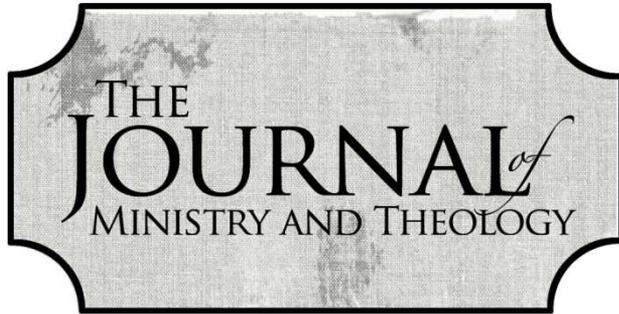


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2 Timothy 2:2

*And the things that you have heard from me
among many witnesses, commit these
to faithful men who will be able
to teach others also.*

Evangelicals and Sports

Dr. Mike Stallard
Dean of Baptist Bible Seminary
Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania

Raised in the state of Alabama as a fan of the Alabama Crimson Tide football team and having lived in northeast Pennsylvania almost seventeen years, I face a profound dilemma. I cannot decide who is crazier—Alabama fans or Philadelphia Eagles fans. In a recent article in *Christianity Today*, the author recounts two bizarre stories. One is of an Alabama couple who missed their own daughter’s wedding because it fell on the day of the Alabama-Tennessee game. The other story is about the man who ran onto the field during a 2005 Eagles-Packers game spreading the ashes of his mother (a life-long Eagles’ fan) onto the field. The man told police, “She’ll always be part of Lincoln Financial Field and of the Eagles.”¹

Americans have always been a bit fanatical about their sports. Evangelicals have not been immune from such interest.²

¹ Shirl James Hoffman, “Whatever Happened to Play,” *Christianity Today* (February 2010), 21. The Alabama story is taken from Warren St. John’s *Rammer Jammer Yellow Hammer* (New York: Three Rivers P, 2005), 10. I can still remember a defining moment in my young Christian life about a year after I became a born-again Christian in the middle 1970s. Alabama was ranked first in pre-season polls and opening at home against an upstart Missouri Tigers. Missouri won convincingly 20-6. Alabama was never close to winning. As I was leaving Legion Field in Birmingham at the end of the game, I saw grown men putting their programs in their seats and then jumping up and down on them as they howled and cried their disapproval. I was certainly disappointed, but I thought to myself, “I am glad that my ultimate joy does not depend upon this game.” Winning as the “only thing” had been taken away from me as a sports fan. Vince Lombardi might not approve, but Jesus might.

² The book that piqued my interest in religion and sports is Robert J. Higgs, *God in the Stadium: Sports and Religion in America* (Lexington,

In fact, evangelicals have consistently taken advantage of the popularity of sports to spread the gospel of eternal life through faith in Jesus. However, the success of evangelistic and other ministry efforts by evangelicals in this venue has caught the attention of critics who have begun to talk and write about perceived problems brought about by such success. In particular, this article will focus mostly on the book *Onward Christian Athletes: Turning Ballparks into Pulpits and Players into Preachers* by USA Today contributor Tom Krattenmaker.³

THE MATTER OF TONE AND THEME

We will begin the analysis by making a few comments on the overall tone and the general direction or theme of Krattenmaker's book. His work is well written for the most part

KY: UP of Kentucky, 1995). This book went beyond the realm of evangelicalism but set the stage for some of my thoughts in this arena. I have also read over the years an assortment of biographies of famous sports figures, mostly Christian but not always. Among them are Keith Dunnavant, *Coach: The Life of Paul 'Bear' Bryant*, rev. ed. (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2005); Bob St. John, *The Landry Legend: Grace Under Pressure* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1989); Tom Osborne, *Faith in the Game: Lessons on Football, Work, and Life* (New York: Broadway Books, 1999); Gene Stallings and Sally Cook, *Another Season: A Coach's Story of Raising an Exceptional Son* (New York: Little, Brown, and Co., 1997); and Bobby Bowden and Mark Schlabach, *Called to Coach: Reflections on Life, Faith, and Football*, forewords by Tony Dungy and Joe Paterno (New York: Howard, 2010). For a refutation of the thought that sports activity has nothing to do with character development, I would urge the reading of Jim Dent, *Twelve Mighty Orphans: The Inspiring True Story of the Mighty Mites Who Ruled Texas Football* (New York: Thomas Dunne, 2007). To show how sports and religion seriously overlap in American culture, see Ed McMinn, *God Bless the Crimson Tide: Devotions for the Die-Hard Alabama Fan* (New York: Howard, 2007), which, of course, I have read cover to cover!

³ Tom Krattenmaker, *Onward Christian Athletes: Turning Ballparks into Pulpits and Players into Preachers* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010).

and extremely riveting for someone who has an interest in sports. Of course, the intensive criticism of evangelicalism that is part of his message would likely keep an evangelical engaged in continued reading (if one does not get too mad!). In short, Krattenmaker, an ecumenical nonevangelical,⁴ has produced an extremely readable book that has the added bonus of alerting evangelicals to how they are perceived in large swaths of the sports world and our culture.

Going beyond writing style, there comes out at times a spirit in Krattenmaker showing willingness on his part to understand the evangelical mindset more fully and commend the good that he finds. For example, he commends evangelicals for the good influence they have had upon pro athletes:

To its credit, the movement brings pro athletes something they very much need: encouragement to become better individuals. Even critics of the ministries must acknowledge that a sports-industrial complex awash in sexual aggression, greed, and a win-at-all-costs obsession is in dire need of perspective and morality. Numerous players are encouraged to become better husbands, fathers, and teammates thanks in part to the teachings of the Christian ministries. The unique pressures of their line of work often leave them in need of spiritual guidance and counseling—resources energetically provided by the ministries operating in sports.⁵

After visiting the headquarters of Athletes in Action in Xenia, Ohio, Krattenmaker remarks in an article, “For those of us in blue states or blue states of mind, it might be useful to journey to places such as Xenia, Ohio, if only metaphorically. We’ll probably return home with a less black-and-white idea about those crazy evangelicals.”⁶ In this way, he challenges

⁴ Krattenmaker never reveals his religious or philosophical persuasion with any precision in the book.

⁵ Krattenmaker, *Onward Christian Athletes*, 16.

nonevangelicals to talk to evangelicals instead of just talking about them. This should be welcomed by evangelicals who often see those outside the movement as simply being dismissive and voicing caricature. To be sure, there are times, as we will see, when one wonders if Krattenmaker takes away with his left hand what he has given with his right. But the positive spirit should be duly noted.

Along with this attempt to understand evangelicals, Krattenmaker asserts that he is not trying to remove the evangelical place in sports but to create a forum for allowing other religious groups to have a similar place.⁷ He notes, somewhat grudgingly, “Even if we graciously concede a role for evangelical Christians and their beliefs in pro sports, *as this book attempts to do*, the time has come that we stop taking ‘no’ for an answer. The rest of us—we Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, atheists, agnostics, progressive and moderate Catholics and Protestants—have a stake in this, too.”⁸ Taking him at his word is somewhat difficult when later in the book his description of the evangelicalism that he envisions is an emasculated version that is not really evangelicalism at all. However, the dynamics of the debate must be sorted out in our later discussion.

Another feature worthy of note in *Onward Christian Athletes* is the awareness Krattenmaker displays of various evangelical subcultures. This trait is often missing in journalists, including sports journalists, so it was refreshing to see it here in small ways even if it could be improved. The word *evangelicalism* in this paper is being used to speak of a born-again Bible-believing Christianity. This covers a lot of territory and many different people with diverse theological beliefs in the details. Beyond the simple definition used here, there are many who use the tag of evangelical out of tradition even when they no longer hold to or

⁶ Tom Krattenmaker, “The Evangelicals You Don’t Know,” *USA Today* (June 2008) <<http://tomkrattenmaker.com/?p=65>> (accessed 4 November 2010). See also *Onward Christian Athletes*, 194-98.

⁷ Krattenmaker, *Onward Christian Athletes*, 206-7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 26; emphasis added.

have distorted the definition. It is quite non-analytical to suggest that all evangelicals can be lumped together and criticism leveled at them as a whole across the board. Krattenmaker appears to avoid this sin to some degree. One illustration (I am giving the benefit of the doubt here to Krattenmaker) is his ability to define the Christian Reconstructionist movement somewhat accurately as an “ultra-right” view trying to “install strict biblical law in the United States.”⁹ Apparently, he does not put everyone into the same mold although he does show the shared concerns such a group of evangelicals would have with the wider group (e.g., pro-life concerns).

Krattenmaker also joins evangelicals in rejecting the secular option. The three options that are laid out relative to religion in sports, especially professional sports, are (1) evangelical dominance, (2) pluralism, and (3) secularism. The first is the status quo from his point of view. The second category is where Krattenmaker wants us to go. The third option removes the influence of religion entirely from sports in America. In his rejection of the third option, he makes a strongly worded statement:

Some, in the final analysis, would prefer that religion be kept out of sports. After all, as some ask, what does religion have to do with sports, anyway? But a complete separation of church and sport is neither practical nor fair. Religion permeates nearly all aspects of public life in America and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. The installation of complete secularity in and around pro sports hardly constitutes a fair and neutral playing field for diverse America.¹⁰

To be sure, Krattenmaker calls the secular approach tempting in light of the “excesses of sports world evangelicalism.”¹¹

⁹ Ibid., 143. There can never be any theological reconciliation between Christian Reconstructionism and dispensationalism, the position of this author.

¹⁰ Ibid., 207.

¹¹ Ibid., 121.

Nonetheless, he defends evangelicals at this very point: “But while a clean separation of church and sport would meet the needs of nonreligious fans (and probably would not offend the many religious fans who approach their faith in quieter, more private ways), would it be fair to evangelical players and fans—people whose faith compels them to bring their God, and their Jesus, with them *wherever* they go?”¹² He answers in the negative. Evangelicals should shout in hearty agreement to such statements.

However, within the evangelical psyche (at least in this writer’s evangelical psyche) there resides some suspicion. The pluralistic option can be viewed as a slippery slope to the secular option—a sneaky way to arrive at the devaluing of faith. The liberal spectrum of professing Christendom and the other religious groups that would benefit from the second option are, in fact, among the most secularized religious groups in America. The form that a pluralistic approach would take must be carefully chosen—not all pluralisms are alike. Therefore, the issue of pluralism will be dealt with in greater detail below. For now, it is enough to say that perhaps the greatest area of agreement between Krattenmaker and evangelicals in the matter of sports is a rejection of the secular choice. This helps the tone of the book and keeps an evangelical engaged in the issue more than he likely would have done otherwise.

On the negative side, at times the book comes across as piling on after the play is over. Krattenmaker labels one of his chapters “Winning for Jesus (But Finding Him in the Loss Column).”¹³ The main theme of the chapter is quite appropriate. Evangelicals have sometimes exaggerated the connection between God and winning. They can easily give the impression that God is with them when they win, but when they lose they do not really talk about him. This idea is true in religious life in both the evangelical and nonevangelical worlds. There are those who will credit God and thank him when things go well but

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 69-86.

wonder if he has abandoned them when things go bad. Pastors deal with this issue all the time. These are important points that need to be surfaced. However, Krattenmaker spends page after page tackling evangelical John Kitna, the former quarterback of the Detroit Lions, as the poster child for overdoing the connection between winning and God's blessing right before the season goes the wrong direction followed by the perfect record of 0-16 the following season. How many pages of examples does it take to make the point? Two pages would have been fine. The extraordinary amount of detail given to Kitna comes across like an offensive lineman stepping on the hand of the running back, or in this case the quarterback, while he is down in the pile.¹⁴ Such an approach colors the tone in an unsavory direction.

A BRIEF SUMMARY

A summary of the book chapter by chapter is of some benefit in this case because Krattenmaker's work is chock full of examples and issues that are worthy of discussion, the piling on notwithstanding. *Onward Christian Athletes* begins with an introduction highlighting the public testimony of evangelical Kurt Warner, a high-profile MVP quarterback of the NFL. The Cardinals quarterback represents to Krattenmaker a frequent and common example of modern day sports being "drenched with Christian religion."¹⁵ Krattenmaker, who grew up a Minnesota Twins fan, does not like this focus on conservative Christianity in America in general and in sports in particular. He states his agenda this way: "And short of banning religion in sports—a nonstarter in a culture that values religious freedom—we have failed to shape a vision for a more appropriate, fair, and thoughtful form of faith in sports."¹⁶ He is

¹⁴ In a spirit of full disclosure I must reluctantly note that the Detroit Lions are one of the teams that I follow.

¹⁵ Krattenmaker, *Onward Christian Athletes*, 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

attempting in this book to outline a way to wrest the religious influence in sports away from evangelical dominance to what he says is a more inclusive approach.¹⁷

Chapter 1 is entitled “On Any Justice Sunday.” The title comes essentially from a trend that is disturbing from Krattenmaker’s view. He presents his concern through the story of Herbert Lusk, a running back for the Philadelphia Eagles, who in 1977 became the first player to kneel down to pray publicly in the end zone after scoring a touchdown against the New York Giants. Lusk, an African American, is now the pastor of the Greater Exodus Baptist Church in the Philadelphia area. Krattenmaker laments the connections that Lusk has to the so-called Christian right, including President George Bush, rather than the traditions of a more liberal direction:

Given the social justice tradition of the black Christian church in America, the combination of his [Lusk’s] race and religion, in a different time, might have compelled him to stand for progressive-leaning racial and social justice, in the mold of a Jackie Robinson or Gale Sayers. But where faith, sports, and politics intersect today, you will find few black Christian sports stars standing up for so-called liberal issues. Like Lusk, they are more likely followers and promoters of a Christian Right movement that has not found much room on its agenda for the issues—racial equality, economic justice, peace—that found their voice in Martin Luther King Jr.¹⁸

Included also in the analysis of this chapter is a review of James Dobson, founder of *Focus on the Family*; Brent High,

¹⁷ Unfortunate for Krattenmaker is his statement in this chapter that “those who pay attention to politics know that the outsize influence of conservative Christians in American politics has waned. Barack Obama, whose stands on abortion and many other issues are anathema to the Christian Right, has won the White House” (Ibid., 7). I am not sure he could have written such a statement after the mid-term elections of November 2, 2010. His statement could just be wishful thinking.

¹⁸ Ibid., 14.

inventor of “faith days” at sporting events; and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). The example of FCA is instructive since it will play a role in the discussion about pluralism later on. Krattenmaker bemoans the fact that the organization was not founded to be the Fellowship of ‘Religious’ Athletes. That way others besides conservative Christians could be involved in helping athletes with their spiritual needs.

Although several examples are mentioned in the second chapter (“A Cross on the Logo”), Krattenmaker here continues to unveil the rise of evangelical dominance in the professional sports world through the example of Dwight Howard, the power player for the Orlando Magic NBA team. Howard publicly let it be known that he drew a cross on the logo of the NBA in his bedroom as a symbol of how his Christian faith would take advantage of his NBA position. The author does not fail to mention that “word leaked out in 2008 that the young superstar had fathered a child out of wedlock with a former member of the Magic’s dance team.”¹⁹ In this chapter, Krattenmaker also spends quite a bit of space covering the public Christian testimony of Curt Schilling which got a boost from the Red Sox come-from-behind win in the playoffs against the New York Yankees in 2004. Both Howard and Schilling serve as examples of sports positions being used to advance the evangelical cause.

Chapters 3 and 4 continue the same approach with slightly different emphases. Chapter 4 was described above with the comments about Kitna. Chapter 3 (“Faith Coach: Discipling Athletes for a Roster Spot on *God’s* Team”) dips for the first time into the world of chaplains to sports teams, giving quite a bit of space to the experience of Kevin Harvey, former chaplain of the Philadelphia 76ers NBA franchise. Krattenmaker presents Harvey as a balanced kind of evangelical with some sensitivity to how he relates and speaks to others of different faith backgrounds. He also mentions Coach Tom Landry of the Dallas Cowboys and James Dobson again for their connections to the FCA. Tim LaHaye also gets mentioned as “anti-gay and anti-

¹⁹ Ibid., 32.

public education crusader.”²⁰ In this chapter, Krattenmaker also contrasts the apparent silence of FCA on racial issues today with Branch Rickey, the Brooklyn Dodgers executive who brought Jackie Robinson into Major League Baseball as the first African American player. Yet Rickey himself was instrumental in the founding of FCA. Krattenmaker wonders where this emphasis has gone.

Chapter 5 is entitled “Church at the Ballpark.” The subtitle reveals the direction of the author’s concern: “Baseball Chapel and Its Exclusive Theology in an Age of Growing Religious Diversity.” The opening issue is the controversy over the 2005 statements of the Christian chaplain (Jon Moeller--supplied by Baseball Chapel) of the Washington Nationals. In response to a direct question by one of the players, he affirmed that Jews who do not believe in Jesus are doomed, meaning “doomed to hell.” The outcry was enormous with Jewish rabbis claiming that the baseball team was being used to promote hate. On the other side, the inevitable suspension of Moeller was viewed as an attack upon the religious liberties of Christians.²¹ The rest of the article gives examples of baseball chapels, Christian players, and the issue of how evangelism is done in that context—a style question for the most part that may have major implications.

The heart of the chapter may be Krattenmaker’s question: “When religion goes wrong—when a player speaks of Jews and other non-Christians being destined for hell, for example—does Baseball Chapel bear responsibility?” The author in the wording of this question shows that, from his view, any religious claim that is exclusive (at least on statements about the afterlife) is not to be tolerated in public.²²

²⁰ Ibid, 57.

²¹ Ibid., 87-89.

²² In this chapter, pages 102-4 were perhaps the most problematic to me in Krattenmaker’s book. Here is the beginning of the suggestion to remake evangelicalism into a form of evangelicalism that is really not evangelicalism. This will be one of the major issues in our discussion below on pluralism.

Chapter 6 is entitled “From Coors Field to Eternity: Faith Days in Major League Baseball.” Here the author expands his coverage of the story of Brent High and the start of Faith Days at ballparks, times when after a game, an evangelical program using the stadium seats or a tent in the parking lot provides a place for Christian music, preaching, and testimonies as a means to evangelize. Players and former players such as Dave Dravecky and John Smoltz are highlighted as well as the message of “salvation-through-Christ-alone.”²³ This is the real concern of Krattenmaker in this chapter. The exclusive message about eternal life through Christ rankles when the special nights for others like the Shriners are known more for their humanitarian side.²⁴

Besides the issue of exclusivity in evangelical sports ministries, Krattenmaker also dislikes strongly the tie to conservative politics found in such ministry efforts. This comes across in almost every chapter and refers to things like gay rights among others. However, he devotes his whole Chapter 7 to the question: “For God, Country, and the Republican Party: The Conservative Politics of Jesus’ Pro Sports Warriors.” Curt Schilling gets special mention for his public pro-Republican statements. However, single issues such as the war in Iraq, abortion, and homosexuality surface in this chapter in a strong way, with Krattenmaker following his right to embrace the liberal side on each issue. Anticipating possible objections to the case he makes about the connection between conservative evangelicals in sports ministry to conservative politics (which seems a natural fit), he notes, “Of course, trotting out a series of examples cannot alone make the case that Christian sports figures are co-opted by Republican politics....Yet the picture becomes clearer when one exams the sports-faith-politics landscape for counterexamples—for instances of Christian athletes taking liberal positions—and comes away virtually

²³ Ibid., 115.

²⁴ Ibid., 122.

empty-handed.”²⁵ Thus, evangelical dominance has from his point of view negative overtones that extend beyond religious expression.

Chapter 8 is entitled “Domesticated Christianity: The Political Acquiescence of African American Christians in Sports.” His opening salvo is to slam Tony Dungy for his reply to CBS announcer Jim Nance when he held up the Super Bowl winner’s trophy following the 2006 season. Nance had asked him what it meant to be the first black coach to win a Super Bowl. Dungy responded:

I tell you what—I’m proud to be representing African American coaches...and to be the first African American to win this. It means an awful lot to our country. But, again, more than anything—I’ve said it before—Lovey Smith and I are not only the first two African Americans but Christian coaches showing you can win doing it the Lord’s way. We’re more proud of that.²⁶

In Dungy’s mind, his faith in Christ transcended the importance of the color of his skin—something similar to the earlier words of Martin Luther King Jr. However, Krattenmaker sees this as a lost moment and opportunity: “There was a time when some of the country’s leading African American athletic figures, religious or otherwise, spoke out for racial justice and addressed the pressing social justice needs of the day.”²⁷ The remainder of the chapter details good and bad examples of social justice representation. It seems that the author always comes back to Dungy and the coach’s penchant for standing up for conservative evangelical interests instead. At the end of the chapter, I wrote in the margin, “my least favorite chapter.” In my judgment, this chapter hit below the belt.

²⁵ Ibid., 138.

²⁶ Quoted in Ibid., 149.

²⁷ Ibid., 150.

Chapter 9 was more intriguing – “A Match Made in Heaven—or Hell: The Dissonance between the Values of Jesus and the Values of Big-Time Sports.” Here I found more common ground with the author. Several good questions are asked. In doing so, Krattenmaker rejects Deion Sanders’ statement that “faith and sports go together like peanut butter and jelly.”²⁸ Instead, he ponders the possibility that the relationship is more like oil and water.²⁹ As Krattenmaker notes, “To the cheating, violence, materialism, hedonism, and the promoting of sex we could add gambling, which flourishes in and around professional sports, often in illegal form, at the same time that socially conservative Christians are frequently mounting political opposition to pro-gambling legislation.”³⁰ In his thinking, the values of the sports world are not the values of the Christian faith. In this assessment, he is quite right. However, many evangelicals in sports ministry would respond with something along the lines of the need for Christians to be in the sports environment, just like in all others, to bring light into the darkness. His opening in the chapter is the story about Coach Bill McCartney who founded Promise Keepers. Krattenmaker reminds us of the fifth down that the officials gave to the Colorado football team, coached by McCartney, which allowed them to score a last-minute touchdown and win against Missouri in 1990. Colorado went on to win the national title. The issue of fairness, honesty, and even cheating is raised by McCartney’s refusal to forfeit the win after the problem was discovered. Krattenmaker interestingly points to a similar event fifty years earlier when Cornell beat Dartmouth with a fifth down mistake by officials. Cornell correctly chose to forfeit the game.

The point of Krattenmaker is that the winning-at-all-costs mentality in sports goes contrary to the spirit of Jesus. I have no

²⁸ Ibid., 170

²⁹ Ibid., 171.

³⁰ Ibid., 179.

trouble in agreeing with him on this point. I do wonder how far this must be taken. For example, when a basketball official calls a foul on one player guarding another player and there was no foul, should the player argue with the referee about the call or be silent? Officials might not want to go that route due to the dynamics of a fast game and the amount of arguing that already exists! Higgs notes the outcry of “unchristian” which was leveled at Amos Alonzo Stagg when he introduced the hidden ball trick into football.³¹ So, in my mind, there are some areas where the line is fine and not as obvious as the fifth down scenario.

Krattenmaker could have been a little more generous in this chapter by pointing to more evangelical examples of honesty in sports. Al Worthington, a Major League pitcher in the 1950s and 1960s, is a case in point. He is well known in baseball circles for choosing to be sent down to the minor leagues rather than play in the majors for the White Sox because they were cheating by stealing the signs of the opposing catcher which was contrary to the rules.³² Others say that stealing signs is part of the game. Worthington disagreed. Certainly the evangelical sports minister must take into account the teachings of Jesus and make sure that the players being ministered to understand the difference between genuine Christian living according to the ways of Christ and the atmosphere and environment that is the sports industry. In this way, Krattenmaker does a good job of raising appropriate issues that need to be on the evangelical radar.

The last chapter of the book is entitled “The Salvation of Sports: ‘Getting it Right’ in an Emerging New Era of Faith in Sports.” Here Krattenmaker presents his vision of what the relationships should be in the future. He champions some evangelicals who, in his view, are more open than others to

³¹ Higgs, *God in the Stadium*, 191.

³² Jim Thielman, *Cool of the Evening: The 1965 Minnesota Twins* (Minneapolis: Kirk House P, 2005), 112-14. See also <http://www.cooloftheevening.com/al_worthington.htm>.

change. He also borrows from some professing evangelicals the language of the “whole gospel,”³³ language that distorts the biblical view of the gospel of eternal life, to support the idea that the individual salvation message is not all that the sports world needs. While I would agree with this point (without using the phrase “whole gospel”), I would want to make sure that the social aspects of Christian living do not push out the message of eternal life through Christ. Some particular emphases in Krattenmaker’s future vision are the need for all Christian ministries in sports to address race issues and to challenge the worship of winning and its implications. The overall frame for the vision is the earlier mentioned choice of pluralism as the vehicle of across-the-spectrum participation. Evangelical dominance should be surrendered in favor of more equal footing on the playing field.

WHAT KIND OF PLURALISM?

There are many other areas that could be discussed and critiqued further concerning Krattenmaker’s book such as his inadequate use of the Bible,³⁴ the issue of “how” evangelicals

³³ Krattenmaker, *Onward Christian Athletes*, 198.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 17, 136, 172. Krattenmaker does a good job of outlining the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 as he acknowledges the evangelical need to evangelize. However, he woefully abuses Romans 2:1 (“Therefore you are without excuse, every man of you who passes judgment...”) in attempting to assert that Paul’s meaning is we should not make judgments about homosexuality (136). Somehow he ignores the many teachings throughout the Bible where Christians should stand against sin (he stands against his own privileged list of sins himself). The bottom line disagreement is over what sin is, not whether judgment should be made. Krattenmaker also mislabels the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand as a parable (when it is an actual historical story—the text never calls it a parable). He comments, “What seems beyond doubt...is that the loaves-and-fishes story teaches believers that God’s salvation is universal, a ‘championship’ granted to all who believe, not just those strong enough or powerful enough to out-do a rival for the eternal prize” (172). However, the fact

share their faith, and his strong aversion to conservative politics. However, the big game before us is the proposal for a pluralistic environment in the relationship between religion and sports which we have mentioned at a few points along the way. I view this as a microcosm of the larger question of pluralism in our culture at large.³⁵

D. A. Carson described for us three kinds of pluralism: (1) empirical, (2) cherished, and (3) philosophical or hermeneutical.³⁶ Empirical pluralism is the statistical presence of differing views. It is a fact that we live in a pluralistic culture. There is nothing earth-shattering about the obvious. However, the second kind of pluralism is “cherished.” That is, it is approved or welcomed. If this means that one welcomes the belief content of differing views, then evangelicals cannot buy into this. If cherished pluralism means the celebration of the existence of many different views, including those against Christ, then again the evangelical must abstain. There is no

of the matter is that the passage has nothing to do with eternal salvation at all. Nothing in the context tells someone what they must do to be saved (that is in the next chapter not in this story). The miracle gives an occasion for Jesus to demonstrate his power to prove who he is. To apply the passage the way Krattenmaker does is simply to sloganize the text.

³⁵ The issue of pluralism is far from a new issue in culture. The debate predates the existence of the church. It is a major issue in the early centuries of the church. While it is fashionable to view any conservative expression of Christianity as intolerant in light of pluralistic realities or desires (usually using Middle Ages scenarios as the examples), the conservative Bible-believing church has often done a better job than its reputation allows. Even Emperor Constantine is getting a facelift among some scholarly studies which show a far greater toleration for minority religious expressions within his empire (see Peter J. Leithart, *Defending Constantine* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2010], 106ff).

³⁶ D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 13-54. This work may be the most important evangelical book written during the 1990s.

sense in which an evangelical should live by the motto, “I’m OK; you’re OK.” If cherished pluralism means that we welcome the context of many views existing around us so that we have opportunity to speak the truth into those contexts, then there might be a way for an evangelical to buy in. However, it might be better simply to see this as taking advantage of empirical pluralism. There is no cherishing of pluralism as a worldview.

As Carson notes, the third kind of pluralism—philosophical pluralism—is the most troublesome for the evangelical. He defines this kind of pluralism as support for the view “that any notion that a particular ideological or religious claim is intrinsically superior to another is *necessarily* wrong.”³⁷ Thus, any claim to absolute truth must be abandoned.

Which of these kinds of pluralism is being urged by the book before us? Does the writer promote a pluralism in which pure evangelicalism can have a place or is there in his approach a muzzle put on the sports-minded evangelical? His promotion (in more than one place in the book) of the idea that the FCA should be the Fellowship of Religious Athletes may be instructive. If this means that the organization or any other evangelical organization like Baseball Chapel should be forced to be internally pluralistic, he is out of bounds. Such an approach would violate the First Amendment rights of the evangelicals. I do not believe that Krattenmaker explicitly goes to this option. He notes, “The challenge, rather, is to create a pluralistic environment in professional sports, where no one form of belief or nonbelief takes over, but where all are welcome, all are free to act and speak in accordance with their creeds and beliefs, so long as they do not blatantly infringe on the rights of others.”³⁸ This is somewhat acceptable to the evangelical depending upon what the last part means – “do not blatantly infringe on the rights of others.”

³⁷ Ibid., 19.

³⁸ Krattenmaker, *Onward Christian Athletes*, 207.

In light of the fact that some Jews believe that evangelism of Jews by evangelicals is anti-Semitic by its very nature, evangelicals have the right to doubt the intention stated here.³⁹

To explore this thought further, one is drawn to Krattenmaker's finish to his book where he gives a word to Christians in sports:

The vision sketched above is not intended to silence you. If anything, your message will come through louder, and resonate more clearly and with far more listeners, when it is expressed through your ethical witness in addition to your get-Jesus evangelism. The nonevangelical rest of us will be more likely to relax our defenses and engage you in an open, hospitable manner if you consistently lead with your hearts rather than a rigid theological proposition about Jesus, heaven, and hell that will inevitably exclude and alienate large numbers of us.

Two things about this statement need to be made: one good and one bad. Krattenmaker is quite right and has a sensitivity that many evangelicals should have concerning ethical behavior (although I would disagree with the author on the list of sins and the behaviors in question). Evangelicals in sports or in all of life speak more strongly when they are coming from a posture of strong ethics. However, the idea that we should not elevate our "theological rigidity about Jesus, heaven, and hell" comes perilously close to telling us to leave our gospel at home when we are doing sports ministry. Is this what he means? Mohler has characterized Krattenmaker's message with the following words: "Krattenmaker repeatedly stresses that he believes athletes should be free to express their faith. Nevertheless, he argues that belief in the exclusivity of the Gospel of Christ is out

³⁹ For an interesting assessment of the relationship of evangelicals and Jews, see David A. Rausch, *Building Bridges* (Chicago: Moody P, 1988), 227-33.

of bounds for such expression.”⁴⁰ I agree with Mohler’s assessment.

Krattenmaker, probably from the vantage point of philosophical pluralism, must in the end be intolerant toward those who believe in absolute truth. The sports world he envisions full of religion has no one telling anyone else they are wrong about the afterlife. The evangelicalism he envisions as part of this mix is not really evangelicalism at all, since the gospel of eternal life through Christ alone must be downplayed or eliminated. But that is what is most important to the evangelical. Krattenmaker would have just as much success asking the Pope to become a Protestant. This does not mean that the evangelical would be opposed to other religious groups developing support ministries for the sports world. They have that right and should not be kept out. But that is their responsibility to develop and work. The evangelical must continue to do his best to share his faith in ways that are not obnoxious. However, Jesus said that his teaching would divide people: “Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division” (Luke 12:51). If the message itself offends rather than the messenger, the evangelical must still step up to the plate and deliver the pitch.

⁴⁰ Al Mohler, “Time to Separate Church and Sports? A New Agenda Takes Shape,” *Almohler.com*, <<http://www.albertmohler.com/2009/10/16/time-to-separate-church-and-sports/>> (accessed 4 November 2010).

Adam: Man or Myth?

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INTRODUCTION

Is Adam a man or a myth?¹ Bible scholars, theologians, philosophers, and scientists are debating this question today. Was Adam a real person in history? Or is Adam a fictional character who never existed? How did Adam come into existence? Did God breathe his image into a pre-human that evolved from a common ancestor with an ape? Or did God create Adam from the dust of the ground and breathe into him the breath of life as Genesis 2:7 says?

This paper is divided into three sections. The first section will define and critique the views of theistic evolutionists on Adam and the origin of man. Theistic evolutionists (sometimes called evolutionary creationists) have different views on the historicity of Adam (the first man of Genesis). Waltke is a theistic evolutionist who believes that a literal Adam existed. Lamoureux is an evolutionary creationist who rejects the existence of Adam.

The second section will examine some ancient myths about the origin of man and compare them with Genesis (the first book of the Bible). A comparison of the worldview of the ancient near eastern myths with the worldview of the Bible will show that the Bible is not myth.

The third section will give an exposition of some verses from the first chapters of Genesis regarding Adam to show what the Bible teaches about the first man.

¹ This paper was first presented as a faculty forum paper at Baptist Bible Seminary on January 31, 2011.

CRITIQUES OF THEISTIC EVOLUTIONISTS' VIEWS ON ADAM AND THE ORIGIN OF MAN AND SIN

Bruce Waltke on Theistic Evolution

In April of 2010 Dr. Bruce Waltke² resigned from Reformed Theological Seminary because of a controversy over a video in which he defended theistic evolution. This video (now removed from the internet) was posted on the BioLogos³ web site.

Waltke argues for theistic evolution in his book *An Old Testament Theology*:

The best harmonious synthesis of the special revelation of the Bible, of the general revelation of human nature that distinguishes between right and wrong and consciously or unconsciously craves God, and of science is the theory of theistic evolution. By theory I mean here a coherent group of general propositions used as principles of explanation for the origin of species, especially 'adam, not a proposed explanation whose status is still conjectural. By theistic evolution I mean that the God of Israel to bring glory to himself (1) created all the things that are out of nothing and sustains them, (2) incredibly, against the laws of probability, finely tuned the essential properties of the universe to produce 'adam,

² Dr. Bruce Waltke, a former president of the Evangelical Theological Society, is a recognized Old Testament and Hebrew scholar who has taught at Dallas Theological Seminary, Regent College, Westminster Theological Seminary, and Reformed Theological Seminary.

³ BioLogos explores, promotes, and celebrates the integration of science and Christian faith. BioLogos holds to a theistic evolution position. Dr. Francis Collins founded BioLogos in November of 2007. He is a physician and geneticist who is known for leading the Human Genome Project. He is now the National Institute of Health Director for the Obama administration. He wrote the book *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free P, 2006). He coined the term BioLogos to define the conclusions he reached about how life, or *bios*, came about through God's word, or *logos*. He believes that DNA is God's language.

who is capable of reflecting upon their origins; (3) within his providence allowed the process of natural selection and of cataclysmic interventions—such as the meteor that extinguished the dinosaurs, enabling mammals to dominate the earth—to produce awe-inspiring creatures, especially 'adam; (4) by direct creation made 'adam a spiritual being, an image of divine beings, for fellowship with himself by faith; (5) allowed 'adam to freely choose to follow their primitive animal nature and to usurp the rule of God instead of living by faith in God, losing fellowship with their physical and spiritual Creator; and (6) and in his mercy chose from fallen 'adam the Israel of God, whom he regenerated by the Holy Spirit, in connection with their faith in Jesus Christ, the second Adam, for fellowship with Himself.⁴

Waltke summarized his views on the BioLogos website in response to the criticism he received from the video:

1. Adam and Eve are historical figures from whom all humans are descended; they are uniquely created in the image of God and as such are not in continuum with animals.
2. Adam is the federal and historical head of the fallen human race just as Jesus Christ is the federal and historical head of the Church.
3. I am not a scientist, but I have familiarized myself with attempts to harmonize Genesis 1-3 with science and I believe that creation by the process of evolution is a tenable Biblical position, and, as represented by BioLogos, the best Christian apologetic to defend Genesis 1-3 against its critics.
4. I apologize for giving the impression that others who seek to harmonize the two differently are not credible. I honor all who contend for the Christian faith.
5. Evolution as a process must be clearly distinguished from evolution as a philosophy.

⁴ Bruce Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 202-3. Waltke admits in a footnote that he reached this conclusion by reading Collin's book *The Language of God*.

6. Science is fallible and subject to revision. As a human and social enterprise, science will always be in flux. My first commitment is to the infallibility (as to its authority) and inerrancy (as to its source) of Scripture.

7. God could have created the Garden of Eden with apparent age or miraculously, even as Christ instantly turned water into wine, but the statement that God “caused the trees to grow” argues against these notions.

8. I believe that the Triune God is Maker and Sustainer of heaven and earth and that biblical Adam is the historical head of the human race.

9. Theological comments made here are mostly a digest of my chapters on Genesis 1-3 in *An Old Testament Theology* (Zondervan, 2007).⁵

In 2009 Dr. Waltke encouraged professors of evangelical seminaries to take an online survey regarding creation and evolution. Six hundred fifty-nine professors visited the site of the survey and 264 completed the survey. Waltke wrote a paper summarizing the results of his study which he entitled “Barriers to Accepting the Possibility of Creation by Means of Evolutionary Process.” Here are the list of barriers that he discovered with the total responses responding to the barriers and their percentage of completes:

1. A straightforward reading of Genesis 1-2 does not harmonize with evolution. Total responses: 116. Percentage of completes: 44%
2. The genealogies of Genesis do not harmonize with evolution. Total responses: 61. Percentage of completes: 23%

⁵ See <<http://biologos.org/blog/why-must-the-church-come-to-accept-evolution-an-update/>> (accessed 25 January 2011).

3. Evolution does not harmonize with the doctrine that Adam brought death and decay into the world. Total responses: 90. Percentage of completes: 34%

4. Evolution calls into question Adam as the father of original sin and of Christ as the Redeemer from the effects of sin. Total responses: 76. Percentage of completes: 34%

5. Evolution is bad science in part because it presumes an old earth. Total responses: 51; Percentage of completes: 19%

6. Evolution is bad science, even though the Big Bang occurred 13.73 billion years ago. Total responses: 20. Percentage of completes: 8%.

7. Intelligent Design explains the origin of species better than evolution. Total responses: 95. Percentage of completes: 36%.

8. Science is restricted to observable phenomenon, and apparent age at the time of creation confounds the scientific evidence. Total responses: 44. Percentage of completes: 17%

9. The gap theory explains the fossil record. Total responses: 47. Percentage of completes: 18%.

10. The framework hypothesis does not harmonize with evolution. Total responses: 16. Percentage of completes: 6%.

11. No barriers to theistic evolution. Total responses: 18. Percentage of completes: 7%

12. None of the above. I can accept the theory of theistic evolution. Total responses: 121. Percentage of completes: 46%⁶

Waltke gives the following analysis of the survey:

First, this survey and the survey by Badger and Tenneson shatter the caricature of evangelicalism in the media and the populace as

⁶ See <<http://biologos.org/uploads>> (accessed 27 January 2011).

demanding the theory of Young Earth Creationism. Correlatively, the fact that 46% can accept the theory of creation by evolution confirms my suspicion that on the issue of evolution one cannot speak of a typical evangelical theologian. Third, the organizations seeking to refute evolution and/or to narrow the gap between creation and evolution must address one another with respect and openness to be optimally effective. The gap between BioLogos and ID, I suggest, can best be narrowed by open dialogue, not by entrenched confrontation.⁷

Critique of Waltke

Dr. Bruce Waltke is a highly respected Hebrew and Old Testament scholar. He believes that creation by the process of evolution is a tenable Biblical position. But the theory of evolution is diametrically opposed to biblical creation as presented in Genesis 1-2. Waltke contradicts himself as he argues for theistic evolution in his *Old Testament Theology* but states in BioLogos that God by direct creation made Adam. Waltke argued that God used the process of natural selection and cataclysmic interventions (including a meteor) to produce creatures especially man. But Genesis 1 teaches that God created the animals to reproduce after their kind. Genesis 1-2 does not indicate that Adam was descended from a pre-existing ape man. Genesis 2:7 indicates that God took dust and breathed into it the breath of life and Adam came into existence. Waltke states in his response to the video that he believes that “Adam and Eve are historical figures from whom all humans are descended; they are uniquely created in the image of God and as such are not in continuum with animals.” Yet this statement contradicts what he wrote in *An Old Testament Theology*. We are left wondering what Waltke really believes. The survey that Waltke took shows that he understands the objections to theistic evolution, yet he takes comfort from the fact that 46% of seminary professors hold to his view.

⁷ Ibid.

Gleason Archer on Theistic Evolution

Gleason Archer⁸ believes that prehistoric cave men existed before Adam. He writes:

To revert to the problem of the Pithecanthropus, the Swanscombe man, the Neanderthal and all the rest (possibly even the Cro-Magnon man, who is apparently to be classed as *Homo sapiens*, but whose remains seem to date back at least to 20,000 B.C.), it seems best to regard these races as all prior to Adam's time, and not involved in the Adamic covenant. We must leave the question open, in view of the cultural remains, whether these pre-Adamite creatures had souls (or, to use the trichotomic terminology, spirits). But the implication of Genesis 1:26 is that God was creating a qualitatively different being when he made Adam (for note that the word rendered "man" in Gen 1:26-27 is the Hebrew *'Adam*), a being who was uniquely fashioned in the image of God. Only Adam and his descendants were infused with the breath of God and a spiritual nature corresponding to God himself. Romans 5:12-21 demands that all mankind subsequent to Adam's time, at least, must have been descended from him, since he entered into covenant relationship with God as the representative of the entire race of man. This indicates that there could have been no true genetic relationship between Adam (the first man created in the image of God) and the pre-Adamic races. However close the skeletal structure of the Cro-Magnon man (for example) may have been to *Homo sapiens*, this factor is scarcely relevant to the principal question of whether these cave men possessed a truly human soul or personality. They may have been exterminated by God for reasons unknown prior to the creation of the original parent of the present human race. Adam, then was the first man

⁸ Gleason Archer was a professor of biblical languages at Fuller Theological Seminary from 1948 to 1965. He served as a Professor of Old Testament and Semitics at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School from 1965-1986. He worked on the team which translated the NIV Bible in 1978. He was critical of the documentary hypothesis (JEDP theory).

created in the spiritual image of God, according to Genesis 1:26-27, and there is no evidence from science to disprove it.”⁹

Critique of Archer

Archer believes in the existence of a race of pre-human creatures (Pithecanthropus, Swanscombe man and Neanderthal). Pithecanthropus (Java Man) was discovered by Eugene Dubois on the island of Java in 1891-1892. The fossil find was a mixture of bones and teeth (some human and some orangutan). The skull cap was of a large ape and it was found 46 feet away from the thigh bone. Swanscombe man was found in England in 1935 and was believed to be the earliest man to have lived in England. Neanderthal man was found in western Germany. Neanderthal was not a sub-human ancestor of man. Most young earth creationists believe that Neanderthal man was a real man descended from Adam. The Neanderthals had larger brains than man today and they were physically strong.

Archer is unsure if these pre-Adamic creatures had souls or spirits. If they did have souls, then the question would be raised regarding their relationship to Adam. Archer claims that there could have been no true genetic relationship between Adam and the pre-Adamic races. He believes that God exterminated these races before he created the first man. Nowhere in Genesis does it say that God destroyed a pre-Adamic race of creatures.¹⁰ If this were true, we would have death before sin. Why would

⁹ Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody P, 1964), 198-99.

¹⁰ In 1814 Thomas Chalmers proposed the gap theory (the view that there are millions of years between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2). This view was popularized by G. H. Pember in his book *Earth's Earliest Ages* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1876). C. I. Scofield put this view in his notes in the Scofield Reference Bible (1909). During this gap these men believed that there was a pre-Adamic race of men that was wiped out when God supposedly judged the world with a flood because of the fall of Lucifer. They believe that the earth became waste and void and was covered with water (Gen 1:2).

God destroy a pre-Adamic race of men? This view of Archer makes God to appear cruel and arbitrary in his judgments.

It is interesting to see that Gleason Archer argues for the historicity of Adam and Eve in the same book:

Questions have been raised as to how seriously we are to take the whole narrative about Adam and Eve (and the serpent in the Garden of Eden) as literal history. Many prefer to regard it as a mere myth or fable (supra-history, to use the neo-orthodox term) in which the moral downfall of man is described by a fictitious episode designed to illustrate it. Yet insofar as man is a fallen creature, a moral agent with an innate sense of guilt, the myth reflects a sublime truth, even though no one such isolated episode actually took place. No decisive objections, however, have ever been raised against the historicity of Adam and Eve either on historical, scientific, or philosophical grounds. The protest has been based essentially upon subjective concepts of improbability. From the standpoint of logic, it is virtually impossible to accept the authority of Romans 5 ("By one man sin entered into the world....By one man's offense death reigned by one...By one man's disobedience many were made sinners") without inferring that the entire human race has descended from a single father. In Romans 5, Adam is contrasted with Christ. If therefore Christ was a historical individual, Adam himself must have been (or else the inspired apostle was in error). Again Paul takes the details of Genesis 2 and of the temptation and fall in Genesis 3 as literal history. In 1 Timothy 2:13-14 he says, "For Adam was first formed then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." There can be no questions that the New Testament authors accepted the literal historicity of Adam and Eve. The origin of the human race is necessarily a matter of revelation by God, since no written records could extend back to a time prior to the invention of writing. Conceivably the true account of man's origin could have been handed down by oral tradition (and perhaps it was so handed down until Moses' time). But apart from revelation, written down as inspired Scripture, there could be no assurance as to which of the bewildering variety of legends of man's origin known to the man different cultures of earth was the true and reliable account. Here the inspired record tells of a literal Adam and Eve, and gives no indication whatever

that the account is intended to be mythical. It was certainly taken as historical by Christ and the apostles.¹¹

Denis Lamoureux on Theistic Evolution

Denis Lamoureux¹² gives three possible explanations for the origin of man in theistic evolution which he calls evolutionary creation:

Evolutionary Monogenism (Greek monos: one; genesis: beginning). This position suggests that God at one specific point in time selected a single pair of individuals from a population of evolving pre-humans. He then intervened dramatically to implant his Image, and in an instant made them morally accountable. Soon afterwards, these two humans sinned through a specific rebellious act. The remaining pre-humans became extinct, and everyone today descends from this first couple, identified as Adam and Eve. As the epigraph at the front of this book reveals, Billy Graham is comfortable with this approach to human evolution.

Punctiliar Polygenism (Greek polus: many). According to this perspective, the Creator at one point in time dramatically intervened to embed his Image into either all evolving pre-humans or a select group of these individuals, with the others going

¹¹ Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 200-201.

¹² Denis Lamoureux is Associate Professor of Science and Religion at St. Joseph's College in the University of Alberta. He holds three doctoral degrees—dentistry, theology, and biology—and has written two other books on the creation/evolution debate: *Darwinism Defeated? The Johnson-Lamoureux Debate on Biological Origins* (Regent College Publishing, 1999) and *Evolutionary Creation: A Christian Approach to Evolution* (Wipf and Stock, 2008). Lamoureux has held to every major position in the creation/evolution debate. He held to atheistic evolution prior to his conversion, young-earth creationism after his conversion to Christ, then he moved to progressive old earth creationism, and now he holds to evolutionary creationism.

extinct. At that precise moment these beings were made morally responsible, but everyone soon sinned. This understanding of human origins suggests that there was one generation of many “Adams” and “Eves.”

Gradual Polygenism. This approach asserts that the image of God and human sinfulness were gradually and mysteriously manifested across many generations of evolving ancestors. The origin of the spiritual characteristics that define and distinguish humanity is not marked by a single punctiliar event in the past. Rather, these metaphysical realities arose slowly and in a way that cannot be fully comprehended. The appearance of God’s Image and human sin during our evolution is similar to the manifestation of these spiritual characteristics in our creation through embryological development: it is ultimately mysterious. Consequently, there was never an Adam/s or Eve/s. Evolutionary creation embraces gradual polygenesis.¹³

Critique of Lamoureux

Lamoureux claims to believe in the Book of God’s Works (revelation in nature) and the Book of God’s Words (revelation in scripture). Lamoureux surveys the five major views in chapter two of his book: (1) young earth creationism, (2) progressive creationism, (3) evolutionary creation, (4) deistic evolution, (5) and dysteleological (i.e., atheistic) evolution. Lamoureux holds to evolutionary creation. He believes that God used the process of evolution to bring the world and man into existence. Lamoureux gives arguments for an old earth (geological column as well as transitional fossils).¹⁴

Lamoureux rejects the inerrancy of the Bible. He does not believe in an historical Adam and Eve. He writes, “His forming of Adam from dust never happened either. No doubt about it, this

¹³ Denis O. Lamoureux, *I Love Jesus & I Accept Evolution* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 138.

¹⁴ See my critique of the geological column and old earth views of Genesis (Gary Gromacki, “Genesis, Geology, and the Grand Canyon,” *JMAT* [Fall 2008], 28-68).

idea is shocking to most Christians. But again, how God made humans is incidental to the message that He made us. Adam is simply an ancient vessel that delivers eternal truths about our spiritual condition.”¹⁵

Lamoureux also rejects the historicity of the Fall of man. He writes, “That’s right, the events in Gen 3 did not happen as stated. There never was a cosmic fall.”¹⁶

Lamoureux admits, “The greatest challenge for evolutionary creation is to explain biblical passages that refer to a connection between the sin of Adam and the origin of physical death.”¹⁷ God told Adam that the penalty for sin would be certain death (Gen 2:17). After Adam sinned against God, God told Adam that he would die and return to dust (Gen 3:19).

Romans 5:12 says “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because all sinned.” Romans 5:14 says “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.” If Adam (the type) was not an historical person and he never sinned, then why did Jesus (the antitype) need to come to die on a cross to save sinners? The gospel is only good news when seen in light of the bad news that men are lost sinners. We need a Savior because we are all descended from Adam who sinned against God and we have inherited a sinful nature from Adam (Ps 51:5; Eph 2:1-3).

¹⁵ Ibid., 80.

¹⁶ Ibid., 82.

¹⁷ Ibid., 140.

Pete Enns and Jeff Schloss on Theistic Evolution

Pete Enns¹⁸ and Jeff Schloss¹⁹ do not believe that Adam and Eve were historical people. They write in a BioLogos blog:

Another view sees human-like creatures evolving as the scientific evidence indicates. But at a certain point in history, it is possible that God bestowed special spiritual gifts on those who had developed the necessary characteristics. This historical event would endow the recipients with the Image of God. We can say that *Homo divinus* was therefore created from *Homo sapiens*. With these spiritual gifts came the ability to know and experience evil — an opportunity that was grasped with tragic consequences that have carried through the history of *Homo divinus*.

This view can fit whether the humans in question constitute a group or a specific male-female pair. In the case of a group, we can imagine God interacts with all members of the group and essentially initiates the relationship that exists today. If the initiative is with a single human couple, then that relationship can spread to and through their offspring as that subset of the existing population comes to dominate.

In these two cases, humans exercised their free will and caused the Fall. The connection of the Fall with the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil suggests that *Homo divinus* exercised their moral consciousness by choosing to live independently, rather than by God's instruction. The Genesis narrative provides a vivid description of their consequent alienation from God.

These views require a non-literal reading of the Adam story, which follows from the details of the story itself (as we saw above), and from the genetic evidence, and from the significant amount of

¹⁸ Pete Enns is Senior Fellow of Biblical Studies for the BioLogos Foundation and the author of several books.

¹⁹ Jeff Schloss is the Distinguished Professor of Biology and director of the Center for Faith, Ethics and the Life Sciences at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California.

corroborating textual data that we have from the ancient Mesopotamian world. These views can also preserve the representational role of either a human pair or a larger initial population.²⁰

Critique of Enns and Schloss

Enns and Schloss write in their blog that humanlike creatures evolved and then at a certain point in history God bestowed special spiritual gifts. They believe that *Homo divinus* was created from *Homo sapiens*. The classification *Homo sapiens* (Latin for “wise man” or “knowing man”) is the taxonomical classification of humans. *Homo divinus* is a new classification of man invented by Enns and Schloss. Enns and Schloss say that their view can fit whether the humans in question constitute a group (punctiliar polygenism) or a specific male-female pair (evolutionary monogenism). Enns and Schloss believe that humans exercised their free will and caused the Fall. They believe that the Fall was the result of *Homo divinus* exercising their moral consciousness by choosing to live independently rather than by God’s instruction. But they state that these views require a non-literal reading of the Adam story.

Tremper Longman on Theistic Evolution

Tremper Longman²¹ questions whether Adam was an historical person. He writes in his BioLogos blog:

In my previous comment, I indicated that there is a lot of figurative language in Genesis 1. The same may be said for Genesis 2, the second creation account in which there is a focus on Adam

²⁰ See <<http://biologos.org/questions/evolution-and-the-fall/>> (accessed 28 January 2011).

²¹ Tremper Longman is the Robert H. Gundry Professor of Biblical Studies at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California, as well as Visiting Professor of Old Testament at Mars Hill Graduate School and adjunct professor of Old Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary.

and Eve. Also, as we saw in Genesis 1, there is an implicit polemic against ancient Near Eastern mythological ideas. Listen to the description of human beings in the Babylonian *Atrahasis* We should read the description of the creation of Adam with this as a background because the original audience certainly did. Adam too is created from the ground (dust) and a divine component (God's breath). Is this a literal description of how God actually created the first human being? Hardly. Even without recourse to knowledge of ancient Near Eastern literature, this description is clearly not literal. God does not have a body with lungs so that he would literally breathe into dust. God is a spiritual being. The description has other purposes than telling us how God created human beings. It is, in the first place, saying God, and not any other god, created human beings. Second, it is, in contrast to the *Atrahasis*, presenting a picture of humanity's creation which indicates that we are creatures with great dignity (created from God's breath, not the spit of the gods).

Again, the point is that Genesis 1 and 2 are not interested in the question how God ordered creation and human beings in particular. It is proclaiming that God is the creator of both. The description of how Adam was created is certainly figurative. The question is open as to whether there was an actual person named Adam who was the first human being or not. Perhaps there was a first man, Adam, and a first woman, Eve, designated as such by God at the right time in his development of human beings. Or perhaps Adam, whose name after all means "Human," is himself figurative of humanity in general. I have not resolved this issue in my own mind except to say that there is nothing that insists on a literal understanding of Adam in a passage so filled with obvious figurative description. The New Testament's use of Adam (Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15) does not resolve the issue as some suggest because it is possible, even natural, to make an analogy between a literary figure and a historical one.

This issue is an important one. It is wrong to challenge people to choose between the Bible and the science of evolution as if you can only believe that one or the other is true. They are not in conflict. It is particularly damaging to insist that our young people make this kind of false choice as they are studying biology in secondary school or college. If we do so, we will force some to choose against the Bible and others to check their intelligence at the classroom

door. This is a false dilemma created by a misuse of the biblical text.²²

Critique of Tremper Longman

Tremper Longman rejects what Genesis teaches regarding the origin of Adam. He argues that since God does not have a body with lungs, he could not literally breathe into dust. I agree that God is Spirit (John 4:24) but that does not mean that God in a theophany could not breathe into Adam the breath of life. Colossians 1:15-16 tells us that Christ is the image of the invisible God and that by him all things were created. The pre-incarnate Jesus Christ, who is the image of the invisible Lord God, formed man from the dust and breathed into him the breath of life.

I agree with Longman that Genesis 1-2 can be viewed as a polemic against ancient Near Eastern mythological ideas (see my critique below of Atrahasis). But Israel did not have to read Atrahasis to understand Genesis 1-2. I disagree with Longman's view of Genesis 1-2 as figurative language. The genre of Genesis is historical narrative, not poetry. Longman says that Adam is figurative of all humanity rather than an individual person in Genesis 1-2. The context of Genesis 1-2 shows that God created a real man—Adam, the first human being.

Longman says that it is wrong to challenge people to choose between the Bible and the science of evolution. Evolution is a theory and is not real science. Real science deals with observations and experiments. One fact that cannot be disputed is that evolution has never been observed. The Bible is not against science but against the theory of evolution. The Bible and science do not conflict. Many scientists believe in the Bible and creation rather than evolution.

²² See <<http://biologos.org/blog/is-there-a-historical-adam/>> (accessed 28 January 2011).

Conclusion: Differences Between Theistic Evolution and Biblical Creationism

The following chart shows that theistic evolution contradicts biblical creationism found in the book of Genesis.

Theistic Evolution	Biblical Creationism
Interprets Genesis 1-3 non-literally	Interprets Genesis 1-3 literally
Sun existed before Earth	Earth created before the sun
Life began in the ocean	Life began on earth
Dinosaurs existed millions of years before man	Dinosaurs and man were created on the sixth day
Race of pre-existing sub-humans	Adam was the first man
Man and ape have a common ancestor	God created man from the dust of the ground and breathed life into him
Death in the world before Adam	Death is a result of Adam's sin

CRITIQUES OF ANCIENT MYTHS ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF MAN

Atrahasis (Babylonian myth)

The Babylonian myth Atrahasis²³ is similar to Genesis in that it contains a story about the creation of man and a story about a man who survived a flood with his family. Atrahasis begins with the more powerful gods (the Annuna gods) forcing the lower gods (the Igigi gods) to do all the work. The lower gods revolted and marched on the house of Enlil and demanded that they be

²³ Atrahasis is written in Akkadian language in cuneiform script. It was found in Sippar (Abu Habbah in modern Iraq) and dates to the seventeenth century B.C. It is currently found in the British museum (room 56). See Clyde Fant and Mitchell Reddish, *Lost Treasures of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 12.

relieved of their tasks of digging the rivers and canals. In response the Annuna gods decide to create man. The birth goddess Nintu (also called Mami) is summoned and given the task of creating the humans. Nintu creates humans with the help of the god Enki. Bill Arnold and Bryan Beyer offer this translation of the original myth:

You are the birth goddess create offspring and let man bear the toil of the gods. They summoned and asked the goddess, the midwife of the gods, wise Mami, You are the birth-goddess, creator of humankind, create humanity that he may bear the yoke, let him bear the yoke assigned by Enlil, let man carry the toil of the gods. Nintu opened her mouth and addressed the great gods: It is not possible for me to make things, skill lies with Enki. Since he can cleanse everything let him give me the clay so that I can make it. Enki opened his mouth and addressed the great gods: On the first, seventh and fifteenth day of the month I will make a purifying bath. Let one god be slaughtered so that all the gods may be cleansed in a dipping. From his flesh and blood let Nintu mix clay, that god and man may be thoroughly mixed in the clay, let there be a spirit from the god's flesh so that we may hear the drum for the rest of time. Let it proclaim living man as its sign, so that this be not forgotten let there be a spirit. And the assembly answered Yes. The great Anunnaki, who administer destinies. On the first, seventh and fifteenth day of the month he made a purifying bath. We-ila, who had personality, they slaughtered in their assembly. From his flesh and blood Nintu mixed clay. For the rest of time they heard the drum from the flesh of the god there was a spirit. It proclaimed living man as its sign and so that this was not forgotten there was a spirit. After she had mixed that clay she summoned the Anunnaki, the great gods. The IGIGI, the great gods, spat upon the clay. Mami opened her mouth and addressed the great gods: You commanded me a task, I have completed it. You have slaughtered a god together with his personality. I have removed your heavy work, I have imposed your toil on man.²⁴

²⁴ Bill Arnold and Bryan Beyer, eds., *Readings from the Ancient Near East: Primary Sources for Old Testament Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 24.

Unlike Genesis, Atrahasis concentrates only on the creation of man. It does not describe the creation of the birds, fish, land animals, or plants and trees. In Atrahasis man is created as a labor force to relieve the gods from the burden of work. In Genesis God created man to worship and serve him in the garden and to have fellowship with him. In Atrahasis man is created from clay mixed with the blood and flesh of a slaughtered god. In Genesis man is formed by God as he took dust and breathed into it the breath of life (Gen 2:7).

Was Genesis dependent upon Atrahasis in some way? Scholars who believe in the documentary hypothesis believe that Genesis was written late (during or after the Babylonian exile in 586 B.C.). They would argue that Genesis is an adaptation of the earlier Atrahasis epic. Conservative Bible scholars would argue that Moses wrote Genesis around 1445 B.C. Moses could have received the information regarding the creation of man from God directly on Mt. Sinai (Exod 34:27-35). He did not have to use a Babylonian myth like Atrahasis to discover how God created man.

Enuma Elish (Babylonian myth)

Enuma Elish²⁵ is sometimes called the Babylonian epic of creation. It is the best known of the ancient Mesopotamian creation stories. It was written to honor Marduk as the chief god of the Babylonian pantheon. The words “Enuma Elish” mean “When on high.” In Enuma Elish the monster Tiamat (goddess symbolized by the primeval ocean) is killed by the young and daring Babylonian god Marduk. Marduk creates the universe from the carcass of Tiamat and has Ea create man from the blood of Tiamat’s co-conspirator Kingu. Man is created to do the

²⁵ Enuma Elish is written in Akkadian language in cuneiform script. It was discovered in Ashurbanipal’s library in Nineveh (Kuyunjik in modern Iraq) and is dated to the seventh century B.C. It is currently located in the British Museum (room 55). See Fant and Reddish, *Lost Treasures of the Bible*, 3.

hard work for the gods. Arnold and Beyers offer the following translation of the myth:

When Marduk hears the words of the gods, his heart prompts him to fashion artful works. Opening his mouth, he addresses Ea to impart the plan he had conceived in his heart: Blood I will mass and cause bones to be. I will establish a savage, Man shall be his name. Truly, savage man I will create. He shall be charged with the service of the gods that they might be at ease.²⁶

It was Kingu who contrived the uprising, and made Tiamat rebel and joined battle. They bound him, holding him before Ea. They imposed on him his guilt and severed his blood vessels. Out of his blood they fashioned humankind. He imposed the service and let free the gods. After Ea, the wise, had created humankind, had imposed upon it the service of the gods—that work was beyond comprehension, as artfully planned by Marduk.²⁷

Enuma Elish is polytheistic account of creation, while Genesis is monotheistic. Violence is part of the creation of man in Enuma Elish. There is no violence in the creation account in Genesis. In Enuma Elish humans are created to be the slave work force for the gods. In Genesis man is created in the image of God to worship and serve the Lord God.

Instruction of Merikare (Egyptian myth)

This ancient Egyptian text about the creation of man mentions that man received the breath of life from the gods. Merikare was possibly the son of Wahkare Akhtoy III (the ninth and tenth dynasties of the first intermediate period of Egyptian history from 2181-2055 B.C.). Here is the account of man's creation from the Instruction of Merikare:

²⁶ Bill Arnold and Bryan Beyer eds., *Readings*, 42.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

Well tended is humankind—god’s cattle, he made sky and earth for their sake, he subdued the water monster, he made breath for their noses to live. They are his images, who came from his body, he shines in the sky for their sake; he made for them plants and cattle, fowl and fish to feed them.²⁸

In this Egyptian myth the Egyptian god Ra made humans from his body. But Genesis teaches that God made man’s body from the dust of the ground (Gen 2:7). In the Egyptian myth the sun god Ra (“he shines in the sky for their sake”) made plants, cattle, birds and fish for man to eat. In Genesis initially man was told to eat fruits and vegetables (a vegetarian diet) (Gen 1:29; 2:16-17). In the Noahic Covenant God gave man permission to eat meat (without blood) after the global flood (Gen 9:3-4). Luke wrote that “Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22a). Moses may have known this Egyptian myth the Instruction of Merikare. But Moses did not use this Egyptian myth to write Genesis. Moses wrote that God created the sun on day four of creation week (Gen 1:16-18). Genesis 1-2 was a polemic against the polytheistic account of creation found in the Instruction of Merikare.

Memphis Creation Myth (Egyptian myth)

The Memphis creation myth²⁹ focuses on the creation of the Egyptian pantheon of gods. Ptah was the father of the Egyptian gods who brought the universe into being by conceiving all aspects of it in his heart and then speaking his thoughts out loud. First he created the Egyptian gods and then he created the cities with shrines in which to house them. He provided wood, clay and stone statues for the spirits or divine power (ka) of the gods to dwell in. Again, Arnold and Beyer provide this text:

²⁸ Ibid., 65.

²⁹ It is written on a rectangular slab of black granite measuring 36 x 54 inches long and is now in the British Museum. The inscription was written during the reign of Egyptian pharaoh Shabaqo (716-702 B.C.), who ordered it to be set up in the temple of Ptah at Memphis.

There came into being as the heart and there came into being as the tongue something in the form of Atum. The mighty Great One is Ptah, who transmitted life to all gods, as well as to their KA, through this heart, by which Horus became Ptah, and through this tongue, by which Thoth became Ptah...Thus all the gods were formed and his Ennead was completed. Indeed, all the divine order really came into being through what the heard thought and the tongue commanded... Thus it happened that it was said of Ptah, "He who made all and brought the gods into being...And so Ptah was satisfied, after he had made everything, as well as all the divine order. He had formed the gods, he had made cities...he had put the gods in their shrines, he had established their offerings...So the gods entered into their bodies of every kind of wood, of every kind of stone, of every kind of clay, or anything...in which they had taken form.³⁰

This Egyptian myth is polytheistic while Genesis is monotheistic. It is interesting that in the Egyptian myth that the Egyptian god Ptah spoke the word and created the gods. In Genesis God spoke his powerful word and the universe came into existence (cf. "God said" in Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24). Romans 1:18-23 indicates that the wrath of God is against sinful man for their refusal to acknowledge the one true powerful Creator God. Sinful man rejects the Creator God and worships idols. The Egyptians worshipped many gods (or idols). Horus was the sky god and Thoth was the moon god. The Ennead refers to the nine leading gods of the Egyptian religion. The Ennead were worshipped at Heliopolis. The nine gods (idols) of the Ennead were: Atum, his children Shu and Tefnut, their children Geb and Nut and their children Osiris, Isis, Set and Nephthys. In the ten plagues on Egypt, Jehovah demonstrated his power over the Egyptian pantheon (i.e. the darkened sky was an attack on the Egyptian god Ra) and delivered his people from bondage. Luke wrote: "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and deeds" (Acts 9:22).

³⁰ Arnold and Beyer, eds., *Readings*, 64.

Moses may have heard the Memphis Creation Myth, but his account of creation on Genesis would be a polemic against this Egyptian creation myth.

A Hymn to Amon-Re (Egyptian myth)

The Egyptians had a myth called A Hymn to Amon-Re which praised Amon-Re as the creator god:

Hail to you, Amon-Re...
 Eldest of heaven, firstborn of earth,
 Lord of what is, enduring in all things...
 The Lord of truth and father of the gods.
 Who made mankind and created the beasts,
 Lord of what is, who created the fruit tree,
 Made herbage and gave life to cattle.
 The god whom Ptah made,
 The goodly beloved youth to whom the gods give praise,
 Who made what is below and what is above....
 The chief one, who made the entire earth...
 Jubilation to you who made the gods,
 Raised the heavens and laid down the ground.³¹

Who is the creator god in Egyptian religion? Apparently several gods were viewed by the Egyptians as creator. The Book of the Dead shows that the Egyptians believed in a god (Atum) who created himself and then the other gods. In the Egyptian myth A Hymn to Amon-Re, the god Amon-Re is described as the eldest of heaven and father of gods, yet Ptah created him. In this Egyptian hymn Amon-Re is praised for creating mankind.

The book of Genesis begins with the words: "In the beginning God." The God of the Bible is eternal. He existed before he created the world. He has always existed and no one created him. The Bible teaches the existence of one God and rejects polytheism.

³¹ Ibid.

JOHN OSWALT- THE BIBLE AMONG THE MYTHS

Dr. John Oswalt³² has written an excellent book on *The Bible Among the Myths*.³³ Oswalt points out that sixty years ago scholars argued that Israel's religion was unique among ancient religions. Now some critical scholars reject that view and argue that the Bible contains myths.³⁴

Definitions of Myth

What is myth? Oswalt points out that many scholars have debated the definition of myth. Gaster writes, "Myth is a story of the gods in which results of natural causes are accounted for supernaturally."³⁵ Bultmann defines myth as "a story involving a pre-scientific world view."³⁶ Rogerson defines myth as "a narrative in which there is a deeply serious use of symbolism to convey profound realities."³⁷ Oden defines myth as "the

³² Dr. John Oswalt is research professor of Old Testament at Wesley Biblical Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi.

³³ John Oswalt, *The Bible Among the Myths* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

³⁴ Mark Smith writes, "The Baal cycle expresses the heart of the West Semitic religion from which Israelite religion largely developed." (*The Ugaritic Baal Cycle* [Leiden: Brill, 1994], 1:xxvii).

³⁵ M. Gaster, "Myth," *IDB*, ed. G. Butterick (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 3:481.

³⁶ R. Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth I*, ed. H. Bartsch (London: SPCK, 1953), 1.

³⁷ J. W. Rogerson, "Slippery Words: V. Myth," *Exp Tim* 110 (1978): 11.

traditional tales of the deeds of *daimones*: gods, spirits, and all sorts of supernatural or superhuman beings.”³⁸

Characteristics of Myth

Oswalt views continuity as the ruling idea of myth. This is the idea that all things that exist are part of each other. There are no distinctions between three realms: humans, gods and nature. So gods are humans and natural forces; nature is divine and has human characteristics; and humans are divine and one with nature. So since the idol is like Baal, it is Baal. Baal is like the storm, therefore he is the storm. Oswalt lists the common features of myth:

(1) Polytheism: The world is made up of many gods and goddesses. The world is an emanation of the divine.

(2) Images: The gods are represented by idol images made of wood, stone, or clay.

(3) Eternity of Chaotic Matter: Myths assume the eternality of matter. In the myths of the ancient near east there is chaos in nature.

(4) Personality not essential to reality: In myths matter is always animate but it is not necessarily personal. The deities in the pantheon represented personalized forces and objects: earth, wind, fire, sun, moon, love, etc.

(5) Low view of the gods: Myths present a low view of the gods. The gods are untrustworthy and selfish and fight amongst themselves for power. They are afraid of death. They are subject to magic.

³⁸ Robert Oden, “Myth and Mythology (OT),” *ABD*, ed. D. N. Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1995), 4:949.

(6) Conflict is the source of life: In myth conflict is the source of life. There is a never ending conflict between forces of construction and forces of chaos.

(7) Low view of humanity: In the myths humans are created to serve the gods. Humans have no control over their destinies. Choice seems to be an illusion.

(8) No single standard of ethics: There is no single standard of ethics. There is no right and wrong. What one god wants another god hates.

(9) Cyclical concept of existence: Life is a series of cycles that lead nowhere. The cycle of life starts with nonexistence to dependence to independence to dependence to nonexistence. Reality is like a turning wheel.

Characteristics of a Biblical Worldview

A biblical worldview starts with the presupposition that the Bible is truth (John 17:17). Since the Bible is truth, it does not contain errors or contradictions. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the prophets wrote down the words that God wanted us to know (2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:19-21). The Bible tells us about the origin of man. Only God was present at the time when man was created. We know that God created man because of the revelation of that truth in the book of Genesis.

Oswalt explains that transcendence is the underlying principle for biblical thinking and a biblical worldview. In mythical thinking God is the cosmos and the cosmos is God. For the Bible, God is not the cosmos and the cosmos is not God. God is distinct from his creation. He is everywhere present in the world, but he is not the world and the world is not him. Oswalt lists these characteristics of biblical worldview:

(1) Monotheism: Israel worshiped one God: Jehovah. God told Israel that they were to worship Him alone (Exod 20:2-3).

(2) Iconoclasm: God forbid Israel in the second commandment to not make any images of him (Exod 20:4-6). Israel disobeyed God's law and worshipped idols. God judged them as a result.

(3) First Principle is Spirit: God is a Spirit (Jn 4:24) and he is eternal. God existed before he created the world. If there is chaos in the world it is because of rebellious created spirits.

(4) Absence of conflict in the creation process: God created a perfect world. He did not fight any evil forces to create (Gen 1-2). Evil entered the world after creation (Gen 3).

(5) A high view of humanity: God made man in the image of God. Man is the apex of God's creation and was created to have a relationship with God (Gen 1:26-27).

(6) The reliability of God: God is personal. He blesses his people (Gen 1:28). He is not fickle or capricious. God is faithful, just, true, kind, and gracious.

(7) God is supra-sexual: God is never said to have a consort or have intercourse with anyone. He does not have divine or semi-divine children.

(8) Sex is desacralized: Nothing happens to God or to nature when a man and woman have sex together. Ritual prostitution was forbidden in the Bible (Num 25:1-3; 1 Cor 6).

(9) Prohibition of magic: The Bible forbids magic and sorcery. The Israelites were not to attempt to manipulate God in any kind of ritualistic way (Deut 18:10-14).

(10) Ethical obedience as a religious response: God told his people to obey his laws. The Mosaic covenant spelled out in detail how the Israelites were to live and worship (Exod 20).

(11) The importance of human-historical activity: The Bible records the choices of men and women and their consequences (negative and positive) in their relationship to God and others.

The following chart shows the contrast between myth and the Bible. Myth and the Bible come from two radically different perspectives and world views. The Bible is not myth.

Myth	The Bible
Polytheism	Monotheism
Worship of idols	Worship of idols is forbidden
Matter is eternal	God is eternal
Low view of the gods	High view of God: Sovereign Creator
Low view of man	High view of man: made in God's image
No single standard of ethics	God's law is a standard of ethics
Magic practiced to influence gods	Prohibition of magic

WHAT GENESIS TEACHES ABOUT ADAM

The Creation of Man (Gen 1:26-27; 2:7)

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in his image; in the image of God He created him; male and female he created them’ (Gen 1:26-27).

The Hebrew word translated “man” (אָדָם) in Genesis 1:26-27 refers to mankind and not Adam. “Them” indicates this generic significance. God created mankind male and female. Adam was not one individual with both male and female sex organs. There is no basis for this bizarre interpretation given by some feminists.

God made man in his “image” (צֶלְמֵנוּ). In the ancient Near East, kings would have statues made of themselves and set them up in different places to indicate their places of rulership. For instance, the word *image* is used in Daniel 3 to describe the image that the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar made of himself (cf. Dan 3:1, 2, 3,5,7, 10, 12, 14, 15, 18). He demanded that everyone worship his image but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down to the image. God has placed his image bearers (man and woman) on the earth to indicate that God is the ruler of this world. The word “image” is a functional term. It does not describe shape. Man possesses the elements of personality that God possesses. God has intellect, emotion, and will. He can think, feel, and act. Man also has these capacities. Both man and woman were created in the image of God.

Image and likeness are essentially synonymous terms. Both indicate personality, moral, and spiritual qualities that God and man share (self-consciousness, God-consciousness, freedom, responsibility, speech, moral discernment). These distinguish humans from animals. John Whitcomb explains how man is different from animals:

Man is the crown of God’s creation. He was made in the image and likeness of his Creator and was given complete dominion over the earth (Gen.1:26). In the light of all of this how utterly blasphemous is the currently popular idea that man is little more than a “naked ape.” The physical differences between man and ape are enormous. But if the physical differences are great, the mental-cultural-spiritual differences are little short of infinite. Of all living beings on this planet, only man is self-conscious as a person; is sufficiently free from the bondage of instinct to exercise real choices and to have significant purposes and goals in life; appreciates art and music; can make real tools; can be truly educated rather than merely trained; can use oral and written symbols to communicate abstract concepts to others; can enjoy true fellowship; can accumulate knowledge and attain wisdom beyond previous generations and thus make genuine history; can discern moral right and wrong and suffer agonies of conscience; can recognize the existence and rightful demands of his Creator

through worship, sacrifice and religious service. Only man will exist forever as a personal being either in heaven or in hell.³⁹

Genesis 1:27 says “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Moses used the verb ברא five times in Genesis 1 (cf. Gen 1:1, 21, 27). The word ברא is used three times in Genesis 1:27. Genesis 1:27 shows that both man and woman are created in God’s image.⁴⁰ Genesis 2 will reveal that God first created Adam from the dust of the ground (2:7) and then God created Eve from the side of Adam. God did not create man and woman simultaneously. Adam was created before Eve. First Timothy 2:13 says “For Adam was formed first, then Eve.” Genesis 1:27 shows that human sexuality (male and female) were a part of the original creation. God created both man and woman in the image of God.

Genesis 2:7 says, “And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being.” Moses identifies the covenant name for God (יהוה) with the creator name for God

³⁹ John Whitcomb, *The Early Earth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972), 120.

⁴⁰ The pseudepigraphic *Alphabet of Ben Sira* gives a story of Lilith as Adam’s first wife. Scholars date the *Alphabet of Ben Sira* between the 8th and 10th centuries A.D. This myth places the creation of Lilith after God’s words in Genesis 2:18. In this myth God formed Lilith out of the clay from which he made Adam, but she and Adam bicker with one another. Lilith claims that since she and Adam were created in the same way that they were equal and she refuses to submit to him. The idea that Adam had a wife prior to Eve developed from an interpretation of Genesis and the two creation accounts. Genesis 1:27 is the first mention of the creation of woman (no name is given for the woman). Genesis 2:22 describes God’s creation of the woman from Adam’s rib. The first woman is not called Eve by Adam until after the Fall. Genesis 3:20 says “And Adam called his wife’s name Eve because she was the mother of all living.”

(אֱלֹהִים) used in Genesis 1:1. This is the first mention of the terms Lord God (יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים) together. Israel would recognize that the one who is their “I AM” was also their Creator.

The word “formed” (נִיָּצַר) means to shape or form like a potter who shapes a clay pot (Isa 29:16; 45:9; Jer18:2, 3, 4, 6). In Genesis 2 both the man and the animals (2:19) are said to have been formed from the dust of the earth. God took the dust from the ground and formed a man.

The dust here refers to inorganic material. The word “dust” (עָפָר) in Genesis 2:7 is the same word used in Genesis 3:17 to describe the material from which thorns and thistles will grow and to which men will return when they die. The word is used 12 times of the material from which the human body is composed and to which it will return (Gen 2:7; 3:19; Job 4:19; 8:19; 10:9; 34:15; Ps 103:14; Ps 104:29; Eccl 3:20; 12:7). For those who believe that the word dust should be interpreted literally, it is impossible to hold to a theistic view of the evolution of man.

God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. The breath of life (נְשַׁמַּת חַיִּים) animated the dust and gave Adam physical and spiritual life. The Creator was intimately involved with His creation. It was an act of giving as well as making. The breath of the Lord has creative power. Man was given three things when God breathed on him. The breath of God brought life. Man was animated by the breath of God. Man was also given spiritual understanding. Job 32:8 says “the breath of the Almighty gives understanding.” Man was also given a conscience: a moral monitor telling him right from wrong. Proverbs 20:7 says that the spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord searching all of his innermost parts. Man was given animation, spiritual understanding, and a conscience when God blew into the statue of dust which he had formed.

The result of God’s breathing into the man the man was that the man became a living being (נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה:). The Hebrew word for living being also describes what sea and land animals possess (Gen.1:20,21, 24). What distinguishes man from animal though is that man alone is created in the image of God

(Gen.1:27). The Hebrew word for living being describes the whole person- the soul in the body. Man is a soul-body person. He is dichotomous in that he is made up of material body and immaterial soul.

Man's First Home: The Garden in Eden (Gen 2:8-15)

The Lord God provided a beautiful place for the man to live. He planted a garden eastward in Eden (Gen.2:8). Specifically, Eden is the name of the place rather than the name of the garden. This was paradise. God put the man he had formed in the garden in Eden (cf. Gen.2:15).

The Lord God provided food for man to eat. He made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground. These trees were pleasing to the eye and good for food. This orchard of trees was beautiful to see. We know from Genesis 1:11-13 that God created the fruit trees on day three of creation week. Two trees in the middle of the garden are singled out: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The tree of life was apparently a means of preserving and promoting life in their blissful state. Eating of the tree of life would lead to living forever (cf. Gen 3:22). The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a tree which produced the experiential knowledge of good and evil.

The Lord God provided a river in order to water the garden and to possibly provide water for man to drink. There was one river which went out of Eden and became four riverheads. The four rivers were called Pishon, Gihon, Hiddekel, and the Euphrates.

Man's First Job (Gen 2:15-17)

The Lord God placed man in the garden in Eden to serve him and to obey his commandments. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. The word "put" (נָתַן) means set to rest. It connotes rest and safety as well as dedication in God's presence (Exod 16:33-34; Lev 16:23; Num 17:4; Deut 26:4,10). God gave man the perfect work place: Paradise. It was a perfect work environment. God's purpose for

placing man in the garden was to keep and serve. The Hebrew word for “tend” (לְעַבְדָּהּ) means to serve. God put Adam in the garden to serve God. The Hebrew word for “keep” (וְלִשְׁמֹרָהּ) is used of keeping the commandments and taking heed to obey God’s words. God created man to worship and serve Him.

God created man with freedom to make choices. He gave man a commandment to test him. God told the man that he could freely eat from every tree of the garden (Gen 2:16). He could eat fruit from the trees of the garden. Man could eat oranges, apples, pears, peaches, and other fruit from the fruit trees. Here we see that God is generous. He gave the man more than he would ever need. He told him that he could eat to his heart’s desire. The Lord God gave the man a prohibition. He was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17). God stated that in the day that he ate from it he would surely die. Disobedience would lead to certain death. God tested man to see if he would obey him.

Man’s Need for a Helper (Genesis 2:18)

The Lord God made it clear to the man that his condition of being alone was not good. The Lord God said, “It is not good (לֹא-טוֹב) that man should be alone.” This is the first “not good” mentioned in the Bible. God knew that the man needed a woman. The man needed someone to talk to and fellowship with like himself. At the end of the sixth day after God created woman, He looked at all of his creation and said that it was “very good” (Gen1:31).

God stated his intention to make a suitable helper for man: “I will make him a helper comparable to him.” The Hebrew word for “helper” (עֵזֶר) is not a demeaning term. It is used to describe God in Psalm 33:20 and Psalm 70:5. A helper is one that one supports the other in doing the will of God (Deut 33:7; Ps 33:20). The woman would assist the man in his task of serving and obeying God’s commands. The word “suitable” (כַּנְגִידוֹ) means what is in front of or corresponding to him. She was to be his equal. There were no animals who met this

qualification (Gen 2:20). What he lacks, she supplies, and what she lacks, he supplies. They would meet each other's needs.

Man's Naming of the Animals (Genesis 2:19-20)

The Lord God made man aware of his being incomplete by bringing the animals to him. God brought the animals to Adam on day six to see what Adam would name them. Adam did not name every individual animal. He apparently gave names to the different kinds God brought before him. Naming the animals showed that Adam had dominion over the animals. In doing this task he was exercising his authority over them. The man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air, and all the beasts of the field. The fact that Adam did this in one day shows the superiority of Adam's intellect. As he named the animals, Adam realized that there was a male and female of each species. He also realized that there was no suitable helper for him. God had revealed to him his need for a helper.

The Creation of the Woman (Gen 2:21-22)

God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam. God didn't need any anesthetics. He just put Adam to sleep. Then the Divine Doctor performed an operation on the side of Adam. He took a rib and some flesh from the side of Adam and God formed the woman. God then performed the first wedding. He brought Eve to Adam in the garden in Eden. The first wedding took place in a beautiful garden. Like a father escorting his daughter, God brought Eve to Adam.

Man's Naming of the Woman (Gen 2:23)

Adam recognized that Eve was taken from a rib and some flesh from his side. He said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man." The Hebrew word for "woman" (אִשָּׁה) sounds similar to the Hebrew word for man (אָדָם). Adam's naming the woman shows his authority over her.

God's Definition of Marriage (Gen 2:24-25)

Genesis 2:24 gives God's definition of marriage. Marriage is a covenant relationship between a man and his wife before God that involves binding public declaration of a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman and a private physical consummation of their union. Marriage involves the man leaving his parents. Marriage involves a man cleaving to his wife. Marriage involves becoming one flesh. This refers to the physical, sexual union between a husband and his wife. A husband should consummate his marriage with his wife.

The man and his wife were naked and unashamed before the Fall (Gen 2:25). They lived without clothes before the fall and without guilt and shame. Guilt and shame came into the world because of sin. Adam and Eve had an intimate marriage. Total transparency marked their relationship. Their nakedness with each other reveals that they were at ease with one another and had no fear of exploitation. They did not try to hide anything from one another. They were transparent with one another as they communicated their feelings, love, trust, and commitment.

The Creation Mandate (Gen 1:28-31)

Chronologically, the creation mandate was given after the creation of Adam and Eve. The creation mandate was given to both Adam and Eve. Notice that Genesis 1:26 says, "Then God blessed them and God said to them." God blessed them and then he gave them some commands to obey. God expected the first man and woman to obey the "Creation Mandate."

(1) Procreation: God told the man and woman to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28). God commanded the man and his wife to have sex and reproduce. Sex is God's idea and is essentially good. God created sex for a husband and wife to enjoy (Prov 5:15-19) and to procreate. God wanted his world to be filled with his image bearers. God gave this command to Noah and his wife and Noah's sons and their wives after the global flood (Gen 9:1).

(2) Geographic Distribution: God told them to fill the earth (Gen 1:28). Adam and Eve were to have children and those children were to spread out and fill the earth. After the flood, God gave the same command to Noah and his family (cf. Gen 9:7). But their descendants disobeyed and built the tower of Babel in rebellion against this command. As a result, the Lord confounded their languages and they scattered across the planet (Gen 11:1-9).

(3) Stewardship of the earth: God told them to “subdue” the earth (Gen 1:28). The word “subdue” means to tread down, to conquer, to force into servitude. Man was to use the resources of the earth for his benefit.

(4) Rulership: God told the man and woman to “have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen 1:28). Man has been given authority over the animals. Man was created in the image of the divine King and was given delegated authority over the animal kingdom.

(5) Diet: God told Adam and Eve what they were to eat. They were to eat herbs (vegetables) and fruit (Gen 1:29). Before the Fall of man and the flood of Noah, man was originally a vegetarian. All of the animals that God created were to eat plants as well (Gen 1:30). So the giant T-Rex was originally a herbivore rather than a carnivore dinosaur (cf. Gen 1:30). After the flood, God told man that he could eat meat without blood (Gen 9:3).

The Temptation of Eve and the Fall of Man (Gen 3:1-6)

Genesis 3:1-6 records the temptation of Eve and the historic Fall of man. Adam and Eve could not blame their sin on the environment. They lived in paradise—in the garden of Eden. They could not blame their sin on heredity. They were the first people and were created without sinful natures. Yet they disobeyed God. Genesis 3 records this historical event. It is not a myth. Genesis 3 is historical narrative.

The serpent tempted the woman and deceived her. Satan disguised himself as a serpent. Revelation 12:9 identifies Satan with the serpent of old. John writes, “So the great dragon was

cast out, the serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth and his angels were cast out with him." The serpent was one of God's creatures. It must have been a beautiful creature rather than a repulsive snake. Eve was caught off guard when the serpent began a conversation with her.

The serpent questioned God's prohibition (Gen 3:1b-3). The serpent questioned God's command and tried to get Eve to doubt God's word. He asked, "Did God really say, You must not eat from any tree in the garden?" Satan got Eve to discuss God's prohibition. He took a clear-cut command of God and turned it into a topic for debate. In the conversation with Eve, Satan learned that she did not know the word of God very well.

Eve became confused in her conversation with Satan. She distorted God's word in several ways. First, we see that Eve took away from the word of God. God said, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen 2:16). Eve minimized the freedom that God gave to her. She said, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden" (Gen 3:2). She left out the word "freely." Eve diminished God's provision for them.

Secondly, Eve added to God's prohibition. The Lord said that they were not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She added the words "and touch it" (Gen 3:3). Eve added to the strictness of God's prohibition.

Thirdly, Eve minimized the punishment for sin. She misquoted God as saying "you shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die." Eve had her doubts that God would punish sin. She did not believe in the certainty of judgment. Now she was set up to believe the lie of Satan.

Satan denied the penalty for sin (Gen 3:4). He told Eve, "You will not surely die." The first doctrine to be denied is the doctrine of God's punishment of sin.

Satan lied and told Eve that she could become like God by eating the forbidden fruit (Gen 3:5). Satan suggested to Eve that God was jealous and holding them back from their destiny. He said, "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Satan

fell because of pride and his desire to become like God (Isa 14:12-14; Ezek 28:11-19). Now he tried to get Eve to fall by appealing to her desire to become like God.

After Satan tempted her, he left her. He wanted her to focus on the physical instead of the spiritual. Satan was successful in his solicitation.

The Sin of Adam and Eve (Gen 3:6)

Eve looked at the fruit on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She saw that it was good for food (the lust of the flesh), that it was pleasing to the eyes (the lust of the eyes) and that it was desirable to make her wise (the pride of life) (cf 1 John 2:15-17). She took of its fruit and ate it. She then gave some to Adam who was with her and he ate.

First Timothy 2:14 says, "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression." The woman was deceived by Satan and fell into transgression. She crossed over the line and broke God's commandment. Second Corinthians 11:3 says, "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

Eve gave some of the forbidden fruit to Adam who was with her. Adam apparently was in the vicinity. Eve involved Adam in her sin. If he was listening, he should have told the serpent and Eve what God had commanded and warned her not to listen to the serpent. Adam deliberately disobeyed God by eating of the forbidden fruit. Adam knew right from wrong. He chose to do wrong.

The Consequences of their Sin (Gen 3:7-13)

The sin of Adam and Eve led to terrible consequences.

1. Guilt: They realized that they had sinned and were naked (Gen 3:7a). Their eyes were opened but they did not see as they once did. Now they saw the world as sinners. They realized that they were physically naked. They realized that they were

vulnerable to exploitation. Before the Fall the man and the woman were naked and were unashamed. Now they were naked and filled with shame. Sin led to shame.

2. Cover-up: They made coverings for themselves out of fig leaves (Gen 3:7b). Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves. They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. They tried to hide their nakedness from one another and God.

3. Fear: They hid from God among the trees of the garden (Gen 3:8-10). They thought they could hide from God. Sin led to a broken relationship with God.

4. Blame: They refused to accept responsibility for their sinful actions (Gen 3:11-13). The Lord confronted the man with his disobedience. He asked two questions, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" (Gen 3:11). How did Adam respond? He did not accept responsibility for his sin. Instead, the man blamed the woman for his sin. He said, "The woman whom you gave me to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate" (Gen 3:12). In one sense Adam blamed God for his sin because God gave the woman to Adam. The Lord confronted the woman with her sin, "What have you done?" The woman blamed the serpent for her sin. She said, "The serpent deceived me and I ate" (Gen 3:13).

The Curse on the Serpent (Gen 3:14-15)

God placed a curse on the serpent. He did not curse Adam or Eve. The serpent was not given an opportunity to explain its actions like Adam and Eve were given. The serpent was immediately judged. The serpent's judgment was to crawl on its belly and to eat dust all the days of its life. The form of the serpent was changed in some way as a result of this curse. Possibly before the Fall the serpent had legs of some kind. Now it would be forced to crawl on the ground. Eating dust is symbolic of humiliation and defeat. The serpent will continue to crawl and eat dust during the Millennial kingdom (Isa 65:25). The entire animal kingdom was affected by man's Fall as

evidenced by the fact that the serpent was cursed more than all cattle and more than every beast of the field (Rom 8:20).

God predicted a conflict between the serpent and the woman and between Satan's seed and the woman's seed. God promised that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent. God said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her Seed, and He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." (Gen 3:15). This verse is sometimes referred to as the *protoevangelium*—the first mention of the gospel.

The Bible records the story of this conflict between the two seeds. Satan tried to stop the coming of the Messiah. Cain killed his brother Abel. First John 3:12 says that Cain was of the evil one (Satan). Pharaoh took Abraham's wife and endangered the promise, but God stopped him from having sexual relations with her (Gen 12). Abimelech took Sarah but God stopped him from having sexual relations with her as well (Gen 20). Pharaoh ordered all the Jewish boy babies to be thrown into the Nile river, but the Jewish midwives refused to obey this command (Exod1). Haman failed in his genocide attempt to have all the Jews killed (cf. book of Esther). King Herod tried to have the baby Jesus killed. He ordered that all the boy babies two years of age and younger in the vicinity of Bethlehem be executed. But God delivered the infant Jesus by warning Joseph in a dream of Herod's plan. Joseph took Mary and the baby Jesus down to Egypt (Matt 2). Judas Iscariot was possessed by Satan when he betrayed Jesus to be crucified (John 13:27).

At the cross it appeared as if Satan had won the victory. Jesus was crucified. But the cross was really the defeat of Satan. At the cross, Jesus "bruised" the head of Satan and he had his heel bruised. The picture is of a person stomping on the head of a snake. In the process of crushing the snake's head, the heel of the person is hurt. Christ suffered and died on the cross in order to defeat Satan (Col 2:14-15; Heb 2:14-15). The original audience of Israel would not know that the Messiah would crush Satan. It is only now as we look back from our post-cross perspective that we understand that this was a prediction of Christ's victory over Satan at the cross.

God's Judgment on the Woman (Gen 3:16)

God told the woman that she would experience pain in bringing forth children and she would experience conflict in her marriage because of her sin. God said that her desire would be for her husband. The Hebrew word translated "desire" (תִּשְׁקֶה) does not refer to sexual desire, but to a desire to control. The same word is used in Genesis 4:7 to describe sin's desire to control Cain. The punishment involved a power struggle between husbands and wives in marriage. Marriage conflicts are a result of the curse.

Foh writes, "The curse here describes the beginning of the battle of the sexes. After the Fall, the husband no longer rules easily; he must fight for his headship. The woman's desire is to control her husband (to usurp his divinely appointed headship) and he must master her, if he can. Sin had corrupted both the willing submission of the wife and the loving headship of the husband. And so the rule of love founded in paradise is replaced by struggle, tyranny, domination, and manipulation."⁴¹

Another consequence was that husbands would rule over their wives. Egalitarians have misinterpreted this verse to teach that headship for husbands was a result of the Fall and that it has been done away with in Christ. The word "rule" (רָשָׁה) here means to dominate in a negative sense. Adam was the head of his wife Eve before the Fall. This is seen in the fact that he named her woman (Gen 2:23). Headship of a husband in marriage is not a result of the Fall. But husbands that dominate and abuse their wives are a result of the Fall. Ephesians 5:22-33 gives the remedy for the Fall. Husbands and wives do not need to struggle to control one another. A godly husband will love his wife as Christ loved the church. A godly wife will submit to her husband and follow his spiritual leadership.

⁴¹ Susan Foh, "What is the Woman's Desire?" *WTJ* 37.3 (Spring 1975), 376.

God's Judgment on the Man (Gen 3:17-19)

God cursed the ground with the result that work would become difficult for man. Man was condemned to exhausting labor in order to make a living because of the curse on the ground. Work in itself is not the curse. Adam was placed in the garden to tend and keep it before the Fall. Now he would have to leave paradise and work the thorn infested ground as a farmer.

Life would not be easy anymore. Man's paradise was turned into a wilderness. It would take hard work to make a living. Natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, and tornadoes would occur as a result of the Fall. Creation would be subject to the bondage of decay (Rom 8: 20). Sorrow and death would lead to the cry in Ecclesiastes, "All is vanity" (Eccl 1:2).

Death entered the human race because of Adam's sin. Death is the punishment for sin. God had predicted "In the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die (Gen 2:17)." Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." Romans 6:23 says "The wages of sin is death." Spiritual death occurred immediately for Adam when he ate the forbidden fruit. Spiritual death is the separation of the spirit of man from God. It is the spiritual condition of all lost people (Eph 2:1-2; Rom 5:21). A person without Jesus Christ is spiritually dead—cut off from the life of God. When Adam sinned, the aging process began. Physical death is the separation of the soul/spirit from the body (Gen 2:17; 3:19; Num 16:29; 27:3; Ps 90:7-11; Gal 3:13). Adam died at the age of 930 (Gen 5:5).

The Naming of the Woman by Adam (Gen 3:20)

Adam and Eve accepted their judgment from God and did not rebel against it. Adam named his wife Eve because she would become the mother of all living. The naming of Eve is an evidence of Adam's faith in God's promise. He believed what God said about the seed of the woman. His wife's first name of "woman" (Gen 2:23) looked back on her origin, but her second name "Eve" anticipated her destiny.

The First Sacrifice and Clothing for Adam and Eve (Gen 3:21)

God made garments of skin for Adam and Eve. God had to kill an animal in order to provide skins for them to wear. Possibly He sacrificed a lamb. This would have been the first lamb slain. The text does not say what animals He killed, but a lamb would have been appropriate. Sacrifice was necessary for them to be clothed. God made the first sacrifice. Whenever Adam and Eve put on clothes, they would be reminded of the sacrifice God made for them.

The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise (Gen 3:22-24)

God kept Adam and Eve from being separated from him for all eternity. God knew that if Adam and Eve had eaten from the tree of life after they had sinned, that they would have lived forever in a state of separation from God. So God expelled Adam and Eve from Paradise. He placed some angels (cherubim) to guard the way to the tree of life. Golden cherubim would later be a part of the ark of the covenant (Exod 25:18-22). A flaming sword which turned different ways was placed to guard the tree of life. This was an act of God's grace. It must have been difficult for Adam and Eve to leave their first home. They left Paradise to never return again.

CONCLUSION

Was Adam a man or just a myth? Some Old Testament scholars today have rejected the historicity of Adam and have embraced a theistic evolution view of the origin of man. They believe that man evolved from a common ancestor with apes. They argue that evolution is science. The Bible is not against science but it is opposed to the theory of evolution. The ancient myths of Babylon and Egypt differ from the accurate historical account given in Genesis regarding the origin of man and sin. Moses wrote the historical account of how God created man and

woman in Genesis 1-2. Moses did not refer to the myths of Babylon and Egypt in writing his account. The true historical account of the origin of man is found in the book of Genesis.

Adam was not a myth but a real man who was created directly by God from the dust of the ground (Gen 2:7). Even though Adam sinned against God, God came looking for him. God promised that the seed of the woman (the Messiah) would crush the serpent (Satan). Adam demonstrated his faith in naming the woman Eve. God forgave Adam and Eve and sacrificed an animal to clothe them with skins. God made Adam and Eve leave the Garden of Eden.

The historicity of Adam and the Fall of man is essential to the historicity of the gospel. If Adam was a myth, then Jesus (the last Adam) was a myth as well. If Adam never sinned why would Jesus need to die on a cross to pay the penalty for the sins of man? Paul wrote, "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come...Therefore as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Rom 5:14-19).

The Will of God and the Death of Christ: A Case for the Universal Scope of the Atonement

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A perennial debate among evangelicals is the extent of the atonement.¹ The dispute is more or less intramural, depending upon the doctrinal orientation of the parties involved. More broadly, the debate takes place between Calvinists and Arminians.² Simply put, “Arminians hold that Christ’s death was for all men alike, and that it secures for everyone a measure of common grace whereby all are able to believe if they will.”³ In contrast, Calvinists generally claim that Christ’s death did not just make salvation a mere *possibility* for all people; instead, the death of Christ is part of God’s plan to *secure* the salvation of

¹ This paper was presented as a Faculty Forum at Baptist Bible Seminary on 9 February 2009. The debate has been couched in different terms. Scholars examining the atonement’s *extent* view it as either limited or unlimited. Those questioning the atonement’s *intent* see it as either particular or universal. The debate always comes down to the question, For whom did Christ die? See Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1997), 189–93.

² I understand that many dislike these labels. Nevertheless, they are so well-entrenched and so long have provided the shorthand for the debate that for convenience’s sake I will use them in this paper.

³ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary P, 1948), 3: 185. For presentations of the Arminian view see Donald M. Lake, “He Died for All: The Universal Dimensions of the Atonement,” in *Grace Unlimited*, ed. Clark H. Pinnock (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 31–50; and Terry L. Miethe, “The Universal Power of the Atonement,” in *Ibid.*, 71–96.

those he has chosen to save. The debate between Calvinists and Arminians is not over whether or not all people will be saved. Both agree that this is not the case. Their debate is over the relationship between Christ's death and other doctrines such as God's sovereignty and grace, election, and total depravity. For the most part this paper will not deal with this broader Calvinist-Arminian debate.

The narrower debate takes place *between* Calvinists and is the subject of this paper. On one side are Calvinists who hold to unlimited atonement or universal redemption—let us call their position Universal Redemption Calvinism (hereafter URC). They are often called four-point Calvinists or Amyraldians.⁴ They typically hold to the five points of Calvinism save one: limited atonement.⁵ Like Arminians they insist that Christ died for all people, but like Calvinists they insist that this in no way casts doubt upon God's sure plan to save his elect. On the other side are Calvinists who embrace limited atonement or particular redemption—let us call their position Particular Redemption Calvinism (hereafter PRC). They are five-point Calvinists who believe that Christ died only for those who will actually be saved.⁶ This intramural Calvinist debate is not over the sufficiency of Christ's death to pay for the sins of all people. Both

⁴ Amyraldians take their name from the seventeenth-century French theologian Moise Amyraut. "Amyraut propounded a view of hypothetical universal predestination, whereby God was said to will the salvation of all people on the condition that they believe. Thus ideally Christ's atonement was sufficient for all, but because of universal human depravity, in practice it was efficient only for the elect" (Bruce A. Demarest, "Amyraut, Moise," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984], 42).

⁵ The acrostic "TULIP" captures the five points of Calvinism: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints.

⁶ Of course this must be nuanced, which I will do later on.

agree that it was sufficient. Their debate is over the question, For whom did Christ die?"⁷

My goal in this paper is to argue that that this intramural Calvinist debate has gone on long enough. Furthermore, the way toward ending this dispute passes through Scripture's teaching on God's will. Finally, recognizing a direct correlation between God's will and Christ's death in essence removes the basis for the debate. Proponents of URC and PRC ought to see that their positions are virtually identical and their debate is groundless. I will proceed by examining the views of three well-known proponents of PRC on the atonement and God's will: Louis Berkhof, Wayne Grudem, and John Piper.⁸ Then I will examine in detail a passage of Scripture which I believe decisively connects the will of God with Christ's death. Finally, I will show that proponents of PRC may remain theologically consistent and accept this connection. If that is the case, then the longstanding debate between proponents of URC and PRC is no more.

BERKHOF ON THE ATONEMENT

Louis Berkhof handles the purpose and extent of the atonement together because for him they go hand in hand. The purpose of Christ's death was not merely to make salvation possible for all people but to make it certain for the elect. This is

⁷ Once again, this requires nuance. It will come in due time. There is a further division among proponents of PRC over the order of the decrees. Supralapsarians, whom Chafer calls "extreme limited redemptionists," believe the decree of election stands first in the order of decrees; infralapsarians, whom Chafer calls "moderate Calvinists who are limited redemptionists," believe the decrees to create and permit the fall precede the decree to elect (*Systematic Theology*, 3:184). For the sake of limiting this paper I will not deal with this debate.

⁸ These three represent well both the PRC position on atonement and the twofold understanding of God's will.

so important for Berkhof that when he comes to defining the extent of the atonement he does so *in terms of this one purpose*:

the question [of the extent of the atonement] does relate to the design of the atonement. Did the Father in sending Christ, and did Christ in coming into the world, to make atonement for sin, *do this with the design or for the purpose of saving only the elect or all men?* That is the question, and that only is the question.... The Reformed position is that Christ died for the purpose of actually and certainly saving the elect, and the elect only.... He died for the purpose of saving only those to whom He actually applies the benefits of His redemptive work.⁹

For Berkhof, since God's *purpose* was singular and limited (to save the elect), his *provision* in Christ likewise must have been singular and limited (to have Christ die only for the elect).

Berkhof rejects the "Calvinistic Universalist" view of Amyraldianism as "dubious and very unsatisfactory."¹⁰ However, Berkhof declares the "Marrow-men" of Scotland "perfectly orthodox" even though they distinguish Christ's "dying" for the elect from his being "dead" (i.e., available) for all people. These Scottish scholars see a difference between God's "giving love" and his "electing love"—the former is the foundation for the universal offer of salvation, while the latter results in the salvation of the elect only. Berkhof himself is only willing to relate the death of Christ to the non-elect in his later discussion of common grace. There Berkhof states that while the work of Christ pertains primarily and directly to the redemption

⁹ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 394; emphasis original.

¹⁰ Amyraldianism labels the view of Moise Amyraut and his associates of the Saumur Academy. To repeat, in this view God has a universal and conditional decree to save all people, and Christ's death for all people reflects that decree, and a particular and unconditional decree to save the elect, with the benefits of Christ's death ultimately applied to the elect only. See Demarest, "Amyraldianism," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 41–42.

of the elect only, it pertains secondarily and indirectly to the general and natural blessings bestowed on all people indiscriminately: "All that the natural man receives other than curse and death is an indirect result of the redemptive work of Christ."¹¹

BERKHOF ON GOD'S WILL

Berkhof handles God's will under divine attributes of sovereignty.¹² Berkhof presents three related sets of terms which theologians have used to indicate a distinction in the will of God. First is the *decretive* versus the *preceptive* will of God. The former is the will by which God decrees all that occurs, whether effectively (causatively) or permissively (through the unrestrained agency of his rational creatures). The latter is the rule of life which God has given his moral creatures, indicating the duties which he requires of them. The second set of terms is the *will of eudokia* versus the *will of euestia*. The former corresponds to the decretive will in that it indicates what God will surely accomplish, while the latter matches the preceptive will as reflecting "simply what God is pleased to have His creatures do."¹³ Third is the *secret* versus the *revealed* will of God: "The secret will of God pertains to all things which He wills either to effect or to permit, and which are therefore absolutely fixed. The revealed will prescribes the duties of man, and represents the way in which he can enjoy the blessings of God."¹⁴

¹¹ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 439.

¹² According to Berkhof, the sovereign will of God and the sovereign power of God are the two attributes of divine sovereignty (*ibid.*, 76).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 77–78.

Berkhof also brings up the two aspects of God's will when he discusses the relationship between God's will and sin. Berkhof responds to this charge: if sin's entrance into the world falls under God's will of decree, then God becomes the author of sin. Not so, says Berkhof. Although admitting we cannot solve the difficulty completely, Berkhof insists that God's will in relation to sin is a will to permit it, not to effectuate it. While God's will to permit sin makes sin certain, "the will of God to permit sin need not imply that He takes delight or pleasure in sin."¹⁵

Berkhof answers another charge that the two aspects of God's will are contradictory. Though they appear distinct to us they are fundamentally one in God. The decretive will indicates God's will in the sense of what he will do or what actually comes to pass. But the preceptive will likewise indicates God's will in the sense that his moral law expresses his holy nature and what he requires of all moral creatures. Berkhof concludes,

The decretive and preceptive will of God do not conflict in the sense that in the former He does, and according to the latter He does not, take pleasure in sin; nor in the sense that according to the former He does not, and according to the latter He does, will the salvation of every individual *with a positive volition*. Even according to the decretive will God takes no pleasure in sin; and even according to the preceptive will He does not will the salvation of every individual *with a positive volition*.¹⁶

What Berkhof seems to be saying here is that because God wills in two different senses, he can both will and not will something at the very same time. Though God wills sin, in another sense he does not will it. God does not will the salvation of all people "with a positive volition," though in another sense he does will it.

Berkhof returns to the two aspects of God's will under soteriology—the application of the work of redemption. Berkhof

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*; emphasis original.

starts with the operation of the Holy Spirit in general and then treats the doctrine of common grace. He offers a twofold understanding of God's common grace: (1) God's positive moral influence upon people which, although falling short of leading them to salvation, helps restrain sin, maintain social order, and promote civil righteousness; and (2) the general blessings (e.g., rain and sun, food and drink, clothing and shelter) which God imparts to all men indiscriminately.¹⁷

Berkhof ends his section on common grace by addressing several objections to it. The objection most relevant to this discussion is that common grace presupposes a certain favorable disposition in God even to the reprobate, which disposition we have no right to assume.¹⁸ In response, Berkhof warns us against oversimplifying the inner life of God. Is it not true that before they come to salvation the elect are objects of God's wrath? And is it not likewise true that the reprobate can be objects of God's favor? Berkhof goes on to illustrate his point and back it up with Scripture. The significance of what Berkhof says warrants an extended quote:

A father who is also a judge may loathe the son that is brought before him as a criminal, and feel constrained to visit his judicial wrath upon him, but may yet pity him and show him acts of

¹⁷ Ibid., 436.

¹⁸ Another objection somewhat related is that common grace involves universal atonement. But while Berkhof admits a connection between common grace and the indiscriminate and sincere offer of salvation to all people, he will not admit its connection to universal atonement. Interestingly he acknowledges that this universal offer of salvation is hard to harmonize with particular redemption, but adds that "the truth of a doctrine does not depend on our ability to harmonize it with every other doctrine of Scripture" (Ibid., 445). Berkhof fails to entertain the possibility that there indeed might be a connection in Scripture between common grace and universal atonement, and that the truth of this latter doctrine likewise does not depend on our ability to harmonize it fully with every other doctrine we hold.

kindness while he is under condemnation. Why should this be impossible in God? General Washington hated the traitor that was brought before him and condemned him to death, but at the same time showed him compassion by serving him with the dainties from his own table. Cannot God have compassion even on the condemned sinner, and bestow favors upon him? The answer need not be uncertain, since the Bible clearly teaches that He showers untold blessings upon all men and also clearly indicates

that these are the expression of a favorable disposition in God, which falls short, however, of the positive volition to pardon their sin, to lift their sentence, and to grant them salvation. The following passages clearly point to such a favorable disposition: Prov 1:24; Isa 1:18; Ezek 18:23, 32; 33:11; Matt 5:43–45; 23:37; Mark 10:21; Luke 6:35; Rom 2:4; 1 Tim 2:4. If such passages do not testify to a favorable disposition in God, it would seem that language has lost its meaning, and that God's revelation is not dependable on this subject.¹⁹

Notice two things about this quotation. First, Berkhof returns to the twofold aspect of God's will discussed earlier in order to explain how God expresses a favorable disposition toward the non-elect. Second, Berkhof believes this is undeniable on the basis of Scripture. Significantly, he includes in his list 1 Timothy 2:4, which declares that God desires all people to be saved. For Berkhof, if passages like this do not reflect God's favorable disposition to all people then "language has lost its meaning."

GRUDEM ON THE ATONEMENT

For Wayne Grudem, the main question regarding the extent of the atonement is this: "when Christ died on the cross, did he pay for the sins of the entire human race or only for the sins of those who he knew would ultimately be saved?"²⁰ The answer

¹⁹ Ibid., 445–46.

²⁰ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Leicester, England: IVP; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 594.

must be the latter, because if Christ's death actually paid for the sins of all people then all people must ultimately be saved; otherwise, in condemning anyone God would have to demand double payment for their sins, which would be unjust.²¹ Grudem does not like the label "limited atonement" because it could be taken to mean that Christ's death was deficient in some way. The better term is particular redemption: Christ died for particular people, namely, those who will be saved and those whom Christ came to redeem.²²

Grudem does not agree with Berkhof that we should focus solely on the purpose of the atonement. To focus on God's purpose (to save all or to save only the elect) is just to give voice to the larger Calvinist-Arminian debate, which cannot be decided at the narrow point of the discussion of the extent of the atonement. Rather than focusing on the purpose of the atonement, it is better to zero in on what actually happened in the atonement. "Did Christ pay for the sins of all unbelievers who will be eternally condemned, and did he pay for their sins fully and completely on the cross? It seems that we have to answer no to that question."²³ So while Berkhof limits the provision of Christ by linking it to God's limited *purpose* in Christ (save the elect), Grudem limits Christ's provision by linking it to Christ's limited *payment* of sin (for the elect only).

GRUDEM ON GOD'S WILL

Grudem affirms two aspects to God's will in three theological contexts. First, Grudem discusses God's will under the divine attributes.²⁴ More specifically, Grudem distinguishes

²¹ Ibid., 594–95.

²² Ibid., 596.

²³ Ibid., 601.

²⁴ Grudem calls will, freedom, and omnipotence divine attributes of purpose (Ibid., 211).

God's *revealed* will from his *secret* will. God's revealed will relates to his commands or precepts for our moral conduct—hence the designations “will of precept” or “will of command.” God's secret will concerns his hidden decrees by which he determines everything that happens—hence the designation “will of decree.”²⁵ Grudem supports the distinction from Scripture; in particular, he shows how Scripture relates God's revealed will to salvation. On the human side, Christ encourages us to ask that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt 6:10). One way we may do this is to pray that people would repent of their sin and trust Christ as Savior. To pray this way is to pray for God's revealed will to be followed on the earth.²⁶ On the divine side, 1 Timothy 2:4 and 2 Peter 3:9 declare that God desires all people to be saved and that he does not wish that any should perish. These passages reflect God's revealed will that people obey God's commands and trust Christ as Savior, for this is pleasing in God's sight.²⁷

Second, Grudem discusses the two wills of God under God's providence.²⁸ Under the concept of God's governance, Grudem distinguishes God's moral will (i.e., revealed will) from His providential government (i.e., secret will). Grudem does not repeat the biblical arguments for this distinction, but instead responds to the charge that distinguishing two aspects of God's will is to introduce a self-contradiction within God. Not so, says Grudem. After all, in the realm of human experience we know that sometimes we will and carry out something painful which we do not desire in order to bring about a long-term result which we desire even more. Likewise, God allows his creatures

²⁵ Ibid., 213.

²⁶ Ibid., 214.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Under providence Grudem discusses preservation, concurrence, and government (Ibid., 315).

to do things in the short term which displease Him in order to bring Himself greater glory in the long term.²⁹

Third, Grudem brings up the two wills of God under the subject of election. Some Arminians use 1 Timothy 2:4 and 2 Peter 3:9 to argue against the doctrine of election: how can it be true that God only chooses some to be saved if the Scriptures declare that God desires all to be saved and none to perish? Grudem's response is simply to reaffirm the two wills of God. Such passages speak of God's revealed will (what we should do), not his secret will (what will actually happen). Grudem counters further that Arminians and Calvinists are really in the same boat on this issue. Calvinists *and* Arminians (unless they are universalists) have to explain why all people will not be saved. Arminians point to something in man: God wants to preserve free will more than he wants to save all people. Calvinists point to something in God: God wants display his glory more than he wants to save all people. "Therefore," Grudem concludes, "in one sense *both agree that God wills that we be saved*—it is the will that he reveals to us explicitly in the gospel invitation."³⁰ The disagreement, then, between Calvinists and Arminians is not over the two wills of God, but over what God desires even more than he desires the salvation of all people.

PIPER ON THE ATONEMENT

John Piper's website contains an article on the five points of Calvinism.³¹ The article defines the atonement as "the work of God in Christ on the cross whereby he canceled the debt of our sin, appeased his holy wrath against us, and won for us all the

²⁹ Ibid., 332.

³⁰ Ibid., 684; emphasis added.

³¹ <http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Articles/ByDate/1985/1487_What_We_Believe_About_the_Five_Points_of_Calvinism/#Atonement> (accessed 23 January 2009). This website contains "God-centered resources from the ministry of John Piper."

benefits of salvation.”³² The term “limited atonement” addresses the question, “For whom did Christ die?” However, behind the question of the atonement’s *extent* is the atonement’s *nature*: “What did Christ actually achieve on the cross for those whom he died?” If Christ died for all people in the same way, then Christ’s death did not actually save anyone, but merely made all people savable, *if* they could bring themselves to faith without God’s irresistible grace. But the fact of the matter is that in the cross God had in view the actual redemption of his children. When Christ died for these, he did not “just create the opportunity for them to save themselves, but really purchased for them all that was necessary to get them saved.”³³ The article does not deny that “all men are the intended beneficiaries of the cross in some sense,” and offers 1 Timothy 4:10 in support: Christ is “the Savior of all men, especially of believers.”³⁴ What the article does deny is that “all men are intended as the beneficiaries of the death of Christ in the same way. All of God’s mercy toward unbelievers—from the rising sun (Matthew 5:45) to the worldwide preaching of the gospel (John 3:16)—is made possible because of the cross.”³⁵ Piper seems to combine the

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations in this paper are from the NASB.

³⁵ “What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism.” Piper argues similarly in another article on his website. “The main point of the doctrine of limited atonement is not to assert that Christ did not die for everyone in the sense that John 3:16 says he did.... That is absolutely true: Christ died so that whoever believes in him will have eternal life. Christ’s death is sufficient for all, and should be offered to all as gloriously sufficient to save them if they will believe. ‘Limited atonement’ does not deny any of that. What it denies is that God’s design in the atonement is the same for everyone. It affirms that Christ dies for his bride in a way that is different from the way he dies for all people” (<<http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/By>

views of Berkhof and Grudem in that God's *provision* of Christ is limited (Christ died for the elect) because God's *purpose* for the cross and Christ's *payment* for sin are limited (for the elect only).

PIPER ON GOD'S WILL

Piper presents an extensive case for seeing two aspects to God's will.³⁶ From the start, Piper makes clear his intention

to show from Scripture that the simultaneous existence of God's will for "all persons to be saved" (1 Tim 2:4) and his will to elect unconditionally those who will actually be saved is not a sign of divine schizophrenia or exegetical confusion [and] to show that unconditional election therefore does not contradict biblical expressions of God's compassion for all people, and does not nullify sincere offers of salvation to everyone who is lost among all the peoples of the world.³⁷

For Piper, "Affirming the will of God to save all, while also affirming the unconditional election of some, implies that there are at least 'two wills' in God, or two ways of willing."³⁸ Piper's first and most compelling example from Scripture is the death of Christ. Jesus' betrayal by Judas was a morally evil act inspired by Satan (Luke 22:3); yet at the same time Jesus was "delivered

Date/2003/121_The_Reformed_Faith_and_Racial_Harmony> accessed 5 February 2009).

³⁶ John Piper, "Are There Two Wills in God? Divine Election and God's Desire for All to Be Saved," in *Still Sovereign*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 107–31. This book was originally published in two volumes as *The Grace of God, The Bondage of the Will* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995). Piper's article is in volume 1. The pagination is the same in both editions.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 107.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 109.

over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23a). Herod’s contempt (Luke 23:11), Pilate’s expediency (v. 24), the Jews’ cry for blood (v. 21), and the Roman soldiers’ mocking (v. 36) were all sinful attitudes and deeds; yet they “gathered together against ... Jesus ... to do whatever [God’s] hand and [God’s] purpose predestined to occur” (Acts 4:27–28). God does not will the murder of innocent people, and yet Isaiah predicted that the Messiah would be “stricken, *smitten of God*, and afflicted ... *the LORD was pleased to crush Him*, putting Him to grief” (Isa 53:4b, 10a, emphasis added). Piper summarizes,

The “will of God” ... proscribes sin. Therefore, we know it was not the “will of God” that Judas and Pilate and Herod and the Gentile soldiers and the Jewish crowds disobey the moral law of God by sinning in delivering Jesus up to be crucified. But we also know that it was the will of God that this come to pass. Therefore, we know that God in some sense wills what he does not will in another sense.³⁹

Another significant example of God’s two ways to will is the death of the wicked. On the one hand, God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek 18:23, 32, 33:11). On the other hand, in the case of Eli’s wicked sons, God “desired to put them to death” (1 Sam 2:25). In fact, the reason the text gives for their not listening to their father’s rebuke was *because* God desired to put them to death. Piper notes that the Hebrew verb is identical in all these passages, **יִצְחַק**, “delight in, have pleasure in, be pleased.”⁴⁰ “The upshot of putting [these passages] together is that in one sense God may desire the death of the wicked and in another sense he may not.”⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid., 112.

⁴⁰ BDB, 342–43.

⁴¹ Piper, “Two Wills in God,” 117.

In another context, God warns Israel that if they fail to keep all the words of his Law (Deut 28:58), “as the LORD delighted over you to prosper you ... so the LORD will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you” (v. 63).⁴² Piper concludes, “We are faced with the inescapable biblical fact that in some sense God does not delight in the death of the wicked (Ezek 18), and in some sense he does (Deut 28:63; 2 Sam 2:25).”⁴³

Piper sums up his presentation thus far,

the Scriptures lead us again and again to affirm that God’s will is sometimes spoken of as an expression of his moral standards for human behavior and sometimes as an expression of his sovereign control even over acts that are contrary to that standard.

This means that the distinction between terms like “will of decree” and “will of command” or “sovereign will” and “moral will” is not an artificial distinction demanded by Calvinistic theology. The terms are an effort to describe the whole of biblical revelation. They are an effort to say yes to all of the Bible and not silence any of it. They are a way to say yes to the universal saving will of 1 Timothy 2:4 and yes to the individual unconditional election of Romans 9:6–23.⁴⁴

Piper next explains how the two wills of God fit together and make sense. Calvinists and Arminians must both agree that God can will that a sinful act occur without willing it himself as an act of sin. Piper shows this to be correct by appealing to 1 Timothy 2:4, where God expresses his desire that all people be saved.

⁴² The verb here is different, שׂוֹשׂ/שׂוּשׂ, “exult, rejoice” (BDB, 965), which is actually an even stronger word for joy than יִצְחַק (Piper, “Two Wills in God,” 118).

⁴³ Piper, “Two Wills in God,” 118–19. Other strands of biblical evidence for two wills in God offered by Piper are the war against the Lamb (Rev 17:16–17) and the hardening work of God (Exod 4, 8, Deut 2, Josh 11, Mark 4, Rom 11, et al.).

⁴⁴ Ibid., 121–22.

There are only two options to explain why all people are not saved: either (1) there is a power greater than God in the universe thwarting and frustrating his will (neither Calvinists nor Arminians affirm this); or (2) "God wills not to save all, though he is willing to save all, because there is something else that he wills more, which would be lost if he exerted his sovereign power to save all."⁴⁵

Similar to Grudem, Piper says that both Calvinists and Arminians should affirm two wills in God after pondering deeply 1 Timothy 2:4. Both can agree that God desires all people to be saved, and when asked why all people will not be saved, both will answer that God is committed to something more valuable than saving all people.

The difference between Calvinists and Arminians lies not in whether there are two wills in God, but in what they say this higher commitment is. What does God will more than saving all? The answer given by Arminians is that human self-determination and the possible resulting loving relationship with God are more valuable than saving all people by sovereign, efficacious grace. The answer given by Calvinists is that the greater value is the manifestation of the full range of God's glory in wrath and mercy (Rom 9:22-23) and the humbling of man so that he enjoys giving all credit to God for his salvation (1 Cor 1:29).⁴⁶

The significant point for Piper is that Calvinists and Arminians should not disagree over whether or not God wills all people to be saved. First Timothy 2:4 makes it clear that he does. They also do not disagree over whether or not all people will be saved. The Bible clearly teaches that all people will not be saved. Their disagreement is over God's higher commitment that keeps him from saving all people. First Timothy 2:4 does not settle this issue; it creates it. "Both Arminians and Calvinists must look elsewhere to answer whether the gift of human self-

⁴⁵ Ibid., 123.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 124.

determination or the glory of divine sovereignty is the reality that restrains God's will to save all people."⁴⁷

But the question comes again: does this understanding of God's will make sense? Is it logical to hold that God can will and not will something at the same time? Does this square with the law of non-contradiction? The law states that a thing cannot be A and non-A at the same time and in the same sense. Those who defend the twofold nature of God's will deny that it violates this law of logic: God does not will in these two ways *in exactly the same sense*. Stephen Charnock explains it this way: God does not will sin directly because he prohibits it by his law. If God directly willed sin and directly prohibited sin, he would will good and evil in the same sense and there would be a contradiction in God's will: "God wills good by a positive decree, because he hath decreed to effect it. He wills evil by a private decree, because he hath decreed not to give that grace which would certainly prevent it." God does not will sin simply, but for the good that his wisdom will bring from it. God "wills not sin for itself, but for the event."⁴⁸

Jonathan Edwards explains it similarly using different terminology. God's will of command and his will of decree do not operate the same way. When God wills the happiness of his creature (will of command) he wills it simply considered, since it is agreeable to the inclination of his nature. However, God's will of decree is his inclination toward a thing, not simply, but in relation to *all* things. So though God hates sin in itself, he may will to permit it because of the good it may accomplish in relation to all things. And though God does not will a creature's

⁴⁷ Ibid., 125.

⁴⁸ Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 2:148; cited in Piper, "Two Wills in God," 125–26.

misery considered simply, he may will it for the greater promotion of good in relation to all things.⁴⁹

Piper puts the explanations of Charnock and Edwards into his own words. According to Piper, God's two ways of willing are like looking through two different lenses. God is able to look at a thing through a narrow lens as well as a wide-angle lens.

When God looks at a painful or wicked event through his narrow lens, he sees the tragedy or the sin for what it is in itself and he is angered and grieved. "I do not delight in the death of anyone, says the Lord God" (Ezek 18:32). But when God looks at a painful or wicked event through his wide-angle lens, he sees the tragedy or sin in relation to everything leading up to it and everything flowing out from it. He sees it in all the connections and effects that form a pattern or mosaic stretching into eternity. This mosaic, with all its (good and evil) parts he does delight in (Ps 115:3).⁵⁰

Piper acknowledges that God's emotional life is infinitely complex and beyond our ability to fully comprehend. Who can understand how God weeps and rejoices, burns in anger over sin, and grieves over the sins of believers and yet takes pleasure in his people—all at the same moment and in every moment? All we know is that Scripture presents God as willing the judgment of the wicked and not willing it at the same time. But this raises the question of sincerity: is God's offer of salvation to all people genuine? Is God's compassion real? Is his willing that no one perish a bona fide willing of love?

Piper's answer is to use an illustration from the life of George Washington. Robert Dabney describes how General Washington signed the death warrant of Major André for treason even though Washington's compassion for André was

⁴⁹ Jonathan Edwards, "Concerning the Decrees in General, and Election in Particular," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 2: 527–28; cited in Piper, "Two Wills in God," 126.

⁵⁰ Piper, "Two Wills in God," 126. The translation of Ezekiel 18:32 is Piper's.

“real and profound.” Washington had power to have André killed or spared, so why did he sign the death warrant? Dabney explains, “Washington’s volition to sign the death warrant of André did not arise from the fact that his compassion was slight or feigned, but from the fact that it was rationally counterpoised by a complex of superior judgments ... of wisdom, patriotism, and moral indignation [the wide-angle lens].”⁵¹ Someone might have charged that Washington’s pity was hypocritical, but Dabney counters that while the pity was real, it was restrained “by superior elements of motive. Washington had official and bodily power to discharge the criminal, but he had not the sanctions of his own wisdom and justice.”⁵² Likewise, says Dabney, God’s will not to save all people does not necessarily imply the absence of compassion. God’s compassion for perishing sinners is real yet restrained, by consistent and holy reasons, from taking the form of a will to regenerate.⁵³

Piper agrees: God’s compassion for perishing sinners is real and deep. Jeremiah reveals God’s heart on this matter: although God judges sinners “He does not afflict willingly or grieve the sons of men” (Lam 3:32–33). As Piper points out, “willingly” translates the Hebrew *רַב־לֵבָאֵל*, “from His heart.” “God does will the affliction that he caused, but he does not will it in the same way he wills compassion. The affliction did not come ‘from his heart’ God’s expression of pity and his entreaties have heart in them. There is a genuine inclination in God’s heart to spare those who have committed treason against his kingdom. But his

⁵¹ Robert L. Dabney, “God’s Indiscriminate Proposals of Mercy, as Related to his Power, Wisdom, and Sincerity,” in *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological* (1890; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967), 1: 285; cited in Piper, “Two Wills in God,” 128. The bracketed phrase is Piper’s.

⁵² Dabney, “God’s Indiscriminate Proposals of Mercy,” 285; cited in Piper, “Two Wills in God,” 128.

⁵³ Dabney, “God’s Indiscriminate Proposals of Mercy,” 307; cited in Piper, “Two Wills in God,” 128.

motivation is complex, and not every true element in it rises to the level of effective choice.”⁵⁴

Piper concludes his article with these significant words worth citing in full:

I affirm with John 3:16 and 1 Timothy 2:4 that God loves the world with a deep compassion that desires the salvation of all men. Yet I also affirm that God has chosen from before the foundation of the world whom he will save from sin.... My contribution has simply been to show that God’s will for all people to be saved is not at odds with the sovereignty of God’s grace in election. That is, my answer to the question about what restrains God’s will to save all people is his supreme commitment to uphold and display the full range of his glory through the sovereign demonstration of his wrath and mercy for the enjoyment of his elect and believing people from every tribe and tongue and nation.⁵⁵

Summing Up

Berkhof, Grudem, and Piper are proponents of PRC since they argue for limiting the *provision* of Christ’s death on the cross. Their argumentation varies slightly (Berkhof sees God’s *purpose* as limited, Grudem views Christ’s *payment* as limited, and Piper seems to hold to both), but the resultant position is the same: the provision of Christ’s death is limited to those who will be saved (i.e., the elect). On the other hand, each acknowledges a twofold understanding of God’s will toward people with regards to salvation. For Berkhof, while God wills the salvation of all people he only wills the salvation of the elect “*with a positive volition*.”⁵⁶ Berkhof says that if passages like 1 Timothy 2:4 do not reflect God’s favorable disposition to all people then “language has lost its meaning.”⁵⁷ For Grudem 1

⁵⁴ Piper, *Ibid.*, 128–29.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 130–31.

⁵⁶ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 79; emphasis original.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 445–46.

Timothy 2:4 and 2 Peter 3:9 really do teach that God desires all people to be saved and that he does not wish that any should perish.⁵⁸ In fact, on this point, says Grudem, Calvinists and Arminians stand arm in arm: “both agree that God wills that we be saved—it is the will that he reveals to us explicitly in the gospel invitation.”⁵⁹ Piper argues the same points: “I affirm with John 3:16 and 1 Timothy 2:4 that God loves the world with a deep compassion that desires the salvation of all men.”⁶⁰ “Calvinists and Arminians affirm two wills in God when they ponder deeply over 1 Timothy 2:4. Both can say that God wills for all to be saved.”⁶¹

My question at this point is simply this: if proponents of PRC are willing to agree that *in some sense* God desires all people to be saved, why are they not willing to acknowledge the possibility that *in some sense* Christ also died for all people? In other words, why can they not consider that the provision of Christ’s death matches the extent of God’s desire for all people? If there is a way for proponents of PRC to agree with proponents of URC, not to mention Arminians, that in some sense God desires all people to be saved, why can they not agree with them that in some sense Christ died for all people?⁶² Now it is one thing to discuss this connection between God’s will and Christ’s death logically. The real question is can we demonstrate it biblically? What we really need is a passage linking God’s will to

⁵⁸ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 214.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 684.

⁶⁰ Piper, “Two Wills in God,” 130.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁶² Not all proponents of PRC agree that God desires all people to be saved, as we will see below.

Christ's death. Is there such a passage? I believe there is: 1 Timothy 2:1-7.⁶³ To this passage we now turn.

The Will of God and the Death of Christ in 1 Timothy 2:1-7

The background for 1 Timothy are events subsequent to those recorded in Acts 28. Upon release from imprisonment in Rome, Paul most likely embarked on a fourth missionary journey which brought him back, among other places, to Ephesus.⁶⁴ Paul left Timothy in Ephesus while he continued on to Macedonia (1 Tim 1:3). When Paul realized that his return to Ephesus might be delayed (3:14-15), he wrote and charged Timothy to refute false teachings (1:3-7, 4:1-8, 6:3-5, 20-21) and oversee important matters of church conduct such as worship (2:1-15, 4:13), appointment of qualified leaders (3:1-13), and proper care of widows and elders (5:3-16, 17-22).

Following his opening exhortation to refute false teachings and teachers, and perhaps even in light of it (note the particle οὖν, "therefore," in 2:1), Paul shifts attention to the proper deportment of the church. The first matter of business is the church's practice of prayer.⁶⁵ But as Mounce points out, Paul

⁶³ Another such text is John 3:16. God so loved the world that he gave his only Son (to die for the world), that whoever (of the world) believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. The scope of God's love for the world matches the scope of God's provision in Christ for the world.

⁶⁴ For the historical background of 1 Timothy, see D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 372-74, and Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 334-36.

⁶⁵ First Timothy 2:1 and 8 seem to serve as bookends for this section (cf. v. 1, "Therefore ... I urge entreaties ...", and v. 8, "Therefore I want men to pray ..." [my translation]). Paul's treatment of the subject reveals two problems related to prayer. Paul's urging them to pray for all people because it pleases God who desires all people to be

really uses prayer here as a platform to address the universal offer of salvation to all people. It appears Paul's opponents are promoting an exclusive gospel and prayer only for certain people.⁶⁶ Ryken puts the thrust of this passage nicely. "Christians pray for everyone (1 Tim 2:1–2): first, because God wants everyone to be saved (1 Tim 2:3–4); second, because Christ is a Savior for everyone (1 Tim 2:5–6); and third, because the gospel is preached to everyone (1 Tim 2:7)."⁶⁷ For my purposes I will divide the passage into the following sections: the prayer (vv. 1–2); the purpose (vv. 3–4); and the proof (vv. 5–7).

The Prayer, vv. 1–2

Paul urges the believers to pray.⁶⁸ More specifically, he urges prayer in various forms. They are to offer "entreaties" (δεήσεις), "prayers" (προσευχάς), "petitions" (ἐντεύξεις), and

saved seems to indicate a lack of evangelistic vision for all people. His desire for the men to pray, "lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissention," may indicate interpersonal difficulties and failure to lead on this issue among the men. The influence of false teachers mentioned in chapter 1 is likewise probably behind these exhortations.

⁶⁶ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 76. The real concern in this passage "is for the prayer that supports the church's universal mission to the world.... Paul urges Timothy to instruct the Ephesian church to reengage in an activity it had apparently been neglecting—prayer in support of Paul's own mandate to take the gospel to the whole world" (Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006], 163).

⁶⁷ Philip Graham Ryken, *1 Timothy*, Reformed Expository Series (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2007), 59.

⁶⁸ While the construction is passive—Paul urges that prayers "be made" (ποιεῖσθαι)—the point of his urging is that they would pray.

“thanksgivings” (εὐχαριστίας). The first word in this list, δέησις, indicates an urgent request. Scripture uses this word exclusively for requests addressed to God.⁶⁹ Here in v. 1 Paul does not say specifically to direct the entreaties to God, but it is obviously implied (cf. vv. 3–4). When one makes request on behalf of someone else and not in one’s own interest, the sense of the word is *intercession*.⁷⁰ That is the case here: Paul is urging the believers to offer intercessions “on behalf of all men” (ὕπὲρ πάντων ἀνθρώπων). Furthermore, the intercessions Paul urges are clearly *evangelistic* in thrust: their intercessions offered on behalf of “all men” are pleasing to God because God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (v. 4).⁷¹

The third word Paul uses for prayer in 1 Timothy 2:1, ἔντευξις, means a formal request or petition put to a high official or official body. Directed to God it likewise indicates intercessory prayer.⁷² The other two words Paul uses for prayer in this verse are a general word for prayer (προσευχή) and one for the giving of thanks (εὐχαριστία). On the one hand I agree with Fee that we do not want to overemphasize the distinctions between these words. Paul simply wants the believers to offer *prayers of all kinds* to God.⁷³ But on the other hand, the words

⁶⁹ BDAG, 213.

⁷⁰ Hans Schönweiss, “Prayer, Ask, Kneel, Beg, Worship, Knock,” in *NIDNTT*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 2: 861.

⁷¹ Paul uses the word δέησις in the same sense in a similarly evangelistic context in Romans 10:1. There Paul declares that his intercession (δέησις) to God (πρὸς τὸν θεόν) on behalf of his fellow Jews (cf. 9:3–4) is “for their salvation” (εἰς σωτηρίαν).

⁷² BDAG, 339–40.

⁷³ Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 62.

Paul uses and the following context clearly indicate an emphasis on *intercessory prayer* with an *evangelistic thrust*.⁷⁴

The most significant debate over 1 Timothy 2:1 concerns the phrase “all men” (πάντων ἀνθρώπων). Reymond argues that Paul *cannot* mean to pray for all people without exception. That would be “positively evil, for such prayers would then need to be offered for the dead and also for the one who has committed the ‘sin unto death’ which John does not encourage (1 John 5:16).”⁷⁵ But this is surely overstated. Paul does not urge us here to pray for all people who ever lived! Paul’s focus is clearly on intercessory prayer for lost people who are still alive and have opportunity to be saved.⁷⁶ Furthermore, 1 John 5:16 more than likely refers to sinning believers losing their physical life by divine discipline (cf. 1 Cor 11:30).⁷⁷ But even if 1 John 5:16 is speaking of an unbeliever (merely professing to be a brother) suffering eternal death, Reymond has a mind to remove from the scope of prayer in 1 Timothy 2:1 much more than just those who have already died and those committing the sin unto death.

⁷⁴ “The kind of prayer the apostle Paul especially has in mind is evangelistic prayer. It is intercession for the salvation of souls” (Ryken, *1 Timothy*, 59).

⁷⁵ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 693.

⁷⁶ Ryken likewise overstates things when he says that “Scripture does not command every Christian to pray, name by name, for every individual in the entire world... Rather, Christians are to pray for all kinds of people” (*1 Timothy*, 70). But Paul speaks here of praying for actual people, not kinds or categories. As far as praying for every single person in the world by name, let us start by praying for the salvation of every lost person we know and go from there!

⁷⁷ For an examination of this passage see Kenneth M. Gardoski, “New Testament Warning Passages in the Light of the Doctrine of Eternal Security” (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2002), 123–34.

In Reymond's view Paul *cannot* be urging us to pray for *all* lost people. This is because God does not desire the salvation of all lost people. For Reymond, Paul *cannot* mean in v. 4 that "God *wishes* or *desires* the salvation of all men without exception, for surely what God *desires* to come to pass, he would have decreed to come to pass."⁷⁸ But this flies in the face of all the biblical evidence for a more nuanced view of God's will. As we have seen, others who hold to PRC are willing to acknowledge that God wills in two ways: he may desire things (will of command) he does not decree (will of decree). Therefore, it is perfectly accurate and biblical to say that in one sense God does will all people to be saved, although in another sense God does not will it. Reymond does not seem willing to accept such an understanding of God's will.⁷⁹ Grudem not only accepts it, but he

⁷⁸ Reymond, *Systematic Theology*, 692; emphasis original.

⁷⁹ Reymond acknowledges that some Reformed theologians teach that God does desire things he has not decreed. He offers John Murray as an example, who on the basis of passages like Deuteronomy 5:29; Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; Matthew 23:37; and 2 Peter 3:9 concludes that "God does not wish that any man should perish. His wish is rather that all should enter upon eternal life by coming to repentance" (John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray* [Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982], 4: 132; cited in Reymond, *Systematic Theology*, 692n25). Reymond's response is twofold: (1) Such reasoning makes God irrational; and (2) Alternate interpretations exist for the passages Murray cites which do not impute such irrationality to God. Reymond refers the reader to those alternate interpretations in John Gill, *The Cause of God and Truth* (Grand Rapids: Sovereign Grace, 1971). Upon examination these interpretations only show the extent some theologians are willing to go in order to deny God his own ways of willing. For example, for Ezekiel 18:23, 32 Gill argues that the wicked here are the house of Israel, not all people; "nor can it be proved that it was made with any who were not eventually saved." Gill also claims that the death here is merely temporal, not eternal. But Gill's sole purpose is to protect "the decree of reprobation" (Gill, *Ibid.*, 25). Regarding Matthew 23:37 Gill's interpretation is more tendentious. First, Jerusalem represents the leaders and its children the people of Israel in general; thus, it is that the leaders did not want Jesus to

is able to connect it to our prayers for lost people. For Grudem, praying for lost people to obey God's commands to repent of sin and trust in Christ as Savior is appropriate because it is in line with God's own desire that all people be saved and none perish.⁸⁰ So at the very least we ought to be able to say that the interpretation which takes "all men" in 1 Timothy 2:1 to mean all lost people without exception is compatible with the PRC position.

But is this interpretation the best one based on the context? After all, Paul does add in 1 Timothy 2:1, "for kings and all who are in authority." For Reymond this addition proves that Paul has in mind *categories* of people: "Paul urges that prayers be offered in behalf of all *classes* of men—even kings and governors."⁸¹ In response, it is just as plausible that by adding "for kings and all who are in authority" Paul means us to pray for all people without exception *including* the governing authorities.⁸² Furthermore, I am not sure what it would mean to

gather the people, not that the people of Jerusalem did not want Jesus to gather *them*. Second, Jesus is only speaking of their temporal welfare or desolation here, not of their spiritual salvation. Third, Jesus wills here only as a man, not as God. Thus, this is only a "human wish or will for their temporal good." Any other view overthrows the doctrines of election, reprobation, and particular redemption (Gill, *Ibid.*, 29). Although Reymond does not mention 1 Timothy 2:4, Gill's interpretation of this verse is likewise instructive. For Gill, if God really does will the salvation of all people the only two options are the denial of reprobation and the affirmation of universalism (Gill, *Ibid.*, 50). For Gill, and Reymond, there *is* no other option.

⁸⁰ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 214.

⁸¹ Reymond, *Systematic Theology*, 693; emphasis original. In other words, we are to pray for all people without *distinction*, not for all people without *exception*. See also George W. Knight III, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 115.

⁸² Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 62. While teaching that "We cannot pray too widely," Paul also "singled out one group which should receive mention in our public prayers.... It is significant that Paul

pray for a *category* to be saved. How does one pray for the salvation of categories without actually praying for the salvation of individual people? After all, categories are not lost and in need of salvation; individual people are. If Reymond responds that we are to pray for God to save the elect from the various categories of people, how is that different from my interpretation? After all, as a Calvinist I agree with Reymond on the doctrine of election. I know as I pray for lost people that God must do a work in their heart and lead them to salvation. The difference is that the subject of my evangelistic prayers is actual people—*all* lost people! I am afraid that by taking his view, Reymond positions himself right out of being able to pray for *any* lost person's salvation.⁸³ It seems that his particular brand of PRC precludes it: Christ did not die for all lost people, because God does not desire the salvation of all lost people, and therefore I cannot pray for the salvation of all lost people. If I cannot pray for the salvation of all lost people, I cannot pray for the salvation of any lost person, but only for impersonal categories. But to pray for the salvation of categories is meaningless—it is not to pray for persons at all—and not to pray for the salvation of lost persons is not to pray according to

singled out for special mention a group of persons who might be the most easily hated by Christians.... Prayer for those who mistreat is still the finest safeguard against the sin of hatred" (Homer A. Kent Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles* [Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1982], 97).

⁸³ Knight seems to face the same dilemma. He claims that "all men" in v. 1 means all kinds of people, but then says that the plural of v. 2a includes "all kinds of men and women, for whom the church is praying and for whom they desire, as does God (v. 4), salvation and godly living" (*Pastoral Epistles*, 115–16). So may we pray for the salvation of all lost people in positions of authority? If so, why may we not then pray for *all* lost people to be saved? If we must only pray for kinds, or categories, to be saved, then what does that mean?

the command of God through the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 2:1.⁸⁴

The Purpose, vv. 3–4

In 1 Timothy 2:3–4 Paul gives Timothy the purpose of these prayers—the reason why the believers in Ephesus and we today should pray for all people including those in governmental authority.⁸⁵ Praying this way is “good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.” It is not only allowable but praiseworthy (καλός).⁸⁶ Indeed, it is acceptable (ἀπόδεκτος) to God. God is pleased when we pray for all people. The reason he is comes in v. 4: God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Here we discover the evangelistic thrust of the prayers in this passage. In light of the following context, the spiritual salvation of lost people is in view: Christ is the mediator for salvation between God and man (v. 5); Christ gave himself as a ransom for the salvation of man (v. 6); and Paul was appointed an apostle and preacher of the gospel of salvation for man (v. 7).

As in v. 1, the debate here is likewise over the meaning of “all men” (πάντας ἀνθρώπους). For Reymond this verse cannot possibly mean that God wills by decree the salvation of all

⁸⁴ The same could be said about Romans 10:1: Paul’s heart’s desire and prayer for his fellow Israelites is “for their salvation.” This makes no sense unless Paul is praying for the salvation of lost Jewish people, for how does one pray for a nation to be saved without praying for individual people to be saved? Piper agrees that “Paul expresses not only his but God’s heart when he says in Romans 10:1, ‘My heart’s desire and prayer to God for them [Israel] is their salvation’” (“Two Wills in God,” 116). Reymond’s Scripture index does not contain this verse, so I am not sure how he would respond here.

⁸⁵ In v. 2b Paul gives the desired outcome of our prayers for us: “so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.”

⁸⁶ BDAG, 504.

people. Other passages tell us that not everyone will be saved and that God has chosen only some to salvation.⁸⁷ I agree as would any Calvinist. But as we saw above, Reymond goes further: in *no sense* can God be thought to desire the salvation of all people, “for surely what God *desires* to come to pass, he would have *decreed* to come to pass.”⁸⁸ Reymond refuses to see what just about everyone else sees in this passage, including his fellow proponents of PRC: although in one sense God does not will the salvation of all people (will of decree), in another sense he does (will of command).⁸⁹ We have already seen that several prominent proponents of PRC have no problem interpreting this passage to mean exactly what it appears to say: God “desires all men to be saved.”⁹⁰ So once again at the very least we can say that interpreting “all men” in 1 Timothy 2:4 to mean all lost people without exception is compatible with the PRC position.

But again we must ask whether this interpretation fits the context. First off, it is hard to miss the repetition of “all” in this passage: “all men” (v. 1); “all men” (v. 4); and “all” (v. 6). What is more, we saw in v. 1 that praying for the salvation of actual lost people makes more sense than praying for the salvation of categories. Sound exegesis would seem to dictate that whatever “all men” means in v. 1, it means the same thing in verses 4 and

⁸⁷ Reymond, *Systematic Theology*, 692.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*; emphasis original.

⁸⁹ Reymond does acknowledge that God extends goodness to all his creatures (Matt 5:45, 48; Luke 6:35–36); yet he will not agree that God’s favorable disposition toward all people might be related to his desire that all people be saved (*Systematic Theology*, 401, 692–93n25).

⁹⁰ According to Grudem, Calvinists should be able to agree with Arminians on the basis of 1 Timothy 2:4 that God wills that all be saved (*Systematic Theology*, 684). Although Piper admits it is *possible* that “all men” in v. 4 means “all *sorts* of persons,” throughout his article he assumes that it truly does mean all people without exception (“Two Wills in God,” 108; emphasis original; cf. 107, 110n14, 123, 124, 130).

6 since Paul ties his argument together logically.⁹¹ Thus, the reason we are to pray for the salvation of all lost people without exception is because it reflects the very heart of God.⁹² The scope of our evangelistic prayers is to be as wide as the scope of God's own desire: the salvation of all lost people without exception.⁹³ If the meaning here is merely that God desires the salvation of all *categories* of people, the problem we face is the same as it was in v. 1.⁹⁴ How can one desire the salvation of a category? The objects of such a desire must be individual people, not categories of people.⁹⁵ To repeat the words of

⁹¹ For Mounce the theme of the entire passage is the universality of salvation; thus, the repetition of "all people" in verses 1, 4, and 6 is clearly intentional (*Pastoral Epistles*, 78). The repetition of "all" sharpens "the soteriological point of the passage" (Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 165). See also Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 175.

⁹² In a similar vein, Christ commands us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us "so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteousness and the unrighteous" (Matt 5:44–45). The scope of our love and prayers are to be as wide as the scope of God's own heart of love and mercy: all people without exception.

⁹³ "The gospel, by its very nature, as Paul will argue in verses 5–6, is universal in its scope, and any narrowing of that scope by a truncated theology or by 'novelties' that appeal to the intellectual curiosities of the few is not the gospel of Christ" (Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 64).

⁹⁴ This is held by Reymond, *Systematic Theology*, 693; Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 119; and Ryken, *1 Timothy*, 70.

⁹⁵ Reymond's response is that God wills to save "(some from) all *categories* of men" (*Systematic Theology*, 693; emphasis original). Are not these quoted words a bit much to draw out of the two words πάντας ανθρώπους?

Berkhof, if 1 Timothy 2:4 and like passages “do not testify to a favorable disposition in God [to all people without exception], it would seem that language has lost its meaning, and that God’s revelation is not dependable on this subject.”⁹⁶

The Proof, vv. 5–7

This section presents the proof of the truth just revealed about the heart of God—that the reason he is pleased when we pray for “all men” (vv. 1–3) is because he himself “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (v. 4). How do we know this is the case? “Because” (γάρ, my translation), Paul says in v. 5, “there is one God....” There is a certain irony that Paul explains God’s view of *all* people with an emphasis on *one*: one God (v. 5); one mediator (v. 5b); one ransom (v. 6); and one gospel mission (v. 7).⁹⁷ “Here is Christianity at its narrowest, and also its widest. Christianity is a thoroughly exclusive religion.... Yet it is also broadly inclusive.”⁹⁸

There is only one God, and that one God is the God of *all* people.⁹⁹ Likewise, there is only one mediator between God and

⁹⁶ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 446. The words added in brackets are implied by the context of his statement.

⁹⁷ Because of the limitations of this study, I will only focus on Christ’s ransom in v. 6.

⁹⁸ Ryken, *1 Timothy*, 67.

⁹⁹ This is one of several passages in Scripture which stress the oneness of God, each with its own implication of this truth. The others are as follows. Because “The LORD our God is one LORD,” “you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart” and “you shall not go after other gods” (Deut 6:4, 5, 14). Because God is one, the way of salvation is the same for all people (Rom 3:29–30). Because God is one, pagan idols are nothing, even though they are called gods (1 Cor 8:4–6). Finally, while commending the person who believes that God is one, James stresses that intellectual assent to even such a fundamental

all men, that is, the man Christ Jesus. Furthermore, Paul says, Jesus Christ gave himself “as a ransom for all” (ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων, v. 6). As in the case of vv. 1 and 4, the “all” here is the point of contention. Who are the “all” for whom Christ gave Himself? For Reymond it cannot mean for all people without exception. In line with what he argued in vv. 1 and 4, that we are to pray for all categories of people, and that God desires to save all categories of people, Reymond holds here that “Christ died for *particular men in all those categories of men* whom God wills to save.”¹⁰⁰ Now, what about the other proponents of PRC which I have been referencing in this paper? Berkhof, Grudem, and Piper acknowledge that v. 4 means what it says: God desires all people without exception to be saved. But do these theologians make the contextual connection between God’s will for all people and Christ’s ransom for all people? No, not directly. For Berkhof, 1 Timothy 2:4–6 refers “to the will of God that both Jews and Gentiles should be saved, but [implies] nothing as to the universal intent of the atonement.”¹⁰¹ But remember, in another context Berkhof agrees that v. 4 expresses God’s “favorable disposition” toward *all* people.¹⁰² Cannot “all” simply mean “all”?

Even Piper, who repeatedly asserts that v. 4 really does mean that God desires all people without exception to be saved, is strangely silent on v. 6 in his article. Elsewhere he argues that “the death of Christ was designed for the salvation of God’s people, not for every individual.”¹⁰³ He cites Mark 10:45 and

tenet is not by itself saving faith, for even demons give assent to the truth of monotheism but are not thereby saved (Jas 2:19).

¹⁰⁰ Reymond, *Systematic Theology*, 693; emphasis original. Cf. also Ryken, *1 Timothy*, 69.

¹⁰¹ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 396–97.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 446.

¹⁰³ “What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism.”

Revelation 5:9 to assert that Jesus did not come to ransom all people, but avoids mentioning 1 Timothy 2:6, which seems to assert this very truth. Ironically, Piper agrees from 1 Timothy 4:10 that “Christ is ‘the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe,’ and, “We do not deny that all men are the intended beneficiaries of the cross in some sense.”¹⁰⁴ So Piper seems to give mixed signals: he agrees that God desires all people to be saved, and that Christ is the Savior of all people, and that all people are beneficiaries of the cross in some sense, but he will not agree that Christ gave himself as a ransom for all people in spite of the fact that 1 Timothy 2:6 seems to say this very thing. Why?

Grudem’s signals are even more mixed on this subject. As we have seen, he too agrees that “all men” really does mean “all people without exception” in v. 4, and that God really does desire all people to be saved. But on the other hand, he defends the PRC position and cannot agree that Christ’s payment for sins “must be actually available for all people.”¹⁰⁵ As we saw earlier, for Grudem if Christ died for the sins of all people, then either all people will be saved (unbiblical) or God demands double payment from those He condemns (unjust).¹⁰⁶ After presenting Scriptures for both sides of the debate, Grudem offers helpful points of agreement. However, at this point his signals become mixed. While all can agree that not all people will be saved, that we can offer the gospel freely to all people, and that Christ’s death has infinite merit, Grudem must insist that Christ did not “*actually pay the penalty ... for the sins ... of every person who ever lived.*”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 594.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 595.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 597; emphasis original.

But what about those passages which connect the death of Christ to the whole world? For Grudem they “are best understood to refer to the free offer of the gospel that is made to all people.”¹⁰⁸ So for example, when Christ gives his flesh for the life of the world (John 6:51), this means Christ offers himself to all people, if they are willing to receive him. When John says Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2), he means that “Christ is the atoning sacrifice that the gospel now *makes available for* the sins of everyone in the world.”¹⁰⁹ Finally, when Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:6 that Christ gave himself as a ransom for all “we are to understand this to mean a ransom available for all people, without exception.”¹¹⁰ Does it not seem to be splitting a very fine hair to claim that Christ’s payment for sins could not have been made “actually available for all people,” but then to admit that “Christ is the atoning sacrifice that the gospel makes available for the sins of everyone in the world,” and that Christ gave himself as a ransom “available for all people”? Is Christ’s death available for all people or not? Did Christ give himself as a ransom for all people or not? Why the equivocation?

The reason for the ambivalence seems clear. On the one hand, proponents of PRC like Piper and Grudem hold for good reason that through the death of Christ God intended to secure salvation for the elect. He did not just make salvation hypothetically possible for everyone, with the hopes that some would believe. But on the other hand, Piper and Grudem recognize that some passages (for Piper, 1 Timothy 4:10, for Grudem 1 Timothy 2:6 and others) seem quite clearly to connect the death of Christ to all people. But their PRC position keeps

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 598.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.; emphasis original.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 599. By the way, it is very difficult to see how Grudem discusses 1 Timothy 2:6 since his Scripture index does not contain it, at least not the edition used for this paper.

them from wanting to say that Christ really died for the sins all people—hence they insist on holding their PRC position: Christ died only for the sins of those who would be saved (the elect).

Furthermore, as we have seen, Piper and Grudem heartily agree with the twofold understanding of God's will, that God can will something in one sense and yet not will it in another. So my question once again is this: is it not possible to connect the death of Christ to the will of God, as 1 Timothy 2:1–7 seems to do, and to hold that in one sense Christ died for the sins of everyone, but in another sense Christ died only for the sins of those who believe (the elect), and that this twofold provision of Christ's death reflects the twofold nature of God's will, that in one sense he wills that all be saved, but in another sense he wills only the salvation of those who believe (the elect)?

If this be the case, then the conclusion seems inescapable that the long-standing disagreement between PRC and URC is groundless and the positions are virtually indistinguishable. I want to prove this point further and wrap up this paper by examining a representative of the URC position, relating it to my connection between the death of Christ and the will of God, and comparing it to the position of Piper and Grudem. I will conclude that the URC and PRC positions are indistinguishable.

DEMAREST ON THE ATONEMENT

Bruce Demarest offers a presentation of the URC position. On the one hand, Demarest agrees with proponents of PRC that Christ died for the sins of those who would believe. Passages such as John 10, Romans 8, and Ephesians 1 teach this truth and “indicate God purposed to apply the fruits of the Atonement to his sheep, his people, or the church who exercise God-given faith. The Reformed tradition correctly emphasizes the particularity of the application side of the Atonement.”¹¹¹

On the other hand, Demarest agrees with Arminians that Christ died for the sins of all people. After presenting the

¹¹¹ Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 193.

scriptural support of passages such as John 3:16–17, Hebrews 2:9, 1 John 2:2, 1 Timothy 2:6, and 1 Timothy 4:10 Demarest concludes,

in terms of the Atonement's *provision* Christ died not merely for the elect but for all sinners in all times and places.... The non-elect had their sins paid for on the cross, even though through unbelief they do not personally appropriate the benefits of his work. Christ, in other words, provided salvation for more people than those to whom he purposed to apply its saving benefits.¹¹²

Note that Demarest distinguishes the *provision* of Christ's death from the *application* of Christ's death. Older theologians argued the *extent* of the atonement, whether it was limited or unlimited. More recent theologians argue the *intent* of Christ's death, whether it was particular or universal. Demarest prefers to think of the question in these terms: "*For whom did Christ intend to provide atonement through his suffering and death?*"¹¹³ He answers,

In sum, regarding the question, For whom did Christ die? we find biblical warrant for dividing the question into God's purpose regarding the *provision* of the Atonement and his purpose concerning the *application* thereof. Scripture leads us to conclude that God loves all people he created and that Christ died to provide salvation for all. The *provision* side of the Atonement is part of the general will of God that must be preached to all. But beyond this, the Father loves the "sheep" with a special love, and in the divine will the Spirit applies the benefits of Christ's death to the "sheep," or the elect. The *application* side of the Atonement is part of the special will of God shared with those who come to faith.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Ibid., 191; emphasis original.

¹¹³ Ibid., 189; emphasis original.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 193; emphasis original. Kent argues similarly that 1 Timothy 2:4 is an expression of God's "moral will which applies to all men" (*Pastoral Epistles*, 99). For the view that the provision of Christ is

In response to Demarest's presentation I want to tweak his position slightly in light of my study. On the basis of Scripture's teaching on the twofold nature of God's will, and the connection between God's will and Christ's death in 1 Timothy 2:1-7, I contend that the *universal scope* or *provision* of the atonement (Christ died for all people) is a reflection of God's *preceptive will* (God desires all people to be saved). I propose further that the *particular application* of the atonement (Christ died for the elect) is a reflection of God's *decretal will* (God wills the salvation only of those who believe, i.e., the elect). These designations, better than Demarest's, more clearly tie the twofold aspect of Christ's death to the larger discussion of God's twofold will as I have presented it in this paper.

I also submit that the difference between the URC position of Demarest and the PRC position of Piper and Grudem is so slight so as to be virtually nonexistent. Consider again their statements regarding Christ's death. Says Piper,

If you say that [Christ] died for every human being *in the same way*, then you have to define the nature of the atonement very differently than you would if you believed that Christ only died for those who actually believe.... For if Christ died for all men *in the same way* then he did not purchase regenerating grace for those who are saved.... In other words if you believe that Christ died for all men *in the same way*, then the benefits of the cross cannot include the mercy by which we are brought to faith, because then all men would be brought to faith, but they aren't.... We do not deny that all men are the intended beneficiaries of the cross *in some sense*.... What we deny is that all men are intended as the beneficiaries of the death of Christ *in the same way*.... Christ is the

universal in its scope but limited in its effect, see also Ralph Earle, "1, 2 Timothy," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebeline (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 11: 358.

savior of all men. But he is especially the Savior of those who believe. He did not die for all men *in the same sense*.¹¹⁵

While Piper is certainly arguing against the Arminian view, I cannot distinguish his position from Demarest's. They are both saying the same thing: there is a sense in which Christ died for all people and there is a sense in which Christ died for the elect only. Consider again the words of Grudem,

The statements "Christ died for his people only" and "Christ died for all people" *are both true in some senses....* The statement "Christ died for his people only" can be understood to mean that "Christ died to actually pay the penalty for all the sins of his people only." In that sense it is true.... On the other hand, the sentence, "Christ died for all people," is true if it means, "Christ died to make salvation available for all people" or if it means, "Christ died to bring the free offer of the gospel to all people." In fact, this is the kind of language Scripture itself uses in passages like John 6:51; 1 Tim 2:6; and 1 John 2:2. It really seems to be only nit-picking that creates controversies and useless disputes when Reformed people insist on being such purists in their speech that they object any time someone says that "Christ died for all people." *There are certainly acceptable ways of understanding that sentence that are consistent with the speech of the scriptural authors themselves.*¹¹⁶

Again, I cannot distinguish Grudem's position from Demarest's: both are saying that Christ died for all people in one sense and Christ died for the elect in another sense.¹¹⁷ Is it

¹¹⁵ "What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism," emphasis added. Cf. similar statements in "The Reformed Faith and Racial Harmony."

¹¹⁶ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 601–2; emphasis added.

¹¹⁷ Of course some of their specific wording differs. Demarest says Christ died for the elect in the sense that to them alone are the saving benefits of his death applied, while Grudem says Christ died for the elect in the sense that he actually paid the penalty for all the sins of the elect only. But the end result is really the same. As Chafer puts it, "The limited redemptionist considers the death of Christ as actual for the

possible, to borrow the words of Grudem, that the long-standing dispute between PRC and URC has been nothing but “nit-picking” over a “useless dispute”?¹¹⁸

elect and of no saving benefit for the nonelect, while the unlimited redemptionist considers the death of Christ as actual for the elect and potential and provisional for the nonelect. The notion is without foundation which assumes that a thing is less real because its acceptance may be uncertain or conditional” (*Systematic Theology*, 3: 186–87). (But see next footnote.)

¹¹⁸ The proponent of PRC might still protest Demarest’s wording that “the non-elect had their sins paid for on the cross” (*The Cross and Salvation*, 191). As we saw earlier, Grudem argues that if this is really true, apart from embracing universalism, one is left holding that God demands double payment for the sins of the non-elect, which would be unjust (*Systematic Theology*, 595). In response, Demarest is speaking in terms of the *provision* of Christ’s death for the sins of all people, not its *application*. Grudem in fact *agrees* with this distinction, accepting the statement “Christ died for the whole world” to mean that “Christ is the atoning sacrifice that the gospel now *makes available for* the sins of everyone in the world” (*Systematic Theology*, 598; emphasis original). Must we now nit-pick over the phrase “Christ paid for the sins of all people”? Can we not simply agree that this is true for all people with regards to *provision* and true only for the elect with regards to *application*? Ryken makes a statement similar to Grudem’s regarding whether Christ actually paid for the sins of people on the cross. He says that Christ is the Savior of the world and a ransom for all. However, “the fact that his death is a ransom does not mean that our own sins have been paid for. Whether we go to him for salvation or not depends on whether or not we realize that we need to be saved, and whether we are willing to go to him when we do. But whether we go to him or not, he is still the Savior of the world, ‘who gave himself as a ransom for all’” (*1 Timothy*, 70). But notice that on this argument Christ actually paid for *no one’s* sins on the cross! In claiming that Christ did not pay for the sins of *all* people on the cross, Ryken ends up arguing that Christ did not pay for *anyone’s* sins on the cross!

CONCLUSION

My goal in writing this paper has been to attempt to bury the hatchet between fellow Calvinists on the atonement. I tried to show that the road toward this goal passes through the Bible's teaching on the twofold nature of God's will. I showed that several prominent proponents of PRC accept the truth from Scripture that God desires the salvation of all people in some sense. I argued that 1 Timothy 2:1–7 connects the will of God and the death of Christ on this subject. Proponents of PRC who acknowledge the universal scope of God's desire for all people to be saved in v. 4 and yet deny the universal scope of Christ's death in v. 6 are missing the point of Paul's argument: the proof that God desires the salvation of all people is evidenced in the truth that Christ died for all people.¹¹⁹ I compared the URC position of Demarest with the PRC position of Piper and Grudem and found the differences to be minute if not non-existent.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 65–66.

¹²⁰ If there is one final sticking point it would be the double payment argument. I realize that this is a stubborn argument: if Christ died for all the sins of the non-elect, including their unbelief, then how can they be condemned for their unbelief? I think Chafer's response here is the best: it is a mystery we cannot fathom. "The unlimited redemptionist recognizes two revelations which are equally clear—that Christ died for the *cosmos* world, and that his death is the ground of salvation for those who believe and the ground of condemnation for those who do not believe. That men are saved on the one condition of personal faith and that men are condemned for want of that faith are plain teachings of the NT. It is equally as great a mystery and one which is closely related to the present problem that, though faith is divinely wrought in the human heart, men are treated as though faith originated in them. They are blessed eternally who have that faith, and are condemned eternally who have it not. The devout soul must recognize his own limitations and here, as elsewhere, be satisfied to receive as true what God has spoken" (*Systematic Theology*, 3: 188). If *this* is what finally divides us, then I say that it is a shame.

I end with an appeal similar to the one Piper makes regarding the two wills in God. He says that

the distinction between terms like “will of decree” and “will of command” or “sovereign will” and “moral will” is not an artificial distinction demanded by Calvinistic theology. The terms are an effort to describe the whole of biblical revelation. They are an effort to say yes to all of the Bible and not silence any of it. They are a way to say yes to the universal saving will of 1 Timothy 2:4 and yes to the individual unconditional election of Romans 9:6–23.¹²¹

Allow me to reword Piper’s quotation in light of the argument of this paper:

the distinction between terms like “unlimited in scope” and “limited in application” or “universal provision” and “particular application” is not an artificial distinction demanded by faulty or inconsistent Calvinistic theology. The terms are an effort to describe the whole of biblical revelation. They are an effort to say yes to all of the Bible and not silence any of it. They are a way to say yes to the universal provision of Christ’s death for all people in 1 Timothy 2:6 and the particular application of Christ’s death to the elect in Romans 8:28–39.

Is it not time for Calvinists to stop arguing over this issue? Instead of remaining “separated brethren” in the opposing camps of URC and PRC, can we not come together into one camp as proponents of USPARC (Universal Scope Particular Application Redemption Calvinism)? Or, to put it *much* more simply, on the atonement can we not just all agree that we are Calvinists?

¹²¹ Piper, “Two Wills in God,” 121–22.

Ancient Near Eastern Covenants

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The topic of Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) covenants is formidable. Volumes have been written, and conclusions vary. Unfortunately, much of the conversation surrounding the New Covenant of Scripture seems either to ignore or to discount the covenant form of the ANE.¹ The purpose here is not to compare all of the similar components of the two. Rather, the purpose is to examine and summarize important elements of ANE covenants as those elements provide clarity for the interpretation of the New Covenant in text of Scripture.² A

¹ The impetus for this article was the 2009 Council on Dispensational Hermeneutics held at Baptist Bible Seminary which dealt with the New Covenant in dispensational understanding. This particular article was a section in a larger work which can be found in its entirety at the website for 2009 papers for the Council. See <http://www.bbc.edu/council>.

² In the Old Testament the New Covenant is only explicitly mentioned once by that designation. Nonetheless, the New Covenant is profusely referenced, delineated, and described in the Old Testament, most particularly in the major and minor prophetic books. Many lists have been formulated in collation of these prophetic New Covenant texts in the Old Testament (Fredrickson articles). The treatment of the New Covenant here will assume a common recognition and collection of these texts. New Testament texts naming the New Covenant will also be treated below. For a proposal on determining if an Old Testament text is a New Covenant passage, see David Fredrickson, "Which Are the New Covenant Passages in the Old Testament, Part One," *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* 14 (Spring 2010):97-126 and "Which Are the New Covenant Passages in the Old Testament, Part Two," *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* 14 (Fall 2010): 79-104.

better understanding of ANE covenant forms should assist in eliminating some of the misunderstandings regarding the New Covenant. As Mendenhall suggests, “A study of the covenant form as we know it in ancient legal documents may possibly serve to bring into the chaos of opinion some objective criteria.”³ The study of any text of Scripture divorced from its cultural setting and historical context is insufficient for formulating conclusions with regard to meaning. Such failure is particularly notable in the study of the New Covenant, both in its Old or New Testament settings.

COVENANT GENRE: THE ANE

Foundationally, ANE covenants were legal instruments. Like any formal, contractual document, stringent conventions surrounded their creation, implementation, execution, and perpetuation.⁴ Covenant enactment was precise. Covenant terms were precise, detailed, and unified. Deviation or

³ G. E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh: Biblical Colloquium, 1955), 24. Mendenhall hoped to alleviate the “chaos of opinion” with regard to the history of religion. The hope here is to do the same with regard to the New Covenant in Scripture.

⁴ ANE contracts did not partake of exact likeness and invariable language or description. Nonetheless, ANE contracts as “formal” promissory documents were, by nature, a much higher mechanism for promise-making than simple, everyday speech. Mendenhall rightly says, “No society compels its members to keep every promise they may make. At the same time the good of society itself demands that certain promises must be followed by performance, and *it perfects forms and procedures by which it can guarantee those promises*. Those procedures are in the beginnings of law most closely connected with religion, and are known as *oaths*. As time passes, the oath which is a conditional self-cursing, an appeal to the gods to punish the promiser if he defaults, tends to become merely the constitutive legal form which makes the promise binding.” Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant*, 26, (emphasis added).

contravention often incurred severe penalties as specified in the agreement. Covenants, like any legal instruments, were to be taken quite seriously. They were not ambiguously formulated, lightly contracted, indifferently enforced, or inconsequentially breached.⁵

COVENANT TERMINOLOGY: THE ANE

Specific terms were attached to covenants and covenant making in the Semitic world of the ANE. In Akkadian, *biritu* meant “to clasp” or “to fetter.” Similarly, the Hebrew term בְּרִית denoted “a bond, pact, treaty,” or “accord.”⁶ It signified a formal agreement between parties that effected specific impositions and liabilities which uniquely interrelated those parties.⁷ The Semitic term chiefly engaged to describe the official enactment of such a bond was “to cut” (Akkadian *parasu* or Hebrew כָּרַת.⁸ In covenantal terms, it meant “to confirm, to actuate, to ratify” a formal agreement. To “cut a bond” or “pact,” then, was to enact an official, formal relationship by means of legal instrument.

⁵ For an extended example of treating covenants as other than legal instruments, see John Walton, *Covenant: God's Purpose, God's Plan* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1994). According to Walton, his approach is that of “biblical theology” (p. 11); he finds “no direct parallels” in extant ANE covenants (p. 14); and that which finds importance to him is “not...what a covenant is,” but “why a covenant was made” (p. 15). For Walton, the purpose of a covenant was not “legal” but “revelatory” (p. 24).

⁶ For other or ancillary terms used for covenants and covenant making see M. Weinfeld, “בְּרִית” *TDOT* 2:257-259.

⁷ Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:255.

⁸ Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:259. The same idiom is used in Phoenician and Aramaic, as well as in Greek. The establishment or enactment of a covenant can also be described in Hebrew by the verbs “to put in place” בָּיַן, “to give, make” (נָתַן), “to set in order” (עָרַךְ), “to cause to stand, establish” קָוַן עָמַד and/or “to enter” (בוֹא).

COVENANT ELEMENTS: THE ANE

By nature all ANE covenants consisted of at least two fundamental elements: relationship and obligation. As legal instruments, covenants brought their stated parties into formal relationship and, by that instrument, defined the obligations (laws, conditions, and consequences) incumbent upon each party in the relationship. No covenant exists apart from the naming of parties, the formal establishment of relationship between those stated parties, and the creation of legal obligations that bind those parties.

Relationship between Parties

First, covenants created a formal, bonded affiliation between designated parties. The party or parties enacting the covenant and creating the relationship were specified by name. Frequently the physical descendants of covenant parties were included by explicit designation and direct affiliation.⁹ Once formally enacted, all of the terms of the accord were in force and were binding on those who enacted it. Only the stated, contracting parties partook directly of the covenant responsibilities and benefits. To be named in the legal instrument as an enacting party to the instrument was to incur, legally, its responsibilities, advantages, and/or penalties. By nature and design, covenants were exclusive: they established an absolute and unique relationship of fealty between the contracting parties.¹⁰

⁹ See Weinfeld, "Scene of the Covenant," *TDOT* 2:269.

¹⁰ This exclusivity was particularly evident in contract with God. "The stipulation in political treaties demanding exclusive fealty to one king corresponds strikingly with the religious belief in one single, exclusive deity.... A legal formula taken from the sphere of marriage [is] attested in various legal documents from the ancient Near East. The relationship of the vassal to his suzerain, and that of the wife to her husband, leave no place for double loyalty" Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:278).

Peoples other than the enacting parties to the covenant might find reference in the accord, but their auxiliary reference did not make them direct participants; the covenant was not “cut” with them.¹¹ Any responsibility, boon, or bane that might befall them as designated in the accord, did so as a result of their interaction or affiliation with the legal parties of the covenant.¹²

¹¹ For example, the Mosaic Covenant contained laws concerning named peoples who lived within the boundaries of Israel’s land of promise (Deut 7:1-2). These people did participate in Israel’s covenant provisos as incidental or third-party designees (they were to be destroyed), but their participation was only indirect. They participated tangentially, only as they found themselves, either willingly or unwillingly, in contact and in context with Israel and Israel’s covenant God and so named in the covenant as auxiliary or tertiary, non-contracting parties.

¹² The “strangers who sojourned” in Israel (i.e., the non-Israelites who experienced established residency among the Israelites either by choice or by servitude) participated in the nation’s covenant and were, in fact, obligated to keep the law of Israel as indirect, third-party participants under Israel. If they were circumcised, they could partake of the Passover meal (Exod 12:43-49). They participated, with Israel, in the laws of the food offering (Num 15:13-16) and were held accountable, in same way as the congregation of Israel, with respect to erroneous and/or high-handed sin (Num 15:25-30) and the purification rituals (Num 19:1-10). They partook of the responsibilities and, apparently, the forgiveness of the Day of Atonement because of their association with the people of Israel (Lev 16:29-34). Like the native Israelites, sojourners were responsible to use the central altar for sacrifice and to avoid the eating of blood (Lev 17:8-16). Like Israel, they were to spurn the abominable practices of the Canaanite nations around them (Lev 18:26) and were not to offer their children to Molech (Lev 20:1-2) or to worship idols (Ezek 14:1-8). Native Israelites under the Mosaic Covenant were told by God to “treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself” (Lev 19:33-34). But even with all of this, the strangers who sojourned among native Israelites were still “strangers” and never attained the legal status of the covenanted people themselves; they never became Israelites. In fact, though obligated to keep the law of Israel, these sojourners were by that same law always terminologically distinguished and legally distinct from

Indirect participation demanded first, that the parties be specifically identified in the covenant as incidental participants and, second, that the covenant be in force. A covenant must be formally ratified before either the contracting or non-contracting parties can experience its benefits. Not to be named specifically as party to or participant in the covenant was to be excluded from the covenant. Covenants were enacted for the purpose of creating formal, unique, and bonded relationships.

Obligations and Benefits

Second, ANE covenants involved obligation.¹³ Covenants defined the parameters and the procedures of the contractual relationship between the legal parties.¹⁴ The instrument stated in unequivocal terms which specific party was beholden to which specific obligations. Often delineated were the rights or benefits (blessings) that were accrued by designated parties for their unfailing compliance with the terms of the covenant. Specific benefits were listed that could encompass all areas of life, tangible and intangible. Once a covenant was formally ratified, all of the benefits immediately owned legal force, though the actual experience of any particular benefit might be contingent on time and performance.¹⁵ Also specified might be

Israel. For example, unlike a native Israelite, sojourners could be owned as permanent slaves without the right of redemption (Lev 25:44-55).

¹³ D. J. McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant: A Survey of Current Opinions* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1972), 3. See also Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:255.

¹⁴ "Berith implies first and foremost the notion of 'imposition,' 'liability,' or 'obligation.'" "...It is in essence an imposition of laws and obligations upon the people" (Weinfeld *TDOT* 2:255).

¹⁵ For example, the promise of a suzerain to defend the vassals would be legally in force at the moment of ratification though that promise would be experiential only when the subjects needed defending; likewise the promise of the provision of food, shelter,

the penalties or adversities (curses) that would befall a party or parties in violation of the covenant terms. All covenants by nature involved obligations, obligors, and obligees, and all covenant responsibilities and benefits were cohesive in enactment and binding in execution.

COVENANT TYPES: THE ANE

Although various subcategories of covenants might be enumerated (e.g., fealty, marriage, indenture, purchase, parity, etc.), it seems that two major categories of covenants can be distinguished, particularly with regard to vassal-type relationships: the suzerainty treaty and the royal grant.¹⁶

Suzerainty Treaties

A suzerainty treaty was an accord that chiefly *defined* vassal loyalty. The focus here was on the *obligation of the inferior party*, though the suzerain embraced specific obligations as well. The suzerain pledged to enable, protect, and sustain his vassals (and their progeny) with all of his resources, power, and ability, if the vassals would swear to keep in perpetuity the specifications, laws, and statutes of the suzerain as delineated in the covenant. The *chief feature* of this covenant was the *law-code*: the list of requisites that were obligatory on the part of the vassals in order to prove continued covenant fealty. In this case, the suzerain contractually offered the terms in pledge to the vassal, and the vassal swore to accept those terms. The vassals,

clothing, etc. The experience of the benefits or blessings was also contingent upon the vassal's faithfulness to the conditions of the covenant. In any case, once a covenant was ratified, all of its terms were in legal force without segregation, alteration, or equivocation.

¹⁶ M. Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East," *JAOS* 90 (1970):185; and Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:270-271. These two types of covenants seem taxonomically to encompass the major biblical covenants.

along with the suzerain, were exclusive direct participants in the enactment and fulfillment of covenant terms. This covenant was bilateral in nature, both parties pledging their allegiance.¹⁷

Royal Grants

A royal grant was an accord that chiefly *rewarded* vassal loyalty. The focus here was on the *obligation of the superior party*, though the vassal owned certain responsibilities as well.¹⁸

¹⁷ Mendenhall suggests that in Hittite treaties, only the vassals swore to the terms and that “by no legal formality did the Hittite king bind himself to any specific obligation;” the fact that the king would protect the vassal was “taken for granted” (Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant*, 30; see also n. 17). Mendenhall extends this observation to the Mosaic Covenant as well, that is to say, that God did not swear to its terms, “though it goes without saying that the covenant relationship itself presupposed the protection and support of Yahweh to Israel” (*Law and Covenant*, 36). The fact that God’s protection and support is “presupposed” and “goes without saying” is the point made here. If the suzerain is the one offering, contractually, the covenant and its terms, then he and the vassals both understand that the suzerain is offering the contract in pledge of the suzerain’s protection and support of the vassal. Furthermore, the blessings (and curses) are, in fact, the promise of the suzerain to the vassals. See McCarthy, *Covenant*, 66, where he says, “The obligations of the overlord and their basis remain a vexed problem. Was he bound by oath? This is usually denied, but the position is becoming more difficult to maintain.”

¹⁸ The terms “conditional” and “unconditional” have long and frequently been engaged by scholars of virtually every theological bent to designate and distinguish suzerainty- and grant-type covenants: suzerainty treaties being “conditional” and Royal Grants being “unconditional.” These designations, “conditional” and “unconditional,” may be comparable, but they are not precise. They do not reflect accurately the distinction between suzerainty- and grant-type covenants. Since all covenants, by nature and content, involved obligation (“imposition, liability”) within relationships, it could logically be argued that all covenants were, by nature, conditioned. In royal grants, participation in the benefits could be conditioned on certain signs or tokens of formal relationship, especially by ensuing

In a royal grant, a sovereign awarded favors or benefits to a proven loyalist. Typically, the subject party had long and/or valiantly demonstrated his fidelity to his lord.¹⁹ The suzerain, then, would provide heightened privilege (e.g., special housing, clothing, transportation, property, food, servants, access, etc.) to the faithful subordinate. The *chief feature* of this covenant was the *list of benefits* that the sovereign promised to bestow on the subject and his progeny. In this case, the suzerain alone swore

generations. Mendenhall, in arguing against conditionality of the Abrahamic grant, notes that “circumcision is not originally an obligation” in the covenant (*Law and Covenant*, 36). While Mendenhall is correct in saying that circumcision was “originally” not an obligation in the covenant, circumcision did *become* obligatory to any of Abraham’s descendents who cared to participate in the covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant was “kept” by circumcision (Gen 10:10). The benefits of royal grants were often specifically contracted by the benefactor to be withheld (i.e., temporarily discontinued) should the loyal beneficiary or his descendents become disloyal and stray from fidelity to the grantor (See 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 89:30-33; and 132:12). Enjoyment of a grant was conditioned on continued loyalty [W. Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 118]. All ANE covenants were by nature conditions of relationship. Therefore, the distinction “conditional” and “unconditional” seems unhelpful.

Others have suggested the designation “administrative” over against “promissory” with regard to ANE covenants: suzerainty treaties being “administrative” in function and royal grants being “promissory” in nature [see T. E. McComisky, *The Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1985)]. These appellations are neither comparable nor accurate. It could be argued that a royal grant was administrative in its detailed specifications for rewarding the faithful servant and his progeny. Clearly, the suzerainty treaty often included numerous promises: promises made by the suzerain for blessing (protection and care) or for cursing (penalty and affliction), and promises made by the vassal to maintain fidelity and compliance. In fact, all covenants were, fundamentally, heightened promises (Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant*, 26).

¹⁹ Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:270-271.

to the terms of the covenant.²⁰ The vassal had only to enjoy those privileges as long as he or his descendants chose to participate in the benefits and retain loyalty to the benefactor. The vassal, at best, participated only indirectly in the enactment of the covenant by witnessing the oath of the benefactor as he swore to the terms. This covenant was unilateral in nature, one party (the benefactor) swearing to his pledge.

COVENANT DURATION: THE ANE

ANE covenants were time-bound. They each found their place in the ebb and flow of history. They were designed within time and with time clearly in mind. Every ANE covenant had a *terminus a quo*, a point of ratification or enactment when the covenant as a legal instrument began to function in legal force. Interestingly, many ANE covenants, particularly suzerainty- and grant-type treaties, were left open-ended with regard to time. They had no *terminus ad quem*. Covenant commencement and

²⁰ Rather than attempting to distinguish the two major covenant types by conditionality (conditional vs. unconditional) or by function (administrative vs. promissory), it seems better, as herein, to distinguish them by enactment. On the one hand, suzerainty treaties were *bilateral* in ratification: both parties, the suzerain and the vassal, made formal commitment to the terms of the covenant. The vassals swore to the terms that the suzerain offered in pledge of contracting a relationship with them. In this case, both parties were direct, pledged enactors of the agreement. On the other hand, royal grants were *unilateral* in ratification. The superior alone offered the terms and made formal commitment to the terms. The inferior and his progeny could choose to enjoy the benefits pledged by the suzerain so long as they associated themselves with the suzerain in personal and prolonged fidelity, but their participation was both voluntary and unpledged. They offered no provisos and swore to no terms. In this case, only the suzerain was the direct, sworn enactor of the agreement. Mendenhall calls these one-sided covenants “Patron” and “Promissory” covenants: G. E. Mendenhall, “Covenant,” *IDB* 1:717. The denomination “Patron” serves better to distinguish this covenant than does “Promissory.”

termination were carefully designated concerns in the ANE. Specific language attended these temporalities.

Commencement

Covenants, as legal instruments, were officially ratified (“cut”) at a precise point in time. Their terms might be discussed, negotiated, spoken, reiterated, and recorded prior to legal ratification, but the terms, obligations, benefits, and penalties were only theoretical until the moment of official enactment.²¹ Covenants, after their initial ratification, might also and regularly be rehearsed and/or renewed with much of the attendant verbiage and ceremony of the original ratification. Renewal might occur when terms of the covenant had been broken and the violating party found need for restoration, or renewal might occur on a regular schedule.²² Later generations who by birth became party to the covenant as originally enacted by their progenitors also might seek renewal. When renewed, some of the terms might be adapted, by mutual agreement between the covenanting parties, in order to adjust the

²¹ Numerous ANE covenants are extant. What exists, however, is chiefly their content—the written documents themselves. What is lacking, in most cases, is an historical record describing their ceremonies and their official enactment. The documents themselves, in record of the words of the covenant, might mention attendant ceremonies and official enactment, but the ceremonies and enactment themselves are not attached as an historical record. “These aspects have to be pieced together out of other sorts of materials for the most part” [D. R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), 39]. In contrast, the text of Scripture is often more descriptive of the historical setting and discussions about the covenants, not the formal texts of the covenants themselves (*ibid.*, 48).

²² Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:265.

stipulations to changing circumstances.²³ Nonetheless, the covenant came into force, in its entirety, precisely at the temporal nexus with its initial, legal ratification. Renewals were only restatements and reaffirmations of an original covenant already in force; they were not new covenants in and of themselves.²⁴

That which immediately and legally placed a covenant in force was the oath.²⁵ Although various symbolic conventions might attend ANE ratification ceremonies,²⁶ the one component essential to all covenants was the swearing of the oath.²⁷ Only by this means was the covenant formally actuated, enacted, or ratified (“cut” כָּרַת).²⁸ A covenant ceremony might include a

²³ For example, the laws of Deuteronomy which anticipate permanent residence in the land over against the nomadic life of the previous generation.

²⁴ Like other ANE suzerainty treaties, renewal of the Law of Moses, for example, was always linked to and grounded in the original covenant (see Josh 24:14-28, 2 Kings 23:1-3; Neh 8:1, 10:30[29]. Renewal of the original covenant was expedient due to the inter-generational nature of the original contract and the perpetuity of a covenant with the progeny of the original enactors (Deut 31:9-13; see Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:274-275).

²⁵ Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:262. According to Weber, “In antiquity every political alliance, in fact, almost every private contract was normally confirmed by an oath.... Israel itself as a political community was conceived as an oath bound confederation” [Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1952), 75]. Hillers concludes, “An ancient treaty, then, is essentially an elaborate oath” (*Covenant*, 28. See also Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant*, 26).

²⁶ See below: Covenant Complements.

²⁷ “*Berith* as a commitment has to be confirmed by an oath.... The oath gives the obligation its binding validity,” Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:256.

²⁸ Following Mendenhall’s well-known list of the six elements commonly found in Hittite treaties, he says: “We know that other factors were involved, for the ratification of the treaty did not take

meal. It could incorporate some form of sacrifice. A token might be assigned, a libation or some other physical act performed. Nevertheless, there was no legal contract, no implementation of terms or benefits in part or in whole, and no obligatory force or factual realization until the moment when the party (unilateral) or parties (bilateral) officially swore to the terms of record.²⁹

Termination

ANE covenants, especially suzerainty treaties and royal grants, were generally construed and specifically designated to be perpetual and eternal.³⁰ Technically, covenants were not dissolved or terminated by noncompliance. The covenant continued in force even when it was “broken” and its stipulations violated.³¹ That which changed legally was the consequence of the covenant, not the continuance of the covenant. The covenant-breaker could be “cut off” or excluded from enjoying covenant benefits or blessings, but the contract continued in force. If it contained curses for non-compliance, the

place by the mere draft in written form. So we must add: 7, The formal oath,” *Law and Covenant*, 34.

²⁹ Just as a modern wedding might include the giving of the bride, a candle ceremony, the formal exchange of rings, prayers, the invoking of witnesses, a meal, and/or any other number of peripheral customs and symbols, the ceremonial act that seals the marriage before God is the vow (oath). As a bilateral agreement, the man swears to his obligations as husband, and the woman swears to her obligations as wife. Like placing one’s signature on a modern-day contract, ANE covenants were singularly actuated by the oath. With the oath-taking, the covenant was officially “cut” or ratified. No one, either directly or indirectly, could experience legally the obligations of the covenant, its terms and conditions, its benefits or penalties, until the covenant was ratified by the oath.

³⁰ Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:264.

³¹ For various terms describing covenant non-compliance, see Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:261-262.

curses were invoked and, by their invocation, the covenant continued to operate. An ANE covenant might also become obsolete. Should one or more of its parties cease to exist³² or should all of the terms of the covenant find complete and permanent satisfaction or actualization,³³ the covenant would essentially come to an end through obsolescence. A covenant, however, was not wholly nullified or made void simply by a participant's violation of the terms. The relationship established by the covenant, along with its obligations, was usually defined as perpetual, inter-generational, everlasting.

COVENANT COMPLEMENTS: THE ANE

In the ANE the term "cutting" a covenant referred to the formal act of ratification which occurred when the parties swore to the terms of the instrument. Numerous attendant ceremonial features or symbolic acts might accompany or complement the formal ratification of ANE covenants. Such complementary elements were optional for inclusion or non-inclusion in the ceremony. All of these features, despite their optional inclusion, were highly emblematic. None of them, however, were essential to covenant making or officially enacted the contract.

Sacrifices

Some covenant ceremonies included a sacrifice. At times, the sacrifice focused on the manipulation of blood by sprinkling or smearing; other times it more specifically involved passing between a division of sacrificial body-parts.³⁴ The manipulation of blood might portray ritual satisfaction and/or purification before the deity or deities overseeing the covenant. Ritual purification would also symbolize the elimination of hostility

³² For example, by the discontinuation of any progeny or by conquest and assimilation or dispersion.

³³ For example, a purchase or trade agreement.

³⁴ Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:262-3.

and, thus, the commitment to fidelity between the parties as they came together to embrace the covenant terms.³⁵ The division of body parts and passing through their midst probably symbolized a severity of cost in the implementation of the covenant and, especially, in the obligation to keep it.³⁶ Nonetheless, the slaughter for division of the body-parts was often considered to be sacrificial.³⁷

If a covenant ceremony did include a sacrifice, the sacrifice was ancillary to formal ratification. It made the parties fit for covenant relationship and symbolized their commitment to covenant fulfillment, all in guarantee that the covenant could and would be actuated.³⁸ The sacrifice and the sacrificial

³⁵ In the case of Moses, the sprinkling of the blood of the burnt and peace offerings on both the altar and the people seems clearly to indicate the ritual cleansing of the people for the establishment of rectitude between the two parties of the covenant, God and Israel, in full assurance of their respective pledge-making (Exod 24:4-8). First, half of the blood was sprinkled (זָרַק) on the altar of God (v. 6). Then God's words, as recorded in the covenant, were read to the people, after which they, in turn, swore to God's terms (v 7). Following their oath, the other half of the blood was sprinkled (זָרַק) on the people, and Moses said, "Behold the blood of the covenant which Yahweh has cut with you based upon all of these words" (v. 8). In this case, the sacrifice was joined with an aspersion of the sacrificial blood. The blood surely was not sprinkled on every Israelite in attendance. It was doubtless only sprinkled on some, in proximity to Moses, as the nation's representatives (Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:263). This aspersion of the blood was a symbolic ritual. The blood, in essence, made the people fit for covenant ratification and guaranteed that the terms of the covenant could be met.

³⁶ See Jer 34:18-19 where this symbolism is made explicit, particularly with reference to those who pass through the pieces.

³⁷ Weinfeld, *JAOS*, 90, 196ff.

³⁸ Note that on the day that Yahweh actually cut his covenant with Abraham (Gen 15:18 – בְּרִית), Abraham asked for some assurance that its terms would truly be accomplished (Gen 15:7-8). In response, Yahweh commanded a sacrifice (Gen 15:9-10), then Yahweh

animals were, nonetheless, “subordinate to a fixed ritual procedure.”³⁹ Covenants could be made without a sacrifice.⁴⁰ Even when included, the sacrifice itself, like other covenant complements, did not constitute enactment or ratification of the covenant. Covenants were ratified by oath.

Libations/Ablutions/Aspersions

Some covenant ceremonies might include libations, ablutions, or other manipulations of non-bloody liquids such as water, oil, or wine.⁴¹ Blood itself—the blood of the covenant sacrifice—could also be manipulated as a libation and/or an aspersion. The pouring out or sprinkling of liquid might be sacrificial and/or it might represent the forfeiture or surrender of independence in coming into a contractual relationship. Ritually purified water or sacrificial blood might be sprinkled on objects or on participants as symbolic ablutions to achieve or to signify purification and covenant fitness. Water, oil, or wine could also be engaged in various fashions, probably to represent similar covenant qualities such as purity, fellowship, or obligation.⁴²

Actions

Some covenant ceremonies were attended by symbolic physical acts. These acts were usually performed by the

unilaterally passed through the divided parts (Gen 15:17), symbolizing his absolute assurance that the covenant would, indeed, be fulfilled (Gen 15:13 – תָּדַעַ תָּדַעַ).

³⁹ Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:262.

⁴⁰ Even biblical covenants; for example, the Davidic.

⁴¹ Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:263.

⁴² Hos 12:2; Jer 2:18. See Hillers, *Covenant*, 40.

contracting party or parties. The most commonly attested actions included bodily contact: the touching of the throat,⁴³ the touching of the breast,⁴⁴ placing a hand under the thigh,⁴⁵ or the joining of hands.⁴⁶ The symbolism might include anything from viable threat (throat or breast) to intimate loyalty (breast or thigh). Another known act was the giving or exchange of personal clothing,⁴⁷ probably indicative of self-sacrifice, deference, or commitment. As mentioned above, the physical act of passing through divided sacrificial body-parts probably signified the depth of commitment to and the guarantee of fulfillment of covenant terms.

Meals

Some covenant ceremonies included a meal. At the meal, the enacting parties of the covenant, or designated representatives from among them, partook of food and drink at a common table or setting. Meals commonly followed covenant ratification. The meal most likely symbolized the bond, unity, and fellowship that resulted from the relationship newly contracted.⁴⁸

⁴³ EnEl VI, 98.

⁴⁴ Weisman, *Vassal-Treaties*, 154-156; EnEl VI, 98; Borger, *Asarhaddon*, 43, 51.

⁴⁵ Gen 24:2, 9; 47:29.

⁴⁶ Ezek 17:18.

⁴⁷ 1Sam 18:3, 4; Ruth 4:7; Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:263.

⁴⁸ Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:263. Such meals might also include a ritual of salt; salt also being used with some ritual sacrifices (Lev 2:13) and offerings (Num 18:19).

Tokens

Some covenant ceremonies included the specific assignment of a token or tokens.⁴⁹ The token was an object, event, or other emblem that served as a physical, experiential, and perpetual reminder of ownership of the contract and participation in its obligations and consequences.⁵⁰ To violate or desecrate the token served, symbolically, to violate the covenant itself.⁵¹

Guarantees

Often the language of the covenant included explicit, heightened verbiage that served to instate guarantees of covenant fidelity and the ongoing fulfillment of covenant terms. Witnesses, either actual or theoretical, animate or inanimate, could be enlisted in order assure that the oath once sworn could not later be questioned. The names of deities might be invoked and appalling consequences could be embraced should one party or the other disregard the covenant. Absurdities were sometimes enumerated, like the falling of the sky or the drying up of the sea, as prerequisite to covenant failure. These guarantees all served to give greater weight to the most important and only necessary feature of the covenant: the oath. An oath is a solemn act. An oath is more solemn when sworn before witnesses and deities, all the while invoking horrors

⁴⁹ Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:263-264.

⁵⁰ The token of the Noachic covenant was the rainbow in the clouds, a natural “reminder” to God (Gen 9:12-17). The token of the Abrahamic Covenant was male circumcision, physically emblematic of covenant participation (Gen 17:10-14). The token of the Mosaic Covenant was observance of the Sabbath, temporally emblematic of covenant fidelity (Exod 31:14-17).

⁵¹ In fact, because the token was symbolic or representative of the covenant as a whole, the token itself was sometimes termed a “covenant.” In these cases, the token should not be deemed a separate or distinct contract.

and/or absurdities to preclude and/or to follow the breaking of the oath.

Covenant complements, as part of a covenant ratification ceremony, were ancillary to covenant enactment. Sacrifices, libations, and ablutions seem particularly to concern covenant *fitness*: they effected the participants' purity and integrity as they swore the oath and entered covenant relationship. Physical acts and verbal guarantees seem particularly to concern covenant *fidelity*: they effected the participants' sincerity and veracity in conjunction with the oath and covenant enactment. Meals and tokens seem particularly to concern covenant *futurity*: they effected the participants' perpetuation and recollection of oath-taking and covenant relationship. Any number of covenant complements might be attached ceremonially to covenant ratification. None of them, however, accomplished covenant ratification. Covenant ratification was effected by means and by virtue of the oath.

Summary: The ANE

Because of both temporal and cultural distantiation from the ANE world, a complete understanding of ANE covenant forms and conventions is lacking. No holistic consensus of opinion exists on every detail of ANE covenant studies. Nevertheless, extant documents and records provide a basic understanding of the nature and function of ANE covenants, and that information must be engaged in the study and evaluation of the biblical record, particularly with regard to the biblical covenants. Most important is recognition of the legal nature both of ANE and of biblical covenants. To dismiss or to overlook the legalities of these forms, for whatever reason, is to skew a proper understanding and interpretation of their content, implementation, perpetuation, and accomplishment.

An Overview and Analysis of Apocalyptic Views Relating to the Year 2012 as the End of the World

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INTRODUCTION TO THE 2012 PHENOMENA¹

The influence and imagery of apocalypticism (the social identification and expression of apocalyptic eschatology) continue to play a major historical, political, social, and religious role in the American culture, crossing ideological boundaries. From the very beginning of the discovery of the Americas to the current day, apocalyptic tones run throughout our nation's history. By the late 1500s Puritan scholars began positing and debating a kind of Jewish Restorationism based upon a common historicist understanding of the book of Revelation.² Early

¹ This article was originally presented as a Faculty Forum paper at Baptist Bible Seminary, Clarks Summit, PA, in March 2010. Each year the BBS faculty presents papers addressing various topics for faculty and student interaction.

² The historicist interpretative framework simply understands the entire book of Revelation as a symbolic presentation of the entire church history and posits that events described in Revelation are currently taking place throughout history. This is counter to the popular current preterist view/contemporary-historical view that asserts Revelation primarily describes first-century experience with no (or little) prophetic future significance today. The Futurist framework (advocated here in this paper) asserts that while Revelation 1-3 describe historical events, chapters 4-22 describe future, progressive prophetic events yet to occur, and that this prophetic section was designed to help the historical churches described in Revelation 2-3.

American Colonial support for this restorationism crossed both religious and political boundaries, and it was most likely this Jewish restorationism (and certainly the broader historicism interpretative framework of Revelation) that led to the imbedded apocalypticism within our own national identity.³ Demy writes:

Influential colonial ministers such as John Cotton, John Davenport, and Increase Mather shared a deep belief in restoration. Statements regarding Israel's biblical history also were readily applied to contemporary concerns. This transference of and identification with Israel's history created an enduring belief in the uniqueness of the American experience and a foundation for future Zionist endeavors. After the American Revolution, theological belief in Jewish restoration was joined with emerging political perspectives. This created a belief in the newly independent American nation that a similar political future awaited Jews in the not distant future.⁴

Warren correctly observes, however, that more recent forms of apocalypticism are not unique to Christianity and can be found in both non-Christian and even anti-Christian worldviews. Thus Warren correctly writes that while

fundamentalist Christianity receives the most media attention as a group engaged with apocalypticism, apocalyptic currents run through much of contemporary discourse . . . across the political spectrum. Marxism and feminism have also been critiqued as

³ For an outstanding discussion of these issues see Tim Demy, "Marching to Zion: Social and Political Foundations of Nineteenth-Century Christian Zionism," <<http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Demy-MarchingtoZionSocial.pdf>> (accessed 5 February 2010).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

apocalyptic, and much of environmentalist discourse at least engages in end-of-the-world-ism.⁵

Warren's thesis demonstrates that many ideological groups acknowledge that major changes in the course of our present world must occur, and these groups attempt to form their own apocalypticism in promoting their ideological views. These varied forms of apocalypticism necessitate that Christians evaluate "end-of-the-world-isms" carefully prior to identifying or promoting a popular apocalyptic view.

In recent years the number 2012 has drawn considerable attention by New Age thinkers, historians, a few Mayan cultural anthropologists, scientific doom-sayers, and some (though very few) Christians who posit that December 2012 marks the end of the world as it is currently known. This ending of the world is portrayed either through cataclysmic destruction or more often a kind of corporate spiritual enlightenment. This spiritual enlightenment is described as a major inner human transformation resulting in a renewed human spirit-consciousness. This renewed spiritual enlightenment is alleged as having the potential to create a new spiritual paradigm—a kind of corporate joined consciousness that results in a greater spiritual awareness and spiritual activism.⁶

The cataclysmic notion of apocalyptic destruction was further popularized through the science fiction film *2012* directed by Roland Emmerich and released by Columbia Pictures in 2009. The film portrays cataclysmic events in which solar flare causes the earth's core to heat and eventually creates earthquakes and all types of geophysical catastrophes. The film portrays a family meeting a conspiracy theorist-type person who believes the ancient Maya people predicted the ending of

⁵ Beckett Warren, "Dawn of A New Apocalypse: Engagements within the Apocalyptic Imagination in 2012 and Primitive Discourse" (master's thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2008), 13.

⁶ Sri Ram Kaa and Kira Raa, *2012 Awakening: Choosing Spiritual Enlightenment over Armageddon* (Berkeley, CA: Ulysses P, 2008). This book is just one of many popular presentations.

the world in the year 2012. This theorist claims he has information, including maps about a secret government-controlled ark project that could carry 400,000 people to safety. The film concludes with worldwide flooding and major continental displacements, though a remnant does survive. Both the movie and the many, many thousands of papers and websites are exploring the year 2012 as the end of the world.

The one unifying element of these 2012 predictions entails the ancient Mayan calendar. The *Maya people* is a collective term to designate a large group of Native Americans living in present-day Southern Mexico, Honduras, and Guatemala who share some degree of common cultural and traditional views. In the movie and current popular 2012 books, the Maya (or Maye) refers to an ancient Mesoamerican civilization responsible for developing (or using) a pre-Columbian written language, art, and incredible mathematical and astronomical dating systems. According to the purported ancient Mayan Long Count calendar, a cycle of more than 5000 years will come to fruition, thus ending this current thirteenth cycle (referred to as baktuns) in 2012.

In conjunction with the end of the Long Count, some enthusiasts and pop-astronomers suggest that a unique astronomical alignment will occur in 2012 during a winter solstice when the sun appears at its lowest point in the horizon. During this purported alignment the sun will line up with the center of the Milky Way galaxy which supposedly occurs only every 25,800 years. This so-called alignment will then allegedly create a pole shift (or wobble affect) leading to magnetic disturbances, massive volcanoes, geomagnetic reversals, massive shifts in the earth's mantle resulting in earthquakes and planetary catastrophe⁷ or resulting in a renewed spiritual enlightenment.

⁷ "Next Apocalypse? Mayan Year 2012 Stirs Doomsayers" <<http://www.penn.museum/news-and-announcements/670-penn-museums-year-2012-prediction.html>> (accessed 19 February 2010). This website contains valuable information to discount the 2012 phenomena. Also see recent CBS news accounts at <<http://www>.

New Age enthusiasts are the most adamant in promoting 2012 as the terminal date of the world as it is currently known, though not all agree on the nature of that ending. Perhaps the most well-known advocate is Jose Arguelles, an American-Mexican spiritual teacher. Arguelles was a promoter and organizer for the harmonic Convergence that occurred in August of 1987. In his book, *The Mayan Factor: Path Beyond Technology*, he argues a major shift in human enlightenment will fully occur in 2012. Arguelles further argues he receives messages from the ancient Mayans through channeling with ancient Mayan spirits. Through this channeling he asserts that the ancient Maya people actually predicted this major 2012 event.

Arguelles, like many New Age advocates, believes that 2012 will not end in cataclysmic destruction but rather in a kind of rebirth and mass inner transformation of humanity. Arguelles is

cbsnews.com/stories/2009/10/10/ap/latinamerica/main5376454.shtml?tag=contentMain;contentBody (accessed 17 February 2010).

This entire description sounds remarkably similar to the *Jupiter Effect* proposed in 1974 by Gribbin and Plagemann. They predicted major earthquakes during 1982 due to a very unusual alignment of nine planets in line with the sun and specifically cited the Los Angeles region of the San Andreas Fault system as a major area of concern. Accordingly, these unique alignments would then create solar and gravitational forces. Their views were critiqued with disapproval by Donald B. DeYoung. DeYoung summarizes this so-called Jupiter effect theory in four statements: "1. The planets will be lined up on the same side of the sun during 1982. Since they orbit the sun at various distance and speeds, this event is very unusual. 2. Each of the planets exerts a gravitational tidal pull on the sun. When aligned, their combined force will substantially affect the sun. 3. The sun will respond with increased surface activity in the form of sunspots and eruptions. This also implies an increase in ejected solar wind particles (charged particles such as electrons and ions) throughout the solar system. Those impinging on the earth will cause large-scale movement of air masses. 4. The resulting atmospheric disturbance will alter the earth's rotation rate. Variations in the earth's spin will trigger regions of geologic instability, causing widespread earthquakes" (See Donald B. DeYoung, "Defects in Jupiter Effect" <<http://www.icr.org/article/154/>> [accessed 17 February 2010]).

repeatedly cited as a leader and promoter of this 2012 initiative. As an example, Stanislav who critiques the 2012 movement with approval writes, “Jose Arguelles’ book *The Mayan Factor* . . . brought to the attention of lay audiences the ancient prophecy concerning the end of the Maya Long Count Calendar, which started on August 11, 3114 BC, and will end on December 21, 2012 AD; this date has become the focus of many articles, books, and conferences and of a forthcoming movie entitled 2012.”⁸

In agreement with Arguelles, Grof states that instead of cataclysmic destruction, this 2012 date may refer to

the end of the world as we have known it: a world dominated by unbridled violence and insatiable greed, egotistic hierarchy of values, corrupted institutions and corporations, and irreconcilable conflicts between organized religions. Instead of predicting a physical destruction of the material world, the Mayan prophecy might refer to death and rebirth and a mass inner transformation of humanity.⁹

Grof further argues that the ancient Maya people developed “technologies of the sacred” and they could create a state of consciousness in which they could “obtain profound revelations concerning the master blueprint of the universe designed by cosmic intelligence . . .”¹⁰ Grof argues the Mayas obtained these revelations by creating a holotropic state by which they could “transcend narrow linear time and make it possible to see events in the universe on a cosmic astronomical scale.”¹¹ Popular Mayan enthusiast John Major Jenkins believes the

⁸ Stanislav Grof, “2012 and Human Destiny: End of the World or Consciousness Revolution” (paper presented at the 2012 Now Conference, Fort Collins, CO, 29 May 2009), 1, <<http://www.stanislavgrof.com/articles.htm>> (accessed 5 February 2010).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

Mayan ruins actually suggest that the ancient Maya people were aware and predicted this galactic alignment and anticipated a type of human transformation. In the introduction to his book *Maya Cosmogenesis 2012* he argues:

But why, I asked myself, did this 13-baktun Great Cycle of the Long Count calendar end in A.D. 2012? Why not A.D. 1712, or A.D. 2650? What determined the placement of the 13-baktun Great Cycle in real time? I noticed that the 2012 end-date occurs precisely on the December solstice One thing was certain: The Maya believed the world will "end" in A.D. 2012. But what does this mean? The end-times doctrine can be interpreted in two ways: metaphorically and literally. My metaphorical interpretation is that the Maya believed that around the year we call 2012, a large chapter in human history will be coming to an end. All the values and assumptions of the previous World Age will expire, and a new phase of human growth will commence. Ultimately, I believe the Maya understood this to be a natural process, in which new life follows a death. We all experience this cycle of death and rebirth in our own lives: our most difficult experiences of suffering and loss are ultimately our best teachers. Imagine this principle taking effect on the level of the entire human race.¹²

Grof, who fully agrees with this metaphorical view of human enlightenment, suggests that the literal view of cataclysmic destruction is similar to the way that fundamentalist Christians have misinterpreted the end times. He avers:

With a few exceptions, the Mayan prophecy about the end of the cosmic cycle, the Fifth World, has been interpreted in terms of actual physical destruction of humanity and of the material world, in a way similar to the interpretation (or better misinterpretation) of the term apocalypse by Christian fundamentalists, particularly the millions of American Christians who believe that at the time of this global destruction they will experience "rapture" and be united with Jesus. People who see it this way are not aware of the

¹² John Major Jenkins, "Introduction To *Maya Cosmogenesis 2012*," <<http://alignment2012.com/mc-intro.html>> (accessed 17 February 2010).

fact that the original and literal meaning of the term apocalypse (Greek Ἀποκάλυψις *Apokálypsis*) is not destruction but "lifting of the veil" or "revelation." It referred to the disclosure of some secrets hidden from the majority of humanity to certain privileged persons. The source of the misinterpretation of this word is probably the phrase "*apokálypsis eschaton*" which literally means "revelation at the end of the æon, or age."¹³

Interestingly Grof and other 2012 enthusiasts create a syncretistic mosaic of many mythologies and cosmologies to reinforce their conclusions. They proffer popular New Age forms of mysticism that asserts all myths originate not in one's mind but rather in the collective unconscious humanity. Consequently these 2012 enthusiasts will appeal to any religious text even if it has a remote similarity to their own views. In this manner they view all mythologies as both timeless and ordering principles of the universe.

A biblical critique of this movement is both simple and complex. Difficulty arises in that the 2012 phenomena is not monolithic nor is it easy to validate sources used by promoters or detractors. The critique strategy in this article entails first differentiating between *what the ancient Maya people actually believed* about their Long Count Calendar System and their ancient views regarding the end of the world as compared to *what New Age enthusiast say the Maya people believed*. A second-level evaluation is to briefly evaluate the impact the 2012 phenomena is having on society, including Christian groups. The third and most important element entails overview analyses of the current popular 2012 views through a biblical/theological lens.

THE MAYA PEOPLE AND LONG COUNT SYSTEM CRITIQUE

The Maya used at least two calendar systems. The first system was cyclical in nature and similar to our cyclical

¹³ Grof, "2012 and Human Destiny," 1.

calendar. They also used a non-cyclical system referred to as the Long Count. The Mayan Long Count is a calendar system used by the Mayans in the classical period of their culture (approximately AD 250-900). The last day of its current cycle is allegedly December 21, 2012. Thus December 21 (or 23) is purported to be the ending of this 5125 year-long cycle. The Long Count calendar identifies a date by counting the number of days from a specific starting date which is generally accepted as August 11, 3114 BC, in the Gregorian calendar. Importantly, the Maya did not develop this Long Count Calendar. Most scholars believe the Maya people coalesced from small groups of people in Mesoamerica, and they inherited the Long Count calendar from the Olmecs. There is no consensus on how the Olmecs developed or obtained this Long Count Calendar system.

Webster writes that the Maya used this Long Count calendar system

to track time in an essentially linear fashion, so that each day (as in our calendar) has a unique date. All these calendars used a system of vigesimal (i.e., 20-based) arithmetical notation that included the sophisticated concepts of “zero” or “place”. Their calendars and mathematical expertise allowed the Maya to track long astronomical cycles, most notably those of the sun and the planet Venus. Scholars understood these calendrical achievements by the beginning of the 20th century, so they contributed greatly to the reputation of the Classic Maya as innovators and intellectuals. What the Maya typically recorded using these calendars, we now know, was the passage of ideologically significant intervals of time that were commemorated by monument dedication, which was in turn linked, almost always retrospectively, to “historical” events in the lives of important people or kingdoms.¹⁴

¹⁴ David Webster, “The Uses and Abuses of the Ancient Maya” presented at the Emergence of the Modern World Conference, (paper Otzenhausen, Germany: Penn State University, September 25, 2007), 17, <http://www.anthro.psu.edu/fac-ulty_staff/docs/Webster_GermanyMaya.pdf> (accessed 5 February 2010).

The starting date of August 11, 3114 BC, was most likely based on a mythological understanding of when the gods recreated this current world or some other unknown though significant event. Mayan scholars are unsure if the Maya inherited the precise date of this 5125 year-long cycle or if the Mayans worked back from an event (such as coronation of a leader) to obtain the ancient date. The Maya, similar to the Aztecs, believed in multiple creations, destructions and recreations of the world. Mark Van Stone, a well-known scholar and contributor to the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, writes:

The Maya and Aztec myths of Creation both describe several iterations of this world. We are in the fourth Creation, according to the Maya *Popol Vuh* (the most complete surviving Maya Creation mythology). But we are in the *fifth* Creation, according to the Aztec *Leyenda de los Soles* ("Legend of the Suns": the Aztecs called each Creation a "sun"). Each of the previous Creations ended with annihilation of the population, of the sun and moon, perhaps of Time itself. This implies that they believed this World, too, —our world— was destined to end sometime.¹⁵

Sitler further argues that the alleged December 21, 2012, date of destruction or transformation

simply marks the last day of the current *b'ak'tun* cycle, a period of 144,000 days roughly equivalent to 394 years. More significantly, it marks the end of the thirteenth *b'ak'tun*, the culminating period of a far larger calendar cycle that began on August 11, 3114 B.C.E., and that will come to fruition 1,872,000 days later on the 2012 winter solstice. It is important to point out that this so-called Great Cycle was only a minor component in far larger chronological

¹⁵ <<http://2012science.wordpress.com/2009/11/02/why-2012->> (accessed 19 February 2010). Much of the information from this popular blog is derived from the home page <<http://www.famsi.org/research/vanstone/2012/index.html>> which contains outstanding information and assessment of the 2012 phenomena. Another very helpful web site is <<http://www.2012hoax.org/links#toc14>>.

periods that theoretically extend infinitely backwards and forward in time within a system of exponentially increasing temporal cycles that have no final beginning or ending points.¹⁶

The Maya Calendar was not simply used to record events and track time as in our culture. Rather, the calendar was used to personify deities, past events, and relationships between those events, deities, and astronomical occurrences. The Maya did not view time and historical events in the Western sense. Rather, they viewed time and historical events “for the purposes of divination and often to establish the legitimacy of the lineage of the local ruler.”¹⁷ The basic unit for day in Maya was the *kin*, beginning at sunset and concluding at sunset of the next day. Note the following chart:

1 kin = 1 day
 20 kins = 1 unial
 18 unials = 1 tun (approx 1 year)
 20 tuns = 1 katun (approx. 19.7 years)
 20 katuns = 1 baktun (approx. 394 years)¹⁸

Notably, Mark Van Stone and other experts quickly and correctly emphasize that the end of this fifth cycle in the Aztec system (or fourth cycle in the Mayan system) does not suggest destruction. The end of the cycle simply indicates the cycle would end—nothing is said about the nature of this ending. Further, much less is known about the Maya myths of creation and recreation than those of the later Aztecs. Most importantly both the Aztecs and Maya did not view their gods and goddesses nor their prophecies as infallible and absolute. The ancient

¹⁶ Robert K. Sitler, “The 2012 Phenomenon: New Age Appropriation of an Ancient Mayan Calendar,” *Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 9, no. 3 (2006):25.

¹⁷ Ronald Bonewitz, *Maya Prophecy: Discover What 2012 Holds for You* (London: Piatkus, 2008), 114.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

Mayas were both polytheistic and animistic in worshipping over 600 gods and goddesses, though little is known regarding their views of the end-time cosmology. Thus any prophecy or prediction of destructions might well be averted through various ceremonies. Neither the ancient Aztecs nor Maya would ever have predicted an absolute terminal destruction of the world. The calendar itself was designed around religious activities so the people could worship and propitiate their gods. Maud Makemson, in her paper entitled "The Maya Calendar," provided by the NASA Astrophysics Society, writes:

The Maya calendar was of a religious origin. Its purpose was to declare to the people of Honduras, Guatemala, and Yucatan the days of the various seasonal festivals for propitiating the gods of rain, hunting, fishing, corn growing¹⁹

Simon Martin, a specialist in Maya writing from the Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, further argues:

The 5,200-year cycle that ends in 2012 is a rather short one. The date itself is mentioned only once in all the many thousands of Maya inscriptions, where it is used as an arbitrary anchor date for the matters under discussion and not associated with any particular prophesy. We know that the Maya believed in a world after 2012 since they mention events set well beyond this, with an inscription at Palenque, Mexico, describing one in the year 4772.²⁰

David Webster, a renowned professor at Penn State University of Archaeology and Anthropology and expert in the Maya ancient culture, further emphasizes the indecisive nature

¹⁹ Maud W. Makemson, "The Maya Calendar," *Publications of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific*, 59, no. 346 (1947): 17, <<http://adsabs.harvard.edu/full/1947PASP>> (accessed 5 February 2010). . . .59...17M;

²⁰ <<http://www.penn.museum/news-and-announcements/670-penn-museums-year-2012-prediction.html>>.

of Maya predictions. Through personal email correspondence with me, he emphasizes that much like the Aztecs, the Maya believed in multiple creations and re-creations of the world. Webster emphasizes that the Aztecs were very explicit on the lengths of time that the first four worlds endured, and they imagined that the one they lived in was the fifth world and beyond.²¹

Robert Sitler, in his article “The 2012 Phenomenon,” provides interaction with the ancient Mayan culture and contemporary Maya people and concludes that neither the ancient culture nor contemporary Maya culture has similarities to the current 2012 phenomenon.²² Sitler correctly argues that the “Long Count calendar fell into disuse well before the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors and knowledge of its rediscovery by Western academics has reached few of today's Maya apart from the most educated.”²³ Further, very few contemporary Maya people are promoting the 2012 phenomenon.

This brief overview indicates that popular portrayal of the Maya Long Count Calendar and the ancient Maya predictions is essentially different and in some cases antithetical to what the ancient Maya people actually believed.

CHRISTIAN CRITIQUE AND OBSERVATIONS

As I begin a brief Christian critique of the 2012 movement, I want to make one simple personal observation. I have personally felt the pain that the Maya anthropologist and experts feel (and have communicated to me) over this 2012 phenomena. There is simply no basis for the popular 2012 movement which has so distorted the ancient Maya people and their own beliefs. Vincent H. Malmström, an esteemed a

²¹ David Webster, professor of Archaeology and Anthropology, Penn State University; email message to author, 18 February 2010.

²² Sitler, “2012 Phenomenon” 24-38.

²³ Ibid., 25.

professor at Dartmouth College, in his paper entitled “The Astronomical Insignificance of Maya Date 13.0.0.0,” writes:

It is never a particularly pleasant exercise to point out the fallacy of other people’s thinking, but whenever such arguments are presented in the name of “science” they must be held up to careful scrutiny and evaluation. While I cannot spare the conclusions of such shoddy “research” my professional condemnation, I have purposely chosen not to identify the titles of Jenkins’ offending publications, lest the resultant publicity contribute to his increased commercial gain – realizing, of course, that he is neither the first nor the last who has sought to profit from “science fiction.” However, what I find just as reprehensible, if not more so, is that an organization such as the Institute of Maya Studies in Miami has been so “subverted” by his foolishness that it has permitted him to publish rather extensively in their monthly newsletter in order to promote his books. While it is not a professional organization to be sure, it is certainly not doing the cause of archaeology, anthropology, or astronomy any favors by disseminating such “misinformation.”²⁴

David Webster further adds:

I happen to study an ancient people – the Classic Maya (AD 250-900) . . . who are both immensely popular and widely misunderstood by the public. Popularity guarantees perennial interest in archaeological research (and generous funding), but also means that people invest the Maya with their own hopes, fears, and prejudices. Archaeologists are a bit two-faced about all this. They strive to preserve the aura of mystery and romance that surrounds these ancient people, and at the same time to understand them better and to correct widespread misconceptions about them. One might fairly say that both the public and professional archaeologists have appropriated the Classic Maya for their own purposes. In this paper I hope to provide some insights about how we have used and abused the

²⁴ Vincent H. Malmström, “The Astronomical Insignificance of Maya Date 13.0.0.0,” 6, <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/18959165/The-Astronomical-Insignificance-of-Maya-Date-13000-by-Vincent-H-Malmstrom>> (accessed 5 February 2010).

Maya, along with a frank discussion of what we know and don't know about them.²⁵

This type of sensational distortion and misrepresentation also occurs at times by popular Christian prophetic enthusiasts, yet I am personally pleased that comparatively few Christian groups have become enamored with this 2012 phenomena.

Apart from very few Christian prophetic enthusiasts, the 2012 phenomena appear to be making little impact in the Christian community that adheres to futurism in prophecy. The two connecting points of interest for a few prophetic enthusiasts entail Matthew 24:37 where Jesus speaks of the end of the world (*aion*). Since Jesus used the term *aion*, Horn incorrectly suggests, "*Aion* is the word Greeks used to designate the Milky Way alignments or the span of the age."²⁶ Horn then incorrectly concludes that the alleged alignment of the sun with the center of the Milky Way galaxy is indeed the *Aion* that Jesus referred to; thus Horn links Jesus' apocalyptic warning in Matthew 24:37 to the 2012 phenomena.

Jack Van Impe has also cited the year 2012 as being ominous. He links 2012 to the Mayan prophecy, current news headlines, and a wealth of other connecting Scriptures in support of his views. In many respects Jack Van Impe's comments are similar to his view that Y2K was also a critical and important development for biblical prophecy. The promoters of Van Impe's new DVD entitled *December 21st 2012: History's Final Day?* write, "Could various cultural and secular sources be right about earth's final day?"²⁷ The subtitle with this advertisement continues:

²⁵ David Webster, "Uses and Abuses of the Ancient Maya," 1.

²⁶ Thomas Horn, *Apollyon Rising 2012: The Lost Symbol Found and the Final Mystery of the Great Seal Revealed* (Crane, MO: Defender, 2009), 314.

²⁷ <<https://ww2.micahtek.com/nexolive/nShopping.cfm?zITEM=DFDV&sVar=N&&VISIBLE=false&CFID=23652516&CFTOKEN=15737198>> (accessed 3 February 2010).

Ancient Romans believed 2012 would be an historic year. . . . Ancient Mayan prophecy of the world's end revolved around 2012 The Ancient Chinese *I Ching* predicted doomsday in 2012. . . . In the 16th Century, English prophetess Mother Shipton said history would end in 2012!²⁸

Their closing promotional comment regarding their view says:

Do these prophecies from all over the world correspond with the truth of God's Word? In their exciting video teaching, Drs. Jack and Rexella Van Impe demonstrate the very real possibility that 2012 could be a year of culmination—could December 21st 2012 be history's final day?²⁹

THEOLOGICAL/BIBLICAL CRITIQUE

Evangelicals generally agree on the following eschatological truths, and it is noteworthy that each truth in some way contradicts the 2012 phenomena:

1. There will be a personal, visible, bodily, and sudden return of Jesus Christ (Matt 24:44; John 14:3; Acts 1:9, 11; 1 Thess 4:16; Rev 19:11-16).
2. Believers should long for the second coming of Christ (Phil 3:20; 1 Cor 16:22).
3. We do not know when Christ will return (Matt 24:44; 25:13; Mark 13:32-33; Luke 12:40).
4. Christ will personally judge unbelievers and reward believers upon his return.
5. Evangelical believers disagree on specific details of future events surrounding the coming of Christ.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

The 2012 Phenomena Denies Clear Biblical Teaching about Date-Setting

A brief biblical overview clearly indicates that the 2012 phenomenon is in fundamental error regarding date-setting. The Scripture authors were emphatic that Jesus would physically return to this earth, and they were equally emphatic that no one knew the date of his return; thus any form of date-setting must be avoided. The biblical authors directed believers to focus on *what was revealed* and to avoid speculation and divination to acquire *what was not revealed*.

Deuteronomy 29:29 says, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but *the things revealed belong to us* and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the *words of this law*.” Furthermore this law of Deuteronomy itself contains provision in Deuteronomy 13:1-5 and Deuteronomy 18:15-22 to test anyone who would assert a different truth claim; the law was sufficiently clear to serve as validating criteria for other truth assertions even if these other truth assertions were accompanied by supernatural manifestations. The verbal-cognitive law possessed the authority and clarity to even preside over actual experiences of supernaturalism.³⁰

Similarly in the Great Commission, Jesus commanded, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20). All that Jesus commanded entails both what Jesus himself taught as well as what Jesus continued to teach (through the Spirit) through his apostles since the apostles were agents of

³⁰ For more extensive discussion on these matters of the authority and clarity of the biblical text see this author’s following recent articles: David A. Mappes, “A New Kind of Christian: A Review” *BSac* 161 (July-September 2004): 289-303; “The Nobility and Knowability of Truth: Part 1,” *JMAT* 12 (Spring 2009): 64-105; “The Nobility and Knowability of Scripture: Part 2” *JMAT* 13 (Fall 2009): 96-117; and “What is Faith in Luke 18:1-8?” *BSac* 167 (July-September 2010): 292-306.

the Scripture (1 Cor 14:37; 1 Thess 4:15; 2 Pet 3:2; Rev 1-3). The task, then, of the Great Commission actually necessitates a practice of collecting, summarizing, and teaching all that the Scripture says about various issues.³¹ Hence *theology must focus on what God has revealed and not on what he has not revealed*. Many times interpreters ask the wrong question or the right question in the wrong way about a particular subject matter or text which creates difficult interpretive issues. However, in the case of date-setting, the Scripture authors are explicit about not knowing the date of Christ's return.

The following passages clearly prohibit date-setting regarding the return of Christ:

Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down." As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matt 24:1-3)

But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women *will be* grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will

³¹ This section is partially adapted from Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 21-38.

be left. Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. (Matt 24:36-42)

“Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.” (Matt 25:13)

So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority.” (Acts 1:6-7)

The 2012 Phenomena Promotes an Anti-Theocentric View of God and Judgment

Both the ontological and economic purpose of the triune God is to glorify himself as he works his plans (Isa 43:7; 1 Cor 6:20; 8:6). His plan ultimately is to effect his glory as he extends the sphere of his sovereignty over all intelligences throughout the universe (Eph 1:11). The scripture authors were very much aware of pagan cosmologies, and in their prophetic warnings they many times provided a counter-view to their more dominate surrounding neighboring peoples. The biblical authors did not incorporate the cosmology of their neighbors but rather countered them. One central feature of the prophets' message reveals that the one, true creator God would intervene and act to judge humankind and preserve his people. Biblical authors did not present judgment as a casual result of nature nor simple coincidence. As an example, the judgments of the Edenic curse, the flood curse, Sodom and Gomorrah, the Exodus, the blessings, and curse narratives along with all the prophetic announcements articulate the hand of God was at work in accomplishing his plan.³²

³² See Charles A. Clough, “Interpreting Texts on End Time Geophysical Catastrophes,” 7 December 2009, <<http://www.pre-trib.org>> (accessed 5 February 2010).

Many times the prophets used the phrase “day of the Lord” to describe God as personally acting (or his future promise of acting) in human history. This phrase “day of the Lord” was used by the OT prophets and the NT authors to indicate a kind of time when God would directly and immediately intervene in the human affairs. At times the phrase is used to indicate an intervention that brings cataclysmic end to an age. The 2012 phenomena depersonalizes and disassociates God as intervening and acting in history. Stanislav Grof, as a 2012 enthusiast, illustrates the mythology of the 2012 movement when he avers:

The Mayan prophecy concerning the galactic alignment is not limited to astronomical observations and astrological predictions; it is intimately interconnected with mythology, with what C. G. Jung called the archetypal domain of the collective unconscious. For example, the Mayan seers referred to the December solstice sun as Cosmic father and to the Milky Way as Cosmic Mother. They envisioned the center of the galaxy, where modern astronomy places a giant black hole, as her creative and destructive womb. The time of the galactic alignment was thus the time of a cosmic hieros gamos, sacred marriage between the Feminine and the Masculine. In the year 2012, the sun will have traveled to the edge of a cosmic dust cloud known as the Great Dark Rift that lies along the Milky Way and seems to divide its light into two paths. The Mayans called this dark rift Xibalba Be {Road to the Underworld} and saw it as a place of birth and death and of death/rebirth. It was for them the birth canal of the Cosmic Mother Creatrix, where the December solstice sun gets reborn in 2012. It was also a death place, because it is the doorway into the underworld, the land of the dead and the unborn. These associations clearly were not products of everyday fantasy and imagination of the Mayans projected on the night sky, but results of profound direct apprehensions of the connection between the archetypal world and the celestial bodies and processes.³³

³³ Stanislav Grof, “End of the World or Consciousness Revolution?”

Notably Grof's very presentation of cosmology is exactly what the OT and NT authors denounced. This type of cosmic humanism and mysticism that emphasizes human potential and enlightenment is fundamentally opposed to biblical Christianity. Thus the 2012 phenomena opposed contradicts any canonical sense of prophetic judgment.

The 2012 Date-Setting Denies Imminency of the Lord's Return and the Pretribulational Rapture of the Church

The pretribulation rapture is a view that maintains Christ will appear in the clouds to instantly catch (take away) the church before the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy begins. It is the *instantaneous gathering up of the whole church by resurrection and direct translation (of those alive) from the earth and transformation into new spiritual bodies to meet Christ in the air and be with him forever* (1 Thess. 4:13-18). Other things may happen before Christ's coming, but nothing else *must* take place before the rapture of the church; thus the rapture is imminent. This concept of imminence means that that Christ could return at *any* time for his church. Jesus' return is not contingent upon any event and thus is always at hand. As soon as the rapture or his return is dated or predicted, then signs of fulfillment are required and the notion of imminence is lost. Shortly after this rapture, the Day of the Lord, which is the tribulation time period as described in the book of Revelation, begins. After the tribulation period the Lord will return with his church and establish his earthly millennial reign according to OT promises and description in Revelation 20.

While on earth Jesus described his return in two different ways. In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus elaborated on the future seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy when he spoke of the abomination of desolation with impending destruction, judgment, and signs of warning. In this discourse Jesus answered the disciples' questions expressed in Matthew 24:3 regarding when he would return to "judge this generation" (Matt 23:36) and bless Israel (Matt 23:37-39).

During the Upper Room Discourse Jesus had provided a very different description of his return. Rather than portraying intense tribulation and the Day of the Lord, he announces that he would be preparing a place for them and that he would return to take them to the Father's house (John 14:13). Regarding Jesus' different description in John 14, Ellison writes,

Whereas the Olivet Discourse described His final coming to Israel to prepare the remnant for the Messianic kingdom, the Upper Room Discourse announced His coming to receive them to the Father's house. Two different groups are addressed, though He spoke to the same disciples. They first represented the faithful of Israel, a remnant of which would be on earth when He returned to set up His kingdom. But they also represented the new body of the Church who would be taught and empowered by the Holy Spirit till He comes to take them to the Father's house.³⁴

Robert Cook,³⁵ along with many other premillennial theologians, posits the similarities between John 14:1-3 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 as indicating Jesus may have been alluding to the rapture.

John 14:1-3		1 Thess 4:13-17	
Trouble	1	Grief	13
Believe	1	Believe	14
God	1	Jesus, God	14
Told you	2	Say to you	15
Come again	3	Coming of the Lord	15
Receive you	3	Caught up	17
To myself	3	To meet the Lord	17
Be where I am	3	Ever be with the Lord	17

³⁴ Stanley A. Ellisen, "The Apostasy as It Relates to the Lord's Return," 2, <<http://www.pre-trib.org>> (accessed 5 February 2010).

³⁵ W. Robert Cook, "Eschatology: Chapter 52, Transition to the Age to Come," <http://www.ancientlight.org/Theology/Cook/cook_th_052W.htm Internet> (accessed 5 February 2010).

Certain signs and events necessarily precede the second personal, visible return of Christ to this earth in establishment of his earthly kingdom (Matt 24; 1 Thess 5; 2 Thess 2). Conversely the rapture is associated with imminency (1 Cor 15:51-52; 1 Thess 4:13-18) which requires no sign or event to occur. Therefore the rapture must occur before events or signs which are necessarily associated as occurring with the personal, visible return and earthly reign of Christ. This notion of imminency then strongly supports the pretribulation position.

Thus the pretribulation rapture is a signless and imminent event involving neither prediction nor fulfillment of prophecy. This attitude and ethos of imminence that the church expected Jesus to return at any time occurs throughout the NT (John 14:2-3; 1 Cor 1:7; Phil 3:20-21; 1 Thess 1:9-10; 4:16-17; 5:5-9; Titus 2:13; James 5:8-9). Moreover, many of the early church fathers held to both the imminent return of Christ as well as signs to depict his coming. Further, the early church fathers did not look back at AD 70 as final fulfillment of the Olivet Discourse.³⁶ Perhaps the strongest exegetical basis for the pretribulation rapture is the fact that the church is not destined for the wrath of God and that the wrath of God occurs throughout the entire Tribulation time period. The 2012 phenomena deny all these basic dimensions of prophecy.

The 2012 Phenomena Denies any Sense of Prophetic Realism

The notion of futurism in prophecy is predicated upon the idea of promise. A promise is a declaration or assurance made to another person stating what one will or will not do with respect to the future. Many times in Scripture a third-party witness is involved in words of promise, and at times in Scripture a promise is later redressed in actual covenant terminology. In

³⁶ For an outstanding discussion of these matters see H. Wayne House, "The Understanding of the Church Fathers regarding the Olivet Discourse and the Fall of Jerusalem," 2009, <<http://www.pre-trib.org>> (accessed 5 February 2010).

scripture the heart (thus character) of a promiser is critical. The Scripture portrays an undeniable cohesion between words and intent of the prophet/apostle and God himself. Thus God is the promiser. Prophecy was not given simply to promote spiritual mysticism or to stir the imagination for the curious. Prophecy reveals what is otherwise unknowable about God's redemptive plan and his very character. Prophecy was given to "impress us with the reality of a world that is about to break in on us . . . [and] calls us to reflect on God's coming into history. . . ."³⁷

Prophecy is generally a very specific type of predicative promise that entails either/or a *fore-telling* of events (futurism) or a *forth-telling* of previous promises (application of previous promise in Scripture). Importantly neither this fore-telling nor forth-telling differs in authority. These events are fore-told or forth-told in rich imagery. This rich imagery creates a type of prophetic literature that has some distinguishing characteristics. Thus as a type of literature, prophecy with its rich imagery is designed to *shock* and *convince* the reader/hearer that the status quo will not continue because the meaning being fore-told or forth-told *is true* even if the event has not transpired. Importantly, the shocking affect is rooted in the historical trustworthiness of the prophecy itself and not simply upon its intended rhetorical *effect* on the hearer. The biblical authors understood their writings as authoritative and understandable to the extent these writings could adjudicate any other truth claim or experience which the reader/hearers encountered. While prophetic realism is illustrated throughout the OT and NT, the following two examples are indeed noteworthy:

The first example occurs in Luke 16:19-31, which describes either the parable or story of the Rich Man and Lazarus. When the rich man requested that the father Abraham send someone to his relatives to warn them about the very real, actual impending judgment and doom which occurs after death (which the rich man was experiencing), the Father replied, "they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them . . . and if they do

³⁷ Stanley A. Ellisen, *Biography of A Great Planet* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1975), 166.

not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.” Jesus uses this parable or story to indicate that the writings of Moses and the prophets possess the clarity, authority, authorial intentionality, and truthfulness regarding eschatological judgment. The actual extent of this clarity, authority, authorial intentionality, and truthfulness of this Scripture warning is sufficiently equal to Jesus’ hearers actually seeing and experiencing a warning from someone who was raised from the dead. Hence the notion of realism permeates this parable or story.

The second example occurs in 2 Peter. The Christian community that Peter addresses entailed false teachers (ch 2) who denied the second coming of Christ. Peter’s description in chapter 2 provides a historical overview of God’s past acts of judgment that transcends human ability to *access and validate* the truthfulness of these judgments apart from the OT text. Thus Peter refers to judgment and imprisonment of angels, preservation of Noah, judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, preservation of Lot, judgment of Balaam, etc. These past actions of God’s judgment then are the basis for the promise of future prophetic judgment at the return of Christ. *The reader could validate neither facts of the past nor the promise future judgment, though nonetheless the reader was (and is) to allow the verbal promises of God to interpret and adjudicate the false teachers as well as their own lives.* Further, it is noteworthy that in chapter 3, Peter asserts misunderstanding of Paul’s words regarding prophecy can lead to destruction.³⁸

This notion of prophetic realism teaches that God provides prophetic promise and insights, and those promises possess the clarity and truthfulness to take precedent over and adjudicate any competing truth-assertions. Hence Christians should not be embracing or promoting non-Christian views of cataclysmic end-time events even if those end-time events may serve their so-called purposes(s) of evangelism. The church should use the

³⁸ For further discussion on these matters of the authority and clarity of the biblical text see this author’s articles cited above in note 30.

2012 phenomena as societal connection to teach the message of the prophets and apostles and not acquiesce the Scripture to this or any other current movement.

The 2012 Phenomena Misrepresents Notions of Fulfillment in Prophecy

Scholars have presented a number of nuances regarding prophetic fulfillment, typology, and prophetic significance of pre-fulfilled events. Complete *prophetic fulfillment* occurs when all the commitments and provisions in a promise have been realized. Thus the original promise or prophecy should not be resignified nor simply reinterpreted apart from the intention of the initial author. At times a prophecy may have reference to more than one single future event; thus scholars speak of double fulfillment or progressive fulfillment. However this double fulfillment or progressive fulfillment does not refer to double meaning. Ultimately the original prophetic promise is the determiner of what governs its fulfillment. *Prophetic typology* occurs when “points of commonality between Old Testament events and symbols illustrate or foreshadow New Testament truths.”³⁹ Again the original meaning (or pattern of meaning) has control on what constitutes the anti-type. *Prophetic significance* refers to events occurring that appear to set the stage for actual prophetic fulfillment. Prophetic significance does not require fulfillment but simply preparation for prophetic fulfillment. Advocates of the 2012 phenomena violate all these prophetic nuances since they ignore the broader Biblical context. The 2012 initiative promotes a kind of technological superstitious supernaturalism that denies any sense of a Christian worldview.

³⁹ H. Wayne House, “Prophecy, Double Fulfillment of” in *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology: A Practical Guide to People, Viewpoints, and History of Prophetic Studies*, ed. Mal Crouch (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 315-6.

The 2012 Phenomena Misrepresents the Teaching of the Ancient Maya People

Christians should not misrepresent any people or cosmology even if a misrepresentation may serve their own ends. The current 2012 movement simply has no historical antecedent to the Maya culture or cosmology. To promote this 2012 phenomena is dishonest and will distort the Maya culture as well as lead to a lack of credible Christian witness.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATION

Believers in Jesus Christ should not promote this 2012 phenomena. We should seek to understand the movement and the accompanying deep thirst our world has for hope, security, and significance and then point them to our Lord Jesus. Believers should use this 2012 movement as an opportunity to promote the reality of who God is, how he has acted in history, and how he will yet act to bring his plan of redemption to conclusion.