Torah should be understood in the context of return from exile. Chapter one describes the differences between studies of intertextuality, tradition-history, and redaction-criticism in terms of how they view connections between passages in the book of Zechariah and passages in other biblical books.

Chapter two presents a methodology for demonstrating a high probability of the existence of Inner-Biblical Allusion, followed by methodology for determining the direction of the allusion. Chapter two concludes with a presentation of a few ways to determine the hermeneutical significance of the allusion.

Chapters three and four argue for specific Inner-Biblical Allusions within the text of Zechariah 9–10. Chapter three argues that Zechariah 9:14 alludes to Exodus 19:16. Chapter four argues that Zechariah 10:1–2 alludes to Deuteronomy 11:14–15. Chapter five concludes the dissertation by describing the tendencies displayed in the allusions present within Zechariah 9–10. These tendencies include shared terms with distinctive language (and accumulation), along with exhibiting a tendency toward a positive re-prediction, or a fulfillment of earlier prophecy. Then, they tend to allude to the Torah in order to claim equal authority to the source text, to abbreviate description in the target text, and to provide interpretation of the source text in the target text.

**“The Speckled Bird: Nathanael Emmons, Consistent Calvinism, and the
Legacy of Jonathan Edwards.” By Zachary M. Bowden. Supervised by
Robert Caldwell.**

Rather than modeling a declension from the theology and ministry of Jonathan Edwards, this dissertation will demonstrate that Nathanael Emmons’s theological development upon Edwards resulted in a lifetime of ministerial activity, as seen in the work of theological education, missions, and moral reformation. Furthermore, such ecclesial activity reflected the ministerial paradigm set by the Edwards. Even though Emmons arrived at different theological conclusions from Edwards at times, he nonetheless constructed his theology upon doctrinal pillars established by the Northampton pastor, thus following in Edwards’s own penchant for theological ingenuity. In so doing, Nathanael Emmons expounded a version of Calvinism that was a consequence of Edwards’s robust ministry, not a decline from it.

Chapter one serves as the introduction to the dissertation, providing the context for the thesis, the pertinent historiography surrounding Emmons and his relationship to Edwards, and the proposed method of study. Followed by this is chapter two, which describes and assesses Emmons’s conversion experience, not only to Christianity, but to Consistent Calvinism.

Chapter three surveys the process by which Emmons came to be the pastor of the church at Franklin, Massachusetts, and how his ministerial vision

related to that of Edwards. Chapter four then, considers Emmons's role in theological education as a leader of the school of the prophets, and how he trained nearly one hundred Consistent Calvinists to serve throughout the new republic.

Chapter five focuses on Emmons's doctrine of disinterested benevolence, and how it served as a catalyst for his pioneering role in establishing the Massachusetts Missionary Society and the Franklin Society for the Reformation of Morals. Followed by this, in chapter six we consider the most unique aspect of Emmons's theology, his "Exercise Scheme," where he attempts to reconcile God's sovereignty with man's responsibility. Additionally, this chapter will consider how Emmons's theological eccentricity relates to Edwards's theological legacy. Finally, this dissertation concludes with chapter seven, which serves as a summary of the entire work's argument.

"Preaching for the Church: An Evaluation of Mark E. Dever's Ecclesiological Homiletic." By Keith Allen Collier. Supervised by Matthew McKellar.

This dissertation argues that Mark E. Dever's ecclesiological homiletic stands as unique among Southern Baptists and conservative evangelicals and serves as a needed guide for building healthy local churches in the twenty-first century.

Chapter one provides context for the dissertation by outlining trends in evangelicalism that have contributed to unhealthy local churches and why Dever's voice is needed.

Chapter two presents a historiographical overview of Dever's early life, academic career, and pastoral ministry prior to his arrival at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.

Chapter three examines Dever's twenty years of influence as senior pastor at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in addition to his widespread contributions to Southern Baptists and the broader conservative evangelical milieu.

Chapter four explores Dever's views on ecclesiology, both his theology of the church as well as how he puts his ecclesiology into practice.

Chapter five focuses on Dever's homiletic, both his theology of preaching and its practice.

Chapter six draws together the themes of previous chapters in an examination of the contemporary implications of Dever's ecclesiological homiletic.

Chapter seven brings the dissertation to a close by offering key principles gleaned from Dever's ecclesiological homiletic, further topics for future research, and a summary of the main arguments presented throughout the dissertation.

"The Household of God: Familial Language and Christology in Hebrews." By Charles T. Martin. Supervised by Terry Wilder.

The present investigation argues that the letter to the Hebrews employs familial language interwoven throughout the discourse to identify and address a house church whose interrelations signify "authentic" siblings. A minority of outsiders attend the gatherings of the household community as well. There is no doubt that all of the voluntary Greco-Roman associations would have anticipated outsiders in the first century CE, but especially the Christian community who welcomed all comers.

Chapter one outlines the problem of "Active kinship" being investigated and identifies the twofold sociohistorical and exegetical methodology. It is common for scholars to use the expression "Active kinship" to describe the brotherly language universally employed in the heterogeneous enclaves of the first century CE. This rubric, however, fails to account adequately for the interrelations of the ancient

family household structure. Put simply, Active kinship essentially cannot convey how blood kin perceived of non-relative members in the ancient households to which they belonged.

Chapter two introduces the sociohistorical origins of the conceptualization of the ancient household through a survey of the architecture, epigraphy, and literature. The findings show generally the common origins of the synagogue, the voluntary association, and early Christian communities in a domicile. This domicile origin often expanded architecturally from the initial structure through adaptation and additional construction. A common factor among all of these enclaves is the crisscross interaction evident in the multiple identities and club memberships of sundry individuals, both civic and religious. Finally, the chapter shows that the house church in Hebrews likely had pagan monotheists attracted to the mutual impartiality and openness to outsiders without the pressure and constrictions imposed within a status-driven, honor/shame patronage society.

The remaining chapters shift concentration to a proposed sociohistorical provenance for the readers and their portrayal as a familial community on sojourn led by Jesus through the imagery of the tabernacle trajectory. Chapter three reconstructs the situation of a house church under duress through multifarious factors and designates their location in or around Rome.

Chapter four underlines the theme of sojourn and the neglected trajectory of the tabernacle or “house” in relation to Christ and this church. Chapter five traces the thread of familial language to identify the authentic Christians and other terminology to designate pagan outsiders. Chapter six provides a conclusion and prospects for further inquiry.

“Old Testament Laws Concerning Particular Female Personhood and their Implications for the Dignity of Women.” By Katie Jean McCoy. Supervised by Malcolm B. Yarnell III

This dissertation tests the hypothesis that, when interpreted according to their cultural context, Old Testament laws concerning particular female personhood demonstrate God’s care for and defense of women’s equal value and shared dignity, according to a relational pattern that is compatible with gender complementarity.

Chapter two of this dissertation discusses the nature of patriarchy in the Old Testament and its relevance to contemporary evangelicals. Chapter three discusses the laws on female biological processes and claims that these laws were a provision for women in Israel rather than a punishment. Chapter four considers the laws concerning accusations of infidelity, finding that these laws vindicated an innocent woman rather than victimized her. Chapter five examines the laws on violation and coerced disgrace according to Israel’s cultural context and discovers that these laws ensured that women were socially established rather than exploited.

Finally, this dissertation concludes by suggesting cultural and theological applications of the laws concerning particular female personhood. As will be demonstrated, the dignity of women is a biblical value, one that the Church must uphold.

“A Soulless Science: An Inquiry Into the Limitations of Natural Science in Detecting a Non-Physical Soul.” By Chad Meeks. Supervised by Paul Gould.

In this dissertation, I will defend dualism against scientific defeaters. More specifically, I will argue that one has good reasons for believing in an immaterial soul despite the advancements and evidences in natural science. I will argue that natural science, as construed by materialists and naturalists, is immoderate or incapable of affirming or analyzing nonphysical (or immaterial) souls. To defend this claim, I will explore various materialistic, naturalistic assumptions and stances, including some scientific experiments used by materialists to defend their view.

The various counter arguments to dualism abound, but many arguments using science or scientific evidence as defeaters against dualism follow a standard pattern. A summary of the arguments (something like a Master Argument) generally proposed (implicitly or explicitly) is:

1. If there are good philosophical reasons for believing in an immaterial soul, then, it is rational to believe in an immaterial soul.
2. There are good philosophical reasons for believing in an immaterial soul.
3. Therefore, it is rational to believe in an immaterial soul.
4. A rebutting defeater to the existence of an immaterial soul comes from science.
5. If a rebutting defeater to the existence of an immaterial soul comes from science, *then all things considered*, it is not rational to believe in an immaterial soul.
6. Therefore, *all things considered*, it is not rational to believe in the existence of an immaterial soul.

This project will counter that such scientifically primed arguments are inadequate at rebutting or undercutting belief in nonphysical souls. Thus, I will be countering premise 5 (and tangentially 4) in this dissertation.

“Blueprint for Change: A History of Efforts by Southern Baptist Leaders to Reform Southern Baptist Culture on Race Relations.” By Kimberly Lynn Pennington. Supervised by William T. Goff.

This dissertation examines the methodologies used by executive leaders of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention in their efforts to transform status quo attitudes and actions regarding race relations. In contrast to scholars who argue that the federal government caused Southern Baptists to change their race relations cultural mores, this thesis asserts that the push for change came from within the denomination.

Chapter one provides an overview of race relations developments as well as the methodology and rationale for this study.

Chapter two establishes a foundation for where Southern Baptists began by reviewing pro and anti-slavery arguments and the post-Civil War era in Southern Baptist life.

Chapter three looks at the formation of the committee that eventually became the Christian Life Commission and the actions of its first chairman, Arthur James Barton.

Chapter four reviews the efforts of Jesse Burton Weatherspoon whose work started before World War II and continued beyond the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision.

Chapter five discusses the activities of the Commission's first full-time employee, Hugh Alexander Brimm in post-World War II America.

Chapter six surveys the work of Acker C. Miller during the 1950s and the advent of Commission publications.

Chapter seven reflects on the endeavors of Foy Dan Valentine who led the Commission during the race relations upheaval of the 1960s.

Chapter eight reports on the initiatives of Richard Dale Land who steered the denomination to apologize for racism and who watched the election of the denomination's first black president.

Chapter nine summarizes the traits and strategies common to all executive leaders studied in chapters three through eight in a manner instructive to people who are seeking today to transform a culture's value system.

“A Development Not a Departure: The Lacunae in the Debate of the Doctrine of the Trinity and Gender Roles.” By Hongyi Yang. Supervised by Malcolm B. Yarnell III

This dissertation examines four lacunae in the debate of the doctrine of the Trinity and gender roles: (1) the legitimacy or illegitimacy of relating the Trinity to gender roles, (2) the methodology of using historical evidence in the debate, (3) elaboration of the significance and implications of the relationship between the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity, and (4) exegetical problems in the debate. While exposing and discussing these lacunae and providing tentative solutions to them, this dissertation demonstrates that the contemporary doctrine of the Son's eternal subordination to the Father in role, function, and authority is a doctrinal development in response to the prevalent egalitarian context yet based on the truth already contained in Scripture rather than a departure from biblical teachings.

Abstracts of Recently Completed Dissertations in the School of Evangelism and Missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

“A Critical Analysis of W.G. McLoughlin's (1922–1992): Evaluation of Elder Jacob Knapp (1799–1874).” By Kuko Kim. Supervised by Matt Queen.

The thesis of this study is to analyze critically William G. McLoughlin's evaluations of Knapp and his ministry in order to investigate whether or not McLoughlin's assessments are warranted. In his work, *Modern Revivalism*, McLoughlin criticizes Knapp's practices and described him as an exemplary revivalist in the nineteenth century who was responsible for the secularization of American Protestantism. The dissertation investigates three major areas of McLoughlin's criticism: Charles G. Finney's influence, commercialism, and misbehavior in Knapp's ministry.

The Introduction presents foundational statements including the purpose, thesis, and background of the study. The chapter also offers definitions of critical terms in the dissertation. For this work, the meaning, direction, and limitation of the study are provided.

Chapter one investigates the influence of the Second Great Awakening on Knapp and his contribution to the Awakening. The relationship among revivalists from Pietism to the Second Great Awakening is also investigated. The work is

critical to demonstrate Finney's indirect connection to Knapp was not unusual nor unique.

Chapter two presents a historical assessment of Knapp's life. His life is divided into three periods: the formation of Knapp, the heyday, and his evangelism to the western part of America. The work provides readers with the historical overview of Knapp's ministerial journey.

Chapter three assesses critically Knapp's practice and theology. The overall evaluation of Knapp's evangelism, as well as a theological analysis of Knapp's theology are offered. The purpose of this work is to investigate whether Knapp was a productive evangelical evangelist following the biblical example of Philip the Evangelist or a money-pursuing preacher.

Chapter four investigates McLoughlin's claims concerning Knapp. McLoughlin's use of quotes and the source of the quotes are assessed critically. Also, several counterexamples against McLoughlin's claims are presented. The work demonstrates whether or not McLoughlin's claims are supported by warrantable sources.

The Conclusion summarizes the previous chapters' research. The summarization demonstrates the validity of McLoughlin's criticism, as well as the value of Knapp's evangelistic practice. It also offers the implication of the study and suggestions for further research.

“The Significance of the Biblical-Historical Framework for Translating and Retransmitting the Gospel: An Analysis of the Shape of Christianity Among East Malaysian Tribals.” By George A. Terry. Supervised by John David Massey.

The growth of the Church in Sarawak, East Malaysia in the twentieth century was extraordinary in terms of its breadth and diversity. What was previously a predominantly animistic context has been transformed into a majority Christian one, even though the extant expressions of faith are anything but uniform. The diversity of this new Christian presence is manifest in the different ways that tribal churches continue to relate to their old animistic beliefs and practices that defined their previous existence. At one end of the theological spectrum exists the conservative Sidang Injil Borneo, marked by her blunt disaffection of the animistic framework. On the other end is the Iban Methodist Church in the Third Division, which has replaced critical elements of the gospel with religious ones from local Iban animism.

This paper argues that the fusion of the gospel with the beliefs and practices of Iban animism is the result of contextually insensitive missionary approaches that inadvertently overlooked the cultural, theological and worldview differences of the Iban. The paper seeks to prove that the pioneers to the Iban made two critical errors of engagement—they *alienated* the gospel from the local socio-cultural context and they *legitimized* the animistic worldview framework for shaping the interpretation of the gospel. Both of these missionary missteps were caused by an underestimation of the influence of the messenger's own culture in the way the Christian faith was conveyed and an undervaluation of the significant worldview differences between the messenger and the local context. The resultant theological syncretism has essentially prohibited the retransmission of the gospel to future generations.

The project will seek to investigate the cultural sources, worldview framework and theological influences that have shaped Iban tribal Christian theology away from the biblical-historical framework, leading to an undervaluation of the story of Scripture. The chief concerns are to exposit the shape of Christianity among Iban

tribals, uncovering underlying influences and theological-ethical emphases, and proposing a way forward for their interpretation of Scripture and the Christian life in order to enhance their effectiveness in retransmitting the gospel to other groups in close geographical and worldview proximity.

Abstracts of Recently Completed Dissertations in the School of Church and Family Ministries at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Faith Training of Children During the Apostolic Age and Ante-Nicene Period” By Katie Michelle Simmons. Supervised by Karen Kennemur.

This dissertation argues that parents are the primary means for faith training and biblical teaching of their children in the apostolic age and ante-Nicene period. This argument is based on research examining the family in the apostolic age and ante-Nicene period and how the early Christians taught their children about Christianity. Specifically, this dissertation is proven by looking at the biblical and historical examples and evidences of faith training.

Chapter one of this dissertation provided the purpose and methodology for the research presented. The thesis of this dissertation was that parents were the primary means for faith training and biblical teaching of children in the apostolic age and ante-Nicene period. This historical dissertation was proven through examining the historical background of family life in the Greco-Roman world during the apostolic age and the ante-Nicene period and was supported with biblical examples.

Chapter two of this dissertation defined and explained key terms as they related to the discussion that parents were the primary means for faith training and the biblical teaching of their children in the apostolic age and Anti-Nicene period. These definitions and the background information provided were built upon as the research sought to prove the thesis of this dissertation.

Chapter three establishes the context of the family in the apostolic age and ante-Nicene period, and then describes the faith training of the early Christian families. The family and education in the Greco-Roman world is introduced and explained, followed by an introduction of early Christian family life. A contrast is presented between the Greco-Roman family and the early Christian families. Specific examples of faith training in the apostolic age and ante-Nicene period are examined from Scripture and early church history.

Chapter four provides biblical examples of faith training, supporting the value and importance of faith training. Biblical examples include the examples set by Jesus with the children, Timothy, and his faith-training heritage. This chapter concluded by examining the domestic codes in Paul’s letters and the household baptisms in Acts.

Chapter five concludes with a brief summary of the research. Connections to contemporary America and implications parents can glean from the early church are presented. Suggestions for further research are provided.

Index of Book Reviews

Beal, G.K. and Gladd, Benjamin L. *Hidden But Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery* (R. Colby Jones) 94

Gould, Paul. *Beyond the Control of God? Six views on the Problem of God and Abstract Objects* (Graham Floyd) 109

Harmon, Matthew S. and Smith, Jay E. *Studies in the Pauline Epistles: Essays in Honor of Douglas J. Moo* (Michael Scott Robertson)..... 90

Mooreland, J.P. *The Soul: How We Know it's Real and Why it Matters* (Chad Meeks)..... 107

Mudge, Lewis. *We Can make the World Economy a Sustainable Global Home* (Graham Floyd)..... 111

Northcott, Michael and Scott, Peter. *Systematic Theology and Climate Change: Ecumenical Perspectives* (Andrew J. Spencer)..... 99

Pettit, Paul E. and Mangum, R. Todd. *Blessed are the Balanced: A Seminarian's Guide to Following Jesus in the Academy* (David Norman, Jr.) 114

Quarles, Charles L. *Illustrated Life of Paul* (James R. Wicker) 92

Rainer, Thom S. *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive* (John L. Rothra)..... 116

Rist, John M. *Augustine Deformed: Love, Sin, and Freedom in the Western Moral Tradition* (Andrew J. Spencer)..... 101

Sexton, Jason. *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Graham Floyd) 96

Sire, James W. *Apologetics Beyond Reason: Why Seeing is Really Believing* (Paul A. Golata)..... 106

Smith, Steven W. *Recapturing the Voice of God: Shaping Sermons Like Scripture* (David Eldridge) 112

Stein, Robert H. *Jesus, the Temple, and the Coming Son of Man: A Commentary on Mark 13* (James R. Wicker) 89

Wandel, Lee Palmer. *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation* (Marc Brewer) 102

Whitcomb, John C. *The Rapture and Beyond: God's Amazing Plan for the Church, Israel, and the Nations* (Mark A. Hassler)..... 97

- White, James Emery. *The Rise of the Nones: Understanding and Reaching the Religiously Unaffiliated* (John L. Rothra) 115
- Wilsey, John D. *American Exceptionalism and Civil Religion: Reassessing the History of an Idea* (Jennifer L. Woodruff Tait) 104
- Wilson, Jared C. *The Story Telling God* (Joshua Chappell) 93