



# Southwestern

JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY



Theology Applied





# **Southwestern**

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## EDITORIAL

The articles found in this issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* are built around the theme of “Theology Applied.” I am sure that some who are starting to read these pages are wondering what this theme means and, furthermore, why we would select such a theme for an academic journal. Please allow me to offer a thought or two related to these and similar questions.

This publication is referred to as a *theological* journal. This particular theological journal is produced by the faculty of The Southwestern Baptist *Theological* Seminary. Obviously, theology is an important aspect of this journal and an important part of the life and work of the seminary. We believe, however, that theology is much more than an academic subject to be studied. It certainly is that, but it is so much more.

Let’s begin with the meaning of the word *theology*. At its most basic level, theology is thinking about God. Jaroslav Pelikan, the great historical theologian, took this one step further when he said that theology is what the church has believed, taught, and confessed based upon the Word of God. We can say that theology involves developing a mind and heart for God’s Word, God’s world, and God’s work, leading to a godly way of life. Many theologians suggest that theology begins with faith seeking understanding. My friend Kevin J. Vanhoozer amplifies this idea when he suggests that the first step in starting to apply theology involves faith speaking understanding.

Far too often in the minds of Christians, theology is something merely contained in a book. It is thought that its place is confined to the study or the classroom. The Christian life and Christian service, so it is thought, take place in another sphere, a different sphere. For some, there is not even a dotted-line connection between theology and the life of the Christian. Our goal in this issue is to begin to correct that false notion and point believers in a different and more coherent direction.

At an introductory level, the contributors to this issue seek to make connections between theology and the church; between theology and the church's worship, proclamation, teaching, and witness; between theology, wisdom, and whole life discipleship; as well as between theology and work. One more piece involves exploring how theology enables believers to live in the world and to engage the public square. There is certainly more that can be said about the doing of theology in and for these various spheres of our life and service. We do not in any way claim that this issue offers an exhaustive look at this theme, but we hope it will help pastors and students, and many other followers of Christ as well, to move away from the disconnect between theology and the application of theology that sadly exists in far too many places.

"Theology Applied" calls for us to be hearers of God's Word, students of God's Word, followers of God's Word, as well as doers and practitioners of God's Word. The contributors to this issue have provided a harmonious chorus to help us begin to connect the dots between thinking about God and our worship of and service to God. In doing so, we recognize that theology is not an individualistic cerebral experience. We contend that theology matters to the church. Moreover, theology serves as the foundation for the life of the church and for the Christian witness to and for the world.

In this issue, Malcolm B. Yarnell III, research professor of systematic theology at Southwestern Seminary, begins the conversation by helping us understand how the Southwestern tradition has addressed the relationship between theology and the church. We are given a look at a theology of the church and an understanding of theology for the church through the eyes of George W. Truett, former pastor at First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, who also served as a member of the Southwestern Board of Trustees from 1908-1944. One of the hallmarks of the Southwestern tradition for more than a century has been its emphasis on doing theology in service to the church.

Other Southwestern faculty members participating in this issue include David L. Allen and Matt Queen, along with Joseph R. and Amy L. Crider. David Allen serves as distinguished professor of preaching while holding the George W. Truett Chair of Ministry, and Professor Queen holds the L. R. Scarborough Chair of Evangelism. Together, they help us see the connection between theology and

witness with articles on a theology of preaching and a theology of evangelism. Amy Crider has recently been appointed to the faculty in the Terry School of Educational Ministries while Joe Crider serves as the dean of the School of Church Music and Worship. The Criders provide us with an illuminating look at a theology of teaching, connecting theology not only to witness but also to wisdom.

D. Jeffrey Mooney and Greg Cochran, two faculty members at California Baptist University, have contributed two thoughtful pieces to this issue. Mooney offers a biblical theology of worship while Cochran's article enables us to think about theology and work. Scott B. Key, who was recently appointed as the academic vice president at the C. S. Lewis Study Center in Northfield, Massachusetts, reflects on the good, the true, and the beautiful, giving us a holistic look at the relationship between theology and whole life discipleship.

Andrew T. Walker, director of the Carl F. H. Henry Institute at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, joins with Casey Hough of Luther Rice Seminary to show us the relationship between theology and the world, guiding us toward a framework for thinking about theology and the public square. There is much more that can be said about our theme, but these eight articles have given us a wonderful starting point to expand our thinking regarding the importance of the relationship of theology to life and to the life of the church.

Our book review section features a look at some outstanding new titles, including the new work by Professor R. Allen Lott, who serves in the School of Church Music and Worship at Southwestern. Reviews include a window into the initial volume in the new *Theology for the People of God* series as well as significant new publications in the areas of biblical studies, theology, missions, church history, and biography. The Book Notes section gives additional guidance to books that connect with the "theology applied" theme.

Let me once again offer thanks to the members of the editorial team. I am genuinely grateful for the work of Andrew Streett, Katie McCoy, James A. Smith Sr., Sarah Spring, and Alex Sibley, as well as Wang Yong Lee, who serves in a graduate assistant role. We express our appreciation for the good work of the design team led by Adam Covington.

We pray that this issue will help our readers see the importance of theology and its application for all aspects of the Christian life,



both individually and corporately. We believe that theology faithfully serves the church and, in multiple ways, enables the church to serve and to speak to our society, the culture, and the world.

*Soli Deo Gloria*

David S. Dockery



## A THEOLOGY FOR THE CHURCH: George W. Truett and the Southwestern Tradition<sup>1</sup>

Malcolm B. Yarnell III\*

Nothing can take the place of the Christian ministry. The progress of civilization, the making of many books, the increase of schools and learning, the marvelous triumphs of the press—mighty as are all of these agencies—they can never supersede the divinely sent preacher.<sup>2</sup>

What is the purpose of academic theology? I am often asked about my role as a theologian. Many are shocked when I tell them it pales in comparison with biblical proclamation, with personal evangelism, with Christian mission, with Bible study in home and church, or with worship. Academic theology serves a necessary but supportive role. Academic theology serves God-called ministers, and those ministers serve the churches, who in turn serve the Lord Jesus. The logic of origins is simple: The Lord Jesus Christ created the church to fulfill his Kingdom purposes; the church verifies the calling of Jesus Christ upon the lives of her ministers; and the churches established theological academies to help their ministers prepare for gospel service. Theologians are thus servants of the churches and their ministers,

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<sup>1</sup>This essay is dedicated to the memory of my father-in-law, George Truett Searcy, who in character was exactly like the man for whom he was named. Both men were gentle in character, possessed great hearts, trusted God's Word thoroughly, and retained their integrity as they went to meet their Lord. My wife, Karen, and I named our first son, Malcolm Truett Yarnell, and are awestruck by the work God has done and continues to do in and through him. Also, please note that Southwestern Seminary's J. Craig Kubic, dean of libraries, and Jill Botticelli, archivist, have been very helpful in making sure this essay is fully researched. Finally, please allow me to express gratitude to my neighbor, Bill Warden, a great nephew of Truett, who kindly gave me two of the founding trustee's books from his personal library.

<sup>2</sup>George W. Truett, "The Subject and Object of the Gospel," Convention Sermon, 1899, Louisville, KY, *We Would See Jesus and Other Sermons* (ed. J. B. Cranfill; New York: Revell, 1915), 200.

\*Malcolm B. Yarnell III serves as research professor of theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and is a former editor of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology*.

and therefore, academic theologians exist to serve the church, its ministers, and thereby our Lord Jesus Christ.

The “founding fathers”<sup>3</sup> of The Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, understanding this truth, intentionally crafted an ethos for the Seminary which would serve the churches through training their ministers. This essay draws on the thought and life of one of those fathers to demonstrate the structure and content of this claim—that academic theology necessarily serves the churches’ ministries. We could look to the founding president<sup>4</sup> or the founding faculty<sup>5</sup> for verification, but it seems best to hear primarily from a founding trustee of the Seminary: George Washington Truett. This particular trustee was integral to the Seminary before its conception, long remained intimately involved in its pedagogy, and elected its first three presidents. H. Leon McBeth argued in 1971 that Truett was “the symbol of Southwestern. He was what the Seminary stood for. He was the image of the Seminary to the world. He was the ministerial model for two generations of Baptist preachers.”<sup>6</sup>

In order to perceive the ethos of practical theology which characterizes The Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, we herein review, first, Truett’s intimate involvement in the foundation of the school. Second, we rehearse Truett’s understanding of dogmatic theology as truth embodied in a life. Third, we recall Truett’s belief that a high view of God in Christ necessarily entails a commitment to a high yet realistic view of humanity. Finally, we recount his understanding of Christian ministry as displayed in the first endowed lectures series held at “Our Seminary,” a series interrupted by the death of her founding president.

## I. GEORGE WASHINGTON TRUETT AND “OUR SEMINARY”<sup>7</sup>

Truett was born on May 6, 1867 into an extended family of farmers

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<sup>3</sup> H. Leon McBeth, “George W. Truett and Southwestern Seminary,” *Southwestern Seminary Founder’s Day Address* (Manuscript, 16 March 1971), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Alan J. Lefever, *Fighting the Good Fight: The Life and Work of Benajah Harvey Carroll* (Austin: Eakin, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> Jill Botticelli, ed., *The Founding Faculty of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary* (A Publication of A. Webb Roberts Library; Fort Worth, TX: Seminary Hill Press, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> McBeth, “George W. Truett and Southwestern Seminary,” 11.

<sup>7</sup> Carroll and Truett referred to The Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary as “our Seminary,” the last known incident being three March 1942 references in Truett’s personal diary to “our

and preachers in the western mountains of North Carolina. Among the treasured books in his home were John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and James Madison Pendleton's *Christian Doctrines*.<sup>8</sup> Receiving an early education in the Hayesville Academy, he seemed destined for a career either in law or education. His first work was to establish and serve as the founding principal of the Hiawassee Academy in northern Georgia. He enrolled 300 students in his first year, including 23 preachers and 51 public educators, along with leading his first convert to Christ.<sup>9</sup> Other Christians discerned Truett's call to ministry before he did. For instance, Ferd McConnell introduced him to the Georgia Baptist Convention as someone who "can speak like Spurgeon."<sup>10</sup> McConnell was not the last to draw the comparison.

Truett was converted to Christ at the age of 19 during a two-week revival. The context and content of his conversion were definitive for the character of his life and message. He framed his conversion in a soliloquy with Christ, who demanded to be his "Saviour and Master." "Are you willing for me to have my way with you, from this time on? I will not indicate to you what that way is to be—it is enough for you to know that my way is always right and safe and best. May I have your consent, without evasion or reservation, to have my way with you now and always?" Truett's answer was an "unreserved 'Yes.'"<sup>11</sup> During that revival, he also gave his first public exhortation for people to follow Christ.

Truett followed his family to Texas in 1889, settling in Whitewright. The church there ordained him to the ministry, although he implored them to desist. He submitted to their call because he recognized in it the call of God.<sup>12</sup> When Benajah Harvey Carroll, chair of the trustees of Baylor University, began looking for a financial agent to retire their crippling debt, Truett's pastor mentioned the new preacher. After interviewing him, Carroll convinced the trustees to hire him. For two years, Truett lived with Carroll and raised critical

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Southwestern Theological Seminary" and "our Seminary in Fort Worth." McBeth, "George W. Truett and Southwestern Seminary," 10.

<sup>8</sup> Powhatan W. James, *George W. Truett: A Biography* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), 20.

<sup>9</sup> James, *Truett*, 32–33.

<sup>10</sup> James, *Truett*, 37.

<sup>11</sup> James, *Truett*, 25. Truett's most recent biography points to the characteristic note of Jesus as Lord in the very title of the book: *Keith E. Durso, Thy Will Be Done: A Biography of George W. Truett* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> James, *Truett*, 48–50.

funds for the school, even giving his own college savings.

Afterwards, Truett entered Baylor as a student, serving the East Waco church as pastor. Truett availed himself of free access to Carroll's private library for six years. They often discussed "theology, history, literature, biography, philosophy, homiletics, Christian apologetics, [and] Biblical criticism . . . far into the night."<sup>13</sup> Truett's Baylor experience convinced him of the temporal priority of education in preparation for ministry even as he consistently maintained the eternal priority of the preaching ministry itself.<sup>14</sup> In recognition of his excellent academic work, Truett was invited to deliver his class's commencement speech, the first among many such opportunities at both Christian and secular universities.

Truett's Baylor sermon provides a philosophical structure for his contention that theology should shape human life. He parallels John Henry Newman's Roman Catholic philosophy of education, which emphasizes the academy's role in molding human souls, rather than Friedrich Schleiermacher's Liberal Protestant proposal for a purely intellectual *Wissenschaft*.<sup>15</sup> The choice was propitious. In that 1897 speech, Truett connected an inspiring idea with its resulting activity: "Swiftly does man become like the thoughts he loves."<sup>16</sup> Ideals and activities are two sides of one coin.

An ideal is "a pattern in the mind, held up before its eye, for imitation, realization and guidance." A corollary term from Scripture for "ideal" is "vision," without which the people perish (Prov 29:18). Individuals and organizations progress or regress on the strength of their ideals. "What we call progress is but society following after and translating into life the visions of the mind."<sup>17</sup> Practices may be described theologically as the "incarnation of ideals."<sup>18</sup> In the history of the West, certain ideals advanced human welfare, such as Martin

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<sup>13</sup>James, *Truett*, 77.

<sup>14</sup>Durso, *Thy Will Be Done*, 44–45.

<sup>15</sup>Truett does not cite him, but Newman's conception of the "idea" is evident. Cf. John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University Defined and Illustrated: In Nine Discourses Delivered to the Catholics of Dublin*, 3rd ed. (London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1873); David H. Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); Malcolm B. Yarnell III, *The Formation of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 115–25.

<sup>16</sup>"The Inspiration of Ideals," in *George W. Truett Library [Hereinafter, GWTL]*, 4 vols., ed. Powhatan James (1950; reprint Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), vol. 3, part 2, 19.

<sup>17</sup>"The Inspiration of Ideals," 13.

<sup>18</sup>"The Inspiration of Ideals," 14.

Luther's "ideal of individual responsibility" and Oliver Cromwell's "ideal of personal rights." These undergirded the later American ideal of "free institutions and self-government."<sup>19</sup> Because of its power to shape individuals and societies, an ideal must be carefully sifted and cultivated, for vicious ideals result in evil actions while virtuous visions foster good deeds.

Even "an incomparable country" like the United States incorporates both noble and ignoble ideals. The ignoble may be seen, for instance, "when the press and the public give greater prominence to the pugilist than to the poet," or, when "the unprincipled politician too frequently displaces the unselfish statesman." But Truett reserved his strongest criticism for the business world: "We talk much of heathen idolatry, but there was never a heathen temple crowded with more eager devotees, than is the temple of mammon in this land of alleged civilization and Christianity."<sup>20</sup> If we allow such vices to "lower the standards of our morality," we bring harm to humanity. Instead of false ideals, we must focus upon "the one ideal and inspiration for every day and duty of life," the person of Jesus Christ. "Study Him, and know that there can be no heroism save in self-sacrificing interest for others."<sup>21</sup>

Those were tough words coming from one who would soon lead a church to become the largest and wealthiest congregation Southern Baptists had ever seen. Numerous churches tried to call Truett as pastor, including the First Baptist Church of Nashville which offered him a princely salary. He declined them all because, as he at first told the First Baptist Church of Dallas, he intended to attend The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for a year in order to further his theological education. First Dallas, however, approached him again with the backing of three leading Texas Southern Baptists: B.H. Carroll, J.B. Cranfill, and J.B. Gambrell.<sup>22</sup> Truett ultimately accepted their call, with the proviso he could build the Baptist denomination.

Benajah Harvey Carroll wanted his protégé as close to his side as he could get him from the very foundation of what they both affectionately called "Our Seminary." While Carroll's mystical "vision"

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<sup>19</sup>"The Inspiration of Ideals," 15–16.

<sup>20</sup>"The Inspiration of Ideals," 17.

<sup>21</sup>"The Inspiration of Ideals," 18, 21.

<sup>22</sup>Durso, *Thy Will Be Done*, 51.

on a train through the Texas Panhandle in 1905 has garnered much attention, the Texas Baptist patriarch was implementing his idea well before that phenomenon.<sup>23</sup> Under Carroll's influence, Truett began serving as a trustee at Baylor University in 1898. Truett served there for over 45 years, even turning down election as her president in 1899. In 1901 Carroll further enlisted Truett to the faculty of his Baylor University Summer Bible School, likely teaching homiletics.<sup>24</sup> As early as 1903, Southern Seminary was concerned Carroll would create a rival seminary out of the Bible School and Baylor's new Theological Department.<sup>25</sup> In 1905, the rival seminary received its first official name, "Baylor Theological Seminary," and began taking both men and women as students.

Carroll's pedagogical vision was delivered in a 1905 *Baptist Standard* article. Robert A. Baker said, "his greatest concern was not for training technical scholars but for preparing a great multitude of pastors, evangelists, missionaries, and Sunday School teachers."<sup>26</sup> Truett agreed entirely with Carroll's integration of theology with practice. He praised Carroll in 1906 at the Baptist General Convention of Texas: The Seminary is "now a vital part of our work, bone of our bone, the child of our prayers and labors," and Carroll is "in any field, first among equals as a preacher and teacher of God's Word."<sup>27</sup> Truett's vision for the Seminary thus matched that of "our beloved brother Carroll." In a novel move, the latter then called for the creation of a chair of evangelism.<sup>28</sup>

The seminary was granted separate existence from Baylor by the Baptist General Convention of Texas in its November 1907 meeting in San Antonio. Truett was also elected a founding trustee. The trustees met immediately afterwards in order to elect Carroll as the school's founding dean.<sup>29</sup> Later that month, the trustees met in

<sup>23</sup>Robert A. Baker, *Tell the Generations Following: A History of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1908-1983* (Nashville: Broadman, 1983), 24–25.

<sup>24</sup>F.H. Kerfoot of Southern Seminary was also included. "The Baylor University Summer Bible School" (April 18, 1901), in B.H. Carroll, *Our Seminary or The Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary: Lectures, Articles and Appeals*, ed. J.W. Crowder (Roberts Library, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, TX, [n.d.]), 3.

<sup>25</sup>S.P. Brooks, in *Proceedings of the Baptist General Convention of Texas* (1903), 43–44; Baker, *Tell the Generations Following*, 118.

<sup>26</sup>Baker, *Tell the Generations Following*, 120.

<sup>27</sup>Baker, *Tell the Generations Following*, 126.

<sup>28</sup>Baker, *Tell the Generations Following*, 125–26.

<sup>29</sup>Minutes of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Board of Trustees, 1907 (Roberts

Truett's office in Dallas, and the school was granted a new name, "The Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary."<sup>30</sup> In the March 1908 trustee meeting, Carroll was elected our seminary's Founding President, and Truett immediately moved that Carroll's salary be increased substantially.<sup>31</sup>

Truett was also appointed to the subcommittee on locating the seminary.<sup>32</sup> In 1906, R.C. Buckner suggested a location in Dallas for the new seminary.<sup>33</sup> In 1907, the president of Baylor suggested Fort Worth so as to provide a clean break between the two schools.<sup>34</sup> When Carroll advertised for offers of locations in April 1908, several cities vied for the seminary.<sup>35</sup> Carroll at first favored a location in Dallas, until an Oak Cliff property was put forward.<sup>36</sup> But the Baptists and other citizens of Fort Worth lobbied the seminary to locate there, with even more substantial incentives. J. Frank Norris, who allowed Carroll to use the *Baptist Standard* to promote but later took a dislike to our seminary, was also pleased with the Fort Worth option.<sup>37</sup> At the November 1909 trustee meeting, Truett moved that the Fort Worth location be approved and profusely thanked the Baptists, newspapers, and citizens of Fort Worth for their generous offers of both land and money.<sup>38</sup>

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Library, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX), 6.

<sup>30</sup>Trustee Minutes, 1907, 9.

<sup>31</sup>Trustee Minutes, 1908, 11, 14.

<sup>32</sup>Trustee Minutes, 1908, 17.

<sup>33</sup>R.C. Buckner to B.H. Carroll, 16 August 1906, in Baker, *Tell the Generations Following*, 127.

<sup>34</sup>S.P. Brooks to B.H. Carroll, 19 September 1907, in Baker, *Tell the Generations Following*, 128-29.

<sup>35</sup>Baker, *Tell the Generations Following*, 147.

<sup>36</sup>Durso, *Thy Will Be Done*, 92-93. Carroll wrote a passionate letter opposing the move to a smaller property in Oak Cliff. B.H. Carroll to George W. Truett, 30 March 1909; Truett Collection [Hereinafter, TC] (Roberts Library, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX), TC 815. Pigott divines a supposed mutually heartfelt rivalry over Carroll between Norris and Truett. However, evidence is not brought forward to support either the emotions or the motives ascribed to Truett. A letter from Carroll may offer evidence of Carroll's emotions and motives, and attacks from Norris may offer evidence of Norris's emotions and motives, but neither Carroll nor Norris tell us anything reliable about Truett's own emotions and motives in this circumstance. Indeed, the introduction of emotive events which occurred long after the deaths of all three men tell us nothing helpful whatsoever. Kelly Pigott, "West of Eden with B.H. Carroll, George W. Truett, and J. Frank Norris: The lifelong feud between the First Baptist pastors of Dallas and Fort Worth," *Review and Expositor* 116.2 (2019): 179. Leon McBeth earlier argued that Truett was not in favor of the Dallas location. McBeth, "George W. Truett and Southwestern Seminary," 7.

<sup>37</sup>Baker, *Tell the Generations Following*, 151-52.

<sup>38</sup>Truett offered the following resolution, which was seconded by W.K. Pearson and adopted: "Whereas the Baptists of Ft. Worth, together with the citizens generally, have shown a most



George Truett served on the Board of Trustees at The Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary from its foundations at the turn of the twentieth century. Truett was intimately and enthusiastically involved in all the major decisions, including its first faculty members and doctrinal confession as well as its new name and new location. However, it was the common vision for theological education that the ninth pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas shared with the first president of Southwestern Seminary which was most important. Truett and Carroll believed theological education should serve the ministers of the church, who should lead the church to serve the Lord by reaching lost souls in the world with the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ the Lord.

## II. THEOLOGY: "TRUTH EMBODIED IN A LIFE"

While Carroll has been described as more dogmatic and Truett as a more heartfelt preacher,<sup>39</sup> Truett's speeches at both the 1898 and 1899 Southern Baptist Convention meetings demonstrate the younger man was as denominationally visionary and theologically adept as his mentor. In his sober 1898 "Response," the young pastor reminded his audience of "the supreme purpose" of the Convention: "We are here to plan and to pray and to work for the interests of that Kingdom which is to break to pieces all other Kingdoms and extend its conquering sway over every acre of this earth."<sup>40</sup> He reminded them that Southern Baptists should be missionary and evangelistic, not only in "profession" but in "practice."<sup>41</sup> Christ organized the church to be his "instrument" in order "to evangelize the world."<sup>42</sup> His prayer included a subtle Trinitarianism which enabled him to integrate theology holistically with the life of the church: "Come, Spirit of God, and teach us here, as we never knew it before, that Christianity is not only truth embodied in a creed, but that it is

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liberal spirit toward the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, as is manifested by their tender of One Hundred Thousand Dollars toward the Building Fund, and an eligible site of large value, which has connected with it other very valuable assets; Therefore be it Resolved: That the Board of Trustees of said Seminary would hereby express to the Baptists, to the 'Ft. Worth Record' and the 'Star-Telegram,' and to the citizens generally of Ft. Worth its profound appreciation of their good will and generosity." *Trustee Minutes*, 1909, 38–39.

<sup>39</sup>Durso, *Thy Will Be Done*, 39.

<sup>40</sup>"Response at S.B.C. at Norfolk, 1898," 6, TC 1911.

<sup>41</sup>"Response," 8.

<sup>42</sup>"Response," 9–10.

infinitely more—it is truth embodied in a life—it is truth in action, out on the field of battle.”<sup>43</sup> “Truth embodied in a life”—this motto clearly characterizes the educational philosophies of the seminary’s first presidents, but it dropped from Truett’s lips.

In 1899, Truett provided more detail regarding the purpose of theology vis-à-vis the church and its ministers. In the background lay controversies at Southern Seminary as it dealt with the higher critical teachings of Crawford Toy and the critical historical teachings of William Whitsitt, controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention as it responded to the anti-missions movement, and controversy in British Baptist life as Spurgeon dealt with the Downgrade Controversy. Truett preached “The Subject and the Object of the Gospel” in Louisville, Kentucky, not far from the only Southern Baptist seminary at the time. He began by calling for personal humility and commitment to the will of God, then developed a cross-centered dogmatic orthodoxy before recalling Baptists to missionary fervor.

His first major point was that “Christianity is nothing if it is not dogmatic.”<sup>44</sup> However, simple, heartfelt faith in New Testament dogma must not be confused with intellectual defensiveness. We must be committed to proclaiming the Word of God with conviction and power, not providing anxious answers to higher critics: “The preacher is to be concerned mainly with the preaching of positive truth rather than the refutation of passing error. Let not the last blatant attack against the Bible be noticed overmuch. It is not the chief business of God’s minister to answer the last fool who has escaped from the mortar in which he was brayed. The Gospel faithfully preached is its own best defense.”<sup>45</sup>

Truett did not spend much time with the doctrine of revelation in this sermon, primarily because he considered the Holy Spirit’s inspiration of the Bible a settled matter. Over the decades, however, he returned to the doctrine. What characterizes his treatment of Scripture is his demand that we demonstrate our respect for God’s Word by reading it, living it, and spreading it. The Bible could be lost to us. It can be lost through “neglect,” when we focus upon the

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<sup>43</sup>“Response,” 12; Durso, *Thy Will Be Done*, 80.

<sup>44</sup>“The Subject and the Object of the Gospel,” 202.

<sup>45</sup>“The Subject and the Object of the Gospel,” 202.

mundane. It can be lost through “substitution,” when the preacher reads “what the scholars, critical and practical, say about the Bible, without coming to the Bible himself.” It can be lost through “mutilation,” when the skeptics take out “a little here, and a little there.”<sup>46</sup> The Bible can be lost, finally, through “disobeying it.” The Bible for Truett is utterly true and utterly demanding. Divine revelation is not merely formal but powerfully practical—it is “the infallible rule of faith and practice.”<sup>47</sup> The Bible dispels the darkness, saves the lost, and gives wisdom for life, so it should be given to everyone, read in the home, and implanted in the hearts of the young.<sup>48</sup>

The Word of God is threefold—Incarnate, proclaimed, and written. Firstly, the preacher’s task is primary, since God thereby saves sinners. Yet, secondly, the Bible is “the transcription of the very thoughts of God.”<sup>49</sup> Thirdly, the written Word cannot be divorced from the living Word, for they exist in “union.” “The Bible is the complement and counterpart of Christ. They are one and inseparable—the binomial word of God.” “They must stand or fall together, for the veracity of the one stands pledged for the perpetuity of the other.” The reign of Christ in the world spreads through the dissemination of the written Word.<sup>50</sup> The truth of Scripture works upon humanity like a “seed,” shaping the destinies of authors and readers, of proclaimers and hearers.<sup>51</sup> The entire mission of the church is disseminating the Word of God through speech and literature. The final admonition of his famous speech “The Leaf and the Life” was “O brothers, I pray almighty God that we may give and pray and toil and lay our every power under tribute to magnify and glorify and make known the written Word of God to all the peoples of every tongue and every clime even as we seek to exalt the Incarnate

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<sup>46</sup>“The Bible Lost and Found,” *GWTL*, vol. 1, part 2, 67–68. Cf. “Mutilating God’s Word,” *GWTL*, vol. 1, part 2, 77–85. “What is to be our reply to all the attacks made upon the Bible? It is to print and scatter it all the more. When men tell us that it is not inspired, or it is inspired only in spots, and nobody knows where the spots are, we are not to waste our lives caviling with them. We are to go on printing and scattering it all the more, and God will see to it that it will survive every conflict.” “The Leaf and the Life,” *GWTL*, vol. 3, part 2, 44.

<sup>47</sup>“This holy Bible is the infallible rule of faith and practice. God has spoken to men by the Holy Spirit and men thus inspired have preserved his counsels for the world’s weal, and here it is in a book for us, the infallible rule of faith and practice.” “The Bible Lost and Found,” 69.

<sup>48</sup>“The Bible Lost and Found,” 70–73.

<sup>49</sup>“The Leaf and the Life,” 26–27.

<sup>50</sup>“The Leaf and the Life,” 27–28.

<sup>51</sup>“The Leaf and the Life,” 34–35.

Word, Jesus Christ our Lord.”<sup>52</sup>

In his 1899 convention sermon, he claimed the subject of the church’s proclamation is located in “one great theme;” “salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ.”<sup>53</sup> “The heaven-appointed center for all true preaching is Jesus Christ, and to leave that center is to lose the dominant power and purpose of the Gospel.”<sup>54</sup> So, Christ and his work in the gospel are the key dogmas which must concern all Christians as they proclaim the Word of God. The gospel includes the truths of his incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, eternal reign, and call to salvation.<sup>55</sup> These gospel truths entail putting other concerns to the side. He asked derisively whether we should, “preach philosophy, or science, or culture, or worldly wisdom, or beautiful platitudes, preach merely to please men or entertain.”<sup>56</sup>

Truett’s Christology is high and conversant with scholastic orthodoxy.<sup>57</sup> He affirmed both Christ’s “divine personality” and “the spotlessness of His humanity,”<sup>58</sup> as well as His threefold office. But most important is the cross: “Christ on the cross is the harmony of every doctrine of divine revelation.” He then linked Christ’s cross with divine simplicity, soteriology, and human sinfulness, as well as the Holy Spirit.<sup>59</sup>

After affirming dogmatic orthodoxy, Truett advocated a heartfelt proclamation devoid of unnecessary subtleties: “If our preaching causes men to think that intellect or anything else is even to be compared with the saving of an immortal soul, then are we guilty of treason against the Gospel of God’s Son.”<sup>60</sup> The missionary

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<sup>52</sup>“The Leaf and the Life,” 45.

<sup>53</sup>“The Subject and the Object of the Gospel,” 203.

<sup>54</sup>“The Subject and the Object of the Gospel,” 204.

<sup>55</sup>“The Subject and the Object of the Gospel,” 204–5.

<sup>56</sup>“The Subject and the Object of the Gospel,” 206. “I preached philosophy and men applauded; I preached Christ and men repented.” “The Subject and the Object of the Gospel,” 211.

<sup>57</sup>In another sermon, Truett employs a subtle Chalcedonian Christology. “He was both God and man, the God-man in one person. Never did hyphen elsewhere mean so much as it does here, the God-man. It both joins and divides. It marks distinction and yet unity. Jesus was as really God as though he were never man, and as really man as though he were never God.” “We Would See Jesus,” *GWTL*, vol. 4, part 2, 14.

<sup>58</sup>Cf. “What We Preach,” *GWTL*, vol. 2, part 2, 17–19.

<sup>59</sup>“The Subject and the Object of the Gospel,” 206–8. The theological founder of the Modern Missions Movement, Andrew Fuller, similarly advocated a cross-centered theology. I believe the Cross of Christ provides the proper basis for a uniquely free church or Baptist theological method. Yarnell, *The Formation of Christian Doctrine*, 154–57.

<sup>60</sup>“The Subject and the Object of the Gospel,” 212.

requirement is laid upon every Christian, so ministers must lead their people to be witnesses to salvation. “Christianity is essentially and fundamentally missionary.” “Missions is not simply an organ of the church, but the church itself is the organ for missions. To this end the church was made—for this cause Christ brought it into the world. The work of missions therefore is not a little optional annex to a church, but it is as essential to the true work of the church as is the heart essential to the human body.”<sup>61</sup>

Turning the tables on those who divorce practice from doctrine, Truett makes right practice necessary for right doctrine. “Christianity is incomparably more than a creed—it is a life. Any other conception than that Christ’s Church is to be a soul-saving army is a caricature upon the churches of the New Testament.”<sup>62</sup> Because Christ gave the Great Commission to the church, any distraction from it is heresy. On the one hand, he says, “We shall not cease to make much of orthodoxy.” But, on the other hand, “There is a heresy of inaction as well as of precept.” “I plead for a living orthodoxy, not a dry, dead dogma, out of which has gone all the blood and heart-beat, leaving only a grinning, ghastly skeleton behind, but an orthodoxy, every pulsation of which can be felt and which is the incarnation of practical loyalty to God.”<sup>63</sup>

In a surprising twist for the academic specialist, Truett concludes, “Let us remember that the deadliest of all heresies is the anti-mission heresy. And let us remember that the anti-mission heresy is the black plague of the Southern Baptist Convention.”<sup>64</sup> Like an active hand grasping a knowledgeable book, “Duty” and “Doctrine” must remain together. This founding trustee’s combination of a serene evangelical Baptist orthodoxy with passion for Bible preaching, soul winning, and missions helps explain why early efforts were made to prevent “our Seminary” from becoming a haven for purely technical scholastic specialization. In April 1912, while Carroll was sick, the seminary’s new dean and another faculty member attempted to alter the curriculum, lessening the evangelism requirement and dismantling the English Bible Department. Carroll acted from his

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<sup>61</sup>“The Subject and the Object of the Gospel,” 215.

<sup>62</sup>“The Subject and the Object of the Gospel,” 217.

<sup>63</sup>“The Subject and the Object of the Gospel,” 220.

<sup>64</sup>“The Subject and the Object of the Gospel,” 221.

sick bed to force the two faculty members out.<sup>65</sup>

As seen in their contemporary book titles and in the establishment of the first American chair of evangelism, George W. Truett,<sup>66</sup> B.H. Carroll, and Lee Rutland Scarborough<sup>67</sup> were passionate for practical theology, in particular to pursue a “quest” or “search” for lost “souls.” Their passion was based in two foundational truths: first, utter faith in God and His Word, as noted above, and second, an intense love for their fellow human beings, as noted below.

### III. ANTHROPOLOGY: “THE DIGNITY AND VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE”

While “Our Seminary” was established with a slightly revised New Hampshire Confession as its official confession, our founders emphasized humanity with an intensity absent in that earlier statement. One of the major changes between the third article of that first confession, on the fall of humanity, and the same article in the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message was the addition of a paragraph regarding the creation of humanity “in the image of God” through “the breath of God.”<sup>68</sup> Likely as a result of Southwestern’s tremendous growth and widespread influence, alongside the hugely popular ministry of Truett, the 1963 revision of the Southern Baptist confession saw a further change in the title of the third article and the addition of an important sentence regarding “the dignity” of human life.<sup>69</sup>

While he sometimes criticized the social gospel, Truett’s preaching always retained a strong humanitarian streak, a humanitarianism which resulted in profound advances for the saving of human lives, not only spiritually but also bodily and mentally. In a 1907 sermon in Carroll Chapel in Waco, Truett proclaimed, “Next in importance to

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<sup>65</sup>Baker, *Tell the Generations Following*, 166. In 1919, the English Bible Department was dismantled.

<sup>66</sup>George W. Truett, *A Quest for Souls: Comprising All the Sermons Preached and Prayers Offered in a Series of Gospel Meetings Held in Fort Worth, Texas* (ed. J.B. Cranfill; New York: Harper, 1917).

<sup>67</sup>L.R. Scarborough, *With Christ after the Lost: A Search for the Lost* (Nashville: Sunday School Board, 1919).

<sup>68</sup>Cf. The New Hampshire Confession of Faith (1853), art. III, “Of the Fall of Man,” with The Baptist Faith and Message (1925), art. III, “Of the Fall of Man.” L.R. Scarborough sat on the Southern Baptist Convention committee which drew up the confession.

<sup>69</sup>The Baptist Faith and Message (1963), art. III, “Man.” The additional sentence states, “The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore every man possesses dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.”

a right conception of God, is a right conception of man.”<sup>70</sup> Theology and anthropology were dogmatically first and second. Truett deeply lamented the ways human life was devalued, for instance in Russia’s recent “anti-Jewish” programs. He also lamented atrocities in the United States: “Here in our own fair land—foremost among all the nations, in the progress of liberty and in the sway of religion—even here, we are grievous offenders against the sanctity of human life. That terrible trinity of horrors—suicide, lynching, murder—still mock us with their awful carnival in every section of our great country.” The theological basis for Truett’s high yet sober anthropology was the *imago Dei*:

If this nation is to be saved from the doom of the proud nations of the olden days, we must learn from the Son of God Himself the priceless value of human life. We must see in humanity, with all of its races and classes, the image of God, despoiled and defaced to be sure, but see that image sufficiently to know that a man, any man, anywhere, is infinitely more precious than fine gold, even than the golden wedge of Ophir. We must see that the value of the meanest human life in the earth is wholly irreducible to terms of silver and gold. This is the doctrine that needs profoundest emphasis to-day, the dignity and value of human life.

Truett decried the poverty which doomed neglected women and children, mourned the way the plague infected cities, and grieved how some were, through social neglect, “dwarfed in body and mind, with life’s horizon little larger than that of the beasts that perish.” Against such atrocities, human dignity must be maintained both collectively and individually. “The tiniest babe, therefore, that ever cooed in its mother’s arms, is intrinsically more valuable than the whole material universe.” Humanity has such great value because “God has stamped on man the likeness of His Deity, and infused into man’s inner life the germs of infinite possibilities. God has endowed man with a part of Himself, even with immortality, which attests

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<sup>70</sup>These profound words were preached at a peace conference. “Why Save Human Life?” *The Baptist Standard* 19.52 (26 December 1907), 1, TC 558.

man's infinite value." Ultimately, every person is valuable, because "every life is to be lived for the glory of God who gave it. Infinite dignity and value is therefore given to human life, because of its office. The humblest peasant in this way becomes a king."

In response, "human life should in every way be most sacredly cherished." From his love for human life, Truett argued military budgets should be trimmed to bare necessity. Instead, universities should be erected, business and labor should honor one another, and everyone should "acknowledge that the Prince of Peace is King of Kings and Lord of Lords." "Christ's conception of human life and His Spirit toward it must be ours. He magnified the dignity of the individual. He gave constant emphasis to human brotherhood. He practiced a pure democracy." While Truett advocated democracy as a spiritual principle derived from Baptist distinctives, he never equated America with Christianity. In 1919, he argued before French dignitaries, in words reminiscent of his later speech before the Capitol of the United States: "Religion must be free. The soul must have absolute liberty to believe or not to believe, to worship or not to worship, to say 'Yes' or 'No' to God, even as that soul, and that soul alone, shall dictate."<sup>71</sup>

In spite of Truett's declamations, lynching continued to be practiced in Texas long after 1907,<sup>72</sup> and the United States was drawn into the maelstrom of the First World War. Truett was selected by Woodrow Wilson to preach to the troops on the front lines. In Europe, Truett had his horror for war reinforced and his trust in government reduced. His official autobiography notes, "He never engaged in flag-waving oratory." Instead, he "preached the same gospel to the soldiers that he had preached for twenty-five years."<sup>73</sup> After the Armistice and travel into Germany, he was profoundly touched by the humanity of the vanquished people and their torn families.<sup>74</sup> In 1935, when some students in India asked why his Christian nation contained crime-ridden cities, he replied, "If you

<sup>71</sup>James, *Truett*, 149. Cf. "Baptists and Religious Liberty," *GWTL*, vol. 3, part 2, 85–112.

<sup>72</sup>There were approximately 500 lynchings in Texas between 1880 and 1930 and 4,700 nationwide. The 1916 lynching of Jesse Washington in Waco was particularly gruesome. Sylvia Moreno, "In Waco, a Push to Atone for the Region's Lynch-Mob Past," *Washington Post* (26 April 2006).

<sup>73</sup>James, *Truett*, 142–43.

<sup>74</sup>On his transition from anti-militarism to a chastened nationalism, see Kelly Pigott, "George W. Truett: Hawk or Dove?" *Texas Baptist History*, 29 (2009): 65–76.



have the impression that my country is a Christian land, you are mistaken.”<sup>75</sup> Truett’s view of humanity embraced all nations, and he did not look to the government as the ultimate solution for the problems of humanity.

Rather, he told the members of the First Baptist Church of Dallas on September 5, 1942, “The supreme agency for bringing in the glorious triumph of Christ’s Kingdom throughout the earth is His Church.”<sup>76</sup> This agency includes every Christian, not just pastors. His desire to help people live is why Truett pushed Southern Baptists to engage in missions, benevolence, and education. We will address missions, which he considered the supreme eternal service, in a moment, but we must consider his view of the supreme earthly importance of both benevolence and education. One of his greatest contributions to benevolence was the foundation and growth of Baylor Hospital in Dallas. He explained to a group of businessmen in Houston why they should do the same.

Truett recognized some pastors did not emphasize human service, but he told the audience they should listen to a “preacher of the right kind.” True preachers are concerned with “the deepest welfare of a city, in all its vital welfare.”<sup>77</sup> Christians must look after “the welfare of the body and of the mind and of the spirit” rather than succumb to “the danger of secularism.”<sup>78</sup> In this life, “earthly and human,” humanity’s supreme task is “to make the right kind of life” as opposed to merely “making a living.”<sup>79</sup> The “true object of human life” in the world now is to live in “service.” “The ideal life is described in the Bible in five little words: ‘He went about doing good.’ That is the ideal life.” Truett looks to Christ not only as the risen Lord saving souls for heaven but to Christ as the “Master of life” who washes feet.<sup>80</sup>

Truett identified three classes of human beings according to their response to Christ’s call to serve others: tramps, spendthrifts, and

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<sup>75</sup>Durso, *Thy Will Be Done*, 222.

<sup>76</sup>Pigott, “Truett: Hawk or Dove?” 75.

<sup>77</sup>“Address by Rev. George W. Truett, D.D., At Banquet in Behalf of Baptist Sanitarium and Hospital, Houston, Texas, January 28, 1915,” 1, TC 1919.

<sup>78</sup>By the danger of secularism, he means divorcing the welfare of the soul from the welfare of the body and the mind. “Address,” 2.

<sup>79</sup>“Address,” 3.

<sup>80</sup>“Address,” 4, 12.

trustees.<sup>81</sup> The Christian life is a life of trusteeship. “The true conception of life is stated for us by the Master of life, and that conception is that life is a trusteeship. Every gift and talent and power and recourse that comes to us, from whatever quarter, is a trusteeship, to be invested in the service of humanity to our last dollar and to the last atom of our strength.”<sup>82</sup> “You and I are here for the express business of saving the people, and we are God’s voice, and God’s machine, and God’s agent, and God’s resource, to go out, near and far, to save the people, and everything else is incidental and subordinate and subsidiary to that great thing.”<sup>83</sup> Salvation includes the mind and the body, as well as the soul, which is why he helped build sanitarium and hospitals, as well as churches.

Truett inspired Baptists not only to support benevolence work, but also to support Christian education. At the height of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy which roiled American evangelical denominations, Southern Baptist educators likewise found themselves under attack. Controversialists like J. Frank Norris complained heresy was overtaking schools like Baylor University. At the Southern Baptist Convention in 1926, Truett stepped forward to defend Christian education. Truett began by admitting there has “now and then” been a rogue teacher, but the overwhelming majority of “the teachers in such schools constitute one of the most faithful and sacrificial and nobly useful groups of workers to be found in the whole realm of Christian service.”<sup>84</sup> Christian education, moreover, is “necessary” and will always be so, for “knowledge is power,” and power must be harnessed to serve the Lord. Through education, the elitist powers of “rulers and priests” are distributed to “the common man.”<sup>85</sup>

While secular education has its place, Christian education is necessary since it alone can teach religion. “Christian education is the only complete education. Man is a tripartite being, possessed of body, mind and soul.” And the state has no business with the soul. As “our

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<sup>81</sup>“Address,” 6.

<sup>82</sup>“Address,” 7.

<sup>83</sup>“Address,” 9.

<sup>84</sup>*Christian Education: An Address by George W. Truett, of Dallas, Texas, at the Southern Baptist Convention in Houston, Texas, Thursday morning, May 13, 1926* (Birmingham: Education Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1926), 2.

<sup>85</sup>*Christian Education*, 3.

Baptist fathers in Holland” wrote in 1611, only “Christ is King and Law-giver of the conscience.” Christian education is of supreme importance precisely because the “supremely essential element of human life is the spiritual element.”<sup>86</sup> Moreover, when Christ gave the Great Commission, He included “teaching” along with “disciplining and baptizing.” “In the method of Jesus, preaching and teaching went hand in hand. He was more frequently called ‘Teacher’ than anything else. His method was chiefly teaching. Certainly, the authority of Christ is the end of all debate for all true Baptists.” These Christian academies also happily contain “the seed beds from which come our vast army of preachers and missionaries.”<sup>87</sup>

Truett believed the Christian academy must be “fundamentally, unflinching and aggressively Christian,” providing evidence to students as to why their faith is most important. Christian truth must come in the classroom through the teacher and in the very “atmosphere” of the school. Both “men and women” should attend these schools, so as to be equipped to fulfill the Great Commission.<sup>88</sup> Because Southern Baptists are a cooperative people, it is right for people to make sure the schools fulfill their function. “By all means, let all our co-operative work—missionary, educational and benevolent—be fully and faithfully discussed by all the people.”

However, “when such discussion is uncandid and untruthful and un-Christian, when it leads to sourness and bitterness and alienations and non-co-operation, then such discussion is to be reprobated by all who care for the honor of Christ’s name and the advancement of his cause.” According to Truett, the biggest problem among the critics of higher Christian education is that they lack love, even as they exalt their liberty. He reminds critics that Paul said, “only use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love, serve one another.” “God give our Baptists to remember, now and always, that the last word in our Baptist vocabulary is not liberty but love!”<sup>89</sup>

Truett appealed to the founding president of Southwestern Seminary as an example of one who stood in the gap to defend Christian schools. “The immortal Texan, Dr. B. H. Carroll, often

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<sup>86</sup>Christian Education, 5.

<sup>87</sup>Christian Education, 7.

<sup>88</sup>Christian Education, 9.

<sup>89</sup>Christian Education, 11.

left his mighty post as pastor, and as the head of a noble theological seminary, and went afield to call to account the misstatements of reckless agitators against the co-operative work of the churches. This whole Convention has been made to glow under his incomparable appeals for a worthy co-operation.”<sup>90</sup> We now turn from Truett’s co-operative efforts to his own pedagogical work within that “noble theological seminary.”

#### IV. MINISTRY: THE LEWIS HOLLAND LECTURES

In 1909, Lewis Holland of San Antonio endowed the first formal lectureship of the new seminary, requesting Carroll appoint Truett the first lecturer.<sup>91</sup> Truett thanked both Holland and the faculty for inviting him to initiate the lectures in 1914.<sup>92</sup> The original plan included three lectures in February and three in November, but only four lectures remain in the Truett Collection. The stenographer’s transcript has been corrected with the number “six” being stricken twice in the first manuscript. However, these strikes appear to be from a more forceful hand than the gentle lines characteristic of Truett’s own hand, and the “six” is retained in the other manuscripts.<sup>93</sup>

The fifth and sixth lectures may have been postponed indefinitely since Carroll was soon known to be on his deathbed. Indeed, he passed away the day after the final lecture was scheduled.<sup>94</sup> The faculty began gathering at Carroll’s side during his final days as he was passing in and out of a coma.<sup>95</sup> As his greatest student, Truett was doubtless included. Truett wrote out his notes for Carroll’s funeral on the back of an envelope, perhaps as he traveled to the First Baptist Church of Waco the very next day. That iconic funeral sermon was published a week later.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Christian Education, 10.

<sup>91</sup>Baker, *Tell the Generations Following*, 143.

<sup>92</sup>“The Preacher as a Man,” 1, TC 1916.

<sup>93</sup>“The Preacher as a Man,” 1, 5.

<sup>94</sup>The first lecture was delivered on Wednesday, February 18; the second on Friday, February 20; and the third on Wednesday, February 25. The fourth lecture was delivered on Tuesday, November 3. If a similar pattern was followed in the second set of lectures, the fifth lecture would have been delivered on Thursday, November 5, while the sixth lecture would have been delivered on Tuesday, November 10. Carroll passed away November 11.

<sup>95</sup>Baker, *Tell the Generations Following*, 181–83.

<sup>96</sup>“Funeral Discourse: Delivered by Pastor George W. Truett of Dallas, in the Meeting House of the First Baptist Church, Waco, Thursday Afternoon, November 12, 1914,” *Baptist Standard* (19 November 1914), 4–5, 21, TC 1692.

The lecture series itself considers the person and work of those who proclaim the Word of God. The first lecture began with the character of the preacher,<sup>97</sup> while the remainder concerned his most important works: in the study,<sup>98</sup> in the pulpit,<sup>99</sup> as a soul winner,<sup>100</sup> and as a shepherd.<sup>101</sup> The outline for the fifth lecture was published as a *Baptist Standard* article a few years later. The sixth lecture apparently addressed personal evangelism. In a 1934 publication encompassing the same subject of the 1914 lecture series, Truett used many points introduced in the series. A new and longer section on personal evangelism, colloquially described as “Our Wayside Ministry,” was inserted at the end.<sup>102</sup> Thus, evangelism from the pulpit, known as “soul winning,” and evangelism at a personal level, known as “wayside ministry,” were both important to the office of the preacher.

In his series introduction, Truett let the students know he was speaking from his heart as “a comrade, a brother” in the ministry, who shared a “common calling” with them but was merely “a little older than most of you.” He exhorted them to make sure they were “divinely called to such work.” One should preach only if he has the “firm conviction that he is called of God to it, and that he may not, must not, cannot put it aside.” The evidences for a call are “both internal and external.”<sup>103</sup> He shared his own experience of discerning God’s call.

After this, he introduced the subject of his first lecture. The preacher must have both “power and purity,” if he is to succeed.<sup>104</sup> The preacher must be “the right kind of a man,” because opposition will test his “habits” and “motives.”<sup>105</sup> The “two most insidious and constant and fatal” temptations a preacher will face are “the love of gain” and “the love of power.”<sup>106</sup> Other temptations to be watched

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<sup>97</sup>“The Preacher as a Man.”

<sup>98</sup>“The Preacher as a Student,” TC 1917.

<sup>99</sup>“The Preacher in the Pulpit,” TC 1918.

<sup>100</sup>“The Preacher as a Soul Winner,” TC 1915.

<sup>101</sup>George W. Truett, “The Pastor as a Shepherd,” *Baptist Standard* (11 April 1918), 7.

<sup>102</sup>*On Preachers and Preaching: Address of Dr. George W. Truett, Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Delivered at the Ministers’ Breakfast of the Pension Fund on Friday Morning, October 18, 1934 at the International Convention of Disciples of Christ, Des Moines, Iowa* (Indianapolis, IN: Pension Fund, 1934), 8–10, TC 1940.

<sup>103</sup>“The Preacher as a Man,” 2–3.

<sup>104</sup>“The Preacher as a Man,” 4.

<sup>105</sup>“The Preacher as a Man,” 6–8.

<sup>106</sup>“The Preacher as a Man,” 8.

against include idleness, commercialism, self-indulgence, formalism, pride, and worldly ambitions. The preacher must ensure that he is sincere in his motives, is not “seeking for emoluments,” and does not pursue sensationalism to gather a crowd. Speaking gravely, he concluded, “your main business is not to make an impression, it is to be a proclaimer of the grace of God.”<sup>107</sup>

In the second lecture, Truett congratulated the students on “the privileges that are yours here in this Seminary.”<sup>108</sup> These privileges should both humble the student and prompt diligence. “I come to remind you, my friends, that all your lifetime you are to be earnest students. These are not the ending days of your study: these are the beginning days.”<sup>109</sup> There are three “text books” requiring ongoing study. First, “the Word of God, the book divine, *the* book.” “The men who are going to have power in this world are the men who have saturated their very heart with the word of God.” “Your supreme text book is the Word of God.”<sup>110</sup> The second text includes all “general literature,” for “the broadening and heightening of our general culture.” But only “the best books,” “the masterpieces,” such as *Pilgrim’s Progress*, should be read, as you compile your own illustrations rather than depending on some collection.<sup>111</sup> The third text is “the book of human nature.” The minister must learn about living humanity by engaging “with sinning, suffering human hearts.”<sup>112</sup> All three should be read together: “Knowing the people and the Bible we are in position to apply its unfailing help to their needs. The book of human nature needs to be illumined by the flood-lights that shine from the Book divine.”<sup>113</sup>

In the third lecture, Truett addressed the pulpit; “Every preacher should have a high estimate of his vocation,” for through public proclamation people are saved.<sup>114</sup> Even before approaching the pulpit, the preacher should read Scripture well, pray with great care, and

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<sup>107</sup>“The Preacher as a Man,” 9–14.

<sup>108</sup>“The Preacher as a Student,” 1.

<sup>109</sup>“The Preacher as a Student,” 2.

<sup>110</sup>“The Preacher as a Student,” 3, 5–6.

<sup>111</sup>“The Preacher as a Student,” 7–9.

<sup>112</sup>“The Preacher as a Student,” 11–12.

<sup>113</sup>“The Preacher as a Student,” 13.

<sup>114</sup>“The Preacher in the Pulpit,” 2.

choose appropriate music.<sup>115</sup> The most important part is the message, which should incorporate the “two great themes running through the word”: sin and salvation. Sin is a painful truth with both individual and corporate aspects.<sup>116</sup> Salvation is the only answer to sin. We are to preach “on the salvability of every sinner in the world however desperate” through the gospel of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The gospel should happen in every sermon.<sup>117</sup> We must guard against “misplaced emphasis,” which can make one just as much “a false prophet” as a Christological heretic.<sup>118</sup> The gospel emphasis is misplaced through “catchy themes,” the “debauching” of “reverence,” and “sensationalism.”<sup>119</sup> As for pulpit manner, the preacher should deal in dogmatic certainties, speak with clarity, preach with hopefulness, emphasize the coming Kingdom, and preach for a verdict. Moreover, “you are to be God’s fine gentleman” and avoid becoming a scold.<sup>120</sup>

In the fourth lecture, after Scarborough’s introduction, Truett replanted the marker for Southwestern’s ethos: “The first and greatest work done by Christianity is winning souls to the saving knowledge of the Gospel of the Grace of God.”<sup>121</sup> To win souls, the preacher must have “certain living convictions,” the first being that evangelism is “the aim and object of his ministry.” Theology and cultural knowledge are right and necessary, but they are not “the major note.” The same must be said of social ministry.<sup>122</sup> The second conviction is that without Christ people are lost. The third, that Christ is not merely interested in rescuing people from hell. “Christ’s gospel is to save the life in its totality.” All of life must submit to Christ’s lordship. While social ministry is not first in importance, it remains necessarily part of the Christian’s calling.<sup>123</sup> The fourth living conviction is that the gospel remains sufficient for all the world’s needs. It will change both individuals and cultures. The fifth, that churches of every size

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<sup>115</sup>“The Preacher in the Pulpit,” 3–4.

<sup>116</sup>“The Preacher in the Pulpit,” 4–5.

<sup>117</sup>“The Preacher in the Pulpit,” 6–7.

<sup>118</sup>“The Preacher in the Pulpit,” 7–8.

<sup>119</sup>“The Preacher in the Pulpit,” 8–9.

<sup>120</sup>“The Preacher in the Pulpit,” 10–14.

<sup>121</sup>“The Preacher as a Soul Winner,” 3.

<sup>122</sup>“The Preacher as a Soul Winner,” 4–5.

<sup>123</sup>“The Preacher as a Soul Winner,” 7.

and shape are “Christ’s definitely appointed agents” for winning the world.<sup>124</sup> The final living conviction is “that every member of the church is to be a soul winner,” which means “every man, woman, and child in the church.”<sup>125</sup> “Oh, brothers and sisters,” Truett pleaded with the mixed student body, “if only we and our fellow Christians will take Christ at his Word and witness for him in season and out of season even as we are prompted and empowered by the Holy Spirit we can and we shall win immortal souls to Christ’s side and service.”<sup>126</sup>

In the rudimentary notes we possess for the final two Holland Lectures, Truett exalted “the work of the pastor” as “the most important work in all the world.” “This is not to minify the work of the evangelist, the teacher, the editor, or anybody else.” Rather, its truth depends on the pastor’s calling to mimic Christ’s own ministry to the church. In the last two lectures, Truett turned from the pastor’s public proclamation to his personal interactions. He first described the pastor as a “shepherd of souls,” who seeks out his people to counsel them with the life-changing truths of the gospel. “There can be no substitutes for this close, personal, intimate face-to-face attention to souls.” The pastor who engages in such work will inspire his people to disciple yet others.<sup>127</sup>

In the final lecture, Truett planned to address “the wayside ministry” which Jesus exemplified. Like Jesus, pastors should engage lost people one-on-one during the six days they are not in the pulpit. After all, Jesus’s “great sermon on the new birth was preached by Him to one man.”<sup>128</sup> He then recounted stories of how people may have expressed their faith during an altar call, but personal witness necessarily occurs before public profession.<sup>129</sup> Through the first series of formal lectures delivered to Southwestern Seminary, Truett laid before faculty, trustees, and students the ethos of church-oriented theology that its founding fathers deemed necessary for theological education.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>124</sup>“The Preacher as a Soul Winner,” 10.

<sup>125</sup>“The Preacher as a Soul Winner,” 12.

<sup>126</sup>“The Preacher as a Soul Winner,” 14.

<sup>127</sup>“The Pastor as a Shepherd,” 7.

<sup>128</sup>Preachers and Preaching, 9.

<sup>129</sup>Preachers and Preaching, 10.

<sup>130</sup>The various lectures were introduced by Scarborough, and the roll call of those who prayed the benediction included other leading founders, such as J.B. Gambrell, J.D. Ray, and W.W. Barnes.



## V. CONCLUSION

Truett encouraged Carroll in the founding of Southwestern Seminary while it was merely a dream in the old man's mind and supported his mentor in all the fundamental decisions. He served as a trustee for the institution from 1907 until his death in 1944, electing her first three presidents. Truett preached the opening session of the seminary in Fort Worth Hall in 1910 and continued to preach here often, not just during the first two Holland lecture series. He served as the chairman of the trustees from 1931 to 1944, raised funds for the Seminary, and chaired the search committee which chose E. D. Head as our third president. That same committee included a young trustee by the name of Robert Naylor, who later became our seminary's fifth president. The seminary's characteristic ethos of practical theology was certainly captured in Truett's ruminations.

We could continue rehearsing the legacy of Truett in its relation to the seminary, alongside his passions for ministry to the lost, for fortifying the churches, for building the largest church in the Southern Baptist Convention, for leading the Baptist World Alliance, for reinforcing Baylor University, and for founding the Baylor Hospital system. All of these are integral to an appreciation of who Truett was. However, he was only able to do these things because he yielded his life completely to Jesus Christ. He totally committed himself to preach that everyone should "Come under to the Mayster" in every aspect of their life, as the west Texas cowboys he led in annual revivals liked to say.<sup>131</sup> The Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary memorialized his leadership of the Baptist World Alliance through the globe adorning the floor of our Rotunda and his soul-winning preaching through our Truett Auditorium.<sup>132</sup> The penetrating gaze of George Washington Truett's portrait still follows me every time I lecture on systematic theology in the Truett Conference Room, as if saying, "Christianity is incomparably more than a creed—it is a life. Any other conception than that Christ's Church is to be a soul-saving army is a caricature."<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup>James, *Truett*, 102.

<sup>132</sup>"Administration—Library Building to Memorialize Truett," *Southwestern News, Extra Issue* (October 1944), 1.

<sup>133</sup>"The Subject and the Object of the Gospel," 217.

## SPANNING THE PEDAGOGICAL DIVIDE: A Theological Model Connecting Content and Competency

Amy L. Crider and Joseph R. Crider\*

As a young professor at a Christian college on the West Coast of the United States in 1990, I (J. Crider) remember conversations among the faculty and administration concerning the importance of the integration of faith and learning. Throughout my training as a musician up to that first appointment as a faculty member, I studied music education and performance at secular institutions. After years of study, I was eager to experience the freedom to pray in my classroom and model for my students what I hoped would be a Christlike example of a Christian musician. Looking back on thirty years of teaching and ministry, I realize how little I understood about the integration of faith and learning.

In another thirty years, historians will look back on 2020 and see seismic shifts in the educational landscape. Some Christian institutions will have altered or abandoned long-held convictions concerning the necessity of residential learning models, some will have given in to pragmatism, and others will have closed their doors.

How should educators at Christian institutions respond amid the 2020 tsunami of educational change? Does “integration of faith and learning” still work as a framework for Christian education? David S. Dockery and Christopher W. Morgan’s call to pedagogues in faith-based institutions gives us a starting place in creating a model of integration of faith and learning for our current situation. In the work they edited, entitled *Christian Higher Education: Faith, Teaching and Learning in the Evangelical Tradition*, they urge, “We ... want to call for the work of higher education in the days ahead to take place through the lenses of the Nicene tradition that recognizes not

\*Amy L. Crider is the director of the Research Doctoral Center for Writing Excellence at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Joseph R. Crider is the dean of the School of Church Music and Worship at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

only the Holy Trinity but also the transcendent creating, sustaining, and self-disclosing Trinitarian God who has made humans in his image.”<sup>1</sup> As Christians in the field of higher education, we would like to propose a model that might help fledgling professors like I was thirty years ago.

It seems to us that the discussion of Christian higher education’s uniqueness—as juxtaposed with secular education—begins and ends like a bridge spanning a chasm, starting with dedicated Christian faculty members who are experts in their fields and ending with the successful student who demonstrates essential competencies woven within the fabric of Christlike character. What is between the bridge’s endpoints—the bridge’s structure itself—is vital to the thriving success and longevity of Christian higher education. While we all recognize competency and an ever-developing Christian formation in our students as our ideal end goal, clearly articulated pedagogical frameworks and subsequent functional steps in the formation process seem to be less specific (in the current literature) between the discipline expert (Christian professor) and the final product (student).

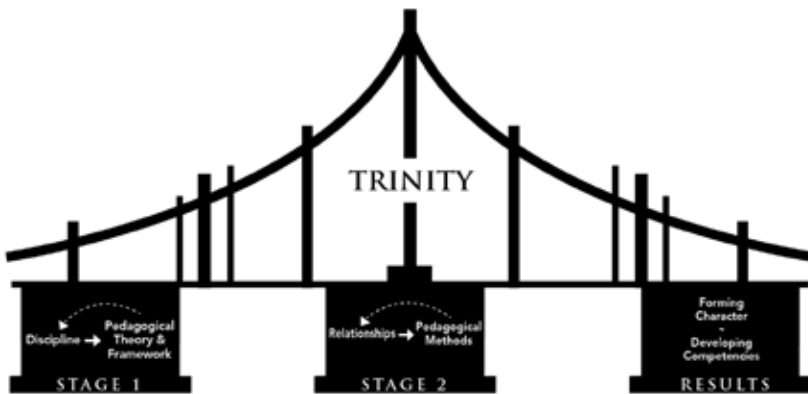


Figure 1. A Pedagogical Bridge between Content and Competency

In other words, while Christian scholars have carefully considered their fields of study through scriptural, doctrinal, and theological

<sup>1</sup>David S. Dockery, “Christian Higher Education: An Introduction,” in *Christian Higher Education: Faith, Teaching, and Learning in the Evangelical Tradition* (eds., David S. Dockery and Christopher W. Morgan; Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 26.

lenses, have we as academic disciplers assumed that our own pursuit of the Lord and expertise in our particular fields of study translate into student formation and skill competencies? By introducing this model, we hope to ignite a conversation among Christian faculty that reconsiders how the entire pedagogical process reflects what Dockery refers to as Christian education rooted in the “transcendent creating, sustaining, and self-disclosing Trinitarian God who has made humans in his image.”

Our model includes two stages, each having two parts. In stage 1, professors review perceptions of their fields, rethinking their fields through a Scripture-based understanding. In the second half of stage 1, professors use that new understanding to create trinitarian theories about their disciplines. The dotted arrow back shows that occasionally the new theoretical understanding offers deeper insights into the discipline. On a very basic level, we could consider the return arrows to be modified feedback loops as both parts of each stage continually interact with each other.

The second stage of the model focuses on what happens in the classroom (residential or virtual), starting with relationships. Those relationships impact pedagogical methods we use as Christian educators to ultimately lead to the result—helping form students who are competent in their field of study and maturing in Christlike character.

While the first three elements of the process (the discipline, pedagogical framework, and relationships) can be evaluated for their theological merit, methods are more difficult to assess. For example, is a flipped classroom a Christian method? Is the “bel canto” technique of singing distinctly Christian? However, if pedagogical method choices result from a biblically grounded process, the apologetic for their inclusion in the Christian pedagogy is not based on pragmatism, popularity, or efficiency. Our model is designed to assist educators in evaluating whether they are missing vital connecting points in helping students move from fledgling novices to lifelong learners who are competent in their disciplines and imbued with the character of Christ.

### **I. STAGE ONE (PART I): DISCIPLINE**

Like many others, we struggle with the phrase “integrating faith and learning” because it conveys an unhelpful presupposition that

faith and learning are two separate, equal subjects to be spliced together like “art and science” or “botany and philosophy.”<sup>2</sup> Scholars through the years have pointed out that in reality faith should drive learning, or what we would call faith-informed learning. As Dockery says, “When we center the work of evangelical higher education on the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, we build on the ultimate foundation.”<sup>3</sup> The integration of faith and learning movement has highlighted the need for a scriptural lens for each discipline’s research and practice.

Although much excellent work has been accomplished in the area of Christian scholars viewing their disciplines through the lens of Scripture, we have included an example of what we believe is a unifying and systematic approach to how disciplines can be reconsidered through a biblical lens.<sup>4</sup> Philosophers Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen propose Christian faculty follow the Augustinian tradition of Abraham Kuyper, embracing “the view that redemption involves the recovery of God’s purposes for all of creation and that no area of life ... is neutral and exempt from religious presuppositions.”<sup>5</sup>

Bartholomew proposes that the Bible sheds its light on all the disciplines and therefore Christian scholars and pedagogues can systematically reconstruct their discipline-specific ontology through a model he calls “The Tree of Knowledge” (see figure 2).<sup>6</sup>

Bartholomew’s Tree of Knowledge also shows how academic disciplines connect through—

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<sup>2</sup>Laurie Matthias traces the use of the phrase “integration of faith and learning” and points out the concept may be worn out and even rejected by some, but the “phrase persists nonetheless.” Laurie R. Matthias, “Faith and Learning,” in *Christian Higher Education*, 172.

<sup>3</sup>Dockery, “Christian Higher Education,” 27.

<sup>4</sup>A few examples of scholars using a scriptural lens through which to view their disciplines include Harold M. Best, *Music Through the Eyes of Faith* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993); Jeremy S. Begbie, *Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); John C. Polkinghorne, *The Faith of a Physicist: Reflections of a Bottom-up Thinker: The Gifford Lectures for 1993-4* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

<sup>5</sup>Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *Christian Philosophy: A Systematic and Narrative Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 24.

<sup>6</sup>Craig G. Bartholomew writes about his Tree of Knowledge in *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 474-75. The Tree of Knowledge figure is from Amy L. Crider, “A New Freshman Composition Pedagogy for Christian Colleges and Universities” (Ed.D. thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017).

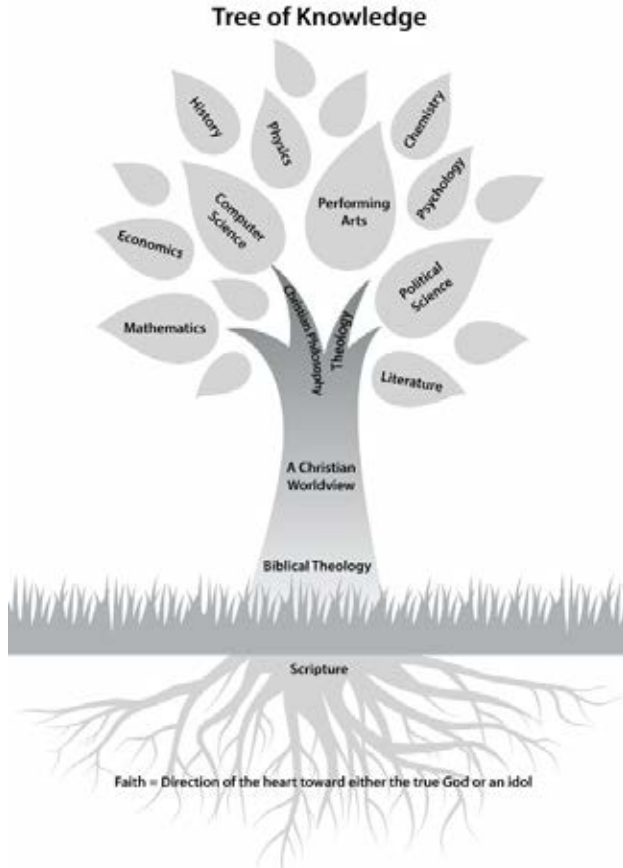


Figure 2. Bartholomew's Tree of Knowledge

- the shared soil of *faith in the authority of Scripture* as a common root system
- the united lower trunk of *biblical theology* (the Bible's progressive redemptive history)
- the united upper trunk of a *Christian worldview*. As James Sire articulates in his work, *The Universe Next Door*, "A worldview ... is situated in the self—the central operating chamber of every human being. It is from this heart that all one's thoughts and actions proceed."<sup>7</sup> Therefore, every pedagogy reflects the worldview of

<sup>7</sup>James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 5th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 20.

its designer.<sup>8</sup>

- the two main branches of *Christian philosophy* and *systematic theology*. *Christian philosophy* highlights the reality that a “philosophical scaffolding is always in place when academic construction is being done, even if scholars are not aware of it: always an epistemology is assumed, always some ontology is taken for granted, always some view of the human person is in mind.”<sup>9</sup> The twin branch of *systematic theology* secures a pedagogical curriculum with doctrinal support.<sup>10</sup> Kevin Vanhoozer defines doctrine as “direction for discipleship. Doctrines tell us how things are (who God is; what God has done; what the new reality is ‘in Christ’) and urge us to live lives that conform to this (new) reality.”<sup>11</sup>

The individual branches of respective fields of study all synthesize in what Bartholomew calls an “ecology of Christian scholarship.”<sup>12</sup>

We contend that as Christian scholars continue to take the necessary steps to anchor their view of their discipline in a model such as Bartholomew and Goheen’s Tree of Knowledge, we will have a significant starting point in advancing Dockery’s charge of “building on the ultimate foundation.” As John Piper relates,

Christian scholarship is not threatened but served when it is permeated by spiritual affections for the glory of God in all things. ... Without a spiritual wakefulness to divine purposes and connections in all things, we will

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<sup>8</sup>George Guthrie asserts, “Whether a person approaches research as a pragmatist, hedonist, naturalist, behaviorist, Marxist, Christian, or one with no readily identifiable worldview, presuppositions are in place and have a profound effect on the way one thinks about research and conclusions.” George H. Guthrie, “The Authority of Scripture,” in *Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundation of Christian Higher Education* (eds. David S. Dockery and Gregory Alan Thornbury; Nashville: B&H, 2002), 21.

<sup>9</sup>Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, 216.

<sup>10</sup>See Crider, “New Freshman Composition Pedagogy,” for a thorough discussion of each section of the Tree of Knowledge as related to developing a Christian writing pedagogy.

<sup>11</sup>Kevin Vanhoozer, note to A. Crider, 2017.

<sup>12</sup>How I (J. Crider) wish I would have been more aware of Scripture’s synthesizing authority in uniting seemingly disparate disciplines thirty years ago. Even in theological seminaries, major areas of study have been (and often still are) siloed into discipline-specific camps. For years, church musicians rarely engaged with theologians until relatively recently when we finally figured out that church musicians need to be theologians.

not know things for what they truly are ... . One might object that the subject matter of psychology or sociology or anthropology or history or physics or chemistry or English or computer science is not about “divine connections and purposes” but simply about natural connections. But that would miss the point: to see reality in the fullness of truth, we must see it in relation to God, who created it, and sustains it, and gives it all its properties, relations, and designs. Therefore, we cannot do Christian scholarship if we have no spiritual sense or taste for God—no captivity to apprehend his glory in the things he has made.<sup>13</sup>

Now more than ever, Christian institutions have a unique opportunity to articulate with clarity why and how Christian higher education is fundamentally different from a secular education. Conveying with conviction that the moorings of our disciplines are rooted in an unshakable gospel-mediated worldview, we must not patently (and, even worse—unwittingly) adopt secular philosophies as the starting point of our pedagogical engagement.

How can we look more thoroughly and specifically at our disciplines to see them rooted in Christ, the one (as Piper reminds us) “who created it, and sustains it, and gives it all its properties, relations, and designs?” Baptizing our classrooms with a perfunctory prayer is obviously not the epicenter of Christian education. Our disciplines should be developed from the ground up, incorporating the incumbent research while redefining the theological and philosophical foundations. Thus, Christian faculty are tasked with evaluating and re-evaluating our respective fields through the lens of the one who created our discipline in the first place.

## II. STAGE ONE (PART II): PEDAGOGICAL THEORY

We can think of truth as being explicit truth (biblical truth, facts), implicit truth (truth suggested by the facts, like “Trinity,” which while not a term used in Scripture is truth revealed by Scripture),<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>John Piper *Think: The Life of the Mind and the Love of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 168-69.

<sup>14</sup>Theories (fledgling facts under scrutiny) fit in this category also.



and conditional truth (what seem to be facts for a current time, place, or situation). When we study our disciplines through biblical lenses, we are revealing explicit truth; when we move to theory, we work to discover implicit truth.

Once we re-vision our disciplines through a model like Bartholomew's (uncovering explicit truth), scholars are tasked with developing theories (implicit truth) about their fields. Sometimes professors think of their disciplines on the macro level (broad subject matter) and micro levels (specific lecture material) as static bodies of knowledge that never change, but the most effective pedagogues know disciplines are dynamic: scholarship affirms this by adopting assumptions about the field in research. Our pedagogy—the art and science of teaching—should also be dynamic, being informed by the discipline and sometimes informing the discipline. My (A. Crider) experience as a writing professor in multiple English departments may serve as a helpful example of this dynamic phenomenon of the interplay between the discipline and the pedagogical framework.

Several years ago, I became burdened that the writing instruction I was giving students at a Christian college and evangelical seminary was alarmingly similar to the writing pedagogy their counterparts were receiving in secular institutions.

I had added Christian elements to the classroom—examples from Tolkien's and Lewis's writing, rhetorical devices in Chesterton's work, argument structure in Christian scholars' articles, and other Christian-infused elements typical in evangelical classrooms. But the pedagogical methods I used were ones I learned in graduate school, ones I learned from literature in the composition field, or ones I gained from classroom experience—"what worked." I am a Christian, teaching in an evangelical institution, but trained in a secular school. Alvin Plantinga points out the fundamental problem of Christian scholars who train in secular schools and then teach and research at Christian institutions: "[Secularly trained Christian scholars] continue to think about and work on ... topics [deemed important to the field]. And it is natural, furthermore, for [a secularly trained Christian scholar] to work on them in the way she was taught to, thinking about them in the light of the assumptions made by her mentors and in terms of currently accepted ideas."<sup>15</sup> Recognizing

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<sup>15</sup>Alvin Plantinga, "Advice to Christian Philosophers," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society*

that theology informs our philosophy, which informs our pedagogy, I wondered if a thoroughly Christian theory of teaching writing was available or even possible. Wolterstorff urges, “Christian scholarship will be a poor and paltry thing, worth little attention, until the Christian scholar, under the control of his authentic commitment, devises theories that lead to promising, interesting, fruitful, challenging lines of research.”<sup>16</sup>

I began asking colleagues, writers, and theologians this question: “Can writing be taught from a distinctly Christian perspective?” Over and over the answer was the same: “Since you’re teaching at a Christian school, using Christian ideas in your classes, and encouraging students to write content that is Christian, you’re teaching writing from a Christian perspective. That’s all you can do.” When books on integration of faith and learning include chapters on the disciplines, they typically have a chapter on the humanities, communication, or literature, but not on composition, the teaching of writing.

I met a conference speaker whose job at a large Christian university was helping the faculty in all the disciplines integrate faith with learning. I asked him my question—how can writing be taught from a distinctly Christian perspective? He answered, “It can’t. Writing is a skill. Leave the melding of Christian ideas and scholarship to professors in content areas.”

It is difficult to read Plantiga, Marsden, Bartholomew, Vanhoozer, and Dockery; to know God’s preeminent medium for communicating truth is the written Word; and to be told my field is outside the realm of the intersection of faith and learning. As is true of many of us in academia, being told something cannot be done is like a case of poison ivy with its irresistible itch.

Eight months later, I proposed a model for writing professors. After working through Bartholomew’s Tree of Knowledge to explore explicit truth in composition, I used Kevin Vanhoozer’s Trinitarian Theology of Communication to propose implicit truth about how Christian writers can write (and teach writing) from a Trinitarian-based model that guides student writers from theological formation

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*of Christian Philosophers* 1, no. 3 (July 1984): 255.

<sup>16</sup>Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 106.

to methodological practice (see figure 3).<sup>17</sup>

While the model gave me a way of explaining how my students and I could approach writing Christianly and seemed to increase students' motivation to write, Joe also saw in the model transdisciplinary potential for his music students.

As a musician, I (J. Crider) can see immediate impact in helping young musicians interact with the music/composer and audience on a Trinitarian level they have perhaps never before considered, and at the same time, give students a lens to see how the music helps mature them as artists and Christians. When professors develop theologically-rooted pedagogical theories, they are one step closer to helping students bridge the chasm between the starting point (body of knowledge in the discipline) and the goal (a competent Christ-filled graduate).

Although my model helped my students and me (A. Crider), my theoretical framework still lacked feet. I could help my students see the field from a Christian perspective and give them a theoretical model, but as with a case of poison ivy, my questions were "calamined," not cured, because my theory did not specifically produce the pragmatic solutions I was looking for in the classroom.

Looking back on my study, I am still asking the following question: "How can pedagogical theory impact what happens in the classroom?" However, what I have learned through the process of developing a pedagogical framework is that all teachers (myself included) model their teaching and their classrooms on some kind of pedagogical theory or framework. The exercise of developing a writing pedagogy rooted in the Trinity forced me to be intentional about grounding my concept of teaching writing in something much more important than the secular pedagogies I had learned and practiced.

### III. STAGE TWO (PART I): RELATIONSHIPS

So how can scholars in any field move from a scriptural lens for their discipline and pedagogical theory to classroom application? If the goal of Christian higher education is student formation and student competency, an academic course's content is a necessary but

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<sup>17</sup>Crider, "A New Freshman Composition Pedagogy," 48; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 161, 456. See also Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012), 457.

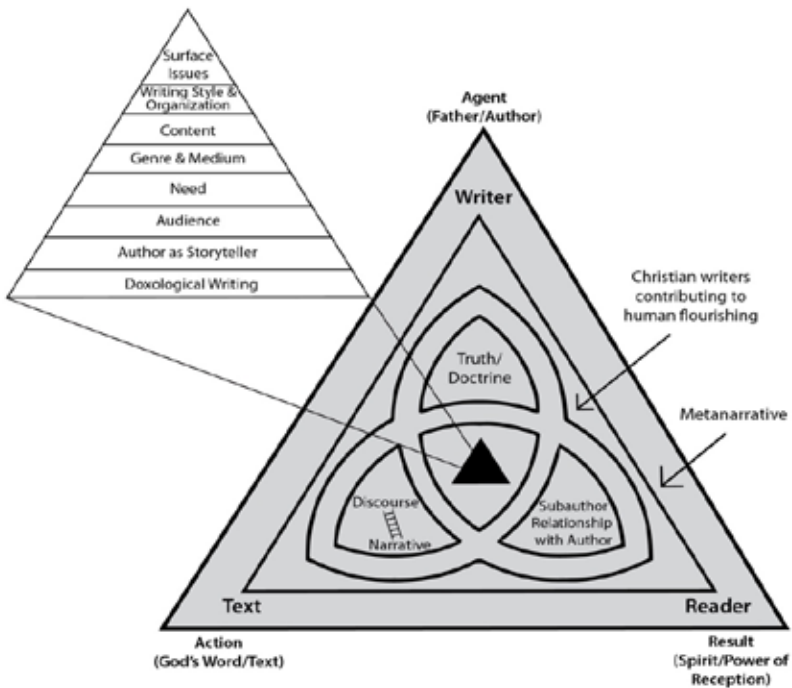


Figure 3. Prototype for a Christian writing model

insufficient vehicle for change because the working out of truth happens *in relationship*.<sup>18</sup> Education does not occur when students merely think rightly about something. Character formation and competency rely on pedagogy that includes right content *and* right relationships in the classroom (whether the classroom is on campus or online).

The root of all relationships is the Trinity. Salvation is based on relationship. Sanctification is a process built on relationship. Even at the discipline level, pedagogy is relationally motivated, as is evidenced in a Christian professor’s “calling” to their subject area and to Christian education. Relationships within the Christian classroom link the professor’s scripturally based understanding of the discipline and the subsequent pedagogical framework with teaching methods.

As God was before all things, the first relationship, the ultimate relationship, is the Trinity. We live and move and teach within the reality of the biblical metanarrative, created, directed, and sustained

<sup>18</sup>See Donald C. Guthrie, “Faith and Teaching,” in *Christian Higher Education*, 149–67.

by the Trinity, so formation and learning in the classroom should also reflect the Trinity.<sup>19</sup>

In the higher education classroom, at least three types of relationships exist: (1) the course subject/discipline (including the discipline interacting with other subjects and disciplines), (2) the professor, and (3) the student (including students with other students). When we agree that the Trinity informs relationships in the classroom, we are not implying a perfect correlative relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to discipline, student, and teacher. But teachers and students are created in His image, in His likeness, and our *imago Dei* is visible in relationships and in some ways reflective of Trinitarian roles.

As Christian educators consider their role, the student role, and the role of the subject or discipline in this triadic relationship, the words of Carl R. Trueman resonate: “Everything the believer is and everything the believer does has to be understood at some level in trinitarian terms.”<sup>20</sup> A more intentional awareness of the Trinity may help us re-envision classroom dynamics.

One way to re-envision classroom dynamics among the course subject, professor, and student is to consider the model of Trinitarian relationships. The Father’s “purpose in creation,” the Son’s incarnation, and the Holy Spirit’s active indwelling give significance to the triadic subject-professor-student relationship.<sup>21</sup>



Figure 4. The Trinity informs classroom relationships

<sup>19</sup>Dockery uses the description “creating, sustaining, and self-disclosing Trinitarian God.” Dockery, “Christian Higher Education,” 26. Scott Swain articulates, “All things are from the Trinity, through the Trinity, and to the Trinity.” Scott R. Swain, “The Mystery of the Trinity,” in *The Essential Trinity: New Testament Foundations and Practical Relevance* (ed. Brandon D. Crowe and Carl R. Trueman; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2017), 213.

<sup>20</sup>Carl R. Trueman, “The Trinity and Prayer,” *The Essential Trinity*, 222.

<sup>21</sup>“Not only does the doctrine of the Trinity identify God; it also illumines all of God’s works, enabling us to perceive more clearly the wonders of the Father’s purpose in creation, of Christ’s incarnation, and of the Spirit’s indwelling.” Scott R. Swain, “The Mystery of the Trinity,” 213.

1. *Discipline/Course Subject.* While we have discussed the importance of viewing our discipline through the lens of Scripture, we also need to see our course subject matter in light of the Trinity. The course subject is “truth,” God’s design of how things work in creation. As mentioned earlier, truth includes explicit truth (biblical truth), implicit truth (revealed truth deduced from explicit truth or uncovered through general revelation), and conditional truth (things that tend to be true). In other words, truth in any field distilled into a course subject taught in the classroom is truth (with a lowercase “t”) and reflects Creator God’s design: Christian scholarship should (1) “bring to light the hidden things of God,” (2) “give us joy in digging up the gold hidden in creation,” and (3) “contribute to the well-being of human life” (serve other people through our learning).<sup>22</sup> For all of us laboring in Christian education, the content of our subject matter embodies the overall competencies we want our students to develop, ultimately as an act of worship. For the student writer and student musician, their work creating discipline-specific artifacts *are acts of worship*—doxological writing and doxological performance. The finished artifacts (a writing assignment and a recital) echo not only a reflection of God’s truth displayed in the work of the student, but also the student’s realization and understanding of the truths they have learned in the process.

2. *Professors.* Martin Luther saw education as giving access to knowledge, but today information is easily googled, so dispensing information is no longer a professor’s primary function. Instead, just as the Son’s incarnation revealed the Father, the professor makes the invisible visible, making the discipline through the course subject visible for students. As John Frame articulates in his *Systematic Theology*, “God’s glory, as a divine attribute, is related to his visibility. ... So we bring God’s glorious reputation to the eyes of others.”<sup>23</sup> Essentially, professors image forth a vision of the discipline for students to capture and actively apply.<sup>24</sup>

The professor is the modeler of the truth in both character and competency. As Donald C. Guthrie shares, “Delighted teaching for

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<sup>22</sup>Craig G. Bartholomew, *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition: A Systematic Introduction* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017), 298.

<sup>23</sup>John Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013), 396.

<sup>24</sup>Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 396-98.

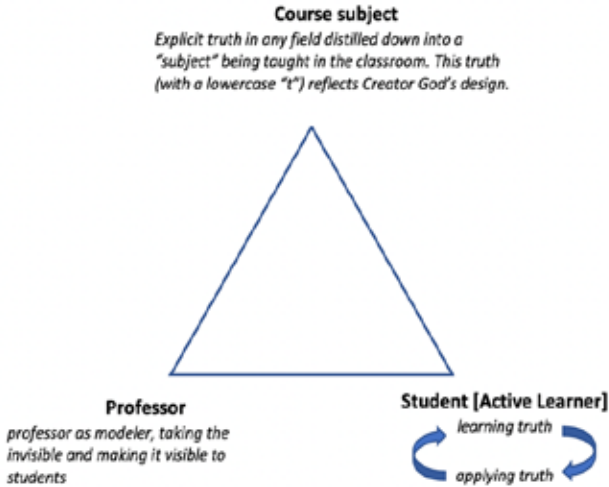


Figure 5. Classroom Relationships

the Christian is *collaborative investigation leading to practiced wisdom under the triune God's care for the sake of others.*<sup>25</sup> Guthrie lands on a significant concept of effective pedagogy as he prioritizes *collaboration* between the professor and the student. While we understand the financial efficiencies of large lecture halls and the professor-as-lecturer paradigm, we also live in a time of MOOCs, where learners can access most courses taught by famous scholars for free. The dynamic core that renders Christian education extraordinary is a professor who not only models character and competency but also fosters a relational culture in the classroom that gives students a vision of what their future might look like. In pedagogical settings like these, students are not simply motivated to memorize facts for a test; instead, they ask questions like:

- (1) "How can we create something new with what we're learning?"
- (2) "How does our knowledge of this subject contribute to human flourishing?"
- (3) "What does this reflect about God?"

The students then become the convincers to others as Christian practitioners in the field.

<sup>25</sup>Guthrie, "Faith and Teaching," 159.

3. *Students*. Similarly, in developing student competency, a Christian understanding of our disciplines and Trinitarian-informed theories (Stage One of the model) is not enough. As James teaches in his epistle, knowing and doing need one another; neither is authentic nor complete without the other.<sup>26</sup> Academia, of course, also recognizes the importance of the duo working together. For example, according to Arthur Holmes, *learning* is both content learned and human activity (experience).<sup>27</sup>

As we consider the role of the student in light of the Trinity, we see the dynamic function of the Holy Spirit as that of the indweller and ever-active member of the Godhead. As Letham articulates in his work on the Holy Spirit, “The New Testament portrays the Holy Spirit as active at every stage of redemption,” and “the Holy Spirit’s presence is known by what He does.”<sup>28</sup> If students could begin to get a vision for their active role in the learning process, rather than being passive receptors of information, transformative learning would take significant leaps forward.

The knowing-doing dyad is well embodied in the active learning pedagogy, which has garnered much attention in recent decades as faculty and administrators seek to help students gain more from the material. Within the Christian higher-education context, however, students must not only know the truth but walk truthfully. The classroom is a potential arena for students to learn truth and engage in truth. When engaging from a true worldview, enactment of the material not only reinforces the content, it shapes the character and behavior of the student. Within this context, faculty serve as guides and coaches to students as they exert personal agency in their learning process. With action comes greater opportunity for students to develop valuable characteristics and behaviors, such as resilience and critical thinking.

#### IV. STAGE TWO (PART II): PEDAGOGICAL METHODS

For much of the existence of higher education, *what* we teach has been central to the mission. As higher education continued to

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<sup>26</sup>James 1:22-25.

<sup>27</sup>Arthur F. Holmes, “What about Student Integration?” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 3–5.

<sup>28</sup>Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 56-57.



secularize, content became the chief distinction between Christian and secular education. However, as our collective understanding of learning theories improves, we know a direct connection exists between how something is taught and what is learned. Therefore, pedagogy is critical, not just the content; the *how* impacts the *what*, which subsequently impacts actual outcomes. The epistemological core is explicit, but the methods are conditional.

In the previous section we looked at the three major relationships in the classroom (subject, professor, student). The three of those intersect through pedagogical methods—*how* we teach (see figure 6).

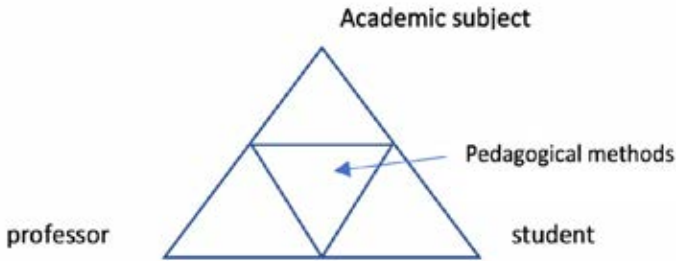


Figure 6. Relationships Intersect with Methods

If Christian educators can develop a systematic method of aligning a discipline's explicit truth (Stage One/Part I content), implicit truth (Stage One/Part II theories), and classroom relationships (Stage Two/Part I), then teaching methods should be the next domino impacted.

Some self-reflection among those of us who are Christian educators might be necessary as we consider our actual teaching methods. Are we baptizing secular educational practices, or under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit are we creating new and better methodologies? It is difficult for us to break from methodological practices that proved effective when we were students because we typically get stuck in the methodological lanes in which we were trained. Yet sometimes those lanes may be like those on the Roosevelt Bridge in Stuart, Florida. The six lanes carried local residents and travelers over the St. Lucie River for decades. But recently, large cracks appeared and concrete fell from the bridge. A new route or reconstructed bridge across the river is necessary, just as we sometimes need to construct new pedagogical paths or reconstruct old ones. We want

to encourage effective and creative new ways for information transfer to lead to life transformation and competency.

The purpose of this section is not to dictate a one-size-fits-all pedagogy but to list some questions about pedagogical methods that, when answered, might spark greater results in Christian classrooms. As Guthrie encourages, “Regularly revisiting assumptions about teaching and learning invites consideration of our simplest choices as well as our deepest convictions.”<sup>29</sup>

Several Questions for Dialogue:

- One way we might reconsider our pedagogy is to think through the kinds of artifacts students should produce, demonstrating their ability to apply, analyze, evaluate, and create because of the course.<sup>30</sup> In some courses, artifacts are more concrete, visible indicators of student achievement—worship students design orders of worship and lead them; musicians perform recitals; entrepreneurial students produce new products and services. In other courses, intellectual artifacts are needed; for example, students write papers to demonstrate analysis, synthesis, or creation of new ideas. Do we get trapped into common assessment measures instead of having students produce meaningful artifacts? What artifacts could we have students produce? When a student is in a church history course, what do we want her to be able to do with that history? Is it possible for us to encourage students to assess how their study has changed them?
- Earlier in this article, we objected to the phrase “integration of faith and learning,” preferring faith-informed learning. But perhaps, as the proposed model shows, it is also *learning-informed faith*, not adding to biblical truth, but reveling in a glorious God who reveals Himself, in part, through our disciplines. As both we and our students learn together and from each other in the classroom, new knowledge increases our appreciation of

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<sup>29</sup>Guthrie, “Faith and Teaching,” 152.

<sup>30</sup>Bloom’s Taxonomy.

God and our awe of Him. We see with fresh eyes God's design in creation. How can we facilitate faith-informed learning and learning-informed faith?

- Pedagogy is our means of discipleship in the classroom, of training students to follow Christ. Are our Christian classrooms more effective than secular ones? How can we measure Christian education's success?
- How can we develop creative new ways for informational transfer to lead to life transformation and competency? In other words, how do we redesign our pedagogies to more closely embrace explicit biblical truth and use it to help us be more creative, more innovative in relationships and methods (Stage Two)? Do we need a theology of creativity to apply to pedagogy? Is it possible that as the Reformers did not see themselves as innovators but instead saw themselves as recovering the past, so too we can "preserve and pass on the Christian tradition while encouraging honest intellectual inquiry"?<sup>31</sup>
- For each of our disciplines, do we need a theology of pedagogy? If so, what would it look like?
- How do we develop or evaluate pedagogical models that embrace the absolutes of a Christian worldview while incorporating student uniqueness? Is it possible for our pedagogies to be flexible, personalized, and contextual?
- In our current educational culture of delivering instruction in a worldwide pandemic (COVID-19), we are all asking what the future of education looks like. Yet, there will always be tension between market-driven forces and the need to existentially "flex" as Simon Sinek articulates in his book for business leaders.<sup>32</sup> But when existential flexing erodes or eradicates the mission of the institution, the purpose for Christian education suffers. What is the ultimate tip of the spear for Christian education? The local church. If we allow the market to drive our curriculum and delivery models, in the end, will the church be the one that suffers the most?

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<sup>31</sup>Dockery, "Christian Higher Education," 27.

<sup>32</sup>Simon Sinek, *The Infinite Game* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2019), 181-95.

## V. CONCLUSION

As educators fully committed to Christ, his Word, and his gospel, we affirm and sign our institution's confessional documents verifying our orthodox doctrinal positions that warrant our place on the faculty roster. And for most of us, a significant part of our calling is a desire to train, influence, and disciple the next generation of Christ-following educators and professionals. We understand the starting line (our disciplines in light of a biblical worldview) and the destination (students competent in their fields and growing in Christlikeness), but do we realize the vital nature of the pedagogical bridge that connects the starting line and destination? Have we given careful attention to our own functional pedagogical frameworks, the intentional development of Triune-based relationships, and pedagogical methods? If ever there was a time in the rich history of Christian higher education when professors needed to build Holy Spirit-guided pedagogical bridges between our disciplines and our students, the time is now.





## TOWARD A HOLISTIC BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

D. Jeffrey Mooney\*

Few topics have held the interest of scholars and pastors alike more than worship. The interest seems justified given the centrality of the topic in Scripture and history. While a monolithic definition for worship remains elusive,<sup>1</sup> contemporary church voices confuse the matter further by conflating ideas like “praise and worship,” and reducing worship to music as a synonym. However, compartmentalizing Spirit-shaped living from the corporate and individual experiences of “worship” may eventually appear as the most damaging aspect of modern approaches to the topic. Here, I survey themes in Leviticus and Amos to extract core elements for Christian worship and to demonstrate the viable relationship between covenant worship and covenant ethics.<sup>2</sup>

Of the available definitions of worship, Miroslav Volf and D. A. Carson are closest to what I propose. Volf writes, “The sacrifice of praise and the sacrifice of good works are two fundamental aspects of the Christian way of being-in-the-world. They are at the same time the two constitutive elements of Christian worship: authentic Christian worship takes place in a rhythm of adoration and action.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See Ron Mann’s informative article that compiles a dizzying array of both scholarly and popular definitions of worship for the reader. Ron Mann, “Defining Our Terms,” *Worship Notes*, Vol. 3, no. 7 (2008). <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwaanPllB9oEMDZXRXhxWUZ1V1U/edit>.

<sup>2</sup>Several scholars contend for the centrality of Leviticus in the Pentateuch, and, thus, the central theological element of the Pentateuch. For a helpful discussion on the structure of Leviticus, see L. Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord* (New Studies in Biblical Theology; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 23–37. Biblical scholars have further examined the macro-structural elements of Leviticus and come up with more than one arrangement. See also Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (Anchor Bible Commentaries; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 27. For the purpose of this study, I will simply examine the book as to its two most obvious sections: chapters 1–16 and 17–26.

<sup>3</sup>Miroslav Volf, “Worship as Adoration and Action: Reflections on a Christian Way of Being-in-the-World,” in *Worship: Adoration and Action* (ed. D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic,

\*D. Jeffrey Mooney serves as professor of Old Testament interpretation and theology at California Baptist University.

Carson correctly orients Christian worship to the gospel of Jesus Christ, “which restores our relationship with our Redeemer-God and therefore also with our fellow image-bearers, our co-worshippers. Such worship therefore manifests itself both in adoration and action.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, I suggest that Christian worship is a God-initiated composite of holistic attitudes and activities given to fallen but redeemed people that they may respond to the triune God for all that he is and does, continue to enjoy his presence, and be conformed in the world to his reality.<sup>5</sup> Together, prophetic and cultic texts provide point-counterpoint material that richly informs our perception of what could be termed “holistic worship.”<sup>6</sup> Such worship assumes the reality of the triune God as the center of all Scripture, who reveals himself, redeems and sustains his people, and reshapes their perception of the world to conform to his presence in it.

### I. LEVITICUS: WORSHIP IS A RESPONSE TO GOD’S SELF REVELATION

“And He called to Moses, and the Lord spoke to him from the

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1993), 207.

<sup>4</sup>D.A. Carson, ed., *Worship by the Book* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 26.

<sup>5</sup>This thesis is similar to Beale’s “what people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or restoration” in Greg Beale, *We Become What We Worship* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), 16.

<sup>6</sup>Divorcing the impulses of the cultic and prophetic literature has been a practice since Wellhausen but is unnecessary and harmful to the overall canonical reading of the Scriptures. Horst D. Preuss, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. II (The Old Testament Library; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 210, helpfully contends that “[t]he prophetic contention with Israel’s religion “has nothing to do with the rejection of the cultus in principle ... but rather with a concrete criticism of a false cultus against which the prophets spoke and which they opposed because of its especially wrongly formed attitude toward its operations.” That Amos’s message is contiguous with Torah traditions appear in John Barton, *The Theology of the Book of Amos* (Old Testament Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 68, in which Barton states: “Amos takes it for granted that the people are familiar with the moral principles he accuses them of breaching. He also assumes that they recognize these principles to be divinely given.” Further, the book begins and ends with references to Exodus traditions (3:2; 9:7). Thus, Amos seems to be responding to Israel’s failure to observe a rich tradition and its legislation. See also the importance of Amos in this discussion in the history of biblical interpretation in M. Daniel Carroll R, *Amos—The Prophet and His Oracles* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 4–11. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, first century Christians read these two texts together. In Acts 15:11–21, Luke combines the eschatological restoration promise of Amos 9:11-12 to describe the rebuilt booth of David as the multiethnic covenant community saved and united in the Spirit by the finished work of Jesus. He then follows up with practical instructions to facilitate fellowship between Jew and Gentile believers pervasively from the priestly tradition, if not from Leviticus in particular. John Polhill, *Acts* (New American Commentary; Nashville: B&H, 1992), 332, notes that all four of the “apostolic decrees” are found in Lev 17 and 18 as requirements expected of resident aliens: abstinence from pagan sacrifices (17:8), blood (17:10-14), strangled meat (17:13), and illicit sexual relationships (18:6-23).

tent of meeting” (Lev 1:1).

The opening line of Leviticus simultaneously connects it to the narrative of Exodus and contextualizes the entire book as divine revelation to Israel.<sup>7</sup> Thus, both worship actions and attitudes in Leviticus apply to the covenant people alone. As the book develops, Moses unites the concepts of worship and ethics, suggesting that God intends proper worship to conform Israel to his reality in both liturgy and principle. That ethics and worship flow from theology is fundamental. Christopher Wright notes that “ethical issues are at every point related to God – to his character, his will, his actions and his purpose.”<sup>8</sup> The same logic applies to worship. Therefore, reflecting on God in Leviticus precedes consideration of either worship acts or sacred ethics. While a full discussion on God in Leviticus exceeds the scope of this project, three characteristics of God integral to the book help clarify Christian worship: God is intentionally present with his people; he is creator King; and he is radically holy.

1. *God as Present in Israel’s Midst.* A number of scholars assert the presence of God as key to the priestly theological enterprise.<sup>9</sup> Morales demonstrated that Leviticus 9–10 and 16 both provided a portrait of the cultic creation and re-creation, and specifically “track[ed] the gradual abolishment of Israel’s distance from God in his *mishkan*” (9:23; 16:2).<sup>10</sup> God’s presence in Leviticus was both daunting and liberating; it provided both threat to and purgation of sacred people and precincts alike. From Israel’s midst, God annually exiled sin through the work of his chosen mediator. Sacrifices and offerings

<sup>7</sup>For a clear discussion of the narrative context of Leviticus, see Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?*, chapters 1–2.

<sup>8</sup>Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 154 notes that this “angle” of Israelite culture is fundamental to all others.

<sup>9</sup>Michael Fishbane, “The Sacred Center: The Symbolic Structure of the Bible,” in *Texts and Responses: Studies Presented to Nahum M. Glatzer on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (ed. M. Fishbane and P.R. Flohr; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 18, argued that the tabernacle, like Sinai, “concretizes sacred space as social space and gives expression to the cohesion and blessing of Israel around God’s presence.” See also J. Roth, “La tradition sacerdotale dans le Pentateuque,” *NRT* 80 (1967): 696–721; M. Saebø, “Priestertheologie und Priestereschrift: Zur Eigenart der priesterlichen Schicht im Pentateuch,” in *Congress Volume* (ed. J. A. Emerton; *VTSup* 32; Leiden: Brill, 1980), 357–74. Gerhard von Rad “The Tent and the Ark,” in *The Problem of the Hexateuch* (trans. E.W. Trueman Dicken; London: SCM Press, 1931), insisted that the idea of YHWH’s indwelling presence is reminiscent of earlier traditions. However, the difficulty in determining which tradition was first and which became dominant is nearly impossible. Most recently is the very helpful work, cited in this project already, Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?*

<sup>10</sup>Michael Morales, “A Theology of Leviticus,” *International Journal of Reformed Theology and Life*, vol. 5.1 (April 2019), 113.



subjugated sin throughout the year at the Ark of the Covenant, mitigating covenant death and exile. Then, once a year on the Day of Atonement, God exiled their sin rather than them from the camp and into the wilderness (Lev 16). He did this to remain among them.

The presence of God also guaranteed covenant life to Israel, for whom the threat of death was a real and present danger. Milgrom maintained that issues of life and death informed Israel's ritual purity and impurity system and argued that ritual impurity was equivalent to death.<sup>11</sup> The chief causes of ritual impurity in Israel were genital discharges, corpses, skin disease, and menstrual blood. For Milgrom, these categories reflected the reality of death.<sup>12</sup> The loss of vaginal blood and semen represents the loss of life. Skin disease reflects a dead body still walking.<sup>13</sup> The significance of a corpse needs no explanation. These common instances of impurity served as constant reminders of death. The rituals of Leviticus maintained the presence of God in Israel's midst in the face of death. God dwelt "in the midst of their uncleanness". To acknowledge, purge, and expel covenant-hostile pollution maintained God's presence, and animated covenant life for Israel. Thus, God's presence with his people, sustained by a God appointed-mediator executing a God-initiated purgation of sin that provides death-shattering life is a central tenant of Christian worship. The mundane frailties of life recall that death is always there. Yet, the presence of the living God likewise reminds the Christian that death never has the final word. This reality derives from the fact that the God present in Israel's midst is also the sovereign God of all creation.

2. *God as King of All Creation.* Scholars, convinced of the association between creation and cult, have appealed to the Sabbath as a clear connecting point between the two traditions. The Sabbath is the sign of God's power and provision on Israel's behalf. Blenkinsopp and Kearney both observed the heptadic structural parallels between Genesis 1:1–2:4 and Exodus 25–40.<sup>14</sup> The heptadic, or Sabbatical

<sup>11</sup>Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16, 46–48*, argued that the common experience of death informed all purity/impurity systems.

<sup>12</sup>For Milgrom's arguments, see *Leviticus 1–16*, 1000–4.

<sup>13</sup>In Num 12:12, Aaron prays for his sister that she "not be as a corpse." See also Num 19:14 for the similar contagious effects of scale disease and corpses.

<sup>14</sup>J. Kearney, "Creation and Liturgy: The P Redaction of Ex 25–40," *ZAW* 89 (1977): 375–86. Others, like Levinson and Geller, have contended that the Sabbath is the key to interpreting creation. See J. Levinson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*; S. A. Geller, "Blood Cult: Toward a

structure, appears in Leviticus as well. Gane noted the menorah contains seven lamps inherent with the evening and morning (Exod 25:37). Morales observed the relationship between the lampstand ritual and bread in the daily ritual, which focuses on the Sabbath in particular.<sup>15</sup> He noticed that “just as the cosmos was created for humanity's Sabbath communion and fellowship with God, so too the cult was established for Israel's Sabbath and communion with God.”<sup>16</sup> He further emphasized that the bread ritual in conjunction with the lampstand ritual provided the “ideal Sabbath.” The twelve loaves of bread, renewed in the light of the lampstands, represented “the twelve tribes of Israel basking in the divine light, being renewed in God's presence ... Sabbath by Sabbath” (Lev 24:8).<sup>17</sup> He also asserted the “Sabbatical principle” united Leviticus 23 and 25. There are two Sabbaths detailed in chapter 25 (Lev 25:1–7; 8–22). In chapter 23, there are seven days of festivals, seven days of rest, and several festivals occurring in the seventh month. Every seven years was a sabbatical year, and the ultimate Sabbath occurred at the end of the seventh of the seven-year cycles.<sup>18</sup> The Day of Atonement is called a “Sabbath of rest for you,” merging atonement for sin with divine repose for his people. The use of Sabbath links the Creation and Exodus traditions to the cult, exemplifying God's power and provision for his people (Gen 2:1–3; Exod 16:27–36; 20:8–11).

Scholars have also long noted the clear connection between the tabernacle/temple and the Garden of Eden.<sup>19</sup> Wenham convincingly

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Literary Theology of the Priestly Work of the Pentateuch,” *Prooftexts* 12 (1992): 97–124.

<sup>15</sup>Morales, “A Theology of Leviticus,” 105.

<sup>16</sup>Morales, “A Theology of Leviticus,” 105.

<sup>17</sup>Morales, “A Theology of Leviticus,” 105–6.

<sup>18</sup>See the reference to Vern Poythress in Morales, “A Theology of Leviticus,” 105–6.

<sup>19</sup>A standard mantra that characterizes the ancient Near East on this point is “a garden is a mountain is a tabernacle is a temple.” This discussion is indebted to the helpful article by Gordon Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” in *I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11* (eds. Richard Hess and David Toshio Tsumura; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 399–404. Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 34, also states that when man forfeited his priestly role, the guardianship of Eden transferred to the Cherubim. They were guardians of the heavenly temple (i.e., the upper register) and thus their transfer highlights the identity of Eden as an earthly reproduction of the heavenly temple. Greg Beale in multiple works, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place for God* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004); *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), similarly asserts the connection between temple and creation. See also Daniel Block, “Eden: A Temple? A Reassessment of the Biblical Evidence” in *From Creation to New Creation: Biblical Theology and Exegesis* (eds. Daniel Gurtner and Benjamin L. Gladd;

contends that the Garden of Eden is an archetypal sanctuary, of which the tabernacle is a copy.<sup>20</sup> He offers several pieces of evidence to substantiate the plausibility of identifying Eden as a sanctuary. First, one likely entered the Garden of Eden from the east, as later sanctuaries, such as the tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple.<sup>21</sup> Second, the verb “to walk to and fro,” in Genesis 3:8, also occurs in Leviticus 26:12, Deuteronomy 23:15, and 2 Samuel 7:6-7 to describe the activity of the priests. Third, Adam’s job in Eden was “to serve and guard”.<sup>22</sup> The only other places these two verbs appear together are in the cultic passages concerning the Levites’ duty at the temple (Num 3:7-8; 8:26; 18:5-6), leading Wenham to suggest that Adam was an archetypal Levite. Fourth, Wenham posits that clothing Adam and Eve with “tunics” paralleled Moses’ actions with the priesthood (Exod 28:41; 29:8; 40:14; Lev 8:13).<sup>23</sup> Fifth, the presence of trees in general and the tree of life in particular is significant.<sup>24</sup> Following Meyers, Wenham commends the menorah as an idealized tree of life in the core of the tabernacle. Sixth, significant is the mention of the “cherubim”, who stand guard at the east side of the Garden and prohibit access to the tree of life.<sup>25</sup> Cherubim appeared both on top of the Ark cover and embroidered on the screens of the tabernacle. Seventh, the appearance of precious jewels Genesis 1–2 bears cultic qualities.<sup>26</sup> Wenham contends that if Eden is a “super-sanctuary,” the

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Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013).

<sup>20</sup>This description corresponds to the general phenomenological definitions applied to shrines. They function as the center, around which all the community was oriented. See the arrangements of the twelve tribes in Num 1:51–2:31; 9:15–23; Ezek 48:8-10. They acted as a meeting point between the heavenly and earthly registers. Pertinent to this idea is Lev 16:2 and 1 Kgs 8:30. The shrines mirrored the heavenly register on the earthly register (cf. Exod 25:40; Heb 9:24). Finally, the temple/tabernacle was the place of “immanent-transcendent presence.” See R. Averbeck, “vdqm,” in *NIDOTTE* (ed., William VanGemeren; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 3:1080–81. All these images are useful in providing definition for the shrine in Leviticus.

<sup>21</sup>Gen 3:24 states that the path out of the garden was east.

<sup>22</sup>Gen 2:15.

<sup>23</sup>The need for covering also may have been a polemical idea in light of the Sumerian priesthood, who practiced their priestly duties naked.

<sup>24</sup>Wenham references Carol Meyers, *The Tabernacle Menorah* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976).

<sup>25</sup>2 Kgs 6:23–28 records two cherubim guarding the inner sanctuary of Solomon’s temple. Pictures of the angelic host decorated the walls of the tabernacle and the temple (Exod 25:28–22; 26:31; 1 Kgs 6:29). In addition, in Akkadian, the *kuribu* also served as the guardians of holy places. Most significant for our discussion is the fact that two cherubim formed the throne of YHWH atop the ark in Exod 25:18–22.

<sup>26</sup>See also D. Chilton, *Paradise Restored* (Tyler, TX: Reconstruction Press, 1958), 29, who draws connections between the jewels and gold of Eden and the décor of the tabernacle and the high priestly vestments. See also Ezek 28:11-13 for garden references. For comment, see Daniel I.

mention of gold (2:12) is hardly surprising. Practically, everything was made of gold or covered with gold in the sanctuary (Exod 25:11, 17, 24, 29, 36). The precious stones bdellium and onyx are equally important (Gen 2:12). The other occurrence in the Torah of bdellium appears in Numbers 11:7, where the writer compared manna to it. Onyx is even more conspicuous. Its identity is relatively unknown. However, Israel used it extensively to decorate the tabernacle, temple, and the high priestly vestments (Exod 25:7; 28:9, 20; 1 Chr 29:2). The two stones that fit inside the ephod were also this type of stone (Exod 28:9–14).

Creation motifs portrayed the object of Israel's worship as the architect of the universe, and absolutely sovereign over all things temporal, material, and functional. Israel understood God to be sovereign over all that He created, sin as the vehicle by which the order of creation elevated itself over God and brought disorder, and sacrificial worship as the task of acknowledging and re-ordering creation *via* ritual.<sup>27</sup> It reiterates the reality that God created humans to enjoy his unique presence as God in all of creation. This characteristic provides a clear lens through which to view God as holy.

3. *God as Radically Holy.* God's holiness orients the book of Leviticus. It appears as an inherent characteristic, contrasting him to the gods of Egypt and Canaan (Lev 18:1–3). Covenant attachment to God demands that Israel also reflect this type of holiness (Lev 18–20). Rudolph Otto produced a provocative discussion on holiness.<sup>28</sup> He argued for five essential aspects of holiness, which he labels *numinous*: *tremendum*,<sup>29</sup> *majestas*,<sup>30</sup> *energicum*,<sup>31</sup> *mysterium*,<sup>32</sup> and *fascinans*.<sup>33</sup> A full discussion of Otto's categories surpasses the

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Block, *Ezekiel 23–48* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

<sup>27</sup>See Frank Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2009).

<sup>28</sup>Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. (trans. John W. Harvey; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928). Otto's thesis was antagonistic to his historical setting. He examined holiness as it applied to ancient Israel, early Christianity, Luther, primitive religion, and oriental religions. The reductionist notion that all religion was created by societies in order to cope with both social and psychological needs had carried the day before his work.

<sup>29</sup>*Tremendum* is the awful element of divine power and wrath.

<sup>30</sup>*Majestas* is the absolute unapproachability of the deity.

<sup>31</sup>*Energicum* is the deity's freedom, mobility, and vitality of movement. D. J. Hanël, *Die Religion der Heiligkeit* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1931), 7, provided this nuance for Otto's categories.

<sup>32</sup>*Mysterium* conveyed that the deity was wholly other, incommensurable, and beyond the transcendent.

<sup>33</sup>*Fascinans* is the element of rapturous exaltation.

scope of this article. However, his *majestas* and *tremendum* provide an illustrative glimpse at the nature of God's holiness.<sup>34</sup> Intertwined in the *majestas* and *tremendum* of God is Leviticus' portrayal of God as radically autonomous from Israel. Block has illustrated the normal ancient Near Eastern triadic relationship among deity, land, and people.<sup>35</sup>

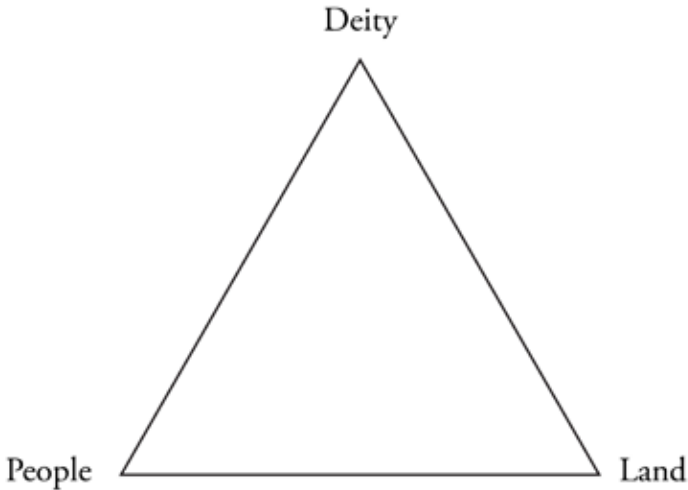


Figure 1. The Interrelationship among Deity, Land, and People

In the environment out of which the priestly vision of Leviticus grew, the notion of *interdependence* between deity, land, and worshipper was central. However, Leviticus conveys a deity that is untamable and without accountability – an idea that abandons the religious paradigm that controlled the ancient world.<sup>36</sup> The Nadab and Abihu

<sup>34</sup>The concept of holiness does not parse off cleanly into Otto's groupings. There is some level of crossover between the categories.

<sup>35</sup>Daniel I. Block, *The Gods of the Nations: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern National Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), notes that the defining element of the ancient Near Eastern god-worshipper relationship was interdependence. The god defined its land and people; in turn, the people, their land and god; and the land its god and people. For an analysis of ancient Near Eastern national theology, see C. J. H. Wright, *God's People in God's Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 105.

<sup>36</sup>W. G. Lambert, "Morals in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Ex Orient lux* 5 (1955–58): 184–196. Lambert contends that "the impression is gained that everyday religion [in Mesopotamia] was dominated by fear of evil powers and black magic rather than a positive worship of the gods ... the world was conceived to be full of evil demons ... if they had attacked, the right ritual should effect the cure" (194).

narrative illustrate this point well: “Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord” (Lev 10:1–2). An Egyptian ritual provides some context for the brothers’ fatal cultic *faux pas*. Every morning in the ritual of Amun, the Egyptian priest approached his “holy of holies”<sup>37</sup> (*naos*) by burning incense. Blackman details the ritual:

His first act after entering the temple was to kindle a fire, a bow-drill being used for that purpose, or perhaps only a spindle and “hearth.” The priest then picked up the principle part of the censer, which was of metal, usually bronze, and in the form of an outstretched arm with the hand open palm upwards. Taking hold of the rest of the censer, the little brazier in which the incense was burned, he fixed it in its place, namely in the open hand, at the end of the arm. Having filled the brazier with burning charcoal from the fire that he had previously kindled, he set incense thereon, and, holding the smoking censer in one hand, proceeded to the sanctuary.<sup>38</sup>

This common ritual in ancient Egypt assumed that the priest both awakened and revived the god. The activities of Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10 and the daily work of the Egyptian priest are comparable. Both bring censers, fill them with fire, place incense on the fire in their censers, and approach the sancta.<sup>39</sup> If Nadab and Abihu had the same intent as the Egyptian priest, it would provide a possible explanation for Moses’ initial remarks made to Aaron in Leviticus 10:3 that those who “drew near” to God, namely the priests, had to portray God as holy before Israel. In the context of Leviticus

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<sup>37</sup>A. Erman, *Handbook on Egyptian Religion* (Boston: Longwood, 1977), 46. Erman called this area the holy of holies, for this is where the god actually dwells.

<sup>38</sup>Aylward M. Blackman, “Episodes in the Egyptian Daily Temple,” in *Gods, Priests, and Men* (Toronto: Kegan Paul, 1998), 235–36.

<sup>39</sup>While there is no specific evidence that Nadab and Abihu were inside the holy of holies, it is certain they were not wandering away from the holy place.

10, holiness seems to refer primarily to the autonomy that is God's alone.<sup>40</sup> God was incomparable, and neither incense offerings nor the priesthood who offered them controlled or manipulated him. To treat God as a common deity interdependent upon his priesthood was an affront to his holiness. In Moses' mind, this scene in Lev 10:2 contextualizes the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). YHWH was not a common deity with whom one could trifle but was the holy God Israel could trust. The punctuation of the threat of Aaron's death coupled with his approach to the heart of the adytum demonstrated the necessary caution exercised by the high priest in the face of overwhelming power and possible wrath. Other elements of the Day of Atonement conveyed an awareness of God's holiness. The cloud functioned as the instrument that both housed God and shielded the high priest.<sup>41</sup> The submission portrayed in the seven-fold sprinkling act assumed the vast inequity between the parties involved with this procedure. Israel stood as vassal and God as an undisputed Suzerain.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup>Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 605. Milgrom was correct in noting that the text set forth a polemic against foreign incense offerings. Whether they were already rampant throughout Israel is difficult to determine. Nevertheless, the priests were not to perform any public or private rite that failed to distinguish YHWH as the one who brought Israel out of bondage and into covenant with himself. This tradition is not unique to Leviticus. See Exod 3:14; Isa 43:7; 62:3-5; Job 41:11; Ps 50:7-12; 90:2.

<sup>41</sup>The same divinely ordained protection shielded Moses in Exodus 34. Cf. also Exod 33:22-23 and Exod 34:5-7. for the relationship to YHWH appearing in a cloud form and setting forth perhaps the Torah's most essential definition of YHWH.

<sup>42</sup>J. B. Pritchard, "EA, No.137" in *ANET* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 483. References to seven-fold acts of prostration in ancient Near Eastern literature tend to appear in political or biographical documents. The Amarna letters reveal an obvious seven-fold act of submission. In EA 137, the writer begins his request for troops as follows: "Rib-Ad[di spoke] to the king, [his Lord, the Sun-god of the lands.] Beneath the feet [of the king my lord,] seven times, and seven times [I fall]." See also *ANET*, 484, EA 147 is also demonstrative of the vassal/suzerain relationship. "To the king, my lord, my pantheon, my Sun-god say: thus, Abimilki, thy servant. Seven and seven times I fall at the feet of the king, my lord. I am the dirt under the feet of the king, my lord." The remainder of the introduction extols the majesty and dominion of Akhenaton. This type introduction appears throughout the letters, EA, 234, 244, 250, 254, 270, 271, 280, 286-290, 292, 297, 298, 320; RA, xix, .97; 106. All of the introductions emphasize the activity of prostration at the feet of the great king. Many include a desperate appeal of some type. Some appeal for troops, and others appeal for a fair hearing against an unjust accusation. Of the former No.137 states, "I have written repeatedly for [garrison troops] but they were not given." No. 287 states, "Let my king know that all the lands are at peace (but that) there is war against me. So let my king take care of his land." This letter, in particular, sets forth a number of difficulties for the king. See *ANET*, 488 n.18. This expression of submission and homage occurs at the heart of the internal blood rites of Leviticus 16. Aaron sprinkles blood from both purification offerings seven times before the *kapporet* and the Tent of Meeting. Each seven-fold act follows a single sprinkling act that serves as the principle purgative act. The seven-fold sprinkling of the purification offering may correspond to the seven-fold act of prostration and submission represented in the Amarna letters.

The vestments of the high priest emphasized not threat but covenant mercy. He was to appear on this day without any of the sacred paraphernalia that would cause God to remember Israel in covenant fidelity. He was both every Israelite and yet high priest, who was still in need of the alleviation of his own guilt. This day, while displaying threat, emphasized God's abundant mercy toward his people. It provided a landscape for Israel to demonstrate its confidence in God's unflinching covenant goodness, equally inherent within God's holiness.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, Israel understood God to be holy, that is, entirely different from all of creation, including the gods of the nations, and available to them in mighty acts of redemption and offers of ongoing reconciliation. The God of Israel did not need a priest to vivify, feed, or care for him. He was the one who called everything, both visible and invisible, into existence by divine fiat and resided on the throne of the cosmos, yet graciously among his covenant people. His merciful deliverance of Israel from Egypt and his self-revelation in their midst undergirded every sacrifice, ritual, and offering. To approach him with any other intention was to deny his autonomy and holiness, and to forfeit the gracious benefits of his presence. The fact that God granted Aaron entrance into the holiest place at all was sheer mercy. God shared no obligation to any priest or people concerning his holy presence. That said, his presence in Israel realistically demanded a response. This response necessitated both acts and attitudes of worship from Israel. This God is the God to whom all Christian acts and attitudes of worship respond.

4. *Covenant Worship Necessitates Sacrifice.* The chasm between God's holiness and Israel's sinfulness necessitated the management of the latter by a sacrificial system that entailed both actions and attitudes.<sup>44</sup> The severity of the sacrifice, namely the destruction of life, conveyed the danger of the distance between God and Israel. The typical result of spilling sacrificial blood was "atonement." Von Rad believed the meaning of this Hebrew term to be elusive even if

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<sup>43</sup>It is possible but less convincing that Leviticus 16 sets forth God's *energicum* as well. The LORD chose to appear in a cloud of incense above the "atonement lid" or, more famously translated, "mercy seat" during the ritual. By moving into the tabernacle at the end of Leviticus 9, God's presence sanctified the tabernacle, altar, and priesthood, but more importantly, provided a tacit offer for Israel to reconcile themselves to him. Moses connected Leviticus 16 with what has gone before, namely Leviticus 10, Exodus 25–31, 35–40, and Exodus 32–34.

<sup>44</sup>For fuller discussions on theology of sacrifice, see Morales, *Who Shall Ascend*, 122–27.



there was scholarly consensus on its translation.<sup>45</sup> However, there is a sense that the overall intent of each use, regardless of the individual results (ransom, purification, forgiveness), is reconciliation. Morales extends the idea, referencing atonement as a means to an end, namely, to dwell in the presence of God.<sup>46</sup>

There are at least three pertinent points concerning Israel's constant need and use of sacrifice. First, Israel is sinful and, thus, in need of continual atonement. Leviticus provides weekly rituals such as the shewbread and lampstand that present Israel with eschatological hope for God's presence and their Sabbatical rest, as well as multiple feasts and festivals throughout the year, where Israel appeared before God to worship him for his goodness and power on their behalf. However, the hallmark of Leviticus' worship paradigm is the consistent offerings for sin, reparation, and atonement. According to McKenzie, "the cultus was the most normal and most frequent form of the Israelites' experience of God."<sup>47</sup> Rather than "save" anyone, sacrifices maintained a state of reconciliation and community between this unprecedented deity and his people. The sinfulness of Israel demanded both acknowledgment and exile of Israel's sin. If nothing occurred to remedy sin, then God would not remain in their midst. The sinner or the impure (whether ritually or morally) must be void of covenant community either temporarily or permanently (11–15, 18–20). Even the land responds to unrepentant sin (Lev 18, 26).

Second, genuine repentance was integral to sacrificial atonement in Leviticus. Repentance appeared in the vital act of imposing one's hand onto the sacrificial animal. The "hand imposition" rite concretized repentance and transferred the pollution of one's sin and guilt to the sacrificial animal. The slaughter of the animal and subsequent manipulation of its blood transferred the pollution to the sancta, where God subjugated it throughout the year.<sup>48</sup> The Day of

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<sup>45</sup>For a thorough discussion on the concept and history of interpretation of sacrifice and atonement, see James Greenberg, *A New Look at Atonement in Leviticus: The Meaning and Purpose of kippur Revisited* (Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement; State College, PA: Penn State University Press, 2020).

<sup>46</sup>Morales, *Who Shall Ascend*, 124, examines Leviticus 9, where the specific order of the ritual, purification offering, "ascension" offering, and peace offering provides the paradigm through which he understands the theology of sacrifice in general.

<sup>47</sup>McKenzie, *A Theology of the Old Testament*, 32.

<sup>48</sup>See Milgrom, "Israel's Sanctuary: The Priestly Picture of Dorian Gray," *RB* 83 (1976): 390–99.

Atonement in Leviticus 16 provided the necessary ritual relief by inverting the normal ritual acts of hand imposition and sacrificial death. In a standard purification offering, the priest placed his hand on the sacrificial animal before its slaughter. However, in Leviticus 16, the high priest reverses the slaughter of the animal and the imposition of the hands, necessitating two animals instead of one.<sup>49</sup> This ritual requires the high priest slaughter the first goat as a regular purification offering, without the performance of the “hand imposition” rite, and take its untainted blood into sacred space for the only time during the year. The untainted blood absorbs the accumulated sin-pollution in the sancta as it does throughout the year at the altar. Then the high priest, bearing the sin, transgressions, and iniquity of Israel that he absorbed with the blood of the first goat imposes both of his hands on the living goat, vicariously repenting and confessing all of Israel’s sin-pollution, over the goat’s head, then exiles the goat.<sup>50</sup> Thus, integral to sacrifice in Israel is the worshipper’s repentance, concretely demonstrated by imposing the hand onto the animal’s head. This scenario provided the worshipper a vicarious substitute that would bear his/ her sin and guilt into the adytum and become the impetus for the resultant forgiveness or purification.<sup>51</sup> Sinners who refused to repent, sinning with a “high hand” (cf. Num 15:30–31), which conveyed obstinacy, had no sacrifice to offer.

Third, sacrifice yielded forgiveness at times (Lev 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5). On other occasions, the ritual resulted in a purification that reconciled one to the community, God, or both (Lev 12:7, 8; 14:1–32). As mentioned above, the purifying work of sacrifice was central to the priestly work done in Leviticus 16, where sacrificial blood purified by absorbing accumulated sin-pollution. The high priest took

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This brief discussion relies upon Noham Zohar, “Repentance and Purification: The Significance and Semantics of *Ḥaṭṭa’at* in the Pentateuch.” *JBL* 107 (1988): 609–18.

<sup>49</sup>It is not unreasonable to understand two male goats as the ritual equivalent to one bull. In Lev 4, the male goat is one degree less valuable than the bull.

<sup>50</sup>Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 258, 981; Milgrom, “Israel’s Sanctuary,” 75–84. Milgrom brilliantly conceptualized the priestly theology of sacrifice using the premise of the Oscar Wilde novel, *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*. The individual or worshipping community did not retain sin’s stain, but rather it was moved to the sanctuary, where annually it would be exiled. If they failed to view themselves as sinners, then the stain of their sin would settle back on them. My conclusions follow his.

<sup>51</sup>Morales, *Who Shall Ascend*, 128. See also Edmund Leach, ‘The Logic of Sacrifice,’ in *Anthropological Approaches to the Old Testament*, IRT 8 (ed. B. Lang; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 145; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 77–80.

uncontaminated (without hand imposition) blood into the holy of holies and worked his way outward, sprinkling all the major cultic furniture on the way. This compilation of ritual acts purged the whole tabernacle area of Israel's accumulated sin-pollution that has resided there throughout the year. In this way, the annual ritual achieves its claim in Leviticus 16:30: "On this day atonement will be made for you." The purgation of sacred space resulted in the purgation of sacred people. The whole purpose of the sacrificial system was to maintain the presence of God in the midst of Israel by realistically assessing and reconciling with God. Thus, Israel's worship necessitated an inherent honesty and vulnerability before God and one another. Forgiveness and restoration rested on the humble worshippers who acknowledged their sin's severity and openly abandoned it. However, authentic worship also had another sanctifying element to it. Consistent confrontation with and worship of the living God of Israel and all creation should change them into a community congruent with the reality of such a God.

5. *Holiness as the Necessary Ethic in Israel.*<sup>52</sup> Milgrom noted that both halves of Leviticus form a continuum.<sup>53</sup> The sacrificial system (Lev 1–16), coupled with instructions on holiness (17–26), provided a beautiful picture of redemption from sin and a perpetual dependence on God. The latter part of the continuum necessitates serious consideration.

The King of creation who is holy and present among Israel both logically demands and engineers an appropriate God-directed response from his people, whether in war, worship, economics, or the judicial system.<sup>54</sup> Because God is holy and Israel is his elect, they likewise should be holy (Lev 11:44–45; 19:2; 20:7–8, 26; 21:6, 15, 23; 22:9). God's presence in Israel's midst resulted in a personal and systemic ethical structure, providing the means by which Israel continues to relate to Him uniquely (Lev 10:3; 18:2, 6; 19:4, 25; 20:24; 22:2; 23:43; 26:1). Israel ideally imaged the holiness of their

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<sup>52</sup>This section relies in terms of organization on Mooney, "Leviticus," *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Some of the material also appears in Mooney, "Leviticus," in *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (ed. Jason S. DeRouchie; Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2013), 102–121.

<sup>53</sup>Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 27.

<sup>54</sup>Morales, "A Theology of Leviticus," 117. God's presence in the tabernacle is the source of sanctification, while Israel's sacred calendar prescribes the occasions for entering his sanctifying presence.

God holistically and systemically. The concept of holiness here has both breadth and depth. It concerns almost every part of the personal and communal life of Israel. They refrained from eating the blood of sacrifice, positioning themselves as sovereign over life and death (Lev 17:10ff). They held a high standard concerning sexual ethics (Lev 18:6–23; 19:20–21; 20:10–21), reverence for parents and the elderly (Lev 19:3, 32), and proper treatment of the poor (Lev 19:9–10; 25:25–28, 29–34, 35–55). Israel also observed the correct protocol for peace offerings (Lev 19:5–8) and Sabbath-keeping (Lev 19:3; 26:2). Israel could neither oppress the vulnerable (Lev 19:13–14, 35–36) nor the sojourner (Lev 19:10, 33–34). Equally prohibited were cult prostitution (Lev 19:29–30), child sacrifice (Lev 20:1–5), and sorcery (Lev 19:31; 20:6–9, 27). Sexual violation of the powerless (Lev 19:20–21) and bowing before a powerless idol were proscribed (Lev 19:4; 26:1).

Thus far in our consideration, genuine worship orients the worshiper to God, who subverts the prevailing cultural theo-narratives. All other deities are adaptations to our reality and simply embody an exalted sense of humanness that expresses itself in conventional ways. Worship before the God who is both independent of his people yet condescends to them has no parallel in the ancient Near East. Thus, worshiping him precludes the worshiper's tendency toward enculturating God – “communizing” him into just another deity. Further, worship reengineers horizontal relationships within the covenant. When Israel loses its grip on these realities and presumes upon or redefines the God of all creation, who is inherently holy, it becomes evident in how they both worship and live.

The common compartmentalization that separates worship and ethics today does not appear in the book of Leviticus. Neither did later prophetic writers understand the idea of a covenant worshiper void of covenant ethics (Isa 1:11–14; 40:16; 66:3; Jer 6:20; 7:21–23; 14:12; Hos 6:6; 8:13; Amos 5:21–24; Mic 6:6–8). Due to injustice, marginalization of the poor, and spilled innocent blood throughout the latter prophets, God refused to receive worship from his people. No book more concisely and clearly demonstrates this reality than Amos.

## II. AMOS: LOSS OF HOLISTIC WORSHIP

The OT historian portrays religion in the Northern Kingdom as a state-sponsored entity rooted in Jeroboam's self-serving cult and continuing as the *status quo* throughout the history of the northern monarchy.<sup>55</sup> Initially, Israel was a tribal federation formed in covenant with God based upon his promises to the Patriarchs and its unprecedented liberation of the nation from Egypt. John Bright notes that Israel's early life was not ideal, but "her social structure had been a unified one without class distinctions, in which the basis of all social obligation was Yahweh's Covenant and in which all controversies were adjudicated by Covenant law."<sup>56</sup> According to 1 Kings 12:25-33, Jeroboam oriented all of Israel's life around the goal of securing his administration over against a possible mass exodus back to Jerusalem. Every king thereafter furthered this sin and continued the state policy of governing without the instituted prophetic voice resulting in sole obligation to the monarch. Bright argues that singular obligation to the state, clear economic growth patterns, and the absorption of numerous Canaanites whose background was feudal, yielded the current privileged class oriented around the monarch, which weakened, if not altogether destroyed, tribal solidarity and covenant orientation. Thus, those holding to historic covenantal values, ambitions, hopes, and legal tenants would indeed have experienced marginalization. While covenant law and commitments all significantly diminished, Yahwism remained the national religion in the eighth century and Israel's worship appeared divided along socioeconomic lines that were often predatory. This reality, so distant from the holistic vision of Leviticus, emerged from a composite of actions and attitudes in worship that often portrayed no knowledge of the holy Creator King who sat enthroned above the cherubim in Israel's midst.

1. *God in Amos.* God appears in two ways in Amos: Israel's perception and God's perception mediated through the prophet. Israel's state-sponsored religion reduced God – untamable and free Creator of all things, both transcendent yet profoundly immanent – to a common deity that corresponded with state values, ambitions, and ethics. Thus, the composite of attitudes and actions that comprised

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<sup>55</sup>The historian describes subsequent kings walking in the way of Jeroboam," or the "sin/s of Jeroboam". See 1 Kings 15:30, 34; 16:2, 19, 26, 31; 21:22; 22:52; 2 Kings 3:3; 10:29, 31; 13:2, 6, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28.

<sup>56</sup>John Bright, *History of Israel* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2000), 260.

worship derived not from a self-revealing God but from a state-sponsored social abstraction without virtue or independence. This new source crafted a community that clung to and institutionalized its sin rather than exiled it. Their continued activity coupled with a lack of covenant ethics betrayed the assumption of God's presence; a theme that appears throughout prophetic texts (Isa 1:10–18; Jer 7:4; Ezek 10:1–22). The assumption seems to derive from a misplaced emphasis concerning Israel's election coupled with a misunderstanding of God's ethnocentric commitments to Israel. By Amos's day, "YHWH may thus be called the national god, just as Chemosh was the god of Moab or Qaus the god of Edom."<sup>57</sup>

Contributing to this atrophied view of God is the clear sense of ethno-nationalism in their anticipation of the "Day of the Lord." Barton surveys the two main classical interpretations of the Day of the Lord: Mowinckel's cultic explanation and von Rad's military explanation.<sup>58</sup> He summarizes that regardless of the dissimilarities of these explanations both indicate God would urgently act on world affairs in the surrounding nations and that this action would be to the benefit and glory of Israel.<sup>59</sup> Amos presents a day that includes Israel as an object of divine derision along with the nations. Israel's current form of nationalism generated presumptions about God that provided a clear context for indictment concerning motifs from prophetic, exodus, and creation traditions. As mentioned above, one's view of God creates a consistent approach to worship. The eighth century northern kingdom reduced the idea of the holy creator king in Israel's midst down to a cultural abstraction, void of any significance independent of the state.

In the face of such a withered perception of God, Amos introduces a renewed vision of something very old. Israel is familiar with significant themes central to our above discussion on Leviticus. They are cognizant of the historical reality of the liberation from Egypt and the literary context of worship in Leviticus:

- "it was I who brought you up out of the land of Egypt and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the

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<sup>57</sup>Barton, *The Theology of the Book of Amos*, 54.

<sup>58</sup>See Barton, *The Theology of the Book of Amos*, 62–64.

<sup>59</sup>Barton, *The Theology of the Book of Amos*, 64–65.

land of the Amorite” (Amos 2:10)

- “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amos 3:2)
- “Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?” (Amos 9:7)

These references assume a certain amount of knowledge of the Exodus tradition, which the prophet used to correct the understanding of God that his audience held. The Exodus tradition texts combined with the international scope of the oracles against the nations provide a clear indication that Israel still perceived God to operate outside of the boundaries of the land. It was normal for deities in the ancient world to pass judgment on surrounding nations. However, Amos reports God’s judgement on nations in proximity to Israel that are not in conflict with Israel (1:1–2:5).<sup>60</sup> Amos also points to creation themes. God is the creator and sovereign over all things (4:13). This statement contextualizes the covenant curses towards Israel. God created Pleiades and Orion, governs time, and nurtures the earth (5:8–9). He can cause the sun to prematurely darken, turn feasts into times of mourning, and engineer a famine for the word of God throughout the land (8:9–11).<sup>61</sup> Amos portrayed God as sovereign over life and death and omnipresent in Sheol, heaven, Mt. Carmel, and the bottom of the ocean (9:24). Earlier in the same chapter, God’s sovereignty over all the earth appears in the allusions to both exodus and creation themes. God is sovereign over the Nile, touches the earth and causes it to melt, and controls chaos, exemplified in the waters of the earth (9:5–6). Unless Israel has some idea of God as international monarch, the use of these comments as foundational for reproach would have been nonsensical. While Amos’s audience retained these traditions in their cultural memory, they understood them in a diminished form. This unfortunate reality appeared most notably in Israel’s worship. The loss of the unique and powerful reality of the one true God in the hearts of worshipping Israel lies at the heart of all worship gone wrong.

2. *Worship in Amos’s Context.* Amos exposed Israel's religious

<sup>60</sup>The bulk of judgment applies to military crimes perpetuated against one another.

<sup>61</sup>See Morales, *Who Shall Ascend*, 45, for the connection between feasts and creation.

life as a thinly veiled amplification of the state. The focal point of the prophet's indictment is the people's ethics rather than their worship methods. However, that Israel was both familiar with and callous to the priestly tradition appears obvious. They make Nazirites drink wine, for instance (2:12). Divine condemnation applies to the worshippers' approach to categories in Leviticus, namely feasts, assemblies, burnt offerings, grain offerings, and peace offerings (5:21–22).<sup>62</sup> Given the clear organization of these sacrifices, the writer denounces the entire usage of the Levitical sacrificial system due to the lack of its necessary variable of systemic holiness.

Opposite of the ideal in Leviticus, Amos depicted their sacred space as barren social wildernesses; "the mountains of Samaria," have "tumults within her" and "the oppressed in her midst." Instead of places of equanimity, forgiveness, and atonement, these spaces embody hypocritical indulgence. Those affiliated with the "altars of Bethel," who own both "winter house and summer house and houses of ivory and great houses" (3:14–15), engage in "feasts," "solemn assemblies," and "offer songs," and "sacrifices," all of which God denounced through Amos (5:21–23).<sup>63</sup> Concerning the "altars at Bethel," Paul observes that the altar had a dual function. It served as asylum for whomever grasped the horns, protecting them from punishment (Exod 21:13–14; 1 Kings 1:50; 2:8). It was also the place of blood atonement for the people. The destruction of the altar and its horns symbolizes the end of the sanctuary, the end of immunity, and the end of atonement for the people.<sup>64</sup> Paul comments:

Ritual per say, with all its paraphernalia and panoply, simply cannot substitute for the basic moral and ethical actions of humans. When these are lacking, religious

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<sup>62</sup>That this list is referencing Leviticus seems obvious since it follows the order of sacrifices in Leviticus: burnt offerings (1:1–17), grain offerings (2:1–16), and peace offerings (3:1–17).

<sup>63</sup>Bethel was one of the two religious shrines set up to insulate Jeroboam in 1 Kings 12:28–33; 33:1–2. It functions also as a cultic center in Hosea (4:15; 10:5, 8, 15; 12:5), and appears throughout Amos (4:4; 5: 5, 6; 7:10, 13). Shalom M. Paul, *A Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Hermeneia-A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1991), 124, suggests that it also seems to function as a royal sanctuary without Amos telling us what he believes that to be (7:13). Paul further observes the extreme similarities and expressions in Hebrew between Exodus 32:34 and Amos 3:14. He also makes the connection between the golden calf incident in Exodus 32 and the threat level against Bethel. This connection could further extend to Leviticus 16, which has a distinct terminological connection to Exodus 32.

<sup>64</sup>Paul, *A Commentary on the Book of Amos*, 124.



life, with all its ritual accoutrements, becomes a sham. What is required above all else is justice and righteousness. The proper human relationship is based upon the correct human to human relationship.<sup>65</sup>

I would argue that this both represents the limitations of ritual and misdiagnoses the core problem. The point in all the prophets is not to elevate human-to-human relationships but to see them as directed byproducts of confronting and being confronted by God, who demands a new type of human-to-human relationship, a new vision of society.

The most unambiguous expression of the conflation of Israel's cultic and sociopolitical identities is the confrontation between Amos and the high priest Amaziah (7:10–17).<sup>66</sup> Amaziah consults with Jeroboam II concerning the possible political fallout from Amos's preaching (Amos 7:10). "Amos has conspired against you," and "The land is unable to bear his words," contributes to a clear covenantal focus for both Amos's preaching and Amaziah's concerns. Amaziah publicly admonishes Amos to "flee away to the land of Judah (7:12) ... and never again prophesy at Bethel for it is the *king's sanctuary*, and it is a *temple of the kingdom*." Mosaic legislation demands that the king write his own copy of the Torah specifically to avoid lifting his heart above his brothers (Deut 17:14–20). The opposite impulse is now a reality. The Torah does not rule and shape the king, but the king rules and shapes the Torah.<sup>67</sup> The religion of Israel, initially an authentically original and living idea, now merely functions as a baptized puppet of the state. This reality appears obvious as the high priest even forgets to mention God's name, the deity who resides enthroned at the temple. Given the holistic nature of Israelite reality,

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<sup>65</sup>Paul, *A Commentary on the Book of Amos*, 193.

<sup>66</sup>Göran Eidervall, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 389, states that the main theological point made by Amos 7:10–17 in conjunction with the vision reports could be formulated as follows: rejection of the prophetic word makes forgiveness unthinkable.

<sup>67</sup>For my purposes, it is obvious that the prophetic writer provides ample indictment for the North by highlighting the prostitutionary nature of Israel's current religious state. More importantly, this is a common ANE religious hierarchy. Due to the lifeless nature of the gods of the nations, religious truth embedded itself into conventional institutions like family, military, and political structures. This scenario portrays the Northern Kingdom as distant from its heritage, which was a tribal federation organized around the covenant of promise and the worship of YHWH. They are now an entity oriented around a monarch and everything attached to that monarch.

this type of worship had deleterious effects upon the worshipper. Carroll contends that holiness and impurity embodies “wholeness and meaning in a cosmic order,” and thus provides perspective on Amos’s possible interaction with Leviticus. Anthropologically, as Carroll argues, God is creator King of the cosmos, the point of orientation around which everything finds its order, systematizing Israelite reality. Thus, properly exercised ritual restores and rejuvenates life but ritual immorally executed in Amos’s day produces disorder and death.<sup>68</sup> Practically speaking, one’s perception of God would direct one toward ways in which to interact and adore him, which would construct a culture characterized by life or death in both ritual and social spheres. This truth provides the landscape on which Amos portrays the worshipping community in eighth century Israel.

3. *The Worshipper in Amos’s Context.* Amos portrays a divided society, which included a property-owning, economically self-sufficient upper class who lived at the expense of the marginalized. They lived functionally opposed to holiness as illustrated in Leviticus. The coexistence of covenant injustice and religious formalities exposed an idolatrous tendency toward the state that robbed worship of its meaning and provided a startling and contrasting vision of life for his audience. God will now treat Israel as it functions, namely as a common ancient Near Eastern people. This impulse appears immediately in the book. After lulling his listeners with clear punitive adjudications on the surrounding nations (1:2–2:5),<sup>69</sup> Amos concluded these oracles with Israel’s inclusion.<sup>70</sup> Barton helpfully explains

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<sup>68</sup>See Carroll, *Amos in Context*, 122–125. For the roots of Carroll’s thoughts, see also Mary Douglas, “The Abomination in Leviticus,” in *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1966).

<sup>69</sup>Barton states that the oracles against the nations function to “startle his hearers by suddenly turning on them. After lulling them into a false sense of their own security by denouncing their neighbors.” See Barton *Amos’s Oracles Against the Nations: A Study of Amos 1:3–2:5* (SOTSMS 6; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 38. The oracles against the nations are written from the perspective of the Israelite strophe as their intensification, 20. The purpose according to Fritz was possibly to warn Judah of impending divine judgement by explaining and justifying the demise of its rival to the north. See Fritz, “Die Fremdvolkersprüche des Amos,” *VT* 37; 26–38, 1987: 37–38. However, it seems that the oracles against the nations formula applied to Israel justifies the destruction of the north in a similar tone as Hosea, which exposes Israel’s infidelity and thus its similarity to the nations.

<sup>70</sup>This rhetorical device intensified the message to the north by startling them into the reality that they had become to God as the nations they deplored. Jeremiah, *Amos*, 15–20, provides three formal devices within the framework, which demonstrate this point. (18–22) 1. The numerical formula, which only finds its completion in the Israelite strophe, where there are four actual sins, enumerated. All the other nations are content with less. 2. The negative formula of irrevocability

the scene: “The audience has to be imagined applauding after each oracle against a foreign nation, beginning with Aram, which the Israelite army had only recently defeated in order to win back two towns in Transjordan (Amos 6:13). This is the kind of thing an audience would expect from a prophet.”<sup>71</sup> Israel’s subsequent insertion with Aram and company must have been shocking. Paul notes that Israel is not indicted for crimes committed as a consequence of military belligerency as were the four nations or for idolatry as was Judah, but “for transgressions committed within the social sphere. Israel’s guilt lies within the domain of the every day oppressive behavior of its citizens toward one another.”<sup>72</sup> The message seems clear: Israel had institutionalized common cultural impulses including subordination of the deity to the state, which resulted in a classist imperialism that dissolved the very heart of the covenant relationship.

Amos describes the ruling class in the eighth-century Northern Kingdom as powerful and oppressive. He calls them the “swift,” the “strong,” the “mighty,” the “one who handles the bow,” who is “swift of foot,” “who rides the horse,” and the “stout of heart among the mighty.” These epithets may indicate a possible attempt at a military aristocracy included in the ruling element in Israel. He refers to the wealthy women of the social class as “cows of Bashan” who, from the vantage point of the temple (mountain of Samaria), “oppress the poor, crush the needy, rule their husbands” (4:1–2), and refuse to return to God regardless of his goodness and discipline toward them (4:6–11).

Like their perception of God, Israel expressed a diminished perception of covenant institutions like justice (holiness) and worship. Blatant discrepancies abounded in the administration of justice since only full citizens could sit and speak in their cases; slaves, foreigners, orphans, and widows had no one to uphold their just claims.<sup>73</sup> Rather than embody holiness and establish justice at the gate, Israel sought to thwart it (5:14–15). The “strong” in 5:9 “hate those who reprove at

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excludes even prophetic intercession, which would have been an option prior to exile according to Jeremiah. 3. The concept of “guilt” Hebrew *pesha* is frequently a political category referring to revolts against or apostasy from a superior entity. The term appears in a metaphorical sense and is designed primarily for Israel (4:4; 5:12).

<sup>71</sup>Barton, *Amos’s Oracles Against the Nations*, 56.

<sup>72</sup>Paul, *Amos*, 76.

<sup>73</sup>Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. II, 135.

the gate” and “abhor him who speaks the truth” (5:10). They trample and exact taxes of grain from the poor. They have built houses indicating they have taken land and planted pleasant vineyards for themselves, directly violating the egalitarian land tenure central to the life and covenant community between Israel and God. Owning and operating the judiciary, they afflict the righteous, take bribes, and “[run] aside the needy at the gate.”<sup>74</sup> They trample on the needy and “bring the poor of the land to an end” (8:4).

While civic in its expression, the social situation in Amos exposed a covenantal consciousness, exemplified by the ruling class’s disdain for faithful adjudicators at the gate and systemic efforts to impoverish a collection of marginalized peoples.<sup>75</sup> These situations contribute to a proper understanding of the marginalized in Amos: “poor,” “needy,” and “righteous.” Simply put, the poor are not righteous because they are poor, but the righteous are poor because they are righteous. Amos described the oppressed class in the inaugural indictment consistent with this covenantal paradigm (2:6–8). Eidevall argues that unlike other traditions that were ambivalent to economic infrastructure, “... prophetic writers give attention to the anomalous situations *in which the wicked were wealthy, and the righteous were poor.*”<sup>76</sup> He translates “the righteous poor” in Amos 2:6–8, as a select group that had become the objects of debt slavery (Exod 21:2; Lev 25:39; Deut 15:11).<sup>77</sup> Jeremias asserts that the sale here has little to nothing to do with any real-life situation that may engineer independence and domestic security, but seems to be a third-party acquisition for profit

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<sup>74</sup>Paul, *Amos*, 170–171. The “gate” was the place where legal hearings took place and where justice was administered. He also notes that the gate seems to be a cultural idea as well with examples appearing in both Ugaritic and Mesopotamian cultures. Amos’s crowd hated the arbiter at the gate for the same reason in Isaiah 29:21. M. Seidel notes a collocation of terms in Isaiah and Amos on this matter (M. Seidel, “Four Prophets who Prophesied at the Same Time,” in *Higre Mikra* (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1978), 195–238 (Hebrew). For the central role of the *shaar* “gate” in legal proceedings, see L. Koehler, *Hebrew Man* (trans. P. Ackroyd; London: Akademie Verlag, 1956), 149–151. See Deut 21:19–20; 22:15; 25:7; Ruth 4:1–3; Lam 5:14; for corruption of justice at the gate, see Prov 22:22.

<sup>75</sup>The situation described here by Amos seems contrary to the understandable but indemonstrable assumptions of the Social Justice Movement, namely that the poor are righteous because they are poor. This project understands that the poor are not righteous because they are poor, but the righteous are poor because they are righteous.

<sup>76</sup>Eidevall, *Amos*, 310.

<sup>77</sup>Jeremias, *Amos*, 308. Earlier the institution itself was designed to keep body and soul together for a hopelessly impoverished person and to provide a manner in which a person might create an independent existence.

alone.<sup>78</sup> While there would always be poor among the Israelites (Deut 15:11), originally inter-covenantal servitude was intended to alleviate the pain of poverty within Israel and elevate the possibility of dignity.<sup>79</sup> Amos's hearers denied any impulses toward the dignity of those within the covenant who were outside of the existent advantageous feudal parameters.

That Amos's hearers have a certain impoverished capacity for covenant religion appears often. They wait for the end of religious holidays, for which they presumably stall their social hypocrisy only to re-engage with corrupt business and legal practices leveled at enriching the king's class and draining the poor classes (8:4–6). They are those who swear by the guilt of Samaria via “Dan” and “Beersheba” (8:14). They have successfully profaned Israel's religious life, compartmentalizing its expression and sanctifying affects from socioeconomic ethics.<sup>80</sup> The process of recrafting the covenant to sustain political identity engineered another god altogether. This deity was common, not holy, and therefore had no compelling power to engineer holiness to the covenant people. Amos 5:23–24 exposes the religion of Israel's inextricable relationship with covenantal justice.<sup>81</sup> The prophet indicts those who “turn justice to wormwood and cast down righteousness to the Earth” (5:7). Further, he follows his condemnation of those who unfaithfully practice orthodox worship activities with the refrain, “Let justice roll down like waters; righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:23–24). This demand calls Israel back to their national identity (Gen 18:19). Read in conjunction with Leviticus, one sees a decisive departure from holiness

<sup>78</sup>Jeremias, *Amos*, 309.

<sup>79</sup>Impoverishment was no doubt the most common route to total loss of property - first land, then clothing from one's back, then one's own body. Torah legislation precluded all three acts and redress through the courts were available to citizens. See Eidevall, *Amos*, 308.

<sup>80</sup>See a similar divine disposition toward Judah in Isa 1, 58; Jer 7, 22; Micah 6.

<sup>81</sup>All the prophetic texts applied by social justice proponents in a civic way are specifically covenantal in the Old Testament (Isa 1, 58; Jer 22; Amos 5; Micah 6). Unless one adapts a hermeneutical angle similar to Christopher Wright's *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, who applies his “social angle” directly to societies outside of Israel, the decision to use these texts civically seems arbitrary. Concerning the ubiquitous nature of justice throughout the Old Testament, Knierim states in *The Task of Old Testament Theology*, 54, “The concern for justice pervades the entire Old Testament. It is found in the historical, legal, prophetic, and wisdom literature, and in the Psalms as well. It is found throughout the entire history of the Old Testament literature...The evidence shows that the concern for justice was one, if not the central, factor by which ancient Israel's multifaceted societal life was united throughout its historical changes...No sphere of Israel's life was exempt from concern for justice, and the LORD was known to be at work in all its spheres.”

given the attention to marginalized people concerning agricultural, business, and judiciary ethics.<sup>82</sup> We would contend that holiness and justice correlate easily with one another. Justice is a primary aspect of holiness. Aside from the textual description of holiness from Leviticus 19, which entailed both individual and systemic justice categories, Wright describes holiness in a manner that allows justice to cohere to holiness:

Holiness is thus a very comprehensive concept indeed. It is, really, not so much a religious aspiration, or even just a moral code. Holiness is rather a way of being: a way of being with God in covenant relationship, a way of being like God in clean and wholesome living, a way of being God's people in the midst of an unholy and unclean world. Preserving that holy cleanness among God's people – ritually, morally, physically, socially, symbolically – is the primary thrust of the laws in the book of Leviticus.<sup>83</sup>

While Amos lacks appropriate cultic vocabulary, his directives concerning justice certainly fall under the auspices of the social vision of holiness found in Leviticus. Injustice expressed in the context of covenant violates the very heart of holiness, which, at a systemic level, deconstructed many of the common realities of ancient Near Eastern religion and culture and produced a vibrant community living in the reality of an unprecedented deity.

There are two clear points of interest concerning worship for the prophet. First, Amos labors to distinguish God from the sacred precincts of Israel. He indicts the entirety of the cultic system early on: “come to Bethel and sin” (4:4–5). He further adjures Israel to seek him [“Me”] and live. The only place the prophet accuses Israel of worshipping other deities takes place after his most prominent call to covenant ethics over against the seemingly orthodox practice of Israelite religion (5:23–24). Amos admonishes the northern kingdom to take up Sikkuth and Kiyyun, their king and star god respectively, and go into exile with them (5:26–27). God will render the songs of

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<sup>82</sup>See the above discussion on holiness as an ethic in Leviticus.

<sup>83</sup>Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 128.

the temple into wailing, which is how they more than likely sound to him. Death will occupy the sacred precincts (8:3).

### III. TOWARD A HOLISTIC BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Leviticus and Amos provide the Christian material to contemplate worship. Christian worship demands responding to God as he has revealed himself to fallen but redeemed humanity. Leviticus presented the triune God as Creator in residence among his people. He is holy; he is radically autonomous, dangerous but liberating, on an entirely different order than his people, yet close to them. Through mediation and atonement, he provides forgiveness, restoration, and a way that his people can know that he is present and will remain present with them. His holiness portrays him as profoundly subversive among the gods, whether priestly or political. The triune God shares no parity with his people; yet loves and changes them. Understanding God as an expression of political or ethnocentric identity tends to have a starting point, where the reality of God eventually becomes a liability rather than an asset. That decision, while framed in covenantal categories betrays itself in acts of worship and the absence of the sanctifying power of worship.

Christian worship demands both attitudes and actions toward God that tend toward sanctifying the worshipper. To worship the living God engineers a tangible counter narrative – holiness applied – to all common cultural narratives. The holiness of Israel is due to attachment. Outside of attachment, there is no inclination toward holiness, but there is a collective response to manufacture something like it. By the time Amos arrives, there had been hundreds of years of state-sponsored religion in the Northern Kingdom. The object of worship is not recognizable and thus neither is the attachment-induced ethic of holiness. They attempt in vain to veil themselves with a deliberate but useless religiosity. Yet, pervading Israel are the marginalized righteous-poor, who are functionally void of covenant status. They are crushed, trampled upon in court, turned aside at the gate, and objectified by the same people who offer the offerings and attend the feasts prescribed for them in Leviticus. There is no evidence that an idea of holiness remains. However, the hope of Amos is why we worship. God would and did rebuild the tent of David,

and the nations and Israel experience it together (Amos 9:11–12; cf. Acts 15:14–20).<sup>84</sup> This restoration allows us to examine, amidst canonical tensions, Scripture’s testimony to the holy God who forgives, restores, and calls his rebellious people to know and worship him. It further reiterates the sanctifying reality that those who cling to God as he has revealed himself at creation, the temple, the cross, the tomb, and resurrected in the church as the holy creator King in the midst of his people, are patiently being changed by God’s spirit, sanctifying them according to God’s divine purpose for their lives.



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<sup>84</sup>Luke seems to marry Amos and Leviticus in this passage, where he references that the nations who are now in the covenant should follow Mosaic legislation reminiscent of Leviticus 17–20.





## **PREACHING: The Foundation of the Church's Mission**

David L. Allen\*

Thankfully, God sees to it that in every generation there are those faithful preachers who have not bowed the knee to culture and choose to preach the Bible. As one who has listened to preaching for more than 55 years, practiced it for 45 years, studied it for more than 35 years, and taught it for more than 30 years, I am always thankful for those who faithfully preach the Word.

Sadly though, some of today's American pulpit is a hodge-podge of mediocrities, curiosities, and even some atrocities.

I have heard texts eisegeted rather than exegeted. I have seen preachers skirmish cleverly on the outskirts of a text, yet never get to its meaning and thrust. I have witnessed sermonic magic shows where a preacher keeps reaching into an empty hat and extracting a handful of nothing. I have heard texts bludgeoned and battered, twisted and tortured into submission. I have sometimes felt when the preacher completed his sermonic surgery, he failed to rightly divide the Word of truth, and I half hoped that the text would rise up and sue the negligent preacher for exegetical and theological malpractice.

In some churches, the dearth of genuine biblical preaching seems obvious. Theologian J. I. Packer called it "nonpreaching." Any number of sermonic idols, including entertainment, personal experience, packaged pragmatism, pop psychology, social gospel, self-help therapy, five-ways-to-be-happy, and three-ways-to-love-your-mother kind of preaching displace the Bible on any given Sunday. In Packer's words:

Not every Discourse that fills the appointed 20- or 30- minute slot in public worship is actual preaching, however much it is called by that name. Sermons (Latin,

\*David L. Allen, who holds the George W. Truett Chair of Ministry, serves as distinguished professor of preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

*sermons*, “speeches”) are often composed and delivered on wrong principles. Thus, if they fail to open Scripture or they expound it without applying it, or if they are no more than lectures aimed at informing the mind or addresses seeking only to focus the present self-awareness of the listening group, or if they are delivered as statements of the preacher’s opinion rather than as messages from God, or if their lines of thought do not require listeners to change in any way, they fall short of being preaching, just as they would if they were so random and confused that no one could tell what the speaker was saying.<sup>1</sup>

In the midst of today’s “cancel culture” movement, some preachers’ sermons indicate they are members of the “cancel Scripture” movement. Their sermons contain everything but the Word. Of course, the obligatory text is given lip service at the beginning of a sermon, but quickly falls by the wayside as the preacher straightway departs therefrom.

The absence of biblical preaching results in doctrine being watered down or ignored. Instead of a robust diet, people are fed spiritual junk food. The sheer weightlessness of such preaching is astounding. No wonder so many spiritual teeth are decaying. The sheep look up and are not fed.

Many mainline denominations have abandoned biblical authority. Caught in the cul-de-sac of a post-liberal Barthian bibliology with its never-ceasing erosion of biblical authority,<sup>2</sup> the first casualty is the pulpit. The failure of the New Homiletic is a case in point.<sup>3</sup> With the

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<sup>1</sup>J. I. Packer, “Introduction, Why Preach?”, *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century* (ed. Samuel T. Logan, Jr.; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986), 4.

<sup>2</sup>Many of the mainline denominations have succumbed to liberalism as evidenced in the writing and preaching of some of their own homileticians. The aptly titled book, *What’s the Matter with Preaching Today?* edited by Mike Graves (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2004), includes ten chapters by ten homileticians from mainline denominations. The book title is a self-fulfilling prophecy; much of it illustrates what is wrong with preaching today. For example, David Buttrick informs us that the idea that Jesus saves individual human souls is a “Gnostic heresy” and that a gospel of personal salvation is a “heretical gospel” (45–46). Earnest Campbell informs us he believes that while Jesus is the only way for us, he is not necessarily the only way for others. According to Campbell, it is “preposterous” to deny the possibility of salvation to the billions who share this planet with us but do not share our faith (52).

<sup>3</sup>See David L. Allen, “A Tale of Two Roads: Homiletics and Biblical Authority,” *JETS* 43 (2000):

publication of Fred Craddock's *As One Without Authority* in 1971, the New Homiletic was born. It was quickly followed by "narrative preaching." Generally speaking, these movements consider the notion of linear thinking to be passé. In the New Homiletic, this concept exhibited itself in the idea that the goal is not so much on *hearing* the truth as it is on *experiencing* the truth. Craddock initiated a move away from the so-called "deductive, propositional" approach to preaching to a more inductive approach. The goal is to create an experience in the listener which effects a hearing of the gospel. The sermon becomes a communication event in which the audience along with the preacher co-creates the sermonic experience.<sup>4</sup>

However, the problem with the New Homiletic is its elevation of the audience over the text, and its privileging of experience over knowledge. Instead of exposition, the sermon proceeds in a narrative form that oftentimes leaves the meaning of the text blurred or undeveloped. This is not to say that the New Homiletic has nothing to teach us about preaching, for indeed it does. However, due to the truncated view of biblical authority of many of its practitioners, the New Homiletic does not take seriously enough the text of Scripture itself as God's Word to us.

Having determined that traditional propositional preaching was inadequate, practitioners opted for indirect communication as a preaching strategy. Unfortunately, wedded to Barth's bibliology, their approach has not yielded the anticipated result, and now many within the New Homiletic recognize the need for adjustment.<sup>5</sup>

Evangelical denominations and churches have not escaped unscathed. Evidence suggests the need to rethink the importance of biblical authority and its concomitant doctrine of inerrancy, coupled with a strong commitment to the sufficiency of Scripture in our preaching. The inerrancy of Scripture is still affirmed in the majority of evangelicalism, but even here there has been significant erosion

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508–13.

<sup>4</sup>See Stephen Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," *JAAR* 39 (1971): 291–311.

<sup>5</sup>Narrative preaching has come under significant critique in recent years, even by those who were once its ardent supporters. See, for example, Tom Long, "What Happened to Narrative Preaching?" *Journal for Preachers* 28.2 (2005): 9–14. In 1997, Charles Campbell's bombshell *Preaching Jesus: New Directions for Homiletics in Hans Frei's Postliberal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), and James Thompson, *Preaching Like Paul: Homiletical Wisdom for Today* (Louisville/John Knox: Westminster, 2001), both leveled broadsides against the New Homiletic.

over the past twenty years.<sup>6</sup> While the battle for the inerrancy of Scripture will remain ongoing, today's evangelicals are engaged in a new battle: the sufficiency of Scripture in preaching. Is the Bible, and the Bible alone, sufficient to change hearts and grow a church? Hundreds of preachers give lip service to inerrancy, but by the conferences they attend and the sermons they preach, they demonstrate that their heart is far from the sufficiency of Scripture.

John Stott insightfully commented that the essential secret of preaching is not “mastering certain techniques, but being mastered by certain convictions.”<sup>7</sup> All preaching rests upon certain convictions about the nature of God, the Scriptures, and the gospel. Haddon Robinson is correct when he pointed out: “Expository preaching, therefore, emerges not merely as a type of sermon – one among many – but as the theological outgrowth of a high view of inspiration. Expository preaching then originates as a philosophy rather than a method.”<sup>8</sup> All preaching, regardless of the form it takes, should be expositional in nature. The word “homiletics” itself etymologically derives from the Greek word *homo* meaning “same,” and *legō*, meaning “to speak.” Homiletics is the art and science of sermon construction and delivery that says the same thing that the text of Scripture says.<sup>9</sup>

If the mission of the church is the evangelism of the lost and the equipping of the saved, then of all things the church does, should not preaching to be at its apex? One will notice the differences between Matthew and Mark in the giving of the Great Commission. Whereas Matthew 28:19 speaks of going into all the world and “making disciples,” Mark 16:15 says “Go into all the world and preach the gospel.” Obviously preaching plays a paramount role in the church’s mandate to fulfill the Great Commission.

## **I. PREACHING AS FOUNDATIONAL: NATURE AND SOURCE OF SCRIPTURE**

There are several reasons why preaching is foundational for the

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<sup>6</sup>See Greg Beale’s *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008).

<sup>7</sup>John Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 92.

<sup>8</sup>Haddon Robinson, “Homiletics and Hermeneutics,” in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible* (ed. Earl Radmacher and Robert Preus; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 803.

<sup>9</sup>James Daane, *Preaching with Confidence* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 49.

mission of the church. The first reason is theological: the nature and source of Scripture. Scripture is the Word of God. In Scripture, God speaks. From Genesis to Revelation, God is a God who speaks. The Word of God is inscripturated. The Word of God is also incarnated: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God” (John 1:1): “God, having spoken of old in different times and in different ways to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us in His Son” (Hebrews 1:1–2).

God has spoken in Christ and in Scripture. In no other way could we know him. Though the universe declares the glory of God and bears witness to his power, it could never tell us of his love. Though history tells us of the sovereignty of God, it can never fully explain what Christ accomplished on the cross. Though our conscience bears witness to the morality of God, it can never teach us how to live and love rightly. Unless God speaks, we would never know him or his love for us. To us, the universe, history, and conscience are all one great undecipherable hieroglyph until we discover God’s Rosetta Stone—Jesus the living Word and Scripture the written Word.

God is the perfect communicator. Jesus is God’s perfect communication to us. Jesus is God’s ultimate communication because he is God’s perfect representation. Jesus perfectly represents God because he is a member of the Trinity and Scripture perfectly represents Jesus. Jesus is God spelling himself out in language we can understand. Jesus does not reveal something other than himself, nor does he reveal something other than God: “The word became flesh and dwelt among us. We behold his glory, even the glory of the only Son from the Father. . . . No one has ever seen God; the only Son, Jesus, has made him known” (John 1:14, 18). Jesus is the speech of eternity translated into the language of time. The inaudible has become audible. The invisible has become visible. The unapproachable has become accessible. God’s revelation in Jesus is personal, plenary, and permanent, and God’s revelation in the written Word is plenary and permanent.

God’s perfect communication in Christ and in Scripture has as its goal the salvation of all sinners. Therefore, Paul admonished Timothy to “preach the Word” (2 Tim 4:1–2). The first theological foundation for preaching is this fact: God has spoken!

## II. PREACHING AS FOUNDATIONAL: DIVINE AUTHORITY

A second reason why preaching is foundational for the church is its divine authority. As the Word of God, Scripture is inspired, inerrant, and sufficient according to 2 Timothy 3:16–17: “All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness.” The authority of Scripture is the very authority of God.

Jesus is the living Word and Scripture is God’s written Word. God is the ultimate author of all Scripture according to 2 Timothy 3:16. It is noteworthy how New Testament authors quote the Old Testament. Often, God and Scripture are interchangeable terms via metonymy when quoting the Old Testament. For example, God is viewed as the author when he himself is not the speaker, as in Matthew 19:4-5. On the other hand, “Scripture says” is used when God himself is the direct speaker, as in Romans 9:17, Galatians 3:8 and 22. To J. I. Packer once again: “Scripture is God preaching.”

The Old Testament quote formulae in Hebrews are instructive. Hebrews not only views Jesus as God’s speech to us, but Hebrews views Scripture as the speech of the Trinity (Heb 1:5-13; 2:12-13; 3:7). Jesus links himself to the Old Testament throughout his ministry. In Luke 4:14–30, when Jesus preached, he took a text of Scripture from Isaiah and startled his synagogue hearers by applying it to himself and claiming its fulfillment on that very day (Isa 61:1-2) After his resurrection, while walking with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, he chided them for their unbelief and laid the fault at the feet of their failure to consider the Scriptures. He then referenced the three sections of the Hebrew Bible—the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings—and asserted that each “testified” concerning himself.

Paul’s method of evangelistic preaching according to Acts 17:2–3 is informative: “As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead.” Paul’s New Testament letters to the churches are mostly written sermons. They contain what Paul would have preached to them had he been with them in person. Hebrews is itself a written sermon that develops several Old Testament texts of Scripture, Psalm 110:1 and 4 being primary.

Our authority for preaching comes from God himself and from his word, Scripture. As Haddon Robinson reminds us, “Ultimately the authority behind preaching resides not in the preacher but in the biblical text.”<sup>10</sup> As the Second Helvetic Confession states, “The preaching of the word of God is the word of God.”

Thus, to preach, *kerussō*, is an authoritative public proclamation of Jesus the Word and Scripture as the word of God. First Thessalonians 2:12–13 makes clear that the source and authority for preaching is God himself: “For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.”

### III. PREACHING AS FOUNDATIONAL: DIVINE CONTENT

A third reason why preaching is foundational for the mission of the church is its divine content. In 2 Timothy, Paul admonished young Timothy to “preach the word” (2 Tim 4:2). In context, the word is the written Scripture of 2 Timothy 3:16–17. Preaching is the ministry of the word and should be shaped by the nature of the word. The focus here is on preaching to the church, as evidenced by context and the use of “teaching” in the final phrase.

Jesus critiques the misreading of Scripture on five occasions, in each chiding the Jewish leaders: “Have you not read?” Perhaps Jesus critiques our mis-preaching of Scripture. Next to a lack of truth, a sermon’s greatest fault is lack of biblically developed content. Preaching must be “text-driven” and “Christ-centered.” It cannot be the latter unless it is first the former.

Luke records Paul’s approach in his evangelistic preaching in Acts 17:2–3: “And according to Paul’s custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead.” Perry and Strubhar are correct: “The biblical text must be the foundation of every evangelistic sermon.”<sup>11</sup>

Since God himself speaks in and through Christ and Scripture, it is incumbent on preachers to expound the meaning of Scripture to

<sup>10</sup>Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 16.

<sup>11</sup>Lloyd M. Perry and John Strubhar, *Evangelistic Preaching*, rev. ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2000), 56.



their people. In so doing, they are preaching Christ through the very words of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit in Scripture. To preach the Word is to hear Christ and encounter him.

We are not just preaching sermons; we are preaching texts—inspired texts. The word “text” comes from the Latin word meaning “to weave.” The word figuratively expresses thought in continuous speech or writing. The product of weaving is the *textus* in Latin. It is a linguistic composition expressed orally or in writing. A text is a cohesive and structured expression of language that intends a specific effect.<sup>12</sup>

Biblical preaching should be the development of a text of Scripture: its explanation, illustration, and application. Our focus should not only be on what the text says, but as much as is possible, on what the author is trying to *do* with his text—what linguistics call “pragmatic analysis.”

One of the goals of preaching is to communicate the meaning of the text to an audience in terms and contexts they understand. One way to think about preaching is to view it as a form of translation. We are translating the meaning of our text to our audience. The word “translate” comes from the Latin word meaning “to transfer.” In a sense, we are “transferring” meaning. And meaning is fragile. Freight may be altered or damaged in shipment. We must handle with care.

Many a sermon uses a text of Scripture but is not derived from the text. In such a sermon, the text is not the source of the sermon; rather, it is only a resource. For some preachers, the Bible is something of a happy hunting-ground for texts on which to hang what they want to say to the people. G. Campbell Morgan spoke of one preacher whose habit was to write his sermons and then choose a text as a peg on which to hang them. Morgan went on to say that the study of that preacher’s sermons revealed the peril of the method. At times, a sermon can sound like a marauding horde of undisciplined thoughts or a loose kind of *omnium-gatherum* of vague generalities. On the other hand, some preachers dazzle us with a blinding flash of swordplay almost too fast to follow. Such preaching may be clever and ingenious, but merely evinces a superficial connection with the text of Scripture. Preaching is not just playing with the subject of your text as one observer said of Lancelot Andrewes’ preaching in

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<sup>12</sup>Werner Stenger, *Introduction to New Testament Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 23.

the court of King James I: “don’t play with the text; preach the text.”

Kent Hughes talks about a kind of preaching he calls “disexposition.” Disexposition occurs when the preacher takes a text but promptly departs therefrom in the sermon. Disexposition occurs when, no matter the text of Scripture, the sermon sounds the same. Disexposition occurs when preaching is “decontexted” (that is, it shows no regard for context). There are few sentences in Hebrews or the first eleven chapters of Romans which can be fully understood without having in mind the entire argument of the Epistle, as John Broadus and others have rightly noted. Disexposition also occurs when a text is “lensed,” as in sermons always focused on pet peeves or themes—domestic, political, ethical, etc., as well as “moralized,” as when Philippians 3:13 is preached as an exhortation in setting personal goals. Luther spoke of an allegorical preaching as an exegetical alchemy that sets out to turn lead into gold but ends up turning gold into lead. You cannot preach the word right until you cut it straight.<sup>13</sup> Walter Brueggemann said preachers are scribes who are entrusted with texts. In the same way that the scribes worked meticulously to handle the text, so preachers must meticulously exegete the text to determine its meaning and faithfully represent that meaning to the people.

Genuine expository preaching is text-driven preaching. Text-driven preaching attempts to stay true to the substance, the structure, and the spirit of the text.<sup>14</sup> The “substance” of the text is what the text is about or its theme. The “structure” of the text concerns the way in which the author develops the theme via syntax and semantics. A text has not only syntactical structure but also semantic structure, and the latter is what the preacher should be attempting to identify and represent in the sermon.<sup>15</sup> The “spirit” of the text concerns the author’s intended “feel” or “emotive tone” of the text which is influenced by the specific textual genre, such as narrative, expository,

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<sup>13</sup>See 2 Timothy 2:15.

<sup>14</sup>See Steven W. Smith, *Recapturing the Voice of God: Shaping Sermons Like Scripture* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015), who first used these descriptors several years ago.

<sup>15</sup>From a semantic standpoint, there is a finite set of communication relations that exists for all languages which functions as something of a natural metaphysic of the human mind. See Robert Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse* (Topics in Language and Linguistics; New York: Plenum, 1983), xix. These relations are catalogued, explained and illustrated by Longacre and in a more “pastor friendly” way by John Beekman, John Callow and Michael Kopeseck, *The Semantic Structure of Written Communication* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1981), 77–113.

hortatory, poetic, etc.<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately, some preachers subordinate the text to their sermon. This becomes evident when preachers preach sermons filtered through preconceived doctrinal systems that sometimes are imposed upon the text. Other preachers subordinate the text to their application in the sermon. You cannot have legitimate application until you first have exposition of textual meaning that grounds the application. Scripture links exegesis and application. The book of Hebrews is a perfect example. There is a boundary between exegesis and application, but it is a permeable boundary. Truth is unto holiness as my professor, Robert Longacre, used to say.

John Broadus reminds us all that we must delight in the exegetical study of the Bible to succeed in expository preaching; we must love to search out the exact meaning of its paragraphs, sentences, phrases, and words.<sup>17</sup> Exegesis of Scripture is the foundation of our exposition of Scripture in preaching. Exegesis is homiletical because preaching is text-based and thus meaning-based. “Faithful engagement with Scripture is a standard by which preaching should be measured, and the normal week-in, week-out practice of preaching should consist of sermons drawn from specific biblical texts.”<sup>18</sup>

Exegesis must be the first language of the preacher; biblical theology, his second language; and systematic theology, his third language. Most preachers, instead of expounding the text, skirmish cleverly on its outskirts. Much of today’s preaching is pirouetting on trifles rather than expounding the text. Without a text to ground the sermon, the preacher becomes something of a magician who, with conjuring adroitness week after week, keeps producing rabbit after rabbit out of an obviously empty hat.

Text-driven preachers are not just preaching sermons; we are preaching texts in an effort to communicate accurately God’s meaning to the people. The text gets the first word. The text gets the

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<sup>16</sup>See D. Allen, “Fundamentals of Genre: How Literary Form Affects the Interpretation of Scripture,” in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*, 264–67. Scripture employs various genres including narrative, poetry, prophecy and epistles, and good text-driven preaching will reflect this variety as well. There is a broad umbrella of sermon styles and structures that can rightfully be called “text-driven.” For a helpful discussion of this subject, see Dennis Cahill, *The Shape of Preaching: Theory and Practice in Sermon Design* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

<sup>17</sup>John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, (ed. E. C. Dargan; New York: Armstrong, 1903), 118.

<sup>18</sup>Thomas Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Louisville: WJK, 2005), 5.

last word. There is a bond between Scripture and sermon. People encounter God not outside the text of Scripture but *through* the text of Scripture. Our response to the word is our response to Christ. The stream of the sermon will never run clear if the source of the sermon is other than a text of Scripture.

1. *Text-centered vs. Text-driven.* Many sermons fall under the rubric of “expository” and are thus text-centered, but not necessarily text-driven. What is the difference between a sermon that is “text-centered” and one that is “text-driven”? Perhaps the following chart will be helpful in drawing distinctions.

Text-Centered Sermons	Text-Driven Sermons
Sermon based on a text and is about the text.	Sermon based on a text, is about the text, is derived from the text, and explains the meaning of the text.
Focus on the textual theme.	Focus on textual theme as textually developed.
Sermon has a point or points <i>usually</i> drawn from the text.	Sermon only has as many “points” as the text has, and these are <i>always</i> drawn from the text.
Textual secondary information may or may not be developed.	Textual secondary information developed in relation to main point(s).
Sermon structure may be imposed on the text.	Sermon structure is borrowed from the structure of the text.
Application relates to or has some connection to the text but may not be derived from the main point(s) of the text.	Application flows directly and exclusively from the text.

Creativity is generally unguided by the text.	Creativity is generally guided by the genre and textual clues of the text.
Tendency to pick short preaching texts.	Demands a natural paragraph/pericope/through unit of text for preaching.
May ignore or sideline the author's intended meaning.	Surrenders to the author's intended meaning.
Context may be easily overlooked.	Context is vital to sermon development.
May not adequately express the substance, structure, and spirit of the text.	Expresses the substance, structure, and spirit of the text.

2. *Linguistics and Preaching: Semantic Structure of Texts.* It is this foundation for preaching in the mission of the church, the divine content, that ineluctably leads to the necessity of exegesis before sermon preparation. From a linguistic perspective, the importance of the study of the semantic structure of texts is vital to genuine biblical preaching. We must strive to examine not only the form but also the meaning of all levels of a text with the goal of understanding the whole.<sup>19</sup>

The painstaking work of exegesis is the foundation for text-driven preaching.<sup>20</sup> Exegesis precedes theology and theology is derived from careful exegesis. To preach well, it is vital to understand certain

<sup>19</sup>Birger Olsson, "A Decade of Text-linguistic Analyses of Biblical Texts at Upsalla," *Studia Theologica* 39 (1985), 107, underlined the vital importance of discourse analysis for exegesis when he noted: "A text-linguistic analysis is a basic component of all exegesis. A main task, or the main task of all Biblical scholarship has always been to interpret individual texts or passages of the Bible. ... To the *words* and to the *sentences* a textual exegesis now adds *texts*. The text is seen as the primary object of inquiry. To handle texts is as basic for our discipline as to handle words and sentences. Therefore, text-linguistic analyses belong to the fundamental part of Biblical scholarship." See also the excellent chapter by George Guthrie, "Discourse Analysis," in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues* (eds. D. A. Black and David S. Dockery; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 253–71.

<sup>20</sup>Among the more recent resources that aid the preacher in exegesis, see Douglas Mangum and Josh Westbury, eds., *Linguistics and Biblical Exegesis* (Lexham Methods Series; Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017). For those who use computer software programs in their exegesis of Scripture, see Mark L. Strauss, *The Biblical Greek Companion for Bible Software Users* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016). Consult also Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010).

basics about the nature of language and meaning. Enter linguistics.

From a linguistic perspective, text-driven preaching should correctly identify the genre of the text. Longacre identified four basic discourse genres which are language universal: narrative, procedural, hortatory and expository.<sup>21</sup> All four of these genres, along with sub-genres, occur in Scripture. Significant portions of the Old Testament are narrative; the Gospels and Acts are primarily narrative in genre. Procedural discourse can be found in Exodus 25–40 where God gives explicit instructions on how to build the tabernacle. Hortatory genre is found in the prophetic sections of the Old Testament as well as in the epistolary literature of the New Testament, though it is by no means confined to these alone in the Scriptures. Expository genre is clearly seen in the New Testament Epistles, each of which are combinations of expository and hortatory genre.

Semantic analysis of a text looks beyond words and sentences to the whole text. Every biblical text is an aggregate of relations between the four elements of meaning which it conveys: structural, referential, situational, and semantic. Referential meaning is that which is being talked about or the subject matter of a text. Situational meaning is information pertaining to the participants in a communication act (matters of environment, social status, etc.). Structural meaning has to do with the arrangement of the information in the text itself, that is the grammar and syntax of a text. Semantics has to do with the structure of meaning and is in some sense the confluence of referential, situational, and structural meaning.<sup>22</sup>

Homiletics has focused on the first three of these elements to the exclusion of the semantic. Analyzing a text's semantic structure allows one to see the communication relations within the text in their full extent. Restricting exegesis to a verse-by-verse process alone often results in the details of the text overshadowing the overall message. It becomes hard to see the forest for the trees, and this oversight is often transferred to the sermon as well.

Linguists now point out the fact that meaning is structured beyond the sentence level. When the preacher restricts the focus to

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<sup>21</sup>Longacre, *Grammar of Discourse*, 3. See also Beekman, Callow and Kopesec, *The Semantic Structure of Written Communication*, 35–40.

<sup>22</sup>Beekman, Callow and Kopesec, *The Semantic Structure of Written Communication*, 8–13. See also Constantine R. Campbell, *Advances in the Study of Greek: New Insights for Reading the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).

the sentence level and to clauses and phrases in verses, there is much that is missed in the paragraph or larger discourse that contributes to the overall meaning and interpretation of the text. The paragraph unit is best used as the basic unit of meaning in expounding the text of Scripture. Ideally, text-driven preaching should deal with a paragraph (as in the Epistles) at minimum; while in the narrative portions of Scripture, several paragraphs which combine to form the story (pericope) should be treated in a single sermon since the meaning and purpose of the story itself cannot be discerned when it is broken up and presented piecemeal. Text-driven preaching looks beyond words and sentences to the whole text (paragraph level and beyond).

The hierarchy of language is such that words are combined into larger units of meaning. Words combine to form phrases; phrases combine to form clauses; clauses combine to form sentences; sentences combine to form paragraphs; and paragraphs combine to form discourses. When it comes to a text of Scripture, however long or short, the whole is more than just the sum of its parts.

Language makes use of content words and function words. Content words are such parts of speech as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Function words are articles, prepositions, and conjunctions. Content words derive their basic meaning from the lexicon of the language. Function words derive their functional meaning from the grammar and syntax of the language. Of course, lexicon, grammar, and syntax combine to give content words and function words their meaning in a text. It is especially important in text-driven preaching to pay close attention to the function words in a text. For example, the Greek conjunction *gar* always introduces a sentence or a paragraph that is subordinate to the one preceding it,<sup>23</sup> and usually signals that what follows will give the grounds or reason for that which precedes. This is immensely important in exegesis and sermon preparation.

Language employs a verbal structure. Verbs are the load-bearing walls of language. Understanding their function within the text is vital to identifying the correct meaning which the author wants

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<sup>23</sup>Timothy Friberg and Barbara Friberg, *The Analytical Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 834.

to convey.<sup>24</sup> Hence, I recommend the discipline of “verb charting” during the exegesis phase of sermon preparation. In Greek, for example, so much information is encoded in the verb (tense, voice, mood, person, number, and lexical meaning). Identifying the main clauses and subordinate clauses in a text is crucial for identifying the semantic focus of the author.<sup>25</sup>

Most of us are trained to observe structural meaning; we are intuitively aware of referential meaning and situational meaning, but we often fail to observe the semantic structure of a text. The text-driven preacher will want to analyze carefully each one of these aspects of meaning for a given text.

John 1:1 furnishes an example of the importance of lexical meaning at the semantic level. Notice the threefold use of *eimi*, “was,” in this verse. Here, a single verb in its three occurrences conveys three different meanings: 1) “In the beginning *was* the Word,” (in which *eimi*, “was,” means “to exist”); 2) “and the Word *was* with God,” (in which *eimi* followed by the preposition “with” conveys the meaning “to be in a place”); and 3) “and the Word *was* God,” (in which *eimi* conveys the meaning “membership in a class: Godhood”).<sup>26</sup> Notice also in John 1:1 that *logos*, “word,” occurs in the predicate position in the first clause, but is in the subject position in the second clause. In the third clause there is again a reversal of the order creating a chiasmus: *theos*, “God,” is placed before the verb creating emphasis on the deity of the “Word.”<sup>27</sup> Lexical meaning is not only inherent in words themselves, but is determined by their relationship to other words in context.

This brings up another important aspect of textual analysis called “pragmatic analysis.” Pragmatic analysis asks the questions “What

<sup>24</sup>A helpful work here is Constantine R. Campbell, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008).

<sup>25</sup>If a New Testament text has a string of verbs in the aorist tense, and then suddenly a perfect verb pops up, there usually is significance to this tense shift. See, for example, Romans 6:1-5 where this very point is illustrated by the use of the perfect tense translated “have been united” in v. 5. In the Abraham and Isaac narrative of Genesis 22, at the climax of the story, there is a sudden onslaught of verbs placed one after another in staccato fashion in the Hebrew text in Genesis 22:9-10. This has the effect of heightening the emotional tone of the story and causes the reader/listener to sit on the edge of his seat as it were, waiting to find out what happens. In the exegetical process, one should pay close attention to verbals (participles and infinitives) as well, as these often play crucial modification roles.

<sup>26</sup>See Jan Waard and Eugene Nida, *From One Language to Another: Functional Equivalence in Bible Translating* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1986), 72.

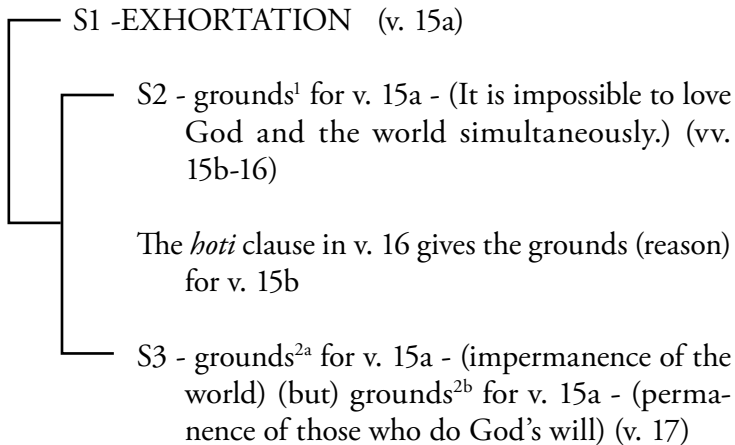
<sup>27</sup>Waard and Nida, *From One Language to Another*, 72.



is the author's purpose of a text?" and "What does an author desire to accomplish with his text?"<sup>28</sup> The text-driven preacher is always attempting to accomplish something with every sermon. All verbal or written communication has at least one of three purposes: 1) to affect the ideas of people, 2) to affect the emotions of people, and 3) to affect the behavior of people. Preaching, like all verbal or written communication, should have all three of these purposes. We should attempt to affect the mind with the truth of Scripture (i.e. doctrine). We should also attempt to affect the emotions of people because emotions are often the gateway to the mind. Finally, we should attempt to affect the behavior of people by moving their will to obey the Word of God.

3. *A Practical Example: The Semantic Structure of 1 John 2:15-17.* If one were to preach through 1 John paragraph by paragraph, 1 John 2:15-17 constitutes the seventh paragraph in the letter. It contains three sentences in Greek that are usually rendered into English by four sentences. Sentence one contains an imperative (the first one in the letter) and functions semantically as the most dominant information conveyed in the paragraph: "Do not love the world."

From a semantic standpoint, the structure of 1 John 2:15-17 can be diagrammed this way:



<sup>28</sup>A. Kuruvilla has reminded us of the importance of this aspect of text analysis for preaching in his *Privilege the Text! A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2013).

Based on the structure of the text itself, how many main points does 1 John 2:15-17 have? It has one main point, expressed in the imperative in verse 15. How many subpoints does the text have? It has two, each one expressed by the grounds of sentence two and sentence three with sentence three divided into two halves—one negative and one positive—on the basis of the compound structure of the last sentence (v. 17).

From this semantic structure, a text-driven sermon would be outlined or structured accordingly:

- I. Don't love the world ... because
  - A. It is impossible to love God and the world simultaneously
  - B. The world is impermanent ... but  
The one doing the will of God (that is, being one who does not love the world) is eternally permanent.

Semantically, the text contains one main point and two subpoints. If you preach on this text omitting one or more of these subpoints, then you have not preached the text fully. If you preach this text adding additional main or subpoints beyond these, then you are adding to the meaning of the text. If you make one of the subpoints a main point parallel to v. 15a, then you have mis-preached the text in terms of its focus. If you overemphasize the three parallel prepositional phrases in v. 16 and spend most of your time explaining and illustrating them, then you will mis-preach the focus of this text. To omit points, to add points, or to “major” on that which is a “minor” in the text is to fail to preach the text accurately. What you say may be biblical, but it will not be what this text says in the way the text says it.

*If we believe in text-driven preaching, then somehow the main and subordinate information which John himself placed in his text must be reflected in the sermon.* There may be many creative ways to do this in preaching; however, these elements must be there, or the sermon will be less than truly text-driven.

#### **IV. PREACHING AS FOUNDATIONAL: THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH**

A fourth foundation for preaching in the mission of the church is the nature of the church. The nature of the church requires that preaching be paramount in the fulfillment of her mission. The Great Commission as recorded in Mark 16:15 indicates how Jesus viewed preaching as the necessary means for the church to fulfill the Great Commission.

The church was birthed in preaching according to Acts 2. In Acts 6:4, Luke records the Apostles placed a high priority on prayer and preaching as their primary focus: “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” Paul says in Romans 10:14 that “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.” Evangelistic preaching grows the church. Biblical preaching edifies the church. The book of Acts clearly shows this.

In his farewell letter to Timothy, Paul tells him to “preach the Word” (2 Timothy 4:2). You cannot have a church without preaching. You cannot have church growth without preaching. You cannot have church revitalization without preaching. Preaching is fundamental to New Testament ecclesiology. Preaching must be foundational in the mission of the church for theological and pastoral reasons. The church cannot be the church unless she is the preaching church. The classical definitions of pastoral care throughout church history speak of preaching as the primary method of doing pastoral care. For example, Martin Luther said:

If any man would preach let him suppress his own words. Let him make them count in family matters and secular affairs but here in the church he should speak nothing except the Word of the rich Head of the household otherwise it is not the true church... [this] is why a preacher by virtue of this commission and office is administering the household of God and dare say nothing but what God says and commands. And although much talking is done which is outside the Word of God, yet the church is not established by such talk though men were to turn mad in their insistence upon it.

Preaching within the church both equips and challenges the church to fulfill the Great Commission.

## V. PREACHING AS FOUNDATIONAL: THE DIVINE MANDATE TO PREACH

The fifth reason why preaching is the foundation of the mission of the church is the divine mandate to preach. The centerpiece and climax of the discourse structure of 2 Timothy is 4:2: “Preach the Word.” This is the only place in Scripture where “Word” (*logos*) occurs as the direct object of the verb “to preach.” Preaching is God’s method of heralding the gospel to a lost world. Preaching is God’s method of teaching his church doctrinal and ethical truths. We refer to these two aspects as *kerygma* (heralding the gospel) and *didache* (teaching). Both words occur in 2 Timothy 4:2–5.

Every time we preach, eternity is at stake. We must realize that, with every sermon, we are not only spiritual surgeons, “rightly dividing the word of truth,” but we are ourselves under the probing knife of the very Word we preach, just as Hebrews 4:12–13 says. Those of us in the pew must hold our pastors accountable to a high standard for preaching God’s Word, all the while remembering that we, too, are being probed by the Word.

The razor-sharp scalpel of the Word penetrates us and becomes a “critic” (*kritikos*) of our thoughts and intents—including the methods and motives of both preachers and listeners. The author of Hebrews warns in 4:13: “Everything is naked and open before the eyes of *him*, before whom we must give an account.” Or, to express the Greek wordplay of the author, “He to whom the Word has been given shall one day be required to give a word in return to the One who is himself the Word of God.”

## VI. CONCLUSION

I close with J. I. Packer:

The Bible text is the real preacher, and the role of the man in the pulpit or the counseling conversation is simply to let the passages say their piece through him. ...For the preacher to reach the point where he no longer hinders and obstructs his text from speaking is harder

work than is sometimes realized. However, there can be no disputing that this is the task.<sup>29</sup>

Since God has spoken in Jesus Christ and in Scripture, there is an answer to our question, a solution to our problem, hope for our future, forgiveness for our sins, and salvation for our soul.

Preach the Word!<sup>30</sup>



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<sup>29</sup>Packer, "Introduction, Why Preach?," 17-18.

<sup>30</sup>Much of the material in this article has been adopted from my chapter in *Text-Driven Preaching* (ed. Daniel Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Mathews; Nashville: B&H, 2010).

## THE GOSPEL, EVANGELISM, AND MISSIONS: Exegetical Observations and Theological Implications of Apostolic Proclamation and Action (Acts 2:22-41)

Matt Queen\*

When defining *evangelical Christianity*, or the *evangelical faith*, John Stott claimed, “[E]vangelical Christianity is original, apostolic, New Testament Christianity ... [T]he evangelical faith is not a deviation from Christian orthodoxy.”<sup>1</sup> He continued, “In seeking what it means to be evangelical, it is inevitable that we begin with the gospel. For both our theology (evangelicalism) and our activity (evangelism) derive their meaning and their importance from the good news (the evangel).”<sup>2</sup> Evangelistic and missionary episodes of gospel proclamation in the New Testament, as well as theological explanations of the gospel in the Scriptures, govern and form a practical theology of evangelism and missions.

Acts 2:22-41 presents a thorough expression of the gospel, evangelism, and missions. Lewis Drummond affirmed, “*The heart and essence of the basic gospel that holds for all* can be found in Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost.”<sup>3</sup> Through his teaching, preaching, and example, Jesus prepared his apostles for the evangelistic and missionary proclamation and practice they would enact when they received the Spirit. As George W. Peters stated in his classic theology of missions,

<sup>1</sup>John Stott, *Evangelical Truth: A Personal Plea for Unity, Integrity, and Faithfulness* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Langham Global Library, 2013), 2-3.

<sup>2</sup>Stott, *Evangelical Truth*, 11.

<sup>3</sup>Lewis Drummond, *The Canvas Cathedral: Billy Graham’s Ministry Seen through the History of Evangelism* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 93 (emphasis added).

\*Matt Queen serves as the associate dean of the Roy J. Fish School of Evangelism and Missions. He also holds the L. R. Scarborough Chair of Evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

“The sense of the missionary thrust of Christ comes into clear focus as we consider His basic theological concepts and presuppositions. All of them are filled with missionary content and charged with missionary dynamic. They only awaited Pentecost to be discharged with full fervor and force.”<sup>4</sup> For these reasons this essay exegetically examines and interprets the earliest apostolic proclamation of the gospel, as well as the first episode of apostolic evangelism, as recorded in Acts 2:22-41, with the intent to draw biblical-theological implications about how it governs and informs gospel proclamation and practice in contemporary evangelism and missions.

### I. AN EXEGETICAL EXAMINATION OF ACTS 2:22-41<sup>5</sup>

The account of Peter’s Pentecost discourse comes after Jesus had given his disciples the command to wait for the arrival of his Spirit (1:5). He then ascended into heaven as they awaited his gift of the Spirit that would empower them to be witnesses of him, beginning first in Jerusalem and then to the rest of the world (1:8). Luke’s accounting of Peter’s speech summarizes the message and describes the evangelistic methods by which the apostles and the early church proclaimed the gospel that was announced at Pentecost.

After presenting the audience an explanation and defense of the Spirit’s manifestation through the disciples of Jesus, Peter addressed the religious Jews in attendance in verse 22—an important detail for two reasons. First, he appealed to an audience who, like him, accepted the veracity of the Scriptures. Second, Peter addressed his audience as *andres Israelitai* in a religious context, reminding them of the covenant established between them and Yahweh.<sup>6</sup>

Peter urgently presented to them Jesus Christ, who was the core of his message and preaching. His example teaches that Christian preaching should focus upon Jesus.<sup>7</sup> He explained that Jesus was *apodedeigmenon apo tou theou* through the *dunamesi kai terasi semeiois* he performed. James D. G. Dunn pointed out the uniqueness of this

<sup>4</sup>George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 39.

<sup>5</sup>Portions of the exegetical content of this article have been modified from Matthew Burton Queen, “A Theological Assessment of the Gospel Content in Selected Southern Baptist Sources,” (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 43-62

<sup>6</sup>Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles* (New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 92.

<sup>7</sup>C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (The International Critical Commentary, vol. 1; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 140.

passage, along with 10:36-39, in that they are “the only passages in the Acts speeches which say anything about Jesus’ pre-crucifixion ministry.”<sup>8</sup> Luke appears to mean that these “miracles, wonders, and signs” did not constitute his appointment or even serve as proof of Jesus’ status. Rather these acts revealed Jesus was God’s special agent, through whom he was working in a unique way.<sup>9</sup>

Peter explained that this unique way in which he was working occurred through Jesus’ death and resurrection. Frank Stagg asserted, “The first major task of apostolic preaching was to deal with the ‘scandal of the cross.’”<sup>10</sup> In dealing with it, Peter explained in verse 23 that the cross was a part of God’s purpose in Jesus Christ, but mankind was held responsible for his death. Eckhard J. Schnabel suggested, “This is the paradox of Jesus’ death: it was engineered and carried out by human beings, while at the same time it was the climax of God’s plan of salvation.”<sup>11</sup> Although Peter succinctly presented his case about Jesus’ death, he expanded his case by expounding on his resurrection. As Craig S. Keener explained, “Although Jesus’ death is pivotal, it is his resurrection over which the speech ‘lingers’ (Acts 2:24-36). Dwelling on that point was one way to emphasize it.”<sup>12</sup>

Verses 25-28 comprise the next section of Peter’s discourse. In these verses he employed the LXX translation of Psalm 16:8-11. David G. Peterson explained, “The contrast between God’s exaltation of Jesus and the attitude of those who opposed him is a central aspect of the apostolic preaching. Jesus’ resurrection was his ultimate accreditation and vindication as God’s servant and Messiah. The latter point comes out emphatically as Peter begins to demonstrate the fulfillment of David’s words (vv. 25-36).”<sup>13</sup>

F. F. Bruce claimed that from its earliest days, the Christian church maintained that the exaltation of Jesus occurred in direct

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<sup>8</sup>James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Narrative Commentaries; Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 29.

<sup>9</sup>Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 141.

<sup>10</sup>Frank Stagg, *The Book of Acts: The Early Struggle for an Unhindered Gospel* (Nashville: Broadman, 1955), 58.

<sup>11</sup>Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts* (Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 5; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 142.

<sup>12</sup>Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Introduction and 1:1-2:47*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 943.

<sup>13</sup>David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 147.



fulfillment of God's promises to David, as those found in Psalm 16.<sup>14</sup> Although Luke's understanding of the original meaning of Psalm 16 is disputed, Keener asserted, "At the least, the psalmist spoke of deliverance from death (probably beforehand), and if the principles in the psalms of righteous sufferers applied to Jesus par excellence, so did the vindication they promised."<sup>15</sup> Peter incorporated this Psalm into his sermon in order to support his contention that God raised Jesus from the dead and thus fulfilled David's prophecy concerning the Messiah and his resurrection.

Peter's use of this Old Testament prophecy infers that he sought biblical evidence to corroborate the case he presented. As Simon J. Kistemaker suggested, his use of Psalm 16:8-11 taught that: 1) David puts his trust completely in God (2:25); 2) Because of the intimacy between God and David, along with the trust he places in him, David's heart was filled with joy and happiness (2:26); and 3) Although David referred to himself in the first part of v. 27, the second half of the verse is clearly a prophecy about the Messiah and his resurrection. The prophetic nature of this psalm proves evident when Peter points to the evidence of David's tomb in Jerusalem, but Christ's tomb is empty because God raised him from the dead, something of which Peter can testify (2:29-32).<sup>16</sup> After presenting his case, Peter confidently presented two witnesses concerning the veracity of the gospel—the Word of God (2:25-28) and the eyewitness of the apostles, themselves (2:32).

In vv. 29-36, Peter explained the prophecy of Psalm 16:8-11. While many in the audience may not have known enough about Peter to trust his words, they all knew enough about David. Peter referred to David as *patriarchou* (2:29), as well as *prophetes* (2:30), and his prophecy (2:27b) remained unfulfilled until the resurrection of Christ (2:31). The fact that David was referring to the Messiah instead of himself is explained by Peter when he informed his listeners that David's body could still be found buried in a tomb, whereas Jesus

<sup>14</sup>F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, rev. ed. (The New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 71. Keener states concerning Luke's use of the messianic psalms in Acts, "Luke readily follows the early Christian christocentric hermeneutic." Keener, *Acts*, 946.

<sup>15</sup>Keener, *Acts*, 945, presents a summary of disputed views about how Luke understood the original sense of Psalm 16.

<sup>16</sup>Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, 95-96.

had been resurrected and exalted to God's throne.<sup>17</sup>

In vv. 32-33, Peter recognized the redemptive facts about Christ's resurrection and ascension and made a connection between them and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.<sup>18</sup> For those who did not have the benefit of witnessing the resurrected Christ as the disciples did, the Spirit manifested himself to the crowd to attest to his presence and his role in fulfilling Old Testament prophecy.

Finally, as if David's body in the tomb and Christ's exaltation to the Father's right hand were not convincing enough, Peter incorporated one more Davidic exclamation. He quoted Psalm 110:1 and used it to argue for the lordship and messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth. Peter used this Scripture reference as one final piece of biblical evidence to confirm his contention that Jesus is both Lord and Messiah. Psalm 110:1 confirmed Peter's claim for more than just the obvious reason that David, by virtue of his body's being in the tomb, could not be the one seated at the Lord's right hand. He included this psalm as further biblical evidence because, as Kistemaker explained:

The Jewish people interpreted Scripture with the hermeneutic rule of verbal analogy. That is, if two passages have a verbal analogy (as in the case of the two quotations from the Psalter), then the one passage must be interpreted as the other. The Jews considered Psalm 110 to be messianic, and therefore they had to interpret the passage from Psalm 16 messianically.<sup>19</sup>

Clearly Peter's belief that Jesus is Lord and Messiah was not a cleverly constructed fable he fabricated. From their post-Pentecostal perspective, this claim was found and foretold in the Scriptures.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, 98.

<sup>18</sup>Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, 100.

<sup>19</sup>Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, 101.

<sup>20</sup>Darrell Bock emphasizes the presence of Jesus' lordship in this passage, as well as in Acts as a whole. He writes, "[Acts 2:21, 32-39] is one of the most important [passages] in Acts. It sets forth the first post-resurrection preaching about Jesus. Acts 2:21 shows that salvation was the subject at hand; the promise of salvation was held out for those who responded to the message." He continues by asking, "What is the nature of the Lord who was offered to the audience in this chapter? (Note how the response called for in v. 38 is preceded by the confession in v. 36 that God made Jesus κύριον ... καὶ Χριστόν.) Acts 2:32-36 gives the answer ... The term κύριον in verse 36 looks back to the previous use of κυρίου in verse 21. The repetition of the term serves to underscore the point that the κυρίος who is confessed is Jesus. The exalted position of Jesus is why baptism is to

Jesus employed Psalm 110 in his teaching (Matt 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-37), as did other biblical authors, who referenced and alluded to it throughout the New Testament (*e.g.*, Rom 8:34; 1 Cor 15:25; Eph 1:20, 22; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13, 8:1, 10:12, 13, 12:2; and 1 Pet 3:22).

John Polhill stated:

Psalm 110:1 was a favorite text for the early church. ... Originally it may have been an enthronement psalm acknowledging the earthly king as God's representative. For the early Christians it became the basis for the affirmation that Jesus has been exalted to God's right hand. For Peter it served as a natural transition from the confession of Jesus as Messiah, the dominant concept to this point, to the ultimate confession that Jesus is Lord.<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps in some way, Peter's use of Psalm 110:1 served the church as a template in order to teach the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Verses 37-41 form the final segment of this passage. The Holy Spirit used the witnesses of Scripture and the apostles' proclamation to convict the crowd. Convinced by the evidence and seized with remorse, the hearers begged Peter and the apostles to instruct them in what they should do. Concerning their conviction and convincing, Ernst Haenchen asserted, "The very form of address they use, *andres adelphoi*, shows that their hearts are already won over."<sup>22</sup> Peter explained to the anxious audience that they should receive the promise of salvation through repentance, signified by water baptism. Concerning the meaning and importance of the call to repentance Schnabel explained:

The exhortation to repent means, here, that the Jews in Jerusalem regret their (active or passive) involvement

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be in His name (v. 38). 'Lord' in verse 36 serves to identify Jesus with God.

... He is the One who is exalted and sits at God's right hand mediating the gifts and promise of God. Thus, the Lord Jesus confessed in Acts 2 is the divine Mediator of the gifts of salvation. He is the One on whom men must call to be saved." Darrell Bock, "Jesus as Lord in Acts and in the Gospel Message," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 (April-June 1986): 147-148.

<sup>21</sup>John B. Polhill, *Acts* (New American Commentary, vol. 31; Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 115.

<sup>22</sup>Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (trans. Bernard Noble, Gerald Shin and R. McL. Wilson; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 183-184.

in the crucifixion of Jesus, that they confess this tragic sin, that they feel sorry for their rejection of Jesus, that they turn away from and change their former attitude concerning Jesus, and that they accept Jesus as the promised Messiah and the risen and exalted Lord.<sup>23</sup>

All that Peter had conveyed to them found its climax in his call for them to repent. Peter's invitation to receive the forgiveness of sins through repentance summarizes the standard call issued to first-century audiences.<sup>24</sup>

The correlation between baptism and salvation in verse 38 calls for an excursus at this point. Polhill notes the uncommon connection of the forgiveness of sins and baptism in Luke-Acts. In addressing its connection found in this passage he writes, "In fact, in no other passage of Acts is baptism presented as bringing about the forgiveness of sins."<sup>25</sup> Scholars have widely debated on the grammatical interpretation of the relationship between the forgiveness of sins and baptism in this verse. Schnabel explained,

The preposition "for" (*eis*) in the expression "for the forgiveness of sins" raises the question of the relationship between immersion in water (baptism) and the forgiveness of sins. Some interpret the preposition as expressing purpose (the purpose of baptism is the forgiveness of sins), some as expressing result (baptism

<sup>23</sup>Schnabel, *Acts*, 161. Schnabel proceeds to elaborate on what he understands the Pentecostal audience's repentance to entail: "When the repentant Jews are immersed 'in the name of Jesus the Messiah' (ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), several things happen as they invoke that name. 1. They publicly acknowledge that Jesus is Israel's Messiah and Savior—the crucified, risen, and exalted Lord who rules on David's throne at God's right hand. 2. They acknowledge that immersion for cleansing from impurity is *now* fundamentally connected with the person and work of Jesus, the Messiah. 3. They acknowledge their personal need for repentance on account of the fact that Jesus is the Messiah and Savior whom they had rejected. 4. They acknowledge Jesus as the cause of the forgiveness they seek. They publicly confess that Jesus has the authority and power to cleanse them from their sins. They invoke the name of Jesus, who is at God's right hand in heaven, calling on him to be saved. 5. They acknowledge Jesus' presence in their lives, Jesus' attention to their needs, and Jesus' intervention for their salvation" (163-64).

<sup>24</sup>I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 80.

<sup>25</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 117. Moreover, Polhill cites B. Sauvagnat's contention that a further reading of Acts reveals that if not linked with repentance, forgiveness is connected with faith over that of baptism. B. Sauvagnat, "Se repentir, etre baptize, recevoir l'Esprit: Actes 2:37ss.," *Foi et Vie* 80 (1981): 77-89.

results in forgiveness). A contextually more plausible interpretation assumes a causal meaning (forgiveness of sins is the cause of baptism).<sup>26</sup>

Concerning the causal use of *eis*, most advocates of this view note J. R. Mantey's hypothesis of its occurrence in both Hellenistic Greek and New Testament sources.<sup>27</sup> Critics, however, point to Ralph Marcus's rebuttal of Mantey's work.<sup>28</sup>

In response, Daniel Wallace has suggested four alternative views of *eis* in Acts 2:38:

If a causal εἰς is not in view, what are we to make of Acts 2:38? ... 1) *The baptism referred to here is **physical** only*, and εἰς has the meaning of *for* or *unto*. Such a view, if this is all there is to it, suggests that salvation is based on works. The basic problem of this view is that it runs squarely in the face of the theology of Acts, namely: (a) repentance precedes baptism (*cf.* Acts 3:19; 26:20), and (b) salvation is entirely a gift of God, not procured via water baptism (Acts 10:43 [*cf.* v [*sic*] 47]; 13:38-39, 48; 15:11; 16:30-31; 20:21; 26:18). 2) *The baptism referred to here is **spiritual** only*. Although such a view fits well with the theology of Acts, it does not fit well with the obvious meaning of "baptism" in Acts—especially in this text (*cf.* 2:41). 3) *The text should be repunctuated* in light of the shift from second person plural to third person singular back to second person plural again. If so, it would read as follows: "Repent, and let each one of you be baptized at the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of sins." If this is the correct understanding,

<sup>26</sup>Schnabel, *Acts*, 164-165.

<sup>27</sup>See J. R. Mantey, "The Causal Use of *Eis* in the New Testament," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 70 (1952): 45-58, and "On Causal *Eis* Again," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 70 (1952): 309-311.

<sup>28</sup>See Ralph Marcus, "On Causal *Eis*," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 70 (1952): 129-130, and "The Elusive Causal *Eis*," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 71 (1953): 43-44. One should be aware; however, that along with Marcus's strong conviction against any evidence indicating the causal use of εἰς in the Hellenistic Greek sources Mantey offers, he does concede this much: "It is quite possible that εἰς is used causally in [Acts 2:38] but the examples of causal εἰς cited from non-biblical Greek contribute absolutely nothing to making this possibility a probability. If, therefore, Professor Mantey is right in his interpretation of various NT passages on baptism and the remission of sins, he is right for reasons that are non-linguistic."

then εἰς is subordinate to μετανοήσατε alone, rather than to βαπτισθήτω. The idea then would be, “Repent *for/with reference to* your sins, and let each one of you be baptized.” Such a view is an acceptable way of handling εἰς, but its subtlety and awkwardness are against it. 4) Finally, it is possible that to a first-century Jewish audience (as well as to Peter), *the idea of baptism might incorporate both the spiritual reality and the physical symbol*. In other words, when one spoke of baptism, he usually meant *both* ideas—the reality and the ritual. Peter is shown to make the strong connection between these two in chapters 10 and 11. In 11:15-16 he recounts the conversion of Cornelius and friends, pointing out that at the point of their conversion they were *baptized* by the Holy Spirit. After he had seen this, he declared, “Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit ...” (10:47). The point seems to be that if they have had the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit via spiritual baptism, there ought to be a public testimony/acknowledgment via water baptism as well. This may not only explain Acts 2:38 (*viz.*, that Peter spoke of both reality and picture, though only the reality removes sins), but also why the NT speaks of only baptized believers (as far as we can tell): Water baptism is not a cause of salvation, but a *picture*; and as such it serves both as a public acknowledgment (by those present) and a public confession (by the convert) that one has been Spirit-baptized.<sup>29</sup>

Wallace’s reasoning for not accepting the first three views is strong enough to discount them. He evidently prefers the fourth interpretation, as he does not include a critique of it as he does the previous views.

Because this specific linkage occurs nowhere else in Acts, it seems reasonable to determine Peter meant repentance, not baptism, served as the requisite act of his audience’s regeneration. Keener and Schnabel

<sup>29</sup>Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 370-371.

favor this causal meaning of *eis*.<sup>30</sup> Concerning the association between baptism and the forgiveness of sins, Bruce argued the following:

It would, of course, be a mistake to link the words “unto the remission of your sins” with the command “be baptized” to the exclusion of the prior command “Repent ye.” It is against the whole genius of Biblical religion to suppose that the outward rite had any value except in so far as it was accompanied by true repentance within. In a similar passage in the following chapter, the blotting out of people’s sins is a direct consequence of their repenting and turning to God (3:19); nothing is said there about baptism, although it is no doubt implied (the idea of an unbaptized Christian is simply not entertained in the NT). So too the reception of the Spirit here is associated not with baptism in itself but with baptism as the visible token of repentance.<sup>31</sup>

Although employing an interpretation that affirms the causal use of *eis* has its valid criticisms, this conclusion fits best with: 1) the repentance formula that follows in Acts 3:19, which omits “baptism;” 2) the meaning and understanding ascribed to baptism in Acts as a whole; and 3) an overall, biblical understanding of baptism. For these reasons, the causal use of *eis* is to be preferred.

Peter’s and the apostles’ invitation to receive the forgiveness of sins through repentance resulted in an astounding 3000 professions of faith (2:41). Some have argued that the incredible number of converts was nothing more than an exaggerated figment of Luke’s

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<sup>30</sup>Keener writes, “The ‘forgiveness of sins’ is explicitly associated with repentance in Acts.

...[I]t seems that ‘forgiveness of sins’ is linked more often with repentance (although grammar alone could not decide this), which is never missing when baptism and forgiveness are both mentioned (Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38) or even when forgiveness is mentioned without baptism. For Luke, however, baptism is not dissociated from repentance but constitutes an act of repentance; under normal circumstances, one does not separate the two (Luke 3:3; Acts 13:24; 19:4).” Keener, *Acts*, 975.

In defending the causal meaning, Schnabel explains, “[T]he Jews who had heard Peter explain that Jesus was the crucified, risen, and exalted Messiah and Lord who saves Israel in the ‘last days’ had repented of their sins and come to faith in Jesus. Otherwise, they would not have been willing to be immersed in water for purification ‘in the name of Jesus the Messiah;’ they were immersed in water for purification ‘on the basis of the forgiveness of sins,’ which they had received from Jesus.” Schnabel, *Acts*, 165.

<sup>31</sup>Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, 77.

imagination due to complications surrounding the mass number of baptisms.<sup>32</sup> However, Marshall explains that Luke's report was entirely possible. The apostles had ample time to have baptized the number of believers Luke records because the other disciples, not Peter alone, shared in the actual baptizing. Despite the suggestion that the Romans would have disrupted such a large assembly, they likely allowed the peaceable assembly due to the overcrowding of pilgrims on the occasion of Pentecost.<sup>33</sup> As such, Luke accurately records Peter's preaching resulted in a large, unexaggerated number of sinners' receiving forgiveness through repentance and faith.

## II. EXEGETICAL OBSERVATIONS FOR THE GOSPEL, EVANGELISM, AND MISSIONS

This exegetical investigation yields four significant conclusions. First, *the Old Testament Scriptures, as well as the meaning Jesus attributed to them in the Gospels (e.g., Matt 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-37), serve as convincing evidence that supports the apostles' claims about the gospel.* During the time that Peter preached, the Old Testament served as the biblical record for first-century Christians. Although Peter incorporated his own witness of the resurrected Christ, he did not exclude the witness of the Scriptures. In fact, his expositions of Joel 2:28-32; Psalm 16:8-11; and Psalm 110:1 comprised the majority of his Pentecost sermon. Peter's example teaches that the Bible and its use by God's Spirit are far more important in evangelistic work than anything else the evangelist has to say.<sup>34</sup>

Second, *the message itself included a number of distinct elements about Christ.* In 1936 C. H. Dodd published a series of three lectures he delivered the year before at Kings College, London. This landmark book, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments*, presents Dodd's six-fold formula of the Petrine, or Jerusalem, *kerygma* (or preaching about Jesus) found in Acts 2:14-41:

- 1) The age of fulfilment has dawned; 2) This has taken

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<sup>32</sup>For example, Gerd Lüdemann states, "The number 3000 comes from Luke's imagination and is meant to bring out the magnitude of the event. The number of Christians has risen enormously from 1.15 ('about 120')." Gerd Lüdemann, *Early Christianity According to the Traditions in Acts: A Commentary* (trans. John Bowden; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 47.

<sup>33</sup>Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 82.

<sup>34</sup>James Montgomery Boice, *Acts: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 50.



place through the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus; 3) By virtue of the resurrection, Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of God; 4) The Holy Spirit in the Church is the sign of Christ's present power and glory; 5) The Messianic Age will shortly reach its consummation in the return of Christ; and 6) The *kerygma* always closes with an appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of "salvation."<sup>35</sup>

Subsequent gospel presentations made by the apostles, deacons, evangelists, and the churches in Acts reflect these Christocentric fundamentals.

Third, *Peter presented the gospel in a contextualized form to which the listeners could both relate and comprehend.* The message of the gospel was contextualized only in its presentation, not in its offer. As Michael Green asserted,

It would be a mistake to assume ... that there was a crippling uniformity about the proclamation of Christian truth in antiquity. That there was a basic homogeneity in what was preached we may agree, but there was wide variety in the way it was presented ... But much of the variety will have been necessitated by the needs and understanding of the hearers. Evangelism is never proclamation in a vacuum; but always to people, and the message must be given in terms that make sense to them.<sup>36</sup>

Peter's contextualization of the gospel did not avoid asserting truths about his audience's complicity in Christ's death, facts that had the likelihood of offending them (*e.g.*, "you used lawless people to nail him to a cross and kill him" [2:23]; "whom you crucified" [2:36]; and "Be saved from this corrupt generation" [2:40]).<sup>37</sup> His incrimination of their culpability was not intended to offend them into resisting

<sup>35</sup>C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1936; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 21-23.

<sup>36</sup>Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1970), 115.

<sup>37</sup>All Bible citations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible (Nashville: Holman, 2017).

the gospel; rather he called attention to their guilt for Jesus' death on the cross in order that the gospel message might convince them of their need for reconciliation with the God whom they had offended.

Finally, *Peter's Pentecost sermon presented the gospel so that, in conjunction with the work of the Holy Spirit, an accurate witness to the work of the Father through Jesus his Son would result in regenerate disciples.* Luke emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit, specifically in his aid in human proclamation, throughout Acts. Keener counted 59 references to the Spirit in Acts, nearly a quarter of the times he is mentioned in the entire New Testament.<sup>38</sup> He continued, "Luke focuses on the Spirit's empowerment for, and the Spirit's guiding the church in, cross-cultural evangelism ... Such an understanding and experience of the Spirit undoubtedly fueled earliest Christianity's phenomenal growth rate."<sup>39</sup>

### III. THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GOSPEL, EVANGELISM, AND MISSIONS

Theology meets evangelism and missions when faithful gospel doctrine intersects with active evangelistic duty. As Robert Coleman said, "In their origins ... theology and evangelism belong together. When the two are separated in practice, as so often happens, both suffer loss—theology loses direction and evangelism loses content."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Keener, *Acts*, 520.

<sup>39</sup>Keener, *Acts*, 521-22.

<sup>40</sup>Robert E. Coleman, *The Heart of Evangelism: The Theology Behind the Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 9. Lewis Drummond identified other reasons theology and evangelism must not be separated: "If evangelism loses sight of basic, biblical theology, it does so at its own peril. And it goes without saying that theology divorced from the fervor of evangelism is superficial and faulty. It cannot be stated too strongly that the two disciplines, when separated, part to their mutual detriment. Several reasons arise as to why theology and mission must not be separated, the first and by far the most important being that they are never divorced in the Scriptures. ... A second reason for the uniting of theology and mission is that without sound theological content, evangelism soon degenerates into sentimentalism, emotionalism, and gimmicks. ... The third reason for fusing theology and evangelism rests in the pragmatic fact that God has honored most profoundly the ministry of those who do.... Other reasons could be given for the necessity of a strong theology for effective evangelism. For example, a knowledge of theology helps make the presentation of the gospel message plain; it makes the evangelists more sure of his message; a genuine understanding of the rich content of the Bible will fill one with zeal; theology is an important agent in conserving evangelistic results." Lewis A. Drummond, *Reaching Generation Next: Effective Evangelism in Today's Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 99-101. It should be noted that although Drummond does not credit Skevington Wood with the reasons he gives for why theology and evangelism/mission must not be separated, the reasons he cites appear to be original with Wood in *Evangelism: Its Theology and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1966), 11-27.

A practical theology of evangelism and missions is a biblically and theologically governed evangelism. Bruce Ashford warned, “If we are not careful ... fissures between belief and practice will derail our mission and render our evangelical theology impotent ... In order to foster a healthy mission, therefore, we must seek carefully, consciously, and consistently to rivet missiological practice to Christian Scripture and its attendant evangelical doctrine.”<sup>41</sup> The biblical record and the theology that naturally flows from it informs evangelism’s and missions’ meaning, motive, method, and maintainability. As demonstrated by the four exegetical observations in the previous section, Acts 2:22-41 theologically informs evangelism and missions in terms of bibliology, Christology, anthropology, and pneumatology.

#### IV. A BIBLIOLOGICAL IMPLICATION

As observed in Acts 2:22-41, the majority of evangelistic proclamations of the gospel in Acts overwhelmingly incorporate the Scriptures (e.g., 3:11-26; 4:1-12; 7; 8:4, 35; 13:13-49; 16:25-32; 17:10-13; 18:5, 28; 20:27; 26:22-23; 28:23-27). In addition to providing evidence to those who hear the gospel, the utilization of the Scriptures in gospel proclamation theologically implies that the Scriptures verify and confirm the biblical faithfulness of the gospel evangelists and missionaries proclaim. Evangelizers who desire to transmit the gospel faithfully to unbelievers will ensure they integrate relevant Scriptures into their presentations that communicate biblical-theological gospel content consistent with apostolic preaching.

#### V. A CHRISTOLOGICAL IMPLICATION

Peter’s Pentecost sermon focused exclusively on Christ. Any “gospel” presentation that fails to emphasize the Christological locus of his life, death, burial, and resurrection for sins ceases to be in the apostolic, theological tradition. In his classic theology of evangelism, A. Skevington Wood declared, “Theology and evangelism are seen together supremely in Christ. Not only was He Himself both teacher and evangelist: He is Himself the subject both of theology and evangelism. Each has its being in Him. Theology means

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<sup>41</sup>Bruce Riley Ashford, “A Theologically Driven Missiology,” in *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations* (ed. Bruce Riley Ashford; Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 294-95.

thinking about Christ. Evangelism means telling about Christ. Surely we must think before we speak?”<sup>42</sup> Lewis Drummond agreed: “Of prime importance, on the day of Pentecost, Christ was preached. The disciples had but one message. This does not mean that later the New Testament church failed to minister in many different ways and to preach many other truths ... [T]o each audience they simply presented Christ as the answer to life’s basic needs. This is an inescapable principle of [the] effective evangelistic endeavor and a vital part of a sound theology of evangelism.”<sup>43</sup> “Evangelism” that presents a “gospel” void of Christ is neither evangelism nor the gospel. Personal evangelists and missionaries must understand Christology, consistent with what the Scriptures teach, in order to be able to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## VI. AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL IMPLICATION

Anthropological dimensions exist within the content and method of Peter’s sermon. In relationship to its content, Peter included in his message the theological doctrine of humanity and their guilt before God. Reference to the theological doctrine associated with anthropology—hamartiology—occurs in Acts 2:23, 36, and 40. Peter informed his audience of their corporate culpability of sin against God by 1) their association with those who crucified Jesus; 2) their identification as those who crucified Jesus; and 3) their inclusion in a corrupt generation. Personal evangelists and missionaries must apprise their listeners of the responsibility they share in Jesus’ death because of their disobedience to God.

In relation to Peter’s evangelistic method, he communicated the gospel in anthropological terms and concepts without compromising the gospel’s essential biblical and Christological doctrine. In other words, he contextualized his gospel presentation in such a way that it could be understood by those who heard it, while it remained faithfully biblical and theological in its content. Evangelists and missionaries must resist the temptation to emphasize the anthropological dimensions of gospel communication over the theological fidelity of the gospel’s content. As Edward Rommen acknowledged, “We are under great pressure to adapt the Gospel to its cultural surroundings.

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<sup>42</sup>Wood, *Evangelism: Its Theology and Practice*, 27.

<sup>43</sup>Drummond, *Reaching Generation Next: Effective Evangelism in Today’s Culture*, 118.

While there is a legitimate concern for contextualization, what most often happens in these cases is an outright capitulation of the Gospel to the principles of that culture."<sup>44</sup>

### VII. A PNEUMATOLOGICAL IMPLICATION

Finally, Acts 2:22-41 necessitates that personal evangelists and missionaries consider and incorporate a pneumatological dimension to their evangelistic practices. The Holy Spirit empowered Peter, a Galilean fisherman, untrained in formal rabbinical teaching (Acts 4:13) and who days earlier had demonstrated cowardice in denying Jesus, to preach the gospel boldly and publicly. In addition, the Spirit convicted Peter's hearers (2:37) of their need for forgiveness through Jesus and to receive him as their promise (2:38-39, 41). Personal evangelists and missionaries who ignore this theological implication from the text will evangelize in their own power, yielding their own results. However, those who fully depend on the preceding work, directing, emboldening, enabling, and accompanying presence and power of the Holy Spirit will follow in the apostolic tradition of evangelistic proclamation and practice, and in doing so will see him yield any and all conversion results.



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<sup>44</sup>Edward Rommen, *Get Real: On Evangelism in the Late Modern World* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2010), 182.

# THE GOOD, THE TRUE, AND THE BEAUTIFUL: Toward a Theology of Whole Life Discipleship

Scott B. Key\*

## I. AN INTRODUCTION

I have titled this portion of my article “An Introduction” because there are multiple ways to start this discussion. In fact, my argument asserts that every “artifact” of our common history contains “traces” of the philosophical-theological assumptions from which it sprang, like budding plants, in the soil of human relational life. Each “trace” is, in turn, only one aspect of a woven tapestry of varied patterns. These patterns, though broken, marred, and frayed by human struggle, prideful selfishness, and the loss of memory, nonetheless, contain residue of primordial beauty, the longing for the truth of reality, and the hope for the fullness of goodness yet to be fully realized.

I am more convinced than ever that the human pilgrimage is compelled, at the deepest level, by a profound quest for meaning. A meaning that lies outside of ourselves but includes and reorganizes our self-centered focus on our own survival, on our own estimation of our needs, and on our own measure of our significance. This deeply compelling quest for meaning shapes the ground for convictional knowing. It provides the impetus for our recognition of the primary importance of relationships. It is the dynamic of community life and gives shape to human culture. The fulfillment of this quest, however, cannot be found in what we make or do. The meaning that brings wholeness and profound satisfaction is the gift of the One who calls us to himself in love and grace.

There is a threefold purpose to this brief article. First, I would like to try to convey the outline of the narrative of “forgetfulness” that provides the contours of our shared cultural anguish. Second,

\*Scott B. Key serves as the academic vice president at the C. S. Lewis Center in Northfield, Massachusetts.

I will illustrate the “hidden theology” of our age by examining the influence of one thinker. Third, I will suggest how the resources found within a biblically shaped worldview can provide guidance and direction for Christ-followers, within any field of life, to begin the journey of whole life discipleship, which is a difficult task of thinking and living consistently with our convictions shaped by the confession: “Jesus is Lord.”

## II. THE TYRANNY OF FORGETFULNESS

In the next few paragraphs, I will summarize a complex narrative, which is very close to us and vaguely familiar. It is so close to us that we scarcely realize its pervasive influence on our daily lives. The assumptions rooted in the story of Western intellectual history shape the conduct of our academic and professional pursuits. They inform the dynamics of our relationships. This brief review of our shared story could begin with an analysis of the primary thinkers or events at almost any point during the last 500 years of human history. The fact that I would even construe this narrative as one that can be understood only within a “historical account of development” is part of the narrative itself and part of that which we have a hard time remembering.

This account, of course, reflects my embeddedness in time and place but I hope it will point beyond my experience toward the nature of Reality. However, even that statement raises our common problem and the first element of the tyranny of forgetfulness. Our common presupposition, deeply rooted in our culture, is the assertion that the “self” – “*my self*” – is the most important reality. The focus on the “I am” is of primary importance. We teach our children in grade school to begin their understanding of history with themselves – their own memories, where they live, and with whom. It is so close to us, so common; we do not even question it. We forget that before the beginning of the modern era very few would have started the discussion of the meaning of life with themselves.

This modern pattern is started, in part, by Rene Descartes and continued by many thinkers who, although rejecting his theories of knowledge, nonetheless adopt his point of beginning. For Descartes, the search for “indubitable” knowledge starts with the “I am a thinking thing.” The self, so construed, is dominated by reason, doubtful of

the body, and isolated from others. The “self” asserts its way towards knowledge through deductive arguments for God’s existence. God’s existence provides the means by which the self, defined as reason, can claim knowledge of the world outside the self. The argument of the “I think” establishes the reality of God. If God be God, and not an “evil demon,” then this God justifies the knowledge obtained by human reason as reliable. Human reason and self-consciousness, thus secured, are freed to pursue the knowledge of the mechanism of the universe unhindered by any restraint. If the ontological argument for God fails to compel our belief, then our efforts to secure knowledge of the world become increasingly doubtful.

This image of the self-conscious “*self*” freely uncovering the hidden mathematical structure of the universe and utilizing it for the benefit of the “*self*” dominates the understanding of much of Western culture throughout modernity. The image is not static. There are changes and alterations in the details. The quest for more knowledge takes unexpected turns but the basic image remains intact well into the late twentieth century. The individual item or phenomenon is all there is. Philosophers call this understanding of reality nominalistic or naturalistic materialism. The bold hero of knowledge carefully and inevitably masters the individual phenomenon before her. Moreover, with that mastery, she gains control of the mechanical framework of the universe. Such is our conceit. Such is our assumption regardless of our discipline. Such is the depth of our forgetfulness. We are master. We can chart the next stage of human evolution. We are unchained by any horizon or restraint or pre-determined nature.

The optimism of this self-understanding, however, encounters profound difficulties as the method of knowledge acquisition is pursued. This is the second movement within the modern narrative. A counter theme unfolds as ever deeper questions arise concerning the nature of human knowledge. These questions begin to temper the basic narrative of our common experience. The “Kantian Copernican Revolution” asserts that human knowledge of the world outside the mind is limited and shaped by the very structures of the mind. Reason cannot know anything beyond the automatic way in which the given mental structures interpret and organize experience. What is experienced, is actually constructed by the structure of the mind. In sum: a person can understand only that which the individual



mind can construct.

This movement asserts that certain realities exist, but no one can know these realities directly or experientially. Our autonomous selves are elusive and ultimately unknowable. And, God, whom Kant presumed to be necessary to ensure morality, is not knowable by either argument of reason or by direct experience. The autonomous self is bound by the contours of the mind. Autonomous reason is the basis of all knowledge, all moral order, and all social relationships. But the mysterious and unknowable “I” is ultimately trapped within the given structure of the individual mind. In this setting, humans still longed for universals: asserting universal norms or laws or patterns. But the governing assumptions of the age undermined these assertions. A person is only an individual mind, ruled by reason, who asserts the existence of his or her “I” that is unknowable in a world whose ultimate nature is a mystery and whose destiny is beyond their grasp.

The deeply disturbing nature of these understandings led a variety of thinkers to three conflicting conclusions. This conflicted debate is the third movement within modernity. First, in an effort to escape the limitations placed on us by own minds and experience, nineteenth-century thinkers asserted the existence of a reality that can give a deeper meaning. These thinkers began to focus on “history” as the unfolding of the self-understanding of a larger Force or Mind. This “Reason” or “Mind – Spirit” governs the affairs of nations and civilizations. History becomes the arena within which humans can discover who we are and what our destiny can be.

This metaphor is applied to all areas of thought. Evolutionary theory is a “meta-theory” or “meta-history” of all things. Everything is the product of natural development. It is asserted that this “meta-history” can explain the nature of all of life – even the emergence of life itself.

Historical knowledge can provide the explanation of human activity and culture. If an accurate account of the development of any human structure, event, or historical pattern of behavior can be stated then the hope exists that humans can understand themselves.

If a careful investigator can uncover the history of the tortured individual consciousness, then there is the hope that we can understand the mystery of our own behavior. Yet, if we are honest, these efforts have led not to meaning but to disillusionment.

Second, other thinkers asserted that history itself has been subverted by social, economic, and political forces that wield power. Will, not reason, is the center of human history and experience. Will can liberate or oppress. Human “nature” is essentially good, but “human” institutions are essentially evil and are shaped to oppress and distort human life in all aspects. The answer to the isolation of the human self-consciousness is its liberation into new social collectives that reestablish our linkage to our common history and provide new horizons of meaning to which we can strive. Yet again, human efforts to pursue this solution continue to lead to untold suffering by millions upon millions of our brothers and sisters.

A third response asserted that the concerns for history and for liberation were over-wrought expressions of ideology. The real answer was to be found in the re-doubled efforts to know the “facts” before us. The imperative is this: utilize extensions of the human sense I-structures through emerging technology to deepen the knowledge of the natural world and the inner life of the human consciousness.

It has been asserted that social science, enhanced with technology, can unleash the constricted human will to achieve unimagined greatness. Humans have unlimited potential. The mysterious caves of human self-consciousness can be explored, exposed, freed, and exploited for the sake of human greatness.

Thus, the natural sciences and the social sciences can lead humanity into a new future unchained from the past and unshackled from any restraint imposed from outside the natural order—which is all there is. A liberated humanity will then be free to be free. Freedom will secure our future. Freedom will disclose what is “fact” and “true.” Yet, at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century, we find ourselves living in a world that no longer believes there are “facts” or “truths.”

These claims should sound familiar, for these ideas remain close to us. These dreams continue to be expressed, but we are not free. We are living under the tyranny of forgetfulness. We have forgotten our own history. We have forgotten our own painful journey, our devotion to “the Self,” “the Mind,” and the “the Facts” of history – be they centered in natural, or economic, or social and psychological narratives of that history. We have forgotten that which is older and wiser. We have chosen to live in a world that we have “disenchanted.”

It is a world made narrow, flat, uniform, and largely meaningless. Before exploring how we as Christ-followers can respond to our contemporary crisis of meaning, I would like to explore, briefly, a case study.

### III. THE DISENCHANTED LIFE

Max Weber was born in 1864 and died in 1920.<sup>1</sup> After completing a legal education, his academic work shaped the disciplines of political economy, sociology, sociology of religion, and the remaining social sciences. Despite challenges to his health, Weber taught at Freiburg and Heidelberg, edited two different journals in sociology, deeply influenced the development of sociological methodology, and influenced German political life as a public intellectual. In November 1917 during WWI, Weber, after returning to university life, was asked by students at the University of Munich to deliver a formal lecture. That lecture was entitled: “Science as a Vocation.” Two years later this lecture was published.

The main theme of the lecture emerges as Weber begins to define science. Fritz Ringer, in his careful treatment of Weber’s intellectual development, summarizes Weber’s extensive examination of the sciences (*Wissenschaft*) broadly understood. Ringer argues that Weber understands the sciences as the systematic disciplines<sup>2</sup> that are “focused upon the transmission of expert knowledge and the exercise in logical analysis.”<sup>3</sup>

In “Science as a Vocation,” Weber argues that these disciplines require “strict specialization”<sup>4</sup> and the self-acknowledgment by the scientist that “what he has accomplished will be antiquated in ten, twenty, fifty years. That is the fate to which science is subjected; it is the very meaning of scientific work.”<sup>5</sup> The only meaning that can be attached to this work is the realization that it is “a fraction, the most important fraction, of the process of intellectualization ...”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fritz Ringer, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ringer, *Max Weber*, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Ringer, *Max Weber*, 225-26.

<sup>4</sup> Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” in *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (trans. and ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills; New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 135.

<sup>5</sup> Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 138.

<sup>6</sup> Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 138.

Weber then defines what this process of “intellectualization” is:

Hence, it means that principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted. One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculations perform the service. This above all is what intellectualization means. This process of disenchantment, which has continued to exist in Occidental culture for millennia, and, in general, this “progress,” to which science belongs as a link and motive force.<sup>7</sup>

In some respects, this quote is the most significant passage in Weber’s address. Science is the most important driving force in the process of “intellectualization,” which will never end. An individual contribution by the individual scientist is rendered meaningless by the process. All wonder and mystery are reduced to “calculation.” The world is the exclusive domain of material and natural forces that have no purpose or telos. In Weber’s own words, what the civilized person “seizes is always something provisional and not definitive, and therefore death for him is a meaningless occurrence. And because death is meaningless, civilized life as such is meaningless: by its very ‘progressiveness’ it gives death the imprint of meaninglessness.”<sup>8</sup>

This insight, derived from Weber’s reading of Tolstoy, causes Weber to ask: “What is the value of science?”<sup>9</sup> In his effort to answer this question, Weber dismisses the notions, rooted in our common history, that science is the “way to true being” or “the way to true art,” or “the way to true nature,” or “the way to true God” or, as “the way to true happiness.”<sup>10</sup> Despite this brief analysis of the history of the Western civilization, Weber is unwilling to totally agree with Tolstoy’s answer to the question of the value of science, namely: that

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<sup>7</sup> Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 139.

<sup>8</sup> Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 140.

<sup>9</sup> Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 140.

<sup>10</sup> Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 143.

“Science is meaningless because it gives no answer, the only question important for us: ‘what shall we do and how shall we live?’”<sup>11</sup> Yet, Weber does say, despite the fact that science cannot answer this value question as Tolstoy posed it, “science might yet be of some use to the one who puts the question correctly.”<sup>12</sup>

Weber suggests there are two ways that science may yet prove of some use even though it cannot answer the question posed by Tolstoy: First, Weber argues that science is important because it “presupposes that the rules of logic and method are valid.” Second, he asserts that the knowledge emerging from scientific work is “worth being known.” Science itself, however, cannot prove that either one of these presuppositions is the case. This is the problem: science, on the basis of its own methods, can neither prove that knowledge itself nor the “existence of the world which these sciences describe is worthwhile, that it has any ‘meaning,’ or that it makes sense to live in such a world.”<sup>13</sup> Weber goes on to assert that, this question cannot be answered by medicine, or by aesthetics, or by jurisprudence, or by the historical and cultural sciences, or by sociology. Science can only provide three things: a “contribution to the technology of controlling life” through calculation; a “method of thinking;” and a process that produces “clarity.”<sup>14</sup>

The “disenchanted” world asserts that “science, ‘free from presuppositions,’ in the sense of a rejection of religious bonds, does not know of the ‘miracle’ and the ‘revelation.’ If it did, science would be unfaithful to its own ‘presuppositions.’”<sup>15</sup> Christian monotheism provided, Weber argues, the basis for the emergence of the “grandiose rationalism of an ethical and methodical conduct of life.”<sup>16</sup> The driving “intellectualization” of modernity, thus set in motion, has created a new situation in which “the routines of everyday life challenge religion.”<sup>17</sup> In this situation Weber argues:

Many old gods ascend from their graves; they are

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<sup>11</sup>Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 143.

<sup>12</sup>Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 143.

<sup>13</sup>Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 143-144.

<sup>14</sup>Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 150-151.

<sup>15</sup>Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 147.

<sup>16</sup>Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 149.

<sup>17</sup>Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 148-149.

disenchanted and hence take the form of impersonal forces. They strive to gain power over our lives and again they (the gods) resume their eternal struggle with one another. What is hard for modern man, and especially for the younger generation, is to measure up to the *workaday* existence. The ubiquitous chase for “experience” stems from this weakness; for it is weakness not to be able to countenance the stern seriousness of our fateful times.<sup>18</sup>

Weber approvingly asserts, quoting James Mill, the father of John Stuart Mill, “(I)f one proceeds from pure experience, one arrives at polytheism.”<sup>19</sup> This dynamic analysis posits an unending tension between the bureaucratic monotheism of rationality and a polytheistic struggle between privatized, subjective value structures, leaving no “objectively ascertainable ground for one’s convictions.”<sup>20</sup> Weber captures his idea in these words:

This proposition, which I present here, always takes its point of departure from the one fundamental fact, that so long as life remains immanent and is interpreted in its own terms, life is an unceasing struggle of these gods with one another. Or speaking directly, the ultimately possible attitudes toward life are irreconcilable, and hence their struggle can never be brought to a final conclusion. Thus, it is necessary to make a decisive choice.<sup>21</sup>

Weber includes in this analysis the theological task. He argues that theology is seeking to interpret the world using presuppositions that lie “beyond the limits of ‘science.’” Therefore, the assumptions and conclusions of theology do not “represent ‘knowledge.’” The “tension between the value-spheres of ‘science’ and the sphere of ‘the holy’ is

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<sup>18</sup>Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 149.

<sup>19</sup>Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 147.

<sup>20</sup>*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. “Max Weber.” <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/weber/#10>.

<sup>21</sup>Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 152.

unbridgeable.”<sup>22</sup> The fragmentation wrought by modernity generates a profound crisis that challenges the possibility of the integrated personality. Weber writes near the conclusion of this address these haunting words:

The fate of our time is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the “disenchantment of the world.” Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations.<sup>23</sup>

It is now important to reflect on the philosophical and theological assumptions that undergird this decisive address. Weber gives us a version of a Neo-Kantian world. What we can know is determined by the rational structure of our mind. In this schema, nothing can be known that is un-interpreted by and un-shaped by this “given” structure. We can never know or claim knowledge of anything that we assert that may lie outside of this schema that controls the knowledge acquisition system of our mind. All the scientific investigator can do is track the causal relationships of the natural order. Thus, God may be inferred by our assumptions about the moral order of reality or by moments of encounter with the “sublime” but God, as such, can never be known.

In addition, values and meaning cannot be found embedded in any of the knowledge structure of the phenomenal world in which we live. It is for this reason that Weber cannot provide an answer to Tolstoy’s critique. The “disenchanted” world of “intellectualization” inevitably leads to the atomistic and polytheistic fragmentation of all values into a pervasive subjectivism which drives all discussion of meaning from public life. In this setting, the scientist can only seek methodological clarity acknowledging that her efforts will be considered meaningless due to the inevitable progress of science and her eventual death will be devoid of significance. Weber gives us a prophetic vision of the dystopia of “disenchantment” and the

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<sup>22</sup>Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 154.

<sup>23</sup>Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 155.

presumed victory of a secularized culture. Weber's lecture is mysteriously both a vigorous call to "meet the 'demands of the day'" and a lament that it is our fate that "each find and obey the demon who holds the fibers of his very life."<sup>24</sup>

#### IV. THE RETRIEVAL OF RESOURCES

The issues raised by Weber's address are varied and profound. This one article is not the entire story of modernity, but it is a window into the common history and experience of life in our twenty-first century context. A disenchanted world is a flattened world. It is a closed world, a world of fate and impersonal power. It is the world of "intellectualization," but it is also a world of latent, vague, and shadowy memory. This is the context of the "forgetfulness" I mentioned earlier in this essay. Even the claims made by "exclusive humanism,"<sup>25</sup> emerging within a secularized social structure asserting complete moral self-sufficiency and the disenchanted intra-human reality, cannot fully escape a vague and distorted cultural memory of a cosmos filled with the divine presence.

I am convinced that there are three narrative themes that provide clues to the role of faithful thinkers who commit both personally and academically to the challenging task of recovering and restoring these submerged memories. Here are three tangled and difficult questions that trouble our time: What is good and what is truth and what is beauty? Weber alludes to these questions in his address. The question posed by the concept of "good" can be translated, in part, by the question: "What is the flourishing life or the fulfilled life?" In Weber's discussion of Tolstoy's critique of modernity, Weber writes, "... civilized man, placed in the midst of the continuous enrichment of culture by ideas, knowledge, and problems, may become 'tired of life' but not 'satiated with life.'"<sup>26</sup> One who comes to the end of life "satiated" with life is filled or fulfilled with the meaning of life. What, then, is the shape of this good life that fulfills?

The question of beauty alerts us to the lurking possibility of wonder. Wonder is discovered not just in encounters with nature but also in the full engagement with works of art. The artist's achievement,

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<sup>24</sup>Weber, "Science as a Vocation," 156.

<sup>25</sup>Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2017), 242-69.

<sup>26</sup>Weber, "Science as a Vocation," 140.



Weber argues, in contrast to the work of the scientist, survives. He writes: “[A] work of art which is genuine ‘fulfillment’ is never surpassed; it will never be antiquated.”<sup>27</sup> A good life and a genuine work of art, never to be surpassed, may serve as a cipher of a forgotten world to entertain “goodness” unaware and engage works of art. In doing so, it may just open the door to the question of truth.

From the perspective of our contemporary moment, Weber’s address provides a window into the horrors and hopes engendered by the last 100 years and reveals his assumed reliance upon the haunting memory of a world largely forgotten and presumed lost. Notions of a fulfilled life draw us to discussions of the nature of goodness. Encounters with wonder weaken our illusion of control and instrumental “intellectualization.” Together these questions point us to the question of truth. There is an inextricable relationship between these three narrative themes. Fullness of life demands the presence of truth. Encounters marked by wonder and awe entice us to begin the search for deeper meaning. Meaning that feeds our broken need is implicitly interpreted as something pointing to goodness. The quest for relational meaning continues to lie at the center of secularized culture. The distortion and brokenness of relationships do not cause us to deny the centrality of relationships but, rather, serve as the source of deeper longing.

As Christ-followers we are called to bear witness in all areas of our lives to both the deep longing for and the possibility of the convergence of goodness, truth, and beauty. Our “frame” or “picture” of these questions is often too restrictive and reactive. We often do not listen enough. We are often unaware of our own forgetfulness. We often fail to realize that within the word of God are powerful metaphors and deeply moving images of a metanarrative saturated with profound meaning. Nevertheless, the profound resources of the history of faithful witness can provide us a place to start our new journey to revitalize both our own struggle and to begin the excavation of the deepest assumptions of our disciplines.

At the heart of the matter is the imperative for the Christ-follower to recover a vital and biblically centered, Trinitarian theology. Contrary to Weber’s vision of the scientific vocation, this recovery does not require each of us to become a “specialist” in systematic

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<sup>27</sup>Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 138.

theology. Rather, it does call us to engage seriously the disciplines of the life of the church and grasp the theological understanding revealed by the Bible and mapped by the early church's ecumenical creeds, affirmed during the fourth and fifth centuries.

In our common confession, we can find the central faith-convictions that will illuminate the faith assumptions of our various academic disciplines as well as our various life callings. The conviction that Reality is Triune is the central and most distinctive contribution to human understanding made by Christian witness. In the dynamic relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as the apostle Paul writes, lies the "mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things" revealed according to "the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:1-13). I will state the implication of our confession this way for those who serve in academic settings (with implications that can be drawn for those who serve in various other contexts):

- If your discipline challenges you to see the "whole" or the "one" in light of the smallest and the many;
- if your discipline challenges you to recognize the mathematical structure of physical reality;
- if your discipline challenges you to recognize deep relationships and interactions;
- if your discipline challenges you to imagine that which lies beyond your senses;
- if your discipline challenges you to struggle with human brokenness and evil that divide and destroy;
- if your discipline challenges you to long for a goodness that heals, a truth that reconciles, and a beauty that illumines the most damaged will;
- then, you will find all the resources you need to recover the center of your discipline in a life-long pursuit of the Triune God.

The Trinity provides the clarifying model of the **oneness**, **duality**, and **many-ness** of all things. The Trinity helps us hold together goodness, truth, and beauty. We see the fullness of the human and the grace-filled possibility of the healing of the brokenness of the

human – all in the same place.

If Christ is, in reality, the Logos – the divine Word/Deed of God who created the rational structure of the cosmos – and the Icon of the “invisible God,” then there is hope. There is hope that, by God’s grace, we will once again be able to discover the center of all things. There is hope that we will realize the deep inter-relatedness of all aspects of all our academic pursuits as well as all aspects of our lives. There is hope that we will begin to see the cosmos as multilayered and multidimensional, open and not closed, animated by the divine presence who became flesh and blood for our salvation. Indeed, there is hope that calls us to faithfulness and whole life discipleship for the glory of God.

## V. CONCLUSION

Now, 100 years after the publication of Weber’s address, we stand at a crossroads. This is a “**cruciform**” moment. Can we commit to reflect the living vitality of the historic and orthodox church, the body of Christ in the world, in such a way, that through all our humble scholarship, through our diverse pursuits in this life, and through all our winsome living in a community shaped by transcendent love others will begin to remember, to see again, to seek life again, to know hope again?

The hope implicit in this personal concluding statement is now clear. It is my fervent prayer that Christ-followers will commit their personal and professional lives to the task of living consistently, thinking deeply, and caring winsomely about our world and our *vocatio* in Christ. We must work to re-center our lives in the Logos who became flesh and blood for us. I am convinced that out of that reconciling center where the confession “Jesus is Lord” rings true can emerge a new community where humble erudition, winsome witness, and sacrificial love will echo the Spirit’s summons of hope. As T. S. Eliot reminds us:

We shall not cease from exploration  
 And the end of all our exploring  
 Will be to arrive where we started  
 And know the place for the first time.  
 Through the unknown, remembered gate

When the last of earth left to discover  
Is that which was the beginning;  
At the source of the longest river  
The voice of the hidden waterfall  
And the children in the apple-tree  
Not known, because not looked for  
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness  
Between two waves of the sea.  
Quick now, here, now, always ---  
A condition of complete simplicity  
(Costing not less than everything)  
And all shall be well and  
All manner of thing shall be well  
When the tongues of flame are in-folded  
Into the crowned knot of fire  
And the fire and the rose are one.<sup>28</sup>



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<sup>28</sup>T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (Orlando, FL: A Harvest Book – Harcourt, Inc, reprint 2014), 59. Portions of this article have been adapted from an address given in February of 2020 at California Baptist University.



## THEOLOGY, LIFE, AND WORK: Revisiting the Twentieth-Century Conversation on the Protestant Work Ethic

Greg Cochran\*

For the western world in general and the U.S. in particular, the twentieth century proved quite a crucible for the concept of *applied theology*—a crucible subjecting divergent theologies to the test of time. Modernists seemed to confine God to a petri dish for objective analysis, while fundamentalists locked down the undeniable, non-negotiable propositional truths about God. The existentialists were determined to intensify encounters with God, while liberation theologians, for their part, were actively insisting that God was empowering (liberating) the poor and oppressed.

Even those who presumably had no stake in a particular theology made it a point to keep God in the conversation. For some, the question was something like “Where was God in the Holocaust?” For others, such as philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche and Bertrand Russell, the question was answered, “God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.”<sup>1</sup> In each of these theologies (even the nihilists’ anti-theology), the crisis in question was essentially one of *applied theology*: How does God relate to life in this world? While computer technology, space travel, and nuclear fusion were all the rage in various decades of the twentieth century, a few age-old concepts actually shaped the course of human events—human life, death, God. The course of human events in the twentieth century might best be likened in psychological terms either to bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. It was the century of life. It was the century of death. Where was God?

The twentieth century is purported by many to be the bloodiest

<sup>1</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: E. W. Fritzsch, 1887), 181.

\*Greg Cochran is professor of theology and director of the applied theology program at California Baptist University.

on human record as revolutions, genocides, ethnic cleansings, and terrorist plots created an insufferable display of human carnage. But the twentieth century also produced the greatest liberation from poverty in the history of the world.<sup>2</sup> As the Institute for Research on Poverty declared, “The average level of well-being has risen and the poverty rate has declined.”<sup>3</sup> In fact, poverty rates in the U.S. “exhibited a long-run downward trend from about 60-70 percent in the earlier years of the century to the 12-14 percent range” by the close of the century.<sup>4</sup> Life and health triumphed around the world. And yet death and oppression raged. How might God be involved in such a strange array of theologies and outcomes? Life. Death. God. Here is the work of applied theology. The remainder of this essay will focus specific attention on the more positive twentieth-century conversation regarding life, work, and economic flourishing. Does following God’s way lead to a prosperous life? This question was part of a critical conversation spanning the twentieth century.

Some Christians are uncomfortable with the notion that increased prosperity is healthy or that increased prosperity decreases poverty. Nevertheless, the twentieth century sustained a prolonged conversation on precisely this point. What role did Christian theology play in producing Western prosperity? Christians and non-Christians alike noticed both that increased wealth decreased poverty and that the increase in wealth production in the West germinated from a work ethic endemic to Christian theology. In other words, many scholars are convinced that prosperity and its concomitant elimination of poverty are rooted in *applied theology*. For example, John Chamberlain, a prolific writer who at various times in the twentieth century held editorial positions at *The New York Times*, *Life*, *Fortune*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *National Review*, concluded in his book *The Roots of Capitalism* that capitalism is not “Christian in and by

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<sup>2</sup>A number of Christian organizations research and publish figures demonstrating this fact, among them are The Chalmers Center, the Oikonomia Network, and the Acton Institute. Other resources include John Schneider, *The Good of Affluence: Seeking God in a Culture of Wealth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); and Dinesh D’Souza, *The Virtue of Prosperity: Finding Values in an Age of Techno-Affluence* (New York: The Free Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup>Robert Plotnick et al., “The Twentieth Century Record of Inequality and Poverty in the United States,” *Institute for Research on Poverty Discussion Paper*, no. 1166-98 (July 1998): 2.

<sup>4</sup>Plotnick et al., “The Twentieth Century Record,” abstract. While noting the diminishing of material poverty, some authors have shown that increased wealth actually led to decreased well-being. For one example, see Brian Fikkert and Kelly M. Kapic, *Becoming Whole: Why the Opposite of Poverty Isn’t the American Dream* (Chicago: Moody, 2019).

itself; it is merely to say that capitalism is a material by-product of the Mosaic law.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, biblical theology worked out over time produced a Western economic system which decreased poverty and increased prosperity. Alvin Schmidt explains it this way: “Capitalism is a by-product of Christianity’s value of freedom applied to economic life and activities.”<sup>6</sup> Capitalism was generated by the Christian view of God being worked out in life. The success of capitalism led to an overall increase in prosperity where it was implemented.

### I. THE PROTESTANT WORK ETHIC

Of course, capitalism is not the same as a work ethic. The theological truths which shaped the way Christians engaged the world (especially at work) consolidated into the phrase the *Protestant work ethic* as a result of the sociological studies generated by Max Weber. Weber’s most influential work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*,<sup>7</sup> provided the framework for much of the twentieth-century discussion. Indeed, at least a portion of the twentieth-century conversation featured a wrestling match among Christians about whether the term should simply be the *Christian work ethic*, highlighting the question, “What exactly was the role of the Protestant Reformation in all of this?” By the end of the century, neither religious appellation was any longer in view. When these truths were discussed, they were discussed simply as a *work ethic*. Reference to *Protestantism* and to *Christianity* dissipated over the nine decades following Weber’s publication. Still, Weber’s thesis demanded an extended conversation on the relation between God’s people, work, and prosperity.

As will become evident further into the essay, Weber’s thesis is not without its problems. Yet Weber’s thesis is significant in this article for two distinct purposes. First, Weber’s thesis—and nomenclature—governed the twentieth-century discussion concerning a Protestant/Christian work ethic. Second, Weber’s thesis affirmed the reality of applied theology—demonstrating that the relationship

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<sup>5</sup>John Chamberlain, *The Roots of Capitalism*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1977), 72–73, as quoted in Alvin J. Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 207.

<sup>6</sup>Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World*, 207.

<sup>7</sup>Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (ed. Richard Swedberg; New York: Norton, 2009).



between God and his covenant people works itself out through the daily lives of teachers, contractors, plumbers, electricians, pastors, and CEO's. With Weber's thesis in mind, we need to step back to the theology of the Protestant Reformation, particularly as it was represented by Martin Luther and John Calvin. This reconsideration of the Reformation should clarify what Weber meant by the term *Protestant*. As we shall see, diversity exists between Luther and Calvin on the question of work, so *Protestant* may not be the best descriptor. Following that clarification of terms, we can better assess how (and whether) the twentieth century was shaped by Protestants at work.

## II. LUTHER AND THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

Martin Luther triggered a theological earthquake by posting his 95 theses. Assuming he actually used a mallet and nail to tack his concerns to the church door in Wittenberg, each strike to the nail reverberated as a shockwave across Christendom. With seemingly little warning, a seismic shift was under way. Luther himself was transformed from an obscure Augustinian monk with ideas about indulgences to the central firebrand of the Protestant Reformation. The aftershocks of reform emanated relentlessly from their epicenter at Wittenberg. Christianity, indeed the world, would never be the same.

The Reformation was not *merely* doctrinal or ecclesiological. Doctrine in the days of Luther was linked to an existential urgency we may have forgotten. In their recent book, *Calvin and Commerce*, David Hall and Matthew Burton note that Christian liberty in life and work was "a 'proper appendix to justification,' which is to say that even as one is justified by God alone, so one experiences liberty only as a consequence of following God alone."<sup>8</sup> Luther's doctrine of justification was less "ivory tower" and more "cobbler and shopsmith." The Reformation altered more than the gospel paradigm, because altering the gospel necessarily altered daily life. To put it another way, *Semper Reformanda* transformed the church *and* the world, renovating even the mundane life of Christians at work. Consequently, one of the tectonic plates to shift during the Reformation was the Protestant concept of work. Christians in the days of Luther were

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<sup>8</sup>David Hall and Matthew Burton, *Calvin and Commerce: The Transforming Power of Calvinism in Market Economies* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009), 86.

freed from more than the indulgence-plagued preaching of Tetzl. Christians were freed from an abiding dualistic concept of vocation which had sustained the medieval monastic ideal.

Luther may have begun in 1517 with questions about indulgences, but his work was quickly expanded into nearly every area of life. By 1520, Luther would write *An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate*. In this work, Luther “developed an attack upon the teaching that the Roman Catholic clergy constitute a special class, the ‘spiritual estate’ while all other people—‘princes, lords, artisans and farmers’—all form the ‘temporal estate.’ No, Luther ... says, all Christians share in the same faith.”<sup>9</sup> In the open letter, Luther wrote, “A cobbler, a smith, a farmer, each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops, and everyone by means of his own work and office must benefit and serve every other, that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, even as all the members of the body serve one another.”<sup>10</sup> Lutheran scholar Karlfried Froehlich examined Luther’s teaching on vocation in four steps. For this paper, the first two steps are most significant.<sup>11</sup> First, Froehlich traces the origin of the Latin concept *vocatio*. In tracing this concept, Froehlich notes the peculiarity of Luther’s translation of 1 Cor 7:20. Froehlich explains,

[Luther translates the verse] “Remain in God’s Word and stay in your *Beruf*... Trust in God and stay in your *Beruf*,” where the Greek has *ergon* (work) and *ponos* (toil). Luther may have pressed Paul too far, making 1 Cor. 7:20 a witness to *klesis* as *Beruf*, that is, as an external condition. But his term was a polemical one, coined with a contemporary edge to protest against the concept of higher and lower callings in the Roman church, the presupposition of all forms of monasticism. Luther’s “doctrine” of vocation, if it was one, belonged

<sup>9</sup>Paul Helm, *The Callings: The Gospel in the World* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987), 57.

<sup>10</sup>Martin Luther, *An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate*, as quoted in Helm, *The Callings*, 57–58.

<sup>11</sup>Karlfried Froehlich, “Luther on Vocation,” in *The Lutheran Journal* 13, no.2 (Summer 1999): 195–207.

in the context of his rejection of monasticism.<sup>12</sup>

Technically, 1 Cor 7:20 is related to the internal call of the Corinthian Christians. From the beginning of the letter, Paul had encouraged the Corinthians to “remember your calling”—a reference to soteriology, not social status. Thus, 1 Cor 7:20 is better understood in the way David Garland explains it: “One can make changes in one’s estate, but nothing is to be gained ‘before God’ from any attempt to upgrade one’s standing with God through these changes.... Paul is not sanctifying the status quo but challenging the illusions of those who think it wise to desexualize their marriage relationship... and to laud such changes as a higher calling.”<sup>13</sup>

Garland clearly explains it differently, but in a sense, Luther had a point—the Christian, whether monk or eunuch, does not improve his status before God by his external condition. Even if Luther’s exegesis wasn’t as precise as later scholars would prefer on this particular point, his application of the text to Christian life certainly held sway. The notion of *vocation* has remained prevalent as a part of the Protestant vocabulary on work. Luther (though he did not technically use the language of calling)<sup>14</sup> did open a fresh conversation on Christian vocation.

Less than a year after writing *An Open Letter*, Luther published a treatise titled *On Monastic Vows*. Luther was obviously thinking about monasticism in 1520-1521. Froehlich notes, “It was in the sermons of this period that Luther spelled out his new notion of *Beruf*. One’s *Beruf* was not something special, but something down-to-earth, something exercised right *in* the world of everyday work and toil. It was the word for the Christian’s calling, wherever exercised, as an act of faith active in the love of God and neighbor.”<sup>15</sup> *Beruf*—Luther’s framework for the concept of vocation—was reactionary against the dualistic stratagem of monasticism. In his second step of explaining Luther’s teaching on vocation, Froehlich points out that Luther did establish a new [or at least a *renewed*] definition of vocation: “Luther calls us back behind a two-tiered Christianity

<sup>12</sup>Froehlich, “Luther on Vocation,” 197.

<sup>13</sup>David Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 307–08.

<sup>14</sup>Helm, *The Callings*, 58. Using the actual language of “calling” came a bit later with Calvin.

<sup>15</sup>Froehlich, “Luther on Vocation,” 200.

of monastics and non-monastics, perfect and less perfect, spiritual and secular Christians, and back to the early Christian *klesis*, the understanding that all have a calling from God, regardless of their station and condition in society.”<sup>16</sup>

Froehlich demonstrates that Luther effectively challenged the dualism of monasticism and the Roman Catholic concept of vocation. Luther also advanced the more practical notion of *Beruf* as a calling for every Christian, thus paving the way for a reformation of the medieval ethic of work. As radical as the concept of *Beruf* was, however, Luther certainly did not envision the twentieth-century capitalistic economy. Luther’s vision might, for example, just as easily be compatible with a more socialistic economic structure.

Both Luther and Calvin spoke from within the context of medieval Christendom. As Paul Helm notes, “As with Luther, [so with Calvin] there is more than a suggestion of Medievalism here, the idea of a static society in which each person has a permanent place.”<sup>17</sup> Luther’s writings on vocation, while significant, fall short of supplying us with the full-orbed *Protestant ethic* of work debated throughout the twentieth century.

### III. CALVIN AND CALVINISM BEYOND

Some scholars, in fact, doubt whether the Protestant Reformation could have launched the workplace into the prosperous mechanism it became in the twentieth century.<sup>18</sup> To be sure, Luther offered weighty contributions to a Christian ethic of work. But Greg Forster contends that Luther’s work was all but forgotten by the end of the century. For Forster, Luther’s contributions are the ones most desperately needed today:

This understanding of God’s calling to daily stewardship through productive work is dormant, if not absent, in much Christian thinking and practice today. However, it was an important distinguishing element

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<sup>16</sup>Froehlich, “Luther on Vocation,” 201.

<sup>17</sup>Helm, *The Callings*, 59.

<sup>18</sup>See for example Karl Barth’s extended discussion of the Reformer’s view of vocation contrasted with his own call to the “active life” in Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, *The Doctrine of Creation*, vol. 3, pt. 4, trans. A. T. Mackay et al.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 521-23.

of Christianity for most of the last two millennia. And in particular, it has been essential to evangelical and Protestant religion. At its deepest level, this view of stewardship and calling is rooted in a fundamental commitment to the direct and personal relationship between God and each individual.<sup>19</sup>

Mingled with Forster's lament is his notable reaffirmation of the link between the doctrine of justification and diurnal Christian living. More skeptically, John Schneider asserts that Luther and Calvin were not as radical as many evangelicals assume. Schneider argues that Augustinianism largely persevered even through the Reformation and the efforts of Luther and Calvin:

While Luther and Calvin were less technical in their arguments on acquisition, use, and enjoyment, permitted the practice of charging interest on loans, and rejected the theology of monasticism, I do not find much support in their writings for anything like the spirit and habits of contemporary capitalism. On the contrary, my sense is that famed historian of the Reformation Albert Huma (in his rigorous critique of Weber on this point) was right. In his estimation, Luther and Calvin were not significantly more progressive on economic matters than their mediaeval predecessors, or Augustine.<sup>20</sup>

To be fair, what Schneider has in mind is less a diminishing of the contributions of Luther and Calvin and more an offering of a clarification that advances were needed beyond Luther and Calvin in order to arrive at the prosperity of the twentieth century. Schneider's view of "where we are today" is, in a sense, much more optimistic than Forster's. The latter views the Christian work ethic as lost, while the former argues that the Protestant work ethic has resulted in unparalleled affluence—even if not necessarily on account of Luther and Calvin.

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<sup>19</sup>Greg Forster, *Theology That Works: Making Disciples Who Practice Fruitful Work and Economic Wisdom in Modern America* (Deerfield, IL: Oikonomia Network, 2013), 13.

<sup>20</sup>Schneider, *The Good of Affluence*, 27.

Schneider argues that Luther and Calvin could not have produced our contemporary, capitalistic impulses toward acquisition and enjoyment. Schneider points instead to Jonathan Edwards and the Puritan divines for the most hopeful theological ecosystem to which we may ascribe the twentieth-century culture of affluence. Schneider says, “Edwards and other American Puritans indeed did seek to integrate their affluence into their Christian theology. They began to rediscover the importance of the Old Testament and its thematic doctrine of creation, especially as evident in the stories of Eden and a Promised Land flowing with milk and honey. And they began linking the experience of prosperity with notions of faithfulness and divine blessing.”<sup>21</sup> Deeply committed to biblical revelation, informed by Luther, Calvin, and the Protestant Reformation, Jonathan Edwards and the Puritans unleashed an intensely practical work ethic which shaped the course of this nation. Just what role did theology play in the work habits of these Puritans? How did theological convictions lead to the unparalleled prosperity of the twentieth century?

These are the questions Weber tried to answer in his monumental essay. In the century since its writing, economists, sociologists, and theologians have been digging out from an avalanche of literature refuting, defending, and clarifying Weber’s 1905 essay.<sup>22</sup> Weber’s real quest was to discover the *geist* which could explain the trail of affluence he saw in the capitalistic systems which followed English Calvinists.<sup>23</sup> Like Schneider would after him, Weber looked beyond Luther and Calvin and found the most likely explanation to rest in the Calvinistic Puritans of England and America. Ironically, the *Protestant* work ethic in Weber’s use of the term turns out to have taken root not in the Protestant Reformation but in the soil of English Puritanism—in the generation following Luther and, even more directly, John Calvin.

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<sup>21</sup>Schneider, *Affluence*, 28. Schneider laments that most of what remains from this formulation is the connection between righteousness and prosperity which has been kidnaped by the prosperity gospel preachers.

<sup>22</sup>Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, hereafter PESC.

<sup>23</sup>Heinrich Maurer, “Studies in the Sociology of Religion: I. The Sociology of Protestantism,” *American Journal of Sociology* 30, no. 3 (1924): 257–86, first clarified the important distinction between German Lutheranism and the kind of Calvinism Weber actually meant in his use of the term *Protestant*. See the discussion in William H. Swatos and Peter Kivisto, “The Publication and Reception of the Protestant Ethic,” in *The Protestant Ethic Turns 100: Essays on the Centenary of the Weber Thesis* (ed. William H. Swatos and Lutz Kaelber; Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2005), 120.

No small confusion surrounded Weber's thesis in its first several decades, as debate raged over the empirical evidence for a Protestant work ethic. Some of that debate eased in the late 1980's when Harry Liebersohn pointed out that Weber's PESC in its original form was contrasting preeminently English Calvinism with German Lutheranism—a Lutheranism which Weber thought was “an incompletely reformed, hence essentially Catholic, otherworldly ascetic, German Lutheranism.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, the Protestant ethic was *Protestant* in the sense that Jonathan Edwards and Richard Baxter were Protestants, rather than Protestant in the sense of Luther and Calvin. This clarification of terms is important to keep in mind when speaking of an ethical ideal like the Protestant ethic. In what sense is the term *Protestant* to be understood?

Like us, the original “Protestants”<sup>25</sup> were living in a time of political turmoil. Global alliances were in doubt and Christian nations were threatened by the fear of Islamic invasion. Thankfully, Luther and Calvin—while aware of these global concerns—were most clearly fixed on doctrine and the church. Luther's primary contributions to an ethic of work have already been discussed, namely, his introducing the notion of *calling* against the dualism of the monastic order and his further explication of a daily vocation lived in the real world to the glory of God and the good of others.

#### IV. CALVIN'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO A PROTESTANT WORK ETHIC

Calvin's contributions were more extensive. Not only did Calvin employ the technical vocabulary for *calling*, but he also constructed the systemic, theological framework necessary for the Protestant work ethic to take root, develop, and flourish. Discussions regarding Calvin's contributions—though plenteous—are not always careful to distinguish which doctrines and practices came directly from Calvin and which were developed by later Calvinists.

Schneider who was quoted earlier is not one to exaggerate the influence of Calvin with regard to work and calling. But Schneider recognizes the importance of Calvin's breaking with centuries of

<sup>24</sup>Swatos and Kivisto, “Publication and Reception,” 120.

<sup>25</sup>The term was first used by the six lords at the second Diet of Spire in 1529 when they could not accept the overturning of the more accommodating edict at the first Diet of Spire in 1526. They responded, “We protest.”

tradition to establish the validity of charging interest on loans. Hall and Burton are much more effusive in their praise of Calvin in this regard. Building on the earlier work of Andre Bieler, Hall and Burton offer three helpful observations regarding Calvin's arguments for the proper use of interest. First, they note that Calvin understood the distinction between consumer lending and production lending. The former was frowned upon, the latter justified. Calvin was not envisioning Christians maxing out their credit cards; he was concerned for Christians to take risks, invest, and produce good.<sup>26</sup>

Second, Hall and Burton point out that Calvin was taking no small step in his move toward charging interest. So, they explain,

Following the views of Aristotle, as Roman Catholicism frequently did, an eighth-century church council in Nicea had condemned lending at interest. Various papal decrees and major theological works had similarly denounced profits that came from interest alone. Calvin, however, based his seismic shift in exegesis on two principal ideas: (1) in a fallen world, it is possible for persons to borrow with ill intent, and if the lender is never repaid that constitutes theft; and (2) in a growing economy, if one wishes to loan money to another person who is producing or developing, that is a fruitful use of assets.<sup>27</sup>

In his exposition of Exodus 22:25, Calvin pointed out the awfulness of usury and agrees it is everywhere condemned. Calvin recognized also the limits to the language used to describe *usury*. He complained that any and all lending is proscribed under the single banner *usury*. But Calvin recognized the need for distinction. So, he argued from the basis of equity and brotherly love that some forms of *usury* are permissible, even good. So, said Calvin, "It is abundantly clear that the ancient people were prohibited from usury, but we must needs confess that this was a part of their political constitution. Hence it

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<sup>26</sup>Andre Bieler, *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought* (New York: World Council of Churches, 2005), 402. See also the discussion in Hall and Burton, *Calvin and Commerce*, 75–78.

<sup>27</sup>Hall and Burton, *Calvin and Commerce*, 75–76. The authors immediately list seven moral conditions that need to be present for interest to be ethical. They have adapted these seven conditions from Bieler.



follows that usury is not now unlawful, except in so far as it contravenes equity and brotherly union. Let each one, then, place himself before God's judgment-seat, and not do to his neighbor what he would not have done to himself, from whence a sure and infallible decision may be come to."<sup>28</sup>

Calvin's usury position nowadays is considered "common sense," but this view of lending was not common in the Reformation. Calvin went against centuries of tradition to pave a way for economic flourishing. Calvin's views made good sense practically: If a brother stands in need, help him. The law says do not steal. Borrowing money without paying it back is stealing. Each person has a right to his or her own property. Using someone else's property without paying them for it is a failure to be your brother's keeper; it breaks the brotherly union and fails to care for your neighbor or his property. Holding someone's property (including money) for a time implies paying them usage. Simple principles, profound results.

Hall and Burton detail how Calvin insisted relentlessly that love for others must govern all instances of borrowing and lending. What Calvin proposed was nothing short of fulfilling the commandment to love. "From a Calvinist perspective, therefore, the purpose of the eighth commandment is that 'no one should suffer loss by us, which will be the case if we have regard to the good of our brethren.'"<sup>29</sup> Using someone's property without compensating them for what they may have earned with the property constitutes a form of theft—or at least loss. Such use would not be loving.

From these remarks, the contributions of Luther and Calvin appear to be significant. Schneider may too hastily have dismissed Luther's offering of vocation and daily call. And the impact of Calvin's breaking the prohibition against usury would be difficult to overvalue. Luther and especially Calvin provided substantial instruction on vocation and economic issues. Little wonder that Weber would look to their heritage to explain the economic flourishing which erupted in the twentieth century.

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<sup>28</sup>John Calvin, *Harmony of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* (Calvin's Commentaries, vol. 3; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 132.

<sup>29</sup>Hall and Burton, *Calvin and Commerce*, 77.

## V. WEBER AND THE PROTESTANT ETHIC

Schneider does not embrace Weber's thesis. No one fully embraces it. Yet both Schneider and Weber point to English Calvinistic Christianity (especially the Puritans) as the nearest connection to the societal affluence of the twentieth century. Many have undertaken to pick up Weber's thesis and correlate it from today back through the Puritans to Calvin and the Reformation.<sup>30</sup> In that sense, maybe there *is* a *Protestant* work ethic. Weber certainly believed in such a thing. For good or ill, Weber—who effectively coined the phrase *Protestant ethic*—has, as noted, shaped no small part of the conversation around Protestant notions of work and economy.

Understanding the concept of a Protestant ethic demands reckoning with Weber's thesis. As part of his discussion regarding the reception of Weber's thesis in the academic world, Richard Hamilton offers a clear, concise summary of Weber's thesis. Here is the Hamilton summary:

- Martin Luther expounded a new and distinctive religious doctrine: the concept of “the calling,” secular occupations were invested with God-given purpose.
- Transmission of the new doctrine occurred.
- Calvin and his followers expounded the doctrine of predestination.
- Transmission of this doctrine occurred.
- Among Calvinists, the predestination doctrine produced extreme salvation anxieties which were experienced in profound “inner isolation.”
- Calvinists were told that “intense worldly activity” may be taken as a sign of salvation.
- To gain that assurance, Calvinists engaged in remarkably disciplined economic activity.
- Calvinists accumulated considerable amounts of capital which following religious strictures, were reinvested.
- The ethic and the later *spirit* cause substantial economic growth in Protestant nations, specifically in those influenced by Calvinism and its derivatives.

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<sup>30</sup>See, for instance, Hall and Burton, *Calvin and Commerce*. See also Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World*.

- Sometime later, the original attitudes were transformed; the religious ethic disappeared and was replaced by the secular capitalist spirit.
- The argument of extension or of diffusion: the spirit of capitalism spreads out from the early centers and, later, has sweeping, general effects.
- Late in the nineteenth century, one finds substantial differences in the economic and occupational standing of Protestants and Catholics, this resulting from “the permanent intrinsic character of their religious beliefs.”<sup>31</sup>

Hamilton finds only the first four points to be adequately supported by Weber (the last eight are either refuted, not supported, or inadequately supported). As demonstrated earlier, Luther redefined vocation and opened the way for all Christians to fulfill their calling. As for the teachings of Calvin, few would doubt that he taught and transmitted to his followers a robust concept of predestination. Theologians would—like Hamilton—insist on making several qualifications to follow that statement, including making clear that Calvin did not view predestination as a root cause of anxiety (indeed it was the opposite).

Hamilton dismisses the aspect of Weber’s thesis concerning the anxiety over predestination on the grounds that it is not only unprovable, but it is nearly untestable. So, Hamilton says, “To assess Weber’s claim, for example, one needs information on the anxiety levels of Puritans and those of some appropriate control groups. Confirmation or disconfirmation of such claims, therefore, is extremely difficult.”<sup>32</sup>

More to the theological point, David Hall and Matthew Burton point out in two distinct ways how Calvin’s teaching militates against the kind of selfishness and anxiety Weber envisions. First, they reference Calvin’s *Institutes* in which Calvin appeals to the eighth commandment—the commandment against stealing. In his interpretation of this command, Calvin asserts both the right

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<sup>31</sup>Bullet points from Richard Hamilton, “Max Weber’s The Protestant Ethic: A Commentary on the Thesis and on Its Reception in the Academic Community,” in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 180–83. For a contrary view from a Roman Catholic perspective, see Michael Novak, *The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: The Free Press, 1993).

<sup>32</sup>Hamilton, “Weber’s Protestant Ethic,” 182.

to possess private property and the obligation of the Christian to look out for his neighbor. Calvin concludes his section on the eighth commandment saying, “Let it be our constant aim faithfully to lend our counsel and aid to all so as to assist them in retaining their property.”<sup>33</sup> Calvin, then, did not teach accumulation of goods apart from love for others. As Calvin writes in the *Institutes*, “For who can deny that it is right for all the powers of the soul to be possessed with love? But if any soul wander from the goal of love, who will not admit that it is diseased?”<sup>34</sup>

A second way Hall and Burton demonstrate the inconsistency of linking anxiety to Calvinistic thinking is through their discussion of the 1562 Geneva Catechism. That catechism included a prayer to be recited daily. The prayer included much in the way of guidance for daily work: “Calvin prayed that workers would care for the indigent and that the prosperous would not become conceited. He prayed that God would diminish prosperity if he knew the people needed a dose of poverty to return them to their senses. Far from callousness toward the less fortunate, Calvin prayed that workers would ‘not fall into mistrust,’ would ‘wait patiently’ on God to provide, and would rest with entire assurance in [God’s] pure goodness.”<sup>35</sup> In the last line of this prayer—which, again, was expected to be prayed daily—an uncompromising antidote to Weber’s assertion of election anxiety is found. Namely, Calvin and Calvinists like William Perkins and Richard Baxter never expected followers to find rest in the accumulation of goods or lands. Rather, as the daily prayer asserts, assurance is found only in God’s pure goodness. Weber’s thesis misunderstands some of the central instructions of Calvinism.

More than a few scholars have pointed out the deficiencies of Weber’s thesis. Often, evangelical scholars mention Weber only to note how thoroughly refuted his thesis has become. As noted, Hamilton points out that two-thirds of Weber’s argument is not supported. And yet—even as scholars note the deficiencies in Weber’s presentation of Calvinism (or *ascetic Protestantism* as he calls it)—Weber’s thesis still governs conversations relating to the Protestant work ethic. An article by Niall Ferguson in the *New York Times* makes

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<sup>33</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1 (ed. John T. McNeil; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 2.8.46, as quoted in Hall and Burton, *Calvin and Commerce*, 28.

<sup>34</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.8.50.

<sup>35</sup>Hall and Burton, *Calvin and Commerce*, 28.

the point: “Many scholars have built careers out of criticizing Weber’s thesis. Yet the experience of Western Europe in the past quarter-century offers an unexpected confirmation of it. To put it bluntly, we are witnessing the decline and fall of the Protestant work ethic in Europe. This represents the stunning triumph of secularization in Western Europe—the simultaneous decline of both Protestantism and its unique work ethic.”<sup>36</sup> Although his definition of the concept is limited to working longer hours and sacrificing leisure on account of theological convictions, Ferguson believes in the real presence of a Protestant work ethic influencing the world.

## VI. A PROTESTANT WORK ETHIC?

So, what fruit did the twentieth century conversation bear for applied theology? Does following God’s word faithfully lead to prosperity? Do Protestant Christians possess a work ethic? Forster (a theologian) and Ferguson (an atheist) equally lament its decline. Is there a Protestant work ethic?

*Yes.* Contra Schneider and Huma, Luther’s concept of vocation was something of a watershed. While Luther did not exactly break from medievalism in his understanding of a static society, he did alter the playing field. As Emil Brunner notes, Luther’s “notion of work shifted the meaning from ‘what’ and ‘how’ to ‘why’.”<sup>37</sup> Luther connected key doctrinal themes such as justification and the priesthood of believers to the everyday circumstances of shopkeepers. When Christians understand “why” they work, they seem better to know how to work. Luther, Calvin, and the Protestants who followed have much to teach both in doctrine and by example concerning work. The doctrine of justification unlocked the potential to move away from a static economy and a dualistic structure for work.

Further, Calvin unlocked yet another key, productive lending, which bore much fruit in the centuries after his death. Whether sociologists agree on its empirically verified presence or not, twentieth-century prosperity bears the fingerprints of sixteenth-century Protestants. Alvin Schmidt may explain it best, when he says,

<sup>36</sup>Niall Ferguson, “The World; Why America Outpaces Europe (Clue: The God Factor),” *The New York Times* (June 8, 2003).

<sup>37</sup>Emil Brunner, *Christianity and Civilization* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1949), 61–62, as quoted in Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World*, 197.

Weber's observation is correct... Calvin's position clearly contravened what numerous church councils had called sin for more than a thousand years. Weber also contended that by giving approval to taking interest money, Calvin's followers, many of whom were Puritans, functioned as inner-worldly ascetics... The inner-worldly ascetics were Christians who remained in society but denied themselves pleasures by working hard, saving, and practicing thrift in order to attain future prosperity and wealth.<sup>38</sup>

Devotion to God and to being faithful stewards (not being anxious over predestination) caused English Calvinists to flourish.

Instead of attempting to encapsulate pragmatic aspects of capitalistic success under the rubric of *Protestant*, we latter day Protestants might be better served to redirect our focus toward *applied theology* for the church—to instruct the teachers, business leaders, nurses, and plumbers in the congregation to apply the lessons of Luther, Calvin, and the Protestants who followed them. Just think of the practical lessons easily drawn from the observations made in this article. Christians might be strengthened by the following lessons:

- Reject—like Luther—any and all dualistic patterns defining work. Full-time pastors and missionaries are not in a better place before God, nor are they inhabitants of a more spiritual estate than Christians of other vocations.<sup>39</sup>
- Teach all Christians to view themselves as “ministers.”<sup>40</sup> Pastors and plumbers are equal before God. Missionaries and millworkers both are called to work “as unto the Lord” for God’s glory. All are ministers of God’s mission.

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<sup>38</sup>Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World*, 199.

<sup>39</sup>For examples of common errors in this regard, See, Greg Cochran, “Help! I Don’t Know How to Take My Faith to Work,” <https://www.crossway.org/articles/help-i-dont-know-how-to-bring-my-faith-to-work/>.

<sup>40</sup>Term taken from Scott Rae, “Taking Faith to Work: Conclusion.” Lecture, Taking Faith to Work Conference at Crowell School of Business, Biola University, La Mirada, CA, April 16, 2013.

- Help Christians own their identity as priests to one another, highlighting the value of a priestly ministry to God and to humankind—regardless of the nature of (licit) work being performed.
- Remind believers of the goodness of work. Work was instituted before the Fall and will continue in some way even after the Parousia.
- Encourage Christians to be productive in their work for their own sakes and for the prospering of others.<sup>41</sup> Through human work, God intends a level of filling and fruitful multiplying on the earth, which Adam and Eve failed to accomplish.
- Clarify for Christians the way borrowing can be loving (productive lending) as well as pointing out the way lending can also be predatory and evil.
- Insist on the principles of unity and brotherly love, while upholding essential biblical notions such as the right to private property.<sup>42</sup>

But the best lesson of all might be for professors (and plumbers and pastors) to keep going back to the Scriptures in the spirit of the Reformers—the true sense of *Semper Reformanda*—and always be willing to protest<sup>43</sup> unbiblical notions of Christians at work—whether those erroneous views originate from political allies or political foes. One of the greatest examples of this practice comes not from the Protestant Reformation, but from the very first Christians of the first century.

Jesus, Peter, John, and Paul were somewhat *Protestant* against Rome's dualistic conception of work. In the Greco-Roman world, labor was viewed as *demeaning*, fit only for slaves. Free citizens were

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<sup>41</sup>A great example of this kind of work is the Chalmers Center for Economic Development, founded by Brian Fikkert at Covenant College. Through local and global microloan programs, they have made demonstrable strides against poverty and toward human flourishing via the gospel at work. See two of the books coauthored by Fikkert: *From Dependence to Dignity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015) and *Helping Without Hurting in Church Benevolence* (Chicago: Moody, 2015).

<sup>42</sup>See important discussion in Schneider, *The Good of Affluence*, 213–220, regarding the work of Hernando de Soto which demonstrates the significance of private property rights for alleviating poverty.

<sup>43</sup>The spirit of protest is certainly present in Ken Estey, *A New Protestant Labor Ethic at Work* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), but this book leans too heavily on “labor” as a synonym for “work.” The thrust is heavily in favor of the worker against the company.

not expected to labor. Certainly, philosophers, political leaders, and religious leaders were beyond menial chores. Nevertheless, Jesus worked in construction. Peter, James, and John fished. And Paul made tents with his hands. Jesus taught that all laborers are worthy of their wages, while Paul taught that anyone unwilling to work ought also to be unable to eat.<sup>44</sup> Schmidt explains, “The view that all work is honorable set the early Christians apart not only in their rejecting the Greco-Roman attitude that despised manual work, but also because they prospered economically as a result of their strong work ethic. Their prosperity was sometimes an additional reason that the Romans saw them as undesirable people, resulting in their persecution.”<sup>45</sup> May we also be such Christians, set apart by our devotion to God through meaningful work that prospers others and ourselves. Perhaps this is the precise disposition toward the world through which God will work to bring about much good in an otherwise evil time.

No doubt the Christian view of work—shaped by the Christian view of God being one who is always working (John 5)—influenced the productivity of the twentieth century. God was at work through millions of Christians working as unto the Lord, shaped by centuries of instruction from the apostles through the Reformers. Frugality, productive lending, and the concept of vocation paired well with the doctrines of justification, sanctification, and the priesthood of believers to contribute—and possibly even to ground—the unparalleled prosperity of the twentieth century. The Protestant work ethic was at least one place applied theology left its mark in the twentieth century. Let us work together to explore meaningful and faithful application of these truths for our twenty-first century world.



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<sup>44</sup>See 2 Thess. 3:10. Note also that Richard Baxter used 2 Thess 3:10 to teach that even the wealthy ought to be required to work. See Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory*, vol. 1 (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2000), 10.1.4.

<sup>45</sup>Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World*, 196.





## TOWARD A BAPTIST NATURAL LAW CONCEPTION OF THE COMMON GOOD

Casey B. Hough and Andrew T. Walker\*

The idea of the common good is a foundational concept in contemporary evangelical public theology. It is the centerpiece of a Christian social ethic in that historic Christianity believes the social arrangements it calls forth from general and special revelation are good for the ordering of society.

At least since the mid-twentieth century, when Carl F. H. Henry sought to awaken evangelicalism to its social obligations through the publication of his *The Uneasy of Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, a cottage industry of Christian thought has mainstreamed the idea of the Christian worldview's contribution to the social order. On the one hand, this is a most welcome development, since Christians believe that our ethics produce a net benefit for society. Rather than a sectarian ethic imposed on society, a Christian worldview helps the world be the very best version of what it was created to be.

On the other hand, the common good is an elusive concept in Christian social ethics. By our reading, when the idea of the common good arises in evangelicalism, it is more akin to an idea like “human flourishing” or “public square” exchanges than with the common good proper. In other words, while evangelicals have laudably expressed care about overcoming various injustices (sex trafficking, abortion, etc.), there is little to no coherent explanation for understanding how the interdependence of a culture's institutions cooperate toward instantiating just conditions overall.

To state it more plainly: a typical evangelical family might donate time and money to their local pregnancy resource center, but this same family likely does not think about how their *activity and purpose as a family* contributes to the common good and the justly ordered

\*Casey B. Hough is assistant professor of biblical interpretation at Luther Rice College & Seminary. Andrew T. Walker is associate professor of Christian ethics at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

society alongside their acts of compassion and mercy. This is because, in our view, the common good in evangelical thinking is more of an industry than it is a function of the creation mandate.

This is especially true compared to Catholic social teaching's emphasis on the common good. One wonders whether Catholicism's greater emphasis on social solidarity has not produced more considerable attention to the common good compared to the more individualistic spirit of evangelicalism. Even still, the problem of the common good lacking clear explanation is that a failure to conceive of it *as such* will hamper how evangelicals understand (1) the purpose of culture's institutions, (2) the expectations of social consensus, and (3) the realization of justice's enactment throughout society. Put differently, our assumptions about the common good color our expectations for what the just society entails.

Evangelical clamoring for justice and righteousness will be to little effect unless we understand what its energies about human flourishing are channeled *toward*. Because the common good is not given focused attention in evangelical public theology, its use aims for everything and hits nothing. This essay hopes to remedy that problem by offering a preliminary proposal for thinking about the common good from the perspective of Baptist theology through a natural law appropriation. We write under the conviction that Baptist distinctives such as (but not limited to) (1) the cultural mandate, (2) natural law, (3) religious liberty, and (4) limited government help promote the conditions for a just society.<sup>1</sup>

## I. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF COMMON GOOD CONCEPTIONS

First, let us define the common good. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines it as “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and easily.”<sup>2</sup> George Duke similarly defines it as a “state of affairs in which each individual within a political community

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<sup>1</sup> To clarify, we acknowledge that many of these themes find common cause and overlap with other Christian traditions. In framing this discussion around Baptist identity, we intend merely to demonstrate how the Baptist tradition can accommodate ideas that contribute toward the common good.

<sup>2</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1906, available at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c2a2.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c2a2.htm).

and the political community as a whole are flourishing.”<sup>3</sup> In these definitions, the common good is both a means and an end. As a means, at the macro-level, the common good is a temporal state of affairs that provides the cooperating institutions of society a peaceable horizon to realize their respective ends. In this, the common good is a conduit that facilitates individual and social flourishing. It does so by protecting the agency rights of various institutions to live out their respective duties. The common good, as such, allows mediating institutions to cooperate toward the advancement of the just society freely. For example, the common good allows educational enterprises to work toward furthering the advancement of knowledge. Similarly, the common good ensures that family life can prosper by removing obstacles to its formation such that families can experience the bliss of family life.

As an end, the common good realizes a state of affairs where institutions are properly ordered and human flourishing is present. The common good is not coterminous with justice but facilitates the advancement and realization of justice. Yet, the common good will never be realized devoid of justice. By way of example: Where a child is in a married, two-parent household and can achieve the education necessary to their development as a person, and where the household of this child lives is headed by a working father whose entrepreneurial skills result in profit and monies to provide for their basic needs, the common good(s) of family life, education, and industry are realized. These are all distinguishable realities but not severable. In this, the common good is oriented to happiness. A child born to wealth in a single-parent home who attends an elite private school is missing a critical pillar to their development. Now think about this arrangement at the aggregate level where certain ideals and arrangements become routinized over time such that society’s norms are robbing society of more just conditions.

The common good reflects the biblical principle of humankind being (1) a community of individuals and (2) individuals in community. If either is emphasized to the neglect of the other, we have jettisoned biblical anthropology. The common good reflects the duality of human existence—human persons *as* persons are social

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<sup>3</sup> George Duke, “The Common Good,” in *Natural Law Jurisprudence* (ed. George Duke and Robert P. George; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 376.

creatures who live in context-specific communities.

1. *Augustine*. Augustine's *City of God* provides fertile ground for considering his views on the common good. Because of the antithesis set in the contrast between the City of God and the City of Man, Augustine's reflections on the common good direct our attention to the provisional and fragmented state of a fallen society. For Augustine, though the City of God and City of Man partake of equal space in society, each understands its station with different ends in mind. The City of Man seeks a tranquility that makes life hospitable. The City of God is to inhabit this same tranquil space in hopes that its peacefulness lets them live in ultimate obedience to God. The City of God hopes that forces inimical to peace can be restrained and do not divert attention away from God. According to Augustine, "The earthly city, which does not live by faith, seeks an earthly peace, and the end it proposes, in the well-ordered concord of civic obedience and rule, is the combination of men's wills to attain the things which are helpful to this life. The heavenly city, or rather the part of it which sojourns on earth and lives by faith, makes use of this peace only because it must, until this mortal condition which necessitates it shall pass away."<sup>4</sup> The common good for Augustine is a merely temporal sphere where existence can be "well-ordered." The City of God is to participate in the traditions and customs of culture and "insofar preserves and adopts them, so long only as no hindrance to the worship of the one supreme and true God is thus introduced." The City of God is obedient to surrounding laws and seeks "common agreement" with the City of Man since each has a vested interest in the stability of society for its own sake but for different ends. They cannot, however, share a common religion because the diversity of beliefs about who God is means that common cause cannot be pursued in heavenly duties. There are echoes in Augustine of a normative pluralism that better confronts contemporary evangelicalism with an alien and exile status. For Augustine, as much as the City of God is to peaceably cooperate with the City of Man, the antithesis between the two means their ultimate commitments have an irreconcilable divergence. The only point of convergence between the two is their pursuit of the common good's fulfillment

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<sup>4</sup> Reflections in this section come from Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, Book 19, Chapter 17.

for mutual, temporal beneficence.

Augustine's reflections on the shared space that the people of God occupy in society offers a chastened expectation as to the richness of moral agreement that one is to expect in society, a theme discussed later in this paper. Augustine's common good is far more instrumentalized and modest in form than what many Christians schooled in transformationalism would countenance.

2. *Thomas Aquinas*. While Aquinas was no Baptist, the influence of his political theory on modern conceptions of the common good are important to consider, especially if one wants to understand the interaction between modern Catholic social thought<sup>5</sup> and a distinctly Baptist social thought. While Aquinas did not develop an extensive doctrine of the common good regarding its particular substance, the concept still "played an important role in Aquinas's mature moral thought."<sup>6</sup> On the central elements of Aquinas's account of the common good, Jean Porter writes:

Most fundamentally, the common good is understood by contrast with one's private good, or with the good of the individual. As such, *the common good* provides the rationale of political authority; the ruler acts with a view to the common good, just as each person directs her or his actions in accordance with some conception of his or her private good. By the same token, the common good provides a rationale for laws, and it serves to justify the ruler in some courses of action that would be closed to private citizens. Finally, because the good of individuals is inseparable from the common good, the political authority so constituted is appropriate in a community of free persons.<sup>7</sup>

For Aquinas, political authority (legislative authority) serves and promotes the common good. The legitimacy of political authority depends on its orientation to the common good. Thus, while Aquinas offers no substantive account of the common good, the procedural

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<sup>5</sup> Jean Porter, "The Common Good in Thomas Aquinas," in *In Search of the Common Good* (ed. Dennis P. McCann and Patrick D. Miller; New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 95.

<sup>6</sup> Porter, "Common Good in Thomas Aquinas," 96.

<sup>7</sup> Porter, "Common Good in Thomas Aquinas," 100–01.

significance of the concept of the common good is undeniable. Civil society finds its bedrock in a political authority that “aims at the common good.”<sup>8</sup> George Duke argues that for Aquinas, the common good of a political community “is a unity of order that is distinguishable from a mere aggregate of individual goods.”<sup>9</sup>

3. *Martin Luther*.<sup>10</sup> Whereas Aquinas grounded his understanding of the common good in contrast to individual goods and the role of political authority, Martin Luther primarily spoke of the common good in connection to the Christian’s obligation to his neighbor. In *Freedom of the Christian*, Luther wrote, “The good things we have from God should flow from one to the other and be common to all, so that everyone should ‘put on’ his neighbor and so conduct himself toward him as he himself were in the other’s place.”<sup>11</sup> In *Secular Authority*, Luther expanded upon the idea of serving the common good of others:

Christians, among themselves and by and for themselves, need no law or sword, since it is neither necessary nor profitable for them. Since, however, a true Christian lives and labors on earth not for himself but for his neighbor, therefore the whole spirit of his life impels him to do even that which he need not do, but which is profitable and necessary for his neighbor. Because the sword is a very great benefit and necessary to the whole world, to preserve peace, to punish sin and to prevent evil, he submits most willingly to the rule of the sword, pays tax, honors those in authority, serves, helps, and does all he can to further the government, that it may be sustained and held in honor and fear. Although he needs none of these things for himself and it is not necessary for him to do them, yet he considers

what is for the good and profit of others, as Paul teaches

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<sup>8</sup> *Summa Theologica (ST)* I.96.4.

<sup>9</sup> George Duke, “The Common Good,” 374.

<sup>10</sup>This section relies on Wanda Deifelt, “Seeking the Common Good: Lutheran Contributions to Global Citizenship,” for the quotes from “The Freedom of the Christian” and “Secular Authority.”

<sup>11</sup>Martin Luther, “Freedom of a Christian,” in *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* (ed. John Dillenberger; New York: Anchor, 1962), 79.

in Ephesians 5:21.<sup>12</sup>

Luther's insights into the common good, however, were not limited to his treatises on Christians and their relationship to the government. In his lectures on Genesis and Romans, Luther promoted the pursuit of the common good as a Christian ideal. In summary, Luther understands the common good as the pursuits of members of a community promoting the good of all in keeping with the Christian's obligation to love God and neighbors.

4. *Abraham Kuyper*. Kuyper, the Dutch Reformed theologian who is known for his work on sphere sovereignty, rarely referred to the common good in explicit terms. Instead, Kuyper tended to emphasize the doctrine of common grace, which was fundamentally rooted in God's universal kindness to all humanity but distinct from the particular grace of God toward the elect.<sup>13</sup> On the matter of common grace, Kuyper wrote, "Neither our election nor our attachment to the *community* of saints negates our common *humanity*, nor removes our participation in the life of family, homeland, or world. Therefore, we need to consider not two, but three aspects: first, our *personal* life; second, our incorporation into the *body* of Christ; and third, our existence as *human beings* (that is, our origin by *human birth*, our membership in the *human race*)."<sup>14</sup> Thus, while it would not be fair to read the concept of common good as a category of political theology into every mention of common grace in Kuyper's works, the idea of a shared experience and obligation to other humans which promotes their good in different spheres of society is undeniably present in Kuyper. One might venture to say that Kuyper's explicit focus on common grace undergirds his implicit articulation of the common good in the different spheres.

5. *David VanDrunen*. Reformed theologian and ethicist David

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<sup>12</sup>Martin Luther, "Secular Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed," *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* (ed. John Dillenberger; New York: Anchor, 1963), 373.

<sup>13</sup>"Particular grace deals with the *individual*, the *person* to be saved, with the *individual* entering glory. And with this individual, as a child of God, we cannot wrap the golden chain of redemption around his soul unless that golden chain descends from personal, sovereign *election*." Abraham Kuyper, *Common Grace: God's Gifts for a Fallen World: The Historical Section* (ed. Jordan J. Ballor, Melvin Flikkema, and Stephen J. Grabill, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman and Ed M. van der Maas, vol. 1, Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology; Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2015), 2.

<sup>14</sup>Kuyper, *Common Grace*, 3.



VanDrunen has advanced a concept of the common good based on his reflections on the Noahic Covenant. Far from offering a detailed blueprint for the common good, VanDrunen describes the reconstituted creational order of the Noahic Covenant as one that calls forth family formation, enterprise associations, and judicial institutions. To form families, engage in cultural formation, and to ensure the stability of justice through government authority does not require a Christianized society for the common good to be achieved. For VanDrunen, an account of the common good need not be, indeed cannot be, dependent only on society experiencing mass conversion to Christianity. Society is too beset by sin and religious diversity for there to be a rich expectation of thick moral agreement.<sup>15</sup>

Natural law as a subset of creation theology functions as the vehicle that makes social life habitable and the common good attainable. VanDrunen rightfully acknowledges that some degree of moral consensus must be present, but he calls this consensus “modest” as to the expectations for specificity. He writes that “a political community needs some shared moral vision, but this vision need not be substantively rich in order to sustain a peaceful coexistence.”<sup>16</sup> The common good for VanDrunen exists to allow the broad diversity of society’s members to achieve its conception of the good life: “By affirming a modest vision of the common good constituted by the advancement of family life, enterprise, and justice against the violent, a political community is to maintain both a peaceful coexistence and a broad pluralism in which individuals and institutions can pursue their own richer notions of the good.”<sup>17</sup> VanDrunen’s argument has much to offer evangelical public theology. Rescuing it from the burdensome task of “taking America back” to its Christian roots or implementing a refurbished Christendom, VanDrunen’s conception of the common good calls Christians back to a more humble engagement with society, recognizing that their unbelieving neighbor has an equal stake in the goods and services of society just as much as the Christian.

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<sup>15</sup>For VanDrunen’s fullest treatment on how the Noahic Covenant offers an attractive foundation for Reformed political theology, see his *Politics after Christendom: Political Theology in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020).

<sup>16</sup>VanDrunen, *Politics after Christendom*, 187.

<sup>17</sup>VanDrunen, *Politics after Christendom*, 188.

## II. THE COMMON GOOD PROPER

With a brief overview of various conceptions of the common good, let us proceed with offering some preliminary insights to advance our thinking and understanding about the common good's use and realization in society. The categories listed below are not exhaustive but demonstrate how categories consistent with Baptist thought can cooperate toward the development of common good thinking in evangelical public theology.

As was mentioned in the introduction of this article, we want to explore how to realize three elements central to achieving the common good in each section below. Proper thinking about the common good will take into consideration (1) the purpose of culture's institutions, (2) the expectations of social consensus, and (3) the realization of justice.

1. *Cultural mandate*. The cultural mandate refers to the command in Gen 1:26–28 where God commissions the man and woman, our ancestral archetypes, to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (v. 28). The cultural mandate is the command to take the raw materials of the earth and to bring form and poise to the surrounding world. Debate persists as to the number of institutions that are entailed by the cultural mandate, but among them are the family, state, and the various pillars of civil society such as industry, education, leisure, and art.

a. *Cultural institutions*. The cultural mandate affirms common good institutions such as the family and the legitimacy of cultural pursuits and creative innovation, as institutions *for their own ends*. Political authority, family life, and other emanating realities that stem from civil society's development are irreducible pursuits (or goods) and incommensurable. Their pursuit is the benefit. The cultural mandate thus gives intelligibility to the institutions of culture. Rather than being sectarian and limited, the institutions of culture are universally accessible to all humans who have an equal share in contributing to their world. The common good exists to allow participating institutions to realize their intelligibility and the actualization of their own end.

b. *Social consensus*. We agree with David Van Druenen's analysis that

sinfulness results in fragmenting the ability for thick moral agreement to occur. Sin does not vitiate the cultural mandate but hampers its ability to be clearly understood and acted upon. The effects of sin ensure that humanity will turn the positive call to exercise dominion into a chaotic panoply of moral and religious pluralism. Because humanity has turned its back toward God, one should expect that a multitude of pick-and-choose moralities bombards society.

Nevertheless, like VanDrunen, we agree that an ineradicable light of nature persists in humankind that restrains the full effects of sin, thus making conditions hospitable. We believe that where society recognizes the lineaments of the Decalogue or the “law written on the heart”—even imperfectly—there will be sufficient common grace to allow the continued perpetuation of civilization through the enduring witness of the cultural mandate. A common good ethic will understand that shared, contested space exists that allows diverse viewpoints to contend with one another for the most persuasive path to human flourishing.

c. *The realization of justice.* The cultural mandate, insofar as it facilitates the cultivation of cultural institutions toward their end, ensures that just conditions are present. To revisit an earlier example: A society whose attitudes about family life make it more likely that a child receives the love and care of the parents who brought children into the world is a society whose common good facilitates justice. Likewise, a society that sees the education of its youngest citizens as a priority to their development treats the child with dignity constitutive of the common good. Of course, there will always be prudential debates about all that justice entails for the common good (e.g., is one’s access to healthcare a matter of justice?), but threats to common good occur when treating an institution originating from the cultural mandate as a mere accessory.

2. *Natural law.* Speaking of the “good” in the common good is to presuppose the existence of an underived principle of moral goodness. Without its existence, the idea of a good worth holding in common is emptied of any meaning. Natural law refers to the idea of a universal moral law accessible to human reason, even fallen human reason (Rom 1:18–21; 2:14–15).<sup>18</sup> Its existence is confirmed or

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<sup>18</sup>For more on the natural law, see Andrew T. Walker and Daniel Darling, “We Should Expect Non-Christians to Share Our Morals,” *Christianity Today*, October 27, 2015, <https://www.>

ratified by the natural sense of revulsion one encounters at observing or experiencing an injustice. A predicate to any concept of human flourishing is an intelligible understanding of human nature's end. Natural law directs our attention to those desires, attitudes, and actions that align with the design of our nature. A controversial idea in some Protestant quarters, we enthusiastically endorse natural law as an essential attribute of the common good as it offers a moral grammar to aid and guide society's thirst for moral rectitude. In our view, natural law is an essential component of Christian ethics as it helps explain how morality, justice, and the common good function as a revelation of God's design for both creation and reason. Natural law is held together not by autonomous reason, but by Jesus Christ, the Logos (John 1:3; Col 1:15–17).

a. *Cultural institutions.* For fear of oversimplification, the very presence of certain institutions presumes an essence or a way of acting that accords with the purpose of a thing. Natural law contributes to the common good of cultural institutions when those institutions' designs are upheld as normative in society.

Let us take marriage, the cornerstone of society, as an example. As a cultural institution, marriage is the conjugal union of one man and woman who unite through a comprehensive bodily union to become husband and wife. Through their respective sex difference, their sexual union can produce offspring, now making them not only spouses but a mother and father. Definitions of marriage that correspond to its authentic design uphold the common good of the family. Sadly, in the United States, with the presence of same-sex marriage, the common good has been undermined at the cultural and legal level of society by enshrining into law a false view of marriage. Such redefinition will have deleterious effects in society, not only by denying children their right to a mother or father but through the sully of marital norms that make the institution internally coherent.

b. *Social consensus.* Social consensus on basic moral norms is a requirement for the common good to be fulfilled. Natural law serves to direct society toward moral consensus at the level of basic principle, not finite specificity. Enacting laws against theft upholds the common

good by protecting property rights. The inability to reach a consensus on basic moral minimums threatens the common good. Again, to echo an earlier sentiment, the common good does not require consensus on all matters of moral significance; but only those whose tearing asunder undermines the fundamental operation of society.

c. *The realization of justice.* Natural law accords with justice in that it directs individuals to pursue actions that accord with moral righteousness and to ennoble those activities that constitute human nature's well-being. A society that refuses to prosecute murder is a society that offends the common good by refusing to bring to justice those who offend elementary principles of the natural law. Actively spurning the principles of natural law and denying justice ensures the denial of the common good. To use asymmetrical moral reasoning: a society that appeals to natural law for the sake of justice to prevent underground sex trafficking ought to be the same society that deconstructs positivist law that offends justice, such as abortion.

3. *Religious liberty.* A principle of utmost significance to Baptist identity, religious liberty is a principle of social equality that, positively, allows all persons to live out the obligations for their conscience. Negatively, religious liberty is a restraining force on the government to prevent any sort of religious establishment from occurring while removing from its jurisdiction the control or enforcement of religion among its citizens.

a. *Cultural institutions.* The very essence of humankind as the *imago Dei* means that its participation in the social sphere is of a divine warrant. All that we do as humans originate from the mind of God and his will for creation. To the degree that humankind understands the obligations of conscience (religiously shaped or not), even if issuing from different faiths, religious liberty protects the common good of the cultural mandate by allowing religion to flow freely throughout society and to ensconce itself in citizens' lives and associations without fear of harassment. Religious liberty used here might as well be a shorthand for general liberty since, in our formulation, the desire to engage in any cultural activity emanates from divine inspiration, whether acknowledged or not. Religious liberty protects the common good of obeying the cultural mandate by allowing the agency of individuals to fulfill the duties imposed on them by conscience. As the common good is ordered toward the

temporal only, it best to afford the institutions of culture their ability to pursue ultimate commitments.

b. *Social consensus.* Rejecting religious liberty as a pillar of the common good ensures society will grow more intolerant or illiberal. Religious liberty as a pillar of the common good allows communities and associations to organize themselves around deep-seated convictions, convictions that result in serving the common good and public welfare.

c. *The realization of justice.* It is fundamentally unjust and a denial of the common good to deny persons the right of their conscience. To insist upon a cultural or political orthodoxy that drafts individuals into conforming themselves to convictions not of their own grasping or voluntary assent is to invite inner fragmentation. Religious liberty fulfills the common good by rendering to each person the freedom to be true to their conscience. Anything less than this, apart from those areas where legislatures act to curtail religion for the sake of another common good, is to vitiate justice.

4. *Limited government.* Limited government serves the interests of the common good by insisting that the government does not have authority over all matters of the common good—that the common good of society has prepolitical aspects. The common good ensures that individuals, communities, and associations can reach their flourishing apart from meddlesome intervention. The government neither exclusively defines the common good nor is synonymous with its fulfillment. Instead, the rightly limited government protects the common good by allowing its constitutive parts to occur organically and protecting it from encroaching impediments.

Far from being a hackneyed concept associated with political conservatism (not that there is anything wrong with that), limited government is a profoundly theological principle. In Matt 22:15–22, Jesus squares off with Pharisees who ask him whether it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar. His reply, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s” (v. 21), was nothing short of revolutionary for his period. Because the coin bears Caesar’s image implying a limited jurisdiction, the obverse reality was that humanity bears God’s image as a comprehensive jurisdiction. The common good ensures that humankind’s responsibility before God is antecedent to any claim of the government. As Robert Reilly

writes, “The ultimate ordering of man’s soul to the transcendent is the principle impetus for limiting politics.”<sup>19</sup>

a. *Cultural institutions.* On the surface, institutions consistent with the cultural mandate require a limited government in order for their agency to develop and prosper. Nevertheless, the best way to explain the connection between limited government and the common good is (a) by pointing to a doctrine of subsidiarity wherein the institutions of civil society most local to a given issue are the best suited to resolve a given issue and (b) by demonstrating how the power of an overweening government obstructs the common good.

Government most patently obstructs the common good by veering into jurisdictions outside its mandate. Let us, for example, consider the abhorrent practice of slavery. Slavery was an evil institution aided and abetted by the government intervening in matters that offend natural law and the principle of justice by perversely incentivizing the trafficking of humans. This abuse is outside the mandate of Scripture, as Scripture’s mandate for government is “to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good” (1 Pet 2:13). The most justly ordered government will be one that serves the common good by adjudicating only those areas assigned to it by Scripture.

b. *Social consensus.* An overly litigious society will be the society that defaults to government procedures to settle all moral disputes. In this scheme, the government necessarily grows larger by playing an increasingly more significant role in adjudicating intricate moral matters. It is doubtless the case that a justly ordered government will be involved in adjudicating moral disputes. The question is the type and degree of moral dispute in question.

Here, deliberative bodies serve the common good by distinguishing immoral actions that are merely sins from those that verge into criminal wrongdoing. As the adage goes, all crimes are sins, but not all sins are crimes. The common good requires a consistent and fairly applied moral system, one whose moral theory can construct a case for determining what types of vices to penalize versus merely discouraging. But a government of exacting moral rectitude will channel the very worst of Inquisition-like powers. According to Ryan T. Anderson and Robert P. George, this form of government

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<sup>19</sup>Robert Reilly, *America on Trial: A Defense of the Founding* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2020), 33.

can become intrusive and does more harm to the common good:

Thomas Aquinas famously taught that the law should not command every virtue or prohibit every vice. Attempts — in the name of the human good — to penalize every form or instance of immorality would actually *undermine* the human good (by, for example, giving power to governments that is too easily abused, or intruding improperly into the lives of families and other institutions of civil society, or imposing a legal burden that is too heavy for most to bear). And so, he taught, the state should limit itself to punishing the graver forms of immorality, those that do the most harm, and those against which the force of law can be effective. Thus, we see in Aquinas one “pre-liberal” limit on government power: Government should not attempt to promote the common good in ways that are likely to undermine or harm it. Indeed, sometimes restricting the liberty to do wrong — a liberty to which no one has a moral right — rather than promoting the common good can actually harm it.<sup>20</sup>

Anderson and George endorse a perfectionist view of government while acknowledging that strenuous protection of a community’s moral ecology can serve to undermine the common good. We agree with this assessment and would aver that promoting the common good through heavy-handedness serves to undermine the common good in the long run by granting too much power to the government.

c. *The realization of justice.* In similar sentiment above, limited government serves the interests of the common good by allowing the institutions of civil society to prosper as each institution is meant to function for itself as such. In essence, by refusing to impose a false redefinition of marriage and family, a limited government allows the contours of the natural family to arise organically. By allowing the delivery of education by those private institutions who educate according to a set of convictions, it treats these institutions according

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<sup>20</sup>Ryan T. Anderson and Robert P. George, “The Baby and the Bathwater,” *National Affairs* 41 (Fall 2019): 176–77.



to their desires. Whether a Christian school or a Jewish school, a common good that allows institutions the ability to act according to their wishes facilitates the justice owed to private associations. Admittedly, there is nothing on the surface that suggests a larger state or more generous safety net is an intrinsic threat to justice, except as a prudential matter where state largesse has worked over time to etch itself ever more deeply into the lives of its citizens.

### III. BAPTIST ACCENTS TO THE COMMON GOOD

From a theological and historical perspective, Baptists have significant resources for developing and advancing a conception of the common good. Baptists have long been distinguished for their commitment to ideals like biblical authority, regenerate church membership, and religious liberty. Such ideals work together to promote an optimal context for the development of a robust conviction and pursuit of the common good in society. Since religious liberty has already been covered in the preceding section, what follows here will be a consideration of how a commitment to biblical authority and regenerate church membership uniquely shape a Baptist conception of the common good.

1. *Biblical authority and the common good.* One cannot speak of a Baptist conception of the common good without considering how a commitment to biblical authority should shape our doctrine. In this section, we consider in brief four prominently cited passages regarding the common good: Jer 29:4–7, Rom 13:1–7, 1 Tim 2:1–7, and 1 Pet 2:13–17.<sup>21</sup>

Evangelicals persistently reference Jeremiah 29 as a text that calls forth “cultural engagement” or “cultural transformation.” In our estimation, these quoted terms lack specificity in evangelical use and over-promise what can be delivered as far as an evangelical program for social engagement. Using categories cited throughout this paper, we would like to reconfigure Jeremiah 29 as an illustrative example of how common good thinking better frames our participation in society over and against triumphalist claims of Christian social transformation.

Jeremiah 29:4–7 states,

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<sup>21</sup>One could also mention Titus 3:1.

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

We submit that Jeremiah 29 offers a compelling case for the common good. Notice, chiefly, that Jeremiah's call for exiled Israel is not to "engage" the culture inasmuch as it is to simply immerse oneself in the cultural practices that foster the right conditions for social ordering. The exiles are not to storm the institutions of elite culture as much as they are to recapitulate the cultural mandate in a new social context. Such is our calling as Christians, as is demonstrated by the way that New Testament authors employ the language of "exile" as a description of the believing community. The consideration of the remaining passages in this section will make this point clearer.

In Rom 13:1–7, the *locus classicus* for a Christian understanding of civil government, the apostle Paul acknowledged the God-ordained role that governing authorities carry out for the common good. As v. 4 declares, governing authorities "are God's servants for your good." To be clear, given the context of Romans 13, Paul is not suggesting that governments somehow redemptively transform people into good, God-honoring, moral people, but rather that the governing authorities must order and support a society where the common good is encouraged and rewarded while discouraging and punishing evil that disrupts society. As for how this passage contributes to the vision of common good found in this article, we submit that Scripture teaches that the common good does not require Christianity to be the majority culture in order for Christians to pursue and promote the common good in society. This passage reinforces the idea that the common good, while fundamentally rooted in the nature of God, can and should be encouraged in a society, even one in which Christianity is not the primary reference for morality.

In 1 Tim 2:1–7, as he neared the end of his ministry, Paul instructed Timothy to lead the churches of Christ to “pray for all peoples—for kings and all those in authority, that Christians may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.” Yet, this is not the first place that Paul stressed the need for a “quiet life” amid the broader community. In 1 Thess 4:10–12, Paul wrote, “But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.” Paul expected the Christian communities that he founded to live with a peculiar disposition of peace in the broader society that provoked the interest of unbelievers without incurring the unnecessary discipline of governing authorities. Admittedly, sometimes faithful Christian living will provoke society and incite governing authorities, as seen in the example of the early church in Rome. Yet, we must also remember that part of what it means to live a faithful Christian life in society is to seek to live peaceful and calm lives for the common good. Seeking to live a faithful Christian life in a secular society and seeking the common good are not contradictory aims.

Yet, the tension remained for the Christian community to live as submissively as possible to the secular authorities in society. One could argue that in 1 Timothy 2, an appropriately peaceful and calm life in society served to advance the cause of the gospel by not bringing disrepute to the churches. It is noteworthy that Paul does not call Christians to political revolution but relatively private lives of prayer for peace and calm in society.<sup>22</sup> For Paul, the Christian’s prayer life was partly a political act aimed at societal peace for all people, which fits perfectly within the framework presented in this article regarding a principled pursuit of the common good. While the common good should never be construed as more important than the redemptive good brought about through the gospel of Christ, there is also no biblical basis for pitting the two goods against one another. As 1 Timothy 2 teaches, the provision of peace and calm in a secular society (a common good) serves to advance the cause of

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<sup>22</sup>“Perhaps Paul has in mind the words of Jer 29:7 (LXX 36:7): ‘Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.’” George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 117.

evangelism and missions (a redemptive good).<sup>23</sup>

Finally, 1 Pet 2:13–17 bookends our consideration of passages that speak to the pursuit of the common good in Scripture by revisiting the theme of exilic living in a pagan society. As Peter wrote to a dispersed audience, he reminded them of their sojourning identity in Christ. As those who belonged to Christ, their lives were to be both set apart from and missionally provocative to the pagans in their community. They were commanded to flee the desires of their flesh that were stoked during their time of exile in a faithless land. However, not every aspect of the faithless land was sinful. While the rulers in the land were faithless concerning Christ, they were still appointed by him for the good of society. As Peter’s audience shunned sinful living while submitting to “every human authority” in obedience to “God’s will,” these exiled Christians would “silence the ignorant talk of foolish people” who charged the churches of God with wrongdoing. Drawing upon the resources of their identity as the people of God (1 Pet 2:9–10), Peter’s audience could live faithfully for Christ while submitting to any human authority that did not require them to disobey God. Hence, as Peter closed the pericope on human authorities, he reminded his audience that there is a proper respect to be paid for all people (civility), a love to be reflected for the household of God (charity), and an honor to be shown for those in authority (citizenship). However, only God is to be feared and worshipped because he alone is the Lord of the conscience. Thus, like exiles living in the land of captivity and longing for home, we receive instruction from Scripture to submit to governing authorities and promote a peaceful and just society through prayer and responsible participation in our communities while acknowledging that our pursuit of the common good is both a vital yet ancillary means to the church’s redemptive end in the world. This is not because the common good is in itself redemptive (it is not, it is temporal) but that the common good provides a tranquility that the church can use to its advantage.

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<sup>23</sup>“When Paul says ‘this is good,’ he probably means that it is so not only ‘before God,’ but also because of all that is involved in such prayer, such as concern for all people, and (as he implies in vv. 3-5.) for their salvation, as well as concern for civil government, tranquility, quiet, and a greater opportunity to live a life of Christian piety (cf. 2 Cor 8:21). ἀπόδεκτος (1 Tim 2:3; 5:4, both with ἐνώπιον θεοῦ) means ‘acceptable’ in the sense of pleasing (see BAGD).” Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 119.

2. *Regenerate church membership and the common good.* One of the more unique contributions of Baptist theology to the conversation regarding the promotion of the common good is the doctrine of regenerate church membership. In brief, the doctrine of regenerate church membership states that only people who have been regenerated by the work of the Holy Spirit should be members of the church of Jesus Christ. Consequently, Baptists believe that baptism is exclusively reserved for those who have consciously placed their trust in Christ for salvation as their Savior and Lord. Foundational to the doctrine of regenerate church membership is the acknowledgment that entrance into the church depends entirely upon the work of God.

If membership in the church of Jesus Christ depends upon a supernatural work of grace by the Holy Spirit, then it should follow that Baptists who maintain this belief will not resort to coercive means, but will rely instead upon the preaching of the gospel for the advancement of its mission in the world. In other words, a Baptist understanding of the nature of the church should temper our expectations for the extent to which governing authorities aid our work. Baptists advocate for limited government and religious liberty because we understand the formation of our religious communities and the advancement of our mission in the world to depend upon the supernatural power of God. Thus, a proper Baptist conception of the common good should also be the least likely to attempt to impose a maximalist approach to the common good, which a pluralistic society cannot sustain.

Unfortunately, in more recent days, Baptists have been influenced by the specific aspects of Enlightenment individualism and modern society, which have led to both confusions about the individual's role in the context of the believing community and a functional abandonment of regenerate church membership among some churches that allow members to either go unaccounted for or undisciplined in accordance with Scripture's expectations for church membership. The result of this unfortunate decline has been the idolizing of individualism among some who have misunderstood the Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, which threatens the possibility of consistently holding a conception of the common good.

If Baptists are going to work for the common good as a believing community, then each subsequent generation must be taught the

importance of our doctrinal distinctives, and how the pursuit of the common good fundamentally requires a certain degree of cooperation and agreement based on those distinctives. As a remedy to this decline, we encourage Baptists to recover a robust awareness of their confessional heritage and doctrinal distinctives, especially as such heritage and distinctives lay an invaluable foundation for building a consensus regarding the concept of the common good in present-day Baptist churches.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION: ON THE LIMITS AND END OF THE COMMON GOOD**

This essay forces us to reckon with a counterargument: How thin or “modest” can the common good be and still endure? When is the common good no longer functioning as it ought? From our point of view, it is hard to tear the totality of the common good asunder because the common good is constitutive of other common good(s). This stems from our belief that despite sin manifesting itself in all corners of human existence, an enduring common grace exists—and will ineradicably exist until the eschaton—that makes the total implosion of society impossible. No matter how many Protestants might reject the natural law, the fact that society obeys road signs and that prisons exist is a testament to the common grace that makes even the most minimal attainment of the common good achievable.

In a fallen world, society will have both simultaneous successes and failures. For example, a society such as our own that has a strong tradition of religious liberty furthers the common good. This same society, tragically, is a society whose idea of the common good leaves out the protection of the unborn. It cannot be said that our nation is a failed state but a state whose conception of the common good denies the most basic essential attribute: the protection of life. We judge the common good by the reigning moral ecologies that comprise it. Far from insinuating that a “modest” common good implies moral neutrality or moral skepticism, the common good requires a moral subtext for personal and social meaning that liberal order cannot in itself provide.

Life in a post-Genesis 3 world is a paradox. Deeply depraved and wicked, it is also inhabited by those capable of supererogatory action.

It is this tension and convergence that should call all Christians to a vigilant concern for strengthening the common good.



## BOOK REVIEWS

***Brahms's A German Requiem: Reconsidering Its Biblical, Historical, and Musical Contexts.* By R. Allen Lott. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2020, xvii+ 512pp., \$117.28.**

Despite almost universal modern assessments of Johannes Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* (A German Requiem) as a deliberately secular choral treatment of death, R. Allen Lott, professor of music history at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, meticulously demonstrates that “the *Requiem* is not theologically or doctrinally inclusive but instead adroitly summarizes the unique Christian view of death, grief, and an afterlife” (p. 2). Along with being one of the most performed choral works from the nineteenth century, Brahms's *Requiem* is notable for the fact that unlike a standard Latin mass for the dead, the composer used exclusively texts from Luther's German translation of the Bible. Yet Christ is not explicitly named, leading most modern scholars to conclude that Brahms did not intend his *Requiem* to be a Christian work but rather a humanist composition inclusive of all creeds. In contrast to this recent consensus, Lott presents his case through evaluating early writings about the work, investigating how audiences understood it during the first fifteen years of performance, and performing in-depth textual and musical analysis, providing a definitive conclusion that a Christian understanding of this beloved nineteenth-century choral masterpiece “is not only allowable but the most rational one to adopt” (p. 2).

Lott lays an interpretive foundation for his analysis in chapter one, arguing for a “course correction to a path that has been focused primarily on Brahms's enigmatic objectives” (p. 13) since “intention does not trump execution” (p. 14). Therefore, determining whether the *Requiem* is a Christian work should be decided based on how the original audiences would have understood the intertextuality of the biblical texts Brahms chose and how he set them musically (p. 37). The broader contexts of those passages, along with that of the



sacred music traditions within which Brahms composed his work, strongly suggest Christian theological implications.

Lott introduces those implications with an exegesis of the biblical texts in chapter two, which he argues “embody unambiguous Christian positions that are distinct from other religious traditions” (p. 60). He demonstrates that, despite common claims, the *Requiem* is certainly about Jesus Christ since Brahms quotes Jesus’ own words (p. 61) and other texts that mention or allude to Christ without naming him (p. 64). “These multiple references to Christ,” Lott contends, “inherently make the *Requiem* a Christian work” since “Christ’s identity as the Son of God and the Savior of the world are the most distinguishing features of Christianity that separate it from all other religions” (p. 67). Further, “Brahms’s text includes unambiguous references to Christian doctrines that are not commonly held” (p. 72), including explicitly Christian understandings of creation, redemption, resurrection, and the afterlife, each of which provides uniquely Christian comfort and promise of joy in the face of death. “Only simple ignorance of or willful disregard for the details of the text,” Lott concludes, “can justify a universal interpretation of the *Requiem*” (p. 93).

If Lott’s biblical exegesis were not enough to convince skeptics, he demonstrates in chapter three that “the first commentators ... consistently read and heard [the *Requiem*] as a piece upholding common Christian beliefs” (p. 98). Based on the fact that “religion continued to be a vital element in nineteenth-century German life” (p. 101), “it should not be surprising that listeners experienced the *Requiem* with its purely scriptural text as a Christian work” (p. 110). Lott provides numerous statements by critics, musicologists, and theologians of the time who clearly identified it as Christian, even Protestant (p. 120). Its classification “as a specimen of church music, which could only refer to settings of doctrinally orthodox texts, verify the recognition and acceptance of the work’s Christian content” (p. 133).

In chapter four, Lott examines one of the most frequently cited “proofs” of the *Requiem*’s supposed universal focus, a letter written by conductor Karl Reinthaler prior to its 1868 premiere in Bremen, wherein he stated, “For the Christian consciousness it lacks the point around which everything revolves, namely, the redeeming death of the Lord” (p. 171). Lott demonstrates that this one statement taken

out of context does not account for the fact that Reintaler made other comments in his letter supporting a Christian interpretation and repeatedly programmed the work for Good Friday performances (p. 178). In fact, such explicitly Christian programming continued for years by others; Lott demonstrates that “more than one-fourth of the early performances of the *Requiem* occurred during Holy Week, indicating a perceived resonance between the work and an important Christian observance” (p. 184).

Lott presents what he considers “the most important hermeneutical guide to the *Requiem*”—musical analysis—in chapter five, explaining that “Brahms set his *Requiem* text sympathetically, convincingly, dramatically, and, above all, with an earnest devotion to sacred music traditions” (p. 230). In particular, Brahms alludes in the *Requiem* to several well-known sacred works, most notably Handel’s *Messiah*. Lott argues that “the general similarities between the *Requiem* and *Messiah* as well as several areas of textual overlap and interrelatedness encourage a Christian perspective on the *Requiem*” (p. 277), which he explores at length. Finally, Lott meticulously traces Brahms’s “musical devotion to scripture as a composer and his continuation of longstanding practices,” leading listeners “to accept the revered, traditional interpretation of the biblical text” (p. 319).

In the final analysis, Lott provides an overwhelmingly convincing, substantively documented case for a Christian interpretation of Brahms’s *Requiem*. Indeed, as Lott notes, “modern scholars seem to impose a set of guidelines for assessing the *Requiem* that are not followed for any other musical work, not even the other choral works of Brahms” (p. 327), in an attempt to substantiate a universalist claim. Far from being a dry musicological monograph, Lott’s extensive analysis is engaging and even devotional, and though his musical analysis requires some competency in music literacy (especially in chapter five), theologians and even lay Christians would find this work fascinating. Perhaps Lott’s treatment will cause skeptics and Christians alike to consider anew that “blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.”

Scott Aniol  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Fort Worth, TX

***The Holy Spirit.* By Gregg R. Allison and Andreas J. Köstenberger. *Theology for the People of God.* Nashville: B&H, 2020, xxiii+543pp., \$44.99.**

The first volume in a new series called “Theology for the People of God” takes up the topic of the Holy Spirit in biblical and systematic theology. Coauthored by a biblical studies scholar and a historical and systematic theologian, their treatment seeks to balance the weight of both fields and offer a thoroughly integrated approach to the doctrine. This partnership, as envisioned by the series, is meant to serve a perspective that is “convictionally Baptist and warmly evangelical.” The series editors articulate well their vision in this way: “Careful theology is an integrative task, and to that end the volumes in *Theology for the People of God* emphasize integration of biblical and systematic theology in dialog with historical theology and with application to church and life” (p. xxii). Professors Allison and Köstenberger have more than answered that call with the series’ first volume by principally rooting their contribution in sustained and rigorous exegetical work alongside thorough attention to theological debates about the Spirit that have punctuated Christian history and continue amidst the church’s witness today.

*The Holy Spirit* proceeds in two parts but in both halves the discussion focuses on the driving questions: 1) Who is the Holy Spirit? 2) What does the Holy Spirit do? Such a framing helps to organize the detailed and nuanced survey given of biblical teaching on the Spirit in the first half of the volume. Here, the authors move step by step through mentions of the Spirit from the Old and New Testaments giving accounts of how various biblical genres treat the Spirit as well as the aggregate pictures from each testament. Their choice to review so carefully the biblical record generates its particular benefit when they arrive at “A Biblical-Theological Synthesis of the Holy Spirit in Scripture,” which is their transition point for moving from biblical to systematic theology. Thus, they reflect that, “the Spirit is not only integrally involved in God’s work throughout salvation history; he increasingly steps into the foreground” (p. 201). Here, their summative conclusions from the biblical witness reveal the trajectory of their most significant answers to the theological questions around the Spirit’s identity and activity. Such a leveraging of biblical theology

for systematic foundations represents a prime example of the “helpful methodological contribution” they are seeking to make (p. 7).

The second part begins by addressing both the historical neglect and lingering suspicion of the Holy Spirit in some churches today. Having named these problems, the authors seek to navigate between two extremes in which the Spirit is seen as either a “last-minute addition” to the traditional categories of doctrine or the opposite error of giving the Spirit “first-order priority” in an undue, reactive way. By way of corrective, then, they devote much attention to the intratrinitarian relations within God as the grounds for their abiding thematic—drawn from Augustine—that envisions the Spirit as love and gift. Their account of the Trinitarian processions and missions thus secures a stable foundation upon which to consider the Spirit’s relation to each doctrinal *loci*, among which the chapters on salvation and ecclesiology respectively are alone worth the volume’s purchase. Along this tour of doctrinal connections, they provide illuminating diagrams, helpful applications for Christian practice, and careful, extended engagement with theological issues such as Spirit Christology, Spirit baptism, cessationism versus continuationism, and the Spirit’s role in the exclusivism versus inclusivism debate, among others. Creating their own question and answer format, the book concludes with a final consideration of the most relevant questions on the role of the Spirit in both the individual and corporate Christian life (e.g. worship, illumination, discernment).

There is much to appreciate about Allison and Köstenberger’s volume. In addition to being consistent, cohesive, and succinct, many readers will find their treatment imminently accessible, readily applicable, and free from unhelpful academic squabbles. While their Baptist convictions are clearly evident, the volume maintains a generative conversation with theologians from the breadth of church history, highlighting the likes of the Cappadocians, Augustine, Luther, and Calvin. Best of all, the volume is thoroughly exegetical, continually employing a “ground-up” approach that constructs its systematic proposals from sound biblical interpretation. The clear aim was to supply a resource for the church that would stand the test of time, and in that light, any innovations for the field remain modest and uncontroversial (e.g. the discussion of prolepsis on pp. 348-350). Where the authors must supply a firm judgment, it comes only

after careful consideration of the options. The charts, diagrams, and other explanatory material will be a welcome find for students and laypeople alike. Still, there are areas where the practical concerns of their broader audience should dictate further discussion. Despite the fact that they review the influence of Pentecostal and Charismatic theologies on evangelicalism, their attention to the project's implications for worship today seems unfortunately meager and brief (perhaps only four pages in the whole volume). There are few areas of concern regarding the Spirit that are riper for rehabilitation and development than worship, and one wonders what help the authors could bring if that discussion matched their commendable treatment of the Spirit and individual discernment (pp. 398-400). Relatedly, their discussion of how the Spirit fosters unity among Christians develops in an awkwardly narrow and perhaps confusing way, especially given the enthusiasm with which they quote Miroslav Volf as saying that, "*the unity of the church is grounded in the interiority of the Spirit*" (emphasis original). Surely this insight runs counter to the prior condition they have placed on biblical unity as understood principally in terms of Calvin's two marks for the church (p. 435). Are we to see, then, the unity they envision as limited exclusively to those who share the same ecclesiology? If so, this seems to digress from the more conciliar tone employed throughout the work, evident in places like their advocacy for a "spiritual presence" view of the Lord's Supper (pp. 453-455). Regardless of a few potentially missed opportunities for further application, readers will discover here a solid and trustworthy guide to a robustly evangelical doctrine of the Spirit that promises to empower a more thoroughly Trinitarian witness for the church. On a personal note, it should be observed that these two Trinity alums have dedicated this excellent volume to those who have served at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

Taylor B. Worley  
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School  
Deerfield, IL

***Baptists and the Christian Tradition: Toward an Evangelical Baptist Catholicity.* Edited By Matthew Y. Emerson, and Christopher W. Morgan and R. Lucas Stamps. Nashville: B&H, 2020, 400pp., \$34.99.**

As a rule, Baptists are not typically known for their catholicity. More often, when other ecclesial traditions think of Baptists, they think of sectarianism. Sometimes this an unfair characterization rooted in centuries of theological debate and even rivalry. Too often, the charge has merit. Whether because of an abundance of kingdom-advancing resources, regrettable denominational pride, or genuinely sectarian theological trajectories, the “default factory setting” of many Baptists—including Southern Baptists—is insularity rather than catholicity.

For the past generation or so, a growing number of theologians with roots in Southern Baptist life have argued for grounding Baptist faith and practice within the context of more catholic sensibilities such as the value of tradition in doctrinal and ethical reflection, an emphasis on a more formal liturgy, and the importance of historical and theological continuity. In the second half of the twentieth century, longtime Southwestern Seminary theologian James Leo Garrett Jr. cultivated an evangelical Baptist catholicity while Southern Baptist Theological Seminary church historian Glenn Hinson advanced a version of Baptist catholicity informed more by mainline Protestant sensibilities. In more recent years, Southern Baptist theologians Timothy George and David Dockery have followed the Garrett trajectory, infusing it with emphases from postwar evangelicalism, while moderate theologians such as Steve Harmon and Curtis Freeman have synthesized elements of the Garrett and Hinson approaches, in dialogue with postliberal theology.

This is the context into which *Baptists and the Christian Tradition* has been published and the conversation into which the contributors have entered. The volume sets the agenda for how Baptist scholars and ministers can embrace a Garrett-George-Dockery form of evangelical Baptist catholicity, that is in constructive conversation with Hinson-Harmon-Freeman trajectory, for the sake of renewing contemporary Baptist faith and practice. Many of the book’s contributors are identified with the Center for Baptist Renewal, which

co-editors Matt Emerson and Luke Stamps lead as co-executive directors. It is best to understand *Baptists and the Christian Tradition* as a convictionally Baptist and explicitly evangelical form of retrieval theology that is in the spirit of earlier efforts by the late Methodist theologian Thomas Oden and ongoing efforts by the Presbyterian scholars Scott Swain and Michael Allen.

The contributors to *Baptists and the Christian Tradition* reflect on a number of themes that are important to framing an evangelical Baptist catholicity. The result is a work that might be called “constructively conservative.” It is *constructive* in that so many of the themes the book addresses are underdeveloped in evangelical Baptist theology. Yet is also *conservative* in that the project is deeply rooted in the supreme authority of Scripture and sensitive to the “Great Tradition” represented in the ancient church’s creedal consensus and the best theological and moral thinking of the medieval and Reformation eras.

Some of the chapters put Baptist theology in greater dialog with the Great Tradition. Examples include Chris Morgan and Kristen Ferguson’s needed chapter on Christian unity; the fine essays by Luke Stamps and Malcolm Yarnell on Christology and the Trinity, respectively; Rhyné Putman’s excellent treatment of the relationship between Scripture and tradition; and Patrick Schreiner’s call for Baptists to give greater heed to classical approaches to biblical interpretation. Other chapters focus on themes that are of perennial import to Baptists, but that can benefit from a deeper engagement with pre-Reformation thinkers. Examples include Madison Grace’s discussion of Baptist ecclesiology in the context of the classical four “marks” of the church; Matt Emerson’s chapter on the ancient and Baptist practice of credobaptism; Michael Haykin’s retrieval of earlier Baptist expressions of the real spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper; and Amy Whitfield’s work on how Baptist denominational polity at times precluded Baptist participation in ecumenical efforts.

Dustin Bruce’s chapter on spirituality and Taylor Worley’s chapter on worship offer fruitful discussions on how contemporary Baptist practices might be shaped with greater attention to the insights of other traditions. Projects on catholicity can at times be insensitive to matters of diversity, perhaps because so much of the Christian

tradition overlaps with the history of so-called Western civilization, so I was encouraged to read Soojin Chung's chapter on global Christianity and Walter Strickland's chapter on racial tensions. The church has always been bigger and more diverse than overly euro-centric accounts of Christian history have made it out to be, and the same should be true of our pursuit of evangelical Baptist catholicity. David Dockery reflects on the intersection of Baptists and evangelicalism, which has been a significant theme throughout his career, while Jason Duesing offers a helpful summary of Baptist contributions to the wider Christian tradition.

There is much herein to both challenge and benefit readers. Some will be challenged by the call to take classical Christology and Trinitarianism seriously, especially as it pushes back against sloppy or even troubling contemporary theologies put forward by some Southern Baptists and other evangelicals. Others will be challenged by the call to engage with non-Baptist and even non-Protestant voices when it comes to spiritual formation and worship, albeit always from a starting point of Baptist and evangelical convictions, or to heed greater attention to the biblical theme of unity with other believers who may not share our convictions on secondary and tertiary matters. The benefits for many readers will include greater exposure to Christian history (especially pre-Reformation history), engagement with lesser-known Baptist voices (especially from the British Isles), and reminders that the Baptist story, like the wider Christian story, has never been (and should never be) a predominantly white story recounted mostly in English. Herein lies much of the cure to Baptist insularity.

In the interest of full disclosure, I need to lay my own cards on the table. I am a fellow of the Center for Baptist Renewal and close friend of the co-editors. I was also involved in the planning stages of this book and dialogued with some of the contributors as they wrote their chapters. I am not a neutral reviewer and do not pretend to be such. I am a vocal proponent of evangelical Baptist catholicity. For that reason, I could hardly be more excited for the publication of *Baptists and the Christian Tradition*. It deserves a wide and reflective reading by Southern Baptist pastors and scholars. I would recommend reading it in conjunction with *Theological Retrieval for Evangelicals: Why We*



*Need Our Past to Have a Future* (Crossway, 2019), an excellent recent work in the same vein by Baptist pastor-theologian Gavin Ortlund.

Nathan A. Finn  
North Greenville University  
Tigerville, SC



***Early Reformation Covenant Theology: Early Reception of Swiss Reformed Thought, 1520-1555.* By Robert J. D. Wainwright. Reformed Academic Dissertation. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2020, xvii+416pp., \$59.99.**

While the concept of “covenant” has been fundamental to Reformed theology since the early days of the Reformation, the story of its origins and development has been contested by scholars for generations. In *Early Reformation Covenant Theology*, Robert Wainwright, a chaplain and fellow at Oriel College, Oxford University, mines the primary sources of both the Swiss and early English Reformers in an effort to reconstruct the story of the rise of covenant theology in the early Reformation (1520s-1550s). The book is an outstanding example of historical theology done well, where readers watch the emergence of a theological concept develop in the context of real-world circumstances without the interference of some predetermined consensus of a later period guiding the storyline.

Wainwright’s book, which is a revision of his Oxford dissertation, has a complex thesis, one that can be divided into three main concerns. First, he argues that we can discern a coherent tradition of covenant theology in three early Swiss theologians: Huldrych Zwingli, Heinrich Bullinger, and John Calvin. While each affirmed justification by faith (solafideism), they generally articulated the concept of covenant in a bilateral manner, meaning that both parties within the covenant are bound by mutual responsibilities: God graciously and freely provides for salvation in Christ to those who believe, and the redeemed are under the reciprocal obligation to keep the covenant by walking with him and keeping his law. This concept of “reciprocal” obligation on behalf of the Christian, Wainwright

maintains, is a central feature of Swiss covenant theology, and was responsible for the robust ethical approach to ecclesiastical reform carried out in Zurich and Geneva (pp. 331-32).

A second part of Wainwright's thesis concerns how Swiss covenant theology took root in England. Wainwright meticulously analyzes the writings of four early English Reformers—William Tyndale, Miles Coverdale, John Hooper, and John Bradford—to demonstrate that they heavily drew upon the covenantal concepts pioneered by their continental counterparts. A complicated picture emerges from these investigations. For Tyndale, Coverdale, and Hooper, Wainwright argues that we see the unmistakable evidence of Swiss covenantal themes appearing in their writings. This is demonstrated by the way these theologians closely coordinated Christian faith (i.e. justification) with moral responsibility (i.e. sanctification) within the context of covenant (p. 220). Hooper, for instance, believed "human works [are] worthless for salvation," yet he strongly maintained that the redeemed are obliged to keep the divine law and strive for godliness if they are to demonstrate that they are truly covenant children (p. 200).

Interestingly, John Bradford's theology took a different turn. Following Martin Bucer, the Strasbourg Reformer who rejected the conditionality associated with a bilateral understanding of covenant (p. 221), Bradford prominently featured the theme of divine election in his writings. Wainwright observes that this emphasis essentially prevented Bradford's thought from becoming overly saturated with covenantal and moral themes. Bradford was deeply concerned with Christian morality, but for him sanctification emerges from the gratitude and awe that arises from an awareness of divine election, not from the conditionality entailed in the bilateral understanding of covenant we find in Swiss theology (pp. 213-16). Bradford's theology reveals that different approaches to Reformed thought were present in these early years of the English Reformation.

In the third part of his thesis, Wainwright devotes two chapters to the sacramental theology of the Swiss and English Reformers. There he notes how Swiss covenantal themes appear in the sacramental writings of the early English Reformers, a point which further demonstrates how a specifically Swiss formulation of covenant was central to the systematic development of Reformed thought in England. "Where Swiss concepts of covenant were adopted by

Englishmen,” Wainwright observes, “their sacramental theologies evidence this reception” (p. 329).

One of the great values of the book is the way it restructures our understanding of how covenant theology emerged in the English Reformed tradition. While it is true that Luther’s solafideism was prominent among English Protestants during the 1520s, Wainwright notes how there was an identifiable pivot toward Swiss views after 1530, especially by Tyndale, Coverdale, and Hooper. Furthermore, Wainwright suggests that this early English approach to the covenant is a coherent tradition in the history of covenant theology—a school if you will—one which must be distinguished from the later federal theology of the Puritan tradition (pp. 347-48). The Puritans were moral precisianists who extensively elaborated the way the law of Christ is to guide every aspect of Christian behavior and national life. By contrast, the early English Reformed highlighted in this book were not as “precise” in their application of the bilateral covenant (p. 348). They were, Wainwright suggests in the title of his final chapter, “imprecisely Reformed.”

*Early Reformation Covenant Theology* is an outstanding example of a study in historical theology. Wainwright is thoroughly immersed in the primary and secondary sources, and he successfully draws readers into the nexus of two intellectual worlds: the Swiss and English Reformers. The vast apparatus of footnotes throughout its pages constantly reminds readers that the book is a dissertation, a work of meticulous scholarship aimed at a highly-trained academic audience. Yet this observation should not dissuade non-specialists from reading it. Wainwright’s clear writing renders the study accessible to laypersons who are fascinated with covenant theology and the Reformation, and who want to take the effort to work through this rich and rewarding study. I highly recommend it!

Robert W. Caldwell III  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Fort Worth, TX

***Crawford Howell Toy: The Man, the Scholar, the Teacher.* By Mikeal C. Parsons. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2019, 384pp., \$35.00.**

Scholars have largely ignored Crawford H. Toy (1836-1919), who was one of the most important figures in Southern Baptist history. He was the first professor dismissed from an American theological faculty for holding liberal theology. His dismissal in 1879, along with those of two missionary appointees in 1881, provoked extensive controversy over the doctrine of inspiration. James Boyce and John Broadus, professors at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, led Southern Baptists through this controversy and established a precedent that Southern Baptists have summoned repeatedly in denominational controversies ever since.

Mikeal C. Parsons, who holds the Macon Chair in Religion at Baylor University, has published the first scholarly biography of Crawford Toy. It is well researched and contributes significantly to Southern Baptist history and to American religious history generally.

Parsons tells the story of Toy's life well. Toy attended the University of Virginia where he was converted in 1854 and joined the Charlottesville Baptist Church, where John Broadus was pastor. Through Broadus's preaching, Toy felt a call to serve as a preacher of the gospel on the mission field and was appointed to Japan, but the Civil War wrecked his plans. Toy served in the Confederate army and after the war studied in Germany for two years. He taught Old Testament and Hebrew at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1869 until his dismissal in 1879. He taught at Harvard University from 1880 until his retirement in 1909.

Parsons also includes chapters on Toy's wife, Nancy Saunders Toy, and Toy's student and colleague, David Gordon Lyon, as well as an appendix disentangling the conflicting accounts of Toy's courtship of Lottie Moon. Parsons's extensive research uncovered details and facts that add to our knowledge of Toy's life and correct some mistakes in the historiography.

The account of Toy's dismissal and its causes will attract the most interest. When students and a few newspapers raised questions about Toy's orthodoxy in the late 1870s, Boyce and Broadus began questioning and remonstrating with him. By late 1878 they supported

his resignation. Toy defended his view of inspiration before seminary trustees in 1879, but after examining him, they voted 16-2 to dismiss him.

Parsons argues that Boyce and Broadus conspired discredibly to oust Toy. He contends that Boyce became jealous and hostile toward Toy, and that Broadus became fearful of his own position and so turned against Toy. The two then engaged in “character assassination” (p. 57) to get him fired, under the pretense that Toy’s continuation would provoke a public controversy that would destroy the seminary (pp. 55-7, 68-87).

Parsons suggests also that Toy’s views were sufficiently conservative to be acceptable at Southern Seminary. He bases this on the fact that trustees did not charge Toy with heresy, and on the insinuation that Toy’s colleagues Broadus and William H. Whitsitt shared Toy’s view of inspiration. Broadus, however, most certainly did not hold Toy’s view. Whitsitt, who joined the faculty in 1872 and who shared an apartment with Toy from 1877 to 1879, apparently did, but he kept it a secret hidden in his diary until 2009, when his diaries were opened to researchers.

Whitsitt claimed in diary entries in 1886 that Boyce and Broadus schemed maliciously and deceitfully to force Toy out. He claimed that Boyce was motivated by jealousy of Toy’s growing fame and suggested that Broadus was “led around by the nose” by Toy until Broadus became afraid of opposition and fell in with Boyce. It was their “animosity” that drove them to lay a trap into which Toy unwittingly fell.

In the diaries, Whitsitt regularly described his colleagues, Boyce, Broadus, and even Toy, in terms filled with contempt and patronizing pity. He secretly despised them. Whitsitt boasted that he was too intelligent to be trapped and destroyed the same way that Toy was, and so he disingenuously convinced Broadus that he rejected Toy’s views.

In his resignation letter and in articles through 1881, Toy defended his views as orthodox. He claimed that he still believed in the fact of inspiration in the Bible, but he redefined inspiration to involve the subjective element only. The Bible’s value, Toy held, was not in its uninformed and often erroneous literal teaching, but rather in the fact that its authors sensed spiritual reality and were able

to communicate this spiritual sense through unreliable outward forms. The Bible was inspired, Toy held, because it inspired inward religious consciousness.

Parsons portrays Toy as holding broadly traditional views. Although Parsons discusses Toy's 1874-75 Old Testament lectures, which are mostly traditional, he omits discussion of his 1877-78 lectures, which were thoroughly liberal. In these later lectures Toy taught that the Old Testament's history was often false and that many prophecies were never fulfilled. The Old Testament's portrayal of Israel's history and of the origins of their religion, Toy said, was a fictional invention, for its ritual and ideas evolved slowly and did not coalesce until the era of the exile, when Ezra and his colleagues composed most of the Old Testament corpus from various pre-existing materials and imposed their ideas on the whole history as if God had given it all through Moses at Mount Sinai in the wilderness. The Old Testament passages interpreted as Messianic in the New Testament did not in fact teach anything about Jesus. Jesus could nevertheless be construed, Toy explained, as a spiritual fulfillment of the all the Old Testament teachings that God would bless the nation of Israel outwardly [H. C. Smith, Lecture Notes 1877-78, SBTS].

Toy's views had changed dramatically. These were the conclusions of the antisupernaturalist historical criticism of the Bible. Toy embraced naturalism and rejected the objective truth of the Bible's accounts of miracles, creation, and God's activity generally. He held that Moses probably provided the germinal principles that evolved into monotheistic Judaism, just as Jesus provided the germinal principles that developed into Christianity.

Toy's teaching of the historical-critical evolutionary reconstruction of the history of Israel showed that his new view of inspiration represented a substantial departure from orthodox interpretation of the Bible. Toy's defection from traditional views had matured well before Boyce and Broadus asked him to resign. Toy himself agreed in 1893 with Broadus's contention that Toy's diverging views required his dismissal: "You are quite right in describing my withdrawal as a necessary result of important differences of opinion" (Toy to Broadus, 20 May 1893).

Parsons suggests also that Toy's views remained rather conservative for over a decade at Harvard, and it was only in the late 1890s

that he “evolved beyond traditional Christian doctrine” (p. 283). He appeals to the fact that Toy joined the Old Cambridge Baptist Church and attended there regularly until his marriage in 1888, after which the couple attended but did not join the Cambridge First Parish Unitarian Church. He argues that they gathered with the Unitarians chiefly to build their social network. Parsons suggests that this is evidence that Toy was not so radical. From any remotely evangelical or Baptist viewpoint, however, abandoning a Trinitarian communion for Unitarian worship would constitute apostasy.

Parsons seems to place little importance on Toy’s more radical views. Parsons gives no notice to such matters as Toy’s belief, published in 1891, that the Gospel of John was thoroughly unreliable, but that the other gospels show enough of the “spirit of his [Jesus’] instruction” to demonstrate that Christianity evolved from the “germinal principles” of Jesus’ teaching, or that Jesus claimed to be human only and in no sense divine, or that Jesus rejected any notion of being a sacrifice for sin, or that he was opposed to any notion of justification by faith, or that salvation was by obedience—“it is individual conduct that determines men’s destinies” [“The Relation of Jesus to Christianity,” 1891].

Parsons defends at some length Toy’s 1907 letter in which he affirmed William James’s pragmatic philosophy, and confessed that “I find myself ready to accept the doctrine that ‘truth’ is not a static and stagnant thing, but a thing that we are constantly creating for ourselves” (pp. 280-2).

And, in defense of Toy’s more radical views, Parsons argues that to the extent that Toy became radical, it wasn’t his fault. “Those most responsible for his ‘heresies,’” Parsons says, were Boyce and Broadus, for they are the ones who expelled him from the conservative milieu of Southern Seminary and forced him to take up residence and work amid Harvard’s rationalistic culture (pp. 275-6).

Whether or not readers agree with Parsons’s interpretations of Toy’s career, all will appreciate the significance of this scholarly biography of this influential figure.

Gregory A. Wills  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Fort Worth, TX

***Imagining Theology: Encounters with God in Scripture, Interpretation, and Aesthetics.* By Garrett Green. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020, 288pp., \$63.00.**

Building upon a career of reigniting interest in the role of imagination in theology, Garrett Green, professor emeritus at Connecticut College, explores in his most recent work the implications for theology of a Christian imagination paradigmatically revealed in Scripture. *Imagination* in Green's thinking "functions throughout human experience, enabling us to envision the whole of things, to focus our minds to perceive how things are ordered and organized" (p. 10). Understanding the imaginative potency of Scripture combats a modern scientific approach to theology characteristic of theological liberalism with a normative Christian imagination, "the employment of the human imagination in ways that remain faithful to the biblical paradigm" (p. 22).

Green opens by presenting guidelines for discerning such a normative use of imagination and then develops a hermeneutic that he applies in a series of essays on various theological issues. His guidelines include the following:

1. The Bible embodies the concrete paradigm on which all genuine Christian theology is based, enabling the faithful to rightly imagine God (p. 12).
2. Right imagination of God is a movement not only of the head—our mind or intellect—but also of the heart, our feelings and affective responses (p. 14).
3. The theological use of imagination must always remain open to the Mystery of God, resisting every temptation to rationalize, demystify, or control the divine (p. 15).
4. In accordance with its biblical paradigm, theological imagination always remains open to novelty, eschewing every attempt at metanarrative or systematic closure (p. 16).
5. Because theological imagination is dependent on the Holy Spirit, it is an enterprise of faith, appearing uncertain and circular from a worldly perspective, depending on the certainty of God's revelation for its claim to truth (p. 19).
6. Theological imagination belongs to the present age, the *regnum gratiae*, the era of our earthly pilgrimage, when we



“see through a glass, darkly.” We will no longer need to imagine God in the world to come, when we shall see him “face to face” (p. 21).

These rules provide a hermeneutical framework that resists “de-mythologizing” Scripture, instead insisting that in Scripture “the form *is* the content: that is, the meaning of a religious world is precisely its shape, the concrete web of ideas, social interactions, symbolic forms, and so on, that give it the peculiar qualities that make it what it is and not something else” (p. 30). Form and content, Green argues, is a false distinction employed by both those rejecting the historicity of Scripture and often those defending it. A better way would be to see the unity of Scripture as an expression of imagination that then shapes our imagination. On this basis, Green suggests, theology that recognizes “the fundamentally imaginative nature of religious belief and practice” (p. 58) is no threat to Christianity; rather, “the believer can affirm the truth of revelation, without shame or embarrassment, in spite of its imaginative character” (p. 61), and in fact “the church is a school of the imagination, the place where we learn to think, feel, see, and hear as followers of the crucified and risen Messiah” (p. 72). This, he suggests, was the project of his former Yale professor Hans Frei, who describes Scripture as a “realistic story” in which its truth is inherently embodied in the literary narrative (p. 84). A biblically-formed imagination, then, provides a lens that “allows us to make sense of what we perceive” in the world (p. 100), considers man-made art to be a doxological tool that “points aesthetically toward the God of the Bible” (p. 120), suggests that the metaphors Scripture uses “say what cannot be said in any other way” (p. 129), and helps Christians “apprehend another world” (p. 193) that forms an eschatological hope in the midst of a secular, pluralistic age.

Green’s argument provides a refreshing corrective for the frequently anti-aesthetic, overly-rationalistic emphasis of much of modern evangelical theologians. He is right: the Spirit-inspired word is a work of literature employing a vast variety of aesthetic devices to communicate what could not be otherwise. Since God is a spirit and does not have a body like man, since he is infinite, eternal, and total other than us, God chose to use particular aesthetic expressions that renew our minds (Rom. 12:2) and thus form our imagination of who God is.

Yet Green sometimes swings the pendulum too far into a

neo-orthodox ambivalence regarding the historical veracity of biblical narratives (p. 86). He criticizes Barth's distinction between *Geschichte* and *Historie* (p. 31), while at the same time asserting his own distinction between "our scientific understanding of the origin of species" and "our theological apprehension of the origin of the world. Relativism no longer threatens to undo our grasp on reality because we no longer imagine that we need universal principles to link all human knowledge systematically or to ground it in incorrigible truth" (p. 38). In my opinion, recent work by evangelical authors like Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine* among others, carves out a more conservative position that does not fall into the traps of higher critical cultural-linguistic philosophy on the one hand or what Vanhoozer calls the "dedramatized propositionalism" that characterizes many forms of the historical-grammatical philosophy.

Nevertheless, Green's articulation of a Scripture-formed imagination, particularly in the early chapters, contains many helpful principles that would aid a conservative evangelical in recovering from Scripture a "normative way to imagine God" (p. 14).

Scott Aniol  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Fort Worth, TX



***T&T Clark Handbook of Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics.***  
**Edited by Uriah Y. Kim and Seung Ai Yang. New York: T&T Clark, 2019, 544pp., \$176.**

This volume is a collection of articles from a wide range of Asian voices in their American contexts among Filipino, Vietnamese, Japanese, Indian, Korean, and Chinese populations. The biblical scholars represented here voice their views that have been shaped by their sociocultural contexts. The articles are divided into three sections—contexts, methods, and texts—the parts that play a role in the process of interpretation. Altogether, thirty-seven biblical scholars of Asian descent have taken part to produce this collection of essays that bring to light the way Asian Americans have understood

biblical hermeneutics.

The first section of seven articles on contexts starts with Tamara Ho's discussion on the complex heterogeneity of the Asian American identity with a religious experience shaped by the numerous world religions which are found in Asian countries. Russell Jeung's article looks at Chinese Americans, their history of immigration, and their "dizzying array of beliefs and traditions" that formed through their differences in income, generation, and familial roots. Lester Ruiz portrays the Filipinos in their multiculturalism in the aftermath of colonialism as they worked through estrangement and hospitality, which are also found in the biblical tradition. Jaisy Joseph and Khyati Joshi examine how Indians have stepped into an interreligious consciousness for interfaith dialogue among the various religious groups in the Indian community. Mai-Anh Le Tran speaks of the turbulent times in Vietnamese history and how their life in America has afforded greater freedom and much religious hybridization. Jung Ha Kim gives an account of Korean American hermeneutics with an overview of the prevalent Korean Christian church culture in the United States. Joanne Doi provides a glimpse into the Japanese mindset that moved from its horrific past of unjust wartime incarceration toward solidarity and remembrance in the present moment: just as wounds remain on the risen body of Christ, the Japanese hold to their past and look ahead toward reconciliation and progress. These experiences of Asians in America situate the reading of the biblical text from their challenges and struggles toward a redemptive future found in the shared Christian hope.

The next section on methods offers some needed reflection on the current methods of interpretation. Here, traditional approaches like historical criticism (Mary Foskett), social criticism (D. N. Premnath), literary criticism (Jin Young Choi), and theological reflection (Bo Lim) are brought into light in connection with the various Asian American experiences. Other non-traditional approaches are also included in the survey. Each of these articles demonstrates an understanding of the field by tracing the history of these methods while also combining the Asian American experience and the effects it has had on the discipline. Theological wisdom is needed to navigate one's path through these discussions.

The third and final section on texts is the largest constituent of

the volume. The twenty-two articles provide insights through the Asian American lens. The general pattern of exegesis is generally in the following steps: observations of the text, an account of the traditional readings of the text, and the perspective of the text through the contributor's history and personal experience. Some memorable, meaningful, and creative connections are presented in this section. For example, the exile of Cain and God's continued protection in Genesis are compared to the flourishing of Asian immigrants with opportunities in the new land (Hemchand Gossai). Zelophehad's daughters in Numbers 27 and 36 uphold family honor as exemplary women in line with the filial piety of Confucianism (Sonia Wong). The book of Job undergirds the voice of the marginalized in the Chinese diaspora experience (Chloe Sun). Daniel in his Babylonian exile shows how Korean Americans face the challenges of cultural adaptation and assimilation (John Ahn). Jesus's call to discipleship in Matthew strongly points to filial piety and radical discipleship among Chinese Christians (Diane Chen). The parable of the great banquet in Luke 15 offers insight into the privileged status of certain South Asian immigrants, moving them toward greater empathy for the disadvantaged in society (Raj Nadella). Readers will need to exercise careful discernment as they work through these articles.

The final product of this volume is a considerable achievement in bringing together the minority voices of biblical studies as their stories and struggles are heard along with their interpretation. The people, their approach, and their interpretation of the biblical text pull together a rich chorus of witnesses that gives the biblical texts significance in their respective Asian, yet still American, contexts. With the theological spectrum being so wide among the contributors, the handbook does not suggest that there exists any collective uniformity among them nor does it show that Asians conform to any singular dogma or tradition, but the collection does allow for these different voices of different backgrounds to be heard and appreciated. Any reader of biblical texts will naturally bring their background and training to their understanding of the biblical text. Missiologists have long identified the contextualized reception of Jesus's message throughout church history. While this handbook has done a great service to show that the biblical text and its redemptive story have affected Asian

Americans in ways profoundly contextualized in their cultural space and varying ecclesial traditions, it must also be noted that some of the contributions found in this volume fall outside the consensus of Christian orthodoxy.

Donald Kim  
Scarborough College  
Fort Worth, TX



***A Survey of World Missions.* By Robin Hadaway. Nashville: B&H, 2020, 352pp., \$29.99.**

Robin Hadaway's survey of world missions issues a fresh study on the range of ideas in missiology. He argues for renewed attention to the subject because while "all evangelical Christians understand the world desperately needs Christ and the task of proclaiming the gospel is great," agreement on approaching the missionary task is markedly different among Christ-followers (p. 16). The author enters the genre with fresh perspectives on mission philosophies, strategies, and methods. Hadaway, missionary scholar and practitioner, engages the reader with both densities of research and examples from his own missionary experiences. Drawing from his Baptist context, readers interested in the various nuances of missions among the Southern Baptist denomination will find a concentrated sampling of missiological insights from its primary international sending support structure, the International Mission Board. As suggested in the title, Hadaway surveys the missiological research and application around broader categories "not to limit one's thinking, but to help the missiologist and practitioner process where they fit along the mission spectrum" (p. 16). The author builds his study on biblical premises and leads the reader to consider the various missiological studies addressed both historically and in contemporary perspective (p. 17).

After an introduction highlighting the present realities in missiological studies, Hadaway leads the reader through the biblical, theological, and historical foundations in evangelical missions.

Setting the Bible as the “foundation and basis for missions” (p. 17), the author sets missions within the Genesis to Revelation storyline of Scripture consisting “of the activities of God and his representative to bring Adam’s race back into fellowship with him through his Son, Jesus Christ” (p. 18). Hadaway’s treatment of the biblical-theological framework for missions or specific texts is broad but not deep as he surveys the foundational landscape of the field. The theological foundation for missions focuses primarily on soteriology and its relationship to evangelism as well as the role of the church in carrying out the missionary task. Hadaway devotes space to surveying the various views on salvation, including everything from pluralism to Calvinism. The author further argues that the responsibility of proclaiming the gospel in mission lies within every church (p. 50). The historical foundation of Hadaway’s survey includes major epochs of mission history as well as unique biographical sketches of some who shaped the philosophies and methodologies of missions today.

In chapters five through seven, the author offers an array of contexts for missions. Hadaway’s overview of world religions defines major (and minor) world religions with the focus on the need for contextualizing the gospel to communicate effectively in the various worldviews around the world. Although contextualizing is a focus and encouragement to the reader, the author concludes by asserting, “At the end of the day, each person from other faiths must be asked to turn from that belief system and follow Christ” (p. 131). Thus, his sections on worldview and contextualization (chapters six and seven) delve deeper into an analysis of what that entails. Hadaway’s survey of contextual approaches in gospel proclamation specifies current realities in seeking to address the need for further studies. The author writes, “Currently, contextualization is probably the most important, yet controversial concept in missions ... and challenges the missionary to his core” (p. 189). This sentiment builds his case for understanding mission philosophies, strategies, and methods.

Hadaway’s survey of the various philosophies, strategies, and methods guides the reader in considering how one should think about the approach to mission, specifically how the missionary evangelizes toward church planting. Helpful to this section are unique strategies implemented currently on the mission field. Although the author does not offer critiques of the various approaches, he postulates

enough information to inform the reader of current mission praxis. Hadaway's final two chapters briefly examine the role of the mission agency in the life of a missionary as well as the author's perspective on missions in the twenty-first century.

The author does not shy from illuminating the reader to a wide range of beliefs and approaches to mission that deserves further study. Therefore, educators, students, church leaders, and missionary practitioners will appreciate the array of issues and ideas that offers context in grappling with the church's role in the mission of God. Furthermore, the author's experience on the mission field and familiarity with leadership in mission agencies bolsters his sections on mission strategy and method, having tried or viewed first-hand their strengths, weaknesses, and need for inclusion of further study.

Since this is a survey, the challenge for the reader is the lack of clarity on the author's missiological positions. The basis of analysis lends more toward a researched overview of topics and not a formal stance on missiological principles. Hadaway is clear on the biblical basis for mission and his articulation of the gospel. However, on the topics presented, readers will find minimal subjective assertions throughout the book.

In sum, *A Survey of World Missions* is a gift to the church and academia in helping think through the essential categories for evangelical missions, especially as it updates the field of study with fresh missiological considerations. Although all evangelical Christians will benefit from thinking through this survey, the book will enlighten and inspire those who claim Southern Baptist roots. Classrooms will want to utilize this resource as a springboard for thinking more deeply about the church on mission. Hadaway's final words offer great encouragement in recognizing that "although Christian missions may seem to the observer as haphazardly planned, . . . God takes the long view and sees a greater purpose for the ages" (p. 288). Hadaway writes with God's perspective in view, and for that reason, this book will serve the church and her mission well.

Andy Pettigrew  
International Mission Board  
Richmond, VA

***Christian Theology: The Biblical Story and Our Faith.* By Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson. Nashville: B&H, 2020, 624pp., \$49.99.**

Chris Morgan, dean of the School of Christian Studies at California Baptist University, has provided Christ's church with a gift in his *Christian Theology: The Biblical Story and Our Faith*. Written with Robert Peterson, Morgan's one-volume systematic theology should be the go-to introduction for evangelical Christians, and especially for Baptists and other credobaptists, to the discipline. While other popular one-volume systematic theologies will surely continue to be read and used profitably, Morgan's new text can be considered the gold standard for evangelical, credobaptist, single-volume introductions to Christian theology.

Several unique features of Morgan's book catapult it to the top of the list, but most significant is its incorporation of biblical theology to the task of systematic theology. Morgan, with contributions from Peterson, discusses each major Christian doctrine in the context of "the biblical story line of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation" (p. 1). While other recent systematic texts give credence to the grand narrative of Scripture and its importance for theology, Morgan and Peterson's is among the first, especially within a Baptist context, to do so considering each doctrine rather than merely as prolegomena.

In addition to this thoroughgoing biblical-theological approach, Morgan and Peterson also make sure to discuss each doctrine's exegetical basis from select passages of Scripture, each doctrine's impact on the life of the individual believer and on the whole church, and each doctrine's place in the Christian tradition and its relation to classic Christian confessions of faith. Fundamentally, Morgan and Peterson describe their work as "evangelical, written with a high view of Scripture and consistent with historic confessions of faith" (p. 1). In other words, in *Christian Theology* we have a single-volume, single-author (by which I mean, not an edited, multi-authored text) introduction to systematic theology that is grounded in an inerrant and fully authoritative view of Scripture, rooted in and faithful to the best of the Christian tradition, shaped by the biblical story, and aimed at the life of the believer and the health of the church. And, to top it off, this book is imminently readable and accessible.



These characteristics, and particularly their combination, sets Morgan and Peterson's text apart from other one-volume systematic theologies currently used by evangelicals, and particularly by evangelical credobaptists. On the one hand, the fact that this volume is not an edited, multi-authored text gives it a coherence that is not always evident in volumes with multiple contributors from various theological backgrounds and with various theological commitments. On the other hand, among single-authored systematics popular in evangelical circles, Morgan and Peterson are unique in their combined emphasis on exegetical rationale, context in the biblical story, and relation to the Christian tradition for each doctrine. Other single-authored systematics, and especially those used by credobaptists, often lack significant engagement with one or more of these important aspects of the task of systematic theology, whereas Morgan and Peterson consistently emphasize the necessity of all three.

Although *Christian Theology* is, in my estimation, the gold standard for evangelical, credobaptist, single-volume systematic theologies, I should also note that this is an *introduction* to the discipline. There are aspects of the discussion of each doctrine that could be expanded, especially as it relates to exegetical basis, historical context, and dogmatic location. Regarding the first two, this is simply a matter of proliferating the foundational work that Morgan and Peterson already provide in their chapters. In other words, there is always more to say about the biblical basis for a doctrine and its place in Christian history and thought.

However, regarding the third – dogmatic location – readers should be aware that *Christian Theology* only engages in basic dogmatic questions when it comes to most doctrines. For instance, regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, the authors are clear that God is one God who exists in three Persons, and they even refer to the eternal relations of origin (pp. 102–103). When it comes to explaining the latter concept and its biblical basis, however, there is little discussion. The emphasis, as Morgan and Peterson state in the introduction, is on the most basic affirmations of the Christian faith. The same could be said, for example, of mentions of the doctrine of simplicity (p. 102) and of the heresy of Apollinarianism. With respect to the former, there is only passing reference, while with the latter the authors define the heresy's meaning but without mention of the

doctrine of dyothelitism or its relation to the doctrine of the Trinity. I want to emphasize that these observations are not criticisms, but only intended to highlight the *introductory* nature of the text. For those who taste and see the beauty of the discipline of systematic theology after reading *Christian Theology*, more work will be required to plumb the dogmatic depths of the doctrines discussed. Again, this aspect of the book is noted by the authors, and each chapter contains a list of resources for further reading to aid those who wish to explore further.

In summary, *Christian Theology* is a highly accessible, readable introduction to the Christian faith that is at once academically stimulating and devotionally engaging, a rare single-volume systematic that gives proper attention to exegesis, biblical theology, historical theology, and ecclesial application. It should be used in churches and classrooms alike. I cannot recommend it highly enough.

Matthew Y. Emerson  
Oklahoma Baptist University  
Shawnee, OK



***A Concise Dictionary of Theological Terms.* By Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson. Nashville: B&H, 2020, 192pp., \$19.99.**

This succinct reference book contains over 700 entries from, “the Bible, theology, church history (people, movements, councils, and documents), philosophy, church practice, and more” (p. x). Entries include topics such as: aseity of God, authority of Scripture, biblical theology, Christ’s names and titles, homiletics, inerrancy, simplicity of God, and *sola scriptura*. *A Concise Dictionary of Theological Terms* serves as the companion piece to Morgan’s *Christian Theology: The Biblical Story and Our Faith* textbook.

Each entry is cleanly defined from a Baptist framework built upon an evangelical foundation. Most of the terms contain further references so that the reader can locate and connect terms to their larger theological conversations. For instance, “Council of Chalcedon” is

summarized and then sends the reader to “Deity and Humanity of Christ.” Many of the terms also contain helpful biblical references so that those seeking further Bible study can easily locate applicable passages. The single-column format helps the user to utilize the reference work more like a book rather than a typical two-column dictionary.

This volume meets two major needs. First, it will be effective as a textbook in theology classes. It is a fitting companion to a theology textbook, particularly Morgan’s, but it would also work well with others. Second, if scholars, pastors, students, and church leaders download the Kindle version, this volume could effectively replace any tendency to search Wikipedia or Theopedia for such terms. Solid theology clearly and concisely written could be as close as our phones. Morgan and Peterson’s *Dictionary* will serve as a valuable resource for scholars, pastors, students, denominational leaders, and church leaders.

Benjamin Michael Skaug  
Immanuel Baptist Church  
Highland, CA



***How the Spirit Became God: The Mosaic of Early Christian Pneumatology.* By Kyle R. Hughes. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020, vii+162pp., \$23.00.**

This volume by Kyle R. Hughes, History Department chair at Whitefield Academy in Atlanta, carries on his project that started with *The Trinitarian Testimony of the Spirit: Prosopological Exegesis and the Development of Pre-Nicene Pneumatology* (Brill, 2018). In that work, he primarily focused on the development of early Christian pneumatology in Justin, Irenaeus, and Tertullian. In this present work, Hughes surveys the development of pneumatology from Pentecost to the Council of Constantinople using the illustration of a mosaic that was built tile by tile into a full divine pneumatology.

In the first chapter, Hughes tackles “The Problem of the Holy Spirit.” Here, he introduces the issue by noting the difficulty artists

and iconographers face with respect to the Holy Spirit. For the Father and Son, there is a type of personification in biblical portrayals that artists can draw (for example, the Father as an old man with a white beard or a depiction of the Son incarnate). However, aside from a dove, the Spirit is often portrayed inanimately as one who is “poured out” or “fills.” Given that these depictions might lend one toward seeing the Spirit as some sort of force rather than person, Hughes notes that interpreters had a less difficult task in talking about the Father and Son as personal beings. Nonetheless, the early church eventually settled on the Trinitarian formula of one God in three persons.

In chapter two, Hughes asserts that the Gospel of John in particular offers the clearest biblical portrait of the Spirit’s distinct personhood. In particular, “The Johannine presentation of the Paraclete sets up an enormously important idea that will be of great significance for later Christian writers’ theology of the Holy Spirit” (p. 22), namely the Spirit’s prosopological speech in divine revelation. Chapter three focuses principally on the Epistle of Barnabas and the work of Justin Martyr, showing the Old Testament’s testimony to the Spirit as the linchpin for developing a specific Christian identity over and against Judaism.

Chapter four is in many ways a condensed argument from *The Trinitarian Testimony of the Spirit*, in which Hughes lays out the development of the Spirit as a divine person in the theologies of Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian. Hughes shows that these early Christian theologians made important contributions to second- and third-century pneumatological development by making “use of an ancient person-centered reading strategy that scholars have termed prosopological exegesis” that personified the Spirit in particular biblical texts in which he seemed to be speaking in a distinct, volitional manner (p. 74). In chapter five, Hughes furthers the discussion by giving attention to the divine economy “tile” Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen contribute to the development of a pneumatological mosaic. Origen’s conclusions about the Spirit’s role in divine revelation, Hughes asserts, especially laid the foundation for later Christians to describe the Spirit as an eternally present person with the Godhead.

Chapter six pulls the pneumatological development together, noting chiefly how Athanasius, Didymus the Blind, and Basil of

Caesarea helped codify the pro-Nicene articulation of the Spirit's full divinity. Hughes notes that Athanasius "broke a long tradition of subordinationism in affirming the coequality of the Spirit with the Father and the Son, emphasizing the unity of action and identity in the Trinity" (p. 128). That said, Hughes asserts that Didymus and Basil helped clarify that which Athanasius left "somewhat underdeveloped" through reflections on the Spirit's role in sanctification and liturgy. The seventh chapter acts as a conclusion, encouraging Christians to receive "the invitation of the Spirit: to make space in our lives for the Spirit's life-giving breath to create in us the very character of Christ, by which we may behold God face-to-face" (p. 139).

The strengths of this book are legion—from its succinctness to its clarity to its theological precision—but its greatest contribution is its avoidance of generalizing early pneumatological development. While nominalism can die the death of a thousand qualifications, Hughes finds the balance between surveying the development, while also deftly noting the nuances in the articulations of certain theologians and time periods in the first five centuries of Christian pneumatological reflection. This type of careful work is difficult in such a brief space of under 150 pages, and yet Hughes accomplishes this task exceptionally well. The only major critique worth noting is the lack of attention to the two Gregories. Of the Cappadocians, Basil is an obvious forerunner to Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa; however, in a chapter in which Hughes seeks to show the final major development of a fully divine pneumatology, he underemphasizes the two men—Nazianzus earns two citations and Nyssa earns zero—who fleshed out Basil's theology with the most rigor. If one were seeking to put a bow on the development of fully divine pneumatology, Nazianzus and/or Nyssa would have been more apt as the final tiles to the mosaic.

Hughes notes that his audience is broad, aiming at scholars, pastors, students, and laypersons (p. 13). He accomplished this task wonderfully, balancing scholarly rigor with accessible and clear prose and storytelling. This book is recommended for anyone seeking to understand how and why Christians confess the Holy Spirit's full divinity.

Brandon D. Smith  
Cedarville University  
Cedarville, OH



***Resilient Faith: How the Early Christian “Third Way” Changed the World.* By Gerald L. Sittser. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2019, xv+222pp., \$19.99.**

Gerald L. Sittser serves as professor of theology and as senior fellow and researcher in the Office of Church Engagement at Whitworth University in Spokane. He has taught at Whitworth since 1989.

*Resilient Faith: How the Early Christian “Third Way” Changed the World* is Sittser’s ninth book. Previous works by Sittser recognized for their excellence include: *When God Doesn’t Answer Your Prayer* (Zondervan, 2003), which received the 2005 Gold Medallion Award in the Christian Living category from the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association, and *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries* (IVP, 2007), which won the Logos Book Award.

The origin of *Resilient Faith* may be traced to Sittser’s study of a second-century document, “The So-Called Letter to Diognetus,” many years ago. In this writing, an unknown author references the Christian movement as the “third race” (which Sittser renders as the “third way”) to distinguish it from the Roman (“first race”) and Jewish ways of life (“second race”). This classification of Christianity intrigued Sittser and led him to ask, “What made early Christianity so unique that ancient people regarded it as a ‘third way,’ a set of beliefs and practices different from the Roman and Jewish ways?” Furthermore, “Why did Christianity’s distinctiveness attract some to the faith and repel others?” His desire to understand the rise of Christianity within its historical and cultural context is similar to portions of Fox’s *Pagans and Christians* (pp. 263-335) and Green’s *Evangelism in the Early Church* (pp. 29-75).

Sittser’s exploration of these questions is motivated by a greater concern than merely tracing the rise of Christianity, however. His larger goal is to provide guidance to modern Christians who desire

to see a resurgence of Christianity. He argues that early Christianity supplies the beliefs, practices, and approach needed for renewal. In regard to approach, Sittser posits that the earliest believers neither accommodated nor isolated themselves from the culture. Instead, they “immersed themselves in the culture as followers of Jesus and agents of the kingdom, influencing it from within both as individuals and as a community” (p. 174). While this is true, at times Christians did separate themselves from certain professions (e.g., actor) and cultural spheres (e.g., gladiatorial events).

Sittser begins by contrasting the context of the modern church with that of the ancient church (Chapter one: “Then and Now”). Noting that modern Christianity no longer dominates over the culture as it did in the past, he argues that many in the West today question Christianity’s relevance due to the fact that Christians have failed to demonstrate the uniqueness of their beliefs and practices. Stated differently, modern believers have compromised Christianity’s identity and the gospel message (p. 12). In contrast, the ancient church displayed a distinctive identity and articulated a unique message that centered on Jesus (p. 16). They regarded him as the new way and sought to live as citizens of God’s divine kingdom within the context of the Roman Empire. Also, the ancient church took spiritual formation seriously, giving a great deal of time and effort to shaping Christian disciples (p. 17).

In Chapters two through eight, which comprises the bulk of the writing, Sittser explores selected topics related to his two key questions of concern. This review will comment on several chapters.

In the “Old World and New World” (Chapter two), Sittser contrasts the “old world” of the Romans with the “new world” brought by Christianity. In the new world of Christianity, Jesus stood as the distinguishing feature (p. 19). Christians, unlike their polytheistic neighbors, worshipped him exclusively (p. 24), viewing him as the Son of God and Savior of the world (p. 34). In addition, Christians refrained from participating in the imperial cult (p. 21). At times, their behavior incurred pagan criticism as seen in the writings of Pliny (pp. 19-22) and Porphyry (pp. 34-35).

In Chapter five (“Authority”), Sittser examines three sources of authority that not only distinguished the church but also kept it strong and stable: belief, book, and bishop. Belief refers to the “rule

of faith” (p. 89) or “orthodoxy” (p. 91). The church’s beliefs conflicted sharply with Gnostic teaching (pp. 85-88), which presented a completely different worldview. Sittser also suggests that Christian beliefs arose independently on a grassroots level as opposed to “top down” (p. 91).

The second source of authority, the Bible, also played an important role in the life of the church. Believers read it personally, listened to others read it, memorized it, copied it, distributed it, and gathered weekly (sometimes even daily) to learn from it (pp. 91-93).

Another source of authority was the office of the bishop. The earliest believers regarded bishops as leaders who continued the apostles’ ministry (p. 93). Bishops exercised authority over the churches through their teaching, shepherding, and care. They also bore witness to the life and teachings of Jesus (p. 96).

In the final chapter (“Crossing to Safety”), Sittser discusses the catechumenate, the early church’s three-year process for bringing pagans into the church. The gulf was so wide that prospective converts needed a bridge to assist them in crossing over to a position of functional discipleship. For Sittser, this type of intense discipleship is absolutely necessary for a resurgence of the church today (pp. 177-178).

The author concludes with a helpful annotated bibliography of early Christian literature (pp. 179-196). This section includes a categorized list of primary (e.g., martyrdom accounts, church manuals) and secondary sources (e.g., early Christian theology, worship, Christian life in the world). It contains a wealth of information.

Sittser’s *Resilient Faith* makes a much-needed contribution to the modern church. He successfully identifies the beliefs, practices, and approach that distinguished the ancient church and contributed to its growth, including: a firm commitment to Jesus as the center of a believer’s life and existence, a strong personal ethic, service to the “least of these” motivated by a desire to follow Christ’s example; and a dedication to worship which in turn prepared believers to live in the world, avoiding both the path of accommodation and isolation and practicing a rigorous program of discipleship.

Those who wish to see the church experience a resurgence today should study Sittser’s book carefully. While recognizing that the early



centuries were not a golden age of Christianity, he calls his readers to follow the ancient church's example at its best. Highly recommended.

Michael Bryant  
Charleston Southern University  
Charleston, SC

## BOOK NOTES

We continue with the overview of notable works that have been published in recent months, a feature initiated in the previous issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology*. Doing so allows us to bring to the attention of our readers additional significant titles from various fields. “Theology Applied” has served as the theme for this issue and we will give greater attention to books that fall into this broad category, beginning with Christian worldview and cultural engagement.

### CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW AND CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

A number of key works in this area are truly noteworthy. In *The Gathering Storm* (Nashville: Nelson, 2020), R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary, brilliantly addresses the primary worldview, cultural, and moral challenges of our day, showing us why these issues are so critical for us to comprehend. Recognizing that all too often Christians have struggled to grasp the far-reaching implications of these matters, this timely and theologically informed volume enables us to see with greater clarity the advances of secularization in all spheres of life. Moreover, Mohler, one of the twenty-first century’s most incisive Christian thinkers, offers wise counsel and cultural commentary connected with an urgent warning about what is really at stake for individuals, families, churches, and the culture at-large. This excellent book will benefit pastors, Christian educators, and laypersons across the land.

*Cultural Intelligence: Living for God in a Diverse, Pluralistic World* (Nashville: B&H, 2020), by Darrell Bock, longtime professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, presents us with a timely perspective on the numerous challenges of our day. Bock, who is widely recognized as one of the finest evangelical biblical scholars of our generation, offers keen insights into the meaning of the relevant biblical texts, allowing us the opportunity to hear his heart as he provides important application to guide believers toward faithful discipleship in this fallen

world in which we live. After providing helpful framing of our current context and culture, Bock calls for individual Christians, churches, and the Christian community at-large to engage and renew the culture in a grace-filled manner. Believing that cultural intelligence can only be developed with biblical conviction and Spirit-enabled kindness, Bock encourages believers to prioritize God's reconciling work in the world through Jesus Christ, along with the themes of hope, love, and the transformational power of the gospel. I pray that believers will reflect the fruit of the Spirit called for in Bock's fine work as we all seek to put into practice the author's wise counsel.

Wherever one finds oneself in the debate related to Christians and social justice, *Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth: 12 Questions Christians Should Ask about Social Justice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020) by Thaddeus Williams, will offer wise guidance to these exceedingly challenging issues. Framed by a series of thoughtful questions, this important work seeks to address the pressing social issues of the day with the assistance of a dozen conversation partners. The helpful addendums at the conclusion of the book provide additional insight and clarity. This certainly could not have been an easy book to compile but Williams, a seasoned faculty member at Biola University, is to be commended for his courage in offering this roadmap for his readers. Anyone who wishes to engage in the debate regarding social justice in the days ahead will find *Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth* to be an essential prerequisite to that discussion. *The Age of AI: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), by Jason Thacker, who serves as associate research fellow and creative director for the Ethics and Religions Liberty Commission, is a superb book written to provide guidance for Christians as we develop, utilize, and interact with artificial intelligence in our families, work, and society. Thacker contends that we do not have the luxury of waiting to see how this technology will affect us. He calls for us to engage these technologies instead of waiting to see how they will impact our communities. Another engaging volume addressing similar themes is David Zahl's *Seculosity: How Career, Parenting, Technology, Food, Politics, and Romance Became Our New Religion and What to Do about It* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2019). Those interested in these pressing issues will not want to miss Jonathan Cole's *Christian Political*

*Theology in an Age of Discontent: Mediating Scripture, Doctrine, and Political Reality* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2019).

### **THEOLOGY, ETHICS, AND APOLOGETICS**

One need not agree with all aspects of Adam Neder's theological framework to appreciate much that is found in *Theology as a Way of Life: On Teaching and Learning the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019). The same can be said for the volume edited by Tim Perry, who has gathered a group of outstanding Protestant theologians to explore *The Theology of Benedict XVI* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019). Members of the Southwestern Seminary family will not want to miss the third volume in *The Collected Writings of James Leo Garrett Jr., 1950-2015* (Eugene, OR: Resource, 2019), which focuses on themes related to ecclesiology. We salute Wyman Richardson for his efforts to bring together this important material for the Baptist and evangelical communities. A marvelous resource by Donald Fairbairn and Ryan Reeves has been carefully and cohesively put together to tell *The Story of Creeds and Confessions: Tracing the Development of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019).

Ken Magnuson, the newly elected executive director of the Evangelical Theological Society, has offered a splendid service to the evangelical community with his biblically grounded and thoughtfully reasoned *Invitation to Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020). Readers will be especially grateful for the clarity this capably researched and accessible volume brings to such a host of wide-ranging issues. All who wish to understand and engage the numerous ethical challenges in our current context will find Magnuson's work to be an excellent guide. Though some may find a place to differ here or there with such a wide array of topics, all will benefit from this even-handed, thorough, informative, and careful presentation. Those who take time to work through this helpful volume will find it to be worthy of serious reflection and consideration. Mary Eberstadt expands her years of work in the area of ethics and cultural engagement with *Primal Screams: How the Sexual Revolution Created Identity Politics* (West Conshohoken, PA: Templeton, 2019). *God, Morality, and Beauty: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Ethics, Aesthetics, and the Problem of Evil* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2019) by Randall B. Bush, professor of philosophy at Union University, is an ambitious project

that seeks to bring the conversation related to the good, the true, and the beautiful into coherence by providing a vision of reality, and trajectory for future discussion, under the authority of a transcendent and Trinitarian God.

Many of us have been looking forward to the arrival of *The History of Apologetics: A Biographical and Methodological Introduction*, edited by Benjamin K. Forrest, Joshua D. Chatraw, and Alister E. McGrath (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020). This wonderful resource is a gold mine of information, a rich resource that will serve students as well as seasoned scholars for years to come. Chatraw has also given us *Telling a Better Story: How to Talk about God in a Skeptical Age* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020). Chatraw has clearly become one of the most significant thinkers and strategists regarding issues of apologetics in the twenty-first century. Winsome and persuasive, this volume should be a high priority on one's reading list.

Thoughtful engagement with the challenging issues of faith and science is readily available in *Darwin Devolving* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2019), by Michael Behe, as well as *A Worldview Approach to Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2019), by Carol Hill. Todd Charles Wood, Darrel R. Falk, and Rob Barrett have given us a model to follow for how to discuss our differences on these matters in an irenic manner in *The Fool and the Heretic: How Two Scientists Moved beyond Labels to a Christian Dialogue about Creation and Evolution* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020). Even as we seek to find more charitable ways to talk about these difficult issues, we must not forget that there are also truth issues at stake in these conversations.

## **BIBLICAL STUDIES**

The new *Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020) has been edited by J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, two esteemed faculty members at Ouachita Baptist University and alumni of Southwestern Seminary. The editors have assembled a first-class team of biblical scholars to explore the important background material related to both the Old Testament and the New. More than merely a survey of dates, times, places, people, and events, as significant as these things may be, the *Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary* provides illumination to challenging and perplexing interpretive issues, guiding readers to fresh understandings

of the biblical text. Drawing on recent archaeological findings and insights from ancient sources, the informative articles, combined with the well-researched textual commentary, provide a rich resource for students, teachers, and pastors. As an added bonus, the book is helpfully and beautifully illustrated. Hays has also provided the church with a terrific resource titled *A Christian's Guide to Evidence for the Bible: 101 Proofs from History and Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020). We salute and applaud Professor Hays for putting together this beautifully illustrated volume, which, with great thoughtfulness, clarity, and organizational skill, illuminates key literary, historical, and geographical aspects of challenging biblical texts related to 101 people, places, and events. Drawing on his years of teaching, research, and travel, Hays has provided a marvelous gift for students, teachers, and scholars of both the Old and New Testaments.

*Invitation to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020), by Andreas Köstenberger with Richard D. Patterson, which was originally released in 2011, has been updated and expanded in this second edition. This volume offers insightful guidance for interpreters of Holy Scripture with its focus on the “hermeneutical triad.” This encyclopedic and monumental publication has been improved with new material on the biblical canon and a renewed recognition of the importance of theology for serious interpretation. Additional thoughts have been added to the chapters on application and proclamation as well. The masterful organizational design and skillful pedagogical emphasis, combined with the helpful and informative bibliographies, make this book a rich and rewarding resource for students, scholars, and pastors. We also want to mention Mark Gignilliat’s fine work on *Reading Scripture Canonically* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019) and the significant introduction to the history, literature, and theology of the early church, which can be found in *The New Testament and Its World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), by N.T. Wright and Michael Bird.

## **CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION AND MISSIONS**

With the publication of *Excellence in Online Education* (Nashville: B&H, 2020), Kristen Ferguson has solidified her role as a shaping leader and strategic voice among Christian educators in the design, delivery, and management of online education. Providing helpful

guidance for both faculty and administrators in the various aspects of online education, Ferguson simultaneously offers a persuasive case to those who continue to doubt the validity of this educational approach. Ferguson brings together a distinctive vision for mission faithfulness and theological fidelity while offering a thoughtful proposal for developing Christian community and spiritual formation in an online format. While Christian educators will need to continue to wrestle with and engage the ongoing questions and challenging issues associated with online education, particularly in a post-COVID-19 context, Ferguson has given us a framework around which we can have these important conversations. *We Evangelicals and Our Mission* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2020) is a posthumous publication from the pen of David Hesselgrave, the longtime faculty member and missiologist at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. This important book, which echoes themes found elsewhere in Hesselgrave's writings, offers a stirring call to theological and confessional fidelity as an essential foundation for faithfulness in global mission efforts. While not everyone will agree with the examples cited by Hesselgrave, this important work, which began as a conversation with his granddaughter, is a much needed and timely work.

## **PASTORAL MINISTRY AND APPLIED THEOLOGY**

Combining rich insights from years of pastoral experience with a theologically shaped and biblically informed approach to ministry, Phil Newton, who has served as pastor of the South Woods Baptist Church in Germantown, Tennessee for more than three decades, has provided readers with a welcomed addition to Kregel's *40 Questions* series. Ministers need not agree with Newton's distinctive theological and ecclesiological convictions to profit from reading this thoughtful and applicable handbook on pastoral ministry. *40 Questions about Pastoral Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020) will serve as a valuable resource and helpful guide for pastors at various stages of their ministries. Another wise and beneficial work on Christian ministry. *The Politics of Ministry: Navigating Power Dynamics and Negotiating Interests* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2019), has been co-authored by Bob Burns, Tasha Chapman, and Donald C. Guthrie. Eric Redmond has edited an important volume with a Foreword by Charlie Dates called *Say It!: Celebrating Expository Preaching in the African American*

*Tradition* (Chicago: Moody, 2020).

Other volumes worthy of at least a brief mention under the wide and varied category of applied theology include *On the Road with Saint Augustine: A Real World Spirituality for Restless Hearts* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2019), by James K. A. Smith; *Biblical Spirituality* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), edited by Christopher Morgan; *Work* (Philipsburg: P&R, 2019), by Daniel Doriani; *Becoming Whole: Why the Opposite of Poverty Isn't the American Dream* (Chicago: Moody, 2019), by Brian Fikkert and Kelly M. Kopic; *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook & Multnomah, 2019), by Latasha Morrison; and *He Calls Me Friend: The Healing Power of Friendship in a Broken World* (Chicago: Moody, 2019), by John Perkins with Karen Waddles.

We look forward to the opportunity to continue this conversation in the next issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology*.

David S. Dockery  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Fort Worth, TX



## BOOK REVIEWS

**Brahms's A German Requiem: Reconsidering the Biblical, Historical, and Musical Contexts**, Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2020, reviewed by Scott Aniol

**The Holy Spirit**, by Gregg R. Allison and Andreas J. Köstenberger. Theology for the People of God. Nashville: B&H, 2020, reviewed by Taylor B. Worley

**Baptists and the Christian Tradition: Toward an Evangelical Baptist Catholicity**, edited by Matthew Y. Emerson, Christopher W. Morgan, and R. Lucas Stamps. Nashville: B&H, 2020, reviewed by Nathan A. Finn

**Early Reformation Covenant Theology: Early Reception of Swiss Reformed Thought, 1520-1555**. By Robert J. D. Wainwright. Reformed Academic Dissertation. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2020, Reviewed by Robert W. Caldwell III

**Crawford Howell Toy: The Man, the Scholar, the Teacher**. By Mikeal C. Parsons. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2019, reviewed by Gregory A. Wills

**Imagining Theology: Encounters with God in Scripture, Interpretation, and Aesthetics**, by Garrett Green. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020, reviewed by Scott Aniol

**T&T Clark Handbook of Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics**, edited by Uriah Y. Kim and Seung Ai Yang. London/New York: T&T Clark Bloomsbury, 2019, reviewed by Donald H. Kim

**A Survey of World Missions**, by Robin Dale Hadaway. Nashville: B&H, 2020, reviewed by Andy Pettigrew

**Christian Theology: The Christian Story and Our Faith**, by Christopher W. Morgan with Robert Peterson. Nashville: B&H, 2020, reviewed by Matthew Y. Emerson

**A Concise Dictionary of Theological Terms**, by Christopher W. Morgan with Robert A. Peterson. Nashville: B&H, 2020, reviewed by Benjamin Michael Skaug

**How the Spirit Became God: The Mosaic of Early Christian Pneumatology**, by Kyle R. Hughes. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020, reviewed by Brandon D. Smith

**Resilient Faith: How the Early Christian "Third Way" Changed the World**, by Gerald L. Sittser. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019, reviewed by Michael L. Bryant

## BOOK NOTES



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