Journal of Ministry & Theology

Fall 2017 | Volume 21 | Number 2

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The Journal of Ministry & Theology

Published semiannually by Baptist Bible Seminary,
South Abington Township, Pennsylvania

The Journal of Ministry & Theology (ISSN: 1092-9525) is published twice a year (June and October) by Clarks Summit University, 538 Venard Road, South Abington Township, Pennsylvania 18411. Address changes may be sent to *The Journal of Ministry & Theology* at the address above or emailed to JMAT@ClarksSummitU.edu.

Subscription Rates: Individual subscriptions for one year $20.00 ($25.00 outside of the United States). Institutional subscriptions for one year $30.00. Single issues available at $10.00 each. Subscription requests should be sent to *The Journal of Ministry & Theology* at the address above or JMAT@ClarksSummitU.edu. You can subscribe at this link: https://www.clarkssummitu.edu/seminary/resources/. All subscriptions are in US currency, with credit card or a check payable to Baptist Bible Seminary – *The Journal of Ministry & Theology.*

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The *JMAT* is indexed in the EBSCO Academic Search Premier database and appears in full text in the Theological Journal Library.

From the Editor's Desk

Welcome to our newest edition of the *JMAT*. With this edition we introduce some upgrades to the journal. I would like to introduce Jared August as the Book Review Editor for the *JMAT*. Jared will be responsible for all aspects of our book review section. Publishers and book review contributors can reach Jared at JMATreviews@ClarksSummitU.edu.

With this edition we introduce our Editorial Content Team, who will be responsible for the content of the journal. Since our journal is one of ministry **and** theology, our editorial members reflect those passions and concerns. Along with myself, the Editorial Content Team consists of Bill Higley, Wayne Slusser, Jared August, Ken Gardoski, Mike Dellaperute, Ken Davis, and Ken Pyne. All articles will be peer reviewed by members of the Editorial Content Team.

New submission guidelines for potential manuscripts may be requested at JMAT@ClarksSummitU.edu.

Each published article will now have an abstract and email contact for the writer. This will allow readers to be able to continue the conversation with the author directly.

New to this edition is a listing of dissertations in progress at BBS. A listing of completed dissertations will appear in the June editions.

Lastly, as the new Editor of the *JMAT*, I offer a new mission statement: The Journal of Ministry & Theology *exists to encourage pastors, church leaders, scholars, missionaries, and others who love the church of Jesus Christ to think biblically regarding contemporary theological issues, ministry concerns, and methodologies facing the church, the academy, and individual believers.*

If you share our passion, I invite you to review our submission guidelines and submit a manuscript to the journal at JMATeditor@ClarksSummitU.edu.

At the *JMAT* we seek to serve our Savior, and you, our reader. I look forward to hearing from you.

Mark McGinniss, Ph.D.
Editor

Second-Temple Exegetical Methods: The Possibility of Contextual Midrash

Jared M. August

Abstract: Numerous proposals exist as to how the New Testament authors used the Old Testament. Several scholars have advocated that the NT authors used a non-contextual approach to the OT based upon the existence of midrash and pesher in the Second Temple era. Their logic is that the NT authors would have employed hermeneutical methods similar to those of their contemporaries. However, when the literature of the Second Temple era is examined, it becomes evident that there was no one monolithic interpretive approach. Rather, two noticeably distinct strands of midrash emerge: (1) non-contextual midrash and (2) contextual midrash. This distinction raises the possibility that the NT authors may have utilized midrashic techniques, while remaining consistent with the original meaning of the OT. Ultimately, this distinction prohibits scholars from claiming that the NT authors "used midrash" to reject their contextual use of the OT.

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There are numerous differing proposals concerning how the New Testament authors used the Old Testament.[2] While

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[2] For an introduction to the topic of the NT use of the OT, see Darrell Bock, "Part 1: Evangelicals and Their Use of the Old Testament in the New," *BibSac* 142, no. 567 (July 1985): 209-23; "Part 2: Evangelicals and Their Use of the Old Testament in the New," *BibSac* 142, no. 567 (October 1985): 306-19; and Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde, eds. *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008); G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007); and Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*

several scholars point to the NT authors' contextually sensitive handling of the OT, others are quick to assert that their methodology is dependent upon non-contextual, Second Temple Jewish exegetical methods (such as midrash and pesher). Still others, while acknowledging the use of various Second Temple tendencies, claim that the overall approach is characterized by acute awareness of the original context of the passages cited. Through surveying the current consensus of proposed methodologies, as well as a careful examination of what these methodologies entail, the exegetical methodology of the NT authors will become evident.

Ultimately, scholars writing on the issue largely adhere to one of two categories: (1) *Non-Contextual Exegesis*: These individuals assert that the NT authors used the OT in a non-contextual fashion, neglecting the OT context in order to present their own NT message. While perhaps this is the majority perspective, this view is by no means unanimous. (2) *Contextual Exegesis*: Others claim that in their use of the OT, the NT authors demonstrate considerable clarity and precision—occasionally employing surprising methods, yet consistently showing a contextual understanding of the OT. Through the following examination of Second Temple midrash and pesher, it will be established that contextual exegesis was indeed a possible exegetical option for the NT authors.

(Chicago: Moody, 1985). Additionally, see Scott A. Swanson, "Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament? Why Are We Still Trying?" *TJ* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 67-76; Martin Pickup, "New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament: The Theological Rational of Midrashic Exegesis," *JETS* 51, no. 2 (June 2008): 353-81; Richard N. Longenecker, "Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?" *TynBul* 21 (1970): 3-38; and Robert L. Thomas, "The New Testament Use of the Old Testament," *MSJ* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 79-98; Robert H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel: With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967); Krister Stendahl, *The School of Matthew: And Its Use of the Old Testament* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1967); Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); O. Lamar Cope, *Matthew: A Scribe Trained for the Kingdom of Heaven* (Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association, 1976).

Although this cannot *prove* their consistent contextual interpretation of the OT, at the very least, it validates the *possibility* of Second Temple contextual exegesis.

Non-Contextual Exegesis

The central thesis of those affirming the NT authors' non-contextual exegetical methodology is that through their use of first-century Jewish exegetical methods, they effectively distorted the OT beyond recognition. As E. Earle Ellis articulates, "Like the teachers of Qumran, [the NT authors] proceed from the conviction that the meaning of the Old Testament is a 'mystery' whose 'interpretation' can be given not by human reason but only by the Holy Spirit."[3] As such, it stands to reason that, if the rabbis of their day would minimize the importance of the OT context, so would the apostles.

Peter Enns is a firm advocate of this view. Enns states, "The NT authors were not engaging the OT in an effort to remain consistent with the original context and intention of the OT author."[4] From this assertion, Enns devotes significant

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[3] E. Earle Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 172. Despite this rejection of the contextual nature of the NT authors' methodology, Ellis states that he has written his book "in the abiding conviction that the New Testament presents to us not merely the opinions of Christian writers but also the message of God mediated through faithful prophets" (*vi*).

[4] Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 115. In contrast to Enns's position, see three critiques on his book by G. K. Beale, "Myth, History, And Inspiration: A Review Article Of Inspiration And Incarnation By Peter Enns" *JETS* 49, no. 2 (June 2006): 287-312; and "Did Jesus and the Apostles Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Revisiting the Debate Seventeen Years Later in the Light of Peter Enns' Book, *Inspiration and Incarnation*," *Themelios* 32, no. 1 (October 2006): 18-43; "A Surrejoinder to Peter Enns," *Themelios* 32, no. 3 (May 2007): 14-25. Worth noting is Beale's observation in "Right Doctrine from Wrong Texts": "Enns' list of 'strange' uses are not that many; indeed, he lists only eight such uses (114-42): Exodus 3:6 in Luke 20:27-40; Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15; Isaiah 49:8 in 2 Corinthians 6:2; Abraham's seed in Galatians 3:16, 29; Isaiah 59:20 in Romans 11:26-27; Psalm 95:9-10 in

discussion to the premise that this non-contextual exegesis should be viewed as legitimate.[5] In his view, since the apostles lived in the first century AD, their methodology must not be held to twenty-first century standards. Furthermore, since they lived among and ministered to a primarily Jewish audience, they should be expected to employ similar exegetical methods and techniques.[6]

Likewise, when writing specifically of Matthew and his mission to communicate the Jewish hope of a Messiah in his cultural setting, Krister Stendahl states, "The Matthaean type of midrashic interpretation … closely approaches what has been called the *midrash pesher* of the Qumran Sect, in which the O.T. texts were not primarily the source of rules, but the prophecy which was shown to be fulfilled [in current events]."[7] In essence, Stendahl argues that just as the literature of Qumran shows little concern for the historic context of the OT, neither does Matthew.[8] In both cases, the OT is cited to show fulfillment of contemporary events.

Again, when writing specifically of Matthew, another proponent of non-contextual methodology, Richard Longenecker, states, "Matthew's use of Scripture is extensive and goes much beyond what has been called historico-

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Hebrews 3:7-11. … He needs to list many more texts in order to support this claim, and he needs to give representative surveys of the various interpretations of each passage in order to show the varying interpretations of these passages and whether or not some of these interpretations contrast the oddity" (23).

[5] Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation*, 113-66.

[6] See also Peter Enns, "Response to G. K. Beale's Review Article Of *Inspiration And Incarnation*," *JETS* 49, no. 2 (June 2006): 313-26; "Response to Professor Greg Beale," *Themelios* 32, no. 3 (May 2007): 5-13.

[7] Stendahl, *School of Matthew*, 35.

[8] When commenting on Stendahl's work, Kaiser states that this "method of utilizing quotations emphasized the application of the OT texts apart from their historical context. … In actual practice, this appeared to be little more than a sophisticated form of allegorizing or spiritualizing of the OT text" (*Uses of the OT*, 227).

grammatical exegesis."[9] In other words, the hermeneutical methods employed are supposedly far from what modern exegetes would consider "critical" or "accurate." Again, this view depends upon the premise that Matthew employed first-century Jewish methods: "The First Gospel should be [viewed as] a pesher handling of the biblical text and application of its meaning."[10] Although the validity of this assertion will be evaluated below, it is important to recognize the point which Longenecker implicitly makes, namely, that Jewish exegetical methods *assume* non-contextual exegesis.[11] Consider his conclusion to the topic in general:

> As students of history we can appreciate something of what was involved in their exegetical procedures, and as Christians we commit ourselves to their conclusions. But … I suggest that we cannot reproduce their pesher exegesis. … Likewise, I suggest that we should not attempt to reproduce their midrashic handling of the text, their allegorical explications, or much of their Jewish manner of argumentation.[12]

This is a strong statement. Again, Longenecker seems to make the assumption that whenever the NT authors employ Jewish exegetical methods, their conclusions are *automatically* uncritical and irreproducible. Although certainly not all Jewish

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[9] Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 124.

[10] Ibid., 126. The term pesher will be defined in depth below. Also, consider Stendahl, *School of Matthew*, 183-202, who devotes significant discussion to the Matthew's supposed use of pesher.

[11] As will be discussed, first-century Jewish exegetical methods do not necessitate non-contextual exegesis.

[12] Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 197. However, earlier in his book, Longenecker asserts, "We must abandon the mistaken ideas that the New Testament writers' treatment of the Old Testament was … an illegitimate twisting and distortion of ancient text" (186). Longenecker asserts that these methods were viable only for the apostolic community, as they were under the "direction of the Holy Spirit" (187). As such, Longenecker ends up in a rather precarious position, asserting that the NT authors' methods were not bad enough to say they were "twisting" the text, but they were not good enough to be considered viable for today.

exegetical methods are contextually viable, to simply assume their non-contextual nature *in toto* is far too extreme a position. At this point, it is necessary to examine the assertions of several who hold to the NT authors' contextual methodology.

Contextual Exegesis

Contrary to the assertions of those arguing for the NT authors' non-contextual methodology, numerous scholars present the premise that these individuals were keenly aware of the context of the OT passages which they cited. For example, concerning the NT authors in general, C. H. Dodd writes of the apostolic appeal to the background context of OT passages. He asserts that in doing so, the apostles were not merely selecting prooftexts. Dodd states,

> I would submit that, while there is a fringe of questionable, arbitrary or even fanciful exegesis, the main line of interpretation of the OT exemplified in the New is not only consistent and intelligent in itself, but also founded upon a genuinely historical understanding of the … history of Israel as a whole.[13]

Dodd makes the point that while the NT authors use the OT in often unexpected and diverse ways, when each passage is examined, the apostles' intentionality in regards to the original context becomes evident. As such, while recognizing the cultural milieu in which the NT authors found themselves, Dodd makes a definite distinction between the common practices of the apostles' Jewish contemporaries and the apostles themselves.

Furthermore, even Robert Gundry (who rejects the historicity of Matthew) asserts that Matthew's interpretive method does not "come from or stand parallel to Qumran, where each phrase of the OT text is made to fit a new historical situation regardless of context and where we meet far-fetched

[13] C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), 133.

allegorical interpretations and ingenious word-play."[14] This statement from Gundry is rather surprising, given his position that Matthew is midrashic and unhistorical in nature. However, that makes it all the more valuable.[15] For even he recognizes the difference between the haphazard hermeneutics employed by Qumran, and the "new and coherent hermeneutical approach to the OT" demonstrated by the apostles.[16] Although this does not diminish the likelihood that the NT authors made use of various first-century techniques, the point is that by and large, there is a noticeable difference between the exegesis common to Judaism in the first century and the exegesis of the apostles.[17]

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[14] Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament*, 213. Also, consider his statement, "It is established, then, that in common with the other NT writers Mt does not deal atomistically with the OT in the sense that he does not search either haphazardly or systematically for isolated proof-texts, but in the main confines himself to areas of the OT which the church recognized as having special bearing upon the ministry of Jesus Christ" (208).

[15] Ironically, although Gundry presents the differences between first-century Jewish exegesis and the exegesis of Matthew in his book *The Use of the Old Testament*, he asserts the similarities in his subsequent book *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982). Gundry goes so far as to state, "Matthew edited historical traditions in unhistorical ways and in accord with midrashic and haggadic practices to which he and his first readers were accustomed. … Comparison with the other gospels, especially with Mark and Luke, and examination of Matthew's style and theology show that he materially altered and embellished historical traditions and that he did so deliberately and often" (639). For a response to Gundry's work, see Douglas J. Moo, "Matthew and Midrash: An Evaluation of Robert H. Gundry's Approach," *JETS* 26, no. 1 (March 1983): 31-39. Moo offers a very compelling rebuttal of Gundry's work.

[16] Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament*, 213. Additionally, he states, "Both Qumran hermeneutics and rabbinical hermeneutics are supremely oblivious to contextual exegesis whenever they wish" (205). This is stated in contrast to the hermeneutics employed by the NT authors.

[17] Additionally, Gundry states, "The theological depth and coherence of the hermeneutical principles [stand] in sharp contrast with Qumran and rabbinic exegesis" (Ibid., 215). He also states, "The naturalness with which the Matthew quotations fall under easily recognizable principles of

About this difference between the common Jewish practices and the apostles' exegetical methodology, G. K. Beale agrees. "I remain convinced that once the hermeneutical and theological presuppositions of the NT writers are considered, there are no clear examples where they have developed a meaning from the OT which is inconsistent or contradictory to some aspect of the original OT intention."[18] Again, while this does not diminish the use of diverse exegetical methods by the apostles, it does inevitably limit the *types* of use.[19] Beale presents the case that the apostles, while having a certain amount of freedom in their hermeneutics, intentionally limited their exegesis in order to maintain the importance of the OT background and context. This is a key point—for it acknowledges the cultural setting of the apostles, yet it recognizes their own theological presuppositions.[20]

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interpretation demonstrate that Matthean hermeneutics were not atomizing—in contrast to Qumran and rabbinical literature" (*xii*).

[18] G. K. Beale, "Positive Answer to the Question Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?" in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament Use in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 398. Beale does offer this disclaimer: "However, there will probably always remain some enigmatic passages that are hard to understand under any reading" (398).

[19] Beale offers several "viable interpretive approaches … between these two opposite poles of '*grammatical-historical* exegesis' and 'non-contextual exegesis'" (Ibid., 21). He focuses on the *biblical-theological approach*, which "could be described as a canonical contextual approach," and the *typological approach*, "whereby historical events come to be seen as foreshadowings of events in New Testament times." Both of these approaches, while not employing grammatical-historical exegesis, still demonstrate keen awareness of the OT context under examination

[20] Related to this, consider Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989). Although Hays writes specifically of Paul and his exegetical methodology, the following statement certainly is applicable to Matthew as well: "There is no possibility of accepting Paul's message while simultaneously rejecting the legitimacy of the scriptural interpretation that sustains it. If Paul's way of reading the testimony of the Law and the Prophets is wrong, then his gospel does constitute a betrayal of Israel and Israel's God, and his

When commenting on the intentionality of the NT authors' use of the OT, Moisés Silva states, "If we compare the bulk of quotations in the NT with the bulk of quotations in rabbinic literature, we cannot but be struck by the *greater sensitivity* of NT writers to the original context."[21] Silva is not one to shy away from the diverse exegetical tendencies of the apostles, yet he acknowledges the readily apparent differences between the two groups.[22] His point is that, far from citing OT texts haphazardly, the NT authors were deeply aware of the context from which they quoted.[23] Furthermore, through a comparison of the exegesis of Qumran/rabbinic literature with the writings of the NT, the contextual awareness demonstrated by the apostles becomes quite apparent.

At this point, it is vital that key terms be defined and considered. In the following pages, the proposed Second Temple Jewish exegetical methods will be examined. The goal is twofold: (1) these terms must be properly understood and defined, and (2) the concepts must then be evaluated in light of their possible uses.

Jewish Exegetical Methods

As developed above, perhaps the most common explanation as to how the NT authors interpret the OT is that their approach is similar to the methodology of Second Temple Judaism. As Douglas Moo states, "There can be no doubt that the New Testament often utilizes citation techniques that are quite similar to practices amply illustrated in first-century Jewish

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hermeneutic can only lead us astray. If, on the other hand, his material claims are in any sense true, then we must go back and learn from him how to read Scripture" (182).

[21] Moisés Silva, "The New Testament Use of the Old Testament," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 159; emphasis added.

[22] See the section, "Apostolic and Rabbinic Interpretation" in Ibid., 156-61.

[23] Silva states, "A sympathetic study of the relevant New Testament passages reveals a notably sane, unfanciful method" (Ibid., 159).

sources."[24] While there is significant debate as to the role of these "citation techniques," it is quite apparent that the NT authors were, at the very least, familiar with these options. Given their first-century context and their familiarity with Jewish customs, they must have been keenly aware of these various techniques.[25] As such, the identity of these methods—which have long been debated—must be examined.

Among these exegetical methods, the primary two are midrash and pesher. However, as Darrell Bock asserts, "Much confusion exists with regard to the use of the terms 'pesher' and 'midrash.' The definitions of these terms are not fixed even in the technical literature. Often when these terms are used, they are not clearly defined."[26] Furthermore, even where the term midrash has been defined, its definition has often included considerable ambiguity.[27] Neusner describes the situation pointedly: "The word 'Midrash' presently stands for pretty much anything any Jew in antiquity did in reading and interpreting Scripture."[28] His point is well articulated, for despite the voluminous material pertaining to Jewish hermeneutics as well as the topic of the NT use of the OT, the term midrash often remains undefined or, at best, vaguely

[24] Douglas J. Moo, "The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 192.

[25] Consider, Paul was a Pharisee (Phil 3:5) taught by Gamaliel (Acts 22:3); Matthew was a tax-collector (Matt 9:9; 10:3) who would have been trained as a scribe.

[26] Bock, "Part 2: Use of the OT," 313.

[27] This is rather ironic, as many scholars assert the importance of a proper introduction to these methods. Consider Moo, "It is vitally important that certain key terms, such as 'midrash' and 'pesher,' be carefully defined, if not in a definitive way, at least for the purposes of the discussion at hand" ("The Problem," 193).

[28] Jacob Neusner, *What is Midrash?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), *xii*. This book is perhaps one of the most thorough, detailed, and succinct introductions to the topic of midrashic exegesis.

defined.[29] Therefore, it is necessary to examine the Jewish exegetical methods and their resultant implications. Below, the terms midrash and pesher will be discussed and defined.[30] Subsequently, these terms will be evaluated in light of the NT literature. Once this has been accomplished, implications for the NT authors' use of the OT will be summarized.

Midrash Overview

The word midrash comes from the Hebrew דרׁש (*darash*), which means "to seek, search, study or inquire" and denotes an "interpretive exposition."[31] Gary Porton draws a distinction between how the Hebrew דרׁש was used in the Bible versus how it was used in later rabbinic literature. In the Bible, this root was used about 150 times, denoting investigation and inquiry. However, in the first few centuries AD, the term began to refer to metaphorical and allegorical interpretation.[32] This shift inevitably has resulted in a diversity of definitions (early midrash versus late midrash). After providing a survey of conflicting contemporary definitions, Porton states,

> I would define midrash as a type of literature, oral or written, which stands in direct relationship to a fixed, canonical text,

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[29] Ironically, this is the case in Beale and Carson's invaluable *Commentary on the NT use of the OT*. Although the contributors often mention midrash, the term is never conclusively defined.

[30] In his chapter "Jewish Hermeneutics in the First Century," Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 6-35, divides Jewish exegetical methods into: (1) Literalist, (2) Midrashic, (3) Pesher, and (4) Allegorical. However, it seems best to divide Midrashic into two separate categories: (a) Midrashic-contextual and (b) Midrashic-non-contextual, and eliminate the category Literalist. For it is unlikely that first-century Jews would have categorized their exegesis as such. Longenecker does recognize this, though, when he states, "Admittedly, such a fourfold classification highlights distinctions of which the early Jewish interpreters themselves may not have always been conscious" (14).

[31] Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 18.

[32] Gary G. Porton, "Defining Midrash," in *The Study of Ancient Judaism*, vol. 1, ed. Jacob Neusner (New York: Ktav, 1981), 56-57.

> considered to be the authoritative and revealed word of God by the midrashist and his audience, and in which this canonical text is explicitly cited or clearly alluded to.[33]

Porton's point is that midrash is the development and interpretation of a canonical text. Although one may certainly disagree with aspects of his conclusions, Porton's broad definition provides clarity to the situation. Furthermore, he claims that this definition provides the ability to differentiate between different types of midrash.[34] This greatly assists in understanding how Second Temple era individuals employed midrash in different ways. As such, in what follows, midrash will be defined as *the interpretation of a scriptural text*.[35] This definition includes numerous documents such as the Targums, the Midrash Rabbah, the Septuagint, as well as various other rabbinic documents. Additionally, under this definition, much of the NT itself must be included as midrash, since it offers interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Related to this definition, Jacob Neusner—perhaps the most prolific scholar of rabbinic literature—devotes substantial discussion to defining midrash. Neusner states,

> Many people refer these days to "Midrash," but few tell us what they mean. The reason for prevailing confusion about Midrash is that a common English word "exegesis," meaning "interpretation and explanation," is replaced by an uncommon Hebrew word. The result is that people obscure matters that should be clear.[36]

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[33] Ibid., 62.

[34] Ibid., 63.

[35] Neusner, *Midrash*, 9, clarifies that midrash may refer to (1) a concrete unite of scriptural exegesis, (2) a compilation of the results of scriptural exegesis, and (3) a process of interpretation of a particular text. It is Neusner's third category that serves as the focus of this paper. The prior two categories are, in many ways, the results of the third.

[36] Ibid., *xi*. Neusner recognizes the limitations of categorizing and defining midrash when he states, "There were diverse Judaisms, and no single orthodoxy, in ancient times. So, too, there were different approaches to the reading and interpretation of Scripture" (*xi*).

His point is that midrash simply denotes exegesis—whether contextual or non-contextual. Neusner reiterates his claim when he writes, "'Midrash,' a foreign word, simply refers to the same thing—the activity or process or intellectual pursuit—as '*exegesis*,' an English word. … It follows that for clear speech, the word 'Midrash,' standing by itself, bears no meaning."[37] His point is that ultimately, the type of midrash must be described. Just as there are numerous "exegetical methods" in various English speaking theological circles, there were numerous "midrashic methods" in various first-century Jewish theological circles.

Even at first glance, this definition closes the door for scholars to claim that the apostles "used midrash" and end their discussion there. To say that would be the equivalent of claiming a preacher used "exegesis" in his sermon preparation, without specifying any details. In such a case, did the preacher use grammatical-historical exegesis? Allegorical exegesis? Spiritualized exegesis? In Neusner's words, such a statement "bears no meaning." The type of exegesis/interpretation must be specified, just as the type of midrash must be specified. Therefore, while all the interpretive works based upon the Hebrew Scriptures could be categorized under the broad term midrash, one cannot end there. The type of midrash must be defined.

By the fourth century AD, Longenecker notes that midrashic exegesis began to be distinguished from literalist exegesis.[38] While the latter, often referred to as peshat, sought the plain meaning,[39] the former sought to discover a meaning

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[37] Ibid., 8; emphasis original. Neusner provides additional clarification, "Midrash corresponds to the English word 'exegesis' and carries the same generic sense. … But the word 'midrash' bears a more limited meaning, namely, 'interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures for the purpose of discovering a pertinent rule (in the Mishnah) or theological truth (in Scripture)'" (108-109).

[38] Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 18-19.

[39] See Irving Jacobs, *The Midrashic Process: Tradition and Interpretation in Rabbinic Judaism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1-20. This book is an excellent resource concerning midrash

deeper than the literal sense. However, it is important to note that this distinction between midrash and peshat did not exist in the first century.[40] This was a later distinction and therefore, should not be anachronistically read back into first-century literature.[41] As such, for practical purposes, this distinction between midrash and peshat, while important, is not entirely significant to the NT literature or to the following discussion. As stated above, the apostles wrote at a time when midrash simply denoted exegesis and interpretation. As John Bowker states, "Midrash … is a term which applies to the exegesis and interpretation of scripture *in general*."[42] The point is that midrash is a very broad term which describes the exercise of exegesis, and does not include a description of the exegetical methodology employed.[43]

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from a Jewish perspective. Jacobs devotes significant discussion to the rabbinic pursuit of the peshat (the plain meaning).

[40] See Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 18, note 45. There is no evidence to suggest that this distinction arose, at earliest, before the fourth century.

[41] David Instone Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis before 70 CE* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), would disagree. In his study, he uses *peshat* as a designation, "for want of a better term" (14). Although he acknowledges the late use of this term, he claims, "when the term 'Peshat' is applied to early exegeses it can be regarded as an anticipation of a distinction which would be defined later but which already existed" (14). While his assertion is valid, this study uses the terms *contextual* and *non-contextual* midrash in place of peshat and midrash in an effort to abstain from anachronism. However, either way is not without its difficulty.

[42] John Bowker, *The Targums & Rabbinic Literature: An Introduction to Jewish Interpretations of Scripture* (New York: Cambridge U P, 1969), 46. Bowker distinguishes between: (i) "The actual work of studying the scripture, as in *beth haMidrash*, the house or school of study," (ii) "The consequence of biblical study, a particular piece of exposition or interpretation," and (iii) "Literary works of biblical exposition, which are known (in plural) as Midrashim" (45-46).

[43] Bowker states, "*halakah* [regulative material] and *haggadah* [illustrative material] describe the content of rabbinic literature … [and] *midrash* describes the way in which both sorts of material were collected together by being attached to the text of scripture, *mishnah* describes the

For the purpose of this study, the broad category of midrash will be considered. In the discussion that follows, it will be demonstrated that the method of midrash—whether contextual or non-contextual—depends almost entirely upon the individual scribe(s) who records it. Towards this end, several Second-Temple Jewish documents will be examined, including Targums Onkelos, Neofiti, the LXX, and Midrash Rabbah to Genesis and Exodus.[44] Since each of these writings can be considered a midrash on the Hebrew text, the diversity of midrashic methods will be demonstrated. Ultimately, it will be shown that midrash can be divided into the category of contextual and non-contextual.

Midrash Examples

The first passage to be examined comes from Targum Onkelos (hereafter, TO). The TO to the Pentateuch is likely the oldest and most accurate translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Aramaic. As such, this translation illustrates with clarity the various methodologies employed. However, according to Auerbach and Grossfeld, "Despite the reputation of T.O. for its literal rendering of the M.T., there are thousands of deviations—some obvious ones, but many more of a rather subtle type—which cannot be imputed to accidental misinterpretation or to scribal errors."[45] Their point is that while on a whole, TO translates in a literal and contextual fashion, there are frequent occasions when it translates less literally and more non-contextually. Auerbach and Grossfeld continue by stating the reasons for these intentional alterations: "Basically,

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way in which the material was collected together in its own right, without necessarily being attached to a text of scripture" (Ibid., 40).

[44] This represents a minuscule sampling from the immense volume of rabbinic literature. These passages have been selected because they demonstrate clearly the variety of methods employed by the Jews of the Second Temple era. Although many other passages (and documents) could have been used, these do represent a fair and varied assortment.

[45] Moses Auerbach and Bernard Grossfeld, *Targum Onkelos to Genesis: A Critical Analysis Together With An English Translation of the Text* (Brooklyn, NY: Ktav, 1982), 10.

all these changes were meant to provide unsophisticated synagogue audiences, for whose benefit the Aramaic translation was designed, with a religiously unimpeachable and pedagogically intelligible version of the Pentateuch."[46] That is, this translation was designed to facilitate effective teaching for the Jewish laypeople.

Although this certainly was a commendable goal, in doing so, the translators inevitably paraphrased some portions in such a way that their own theological convictions and non-contextual hermeneutics were revealed.[47] As such, they demonstrate both their contextual and non-contextual methods. Consider the contextual translation of Genesis 3:1:

> And the serpent was more cunning than any wild beast which the Lord God had made; and he said to the woman, "Is it in truth (that) the Lord God said: You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?"[48]

When this passage is compared with the Hebrew, there is considerable similarity. In fact, it appears to be an almost exact translation. In twenty-first century language, one might say, "They got it right," at least in terms of preserving the contextual intent of the Hebrew. Additionally, since all translation involves interpretation, in this case, the TO interprets this verse contextually. However, in comparison, consider the *non-contextual* translation of Genesis 3:15:

> And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your children and her children; they will remember what you did to them in ancient times, and you will preserve (your hatred) for them to the end (of time).[49]

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[46] Ibid., 10.

[47] Again, theological presuppositions do not necessarily result in non-contextual hermeneutics.

[48] Ibid., 32.

[49] Ibid., 36.

Although this verse certainly bears resemblance to the Hebrew, several alterations have been made which suggests a certain interpretation had been accepted and incorporated into TO. In place of "he shall bruise your head," TO inserts, "they will remember what you did to them in ancient times." Furthermore, in place of "you shall bruise his heel," TO inserts "you will preserve (your hatred) for them to the end (of time)." From the MT of Genesis, there seems no reason to translate these portions as such. Therefore, it appears that the TO translators incorporated their own presuppositions and theological convictions into their translation. The end result is a non-contextual translation of the MT 3:15. In twenty-first century language, one might say, "They got it wrong," at least in terms of preserving the contextual meaning of the Hebrew.[50] In summary, within the same chapter, one finds both contextual and non-contextual exegetical methods in TO.

For a striking example of another non-contextual translation, consider Targum Neofiti (hereafter, TN) on Genesis 3:15 (MT translation provided above, TN provided below):[51]

> (1) I will put hostility between you and the woman,
> (2) and between your seed and her seed.
> (3) He shall bruise your head
> (4) and you shall bruise his heel.

> (1) And I will put hostility between you and the woman,
> (2) and between your children and her children.
> (3) And when her children guard the Torah and keep the commandments they will aim against you and strike you on your head and kill you.

[50] Caution must be demonstrated here, as the exegete must perform textual criticism on any verse considered before asserting the reason for the change. Quite simply, in many cases, the author/interpreter for the TO (or LXX, or Midrash Rabbah, etc.) may have had access to a text with different or unknown textual variants.

[51] Translation from Neusner, *Midrash*, 29.

> (4) And when they forsake the commandments of the Torah, you will take aim and bite them on their heels and cause them to sicken.
> (5) However, there will be a cure for her children, but for you there will be no cure. For in the future they will find relief in the Remnant [of Israel?] in the day of the King Messiah.

Despite the change of "seed" to "children," lines (1) and (2) demonstrate remarkable similarity. However, it is clear that while lines (3) and (4) retain certain elements, they include considerable changes. Nothing in the context of the MT indicates any reference to the "Torah" or "commandments," yet TN evidently finds reason to include these concepts. Furthermore, line (5) is a complete addition, with no apparent textual reason whatsoever.[52] All in all, the TN paraphrase appears to show little concern for the original context. Rather, as demonstrated above in the TO translation of this verse, it seems that the TN translators incorporated their own presuppositions and theological convictions into their work. Again, the end result is a non-contextual midrash of the MT 3:15.

However, not every first-century midrash on Genesis 3:15 is non-contextual. For example, consider the strikingly contextual translation found in the LXX:

> And I will put enmity between you and between the woman and between your seed and between her seed; he will lie in wait (bruise?) your head, and you will lie in wait (bruise?) his heel.[53]

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[52] Of considerable interest, is the TN mention of "the day of King Messiah" in this verse. Although there is a long Christian tradition of translating this verse as the first 'messianic' verse (or *protoevangelium*—first gospel), this translation demonstrates a Jewish interpretation including this messianic theme.

[53] Translation original. The words τηρήσει and τηρήσεις are notoriously hard to translate. J. Lust, E. Eynikel, and K. Hauspie, *Greek English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), 613, suggest to correct this reading to τειρήσει (to bruise), which aligns better with the MT.

Overall, this verse demonstrates clear contextual awareness and a rather literal interpretive method. Furthermore, here is a case where the translators revealed their theological convictions without engaging in non-contextual exegesis. It is worth noting that when the LXX refers back to the antecedent "seed" (σπέρμα), a grammatical *neuter*, the translators use the *masculine* αὐτός (he) rather than the *neuter* αὐτό (it). In this case, although the Greek antecedent requires a *neuter* pronoun, the LXX breaks the rules of grammar to translate this word as a *masculine*.[54] The point—which is advanced especially by Martin—is that the LXX translators intentionally indicated the hope of a coming redeemer through their grammatical decision. Martin claims (as his title articulates) that this is the "The Earliest Messianic Interpretation of Genesis 3:15." Ultimately, despite the grammatical decision on the part of the translators, this verse is still translated in a rather contextually sensitive manner.

Another example comes from Midrash Rabbah on Genesis 22:11 (which states, "The angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!'").[55] In the commentary on this verse, two scribes reveal significantly different exegetical methods through their statements. When noting the repetition of "Abraham, Abraham," these individuals state:

> The repetition implies: "This is an expression of love and encouragement" (R. Hiyya).

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[54] See R. A. Martin, "The Earliest Messianic Interpretation of Genesis 3:15," *JBL* 84, no. 4 (December 1965): 425-27, and Jack P. Lewis, "The Woman's Seed (Genesis 3:15)," *JETS* 34, no. 3 (September 1991): 299-319. Martin asserts that of the 103 times the pronoun הוּא occurs in Genesis, "In none of the instances where the translator has translated literally does he do violence to agreement in Greek between the pronoun and its antecedent, *except here in Gen. 3:15*" (426-27).

[55] *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001). Unless otherwise noted, all English Scripture is cited from the ESV.

> The repetition implies: "There is no generation which does not contain men like Abraham, and there is no generation which does not contain men like Jacob, Moses, and Samuel" (R. Liezer).[56]

Clearly there is significant difference in the hermeneutic behind the statement of R. Hiyya and that of R. Liezer. Commenting on this passage, Jacobs states, "R. Hiyya's explanation of the phenomenon … is clearly in line with the plain meaning of the text as he perceived it."[57] However, Jacobs continues, "R. Eliezer [*sic*], on the other hand, has interpreted the phenomenon in keeping with the broader concept of the Bible as the revealed word of God, which was intended to convey a message of both specific and eternal relevance."[58] Jacobs's point is that while the statement of R. Hiyya is a contextually viable summary, the statement of R. Liezer is not; for there is nothing in this verse—or in the context of this passage—to make such an assertion. In the context of this verse, none of the individuals mentioned—neither Jacob, Moses nor Samuel—had yet been born. Although perhaps in the broader context of Scripture, the message of R. Liezer could be argued as valid, his assessment cannot be developed contextually from Genesis 22:11. In other words, this is a prime example of finding the right message from the wrong text. Ultimately, the two midrashic comments concerning this passage are based upon very different exegetical methods.

In relation to a contextual interpretation, it is necessary to consider the following example from Midrash Rabbah on Genesis 5:29. Although this commentary concerns details beyond 5:29, it still reflects a rather contextual (perhaps even woodenly literalistic) methodology:

> Famine visited the world ten times. Once in the days of Adam … [Gn 3:17]; once in the days of Lamech … [Gn 5:29]; once in the days of Abraham … [Gn 12:10]; once in the days of Isaac … [Gn

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[56] H. Freedman, trans., *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis I* in H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, *Midrash Rabbah: Translated into English* (London: Soncino, 1961), 496.

[57] Jacobs, *Midrashic Process*, 6.

[58] Ibid., 6.

> 26:1]; once in the days of Jacob … [Gn 45:6]; once in the days when the judges judged … [Ru 1:1]; once in the days of Elijah … [1 Kgs 17:1]; once in the days of Elisha … [2 Kgs 6:25]; one famine which travels about in the world; and once in the Messianic future … [Am 8:11].[59]

It is unclear of whether this passage claims that famine visited the world *only* ten times, or if these are merely ten specific times. However, it is clear that this passage demonstrates neither haphazard nor atomistic exegesis. On the contrary, this passage demonstrates a keen awareness of the context of these various passages of Scripture. Although this commentary goes beyond Genesis 5:29, the author of this midrash simply surveys various times in which people had suffered from famine. As such, the author refrains from importing new meaning into Genesis 5:29. All in all, this is a solid example of contextual midrash.

Yet another example comes from Midrash Rabbah on Exodus 1:6-7. In these two verses, one finds instances of both contextual as well as non-contextual midrash. Exodus 1:6-7 states, "[1:6] Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. [1:7] But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them." The non-contextual midrash of 1:7 will be examined first:

> [One] explanation: Each woman bore six [children] at one birth. … Others say: Twelve, because the word PARU implies two, WA-YISHREZU another two, WA-YIRBU another two, WA-YE'AZMU another two, BI-ME'OD ME'OD another two, and THE LAND WAS FILLED WITH THEM, another two—this making twelve in all.[60]

In this commentary, the six verbs of Exodus 1:7 are each taken to imply the birth of two children, thus equaling a total of twelve children for each woman. Juel's commentary concerning

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[59] Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 206.

[60] Lehrman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 8-9.

midrash in general is applicable to this interpretation: "Few students of the Scriptures today would find such [midrashic] arguments convincing, though the ingenuity of the rabbinic sages is impressive."[61] Indeed this approach certainly does demonstrate a rather impressive and unique approach to this passage. However, there is no contextual evidence for such an assertion. This midrash appears to be nothing more than a rather subjective and arbitrary interpretation of the verse, as it goes far beyond any appeal to the context, and rather deals solely with an attempt to find significance in the insignificant (i.e., number of verbs).

However, this non-contextual method is not found in the commentary on the previous verse. Rather, Midrash Rabbah on Exodus 1:6 can be classified as contextual midrash. Concerning Israel's enslavement upon the deaths of Joseph and his brothers, the text states,

> This teaches that as long as one of those who originally went down into Egypt was alive, the Egyptians did not subject Israel to slavery. … Although Joseph and his brothers were dead, yet their God was not dead.[62]

The difference between this commentary and that of 1:7 is patently obvious and its contextual nature is quite clear. In fact, this commentary on 1:6 seems to evidence keen awareness of the entire context of this passage, especially 1:8-10. Overall, this midrash demonstrates a remarkable appeal to the overall context of the book of Exodus, and therefore, should be labeled as a contextual midrash.

In the Second Temple era, the Jewish scribes developed a series of "rules" which they sought to abide by in their exegetical endeavors. This list was first known as the *Seven Middoth of Hillel*, developed into the *Thirteen Middoth of*

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[61] Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 46.

[62] S. M. Lehrman, trans., *Midrash Rabbah: Exodus* in H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, *Midrash Rabbah: Translated into English* (London: Soncino, 1961), 8.

Rabbi Ishmael, and ultimately expanded into the *Thirty-two Middoth of Rabbi Eliezer ben Jose HaGelili*.[63] Although numerous differences are evident between these lists, for the sake of this discussion, the *Seven Middoth of Hillel* are reproduced below with comments by Brewer.[64]

(1) *Lightness and heaviness* (*קל וחומר*)
-Argument from major to minor and vice versa.
(2) *Equal decree* (*גזרה שוה*)
-Analogy from similar words.
(3) *Building a family from one text* (*בנין אב מצתוב אחד*)
-What is stated in one text applies to all similar texts.
(4) *Building a family from two texts* (*בנין אב משני צתובים*)
-What is common between two texts applies to all similar texts.
(5) *General and Particular* (*כלל ופרט*)
-A general term is restricted by a subsequent particular term.
(6) *As is similar with it in another text* (*כיוצא בו במקום אחר*)
-The meaning may be deduced from a similar text.
(7) *Meaning is learned from the context* (*דבר הלמד מענינו*)
-The meaning may be deduced from nearby texts.

An examination of this list reveals, at the very least, a basic pursuit of the contextual elements of texts studied by Jewish scribes.[65] Although it is evident that these rules eventually

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[63] For a survey, general commentary, and historical account of the *Seven Middoth of Hillel*, see among others, Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions*, 17-23; Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 18-24; and Berding and Lunde, *New Testament Use*, 26-27.

[64] Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions*, 226. Brewer's Appendix 1 includes a translation and brief comments on the *Seven Middoth of Hillel*, the *Thirteen Middoth of R. Ishmael*, and the *Thirty-two Middoth of Eliezer b.Jose HaGelili* (226-231). These rules of interpretation can be found in various other places, such as Bowker, *Targums & Rabbinic Literature*, 315-18.

[65] Enns would disagree. He states, "The Rules of Hillel … are not simply to be equated with, say, Qumran *pesher*. But neither were these rules intended to inch ancient readers closer to a plain, contextual, semi-grammatical-historical sense of Scripture. … These rules did not encourage

"opened the door for significant alterations in authorial intent,"[66] the mere existence of guidelines for proper interpretation suggests that the concept of *valid* and *invalid* interpretations was present in the Second Temple era. At the very least, this demonstrates a degree of intentionality employed by the exegetes of the first century.

Again, although some of these seven rules can certainly be used in non-contextual manners, others seem to require a certain amount of contextual awareness. Perhaps in regards to this, the seventh rule is the clearest: "*Meaning is learned from the context*." Certainly this rule seems to require a contextual interpretation. Additionally, the second rule, "*Equal decree*," suggests the literal interpretation of vocabulary. In his commentary on this rule, Brewer states, "It assumes that the meaning of a word in one text is always the same as its meaning in another."[67] While perhaps in some cases this rule could lead to a non-contextual approach,[68] in general, this rule seems remarkably similar to techniques employed by twenty-first century exegetes working from a grammatical-historical standpoint. Overall, while the *Seven Middoth of Hillel* do not *necessitate* a contextual approach, they certainly open the door for this possibility.

Midrash Evaluation

Overall, even a brief survey of Jewish exegetical methods reveals the diverse and varied techniques employed. Although some cases of midrash demonstrate remarkable contextual awareness, others demonstrate little to no contextual concern.

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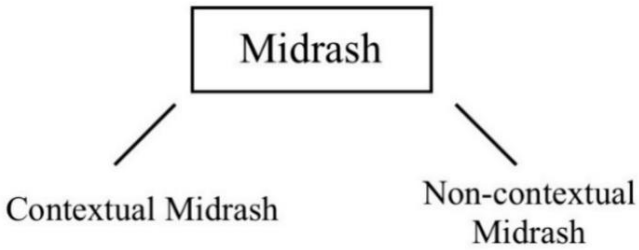
strict attention to contextual matters, and in fact resulted in conflicting and contradictory interpretations" (Response," 6-7).

[66] Berding and Lunde, *New Testament Use*, 26-27, note 59. This is evident with the subsequent additions to the list by the *Thirteen Middoth of Rabbi Ishmael* and the *Thirty-two Middoth of Rabbi Eliezer ben Jose HaGelili*.

[67] Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions*, 17.

[68] For example, this could lead to what Barr refers to as *illegitimate totality transfer*; that is, reading the meaning of one word completely into the context of another.

Beale aptly summarizes the situation: "[Within Second-Temple literature] there are some 'wild and crazy' uses of the Old Testament, but there is also some good and sophisticated exegesis."[69] Therefore, once it is established that the term midrash refers to Jewish exegesis *in general*, and not solely to non-contextual hermeneutics, it becomes apparent that the term midrash is best divided into two categories: (1) contextual midrash and (2) non-contextual midrash. Once this division is properly understood, it removes the possibility of merely claiming that "the NT authors engaged in midrash." As discussed above, to say this (in Neusner's words), "bears no meaning." The diagram below illustrates the difference between contextual and non-contextual midrash. It also reveals the false assumption that the term midrash can be employed to designate all Second Temple literature:



Ultimately, the point of the above examples is to surface the reality that the Second Temple Jewish literature varies significantly; it cannot be classified as one monolithic approach to Scripture. Although it appears that some Jewish scribes ignored the context of the OT altogether, others demonstrated keen awareness of the overall context of the passages developed. At the very least, while this does not *prove* the NT authors' contextual awareness, it certainly raises the *possibility* that the NT authors could engage in various first-century midrashic techniques, yet do so in a completely contextual way.

Of course even this conclusion is still debated. Jacobs agrees there are "many examples of midrashic exegesis which

[69] Beale, "Right Doctrine from Wrong Texts," 26.

illustrate … the early rabbinic exegetes' awareness of plain meaning,"[70] Enns argues the opposite, namely the non-contextual dimension of Second Temple Judaism "is far, far more pervasive than any concern to be 'sensitive' to the Old Testament context."[71] Although the conclusion of Enns is rightfully doubted by individuals such as Beale[72] and Brewer,[73] even if one grants Enns this concession, it proves little. Even if the non-contextual dimension is "far more pervasive" than the contextual dimension, that does not negate the reality that numerous cases demonstrate clear contextual awareness. Furthermore, given the presuppositions of the NT authors, it seems pointedly clear that they could have engaged in Jewish midrashic methods while still abstaining from the extreme non-contextual methods employed. Moo articulates this point superbly:

> We should recognize that the degree of influence of Jewish exegetical methods on New Testament procedure has often been considerably exaggerated. A vast gulf separates the often fantastic, purely verbal exegeses of the rabbis from the generally sober and clearly contextually oriented interpretations found in the New Testament.[74]

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[70] Jacobs, *Midrashic Process*, 5.

[71] Enns, "Response," 6.

[72] In response to Enns' statement, Beale responds, "The verdict is out about how diverse early Judaism was on this issue, but circumspect conclusions need to be held rather than sweeping statements one way or another" ("Surrejoinder," 16).

[73] Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions*, argues that the exegetical methods employed by Judaism prior to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD demonstrates remarkable contextual awareness and does not ignore the context of the passages cited. He states in his conclusion, "[The scribes prior to 70 AD] therefore regarded every word of Scripture as consistent and equally important, to be interpreted according to its context and according to its primary meaning only, and recognised a single valid text form" (222). His thesis is that this contrasts remarkably from "later rabbis who frequently ignored the context, found secondary meanings hidden in the text and who proposed alternate readings of the text for the purpose of exegesis" (222).

[74] Moo, "Problem," 193.

Ultimately, while proving the NT authors' complete avoidance of non-contextual methods requires nothing short of an examination of every instance where they cite the OT (which is available[75]), at the very least, the above examples demonstrate that it would have been *possible* for the NT authors to use the midrash of their day while still remaining sensitive to the OT original context.

Pesher Overview

As demonstrated above, in light of extra-biblical midrashic literature, it is at the very least *possible* that the NT authors maintained strict contextual sensitivity in their use of the OT even while employing diverse exegetical methods. The following discussion will revolve around whether or not the apostles could have additionally made use of pesher techniques. In other words, since the NT authors could have made use of contextual midrash, the possibility of contextual pesher must also be considered. To accomplish this goal, the nature of pesher methodology will be examined. Once this has been accomplished, an evaluation as to its validity—and the possibility of its contextual use—will be appraised.

The Aramaic word פֵּשֶׁר (pesher) means "interpretation" or "solution." Pesher literature is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls from the Qumran community of the Essenes, a sect of Second-Temple Judaism.[76] The term pesher is often found at the beginning of the interpretation portion of documents from Qumran, thereby eliciting the title for this literary form: pesher. Longenecker aptly provides a summary of the relevant historical background of this literature:

> The Dead Sea sectarians considered themselves the divinely elected community of the final generation of the present age,

[75] Beale and Carson, *Commentary on the NT Use of the OT*.

[76] Among the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran, the pesher documents—also known as the pesharim—make up just a small portion of the texts discovered. For an English translation of the DSS, see Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

> living in the days of "messianic travail" before the eschatological consumption. Theirs was the task of preparing for the coming of the Messianic Age and/or the Age to Come. And to them applied certain prophecies in the Old Testament that were considered to speak of their situation and circumstances.[77]

In large part, the Qumran community applied the Scriptures to their current situation by claiming eschatological fulfillment in their contemporary events. That is, the authors of pesher assumed that the biblical texts referred to the end of times, and that the end of times was at hand.

As was established above, midrash is most broadly defined as the interpretation of a scriptural text. Pesher, too, is an interpretation of a scriptural text. In many ways, pesher interpretation is best categorized as a subset of midrashic interpretation.[78] Both occur during and around the Second Temple Era, both involve Jewish exegesis and interpretation, both endeavor to better understand the Hebrew Scriptures, and both seek to demonstrate contemporary application from the Scriptures. However, the difference between these two forms is found primarily in approach—while midrash includes contextual and non-contextual forms, pesher is exclusively non-contextual in nature.

In relation to the non-contextual nature of pesher, consider the words of F. F. Bruce, "The *pesher* … is an interpretation which passes the power of ordinary wisdom to attain; it is given by divine illumination."[79] Likewise, Porton states, "The writers at Qumran were not at all interested in the historical or social context of the original prophecy."[80] Maurya Horgan agrees that pesher is "an interpretation made known by God to a selected interpreter of a mystery revealed by God to the biblical prophet

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[77] Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 24.

[78] This seems to be one reason why the terms are often combined, as in "midrash pesher." For example, see "Midrash Pesher in Pauline Hermeneutics" in Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics*, 173.

[79] F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (London: Tyndale, 1960), 8. This book provides perhaps the best introduction to the topic of Qumran pesher.

[80] Porton, "Defining Midrash," 75-76.

concerning history."[81] Stendahl goes so far as to assert that pesher is related to midrash, but simply displays "a greater audacity than the rabbinic exegesis."[82] As such, it appears that pesher is best viewed as a type of midrash which solely demonstrates non-contextual techniques. Longenecker would disagree with Stendahl about the conclusion that pesher literature displays a "greater audacity." He states, "It is not sufficient to define *pesher* as midrashic exegesis that displays a greater audacity in its handling of the text, coupled to an apocalyptic orientation."[83] Although Longenecker agrees that "such a characterization is true as far as it goes," his assertion is that it does not deal with the "vital factor in Qumran hermeneutics."[84] Longenecker argues that a careful understanding of rāz-pesher must first be grasped.

Bruce devotes significant discussion to the concept of rāz-pesher, especially to the book of Daniel and its use of the two terms rāz and pesher. Consider the following succinct summary and introduction to the topic by Bruce:

> When Daniel enters the kings' presence to explain his dream of the great image, he says: 'not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living has this mystery (*rāz*) been revealed to me, but in order that the interpretation (*pĕsher*) may be made known to the king' (Dan ii. 30). And when Nebuchadnezzar enlists Daniel's aid to explain his dream of the great tree, he says (Dan. iv. 9): 'because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery (*rāz*) is difficult for you, here is the dream which I saw; tell me its interpretation (*pĕsher*).'[85]

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[81] Maurya P. Horgan, *Pesharim: Qumran Interpretations of Biblical Books* (Washington, DC The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 8, 1979), 229.

[82] Stendahl, *School of Matthew*, 193.

[83] Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 26

[84] Ibid., 26.

[85] Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis*, 8. Bruce provides additional implications for the NT: "In the Greek versions of the Septuagint and Theodotion, this term *rāz*, wherever it occurs in Daniel, is represented by *mystērion*; and it is helpful to bear this in mind when we meet the word *mystērion* in the Greek New Testament" (8).

In these passages from the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar is given the rāz, while Daniel is given the pesher. In other words, "the rāz, the mystery, is divinely communicated to one party, and the pesher, the interpretation, to another."[86] Ultimately, taking these passages from Daniel as their basis, the Qumran community believed that it was not until the rāz (mystery) and the pesher (interpretation) were brought together that the divine communication could be understood. Bruce pointedly describes the implications of this concept:

> This principle, that the divine purpose cannot be properly understood until the *pesher* has been revealed as well as the *rāz*, underlies the biblical exegesis in the Qumran commentaries. The *rāz* was communicated by God to the prophet, but the meaning of that communication remained sealed until its *pesher* was made known by God to His chosen interpreter. The chosen interpreter was the Teacher of Righteousness, the founder of the Qumran community.[87]

Bruce's point is that pesher literature assumes that the OT prophets were only given the mystery (rāz), and it was not until the founder of the Qumran community interpreted the prophetic books that the divine message was able to be interpreted (pesher), and properly understood.

In light of the division between rāz and pesher, it corresponds that the interpreters of Qumran would feel free to do whatever they wished with the texts. For if the OT prophetic books contained solely the rāz (mystery) and could not be properly understood apart from divine guidance, it makes sense that their pesher would appear rather arbitrary at times. Simply stated, these interpreters placed little to no value on the original historical context. Again, Bruce summarizes this with keen insight, "It will be easily realized that this principle of interpretation, if carried through to its logical conclusion, *must deprive Old Testament prophecies of that relevance and coherence* which can best be appreciated when they are studied

[86] Ibid., 8.
[87] Ibid., 9.

in their historical setting."[88] In other words, it is as if the OT prophets were given a code which no one could break until the founder of the Qumran community—known as the Teach of Righteousness—was finally given the key.

Pesher Examples

The following examples have been selected for their brevity and succinct qualities in exemplifying typical pesher interpretation. In each case, a scriptural passage is first cited, and then is interpreted by a scribe of the Qumran community. The quoted Scripture passage is often referred to as the rāz, and the interpretation provided is referred to as the pesher. The following translations are provided by Martínez:

> 4QIsaiah Pesher[d] (4Q164 [4QpIs[d]]):
>
> Frag. 1 … Is 54:11 And your foundations are sapphires. [Its interpretation:] they will found the council of the Community, the priests and the peo[ple …] the assembly of their elect, like a sapphire stone in the midst of stones …[89]

In its context, this statement refers to the hope of restoration for Israel. From the passage itself, there is no reason to take it as anything other than the Lord promising a physical restoration of Jerusalem. However, the interpreter claims that the council of the Qumran community of Essenes is the "sapphire stone" which the Lord had promised. There is no textual evidence to support this assertion.

> 4QIsaiah Pesher[e] (4Q165[4QpIs[e]]):
>
> Frags. 1-2 … And what is written: [Is 40:11 He carries them on his chest and leads the mothers.] The interpretation of the word [concerns the Teacher of Righteousness who] reveals just teaching …[90]

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[88] Ibid., 10; emphasis added.
[89] Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 190.
[90] Ibid., 191.

The specific portion under examination, from 40:11, builds the illustration of the Lord as the Shepherd of his people, carrying young lambs and gently guiding the mother sheep. However, the Qumran interpreter claims that this refers to the Teacher of Righteousness—the founder of the Qumran community of Essenes—revealing his teaching to the community. As in most of the pesharim, no textual correspondence is provided between the original context and the interpretation.

> 1QMicah Pesher (1Q14 [1QpMic])
>
> Frag. 10 … [Mic 1:5-6 What are the 'high places' of Judah? Is it not Je]rusa[lem? I will reduce Samaria] [to a country ruin, to a plot of vines.] The interpretation of this concerns the Spreader of Lies [since he has misdirected] simpletons. Mic 1:5 'What are the "high places" of Judah? [Is it not Je]rusalem? The interpretation of this concerns the Teacher of Righteousness who [teaches the law to his council] and to all those volunteering to join the chosen of [God, carrying out the law] in the council of the Community, those who will be saved on the day of judgement …] …[91]

Although the contextual, historical meaning of this verse would appear to refer to the coming judgment of Samaria, the scribe here provides his pesher interpretation and claims that these verses refer to the "Spreader of Lies" (presumably an enemy of the Essenes).[92] Interestingly, Micah 1:5 is repeated a second time. In the pesher interpretation of 1:5, "Jerusalem" is asserted to refer to the Teacher of Righteousness. Again, there is no contextual evidence provided for this assertion.

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[91] Ibid., 194.

[92] The Essenes frequently gave titles to various individuals—whether good or bad. Consider Bruce, "One source of difficulty lies in the fact that leading personalities are denoted by descriptive titles rather than by personal names. We read much about the Teacher of Righteousness, the Wicked Priest, the Man of Falsehood, and the Seekers after Smooth Things; but there are many characters in the history of the Second Jewish Commonwealth who might be so described" (*Biblical Exegesis*, 20).

4QNahum Pesher (4Q169 [4QpNah])

> Frags. 3-4 col. II … Nah 3:1 Alas the bloody city, all of it [treachery,] stuffed with loot! Its interpretation: it is the city of Ephraim, those looking for easy interpretations, in the final days, since they walk in treachery and lies.
>
> Frags. 3-4 col. III … Nah 3:7 They shall say: Nineveh is laid waste, who will be sorry for her? Where shall I find comforters for you? Its interpretation concerns those looking for easy interpretations, whose council will die and whose society will be disbanded … *Nah 3:8* Do you act better than Am[mon, seated between] the Niles? … Its interpretation: Amon is Manasseh and the Niles are the important people of Manasseh, the nobles of the [people who surround Ma[nasseh].[93]

These fragments containing commentary on Nahum 3:1, 7, 8 are included above to demonstrate several examples of the Essenes' demeaning view of other "interpretations." Throughout the entirety of 4QNahum Pesher, "interpretations" other than those given by the Teacher of Righteousness are viewed as contrary to the true meaning of the divine communication. Although the context of these passages from Nahum does not refer to this concept, the Essene scribe offers a new interpretation—claiming that his interpretation alone is correct. Furthermore, in the commentary on 3:8 (above), there is no textual evidence to support the claim that "Amon is Manasseh and the Niles are the important people of Manasseh." Again, the pesher of Nahum clearly illustrates a non-contextual hermeneutical approach.

1QHabakkuk Pesher (1QpHab):

> Col. I [Hab 1:1-2 Oracle received by the prophet Habakkuk in a vision. For how long, YHWH] will I ask for help without [you hearing me; shout: Violence! to you without you saving me? The

[93] Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 196-97.

> interpretation of this concerns the beginning of the [final] generation …
>
> Col. V … Hab 1:13b Why are you staring, traitors, and you maintain your silence when a wicked person consumes someone more upright than himself? Its interpretation concerns the House of Absalom and the members of his council, who kept silent at the time of the reproach of the Teacher of Righteousness, and did not help him against the Man of Lies, who rejected the Law in the midst of their whole Comm[unity] …
>
> Col VII And God told Habakkuk to write what was going to happen to the last generation, but he did not let him know the end of the age. … Its interpretation concerns the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God has disclosed all the mysteries of the words of his servants, the prophets.[94]

Among the pesher documents from Qumran, few have received as much analysis and consideration as the Habakkuk Commentary. These selected portions above from *1QpHab* were included to accomplish two goals: (1) display some of the clearest examples of the non-contextual nature of pesher, and (2) reveal the presuppositions of the Qumran community. As in the previous examples, a Scripture passage is first cited, and then the scribe provides the pesher ("Its interpretation concerns …"). In the second example (*Col V*) on Habakkuk 1:13b, the scribe provides a rather surprising interpretation. In its original context, 1:13 does not refer to the "House of Absalom," nor to the situation described. Additionally, in the third example (*Col VII*), there is certainly no textual evidence from the cited passage that to the Teacher of Righteousness God has "disclosed all the mysteries of the words of … the prophets." However, it must be remembered that the Qumran community presupposed that the prophets—in this case Habakkuk—was only given the rāz. As such, in the minds of the Essenes, the Teacher of Righteousness was able to provide the true interpretation—the pesher.

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[94] Ibid., 197-200.

As one of the most studied pesharim, many resources for study are available for the Habakkuk Commentary. One of particular worth is the following list of "common characteristics" demonstrated by the Qumran pesher. The following list is reproduced from Brownlee concerning the Habakkuk Commentary:[95]

> (1) Everything the ancient prophet wrote has a *veiled, eschatological meaning*.
> (2) Since the ancient prophet wrote cryptically, his meaning is often to be ascertained through a *forced, or abnormal construction of the Biblical text*.
> (3) The prophet's meaning may be detected through the study of the *textual* or *orthographic peculiarities* in the transmitted text. Thus the interpretation frequently turns upon the special readings of the text cited.
> (4) *A textual variant*, i.e., a different reading from the one cited, may also assist interpretation.
> (5) The application of the features of a verse may be determined by *analogous circumstance*, or by
> (6) Allegorical propriety.
> (7) For the full meaning of the prophet, *more than one meaning* may be attached to his words.
> (8) In some cases the original prophet so completely veiled his meaning that he can be understood only by an *equation of synonyms*, attaching to the original word a secondary meaning of one of the synonyms.
> (9) Sometimes the prophet veiled his message by writing one word instead of another, the interpreter being able to recover the prophet's meaning by a *rearrangement of the letters in a word*, or by
> (10) *The substitution of similar letters* for one or more of the letters in the word of the Biblical text.

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[95] W. H. Brownlee, "Biblical Interpretation among the Sectaries of the Dead Sea Scrolls," *BA*14 (1951): 54-76; cited from 60-62; emphasis original. Brownlee devotes most of the article to demonstrating the occurrences of these hermeneutical principles in 1QpHab. 1QpHab, the Habakkuk Commentary, is referred to as DSH in both Brownlee, "Biblical Interpretation," as well as Stendahl, *School of Matthew*.

> (11) Sometimes the prophet's meaning is to be derived by *the division of one word into two or more parts*, and by expounding the parts.
> (12) At times the original prophet concealed his message beneath abbreviations, so that the cryptic meaning of a word is to be evolved through *interpretation of words, or parts of words, as abbreviations*.
> (13) *Other passages of scripture* may illumine the meaning of the original prophet.

Each of these criteria demonstrates atomistic and non-contextual exegesis. As such, it seems best to consider all pesher as non-contextual. It is important to recognize that the pesher literature demonstrates a strand of midrash which is drastically different than much of the midrash examined above.

Pesher Evaluation

All in all, pesher, while included in the broader category midrash, involves considerable difference from most other midrashic literature, especially that which is demonstrated in the NT. Unlike the LXX, Targums, and Midrash Rabbah, Qumran pesher seeks to provide a new and fresh meaning, apart from an appeal to the original context. Porton summarizes pesher well:

> The unique character of the *pesher* when compared to the other examples of *midrash* … should be obvious. First the major emphasis on the eschatological cannot be found in any other class of *midrash* … Second, no other type of *midrash* … takes such freedoms with the biblical text.[96]

Since no other type of midrash deals in quite the same way as the Qumran community did in their pesher, a sharp distinction must be drawn.[97] Ultimately, it seems best to include pesher in

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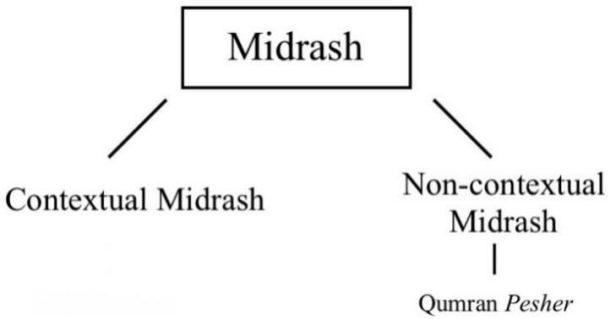
[96] Porton, "Defining Midrash," 77.

[97]Even Longenecker acknowledges this distinction, "Qumran distinguishes itself from rabbinic interpretation, for while in the talmudic literature there is a contemporizing treatment of Holy Writ that seeks to

the non-contextual midrash category, as the diagram below illustrates:



Even when pesher is compared with much non-contextual midrash, noticeable differences arise. For example, while many non-contextual midrashic documents will claim obscure application, Qumran pesher claims completely new interpretation. Although modern exegetes can rightfully classify this as "re-interpretation," Bruce raises the point that the Teacher of Righteousness and his followers in the Qumran community would have instead believed their pesher to be "the true and proper interpretation of the prophet's words."[98] The point is that there were not "multiple meanings," but rather *one* meaning, which only the pesher interpreter could discover.

Ultimately, while individuals such as Juel argue that the "conclusion that Qumran or rabbinic exegetes do greater violence to the scriptural text is a matter of taste,"[99] it must be made clear that the hermeneutical and methodological presuppositions differed significantly. Although both may have interpreted the OT in non-contextual manners, it is only the Qumran composers of pesher who assumed that they alone held the only true interpretation. While many midrashic documents demonstrate a plurality of competing interpretations, pesher

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make God's Word relevant to the present circumstances and ongoing situations, among the Dead Sea covenanters the biblical texts were looked on from the perspective of eminent apocalyptic fulfillment" (*Biblical Exegesis*, 25).

[98] Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis*, 17.

[99] Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 51.

documents unanimously claim a single and new interpretation of the text.

Implications and Conclusion

Clearly the topics of midrash and pesher are not equivalent. As demonstrated above, it is best to define midrash as the interpretation of a scriptural text. Within this broad category, many cases of contextual and non-contextual midrash exist. Despite the frequent assertion of many scholars that midrash assumes non-contextual exegesis, this clearly is not the case. Rather, it is readily apparent that contextual midrash must be embraced as a legitimate type of interpretation. With this in mind, it is evident that the NT authors could engage in midrash, yet do so in a completely contextual way. Again, while this does not prove the NT authors' contextual use of the OT, it certainly raises the possibility.

Additionally, as demonstrated above, it is best to define pesher as the non-contextual interpretation of a scriptural text. Although pesher can be categorized as a type of midrash (perhaps more specifically, as a type of non-contextual midrash), significant differences between the two are evident. The primary difference is that while midrash may offer haphazard interpretations, pesher rejects all prior interpretations in favor of the new "eschatological" interpretation offered by the Teacher of Righteousness (and the Qumran interpreters who followed his methodology). This is nothing short of a complete rejection of the historical and contextual meaning. As such, midrash and pesher must be properly understood as dramatically different interpretive methods.

Overall, the NT authors must be understood in light of their own usage of the OT. This study serves to better locate the NT authors in their historical and cultural situations, and to demonstrate that there is no one monolithic Second Temple exegetical approach to interpreting the OT. Therefore, blanket statements alleging the NT authors' non-contextual hermeneutics (such as those made by Enns, Longenecker, Stendahl, Ellis, and others) are simply overgeneralizations of certain strands of midrash. While non-contextual midrash was

certainly prevalent, for one to assume that the NT authors employed it because some of their contemporaries did, is an invalid argument. Ultimately, this distinction between contextual and non-contextual approaches raises the possibility that the NT authors may have utilized Second Temple exegetical techniques, yet consistently remained loyal to the original intention of the OT.[100]

[100] This conclusion aligns quite well with that of Moo, who states, "The New Testament use of Jewish exegetical methods does not lead necessarily to the misinterpretation of the Old Testament; nor does it, in itself, constitute a problem for the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scripture" ("Problem," 194).

(Re)Defining the Gospels: Mark as a Test Case, Part One

Wayne Slusser

Abstract: The Gospel accounts are stories about Jesus Christ communicated through a common literary genre known as narrative. Although narrative is the literary medium used to categorize these accounts, the Gospels are more than narrative. They are a unique type of narrative; a sub-genre. They report biographical, historical, and theological information regarding a central character, Jesus Christ. This article proposes that the Gospels fit into a sub-genre of narrative; theological narrative biography. This proposed sub-genre category aims to account for the intention of the author, and the characteristics common within the Gospels. The intent of this article is to propose a sub-genre category that explicates the unique nature of the Gospel accounts.

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How did the biblical authors communicate their information as it was revealed to them by God? As one reads the text, it is apparent as to what is said because we have the written text. But the concern of this paper is not *what* is said, rather *how* it is communicated to the reader. In other words, how does the author structure his story, letter, argument, sermon, etc., so that communication is possible?

Today's reader has the difficult task of interpreting the biblical author's communication that originated in another language, time period, and culture; was addressed to different recipients; and united two unique authors, the divine and the human. Given these characteristics of the text, part of the reader's responsibility is to know how the author communicated to his original recipients. What basic framework was used? The

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author's style of writing typically represents the culture and history of his time period. In other words, the interpreter must know the genre that was used to communicate the text.

Genre is the basic framework in which communication occurs. Written communication or literature is not packaged in neutral containers but reflects the social and cultural conventions of the time in which the text is written. Literary genre therefore affects how writing is to be interpreted.[2] Literary genre of all kinds is interpreted differently (e.g., epistles versus Gospels), for each possesses genuinely unique features.

Sub-genre, on the other hand, is a sub-category of the larger genre framework in which the text is to be understood. In other

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[2] The interpreter is to keep in mind, however, that genre is simply a guide or framework for interpretation; never is it to impose a rigid set of requirements to one's exegetical study. For example, Paul's letters are often interpreted by scholars through the application of categories from classic rhetoric (see Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990]; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996]; and F. F. Forrester Church, "Rhetorical Structure and Design in Paul's Letter to Philemon," *HTR* 71 [January-April 1978]: 17-33). The suppositions that underlie this interpretation are twofold; that is, the ancients themselves would have been familiar with and recognized these categories of rhetoric, and Paul would have intended to use them. Porter's contention is "Thus, although categories of ancient rhetoric may have been 'in the air' of the Greco-Roman world, their use in the writing or analysis of letters cannot be substantiated. ... The above conclusion does not preclude exegeting the Pauline letters in terms of the categories of ancient rhetoric, however, as long as it is kept in mind that these categories, especially those regarding the arrangement of the parts of the speech, probably did not consciously influence the writing of the letters and almost assuredly did not figure significantly in their earliest interpretation (Stanley E. Porter, "Exegesis of the Pauline Letters, Including the Deutero-Pauline Letters," in *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter [Leiden: Brill, 2002], 542-43). Although this is an example of Pauline literature, it serves to simply demonstrate the value of genre in the interpretive process without imposing outside guidelines to determine meaning; rather genre provides help to discover meaning.

words, a sub-genre facilitates a more distinct category that possesses similarities to the genre category, yet does not possess all the defining characteristics of the larger category. Sub-genre is its own unique category. Therefore, the interpreter of literature must identify the literary genre and in the case of the Gospel accounts, the literary sub-genre, and analyze how the elements of both provide an understanding of the whole.[3]

It is important to note two goals for this article. First, the goal is not to complicate matters through the proposal of new terminology; a redefining of the traditional long-standing term known as *Gospel*. Rather the point is to explicate more fully and carefully the intent of the Gospel authors. Second, it is also *not* the intent to minimize the significance of these accounts to those who read them, nor to reduce them down to mere pieces of literature as if they were not divinely written. The point, however, is to more clearly, and succinctly, see the biblical writings as literature.

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[3] Grant R. Osborne sees the significance of genre identification for interpretation because "all writers couch their messages in a certain genre in order to give the reader sufficient rules by which to decode that message. These hints guide the reader (or hearer) and provide clues for interpretation" (*The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, rev and exp. ed. [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006], 26). David E. Aune emphasizes that "the original significance that a literary text had for both author and reader is tied to the genre of that text, so that the meaning of the part is dependent upon the meaning of the whole" (*The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* [Philadelphia, PA: Westminster P, 1987], 13). E. D. Hirsch Jr. claims that "an understanding of all verbal meaning is necessarily genre-bound" (*Validity in Interpretation* [New Haven, CT: Yale U P, 1967], 76). Richard A. Burridge states, "We have seen that genre functions by providing a set of expectations as a sort of contract between author and reader. It is constituted and mediated through a variety of different generic features, none of which need be peculiar to the genre; however, when they are taken all together, they reveal a particular pattern, which enables us to recognize the genre" (*What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* [SNTSMS 70, Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1992], 109).

Literary Genre: An Overview

Literature requires interpretation, for it is a presentation of human expression. However, it is not just human expression but it is also an art form. This art form is characterized by technique, structure, and beauty. The most common way of defining literature is through its kind and type, or literary genres. The New Testament is not unique. The authors communicate their meaning through literary genres. This literary approach pays close attention to what the author expresses through content and the way in which he expresses his content. The influence of culture and historical conditions upon the writing of the Bible is important to its understanding.[4]

The various cultural and historical influences on the writing of the NT include, but are not limited to, the Greco-Roman world.[5] The types of texts that comprise the NT are culture-specific; that is, each text has a variety of linguistic elements that can only be specific and distinctive to that culture.[6] The culture-specific features of the Greco-Roman world provide understanding as one classifies the text into literary genre.

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[4] Aune states, "Even though the New Testament is published between two covers like any other book, it is not quite as homogeneous as it first appears. It is not a 'book' in the usual sense but a collection of twenty-seven compositions in various literary genres by roughly a dozen authors written over a hundred-year period (c.a. A.D. 50 to 150) in an ancient language (Greek) and within an alien culture (the ancient Mediterranean world)" (*New Testament in its Literary Environment*, 13).

[5] There is not a discussion regarding the influence of the OT upon the writing of the NT. The OT does not possess the similarities as that of the Greco-Roman biographies. Therefore, it is the understanding of Hellenism that more closely relates to the Gospel NT accounts and are used in the proposed definition of the sub-genre of narrative, theological narrative biography.

[6] Robert A. Dooley and Stephen H. Levinsohn, *Analyzing Discourse: A Manual of Basic Concepts* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2001), 7. It is important to understand that genre is tied to its era and literary milieu. See also Anthony R. Cross, "Genres of the New Testament," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000), 402.

Definition of Literary Genre

Literary genre is simply defined as the kind or type of literature by which a written text is classified. Literary genres consist of related texts that have "coherent and recurring configuration of literary features involving form (including structure and style), content, and function."[7] They have both external (compositional form) and internal (contents) components that are uniquely assembled by the author that assists the reader with interpretation. The external components are "the overall structural pattern, the form . . . style, interrelationships and content. Internal factors include the cohesive plot, action, narrative voice, setting and language."[8]

Literary genre is distinct from literary forms. The composite whole, of which constituent parts are made, is literary genre; whereas the parts or smaller units are the literary forms.[9] For example, the parable is a literary form which works of many genres may include. Due to the complexities within the discipline of genre criticism, this distinction is necessary so as not to confuse the whole and parts of a given text.

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[7] Aune, *New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 13. See also Craig L. Blomberg, "The Diversity of Literary Genres in the New Testament," in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001), 272; John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984), 16; and J. J. Collins, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," *Semeia* 14 (1979): 1.

[8] Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 182. The basic glossary definition offered by Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moisés Silva includes both components (*Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, rev.and exp. ed. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007], 335). See also René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1956), 231.

[9] Some authors do not distinguish between these. See J. L. Bailey and L. D. Vander Broek, *Literary Forms in the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1992); and D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese (*Cracking Old Testament Codes: A Guide to Interpreting the Literary Genres of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 5-27. The purpose of this distinction is to provide clarification regarding the definition of literary genre.

Literary genre therefore is discovered through the discipline known as genre criticism, one of several subdisciplines of NT studies. Genre criticism is "probably best understood simply as a tool to discover the situational circumstances within which the document came into being."[10] It is the discovering of unique features that make the text one type of genre as opposed to another type. It works with the canonical form of the text as it is written and not any form before or after that.[11] Genre criticism identifies and analyzes the text as it is; it does not do so without paying attention to the form, style, and function of the text.[12] Genre "becomes a mediator between form and content; it constructs and responds to recurring situation. . . . Genre is truly, therefore, a marker of meaning . . . a dynamic rather than a static concept."[13]

Thus, it is important to note that though genre criticism is essential to interpretation, "the idea of genre . . . is not one that is drawn from *outside* the text . . . but rather something that is drawn from reading the work itself."[14]

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[10] Brook W. R. Pearson and Stanley E. Porter, "The Genres of the New Testament," in *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 133.

[11] Tremper Longman III uses the term *genre analysis* as opposed to *genre criticism*. He wishes to communicate the necessity of the text and its content along a synchronic analysis rather than a diachronic analysis in order to substantiate that it is the written text and its form that necessitates a given genre classification. He states, "What I label genre analysis bears a close resemblance to form criticism. The major difference is that form criticism is a diachronic analysis, whereas genre analysis is synchronic, concerned to identify the type of literature, not its prehistory" ("Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation," in *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*, ed. Moisés Silva [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 141).

[12] See these helpful resources: V. Philips Long, "The Art of Biblical History," in *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*, ed. Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 306; Grant R. Osborne, "Genre Criticism—Sensus Literalis," *TrinJ* 4, no. 2 (1983).

[13] Amy Devitt, "Generalizing about Genre: New Conceptions of an Old Concept," *College Composition and Communication* 44 (December 1993): 578-80.

[14] Pearson and Porter state, "For example, in the case of the one who suggests that, as *Hamlet* is a tragedy, all of the characteristics of tragedy,

This understanding is critical because all communication is genre-bound.[15] If indeed genre captures the structural and contextual elements of written communication, then an understanding of genre is essential for the interpretation of written texts.

Role of Literary Genre in Interpretation

Literary genre is essential to interpretation, for it is part and parcel of the grammatical-historical method of exegesis. Literary genre is not just for the mere classification of texts, though literary genre provides this, but it provides the literary context for a given sentence or paragraph. In short, it is not just to classify but also clarify. The concept and classifications of literary genre is important for interpretation, for it is this "that describes the broad contours and features of a particular literary work."[16] Literary genre is the epistemological tool for discovering the intended meaning.[17]

Literary genre is that framework by which the author accepts and shapes his text in adherence to it. It is a literary convention that communicates not only the text, but also meaning to its readers or hearers.[18] At the same time, literary

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ancient and modern, must be understood before one can appreciate the significance of the action in the play, … [Whereas the correct use of genre is] understanding that the action in *Hamlet*, while similar to other works often labeled as tragedies, is unique to itself and can only be understood by a thorough examination thereof" ("Genres of the New Testament," 133).

[15] Edgar V. McKnight write, "The question of genre cannot be avoided, for every reader reads a text in the light of its presumed purpose and nature as a representation of reality and/or a work of art, and in light of the conventions of that particular sort of writing" ("Literary Criticism," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1992], 478).

[16] Michael H. Burer, "Narrative Genre: Studying the Story," in *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Buist M. Fanning (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 198.

[17] Osborne, "Genre Criticism," 1-27.

[18] Kevin J. Vanhoozer states, "Genre thus enables the reader to interpret meaning and to recognize what kinds of truth claims are being

genre is not a self-imposed structure that determines meaning. Literary genre is simply how an author expresses his content to the audience. It is the style and medium by which communication takes place. Whatever literary genre the author chooses to communicate cannot be separated from the content within this medium. Any interpretation of a written text therefore requires the analysis of genre, for it is impossible to separate what is said from how it is said.[19] The role of literary genre for interpretation is critical to an understanding of the text as a whole since the choice of genre complements the meaning of the text.

Misuse of Literary Genre in Interpretation

Literary genre is the guide or framework the author implements to communicate a given text and the interpreter uses to understand the author's intended meaning of that text. Though genre identification is indispensable to interpretation, that is, meaning is genre-bound, it is also important for the interpreter to know that genres are not absolute and mutually distinctive categories. With this in mind, the interpreter must always be aware of the context that surrounds the passage. In

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made in and by a text" ("The Semantics of Biblical Literature: Truth and Scripture's Diverse Literary Forms," in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986], 80). Leland Ryken states that literary genre is nothing more than "a norm or expectation to guide the reader in his encounter with the text" (*How to Read the Bible As Literature* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984], 25).

[19] Sandy and Giese observe, "To read generically is to sign a rhetorical contract with the author to understand his work in the terms that he shared within his intended audience. The task of hermeneutics is not to develop new procedures of understanding but to clarify the conditions in which understanding occurs" (*Cracking Old Testament Codes*, 38). Richard A. Burridge states, "We have seen that genre functions by providing a set of expectations as a sort of contract between author and reader. It is constituted and mediated through a variety of different generic features, none of which need be peculiar to the genre; however, when they are taken all together, they reveal a particular pattern, which enables us to recognize the genre" (*What Are the Gospels?*, 109).

other words, it is critical the interpreter use literary genre in two ways. The first is related to classification and the second to methodology.

First, the interpreter is to remember that literary genres are convenient categories to help with the interpretation process, but he must recognize that these genres are not rigid final forms in which the author fits his text. Literary genres possess family resemblances or a composite of features that individual texts share with other texts. The misuse of literary genre occurs when the interpreter is too dogmatic either in classification of genre or the use of this classification as a means for interpretation.[20] The use of literary genre must be understood in light of its flexibility and functionality, not its rigidity and formality. The Gospels are a case in point. The Gospels are more than history or biography. They are a unique synthesis of three characteristics: theology, narrative, and biography.

Second, the interpreter is to use literary genre alongside of the "exegesis and historical and biographical theologies . . . . For one without the other would provide an imbalanced, imprecise understanding of a text."[21] The misuse of literary genre occurs when the interpreter only uses the generic classification as the means of interpretation; that is, a presuppositional generic approach to the text. Literary genre is not to be used independently of the literal-grammatical-historical method of interpretation.

Summary of Literary Genre

A written text is classified based on its common literary features: form, content, and function. The texts that share

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[20] William G. Doty explains using Paul's writings: "I argue . . . that in his letters a genre or subgenre was created, and that our task is that of identifying the stages and steps in generic construction. Instead of arguing that there is one clearly identified Pauline form, I argue that there is a basic understanding of structure by which Paul wrote, but that this basic understanding could be modified on occasion, and that the basic understanding itself was something that came into being only gradually" (*Letters in Primitive Christianity* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973], 21).

[21] Sandy and Giese, *Cracking Old Testament Codes*, 42-43.

common literary features are classified into literary genres. Literary genres guide the reader. They are the basic framework used by the author to communicate his story. Genre enables the reader to treat the text as a whole, that is, unified communicative acts. Through this unified whole, genre is able to join together the author, text, and reader, for genre helps to facilitate *what* the text is and *how* the text is to be understood.

Narrative as a Genre

The interpretation of any written text involves the author, text, and reader. The written text is a form of language that is communicated (author), portrayed in a given situation (text), and is then interpreted (reader). Written texts can be classified into genre, or as Robert Longacre posits, "Every language has a system of discourse types (e.g., narrative)"[22] and it is through these discourse types that written communication takes place. Narrative is a discourse type. It is the dominant form of discourse in the Bible.[23]

Definition of Narrative

Narrative is communication in which the author organizes the sequence of episodes within a specified context.[24] These communicative episodes along with participants (characters) are written literary texts that form the plot of the story. It is the story then that both presents episodes and reveals the essence of

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[22] Robert E. Longacre, *Joseph, A Story of Divine Providence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39-48* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 59. A *discourse* is a linguistic term indicating *how* a written text is communicated.

[23] Walter C. Kaiser Jr. "I Will Remember the Deeds of the Lord: The Meaning of Narrative," in *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, rev. & exp. ed., ed. Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 122-23.

[24] Ibid. "Narrative in its broadest sense is an account of specific space-time events and participants whose stories are recorded with a beginning, a middle, and an end" (123-24).

the characters.[25] The power of the story is the unique ability to involve the reader in what is happening.[26] According to Perrin, the function of the story "is to help the reader hear the voices, take part in the action, get involved in the plot."[27] Therefore, narrative is the product of a composition that communicates a message in which its meaning is ascertained by a reader who encounters characters acting within certain settings in sequential order.[28]

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[25] Osborne notes, "The biblical narratives contain both history and theology, and I would add that these are brought together via a 'story' format. The historical basis for the stories is crucial, but the representation of that story in the text is the actual object of interpretation" (*Hermeneutical Spiral*, 200). Sydney Greidanus agrees with Osborne. He notes, "Although there is much to be said for the power of story and how it works apart from the question of historicity, it must also be said that treating all biblical narratives like parables is a gross oversimplification, for not all biblical narratives are non-historical. . . . The issue here again is the intent or purpose of the text. If that intent . . . entails relating historical events, then sidestepping that intent in one's interpretation fails to do full justice to that narrative's meaning" (*The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 199). See also the contribution of Michael H. Burer, "Narrative Genre," 198-202. Contra Hans Frei who understands narrative as not containing history; rather it is 'history-like' (*Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* [New Haven, CT: Yale U P, 1974], chap 1).

[26] Meir Sternberg calls narrative "a functional structure, a means to a communicative end, a transaction between the narrator and the audience on whom he wishes to produce a certain effect by way of certain strategies" (*The Poetics of Biblical Narrative, Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* [Bloomington, IN: Indiana U P], 1985), 1.

[27] Norman Perrin, *The New Testament: An Introduction* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 165.

[28] Robert C. Tannehill states the importance of the reader's understanding of the composition of a Gospel as a whole, and especially as narrative. He writes, "The outline of a Gospel has also been a subject of frequent study. This usually results in a topical outline with neat divisions. Such an outline may be appropriate to a well-constructed essay, but it is not necessarily appropriate to a narrative. There are special aspects of *narrative* composition which biblical scholars will continue to ignore if there is not greater awareness of how stories are told and how they

Elements of Narrative

Narratives are built with the basic elements of structure, plot, setting, characters, and point of view. They provide a focus on the work as a whole, not just the individual paragraph. The assumption is that each narrative consists of individual paragraphs.[29] In order to understand narrative, the reader must seek to appreciate each of the elements individually and then conclude how each contributes to the whole.[30]

Structure

The structure of the narrative refers to the order of episodes; that is, the sequential order the reader views as he reads the story. These episodes[31] can be ordered in a number of ways; chronological, topical, or geographical. This ordering is known as redaction; that is, the arranging of episodes in such a way so as to communicate the theology of the narrative.[32]

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communicate" ("The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role," *JRel* 57 [1977]: 387).

[29] Robert J. Banks, "Narrative Exegesis," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1992), 570.

[30] Tannehill clarifies that a story is a representation of a narrator. It is through the choice of the narrator that the reader understands *how* the story is told and that these choices are a reflection of his emphases and values ("Disciples in Mark," 387).

[31] Mark Alan Powell uses the term *event* rather than episode. He defines an event as "incidents or happenings that occur within a story, and a story cannot exist without them. . . . Simply to consider events as the content of the narrative or as definitive of what we have called the story is not enough. One must also consider the 'story-as-discoursed,' the manner in which the events are presented" (*What Is Narrative Criticism*? [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990], 35).

[32] The author's use of redaction here is distinguished from the critical methodology redaction criticism. Here it is assumed that the biblical author arranges his text to communicate meaning. However, this work does not assume that Mark has done so through the use of outside sources such as Q, L, etc. Scholars recognize that these sources are hypothetical and allow them to become the basis for the composition of the Gospel account. This

The structure of the narrative is communicated through episodes or paragraphs that are interrelated, thus forming a whole. The structure is patterned through literary devices that ultimately organize the text into clauses, sentences, and paragraphs. These literary devices include, but are not limited to, repetition, inclusion, and chiasm.[33] It is therefore important for the reader to note the structure or patterns of narrative, for these help to assist with the apprehension of the story through the author's decisions regarding organization and arrangement of material. Structure answers the *how* of the organization of the story.

Plot

The plot of a narrative is similar to the structure in that it too communicates a coherent arrangement of episodes that are interrelated; thus it is a complete communicative act or whole story.[34] The difference between plot and structure is that the plot is concerned more with the linking between episodes, or the movement from one episode to another and its cause,[35] not just the order or arrangement of episodes. Plot answers the *what* of the story.

Setting

The setting of the narrative "refers to the where and when or the spatial, temporal and social locations of narrative events."[36] The setting, however, does not include just the events of the narrative, but can also include the characters of the narrative. In other words, the characters themselves can speak throughout the

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necessarily follows because some deny the traditional authorship of the Gospel accounts.

[33] See the list in Powell, 32-33; also David Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew's Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*, JSNTSS 31 (Sheffield: Almond P, 1988), 13-20.

[34] Ryken, *How to Read the Bible*, 40.

[35] Walter C. Kaiser Jr and Moisés Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 126.

[36] Stamps, "Rhetorical and Narratological Criticism," 232. Powell states, "Settings are the adverbs of literary structure: they designate when, where, and how the action occurs" (*What Is Narrative Criticism*, 69).

narrative or they can simply blend into the background, thus becoming part of the setting.

There are three types of settings in narrative. They include spatial, temporal, and social. A spatial setting pertains to the location or space in which the story is told. It refers to any "physical environment in which the characters of the story live as well as the 'props' and 'furniture' that make up that environment."[37] A temporal setting can refer to either chronological or typological time. The chronological reference is either a point in time or duration of time in which an action takes place. The typological time references, on the other hand, indicate the kind of time within which an action transpires,[38] e.g., night as opposed to day.

Last, social setting is a cultural climate. It is "a set of beliefs, attitudes, and customs that prevail in the world of the story."[39] Especially given the time period in which the Bible was written, the reader must familiarize himself with the social and cultural customs of the time. The notation of the setting provides a conceptualization of the world around a character within the story that may otherwise be restricted due to the cultural and temporal gap between reader and text. The setting answers the *when* and *where* of the story.

Characters

The characters of the narrative are those who perform the various activities that are "generally crucial to the development of the story."[40] The majority of the time these characters are people; however they can also be animals or non-human entities. A group of people can also serve as a single character (e.g., the crowds/multitudes in the Gospels). Typically, it is the characters within a narrative that produce actions, thus

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[37] Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism*, 70.

[38] Ibid., 73.

[39] *Ryken, How To Read the Bible*, 36. Powell states that a social setting concerns "social circumstances. These include political institutions, class structures, economic systems, social customs, and general cultural context assumed to be operative in the work" (*What Is Narrative Criticism*, 74).

[40] Stamps, "Rhetorical and Narratological Criticism," 231.

communicating the plot of the story. Sometimes, however, the author uses the identity and personality of his characters to show what the characters themselves are like in the narrative. For example, the author either makes direct statements about the characters (e.g., Matthew states that Joseph is a just man, 1:19) or uses the characters' points of view about other characters (e.g., John the Baptist calls the religious leaders a "brood of vipers" in Matthew 3:7).[41]

It is clear throughout narrative that the characters are essential. They often provide the means by which an author may tell the story. They also offer responses and attitudes throughout the story giving the reader a point-of-view that would not have been otherwise provided, and characters, due to their traits and characteristics, also bring the reader into a worldview that would not have been otherwise present. The characters answer the *who* of any story.

Point of View

The point of view of a narrative refers to the reference point an author uses to organize the story. The point of view is told from some reference point within that has an evaluative consequence. In biblical narrative the narrator provides a reliable perspective and dominates most narratives. As the narrator communicates his story, he may communicate it as one of the characters. The author's reference point provides the reader with a reliable point of view.[42] Grant Osborne claims that point of view is a perspective taken by the narrator and characters of a story. This perspective provides the force or significance of the story for the reader. In other words, "every author has a certain message that he or she wishes to get across to the reader. . . . This point of view guides the reader to the significance of the story and determines the actual 'shape' that

[41] Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism*, 52-53.

[42] Powell calls this the evaluative point-of-view and "may be defined as the standards of judgment by which readers are led to evaluate the events, characters, and settings that comprise the story" (Ibid., 24). Ryken states that the reader determines the perspective by which he is to share with the storyteller (*How To Read the Bible*, 61).

the author gives to the narrative."[43] The *basis* or *reason* for the episodes within the narrative is established through the point of view.

The Study of Narrative: Narrative Criticism

Traditionally NT scholars have discussed narrative in terms of three related schools of thought. They are source, form, and redaction criticism. During the eighteenth century scholars spent their efforts finding the earliest sources that underlie the Synoptic Gospels.[44] Source criticism is defined as the "attempt to identify the written traditions behind the Gospels in order to determine the relationship of the Synoptics."[45] This method provided the scholar with an understanding of the materials used in the creation of the Gospels.

Before the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, scholars went another direction. The goal was no longer to study the Gospels as whole discourses, but to study the individual units that make up the Gospels. Form criticism represents the endeavor to determine the oral form of written documents or sources and to classify the material according to the various forms or categories or narrative, or discourse.[46] In other words, form criticism helped the scholar to

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[43] Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 204. See also Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond, 1983), 43-55.

[44] See the following for introductions: Robert H. Stein, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels: Origin and Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001); Darrell L. Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002); and D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 85-103. Burer defines synoptic as "the first three Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This is due to fact that they share common material and a common order, and thus can be profitably studied when viewed together" ("Narrative Genre," 204).

[45] Scot McKnight, *Interpreting the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 34.

[46] See also Darrell L. Bock, "Form Criticism," in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001), 106-27;

determine how the Gospel was compiled and then use this information to determine the historical accuracy of its form.

Although the holistic approach to the Gospels was left behind in the early twentieth century, it re-surfaced again during the second half of the twentieth century through a critical method known as redaction criticism. Redaction criticism "seeks to uncover the theology and setting of a writing by studying the ways the redactor or editor changed the traditions he inherited and the seams or transitions that the redactor used to link those traditions together."[47] It was through this method that scholars argued the Gospel writers were more than editors. They were now considered authors who edited, arranged, and shaped the accounts of Jesus' life in such a way that specific theological purposes were conveyed.

As a result the authorial purpose was rediscovered and scholars began to emphasize a holistic approach through the totality of the narrative of Gospel, for the narrative would now become the literary medium by which the Gospel accounts could be studied. This reemphasis is what led to literary analysis.[48] A more recent development however is narrative

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Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 79-85; Edgar V. McKnight, *What Is Form Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969). Burer provides the seminal works on form criticism (see "Narrative Genre," 204n24). They are Karl Ludwig Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu: Literarkritische Untersuchungen zur ältesten Jesusüberlieferung* (Berlin: Trowitzsch, 1919); Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, trans. Bertram Lee Woolf, Library of Theological Translations (New York: Scribner, 1971); Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh (New York: Harper & Row, 1963); and Vincent Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (London: Macmillan, 1933).

[47] Grant R. Osborne, "Redaction Criticism," in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001), 128. See also Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 103-12; Norman Perrin, *What Is Redaction Criticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970).

[48] Carson and Moo define literary criticism "as a catchall designation for contemporary approaches to the gospels that focus on careful study of the way the gospels function as pieces of literature" (*An Introduction to the New Testament*, 115).

criticism. Because of the underlying assumptions of the aforementioned critical methodologies (source, form, and redaction criticism), the focus here is narrative criticism.[49]

The reason for the study, and therefore consideration of narrative criticism, is because this method focuses upon the coherence of the text and its final form.[50] It examines the

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[49] One assumption of the critical methodologies, (source, form, and redaction criticism), is that they undermine the historicity of the Gospel accounts. In an edition of *Interpretation*, Mark A. Powell demonstrates that several scholars, both of secular and biblical literature, reject redaction criticism and related approaches and propose a narrative analysis of the Gospel of Mark. For example, Norman R. Petersen claims that the Gospel of Mark ought to be read as a narrative and not as a redaction ("Point of View in Mark's Narrative," *Semeia* 12 (1978): 119). David Rhoads understands the Gospel of Mark in terms of literary-critical concerns, not historical-critical concerns (David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark As Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 2nd ed. [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999]). Mark Powell claims the intent of narrative criticism provides a better interpretation because the historical-critical method (redaction criticism and others) does not take the interpretation of Mark as historically accurate ("Toward a Narrative-Critical Understanding of Mark," *Interpretation* 47, no. 4 [October 1993]: 342). Although some proponents of narrative criticism may not always assume historicity of the text (e.g., Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, see 18n51), the Markan scholars (Powell, Peterson, and Perrin) do assume the historicity of the Gospel of Mark. This article approaches the Gospel of Mark as a revelatory historical account of the details of Jesus' life and the surrounding events. It was written by John Mark.

See also Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes, eds, who state in their introduction, "Increasingly over the last twenty years the hegemony of historical methods for interpreting the Bible has been challenged by biblical critics unhappy with either the results or the very assumptions of historical-critical scholarship" (*To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993], 2). The purpose of their book is to introduce the most important methods of biblical criticism and their application.

[50] James L. Resseguie defines narrative criticism as "the 'what' of a text (its content) and the 'how' of a text (its rhetoric and structure) are analyzed as a complete tapestry, an organic whole" (*Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005], 18-19).

elements of a narrative (structure, plot, setting, characters, and point of view) and understands the relationship of these elements as a unified whole.[51] In other words, "narrative criticism assists the exegetical task by providing an interpretive perspective which can evaluate the purpose or significance of the 'what' and 'why' (structure and plot), the 'who' (characters), the 'when' and 'where' (setting), and the 'wherefore' (point-of-view) of the events in a biblical narrative."[52]

David M. Gunn stresses the literary importance of narrative criticism. He states that what is meant by narrative criticism is, "interpreting the existing text (in its 'final form') in terms primarily of its own story world, seen as replete with meaning, rather than understanding the text by attempting to reconstruct its sources and editorial history . . . Here meaning is to be found by close reading that identifies formal and conventional structures of the narrative, determines plot, develops characterization, distinguishes point of view, exposes language play, and relates all to some overarching, encapsulating theme. Unlike historical criticism, which in practice has segmented the text" ("Narrative Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, ed.. Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes [Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993], 171).

[51] Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark As Story*, 3-4. Though these scholars question the historic reliability of the Gospel of Mark, their method demonstrates the unity and coherence of narrative by emphasizing the unity of the final text. Thus, by understanding the story as a unified whole, the reader is able then to better appreciate its impact. The author of this work disagrees with the position of Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie regarding their view on the historicity of the Gospel of Mark. See also the discussion by Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 22-23.

[52] Stamps, "Rhetorical and Narratological Criticism," 232. David A. DeSilva states, "It invites precisely this attention to the story—the characters, plot and other literary features an author uses to create a story world—and to the effects the text invites and encourages in its readers" (*An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004], 395). See also Francis J. Moloney, "Narrative Criticism of the Gospels," in *A Hard Saying: The Gospel and Culture* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 85-105.

Some are cautious about narrative criticism.[53] For example, Stein claims that narrative criticism and its principles are primarily from the study of fictional literature, and narrative criticism seems to have too close a connection with reader-response criticism.[54] While appropriate, Powell balances Stein's critique. His contention is that "this movement [narrative criticism] developed within the field of biblical studies without an exact counterpart in the secular world."[55] As a matter of fact,

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[53] Osborne notes seven weaknesses. Though they are not intended to be a rejection of narrative criticism, he lists these weaknesses as a caution against excessive use. The weaknesses are a dehistoricizing tendency (a denial of any historical element in the text); setting aside the author (the present reader becomes the author of meaning rather than the 'past' author of the text); a denial of intended meaning (present reader becomes the author and produces his own meaning); reductionistic thinking (assuming meaning is only in narrative elements and not also in the exegetical and historical-research); imposition of modern literary categories on ancient genres (derivation of the text's character through modern fiction); preoccupation of obscure theories (use of technical language that is difficult to comprehend); and ignoring the understanding of the early church (not using the earliest of exegetes for information) (*Hermeneutical Spiral*, 212-16).

[54] Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BEC (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 18-19. Stein also notes that although the Gospel of Mark may read very much like a piece of fictional literature (a drama), he notes that "this is not because it is written in the genre of a Greek tragedy but because it tells the story of the most important person who ever lived—Jesus Christ, the Son of God!" (20). Reader-response criticism "emphasizes the role of the reader in determining meaning" (Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism*, 16). It is the reader who becomes the center of authority for interpretation, not the text. See also Jeffrey A. D. Weima, "Literary Criticism," in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001), 159-60; Greg Clark, "General Hermeneutics," in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, ed. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 114-16; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There A Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 27-29, 367-68.

[55] Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism*, 19. Stamps also argues that narrative criticism operates "with an underlying assumption that a text in all its parts has an overarching unity; this methodological assumption has been used to counter arguments for compositional incoherence. . . .

Resseguie notes three strengths to narrative criticism. The first strength focuses on the narrative text as a whole. He writes,

> Narrative criticism views the text as a whole. One of the acknowledged strengths of the narrative-critical method is that it avoids the fragmentation of the text associated with forms of historical criticism. . . . Narrative critics are interested in narratives as complete tapestries in which the parts fit together to form an organic whole.[56]

The second strength examines the nuances of the narrative as literature. In other words, "the narrative critic attends to the nuances and interrelationships of texts: its structure, rhetorical strategies, character development, arresting imagery, setting, point of view, and symbolism."[57] The third strength involves the effects of the narrative on the reader. "Since narrative criticism analyzes the narrative point of view, it can describe the text's effects upon a reader. . . . Narrative point of view exists to persuade the reader to see the world in a different way, to adopt a new perspective, or to abandon an old point of view."[58]

Although Stein's critique should not be ignored, one should not lose the emphasis of narrative criticism. It focuses on the final form of the text. The reader analyzes the arrangement of the textual components of narrative, or story, and assesses their effect on the story as a whole. It helps to answer *how* the narrative is put together. Narrative criticism also enables the reader to know *what* the authorial intended message is through an examination of the literary devices, or elements of narrative.

Narrative criticism has the means for integrating discourse digression and disjunction into the larger discourse purpose" ("Rhetorical and Narratological Criticism," 236).

[56] Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 38.

[57] Ibid., 39.

[58] Ibid., 40. Although Resseguie does not speak of a commitment to the historicity of the text as a strength of narrative criticism, the significance behind his strengths is the commitment to the text as a unified whole that avoids fragmenting the text in search of meaning. The strength of narrative criticism is that the meaning of a narrative stems from an understanding of the unity of the elements that constitute the narrative.

Therefore, narrative criticism provides the means by which the interpreter examines what the biblical author says and how he says it. In other words, narrative criticism complements genre criticism. While genre criticism provides the larger framework by which the reader understands, for example, the Gospel of Mark, narrative criticism provides particulars (e.g., structure, setting, etc.) that guide the reader through Mark to understand the historical, biographical, and theological components of Mark. The methods, genre criticism and narrative criticism, work together to enable interpreters to understand the text at the level of genre.

Summary of Narrative

Narrative is an arrangement of events (structure) within a given context (setting) that enables the interpreter to treat the text as a whole or a unified communicative act. This unified whole (plot), joins together people, animals, and non-human entities (characters) and their perspectives (point of view) to tell a story. It is through the study of these elements (narrative criticism) that author, text, and reader come together. Narrative therefore is a literary vehicle that facilitates the reading and hearing of the story itself to enable readers to interpret and understand the story more fully.

Gospel As a Sub-genre: Theological Narrative Biography

Traditionally scholars have used features or characteristics that are representative of either the structure or content of the text to define the Gospels. The purpose of this section is to propose a definition of a sub-genre category of narrative that may account for the Gospel's unique features. This paper proposes, or re-defines, the Gospels as theological narrative biographies.[59]

[59] The rationale behind the Gospels classified as a sub-genre, that is, theological narrative biographies, is to capture the different aspects unique to the Gospel accounts. The term *theological* represents the applicational

The preceding discussion clearly states that the Gospel accounts are stories or narratives, communicated through various elements. Fowler states, "The Gospel writers produced neither volumes of learned exegesis nor sermons, rather, they told stories; and if we wish to understand what the Gospels say, we should study how stories are told."[60] Therefore the Gospel accounts ought to be studied as narratives.

The Gospel accounts are narratives. However, they are more than narratives. Though Gospels share features of the larger category, narrative, they are unique and unlike any other type of narrative. The Gospel accounts have a unifying focus on the central character, Jesus Christ.[61] Due to this unifying focus they go beyond simply reporting biographical and historical information, they also explain and contain theology.[62] The

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aspect of the narrative for the reader; that is, the Gospels were written and geared to awaken and subsequently strengthen faith. The term *narrative* represents how the Gospel is structured. The term *biography* represents the life of the central figure of the story, that is, Jesus Christ.

[60] Robert M. Fowler, "Using Literary Criticism on the Gospels," *ChrCent* 26 (May 1982): 87-95.

[61] Roy B. Zuck writes, "The Gospels are collections of stories, far more packed with action than is customary in narrative. The overriding purpose of the Gospel stories is to explain and praise the person and work of Jesus … through his actions, his words, and the responses of other people" (*Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth* [Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 1991], 132). Graham N. Stanton agrees. He writes, "The Gospel writers give both the story [words and works] of Jesus and the significance of his story to their hearers AND readers. … Story and theology are intertwined. They tell the 'story' of Jesus in order to address the needs of the Christian communities to which they are writing. … The evangelists inform us both about the 'past' story of Jesus of Nazareth and also about the 'present' significance that they attach to Jesus who, they claim, is the Messiah—Christ, the Son of God" (*The Gospels and Jesus*, 2nd ed. [New York: Oxford U P, 2002], 3-6).

[62] There are other types of narrative in the Scripture that do not possess the unique features that the Gospel accounts possess. For example, the book of Acts "narrates the founding events of the church" and does not focus on one unifying character (Carson and Moo, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 285). Though Acts could be considered as history, it still focuses on communicating events in a given time using characters that

depiction of Jesus in any one Gospel account is much like that of a portrait; that is, the author, like the artist of a painting, is highly selective in what he includes to communicate his story.[63] The author does this by paraphrasing, explaining, and combining the words and deeds of Jesus in a variety of ways.[64] The Gospels are biographical in that they emphasize Jesus Christ from different evangelists' intended perspectives,[65] all the while communicated as historically accurate.

Also, typical to the unifying focus of the Gospel accounts, is the arrangement of the Gospel genre; it too is unique. The Gospel accounts do not compare to modern biographies, for each author with varying degree arranges his Gospel topically and chronologically.[66] Although the Gospel accounts do not

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formulate a plot. See also, John B. Polhill, "Interpreting the Book of Acts," in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery [Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001], 391-92). Another example of narrative is found in the Old Testament, the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch is narrative communicating historical reporting (Israelite history) and theological interpretation. See Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 59-60. Like Acts, the Pentateuch also does not focus on Jesus Christ. Due to the fact that the Scriptures possess other kinds of narrative, the Gospel accounts require a sub-genre.

[63] Robert A. Guelich, "The Gospels: Portraits of Jesus and His Ministry," *JETS* 24 (1982): 117-25.

[64] Joseph Kudasiewicz states, "From the genesis of the Gospels it follows that they contain in themselves an historical element: the words and deeds of Jesus from Nazareth. But this element was not set forth in the form of naked facts, or as a chronicle or official record but was interpreted theologically. Thus the Gospels are the only synthesis of history and theology of their kind. They contain facts and at the same time interpret their meaning" (*The Synoptic Gospels Today*, trans. Sergius Wroblewski [New York: Alba House, 1996], 52).

[65] Ibid., "Not only did the evangelists want to be eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus, but also witnesses to the Good News about salvation. They did not want to write the human history of Jesus but salvation history; they narrated the deeds of Jesus from the viewpoint of salvation" (52-53).

[66] Biography is defined as "the histories of individual lives; an account of a person's life; life story" (Victoria Neufeldt, ed., *Webster's New World College Dictionary*, 3rd ed. [New York: Macmillan, 1997], s.v.

necessarily compare to biographies of the Hellenistic sense known as βίοι,[67] they do possess some similar features as those of Greco-Roman biography.[68] The Gospels are similar in some respects to ancient biographical writings, but they form a distinct group within the broad group of ancient narrative. Due to the content of the Gospels, Arp proposes that the "Gospels may be a unique type of Christian writing, not explainable to any other type of literature in the ancient world."[69] If indeed the

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"Biography"). Ryken contends that the Gospels are not typical modern biographies because they are "too episodic and fragmented, too self-contained in their individual parts, and too thoroughly a hybrid form with interspersed nonnarrative elements. The Gospels are an encyclopedic or mixed form" (*How to Read the Bible*, 132).

[67] Ancient (Greco-Roman) biography is defined as βίου; that is, simply 'lives.' Cf. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*; Charles H. Talbert, *What Is a Gospel? The Genre of the Canonical Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); David E. Aune, *New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 17-76.

[68] "Greco-Roman biography was a powerful propaganda tool which often had a teaching or didactic function, presenting the subject as a paradigm of virtue. . . . Greco-Roman biography is prose narration about a person's life, presenting supposedly historical facts which are selected to reveal the character or essence of the person often with the purpose of affecting the behavior of the reader" (William Arp, Course notes for NT8, Seminar in Gospel Studies, Baptist Bible Seminary, Clarks Summit, PA, fall 2005, 2).

The Gospels possess similar features as those of the Greco-Roman βίοι. There is a high degree of correlation between the generic features of the Greco-Roman βιοι and the opening, external, and internal features of the canonical Gospels demonstrating that they are the work of narratives with a chronological structure that is narrowly focused on the works and words of Jesus Christ. See Burridge, *What Are the Gospels*, 133-53, 160-90, with the connection to the canonical Gospels, 193-219.

[69] Arp, Course notes for NT8, 3. They possess a form and function that makes them unique. "Formally, a Gospel is a narrative account about the public life and teaching of Jesus which is composed of discrete tradition units which the writer placed in the context of Scriptures." This keeps the Gospels at the biography-level. "Functionally, a Gospel consists of the message that God was at work in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection affecting the promises found in the Scriptures." This makes them unique and unlike any other biography (Arp, Course notes for NT8, 3).

Gospels are unique, is there still a way to convey their genre? In other words, what are the characteristics of a Gospel that lead to a definition? This paper proposes a definition of the Gospels as a sub-genre; a theological narrative biography. Also, what are the contents and the function of the Gospel?

Characteristics of Gospel

There are two characteristics of a Gospel that lead to the proposed definition. These characteristics highlight the Gospel as a sub-genre of narrative. They are biography and theology. These characteristics can lead to difficulty in establishing a definition, for often an emphasis is placed on one characteristic as opposed to the other rather than an incorporation of all or some of the more prominent characteristics. A brief, though not exhaustive, look at the characteristics that pertain to a definition of Gospel is presented here. The proposed definition that incorporates the major characteristics from the various definitions surveyed is a theological narrative biography.

Gospels are Biographical

The most common way to characterize a Gospel is biography. The biography typifies the words and deeds of a character. The Gospel authors arranged the life of Jesus through chronology or topics to address the specific needs of the community to whom they were writing.[70] Therefore, many scholars look at the life of the character to characterize, and thus define, a Gospel because of the dominating presence of a unifying focus through the central figure, Jesus Christ.[71]

The Gospels also portray continuous narratives of Jesus that represent the biographical nature of the genres of Greco-Roman

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[70] DeSilva, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 148.

[71] Larry W. Hurtado contends that Jesus is one of the formal features of the Gospel accounts: "The Gospels are all narratives about Jesus that include examples of his deeds and sayings in a loose chronological framework that concentrates on the period between the beginning of his ministry and his death/resurrection" ("Gospel (Genre)," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1992], 278).

literature, for they too promoted the life story of a hero. There is therefore, similarity between the Gospel accounts and Greco-Roman biographical genres. The difference lies in the story's emphasis. The Greco-Roman biography was written in such a way to glorify virtues of the main character; whereas the Gospel authors, though they too focus on the person and character of Jesus, place emphasis upon Jesus' significance in relationship to his divine purpose.

Scholars throughout the past century characterized the Gospel as biography. For example, in 1915 Clyde Votaw compared the Gospels to ancient biography.[72] Votaw's description promotes Christian to label the Gospels as 'biographies of Jesus.' His definition of biography was called a popular biography; that is, a biography that "aims to make one acquainted with a historical person by giving some account of his deeds and words, sketchily chosen and arranged, even when the motive of the writer is practical and hortatory rather than historical."[73] Though Votaw commenced the way for an understanding of the Gospel accounts as popular biography, the early consensus among NT scholars followed more closely the form-critical method reflected by Karl L. Schmidt.[74] His view claimed that the Gospels were basically collections of the Jesus traditions. The motivation for the Gospel accounts was not literary, but kerygmatic; the proclamation of the significance of Jesus.

In more recent developments, three scholars have made attempts to determine the genre of the Gospels. They all have come to the consensus that the Gospels are to be characterized as some kind of biography. In 1977 Charles Talbert re-examined the genre of the Gospels.[75] He concluded that all the Gospel accounts were written in terms of myth rather than

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[72] Clyde Weber Votaw, *The Gospels and Contemporary Biographies in the Greco-Roman World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970).

[73] Ibid., 5.

[74] Hurtado, "Gospel (Genre)," 277.

[75] Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genres of Luke-Acts* (SBLMS, 20; Missoula, MT: Scholars P, 1974) and most notably *What Is a Gospel? The Genre of the Canonical Gospels*.

history. He also declared that all Gospels were didactic biographies; that is, practical and hortatory rather than historical. Aune, however argued for a definition of biography that indeed spoke to its historical character. He wrote, "Biography may be defined as a discrete prose narrative devoted exclusively to the portrayal of the whole life of a particular individual perceived as historical."[76]

In 1982 Philip Shuler also attempted to situate the Gospels in the Greco-Roman biography environment.[77] He defined the Gospels by using a subtype of biography called the encomium or laudatory biography. This is described as a biography told for the specific purpose of praising the central character.[78]

The third scholar to define the Gospel genre was Richard Burridge in 1992.[79] He used genre criticism and literary theory as his starting point and agreed that genre ought to be used as an instrument for meaning. He understood genre as a group of literary works that shared family resemblances that ultimately functioned to guide interpretation. The text therefore possesses both external and internal features.[80] It is these generic features that Burridge used to demonstrate the similarities between the Gospel accounts and their counterparts, the Greco-Roman biographies; thus, defining the Gospels as βίοι, or "lives."[81]

It is unlikely that the Gospel writers used a specific Hellenistic or Roman biographical template in constructing the Gospels. However, it is clear that they recount the life of a character, Jesus Christ. They are portraits that communicate certain words and deeds of Jesus Christ, and it is through these portraits that readers see the authors' intention and purpose. The Gospels therefore are biographies.

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[76] Aune, *New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 29.

[77] Philip L. Shuler, *A Genre for the Gospels: The Biographical Character of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982).

[78] Ibid., 37.

[79] Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*

[80] Ibid., 42. These genre features include opening features (e.g, title, opening words), subject, external features (e.g., size or length, structure or sequence, use of literary units), and internal features (e.g, the content of the work, style, tone, mood, occasion for writing) (111).

[81] Ibid., 63.

Gospels are Theological

The Gospels have not always been characterized, nor defined using a connection with literary features. In the early twentieth century, two German scholars in particular, using the form-critical method, characterized the Gospels as a development of kerygma, a totally unique genre in the ancient world.[82] Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann argued that the final form of the Gospels emerged from a process of oral tradition. It was the oral tradition based on the community of the early church that served as the means for the authors' kerygma and therefore served to characterize the Gospel accounts, not the genre of narrative. This kerygma

> always emphasized the death and resurrection of Jesus, included proofs from the Old Testament, and referred to Jesus' exaltation to the right hand of God and imminent return to save and to judge, concluding with a call for repentance and faith. Through evangelistic preaching and catechetical instruction, according to this view, the basic kerygma was expanded, illustrated, and commented upon by the addition of stories and sayings of Jesus.[83]

The Gospels therefore were neither historical nor literary, but rather they were dogmatic and cultic. The understanding was that the Gospels were "expanded cult legends in which the Hellenistic mythological interpretation of Christ has been

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[82] Martin Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1919) and Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963). Kerygma refers to the gospel proclamation, especially as taught in the Gospels.

[83] Aune, *New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 24. Robert Guelich reports Dibelius's clarity regarding the composition of the Gospels. He writes, "The Gospels represent simply the final phase in the evolution of the early Christian tradition with the primitive Church's kerygma at its core. The final product, the Gospels, and the process itself were influenced especially for Dibelius by three factors: The primitive communities' eschatology, the Church's mission, and the kerygma of Jesus' death and resurrection" ("The Gospel Genre," in *The Gospel and the Gospels*, ed. Peter Stuhlmacher [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 186).

superimposed on the story of Jesus."[84] The problem with this view, however, is that it placed too much emphasis on the early church community and not enough emphasis on the biblical writer. The idea of the Gospels as biographies has not been abandoned and the discussion has been re-opened. The kerygmatic hypothesis is no longer dominating the discussion.[85]

The Gospels were constructed using related episodes to not just capture the importance of the life of Jesus Christ, but also with a wider importance: the reader. The authorial intent, in which each of the Gospels selectively portrayed the words and deeds of Jesus Christ, was the means by which the evangelists developed the salvation-history meaning of Christ's messianic mission on behalf of the characters in the story and the reader. This theology that runs throughout the Gospel accounts is centered on the biographical and historical setting of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.[86] The Gospels, therefore, are theological.

Gospels are Theological Narrative Biographies

It is difficult to consider a definition of Gospel through the use or emphasis of one characteristic, either biography or theology. Since a single characteristic potentially leads to an incomplete picture of a definition of the Gospel as a sub-genre, it is best to incorporate both characteristics. This article therefore proposes a definition that incorporates biography and theology. The proposed definition also incorporates the genre, of which it is a part; that is, narrative. The sub-genre of the Gospels is theological narrative biography.

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[84] Robert H. Gundry, "Literary Genre 'Gospel'," in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 99.

[85] Helmut Koester, "From the Kerygma-Gospel to Written Gospels," *NTS* 35 (1989): 361-81.

[86] Kudasiewicz writes, "They did not want to provide a range of information to be remembered but to preach the Good News of salvation to all. The proclamation of the kerygma brought this about, that the evangelists composed works out of authentic history but their central point of interest was not historical nor biographical but religious and theological. The evangelists did not want to write a life of Jesus but to show that he was the Messiah, the Son of God and the Savior" (*Synoptic Gospels Today*, 56).

The theological narrative biography is defined as a sub-genre of narrative that encompasses the Gospel accounts. The Gospels are theological narrative biographies that are written as stories, or narratives, that catalogue episodes centered around one unifying character, Jesus Christ, and these episodes are written in such a way that they serve to awaken and subsequently strengthen the faith of the reader.

As demonstrated earlier in this article, the Gospel accounts fit into the larger category of narrative. They do so based upon the possession of the common elements of narrative, for both the Gospel accounts and narratives have structure, plot, setting, characters, and point of view. The Gospel accounts, however, are a unique sub-genre. They possess more than a biographical characteristic. They also have a theological purpose. A description of the proposed sub-genre of narrative, the theological narrative biography, follows.

First, the Gospels are constructed as stories. The literary medium by which the Gospels are communicated is narrative. They are constructed through unified communicative acts known as episodes or events. Theological narrative biography accounts for the literary medium, or *how* the author's intended message is communicated. The author is selective and purposeful in the writing and placement of each episode regarding those aspects of Jesus' life that help to communicate his message to his intended audience. The organization of episodes contributes to the whole, and does so through narrative. Therefore, the proposed definition incorporates *narrative* in its sub-genre category.

Second, the Gospels are illustrations of the public life, teachings, miracles, death, and resurrection of a unifying figure, the biography of Jesus Christ as it is set in a historical context. The historical context and the sayings and stories of Jesus are true, though they may not contain all the details of any one episode. Therefore, the proposed definition incorporates *biography* in its sub-genre category.

Third, the Gospels have a theological purpose. The Gospels are not written to simply chronicle biographical information within a historical context. Rather their purpose is for the reader to learn who Jesus is and how to live in light of knowing him.

The Gospels are history and theology intertwined. They were written to awaken faith. They were disciplinal; that is, geared to be disciple-oriented. Therefore, the proposed definition incorporates *theological* in its sub-genre category.

Summary of the Definition of Gospel

A Gospel is a sub-genre that aims to account for all the characteristics common within them as they are communicated through their literary genre. These narratives are biography and theology. The proposed sub-genre definition, theological narrative biography, aims to account for the purposeful intention of the biblical author. This purposeful intention is the theology the biblical author seeks to communicate through his story. It is not the intent to complicate matters by introducing new terminology; but rather to propose a sub-genre category that explicates the true nature of the Gospel accounts found within Scripture.

Content of Gospel

The Gospels are centered on one primary, formal feature: Jesus Christ. They are narratives explicating the words and deeds of Jesus as told by the evangelists. The general focus of these accounts is from the beginning of Jesus' ministry to his death and resurrection. These stories include various instruments used by the authors to depict their Gospel accounts.

First, the authors use the interaction between Jesus and various characters, including nature. The disciples are among one of the major characters whom the authors emphasize. It is the communication and reaction of these characters that highlights Jesus' revelatory identity and supernatural power. Second, the authors also use charges that are brought against Jesus to confirm his identity. It is often the goal of the antagonist (e.g., Pharisees and scribes) to disprove, discredit, or contradict the claims of Jesus' identity. Third, the authors use literary motifs to delineate Jesus' identity. These literary motifs include miracle stories, sayings, and parables. Although the primary goal of these motifs is not necessarily to reveal Jesus' character, they "are literary vehicles that legitimate the

presentation of Jesus as Messiah, or Son of God."[87] It is through the sayings and parables of Jesus that one finds real-life connections to the disciple-oriented life of a true follower of Jesus. The Gospels are therefore "dominated by attempts to demonstrate and confirm the supreme significance of the identity of Jesus conceptualized in terms of various types of eschatological deliverers."[88]

Function of Gospel

The Gospels are narratives that function to convince the reader/hearer that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.[89] They also function within a historical and cultural milieu in which the biblical authors used situations and circumstances of everyday community life to portray Jesus as the Son of God. The evangelists wrote with historical and theological premises. They function in various ways to portray Jesus' identity. They are biographical (highlight Jesus as the hero), historical (communicate truth, history about the hero), partial (illustrate who the hero says he is), purposeful (grow the reader spiritually, not just chronicle events), and disciplinal (gear to be disciple-oriented). Simply put, the Gospels are Christian literary works to awaken and subsequently strengthen faith.

Summary of Gospel

The Gospel accounts are narrative stories with Jesus Christ as the unifying focus. These Gospels report biographical and historical information, while also explaining theological truth. They are arranged topically and chronologically with similarities to that of ancient Greco-Roman βίοι. The Gospels were written to facilitate the reading and hearing of the life of

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[87] Aune, *New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 57.

[88] Ibid., 55.

[89] Ronald F. Thiemann states the purpose for the Gospel accounts; that is, to draw the reader into the story so that he or she may respond to the unfolding of Jesus' identity ("Radiance and Obscurity in Biblical Narrative," in *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation*, ed. Garrett Green [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987], 33).

Jesus Christ with the purposeful intention of awakening one's faith.

Conclusion

The New Testament is a collection of various kinds of writings. These various kinds of writings are called literary genres. Literary genres provide a basic framework for the interpreter and through literary genre, the biblical author shapes his text. In other words, literary genre helps a reader not only grasp the content of the text but also the way in which the author chooses to communicate it.

When various kinds of writings are examined, a sub-discipline of New Testament studies, genre criticism, is used. Genre criticism discovers the situational circumstances and unique features of the text; therefore, identifying the text as one kind of genre as opposed to another. As a result of the examination of the text, the two categories of genre that best represent the Gospels are narrative (genre) and theological narrative biography (sub-genre). These two categories assume the interpreter looks at the text holistically.

Narrative is a communicative act written within a given setting, using characters to convey a plot through a point of view that the author typically composes in sequential order. Simply put, narrative is a story. The reader examines the narrative. He does so using a sub-discipline of NT studies, narrative criticism. Narrative criticism assists the reader in the exegetical task by accounting for the elements of narrative and demonstrating their relationship to the whole. Narrative criticism therefore focuses upon the coherence of the text and its final form. In other words, narrative criticism provides the reader with the means by which he can examine what the biblical author says and how he says it.

Although narrative is the genre literary medium by which one examines the Gospel accounts, the Gospels are more than narrative. They are unique and unlike any other type of narrative. They report biographical, historical, and theological information regarding a central character, Jesus Christ. Due to their unique nature, the Gospels fit into a sub-genre of

narrative. The Gospel accounts therefore are theological narrative biographies.

The theological narrative biography accounts for the *way* in which the Gospels were written (narrative), the life of Jesus Christ (biography) as the central unifying character, and the application to the life of the reader (theology). The intended purpose of the Gospel accounts is to awaken and subsequently strengthen faith. Part two of this article will demonstrate how the Gospel of Mark is a theological narrative biography.

Contributing to the Faith Once Delivered: Jude, Systematic Theology, and an Appeal to Pastors

Dan Wiley

Abstract: For a variety of reasons, the Epistle of Jude has faced great neglect throughout the history of biblical interpretation. In recent decades, there has been a resurgence of interest in Jude yet, the Epistle of Jude is noticeably absent from most pulpits in the modern church. Although the reasons for this discontinuity are debatable, there is no doubt that the pastor who studies the Epistle of Jude will recognize the letter's contribution to key areas of systematic theology and the importance of preaching that contribution from the pulpit today.

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A study of the Epistle of Jude reveals one undeniable fact about its content: the letter, written to warn the church about apostate teachers and their coming judgment, is a theologically heavy text. In just twenty-five verses, Jude reinforces great theological themes and even offers unique data to the science of systematic theology, and much of that data is essential knowledge for believers in the world today. Therefore, the pastor who seeks to drive his congregation to "defend the faith once delivered to the saints" cannot afford to ignore the study, preaching, and teaching of this necessary text.

Ironically, the study of Jude has faced trying times throughout church history. Douglas J. Rowston famously titled his article on Jude "The Most Neglected Book in the New Testament."[2] Frankly, despite the importance of this letter, it is

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[2] Douglas J. Rowston, "The Most Neglected Book in the New Testament," *NTS* 21 (1975): 554-63.

rather easy to understand the neglect of Jude. As a text, Jude is no behemoth. In its Greek version, Jude is 461 words long, making it the fourth shortest book in the NT. Thematically, Jude shares many similarities with 2 Peter and is often grouped with that epistle in commentaries.[3] Scholars generally agree that 2 Peter is expansion of Jude[4]; unfortunately this conclusion implies that a study of Jude is a duty of lesser importance. Topically, Jude is a "strange" book. On several occasions, it speaks of events recorded nowhere else in Scripture and draws from a first-century Jewish literary background unfamiliar to many of those in the modern world, to say nothing of its reference to 1 Enoch and the Assumption of Moses. Such content makes Jude "problematic, messy, and controversial."[5]

To various degrees, these factors have influenced its reception in the church throughout its history. The early fathers questioned Jude's canonical status because of its use of extrabiblical literature.[6] Martin Luther placed Jude at the end of his German translation of the NT and, according to Gruber, identified the letter as "an unnecessary Epistle to be counted among the chief books" because of its similarity to 2 Peter and its use of extrabiblical literature.[7] Although Calvin wrote a commentary on Jude, he quoted only two verses from the epistle in his famous *Institutes*.[8] Many more examples of Jude's neglect in church history could be cited, and though it is impossible to fully trace the consequences of this neglect, it is

[3] For a survey of the similarities between Jude and 2 Peter, see Fredrick Gardiner, "The Similarity Between the Epistle of Jude and the Second Epistle of Peter," *BSac* 11, no. 41 (Jan 1854): 114-39.

[4] Matthew Y. Emerson, *Christ and the New Creation: A Canonical Approach to the Theology of the New Testament* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 127.

[5] Bryan J. Whitefield, "To See the Canon in a Grain of Sand: Preaching Jude," *Word & World* 29, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 429.

[6] Lewis R. Donelson, *I & II Peter and Jude: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2010), 167.

[7] L. Franklin Gruber, "Luther's New Testament – A Quadricentennial Study," *BibSac* 80, no. 317 (January 1923): 101.

[8] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 1059.

evident that there is an ignorance of Jude today. As Moo points out, "Few Christians have heard of Jude apart from the name of the biblical book that they may know is buried somewhere towards the end of their Bible."[9]

Fortunately, Jude has made a comeback within the realm of systematic theology, a science that, based upon the number of published works, has seen a growth in its own popularity in recent years. From his very first lesson, the student of this important field of science learns that a proper methodology requires the student to gather all the biblical data pertaining to any given doctrine, not just some of that data. In his popular *Systematic Theology*, Grudem argues that "a good theological analysis must find and treat fairly *all the relevant Bible passages* for each particular topic, not just some or a few of the relevant passages."[10] Therefore, in order to provide a complete statement on doctrine, it is the duty of every systematic theologian to examine all of Scripture, even those portions that are "problematic, messy, and controversial." For the most part, systematic theologians within the last twenty-five years have been consistent in this methodology and have cited Jude at great length.[11] Of course, this is not just out of necessity, but for good

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[9] Douglas J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 27.

[10] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 24; emphasis original.

[11] For example, the following authors reference at least half of Jude in their systematic theologies: Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical & Historical* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 1121-22; Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology: In One Volume* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2011), 1620; John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Study of Biblical Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 1020; Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 1188. The following authors reference at least a fourth of Jude in their systematic theologies: Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 1163; Michael Horton, *Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 1025; John Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Philipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 1192.

reason. For although Jude might be a unique text, it is by no means a theologically shallow text. As stated by Charles and Thatcher, "For its notable brevity, Jude is theologically rich."[12]

Nevertheless, there is still a disconnect between the academy and the church. Although Jude is now better represented in systematic theology, the epistle has not shared that success in the pulpit. As commentators point out, sermons on Jude are uncommon.[13] This prompts the question, why is Jude making a comeback in systematic theology but absent on Sunday morning? Are pastors not interested in systematic theology? Are systematic theologies including but not emphasizing the contributions of Jude to systematic theology? Are pastors recognizing Jude's contributions to systematic theology but do not feel as if these contributions have any real significance to the life of the "common churchgoer"? Perhaps believers are still cautious of Jude for the reasons cited above, no matter what inroads it has made in systematic theology.

Each of these questions deserve their own research, but nevertheless one fact is certain: a pastor who reads systematic theology that highlights the important contributions of Jude will certainly reach conviction on Jude's importance for the church. To demonstrate this point, the following pages examine Jude's important contributions to the major subsets of systematic theology. In addition, each contribution concludes with a summary as to why it makes for essential preaching material in the modern world.

Bibliology

Bibliology, the study of Scripture, is arguably the most important subset of systematic theology. A correct understanding of Scripture, being the propositional source of

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[12] Daryl Charles and Tom Thatcher, *Hebrews-Revelation*, Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 542.

[13] Fred B. Craddock, *First and Second Peter, and Jude*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1995), 127; Gene Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), xi.

theology, is essential to a correct understanding of every other area of theology.[14] Therefore, the student of systematic theology must master every area of this important subject. The Epistle of Jude contributes to bibliology in three critical ways: (1) Jude affirms the authority of the OT, (2) Jude expounds the definition of inspiration, and (3) Jude defends a closed canon.

The Authority of the Old Testament

Although Jude never reveals the full identity of his apostate opponents, his method of rebuttal is clearly presented. To warn his readers of the false teachers and consequences of apostasy, Jude refers them to six OT examples of apostasy: the destruction of the rebellious Israelites (v. 5), the angels (v. 6), Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7), Cain, Balaam, and Korah (v. 11). Of course, these six examples of are not the only ways in which Jude references the OT. As Whitfield argues,

> Yet the six examples of disobedience are not the only references Jude makes to the Hebrew Scriptures. The condemnation of the false teachers as "shepherds who care only for themselves" (v. 12 NRSV alternate reading) echoes Ezek 34:2, where Ezekiel speaks against the leaders of Israel who are feeding themselves instead of feeding the sheep. When Jude compares the false teachers to "waterless clouds" (v. 12), he recalls Prov 25:14, and his description of them as "wild waves of the sea" (v. 13) calls to mind Isa 57:20, a verse that the Qumran hymns also echo. Finally, there are multiple connections between Jude and Zech 3. The words of Michael to Satan ("The Lord rebuke you!" v. 9) are the same as Zech 3:2. The image of snatching the wavering "out of the fire" (v. 23) recalls the deliverance of Joshua in Zech 3:3 as well as the original source of the image in Amos 4:11, 18 and the phrase "hating even the tunic defiled by their bodies" echoes the "filthy clothes" of Joshua in Zech 3:3–4:15.

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[14] As MacArthur and Mayhue argue, "The doctrine of Scripture is absolutely fundamental and essential because it identifies the only true source for all Christian truth" (*Biblical Doctrine*, 69).

[15] Bryan J. Whitfield, "To See the Canon in a Grain of Sand: Preaching Jude," *Word & World* 29, no. 4 (2009): 425.

If anything, Jude's reliance on the OT to proclaim his case against the apostate teachers reveals his high view of the OT. In addition, Jude's reference to the OT, one that is very casual and without defense, suggests that his readers also held a high view of the OT.

This high view of Scripture is not shared by many in the modern world, especially in the academy, where it is increasingly popular to treat much of the content of the OT as allegory, myth, or saga. [16] However, these genres strip the OT of complete historicity, and consequently negate its authority. Such records, if devoid of historical truth, could hardly be considered divinely inspired as the Bible claims for itself (cf. 2 Tim 3:16-17).[17] In response, among other methods, systematic theology defends the authority of the OT by its citation in the NT, and especially in Jesus' use of the OT during his ministry.[18]

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[16] Most critics of Scripture derive their genre identifications based upon their prior theological commitments. For example, as Howe notes, "Because critical scholars do not believe in the historicity of Daniel, they classify it as legend, or myth, or midrash" (Thomas A. Howe, "Does Genre Determine Meaning?" *Christian Apologetics Journal* 6, no.1 (Spring 2007): 13.

[17] In response to those that classify the Scriptures as "myth" or "legend," yet argue that the Scriptures still have value, Howe asks, "But there is a problem, at least according to the words ascribed to Jesus in the Gospel of John. Jesus is reputed to have said to Nicodemus, 'If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?' (Jn. 3:12). In other words, if we cannot trust the Bible when it tells us about the things on earth that we can verify by our independent investigations, then how can we trust it when it tells us about heavenly things, things that we do not have the capacity to verify? If Daniel's book contains inaccurate history that Daniel is presenting as if it were true, then how can we know whether the spiritual lessons it teaches are not equally inaccurate? If we cannot trust Daniel with reference to history, how can we be edified when there is the possibility that any other lesson it teaches may be equally untrustworthy?" (Ibid., 14-15).

[18] For example, see Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, Introduction & Bible (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002), 266-281; Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity*, Vol. 1, Prolegomena and the Doctrines of Scripture, God, and Angels (Detroit: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary Press, 2009), 65-68; Henry C.

In this regard, Jude must not be left out of the discussion. In fact, the weight of Jude's response to the apostate teachers is primarily based upon the truthfulness of the Lord's consistency in punishing apostasy during the OT period. Without an authoritative historical source to validate Jude's argument, Jude's judgment of apostasy based upon Lord's dealings with apostasy in the past loses much of its force.

The urgency of this doctrine requires little defense. Many Christians in the modern world are unfamiliar with the OT,[19] yet as Berding notes, "All of us who are acquainted with the Bible are aware that the NT authors frequently appeal to OT passages to make a theological point, to confirm a prophetic fulfillment, or to ground one ethical exhortation or another."[20] In response, pastors must preach the authority of the OT, not simply because the NT quotes the OT, but because it does so to ground biblical truth and its application. In the context of Jude, warning the church of the consequences of apostasy demands the preaching of the authority of the OT, for it is in the OT that one observes the Lord's consistency in judging apostasy. Believers cannot be left ignorant of this fact.

Exposition on the Definition of Inspiration

The primary theological concerns involve inspiration and the biblical canon. In systematic theological discourse, inspiration as defined by Decker is:

> The work of the Holy Spirit by which he so guided the minds of the human authors and writers that they chose the precise words necessary to accurately reflect the exact truth God intended, all the while reflecting their own personality, writing style,

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Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 56.

[19] David Murray, "Bright Shadows: Preaching Christ from the Old Testament," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 1, no. 1 (January 2009): 24.

[20] Kenneth Berding, *The Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 7-8.

> vocabulary, and cultural context, thus guaranteeing that this truth is accurately, inerrantly, and infallibly recorded in writing.[21]

This definition is the testimony of Scripture itself.[22] Ultimately, it is only those inspired works, recognized by the church, that belong in the canon and carry authority as the word of God.[23]

However, what would happen if a biblical author quoted a non-canonical work? This is an important question because it is widely believed that Jude does just that in his epistle. In verses 9 and 14-15, respectively, Jude makes the following proclamations:

1:9 ὁ δὲ Μιχαὴλ ὁ ἀρχάγγελος, ὅτε τῷ διαβόλῳ διακρινόμενος διελέγετο περὶ τοῦ Μωϋσέως σώματος, οὐκ ἐτόλμησεν κρίσιν ἐπενεγκεῖν βλασφημίας, ἀλλὰ εἶπεν· Ἐπιτιμήσαι σοι κύριος.	1:9 But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"[24]
1:14-15 Προεφήτευσεν δὲ καὶ τούτοις ἕβδομος ἀπὸ Ἀδὰμ Ἐνὼχ λέγων· Ἰδοὺ ἦλθεν κύριος ἐν ἁγίαις μυριάσιν αὐτοῦ, ποιῆσαι κρίσιν κατὰ πάντων καὶ ἐλέγξαι πάντας τοὺς ἀσεβεῖς περὶ πάντων τῶν ἔργων ἀσεβείας αὐτῶν ὧν ἠσέβησαν καὶ περὶ πάντων τῶν σκληρῶν ὧν ἐλάλησαν κατ' αὐτοῦ ἁμαρτωλοὶ ἀσεβεῖς.	1:14-15 *It was* also about these men *that* Enoch, *in* the seventh *generation* from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.

[21] Rodney J. Decker, "Verbal-Plenary Inspiration and Translation," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 11, no. 1 (Fall 2006): 27-28.

[22] MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctine*, 86-94.

[23] Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, 514.

[24] Unless otherwise indicated, all English translations are taken from the NASB.

Both verses appear to quote two pseudepigraphical works, The Assumption of Moses and 1 Enoch, respectively.[25] These two apparent quotations leave one with several difficult questions concerning the canon and the status of Jude's epistle. If quoted by an epistle that is part of the canon, should these two non-canonical works be included in the canon? Should these quotations of non-biblical material be grounds to remove Jude's epistle from the canon? If the answer is no to either of the first two questions, then how can the Epistle of Jude quote non-canonical literature and still maintain its canonical status?

Apologists have responded to this dilemma in a variety of ways. Some scholars argue that it is possible that Jude did not pen verses 9 and 14-15 as direct quotes from pseudepigraphical sources but rather drew from oral traditions that shared historical accounts with The Assumption of Moses and 1 Enoch. In other words, Jude and the authors of The Assumption of Moses and 1 Enoch wrote concerning similar events but independently of each other.[26]

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[25] The Assumption of Moses (ca. 1 BC-AD 1) is a pseudonymous work documenting an exchange between Satan and Michael the Archangel concerning the body of Moses. Satan desired to take the body and accuse him of murder before the people of Israel, robbing Moses of honor during his burial. Michael stands against Satan is able to bury Moses in an unknown location. The autograph of this story no longer exists, but its reference by the church fathers and comparable stories from that era shed enough light to reconstruct the document. See Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 65-76.

First Enoch (ca. 300-1 BC) is one of three apocryphal writings loosely attributed to the man Enoch (cf. Gen 5:18-24). Because of the mystery surrounding Enoch's ascent into heaven, Jews during the second temple period began to develop a tradition of speculation concerning Enoch's life and ministry. First Enoch was essentially the most well-known of the three and was held in high esteem at Qumran and by some early church fathers (e.g., Tertullian) but was not accepted as Scripture by rabbinic Judaism and was ultimately rejected by Western churches and the majority of Eastern churches. See Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 313-17.

[26] As a parallel example, both Luke and the Roman historian Suetonius document the expulsion of the Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2; *Divus Claudius 25*). However, it is highly doubtful that Suetonius, who wrote

One the other hand, it is possible that Jude quoted from The Assumption of Moses and 1 Enoch, yet one should still not consider these works inspired. To understand this argument, one must first understand the nature of inspiration. According to 2 Peter 1:21, "For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." This fact implies two important considerations. First, inspiration extends only to the biblical authors when they were under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and does not extend to the other writings penned by the writers of Scripture.[27] As an example, Paul most likely wrote four letters to the church at Corinth, but only two were inspired (cf. 1 Cor 5:9; 2 Cor 2:4) and found their place in Scripture. Second, inspiration guarantees the accuracy of what was penned by men under inspiration of the Holy Spirit but does not extend to every person or document quoted by Scripture except for those points where they are quoted (unless, of course, Scripture is quoting Scripture). For example, Paul quotes the Greek poet Epimenides for his own purposes (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12), but Epimenides was not

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after Luke, copied the account from Acts. Most likely Suetonius drew from other sources. Similarly, perhaps Jude recorded the two well-known accounts for his own purpose, but did not use The Assumption of Moses and 1 Enoch as sources. Further evidence for this position includes the lack of any indication that Jude quoted those two specific sources in verses 9 and 14-15. Additionally, it is also worth noting that Jude alludes to other events that were also documented in well-known Jewish works of the day (e.g., Sodom and Gomorrah and the Watchers; Jude 5-7; Sirach 16:7-10; Damascus Document 2:17-3:12; 3 Maccabees 2:4-7; Testament of Naphtali 3:4-5 (see D. A. Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005], 422-23; Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 248), yet there is very little contention in the scholarly community to include these works or exclude Jude from the canon because it document similar events to these extra-biblical writings. In light of these facts, one can simply conclude that Jude, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, drew his information behind verses 9 and 14-15 from a common tradition. This would prevent any inclusion of these non-canonical works and dismiss any attempt to exclude Jude from the canon.

[27] Horton, *Christian Faith*,160. For the argument that both the author and the writings were inspired, see Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 244.

inspired by the Holy Spirit to pen any Scripture. Those particular quotations are considered inspired only because the Holy Spirit moved the biblical writers (Paul in this example) to record them, not because the source was inspired.

With this understanding of inspiration, it is easy to explain the use of The Assumption of Moses and 1 Enoch in Jude. Just as Paul was moved to quote Epimenides at certain points for a specific purpose, so Jude quoted these sources for a specific purpose. Although Jude does say that Enoch's prophesy, meaning that the author of 1 Enoch did record an accurate prophecy,[28] by definition, inspiration should not extend to the entirety of 1 Enoch unless it can be proven that 1 Enoch is, in fact, inspired, which, as history charges, is a difficult challenge because of its uneven acceptance in both Jewish and Christian circles.[29] Of course, this does mean that The Assumption of Moses and 1 Enoch spoke truth at those two points since these two points are recorded as truth in Scripture, but that does not mean that The Assumption of Moses and 1 Enoch are inspired Scripture, but only that those two places spoke truth at those points and the Holy Spirit moved Jude to record those truths. Truth alone does not indicate inspiration. Ultimately, with the above argument, it is right to conclude, as Lovik, "Whether Jude took this from a non-canonical book is unimportant since when he records it, it is God's word, divinely inspired."[30]

Jude's use of non-canonical literature is a challenge for any student of Scripture, but is also a unique opportunity for the preacher. Inspiration is a critical doctrine, yet many believers are confused about the nature of inspiration, even without exposure to Jude's use of extrabiblical literature. Since Jude's use of extrabiblical literature is one of the greatest setbacks to

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[28] Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 273.

[29] For example, 1 Enoch was not preserved by rabbinic Judaism and, though it was preserved at Qumran, its status amongst this sect is uncertain. First Enoch enjoyed popularity among some Christians, as evidenced by the Epistle of Barnabas and the writings of Tertullian, but even Tertullian admitted that some rejected the writing as authoritative (Evans and Porter, *Dictionary*, 317).

[30] Gordon H. Lovik, "'These Men' in Your Church (An Exegesis of the Book of Jude)," *Central Bible Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (Fall 1965): 35.

its proclamation in the pulpit, it is essential that the preacher understand this important doctrine and its implications. Ultimately, Jude 9 and 14-15 present a clear opportunity to explain the extent of this important doctrine beyond the "traditional" *crux interpretum* 1 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:21.[31]

Defense of a Closed Canon

In addition to the above topics, Jude provides data to one of the most important concerns in bibliology: the status of the canon. Although most defenses of a closed canon draw from history and church authority, the implications of Jude 3, Jude's call for the church to "contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" clearly indicates the biblical canon as closed.[32] In summary, "the faith," which refers to the doctrinal content given by Jesus to his apostles and delivered unto the church and preserved in the inspired writings of the apostles and their associates, was delivered once for all. Now, if the faith was delivered once for all in the past by the apostles and preserved in their writings, then the canon must have closed at the end of the first century with the death of the apostles.

The urgency of preaching Jude 3 and its declaration of a closed canon requires no defense. All cults, -isms, and competing religious movements and philosophies deny the sufficiency of the biblical canon and the faith it represents, whether by adding "Scripture" to the canon, as in Islam or Mormonism, or by denying its application in the modern world,

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[31] On an unrelated note, but one that is particularly noteworthy for pastors, Jude's use of extrabiblical literature demonstrates one of the greatest elements of solid preaching: Jude used illustrations that would be familiar to his first-century Jewish-Christian audience. See Walter M. Dunnett, "The Hermeneutics of Jude and 2 Peter: The Use of Ancient Jewish Traditions," *JETS* 31:1 (September 1988): 291.

[32] This author has defended Jude's affirmation of a closed canon at greater length elsewhere and the reader is encouraged to examine that argument more fully. Daniel Wiley, "Contending for the Faith Once Delivered: An Exposition of Jude 3 and Its Contribution Towards the Doctrine of a Closed Canon," *JMAT* 20, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 58-83.

as in theological liberalism. In Jude's day, apostate teachers proclaimed a licentious gospel, denying the sufficiency of the faith. Today, those teachers are demanding conformity to ecumenicalism and so-called "21st century morals and values." With the rise of "evangelical civility," as Hunter defines it,[33] believers have become increasingly tolerant and accepting of false belief systems, and that acceptance is destroying the unity and purity of the church. For Jude, this will not do, for there is only one faith that no one has the right to change or alter.

Theology Proper

Theology proper, the study of "what may be known of the existence, Persons, and characteristics of the triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" systematizes under two subtitles: (1) Theism, the study of the existence and character of God, and (2) Trinitarianism, the study of the three Persons of the Godhead.[34] In its rebuttal of the false teachers, Jude offers data to both areas of knowledge. In the words of Norman Ericson, "The theology of Jude is explicitly monotheistic and implicitly Trinitarian."[35]

Theism

In his closing remarks, Jude dedicates his letter μόνῳ θεῷ, "to the only God." This phrase is of no little significance. Monotheism is one of the great doctrinal distinctives of Judaism, and, according to Bauckham, "μόνος, 'only,' was therefore frequently applied to God in Jewish confessional (2 Macc 7:37; 4 Macc 5:24) and liturgical (LXX 4 Kgdms 19:15, 19; Neh 9:6; Pss 82:19; 85:10; Dan 3:45; 1 Esd 8:25; 2 Macc

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[33] James Davison Hunter, *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 35.

[34] Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (1934; repr. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1976), 1:136.

[35] Norman R. Ericson, "Jude, Theology of," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 433.

1:24-25; cf. 4QDibHam 5:8-9; *Apoc. Abr.* 17) contexts."[36] Many passages in the NT (e.g., 1 Cor 8:6; 1 Tim 2:5) speak to this essential truth. Jude 25 joins these ranks as one of the most straightforward declarations of monotheism in all of Scripture.

Of course, this monotheistic God is no mere abstract or principle, as in pantheism, or inactive, as in deism, but displays qualities of personality and is active in history. For example, the recipients of Jude's letter are identified as ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ ἠγαπημένοις, "beloved in God the Father" (v. 1), and are commanded to ἑαυτοὺς ἐν ἀγάπῃ θεοῦ τηρήσατε, "keep yourselves in the love of God." This love is best displayed in the qualifier of God in verse 25, σωτῆρι ἡμῶν, "our Savior." It is this love, displayed by God's grace towards sinners, which is under attack by the false teachers and their licentious gospel (v. 4). However, this God is not just one of love, but of justice. As referenced earlier in this article, Jude gives six historical references of apostasy, all of which are used as examples of the consequences of apostasy. Jude's primary concern is consistency, for as Enoch's prophecy reveals (vv. 14-15), the Lord spoke against apostasy in the past (through Enoch), will judge apostates in the future (at the Parousia), and this consistent testimony judges apostates in the present (Jude's opponents). The God of Jude is no idle God.

Jude's theology proper makes for essential preaching in a world that redefines love and ignores God's moral standards and believes that God does not care about man's activity. As Jude clearly states, this "only God" who keeps believers until the parousia (vv. 1, 21, 24) is the same God who keeps the apostate angels in chains awaiting judgment (v.6). The Lord loves his people, but will not stand by and allow lawlessness to pervade the church. If there was ever a book from which the pastor could preach both God's eternal love for his elect and his wrath upon sin and rebellion, it is the twenty-five-verse Epistle of Jude.

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[36] Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 123.

Trinitarianism

Of course, Jude's theology proper is not limited to basic monotheistic propositions. In regards to Trinitarianism, Jude contains one of many important triadic references to the Godhead.[37] Trinitarians have historically argued that such triadic references defend the existence and equality of each person.[38] Jude adds revelation in support of this great theme in verses 20-21:

> ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀγαπητοί, ἐποικοδομοῦντες ἑαυτοὺς τῇ ἁγιωτάτῃ ὑμῶν πίστει, ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ προσευχόμενοι, ἑαυτοὺς ἐν ἀγάπῃ θεοῦ τηρήσατε προσδεχόμενοι τὸ ἔλεος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον.
> But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

Within the broader theme of systematic theology, the implication of this triadic formula is obvious.

Christology

Jude refers to Jesus Christ only four times in twenty-five verses, which might seem to imply that Jude has little interest in this topic. However, these four references to Christ display a high Christology that rivals the works of Jude's inspired authorial colleagues. Jude's data concerning Christ involves two primary areas: (1) the deity of Christ, and (2) the authority of Christ.

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[37] The most famous of these references is found in the baptismal formula of Matthew 28:19. Others include, but are not limited to, Romans 5:5-6; 8:14-17; 15:30; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 4:4-6; Ephesians 2:18; 1 Thessalonians 1:3-6 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Hebrews 2:3-4; 9:14; 1 Peter 1:2; 3:18; 4:14; 1 John 3:23-24.

[38] Culver, *Systematic Theology*, 107.

The Deity of Christ

In verse 4, Jude argues that the false teachers "deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." The immediate textual concern is the application of the titles δεσπότης, "Master," and κύριος, "Lord." Does Jude intend to apply both titles to Jesus, or does Jude only intent to imply "Lord" to Jesus and "Master" to God? The application of the Granville Sharp Rule suggests that both titles must apply to Jesus.[39] Furthermore, δεσπότης is used in the closely related text of 2 Peter 2:1, καὶ τὸν ἀγοράσαντα αὐτοὺς δεσπότην ἀρνούμενοι, "even deny the Lord who bought them,"[40] which is a clear reference to Jesus.

Most theologians agree that the false teacher's denial of Christ was ethical rather than doctrinal.[41] In other words, the false teachers denied the lordship of Christ by their actions rather than by denying the ontological status of Christ.[42] Nevertheless, by applying the title δεσπότης to Jesus, Jude places Jesus in the highest place of authority. The word δεσπότης is used in the NT in reference to God (Luke 2:29;

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[39] Donelson cautions that κύριος often lacks the article in Greek, and thus "Master" and "Lord" could refer to different persons. Furthermore, the Received Text complicates matters with its variant reading, καὶ τὸν μόνον δεσπότην Θεὸν, καὶ Κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἀρνούμενοι. Nevertheless, Donelson is still convinced that Jude addresses Jesus as both Master and Lord. See Lewis R. Donelson, *I & II Peter and Jude: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2010), 173.

[40] Walter M. Dunnett, "The Hermeneutics Of Jude And 2 Peter: The Use Of Ancient Jewish Traditions," *JETS* 31, no. 3 (September 1988): 292.

[41] Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 40; G. F. C. Fronmüller, *The Epistles General of Peter with the Epistle of Jude: An Exegetical and Doctrinal Commentary*, Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scripture, trans. J. Isidore Mombert (1870; repr. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007), 14; Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 231.

[42] According to Peter H. Davids, "The Point [of Jude 4] is that if people fail to obey someone, whether or not they call him "lord" or "master," they are in fact denying that he is their lord of master. Thus their behavior with respect to the commands of Jesus…reveals the true state of their hearts. However orthodox their words may be, their behavior denies that Jesus is really their only Sovereign and Lord" (*Letters of Second Peter and Jude*, Pillar NT Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans], 45).

Acts 4:24; Rev 6:10) and was frequently used in the LXX as a divine title (Gen 15:2, 8; Josh 5:14; Prov 29:25; Isa 3:1; 10:33).[43] As Moo states, "We have here another instance in which Jude applies language typically used only of God to Jesus Christ."[44] No monotheistic Jew would have missed the implication.

The Authority of Christ

In addition to Christ's deity, Jude also proclaims Christ's authority in two unique ways. First, Jude identifies himself as Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος, "a slave of Jesus Christ" (v. 1). The title "slave" is a common term used to identify the authors of the NT, including Paul (Rom 1:1), Peter (2 Pet 1:1), James (Jas 1:1), and John (Rev 1:1). In its OT usage, a "servant of the Lord" designated authority and was used to identify such men as Moses (Num 12:7; cf. Heb 3:5), David (Ps 78:70), Daniel (Dan 6:20). Although identifying oneself as a δοῦλος reveals humility, here in Jude 1 it most likely refers to Jude's claim to authority,[45] and by implication, Jude refers to the authority of Jesus Christ, the one whom he serves. As Green notes, "Jude's high Christology is implicit in this identification."[46] Second, Jude urges his readers to μνήσθητε τῶν ῥημάτων τῶν προειρημένων ὑπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, "remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 17). Jude's call to μνάομαι, "remember," emphasizes the authority of the apostles. The implication is obvious, for if the apostles' words, which govern the doctrine and conduct of the church, have authority, then their master has even greater authority.

The lordship of Jesus Christ is necessary preaching in every church today. Many claim allegiance to Christ, including the proponents of many false religions. However, few identify Christ as the "only" master and lord. Some deny Christ as the

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[43] See Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 60.
[44] Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 231.
[45] Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 23.
[46] Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 45.

only master and lord by their rejection of biblical Christology, but just as many reject his authority by their actions. This was the sin of the Jude's opponents, who may have called Jesus "Lord" but proved to be hypocrites by their propagation of a licentious gospel. Just as there is nothing new under the sun (Eccl 1:9), theological liberalism rejects the moral teachings of Scripture while claiming to represent Christ. But, as Jesus said himself, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46) As Jude preaches so clearly, one must submit to the commands of Christ to truly call him "Lord."

Pneumatology

Pneumatology, the study of the Holy Spirit, is a theological subset that was neglected for much of church history and has only witnessed a popular resurgence within the last century due to the rise of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements.[47] At first glance, it seems that Jude contributes to this neglect, for Jude makes only two references to the Holy Spirit, as Davids notes, "once as a mediator of prayer ("pray in the Holy Spirit" – Jude 20) and once as what is lacked by those he opposes (Jude 19)."[48] However, both references offer critical data to the important doctrines of the Spirit's absence in man as indicative of man's fallen state and the Spirit as mediator.

The Spirit Absent in the False Teachers

In verse 19, Jude makes a devastating charge against his apostate opponents: οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ ἀποδιορίζοντες, ψυχικοί, πνεῦμα μὴ ἔχοντες, "These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit." Expositors differ in opinion concerning whether πνεῦμα in the final clause, πνεῦμα μὴ ἔχοντες, "devoid of the Spirit," refers to the spirit of man or

[47] Michael Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit: God's Perfecting Presence in Creation, Redemption, and Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 19.

[48] Davids, *Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 155.

the Holy Spirit, but it is best to recognize πνεῦμα as a reference to the Holy Spirit because of its use in verse 20.[49]

Jude 19 has chilling parallels to Romans 8:9 and 1 Corinthians 2:14.[50] In the former, Paul makes the bold assertion that "if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." As Moo simply puts it, "For Paul, possession of the Spirit goes hand-in-hand with being a Christian."[51] Furthermore, the Greek word ψυχικός used in Jude 19 to describe the false teachers is the same word Paul used to describe the "natural man" in 1 Corinthians 2:14, a passage describing an unsaved man regarding his inability to comprehend spiritual truth.[52] The implication is clear: if the false teachers do not have the Spirit, then they are unbelievers, and because they lack the Spirit, they are prone to revealing their depraved nature by their actions, including causing division and following after their own ungodly lusts. Ultimately, because these false teachers cause division through their doctrine, they should not be trusted in spiritual matters, no matter what allegiance they claim to Christ. Jude 19 takes the Spirit's absence in unbelievers and its consequences as theory and makes it reality, and thus Jude adds depth to a terrifying, yet important, doctrine.

The Spirit as Mediator

In verse 20, Jude exhorts his readers, ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀγαπητοί, ἐποικοδομοῦντες ἑαυτοὺς τῇ ἁγιωτάτῃ ὑμῶν πίστει, ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ προσευχόμενοι, "But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit." What does the phrase, "praying in the Holy Spirit" mean? This phrase has been understood by some in Pentecostal/charismatic

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[49] D. Edmond Hiebert, "Selected Studies from Jude Part 3: An Exposition of Jude 17-23," *BibSac* 142, no.568 (October 1985): 359.

[50] Stanley D. Toussaint, "The Spiritual Man," *BibSac* 125, no. 498 (April 1968): 140.

[51] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans,* NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 490.

[52] Charles C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 97.

denominations to indicate speaking in tongues.[53] However, Ephesians 6:18, a parallel passage to Jude 20, reads, "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints," and makes no mention of tongues but is concerned with the believer's response to Satan's attacks.[54] Likewise, the context of Jude 20 speaks against the charismatic interpretation, for Jude is concerned with contrasting the apostate teachers, who were submitting to their own fleshly desires, with the recipients of Jude's letter who, in order to guard against apostasy, must submit to the desires of the Holy Spirit.[55] Therefore, it is better to understand "praying in the Holy Spirit" as "praying according to the will of the Holy Spirit."

The Holy Spirit as a mediator in prayer is most noted in Romans 8, where Paul proclaims that the Holy Spirit "intercedes for us" (v. 26). Jude 20 adds to this important doctrine by linking the imperative with the previous phrase "building yourselves up on your most holy faith." "Praying in the Spirit," meaning that believers seek the will of the Spirit in prayer, is a critical way in which, among other things, believers protect themselves from apostate teaching. By seeking the Spirit's will rather than their own desires, believers guard themselves against errant teachings, and thus Jude 20 becomes essential preaching towards a culture that is self-centered and concerned more with feelings over biblical truth.

Angelology

Jude makes a unique contribution to the theologian's understanding of angelology, the study of the angelic host, by offering data concerning the fall of the angels (v. 6) and the authority of Satan (v. 9). In fact, the specifics of this data are so

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[53] Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 121.

[54] Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC (Nashville: B & H Publishing), 483.

[55] Shawn Leach, "Keep Yourselves in the Love of God: A Study of Jude 20-23," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 24, no.46 (Spring 2011): 55.

unique that the former point is rarely mentioned elsewhere in Scripture and the latter point is mentioned nowhere else in Scripture. A further discussion of each point is as follows.

The Fallen Angels

In warning his readers of the fate of the apostates, Jude reminds them of several historic examples of the Lord punishing apostates. One of these examples is the rebellion of the angels and their fate. In verse 6, Jude writes, ἀγγέλους τε τοὺς μὴ τηρήσαντας τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἀρχὴν ἀλλὰ ἀπολιπόντας τὸ ἴδιον οἰκητήριον εἰς κρίσιν μεγάλης ἡμέρας δεσμοῖς ἀϊδίοις ὑπὸ ζόφον τετήρηκεν, "And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day." There is great debate over the identity of these angels, for Jude 6 (and 2 Peter 2:4, the parallel of Jude 6) does not indicate the time or the reason for their rebellion.[56] Some theologians identify these fallen angels with the "sons of God" in Genesis 6:1-2 because of the proximity of Jude 6 to Jude 7 and its reference to Sodom and Gomorrah and those cities' indulging "in gross immorality" and going "after strange flesh."[57] If such evidence holds, then Jude provides insight into a select group of fallen angels, their activities, and their destiny. Other theologians contest that Jude is referring to the general fall of Satan's angels with Sodom and Gomorrah serving as imagery for the fire prepared for these angels. No matter what option one choses, the conclusion is the same: Angels, although powerful spirit beings, are not immune to the Lord's judgment, but are subject to His law and will face punishment for their apostasy. In fact, the angels who sinned are facing punishment right now!

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[56] J. Darly Charles, "The Angels Under Reserve in 2 Peter and Jude," *BBR* 15, no.1 (2005): 43.

[57] Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 50-51.

Due to the rise of spirituality and New Age thought in the West, the interest in angels has surged amongst Americans.[58] In 1999, 75% of Americans claimed to believe in angels.[59] However, the angels of these movements essentially act as "divine neutrals" and take the place of God; for example, some people believe that angels receive and answer prayer.[60] This belief completely contrasts with the subjection of the angels to the Lord as stated in Scripture. With a steady misunderstanding of angels in modern culture, a pastor cannot neglect this important subject.

The Authority of Angels

Beyond a general mention to the fallen angels, Jude makes a unique reference to a famous encounter between the angels Michael and Satan. Of course, this is deliberate. Among his various charges against the apostate teachers, Jude accuses the false teachers of δόξας δὲ βλασφημοῦσιν, "[reviling] angelic majesties" (v. 9). To show their error, Jude observes an account recorded in the Assumption of Moses. In this version, Moses is accused of murder, but Michael, fully knowing Satan's incorrect accusation, does not offer an accusation of Satan but calls upon the Lord to proclaim that condemnation. By acknowledging their slander of angels, Jude points out that the apostates are reckless and do not understand the role and authority of angels and thus do not understand biblical truth.[61]

That Michael would refuse to accuse Satan is at first a rather strange observation. However, this conclusion does not conflict with scriptural truth. Elsewhere in the Bible, evil angels are given positions of authority (e.g., Dan 10:13; Eph 6:12), and although man struggles with such authorities, he is never given the license to blaspheme these evil angels.

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[58] Laurence Osborne, "Entertaining Angels: Their Place in Contemporary Theology," *TynBul*, 45, no. 2 (1994): 274.

[59] Patty Tunnicliffe, "What in Heaven's Name? An Analysis of the Messages and World Views Coming from Aliens and Modern Day Angels," *Christian Apologetics Journal* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 11.

[60] Ibid., 11.

[61] Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 64.

The account of the confrontation between Michael and Satan reveals a unique truth concerning the angels: no matter the status of their allegiance to God, all angels, being the servants and messengers of God, are worthy of respect. Because of Satan's activity, especially his activity against the Lord and believers, it is very easy to see slander against the devil as an act of piety. However, according to Jude, such slander is a sign of recklessness and ignorance, both of which identify the apostate teachers who claimed to be bearers of the truth. Because of the rise in interest in angels in popular culture and spiritual warfare in the church, preachers must be certain to inform believers of this essential truth.

Anthropology

Jude's anthropology is revealed through his contrast of the apostate teachers and the recipients of the epistle. According to Jude, these men were γογγυσταί, μεμψίμοιροι, κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῶν πορευόμενοι, καὶ τὸ στόμα αὐτῶν λαλεῖ ὑπέρογκα, θαυμάζοντες πρόσωπα ὠφελείας χάριν, "Grumblers, finding fault, following after their *own* lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of *gaining an* advantage" (v. 16). It is these men whom Jude identifies as those "ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit" (v. 19). It is no coincidence that Jude links these actions with the absence of the Spirit. As Lovik concludes, "[The apostate teachers] are living according to the only nature that they have," which is, according to Lovik, "an unregenerate and ungodly nature."[62] As far as Jude is concerned, these "worldly-minded men" do not belong to the church. In contrast, the recipients of Jude's letter are "called," "kept for Jesus Christ" (v.1), share in "our common salvation" (v.3) and are commanded to pray "in the Spirit" (v.20), and thus, in the mind of Jude, his recipients were saved and belong to the church.

Other passages of Scripture describe the state of the so-called "natural man," or the man lacking the Spirit and thus living in an unsaved and fallen state. For example 1 Corinthians

[62] Lovik, "'These Men,'"43.

2:14 describes the unbeliever and his inability to comprehend spiritual truth. However, Jude uniquely takes the concept of the "natural man" and proclaims that the "natural man" is not just unable to comprehend spiritual truth, but is subject to living according to his own nature. Although it is not very comforting in and of itself, Jude's anthropology offers an important explanation for the state and condition of the world, for unregenerate men will act according to their nature, and a world filled with unregenerate men will reflect that nature even more. In short, a fallen world should surprise no one, and no believer, whether a pastor or "layman," should be unaware of this truth so clearly spoken of in Jude.

Soteriology

Jude's soteriology is critical to the thesis of the epistle, for it provides the counterbalance to Jude's proclamation of judgment upon the apostates. All of Jude's soteriological references, as with most of the NT's soteriological propositions, are not simply academic fodder for theological debate, but provide comfort and assurance to suffering and persecuted believers. Essentially, Jude's soteriology is twofold: (1) Jude proclaims the salvation of his readers, and (2) Jude proclaims the doom of the false gospel propagated by the apostates.

Election

Jude addresses his epistle τοῖς…κλητοῖς, "to those who are called" (v.1). Bauckam explains that title κλητός, "called," has its origins with God's "calling," or "election," of Israel to be His servant people (e.g., Isa. 41:8).[63] This meaning carried over into the NT and was used to signify God's choice of bringing certain individuals to faith in Jesus Christ by the proclamation of the Gospel. The NT clearly attests to this usage of κλητός (e.g., Rom 4:17; 8:30; 9:12, 24-26; 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Thess 2:14; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Pet 1:15; 2:9).[64] Therefore, "call" does not mean

[63] Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 26.

[64] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 292.

"invite," but to "choose" or "select,"[65] and reflects God's gracious choice to save some men for his glory. For the original recipients of Jude, this title would have distinguished them from the apostates and provided comfort amid persecution.

Eternal Security

In addition to election, Jude contributes to the doctrine of eternal security. In addition to being identified as "the called," Jude also identifies his readers as those who are Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ τετηρημένοις, "kept for Jesus Christ" (v. 1). Scholars have differed in their translation of this phrase. Some argue that Jude's recipients were "kept" by the power of Jesus Christ working in them, and thus the phrase takes on the meaning of sanctification. Others argue that Jude's recipients were "kept" safe until the day of the parousia, and thus it has an eschatological sense. Ultimately, both solutions have the same conclusion, for it is the Lord who is "able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy" (v. 24). Therefore, Jude is not just certain that his recipients were chosen in eternity past, but that they will be preserved in eternity future. This reassurance of future glorification, like election, would provide assurance to the recipients of Jude's letter, for it guarantees that the Lord would keep them safe from the influence of the apostate teachers and their judgment.[66]

Our Common Salvation

What is it that makes Jude certain of his recipients' calling and security? For Jude, it is κοινῆς ἡμῶν σωτηρίας, "our common salvation" (v. 3). This expression occurs nowhere else in the NT, although Titus 1:4 and its "common faith" is a close parallel. According to Hiebert, ""Common'" (κοινή́) does not

[65] Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 222.
[66] Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 26.

denote something ordinary or inferior but rather what is shared by God's true people everywhere."[67] To this, Hiebert adds,

> Salvation (σωτηρία) is a comprehensive New Testament term, and probably Jude was thinking of preparing an inclusive presentation of all the blessings involved in the concept. These blessings include the believer's past deliverance from the guilt of sin, present deliverance from the domination of sin, and future deliverance from the very presence of sin.[68]

Here, Jude establishes a "standard" for what salvation truly is, in contrast to the apostates, who claim to represent the truth but actually stand contrary to the truth.

False Views of Salvation

In contrast to "our common salvation," Jude attacks the apostate teachers and their "gospel," men who had τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν χάριτα μετατιθέντες εἰς ἀσέλγειαν, "turn[ed] the grace of God into licentiousness" (v. 4). Although the exact identity and sin of the false teachers are unknown, the word ἀσέλγεια, "licentiousness," indicates sensual indulgences and sexual immorality (e.g., Rom 13:13; 1 Pet 4:3; 2 Cor 12:21). According to Bauckham, the apostate teachers interpreted "the Christian's liberation by God's grace as liberation from all moral restraint…. They justified immoral behavior by an antinomian doctrine."[69] It is this very view of the gospel that Paul spoke against (e.g., Rom 6:1).

The urgency of preaching Jude's contrast between the recipients of his letter and their salvation and the apostates and their damning gospel requires little defense. According to Jude, it is the "common salvation" that looks forward to the glorious return of Jesus Christ, and not the apostate gospel, which may be sensually alluring but only ends in judgment. The church in the West faces immense pressure to conform to secular norms

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[67] D. Edmond Hiebert, "Selected Studies from Jude, Part 1: An Exposition of Jude 3-4," *BibSac* 142, no. 556 (April 1985): 143.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 38.

and values much in the same way that Jude's recipients faced pressure to conform to an apostate worldview that was tolerable in first-century Roman society. However, holding a "tolerant" and "licentious" gospel may win praise from men and culture, but it does not save or protect one from the coming wrath.

Ecclesiology

The Greek word for "church," ἐκκλησία, is never used in Jude, and neither will one find lengthy discourses on prominent themes in ecclesiology such as the qualifications of church leaders (cf. 1 Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9), spiritual gifts (cf. 1 Cor 12-14), or the administration of the ordinances (cf. 11:23-34). Therefore, it is easy to assume that Jude does not concern itself with these doctrinal matters. However, to draw this conclusion would be a mistake, for although Jude does not develop common themes within ecclesiology, Jude makes two critically important contributions of its own to this important theological subset: (1) Jude commissions the church to fight for the faith, and (2) Jude commissions the church to enact specific discipline upon apostates and succumbing church members.

Fighting for the Faith

What is the role of the church? Although this question is incredibly important, many believers stumble in answering. However, Jude leaves no doubt as to the duty of the church: it must fight for the faith. In Jude 3 he exhorts his readers to "contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." Although the passage has implications for the biblical canon, its primary purpose is to commission believers to stand for the teachings of Scripture as delivered by the apostles and their associates and against the immoral practices of the apostate teachers. That this command is issued to all believers (and not just pastors, apologists, professors, etc.) is indicated by ὑμῖν (plural dative "you") and τοῖς ἁγίοις ("to the saints" collectively rather than just church leaders).

The church's role in propagating true doctrine is supported elsewhere in Scripture. Perhaps the best parallel of Jude 3 in

Paul's epistles is found in Philippians 1:27. Here Paul commands, "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." Paul also gives this command using a form of the same verb in 1 Timothy 6:12, "Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called." This fight for the faith is not simply a defensive response to false doctrine or even a retreat from false teachers, but is a call to stand firm for the faith and continue to teach true doctrine and the holy life that comes from such doctrine.

Jude 3 stands as the thesis to his letter, and this thesis is critically important, not just for understanding the purpose of his letter, but as a calling for the church. Even a discussion of "common salvation" had to take second place to a defense of the faith, and for good reason: It is not enough for the church to simply discuss the gospel every Sunday morning, but must actively teach the whole counsel of God and prepare members to proclaim and defend sound doctrine. It might be a stretch to argue that the widespread biblical illiteracy in churches today is the direct result of Jude's absence from the pulpit, but it certainly does not help that the book which contains the clearest exhortation to stand for biblical truth is not a commonly studied and preached letter.

Church Discipline in the Context of Apostasy

In addition to Jude's commission to fight for the faith, Jude also offers a unique discourse on church discipline. In verses 22-23, Jude writes, καὶ οὓς μὲν ἐλεᾶτε διακρινομένους, οὓς δὲ σῴζετε ἐκ πυρὸς ἁρπάζοντες, οὓς δὲ ἐλεᾶτε ἐν φόβῳ, μισοῦντες καὶ τὸν ἀπὸ τῆς σαρκὸς ἐσπιλωμένον χιτῶνα, "And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh." In context, Jude is confronting the apostate teachers and those whom they have deceived in the church. In these two verses, he describes three kinds of "churchgoers" who have been influenced by apostate teachers.

The first concerns those who have been exposed to the apostate teachers and thus are διακρινόμενοι, "doubting," the doctrines and practices of the Christian faith. The correct response is ἐλεέω, "have mercy." These believers have not given in but are suffering under the immense pressure to conform and thus need encouragement and correct doctrine. The second group concerns those who are just about to fall to the teachings of the apostates. These, Jude commands, are to be "saved" from "the fire." Although Jude has already referenced hell and "eternal" fire, the lack of ἀΐδιος here in verse 22 suggests that Jude is thinking of temporal judgment laid upon straying believers rather than eternal hellfire.[70] These individuals require a more direct approach and must be warned of the consequences of apostasy, both eternally and in their relationship with the church. The final group concerns confronting those who have completely given into the teachings of the apostate teachers. Like the first group, believers are to show "mercy" but also "fear," recognizing the dangers presented by the teachings of the false teachers. The reference to χιτών, "garment," is a common reference to one's spiritual condition, being either pure or filthy.[71] "Hating even the garment polluted by the flesh" is probably the closest biblical statement to the popular "hate the sinner, not the sin" slogan, as it recognizes that, although apostates are sinners corrupting the church, they also need to hear the truth.

Church discipline is a theme that runs through the NT (Matt 18:15-17; 1 Cor 5:13; 2 Cor 2:5-8; Gal 6:1; 2 Thess 3:14). It is necessary to maintain the purity of the church. Most of these references concern disciplining sinning believers. However, Jude is the only NT book that speaks on handling discipline in the context of apostasy within the visible church. Understanding Jude's taxonomy in dealing with those affected by apostate teachings is vital in maintaining unity in the church, for condemning those who are doubting while being "soft" on true

[70] Shawn Leach, "Keep Yourselves in the Love of God: A Study of Jude 20-23," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 24, no. 46 (Spring 2011): 59.

[71] Ibid.

apostates are both reckless and heartless acts. As Jude points out, the church must be wise in administering discipline across various scenarios, and in a world full of apostasy, the modern church must get this right.

Eschatology

Jude's eschatology is heavily set upon the destinies of the apostates and the faithful. As Webb notes, "Jude's eschatology is oriented around the twin poles common to most eschatological schemata: eschatological judgment and eschatological salvation."[72], Jude offers data to two other areas of eschatology: (1) the "Last Days," and (2) hell.

The Last Days

In Jude 17-18, Jude warns his readers,

> Ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀγαπητοί, μνήσθητε τῶν ῥημάτων τῶν προειρημένων ὑπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ· ὅτι ἔλεγον ὑμῖν· Ἐπ' ἐσχάτου χρόνου ἔσονται ἐμπαῖκται κατὰ τὰς ἑαυτῶν ἐπιθυμίας πορευόμενοι τῶν ἀσεβειῶν,
> But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, 'In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.

Jude, apparently referencing 2 Peter 3:3-4, explains to his readers that they should not be surprised that false teachers walked among them, for the presence of such false teachers were promised by the apostles. The implication of Jude's proclamation is evident: if these apostate teachers were walking among believers, then the recipients of Jude's letter were living in the "last days."

The "last days" is a common theme of the NT (Acts 2:17; 2 Tim 3:1-17; James 5:3; 1 John 2:18) and generally points to a time of trouble, sin, and distress. However, Jude 17-18 suggests

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[72] Robert L. Webb, "The Eschatology of the Epistle of Jude and its Rhetorical and Social Functions," *BBR* 6, no. 1 (1996): 140.

that believers are now living in the "last days." Believers should not be fooled into thinking that the modern period and its "morals" is somehow radically different than the past. As Jude implies, false teachers have been penetrating the church for two millennia. The church is not now suddenly in the "last days," for it has been in the "last days" for 2,000 years.[73] No matter how bad things appear or may be today, believers should not take on a "doomsday" mentality but wisely prepare for the presence of false teachers among them.

Hell

In Jude 7, the brother of the Lord affirms the orthodox doctrine of the eternity of hell:

> ὡς Σόδομα καὶ Γόμορρα καὶ αἱ περὶ αὐτὰς πόλεις, τὸν ὅμοιον τρόπον τούτοις ἐκπορνεύσασαι καὶ ἀπελθοῦσαι ὀπίσω σαρκὸς ἑτέρας, πρόκεινται δεῖγμα πυρὸς αἰωνίου δίκην ὑπέχουσαι,
>
> Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

The people of Sodom and Gomorrah, who had once been in league with Abraham and were exposed to his blessings (Gen 14), turned to sexual immorality and were destroyed by fire. Jude identifies the fire of Sodom and Gomorrah as πυρὸς αἰωνίου δίκην, "an example of eternal fire." It is interesting that Jude uses a "temporal" example of fire to refer to an "eternal" example of fire. If Jude had wanted to argue for some form of annihilationism, then this was the perfect opportunity; for example, Jude could have argued that the fate of the apostates was simply "destruction" like Sodom and Gomorrah. However, Jude uses the adjective αἰώνιος, as others do (e.g., Matt 18:8; 25:41) to describe the duration of the Lord's judgment upon the

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[73] See William F. Kerr, "Apostasy According to Jude," *Central Bible Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (Winter 1959): 19.

apostates in contrast to the immediate punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah. Thus, Sodom and Gomorrah become a "type" of a much more devastating "eternal" fire. There is absolutely no doubt as to how Jude understood the nature of hell.

The nature of hell is an important battle in modern culture. As Spencer reminds the church, "For the past century there has been a battle for the traditional doctrine of Hell. The results of the battle have culminated in the erroneous teachings of various evangelical Christian leaders as well as the cults of Christianity."[74] Rob Bell's 2013 work *Love Wins* only fueled the flames of this debate. Although the doctrine of hell is offensive to modern ears, Jude's use of the well-known Sodom and Gomorrah account serves as a warning to all apostates or those who are tempted with the teachings of apostates. As any pastor knows, the doctrine of hell is foundational to the gospel, and with such a clear statement on the subject in Jude, it would be foolish for the pastor to ignore this important epistle.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this article, it was stated that Jude is a theologically-heavy text and offers unique data to the science of systematic theology in a very short amount of space. The Epistle of Jude contains vast material from which the pastor can draw and use to preach on some of the most important issues today. Although Jude has been ignored in the past, its vital theological content, valuable to both systematic theology and the pulpit, make the Epistle essential and necessary for believers in the modern world.

If there is a lesson to be learned, it is this: in 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul declares, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." This verse is well-known, but perhaps not applied as much as it should. Just as the systematic theologian, who recognizes the truth of 2 Timothy 3:16-17,

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[74] Jeffrey M. Spencer, "The Destruction of Hell: Annihilationism Examined," *Christian Apologetics Journal* 1, no.1 (Spring 1998): 1.

must draw from all parts of Scripture in forming his theological statements, so the preacher, who also recognizes the truth of 2 Timothy 3:16-17, must also draw from all parts of Scripture to truly preach the whole counsel of God. This certainly includes Jude's vital contributions to the faith.

The Early Life and Influence of John Nelson Darby

Bruce A. Baker

Abstract: Many dispensationalists are familiar with the work of J. N. Darby, particularly his influence on dispensationalism as a system. But considerably less are acquainted with the man himself. This is particularly unfortunate because, by all accounts, Darby was a great man. Even his detractors concede that his attitude toward the poor and his remarkable generosity mark him as a man of unusual character. This article traces the early life of Darby as well as influential persons and events upon his life and ministry. Specifically, this article examines the influence of Richard Graves (Dean of Trinity College) upon Darby's spiritual life, his conversion and his "deliverance" years later, as well as his generosity and attitude toward the poor.

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The youngest son of John Darby of Leap Castle, King's County, Ireland, John Nelson Darby was born at his father's house in London on November 18, 1800.[2] Though his family had been associated with Ireland since before the Reformation, his early years were spent in London, attending Westminster School. These years were uneventful save for the untimely death of his mother, which made a lasting impression upon the boy.[3] He matriculated at Trinity College,

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[2] W. G. Turner, *John Nelson Darby* (London: Chapter Two, 1986), 14. "His uncle, Admiral Sir Henry Darby, commanded the *Bellerophon* in the Battle of the Nile, and Lord Nelson, to the delight of the parents, was sponsor for their youngest son: hence the second Christian name given in compliment to England's naval hero" (ibid.).

[3] Turner recounts the common view of Darby's mother: "[I]n spite of a stormy ecclesiastical career, the tender memory which he cherished in his

Dublin, at age fifteen. At nineteen he graduated as a Classical Gold Medalist.[4]

Richard Graves

While at Trinity, Darby came under the influence of the godly dean of the school, Richard Graves, who had a keen interest in Jewish evangelism and the prophecies of the OT.[5]

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heart of her sometimes found expression on unexpected occasions. When fifty years of age, he writes of her as follows: 'I have long, I suppose, looked at the portrait of my mother, who watched over my tender years with the care which only a mother knows how to bestow. I can just form some imperfect thought of her looks, for I was early bereft of her; but her eye fixed upon me that tender love which had me for its heart's object—which could win when I could know little else—which had my confidence before I knew what confidence was—by which I learnt to love, because I felt I was loved, was the object of that love which had its joy in serving me—which I took for granted must be; for I had never known aught else. All that which I had learnt, but which was treasured in my heart and formed part of my nature, was linked with the features which hung before my gaze. That was my mother's picture. It recalled her, no longer sensibly present, to my heart'" (ibid., 15). Weremchuk presents a different account. He maintains that Darby's mother died in 1847 at the age of 90, when Darby was 47 years old. He contends that Turner's quotation from Darby that he was "early bereft" of his mother is ambiguous. Weremchuk alleges that Darby's parents were separated while the youngest boy was still small, and that John Nelson never saw his mother again (Max S. Weremchuk, *John Nelson Darby* [Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Bros., 1992], 28). Darby's father passed away in 1834, but Darby did not attend the funeral due to his strong position against the clergy, who were present at the funeral (ibid.). Although Weremchuk provides persuasive evidence for his theory, nothing he presents adequately explains why Darby would have spoken so wistfully of his mother when it is conceivable that he could have located and visited her while she was still alive.

[4] Turner, *Darby*, 15. The gold medal was awarded to the best respondent at the degree examination in mathematics and classics respectively. See Floyd Sanders Elmore, "A Critical Examination of the Doctrine of the Two Peoples of God in John Nelson Darby" (ThD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1991), 54.

[5] Ibid., 57. Interestingly, Graves tutored classics, which may help explain why Darby excelled in this area (ibid, 54).

Graves was "innovative and fervent-spirited" and was promoted to Regius Professor of Divinity in 1815 "to try to turn things around."[6]

Prior to Graves' arrival, the spiritual tenor of the college was at an all-time low. To combat this spiritual lethargy, Graves began instituting changes to the curricula including a mandatory one year of divinity before taking Holy Orders: "[I]t might be deduced that Darby, who was ordained a priest in 1826, had met the 'year's course of Divinity Lectures' requirement."[7]

Graves was evidently a dynamic preacher and loving professor, taking a genuine interest in both the spiritual and physical welfare of his students. Consequently he became a favorite at the college.[8] "Graves exemplified missionary zeal without political considerations for the conversion of Irish Catholics. In these respects, Darby was a model disciple of his teacher, whose example of devotion in evangelistic ministry he followed."[9]

Graves was also keenly interested in prophecy, as was much of the British Empire at that time.[10] Graves subscribed to what might be called a "futuristic postmillennialism":[11]

> The elements of Graves' postmillennial scheme assume a literal approach to the interpretation of Scripture. Unfulfilled prophecies must yet be fulfilled. He used Isa 11:11 ("the second time to recover the remnant of his people") as a key support in his plea for Jewish evangelism. Even the 1260 days, which for him were

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., 55. Weremchuk disagrees: "J. N. Darby had not studied theology at Trinity College, and there is not the least ground for assuming that he did so between the time of his being called to the Chancery Bar in 1822 and his ordination in 1825" (*Darby*, 39).

[8] Elmore, "Critical Examination," 56.

[9] Ibid., 56-57.

[10] "The eschatological climate of 1827-33 previously surveyed revealed that Darby arrived at his new synthesis in a time of heightened millennial expectations in the British empire. The French Revolution, and especially the Napoleonic wars, had stimulated speculation among premillennialists about the exact time of the coming of Christ" (ibid., 62).

[11] Ibid., 66.

> years, is still literally applied, for there will be 1260 real years which will come to a close before the Jews convert in mass and the millennial age dawns.[12]

Thus it seems reasonable to speculate that Darby did not come up with his prophetic outlook from scratch, but learned some of the fundamental principles—a literal hermeneutic for example—while at Trinity.[13] Yet Darby's spiritual awakening did not occur at Trinity. Despite the preaching of Graves and the study of the Scriptures, Darby was still lost.

Darby's Conversion and Spiritual Struggle

It was while he was in law school, at the age of 21, that Darby was converted.[14] He was studying to be a barrister and came to Christ as a result, at least in part, of reading Cicero's *Offices*. He later wrote of this under the title "The Irrationalism of Infidelity: How Far Can God Be Known?"[15]

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[12] Ibid.

[13] One must not wonder at the fact that Darby departed from Graves's postmillennialism, despite the fact that he was indeed heavily influenced by him. Darby rejected, for example, the Arminianism of Graves and remained a moderate Calvinist (ibid., 56). As many college professors will attest, one may influence a student's thinking while still having that student reject the professor's theology.

[14] Weremchuk, *Darby*, 33. This age is not universally accepted; see Turner, *Darby*, 16.

[15] "I remember (for I also have had my 'phases of faith') when first awakened to serious and, in some measure, continued moral thought, I was reading, partly through desire of knowledge, partly alas! through the vanity which likes to possess it, Cicero's 'Offices,' and I came to the passage, nearly the only one which remains to me unobliterated by an active life, '*subjecta veritas quasi materia*,' that is, 'truth subjected as a material' to the mind. I said to myself (or rather the divine truth flashed across my mind), 'This cannot be in the case of God, for my mind must be superior to the matter which is subjected to its operations; if it be, that which is so is not God. Faith alone can put Him in His place, which, if He be God, must be above me, as much as God must be above man'" (J. N. Darby, The *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby*, 34 vols., ed. William Kelly [Oak Park, IL.: Bible Truth Publishers, n.d.], 6: 27-28).

Darby was admitted to the Irish Chancery Bar three years after graduation from Trinity.[16] Despite his obvious talent and to the great disappointment of many,[17] he left the bar and was "ordained as a deacon in 1825 and as a priest in the Church of England in 1826."[18] Although this change in direction may appear sudden, it was anything but. Darby "underwent much spiritual exercise" for approximately seven years after his conversion.[19] It was this inner struggle that caused him to seek holy orders.[20] "He became ordained in the hope of finding inner peace and not because he already possessed it."[21] During this time of spiritual doubt and despair, Darby would develop habits that would remain with him the rest of his life.

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[16] Darby graduated July 10, 1819, and was called to the Irish Bar on January 21, 1822 (Weremchuk, *Darby*, 31-32).

[17] Darby's rejection of the Bar for an ecclesiastical calling was a particular disappointment to "his brother-in-law, the Lord Chief Justice of Ireland (then Sergeant Pennefather), who hoped not only for his rise to the highest honours in the profession, but that his penetrating and generalizing genius would have done much to reduce the legal chaos to order" (Turner, *Darby*, 15-16).

[18] Elmore, "Critical Examination," 82.

[19] Weremchuk describes this period in Darby's life: "During these years universal sorrow and sin pressed upon his spirit. Darby's conversion took place, as he himself testified, through the reading of God's Word alone and not with the help of man. He felt that Christ was the only Savior, but was not able to say that he possessed Him, or that he was saved by Him. He looked for proofs of regeneration in himself, something that can never give peace, and rested in the *hope* of Christ's work, but not in *faith*. He spent his time in fasting, praying, and giving alms. On Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays he would eat nothing at all until evening, and then only a little bread, or nothing. If he could fast three days, he thought he could fast four; if four, then five; if five, better still six; and if six, then seven" (Weremchuk, *Darby*, 34). Only the Word of God upheld Darby during this time of spiritual grief. "Speaking to the late Mr. William Kelly many years after on the subject of the possibility of real conversion before the peace of conversion, Mr. Darby said that for these seven years he practically lived in the 88th Psalm, his only ray of light being in the opening words, 'O Lord God of my salvation'" (Turner, *Darby*, 16).

[20] Weremchuk, *Darby*, 37.

[21] Ibid.

Irish Ministry

Archbishop Magee assigned the young Darby to a "large and straggling parish in County Wicklow,"[22] Ireland. Darby threw himself into this work even though, or more likely because, he was not initially assured of his position before God.[23] He lived in a peasant hut near the school where he preached.[24] Every evening he could be seen travelling to and from the cabins of the notoriously poor Irish Catholics in his parish. Traveling sometimes on horseback and other times on foot, he climbed the mountains and tramped through bogs in order to make his calls.[25] He ate only what he was offered, much of this food being tasteless and indigestible. The combination of strenuous exercise, little sleep (he rarely returned home before midnight), and poor nutrition combined to cause his body to waste away. His appearance, godly character, and almsgiving served to endear him to his parishioners, as he

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[22] Turner, *Darby*, 16.

[23] For a description of his labors both before and during the early period of this ministry, see note 19.

[24] This account of the conditions of Darby's ministry is taken entirely from Turner, *Darby*, 16.

[25] This work ethic stayed with him throughout his life. "He was habitually a hard worker, from early morn devoted to his own reading the Word and prayer; but even when most busily engaged, he as the rule reserved the afternoons for visiting the poor and the sick, his evening for public prayer, fellowship, or ministry" (ibid., 53-54). That Darby's prose is regularly difficult to comprehend is an offshoot of his work ethic. "He wrote rapidly, as thoughts arose in his spirit, and often with scarcely a word changed. He delighted in a concatenated sentence, sometimes with parenthesis within parenthesis, to express the truth fully, and with guards against misconception. An early riser and indefatigable worker, he yet had not time to express his mind as briefly and clearly as he could wish. 'You write to be read and understood,' he once said playfully to me; *'I* only think on paper.' This made his writings, to the uninitiated, anything but pleasant reading, and to a hasty glance almost unintelligible; so that many, even among highly educated believers, turned away, because of their inability to penetrate sentences so involved" (ibid., 48-49).

appeared to them to be similar to a "monk of LaTrappe."[26] This commended him to those who heard him, but his labors brought little peace to his soul.

> …but going from cabin to cabin to speak of Christ, and with souls, these thoughts sprang up, and if I thought to quote a text to myself it seemed a shadow and not real. I ought never to have been there. I was not set free according to Romans viii. [27]

> I preached nothing but Christ and had not peace, and had no business to be in any public ministry.[28]

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[26] Weremchuk, *Darby*, 42. Trappist Monks are "Catholic monks of the order of Reformed Cistercians. Their name reflects the reform introduced at La Trappe in France in 1664. The order stresses silence, manual labor, abstention from meat, community life, and liturgical worship" (*The Dictionary of Religious Terms* [Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1967], s.v. "Trappists."

[27] John Nelson Darby, *Letters of J. N. Darby*, 3 vols. (Sunbury, PA:. Believer's Bookshelf, 2007), 3:453-54.

[28] Ibid., 2:376. This reminiscence is found in the context of going about the work of ministry too soon, a problem, Darby notes, which is particularly evident in the United States. "The notion of work as pressed by Moody, etc., I believe to be a most mischievous one. That they who are called to it should work devotedly is all clear; that if any one knows to do good, and does not do it, it is sin, is equally clear. We have all to serve. *But people are set to work, when they ought, as new-born babes, to be receiving milk for themselves*. The consequence is that they are full of themselves, light ill their way of working, and Christ's name is dishonoured. In the States generally they have no idea of getting peace but by working, and where sincere in this case dare not stop; with the rest it is a flighty self-sufficient forwardness. The revival work with everybody has nine-tenths of it everywhere come to nothing. … Working is all right when it is with Christ, and serious, when a person is led of the Spirit of God to it, but setting to work is another thing. The whole tone of Christianity suffers by it. I have said to them, I have worked unceasingly forty-nine years. I was set to it as positive ministry four years before: I preached nothing but Christ, and had not peace, and had no business to be in any public ministry. The whole system is a mischievous mistake: it has in the States done immense mischief" (ibid., 2:375-76; emphasis added).

Not content with merely ministering to those of the parish, he became particularly active in the Home Missions of the church, evangelizing the large Roman Catholic population.

> He was earnest and diligent in his ministrations, strict in his personal walk and churchmanship, endeared to the poor by his devotedness, and exercised a generally beneficial influence over the whole locality, where he spent his patrimony in schools and charity.[29]

Darby reports, "At that time the Roman Catholics were becoming Protestant at the rate of 600 to 800 a week."[30]

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[29] Weremchuk, *Darby*, 42-43. This is in stark contrast to the typical churchman of his day. Turner writes,

> The clergy were, as a whole, careless in giving out the bread of life to the flocks who had been committed to their care and keeping. At best they preached a carnal and soul-benumbing morality, and trafficked with the souls of men by receiving money for discharging the pastoral office in parishes where they did not so much as look on the faces of the people more than once a year. The typical clergyman had no great aims or theological enthusiasm. He felt no serious alarms about the souls of the people who made up his parish, and would have considered it a waste of time to speak in a doctrinal and awakening manner to these simple folk. He would have agreed that the only healthy effects of religion possible in the minds of such people were certain dim but strong emotions, which spread themselves out as sanctifying influences over family affections and neighborly duties. He thought that the custom of baptism was more important than its doctrine, and that the religious benefits which the peasant received from the church were but slightly dependent on a clear understanding of the liturgy or the sermon. The average rector could have been called anything but an earnest man. He was more fond of church history than he was of divinity. He was neither laborious, nor self-denying, nor very liberal in almsgiving, and his theology was evidently lax (Turner, *Darby*, 16).

[30] Darby, *Collected Writings*, 1:1. Turner states Darby "became specially active in the Home Mission of that day, which was greatly

The response of the established church to this awakening was cold. Archbishop Magee, in particular, was concerned about so many former Irish Catholics coming into the church. He insisted upon maintaining the relationship between church and state, an arrangement that he evidently felt was threatened.

> This time Magee spoke strongly against the Roman Catholic system, and in favor of the Church of England and Ireland, praising it especially for its loyalty to the state. He saw the church and the state as two aspects of the same Christian community, harmonized in the acknowledgment of the king as the supreme sovereign within the realm.[31]

As a result, the Archbishop "imposed, within the limits of his jurisdiction, the oaths of allegiance (to the British crown) and supremacy,"[32] acknowledging the King of England to be head of the church. This requirement changed the issue in the minds of the Irish Catholics from a choice between the Pope and Christ, to a choice between the Pope and the King.[33] As a result of the loyalty oaths, "the work everywhere instantly ceased."[34]

In response, Darby wrote a private letter to the Archbishop and to the clergy who supported his decision. In this letter (published thirty-eight years later[35]), one finds in embryonic form the central interpretive motif for Darby.

> What is the Church of Christ in its purpose and perfection? … It is a congregation of souls redeemed out of 'this naughty world' by God manifest in the flesh, a people purified to Himself by

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blessed in the conversion of Roman Catholics (at one time five hundred in a week) all over Ireland" (Turner, *Darby*, 17).

[31] Weremchuk, *Darby*, 44.

[32] Darby, *Collected Writings*, 1:1.

[33] "In one sense the former part of this may be true, but, on the principles of the Charge, is a mere substitution of the civil Sovereign for the Pope, such as Henry VIII introduced, and which made the German Protestants refuse to ally themselves with him" (ibid., 1:8).

[34] Ibid., 1:1.

[35] "All the actors are passed, everything is changed, so that there is no indiscretion in publishing it now" (ibid).

> Christ, purified in the heart by faith, knit together, by the bond of this common faith in Him, to Him their Head sitting at the right hand of the Father, having consequently their conversation (*commonwealth*) in heaven, from whence they look for the Saviour, the Lord of glory; Phil. 3:20. As a body, therefore, they belong to heaven; *there* is their portion in the restitution of all things, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. On earth they are, as a people, necessarily subordinate; they are nothing and nobody; their King is in heaven, their interests and constitution heavenly. … As such, consequently, they have no power. The result is, that they are formed into a spiritual community; they are raised, by their Head and centre and source of hope and object of allegiance being in heaven, to be heavenly. They are delivered in spirit out of this present evil world, and become heavenly, spiritual, in their connections, interests, thoughts, and prospects….[36]

This concept of the church as a heavenly (as opposed to an earthly) body is central to Darby's theology in general and his ecclesiology in particular.

"The Convalescence" and "The Deliverance"

During this controversy, Darby was thrown by his horse into a doorpost.[37] His injuries were primarily to his foot and were severe enough that he had to retire to Dublin for proper care and treatment.[38] It was during Darby's recuperation that he finally found the peace and rest that he sought through his strenuous labors.

> I may add as that which led to this (I mean as to the truth itself in my own soul), that, after I had been converted six or seven years,

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[36] Darby, *Collected Writings*, 1:1.

[37] Weremchuk, *Darby*, 47. "This period of Darby's life is known among Darby scholars as 'The Convalescence' during which he experienced 'The Deliverance.'" (Thomas Ice, "John Nelson Darby and the Rapture," (paper delivered at the Barndollar Lecture Series, Clarks Summitt, PA, 2011), 5.

[38] Turner, *Darby*, 17.

> I learned by divine teaching what the Lord says in John 14, "In that day ye shall know . . . that ye are in me, and I in you" - that I was one with Christ before God, and I found peace, and I have never, with many shortcomings, lost it since. The same truth brought me out of the Establishment. I saw that the true church was composed of those who were thus united to Christ; I may add, it led me to wait for God's Son from heaven; for if I was sitting in heavenly places in Him, what was I waiting for but that He should come and take me there?[39]

That is not to say this was an easy time for Darby. Indeed, he "passed through the deepest possible exercise as to the authority of the word."[40] Still, and as a result, Darby moved his trust from the church and the world, to the Bible. Commenting on this time he wrote,

> I am daily more struck with the connection of the great principles on which my mind was exercised by and with God, when I found salvation and peace, and the questions agitated and agitating the world at the present day: the absolute, divine authority and certainty of the Word, as a divine link between us and God, if everything (church and world) went; personal assurance of salvation in a new condition by being in Christ; the church as His body; Christ coming to receive us to Himself; and collaterally with that, the setting up of a new earthly dispensation, from Isaiah 32 (more particularly the end); all this was when laid aside

[39] Darby, *Collected Writings*, 1:36.

[40] "As I have spoken of myself (always a hazardous thing), I add that at the same period in which I was brought to liberty and to believe, with divinely given faith, in the presence of the Holy Spirit, I passed through the deepest possible exercise as to the authority of the word: whether if the world and the Church (that is, as an external thing, for it yet had certain traditional power over me as such) disappeared and were annihilated, and the word of God alone remained as an invisible thread over the abyss, my soul would trust in it. After deep exercise of soul I was brought by grace to feel I could entirely. I never found it fail me since. I have often failed; but I never found it failed me" (ibid., 1:38).

> at E.P.'s[41] in 1827; the house character of the assembly on earth (not the fact of the presence of the Spirit) was subsequently. It was a vague fact which received form in my mind long after, that there must be a wholly new order of things, if God was to have His way, and the craving of the heart after it I had felt long before; but the church and redemption I did not know till the time I have spoken of; but eight years before, universal sorrow and sin pressed upon my spirit. I did not think to say so much of myself; but it is all well. The truth remains the truth, and it is on that we have to go; but the Lord's dealings with the soul, connected with the use of truth, have to be noted.[42]

During these three months, our sovereign God set free the struggling Darby. He was never the same afterward.

Darby and the Poor

One cannot adequately understand Darby unless one recognizes how different he was from (nearly) everyone else, both then and now. Darby cared little for the things of this world. Refusing to be concerned with reputation or status caused him to be sainted by his admirers and vilified by his detractors.[43] Warrenchuk writes, "Darby was a man just like us. To present him as faultless would be nonsense. He did have faults, shortcomings, and weaknesses. But it was his greatness that gave prominence to his weaknesses."[44] Even his detractors[45]

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[41] Edward Pennefather was J. N. D.'s brother-in-law. Darby recuperated from his foot injury at Edward's house in Dublin.

[42] Darby, *Letters*, 1:344-45.

[43] "Many of Darby's critics, past and present, have described him as being jealous of his ecclesiastical authority. They have portrayed him as antagonistic, tyrannical, domineering, arrogant, vain, peremptory and haughty. They have said he used his friends to further his personal ambitions" (Weremchuk, *Darby*, 139).

[44] Ibid.

[45] In a textbook example of damning by faint praise, Neatby defends his *History of the Plymouth Brethren* with these words: "And it was Darby's supreme misfortune that his single vice, by the irony of circumstances, had perhaps more to do than all his virtues with fixing the

(and they are legion), are forced to recognize the uniqueness of his qualities. For example, Neatby writes,

> I have often heard people who were not blind to Darby's faults say with immense emphasis, "He was *a great man."* If a magnanimous simplicity makes a man great, they were right. He might be a scholar, but he wore none of a scholar's trappings; he might be supreme in his own little world, but his habitual bearing showed no trace of self-consciousness. To his social inferiors and to young men he was genial and hearty, and he kept his well-known brusquerie for more influential people, and especially for his sycophants—who were many. If he was ruthless in his ecclesiastical conflicts, he had at other times a singularly kindly and sympathetic nature. In the act of addressing a meeting he would roll up his greatcoat as a pillow for a sleeping child whose uncomfortable attitude had struck him. I have heard that, on one of his numerous voyages, he might have been seen pacing the deck all night with a restless child in his arms, in order to afford the worn-out mother an opportunity of rest; and I doubt whether many children were more tenderly nursed that night. The incident is the more interesting for the fact that Darby was never married. Was it the breaking forth of this tenderness, deep-hidden in his lonely heart, that bound men to him in so pathetic a fidelity of devotion?[46]

It is beyond the scope of this work to paint the full canvas of Darby's character.[47] Instead, this work will examine just one

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character of his life's work. This threatens to result in the evil that he did living after him, and the good being interred with his bones; and the present writer would be thankful if this work should in some measure serve as a humble obstruction to such an injustice" (William Blair Neatby, *History of the Plymouth Brethren* [n.p., 1901], 150, accessed June 24, 2012, https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/11972135/a-history-of-the-plymouth-brethren-by-william-blair-neatby).

[46] Ibid., 96.

[47] "Any portraiture of Darby the man must be painted in sharp black and white tones, never in shades of gray. He was a man of incredible intensity" (Larry Cruchfield, "John Nelson Darby: Defender of the Faith,"

aspect of his personality that contributes directly to one's understanding of his approach to Christian work.

Remembering that Darby had been reared in a wealthy family, one can only look to his conversion for his attitude towards the poor. Darby wrote, "I love the poor, I have no distrust of them; I live by far the most of my time amongst them, and gladly."[48] Although rich and poor alike have the same sin nature, the difference in their circumstance causes them to react differently to conflict between Christ and the world. Darby observed,

> I see looseness is an easy road, but I prefer following Christ. And I see very clearly here that gentlefolks who want an easy berth would prefer Bethesda for unholy reasons. Perhaps God in the present state of the church would give them an easy path, half-way with the world. They have their own cross there for their class, and they are not capable of more. Christ preferred the poor; ever since I have been converted so have I. Let those who like society better have it. If I ever get into it, and it has crossed my path in London, I return sick at heart. I go to the poor; I find the same evil nature as in the rich, but I find this difference: the rich, and those who keep their comforts and their society, judge and measure how much of Christ they can take and keep without committing themselves; the poor, how much of Christ they can have to comfort them in their sorrows. That, unworthy as I am, is where I am at home and happy. I think I am intellectual enough, and my mind - though my education was in my judgment not well

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Pre-Trib Research Center, accessed June 24, 2014, http://www.pre-trib.org/articles/view/john-nelson-darby-defender-of-faith).

[48] Darby, *Collected Writings*, 10:277. "When I first began such a life, I as to nature felt a certain satisfaction in the intercourse of educated persons: it was natural. I avow that, if I find a person spiritually minded and full of Christ, from habit as well as principle, I had rather have him than the most elevated or the most educated: the rest is all alike to me. The latter are apt to spare themselves, to screen themselves, to get on in society; they want a fence round them. I would rather, in general, have a poor man's judgment of right and wrong than another's…" (ibid.).

> *directed*, save by God - cultivated enough to enjoy cultivated society. I have none of it, but I prefer the cross.[49]

As a result of Darby's rejection of the world and embrace of the poor, he was regularly taken as poor himself. It was reported that "a person in Limerick offered him a halfpenny, mistaking him for a beggar: and if not true, the story was yet well invented."[50] At another time, Darby visited a brother who owned a factory in Switzerland. The brother regularly offered to the poor and to the stranger some food and a place to rest. Instead of using the front door to the factory, Darby slipped in the back door where the poor entered. The factory staff took him as one of the many poor and treated him like the rest. After eating, he went on his way.[51]

Darby's compassion for the poor was so great it grieved him when they were absent. On one occasion, William Kelly and J. N. Darby were invited to a sister's home for Bible study. Upon entering the residence, Darby was extremely disappointed to see that only those of the better class were in attendance. His spirit was so grieved that, when asked to return thanks, he asked Kelly pray in his place. Kelly states, "… he begged me to do so, meaning it as a quiet sign that he was displeased."[52] Darby felt that restricting the meeting to the well-off was incompatible with the mind of Christ "since she had not given the more lowly saints an opportunity for hearing the Word."[53]

Darby's Character

One aspect of Darby's character often overlooked was his abundance of tact. In the previously-related incident, Darby disapproved to the point of refusing to pray yet he did not chide the woman responsible for his grief. Neatby provides a classic example of this virtue:

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[49] Darby, *Letters*, 1:205.
[50] Turner, *Darby*, 27
[51] Weremchuk, *Darby*, 151.
[52] Quoted in Turner, *Darby*, 50.
[53] Weremchuk, *Darby*, 150.

> Another story, which I can relate with equal confidence, illustrates not only this fine simplicity of character, but also the readiness of resource by which he was no less distinguished. He had arrived at the railway station of a Continental town where he was expected to make some little stay, and found himself, as he stepped from the train, face to face with a formidable contingent of the local Brethren. Several ladies of good position were there, all zealous for the honour of becoming his host. Here was a delicate situation, but Solomon could not have been more equal to it. "Qui est-ce qui loge les frères?"[54] said Darby. All eyes turned upon a very humble-looking brother, who had hitherto kept modestly in the background. Darby immediately went up to him, saying, "Je logerai où logent les frères."[55] And the entertainer of obscure itinerants became the host of the great man himself.[56]

What Darby demanded of others, he practiced himself. Kelly spoke of Darby's "wonderful generosity,"[57] and Philpot stated he was "generous to the wasting of his substance."[58] One reason he was free to give so many alms was his habit of denying himself:

> But his clothes were plain, and he wore them to shabbiness, though punctiliously clean in his person, which dressy people are not always. In Limerick, once, kind friends took advantage of his sleep to replace the old with new, which he put on without a word, as the story went.[59]

Conclusion

It may be safely stated that the modern world has not seen another like Darby. Certainly there have been some who embodied the self-sacrifice and embrace of the poor as Darby.

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[54] "Who [generally] puts up the [ministering] brothers?"

[55] "I will stay where the [ministering] brothers are in the habit of staying."

[56] Neatby, *History*, 97.

[57] Turner, *Darby*, 34.

[58] Ibid., 30.

[59] Quoted in Ibid., 54.

But such is modern life that these few nearly always labor in obscurity. Likewise, there may be some who have moved large numbers of believers in a sustained and necessary correction. Yet one must think hard for someone the like of Darby, who did both. As Neatby reluctantly concedes, "He was *a great man.*"[60]

[60] Neatby, *History*, 96; emphasis original.

A Review of *Executing Grace: How the Death Penalty Killed Jesus and Why It's Killing Us*, by Shane Claiborne

Mark McGinniss

Abstract: In his newest book, *Executing Grace*, Shane Claiborne argues vehemently against the death penalty by putting faces on the victims (and their surviving families), the guilty, the executioner, and the system itself. It was these "faces" that caused Claiborne to change his view on capital punishment. However, he argues against capital punishment from inadequate theology, uncomfortable personal feelings, heart-wrenching stories, recent trends, inaccurate comparisons, and guilt by association. Nonetheless, his observations concerning the racial bias in the application of the death penalty as well as the miscarriage of justice for those who are innocent are worth pondering. These facts alone should give pause to a society to evaluate the methods and application of its capital punishment system. Even in light of chilling bias and innocent death, however, Claiborne's case for killing the death penalty is not biblically sound or logically compelling.

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In a later chapter of his book *Executing Grace*,[2] Claiborne confesses that it was the faces involved with capital punishment that caused him to change his position from advocate to passionate zealot against the death penalty. He writes, "But I have to tell you that these (history, Bible study, facts and stats) were not what changed my mind about the death

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[2] Shane Claiborne, *Executing Grace: How the Death Penalty Killed Jesus and Why It's Killing Us* (Zondervan, 2016).

penalty. It was the people I met and their stories that changed my mind. The faces. The names" (206-7).

I have a face and name as well—Raymond. Raymond was in my church and Christian school. In the first three years of our marriage, Joy and I rented a cottage from his parents and lived on his parents' property. Raymond was one of those fun-loving kids who believed the world was for their sole enjoyment. Even Sunday morning service was a fun place to bring a concealed snake under his shirt, a snake that preferred not to be concealed. As a youngster, he rarely showed a serious side. He wore a ready grin (some say smirk). I spent much time motivating him in his studies—generally not to much avail. School was a drudge, a dreaded necessity for Raymond. Fortunately, he did not hold school against me.

One summer when the bluefish were running right off the beach 50 yards from our houses, he came hollering for me and we crushed the fish. We caught so many that he grabbed his wheelbarrow, filled it with our catch, and walked around the neighborhood trying to sell them. Before he graduated high school his family moved away and we lost personal contact. His best friend, Mike, kept me apprised of Raymond's comings and goings. Whenever he came back to the area, he would always stop by the church to say hello. Once he visited to share that he had become a police officer in North Carolina and married. Then I heard he joined Blackwater Security and served in Kosovo with UN Peacekeepers. He came back to North Carolina as a police officer and divorced. Then in the late fall of 2007 I heard he was arrested for kidnapping and first degree murder.

His defense lawyer drove up from North Carolina to interview me at the seminary. The evidence against Raymond was overwhelming. His defense team was looking for mitigating family and life circumstances to keep him from lethal injection.

Like Claiborne, I, too, have a name and face.

Overview

Shane Claiborne is a best-selling author, activist, and director of Red Letter Christians. In his newest book, *Executing Grace*, Claiborne argues vehemently against the death penalty by putting faces on the victims (and their surviving families), the guilty, the executioner, and the system itself. It was these "faces" that caused Claiborne's to change his view on capital punishment. However, he argues against capital punishment from inadequate theology, uncomfortable personal feelings, heart-wrenching stories, recent trends, inaccurate comparisons, and guilt by association. Nonetheless, his observations concerning the racial bias in the application of the death penalty as well as the miscarriage of justice for those who are innocent are worth pondering. These facts alone should give pause to a society to evaluate the methods and application of its capital punishment system. However, even in light of chilling bias and innocent death, Claiborne's case for killing the death penalty is not biblically sound or logically compelling.

Executing Grace covers 313 pages. It is composed of fourteen chapters and concludes with acknowledgements, works cited and recommended sources, and the dreaded endnotes. At the bottom of every page in different font color are five to six names "of those who have been executed in the United States since 1976" (207). It begins with Gary Gilmore (1) and concludes with David Martin (287).

Although Claiborne is easy to read and tells stories well, some sentences are mystifying. For instance, Claiborne observes, "There is a war in the world around us. Both hatred and love seem to be trying to take over the world." Though his premise is debatable, in the next sentences he writes, "The contagion of violence and the contagion of grace are spreading like invasive plants in the garden. The quicker you rip them up, the quicker they spread" (5). Although I disagree that grace is spreading in society outside of the gospel, I am uncertain as to the point of his agricultural metaphor.

Claiborne rightly recognizes the brutality of the crimes that lead to the legal penalty of capital punishment. He does not bash the victims to save the murderer. After his introductory

chapter he moves into chapter 2 which begins with the stories of victims of some of the most heinous murders and their effects on the surviving families and friends. He writes, "The victims are front and center, as they should be. That's why we are going to start this book with them" (17). He also points out correctly the "clear racial bias" of the American judicial system when it comes to capital punishment (180).

Although Claiborne accurately observes a number of terrible inconsistencies, legal wrongs, and heart-breaking racial bias in the capital justice system, his argumentation to abolish capital punishment is not compelling in light of the biblical text. In this review I am not marshaling arguments from others to argue for capital punishment. On the contrary, I endeavor to show how Claiborne's position does not deal adequately with God's word.[3] Because there are so many issues with his argumentation and logic, the most thorough way to conduct a review of *Executing Grace* is by working through the book chapter by chapter.[4]

Chapter One: "Something Just Doesn't Feel Right" (1-16)

In chapter one Claiborne lays out his book's purpose and confesses that he was once a death penalty proponent even for homosexuality (1). Although he is not proud of his past (1), he is able to be compassionate towards those who disagree with him. His agenda is "about grace. I want to build a movement of grace-driven abolitionists—people of faith and conscience who want to put an end to death forever. I want to make the death penalty history…. I am not interested in talking about 'capital punishment' as much as I am in talking about the ramifications of grace, mercy, forgiveness, and love" (3).

After sharing an interview he watched of Joel Osteen being questioned about his views on capital punishment, the first

[3] I cite others on occasion to give evidence that contradicts Claiborne's assertions.

[4] Suffice to say that I do not deal with every issue or disagreement I have with the book.

argument Claiborne lays out against the death penalty is "there are lots of folks like Joel, who seem to be shaking their heads and saying in their gut, 'Something about it just doesn't seem right'.... Something in the gut says there must be another way" (4, 5). There are instances (and Claiborne points those out in his book) when innocent people were executed by the state for a capital crime they did not commit or when the trauma of taking a life by the state has an impact on those who participate in the legal system. Although these situations may not "feel right," these emotions evade the deeper question of what God requires. There are times that emotions must be overruled by obedience to what God commands.

Claiborne argues by making inaccurate equalities. For instance, he pits capital punishment against grace. He writes, "Capital punishment offers us one version of justice.... Yet grace offers us another version of justice.... These two versions of justice compete for our allegiance" (7). Unfortunately, grace and justice are never seen as competing forces within the Bible. At Jesus' own crucifixion Jesus graces a fellow condemned man and at the same time allows the Roman justice system to carry out its judicial sentence (Luke 23:40-43). Based on Claiborne's understanding of grace and justice, Jesus should have followed the counsel of the other thief (Luke 23:39).

One of the major inequalities that Claiborne consistently rehearses is that capital punishment carried out by the criminal justice system is the same as murder. "When we kill to show that killing is wrong, aren't we reinforcing the very thing we want to rid the world of? The cure is as bad as the disease" (7). This inequality is not evident in the OT or NT. In Exodus the command not to murder is clearly articulated by God (Exod 20:13). This is certainly not a blanket statement against all killing since God continues to speak in the next chapter where the death penalty is the God-ordained consequence for various crimes (Exod 21:12, 15, 16, 17). In Romans 13 the command not to commit murder is stated (v. 9) in relationship to loving one's neighbor (v. 10). However, only a few verses earlier the authority of the state to take a life is affirmed (v. 4). God does not see murder and state-sponsored execution the same way Claiborne does.

Lastly in this chapter Claiborne confuses justice and forgiveness. He shares the tragic story of the 2006 shooting at the Amish school in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, where ten girls were shot and five died (10). He focuses the story on the response of the Amish to forgive the killer. Their ability to forgive grabbed international headlines and rightly so. To forgive is no easy task. However, personal forgiveness does not negate societal (or divine) justice and its consequences. King David experienced this dynamic in his life. When Nathan, the prophet, confronts David after his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, David is forgiven immediately at his confession (2 Sam 12:13). However, he is told that the child born of the illicit union will die. Although he seeks the Lord for the child's life, the infant dies (2 Sam 12:18). Forgiveness, grace, and mercy do not nor should they always abort the consequences of justice.

Chapter Two: "Let's Begin with the Victim" (17-42)

Claiborne devotes this chapter to the victims. Generally it is to the surviving families of those whose lives were taken. The "victims" he highlights are only those who speak against the death penalty.[5] Claiborne's argument in this chapter is that because the victims oppose the death penalty, society should oppose it as well: "Without a doubt, some of the strongest voices against the penalty, and some of the most credible voices, are the victims of violent crimes who know that there are better forms of justice than execution" (20).

Believing "there are better forms of justice than execution" is simple opinion. Although people are free to voice their opinion, what God requires of a society is not dictated by opinion. There are times when God required his people to act against their opinion in light of his justice. Although there is no

[5] Claiborne argues these folks are systematically silenced because of their stance against capital punishment (22-42). I did not find this to be true in the case of Raymond (Cal Bryant, "Family Satisfied with Prison Terms," December 3, 2010, accessed April 10 2017, http://www.roanoke-chowannewsherald.com/2010/12/03/family-satisfied-with-prison-terms/.

reason given for God's justice in this specific case, if a wife were to deliver her husband by grabbing his opponent's genitals, her hand was to be cut off (Deut 25:11-12). Even though the original audience (and we the reader) understands the woman's motivation for such a move, God requires that no "pity" or compassion be shown to the woman. Public opinion did not and should not change God's justice.

Chapter Three: "Death and Grace in the Bible" (43-60)

Without proof or examples Claiborne introduces this chapter with a "troubling question: As a nation how have we justified things like lynching, the death penalty, and wicked glorification of death? And the answer is the Bible" (43). Although I am aware of the biblical justification of the death penalty, I am unaware of any biblical warrant for lynching or "the wicked glorification of death" or even what this phrase means. After a short pause, Claiborne adds, "To be more accurate, the answer is the Bible, the Koran, the Torah, the U.S. Constitution, and all sorts of holy and unholy stuff" (43). Claiborne implies that religion is the compelling reason for executions: "over 85 percent of state execution in the last thirty-eight years occurred in the so-called Bible-belt" (43). These observations lead Claiborne to see if the Bible supports "the contemporary practice of execution *as it exists today*"[6] (45). In short, Claiborne reasons that the Bible does not support the death penalty.

Starting with God not executing Cain for his murder of Abel (46) and citing Joseph forgiving his brothers and David not killing Saul, Claiborne states, "throughout the Bible there is a movement away from violence, 'towards beating swords into plows' Isa. 2:4), transforming the instruments of death into tools that can cultivate life" (47).[7] He then cites Moses: "God

[6] Italics are original although I am uncertain as to the significance.

[7] Claiborne's observation is an overstatement at best. Until one gets to the new heaven and the new earth (Rev 21:4), death/violence will be part of the human condition. The Bible shows no "movement" towards non-violence.

did not kill Moses…. If God's most perfect will for everyone who kills to be killed, God would have killed Moses. But God did not" (47). David and Saul are also mentioned to illustrate that God did not kill those who kill others; therefore, capital punishment is not supported in the Bible. This argumentation is problematic. (1) In the case of Saul, while he approved of the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:1), he did not cast a stone. Also, it could be reasoned that the martyrdom of Stephen was murder and the Jews should have been tried for the offense. (2) In the case of David and Saul this was in essence a civil war and not governed by the same rules as capital murder. In addition David nor Saul killed one another so the example does not fit the argument. (3) In the case of Moses' killing the Egyptian (Exod 2:12), it was up to the Egyptian court to bring Moses to trial. This type of reasoning shows the major difficulty in Claiborne's biblical citations.

Claiborne wants to believe that since God did not kill (for example) Cain and David for their sin of murder, then neither should we. However, nowhere in this chapter nor in the rest of his book does he deal at all (or even mention) Genesis 9:6. The reason why God as the executioner is a poor argument is because the biblical text is clear:

> Whoever sheds man's blood,
> By man his blood shall be shed.
>
> שֹׁפֵךְ֙ דַּ֣ם הָאָדָ֔ם בָּאָדָ֖ם דָּמ֑וֹ יִשָּׁפֵ֗ךְ

God gave man and by extension government (Rom 13) the responsibility to carry out capital punishment. Although God may act as executioner (think of the first generation of Israel in the wilderness in Numbers), capital punishment is clearly the obligation of man, not God. Whether on purpose or by accident, Claiborne not dealing with this pivotal biblical text provides evidence that he is not bringing all the relevant biblical data to the conversation.[8] It seems odd at best not to deal honestly with

[8] I attended a presentation Claiborne made concerning *Executing Grace* in the winter of 2017. During the Q&A when asked pointedly about

this divine revelation that states God's will so clearly and in God's own words concerning capital punishment. This is a pivotal text in the capital punishment debate and needs to be addressed in any discussion of the topic. It should be noted that this divine imperative is prior to the giving of the OT law and thus is a perpetual obligation on all men at all times and in all societies.

Claiborne rightly recognizes "that we have never followed what the Bible teaches as literally as the church thinks it has" (53). He seems to want to argue that since we do not follow the OT laws of capital punishment consistently, we should not practice capital punishment at all. What he fails to mention (or realize) is that the US is not Israel and the United States is not a theocracy under the same legal obligations as OT Israel. He also fails to see that we are not as believers or American citizens "under the OT Law" (Rom 6:14; Gal 3:13-29; 5:18); therefore, OT regulations requiring capital punishment are not enforced since the law is not in effect. However, although we are not under law, Genesis 9:6 is pre-law and serves as the divine imperative that needs to be followed as regarding capital punishment since it is based on the image of God in man.[9]

Claiborne also argues in this chapter that the Jews ceased employing the death penalty around the time of Christ (55). The difficulty with this argument is that it is untrue. The Jews had lost the ability to execute since the fall of Jerusalem (586 BC). Instead the Jewish leaders influenced the sitting government over them to carry out capital sentences. For instance the Jews wanting to kill Jesus had to bring him to Pilate for the sentence and execution (Luke 22:54-23:24). Herod executed James and because "he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest

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Genesis 9:6 on at least two separate occasions, Claiborne avoided answering the questions by changing the topic.

[9] It is interesting that Claiborne is against the death penalty when he states concerning the relationship between Israel and the law: "Every society establishes its value and laws and identifies those actions that are offenses, along with appropriate punishments. What we can learn from the Bible is that the Hebrew people and their God identified the above-listed offenses as so destructive to the life of the community that they were deserving of death" (53).

Peter" (Acts 12:2-3). Paul was in danger of death numerous times from the deadly treachery of the Jews to kill him legally (Acts 25:11) or illegally (Acts 25:3). Once the Jews stoned Paul and thought he had died (Acts 14:19). Although the Jews may not have had the judicial power to execute, they certainly influenced the powers that could without hesitation. Claiborne is wildly incorrect when he observes, "The entire system of ancient Jewish capital punishment ceased as the sacrifice of Jesus was given for all" (56). There is no such connection and this flies in the face of the rest of the New Testament.

Towards the end of the chapter Claiborne states, "As the author of life, God is concerned with preserving life, not ending it." But then he equates the plagues to "God slapping our hand to save us from losing our arm" (59) and God repenting of decimating everyone in the flood because it was a "painful experience" for God. One doubts that the Egyptian parents as they held their dead first-born viewed the last plague as a "slap on the hand." Although God does not delight in the death of the wicked (Ezek 33:11), it is certain that he will once again judge the world and destroy the ungodly (2 Pet 3:7-13). God may not rejoice in death, but he uses death to satisfy his holy justice (Rev 21:8). Claiborne does not want to put "compassion and justice at odds with each other. Both of them are part of God's character. But God's justice may look different from ours—in part because God is more compassionate than we are" (58-59). However, Claiborne believes life is the highest good (59) and thus he pits God's justice against his compassion. God's justice includes Genesis 9:6.

Chapter Four: "The Limits of an Eye for an Eye" (61-79)

This chapter covers two biblical principles: "an eye for an eye" and Romans 13. Claiborne is certainly correct to see that *lex talions* "was intended to be a *limit* to retaliation—not a license for it" (64). However, he wants to move from this concept to the general: "Limiting violence is a good place to start" (65) then to Jesus who seemingly moves past this principle to loving your enemy (Matt 5:38-39, 44), and

concludes that though "'an eye for an eye' justice is still practiced in parts of the world, I don't think many of us would argue that it's a move in the right direction" (67). He misses the point that in the OT, *lex talions* does not negate the death penalty in any way. In the same chapter that an "eye for an eye" is found (Exod 21:24) there are a number of situations that call for death (Exod 21:12, 14-17).

However, Claiborne feels that Jesus moves us beyond the law (71) and therefore puts an end to capital punishment once and for all. He believes Jesus is "the greatest obstacle for pro-death penalty Christians" (72). He reasons this based on the story of the woman caught in adultery in John 8. Since Jesus "stopped" the woman's execution, Christians should follow his example and stop all executions. What Claiborne fails to interact with is that Jesus did not repudiate the law (John 8:5) and did not say that capital execution was wrong based on the law in this situation. Matter of fact Jesus allowed for stoning by saying that the one without sin should throw the first stone (John 8:7). He did not condemn capital punishment. Jesus simply questioned the motivation of the executioners because he knew that their motives were suspect since if the woman was caught in the act of adultery, there should have been a man as well who was strangely absent (John 8:3).

If Claiborne is accurate in his understanding of Jesus, one wonders why Jesus did not stop the crucifixion of the two who were executed with him at Calvary (Luke 23:39-43). He could have asked the Father to deliver him and/or them (Matt 26:53) if "life" is the greatest good.

Claiborne's issue with Romans 13 hinges on the term "sword." He argues the "sword" is "macharia… a short sword worn on the belt, a dagger. It was not an instrument of decapitation in capital crimes…. The Romans did not use a macharia…for execution" (76). Claiborne misses the point of Paul's argument. Paul is using *macharia* as a literary device (metonym) to show that the state has both the right and means to take a life. He is not specifying that the *macharia* has to be the instrument used. It is clear from other uses of this word in

the NT that the *macharia* was an instrument of death.[10] Claiborne omits the fact that the *macharia* was the implement Rome used to take James's life (Acts 12:2*)*.

Chapter Five: "The Most Famous Execution in History" (81-120)

This chapter draws its title and conclusion from Jesus' death on the cross: "You'd think that having an executed Savior who died forgiving his killers would mean that Christians identify with the victims of violence and have a special propensity towards mercy" (88). Again, Claiborne loses sight of the fact that while one should offer mercy and forgiveness to his executioners (or murderers), personal forgiveness does not negate societal justice or obedience to God's command in Genesis 9:6.[11] There can be both; however, he consistently positions one against the other (112).

Claiborne believes, "It's bad theology that we're using to justify execution today" (89). He continues, "Most bad theology sounds good in the head bit doesn't feel quite right in the heart" (90). It seems for Claiborne that "bad theology" is any theology that disagrees with him and allows for capital punishment.

Claiborne exposes his own incorrect theology in his understanding of Christ's death. Although he cites Colossians 2:15, he explains the verse this way: "Another way to put this is to say that Jesus, on the cross, became a victim of violence to expose the systems of violence" (93). There is no biblical data to support such a statement. He seems reluctant to acknowledge the fact (91-93) that Christ's death was a propitiation (1 John

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[10] For instance, see Matthew 10:34; Luke 21:24; Acts 16:27; Romans 8:35; Hebrews 11:34, 37; and Revelation 6:6; 13:10, 14.

[11] I take offense with Claiborne's suggestion to think "of Jesus as among those who have been executed adds depth to what happened on the cross" (87). There is no comparison. Many who have been executed were guilty of heinous crimes. Jesus was innocent of any crime or sin. Even the case of an innocent person being wrongly executed by the state offers no real comparison with the death of Jesus. While Jesus was certainly innocent, he died because the innocent One had to suffer for the guilty (Rom 5:6-10).

2:2) that satisfied the wrath of God (Rom 5:9; 1 Thess 1:10). While Jesus' death certainly triumphed over death, Jesus' death did not "short-circuit" Genesis 9:6 or Romans 13. Although there is biblical evidence that the resurrection was a victory over death, there is no evidence that "execution has been abolished" by it (111). There is also no scriptural evidence that "the contemporary practice of the death penalty glorifies death and disgraces the work Jesus did on the cross" (103).

Also, it is interesting that Claiborne makes the statement, "If we can see a noose every time we see a cross, we can prevent the kind of atrocities that have left bloodstains on this land. And the blood cries out to God" (99). Although Claiborne does not cite the biblical reference, it is true that blood pollutes the land (Num 35:33). He fails to cite the only way to cleanse the land of this blood pollution is by taking the life of the one who shed the blood in the first place (Num 35:33).

Chapter Six: "The Early Christians and Execution" (121-145)

In this chapter Claiborne marshals those early Christians who disagreed with the practice of capital punishment. Quoting Ron Sider's research extensively throughout, he comes to the conclusion, "On the issue of capital punishment the early Christians were crystal clear; it is wrong for Christians to kill, or even participate in the apparatus of state sanctioned death" (123). His claims are suspect. Avery Dulles, who himself has reservation concerning the death penalty, writes, "Turning to Christian tradition, we may note that the Fathers and Doctors of the Church are virtually unanimous in their support for capital punishment, even though some of them such as St. Ambrose exhort members of the clergy not to pronounce capital sentences or serve as executioners."[12] Although Claiborne cites those who agree with his position like Origen, Tertullian (124),

[12] Avery Cardinal Dulles, "Catholicism and Capital Punishment," *First Things*, April 2001, accessed April 4, 2017, https://www.firstthings.com/article/2001/04/catholicism-amp-capital-punishment. This is a well-balanced article and it is worth the time to read it.

Martyr (125), and Clement (127), he fails to mention that Augustine did not agree and saw no contradiction between state sanctioned execution and the command to "love one's neighbor."[13] Although Augustine is later than Origen, he is not by much. It seems odd that Claiborne would not include a stalwart as Augustine as a voice for early Christendom. Claiborne notes Luther's approval of capital punishment with this comment: Luther "had very disturbing ideas about capital punishment. Luther said, for example, that 'the hand that wields the sword is… no longer man's but God's'" (140). One wonders what makes Luther's idea concerning capital punishment so disturbing since this would be a legitimate application of Romans 13. It seems that what is "very disturbing" for Claiborne is simply that Luther agrees with the biblical teaching on capital punishment and disagrees with him.

Chapter Seven: "Death on the Run" (148-168)

This chapter concerns "how the death penalty worked in the recent past and how it works today" (148). Claiborne also includes a few hair-raising pages of the methods of capital punishment throughout the century and around the world (152-54). To read such methods and contemplate such a death is surely gruesome at best. Claiborne's argument is that the death penalty is on the decline and Christians who advocate capital punishment should drop their support, get onboard, and kill the death penalty because the "moral arc" is against such a position. He reasons with a question: "Could it be that we will look back a generation from now and think of the death penalty like we now think of slavery?" (155).

It is true that public opinion has certainly shifted concerning capital punishment. However, it could be suggested that the reason for such an arc away from supporting capital punishment is directly associated with the general decline of believers following the Bible as it pertains to public life and policy and a general loss of adherence to the country's once foundational Judeo-Christian ethic.

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[13] Ibid.

Chapter Eight: "Race, the Death Penalty, and Lynching" (169-188)

Out of the entire book, this chapter provides reasons for supporters of the death penalty to think cautiously concerning its application to minorities. Claiborne reasons, "One of the most powerful arguments against the death penalty is the simple fact of how disproportionately it is applied based on race. Even if you think the death penalty is just in theory, it is hard to support when we see how often its application is distorted in practice" (169). Furthermore, "in Georgia, the law explicitly sentenced a black person to death for rape, but a white person got as little as two years" (181). The Scripture is clear that capital punishment was to be fair and not perverted by pity or bribe (Deut 19:21; Num 35:31, 32).

The weakest section of this chapter is Claiborne's self-contradiction. He writes, "It would be irresponsible to talk about the death penalty… and not mention lynching" (169). However, on the next page he states, "I want to be careful not to equate lynching with current-day execution" (170). Unfortunately, by his discussion of the two in the same context, the equality is made by the reader despite his comment to the contrary.

The issue of racial bias in the practice of the death penalty needs to be addressed by opponents and advocates of capital punishment. God is a God who shows no partiality (Deut 10:17) and clearly states, "Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent or the righteous, for I will not acquit the guilty" (Exod 23:7).

Chapter Nine: "The Death Penalty Hall of Shame" (189-204)

Claiborne shares stories of botched executions, wrongful convictions, mental illness, and judicial override. The sections of botched executions and wrongful convictions are difficult to digest. Claiborne's argument is "are we good enough to oversee the use of the death penalty?" Obviously, Claiborne believes not since the following sentence reads, "It's time to put an end

to this madness of execution" (201). However, God gave the command for capital punishment to Noah as a perpetual statute that was the responsibility of every man (Gen 9:6). Paul writes that God gave government (which is made up of men and women) the sword to carry out capital execution (Rom 13). Although Claiborne certainly believes "we are not good enough," God has stated in both testaments that "we are" and it is man's responsibility before God to carry out this divine mandate. Wrongful convictions and executions have not taken God by surprise. He knew that the bribe and false witnesses would be issues and he gave laws concerning both (Num 35:31, 32; Deut 27:25; Exod 23:7).

Chapter Ten: "Putting a Face on the Issue" (205-218)

Claiborne admits, "It is the people I met who changed my mind on this 'issue.' They put a face on the stale rhetoric and heartless debates and tiring biblical exegesis" (206). The faces he sees are the murderers who are different people than they were when they committed the crime; the convicted who are innocent; the victims who do not want execution; executioners; judges; lawyers; governors; and death row convicts "counting the days until their life would be ended" (206).

Although it is good idea to put faces to our theology, our theological positions are not driven by "faces" or people's reactions. They should be founded on careful exegesis of the biblical text.

Chapter Eleven: "Putting a Face on the Innocent" (219-226)

After quoting retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, "More often than we want to recognize, some innocent defendants have been convicted and sentenced to death" (219), Claiborne continues, "And there is the heart of the matter, sometimes innocent people are sentenced to death…. Worse yet… sometimes innocent people are executed" (219). Although this should provide pause and question the process, it does not mean as Claiborne insinuates in his last sentence of

this chapter, "Why should we have a system in which irreversible injustice is inevitable?" (226). Although he may consider the answer "tiring exegesis" (206), the exegetical answer is because God ordered and designed such a system (Gen 9:6).

Chapter Twelve: "The Haunted Executioners" (227-247)

This chapter probes the question, "How does the death penalty affect" those "responsible for carrying out the executions?" (228). Because some who are involved in the execution process say, "'We are just not meant to have that kind of power' over life and death" and the fact that executions have a negative effect on some executioners signals to Claiborne that the system is flawed and should be scrapped. Although it is terrible to be responsible for taking a life, one wonders if a reason for such negative consequences is because those responsible for execution have had the sense of doing God's will taken from them? If one were to follow Luther's admonition that Claiborne quotes "the hand that wields the sword is… no longer man's but God's" (140), one wonders if the executioners would feel the same way. It is interesting that the humble Moses recognized he was doing God's will with the unique death of the sons of Korah (Num 16:28-33).

Claiborne observes later in the chapter, "The problem is, no matter how hard you try, people are human beings. Even the best ones have their flaws, and even the worst ones have a glimmer of goodness" (233). Although the apostle Paul would argue with "even the worst ones have a glimmer of goodness" (Rom 3:23), what is telling is Claiborne's observation that "people are human beings." This is certainly true but does not go far enough. People are human beings who are made in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27). Because they are humans in the image of God and if that image is marred by murder, God requires the death penalty (Gen 9:6).

Chapter Thirteen: "A New Vision of Justice" (249-269)

Claiborne asserts, "The word 'justice' gets abused and misused. People demand 'justice' all the time but have very different things in mind as they call for it…. Justice itself might do well to find some new lawyers; it needs better representation" (249). Claiborne is not the one to represent biblical justice.

First, without proof or evidence, Claiborne makes the statement, "The word for 'justice' in the Bible is the same word as 'righteousness." (249) At least in the OT this is not true at all. Although the words may appear together, there is no evidence that מִשְׁפָּט justice, and צְדָקָה righteousness are the same. Second, he believes (again without citation) that the reason justice is depicted with scales is because justice is "about bringing balance and wholeness back to the community" (249). While the scales in Lady's Justice left hand function as a balance, they do not function as Claiborne claims.[14] Third, he cites a friend who is a biblical scholar who "says the best contemporary translation for the ancient notion of 'justice/righteousness' is 'restorative justice'" (250). While there are certainly elements of restitution in the OT judicial system (Exod 22:1, 4, 5, 7), it is a vast overstatement and falsehood to imply that restoration is the best translation or even goal of justice in the Old or New Testaments. In the Bible there were other consequences rather than restoration. God fatally judged Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19). If an Israelite were to endeavor to entice his fellow countryman to forsake the Lord, the Israelites were not to "pity him, nor shall you spare

[14] There seems to be some differences of opinion about the scales in Lady's Justice's left hand. According to the Supreme Court Information Sheet, "Over time, Justice became associated with scales to represent impartiality" ("Figures of Justice," https://www.supremecourt.gov/about/figuresofjustice.pdf.) A different Supreme Court publication states the scales symbolize "the impartial deliberation, or 'weighing,' of two sides in a legal dispute" ("Symbols of Law," May 23, 2002, accessed April 7, 2017, https://www.supremecourt.gov/about/symbolsoflaw.pdf. No matter which view is taken, it is clear that the Supreme Court does not see the scales in the same manner as Claiborne.

him or conceal him. But you shall surely kill him" (Deut 13:8-9). God commanded that no sorceress be allowed to live or someone who practiced bestiality (Exod 22:18, 19). God himself killed an entire generation over forty years because they would not obey his voice (Num 14). Korah suffered the deadly consequences of his rebellion against Moses (Num 16). Israel suffered a pestilence from the LORD because David had numbered Israel (2 Sam 24).[15] The death of Ananias and Sapphira shows that God is not always seeking restoration (Acts 5:1-11). Paul delivered an immoral believer over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh (1 Cor 5:15). There is coming a day when God will judge the world with fire for the destruction of ungodly men (2 Pet 3:7).

Although there may be a place for Claiborne's "restorative justice" for some penalties in the US judicial system, it should not be the final word for the crime of premeditated murder when God has spoken clearly in Genesis 9:6. To offer an alternative solution to capital punishment, Claiborne must demonstrate why and how God's mandate in this pivotal text is faulty. Even Claiborne's own understanding calls for this. He writes, "Restorative justice is 'a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense and to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible'" (253). Since all human beings are made by God and are in his image, God is the first and foremost stakeholder in all murders for killing is ultimately an offense against him. By Claiborne's own admission God's call for capital punishment in Genesis 9 is the divine prescribed manner to "put things as right as possible." By excluding God's voice (Genesis 9), Claiborne violates his own tenet of "restorative justice" by not including God as a stakeholder in the specific offense of murder.

Claiborne consistently equates forgiveness of the offense with elimination of the death penalty. This is an inequality. Certainly forgiveness is required by Jesus (Matt 6:12-15); however, forgiveness does not in any way negate the

[15] Although it is true we are not under OT Law, these laws show that restoration was not always the goal of OT justice.

consequences of the crime. It is interesting that those who took responsibility for the death of Jesus (Matt 27:25) and received his forgiveness (Luke 23:34) once their eyes were opened at the preaching of Peter recognized that there were dire consequences to their actions (Acts 2:36-37). Personal forgiveness of a capital offense does not cancel legal consequences against criminals. To carry out these penalties is the purpose of government (Rom 13:1-4).

Chapter Fourteen: "Making Death Penalty History" (249-269)

In this final chapter, Claiborne's arguments concerning the cost of capital punishment (273) or that recent popes have been against it (274) or that "young Christians are overwhelmingly against the death penalty" (274) or that "the National Latino Evangelical Coalition" is against it (275) or that "hundreds of pastors and clergy… have joined forces to stop executions (275) are not persuasive in light of God's command in Genesis 9:6. Theological stances and practices are not determined by popularity. Although it is certainly true that the Bible has been used to justify terrible injustices, in reality these sins are not the results of God's word but incorrect exegesis and application of the biblical text. Claiborne rightly reminds his reader, "Every human holds God's image…" (275). However, he conveniently leaves out the rest of the biblical teaching on which his observation is based—God's requirement when his image in man is taken (Gen 9:6).

Conclusion

While Claiborne raises a few significant (although not new) issues with the process and implementation of the death penalty, these concerns do not override what God requires in Genesis 9:6. Claiborne may be well intentioned in his arguments against capital punishment; however, if his biblical evidence were presented in a law court, no jury would convict the death penalty based on the presentation of his evidence.

As Raymond's defense lawyer sat across from my desk on a bright summer day, I could tell he was struggling. Nothing I shared about Raymond's family or his childhood gave him the mitigating circumstances he so desperately desired to keep Raymond off death row. He asked me if I would be willing to testify or even meet with Raymond. I said "yes" without hesitation. However, I did share that if I had a chance to speak with Raymond, I would encourage him to tell the truth, no matter the consequences, even capital punishment. Based on my history with Raymond he would expect nothing less and neither would our God. The lawyer did ask me my position on capital punishment. I explained that as difficult as it was to say, even knowing that Raymond's life hung in the balance, I would support the death penalty within the confines of the biblical text.

My testimony was not required. On November 24, 2010, Raymond pleaded guilty to one count of first degree murder. He was sentenced to life behind bars without parole in exchange for his plea.

Charlottesville: How Should the Church Respond?

Dr. Ken Davis

Abstract: The recent Charlottesville, VA, event and its aftermath nationally revealed that racism and ethnic discord are still real issues in our nation and on our streets. This article seeks to help churches move past rhetoric to a biblically based gospel response. This article proposes seven practical steps that churches and leaders can implement to bring genuine racial reconciliation in our divided communities. The popular concepts of "race" and being "color-blind" are challenged as unhelpful; instead, the way forward is to grasp the biblical concepts of ethnicity and the celebration of difference.

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In light of the recent public turmoil in the streets of Charlottesville, Virginia, Bible-believing Christians should reflect on how we can respond from a biblical worldview perspective. As a long-time (over four decades) observer /researcher of America's increasingly diverse demographics and a church planting participant in urban multiethnic ministry, I am deeply concerned that we independent (unaffiliated) evangelical and fundamental Baptists be among the leaders to model how Christians can make a difference to bring about racial reconciliation in our divided nation and communities.

Too often, our history as churches and as a movement has not been exemplary. Fearing an embrace of the liberal social gospel, we avoided any involvement in community race

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This article first appeared on the Regular Baptist website, posted August 31, 2017; used with permission and with some minor adaptations (see http://www.garbc.org/commentary/culture/charlottesville-how-should-the-church-respond/#_edn12).

relations. Sometimes we sadly demonstrated open or latent racist attitudes and behaviors—or were complicit by our silence. Some of our schools have in the past excluded blacks because of an unbiblical view of "inter-racial marriage." Our churches have not always enthusiastically welcomed and embraced ethnic minorities.

In recent times, many of our local churches have struggled with how to reach racially and economically changing neighborhoods in order to transition their ministries to become more multicultural. Too often, the growing ethnic and racial diversity of our communities is not reflected in our churches.

So in these times of racial and political discord and division, how should the church respond? In particular, what can pastors do to lead their people with biblical conviction to be on mission with Jesus and make a difference? How can we be instruments to see racial reconciliation realized in our communities and churches?

In light of the above realities, I would like to suggest six foundational observations regarding racial reconciliation to lay the groundwork for seven practical recommendations for church leaders.

Foundational Assumptions

First, racial reconciliation in our land is needed because racism is alive and well. Racism, both individual and institutional, still exists in America and has not gone away with time. Knowing the biblical doctrine of the depravity of man, the public display of white supremacy and neo-Nazi hatred should not surprise us. Al Mohler, president of Southern Seminary, shows why white supremacist ideas are a heresy contrary to Scripture:

> A claim of white superiority is not merely wrong, and not merely deadly. It is a denial of the glory of God in creating humanity—every single human being–in his own image. It is a rejection of God's glory in creating a humanity of different skin pigmentation. It is a misconstrual of God's judgment and glory in creating different ethnicities. Most urgently, it is a rejection of the gospel of Christ–the great good news of God's saving purpose

> in the atonement accomplished by Christ. A claim of racial superiority denies our common humanity, our common sinfulness, our common salvation through faith in Christ, and God's purpose to create a common new humanity in Christ. You cannot preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and hold to any notion of racial superiority. It is impossible.[2]

The events in Virginia and the violent backlash from left-wing groups remind us again that it has been hard to shed the stain of racialized sin in our nation.[3]

Our churches are not immune either. I do not know of any churches in our circles that would openly endorse the recent events of Charlottesville, but I suspect that we may have church members who are secretly supportive of white supremacist and KKK ideals. Sadly, I personally know of pastors who have been fired because they encouraged ethnic diversity in their churches. Other forms of racism are more subtle, but no less toxic and repugnant before a holy God.[4]

Second, racial reconciliation is not primarily a social issue but a gospel issue. Not everyone in Christian circles may agree. We must be very careful what we label a "gospel issue," but as D. A. Carson has observed,

> Certainly the majority of Christians in America today would happily aver that good race relations are a gospel issue. They might point out that God's saving purpose is to draw to himself, through the cross, men and women from every tongue and tribe

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[2] Al Mohler, "Letter from Berlin: The Lessons of History and the Heresy of Racial Superiority," *Albert Mohler Blog*, August 13, 2017, accessed August 22, 2017, http://www.albertmohler.com/2017/08/13/letter-berlin-lessons-history-heresy-racial-superiority/.

3 Obviously, there are hate groups on both sides of the fence that Christians should avoid. To learn more about Antifa, see Joe Carter, "The FAQs: Here Are the Facts Christians Should Know about Antifa," *The Gospel Coalition*, September 2, 2017, accessed September 12, 2017, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-faqs-what-christians-should-know-about-antifa.

[4] Contact me to request a copy of a message I recently preached in chapel at Clarks Summit University entitled, "Why Racism is Sin." Racism is a topic I never heard addressed as I grew up in fundamentalist circles.

> and people and nation; that the church is one new humanity, made up of Jew and Gentile; that Paul tells Philemon to treat his slave Onesimus as his brother, as the apostle himself; that this trajectory starts at creation, with all men and women being made in the image of God, and finds its anticipation in the promise to Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed. Moreover, the salvation secured by Christ in the gospel is more comprehensive than justification alone: it brings repentance, wholeness, love for brothers and sisters in the Christian community. But the sad fact remains that not all Christians have always viewed race relations within the church as a gospel issue.[5]

Today more Christians are willing to see racial reconciliation as a genuine gospel issue, but sadly we still disagree on how urgent the issue is and how to confront it. As Carson goes on to say, "Black Christians are far more likely to see that this is a crucial gospel issue, an issue of huge importance, one that is often ignored, while white Christians are more likely to imagine that racial issues have so largely been resolved that it is a distraction to keep bringing them up."[6]

Third, genuine racial reconciliation must be rooted and grounded in the gospel. Let me encourage pastors to do a careful study of (and preach!) Ephesians 2 and 3. We must become convinced that the gospel includes the reality that Jews and Gentiles are now brought together by the cross of Christ into a new humanity. Christians now have a new identity in Christ. This ethnic unity in Christ is a reality already accomplished in the finished work of Christ. As one NT professor acknowledges,

> It would not be exegetically accurate to say that [Ephesians 2 and 3] are "about racial reconciliation," at least in the way we think of those terms today. The ancient division between Jew and Gentile was not the same as the divisions we know exist between

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[5] Donald A. Carson, "What Are Gospel Issues?" *Themelios* 39, no. 2 (July 2014), accessed August 22, 2017, http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-are-gospel-issues.

[6] Ibid.

> Black and White or Serbian and Croatian or Hutu and Tutsi or Japanese and Chinese. The division between Jew and Gentile was God's own doing according to his covenantal plan, and Ephesians 2 and 3 dwell on the fulfillment of that covenantal plan. But certainly we must say that a lesson or an implication of Ephesians 2:11-3:8 is that Christ united Christians of every ethnicity together. He removed ethnicity as a barrier. The good news of the gospel, in that sense, includes racial reconciliation. Christ did it! He reconciled us both to the Father and to one another![7]

This unity and new identity in Christ demands and deserves a visible demonstration in our churches and personal relationships. The watching world needs to see the supernatural power of the gospel to break down the walls of hostility.

Those of us who are convinced that racial reconciliation must be firmly rooted in the gospel—that it is in fact a clear gospel issue—would also point to passages like Romans 1:16-17 and Galatians 2:11-14 and 3:26-29. We would point out that Jesus himself preached this gospel of peace (= reconciliation) to Jews near the promises and to Gentiles far away from those promises (Matt 15:21-28; John 4, etc.). Passages like these demonstrate that the Bible's categories of identity and racial reconciliation intersect with a proper understanding of salvation and Christ's gospel.[8]

Fourth, racial reconciliation is not to be confused with ethnic diversity. The place to begin our conversation for change is not by pushing hard for multiethnic churches. It is quite possible to have successfully transitioned into a multicultural congregation, and yet not see genuine gospel-centered racial

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[7] Jarvis J. Williams, "Racial Reconciliation, the Gospel, and the Church," *9Marks*, September 25, 2015, accessed August 22, 2017, https://www.9marks.org/article/racial-reconciliation-the-gospel-and-the-church/.

[8] For help in exegeting and applying these and other key NT passages, I recommend *One New Man: The Cross and Racial Reconciliation in Pauline Theology* by Jarvis Williams (B&H Publishing, 2010); *God's New Humanity: A Biblical Theology of Multiethnicity for the Church* by David E. Stevens (Wipf and Stock, 2012); and *Bloodlines: Race, Cross and the Christian* by John Piper (Crossway, 2011).

reconciliation. I personally desire to see more intentionally multiethnic churches in our nation—and have been a passionate advocate for several decades. I have planted several very diverse congregations, but recognize that the first and most urgent need in our communities is for gospel-grounded ethnic reconciliation. This kind of reconciliation can be achieved only through the supernatural cross work of Christ to change hearts. Only the gospel can unite former enemies, reconciling humans to God and then to one another. Only the good news message of Jesus can empower us to truly and deeply love one another. Moving toward multiethnic churches then becomes a beautiful reality and result of fully embracing/applying this radical gospel message that Christ is the great barrier breaker.

Fifth, biblical racial reconciliation demands a clearer understanding of "race." I am not convinced that the modern concept of race is even biblical and really helps us relate to each other. Many have pointed out that race is, in fact, a social construct. In the modern world, it is the product of eighteenth and nineteenth-century racist theories in Europe and based on a pseudo-science of "whiteness" and non-whiteness.[9] It was utilized by Darwin in his wrong-headed proposals for the "survival of the fittest" [superior races] and then taken up by

[9] Historically, the emergence of the anthropology of races in the modern world went hand in hand with early assumptions of racial inferiority and superiority. From the beginning, science was bent on serving "the superior." See Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race Scripture and the Protestant Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2006), 3-9; and Jenell Williams Paris, "Race: Critical Thinking and Transformative Possibilities," in *This Side of Heaven*, ed. Robert J. Priest and Alvaro L. Nieves (New York: Oxford U P, 2017), 22. Some researchers believe race as a social construct actually arose much earlier, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to justify the enslaving of whole people groups; see Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, Vol. 1, *Racial Oppression and Social Control,* ed. Nicholas Canny (London, England: Verso, 1994); and Robert E. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage, 1978).

the Nazis to justify the extermination of millions of Jews.[10] Many of us are persuaded that the very construct of race, as we know it, is just one more manifestation of the evil of racism. In other words, racism has created the very concept of race.

Though the category of race is not found in the Bible, we do find clear evidence for the concept of ethnicity, an idea that is much larger than race. John Piper does a fine job of demonstrating that the concept of ethnicity is common in both testaments and more useful in cultivating human relationships.[11] He argues that the concept of ethnicity is better than the concept of race in marking human identity and cultural differences. *Race* is an imprecise term with no clear boundary lines—and certainly none based on biblical distinctions. Biblically all humans are related to one another and have descended from one common ancestor—Adam. Acts 17:26 clearly teaches, "[God] made from one man every nation [ἔθνος = people] of mankind to live on the face of the earth" (ESV). Thus, there is only one "race"—the human race, composed of thousands of ethnic people groups. This is the primary reason we can boldly teach our people that any idea of racial supremacy (whether black or white) is totally contrary to God's design.

Finally, racial reconciliation will require constant intentionality. Ethnic unity will not happen in our churches automatically because people naturally desire to be with their own people group where they are most comfortable. Leaders will need to cast a biblical vision (cf. Rev 7:9) and exhort their congregations to leave their comfort zones to cultivate relationships with those of other ethnicities. Churches in diverse communities will need to be intentional about proclaiming the gospel to all community groups, living out the gospel in front of

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[10] For the connection of the race concept to Darwinian evolution, see Ken Ham and A. Charles Ware, *One Race, One Blood* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2010) and Carl Wieland, *One Human Family: The Bible, Science, Race & Culture* (Atlanta: Creation Book Publishers, 2011).

[11] See for example chapter 5 in *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Baker, 2010) and *Bloodlines* (Crossway, 2011).

those communities. This may mean having people in their homes who do not look like them, sound like them, or act like them. In my view, this is not some superficial "let's just get together once in a while" thing; this is a sincere desire to love and serve each other in the Spirit and by the power of Jesus Christ. "By this all people will know that [we] are [Christ's] disciples" (John 13:35 ESV).

Churches seeking to be Great Commission focused and obedient must have leaders and members who are intentional about sharing the gospel, making disciples "of all nations [πάντα τὰ ἔθνη]," i.e., among every ethnolinguistic people groups in their communities (Matt 28:19 ESV). They will not neglect reaching out to their "Samaria" (Acts 1:8; cf. Jesus in John 4)—those whom I define as geographically close but culturally distant. Churches that desire to better reflect the ethnic diversity of their communities will need to be passionate about reaching people who may not look like them. Only then will they be change agents, modeling what can be to their divided communities.

Recommendations for Leaders

With this foundation in place, to move us from rhetoric to Bible-based action, let me share some practical steps which Christians and church leaders can prayerfully implement.

First, Christians and biblical congregations must boldly proclaim the gospel as the ultimate solution to the divisions and discord in our nation. We must show and share with those far from God what the gospel says about racial and ethnic reconciliation. We must be willing to press courageously the claims of Christ and his gospel into the hopelessness of our racist culture.

Second, we must be willing to publicly and privately call all forms of racism and racial supremacy a repugnant evil in the eyes of the Creator who made all men in His image. We must help believers in our churches to develop a Christo-centric commitment that views all ethnocentric concepts as rivals to the sole supremacy of Christ and thus contrary to Scripture. We should at times use legal and peaceful means at our disposal

when we see overt racism and injustice raise its ugly head in our communities. We may need to practice loving church discipline for unrepentant racists in our midst.

Third, we must be willing to repent humbly of our racist past as a nation and sometimes as churches. Where our individual and corporate attitudes, actions, and policies have been more like our culture than Christ our Redeemer and Reconciler, we must honestly acknowledge our failure and seek to be reconciled with minorities we have perhaps excluded, offended, or ignored. Only as we address our often racist history will we have credibility and be able to answer the complicated questions in our racist present. Progress will be difficult if we deny racism still exists.

Fourth, we must hold our leaders accountable, both national and local, in our communities and our congregations, when necessary. As U.S. citizens and as Christians, we are obligated to seek justice for all.[12] The OT prophet tells us that the Lord requires "good" of his people and then goes on to describe that as doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God (Mic 6:8). Significantly, godliness and pursing justice are linked. If leaders commit injustice rather than uphold justice, we should take up a prophetic role to condemn this.[13] At times, we may need to take legal steps to ensure that justice under the law will be upheld for all citizens.

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[12] Social justice is not just the most recent ministry buzzword. Over eighty biblical texts underscore divine concern for justice to the disadvantaged. In the OT, God often warned his people that judgment would come if they refused to show justice to the poor, the oppressed, and the powerless. These passages speak not just of individual sins but systemic, institutional evils. God calls for his people to uphold the rights of the oppressed and the destitute, to rescue the poor and helpless, and to deliver them from the grasp of evil people (Ps 82:2-4). For more on this, see Timothy Keller's *Generous Justice: How Grace Makes Us Just* (New York: Penguin, 2012).

[13] We do this for other clear-cut moral issues such as abortion, gay marriage, and euthanasia, so why are we hesitant to publicly address racial and economic injustice?

Fifth, as Christian leaders we must learn to listen carefully to ethnic minority voices within our church circles. Sitting down and engaging Christians of color in meaningful conversation to hear their perspectives on local and national social justice issues might be a helpful start. Hear their recommendations on how to make your church more welcoming to minorities. As white Christians, we must be willing to share our privilege and power with other Bible-based Christian leaders. We must be willing to invest in emerging minority leaders and hear their concerns. All of us, whatever our color or culture, must be willing to sacrifice our preferences and comfort zones to build and model genuine multiethnic community for our divided neighbors to see.

Sixth, we must be diligent to cultivate and maintain close relationships and friendships with unsaved ethnic leaders and members of our own communities. Work diligently in your own church and ministry to challenge, inform, and train your people, particularly those in the majority community, to be sensitive to the pain, hurts, and needs among minority peoples living all around you. Then move beyond building empathy to actually equipping your people to build bridges with nearby people of color. Use John 4 and other related passages to teach your people to follow the example of Christ in reaching out to your local “Samaria.” Regardless of our color or culture, we must all work hard to develop cultural sensitivities and competencies to ensure harmonious inter-personal relationships in our ministries and civic affairs.

Lastly, we must welcome and embrace difference, not ignore or deny it. Mere condemnation of the evil of racism is insufficient. Whites must move past a superficial "color blind" approach, recognizing and even celebrating God-designed differences. Seasoned missiologists Bob Hoskins has properly observed,

> When tragedies [like Charlottesville] happen and the topics of race and equality come up, people tend to say things like, “I don’t see differences. I see everyone as equal,” or, “I am color blind. The color of a person’s skin doesn’t matter to me.” While I understand the sentiment behind such statements – you don’t

> judge people based on their skin color – I feel this kind of thinking is causing more harm than good. Yes, everyone is equal in worth regardless of who they are and where they come from – we are all created equally valuable and worthy of the love and life of God. However, *there are many beautiful differences we need to be willing to acknowledge, see, and appreciate if we are going to be able to genuinely move towards others who are different from us*. When we say we see everyone the same regardless of skin color or cultural differences, we are discounting the awesome ways God created us as unique persons and people groups with our own specific purposes, gifts, and ideas. *Desiring to see everyone the same ultimately implies more value is placed on agreement and sameness than on differences or diverse ideas and thoughts*. If we desire to grow in our understanding of others and of God, we need to be willing to move toward differing ideas, cultures, and perspectives – and allow them to change us in healthy, God-ordained ways, without fear.[14] (emphasis original)

One of the most significant ways a church can serve its city is by modeling the racial reconciliation that society is desperately looking for within its four walls. Multiethnic churches that intentionally bring people together around the gospel and demonstrate loving unity in diversity have a voice and an influence that can radically impact our communities, cities, and nation. They are urgently needed in our multicultural cities.

In closing, discussing race, cultural diversity, and justice issues can be quite challenging because of all the differing perspectives and opinions on these topics. Yet these are necessary conversations to have if are to move beyond rhetoric to results, see wrongs righted, hurts healed, and a Church that demographically reflects its community and shares the heart of God for all peoples.

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[14]Robert Hoskins, "Why the Church Can't Be Colorblind After Charlottesville," *Rob Hoskins/One Hope*, August 13, 2017, accessed August 23, 2017, http://robhoskins.onehope.net/church-cant-colorblind-charlottesville/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=dp-08-14-17.

I am convinced that Christ and the biblical gospel are sufficient to resolve the pressing issues of our day. A truly Christ-exalting, gospel-centered approach to ethnic relations will stress God's grace pointing people to the cross more than man's proposed remedies. I firmly believe it is critical that the church pursue grace relations rather than "race" relations.[15]

[15] For more on this subject, see my journal article co-written with Dr. Charles Ware, proposing fifteen proactive steps which church leaders can take in response to racial discord in our communities (written after the Ferguson, MO, tragedy, it still has relevance); see http://churchplant.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Ferguson-Article-JMAT-Spring-2015-5-58-FINAL.pdf.

Book Reviews

— *Old Testament* —

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What Happened in the Garden?: The Reality and Ramification of the Creation and Fall of Man. Edited by Abner Chou. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2016. 302 pp. $19.99.

With the various chapters authored by the faculty of The Master's College and edited by Abner Chou, *What Happened in the Garden?* presents various theological views of Genesis 2-3, both as history and hypothesis and the varying theological as well as scientific and societal results of these views. It addresses modern worldview impacts of the spectrum of theological views of Genesis 2-3 and the fall of man and most specifically the doctrine of original sin. The book is divided into three parts: (1) The Reality of Genesis 2-3, (2) Theological Ramifications of the Creation and Fall and (3) Worldview Ramifications of the Creation and Fall.

What Happened in the Garden? addresses the various theological interpretations of Genesis 2-3. The text states, "The story of Genesis 2-3 is the foundation for the rest of the story in Scripture. Change one part of that and we will shift our entire theology. Even more, theology is not just ideas in an ivory tower but the way we understand reality around us" (13). Evangelical believers, or Biblicists, agree with this statement. The book's purpose is to bring the reader to the affirmed conclusion that "the correct interpretation of Genesis 2-3 is to read it as an accurate record of the past" (301). *What Happened in the Garden?* directs readers' thoughts towards the conclusion that "Genesis 2-3 is historical. It is hermeneutically and linguistically justifiable to read it as history" (301). Like the blast of a shotgun, the various chapters theologically, historically, linguistically, and philosophically push the reader to conclude that "it is a story that makes bold claims not only on 'what' is but also on 'how' everything came to be" (301).

The thesis of this book could be summarized in that Genesis 2-3 is scripturally stated historical and theological fact. The authors conclude that when a scholar strays from Genesis 3 as both literal and historical in its interpretation, much of the rest of Scripture will be interpreted in the same skeptical fashion. When the first Adam of Genesis 2-3 is reasoned away as a myth, the interpreter will have very little foundation to believe that the

second Adam of Romans, Jesus Christ, is a historical, literal, and not a fictitious character. This is the summation of what Abner Chou, writes in chapter one, "Did God Really Say…?—Hermeneutics and History in Genesis 3." This is a strong section of the book. Abner identifies various theological interpretations from both evangelical and critical scholars and discusses their impact in the history of both the first Adam and the second Adam, Jesus Christ. He sets forth God's method of teaching theology to mankind through his acts in history: "Theology is worked out in history itself" (26). If the first Adam in Scripture is mythological or symbolical, then so may the second Adam—Jesus Christ—be as well. Chou writes, "The biblical writers do not see history as merely a means of communicating theology; rather, they see history as the means of actualizing theology" (27). Evangelical theologians as well as everyday believers will agree with Chou's conclusions.

Many of the thirteen chapters of the book support their theses with ample evidence. For example, the chapters "Adam and the Animals" and "Genetics of Adam" provide substantive scientific data. "Adam and the Animals" provides both the similarities and differences between mankind and animals (such as chimpanzees). These chapters address the various theological paths that splinter off evolution of mankind from the animals and brings the reader back to a belief of the literal truth of the text in a seven-day (24-hour) creation.

Additionally, the chapters that focus on the fall are quite thorough. Support is found by interpreting Genesis 3 through other scriptural passages that teach that Genesis 3 is a literal and historical/theological event such as the OT prophets and Paul's writings in the NT. These chapters also note the teachings of the church historically as it relates to Genesis 3 and original sin through writers such as Calvin and Augustine, as well as medieval and Reformation church periods.

This book is of value to both the lay student of the Bible as well as the academic. The topics of two chapters that stand out as especially helpful that are not typically covered in studies of Genesis are "Thermodynamics and the Fall—How the Curse Changed our World" and "The Significance of Sin for the Psychologies." Both of these chapters address aspects of the fall

that are beneficial. In the chapter on thermodynamics the writer states, "Seven times in the Creation account it is recorded that God's assessment of His Creation was that it was good (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). … The point here is that the Creation, taken in its totality, was exceedingly good" (197). The writer continues, "The Fall did change the universe. In a real sense, the Fall resulted in a universe whose thermodynamics are best characterized as controlled chaos" (198). This is an element of the fall that the average Bible student does not take much time to consider. The only "creation" we are familiar with is that which we observe and are born into, so we take for granted that it must be what God "created." As Paul wrote, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom 8:22). This is a different world that is marred by sin. How different, we honestly do not know all of the impacts this world sustained due to the fall. This chapter did well in addressing the thermodynamics, even though more in-depth comparisons may have provided a greater impact.

All in all, this book has many beneficial chapters which cover a variety of aspects of the fall. *What Happened in the Garden?* fully sustains and argues in favor of the literal and historical as well as theological truth of Adam and Eve in the garden. John MacArthur writes, "Doubt the historicity of Adam, and you have no good reason to believe any of the rest of the Bible" (290). It rightly seems that all evangelical theologians and Biblicists would be in agreement with this conclusion.

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Devotions on the Hebrew Bible. Edited by Milton Eng and Lee M. Fields. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015. 171 pp. $16.99.

The book *Devotions on the Hebrew Bible* was inspired by Zondervan's 2012 publication *Devotions on the Greek New Testament*. Independently, the co-editors approached the late Verlyn Verbrugge, who was Senior Editor-at-Large for Biblical and Theological Resources and Zondervan, with the idea of

publishing a companion volume for the Hebrew OT. The aim of the book is twofold: "(1) to encourage students and pastors to continue (or to resume!) using their Hebrew knowledge in their devotions and sermon preparation and (2) to demonstrate that a knowledge of the original languages can and should be a spiritually rewarding exercise."

Thirty-eight contributors submitted one or two devotions covering all thirty-nine books of the OT. The writers are all evangelicals, coming from a variety of theological and denominational backgrounds. All are competent Hebrew scholars, and many are professors of Hebrew studies.

Each devotion starts with a "standard English translation," and the Hebrew text was used to bring out insights which cannot be gained from English translation alone. Each contributor was also asked to make spiritual applications from the text, as Fields taught his classes, "Bible study is never complete until it results in worship."

The writers employ several different approaches, and the variety makes the collection fresh and interesting. Some writers allow their theology to inform their exegesis more than is ideal, but none is without merit. An example of that tendency is Randall Buth's reference to וְהֶאֱמַן in Genesis 15:6. Buth argues that the verb "and he believed" is an open-ended tense in the Hebrew and refers to Abraham's life of faith, but in his exegesis, though he refers to Paul's and James's quotation of this passage, he does not point out that they translate the verb in the aorist tense.

The lives and ministries of the contributors enrich their treatment of the text. Martha Wade, a Translation Consultant with Pioneer Bible Translators, brings the diligence with which she worked on translating the Bible in Papua New Guinea into her devotion from 1 Chronicles 29:20. The struggles she experienced in trying to convey the full sense of the text into the Apal language and the New Guinean culture help the reader to appreciate the nuances of the Hebrew text more fully.

Some of the contributors to the book use the grammatical structure of their passage to draw out depth of meaning that may not be apparent in the English translation. Dave Deuel provides a good example of this in his devotion on Ezra 7:10. He points out that the verse contains three complementary infinitives which

reveal the key to Ezra's approach to God's word. Ezra set his heart "to study," "to do," and "to teach" God's statutes and ordinances. In its application, Deuel states, "One can hardly find a more clearly articulated and biblical model."

In a number of the devotions, the contributor's close walk with the Lord was apparent. Bruce Waltke's devotion on Proverbs 30:1 reveals insights into the text that come from thorough knowledge of God's Word and a close walk with the Lord. Specifically, Waltke focuses on Agur's "words," which he says means "a complete thought, not merely the smallest element in a language that may be uttered or written in isolation and carry a meaning." He proceeds to show that by "words" or "sayings" Agur is referring to "prophecies" and especially "judgment prophecies." Agur, then, in his sayings is censuring "greed and hubris, teaching subordination to authority to God's message."

The book is worthwhile reading for several reasons. First, it reveals how study of the Hebrew Bible is useful beyond the academic and homiletic purposes and that the devotional benefit is immense. Second, it should motivate readers who have been out of seminary for a while to keep their grammatical and exegetical skills honed.

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Invitation to the Septuagint. 2nd edition. By Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015. 384 pp. $36.00.

The book *Invitation to the Septuagint* by Karen Jobes and Moisés Silva is an excellent resource for anyone interested in better understanding the issues related to the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. Jobes and Silva have made a significant impact in recent years in the field of Septuagint studies. As the second edition of this text, the authors have substantially revised it to reflect recent scholarly developments and cite recent sources. Jobes formerly taught at Westmont, and more recently at Wheaton. Silva has had an extensive career in NT studies,

teaching at Westmont, Westminster, and more recently at Gordon-Conwell.

In this book, Jobes and Silva offer an introduction to the topic of Septuagint studies that is comprehensive, yet eminently readable. The authors state their goal: "In this book, we invite you to learn about the place of this translation in history, to appreciate its value for modern scholarship, and to come away with some of our enthusiasm for it" (1). Even the format of the book is oriented for the student's ease of access. For example, at the beginning of each chapter, Jobes and Silva define key terms that will be discussed in greater depth in the chapter. This format allows the reader to easily follow the authors' argumentation throughout the chapters.

Jobes and Silva divide this book into three sections: (1) *The History of the Septuagint,* consisting of four chapters; (2) *The Septuagint in Biblical Studies,* consisting of six chapters; and (3) *The Current State of Septuagint Studies,* consisting of four chapters. In so doing, Jobes and Silva present the key aspects of Septuagint studies in an easy-to-grasp manner. The first section (11-110) provides a solid introduction to the development of the Septuagint. In this section, they seek to answer the question, What is the Septuagint? They caution the reader that "there is really no such thing as *the* Septuagint" (17), but that students and scholars must carefully wrestle through the various terms and relevant definitions. In so doing, Jobes and Silva offer an in-depth historical survey of the development of the Greek OT.

The second section (111-262) deals primarily with the importance of this document for biblical studies. The necessity of using the Septuagint in OT textual criticism is strongly developed. Jobes and Silva state, "By far the greatest significance of the LXX … has been its extensive use by scholars in the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible" (157). Not only do the authors present a solid introduction to this issue, they also offer a series of steps to assist the beginning student in working with the LXX in textual criticism (167-69). Perhaps the most beneficial chapter of this section, is chapter nine, "The Septuagint and the New Testament." This chapter is a key resource for NT students looking to better understand the Bible of the apostles and early church. The influence of the LXX upon

the numerous quotations (213-20) and allusions (223-26) of the OT in the NT is considered here.

Finally, the third section (263-350) serves as an excellent resource for those who desire to become better acquainted with the historical development of formal Septuagint studies. Chapter eleven, "Our Predecessors," offers a brief biographical introduction for numerous LXX scholars who have played an important role in developing the discipline into what it is today. Among others, the individuals discussed include Tischendorf, Hatch, Lagarde, Rahlfs, Swete, and Wevers. Additionally, chapter twelve, "Current Studies in Language and Translation" offers a much needed introduction to the current views on Septuagint related issues, such as lexicography, textual criticism, and modern translation theory.

Overall, this book is a must read for both OT and NT students. The Septuagint is an immensely valuable resource which has all too often been neglected. At one point, Jobes and Silva cite a statement made by Peter Katz in 1956: "Never was the LXX more used and less studied!" (309). Although this statement was made several decades ago, it is unfortunately all too often the case today. To combat this neglect, *Invitation to the Septuagint* provides a thorough overview beneficial for both the beginning student and the seasoned biblical scholar.

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An Introduction to Biblical Law. By William S. Morrow. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. 286 pp. $24.00.

William Morrow, author of *An Introduction to Biblical Law*, has researched and published widely on law. The author, professor of Hebrew and Hebrew Scriptures at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, views law as a dynamic system of thought that serves as Israel's theological instruction as well as its guide for conduct. Most crucially, law helps to sustain a

community of faith-seeking stability as it adapts to changing circumstances.

Defining and classifying law requires care. Biblical law includes complete biblical books or sections of books in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Sections include ethical admonitions, instructions for sacrificial rituals, ceremonies for covenant ratification, rules for adjudicating civil damages, stories about legal processes, and criminal law (33). Consequently, defining law is a challenge due largely to the changing notion of the Hebrew word *Torah* that originally meant "instruction" or "teaching." It eventually came to represent "the sum total of teachings that stem from Israel's encounter with God" (3, n.1).

Following an introductory chapter, the author gives one chapter each to treat four major law collections that come from four different spheres or social contexts: Israel at the holy mountain (the Ten Commandments); Israel in the village assembly (Exod 20:22-23:19); Israel in the courts of the Lord (priestly and holiness rules in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers); and Israel in the city (Deuteronomy).

The author views Israel as a law-dependent religious community. But law is both cause and effect; law shapes the community and the community shapes the law. Morrow says, "The legal collections surveyed in this textbook articulate visions of a human community that can respond to the divine reality with integrity" (5). In fact, the book "seeks to understand the witness of these instructions and regulations in an effort to make a viable community of faith" (12). The author's focus on community leads him to take a canonical perspective of the biblical text in its final and complete form. He explains, "The social and theological perspectives that motivated the composition of the covenant code (Exod 20:22-23:19), collections of Priestly instruction, and the laws of Deuteronomy are formed around different metaphors for the character of the community" (7). These social metaphors become the key to organizing and classifying different bodies of law in the Pentateuch. The impetus for differences in perspective in and among these law traditions was often Israel's historical circumstances.

Law programmed and re-programmed Israel throughout her history. Consequently, William Marrow views law as a social construct theologically construed. That is because "law represents a significant way in which ancient Israel did theology" (5). God's law gave his people who had lived four centuries in Egypt a new vision of society because the fabric of their lives had become essentially Egyptian. Regardless of how resilient they were to Egyptian influences, they enjoyed Egyptian social stability and developed Egyptian cultural taste (e.g., the leeks of Egypt). When life became difficult on the way to the promised land, they longed to return to Egypt. But at Sinai YHWH had revealed that "divine instruction will constitute forms of social organization" (4). Israel must embrace YHWH and his law.

Law changes with the growth of Israel's cities. As the need arose, priestly law missions went from the city core to the periphery, particularly during the time of the monarchy. Once again, the goals were programmatic. Even later following the Babylonian exile, the law would once again reconstitute Israel programmatically. In the same way that the law had defined and structured society as Israel came out of Egypt, it did so again as it redefined and restructured the society of God's people when they came out of Babylon. Ezra's reading of Torah is not only an outworking of his commitments described in Ezra 7:10, but also, it reset Israel's life, leaving behind Babylonian life and culture.

Israel's law differed from that of its neighbors on significant points. The ANE neighbors invoked their deities to occupy idols so that they could serve and worship them. Conversely, "Israel had only a verbal disclosure of the character of its divine ruler" (53). Morrow continues, "In other words, part of the problem with physical representations of God is that they rival the word of God/Torah as a medium for divine revelation. This is unacceptable in biblical religion. A primary reason for the rejection of physical images of God is that the Old Testament thinks that God normally interacts with the world through acts of speech" (66). Second, the prominence of Torah is clear in all aspects of the law, particularly with respect to monotheism. Indeed, "fidelity to the Mosaic tradition required Israel's thinkers to *monotheize*" (8; italics original). Finally, many differences between Israel's law and that of its neighbors center on the fact

that "human life has a value in biblical law that cannot be strictly fixed economically" (92). People cannot be monetized.

The author corrects misconceptions about Israel's law. In his treatment of the Book of the Covenant, Morrow notes that in the *lex talionis* illustrated by the English dictum, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," perhaps surprisingly "the emphasis is on restoring broken social relationships, not punishing the guilty party" (89). Here again, we are reminded that the portion of Scripture that we know as law has theological and ethical implications beyond just obeying the laws. Not surprisingly, Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount message emphasizes "preserving good relationship in the community, even at the expense of standing on one's legal rights" (95). It also follows that "a key interest of biblical sacrifice, therefore, is to communicate Israel's commitment to its God" (137). Relationship with God is at the center of biblical law.

Morrow does not intend to treat biblical law comprehensively. And although Morrow recognizes that the composition of Israel's legal portions was a highly complex matter, he does not argue for a single compositional strategy. Rather he treats law from a canonical or synchronic perspective. That said, he proposes hypotheses of textual development in order to support his interpretations of law, particularly its development. The author argues for a complex literary history for Israel's law. Many readers will find disagreement here. What is more, his understanding of Mosaic authorship may be unacceptable to some. Regardless, his proposal that law arose from Israel's historical circumstances, within social spheres of community, and around various metaphors is appealing. His recurrent emphasis is that experiencing God is both a gift and a vocation. For this the author is to be commended and his work appreciated.

Intended as a textbook, this work's organization includes assigned readings from Scripture for most chapter topics as well as readings in manageable assignment-sized portions. Documentation is very selective. Each chapter follows a logical sequence of reading the passage, discussing the details, then considering developments. Further reading is prescribed and both Scripture and topical indexes aid the reader in locating specific

discussions within the book. Rather than a conclusion in the strict sense, the author chooses to use a list of four summary observations carefully selected from topics treated throughout the book.

An editorial error confuses the sense in the sentence beginning with "Rituals surrounding food" (162). Also, the line "One can also can detect . . ." (234) requires clarification.

Overall, this reviewer commends William Morrow for treating a complex subject in a pedagogically sound, interesting, and very readable manner. Forty-seven illustrations and eleven figures assure the reader that the volume under review was written to serve as a course textbook. Similarly, the author carefully avoids using terminology and concepts without defining and explaining them. The author writes for his students, most of who studied for church ministries. This includes theological students and other lay people investigating the complex issues surrounding biblical law for the first time.

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Theological Interpretation and Isaiah 53: A Critical Comparison of Bernhard Duhm, Brevard Childs, and Alec Motyer. By Charles E. Shepherd. London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014. 295 pp. $31.55.

Charles Shepherd's book, *Theological Interpretation and Isaiah 53: A Critical Comparison of Bernhard Duhm, Brevard Childs, and Alec Motyer*, is a slightly revised version of Shepherd's 2012 dissertation at the University of Durham. By comparing the hermeneutical approaches of three divergent OT scholars regarding a text that is theologically paramount to the church of all ages—Isaiah 53—Shepherd seeks to gain a "deeper self-understanding" and "more robust practice" of theological

hermeneutics (1). In the context of Shepherd's book, "theological hermeneutics" concerns the way that the church interprets the text of scripture to formulate its theology, irrespective of whether or not there are historical critical concerns related to the OT text. Of course, given the controversies in the past 200+ years regarding the authorship and setting of the book of Isaiah, chapter 53 provides an excellent test case for this endeavor.

The dialogue between pre-critical, critical, and post-critical scholars that results in this study is both irenic and even-handed; Shepherd critiques each approach, citing both weaknesses and strengths. However, the reader may experience some disappointment that Shepherd does not overtly take a position in the debate that he seeks to mediate. Rather, he concludes that the dialectic that occurs between "history" and "theology" has always been present in the church and always will be (260). Thus, Shepherd argues that the church can profit from reading both Duhm and Motyer; the former identifies the suffering of Isaiah 53 as that of an anonymous Jew in exile, while the later argues that this chapter predicts the suffering of Jesus Christ as God's perfect servant. For Shepherd, the result is all the same: Duhm's church looks beyond the historical critical concerns of this text and sees Jesus Christ in it, much the same way as Motyer's church.

The greatest value of Shepherd's book is the opportunity that he provides to the reader to examine the hermeneutics and theology of three very different OT scholars, all who have made significant contributions to the study of Isaiah. Duhm is best known in Isaianic studies for postulating three eras of writing for this prophecy: during the time of Isaiah (most of the text of Isaiah 1-39); during the Jewish exile in Babylon (most of the text of Isaiah 40-55); and following the exile (most of the text of Isaiah 56-66), breaking company with the two-way division that was common among historical critics (1-39 and 40-66) of Duhm's day. As a result, Duhm strips this text of any predictive elements. He insists that the previous notion that prophets could actually predict the future is "so entirely abandoned in scholarly theology that scholars don't even bother to refute them anymore" (36). However, Duhm recognizes that this de-spiritualizing of the text is "a great loss": "For the knowledge of Old Testament religion

is at least as needful for a deeper insight into the development of humanity as that knowledge concerning which the Greeks, Romans, and Indians accomplished for humanity."[1] Thus, in Duhm's view of theology, one must not abandon an experience with the supernatural, even though one's critical bias repudiates it. Second, he suggests that religions of many types provide similar experiences to Christianity. Thus, it may be observed that Duhm embraces a dialectic theological hermeneutic: on the one hand he rejects a supernatural Bible; on the other, he defends faith in God. Surely only Kant could provide the philosophical framework for such an approach.

Duhm places the writing of the four servant songs (Isa 42:1—4; 49:1—6; 50:4—9; 52:13—53:12) just after the writing of Trito-Isaiah (post-exilic) (52). Regarding Isaiah 53, (1) he denies any vicarious or penal elements of the suffering servant in the fourth song (74); (2) he emends the text in a number of places to "improve" the meter or more significantly, to correct the theology of the text (74); (3) he views the suffering of the servant as only analogous to the suffering of Jesus on Golgotha (75); and (4) he argues that the suffering of the person in Isaiah 53 is so distinct that it would be wrong-headed to say that the NT writers cited or alluded to this text (78).

Shepherd describes Brevard Childs as a theologian who adheres to similar historical-critical presuppositions as Duhm does, but emphasizes the unity of writings like Isaiah because of the final redactor (79). Therefore, although it may appear that Childs seeks some middle ground between liberal and conservative theologians, he clearly embraces liberal presuppositions in his approach to Scripture. Yet he is able to escape the "fragmentation" of the text that so often comes with liberal approaches because of his emphasis on the final form of the text (96-97).

Regarding Child's treatment of Isaiah 53, he exceeds Duhm in respect to a theological interpretation of Isaiah 53. First, unlike Duhm, Childs stresses the importance of theology for the OT

[1] Bernhard Duhm, *Israels Propheten*, Lebensfragen 26 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1916), v, cited and translated by Shepherd (*Theological Interpretation*, 36).

community. For the Jewish exiles living in Babylon, the anonymous servant suffers, taking on the "corporate identity" of the nation Israel. Due to the confessional "we" of Isaiah 53:1, the OT community should feel comfort by identifying with the servant and thereby enjoy the prospect of its future exaltation (133).

Second, Childs adds that the church of the NT is also the beneficiary of its own theology of this text. Similar to Jewish Midrash, the church is able to read this text and appropriate its message to its current setting (98-99). Thus, both Israel and the church share an "ontological" connection in their respective theologies of Isaiah 53, but the "Christian theological affirmation of divine unity" takes precedence (113). Shepherd has rightly identified this hermeneutical process as the essence of Child's "canonical criticism."

Although Shepherd acknowledges that in Child's theological method, OT saints do not have access to the ultimate meaning of a text, he seems to agree with Childs that they do have the interpretation that they need for their particular setting (128). For instance, Childs (and Shepherd) explain the problem of the influence of the servant over "nations" and "kings" in 52:15 regarding the OT audience: "From the point of view of the writer, this kind of impact is had only within that circle in Israel who have come to perceive the servant with new eyes" (133-34). In other words, the nations and kings do not represent literal kingdoms and individuals who are impacted by the suffering of the servant described in this prophecy. Passages like these reveal the aversion that liberal theologians have for predictive prophecy.

Alec Motyer, representing evangelical hermeneutics (as if there were only one stream!), approaches Isaiah as Christian Scripture, inspired and inerrant in all respects. He defends an eighth-century authorship by one prophet known as Isaiah. Motyer rejects the scholarship of Duhm and Childs, having very little in common with their presuppositions and conclusions. Motyer describes the testaments as a "two-act play" (151); both acts are needed for a full understanding of God's message to man. Since the central character of the play is Jesus Christ, one could expect that the OT prepares its readers with many messianic

predictions: these predictions culminate in Isaiah's prophecy (152).

Shepherd critiques Motyer's hermeneutics as follows: (1) he challenges Motyer's view with the observation that if prophets function to call people to repentance, the Scripture cannot predict with precision what is going to happen, since the people have not yet acted on the prophet's words (156-57); (2) he accuses Motyer of ignoring the "future orientation" of chapters 40-55, providing no explanation for how a prophet of the eighth-century could know the name of a ruler who will come to power 200 years later (157-58); (3) he chides Motyer for rejecting the nineteenth-century rationalist scholarship that "shattered" the one-author view of Isaiah (160).

In the end, Shepherd finds Motyer's approach to be strangely curious and perhaps even inviting. He praises Motyer for his attention to the text and for his defense of literary features identified throughout Isaiah; and although Shepherd seems to reject the idea of penal substitutionary atonement in Isaiah 53, he admits that if one follows Motyer's exegetical process, it is reasonable to assume that this theology is taught in the text (229).

Shepherd's book provides helpful insights into how historical critics and conservative scholars approach theological hermeneutics. Duhm and Childs appear to face insurmountable obstacles in their rejection of prophecy. Motyer, on the other hand, is able to present the death and victory of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of Isaiah 53. I think that inquisitive readers will find the chapters on Motyer's hermeneutics most interesting, as this appears to be Shepherd's unfamiliar territory.

Theological Interpretation and Isaiah 53 is a challenging read, best handled by scholars and advanced seminary students. The first half of the book contains a great deal of German, much of it untranslated. Furthermore, many of the sections of the book assume that the reader is conversant in liberal theology and philosophy.

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Reading Biblical Greek: A Grammar for Students. By Richard J. Gibson and Constantine R. Campbell. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 144 pp. $34.99.

The prospect of learning the biblical languages presents a serious challenge not only to students but to teachers as well. Striking the right balance between brevity and depth is difficult, especially at the introductory level. Zondervan's new resource for learning the Greek of the NT by Richard Gibson and Constantine Campbell offers a leaner approach than most first-year grammars, with the goal of reducing its content to the minimum a beginning student needs to know to read the Greek New Testament.

The *Reading Biblical Greek* textbook layout reflects its minimalist philosophy. It confines each "micro-lesson" to a single topic on one page divided into three columns. The first column has new material, the second contains memorization content, and the third has examples and exercises. Some pages deviate from this format, usually when the textbook introduces a major concept. This consistent layout allows the student to distinguish material to be understood from what must be committed to memory and what assignments to complete. True to the authors' goal, the explanations are to the point with very little included that does not directly relate to the point at hand.

The memorization required of the student consists mainly of vocabulary and paradigms or conjugations, along with some grammar rules. The vocabulary lists are conveniently gathered together at the end of the text so the student can easily work on more than one list at a time without flipping through the lessons. The exercises and examples are appropriate for each lesson and include activities like recognizing Greek forms, expressing English ideas in Greek, and other ways of applying the material. Answers to all of the exercises appear after the last lesson. Following the answers and vocabulary, the book contains tables of material that appeared in the lessons, along with additional information like accent rules and a principal parts table. These are followed by a Scripture index and a subject index.

Campbell's research on Greek verbal aspect has allowed him to include this key to understanding the verbal system at an

introductory level. It is well done, informing students of the scholarly debates over both verbal aspect and the middle voice without drowning students in unnecessary detail at this point in their study.

Gibson and Campbell also aim to introduce the student to reading the Greek NT. They accomplish this with the textbook's companion workbook, which breaks the entire text of Mark 1–4 into manageable translation exercises. This approach gets the student into reading the text early in the learning process rather than waiting until a third semester of study. The authors have also provided a clear, deliberate method of translation that will certainly help a beginning student. The student first marks up the text with a system of symbols and brackets to identify clauses, parts of speech, etc. With those guides in place, the student produces an appropriate translation.

A three-DVD set of video lectures for *Reading Biblical Greek* is also available for purchase. Each lecture features Dr. Campbell talking the student through a lesson in four or five minutes with his computer and tablet. The videos also follow the minimalist approach, without frills and not adding to the material in the textbook, using only its charts as visuals. Pedagogically, the DVDs assist the auditory learner by restating the printed content and vocalizing the Greek words.

Despite all of the benefits of this textbook, a few corrections and improvements could be suggested. The Erasmian pronunciation of ἐκκλησία on p. 8 is listed as *ek-klair-s***i**-*a* rather than *ek-klai-s***i**-*a*, which might confuse the student learning pronunciation. Also, the presence of both Erasmian and modern Greek pronunciations in the DVD lessons may make it more difficult for the student to learn one method. The DVD lesson 25, however, does include a better form of the preposition chart than the one on p. 25 of the book. Lesson 28 recommends that the present active indicative of λύω be translated with "I am loosing," but the chart on the same page does not follow that advice. The choice of an obscure clause in 4 Maccabees 5:35 as the example for the vocative case on page 13 may leave the student scratching his head in puzzlement over its meaning. The much more straightforward clause in Mark 4:38 would be clearer and falls within the range of verses the student will study. On the

same page, the description of the genitive case implies that it contributes only two meanings, either possession or content. Similarly, lesson 53A introduces the second aorist tense-form and states that the indicative mood should be translated like the first aorist. This raises the question of what the other moods of the second aorist mean, but there is no statement about meaning in lesson 53B where they are introduced. Finally, lesson 30 illustrates that the student may not be ready for all the details that are given in overview fashion. In the Marking Verbs section the student is directed to note that each clause of the included text contains only one verb, but at this point the student does not have enough information to recognize verb forms like the perfect in verse 2a and the verbless clause of verse 1. In the decoding example in this lesson, the mention of a different stem for the aorist and future forms of βαπτίζω is unnecessary. It was wise for the authors to include the advice to "stay calm" on this page!

These negatives can easily be addressed in the classroom and they should not discourage instructors from using this resource. With its bite-sized lessons, a teacher has the flexibility to cover as many or as few topics as time allows without splitting a chapter's content. The benefits of learning current verb system theory and working through a large section of the biblical text without superfluous details can surely make up for any weaknesses in the textbook.

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Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament. By Andreas J. Köstenberger, Benjamin L. Merkle, and Robert L. Plummer. Nashville: B&H, 2016. 550 pp. $49.99.

Seasoned NT scholars Köstenberger, Merkle, and Plummer have provided an intermediate Greek textbook that is sure to assist both professors and students with a current resource for the study of the grammar and syntax of the Greek New Testament.

Their goal was to provide a resource which is accessible and fun for students. The authors claim that as a textbook, this is not merely a reference guide/resource. Rather, it is a hands-on, practical guide to assist in the proper interpretation of God's word.

The format of the textbook is straightforward and user-friendly. First, each chapter begins with a section titled "Going Deeper." The purpose of this section is to introduce the student to the material by using a practical illustration that demonstrates the "payoff" to learning the material found within the chapter. For example, chapter 3, which discusses the genitive case, walks the student through common wording that is often found on Christmas cards ("peace on earth, good will toward men," ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκίας). Is this an accurate translation of the Greek text? There is also a text-critical issue with this verse; should the text read εὐδοκίας (gen case), or εὐδοκία (nom case)? And, is Luke (2:14) suggesting that good will go to *all* men, humanity at large?

Next, each chapter states the objectives and introduces the material. Subsequently, several biblical examples, written in Greek and translated into English, illustrate the grammatical and/or syntactical category discussed in the chapter.

Third, and probably one of the most unique sections of the grammar, is the inclusion of practice sentences. These sentence (ten in each chapter) are carefully chosen to provide students with the ability to practice the skills they have learned. This feature is unique because it is unlike the typical intermediate grammar; that is, most grammars either do not include practice sentences or publish them in a separate volume.

Fourth, this intermediate grammar offers vocabulary for students to memorize. In the introduction (4), it states that the student who memorizes all words in the NT that occur 15 times or more will have memorized 830 words.

And last, this grammar offers a built-in reader. By *reader* it is meant that there are NT texts available at the end of each chapter for students to translate, interpret, and apply. These texts were carefully selected so that students are exposed to the following: (1) grammar and syntax discussed in the chapter, (2) a pastorally relevant/theologically foundational/or doctrinally

debated text that is 10-12 verses in length, and (3) beneficial notes to guide the student through the translation, interpretation, and application process.

One of the benefits to this grammar for professors is the available additional resources. A number of teacher aids from weekly quizzes to PowerPoint presentations and chapter summaries are accessible at www.deepergreek.com.

As one thumbs through the table of contents, he will not be surprised to find chapter titles typical for an intermediate grammar (e.g., Genitive Case, Dative Case, Participles, Infinitives, etc.). However, the authors have also incorporated recent studies within the fields of verbal aspect and discourse analysis into chapters 7 and 13 respectively. They have consulted with a number of NT scholars (e.g., Campbell, Decker, Porter, Black, Huffman, Runge) to provide the latest information and/or techniques, especially in these fields.

"Keeping current" is a must for a NT Greek grammar. With a publication date of 2016, *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek* is sure to have the latest information on key grammatical and syntactical concepts. I am impressed with chapter 15 (Continuing with Greek) because it offers resources for students of the Greek NT. The writers of this Greek grammar strongly encourage their readers to invest time into recommended resources and tools such as websites (e.g., ntresources.com), exegetical commentaries (e.g., EGGNT series, Handbook on the Greek Text series, etc.), lexicons (e.g., BDAG), and grammars.

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Genesis in the New Testament. Edited by Maarten J. J. Menken and Steve Moyise. New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014, paperback. 200 pp. $30.00.

The book *Genesis in the New Testament* is the fifth in the series The New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel from The Library of New Testament Studies (LNTS). The companion volumes are *The Psalms in the New Testament* (2004), *Isaiah in the New Testament* (2005), *Deuteronomy in the New Testament* (LNTS 358, 2007), and *The Minor Prophets in the New Testament* (LNTS 377, 2009). All volumes are edited by Maarten J. J. Menken and Steve Moyise and are published by Bloomsbury T & T Clark.

Genesis in the New Testament was written by contributors who were appointed specifically to introduce the influence of the book of Genesis upon early Jewish literature and the NT. Thus, the highlight of the book is found in the hermeneutical links presented by these authors. The goal of this book is to disclose the recognizable dependence of early Jewish literature (e.g., *Life of Adam and Eve*; *1 and 2 Enoch*) and the NT on the book of Genesis.

The book introduces the reader to noticeable connections between Genesis and these documents. Accordingly, the influence of the book of Genesis on subsequent writings underscores the "authoritative significance" of Genesis and the consequent continuity of Scripture. This book indicates that in the case of the NT, all of the authors made use of the book of Genesis to some degree or another.

Key strengths of the book are the critical assessments offered by the contributors. These evaluations provide a basis from which further intertextual and hermeneutical studies can be pursued. A couple examples will be sufficient to demonstrate how the book is formatted. In Chapter 6, David Lincicum mentions Paul's allusion to Adam as a type of Christ in Romans 5:12-21. Lincicum suggests that Paul's allusion to Adam as a prefigurement of the coming Messiah points to a "divine plan that orders all of history" (106).

Another example which is slightly is offered by Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll and found in Chapter 2. Ahearne-Kroll refers to

the work of Matthew S. Rindge as he attempts to make the case that the Gospel of Mark "reconfigures the story of the Aqedah to tell the story of Jesus" (29), thereby alluding to Genesis 22. Rindge points out similarities between Abraham's offering of Isaac and Jesus' baptism and subsequent testing in the wilderness: (1) both Abraham and Jesus are tested by God; (2) both narratives require a beloved son; (3) and both Isaac and Jesus are the intended sacrifice, with the only difference being that Isaac is spared while Jesus is crucified. Ahearne-Kroll writes that "once the lexical similarities between Gen. 22:2, 12, and 16 and Mk 1:11, 9:7, and 12:6 are established, then it is possible to read Mark in light of Genesis 22 as Rindge argues, and the implications for doing so are intriguing" (29).

Ahearne-Kroll acknowledges that "allusions are difficult to confirm" (27). Therefore, finding the right criteria for determining correctly proposed allusions should be a primary concern for this type of intertextual study. In Chapter 3, Jeannine K. Brown responds to this concern as she proposes three of seven criteria from R. B. Hays's book *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* for her work (47-48). Perhaps a list of criteria placed at the beginning of the book, stating how echoes and allusions are regarded by the contributors would have been a helpful guide for the reader.

Overall, *Genesis in the New Testament* is an academic work that appeals mostly to scholars; professors of Old and New Testament; and graduate students who are involved in biblical studies.

I recommend *Genesis in the New Testament* because of the contribution this book offers to the field of biblical study. As the title suggests, this book underscores the importance of intertextual studies. The product of this study is a treasure trove for those who would hold to the position that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

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What Christians Ought to Believe: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine through the Apostles' Creed. By Michael F. Bird. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016. 240 pp. $24.99.

The subtitle to Michael F. Bird's *What Christians Ought to Believe: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine through the Apostles' Creed* provides a helpful description, as the book surveys major doctrines of the Christian faith through the lens of the Apostles' Creed. Bird reviews each section of the Creed from beginning to end in eleven chapters (chapters 4–14). For example, in chapter 4 Bird describes God as true, as Triune, as Father, and as almighty. At the same time he addresses contemporary concerns, such as how some people negatively view God as Father. Each chapter concludes with further recommended reading, often including a section from Bird's *Evangelical Theology* (Zondervan, 2013). But first, in chapters 1 and 2, Bird makes his case for the validity of and need for the Apostles' Creed. He argues that creeds are biblical, summarize biblical traditions, were developed in the early church, and embraced at early church councils.

Bird believes that the early church creeds have been given a bad name in some Christian circles and that believers need to reconsider the merits of the Apostles' Creed for basic discipleship. The Creed should be known by all true believers as well as defended by theologians (26). Bird is convinced that in order for a church to be "theologically healthy," it must embrace rather than "jettison the creeds" (38). Personal faith is so central to the Apostles' Creed that Bird spends all of chapter 3 contemplating the importance and meaning of "I believe."

Overall, the book is quite readable and sometime even wittingly entertaining. Bird describes faith not as "a person blindly jumping in the dark," but more as "a leap into the light" (51). And in the section titled "A Son Is Born to Us!" Bird's writing made me do a double-take where he introduced "several salient points that are *umbilically* connected to it" (105, emphasis added). Bird quotes from a wide array of early church and modern authors.

Though Bird writes an introduction to Christian doctrine, he often addresses issues skeptics might raise. For example, he deals

with faith and doubt in the "I Believe" chapter (53–55). In the chapter on "Believing in the Cross," Bird tackles the foolishness of the cross theme not only from the first-century perspective of the Jews and the Greeks, but also from that of the postmodern (112–17). Some sections are overly technical, such as Bird's five reasons for the virgin birth (conception; 105–8). Occasionally his arguments lack clarity. How does virgin conception mandate an Israelite-born Messiah, when being born the son of Mary and Joseph would have fulfilled that (105)? And the fifth argument for virgin conception seems to address only the Messiah's birth rather than his *virgin* birth (107–8).

Most of the book is impeccably edited, with no noticeable grammatical or spelling errors. However, several editorial lapses were found in footnoted citations (e.g., 164, n2; 213, n5). Bird writes an introductory rather than a research book, which may explain why he sometimes uses secondary sources (e.g., 93, n12; 164, n5; 183, n2). More concerning, sometimes Bird seems to quote from sources to support his own views when in the broader context the author quoted does not support that same view. Two notable examples are when Bird quotes from John Stott (140) and from John Murray (134) in the section on atonement. Both of these authors argue that propitiation (satisfying God's righteous wrath toward sin) is central to atonement, while Bird emphasizes the victory theory (133). Admittedly, the Apostles' Creed addresses none of these theories of the atonement.

My greatest concern relates to Bird's discussion of the canon's development. Although it is undeniable that the apostolic church passed on oral tradition, Bird at times seems to emphasize tradition over the written (NT) documents (21). Why wouldn't Jude 3 *also* refer to the available written NT documents in Jude's famous words "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" since Jude is one of the last NT epistles to be written? In the same vein, Bird offers a helpful discussion of the rule of faith. But how does it "authorize Scripture" if it comes *from* Scripture (34)? If Bird means it consents to Scripture, agreed. But if he means the rule of faith sanctions, empowers, allows, or approves Scripture, that is placing too much authority in the hands of mankind and the church, authority that belongs only to God.

The book is written for college undergraduates or serious minded disciples of Christ. Mature believers who have read little positively oriented assessment of the Apostles' Creed could benefit from the book. Although numerous books have been written on the Apostles' Creed, if you are looking for a carefully thought out and well written introduction, Bird's book will certainly help. If you are concerned about balancing out some of Bird's theological leanings, compare his book with J. I. Packer's *Affirming the Apostles' Creed*, or R. C. Sproul's *What We Believe*.

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Making Sense of God's Plan for Humanity: An Easy to Understand Guide to Dispensationalism. By Douglas C. Bozung. Taos, NM: Dispensational Publishing House, 2017. 142 pp. $11.99.

Douglas C. Bozung is the teaching pastor at Christian Fellowship Church in New Holland, PA, and an adjunct professor at Lancaster Bible College. In the past, he served as a missionary and missionary trainer. His most recent degrees were awarded by Dallas Theological Seminary (ThM, 1987) and Baptist Bible Seminary (PhD, 2008).

In his foreword to the book, Charles H. Dyer observes that Bozung "has set out to solve" the problem of a lack of full comprehension of dispensationalism on the parts of both its critics and champions (1). Bozung notes in his preface his intention to write for "a lay audience with little or no familiarity" with dispensational concepts (5). By choosing to address an audience with little comprehension and by writing in a clear, uncomplicated style, the author succeeds in providing an instrument to solve the problem mentioned by Dyer.

The book begins with an introduction in which Bozung introduces "literal interpretation" and several major aspects of the concept of dispensationalism. He broadly defines dispensationalism as "the belief that God has related to people in the course of human history in unique ways" (14). He then proceeds, in Chapters 1 through 7, to describe in order each of those unique dispensations. In Chapter 8, the author presents and answers objections to dispensationalism. In Chapter 9, he answers the question "What difference does it make?" whether the reader is a dispensationalist or not, providing four benefits of dispensationalism. In two appendices, Bozung articulates his case for pretribulationism, and provides a critique of Progressive Dispensationalism. The book contains useful charts, several discussion questions for each chapter, end notes, and indices.

Although he has written for beginners, the author of this "guide" demonstrates throughout his mastery of the subject matter and his understanding of the frequently asked questions concerning the theological system of dispensationalism and the dispensations, including those raised concerning "outdated conceptions" of dispensationalism. Theologians who have concluded that literal interpretation (including a literal fulfilment of OT prophecy), God's future plan for Israel, Christ's coming for his church before the tribulation, and the establishment of a future Messianic kingdom on earth are not in keeping with their conception of God's plan of redemption will probably not be persuaded by Bozung's arguments. They will benefit, however, from the clarity of his presentation of the basics, his careful exegesis of the biblical text, and his arguments in defense of dispensationalism. His explanation of the dispensation of grace is particularly helpful.

This book will serve as perhaps the best, most succinct book available for a discussion group study in a church or a home Bible study. It will also benefit pastors and teachers who have become rusty in their understanding of dispensationalism.

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Reordering the Trinity: Six Movements of God in the New Testament. By Rodrick K. Durst. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2015. 369 pp. $22.99.

Is it possible that most Christians are malnourished in the doctrine of the Trinity because the church has been feeding on one primary order of the Trinity—Father, then Son, then Spirit? In *Reordering the Trinity: Six Movements of God in the New Testament*, Rodrick Durst notes that only 18 out of 75 Trinitarian occurrences in the NT appear in this well-known order. Thus, Durst argues that there is good reason to investigate the contexts of the other 57 occurrences spread over five additional triadic orders and found in 19 of the 27 NT documents.

After his exegetical analysis of each context, Durst summarizes the primary theological pattern of each triadic order and then shows their application for worship, life, and ministry. He concludes that there is a consistent context peculiar to each of the six triadic orders in the NT, which, when understood and applied, strengthen the church's theology, worship, and witness.

Although NT scholars have been examining individual pieces of the Trinitarian puzzle, Durst suggests that his "Trinitarian Matrix" may be that "missing corner piece that lets us complete the framework for this overarching picture of who the Triune God is" (49). The following chart summarizes Durst's analysis and conclusions.

NT Triadic Orders, Name, Theme, and Frequency according to Durst

Triadic Order	Triadic Name	Theme	Frequency
Father–Son–Spirit	The **Sending** Triad	**Missional**	**18x, 24%**
Son–Spirit–Father	The **Saving** Triad	**Regenerative**	**15x, 20%**
Son–Father–Spirit	The **Indwelling** Triad	**Christological Witness**	**14x, 19%**
Spirit–Father–Son	The **Standing** Triad	**Sanctifying**	**9x, 12%**
Father–Spirit–Son	The **Shaping** Triad	**Formation**	**11x, 15%**
Spirit–Son–Father	The **Uniting** Triad	**Ecclesial**	**8x, 10%**

Before examining the context of the six triadic orders (chapters 5–10), Durst discusses four introductory questions. In chapter 1, "The Status Question," Durst summarizes and briefly assesses Trinitarian views in contemporary theology. He even critiques the best-selling book *The Shack,* which, he notes, offers a tritheistic view of God. In chapter 2, "The Data Question," Durst introduces the six triadic orders, noting that "the earliest Christians were Trinitarian because that is how they learned to think before, from, and within the New Testament" (66). In chapter 3, "The Antecedent Question," Durst shows how the doctrine of the Trinity is actually rooted in the OT rather than being "a post-New Testament dogmatic invention of the third- through fifth-century ecumenical councils" (83). In chapter 4, "The Historical Question," he summarizes Trinitarian views from the early church fathers up through the twentieth century. To conclude his work (chapter 11), Durst asks "The Application Question," in which he suggests how the reader can incorporate this central NT doctrine in order to become a "functional Trinitarian for everyday worship, life, and ministry."

There is much to commend Durst's work as a stimulating and valuable resource for the serious student or pastor. First, Durst processes a vast amount of both historical and contemporary perspectives on the Trinity, presenting them in digestible portions for the reader. Second, his comprehensive analysis, grading, and organization of the 75 triadic occurrences is a big step forward in systematizing this core apostolic doctrine, even if his systemization runs the risk of oversimplifying diverse and complex evidence. Third, his discussion questions and "sermon starters" that conclude most chapters show the practical ministry relevance of a deeper understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. From history, to exegesis, to systematic theology, to application, Durst shines as a scholar-teacher and a pastor-churchman.

Two areas of confusion weaken his work, however. First, since clarity is typical in Durst's organization and style, it is odd that he chooses alternate titles for the triads in his preview of them (79–81). For instance, the Sending Triad (chapter 5) he previews with the title "The Missional Triad"; the Saving Triad (chapter 6) he also names "The Evangelistic Triad"; the Indwelling Triad (chapter 7) he names "The Christological

Triad"; the Standing Triad (chapter 8) he calls "The Liturgical Triad"; the Shaping Triad (chapter 9) he also names "The Formational Triad"; and, the Uniting Triad (chapter 10) Durst alternately names "The Ecclesial Triad." Although these alternate titles may help to fill out the reader's understanding, the double names also tend to confuse.

Second, for his OT evidence, Durst includes the Apocrypha along with the Tanakh in this curious sentence: "While Jesus was not averse to going beyond the Pentateuch, Tanakh, and the Apocrypha …" (82). Not only is this redundant, since the Pentateuch is the first part of the acronym Tanakh (T=Torah), but it also leads one to wonder why Durst includes Trinitarian roots from the Apocrypha since Jesus does delimit the OT canon (Luke 24:27, 44), and Durst himself limits his survey of triadic orders to the NT canon.

Despite such concerns, Durst's work provides a wealth of historical, exegetical, theological, homiletical, and even pedagogical material that is sure to be useful for a variety of Bible students, especially pastors. In the final analysis, Durst does achieve his aim "to demonstrate biblically the degree to which the Trinity is a showcase doctrine and how that showcase practically works to the glory of God and the benefit of the church" (32). Whether or not Durst's "Trinitarian matrix" is indeed that "missing corner piece" that brings coherence to the NT Trinitarian puzzle, his analysis does significantly synthesize and advance the scholarly research and application of the Trinity.

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The Story of Reality: How the World Began, How It Ends, and Everything Important that Happens in Between. By Gregory Koukl. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 198 pp. $15.99.

In *The Story of Reality*, Gregory Koukl tackles describing "How the World Began, How It Ends, and Everything Important

that Happens in Between." He successfully completes that ambitious goal.

The author is an adjunct professor of Christian apologetics at Biola University and President of Stand to Reason (http://www.str.org). In this volume, he skillfully applies and models the recommendations of his earlier book, *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions* (Zondervan, 2009), combining winsomeness, logic, and scriptural integrity. He understands the postmodern mindset and presents Christian theology in a way that interacts with current secular thinking. The target audiences are both unbelieving skeptics and believers who want to be more articulate explaining Christianity.

In the forward, Nancy Pearcey refers to Francis Shaeffer's point that "Christianity cannot be reduced to … a technique for getting 'saved.' It is a comprehensive account of the structure of reality … a verifiable storyline of the unfolding of the cosmos" (13). Thus, hearing a witness about Jesus without being told the OT background about God, creation, and sin is like walking into a movie theater halfway through the showing. You don't know the characters, the plot line, or the problems being solved.

Koukl overcomes such a flawed approach by gently and rationally unfolding the biblical storyline in five movements—God, Man, Sin, Jesus, and (final) Resurrection. Koukl rightly argues that everyone has a worldview in his or her mind, "a story about the way the world actually is, even if they haven't thought about it much or worked out all the details" (23). Koukl asserts therefore, that it is wrong for skeptics to call religious persons bigots for having a definite worldview, since they too have one. However, "all worldviews are not equal" (24). The author effectively demonstrates that Christianity fits what people see in the world better than any other worldview.

Using brief easy-to-read chapters, Koukl excels at concise summaries and helpful illustrations. Logical argumentation is his primary tool. For example, he logically explains why denying the existence of an overall metanarrative is flawed (30-33), why two big objections, "the brokenness of the world and the unique role of Jesus are connected" (37), and why a God who is good must be more than loving but also wrathful (97). Chapters eight

("Matter-Ism") and nine ("Mind-Ism") interact reasonably with the flaws of both materialistic atheism and new age pantheism.

Footnotes instead of endnotes would have greatly improved the format of the book, especially since the endnotes are full of biblical references to support the well-crafted narrative. A biblically grounded reader must also remind himself that Koukl presents "mere Christianity" (to borrow a phrase from C. S. Lewis, whom Koukl quotes frequently). It is understandable (though a occasionally frustrating) that the author avoids taking a stand on some secondary but important issues such as the age of the earth (chapter 6, "in the Beginning"), the nature of hell's "real fire" (160), a timeline of eschatology (chapter 25), or the nature of the coming New Jerusalem (166).

Koukl summarizes biblical theology artfully—for example, the effects of the fall (96-97); that God is "tri-personal" (110); or that Christ's work was primarily to save sinners, not to bring social justice (114). The theologically careful reader, however, may struggle with some of Koukl's details. Is the distinction between animals and humans best described as "the *kind* of souls we have" (68)? Wouldn't it have been important to add the terms "husband/wife" when describing Adam and Eve's "friendship" and "companionship" (82-83)? When referencing near-death experiences (in light of Hebrews 9:27 and James 2:26), it is not accurate to say "their souls go away somewhere and then return" (148).

While writing for secularists, Koukl does not compromise on unpopular issues like Jesus being the only way (132) or the eternality of hell (161). Having logically constructed the background to Jesus' arrival, when he gets to the gospel, Koukl's presentation truly soars as he proclaims "The Rescue" and "The Trade" (chapters 18, 20). In the end, my joy welled up as he describes our eternity: "It is the Father's house, and there is a place for us in it. And he will say, 'Come. Enter. Enjoy. Be with Me' … Our hunger for home was always our hunger for him. And we shall have him" (171).

Gregory Koukl succeeds in his goal of presenting *The Story of Reality*. He states:

> I told you the true picture of reality is like a puzzle made up of many pieces. And, just like any other puzzle, you need to have all the right pieces put together in the proper way to see the picture clearly. If you are missing major pieces, or have pieces from other worldview puzzles mixed in, then you will not get an accurate picture of reality. (173)

I highly recommend this book and hope it has a wide readership. It can help Christians better understand and articulate the faith. It is also a helpful tool for passing on to seekers or skeptics alike. Most of all, it can help many far from God to "bend the knee to (our) Sovereign, beg for mercy because of Christ, be welcomed into his family as a son or daughter, and belong to him" (177).

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Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Biblical Truth. By John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue. Wheaton: Crossway, 2017. 1024 pp. $60.00.

Nearly twelve years ago, during a time in my life that the Lord was calling me to ministry, I was introduced to the John MacArthur Study Bible while volunteering at a small Christian bookstore. I was instantly attracted to MacArthur's clarity and conviction and kept that study Bible close as I pursued my seminary work. However, as I grew interested in systematic theology over the course of my studies, I was surprised to learn that, although MacArthur had published many books, he had never released a work on systematic theology. I dreamed that, someday, MacArthur would produce a work on my favorite subject.

That day has finally come. John MacArthur (Pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California, and President of The Master's College and Seminary) and coauthor Richard Mayhue (Executive Vice President, Dean, and Research

Professor of Theology Emeritus of The Master's Seminary) have released their work *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Study of Biblical Truth*. With the prestige of its authors, *Biblical Doctrine* is a highly anticipated contribution to systematic theology.

In its structure, the book treks very familiar territory for students of systematic theology. The text covers the nine major topics (bibliology, theology proper, Christology, pneumatology, anthropology, hamartiology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology) along with an introduction (prolegomena). Other features include the careful use of footnotes; a basic theological glossary; and the inclusion of topic-specific prayer, bibliography, and hymns concluding each chapter.

It is a given that followers of MacArthur's previous works will purchase *Biblical Doctrine*. However, for the rest of the Christian community, is the book worth acquiring, especially with the number of systematic theology texts on the market today? I believe *Biblical Doctrine* is worth that purchase for the following three reasons.

First, *Biblical Doctrine* succeeds in its objective of reaching a variety of readers from seminary instructors to lay church members who desire to better understand the Scriptures in their entirety. It does so by minimizing its extra-biblical content and instead, focusing on the text of Scripture. One will not find running sentences in Latin, lengthy quotations from the Reformers, or comprehensive historical summaries of each doctrine (traits that characterize many systematic theologies), but will be treated to an exposition of the key biblical passages concerning each topic. This "simplicity" makes *Biblical Doctrine* both valuable as a reference text and accessible to many audiences.

Second, *Biblical Doctrine* makes a unique contribution to systematic theology. Those familiar with MacArthur's writing and preaching are aware of his positions on key theological topics, and these positions are evident in the text. For example, *Biblical Doctrine* holds to a historical-grammatical interpretation of Scripture, young-earth creationism, cessationism, five-point Calvinism, a baptistic ecclesiology, and a dispensational-premillennial approach to eschatology. Theological volumes possessing this combination of doctrinal distinctives are rare, and

in a market saturated with systematic theology, *Biblical Doctrine* is a fresh presentation of a very old science.

Third, *Biblical Doctrine* is contemporary, meaning that it makes the point of addressing key theological issues facing the church today. This is most evident in its summary of anthropology, which, among other topics, explains the biblical view of gender, the sanctity of human life, and the role of government. The text also includes discussions of "popular" theological questions (e.g., Do believers have guardian angels? Can Satan read minds?) and topics that do not often make the cut (e.g., textual criticism) that are important today and helpful, no matter the context of the reader's ministry.

Critiquing systematic theologies is difficult because criticism often comes by way of doctrinal differences. Those who are familiar with MacArthur's doctrinal positions will find very few surprises in *Biblical Doctrine*. With that said, perhaps a word of caution regarding the text itself is more appropriate here: *Biblical Doctrine* lives up to its name. MacArthur argues, "Systematic theology answers the question, what does the complete canon of Scripture teach about any one theme or topic?" (36). Excluding limited quotations of the church fathers and the inclusion of historical background to give certain doctrinal positions a historical context, *Biblical Doctrine* sticks to its definition of systematic theology. As such, the reader looking for a systematic theology that, for example, includes an extensive use of apologetics (e.g., Geisler) or surveys of doctrinal history (e.g., Berkhof and many other Reformed theologians) may be disappointed with *Biblical Theology*.

The final verdict? Purchase this text (it can be purchased for less than the $60 cover price). If you cannot do so, rent it from a theological library or borrow *Biblical Doctrine* from a friend and read it. Twelve years is a long time, but it was worth the wait.

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The Essentials of Christian Thought: Seeing Reality Through the Biblical Story. By Roger E. Olson. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 256 pp. $18.99.

Is there ever a time when philosophy and Christianity cross paths? Should the two walk along the same path together? In *The Essentials of Christian Thought: Seeing Reality Through the Biblical Story*, Roger Olson suggests that philosophy and Christianity have danced throughout history for centuries. Unfortunately, many of philosophy's negative principles have filtered into forms of Christianity along with the purest forms that define life, worldview, and reality. Olson carefully displays the reality and truth of God's Word while warning the reader to discern where and when philosophy has influenced how one interprets the Bible.

Beginning with the introduction, Olson explains that many Christians miss how philosophy and the Bible cross paths safely. As he discusses the metaphysical reality of the Bible, Olson provides three reasons why Christians miss this important truth. First, the Bible is not a philosophy book. This reason causes a struggle when believers attempt to view all reality in Jesus Christ. Second, many churches never touch on philosophical basics of reality found in the Bible. Rather, their theology and philosophy emphasize matters of worship and lifestyle (15). In other words, these churches no longer teach Christians to think deeply about the reality of the Bible. Third, cultural emphases have seduced Christians into creating their own blends of life, worldview, and reality. Too often, the result is far from the ultimate reality the Bible teaches.

There is a depth of wisdom and insight offered in this book. Olson includes prominent members of theology and philosophy in his research, as well as early church leaders. This reader was challenged by the content of each of the seven chapters of this book, yet found chapter two to be especially foundational for the entire book. Chapter two's title is "Ultimate Reality Is Supernatural and Personal (But Not Human)." Olson chooses to clear any misunderstanding of the words *supernatural* and *personal*. He notes both terms have been stripped of their true meaning and (in some cases) given several meanings. To be clear,

Olson defines *supernatural* as "beyond nature, not bound in nature and nature's flaws, free over nature, not controlled by nature" (53). This definition is quite different from the definition often delivered by network television. Olson continues by emphasizing that God (the ultimate reality) is a combination of the supernatural, transcendent, personal, and relational. Olson supports his claims with numerous passages of Scripture. This reader agrees with the author's emphasis and would add that God (YHWH) can be the only true ultimate reality found in any philosophy of the world. As chapter two concludes, Olson offers an obvious tension that exists in Christianity today. He says, "Christian thinkers have succumbed to the temptation to replace the thinking of the Bible with alien philosophies under the wrong assumption that the Bible is a bunch of stories from which no reasonable, workable metaphysical vision (or ethic) can be drawn for later cultures and their Christians" (69). Chapter four discusses several alien philosophies that replace the Bible or are combined with the Bible for a new type of Christianity.

Chapter three offers a retrieval of the ultimate reality of the Bible. Olson suggests three reasons why a Christian philosophy of life (worldview and reality) is important. First, a Christian worldview of reality helps Christians avoid inappropriate blending of the truth about God, the world, and humanity. Second, a Christian worldview of reality is necessary for the integration of faith with disciplines of life. Third, a Christian worldview of reality is necessary as the foundation of culture (95-96). The third reason is important due to several factors. First, "the human person cannot use his own reason to arrive at a satisfying life philosophy or vision or reality" because his own natural tendency is to minimize evil (93). Second, the Christian ultimate reality answers the question: What is true always and everywhere, regardless of time or place? (84). No other ultimate reality or metaphysical view of life and reality will answer the question in the same manner.

Chapters five and six deal with the ontological nature of God. Olson expounds on God's being supernatural and personal from chapter two. Olson spends time on God's being eternal. With the emphasis of tolerance and the watering-down of Christianity, this reader applauds Olson for taking a theological stand on such

specifics of the faith, especially when notable progressives have worked hard at erasing foundational cores of Christianity.

Olson also spends time dealing with creation. This reader agrees with most of his arguments and principles. That being said, this reader would like one line removed from this book. On page 186 Olson writes, "Our concern here is with the metaphysical implications of Genesis, not how literally or historically to interpret its narratives of origins." Inside the context, this reader understands the point the author attempts to make. However, there are metaphysical implications to Genesis if creation is not literal and historical. Olson could have taken a strong stand on this foundational core of the faith. Instead, he dances around the issue. This was my only disappointment with his book.

Finally, "this book is a call to Christians to embrace the biblical narrative as primary in developing beliefs about reality" (203). There are many worldviews that wiggle their way into a church's teaching and doctrine. Matthew 7:15 reminds believers to "beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves." This reader found many places in Olson's book that teach to guard one's faith against the wolves that come after believers in the form of philosophy and cultural norms. Olson offers wisdom for church leaders who wish to teach and warn their flocks away from outside philosophies regarding life, worldview, and reality.

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A Peculiar Glory: How the Christian Scriptures Reveal Their Complete Truthfulness. By John Piper. Wheaton: Crossway, 2016. 302 pp. $24.99.

In *A Peculiar Glory*, John Piper seeks to answer the question of the truthfulness of the Bible. He asks, "Is the Bible completely true? All of it. Is it so trustworthy in all it teaches that it can function as the test of all other claims to truth?" (11). Another

question to which he returns throughout his work comes from the Westminster Larger Catechism. Question four asks, "How doth it appear that the Scriptures are the word of God, by … *the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God*." Before launching into his personal story of seeing the glory of God in Scripture, Piper states his argument succinctly, "My argument is that the glory of God in and through the Scriptures is a real, objective, self-authenticating reality" (15).

Piper addresses the issue of whether an individual with limited access to scholarship can know with a strong degree of certainty that the Bible truly is the word of God. In part one, he recounts his personal story of being captivated by the glory that emanates from the Scriptures. Subsequently, he develops his argument—that the glory of God in and through the Scriptures is a real, objective, and self-authenticating reality—in four parts. Each part responds to the following questions: What books and words make up the Christian Scriptures? (Part 2); What do the Christian Scriptures claim for themselves? (Part 3); How can we know the Christian Scriptures are true? (Part 4); and How are the Christian Scriptures confirmed by the peculiar glory of God? (Part 5).

As always, Piper's work is saturated in Scripture. Each argument he employs is well-reasoned and undergirded by the Word of God. His logic is tight and his conclusions are founded. His use of Scripture is well rounded, taking portions from forty-seven of the Bible's sixty-six books. His Scripture index is eight pages long in a two-column format. All of this demonstrates that Piper's work is not subjective. It is derived from and anchored to the biblical text. This emphasis is essential to complete a work on how the Scriptures reveal their complete truthfulness.

Another strength of Piper's work is his illustrations. His experience teaching in the academy and ministering in the church is evident. He begins by offering his personal story (chapter 1). This story is subjective in nature, but it is nonetheless compelling. He also includes an entire chapter that details four analogies (chapter 9). Here he is trying to describe what it is like to experience the miracle of seeing the glory of God in the

Scriptures. This was a welcomed chapter of illustration in a work that mainly consists of propositional arguments.

Piper's aim in writing is perhaps the greatest strength of his work. His motivation for writing is as follows:

> Ordinary people, with little chance of following complex and obscure textual and historical arguments, may discern whether the Christian Scriptures are the word of God. We may rejoice that God always raises up scholarly Christians to interact with scholarly opponents of Christian faith. But it is wrong to think that all believers need to follow those debates in order to have a justified faith in Scripture. (79–80)

For this purpose, Piper should be applauded. It is easy to get lost in academia when one has higher-level training and experience. But Piper has always had the church in view for his ministry and writing. His love and concern for all men to know and love God bleeds through the pages of *A Peculiar Glory*.

Pastors, laymen, students, and scholars alike will benefit from the fresh perspective Piper offers on the truthfulness, reliability, and authority of God's word.

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Just Immigration: American Policy in Christian Perspective. By Mark R. Amstutz. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. 272 pp. $25.00.

There are few issues as complex and controversial as immigration in the United States. The main point or question about immigration is that the system is broken and in need of repair. In *Just Immigration: American Policty in Christian Perspective*, Mark Amstutz offers an overview and assessment of the current immigration policy, and stresses that an approach is needed for the complex immigration debate, an approach that is

solidly grounded in Christian political thought. The author comes well prepared for this book, as he is a professor of political science at Wheaton College and has authored several books on policy and international ethics.

This book is a plea to the many American churches and Christian organizations for an approach to more comprehensive immigration reform, including the legalization of migrants living in the United States without official authorization.

After analyzing key laws and institutions in the United States immigration system, the author examines how the Roman Catholic Church, evangelical churches, and many mainline Protestant churches have used Scripture to address social and political issues, including immigration. He analyzes the ways in which many Christians have approached immigration reform and offers suggestions on how Christian groups can provide a more credible political engagement with this much needed policy issue.

To lay the foundation for the research into the questions and the main core of the framework, the credible solution must involve four questions that became the basis for the research and writing of this book. This book is the result of Amstutz's research and investigation. It involved not only researching the various immigration laws, but also field trips to see actual border enforcement and numerous interviews of pastors, lawyers of immigration law, leaders of various religious organizations, church leaders, government officials, and policy experts.

The Bureau of Immigration was established in 1891 with the passing of the first Immigration Act. The author maintains that, for the first 100 years, immigration was largely unrestricted. Amstutz discusses how the United States has been largely reactive instead of proactive in regard to the immigration laws and policy until recent years. With the influx of immigrants, including illegal immigrants, various individuals and groups have found ways to circumvent the law. Even with the strengths of today's immigration system, the system needs a major overhaul.

For Christians, regardless of what denomination they are associated with, the main point of conviction is three fold. The first point is the concept of people, the second is the need to

welcome strangers, and the third is the inclusiveness of God's kingdom. The churches may center their position in Scripture, but differ in the application and interpretation. After evaluating the pros and cons of the actions of various denomination, the author addresses some suggestions for how Christians and/or churches can become involved in the public forum of immigration.

Overall, the author has done an outstanding job in his assessments and evaluation of the laws and has reviewed the denominational papers and papal letters, listing the pros and cons, to come to his conclusions. After reading the book and Amstutz's assessments, I agree with his conclusions. The laws and systems are effective in some areas, but certainly need updating.

This book is for anyone who is interested in taking part in the public forum on immigration. This will be a helpful resource for pastors, religious leaders, college professors, Christian teachers, missionaries, government leaders, and anyone who is working with immigrants and refugees. I recommend this book for their reading and as a resource for their libraries.

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Reclaiming Glory: Revitalizing Dying Churches. By Mark Clifton. Nashville: B&H, 2016. 176 pp. $14.99.

With 70 to 80 percent of North American churches either plateauing or declining, this timely resource is much needed. In *Reclaiming Glory,* veteran church planter and revitalizer Mark Clifton shows church leaders how to "replant" a struggling congregation, restoring it to its former glory so that the reputation of Christ is no longer dishonored in the community. Clifton properly diagnoses the main problem with dwindling congregations as a lack of proper discipleship. He insightfully describes eight characteristics of declining or dying churches and

then goes to work laying out practical and replicable steps for churches facing these difficulties. The author points church leaders to a hope-filled future for restarted churches, showing how the work of Christ can continue in the facility that belonged to him all along. He recommends four viable options that church leaders can prayerfully consider: (1) give the building to a church plant, (2) share the facility with a church plant, (3) merge with a church plant, or (4) replant the church from within.

To help pastors or replanters see fruitful corporate renewal, Clifton offers six replanting "imperatives" which should be embraced. Successful revitalizers must: (1) pray without ceasing, (2) unconditionally love the church's remaining members, (3) carefully exegete the community, (4) wisely simplify their strategy, (5) intentionally focus on reaching/discipling young men, and (6) start making disciples who make disciples. The latter, he rightly contends, is the true metric of a church's success. The author then illustrates these proven revitalization "best practices" with five case studies of Baptist churches that have been transformed. In so doing, Clifton provides examples that both instruct and inspire.

To help men called to vocational ministry discern whether God has "wired" them to be a replanter, Clifton concludes the book with an insightful discussion of eight essential characteristics of fruitful replanters. He points out, "Replanting requires gifts and skills that are both a mixture of church planting and pastoring, at times, completely unique as well" (118). He further observes, "Replanters have to be so secure in who they are in Christ that their worth and value as a leader comes not from the results they see week-to-week but from what Christ *has* done for them and *is* accomplishing for them every day" (138; emphasis original).

For those who love the local church and are concerned about the urgent need to see churches renewed, revitalized, and reclaimed for God's glory, this book is essential reading. I am personally convinced that replanting is one of the more strategic and cost effective ways to push back the darkness in communities and to save associations of churches from possible extinction. I agree with Clifton that the solution is not found in proliferating more megachurches but in planting many more

normative-sized, vibrant, healthy neighborhood churches that are refocused on Great Commission outreach and discipling.

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At Home in Exile: Finding Jesus among My Ancestors and Refugee Neighbors. By Russell Jeung. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016. 224 pp. $17.99.

I approached Russell Jeung's book, *At Home in Exile: Finding Jesus among My Ancestors and Refugee Neighbors*, with a level of personal interest. Jeung, as a self-described fifth generation Chinese American, had some similar experiences to my own. I was born to a Filipina mother and raised exclusively here in a US middle class setting. Like me, Jeung grew up speaking only English and had minimal exposure to his Asian heritage, ancestral language, and so on. And I, like Jeung, have known the joy of ministry to people whose ethnic heritage and formative experiences sharply contrast with my own.

At Home in Exile is described by the author as a book of "lived theology" (17). The book is largely autobiographical as Jeung intertwines the details of his adult life and the exploration and investment of his ancestral legacy with Scriptural anecdotes to justify his spiritual rationale. After exploring his ancestral home teaching ESL courses in Hong Kong following college, the author made an intentional move to the Oak Park ghettos of Oakland, California, to live among lower class ethnic minorities. Much of the book consists of stories relating Jeung's experiences with his neighbors and in the ministries and congregations he helped establish in Oak Park. Readers will find his intentional engagement and investment in living with the people he desires to reach to be admirable and instructive.

The difficulty I found in reading his work is that Jeung's attention and efforts seem more directed toward social reform than they do to salvation-centered ministry. One cannot help but

be drawn in by the heart-wrenching accounts of Jeung's neighbors and the misery they experience because of enslaving sinful choices they find themselves trapped in. However, the solutions offered often seem to target civic and societal remedies and expressions of social compassion as much or more than the message of spiritual conversion, redemption, and justification that Jesus commissioned his church to proclaim. Concern with the condition of the human soul seems less prominent in Jeung's accounts than the investment made in people's physical conditions. The author also seems to dismiss forms explicitly prescribed in the NT for Christian worship as culturally relative. A description of the substitution of Scriptural elements used in communion for more familiar foods to a particular ethnic tradition (195-96) is one such example.

Communicating Christ clearly to the various cultural contexts believers encounter continues to present challenges to those proclaiming the transformative gospel. Jeung's willingness to invest himself in making Jesus known is an example more believers need to be willing to duplicate. However, in the process of engaging the communities in which we serve, we must also be careful to understand what must be preserved in the proclamation. The life-changing good news must be proclaimed to the nations, but believers cannot forget that Jesus is calling out to himself from various human divisions and categories, one holy nation.

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The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience. By Maarten Jeremy Pierre. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016. 255 pp. $19.97.

Maarten Jeremy Pierre's book, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience*, is about the spiritual human heart, Scripture's most comprehensive

designation for man's immaterial aspect. Pierre divides his book into three main sections: Section 1 (chapters 1–5) seeks to establish *how* the human heart responds dynamically; Section 2 (chapters 6–9) explains *what* the heart responds to; and Section 3 (chapters 10–13) is devoted to *counseling* the human heart. Except for Endnotes, there is no other "back-matter."

Pierre states his comprehensive thesis in at least two different ways. First, he states, "These pages are dedicated to showing how God designed people with dynamic hearts to experience the world fully only when connected to Christ" (2). Later, he says, "This book explores a faith-centered understanding of people accompanied by a Word-centered methodology for helping people" (3). He also provides a very helpful thesis statement for each chapter.

The foundation of the book is Section 1. Pierre devotes significantly more space to it (41%) than to the other two sections (32% and 27%, respectively). It is in Section 1 that he argues for his notion of the "dynamic" heart. This was the subject of Pierre's 2010 dissertation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, yet Pierre has done an excellent job at presenting the material in an accessible and not overly technical manner. Biblical counselors especially—who are Pierre's main audience—will find good, practical help here. By the end of Section 1, the reader will understand that the heart perpetually engages in a threefold interaction of cognition (beliefs and interpretations), affection (desires and feelings), and volition (commitments and choices). Each subsequent chapter addresses this threefold interplay. On this basis then, Pierre insightfully demonstrates how sin has corrupted each of these three expressions of the heart (chapter 3), how Christ came to redeem the whole person, which includes these same three expressions (chapter 4), and how a person's external conditions influence the dynamic heart (chapter 5).

In Section 2, Pierre delves into various aspects of the human context. Chapter 6 addresses "God and Worship," where he states forthrightly that the purpose of all human experience is to imitate God. This, he argues, is not limited to mere behavior, but to the whole person (cognition, affections, volition). This rather naturally leads into a discussion of identity, and what Pierre calls

"constructed identity" (chapter 7: "Self and Identity") and how that is formed by external factors. To think rightly about this, however, the individual must be shaped by what God says about a person's identity. Chapters 8 ("Others and Influence") and 9 ("Circumstances and Meaning") tease out these concepts in the two domains of interpersonal and circumstantial influences.

Finally, in Section 3, Pierre offers biblical counselors pragmatic help in applying all of the foregoing material. In chapter 10, he offers practical questions for how a counselor can "read a counselee's heart." Pierre's terminology here could open him up to the criticism of being mystical. But the context clearly refers to the counselor's ability to listen well so as to discern the threefold interplay of the counselee's heart. In chapter 11, he offers practical questions that help counselors gain a biblical understanding of how their counselees respond to various influences. Chapters 13 and 14 are essentially of one essence with two foci. Both chapters underscore the centrality of Christ—and faith in him—as the means of true heart renewal. In the first focus (chapter 13), Pierre provides questions that help the counselees examine their own heart motives—why they do what they do. In the second focus (chapter 14), he provides questions that help individuals think relationally—who they are serving and loving.

As a whole, Pierre's book is a helpful resource for the body of Christ. This is particularly so for the biblical counselor. Although the final section (Section 3) is what biblical counselors will likely refer to again and again for practical help, the clarity gained by Sections 1 and 2 should not be passed over lightly. Although, there is much to commend Pierre's book as a worthy investment, I offer a few constructive criticisms below.

At the more surface and mechanical level, there are several typographical and grammatical errors scattered throughout the book (see, for example, pages 89, 111, 114, 120, 122, 125, 139, 172, 174, 176, 207, 223—and no doubt I missed some along the way). Second, some headings warrant reconsideration. For instance, Pierre's title for Section 1 is *The Beauty of Human Experience*. That is certainly appropriate for the way God originally created man in his full personhood, and as such, stands as a fine title for chapters 1 and 2. Yet this section also

encompasses a chapter on the corruption of the heart (chapter 3) and its aberrant responses to a fallen world (chapter 5), which is inconsistent with the notion of beauty. However, these are lesser problems that do not detract from the essential argument of the book.

There are, however, two areas of criticism of Pierre's book that are more substantive in nature. Both areas involve improper use of terminology or inadequate biblical distinctions of the human condition. In Chapter 4, Pierre discusses depression. Throughout this section, he makes no real distinction between *sadness* and *depression*. In earlier editions of the American Psychiatric Association's (APA's) primary diagnostic manual, APA distinguished these two conditions, such that they apply the term *depression* only to severe cases as a deficient human condition. In later editions, however, the APA broadened the diagnosis and labeled virtually all presentations of sadness as depression, yet categorizing them under three gradations: *mild*, *moderate*, or *severe*. What the APA calls *mild* depression seems to best fit what the Bible calls *sadness* or *grief*. Moreover, what the APA calls *moderate* or *severe* depression seems to best fit what the Bible essentially describes as *worldly* or *hopeless grief*. There are some terms that secular clinical labeling shares with biblical counselors (e.g., anger management), terms that are generally not problematic so long as biblical distinctions are not compromised. The subsuming of *sadness* under the clinical label *depression*, however, is arguably a case where such a compromise has occurred.

The second matter of inadequate labeling is the author's endorsement of the term "self-love" (139). Pierre seems to agree that so long as one defines self-love as finding happiness in God and his glory, then somehow this sanctifies its use as a profitable term. The problem with this notion is that the NT employs terminology which runs counter to the designation "self-love," a term that is rife in secular psychology. Instead, Scripture uses terms such as *self-denial*, *self-hatred*, *taking up one's cross*, *killing the flesh*, etc. Biblical counselors make much out of employing proper biblical terminology and labeling. Perhaps this usage is simply an oversight. If so, it is a significant one, since

terms and labels function as interpretive lenses through which people approach a given issue.

None of the criticisms above invalidate Pierre's major premise, and thus, these drawbacks do not reduce the book's overall usefulness. All in all, Pierre's book is one that is filled with much insight and is profitable in many ways even beyond biblical counseling. I consider it a resource that should be on the shelf of every pastor and biblical counselor.

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A Little Book for New Bible Scholars. By E. Randolf Richards and Joseph R. Dodson. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2017. 126 pp. $9.00.

In *A Little Book for New Bible Scholars*, Randolph Richards and Joseph Dodson declare that "biblical studies is a noble calling." The title is intentionally oxymoronic, as Bible *scholars* are never *new*. The authors clearly state that this is not a book written for seasoned scholars but designed to encourage beginners who desire to grow in the knowledge of the Word of God.

Regarding the purpose of the book, the authors quote Preston Sprinkle:

> Early in my Christian journey, I recognized that the Bible is the inspired word of God—the very words of our Creator. At the same time I was in awe of the majesty of God splashed all over creation. *God spoke all of this into existence*. I put two and two together and thought, *If the God who spoke this universe into existence also spoke the Scriptures into existence, then I want to give my life to studying these words.* Pursuing biblical studies has been both an adventure and a dream. Engaging God's living word—and letting him engage me—has been the most life giving vocation I could ever imagine. (14; emphasis original)

Similar to a gripping novel, this book is a page-turner with exposure to new information developing a complex plot. Illustrations and abundant quotations paint the landscape with the authors' purpose. Warnings much like highway signs, such as "bridge out," "sharp turn," or "steep grade," make this book priceless to keep students safely on the road of biblical interpretation. Warnings are necessary in biblical study. Interpretive mistakes of the novice can often lead to confusion and spiritual disillusionment. Random biblical selections do not create a solid systematic theology nor a confident spiritual life.

This book is not an expanded method of hermeneutics but a primer of life-long principles and solid advice from multiple biblical scholars. The concepts in each chapter may not be surprising, but they are always practical. The authors' approach is more like a grocery list rather than a systematic development of the subject. Thus the "page turner" style forced me to the next chapter. I was disappointed with myself at the end of the book when I realized the purpose of the book is to challenge more than to instruct and I was challenged!

However, challenge toward advanced "scholarly" study requires empathetic moderation. As I read each chapter, I had a strong feeling that I have fallen short of the authors' rigorous expectations. Not every student of the Word is competent in all of the vast fields of biblical archeology, history of doctrine, textual criticism, Greek and Hebrew, etc. I often tell my students, "I may not be the sharpest knife on the table but I am on the table." This said, preachers and teachers should never cease mining the richness of God's word; sharpening their tools regularly as they continue the work of biblical interpretation.

In regard to the format, this book contains descriptive chapter titles and abundant quotations, which by themselves are worth the price of the book. Here are a few of my favorites.

Chapter 2—More Stuff, Less Fluff: "Be an owl, not a peacock" (27).

Chapter 4—Don't Play Marbles With Diamonds: "If you plan to be mediocre, go into some other field. Go into medicine, for instance. The worst thing a surgeon can do is kill someone. In ministry, you are messing with people's souls" (46).

Conclusion—"Work to become a Bible Scholar in order that you may communicate the Bible in ways that change people's lives. Heaven will be full of people, not publications" (104).

This book is a gem and stands to be an appropriate gift for students entering Bible college or seminary. I would make it required reading for every ministerial student.

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Sensitive Preaching to the Sexually Hurting. By Sam Serio. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2016. 202 pp. $16.99.

As the title suggests, *Sensitive Preaching to the Sexually Hurting* is written primarily for pastors and teachers to assist them in becoming more attuned to the myriad of sexually hurting people in their congregations. As Serio attests, "Rarely is there any family without sexual sadness and skeletons hidden in their closets" (12). Having served in several churches as a pastor and now as a Christian counselor, Serio believes that when it comes to the issue of sex itself "most ministry leaders … are either negligent or negative" (13). Therefore, he endeavors to help such leaders to "communicate both warmth and wisdom when it comes to any and every topic relating to sexuality" (17).

A question he asks more than once that prompted some genuine self–reflection was "Do I publicly communicate about sex in such a way that people would want to come to me for additional counseling afterward?" (16, 52). In this regard, he rightly expresses his conviction that the church should be the best—not the worst place—to go for sexual healing (20).

Serio follows a consistent format in most of the book in which he first provides a brief but generally helpful overview of a sexuality issue (e.g., casual sex, abortion, sexual assault, pornography, etc.). He follows this overview with several sample texts of Scripture for which he offers suggested wording as to how one might sensitively address this issue in a sermon or in a

counseling session. This is one of the most valuable features of this book, though in several places I had difficulty imagining myself preaching his suggested sermon samples. For example, "I know women who have a tough time in having normal sexual relations with their husbands because of what their fathers had done to them" (119). While not denying the truth of the statement itself, how is saying this publicly going to encourage such women to come to me as pastor? And how will such women feel if they had already come to me? In Serio's defense, he states his suggested wording also be taken under the guise of "counseling tips." However, the reader would be better served if Serio had separated suggested sermonizing from suggested counseling.

Not surprisingly, Serio advocates "a softer and gentler tone of voice" when ministering to persons with sexual wounds (26, 53). In addition, he advises holding a separate children's service (29), carefully planning and writing out sections of sermons that deal with sexually sensitive topics (44), using a modern translation (45), employing "brevity and quality" (46), using "euphemisms and alternative language" (49), and seeking to bring comfort rather than just conviction (53).

I especially appreciate his rigorous biblical approach: "the deepest healing for sexual hurt or habits comes from God's Word, not from a man's advice in an office or a therapist" (15). In this regard, he affirms traditional evangelical views on marriage and sexuality, and his discussion of a "sexless marriage" was the best chapter of the book in my view.

However, at times, Serio seems to overstate his case. For example, he estimates that 60–80% of all church-going adults are "emotionally affected by sexual pain or sin that has been done by them or to them" (14). Depending upon what sins he includes in this estimate (e.g., is fantasizing included?), this estimate seems inflated. He is also sometimes given to provocative blanket statements such as "America does not love children any longer" (196), and "a five minute weekly children's sermon is no match for the hundreds of hours of sexual content they see each week" (188). Finally, some of his counsel seems quite unrealistic such as "every church leader and Christ-follower needs to be a rape-crisis counselor" (91) and "today's singles need a ton of weekend

events to take their mind off weekend temptations" (188). Who is going to plan and run those "tons of events"?

But much of his counsel is spot on, such as the church needs "to be much more careful and biblical in our topics of submission, forgiveness, grief, headship, and especially anger" (197). He also warns the reader to "beware and prepare" for the inevitable (in his view) pushback one will experience as one seeks to implement his counsels on a regular basis (19). Finally, though perhaps also overstated, he scolds preachers for the fact that in his estimation "the only thing we hear today from the church is totally negative about sexual expression before marriage. …It's about time we hear some positive sermons about sexual expression within marriage" (39).

The most troubling parts of the book are his counsels regarding the issue of sexual molestation. On the one hand, he chides the church for failing to demonstrate "tender compassion" towards a child molester who may be in its midst (23–24), and he warns against being "repulsed by these men" whom we cannot help if we hate (107). On the other hand, he does not address the many legal and logistical challenges that come with seeking to minster well to someone so accused and convicted. Having dealt with this issue in my own church, I can attest that simply "showing love" is a frightfully simplistic and naïve approach! Also, in relation to the issue of rape, he suggests challenging rapists to repent, receive Christ as their Savior and Lord, and apologize to their victims (95–96). However, shouldn't such persons also be exhorted to turn themselves in to the police if they have not done so already? Finally, in his sample sermon excerpts, I don't recall any mention of warnings about the eternal consequences of sexual sin. Does "sensitive preaching" mean ignoring such texts?

Despite these drawbacks, this work can be used with profit by anyone engaged in either public or private ministry to those suffering from sexual wounds. I highly recommend this book.

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When Suffering is Redemptive: Stories of How Anguish and Pain Accomplish God's Mission. Edited by Larry J. Waters. Wooster, OH: Weaver Book Company, 2016. 208 pp. $15.99.

The suffering of Job is iconic. In an instant, he lost his family, his wealth, and his health (6). Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of his trial, however, lies in the fact that, even when granted an audience with the Almighty, the reason for Job's suffering is never revealed (63). Yet through the ensuing millennia, countless believers have found solace in this redemptive story. Christians have learned the value of looking to the Redeemer, as opposed to looking only for answers. And, although the story of Job's trial stands out in Scripture, Job is not the only believer in history whose faith in God was refined through the fires of suffering.

Edited by Dallas Theological Seminary professor Larry Waters, *When Suffering is Redemptive* addresses the very real plight of Christians who are forced to endure various forms of suffering including searing pain, paralysis, disability, and even death. Numbering 154 pages that span from contents to a biography of contributors, this collection of heart-rending and mending stories demonstrates how God is able to work all things together for good for those who love him (81). This book is a valuable resource for both the ministry professional who must come alongside the wounded, as well as the distressed layperson who is searching for a glimmer of light in the darkness. Along with valuable insights, *When Suffering is Redemptive* is smattered with illustrations by Deana Jones, and each chapter concludes with a series of thought-provoking questions and a list of related resources.

This work of practical theology opens with a forward from Joni Eareckson Tada, whose personal tragedies and triumphs are renowned in Christian circles. Then, mingled with the well-known suffering of biblical characters such as David, Ruth, Joseph, and of course Job, one encounters contemporary stories from people like Larry, Mark, Mary, Mark, Steve, Rick, Wayne, and Bill. From the onset, the contributors to this volume make it clear that their mission is not to provide an apologetic for natural evil (x), but rather to demonstrate the power of Romans 8:28 in the life of a suffering believer. Finally, throughout the book, the

authors reiterate and demonstrate the principle, "God's silence is not to be mistaken for His absence" (64).

The strength of *When Suffering is Redemptive* lies in its honest approach to the agonies of life. Anyone who suffers with chronic pain will immediately empathize with the plight of Larry Waters or Mark McGinniss. These two men, who have struggled through searing cluster headaches (2) and failed brain surgeries (61) respectively, describe their experiences in a manner that is almost palpable through the pages of the book. Furthermore, those who have grieved for loved ones will immediately identify with Rick Rood's devastating walk with his wife through her terminal illness (116), Mary Klentzman's account of caring for her disabled son (73), and Bill Bryan's depiction of his father's suicide (140). From these and other testimonies, the grace of God is clearly evident in the midst of suffering. In each case, the authors demonstrate how trials can bring glory to the Lord in unexpected ways, as it is "in the crucible of affliction that our faith is tested" (113).

The lone weakness of the book may lie in the lack of testimony from victims of moral evils. Survivors of violent crimes, terrorist attacks, sexual assaults, or the consequences of addiction may have difficulty relating to the work at first. However, the principles that can be gleaned from the trials of these eight contemporary "Jobs" are broadly applicable. Furthermore, their stories are engaging, and their theology is sound. The resounding theme of the book is that there is hope, help, and ultimately redemption in Jesus Christ in the midst of suffering. Therefore, *When Suffering is Redemptive* is highly recommended both for those who walk a painful path in life and for those who are called to come beside them.

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Dissertations in Progress at Baptist Bible Seminary

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