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The Master's Seminary Journal

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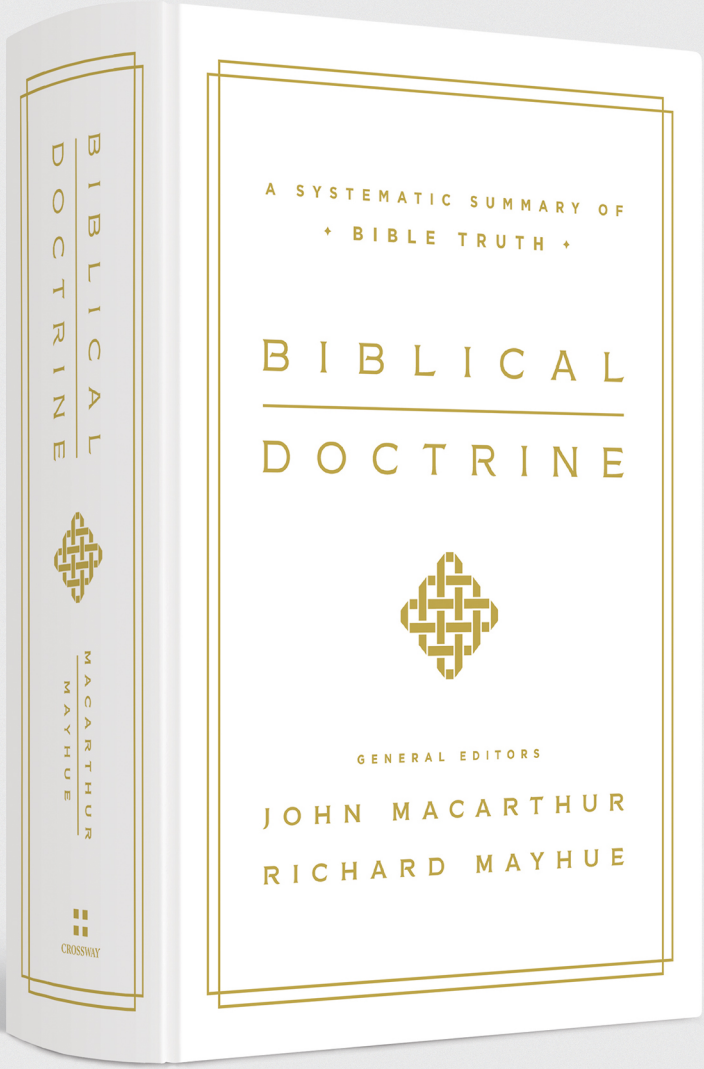
NEW SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

BY MACARTHUR, MAYHUE, AND TMS FACULTY



"It is a delight to wholeheartedly recommend John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue's Biblical Doctrine. It will be celebrated for the clarity of its outline and description of the Bible's doctrines. It is just too good to miss."

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EDITORIAL

On Be(com)ing a Theologian

Every pastor must be a theologian. Declaring the whole purpose of God (Acts 20:17; cf. Ps. 40:10) depends on it. Ezra set his heart on studying the law of the LORD, practicing it, and then teaching it (Ezra 7:10). Jesus had the heart of a compassionate Shepherd (Matt. 9:36–38; John 10:11), but He also taught powerfully with wisdom, depth, and insight (Matt. 7:29). Timothy was exhorted to pay close attention to himself and his teaching, and to persevere in these things (1 Tim. 4:16). From the closing of the canon to the present day, the great spokesmen for God and proclaimers of truth were theologians and biblical scholars.[1]

In 1978, John Jefferson Davis edited a multi-authored anthology entitled, *The Necessity of Systematic Theology*. In the Preface he explains: "The articles reprinted here have as a common theme the value of systematic, disciplined reflection on biblical truth for Christian living and ministry. In a cultural climate, which tends to stress subjective experience rather than systematic reflection, there would seem to be a particular need to set forth an explicit rationale for the study of systematic theology."[2]

In an effort to fill that need, a new systematic theology was published this spring by The Master's Seminary. Edited by Drs. John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*[3] is marked by six qualities: biblical, exegetical, systematic, comprehensive, pastoral, and practical. Cognizant that to know and understand the breadth and depth of what God has communicated in one text of Scripture requires the import of what He has revealed on the same topic elsewhere, the authors have given careful attention to addressing biblical truths in an accessible yet compelling fashion.

Systematic theology is a placing together of the teachings of Scripture into a harmonious system of truth to the greatest extent possible. If we are to know and teach the truths of Scripture, then it is necessary to see them in relationship to each

---

[1] John MacArthur, "Introduction," *The Shepherd as Theologian*, ed. John MacArthur (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2017), 6.

[2] John Jefferson Davis, "Preface," *The Necessity of Systematic Theology*, ed. John Jefferson Davis (Washington, DC: University Press, 1978), n.p.

[3] John F. MacArthur & Richard L. Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017).

other. Theologian William Shedd contends that systematic theology is absolutely essential to the understanding of Scripture: "The attempt to understand revelation piecemeal, is liable to fail. In every organic product—and the Bible is organized throughout—the whole explains the parts, because the parts exist for the whole, and have no meaning or use separate from it."[4] The human mind is such that it demands systematizing; it is not satisfied with anything less. "We do not possess the separate truths of religion in the abstract; we possess them only in their relations, and we do not properly know anyone of them—nor can it have its full effect on our life—except as we know it in its relation to other truths, that is, as systematized. What we do not know, in this sense, systematically, we rob of half its power on our conduct."[5]

It is *required* that the pastor be a theologian. Searching the Scriptures to bring all that God has said to bear on a text is not optional, neither for the student nor for the shepherd. True expository preaching mandates it. The qualifications for an elder make it requisite: the pastor is to be "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2) and "able to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (Tit. 1:9). It is no accident that Paul links pastor and teacher together (Eph. 4:11). The pastor-teacher has the mandate to teach those given to his charge (Eph. 4:13–14; Acts 20:27–28). Carrying out the Great Commission to teach others (Matt. 28:20) requires a depth and breadth of understanding God's Word.

Plumbing the depths of the Word is not easy; it is *rigorous*. Scripture often "forges a chain of logical argumentation . . . . Since much of the Bible is written this way, pastors are called to trace these arguments with active, careful, rigorous reading, and explain statements and the connections and the larger units to their people, and then apply them to their lives."[6] Jude begs his readers to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 3). Though occasionally likened to milk (Heb. 5:12–13), where the cream rises to the top, the "cream" of the Word requires digging deep for it. Thus, Paul exhorts Timothy to be diligent to accurately handle the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). Pastors are instructed to lead their people to a maturity evidenced by spiritual stability (Eph. 4:13–14), a stability that is achieved only by being diligent to cut it straight.

Studying the Word of God and proclaiming it to others brings inestimable *reward*. After rehearsing the grandeur of the gospel, Paul exclaims: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways" (Rom. 11:33). Plumbing the depths results in unspeakable joy and "will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you" (1 Tim. 4:16b). In his closing years of life, Paul notes that Timothy had studied the inspired writings and exhorts him to continue in the things he has learned, because they are very profitable (1 Tim. 3:17; Ps. 1:2–3) and will not return void (Isa. 55:11).

Ultimately, the goal of any theological study must be to know God (Phil. 3:10) and make Him known to others (Phil. 3:17). B. B. Warfield, addressing the students

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[4] William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971) I:14

[5] Benjamin B. Warfield, *Studies in Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991) IX: 83.

[6] John Piper, "The Pastor as Scholar," *The Pastor as Scholar & The Scholar as Pastor*, by John Piper & D. A. Carson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 64, 65.

at Princeton Theological Seminary more than a century ago, exhorted them: "I am here today to warn you to take seriously your theological study, not merely as a duty, done for God's sake and therefore made divine, but as a [spiritual] exercise."[7] To relinquish this pursuit is to inadvertently diminish the power of the Word to change lives—both our own life and the lives of others. Expository preaching depends upon its pursuit. Rightly dividing the Word of God demands it!

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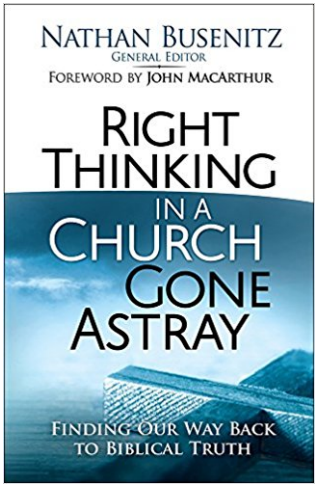
[7] Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Religious Life of Theological Students," *The Master's Seminary Journal*, (1911; repr., Fall 1995) 6:2:187.



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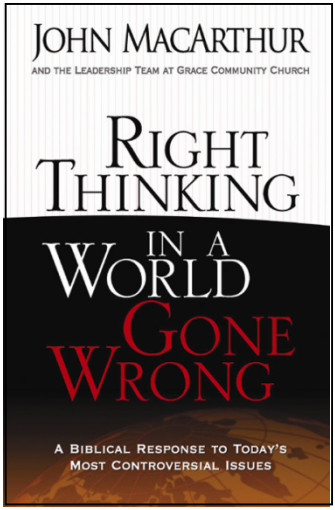

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THE REFORMERS AND THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGES: CALVIN AND LUTHER ON THE IMPORTANCE OF GREEK AND HEBREW IN THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY

Peter Goeman
Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Languages
Shepherds Theological Seminary

The Reformation stands in history as a pivotal time in the church's past. The Reformation saw such heroes as Luther and Calvin redirect people back to Scripture as the primary authority for life. One of the key components of the Reformation, which is especially evident in Luther and Calvin, was a dependence upon the original languages. It remains vital today for the church to continue in the spirit of the Reformation and train the next generation of church leaders to be competent in Greek and Hebrew.

* * * * *

Introduction

This year marks the five-hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation (1517). In a society inundated with the idea that something is only as good as it is new, it is important to be reminded that just because something is old does not mean it is inferior or useless. In fact, the church can learn many important lessons from the Reformers since we continue to deal with many of the same issues. After all, the wise man learns from history and avoids repeating the mistakes of the past.

Without a doubt, the Reformation is one of the highlights in church history. It was the battleground of definition and clarification for key doctrines of the Christian faith. Although evangelicals affirm and celebrate these great doctrines today, there is often a simultaneous neglect of a foundational component of the Reformation—an emphasis on the original languages. The Reformers themselves prized the original languages, and this attention to the original languages provided the foundation for the sound theology of the Reformation.

In contrast to the Reformers, many seminaries have begun to devalue the priority placed on the original languages and have lessened the original language requirements in their curriculum. The purpose of this article is to draw attention to the fact that an emphasis on the original languages was essential both in theory and practice

for two key Reformers, Martin Luther and John Calvin. After we examine the lives of Luther and Calvin, this article will call for evangelical institutions to continue in the Reformed tradition and put a high priority on the original languages so that the benefits of the Reformation can continue.

A Personal Anecdote

When I first went to seminary I had no idea what to expect. I had no previous theological or language training, and I was quickly overwhelmed by the workload. To adjust I became adept at asking other students for advice concerning how best to handle assignments. However, in rubbing shoulders with some of my fellow classmates I was surprised to hear some significant objections about the usefulness of the language courses. I had always assumed that everyone would want to read the Bible in the original languages, but now in seminary I was running into some students who wished for less focus on language classes. Among this group there was even an expressed joy at being done with the required "torture" of the core language classes. That was certainly a surprise to me at that time.

As it turns out, however, many seminary students think of language proficiency as unimportant to real ministry. Scott Hafemann, NT Professor at Gordon-Conwell Seminary, related a study where students ranked abilities needed in the ministry. In the study, students listed proficiency in Greek and Hebrew as eleventh most important out of thirteen qualities. The only things less important, according to the students surveyed, was knowing adult life cycles and themes in Christian education.[1] To say the least, language learning is not a priority for many students.

Although experiencing a reduced value in many seminaries today, the Reformers understood the importance of the original languages. Indeed, to the Reformers, if the pastors and Christian leaders were incompetent in Greek and Hebrew, this would inevitably lead to errant doctrine, which in turn would lead to errant churches. The Reformers thus preached the need to know the original languages for usefulness in ministry. In order to see this we turn now to the lives of Luther and Calvin.

Martin Luther

In the providence of God, no man ever exists in a vacuum. He exists in a complex set of circumstances and culture. Before talking directly about Luther, it is important to set the stage for Luther's impact.

---

[1] Scott J. Hafemann, "Is it genuinely important to use the biblical languages in preaching, especially since there are many excellent commentaries and pastors will never attain the expertise of scholars?" "The SBJT Forum: Profiles of Expository Preaching," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3:2 (1999): 88. cf. R. G. Watson, "Secularists Did Not Steal the Colleges," *Presbyterian Journal* (1986): 8–10: "Some seminary students spend a tremendous amount of time studying Hebrew, but in a small survey of pastors who have been in the ministry for ten years or more, not one still used Hebrew. Most of them reported that they gave it up immediately after completing the last required course. This is not a new discovery but has been a source of jokes among pastors for years. Why, then, have seminaries not changed the Hebrew program to make it useful or otherwise eliminate it entirely?"

An important character on this stage is John Wyclif. Born in the fourteenth century, Wyclif lived at a time when Latin had passed from common use but was still the language for the church service as well as the Scripture readings. People were discouraged by the church from having a translated copy of God's Word for their own personal use. The authority of the church was viewed as preeminent during Wyclif's day. The power of the pope and the authority of the church's interpretation were viewed as supreme.

Wyclif was strongly motivated to write against papal authority, indulgences, and idolatry in the church. In addition, he supervised a translation of Scripture into English that the common people could understand.[2] Although the Catholic Church ultimately condemned Wyclif as a heretic, his influence spread beyond the shores of England to much of Europe, due partially to the papal schism which weakened the unquestioned authority of the Catholic Church.[3] People began to question papal authority and move toward the authority of Scripture. It was Wyclif's belief in Scripture as the final authority of the church that laid the groundwork for the Reformation cry of *sola scriptura*.[4]

This is why Wyclif is known as the "Morning Star of the Reformation"—he questioned the pope's authority and began to persuade others that only the Bible ought to be given authority for the church.[5] Wyclif's work set the stage for Martin Luther.

Born one hundred years after the death of Wyclif, Martin Luther (1483–1546) is perhaps the most well-known character of the Reformation and is the one to whom the beginning of the Reformation is credited. In October 1517, Luther posted 95 theses which challenged the idea of indulgences and absolute papal authority. After being given time to recant, Luther held fast to his points of opposition to the pope and the absolute authority of the church. His opponents engaged Luther at the Diet of Worms where Luther famously responded that he would not recant his writings without Scripture giving him reason to do so.[6] Ultimately, Luther was excommunicated by Rome in 1521.

Like Wyclif, Luther knew the importance of understanding God's Word and embracing it as the ultimate authority for the church. Luther also knew how important

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[2] Christopher K. Lensch, "The Morningstar of the Reformation: John Wycliffe," *WRS Journal* 3, no. 2 (August 1996): 17–18.

[3] Ibid., 18.

[4] Matthew Spinka, "Advocates of Reform from Wyclif to Erasmus," in *Library of Christian Classics*, eds. J. Baille, J.T. McNeill and H.P. Van Dusen (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953) 15:26. "The basic principle upon which he [Wyclif] sought to ground his reform was the supreme authority of the Scriptures. This doctrine, which more than anything else links him with the reformation, was carefully worked out in *De veritate sacrae Scripturae* (On the Truth of the Holy Scriptures), published in the very year in which the schism broke out. Wyclif asserts and defends therein the absolute superiority of the Scriptural doctrine over scholastic theology or the current assertion of papal supremacy in all matters of faith and practice. For him, 'Holy Scripture is the highest authority for every Christian and the standard of faith and of all human perfection.'"

[5] John Stacey, *John Wyclif and Reform* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), 87.

[6] Hans Joachim Hillerbrand, ed., *The Reformation: A Narrative History Related by Contemporary Observers and Participants*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 88.

it was for the people to understand God's Word. Immediately following his excommunication, Luther translated the New Testament into German.[7] This work later extended to the whole Bible so that the common people could have God's Word in their own language.

Luther was passionate about Scripture being the authority for the church. Although this belief made Luther work hard to give the people a translation in their everyday language, he also actively promoted the value of knowing Greek and Hebrew. Because Scripture was written in Hebrew and Greek, Luther considered it essential for ministers to know these languages. He stated this clearly when he said,

> Though the faith and the Gospel may be proclaimed by simple preachers without the languages, such preaching is flat and tame, men grow at last wearied and disgusted and it falls to the ground. But when the preacher is versed in the languages, his discourse has freshness and force, the whole of Scripture is treated, and faith finds itself constantly renewed by a continual variety of words and works.[8]

Indeed, for Luther, knowledge of Greek and Hebrew ensured a proper preservation of the gospel itself. He notes this passionately:

> And let us be sure of this we will not long preserve the gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath in which this sword of the Spirit is contained; they are the casket in which this jewel is enshrined; they are the vessel in which this wine is held; they are the larder in which this food is stored; and, as the gospel itself points out, they are the baskets in which are kept these loaves and fishes and fragments. . . .
>
> For this reason even the apostles themselves considered it necessary to set down the New Testament and hold it fast in the Greek language, doubtless in order to preserve it for us there safe and sound as in a sacred ark. For they foresaw all that was to come, and now has come to pass; they knew that if it was left exclusively to men's memory, wild and fearful disorder and confusion and a host of varied interpretations, fancies, and doctrines would arise in the Christian church, and that this could not be prevented and the simple folk protected unless the New Testament were set down with certainty in written language. Hence, it is inevitable that unless the languages remain, the gospel must finally perish.[9]

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[7] Erasmus's publication of his Greek New Testament (1516) was very useful in this endeavor. For Erasmus's impact on Luther and the other Reformers, see Peter J. Goeman, "The Impact and Influence of Erasmus's Greek New Testament," *Unio Cum Christo* 2, no. 1 (April 2016): 76–81.

[8] Hugh Thomson Kerr, ed., *A Compend of Luther's Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), 148.

[9] Martin Luther, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools," in *The Christian in Society II*, ed. Walther I. Brandt, trans. Albert T. W. Steinhaeuser and rev. Walther I. Brandt; *Luther's Works* 45; (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1962), 360.

Not only did Luther believe the languages were a safeguard for the truth, but Luther also stressed that history has shown that when the biblical languages decline, Christianity itself loses its doctrinal integrity.[10] It is no surprise then that Luther viewed the biblical languages as the most effective tool in fighting false teaching and attacking the heresies of the Catholic Church. On this point, Luther gave personal testimony by saying,

> If the languages had not made me positive as to the true meaning of the Word, I might have still remained a chained monk, engaged in quietly preaching Romish errors in the obscurity of a cloister; the pope, the sophists, and their anti-Christian empire would have remained unshaken.[11]

Clearly Luther believed knowledge of the original languages gave him an important understanding of God's Word which resulted in a boldness to confront error. Elsewhere, Luther noted the integral role of the biblical languages to help start the Reformation when he said,

> I know full well that while it is the Spirit alone who accomplishes everything, I would surely have never flushed a covey if the languages had not helped me and given me a sure and certain knowledge of Scripture. I too could have lived uprightly and preached the truth in seclusion; but then I should have left undisturbed the pope, the sophists, and the whole anti-Christian regime.[12]

Luther's day was not so different from our own. Some in Luther's time did not value the biblical languages like he did. These men emphasized Christian living and piety. Such a group in Luther's day was the Waldensian Brethren who, although siding with the Reformers, could not be commended by Luther. Of these well-meaning brothers Luther said:

> So I can by no means commend the Waldensian Brethren for their neglect of the languages. For even though they may teach the truth, they inevitably often miss the true meaning of the text, and thus are neither equipped nor fit for defending the faith against error. Moreover, their teaching is so obscure and couched in such peculiar terms, differing from the language of Scripture, that I fear it is not or will not remain pure. For there is great danger in speaking of things of God in a different manner and in different terms than God himself

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[10] Ibid. Luther goes on to say, "Experience too has proved this and still gives evidence of it. For as soon as the languages declined to the vanishing point, after the apostolic age, the gospel and faith and Christianity itself declined more and more until under the pope they disappeared entirely. After the decline of the languages Christianity witnessed little that was worth anything; instead, a great many dreadful abominations arose because of ignorance of the languages."

[11] Quoted in W. Carlos Martyn, *The Life and Times of Martin Luther* (New York: American Tract Society), 474.

[12] Martin Luther, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools," 366.

> employs. In short, they may lead saintly lives and teach sacred things among themselves, but so long as they remain without the languages they cannot but lack what all the rest lack, namely, the ability to treat Scripture with certainty and thoroughness and to be useful to other nations. Because they could do this, but will not, they have to figure out for themselves how they will answer for it to God.[13]

According to Luther, this neglect of the original languages by the Waldensian Brethren resulted in the inability to defend the truth from error, and an ambiguous meaning for Scripture due to the lack of clear and biblical terminology.

In summary, Luther emphasizes that the church must prize Greek and Hebrew because those languages are the means by which God revealed His truth to mankind. The minister ought to be proficient in the languages in order to understand God's Word with clarity and be able to proclaim that truth to others while defending the church from errant doctrine.[14]

John Calvin

John Calvin's name is virtually synonymous with the Reformation to many students of church history. Born in 1509, originally training for a profession in law, Calvin was converted and focused on training for ministry, which included intense study of Greek and Hebrew.[15]

Calvin's ministry led him to Geneva in the middle of the sixteenth century. Calvin became renowned for his academic teaching and preaching ability. It is estimated that Calvin preached over four thousand sermons from both Old and New Testaments.[16] Calvin's preaching style was to translate directly from the Greek or Hebrew. He preached extemporaneously and without notes, relying on his previous study of the passage in the original languages.[17]

Calvin's preaching focused on getting to the literal meaning of the text, and avoiding any allegorical interpretations that were popular in his day. In his commentary on 2 Corinthians Calvin wrote:

> This error [of allegory] has been the source of many evils. Not only did it open the way for the adulteration of the natural meaning of Scripture but also set up

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[13] Ibid.

[14] We are reminded again of Luther's words quoted earlier, "Though the faith and the Gospel may be proclaimed by simple preachers without the languages, such preaching is flat and tame, men grow at last wearied and disgusted and it falls to the ground. But when the preacher is versed in the languages, his discourse has freshness and force, the whole of Scripture is treated, and faith finds itself constantly renewed by a continual variety of words and works." Kerr, *A Compend of Luther's Theology*, 148.

[15] John D. Currid, *Calvin and the Biblical Languages* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2006: Mentor, 2007), 14–20.

[16] Ibid., 22.

[17] Ibid., 24–25.

> boldness in allegorizing as the chief exegetical virtue. Thus many of the ancients without any restraint played all sorts of games with the sacred Word of God, as if they were tossing a ball to and fro. It also gave heretics a chance to throw the Church into turmoil, for when it is accepted practice for anybody to interpret any passage in any way he desired, any mad idea, however absurd or monstrous, could be introduced under the pretext of allegory. Even good men were carried away by their mistaken fondness for allegories into formulating a great number of perverse opinions.[18]

This desire to interpret Scripture with a literal-grammatical approach was what gave Calvin such clarity as a preacher. In addition to Calvin being a renowned preacher, he was also a famed teacher in the academic setting. He had a passion for training both lay-Christians as well as ministers in academics.

In 1541 Calvin published a work entitled, *The Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1541*. John Currid observes that this work reveals two important characteristics of Calvin's educational philosophy. First, Calvin wanted a place of education that could train all children to become godly citizens no matter their vocation. Second, Calvin based the core of the curriculum around language development and the humanities.[19] Calvin's students were expected to be proficient in Hebrew, Greek, and also Latin. And those languages made up much of the day's work for the students. It is clear Calvin held the biblical languages in high regard and considered them essential to proper education.

Calvin's academy was tremendously successful and it attracted many students from all around Europe. Students came from France, England, Scotland, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland—drawn by the passion and academic excellence of the graduates.[20] The success of the Geneva Academy led to many universities modeling their education systems after the Geneva Academy.[21] The academy itself is noted to have produced some of the leading scholars of the biblical languages of that time.[22]

Like Luther, Calvin recognized that false teachers in the church wanted to keep the biblical languages hidden, keeping the meaning of Scripture hidden. In describing those who downplay the original languages and teach error, Calvin labeled such men

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[18] John Calvin, "Commentary on 2 Corinthians 3:6," *Corpus Reformatorum*, 50.40–41, quoted in David Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament* (Lousville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 107. Elsewhere Calvin wrote, "We must, however, entirely reject the allegories of Origen, and of others like him, which Satan, with the deepest subtlety, has endeavored to introduce into the Church, for the purpose of rendering the doctrine of Scripture ambiguous and destitute of all certainty and firmness," John Calvin, *Genesis*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (1847; repr., Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 33.

[19] Currid, *Calvin and the Biblical Languages*, 53.

[20] Williston Walker, *John Calvin: Organiser of Reformed Protestantism (1509–1564)* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 366–67.

[21] Currid, *Calvin and the Biblical Languages*, 61–62.

[22] G. Lloyd Jones, *The Discovery of Hebrew in Tudor England: A Third Language* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1983), 79; Currid, *Calvin and the Biblical Languages*, 62.

as "oxen [that] usurp the reigns" and "asses [that usurp] the lyre." Calvin also pointed out that the goal of such men was to "make all revere a Scripture hidden in darkness like the mysteries of Ceres, and let none presume to aspire to the understanding of it."[23]

Calvin recognized that error was common where there was a misunderstanding of the original languages. One such example pointed out by Calvin was the church's teaching that marriage was a sacrament. The basis for this teaching was the Latin word *sacramentum*, which was the translation for the Greek word μυστήριον. Calvin noted that the difference between the Latin and the Greek words inexcusably resulted in errant teaching by the church. Calvin blamed this mistake on the lack of Greek facility when he said, "But, was it right that the whole Church should be punished for the ignorance of these men? … Let them go now and clamour [sic] against skill in languages, their ignorance of which leads them most shamefully astray in a matter easy and obvious to everyone."[24]

Like his fellow Reformers, Calvin advocated strongly for an intense study of the original languages. He was competent in the languages himself, and he also required those he trained to be thoroughly equipped in them. As is evidenced by his writings, Calvin's inclination toward the biblical languages was motivated by his belief that Scripture ought to be the sole authority for the church. Like Luther, Calvin desired to accurately interpret God's Word, declare its truth to others, and be able to refute the errors of his day.

A Call to Continue an Emphasis on Original Languages

To both Calvin and Luther the biblical languages were nonnegotiable. Proficiency in Greek and Hebrew was viewed as completely essential for the minister. Although this article has focused on Calvin and Luther, this mindset is present in the other Reformers as well. For example, Zwingli was said to be able to preach in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew as easily as his native language.[25]

Today some Christians do not see the need for continued proficiency in the languages. One common argument against the need for competency in the biblical languages is that with as many good commentaries as there are now, one does not need to be as gifted in the languages as in past times. Addressing this attitude, Luther wrote:

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[23] John Calvin, "Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, with the Antidote," in *Tracts and Letters*, Selected Works of John Calvin, ed. and trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 3:75.

[24] John Calvin and Henry Beveridge, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 3:515.

[25] Jerome Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony: Sixteenth-Century Christian-Hebraica in the Age of Renaissance Nostalgia* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1983), 257. Melanchthon also is quoted as saying, "Only if we have clearly understood the language will we clearly understand the content. All the dry glossaries, concordances, disconcordances and the like, which have been manufactured without number, are only hindrances for the spirit. If we put our minds to the sources, we will begin to understand Christ rightly." Quoted in Hans Joachim Hillerbrand, ed., *The Reformation: A Narrative History Related by Contemporary Observers and Participants*, new ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 60.

> It is also a stupid undertaking to attempt to gain an understanding of Scripture by laboring through the commentaries of the fathers and a multitude of books and glosses. Instead of this, men should have devoted themselves to the languages. Because they were ignorant of languages, the dear fathers at times expended many words in dealing with a text. Yet when they were all done they had scarcely taken its measure; they were half right and half wrong. Still, you continue to pore over them with immense labor even though, if you knew the languages, you could get further with the passage than they whom you are following. As sunshine is to shadow, so is the language itself compared to all the glosses of the fathers."[26]

Some may take issue with Luther's comments by thinking that today we have far better information available than what Luther had access to. Although that is true, Hafemann perceptively notes, "It is precisely because there are so many excellent commentaries available today that the use of the biblical languages in preaching becomes more important, not less."[27]

This becomes clear when one thinks through the options available for a minister not versed in the original languages. When ministers are inadequately prepared in the original languages they are given only three options.[28] First, they can become experts in note taking and cataloging the opinions of others, relying upon their favorite commentators or siding with whatever position is expedient to them. Second, they can refuse to make a decision and simply present all the options without taking a stand. Or, finally, ministers without proficiency in the original languages can just ignore the difficult issues in a text. Obviously none of these options is acceptable for a minister who is teaching people the very Word of God.

If seminaries are training ministers to understand God's Word and accurately teach it to others, then the only course of action is to teach students the Biblical languages in order that they might walk the steps of the commentators and translators so as to appropriately evaluate their work. This gives the students freedom from being enslaved to the opinions of others and puts them in a position to wrestle directly with the text of Scripture through the aid of the Holy Spirit.

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[26] Martin Luther, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools," 364.

[27] Hafemann, "Is it genuinely important to use the biblical languages in preaching, especially since there are many excellent commentaries and pastors will never attain the expertise of scholars?" 86. Hafemann goes on to say that knowing the original languages allows a pastor to trace the argument of an author in a way a commentary cannot readily do.

[28] This is a summary of the point made by Hafemann, "Is it genuinely important to use the biblical languages in preaching, especially since there are many excellent commentaries and pastors will never attain the expertise of scholars?" 87–88.

Conclusion

This article is not arguing that every Christian needs to be an expert in Greek and Hebrew, nor is it suggesting preachers and teachers should flaunt biblical languages over laypeople.[29] The main point is this: contrary to the viewpoint of many in the Christian community (including some seminaries), institutions that are training men to teach God's Word must put significant emphasis on the original languages. Seminaries do students and ministers more harm than good when they allow them to buy in to the idea that the languages are a luxury and not a necessity for effective ministry.

In reading an older edition of the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, my attention was drawn to a sad event in the life of J. Gresham Machen.[30] In 1909 there was a student rebellion of sorts at Princeton Seminary where Machen was then teaching. The students complained about the amount of language courses they were required to take, and requested fewer exegetical courses, and more courses in practical matters.

Although rejecting the student demands in 1909, it was only a matter of time until the administration reduced the Hebrew and Greek requirements, resulting in the eventual resignation of Machen and his colleagues: Robert Dick Wilson, Oswald T. Allis, and Cornelius Van Til.[31]

In the providence of God, these circumstances led to the founding of Westminster Theological Seminary. Although God used this situation for good, the founding of a Bible-centered seminary, at the same time this narrative also displays the sad tale of what happens when careful fidelity to God's Word is neglected through the original languages.

During that troublesome time when students were complaining about the language requirements, Machen wrote a letter to his parents. He wrote this:

> The students are exhibiting a spirit of dissatisfaction with the instruction that is offered them. What they want is apparently a little course in the English Bible, about on a level with White's Bible School. They want to be pumped full of material, which without any real assimilation or any intellectual work of any kind they can pump out again upon their unfortunate congregations. I sometimes feel that we are like a monastery in the Middle Ages. We are able to do little for our own generation, and can only hope to conserve a spark of learning for some future awakening in the Church's intellectual life. Other seminaries have yielded to the incessant clamor for the "practical," and we are being assailed both from within and from without. I only hope the authorities will have the courage to keep our standard high, not bother about losses of students, and

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[29] Luther himself advised pastors against using Greek and Hebrew words in their sermons.

[30] Wayne G. Strickland, "Seminary Education: A Philosophical Paradigm Shift in Process," *JETS* 32, no. 2 (June 1989): 232–34.

[31] Ibid., 234.

> wait for better times. It is the only course of action that can be successful in the long run.[32]

Unfortunately, Princeton did eventually yield. With the forgoing of the biblical languages, what followed was a lack of devotion and fidelity to God's Word. Princeton Seminary soon slipped from being a seminary marked by faithfulness to God's Word.[33]

Having looked at the lives of Luther and Calvin, we observe that attention to the original languages marked them both. Their facility with the original languages allowed them to teach God's Word clearly and fight the prevalent false teaching of their day. As Currid notes,

> When we consider the Reformation, it is usually characterized by the Latin expressions *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, and *sola fides*. And, indeed, these are principal teachings of the reformers and truths that we ought to hold to dearly. Yet, I would argue that the commitment of the reformers to the study of the original languages of the Bible was one of the hallmarks or emblems of the Reformation. It was the Reformation that gave the study of the biblical languages their true significance with a definite goal: to obtain a serious and impartial understanding of the Scriptures freed from the medieval hermeneutic. The church for centuries had been enslaved by the hermeneutic of allegory and church tradition. But the interpretive method of the Reformation was a single meaning to a text, and that meaning was the one intended by the author. In order to glean that sense, the student of the Bible must use a historical-grammatical approach to the Scriptures. An essential part of that task is to read and study the Word in its original tongues.[34]

The future of a doctrinally sound church lies in being faithful and attentive to God's Word. It is not enough to train church leaders to be dependent upon commentators or English translations (although thankfully we have many good ones). If we want to continue to train the next generation to value the great doctrines of the Reformation (which were birthed out of a refocused attention to the detail of God's Word),

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[32] Ned B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1954), 150–51.

[33] Strickland, "Seminary Education," 235. Strickland writes, "The lesson of Princeton Seminary shows that Biblical orthodoxy depends upon men and women who are firmly grounded in exegetical skills such as those provided in a seminary curriculum that adequately stresses the knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. The most capable practitioner in pastoral ministry is the one who not only excels in the practical areas but, more importantly, as the foundation to his ministry has a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew that will enable practical theology to be harmonious with an accurate understanding of Scripture."

[34] Currid, *Calvin and the Biblical Languages*, 69–70.

then we must train our pastors and church leaders to carefully read God's Word with competency in the original languages.[35]

[35] Although space limits the ability to include many other reasons for studying the original languages, the reader can pursue the topic further in Jason DeRouchie, "The Profit of Employing the Biblical Languages: Scriptural and Historical Reflections," *Themelios* 37, no. 1 (April 2012): 32–50.

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IS CHRIST THE FULFILLMENT OF NATIONAL ISRAEL'S PROPHECIES? YES AND NO!

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Some believe that Jesus fulfills Israel's prophecies to such an extent that there is no more theological significance for national Israel. This article asserts that the fulfillment of Israel's promises is related to Jesus, the ultimate Israelite. But this truth means the restoration and significance of national Israel, not Israel's non-significance.

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Introduction

The question of whether Scripture teaches a restoration of Israel as a nation, which of course implies a land, is much disputed today especially among evangelicals. Since the Holocaust and the modern establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, Christians have become more favorable to a biblical teaching of a future for Israel or the Jews. For many, however, this does not involve the reestablishment of Israel as a national entity, but rather individual personal conversion of Jews and their incorporation into the church which is commonly understood as a new Israel. One prominent supporting plank of this non-national future for Israel is the assertion that Christ as the new Israel takes the place of national Israel and consequently fulfills in Himself the promises concerning that nation.

In this paper I will argue that "yes," Christ is the fulfillment of all of the promises concerning national Israel. But "no," Christ is not the fulfillment in the sense that the prophecies of an eschatological restoration of the nation of Israel and its function in the divine plan of salvation history are no longer valid as prophesied. As the question of the fulfillment of Israel's prophecies is scripturally global, we will only be able to outline some primary issues that in my mind have a bearing on issue.

[1] Dr. Robert L. Saucy entered the presence of the Lord on March 12, 2015. Permission to publish this article was granted by the Saucy family.

The Position that Christ Supplants National Israel and Fulfills Her Eschatological Prophecies

The belief that Christ supplants national Israel, and therefore fulfills her promises in biblical prophecy, is presented with variations. Because of the limitations of this article, we will not be able to discuss these in detail, but rather focus on the general position that Scripture, especially the New Testament, teaches that Christ is Israel and therefore the eschatological prophecies of national Israel are carried forth in Him and His new people, the church. Any future for ethnic Jews or Old Testament Israel is found only with individuals in the church.

To note a few examples of this belief, in his discussion of the Old Testament basis for Christian mission, G. Ernest Wright says, "Second Isaiah presents the people of God [i.e. Israel] with an eloquent and deeply moving portrayal of their mission, one fulfilled in Christ and become the pattern for the Church's life in the world."[2] More recently, Graeme Goldsworthy asserts that Christ "is the end of God's saving acts in the history of Israel (Rom. 1:1–4) and thus fulfills all prophecy (Acts 13:32–33). The real meaning of prophecy always lies in the person and work of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:10–12)." "The whole history of Israel is thus caught up into the redemptive revelation of God, which climaxes in Jesus Christ."[3]

Understanding Israel as called to represent humanity before God in an Adam→Israel→Christ sequence of representative agents, N. T. Wright sees Christ as Israel in person who has assumed the role of the nation after it failed in its national mission. He writes,

> As in the thought-patterns of much apocalyptic writing, Israel is to be Yahweh's agent in the eschatological drama. . . . Now, in Paul's revision of the scheme, Israel's role is taken by her anointed king, and this Messiah has acted out her victory in himself, being raised from the dead in advance of his people. That which Israel had expected for herself, whether metaphorically or literally, has come true in the person of her representative, the Messiah.[4]

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[2] G. Ernest Wright, "The Old Testament Basis for the Christian Mission," in *The Theology of the Christian Mission,* ed. Gerald H. Anderson (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 18. H. H. Rowley similarly says, "Deutero-Isaiah believed that Israel was called to be a missionary people. Yet we must not forget the relation of the Servant to the missionary purpose. Nor must we forget that if in some sense Israel was the Servant, it was in an individual that the function of the Servant was to be fully realized…." H. H. Rowley, *The Missionary Message of the Old Testament* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1944), 76.

[3] Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 50, 56. Cf. also Hans LaRondelle: "The New Testament truth that Jesus Christ incorporates the Israel of God as a whole and thus brings the essential fulfillment of Israel's history and prophecy in His own life, is crucial to the Christian understanding of Israel's eschatology." "Israel's mission and destiny have found completion in Jesus Christ. In His resurrection, Israel's hope of restoration has been realized: Hans LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), 65, 68.

[4] N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 28. Further statements of Wright: "The list of Jewish privileges in [Romans] 9:4 f. is not arbitrary, but echoes precisely those privileges which, throughout Romans up to this point, Paul has shown to be transferred to the Jews' representative Messiah, and, through him, to all those who are 'in him', be they Jewish or Gentile" Ibid.,

Similarly, Michael Horton sees Israel as analogous to Adam and Christ in its responsibility for human salvation through obedience. Like Adam, Israel fails in its responsibility, but Jesus fulfills "as the covenant Servant what he proclaimed as covenant Lord."[5] (We will briefly touch on the validity of viewing Israel's role as analogous to Adam and Christ in the divine plan of salvation later when we consider the purpose of national Israel.)

Without explaining exactly what Israel's purposes were, Strimple also explains that since "Israel…failed to fulfill the purposes of her divine election, the Lord brought forth His Elect One, his Servant, his true Israel." Israel's national promises are thus fulfilled in Him and the new spiritual Israel in Him.[6] Premillennialist Russell Moore similarly sees Jesus as the "substitute" for Israel and thus the fulfillment of the promises related to national Israel."[7]

A final expression of Christ's fulfillment of Israel's national promises relates to the Promised Land. W. D. Davies asserts, "For Paul, Christ had gathered up the promise into the singularity of his own person….The land, like the Law, particular and provisional, had become irrelevant."[8] More recently, Gary Burge likewise says, "The New Testament locates in Christ all of the expectations once held for 'Sinai and Zion, Bethel and Jerusalem.' For a Christian to return to a Jewish territoriality is to deny fundamentally what has transpired in the incarnation."[9] Since land and nation are inherently related, such fulfillment of the land promise in the person of Christ also entails a similar fulfillment of all of Israel's national promises.

As a result of Christ's fulfillment of its prophecies, national Israel is perceived only as an illustration or type of Christ and His salvation work in the church. Referring to Old Testament revelation of Abraham's call to be "the father of the people of God" and the subsequent history of that people including the restoration of a "remnant of Israel," Goldsworthy says, "Through these stages the *type* is progressively clarified. The fulfillment of all this is referred to as the *antitype,*" which he explains

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237; cf. similar statement concerning Romans 2:25–29 and Philippians 3:2–11, "[Paul] has systematically transferred the privileges and attributes of 'Israel' to the Messiah and his people," Ibid., 250.

[5] Michael S. Horton, *Lord and Servant: A Covenant Christology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 219.

[6] Robert Strimple, "Amillennialism," in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond,* ed. Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 88–89.

[7] Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 118. Noting that "The New Testament applies to Jesus language previously applied to the nation," Moore says, "The identification of Jesus with Israel—as her king, her substitute, and her goal—is everywhere through the apostolic understanding of the Old Testament."

[8] W. D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), 179. Cf. also James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary*, *Romans 1–8* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1988), 213.

[9] Gary M. Burge, *Jesus and the Land* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 129–30. Cf. Barth: "There does not exist any more a holy mountain or a holy city or holy land which can be marked on a map. . . . The reason is that all prophecy is now fulfilled in Jesus…." Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1957), II.I, 482.

as Christ and the church in Him.[10] Horton similarly describes national Israel and its calling as "typological of the true Israel, the faithful Adam, who is also the true heavenly temple and everlasting Sabbath of God."[11]

Much of the present explanation of Christ as the fulfillment of Israel's national prophecies thus fits well with Soulen's description of the teaching of supersessionism which has dominated the church for most of the past two thousand years.[12] "God chose the Jewish people after the fall of Adam in order to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ, the Savior. After Christ came, however, the special role of the Jewish people came to an end and its place was taken by the church, the new Israel."[13]

Christ: The Fulfillment of Israel's Prophecies

That Christ is the fulfillment of Israel's promises, including the national promises, cannot be denied, and to my knowledge it has never been denied by any who believe in a future for national Israel. Scripture expressly declares that God's historical purposes are all fulfilled in Christ. The "mystery" of His plan of salvation is "the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth" (Eph. 1:10; cf. 3:9–11). It was the Father's "good pleasure . . . to reconcile all things to Himself" through Christ (Col. 1:19–20), or as Lohse explains, "Through Christ . . . the universe has been reconciled in that heaven and earth have been brought back into their divinely created and determined order through the resurrection and exaltation of Christ."[14] Explaining that Paul's varied use of the terminology "in Christ" expresses "instrumentality" as well as "locality" or sphere, Seifried concludes that "in Christ" conveys Paul's belief that God's saving purposes are decisively *effected* through Christ."[15] As the apostle says, "as many are the promises of God, in Him [Christ] they are yes" (2 Cor. 1:20). In short, "God's promises all find their 'Yes' of fulfillment in Christ."[16]

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[10] Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible,* 67–68; cf. also 184, 187–89; cf. also Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 231.

[11] Horton, *Lord and Servant*, 130.

[12] See Ronald E. Diprose, *Israel and the Church: The Origin and Effects of Replacement Theology* (Waynesboro, GA.: Authentic Media, 2000); R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 25–56; Marvin R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish roots of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 87–101.

[13] R. Kendal Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 1–2. According to Soulen this supersessionism sees the Old Testament, including its prophecies, pointing forward to Christ "in a carnal and prophetic way." All of Israel's history and promises look forward to a "definitive and spiritual" redemption in Christ and the church (27).

[14] Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 59.

[15] M. A. Seifried, "In Christ," *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters,* eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 433 (italics added). Seifried notes that effect of Christ extends finally to all things: "the divine purpose for creation, redemption and the consummation of all things is comprehended with the "sphere" of Christ…" (434).

[16] Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 202.

Throughout biblical history God is the Redeemer and King who establishes His kingdom on earth. As Mowinckel says, "The kingdom will be established by a miraculous divine intervention: it will be God's own work, not the work of man."[17] As we will see later, Scripture clearly gives a place for the instrumentality of humans in this divine work. But Christ, as the one in whom the fullness of deity dwells, is uniquely the one who effects it. Humans may serve as a voice or a lighthouse, but He is the Word and the Light. Thus, the story of the Bible including creation and redemption is all fulfilled in Christ. In the words of Oscar Cullmann, "As the Son of Man, second Adam, Jesus fulfills the destiny of the man created by God; as Servant of Yahweh he fulfills the history of his people."[18]

Christ's Fulfillment of the Promises Does not Negate Israel's Participation

Granting that Christ is the fulfillment of all God's covenant promises, does this logically and biblically exclude national Israel's participation in this fulfillment? I would suggest that the biblical evidence of what is often, and perhaps unhappily, termed "corporate personality" speaks to this issue with the conclusion that Christ's fulfillment does not deny a role for national Israel in this process. By "corporate personality" I am referring not to the idea of a primitive mentality that had no clear recognition between the individual and the group, but rather to those instances in Scripture where there is a tension between the group and an individual ideal or representative of the group.[19] In this tension both the individual and the group, or the one and the many, are real and both maintain their identity.

The Old Testament Evidence

The Old Testament provides a number of instances where we find an identification of one and many or the incorporation of many into a representative head. We will note them without attempting any analysis of their structure and how they relate to each other.

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[17] Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (New York: Abingdon, 1954), 171; cf. also Aubrey Johnson: "…While Israel is the chosen instrument of God for achievement of His purpose, … the assurance of ultimate victory is found, not in the weapons of His followers, but in His own omnipotence. When all is said and done, the deeds must be Yahweh's deeds, and it is He alone who can really make wars to cease throughout the earth," *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1967), 95.

[18] Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 138.

[19] For a critical discussion of "corporate personality" see J. W. Rogerson, "The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality: A Re–examination," *The Journal of Theological Studies*. XXI (April: 1970), 1–16. See also, Jean de Fraine, *Adam and the Family of Man* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1965); H. H. Rowley, "The Servant of the Lord in the Light of Three Decades of Criticism," in *The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays on the Old Testament* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), 3–57. Russell Phillip Shedd, *Man in Community: A Study of St. Paul's Application of Old Testament and Early Jewish Conceptions of Human Solidarity* (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1964). For an interesting discussion of the "corporate Christ," see C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 47–96.

Adam

In the creation story we immediately find that the Hebrew word *'adam* has an individual and collective aspect. In Genesis 1 it encompasses both male and female or humanity (vv. 26–27) which is its prominent use, while in Genesis 2 and later it is clearly a reference to an individual (e.g. 2:18; 3:17; 4:1; 5:3). The Apostle Paul's analogy of Adam and Christ makes this concept of the one and many in Adam explicit in the New Testament (cf. Rom. 5:12–19; 1 Cor. 15:21–22). Adam is he and his posterity.

The "Seed" of the Woman and the "Seed" of Abraham

The Protoevangelium in Genesis 3:15 presents another example of this corporate relationship of the one and the many. The singular masculine pronoun *hu'* could be understood as a singular "he" referring to the woman's seed as the Messiah, or as a collective noun referring to the "seed" as the human race. The use of "seed" in Genesis and the remainder of the Pentateuch in relation to Abraham suggests that "seed" in both instances—seed of the woman and seed of Abraham—is used both for a collective of many and a single individual who is ultimately the Messiah.[20]

The Son of Man and the Saints, and the King and His People

Daniel's reference to "one like a Son of Man" is also commonly recognized among evangelicals as a corporate individual, i.e. the Messiah.[21] In 7:13–14 Daniel records seeing this "Son of Man" coming before "the Ancient of Days" to receive "dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him." Four verses later in the interpretation of the vision (v. 18) Daniel is told that "the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever." And again in verse 23 Daniel sees the same "Ancient of Days" who gave the kingdom to the Son of Man pass judgment in favor of "the saints of the Highest One" who are now seen as taking "possession of the kingdom."

It is impossible to identify the "Son of Man" as simply a personification of "the saints of the Highest One" as some propose.[22] For we are told that all the people "serve" or "worship" this Person (v. 14). Furthermore "the Son of Man" is clearly an individual in the New Testament and in two Old Testament apocryphal works that

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[20] For a good thorough discussion of the meaning of "seed" in relation to the woman and Abraham, see John H. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), especially 321, 443, 449, 473–80; 587–90.

[21] The earliest interpretations among Jews and Christians understood the "one like a Son of Man" as an individual and with most identifying it as a reference to the Messiah. John J. Collins, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 306–08.

[22] J. A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel.* ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), 283, 317ff.

refer to the "Son of Man"—Enoch and Fourth Esdras. It is thus best to see the Son of Man again in a corporate individual who encompasses the many within Himself.[23]

The relationship of the Son of Man and the saints is no doubt an example of the same phenomenon as that of the king and his people. David is called "the lamp of Israel" (2 Sam. 21:17) and of the later Davidic king, Zedekiah, it is said "Under his shadow we shall live among the nations" (Lam. 4:20). As the light and life of his people the king is the person who in a sense embodies his people as a collective person.[24] This reality is seen in the relation of the eschatological remnant of Israel and her Messiah in whom she has her life.[25]

The Servant of the Lord

The question of whether the singular Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 41–53 is an individual or a collective reference to a group is best understood as both—the people of Israel and an individual Person who encompasses Israel within Himself.[26] Clearly there are statements concerning the Servant in those portions known as the Servant Songs[27] that cannot be applied to the people of Israel. At one point, the Servant has the task of bringing Israel back to the Lord (49:5–6). This fact and the vicarious sufferings of an innocent Servant in the Fourth Song are impossible to apply to sinful Israel (Isa. 53:4–6, 9; cf. 49:5).

On the other hand, there are many references in this section dealing with the Servant of the Lord that identify the Servant as Israel (cf. 41:8–9; 42:19; 44:1–2, 21–22; 43:10; 45:4; 48:20). It is impossible to believe that Isaiah is talking about two completely distinct servants in this section especially since the Servant in the Servant Songs remains unidentified. It thus seems best to see the Servant as again a collective, i.e. Israel, and an individual who encompasses the group within Himself. In one instance the Servant, whose task it is to restore Israel to the Lord and therefore cannot be equated with the nation, is explicitly referred to as "Israel" (49:3) in whom the Lord would display His glory (49:3). But previously the same thing was said of redeemed Israel, that in her God "shows forth His glory" (44:23). Thus we again have a situation where the many are incorporated into one without denying the reality of either.

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[23] Jean de Franie, *Adam and the Family of Man,* 202–11; cf. T. W. Manson, "The Son of Man in Daniel, Enoch and the Gospels," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library,* 32 (March 1950): 190; Russell Shedd, *Man in Community*, 39, 139–43.

[24] Ibid, pp. 152–70; Aubrey Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel,* 1–3.

[25] V. Herntrich, "λεῖμμα κτλ," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. IV Gerhard Kittel, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 209; Ernest Best, *One Body in Christ* (London: SPCK, 1955), 208–14.

[26] For a brief discussion of the various interpretations of the identity of the Servant of Isaiah's Servant Songs, see C. G. Kruse, "The Servant Songs: Interpretive Trends since C. R. North,: StBTh 8 (1978), 1–27. See also Jean de Fraine, *Adam and the Family of Man,* 182–202; C. R. North, *The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah* (London: Oxford, 1948); H. H. Rowley, "The Servant of the Lord in the Light of Three Decades of Criticism," in *The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays* (London: Lutterworth, 1952), 1–57.

[27] Isaiah 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12.

Conclusion

All of the examples of the "corporate Person" in the Old Testament that we have considered finally relate to the Messiah and His people. In each instance the reality that the One is in a sense the life and light of the many, and thus may be said to fulfill their destiny, does not by this negate or replace the many either as individuals or in the fulfillment of their calling. In all of these instances the one involves the inclusion of the many, not their substitution. Focusing especially on the Servant of the Lord, which by the very name involves function, there is no evidence that the One Servant of the Lord, in whom Israel's ministry is fulfilled, thereby supersedes Israel as a people and nation. Nor does it deny that Israel as a people can still have a function as the Lord's Servant in and through the One Servant.

As we will consider more fully later, Isaiah sees the incapability of Israel to fulfill her servant mission. But he also sees Israel redeemed by the work of the unique Servant and in the later chapters of his book gives many instances where Israel is used by the Lord in the service of God's salvation for the nations.

This scenario with regard to the picture of the Servant in the Old Testament is acknowledged by many. Noting that most interpreters "are content to find an embodiment of the conception of the Servant in Christ…and to leave any collective fulfillment without thought or word,"[28] H. H. Rowley sees "the Servant Israel" as "at once an individual, who both represents the whole community and carries to its supreme point the mission of the nation, while calling the whole people to enter into that mission, so that it shall be its mission and not merely his."[29] Westermann similarly states that the "discussion of Israel as Yahweh's servant probably indicates Israel's future task in service to Yahweh. The collective interpretation may, in a limited way, prove correct to the extent that the labor of God's servant in the songs, even if he is explicitly described as an individual, simultaneously involves Israel's future task."[30]

This issue in Israel's prophecy of "the Servant" is well summed up in the explanation of John Oswalt. Recognizing the servant teaching as both collective (Israel) and individual, and also rejecting the view that the prophet sees Israel failing and the individual servant taking its place, Oswalt says,

> Instead of abandoning the idea of the people's becoming true servants . . . [Isaiah] rather asks, and answers, the questions of *how* they can become such servants. How can the broken, sinful Israel ever be the servants of God as he

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[28] H. H. Rowley, "The Servant of the Lord in the Light of Three Decades of Criticism," in *The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays on the Old Testament*, 56–57.

[29] H. H. Rowley, *The Faith of Israel* (London: SCM, 1956), 121–22. Rowley apparently sees the Church as inheriting the mission of Israel as the servant (cf. "The Servant of the Lord in the Light of Three Decades of Criticism," in *The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays on the Old Testament,* 55–57). This, of course is another issue not in any way addressed in Isaiah's discussion of the Servant. The point here is simply Rowley's acknowledgement that the fulfillment of the Servant in the One does not eliminate the participation of the many, which in Isaiah is generally understood as the nation of Israel.

[30] C. Westermann, "עֶבֶד '*ebed* servant" *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament,* edited by Ernest Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody MA: Hendriksen, 1997), 828.

> has promised? The answer is 'the Servant.' Because he will be what they could not, and indeed will be that for all people, they can become what God has promised: his servants who can reveal his redeeming light. Thus chs. 54 and 55 depict a nation which through the ministry of the Servant, have become servants of God (54:17), redeemed and clean (54:8), a witness to God's glory and a light to the nations (55:4–5). Thus perhaps a better figure for the total Servant-concept is that of a circle where the movement is from the circumference to the center and back again.[31]

The New Testament Evidence

The prime evidence that the work of Christ does not eliminate the function or service of those in Him is Christ and the church.

The Corporate Christ

The Old Testament indication that the Messiah is an individual who incorporates His people within Himself is even more evident in the New Testament. We will content ourselves with noting perhaps the two most significant evidences of this reality. The first is the prepositional phase "in Christ." While "in Christ" often has an instrumental sense of "through Christ," there are also instances that seem to have a clear local or incorporative idea.[32] In these instances, as Best expresses it, "Christ is the 'place' in whom believers are and in whom salvation is."[33] This local sense seems especially clear in Ephesians 2:6 where Paul describes believers as "seated with Him [i.e. Christ] in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1 is also often cited as an example: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ" (cf. also 2 Cor. 5:17). Finally, the apostle's declaration that Jew and Greek, slave and free man, and male and female "are all one in Christ Jesus" clearly expresses the concept of Christ as a corporate Person. As Longenecker explains, "The 'in' of the

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[31] John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 52.

[32] The concept of Christ as a "corporate Person" has come under criticism in favor of understanding the phrases "in Christ" and "body of Christ" as metaphors for a "defining 'sphere'" and not references to a real entity (cf. M. A. Seifrid, "In Christ," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters,* edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993], 434–35. But see also interpreters who uphold the local sense of ἐν in some Pauline references to "in Christ" and the concept of a "corporate Christ," e.g. (Best, *One Body in Christ;* de Fraine, *Adam and the Family of Man,* 245–70; Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 170–73; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary, Ephesians* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1990), 21–22; Moule, *The Origin of Christology,* 47–96; Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 97–98; cf. M. J. Harris, "*en*," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology,* vol. 3, edited by Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 1190–93; Albrecht Oepke, "ἐν," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 541–42.

[33] Best, *One Body in Christ*, 8.

equation is local and personal; 'Christ Jesus' is viewed in universal and corporate terms."[34]

A second evidence, closely related to the phase "in Christ," is the description of God's people as "the body of Christ"—an entity which is one composed of many (Rom. 12:4–5; 1 Cor. 12:12–27; Eph. 4:4–16). Writing to the Roman believers, Paul says, "we who are many, are one body in Christ" (Rom. 12:5). This body is not only "in Christ" or simply belonging to Christ, in a sense it is Christ as the apostle explains in 1 Corinthians 12:12: "For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ." The body composed of the many are not identical to Christ.[35] But the many are Christ's own body, i.e. the many and Christ are conceived as a corporate entity, an inclusive Person.[36]

Christ Is the Fulfillment of the Promises of the Church

As the fulfillment of all of God's covenant promises of salvation, Christ is the fulfillment of the promises of the church as well as of Israel. In truth, the church has no covenant promises other than those originally promised to Israel in the Old Testament. Those outside of Israel prior to Christ, the apostle says, were "strangers to the covenants of promise" (2:12)—i.e., the covenants with Abraham, David, and the new covenant which brings these earlier promises to reality.[37] Now in Christ these who had no covenants are "fellow partakers of the promise"[38] along with Israel to whom the promises originally belonged (3:6). Thus if Israel's promises are fulfilled in Christ, so also are the promises of the church.

Now we might ask, if the salvation promises related to the church are all fulfilled in Christ, does this negate any function for the church in the fulfillment of those promises, as its asserted in relation to the promises of national Israel? Clearly this is denied in the New Testament. Christ is the final prophet (Heb. 1:1–2), yet He gave the gift of prophecy and prophets to function in the church (1 Cor. 12:10, 18; Eph.

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[34] Richard N. Longenecker, *Word Biblical Commentary,* vol. 41, *Galatians* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1990), 158; cf. Sailhamer who sees the "one" in v. 28 as the "individual 'seed of Abraham'" of v. 16 (*The meaning of the Pentateuch,* 536); Ernest De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians,* ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), 207–08.

[35] As Best explains, "He and the Church form a 'whole'" which is "in some way identified with himself." Nevertheless he is distinct from the Church "since it is he who redeems, nourishes, and unifies it, and fills it with all his own divine fullness." *One Body in Christ*, 186.

[36] Moule, *The Origin of Christology,* 81l; cf. Oepke who, commenting on 1 Cor. 12:12, says, "'so Christ' makes sense only if it is self–evident that the one body of the community is not other than the body of Christ Himself. v. 27 is to the same effect, and this certainly cannot be regarded merely as an imprecise way of putting a pure comparison" (Eduard Schweizer, "σῶμα κτλ," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 1070–71); Best, *One Body in Christ, 99.*

[37] Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 359.

[38] The singular "promise" in 3:6 is probably a reference to the general promise of messianic salvation which in 2:12 is described as "the covenants of the promise" (Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary,* 447). But it is also understood as the Holy Spirit mentioned in 1:13 as the substance of the promise (O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians,* 235–36).

4:11). He is the great high priest (Heb. 4:14) who fulfills the office of the priest offering Himself as an atoning sacrifice once for all (Heb. 2:17; 7:26–27; 9:24–28; 10:11–14) and continuing to make intercession for His people (Heb. 7:25). But we also are a priesthood called to function as priests through Christ (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 16). Paul saw himself ministering the gospel as "a priest" offering Gentile converts as an "offering" acceptable to God (Rom. 15:16). Believers in Christ also function as kings (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:4, 6). Finally, Paul explains his apostolic commission from the risen Lord as fulfilling the mission of the Servant of the Lord originally proclaimed through Isaiah: "I have placed You as a light for the Gentiles, that You may bring salvation to the end of the earth" (Acts 13:47).

The New Testament thus clearly reveals that despite the fact that God's saving plan, including all of the covenants of promise, is fulfilled in Christ, the people of God still have a ministry to perform in that salvation purpose. How are we to understand this relationship? The answer is that in "Christ" we are united with Him in His work. He is working through His people in the application and thus fulfillment of His saving work. For the understanding of our "kingly and priestly" ministry in Revelation 1:6, Beale rightly tell us to look at "how Christ himself functioned in these two offices." "Believers spiritually," he explains, "fulfill the same offices in this age by following his model especially by being faithful witnesses by mediating Christ's priestly and royal authority to the world. . . . It is the light of God's presence that they are to reflect to the world."[39]

Bock expresses the same thought in his explanation of Paul's application of the ministry of the Servant of the Lord to his own ministry. Calling attention to the fact that the "Isaianic servant imagery was applied in this instance not to Jesus, but to "his followers," Bock says, "Paul takes up the task of the Servant. His task is like the messenger of old. . . . There is a unity between what God spoke in days of old and what the Lord Jesus commands His disciples now. What Jesus was (Luke 2:32), his disciples now become."[40] The broad principle of the relationship of the function of Christ and His people is well summed up by Legrand's comment on mission in all of Scripture. "Mission is first and foremost the God who comes." But mission is also "exercised in function of a people, creating this people and in turn developing through it."[41]

Conclusion

We have seen that both in the Old and New Testament there is the phenomenon where many are united with one forming a corporate entity or an inclusive person. It is clear in the New Testament with the case of Christ and the church that although Christ represents and fulfills the purpose and destiny of His people, the people in and

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[39] G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek text,* New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 193.

[40] Darrell L. Bock, "The Use of the Old Testament in Luke-Acts: Christology and Mission," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1990 Seminar Papers,* no. 29, edited by David J. Lull (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990), 508.

[41] Lucien Legrand, *Unity and Plurality: Mission in the Bible* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 152; cf. also 85–86, 88, 127–28.

through Him also participate in this fulfillment. There is no reason not to see this same reality in relation to the prophecies of the Messiah and His people in the Old Testament. *Thus, the fact that Christ is the fulfillment of national Israel's covenant promises cannot be said to necessarily lead to the conclusion that national Israel has no further participation in the fulfillment of those promises*. The question is then not whether Christ fulfills the promises, but whether the church has taken the place of national Israel and in her stead is fulfilling the prophesied ministry of the nation in the fulfillment of God's saving purposes.

The Purpose of Israel and the Biblical Promises Related to that Purpose

The question of whether the promises that are related to national Israel are fulfilled by the church or are yet to be fulfilled by that nation involves many facets of biblical teaching. We will content ourselves by focusing on two primary issues that seem vital to this question: (1) What is the purpose of the nation of Israel and the biblical covenant promises related to that promise? and (2) Does Scripture teach that the church fulfills Israel's purpose and related promises? Some related questions such as whether Israel's sin forfeited its future fulfillment of the promises, and whether the promises as portrayed in the Old Testament prophecies have been altered so that fulfillment is no longer to be expected, will be briefly touched as we consider the two primary issues.

The General Purpose of God's Creation of the Nation Israel

The issue of the fulfillment of Israel's national covenant promises and their purpose requires an understanding of the nature of those promises. As noted earlier, some see Israel as called to represent mankind in God's saving program in a position analogous to Adam and Christ. For example, Wright says, "The first [of two tasks undertaken by Christ], involving the obedience unto death, is essentially (in Paul's mind) the task by which the old Adamic humanity is redeemed, that is, the task with which Israel was entrusted."[42] And again, "Jesus, as last Adam, had revealed what God's saving plan for the world had really been—what Israel's vocation had really been—by enacting it, becoming obedient to death, even the death of the cross."[43]

These statements appear to suggest that the obedience or disobedience of Israel was intended by God to have a salvific effect on all mankind even as Adam did negatively and Christ did positively. Thus it is concluded that through disobedience national Israel failed to achieve its purpose, but Christ as the seed of Abraham and the

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[42] Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant,* 38.

[43] Ibid., 40. Agreeing with Wright that Adam represented humanity before God analogously to Adam and Christ, Horton writes, "Thus the story of Adam (humanity generally) is concentrated in the story of Israel, particularly focused on the active obedience of Christ. I would elaborate Wright's conclusion still further at this point by correlating the covenant of creation to both Adam's trial and that of Israel in the wilderness and in the land. The exegetical links that bind Adam, Israel, and Christ suggest that the covenant of creation and its renewal at Sinai (as a legal covenant) is the valid category here" (*Lord and Servant: A Covenant Christology,* 239–40). Also, "Adam and Israel failed, but Jesus himself fulfilled as the covenant Servant what he proclaimed as covenant Lord" (219).

true Israel by His obedience did fulfill national Israel's purpose thereby negating any need of a further purpose of national Israel in God's salvific plan. But there is no suggestion in Scripture that, in fact, the nation of Israel was called to be the saving agent of humanity. Unlike both Adam and Christ who were without sin at the point of their testing, Israel was a sinful people which God clearly acknowledged in the gracious provision of the sacrificial system. Thus, Israel as a nation was not created to do all that Christ did. In terms of Isaiah's Servant of the Lord, while the servant Israel is united to the one servant Messiah, it could not and did not do all that the One Servant Messiah was to do.

The foundational statement of Israel's purpose is stated in the Lord's words at the establishment of that nation in the covenant at Sinai: "you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests [or a priestly kingdom] and a holy nation" (Exod. 19:6). In relation to "kingdom of priests," Noth says, "Israel is to have the role of the priestly member in the number of earthly states. Israel is to do 'service' for all the world…; this is the purpose for which Israel was chosen."[44] Commenting on these same words, Beale says, this "summary of God's purpose for Israel" meant that Israel was called "to be a kingly and priestly nation mediating[45] Yahweh's light of salvific revelation by witnessing to the Gentiles…. It is the light of God's presence that they are to reflect to the world."[46]

The description of Israel as a "holy nation" also signified a ministry to the world. Israel was to be "set apart, different from all other people by what they are and are becoming—a display-people, a showcase to the world of how being in covenant with Yahweh changes a people."[47] More insight into the purpose for which Israel was created as a nation will be evident in the following consideration of the means through which she is to fulfill her mission. Here we will simply sum up God's purpose for that nation in the words of Isaiah, "And in Israel He shows forth His glory" (Isa. 44:23; cf. 43:7; 60:7, 13, 21; Ezek. 39:13; Zech. 2:5).

The Manner through which Israel Fulfills Her Purpose

Israel's mission, as is often pointed out, is not fulfilled by going out to the nations proclaiming the revelation of God. Rather as Isaiah's words just cited—"in Israel He shows forth His glory." Israel is the place where God intended to glorify

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[44] Martin Noth, *Exodus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 157.

[45] The dispensational use of the word "mediate" to describe Israel's future role in "dispensing the blessings of God to the nations" in the future has been criticized on the basis that according to the New Testament, this mediatorial role belongs to the one mediator, Christ (1 Tim. 2:5) (cf. Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004], 118). Dispensationalists, however, refer to Israel's mediating ministry with the same meaning as that of Beale in the citation above, namely, bringing "Yahweh's light of salvific revelation" to others—which is now the ministry of the church—and not mediation in the sense of reconciling God and man (1 Tim. 2:5). The work of Christ as mediator therefore does not preclude the possibility of Israel's function as a mediator of God's blessing to the nations in the future, any more than it precludes that function for the church today.

[46] Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 193.

[47] John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 3: *Exodus* (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 263.

Himself before the onlooking nations of the world.[48] Commenting on these words of Isaiah and the prior context which calls for heaven and earth to rejoice over the redemption of Israel, Goldingay says, "What happens to Israel is the basis of the whole world's praise. Instead of human beings committing themselves to making deity reflect their attractiveness, Yhwh is committed to making human beings reflect the divine attractiveness. Specifically Israel is designed for that."[49]

In other words, Israel's mission was to be fulfilled essentially by her existence through whom God would reveal Himself to the nations. As Martin-Achard explains in his discussion of Israel's role in Isaiah's prophecies, "The Chosen People's business is to exist: its presence in the world furnishes proof of Yahweh's divinity; its life declares what He means for Israel itself and for the universe. The mission of Israel consists in reflecting the glory of God by accepting His gifts and judgment alike…. The miracle by which Israel lives extols its God's greatness before the whole universe."[50] God desired to reveal His glory in Israel that the nations might come to know Him both by Israel's public life in covenant with Him and through God's historical actions with Israel in public history.

Displaying God's Glory through a Righteous Nation among Nations

Just prior to entering the Promised Land, Moses, looking forward to Israel as a "great nation," instructed the people with these words: "See, I have taught you statues and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land …. So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people'" (Deut. 4:5–6). The same thought is repeated in 26:18–19: "The LORD has today declared you to be His people, … and that you should keep all His commandments; and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the LORD your God."

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[48] Missiologist David Bosch says, "Israel would, however, not actually go out to the nations. Neither would Israel expressly call the nations to faith in Yahweh. If they do come, it is because God is bringing them in. So, if there is a 'missionary' in the Old Testament, it is God himself who will, as his eschatological deed *par excellence,* bring the nations to Jerusalem to worship himself there together with his covenant people" (*Transforming Mission* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991], cf. John Goldingay's words: "God does not commission Israel to go out on a mission or crusade. From the beginning, it fulfills its vocation more by being than by acting. To put it another way, the First Testament assumes that Yhwh's self–revelation to the world comes about through Yhwh's own action by means of Israel rather than by Israel's action or Israel's action that Israel interprets as Yhwh's action. The principle is established by Yhwh's first words to Abraham. Yhwh intends so to bless Abraham that he will become a blessing—that is, a means of other people's blessing. That will come about as all peoples pray to be blessed as Abraham is blessed (Gen 12:1–3). It will not come about because he does something, except go where Yhwh tells him (and pray: see Gen 18). In Second Isaiah, 'the Chosen People's business is to exist … The mission of Israel consists in reflecting the glory of God by accepting His gifts and judgments alike'" (*Israel's Faith: Old Testament Theology,* vol. 2 [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006] 203–04.

[49] John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40–55: A Literary-Theological Commentary* (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 249.

[50] Robert Martin-Archard, *A Light to the Nations*, 31.

The *torah* or instruction that God revealed to Israel was designed not to be a burden, but a means through which God would bring about a righteous life of wisdom and understanding in all of the societal structures of the community of Israel and so reveal God and His life to the other nations of the world. Israel's task was thus "to be the means of Yhwh's teaching coming to the world and to be a witness to the world, not least by embodying how Yhwh's covenant with a people works out." In short, the nation of Israel was to be "a paradigm for the blessing of the nations."[51]

In his summary on the determinative role of the Davidic king in the service of Yahweh in establishing God's justice and righteousness in the nation of Israel, Aubrey Johnson writes,

> The implications of Yahweh's choice of the Hebrews were now unfolded. . . . Yahweh's ultimate purpose was now clear; it was that of a universal realm of righteousness and peace, in which not merely the twelve tribes of Israel but all the nations of the earth should be united in one common life. This was Israel's mission to the world; and the successful direction of that mission had been entrusted to the House of David. The purpose of the Davidic covenant was to ensure righteousness within Israel and thus make righteousness safe for the world.[52]

Dumbrell points to the importance of Israel being a nation for this mission in his comments on the description of that people as a "holy nation." "Probably . . . We are here . . . thinking of Israel as offering in her constitution a societary model for the world. She will provide, under the direct divine rule which the covenant contemplates, the paradigm for the theocratic rule which is to be the biblical aim for the whole world."[53] Merrill similarly writes, "As God's kingdom they would model what it means to have dominion over all things as an extension of his sovereignty."[54]

Displaying God's Glory in Historical Acts with Israel as a Nation

God reveals himself not only in speech and the inner working of the Spirit, but also in historical acts.[55] The creation of a righteous nation would, of course, be a

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[51] Goldingay, *Israel's Faith: Old Testament Theology*, 221. In the same vein, Mascarenhas writes, "Israel is called to be a model. Its task is to live according to the way that Yahweh has set for it. An obedient Israel becomes a light to the nations because it becomes a path–setter, as one who is blessed because it has lived according to God's way. Nations can look up to a blessed Israel and come to the knowledge of the 'way' that leads to blessing" (Theodore Mascarenhas, *The Missionary Function of Israel in Psalms 67, 96, and 117* [Dallas, TX: University Press of America, 2005], 276–77).

[52] Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel,* 138.

[53] W. J., Dumbrell, Creation and Covenant (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 87.

[54] Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 159–60. G. Ernest Wright similarly comments, "God's revealed purpose was that the whole earth shall become his kingdom, and the Israelite was called to play his role in the universal cosmogony of the age yet to be born." G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts* (London: SCM Press, 1952), 25.

[55] On the importance of recognizing the God of the Bible as a God who acts in history and consequently the importance of the Old Testament record of his historical acts with Israel for the church, see

public demonstration of the saving work of God. But here we are thinking of historical demonstrations of power that cannot be evaded by the nations of the world. Since the creation of Israel, God has performed such acts which have all focused on that nation.[56] Even God's act in Christ, although having universal significance, was first His deed *par excellence* in Israel.[57]

God reveals Himself in Israel, according to Scriptures, both through acts of judgment and blessing.[58] This theme is prominent in the prophecy of Ezekiel which according to Zimmerli "announces that what happens to Israel historically is in fact Yahweh's own dealing with both His people and the nations."[59] This revelation is for Israel herself, but especially for the nations who in Gowan's words are portrayed as "spectators who will learn something about the true God from his works in history."[60]

God's revelation of Himself through judgment on His people is seen in His purpose for bringing desolation through Babylon: "Thus all flesh will know that I, the LORD, have drawn My sword out of its sheath" (Ezek. 21:5). Numerous other statements declare God's intention to make Himself known to Israel and nations through judgment of His people (cf. 5:8, 13; 6:14; 7:9; 12:15ff.; 15:7; 39:21–24; Deut. 29:24–25). While most of Ezekiel's statements of judgment refer in the first place to the Babylonian exile, they are not exhausted by that event. Some clearly pertain to the future and are inherently related to Israel's final restoration which according to Ezekiel's portrayal clearly transcended Israel's restoration from the Babylonian exile (cf. 39:21–24).

God also makes Himself known through His gracious acts toward His people Israel. Both Israel and Egypt along with the surrounding nations would know that Yahweh was God through His mighty actions in the Exodus (cf. Exod. 6:7; 7:5; 14:4, 18; Josh. 2:10). The prophets frequently predicted the same revelatory power in God's future actions of redeeming Israel from her oppressors and restoring her as the place of God's glory. Isaiah declares that God will "feed … [Israel's] oppressors with their own flesh, and they will become drunk with their own blood . . . And all flesh will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob" (49:26). Similarly God says through the prophet Ezekiel, "When I bring them

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Wright, *God Who Acts,* 15–31. See also, David W. Torrance, "The Witness of the Jews to God," in *The Witness of the Jews to God,* ed. David W. Torrance (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1982), 2–4.

[56] Daniel I. Block says, "All of God's dealings with Israel were public—before the eyes of the nations. Israel was to be the agent through whom the nations would come to know that he is Yahweh." *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapter 1–24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 658.

[57] Th. C. Vriezen, "Theocracy and Soteriology," in *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics,* ed. Claus Westermann (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1963), 218.

[58] Arendt Th. Van Leeuwen sees God's dealing with Israel as a paradigm of his dealing with all nations: "Israel…. represents all mankind, in unity and scattering, in pride and sin and fall. God's judgment on his people is his judgment upon all the earth; and when the Lord has mercy on his people and gathers them again, the action adumbrates his blessing which he has promised to bestow on each and every nation. Israel then is the vanguard of the nations; her history is the centre and epitome of all history and the revelation of God's purposes for all mankind" (*Christianity in World History* [New York: Scribner's, 1964] 101. See also, Torrance, "The Witness of the Jews to God," 7–12.

[59] Walther Zimmerli, *I Am Yahweh* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1982), 88.

[60] Donald E. Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 49.

back from the peoples and gather them from the lands of their enemies, then I shall be sanctified through them in the sight of the many nations" (39:27; cf. 36:22–36).

The sight of the Lord's powerful historical intervention to rescue the nation of Israel from her oppressors and glorify Himself in her through gracious blessing will be the means of bringing salvation to the nations. They will see the Lord's action on behalf of Israel and submit to Him, desirous of the same blessing.[61] This connection is clear in the Psalmist's prayer, "God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us—that Your way may be known on the earth, your salvation among all nations. . . . God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him" (Ps. 67:1–2, 7). The same thought is evident in the Psalmist's anticipation of the time when the Lord would "arise and have compassion on Zion" and "be gracious to her" with the result that "the nations will fear the name of the Lord and all kings of the earth Your glory" (Ps. 102:13–15; cf. Is. 52:7–10; 55:3–5).

In summary, Israel was created and commissioned to be a place on earth where God would display His glory through a model kingdom before all the nations of the world. He would do so through spoken instructions as well as overt historical actions of judgment and mercy with the goal that through His dealing with Israel the world would come to recognize Him as the only true God and submit to His gracious blessing of salvation.

The Promised Fulfillment of Israel's Purpose

As we have seen earlier, the rationale for seeing Old Testament Israel's promises now fulfilled in Christ is the failure of national Israel to obey the Lord. As a result Israel's calling is being fulfilled in Christ and the church in Him as a "new Israel." I would suggest that two important facts of biblical teaching mitigate against this conclusion: (1) the prediction of Israel's failure, and (2) the promise of restoration despite failure.

The Prediction of Israel's Failure

The rebellious disobedience of the nation Israel is a clear theme in the prophecies related to that nation. The Apostle Paul applies Old Testament teaching to the disobedience and even divine hardening of Israel in his time (Rom. 11:810; citing Deut. 29:4; Is. 29:10; Ps. 69:22–23). Isaiah portrays Israel as "blind" and "deaf," incapable in that state of fulfilling its mission as the Lord's servant (Isa. 42:16–19; 43:8–13, 22–28; 44:4–8; 56:10; cf., 6:9–10; 8:17–22). Most importantly, it was foretold that this disobedience of the nation would climax in the rejection of their Messiah, the

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[61] Commenting on the prayer for Israel's Davidic king at the end of Psalm 27—"May all nations bless themselves by him. May they count him fortunate" (Goldingay's trans.)—Goldingay says, "Why should they do that? The wording again goes back to Yhwh's promise to Abraham (e.g. Gen. 12:1–3) and takes up that promise's assumption about the interrelationship of Yhwh's work with Israel and with the nations. Yhwh will so bless Israel that the nation will covet the same blessing for themselves" (*Israel's Faith: Old Testament Theology,* 743).

crucified Servant (Isa. 53:1–3; cf. John 12:38; Rom. 10:16).[62] Thus the Old Testament is filled with the history of Israel's failure to fulfill its calling as God's "holy nation" and "priestly kingdom" in the service of His salvation plan for the world. But Israel's failure is not the end of the prophetic story.

The Promises of Israel's Restoration and Fulfillment of Purpose

Along with the theme of Israel's sinful failure to be the nation that it was formed to be, the Old Testament proclaims the future restoration of the nation and the fulfillment of its God-given destiny.[63] During Israel's sinful decline through disobedience to the Sinai covenant, the prophets made greater reference to the covenant with Abraham which guaranteed Israel's existence by a divine oath (cf. Isa. 29:22–24; 41:8–10; 51:2–3; Jer. 33:24–26; Micah 7:20).[64] God would remain faithful to His promise covenants and bring Israel back from her rebellious way. She would be restored as a nation to live in her Promised Land (cf. Lev. 26:43–44; Isa. 11:11–12; 48:9; 49:8–12; Jer. 30:3, 10, 11; 31:8; Ezek. 20:33–44; 34:11–16; 37:37; Amos 9:11–15). She would then fulfill her purpose as God's witness to the nations as they are drawn to God's glory radiating in her (Isa. 2:1–4; Jer. 33:9; Zech. 8:13; cf. also Scriptures above in discussion of Israel's purpose).

All of this would come about as a result of a spiritual transformation which the Lord would bring through the gift of a new covenant which would bring about a new heart in the people through the indwelling Spirit and a righteousness of life resulting in abundant blessing of God. As the Lord says through the prophet Ezekiel, "I will give them one heart and put a new spirit within them . . . that they may walk in My statues and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God" (Ezek. 11:19–20; cf. also 36:25–29; Jer. 31:31–34). The obedience of Israel would result in untold blessings in the sight of all nations, drawing them to God's salvation.

These prophecies of Israel's restoration and fulfillment of purpose refer to the same Israel who had a history of disobedience. It is the blind and deaf disobedient servant to which the spiritual transformation and restoration as a nation are promised again and again in Isaiah, not a new spiritual Israel. According to Ezekiel it is the Israel that God brought out of the land of Egypt and who had profaned the Lord's

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[62] On Isaiah 53:1–6 as a reference to Israel's rejection of Christ at his first coming, see, John N., Oswalt, *The book of Isaiah. Chapters 40–66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 381.

[63] For an interesting rather comprehensive discussion of the prophetic hope of Israel that rejects supersessionism, see Goldingay, *Israel's Faith: Old Testament Theology,* 350–516,

[64] Ronald E. Clements, "אַבְרָהָם," *Theological Dictionary of the Old testament,* vol. 1, ed., G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 57–58; cf. Goldingay's comment: "In the context of exile where Israel's failure has imperiled the covenant relationship, the emphasis of the Abraham covenant would remind Israel that its relationship with God originally rested on divine choice and that this failure of theirs need not mean its termination. The hierarchical nature of the covenant means that Israel's relationship with Yhwh rests on the immense security of its having come into being because of Yhwh's sovereignty. It does not rest on Yhwh's sentiment nor on the fickleness of Israel's choice of Yhwh. It is thus not so surprising that after a while Yhwh commissions messengers with the words 'Comfort, comfort my people, says your God;' (Is 40:1)" (*Israel's Faith: Old Testament Theology,* 189).

name by their disobedience (20:9, 13, 16, 21–22) that is going to be renewed and restored through a new purging even as their fathers were judged in the wilderness (20:34–44).

It is Israel as a *nation*, and not an Israel of people gathered from all nations as is the church today. In connection with the promise of a new covenant, the Lord declared that only if the fixed order of nature ceased would "the offspring of Israel also … cease from being a *nation* before Me forever" (Jer. 31:35–36, emphasis added). It is as a nation among nations that Israel will become a blessing to other nations that they might receive the same salvation and become God's people alongside of it (cf. Isa. 19:23–25).

That it is the same historical Israel is also clear from the fact that God's name is at stake in the destiny of this nation. From the beginning God's name was publicly attached to the nation of Israel. He had created it, redeemed it from slavery, given it the Promised Land, and judged it for disobedience. He had given it many covenant promises. Throughout her history, Israel often wanted to be like the other nations, but God insisted on maintaining His special relationship with her because for Him to let her go and begin with a different people would bring discredit on His name (Ezek. 20:9, 14, 22).[65]

Thus He declares that He will ultimately restore them for the sake of His name: "You will know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the land which I swore to give your forefathers….Then you will know that I am the LORD when I have dealt with you for My name's sake" (Ezek. 20:42, 44). And in Israel's restoration, the Lord will fulfill his original intent with Israel: "I will prove myself holy among you in the sight of the nations" (Ezek. 20:41). I think that Goldingay is correct in his belief that the prophets could never conceive of God creating a new Israel that would replace the original Israel and fulfill its promises, for He "would not accept such a denigrating of the divine holiness."[66]

The essence of Israel's place and purpose in God's plan of salvation for the nations is summed up well in von Rad's summary of Isaiah's prophecy relating to that nation:

> Once Yahweh has performed his work upon Israel, there will be a universal 'twilight of the gods' among the nations, for the heathen will realize the impotence of their idols. The heathen will be put to shame (Is. XLI, II, XLII. 17, XL. 24), they will come to Yahweh (Is. XIV. 24); indeed, because they are convinced of the greatness and glory of the God of Israel, they will even bring home the Lord's scattered people (Is. XLIX. 22f.). 'Kings shall see it and arise, princes, and prostrate themselves' (Is. XLIX. 7). Then …Yahweh can make a direct appeal to the nations to avail themselves of this hour of the dawn of salvation: 'Be saved, all the ends of the earth' (Is. XLV. 22); 'let the coastlands

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[65] Goldingay, *Israel's Faith: Old Testament Theology,* 360. Block similarly says in his comments on Ezekiel 20–32–44, "The divine reputation depends on the fate of his people. All of God's dealings with Israel were public—before the eyes of the nations." Block, *The Book of Ezekiel; Chapters 1–24*, 658.

[66] Goldingay, *Israel's Faith: Old Testament Theology*, 361,

> put their hope in Yahweh and wait for his arm' (Is. LI. 5). This ought not to be called a 'missionary idea,'. . . . Israel is thought of rather as a sign of which the Gentiles are to become aware, and to which in the course of the eschatological events, they will resort of their own accord. They will come to Israel and confess that 'God is with you only, and nowhere else, no god besides him'; 'only in Yahweh are salvation and strength'… (Is. XLV. 15f., 24).[67]

This picture of the calling of Israel and her eschatological role of blessing for the nations remained an unfulfilled hope for the Old Testament people of God. Even after the Babylonian exile the promise of a final fulfillment remained alive as evident in Zechariah's prophecy: "It will come about that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you that you may become a blessing . . . So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the Lord" (Zech. 8:13, 22). The question is whether Scripture sees the fulfillment of these covenant promises made to Israel and if so, how?

The Church Does Not Fulfill Israel's Promises

We have seen that Christ is the fulfillment of Israel's covenant promises as well as those for the church. We have also seen that Christ's people participate in the fulfillment of that role as is evident in the present ministry of the church in the world. The question is whether the fulfillment of the covenants which involved the participation of the nation of Israel through which God promised to bring his salvation to the world are going to be fulfilled through that nation or through the church as a "new Israel."

In strong support of Israel's promises being fulfilled by that nation, the New Testament rather clearly teaches that the Old Testament covenant promises still belong to the Israel of the Old Testament even as they are now largely in unbelief (Rom. 9:3–5; 11:29). The Apostle Paul expressly declares that God has not rejected His Old Testament people, but rather will in the future bring about their salvation for the blessing of the world (Rom. 11, see especially vv. 12, 15, 26). As we have seen, the Old Testament does not teach the abandonment of national Israel in God's saving plan, nor is any abandonment of Israel because of failure taught in the New Testament. But aside from this rather clear teaching which we cannot develop here, I want to suggest several other things that make it difficult to see the church fulfilling Israel's Old Testament promises.

A Different Manifestation of the Kingdom

The church is a manifestation of Christ's kingdom, but it is not the manifestation of the kingdom that was prophesied for Israel. As a spiritual community of God's people, the church cannot manifest a paradigm of the kingdom of God before the nations as is prophesied through the theocracy of Israel where all of the structures of

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[67] Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology,* vol. 2 (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 248–49.

human society are ruled by God, and there is no Caesar governing the people along with Christ as is true during this age of the church.

According to the New Testament, the power of the kingdom presently reveals itself through the church in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9) after the example of Christ who displayed God's power in the weakness of His earthly life and crucifixion (cf. 2 Cor. 13:4). Paul did not see himself or other believers as reigning during this age (1 Cor. 4:8ff.). In the prophecies related to the restoration of Israel, the kingdom's power is clearly manifest in overt glorious power before world. If today the power of the kingdom that is manifest through the word and the Spirit is essentially *influential* love, with the restoration of Israel that power of the kingdom will also include *coercive* force.

Finally, as has been already implied, contrary to the present manifestation of the kingdom's power through the church in spiritually changed lives and communities, the restoration of Israel will entail a display of God's kingdom power in public historical acts of salvation before the eyes of the nations, a manifestation that cannot be explained away as is often done in relation to present salvation in the church. It is difficult if not impossible to see any analogy between God's activities with the church and the many prophesies of God displaying His glorious power in the historical action of defeating Israel's enemy nations and restoring her to an exalted place for the purpose of the salvation of the nations. This is particularly difficult if the coming of Christ brings the final judgment of all people.

A Radically Different Experience of God's People in Witness

The nation of Israel was called to reveal God's glory to the world through word but also through historical actions of God in relation to that nation. As we have seen, this takes place through acts of judgments, but Israel's witness to the nations was to be primarily through God's historical actions in restoring and blessing that nation before the eyes of the world. Freed from the persecution and oppression of the nations, the spiritually transformed Israel would live in their land in God's peace and prosperity exalted among the nations who look to the God of Israel for the same blessing.[68]

The experience of believers in the church in the world during this age is radically different. Like the Apostle Paul who as a chosen instrument to bear the Lord's name before Israel and Gentiles must "suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:15; cf. 2 Cor. 11), the experience of the church in its witness to God's glory is suffering (cf. 1 Pet. 4:12–19). We live as aliens among the nations which are headed toward the domination of anti-Christ, hated and persecuted until the end of the age (cf. John 15:18–

[68] The exaltation of Israel is not for the pride of Israel or pay-back for her oppression by the nations, but rather for God's service in bringing his salvation to the nations. D. W. Van Winkle concludes his study on the relationship of the nations to God and to Isaiah 40–55 by saying, "The prophet does not envisage the co-equality of Jews and gentiles. He expects that Israel will be exalted, and that she will become Yahweh's agent who will rule the nations in such a way that justice is established and mercy is shown. This rule is both that for which the nations wait expectantly and that to which they must submit: ("The Relationship of the Nations to Yahweh and to Israel in Isaiah XL–LV," *Vetus Testamentum,* 35 [1985], 457). See also Robert Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 303–05.

21; Matt. 24:9). Unless one radically reinterprets the prophecy of Israel's witness in its restoration, it seems impossible to see the experience of the church as the fulfillment of Israel's witness.

A Different Evangelization of the Nations

Finally, the biblical teaching of the effect of the witness of Israel and that of the church is strong evidence that the church is not fulfilling Israel's national promises. As we have seen the Old Testament declares that it is God's plan to glorify Himself before the nations of the world that they may come to know that He is the true God (cf. Ezek. 36:22–23, 26; 37:28; 39:21, 13; Is. 45:14). This concern for coming to know God is also expressed in relation to Israel and her spiritual restoration, thus indicating that this knowledge that the nations would gain was not simply the recognition of God's existence, but "above all else the adoration that kneels because of divinely inspired recognition."[69]

This is evident from other references indicating that God's revelation in Israel will bring the nations to acknowledge and worship Him (cf. Isa. 19:21–25; 45:14–24; 60:1–3). The nations will come to Zion to worship and learn God's ways (Isa. 2:2–4; 55:4–5; 66:18; Jer. 3:17; Mic. 4:1–4). Because of the Lord's blessing of Israel, the nations will desire to associate with her and seek the same blessing of the true God for themselves (Zech. 8:20–22). Whether voluntarily in worship or involuntarily, all nations along with Israel will bow the knee and every tongue will swear allegiance to the true God (Isa. 45:23; cf. 49:7).

The broad conversion of the nations along with the involuntary submission of those whose hearts are not changed leads to world peace. The Lord's reign through His Messiah in restored Jerusalem will be worldwide. He will "judge disputes between nations." And instead of taking up the sword against each other, "they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks" (Isa. 2:4, NET; cf. Mic. 2:3; Jer. 3:17; Zech. 9:9–10). In his prophecy of the final destruction of Babylon—the great symbol of human antagonism to God—Jeremiah connects this peace with God's restoration of Israel. Speaking of Israel's strong Redeemer, the prophet declares, "He will vigorously plead their [Israel's] case so that He may bring rest to the earth" (Jer. 50:34; cf. Is.14:1–3, 7, 16). In the words of Laetsch, "Judah's enemies forgot that Israel was the covenant nation of the Lord of Hosts, 'their Redeemer.' As such He will plead their cause, not by lengthy speeches, but by mighty deeds. He will quiet the world."[70] Similarly, Ezekiel in his "image of a huge tree offering nourishment and protection for all creatures" depicts the Messiah enthroned in Israel restoring "shalom not only to his own people but also to the world" (17:22–24).[71]

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[69] Walther Zimmerli, *I Am Yahweh* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 88.

[70] Theo Laetsch, *Bible Commentary: Jeremiah* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1952), 358. Laetsch refers this prophecy to Cyrus' gaining the goodwill of the nations through permitting all deported people to return to their homelands. But the description of Babylon and its fall and destruction in chapters 50–51, along with the exhortation for God's people to escape from the city (e.g. 50:8; 51:6, 45) and the promise of forgiveness (50:20) and a new covenant (cf. 50:5), clearly transcend this historical situation (cf. Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968], 224–25).

[71] Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 551, 554.

The effect of the witness of the church during this age is quite different. While the evangelization of the church will reach all nations (Matt. 24:14), there is no reference to the nations acknowledging God to the extent that they come to the church to learn the ways of God. The spiritual condition of the world at the end of the age just prior to the Lord's return is likened to the days of Noah—a total lack of concern for God with even the faith of many believers wanting (cf. Matt. 24:10–12, 37–39). There is also no indication that God will bring peace to the world through the witness of the church. Instead the New Testament indicates, as we have already seen, that the church will suffer persecution until Christ comes. There will be strife and war among the nations culminating in a final anti-Christ ruler (cf. 2 Thess. 2:3–12; Rev. 19:17–19).

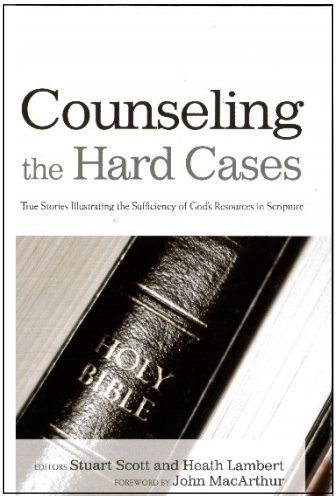
In sum, although both national Israel and the church are called to be God's witnesses to the world, Scripture portrays some radical differences between national Israel and the church in the nature and effects of that witness. Unless one radically reinterprets the biblical prophecies concerning Israel—which in my opinion Scripture never does—or simply denies that some of the national promises will ever be fulfilled, it seems impossible to affirm that the church is presently fulfilling or will fulfill in the future all of the covenanted promises made with historic Israel.

Conclusion

Is Christ the fulfillment of national Israel's promises? Scripture answers this question with both a "yes" and a "no." As the One in whom all of God's covenant promises of salvation are summed up, yes, Christ is the fulfillment of Israel's national covenant promises as well as the promises in which the church participates. For all these promises are facets of His historical program of salvation.

On the other hand, Scripture also teaches that the people in union with Christ, or "in Him," also participate through Him in His fulfillment of God's salvation program for the world. Even as the church presently has a priestly ministry in Christ, the great High Priest, so Israel was called to have a priestly ministry in the service of God. Although the church and Israel have similar functions as witnesses to the glory of God in the world, we saw that the witness of Israel as a nation was prophesied to be significantly different in nature and effect. Without radical reinterpretation of Israel's prophecies, it is impossible to see them fulfilled by the church.

Nowhere does the New Testament expressly teach the replacement of national Israel by the church and reinterpret Israel's promises accordingly. Rather it reaffirms the promises to historic Israel and thus its restoration (cf. Rom. 9–11). The fulfillment of Israel's national prophecies by that nation is in harmony with the apostle's picture of the participation of both the present church and that nation in God's plan of salvation for the world. Presently because of Israel's "transgression" the church is bringing the "riches" of salvation blessing for the world. But "how much more" will salvation's blessing flow to the world through the "fullness" of Israel, i.e., through God's historical action of redeeming and restoring the full number of Israel as a nation before the eyes of the world and making it the showplace of His glory that will draw the nations to Him (Rom. 11:12; cf. v. 15).



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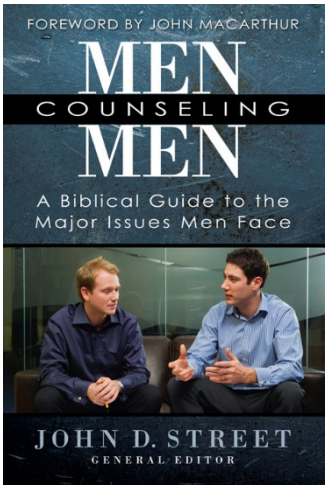

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MATTHEW 5:5 AND THE OLD TESTAMENT LAND PROMISES: AN INHERITANCE OF THE EARTH OR THE LAND OF ISRAEL?

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While many biblical-theological scholars claim that Matthew 5:5 is a straightforward expansion of the OT land promises to now encompass the whole earth, the original text of Matthew 5:5 (κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν) makes no clear indication that it is referring to the "earth" rather than to the "land" of Israel. It is possible to interpret Matthew 5:5 as referring to an inheritance of the land of Israel, but unfortunately, such an interpretive possibility has been obscured by English translations and ruled out by supersessionist theological assumptions regarding Israel's future. Based on careful word study and sensitivity to the Jewish-focused literary-historical context of Matthew's Gospel, this article will argue that Matthew 5:5 reaffirms a future Jewish inheritance of the land of Israel, an inheritance that does not exclude Gentiles but complements and fits within the worldwide inheritance for all of God's people.

* * * * *

The promised land of the Abrahamic covenant is such a major theme in the OT and Second Temple Jewish literature, but seems to fade in the New Testament. Any theologian attempting to discuss the topic must ask: Does the New Testament (NT) nullify, modify/expand, or reaffirm the Old Testament (OT) land promises?[1] The land promise is biblically and theologically complex because it touches upon issues such

[1] An additional way of phrasing the issue is possible: Does the NT clarify and reaffirm the typological trajectory regarding the land already present in the OT? That typological trajectory is as follows: the land of Canaan pointed back to creation, then the rest of the OT envisioned Canaan as pointing forward to something greater and larger: the new creation. This would be the preferred way of phrasing the question by progressive covenantalists. This way of phrasing the issue is more complex, which is why I have separated it out. For other views, however, the language of modification or expansion is appropriate since that is how they phrase Matthew's use of Psalm 37.

as the NT use of the OT, the nature and proper use of typology, the relationship between land and temple, the relationship between land and kingdom, the nature and fulfillment of the biblical covenants (particularly the Abrahamic and New covenants), and the interpretation of specific texts, particularly Matthew 5:5; Romans 4:13; Ephesians 6:3; Hebrews 4:1–11; 11:8–16. Thus, while few NT texts *explicitly* address the OT land promises, many major NT themes have direct relevance to the OT land promises (e.g. temple, kingdom, covenant, typology), so the NT discusses land (albeit indirectly) far more than often acknowledged.[2]

This article will attempt to tackle one piece of this theological puzzle—a crucial yet little discussed text: Matthew 5:5. A quick glance at this verse and its allusion to Psalm 37:11 in the original languages would seem to suggest that Matthew is not changing much from Psalm 37:

Ps. 37:11 (MT):	וַעֲנָוִים יִירְשׁוּ־אָרֶץ
Ps. 36:11 (LXX Göttingen):	οἱ δὲ πραεῖς κληρονομήσουσιν γῆν
Matt. 5:5 (NA[28]):	μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν

Although Matthew's changes seem minor, non-dispensationalists have used Matthew 5:5 to make a bold claim, to assert that the *land* in Psalm 37 has become the *earth* in Matthew 5:5,[3] thus Matthew 5:5 stands alongside other NT texts, which teach that the OT land promises are "either *spiritualized* as the ultimate heavenly rest (Heb. 4:1ff.; 11:16 cf. 11:10), or *globalized* [e.g. expanded] to become a promise of inheriting the earth/world to come (e.g. Mt. 5:5; Rom. 4:13; Heb. 1:2; cf. Eph. 6:3)."[4] These assertions imply that ethnic Israel no longer has a promise to inherit the land of Israel sometime in the future, although often this implication is unexpressed.

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[2] This crucial point is made by Stephen Wellum in Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 713.

[3] See the comments on Matthew 5:5 in G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 756–57; Gary M. Burge, *Jesus and the Land: The New Testament Challenge to "Holy Land" Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 33–35; Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 211–12, 281; Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), 138; Oren R. Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land: The Land Promise in God's Redemptive Plan*, NSBT, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 124–26; Keith A. Mathison, *Dispensationalism: Rightly Dividing the People of God?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1995), 27–28; O. Palmer Robertson, *The Israel of God: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2000), 26–27; Stephen R. Sizer, "An Alternative Theology of the Holy Land: A Critique of Christian Zionism," *Churchman* 113, no. 2 (1999): 136; Mark D. Vander Hart, "Possessing the Land as Command and Promise," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 4, no. 2 (1988): 150–51; Paul R. Williamson, "Abraham, Israel, and the Church," *Evangelical Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (2000): 116–17.

[4] Williamson, "Abraham, Israel, and the Church," 116. Emphases added.

In contrast to such assertions, most dispensationalists have been silent on Matthew 5:5 and none have responded to the assertion that Matthew 5:5 expands the OT land promises.[5] This paper intends to fill the gap in dispensational literature by arguing that Matthew 5:5 reaffirms the OT land promises made to Israel—yet this reaffirmation needs to be nuanced in two ways: First, this reaffirmation is not a flat reading of Scripture;[6] the OT land promises are reaffirmed *by Christ himself* and his allusions to Psalm 37 and Isaiah 61 indicate that he is the greater David in fulfillment of Psalm 37 and he is Isaiah's servant of the LORD in fulfillment of Isaiah 61. Second, this reaffirmation should also not be understood by itself, but read together with other statements in Matthew's Gospel about the future, a future which will certainly include territorial blessings for the Gentiles (e.g. Matt 8:11; 19:28; 25:34). When read as a whole, Matthew's Gospel presents both a *particular* re-affirmed land inheritance for Israel that will fit into and be part of the *universal*, global inheritance for all.

Before moving on, I want to emphasize the theological importance of Matthew 5:5 for our understanding of Israel's future by highlighting Bruce Waltke's bold yet legitimate challenge to dispensationalists: "If revised dispensationalism produced one passage in the entire New Testament that clearly presents the resettlement of national Israel in the land, I would join them. But I know of none!"[7] The standard dispensationalist response to this challenge has been to say that (1) since Israel was

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[5] The following dispensational works do not discuss Matthew 5:5 at all (this assertion is made on the basis of the Scripture indices in these books): Paul N. Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Moody, 2006); Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, eds., *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Bridgepoint Books, 1993); H. Wayne House, ed. *Israel, the Land and the People: An Evangelical Affirmation of God's Promises* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998); John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Christ's Prophetic Plans: A Futuristic Premillennial Primer* (Chicago: Moody, 2012); J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958); Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007); Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?: A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010); John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959); Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master, eds., *Issues in Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994).

A few dispensationalists do briefly discuss Matthew 5:5, but with no response to non-dispensational claims that Matthew 5:5 expands the OT land promises. See Darrell L. Bock, "Covenants in Progressive Dispensationalism," in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views*, ed. Herbert W. Bateman IV (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 214n9; Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), 75; Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational & Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 52; Dale S. DeWitt, *Dispensational Theology in America During the 20th Century: Theological Development & Cultural Context* (Grand Rapids: Grace Bible College Publications, 2002), 307.

[6] Progressive covenantalists have charged dispensationalists with a "thin" or flat reading of Scripture, accusing them of simplistically upholding OT promises made to Israel without considering how the NT speaks of Christ fulfilling and reconfiguring those OT promises. In other words, they accuse dispensationalists of viewing the OT land promises as *remaining unchanged across redemptive history*, unchanged even after the coming of Christ. In their view, dispensationalists make a hermeneutical error by failing to read the OT within its larger *canonical* context. See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 85-87, 117-118.

[7] Bruce K. Waltke, "A Response," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*, eds. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 357.

still in the land when the NT was written, there was no need for the NT authors to explicitly address the issue of Israel's land; and (2) since the NT authors did not explicitly nullify the OT land promises, they probably assumed that OT land promises made to Israel were still valid. If my proposed interpretation of Matthew 5:5 is correct, then dispensationalists can respond to Waltke's challenge by saying that at least one NT text does explicitly reaffirm the OT land promises made to Israel. Matthew 5:5 would, therefore, be a significant pillar for supporting belief in a future restoration of Israel.

Arguments that Matthew 5:5 Expands the OT Abrahamic Land Promises

In contrast to some spiritualizing interpretations of the OT land promises,[8] many now emphasize that the fulfillment of OT land promises is physical and earthly, not spiritual and non-territorial.[9] In other words, Jesus does not spiritualize the OT land promises; He rather *expands* them to include the whole earth. This is the majority view of Matthew commentators.[10] Hans K. LaRondelle summarizes this view well:

> *Clearly, Jesus applies Psalm 37 in a new, surprising way*: (1) This "land" will be larger than David thought: the fulfillment will include the entire earth in its recreated beauty (see Isaiah 11:6–9; Revelation 21–22); (2) The renewed earth will be the inheritance of all the meek from all the nations who accept Christ as their Lord and Savior. Christ is definitely not spiritualizing away Israel's territorial promise when He includes His universal Church. On the contrary, He widened the scope of the territory until it extended to the whole world.[11]

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[8] Those who spiritualize the land promise in Matthew 5:5 include: W. D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), 360–61; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 166–67; Frédéric Manns, "Blessed are the Meek for They Shall Inherit the Earth," *Liber Annuus* 50 (2000): 37–51; Georg Strecker, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, trans. O. C. Dean Jr. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1988), 36. I have chosen not to engage with this view in this article because it is a minority view and less persuasive than the expansion of the land view. I find it hard to view τὴν γῆν as being fulfilled in "non-territorial ways" (France, 166).

[9] David E. Holwerda, *Jesus and Israel: One Covenant or Two?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 85. Also see comments in Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future,* 274–76; Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land,* 125–26; Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1994), 132–33.

[10] Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1995), 127–28; Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 99; Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary, Volume 1: The Christbook (Matthew 1–12)*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 166–67; D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 9:163–64, 166; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, WBC (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1993), 92–93; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 167; Ulrich Luz, *A Commentary on Matthew 1–7*, trans. James E. Crouch, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 194–95; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount: Character Formation and Ethical Decision Making in Matthew 5–7* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 52; Charles Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount: Restoring Christ's Message to the Modern Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011), 55–58.

[11] LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy,* 138. Emphasis added.

Others reflect a similar sentiment: Charles Quarles says, "Although Ps 37:11 is about inheriting the land of covenant promise, *Jesus was free to apply the text in new ways* for His audience."[12] Anthony Hoekema writes, "the *land* of Psalm 37 has become the *earth* in Matthew 5."[13] The unexpressed assumption in this view is that ethnic Israel no longer has a promise to inherit the land of Israel. The localized promise has been transcended into a more glorious promise of the entire earth. The following four arguments are given to support this view:[14]

(1) Lexically, the use of γῆ ('land/earth') elsewhere in Matthew 5–7 and Matthew's Gospel would argue for translating τὴν γῆν as "the earth" in Matthew 5:5.[15] Just a few verses after Matthew 5:5, Jesus says, "You are the salt of the earth [γῆ]" (5:13), which is parallel to the next statement, "You are the light of the world [κόσμος]" (5:14). So it seems that "earth" and "world" are synonymous. It would be strange and confusing for γῆ in Matthew 5:5 to refer to the land of Israel, while γῆ in Matthew 5:13 refers to the whole earth. However, this does not mean that γῆ always refers to the whole earth. "When Matthew used [γῆ] to refer to a specific geographical location, he typically offered further qualification such as 'land of Judah' or 'land of Israel' (e.g. 2:6, 20–21)."[16] Since Matthew does not add a qualifier in Matthew 5:5 (e.g., "land *of Israel*"), we can conclude on lexical grounds that he is referring to the earth, not the land of Israel.

(2) The parallelism between verse 5 (κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν) and verses 3 and 10 ("theirs is the kingdom of heaven") would suggest that κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν is synonymous with inheriting the worldwide kingdom of heaven. Beale explains:

> Earth in verse 5 is parallel with "kingdom of heaven" in verses 3, 10, so that the "earth" here [in verse 5] is wider than the promised land's old borders and is coextensive with the "kingdom of heaven." This is likely a way to say that the "blessed" will inherit the new heaven and new earth and not some mere ethereal heavenly realm.[17]

Thus, to limit Jesus' saying in verse 5 to inheriting the land of Israel would also imply that the kingdom of heaven is limited only to the land of Israel. But surely that would be an unwarranted restriction since the extent of the future kingdom is worldwide and will include Gentiles (e.g. Ps. 2:8; 72:8). This close connection between the worldwide "kingdom of heaven" in verse 3 and the "earth" in verse 5 is confirmed

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[12] Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount,* 57. Emphasis added.

[13] Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future,* 212. Emphasis original.

[14] There is no sustained argument for the expansion of the land view of Matthew 5:5. I have constructed the following four arguments based on dialogue with non-dispensationalists and through reading non-dispensational literature and thinking in accord with their view.

[15] See especially the comments in Carson, "Matthew," 166; Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount,* 58.

[16] Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount,* 58. Also see Carson, "Matthew," 166.

[17] Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology,* 757. A similar point is made in W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew*, AB (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 46.

by the fact that some ancient manuscripts invert the order of verses 4 and 5,[18] so that verse 3 is followed by verse 5, allowing for closer comparison:

> Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (v. 3)
> Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth (v. 5)

This order creates a synonymous parallelism between the "poor in spirit" and the "meek," and an antithesis between the "kingdom of heaven" and the "earth." The antithesis would not work if it were "kingdom of heaven" and "land." This suggests that even some ancient scribes recognized that τὴν γῆν in Matthew 5:5 refers to the whole earth, not just to the land of Israel.[19]

(3) In its original OT context, Psalm 37 envisioned an eschatological fulfillment of inheriting the land—therefore, Jesus is not twisting or reinterpreting Psalm 37 but merely affirming the eschatological trajectory already present in Psalm 37.[20] This eschatological trajectory is clear from three perspectives: First, Psalm 37 itself has an eschatological trajectory. It may seem anachronistic to speak of the "eschatology" of Psalm 37,[21] but clearly Psalm 37 has in mind some sort of future judgment of the wicked and future blessing of the righteous. Exactly *when* this will happen is unclear, yet there is an undeniable *finality* to this future judgment and blessing (see esp. vv. 18, 29).

Second, the LXX translation of Psalm 37 confirms the eschatological trajectory already present in the Hebrew of Psalm 37. The LXX translator embeds his interpretation of the land into Psalm 37; modern English translations of Psalm 37 (under the influence of the NT and the traditional translation of Matthew 5:5) obscure this interpretive development. The Hebrew verb used throughout Psalm 37 is יָרַשׁ, which can connote "inherit," but its most common meaning is to "take possession" (see esp. its 47 usages in Deuteronomy). The more common Hebrew terms for "inherit" or "inheritance" are נָחַל and נַחֲלָה, neither of which are used in Psalm 37. Thus a more

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[18] Alexandrian—33, Δ, Clement; Western—D, Vulgate, Syr^{cur}; Caesarean—700, 28, 544, 543.

[19] Guelich offers probably the best explanation for the inversion: "This variation in location most likely resulted from differing degrees of recognition of the synonymous parallelism between 5:3 and 5:5. . . . Yet this alternate order (5:3, 5, 4) may have come from the tradition. Assuming that the original Beatitude was addressed to the *poor* (πτωχοί = *ʿnyym*/*ʿnwm*), the synonymous parallelism of 5:5 drawn from Ps 37(36):11 (*ʿnwm* = πραεῖς) would have formed a couplet . . . and maintained the lexical balance between the socioeconomic and the religious inherent in both Hebrew terms *ʿnyym*/*ʿnwm* (see Note on 5:3). The two Beatitudes would then have been transmitted together in the tradition until Matthew, in his desire to align the initial Beatitudes (see Notes on 5:3, 4) more closely to the language and order of Isa 61:1–2, rearranged them" (Robert Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount* [Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1982], 81–82). Metzger adds that inverting verses 4 and 5 produces an antithesis between heaven and earth. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1994), 10.

[20] This hermeneutical point is made in Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land,* 124.

[21] The eschatology of the LXX Psalms is discussed in Joachim Schaper, *Eschatology in the Greek Psalter* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995). General treatments of this theme are found in Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 417–24; Geerhardus Vos, "Eschatology of the Psalter," in *The Pauline Eschatology* (1930; repr., Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1994), 323–65.

appropriate translation of Psalm 37:11 is, "But the meek will take possession of the land," not "inherit the land." The LXX, however, inserts its own interpretation when it translates יָרַשׁ ("take possession") with κληρονομέω ("inherit"), which leads Robert Brawley to conclude, "The Hebrew implicates *possession* of land . . . [the] LXX accents *inheritance* . . . [Jewish] tradition pushed the promise into an eschatological future."[22] This means that Psalm 37, in its original context, was primarily *historical* in its outlook: in the likely socio-economic context of Psalm 37, where the wicked oppress the poor, perhaps even by stealing their land, Psalm 37 envisioned a *historical* fulfillment of its land promise, where economic justice would be served when the wicked are "cut off" from the land and the meek "take possession of" or "repossess" the land.[23] However, the LXX translator gave Psalm 37 an *eschatological* outlook: the meek would not simply "take possession of" or "repossess" the land, but "inherit" it.[24] This shift from a historical, Israel-focused outlook to an eschatological outlook paves the way for Jesus' use of Psalm 37 in Matthew 5:5.

Third, Jewish literature from the Second Temple period also seems to confirm the eschatological trajectory of Psalm 37 and supports reading Matthew 5:5 as referring to inheriting the whole earth. Craig Keener writes, "When Jewish people thought of the meek "inheriting the earth," they went beyond the minimal interpretation of Psalm 37:9, 11, 29 (where those who hope in God alone will "inherit the land"; cf. 25:13) and thought of inheriting the entire world (Rom 4:13; Jub. 32:19; 4QPs 37; 2 Bar. 51:3)."[25] Keener also cites numerous other works from Second Temple Jewish literature to support his claim that Jewish interpreters viewed the land in Psalm 37 as being expanded to include the whole earth.[26] Two texts in particular seem clear: In Jubilees 32:19, God speaking to Abraham, says, "And I will give to thy seed all the earth which is under heaven, and they shall judge all the nations according to their desires, and after that they shall get possession of the whole earth and inherit it forever."[27] This text is explicitly global, promising an inheritance of "all the earth which is under heaven" and "the whole earth." The most significant text is from the Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls, which include a commentary (pesher) on Psalm 37 (known as 4QpPs37 or 4Q171). 4Q171 quotes from Psalm 37, then offers brief commentary:

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[22] Robert L. Brawley, "Evocative Allusions in Matthew: Matthew 5:5 As a Test Case," *Theological Studies* 59, no. 3 (2003): 609. Emphases original.

[23] This socio-economic background is suggested by John Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, BCOTWP (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 518, 522–23, 534; Ellen F. Davis, *Biblical Prophecy: Perspectives for Christian Theology, Discipleship, and Ministry* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 225–26.

[24] This eschatological outlook is especially noted in Norbert Lohfink, "The Appeasement of the Messiah: Thoughts on Ps 37 and the Third Beatitude," *Theology Digest* 44, no. 3 (1997): 235–36.

[25] Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew,* 167.

[26] Keener, 167 fn 20: "Cf. also, e.g., Mek. Beshallah 7.139–40; b. Abod. Zar. 35b; Ber. 4b; Gen. Rab. 11:7; Ex. Rab. 15:31. As the Israelites "inherited" the promised land, so they expected to "inherit" that land and the coming world in the future; cf. e.g., 21:38; 25:34; Ps 25:13; 37:9, 11; Is 57:13; 60:21; 61:7; Jub. 32:19; 1 Enoch 5:7; 2 Enoch 50:2; Rom 8:17; Eph 1:14; 4 Ezra 6:59; 7:96; 2 Bar. 51:3; Mek. Beshallah 7.139–40; b. Qidd. 40b; Ex. Rab. 2:6; 20:4."

[27] Quoted from the English translation of R. H. Charles, ed. *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913).

> 'But those who trust in the Lord are the ones who will inherit the earth' (Psalm 37:9b). This refers to the company of his chosen, those who do his will. 'Very soon there will be no wicked man; look where he was, he's not there' (Psalm 37:10). This refers to all of the wicked at the end of the forty years. When they are completed, there will no longer be any wicked person on the earth. 'Then the meek will inherit the earth and enjoy all the abundance that peace brings' (Psalm 37:11). This refers to the company of the poor who endure the time of error but are delivered from all the snares of Belial. Afterwards they will enjoy all the […] of the earth and grow fat on every human [luxury.][28]

The Qumran commentary is clearly eschatological, envisioning a time when "there will no longer be any wicked person on the earth" and the meek will inherit the earth, not the land of Israel. This shift from a historical, Israel-focused outlook to an eschatological, universal/global outlook paves the way for Jesus' use of Psalm 37 in Matthew 5:5. Jesus would also view the land promise as to be fulfilled eschatologically with an inheritance of the whole earth, not just the land of Israel.

(4) In the OT itself, the land is presented as a type, a pointer to the final inheritance of the new heavens and new earth—therefore, to reaffirm a future inheritance of the land of Israel is a step backward in redemptive history, a return to OT types/shadows that have been fulfilled in Christ (see Col. 2:17; Heb. 10:1).[29] Stephen Wellum gives a detailed definition of typology:

> Typology as a New Testament hermeneutical endeavor is the study of Old Testament salvation historical realities or "types" (persons, events, institutions) which God has specifically designed to correspond to, and predictively prefigure, their intensified antitypical fulfillment aspects (inaugurated and consummated) in New Testament salvation history.[30]

Against some dispensationalists who view typology merely as analogies,[31] Wellum insists that types point forward and "ought to be viewed as a subset of predictive

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[28] Quoted from the English translation of Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, and Edward Cook, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005). Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 124, references 4Q171 in support of a universal/globalized interpretation of Matt. 5:5.

[29] See the comments in Holwerda, *Jesus and Israel,* 112; Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 234–36; Robertson, *The Israel of God,* 4–6, 30–31; Williamson, "Abraham, Israel, and the Church," 116–17; Robert Vasholz, "The Character of Israel's Future in Light of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants," *Trinity Journal* 25, no. 1 (2004): 49–51.

[30] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant,* 103. In agreement with his view, Wellum cites numerous sources on page 101n44, though most important for him is Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981).

[31] Wellum cites John Feinberg as a dispensationalist who views typology as mere analogies. See John S. Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments: Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 77–79.

prophecy, not in the sense of verbal predictions, but in the sense of predictions built on models/patterns that God himself has established."[32] Further, Wellum emphasizes that *the OT itself develops the land as a type*; progressive covenantalists like Wellum claim that they are not using the NT to reinterpret or modify the OT (as some dispensationalists allege), but are allowing the OT to speak for itself and merely allowing the NT to clarify what the OT hinted at with less clarity.[33]

Greg Beale, Oren Martin, and Stephen Wellum have argued at length that the land in the OT was a type that foreshadowed the new earth.[34] I cannot do full justice to their view in such short space, but the following are the major lines of argument: First, the concept of land does not begin with the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12, but with creation in Genesis 1–2.[35] "From the covenant of creation with Adam, Eden is presented as the archetype, which the 'land' later on looks back to and forward to in anticipation of the recovery of the new creation."[36] Eden was the ideal land of paradise, which was lost through Adam's disobedience but will be regained through the obedience of the last Adam (Christ) in the new earth.

Second, the OT itself develops the land as a type in three ways: (a) the Abrahamic covenant has both national/international, regional/global components so that the multiplication of Abraham's descendants to include Gentiles necessitates expanding the borders of the land to include the whole earth.[37] Furthermore, since the texts that depict the geographical boundaries of the land are not consistent and precise (e.g. Gen. 15:8–11; Deut. 1:7; 11:24), this seems to suggest that something greater than just Canaan was in store.[38] (b) Exodus to Deuteronomy portrays Israel's entrance into the land as a return to Edenic conditions and as God's "rest" for his people.[39] (c) The OT prophets envision a new exodus that will culminate in a new heavens and new earth (Isa. 65:17; 66:22) that will include an international community of Jews and Gentiles.[40]

Third, the NT seems to confirm that the OT rightly viewed the land of Israel as a type. Specific NT texts seem to confirm that the OT land promises have been expanded to include the whole earth (e.g. Matt. 5:5; Rom. 4:13; Eph. 6:3; Heb. 11:8–16). The NT picks up the theme of "rest" and affirms in Heb. 3:7–4:11 that God's "rest" is not found by inheriting the land of Israel but by trusting in Christ. Revelation

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[32] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant,* 103.

[33] Oren Martin makes this point forcefully. See Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land,* 166–68.

[34] See the arguments in Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology,* 750–72; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant,* 707–16; Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land,* 61–116.

[35] This point is made in Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant,* 709–11; Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land,* 61–62; Robertson, *The Israel of God,* 4; Christopher Wright, "Biblical Reflections on Land," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 17, no. 2 (1993): 153–58.

[36] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant,* 124.

[37] Ibid., 707–09; Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land,* 62–75.

[38] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant,* 708; Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land,* 71–74.

[39] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant,* 709–11; Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land,* 77–86.

[40] Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land,* 95–114.

21–22 portrays the new heavens and new earth as a renewed garden-temple-city, encompassing not just Israel, but the whole earth. In sum, when the OT land promises are traced from creation to new creation, they are seen to be global, not local.

Evaluation of the Expansion of the Land View of Matthew 5:5

This section will evaluate the expansion of the land view with six points: (1) Claims that Jesus "intentionally changes [Ps. 37:11] . . . to refer to the whole earth"[41] or that "the *land* of Psalm 37 has become the *earth* in Matthew 5"[42] are overstated. Such sweeping statements are revealed to be exaggerated and overly confident with even a casual glance at the original texts:

Ps. 37:11 (MT):	וַעֲנָוִים יִירְשׁוּ־אָרֶץ
Ps. 36:11 (LXX Göttingen):	οἱ δὲ πραεῖς κληρονομήσουσιν γῆν
Matt. 5:5 (NA[28]):	μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν

It is not immediately obvious or clear that Matthew 5:5 has changed the inheritance from *land* to *earth*—unless one reads with theological presuppositions or familiarity with English translations. Most of the changes are minor.[43] The most significant change that Matthew makes is adding the article: γῆν becomes τὴν γῆν. This addition is significant and will be discussed later.

Matthew, however, *does not* change the direct object of the verb κληρονομήσουσιν. English translations and many biblical scholars *assume* a change in meaning from *land* to *earth*, but any reader of the original languages recognizes that the same noun (γῆ) is used in both the LXX and NT. *By itself*, the retention of γῆ in Matthew 5:5 does not automatically mean that γῆ refers to the land of Israel. But it does place the burden of proof upon the interpreter who insists that γῆ now refers to the earth since such a change is not immediately obvious or clear.

(2) Carson and Quarles provide exegetical justification for rendering γῆν as earth, but it is unconvincing. Quarles points to the use of γῆν in a global sense in Matthew 5:13: Ὑμεῖς ἐστε τὸ ἅλας τῆς γῆς ('You are the salt of the earth'). Yes, the use of γῆν here must indeed be global; the disciples are not merely the salt of the land

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[41] Bruce Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 559.

[42] Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future,* 212. Emphasis original.

[43] Two changes are very minor: (1) There is a change in sentence structure: the simple sentence of Ps 37:11 ("the meek will inherit the land") becomes a complex sentence in Matt 5:5 ("blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the land/earth"). This change in sentence structure, however, does not make a major change in meaning—the idea of the meek inheriting the land/earth is retained. (2) There is a change in literary form: the proverb-like declaration in Ps 37:11 becomes a beatitude in Matt 5:5 ("blessed are…"). Ps 37 is a wisdom psalm, and beatitudes are a literary form often used in wisdom literature, so there is no change in genre (wisdom), even though there is a change in form (from proverb to beatitude).

of Israel. But Jesus' statement here is figurative, not literal: Jesus' disciples are not literal salt upon the literal physical earth. Jesus' disciples are to figuratively be like salt for those who live on the earth, for the inhabitants of the earth. The sense of γῆν in Matthew 5:13 is concerning "the inhabitants of the earth,"[44] not the physical surface of the earth. Thus, Matthew 5:13 really has no bearing on the meaning of γῆν in Matthew 5:5 since it is a figurative use of γῆ. However, there is some merit to the argument that when Matthew uses γῆ to refer to land and not earth, he uses an explicit modifier ('land *of Israel*,' 'land *of Naphtali*,' etc.). So if Matthew wanted to clarify that he was referring to an inheritance of the land of Israel, he could have made his meaning clear by adding "of Israel." This expression, "land of Israel" is used in Matt 2:20, 21. But saying "land of Israel" would destroy Matthew's allusion to Psalm 37, so because Matthew wanted to allude to Psalm 37, he cannot add "of Israel." Furthermore, Matthew's allusion to Psalm 37:11 makes it unnecessary for him to specify "land of Israel" since the context of Psalm 37 already indicates that κληρονομήσουσιν γῆν refers to inheriting the land of Israel.

(3) The expansion of the land view does not recognize that there is complexity and nuance to Second Temple Jewish texts regarding the land of Israel. The expansion of the land view has misused Jubilees and 4Q171. Regarding Jubilees, I would refer the reader to the detailed discussion of land in James Scott's work, where he concludes:

> In the foregoing we have shown that the Land of Israel occupies center stage in the eschatological expectations of the *Book of Jubilees*. If, as we had previously argued, *Jubilees* regards the goal of history to be the realignment of sacred space with sacred time so that everything will become 'on earth as in heaven,' then the holy Land of Israel, with its central sanctuary, must be the focal point of that conception. The present chapter confirms this conclusion. The universalistic strains in the book are completely subordinated to its particularistic emphasis on Israel and the Temple in the Land.[45]

While Jubilees may be debatable, the use of the Dead Sea Scroll 4Q171 to support a universal view of the land promise is far more serious a mistake and a clear misreading of the text. 4Q171, precisely quoting Psalm 37, says וענוים ירשו ארץ and five reputable English translations render it as follows: "But the humble will/shall possess the land,"[46] "And the poor shall possess the land,"[47] "And the poor shall inherit the

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[44] Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 196.

[45] James M. Scott, *On Earth as in Heaven: The Restoration of Sacred Time and Sacred Space in the Book of Jubilees*, JSJSup 91 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 208–09.

[46] Michael A. Knibb, *The Qumran Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 248; G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1962), 241.

[47] Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition, Volume One: 1Q1–4Q273* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 343.

land,"[48] "And the afflicted will take possession of (the) land."[49] Certainly ארץ has the flexibility to refer to "land" or "earth," but why would an ascetic, reclusive Jewish sect who retreated into the desert be inclined to universalize the OT land promises to include Gentiles? The Jews at Qumran not only separated themselves from Gentiles, but even considered their fellow Jews to have compromised the faith—it seems nearly impossible that they would reinterpret the land promise as now universalized to include the whole world. Beyond these two texts, I have addressed the complexity and diversity of Second Temple Jewish texts on the land elsewhere;[50] here I will simply reiterate W. D. Davies' conclusion that there is "an undeniable historical diversity" and that "the term 'Judaism' itself cannot be understood as representing a monolithic faith in which there has been a simplistic uniformity of doctrine—whether demanded, imposed, or recognized—about the Land, as about other elements of belief."[51]

(4) Typology is perhaps the bottom-level area of disagreement on the land promise, and is where further debate is necessary. This article focuses on the exegesis of Matthew 5:5, so it is beyond the scope of the article to engage extensively with the claim that the land is a type. Three points will be made here (one concession and two concerns): First, Wellum and Parker allege that, "in dispensational and covenant critiques [of progressive covenantalism], each view retreated to their theological system without engaging the arguments of *KTC* [*Kingdom through Covenant*]."[52] If I am understanding Beale's, Martin's, and Wellum's arguments correctly—that the land is a type, that the unconditionality of the Abrahamic covenant does not settle the issue, and that some NT texts seem to confirm the expansion of the land (e.g. Matt. 5:5; Rom. 4:13; Eph. 6:3; Heb. 3:1–4:13; 11:8–16)—then I would concede that dispensationalists have often overlooked these core non-dispensational arguments concerning the land. This article is an effort to change that by engaging with one NT text that has been largely ignored—Matthew 5:5. But further engagement on the nature of the Abrahamic covenant, on other NT texts mentioned above, and on the legitimacy of the land as a type is necessary.[53]

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[48] Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 203.

[49] James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations, Volume 6B* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 11.

[50] Nelson S. Hsieh, "Abraham as 'Heir of the World': Does Romans 4:13 Expand the Old Testament Abrahamic Land Promises?," *Master's Seminary Journal* 26, no. 1 (2015): 102–05.

[51] W. D. Davies, *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 54.

[52] Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker, "Introduction," in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course Between Dispensational and Covenant Theologies*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 3n7.

[53] Regarding the nature of the Abrahamic covenant, it is true that the Abrahamic covenant is both conditional and unconditional. It is unconditional as to its final fulfillment—God will surely bring it about. But its blessings are conditioned upon Israel's obedience—yet Israel has continually been disobedient. How then will God remain faithful to his promises? This is where the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31–34 enters. The New Covenant is the mechanism by which the Abrahamic promises will be fulfilled. God will cause Israel to obey through the indwelling Holy Spirit—thus Israel obeys and receives the Abrahamic

Second, I do not think that Martin and Wellum have accurately portrayed the dispensational view of typology.[54] They rely too much on John Feinberg, who has actually not written much on dispensationalism and who represents one type of dispensationalism.[55] There are multiple dispensational theologies: classical, revised, and progressive, according to Bock's and Blaising's history of dispensationalism.[56] This means that there will be multiple dispensational views on typology. Darrell Bock has presented the progressive dispensational view of typology,[57] a view that Wellum and Martin would probably mostly agree with in theory, though obviously in practice Bock will disagree that the land is a type. As of yet, Martin and Wellum have not taken into account Bock's progressive dispensational view of typology.[58]

Third, I wonder if the belief that the land is a type has become an overpowering presupposition that colors the way non-dispensationalists read specific texts regarding the land. In other words, certainly I agree that "grammatical-historical exegesis needs to be set in the larger context of a canonical reading of Scripture"[59] to prevent a flat, literalistic reading of Scripture. Dispensationalists have often been guilty of failing to do a canonical reading. But are non-dispensationalists moving too far to the other side? Have they allowed their typological framework to mute or even silence what individual passages say? Will they allow exegesis of texts like Matthew 5:5 to tweak or modify their typological framework? Will they even be willing to consider that Matthew 5:5 refers to the land of Israel and not the earth, or will their typological framework allow them to dismiss the very possibility of Matthew 5:5 referring to the land of Israel?

Some scholars openly admit the foundational status of their belief in an expanded land promise. In response to Boyd Luter's review of Gary Burge's *Jesus and the Land*, Burge writes:

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promises, yet God was the ultimate cause. The New Covenant has just as much to say about the land as the Abrahamic covenant, and they must be read in conjunction.

Regarding specific NT texts, I have dealt with Rom 4:13 elsewhere—see Hsieh, "Abraham as 'Heir of the World'," 95–110. I intend to deal with Ephesians 6:3 and Hebrews 11:8–16 in the future.

Regarding the land as a type, see Justin Brown, "Is Typology an Interpretive Method?" (Th.M thesis, The Master's Seminary, 2014), 64–76; Michael J. Vlach, "Have They Found a Better Way? An Analysis of Gentry and Wellum's *Kingdom Through Covenant*," *Master's Seminary Journal* 24, no. 1 (2013): 12–17.

[54] See esp. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 121–24.

[55] Feinberg appears to hold to revised dispensationalism.

[56] Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 9–56

[57] Darrell L. Bock, "Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents: The New Testament's Legitimate, Accurate, and Multifaceted Use of the Old," in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 118–20.

[58] Wellum's doctoral student, Brent Parker, interacts at length with a wide range of dispensational views of typology (including Bock's view) in his forthcoming dissertation on typology. It was successfully defended orally, but will not be available on ProQuest in its final form until May 2017. See Brent E. Parker, "The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern: A Theological Critique of Covenant and Dispensational Theologies" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017).

[59] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant,* 86.

> Luter simply never engages the larger theological argument that the book is prosecuting. In a word, I am simply tracing the same trajectory that scholars such as N. Perrin, G. Beale and N.T. Wright have applied to the Temple. Intrinsic to the theology of the NT is the view that something has been realized in Christ that has permanently shifted the *theological importance* of the major deep structures of first century Judaism. . . . Christ brought an eschatological fulfillment to Jewish Temple practice and for the early church, there was no going back. I have simply taken this deep trajectory of the NT and applied it to the Land.[60]

Burge's rejoinder to Luter is very revealing—rather than engage with the texts that Luter raises (e.g. Rev. 11:1–2, 8–13; 14:6–7; Rom. 11:25–27) or defend his own interpretation of specific biblical texts, Burge simply dismisses the texts that Luter raises and is content to reiterate his theological argument of fulfillment in Christ. In fact, Burge's rejoinder to Luter does not deal with *any* texts related to the OT land promise—only Burge's "larger theological argument" matters. From this exchange, one could easily conclude that dispensationalists could respond to *all* of Burge's interpretations of biblical texts and even raise additional biblical texts that seem to disprove Burge's position—but it would not matter to Burge because his theological argument of fulfillment in Christ is overpowering, underpinning the way he views all biblical texts related to the OT land promises. Certainly dispensationalists can be accused of having presuppositions that color the way they read biblical texts, but the presuppositions of *both sides* have to be exposed, and perhaps it is at this level of theological presuppositions that debate must focus.[61]

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[60] Gary M. Burge, "Rejoinder to Boyd Luter—*Jesus and the Land: The New Testament Challenge to Holy Land Theology*," *Criswell Theological Review* 9, no. 2 (2012): 77. Emphasis original.

[61] Burge is not alone. In response to Darrell Bock's critique of *Kingdom through Covenant*, Gentry and Wellum plainly admit that their canonical reading of Scripture determines their exegesis of individual passages: "The metanarrative we bring to these texts [Rom 9–11; Luke-Acts] *determines our exegetical outcomes*, and we are questioning [dispensationalism's] storyline" (emphasis added) Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, "'Kingdom through Covenant' Authors Respond to Bock, Moo, Horton," https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/gentry-and-wellum-respond-to-kingdom-through-covenant-reviews (accessed May 1, 2016). Interestingly, it is almost as if the OT is given priority over the NT in their system (the opposite of what John Feinberg claims non-dispensationalists do). In explaining their omission of a significant section on the NT in *KTC*, they say: "Only when we correctly construct the OT scaffolding can we rightly understand what Paul is doing in Romans 9–11 and other NT texts."

My concern here is the same as with Burge: will specific texts be allowed to modify their understanding of the whole? Earlier in their response, Gentry and Wellum rightly explain that "we create understandings of the whole by dissecting and studying its parts, and conversely we understand the parts in light of the whole. *As we go back and forth between analysis and synthesis*, *we refine our understandings of both the parts and the whole*" (emphasis added). Stated again, my concern is whether or not non-dispensationalists are willing to allow the parts (such as Matt. 5:5) to modify their understanding of the whole (Scripture's metanarrative). This seems unlikely if they admit, "the metanarrative we bring to these texts [Rom 9–11; Luke-Acts] determines our exegetical outcomes."

But perhaps change is necessary on *both sides*: dispensationalists need to do a better job setting forth and arguing for their metanarrative and for their understanding of typology, while non-dispensationalists need to be willing to re-examine specific passages of Scripture and need to produce rigorous exegesis to support their position. A notable exegetical effort has been made by progressive covenantalist, P. Chase

(5) Regarding the relationship between Matthew 5:5 and Matthew 5:3, 10 ("theirs is the kingdom of heaven"), non-dispensationalists argue that since Matthew 5:5 is connected to the kingdom, Matthew 5:5 therefore must refer to the entire earth and not a specific part of the earth. But there is an alternate explanation that is also possible. I cannot argue for it in detail here, but only offer a brief sketch: The kingdom of heaven is indeed worldwide (dispensationalists do not deny this), but a worldwide kingdom does not automatically mean that Matthew 5:5 refers to the earth. A worldwide kingdom and a localized land inheritance are not mutually exclusive. It is not an either-or choice. Joel Willitts offers an alternate explanation:[62] God's universal kingdom (his non-territorial rule and sovereignty over all things) will be "made manifest on earth in time and space *singularly* in the establishment of the kingdom of Israel through the reign of his Davidic son whose influence, as YHWH's viceroy, will extend far beyond the borders of Israel to encompass the whole earth."[63] In other words, the extent of Messiah's *dominion/authority* will be global, including all nations (e.g. Pss. 2:8; 72:8; Zech. 9:10; Dan. 7:14), yet this does not explain that fact that the Messiah must *reign from a specific location on the earth*. Having taken on a human body, Jesus cannot be everywhere at all times and he must physically reign from somewhere. If one is content to leave the location of Jesus' reign unspecified, that is one possibility—but it seems that Scripture indicates that the Messiah will reign from Zion (e.g. Ps. 2:6; Zech. 14:6–7), the capitol city of the Messiah where the nations will come to worship (e.g. Isa. 60:11; Rev. 21:25–26). Thus there is both a worldwide kingdom and a localized land inheritance (i.e. a capitol city/region) that harmonize together; they do not conflict.[64]

Sears, "More than a Question: Acts 1:6–11 and the Restoration of the Kingdom to Israel," unpublished paper presented at the 2016 National Conference of the Evangelical Theological Society.

[62] Joel Willitts, *Matthew's Messianic Shepherd-King: In Search of 'The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel'*, BZNW 147 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 168–73. Also see Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1959), 213–15, 228–31. McClain observes that the extent of Messiah's kingdom/authority will be universal/global, while the "world capitol" of this kingdom will be in Jerusalem.

[63] Willitts, *Matthew's Messianic Shepherd-King,* 170–71. NT scholarship today far too quickly accepts George Ladd's false dichotomy of viewing the kingdom as God's *reign* rather than a *realm* over which God rules. The kingdom includes *both* God's reign and the realm over which he rules, a worldwide kingdom centered in Israel. For defense of the unbreakable relationship between kingdom and land, see Sverre Aalen, "'Reign' and 'House' in the Kingdom of God in the Gospels," *New Testament Studies* 8, no. 3 (1962): 215–40; George W. Buchanan, "The Kingdom of God," in *The Consequences of the Covenant* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 42–90; Joel Willitts, "Jesus, the Kingdom and the Promised Land: Engaging N.T. Wright and the Question of Kingdom and Land," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 13 (2015): 347–72.

[64] This issue of a false dichotomy (either the new earth or the land of Israel) has been raised by at least one non-dispensationalist. In 2012, after reading Gentry and Wellum's *Kingdom Through Covenant*, Andrew Naselli had four questions in his mind (the first two he said are major, the second two are minor). The first question raised in Naselli's mind was: "Must the OT land promises be an either-or proposition (i.e., either literally Canaan or typologically the new creation)? Can they include both?" Andrew David Naselli, "Progressive Covenantalism: A Via Media between Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism," http://andynaselli.com/progressive-covenantalism-a-via-media-between-covenant-theology-and-dispensationalism (accessed April 30, 2016). In the comments section, Brent Parker responded by saying that the very nature of typology prevents a both-and choice here; the NT anti-type cancels out and makes

(6) Some biblical-theological scholars are interesting cases for the expansion of the land view: *exegetically*, they understand τὴν γῆν in Matthew 5:5 as referring to the land of Israel, but *theologically*, they have an impulse to explain away such a limited reference to Israel and to expand the inheritance of Matthew 5:5 to be global.[65] In other words, these scholars are not dispensationalists yet they are exegetically convinced that τὴν γῆν in Matthew 5:5 refers to the land of Israel. This provides a middle way that allows such scholars to be exegetically honest with Matthew 5:5 yet still uphold their theological conviction that the NT expands the OT land promises. Gary Burge and John Nolland first admit that exegetically Matthew 5:5 refers to the land of Israel:

> Since [the use of γῆ] here in Matthew 5 springs from Psalm 37, Jesus' reference would have gained immediate notice among his listeners as a reference not to the entire *earth* but to the Land of Promise, the Holy Land. Moreover, Jesus refers to these recipients as *inheritors* of this land. This is yet another potent term for Jesus' audience. This word [*kleronomeo*, to inherit; *kleros*, inheritance] was commonly used to refer to the assignment of land in the OT promises. When "inheritance" is joined to "land" the allusion is unmistakable: this is the *land of inheritance*, the land of promise.[66]

> The interest in [Matt] 4:25 in the scope of historic Israel (see discussion there) and the evocation of exile and return in the opening beatitudes weigh in favour of Matthew's also intending γῆ to refer to Israel as the land of covenant promise.[67]

How then do Burge and Nolland reach contradictory exegetical and theological conclusions?

> Does this mean that Jesus here offered a territorial promise to his followers? This is not likely. For as we shall see (and as commentators regularly show) while the land itself had concrete application for most in Judaism [e.g. in Sec-

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obsolete the OT type. Naselli responded, "I still don't know of a compelling reason or set of reasons that the land promises excludes Canaan. I don't think that the two options are incompatible."

In personal e-mail correspondence, Naselli clarified that his own position has now solidified: "After a few years of wrestling with Oren Martin's view, I'm finally convinced of it. I think that happened in fall 2015." When asked what was particularly convincing, he said, "The way typology works" (personal e-mail correspondence, April 30, 2016). Thus, it seems that a central issue, perhaps *the* central issue in the debate regarding the land promises is the nature and proper use of typology.

[65] Burge, *Jesus and the Land,* 33–35; Richard E. Menninger, *Israel and the Church in the Gospel of Matthew* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1994), 150–51; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 202.

[66] Gary M. Burge, "Jesus and the Land," in *The Land Cries Out: Theology of the Land in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, ed. Salim J. Munayer and Lisa Loden (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 326. Emphases original. Let me emphasize again that Burge is definitely not a dispensationalist.

[67] Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew,* 202. Nolland is also not a dispensationalist.

> ond Temple Jewish literature], Jesus and his followers *reinterpreted* the promises that came to those in his kingdom. Their kingdom is in heaven (Matt. 5.3, 10), they shall see God (5.8), and their rewards will be in heaven (5.12). Still, Jesus exploited one of the most potent images of his day—the land.[68]
>
> This [τὴν γῆν in Matt. 5:5], of course, is in the first instance a judgment about imagery and not about a literal referent.[69]

Unfortunately, Nolland ends his discussion after that terse sentence; Burge at least attempts some biblical justification for his reinterpretation. Both say that Jesus used the land of Israel for "imagery" purposes and not as the literal object of inheritance. Still, Nolland and Burge should be applauded for their exegetical honesty, even though ultimately, their theological systems will not allow Matthew 5:5 to re-affirm an inheritance of the land of Israel. Hopefully other non-dispensationalists will be willing to wrestle exegetically with Matthew 5:5 and consider my exegetical arguments, and if they decide to retreat to a theological argument—that is fine, so long as they openly admit what they are doing (as Burge and Nolland do). Retreating to a theological argument *after* looking honestly at Matthew 5:5 is far better than allowing a theological framework to pre-determine the exegesis of Matthew 5:5.

Arguments that Matthew 5:5 Reaffirms Jewish Inheritance of the Land of Israel

Having evaluated the expansion of the land view, now I will give four arguments for viewing Matthew 5:5 as reaffirming an eschatological Jewish inheritance of the land of Israel:[70]

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[68] Burge, *Jesus and the Land,* 35. Emphasis added.

[69] Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew,* 202.

[70] Although this view is in the minority, an increasing number of scholars hold it. Not all the following scholars are dispensationalists, but they do believe that Matthew 5:5 refers to an inheritance of the land of Israel: Herbet W. Basser and Marsha B. Cohen, *The Gospel of Matthew and Judaic Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 124–25, 127; Robert Horton Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel with Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 133n4; Christoph Heil, "'Selig die Sanftmütigen, denn sie werden das Land Besitzen' (Mt 5,5): Das Matthäische Verständnis der Landverheissung in seinen Frühjüdischen und Frühchristlichen Kontexten," in *The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity*, ed. Donald Senior (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 389–417; William Horbury, "Land, Sanctuary and Worship," in *Early Christian Thought In Its Jewish Context: Festschrift in Honour of Morna Hooker's 65th Birthday*, ed. John Barclay and John Sweet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 217; Scot McKnight, *Sermon on the Mount*, SGBC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 42–43; David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1992), 23–24; Martin Vahrenhorst, "Land und Landverheißung im Neuen Testament," in *Heiliges Land*, ed. Martin Ebner (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2009), 129–33; Willitts, *Matthew's Messianic Shepherd-King,* 107n49, 160–61; Joel Willitts, "Zionism in the Gospel of Matthew: Do the People of Israel and the Land of Israel Persist as Abiding Concerns for Matthew?," in *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel & the Land*, ed. Gerald D. McDermott (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 135–38; Ben Witherington III, *Jesus, Paul and the End of the World: A Comparative Study in New Testament Eschatology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 133–36, 141, 276.

#1: Arguments Relating to Lexical Choice

An important principle relating to word study is the principle that *choice implies meaning* (also known as paradigmatic choice).[71] Constantine Campbell explains:

> While there are certain idiomatic and linguistic restraints that delimit lexical choice, nevertheless it is significant that an author chooses one word when another might have been chosen instead . . . Rather than simply trying to ascertain which sense of a lexeme is most likely in a particular context, it is worth asking how the use of a different lexeme in its place might have changed the meaning of the utterance. That contrast can illuminate the use of the original lexeme in question. . . .
>
> Meaning is created through meaningful choices within a system of options. When a language user chooses a certain word, she is also 'unchoosing' other options that might have been chosen. . . . Whatever has been 'unchosen' helps to convey what is meant by what is chosen, because meaning is elucidated as much by what a word *doesn't* mean as by what it does [mean].[72]

This principle that choice implies meaning is why Johannes Louw and Eugene Nida created their unique lexicon that organizes words according to semantic domains (i.e. words with similar meanings) rather than alphabetically.[73] Louw & Nida place γῆ under five headings: (1) The Earth's Surface; (2) Land in Contrast with the Sea; (3) Sociopolitical Areas; (4) Earth, Mud, Sand, Rock; and (5) Human Beings.[74] For our purposes, headings #1 and #3 are most important.

What other options did Matthew have if he wanted to refer to the entire earth's surface? Three words (γῆ; οἰκουμένη; κόσμος) can refer to "the surface of the earth as the dwelling place of mankind, in contrast with the heavens above and the world

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David Stern is a Messianic Jew and while it may be tempting to dismiss his work as biased, the same could be said of the works of Gentile scholars. Unfortunately, Jewish biblical scholars like Stern have been largely ignored. See the plea by David J. Rudolph, "Messianic Jews and Christian Theology: Restoring an Historical Voice to the Contemporary Discussion," *Pro Ecclesia* 14, no. 1 (2005): 58–84.

[71] Constantine R. Campbell, *Advances in the Study of Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 63–64, 67–68, 78–79; D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 64; M. A. K. Halliday and Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen, *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*, 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 2014), 20–31; Stephen H. Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2000), viii; Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 5–7; Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meanings*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 159–69.

[72] Campbell, *Advances in the Study of Greek,* 78–79, 63. Emphasis original.

[73] Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989). Louw and Nida describe how to analyze a word according to semantic domains (as I am doing here) in: Eugene A. Nida and Johannes P. Louw, "Analyzing the Related Meanings of Different Lexemes," in *Lexical Semantics of the Greek New Testament* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1992), 81–105.

[74] Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon,* 10, 13, 15–16, 22, 106.

below."[75] What other options did Matthew have in referring to a sociopolitical region of the earth? Four words (γῆ; χώρα; κλίμα; ὅριον) can refer to "region or regions of the earth, normally in relation to some ethnic group or geographical center."[76]

We can now ask three related questions: (1) If Matthew wanted to refer to the region of Israel, why did he not use χώρα, κλίμα, or ὅριον? The answer is simple: to have chosen another word would have destroyed his allusion to Psalm 37:11. Because Matthew chose to allude to Psalm 37:11, his word choice was constrained to only γῆ. (2) If Matthew wanted to refer to the entire earth, what other words or phrases could he have used? οἰκουμένη or κόσμος were his alternate choices, and to have picked either one would have broken his allusion to Psalm 37:11, where τὴν γῆν is restricted to the land of Israel. *Breaking the allusion to Psalm 37:11 by using οἰκουμένη or κόσμος would have made a reference to the whole earth crystal clear (thus bolstering the expansion of the land view)—but Matthew did not choose either οἰκουμένη or κόσμος.* (3) Does Matthew ever make a clear reference to the whole earth? Yes. In three places (Matt. 16:26; 24:14; 26:13), Matthew does make it crystal clear that he is referring to the entire world by adding the adjective ὅλος ('whole, entire, complete') and by using οἰκουμένη or κόσμος, not γῆ:

- **Matt 16:26:** τί γὰρ ὠφεληθήσεται ἄνθρωπος ἐὰν **<u>τὸν κόσμον ὅλον</u>** κερδήσῃ τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ζημιωθῇ; ('For what will it profit a man if he gains <u>*the whole world*</u> and forfeits his soul?')

- **Matt 24:14:** κηρυχθήσεται τοῦτο τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας **<u>ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ</u>** ('this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout <u>*the whole world*</u>')

- **Matt 26:13:** In referring to the woman who anointed him for burial, Jesus says: ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅπου ἐὰν κηρυχθῇ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦτο **<u>ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ</u>**, λαληθήσεται καὶ ὃ ἐποίησεν αὕτη εἰς μνημόσυνον αὐτῆς ('Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in <u>*the whole world*</u>, what she has done will also be told in memory of her')

So three times (Matt. 16:26; 24:14; 26:13), Matthew makes it crystal clear that he is referring to the *whole world* by not using γῆ, but rather οἰκουμένη or κόσμος, and by adding the adjective ὅλος ('whole, entire, complete'). If we assume that Matthew was a competent communicator and if we assume he wanted to communicate an inheritance of the entire earth, then he could have said:

- μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν **<u>τὸν ὅλον κόσμον</u>**

- μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν **<u>τὴν ὅλην οἰκουμένην</u>**

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[75] Ibid., 10.

[76] Ibid., 15.

- Or Matthew could have retained γῆ and added the adjective ὅλος or πᾶς: κληρονομήσουσιν **<u>τὴν ὅλην γῆν</u>** or κληρονομήσουσιν **<u>πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν</u>**[77]

Matthew had plenty of options to communicate his meaning more clearly if he wanted to indicate an inheritance of the whole earth, but he chose to allude to Psalm 37:11, he chose not to use the adjective πᾶς or ὅλος, and he chose to use the more ambiguous term γῆ rather than the clearer terms οἰκουμένη or κόσμος. γῆ is more ambiguous because it can refer to the entire earth *or to a region of the earth*. Both οἰκουμένη and κόσμος cannot refer to only a part/region of the world, thus they are more precise choices than γῆ and could have been used if Matthew had wanted to refer to the whole earth. This argument is not speculation, but based on the linguistic principle that choice implies meaning and based on the assumption that Matthew was a competent communicator. Thus, the burden of proof is upon the expansion of the land view to explain why Matthew did not say τὸν ὅλον κόσμον or τὴν ὅλην οἰκουμένην (as he did in Matt. 16:26; 24:14; 26:13), and to explain why Matthew did not say τὴν ὅλην γῆν or πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν. If Matthew were going to make a surprising and big change from inheriting the land of Israel to inheriting the whole earth, why did he not make his meaning clearer?

#2: Arguments Relating to Matthew's Addition of the Article to the LXX

Greek scholar A. T. Robertson writes, "The article is never meaningless in Greek."[78] The minor role of the article in English tempts English speakers to regard the article in Greek as trivial. The Greek article is important, yet we have to tread carefully, which is why this section has both a negative and positive point. Negatively, Matthew's use of the article does not automatically mean that τὴν γῆν refers to the land of Israel. It is valid to ask why Matthew added the article. The article before a noun is used to make the noun definite, that is, "to specify one of many (the door rather than any door) . . . to mark clear boundaries for the sake of identification . . . to distinguish one person or thing from other persons or things."[79] The article in Matthew 5:5 is probably used to point out something "well-known or familiar."[80]

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[77] The New Living Translation (NLT) gives a loose interpretive translation of Matthew 5:5 that imports the theological assumption that Matthew is referring to the earth by adding the adjective "whole": "God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit *the whole earth*." This adds what is not in the MT, LXX, or GNT.

[78] A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1923), 756. Although perhaps overstated, Daniel Wallace writes, "In the least, we cannot treat [the article] lightly, for its presence or absence is the crucial element to unlocking the meaning of scores of passages in the NT. In short, there is no more important aspect of Greek grammar than the article to help shape our understanding of the thought and theology of the NT writers" (Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 208).

[79] Richard A. Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek: A Linguistic and Exegetical Approach* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 55–56.

[80] Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 225.

Hence one might conclude that τὴν γῆν refers to the well-known, specific land of Israel as opposed to a land or any land. But this is a wrong conclusion. Matthew uses γῆ 43x in his Gospel, 11x without the article and 32x with the article. Most of Matthew's usages of γῆ with the article should undoubtedly be translated as "the earth"—in fact, every other occurrence of γῆ in Matthew 5–7 (except possibly 5:5) should be translated as "earth, or the earth" (see 5:13, 18, 34–35; 6:10, 19–20). *But it is not the mere presence of the article that causes the article + γῆ to refer to the earth; contextual factors lead to such a conclusion.* Very often Matthew contrasts ὁ οὐρανὸς ("heaven") with ἡ γῆ (5:18, 34–35; 6:10, 19–20; 11:25; 16:19; 18:18–19; 23:9; 24:35; 28:18), thus the translation "earth" is appropriate. The article *by itself* helps neither view; the article by itself does not argue for τὴν γῆν as referring to the land of Israel or the earth. Contextual factors are most important.

Positively, Matthew's addition of the article is still significant. So why did Matthew add the article to the LXX? This can be explained in a number of ways:[81] (1) textual corruption—Matthew used a Greek translation of the OT or a Hebrew text that included the article, but is no longer extant; (2) a memory slip—Matthew alluded to Psalm 37:11 from memory and *unintentionally* added the article since in the LXX, κληρονομέω often takes the article + γῆ as its direct object;[82] or (3) an intentional change—Matthew consciously, intentionally modified the Greek and/or Hebrew texts available to him (or memorized by him) for his own purposes. The best explanation is probably #3 along with the relevant biblical data from #2 (in footnote 79): *The addition of the article allowed Matthew to bring his allusion to Psalm 37:11 into conformity with the overarching use of κληρονομέω + the article + γῆ in the rest of the OT, thus making clear that Matthew 5:5 refers to inheriting the land of Israel*. In other words, Matthew adds the article to build the specific combination [κληρονομέω + the article + γῆ], a combination that significantly narrows down the possible meaning of τὴν γῆν in Matthew 5:5.

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[81] This explanation follows Christopher Stanley, who carefully lays out possible reasons why NT citations/allusions do not match up with the MT and LXX versions we possess today. See Christopher D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 8–28. Stanley concludes that while textual corruption is always possible, memory slips would have been highly unlikely in ancient oral cultures—therefore most of the time, differences between the MT, LXX, and NT can be explained through intentional adaptations, or what Stanley calls an "interpretive rendering," which is a "contextual application in which introductory expressions, interpretive comments, explicit deductions, and (in many cases) changes in the wording of the text work together to bring the authoritative biblical text to bear on the pastoral needs of the people being addressed" (p. 360). See Stanley's further reasons that NT authors would modify the original OT texts available to them, on pp. 262–64 (point #11).

[82] 43x κληρονομέω takes the article + γῆ as its direct object: Gen 15:7; 28:4; Exod 23:30; Num 14:31; 26:53; 33:54; 34:17; Deut 1:8; 4:1, 5, 14, 22, 26; 5:33; 6:18; 7:1; 8:1; 9:4, 6, 23; 10:11; 11:8, 10, 29, 31; 16:20; 17:14; 21:1; 23:21; 28:21, 63; 30:5, 16, 18; 31:13; 32:47; Josh 1:15; 18:3; 1 Chr 28:8; Ezra 9:11; Neh 9:15, 23; Isa 14:21; 60:21; 61:7. Interestingly, *only* in the Psalms κληρονομέω takes γῆν as its direct object without the article (24:13; 36:9, 11, 22, 29). Elsewhere, κληρονομέω *always* takes the article + γῆ as its direct object. Perhaps this was something peculiar to the LXX translator of Psalms?

#3: Arguments Relating to the Collocation of κληρονομέω + the article + γῆ

Another important principle relating to word study is the principle of context, or more specifically, the principle of collocations. The term "collocation" is attributed to British linguist J.R. Firth,[83] who suggested that certain words are frequently found close together in speech and writing, which was nothing particularly new since linguists have long spoken about idioms. What was unique about Firth is that he "suggested that a detailed examination of a word's surrounding 'company' would aid in discerning which of the word's different senses was being drawn upon in a specific example."[84] NT Greek scholars have picked up Firth's ideas and use the terminology of "syntagmatic choice" or "syntactical combinations."[85] This means that studying the 33x Matthew uses γῆ with the article is of little value. What really matters is *analyzing the specific collocation* found in Matthew 5:5: κληρονομέω + the article + γῆ. By itself, τὴν γῆν can mean many things: soil, land, territory, earth. But the collocation κληρονομέω + the article + γῆ restricts and narrows down the meaning of τὴν γῆν.

To survey κληρονομέω + the article + γῆ in that exact word order would be too narrow. Instead, κληρονομέω + the article + γῆ (where the three words occur somewhere within the same verse) occurs 46x in the LXX Rahlfs,[86] 3x in extant Greek texts of the Pseudepigrapha (*1 En.* 3:6, 7, 8), twice in Philo (*Sacr.* 57; *Her.* 96), once in the Apostolic Fathers (*Did.* 3:7), and once in the NT (Matthew 5:5). Unfortunately, there are no other occurrences in the NT beyond Matthew 5:5, which means that LXX usage becomes most important.[87]

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[83] J.R. Firth, "Modes of Meaning," in *Papers in Linguistics 1934–1951* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 194; J.R. Firth, "A Synopsis of Linguistic Theory, 1930–55," in *Studies in Linguistic Analysis* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), 11–13, 26–27.

[84] Matthew Brook O'Donnell, "Some New Testament Words for Resurrection and the Company They Keep," in *Resurrection*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, Michael A. Hayes, and David Tombs (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 137. In this chapter, O'Donnell gives a collocational analysis of words relating to resurrection.

[85] Campbell, *Advances in the Study of Greek,* 67; Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies,* 64; Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meanings,* 141–43.

[86] I did not search the LXX Göttingen since the project is incomplete and does not cover the entire OT.

[87] It is exegetically sound to prefer LXX usage since Matthew was well acquainted with the LXX. Robert Gundry has done extensive analysis of Matthew's citations/allusions to the OT and concludes: "First, the formal quotations in the Marcan tradition are almost purely Septuagintal. Second, a mixed textual tradition is displayed elsewhere [e.g. in allusions]" (Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel*, 150). In the preceding quote, Gundry says "Marcan tradition" because he assumes Marcan priority and Matthean dependence on Mark, so his summary combines Matthew's and Mark's quotations and allusions to the OT.

What Gundry's analysis implies is that Matthew's "Old Testament" was primarily the Greek OT, with some tapping into the Hebrew OT. So when Matthew uses the collocation κληρονομέω + the article + γῆ (which occurs 46x in the LXX), we can be fairly sure that Matthew's understanding of this collocation comes from the LXX. Thus to give priority to the LXX meaning of κληρονομέω + the article + γῆ has stronger exegetical foundation than to give priority to other NT texts about land and inheritance (e.g. Paul or John or Hebrews) since Matthew may not have even had access to or been aware of other NT texts

So how does the LXX understand κληρονομέω + the article + γῆ? In the Pentateuch, every instance refers to inheriting the land promised to Abraham, the land of Canaan, often taking it away from the Canaanite inhabitants.[88] In the historical books, every instance still refers to the land of Canaan.[89] In the prophets, the collocation occurs only in Isaiah,[90] where Isaiah 14:21 might refer to the earth, while the three other occurrences refer to the land of Israel in the context of restoration and in relation to the work of Yahweh's anointed Servant (Isa. 49:8; 60:21; 61:7). *Matthew's addition of the article does not destroy his allusion to Psalm 37:11 (since the meek are inheriting the land), yet adding the article allows him to conform his allusion to the use of κληρονομέω + the article + γῆ in the LXX, which almost always refers to inheriting the land of Israel (except possibly Isa. 14:21).* If Matthew's addition of the article is not explained in this way, then interpreters will need to come up with an alternate explanation. Furthermore, one may be tempted to jump to other passages in the NT on inheritance (e.g. Rom. 4:13; 8:17), but here we are concerned with determining Matthew's meaning in Matthew 5:5, not what the broader NT teaches. We must focus on original meaning in Matthew 5:5 before jumping to theological synthesis.

While it has already been established that κληρονομέω + the article + γῆ in the LXX almost always refers to the land of Israel, the most notable use of the collocation is Isaiah 61:7. Nearly all scholars have noticed the parallels between Matthew 5:3–4 and Isaiah 61:1–2 (ministry to the poor and comforting those who mourn), but some have also noted the parallels between Matthew 5:5 and LXX Isaiah 61:7 (which significantly modifies the MT).[91] In fact Davies and Allison even suggest that Matthew 5:5 alludes primarily to LXX Isaiah 61:7, not Psalm 37:11: "Given the other allusions to Isa 61 in the other beatitudes [esp. vv. 3–4], perhaps 5.5 should recall Isa 61.7 even though 5.5 clearly quotes Psalm 37.11—especially since both Matthew and Isaiah agree, against the psalm, in having the definite article before γῆν."[92] LXX Isaiah 61:7 has *the exact same phrase* as Matthew 5:5 (κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν), a phrase that has significantly modified the MT:

Isa. 61:7 (MT):	תַּחַת בָּשְׁתְּכֶם מִשְׁנֶה "Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion" (ESV)

(besides maybe Mark). Again, at this stage, Matthew's intent in Matthew 5:5 is the focus, not theological integration with the rest of the NT.

[88] Gen. 15:7; 28:4; Exod. 23:30; Lev. 20:24; Num. 14:24, 31, 35; 33:54; 34:17; Deut. 1:8, 21; 2:24, 31; 3:12; 4:1, 22, 26, 38, 47; 6:18; 7:1; 8:1; 9:4, 5, 6, 23; 10:11; 11:8, 29, 31; 12:29; 16:20; 17:14; 20:16; 30:5.

[89] Josh. 1:15; 18:3; Judg. 11:21; 1 Chr. 28:8; Neh. 9:15, 22, 23.

[90] Isa. 14:21; 49:8; 60:21; 61:7.

[91] Michael P. Knowles, "Scripture, History, Messiah: Scriptural Fulfillment and the Fullness of Time in Matthew's Gospel," in *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 67–68; Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount,* 56; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew 1–7*, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 1988), 450–51.

[92] Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1–7*, 451.

Isa. 61:7 (LXX Göttingen):	οὕτως ἐκ δευτέρας κληρονομήσουσι τὴν γῆν[93] "Thus they shall inherit the land a second time" (NETS)
Matt. 5:5 (NA[28]):	μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν

The LXX translator of Isaiah is well known for some significant changes to the MT, changes that are theologically motivated.[94] LXX Isaiah 61:7 is a significant change: "Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion" has become "Thus they shall inherit the land a second time," a clear expression of Jewish restoration hope indicating that the Jewish occupation of Israel during Isaiah's time and even during the LXX translator's time were not a true inheritance of the land, but Israel will "inherit the land *a second time*," an inheritance that will take place when Isaiah's servant comes (Isa 61:1–6). Perhaps one may reject an allusion to LXX Isaiah 61:7, but it is not only myself (as a dispensationalist) drawing this connection (see footnote 91 above). Matthew 5:5 has the exact same phrase as LXX Isaiah 61:7 (κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν), the linguistic and conceptual connections are undeniable, and the fact that Matthew 5:3–4 clearly alludes to Isaiah 61:1–2 (everyone agrees on this) strengthens the case that Matthew 5:5 alludes to (or even quotes) LXX Isaiah 61:7. Matthew 5:5 certainly satisfies the criteria for detecting allusions set out by several scholars.[95]

Ultimately, the most important question here is why did Matthew allude to Psalm 37:11 and perhaps even LXX Isaiah 61:7? In what way is Matthew 5:5 using the OT?[96] Regarding the use of LXX Isaiah 61:7 in Matthew 5:5, Matthew wants to demonstrate that Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah's servant in Isaiah 61 (similar to what Luke does in Luke 4:18–21):

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[93] LXX Göttingen Isaiah 61:7 dropped the moveable ν at the end of κληρονομήσουσι, but that is an insignificant textual variant. LXX Rahlfs retains the moveable ν.

[94] Instances of theologically motivated translation in LXX Isaiah are found in Isac Leo Seeligmann, "The Translation as a Document of Jewish-Alexandrian Theology," in *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah and Cognate Studies* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 258–94; Emanuel Tov, "Theologically Motivated Exegesis Embedded in the Septuagint," in *Translation of Scripture: Proceedings of a Conference at the Annenberg Research Institute, May 15–16, 1989* (Philadelphia, PA: Annenberg Research Institute, 1990), 230.

[95] See the criteria for detecting allusions in G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 31–35; Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 29–32; Michael Thompson, "The Meaning and Detection of Allusions," in *Clothed with Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12.1–15.13* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 28–36. In fact, according to Stanley Porter's criteria, Matthew 5:5 may even qualify as a direct quotation of LXX Isaiah 61:7. See Stanley E. Porter, "Further Comments on the Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," in *The Intertextuality of the Epistles: Explorations of Theory and Practice*, ed. Thomas L. Brodie, Dennis R. MacDonald, and Stanley E. Porter (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 108.

[96] General answers about how the NT authors use the OT are found in Beale, "Primary Ways the New Testament Uses the Old Testament," in *Handbook on the NT Use of the OT*, 55–93; Bock, "Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents," in *Three Views on the NT Use of the OT*, 118–21.

	Matthew 5		**Isaiah 61 (LXX)**
v. 3	Blessed are the poor [πτωχοὶ] in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.	**v. 1**	The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me . . . to bring good news to the poor [πτωχοῖς]
v. 4	Blessed are those who mourn [πενθοῦντες], for they will be comforted [παρακληθήσονται].	**v. 2**	. . . to comfort all who mourn [πενθοῦντας]
v. 5	Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the land [κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν].	**v. 7**	. . . they shall inherit the land a second time [κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν]

Jesus proclaims good news to the poor (Isa. 61:1, alluded to in Matt. 5:3), Jesus comforts all those who mourn (Isa. 61:2, alluded to in Matt. 5:4), and Jesus promises a second eschatological inheritance of the land of Israel for the meek (Isa. 61:7, alluded to in Matt. 5:5).

Regarding the use of Psalm 37:11, it is important that David authored Psalm 37. David was Israel's greatest king yet he did not put an end to the wicked during his reign. David defeated many of Israel's enemies and expanded Israel's territory, yet he did not give Israel the full, consummate inheritance of the land. Israel was already in the land during David's time, yet David still speaks of a future inheritance of the land (vv. 9, 11, 22, 29, 34). Matthew 5:5 implies that Jesus is the greater David, the final Davidic king who will put an end to the wicked, deliver the righteous, and grant Israel their inheritance of the land. Matthew knows that Jesus did not accomplish these things in his first coming, thus in Matthew 25:31–46, Matthew describes the final judgment and inheritance of the righteous in terms of Christ returning to "sit on his glorious throne" (v. 31) and as "the King" who will pronounce judgment (vv. 34, 40, 41, 45, 46) and grant inheritance of the kingdom to all nations (v. 34).[97]

In summary, Matthew 5:5 presents the land promises as fulfilled in Christ. Christ is the greater David who fulfills the promises of Psalm 37 and Christ is Isaiah's servant who fulfills the promises of Isaiah 61. The OT land promises go through Christ in Matthew 5:5 and come out as a reaffirmation of a Jewish inheritance of the land of Israel in fulfillment of Psalm 37 and Isaiah 61.

#4: Arguments Relating to the Literary and Historical Context of Matthew's Gospel

Nearly all biblical scholars will agree that when ambiguity arises in biblical interpretation, the arbiter and final determiner of meaning is *context*. But important questions arise: What *kinds* of context matter (e.g. literary, historical, canonical)? And which kind or kinds of context should be given priority?

[97] What I said in point #5 while evaluating the expansion of the land view applies here too. Matthew 25:31–46 is a judgment and inheritance for "all the nations" (v. 32), including Israel. People from all nations will enter into God's kingdom, but a worldwide kingdom does not exclude a localized land inheritance, where Jerusalem is the "world capitol" of Messiah's worldwide kingdom. It is a both-and choice, not either-or.

One of the major weaknesses of the expansion of the land view is that it does not pay careful attention to the literary-historical context of Matthew's Gospel, perhaps even over-privileging the so-called canonical context so that the canonical context silences the literary-historical context of Matthew. Four issues in particular deserve attention: (1) the Jewishness of Matthew's Gospel; (2) the relationship between Matthew 5:5 and Matthew's universal mission statement in 28:19–20; (3) the political-territorial background to Matthew and significance of geography for Matthew; and (4) the reception context of Matthew 5:5.

(1) The expansion of the land view does not take seriously the Jewishness of Matthew's Gospel, but rather dampens Matthew's focus on the Jews and amplifies Gentile inclusion to a level never intended by Matthew. Certainly, Matthew's view of Jews and Gentiles is complex and highly debated. Opinions range from a strong privileging of Gentiles and rejection of Jews,[98] to views that consider Matthew's Gospel a sect within Second Temple Judaism that never broke away from Judaism to form "Christianity,"[99] a sect that was perhaps even anti-Gentile because of Gentile persecution of the Jews.[100] The latter view has been quite thoroughly refuted; there was a decisive break with Judaism yet Matthew advocates a clearly Jewish-focused form of Christianity.[101] The Jewishness of Matthew's Gospel is well-known and documented elsewhere;[102] it is also fairly well-agreed that Matthew's Gospel was written by a Jew to a Jewish-Christian community consisting of mainly, if not exclusively,

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[98] Kenneth W. Clark, "The Gentile Bias in Matthew," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 66, no. 2 (1947): 165–72. Clark claims that Matthew "was a gentile Christian who wrote his gospel in Syria, where Gentile Christianity threatened to dominate even in the days of Paul. He was persuaded that the Christian gospel, originally delivered to the Jews, had been rejected by them as a people; that God had now turned his back upon Judaism and chosen the largely gentile Christianity . . . the assurance that the gentiles have displaced the Jews is the basic message and the gentile bias of Matthew" (p. 172).

[99] J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990); Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[100] David C. Sim, "The Gospel of Matthew and the Gentiles," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 57 (1995): 19–48. Sim goes to the extreme of saying that Matthew's church "accepted the legitimacy of both the Jewish and Gentile missions within the mandate of the whole Christian church, but engaged in only the former" (p. 44), leaving the Gentile mission to other Christian communities.

[101] Donald A. Hagner, "Matthew: Christian Judaism or Jewish Christianity?," in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, ed. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 263–82; Douglas R. A. Hare, "How Jewish is the Gospel of Matthew?," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (2000): 264–77; Daniel J. Harrington, "Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations*, ed. David J. Rudolph and Joel Willitts (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 159–67; Donald Senior, "Between Two Worlds: Gentiles and Jewish Christians in Matthew's Gospel," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (1999): 1–23. Also see Richard Bauckham, "The Parting of the Ways: What Happened and Why," *Studia Theologica* 47, no. 2 (1993): 135–51.

[102] For example, see Craig A. Evans, "The Jewish Christian Gospel Tradition," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 244–45; Hagner, "Matthew: Christian Judaism or Jewish Christianity?," 263–64; Oskar Skarsaune, "Jesus and the Jewish People According to Luke, Matthew and Justin," www.lcje.net/papers/2003/skarsaune.doc (accessed September 12, 2016).

Jewish believers in Jesus.[103] The exact identity of the author, intended audience, and date of composition are irrelevant for our purposes here. What is crucial is to ask: How would a first-century Jew have read Matthew 5:5? Would such a Jew be thinking about the inclusion of the Gentiles and the worldwide nature of inheritance while reading Matthew 5:5? Or would such a Jew have immediately recognized the allusion to OT land promises made to Israel? The expansion of the land view ignores or downplays the Jewish-focused historical context of Matthew, and universalizes Matthew 5:5 based on its view that the land of Israel was a type fulfilled in the new earth. However, Matthew's focus on the Jews puts the burden of proof upon the expansion of the land view to prove that Matthew 5:5 was universal.

Thus, my main point here is that Matthew's Jewish focused historical context bolsters the view that Matthew 5:5 refers to the land of Israel; yet this point has been met with significant resistance. The main objection is hermeneutical and can be phrased a few different ways: my view excludes the church and forces one to read Matthew as no longer relevant to believers today. Since Matthew 5:5 is not an OT promise addressed to Israel, but a NT promise addressed to the church (which includes Jews and Gentiles), Matthew 5:5 must speak of inheriting the earth.[104] Another way of phrasing this objection is to say that my view requires a double hermeneutic: one has to read Matthew and constantly think about whether the text applies only to Jews, or to both Jews and Gentiles. Since Matthew's Gospel is for all Christians, interpreters should not have to wrestle with whether or not the text applies to Gentiles.[105]

Much could be said in response, but I will limit myself to the following points: First, it is incorrect to say that Matthew's Gospel was originally intended for all Christians.[106] David Sim and others have proven that like the authors of the NT epistles, the Gospel writers had a specific audience in mind when they wrote.[107] The careful interpreter recognizes that a crucial question to ask in the exegetical process is: What did this text mean for its original audience? Although we cannot be sure of all

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[103] Exceptions to this consensus include: Clark, "The Gentile Bias in Matthew," 165–72; John P. Meier, "Matthew, Gospel of," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 4:624–26. Clark and Meier both argue that a Gentile wrote Matthew's Gospel.

[104] This objection was voiced by NT scholar Thomas R. Schreiner in personal conversation and in response to an earlier unpublished form of this article.

[105] This objection was voiced by theologian Stephen J. Wellum when I presented an earlier form of this article in a Ph.D. seminar at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, on May 4, 2016.

[106] Some have tried to argue that all four Gospels did not have specific audiences in mind but were written with all Christians in mind: Richard Bauckham, ed. *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Martin Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ*, trans. John Bowden (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 106–15.

[107] Philip F. Esler, "Community and Gospel in Early Christianity: A Response to Richard Bauckham's Gospels for All Christians," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 51, no. 2 (1998): 235–48; Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, AB (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 25–28; David C. Sim, "The Gospel for All Christians?: A Response to Richard Bauckham," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 84 (2001): 3–27.

the details, it seems fairly clear that Matthew wrote to Jewish-Christians who were struggling with their identity within Second Temple Judaism. Should Christianity be regarded as another sect within Judaism? Or did Christianity have beliefs and practices that forced one to separate from Judaism? Matthew's answer seems to be that belief in Jesus as the Messiah is incompatible with first-century Judaism and necessitates a parting of the ways. However, this parting of the ways has often been taken to the extreme of eliminating or universalizing OT promises made to ethnic Israel. But "Matthew would not have thought of Christianity as a new religion. Such a conclusion would be anathema to any Jewish Christian, including Paul. For Matthew, Jewish Christianity is the perfection and fulfillment of Judaism."[108] After surveying Matthew's view of Israel and the land, Willitts concludes, "Matthew continued to hold traditional assumptions about the people and land of Israel, although his assumptions have been reconfigured around the person of Jesus."[109] According to Matthew, inheritance of the land of Israel is not dependent upon obedience to Torah, but upon faith in Jesus as the Messiah, who will one day return to earth and secure the promised inheritance for Israel.

Second, regarding the charge of making Matthew 5:5 irrelevant for Gentiles, I suggest that we do not read the OT without profit just because it was addressed specifically to Israel—in the same way, even if Matthew 5:5 is directed specifically to Jews, that does not mean that it has no relevance for Gentiles. Just as Gentiles can read OT prophecies of God's promise to bring Jews back to the land of Israel and reflect on God's faithfulness to his promises, so Gentiles can read Matthew 5:5 as referring to a promise of Jewish inheritance of the land of Israel and reflect on God's faithfulness to the Jews. Romans 15:8 confirms such an attitude: "Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs." When Gentiles realize that God's "special" ministry to Israel is not unfair, but a demonstration of God's faithfulness, we no longer must insist that every part of Scripture must have direct relevance to Gentiles.

Third, Matthew 5:5 is not the only passage in Matthew that is directed to Jews only. There are at least three other passages directed *only* to Jews: (a) In Matthew 1:21, Matthew explains the significance of Jesus' name: "[Mary] will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save *his people* from their sins." In its original context, "his people" refers to the Jews, and of course it can be broadened to include Gentiles on the basis of theological synthesis and harmonizing. But Matthew does not have Gentiles in view in 1:21. As Matthew unfolds, certainly it will become clear that Gentiles are included in God's people, but 1:21 was a promise directed to Jews. [110] (b) In 2:6, Matthew quotes from Micah 5:2 to show that the Messiah's birth in Bethlehem was predicted in the OT: "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means the least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel." Here Jews are explicitly in view ('my people

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[108] Hagner, "Matthew: Christian Judaism or Jewish Christianity?," 281.

[109] Willitts, "Zionism in the Gospel of Matthew," 138.

[110] Even many non-dispensational commentators recognize that the primary referent of "his people" is the Jews, even if Matthew *later* expands God's people to include Gentiles: e.g. Carson, "Matthew," 101; France, *The Gospel of Matthew,* 53; Luz, *A Commentary on Matthew 1–7,* 95; Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew,* 98–99.

Israel'), not Gentiles. Jesus will shepherd Israel. Of course, we can broaden out to say that Jesus will shepherd Gentiles as well (e.g. John 10:16), but that is not what Matthew is saying here. (c) Speaking to the Pharisees and Sadducees, John the Baptist says, "Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham" (3:9). Here is a third passage directed exclusively to Jews, not Gentiles. The Jews were tempted to trust in having Abraham as their ancestor, but faith and repentance must be added to one's ancestry. Again, we can draw out a broader principle (e.g. people should not trust in a Christian upbringing in a Christian home), but that is not Matthew's point here. The Jewish exclusiveness of these three passages may offend Gentile readers and tempt them to water down the Jewishness of Matthew's message, but it is undeniable that Matthew made promises and gave warnings that were directed *only* to Jews. Broader theological synthesis should not be allowed to downplay or nullify the Jewish focus of Matthew. Similar to these three passages, Matthew 5:5 refers to a Jewish inheritance of the land of Israel, yet such a focus on the Jews can be easily harmonized with the fact that Gentiles will also inherit the renewed earth (e.g. Rom. 8:18–25; 2 Pet. 3:13).

(2) Most biblical scholars have allowed the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19–20 to *predetermine* their reading of Matthew 5:5. Their logic is that since the Great Commission is universal in scope ("make disciples of all nations"), Matthew 5:5 *must* also be universal in scope ("inherit the earth"). This is problematic from a methodological/hermeneutical standpoint: no reader starts at the end of a work and reads backward; readers proceed from beginning to end and would thus read Matthew 5:5 before Matthew 28:19–20. Perhaps the ending of a work may modify or change one's reading of earlier parts, but a correct reading strategy will approach the text as the original readers would have: from beginning to end.[111] From a literary standpoint, Menakhem Perry has argued for the "primacy effect," whereby material located at the beginning of a literary work influences and shapes the reader's expectations and understanding of subsequent material.[112] In this regard, Matthew 1:1 and the subsequent genealogy would seem to be the interpretive key to understanding Matthew, not Matthew 28:19–20. Warren Carter and Anders Runesson have cut through the standard focus on Gentiles and spiritual matters in Matthew 1:1–17 and have recognized the political-territorial implications for Jews in Matthew 1:1–17.[113] Runesson is particularly insightful. After observing that Matthew 1:1–17 focuses on four persons/events (Abraham, David, the exile, and the Messiah), Runesson suggests that:

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[111] This point is made in Schuyler Brown, "The Two-fold Representation of the Mission in Matthew's Gospel," *Studia Biblica Et Theologica* 31, no. 1 (1977): 30–31; Willitts, *Matthew's Messianic Shepherd-King,* 9–10, 29–30.

[112] Menakhem Perry, "Literary Dynamics: How the Order of a Text Creates Its Meanings," *Poetics Today* 1, nos. 1/2 (1979): 35–64, 311–61. This point is also made in Warren Carter, "Matthaean Christology in Roman Imperial Key: Matthew 1.1," in *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman Imperial Context*, ed. John Riches and David C. Sim (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 151; Willitts, *Matthew's Messianic Shepherd-King,* 29–30.

[113] Carter, "Matthaean Christology in Roman Imperial Key," 143–65; Anders Runesson, "Giving Birth to Jesus in the Late First Century: Matthew as Midwife in the Context of Colonisation," in *Infancy Gospels: Stories and Identities*, ed. Claire Clivaz, et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 301–27.

> few have asked for the unifying element of all four events. . . . The common element seems to me to be the land, or as Matthew writes a few verses later, the land of Israel (*gē Israel*, Matt 2.20, 21). The land of Israel was promised to Abraham (1.1, 17) and brought to its ultimate climax under the ideal kingship of David (1.6, 17); the loss of the land followed with the exile (1.11, 17), the disaster which is now going to be triumphantly reversed with the birth of the Messiah (1.16, 17).[114]

If one reads from beginning to end, the expansion of the land view has difficulty. My plea is a modest one: given the intended Jewish audience of Matthew, given the political-territorial implications of Matthew 1:1–17, and assuming one reads from beginning to end, how would a first-century Jew have read Matthew 5:5 on first pass? Would Gentile inclusion have been in the forefront of his mind as he read, or the promised Jewish inheritance of the land of Israel? Granted, after reading all of Matthew, one might argue that there is also a territorial inheritance for Gentiles, but such an inheritance for Gentiles should not be allowed to cancel out the original promise of Matthew 5:5—that Jews were promised an inheritance of the land of Israel.

(3) My brief discussion of Matthew 1:1–17 above leads us to consider the political-territorial background to Matthew and the significance of geography for Matthew. Two points need to be made here: First, those living in Western democratic governments where there is a clear separation of church and state are likely to (unconsciously?) separate religion from politics in their reading of Matthew. But religion and politics were never separated in the ancient world. What we call "religion" today best compares in the ancient world to philosophy and the mystery cults.[115] However, when ancient peoples thought of "religion," they "usually did so in ways that merged ethnic aspects with a specific land, specific laws, and worship of a specific god. In other words, the concepts of land-law-god-people were intertwined in a world in which the political and the religious were inseperable."[116] Once the modern separation of religion and politics is put aside, one can read Matthew 5:5 and recognize its audacious political-territorial implications. Although Matthew 5:5 is a promise for the meek, it is by no means a meek statement. Matthew 5:5 is a political-territorial claim against Roman imperial rule. In the first century AD, the land of Israel belonged to the mighty Roman Empire, but Matthew 5:5 makes the radical claim that the meek (not the mighty) will inherit the land. This would be akin to African or Asian colonies of the British Empire claiming that their land belongs to them and not to the British Empire. Matthew 5:5 is not a statement about the expansiveness or universal scope of inheritance; it is a bold political-territorial claim against Rome.

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[114] Runesson, "Giving Birth to Jesus in the Late First Century," 310.

[115] See the discussion in Steve Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38 (2007): 457–512.

[116] Anders Runesson, "Judging Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew: Between 'Othering' and Inclusion," in *Jesus, Matthew's Gospel and Early Christianity: Studies in Memory of Graham N. Stanton*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner, Joel Willitts, and Richard A. Burridge (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 136–37.

Yet Jesus was not advocating armed rebellion; the inheritance is promised to the meek, who wait upon the Lord to fulfill his promises.

Second, the political-territorial claim of Matthew 5:5 may make more sense when we consider that Matthew is particularly interested in geography, but not for the sake of historical details or background.[117] For the ancients, geography was not a neutral, scientific discipline aimed to develop a precise representation of the world; one's geography reflected a world-view and political agenda. Geography "is not merely the setting for history; it is *an active agent of meaning in the historical narrative*. . . . Maps are not merely a mirror of intellectual achievements . . . they also play a very hands-on role as expressions of claims, are employed as tools of argument in conflicts and function as means of exerting control."[118] An overlooked passage in Matthew 2:20–21 provides crucial background to Matthew 5:5 and is a perfect example of using geography to make a political-territorial claim. The angel of the Lord spoke to Joseph and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to *the land of Israel*, for those who sought the child's life are dead. And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to *the land of Israel*." Although peripheral to the main point of these verses, Matthew's use of the phrase "land of Israel" reveals his Jewish bias. While the Romans referred to Jewish territory with the Latin term *Palestina* and others referred to Jewish territory as Judaea (for the southern region) and Galilee (for the northern region),[119] Matthew uses the traditional term *land of Israel*, "signaling both the unity of the land (the designation clearly refers to both Galilee and Judaea) and claiming 'Israelite', i.e. Jewish, ownership of it, in contrast to the factual situation under the Romans."[120] In other words, Rome ruled over the Jews and their land and would have never labeled Jewish territory as "the land of Israel" because it was Roman land that would have been designated as *Palestina* on a map. Yet Matthew is so bold as to claim that the land belongs to Israel. The sentiment of Matthew 5:5 is likely similar to what Matthew did in 2:20–21: he makes a bold political-territorial claim of Jewish ownership of the land. Matthew is not making an expansive claim about a universal earthly inheritance for Jews and Gentiles.

(4) In closing this section on literary-historical context, I want to discuss the reception context of Matthew 5:5 and propose that reception context has biased modern-day readings of Matthew 5:5 toward a universalistic reading. Reception context refers to the history of interpretation of a text *after* it was written.[121] Campbell warns that "while we might be tempted to think that 'reception context' is not relevant for understanding an author's use of a particular lexeme [or phrase], such an attitude is

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[117] Matthew's interest in geography to make theological points is expounded in Willitts, *Matthew's Messianic Shepherd-King*; Jürgen Zangenberg, "Pharisees, Villages and Synagogues: Observations on the Theological Significance of Matthew's Geography of Galilee," in *Logos-Logik-Lyrik: Engagierte exegetische Studien zum biblischen Reden Gottes*, ed. Volker A. Lehnert and Ulrich Rüsen-Weinhold (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007), 151–69.

[118] Zangenberg, "Pharisees, Villages and Synagogues," 155–56. Emphasis original.

[119] For more regarding the terminology that non-Jews used to refer to Jewish territory, see Zangenberg, "Pharisees, Villages, and Synagogues," 167n53.

[120] Runesson, "Judging Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew," 142.

[121] See the discussion in Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meanings,* 147–48.

naïve. The reason that reception context matters is that certain words will be 'heard' by modern readers through the lens of how others have understood them in the past."[122] Gentiles from Western democracies where religion and politics are divorced from each other have dominated biblical scholarship in the past hundred years. Many such scholars ignore or downplay the political-territorial context of Matthew and such a practice builds presuppositions regarding biblical teaching where the idea of Jews inheriting the land of Israel becomes *a priori* implausible and impossible. Carter states more forcefully:

> Matthaean scholars, shaped by the contemporary separation of 'religion' and 'politics' and by their location in a long 'spiritualizing' (and confessional) tradition of reading Matthew, have avoided 'political' interpretations of Jesus' mission to save from sins, preferring 'spiritualized' interpretations. There is no denying that inner transformation matters, but contemporary attempts to separate the religious and the secular (political, socioeconomic) should not anachronistically control the exegesis.[123]

We must seriously consider how much modern Gentile biblical scholarship has skewed readings of texts like Matthew 5:5. If one has proper respect for the Jewishness of Matthew's Gospel and for the political-territorial background of Matthew's Gospel, viewing Matthew 5:5 as an inheritance of the land of Israel not only becomes plausible but more fitting to Matthew's literary-historical context.

Conclusion

Guidance for Preachers

The length and complexity of this article may overwhelm the pastor who hopes to preach on Matthew 5:5. Let me offer some suggestions about how this interpretation of Matthew 5:5 could be explained to people in a church context: (1) Carefully note that the Greek word γῆ is flexible and can refer to a wide variety of things. Take the congregation to other passages where γῆ refers to soil (Matt. 13:5, 8, 23), the ground (Matt. 10:29; 25:25), and even a socio-political region of the earth (Matt. 2:6, 20, 21; 9:26, 31). However, most interesting is Matthew 27:45 when during Jesus' crucifixion darkness falls over all the γῆ (land or earth?). Even English translations such as the ESV and HCSB recognize the ambiguity and possibility that it can refer to either land or earth.

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[122] Campbell, *Advances in the Study of Greek,* 77–78.

[123] Carter, "Matthaean Christology in Roman Imperial Key," 157. Cf. Runesson, who after claiming that the events/persons of Matt 1:1–17 find a common theme in the land of Israel, asks: "Would finding such a strong focus on the land in Matthew be strange? In my view, it is only [strange] once we read the Gospel through the lens of almost 1900 years of non-Jewish Christianity, beginning with Ignatios [*sic.* Ignatius] and later patristic writings, that we may be able to downplay the importance of the land for Jewish, including messianic-Jewish, theology" ("Giving Birth to Jesus in the Late First Century," 310).

(2) Explain that while γῆ itself is flexible, we are concerned with the specific idea of *inheritance*, and in the OT nearly every reference to inheritance refers to inheriting the land of Israel. Then explain how Matthew was written by a Jew to Jews who had just broken away from the synagogue and needed encouragement that Jesus is indeed the true Jewish Messiah. Thus the "Jewishness" of Matthew's Gospel would lead us to think that any first-century Jew reading Matthew 5:5 would have immediately associated the idea of inheritance with the land of Israel. The burden of proof lies with those who claim that Matthew is expanding the land promise.

(3) Show that when Matthew wanted to refer to the whole earth, he made his meaning clear by adding the adjective 'whole/entire' as in Matthew 16:26; 24:14; 26:13. Take the congregation to these passages and show how Matthew clearly referred to the whole earth and suggest that Matthew could have done the same in Matthew 5:5, but did not. If Matthew was going to make a massive change to the OT land promises, we would expect him to have made his point unmistakably clear and to have said something like "the meek will inherit the *whole* earth."

(4) Show that Matthew 5:5 alludes to Psalm 37 and that Psalm 37, in its original context, clearly refers to the land of Israel. Then suggest that we should stick to the OT meaning unless clear and compelling reasons force us to re-evaluate the NT use of an OT text.

(5) Show that David authored Psalm 37 and that although David was Israel's greatest king, he was still unable to give Israel the full, consummate inheritance of the land. Israel's wicked enemies constantly threatened them and Gentile nations constantly ruled over them. Thus David himself spoke of a future inheritance of the land in Psalm 37. Matthew 5:5 is therefore telling us that Jesus is the greater David, the final Davidic king who will fulfill the promises of Psalm 37 by defeating Israel's enemies and giving the land to Israel at his second coming.

(6) Explain that a Jewish inheritance of the land does not exclude Gentiles and does not mean that Matthew 5:5 is irrelevant for Gentiles. Jesus' kingdom will include Gentiles. His kingdom's *authority/dominion* will be worldwide, yet because he has taken on a human body, *he must rule from a specific location on the earth*, which Scripture makes clear is Jerusalem. There is thus both a worldwide kingdom (Jesus' authority/dominion reaches the whole world) and a localized land inheritance (a capitol city/region). Furthermore, Matthew 5:5 is not irrelevant to Gentiles; the God of the OT who made promises to Israel will be faithful to those promises and such faithfulness gives Gentiles confidence that God will also fulfill his promises made to all people in the NT.

Hopeful Contributions

What are the hoped-for contributions of this article? My main goal was to provide a detailed exegesis of Matthew 5:5 that provides an alternative interpretation for non-dispensationalists to consider and respond to, an exegesis that does not quickly resort to theological arguments, but argues from lexical-syntactical analysis and from the literary-historical context of Matthew. I have argued that Matthew 5:5 reaffirms an eschatological Jewish inheritance of the land of Israel, yet it should be read in conjunction with other passages that speak of Gentile inclusion in the kingdom of God (8:11; 25:34). At the same time, this is not a "flat" reading of the land promises,

as progressive covenantalists have suggested. The OT land promises do not cross over to the NT unchanged. Matthew 5:5 presents the land promises as fulfilled in Christ. Christ is the greater David who fulfills the promises of Psalm 37 and Christ is Isaiah's servant who fulfills the promises of Isaiah 61. The OT land promises *go through* Christ in Matthew 5:5 and *come out* as a reaffirmation of a Jewish inheritance of the land of Israel in fulfillment of Psalm 37 and Isaiah 61.

Secondly, in light of the constant danger of misrepresenting opposing views, I hope to have fairly and accurately portrayed the non-dispensational interpretation of Matthew 5:5 and (in the small space available) to have fairly represented some of the larger arguments regarding the land, particularly the land as a type.[124]

Suggestions for Further Debate

Now I want to provide some suggestions for further debate that all sides might consider: (1) Dispensationalists need to argue for their own biblical metanarrative and need to engage directly with the arguments concerning the land as a type, with the biblical metanarrative of non-dispensationalists, and with specific NT texts that dispensationalists have largely ignored (e.g. Matt. 5:5; Rom 4:13; Eph. 6:3; Heb. 11:8–16).[125]

(2) Non-dispensationalists need to consider whether or not typology and/or theological arguments of fulfillment in Christ have muted or even pre-determined the meaning of specific passages of Scripture (e.g. Rom. 9–11; Luke-Acts; Matt. 5:5) and thus should consider producing detailed exegesis of such passages.[126]

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[124] Progressive covenantalists in particular feel that their view has been misunderstood and misrepresented. See esp. Wellum and Parker, "Introduction," in *Progressive Covenantalism*, 1–6. Also see Wellum's response to critiques of *Kingdom Through Covenant* at the 2014 National Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, available at http://www.wordmp3.com/details.aspx?id=17630 (accessed February 22, 2017).

[125] Dispensationalists will have to also answer questions like: How do we explain the imprecise and inconsistent borders of the land in the OT? What is the relationship between land and temple—will there be a re-built temple in the future? How do we account for spiritual equality in Christ if Israel has a privileged place in the future—does not dispensationalism rebuild the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles that Christ abolished (Eph. 2:11–22; Galatians 3)? How is the dispensational understanding of the land not a flat, literalistic reading of the Bible—does not dispensationalism carry over the land promise into the NT without change, which is in essence a denial of progressive revelation?

[126] Particularly important are the specific texts mentioned in Larry R. Helyer, "Luke and the Restoration of Israel," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36, no. 3 (1993): 317–29; Michael J. Vlach, "A Case for the Restoration of National Israel," in *Has the Church Replaced Israel?*, 177–201; Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism,* 221–96.

Two other major works that have been largely neglected by non-dispensationalists are: Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007); James M. Scott, ed., *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2001). James Scott's article on Rom 11:26–27 is particularly worthy of interaction.

In addition, non-dispensationalists will have to answer questions like: What is the relationship between the Abrahamic and new covenants since both promise to Israel an inheritance/return to the land of Israel? Who is the singular "great nation" promised to Abraham (Gen 12:2)—how can it be the church (cf. 1 Pet 2:9) when the church consists of people from *every* nation? It simply does not make logical sense for the church (made up of people from every nation) to become a singular "holy nation" since the church

(3) Building off my previous point and intentionally being repetitive for the sake of emphasis, I want to say that as an observer of the debate between dispensationalists and non-dispensationalists, and as someone who has switched positions (from amillennial to dispensational premillennial), and who has personally interacted with people on both sides—it seems that dispensationalists will not be satisfied until non-dispensationalists produce careful exegesis of the specific NT passages mentioned in point #2 above, while non-dispensationalists will not be satisfied until dispensationalists interact directly with the arguments that the land is a type, with a canonical reading concerning the land, and with the specific NT texts mentioned in point #1 above. So far, both sides seem to have done little to satisfy the primary concerns of the other side. Therefore, it seems to me that until this third point is heeded, scholars on both sides will talk past each other and remain entrenched in their respective positions. Hopefully, this article will allow progress to be made.

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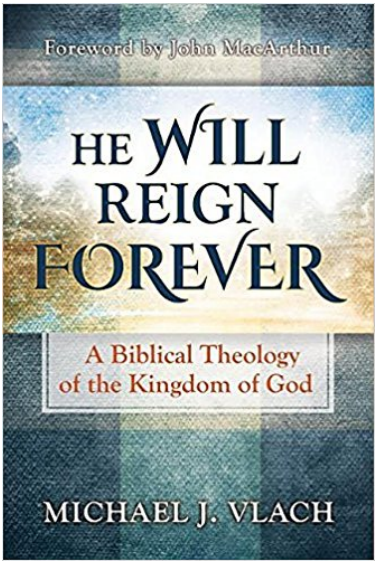
is not a "nation" in any typical use of the term, since a nation implies a government and a territory. Will there be nations (not just ethnicity, but nations) in the new earth, as Rev 21:24, 26 clearly states? If so, what is the definition of a "nation"? And why cannot Israel also be one of the many nations that dwell in the new earth? On this last point, see Michael J. Vlach, "God's Future Plans for the Nations," in *Has the Church Replaced Israel?*, 165–76.



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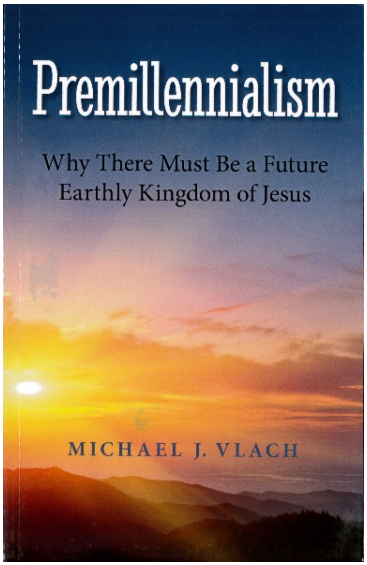

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THE VERNACULAR CONSCIOUSNESS: MODERNISM'S INFLUENCE ON POSTCOLONIAL CONTEXTUALIZATION

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Case studies in postcolonial contextualization mark a forty-year-old missiological trend in evangelical scholarship. The largely unqualified support of indigenous theological expression by mission theorists represents an epistemological shift from a conservative bibliology toward felt-needs evangelization and religious roundtable dialogue methods. Evangelical contextualization theory today echoes German Romanticism's early assessments of indigenous language and local religion, especially as seen in the works of pluralistic Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803). No study of postcolonial contextualization is complete without considering the enduring influence of Herder's "vernacular consciousness" on the current missiological mindset.

* * * * *

The Challenge of Contextualization

The role of the evangelical missionary today remains in a perplexing state concerning the necessary attitude toward the use of the Bible in delivering the gospel to all peoples. Questions about the role of Scripture in defining evangelistic and theological contextualization in the Third (or Majority) World remain largely unanswered. Despite four decades of mounting research the most important discussions of postcolonial missiology have been left in a formative stage.[1] Bibliological ques-

[1] Missiologists struggle to match current contextual realities to their biblical counterparts. For example, Missional theorists Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch support John Travis' C5-level contextualization which encourages Jesus-following Muslim Insiders to maintain certain Islamic practices, such as mosque fellowship and prayers, despite the risk of being perceived as publicly denying Jesus' deity. Western missiologists who aim to uphold Muslim culture and community by new Christians might inadvertently incite local converts to similar sinful fears as the believing-but-not-confessing Jews in John 12:42–43 who sought the community comfort of institutionalized religion. Tim Matheny earlier concluded that Muslim felt needs must always submit to "ultimate needs, those seen from God's perspective," rather than from an

tions of essential interest to evangelicals (the doctrines of revelation, inspiration, inerrancy, authority, sufficiency, and Canon)[2] are largely unexplored and missing from the key models of cultural engagement which do exist.[3]

Contextualization, in conservative evangelical terms, strives to communicate the whole of God's revelation with orthodox faithfulness and cultural relevance in a fundamentally understandable way. The conservative process of contextualization focuses on the articulation and appropriation of the content of biblical truth (the gospel and theology) to spiritually blind, unregenerate sinners in a social or cultural context not innate to the ambassador for Christ such that biblical orthodoxy becomes reproducible in myriad contexts.[4] Yet, because of the varied treatment of Scripture in

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anthropological base (in Tim Matheny, *Reaching the Arabs: A Felt Need Approach* [Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981], 153). See Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church*, rev. ed (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 83, with discussion on pp. 82–94, 121 n15.5; John Travis, "Must All Muslims Leave 'Islam' to Follow Jesus?," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 34 no 4 (Oct, 1998): 411–15.

[2] Functional conservative evangelical definitions of the six doctrines of bibliology establish the foundation for conservative missiological theory and practice: 1. The general, non-salvific revelation of God must be accompanied by the specific verbal proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ because unregenerate man cannot spiritually appraise natural theology unto salvation. 2. The words of Scripture were penned by men with their distinct personalities, styles, intellects, and wills, through the supernatural moving of the Holy Spirit; the Spirit now animates the Scriptures to directly and actively communicate the power of God to saving effect in the recipient. 3. Scripture itself attests that the words and syntax of the Bible in the original autographs are absolutely true when interpreted in their historical, grammatical, literary, and ethical settings, for all of the content and any topic or concept therein presented. 4. The authority of Scripture rests upon the character of God, the objective arbiter of truth; at the same time, the Holy Spirit effectually illuminates and enables a person to subjectively and spiritually appraise Scripture as the wisdom and the sure power of God. 5. Scripture affirms that the Bible provides all the necessary content for finite man to know God and to adequately perceive His will for salvation. 6. On the recognition of the divine authorship of Scripture by means of verbal, plenary inspiration according to the witness of God in Scripture itself, all "truth" must be tested for consistency with the total biblical content.

[3] Conservative cultural anthropologist Paul Hiebert seems to assume that the authority of Scripture is foundational for the "committed Christian theologians" who help construct his "metatheological framework" (see Paul Hiebert, "Missionary as Mediator," in Craig Ott, and Harold A. Netland, *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006], 302–03). However, the assumption might be impractically broad, as not all prominent contextualizers share similar bibliological bases. For example, Kevin Vanhoozer offers unqualified appreciation of Roman Catholic Robert Schreiter who continues to inform evangelical theory even though he links criteria of orthodoxy to Vatican II magisterial tradition in determining gospel faithfulness (see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "'One Rule to Rule Them All?' Theological Method in an Era of World Christianity," in Ott and Netland, *Globalizing Theology*, 123–24; Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985], 115–17). Likewise, Grant Osborne relies on Roman Catholic Stephen Bevans to define the imperatives of contextualization though his "transcendental model" of experiential revelation assumes that the Bible is not a source of propositional truths which remain immutable, but that theology redefines the content of Scriptural truth (see Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed. [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006], 411; Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* [Maryknoll, NT: Orbis, 1992], 9–10, 97–112).

[4] The focus of conservative contextualization theory and practice is on the "translatability" of the whole counsel of God (so Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* [Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2010], 85–86, 325). Conservative Dean Flemming underlines the importance of moving past the act of cross-cultural communication into the "'life world' of the audience" with a message framed within the target context (see Dean Flemming, *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity,

mission theory across the spectrum of contemporary evangelicalism, the conservative definition does not represent the scope of contextualization studies today.[5]

Determining the boundaries of orthodoxy and orthopraxy in cross-cultural practice appears to be more fluid than rigid. Engagement with contemporary contextualization studies suggests that the lack of definitive bibliological treatment is the result of an overall epistemological shift away from the authority of Scripture. The bulk of publications suggest mission theory has largely embraced an anthropologically centered, culture-driven, felt-need response to the problem of conflicting worldviews.

This article will assess how popular anti-colonialist assumptions birthed studies on vernacular theologies, which led to the faulty ideals of an ecumenical *via media* for a globalized dialogue, ultimately resulting in theological inconsistencies among those who otherwise propose conservative evangelical doctrine.

Yet the epistemological shift is not new to this generation. Mission theory today bears similarities in tone and content to the early works on vernacular language and religion by German Romantic philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803). Herder challenged the orthodox missionary efforts of his day with argumentation comparable to that of many studies affecting evangelical missiology two centuries later. Notable alignment will thus be suggested between contemporary and Counter-Enlightenment thought concerning the evangelization and theologizing of indigenous people groups.

The Rise of Contextualization Studies

A survey of the cultural-linguistic philosophies of the Romantic period provides important insights into the non-conservative presuppositions which shaped later studies on anti-colonial vernacular theologies. The work of budding cultural anthropologist Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788) paved the way for a new understanding of God's revelation to cultures.[6] His studies gave rise to the important humanistic efforts

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2005], 19–20). Also see the helpful definitions in David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 143, 200; Scott A. Moreau, *Contextualization in World Missions: Mapping and Assessing Evangelical Models* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2012), 36.

[5] Insofar as the "Christian orthodoxy" has been replaced by a generic "evangelical ecumenism," Hesselgrave addresses EMS members with questions as to the integrity, intent and priority of Scripture in contemporary mission theory and practice. Though EMS requires adherence to the ICBI Chicago Statement on Inerrancy (accessed February 16, 2016, www.etsjets.org/files/documents/Chicago_Statement.pdf), the widening range of missiological confessions means members hold varying and conflicting positions on the authority of Scripture in global engagement. David J. Hesselgrave, "The Power of Words," published in *Global Missiology* (January 2006), accessed February 16, 2016, www.globalmissiology.net; also see Richard V. Pierard, "Evangelicalism," in *New Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991) pp. 311–13.

[6] See James C. O' Flaherty, ed., *Hamann's Socratic Memorabilia: A Translation and Commentary* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), 169. Charles Taylor details what he calls the "expressive constitutive" theory of language and human thought, a dialogical understanding of language most typified by German Romantics like Hamann. See Charles Taylor, *The Language Animal: The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 4, 48–50.

of Herder, whose theories on the vernacular nature of consciousness have come to be at least implicitly expressed by contemporary dialogue theories.[7]

Hamann played an important role by proposing that God's revelation about Himself through nature, history, and His Word is to be codified on the human plane, not through lofty reason.[8] Hamann developed a *metacritique* to prove that language not only expresses the thoughts embedded deeply in man through symbols, but that language controls all thoughts. Thus, by implication, human consciousness is indivisibly rooted in the expressions of words. The religious implication thus emerges: the language and symbols of Scripture express spiritual truth, and the perception and comprehension of the divine reality must be found in the significance drawn out by the words themselves.[9] Religious knowledge arrives through local, culturally specific language; therefore, only through communicable human language can philosophical thought be expressed and Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, become known.[10] Divine words translate into human words and must be met by human thoughts in order for the transcendent reality to be perceived.[11]

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[7] German Romantics Hamann and Herder are by no means the only early linguistic philosophers to arrive at conclusions similar to those of contemporary evangelical missiologists on the importance of faith and theology rising from personal, cultural experience. Other modernists are herein highlighted: English rational supernaturalist John Locke (1632–1704); French Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778); French philosopher Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1714–1780); German Romantic Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834); British Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834); New England Transcendentalist Horace Bushnell (1802–1876). Of important note, but outside of the scope here is Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), whose 20th-Century "language-game" concept concerning meaning behind thoughts and the import of presuppositions in communication factors heavily into contextualization theory today, especially with the contemporary cultural and linguistic models of post-, non-, and anti-foundationalism. On Wittgenstein's contribution to cultural-linguistic expressivism; for example, see Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C. K. Ogden, New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1922; Roger E. Olson, *Reformed and Always Reforming—The Postconservative Approach to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 141–42; George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine—Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 6, 10, 19; with cautious delimitation in F. LeRon Shults, *The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology—Wolfhart Pannenberg and the New Theological Rationality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 36, 53–60.

[8] For an essential survey of the man and his thought, see Isaiah Berlin, *Three Critics of the Enlightenment—Vico, Hamann, Herder*, edited by Henry Hardy, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 321–447.

[9] Michael Jinkins, *Christianity, Tolerance, and Pluralism: A Theological Engagement with Isaiah Berlin's Social Theory* (New York, NY: Psychology Press, 2004), 48. Taylor recalls Hamman's concept that "we don't simply recognize the signs of God; we translate them; '*Reden ist übersetzen*'" ("To speak is to translate"). In Taylor, *Language Animal*, 344.

[10] Livingston, *Enlightenment and Nineteenth Century*, 72.

[11] The nuances of this Counter-Enlightenment claim are a common feature in contextualization theory today. Alister McGrath opposes the propositionalism of historic conservatives like Charles Hodge, B. B. Warfield, and Carl F. H. Henry, who upheld the direct proclamation of Scripture as "truth" in global evangelization. McGrath falsely assumes, like Pannenberg, Grenz, and Franke, that the absolutism of those who contend for a conservative bibliology shares the epistemological base of Enlightenment-era rationalists. Rather, the propositionalists in question appealed to the inner witness of the Spirit as assurance that God has told the hearer what to objectively believe, apart from the dynamic (subjective) controls of the contextualized faith community in its secular society. See Alister McGrath, *A Passion for Truth—The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 163–79; Shults, *Postfoundationalist Task of Theology*; Stanley J. Grenz, and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism—*

Hamann's influence in the area of linguistic priority over reason was directly felt by his disciple Herder (1744–1803), the "Father of German Romanticism,"[12] who borrowed the term "vernacular" from his teacher.[13] Herder's impressive work in cultural anthropology and comparative religions has led him to be regarded as "a remarkable thinker who gave early expression to many themes that were to become entrenched in modern cultural relativism."[14]

Herder on the Development of Vernacular Language

Johann Herder's enduring work on the faculty of speech, "On the Origin of Language" (1772), reveals a complex development of Hamann's initial proposition on the link between reason and language.[15] Herder's four "Laws of Nature" remain "central to contemporary Postmodernist criticism: the fundamental role of concrete language in our knowing."[16] These "Laws" are predicated upon man being both the creature and creator of the evolving human language. He posits that (1) Man is dependent upon language in order to promote meaningful thought and action; (2) Language development is a natural and necessary part of man's essence; (3) Diversity of languages derives from the dispersion of man into distinctly developing nations; (4) Cultures are inextricably tied to language.[17]

Herder thus advances the notion that if humans are to have a sense of spiritual realities, they must rely on the inner faculties of consciousness, reason, discernment, and the outward construction of culture and society.[18] As language develops, so must

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Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 13–14; John R. Franke, Reforming Theology: Toward A Postmodern Reformed Dogmatics," *Westminster Theological Journal* 65:1 (Spring 2003): 1–26.

[12] John H. Moran and Alexander Gode, trans., eds., *On the Origin of Language—Two Essays: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Gottfried Herder* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), v.

[13] So, Werner Ustorf, "The Rainbow and the Missionary: Revisiting Johann Gottfried Herder," *Swedish Missiological Themes*, 92, no. 3 (2004): 386 n7.

[14] Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith & Mission* (Downers Grove: IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 140. Ustorf traces Herder's influence in vernacular studies of culture, linguistics, and nationalism. He nevertheless recognizes the paucity of attributions in contemporary missiology to Herder. Ustorf posits that one of the reasons that Herder is not viewed more prominently relates to accusations of atheism and unorthodox thinking, claims which ostracized him from academia. Ustorf, "Rainbow," 386–87.

[15] For translation, see Moran and Gode, *On the Origin of Language*, 85–166. Part Two of Herder's essay, entitled "The Way Human Beings Could and Must Have Most Easily Invented Language for Themselves," is translated elsewhere, in Johann Gottfried Herder, *Against Pure Reason: Writings on Religion, Language, and History*, Marcia Bunge, trans., ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 77.

[16] In Livingston, *Enlightenment and Nineteenth Century*, 72. Gode, in Moran and Gode, *On the Origin of Language*, 173–74. Gode recognized Herder's contribution to linguistic theory to be both "timely and possibly timeless," yet to be replaced by a more developed philosophy, and one which addressed the linguistic and theological issues of Gode's late 1960s.

[17] For apparent contradiction on this point, see Berlin, *Three Critics*, 240–41.

[18] Herder, "On the Origin of Language," 118–19; Jürgen Trabant, "Herder and Language," in Hans Adler, and Wulf Köpke, eds., *A Companion to the Works of Johann Gottfried Herder* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009), 135–36.

the human consciousness, so that man might reach upward for the apprehension of spiritual concepts.[19]

Herder on Cultural and Religious Pluralism

Herder's recognition of the development of culture by an expressive human consciousness thus made a foray into early contextualization theory. According to the German Romantic, language is humanly derived and constantly undergoing an evolutionary process specific to the culture and society of a time. Therefore, the religious beliefs expressed through the cultural voice of a given locality are necessarily unique and independent of beliefs expressed elsewhere or at a different time.[20] Because of the historical, political, and socio-cultural factors at play in forming indigenous character, no one people group can claim superior spiritual truth over another.[21] His position may thus be viewed as "an unqualified cultural relativism" which promotes religious pluralism[22] for several reasons.

First, Herder contradicts the biblical testimony of the gospel's supremacy and universal applicability, though he finds Christianity to have a vaguely norming, purifying effect among the nations.[23] The person of Jesus Christ is an inspiring figure of humanity and love to all people in all settings, from whom a Christology for all religions might be derived.[24] He also believes that the Bible offers a "fatherly explanation" through "a voice of God" to point readers toward God's ultimate purpose of helping all peoples to fulfill their humanity as bearers of God's image.[25] As a divine

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[19] Herder, "On the Origin of Language," 122.

[20] Livingston, *Enlightenment and Nineteenth Century*, 74.

[21] Ibid., 74–75; Berlin, *Three Critics*, 291–98. To Herder, "anything that annihilates one's individuality or consciousness cannot be love.... True love of God and neighbor begin with one's individual existence and not with the attempt to be united with God and all things." In Bunge, in Johann Gottfried Herder, *Against Pure Reason*, 22–23.

[22] Livingston, *Enlightenment and Nineteenth Century*, 75; Bunge, in Johann Gottfried Herder, *Against Pure Reason*, 23–27. Berlin attempts to distinguish the ambivalence of relativism from the tolerance of pluralism, recognizing Herder's tolerance as a form of religious and cultural pluralism. Berlin, *Three Critics*, 208, 218, 292; Isaiah Berlin, *The Power of Ideas*, edited by Henry Hardy, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 14–17.

[23] Livingston also notes his vagueness: "Herder calls for toleration, mutual respect, and understanding.... He would appear to see Christianity as having a very special role in helping other religions to 'purify' themselves, and, in so doing, helping all humans toward the ideal of *Humanität*, civilization.... Herder leaves unaddressed the very basic questions about truth, pluralism, and relativism, especially as they relate to Christianity's claims to normativeness, as well as the possible liabilities, even dangers, of ethnic and religious particularism." Livingston, *Enlightenment and Nineteenth Century*, 76; Bunge, in Herder, *Against Pure Reason*, 19; Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 141; Johann Gottfried Herder, *First Dialogue Concerning National Religions*, in *Against Pure Reason*, 103, 105.

[24] Jesus Christ was "the pure expression of the image of God,... an 'ideal,' a representation of the 'supreme character of humanity.' Bunge, in Herder, *Against Pure Reason*, 31. For Herder, "'Christ' signifies the ongoing incarnation of God in processes of people's survival, transformation, reconciliation, and salvation (inside and outside Christianity)." There are thus "different images of 'Christ.' This means that nobody can present a definitive interpretation of 'Christ'." In Ustorf, "Rainbow," 399–400.

[25] Bunge, in Herder, *Against Pure Reason*, 29–30.

guide for all generations, "people are to appropriate the Bible in new ways according to their own capacities and historical circumstances."[26]

Second, the vernacular infiltrates all levels of Herder's theology. His historicism, when applied to all religions, reduces Christianity to little more than an historical phenomenon—a politically entangled, culturally evolved worldview shaped by Hellenism, Jewish thought, and gnostic theories.[27] In his groundbreaking work, "First Dialogue Concerning National Religions" (1802), Herder asks, "Was not even the religion of the ancient Jews wholly a religion of Palestine?"[28] He implies that Christianity holds no rights over other languages and beliefs of other geographical regions or times because it is itself a vernacular worldview rather than the divine message universally mandated to mankind.

Third, Herder's religious relativism is distinctly anti-propositional, urging for an embracing cultural empathy to rule all missionary efforts. He voiced early resistance to the emerging missionary activities of the colonial age, which were largely built on the Calvinistic ideals of propositional truth as God's means of converting the heathen.[29] To Herder, rather, the natural sense of God as perceived by a historically rooted culture births a national desire for God that is not necessarily reconcilable with the divine longings of another culture. Thus the direct transfer of knowledge or truth between peoples and epochs smacks of a spiritual superiority which must not be tolerated.[30]

Fourth, missionary engagement is for ethical, not salvific purposes. To Herder, "every nation loves God in its very own way and serves the neighbor in the way that most pleases God."[31] One's heart language is sufficiently capable of communing with

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[26] Ibid., 30.

[27] Ibid., 19. Bunge reports, "Herder also appreciates the individuality of each work, refusing to judge texts according to foreign standards or to compare them to one another. In speaking of the Hebrew Bible prophets, for example, he says that each has a particular spirit, history, and language.... In the same way, he claims that the Gospels are highly individual, for each reflects the unique interests and gifts of the authors and their particular audiences.... No piece of world literature is 'ideal' for all cultures. Literature of diverse cultures should not be compared to one another; attention should be given to their natural distinctions." Ibid., 27–28.

[28] Johann Gottfried Herder, "First Dialogue Concerning National Religions," in Herder, *Against Pure Reason*, 103.

[29] Ibid., 141. "First Dialogue Concerning National Religions" was published nearly ten years after the outset of William Carey into polytheistic India. Carey was not the first evangelical missionary to bring the propositional truth of Scripture to bear in pagan evangelization. He was influenced by the earlier efforts of David Brainerd (1718–47), passionately described by Jonathan Edwards in his *Account of the Life of the Late Rev. David Brainerd*, as well as by the journals of James Cook, evangelical explorer, and others. For discussion on the early influences of Protestant mission in relation to Carey, see John Carpenter, "New England Puritans: The Grandparents of Modern Protestant Missions," *Missiology: An International Review* 30, no. 4 (October, 2002): 519; also see Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson, eds. *Missiology—An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 201.

[30] Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 141 n56. Herder remarks, "It is unusual for one language to be equally proper for every kind of conversation.... If this language is not suitable for expressing *my* ideas, if it has not sprung from my very own needs and feelings, then no matter how powerful it is to others, it is not *my* religious language." In Herder, "First Dialogue," 102.

[31] Bunge, in Herder, *Against Pure Reason*, 19; Herder, "First Dialogue," 103.

God without the help of the Christian witness.[32] Thus, field engagement is not evangelistic but rather a sort of religious dialogue on mutual grounds for the purpose of meeting the ethical needs of the national consciousness according to the ideal of human civilization. Theology's central task is to help all people please God according to the confines of their national consciousness, without any assertive dissuasion from or violent uprooting of the indigenous belief system.

Fifth, insofar as Herder cannot divorce socio-political colonialism from the missionary propositionalism of his time, he assumes global anti-colonialist sentiments. Though he never traveled overseas, Herder posits that the result of propositional evangelization is the tearing away of indigenous religion such that the peoples lose their "spirit and character, indeed, their language, their heart, their land, their history...." and that "this is the reason for their indelible, irreconcilable hatred for the foreigners...."[33]

Finally, Herder's indiscriminate appreciation of disparate worldviews came under suspicion by the academic community who found his ideas in plain contradiction to the condemnation of paganism by Scripture. At least two factors contribute to his largely unfavorable appraisal by his contemporaries. First, Herder struggled to define the concept of origins for language, and thus remained "teasingly unclear" about the origins of humanity, and of religion,[34] despite his extensive work on the book of Genesis.[35] Failure to read Scripture outside of his overtly allegorical system thus left him unable to reconcile his myth-based "historicity" with the Biblical account.[36] Second, he was unfavorably appraised for his support of Baruch Spinoza (1632–77) and Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819), both of whom were embroiled in charges of atheism or pantheism at best.[37] Their works helped concretize his own religious views as

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[32] In the dialogue, one friend, Dietrich, says to the other, "I use the word ["religion"] in the Roman sense of 'awe before the gods, sacred commitment.'" To this, his counterpart Winnfried questions, "In which language will the heart commit itself to the gods most lovingly and most intimately? Does it not have to be in the language of the heart, that is, in our very own mother tongue? The language in which we *love*, *pray*, *and dream* is our very own religious language." Ibid., 101–02.

[33] Herder criticizes the missionary efforts of St. Patrick among the pantheistic Irish who, in the tale relayed in *First Dialogue*, saw the repentance of the pagan representative from idolatry and blasphemy. Herder, through the two dialoguing friends, expresses his grief over this cultural "violence." Johann Gottfried Herder, "First Dialogue," 101.

[34] Herder is not ambiguous about the formation of national religion from the evolved character of families into tribes and nations, but he fails to link divine condescension to human ascent. Herder, "First Dialogue," 102–03.

[35] Gode, in Moran and Gode, *On the Origin of Language*, 174, with discussion on 169–70.

[36] Gode, *On the Origin of Language*, 169–70; Ulrich Gaier, "Myth, Mythology, New Mythology," in Adler and Köpke, *A Companion to the Works of Johann Gottfried Herder*, 178–79. Albert Schweitzer praised Herder's interpretive direction for the Synoptic Gospels, considering him "more than a generation in advance of his time," the precursor of Strauss on the question of the supernatural. In Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest Of The Historical Jesus: A Critical Study Of Its Progress From Reimarus To Wrede*, transl. W. Montgomery London: Adam and Charles Black, 1910), 35–37; Ustorf, "Rainbow," 387–88.

[37] Herder's work, *God, Some Conversations* (1787), paved the way for a more positive academic appraisal of Spinoza. For a brief but helpful treatment of the correspondence between Lessing, Jacobi and Herder which resulted in Herder's support of Spinoza, see Bunge, in Herder, *Against Pure Reason*, 23–

to the immanence of God in all things. Herder was ultimately denied a professorship at Göttingen under charges of atheism and heterodox missiology.[38]

Herder on Religious Tolerance

By necessity, according to the Romantic philosopher, the key to sustainable global harmony and the perpetuity of indigenous worldviews is religious tolerance, not adherence to the biblical paradigm of repentance and belief as the components of saving faith.

As Herder brings "First Dialogue" to a forceful conclusion, he answers the question, "Would you like 'national religions' of all peoples on earth?"[39] With unmistakable clarity he answers "Yes," with four qualifications: (1) Christianity is "the true conviction about God and human beings;" (2) Christian mission must not assert language or faith in a way that might tyrannize the language or character of another nation; (3) Christianity must not change the extant religion nor compromise the local essence of the people; (4) If the West is to have any influence abroad, it must first understand local languages and spiritual felt needs.[40]

To achieve conciliatory intercultural engagement, Herder urges for Christian Westerners to abstain from any interaction (evangelization?) that might threaten the genuine consciousness of a nation, no matter how pagan its worldview and religious practices. Within Herder's cultural-linguistic logic, as religion emerges from the language of a people, and language from the national consciousness, the cultic expressions and practices of a people represent the people themselves. As one collective body, like flower varieties in a field, there is now one unifying purpose on the earth.[41] The "purpose" recalls the ethical character of Herder's definition of religion: "Every religion would strive, according to and within its own context, to be the better, no, the best of its kind without measuring and comparing itself to others."[42] Hence, for Christianity to assume a place of prominence in the garden of human consciousness is both intrusive and irrelevant.[43]

Herder does not overlook the individual component to his vernacular consciousness theory. He closes "First Dialogue" with attention to the practical work of mission—engaging not just a people group but each person of it. On individuality he

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25; and Steven D. Martinson, "Herder's Life and Works," in Adler and Köpke, *A Companion to the Works of Johann Gottfried Herder*, 32–33.

[38] Ustorf, "Rainbow," 387.

[39] Herder, "First Dialogue," 105.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Herder explains his field and garden metaphor: "In the same way, the human race would become one family, which it truly is and must be, with the most diverse characters and national religions, and it would *strive toward one purpose*." Herder, "First Dialogue," 106. Emphasis in original.

[42] Ibid.

[43] The biblical doctrines of total inability and sin do not appear to factor into Herder's understanding of humanity and culture. If there is to be religious and national peace on the global scale, Christianity must not promote itself as "a supreme shepherding nation" whose "foreign language or religion will tyrannize the language and character of another nation." Ibid., 105.

avers, "In the end all individuals would possess their own religions, just as they would possess their own hearts, their own convictions and languages."[44] Peace on earth must be achieved both on the national and the individual scale through mutual respect, tolerance, and the acceptance of global and individual religious pluralism. A peace-bearing, globally sensitive Christian must be unassuming and unassailing in the face of conflicting worldviews.[45]

The Emergence of Vernacular Theologies

Herder's views resonate in today's missiology. Local vernacular constructions of theology are commonly believed to have emerged as an overt anti-colonialist reaction to and dissociation from the purportedly deleterious theological effects of modern-era Western theology on target populations. These groups are viewed as holding fundamentally different cognitive approaches to communication, learning, and the assimilation of truth.

The emergent "vernacular, contextual, local, national, ethnic, or global theologies" common in the Global Church of the Majority World continue to yield surprising challenges to systematically oriented theologians unaccustomed to the emerging patterns of non-linear thought and dissemination.[46] In addition, homegrown theological concepts might be quite abstract from scriptural teaching. They might represent an unchecked, pandemic disregard of cultural sins and surrounding religions which open the door to syncretism and inappropriate religious pluralism. The search for theological relevance in the globalized context appears to place current contextualization approaches at greater risk of pluralism and syncretism in the Third World.[47] When the culturally dependent Global Church becomes the interpreter of biblical exegesis, the resultant theology might appear culturally significant yet have little to do with the original author's intention for the text.[48]

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[44] Ibid., 106.

[45] Herder concludes, "No one would be allowed to judge the innermost heart of another.... In this way the so-called propagation and expansion of Christianity would win a different character.... Some useless trouble could have been spared in this way." Ibid., 105.

[46] J. V. Taylor preceded most contemporary Western cultural anthropologists with a now ubiquitous question: "Christ has been presented as the answer to the questions a white man would ask, the solution to the needs that Western man would feel, the Saviour of the world of the European world-view, the object of the adoration and prayer of historic Christendom. But if Christ were to appear as the answer to the questions that Africans are asking, what would he look like?" In John Vernon Taylor, *The Primal Vision: Christian Presence amid African Religion* (London: SCM, 1963), 16.

[47] The Global Church's search for theological significance has led to the circular process of discovering meaning through cultural filters. See Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Context*, 128–29, 130; Stinton, *Jesus of Africa*, 250–53, esp. p. 251.

[48] Ghanaian Anglican lay scholar John Pobee collocates extrabiblical Africanisms within the greater whole of cultural identity, forcefully declaring, "I am first an African and second a Christian." In John S. Pobee, "I Am First an African and Second a Christian," in *Indian Missiological Review* 10, no. 3 (July 1989): 268–77. For an evaluation of African-Christian complementarity in Anglicanism, see Cephas N. Omenyo, and Eric B. Anum, *Trajectories of Religion in Africa: Essays in Honour of John S. Pobee* (Amsterdam: Rodopi [Brill], 2014), 137–39.

Anti-colonialist proponents have raised few flags concerning the long-term effects of sub-biblical vernacular theologizing on the Global Church.[49] The hesitation to engage clear abuses of Scripture appears largely rooted in hindsight bias.[50] Anti-colonialism might be recognized as historical fact on the world scale. Yet causation is not sufficiently established to prove that Christianity's demographic shift to the "self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating"[51] Global Church of the Majority World is a negative response to previous Western attempts at Christianization,[52] which has resulted in an increasing distance from Western theological thought and practice.[53]

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[49] As an example of missiological ambivalence, Fuller Theological Seminary's William Dyrness observes several ethnically distinct contexts to suggest that the construction of theology is a largely non-critical task. He asks: "Does all this suggest a different way (or many different ways) of doing theology?" Felt needs and socio-cultural concerns inform his postulations to the degree that he ultimately finds theological convergence between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism in Christianizing local worldviews (in William A. Dyrness, *Invitation to Cross-Cultural Theology: Case Studies in Vernacular Theologies* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992], 22–23). Along similar lines, Birmingham's John Parratt's work on vernacular theologies leads him to conclude that extra-biblical sources of revelation are necessary in order to develop a multifaceted theology capable of a multi-dimensional view of God (see John Parratt, ed. *An Introduction to Third World Theologies.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). In an extreme example, Roman Catholic priest, Michael Amaladoss, openly suggests that Asian contextualizers distance themselves from Western Christology and rather search pagan literature characters, culture, and symbols for aspects of the person of Jesus Christ. Amaladoss offers nine common Asian categories for the person of Jesus Christ in order to propose a viable correspondence between Christianity and Eastern religions (see Michael Amaladoss, *The Asian Jesus*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006). His pluralistic constructions are now under papal investigation (see David Gibson, "Vatican Threatens Rev. Michael Amaladoss, Jesuit Theologian In India, With Censure," news report [May 13, 2014], accessed March 10, 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/13/ michael-amaladoss-censure_n_5311215.html).

[50] The claim that evangelical efforts floundered in overseas ministry needs evaluation. Hiebert provides helpful delineations concerning evangelical "obsolescence," noting that increased education of local populations led to greater cultural interaction which ultimately helped the West reassess their sense of cultural superiority. See Paul G. Hiebert, "Beyond Anti-Colonialism to Globalism," *Missiology: An International Review*, 19, no. 3 (July, 1991): 267. Furthermore, Osborne anticipates that the rise of vernacular theologies might in certain cases signal the maturing of biblical truth from the indigenous people the gospel was intended to affect. See Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 428.

[51] Henry Venn's 1854 "three self" definition of the autonomous indigenous church was considered a neutral description of anti-colonialism in practice. See Terry, et. al, *Missiology*, 209; Paul G. Hiebert, in Ott and Netland, *Globalizing Theology*, 28; Hiebert, "Beyond Anti-Colonialism to Globalism," 267.

[52] Not all contemporary historical surveys agree that the practices and presuppositions of modern-era missionaries were laden with cultural ignorance and propositionalist arrogance. On the one hand, Hiebert sides with Wilbert Shenk that New Englanders like Jonathan Edwards insisted on Puritanical ideals and identity among tribal converts, making for poor contextualization practices. On the other hand, however, McDermott and Netland contradict these generalizations with details of Edwards' great pains to compare religions and contextualize the strictly orthodox gospel with a culturally appropriate orthopraxy. See Hiebert, "Beyond Anti-Colonialism," 264–65; Wilbert R. Shenk, "The Changing Role of the Missionary: From 'Civilization' to Contextualization," in C. Norman Kraus, ed., *Missions, Evangelism, and Church Growth* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980), 35; Gerald R. McDermott, and Harold A. Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions: An Evangelical Proposal* (New York, NY; Oxford University Press, 2014), 20–21.

[53] Western-trained Nigerian Victor Ezigbo traces palpable Nigerian anti-colonial sentiments while noting common misinterpretations and distortions of modern era teaching which highlight the difficulty of linking African impressions to actual Western abuses, especially in the area of Christology. Furthermore

Dissenting voices question whether conservative, orthodox approaches promoted during the modern era are obsolete. Does mission theory today indeed require the repeal of Western systematic methods in order to engage productively in local contexts?[54] A minority of evangelicals further disagrees that the Global Church has summarily rejected all forms of systematic theologizing. Conservative practitioners and theorists who recognize the continuity of systematic methods in the Majority World now raise opposing questions and present more balanced case studies.[55] Evidence of new global communities which confess orthodox bibliology to the degree of Western conservative evangelicals, yet with a local voice wholly their own, thus betrays many of the negative assumptions of anti-colonialism.[56]

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he recognizes the heavy influence of postmodern scholarship in African theological development, but stops short of asking to what degree postfoundational Westerners with hindsight bias influence Nigerian anti-colonialism today. See Victor Ezigbo, *Contextualizing the Christ-Event: A Christological Study of Interpretations and Appropriations of Jesus Christ in Nigerian Christianity* (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2008), 1–13.

[54] Conservative evangelicals Steve Strauss and Ken Baker exegetically demonstrate how the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 successfully staved off racial tensions in view of a "fellowshipping unity without cultural uniformity" which did not sacrifice essential theological parameters for true gospel unity. To Strauss and Baker, successful contextualization is possible only when it is grounded upon a "theological foundation." They offer sound ethical conclusions which stem from the transcultural gospel: "People groups should be able to accept the gospel and become fully a part of the universal church without giving up their core ethnicity. At the same time, this contextual openness does not preclude cultural sensitivity and respect toward the rest of the believing community." In Steve Strauss and Ken Baker, "Acts 15 and the Purpose of Acts: A Model of Contextualization?," in *The Theory and Practice of Biblical Hermeneutics: Essays in Honor of Elliott E. Johnson*, edited by H. Wayne House and Forrest Weiland (Silverton, OR: Lampion Press, 2015), 335–51, with quotes on p. 348.

[55] The paucity of inerrantist, conservative, evangelical research is alarming. Church networks and scholars who are able to pinpoint non-Western conservative communities on the global theological map appear reticent thus far to refute the sweeping claims of anti-colonialism in print or media. Of the meager conservative resources, the following demand consideration. See Robert W. Yarbrough, "The Future of Cognitive Reverence for the Bible," *JETS* 57, no. 1 (2014): 5–18; Mark Tatlock, ed., *The Implications of Inerrancy for the Global Church*, Sun Valley, CA: Xulon Press, 2015; Mark Tatlock, ed., *Christ Alone: The Uniqueness of the Gospel and Its Impact on the World*, Maitland, FL: Xulon, 2017; Chris Williams, "Urgency for Inerrant Theological Education Today," speech, TMAI Symposium, March 2, 2015, Burbank, CA, accessed July 31, 2016, http://tmai.org/getinvolved/specialproject/audio/. Also see Beale's link between Anti-Colonialism and Postmodernism in his Addendum to Appendix 1, in Gregory K. Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges in Biblical Authority*, Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008. Blomberg calls for a return to sound biblical interpretation by proponents of liberation theology, feminism, politics, and religious pluralism. See Craig L. Blomberg, "The Globalization of Biblical Interpretation: A Test Case John 3–4," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 5 (1995): 1–15; and Ibid., "Where Should Twenty-First-Century Evangelical Biblical Scholarship Be Heading?" *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 11, no. 2 (2001): 162–72. Moreau offers what might be a more balanced evangelical methodology for contextualization. See Moreau, *Contextualization in World Missions: Mapping and Assessing Evangelical Models,* Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012. For an insightful survey of the role and use of Scripture by continent, see Pauline Hoggarth, Fergus Macdonald, Bill Mitchell, and Knud Jorgenson, eds., *Bible in Mission*, Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, Volume 18, Oxford, UK; Regnum Books International, 2013.

[56] Ethnically distinct modes of communication and patterns of thought will be equally faithful to doctrine insofar as Scripture is their common denominator. The Master's Academy International (TMAI), for example, has furnished a series of current case studies which document several hundred local churches on six continents which propagate theological method similar to that of conservative modern-era missionaries. The often-underrepresented reality of biblically sound Majority World churches provides a living

Conservative scholarship submits that the shift to reactive anti-colonialism is less present than the majority of publications might report. Also, where independent, local expressions which disengage from the supreme authority of Scripture and the strict parameters of orthodoxy are present, the local believing population is placed in sub-biblical and theologically inconsistent waters. The character of vernacular theologies is therefore no longer the most pertinent question for research. The question is whether Western reporting has offered unqualified support of sub-biblical or unorthodox beliefs and practices in an effort to shift Western mission theory away from the propositionalism inherent to conservative bibliology.

Global Religious and Theological Dialogue

Missiological publications identify sub-orthodox ideals for relating Christianity to world religions and to indigenous Christian theologians. Recent dialogue methods between the West and the Majority World evidence ways in which contemporary evangelical contextualization studies have shifted epistemologically away from conservative bibliology.[57] Roundtable interfaith exchange proposes to offer a Christian alternative to local worldviews, but courtesies have led to the sacrificing of distinctly Christian theological ground potentially in favor of pluralistic ideals.[58] The call for

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example that the claims of anti-colonialism have been to some degree exaggerated. See "Our Purpose" and "Ministry Distinctives," web content, accessed July 31, 2016, http://www.tmai.org/about/purpose/. Also see the volumes edited by Mark Tatlock, *The Implications of Inerrancy for the Global Church*, and *Christ Alone*, which present a collection of sound doctrinal treatments of bibliology, soteriology, and Christology by several Majority World leaders ministering in their contexts. See also Moonjang Lee, "Reading the Bible in the Non-Western Church: An Asian Dimension," in *Mission in the Twenty-first Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission*, eds. Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008), 149–50.

[57] For a conservative survey of the rise of pluralism in the West, see Herbert Pollitt's detailed tracing of the origins and development of several contemporary Christian ecumenical councils which influence the missiological landscape today. Herbert J. Pollitt, *The Inter-Faith Movement: The New Age Enters the Church* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), 3–23.

[58] Recently, Miroslav Volf's proposal for greater reconciliation concerning Christian-Muslim relations demonstrates how interfaith dialogue might lead to theological pluralism. He regards monotheism as a common point of contact between Christian and Islamic doctrine. To Volf, distinctions between the divine person of God and Allah are less important than the commonalities of both being a god of love who requires an ethical response toward one's neighbors (see Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response*, San Francisco: HarperOne, 2011). Jason Medearis, who contends for Christocentric dialogue (see Jason Medearis, *Speaking of Jesus: The Art of Not-Evangelism*, Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2011), highly supports Volf's methodology, noting in a blog comment that he "approaches the issue from theological, philosophical, etymological, historical and simply biblical perspectives." (in Georges Houssney, "Analysis of Paul's Acts 17," article [April 4, 2011], accessed March 11, 2017, www.biblicalmissiology.org/2011/04/04/analysis-of-pauls-acts-17/). But Medearis' view of Volf appears too generous. Volf reasons that because Jesus is the final revelation of God, "a person can be both a practicing Muslim and 100 percent Christian without denying core convictions of belief and practice." Volf later comments in response to criticism, "In holding many Muslim convictions and engaging in many Muslim practices, you can still be 100 percent Christian.… I say that one can be a 100 percent Christian, and engage in some specifically Muslim practices." See Collin Hansen, "Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God?," online editorial (June 28, 2011), accessed March 11, 2017, http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/do-muslims-and-christians-worship-the-same-god). Not all evangelicals support Volf and Medearis in approaching the religious roundtable with theological leniency. McDermott and Netland, in their recent work

mutual dialogue between the Western and Majority World seems chiefly heralded by missiologists and ecumenical councils who view the West as rigidly Hellenistic and largely unhelpful to non-Westerners who think and learn through non-European means.[59]

Intercultural dialogue between contemporary Western theology and the vernacular expressions of Majority World Christianity seem at the forefront of recent approaches to move beyond anti-colonialist separatism toward the unification of the Christian faith into a globalized whole.[60] However, missiologists appear hesitant or

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on Trinitarianism, are not satisfied with Volf's pluralism. They detail how his "god of love" concept leads to methodological errors which both compromise the Christian gospel and poorly represent the tenets of Islam. In their estimation, Volf risks sacrificing theological ground by avoiding theological conflicts and upholding common values through civil interaction, even when doing so ignores the centuries-old theological gap between the two faith systems and serves no overarching purpose except to limit propositional evangelism. See McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 62–65.

[59] For example, Parratt contends that the West's "Hellenistic model" of the New Testament reveals a philosophical rigidity which does not adequately relate to the less-cerebral cultures of Africa and Asia who theologize through orality and symbol (see Parratt, *An Introduction to Third World*, 14–15). Contrarily, Bauckham recognizes that the original Gospel writers wrote for an "open category" audience, persuading for faith in all contexts, and thus demanding *specific* application to all peoples *generally* (see Richard Bauckham, "For Whom Were Gospels Written," in *The Gospels for All Christians—Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*," ed. Richard Bauckham [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 46). The "Seoul Declaration" represents an early global commitment to a Third-World evangelical theology which "addresses the questions of people living in situations characterized by religious pluralism, secularism, resurgent Islam, or Marxist totalitarianism." However, the hermeneutic through which the authority of Scripture will be born in and through the church appears to be the church itself. Theology from the "ground up" is necessarily subjective and dynamic due to the varied Global Church being the interpretive key for biblical exegesis. It ought to be asked to what degree the postfoundational commitments of Pannenberg and the developments of the early spread of postmodernism influenced this sub-orthodox framework. See "The Seoul Declaration: Toward an Evangelical Theology for the Third World," *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, Volume 7, Issue 2 (April, 1983): 64–65; also in Bong Rin Ro, and Ruth Eshenaur, eds., *The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts: An Evangelical Perspective on Asian Theology* (Taichung, Taiwan: Asia Theological Association, 1984), 22–23. Later, and more explicitly, the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) concurred: "One of the most striking developments in EATWOT has been the challenge presented by some members to our common Judeo-Christian tradition. The living religions of Africa and Asia call for a conscious incorporation of theologies other than Christian into our thinking. This is especially true about Christology. It is impossible to accept that the majority of humankind would be deprived of the benefits of redemption and salvation. The Jesus of Nazareth should be expanded and considered also as the total and cosmic Christ." In K. C. Abraham, ed., *Third World Theologies—Commonalities and Divergences* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 199. Parratt exposes their foray into liberation theology. Once they dialogued with national theologians from Africa and Asia, EATWOT found its doctrines "redefined to take in culture and religious pluralism alongside social and political analysis." Parratt, *Introduction to Third World*, 11.

[60] See Hiebert's general vision in Ott and Netland, *Globalizing Theology*, 29. The Majority World's contribution to theology might provide a more complete picture of systematic theology than could be offered through the Western theological heritage. Bridging between the two increasingly separate worlds is a new and open-ended discussion among conservative evangelicals. See Ibid., 311–14. Stephen Pardue has recently urged the evangelical West to listen to the Global Church with the express intention of challenging Western Reformation doctrines. To him, the five "solas" no longer represent what the Spirit seems to be teaching across the world. His view of culture's influence in developing theology raises questions as to how open he believes the canon to be today, and which Reformation doctrines he would suggest revising. See Stephen Pardue, "What Hath Wheaton To Do With Nairobi? Toward Catholic and Evangelical Theology," in *JETS* 58, no. 4 (2015): 757–70.

might be unable to define specific ways in which Western theological reflection is enhanced or redefined by dialogue with vernacular theologies. Genuinely important local contributions to global theology appear lacking, though certain cultural insights might shine helpful light on established Western teaching.[61]

Because biblical definitions of orthodoxy have received meager treatment in evaluating vernacular theologies, practical solutions for a united global theology are still being discussed. The concept of a globalized theological dialogue appears undergirded by the general presupposition that meaningful theology can be constructed apart from the singular base of Scripture.[62] Few, if any, practical, reproducible solutions or models have been promoted for evaluating the soundness of locally propagated doctrines.[63] Since the first wave of sweeping interest in the topic, forty years

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[61] Western theology seems largely unaffected by ethnic reflections. For example, in Cameroonian Christology, the Gbaya people relate Jesus' ministry of community healing to the *Soreh* tree, known for playing a role in tribal reconciliation and community. Flemming promotes the *Soreh* as an example of how the missionary might effectively contextualize the work of Christ, and in so doing favors the potential of a richer, more nuanced global theology which implicitly downplays the risks of unorthodox formulations. Flemming, however, appears reticent to indicate how the *Soreh* illustration connects to Scripture, (such as connecting *Soreh* activity to the evangelistic ministry of reconciliation in 2 Cor 5:11–21) nor if it will indeed be framed within appropriate biblical bounds so that it is useful to the local ministry of the Word. See Dean Flemming, *Contextualization in the New Testament—Patterns for Theology and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 299–300.

[62] For example, Charles Kraft minimizes the presuppositions of conservative theology by exploring cultural and behavioral insights under the assumption that they might in some way elevate the role of man in mediating divine revelation (see discussion in Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study of Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, rev. ed. [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005], 152–68). According to Grant Osborne, the cultural process of deriving theology leaves Kraft with "too little that is supracultural. The Bible as he sees it is too culture bound, with too little theological truth that carries over.... a canon within a canon" (in Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed. [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006], 415–16). Also, Todd Johnson and Cindy Wu have recently analyzed worldwide religious demographics through the interpretive lens of "family" and now urge for an ecumenical interfaith dialogue that embraces a corporate human identity above a distinctly Christian one (see Todd M. Johnson, and Cindy M. Wu. *Our Global Families—Christians Embracing Common Identity in a Changing World*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015; for a more extreme dialogue approach, see C. Norman Kraus, *An Intrusive Gospel? Christian Mission in the Postmodern World*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998).

[63] Ott and Netland present past proposals as to how a unified global theology might be communicated and formed, such as Schreiter's four-fold approach to theology (in Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*), Kevin Vanhoozer's missional "Theodrama" approach (in Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "'One Rule to Rule Them All?' Theological Method in an Era of World Christianity," in Ott and Netland, *Globalizing Theology*, 85–126), and Ott's modes of theologizing (in Ibid., 320–22). These theoretical approaches arise in the West, rather than from the Global Church, suggesting that indigenous voices still need to reach a point at which they can productively engage with the West rather than react against it. To reach a global theology, Ott and Netland propose the West adopt strategies to foster a conservative ecumenism subject to international peer review by emerging local voices who have the potential to internationalize academia (see Ott and Netland, *Globalizing Theology*, 329–36). The researchers propose a revision of systematic theology according to six areas of Western development which relate continuously to the Global Church: Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology, soteriology, anthropology, and missiology (N.B. the surprising exclusion of bibliology; see the conclusion to Ott and Netland, *Globalizing Theology*, 309–36). Timothy Tennent attempts a conservative methodology for interreligious dialogue with Asian religions and proposes an integrative global systematic theology based on select systematic theological categories (see Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).

of research have still not produced long-range, longitudinal case studies which would help establish the usefulness of ethnic theologies in their own contexts. Furthermore, there are still no tested models of implementation to ascertain the viability of Western and Majority World dialogue in creating a hybrid global theology.[64]

The corpus of contextualization research thus far evidences a general hesitation to either affirm Scripture as the only Spirit-inspired source of propositional revelation, or criticize sub-biblical vernacular theologies as doctrinally flawed. Questions largely unanswered by the academic community highlight the tension in many evangelical scholars today between the biblical call for propositionalism and the socio-cultural notions of postfoundationalism. Do the parameters of biblical orthodoxy apply to all cultures in all generations, or might they be modified where there might be a theological impasse? At what point does cultural accommodation require a change in the role of Scripture?

Another generation of global leaders and educators seems destined to accept the misleading evidences and fallacious claims that at least implicitly call for the abolition of rigid biblical orthodoxy in defining Christianity on the global plane.

Conclusion

German Romantic, Johann Gottfried Herder, functioned in the roles of pastor and linguistic philosopher at a time in which Christianity was rapidly expanding from the Western seat of Europe to the challenging frontiers of the indigenous world. A formidable mission theorist, Herder worked avidly in the fledgling years of conservative Protestant global evangelization to construct the link between thought and humanity, such that the language of man became the basis of the religion of man—a vernacular consciousness. His secular enterprise distanced him from the biblical claim that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the universally authoritative revelation of God, sufficient to save and sanctify individuals from all generations and cultures who repent of sin. True of many thinkers of his day, Herder followed his fellow philosophers away from a literal, plain-sense hermeneutic into the realms of abstruse allegory, and thus vehemently parted company with the orthodox doctrines of his Protestant roots.

Current evangelical mission studies appear, for the most part, not to recognize the influences of Herder upon the broad topic of the vernacular consciousness. Yet, his distinctive call for toleration and the appreciation of vernacular religious expression has been continually voiced especially since the 1980s. Several points of overlap emerge between Johann Herder's school of thought and that of contemporary contextualization research.

First, negative assumptions of anti-colonialism appear strongly rooted in anti-propositionalism in both eras. The postfoundationalist dismissal of absolute truth

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[64] Indeed, some missiologists question the likelihood of ever reaching a legitimately globalized theology sufficient for all contexts. Over two decades ago, Dyrness cautioned: "We must not suppose that we are after some grand synthesis—a kind of universal theology that will apply in every place. It is clear by now that we cannot expect this, at least not until we stand before Christ." In William A. Dyrness, *Learning About Theology from the Third World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 195–96.

closely parallels the Counter-Enlightenment move away from fideistic reason, although the epistemological core of conservative evangelicalism differs greatly from Enlightenment convictions.

Second, theorists today seem to hold inexact bibliological positions. They appear generally reticent to address or correct the Scriptural incongruences of vernacular religious symbols and expressions. The desire to be West-neutral and dialogue-focused in the face of conflicting worldviews approaches the distinctly Herderian ideal of seeking the validity of all worldviews for their time, place, and people. Bibliological ambiguity has thus far held back the discussion of corrective engagement for the biblical advancement of the Global Church.

Third, linguistic and cultural studies often employ theologically inconsistent hypotheses which result in illegitimate conclusions. The doctrines of total depravity and the noetic effects of sin factor little into proposals for evangelistic and dialogic accommodation. The corruption of man's soul and cultural mind necessitates an epistemological shift toward the objective truth of the gospel, rather than vice versa.

Fourth, the anthropology of Herder and some contemporary researchers might therefore be similarly soteriologically flawed. "Ground up" contextualization models downplay the biblical call to a redemption which subjects national identity and social dynamics to the unchanging standards of an other-worldly Christian culture in order to please God. The plea for radical holiness, separation from the world, and possible martyrdom as fools for Christ is conspicuously replaced by felt-need investigations and studies on socio-cultural relevance.

Fifth, the study of vernacular theologies opens the door to unconstrained religious round-table dialogue and religious pluralism. That Christ's uniqueness demands unequivocal allegiance was an intolerable position for Herder. The anthropologically driven missiology of today appears to speak a similar language, urging for an ecumenism which both promotes and adopts vernacular theologies, no matter how seemingly unbiblical.

Through conservative evangelical lenses, contemporary contextualization trends align unconsciously but notably with the Counter-Enlightenment linguistic and cultural theories of Johann Gottfried Herder. Yet, scant and indefinite bibliological treatment today cannot help but indicate an overall epistemological shift away from the authority of Scripture which was a lynchpin to Herder's pluralism.

Almost thirty years ago, Hesselgrave and Rommen warned of unconscious epistemological shifts from orthodox Christianity within contextualization studies:

> If the Christian contextualizer consciously or unconsciously shifts ground and builds on a view of Scripture and theological knowledge that accords better with one or another of the non-Christian views, he not only sacrifices the uniqueness of the Bible but also finds himself standing on the shaken epistemological foundations of other faiths.[65]

The failure to seriously engage with the absolute claims of Scripture calls into question the ability of the majority of mission theorists to advance contextualization in an

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[65] Hesselgrave and Rommen, *Contextualization*, 143.

evangelical direction. The emerging Herderian attitude reveals an important yet unasked question: Is contemporary evangelical missiology more heterodox than evangelical?

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REVIEWS

M. Scott Bashoor. *Visual Outline Charts of the New Testament.* Nashville, TN: B&H Academic Digital, 2016. Available for WORDsearch Bible software. $34.95.

Reviewed by Gregory H. Harris, Professor of Bible Exposition, The Master's Seminary.

M. Scott Bashoor is a long time Faculty Associate at The Master's Seminary, and since 1999 he has served as the pastor of Bible Church of Buena Park, CA. He is a graduate of Bob Jones University (B.A.) and The Master's Seminary (M.Div. 1994; Th.M. 2002) where he is currently pursuing a Ph.D. *Visual Outline Charts of the New Testament* (VOCNT) is his first book. VOCNT began as handouts Bashoor distributed to the adult Bible class at his church. Over time he significantly enhanced and expanded them for use in the seminary classroom. This makes these charts usable in a wide range of venues from the pastor's desk, to the classroom, to the individual Bible reader's personal study. While there are many books of Bible-related charts on the market, there is nothing quite like VOCNT. Those familiar with the brief charts in *Talk Thru the Bible* will see some similarities, but the level of detail in VOCNT far surpasses them.

VOCNT is currently available only as a digital title, and one must use WORDsearch Bible software to read it. Doubtless some readers will be hesitant to sign up for another book reading platform, but VOCNT will richly reward the user. All of the Scripture references are hyperlinked to whatever Bible translation has been chosen from the reader's library. The software is easy to obtain and use whether online, as a downloaded client, or in the apps for iOS, Android, or Kindle Fire. That said, VOCNT will be best read on a large-screen device such as a desktop, laptop, or larger tablet.

VOCNT consists of 70 full-color, full-page charts that display the structure and content of each New Testament book. Color gradations guide the eye, helping the reader follow the flow of thought of each book. It is difficult to describe in words what is intended to be a visual tool, so the reader might wish to request a free sample from the book's landing page (see the end of this review). The main chart for each NT book includes a purpose statement and a box with a limited amount of vital information such as author, date of writing, and recipients. Each book has at least one overview chart, and larger books have at least 2 focus charts which drill down into

details of structure and content. For instance, the first chart on the Gospel of Matthew surveys the whole book, but the next 6 charts focus in with detail of subsections throughout the gospel. Other larger books are similarly covered with multiple charts: Mark (4), Luke (9), John (6), Acts (6), Romans (3), First Corinthians (3), Second Corinthians (3), Hebrews (4), and Revelation (6). As one moves through the focus charts, the main headings for sections already covered and those to be covered later are collapsed, helping the reader see where he is in the book as a whole as he examines details.

The appendix contains three charts dealing with canonical and chronological matters. Chart 68 lays out the order of books in the NT canon as they have been arranged for the last millennium, showing how books are arranged by type, author, and word count. Chart 69 presents the books in chronological order and provides a brief summary of the circumstances surrounding each book's writing. Chart 70 provides a chronology of Paul's life and ministry, giving special attention to events surrounding the composition of his letters.

Some notable points of analysis include an early date for Matthew and its structure, alternating between discourses and narratives. Mark is dated close to or after Peter's martyrdom. Luke is explained as a prequel to Acts, which together are parts 1 and 2 of an authentication of Paul's gospel ministry to Gentiles. The natural two-part structure of John is exposed while still highlighting the special role of the 7 great signs. Romans is explained as a letter to mature Gentile and Jewish Christians who need to live in the common ground of the gospel. Galatians is dated early in AD 49 before the Jerusalem Council. The chronology of Paul's life is worked out to sustain Pauline authorship of the pastorals after Paul's first Roman imprisonment. The sophisticated structure of Hebrews is unveiled in a clear and compelling way. The author is described as "an unnamed associate of Paul's ministerial circle," a vague ascription that can allow for Pauline authorship but perhaps implies otherwise. James, a book whose structure continues to defy consensus, is said to develop around the three points of response to God's word in 1:19–21. The name "Babylon" in 1 Peter 5:13 is explained as a euphemism for "Rome." Revelation is dated near the end of the first century (not prior to 70 AD), and the book is outlined with the understanding that there are four great visions comprising the body of the book.

The shortcomings of the book are mostly countenanced in the author's introduction. Bashoor admits that the limited space that charts afford do not allow for much explanation of the interpretive decisions that are made. For instance, there is no space to explain his outline of Revelation, that the references to "in the Spirit" and "I saw" mark out major transitions. Also, while there are many interpretive approaches to the structure of Hebrews, VOCNT only presents one perspective. If one only reads VOCNT, one will be blind to the plethora of structural approaches. But if one views VOCNT as something short of the final word, much of this limitation can be overcome.

Most of the larger books are handled with sufficient detail, but there are a few places of unevenness. For instance, while the 3 charts on Romans adequately cover the whole of the book, sometimes a portion of a dozen verses is subsumed under a single sub-heading. As anyone who has studied Romans knows, Paul's arguments often develop verse-by-verse. It might be beneficial for the Romans section to be

supplemented with another focus chart. (One benefit of a digital title is that such revisions are relatively easy to make.) Nonetheless, the charts are still helpful in showing the reader the parts of the book in light of the whole.

Many will profit from this digital publication, and I highly commend it. It has garnered endorsements not only from Dr. MacArthur and our own faculty but also some notable faculty from other institutions. The landing page for the book provides more information about the work, including endorsements, FAQ, an interview, free samples, and ordering information. www.BiblePrism.com.

D. Jeffrey Bingham and Glenn R. Kreider, eds. *Eschatology: Biblical, Historical, and Practical Approaches; A Volume in Honor of Craig A. Blaising*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2016. 501 pp. $36.99.

Reviewed by Mark A. Hassler, Associate Professor of Old Testament, Virginia Beach Theological Seminary.

In this festschrift, thirty contributors pay tribute to Craig Blaising on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday. Blaising serves at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary as the Executive Vice President and Provost, Professor of Theology, and Jesse Hendley Chair of Biblical Theology. As for the editors, Jeffrey Bingham functions as Associate Dean, Biblical and Theological Studies, and Professor of Theology at Wheaton College. Glenn Kreider is Professor of Theological Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. The duo also coedited *Dispensationalism and the History of Redemption: A Developing and Diverse Tradition* (Moody, 2015).

The compilation divides into four parts: "The Doctrine of the Future and Its Foundations" (part 1), "The Doctrine of the Future in the Bible" (part 2), "The Doctrine of the Future in the History of Christian Thought" (part 3), and "The Doctrine of the Future and Christian Ministry" (part 4). In the foreword, Timothy George affirms the importance of biblical eschatology and tips his cap to Blaising. Subsequently, Steven James offers a biographical sketch of Blaising and lists highlights from Blaising's curriculum vitae. In the preface, the editors explain that eschatology emerged as the obvious choice for the theme of the festschrift because of Blaising's many contributions in that area. The back cover presents the book as an "introductory textbook," but the absence of indexes cripples the academic usefulness.

The writers stress the value of eschatology to the Christian life. In the words of David Dockery, "Eschatology, rightly understood, leads not to division but to doxology" (455). Darrell Bock states, "How we see the future and respond to it now is a litmus test for our hearts before God. The future is that important. It motivates us to act in faith and engenders hope. It keeps us accountable" (204). Lanier Burns quotes Jürgen Moltmann as follows: "From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present. The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith" (416).

Bingham identifies dispensationalism as a hermeneutic (50). For many practitioners, however, dispensationalism—and for that matter, covenantalism—constitute a theological outcome, not a hermeneutical paradigm. That is, the interpreter uses a

grammatical-historical hermeneutic that yields a dispensational theology. If we metathesize hermeneutics and theology in the interpretive process, exegesis becomes an afterthought and our allegiance belongs to a theological system rather than to Scripture.

Stanley Toussaint surveys the biblical doctrine of eschatological hope. According to him, "The usual meaning of 'salvation' in Hebrews is eschatological" (65). Insightfully, he points out an *inclusio* in Hebrews 11:2 and verse 39 that frames the chapter (65). Whereas Toussaint equates the "law of liberty" in James 2:12 with the "righteousness of God" in 1:20 (66), other interpreters associate the "law of liberty" with the "perfect law" (James 1:25) or the "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Toussaint devotes eleven pages to the NT but only three pages to the OT. He does not cite any journal articles, and he cites only one resource that was published within the last twenty years (a lexicon).

The shortest essay of the lot belongs to Charles Ryrie ("The Doctrine of the Future and the Weakening of Prophecy," 71–76). Ryrie describes four ways in which Bible interpreters deny the existence or accuracy of distant eschatological predictions. One way involves the use of genre-dependent hermeneutics—hermeneutics, for instance, that allow for the special treatment of symbols and numbers in apocalyptic literature (74).

Mark Bailey contributes "The Doctrine of the Future and Dispensationalism." He offers eleven supports for a pretribulation rapture, although the numbering system only lists ten because "Second" appears twice by mistake (397). Bailey also enumerates fourteen factors that favor the future existence of an actual and earthly millennium (403–5). He does not identify the dispensations.

As the reader might suspect in a festschrift for Blaising, some of the contributors advocate or assume progressive dispensationalism. Many of the definitions and descriptions of eschatology encompass the first advent as well as the second (e.g., Bock, 197–98; Edward Glenny, 229).

In dealing with the topic of predictive prophecy, John Laing and Stefana Laing use Daniel 2 to support the doctrine of inaugurated eschatology. They suggest that the fourth sequential empire of Daniel 2 denotes Rome. Since a Roman leader (Caesar Augustus) reigned when Jesus was born, Jesus must have inaugurated the kingdom amidst Roman rule (94–95). Not everyone agrees, however, that the fourth empire represents Rome, and the writers do not attempt to persuade those who believe otherwise. To strengthen their case, the authors could address common objections to their viewpoint. For instance, given that the fourth kingdom stands out as "different from all the other kingdoms" (Dan. 7:19, 23), in what significant way does Rome differ from the first three kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece?

In his piece, "The Doctrine of the Future in the Synoptic Gospels," Bock claims that the Olivet Discourse uses typology to forecast the demise of the Temple in AD 70 *and* a remote eschatological scenario (205). He offers a three-page overview of this beloved and debated discourse, but he does not entertain the main objections.

Some essay titles are perhaps too broad or too narrow in scope. For example, Daniel Block's title signals that he will treat Moses' eschatology, but the essay deals only with Deuteronomy because "exploring the eschatology of the entire Pentateuch would require an entire volume" (107). David Turner's title announces that he will

synthesize John's eschatology, but the work majors on John's Gospel rather than the Epistles or the Apocalypse (211). The book lacks an essay that focuses on the Apocalypse. In my opinion, a five-hundred-page volume devoted to eschatology and biblical theology should include an essay or two that expounds Revelation or some aspect of it. George Klein's study, "The Doctrine of the Future in the Psalms: Reflections on the Struggle of Waiting," consists of a word study on יחל (wait). Klein bypasses Psalm 89, one of the great kingdom psalms—a psalm that possesses eschatological implications and expresses the struggle of waiting (e.g., v. 46, "How long, O Yahweh?").

Nathan Holsteen writes a chapter on John Calvin's eschatology. One wonders why the book merits a chapter on Calvin's eschatology given "the relative paucity of material on the subject within Calvin's works" (319). As Holsteen notes, Calvin avoided subjects such as the nature of the future kingdom, the new heavens and new earth, and the rapture of the church (320).

Despite the shortcomings, this volume can be read with profit. It addresses a vital subject, and the contributors seek to bring clarity and accuracy to the interpretation and application of Scripture.

Kevin J. Vanhoozer. *Biblical Authority after Babel: Retrieving the Solas in a Spirit of Mere Protestant Christianity.* Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016. 288 pp. (hardcover) $21.99.

Reviewed by Paul Shirley, Pastor of Grace Community Church, Wilmington, DE.

As the five-hundredth anniversary of Luther's 95 Theses draws near, appreciation and acclaim for the Reformation may be at an all-time high. For some, however, there remains a dark cloud around the history, principles, and consequences of the Reformation. *Biblical Authority after Babel: Retrieving the Solas in a Spirit of Mere Protestant Christianity* (*BAB*) by Kevin J. Vanhoozer was written to address such concerns and propose a way for the church to move beyond these criticisms.

Vanhoozer (Ph.D., University of Cambridge) has established himself as one of the most influential and innovative theologians in the English-speaking world. He currently serves as Research Professor of Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL and has written numerous books, including *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* and *The Pastor as Public Theologian.* The material found in *BAB* was originally delivered at the Annual Moore College Lectures in 2015 and the recordings of these lectures can still be found online.

As Vanhoozer notes extensively, many scholarly historians have laid the blame for secularism, skepticism, and schism at the feet of the ecclesiastical events of the 16th century. The first Protestants—so it is said—taught their spiritual progeny to disdain any kind of hierarchy, to doubt all authority, and to divide at the drop of a hat. They apparently lit the first sparks of the raging inferno of modern individualism, and as proof the critics point to the thousands of disparate Protestant groups and denominations devoid of external unity. In this volume Vanhoozer seeks to assuage the

critics of the Reformation, at the same time setting the course for a unified "Mere Protestant Christianity."

As the title of the book indicates, Vanhoozer deals with the Reformation as a "hermeneutical Babel" (155) and with Protestantism's lack of visible unity as the post-Babel ecclesial world. For Vanhoozer, the Reformation resulted in "hermeneutical havoc" and "split churches," but it didn't have to be that way (xi) and could be different moving forward. In fact, if Protestantism will revisit and properly apply the five *solas* of the Reformation, these "accidental truths of European history" (xi) can be avoided and a "Mere Protestant Christianity" can be achieved (31–33).

> Mere Protestant Christianity is an attempt to stop the bleeding: first, by retrieving the *solas* as guidelines and guardrails of biblical interpretation; and second; by retrieving the royal priesthood of all believers, which is to say, the place of the church in the pattern of theological authority—the place where *sola scriptura* gets lived out in embodied interpretive practices (32).

In other words, Vanhoozer's goal is to bring increased visible unity to a fractured Protestant movement by using the *solas* of the Reformation to produce an authoritative hermeneutic all Christians can live under.

> The burden of the present work is therefore to reclaim elements for a normative Protestantism from the ruins of present-day Protestantism by revisiting historical Protestantism (the Reformation *solas*). I argue that the *solas* provided not an alternative to orthodox tradition but rather a deeper insight into the one true gospel that undergirds that tradition (xi).

Vanhoozer's hope is not to put an end to denominationalism, but to encourage denominations to appreciate and learn from the various interpretations of Scripture found within the Body of Christ—as long as they fall within the parameters of the *solas* as explained by Vanhoozer. Thus, the author is seeking to retrieve the catholic spirit he perceives to have been lost in the generations subsequent to the Reformation.

The main purpose of retrieval is the revitalization of biblical interpretation, theology, and the church today. To retrieve is to look back creatively in order to move forward faithfully. In particular, what needs to be retrieved is the Reformers' vision for catholic unity under canonical authority, and also their strategy for making this vision visible through table talk: conciliar deliberation around not simply a conference table but a communion table (24).

In order to bring all Protestants back to the table, Vanhoozer proposes that we use the five *solas* (grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone, Christ alone, and the glory of God alone) as the guidelines for how to interpret the Bible in a catholic manner. He uses "the *solas* not as doctrines in their own right as much as theological insights into various facets of the ontology, epistemology, and teleology of the gospel" (61). According to his proposal, viewing the slogans of the Reformation in this fashion, would provide the interpretive certainty and authority that would allow Protestants of differing convictions to co-exist under the banner of "Mere Protestant Christianity."

In chapter 1 Vanhoozer explains "grace alone" as more than just a soteriological principle:

> The crux of the argument will therefore be that *sola gratia* has ontological and not merely soteriological significance: first, by helping us better understand the freedom of God… second by helping us to see that the Bible, biblical interpretation, and biblical interpreters refer not to natural entities and process but to elements in an economy of grace. We are *not* to read the Bible like any other book… (50).

For Vanhoozer, a method of interpretation which seeks objective truth from a specific passage through interpretive methods does not measure up to hermeneutical implications of *sola gratia*. "To recognize Scripture as God's gracious address is to view biblical interpretation less as a procedure that readers perform on the text than a process of spiritual formation that takes place in the readers" (65–66). This formation requires that interpreters "preserve the integrity of the story of salvation" without giving the "impression that second-order doctrines are of first-order importance" (63). Thus he can muse, "Could it be that the various Protestant traditions function similarly as witnesses who testify to the same Jesus from different situations and perspectives? Perhaps we can put it like this: each Protestant church seeks to be faithful to the gospel, but no one form of Protestantism exhausts the gospel's meaning" (224). It is not totally clear how the concept of *sola gratia* leads to this implication, nor is it clear how one accurately identifies the story of salvation or distinguishes the doctrines of first-order importance. Historically, Protestants have contended that these questions can only be answered through an accurate interpretation of Scripture, but in Vanhoozer's view it is not entirely clear if any of these issues can ever be resolved.

In chapter 2 Vanhoozer explains how "faith alone" functions as an epistemological principle that prevents the interpreter from overstepping the bounds of his own authority. "*Sola fide* thus refers to the way Christians come to know and appropriate the gift of Jesus Christ via the human words of Scripture" (74). Because we appropriate the gift of Christ found in Scripture through faith, we must be cautious about the authority of our own interpretations since "the claims to have absolute knowledge or even objective knowledge comes close to claiming that one knows as God knows" (82). Thus, "Mere Protestant Christians believe that faith enables a way of interpreting Scripture that refuses both absolute certainty (idols of the tower) and relativizing skepticism (idols of the maze)" (105). What lies between absolute certainty and relativizing skepticism is unclear, but Vanhoozer has previously expressed that "honesty forbids certainty" (*Is There a Meaning in this Text?*, 207). Interestingly, Vanhoozer uses a doctrine that has traditionally called sinners to believe in Christ with absolute certainty to argue for a hermeneutic that obfuscates absolute certainty.

In Chapter 3 Vanhoozer argues that Scripture alone is necessary but insufficient for interpretative authority. "Scripture *alone* is the supreme authority, but God in his grace decided that it is not good for Scripture to be alone. He thus authorized tradition, and Scripture" (144). Thus, God's Word is supreme, but tradition, which is determined by the conciliar consensus of the church, is necessary in interpretation to

prevent disunity within the church. Vanhoozer does not mention where God has authorized the use of tradition in this way, but he does assert that tradition plays an "appointed role in the economy of salvation" (143). In fact, he states that "Christian tradition…is an external means that the Spirit uses" (141). Again, he does not specify from Scripture where the Spirit promised to use tradition in this manner nor what it means for tradition to be included in the economy of salvation.

In Chapter 4 readers will find a surprise in Vanhoozer's explanation of *solus Christus.* Vanhoozer expands the concept of "Christ alone" to include the doctrine of the royal priesthood of believers. In fact, he argues "the royal priesthood is the sum of the *solas*—and a *summa* of mere Protestant Christianity" (156). To some it might seem strange to extrapolate the salvific concept of "Christ alone" to include the royal priesthood of believers, but Vanhoozer reminds his readers that "retrieving involves more than merely repeating" (160). This is a helpful principle to remember when reading Vanhoozer's explanation of the priesthood of believers, since there are very few places where he merely repeats the historic definitions and explanations associated with this doctrine. For Vanhoozer, the royal priesthood of believers implies that the local church in conjunction with the communion of churches has been invested with the authority to interpret the meaning of Scripture. It would seem, then, that Vanhoozer would argue that an individual believer should accept a specific interpretation of a passage based on the church's authoritative interpretation of that passage. Someone could easily read this explanation and wonder if Vanhoozer turned this doctrine on its head to argue against what the Reformers were arguing for.

In Chapter 5 Vanhoozer closes his exposition of the *solas* by looking at "the glory of God alone." At this point, readers who have become accustomed to his interpretive expansions will not be surprised to learn that Vanhoozer has found an innovative application of *soli Deo gloria*. In generations past Christians were content to let this mantra communicate that God alone gets the glory for the salvation of a sinner, but this chapter reveals that *soli Deo gloria* is an ecumenical principle, since what most glorifies God is the external unity of the professing church. This is the goal that eluded the Reformers, no doubt because their retrieval of the gospel did not look back creatively enough in order to move forward faithfully. Vanhoozer, however, proposes that God's glory alone should lead the church to arrive at external unity. Practically, he proposes that "Mere Protestant Christianity" can achieve this by prioritizing few core doctrines that are worth dividing over and employing theological conferences for extended dialogue about all the other disputed doctrines. Vanhoozer's goal is to bring all segments of the church together around the communion table by using the principles of the Reformation to craft an authoritative hermeneutic. Ironically, the Reformers who first articulated these principles could not even agree on a view of communion. Readers seeking to apply Vanhoozer's vision of Mere Protestant Christianity will again have to wrestle with the issue of how core doctrines and other disputed doctrines are identified.

No doubt, Vanhoozer is a compelling and creative writer. Regrettably, his creativity is not limited to his forward movement but also includes an innovative analysis of the history of the *solas* of the Reformation, which conveniently agrees with his hermeneutical proposals. He turns the *solas* of the Reformation into an opportunity to restate many of his previous conclusions from previous works. There are enough

insightful nuggets of theology, coupled with obfuscating formulations, to distract many people from discerning the unhelpful elevation of tradition embedded in his approach. Vanhoozer goes too far when he espouses a "pattern of theological authority by which the Spirit leads the church in the full measure of Scripture's meaning by utilizing previous readings" (145) and ascribes "testimonial authority as to Scripture's meaning" to the "corporate confessions of the church" (146). It seems as if he is saying that Scripture is authoritative but we only have to access the authoritative meaning of Scripture through the authoritative interpretation of the church (141–44; 212, 223, 233)—which is what the Reformers argued against. This, along with a startling addition of human tradition to the economy of salvation, would not have been welcomed by the Reformers. On this point Vanhoozer certainly departs from Luther's view on biblical authority.

Biblical authority comes from demonstrating a truth from Scripture in such a way that it informs and persuades the conscience of a believer. The authority does not reside in the conciliar counsel of a church but in the clarity of Scripture. The church has been given the Spirit to recognize and submit to the authority of the Bible, not as a source of interpretive authority. To put it another way, the church possess a ministerial *function* in the interpretation of Scripture, not a magisterial *authority.* What Vanhoozer misses in his evaluation of the post-Reformation church is that the problem of authority in interpretation is not epistemological; it is hamartiological. The reality of original sin, remaining sin, and false professions make perfect unity among the professing church an impossibility until the return of Christ.

I suspect those who have experienced the scorn of scholars toward the Reformation will greatly appreciate this volume's attempt to defend their academic credibility. Vanhoozer's vision for Christianity appeals to the sensibilities of philosophical pluralism by providing a place at the table for every theological tradition, but it will add little to confessional Christianity. For the reader who appreciates a clear exposition of historical theology and as little innovation as possible in their systematic theology, this volume will not be as appealing. Students of the Reformation will find Vanhoozer's articulation of the *solas* so creative that they are barely recognizable.

Thomas Ice. *The Case for Zionism: Why Christians Should Support Israel*. Green Forest, AR: New Leaf Press, 2017. 219 pp. (paper) $14.99

Reviewed by Michael J. Vlach, Professor of Theology, The Master's Seminary.

Thomas Ice is Executive Director of the Pre-Trib Research Center. Ice, who has devoted much of his career to issues related to Israel and the church, senses an increasing anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism, not only in the secular culture at large, but also within evangelicalism, which traditionally has been supportive of the Jewish people and the state of Israel. That is why he wrote *The Case for Zion: Why Christians Should Support Israel*. Ice offers a rationale, based in Scripture and in conversation with history, concerning why Christians should support Israel. Offering both broader and narrower definitions of "Zionism," Ice makes clear that Zionism is support for the Jewish people and their right to live in the land of Israel.

Much of the world is opposed to Israel yet Ice documents a disturbing trend in evangelical theology against Israel. A growing number of Christian theologians are combining a theological "replacement theology" or "supersessionism" to the current situation in the Middle East against Israel and for Israel's enemies. Appealing to the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12; 15) and New Testament passages such as Romans 11 and Revelation 12, Ice argues that the Bible explicitly teaches a future salvation and restoration of Israel. He also refutes replacement theology and explains that the current claim that there is no replacement theology, only fulfillment theology, is a sham. Those who argue for "fulfillment theology" are really using the same arguments found in replacement theology.

In recent years some replacement theologians and anti-Zionists have claimed that today's Jews are not really true ethnic Jews with bloodline connections to Israel's patriarchs. Ice notes that since 1976 this idea has taken the form of the Khazar Theory in which the Jewish progeny allegedly has been diluted through a great influx of Gentiles into Judaism connected with the medieval nation Khazaria (129). Ice debunks this theory with appeals to DNA evidence and history. Ice says, "We see that not only do recent DNA studies provide a scientific basis for verifying that modern Jewry really are descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, this view is also supported by biblical logic and the testimony of history" (145–46).

Ice also refutes the idea that support for Israel is mostly a result of dispensationalism and John Nelson Darby. Love for Israel, which should be the case for all Christians, has deep roots in church history, including Protestant England and Puritan influence associated with the founding of colonial America.

This book is highly recommended. It is a helpful mix of biblical arguments and historical insights that helps the reader understand the real issues concerning Israel and Israel's relationship to the land of promise.

Richard A. Taylor. *Interpreting Apocalyptic Literature: An Exegetical Handbook*. Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2016. 201 pp. (paper) $21.99.

Reviewed by Mark A. Hassler, Associate Professor of Old Testament, Virginia Beach Theological Seminary.

Richard Taylor serves as Senior Professor of Old Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. He contributed the commentary on Haggai in the New American Commentary series.

Taylor's work represents the fifth of six volumes to be published in the series, Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis (HOTE). The volume concentrates on the book of Daniel, but it also deals with other biblical prophets and the extrabiblical texts. It shares some affinities with another HOTE volume, *Interpreting the Prophetic Books: An Exegetical Handbook*, by Gary Smith (2014). Similarly, Taylor's book overlaps in some ways with Marvin Pate's 2016 release, *Interpreting Revelation and Other Apocalyptic Literature: An Exegetical Handbook* (Handbooks for New Testament Exegesis).

Six chapters address various issues of apocalyptic literature, such as its nature, themes, interpretation, and proclamation. Bold typeface highlights terms that appear in the glossary. The end matter contains a twenty-one page appendix, "Antecedents of Apocalyptic Literature." The absence of indexes reduces the value of the handbook for the purposes of research and reference. Such an omission seems bizarre given that the series aims to reach an academic audience (13). The back matter excludes a bibliography, but the author reports that his private bibliography for the book of Daniel alone is approaching a staggering four thousand entries (15).

Instead of a bibliography at the end, recommended resources for exegesis appear interspersed throughout the book in the form of annotated bibliography entries. For instance, the author recommends Brent Sandy's *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocolyptic* (InterVarsity Press, 2002). The annotation reads, "A perceptive examination of the way prophetic and apocalyptic language works" (97). In another place, Taylor recommends fourteen commentaries on the book of Daniel (166–68). To this reviewer's surprise, the list excludes the *Commentary on Daniel* by Leon Wood (Zondervan, 1973). The entry for Reinhard Wonneberger's *Understanding BHS: A Manual for the Users of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* lists the second edition of 1990 rather than the third edition of 2001 (103).

Scholars dispute the definition of *apocalyptic* and related terms, therefore Taylor uses nearly ten pages to define the key terms. Ultimately, he adopts John J. Collins' definition of apocalypse: "a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world" (31–33). Taylor also adopts the wording of Adela Yarbro Collins: an apocalypse is "intended to interpret present, earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority" (32–33). Thus, in the OT, only Daniel 7–12 qualifies as an apocalypse; however, quasi-apocalyptic passages appear in books such as Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, and Zechariah, says Taylor (34).

The author offers helpful guidance for students of exegesis. He advocates the grammatical-historical method of interpretation and reminds the reader that this method "applies equally to biblical and extrabiblical literature" (119). Students learn that "All translations are, to some extent, mini-commentaries on the biblical text" (119). As a Bible reading tip, Taylor suggests that one read the entire book of Daniel in one sitting in order to grasp the full picture (136). And significantly, "The book of Daniel often provides interpretive guidance that is located right in the biblical text itself" (123).

Taylor warns the reader of the pitfalls concerning the interpretation of apocalyptic literature. "Perhaps the greatest temptation that confronts interpreters of apocalyptic literature is that of going beyond what the text actually says and indulging in reckless and harmful speculation" (97). More specifically, Bible readers should avoid "speculative theories equating contemporary events with biblical prophecy" (98). He notes that the scribe of the Leningrad Codex dated the manuscript in relation to Islam: "this is the year 399 of the reign of the little horn" (129).

Concerning the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture, the author says that "perspicuity does not apply equally to all parts of the Bible. . . . not everything in the Bible is so clear as to be easily grasped" (117). Other scholars articulate the doctrine differently. Namely, "clear" does not mean "easily grasped," but that the reader *can* know the author's intent.

Taylor reveals some of his conclusions concerning textual criticism. Regarding the book of Daniel, he states that "Theodotion provides a number of variant readings that are superior to the Masoretic text" (100). Later in the volume he evaluates Daniel 8:22, favoring Theodotion's reading ("from his nation") instead of the MT's "from a nation" (159). Moreover, Taylor supposes that the translator of the Old Greek of Daniel used a Hebrew *Vorlage* that differed from the medieval Hebrew and Aramaic manuscripts (100–01).

A little argumentation could have supported some interpretations of the biblical text in order to persuade some readers. For example, concerning the topic of angelology, Taylor supposes that an angel (rather than God the Son) rescued Daniel from the lions' den and Daniel's friends from the blazing kiln (75–76). Elsewhere, Genesis 11:4 exemplifies hyperbole: the tower will reach "into the heavens" (126). Or perhaps hyperbole is not involved, and the term simply refers to the "sky" (CSB).

The rubber meets the road in chapter six. Here the author seeks to apply "previously discussed principles" to a few sample texts: Daniel 8:1–27 and Joel 2:28–32 (153). In the treatment of Daniel 8, Taylor assumes that the little horn refers to the Seleucid tyrant Antiochus IV Epiphanes, but he does not address some of the glaring weaknesses of that identification (156–57, 160–61). Regarding Joel 2, the author claims that verses 28–32 received an initial fulfillment on the day of Pentecost (175, 177–78), but there were no "previously discussed principles" to prepare the reader to navigate the issues that accompany the NT use of the OT. Moreover, Taylor maintains that some circumstances of the book of Joel, such as the locust invasion, transpired within Joel's lifetime (169–70). He does not, however, provide any historical or literary confirmation of a fulfillment within Joel's lifetime. Furthermore, he argues for a past tense use of the verbs in 2:18 based on the presence of the *wayyiqtol* verb form (173). But the context, not the verb form, determines the tense of the verbs in biblical Hebrew (cf. Robert Chisholm, *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew*, Baker Books, p. 86).

In a few instances, the list of abbreviations does not synchronize with the subsequent data. The list gives *DCH* as eight volumes and extending through the year 2012, but page 105 shows *DCH* as nine volumes and extending through 2016. The list of abbreviations has the year 1983 as the publication date for *BHS*, but on page 103 it has 1977.

The HOTE handbooks are "primarily intended to serve as textbooks for graduate-level exegesis courses that assume a basic knowledge of Hebrew" (13). Taylor's volume might not fill that niche because it is too narrow in scope. The volume focuses on only six chapters of the Bible (Daniel 7–12), and exegesis of one of those chapters (chap. 7) presupposes at least a working knowledge of biblical Aramaic.

J. Daniel Hays. *The Temple and the Tabernacle: A Study of God's Dwelling Places from Genesis to Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016. 208 pp. (paper) $19.99.

Reviewed by John W. Dube, Grace Bible Institute, Tempe, AZ

J. Daniel Hays is dean of the School of Christian Studies and Professor of Biblical Studies at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas. Hays is well known for his popular text book on hermeneutics *Grasping God's Word* (coauthored with his colleague J. Scott Duvall). In this well-written volume he tracks the story of the Bible through the lens of the temple and the tabernacle. The content of the book moves chronologically, "examining theologically how God's presence, power, and holiness engage with people through 'temples,' or 'temple-like' places" (11).

The author begins in the first chapter with a study of the Hebrew and Greek words used to refer to the tabernacle and temple. As a result of this study it is determined that the words used for the tabernacle and temple stress the presence, power, holiness, and worship of God (18). This preliminary lexical study is helpful as it lays the foundation for the chapters that follow.

Hays builds on this foundation by explaining how the Garden of Eden functioned much like a sanctuary or temple would, "a place where God's presence dwells in a special kind of way so that his people can be with him and worship him" (21). The author moves to prove this with nine convincing reasons (22–24). The eviction of Adam and Eve from God's garden temple proves the need for a new dwelling place for God's presence. And, it is the details of these dwelling places (both real and supposed) that the author explains in chapter 3–7 of the book.

Chapter 3 covers the tabernacle; chapter 4–5 Solomon's temple and the departure of Yahweh from the temple; chapter 6 the second temple; and chapter 7 deals with the temple of God in the New Testament. The author begins his discussion on the tabernacle in chapter 3 by explaining the major themes of deliverance and presence from the book of Exodus. The point is made throughout the book that as one draws closer to the presence of God, the intensity of holiness increases (34). This is the reason God's instruction to Moses concerning the tabernacle starts with the ark (Exod. 25:10–22), moves outward to the table (Exod. 25:23–30), and then the lampstand (Exod. 25:31–40). The author spends adequate time talking through the details of the ark (esp., materials used, design, decoration, and contents), table, golden lampstand, incense altar tabernacle proper, curtains, alter of burnt offering, basin for washing and courtyard. In nearly every case the author is well balanced in his conclusions regarding symbology or prophetic connections found in the tabernacle and its accoutrements. This reviewer was particularly impressed with the explanation and details regarding the golden lampstand. The author reminds us that the treelike appearance of the tabernacle lampstand "is quite different from the traditional seven-branched candelabrum that is the national symbol of Israel" (44). The author explains the unique details regarding the stone or clay "lamps" used on the lampstand, the metallurgical details of the lampstand, the method of its construction and its dimensions. Finally, the author draws a connection between the Garden of Eden (the garden dwelling place of God) and the tabernacle, saying, "A sacred or holy tree in the very presence of God is suggestive of the tree of life that was in the garden" (47–

48). Chapter 3 ends by addressing the symbolism in the tabernacle and its connection to Christ. Hays confronts the issue directly, "We do not have the liberty to let our imaginations run wild and dream up prophetic connections about every little detail of the tabernacle" (60). The author says rightly, "The primary and correct way to study Christ in the tabernacle is to observe how all the major theological themes in the tabernacle find their ultimate fulfillment and completion in Christ" (60). Therefore, the tabernacle's limited access to the presence of God is overshadowed by Christ, who provides direct access to the presence of God through his atoning sacrifice. "The tabernacle was a shadow; Christ is the reality. This is the correct approach to understanding how Christ relates to the tabernacle" (61).

In chapter four the author undertakes the topic of Solomon's temple. The strength of this chapter is *not* found in the author's lucid explanation of the temple construction and its details, but in the comparison between that temple and the tabernacle. Hays builds on his article "To Praise Solomon or to Bury Him" (*JSOT* 28.2 [2003]: 149–74), suggesting that the narrative details concerning the temple construction are pejorative toward Solomon and his building of the temple. The author defends this claim on the following significant differences between the tabernacle and temple destruction in Exodus and 1 Kings respectively: (1) God's role in the construction accounts, (2) Israel's participation in the construction accounts, (3) the primary craftsmen's identity and training, (4) the materials used, and (5) the time dedicated to their construction. The author summarizes his conclusions,

> The physical temple that Solomon builds, the high point of his reign, is spectacular from a human point of view, but theologically it is clouded with numerous negative connotations from the beginning. It is not a step forward in Israel's relationship with God, a supposed improvement on the tabernacle, but rather a step backward (87).

Yahweh's departure from Solomon's temple is covered in chapter 5. Hays applies clear and fluid exegesis throughout the chapter and makes very helpful observations regarding the cherubim attending to the presence of God and their involvement in Yahweh's departure from Solomon's temple. The author does such an excellent job of explaining who these divine attendants are, that pages 111–26 of this volume provide a better angelology than most monographs dedicated to the subject.

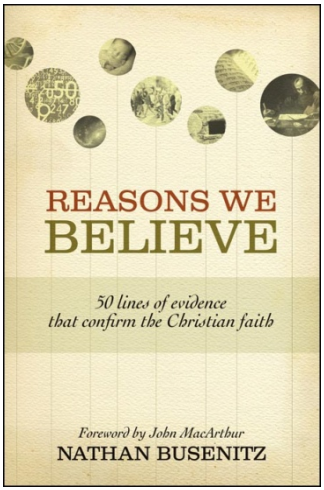
The second temple is the subject of the sixth chapter, which is replete with helpful background information relevant to second temple Israel. The author traces the history of Israel from Ezra to Herod, explains the rise of the synagogue, and explores the details of Herod's temple and the various courtyards and gates surrounding it.

In chapter seven Hays moves from the Old Testament era to the New and addresses the "temple" issues as they reach their consummation in Jesus Christ. Hays rightly reminds the reader that the presence of God did not dwell in the second temple, "until Jesus Christ walks in through its gates" (167). Hays explains Jesus as the temple (John 2:19) and how "each Christian believer becomes a temple of God, since God does indeed dwell within each of them" (178). Hays explains Ezekiel's temple vision in this chapter. He says Ezekiel's vision is prophetic, "pointing figuratively and representatively to realities brought about by Jesus Christ in the New Testament

and probably realized in the new Jerusalem" (182). Hays does explain the literal view and is charitable towards it.

In addition to the great content offered by Hays, this volume offers many helpful images, tables, and graphs—all printed on high quality glossy paper. One such example is a map of the second temple with numbered locations and explanations from Acts (174–75). The book contains a bibliography and subject and Scripture index, which makes the book a helpful resource tool for the Bible student and exegete.

This reviewer recommends this book to anyone desiring to explore issues related to the temple and tabernacle. Additionally, this volume contributes to the subject of Old Testament theology as it functions as an Old Testament theology viewed through the lens of the temple and the tabernacle.



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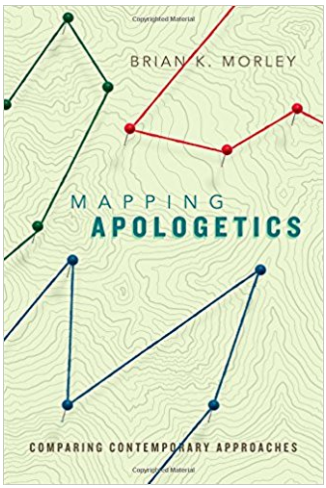

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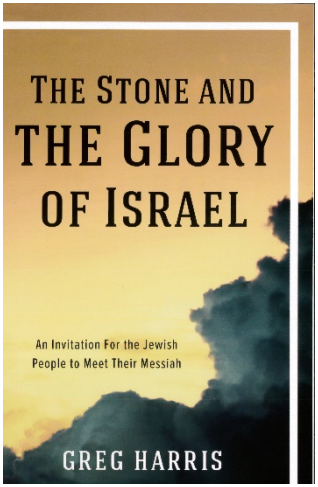

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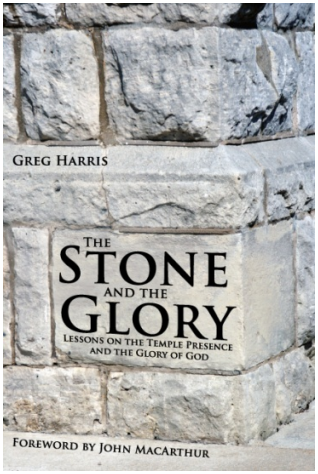

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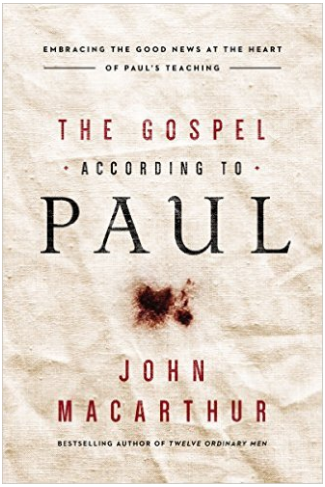

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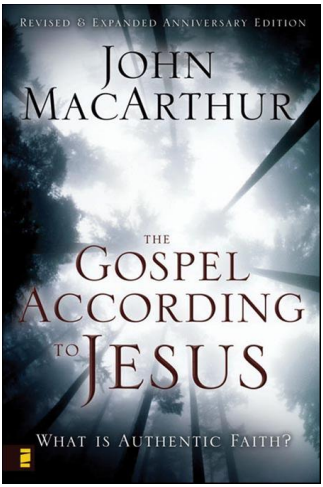

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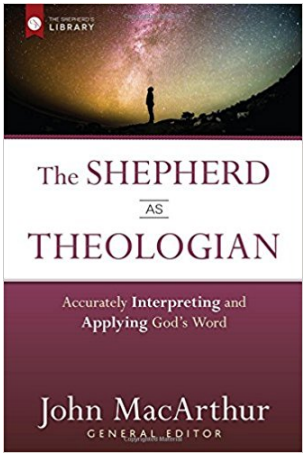

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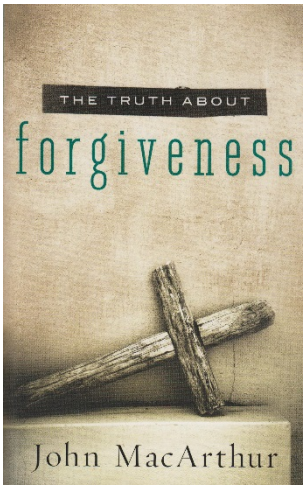

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