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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Spring 2022 issue of the Midwestern Journal of Theology, once again I would like to begin by expressing my sincere thanks to all who have contributed to make this happen. Special mention goes to Dr. Jason Duesing, Provost and Academic Editor, for all his invaluable assistance; to Dr. Blake Hearson for all the time and energy he invests in each issue; and to Mrs. Lynae Duarte, for all that she so patiently and efficiently does in the background.

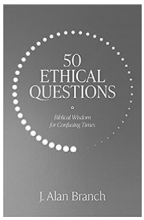
We are again blessed to publish a rich and varied assortment of articles for this issue, and I am always grateful for the many who submit articles. If you are interested in submitting an article for consideration, please submit a Word document direct to me at mmcmullen@mbts.edu. We are sorry we are not able to publish all the articles we receive.

We open this issue with the timely and challenging 2021 Faculty Address given by Alan Branch, 'A Christian Ethical Critique of Puberty-Suppressing Drugs.' This is followed by 'Faithful Flexibility,' a helpful reminder by Pete Charpentier of Grand Canyon Theological Seminary, of how in sermon preparation one can make a minor point of a text the major point of a message, without missing the main point of the text. Elmer Towns, the co-founder of Liberty University, then contributes a personal, analytical reflection on fifty years of innovative church evangelism. Our penultimate article from Midwestern's Tyler Sykora, 'It's Worse than we Think,' uses a particular incident from the Gospels to demonstrate that when it comes to the task of biblical interpretation, the better one understands the situational context of a given book, pericope, or word, the more likely one is to arrive at the correct interpretation. Our final submission, 'No Other Name,' argues that while the historical background of speeches in the book of Acts has been thoroughly considered, there has been a corresponding lack of attention given to actual preaching. In his article, Jared Bumpers seeks to bring a necessary correction by examining the theology of preaching in Acts.

Reflecting the popularity of the MJT, we again close this issue with a good number of relevant and thought-provoking book reviews, helpfully secured and edited by our book review editor, Dr. Blake Hearson.

Books in Brief

New and upcoming releases from the Midwestern Seminary community



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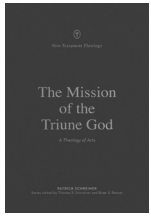
The Muslim Majority is unlike many published works on evangelism to Muslims, which argue for either apologetic or contextualized "bridge" approaches. Author and missiologist Robin Hadaway outlines a contextual approach that addresses the unique perspective of popular Islam.



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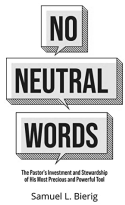

NO NEUTRAL WORDS: THE PASTOR'S INVESTMENT AND STEWARDSHIP OF HIS MOST PRECIOUS AND POWERFUL TOOL.

by Samuel L. Bierig
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DECEMBER 10, 2021

The aim of No Neutral Words is to convince you to consider your "word budget" and show you that every single word you speak is an eternal investment in your hearers for either life or death.

LOVE ME ANYWAY: HOW GOD'S PERFECT LOVE FILLS OUR DEEPEST LONGING

by Jared C. Wilson
(Baker Books)
SEPTEMBER 21, 2021

There may be no more powerful desire in the human heart than to be loved. And not just loved, but loved *anyway*. *In Love Me Anyway*, Jared C. Wilson unpacks 1 Corinthians 13 to show us what real unconditional love looks like whether you're in a romantic relationship or not.

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The Fall 2021 MBTS Faculty Address: A Christian Ethical Critique of Puberty-Suppressing Drugs

J. ALAN BRANCH,
Professor of Ethics,
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

In 1998, Dutch researchers Peggy T. Cohen-Kettenis, a physician, and Stephanie H. M. van Goozen, a psychologist, published a landmark article in *European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* documenting for the first time the use of puberty-suppressing drugs as part of the process for gender transition in a teenager. At that time, both Cohen-Kettenis and van Goozen were associated with Utrecht University's gender clinic in the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. They reported that a 16-year old natal female came to their clinic requesting sex-reassignment surgery. Beginning at age 13 and prior to coming to the university's gender clinic, this adolescent had been given a luteinizing hormone-releasing hormone agonist, aka a "puberty blocker," by a pediatric endocrinologist not associated with Utrecht University. These drugs were originally used to suppress puberty in children who experience precocious puberty – puberty which starts at a very early developmental age – in order to start puberty at a developmentally correct time. But in this case, the drugs were used in a new way to prevent an older child experiencing gender nonconformity from going through puberty.[1] The team at Utrecht gave the girl male hormones and she subsequently had both a mastectomy and oophorectomy / hysterectomy at age 18, and eventually genital gender reassignment surgery (GRS). Following the patient over several years, Cohen-Kettenis and van Goozen reported extremely favorable mental health outcomes. Furthermore, they argued that prevention of the development of natal secondary sex characteristics "may result in a lower incidence of transsexuals with

[1] Some of these drugs are also used to treat prostate cancer.

postoperative regrets" and concluded that for some children experiencing gender incongruity, puberty suppression "may be a physical and psychological beneficial way to intervene."[2]

The use of puberty-suppressing drugs for gender nonconforming children and adolescents quickly became a preferred treatment option in Holland. In 2006, the Amsterdam Gender Clinic of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam Medical Center published what is now known as the "Dutch Protocol" for pubertal suppression. These groundbreaking guidelines said children could be given puberty-suppressing drugs if they were older than 12 years of age and had reached Tanner Stage 2 or 3 in pubertal development. The reasoning behind these guidelines was that suppressing puberty could be considered "buying time to allow for an open exploration of [sex reassignment] wish."[3]

How should Christians think about puberty suppression for the purpose of exploring a transgender identity? The process is rapidly becoming a preferred treatment at pediatric gender clinics around the world. But what Biblical, theological, or ethical principles are relevant in examining puberty suppression? Is the process an ethically acceptable course of action? This paper will argue that while using puberty-suppressing drugs for treatment of precocious puberty is morally acceptable, the practice of giving children and adolescents puberty-suppressing drugs for the purpose of encouraging them to explore a transgender identity is incompatible with Christian ethics. To prove this thesis, the paper will begin with a brief summary of the use of Gonadotrophin-releasing Hormone Analogs (GnRHa) for the treatment of precocious puberty.[4] Next, arguments in favor of using GnRHa for

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[2] Peggy T. Cohen-Kettenis and Stephanie H. M. van Goozen, "Pubertal Delay As An Aid in Diagnosis and Treatment of a Transsexual Adolescent," *European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 7.4 (June 1998):248.

[3] Henriette A. Delemarre-van de Waal and Peggy T. Cohen-Kettenis, "Clinical Management of Gender Identity Disorder in Adolescents: A Protocol on Psychological and Paediatric Endocrinology," *European Journal of Endocrinology* 155 (2006): S132.

[4] For ministers and seminary students who may read this paper, the difference between the terms *analog* and *agonist* can be a bit confusing, and sometimes one will read about GnRH *analogs* and at other times GnRH *agonists*. The puberty-suppressing drugs in question are GnRH *analogs*. The word analog means the drugs are similar to naturally occurring hormones in the human body. These

purposes of intentionally suppressing puberty in order to explore a transgender identity will be discussed. Finally, a Christian ethical response will be formulated using the categories of Christian love and the goodness of the gift of gender along with critical comments regarding nonmaleficence and autonomy.

GnRHa for the Treatment of Precocious Puberty

Precocious puberty (PP) is a condition in which puberty begins pathologically early, resulting in abnormally early development of secondary sexual characteristics and premature skeletal maturation.[5] Puberty itself is not a single event, but a complex metamorphosis, a cascade of changes that result in development of secondary sex characteristics, adult appearance, adult physiology, maturation of identity, and reproductive function.[6] Puberty varies according to several basic dimensions, including when it happens, and how quickly it happens.[7] In this light, PP can be defined as the development of pubertal changes at an age younger than the accepted lower limits for onset of puberty; usually defined as before age 8 years in girls and 9 years in boys.[8]

GnRH analogs function as an *agonist,* meaning the puberty-suppressing drugs stimulate a particular action. An agonist binds to a receptor and produces an effect within a cell. So, puberty-suppressing drugs are GnRH *analogs* that have an *agonist* function.

[5] P. Michael Conn and William F. Crowley, "Gonadotrophin-Releasing Hormone and Its Analogs," *The Annual Review of Medicine* 45 (1994): 399.

[6] Chris Hayward, "Methodological Concerns in Puberty-Related Research," *Gender Differences at Puberty,* Chris Hayward, ed., Cambridge Studies on Child and Adolescent Health (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1; Risa M. Wolf and Dominque Long, "Pubertal Development," *Pediatrics in Review* 37.7 (July 2016): 292.

[7] Tanya A. Bergevin, William M. Bukowski, and Leigh Karavasilis, "Childhood Sexual Abuse and Pubertal Timing: Implications for Long-Term Psychosocial Adjustment," *Gender Differences at Puberty,* Christ Hayward, ed., Cambridge Studies on Child and Adolescent Health (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 187.

[8] Merih Berberoğlu, "Precocious Puberty and Normal Variant Puberty: Definition, Etiology, Diagnosis, and Current Management," *Journal of Clinical Research in Pediatric Endocrinology* 1.4 (2009): 164. There is some debate over the lower limits of normal in girls. The Pediatric Endocrine Society accepted that the appearance of secondary sex characteristics before age 7 in Caucasian girls

PP occurs in about 1 in 5,000 children and exists in girls more than boys by a ratio of 10:1.[9] The two primary variants of PP are Central Precocious Puberty (CPP) and Peripheral Precocious Puberty (PPP). CPP occurs because of an abnormality in either the pituitary gland or the hypothalamus resulting in an early maturation of the Hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal (HPG) axis and is more common in girls. PPP occurs when the ovaries or testes begin working on their own and producing sex hormones at an unusually early age. One of the most common causes of PPP in girls is ovarian follicular cysts.[10]

Two negative outcomes often associated with PP are reduced final height and psychological behavioral difficulties. PP causes young children to experience a rapid increase in growth velocity which leads to a tall stature in childhood, with the final paradox of a tall child growing up to become a short adult because of premature epiphyseal fusion.[11] Girls and boys who begin puberty long before their peers may be extremely self-conscious about the secondary sex changes occurring in their bodies. This may affect self-esteem and possibly increase the risk of depression or substance abuse.[12]

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and age 6 in African-American girls constitutes precocious sexual development. Dennis M. Styne, "Puberty," in *Pubertal Suppression in Transgender Youth,* Courtney Finlayson, ed. (St. Louis: Elsevier, 2019), 22.

[9] Sandra K. Cesario and Lisa A. Hughes, "Precocious Puberty: A Comprehensive Review of Literature," *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing* 36.3 (2007): 264.

[10] Lawrence Silverman and Paul Kaplowitz, "Precocious Puberty: A Guide for Parents and Patients," Pediatric
Endocrine Society, accessed May 14, 2019,
https://www.pedsendo.org/assets/patients_families/Educational_Materials/PrecociousPuberty.pdf; Berberoğlu, "Precocious Puberty and Normal Variant Puberty: Definition, Etiology, Diagnosis, and Current Management,"165 – 166.

[11] Styne, "Puberty," 22.

[12] Mayo Clinic, "Precocious Puberty," April 5, 2019, accessed May 14, 2019, https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/precocious-puberty/symptoms-causes/syc-20351811. The data on behavioral difficulties associated with PP is not as clear as data regarding terminal height. Research suggests that an earlier rate of pubertal maturation in girls correlates with a number of detrimental outcomes compared with on-time or later maturation. Jane Mendle, Eric Turkheimer, and Robert E. Emery, "Detrimental Psychological Outcomes Associated with Early Pubertal Timing in Adolescent Girls,"

To understand how puberty-suppressing drugs are used to treat PP it is helpful to summarize how puberty itself begins. Puberty is triggered when the hypothalamus begins to increase its pulsatile secretion of gonadotrophin-releasing hormone (GnRH), which stimulates production of follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) and Luteinizing Hormone (LH) in the pituitary gland. LH then stimulates the ovaries to secrete female sex hormones (estradiol) and the testes to secrete male sex hormones (testosterone). Estrogen is then involved in the growth and development of female sexual characteristics while testosterone is responsible for the growth and development of male sexual characteristics. At this time, FSH also stimulates gametogenesis and reproductive capability.

GnRHa – puberty-suppressing drugs, puberty blockers – have been extensively used in clinical medicine since they were identified and synthesized in 1971. GnRH is released naturally by the hypothalamus in pulsatile fashion during puberty, resulting in physiologic stimulation of sex hormone production.[13] Therapeutically, GnRHa can be given in pulsatile fashion to treat conditions of GnRH deficiency, or in continuous fashion (long-acting or depot formulations) which actually suppresses the production of sex hormones (estrogen/testosterone) as desired for treating precocious puberty. The vast majority of children treated for PP are girls; boys represent only about ten percent of the children using puberty blockers for PP, usually because the boys have tumors or other conditions triggering PP.[14]

GnRHa initially affect the HPG axis by increasing LH and FSH production; but then through GnRH receptor desensitization and

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Developmental Review 27.2 (June 2007): 151 – 171. Also, it should be noted that some studies assert an IQ or school achievement advantage in children (primarily girls) with a clinical diagnosis of PP, while another study with a small sample size showed a decrease in IQ scores during treatment with GnRHa. See Mari S. Golub, et al, "Public Health Implications of Altered Puberty Timing," *Pediatrics* 121, Supplement 3 (February 2008): S220 – S221.

[13] For puberty to proceed, GnRH must be released in pulses at intervals of 90 to 120 minutes.

[14] Christian Jewett, "Women Fear Drug They Used To Halt Puberty Led to Health Problems," Kaiser Health News, February 2, 2017, https://khn.org/news/women-fear-drug-they-used-to-halt-puberty-led-to-health-problems/.

downregulation,[15] the LH and FSH production drops, resulting in severe depression of estrogen and testosterone levels. In this way, GnRHa can stop the normal progression of puberty in children.[16] The first reported use of GnRHa for treatment of precocious puberty was in 1981 and the drugs quickly became the standard of care for CPP, with the FDA approving three different GnRHa by 1993 for these purposes. Current methods of delivery include intranasal, three monthly intramuscular injections, six monthly intramuscular injections, and yearly subcutaneous implants.[17] The most well-known GnRHa is sold under the brand name Lupron, which has multiple clinical applications in addition to the suppression of puberty. These drugs have also been used to treat prostate cancer and endometriosis.

Using puberty-suppressing drugs in cases of PP seems permissible from the perspective of Christian ethics. First, in cases of PP, puberty-suppressing drugs are only used to postpone the onset of puberty until a more developmentally correct time. The purpose is to achieve a socially normative timing of puberty consistent with a child's sex as opposed to an abnormally early one, a result which is not inconsistent with a Biblical view of gender. Second, when GnRHa are used for PP, the intention is to maximize the physical health of the child based on objective criteria. PP affects a child's terminal height in adulthood and is associated with a much shorter final stature. The goal is a healthier body and Christian ethics affirms the goodness of the body and the need to maximize physical health. Third, the consensus is that an abnormally early puberty can present children with challenging emotional stressors. Delaying puberty is associated with better mental health outcomes for these children. It is best if puberty occurs at a developmentally correct age so children can process the changes in their bodies and the development of sexual awareness at a time when they can develop appropriate moral

[15] Downregulation refers to a decrease in the number of receptors on the surface of target cells, making the cells less sensitive to a hormone or another agent.

[16] *See* P. Michael Conn and William F. Crowley, "Gonadotrophin-Releasing Hormone and Its Analogs," *Annual Review of Medicine* 45 (February 1994): 391 – 405.

[17] Anisha Gohl and Erica A. Eugster, "GnRH Analogs (Mechanism, Past Studies, Drug Options, Use in Precocious Puberty, Use in Gender-Nonconforming Youth)," *Pubertal Suppression in Transgender Youth,* Courtney Finlayson, ed. (St. Louis, Elsevier, 2019), 25.

boundaries and a healthy appreciation of their own sexual awareness under holy constraints.[18]

To say that the use of puberty-blockers for precocious puberty is morally permissible does not mean that such use is without controversy. And to be clear, when the FDA determines that a particular drug is *safe,* this does not mean the drug has no side-effects. Some women who were given Lupron to treat PP claim the drug has several negative side-effects, such as brittle bones and faulty joints. The drug has also been used in off label[19] applications in fertility clinics to prepare women for in-vitro fertilization and in some cases it has been used to increase the terminal height in children.[20] At the same time, 2018 study of women who used GnRHa for adolescent endometriosis found that most participants felt the drug was effective, but especially when augmented with other drugs to counter-act side effects.[21]

While the use of GnRHa for PP seems morally permissible, such a treatment does not seem to be morally obligatory. To say an action is morally permissible means one may do it or refrain from it without incurring any moral guilt because the action breaks no rule. On the other

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[18] In one 2011 study, offspring of teenage mothers who reached puberty earlier than their peers were at greater risk of earlier sexual debut. Natacha M. De Genna, Cynthia Larkby, and Marie D. Cornelius, "Pubertal Timing and Early Sexual Intercourse in the Offspring of Teenage Mothers," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 40.10 (October 2011): 1315 – 1328.

[19] The term *off label* means a medication is prescribed for reasons which have not been approved by the FDA. Off label use of drugs is common, but is seems to be more common in areas of medicine in which the patient population is less likely to be included in clinical trials (e.g., pediatric, pregnant, or psychiatric patients). Christopher M. Wittich, Christopher M. Burkle, and William L. Lanier, "Ten Common Questions (and Their Answers) About Off Label Drug use," *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* 87.10 (October 2012); 982.

[20] For example, see Christian Jewett, "Women Fear Drug They Used To Halt Puberty Led to Health Problems," Kaiser Health News, February 2, 2017, https://khn.org/news/women-fear-drug-they-used-to-halt-puberty-led-to-health-problems/. The manufacturer of L

[21] *See* Jenny Sadler Gallagher, Stacey A. Missmer, Mark D. Hornstein, Marc R. Laufer, Catherine M. Gordon and Amy D. DiVasta, "Long-Term Effects of Gonadotropin-Releasing Hormone Agonists and Add-Back In Adolescent Endometriosis," *Journal of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology* 31.5 (August 2018): 376 – 381.

hand, morally obligatory acts are acts that are either mandated or prohibited.[22] Certainly, there are cases where children have successfully navigated precocious puberty without the use of GnRHa, thus it seems difficult to say using the drugs is mandatory.

Puberty-Suppressing Drugs as a Component of Gender Transition

Beginning in 1998 with the first published report of using puberty-suppressing drugs in a transgender teenager, GnRHa have rapidly become a preferred treatment option for children experiencing gender nonconformity or for teenagers who have adopted a transgender identity. At least four relevant questions seem to emerge for clinicians who use GnRHa in gender nonconforming youth:

1. Why should puberty be suppressed in gender nonconforming youth?
2. When should GnRHa treatment start?
3. When should opposite-sex hormones be administered?
4. When should GnRHa treatments be stopped?[23]

Four protocols currently give directions for answering these questions: The Dutch Protocol, The World Professional Association for Transgender Health's Standard of Care, The Center for Excellence in Transgender Health at the University of California, San Francisco's Primary Care Guidelines, and the Endocrine Society Clinical Practice Guidelines. It should be noted that the FDA has not approved the use of GnRHa for gender dysphoria, so their use in the USA for these purposes is considered "off label."

The first and most obvious question is, "Why should puberty be suppressed in gender-nonconforming youth?" Those in favor of puberty suppression argue giving GnRHa to children with different levels of gender dysphoria is a beneficent act. The ethical principle of beneficence requires clinicians to contribute to the welfare of their patients; as moral

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[22] John Feinberg and Paul Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 24.

[23] This list is modified from Hadrian Myles Kinnear and Daniel Evan Shumer, "Duration of Pubertal Suppression and Initiation of Gender-Affirming Hormone Treatment in Youth," *Pubertal Suppression in Transgender Youth,* Courtney Finlayson, ed. (St. Louis, Elsevier, 2019), 75.

agents, clinicians must take positive steps to help their patients.[24] Advocates of puberty suppression believe they are contributing to the welfare of their patients. How so? Because if a child experiences gender nonconformity, developing the secondary sex characteristics of his or her natal sex can be very unwanted and stressful. As such, three positive outcomes are often mentioned to justify puberty suppression:

1. Transgender youth have many mental health difficulties and higher suicide rates. For example, one study from 2018 noted that both MtF and FtM transgender adolescents experienced particularly pronounced increased prevalence in psychoses and suicidal ideation when compared to non-transgender adolescents.[25] If transgender adolescents were allowed to transition earlier, then there would be a decrease in negative mental health outcomes and lower rates of suicidal ideation or suicide attempts.
2. GnRHa allow adolescents more time to explore their gender nonconformity and other developmental issues.
3. GnRHa facilitate an easier gender transition by preventing the development of natal sex characteristics that are difficult or impossible to reverse if adolescents continue to pursue sex reassignment.[26]

In each case, puberty-suppression is connected with quality of life concerns related to good mental health.

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[24] Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics,* 7th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 202.

[25] Tracy A. Becerra-Culqui, et al, "Mental Health of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Youth Compared With Their Peers," *Pediatrics* 141.5 (May 2018): 7.

[26] WPATH only mentions reasons 2 and 3 in their standards of care, but the first premise underlies their argument. World Professional Association for Transgender Health, *Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender-Nonconforming People,* 7th ed., 2012, 19, https://www.wpath.org/media/cms/Documents/SOC%20v7/Standards%20of%20Care_V7%20Full%20Book_English.pdf.

Two major premises are assumed as proven as the basis for ethical arguments in favor of puberty suppression in cases of childhood gender nonconformity. First, advocates for puberty suppression insist psychotherapy and mental health interventions alone do not help abate feelings of gender incongruence in some children and thus pharmaceutical and surgical options should be followed. Second, any psychological difficulties experienced by gender nonconforming children and adolescents result from the anxiety they feel because of other people's reaction to their incipient transgenderism or because of internalized self-loathing from cultural and religious taboos against transgenderism. But the gender incongruence itself is not caused by these comorbid psychological problems.[27]

Advocates of puberty suppression suggest preventing a gender nonconforming child's secondary sex characteristics from developing promotes better mental health outcomes by relieving children of the anticipatory burden of developing into a body that does not align with their gender identity.[28] The researchers behind the Dutch Protocol say, "These [transgender] youngsters are no longer willing to wait for many years, knowing that the alienating experience of development of the secondary sex characteristics of their biological sex by [the end of puberty] will have been completed and can only be incompletely reversed at the high price of medical interventions."[29] In other words, sexual changes like deepening of voice and development of an Adam's apple may frustrate a male who wishes to be female. Likewise, breast development may make a female who wishes to be male feel even more incongruity with her own body.

Puberty-suppression for gender nonconforming children is also seen as consistent with the ethical principle of nonmaleficence, which obligates us to abstain from causing harm to others.[30] First, puberty-

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[27] Simone Mahfouda, Julia K. Moore, Aris Siafarikas, Florian D. Zepf, and Ashleigh Lin, "Puberty Suppression in Transgender Children and Adolescents," *The Lancet: Diabetes and Endocrinology* 5 (2017): 817.

[28] Simone Mahfouda, et al, "Puberty Suppression in Transgender Children and Adolescents," 817.

[29] Peggy T. Cohen-Kettenis, Henriette A. Delemarre-van de Wall, and Louis J. G. Gooren, "The Treatment of Adolescent Transsexuals: Changing Insights," *Journal of Sexual Medicine* 5 (2008):1894.

[30] Beauchamp and Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics,* 150.

suppression is touted as an intervention which is completely reversible, meaning that if after a period of time a child decides to identify with his or her biological sex, the drugs can be stopped and puberty will progress as normal with no problems. Puberty-suppressing drugs are frequently called "fully reversible."[31] Second, advocates argue stopping the development of secondary sex characteristics actually makes transition later in life easier and ultimately requires fewer surgical interventions. If a girl never develops breasts, they won't have to be removed. If a boy never develops a normal male muscle mass, he won't need as many cosmetic surgeries to feminize his appearance when he is older. Thus, puberty-suppression is associated with less harm in the long run. Finally, a child who is given GnRHa does not need as large a dose of cross-sex hormones when transitioning, thus minimalizing both the amount and cost of pharmaceutical interventions.[32] It should be noted this is an atypical use of the principle of nonmaleficence. Usually, nonmaleficence refers to refraining from medical treatments that could be harmful. The use here assumes non-treatment to be harmful. In this light, some advocates go so far as to say refusal to give puberty-blocking drugs to a child experiencing gender dysphoria "goes against the principle of nonmaleficence and would, in fact, impose harm."[33]

Puberty-suppression is also affirmed out of respect for patient autonomy. Modern medical ethics generally asserts that a patient should be able to act freely in accordance with a self-chosen plan.[34] Autonomous decision making includes exploration of gender identity, which includes determining exactly what one's gender identity is, coming to terms with this gender identity, self-acceptance and individuation, and exploring individual–level ways to actualize this identity in the world.[35] Autonomy

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[31] World Professional Association for Transgender Health, *Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender-Nonconforming People,* 7th ed., 2012, 18.

[32] Kinnear and Shumer, "Duration of Pubertal Suppression and Initiation of Gender-Affirming Hormone Treatment in Youth," 80.

[33] Rebecca M. Harris and Joel E. Frader, "Ethical Considerations of GnRHa Treatment and Consent Process," in *Pubertal Suppression in Transgender Youth,* Courtney Finlayson, ed. (St. Louis: Elsevier, 2019), 92.

[34] Beauchamp and Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics,* 101.

[35] University of California, San Francisco, Center of Excellence for Transgender Health, "Mental Health Considerations With Transgender and Gender

entails self-determination regarding gender and moral freedom to explore new sexual or gender identities. For example, Kinnear and Shumer insist modern individuals are increasingly expanding beyond the male/female, boy/girl, man/woman binary ideas of sex and gender and say, "In our experience, the current generation of youth is expanding the boundaries of sexuality and gender, and often times, rejecting binary ideas of gender, sex, and sexuality. This requires careful consideration as to when medical intervention is appropriate."[36] Allowing and encouraging exploration of one's gender identity is considered part of respect for autonomy.

Puberty suppression for gender nonconforming children and adolescents is also seen as consistent with the principle of justice. Puberty suppression is considered fair and equitable treatment for young people experiencing feelings of gender incongruity. Because puberty-suppressing drugs are expensive, advocates often lament the lack of universal healthcare coverage in the United States and point to the open access to such care in nations like Holland as a more just model.[37] From the perspective of those in favor of puberty suppression, social cooperation in a fair society requires appropriate burden-sharing of the costs of gender transition.

If puberty suppression for gender nonconforming children is morally permissible, when should GnRHa treatment start? The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) suggests the following four guidelines for beginning gender-suppressing drugs:

> 1. The adolescent has demonstrated a long-lasting and intense pattern of gender nonconformity or gender dysphoria (whether suppressed or expressed). [38]

Nonconforming Clients," Guidelines for the Primary and Gender-Affirming Care of Transgender and Gender Nonbinary People, 2nd ed., June 17, 2016, accessed May 15, 2019, http://www.transhealth.ucsf.edu/trans?page=guidelines-mental-health.

[36] Kinnear and Shumer, "Duration of Pubertal Suppression and Initiation of Gender-Affirming Hormone Treatment in Youth," 82.

[37] The cost for a Lupron Depot monthly intramuscular kit (7.5mg / month) is around $1,626. https://www.drugs.com/price-guide/lupron-depot.

[38] It is not clear to me how this prerequisite fits with what has recently been identified with "Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria." But perhaps, future guidelines

2. Gender dysphoria emerged or worsened with the onset of puberty.
3. Any coexisting psychological, medical, or social problems that could interfere with treatment (e.g., that may compromise treatment adherence) have been addressed, such that the adolescent's situation and functioning are stable enough to start treatment.
4. The adolescent has given informed consent and, particularly when the adolescent has not reached the age of medical consent, the parents or other caretakers or guardians have consented to the treatment and are involved in supporting the adolescent throughout the treatment process.[39]

While WPATH does not mention a specific age when administration of GnRHa should begin, the University of California, San Francisco protocol says the drugs should be initiated in Tanner Stages 2 - 3,[40] the Dutch Protocol says GnRHa should be administered at Tanner Stages 2 - 3 and no earlier than age 12, while the Endocrine Society says, "We suggest that clinicians begin pubertal hormone suppression after girls and boys first exhibit physical changes of puberty," meaning Tanner Stage 2.[41]

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will give an alternative path for teenagers who seem to embrace transgenderism ex nihilo. See Lisa Littman, "Parent Reports of Adolescents and Young Adults Perceived to Show Signs of Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria," PlosOne, August 16, 2018, https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0202330; see also Littman's correction, March 19, 2019, https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0214157. The degree to which her correction actually "corrected" anything as opposed to serving to placate people angry with her research is up for debate.

[39] World Professional Association for Transgender Health, *Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender-Nonconforming People,* 7th ed., 2012, 19.

[40] University of California, San Francisco, Center of Excellence for Transgender Health, "Health Considerations for Gender Non-Conforming Children and Transgender Adolescents," Guidelines for the Primary and Gender-Affirming Care of Transgender and Gender Nonbinary People, 2nd ed., June 17, 2016, accessed May 15, 2019, http://www.transhealth.ucsf.edu/trans?page=guidelines-youth.

[41] Wylie C. Hembree, Peggy T. Cohen-Kettenis, Louis Gooren, Sabine E. Hannema, Walter J. Meyer, M. Hassan Murad, Stephen M. Rosenthal, Joshua

If GnRHa treatment has been initiated, when should cross-sex hormones be administered? The Dutch Protocol calls for GnRHa at age 12 (if the child has reached Tanner Stage 2), cross-sex hormones at age 16, and surgical transition at age 18.[42] The Endocrine Society says cross-sex hormones should usually be started around age 16, but also says "there may be compelling reasons to initiate sex hormone treatment prior to the age of 16 years in some adolescents with Gender Dysphoria / gender incongruence."[43] When an adolescent receives cross-sex hormones, he or she will then basically go through pubertal changes similar to the opposite sex. As part of gender transition, cross-sex hormones must continually be administered throughout life.

When should GnRHa treatments be stopped? The published guidelines offer less nuance and directions regarding when the treatments should be discontinued.[44] Most discussions assume children who suppress puberty for reasons related to gender nonconformity will in fact continue on towards surgical transition. If the ovaries or testes are removed, there would obviously be no reason to continue to suppress sex hormones. Typically, gender reassignment surgery is not allowed until age 18, but it is not difficult to imagine the age for surgical transition being lowered in coming years. Also, as gender identities shift away from the gender binary, it is possible that some children may ask to stay on GnRHa indefinitely in order to achieve an androgynous appearance. In such cases, cross-sex hormones would also be rejected because taking them would initiate gender-specific secondary sex characteristics. But Kinnear and Shumer comment, "The indefinite withholding of puberty is not recommended."[45]

D. Safer, Vin Tangpricha, and Guy G. T'Sjoen, "Endocrine Treatment of Gender-Dysphoric / Gender-Incongruent Persons: An Endocrine Society Clinical Practice Guideline," *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* 102:11 (November 1, 2017): 3871.

[42] Henriette A. Delemarre-van de Waal and Peggy T. Cohen-Kettenis, "Clinical Management of Gender Identity Disorder in Adolescents: A Protocol on Psychological and Paediatric Endocrinology," S133.

[43] Hembree, et al, "Endocrine Treatment of Gender-Dysphoric / Gender-Incongruent Persons: An Endocrine Society Clinical Practice Guideline," 3871.

[44] Kinnear and Shumer, "Duration of Pubertal Suppression and Initiation of Gender-Affirming Hormone Treatment in Youth," 77.

[45] Ibid., 79.

The moral argument in favor of using GnRHa in transgender children revolves around six major ideas. First, the basic premise in favor of transgenderism is that sex and gender are separate identities: Sex is a matter of biology while gender is a subjective sense of how one feels. Second, it is a noble and good thing to explore new boundaries for gender and sexual expression, and even children should be encouraged in such exploration. Third, a transgender identity is probably an innate and immutable characteristic, thus it is senseless to try and get a person to change such an identity.[46] Fourth, if a person experiences dissonance between his or her biology and inner sense of gender, the best treatment option is to adjust the body to fit one's subjective psychological state. The fifth major idea is the oft-repeated claim that stopping puberty is a completely reversible medical application which allows children time to decide which gender they will embrace without having to deal with the bothersome physical changes associated with puberty. Finally, stopping a child experiencing gender dysphoria from going through puberty is claimed to improve physical and psychological outcomes.

The arguments in favor of using puberty-suppressing drugs for the purpose of exploring a transgender identity are compelling to many clinicians. They consider natural pubertal development to be detrimental to the psychology and general well-being to gender dysphoric children.[47] But are there any reasons for concern? Does this clinical application of GnRHa have any physical, psychological or moral concerns associated with it? Should Christians approve of gender suppression in such cases?

Christian Ethics, Puberty Suppression, and Transgenderism

The use of puberty-suppressing drugs in gender nonconforming children and adolescents poses several problems from the perspective of Christian ethics. To provide a response, I will begin by discussing how Christian love should be considered when addressing the problem of gender nonconforming children, then the Christian concept of creation and the subsequent fall will be integrated into an analysis of gender

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[46] Someone could argue this third assumption isn't really necessary to support pubertal suppression, especially if one holds to suppression being fully and inconsequentially reversible.

[47] Jamie Stevens, Veronica Gomez-Lobo, and Elyse Pine-Twaddell, "Insurance Coverage for Puberty Blocker Therapies for Transgender Youth," *Pediatrics* 136.6 (December 2015): 1029.

suppression, and finally problems related to nonmaleficence and autonomy will be addressed regarding postponing puberty.

Christian Love and Puberty Suppression

Does Christian love allow for exploration of a broad spectrum of gender identities in the hopes of good mental health outcomes for children? Perhaps a religiously minded person arguing in favor of puberty suppression could point to Jesus's words in John 13:34, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." Jesus also demonstrated a tender love towards children, saying in Mark 10:14, "Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Taking these passages together, one could hypothetically argue that Christian love for children demands compassionate understanding be extended towards children who experience gender nonconformity. If we tell them desiring to be the opposite gender is a sin, we are saying the God of the Bible requires them to hate a core part of themselves. This could lead them to internalize rejection from Christians and develop an unhealthy self-loathing, a contributing factor in suicidal ideation.[48] Thus, one could possibly argue that out of love for children and a desire that they not harm themselves, Christians should support puberty suppression for purposes of exploring a transgender identity.

But in fact, arguing that Christian love mandates believers affirm puberty suppression in gender nonconforming children and exploration of a transgender identity reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of Christian love. From the transgender-advocate's perspective, "loving" someone means you do not suggest the person is wrong to explore new boundaries regarding gender and sexual ethics. Yet, Jesus Christ consistently modeled and taught a very high standard for sexual ethics. What was remarkable about Jesus' ministry was not that he lowered moral standards or refused to make moral judgements. What was distinctive was His very gracious spirit towards those who had lived in

[48] Some of my comments here are borrowed from Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case for Same-Sex Relationships* (New York: Convergent Books, 2014), 7 – 9. Vines is not addressing transgenderism, but the type of reasoning he uses might possibly be used by a religious person arguing in favor of puberty suppression.

open disobedience to God for years, and the fact that He called them to repent. Jesus did not confuse love with toleration of all behavior, and neither should we.[49]

Advocates of gender suppression insist the loving thing to do is relieve a gender nonconforming child of the anticipatory burden of the secondary sex characteristic changes which occur in puberty. This may possibly be a noble intention, but children have anticipatory burdens about a lot of things in puberty and adulthood that we don't take extreme measures to circumvent! For example, children may be afraid of going to junior high or have anxiety about an algebra exam, but we do not take extreme measures to prevent these ordinary transitions in life. Instead, the loving thing to do is enable someone to navigate these transitions in a successful manner. For Christians, successful navigation of gender identity during puberty is guided by God's original intent for creation.

Christians should grieve with and for children who experience agonizing feelings of gender nonconformity. Parents in such cases must remember the instruction of Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." The Greek word translated "provoke to anger" is παροργίζω and according to BDAG the idea in Ephesians 6:4 is effective nurture through praise rather than threats.[50] "Bring them up" is the imperative of the verb ἐκτρέφω, which means to provide food or to nourish.[51] The goal of the Christian parent is nurture a child both emotionally and physically. While parents can find the experience of raising a child manifesting gender nonconformity to be very disorienting, I fear we underestimate the power of a tender, Spirit-filled mother or father who says to a child with the deepest manner of internal dissonance, "I love you and nothing can change that. God has entrusted you to me and my goal is to get you to adulthood emotionally, spiritually, and physically safe. We aren't going to do anything to damage your body

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[49] My comments here are influenced by Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Text and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 212 – 213.

[50] Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature,* 3rd ed., Frederick William Danker, rev. and ed.(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 780.

[51] *BDAG,* 311.

or hurt you." Never underestimate the power of a parent's unconditional love.

The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Puberty Suppression

Underlying the claim that using GnRHa in gender nonconforming children and adolescents is the loving thing to do is the idea that transgenderism itself is an innate trait, somewhat akin to skin or hair color. As such, it is cruel to ask people – especially children – to deny a fundamental aspect of who they are. But a quick review of the theories regarding the etiology of transgenderism along with the Christian doctrine of creation and the goodness of the gift of gender challenges these claims.

No one knows why some children experience strong feelings of gender nonconformity and no one knows what causes transgenderism. The most common suggestion is the prenatal hormone theory which says transgenderism arises in the womb from a discrepancy between sexual differentiation of the genitals and sexual differentiation of the brain. In the womb, the genitals develop first and the brain experiences sexual differentiation later. Thus, this theory suggests that, early on in prenatal development, the genitalia of someone who is transgender develops in accordance with his or her genetic sex, but then an aberration occurs and later the brain develops in a manner consistent with the opposite sex, resulting in someone who claims to have a "male" body with a "female" brain or a "female" body with a "male" brain. This theory is central to both genetic and brain research regarding the origins of transgenderism.[52]

Though the prenatal hormone theory has a strong explanatory appeal for many, evidence regarding it is conflicting and inconclusive. Research on genes related to androgen receptors and estrogen receptors in MtF and FtM transsexuals has yielded widely divergent results. The results are so contradictory, nothing has been proven conclusively concerning these particular genes and transgender identity. Furthermore, no distinctive brain difference between transgender people and non-transgender people has been conclusively demonstrated. What data does show is a correlation between some variables in the brains of some

[52] For a summary of the theory, see A. Mansouri, K. Kosidou, I. Savic, "Anatomical and Functional Findings in Female-to-Male Transsexuals: Testing a New Hypothesis," *Cerebral Cortex* 27.2 (February 1, 2017): 998 – 1010.

samples and an increased rate of transgenderism. But correlation and causation are not the same thing and *causation* has not been proven. Furthermore, it is daunting to know if the limited differences which have been noted are factors contributing to transgenderism or if the transgenderism itself caused the changes.[53]

Many advocates of puberty suppression in gender nonconforming youth subtly argue for a crude form of biological determinism. From this perspective, humans are slavishly and uncontrollably driven to certain moral ends by biological and genetic factors over which they have no control. The Christian stance is more robust and suggests that transgenderism emerges from a complex matrix of variables including genetics, family of origin, environment (including the prenatal environment), response to stress and temptation, and perhaps many other factors that remain unknown to us. But Christians don't argue this just about transgenderism: *All* of human behavior is seen as emerging out of such a complex matrix. But no one is excused from moral accountability because of the degree to which any of these variables may have contributed to the strength of a temptation to engage in many kinds of forbidden behaviors, including transgenderism. Biological or sociological contributions to our sin nature do not somehow excuse our moral accountability.

The idea that transgenderism or gender dysphoria require surgical intervention reflects a common assumption that psychological/spiritual problems must have a medical/surgical solution because all such things must be strictly biological or genetic. Historically this led to such egregious treatment as frontal lobotomies for psychiatric disease and hysterectomies for all kinds of female "hysteria." It is far better to consider transgenderism as complex form of self-identity; seeking to treat it with medical/surgical modalities alone is a disservice to these patients.

Transgenderism itself as an identity is inconsistent with a Christian understanding of creation, especially gender as a gift from God. All humans are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26): To be human is to be made in God's image and there are no humans who do share God's

[53] For a detailed discussion of genetic and brain-difference arguments regarding transgenderism, see my *Affirming God's Image: Addressing the Transgender Question With Science and Scripture* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019, chapters 4 and 5.

image. As finite and created beings, we will never have God's complete attributes, but we reflect God's image when we exercise knowledge and responsible use of power for the good of His creation.[54] To be made in the image of God also means humans reflect God's spiritual nature, for Genesis 2:7 also tells us God breathed into man the "breath of life." As a consequence of the image of God, humans have spiritual life, ethical and moral sensitivities, conscience, and the capacity to represent God.[55] At the same time, caution should be used when discussing any human capacity as a prerequisite for the Imago Dei. Otherwise, there is possibly moral license to treat those of minimal capacity (the disabled, the poor) as bearing less of God's image. Biblically, the image of God is coextensive with all of humanity, regardless of one's station in life.

Being made in the image of God also entails that we carry ourselves in a manner consistent with our biological sex: Our gender identity and expression should match our biological sex. Genesis 1:27 says, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." The Bible does not address the modern differentiation between sex and gender, but simply assumes there are gender-appropriate roles for each sex and that people dedicated to following God will strive to act in a manner consistent with their sex.[56] The Hebrew word translated "man" in Genesis 1:27 is *adam*, and it can be used as a name, but here it refers to all humans. By emphasizing that God made a male *adam* and a female *adam*, Genesis 1:27 affirms that sexuality is not an accident of nature, nor is it simply a biological phenomenon. Instead, sexual identity and function are part of God's will for his image bearers.[57] The gift of gender is not an accident of evolution or a mere social construction, it is a part of an intentional and purposeful plan for each person. When God finished the work of creation and called it "very good" (Genesis 1:31), this means our gender is a very good thing

[54] I am suggesting God has shared His communicable attributes via the Image of God while His incommunicable attributes are retained for Himself.

[55] Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 112.

[56] Even if we grant the distinction between sex and gender, I don't think that affirmation of transgenderism must necessarily follow.

[57] Victor Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 139.

to be embraced. Thus, the sex we are given at birth is part of God's will for us as His image bearers.[58]

The goodness of the gender binary is further amplified by the three-fold repetition of the verb *bāra'* in Genesis 1:27. This is the same word used in Genesis 1:1 describing God's creation of the entire universe and Moses piles up this verb *bāra'* in Genesis 1:27:

> God *created* in His own image,
> in the image of God He *created* him;
> male and female He *created* them.

This is actually an imbedded poem within the creation account, with lines one and two in chiastic arrangement (inverted repetition) and the last line as an explication.[59] Such an arrangement accentuates the importance of sexual identity for God's image bearers. Repetition up the verb *bāra'* emphasizes both that man is the apex of God's creative work and the gift of gender is intricately tied to this creation. One's maleness or femaleness is not incidental to our humanness but constitutes its very essence.[60] For good reason the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* says, "[God] created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation."[61] Pushing ideas of puberty suppression onto children at an age when they are barely able to conceive the concept of puberty leads to a not so subtle coercion of children into participation with adult ideas in direct conflict with the word of God in the most profound manner imaginable. Adults should lead children to be good stewards of the bodies God has given, not to loathe their own bodies.

God's will for His image-bearers to embrace their biological sex is amplified in two other Old Testament passages. Deuteronomy 22:5 says, "A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD

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[58] I recognize here that I'm using sex and gender as synonyms while the primary premise of modern transgenderism is that these are two separate concepts.

[59] Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1 – 11:26,* The New American Commentary, vol. 1a (Nashville: Broadman, 1996), 173.

[60] Timothy Keller with Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 194.

[61] The Baptist Faith and Message 2000, Article III, "Man."

your God." This passage instructs people to present themselves in a manner consistent with their natal sex; Sex, gender identity, and gender expression should be unified. While the manner in which this occurs will vary from culture to culture, the point is that someone does not engage in an attempt to deceive someone else regarding one's own gender. Furthermore, Deuteronomy 23:1 also says, "No one who is emasculated or has his male organ cut off shall enter the assembly of the LORD." Emasculation refers to gonadectomy (castration) and the phrase "has his male organ cut off" refers to penectomy. There is evidence that some Ancient Near Eastern religions encouraged men to sacrifice their genitals to a pagan god in an act of devotion. One ancient text criticizes "the party-boys and festival people who changed their masculinity into femininity to make the people of Ishtar revere her. The dagger-bearer, bearers of razors, pruning knives and flint blades who frequently do abominable acts to please the heart of Ishtar."[62] Perhaps some act like this is in the distant view of Deuteronomy 23:1. Thus, the phrase "has his male organ cut off" in Deuteronomy 23:1 may refer to a primitive attempt to present one's self as the opposite gender.[63] Furthermore, one must remember that both Deuteronomy 22:5 and 23:1 occur in the Pentateuch, a five volume work that begins with the creation narrative of Genesis 1 & 2. Thus, these prohibitions should be read in light of the goodness of gender affirmed in Genesis 1:27.

How do these passages from Genesis and Deuteronomy inform our response to the use of puberty-suppressing drugs for the purpose of exploring a transgender identity? Someone could possibly reject their applicability to modern discussions in at least one of two ways. First, someone might grant that Deuteronomy 22:5 and 23:1 indeed express God's displeasure towards genital mutilation, but this is only context of pagan devotion. They may then insist such pagan devotion is not analogous to addressing the complex problems of gender nonconforming children. These children, they say, are not worshipping a pagan god, but are trying to express their true nature. Second, one may suggest that the law does in fact prohibit transgender behavior, but it also prohibits eating shellfish (Leviticus 11:9 – 12) and wearing clothes made of two

[62] "Err and Ishum," Stephanie Dalley, trans., in *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 1, William W. Hallo, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 413.

[63] Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 534, n. 3.

different materials (Leviticus 19:19). Modern Christians do not follow either of these commands and, thus, are being arbitrary in Old Testament verses they choose to quote. Opposition to the use of puberty-suppressing drugs in gender nonconforming children is, therefore, based on bias and fear, not love and compassion.

In response, nowhere in Scripture is anything like transgenderism presented in a favorable light. In both narrative and didactic passages, heterosexual and monogamous marriage is the only appropriate arena for sexual expression and no other option is made available. The gender and sexual guidelines of Scripture are narrow, not broad.[64] We should also note that while there are indeed difficulties in using the Old Testament in New Testament ethics (a difficulty noted by every generation of Christians), Jesus simultaneously affirmed the inspiration of the Old Testament (Matthew 5:17 – 18), acknowledged its moral authority, and taught that some ceremonial aspects of the OT law had been fulfilled (Mark 7:18 – 19). But in discussions of sexual ethics and marriage, Jesus continually affirmed that the moral norms of the OT are still in play (Matthew 19:1 – 12). Additionally, the sexual ethics of Leviticus are in the background of Paul's condemnation of a man at the Corinthian church who was sleeping with his stepmother (Leviticus 18:8; 1 Corinthians 5:1). Furthermore, the Greek term *arsenokoitai* – the fifth vice listed in 1 Corinthians 6:9 – 11 – is clearly a term derived from the LXX of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, indicating the sexual ethics of the OT are normative for the NT Christians.[65] Though neither Deuteronomy 22:5 nor 23:1 are specifically cited in the NT, they fall into the category of gender and sexual boundaries endorsed by the NT. While recognizing the frustration, inner turmoil, and deep distress that gender-

[64] I realize some may quibble here and argue the sexual guidelines are narrow while the gender guidelines are more flexible, culturally conditioned, and open to some creative expression. It is not my purpose here to explore the entire egalitarian vs. complementarian debate.

[65] As a note, some may argue the vision of the family in the OT is expansive, with polygamy being mentioned frequently. But no didactic passage ever mentions polygamy favorably. Polygamy was allowed, not endorsed. The standard – repeated in the NT – is heterosexual and monogamous marriage. In light of NT teaching (e.g. 1 Corinthians 7:2), polygamy is clearly prohibited, a stance clearly consistent with God's original plan in Genesis 2:24 – 25.

nonconforming children can feel, it is inconsistent with Scripture to facilitate gender transition, especially at very young ages.

The doctrine of creation must also be seen in light of the subsequent Fall in Genesis 3 and pervasive and destructive nature of human sin (Romans 3:23; 5:12; Ephesians 2:1). The Christian metanarrative insists that all humans are in fact made in the image of God, but that image has been marred by sin. We now inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. As such, human desires are often in direct contradiction to God's will. The painful effects of sinful people being born into a sinful environment can lead to desires which are oriented away from God, desires which can occur at every phase of life – even in childhood.

At the heart of the Fall in Genesis 3 is radical moral autonomy: We want to be God and assert our own values and standards as opposed to accepting God's reign and rule. And it is this type of radical moral autonomy which seems to be at the heart of advice some adults give to gender nonconforming youth. Sexually enlightened and gender expansive adults urge their adult categories upon young children, sexualizing them at younger and younger ages. Such advice can likely deepen feelings of gender confusion instead of pointing towards a healthy resolution of feelings about one's body.[66]

When the narrative of creation and fall are taken together, Christians can acknowledge the feelings that transgender individuals describe while still limiting the role of those feelings in defining true gender. We do not deny someone may feel genuine dysphoria or conflicting feelings about gender. What we do deny is that these feelings are normative for how one should perceive one's own gender.

Beneficence and Puberty Suppression

Christian Ethics affirms the principle of beneficence. The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30 – 37) demonstrates active well-doing and practical applications of kindness are integral aspects of Christian moral duty. The matter of beneficence is perhaps the crux of the issue for

[66] An example of exposing an adolescent to sexually expansive adult categories for sexual ethics is tragically seen when Jazz Jennings' parents took the teenager to a "drag queen" show for the teenager's 16th birthday, with Jazz's mother admitting the show is "dirty" and "frisky." See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2aqb35euVk.

physicians who affirm puberty suppression for gender-nonconforming children. If it is true that pubertal suppression and early-age gender transition is associated with better mental health outcomes, it is hard from their perspective to deny the beneficence of pubertal suppression and subsequent reassignment surgery.

There are two challenges to the argument from beneficence. First, Christians believe in doing good for others, but good *as defined by God.* In contrast, our culture is defining *good* by any number of standards inconsistent with God or His revelation, and among these many competing standards are expansive views of gender identity and sexual ethics directly at cross purposes with the Bible. Second, long-term outcome studies are hard to find which demonstrate early-age transitions are associated with better mental health outcomes. Puberty suppression in gender nonconforming youth is never studied in randomized controlled fashion, and follow-up is often limited to just a few years (or less) after GRS.[67] Furthermore, mental health disorders actually remain quite common even after GRS – for instance, suicide rates five times that of the general community.[68] In 2011, significant research from Sweden followed a cohort of 324 sex-reassigned people over thirty years and demonstrated that numerous problems persisted after reassignment. While patients' gender dysphoria was usually relieved, other problems remained including higher mortality, suicidality, and psychiatric morbidity.[69]

Nonmaleficence, Autonomy, and Puberty Suppression

One of the most oft-repeated claims for puberty-suppression in cases of gender nonconforming children is that the effects of the drugs are

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[67] A typical small-sized sample is seen in Annelou L.C. de Vries, Jenifer K. McGuire, Thomas D. Steensma, Eva C.F. Wagenaar, Theo A.H. Doreleigers, and Peggy T. Cohen-Kettenis, "Young Adult Psychological Outcome After Puberty Suppression and Gender Reassignment," *Pediatrics* 134.4 (October 2014): 696 – 704. The sample included 22 MtF and 33 FtM.

[68] G.P. Grobler, "The Lifetime Prevalence of Psychiatric Diagnoses in an Academic Gender Reassignment Service," *Current Opinion in Psychiatry* 30.6 (November 2017): 391 – 395.

[69] Cecilia Dhejne, Paul Lichtenstein, Marcus Boman, Anna L.V. Johansson, Niklas Langström, and Mikael Landen, "Long-Term Follow-Up of Transsexual Persons Undergoing Sex-Reassignment Surgery: Cohort Study in Sweden," *PloS One* 6.2 (February 2011); 7.

completely reversible. This claim should be challenged when made in reference to using GnRHa on gender nonconforming children. In cases of PP, the drugs are only used for a brief period to allow the child to develop at the normal time. But in cases of gender nonconforming children, puberty-suppressing drugs are used to stop puberty at the very time children should be growing and maturing. The literature on puberty suppression is replete with discussions of the effects of GnRHa on bone mass and growth, with great concern about the manner in which puberty blockers negatively affect terminal height.[70] Dennis Styne, an advocate for puberty suppression, notes, "Delayed puberty from any cause including suppression by long-term gonadotrophin releasing hormone agonist therapy for an extended period may cause a significant decrease in bond accretion and a delay in reaching peak bone mineral density."[71] In 2008, researchers from Holland who were on the forefront of puberty suppression acknowledged this concern, but said that after children in their research showed a slowing of growth upon being administered GnRHa, their growth "significantly caught up after the commencement of cross-sex steroid hormone treatment."[72] Yet, it is important for bone growth to occur at age-appropriate times. When these windows of opportunity pass, a child's terminal size is affected. Such results are not reversible.

At this point an inconsistency in the argument for puberty suppression appears. On one hand, the researchers insist that puberty-suppressing drugs are a completely reversible intervention which merely allows a child to press "pause" while exploring and reconciling gender issues. But the data to date clearly shows that use of puberty suppressing drugs doesn't merely press pause, it is the first step in gender transition. A 2021 study of 44 adolescents who started using GnRHa found that 43 moved forward to begin taking cross-sex hormones and only one stopped

[70] It may sound strange that puberty blockers negatively affect terminal height when used for transgender purposes, and yet the same drugs are used to increase terminal height in other children. Keep in mind, the effects of any drug are all related to dosage and timing.

[71] Dennis M. Styne, "Puberty," 16.

[72] Cohen-Kettenis, et al, "The Treatment of Adolescent Transsexuals: Changing Insights," 1895.

using GnRHa.[73] This is disheartening because the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* 5th ed. says, "Rates of persistence of gender dysphoria from childhood into adolescence or adulthood vary. In natal males, persistence has ranged from 2.2% to 30%. In natal females, persistence has ranged from 12% to 50%."[74] While these ranges are broad, they indicate most cases of childhood gender nonconformity resolve and the children embrace the gender consistent with their natal sex. This is in stark contrast to preliminary data which indicates the large majority of children who begin puberty suppression eventually decide to continue gender transition.[75] To be clear, most kids who don't take puberty suppressing drugs resolve their gender dysphoria; most kids who take puberty suppressing drugs later transition to the other gender.

Furthermore, it is unclear what effects puberty-suppressing drugs have on adolescent brain development. Adolescence is one of the most dynamic events of human growth and development, second only to infancy in terms of the rate of developmental changes that can occur within the brain.[76] In 2006, Dutch researchers made a startling admission and said, "It is not clear yet how pubertal suppression will influence brain development."[77] They are giving children drugs without understanding how this will influence brain development: *They are*

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[73] Polly Carmichael, Gary Butler, Una Masic, Tim J. Cole, Bianca L. De Stavola, Sarah Davidson, Elin M. Skageberg, Sophie Khadr, and Russell M. Viner, "Short-term outcomes of pubertal suppression in a selected cohort of 12 to 15 year old Young People with persistent gender dysphoria in the UK," *Plos One* 16.2 (February 2, 2021): https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0243894.

[74] *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* 5th ed., 454.

[75] Peggy T. Cohen-Kettenis, Henriette A. Delemarre-van de Waal, and Louis J. G. Gooren, "The Treatment of Adolescent Transsexuals: Changing Insights," *Journal of Sexual Medicine* 5 (2008): 1895. The authors state that none of the children treated at the Gender Identity clinic at the Free University dropped out of the program and all continued to sex reassignment.

[76] Mariam Arain, Maliha Haque, Lina Johal, Puja Mathur, Wyand Nel, Afsha Rais, Ranbir Sandhu, and Sushil Sharma, "Maturation of the Adolescent Brain," *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment* 9 (2013): 451.

[77] Henriette A. Delemarre-van de Waal and Peggy T. Cohen-Kettenis, "Clinical Management of Gender Identity Disorder in Adolescents: A Protocol on Psychological and Paediatric Endocrinology," S136 – S137.
They stressed preliminary data indicates no long-term problems with the brain.

experimenting on children. The same Dutch research group published a study of adolescents treated with puberty suppressing drugs, focusing on executive functioning skills of the children, meaning one's ability to manage resources in order to achieve a goal. The report claimed the puberty suppressing drugs had "no detrimental effects" on executive functioning.[78] However, others noted the results of their study, especially for males, were more ambiguous and possibly suggestive of harm than their optimistic summary indicates.[79]

Because the vast majority of gender nonconforming children who begin puberty-suppressing drugs eventually transition, this means they will probably go through gender reassignment surgery (GRS). Both vaginoplasty in male-to-female cases and phalloplasty in female-to-male cases are surgeries fraught with post-operative difficulties. To make matters even more complicated, the preferred method of vaginoplasty is the penile inversion method. But a biological male who has been using GnRHa will not have enough penile material to form a vagina, thus requiring surgeons to harvest a section of the sigmoid colon to be used as an artificial vagina.[80] An example of postoperative difficulties associated with gender reassignment surgery can be seen in Jazz Jennings who had to have an additional surgery after the incisions from his GRS separated, requiring an additional ten days in the hospital.[81] Jennings post-operative problems are common with GRS. To be clear, in

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[78] Annemeike S. Staphorsius, Baudewijntje P.C. Kreukels, Peggy T. Cohen-Kettenis, Dick J. Veltman, Sarah M. Burke, Sebastian E.E. Schagen, Femke M. Wouters, Henrië A. Delemarre-van de Waal, Julie Baker, "Puberty Suppression and Executive Functioning: An fMRI-study in Adolescents With Gender Dysphoria," *Psychoneuroendocrinology* 56 (June 2015): 197.

[79] Paul W. Hruz, Lawrence S. Mayer, and Paul R. McHugh, "Growing Pains; Problems With Puberty Suppression in Treating Gender Dysphoria," *The New Atlantis* 52 (Spring 2017):24.

[80] Christopher J. Salgado, Ajani Nugent, Joseph Kuhn, Meghan Janette, and Heidi Bahna, "Primary Sigmoid Vaginoplasty in Transwomen: Technique and Outcomes," *Biomed Research International,* 2018, https://www.hindawi.com/journals/bmri/2018/4907208/. For an extended evaluation of GRS, see my *Affirming God's Image,* Chapter 7.

[81] Korin Miller, "Jazz Jennings Says She Had A "Complication" During Her Gender Confirmation Surgery," *Women's Health* February 6, 2019, https://www.womenshealthmag.com/health/a23828566/jazz-jennings-gender-confirmation-surgery-complication/.

GRS, perfectly functioning urogenital tracts are destroyed and replaced with a less effective substitute, and the subsequent structures are prone to increased levels of urogenital problems.

In light of the fact that most children who do not receive puberty-suppressing drugs do successfully embrace their natal sex while those who do take the drugs eventually transition, and considering GnRHa's negative effects on bone development and the quite uncertain implications for brain development, and considering that most transitioning children will eventually pursue GRS with all its subsequent urogenital problems, I submit that puberty-suppression for the purpose of gender transition fails the test of nonmaleficence. Instead of reducing harm, potential for harm is increased. A more compassionate approach acknowledges the stressful difficulties of childhood gender nonconformity while looking forward to an outcome associated with healthy acceptance of one's body.

Puberty-Suppressing Drugs and Autonomy

One aspect of the principle of autonomy is informed consent: An informed consent is an individual's autonomous authorization of a medical intervention or of participation in research.[82] Medical ethics has wrestled with the issue of informed consent in the case of minors, but, at a minimum, informed consent includes both competence – the ability to understand – and voluntariness in deciding.[83] In the issue of puberty-suppression, three serious issues should be raised about a child's ability to understand the nature and implications of puberty-suppression.

First, one is struck by the degree to which gender-nonconforming children are called "trans kids" or "transgender children" in the professional literature. But I contend that transgenderism is an adult concept which incorporates highly complex ideas of gender, gender expression, and sexual identity, categories foreign to children, or at best only grasped in the most elementary ways. Calling small children *transgender* is hardly an objective label for a child's subjective sense of gender. Instead, transgender is a label imposed on the child by adults, adults who are often quite far from neutral in their perspective on how a gender nonconforming child should be treated. Of course, the explosion

[82] Beauchamp and Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics,* 7th ed., 122.
[83] Ibid., 124.

of access to information on the internet to pre-pubescent children means even very young children can be exposed to progressive ideas regarding gender and some gender nonconforming children may in fact meet the *DSMV's* criteria for gender dysphoria. But a diagnosis of gender dysphoria is not identical with a transgender identity. By forcing adult categories on children, the child's autonomy is violated because the children are expected to follow a trajectory towards transgenderism.[84]

The second concern is the degree to which pre-pubescent children can understand the concept of puberty itself and all the changes associated with it. Puberty is an exciting and maddening time of life for all of us and most everyone experiences some anxiety as the body begins to change and sexual feelings emerge. It is difficult to know the degree to which a child who has not yet experienced puberty can actually grasp the implications of either puberty itself or puberty suppression.

Finally, the fact depression and anxiety are common in gender nonconforming children and adolescents also complicates the issue of autonomous decision-making. Knowing the psychiatric comorbidity experienced by those with gender dysphoria, and the maturational issues involved with informed consent, it is unlikely adolescents with gender dysphoria or gender incongruence could actually make an informed, autonomous decision with respect to pubertal suppression. Just as depression during serious/terminal illness confounds the ethics of consenting for physician-assisted suicide, it seems that depression would confound logical decision-making for many transgender youth.[85]

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[84] My thoughts in this paragraph have been partially influenced by Kenneth J. Zucker, "The Myth of Persistence: Response to 'A Critical Commentary on Follow-Up Studies and "Desistance" Theories About Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Children,'" *International Journal of Transgenderism* 19.2 (2018): 232. This is not meant to imply Zucker would agree with any or all of my opinions. Elsewhere, Zucker affirms hormonal therapy and GRS for adolescents and adults, but takes a very different view concerning gender nonconforming children. *See* Kenneth J. Zucker, "Children With Gender Identity Disorder: Is There a Best Practice?," *Neuropsychiatrie de l'enfance et del l'adolescence* 56 (2008): 358 – 364.

[85] Some complexities for decision-making in depressed patients are reviewed at Yan Leykin, Carolyn Sewell Roberts, and Robert J. DuRubeis, "Decision-Making and Depressive Symptomatology," *Cognitive Therapy and Research* 35.4 (2011): 333 – 341.

Because the long-term effects of puberty-suppressing drugs over a lifetime are still unknown to a large degree, the use of such drugs still seems experimental. Children should only be involved in experiments which benefit them or provide immediate help to a health problem of immediate concern. Yet, we already know that if *no intervention whatsoever takes place, the majority of cases of childhood gender nonconformity will resolve.* Thus, is there some other sort of social experiment at work here? It seems there is: LGBTQ advocates with expansive views of gender are convinced gender is hardwired in the brain and is not necessarily associated with the body. To prove this, they are eager to see children suppress puberty and then have gender-reassignment surgery. But how many of these children will regret such irreversible changes by the time they reach adulthood?

This issue of informed consent becomes especially difficult when applied to children or mentally incompetent patients. In both cases, the patients lack the mental capacity to understand the implications of medical procedures or experiments, so someone else has to make the decision for them. But what principles serve to protect mentally incompetent patients or children? Paul Ramsey suggested the rule of loyalty to our fellow humans leads to the following guidelines:

> From consent as a canon of loyalty in medical practice it follows that children, who cannot give a mature and informed consent, or adult incompetents, should not be made the subjects of medical experimentation unless, other remedies having failed to relieve their grave illness, it is reasonable to believe that the administration of a drug as yet untested or insufficiently tested on human beings, or the performance of an untried operation, may further the *patient's own recovery.*[86]

Ramsey went on to say we can make decisions for operations or procedures for children if it is for the child's own good, but we should not volunteer a child for an experiment which has as its purpose merely increasing medical knowledge with no direct benefit to the child's immediate health.

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[86] Paul Ramsey, *The Patient as Person: Explorations in Medical Ethics*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 11 – 12. Italics in original.

Advocates of puberty-suppression adamantly insist they have the child's best interest at heart: Early resolution of gender nonconformity via puberty suppression and subsequent gender reassignment surgery will help the children live happier lives, it is claimed. But these sexually enlightened adults are imposing their own progressive views of sex and gender on children who lack the capacity to understand such things. Commenting on using children in experiments which only pushed the boundaries of human knowledge, Paul Ramsey said, "To attempt to consent for a child to be made an experimental subject is to treat a child as not a child. It is to treat him as if he were an adult person who has consented to become a joint adventurer in the common cause of medical research."[87] If we may paraphrase Ramsey a bit differently, to attempt to provide an informed consent on a child's behalf for a child to be made an experimental subject in gender-suppression is to treat the child as a liberal, sexually-expansive adult and not a child. The advocate for puberty suppression wants the child to be a joint adventurer in the ever changing world of LGBTQ sexual ethics and gender identity.

The use of puberty-suppressing pharmaceuticals is has been integrated into what many modern mental health professionals call *the gender affirmative model.* In the past, the approach with children displaying gender nonconformity was to wait and see until using medical interventions since the majority of cases self-resolved. But this model insists that if a child exhibits expansive notions of gender, this should be affirmed and the use of puberty blockers is an essential part of the model. But the model is deeply opposed to the Christian worldview down to the very substrata of its thinking. Advocates Keo-Meier and Ehrensaft say a primary tenet of the theory is that "care providers need to be able to reevaluate our social constructs of gender and sexuality within our cultural context and the positions we impose on children."[88] It seems unimportant to these authors that they themselves are in fact imposing very adult ideas and concepts upon children. It is hard not to see the use of puberty blockers as a method for sexually libertine adults to create new

[87] Paul Ramsey, *The Patient as Person*, 14.

[88] Colt Keo-Meier and Diane Ehrensaft, "Introduction to the Gender-Affirmative Model," *The Gender Affirmative Model: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Supporting Transgender and Gender Expansive Children,* Colt Keo-Meier and Diane Ehrensaft, eds. (Washington, DC, American Psychological Association, 2018), 15.

categories of individuals to be introduced into the LGBTQ spectrum. One recognizes the persistent claim to have the health of the children involved as a matter of first importance, but the sexual undertow within these conversations seems ever present, constant pulling children towards an expectation of certain sexual behaviors as the end goal of transitioning.

But we are not the first generation of Christians to face something vaguely similar. Justin Martyr (beheaded 165 AD) addresses something that appears similar to a sort of coerced transgenderism in his *First Apology* written circa 155. In a section addressing the evil practice of child abandonment, he grieves the fact that many infants abandoned in the Roman Empire were raised to be exploited in prostitution. He then says "some are openly mutilated for the purpose of sodomy (καὶ φανερῶς εἰς κιναιδίαν ἀποκόπτονταί τινες)."[89] The Greek word translated *sodomy* is κιναιδος and it specifically in this context refers to a *catamite,* meaning a boy kept for the sexual pleasures of adult male.[90] But Justin Martyr is even more explicit and says these are boys who have been *mutilated,* and he uses the Greek verb ἀποκότω meaning "to cut away," which is related to the noun ἀποκοπή which means *amputation.*[91] He is referring to boys who have either been castrated or had a complete penectomy for the purpose of being sexually abused by older men. The apparent reason for the amputation is to give the boys a more feminine appearance to meet the twisted pleasures of their abusers. Justin Martyr ends on a note of disgust by saying to his fellow Roman citizens, "These things you do openly and with applause."[92]

Modern mental health professionals would revolt at the analogy I am making here, and insist their goal is not for children to be exploited but to achieve emotional stability and well-being. Furthermore, they seek the informed consent of children as much as possible. But we have

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[89] Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin,* in *The Writings of Justin Martyr and Athenagoras,* Marcus Dods, George Reith, and B.P. Pratten, trans. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1909), 30.

[90] Franco Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek,* 3rd ed., Madeleine Goh & Chad Schroeder, eds. (Boston: Brill, 2013), 1130.

[91] Franco Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek,* 3rd ed, 254, 253.

[92] Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin,* in *The Writings of Justin Martyr and Athenagoras,* Marcus Dods, George Reith, and B.P. Pratten, trans. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1909), 31.

established children are not sufficiently mature to understand the life-altering nature of puberty-blockers or the excessive, future pain of a brutally intrusive surgical procedure such as GRS. Puberty blockers pushed on young children by progressive adults is a process with *at least* exploitative overtones. To be sure, they are presented as sophisticated, enlightened, and compassionate, but such avant garde morality is really a thinly veiled cover for the latest phase of the Sexual Revolution. Christians have a long history of advocating for the best futures for children. Like Christians in the second century who opposed the permissive and disturbing sexual morals of the Roman Empire, modern Christians should exhibit the same standard of faithfulness.

Summary

The use of puberty-suppressing drugs in cases of PP seems to be morally permissible from the perspective of Christian ethics as the ultimate goal is a healthy progression through normal puberty and the treatment is not directly tied to expansive adult concepts of gender. In contrast, the use of puberty-suppressing drugs in cases of childhood gender non-conformity is not consistent with Christian ethics because it is a fundamental reordering of the concept of the goodness of the gift of gender in the creation narratives, it is based upon assumptions about the innate nature of transgenderism which are speculative at best, it is inconsistent with the principle of nonmaleficence, and there are serious questions about the ability of a child experiencing gender nonconformity to make an autonomous decision to forego normal puberty. Christians intuitively understand that puberty is a time of vitally important transitions that must be skillfully navigated to arrive spiritually and morally intact at adulthood. The entire enterprise of puberty-suppression for the purpose of exploring a transgender identity seems patently unwise, except that the spirit of our age declares we rush forward in redefining gender and human sexual development.

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Faithful Flexibility? Making a Minor Point of the Text the Major Point of a Sermon without Missing the Main Point of the Text

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Introduction

A long-standing axiom of expository preaching has been the assertion that the main point of a focal passage of Scripture should be the main point of its corresponding sermon.[1] For example, Miller provided a straightforward articulation of this idea when he wrote, *Every sermon should have a theme, and that theme should be the theme of the portion*

[1] For various expressions of this axiom of expository preaching in the field of homiletics, see John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, revised by Vernon L. Stanfield, 4th ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1979), 58; Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 128; Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 5; Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Delivery Expository Sermons*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2017), 45; and Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 118. This axiom flows out of the foundational presupposition that the biblical authors wrote in such a way as to present a unified theme to their audiences. For instance, while Miller acknowledged that discerning a biblical author's theme in certain genres such as the wisdom literature of Proverbs may be challenging, he nevertheless contended that "for the most part, the Scriptures are made up of literary forms which involve interrelations of thought. These normally are linked together by some cohesive idea to which everything else is related." See Donald G. Miller, *The Way to Biblical Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1957), 54.

of Scripture on which it is based (emphasis appeared in the original).[2] Also, in describing the third step of preparing an expository sermon, Stott wrote, "As we continue to meditate by prayer and study, and jot down a miscellany of ideas, we should be looking for our text's dominate thought. Indeed, we should persevere in meditation until it emerges and clarifies."[3] What was Stott's reason for this? He contended quite simply that "every text has a main theme."[4] Likewise, in writing about expository preaching from Old Testament narratives, Moseley plainly states, "Sermons should have a point. Even more important, the main point of the sermon should match the main point of the text."[5]

Timothy Keller, however, cautiously challenges a strict adherence to this guiding principle of expository preaching. He argues, "In some Bible passages it is not easy to discern one clear central idea. This is especially true in narratives."[6] Then, after briefly mentioning several passages from both the Old and New Testaments, he concludes, "Multiple valid inferences can be drawn from such narratives, from which a wise preacher can select one or two to fit the capacities and needs of the listeners."[7]

Of course, Keller does not advocate casting off all hermeneutical and homiletical restraint. This is clear when be balances his previous thoughts with the following counsel, "Having said this, often the biblical author *does* have one main theme that becomes evident with careful study. Expository preachers must major in the text's major ideas and not get lost in the details and tangents that misrepresent the biblical author."[8]

Keller's balance is appreciated and noted, but he still raises an interesting question. Is a sermon truly "expository" in nature if its major

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[2] Miller, 55.
[3] John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 224.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Allan Moseley, *From the Study to the Pulpit: An 8-Step Method for Preaching and Teaching the Old Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 55.
[6] Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 43.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., 44.

point takes its cue from a minor point in its focal passage? Is there room for a faithful flexibility in this regard in expository preaching?

This article will argue affirmative answers to both questions. It will also offer homiletical guidelines for how to keep Keller's wise counsel in mind. Hopefully, then, expositors will be able to engage in a faithful flexibility in their preaching. Even when the major point of a sermon is based on a minor point of its focal passage, those committed to expository preaching can deliver such sermons without missing the biblical author's main point.

Interestingly, while Keller uses the word "narratives" to describe some texts in which he contends there is difficulty in discerning a biblical author's main point, he specifically references Matthew's genealogy.[9] For the purposes of this article, then, Matthew 1:1-17 will be used as a test case for the type of faithful flexibility advocated in this article.

The Main Point of Matthew's Genealogy[10]

One may be surprised for two reasons to see Matthew's genealogy appear in the list of texts Keller references as examples of biblical narratives without a clearly discernable main theme.[11] To begin, Matthew's genealogy is not technically a "narrative". While genealogies typically surface in narrative literature, they are nevertheless a distinct subgenre.[12] It should not be surprising then that the only two genealogies

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[9] Ibid., 43.

[10] This article will focus on expository preaching from one focal passage which forms a complete unit of thought. For homileticians who support the idea of topical preaching from an expositional framework, see Tony Merida, *Faithful Preaching: Declaring Scripture with Responsibility, Passion, and Authenticity* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2009), 10 and Jason C. Meyer, *Preaching: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 292-297. For discussions of preaching from passages for various lengths from an expositional framework, see Greidanus, 126-128 and Bryan Chapell, 42-43.

[11] In addition to Matthew's genealogy, the other passages Keller mentions are as follows: "Jacob's wrestling with the Lord in Genesis 32 … the dead man who came to life when his corpse came into contact with the bones of the prophet Elisha in 2 Kings 13 … [and] the strange account of the seven sons of Sceva (Acts 19:11-20) who tried to cast a demon out of a man 'in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches.'" Keller, 43.

[12] William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 271, 273.

which appear in the New Testament are in two of the synoptic Gospel accounts, namely, Matthew and Luke.[13] Although the Gospels are more than simple narratives, they are not less than this. Ryken contends that "if we simply look at the four Gospels as we now have them, it is obvious that above all they tell a story. Narrative is the organizing framework within which the sayings and discourses [along with other subgenres such as genealogies] are arranged."[14] Thus, the first key to understanding the main point of Matthew 1:1-17 is to understand its literary nature.

Given this literary distinction, it is important to understand the broad uses of genealogies in Scripture. In commenting on the diverse purposes of genealogical lists in the Old Testament,[15] where they occur most frequently, Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard note, "Genealogies tend to bore the modern reader, but ancient peoples regarded them as crucial legal documents. They used genealogical records to establish their claims to be king or high priest, to process certain property, and to marry into certain families."[16] It is the first purpose mentioned here which seems to capture Matthew's main point for including Jesus' genealogy to begin his Gospel account. Although Johnson does not consider Matthew 1:1-17 to convey accurate historical details related to Jesus' lineage, he summarizes the importance of the genealogy for Matthew's (and Luke's) overall purpose as follows:

> The genealogical form was made to serve the interpretation of history and, as such, illumines the author's view of historical relationships more than the actual course of historical events itself. This is certainly true of the NT genealogies, which reflect the tradition of Jesus' Davidic descent which are not actual family pedigrees. Rather, they reveal the hand of the author and can therefore be considered

[13] D. S. Huffman, "Genealogy," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, edited by Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 253.

[14] Leland Ryken, *Words of Life: A Literary Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 31.

[15] Marshall D. Johnson, *The Propose of the Biblical Genealogies: With Special Reference to the Setting of the Genealogies of Jesus*, in *Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series*, volume 8, edited by Matthew Black (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 77-82.

[16] Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, Jr., 273.

> apologetic attempts to express more fully the Christian conviction that Jesus is the fulfillment of the hope of Israel.[17]

This leads to the second reason one may be surprised to read Keller mention Matthew's genealogy as a text whose main point is difficult to discern. Actually, scholars seem rather uniform in their descriptions of the central idea(s) of Matthew 1:1-17, especially as this opening text connects with the key themes of Matthew's narrative in general.[18] For instance, Carson explains, "In each Gospel the introduction anticipates major themes and emphases."[19] While Carson has all of Matthew 1:1-2:23 in view here, he articulates the main point of the genealogy in particular as follows: "Matthew's chief aims in including the genealogy are hinted at in the first verse–viz., to show that Jesus Messiah is truly in the kingly line of David, heir to the messianic promises, the one who brings divine

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[17] Johnson, 256. For an argument in favor of the accuracy and historical reliability of the genealogical information contained in Matthew 1:1-17, see R. Larry Overstreet, "Difficulties of New Testament Genealogies," *Grace Theological Journal* 2 (1981): 303-326. Of course, the question of whether theological commitments can be coupled with accurate historical writing is an important one. Although Hagner's thoughts are directed towards Matthew's entire infancy narrative, his following caution is worth noting: "The question of the historicity of [Matthew] chaps. 1-2 is very often posed in terms of history and theology conceived of as polar opposites, as though what is theological cannot be historical and vice versa. That is, one has here *either* theology *or* history. The idea of a historical core with theological elaboration is hardly considered. Yet that may very well be the case here in what is admittedly material of a special character. Matthew has taken his historical traditions and set them forth in such a way as to underline matters of fundamental theological importance. Thus he grounds his narrative upon several OT quotations and provides a strong sense of fulfillment." See Donald A. Hagner, "Matthew 1-13," in *Word Biblical Commentary*, volume 33a, edited by John D. W. Watts (Dallas: Word, 1993), 2.

[18] The resources quoted in this paragraph were selected based on the identification of works by key authors related to the study of Matthew which were mentioned in Blomberg's commentary on Matthew's Gospel. See Craig L. Blomberg, "Matthew," in *The New American Commentary*, volume 22, edited by David S. Dockery (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 1992).

[19] D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, volume 8, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 61.

blessings to all nations."[20] France has also noted, "The way [Matthew] presents his genealogy shows that it introduces several important strands into his presentation of Jesus as the Messiah."[21] Specifically, France argued that the genealogy's "main relevance [is as follows]: Jesus is *son of Abraham*, a true Jew; he is *son of David* … and as such he is the *Christ* (… in this context of introducing Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament hopes [Christ] must carry its full theological meaning, 'the Messiah')."[22] In summary fashion, Bruner has noted that "in the genealogy Matthew lays out how the Christ-promising God shaped Israel's history to keep the divine promise."[23] With a more narrow focus, Bruner asserted, "The overriding concern of the genealogy is to show that Jesus was in and of the line of David – that he was the Son of David."[24] While this comment focused on David, Bruner acknowledged how Jesus' connection to Abraham in Matthew 1:1 also signals something of Matthew's main point in his genealogy. He wrote, "This faith plan of salvation, rooted in one person but focused on the whole earth of nations and families, now receives its classical form in the seed of Abraham, Jesus."[25] While not seeing any historical value in Matthew's genealogy, Luz, nevertheless, offers a summary of the main thrust of Matthew 1:1-17 when he comments that "Jesus is son of David, that is, sent to Israel by God as his Anointed One; and at the same time he is Abraham's son, because through him, the Israelite, God wants to speak to the entire

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[20] Ibid., 63.

[21] R. T. France, "The Gospel according to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary," in *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 71.

[22] Ibid., 73. In commenting elsewhere on how Matthew 1:1-17 is also connected to the idea of "fulfillment" as the overall thrust of Matthew's Gospel, France has written that "This orientation of Matthew's gospel [that is, the idea of 'fulfillment'] is made clear right from the beginning. The first 17 verses are devoted to a genealogy, which has as its primary purpose to link Jesus as closely as possible with the developing purpose of God as revealed in Old Testament history." See R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 168.

[23] Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Christbook: A Historical/Theological Commentary* (Waco: Word, 1987), 1.

[24] Ibid., 18.

[25] Ibid., 3.

Gentile world. That is the message of this text."[26] Thus, it seems evident that scholars from diverse theological perspectives have argued for a discernable main theme in Matthew's genealogy. This main theme could be summarized as Matthew's attempt to show that Jesus is the Messiah, the long-awaited Son of David and descendant of Abraham who has come to bring God's blessings to all people.

The above summary statement is supported by four exegetical observations which surface throughout Matthew's genealogy. First, identifying the boundaries of a focal passage is essential for seeking to discern a biblical author's main point. Clearly, various genres signal the completion of their units of thought in diverse ways.[27] Yet, there is a foundational assumption of those committed to expository preaching that the biblical authors conveyed meaning to their audiences in complete units of thought.[28] In relation to Matthew's genealogy, the boundaries for the passage seem relatively clear.[29] These boundaries are marked by the sequence of names in Matthew 1:1 and 1:17, respectively. Pizzuto explains, "Structurally speaking, the genealogy is a simple chiasm in the form of an inclusion. The first names appearing in v. 1 (Jesus Christ, David, Abraham) are inverted in the final line of v. 17 (Abraham, David, Christ)."[30] This type of focus on the key names mentioned in the genealogy serve to identify both the boundaries of the thought unit as well as Matthew's main trust. Second, the opening words of Matthew 1:1, Βίβλος γενέσεως, are typically considered to have strong connections with the book of Genesis. Wilkens explains that

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[26] Ulrich Luz, "Matthew 1-7: A Commentary," in *Hermenia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*, translated by James E. Crouch, edited by Helmut Koester (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 87.

[27] Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, Jr., 156-161.

[28] Greidanus, 126.

[29] There is a debate, however, regarding the relationship between Matthew 1:1 and other aspects of the Gospel account. For instance, some view this verse as a title for only the infancy narrative, while others see it as a title for Matthew's entire narrative. Michael J. Wilkins, "Matthew," in *The NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Text … to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 55.

[30] Vincent A. Pizzuto, "The Structural Elegance of Matthew 1-2: A Chiastic Proposal," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 74 (2012): 728.

> an almost identical expression to Matthew 1:1 occurs in the LXX of Genesis 2:4 and 5:1 to narrate both the beginning record of God's creation and the first genealogy of God's human creatures ... Just as Genesis gave the story of one beginning – God's creation and covenant relations with Israel – so the Gospel of Matthew gives the story of a new beginning – the arrival of Jesus the Messiah and the kingdom of God (cf. also Mark 1:1).[31]

This overall connection to the Old Testament leads to the third exegetical observation which supports the main theme of Matthew's genealogy mentioned above. This focuses on the three titles used to introduce Jesus in Matthew 1:1, namely, Christ, son of David, and son of Abraham. The word Χριστοῦ or Χριστός occurs three times in Matthew's genealogy in verses 1, 16, and 17, and France has argued that it is best to see its use in the genealogy as being titular in nature.[32] Furthermore, the word Χριστός recurs throughout Matthew's Gospel in connection with Jesus, showing that this is a major component of Matthew's presentation of Jesus in his narrative.[33] Likewise, the title, son of David, figures prominently on Matthew's Christological landscape. Hagner comments, "This title is a favorite of Matthew's, occurring ten times, compared to four times each in Mark and Luke."[34] While the concept of the Messiah was not monolithic in the first-century,[35] a connection between the Messiah and the line of David was a dominate component of messianic expectations in this period.[36] Although the title, son of David, links Jesus securely to Israel's messianic hope, the title, son of Abraham, accomplishes this and more.[37] While this title is only used here in Matthew, it signals other important ideas related to Jesus' messianic

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[31] Wilkins, 55.
[32] France, *Matthew*, 281. For an argument which does not view the appearance of the word Χριστός in Matthew 1:1 as being strictly titular in nature, see Carson, 62.
[33] Carson, 62.
[34] Hagner, 9.
[35] L. W. Hurtado, "Christ," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, edited by Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992), 107.
[36] Johnson, 115-138.
[37] Blomberg, "Matthew," 52-53.

identity and universal mission in the Gospel account.[38] One of the major ideas in the Abrahamic covenant is God's blessing to the nations through the seed of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3).[39] The juxtaposition of the titles "son of David" and "son of Abraham", thus, anticipates the tension between the themes of particularism and universalism which emerge in Matthew's Gospel.[40] Of course, the identification of this "tension" does not indicate a contradiction within Matthew's theology; rather, they serve to show that Jesus came to bring God's redemption *from* Israel but not only *for* Israel. For instance, when commenting on Jesus as the hope of Israel in Matthew 1:23 and the hope of the Gentiles in Matthew 28:18-20, Kingsbury argues, "Together, therefore, these passages set forth the bold claim that the story of Matthew raises on behalf of Jesus: for the salvation of both Jew and Gentile, Jesus Son of God is of decisive significance."[41] Therefore, the combination of these three titles in Matthew 1:1 serve to underscore the biblical author's main theme for the passage. In summary, it focuses on Jesus' messianic identity and mission as the Son of David who has come to bring God's redemption to both Jews and Gentiles, fulfilling God's covenant promises to both David and Abraham.

The fourth exegetical observation follows from the previous one, in that, the title "son of David" seems to be further emphasized in the genealogy in four ways. To begin, Matthew's affinity for structural design and numerical groups is apparent throughout his Gospel account.[42] Specifically, the summary statement in Matthew 1:17 shows that the biblical author intentionally arranged the genealogy in three groups of fourteen generations. While this structure may be a mnemonic device for

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[38] Ulrich Luz, "The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew," in *New Testament Theology*, translated by J. Bradford Robinson, edited by James D. G. Dunn (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 23-30.

[39] Wilkins, 56.

[40] D. A. Hagner, "Matthew," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, edited by T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 262-263.

[41] Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 2nd edition (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 42.

[42] Hagner, "Matthew 1-13," l-liii. For a more focused discussion of the numerical groups in Matthew's Gospel, see Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), xviii-xxv.

Matthew's audience,[43] it seems to highlight a theological thrust related to God's covenant with David and its eschatological fulfillment in Christ as well. For example, France has observed:

> The genealogy is arranged in three groups of twice-seven ... One purpose is certainly to highlight two essential turning-points in the history of Israel, and of the Davidic line: the accession of David to kingship, and the loss of that kingship at the Babylonian exile; now in the coming of Jesus, son of David, that kingship is to reach its appointed goal. The rounded symmetry of the scheme indicates that the period of preparation is now complete.[44]

Next, drawing even more attention to the name of David within Matthew's structural design in his genealogy is the fact that the name David is the fourteenth name in Matthew's list.[45] Also, when the possibility of gematria is factored into the equation, the addition of the numerical values for the Hebrew consonants in David's name equals fourteen.[46] Lastly, David's name is the only name, other than the name Jesus, which receives a title in Matthew's genealogy. For example, Bauckham observes, "The Davidic messianic nature of the genealogy is apparent from the fact that 'David the king' and 'Jesus the Messiah' are the only two persons with titles."[47] Also, Huffman similarly explains, "Matthew adds the descriptive phrase 'the king' only to David's name in [Matthew] 1:6, even though every name in the second group served in that capacity."[48] Finally, Wilkins echoes related ideas:

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[43] Carson, 68.
[44] France, "The Gospel according to Matthew," 75.
[45] Blomberg, "Matthew," 53.
[46] Ibid.; see also Robert H. Mounce, "Matthew," in *New International Biblical Commentary*, volume 1, edited by W. Ward Gasque (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 8.
[47] Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Names Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 19.
[48] Huffman, 255. In addition to the above mention of the titular use of the word Χριστοῦ or Χριστός in the genealogy, Huffman also explains that "in reporting the genealogy of 'Jesus Christ,' Matthew makes the title 'Messiah' ... part of Jesus' name (Mt 1:1)." Ibid.

> David is not simply the son of Jesse (as is stated in Luke's genealogy, Luke 3:31-32) but is "King David" (Matt. 1:6), an explicit emphasis on royalty in the genealogy of Jesus. From here Matthew maintains an emphasis on kingship, using the word "king" twenty-two times, more than any other book in the New Testament. Throughout his Gospel, Matthew maintains a focus on Jesus as "the King of the Jews."[49]

Hagner summarizes a similar point when he comments, "The addition of the words 'the king' in τὸν Δαυὶδ τὸν βασιλέα serves to strengthen the link between David and Jesus as the Davidic, messianic king, an important motif in Matthew."[50] Thus, the various ways that the name David is used in Matthew's genealogy underscores the central theme of this passage in terms of its focus on Jesus as the royal Redeemer who was sent to fulfill God's salvific plan for Israel and the world.

Minor Points in Matthew's Genealogy

While the main theme of Matthew's genealogy seems to be clear, this does not mean that Matthew 1:1-17 is void of other legitimate points for expository preaching. At least two minor points can be mentioned for consideration. The first is the appearance of four women in Matthew's genealogy,[51] and the second is Matthew's reference to the supernatural conception of Jesus.

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[49] Wilkins, 60.

[50] Hagner, 11.

[51] Five women actually appear in Matthew's genealogy, if Mary is included. However, a treatment of Mary will be reserved for a discussion of the second of the two minor points identified in Matthew 1:1-17. Also, Bauckham contends that the four women preceding Mary in the genealogy do not necessarily anticipate Mary. Rather, he suggests that the way the genealogy presents the four women and then adjusts in its presentation of Mary is an important distinction to note. He explains, "The remaining annotations [in the genealogy] concern the four women from the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and Mary the mother of Jesus. Discussions of the women in the genealogy often assume that an explanation of the references to the women should relate to all five, such that the four women from the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament in some way foreshadow Mary. This assumption has strongly prejudiced many attempts to explain the references to these four women, but it is by no means a necessary assumption. The four are formally related to the genealogy in quite a different way from Mary. The whole genealogy follows a rigid formulaic pattern (A begat B, B begat

Before each of these minor points are discussed, it is important to explain how the word "minor" is being used here. The word is meant to offer a distinction between Matthew's central intention and other valid points in his genealogy. Thus, the word "minor" is not meant to convey any lack of theological significance for these points. In fact, the two minor points identified in this article for Matthew 1:1-17 are both crucial, and even essential, for understanding Matthew's presentation of Jesus in his Gospel account.

In relation to the mention of four women in Matthew's genealogy, it has been noted that this is not an anomaly in Jewish genealogical records, but it is nevertheless rare.[52] In comparing the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke, Stendahl has noted with reference to Matthew's genealogy, "Its most distinctive feature is the mentioning of the four women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bath-Sheba ('the wife of Uriah')."[53] France, however, has argued that this aspect of Jesus' genealogy, while important to expositors, was not Matthew's main concern. He wrote, "I suppose most expository attention these days is given to what is for Matthew a very minor part of the genealogy: the presence of the four women in 1:3-6."[54]

Assuming the exegetical observations above reveal Matthew's main thrust in his genealogy and that the mention of the four women are

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C, C begat D ...) that none of the annotations before verse 16 disturbs ... This is true of the four biblical women, all of whom are attached to the regular pattern by means of the same formula (ἐκ τῆς Θαμάρ, etc.). But with Joseph the basic formula of the genealogy for the first (and last) time changes: 'Joseph the husband of Mary, from whom was born Jesus ...' (τὸν Ἰωσὴφ τὸν ἄνδρα Μαρίας, ἐξ ἧς ἐγεννήθη Ἰησοῦς). Whereas Judah did beget Perez and Zerah 'by Tamar,' Joseph did not beget Jesus. Mary appears in the genealogy because Matthew cannot otherwise explain Joseph's relationship to Jesus. This most fundamental reason why Mary appears in the genealogy has no precedent in the other four women, and so it is not at all obvious why their function in the genealogy should have to be related to Mary." (Bauckham, 21-22).

[52] Johnson, 153.

[53] Krister Stendahl, "Quis et Unde? An Analysis of Matthew 1-2," in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, second edition, edited by Graham Stanton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 69.

[54] R. T. France, "Preaching on the Infancy Narratives," in *Preaching the New Testament*, edited by Ian Paul and David Wenham (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013), 41.

important but not Matthew's main point, a natural question arises: How does this minor point of the genealogy support its main point? Various theories have been suggested for Matthew's purpose for including the women in his genealogy.[55] However, it would be best to ground a theory in this regard on cues from the immediate context of Matthew 1:1-17 as well as his overall focus throughout his Gospel account.

To begin, since Jesus is introduced with three titles in Matthew 1:1, then it would seem reasonable to assume that the various aspects of the genealogy would be framed by these titles. Thus, Jesus is presented as the Messiah with the title Χριστός, and the structure of the genealogy points to this eschatological fulfillment of God's covenant promises to Abraham and to David.[56] Jesus is presented as the Davidic Messiah with the title υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ, and the various ways David is emphasized in the genealogy (see related points in the article above) support his Davidic lineage and right to David's throne. Jesus is also presented as the υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ. However, one may wonder how this title receives further attention in the genealogy, and this is where the mention of the four women could come into view.

While there is some debate about the lineage of the four women named in Matthew's genealogy, Johnson has noted that "it is highly probable that, at the time of the composition of Matthew, each of the four, in Jewish tradition, was considered to be of Gentile stock."[57] Brown also explains, "According to the Bible, Rahab and (probably) Tamar were Canaanites, while Ruth was a Moabite. Bathsheba is not identified in the OT as a foreigner; but it is as the wife of Uriah (*the Hittite*) that Matthew identifies her, and indeed this peculiar designation constitutes the strongest argument for the proposal that the four women were thought of as foreigners in the genealogy of the Messiah."[58] While Brown does not see this as the primary reason for Matthew's inclusion of the these women in Jesus' genealogy, he nevertheless views this theory as a part of

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[55] Johnson, 153-189. For an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses for various arguments for Matthew's purpose(s) for including four women in his genealogy, see also Bauckham, 22-28.

[56] Kingsbury, 45.

[57] Johnson, 153.

[58] Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 72.

Matthew's overall theme for his Gospel account. In fact, he writes, "It was to Matthew's interest that the four OT women were also Gentiles or associated with Gentiles (Uriah's wife). This did not foreshadow the role of Mary [in the genealogy], but it did foreshadow the role of the Messiah who was to bring Gentiles into God's plan of salvation – people who, though not Jews, were like Jesus in their descent from Abraham."[59] In contrast, although Bauckham sees other theories for Matthew's inclusion of the four women in Jesus' genealogy as having some merit, he argues, "I conclude that the identification of the four women from the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament as Gentiles offers an interpretation of their place in the genealogy that both finds a convincing element common to all four and also accords well with the overall messianic purpose of the genealogy."[60] So, the appearance of four women in Matthew's genealogy draws attention to Matthew's point that Jesus is the "son of Abraham" sent to redeem the world. In other words, while the multi-faceted ways David is emphasized in the genealogy support Jesus' legal claim to the throne of David, the striking mention of these four women underscore Jesus' inclusion of Gentiles in God's redemptive plan as a fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant.

The second minor point in Matthew's genealogy is the supernatural conception of Jesus which s clearly implied in Matthew 1:16 in light of a grammatical and syntactical observation.[61] First, grammatically, Matthew changes the tense of the verb γεννάω in its occurrences in verses 2-15 and its occurrence in verse 16b. This grammatical shift, after its clearly established pattern through repetition in the genealogy, is striking. Wilkins observes that "in [Matthew] 1:2-16 there are forty occurrences of [the verb γεννάω]. All the others are in the active voice (e.g., 1:2: 'Abraham was the father of'; lit., 'fathered, gave birth to' Isaac), emphasizing the human action in giving birth to a child. But in 1:16 the verb is in the passive voice, where the subject Mary, receives the action or is acted upon … This is a common construction in the New Testament,

[59] Ibid., 74.

[60] Bauckham, 27.

[61] For a discussion of the textual variants related to Matthew 1:16, especially in relation to their impact on a discussion of Jesus' virgin birth, see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1971), 2-7.

which many grammarians call a 'divine passive,' where God is the assumed agent of the action."[62] Second, syntactically, Hagner explains how the use of the feminine relative pronoun in Matthew 1:16 emphasizes the virgin birth of Jesus: "Having brought the genealogy down to Joseph, the evangelist identifies him as the husband of Mary, and the attention shifts to her (ἐξ ἧς, "from whom"). The repeated active verb ἐγέννησεν gives way to a divine passive (i.e., God is the active agent). Joseph is important – it is his genealogy, after all, that is traced – but as the extraordinary change in the syntax indicates, he is not important as the physical father of Jesus but rather … as his legal parent."[63] Wallace also offers an explanation of the syntactical and theological significance of the shift in gender for the relative pronoun in Matthew 1:16 when he writes, "The English translation [of Matthew 1:16] does not bring out the gender [of the relative pronoun] in Greek: 'by whom' (ἐξ ἧς) is feminine, referring to Mary. To list women indirectly in a Jewish genealogy was unusual (as was done with Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and 'the wife of Uriah'), but to list a woman by directly linking her to the offspring was startling. The discourse follows with an explanation: Jesus was miraculously conceived (vv. 18-25)."[64]

Of course, some may argue that these grammatical and syntactical indicators of the supernatural conception of Jesus in Matthew 1:16 are so clear that this point should be viewed as a major point rather than a minor point in Jesus' genealogy. However, if Matthew 1:1 functions as a hermeneutical control for discerning the biblical author's central thrust for the passage, then it is perhaps best to take Matthew 1:16 as a supporting or minor point in the overall passage. Thus, Jesus is the Davidic Messiah who was also divine, and he is the son of Abraham who has come to bring God's salvific blessings to the nations. Furthermore, it seems that the grammatical and syntactical signals of Jesus' virgin birth in Matthew 1:16 are intended to provide a segue to the next passage in Matthew's infancy narrative, namely, the description of Jesus' supernatural conception and actual birth in Matthew 1:18-25. Commenting on this semantic connection in the narrative, Wilkins

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[62] Wilkins, 63.

[63] Hagner, 12.

[64] Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 336-337.

suggests, "While the genealogy establishes Joseph as the legal father of Jesus, Matthew emphasizes that Mary is the biological parent 'of whom' Jesus was born, preparing the reader for the virgin birth by shifting attention from Joseph to Mary … [Also] Matthew specifies that it was not the sole action of Mary who gave birth, preparing the reader for the angelic announcement of divine action in the conception and birth of Jesus (1:18-25)."[65] So it would seem that the idea of preparation which Wilkins mentions twice lends support to the idea that while the virgin birth of Jesus could be argued to be the main point of Matthew 1:18-25, it would be a minor point in Matthew 1:1-17.

Homiletical Guidelines for Preaching a Minor Point as a Major Point

Now that the main point of Matthew 1:1-17 has been discussed along with two of its minor points, some homiletical guidelines for preaching a minor point of a biblical text as the major point of an expository sermon without missing the main point of a biblical text are in order. How can an expositor be faithful to a focal passage while also being flexible in terms of what point(s) of a passage are emphasized in a sermon? The following suggestions could function as homiletical rails to keep an expository sermon on track with its corresponding focal passage.

To begin, an expository sermon should always unpack a focal passage's minor point in the context of its main point. To fail to do this would essentially mean that a text is not being handled faithfully.[66] Even when Keller raises his question about preaching from the minor points of passages, he is quick, as already quoted above, to offer the following caution: "Expository preachers must major in the text's major ideas and not get lost in the details and tangents that misrepresent the biblical author."[67]

For example, when preparing a sermon from Matthew 1:1-17 which focuses on the inclusion of the four women in Jesus' genealogy, it would be important to explain this minor point in connection with Matthew's main point that Jesus is the Davidic Messiah who brings God's blessings of salvation to all people as promised in the Abrahamic covenant. Furthermore, it would be helpful to illustrate this point with referencing

[65] Wilkins, 63.
[66] Greidanus, 128.
[67] Keller, 44.

and elaborating on other related passages in the Gospel of Matthew. Bauckham, for instance, surmises about some interesting connections between the mention of the four Gentile women in Matthew 1:1-17 and Jesus' interactions with the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21-28 as well as Jesus' commendatory comments about the Centurion's faith in Matthew 8:5-13.[68] Whether or not one accepts all of Bauckham's points along these lines as valid, the main idea here would be to unpack a minor point of a passage in the context of the biblical author's central theme both within its immediate and larger literary contexts.[69] In this way, a minor point of the passage can be the major point of a sermon without missing the main point of the biblical author.

Additionally, an expositor might choose to concentrate on a minor point of a passage for a variety of reasons. For instance, Keller mentions how allowing for flexibility in dealing with the minors points of passages, pastors can preach more than one message from the same text, exploring the multi-faceted theological richness of a focal passage. He writes,

> The Bible is particularly rich, and this is why nearly always when you return to a text several years after having studied it or preached on it you see new ideas and meanings that you hadn't seen before ... Your new study and treatment will supplement and sharpen what you understood about the passage before. The richness of Scripture means that there are always new things to see and find.[70]

Thus, once a pastor has completed an exegetical study of a passage, its main point should be discernable along with its minor points which support the biblical author's main point. Practically speaking, then, several expository sermons could be developed from one focal passage. In using Matthew 1:1-17 as an example, at least three messages could be prepared from this text. One message could focus on Matthew's main point as argued in this article with the minor points mentioned above factoring into the message in relevant ways. Also, two other messages could be developed from Matthew 1:1-17, each one taking its cue from one of the minor points identified for the passage in the context of the

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[68] Bauckham, 41-46.
[69] Greidanus, 137.
[70] Keller, 43-44.

biblical author's main point. Thus, this approach of flexible faithfulness in expository preaching could supply busy pastors who are committed to careful exposition with more homiletical rewards from their exegetical labors.

Additionally, expositors may select a minor point of a focal passage to be the major point of a sermon because of pastoral concerns related to audience awareness. Greidanus offers some general thoughts on how pastoral considerations influence the text selection process when he writes, "Since the purpose of preaching is to build up the church (1 Cor 14:3; Eph 4:11-12), preachers will naturally wish to select preaching texts with an eye to the needs of the church."[71] However, pastoral considerations may not only influence the selection of a preaching text; it may also impact which point in a text, either the main point or one of its legitimate minor points, will serve as the major point of its corresponding sermon. For example, France argued that any sermon based on one of the passages in Matthew's infancy narrative should be developed in light of Matthew's main point when he wrote: "The preacher who bases a sermon on an episode in Matthew's 'infancy narrative' should recognize that it is not a free-standing story but a part of a carefully constructed complex, and that its purpose in Matthew's plan was to demonstrate the scriptural credentials of Jesus as Messiah."[72]

However, France seemed to raise the question of how Matthew's main point in his infancy narrative relates to pastoral considerations in preaching these texts to contemporary congregations when he suggested the following thoughts: "But do congregations today either need or want to be convinced from Scripture that Jesus is the Messiah promised to the Jews? ... The formula quotations of chapters 1-2 are a happy hunting ground for the exegetical commentator, and call forth an extraordinary range of suggested scriptural connections, with each commentator vying with the next in the rabbinic subtlety deployed. But is this what our Christian congregations have come for?"[73]

Whether or not one completely agrees with the thoughts France conveyed above, he nevertheless raises some interesting questions which many pastors who are committed to expository preaching have likely

[71] Greidanus, 124-125.
[72] France, "Preaching on the Infancy Narratives," 40.
[73] Ibid., 40-41.

raised over the course of their preaching ministries. Perhaps the following homiletical suggestion may be helpful. In certain ministry settings, the importance of audience awareness may provide guidance for which point of a text may be most beneficial as the major point of a sermon. For instance, for a Christmas service where many visitors may be present who may or may not be Christians, focusing on God's gracious offer of salvation to the world as evidenced in the inclusion of the four women in Jesus' genealogy would be most helpful. Although this is a minor point in Matthew 1:1-17, it could be unpacked in view of the context of Matthew's main point concerning Jesus, the Davidic Messiah who fulfills God's covenant promises in the Old Testament. For a regular Bible study or worship service setting where more seasoned Christians are in attendance, elaborating on Matthew's main point related to Jesus' rightful claim to the throne of David and his fulfillment of the Davidic and Abrahamic covenant promises as supported by the inclusion of the four women named in the genealogy may be more appropriate.

Related to the above idea but somewhat distinct is the homiletical guideline of emphasizing various nuances in the minor points of a focal passage. For example, it is not uncommon for commentaries to raise the question as to why Matthew mentions four women (or five women, if Mary is included) in his genealogy. Although this article has argued that their Gentile background is primarily in view given Matthew's main point about Jesus being the son of Abraham who brought God's blessings to the nations, other theories have been offered to explain Matthew's reasoning and purpose for this feature of his genealogy. Some have contended that the four women were examples of God's gracious salvation in Christ. After commenting on how this view was first advocated by Jerome, Brown explains that "[the inclusion of these four women] foreshadowed for Matthew's readers the role of Jesus as the Savior of sinful men."[74]

Others have suggested that Matthew's main thrust for naming four women in his genealogy was to stress God's providential work throughout history in fulfilling his redemptive plan in Christ. Hagner comments, "The sovereign plan and purpose of God are often worked out in and through the most unlikely turn of events, and even through women who, though Gentiles or harlots, are receptive to God's will. The

[74] Brown, 71.

virgin birth and the importance of Mary are just such surprising and scandalous (though in Mary's case only seemingly scandalous) ways through which God brings his purposes to realization in the story of Jesus. The women then serve as reminders that God often works in the most unusual ways and that to be open to his sovereign activity is to be prepared for the surprising."[75]

Still others have suggested that the first four women mentioned in the genealogy anticipate and serve as an apologetic for the subsequent mention of Mary at the end of Matthew's genealogical list. Blomberg argues that "The only factor that clearly applies to all four [women] is that suspicions of illegitimacy surrounded their sexual activity and childbearing. This suspicion of illegitimacy fits perfectly with that which surrounded Mary, which Matthew immediately takes pains to refute (vv. 18-25) … Within the Gospels, Jewish polemic hinted (John 8:48) and in the early centuries of the Christian era explicitly charged that Jesus was an illegitimate child. Matthew here strenuously denies the charge, but he also points out that key members of the messianic genealogy were haunted by similar suspicions … Such suspicions, nevertheless, did not impugn the spiritual character of the individuals involved. In fact, Jesus came to save precisely such people. Already here in the genealogy, Jesus is presented as the one who will ignore human labels of legitimacy and illegitimacy to offer his gospel of salvation to all, including the despised and outcasts of society."[76]

Of course, various scholars have noted both the strengths of these theories as well as raised objections to them. While one theory may be argued to be the most dominate for Matthew's purpose, the other ideas may still be a part of Matthew's argument. Thus, Carson, after surveying various theories, comments, "There is no reason to rule out any of the above interpretations. Matthew, Jew that he is, knows how to write with an allusive touch; and readers steeped in the OT would naturally call to mind a plethora of images associated with many names in this selective genealogy."[77] And it is this point which may be particularly relevant to the idea of a faithful flexibility in preaching from the minor point related to Matthew mentioning the four women in Jesus' genealogy. For

[75] Hagner, 10.
[76] Blomberg, 55-56.
[77] Carson, 66.

example, perhaps a message could mention the four main theories for why Matthew included women in his genealogical list as the four main divisions of a sermon, and the ways these four theories are supported in light of the main point of Matthew 1:1-17 as well as key theological themes which surface throughout Matthew's Gospel account. Such a message could serve well in helping a congregation to learn how to read Scripture and study it in terms of testing and rooting interpretive theories in the details of a passage's immediate and larger contexts. In describing various benefits for expository preaching, Merida explains how "exposition teaches people how to study the Bible on their own … They will understand the importance of context, words, and biblical genres … Expository preaching will produce expository preachers and expository students."[78] So preaching the diverse nuances of a minor point of a passage in the context of its main point could yield a wide range of benefits to listeners.

One other idea which could be mentioned about preaching a minor point of a passage as the major point of a sermon in relation to pastoral considerations would be the inspiration of Scripture and its impact on the preacher. Keller elaborates on this idea when, after raising some challenges to the assertion that every biblical text has only one central theme which is discernable, he writes that "even when you think you have discerned the primary theme or subject (and usually the main subject *is* clear), because this is the inspired Word of God, even the more tangential statements and the semi-developed assumptions of the inspired author are rich sources of instruction. Not only the author's major points but also his minor points should be attended to, since they are also from God."[79]

Of course, Keller's points are well-taken. In Paul's classic description of the inspiration of Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, he mentioned that every aspect of God's written revelation is powerfully impactful. After making a case for the inspiration of both the Old and New Testaments in light of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and other passages, Grudem concludes that "once we establish that a New Testament writing belongs to the special category 'scripture,' then we are correct in applying 2 Timothy 3:16 to that writing as well, and saying that that writing also has the

[78] Merida, 12.
[79] Keller, 250.

characteristic Paul attributes to 'all scripture': it is 'God-breathed,' and all its words are the very words of God."[80] Thus, if every word of Scripture is inspired by God, then it follows that all the points, both major and minor points, which emerge in biblical passages are equally inspired by God's Spirit.

Now, how does this doctrine of verbal plenary inspiration impact the idea of faithful flexibility, specifically? Homileticians have noted how a passage's impact on a preacher often translates into a more passionate delivery of its message. Greidanus makes this point when he writes, "Texts that grab hold of preachers and speak to them will naturally be preached with more conviction and enthusiasm than texts that do not involve them at the moment."[81] This idea of how certain texts or aspects of a text resonate with preachers at particular moments in their lives may provide a further homiletical guideline for why a preacher might focus on a minor point of a passage as the major point of its corresponding sermon. When a preacher is unusually struck either through the comfort or conviction of the Spirit by a specific aspect of a passage, this can naturally serve as the major point of a sermon on this text even if it flows from a minor point in the passage, since all the points of the passage are equally inspired by the Spirit.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction to the article, Keller's question about whether or not a minor point in a passage can serve as the major point of its corresponding expository sermon without missing the main point of a passage is answered in the affirmative. There is a way to exercise a faithful flexibility in biblical exposition in this regard in various ways. Through the unpacking of a minor point in light of a text's main point, the major point of a sermon can nevertheless remain a faithful handling of the focal passage. Also, diverse pastoral considerations can provide a homiletical rationale for why and how the minor point of a passage may serve as the major point of a sermon without missing the biblical author's main point in a passage. In at least these ways, faithful

[80] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 76.
[81] Greidanus, 125.

flexibility is a possibility for those committed to the expository preaching of Scripture.

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Fifty Years of Innovative Church Evangelism

ELMER TOWNS
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During the 1950s a negative dread swept over Protestant churches, many mainline denominations reported a decline in attendance, membership, and offerings.[1] A newspaper article shocked readers when it announced, "God is Dead."[2] What else could be the response when nationally recognized churches were declining?

But against that national gloom, a bright new movement dawned. Several innovative expressions of evangelistic outreaches among evangelical churches showed optimism. As an interested observer and/or participant at Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia, I began writing on the new movement in church growth, specifically among evangelical churches, (1) the explosion of large Sunday schools, (2) next the praise/worship church, and (3) and finally, the multisite church.

The Evangelistic Sunday School

As Sunday school editor of *Christian Life Magazine* (1965-75), I saw something different as I traveled among the large Sunday schools in Baptist, Pentecostal, and Independent churches. I saw large evangelistic Sunday schools. I saw the gospel preached with power, I saw large numbers responding to gospel invitations to be saved and/or joining the church. I saw large numbers of dedicated laymen teaching Sunday school, making evangelistic calls in homes. I sensed and felt a new feeling of revival, not gloom.

Then I decided to conduct a national research to find the ten largest Sunday schools in the United States, i.e., what methods they used, the

[1] Elmer Towns, *Is The Day of the Denomination Dead* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1974).
[2] Ibid., 10ff.

effectiveness of their methods, and how they integrated evangelism into the life of the total church.[3]

Using three research tools, I first surveyed citywide interdenominational Sunday school organizations across America and Canada to find the reasons for their growth and effectiveness. Second, I surveyed denominations to find and analyze their largest Sunday schools within their clientele. Third, I advertised broadly in *Christian Life Magazine* searching for the largest Sunday schools in all 50 states.

The results of my research was published in October 1967, *Christian Life Magazine*. The church editor of *The Los Angeles Times* printed the results of the surveys in their large Sunday edition because several large Sunday schools were located in Southern California. The editor voiced the universal response to the news of the large Sunday schools by writing, "The news of large aggressive Sunday schools has hit America like a lightning bolt."[4]

Attention to the ten largest Sunday schools received immediate and overwhelming response. Then with further research I released *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools And What Makes Them Grow*[5]. The public wanted to know more. This book stayed on the bestseller list for 14 months demonstrating public interest in large growing Sunday schools.

Historically the dominant American Protestant churches in America had been focused on liturgical worship experiences of deep organ tones, people praying responsively from the hymn book, and listening to short sermons. But these new evangelistic churches with growing Sunday schools were evangelistically focused much like traditional revival meetings where the gospel was preached, invitations to receive Christ were given at the end of the sermon and people coming forward for salvation. These Sunday schools were organized around the evangelistic purpose of the church. Teachers visited prospects to solicit attendance and/or to lead potential class members to Christ.

These churches not only focused on large Sunday school attendance, but they also focused on yearly evangelistic campaigns to build attendance. These churches kept statistics concerning numbers of people being saved, baptized, and added to the church. Teachers gave a

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[3] Towns, *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1969).

[4] Towns, *Walking With Giants* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2012), 152.

[5] Towns, *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools*.

gospel invitation for students to receive Christ. These churches are characterized by *Aggressive Organizational Evangelism.*

America's Ten Largest Sunday Schools, 1969

Akron Baptist Temple, Akron, Ohio – 5,762
Highland Park Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee – 4,821
First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas – 4,731
First Baptist Church, Hammond, Indiana – 3,978
Canton Baptist Temple, Canton, Ohio – 3,581
Landmark Baptist Temple, Cincinnati, Ohio – 3,540
Temple Baptist Church, Detroit, Michigan – 3,400
First Baptist Church, Van Nuys, California – 2,847
Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia – 2,640
Calvary Temple, Denver, Colorado – 2,453

The New Praise/Worship Church

In the mid-1980s a new evangelistic strategy developed among churches that was different from the Sunday school emphasis largely found in Baptist, Pentecostal, and Independent churches. It was also different from traditional "dead" Protestant churches, a new strategy aimed at the emerging Baby Boomer generation appealing to the "me" generation, or the consumer-generation. Baby Boomers were consumers who chose churches like they were shopping for the necessities of life. They wanted a new meaningful church experience from their parents. As an experience-driven generation, they chose a church to touch God ... feel God ... and meet God personally.

I talked to a gentleman who left a liturgical church to became an avid worshiper in a Baby Boomer church. He had been turned off by evangelistic preaching in the Sunday school church. He complained, "They just preach at me." When first attending a praise-worship service and hearing the beat of drums, guitars strumming, and the whine of a Hammond organ, his hands went up and he worshiped God, "This is me!" he replied. He prayed in his heart while singing the worship songs from the overhead screen and confessed, "I found myself lifting my hands to God, singing to God, talking to God, and I experienced God."

These praise-worship churches began to grow and explode in attendance. Yes, they were worship centered, just as traditional Protestant churches, but more than that; they were "worshiper

centered," where each experienced God's presence. They felt this was the way church ought to worship.

When I saw the revolution on worship, I wrote another bestseller; *Ten of Today's Most Innovative Churches*[6] published by Regal Books, 1990, describing the new worship experience.

Ten Praise/Worship Churches, 1991

Skyline Wesleyan Church, San Diego, California – 3,128
Willow Creek Community Church, South Barrington, Illinois – 12,002
The Church on the way, Van Nuys, California – 6,347
New Hope Community Church, Portland, Oregon – 5,000
Perimeter Church, Atlanta, Georgia – 2,000
First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida – 7,600
Central Community Church, Wichita, Kansas – 2,015
Second Baptist Church, Houston, Texas – 12,182
Horizon Christian Fellowship, San Diego, California – 3,800
Mount Paran Church of God, Atlanta, Georgia – 8,850

These new Baby Bloomer churches[7] introduced innovative contemporary praise-worship music reflecting contemporary sound, not the traditional quiet solemn worship. The pastor's new role equipped believers for ministry, rather than his past role of being the center of pastoral duties. The new contemporary pastor led a team of men and women; each ministering in his/her area, the pastor was no longer the center of ministry. The new approach bonded people to one another, rather than just joining as a church member. Also, Baby Boomer churches spread out with multi-services in the sanctuary, even using Saturday night for church services. That prepared the way for the most innovation in evangelistic outreach.

The New Multisite Church Movement

Remember in the 1960s, it was the successful organized Sunday school outreach to the multitudes. In the 1990s, it was the Baby Boomers

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[6] Towns, *Ten of Today's Most Innovative Churches* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 1990).
[7] Ibid., 15-20.

using innovative praise/worship service to worship God, and at the same time the unsaved were attracted to their experienced-based worship. Now in the 2020s a new expression (method) of church outreach is the multisite church. More than just bigger sanctuaries, multisite churches exploded beyond city limits, beyond state boundaries. Some multisite churches cover their entire state. Some covered their entire nation. A few reached out around the world.

The multisite church innovation is built on two dynamic principles that has been a foundation for modern advances in the world: (1) communication, (2) transportation. First, the multisite church takes advantage of the communication explosion taking place on the internet, television, and other electronic inventions to communicate the gospel to unreached people everywhere. Transportation is a second evolution making multisite churches possible. An aggregative multisite church reaches (in communication and transportation) across cities, states, and national boundaries to create new centers or sites of ministry. These extension churches centered their influence to unreached areas and unreached people groups.

In 2020 I released *Ten Of The Largest Growing Church Ministries Aggressively Touching The World.*[8] To reflect the evolving publishing industry, several of these large churches sent an email copy of this book to their church members. Over 300,000 (a third of a million) copies were distributed, while not producing added income for the publisher, nor did it receive recognition from news services to put this book on the bestselling list, God has used the message of the book to enhance and grow the work of these ten multisite churches.

Ten Innovative Churches

The Church of the Highlands, Birmingham, Alabama – 55,000 worshipers. A multisite church in 55 locations across Alabama.

Hillsong Church, Australia – 150,000 worshipers. Some claim this is the largest attended church influencing the world through television, social media, and church planting. Hillsong International Leadership College is located in several nations around the world with students representing 70 countries, and

[8] Towns, *Ten of the Largest Church Ministries Aggressively Touching the World* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, Inc., 2020).

Hillsong worship is shared by their television channel seen in over 180 countries.

Life Church, Oklahoma City – 100,000 worshipers. The largest attended church in the U.S. with over 40 campuses across America

World Harvest Center, Fiji – vision to plant 100,000 churches. Pastor Suliasi Kurulo planted and built the church to over 5,000 in attendance, but has planted over 7,000 churches throughout the Pacific Ocean.

The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Nigeria. Planted 42,000 churches in Nigeria and in 180 nations around the world. Its vision is to plant a church within five minutes of everyone in major locations around the world. The first Holy Ghost Congress was held in 1998, with over seven million attendees, the largest gathering of people in a church worship service televised worldwide by CNN and BBC.

Global Church Network. While this is not a "church," it influences megachurches and church planting agencies sharing strategy, vision, and news, plus instructs over 60,000 church planters with online training, and face-to-face teaching in their 100 HUBS around the world.

Glory of Zion, Corinth, Texas – 55,000 worshipers. One of the largest worship services using the internet by live streaming to its aligned believers (church members) and its 10,000 worldwide house churches.

New Life Assembly of God, Chennai, India – 60,000 worshipers. The largest attended church in India with an average of 60,000 worshipers weekly in 5 campuses and has planted 150 churches.

Word of Hope Church, Manila, Philippines – 60,000 worshipers. With 60 satellite churches and has planted over 300 independent churches in the Philippines.

Love Fellowship, Southern Asia. An underground church that has planted 30,000 house churches and 5,000 street churches by translating the Bible in the native languages of the people and using the Bible to plant new churches.

When Jesus promised to build His church, notice the things He did not include, i.e., methods of evangelism, or ministry, or worship or

organizational forms and functions. Also He did not include all the doctrinal intricacies we include in our church's designations today.

Jesus' idea of church was broad enough to involve all the variations that different people in different cultures have followed in worship experience. Jesus' idea was also broad enough to include the various organizational structures that different cultures have followed. And also, Jesus' idea of church was broad enough to include all the ways and methods churches have used to operate themselves, to function properly, and to accomplish the goal that Jesus set for all His followers, "Go into all the world and make disciples (followers) of all people groups, and I will be with you till the end of this age" (Matthew 18:19-20, ELT).

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It's Worse Than We Think: A Fresh Look at ΟΙΚΟΔΟΜΗ in Matthew 24:1 and Mark 13:1-2

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Introduction[1]

When it comes to the task of biblical interpretation, the common adage "context determines meaning" reigns supreme among most conservative biblical scholars. In other words, to rightly understand a passage of Scripture, one must interpret the passage in light of its various contexts. One such context is the passage's "situational context," which could be considered a subset of the historical-cultural context. Especially important, though, is understanding that the situational context directly impacts how one understands words and their implied meaning in a given passage. Ethnographer Bronislaw Malinowski writes:

> …(language) becomes only intelligible when it is placed within a context of situation, if I may be allowed to coin an expression which indicates on the one hand that the conception of context has to be broadened and on the other that the situation in which words are uttered can never be passed over as irrelevant to the linguistic expression… utterance and situation are bound up inextricably with each other and the context of situation is indispensable for the understanding of the words. Exactly as… a word without linguistic

[1] I would like to thank Dr. Alan Tomlinson for bringing this paper topic to my attention. Any weaknesses or errors throughout this paper are the responsibility of the author and should not reflect upon Dr. Tomlinson.

> context is a mere figment and stands for nothing by itself, so… the utterance has no meaning except in the context of situation.[2]

If Malinowski is correct, then the situation in which words appear directly affects how one understands what each word means in a given piece of communication. Therefore, when it comes to the task of biblical interpretation, the better one understands the situational context of a given book, pericope, or word, the more likely one is to arrive at the correct interpretation.

This concept is directly relevant to how one understands the use of οἰκοδομή in Matthew 24:1 and Mark 13:1-2. At the beginning of Matthew 24 and Mark 13, Jesus is leaving the temple grounds after teaching there. In Mark 13, which contains a more descriptive account than Matthew 24, the disciples marvel at the great stones and the great οἰκοδομαί of the temple. While virtually every English translation and commentator[3] alike render οἰκοδομαί as the "buildings" of the temple, thereby invoking the image of the disciples marveling at a completed temple precinct, the purpose of this paper is to argue that if the Old Testament context of "stone upon stone" and the situational context related to the reconstruction of the second temple are taken into consideration, οἰκοδομαί should be rendered as something like "buildings under construction." Therefore, what the disciples are actually marveling at are the great stones and the great construction on the temple complex likely taking place before their eyes as they are leaving the temple grounds.

This thesis will be argued, first, by examining the two uses of οἰκοδομή, second, by analyzing the singular and plural uses of οἰκοδομή, and, third, by establishing pertinent contextual factors which directly relate to how one renders οἰκοδομή in Matthew 24:1 and Mark 13:1-2, namely, the Old Testament context of "stone upon stone" and the

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[2] Bronislaw Malinowski, "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages," in *The Meaning of Meaning*, eds. Charles K. Ogden and Ian A. Richards, (London: Routledge, 1923), 306.

[3] This author was surprised at the lack of discussion concerning how to render οἰκοδομή in Mathew 24:1 and Mark 13:1-2 amongst commentators. Most commentators just assume it should be rendered as "buildings" and then move on with their discussion.

situational context related to the reconstruction of the second temple. While misunderstanding a given word in its context can sometimes lead to minimal differences in actual meaning, this paper will demonstrate that it can also paint a dramatically different picture significantly changing how one understands a given passage.

The Two Uses of Οἰκοδομή

Before getting into the meat of the argument, it is first necessary to lay the skeletal foundation of the uses of οἰκοδομή in ancient Greek literature.[4] According to BDAG,[5] there are two primary uses. First, and beginning with the less common use, it can mean "a building as result of a construction process, building, edifice."[6] This use focuses on the completion or product of a building project and can be seen in the following examples. First, in 2 Corinthians 5:1, Paul says, "For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building [οἰκοδομὴν] from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."[7] Whatever precisely Paul is referring to by the eternal building from God made without hands is beyond the argument of this paper. The pertinent point is that this is a clear reference of οἰκοδομή not being used for a building currently under construction.

Another example comes from the *Epistle of Barnabas* which states, "Moreover I will tell you likewise concerning the temple, how these wretched men being led astray set their hope on the building [οἰκοδομὴν], and not on their God that made them, as being a house of God."[8] In this context, the author of the *Epistle of Barnabas* seems to be

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[4] What is missing from this study is a detailed look of οἰκοδομή in epigraphy. While this author found numerous relevant examples of οἰκοδομή in the singular in epigraphy, there were not enough substantial examples of οἰκοδομή in the plural to be used in this study.

[5] Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and William Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[6] Ibid., 697.

[7] Unless otherwise stated, all English translations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

[8] Joseph Barber Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, *The Apostolic Fathers* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1891), 284.

referring to these wretched men setting their hope on the completed temple instead of God Himself.

The second use of οἰκοδομή put forth by BDAG is the "process of building, building, construction."[9] This is the more predominant use and can be seen in the following examples. First, 1 Chronicles 26:27 says, "He [Shelomoth] took these things from the cities and from the spoils and dedicated from them *so as to* not fall behind the building [οἰκοδομὴν] of the sanctuary of God."[10] 1 Esdras 2:25 says, "Then, when the letter from King Artaxerxes was read, Rehum and the scribe Shimshai and their associates went quickly to Jerusalem, with cavalry and a large number of armed troops, and began to hinder the builders. And the building [οἰκοδομὴ] of the temple in Jerusalem stopped until the second year of the reign of King Darius of the Persians." A couple chapters later in 1 Esdras 4:51, when King Darius commanded the resumption of the building in Jerusalem, he said "that twenty talents a year should be given for the building [οἰκοδομήν] of the temple until it was completed." Undoubtedly, in each of these contexts, οἰκοδομή refers to buildings under construction.

In addition to this literal use of οἰκοδομή as referring to construction, BDAG also states that it can be used figuratively for construction. This use of οἰκοδομὴ is prominent in the apostle Paul's epistles. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:21, how the church or household of God is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure [οἰκοδομὴ], being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord."[11] Since the "structure" or edification, that is the body of Christ, still "grows into a holy temple," current construction in view here. As another example, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 14:5, "Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks

[9] Danker, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 696.

[10] Rick Brannan et al., eds., *The Lexham English Septuagint* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 1 Ch 26:27.

[11] Unless otherwise stated, all New Testament Greek citations or references to the Greek text underlying the English translation come from Eberhard Nestle et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2015).

in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built [οἰκοδομὴν] up." Here again, the focus is on the current edification of the church.

The most observant readers may have noticed a seeming disparity in the examples above, namely, all of the examples of οἰκοδομὴ occur in the singular while the uses in Matthew 24:1 and Mark 13:1-2 occur in the plural. Does this impact whether οἰκοδομὴ is rendered as "buildings" or "buildings under construction"?

Difference Between Singular/Plural?

The plural use of οἰκοδομὴ can be used to denote completed buildings as seen in the following examples. First, Plutarch writes in *Camillus* 32:3:

> Then the inclinations of the multitude were marvelously changed. They exhorted and incited one another to the work, and pitched upon their several sites, not by any orderly assignment, but as each man found it convenient and desirable. Therefore the city was rebuilt with confused and narrow streets and a maze of houses, owing to their haste and speed. Within a year's time, it is said, a new city had arisen, with walls to guard it and homes [οἰκοδομαῖς] in which to dwell.[12]

This is a great example of BDAG's use of "a building as a result of a construction process."[13] In the context, the city being rebuilt connotes construction, yet the focus is on the completed product of "homes in which to dwell."[14] Another example of the plural of οἰκοδομὴ meaning completed buildings is found in Philo when he describes the destruction of Sodom. He writes, "And the folds for the cattle, and the houses of the men, and the walls, and all that was in any building [οἰκοδομαῖς], whether of private or public property, were all burnt. And in one day these populous cities became the tomb of their inhabitants, and the vast

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[12] Plutarchus and Bernadotte Perrin, *Plutarch Lives, II: Themistocles and Camillus. Aristides and Cato Major. Cimon and Lucullus*, Reprinted (Cambridge, MS: Harvard University Press, 2006), 175.

[13] Danker, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 697.

[14] Plutarchus and Perrin, *Plutarch Lives, II*, 175.

edifices of stone and timber became thin dust and ashes."[15] In this context, which lacks the notion of construction, Philo describes people perishing in completed buildings.

While these examples demonstrate that the plural of οἰκοδομὴ can mean completed buildings, there are also several examples of the plural being used to connote current construction. First, Strabo writes, "The transport of the marble [λίθος] is easy, as the quarries lie near to the sea, and from the sea they are conveyed by the Tiber. Tyrrhenia likewise supplies most of the straightest and longest planks for building [οἰκοδομὰς], as they are brought direct from the mountains to the river."[16] While this example is not referring to construction on a particular building, this use of οἰκοδομὰς connotes construction in general and not the completed product. Second, in a similar example again from Strabo, he writes, "At the present day the wood is mostly employed for building [οἰκοδομὰς] houses in Rome, and in the country villas [of the Romans], which resemble in their gorgeousness Persian palaces."[17] Additionally, Plutarch writes, "While the Athenians were building [οἰκοδομῶν] the Parthenon, they turned loose for free and unrestricted pasturage such mules as were seen to be most persistently laborious."[18] This example is especially relevant because it demonstrates that the plural use of οἰκοδομὴ denoting construction can be linked to a singular noun. This is what is seen in Matthew 24:1 which says, "Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the οἰκοδομὰς of the temple."

While more examples could be cited, these three are sufficient to demonstrate that the plural of οἰκοδομὴ can be used to denote current construction or buildings under construction. As was stated in the introduction, how one determines which use is intended by the author comes down to context. It is obvious from how οἰκοδομὴ has been continuously translated in Matthew 24:1 and Mark 13:1-2, that "buildings" is a suitable translation within the context of Matthew 24 and

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[15] Philo and Charles Duke Yonge, *The Works of Philo* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 423.

[16] Strabo and H. C. Hamilton, *The Geography of Strabo. Literally Translated, with Notes, in Three Volumes* (Medford, MA: George Bell & Sons, 1903), 330.

[17] Strabo and Hamilton, *The Geography of Strabo*, 331.

[18] Plutarchus and Perrin, *Plutarch Lives, II*, 317.

Mark 13. Yet, are there any contextual factors that would favor rendering οἰκοδομὴ as "buildings under construction" or "edifications" instead of completed "buildings?" This author believes so, and these contextual factors will be the focus of the rest of this paper.

Contextual Factors Related to the Meaning of Οἰκοδομὴ in Matthew 24:1 and Mark 13:1-2

For the purposes of this paper, two relevant contexts will be examined. First, there will be a discussion of a possible Old Testament context for "stone upon stone." Second, there will be a discussion of the situational context related to the reconstruction of the second temple.

The Old Testament Context of "Stone Upon Stone"

In Mark 13:2, Matthew 24:2, and Luke 21:6,[19] Jesus makes a very strong statement concerning the stones of the temple mount. As an example of the parallel passages, Jesus says in Matthew 24:2, "Truly, I

[19] One might think that the argument of this paper seems to contradict a plain reading of the parallel passage in Luke 21:5-6 which says, "And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, 'As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.'" In this passage, οἰκοδομὴ is not used, and one could argue that since Luke uses the perfect passive indicative form κεκόσμηται (lit. "had been adorned"), he seems to be describing the completed temple which had been adorned with "noble" or beautiful stones and "offerings." However, to assume this is in reference to a fully completed structure would be to say too much. It seems perfectly feasible, in fact likely, to say that both depictions can be true at the same time. Meaning, Matthew and Mark focus on the part of the conversation that emphasized what was currently under construction, hence their use of οἰκοδομὴ which is the word more prominently used for ongoing construction. Likewise, Luke focuses on the part of the conversation that emphasized what has already been constructed. He describes the beauty, craftsmanship, and gifts that went into adorning the temple, hence his depiction of the gifts and the stones as beautiful (καλοῖς), not simply great (ποταποὶ) as in Mark 13:2. Additionally, the purpose of this paper is not to say that there were no completed aspects of the temple complex. Since it is well known that the temple complex took years to complete, there would have been completed aspects and uncompleted aspects at the same time, therefore, this supposed contradiction does not appear to be irreconcilable with the argument of this paper.

say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another [λίθος ἐπὶ λίθον] that will not be thrown down." The only other time "stone upon stone" occurs in the Bible is in Haggai 2:15-16, which states, "Now then, consider from this day onward. Before stone was placed upon stone [λίθον ἐπὶ λίθον] in the temple of the LORD, how did you fare?" Both passages concern the stones of the temple and both passages, arguably, are concerned with construction on the second temple. Therefore, it seems likely that Jesus chose the language of "stone upon stone" intentionally to allude to Haggai 2:15-16. The pertinent question is why did he make such an allusion? In the context of the passage in Haggai, the temple of Jerusalem was under current construction. Not only that, but the reconstruction of the temple was directly tied to the restoration of Israel. Commenting on this section of Haggai, Andrew Hill writes,

> Haggai's third declaration revealed God's intentions to overthrow the nations and restore the fortunes of Israel. It served to encourage and unify the community in their initiative to rebuild the temple. The reminder that divine justice was still operative in human history both fortified the people in spirit and awakened dormant faith. The long-deferred hope of Zion's shame changed into praise was finally becoming a reality.[20]

It appears, then, that Jews during the second temple period associated hope and deliverance with a fully restored temple. Moreover, in Haggai 2:9, the Lord describes how "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former,"[21] which entails, in the least, that there was an expectation of a more elaborate and glorious temple promised by the

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[20] Andrew E. Hill, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Volume 28 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 92.

[21] In addition to the physical aspect of a bigger, more glorious temple complex, Richard Fuhr and Gary Yates also state that "the eschatological hope associated with the temple was the return of Yahweh's glory to dwell among his people (see Ezekiel 40-48; esp. 43:1-7; 44:4). This expectation was fulfilled in part when Jesus, as the incarnated 'glory' of God, presented himself at the Jerusalem temple during his earthly ministry (see John 1:14)." Richard Alan Fuhr and Gary E. Yates, *The Message of the Twelve: Hearing the Voice of the Minor Prophets* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016).

Lord and it was directly related to the fortunes of Israel. Therefore, it is no surprise that the disciples marveled at the great stones and the great construction of the temple. The long-awaited Messiah was right in front of them. The second temple, under Herod the Great's leadership and taxes, had indeed surpassed the glory of the first temple. Surely, the restoration of Israel and the overthrow of the Romans was, indeed, near.

Yet, in astonishing fashion, Jesus does not marvel at the stones or the construction with his disciples. The hope and restoration of Israel is, indeed, immanent, but it has nothing to do with the reconstruction and glorification of the second temple building happening in front of them. Rather, it has to do with the destruction and reconstruction of the temple that is Jesus' body (John 2:20). But, because the Jews misunderstand Jesus and reject him, he uses precise language previously associated with the hope and restoration related to the construction of the second temple, instead, to foretell the dramatic and ironic undoing of the very construction they are witnessing.

If one misses the context of current construction in Matthew 24:1 and Mark 13:1-2, however, this imagery and ironic parallel is easily missed.[22] Therefore, if Jesus was, in fact, alluding to Haggai 2:15-16 by using the language of "stone upon stone," then the argument for understanding οἰκοδομὴ as buildings under construction is strengthened to say the least.

The Situational Context Related to the Reconstruction of the Second Temple

The second pertinent discussion related to the contextual meaning of οἰκοδομὴ in Matthew 24:1 and Mark 13:1-2 involves the situational context related to the reconstruction of the second temple. It is first necessary to begin with the distinction between "ναός" and "ἱερόν" in the

[22] John Nolland recognizes the "echo" to Haggai 2:15 but because he does not understand οἰκοδομὴ as referring to current construction, he fails to see the full significance of the reference. He writes, "There may be a variant on the Babylonian-Exile connection here, with λίθος ἐπὶ λίθον (lit. 'stone on stone') echoing Hg. 2:15, where λίθον ἐπὶ λίθον (MT: *ʾbn ʾl ʾbn*) is used for the beginnings of the construction of the post-Exilic temple: restoration is now to be reversed." John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 959.

context of the New Testament gospels. Often, a confusing aspect of learning Greek for English students is the fact that sometimes two different Greek words are translated with the same English word. One such example is that ναός and ἱερόν are both translated as "temple." While this is not necessarily wrong, the result is that a distinction in the Greek usage is often missed. Though it is granted that the distinction between the terms is not universal,[23] most scholars readily admit that in most instances of these terms in the New Testament, ναός refers to the temple proper while ἱερόν refers to the temple precinct or the entire temple complex.[24]

Why does this distinction matter for the argument of this paper? In short, a correct understanding of John 2:20 would indicate that construction on the ναός, or temple proper, was completed during the reign of Herod the Great. However, according to Josephus, construction on the ἱερόν, or entire temple complex,[25] lasted until A.D. 63 which has direct implications for how one understands οἰκοδομὴ in Matthew 24:1 and Mark 13:1-2.

John 2:20

In John 2:19, Jesus says, "Destroy this temple [ναὸν], and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews respond by saying, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple [ναὸς], and will you raise it up in three

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[23] Though Carson agrees in general about the distinction between "ναός" and "ἱερόν" in the New Testament, he also writes that "the distinction between the two terms is not well preserved in the Greek of this period." D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 181.

[24] For example, see Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), Colin G. Kruse, *John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008).

[25] According to Ehud Netzer, the temple complex included the Inner Enclosure (the Temple proper, the Priest's Court, gatehouses, offices, porticoes, the chel) the Court of Women, the Outer Court (the rachavah and the stoa basileia), and the Court within the Outer Court. Ehud Netzer, *The Architecture of Herod, The Great Builder* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 139-140. For an additional discussion on the temple mount, see Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Jesus in Jerusalem: The Last Days* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 107-111.

days?" As Andreas Köstenberger has noted, the translation of τεσσεράκοντα καὶ ἓξ ἔτεσιν οἰκοδομήθη ὁ ναὸς οὗτος as "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple" is almost certainly incorrect.[26] This translation implies that construction of the ναὸς was still underway when Jesus cleared the temple. But, according to Josephus,

> Herod, in the eighteenth year of his reign [20/19 B.C.], and after the acts already mentioned, undertook a very great work, that is, to build of himself the temple [νεὼν] of God, and make it larger in compass, and to raise it to a most magnificent altitude, as esteeming it to be the most glorious of all his actions, as it really was, to bring it to perfection.[27]

While Josephus would go on to describe how Herod's reconstruction of the temple included the temple precinct at large (the ἱερόν), he later circles back and writes, "But the temple [ναοῦ] itself was built by the priests in a year and six months,—upon which all the people were full of joy; and presently they returned thanks, in the first place, to God; and in the next place for the alacrity the king had shown."[28] Therefore, the ναὸς was completed about 18 months after the initial construction began. But how should one understand "Τεσσεράκοντα καὶ ἓξ ἔτεσιν οἰκοδομήθη ὁ ναὸς οὗτος" in John 2:20 then? Once again, Köstenberger proves helpful when he writes,

> The phrase 'forty-six years' is in the dative (locative), not the accusative (durative)…Likewise, it is unlikely that the aorist passive 'was built' refers to an action still in progress…The logic underlying Jesus' statement may become clearer when his opponents' question is understood as containing an ellipsis: 'This temple was built forty-six years ago–and has stood all that time ever since then– and you

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[26] Köstenberger, *John*, 109. For a discussion and summary of the debate concerning the distinction of the terms "ναός" and "ἱερόν" in John 2:20, see Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 40-43.

[27] Josephus' *Antiquities*, 15. 11. 1 in Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus*, New Updated Ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 423.

[28] Ibid., 15. 11. 6, 425.

> want us to destroy it just so you can raise it up again in three days?' To be sure, they had demanded a sign, but to ask them to tear down the temple just so Jesus could provide the requested sign by rebuilding it within three days…was clearly beyond the pale of what they were willing to do.[29]

In light of both the historical details mentioned by Josephus and the grammar itself, it seems better to render "τεσσεράκοντα καὶ ἓξ ἔτεσιν οἰκοδομήθη ὁ ναὸς οὗτος" in John 2:20 as "this temple was built 46 years ago." In summary, according to this understanding of John 2:20, the construction of the ναὸς was completed in 18 months which would be around 18/17 B.C.[30] If this is the case, then what would be under construction in the final days of Jesus' ministry around AD 33?[31]

The Continued Construction on the Ἱερόν Until AD 63

While the ναὸς was completed around 18/17 B.C., Josephus also tells us that the ἱερόν was the focus of continued construction until approximately A.D. 63. Depicting events that took place during the procuratorship of Albinus (A.D. 62-64),[32] Josephus writes, "And now it was that the temple [ἱερὸν] was finished. So, when the people saw that the workmen were employed who were above eighteen thousand, and that they, receiving no wages, were in want, because they had earned

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[29] Köstenberger, *John*, 109-110.

[30] Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 42.

[31] This date is derived from the work of Harold Hoehner. Hoehner writes, "With the help of astronomy the only possible years on which Friday, Nisan 14 occurred were A.D. 27, 30, 33, and 36. One can eliminate A.D. 27 and 36 when one looks at the ministry of Christ, leaving only A.D. 30 and 33 as feasible dates. However, upon further examining the evidence of astronomy and the life of Christ the most viable date for the death of Christ was A.D. 33. This date is confirmed when one looks into history for it not only fills several passages of the Gospels with meaning but it also prevents the charge that the Gospels are inaccurate in some parts of the passion narrative. Here, then, is the case for the A.D. 33 date for the crucifixion of our Lord, more specifically Friday, April 3, A.D. 33." For an in depth look at the evidence of Hoehner's claim, see his *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 95-113.

[32] Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 39.

their bread by their labors about the temple [ἱερὸν]…"[33] According to this account, over eighteen thousand men were employed on the construction of the temple at the time of its completion. As an observation, if eighteen thousand men were still employed for construction on the temple roughly 30 years after Jesus' final days, then during Jesus' ministry, one can safely assume that there was still substantial construction occurring on the ἱερόν. Quite likely, the construction occurring during Jesus' final days still involved moving and hoisting massive stones which would have been towards the top of the temple mount. Moving these stones would have required cranes, derricks, and ginpoles among other equipment.[34]

With all of this in mind, one can begin to imagine an entirely different situational context for Matthew 24:1 and Mark 13:1-2. The imperative question that must be answered is if it is known for a fact that the ἱερόν was still under construction during Jesus' ministry, then why should οἰκοδομὴ in Matthew 24:1 and Mark 13:1-2 not be rendered as something like "buildings under construction?" In other words, as stated in the introduction, if context determines meaning, and in the immediate literary contexts of Matthew 24 and Mark 13 either meaning of οἰκοδομὴ could technically work, then why should the well-known extra-biblical situational context of current construction on the ἱερόν not lead biblical interpreters to see "buildings under construction" as the best understanding of οἰκοδομὴ? Though there may be appropriate responses to these questions, at the current moment, this is at least a conversation worthy of consideration.

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[33] Josephus' *Antiquities*, 20. 9. 7, 539.

[34] Max Schwartz, *The Biblical Engineer: How the Temple in Jerusalem Was Built* (Hoboken, N.J: Ktav Pub. House, 2002), 29-33. Interestingly, the author of the *Epistle of Barnabas* combines both the use of οἰκοδομὴ and building equipment when he writes, "But I have learned that certain persons passed through you from yonder, bringing evil doctrine; whom ye suffered not to sow seed in you, for ye stopped your ears, so that ye might not receive the seed sown by them; forasmuch as ye are stones [λίθοι] of a temple [ναοῦ], which were prepared beforehand for a building [οἰκοδομὴν] of God the Father, being hoisted up to the heights through the engine of Jesus Christ, which is the Cross, and using for a rope the Holy Spirit; while your faith is your windlass, and love is the way that leadeth up to God." Joseph Barber Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, The Apostolic Fathers (London: Macmillan and Co., 1891), 139.

Conclusion

If Ethnographer Bronislaw Malinowski is correct in that "utterance and situation are bound up inextricably with each other and the context of situation is indispensable for the understanding of the words…,"[35] then surely the situational context is paramount for understanding particular words in a given New Testament passage. The purpose of this paper has been to argue that if the Old Testament context of "stone upon stone" and the situational context related to the reconstruction of the second temple are taken into consideration, οἰκοδομὴ should be rendered as something like "buildings under construction" in Matthew 24:1 and Mark 13:1-2. This understanding not only gets one closer to rightly understanding authorial intent, it also hints at an aspect of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple that is often overlooked by biblical readers, namely, that it is was destroyed only seven years after being finally completed. It is one thing for the Jews to lose one of the central icons of their religion on account of rejecting their one, true Messiah, but it adds insult to injury in that it was destroyed in the seeming moments of its final completion. In other words, it is far worse than one often thinks.

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[35] Malinowski, "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages," 306.

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"No Other Name": A Biblical Theology of Preaching in Acts

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Introduction

Scholars have long recognized the amount of space dedicated to "speeches" in the Acts of the Apostles. Nearly half of the words are direct speech.[1] As Richard Pervo observed, "There is no chapter that does not have some direct speech."[2] Given the volume of direct speech in Acts, scholars have rightly devoted much effort to analyzing the various speeches found within the book. Numerous monographs and articles are devoted to understanding the significance of the speeches exclusively.[3] A

[1]Armin D. Baum noted around 9,100 of the roughly 18,400 words in Acts are direct speech: "Die Apostelgeschicte (rund 18.400 Wörter) besteht zu knapp der Hälfte (9.100 Wörter) aus *oratio recta*." See Armin D. Baum, "Paulinismen in den Missionsreden des lukanischen Paulus: Zur inhaltlichen Authentizität der *oratio recta* in der Apostelgeschichte," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 82, no. 4 (2006): 405. Similarly, Richard Pervo used the verses in Acts to establish how much of the book was *oratio recta*. He stated, "My own hand calculation indicates that c. 51% of the verses in Acts contain direct speech. The book has c. 1002 verses, 516 of which contain direct speech." See Richard I. Pervo, "Direct Speech in Acts and the Question of Genre," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28, no. 3 (2006): 288. Regardless of whether one bases his or her calculations on words or verses, nearly half of the book of Acts is comprised of direct speech.

[2]Pervo, "Direct Speech in Acts," 288.

[3]For helpful treatments of the speeches in Acts, see F. F. Bruce, *The Speeches in the Acts of the Apostles* (London: Tyndale Press, 1942); F. F. Bruce, "The Speeches in Acts—Thirty Years After," in *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology Presented to L. L. Morris on his 60th Birthday*, ed. Robert Banks (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1974); Marion L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concern*

quick glance at these works reveals their emphasis on the historical background of the speeches and how the speeches in Acts compare to those in Greco-Roman historical accounts. The author of Acts is compared and contrasted with Thucydides.[4] The use of prosopopoeia is considered.[5] The speeches in Acts are classified and analyzed using common rhetorical categories and handbooks.[6] As a result, the historical background of the speeches has been thoroughly considered. Unfortunately, one unintended consequence of this focus on backgrounds is the lack of attention given to preaching in Acts.[7] This

(Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994); Craig Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), XX - XX; and Osvaldo Padilla, *The Speeches of Outsiders in Acts: Poetics, Theology, and Historiography*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 144 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[4]For specific examples, see Conrad Gempf, "Public Speaking and Published Accounts," in *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*, The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting, vol. 1, eds. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 259-303; Stanley E. Porter, "Thucydides 1.22.1 and Speeches in Acts: Is There a Thucydidean View?," *Novum Testamentum* 32, no. 2 (April 1990): 121-142; and Osvaldo Padilla, *The Acts of the Apostles: Interpretation, History, and Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2016), 123-149.

[5]See Keener, *Acts*, vol. 1, 304.

[6]Examples include Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 39-51; Bruce W. Winter, "Official Proceedings and the Forensic Speeches in Acts 24-26," in *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*, The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting, vol. 1, eds. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 305-336; Philip E. Satterthwaite, "Acts Against the Background of Classical Rhetoric," in *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*, The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting, vol. 1, eds. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 337-379; and Takaaki Haraguchi, "A Call for Repentance to the Whole Israel – A Rhetorical Study of Acts 3:12-26," *Asia Journal of Theology* 18, no. 2 (Oct 2004): 267-282.

[7]Notable exceptions include Roger Wagner, *Tongues Aflame: Learning to Preach from the Apostles*, rev. ed. (Ross-shire, UK, Scotland: Mentor, 2004); Dennis E. Johnson, *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1997); Mary E. Hinkle, "Preaching for Mission: Ancient Speeches and Postmodern Sermons," in *Mission in Acts: Ancient Narratives in Contemporary Context*, American Society of Missiology Series, no. 34, eds. Robert L. Gallagher

paper aims to redirect the conversation by examining the theology of preaching in the Acts of the Apostles.

The most prominent "act" in the Acts of the Apostles is preaching.[8] From the description of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41) to the summary of Paul's preaching ministry in Rome (Acts 28:17-31), Luke highlighted the central role of Christian proclamation in the life and mission of the early church. Regardless of whether Acts is approached from a historical, biographical, or missiological perspective, preaching is at the center.[9] Therefore, any study of Acts or its theology must consider preaching. Surprisingly, most works on the theology of Acts only deal with preaching tangentially.[10] While preaching is discussed, themes like mission, witness, and Spirit dominate the conversation. Preaching is only discussed as it relates to one of these "major" themes. The time has come to reverse this trend and move preaching to the center of the conversation, discussing the other themes as they relate to preaching.

One of the best ways to study preaching in Acts is by utilizing the tool of biblical theology. Biblical theology affirms "the primacy of the text"

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and Paul Hertig (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 87-102; Gary Gromacki, "Preaching the Gospel in Acts and Today," *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* 20, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 5-38; and Aaron W. White, "The Apostolic Preaching of the Lord Jesus: Seeing the Speeches in Acts as a Coherent Series of Sermons," *Presbyterion* 44, no. 2 (Fall 2018): 33-51.

[8]Craig Keener made a similar claim: "Proclamation is the narrative's chief subject and action." See Keener, *Acts*, vol. 1, 259.

[9]Colin Hemer declared, "The progress of the good news was the very subject of the book of Acts, and preaching of that word (and the words spoken in opposition to it) is therefore the heart of the matter, not mere illustrative material as it might be to authors who write about the history of nations or the causes and effects of a war." See Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 49 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989), 427.

[10]For works on the theology of Acts, see Howard Clark Kee, *Good News to the Ends of the Earth* (London: SCM Press, 1990); Jacob Jervell *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Darrell L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012); and I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson, eds., *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

and "corresponds as closely as possible to what the text is about."[11] Biblical theology calls for "an inductive and descriptive method."[12] Since much of Acts "is about" preaching, biblical theology is perfectly suited for the task. This study attempts to develop a biblical theology of preaching in Acts by inductively studying the text and then describing Luke's theology of preaching based on that study. In this first article, I will examine the introduction and summary statements in Acts to demonstrate the centrality of preaching in the book, then analyze the vocabulary of preaching in Acts to demonstrate the wide range of terms Luke employed to depict the task of preaching. In a subsequent article, I will examine the content of the major sermons in Acts to identify the major elements of early Christian preaching and draw all of the exegetical data together to summarize Luke's theology of preaching in Acts.

"Witnesses" and the Growth of the Word of God: The Centrality of Preaching in Acts

The significance of preaching in Acts is evident not only from the amount of space dedicated to the task of proclamation, as noted above, but from the emphasis on witness in the introduction (Acts 1:1-8) and the inclusion of the summary statements throughout the book (Acts 2:47; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 11:21, 24; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20).[13] First, Luke's introduction to Acts anticipates the prominent role that preaching will play in Acts. His second volume begins like his first volume ends – with an emphasis on the role of the disciples as witnesses. In response to the disciples' question about the timing of the restoration of the kingdom of Israel (Acts 1:6), Jesus told His disciples it was not for them to know the timing or epochs the Father had fixed (Acts 1:7). Instead, the disciples were supposed to be Spirit-empowered witnesses (μάρτυρες) to

[11]Brian S. Rosner, "Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, eds. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000), 5.

[12]Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Present and Future of Biblical Theology," *Themelios* 37, no. 3 (2012): 445.

[13]Jerome Kodell listed these eight summary statements in Acts as passages intended "to show the steady expansion of the Christian community by the addition of new members." See Jerome Kodell, "'The Word of the Lord Grew': The Ecclesial Tendency of Λογος in Acts 1,7; 12,24; 19,20," *Biblica* 55 (1974): 507.

Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).[14] This verse sets up the remainder of Acts, where the disciples receive the Spirit and bear witness to the ends of the earth.[15]

One of the primary ways the apostles bear witness in Acts is through preaching. Although the introduction to Acts does not explicitly mention preaching, the conclusion of Luke's Gospel does. At the end of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus appeared to His disciples and opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). The Scriptures taught Jesus would suffer and die, rise from the dead on the third day, and be proclaimed (κηρυχθῆναι) to the ends of the earth (Luke 24:46-47). Luke's Gospel identified proclamation, or preaching, as the means by which the gospel will reach the ends of the earth. Then, Jesus told the disciples they were witnesses (μάρτυρες) of these things (Luke 24:48). The apostles' role as witnesses (μάρτυρες) consisted of them preaching (κηρυχθῆναι) the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and repentance for the forgiveness of sins.[16] Witness and preaching are

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[14]Commenting on the "ambivalence" of Jesus to their question, Max Turner wrote, "It is not a denial of an important future for 'Israel,' but a change of emphasis from Israel's kingship to her task as servant bringing the light of God's salvation to the nations." In other words, Jesus responds to their question by re-directing their focus from kingdom to witness. See Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 301.

[15]David G. Peterson noted the relationship between Acts 1:8 and the rest of the book. Like Turner, he viewed Jesus' response as a shift from kingship to vocation, seeing verse 8 as a renewal of Israel's vocation "to be a light to the nations to the ends of the earth." Following the geographical locations in Acts 1:8, the remainder of the book shows how the apostles witnessed and acted as a light to the nations: "first *in Jerusalem* (chap. 2—7), then *in all Judea and Samaria* (chap. 8—12), and then *to the ends of the earth* (chap. 13—28)." See Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 112.

[16]Klaas Runia made a similar argument. He pointed out the use of μάρτυρες at the end of Luke and the beginning of Acts, as well as the "kerygmatic" nature of witnessing, and concluded, "The μαρτυρία is also kerygmatic, it is proclamation that calls to faith." See Runia, "What is Preaching according to the New Testament?," *Tyndale Bulletin* 29 (1978): 11. The entry on "μάρτυς" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* – which Runia cited – also highlighted the relationship between witness and preaching. See Hermann Strathmann, "Μάρτυς, Μαρτυρέω, Μαρτυρία, Μαρτύριον, Ἐπιμαρτυρέω,

linked. Jesus concluded his instructions by promising to send His Spirit to empower them and instructing them to wait in Jerusalem until they received the Spirit (Luke 24:49). Thus, when Jesus promised the disciples in Acts 1:8 that He would send His Spirit and told them they would be witnesses to the ends of the earth, He expected them to bear witness by preaching the gospel and calling for repentance. The rest of Acts records their efforts to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth. From the very outset of Acts, then, witness through preaching was central.

Second, the summary statements in Acts highlight the central role of preaching in the book. If Acts 1:8 describe the means and route by which the gospel will go out, the summary statements demonstrate the progress of the Word of God and the growth of the people of God as a result of the apostles' preaching. As the apostles preached Christ and called people to repent, the gospel spread. Sinners were converted. The church grew. Luke recorded this growth and expansion through the summary statements in Acts (Acts 2:47; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 11:21, 24; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20). Therefore, the statements must be understood in relation to Acts 1:8 and should be viewed as confirmation the apostles are fulfilling their mission to bear witness by preaching Christ to the ends of the earth.[17]

Three of the summary statements mention the growth (αὐξάνω) of the Word and deserve a closer look.[18] In Acts 6:7, Luke stated the Word grew (αὐξάνω) and the number of the disciples multiplied (πληθύνω). He used similar language in Acts 12:24, where the word of God grew

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Συμμαρτυρέω, Συνεπιμαρτυρέω, Καταμαρτυρέω, Μαρτύρομαι, Διαμαρτύρομαι, Προμαρτύρομαι, Ψευδόμαρτυς, Ψευδομαρτυρέω, Ψευδομαρτυρία," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 4, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 4:492-494.

[17]Thomas Schreiner argued these summary statements "fit well with the theme of the book, which is found in 1:8," and "nicely structure the book." See Thomas R. Schreiner, *Handbook on Acts and Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 2-3.

[18]Interestingly, the statements "also 'grow' in their own way: in 6:7 the word grows; in 12:24 the word grows and multiplies; in 19:20 the word grows and prevails." See Jeffrey A. Oschwald, "The Word of the Lord Grew—and Multiplied—and Showed Its Strength: The Word of God in the Book of Acts," *Concordia Journal* 44, no. 1 (Winter 2018): 43.

(αύξάνω) and multiplied (πληθύνω). Finally, Luke recorded the Word growing (αύξάνω) and prevailing (ισχύω) in Acts 19:20. Outside of these summary statements, Luke only used αύξάνω in one other place: Acts 7:17. In his speech, Stephen recounted Israel's history from the call of Abraham to the persecution of the prophets (Acts 7:2-53). When he described the Israelites in Egypt, he borrowed language from the Greek translation of Exodus 1:7: "οἱ δὲ υἱοὶ Ισραηλ **ηὐξήθησαν** καὶ **ἐπληθύνθησαν** καὶ χυδαῖοι ἐγένοντο καὶ **κατίσχυον** σφόδρα σφόδρα, ἐπλήθυνεν δὲ ἡ γῆ αὐτούς."[19] All three of the verbs in the summary statements in Acts (αύξάνω, πληθύνω, and ισχύω) occur in Exodus 1:7.[20] The verbal triad depicts the growth of Israel in Egypt, but Luke borrowed them to depict the growth of the Word in Acts. [21] Just as the Israelites grew, multiplied, and became strong during their sojourn in Egypt, the Word grew and the church multiplied and became strong as the gospel was preached in Acts.[22]

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[19]The Greek text is taken from *Septuaginta: With Morphology* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1996); emphasis added.

[20]Oschwald, "The Word of the Lord," 46.

[21]Elsewhere in the Old Testament, the combination of αύξάνω and πληθύνω is used to depict the growth of God's people. Both terms are used in the following passages: Genesis 1:22, 28; 8:17; 9:1, 7; 17:20; 28:3; 35:11; 47:27; 48:4; Exodus 1:7; Leviticus 26:9; Jeremiah 3:16; and 23:3.Kodell traced the combination of αύξάνω and πληθύνω through the Old Testament and noted ten of the fourteen occurrences are "used in connection with the promise of the growth and expansion of the covenant People of God." Kodell, "'The Word of God Grew'," 511. The four texts not associated with the growth of God's people, according to Kodell, were Genesis 1:22, 28; 8:17; and 17:20. Since Genesis 1:22 and 8:17 refer to animals, it makes sense to exclude them. Similarly, Genesis 17:20 refers to Ishmael, so it makes sense to exclude him as well. What does not make sense, however, is the exclusion of Genesis 1:28. There, God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply. Surely this text should be viewed in relation to the growth of God's covenant people. Unfortunately, Kodell does not explain the exclusion of the verse. What makes the exclusion even more puzzling is his inclusion of Genesis 9:7, which is essentially a renewal of the original instructions contained in Genesis 1:28! I would argue: (1) Genesis 1:28 should be included, and (2) eleven of the fourteen Old Testament references actually relate to the growth of God's people.

[22]Kodell also connected Luke's use of αὐξάνω with Jesus' use of the verb in the parable of the Sower. Just as the seed – which represented the Word of God –

In summary, the introduction of Acts sets up the centrality of preaching in the book. The apostles would bear witness to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and call people to repent. Their role as Spirit-empowered witnesses and their mission to take the message of Jesus to the ends of the earth were inseparably linked to the task of preaching. As they preached Christ and called for repentance wherever they went, they were bearing witness and fulfilling their mission to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. The summary statements reinforce the centrality of preaching by summarizing the results of their preaching: the Word of God grew, sinners were converted, and the church grew and was strengthened. Taken together, the introduction and summary statements place preaching at the center of Acts. Or, to put it another way, the theme verse of Acts and the structure of Acts indicates preaching is at the heart of the book and deserves more attention.

A Lukan Vocabulary of "Preaching"

A careful reading of Acts reveals the wide variety of terms used to describe the task of proclamation.[23] Carl Holladay argued "the extensive, often interlocking, network of terms" used for preaching indicated "the persuasive kerygmatic texture of Acts."[24] Among these terms, the most prominent are λαλέω, διδάσκω, εὐαγγελιζομαι, κηρύσσω, καταγγέλλω, διαμαρτύρομαι, παρρησιάζομαι, and διαλέγομαι.[25] Most

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grew in the soil and produced fruit, so the Word of God grew and produced fruit. There are differences, however. "The context of growth in the parable…is individual and personal: the word takes root in the heart of the believer and 'grows' as his faith and devotion increases. In the context of the summaries, the growth is external and communitarian: the church is growing numerically." Ibid., 517.

[23]For a complete list of terms, see Carl L. Holladay, "Acts as Kerygma: *λαλεῖν τὸν λόγον*," *New Testament Studies* 63, no. 2 (April 2017): 178-182, and Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011), 99-101.

[24]Holladay, "Acts as Kerygma," 159.

[25]Ibid., 161. Luke used each of these terms at least six times. Holladay also included ἀπολογέομεαι on his list, but the term is primarily used in "defense" contexts and will not be considered here. Παρακαλέω was omitted from his list but could be considered. Luke used the term to describe Peter's activity at

of these terms are translated as "preach," which robs the English reader of the richness of Luke's vocabulary and flattens the biblical text.[26] Studying the major terms for preaching in Acts will help counteract these unintended consequences and lead to a richer, more complex understanding of the concept of preaching.[27]

Κηρύσσω

One of the most prominent verbs associated with preaching in the New Testament is κηρύσσω.[28] The verb can be translated "to make an official announcement," "*announce*," "*make known*," "to make public declarations," or "*proclaim aloud*."[29] The announcement often came from a herald (κηρύξ), who was "a messenger vested with public authority,

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Pentecost (2:40), and the leaders of the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch asked Paul and Barnabas if they had a λόγος παρακλήσεως (13:15). Typically, however, the term refers to exhortatory speech directed towards believers, and the fact that Luke only used the term twice in conjunction with preaching excludes it from the present study.

[26]"The NT is more dynamic and varied in its modes of expression than we are today. . . . our almost exclusive use of 'preach' for all of them is a sign, not merely of poverty of vocabulary, but of the loss of something which was a living reality in primitive Christianity." Gerhard Friedrich, "Κῆρυξ (ἱεροκῆρυξ), Κηρύσσω, Κήρυγμα, Προσκηρύσσω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 3, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 3:703.

[27]Jonathan Griffiths warned against trying to develop a thorough conception of preaching by studying the Greek vocabulary alone: "We cannot hope to develop a complete understanding of the New Testament's portrayal of preaching merely by studying the Greek vocabulary it uses in connection with the activity." Jonathan I. Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament: An Exegetical and Biblical-Theological Study* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2017), 17. However, he conceded, "Word studies are undoubtedly of value in considering the NT's conception of preaching."

[28]The verb occurs fifty-nine times in the New Testament. Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament*, 27. Along with καταγγέλλω and εὐαγγελιζομαι, Griffiths argued κηρύσσω functioned as a "semi-technical" term for preaching in the New Testament. All three terms are used in Acts and will be discussed in this section.

[29]William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 543. Emphasis original.

who conveyed the official messages of kings, magistrates, princes, military commanders, or who gave a public summons or demand."[30] Thus, the herald (κηρύξ) was sent by the king to preach (κηρύσσω) a message with divine authority. Although Luke did not use κηρύξ in Acts, he did use κηρύσσω to describe the task of preaching (8:5; 9:20; 10:42; 19:13; 20:25; 28:30-31). In these passages, Luke portrayed the apostles as heralds who proclaimed Jesus Christ.

Κηρύσσω		
The Preacher	**The Message**	**The Setting**
Phillip (8:5)	Christ (Χριστόν – 8:5)	Samaria (8:5)
Paul (9:20; 19:13; 20:25; 28:30-31)	Jesus (Ἰησοῦν – 9:20; 19:13), the kingdom (τὴν βασιλείαν – 20:25), and the kingdom of God (τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ – 28:31)	The synagogue (9:20) and Paul's "own quarters" (28:30-31)
Peter and the rest of the apostles (10:42)	The One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead (10:42)	Caesarea (cf. 10:24)

Εὐαγγελίζομαι

Another common term for preaching in the New Testament is εὐαγγελίζομαι.[31] The verb means to "bring good news," "*announce good news*," "proclaim the divine message of salvation," or "*proclaim the gospel*."[32] The message announced is often called the εὐαγγέλιον, which means "God's good news to humans, good news as proclamation," and often "serves in the New Testament as a shorthand for the message of Christ's death and resurrection that is proclaimed."[33] In Acts, Luke used εὐαγγελίζομαι fifteen times to describe the act of proclamation (5:42;

[30]Joseph H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1889), 346.

[31]The verb occurs fifty-four times in the New Testament. Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament*, 20.

[32]Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon on the New Testament*, 402. Emphasis original.

[33]Ibid., 402, and Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament*, 20.

8:4, 12, 25, 35, 40; 10:36; 11:20; 13:32; 14:7, 15, 21; 15:35; 16:10; 17:18).[34]

Εὐαγγελίζομαι		
The Preacher	**The Message**	**The Setting**
The apostles (5:42)	Jesus Christ (τὸν Κριστὸν Ἰησοῦν – 5:42)	The Temple and houses in Jerusalem (5:42)
Those who were scattered (8:4)	The Word (τὸν λόγον – 8:4)	
Phillip (8:12, 25, 35, 40)	The kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ (τῆσ βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος Ἰησοῦ Κριστοῦ – 8:12), Jesus (Ἰησοῦν – 8:35), and the gospel (implied – 8:25, 40)	The villages of Samaria (8:12, 25), a desert road (8:35), and all the cities from Azotus to Caesarea (8:40)
Peter, John, and Phillip (8:25)	The gospel (implied – 8:25)	The villages of Samaria (8:25)
Jesus (10:36)	Peace (εἰρήνην – 10:36)	The home of Cornelius (10:36)
Men of Cyprus and Cyrene (11:20)	The Lord Jesus (τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν – 11:20)	Antioch (11:20)
Paul (13:32; 16:10; 17:18)	Jesus and the resurrection (τὸν Ἰησοῦν και τὴν ἀνάστασιν – 17:18) and the gospel (implied – 13:32; 16:10)	The synagogue in Pisidian Antioch (13:32) and Athens (17:18)
Paul and Barnabas (14:7, 15, 21; 15:35)	The Word of the Lord (τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου – 15:35) and the gospel (implied – 14:7, 15, 21)	Derby and Lystra (14:7, 21) and Antioch (15:35)

[34]In Acts, the only verb used to describe proclamation more than εὐαγγελίζομαι is διδάσκω.

Καταγγέλλω

The third verb prominently associated with preaching in the New Testament is καταγγέλλω.[35] The term means "to make known in public, with implication of broad dissemination, *proclaim*, *announce*."[36] Luke used the term eleven times in Acts, which constitutes more than half of its uses in the New Testament (3:24; 4:2; 13:5, 38; 15:36; 16:17, 21; 17:3, 13, 23; 26:23). Summarizing the use of καταγγέλλω in Acts, Holladay wrote, "Acts thus boldly asserts that all the apostles, but Paul especially, and even the risen Lord, are proclaimers of the gospel."[37]

Καταγγέλλω		
The Preacher	**The Message**	**The Setting**
The prophets (3:24)	"These days," in reference to Christ's suffering, resurrection, and exaltation (3:24)	
The apostles (4:2)	The resurrection of the dead (4:2)	Solomon's Portico (cf. 3:11)
Paul (13:5, 38; 15:36; 16:17, 21; 17:3, 13, 23)	The Word of God (τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ – 13:5; 17:23), forgiveness of sins (ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν – 13:38), the Word of the Lord (τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου – 15:36), the way of salvation (ὁδὸν σοτερίας – 16:17), and Jesus (Ἰησοῦς – 17:3)	The synagogue at Salamis (13:5), at Pisidian Antioch (13:38), at Philippi (16:21), at Thessalonica (17:3), at Berea (17:13), and the Areopagus at Athens (17:23)
Jesus (26:23)	Light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles (26:23)	

[35]Griffiths noted the term was used eighteen times in the New Testament and functioned as a semi-technical term for preaching. Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament*, 17, 25.

[36]Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon on the New Testament*, 515. Emphasis original.

[37]Holladay, "Acts as Kerygma," 167.

Διαλέγομαι

Another verb used to emphasize proclamation in Acts is διαλέγομαι, which means "to engage in speech interchange, *converse*, *discuss*, *argue*," or "to instruct about something, *inform*, *instruct*."[38] Luke used the verb ten times to describe public "reasoning" with people (17:2, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8, 9; 20:7, 9; 24:12, 25). In Acts 17, "reasoning" is connected with preaching in two ways. First, Luke described Paul reasoning (διαλέγομαι) from the Scriptures and explaining that Jesus had to suffer and rise from the dead (17:2-3). When Paul summarized what he was doing, he said he was proclaiming (καταγγέλλω) that Jesus was the Christ (17:3). Reasoning and preaching were synonymous. Second, Luke portrayed Paul reasoning (διαλέγομαι) in the synagogue and in the market place (17:17). In response, the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began asking him questions because he was preaching (εὐαγγελίζομαι) Jesus and the resurrection (17:18). Again, reasoning and preaching denote the same activity. Therefore, διαλέγομαι should be viewed as a technical term for preaching.

Διαλέγομαι		
The Preacher	**The Message**	**The Setting**
Paul (17:2, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8, 9; 20:7, 9; 24:12, 25)	Paul reasoned from Scripture (17:2) that Jesus was the Messiah (17:3) with Jews and Greeks (17:17; 18:4, 19)	The synagogue (17:2, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8), the school of Tyrannus (19:9), a gathering of believers (20:7, 9), and in front of a Roman official (24:12, 25)

Διαμαρτύρομαι

Luke also used διαμαρτύρομαι to communicate proclamation in Acts. The verb means "to make a solemn declaration about the truth of something, *testify of*, *bear witness to*," or "to exhort with authority in

[38]Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon on the New Testament*, 232. Emphasis original.

matters of extraordinary importance, frequently with reference to higher powers and/or suggestion of peril, *solemnly urge*, *exhort*, *warn*."[39] The word finds "its origin in the courtroom."[40] The person who testifies or bears witness is a μάρτυς.[41] Jesus used μάρτυς to describe the apostles (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8), which highlights their role as eyewitnesses and their responsibility to testify about Him. Because the disciples witnessed the ministry, passion, and resurrection of Jesus, they were called to testify concerning what they had seen. Luke used διαμαρτύρομαι nine times in Acts (2:40; 8:25; 10:42; 18:5; 20:21; 20:23; 20:24; 23:11; 28:23). The public nature of witnessing in Acts, as well as the content of witnessing, indicates Luke employed διαμαρτύρομαι to depict preaching.

Διαμαρτύρομαι		
The Preacher	**The Message**	**The Setting**
Peter (2:40; 10:42)	Jesus (immediate context – 2:40; 10:42)	Large crowd on Pentecost (2:40) and Cornelius's family and friends (10:42)
Peter, John, and Phillip (8:25)	The word of the Lord (τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου – 8:25)	The city of Samaria (8:25)
Paul (18:5; 20:21, 24; 23:11; 28:23)	Jesus as the Christ (εἶνα τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν – 18:5), Jesus (immediate context – 23:11), repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (είς θεὸν μετάνοιαν καὶ πίστιν είς τὸν χύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν –	The synagogue at Corinth (18:5), the church at Ephesus (20:21), and Rome (28:23)

[39]Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon on the New Testament*, 233. Emphasis original.

[40]Runia, "What is Preaching," 10.

[41]Ibid., 619-620. As the entry shows, the modern use of the term is not prominent in Acts, although the notion of a martyr as one who testifies at the cost of their life finds its origin in Acts (cf. Acts 22:20).

	20:21), the gospel of the grace of God (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ – 20:24), and the kingdom of God (τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ – 28:23)	
The Holy Spirit (20:23)	Bonds await Paul (20:23)	Every city (20:23)

Παρρησιάζομαι

The verb παρρησιάζομαι also occurs throughout Acts as a preaching term. It means to "express oneself freely, speak freely, openly, fearlessly."[42] Its cognate, παρρησιά, denotes boldness and is often associated with preaching as well (Acts 2:29; 4:13, 31; 28:31).[43] Luke used παρρησιάζομαι seven times in Acts (9:27, 28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 26:26). In every instance, opposition is present. In Acts 9, the Jews attempted to put Paul to death for boldly proclaiming Christ (9:29). In Acts 13, the Jews were filled with jealousy, contradicted Paul, and blasphemed God (13:45). In Acts 14, the Jews stirred up the minds of the Gentiles (14:2) and attempted to mistreat and stone Paul (14:5). In Acts 19, the Jews were hardened, disobedient, and spoke evil of the way (19:9). In Acts 26, Paul gave a defense of his ministry and was called crazy by a political figure (26:24). Given the opposition in these passages, Holladay was right to argue Luke used παρρησιάζομαι to denote "bold, courageous proclamation typically prompted by stout opposition."[44]

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[42]Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon on the New Testament*, 782. Emphasis original.

[43]Ibid., 781-782, and Holladay, "Acts as Kerygma," 169. Oschwald argued boldness "has more to do with freedom of speech than simple courage. . . . It is the way you speak when you feel that you have the freedom to say very word, to say every word you want to, that is." He noted Peter spoke this way at Pentecost (2:26), and Paul spoke this way at Rome (28:31). Thus, bold proclamation frames the book, and "we see examples of it [παρρησία] on every page. They kept on speaking the word of God with unrestrainable freedom in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, all the way to Rome." Oschwald, "The Word of the Lord Grew," 50.

[44]Holladay, "Acts as Kerygma," 169. Or, better yet, παρρησιάζομαι denotes bold, courageous proclamation that typically prompted opposition. In Acts, opposition was usually the result of preaching, not the cause of it.

Παρρησιάζομαι		
The Preacher	**The Message**	**The Setting**
Paul (9:27, 28; 13:46; 14:3; 19:8; 26:26)	Jesus (Ἰησοῦ – 9:27), the Lord (τοῦ κυρίου – 9:28), the Word of God (τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ – 13:46), the Word of His grace (τῷ λόγῳ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ – 14:3), the kingdom of God (τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ – 19:8), and the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (context – 20:26; cf. 22-23)	Damascus (9:27), Jerusalem (9:28), the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch (13:46), the synagogue at Iconium (14:3), the synagogue at Ephesus (19:8), and his defense before Agrippa (26:26)
Apollos (18:26)	The things concerning Jesus (18:25)	The synagogue at Ephesus (18:26)

Λαλέω + ὁ λογός τοῦ θεοῦ/κυρίου

λαλέω means "to utter words, *talk*, *speak*."[45] In Acts, Luke typically used the verb in a general sense to report the speech of various characters (cf. 2:4, 6, 7, 11, 31; 3:21, 22, 24; 4:1, 17, 20, 29, 31; etc.). As such, λαλέω is not a synonym for preaching. When the term is combined with ὁ λογός τοῦ θεοῦ or ὁ λογός τοῦ κυρίου, however, it "functions as a *terminus technicus* for proclaiming the gospel."[46] Luke used λαλέω with ὁ λογός or ὁ λογός τοῦ θεοῦ/κυρίου eight times in Acts (4:29, 31; 8:25; 11:19; 13:46; 14:25; 16:6, 32). Of particular interest is the fact that other kerygmatic terms – like εὐαγγελίζομαι (8:4; 15:35), διδάσκω (15:35; 18:11), and καταγγέλλω (13:5; 15:36) – are used with ὁ λογός or ὁ λογός τοῦ θεοῦ/κυρίου as well. The fact that Luke uses λαλέω in the same way he uses other preaching verbs indicates λαλεω, while not typically used as a synonym for preaching, "acquires a public platform" in Acts that is "unmatched elsewhere in the NT" and should be considered a synonym

[45]Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon on the New Testament*, 582. Emphasis original.
[46]Holladay, "Acts as Kerygma," 162.

for preaching when paired with the word, the word of God, or the word of the Lord.[47]

Λαλέω + ὁ λογός τοῦ θεοῦ/κυρίου		
The Preacher	**The Message**	**The Setting**
The apostles (4:29, 31)	Your word (τὸν λόγον σου – 4:29) and the Word of God (ὁ λογός τοῦ θεοῦ – 4:31)	Jerusalem (4:29, 31)
Peter, John, and Philip (8:25)	The word of Christ (τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου – 8:25)	The villages of Samaria (8:25)
Persecuted believers (11:19)	The word (τὸν λόγον – 11:19)	Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (11:19)
Paul and Barnabas (13:46; 14:25)	The word of God (τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ – 13:46) and the word (τὸν λόγον – 14:25)	The synagogue at Pisidian Antioch (13:46) and Perga (14:25)
Paul and Silas (16:32)	The word of Christ (τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου – 16:32)	The Philippian Jailer's home (16:32)

Διδάσκω

The final major term associated with preaching in Acts is διδάσκω, which means "to provide instruction in a formal or informal setting, *teach*."[48] Surprisingly, teaching has not always been considered a proclamatory or kerygmatic term. C. H. Dodd famously argued teaching should be distinguished from preaching. He contended:

The New Testament writers draw a clear distinction between preaching and teaching. The distinction is preserved alike in Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypse, and must be considered characteristic of early Christian usage in general. Teaching (*didaskein*) is in a large

[47]Ibid., 162.

[48]Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon on the New Testament*, 241. Emphasis original.

majority of cases ethical instruction. . . . Preaching, on the other hand, is the public proclamation of Christianity to the non-Christian world.[49]

Runia noted the popularity and influence of Dodd's view, citing A. M. Hunter as a proponent and pointing out traces of Dodd's work in articles on κηρύσσω and διδασκω in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*.[50] In spite of its influence, not everyone was persuaded by Dodd's argument. Numerous scholars have challenged his claim.[51] A careful examination of διδάσκω in Acts affirms their concerns and undermines the veracity of Dodd's claim. Luke used διδάσκω sixteen times in Acts (1:1; 4:2, 18; 5:21, 25, 28, 42; 11:26; 15:1, 35; 18:11, 25; 20:20; 21:21, 28; 28:31), and most of the instances portray teaching as evangelistic in nature. Herman Ridderbos observed the evangelistic nature of teaching in Acts and concluded, "What *to teach* and *teaching* indicate thus stands in the closest relation to the great redemptive event that is proclaimed in the kerygma of the gospel; it belongs to the essence of the New Testament proclamation of redemption."[52] Additionally, preaching and teaching are often "conjoined in describing the activity of Jesus, Peter, and Paul" and "are apparently used interchangeably."[53] Based on the significant overlap of preaching and teaching in Acts, it appears Dodd's distinction is untenable. Luke conjoined preaching and

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[49]C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1937), 7.

[50]Runia, "What is Preaching," 14. Hunter contended Dodd's thesis was "one of the most important and positive contributions to New Testament science in our generation." A. M. Hunter, *The Message of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1944), 26. The entries in TDNT also reveal some dependence on Dodd, as seen in the entries on διδάσκω and κηρύσσω in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2-3, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:135-148 and 3:683-718.

[51]For helpful interactions with Dodd, see Robert H. Mounce, *The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1960); Robert C. Worley, *Preaching and Teaching in the Earliest Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967); and Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 76-160.

[52]Herman N. Ridderbos, *Redemptive History and the New Testament Scriptures*, 2nd rev. ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1988), 69. Emphasis original.

[53]Worley, *Preaching and Teaching*, 35.

teaching throughout Acts, and the content of preaching and teaching was indistinguishable. Therefore, διδάσκω should be considered a preaching term when encountered in Acts.

Διδάσκω		
The Preacher	**The Message**	**The Setting**
Jesus (1:1)		
Peter and John (4:2, 18)	The resurrection of the dead (4:2) and in the name of Jesus (4:18)	The Temple (Acts 4-5)
The apostles (5:21, 25, 28, 42)	Jesus as the Christ (5:42)	The Temple (Acts 4-5)
Paul (11:26; 18:11; 20:20; 21:21, 28; 28:31)	The Word of God (18:11), repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (20:20 – cf. 20:21), to forsake Moses (21:21), and the Lord Jesus Christ (28:31)	Antioch (11:26), Corinth (18:11), publicly and from house to house (20:20), Jerusalem (21:21, 28 – cf. 21:17), and Rome (28:31 – cf. 28:14)
Judaizers (15:1)	Circumcision (15:1)	Antioch (cf. 14:26)
Paul and Barnabas (15:35)	The Word of the Lord (15:35)	Antioch and Corinth (15:35)
Apollos (18:25)	The things concerning Jesus (18:25)	Ephesus (18:25)

Summary

Luke employed various terms throughout Acts to depict the act of proclamation. On one hand, the diversity of terms reveals the inability of one word to capture all that preaching entails. The preacher is a herald, sent by the high king of heaven to deliver a divine message (κηρύσσω). The preacher is an evangelist, announcing the good news of Jesus' death

and resurrection (εὐαγγελίζομαι). The preacher is one who publicly proclaims the Word of God (καταγγέλλω), reasons from Scripture (διαλέγομαι), bears witness to Christ (διαμαρτύρομαι), speaks the Word of the Lord with boldness (λαλέω + ὁ λογός τοῦ θεοῦ/κυρίου and παρρησιάζομαι), and teaches repentance toward God and faith in Christ (διδάσκω). Preaching is multi-faceted.

On the other hand, the terms display considerable overlap. Each term emphasizes speech and orality, because preaching is verbal communication. Each term is paired with similar phrases to describe the content of the apostles' preaching: the Lord Jesus Christ (4:2; 5:42; 18:25; 28:31; etc.), the Word of God/the Lord (4:31; 8:4; 13:5; 15:35; etc.), and the kingdom of God (8:12; 19:8; 28:23). These shared features should restrict one from making too much of Luke's broad use of terms, while the unique features should restrict one from making too little of his vocabulary. In short, careful readers should observe the particular verb Luke utilized to portray preaching in any given text and note any distinct emphases while recognizing the overlap with other preaching terms within the book.

Conclusion

In this article, I have argued the task of preaching is central in the book of Acts. From the amount of space dedicated to "speeches" to the summary statements highlighting the expansion of the church through the proclamation of the gospel, Luke emphasized the importance of preaching in the life of the early church. Nothing else could substitute for preaching Christ. As Peter declared, "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (4:12).

Given the richness and complexity of preaching, Luke was forced to employ a host of terms to describe biblical preaching. The various terms communicate the multi-faceted nature of preaching while simultaneously revealing a significant amount of overlap. Whether boldly proclaiming the gospel or carefully reasoning with unbelievers, the leaders of the early church announced the good news wherever they went. Their commitment is instructive for preachers today. Those who aspire to follow in the steps of the apostles will join the twelve and say, "We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4).

Here Are Your Gods: Faithful Discipleship in Idolatrous Times. **By Christopher J. H. Wright. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2020. 153 pp. $18.00, Paperback. ISBN 978-0830853359.**

Christopher J. H. Wright is the son of missionary parents, with a Ph.D. from Cambridge. He has written several books that are applicable for ministry contexts through his role as the International Ministries Director of Langham Partnership International. The occasion for this work was a lecture he delivered in 2017 called "Following Jesus in an Age of Political Turbulence." Two political events served as the impetus for the term "Political Turbulence:" Brexit, and the election of Donald Trump.

The book begins with a section describing monotheism in ancient Israel as described by the Old Testament. He delineates several different categories of reality in which "other gods" can exist. They can exist within the created order (Job 31:26-28), as demons (Deut 32) and as the work of human hands (Hos 13:2). Wright asserts that, as a part of the created order, other gods are subject to decline and decay – like everything else. He goes on to point out that many categories of things that aren't carved images can take the place of the one true God within human experience. These could be "things that entice us" (Deut 4:19), "things that we trust" (see Psalm 33:16-17), or "things that we need" (Matt 6:31-32). Yet, these things ultimately crumble under the weight of the expectations that humans place on them. So, Wright argues that God battles against idolatry and calls his people to take part in that struggle. Though, he cautions that it should be a nuanced battle that is sensitive to the ministry context.

The second section deals with political and military matters that Israel encountered as well as how those matters challenged the scriptural understanding of monotheism. He begins by citing scriptural arguments against nations embracing their own power in place of God, or outside influences as such (see Psalm 33:10-11). He goes on to argue that Amos (and other prophets, too) condemned Israel for their treatment of the poor, which showed that the elites valued money over God's sense of justice. Next, Wright describes what he sees as problematic idols in history past and present. He describes several issues, such as systemic violence, income inequality, populism and nationalism, sexual confusion and the breakdown of the traditional family, environmental destruction,

and confusion over truth. Furthermore, Wright describes the political ideals outlined in scripture. He points to the difference of what was expected of Israel's king (Deut 17:14-20), the accountability of public officials (1 Sam 12:1-5), and the expectation of justice (Prov 31:3, 8-9).

In the final section, Wright applies lessons from the first two sections to the 21st century world. He begins with a prescriptive call for God's people to recognize their place in God's revelatory history—that 21st century believers are in between the launching of the New Testament mission and the impending Final Judgment. Once believers recognize their place, they should embrace a five-fold mission of evangelism, teaching, compassion, justice, and creational responsibility (119). He calls for believers to act and think differently than others in a 21st century socio-political context.

Evaluating this book presents unique challenges, since Wright interprets both Old Testament Scripture and the Political Realm. Perhaps the best admonition one can give while reading this book is for the reader to be cautious, because the book is a bit uneven. Wright makes statements based on scripture that are quite easy to follow and agree with. Yet, he also makes statements about the political realm that seem more politically motivated than scripturally motivated.

For example, it is quite easy to agree with some statements that Wright makes such as, "National gods, then, both ancient and modern, are the ultimate deification of human pride, but they remain human constructs nevertheless" (23). Indeed, much of what Wright does in the first part of his book is simply deduce principles about the way that YHWH was to be treated by his people and the way in which his people were to treat other gods. Wright does a fine job of quoting or citing scripture in order to make his points in this first section. He also includes copious endnotes that refer to scholarly sources for the most part.

Then, in part two, most of the sources that he utilizes are internet resources – which isn't problematic in and of itself. However, some readers (especially American evangelicals who are politically conservative) will not consider some of his sources to be authoritative. A few times he appeals to Wikipedia articles. Other times he cites americanprogress.org and the newyorker.com. Use of these sites (which have real political bias) affect the force of his argument. If one values his sources, then one may consider his argument forceful. However, if a

reader finds the sources Wright has used to be of a different political bent than their own, the reader may consider his argument less forceful.

Furthermore, Wright seems to be bound by his own unique cultural perspective at times. In this book, Wright conveys the sense that he writes from a perspective that values globalist ideas (a seemingly European perspective). He admits to being dismayed at the outcome of the Brexit vote in the epilogue of the book. Then, he surmises that lament in the biblical sense is the proper response. Furthermore, Wright argues against the "gun-god" briefly in a way that seems to misunderstand the motives of many American gun owners who might read his book (100). Even so, most readers will agree with him about the prevalent cultural gods of prosperity, injustice to benefit the wealthy, and sexual promiscuity as well as his condemnation of these based on scriptural appeals. So, Wright's book does contain arguments that can contribute to even the most politically right-leaning readers. But, because of the other political statements described above, it seems unlikely these readers would finish the book.

All things considered, this book is useful. The book contributes to an understanding of Old Testament scripture in relation to the political structures present in ancient Israel (part one). The book also contributes some helpful identifications of potential cultural gods in the 21st century; though, many readers will not agree with all of Wright's analysis. Then, the concluding section contributes hope to believers who are attempting to live as faithful believers in the church age of history. Readers of many different backgrounds will find material that is helpful and applicable in this book. For that reason, I recommend this book, but the reader also needs to be aware that the author's cultural perspective is not the same as many who read this journal.

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***Divine Discourse in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Recontextualization of Spoken Quotations of Scripture*. By Madison N. Pierce. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 178. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. xii + 237 pp. $99.99, Hardback. ISBN 978-1-108-49541-7.**

When freshly minted theologians publish their research, few make as immediate of a contribution as Madison N. Pierce in *Divine Discourse in the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Handling cross-disciplinary tasks with poise to present a compelling analysis of Hebrews, Pierce's thesis is straightforward: "The author of Hebrews uses divine discourse—the speech of God—in Hebrews to develop his characterization of God and by extension his broader argument" (2). Pierce's reading of Hebrews is insightful; perhaps more impressive, however, is her method whereby she uses early Christian exegetical methods, Jewish and Greco-Roman backgrounds, and the developments of Trinitarian theology to offer an inventive and faithful exegesis of the New Testament.

While most of the book's structure follows the way paved by those occurrences of "speech acts" in Hebrews, an introductory chapter sets the stage for Pierce's reading by positing it against the backdrop of ancient and contemporary exegesis. Wielding an array of Rabbinic, New Testament, and Patristic examples to help the reader detect prosopological exegesis in a text, Pierce lays out the criteria to recognize prosopological exegesis, calling specific attention to the way it "[identifies] an unspecified participant of the base text in a way that is not obviously indicated by a plain reading" (21). Having defined prosopological exegesis, the book turns its attention to a brief overview of three modern supporting voices: G. B. Caird, Michael Theobald, and Tomasz Lewicki. Introducing these interlocutors in this introductory chapter bridges the gap between ancient exegetical techniques and modern readings of Hebrews; similarly, it shows where Pierce's project lands among recent studies of Hebrews. After defining the terms and method of engagement, Pierce's subsequent chapters follow the speech acts of the divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The second chapter addresses the first of three speakers. Her longest chapter, Pierce uses it to investigate those scenes wherein the Father addresses the Son, hoping to show the twofold accomplishments of these texts: that the Father, first, "confirms the Son's identity and calling," and

second, "announces his plans for the rest of his children" (35). Beginning with interplayed speech concerning the Son and angels, Pierce shows how the author's use of divine speech through prosopological readings grounds the author's introductory expression of the Son's divinity in 1:1–14, his identification of the Son as high priest of another kind in 5:1–10 and 7:1–28, and his pronouncement of the new covenant in 8:8–12. Unconvinced readers may squirm early on as Pierce argues for an ambiguous addressee in place of an ambiguous speaker in 1:1–14, as the malleability of the ambiguous speaker/addressee felt like an initial imposition onto the text of Hebrews. Having revisited the thesis, however, it becomes clear Pierce is successful in identifying episodes of prosopological exegesis as she pulls from a range of Old Testament texts, showing how their recontextualization in Hebrews easily meets the essential criteria for what constitutes prosopological exegesis: identifying an unspecified participant of the base text not obviously indicated by a plain reading.

Having invited us into the triune discourse and established a pattern of prosopological reading, Pierce's third chapter locates those places where the Son responds to the Father in Hebrews, identified as 2:1–18 and 10:1–10. Her meticulous examination of the author's exegetical method continues throughout this chapter, though the clarity of Pierce's argument gets lost at times—typically due to her attempts to refute a multitude of possible counterpoints. Indeed, one wonders if Pierce does a disservice to her own thesis as she rightly seeks to anticipate the plethora of responses to her prosopological propositions. Such a speculation, of course, unintentionally reveals one of the book's strengths: Pierce clearly has an intimate familiarity with both primary and secondary literature in the field. She addresses skeptics in the conclusion, as she concedes, "although the use of this conversational model may appear strained at points, the common alternative of reading these citations in isolation fails to recognize the author's use of these texts to develop these characters within his discourse. It also fails to recognize the consistent thread throughout the author's use of scripture—prosopological exegesis" (134). In this way, Pierce makes the most of the biblical data available and offers a sensible reading of the Son's speech acts in Hebrews.

The third speaker is given the platform in chapter four: "The Holy Spirit Speaks to the Community" (135). As indicated by such a subtitle,

Pierce contends that this third strand of prosopological exegesis contained in Hebrews is divine speech originating in the Spirit, directed outward toward a community of non-divine figures. Continuing a newfound heritage of scholars advocating a more involved pneumatology of Hebrews, Pierce draws upon 3:7–4:11 and 10:15–18 to show how, exegetically, the Spirit is the one who works among the community throughout the epistle by means of recontextualizing Jewish scriptures. Pierce identifies characteristics common to both the Spirit's speech and the kinds of divine speech depicted as originating in the Father and Son: "The Spirit's speech is introduced with the same type of formula as the Father's and the Son's; the Spirit's speech relies on prosopological exegesis, and thus a fresh reading of the base text; and the Spirit's speech has a distinct function within Hebrews as the message of God to the contemporary community" (173–174). As the culmination of the two chapters preceding it, this rounds out an impressive and fully Trinitarian reading of the epistle to the Hebrews, giving due attention to Father, Son, and Spirit as they speak to and through one another, both inwardly and outwardly.

In her concluding chapters, Pierce shows how these speech acts shape the overall structure of the epistle to the Hebrews. One could divide the work into a threefold, speech-patterned structure: Father-Son-Spirit, Father-Son-Spirit, and Spirit-God-Human. In this way, Pierce shows how the epistle to the Hebrews—for all its highly Jewish influences, all its high-minded prose, for all its mystique and theological offerings—is largely a work focused on the work of the Trinity (and, specifically, the *speech* of the Trinity). And, because the Trinity lies at the heart of the words of Hebrews, we ought to read and receive it with a Triune reading.

For all its exegetical intricacies, *Divine Discourse in the Epistle to the Hebrews* accomplishes three goals atypical of most early-career publications: (1) it substantiates its thesis and does so by utilizing several disciplines, (2) it remains deeply relevant for those working in ecclesiastical and pastoral settings, and (3) it aids the reader in turning away from the dullness of earth-bound carnality so that they may set their minds on nobler things such as the Triune God who speaks, revealed as Father, Son, and Spirit.

In light of this, I recommend this work to students of New Testament exegesis, those studying the early Christian tradition and the

development of doctrine, and those interested in the relationship between theology and the interpretation of Scripture.

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***Baptism: A Guide to Life from Death*. By Peter J. Leithart. Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2021. 140 + xii pp. $15.99, Hardcover. ISBN 9781683594635.**

The practice of baptism is, perhaps, the most universal mark of the Christian faith. From the disciples to the present day and from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth, Christians have distinguished themselves by baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. At the same time, questions about the effect of baptism and its proper administration have divided Christians for centuries. It is amid this irony that Peter Leithart offers his short volume on Christian baptism. He insists that such divisions are a travesty, and with this book, he intends to guide readers at least a little closer to unity.

Structuring the book around a baptism prayer from Martin Luther, Leithart begins chapter one by rooting baptism in a Trinitarian context. He maintains that disagreements about baptism are actually disagreements about the nature of the church *into which* we are baptized. We are baptized into the "family" of the Father, and thereby we become the earthly "body" of the Son and the true "temple" of the Holy Spirit. These images of family, body, and temple illustrate the purpose of the church. The second chapter describes baptism's effect. Leithart contends that baptism is more than a mere reminder of God's promises, baptism truly accomplishes these promises. It reminds us of the gospel of the kingdom, but it also *announces* that gospel. Each baptism expands the church, creating new family members and uniting them to the rest of the family. Christian baptism is an act of God, not merely the application of water and words to a person. Baptism is effective *because* God is at work. The promises of God are fulfilled at each baptism.

In chapter three, Leithart connects the water of baptism to the waters of creation, old and new. He traces the theme of life-giving water

throughout the Scriptures and describes how baptism both *announces* and *accomplishes* the new creation. Chapter four reflects upon the waters of the flood, through which God saved Noah and his family. Where the flood waters cleansed the earth by bringing death to sinners, baptism also brings death to those who receive it. But baptism does not leave the believer in death; believers are delivered "dry and safe" (34). This connection between baptism and death leads Leithart, in chapter five, to discuss the relationship between baptism and circumcision, which he sees as a type of death. He describes circumcision as the removal of fallen flesh in preparation for the new creation that baptism brings. Just as circumcision nullified the effort of Abraham to produce an heir, baptism nullifies human effort allowing the power of God to take center stage. But Leithart distinguishes baptism from circumcision in that baptism reunites the factions of humanity divided by circumcision. Where circumcision created an "us" and a "them," baptism unifies Jew and Gentile into one new man, centered in the "circumcision of Christ" (Col 2:11). In chapter six, Leithart focuses on baptism as a rescue and as the beginning of our struggle against an enemy who would have us drown with him.

The final four chapters examine how baptism prepares us to share in the vocation of Christ as priests, conquerors, kings, and prophets. Chapter seven contrasts the repeated washings that purified the Israelites with the singular baptism that cleanses Christians "not merely [as] consecrated ones, but consecrat*ing* ones, who sanctify everything and everyone by the word of God, prayer, and thanksgiving" (67). Chapter eight then parallels the conquest of Israel, who passed through the waters of the Jordan, to the conquest for which baptism prepares believers as we, for the sake of Christ, conquer the nations through the proclamation of the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit. Baptism's relevance to the vocation of kingship is likewise connected to Israelite types such as Joshua, David, and Solomon through the antitype of Jesus. In chapter nine, Leithart describes the primary role of a king as an administrator of justice. Through a Christological interpretation of Psalm 72, he argues for our participation as co-regents with Christ by the anointing we receive in baptism. The royal task of believers, of the church, is to be the earthly body through which Christ our King provides justice for the vulnerable. Finally, Leithart discusses the prophetic role to which believers are called by virtue of our baptismal anointing. He sees

the church as "a prophetic community, given the words of God to speak and sing to one another, qualified by the Spirit to stand in the Lord's council" (98). The book ends with an epilogue to the baptized reminding us of God's truth about who we are and what we have through our baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Leithart's explanations and descriptions of baptism are refreshing and powerful. This work will certainly move fragmented and confused believers at least a step closer to unity. The opening pleas for unity around baptism may lead the reader to expect a particularly broad approach, one that considers and accommodates the concerns that various traditions have about baptism. Certain traditions will find Leithart's treatment quite unifying, but others may be frustrated with his straightforward promotion of paedo-baptism (not to mention paedo-communion), when he so stridently denounces divisions over baptism. He is vocal in his own concerns about those who misrepresent baptism, yet he speaks little to the danger of importing unwarranted significance or effect. Leithart argues *from* Scripture to establish his understanding, but those who disagree with this understanding also argue from Scripture. Leithart acknowledges from the beginning that he does not intend to settle all disputes about baptism—a reasonable limitation; however, as the book progresses, readers may sense the mood subtly shift from unity around the fundamentals of what baptism is to unity around the author's own tradition regarding baptism. This is not to say that the book is not unifying. Christians from many traditions will either already agree with Leithart's understanding of baptism or will be persuaded by it. Catholics, Orthodox, Lutherans, Anglicans, and Episcopalians, even many from reformed and Methodist traditions will have no issue with this presentation, but those traditions that also argue *from* Scripture against the mode of sprinkling or the eligibility of infants or any other number of disagreements may find Leithart to be preaching—to a degree—to his own choir. Nevertheless, this book is more than worth the minor frustrations those who disagree with Leithart may experience. Enthusiastic endorsements of the book from Baptists like Timothy George and Michael Haykin demonstrate as much. Though the book briefly engages some of the more divisive controversies around baptism, there truly is a fundamental core around which all Christians should be able to agree and unite, and Leithart's description of that fundamental core is elegant. Even his explanation of these more contentious aspects

of baptism are beautifully presented. Those who disagree with Leithart can at least appreciate why his view is so appealing to so many.

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Paul and the Good Life: Transformation and Citizenship in the Commonwealth of God. **By Julian C.H. Smith. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2020. 274+ pp. $37.92, Paperback. ISBN 978-1481313100.**

If Paul sat down with the other great minds of history to ponder how one might live a virtuous, satisfying life in the context of fellow humans and nature, what might the apostle say? In *Paul and the Good Life: Transformation and Citizenship in the Commonwealth of God*, Julian C.H. Smith brings Paul into dialogue with figures a college student would encounter in a freshman Great Books course. *Paul and the Good Life* is cast in the mold of volumes like Jonathan Pennington's *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing* (Baker, 2017) with comments from Lesslie Newbigin, Dallas Willard, James K.A. Smith, and Wendell Berry echoing in the background. The author argues that Paul views Jesus as the mighty King who liberates the communal city and transforms its occupants to live distinctly as His subjects—even though the oppressive power of sin holds sway in the world until the King returns (23).

Smith's book is comprised of six chapters. In chapter 1, "Salvation and the Good Life: Ancient Conversations," Smith states that Paul's concept of salvation includes deliverance from peril after death and restoration to wholeness during one's earthly life. Though Christians have polarized these concepts, since Jesus is God's Messiah-King, the salvation He offers involves both eternal and temporal domains. Smith argues that Jesus' followers are saved eternally by grace through His victory and empowered by King Jesus to labor and toil so that the wholeness they enjoy in Jesus might be established throughout the created order (12).

In chapters 2-5, Smith sets out four themes of the Great Books conversation: Citizenship, Character, Community, and Creation, investigating each in light of Pauline Christology. In chapter 2 (27-61),

Smith suggests that the theme of Jesus' suffering in Philippians addresses the concerns of Citizenship shared with the great minds of history. Ancient philosophers like Aristotle shape the social expectations and ethical norms for the citizens of Rome. Rome prizes excellent character that objectifies a citizen's allegiance to the empire. In the ideal, the Roman aristocracy and especially the Emperor are expected to portray the ethical standards the citizenry is to follow. Smith suggests that Christian suffering addresses that very expectation in Paul's day. Mining Paul's experience in Philippi (Acts 16:11-40) and Phil 1:25-30; 2:5-11; and 3:20, Smith argues that as Christians endure suffering because of King Jesus, they testify to the reality of Jesus' kingdom on earth by re-presenting His character as citizens under His rule.

Smith's weightiest concern is the issue of Character, giving twice the number of pages to chapter 3 (63-113), "Character: In the Presence of the Transformative King in Corinth," than any other chapter. Smith cites various texts from Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon, Philo, Plutarch, Seneca, and Virgil to propose that the presence of a great king transforms the character of the citizenry. In Smith's reading of 2 Cor 3:7-8 and Philo's *Life of Moses*, Moses is a philosopher-king exemplifying the virtues of Israel's law. Likewise, the Spirit, who is the agency of King Jesus, transforms the character of Jesus' followers (2 Cor 3:18). Smith argues that Paul's comparison of Moses and Jesus fits the apostle's rhetorical strategy and self-defense in 2 Corinthians. Because the Corinthians enjoy the power of the Spirit transforming their character, they are forced to render Paul a legitimate apostle, despite his suffering. For without Paul, they do not know of the Spirit.

Paul's Christology of peacemaking in Ephesians and Colossians speaks to humanity's quest for Community, Smith's concern in chapter 4 (115-143). After giving a ten-page review of Paul's teaching about unity at the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11, Smith turns his attention to themes of unity in Ephesians and Colossians, arguing that worship instills new habits in Jesus' followers. In Smith's reading of the Great Books conversation, Jesus' activities fit the mold of what societies hope for in a great king. Christ makes peace possible between Jews and Gentiles, enabling both groups to enact divine virtue toward one another.

In chapter 5 (145-178), Smith suggests that Paul's Christology of glory in Romans encompasses what the apostle might say when the great

conversation turns to the subject of Creation. Smith offers the personal anecdote that his family has tried to produce as much of their own food as possible in recent years, inclining an increased sensitivity to the earth's needs. For Smith, the agricultural bounty of ancient Rome results from land exploitation. Paul's logic in Romans 5-8 speaks to the great conversation ideal of citizens living in harmony with their environment as an expression of allegiance to their king. "Hope and endurance are the virtues required to live in anticipation of the eschatological fulfillment of the Messiah's reign, of the glorification of the children of God and the attendant liberation of all creation" (174).

In chapter 6, "Paul and the Good Life: Contemporary Conversations," Smith argues that the four themes he explores in the book have spiritual and apologetic value. He states that in a society clamoring for power and victory, Jesus' suffering and the suffering experienced by the citizens of His Kingdom invert the human quest for triumph (185-87). In times of societal crisis, Smith writes, those who know Jesus as the apocalyptic King are enabled to rely upon His resources and grace that they might not only know how humanity ought to respond but also fulfill those ideals for all to see (188-95). So far, so good. But Smith conflates the third and fourth themes (Community and Creation), concluding that both speak primarily to the contemporary conversation about creation care. True, one can argue that Ephesians, Colossians, and Romans compel followers of King Jesus to plant gardens and maintain the agrarian virtues of hope and endurance (195-204). But Paul's Christology in these letters would imply more.

So, *Paul and the Good Life* applies apocalyptic Pauline Christology to the great conversation. But Smith does more and less. Any whole-hearted attempt at Pauline Christology will inevitably address ecclesiology, ethics, eschatology, and more. Smith admirably does so, insightfully applying a Pauline Christology that emphasizes Jesus as Messiah-King. But *Paul and the Good Life* is not a comprehensive survey of Paul's letters—even those Smith investigates. Smith's choice to examine the theme of Citizenship only in Philippians and Character only in just Paul's Corinthian correspondence makes *Paul and the Good Life* less comprehensive than one might hope. The index lists just eleven citations of Galatians. Does not Paul articulate Christ's character-transforming power in Ephesians, Colossians, and Romans? How might Paul respond

when he learns that his letter to Rome is not considered by a theologian summarizing how his Christology addresses the concept of Citizenship?

I cannot help but wonder if a more comprehensive approach would prove more persuasive—and more authentic. Paul has more to contribute to the great conversation. Further, in places, Smith's analysis of one Pauline text surfaces in a chapter whose title states that other texts will be the locus of investigation. Smith devotes one-third of chapter 4, "Community: Worshiping the Peacemaking King in Ephesus and Colossae," to a survey of the social implications of Paul's teaching on the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11. Smith's choice of which Pauline passages to place under which headings in *Paul and the Good Life* demonstrates that he has not achieved as comprehensive a synthesis of Paul's Christology as he might address in the great conversation.

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1 Peter: A Commentary. **By Craig S. Keener. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021. 608 pp. $59.99, Hardcover. ISBN 13: 978-1540962867.**

Over the last few decades, the world of New Testament scholarship has expressed a renewed interest in the Petrine letters, particularly 1 Peter. Craig S. Keener brings decades of careful research and proven scholarship in biblical studies to the Petrine scholarship community with this latest work *1 Peter: A Commentary.*

Keener begins *1 Peter: A Commentary* by explaining his thought process and goal for the commentary in the preface. He notes upfront the work's limitations and his lack of engagement with the secondary literature. Keener states that his goal for the commentary is to provide complementary and supplemental insight rather than attempting to supplant those who came before him (xii). After the preface Keener provides a full translation of 1 Peter designed to work specifically for his commentary. The first substantial section of the commentary is found in Keener's introduction of the preliminary issues surrounding the letter of 1 Peter. There was a point in time in Petrine scholarship when the

structure of the letter was highly debated, but in the last few decades this conversation has largely quieted down. Keener's brief, but helpful, coverage of the letter's structure transitions into a highly debated topic in the Petrine scholarship community—authorship. Keener is quick to place his cards on the table and admit that he takes a contrarian position to many of his colleagues in critical scholarship by advocating for authorship from the Apostle Peter. Keener starts by first weighing the internal evidence of the letter before moving to the external evidence. He believes the conversations and arguments concerning the internal evidence often lead to what Keener considers "subjective inferences" (16). Furthermore, Keener believes that the external evidence offers "concrete benchmarks" which all scholars must deal with in an adequate manner.

After dealing with the issue of the letter's authorship, Keener moves forward with another important conversation—the letter's date of origin. Keener briefly covers the three main dates that commentators often assign to the letter and, after weighing the evidence, gives preference to a Neronian date (AD 60-68). Closely tied to the letter's authorship and date are the topics of provenance, destination, and setting, which Keener unpacks in the remainder of the introduction.

With introductory issues firmly in place, Keener turns his attention to the content of the letter. Keener begins each section by giving the reader his own translation of the text. He then moves through each section in a verse-by-verse fashion commenting on all the necessary features needed for interpretation, often giving immense detail about the background and world of the 1 Peter. Throughout his commentary on the text of 1 Peter, Keener, like many other commentators, employs the use of excursuses, calling these sections "A Closer Look."

1 Peter: A Commentary accomplishes its goal of providing a supplemental and complementary work on the letter of 1 Peter. *1 Peter: A Commentary* offers many significant strengths while only containing a few weaknesses. We will now turn to the areas of strength of Keener's work. First, the approach and tone of Keener's introduction, particularly his focus on the letter's authorship, is well done. Keener does not side step the common objections, rather he seeks to expose the areas in which they are vulnerable, understanding many do not share his conclusions. Navigating issues like authorship, date, and provenance can be thorny; Keener's approach serves as an example of how conversations like these

should be navigated. Second, Keener's work in primary sources is commendable. The depth and breadth of these sources is displayed regularly throughout the commentary. To those familiar with Keener's work, especially his commentary on Acts through Baker Academic, this will come as no surprise, but those encountering Keener's work for the first time will come away with a new sense of appreciation and attention when it comes to the world of the New Testament.

Third, Keener offers an even-handed approach when unpacking complex issues contained in the letter. It is widely understood that one's theological convictions can bend their exegesis if they are not careful. Keener's even-handed approach to the weighty issues of providence and predestination are to be recognized and commended. Even if the reader disagrees with Keener's conclusion, they will take notice of his balanced and fair treatment of the issues surrounding the text. The final strength of the commentary worth pointing out are the sections Keener calls "A Closer Look." It is not an overstatement to suggest that these twenty-five excursuses alone make the commentary worth its asking price. There are three worth highlighting for this review: (1) *Providence, Fate, and Predestination in Antiquity*; (2) *Roman Aristocratic Fears of Anti-traditional Groups*; (3) *Silvanus's Role in Peter's Letter.* As noted, all these short discussions are helpful, and the reader of *1 Peter: A Commentary* will be aided by taking the time to explore these well put together sections.

1 Peter: A Commentary is not without a few flaws and contains a few weaknesses that some readers will notice. First, even though Keener is upfront about his lack of interaction with the secondary literature, those who frequently navigate the scholarly world of 1 Peter will be left unsatisfied by this reality. There are important conversations happening in the Petrine community and hearing from a seasoned scholar like Keener would have been a welcomed addition to the commentary and the Petrine community as a whole. Second, for those scholars and students looking for an in-depth commentary on the Greek text, *1 Peter: A Commentary* will be somewhat of a letdown. Keener's approach has a wide audience in view and captures many of the main themes of the text. However, it does not offer much insight on the structure or grammar of each passage. This is by far the work's biggest weakness and, while it is clear that Keener is not trying to offer an updated version of Paul J.

Achtemeier's 1 Peter commentary, a little more attention to the Greek text would have been welcomed.

The final weakness of the work is slight in nature but is still worth mentioning. A few times throughout the work Keener mentions scholarship or colleagues without clearly specifying what or whom he means. For example, Keener holds to genuine Petrine authorship, a position that is respectable and well defended. However, in his concluding remarks on authorship he makes the comment that this is the minority opinion of scholarship. The reason I raise this issue up as a weakness is because a seasoned scholar like Keener must be aware that this statement is far too vague to be helpful. The world of biblical studies is diverse and far reaching and there are large number of Petrine scholars outside of critical scholarship circles that defend Petrine authorship.

A few small weaknesses aside, *1 Peter: A Commentary* is a welcomed addition to anyone seeking to grow their knowledge on this important letter. Keener's strengths shine through and his attention to historical backgrounds will prove helpful to a wide scope of readership. This commentary is a must have for both scholars and students of 1 Peter.

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***Signs of the Messiah: An Introduction to John's Gospel.* By Andreas J. Köstenberger. Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2021. 202 pp. $27.99, Hardcover. ISBN 9781683594550.**

In 2019 and 2020, Dr. Andreas J. Köstenberger taught through the Gospel of John as a For the Church Workshop on the campus of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. His book, *Signs of the Messiah: An Introduction to John's Gospel*, grew out of this lecture series. Köstenberger currently serves as Research Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology and Director of the Center for Biblical Studies at MBTS. He has written numerous books including *A Theology of John's Gospel and His Letters* in the BTNT series, *The Jesus of the Gospels*, and his monumental *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament*, which was co-written with Scott

Kellum and Charles Quarles. He also serves as general editor for several respected commentary series including the BTNT and the EGGNT.

While Köstenberger presented a typical overview of the fourth gospel at this workshop, he uniquely arranged his lectures and book around the signs presented in the first half of John's work. In addition, he has intentionally connected each section of John's Gospel to the evangelist's purpose statement as given in John 20:30-31. This emphasis presupposes an overall literary and theological unity to the Gospel of John. It also amplifies the apologetic character of the Gospel to convince readers of Jesus's identity as the Messiah, the Son of God.

In part one of *Signs of the Messiah*, Köstenberger presents his argument for John the Apostle as the author of the eponymous Gospel and walks his readers through the Cana Cycle (John 1-4). As he walks through the Gospel, Köstenberger notes that the other Gospel writers label the supernatural acts of Jesus as miracles. John, however, emphasizes that these acts are signs of the messianic Son of God. In other words, the signs reveal Jesus's identity to his disciples and those with eyes to see. The three signs examined in this cycle demonstrate Jesus's authority over nature, the temple, and disease, respectfully. This introduction to the person of Jesus forces the readers of the Gospel to ask, "Who is this man?"

The second part of the book walks through the Festival Cycle (John 5-10). Within this section, Köstenberger expounds three more signs of Jesus. These acts include two healings and the feeding of five thousand men. The Jewish festivals serve as the backdrop to these powerful signs so that a secondary aspect of each sign is Jesus's ability to reinterpret each festival. Jesus's teaching throughout these passages, often framed around an "I am" statement, highlights the unique role He has as the Son of God. Köstenberger also uniquely notes that each of the signs of Jesus features a significant number or date (see fig. 7 on p. 72).

Part three focuses on the conclusion to the Book of Signs along with the remainder of the Gospel, which Köstenberger calls the Book of Exaltation. The final sign, the raising of Lazarus, reveals Jesus's power over death in matchless anticipation of His own resurrection. After walking through the Farewell Discourse, Köstenberger moves rapidly through the Passion Narrative of John before providing a brief conclusion to the study. He sees John providing the "canonical capstone of the fourfold gospel in our New Testament" (170). With this

contribution, John has fulfilled his purpose of glorifying Jesus so that his readers may recognize Him as the Messiah, God's Son.

Köstenberger, like John, accomplishes what he plans with his book. He provides his readers with a basic introduction to the Gospel of John that is highly readable, academically erudite, and devotionally invigorating. The length of the volume and minimal footnotes allow readers to focus on the overall message and outline of the Gospel without being unnecessarily bogged down in the typical fodder of commentaries (with the possible exception of his successful argument for Johannine authorship). Only an author with decades of research experience and comprehensive familiarity with contemporary Johannine discussions could successfully hit the high notes and key literary elements of John's Gospel with such precision and concision.

Köstenberger's choice to arrange this book around the signs of Jesus offers the reader a helpful framework for following John's narrative. Those who are less familiar with the Gospel will benefit from this structuring, which allows them to put the larger storyline of the book together. One of the drawbacks to this arrangement, however, is that the second half of John does not follow suit. This section would need a different structure to be as memorable for beginners as Köstenberger makes the earlier parts of the book. Yet, the passages built around the signs are expertly treated.

Another slight shortcoming with this volume is the amount of repetition. Due to the work originating as a set of lectures, many of the verbal cues and recaps needed for oratorical continuity remain in this finished written product. On occasion, the items that are summarized at the end of a chapter are reintroduced for context near the beginning of the following chapter. While this repetition is especially helpful for those less familiar with John and his writings, it could frustrate more advanced learners.

The most helpful portions of *Signs of the Messiah* contrast with those who respond rightly to Jesus and those who do not. Köstenberger draws a sharp distinction between Nicodemus and the Samaritan Woman (as would be expected), but he also notes the ingratitude of the healed invalid in John 5 in comparison to the grateful worship of the healed blind man in John 9. These opposing images expose the missional force of the Gospel whereby those who should have expected the Messiah and worshiped Him were instead antagonistic toward Jesus, while those who

seemed to have been beyond hope were brought into the Good Shepherd's fold.

Signs of the Messiah is an ideal companion piece for anyone interested in further study of the Gospel of John. Köstenberger presents his work in a straightforward manner that would benefit students, pastors, and church members alike. The only possible hindrance to its widespread use in the church is its unfortunate price point. The writing is crisp and clear, and Köstenberger's message (and John's) is unmistakable: Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and His signs are the proof.

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Five Views on the Extent of the Atonement, Counterpoints: Bible and Theology. **Edited by Adam J. Johnson, et al. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019. 256 pp. $22.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-0310527718.**

Adam Johnson, associate professor of theology at the Torrey Honors Institute at Biola University, has collected a remarkable group of contributors to represent five varying positions on the atonement in this contribution to Zondervan Academic's *Counterpoints* series. By now, readers ought to be familiar with the format of these multi-perspective volumes. The volume editor, Johnson for this installation, opens the discussion with a chapter that lays forth important questions in the discussion, and provides an overview of each author's chapter. Each contributor presents his perspective of the discussed doctrine—in this case, the extent of the atonement. Following the positive presentation, the remaining authors are given space to respond, noting points of agreement and disagreement. The volume concludes with the editor summarizing the discussion and pointing a way forward for more discussion.

The first contributor, representing the Eastern Orthodox view, is Andrew Louth, emeritus professor of patristic and Byzantine studies at Durham University. Louth begins his chapter by noting that from the onset there is a "linguistic and conceptual" gulf between the Eastern and

Western Church which renders questions like the extent of the atonement difficult to answer from an Eastern Orthodox perspective. According to Louth, atonement — understood in forensic terms — has little resonance with the theological tradition of the East because it limits the imagery of God's work in Christ, such as Christ as victor, Christ as sacrificial victim, and Christ as teacher (22). Instead, Louth argues that the East focuses on the "unlimitedness of God's love" and that the purpose of God's work is "to facilitate God's original and eternal purpose for his created order, to draw it into union with himself, to deify it" (36).

Next, Matthew Levering, James N. and Mary D. Perry Jr. Chair of Theology at Mundelein Seminary, present a Roman Catholic answer to the question. From the very first sentence of his essay, Levering notes that a tension exists in the universal extent of the atonement and the doctrine of predestination. After surveying the Catholic magisterial teaching and the influence of Augustine and Aquinas, Levering presents his own understanding of this doctrinal tension. In the end, Levering discerns a tension in the biblical teaching of God's love. On the one hand, God efficaciously predestined some to salvation and permits others to remain in rebellion; on the other hand, God superabundantly loves each and every rational creature. Rather than subordinating one view over the other, Levering holds both sides in tension, concluding that Christ died "for the salvation of each and every human," thus allowing that Christ "died for some whom he knew would reject him" (89).

Michael Horton, J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics at Westminster Seminary California, presents the Reformed view. Horton begins his chapter by clarifying misconceptions about the theology of John Calvin and Calvinism in general. He argues that predestination was not central to Calvin's theological project and that the Reformed teaching of predestination and reprobation was received from the church fathers and agreed upon by the churches of the magisterial Reformation. Horton then grounds salvation in the intra-trinitarian covenant of redemption and provides biblical support for the role of each person in the work of salvation. Horton then considers three potential positions regarding the purpose of Christ's death: Universalism, Hypothetical Universalism or Amyraldianism, and Horton's position, which claims that Christ's death is sufficient for all but is intended for the elect alone.

Fred Sanders, professor of theology at the Torrey's Honors Institute, presents the Wesleyan view. Sanders, a leading evangelical scholar on the Trinity, views the question of the atonement's extent through the three questions which carry important trinitarian dimensions. Those questions address "the difference between nature and person, the difference between salvation accomplished and applied, and the difference between the Son and the Holy Spirit" (158). As a result of his study, Sanders argues that salvation was sufficient for all and intended for all but only applied to those who respond to Christ in faith. Sanders ends his chapter by aligning his view with the Wesleyan tradition.

The final contribution, representing the Christian Universalist view, is presented by Tom Greggs, the Marischal Professor of Divinity at the University of Aberdeen. Greggs begins his chapter by differentiating pluralistic universalism, which best describes the idea that all religions allow equal access to God, with Christian universalism, which "seeks to offer a *particularist* account of the work of salvation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and to claim that *this particularity and the uniqueness of the incarnation and atonement has universal effect*" (200, emphasis original). Greggs' chapter then seeks to link the atonement with divine love. According to Greggs, because God is love, all of God's actions, including salvation, must accord with God's love. Greggs ends his chapter with a discussion on how Christian universalism considers the biblical themes of sin, judgment, and the life of faith.

The quality of multi-perspective volumes rises and falls with the quality of presentations and interactions provided by the contributors. In this respect, Johnson has edited a high-quality volume. Each contributor is a respected statesman of their particular tradition and clearly articulates how their tradition formulates (or does not formulate) the answer to the question of the extent of the atonement. The volume would have been sufficient had Johnson limited the views to the two most common evangelical constructions, the Reformed and Wesleyan views. Instead, Johnson does the reader a service by including the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Christian Universalist views — three views which often lack serious engagement by evangelicals. That is not to say that these non-evangelical views are necessarily equally acceptable by evangelicals. The Christian Universalist view is particularly hard to square with other evangelical (and biblical) convictions regarding, for instance, sin, death, and final judgment. Greggs attempts

to reorient those convictions within a Christian Universalist framework but faces a steep uphill battle against the more evangelical interpretations of the atonement. Nonetheless, evangelicals ought to be aware of these other views and able to interact with them as it relates to the extent of the atonement.

Several of the individual essays are worth further consideration. Andrew Louth's presentation and interactions from the Eastern Orthodox perspective were particularly enlightening. From the onset of his initial presentation, it is obvious that Louth, and by extension the Eastern tradition, differs from the Western traditions on starting points, questions asked, and answers concluded (32). Louth warns against limiting the imagery of Christ's saving work in purely legal or feudal terms (24). The stark contrast between the Eastern and Western tradition is an important context to the broader retrieval project underway in evangelical theology. Understanding and interacting with the Eastern tradition's inheritance of the early church will be key as evangelicals look to the early church for guidance in subjects such as the Trinity, Christology, and hermeneutics.

However, Louth's chapter was not without concerns. Horton provides fair push-back against Louth's assessment of Anselm and the Western tradition's emphasis on the forensic aspect of atonement. Horton argues Louth's assessment of Western theology is inaccurate because, despite Louth's claims, the Reformed confessions do treat the death of Christ within the "greater arc" of the biblical story of creation, fall, redemption and consummation. Further, he cites John Calvin on the "deification" of believers, noting that the subject is often covered in Reformed theology under the title of "glorification." Thus, according to Horton, the Western traditions, at least as it is represented by Reformed theology, is far more balanced than Louth presents.

While chapters like Louth's provide readers with a perspective often far-removed from their own tradition, Horton's and Sanders's chapters provide readers with excellent overviews of the most common evangelical views. Though these chapters differ in which tradition they represent (Reformed, Wesleyan), and though they differ on their conclusions, both authors go to great lengths to ground their conclusions in Trinitarian reasoning. Horton argues that salvation is grounded in the intra-trinitarian covenant of redemption, wherein "...the Father chose a bride for his Son, the Son accepted this role as mediator of the elect, and

the Holy Spirit pledged to bring the elect into saving communion with Christ" (118). Sanders, as previously noted, highlights three questions which have important trinitarian dimensions. While these two theologians come to differing conclusions, evangelicals would do well to mimic the methodological step of grounding the work of salvation in the nature and action of the Trinity.

Overall, *Five Views on the Extent of the Atonement* is a helpful addition to the *Counterpoints* series. The reader will encounter well-respected theologians who offer thought provoking answers to the question of the extent of the atonement. This volume will be a useful resource to anyone wishing to study the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross and the relationship of that work with mankind.

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***God, Creation, and Human Rebellion: Lecture Notes of Archibald Alexander from the Hand of Charles Hodge*. By Archibald Alexander, ed. Travis Fentiman. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019. 169 pp. $22.00, Hardback. ISBN 978-1-60178-719-4.**

A welcome addition to any pastor or scholar's library—especially for those interested in reformed theology and the history of Christianity in America—*God, Creation, and Human Rebellion* contains, for the first time ever, the printed notes of Archibald Alexander's lectures in systematic theology by the pen of Charles Hodge when he was a student at Princeton Seminary in the winter of 1818. The origin of this important publication began when Travis Fentiman, the editor, found a digital manuscript online of Hodge's notes of Alexander's lectures. Realizing the historical and theological value of the treasure he had stumbled upon, Fentiman was faced at once with the challenge of reading Hodge's nearly illegible handwriting. Fortunately, with the help of dedicated friends, Fentiman and his ten-person team learned the peculiarities of Hodge's script and were able to transcribe this remarkable 260-page manuscript within two months.

The introduction, written by James Garretson, devotes twenty-five pages to placing the notes within the historical context of post-colonial America. American Presbyterianism was very much in its infancy stage in the 1700s and still not yet fully-formed even into the early 19th century. During this time, Enlightenment thinking was shaping the course of European and American education, and the increasingly secular attitude brought with it declining moral standards which threatened the influence of Christianity in the young United States. Charles Hodge learned during his time studying in western Europe (1826-1828) how vitally important the connection between doctrine and living was, seeing firsthand how deeply secular the continent had become where only three centuries before the Reformation had taken place. A seminary was needed which specialized in biblical studies for students, one geared towards their preparation for ministry in the proclamation of the gospel, the raising up of disciples, and the defense of the faith.

What makes this work so important is understood in what made Princeton and its first president so significant. Here at Princeton Seminary the trajectory of Presbyterianism in America (and much of American evangelicalism in general) would be established. Alexander (who was the school's only professor its first year in 1812) would define and shape the course the seminary would take for generations to come. For a little over a century, the seminary was a bastion of conservative reformed orthodoxy with its strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the centrality of the Bible as God's infallible Word, and a strict observance of the Westminster Confession of Faith as the clearest expression of the Bible's teaching.

Archibald Alexander was born in 1772 outside Lexington, Virginia just beyond the frontier. Before coming to serve as Princeton's first president and professor, he was an itinerant evangelist, a college president, and a pastor. His life was characterized by a godly piety and an uncompromising devotion to rigorous study. He was already reading through the New Testament at the age of five and had memorized the Westminster Shorter Catechism at the age of seven. The truths he knew in his mind, however, did not fully make their way into his heart until he had a conversion experience years later at the age of seventeen when he was a private tutor in the family of General John Posey. This reality of a full-orbed faith, connecting heart and mind, would characterize his teaching at Princeton Seminary and leave an indelible impression on his

student, Charles Hodge. A brilliant polymath, who at one point in his life said he had read more works in Latin than in English, he once said, "All my theology is reduced to this narrow compass, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners" (386).

Alexander's student, Charles Hodge, would go on to become one of the greatest shapers of the Princeton Theology. As a young man, Hodge was deeply moved by the preaching of Alexander during his time as a student at Princeton College (1812-1815). Shortly after graduating from the college, Alexander took Hodge with him on an itinerant preaching tour in the fall of 1816 where their relationship grew and the theology of the classroom was put into practice in evangelizing to the people of rural Virginia. With his own father dying of yellow fever at the young age of six months, Alexander became a father to Hodge and an exemplary model of Christian discipleship. So great was the impact of Alexander on Hodge that, shortly after graduating from the seminary, Hodge named his first child after him: Archibald Alexander Hodge. A. A. Hodge would also go on to become a professor at Princeton Seminary and a towering figure in reformed thought.

The lecture notes of Archibald Alexander give us valuable insight into the relevant issues of the day while covering the standard topics one would expect from a systematic theology: theology proper, anthropology, election and predestination, creation and providence, covenants, and angelology. Alexander's lectures are very readable, following a catechetical style of question and answer similar to that of Francis Turretin's "Institutes of Elenctic Theology." Such a style was ideally suited for the instruction of future pastors, teachers, and missionaries, allowing for the communication of the salient features of the topic at hand in a succinct and logical fashion.

The first and last chapters of the lecture notes are devoted to Alexander's philosophy of the mind and the will. Alexander had a particular interest in epistemology and, like many in colonial and postcolonial America, was influenced by Common Sense Realism. It is important for the reader to be aware that in Alexander's time the extreme (and dangerous) skepticism of David Hume was very influential as well as other philosophical beliefs which threatened to undermine the very foundation of what it means to have knowledge of one's self and of the world around. Within this context, Alexander recognized the task of defining knowledge and its object to be crucial for young Christians going

into ministry. A historically responsible reading on this point must take such a context into consideration and not suppose the distinguished professor is engaging in pedantic trivialities. It is clear from Archibald Alexander's life and writings that he was not bound to any one philosophical approach, but wholly committed to the Scriptures as the final revealer of reality and how we come to know it. His interest, then, in engaging the philosophical ideas of his day and devoting so much discussion to the will and the mind, was wholly motivated by a desire to defend the truths of Scripture and its Author.

One additional element that will interest readers is in seeing how frequently the physical sciences are intertwined with theological discussion. In Alexander and Hodge's day, many still saw theology as the Queen of the sciences and did not see any inherent conflict between the two as modern westerners so often do. The physical and the spiritual are treated in harmony with one another as God is the sovereign Lord over body and spirit. This holistic approach to theology would shape Charles Hodge and Princeton Seminary for generations to come and would become particularly relevant to Hodge's challenge of Darwinism later that century and to the Modernist Controversy of the 1920s.

In every respect, this publication is truly a remarkable work. The only improvement I would make to the book would be to include a timeline somewhere recording the major events of the lives of Alexander and Hodge within the context of Princeton Seminary in its early years. Such a reference would complement the introduction very nicely and provide easy access to a quick overview of the time period for context.

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***The Same God Who Works All Things: Inseparable Operations in Trinitarian Theology*. By Adonis Vidu. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2021. 352 pp. $45.49, Hardcover. ISBN 978-0-8028-7443-6.**

In *The Same God Who Works All Things: Inseparable Operations in Trinitarian Theology*. Adonis Vidu, who currently serves as professor of

Theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, faces the complexities and challenges of the doctrine of Inseparable Operations without compromise or waver. He is the author of several books, among them *Atonement, Law, and Justice: The Cross in Historical and Cultural Contexts* and *Postliberal Theological Method: A Critical Study*. He formerly held teaching positions at Emmanuel University and University of Bucharest.

By any standard *The Same God Who Works All Things* (hereafter referred to as *TSG*) is a prodigious contribution to the study of divine action. Vidu has a gifted, analytical mind aptly suited to making abstract concepts clear by way of methodical analysis, efficient vocabulary, and creatively drawn metaphors. His project retrieves the heart of classic Augustinian and Thomistic trinitarianism and presents it in conversation with the works of John Owen, Karl Rahner, Giles Emery, Thomas McCall, and other Protestant and Catholic giants in Trinitarian studies. *TSG* provides a fresh and much needed take on dense and complex material in a nine-chapter volume that demands full attention from its readers. It deserves a place alongside the best works dealing with divine action of our day, such as William Abraham's *Divine Agency and Divine Action*.

TSG has a break in structure between chapters three and four. The first three chapters trace the history of the doctrine of Inseparable Operations (hereafter referred to as *IO*) from the early witness of Scripture through the church fathers to medieval developments all the way and to the recent challenge presented by social trinitarianism. In chapters four through nine Vidu applies *IO* to Creation, the Incarnation, Christology, Atonement, Ascension and Pentecost, and the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit. While Vidu's unwavering advocacy of and apology for *IO* doctrine is his consistent theme throughout the book, chapters one through three establish the history of the doctrine, while four through nine serve as an application of it.

Vidu's insistence on the unity of trinitarian action is detailed in chapter three of *TSG* simply titled Unity and Distinction in Divine Action. The doctrine of Inseparable Operations states that the persons of the trinity are indivisible in essence and indivisible in their external operations. Therefore, divine action is attributed to the one, simple will of God, indivisible from the divine nature. Vidu highlights *equiprimordiality* (p. 97), the equal sharing of the divine nature in the

persons in order to attend to the common will of the persons leading to the "in common" work of the Trinity *ad extra*. Historically, this position is described by the dogmatic rule, *opera trinitas ad extra sunt indivisa* (the operations of the Trinity outside are indivisible) (xiii, 99). Divine action is sourced to the divine nature and the divine persons coequally share this nature resulting in all of God operating in all his external works. Distinctions between the persons of the trinity are recognized through the divine processions internal to the divine essence. Because there is one divine essence shared equally by the three persons, the three are distinguished by their irreducible relations to each other within the essence (124). The dogmatic rule emphasizes the unity of action which is essential to the divine nature, and which prevents any maverick activity of the individual persons (99). The result attributes divine action as originating in the processions of the persons. Every divine action carries with it the persons of Father, Son, and Spirit. According to Vidu, "God acts through the Son and in the Holy Spirit" (202). In trinitarian terminology, the subject of the action is the person (*hypostasis*), and the person shares the divine essence with the other two persons. As action is appropriated to the person, all of God is involved in the action (203).

Vidu locates the beginning recognition of *IO* doctrine in Jewish Monotheism, the scriptural witness, and Second Temple worship. He describes monotheism as not primarily interested in "integers," or the number of "tropes of divinity," but in worshiping the universal Creator and Ruler (2). Vidu highlights three critical scriptural attestations of *IO*: the equal divine status of the Son and Spirit with YHWH, Paul's alignment of the Christ with God (1Cor. 10:3-4, 9), and John's presentation of the mutual indwelling of the three persons in chapter fourteen of his Gospel. He identifies appeals to "sameness of operations" in the writings of Athanasius, Didymus, and the Cappadocians who differentiated "substances" by their activities. "Similar action defines similar substances" and Athanasius pressed the unity and inseparability of Father and Son in will and action (John 5:17) (56). The Trinitarianism of Augustine, and eventually Aquinas, affirmed one God (Deut 6:4) with indivisible operations in the world in light of their common commitment to Simplicity doctrine. According to Augustine: "That Father, Son, and Spirit always operate together we learn from Scripture, by faith" (69).

Vidu offers helpful metaphors throughout *TSG* that greatly enhance the understanding of three persons working through one nature. For

example, divine action according to *IO* is likened to a magnet attracting a pin. The pin is attracted to one pole of the magnet, however without the other pole the magnet is inactive. Similarly, when two people are needed to push a heavy cart, one may do more of the work, but without the two the cart does not move. A flashlight needs power from the two poles of a battery to operate. Depersonalization of the Trinity, or what Vidu calls the "individuation problem" is the chief challenge *IO* doctrine faces. Thomas Aquinas responded to it with the "corollary of appropriation" which credits like operations (attributes) to like persons (69). Divine action is not divided between persons it is *represented* by personal properties distinctive to the person in the process of appropriation. The human senses are not capable of doing the work of appropriation, so Scripture and other tools are needed for support.

There are two notable applications of *IO* doctrine that establish Vidu's project. Building on the premise of distinguishing divine persons by irreducible relations within the divine essence, the human nature of Christ is acquired and actuated by the Son because of his *filial* mode. The divine action of the Son includes the Father and Spirit, and the human nature acquired by the Son becomes "instrumentalized" by the Trinity. This results in the interpretation of divine activity such as salvation, being performed through Christ in a *theandric* way (207). His work is not easily divided by his two natures but performed by his *hypostasized* person. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is identified by irreducible relation to Father *and* Son in his mode of *spiration*, allowing his sending to actualize the indwelt essence of God in creation. The Spirit ushers forward sanctification by imprinting Godly character on the believer's soul through the notion of exemplary cause (297). This action is attributed to the Spirit; however the Spirit is conforming the believer to the image of the Son. As noted by Vidu the divine missions of the persons both make the processions of the persons known and incorporate divine inseparable operations in created reality (73). *TSG* includes discussion of divine missions to assist in completing several narrations, and reading Vidu's full treatment of divine missions that is now available in print is recommended.

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***Linguistics and New Testament Greek: Key Issues in the Current Debate*. Edited by David Alan Black and Benjamin L. Merkle. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020. 260 pp. $21.49, Paperback. ISBN 9781540961068.**

In Scripture, God reveals Himself through human language; therefore, biblical exegetes must think carefully about language and should consider insights from linguistics to deepen their understanding of God's Word. From this conviction, David Alan Black and Benjamin Merkle organized a conference at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary to "help ordinary students of Greek think more linguistically about the language they are studying" (3). At this conference, scholars of New Testament Greek presented papers surveying the current value of linguistic research in their field. *Linguistics and New Testament Greek* is the publication of those papers.

Stanley Porter begins the volume with a survey of formalist, functional, and cognitive linguistic schools (11-36). He laments that, despite advances in linguistics, New Testament Greek study and pedagogy remain grounded in the comparative-historical approach of the pre-linguistic era. He further argues that modern linguistic engagement, emphasizing methodological purity over linguistic eclecticism, is necessary for New Testament Greek study.

Chapters 2 through 4 address issues concerning the Greek verbal system. In chapter 2 (37-54), Constantine Campbell deals with aspect and tense. Acknowledging the debate concerning the *number* of aspects, he focuses on whether tense is a feature of the indicative mood. Campbell shows that aspect is a semantic category (features encoded at the morphological level), and *Aktionsart* is a pragmatic category (variable functions of morphological forms). He then concludes that the tense debate concerns methodology and whether one holds a clear distinction between semantics and pragmatics (48).

Michael Aubrey then overviews various definitions of the perfect tense and provides tools to evaluate alternative approaches to the perfect tense (56). He encourages students to evaluate the perfect by paying attention to the number of participants in a clause, how the participants are affected by the event, and energy transfer between participants (81). Jonathan Pennington concludes the section on verbs with an examination of the Greek middle voice. Defining the middle voice as

expressing subject affectedness (97), he rejects deponency, and argues that all middle-only verbs are truly middle in meaning (89). He also argues that the Greek voice system contrasts active and *middle* voices, unlike English which contrasts active and *passive* (96).

In the next two chapters, Stephen Levinsohn and Steven Runge discuss discourse analysis (103). Using five examples, Levinsohn advocates that New Testament Greek discourse studies benefit from advances made by studying discourse features of other languages (110). He then uses Galatians to demonstrate how the discourse structure of a New Testament book could be studied. In his chapter, Runge explores the ordering of Greek clauses for emphasis (125-26). Discussing *theme* (what is known) and *rheme* (what is new), he explains that in natural information flow theme *precedes* rheme. Runge then asserts that Greek usually places the verb first in a clause but will front other clause constituents to set a frame of reference or emphasize *rheme* material (130-131). He concludes by demonstrating the pragmatic effect of violating natural information flow and the ordering of dependent adverbial clauses.

The next four chapters address Greek pedagogy. T. Michael Halcomb begins by discussing the living languages approach to teaching Greek. He rejects the dichotomy between the grammar-translation and living languages approaches to foreign language teaching, advocating instead for the utilization of multiple aspects of pedagogy (150). He illustrates his point through a historical overview of foreign language teaching and concludes with a challenge to consider the impact of pedagogical methods on enrollment in biblical language courses.

Randall Buth then addresses the role of pronunciation in New Testament Greek studies. He argues that our brains require fluent pronunciation because we process text verbally and retain words for only two seconds before storing a summary concept (170). Based on the need for fluent reading, he notes that extensive *oral* Greek development is necessary for increased reading comprehension and literacy (171). Buth then examines the data concerning Koine pronunciation and argues for Greek teachers adapting the likely pronunciation system at the turn of the millennium.

In chapter 9, Thomas Hudgins overviews and annotates several electronic tools for study of New Testament Greek in the areas of: (1) language acquisition, (2) textual criticism, (3) lexical analysis, and (4)

syntactical analysis (195). Robert Plummer concludes the pedagogy section discussing the ideal beginning Greek grammar. He begins with two caveats: (1) often it is time or will power, not an ideal grammar, that is lacking, and (2) there is an economic or social 'lock in' to current grammars (213-217). He then outlines six characteristics of an ideal Greek grammar, emphasizing the need for clear, accurate communication that inspires students learning.

Nicholas Ellis concludes the body of the book by using lexical semantics to survey the history of interaction between linguistics and biblical exegesis. He notes that after the comparative philologists such as A.T. Robertson, James Barr's structuralism and critique of lexical fallacies discouraged biblical scholars from engaging in linguistic advances (234). Ellis concedes that, in biblical studies, Systemic Functional Linguistics and Cognitive Linguistics continued to pursue linguistic advances, but he argues that Bible translators lead the way in linguistic interaction. Lamenting the rift between linguistics, biblical studies, and Bible translation, Ellis calls on the biblical studies guild to reengage linguistic analysis (230).

In a postscript, Benjamin Merkle offers synthesis and a way forward (247). In relation to linguistic schools, he argues that linguistic eclecticism must be pursued. Noting areas of agreement concerning verbal aspect, he summarizes areas under debate: (1) the number of aspects, (2) temporality in the indicative mood, (3) the influence of lexical meaning on aspectual choice, and (4) prominence (253). He recognizes the pedagogical power of living languages approach to teaching and concludes that Greek teachers must improve by engaging in linguistics (260).

Linguistics and New Testament Greek is a helpful look at the current state of Greek linguistics and exegesis. The inclusion of authors from different methodological backgrounds demonstrates the breadth of the field, and examples from specific biblical passages show the exegetical payoff of linguistics. This volume progresses beyond similar volumes with an emphasis on pedagogy, consistently challenging current and future Greek teachers to engage with linguistics. Though linguistic engagement poses a steep learning curve for the biblical exegete, the results in this volume demonstrate the need for deeper linguistic engagement. Nicholas Ellis also notes the global church's demand for

more than translations of English-based resources which requires deep linguistic and cross-linguistic engagement (227).

One issue a reader unfamiliar with linguistics will face is technical terminology. The editors have provided a glossary to mitigate this inevitability, yet the reader will run into unfamiliar terms not in the glossary. This difficulty notwithstanding, *Linguistics and New Testament Greek* is a valuable resource for students of New Testament Greek with basic exposure to Greek who want to know how insights from linguistics can aid their exegesis. Greek teachers will especially benefit from the challenge of this volume and strengthen their own pedagogical approach. Institutions and individuals committed to serious study of God's word will be aided by the inclusion of this volume in their libraries.

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Jude's Apocalyptic Eschatology as Theological Exclusivism. **By William R. Wilson II. Dallas: Fontes, 2021. 163 pp. $44.95, Hardback. ISBN 978-1-948048-49-1.**

William R. Wilson II, currently serving as associate professor of New Testament and Greek at Luther Rice College and Seminary, has taught in several academic institutions in the U.S. and China. Wilson is passionate about the church and the academy, and his work on Jude is a demonstration of this passion. Wilson writes this book in order to defend theologically conservative Christian views during a pluralistic society and church. Wilson's choice in Jude provides the perfect book to address the present problem of "a postmodern passion for tolerance and autonomy" (xv). Although other books have been written addressing such matters from a cultural perspective, Wilson's work focuses on one book from the New Testament. This book is primarily written to scholars and students, though, for the efforts involved in reading, the average church member will be well rewarded.

Wilson sets out to demonstrate that Jude's epistle provides the church with a canonical determent from the desire for tolerance and pluralism prominent today. The book is divided into four parts. Part one

provides an overview of current Jude studies, including relevant textual issues, the use of extrabiblical resources, the connection to other canonical books, and the key themes and information of Jude. Part two interacts with "apocalyptic eschatology," specifically within Judaism and early Christianity (57). He discusses the historical backdrop of apocalyptic eschatology, the key "ideological" issues, and the main "elements" (43, 45). After this, Wilson connects the research on apocalyptic eschatology to Jude's epistle. It parallels part two by discussing the cultural and historical situation at the time of Jude's writing. He also presents the elements of exclusivism with which Jude would be involved. Finally in part four, the author summarizes his research as it relates to "theological exclusivism" in Jude's letter (95). He discusses Jude's opponents, and then addresses each item of exclusivism found with Jude's epistle.

Wilson accomplishes his mission to provide the church with a protection against the encroaching acceptance and desire for autonomy in his work. His clearly written arguments take the reader through pertinent research without becoming overly technical. Wilson's main thesis is that Jude, written as apocalyptic eschatology, is a defense against pluralism and a bulwark for orthodox teaching and practice. As a result of his prose, the reader will grasp this with ease. Wilson makes the connection between both Judaic and Christian apocalyptic eschatology within Jude clear. He does this by discussing the parallels between the two. He addresses Judaism and Christianity first in part two. Then he presents the parallels to Jude in part three. In part four, the author summarizes his research by focusing the remainder of his work on developing his thesis in the book of Jude itself. The foundations he lays through parts 1-3 provide the material connection to the author's argument that Jude, as apocalyptic eschatology, is a defense of orthodox teaching and practice and an argument against pluralism and tolerance within the church.

This book has several strengths. First, it is written distinctly. Though technical, Wilson presents his arguments and interacts with the field of literature *without forsaking clarity.* A second strength of this book is the robust research material. Parts one and two cover a range of topics from textual critical issues to extrabiblical and Judaic literature. This research bolsters Wilson's arguments and demonstrates the robust work performed. Third, Wilson provides definitions to the terms he uses,

allowing the reader to understand his arguments precisely as he develops his thesis. For example, he defines ideas such as "apocalyptic eschatology," "dualism," and "paraenesis" (33, 52, and 86). Finally, Wilson succeeds in his goal. He provides the modern church with the encouragement to stay faithful to orthodox teaching and practice while avoiding the pluralism as demonstrated by the book of Jude. For example, as Wilson begins his dissection of the text of Jude, he reminds his readers, "Jude advances a worldview that is aggressively hostile to doctrinal oscillation, positing a belief system that is not open for negotiation" (103). At the conclusion of his discussion on Jude's elements of exclusivism, the author writes, "…Jude's biblical distinctions between the righteous and the wicked, this evil age and the age to come, and beliefs that are right and beliefs that are wrong must be maintained" (111). He concludes his argument, and the book, stating, "In an era deluged by alternatives, Jude would have the church confess Jesus' unique identity and universal authority" (113).

Many people will benefit from this book. First, seminaries will benefit from using this book. On the one hand, it provides a rich, brief text that addresses pertinent issues within the church today. On the other hand, it is an excellent work of exegesis. This would prove useful for advanced Greek or expository classes on Jude. Students of Scripture will also benefit from this work. Wilson interacts with primary sources, providing the student with a didactic example of what original research should be. It also shows how exegesis is more than working with the Greek text; exegesis includes the historical and cultural context in which the writers find themselves. Seminary and university libraries should consider procuring a copy of this work as well. Not only is Wilson's work excellent, it also provides an incredible bibliography related to studies of Jude.

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***A History of Evangelism in North America.* Edited by Thomas P. Johnston. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021. 345 pp. $23.99, Paperback. ISBN 9780825447099.**

A History of Evangelism in North America gives the reader an overview of the key events and individuals that brought revival and church growth. Thomas Johnston, an experienced and energetic scholar, provides oversight to the twenty other contributors to this work. Johnston recently retired from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he now serves as senior professor of evangelism. He also served as president of the Southern Baptist Professors of Evangelism Fellowship. Johnston has written several books and articles on evangelism.

A History of Evangelism seeks "to fill a seventy-year void" on the history of evangelism (9). The book serves as an overview of the individuals, movements, and methodologies from a wide berth of denominations in the North American context. The authors, at the direction of Johnston, accomplish this task.

There are two main sections of the work. The authors in the first section address evangelism "in the formation of the United States" (9). The contributors in the second section address evangelism "in the twenty-first century" (9). The structure of each chapter is similar throughout the work. One author writes each chapter. Then the author presents the individual, movement, or methodology with a summary introduction. The author highlights the important background, concepts, or beliefs that contribute toward evangelism. Each contributor provides additional resources for further reading. Finally, the writers close their chapters with key contributions toward evangelism.

William Henard interacts primarily with the preaching of Jonathan Edwards. Henard contrasts the common view of the preacher of hell with the evangelistic fervor of one of America's paramount theologians. Edwards's primary method of evangelism is preaching, as Henard demonstrates. J. D. Payne addresses the missionary zeal of David Brainerd. Working against the Dutch community's ill-treatment of the Indians, Payne shows how Brainerd engaged in prayer, "Christocentric preaching," and systematic teaching (43-44). Jeff Brown covers John Wesley in chapter 3 in two areas: his "itinerant preaching" and "preachers' conferences" (49). After treating the work of God in Whitefield's life, Jake Roudkovski demonstrates eight features from

Scripture to prayer to holiness to individual and public witnessing, proving that Whitefield burned with a desire to tell others about Jesus. Larry McDonald shows the Spirit-dependent work of Shubal Stearns and the long-lasting effects of the Sandy Creek Association in Baptist life in chapter 5. Timothy Beougher covers the circuit riders of Methodism and its key leader Francis Asbury in chapter 6. It is Asbury's organization that led to the propagation of the gospel during his time.

D. Scott Hildreth focuses on the Cane Ridge revival and camp meetings in chapter 7. While acknowledging the abuses, Hildreth presents the strengths and benefits of camp meetings (111). Thomas Johnston covers an enormous amount of history in Bible and tract publication and distribution in chapter 8. Touching on important divisions, such as the textual basis for translations, denominational differences, and even responses from false religions, Johnston demonstrates the importance of literature in evangelism (136-139). Robert Matz covers the revivals in the west in chapter 9. Prayer and the work of James McGready combined to bring revival and growth in the "American frontier" (141). Jeff Farmer interacts with "the pastor evangelist" J. Wilbur Chapman (153). Influenced by Charles Finney, Chapman sees no separation between the work of the pastor and the evangelist. Farmer expands upon the work of Chapman by addressing the importance of prayer, intentionality, and approaches to evangelism.

Doug Munton writes about John Mason Peck and his seminary Rock Springs. Peck fights against the anti-missionary oppositions and works to establish "one of the first colleges west of the Alleghenies" (176). Munton ends the discussion by connecting education to evangelism. Kristen Ferguson presents Henrietta Mears and her influence on evangelism in chapter 12. Though primarily a teacher in the schools, Ferguson emphasizes "multiplication" within the context of her Sunday school class (183). Her influence reached individuals such as Bill Bright, Billy Graham, and Jim Rayburn.

Allan Karr interacts with Dawson Troutman, a man who lived in hypocrisy until the Lord saved him. Troutman combines evangelism and discipleship in his organization The Navigators (198). Though surrounded by criticism and controversy, "Troutman was a breath of fresh air" (212). Carl Bradford introduces African American pastor and evangelist S. M. Lockridge in chapter 14. Lockridge emphasizes the means, message, and methodology in his preaching. Thomas Johnston

focuses on Billy Graham, perhaps the most well-known evangelist in recent history. Graham's life has several key moments that hone and sharpen his evangelistic focus, broadening his efforts to include as many churches as possible (239). Johnston both exhorts and warns readers about the benefits and dangers of following Graham's ministry.

Greg Mathias handles Bill Bright and the Campus Crusade in chapter 16. Bright's greatest contribution to evangelism is his "four spiritual laws" (249). Bright also influences campus evangelism in four ways. These provide help for campus ministries today. In chapter 17, Eddie Pate examines D. James Kennedy and Evangelism Explosion. After presenting biographical information, Pate demonstrates Kenney's contribution to evangelism through the Evangelism Explosion. Evangelists are still benefiting from and using this tool. Preston Nix writes about Chuck Smith and "a special revival" known as the Jesus Movement. A unique period provides for unique opportunities for evangelism and Smith takes advantage of these ministry opportunities to present the gospel.

Chuck Lawless interacts with the church growth movement, led by Donald McGavran and C. Peter Wagner in chapter 19. McGavran and Wagner delve into the deeper issues behind evangelism and present research-based methods for evangelism (296-299). Bo Rice ushers in John Piper and the *young-restless and reformed* movement in chapter 20. Though Calvinism has often received rejection within many churches, Rice attempts to correct the misunderstanding by unpacking Piper's contribution to evangelism. Matt Queen walks through thirty years of evangelism history within the Southern Baptist Convention, offering feedback on the many approaches offered. Finally, Paul Akin attempts to combine everything with helpful feedback for the church in the 21st century.

This book offers a wealth of evangelism history without burdening the reader. For those interested, each contributor provides references for further research. This book will be a blessing to the average church member as well as undergraduate evangelism professors. Church libraries and seminaries would do well to procure a copy for their members and students.

There are several strengths of this book. First, the book covers an enormous period of history well. Without bogging the reader with too many details, each contributor presents an excellent overview of the

individual along with their contributions to evangelism. Second, they offer many works as references for those interested in a particular person. Finally, the authors discuss the positive and negative aspects of everyone. This strengthens the work because it does not devolve into hero worship.

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Quotations in John: Studies on Jewish Scripture in the Fourth Gospel. **By Michael A. Daise. Broadway, New York: T & T Clark, 2020. 248 pp. $80.50, Hardcover. ISBN 978-0-567-68179-9.**

Quotations in John continue to intrigue exegetes for several reasons, prompting them to look again at the dynamics of the quotations. The present volume by Michael Daise is a revisit to the quotations of John, particularly the quotation clusters in the Book of Signs (John 1 – 12). Michael A. Daise is Walter G. Mason Professor of Religious Studies at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA. He teaches early Judaism, the origins of Christianity, and the New Testament for the Department of Religious Studies and the program in Judaic Studies.

The historical-critical/theological approach was primary in studying John's quotations until the mid-1990s; but several others have been advanced since then; namely, the hermeneutical, the social-scientific, and the semiotic. However, Daise sees continued relevance of the former approach as articulated by Maarten J. J. Menken and Bruce G. Schuchard. Thus, four factors govern his work: (i) critique of the new approaches, (ii) lingering exegetical and theological issues, (iii) quotation clusters and literary structures, and (iv) broader theological implications. To achieve this task, Daise employs the following methodology: the versions cited by John, texts from the Judean desert, mediating sources, and hypotheses for Johannine anomalies.

In this volume, Daise focuses on six quotation clusters in John 1—12. He argues that "these six quotations carry three dynamics" (10). First, the *formulae* in the quotations have one of two features found nowhere else in John: one, that it explicitly ascribes to Isaiah John 1:23, 12:38 and

12:39-40 and, two, that quotations which indicate fulfillment were "remembered" by the disciples (John 2:17, 2:19-22 and 12:12-16). Second, the Isaianic and "remembrance" groupings bracket the Book of Signs as *inclusios*. Finally, these two quotation clusters form a mirrorlike A-B-B'-A' arrangement in the Book of Signs. While the Isaianic quotations are the first (John 1:23) and last two (John 12:38, 40), the "remembrance" quotations are the second (John 2:17) and second-to-last two (John 12:13, 15-16). The chiastic structure, according to Daise, not only emphasizes the theme of the inner bracket against the outer, it creates an even starker contrast between the two messages expressed in the *inclusios*. Compared to the Jews, who are angelologically blind to the significance of Jesus' signs (in the Isaianic *inclusio*), the disciples are pneumatologically enlightened to the purpose of Jesus' signs (in the "remembrance" *inclusio*). Daise further observes that the narrative in the *chiasmus*, "distills implications spanning the five spheres of theological thought ... Christology, soteriology, eschatology, ecclesiology and pneumatology" (12).

Chapter One probes Isaiah 40:3 at John 1:23. According to Daise, the key to understanding the citation is the syntactical (ἐγὼ - I am) and lexical (εὐθύνατε – make straight) meaning (37). He argues that, by casting John as "a voice," the exhortation is personified in him but issued by God, embellishing the exhortation with sapiential language equates wisdom to the faith by which people should receive Jesus. Therefore, according to Daise, "reading John 1:23/ Isaiah 40:3 in light of its broader, narrative context ... John is summoning the populace to the wisdom of faith" (65).

Chapter Two examines the Isaianic *inclusio* – Isaiah 53:1 at John 12:38 and Isaiah 6:10 at John 12:40. Daise argues that these quotations "serve to elucidate the Jews' unbelieving responses to Jesus' ministry" (67). While Isaiah 53:1 at John 12:38 describes the fact of unbelief, Isaiah 6:10 at John 12:40 provides the reason for unbelief. Daise argues that these quotations are "brokered by the Synoptic Gospels" (36).

In Chapter Three, Daise analyzes the quotation of Psalm 69:10 at John 2:17. He argues that the quotation drawn from the LXX has been edited, not only to depict Jesus' state of mind during the temple incident, but also the change from the aorist to the future tense portrays Jesus' zeal which establishes a twofold, metaphorized temple through his death

and resurrection: the sanctuary of his body and the Father's house of the indwelling Godhead (155).

In Chapter Four, Daise examines the concluding "remembrance" formulae: Psalm 118:25 – 26 and Zechariah 9:9 at John 12:12-16. He argues that thematically the import of the Psalm and Zechariah portrays Jesus as the king who fulfills both northern and southern kingdoms, "northern, by the acclamation he receives from the pilgrims as 'king of Israel'; southern, by the gesture towards Jacob's oracle on Judah which he makes to Jerusalemites" (196).

Chapter Five synthesizes the array of motifs from each quotation cluster into the overarching narrative created by the full *chiasmus*. According to Daise, the outer *inclusio* (Isaianic) depicts Jesus as Moses entreating the Jews to believe, and the inner *inclusio* (remembrance) portrays Jesus as David uniting the divided kingdoms. He argues that the *inclusios* are connected by "the ruler of this world" who is the cause of obduracy but is to be cast out (204).

In a nutshell, Daise argues that "the Isaianic quotations look back (with closure) to Jesus's public ministry in the Book of Signs, [while] the 'remembrance' quotations look ahead (with anticipation) to the erection of that sanctuary: Jesus's death and resurrection in the Book of Glory" (199).

In this work, Daise "revisits the quotations in John from an historical-critical and theological vantage point" (12). He succeeds in what he promises to do; he adequately addresses the four factors that prompted his work. The strength of Daise's work is that, first, he makes a compelling case for the traditional approach (the historical-critical/theological) to studying quotations in John, thereby answering the questions posed by the critics of the traditional approach.

Second, Daise tackles the lingering exegetical and theological issues by carefully examining each quotation with various criteria: comparing texts (HB, LXX, texts from the Judean desert), versions cited, anomalies, hypotheses, and the rendering by the fourth Gospel. Examining the text this way, Daise leaves no stone unturned to understand the intent of the fourth Gospel's author in quoting the Old Testament.

Third, the literary structures Daise presents are compelling. He argues that "some quotations in John share lexical and thematic features that suggest they should be examined as clusters rather than as discrete units" (9). Thus, he makes compelling arguments for the chiastic structure

formed by the clusters of quotations. Fourth, Daise's work is permeated with excellent scholarship, evidenced in his engagement with the foremost scholars in the field.

While Daise's work has great merit, his presentation of the author of the fourth Gospel is unclear. For the most part, he refers to the author of John as "the evangelist." However, he seems to suggest multiple editors when he says "elements that cannot be traced to any extant source (biblical or peritestamental) will be attributed to the editorial activity of the fourth Gospel's *author(s)* (emphasis added) (28). Furthermore, Daise's distinction between "the evangelist" and "John" needs clarification. He says, "The quotations of Isaiah at John 12:38 and 12:40 are cited by the evangelist, not John" (67). Regardless, Daise's work is a valuable contribution to New Testament studies and biblical theology in general and to the study of the Gospel of John in particular. People in the academy and serious students of the Bible in the church will find a wealth of exegetical and theological insights from Daise's volume.

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From Research to Teaching: A Guide to Beginning Your Classroom Career. **By Michael Kibbe. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2021. 138 pp. Paperback, $20.00. ISBN 9780830839186.**

Following his instructional *From Topic to Thesis,* Michael Kibbe writes *From Research to Teaching* for those graduate students beginning their career as communicative professionals. The transition from the desk of the research student to the classroom podium is not far at all. Kibbe, an associate professor of biblical studies and dean of communication and theology at Great Northern University, provides a useful and helpful companion for the transition and path of teaching, communication, and method.

No one is fully prepared for the transition from study to practice. The study, in general, is to provide a basis and foundation of principles for all the following tasks. Kibbe gives a personal example in chapter one of his apprenticeship in cabinetry. His teacher said of each job, "this one is just

like the one before." On the one hand, the teacher could not be more wrong. Each job was different in almost every detail. From the shape to size to extent, every job required new skills and knowledge. On the other hand, the teacher could not be more right. Each job required the principle basics of cabinetry, though with different applications of those principles. Yes, each job has many differences in the details, but the principles provided the foundations for learning new skills and applications of those principles.

This is the beginning idea that Kibbe has in mind when moving from the research carrel to the classroom podium. The disciplines and principles of learning and research provide the necessary principles for the career in teaching and communicating. In the book, Kibbe continues with other personal examples that shine light on practices in the classroom that are most helpful to the teacher and the student. Additionally, Kibbe provides helpful self-analytical tools to finely craft one's method of madness. Perhaps most importantly, Kibbe provides comments on what Sertillanges called the "Intellectual Life." The life of teaching requires professors to be attentive, fundamentally, to the spirit, condition, and practice of their own lives.

From Research to Teaching is structured in two parts. First, Kibbe analyzes what teachers must do. Here, there are three spheres of internal and external action: before the classroom, in the classroom, and after the classroom. The second part analyzes what teachers must know. Here, Kibbe encourages his readers to turn their attention away from themselves toward others such that the readers become better for the benefit of their students, families, and colleagues. Kibbe provides three appendices for using the dissertation, a plea for graduate schools to implement these practices, and further resources on teaching effectively.

The first part has three phases or spheres of internal and external action: preparation, execution, and reflection. Chapter one begins answering the question what teachers must do by looking at the preparation before getting to the classroom. This phase is all about remaining a student in the research carrel but shifting the focus of research to the teaching craft. Holding on to the academic discipline, Kibbe gives four points of advice in making the transition from research to teaching: 1) finish the job, 2) read a book, 3) get a mentor, and 4) do the work.

Teaching requires a great deal of content preparation. Thankfully, the past few years in the research carrel provided a discipline for this. However, these steps will allow the transition to teaching to be effective and long-lasting. Getting the dissertation published is a crucial step, for Kibbe. This work contributes to the academy and the one who wrote the dissertation needs closure.

Moreover, those on the dissertation committee may or may not be good fits for a pedagogical mentor, and that is okay. Kibbe provides a host of insights to finding a pedagogical mentor where one learns and crafts his gifts and abilities in the classroom. A good mentor will assist in strengthening the inherent gifts and abilities within and will not try to duplicate himself. Along with securing a mentor, the rookie professor must be creative and devoted to reading outside of his field. Reading pedagogical books can sometimes be a drag, however, we learn by reading widely, intermittently, and implementing what is read.

The second phase for what teachers must do concerns execution in the classroom. While there is content and information being delivered, there is more that happens in the classroom than dispelling information to students. Kibbe provides five tools for effectively executing in the classroom. First, zoom out to the entire semester (or year), and treat each lesson as a part of the plan. Each part of the journey is inviting the students into it for comprehension and formation. Second, learn to help students finish the journey. Again, it is more than information dump; it is comprehension and formation.

The third part of execution, and maybe the most fun, is having a signature. This could likely be the dissertation topic, but whatever it is, this one topic is always associated with you. Fourth, it must be acknowledged and accepted that mistakes and failures will be made. If this is the case, Kibbe encourages new professors to take risks in the teaching craft. Finally, remember the center, the one thing that matters in the curriculum. This will be the guiding factor through the whole course for the professor and student.

The final phase of what teachers must do concerns reflection after the classroom. This is the most important, but the hardest, to do. Also, more than any other aspect, this phase is the longest. This reflection is not just for the rookie teacher but for seasoned veterans as well. According to Kibbe, reflection is both active and passive. One must find a system of reflection and evaluation, deciding how to advance and do better. One

must also take a sabbath. The old adage is if you primarily do physical labor, then you must rest with your mind; and vice versa here, since teachers are primarily using their minds, physical rest is healthy. This could be hiking, fly fishing, biking, or wood working.

The second part of the book answers what teachers must know. Following Parker Palmer's, *The Courage to Teach,* Kibbe follows the wisdom that in order to know something you have to do something. Here, self-discovery and execution are in view. Again, in very similar terms to Sertillanges' *The Intellectual Life*, there must be a denial of arrogance and self-conceit, and an acknowledgement that the idea of being Superman/woman is fiction. For Kibbe, this takes the path of method, community, limitations, and power.

The first path of what teachers must know is mission and methodology. Figuring out what you're going to do in the classroom and how you're going to do it matters *significantly*. "There isn't one right way, but there are better and worse ways *for you*" (8). Kibbe lists four interwoven threads for success in mission and methodology: mechanism (delivery), mannerism (appearance), environment (aesthetics), and centerpiece (focus) (86). Additionally, if a method isn't working, the teacher would be wise to try other avenues.

The second path concerns community. Kibbe discusses only two groups here: students and family. For some professors, class sizes will be grand and others will be less than twenty. It is important, then, to *know* your students. Each student in the classroom will be different: strengths, weaknesses, stories, etc. So, the teacher doesn't necessarily have to know each student at the same level. However, knowing *your* students in the key. The second group, family, is critical. It is easy to get caught up in the passions and excitement of our particular field of academics, meeting students, and collaborating with colleagues. It is imperative, then, to be aware of the type and frequency of communication, partnership, and time your family needs. You will probably learn a few things from your family that will make you a better teacher, communicator, and leader.

The third path concerns our limitations. Like many of Kibbe's points of wisdom, this is a marathon to learn and accept. Different seasons of life will cause limitations to ebb and flow. Thus, reflection with yourself and community is all the more important. We are not the geniuses we make ourselves out to be. In fact, even after five decades in the academy, there is still a multitude of riches to mine in God.

Kibbe's final exhortation gets to the heart of the matter: self. Teaching is a perilous career to undertake. What you teach and, more importantly, how you teach it is what is in view here. Minds and souls are being cultivated in your classroom, thus there should be a deep level of self-awareness to check against your range of creative and destructive capabilities.

Michael Kibbe has produced a wonderful sequel to *From Topic to Thesis*. Kibbe is concerned with many aspects for the student entering the teaching profession. From preparation to reflection to method to habit to self-control, *From Research to Teaching* is a concise, practical, and able guide for aspiring or new professors. This and *The Intellectual Life* should be given to aspiring and new professors together.

One aspect of further desire was to know Kibbe's thoughts on other features of community (colleagues and ecumenical conversations). He limits the discussion to students and family. These are probably the two most important groups within one community, and word limit was likely an issue. However, discussion and wisdom on interacting and learning from one's direct community of academic professionals would be of helpful service.

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***T&T Clark Handbook of Thomas F. Torrance*. Edited by Paul D. Molnar and Myk Habets. New York: T&T Clark, 2020. 290pp. $157.50, Hardback. ISBN 9780567670519.**

Thomas F. Torrance is hailed as "one of the most important theologians of the past century" (Elmer E. Colyer, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T. F. Torrance*, edited by Elmer M. Colyer. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001, xi). Therefore, it was fitting that, at the turn of the new century, there be an edited volume to serve both as "an introduction to Torrance and his theology" and "a handbook for those researching his work" (Colyer, *Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, xi). The last two decades, however, have seen a considerable increase of interest in Torrance's corpus—each year

adding to the steady stream of new dissertations, journal articles, and monographs, as well a theological fellowship and peer-reviewed journal, all dedicated to analyzing and advancing his work. What has been lacking, though, is a single, definitive resource that reflects the wealth of this recent scholarship. The *T&T Clark Handbook of Thomas F. Torrance* aims directly to fill this lacuna, seeking to present "cutting-edge Torrance scholarship for a new generation" (front jacket).

The *Handbook* is edited by two of the leading Torrance scholars, Paul D. Molnar and Myk Habets, who seek to "provide a thorough and engaging overview of the theology of Thomas F. Torrance" (Molnar, 8). Although, even that task is not an easy one as Torrance's writings have been described as vast, interconnected, and obscure. A cursory review of the table of contents, however, demonstrates Molnar and Habet's command of both Torrance's own body of work and the contemporary conversation in secondary literature. Indeed, the list of contributors represents the proverbial "Who's Who" of Torrance scholarship. What is more, the individual chapters reflect a deft balance, outlining the important contours of his broad theological program, detailing more technical contributions by Torrance, and introducing the reader to specific points of disagreement within the ongoing discussion of his work.

For example, those recently introduced to Torrance will appreciate the helpful clarification of his relationship with Barth (Paul Molnar, "Thomas F. Torrance and Karl Barth: Similarities and Differences," 67–84), a careful survey of his doctrine of the Trinity (Cristopher R. J. Holmes, "Thomas F. Torrance and the Trinity," 161–72), an exploration of the enduring significance of his trademark work on theological science (Travis Stevick, "Theological Science Then and Now," 111–26), and the all-important interconnectedness of the incarnation and atonement in his thought (Thomas A. Noble, "Incarnation and Atonement," 173–88). Those advancing as students of Torrance can look forward to a lucid engagement with the more technical contributions of his program, such as "The Importance of the Personal in the Onto-relational theology of Thomas F. Torrance" (Gary W. Deddo, 143–60) and "The Innovative Fruitfulness of *an/en-hypostasis* in Thomas F. Torrance" (Robert T. Walker, 189–206). Finally, those entering the critical dialogue within the secondary literature will find Kettler's chapter "'Jesus Christ is our Human Response to God': Divine and Human Agency in the Theology of

Thomas F. Torrance" (207–222) an insightful engagement of a key fault line in the interpretation of Torrance, especially as it relates to soteriology and the sacraments.

Important also is the present volume's ability to provide the background to Torrance's positive contribution to theology. In this vein, Joel Scandrett's chapter "Thomas F. Torrance and Ecumenism" (51–66) sets Torrance's work in the proper context of his desire for Christocentric, ecclesiocentric, and sacramental ecumenism (and in that order). Jason Radcliff's chapter "Thomas F. Torrance: Historian of Dogma" (101–10) helpfully clarifies that Torrance's work breaks the mold of more traditional categories (systematic theologian, an historian, or an historical theologian) in that he engages in an imaginative and creative reconstruction of the theological tradition, both dialoguing with and reshaping the Fathers, the Reformation, and Barth in light of the others (103–05). Torrance can do so because he views the ideas and figures he encounters in the history of dogma as "living members of the *communion sanctorum* empowered by the same Holy Spirit to witness to the same God through the same Jesus Christ of whose Body they are a part" (110). For this reason, Kate Tyler's chapter "Thomas F. Torrance and Ecclesiology" (223–42) completes the tripartite background of Torrance's thought. For Torrance, ecclesiology is the Church's dialogue with both Christology/Trinity and eschatology so that "the eschatological *telos* of the Church is that of a redeemed and reconciled body, which is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, united with Jesus Chris through the Holy Spirit" (241). Torrance's charge to the church to herald this glorious reality unites ecclesiology with the previous emphases of ecumenism and creative engagement with the Tradition.

Especially intriguing are the three final chapters of this volume, which tease out often neglected aspects of Torrance's work. Jerome Van Kuiken expands on the contribution of Torrance's theology for the Christian life, noting how he broadens his own Reformed tradition by a view of the objective and subjective aspects of sanctification, reflecting on the life of Christ to anchor both our participation in God and personalization as persons (243). Myk Habets then provides an overview of Torrance's early sermons that, in fact, reveal "the underlying assumptions and biblical commitments which drove his more academic program" (260). For while he is known as an academic theologian, Torrance not only began his ministry in the pulpit but continued to understand his work within a

ministerial context as a pastor-missionary, both proclaiming Christ and training men and women to do the same in pastoral ministry. However, as Andrew Purves makes clear in the final chapter, "The theological themes of eschatology and ministry run consistently together throughout much of the writing of Thomas F. Torrance" (277). That is, the church's ministry is understood from the context of our position within the "eschatological pause" in the extended event of the one *Parousia* of Christ, "so that 'the focus is on *Eschatos* (last one) rather than on *eschaton* (last event)'" (278). Each of these chapters, then, reflects a helpful expansion of Torrance's thoroughgoing Christo-centric program in often underdeveloped facets of his theology.

In summary, for anyone engaging Torrance's work in an official academic capacity, this *Handbook* is, quite simply, a must-have resource. What is more, for those interested in learning more about Torrance, it will prove to be not only a helpful entry into his program but also a worthwhile companion as one increasingly engages the secondary literature. Perhaps the prevailing critique is that the price of the volume may unfortunately prevent the fulfillment of its stated mission "to entice more and more serious students of theology to engage his thought" (Molnar, 8), though Logos Bible Software has a forthcoming digital version with a list price of $25.99.

Overall, Torrance deserves "to be read and be read better," as Ivor J. Davidson reminds, for "the vision set before us of theology's vocation and of how its commitments ought to be pursued," that is in "worship, wonder, and works of testimony to the reality of the God who announces himself in the gospel" (35).

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Backdrop for a Glorious Gospel: The Covenant of Works According to William Strong. **By Thomas Parr. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2020. 248 pp. $25.00, Paperback. ISBN 978-1601787712.**

Most Christians today do not recognize William Strong's name, but that has not always been true. William Strong (1611–1654) was an influential

member of the Westminster Assembly and a reputable theologian and preacher. Thomas Manton called him a burning and shining light. He lived during the era of Oliver Cromwell and served as one of Cromwell's Triers, which was "a committee of men who examined pastoral candidates for church ministry throughout England" (16). Unfortunately, his life's work "is buried in obscurity, just like his body, which was exhumed from Westminster Abbey and cast into a mass grave in 1661" (1). Thomas Parr (Th.M., Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary) engages in a work of recovery to shed light on the covenant theology of William Strong. In *Backdrop for a Glorious Gospel*, Parr helps pastors and scholars consider the covenant of works—an important, though sometimes debated, aspect of covenant theology—and shows how Strong might assist pastors and the church.

William Strong's magnum opus, *A Discourse of the Two Covenants*, began as sermon notes aimed at helping the people he pastored and was published posthumously in 1678. Like many treatises of this era, Strong's book is as challenging to read as it is profound. Parr examines what Strong says about the covenant of works. Parr says, "Given the massive size and complexity of Strong's tome, this book is limited to examining *Of the Covenant of Works*, which is the first 'book' out of the three in it" (xiii).

Since the book is so cumbersome for most modern readers to wade through, Parr must re-present Strong's views of covenant theology in context. Parr traces Strong's argument and quotes from him often to give readers a sense of what Strong believed about the covenant of works and how he communicated that content to others. Parr offers readers an original outline with headings and subheadings to serve as a corrective road map that eases navigation through Strong's book that is "filled with organizational blunders and typographical errors" (xi). Parr also compares Strong's ideas with recognizable Puritan covenant theologians like John Ball, Francis Roberts, Ezekiel Hopkins, Samuel Bolton, and John Flavel and sources like the Westminster Standards. This comparison allows readers to gain the historical and theological context of Strong's views on covenant theology.

After a biographical prologue, the eight chapters of Parr's book correspond to the eight chapters of Strong's book, outlining his insights into the covenant of works. Chapter 1 describes the reality of the covenant of works and the consequences for breaking this covenant.

Strong defines covenant as "an arrangement between two parties that involves stipulations and that rewards conformity to those stipulations as well as punishes a lack of conformity," and the covenant of works as "that which teaches us Justification and life by doing" (23).

Chapters 2–4 focus on the psychological ramifications of being in the broken covenant of works (41). Tragically, those in Adam prefer the covenant of works to the covenant of grace, having a relentless desire to establish their own righteousness. The law irritates and aggravates sin in the lives of those in the covenant of works. People who do not have a heart that conforms to the law are doomed to fail since the stipulations for the covenant of works are perfect and perpetual obedience.

Chapters 5–8 highlight the necessity of being transferred out of the covenant of works and into the covenant of grace. These covenants are mutually exclusive, and transference occurs only through union with Jesus Christ by the Spirit and by faith. Since Jesus has satisfied the law for all united to Him by faith, believers are free from the law's condemnation. Furthermore, God made the covenant of works to serve the covenant of grace, and readers will find Strong's discussion about the relationship of the Mosaic Law to the covenant of works nuanced.

Not everyone will appreciate Strong's reformed covenant theology. A variety of notable theologians—including Karl Barth, John Murray, J. B. Torrance, and N. T. Wright—have been critical of the doctrine of the covenant of works. Those with differing theological views on the spectrum between covenant and dispensational theologies might take issue with Strong's covenant theology or his nuanced articulation of the covenant of works. While some Credobaptists may appreciate Strong's views on congregational church polity, others may wonder about the usefulness of a Paedobaptist's theological views on this subject.

Objections notwithstanding, Parr's book is recommended for four reasons. First, Parr accomplishes his goal of recovering the covenant theology of William Strong. Parr plumbs the depths of Strong's magnum opus and explains his view of the covenant of works in a way that modern readers can understand. Readers will find their interest kindled by Parr's helpful introduction to the covenant theology of this influential Westminster Divine. After studying this book, preachers might search for a copy of Strong's *XXXI Selected Sermons Preached on Several Occasions* (1656) to see how Strong applied his theology in his preaching to Parliament and his parishioners.

Second, Parr is commended for his diligent research. A variety of lengthy quotations, hundreds of footnotes, and a comprehensive bibliography provide ample further reading on this important topic without sacrificing clarity in writing.

Third, Parr helps the reader understand the context of Strong's views by putting him in conversation with other Puritans. Comparing and contrasting Strong's view with other notable theologians of the era helps readers discern the uniqueness of Strong's contribution. Parr demonstrates that Strong has a very Christocentric emphasis when he deals with the covenant of works that could help pastors preach Christ to their congregations. This book may be combined with *Adam and the Covenant of Works* by J. V. Fesko (2021) to help pastors reach convictions about the nuances of God's covenantal dealings with His people.

Fourth, Parr's book, especially his conclusion, reveals that his scholarly research is geared toward the church. This book was a reformulation of his Th.M. thesis and is more academic than most books on pastoral theology. Still, theology is practical for Parr and Strong, and readers will find several wise sayings and pastoral insights. A brief illustration—some pastors and theologians who delight in theology face a problem. They do not speak in a way that the people in the pew can understand. Parr offers a corrective: "A modern theologian should strive to meet the people where they are at intellectually in order to raise them up to another level" (209). Furthermore, Parr points out Strong's evangelistic and experiential contrasts between the two covenants throughout the book. These repeated contrasts can help preachers and theologians recover an urgency to see people converted and edified.

The way to eternal life for sinners is not found through the covenant of works but by the covenant of grace. The darker the backdrop of the covenant of works appears, the more beautiful and bright the covenant of grace and gospel shines. Pastors and theologians would do well to let Thomas Parr serve as their tour guide through a vital aspect of the covenant theology of William Strong.

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Father, Son, and Spirit in Romans 8: The Roman Reception of Paul's Trinitarian Theology. **Studies in Jewish and Christian Literature. By Ron C. Fay. Dallas: Fontes, 2020. 186 pp. $26.95, Paperback. ISBN 978-1948048279.**

There is no hotter topic in contemporary theological discussion than trinitarian theology. However, many present-day scholars often approach the doctrine of the Trinity from a primarily philosophical or historical perspective. Ron C. Fay's book *Father, Son, and Spirit in Romans 8* sets out to contribute a biblically rooted analysis of the subject, thus filling a gap in the literature of New Testament studies. Fay is Adjunct Professor of New Testament at Liberty University's Rawlings School of Divinity, having co-edited multiple volumes with Stanley E. Porter in the Milestones in New Testament Scholarship series (Kregel).

Fay seeks to answer the question as to whether the apostle Paul held to a robustly triune understanding of God (so C. E. B. Cranfield and Francis Watson) as opposed to a monotheistic-yet-incipient-trinitarian trajectory (James D. G. Dunn), siding with the former position. Fay sets forth his thesis as follows: "When taking account his Jewish background and the Romans [*sic*] context into which he was writing, Paul communicates the Father, Son, and Spirit as a triunity to his readers in Romans 8" (4). Chapter one of Fay's monograph presents an introduction to the work, offering his thesis and laying down a methodology which targets first-century A.D. Roman sources. Chapter two examines Greco-Roman religious views, including the role of divine triads, mystery cults, and human emperors who viewed themselves as divine. Chapter three focuses on Paul's presentation of God in Romans 8 in comparison to and in contradistinction from pagan ideas of deity. Chapter four sets forth Romans 8's precise intra-trinitarian relationships and innerworkings between Father, Son, and Spirit in the task of salvation.

In *Father, Son, and Spirit in Romans 8*, Fay succeeds in affirming a programmatic argument that summarizes Paul's interaction with Roman cultural and religious backgrounds. He notes: "In the epistle to the Romans, Paul does not write in order to fortify the pagan mindset of the Roman Christians. Instead [*sic*] his writing both draws on the Roman theological landscape of the first century as well as overturns it in order to convey his message" (135). According to Fay, there are surface-level similarities between first-century pagan ideas and Christian conceptions

of God, but Paul is always careful to highlight the stark differences between the two. Three ensuing examples of Fay's analysis of continuity and discontinuity in this area should prove insightful.

First, Fay notes Paul's utilization of the Roman custom of adoption (with its *paterfamilias* dynamic) as an analogy to Christian familial realities, yet Fay is also quick to observe the Roman incongruencies with the Christian faith on this account. God's adoption of believers as his children through his trueborn Son and by his Spirit in Romans 8 would have proved jarring to the Roman mind, since Roman gods did not adopt human beings (54–63, esp. 62–63). Second, Fay shows parallels between various triads of deities appearing in Roman religion (e.g., Jupiter, Romulus, and Mars; alternately, Jupiter, Minerva, and Juno) and the Christian "triad" of Father, Son, and Spirit (14–17). Nevertheless, Fay takes pains to demonstrate that while there were power differentials and fundamental inequalities among the Roman gods, with greater deities often overshadowing or absorbing the lesser, the Christian conception featured co-equal persons sharing their divine duties in perfect reciprocity and harmony (137). Third, Fay highlights the fact that while Roman paganism and Christianity both focused on the interplay between the human and the divine, Roman conceptions focused on man becoming divine (e.g., the emperors Caligula, Nero, and Domitian), while Pauline thought reversed the order and instead proclaimed how God became man in Christ (26–36, cf. 136). While the Roman cult allowed for deification (man's), Christianity instead emphasized incarnation (God's).

While *Father, Son, and Spirit in Romans 8* contains an impressive number of strengths, the present reviewer also will highlight a couple of items for improvement. First, Fay's thesis is not as pinpointed as it should be. On at least three occasions in the book, the author sets forth his thesis, namely, that "when taking into account his Jewish background and the Roman context into which he was writing, Paul communicates the Father, Son, and Spirit as a triunity to his readers in Romans 8" (139, cf. also 4, 142). The problem here is the inclusion of a reference to Paul's "Jewish background" since Fay never demonstrates or develops this part of his assertion. In fact, on at least three occasions, Fay admits that he will not delve into the Old Testament (5), he will focus only on Roman first-century sources (10–11), and he will not investigate Jewish parallels (81). Due to the formulation of Fay's thesis, however, the reader *expects* and *anticipates* such interaction. Precision is the name of the game when

it comes to academic argumentation, and thus, an author must examine his thesis statement with a razor-sharp scalpel. The scholarly expectation is for an author to substantiate every phrase in his thesis statement.

Second, Fay's compelling monograph is marred by numerous typographical errors. Such typos include: an erroneous apostrophe after the word "authors" (6); an extra space between the words "and" and "yet" (13); "wrong doing" printed as two words instead of one (32); the need for a semicolon, rather than a comma, after the word "fate" (36); the need for the insertion of the preposition "for" before the word "them" (37); a random fragment erroneously pasted at the end of chapter two (38); the need for an apostrophe to indicate a possessive after "Wilckens" (48); the need for the article "the" in front of "believer" (60); the need for an adversative term such as "rather" before "Paul" (69); the misspelled word "creatd" (79); the need for commas to set off the phrase "in turn" (107); the need for a comma after "God" (123); imprecise citation of the Greek text of Romans 8:39 (127); a redundant period after the footnote reference marker following "Demeter" (131); the use of "is" instead of "as" (133); the misspelled word "througwh"(137); and an unnecessary apostrophe punctuating the word "religions" (143).

Father, Son, and Spirit in Romans 8 succeeds in taking a more exegetically rooted approach to the topic of trinitarian theology, demonstrating that Paul indeed affirms a triune belief in which Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each are God and together are God. One can hope that Fay's commendable work will motivate other New Testament scholars and seminary students to delve into similar analyses of trinitarian passages using an analogous approach, giving prime of place to biblical exegesis as the indispensable first step for later theological reflection.

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Pastors and their Critics: A Guide to Coping with Criticism in the Ministry. **By Joel R. Beeke and Nick Thompson. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2020. 177 pp. $15.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-62995-752-4.**

Every pastor, at some point in their ministry, will encounter criticism. However, how a person responds to criticism is not necessarily something that happens in a naturally wholesome way. Joel R. Beeke and Nick Thompson, in their new book, discuss a common but unaddressed problem that is unfortunately pervasive within the church today. They aim to speak to the question of how one should respond to destructive criticism toward the pastor. They address the problem in four parts, first setting a biblical foundation, then writing on practical principles for coping, then giving constructive criticism, while lastly giving an idea on how to cast a theological vision for criticism. The book is accessibly written and rooted in biblical truth while also being unfortunately wise due to the authors' years of experience weathering the storms of criticism in ministry.

Beeke brings a vast amount of pastoral experience as well as having authored a plethora of ministry-related books. Though brief compared to many of Beeke's other works, this book still packs much in terms of wisdom and counsel into its smaller size. Nick Thompson, a candidate for ordination in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and a graduate of Puritan Reformed Seminary, is a capable coauthor and contributes excellently to the appendix both on the need and tools for preparing for criticism while still in seminary.

The book is broken down into four parts, the first being laying out a biblical theology of destructive criticism. Starting with the Old Testament and the first criticism of God by the serpent in the garden, the authors trace the misuse of criticism through the Bible, ending in the second chapter with the Christological foundations for coping with criticism. "He suffered for me, and now I will suffer this criticism for Him. God has vindicated His Son, and God will vindicate me one day as well" (42). Beeke emphasizes that Christ was unworthy of the criticism he bore, yet he still received it in grace; how much more should pastors, who are sinners, weather criticism and therefore resemble Christ. This beginning biblical foundation helps establish a view on criticism that is graceful while also showing the relatability of Jesus to the situation of

difficult criticism. Often the Bible is not utilized as the foundation of books on leadership and emotional issues, Beeke's book starts refreshingly different.

Part two deals with the practical and spiritual ways of coping with destructive criticism focusing on the idea that, "As pastors, we not only can expect criticism – we need it" (61)! Beeke and Thompson lay out a challenging but effective guide on the four ways a pastor should respond to criticism realistically, humbly, with sober judgment, and in grace. "Though we do not embrace all criticism as true, we need to embrace all critics with grace" (113). The second section is the most significant chunk of the book and is extremely helpful in the pastor's response to criticism. The book is excellent in teaching how to handle criticism in a Christ-like manner, rather than defaulting to the temptation merely to ignore it. Beeke and Thompson strive throughout the book to see one's self as who they truly are, a sinner found in the beauty of God's grace. Therefore, the pastor's response is one of humility, one that does not listen to every objection but learning instead that "coping with criticism in the ministry requires a healthy reckoning with reality" (55). A reality in which pastors are just as much saved by grace as those who are spewing the negative criticism. Throughout this section, the time-tested ministry of the author is exposed as someone who has not been without harsh criticism in his life. His responses show a humble heart and, at times, appreciative of criticism and how it shapes him professionally and spiritually.

In part three, after addressing the way to handle destructive criticism, the authors give two chapters on giving Christ-focused and constructive criticism to others. The authors lay out three characteristics that a person should have to give criticism well: ethos, pathos, and logos. These three helpful categories help identify and shape the heart of the criticism giver by giving practical yet spiritual advice of the nature of the criticism to give. In ethos, "We must be men of integrity" (123); in pathos, "criticism is best carried out in the context of a ministry of encouragement" (128); and in logos, "word choice is a critical element of constructive criticism" (132)—all this, with the goal of always giving criticism to build up the body of Christ. The authors sum this up by giving the wise warning, "pastors, we must beware of Christless criticism" (131). Chapter eight leads naturally into a section where the authors formulate this into a vision for the church. It is evident that the author has experience in receiving harsh criticism and giving constructive criticism well. Chapters

seven and eight are written from someone who has not bungled all of his interactions and then is writing a book on what not to do, but a pastor who has carefully weighed the cost and done criticism well in his ministry.

The last part, a singular chapter, finishes the book nicely by laying out an encompassing survey of a theological view of criticism for life. As typical of Beeke, his end goal is not a sharp vindication of his critics but a grand vision of God's glory in ministry. He writes this in the final pages, "Brothers, strive in dependence upon the Spirit to daily seek after a more expansive vision of God's mind-renewing glory in His Word" (154). He accomplishes his goal of practical ways to address criticism in his book exceedingly well, while also drawing the reader back to the heart of ministry, the desire to exalt the glories of God in Christ.

The authors not only handle the topic of criticism with skill but with wisdom, helping pastors and ministry leaders see the glorious labor of sanctification within the mines of destructive criticism. This book would be helpful, especially for anyone in a ministry role who could or is experiencing both destructive and constructive criticism.

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Not Home Yet: How the Renewal of the Earth Fits into God's Plan for the World. **By Ian K. Smith. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. 176 pp. $13.59, Paperback. ISBN 1433562774.**

Christians commonly anticipate a future that expands no further than heaven and fail to acknowledge their ultimate destiny, beyond heaven, in that future world which will last forever. Ian Smith sets out to correct this shortsighted view by pointing out how "Jesus's resurrection does not only guarantee my resurrection…he will usher in a new heaven and a new earth, and we will be part of that" (12). Throughout this book, Smith seeks to demonstrate and develop this fascinating perspective at length, reminding us that the earth is much more than our present home – it is our ultimate destination, too. After serving up the book's underlying premise with a thoughtful and enticing introduction, namely that God

intends to renew and "fix up earth," Smith proceeds to develop his premise through twelve methodical chapters, tracing a progression of how earth serves as our long-term "home," from the start to end of the biblical record. Like bookends, Chapter 1 emphasizes God's affirmation of and commitment to the created world, whereas Chapter 12 emphasizes God's transformation and restoration of that same created world (Rev 21-22). These two chapters serve the book's underlying premise most clearly and directly, presenting Smith's most thought-provoking and valuable material.

Smith's intervening chapters, offer evidence for his premise from the progressive chronological and theological record of Scripture. Chapter 2 highlights the failure of this created world. Chapter 3 then presents the flood as God's way of "cleansing" the earth from its opening failure. Chapter 4 suggests the tabernacle and successive temples of Israel as God's "earthly home," after which, Chapter 5 portrays the promised land as God's earthly home. Next, Chapter 6 explores God's promise of a "better home" by shifting the reader's focus from the temple and land to God's Spirit indwelling believers themselves as his "home" today. Then, Chapter 7 explores the significance of the Herodian temple, Chapter 8 consider the significance of Christ's inauguration of a spiritual kingdom, and Chapter 9 discusses the significance of his death and resurrection as a spiritual reality that parallels and connects to the resurrection and renewal of the created world. Chapter 10 explores the expansion of God's kingdom to the Gentile nations of the world, and Chapter 11 explores the significance of our bodily resurrection and its relation to the final "resurrection" of the earth. In the end, Smith concludes: "Jesus is coming again to the earth. Heaven will be our home as we await the Lord's return, but after that we will be in our eternal home – the new heavens and new earth" (144).

Not Home Yet reads easily enough and raises some interesting points and observations along the way. For instance, Smith points out that the *new* heaven and earth is *kainos*, "which means qualitatively new in kind" (rather than new in time of chronology) and refers to a renewed or restored world not one that God will destroy and replace with a different one (136-137). He also reiterates that just as "our very same bodies will be raised this earth will be raised" (147). Establishing such continuity between Christ's physical resurrection, our physical resurrection, and the

restoration of the physical world is a crucial theological connection that deserves more attention by pastors and professors alike.

Even so, Smith fails to develop a clear and cohesive pattern or progression of thought throughout the book. The beginning (the creation of earth) and end (the restoration of earth) are clear enough, but the material in between feels more like a loosely tangled web of miscellaneous observations than a well-constructed bridge of closely connected thoughts which build a case for his central message. The relationship Smith hints at between Eden, the Flood, the tabernacle and temples, Christ's own life, and also the church is ambiguous at best and fails to strengthen his underlying premise and conclusion. Smith writes from a covenantal not dispensational viewpoint, a paradigm that impacts his interpretive choices distinctly. As the reader would expect, the author presents the church as the new "people of God" (113), the "new Israel" (115), and claims that God has "redefined Israel" (91). He also believes that God's promise of land to Israel has been expanded and fulfilled by his promise to bless and renew the entire earth instead (64). Dispensational readers will disagree with Smith's interpretive grid, though they will appreciate his affirmation of a physical new creation rather than a spiritual one. Early in the book, Smith firmly adheres to the idea that Eden was "God's temple" in which Adam served as a priest (50). Those who accept this cosmic temple motif will appreciate Smith's approach here, while others will remain unconvinced.

With *Not Home Yet,* Smith alerts us to an underdeveloped and misunderstood element in our eschatology: the nature of and significance of the new heaven and earth and its distinction from and ultimate priority over heaven or our prevailing, overpopularized concept of heaven. That said, this book will likely leave dispensational readers disappointed with Smith's overall approach. Though covenantal readers will resonate more closely, they may also be disappointed by his loose, somewhat disjointed presentation in the middle chapters. Despite these shortcomings, *Not Yet Home* serves us well by elevating some common shortcomings in our broader eschatology. We can only hope that either Smith or other students and writers will continue to move us forward in forming a more accurate and inspiring perspective of our true eternal home.

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Homiletics and Hermeneutics: Four Views on Preaching Today. **By Scott M. Gibson and Matthew D. Kim. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018. 269 pp. $18.29, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8010-9869-7.**

Scott Gibson and Matthew Kim edited and compiled *Homiletics and Hermeneutics: Four Views on Preaching Today* to illuminate the theological presuppositions that undergird the interpretative process in preaching. Gibson and Kim asked four eminently qualified preachers to discuss four major approaches to preaching. The outline of *Homiletics and Hermeneutics* is defined by four major sections. In each chapter, a contributor provides the theoretical basis for their approach to preaching. The other contributors provide critical feedback concerning their counterpart's approach. Gibson and Kim chose this structure to highlight the similarities and differences between each preacher's approach (xi-xiii).

Bryan Chapell is the first author and he argues for a Redemptive-Historic preaching model. The redemptive-historic method of preaching finds its roots in the domain of biblical theology in the sense that all texts are fixed within the broader narrative of Christ's redemptive work. First, Chappell provides a biblical and theological rationale for his position. Second, Chappell presents how one may move from text to redemption in Christ: text disclosure, type disclosure, and context disclosure. He finishes his argument by presenting an applicational rationale for Christ-centered preaching (1-29). Chappell notes that preachers fail to note two elements of one's motivation for personal application. The first is the multiplicity of motivations and the second is the priority of motivations. Chappell contends that Christ-centered preaching prioritizes the motivations for obedience in the love of God (23).

Abraham Kuruvilla is the second author and he argues for a Christiconic approach to preaching. Kuruvilla observes that the process of moving from the biblical text to the contemporary listener is often missed in homiletical theories. Kuruvilla proposes a Christiconic approach which asks the central question: what was the author "doing with what he was saying in this text" (50)? Kuruvilla supplies a biblical example of his method and proceeds to ground it in four rationales: linguistic, theological, applicational, and homiletical (43-70). Kuruvilla's model of interpretation deals with how the biblical canon presents God's

ideal world through individual pericopes (55). Most of his biblical examples come from the Old Testament narratives because that is where the bulk of biblical texts reside. In addition, they tend to present the most interpretive challenges. With that said, Kuruvilla notes that his approach works with other genres as evidenced in his commentary on Ephesians (45-46).

Kenneth Langley is the third author and argues for a theocentric preaching model. He argues that since God operates for his glory, God-centered preaching is the natural progression of God's glory. He provides four rationales for his approach: a biblical rationale, a theological rationale, a homiletical rationale, and an applicational rationale (81-106). One notable element of his hermeneutical approach comes from his theological rationale. Langley states that theology proper is the best interpretive lens to view Scripture. All subcategories of theology proper, such as covenant, law-gospel, and redemptive-historic, are designed to handle certain texts better than others. A theocentric approach is always responsible because God is throughout the biblical text (89-90).

Paul Scott Wilson is the fourth contributor and argues for a Law-Gospel approach to preaching. He uses a hermeneutic that presupposes the Word of God has dual edges of "trouble and grace" (117). He provides a biblical, theological, homiletical, and applicational rationale for his approach (145). Wilson observes that while the law-gospel distinction is most notable for the Lutheran tradition, it is essential to many protestant strands of theology. One notable feature of his approach is that he argues for a four-page sermon template with the first part emphasizing law and the second emphasizing grace (126-127).

Homiletics and Hermeneutics has numerous strengths as a survey of preaching methodologies. The true value of this book is in the interaction of contributors with each other's work. Scholarly interaction often produces interesting avenues of further research. One such interaction is between Abraham Kuruvilla and Bryan Chappell. Chappell was concerned that congregants may understand Kuruvilla's application in moralistic terms rather than through grace. He also noted that Kuruvilla failed to include the canonical author's contribution to the meaning of the text (71-73). Kuruvilla's concern with Chappell's approach is that his method uses imprecise terms for redemptive historic preaching (30-31). These interactions clarify the landscape of homiletics in a succinct and thought-provoking format.

While *Homiletics and Hermeneutics* possesses noteworthy strengths, it also possesses weaknesses. One of the major weaknesses of this volume is that it neglects other homiletical approaches. The editors note this weakness in the preface as they mention these four approaches represent the dominant stream of evangelical preaching (with the exception of Pentecostal and charismatic approaches). One may add dispensational preaching to the list of important strands of evangelical preaching. A new volume including these approaches would certainly advance the conversation of *Homiletics and Hermeneutics*.

Homiletics and Hermeneutics is a masterful work that emphasizes four major strands of evangelical preaching. It is an essential book for those who desire to gain a better understanding of the field of homiletics. Preachers and students alike will benefit from the explanations advanced by each contributor and their critiques of each position.

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***Until Unity*. By Francis Chan. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2021. 220 pp. $17.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8307-8272-7.**

With today's church increasingly at odds both internally and externally, Francis Chan writes *Until Unity* directly to those claiming to follow Christ within a dysfunctional and divisive cultural context. Chan holds a Master's of Divinity from The Master's Seminary, has over 30 years of church leadership experience, and currently spends his time ministering between the U.S. and Hong Kong. A well-known pastor, teacher, and church-planter, Francis Chan is also the author and co-author of several books written for the spiritual well-being of members of the body of Christ, including *Crazy Love* (2008), *Forgotten God* (2009), *Multiply* (2012), and *Letters to the Church* (2018). His most recent work focuses on the subject of unity as it is mandated by God among the body of his bride. Chan guides the reader through a survey of Old and New Testament Scripture, personal anecdotes, and exhortation with the goal of convicting, convincing, and encouraging believers toward the kind of

oneness expected by God, prayed for by Christ in John 17, and wrought only in the hearts of those indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Until Unity consists of eight chapters bookended by an introduction and conclusion that seek to center the reader's focus on worshiping God, who demonstrates perfect unity in and of himself. Throughout the entire book, Chan relies primarily on Scripture to support his argument for unity among believers. He argues that "That the world currently hates us not because we resemble Jesus but because we don't. [And] Scripture teaches that our influence on the world is directly tied to the unity we display" (26). Rather than list a string of passages for the reader to look up, Chan quotes each verse, even lengthy passages, allowing the reader to stay focused on the subject at hand—the unity of the church.

Chapters 1-3 center on the necessity of unity within the church. With each chapter title Chan presents a reason for an assumed "why" and subsequently supports his reasons using Scripture and his typical persuasive writing style. Chan argues that unity in the church is a necessity because "It's what the Trinity wants" (35), "It's what you want" (53), and "It's what the world needs" (75). Essentially, Chan points out the Godhead's display of and explicit command for unity in Scripture along with God's severe displeasure in those who cause disunity among his sheep. He then argues that those indwelt by the Holy Spirit must inevitably and necessarily be drawn to one another in unified fellowship. Finally, Chan makes the case that unity among believers is vital to the mission of the church—leading the lost to Christ. Chan also consistently emphasizes that this unity is specifically an outworking of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and a mark of true salvation in those who claim to follow Christ (50, 61, 96).

Chapters 4-8 address the "how," wherein the author seeks to create a visual for what Christian unity looks like and what is required from Christians to work toward that end. The descriptive chapter titles explain the character of a movement towards unity as one that "starts with repentance" (97), "comes with maturity" (119), "survives with love" (137), "requires a fight" (161), and "must start small" (191). Again, Chan relies heavily on Scripture to support his arguments in each chapter. He also includes candid personal stories about his own failures or growth in seeking relational unity as additional evidential support. These chapters exhort professing Christians, especially church leaders, to carefully consider their own hearts toward fellow believers and whether they

relate to one another in the ways Scripture commands despite differences of opinion or preference. Chan explains that Christians have a responsibility to move beyond simply acquiring knowledge of God's truth to spiritual maturity through practicing love of God and one's neighbor in perfect unity with other believers (125). He also clarifies that unity does not necessarily mean agreement in all areas but that those who claim Christ and hold to the same primary doctrines should be able to live, worship, and serve as a unified body for the sake of the gospel. He emphasizes the promises of Scripture that the lost will be reached through the oneness of the body of Christ and argues: "The gospel message is incomplete without the picture of the unified church" (96).

Francis Chan's *Until Unity* is a passionate and careful argument for a unified and, thus, effective church body. Chan's heavy reliance upon Scripture, consistent reverence for God's Word, and convictional writing style make for a brief but thoughtful survey on the current state of the church compared to the bride of Christ described in the Bible. Chan balances a fervent call for unity that looks beyond personal preference and secondary doctrinal differences with emphatic reminders to avoid compromise on essential doctrines and pursue loving, truthful relationships, even through church discipline (111, 132, 145, 175-76, 201). While the sheer amount of Scripture referenced can be overwhelming at times, each passage informs and directs Chan's argument. The author includes a large amount of Scripture because the Bible has much to say on the subject of unity among God's people. However, further in-depth, personal study of God's Word on this topic is warranted for those who claim fellowship with Christ. Chan's book is merely an introduction to this theme and does not seek to cover each passage referenced with exhaustive exegetical commentary. The author's goal is to introduce the reader to the necessity of unity within the body of Christ and provide some guidance and encouragement as to how this may be accomplished. Chan does this well, coming across as a man who has been contemplating this issue for some time and now seeks to invite others to join him in working toward the biblical goal—a unified body of believers.

Until Unity is a valuable introductory resource for believers seeking to inform their ecclesiology through a better understanding the function and purpose of the church and the vital role unity plays in its character and operation. Chan's writing style is incredibly accessible and

appropriate for most readers and would be an excellent resource for Christian educational settings (e.g., small groups, adult Sunday school classes, youth groups, etc.), though the primary audience seems to be those involved in some form of church leadership. Additionally, this book would serve well as a springboard for further personal study of this topic. Readers will greatly benefit from Chan's overview of how the Bible addresses church unity as well as from the Scripture index on pages 217-20, which lists each Scripture reference made in order by chapter throughout the book. While such a subject cannot possibly be thoroughly addressed in a little over 200 pages, Chan's book definitely serves as an effective conversation starter for anyone looking to gain a better understanding of God's expectation for unity among those indwelt by his Holy Spirit and claiming relationship with his Son Jesus Christ.

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***The Book of Acts as Story: A Narrative-Critical Study*. By David R. Bauer. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021. 284 pp. $32.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8010-9832-1.**

The book of Acts has been well served in recent years by several commentaries and monographs that have dealt with the historical issues surrounding the narrative. However, fewer works have attempted to engage Acts as a work of literature. In this regard, Robert Tannehill's *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation* is still considered the best work on a narrative approach to Acts, even though it was published in 1986. However, David Bauer's *The Book of Acts as Story: A Narrative Critical Study* attempts to fill this gap by providing a fresh assessment of Acts as a work of literature. Bauer, who is Dean of the School of Biblical Interpretation at Asbury Theological Seminary, offered a similar reading of the Gospel of Matthew in his previous work, *The Gospel of the Son of God: An Introduction to Matthew*.

The Book of Acts as Story can be broken down into two major sections. First, Bauer provides readers with an introduction to narrative criticism replete with examples from Acts. The second section of the

work functions as a succinct commentary through Acts that highlights the insights narrative criticism can provide through a close reading of the text. While not delving too deeply into the historical questions surrounding the book, Bauer displays the wealth of insights gained from reading Acts as a carefully constructed piece of literature.

Part one of *The Book of Acts as Story* functions as an introduction to narrative criticism for those unfamiliar with the discipline. Following a discussion of the genre of Acts, which Bauer identifies as a work of "ancient historiography" (9), he moves on to more formal elements of the discipline. Bauer discusses the importance of characters, story, discourse, literary structure, generalization and climax, and repetition for accurately interpreting the work. These concepts, which tend to receive less attention in more historical assessments of Acts, are shown to be critical interpretive lenses that allow the reader to come to a better understanding of what Luke was attempting to do as he constructed this narrative.

In this opening section, Bauer articulates his understanding of the primary focus of the narrative. An assessment of the outline of Acts makes clear that Luke is not only concerned with the geographical expansion of the gospel message, but he is also concerned with the "demands of the cross-cultural communication of the gospel" (57). Keeping these two ideas in mind allows readers to make sense of Luke's narrative strategy in the stories, sermons, and discourses he highlights throughout the work.

The second significant section of *The Book of Acts as Story* provides a running commentary through Acts, with particular attention given to narrative categories. Throughout this commentary, Bauer argues that Luke is the author of both Luke and Acts. This has important significance for the purpose of Acts. If Luke and Acts are read as a literary whole, then the introduction to Luke provides the purpose statement of Luke and Acts (68). Luke's focus on the ascension of Jesus at the end of his Gospel and the opening of Acts alerts readers to the reality that "the ascension is the central event in the Jesus-history" (70). This introductory section of Acts forms a critical foundation for understanding the events narrated by Luke throughout its pages.

Bauer's treatment of Acts revolves around three basic moves in the narrative. He gives special attention to "The Witness to Jerusalem" (Acts 2:1-8:1), "The Witness to All Judea and Samaria as Far as Antioch" (Acts

8:1-12:25), and "The Witness to the Ends of the Earth" (Acts 13:1-28:31). These three movements reinforce the purpose of Acts to display the geographical and cultural expanse of the gospel. Throughout these chapters, Bauer attempts to highlight how each section of action is carefully constructed to support the idea that the spread of the gospel is a God-ordained and empowered activity that receives his divine approval every step of the way.

One of the primary benefits of *The Book of Acts as Story* is that it shows how much can be gleaned from the work through a careful reading of the text. This is especially apparent as Bauer recognizes the importance of the "implied reader" of Acts. According to Bauer, the implied reader of Acts would surely have been familiar with the Gospel of Luke. One example of the importance of this realization is found in his interpretation of Luke's statement in Acts 2:44-45 that the earliest Christians shared their material goods. Bauer notes that in Luke's Gospel, the sharing of material goods was a "manifestation of repentance" (cf. Lk. 3:10-14). Thus, when the earliest Christians shared their wealth, they were not only providing for needs in the community, but they were sharing their resources as a sign of repentance in light of their acknowledgment of Jesus as Lord (95).

Similarly, examples can be found throughout the work where the implied reader's knowledge of the Gospel of Luke, the Synoptic traditions, and the Greco-Roman world would help flesh out the significance of Luke's carefully chosen plot points. This is apparent at a broad level as Bauer notes the many literary parallels between Jesus in the Gospel of Luke and key figures in the early church (e.g., Peter and Paul) throughout Acts. As the early church mimicked the ministry of Jesus in their miracles, suffering, and speech, they provided evidence that their work was a continuation of the ministry of Jesus. By reliving the story of Christ, the early church exhibited that their ministry was in continuity with Jesus's earthly ministry, thus providing God's affirmation of the spread of the gospel message.

Readers may find themselves disagreeing with specific interpretive decisions throughout *The Book of Acts as Story*. Still, overall, Bauer helpfully attempts to display what can be gained from a careful narrative reading of the text with special attention given to the assumed first-century recipient. Readers looking for a work on Acts that thoroughly treats the historical veracity of the narrative will need to supplement

Bauer's study with any number of recent commentaries. However, taken on its own terms, *The Book of Acts as Story* presents readers with a helpful sketch of Luke's primary aims and goals as he carefully crafted the story of the advance of the gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

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Advances in the Study of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic: New Insights for Reading the Old Testament. **By Benjamin J. Noonan. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020. 336 pp. $38.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-310-59601-1.**

Advances in the Study of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic was written to help students, pastors, professors, and scholars better understand the Hebrew Bible (26), which requires familiarity with current scholarship of Hebrew and Aramaic in order to foster faithful exegesis and effective ministry (25, 29). Its author, Benjamin J. Noonan (PhD, Hebrew Union College) is associate professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Columbia International University. He also serves on the Pentateuch Program Unit Steering Committee of the Evangelical Theological Society.

In chapter one, Noonan first defines linguistics as the scientific study of "how language is used in actual practice," which includes many core branches: phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (32). He underscores its relevance: "Whether we realize it or not, we each have our own understanding of linguistics that we bring to the table when we read Hebrew and Aramaic" (31). As a foundation for future chapters, Noonan succinctly surveys the history of modern linguistic theories (Comparative Philology, Structuralism, Generative Grammar, Functionalism, and Cognitive Linguistics), noting their influence on the study of Hebrew and Aramaic, particularly through popular reference works (35-49).

In chapter two, Noonan offers a brief history of Biblical Hebrew (BH) and Biblical Aramaic (BA) studies from medieval Jewish scholarship to the modern period. He points to the most accessible and helpful resources for the application of modern linguistic theory to biblical study

(62-64).

In chapter three, Noonan stresses the importance of lexicology for avoiding word fallacies (66). He explains key terms and theories, seeking both to affirm and balance Barr's famous critiques (67-78). After cataloging the challenges of lexicography for a "dead" language and evaluating several popular Hebrew dictionaries, databases, and theological dictionaries (78-84), Noonan advocates definitions rather than glosses (for the sake of communicating encyclopedic knowledge) and careful use of etymological data rather than ignoring it altogether (85-86).

Chapter four treats verbal stems. After introducing foundational linguistic terminology (89-92), Noonan surveys competing definitions of the meaning(s) of the Hebrew Niphal, Piel, Hiphil, and Hithpael (92-113). He also briefly notes more nuanced teaching of the BA derived stems in ways that parallel recent advances in BH (113-16). Common refrains include the need for cross-linguistic attention, the distinction between active and stative verbs, and a denial of necessity to unify each stem under a single meaning (e.g., 116).

In chapter five, Noonan defines tense, mood, and aspect (118-22), briefly sketching history from the middle ages to the nineteenth-century reformation from tense-prominence to aspect-prominence (123). Modern debates were sparked by the discovery of Akkadian and Ugaritic texts to be compared with BH (123-24). Noonan details and evaluates the variations within theories of the prominence of tense, aspect, or mood, including functional theories that do not claim prominence of one over the others (124-39). He also covers the only two major studies of the BA verbal system since 1927 (139-42).

In chapter six, Noonan introduces discourse analysis, which studies how language is structured in order to communicate (145-51). Then he explains four basic approaches to discourse analysis of the Hebrew Bible: tagmemic, distributional, information structure, and inter-clausal (152-69). Finally, he surveys and evaluates four recent Hebrew discourse grammars and commentaries (169-78).

In chapter seven, Noonan explains criteria for determining a language's basic word order (183-84). The most frequent order in BH is verb-subject-object, due to the extremely common *wayyiqtol* form; the vast majority of grammars teach this as the default order for BH, but a small minority of scholars have argued for subject-verb-object (185).

Noonan details their case and the response of traditionalists before stressing the need for further studies (186-93). In BA, the statistically dominant order is subject-verb-object, but grammars have traditionally designated BA as having "a free word order," although this has been challenged recently (193).

In chapter eight, Noonan teaches modern sociolinguistic understanding of variations within a language – register, dialect, style-shifting, and code-switching – as well as their application by biblical scholars (201-22). Chapter nine considers the use of internal and external language changes for dating ancient texts (223-27). Noonan surveys the diachronic typological study of BH sparked by Albright with the traditional division into Archaic, Standard, and Late BH (227-32). He explains Hurvitz's influential methodology and his bifurcation into pre and post-exilic BH (232-34). Then Noonan chronicles the challenges to and defenses of diachronic typology since 2003 (232-43), a debate that "remains largely unresolved" (244). Concerning BA, Noonan summarizes the arguments of the key debaters regarding Daniel's date and provenance (245-60).

In the tenth and final chapter, Noonan takes up the teaching of ancient language acquisition with fresh ideas for the traditional grammar-translation method (262-66), but more favorably, Communicative Language Teaching that seeks to pattern after the manner in which we learn our first language (266-73). He closes with comments on tips and resources to maintain what has been learned (273-76).

Many would not even know where to begin in the attempt to catch up with recent linguistic scholarship beyond standard reference grammars, so Noonan's breadth of scholarship is very impressive, and he should be commended for providing such a service here. His style is crisp and clear. The formatting is clean and well-organized. I know of no other work like it (other than its model, *Advances in the Study of Greek* by Constantine Campbell), and I recommend it to anyone who realizes that God's Word is worth a lifetime of diligent study in its original languages.

However, I hope a second edition adds examples, which are needed in order to be truly educational for the uninitiated (a target audience: 26, 28, 29, 31). As is, it serves as a great basic introduction to fields of study that an intermediate student probably does not now exist. Yet, it typically does not offer enough help to the student regarding what to

decide about these areas. Summaries of positions often are not enough to support positions or expose their lack of support. Similarly, students would be better served with more details in explanation of Noonan's own conclusions on each issue.

The reader often must process chapters as "he said this, but she said that, so we should think more about it." I finished many chapters unsatisfied and disheartened by the apparent need to read several thousand pages more before I could really be able to discern the correct position. At this stage of studies, that is flatly unrealistic for me – and surely most readers. I understand this request would push the book past the length that the publisher likely believes is most marketable. Still, for more edified and satisfied customers, it simply needs to be something close to one hundred pages longer.

In spite of this criticism, I still recommend the book. It is better to be humbled by how little one knows and pointed to thousands of pages that still need to be studied than it is to wallow aimlessly in ignorance. Push past frustrations with the muddied state of linguistic scholarship and get to work. The Author who wrote in these languages is worthy.

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What About Evil? A Defense of God's Sovereign Glory. **By Scott Christensen. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2020. 576 pp. $39.00, Hardcover. ISBN 9781629955353.**

Justifying the co-existence of a good and all-powerful God alongside evil has stretched the greatest theological and philosophical minds of human history. Because of the great urgency in providing a sound theodicy in defense of a Christian worldview, many learned men and women have taken up the task of crafting this response to evil. However, according to Scott Christensen (MDiv, The Master's Seminary), associate pastor of Kerrville Baptist Church in Kerrville, TX, and author of *What About Free Will?* (2016), many such theodicies are too philosophical in nature and lack biblical and theological perspective. Seeking to fill this gap in the

literature on the issue, Christensen writes *What About Evil? A Defense of God's Sovereign Glory* (xiii).

Approaching the problem from a broadly reformed and evangelical position (9, cf. 72, 150), Christensen advances what he calls the *greater-glory theodicy*, a modified version of the *greater-good* and *best-of-all-possible-worlds* defenses (6–7). According to Christensen, the *greater-glory theodicy* argues that "The fall was planned by God because it brings about the greater good of redemption" (7–8), and since redemption brings the greatest glory to God, "A fallen-but-being-redeemed world is far better than an unfallen-not-needing-redemption world" (8). Christensen writes for the believer looking for a biblically grounded response to the problem of evil within the storyline of Scripture and God's redemptive purposes, but also hopes that unbelievers may learn something about the Christian faith and a biblical answer to evil (xiv).

To make his case for the *greater-glory theodicy*, Christensen first surveys and critiques the major responses to the problem of evil from both secular (chapters 2–3) and Christian (chapters 4–6) perspectives. Following this survey and critique, Christensen then defends divine compatibilism as the biblical understanding of God's relationship to evil (chapters 7–9). From his defense of compatibilism, Christensen then explains how the storyline of Scripture reveals God's pursuit of his glory through the working out of history for the redemption of his people (chapters 10–13). This follows with a series of chapters describing how Christ's finished work marks him as the hero who will consummate the destruction of evil at his second coming (chapters 14–16). Christensen concludes with a chapter calling believers in the present to extend mercy to both perpetuators and victims of suffering in response to evil (chapter 17) and an appendix addressing the supra-infralapsarian debate and its theological compatibility with the *greater-glory theodicy*.

What About Evil? excels in its faithfulness to its thesis, that of answering the problem of evil from Scripture. Of course, Christensen's compatiblism, that divine determinism is "compatible" with the free choices of humanity (213) is not new, nor is the view that a biblical theodicy must allow for evil within God's decree (179, 186, 199), as both are standard reformed positions. Furthermore, the task is ambitious, as any suggestion that God decreed the fall, or any sin for that matter, is likely to be met with disdain from those who are uncomfortable with the reformed position. Nevertheless, Christensen's survey of the extensive

biblical data revealing God's work through human decision-making to accomplish his good purposes is effective, and it becomes an easy step to argue from Ephesians 1:3–11 that God decreed the fall for his glory through the salvation of his elect (296–297). While Christensen admits that the *greater-glory theodicy* does not answer every question regarding every specific instance of evil (82), he offers enough biblical support to substantiate *greater-glory theodicy* as a general approach, which answers the problem of evil while being faithful to Scripture. The reader will especially appreciate how Christensen comprehensively demonstrates that compatibilism, often at the center of abstract theological debates, provides a foundation for God's purposes in redemption. In addition, while Christensen argues that his book is not a philosophical work, he does a good job at responding to alternative responses to the problem of evil and especially the *free-will defense* (84–115). While popular in American Christendom, the *free-will defense* suffers from numerous problems, and the reader should also appreciate this accessible critique.

While theological students will enjoy jockeying over Christensen's defense of compatibilism, one cannot overlook his critique of secularism, which is perhaps the text's greatest contribution. Historically, Christianity has assumed the burden of proof in explaining evil within its worldview. However, rather than taking a defensive posture, Christensen begins his work by placing secularism on the witness stand. Christensen rightly calls for secularism to provide an objective foundation for its understanding of evil, one which requires some objective moral standard. Yet, "How do you ground such moral judgments if God does not exist" (63)? "He concludes, "the only reason why evil is a problem at all is that God does exist," and thus, "theodicy is just as much of a problem for atheists as it is for theists" (43). Furthermore, Christensen rightly critiques secularism's inability to help people withstand the impact of evil, as the worldview offers no objective meaning and purpose that can make sense of evil (33, 35–36). Considering this, he responds, "Christianity has a problem, but it is a good problem because nobody else has the resources to address it" (69). Christensen's placement of his critique of secularism is rhetorically effective. While building a satisfying theodicy will never be easy, secularism cannot rely on a believer's inability to explain evil as the grounds for its own truthfulness. With such a critique so early in the text, Christensen effectively leads his readers to

question secularism as an "easy out" and instead consider a theodicy found in the biblical storyline.

One minor criticism of *What About Evil?* concerns Christensen's discussion of monomyths (chapter 10). It is understandable why Christensen would include this content, as he is seeking to demonstrate that the biblical answer to evil in the storyline of Scripture satisfies an inner longing for redemption that transcends cultures and beliefs (245–247). Such a longing could be a byproduct of general revelation (242). However, the transition from Christensen's defense of compatiblism to his justification for evaluating monomyths takes too long. This content could be annexed to the beginning of the following chapter (chapter 11) for better effect. It is also worth pointing out that Christensen's discussion of monomyths is essentially limited to Greek and Western storytelling, and cultures with cyclical views of life and reality (e.g., most ANE cultures) do not fit well into this model. While Christensen can certainly argue that the storyline of Scripture satisfies one's longing for purpose and completion, modelling Freytag's Pyramid as definitive of general storytelling (237) alone may not allow Christensen to make universal statements regarding humanity's longing for redemption.

The final verdict? *What About Evil?* offers an effective response to the problem of evil from a reformed and evangelical perspective. Its critique of secularism is worth the price alone, but readers will also benefit from its response to the *free-will defense* and its biblical defense of compatibilism. The text is accessible for general readers, but it will especially benefit pastors who are looking to defend a biblical worldview from their pulpits and encourage the faithful.

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PhD Graduates (2022)
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

PhD Graduates (2022) from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, with their PhD emphases, dissertation title and supervisory committee members.

May 2022 – PhD Graduates

John Blackmon, PhD (Historical Theology)
The Loveliest Thing: The Doctrine and Celebration of Marriage According to the Reformers and their Use of John 2:1-11.
Dr. Jason Duesing and Dr. John Mark Yeats

Adam Bueltel, PhD (Theology)
A Biblical and Theological Defense of Volitional Illumination.
Dr. Rick Holland and Dr. Owen Strachan

Yeon Suk (Sarah) Choi, PhD (Ministry)
The Role of Music Ministry in Fostering Intergenerational Corporate Sunday Worship Service in the Korean Church.
Dr. Matthew Swain and Dr. Jae Eun Jin

Donnie DeBord, PhD (Systematic Theology)
A Chalcedonian Critique of Neo-Apollinarianism.
Dr. Matthew Barrett and Dr. Shawn Wilhite

Brian Dembowcyzk, PhD (Ministry)
Act Like Jesus: How the Theodrama Could Improve Family Discipleship.
Dr. Jared Bumpers and Dr. Kevin Kallin

Jason Doty, PhD (Biblical Theology)
Pledging Allegiance to the Dragon: Reading the Mark of the Beast through the Lens of the Shema.
Dr. Andreas Köstenberger and Dr. Blake Hearson

Aaron Fenlason, PhD (Old Testament)
Translation Technique and the Intertextuality of Creation in LXX Isaiah 40-55.
Dr. Radu Gheorghita and Dr. Blake Hearson

PhD Graduates

Kelvin Freeman, PhD (Ministry)
The Impact of Teaching the Deity of Christ on Discipleship.
Dr. Seth Pankratz and Dr. Tony Cobbins

Ross Harmon, PhD (Biblical Studies)
Luke's Use of "The Way" to Describe Christianity: An Innerbiblical Study.
Dr. Dan Brown and Dr. Rusty Osborne

Nathan Harris, PhD (New Testament)
Conjunction Junction, What's Your Discourse Function? Analyzing Select Conjunctions, Asyndeton, and Polysyndeton in the Letter of Hebrews.
Dr. Todd Chipman and Dr. Eric Turner

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