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EDITORIAL

Nathan Busenitz
Dean of Faculty
The Master's Seminary

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Study the greatest revivals recorded in biblical or church history, and a common theme emerges. God draws sinners to Himself through the preaching and teaching of His Word. From Judah's revival under King Josiah (2 Chr 34:14–21) to the dramatic growth of the early church (Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20), the supernatural power behind revival is always the same. Where God's Word is absent, spiritual darkness abounds. But where His truth is faithfully proclaimed, through the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph 6:17), the light of the Word pierces the darkness and transforms lives (John 1:5–13). A commitment to preaching and teaching the Word of God, then, lies at the heart of revival (Rom 10:14–15).

The sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation was one of the greatest revivals in church history. Given the current penchant for market-driven growth strategies, one might wonder: What caused the Reformation? Was it the creativity or cleverness of the Reformers? Or, more specifically, should the credit go to Martin Luther and his *95 Theses*?

If one were to ask Luther such questions, his answer would consist of a resounding "No." He refused to credit himself or his writings. Instead, he gave all the credit to God and His Word. Near the end of his life, Luther declared: "All I have done is put forth, preach and write the Word of God, and apart from this I have done nothing…. It is the Word that has done great things…. I have done nothing; the Word has done and achieved everything."[1] Elsewhere, he exclaimed: "By the Word the earth has been subdued; by the Word the Church has been saved; and by the Word also it shall be reestablished."[2] Noting Scripture's foundational place in his own heart, Luther wrote: "No matter what happens, you should say: There is God's Word. This is

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[1] Martin Luther, cited from Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1970), 66–67.

[2] Martin Luther, cited in Jean Henri Merle d'Aubigné, *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, 20 vols. Trans. H. White. (New York: Robert Carter & Bros., 1853), 2:89–90.

my rock and anchor. On it I rely, and it remains. Where it remains, I, too, remain; where it goes, I, too, go."[3]

Luther understood what truly caused the Reformation. He recognized it was the Word of God empowered by the Holy Spirit preached in the common languages of Europe, so that people could understand. When their ears were exposed to the truth of God's Word, it pierced their hearts and they were transformed (2 Cor 5:17). That power is summarized in the familiar words of Hebrews 4:12: "The Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword." The book of Jeremiah vividly makes the same point, "Is not My word like fire?" declares the Lord, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?" (Jer 23:29).

During the late Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church had imprisoned God's Word in the Latin language, a language the common people of Europe did not speak. The Reformers unlocked the Scriptures by translating them. And once the people had the Word of God, the Reformation became inevitable. This commitment to the Scriptures is seen even in the centuries prior to Martin Luther, beginning with the Forerunners to the Reformation: In the 12th century, the Waldensians translated the New Testament from the Latin Vulgate into regional dialects. According to tradition, the Waldensians were so committed to Scripture that they memorized large sections of the Bible. If Roman Catholic authorities confiscated their printed copies of Scripture, the Word of God remained hidden in their hearts and minds.

In the 14th century, John Wycliffe and his associates at Oxford translated the Bible from Latin into English. Wycliffe's followers, known as the Lollards, went throughout the countryside preaching and reading passages of Scripture in English. In the 15th century, Jan Huss preached in the language of the people, and not in Latin, making him the most popular preacher in Prague at the time. Yet, because Huss insisted that Christ alone was the head of the church, not the pope, the Roman Catholic Council of Constance condemned him for heresy and burned him at the stake in July 1415.

In the 16th century, as the study of Greek and Hebrew was recovered, Martin Luther translated the Bible into German, with the New Testament being completed in 1522. In 1526, William Tyndale completed a translation of the Greek New Testament into English. A few years later he also translated the Pentateuch from Hebrew. Shortly thereafter he was arrested and executed as a heretic—being strangled and then burned at the stake. According to Fox's *Book of Martyrs*, Tyndale's last words were "Lord, Open the King of England's Eyes." A couple years after his death King Henry VIII authorized the Great Bible in England—a Bible that was largely based on Tyndale's translation work. The Great Bible laid the foundation for the later King James version of 1611.

The common thread, from Reformer to Reformer, was an undying commitment to the authority and sufficiency of Scripture. They were willing to sacrifice everything, including their lives, to get the Word of God into the hands and hearts of the people. Their commitment was fueled by a recognition that the power for reformation and revival was not in them, but in the gospel (cf. Rom 1:16–17). They used the Latin

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[3] Martin Luther, *What Luther Says: An Anthology*. 3 vols., ed. Ewald Plass. St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 68.

phrase s*ola Scriptura* ("Scripture alone") to emphasize the truth that God's Word was the true power and ultimate authority behind all they said and did.

It was ignorance of Scripture that made the Reformation necessary. It was the recovery of the Scripture that made the Reformation possible. And it was the power of the Scripture that gave the Reformation its enduring impact, as the Holy Spirit brought the truth of His Word to bear on the hearts and minds of individual sinners, regenerating them and giving them eternal life.

The same is true today. Consequently, contemporary ministers of the gospel ought to remember the true power behind what they do. Genuine revival is always a work of the Holy Spirit, using the means of His Word to transform lives. The preacher's primary responsibility is not found in cleverness or creativity, but in faithfulness (Matt 25:21). Accordingly, Paul's reminder to Timothy is one every pastor must frequently call to mind: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15).

ARE THE CANONICAL GOSPELS TO BE IDENTIFIED AS A GENRE OF GRECO-ROMAN BIOGRAPHY? THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS SAY 'NO.'

F. David Farnell
Professor of New Testament
The Master's Seminary

Liberal-critical and evangelical-critical scholarship has recently attempted to identify the Gospels with the ancient style of writing known as Greco-Roman biography. The author has already established this position as highly tenuous, reflecting a cycle in New Testament studies that often seeks novelty in interpretation (cf. Acts 17:21, καινότερον—"new," "unique," "novel"). A close examination of the nascent church Fathers, especially as found in the first great church historian, Eusebius, reveals that the early church decidedly rejected the Greco-Roman historiographic tradition. Prominent early Fathers deprecated the quality of historians like Thucydides and Plutarch who are now identified with the Gospel tradition in New Testament scholarship. Instead, the early Fathers identified the historiography of the Gospels with the Hebrew tradition as evidenced in the Old Testament, reflecting the historical genre of Old Testament promise, now seeing the fulfilment of those promises. They also affirmed the absolute trustworthiness and accuracy of the canonical Gospels as produced of the Holy Spirit of truth. Once again, critical scholarship, being influenced by the Enlightenment, has chosen to disregard the voice of the early church as the nature of the Gospels.

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Introduction to the Problem

In a prior article,[1] the current New Testament discipline's ongoing fad of identifying the canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as following the pattern for the writing or historiography of ancient Greco-Roman biography was refuted. Instead, the Gospel accounts are to be identified with the Old Testament historiographic tradition of promise (OT) and fulfillment (NT). The importance of this distinction centers in the acute tendency of the Greco-Roman historiographical idea to

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[1] F. David Farnell, "Do The Canonical Gospels Reflect Greco-Roman Biographical Genre or Are They Modeled After the Old Testament Books?," *MSJ* 30 no. 1 (Spring 2019): 5–44.

negate the historicity of the Gospels as they center in Jesus Christ. While the Greco-Roman tradition often invented and/or created traditions about historical events, the canonical Gospels most certainly did not do so. Rather, the Gospel writers anchored their material in the historical eyewitness accounts of those who directly interacted with Jesus and the events surrounding His life. The nascent, earliest church identified the Gospel of Matthew as written by Levi, the tax collector. John directly linked himself with "those who beheld His glory" when the "Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14; John 14:26; 16:13; 1 John 1:1–4; 4:4–6). Luke was understood as having direct contact with eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1–4), and the Gospel of Mark was the preaching of the apostle Peter.[2]

Strategically, this refutation of the Greco-Roman historiography hypothesis as being the model for the Gospel accounts also finds strong support among the ancient church Fathers, especially those of the earliest periods of the nascent church. This article will examine strategic references that support the idea (1) that the early Fathers taught the Gospels as anchored to the promise and fulfillment pattern of the Old Testament and (2) that the early Fathers sharply distinguished the historiography of the Gospels from the ancient Greco-Roman tradition.

Eusebius of Caesarea's works, especially that of *Preparation for the Gospel*, provide strong evidence that not only have more liberal evangelical scholars, like Charles H. Talbert, Richard A. Burridge, and David Aune erroneously linked the canonical Gospels to the wrong paradigm of Greco-Roman biography, but so also, as a result of uniting with their liberal counterparts, evangelical critical scholars like Michael Licona, Craig Evans, Darrell Bock and Craig Blomberg, have also chosen the wrong paradigm for the genre of the canonical Gospels by their support of the Greco-Roman hypothesis.[3]

Several important arguments in relation to Eusebius' works need highlighting as an introduction to this subject. First, Eusebius' fifteen-book work of great significance in this regard, entitled *Preparatio Evangelica,* or *Preparation for the Gospel*, is the first part of his larger work, entitled *Demonstratio Evangelica*. Edwin H. Gifford describes Eusebius' effort here "as the most systematic and comprehensive of many apologetic works of Christian antiquity."[4] More significantly, Eusebius as

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[2] E.g., Eusebius *Hist. Eccl*. III.XXXIX.1–17. For further information, see F. David Farnell, "The Synoptic Gospels in the Ancient Church: A Testimony to the Priority of Matthew's Gospel," *MSJ* 10 no. 1 (Spring 1999) 53–86; idem. "How Views of Inspiration Have Impacted Synoptic Problem Discussions," *MSJ* 13 no. 1 (Spring 2002): 33–64.

[3] Charles H. Talbert, *What Is a Gospel? The Genre of the Canonical Gospels* (London: SPCK, 1977), 133–35; Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 233–51; Richard A. Burridge, *Four Gospels, One Jesus? A Symbolic Reading*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1–33; Michael R. Licona, "Introduction," in *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels? What We Can Learn From Ancient Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2017), 1–8; Craig Evans, "Foreword," in *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels*, ix–xi; Darrell L. Bock, "Precision and Accuracy: Making Distinctions in the Cultural Context," in *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 368; see also "An Interview with Dr. Craig Blomberg," *LogosTalk*, April 22, 2013, accessed November 4, 2019, https://blog.logos.com/2013/04/an-interview-with-dr-craig-blomberg/.

[4] Edwin Hamilton Gifford, "Preface," in Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, vol. 1 (Books 1–9), trans. Edwin Hamilton Gifford (1903; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1981), v.

the first great church historian, as well as an eminent theologian of the recently converted Constantine, in his *Preparation for the Gospel*, set forth a comprehensive defense of Christianity.[5] David L. Dungan insightfully observed in his study of Eusebius' attitude toward the Greco-Roman tradition, entitled *Constantine's Bible*, that *Preparation for the Gospel* "defended the Christian rejection of the confused, immoral, and self-contradictory Greco-Roman tradition."[6] These are hardly terms that would be applied if Eusebius truly believed that the Gospels partook of such historiographical lineage as evidenced by either the Greeks or Romans.

Second, in Eusebius' even larger second book, entitled *Proof of the Gospel*, Eusebius affirmed that the Gospel writers patterned their writings, as well as their belief systems, after the Jewish historiographical tradition as evidenced in the Old Testament canonical books.

Third, Eusebius' work, entitled *Ecclesiastical History*, demonstrated the absolute certainty of the New Testament canon, especially the four canonical Gospels, which he termed the "holy tetrad of the Gospels" (τὴν ἁγιάν τῶν εὐαγγελίων τετρακτύν). According to Eusebius, any book in the New Testament that was accepted by the church had to be "true, genuine, and recognized."[7] The church in his day investigated this "holy tetrad" and accepted it with absolute certainty that it had been written by the individuals whose names Christian tradition had attached to them.[8] Indeed, for Eusebius, the ancient bishops from the earliest times of the church to his day, through an unbroken chain, had received these four Gospels (as well as the other canonical NT books) as genuine, as books that were absolutely authentic with regard to authorship and content.[9] Indeed, these were the four Gospels that the early church's orthodox bishops had approved as authoritatively genuine without question.[10]

In summary, Eusebius presented in his *Ecclesiastical History* the evidence that the canonical Gospels, as well as the other books of the NT, were "as hard as granite" in terms of their genuine witness by the earliest parts of the church.[11] These were the undisputed accounts that the earliest church had absolute certainty as to their origin by direct apostolic witnesses who wrote these accounts of Jesus' life.

Fourth, also strategically important is that Eusebius affirmed the ability of the Gospels to be fully harmonized, as evidenced in his production of a fourth work, *Sections and Canons*.[12] This work provided a table of Gospel pericopes of single, double, and triple parallels to function as a guide in verifying the harmony and concord of the Gospel accounts of Jesus. This table served to an answer to attacks on

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[5] David L. Dungan, *Constantine's Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 59.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl*. III.XXV.6.

[8] Ibid. III.XXV.1.

[9] On the passing down of exact information regarding authenticity of the books used by the earliest church see Ibid., III.III.1–3; XXXVII.II; VI.XXII.3.

[10] Ibid., III.XXV.1.

[11] Dungan, *Constantine's Bible*, 92.

[12] For an electronic version, see https://danielbwallace.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/eusebian-canons-conversion-table.pdf, accessed November 4, 2019.

Christianity, especially the neoplatonistic philosopher Porphyry of Tyre (ca. 234–305), who excelled in collecting and summarizing the attacks in his massive 15-part work, entitled *Against the Christians* (Κατὰ Χριστιανῶν; or *Adversus Christianos*).[13] Eusebius' *Sections and Canons* is so important that the Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testament Graece*, 28th Edition (as well as the earlier editions) still use them in the inner margins.[14] All four of Eusebius' works, *Preparation for the Gospel*, *Proof of the Gospel*, *Ecclesiastical History*, and *Sections and Canons*, constitute his formal defense of charges against Christianity that had been conducted by its enemies prior to the legalization of the Christian faith in Rome.[15]

What follows is a special look at the first of Eusebius' works, *Preparation for the Gospel*, to highlight how Eusebius distanced Christianity and its Gospels from Greco-Roman tradition.

Eusebius of Caesarea: The First Great Ancient Church Historian

Who was Eusebius, and why were his scholarly investigations and resultant writings so strategic and significant for the issue of the Gospels and the entire New Testament canon?

Eusebius (ca. 260–339/340)[16] was the preeminent historian and biblical scholar of the Emperor Constantine I, who ruled from AD 306–37, and as sole emperor from 324–37. Eusebius was a prolific writer, biblical scholar, and apologist for the earliest

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[13] Porphyry asserted that the Gospel writers contradicted one another. For Eusebius, Porphyry's criticisms were a grave, potentially fatal, danger to Christianity, and many in the early church concurred. For more discussion of Porphyry's attacks, see David Laird Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 98–111. Porphyry's work had occurred at an unfortunate time in the history of Christianity, during a lull in Roman persecution sometime around AD 270. The damage of Porphyry's arguments revived anti-Christian sentiment among pagan philosophers and Roman officials. Unfortunately, Porphyry's work is no longer extant, for it was condemned by religious authorities and all copies burned (including commentaries on it) when Christianity gained ascendancy. Nevertheless, the church's memory of Porphyry's damage to the church was long, for Augustine (AD 354–430) related, "Porphyry, the most learned of the philosophers (and) the bitterest enemy of the Christians" (Augustine, *City of God*, 1.22, in Book XIX:22 of NPCF, Series I, vol. II, 947). Even in the 19th century, the German critic, Adolf Harnack (1851–1930) described Porphyry's criticisms in the following startling terms, "This work of Porphyry is perhaps the most ample and thoroughgoing treatise which has ever been written against Christianity. It earned for its author the titles πάντων δυσμενέστατος καὶ πολεμώτατος ('most malicious and hostile of all') 'hostis dei, veritatis inimicus,' 'sceleratarum atrium magister' (God's enemy, a foe to truth, a master of accursed arts), and so forth. But, although our estimate can only be based on fragments, it is not too much to say that the controversy between the philosophy of religion and Christianity lies today in the very position in which Porphyry placed it. Even at this time of day Porphyry remains unanswered." In Adolf Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. and ed. James Moffatt, 2nd ed. (New York: Putnam and Sons, 1908), 1:505.

[14] See "Conversion Table for the Eusebian Canons," *Daniel B. Wallace*, April 13, 2014, accessed November 4, 2019, https://danielbwallace.com/2014/04/13/conversion-table-for-the-eusebian-canons/.

[15] Eusebius also authored *Against Porphyry*, which consisted of twenty-five books but it did not survive.

[16] His most usual designation was "Eusebius of Pamphilus," with Pamphilus being somehow closely connected to him most likely as friend. Many believe that quite possibly Eusebius was adopted by Pamphilus (martyred AD 310) as the latter's heir in the phrase, Εὐσέβιος ὁ Παμφίλου found in a scribal Scholion in his work *Preparation for the Gospel*. See Gifford, "Preface," in *Preparation for the Gospel*, ix.

times of Christianity. Many credit him with the invention of the genre of Christian church history and chronology as well as being the most important source for the reign of Constantine.[17] From his election as bishop of Caesarea until his death he played a crucial role in ecclesiastical politics, especially in the eastern Roman Empire.

The strategic importance of Eusebius is not only his immense scholarship but also that his research had direct touch with the earliest historical records of Christianity—he attended and assented to the decisions of the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. While Eusebius' integrity as a historian has sometimes been challenged, the authenticity of Eusebius' works as coming directly from him have been vindicated over time.[18]

In his defense of Christianity and its critics, especially but not exclusively centered in Porphyry, Eusebius produced his four strategic works. Moreover, while the development of the idea of a canon or rule of authority may have come from Greek philosophical schools with its idea of *polis* as a metaphor for accuracy, correctness, and truth,[19] Eusebius skillfully distanced himself from the historiography of the ancient Greek tradition, focusing on the uniqueness of the authoritative documents of the New Testament, especially the canonical Gospels.

Indeed, though in some ways the church had been influenced broadly by the Greek cultural and philosophical idea of gathering the genuine copies of teachings, examples, and writings of any founder of a system, as well as his disciples, this does not mean that the church had described the New Testament authoritative writings in terms of the *historiographical* ways of the Greek philosophical schools. Dungan observes:

> It was not until the fourth century, after the Roman emperor had stepped in and—with the whole-hearted assistance of the orthodox bishops—took de facto charge of aspects of the Catholic church's doctrine, polity, and scripture selection, that the first occurrence of the term canon of scripture appeared, consisting of a list of the approved writings of the Old and New Testament, and the Greek term *kanōn* came to be increasingly used in the narrow Latin sense of *regula* = law.[20]

This distinction between the New Testament writings from Greco-Roman historiography is very evident in Eusebius' writings.

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[17] Indeed, Eusebius is credited with the work, *The Life of Constantine* (*Vita Constantini*), which is recognized as the main source for the religious policy of Constantine the Great, though it details many other aspects of his life. See Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, trans. Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999).

[18] Unfortunately, no contemporary biography of Eusebius is extant. Eusebius successor, Acacius, produced one but it is now lost. What remain are a few vague statements of later writers as well as evidence of his extant writings.

[19] Dungan, *Constantine's Bible*, 26–31.

[20] Ibid., 30

The Strategic Evidence from Eusebius' *Preparation of the Gospel*

Some observations at the outset must be made from an examination of Eusebius' central arguments in *Preparation for the Gospel*. Importantly, he considers ancient writers who were historians, like Plutarch and Thucydides, whom he specifically mentions among many more, to be foundationally faulty in their learning and historiographical endeavors, and filled with inaccuracy and contradiction. These allegations were not only Eusebius' opinion but were cited by many previous Christian writers that Eusebius quotes extensively (e.g., Clement, Tatian) and Hebrew writers (e.g., Josephus). Moreover, Eusebius' carefully catalogues that even these very same hellenistic writers disagreed significantly amongst themselves, manifestly contradicting each other. Eusebius takes great care to emphasize the inconsistency and contradiction within the Greco-Roman tradition, as well as a faulty writing tradition of the ancients.

Eusebius, moreover, is not positive about any ancient historians that had prominence in his day. This deserves special mention, since liberal, as well as evangelical, critical scholars, present some of these writers especially as the pattern of Greco-Roman historiography being the pattern for the Gospels. As will be seen, Eusebius championed the ancient Hebrew tradition that was the pattern for Christianity and its documents. Eusebius mentions many Greco-Roman authors and concludes negatively for them. Important also is the fact that the rejection of these writers is not only confined to Eusebius but he quotes many others of the Jewish-Christian tradition, such as Josephus and Clement of Alexandria for support of the rejection of the Greco-Roman writing tradition. As Gifford's introduction to *Preparation for the Gospel* long ago observed, "[M]any of [Eusebius'] arguments [against the historians/philosophers] are the same as those of the earlier Apologies, Aristides, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen; that he consistently borrows long passages from their writings, including the same quotations from Greek authors, reproduced word for word with due acknowledgement. The particular value of the *Preparatio* resulting from this wealth of quotation is universally acknowledged."[21]

Therefore, Eusebius' negativity regarding the ancient historiographical tradition is not merely his opinion, but as the church's first great historian, he would likely represent the thinking of the orthodox church in the Roman Empire of his day. His work is a comprehensive defense of Christian truth and a rejection of preeminent Greek historians who stand as notables in history writing known in his day. While admittedly he is, on occasion, more positive of Plato and his tradition, as being more in agreement with Hebrew Scriptures, Eusebius strongly concludes in book XV, "We must therefore carefully observe that the oldest of their theologians [of the Greco-Roman tradition] were proved on the highest testimony to have no special knowledge of history, but to rely solely on fables."[22]

Eusebius ties these "theologians" directly into their historical tradition when he notes, "[I]n the first three books [of *Preparation*], I thoroughly examined not only

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[21] Gifford, "Preface," in Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, xvi.

[22] Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, XV.I.c, 848. Hereafter, the page number in parenthesis represents the pagination of Gifford's translation.

the fables concerning their gods which have been turned into ridicule by their own theologians and poets, but also the solemn and secret physical theories of these latter, which have been transported by their grand philosophy high up to heaven and to the various parts of the world."[23]

Eusebius accomplished his deprecation of these ancient sources by limiting his own contributions and compiling a numerous wealth of quotes from ancient classical philosophers of Greece in great length.[24] Interestingly, some of the authors quoted by Eusebius are not extant or known except through Eusebius' extensive quoting of them. Importantly, after effectively countering these sources with the superiority of the Christian message, Eusebius further argued that he, in his work, brought "the fine philosophy of the Greeks" and laid "bare before the eyes of all the useless learning therein."[25] Eusebius' contention is that he has set forth "with well-judged and sound reasoning" that the "religion and philosophy" of the Hebrews, "is both ancient and true, in preference to that of the Greeks."[26] As will be seen, for Eusebius, the canonical Gospels are anchored not to Greco-Roman historiography, but to that of the Hebrew (OT) materials.

Eusebius' *Preparation for the Gospel* is crucial evidence against comparing the Gospels to the ancient writing practices that evangelicals promote in Greco-Roman biography hypotheses. In his introduction to this work, he sets forth the theme, which is "to show the nature of Christianity to those who know not what it means."[27] He defends Christianity against Greek (e.g., Porphyry, Seneca) and Jewish critics of his day and in the past. These objections by opponents encompass three basic areas: (1) Christians have abandoned the ancestral religions of the Greeks (V.a2); (2) Christians have accepted the foreign doctrines of the Barbarians, i.e., Jews (5b); and (3) Christian inconsistency in rejecting Jewish sacrifices, rites, and general manner of life, while appropriating their sacred Scripture (i.e., Old Testament) and promised blessings (5c), this latter point being more fully developed in his *The Proof of the Gospel*.[28]

In books (I–III) of *Preparation for the Gospel*, Eusebius criticizes pagan theology, mythical, allegorical, and political culture; in the next three books, IV–VI he refutes the chief oracles, worship of demons, and various opinions of Greek philosophers on such areas as fate and free will; in books VII–IX Eusebius demonstrates the superiority of the Hebrew religion based in testimony of various authors as the excellence of the Scriptural writings in the Old Testament and the absolute truth of their history; in Books X–XII Eusebius castigates the Greeks asserting that the Greeks had been plagiarizers of philosophy and theology from the Hebrews, asserting that even

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[23] Ibid.

[24] As Gifford notes, Eusebius gathered "a great multitude" of quotes "from all parts of the Greek literature of a thousand years, from works both known and unknown of poets, historians, and philosophers." "Preface," in Eusebius *Preparation for the Gospel*, xvi.

[25] Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, XV.1.a, 850.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., I.1a, 1.

[28] See Gifford, in Eusebius *Preparation for the Gospel*, xviii.

Plato was dependent upon Moses; and in the last three books (XIII–XV), he continued his comparison of Plato with Moses, adding more information on contradictions of other Greek philosophers, with special attention to the Peripatetics and Stoics.[29]

Eusebius Cites Long Christian (and Jewish) Tradition that the Greeks Were Mere Plagiarizers

In the second part of *Preparation for the Gospel* (Books IX–XV), Eusebius cites a long Christian tradition from earlier Christian writers that the Greeks were mere plagiarizers. Strategically, he demonstrates by extensive quoting from Christian writers before him that such an idea was not original to him but maintained by a prestigious Christian heritage from the earliest period of Christianity. Eusebius writes:

> But you must not be surprised if we say that possibly the doctrine of the Hebrews have been plagiarised by them, since they [Greeks] are not only proved to have stolen the other branches of learning from Egyptians and Chaldees and the rest of the barbarous nations, but even to the present day are detected in robbing one another of the honours gained in their own writers.
>
> At all events one after another they surreptitiously steal the phrases of their neighbors together with the thoughts and whole arrangement of treatises, and pride themselves as if upon their own labours. And do not suppose that this is my statement for you shall again hear the very wisest of them convicting one another of theft in their writings.[30]

A few of many examples must suffice here. In substantiating this position, Eusebius in Book X quotes *Miscellanies* by Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215) as to the plagiarism by the Greeks:

> Come, and let us adduce the Greeks as witnesses against themselves to the theft. For, inasmuch as they pilfer from one another, they establish the fact that they are thieves; and although against their will, they are detected, clandestinely appropriating to those of their own race the truth which belongs to us. For if they do not keep their hands from each other, they will hardly do it from our authors. I shall say nothing of philosophic dogmas, since the very persons who are the authors of the divisions into sects, confess in writing, so as not to be convicted of ingratitude, that they have received from Socrates the most important of their dogmas. But after availing myself of a few testimonies of men most talked of, and of repute among the Greeks, and exposing their plagiarizing style.[31]

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[29] Ibid., xviii–xix. The categories referenced here receive capitalization in Gifford's introduction.

[30] Ibid., X.I., 491.

[31] Ibid; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* (or *Miscellanies*), VI.ii., in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2., ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. William Wilson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885), 119. *Ante-Nicene Fathers* is hereafter abbreviated *ANF*.

Clement speaks negatively of Orpheus, Heraclitus, Plato, Pythagoras, Herodotus, Theopompus, *Thucydides* [emphasis added], Demosthenes, Aeschines, Lysias, Isocrates, and many others who steal from others. Clement further notes after extensive citing of these famous Greek writers:

> Let these species, then, of Greek plagiarism of sentiments, being such, stand as sufficient for a clear specimen to him who is capable of perceiving.
> And not only have they been detected pirating and paraphrasing thoughts and expressions, as will be shown; but they will also be convicted of the possession of what is entirely stolen. For stealing entirely what is the production of others, they have published it as their own; as Eugamon of Cyrene did the entire book on the Thesprotians from Musæus, and Pisander of Camirus the Heraclea of Pisinus of Lindus, and Panyasis of Halicarnassus, the capture of Œchalia from Cleophilus of Samos.[32]

Again, Clement is quoted in a lengthy statement, saying, "For life would fail me, were I to undertake to go over the subject in detail, to expose the selfish plagiarism of the Greeks, and how they claim the discovery of the best of their doctrines, which they have received from us."[33] And again:

> And now they are convicted not only of borrowing doctrines from the Barbarians, but also of relating as prodigies of Hellenic mythology the marvels found in our records, wrought through divine power from above, by those who led holy lives, while devoting attention to us. And we shall ask at them whether those things which they relate are true or false. But they will not say that they are false; for they will not with their will condemn themselves of the very great silliness of composing falsehoods, but of necessity admit them to be true.[34]

Eusebius comments at the end of the quotation from Clement with the following: "[T]o this Clement subjoined countless instances and convicted the Greeks of having been plagiarists by indisputable proofs."[35]

Interestingly, Eusebius also cites the Jewish historian Josephus [AD 37–ca. 100] as another historian and authority to the inaccurate and/or false historical reporting of Greek historians, mentioning criticism of Thucydides, and arguing that Greek historiography was not to be trusted:

> My first thought is one of intense astonishment at the current opinion that, in the study of primeval worthy as history, the Greeks alone deserve serious attention, that the truth should be sought from them, and that neither we nor any others in the world are to be trusted. In my view the very reverse of this

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., VI.iii.

[35] Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, X.II, 494.

is the case, if, that is to say, we are not to take idle prejudices as our guide, but to extract the truth from the facts themselves….

Surely, then, it is absurd that the Greeks should be so conceited as to think themselves the sole possessors of a knowledge of antiquity and the only accurate reporters of its history. Anyone can easily discover from the historians themselves that their writings have no basis of sure knowledge, but merely present the facts as conjectured by individual authors. More often than not they confute each other in their works, not hesitating to give the most contradictory accounts of the same events….

What need, however, to speak of the histories of individual states and matters of minor importance, when contradictory accounts of the Persian invasion and the events which accompanied it have been given by writers of the first rank? On many points even Thucydides is accused of error by some critics, notwithstanding his reputation for writing the most accurate history of his time….

For such inconsistency many other causes might possibly be found if one cared to look for them; for my part, I attach the greatest weight to the two which I proceed to mention. I will begin with that to keep which I regard as the more fundamental. The main responsibility for the errors of later historians who aspired to write on antiquity and for the licence granted to their mendacity rests with the original neglect of the Greeks to keep official records of current events. This neglect was not confined to the lesser Greek states. Even among the Athenians, who are reputed to be indigenous and devoted to learning, we find that nothing of the kind existed, and their most ancient public records are said to be the laws on homicide drafted for them by Dracon, a man who lived only a little before the despotism of Pisistratus. Of the Arcadians and their vaunted antiquity it is unnecessary to speak, since even at a later date they had hardly learnt the alphabet.[36]

Eusebius then cites Tatian's (AD ca. 120–180) *Address to the Greeks* as another authority that rejected Greco-Roman tradition. Tatian, who was a pupil of Justin Martyr and author of the *Diatessaron*, a harmony of the four Gospels, composed his apology approximately between 155–165. Eusebius quotes Tatian as follows:

But now it seems proper for me to demonstrate that our philosophy is older than the systems of the Greeks. Moses and Homer shall be our limits, each of them being of great antiquity; the one being the oldest of poets and his-

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[36] Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1.2–4, in *Josephus: The Life, Against Apion*, ed. H. St. J. Thackeray, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926). See Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, X.VII (510–13).

torians, and the other the founder of all barbarian wisdom. Let us, then, institute a comparison between them; and we shall find that our doctrines are older, not only than those of the Greeks, but than the invention of letters.[37]

Tatian,[38] a hearer of Justin Martyr, was an Assyrian Christian writer and theologian of the second century, who produced the first known harmony of the Gospels, entitling it the *Diatessaron*. His harmony is strategic because it reflects the early nascent church's belief in the ability of the Gospels to be fully harmonized in their entirety into one single Gospel without contradictions.[39] Tatian's work demonstrates clear evidence of the importance and authority of the four canonical Gospels in the mid-second century. Tatian's *Diatessaron* was still in use at the time of Eusebius who made reference to it.[40]

Others in the early church continued to produce harmonies that reflected the early church's belief that the four Gospels had no essential contradictions or errors. In his final writing, *The Retractions*, Augustine wrote that he composed his harmony of the Gospels "because of those who falsely accuse the Evangelists of lacking agreement."[41]

In *Preparation for the Gospel* XV, Eusebius summarizes his thoughts concerning his deprecation of Greek historians/historiography as follows:

> [I]n the first three books [I–III]…. We must therefore carefully observe the oldest of their theologians were proved on the highest testimony to have no special knowledge of history, but to rely solely on the fables…. [A]nd for proof against them [Books IV–VI] I made use not only of my own dialectic efforts but also especially of the sayings of the Greek philosophers themselves….
> Next in order I refused the method of the Greeks, and clearly showed how they were helped in all things by Barbarians, and that they bring forward no serious learning of their own….
> Again the next three books [Books VII–IX] showed the agreement of the best-esteemed philosophers of the Greeks with the opinion of the Hebrews, and again make their own utterances my witnesses….
> I have brought forward my proofs, that with no want of consideration, but with well-judged reasoning, we have chosen the philosophy and religion of

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[37] Tatian, *Address of Tatian to the Greeks,* XXXI, in Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 2., ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. J.E. Ryland (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885).

[38] Tatian, in later years fell into heresy according to Irenaeus, having aberrant views on marriage and denying that Adam received salvation after the fall. See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, I.XXVIII.1.

[39] The *Diatessaron* "signified the meticulous fitting together of the four Gospels into a single seamless narrative, harmonizing them." Dungan, *Constantine's Bible*, 41.

[40] F. L. Cross, ed., "Diatessaron," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (New York: Oxford University Press. 2005), XXX.

[41] Augustine, *Retractions*, 42, in *The Fathers of the Church*, trans. Mary Inez Bogan (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press of America, 1968), 60:150.

the Hebrews, which is both ancient and true, in preference to that of the Greeks, which result was also confirmed by the statements of the Greeks.[42]

Eusebius comments regarding his final chapter XV in *Preparation* that he would add final proof of "the solemn doctrines of the fine philosophy of the Greeks,… laying bare before the eyes of all the useless learning therein. And before all things we shall show that not from ignorance the things which they admire, but from contempt of the unprofitable study therein we have cared very little for them, and devoted our own souls to the practice of things far better."[43] And again, Eusebius spares no one of these famous ancient authorities, issuing sweeping negative conclusions:

> We have seen that the philosophy of Plato sometimes agreeing with the doctrines of the Hebrews, and sometimes at variance with them, wherein it has been proved [Plato's] to disagree even with its own favorite dogmas; while as to the doctrines of the other philosophers, the physicists, as they are called, and those of the Platonic succession, and Xenophanes and Parmenides, moreover of Pyrrho, and those who introduce the 'suspension of judgment,' and all the rest whose opinions have been refuted in the preceding discourse, we have seen that they stand in opposition alike to the doctrines of the Hebrews and of Plato and to the truth itself, and moreover have received their refutation by means of their own weapons.[44]

Instead, Eusebius argues, "We have preferred the truth and piety found among those who have been regarded as Barbarians to all the wisdom of the Greeks, not in ignorance of their fine doctrines, but by a well examined and thoroughly tested judgement."[45] He summarizes, based upon his analysis of the Greco-Roman historian Plutarch's own collections, that they all contradict each another:

> Now all these questions have been treated in a number of ways by the philosophers of whom we speak, but since Plutarch collected them in a few concise words, by bringing together the opinions of them all and their contractions, I think it will not be unprofitable to us if they are presented with a view to their rejection on reasonable grounds. For since they stood in diametrical opposition one to another, and stirred up battles and wars against each other, and nothing better, each with jealous strife of words confuting their neighbours' opinions, must not every one admit that our hesitation of these subjects [addressed by the Greek writers] has been reasonable and safe?[46]

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[42] Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, XV.I (848–50).

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid., XV.XXXII, 903.

Eusebius continues that these renowned writers of the Greco-Roman tradition have discredited their works themselves: "Since… we have now exhibited the dissension and fighting of these sages among themselves, and since the wholly superfluous, and unintelligible, and to us utterly unnecessary study and learning of all the other subjects which the tribes of philosophers still take pride, have been refuted not by our demonstrations but their own."[47] Eusebius drives home the inferiority of these historians, not only by demonstrating that there are manifest contradictions between their writers like Plutarch, Thucydides and all the rest, but by accusing the Greeks of being unoriginal in thought.[48] He boldly asserts that the Greco-Roman tradition of these writers gives evidence that "possibly the doctrine of the Hebrews have been plagiarised by them" and even more, that these writers "have stolen the other branches of learning from Egyptians and Chaldees and the rest of the barbarous nations, but even to the present day are detected in robbing one another of the honors gained in their own writings."[49]

The power and genius of Eusebius' argument is also found in tracing the earlier writers of Christian history, demonstrating that he does not stand alone in such opinions regarding Greco-Roman historiography, for he quotes other church Fathers before him to support this point as not original to him but as maintained previously by the early church. He cites Clement in the following terms, "To this Clement subjoined countless instances, and convicted by the Greeks of having been plagiarists by indisputable proofs."[50] For Eusebius and other significant church Fathers whom he cites, like Clement of Alexandria, the Greco-Roman historiographical tradition lacks originality, since the Greeks merely echoed others "by going out among the Barbarians, collected the other branches of learning, geometry, arithmetic, music, astronomy, medicine, and the very first elements of grammar, and numberless other artistic and profitable studies."[51] Such a negative attitude is not just Eusebius' opinion, for he comments that "Our Clement then, in his sixth *Miscellany*, has arranged the proof of this point at full length: so take and read me his words first."[52] He then quotes Clement (ca. AD 150–215) several times to prove his point, showing how far-reaching into church history the rejection of these writers went. Prominently, Eusebius indicates the influence of Clement's thought in the early church by citing his *Miscellanies*, or *Stromata* (Στρωματεῖς), which are among the largest and most valuable remains of Christian antiquity:

> Come, and let us adduce the Greeks as witnesses against themselves to the theft. For, inasmuch as they pilfer from one another, they establish the fact

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[47] Ibid., XV.LXII.d, 919.

[48] In *Preparation* Eusebius mentions Plutarch many dozens of times and Thucydides twice. He is not positive regarding Plutarch or Thucydides as well as other Greco-Roman writers but, each time, his opinion is consistently negative. His goal is to defend Christianity, as well as the Hebrew tradition, from Greco-Roman attacks that have been conducted, especially by Porphyry, who lauded the Greco-Roman tradition.

[49] Ibid., X.I.b–c, 491.

[50] Ibid., X.II, 494. cf. Clement, *Miscellanies*, vi.

[51] Ibid., X.I.d, 490.

[52] Ibid., X.I.d, 491; cf. Clement, *Miscellanies*, VI.c.2, §4., 491.

that they are thieves; and although against their will, they are detected, clandestinely appropriating to those of their own race the truth which belongs to us. For if they do not keep their hands from each other, they will hardly do it from our authors. I shall say nothing of philosophic dogmas, since the very persons who are the authors of the divisions into sects, confess in writing, so as not to be convicted of ingratitude, that they have received from Socrates the most important of their dogmas. But after availing myself of a few testimonies of men most talked of, and of repute among the Greeks, and exposing their plagiarizing style, and selecting them from various periods that belong to that early period.[53]

Eusebius summarizes Clement's thoughts to demonstrate that long ago Greek writers, such as Thucydides, Plutarch, and the like, were demonstrated to have stolen from each other and from other sources.[54] Clement labels their historiographical records as "composing falsehoods,"[55] noting that "not only have they been detected pirating and paraphrasing thoughts and expressions, as will be shown; but they will also be convicted of the possession of what is entirely stolen. For stealing entirely what is the production of others, they have published it as their own."[56]

Such comments by the nascent Fathers, like Clement and catalogued carefully by Eusebius, hardly give any confidence to the current critical biblical scholarship hypothesis of viewing the Gospels as products of Greco-Roman historiography. Eusebius denigrates them in the following terms:

For by copying different sciences from different nations, they got geometry from the Egyptians, and astrology from the Chaldeans, and other things again from other countries; but nothing among any other nations like the benefit some of them found from the Hebrews.

But thus much at present it indicates to the readers [of Eusebius' work], that the ancient Greeks were destitute not only of true theology, but also the sciences which are profitable to philosophy; and not of these only, but also of the common habits of civil life."[57]

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[53] Clement, *Miscellanies* VI.II, 481.

[54] Eusebius notes, "Then he [Clement] successively compares passages of Orpheus, Heraclitus, Plato, Pythagoras, Herodotus, Theopompus, Thucydides, Demosthenes, Aeschines, Lysias, Isocrates, and ten thousand others, of whose sayings it is superfluous for me [i.e. Eusebius] to make a catalogue, as the author's [Clement's] work is ready at hand." In *Preparation* X.II. c–d (492); cp. Clement Miscellanies VI.II (*ANF*, 482), where Thucydides is mentioned by Clement as an example of a literary thief. Eusebius then cites many more similar phrases, like those that Clement used for the Greco-Roman writers, such as when Clement related that "they pilfer from one another, they establish the fact that they are thieves; and although against their will, they are detected, clandestinely appropriating to those of their own race the truth which belongs to us. For if they do not keep their hands from each other, they will hardly do it from our authors." Clement, *Miscellanies*, VI.II (*ANF*, 481).

[55] Ibid., VI.III, 486.

[56] Ibid., VI.II.

[57] Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel* X.IV, 505.

In Book X, Eusebius issues a stinging rebuke of the Greco-Roman traditions:

> But I think that out of numberless examples those which have been mentioned are sufficient to show what was the character of the Greek writers, and that they did not spare even the exposure one of another. Yet in farther preparation for showing the benefit which has overflowed to the Greeks from the Hebrew Scriptures, I think it will be right and necessary for me to prove generally that all the celebrated learning and philosophy of the Greeks, both their elementary studies, and their grand system of logical science, have been collected by them from Barbarians, so that none of them may any longer lay blame upon us, because forsooth we have preferred the religion and philosophy of the Barbarians to their grand doctrines.[58]

Eusebius Argues that the Gospels and Christian Tradition Find Base in the Hebrew Old Testament Tradition

Eusebius also firmly stresses that Christians have role-modeled the Hebrew traditions of the Old Testament in the formulation of the Gospel as well as Christian writing in the Gospels, by emphasizing that "we [Christians] have preferred the philosophy of the Hebrews to that of the Greeks."[59] In Chapter XIII of *Preparation of the Gospel*, he drew a more favorable view of Plato than others, asserting that at points, "the philosophy of Plato contains as translation as it were, of Moses and the sacred writings of the Hebrews into the Greek language…. Why then, he [the reader of Eusebius' work] might say, if Moses and Plato have agreed so well in their philosophy, are we to follow the doctrines of Plato but of Moses?"[60] He goes on to explain a sharp distinction in Book XIII, that:

> The oracles of the Hebrews containing prophecies and responses of a divine power are beyond that of man, and claiming God as their author, and confirming their promise of the prediction of things to come, and by the results corresponding to the prophecies, are said to be free from all erroneous thought…. But not such are the words of Plato, nor yet of any other of the wise among men, who with the eyes of mortal thought and with feeble guesses and comparisons… so that one can find in them no learning free from error.[61]

Eusebius concludes that even though Plato might follow Moses and the Hebrew tradition ("enactments of Moses") in his viewpoint at times, "we most gladly welcome all that is noble and excellent in him… we have not chosen to follow Plato in

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[58] Ibid., X.III., 499.

[59] Ibid., X.1.b, 489.

[60] Ibid., XIII.I.a, 693.

[61] Ibid., XIII.XIV c–d, 745.

philosophy."[62] Here his reasoning is consistent in affirming that while a little value might be in some of these writers like Plato, only the Scripture is inspired by God and without error. He says of Plato in comparison with Scripture, that "not such are the words of Plato, nor yet of any other of the wise among men, who with eyes of mortal thought and with feeble guesses and comparisons, as in a dream, and not awake, attained to a notion of the nature of all things, but superadded to the truth of nature a large admixture of falsehood, so that one can find in them no learning free from error."[63]

Eusebius' method is strategic—he uses the very words of the pagan Greco-Roman tradition of writers to show their utter inconsistency between them. For Eusebius and the early church, both the Old and the New Testament are the only documents that can claim to be free from error. The strategic point of *Preparation for the Gospel* exhibits the early church's early, widespread rejection of Greco-Roman tradition in favor of that of the Old Testament literature as a pattern for the New Testament literature. Eusebius sums up his final chapter of *Preparation* with these concluding words:

> [W]e have now exhibited the dissension and fighting of these sages among themselves, and since the wholly superfluous, and unintelligible, and to us utterly unnecessary study and learning of all the other subjects in which the tribes of philosophers still take pride, we have refuted not by our own demonstrations but by their own; may more, we since we have also plainly set forth the reason why we have rejected their doctrines and preferred the Hebrew oracles.[64]

For Eusebius, and the great line of Christian and Hebrew writers that he has cited, neither Plutarch or Thucydides, nor anyone else for that matter, comes anywhere near setting the standard for history or accuracy. Such deprecation solidly refutes the idea that the Gospels would ever be compared to the historiography of such writers.

In sum, we find several strategic thoughts from Eusebius in *Preparation*. First, Eusebius would not have linked the Gospels with ancient historiography, especially Thucydides or Plutarch. Modern evangelical critical scholars have ignored this great church historian's work that cites the ancient Christian rejection of these writers as presenting anything of substance. Second, Eusebius bases the pattern for the Christian message and Gospels in the Hebrew historiography. Indeed, to Eusebius, these ancient writers are guilty of plagiarizing Moses! Third, the concept of the Gospels as Greco-Roman biography are shown to be a novel idea of the twentieth and twenty-first century imposed upon the material rather than being supported in the early nascent church and especially by the church's first great historian.

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[62] Ibid., XIII.XXI.d, 771.

[63] Ibid., XIII.IIV, 745.

[64] Ibid., XV.LXII, 919.

The Evidence from Eusebius' *The Proof of the Gospel*

Another volume dedicated to refuting Porphyry's assault against Christianity is Eusebius' *The Proof of the Gospel* in twenty books (ca. AD 314–318).[65] The purpose of this work was to offer a thorough defense of the Christian adoption and modification of the Jewish tradition.[66] J. B. Lightfoot termed this work as probably the most important apologetic work of the early church."[67] Both *Preparation for the Gospel* and *Proof of the Gospel* were separate, but also complementary works in purpose. *Preparation for the Gospel* concluded with Eusebius' comment at the end that "it remains… to make answer to those of the circumcision who find fault with us, make use of their books, which, as they would say, do not belong to us at all."[68]

The Proof of the Gospel is Eusebius' full expression of this next purpose that he would defend Christianity as the true completion of the Old Testament prophetic promise, as well as the religion of the Old Testament patriarchs, who viewed the Messiah as fulfilled in Jesus. The purpose of its pages "was to give an answer to all reasonable questions both from Jewish or Greek inquirers about Christianity, and its relationship to other Christians."[69] While *Preparation for the Gospel* was to be a general guide of instruction, *The Proof of the Gospel*'s purpose was to go into much greater depth to strengthen especially the convictions of those who had already accepted Christianity to "give a completer enlightenment for those who are already members of the Church of Christ."[70] Ferrar gives an excellent summation of *Proof of the Gospel*'s occasion for writing by Eusebius:

> To sum up, it was the cessation of the persecution, the ground impression made on the educated and the uneducated alike by the imperial change of front, the proud sense within the Church itself its patience had triumphed, combined with the presence of the opposing criticism of the cultured [e.g., Porphyry], which may be said to have been the occasion for the great literary effort.[71]

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[65] W. J. Ferrar, "Introduction," in Eusebius, *The Proof of the Gospel*, 2 vols., ed. and trans. W. J. Ferrar (1920; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980), I:xiii.

[66] Dungan, *Constantine's Bible*, 59.

[67] J. B. Lightfoot, "Eusebius," in *A Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature to the End of the Sixth Century A.D., with an Account of the Principal Sects and Heresies*, 2 vols., ed. Henry Wace (1880; repr., Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2000), 2:331.

[68] Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, XV.LXII.d, 919.

[69] Ferrar, "Introduction," *The Proof of the Gospel*, I:ix. While the *Proof of the Gospel* had originally twenty chapters or books, only the first ten of it survived in their complete form. Gifford characterizes both works as "the most systematic and comprehensive of the many apologetic works of Christianity." Gifford, "Preface," *Preparation of the Gospel*, 5.

[70] Ferrar, "Introduction," *The Proof of the Gospel*, x.

[71] Ibid., xii.

Eusebius Argues that Canonical Gospels
Are Anchored to the Old Testament Writings

Eusebius takes care to show that the Gospels based their understanding of Jesus Christ from the prophetic portions of the Old Testament to which the Gospels drew their source material—Gospel content is anchored to the Old Testament writings.[72] While the following quote is lengthy it is nonetheless important to show that the content of the Gospels were the actual historic outworking of Hebrew prophecy in the Old Testament:

> It is possible for you, if you care to take the trouble, to see with your eyes, comprehended in the prophetic writings, all the wonderful miracles of our Saviour Jesus Christ Himself, that are witnessed to *by the heavenly Gospels* and to hear His divine and perfect teaching about true holiness. How it must move our wonder, when they unmistakably proclaim the new ideal of religion preached by Him to all men, the call of His disciples, and the teaching of the new Covenant. Yes, and in addition to all this they foretell the Jews' disbelief in Him, and disputing, the plots of the rulers, the envy of the Scribes, the treachery of one of His disciples, the schemes of enemies, the accusations of false witnesses, the condemnations of His judges, the shameful violence, unspeakable scourging, ill-omened abuse, and, crowning all, the death of shame. They portray Christ's wonderful silence, His gentleness and fortitude, and the unimaginable depths of His forbearance and forgiveness.
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> The most ancient Hebrew oracles present all these things definitely about One Who would come in the last times, and Who would undergo such sufferings among men, and they clearly tell the source of their foreknowledge. They bear witness to the Resurrection from the dead of the Being Whom they revealed, His appearance to His disciples, His gift of the Holy Spirit to them. His return to heaven, His establishment as King on His Father's throne and His glorious second Advent yet to be at the consummation of the age. In addition to all this you can hear the wailings and lamentations of each of the prophets, wailing and lamenting characteristically over the calamities which will overtake the Jewish people because of their impiety to Him Who had been foretold. How their kingdom, that had continued from time days of a remote ancestry to their own, would be Utterly destroyed after their sin against Christ; how their fathers' Laws would be abrogated, they themselves deprived of their ancient worship, robbed of the independence of their forefathers, and made slaves of their enemies instead of free men; how their royal metropolis would be burned with fire, their venerable holy altar undergo the flames and extreme desolation, their city be inhabited no longer

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[72] Eusebius draws his proof for the Gospel in the following terms, "It seems now time to say what I consider to be desirable at present to draw from the prophetic writings for the proof of the Gospel." Eusebius, *The Proof of the Gospel* I.I, 2.

by its old possessors but by races of other stock, while they would be dispersed among the Gentiles through the whole world, with never a hope of any cessation of evil, or breathing-space from troubles. And it is plain even to the blind, that what they saw and foretold is fulfilled in actual facts from the very day the Jews laid godless hands on Christ, and drew down on themselves the beginning of the train of sorrows.[73]

For Eusebius, the Old Testament's outworking of proof from Old Testament prophecy is found in the canonical Gospels' record of Jesus' life, making the Old Testament the basis for the Gospels. Books One and Two of *The Proof of the Gospel* are the strategic "prolegomena" that anchor the Christian religion to the Jewish Scriptures with Christianity as the real fulfilment of the Old Testament.[74] Books 1 and 2 clarify that while Christians use the Old Testament to form their understanding of the life and mission of Jesus, they did not accept the Jewish Old Covenant religion of Moses.[75] Eusebius reminds his readers:

> I have already laid down in my Preparation [of the Gospel] that Christianity is neither a form of Hellenism, nor of Judaism, but that it is a religion with its own characteristic stamp and that this is not anything novel or original, but something of the greatest antiquity, something natural and family to the godly men before the times of Moses.[76]

Therefore, while Christianity is based in the Jewish Scriptures, its belief in Christ goes beyond any form of Jewish religion found in Judaism. Eusebius took great pain to show how the Gospel content was foretold in Hebrew Scripture, citing numerous Old Testament passages as predicting Jesus' life and ministry. He goes on to comment regarding Books 1–2, "I have shown the nature of our Saviour's teaching, and given the reason of our [Christianity's] regard for the oracles of the Jews, while we reject their rule of life. I have made it clear that their prophetic writings in their foresight of the future recorded our own calling through Christ, so that we make use of them not as books alien to us, but as our own property."[77]

Book III makes a firm stance for the authenticity of the Gospel material, focusing especially Jesus' miraculous works. He reviews, "the number and character or the marvelous works He [Jesus] performed while living among men; how He cleansed by His divine power those leprous in body, how He drove demons out of men by His word of command, and how again He cured ungrudgingly those who were sick, and laboring under all kinds of infirmity.[78] He directly references Gospel accounts from

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[73] Ibid., I.I.4, 3–4. Italics added.

[74] See comment by Ferrar, in Eusebius, *The Proof of the Gospel*, III:101n1.

[75] Ibid., xiii.

[76] Eusebius, *The Proof of the Gospel*, I.2, 7.

[77] Ibid., III, 101.

[78] Ibid., III.4, 124.

Matthew 4:10, Mark 2:11, John 5:8, and he refers to the feeding of the five thousand, as well as to details of Jesus' death and physical resurrection appearances.[79]

For Eusebius, the relationship of the disciples as Jesus' followers reveals "the root of their earnestness" in what they wrote.[80] He defends the Gospel writers as "[Jesus'] friends [who] bore witness" of the events they recorded, calling the authors of the Gospels "disciples" who had been Jesus "pupils."[81] He refers to Matthew 10 and Jesus' commission of the disciples who taught others what Jesus had taught them.[82] He calls the Gospel writers "masters in such instruction" of their "Master's work," who never would have "invented their account."[83] He asks, "How is it possible to think that they were all in agreement to lie."[84] He argues that the suffering of the disciples for their preaching of Jesus' words ("undergo at the hands of their fellow-countrymen every insult and every form of punishment on account of their witness they delivered about Him") refutes any accusation that they were deceivers.[85] He recounts the suffering witnessed also in Acts 5:29, where Peter affirms obedience to God rather than men, along with Stephen's stoning in Acts 7, John's brother James' death in Acts 12, all as firm proof of the truth of the Gospel message.[86]

Strategically, Eusebius distances the disciples from the learning of their time, describing them as "unable to speak or understand any other language but their own."[87] Hardly a characterization that one would use if Eusebius believed that such disciples were given to mimic or imitate Greco-Roman methodology of biography! He affirms regarding the Gospels:

> What a remarkable thing it is that they all agreed in every point of *their account of the acts of Jesus*. For if it is true that in all matters of dispute, either in legal tribunals or in ordinary disagreements, the agreement is decisive (in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is established [Deut 14:15]) surely the truth must be established in their case, there being twelve apostles and seventy disciples, and a large number apart from them, who all shewed an extraordinary agreement, and gave witness to the deeds of Jesus, not without labour, and by bearing torture, all kinds of outrage and death, and were in all things borne witness to by God, Who even now empowers the Word they preached, and will do so for ever.[88]

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[79] Ibid. These scriptural references are mentioned in Ibid., 124–62.

[80] Ibid., 127.

[81] Ibid. III.V., 126.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid., 129.

[86] Ibid., 134.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Eusebius *Demonstration*, III.V, 134–35. Italics added.

Furthermore, Eusebius affirmed the traditional view of the authorship of the Gospels passed down by the earliest nascent church. Eusebius characterizes the Gospel of Matthew as "the Gospel written by him [the apostle Matthew].[89] He then quotes the Greek Matthew 9:9 of Matthew's calling at the tax booth.[90] Likewise, he affirms Luke's authorship of the Gospel that bears his name, quoting from the Prologue of Luke 1:2 that Luke "honored Matthew, according to what they delivered, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word."[91] He notes that John wrote the Johannine Epistles that bear his name as well as being the author of the Gospel of John, stating that "in the Gospel, though he declares himself as the one whom Jesus loved, he does not reveal himself by name."[92] Regarding Mark, he notes that Peter's words are behind Mark's Gospel: "Neither did Peter permit himself to write a Gospel through his excessive reverence. Mark, being his friend and companion, is said to have recorded the accounts of Peter about the Acts of Jesus."[93] Eusebius even notes that the Gospel of Mark's account of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi was abbreviated by the fact that "Peter did not think it right to bring forward his own testimony what was said to him and concerning him by Jesus" in Mark 8:27–30 as compared to Matthew 16:15–19 where Jesus refers to Peter as the rock and gives him high praise.[94]

In Books IV to X, Eusebius continues a thorough discussion of the fact that the account of Jesus in the Gospels was anchored to the Old Testament prophetic portions. His constant theme continues, that the Gospel, as evidenced in the New Testament canon, has its source in the prophecy and fulfillment pattern of the Scriptures. He quotes a numerous multitude of Old Testament prophetic portions, e.g., the Pentateuch, the Psalms (esp. Pss 2 and 110), as well as major prophetic books of the Old Testament to show how the New Testament revelation anchored to the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah.

In sum, Books IV–V anchor the deity of Jesus as the Son and Logos to the Old Testament Scriptures; Books VI–X show Jesus' incarnation as fulfillment of Old Testament predictions; Book X specifically deals with the betrayal and passion of Jesus as being anchored to the Old Testament. He closes Book X when he quotes John 5:39 and urges his reader to examine the Old Testament further, to "'Search the Scriptures'' and "plunge his [the reader's] mind in each word of the Psalms and hunt for the exact sense of the truth expressed."[95] The clear impression built from Books I–X is that the Old Testament is the complete foundation for what is contained in the Gospels in the pattern of prediction and fulfillment, with the consistent presentation

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[89] Ibid., 135.

[90] Ibid., 137.

[91] Ibid., 138.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid., 139.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Eusebius, *Proof of the Gospel*, X.8, 236.

of what the Old Testament predicted and how the New Testament showed its fulfillment, especially in the Gospels. Eusebius' treatment is very thorough and exhaustive in demonstration of this pattern.

<div align="center">

Conclusion as to Eusebius'
Preparation for the Gospel and *The Proof of the Gospel*

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Modern New Testament evangelical-critical scholarship has a tendency to ignore the testimony of the early church regarding the nature of the Gospels. Such tendency is perhaps due to the influence of the Enlightenment on today's scholarship in its "prejudice against prejudice."[96] Since most New Testament scholarship, both liberal-critical and evangelical-critical, bases their approach from historical-critical ideology spawned by the Enlightenment, one can naturally expect that they ignore, or perhaps are unaware of prime evidence against novel theories like Greco-Roman biography. Peter Gay describes the main actors in the Enlightenment as follows: "Theirs was a paganism directed against their Christian inheritance and dependent upon the paganism of classical antiquity, but it was also a *modern* paganism, emancipated from classical thought as much as from Christian dogma."[97] This hidden prejudice against prejudice bound to Enlightenment-influenced scholarship causes great error in understanding the nature of the Gospels as eyewitness accounts from men who experienced Jesus' ministry.

From the first great church historian, Eusebius, emerge two fundamental truths: First, in *Preparation for the Gospel*, Eusebius would never have identified the Gospel historiography with the Greco-Roman tradition that he despised. Second, from *The Proof of the Gospel*, the real foundation to the Gospel accounts was that of promise and fulfillment from the Old Testament Scriptures. The Gospels evidenced in their content how the Old Testament predictions were the anchor and fulfillment of New Testament truths. One must now issue a call for evangelical-critical scholarship to abandon speculation of historical criticism and once again read, study, and understand the ancient Church's witness to the Gospels.

Eusebius' value is that of early acute awareness of what the ancient nascent church eldership testified about the New Testament canon. His testimony should not, and cannot be, ignored since he had a very thorough understanding of church history in the early first three centuries of the church. Eusebius' works provide overwhelming proof that any equating of the Gospels to Greco-Roman biography or historiography is merely a scholarly fad and invention of New Testament critical scholarship, both liberal and evangelical.

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[96] See F. David Farnell, "The Theological and Philosophical Bent of Historical Criticism," in *The Jesus Crisis*, ed. Robert L. Thomas and F. David Farnell (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 85–131.

[97] See Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment, An Interpretation: The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966), xi.

JOB'S ESCHATOLOGICAL HOPE:
THE IMPLICATIONS OF JOB'S REDEEMER
FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Jamie Bissmeyer
ThM Candidate
The Master's Seminary

The purpose of this article is to identify the person of Job's perspective on issues pertaining to social justice, in order to show that Job places his hope of social justice issues being resolved in God's unique ability to make a just society in the end times. First, background material to the book of Job will be explained, to give context to Job's statements about a Redeemer. Second, statements in the book of Job regarding the oppression of the poor by the wicked in society will be examined, in order to establish that the book of Job relates to social justice issues. Third, Job's own perspective on social justice issues will be examined. Fourth, Job's solution to social justice issues will be explained, with a focus on Job 19:25–26. Finally, Job's solution to social justice issues will be applied to current social justice issues faced by pastors.

* * * * *

Introduction

The topic of social justice is heavily debated in evangelical circles. Some Christians argue that there is a divine command to pursue social justice.[1] Others would go so far as to say that, "Evangelism and social justice are inseparable elements of the proclamation of the good news in Jesus Christ…"[2] Still other Christians would say

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[1] Stanley M. Burgess, "Christianity: Historical Setting," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Religion and Social Justice*, ed. Michael D. Palmer and Stanley M. Burgess, Wiley-Blackwell Companions to Religion (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 46. Burgess' opinion is similar to official Catholic teaching on social justice. To Rome, pursuing social justice is part and parcel of the Christian's mission. See Vincent P. Mainelli, *Social Justice*, Official Catholic Teachings (Wilmington, NC: McGrath, 1978).

[2] John Franke, "Contextual Mission: Bearing Witness to the Ends of the Earth," in *Four Views on the Church's Mission*, ed. Jason S. Sexton, Counterpoints: Bible & Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 124. Franke plainly states that the church is called to participate in political, cultural, and spiritual

that social justice relates to the mission of the church, and that the mission of the church is to primarily proclaim the Gospel, not enact political or social change.[3] So which is it? Why is there so much disagreement over how the church should pursue social justice?

A major reason for disagreement is confusion as to what the phrase "social justice" means. Some Christian leaders define social justice as simply ensuring that people receive equal treatment under a fair law.[4] However, many see social justice as the community or state ensuring equality of treatment and outcome of its citizens.[5] Still other define social justice as simply righting injustices in society.[6]

This lack of clarity over how to define and carry out social justice is best explained as being a result of different theological presuppositions between Christians. The debate is fundamentally one of worldviews. Duncan B. Forrester's words are insightful here: "What is in dispute may be made increasingly clear in the course of discussion but, in the absence of some agreed standard, the choice between differing positions appears to be largely arbitrary. Only very rarely is an account of justice presented as resting on an ontology, or the nature of things, or as being in some sense 'true'."[7]

Fundamentally then, disagreements over social justice are issues of ontology or epistemology. What exactly does it mean to be just? Furthermore, who is knowledgeable enough or powerful enough to ensure that social justice is perfectly carried out to all groups and types of people? These are some of the challenges facing the church as it thinks about how to define and carry out social justice.

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liberation: "These texts point to the calling of the church to participate in the temporal, here-and-now activity of liberation" (Ibid.).

[3] E.g. Jonathan Leeman, "Response to John R. Franke," in *Four Views on the Church's Mission*, 134–39. His response points out two missing elements in Franke's discussion on the church's mission and social justice: 1) the holiness of God, and 2) the judgment of God (Ibid., 135–38).

[4] Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?: Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 182. They take a "constrained view" of justice, where justice is not a result (i.e., equality of outcome), but a process where people are treated fairly under the law: "Justice, in this vision, is upheld through the rule of law, a fair court system, and equitable treatment of all persons regardless of natural diversity" (Ibid.). However, they are hesitant to give a general definition of social justice, because it is poorly and variously defined depending on what person or group is using the term. See Ibid., 179. Their position contrasts the UN's report on social justice, which defines social justice as follows: "Social justice may be broadly understood as the fair and compassionate distribution of the fruits of economic growth." See United Nations, *Social Justice in an Open World: The Role of the United Nations* (New York: United Nations, 2006), 7.

[5] For a survey of some of these perspectives, see Vic McCracken, ed., *Christian Faith and Social Justice: Five Views* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014). McCracken himself implies that fairness in society, not just fair treatment under law, is a part of social justice. See Vic McCracken, "Social Justice: An Introduction to an Important Concept," in *Christian Faith and Social Justice: Five Views*, 2014), 2–3.

[6] Curtiss Paul DeYoung, "Christianity: Contemporary Expressions," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Religion and Social Justice*, 62. He goes on to list various issues (poverty, AIDS, racism, sex trafficking, etc.) that social justice addresses.

[7] Duncan B. Forrester, *Christian Justice and Public Policy*, Cambridge Studies in Ideology and Religion 10 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2.

Here is where the book of Job comes into play. This article will argue that Job serves as a theological foundation to Christian thinking in all areas, including social justice. This article will also argue that Job's suffering caused him to think about social injustices, and that Job connects his hopes with societies' hopes. And this hope is most clearly found in Job 19:25–26, where Job hopes for eschatological justice through a mediator. [8] Job did not hope in the wisdom of man for vindication and an end to suffering, but in God's wisdom to be just and caring in the end. It is this perspective that the church is to have when thinking through social justice—we apply a Christian worldview to address social injustices, but we ultimately need to give people the hope that God is just and can not only make them right, but create a just and right society in the end.[9]

Does the Book of Job Talk about Social Justice?

Before examining Job's hope, it needs to be established that the book of Job has relevance to the issues of social justice in the first place. Do Job or his friends talk about injustices in society? The answer is yes.

Zophar directly mentions the oppression of poor people in society by the wicked (Job 20:18–19). Eliphaz accuses Job of oppressing and robbing others less fortunate than him (Job 22:6–7). Job refers to how judges are blind to the injustices perpetrated by the wicked (9:24), and how evil men oppress those who are underneath them (24:1–10). To these men, social injustices are real and present in society. The rich oppress the poor, the wicked rob from others. Judges do not uphold standards of justice for the innocent. Although anachronistic, "social justice" was a concern of Job and his friends.

Social Justice and the Divine Retribution Principle

Although Job and his friends agree that there are injustices in society, they disagree on the reason why injustices in society exist in the first place. This is because Job's friends have a worldview that interprets how they view these injustices called the "Divine Retribution Principle."[10] In this worldview, everything is cause and effect. Bad things happen to bad people, and good things happen to good people. So

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[8] Unless otherwise noted, all English Scripture references come from the *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

[9] John Donehue is not wrong to point out how the book of Job describes the just person. They are someone who preserves the peace and wholeness of the community (Job 4:3–5; 29:12–15; 31:16–19; 29:16; 31:1–12). See John R. Donehue, "Biblical Perspectives on Justice," in *The Faith That Does Justice: Examining the Christian Sources for Social Change*, ed. John C. Haughey, Woodstock Studies 2 (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 70. However, in chapter 31 it is more likely that Job is being self-righteous than actually just. Furthermore, Job directs his petitions to God rather than exhorting his fellow countrymen to do more for the community.

[10] Hereafter referred to as the "DRP." It is otherwise known as the Retribution Principle and it, "… is the conviction that the righteous will prosper and the wicked will suffer, both in proportion to their respective righteousness and wickedness." John H. Walton and Kelly Lemon Vizcaino, *Job*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 39. For further information on this principle see Angelika Berlejung, "Sin and Punishment: The Ethics of Divine Justice and Retribution in Ancient

even if the wicked oppress people, God will judge those wicked people in this life. The innocent sufferer will be vindicated by God, while those who cause the suffering will be punished by Him.

Under a DRP system, Job's friends probably would not have thought of social justice as a big issue that needs to be addressed. If there is injustice in society, God will right it. There will be no evil left unpunished by God in this life. As Eliphaz says, "Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright destroyed? According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble harvest it. By the breath of God they perish, and by the blast of His anger they come to an end" (Job 4:7–9).

The worldview proposed by the DRP is undermined by Job's own innocent suffering. Job was a God-fearing, righteous man (Job 1:1). He was immensely blessed, such that he was the "greatest of all the men of the east" (Job 1:3). Yet instead of continuing in this state of material blessings, God through Satan takes away everything that Job has and causes him immense physical suffering (Job 1:8–2:8). If the DRP were true, then Job should never have suffered.

Job's suffering then becomes a window through which he asks fundamental questions about life. If the DRP cannot explain reality, then what does? Job agrees with his friends that ultimately God is in control over injustices in society. But his own suffering causes him to question if God really cares about those injustices. In Job's mind, if God does not care about him, then he certainly does not care about the broader evils that occur in society (Job 9:20; 16:11–12; cf. Job 9:24; 24:12).

By thinking along these lines, Job frames the problem of social justice as not primarily economic or racial, but theological. There is oppression and injustice in this life, but the real question is not what the church will do about it but this: What is God going to do about it? Does God care about what happens to the poor, or when righteous people suffer at the hands of evil men?

Job's Redeemer and Social Justice

Job's suffering also leads him to ask a fundamental question: How can man be in the right (i.e., justified [יִצְדָּק, *yiṣdaq*]) before God? (Job 9:1–2)[11] To Job, the reason why he is suffering in the first place is that he cannot meet God's standard of

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Near Eastern and Old Testament Texts," *Interpretation* 69, no. 3 (July 2015): 272–87, but especially 273–74. This principle is shattered when Job, a righteous and God-fearing man, encounters immense suffering (Job 1:1–3). If God treats a righteous person like Job as if he was wicked, then what is man's hope of ever being made right in God's eyes? Debating over the validity of the Divine Retribution Principle is what drives the dialogue in the book.

[11] יִצְדָּק (*yiṣdaq*) in the Qal means, "to be in the right, be right, to justify, consider as just." Ludwig Köhler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 1003. Hereafter referred to as *HALOT*. It is translated as δίκαιος (*dikaios*) in the LXX, which means, "to be upright, just fair in view of certain requirements of justice." Arndt, William et al., "Δίκαιος," *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 247. Hereafter known as BDAG. These two words are the standard biblical terms used whenever an author is talking about justification before God (cf. Silva Moisés, ed., "Δικαιοσύνη," *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis,* vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan,

righteousness. God is simply too strong and too wise (Job 9:3–4). There is an important implication in Job's question though—that if Job can be justified before God, then his suffering would cease, and God would be caring. This implication is not just a wish for God to stop hurting Job—it is a wish for an entirely new system. The DRP cannot make man right before God, so there must be a new system that does. He knows that if this new system were true, then God would be good and caring. God would be able to justify Job and in the end make his suffering worth it.

In other words, Job's personal suffering causes him to realize that societies in general suffer. Inversely then, Job knows that if God can justify him before Himself, societies in general will be made right by God in the end. This is Job's hope applied to social justice. This hope appears in multiple places in the book (e.g. Job 9:32–35; Job 16:19–21), but it finds arguably its clearest expression and connection to social justice in the aforementioned Job 19:25–26, where Job expresses belief in future vindication through a Redeemer.

Foundational Matters in Job Connected to Social Justice

Before approaching Job's Redeemer in chapter 19, we need to have a methodology for approaching the book. Issues like the book of Job's genre and dating, as well as literary themes and structure, will help to put Job 19 in perspective and bring clarity to the passage itself. The section on Job's genre and dating will argue for the early and thus foundational role the book plays when it speaks to any topic, including social justice. The sections on literary themes and the structure of Job will put Job's hope in 19:25–26 in its proper context. By outlining an approach to the book of Job, we will be able to see just how important Job 19:25–26 is for Job's hope and social justice.

The Genre and Dating of Job

Is the book of Job historical? Or is it simply poetic fiction?[12] If it is the latter, then much of what the book says may not be true. Job will thus have no real relationship to the problem of social justice. If on the other hand, Job is a historical person, then his sufferings and subsequent declaration of a Redeemer provide real answers and hope to our society.

2014), 724. Someone involved in New Pauline Perspective scholarship like N.T. Wright might argue that Job could not have been thinking of classic Protestant legal view justification before God, because the term itself merely marks out those who have already become a part of the covenant people of God. (See N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009], 116.) Under this definition of justification, not much changes. Job views himself as outside of the covenant people of God, and he sees the perfections/attributes of God as an insurmountable obstacle to becoming a member of that people.

[12] Marvin Pope is one who takes the stance that Job is fictional. See Marvin H. Pope, *Job*, vol. 15, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1973), xxxiii. However, Pope bases this position upon an assumption that all biblical works underwent an oral history before being written down, which by definition cannot be examined scientifically or historically. Janzen argues that Job is a post-exilic product of religious upheaval, even though he provides no support for this argument. See J. Gerald Janzen, *Job*. Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 5.

Job is generally considered *sui generis,* defying a single genre classification.[13] There are, however, multiple lines of evidence that indicate that the book of Job is at least a historical account of real events. The opening of the book itself indicates that it is historical. Job 1–2 is prose in style and makes a truth claim by beginning with, "There was a man."[14] The way Job's possessions are described, as well as cultural references, are other indicators of a patriarchal period setting. In light of this evidence, a 3rd millennium BC setting seems plausible.[15] Even if it is granted that Job was written at a late date, the author of the book intentionally wrote it to look like a patriarchal period work.[16]

This patriarchal setting is important because even if the book of Job's exact date of authorship is uncertain, it was crafted to serve as a sort of chronological and therefore theological prequel to the rest of the Bible. It gives Christians foundational pieces that they need to know when thinking through suffering, man's relationship to God, social justice, and more. And because the events in Job occurred in history, Christians can hope in the same things that Job hoped for and apply his hope to think through the problem of social justice.

The Setting of Job

The setting of the book of Job is also important to the topic of social justice. The book begins by mentioning that Job is from the land of Uz, which is most likely a city in Edom (Jer 25:20; cf. Lam 4:21).[17] So although the book of Job is a part of the Hebrew canon, its non-Israelite setting indicates that what it discusses has universal

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[13] See Michael A. Grisanti, "The Book of Job," in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament*, ed. Eugene H. Merrill, Mark F. Rooker, and Michael A. Grisanti (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011).

[14] Abner Chou, "Authorship and Date of Job and Why It's Important" (Lecture, The Master's University, Santa Clarita, CA, January 22, 2014).

[15] For more information on the patriarchal background of the book, see Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 13 (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), 56.

[16] Pope admits that evidence for an early date is present within Job. He states that whoever wrote Job was at least a Jew who could write in a lost literary Hebrew and was conversant with a wide-range of lost Northwest-Semitic literature (Pope, *Job*, xxxiv). There is no evidence that post-exilic Jews could have composed a work like Job. Some point out that Job is late because of Aramaisms in the book. However, the Aramaic plural suffix has been found in early Canaanite literature (Andersen, *Job*, 58). Pope goes so far as to say that either Job was made to look like it was written in the Patriarchal Period, or it actually was. Charles Feinberg has shown that there are numerous Ugaritic pronominal forms as well as pronominal suffixes that parallel Job's Hebrew (e.g., Ugaritic III 17–18; cf. Job 5:19, 33:14, 40:5; see Charles Lee Feinberg, *Ugaritic Literature and the Book of Job* [Baltimore, MD: PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1945], 64–71). These forms were in use in the 3rd millennium BC, again pointing to a Patriarchal date of writing. See also Edward Greenstein for further discussion on the early linguistic features in Job (Edward L. Greenstein, "The Invention of Language in the Poetry of Job," in *Interested Readers: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David J. A. Clines*, ed. James K. Aitken, Jeremy M. S. Clines, and Christl M. Maier [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013]).

[17] See Robert Alden's discussion in Robert L. Alden, *Job*, vol. 11, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 46.

implications. What Job and his friends debate over thus concerns not only Israelites under Mosaic Law, but all of mankind. This means that what Job talks about and hopes for has direct impact on how we are to view the problems of social injustices in our own society.

Literary Themes in Job

Getting further into the book of Job itself, Job is a series of disputations, between both Job and his friends and between Job and God.[18] Job is personally seeking legal vindication before God in court (31:35–36). The trial is not just to vindicate himself before God—it is to put God Himself on trial, to hold Him accountable for the actions He has brought upon Job.[19] Meanwhile, Job's friends are attempting to get him to admit that he has sinned and deserves the calamity brought upon him. Yet Job's righteous status and subsequent downfall force him to realize he can never be right before God in his own power. He needs a mechanism that can put them both on an even playing field, which a legal environment provides.[20]

Job's desire for a day in court with God is important, because the courtroom theme that begins in chapter 1 between God and Satan in heaven results in a second courtroom scene between Job and his friends on earth. The human verdict on God's name is played out on earth in Job's mind, as he debates with his friends concerning the goodness of God and how He works in this world. Job knows he needs a mediator, someone who can allow him a fair hearing before God, as Job 9:33 suggests: "There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both." This legal theme must be in mind when arriving at Job 19, because a third party who can enable a fair hearing before God is exactly what Job wishes for in his Redeemer.

The Structure of Job

The structure of the book also helps us understand why Job expressed belief in a Redeemer in chapter 19. Since the 18th century, the structure of Job has been divided into several parts: A prologue (1–2), followed by a lament (3), then a series of

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[18] It has been noted that Job's disputations with God have similarities to certain Ancient Near Eastern stories, including "Man and His God" and, "The Babylonian Theodicy". See James B. Pritchard, ed., "Man and His God," in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 589–90; ibid., 601–4.

[19] Carol Newsom has pointed out that outside of the book of Job, only Jeremiah 12:1 entertains the idea of man putting God on trial as the accused. Carol A. Newsom, "The Invention of the Divine Courtroom in the Book of Job," in *The Divine Courtroom in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Ari Mermelstein and Shalom E. Holtz, vol. 132, Biblical Interpretation Series (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 246.

[20] Newsom puts it this way: "By envisioning a trial procedure, Job reconfigures the basic social relationship that governs the two parties. As noted above, Israelite law acknowledged that the parties to a dispute often might not be social equals. But for the purposes of the law, such differences were to be set aside (e.g., Exod 23:2). In thinking in terms of a trial, Job is not claiming actual equality with God but simply a stipulated, provisional, 'as if' equality" (Ibid., 254). For more detail on Ancient Near Eastern courtroom motifs, see Tzvi Abusch, "Divine Judges on Earth and in Heaven," in *The Divine Courtroom in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Ari Mermelstein and Shalom E. Holtz, vol. 132, Biblical Interpretation Series (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

three cycles or debates between Job and his friends (4–14; 15–21; 22–26), then Job's monologue (27–31), Elihu's speeches (32–37), God's speeches (38–42:6), and the epilogue (42:7–17).[21] The arguments for shifting the text of the book around and assigning them to different speakers are ultimately subjective and not persuasive.[22] Scholars are beginning to see that trying to find an original order of the Joban text is futile.[23] It is best to come to the text of Job with an open mind and to trust its canonical structure.

Job 19 falls in the second cycle of Job's debates with his friends. The dialogue has not yet broken down, as it will in the third cycle.[24] At this point in the book, Job is still in the middle of debate—although he is tiring of his friends' unwise counsel (16:1–3; 19:1–3). Job is losing hope that his friends will ever believe his defense, that his suffering is not the result of any sin that he committed. This is in addition to his losing hope that God will vindicate him, since he cannot even see, let alone talk to God (9:11). Chapter 19 will thus see Job move his hope in vindication from his friends and God in this life, to a future time when someone else will vindicate him before God.

The Context of Job's Redeemer of Chapter 19

With the preceding structural and contextual information, we can now properly approach chapter 19. This chapter is Job's response to Bildad, who has argued that the wicked are always punished by God in this life. His reasoning? It is because that is what Bildad always sees. To Bildad, the DRP is a closed system. There is never any hope for the wicked, only destruction (18:20–21).[25]

Job's response is to point out that Bildad's closed system is broken. If the wicked are always punished, then why does Bildad care to be with him in the first place

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[21] Benjamin Kennicott, *Remarks on Select Passages in the Old Testament: To Which Are Added Eight Sermons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1787). For an argument for a fourfold structure of two cycles of speeches, see Andrew E Steinmann, "The Structure and Message of the Book of Job," *Vetus Testamentum* 46, no. 1 (January 1996): 85–100.

[22] For example, David Wolfers relies on thematic readings of chapters 25–27 to support his view that they are actually speeches of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (David Wolfers, "The Speech-Cycles in the Book of Job," *Vetus Testamentum* 43, no. 3 [July 1993]: 400–401). Other authors like Gordis and Clines move the text around and find the missing third speech of Zophar, because it makes the book fit together better in their eyes (E.g., Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies*, vol. 2, Moreshet Series: Studies in Jewish History, Literature, and Thought [New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978], 291; David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 17 [Waco, TX: Word, 1989], 1189).

[23] See Christopher R. Seitz, "Job: Full-Structure, Movement, and Interpretation," *Interpretation* 43, no. 1 (January 1989): 5–17.

[24] Lindsay Wilson notes that, "The dialogue breaks down in the third cycle, thus witnessing to the inability of the exponents of traditional wisdom to solve Job's dilemma." Lindsay Wilson, *Job*, Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 15. Tremper Longman III concurs. See Tremper Longman III, *Job*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), 109.

[25] Abner Chou, "Job 19" (Lecture, The Master's University, Santa Clarita, CA, March 3rd, 2014).

(19:4)?[26] Furthermore, Bildad has missed the point: God Himself has brought suffering to Job, not because of Job's wickedness, but simply because it was willed by Him (19:6). Bildad's closed-system worldview cannot account for the reality Job faces, so it is inherently flawed. What Job needs is a new system of justice.

A Closer Look at Job 19:23–26

Job's wish for a new system of justice emerges most clearly in 19:23–26. In the immediate context of verses 23–24 Job realizes that if he cannot get vindication in this life, then maybe by permanently writing down his words someone in the future will vindicate him. This desire for future vindication from someone other than his friends moves Job to place his hope in a person that can vindicate him on the last day: a "Mediator" who can somehow resurrect Job and bring him eschatological redemption (vv. 25–26). Exegetical treatment of these verses follows.

Verses 23–24

There is general agreement as to the contents of verses 23–24. Verse 23 is begun and split into halves by the optative formula מִי־יִתֵּן (*mî-yittēn*), which relays Job's wish that permanence might be given to his words.[27] Literally the sentence is, "Who will give?" This again points to Job's desperate status: He is unsure who can help him. Job's reference to writing in both halves of this verse (וְיִכָּתְבוּן, *wĕyikkotbûn*; וְיֻחָקוּ, *wĕyuḥāqû*) indicates a desire for someone to record his testimony so that someone in the future can vindicate his name.[28]

Verse 24 expands on Job's wish for future vindication through written testimony. The phrase, "with iron and lead" (בְּעֵט־בַּרְזֶל וְעֹפָרֶת, *bĕʿēṭ-barzel wĕʿōpāret*) is referring to the means by which Job's testimony will be preserved: By engraving his words into stone.[29] This type of wish is for coming generations forever to see what Job has gone through. The purpose of engraving Job's words can only be in hope of future vindication that will come even after his own life ends. Otherwise, there is no need for a permanent record.[30]

The grammar suggests that Job has been setting a temporal frame of reference for what he is about to say. He has already established in this chapter that his friends and family, people who could vouch for his integrity before God, have all deserted

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 281.

[28] William David Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 361–62; C. L. Seow, *Job 1–21: Interpretation and Commentary, Vol. I*, Illuminations (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 802.

[29] Dhorme prefers to see verses 24 as translated "With a tool of iron and lead" contrary to Rashi's explanation that liquid was poured onto a mold (cf. Ezek 22:20). The lead would serve the purpose of coloring matter to enable the engraver to mark out his letter before cutting into the stone. See Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 282.

[30] Wilson, *Job*, 106. The prepositional phrase "to the end" (לָעַד, *lāʿad*) confirms that Job wants his words to last forever.

him (vv. 13–19). This leaves no one to vindicate him in this life. So, Job wishes for a way to immortalize his words in stone so that someone in the future, even the far future, can vindicate him (vv. 23–24). It is important to keep this future-oriented frame of reference in mind when interpreting the crucial next verse.

Verse 25: Job's Redeemer

Job begins verse 25 by shifting the frame of focus from what his friends and family think of him, to what he personally hopes, indicated by the *vaqatal* and the fronting of the subject (אֲנִי, *ʾănî*).[31] Recognition of the grammatical shift contradicts those who think that Job is just making a passing wish statement.[32] Job's declaration in verse 25 is not a random or throwaway wish—it is the result of realizing that he has no hope of vindication from any of his friends and family in this life. This also means that it is incorrect to say that Job was raised to a level of prophetic ecstasy.[33] Job is not claiming to have new or divine source of insight here. Rather, he is simply claiming to "know" something about the future status of his vindication.[34]

Job's Redeemer

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[31] The reduplication of the first-person pronoun in יָדַעְתִּי *(yādaʿtî)* emphasizes the fact that Job has a deep-seated conviction, a strong belief about what he is about to say. David Wolfers makes the statement that he sees no point in the reduplication of the first-person pronouns here. See David Wolfers, *Deep Things Out of Darkness: The Book of Job: Essays and a New English Translation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 486. However, a couple paragraphs later he rightly points out that reduplication of the personal pronoun is used for emphasis, often in an adversative sense. The disjunctive *vav* supports this (Ibid.). However, on the next page Wolfers then claims that the *vav* is actually conjunctive (Ibid., 487). He also claims that the lack of a *kî* particle, which is typical for ידע *(ydʿ)* is suspicious (Ibid., 486). This pushes him towards a different reading of the text. This is a subjective argument though, as Job has the freedom (being the speaker) to do what he wants.

[32] E.g., James Wood, *Job and the Human Situation,* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1966), 77.

[33] Mike Mason, *The Gospel According to Job* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), 217.

[34] Some scholars tend to lump this verse in with the previous few, arguing that Job is stating something that he knows is contrary to fact. However, these arguments do not satisfy the grammar and context. It is better to see Job here as expressing hope that he will one day be vindicated by his *goʾel* (גֹּאֲלִי). This hope must be rooted in the justice of God. Job believes that God won't give him a fair trial, but he knows that God is ultimately just. So, there has to be a way for Job to be made right before God. For example, Clines rightly argues that "I know" (יָדַעְתִּי, *yādaʿtî*) in forensic contexts often means, "I firmly believe." He then claims that Job is simply stating a strong wish that he knows isn't true. See Clines, *Job 1–20*, 457–59. While it is true that this phrase in forensic contexts refers to a deep-seated conviction, Clines reaches too far in arguing that Job actually knows what he is wishing for is not true. The text says that Job is expressing conviction, not something Job knows is not true, and Clines himself does not give evidence to support his conclusion, raising doubts about its veracity. In addition, three further reasons refute Cline's position: 1) Belief contrary to what one knows to be true is simply not within the semantic range of this word (cf. Willem VanGemeren, ed., "יָדַע," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 409–10. 2) Based on the context, Job does not appear to be sarcastic or ironic in verse 25, but desperate and longing (19:21–22, 27). 3) To know something in the biblical sense, there is always a relationship involved (Ibid.). Clines might be correct to argue that Job did not think his Redeemer was alive—but Job did express hope that a Redeemer would one day bring about vindication.

The grammatical object of Job's knowing in verse 25 is גֹּאֲלִי חָי (gōʾălî ḥāy). Presently, it must be asked: What does גֹּאֲלִי (gōʾălî) mean? And more specifically, what does Job signify by using this word at this moment in the book? The answer to these questions forms an important part of Job's eschatological thinking, since we already know that Job is looking to a time beyond his own life.

The term גאל (gʾl), rightly translated "Vindicator," accurately captures its sense.[35] Fundamentally, the word is a technical legal term found in Israelite family law (Lev 25, 27; Num 35).[36] Edouard Dhorme notes that the Bible makes the connection between these family, legal functions of גאל (the go'el), and the broader theme of bringing justice to the oppressed: "Quite naturally the go'el becomes the defender in justice, he who vindicates the rights of the oppressed (Prov 23:10–11)."[37] This idea, that the *go'el* is someone who vindicates or justifies those who cannot help themselves, undergirds Job's use of the term here. Job cannot vindicate his name before God, so he is asking for outside help.

This moves the reader closer to understanding who Job's Redeemer is. Job has realized that his friends will not vindicate his name before God—whoever this Redeemer is, then, he must be more than a man.[38] Because of the absence of help from Job's friends and the reference to the "last" in the second half of this verse (וְאַחֲרֹון, wěʾaḥărōwn), many scholars see that Job is referring to God the Father or to a third party in heaven;[39] that Job is referring to Jesus;[40] or, that Job is simply expecting to be cleared in court by a heavenly vindicator in the next life.[41]

Although the Redeemer as God the Father is a popular option, it is not a viable option for one clear reason: God is the one whom Job feels will not give him a fair

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[35] The NET Bible presents this translation. See Biblical Studies Press, *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Biblical Studies Press, 2006).

[36] Willem VanGemeren, ed., "גָּאַל," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 789. In these cases, the function of the go'el would be to buy back a house or piece of land for a relative who had to sell it (Lev 25:26, 29–43). Since land was allotted to each tribe and family, people would need to sell their homes or land if they were in debt or poor. The purpose of the go'el in this context would be to vindicate the names of families who had sold their property by buying back what they had lost.

[37] Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 283. This is seen even in English, where vindication is a synonym for forensic justification. Cf. . Merriam-Webster Inc., *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2003). This assumes the historical Protestant definition of justification as defined in footnote 2.

[38] Stephen Vicchio is one who holds that Job's vindicator is just a man. See Stephen Vicchio, *The Image of the Biblical Job: A History*, vol. 1, Job in the Ancient World (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 82. He is simply wrong to say that the term *go'el* is never used of God (cf. Ps 19:14; 119:154). Seow believes Job's Redeemer is simply Job's imagination of what he hopes God to be. See Seow, *Job 1–21*, 805. Later though, he admits that an eschatological time period could be in view in 19:25–26 (Ibid., 806–7)

[39] E.g., John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 264; George Granville Bradley, *Lectures on the Book of Job, Delivered in Westminster Abbey*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1888), 148.

[40] E.g., Mason, *The Gospel According to Job*, 119.

[41] T. F. Royds, *Job and the Problem of Suffering.* (London: Wells Gardner, Darton, 1911), 58.

trial. Even if Job were innocent, God could condemn him simply because He is God and Job is not (9:19–20). That is the whole point of the legal metaphor Job has constructed: He needs to bring a third-party into the picture to enable a fair hearing with God.[42]

Marvin Pope presents a probable solution to the problem of viewing God as the Redeemer. Tying in Job's wishes for legal vindication he says, "The difficulty may be alleviated by understanding the term *go'el* here to refer to the agent elsewhere termed an umpire (ix 33) and a witness (xvi 19) who is to serve the same function as the personal god of Sumerian theology, i.e., act as his advocate and defender in the assembly of the gods; cf. xxxiii 23."[43] Wilson concurs, arguing that 9:33, 16:18, and 19:25 contain one hope, variously described: "Each passage has a call for an arbiter, is preceded by an angry protest, and succeeded by despair and the floating of unfulfilled hope."[44]

In light of the common themes between chapters 9, 16, and 19, there are compelling reasons to think that Job's Redeemer is a third party who is also equal to God, something Job has already wished for in 9:33. For one, the function of the biblical *go'el*, as mentioned earlier, is someone who avenges the blood of a relative or redeems an oppressed family member from a hopeless situation.[45] As John Hartley points out though, this word can also be used to refer to contexts in which God redeems His people.[46] And in Psalm 103:4, God is the *go'el* who redeems Israel from the pit of death.[47] This shows that the term can be used to refer to a divine being who saves people from death; Job chose the term for a specific reason, which has divine implications connected to it.[48]

The implications of a divine *go'el* support the future-oriented context of 19:25, because Job in 19:25 is referring to person who is not only alive in Job's day, but alive in the last days. Only a divine Redeemer can fulfill this role. Furthermore, the

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[42] So also Seow, *Job 1–21*, 804. Gordis sees the Redeemer as God, because Job is monotheistic (cf. Gordis, *The Book of Job*, 206). Again, Job sees God as His enemy, and Gordis does not take this into account. Job is a monotheist, but he knows that someone other than God will have to mediate for him. Wolfers may be correct that only God is referred to as a Redeemer in the participle form (cf. Wolfers, *Deep Things out of Darkness*, 488). This does not mean God is Job's Redeemer though, only that someone like God will have to vindicate Job. Wolfers' assertion that this allegorically means God is the Redeemer for a fallen exilic Judah is baseless (see Ibid.). Clines has the unique claim that Job's redeemer is actually his "cry standing in heaven" (cf. Clines, *Job 1–20*, 459). A cry is never referred to as a go'el in the Scriptures though. Furthermore, the personal pronouns in this context make it highly unlikely that Job is wishing for his "cry" to take its stand upon the dust.

[43] Pope, *Job*, 146.

[44] Wilson, *Job*, 107.

[45] Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, 362–63.

[46] Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 292. He references Exodus 6:6, 15:13 and Psalms 74:2, 77:15 as examples of this.

[47] Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, 363.

[48] Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 292–93. The LXX's translation of go'el as "the eternal one" (ἀένaός ἐστιν ὁ, *aenaos estin ho*) lends support to this stance. This shows that early Jewish translators thought that using a word with explicit divine implications was an accurate representation of the phrase גֹּאֲלִי חָי (*gō'ălî ḥāy*).

adjective "living" (חַי, *ḥayyā*) has to do with someone who will outlast Job.[49] The phrase אֵלִי חָי (*ʾălî ḥāy*) is literally, "My Redeemer is alive." This means Job believed that his Redeemer was living when he spoke those words, even if that Redeemer was not on earth. Why would Job even hope in a redemption that would come after he dies though? At this point it is helpful to remember the context—all of Job's human kinsmen and redeemers have fled from him (cf. 19:13–14). Job has thus moved his hope of vindication before God from his present situation to the future, when only a divine person can make him right before God.

Job's Redeemer in His Eschatological Context

It is now clear from the exegesis of the passage thus far that Job has an eschatological time period in mind when he is thinking of the identity of his Redeemer. In fact, Job's Redeemer demands an eschatological context, and Job knows it. At this point Job believes that if he were to be vindicated before God, it would have to happen after he has died. It is an inescapable reality that Job's Redeemer must be a divine eschatological figure.

The end of verse 25 and the entirety of verse 26 fill out this picture, presenting a clear connection between Job's theology and the end times. If Job's train of thought is followed through verse 26, Job's eschatological framework becomes even clearer.

The Eschatological Context of Verse 25

The crucial phrase, "and at the last" (וְאַחֲרוֹן, *wě ʾaḥărôn*) in the second half of verse 25 has connotations that extend beyond the life of Job. אַחֲרוֹן (*ʾaḥărôn)* is an adjective: "At the last."[50] In this context, Job must be referring to a specific point in time, because he is referring to an end period where the *go'el* will be performing an action (יָקוּם, *yāqûm*). A Redeemer who is alive right now and will also be alive at a point far in the future implies that the Redeemer will have divine qualities.[51] This means that Job has more than vindication alone in mind, because 19:25 does not just speak of vindication but the time period in which the *go'el* will come to bring about vindication for Job.[52] Job is thinking of vindication that will come in the eschaton.

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[49] Ibid.

[50] Ludwig Köhler et al., "אַחֲרוֹן," *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000), 36. The word always refers to the end of something, be it acts (Exod 4:8; 2 Chr 9:29, 26:22; 29:29), people (Deut 24:3, 29:22) or the western geographical regions (Dan 11:29; Zech 14:8). Seow is hesitant to think that this word has eschatological connotations to it, even though he admits that the word has all of history in view (Seow, *Job 1–21*, 806–7). Surely this includes the eschaton.

[51] So also Seow, *Job 1–21*, 806.

[52] Dhorme translates this as "as the last", referring to a God having the last word. Cf. Isaiah 48:12, where this word is used of God (Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 283). But even here the word is not used adverbially—in that passage it is referring to temporality (albeit God's atemporality). Pope takes this adverbially but does not give a reason why. See Pope, *Job*, 146. This also contradicts how אַחֲרוֹן (*ʾaḥărôn*) is used in Scripture. Pope's translation of this word as "a guarantor" adverbially modifying "go'el" is not in the grammar of the text. This word is properly the antecedent of יָקוּם.

The last clause of verse 25 describes what the Redeemer will do during the eschatological time frame indicated by וְֽאַחֲר֗וֹן (*wĕʾaḥărôn*). The phrase עַל־עָפָר (*ʿal-ʿāpār*) is not the typical word used when talking about the earth but would rather be אֶרֶץ (*ʾereṣ*).[53] עָפָר (*ʿāpār*) most commonly means, "fine dry top-soil, dust."[54] Semantically, עָפָר (*ʿāpār)* is often used to refer to human frailty, humiliation, creation, or death.[55] In the book of Job, עָפָר (*ʿāpār*) is usually used to refer to human frailty and death, physically and spiritually (4:19; 7:5, 21; 10:9; 16:15; 17:16). It is also used to refer to the place of creation and recreation (8:19).[56] This use of עָפָר (*ʿāpār*) in Job may carry implications for Job's own situation. As we saw in our semantic study of it, a significant percentage of the occurrences of עָפָר (*ʿāpār*) have to do with death or frailty.[57] There are only two occurrences of עָפָר (*ʿāpār*) in Job that could be taken to refer to the earth as a whole: Job 19:25 and 41:33. It is therefore probable that at least in the case of 19:25, עָפָר (*ʿāpār*) primarily refers to death or the grave. Even so, there may be global implications to Job's use of עָפָר (*ʿāpār*) here. Job does not say "my dust" but "the dust," using the prepositional phrase עַל־עָפָר (*ʿal-ʿāpār*). And if Job is thinking eschatologically, then he could be thinking of a time when God makes all things on the surface of the earth right.

This thinking connects neatly with the issue of social justice—if Job's personal vindication proves to Job that God is ultimately just and caring, then by extension this just and caring God will in the eschaton also remedy social injustices on the earth.

The action the Redeemer takes also has eschatological implications. Within the eschatological, temporal frame of reference established by וְֽאַחֲר֗וֹן (*wĕʾaḥărôn*), the Redeemer will stand (יָקוּם, *yāqûm*). Not only does the imperfect nature of יָקוּם (*yāqûm*) allow for the future completion of this action—it has legal connotations (Deut 19:15; Pss 27:12; 35:11; 94:16; cf. with God as the subject: Zeph 3:8; Pss 12:6; 68:2, 76:10).[58] קום (*qwm*) is also used to specifically refer to the actions of legal witnesses in a courtroom setting (Deut 19:15ff; Pss 27:12; 35:11; Zeph 3:8). In this context, יָקוּם (*yāqûm*) must be taken in a legal sense, because Job has been wishing

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[53] Cf. *HALOT,* 90.

[54] Köhler et al., "862 ",אַחֲר֗וֹן.

[55] Cf. Gen 3:14,19a, 19b; 18:27; Deut 9:21a; 2 Sam 22:43; 2 Kings 13:7; Job 7:21; 10:9; 16:15; 17:16; 20:11; 21:26; 30:19; 34:15; 40:13; Pss 7:5; 18:42; 22:15; 29; 30:9; 44:25; 72:9; 103:14; 104:29; Eccl 3:20b; 12:7; Isa 26:19; 29:4a, 4b; 41:2; 49:23; 65:25; Lam 3:29; Dan 12:2; Mic 7:17; Zeph 1:17. Special thanks to Dr. Aaron Shryock and his students at the Master's Seminary for this data.

[56] Dhorme is mistaken to see this word as always referring to earth in the book of Job. In 5:6 the location is the ground as origin of troubles, not the earth. 5:7 implies an origin and creation context. The same principle applies in 8:19 where dust as the source of creation, not the earth in general, is in view. See Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job,* 283.

[57] Seow rightly sees עָפָר (*ʿāpār*) as being associated with frailty and death. In this context, this means then that the Redeemer is standing over death in general, and in context, Job's grave (Seow, 808).

[58] Cf. Ludwig Köhler et al., "קום," *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1086–87. Dhorme and Habel concur with the legal implications of this word in this context. See also Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job,* 283; Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1985), 293.

for a courtroom trial. Furthermore, the function of the Redeemer Himself in this passage is legal. So, Job wishes that his Redeemer will perform His legal function of vindicating Job in the end. Everything in verse 25 paints the vindicating work of the Redeemer as taking place in an eschatological context. The context therefore points to the Redeemer as likely being divine, for only a divine person who was alive when Job spoke his wish can take His stand on behalf of Job "at the last."

The connection between vindication in the *eschaton* and the righting of social wrongs cannot be missed either. Job believes that God has mistreated him, and if God mistreats even the godliest people, what does that say about how God administers justice to the world in general?: "The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; He covers the faces of its judges. If *it is* not *He,* then who is it?" If this logic is flipped around, we can see what Job is hoping for in 19:25–26—Job knows that if God cares enough to justify him through a Redeemer, then God through the Redeemer will make all things right in the eschaton: "And at the last He will take His stand on the earth" (Job 19:25b).

Verse 26: Job's Hope of Resurrection

Job hopes that his Redeemer will vindicate him before God. He does not believe it will happen during this life, but when he one day rises from the dead to see God face-to-face. Three contextual markers indicate Job is thinking of an eschatological resurrection: first, the future-oriented context discussed in the verses leading up to verse 25; second, the eschatological time frame indicated by וְאַחֲרוֹן (*wě'aḥărōwn*); and third, the divine nature of the Redeemer. [59]

Verse 26 is heavily debated by scholars. Pope comments that this verse is impossible to understand, being, "notoriously difficult."[60] Vicchio overstates his case

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[59] The LXX affirms the general salvific nature of this passage with a dynamic translation: "The Lord will be the one who will cause Job's flesh to come back" (κυρίου ταῦτά μοι συνετελέσθη, *kyriou tauta moi synetelesthē*).Vicchio points out that the LXX is significantly shorter than the MT. He concludes that this is for theological reasons. See Vicchio, *The Image of the Biblical Job*, 105. This may be partly true, but it is not the entire answer. The LXX translators had a tendency to eliminate parallel passages, and explain things to make the text more understandable, as Vicchio himself admits (Ibid., 107). He also sees the LXX as contradicting the naturalistic worldview of MT 19:25–27, but the translation he gives (from the LXX) is spot on with the MT (Ibid.). He does rightly point out a tendency amongst the LXX translators for the book of Job to tone down language Job uses against God though (Ibid.). In general, it is widely acknowledged that the translation of Job was a free translation, i.e., the translators opted to translate the ideas and meanings of Job rather than every word. See J. H. Gailey, "Jerome's Latin Version of Job from the Greek. Chapters 1–26, Its Text, Character and Provenance" (ThD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1945), 14; Edwin Hatch, *Essays in Biblical Greek: Studies on the Value and Use of the Septuagint, on the Meanings of Words and Psychological Terms in Biblical Greek, on Quotations from the Septuagint, on Origen's Revision of Job, and on the Text of Ecclesiasticus, with an Index of Biblical Passages* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 220; Emanuel Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*, 3rd ed. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 19; and Claude E. Cox, "The Nature of Luian's Revision of the Text of Greek Job," in *Scripture in Transition: Essays on Septuagint, Hebrew Bible, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of Raija Sollamo*, ed. Anssi Voitila and Jutta Jokiranta, vol. 126, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 425.

[60] Pope, *Job*, 147. Habel uses the same phrase to refer to this verse (Habel, *The Book of Job*, 293. Pope adds that, "The ancient versions all differ and no reliance can be placed in any of them" (Pope, *Job*, 147).

by claiming that it is impossible to understand what verse 26 is saying and that the original Masoretic Text is unrecoverable.[61] Aron Pinker argues that the MT of Job 19:26 has been edited to reflect a bias towards physical resurrection and a hope in future vindication.[62] The only objective evidence he cites for this position, however, is a much earlier article on the subject, which itself simply asserts the position without any evidence.[63] The original *Vorlage* of the Old Testament (seen most clearly in Masoretic Text) is itself quite stable, so the meaning of Job 19:26 is ascertainable if contextual exegesis is performed.[64]

Verse 26 is also fronted with a prepositional phrase, with the subject at the back end, in order to emphasize what comes next, namely, Job's death. The temporal marker indicates the time in which Job will see God (וְאַחַר, *wĕʾaḥar*), "and after."[65] Job is thus speaking of a certain point in time, a time that will come after "this flesh of mine is cut off" (עוֹרִי נִקְּפוּ־זֹאת, *ʿôwrî niqqĕpû-zōʾt*), which can only be a reference

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[61] Vicchio, *The Image of the Biblical Job*, 82. Vicchio proves this himself by comparing the ben Naphtali and ben Asher texts, and concluding that most of the differences are minor and have to do with spelling (Ibid., 63).

[62] Aron Pinker, "A New Interpretation of Job 19:26," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 15, no. 2 (2015).

[63] T. K. Cheyne, "On Some Suspected Passages in the Poetical Books of the Old Testament," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 10, no. 1 (1897): 15–66.

[64] Pope, *Job*, 147, affirms that the MT text appears to fit the context, even though there are problems with it (he does not say what problems those are). For a list of the variant reading and versions of this verse, see Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 284. There is evidence that the term "Septuagint" did not start to be used in reference to the Old Greek until after the first century AD. See Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 17. Albert Pietersma argues that there was a single proto-Masoretic *Vorlage* underlying both the LXX and the MT by contending that in the beginning, the LXX was an interlinear and subservient translation to the Hebrew original. See Albert Pietersma, *A New English Translation of the Septuagint, and Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title: The Psalms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), ix. Many Old Testament LXX books will therefore give the rigid equivalence of the Hebrew, like an interlinear. In light of this, when faced with a difficult translation decision, it is usually better to go in the direction that the Hebrew leads (Ibid, xiii). Siegfriend Kreuzer has pointed out that early recensions of the Old Greek brought the text more in line with the MT. See Siegfried Kreuzer, "From 'Old Greek' to the Recensions: Who and What Causes the Change of the Hebrew Reference Text of the Septuagint?," in *Septuagint Research: Issues and Challenges in the Study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures*, ed. Wolfgang Kraus and R. Glenn Wooden, Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series (Brill Academic Publishers) 53 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 229. There are also Septuagint texts from Qumran that show a revision toward a proto-Masoretic text, called the *kaige* revison (Ibid., 229). Not all scholars agree about the nature and importance of the *kaige* revision though. See Peter John Gentry, "An Analysis of the Revisor's Text of the Greek Job" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1994), 488. Kreuzer also notes that the proto-Masoretic text was the dominant text base in the first century (Ibid., 227–28). There were only minor changes between the proto-Masoretic text in the second century BC, and the Masoretic Text of the 10th century A.D (Ibid., 229). This brings a much greater certainty to the reliability of the MT text.

[65] Temporal framing is its primary usage (cf. Deut 8:16; Job 42:12). See Willem VanGemeren, ed., "אַחֲרִית," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 361–62. Seow notes that the wordplay between וְאַחֲרוֹן and וְאַחַר makes וְאַחַר temporal (Seow, *Job 1–21*, 805).

to Job's own death.[66] The *min* prefix on וּמִבְּשָׂרִי, (*ûmibbĕśārî*) probably indicates that after Job's flesh has been cut off, he will see God in his flesh again.[67]

When the exegetical data is connected and combined with the eschatological context of this passage, it becomes likely that Job is wishing for a bodily resurrection. Job knows he will not be vindicated by anyone in this life—so he looks ahead to the future, to the last day when his Redeemer will vindicate him in his resurrected body.[68]

The most serious objection to the physical resurrection view seems to come from Job himself. In Job 14:12, Job clearly states once a man dies, that is the end of his life.[69] Vicchio categorically states that it is impossible for Job to be thinking about resurrection in 19:26, based on 14:12.[70] Yet, there is not necessarily a contradiction between these two passages. It is true that Job sees death as the end of his life (3:17–

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[66] The demonstrative pronoun זֹאת emphasizes Job's flesh. Dhorme sees נִקְּפוּ (niqqĕpû) as "surrounding", even though he gives no argument to support this. See Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 284. From here he translates verse 26 as, "And that behind my skin, I shall stand up." He gives no evidence for this either, and "I shall stand up" is not in the text (Ibid.). The only other place נִקְּפוּ (niqqĕpû) occurs is in Isa 10:34 and here; it clearly means cutting down. Job though is talking about his flesh being cut away from him. Gordis thinks this word means, "mark off" because of its Hifil form, but this word in Job 19:26 is in the Piel. Gordis, *The Book of Job*, 2:206. Habel recognizes that Dhorme, Pope, and Gordis all have different opinions of this word, so he follows the context by translating this phrase as Job's skin being peeled off "in death." See Habel, *The Book of Job*, 293.

[67] There is a key interpretive problem here. Should the *min* prefix on וּמִבְּשָׂרִי (ûmibbĕśārî) be interpreted as a privative *min* (without my flesh) instead of as a *min* of location (from my flesh)? Arguments for a privative use include: 1) Job knows how to use the privative *min* (cf. 21:9). 2). The *vav* is probably adversative (but, yet). Even though Job will die, he will see God. 3) There is nothing at the clausal level that contradicts this position. It is preferable to see the *min* here as a *min* of location though. Several reasons support this conclusion: 1) Its only other parallel construction (Gen 2:23) is also a *min* of location. 2) Nothing in the context rules out bodily resurrection. 3) Death in Job's worldview means leaving the body and going to the place of the death (Sheol; cf. Job 14:10, 12–14). Seeing God again would imply a restoration of body and soul together. 4) The words for seeing God in verses 26–27 are never used of dead people, but people alive with bodies (See Ludwig Köhler et al., "חזה," *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 301). 5) Job's emphasis on seeing and beholding God with his eyes in verse 27 implies being in a heavenly courtroom with Him, not in Sheol.

[68] While Seow does not believe bodily resurrection is in view here, he favorably notes that Christians and Jews throughout church history have held to a bodily resurrection view. Seow, *Job 1–21*, 809. Naturally, such clear resurrection language by Job is played down by many non-evangelical scholars. Pope offers no reason for his translation, "Without my flesh I shall see God" (Pope, *Job*, 147). Gordis rightly points out that Job cannot be referring to seeing God after his body decays (Gordis, *The Book of Job*, 206). Instead of taking this logic to imply bodily resurrection though, Gordis opts for a mystical viewing of God in this life. This does not square with the context though—"deep in my skin" is simply not a good translation. Wilson admits that the min is probably one of source, and that Job quite possibly has physical resurrection in view (Wilson, *Job*, 108). In addition, Habel recognizes that Israelite tradition agrees with וּמִבְּשָׂרִי (ûmibbĕśārî) as being a min of source, because no tradition speaks of people seeing God in a disembodied form. See Habel, *The Book of Job*, 293. He notes the broader context of Job wanting to see God face to face (13:15, 20, 24) (Ibid., 294) and Job wishing to see God with his eyes (Ibid.). Dahood's reconstruction of וּמִבְּשָׂרִי (ûmibbĕśārî) as a pual participle is arbitrary (cf. Pope, *Job*, 147). Although Wilson opts against seeing the min as one of source, he gives no exegetical reason for it, instead choosing neutrality: "However a better view is that the limits of language have been reaching here, and the details should not be pressed too far." (Wilson, *Job,* 108).

[69] Pope, *Job*, 147. He mentions that Chrysostom refutes bodily resurrection in Job based off Job 14:12 as well.

[70] Vicchio, *The Image of the Biblical Job*, 82.

19; 7:21; 10:21–22; 14:7–12; 16:22; 17:14–15). Nevertheless, in 19:25–26 there is clear evidence that Job is at least wishing for bodily resurrection, envisaging a life after death.[71]

Thus, while it is true that Job believes death is permanent, in 19:26 Job's belief in the ultimate rightness of God results in the hope that somehow, his redeemer would defeat death and enable Job to be raised from the dead.[72] The Redeemer's function thus involves enabling Job to see God in a future life, in a system that is outside the bounds of the DRP. Job seems to be saying that although death is the end of his current life, he is hoping for a resurrection enabled by his Redeemer.[73]

All of this exegetical effort on Job 19:25–26, especially, is paramount in order to connect Job's eschatological hope to contemporary issues of social justice. What emerges is that Job connects his own situation to the way the world works in general. If a God-fearing man like him suffers, what is the hope of any man in being right with God? Does God even care about judging the wicked and protecting the innocent? When the text is allowed to speak for itself, Job's solution to the problems facing both himself and, by extension, society, becomes clear: real problems can only ultimately be solved by a divine third party—one who can enable man to be made clean and justified before God.

Conclusion: Job's Hope and Its Implications for Social Justice

There are important implications for social justice when Job's hope is rightly understood, and the book is affirmed as the theological prequel to the rest of the Bible. First, the root of social ills is not race, class, economic status, or any other standard measurement of societies—it is the sinful nature mankind possesses. It is the "wicked" who oppress the poor and rob from others (e.g., Job 9:24; 24:1–4; 9–14).

Second, Job's suffering makes him realize, along with his friends, that under the DRP (Divine Retribution Principle) man can never be right with God. This points to the ultimate problem facing anyone trying to bring social justice to bear, because the most pressing concern for the Christian is not how social ills can be made right, but

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[71] Seow, *Job 1–21*, 808.

[72] My thanks to Dr. Chou for pointing this out to me.

[73] This idea of resurrection is not foreign to the Ancient Near East. M.L. Barré, who is not an evangelical, has noted that the verbs חַי (ḥāy) and יָקוּם (yāqûm) in Job 19:25 have verbal parallels in Akkadian literature. He argues that anytime the two words for "live" and "rise" occur in the same context, healing and resurrection are in view. See M. L. Barré, "A Note on Job XIX 25," *Vetus Testamentum* 29, no. 1 (1979): 107–10. Barré admits that this means Job could be thinking of resurrection in 19:25. However, he ultimately comes to the conclusion that Job is just wishing for physical restoration of health (Ibid., 109). As has been noted though, this goes against the future-oriented context of the passage. Job already believes that he will not get vindication (or healing) in this life. That is the entire reason why he is wishing for an eschatological Redeemer, and why he wants his words to be written down. Seow affirms Barré's line of thinking (Seow, *Job 1–21*, 824–25).

how sinful people can be made right before a holy God before they are judged eternally.[74]

Third, and related to the previous implication, is that Job's hope is set on God, the only one who can enact perfect social justice. He is the only Being wise and strong enough to one day ensure that all of His people will live in a just society.[75]

Fourth, Job's hope of a Redeemer is fulfilled in Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Tim 2:5–6).[76] This means that Christians know by experience and from the entire canon of revelation that God is just, that He does care, and that He will make all things right one day (cf. Rom 3:23–26; 8:28; 1 Pet 5:10; 2 Pet 3:7;). The wicked might prosper in this life, but they will be judged in the end (2 Pet 2:9–17; Rev 20:11–15).

When thinking about the issues of social justice, the following questions require a biblical response: Does God care about the evil in society? Is He going to do something about it? As exemplified in the case of Job, social justice is not purely a horizontal problem caused by man, needing to be solved by man. Its root cause is sin, and the only solution for sin is for God to make man right with him. Job looked ahead and, believing that God was just, expressed hope that a Redeemer would make him right and, by implication, mankind in general. Man, through the Redeemer, is not just forgiven, but actually cleansed and made new. This new humanity, in the *eschaton*, will form a society where there is perfect social justice.

This does not mean that pastors should be indifferent to evils in today's society, nor does it mean that Christians should not show mercy and do justice as the Lord leads. What Job's hope in future redemption offers the church is the proper perspective on the ultimate root cause of social injustice, and its corresponding ultimate solution. Job's hope gives pastors a heavenly perspective when they are preaching about social evils and when they are counseling those who suffer because of them—our hope is no handcuff, obligating God to fix everything now, but is a settled, liberating trust in His promise to make a perfectly just society of people in the end.

This hope is not just eschatological—Job's hope began to be realized in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His life, death, and resurrection showed that man can be made right before God (Rom 3:23–24; 5:1–2, 9; 1 Cor 15:20–22). And every Christian, despite his or her imperfections, stands as a present witness to the goodness of God and the ability of God to make people right spiritually in the present, and holistically in the end. The church must answer the issues of social justice this way: by living out

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[74] As noted by Leeman in Jonathan Leeman, "Response to John R. Franke," in *Four Views on the Church's Mission*, ed. Jason S. Sexton, Counterpoints: Bible & Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017).

[75] McCracken notes 5 challenges to implementing social justice: 1) Fairly distributing resources that are moderately scarce. 2) Disagreement over what kind of life a just society should aspire to live. 3) How to ensure cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity is treated fairly in relationship to other diversities. 4) Conflicting norms, i.e., different standards of what is most important in social justice (welfare, liberty, virtue). 5) How Christians engage each other from different viewpoints and traditions. See McCracken, "Social Justice: An Introduction to an Important Concept," 8–12.

[76] Peter Leithart makes a true statement on this topic: "A sacramental missiology will insist that the just society can exist only through Jesus, who is the embodiment of God's justice, and that the cross and resurrection of Jesus are the source of all genuine social justice." See Peter Leithart, "Sacramental Mission: Ecumenical and Political Missiology," in *Four Views on the Church's Mission*, ed. Jason S. Sexton, Counterpoints: Bible & Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 171.

Christ's commands now, and by proclaiming the Gospel, the only hope that an evil society has of being transformed in the end.

AND HOW SHALL THEY HEAR WITHOUT A PREACHER?
A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF ROMANS 9–11

Gregory H. Harris
Professor Emeritus of Bible Exposition
The Master's Seminary

Romans 10:14 ("And how shall they hear without a preacher?") and accompanying verses are frequently used completely out of context for ordinations or missionary commissioning services, as if in these verses God is calling for preachers to be sent out. Other preachers and teachers completely omit Romans 9–11 in much or all of their teaching or preaching and, by default, these verses have no influence on their theology. As this article will show, these Holy Spirit-inspired Scriptures: (1) Are not rhetorical questions asked by God; (2) rather they are part of God's answers given by means of the apostle Paul as to His trustworthiness and omnipotence, particularly related to His Word. Further, (3) when "the fulness of the Gentiles has come in," this will also mean that "the partial hardening of [national] Israel," has ended and thus Romans 11:25 will be fulfilled, (4) as Israel's Deliverer will come from Zion and through the blood of the New Covenant, He will remove their sin and ungodliness from a promised Jewish remnant, (5) ultimately blessing the entire world of redeemed Jews and Gentiles.

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Introduction

Two Scripture passages are frequently used in commissioning services of pastors and missionaries, or as a call to expository preaching/teaching:

Isaiah 6:8 "Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"

Romans 10:14–15 "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!'"

Here are a few examples of such an interpretation and usage, specifically Romans 10:14–15.

> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: "These verses [Rom 10:14–15] are the great charter for foreign mission enterprises. They apply, of course, to any missionary enterprise, but they are in particular, and have always been regarded as, the great charter for foreign missionary work."[1]

> Ligonier Ministries: "Preachers, moreover, cannot go unless the church sends them, commissioning them for ministry and supporting their physical needs (Rom 10:14–15). The task of reaching the nations is not accomplished by solo missionaries who strike out on their own. Instead, the church trains and sends forth sound preachers of the gospel. Dr. R.C. Sproul writes in his commentary on Romans that 'not everyone in the church is called to be a missionary, but every member of the church is responsible to make sure that the missionary activity gets done.' The Great Commission is not for a select few; rather, it is given to the whole church. Some of us will go to the ends of the earth. Some of us will send out missionaries, supporting them financially and in prayer. But all of us must take part in this great work."[2]

> Steve Lawson: "The Great Commission is our manifesto. It is our mandate. It is our marching orders from headquarters. And so this morning I want us to look at some extremely important verses that sketch out and give to us the divine mandate for missions. We find them in Romans chapter 10. I want to read verse 13 through 17 today…. In these verses the Apostle Paul is talking about missions. He is talking about evangelism."[3]

God does send out people into the ministry. Jesus explained in Luke 10:2, when sending out the seventy, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." However, neither Romans 10:14–15 nor Isaiah 6:8 are the proper starting places for the biblical teaching on the sending of ministry workers, otherwise the accurate interpretation of

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[1] D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 10, Saving Faith* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1997), 257.

[2] Ligonier Ministries, "The Gospel Sent Forth," Ligonier Ministries: The Teaching Fellowship of R. C. Sproul, https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/gospel-sent-forth/ (accessed September 22, 2018).

[3] Steven J. Lawson, "A Mandate for Missions," Sermon Audio, https://www.sermonaudio.com/ser-moninfo.asp?SID=1124101355570 (accessed December 3, 2019), found around the 6:30 minute mark. Around the 36:00 mark, Lawson adds, "Preaching is the primary work of missions. The other things can augment and find their place. And we have many needs on the mission field of many people doing many different tasks… but at the forefront of the work of missions—hear me—is the preaching of the word of Christ and the preacher lifting up his voice in the public arenas around the world."

these verses will be sacrificed. The contexts of the verses reveal totally different usage by God, with meanings that are eternally profound and consequential regarding things past, present, and future, in distinct ways.[4]

A Broad Walk-Through of Romans

The epistle that Paul composed to the church(es) in Rome was not an evangelistic message to the city of Rome. The Christian nature of this Spirit-inspired epistle is easily seen in the opening verses of Romans 1:1–7:

> Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.[5]

Paul wrote further, in verse 15: "I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome." He wrote about how eager he was to preach the gospel to Christians and to the unsaved in Rome. Why would Christians who had already received the gospel need to hear the gospel that Paul preached? A major part of the answer was that Paul wanted to use Rome as his home base, especially in light of his desire to continue his missionary journeys to Spain, as seen in Romans 15:20–25:

> And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation; but as it is written,
>   "THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE,
>   AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND." [Isa 52:15]
> For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you; but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you whenever I go to Spain—or I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while—but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.

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[4] The core truths of the biblical trail are taken from chapter 9 of Greg Harris, *The Bible Expositor's Handbook—New Testament Digital Edition* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), 181–203. See that chapter for additional related information.

[5] All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise stated, are taken from the New American Standard, 1995 Updated Edition (La Habra, CA: Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Under the sovereignty of God, Paul had different reasons for writing the epistle to the Christians in Rome. First, it was a preventive/protective measure against false teachers/false apostles. Previously, from every location after Paul had departed from a church or churches, false teachers always crept in and attacked the churches, causing much spiritual harm as shown in Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and 1 and 2 Corinthians. Second, this gave Paul an opportunity to write to them ahead of time the biblical truths that he had taught/would be teaching.[6] Paul was not the founder of the church at Rome. In Acts 2:10, with the birth of the church and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, Romans are part of the people who attended that day: "Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome [literally "the sojourning Romans"], both Jews and proselytes."[7] The Romans saved that day most likely were the ones whom God used to found the church in Rome.[8] So, without Paul's having previously met most of them, if the church in Rome was to be his missionary base, Paul must have his home church in agreement doctrinally before he could trust that false teachers would not come after he left and deceive the church at Rome.

The third reason Paul wrote Romans was in view of the mind-set of the unsaved Romans and the hindrances that could keep many others from receiving the gospel. As the biblical text will show, two specifically important questions had to be dealt with. First, how can anyone say that Jesus is the Christ/Messiah and the Son of God when His own people Israel rejected Him? Second, how can anyone say that the God of the Bible is actually the God who tells the truth, and that His Word is true? Not only had most of the Jews rejected God's Messiah—including most Jews up to the present time—but also most of what is written in the Old Testament, especially the prophecies, has not yet come true.

In broadest terms, these are the divisions of the book: Romans 1–11 is the doctrinal portion, and 12:1–15:13 is the section of application of the biblical truths in godly living. The application section of Romans begins with these familiar verses to

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[6] Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1961), 399, writes, "[Paul] seems to have been aware of certain intellectual problems which were of some concern to the Christians and sets out to answer them." Guthrie adds, "For this reason Paul deals with the fundamental Christian principle of 'righteousness' as contrasted with the Jewish approach, and then discusses the problem of Israel's failure and her relationship to the universal Christian Church" (Ibid.).

[7] Gk. οἱ ἐπιδημοῦντες Ῥωμαῖοι (Acts 2:10). The participle accompanying the ethnic "Romans" term—"visiting" or "sojourning"—means "to stay in a place as a stranger or visitor" according to Walter Bauer, "ἐπιδημέω," in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker, trans. William Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 370. Also, following the term is the phrase, Ἰουδαῖοί τε καὶ προσήλυτοι, ("both Jews and proselytes"). Given that this ascription is placed in the middle of a list of ethnic names, it is likely that it specifically defines what kind of Romans came to Pentecost—both Jews and non-Jews (i.e. Gentiles who became worshippers of the true God). In this way, it is more than likely that both Roman Jews and Gentiles were saved at Pentecost and together began the churches in Rome.

[8] David A. Fiensy, *New Testament Introduction*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1994), 223. See also Boyce W. Blackwelder, *Toward Understanding Romans: An Introduction and Exegetical Translation* (Anderson, IN: The Warner Press, 1962), 28, where he writes, "No direct evidence of foundation; neither Peter nor Paul have any clear historical evidence of founding." Irenaeus was the first to propagate Peter and Paul as its founders (Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, trans. Dominic J. Unger, ed. John J. Dillon (New York: Newman Press, 1992), 3:206).

many, 12:1–2: "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

Paul followed these verses with many informative greetings to different people (15:14–16:24), and concluded with a beautiful, doctrinally rich benediction, in Romans 16:25–27:

> Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

The first major doctrinal portion of the epistle is in Romans 1:18–5:21 and presents the doctrine of justification by faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.[9] It must be emphasized that it is not fitting just to say, "justification by faith." There must be some object of that faith, especially an object of faith accepted by God as sufficient satisfaction for one's salvation. It is not only faith alone; even demons have the faith to believe that there is only one God (Jas 2:19). So just a broad belief in God does not suffice here. Such saving faith is set solely on the person and the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, His perfect life and perfect sacrifice, accepted by God in our behalf by those He has already redeemed or by those whom He will redeem.

Broadly speaking, Paul began with the bad news in Romans 1:18–3:20 that all humans— except Jesus Himself—are condemned before God for every sin they have committed, which makes it fitting for the wrath of God to be poured out upon them. There are no righteous individuals, groups, or people, and this is true for Gentiles, true for Jews, throughout all time (Rom 3:9–18). After biblically establishing the bad news of the total condemnation of every natural-born person, Paul began building the argument for "the good news," the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. To what degree this good news means to us in our standing before God is answered—among other places—in Romans 5:1–2: "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the

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[9] Though worded differently, this article generally follows the divisions of Romans used by Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, NAC 27, ed. E. Ray Clendenen and David. S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 57: "The Order-of-salvation macrostructure of Romans goes as follows: Sin (Rom 1:18–3:20), Justification (3:21–4:25), Sanctification (5:1–8:17), Glorification (8:18–39), Israel (9–11), Application (12–16). Harvey has the structure of the book similarly built around the theme of God's righteousness: "The revelation of God's righteousness (1:18–4:25)," "The provision of God's righteousness (5:1–8:39)," "The vindication of God's righteousness (9:1–11:36)," "The practice of God's righteousness (12:1–15:13)." John D. Harvey, *Romans: Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2017), 4–6.

glory of God." Romans 5:9–11 continues with other wonderful benefits of the salvation that God gives to the redeemed: "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."

The second major division of the doctrinal portion of the book of Romans is 6:1–8:17, presenting the doctrine of positional sanctification, which emphasizes that positional sanctification is a spiritual status granted to all Christians by God at the point of salvation. The redeemed currently possess this spiritual status in Christ Jesus, but will have to wait until heaven to see the fullness of many of these blessed promises. Such emphasis is highlighted by John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue:

> Thus, when the Spirit imparts spiritual life into the soul of the dead sinner, opening his eyes to the filth of sin and the glory of Jesus (2 Cor 4:4, 6), man's nature is sanctified—definitively transformed from spiritual death to spiritual life, such that Scripture calls him a new creation (2 Cor 5:17).… For this reason, the New Testament often employs the terminology of sanctification in the past tense, characterizing the Christian as one who has been initially sanctified by God.[10]

Paul's instruction about the Christian's progressive sanctification—living the Christian life and walk, and growing in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—does not begin until Romans 12:1 ("I urge you, brethren... present your bodies..."). In this doctrinal portion of Romans, Paul wrote about positional sanctification by giving very few commands during this section; instead, Paul repeated biblical, doctrinal truths that are true for every Christian.

In Romans 6:11, Paul wrote that those justified by Jesus Christ are positionally dead to sin as master over us: "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." In Romans 7, Paul instructed that the believer is dead to law as the ruling master over the redeemed. However, he also recognized the present struggle that comes to, and often wins over, the Christian who is living out these truths, as Romans 7:24–25 demonstrates: "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin." In fact, so great and wonderful are these truths that are applicable for the redeemed that we can rejoice over such doctrinal truths in Romans 8:1–2: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are

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[10] John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 632–33. See also, Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 747, who writes, "This initial moral change is the first stage in sanctification.… This initial step in sanctification involves a definite break from the ruling power and love of sin, so that the believer is no longer ruled or dominated by sin and no longer loves to sin."[10] Grudem cites 1 Cor 6:11 and Acts 20:32 where Paul refers to Christians as "sanctified" using the aorist (and probably past) tense."

in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death."

Romans 8:18–39 is the third part of the doctrinal section of Romans. God the Holy Spirit, through the Apostle Paul, reveals the future glorification of the redeemed and the earth, which not only relates to many of the problems of the present situation but also looks far into the future. Romans 8:18–21 show this to be true:

> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Matt Waymeyer shows how many amillennialists consider the biblical truths of Romans 8:17–23 as "their closing argument" in their case against premillennialism:

> Amillennialists also point to Rom 8:17–23 as an indication that sin and death will no longer exist after the Second Coming. In this passage, not only will creation itself "be set free from its slavery to corruption" (21), but the children of God will be glorified with Christ, being fully delivered from sin (17–23). Paul specifically refers to being "glorified" with Christ (17); "the glory that is to be revealed to us" (18); "the revealing of the sons of God" (19); "the glory of the children of God" (21); and "our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body" (23). According to amillennialists, this indicates that the Second Coming will be a time of full deliverance from sin and all of its effects, a time when the curse is lifted and every trace of wickedness will be removed from the entirety of the created order, including the children of God. Therefore, it is said, Rom 8:17–23 clearly precludes the possibility of an intermediate kingdom in which sin and death continue after the Second Coming (Venema, *The Promise of the Future*, 94; Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism*, 166; Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 282; Storms, *Kingdom Come*, 153–54; 551).[11]

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[11] Matt Waymeyer. *Amillennialism and the Age to Come: A Premillennial Critique of the Two-Age Model* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Biblical Resources, 2016), 170n64. Waymeyer has provided a much needed rebuttal of some of the amillennialists' conclusions about Romans 8: "In response, premillennialism fully affirms the glorification of God's people at the return of Christ as taught in Rom 8, but this does not mean that sin and death are abolished at the Second Coming. Not only do the Old Testament prophets speak of the existence of sin and death in the initial phase of the coming kingdom (Isa 65:20; Zech 14:17–19; see chapters 2—4 for a fuller explanation), but Rev 20:7–10 describes a revolt at the end of the millennium in which unbelievers are deceived by Satan, led into battle against Christ and the saints, and decisively judged by fire from heaven. According to premillennialists, these unbelievers will arise either from (a) unbelievers who survive the battle of Rev 19:17–19 and enter the millennial kingdom in non-glorified bodies or (b) the descendants of those who are converted during the Tribulation and enter the millennial kingdom in non-glorified bodies. Both of these premillennial views are consistent with the teaching of Rom 8. Under the first scenario, Rom 8 describes the glorification of all God's people—both dead and alive—at the return of Christ when He comes to establish His kingdom on earth, but sin and death continue among those non-glorified people who populate this kingdom. Under the second scenario,

While fervently anticipating and longing for the glories of God to come that will affect the entire world, the doctrinal section does not end at Romans 8, no matter whether or not it fits one's pre-established theology. The upcoming chapters are also part of "the gospel of God" that God gave to the apostle Paul (Rom 1:1).

Romans 9–11 is to be regarded as constituting the fourth and final part of the doctrinal portion of Romans. This section explains much about the Jewish people, their future, and their relation to the promises and works of God. These chapters are just as much Spirit-inspired doctrinal truth as any of the wonderful promises by God found in Romans 5 or Romans 8, for example. Sadly, however, this doctrinal truth is far from universal acceptance by many expositors who purposely ignore much or all of the content of Romans 9–11, because it does not align with their previously established eschatology. Thus, this section about national Israel is just as much doctrine—not opinion, and not optional—if one is going to preach and teach God's Word accurately. Paul said in Romans 1:1 that he was set apart for the gospel of God, the gospel which includes Romans 9–11.[12]

It is in this section of Romans that God the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul addressed the two critical questions of how Jesus could be God's Messiah if even His own people rejected Him, and how God can be God Almighty if His own Word has not yet come true. The latter question is asked because the Bible contains so many prophecies—especially in the Old Testament—that are yet to be fulfilled. Both are questions that skeptics and critics of God and His Word still currently use.[13]

As a final consideration, Gentry and Wellum, in the opening verses of *Kingdom Through Covenant*, make agreeable claims regarding God's covenants:

Rom 8 describes the glorification of God's people both at the rapture (1 Thess 4:13–18) and at the Second Coming (Rev 20:4–6)—conflating the two into a single description—and sin and death continue among those non-glorified people in the millennial kingdom. Because nothing in Rom 8 requires that sin and death are abolished and no longer exist, both views are consistent with the glorification of God's people at the Second Coming of Christ."

[12] Those who remove this section from their theology or their teaching or preaching, do this at their own peril in understanding God's Word. For instance, C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, MNTC (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1932), 150, writes, "[Romans 9–11] were very likely not written *currente calamo* with the rest of the epistle, but represent a somewhat earlier piece of work, incorporated here wholesale to save a busy man's time and trouble in writing on the subject afresh." William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC, 5th ed. (1952; repr., New York: T & T Clark, 1895), 225, "suggest that Paul's main argument of the gospel is complete once he finishes with Romans 8." This erroneously asserts that Romans 9–11 are not as foundational to Paul's argument and/or theology in Romans. Such proponents should formulate ahead of time what they will tell Jesus when He asks them why they did not believe or preach/teach this part of the doctrinal section of Romans. If they follow the same unbelieving approach to its logical conclusion, then perhaps other doctrinal sections could/should be removed as well, such as the wonderful promises of God found in Romans 5 and 8, which is the disastrous result of higher criticism of the Bible.

[13] We should also note that Romans 9–11 comprises one section in the book of Romans and must be treated as such: one cannot accurately read Romans 9 by itself or take a verse out of context from Romans 10 or begin or end one's study of this section in Romans 11. All three chapters must be included, and one *must* study this section in the order in which God gave it. Moreover, one must also study the Holy Spirit inspired logic that He used in this biblical doctrine section.

The purpose of this book is to demonstrate two claims. First, we want to show how central the concept of "covenant" is to the narrative plot structure of the Bible, and secondly, how a number of crucial theological differences, and the resolution of those differences, are directly tied to one's understanding of how the biblical covenants unfold and relate to each other…. Instead, we assert that the covenants form the backbone of the metanarrative of Scripture and thus it its essential "to put them together" correctly in order to discern accurately "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27)."[14]

Further, they write:

Michael Horton nicely captures this point when he writes that the biblical covenants are "the architectural structure that we believe the Scriptures themselves to yield…. It is not simply the concept of the covenant, but the concrete existence of God's covenantal dealings in our history that provides the context within which we recognize the unity of Scripture amid its remarkable variety." If this is the case, which we contend that it is, apart from properly understanding the nature of the biblical covenants and how they relate to each other, one will not correctly discern the message of the Bible and hence God's self-disclosure which centres [sic] and culminates in our Lord Jesus Christ.[15]

It will become evident that it is the identification and/or implementation of what the covenants of God are—as well as how important they are—that vastly differ. This is because the section of Romans 9–11 factors very little into Gentry and Wellum's understanding of the Bible as whole, especially its covenants. Moo rightly asserts: "Is this section, then, a detour from the main line of Paul's argument in Romans, an excursus that disrupts the natural flow of the letter? Not at all. Rom 9–11 is an important and integral part of the letter. Those who relegate chaps. 9–11 to the periphery of Romans have misunderstood the purpose of Rom 9–11, or of the letter, or of both."[16]

The Theological Importance of the Biblical Doctrine of Romans 9:1–5

The introductory verses of Romans 9:1–5 begin the fourth and final part of the doctrinal section of Romans 9–11 by listing some of the wonderful benefits/blessings that God had given to the Jewish people. The ESV translated these opening verses as follows:

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[14] Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 21.

[15] Ibid., 21–22, The authors site Michael S. Horton, *God of Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 13.

[16] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 547–48.

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.[17]

In writing about his fellow Jews, Paul states in verse 4, "They are Israelites, *and to them belong* the adoption, the glory, *the covenants*, the giving of the law, the temple service, and the promises" (emphasis added). Special notice should be made that all of these privileges belong currently—not in past tense—to the Jewish people, although the temple services, which were functioning at that time, would soon end for an extended period beginning in AD 70. This does not mean that every Jew is saved, but it does show, if just limited to this one doctrinal truth, that "to them belong... the covenants" (plural αἱ διαθῆκαι).

There are different ways amillennialists respond to what these opening verses mean and how they should be interpreted. By far, the easiest response is that found in Gentry and Wellum's *Kingdom Through Covenant*, which does not include Romans 9:1–5 in their scriptural index. It appears evident that these verses play no role whatsoever in their interpretation of the Bible. Morris at least acknowledges that these listed promises do exist, but sees that "[t]he covenants [as still belonging to the Jews in Romans 9:4] is perhaps surprising."[18] He then traverses a wide spectrum of possible interpretive options, some of them rather esoteric. Sam Storms, in *Kingdom Come,* writes:

Key to Paul's argumentation in Romans 11 is a problem he addressed in Romans 9:1–5, to which I must briefly turn. If Israel is God's covenant people to whom many glorious privileges have been given (9:4–5), how can it be that so few are saved and so many accursed separated from Christ (9:1–3)? Has God's "word," his covenant promise and eternal purpose, failed? Has the unbelief of the majority of Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh thwarted God's salvific decree, thereby undermining the trustworthiness

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[17] The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001).

[18] Leon Morris' full quote follows, in *The Epistle to the Romans*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 348: "The covenants is perhaps surprising, for we might have expected the emphasis to be on the great covenant of Exodus 24.21 But there was a Jewish habit of distinguishing within the Exodus covenant three covenants, those at Horeb, in the plains of Moab, and at Gerizim and Ebal.22 Irenaeus points out four covenants, those with Adam, with Noah, with Moses, and the gospel covenant (iii.11.8). A number of commentators see a reference to the old covenant at Sinai and the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah and fulfilled in Christ, but this could scarcely be said to belong to the Jews. It is more likely that the reference is to the several covenants in the Old Testament, as with Noah (Gen 9:9), with Abraham (Gen 17:2), with Moses (Exod 24:8), with Joshua (Josh 8:30ff.), and with David (2 Sam 23:5). The concept of covenant is very important for Old Testament religion, and God repeatedly entered covenantal relations with his people."

and fidelity of God's word? Paul's answer to this is a resounding No! He will labor to demonstrate that God's eternal purpose never included the salvation of every ethnic Jew. Their unbelief, therefore, can hardly be cited as evidence against the veracity and immutability of God's word.[19]

To Storms' credit, contra Wellum and Gentry, he at least deals with some of the questions beginning in Romans 9–11, but does so in a somewhat flyby way. First, he asks, "If Israel is God's people to whom many glorious privileges have been given (9:4–5)...," but then he keeps these verses closed. Of the glorious promises given to the Jewish people, he writes, "They are Israelites, *and to them belong* the adoption, the glory, *the covenants*, the giving of the law, the temple service, and the promises."[20] Second, Storms conducts eisegesis, bringing upon the text his own interpretation: "Has God's "word," *his covenant promise* and eternal purpose, failed?"[21] Storms writes "his covenant promise" (singular), but the text of which he writes (Rom 9:4) records "to them belong... the covenants" (plural). The reduction from two covenants in this passage to only one covenant is something brought to the text based on a predetermined theological bias and is not taken from the text itself.

From Romans 9:1–5 (especially v. 4), what covenants still belong to the Jewish people even up to today, when the church has been established and the gospel is going to the Gentiles? Everyone born receives the benefit of the Noahic Covenant, including the animals. God's everlasting promises in the Abrahamic Covenant still belong to the Jewish people. The Mosaic Covenant had passed by that time, so, along with the Abrahamic Covenant (e.g., Gen 17:7–8), Paul would also have been referring to the Davidic Covenant and the New Covenant as still belonging to the Jewish people. This is clearly explained and should be easily understood: this is the biblical truth/doctrine *from God*. Paul could have written only one sentence to say that "God's covenants used to belong to the Jewish people, but now they no longer have relevance nor benefits of these covenants—based on all the sins the Jewish people have done, especially in killing God's Messiah." But Paul did not write that—in fact, he wrote just the opposite.

The Biblical Doctrine of Romans 9:6–19

Romans 9:6a sets forth the argumentation against an earlier question ("But it is not as though the word of God has failed"), as to whether God's Word failed because what He had promised had not yet been fulfilled. What follows in the remainder of Romans 9:6–29 is the section on how the Holy Spirit "by means of the apostle Paul" answers these questions. To begin with, God in His sovereignty chose the Jewish people as a select people, in essence, because He wanted to. Verses 22–24 show that God did this as part of His overall divine purposes: "What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so in order that He might make

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[19] Sam Storms, *Kingdom Come: The Amillennial Alternative* (Ross-shire, Scotland, Mentor, 2013), 304–5.

[20] Ibid., 304; emphasis added.

[21] Ibid.

known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles."

While Romans 9 shows God choosing national Israel, it needs to be established that other Scripture proves that God in His sovereignty promised to save a remnant of the Jewish people. When God commissioned Isaiah, Yahweh revealed His promise that He will save "a tenth portion" of national Israel (Isa 6:13). Later, and appropriately, the section of Isaiah often referred to as "the Book of Immanuel" (Isa 7–12) records many prophecies and promises about the person and work of God's Messiah.[22] Within the Book of Immanuel section comes the promise of a future grace gift by God to a portion of the Jewish people at some undisclosed time in history future. Isaiah 10:20–23 reveals this promise:

> Now it will come about in that day that *the remnant of Israel*, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who struck them, but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.
> A *remnant* will return, *the remnant of Jacob*, to the mighty God.
> For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea,
> *Only a remnant* within them will return;
> A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness.
> For a complete destruction, one that is decreed, the Lord GOD of hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land. (Emphasis added)

The word "remnant" occurs four times in the passage, which is vital to the biblical truth. Other than having developed a strong theological bias against this doctrine, why would someone not accept that this is God's promise of what He would do at some time in the future for a remnant of Jewish people whom He will redeem? The quote directly ties to God's promised Messiah (Isa 7–12). Furthermore, if God did not mean that He would one day save a remnant of Jewish people, what exactly did He mean by the repetition, and how could one ever make sense of anything else God said?

Centuries past the time of Isaiah, God promised in Zechariah 13:8–9 that in the times of the Gentiles during the tribulation, Yahweh will bring the one-third remnant of the Jewish people back to Him in full covenant obedience and restoration of fellowship with Him. Included in this is His full acceptance of that remnant at that time, after He saves them:

> "It will come about in all the land,"
> Declares the LORD,
> "That two parts in it will be cut off and perish;
> But the third will be left in it.

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[22] For rationale for such naming of this subsection of Isaiah 7–12, see J. A. Motyer, "Context and Content in the Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14." *Tyndale Bulletin* 21 (1970): 123; Ross E. Price, "Isaiah," in *The Major Prophets*, vol. 4, Beacon Bible Commentary (1971; repr., Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1966), 55–72; and John L. Mackay, *A Study Commentary on Isaiah*, vol. 1 (North Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2008), 181–313.

"And I will bring the third part through the fire,
Refine them as silver is refined,
And test them as gold is tested.
They will call on My name,
And I will answer them;
I will say, 'They are My people,'
And they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"

With the biblical doctrine of Yahweh's promise to save a Jewish remnant, one-third of them during the Tribulation, Paul cited Isaiah 10:22–23 in Romans 9:27–28: "Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, 'THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED; FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY.'" Continuing his teaching about the Jewish remnant, instead of looking toward the future, Paul looked backward. He quoted from Isaiah 1:9, from the panoramic overview of the book of Isaiah (chaps. 1–5)—even with the depths of national Israel's sin, the utter faithfulness of God to fulfill His own promises continues. In Romans 9:29 he wrote, "And just as Isaiah foretold, 'UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOTH HAD LEFT TO US A POS-TERITY, / WE WOULD HAVE BECOME AS SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GO-MORRAH.'"

God's promising and working to keep a remnant of the Jewish people, in the context of Isaiah 1:9, was in the midst of the magnitude of national Israel's sin before Him. If God had wanted to destroy or reject the Jewish people, He had many oppor-tunities to have done so. Sadly, in this section, the sin of collective, national Israel was shown to be as great as or worse than the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, which is a staggering proportion. Yet, God still promised to faithfully fulfill His Word, in not only preserving a remnant of the Jewish people, but also in saving one-third of them in the future, during the Tribulation (Zech 13: 8–9). Fulfilling these promises is to-tally by God's grace alone, is totally by God's faithfulness to His Word and is another biblical example of God choosing to bind Himself by His own Scripture. Yahweh has to maintain national Israel all the way into the Tribulation, and beyond, so that He can save a one-third remnant after two-thirds of the Jewish people will be de-stroyed during that time.

Therefore, in the logic of God in the first part of the four-part answer found in Romans 9–11, the Holy Spirit by means of the apostle Paul, after showing the won-derful promises, divine selection, and privileges that He had given to the Jewish peo-ple, included that His covenants with them were still operative, though not revealed in their fullest measure yet. Romans 9 shows how God had sovereignly formed and maintained the Jewish people as the Jewish nation, and harmonizes with previous passages, such as Zechariah 13:8–9, where God looked forward to "the last days"/end of the days where He would sovereignly work to remove two-thirds of the Jewish people and bring the one-third of the Jewish people "through the rod/under the rod" to Himself and accept them—bringing them into full covenant obedience and fellow-ship with Him.

One item that is relevant to looking at the next section on Paul's logic and an-swers to questions about God and the Jews involves Paul's unusual presentation of

the Old Testament verse, "And Isaiah *cries out*," in 9:27 (emphasis added). The present tense usage is relatively rare in such Old Testament citations, whereas the past tense is much more common (e.g., Matt 4:14: "This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet"). Several important biblical truths should be highlighted. (1) That the message from the book of Isaiah *cries out* is similar to the way Wisdom cries out in Proverbs, in a continuous manner (e.g. Prov 8:1–9:12). (2) The quote Paul used is actually Yahweh crying out, not the person of Isaiah crying out. (3) This portion of Isaiah regarding national Israel *cries out* in the present, not past, tense—it is still crying out today concerning national Israel. (4) Further, Isaiah 1:1 and 2:1–4 speak directly concerning Judah and Jerusalem and the end of the days/last days. And finally, (5) the force and focus of these verses look to a future work that God will do, not to a past work that He has already accomplished. The past tense would have been expected if God had finished with national Israel, with the idea being that God had cried out to national Israel but had stopped doing so at some point in time, but this is not at all what the text states, nor what God promises to do.

The Theological Importance and Hinge of Romans 9:30–10:3

It is worth noting that chapter divisions in the Bible are man-made dividers that are, for the most part, accurate and wonderfully useful; nevertheless, these divisions are not inspired, and sometimes they could have been somewhat adjusted. Such is the case for the chapter divisions of Romans 9 and 10. In the first part of Romans 9–11, the doctrinal section goes from Romans 9:1–29, describing how God sovereignly selected the Jewish people by His desire to do so. In transitioning to the second part of the fourfold answer in Romans 9–11, the answer about the Jews is, Yes, God in His sovereignty chose national Israel. The second part, 9:30–10:3, explains national Israel's part in their present situation—including matters that remain even to the present day—all based on the majority of the Jewish people's sinful rejection of the Word of God. Paul was not referring to every member of the Jewish people, such as to those like him who did eventually receive the Messiah Jesus as Savior and Lord.

In this section he writes of the severe consequences of national Israel's rejection of Jesus the Messiah, whom God had already sent to them. He specifically addresses the reason for the current spiritual lostness of most of the Jewish people and the four reasons for their current spiritual situation, as seen in Romans 9:30–10:3:

> What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, just as it is written,
>> "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE,
>> AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."
> Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.
> For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking

to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

The Holy Spirit, by means of the apostle Paul, lists four specific sins that the unredeemed Jews have nationally committed up to this day. First, unsaved Israel pursued works of the law—not faith—and yet with all of their works, they have not arrived, and they never will arrive at the righteousness under the law for which they strive. "Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works" (9:32).

Second, while many of the unsaved Jews tried or try to keep all the works of the law, their most horrific sin was the rejection of the Messiah whom God had already sent to them. God through Paul used two references to the Stone Prophecies about the Messiah (Rom 9:32b–33):[23] "They stumbled over the stumbling stone [from Isa 8:14, in "The Book of Immanuel" Section] just as it is written [Isa 28:16], 'BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED'."

So, in explaining the present spiritual status of unsaved national Israel, Paul argued that not only do they attempt justification by works instead of by faith, but they have collectively sinned against God by rejecting the Messiah and now suffer the subsequent consequences of their not having received Jesus the Messiah whom God had sent to them.[24] Other than those who are saved or who will be saved, unbelieving national Israel collectively still stumbles over the stumbling stone. God states in Isaiah 28:16 that He personally placed the stone in Zion. Jesus Christ is therefore the stone of stumbling and a rock to be tripped over. There are only two options available when it comes to Him: people will either "believe on Him"—on *Him*, not on *it*—or they will eternally trip over Him all the way into eternal damnation.

Third, in Romans 10:1–2, Paul added the explanation of the current spiritual status of unsaved national Israel, of those who attempted salvation by means of works of the law instead of by faith, who rejected the One object of faith whom they should look to, Jesus the Messiah. He wrote, "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their [unsaved national Israel] salvation. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge."

So, added to the list of sinful actions that they currently perform are their own "works of righteousness," as they understand them. Many unsaved Jews have a zeal for God that does not accord with true biblical knowledge. Passages such as Isaiah 64:6 reveal how God views their futile attempts at works of righteousness: "For all

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[23] For practical use of these verses with Jewish people, see Harris, *The Bible Expositor's Handbook—OT Digital*, "Appendix: Using the Stone Prophecies about the Messiah in Jewish Evangelism," 203–14. For an even longer biblical trail about these most remarkable Stone Prophecies about the Messiah, see Greg Harris, *The Stone and the Glory of Israel—An Invitation to the Jewish people to Meet Their Messiah* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Biblical Resources: 2015).

[24] Elliott E. Johnson, "A Biblical Theology of God's Glory," (*Bibliotheca Sacra* 169 (October–December 2012): 409, demonstrates biblically, "As Jesus neared death, He agonized, 'Now my soul has become troubled, and what shall I say, "Father save me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name' (John 12:27–28). Jesus became 'obedient to the point of death, even to death on a cross' (Phil 2:8). And in doing so, He served God the Father and His purposes, and He also served man who was unable to accomplish those purposes."

of us have become like one who is unclean, / And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment."

Fourth, in this section, Paul explains in Romans 10:3, "For not knowing about God's righteousness, and by seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." Many unsaved from national Israel collectively and wrongly believed then, as many presently do, that by keeping the law they would be able to attain the righteousness of God on their own merit. This belief would have been true for the rich young ruler Saul of Tarsus, the Pharisee who later became Saul the Christian and eventually Paul the apostle. Such is true for orthodox Jews up to the present time and will ultimately be true for some into the Tribulation. Romans 10:4, however, shows the eternally different perception of biblical truth for the saved: "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

Broadly speaking, then, first, God sovereignly chose and brought national Israel into existence (Rom 9:1–29); second, national Israel committed four specific sins that explain the current lostness of most Jewish people, especially by not receiving the Messiah God had sent to them (9:30–10:3); third, Romans 10:4 starts the third part of God's fourfold answers that He gives in the doctrinal section in chapters 9–11.

And How Shall They Hear without a Preacher?

Romans 10:4–10 was and is Paul's logic, and divides between verses 4–7 and 8–10. If any of the unsaved Jewish people claimed that the message of God's gospel is unattainable because it is concealed in heaven or unreachable in the depths of the abyss, and thus is out of reach, then verses 4–7 offer the rebuttal:

> For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. But the righteousness based on faith speaks thus, "DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, 'WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?' (that is, to bring Christ down), or 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

Romans 10:8–10 counters that instead of being far away, on the contrary, the Word of God is very near: "But what does it say? 'THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, in your mouth and in your heart'— that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." The message of the gospel was not out of reach for the unsaved Jewish people, neither was it unattainable in their understanding. It was and is as near as their mouth and their heart, and it is a message that they can confess with their mouth.

In Romans 10:11–13 Paul further explained how the Gentiles are saved in the same manner and with the same message that God had given to national Israel, namely by Jesus, "the tested stone" that God Himself will place in Zion: "For the Scripture says, 'WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED' [Isa 28:16]. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all,

abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; for 'WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED'."

It is within this third part of Paul's four-part answer, in Romans 10:14–15, that the famous question is raised, "And how can they hear without a preacher?": "How, then, can they call on Him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written [in Isa 52:7]: 'HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS!'" It is essential to emphasize that in its context, Romans 10:14–15 is *not* a general call for Bible expositors nor for preachers to emerge and be sent out. Again, Moo has helpfully surmised:

> Before I studied or taught Romans, I had often heard 10:14–15 quoted in missionary sermons to prove the need to 'send out' missionaries. Like many who listened to such sermons, I did not have a good sense of the context from which the verses were taken. When I studied that context, I realized that the usual application of the verses was not on target. That text is not encouraging us to send out missionaries. Rather, it is asserting that God has already done so. He has sent out people like Paul and the other apostles to preach the good news. Israel has heard that good news but failed to believe it. This is the issue in Romans 10.[25]

At least two questions must be determined in Romans 10:14–15: (1) Who are the "they" of whom Paul spoke when asking "and how can *they* hear?" and (2) How did God answer the critics who might have claimed that national Israel did not receive the gospel of the Messiah because they were never told?

With regard to the first question, the "they" refers to unsaved national Israel, the majority of the Jewish people, to whom God had given many opportunities to hear and receive His gospel, the ones first introduced in the opening verses of the section (Rom 9:1–5). Some believed, but most neither believed nor received God's Messiah, who had been given to them (John 1:11–13). These are the same people whom Paul calls "my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom 9:3). In the immediate context, "they" are the ones who attempted works of righteousness (and many still do or will attempt later) in an effort to secure their salvation (9:30–32a). They are the ones who have stumbled over the stumbling stone of Jesus the Messiah, the One God placed in Zion, in whom they would not believe (9:32b–33). They are the specific group that Paul associated with physically and ethnically, but not spiritually, because these lost Jewish people needed the salvation found in Jesus Christ alone (10:1). They are the ones who have a zeal for God but not in accordance with knowledge (10:2). All of these statements are specifically written about the unbelieving Jewish people.

Continuing with the same logic, "they" are also the unsaved national Israel who have neglected the righteousness of God and who, instead, have sought to establish their own righteousness. Consequently, "they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God," of which Christ is the end for everyone who believes, and the "they" being written about, most assuredly, did not believe or receive, at least at the time that Paul wrote Romans (10:3). They are the ones who were offered the simple

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[25] Moo, *Romans*, 351.

gospel message as something that they could have comprehended or believed, if they had been willing to do so.

Many of those Jewish people who will stand before Jesus Messiah at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11–15) will argue that they never had an opportunity to hear. On the contrary, they have been told repeatedly and still are being told (i.e., Rom 9:27, "Isaiah cries out concerning Israel"), marking almost three thousand years that God has testified of their Messiah. The "they" were the ones who would not believe or receive this wonderfully simplistic yet eternally profound gospel message, even though Paul further reminded them of how very close it was and is to them, and yet how far away that message is to unregenerate Jewish hearts (cf. 10:8–9, "The message is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"). Paul, and others sent by God, had been preaching the word of faith and the gospel of salvation through the finished work of Jesus the Messiah to the Jewish people. The above "they," are therefore unmistakably the unsaved Jewish people during Paul's lifetime. They rejected and died outside of God's grace offer through Jesus the Messiah and are eternally damned. They are those who currently reject, or who will reject even during the tribulation, God's offer of salvation through Jesus the Messiah.

The identity of the unsaved national Jews now *continues* and *connects* God's answer to any of the Jews who would claim they never heard the gospel message nor had a chance to receive it. Beginning with the immediate context verse of Romans 10:13: "for 'WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED,'" comes Romans 10:14: "How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" The subsequent verses continue the same logical progression and argument: God Himself has sent prophets, preachers, and even Jesus the Messiah Himself to bring national Israel the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as shown in Romans 10:15: "And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!'"

What was the response of most of the Jewish people to the many different means that God used to bring them the gospel? Romans 10:16 explains: "However, they [the unsaved Jewish people] did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, 'LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?'" Notably, most of the unsaved Jewish people did not heed or receive the gospel, an act which at its core is sin. Scripture clearly shows that rejection of God's Word is a sin issue, and one of the most serious ones (e.g., Matt 21:23–32; 23:34–39; John 5:37–47; 8:43–47; 12:35–40). Lack of acceptance of the gospel is not an ignorance issue, as if God had never sent anyone to the Jewish people to proclaim His salvation message. God had sent messengers to the Jewish people, at the very least going back to Isaiah 53:1: "Who has believed our message" (Isa 1:1; 2:1–2a). In this context, the message was to those Jewish people who were disobedient—nonbelievers who would not receive the person and the work of Jesus the Messiah. The remainder of Isaiah 53 so beautifully describes those Jewish people who will eventually have their eyes opened to the person and work of Jesus the Messiah and be saved on the same basis that Gentiles are saved—solely by God's grace and His predetermined will.

In Romans 10:17–18, verses quite often quoted out of context, Paul continued the same argumentation that we have seen repeatedly: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. But I say, surely they [unsaved national Israel] have never heard [God's message of salvation], have they? Indeed they have; tHEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE END OF THE WORLD." Using the same line of reasoning as before in 10:19, the apostle Paul asks, "But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? At the first Moses says, 'I WILL MAKE YOU JEALOUS BY THAT WHICH IS NOT A NATION, BY A NATION WITHOUT UNDERSTAND-ING WILL I ANGER YOU'."

Continuing the same logic in 10:20, Paul speaks about national Israel's rejection of God and His Messiah: "And Isaiah [65:1] is very bold and says, 'I WAS FOUND BY THOSE WHO SOUGHT ME NOT, I BECAME MANIFEST TO THOSE WHO DID NOT ASK FOR ME'." To the foolishly naïve unsaved Israelites who would protest that God never sent them any Word, and if He did send it, He only did it for a short time, Romans 10:21 quotes from Isaiah 65:2: "But as for Israel He says, 'ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE." It must be emphasized that Romans 10:20–21, quoting from Isaiah 65:1–2, is distinctly in the context for unsaved national Israel from the Old Testament days up to the present and into the future. God has spread out His hand to disobedient and defiant Jewish people over thousands of years. These references to the Jewish people do not include saved Jews in Old Testament times, nor to saved Jews in the church at the present time, nor even initially to the one-third Jewish remnant whom God will save in the Tribulation (Zech 13:8–9).

The Holy Beauty and Logic of Romans 11

Remembering that Romans 9–11 is one section in Romans, one cannot go only to Romans 9 by itself, nor to Romans 10 by itself, nor can one start in Romans 11. They are one theological unit of "God's doctrine" (Rom 1:1), truths that are not op-tional. Therefore these three chapters must be viewed as a collective whole.

To build upon the logic of Romans 9–10, a brief summary is in order: first, in 9:1–29 God sets forth that He sovereignly chose national Israel; second, 9:30–10:3 explains the lostness of most of the Jewish people as the consequence for four specific sinful responses that led to their present lost spiritual state; and third, Romans 10:4–21 gives a strong, logical rationale for Israel's repeated and continued rejection of both God's Messiah and His message, even after the multiplicity of ways God chose to get His Word to the Jewish people. So, in spite of the many messengers, prophets, preachers—and eventually God's very own Son, the Messiah—most of the unsaved Jewish people (national Israel) rejected God's Word. It is exceedingly dangerous to reject the Word of God, such as shown in Isaiah 5:24—one of many passages that exemplifies the consequences of national Israel's sinful and willful choice:

> Therefore, as a tongue of fire consumes stubble, and dry grass collapses into the flame, so their root will become like rot and their blossom blow away as dust;
> For they [the majority of the Jewish people alive at the time of Isaiah's min-istry] have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts,

And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

Of God's four-part answer in Romans 9–11 as to why the Jews did not receive their Messiah and did not rely on the trustworthiness of God and His Word, Romans 9 constitutes the first part, and Romans 10 comprises the second and third parts. Now Romans 11 sequentially continues God's answer in the fourth part, a part that *must* be included in this sequentially constructed doctrinal portion. Failure to study the three biblical chapters in the order by which they were given by God not only reduces one's understanding of God and His Word, thereby removing God's holy logic, but also leaves the response to the problem incomplete.

In light of the sins and rejection of God and His messages and messengers, the question that must be addressed is: Has God rejected national Israel for all the sins they have committed—including their part in the crucifixion of Jesus? Romans 11:1–4 begins the last section of this doctrinal section in Romans and clearly gives the answer:

> I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?
> "Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED THY PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN THINE ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE."
> But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT FOR MYSELF SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL."

In the time of collective national Israel's incredibly heinous sins, Elijah reasoned that he was the only follower of God left among the Jewish people. The answer God gave to His weary and burdened prophet was that Elijah was not the only faithful one; God had kept for Himself seven thousand who had not bowed down to Baal. This was "the righteous remnant" of that day, chosen by the grace of God. Similarly, He has preserved such a believing remnant of Jews out of the broader Jewish ethnicity, as stated in Romans 11:5–6: "In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace" (emphasis added).

In Romans 11:7–10, the elect of Israel have found (and will find) what they are seeking, but the rest of the unsaved Jewish people were hardened after their rejection of God, His Word, and His Messiah—with disastrous consequences:

> What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; just as it is written,
> "GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY."
> And David says,
> "LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP,

AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM.
"LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT,
AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER."

Romans 11:11–12 asks one pertinent question and gives God's answer concerning unbelieving national Israel, as well as part of the reason that He chose to work this way: "I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!"[26]

To the Gentiles, regarding this grace of God in their lives, Paul writes in verses 13–16:

But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if somehow, I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. For if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? And if the first piece of dough be holy, the lump is also; and if the root be holy, the branches are too.

To the Gentiles who may look at themselves boastfully, especially in looking down on the Jewish people, Paul strongly cautions in Romans 11:17–24:

But if some of the branches [unsaved Jewish people] were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.
You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches [the Jewish people], neither will He spare you [collective Gentiles].
Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. And they [unbelieving national Israel] also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?

From the logic of God's Word in this passage alone, whenever the Jewish people "do not continue in their unbelief, [they] will be grafted in, for God is able to graft

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[26] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 845, omit these two very important doctrinal verses in their Scripture index.

them in again" (Rom 11:23). The God-given promise and hope for the Jewish people is expressed in the logic of God's argument: how much better it will be when "the broken off branches" (unsaved Jewish people) are collectively saved by God. Then they will become the Jewish believing remnant, accepting Jesus as their Savior and Redeemer, which is initially comprised of only one-third of them during the Tribulation (Zech 13:8–9), plus the multitudes whom God will save and who will benefit eternally through the fullness of the covenants that He has for them. Ezekiel 36:32–38 reveals what will happen at that time, among many other blessings:

> "I am not doing this for your sake," declares the Lord GOD, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!"
> Thus says the Lord GOD, "On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places will be rebuilt. And the desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passed by. And they will say, 'This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate, and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.' Then the nations that are left round about you will know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted that which was desolate; I, the LORD, have spoken and will do it."
> Thus says the Lord GOD, "This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them: I will increase their men like a flock. Like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts, so will the waste cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they will know that I am the LORD.'"

In Romans 11:25–27, salvation of the remnant becomes more than a part of the logical conclusion. Now it becomes the prophetic Word of God that must come true at some time in the future, when the saved Jews will finally receive and accept the cleansing that comes only by the blood of the New Covenant, already shed by their Messiah Jesus:[27]

> For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,
>
> > "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION,
> > HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB."
> > "THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM,
> > WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."

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[27] For a much fuller detailed account, see Larry Pettegrew, "The New Covenant," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 10:2 (Fall 1999): 251–70. Thomas has "forgiveness of sins" and a "new relationship with God" as part of the New Covenant blessing God has for national Israel (Robert L. Thomas, "Promises to Israel in the Apocalypse," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 19:1 (Spring 2008): 46–48).

In following the biblical logic from Romans 11:25–27 and other passages, certain sure truths emerge: (1) the New Covenant is the last covenant God ever made in Scripture (Jer 31:31–34); (2) the New Covenant is the only covenant of God that He did not ratify in the Old Testament; (3) this covenant was originally made with "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (Jer 31:31); (4) the future work that God will do in Romans 11:25–27 is presented as a biblical mystery; [28] (5) a partial (not total) hardening has happened to unbelieving national Israel, and God was the One who did this; (6) this mystery has an ending point: it will not occur "until the full number of the Gentiles has come in"; (7) this time will end at the beginning of Jesus' reign as the Davidic Covenant heir; (8) all Israel will be saved, namely, initially the one-third righteous remnant of the Jewish people whom God will save during the Tribulation (Zech 13:8–9); (9) when the Deliverer will go to Zion in Jerusalem, He will remove ungodliness from the remaining Jewish people; (10) this is His covenant with them, the New Covenant, resulting in "when I [He Himself personally] will take away their sin," which only Jesus, their Redeemer and God could do, as He had promised so many centuries earlier (cf. Zech 13:8–9, Isa 53, and Ezek 36:32–38);[29] (11) the Old Testament quotes that Paul used here are taken from Isaiah 59:20–21, and he uses primarily future tense verbs; (12) these verses are found in the eschatological section of Isaiah 58–66 and are wondrously referenced as biblical prophecies—divine mandates—that *must* accompany the Messiah Jesus' return to earth to reign, in order to begin the fulfillment of all that the Bible says will happen (though yet to be fulfilled), such as the rebuilding of Jerusalem;[30] and finally, (13) any true Christian (Jew or

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[28] Everett F. Harrison and Donald A. Hagner, "Romans," in *Romans-Galatians*, vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary Revised Edition*. ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 176 writes: "Now Paul speaks of a 'mystery,' lest his readers imagine that either he or they are capable of understanding the course of Israel's history simply by observation and insight. . . . The content of the mystery of Israel is stated immediately by Paul. It consists of two parts: (1) Israel's hardening is partial, both in scope, because of the reality of the remnant, and time, because it is limited in duration, lasting only 'until the full number of the Gentiles has come in'; and (2) the salvation of 'all Israel' will take place in the future."

[29] Pettegrew notes: "Other names for the New Covenant include an 'everlasting covenant' (Jer. 32:40): 'And I will make an everlasting covenant with them…', 'covenant of peace with them…', and 'my covenant' or 'a covenant' (Hos 2:18–20). Cf. Bruce Ware, "The New Covenant and the People(s) of God, Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church," 69, and Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Old Promises and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31–34," *JETS* 15 (Winter 1972): 14." (Pettegrew, "The New Covenant," 253, n. 5).

[30] Jeremiah 31:38–40 ends the chapter by offering additional blessings of what will take place when the fulness of the New Covenant comes into being: "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the city shall be rebuilt for the LORD from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. And the measuring line shall go out farther straight ahead to the hill Gareb; then it will turn to Goah. And the whole valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes, and all the fields as far as the brook Kidron, to the corner of the Horse Gate toward the east, shall be holy to the LORD; it shall not be plucked up, or overthrown anymore forever." For an excellent article on the literal rebuilding of Jerusalem on earth and argument for a fulfillment of the land promises in Jeremiah 31 in the future and how these relate to other land promises, see Dennis M. Swanson, "Expansion of Jerusalem in Jer 31:38–40: Never, Already, or Not Yet?" *The Master's Seminary Journal* 17:1 (Spring 2006): 17–34. Especially see critiques for the "never to be fulfilled" land promises (27–29) and the "realized" or "already fulfilled" land promises (29–32). Based on the specifics given in Jeremiah 31:38–40, Swanson argues persuasively that these promises await a future fulfillment on earth at the return of Jesus (32–34).

Gentile) has already received and will eternally secure the same spiritual benefits that the overwhelming majority of the unsaved Jews so desperately need, as Paul wrote in reference to the Lord's Table, in 1 Corinthians 11:23–26.[31]

Romans 11:28–32 explains how saved Gentiles should view the unsaved Jewish people:

> From the standpoint of the gospel they [the collective unsaved Jewish people—especially the hostile ones] are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they [the unsaved Jewish people—especially the eschatological remnant] are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For just as you [Gentiles] once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these [unsaved Jews] also now have been disobedient, in order that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.

Romans 11:33–36 gives Paul's joyous, responsive praise to this beautiful work of God that so appropriately concludes this wonderful section of God's doctrine in Romans 9–11: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? OR WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen." Amen, indeed—and come soon Lord Jesus!

Summary and Conclusion

A biblical theology of Romans 9–11 makes perfect sense when viewed in its context and without imposing some predetermined hermeneutical interpretation on it. It is necessary to summarize and conclude this three-chapter biblical theology in some length, according to the following points.

(1) God used the background events for the apostle Paul, and the church at Rome, which Paul wanted to use as his missionary base for his evangelistic efforts in Spain.

(2) Because Paul, "set apart for the gospel of God" (Rom 1:1), did not found the church at Rome, Paul wrote Romans to be proactive against false teachers, who would come in later and try to undermine the gospel. He did this by sending ahead to the Romans the biblical truths that he would be teaching, and what he wrote became the Holy Spirit-inspired book of Romans.

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[31] First Corinthians 11:23–26 reads, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

(3) Part of what Paul had to address in the book of Romans involved two specific questions: one, how can anyone say Jesus is the Christ/Messiah, the Son of God, when His own people Israel rejected Him? And two, how can anyone say the God of the Bible is actually a God who tells the truth, because not only do most of the Jews today reject His Messiah, but also most of what is written in the Old Testament—especially the prophecies—has not yet come true?

(4) Broadly speaking, the book divides thusly: Romans 1–11 is the doctrinal portion, and Romans 12:1–15:13 is the section of application of the biblical truths in godly living, beginning with verses that many are familiar with: "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (12:1–2). Paul concluded with many informative greetings to different people (15:14–16:24) and with a beautiful, doctrinally rich benediction (16:25–27).

(5) The doctrinal section of Romans includes 1:18–5:21: the doctrine of *justification by faith* in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ; 6:1–8:17: the doctrine of *positional sanctification*; and 8:18–39: the *future glorification* of the redeemed and the earth, which not only relates to the present situation but also looks far into the future. Remembering that the personal application section does not begin until 12:1, it is evident that Romans 9–11 is as much part of the doctrinal section of Romans as any prior section. God's placed the section where it belongs, and one cannot be true to the Bible if one omits this section from their doctrinal understanding.

(6) Romans 9–11 is a single section in the letter, so each chapter must be studied in the order in which it is given, without omitting any of the chapters, whether purposely omitting them or doing so by default by ignoring them.

(7) Paul began the section in 9:1–5 by addressing his fellow Jews and reminding them of the wonderful spiritual privileges that God gave to them, by which he specifically noted the covenants (plural), especially including God's many promises given to the Jews, and to the world, detailed in the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants. Paul wrote nothing about the covenants no longer having any relevance for the Jewish people because of their sin, but, in fact, wrote just the opposite.

(8) Romans 9:6–29 specifically demonstrates that God's Word had not failed and reveals how God in His sovereignty and grace chose national Israel.

(9) Examples from the Old Testament reveal God's specific promise that He will save a remnant of the Jewish people at some time in the future (e.g., Isa 10:20–23; Zech 13:8–9). In Romans 9:27–28, Paul cited Isaiah 10:22–23, showing once more that God promises to save at some time in the future a remnant, such as a remnant from national Israel. In Romans 9:27, he quoted from Isaiah 1:9 to provide a sad indication of the depth of national Israel's sin—Israel's sins were so bad that the Jewish people would have been punished like Sodom and Gomorrah, yet Yahweh remained faithfully true to His Word.

(10) Romans 9:30–10:3 shifted the focus from God's sovereign choice of Israel in chapter 9 to Israel's sinful actions that led to their present spiritual condition. First, unsaved Israel pursued works of the law, not faith. Second, the unsaved Jews systematically tried to keep all the works of the law, but their most heinous sin was the rejection of the Messiah whom God had already sent to them. God through Paul used

two references to the stone prophecies about the Messiah (Rom 9:32b–33; Isa 8:14, 28:16). So, in explaining the present spiritual status of unsaved national Israel, not only do they attempt justification by works instead of by faith, but they have collectively sinned against God by having rejected the Messiah, and they now suffer the consequences of their sinful actions. Other than those Jews who are saved or who will be saved, unbelieving national Israel collectively stumbles over the stumbling stone, Messiah. God says in Isaiah 28:16 that He personally placed the stone in Zion, leaving only two options available for dealing with Him: there will be "the one who believes on Him" or those who will eternally trip over Him. Third, in Romans 10:1–2 Paul described unsaved national Israel, noting that they "have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge." And fourth, in this section, Romans 10:3 explains, "For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." They collectively and wrongly believed that by meticulously keeping the law they would be able, on their own, to achieve the righteousness of God.

(11) Paul argued in Romans 10:4–13 against anyone who claims the gospel message was purposely placed out of reach for national Israel; it was, and is, incredibly close to them.

(12) Thus, verses 14–15a ("How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?...") is *not* a general call for missionaries nor Bible expositors and preachers to emerge. The "they" in "and how will they hear?" is unsaved national Israel, the Jewish people, to whom God had given many opportunities to hear the gospel of God. Some believed but most did not. "They" are the same ones in this section (Rom 9–11), the Jewish people, national Israel (Rom 9:1–5), Paul's "brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (9:3), who would certainly be Jewish in ethnicity.

(13) The next verses continue the same argumentation: God Himself has sent prophets, preachers, and even Jesus the Messiah to give to national Israel the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as shown in Romans 10:14–15, which quotes Isaiah 52:7.

(14) The response by the Jewish people to the many different means that God used to get the gospel to them is encapsulated in Romans 10:16: "However, they [the unsaved Jewish people] did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, 'LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?' [Isa 53:1]"

(15) It is marked well that most of the Jewish people did not and still do not obey the gospel. As Scripture repeatedly reveals, rejection of God's Word is a sin issue—and one of the most serious ones—not an ignorance issue, as if God had never sent anyone to the Jewish people to proclaim His salvation message. The remainder of Romans 10 repeatedly shows, primarily using Old Testament quotes, that God repeatedly and persistently reached out to national Israel, but, for the most part, they collectively rejected Him, His Messiah, and the gospel. Broadly speaking, whereas Romans 9 argues that God in His grace chose Israel, Romans 10 highlights Israel's sins, committed by the majority of the people; their rejection of the Word of God is paramount.

(16) Chapter 11 continues the fourth part of Romans 9–11 and must be included in this doctrinal portion, and must be studied after chapters 9 and 10, in the textual

order given by God, in order to arrive at a complete understanding of God and His Word. Romans 11:1–4 is clear that in spite of the sins and rejection of God, His messages, and messengers, including the people's role in the crucifixion of Jesus, God has not rejected national Israel.

(17) Furthermore, according to 11:5–6, "the righteous remnant" of that day, chosen and preserved by the grace of God, are believers out of the broader Jewish ethnicity.

(18) In Romans 11:25–27 the reality of a righteous remnant becomes more than a part of the logical conclusion, but the prophetic Word of God which He must fulfill at some point in the future, so that the remnant receives the full benefits of the same New Covenant that God has already used to save Gentiles.

(19) In following the biblical logic, this future work of God is presented as a biblical mystery: a partial (not total) hardening has happened to unbelieving national Israel, and God was the One who did the hardening.

(20) This mystery has an ending time that will not occur "until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in," and this will coincide with the beginning of Jesus' reign as the Davidic Covenant heir.

(21) Thus, based on all that we have logically interpreted—especially in the total context of Romans 9–11—all Israel will be saved, namely, initially with the one-third who will be a righteous remnant of the Jewish people whom God will save during the time when the Deliverer will go to Zion in Jerusalem (Zech 13:8–9), plus the vast number of Jews and Gentiles that Jesus will save when He reigns on earth during the Millennial Kingdom. He will remove ungodliness from the remaining Jewish people, and will establish the New Covenant, resulting in His direct, personal removal of their sin. Only Jesus could fill this role as Redeemer, thus allowing God to do just as He had promised to do so many centuries earlier, beginning in the Tribulation, initially saving one-third of the Jewish remnant at that time (Zech 13:8–9).

(22) In conclusion to this wonderful section of God's doctrine, Paul joyously and appropriately praises God, in Romans 11:33–36: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? OR WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."

On the basis of this biblical theology, one final principle is warranted to aid in applying the biblical theology of Romans 9–11 to the task of preaching. The principle is simple: application of a biblical text must be made by applying doctrinal truths. Application is only as good as it is accurate within the biblical truth, otherwise, people can make the Bible say anything that they want it to say, and very often will present their application as doctrinal truth instead of God's Word being the basis of their application. The preacher must definitively answer many questions about the Jews (Rom 9:1–5), about how God's Word did not in fact fail (9:6), about how the Holy Spirit through this section is answering the accusation that He had never sent any preachers to national Israel, and that Romans 9–11 is the last of the doctrinal section.

The dilemma facing the expositor is a common one: Can the preacher maintain the doctrinal integrity of this three-chapter segment and still make application to missions? Realizing that Romans 10:14–15 are the favorite texts among many Christians, churches, and agencies that send out missionaries, how can one make an application of this Scripture that is clearly delineated in the doctrinal portion of Romans?

Once more, this beloved text reads as follows: "How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!'"

Within the dilemma itself is the answer: the expositor must make application from other biblical texts that harmonize with these verses. First, Matthew 9:35–38 presents:

> And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."

The parallel passage of Luke 10:1–2 describes Jesus sending out of the seventy:

> Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

Not one scintilla within the Matthew or Luke account gives any indication that the harvest is not still plentiful and that believers should stop beseeching the Lord of the harvest that He would send out workers into His harvest. He calls believers to pray that He will send *His* workers sent out into *His* harvest.

Second, Acts 13:2–4a, describes the sending process for the first missionary journey from the church in Antioch: "And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit…." Nothing within this text can be construed to show that the Holy Spirit has ceased setting apart and sending out missionaries.

Furthermore, Acts 20:28 reveals the real One who chose the elders: "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." When

done in accordance with God's guidelines, and those who are chosen have the required qualifications, it is evident that the Holy Spirit still continues to select and place elders/overseers in the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

With every qualification, instruction, and admonition of the Word in place and proper before the Lord, then the solution to the dilemma rings clear: While Romans 10:14–15 shows God definitively addressing attacks against His Word and Himself, these verses are looking backward at what already has happened. If all the components listed in the previous Scriptures are operative, we have no reason to think that God has stopped rejoicing. Therefore, He would be equally delighted that Romans 10:15 is looking forward, and that this is still currently true for such pastors, missionaries, and godly workers of all kinds, regardless of their ministry: "And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!'"
In the original context of Isaiah 52:6–7, Isaiah prophesies:

> "Therefore My people shall know My name; therefore in that day I am the
> one who is speaking, 'Here I am.'"
> How lovely on the mountains
> Are the feet of him who brings good news,
> Who announces peace
> And brings good news of happiness,
> Who announces salvation,
> And says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

While it is true that believers must recognize what the text in Romans 10:14–15 says in reference to God answering an attack on Himself and His Word, and in dealing with national Israel, we must also keep looking forward until He one day will cease sending out workers into His harvest. Until that appointed time, the exhortation and application would indeed be true, "Just as it is written, 'HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!'" By accepting the referenced statements from the Word, the integrity of the text is kept. God gives to us today these same encouragements, and what a delight that they continue to be true for godly Christian workers—be they godly Jews or Gentiles, ministering to Jews or to Gentiles who so desperately need the ministry, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose we are and Whom we serve.
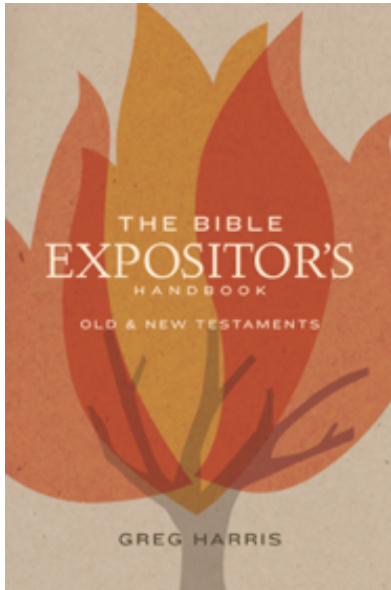
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A DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIP:
CHRIST, THE COVENANTS, AND ISRAEL

Cory M. Marsh
Associate Professor of New Testament
at the College at Southern California Seminary
El Cajon, CA

As recently highlighted in Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum's Kingdom Through Covenant *(2012), furthered by Wellum and Brent Parker's* Progressive Covenantalism *(2016), the notion of covenant is both popular and controversial within biblical theology. While these two works focused on forging a via media between dispensational and covenantal theology, occupying the center of the debate on all sides were questions related to Christ and His relationship to the biblical covenants. The current article explores questions raised from these and other works related to Christ's relationship to the covenants and defends the only option consistent with a literal methodology: Christ relates to each of the biblical covenants dynamically as recipient, fulfillment, and/or mediator—and does so without collapsing any promised future for national Israel.*

* * * * *

Introduction

The notion of covenant is both popular and controversial within biblical theology.[1] Occupying the center of the debate on all sides are questions related to Jesus Christ and His relationship or involvement in each of the covenants. Hermeneutical implications raise questions such as: Are all the covenants fulfilled in Jesus' rendering them forever satisfied? Does Scripture present Jesus as the main or even sole-recipient of the covenants, and if so, which ones? Is Jesus the mediator or dispenser of the covenants? Is there any aspect where Jesus assumes all three roles without abrogating specific promises of fulfillment in or for national Israel?

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[1] The various theological controversies centered on the biblical covenants is especially highlighted in Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the* Covenants (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012). Gentry and Wellum's volume seeks to forge a pathway between dispensational theology and covenant theology's stances on the biblical covenants. This attempt at a middle way was then further advanced in Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker, eds., *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course Between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies* (Grand Rapids: B&H, 2016).

Accordingly, this article will explore and answer these questions and will defend the final option presented above: *Jesus dynamically relates to each of the biblical covenants either as recipient, fulfillment, and/or mediator—and does so without collapsing any promised future for national Israel.* In order to advance this thesis, the article's method will be driven by a consistent, grammatical-historical hermeneutic limited to four of the directly stated biblical covenants that occupy the most interaction in scholarship, typically identified by their biblical *nomen*: Abrahamic, Mosaic/Sinaitic; Davidic; and New Covenants.[2] The hope of this article is to further the dialogue regarding Christ's dynamic relation to the biblical covenants that has occupied much of biblical theology, offering a position typically not represented in the conversation.

Theological Method

Because appeals made to *sola Scriptura* (explicitly or implicitly), in the end, do not settle the question of how Christ relates to the biblical covenants, foundational assumptions for such appeals need to be examined.[3] As such, it is precisely here at the *methodological level* which underlies all claims to Scripture that forms the starting point for the ensuing discussion on Christ's relationship (and His church) with the covenants.

Thus, the method utilized throughout it is one that understands the purpose of language is for meaningful communication between God and men, and men and men, and is based solely on authorial intention for meaning—not any effect an author's words may have on their recipient.[4] Consequently, it is believed that the interpretive method that best safeguards authorial intent as the "meaning of meaning" is one that examines all written texts in light of its grammatical and historical contexts; it is this approach that serves as the hermeneutical method employed in the article.

Further, this literal, grammatical-historical hermeneutic is to be consistently applied to all biblical passages examined regardless of their canonical placements. When this consistently literal approach is unvaryingly applied to the entirety of Scripture, God's revelation is viewed as progressive, beginning from creation (Gen 1–2) and consummating in the eternal state (Rev 22), with each deposit of God's

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[2] The first covenant identified in Scripture, the Noahic Covenant (Gen 6:18), will not be treated due to its universally accepted global context and application among scholars. The Phinehas (Num 25) and Land Covenants (Deut 29), while deserving of more attention by scholars, will not be given much analysis here due to space limits. The four chosen for this article were done so due to their prominent place in biblical theology across all traditions.

[3] An outstanding analysis of method showing the deficiencies of mere *claims* to Scripture's authority is David H. Kelsey, *Proving Doctrine: The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology* (Norcross, GA: Trinity, 1999).

[4] While not denying certain insightful observations stemming from speech-act theory, it is a hermeneutic not particularly favored by this author as it is believed to fall short of a comprehensive philosophy of language by placing too much emphasis on the reader or audience's experience or response from words for meaning; rather, the willed-intention of the original speaker or author is what governs meaning. A good critical examination of speech-act theory that recognizes both its pros and cons in biblical studies is R. S. Briggs, *Words in Action: Speech Act Theory in Biblical Interpretation* (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 2004).

thoughts fully sufficient for the economy in which they were given. In other words, each passage can stand on its own right. When applied consistently, the revelation in the Old Testament (OT) is taken at face value and assumed to fully and ably communicate God's single intent as given to His original audience which progresses into the New Testament (NT)—the latter of which continues to disclose God's thoughts to newer audiences without ever abrogating, canceling, or changing meaning of previous texts.[5]

In light of these elements—authorial intent as defining meaning, and Scripture's inherent progressive nature—it logically flows that a proper theological method that examines the biblical covenants will be one that does not begin in the NT, but rather begins in the OT—as it is the OT that sheds light for a proper understanding of the NT, not the converse.[6] Therefore, each of the covenants examined in this article will necessarily begin with their meanings derived from the OT with the NT given priority for *Christ's relationship with them* as it is only in the NT that Jesus Christ, not the covenants, is most fully revealed. This method will have noteworthy implications regarding the biblical covenants and Jesus' relation to them, specifically when dealing with land promises fixed in several of the covenants as well as any stated referents for each of them.

The importance of this theological method is perhaps best seen in contrast to scholars who view the land promises embedded in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 15) and Deuteronomic Covenant (Deut 29–30) as types that are later fulfilled in Christ, the antitype.[7] Though biblical typology is a legitimate form of revelation (e.g., Rom 5:14), its exegesis should be restricted solely to the NT without abrogating original meanings in the OT.[8] Consequently, the theological method employed in the current study is one that does not view any of the biblical covenants through a type / antitype paradigm since they are never explicitly identified as such in Scripture.[9]

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[5] An excellent treatment examining the method of certain scholars who misuse NT priority to *reinterpret* the OT is Mike Stallard, "Literal Interpretation, Theological Method, and the Essence of Dispensationalism," *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 5–36, esp. 18–27.

[6] Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 24–26, makes a substantial argument for recognizing the OT as a fully sufficient, divinely authoritative document that must be taken on its terms. Routledge concludes: "The NT writers were rooted in these [OT] Scriptures and built on them; thus, it is also true that the NT is incomplete without the OT" (26).

[7] The typological approach is exemplified in both Gentry and Wellum's, *Kingdom Through Covenant,* 126, 713–14; and Oren R. Martin, Bound for the Promised Land: The Land Promise in God's Redemptive Plan (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 159–71. In distinction from Gentry and Wellum who view Israel and the land as a type fulfilled in Christ, Martin sees the type (Israel and the land) as fulfilled in their antitype, the New Heaves and the New Earth by virtue of Christ.

[8] Robin Rutledge, *Old Testament Theology*, 46–47.

[9] Rutledge, in Ibid., rightly rejects any allegorical and/or fulfillment components to typology viewing it more conservatively as "correspondence": "Typology, rightly understood, is concerned with general historical and theological correspondences….We should note too that the theological significance of OT persons, events and institutions is not exhausted by their typological interpretation in the NT. Typology notes relationships between texts and themes; it does not, nor does it intend to, provide a definitive interpretation of the OT text." Rutledge's observations, if taken seriously, would help quell the tendencies of many scholars today who impose types on the sacred text when none are to be found, which inevitably

The Reality of Presuppositions

A logical inference from the discussion on method is that no theologian comes to the sacred text free from assumptions or presuppositions. Stephen Wellum rightly acknowledged, that nobody approaches Scripture *tabula rasa*; rather, everyone comes to it with a set of presuppositions influenced by various cultures and backgrounds that can affect one's interpretation.[10] In light of this reality, it is perhaps best to be cognizant of one's method more so than content, as methodological presuppositions necessarily affect all theological work.[11] The history of scholarship has proven even the most diligent researcher cannot fully escape the influence of his own cultural upbringing, education, church tradition, confessional convictions, etc.—all of which can underly the theological method assumed which then yield conclusions reached.

While more can be said on this of course, the relevant point here is that because this article is written from an evangelical perspective, its underlying theological method must be thoroughly evangelical.[12] Accordingly, it is a study founded on presuppositions affirming the Bible is in fact God's inspired, authoritative, inerrant, and sufficient revelation given to mankind—as it has been progressively revealed to mankind throughout history.

Single Intended Meaning Hermeneutics

It is worth considering how adapted English speakers are to the use of metaphor as an accepted way to conceptualize ideas. So pervasive is metaphor in human speech, questions are hardly raised to its purpose in communicating literal meaning.[13] This recognition has had a sizable impact in biblical studies over the last several decades with scholars now viewing metaphor and figurative speech as consistent rhetorical devices biblical authors used to employ to their writings in order to "illuminate its literary artistry and sophistication."[14] In light of this phenomenon, the article's position is one that recognizes biblical authors as certainly employing metaphor in

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leads to: (1) a re-interpretation of OT meanings; and/or (2) a termination of any future historical realities still to be fulfilled—such as those to be realized in a future national Israel (e.g., Isa 2; Zech 12, 14; et al.).

[10] Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 93.

[11] Cf. John Warwick Montgomery, *The Shape of the Past* (Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers, 1962), 144.

[12] A recent dissertation exposing the pervasiveness of presuppositions while doing biblical theology is Edward J. Herrelko III, "The Role of Presuppositions and Their Impact on The Process of Biblical Theology: A Case Study of The Pauline Theologies of James Dunn and Thomas Schreiner" (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016).

[13] Helen Sword, *Air & Light & Time and Space How Successful Academics Write* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 180–93, surveys multiple academic writers who communicate through metaphor.

[14] Hugo Méndez, "Mixed Metaphors: Resolving the "Eschatological Headache" of John 5," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 137, no. 3 (2018): 712 [711–32]. While this author disagrees with several of Mendez's positions, his article nonetheless helpfully highlights the importance of metaphorical language to convey literal objects of meaning.

much of their writings, yet when done so is never at the expense of conveying a literally intended meaning. Furthermore, this meaning is shared by both its divine and human author.[15] Put another way, the intended meaning from both God and the human prophet of any biblical text is both one and the same. Thus, as Robert Thomas contended, each text has a "single intended meaning."[16]

That this article's hermeneutical method is one that emphasizes single-intended meaning is due to the enormous influence general linguistic theory has had on biblical exegesis; namely, the view that understands meaning as objects while linguistic expressions are containers.[17] While this is not to be entirely discarded, it can run amuck when used as an unbendable paradigm for inductive exegesis. Particularly, when applied to the Bible, it is often the rhetoric of metaphor that becomes the chief element celebrated in biblical studies at the expense of reproducible, literal, authorial-intended meaning. This can, and has, affected studies on the biblical covenants.

Be that as it may, some are convinced that for a writer wishing to transport his or her literal meaning through written communication so it is reproduced by their reader, a chain of conscious decisions must be made that take the reader's social construct into account. Professor of Applied Linguistics in Education at the University of East Anglia, Ken Hyland, states: "Meanings are ultimately produced in the interaction between writers and readers in specific social circumstance."[18] Without an unbroken conscious relationship between the writer and the reader's "socially situated context," meaning is, according to this theory, ultimately meaningless. Without denying positive elements that linguistic theorists have offered in relation to biblical studies, a more suitable hermeneutical method is one that understands meaning as that which is intended and willed by its author which is then able to be reproduced by its recipients—regardless of any time or cultural gaps separating the two parties. This is the method of interpretation employed throughout the study on the covenants believing, along with noted literary theorist E. D. Hirsch, that accurate interpretation *is* a recognition of an author's intended meaning.[19] With critical prolegomena now settled, the identification if the biblical covenants and Christ's relationship with them will be explored.

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[15] Elliot E. Johnson, *Expository Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 29, observed: "It is absolutely essential to recognize that the Author's/author's intention does not separate what is meant from the text." Another solid treatment on the shared intention of Author/author is Nathan Hoff, "Meaning-Types and Text-Tokens: An Examination of the Relationship Between The Biblical Text and Its Meaning," in *The Theory and Practice of Biblical Hermeneutics: Essays in Honor of Elliot E. Johnson*, ed. by H. Wayne House and Forrest Weiland (Silverton, OR: Lampion, 2015), 11–32.

[16] Robert L. Thomas, *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 141–64.

[17] This is basically the mantra of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 10, quoted in Helen Sword, *Air & Light & Time & Space,* 180.

[18] Ken Hyland, "Stance and Engagement: A Model of Interaction in Academic Discourse" *Discourse Studies* 7, no. 2 (May 2005): 175.

[19] E. D. Hirsch, Jr. *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 1967).

The Biblical Covenants

The idea of "covenant," though common in Ancient Near East culture, carries a most sacred connotation within Scripture.[20] Routledge notes that while the OT views God as one who made Himself known to all of mankind, it specifically presents Him as one who enters into a unique relationship with the nation of Israel, formally expressed in covenantal terms.[21] While the term "covenant" (בְּרִית; διαθήκη) occurs well over 300 times throughout the Bible, remarkably, its appearance marking an intimate relationship from God-to-man occurs only a total of seven times.[22] Conservative scholars have generally labeled these respective covenants as such: "Noahic" (Gen 6–9); "Abrahamic" (Gen 15–17); "Mosaic" (or "Sinaitic") (Exod 19:5, 20); "Phineas [or Levitical]" (Num 25:11–13); "Deuteronomic" (or "Land") (Deut 29–30); "Davidic" (2 Sam 7:14–16; cf. Ps 89:3–4); and "New" (Jer 31:31–34).

There is no debate among scholars that the immediate context in which each of these covenants lie relates the nation of Israel as its primary audience and targeted beneficiary of their promises. Disagreement, however, lies, over the church's role in each of these covenants as well Christ's place in them. Yet, because the Jewish Messiah, Jesus—the "true vine" (John 15:1) [23]—has come and all the promises of God find their "yes in Him" (2 Cor 1:20), it is Christ Himself who connects each covenant together within intertwining themes of redemption and glory. Exactly what elements the "yes" entails are not stated by Paul. Though, it seems logical to assume that apostle's claim is, in some respect, applicable toward the greatest of promises of the OT: the biblical covenants. As such, the study here will take for granted Paul's claim as a connecting point, assuming the "yes" links Jesus Christ to the promises of the biblical

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[20] Among the proliferation of scholarly treatments covering the ancient phenomena of "covenant" and its relation to the Ancient Near East a standout that details parallel themes of ANE and biblical covenants, demonstrating superiority of the latter is: Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 56–115; cf. Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology*, 159–74, who takes a more bird's-eye view surveying and comparing the Sinaitic Covenant with Hittite suzerainty-vassal treaties and supplies a history of research in the matter.

[21] Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology*, 159–60.

[22] These seven God-to-man covenants are in reference to their *initial* biblical appearance or establishment. The word "covenant" (בְּרִית; διαθήκη) appears in Scripture far more than seven times when referring to the biblical covenants but does so referring to these same seven *post* initial appearance.

[23] Throughout the OT, the imagery of "vine" and "vineyard" represented Israel (e.g. Ps 80; Isa 5; 27; Jer 2, et al.). With Jesus' final self-predicated "εγω ειμι" (I Am) declaration as being the "true vine" in John 15, this author believes Jesus meant that in Him, religious Judaism (not Israel) was now fulfilled while OT covenant promises still await a future national fulfillment. In the interim, a new economy characterized by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit has been established and made manifest in the Christian church (John 14:17; Eph 2:14–16). For a detailed treatment of this position, see Cory M. Marsh, "Jesus as the True Vine: A Transition of Economies Announced at John 15," *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2019).

covenants in such a way that He is recipient, fulfillment, and/or mediator of these grand biblical promises.[24]

That an examination of the major covenants in Scripture and Christ's direct role in each of them will focus on the *actual* covenants of Scripture, not theological or theoretical, makes this study a biblical theology dealing with the scriptural data rather than subsuming that data under presupposed covenants germane to Covenant Theology.[25] Yet, because of space limitations, only four of the biblical covenants will be treated here as these four are what are universally agreed upon as being specific, distinguished covenants.[26] But first it is important to frame all of them under one unifying theme which this author believes to be their biblical focus. This biblical-covenantal theme is not merely redemptive or soteriological, but rather doxological.

A Doxological-Redemptive Theme

In secular ANE times, a covenant was simply a contract or alliance between two parties; a mutual agreement over business, personal, or governmental affairs that bound them together for a specific purpose.[27] *Theologically*, however, בְּרִית (covenant) in the Old Testament always related God to man.[28] According to Gleason Archer, a biblical-theological covenant "denotes a gracious undertaking entered into by God for the benefit and blessing of man, and specifically of those men who by faith receive the promises and commit themselves to the obligations which this undertaking involves."[29] While one of the biblical covenants had attached stipulations, making it bilateral and/or conditional (i.e., the Mosaic/Sinaitic Covenant), the others were unilateral as they were dependent on God alone.[30]

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[24] While the *Westminster Larger Catechism* Question 57 uses Paul's text as a proof explicitly connecting Christ as mediator to the "covenant of grace," this essay employs it in reference to Christ's mediation (as well as His other roles) in connection with the biblical covenants—not any theological covenants comprising the system of Covenant Theology.

[25] A helpful essay exposing the weaknesses of theoretical or theological covenants is Jeffrey J. Niehaus, "An Argument Against Theologically Construed Covenants," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 50, no. 2 (2007): 259–73. While this author takes issue with Niehaus's postulation of an Adamic or Creation Covenant, Niehaus is to be commended for challenging the false notion of overarching theological covenants within Covenant Theology, particularly the so-called "covenant of grace," which virtually assimilates all the biblical covenants.

[26] The Phineas Covenant (Num 25) and the Land Covenant (Deut 29), this author believing them to be specific and distinct covenants—and deserving of more treatment from scholars—will not be dealt with here.

[27] Gleason L. Archer, "Covenant," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. by Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), 276. Cf. F. C. Frensham, "Covenant, Alliance," in *The New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed., eds. I. Howard Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, and D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 234.

[28] Cf. Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and M. E. J. Richardson, eds., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), s.v. בְּרִית. Bible Works Software. The Greek word for "covenant" in the LXX and NT (διαθήκη) carries the same denotation.

[29] Gleason L. Archer, "Covenant," 276.

[30] Both Jeffrey Niehaus, *Biblical Theology: Special Grace Covenants Old Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 2:33–35; and Oren R. Martin, Bound for the Promised Land, 63–71, rightly

Surveying these covenants with a view toward grammatical and historical contexts reveals that a redemptive-historical nature is not the only feature purposed in them. As God in Christ relates to each of the covenants, they all ultimately serve a *doxological* function, that is, God in Christ is glorified by each of the covenants due to the role He plays. As such, Scripture's salvation-history theme, as prominent as it is, is itself trumped by the Bible's doxological focus—the supreme theme carried even through the biblical covenants. In other words, man's redemption, certainly a major biblical reality, is itself subsumed under God's glory (Eph 1:12, 14).[31] Because both God's glory as well as man's redemption are twin concepts presented in each of the God-to-man covenants, it is a *doxological-redemptive* unified theme that this author believes is carried most excellently throughout the covenants (with the entirety of Scripture displaying a *doxological-historical* progression).[32]

Some may challenge the concept of viewing the biblical covenants as primarily doxological rather than merely redemptive, insisting that it falsely separates parallel themes not in competition with one another. To this objection, the author would agree—doxology and redemption are not "in competition" with one another. Rather, what is proposed here is that "glory" is the *ultimate* theme that unites the canon of Scripture with "salvation" being the *primary avenue* through which God is glorified. Thus, a philosophy of history that accurately reflects the Bible and is central to each of the biblical covenants is one that is "doxological-redemptive," the former concept guiding the later.[33] To this, both Bigalke and Couch agree: "It is in the biblical covenants that the Lord sets a plan and purpose forth. Not only is redemption revealed in

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challenge the traditional conditional/unconditional or bilateral/unilateral covenant nomenclature. Even so, the traditional paradigm is used in this article nonetheless due to their familiarity.

[31] The doxological metanarrative of Scripture seems not to be in vogue among scholars today who choose to emphasize redemption as Scripture's main theme. This is especially true when dealing with the biblical covenants, such as Gentry and Wellum's *Kingdom through Covenants*, or Jeffrey Niehaus's *Biblical Theology*, particularly, vol. 2, "Special Grace Covenants Old Testament." Two outstanding classic presentations of Scripture's doxological focus being advanced through a kingdom theme are George H. Peters, *Theocratic Kingdom: The Theocratic Kingdom of our Lord Jesus As Covenanted in the Old Testament and Presented*, 3 vols. (1884; repr., Forgotten Books, 2012); and Alva J. McClain, *Greatness of the Kingdom: An Indictive Study of the Kingdom of God* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2001). A recent contribution in line with McClain's classic work, but one that is more comprehensive in its scope is Michael J. Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever: A Biblical Theology of the Kingdom of God* (Silverton, OR: Lampion, 2017).

[32] It is important to note that Scripture's redemptive theme is not merely individualistic. While individual redemption or salvation is revealed in the biblical covenants, some specifically denote national or even priestly redemption—such as with Phineas, through whom God promised a "perpetual priesthood" (Num 25:13).

[33] Two reasons for this proposal are: (1) the false dichotomizing of "actual history" and "redemptive history" (*heilsgeschicht*) stemming from the widely influential approach of Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962); and (2) the unfortunate tendency to elevate man's redemption in contemporary evangelical scholarship to such a height that the Bible can be mistaken as man-centered rather than God-centered. As Paul made clear, all things were created *for* (εἰς) Christ (Col 1:16), even man's redemption being "to the praise of His glory" (Eph 1:12, 14). By viewing Scripture as primarily doxological rather than redemptive safeguards God's place in creation as the Ultimate Sovereign

the covenants, but also a plan of history that flows mainly from Abraham all the way to the final chapters of Revelation."[34] In light of this, it is not too far a stretch to connect this doxological-redemptive nuance to the Bible's grandest theme of redemption—the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Isa 44:6).

Abrahamic Covenant

Evangelical scholars of all traditions routinely agree that the covenant God cut with Abraham is the most important of the biblical covenants. For instance, after conducting an in-depth exegetical analysis of the Abrahamic Covenant, Peter Gentry declared: "The Covenant with Abraham is the basis for all of God's dealings with the human race from this point on, and the basis for all his later plans and purposes in history."[35] Likewise, it is no mere overstatement when Bigalke observed, "The Abrahamic Covenant is the greatest of redemptive covenants."[36] Indeed, the covenant scholars refer to as the Abrahamic Covenant is a pivot in world history.

Throughout Genesis, the Abrahamic Covenant is found in various forms throughout five different chapters (Gen 12:1–3; 13:14–17; 15:1–21; 17:1–21; 22:15–18).[37] This was a unilateral covenant initiated by God to Abraham promising blessings such as: fathering a great nation (12:2; 17:1); a specific land for that nation that will bless others (12:1–3; 13:14–17)[38]; and a promised "seed" or son (15:1–4). The main reason why this particular covenant is "the greatest" of the biblical covenants is because it acts as a grand umbrella over which the other unilateral covenants are ultimately covered.[39] In other words, each of the covenants ultimately find their basis

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who receives glory from all of His creation. Thus, an argument can be made that the Bible's main progression is really doxological-historical (God's glory progresses throughout creative history) more so than redemptive-historical or even doxological-redemptive.

[34] Ron J. Bigalke and Mal Couch, "The Relationship Between Covenants and Dispensations," in *Progressive Dispensationalism: An Analysis of the Movement and Defense of Traditional Dispensationalism*, ed. by Ron J. Bigalke (Lanham, MD: UPA, 2005), 22.

[35] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenants*, 295.

[36] Bigalke, "The Abrahamic Covenant," in *Progressive Dispensationalism* 42.

[37] This author agrees with Niehaus who adamantly defends the position that God cut only one covenant with Abraham to which the various passages refer. Cf. Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Biblical Theology*, 2:103–38; contra. P. R. Williamson, "Covenant," *Dictionary of The Old Testament: Pentateuch*, edited by T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 146–48.

[38] Cf. P. R. Williamson, "Covenant," *Dictionary of The Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. by T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 145–46, who ties the elements in the first half of Genesis 12:1–3 to political and territorial nationhood.

[39] The Noahic Covenant is excluded here as it refers to the preservation of all humanity, animal and vegetation life. As this covenant was given before the call of Abram in Gen 12, it does not deal with Israel. The Mosaic Covenant is the sole exception in the remaining five covenants as it is the one bilateral covenant with certain attached stipulations/conditions. Although some would see the Land Covenant as conditional (e.g., editors of the *AMG Key Word Study Bible*), the promise of land to Israel is ultimately based on God's earlier unilateral covenant to Abraham and furthered by his immediate posterity (Lev 26:39–45, esp. v.42; cf. Ps 106:45). On this, the *NET Bible*, Lev 26:40, n.61, offers a correct translation using the temporal adverb "when," for the Hebrew *vav*-conjunctive instead of the conditional conjunction "if," thereby validating the Land Covenant's ultimate, unilateral sense. It is worth noting that Christ's role in the Land Covenant seems to have a specific recipient aspect to it.

in the covenant originally given from God to Abraham; the Abrahamic Covenant progressively advances in the succeeding yet distinct covenants. Bigalke explains:[40]

> The Abrahamic Covenant involves a promise of a land to Abraham and Is-rael, a nation (a seed), and a worldwide blessing. The implication is that the Abrahamic Covenant will be fulfilled in the form of three sub-covenants: (1) the Land [Palestinian] Covenant;(2) the Davidic Covenant; and (3) the New Covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant is literal (13:15, 17), eternal (13:15; 17:7, 8, 13, 19), and unconditional (15:1–18); it is God's promise to Abraham of a land, seed, and blessing.

It is from this unilateral covenant God made with Abraham that a direct line is connected to Jesus—the Jewish Messiah—and consequently, those in Him. Paul, writing in Galatians 3, states: "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ." (v. 16). Here, the *ultimate* beneficiary to the Abrahamic Covenant is not Israel, but Christ Himself. This means Christ is both the covenant's recipient, which entails promised geographical land, and its fulfillment.[41] This is in contrast to those who simply absorb all of the Abrahamic promises, which includes the land, into Christ or His church, generally referred to as "fulfillment theology."[42]

Yet, because Jesus is the Jewish Messiah, the True Vine and ultimate Israelite, all those who trust in Him (both Jew and Gentile) enjoy blessings stemming from the Abrahamic Covenant. Paul wrote, "For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the right-eousness of faith" (Rom 4:13) and this is guaranteed for all those who share the faith of Abraham, "who is the father of us all" (v. 16). Observing the connection between Abraham-to-Jesus-to-believers, John Davis comments, "As the quintessential seed of Abraham, [Christ] inherited all the promises given to Israel. Now, in light of the ful-fillment in Jesus, all believers share his inheritance through their faith in Jesus Christ."[43] As such, Christ's role in the Abrahamic Covenant is one of *both* recipient and fulfillment.

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[40] Ron J. Bigalke, "The Abrahamic Covenant," in *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 43.

[41] If space were not a limiting factor, it would be worth further exploration that Paul, in Galatians 3:16, seemingly quotes from Genesis 12:7, and specifically calls attention to Christ being the recipient of the Abrahamic promises—prime among them being land according to its original context. As Christ is the Messianic King to rule over His eschatological kingdom (Zech 14), it would make sense that He is the *recipient* of an actual territory over which to rule. Thus, Christ's role in connection with the land aspect in the Abrahamic Covenant, further amplified in the Land Covenant of Deuteronomy 29, is one of recep-tion—it is Christ the Messiah, King of Israel, to whom the land ultimately belongs.

[42] A helpful article that demonstrates "fulfillment theology" as being another form of "replacement theology" is Michael J. Vlach, "Various Forms of Replacement Theology," *The Masters Seminary Journal* 20, no.1 (Spring 2009): 57–69.

[43] John P. Davis, "Who Are the Heirs of the Abrahamic Covenant?" *Evangelical Review of Theology* 29, no. 2 (April 2005): 149.

Mosaic/Sinaitic Covenant

The Mosaic or Sinaitic Covenant was designed by God to be conditioned upon Israel's obedience.[44] That national Israel broke this bilateral covenant was, ultimately, a part of God's intention behind it as it would drive their need for a Savior (cf. Gal 3:24).[45] Rebelling against this codified Law would result in curses for Israel (Deut 27:26). However, there are parts of the Mosaic Covenant which still hearkened back to the original unilateral, unconditional contract between God and Abraham.[46]

In Exodus 19–23, and furthered throughout the Torah, Yahweh sets forth the Covenant of Law or Mosaic Covenant which included over 600 commands. In Deuteronomy 29–30, Moses revisits this Law code to a new generation of Israelites whose forefathers disobeyed the covenant with Moses at Sinai.[47] Here, in addition of cutting a separate covenant amplifying land inheritance, the need for divine help is obvious as God made it clear that their obedience to all the Law is the condition on which this covenant is set. Yet, He also hinted that its true fulfillment is ultimately dependent on Him and His grace as put forth in Deuteronomy 30:6: "And the LORD your God *will* circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, *so that* you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live [emphasis added]." According to this promise, therefore, it seems that at a future time, the Jewish nation will be empowered in such a way to always obey God, and it is God Himself who will achieve this.

The future restoration of repentant Israel will occur with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the nation and final coming of Messiah (Zech 12:10). That this future time is ultimately dependent on divine help embodied in the Messiah is a truth not lost even on today's orthodox Jewish commentators: "This Divine assistance… and the profound change implied by this verse [Deut 30:6] will occur with the coming of

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[44] The label "Sinaitic" distinguishes the particular covenant God gave through Moses represented in the Law from the covenant mainly concerning land in Deuteronomy 29, both technically being "Mosaic."

[45] Cf. Niehaus, *Biblical Theology* 2:394–405. While Niehaus rightly points out, though more implicitly than explicitly, the failure of the Mosaic Covenant (or Law) being designed and dependent on *God's intention* and not due to Israel's failed attempts at obedience to the covenant, he later wrongly assimilates the Land Covenant into the Mosaic Covenant, reducing it to a mere "renewal" of the later (397–98). This position, virtually assumed in biblical scholarship and unchallenged by non-dispensational thinkers, dismisses Deuteronomy 29:1 which states clearly that its covenant is a covenant "besides" (מִלְּבַד) the one made at Horeb or Sinai. The root בַּד literally denotes a "separation" or "aloneness" which is then amplified by the attached preposition מִן. In other words, this particular covenant is pointed out as something *separate* or its *own thing*, which then deals specifically with the land originally promised to Abraham and Israel's obedience concerning it.

[46] It was volume one in Walter Eichrodt's influential work *Theology of the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1961), that emphasized the Sinaitic (Mosaic) Covenant as the central unifying theme to the entire OT. While Eichrodt's work is to be commended for its contribution to OT biblical theology, his emphasis on and superlative claims of the Mosaic Covenant unfortunately trump the importance of the other biblical covenants.

[47] Interestingly, Michael A. Grasinti, "Deuteronomy," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Numbers Through Ruth* 2, rev. ed., edited by Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 459, views Deuteronomy as a "sermonic exposition" rather than contractual legislation. While the book certainly contains legal material, Gristanti suggests, "the legal material is incorporated into the exposition."

Messiah."[48] Thus, the Mosaic Covenant, like the others, is also tied directly to the Jewish Messiah—Jesus of Nazareth—who Paul later described as the "end of the Law" (Rom 10:4; cf. Gal 3:10–14) and Jesus Himself directly stated came "to fulfill" (πληρῶσαι) the Law. Thus, Christ is not described in terms of recipient or mediator of this covenant. Rather, He is, in every sense, its fulfillment: "Do not think I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets," declared Jesus. "I did not come to abolish but fulfill" (Matt 5:17).[49]

Davidic Covenant

Subsumed under the Abrahamic Covenant is an additional unilateral בְּרִית (covenant) made with King David (Ps 89:3, 28).[50] In paralleled accounts of this covenant (2 Sam 7; 1 Chr 17), Yahweh stated clearly to David: "Your house and your kingdom will stand before me permanently; your dynasty will be permanent" (2 Sam 7:16 NET). While the immediately preceding verses refer plainly to Solomon (esp. v. 14, dealing with David's son committing sin[51]), only Jesus—the eternal Son of God (1 John 1:2)—can be the magistrate of an "eternal kingdom. The force of this eternal aspect is perhaps best reflected in the translation of 2 Samuel 7:16 offered in the *Complete Jewish Bible*: "Thus your house and your kingdom will be made secure *forever* before you; your throne will be set up *forever*" (emphasis added). Here, a connection to Christ becomes apparent.

One of the more widely used titles of Jesus in the NT is "Son of David." This phrase used in apposition to Christ appears a total of 18 times and is always suggestive of Davidic promises concerning the Messiah still to come (e.g., Matt 1:1; cf. Luke 1:32; Mark 10:48; 12:35; cf. Acts 13:22). According to Andrew Steinmann, "The identity of the Messiah [was] so closely bound up with David that at times the

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[48] Rabbi Nosson Scherman, ed., *The Chumash: The Torah: Haftaros and Five Megillos with a Commentary Anthologized from the Rabbinic Writings*, The Stone ed., Artscroll ser. (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah, 2013), 1091, n. 6.

[49] It is only in regard to this particular covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, that this author would agree with Gentry and Wellum's take that in Christ the covenants are "terminated." Cf. Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum, 24.

[50] Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), rightly lauds the importance of the Davidic Covenant and dynasty yet does so to the extent that he seems to view it, more than any other covenant or theme, as the central focus through which to view the entire OT. While acknowledging the vital important of this particular covenant, it is worth questioning nonetheless if Dempster, like Walter Eichrodt before him who esteemed the Mosaic Covenant similarly, carries his focus and claims too far.

[51] Some scholars see a connection between David's son "committing sin" and Paul's description of Jesus "being made sin" in 2 Corinthians 5:21, thus holding that the entirety of 2 Samuel 7:1–7 has only one man in view: Jesus Christ. However appealing this interpretation may be, this author believes that connection goes too far in violating both the grammatical and historical context of 2 Samuel 7. For instance, the verb used in v. 14 for "commit," עָוָה, is a hiphil infinitive construct denoting a causative action (*BDB*, 6866). Lit: "When he causes to commit sin…" This cannot apply to the sinless Christ (1 Pet 2:22). Additionally, the historical context demands it to be Solomon who came "after" David and directly from his "body" (v.12), and also "built a house" for the Lord (v.13; cf. 1 Kings 5:5). Therefore, both Solomon and Jesus are in view respectively within this prophetic periscope.

prophets simply call the promised Savior 'David' (Jer 30:9; Ezek 34:23–24; 37:24–25; Hos 3:5)."[52] Steinmann also concludes that David himself understood that a future, personal Messiah, one related to him, was the prophecy's main subject: "While a number of exegetical difficulties surround David's words as recorded in 2 Samuel 7:19 and 1 Chronicles 17:17, on close examination it ought to be concluded that David knew that God had made him the promise that he would be the ancestor of the promised *man* to come. As an Israelite who was chosen to be king because his heart was aligned with God's own heart, David understood this immediately on receiving Nathan's words."[53]

With this Davidic prophecy serving as the backdrop, the announcement of the angel to Mary makes clear that Jesus is its fulfillment: "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son…and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end" (Luke 1:31–33). The tense of the angel's announcement in vv. 32–33 makes plain this fulfillment is to take place in the future. Contextual consistency demands a literal reading of the pericope at hand; that is, Mary is promised a miraculous conception in v. 31 and immediately following in vv. 32–33 is told her Son *will reign* in connection with David over national Israel. Christ's role in the Davidic Covenant, therefore, is not mediatorial as to place Him as a distributor or go-between for this covenant. Nor is Christ's role receptive as to violate David as the original referent. Rather, it is one of future fulfillment.

<center>New Covenant</center>

Due to the varied opinions of this next covenant pertaining to its relevance for the church, more space will be devoted to its examination than the others. What will be defended here is that this final covenant belongs solely to its original stated recipients, national Israel, with Christ serving as its divine mediator. Christ's mediatorial role ensures a future for national Israel.

What scholars call "the new covenant" is found in the OT by name in a single place: Jeremiah 31:31–34.[54] Specifically, the prophet recorded Yahweh saying, "'Behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah'" (v. 31, emphasis added). The "newness" of this covenant is set in contrast to the previous "old" Mosaic Covenant, one

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[52] Andrew E. Steinmann, "What Did David Understand About the Promises in the Davidic Covenant?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 171, no. 681 (January-March 2014): 19–29.

[53] Ibid., 29.

[54] While other places in the OT most probably allude to or highlight various aspects of this same covenant (e.g., Ezek 36:22–39), the explicit term "new covenant" (בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה) is language exclusive to Jeremiah. This is worthy of pause since, unlike concepts such as the Trinity, effectual calling, regeneration, discipleship, etc. that are biblically warranted doctrines without any dependence on their nomenclature, the biblical covenants, in contrast, seem to be reliant in some sense on the identifying word "covenant." In other words, covenants seem only to present in Scripture when formal treaty language is present. Indeed, each of the biblical covenants is explicitly referred to as "covenants" in the Old Testament, a fact that should not be casually dismissed.

in which Israel "broke though [God] was their husband" (v. 32). One way this particular covenant would differ from than the previous one made with Moses is that the Lord promised to put His "law within them, and on their heart [He] will write it" (v. 33b).[55] Potter poetically suggests, "The thought of Jeremiah may well have been as follows: as long as the Law is written merely on tablets of stone, so long will sin be written on the tablets of the heart, and so long will forgiveness be impossible."[56]

For purposes of this essay what should first be underscored in this passage is that the New Covenant (NC) is explicitly given to national Israel as its main recipient. Bruce Ware confirms as much:

> It is clear from Jeremiah 31:31 that Yahweh promises to make a new covenant with *all* of Israel, that is, "with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." Spoken at a time when the nation of Israel was divided into northern and southern kingdoms (Israel and Judah, respectively), and just a few years before the Babylonian exile of the southern kingdom, this pledge to make *one* new covenant with Israel *and* Judah indicates God's determined purpose to see the divided nation of Israel once again reunited as a single people.[57]

Ware's insistence that there is to be *one* new covenant is in response to older, classic dispensationalists who, following a more literalistic (not literal) hermeneutic, taught that God actually had in mind two new covenants—one for Israel and one for the church.[58] The reason for the "two covenant" interpretation was not merely from a plain reading of Jeremiah 31, which all dispensationalists recognize has Israel in view, but in an attempt to reconcile the OT teaching with NT statements which, at first glance, seem to suggest that the NC also applies to the church (e.g., Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8–9).

As thinking progressed on the matter, a newer crop of dispensational scholars began to reject the two-new-covenant view in favor of a position recognizing *both* Israel and the church as legitimate beneficiaries of the *single* NC of Jeremiah 31.

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[55] In addition to the recipients of this covenant clearly being "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (Jer 31:31), excluding the Christian church as a possible referent, the pericope is also clear that it is to be a covenant centered on "law." As such, this author believes the church shares no participation in the New Covenant since the apostle Paul would later plainly state that believes are "no longer under law, but under grace" (Rom 6:14).

[56] Harry D. Potter, "The New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31–34," *Vetus Testamentum* 33, no. 3 (July 1983): 347–57.

[57] Bruce A. Ware, "The New Covenant and the People(s) of God" in *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church: The Search for Definition*, edited by Darrell Bock and Craig Blaising (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 70.

[58] Most notable of this persuasion was Lewis Sperry Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary. Charles Ryrie originally held to the "two-covenant view" as noted in his earlier book *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* (1953), yet later modified his view to seeing the New Covenant being one in nature, as seen in his *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia* note: "Covenant, New" (1975). John Walvoord also originally held to the two-covenant view, but like Ryrie, later corrected his misunderstanding and switched to the single-covenant idea.

Against covenantal scholars who see the NC as simply another outworking of their Covenant of Grace, thus assuming out of hand its wholesale application to Christians,[59] the single-covenant, two-beneficiaries view is now the majority position among mainline dispensationalists. Long time NT and Greek Professor and former president of Grace College and Seminary Homer Kent is representative of the latter view: "When the OT is examined to discover what this new covenant involved, and when the NT is investigated for further clarification it becomes clear that only one new covenant is in view, even though different groups may derive somewhat varying benefits from it. The essence of the new covenant is spiritual regeneration, enjoyed now by Christian believers and prophesied for national Israel at the second coming of Christ."[60]

While Kent attempts to do justice to all the canonical literature seemingly regarding the NC, in the end, he ends up with a two-pronged position more reminiscent of Platonic dualism than biblical theology. This he does by slicing up spiritual and material blessings that are promised within the covenant itself.[61] Yet, Kent and others like him who attempt to remain consistent with grammatical-historical interpretation, albeit imperfectly, are to be commended for avoiding the allegorization of Covenant Theology that views the church as the sole recipient of the New Covenant.[62]

Contrary to the one covenant / two beneficiaries view, perhaps a better solution is one that utilizes a hermeneutical approach that remains consistently normative with attention paid to revelation's progressive nature. When teased out, not only is the NC kept intact for exclusive fulfillment with its stated recipients (national Israel) but

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[59] This is no doubt due to the hermeneutical method normalized by Covenant Theology that first presupposes a theological covenant of grace and interprets all biblical covenantal-data through that presupposition. As Ronald M. Johnson concludes in his article "Covenant Hermeneutics" in *Conservative Theological Journal* 3, no. 10 (Dec 1999): 328, "Most prominent [is] Covenant Theology's spiritualizing of the nation Israel to be the church, in order to validate the one covenant concept, [which] is the defining factor that governs their eschatological view…. Covenant Theology's eschatology is determined primarily by the one Covenant of Grace, which exerts global authority in the work of exegesis."

[60] Homer A. Kent, "The New Covenant and the Church," *Grace Theological Journal* 6, no. 2 (Fall 1985): 289.

[61] Kent is, of course, not the sole dispensationalist who bifurcates the NC into material and spiritual blessings in order to include the church as a beneficiary of the NC. In addition to this view being adopted by virtually all progressive dispensationalists (e.g., the authors represented in Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, eds., *Progressive Dispensationalism* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000]), this same position is essentially taken by mainline traditional dispensationalists: Renald Showers, *There Really is a Difference: A Comparison of Covenant and Dispensational Theology* (Bellmawr, NJ: Friends of Israel, 1990), 108; Elliot E. Johnson, "The Church has an Indirect Relationship to the New Covenant," in *A Dispensational Understanding of the New Covenant* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 2012), 164–75; and the late Rodney J. Decker, "The Church has an Indirect Relationship to the New Covenant," in Ibid., 194–222.

[62] A fair yet critical view of the hermeneutics of Covenant Theology, is Ronald M. Johnson's article referenced above, "Covenant Hermeneutics," 316–28. Notable covenantalists who defend nuances of allegorical hermeneutics being applied to the covenants are Michael Horton, *Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006); O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R., 1980); and Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003).

Christ's relation to the NC is plainly seen for what it is: Jesus Christ is *the mediator* of the NC. Two reasons are offered as support.[63]

First, it is important to note that the only canonical place besides Jeremiah 31 where the NC is stated in its entirety is in Hebrews 8:8–12. Some scholars understand this restatement in Hebrews as proof of an inaugurated covenant with blessings delivered to Christians, thus making it a present reality in the church.[64] Others believe it to be a covenant "terminated" in Christ with no future realties for its original recipients.[65] However, there is nothing expressed in the Hebrews' restatement of the NC that suggests it is currently fulfilled and or inaugurated by Christ. It is merely a recitation of Jeremiah 31:31–34, indeed with the same recipients named in Hebrews 8:8: "the house of Israel and the house of Judah."[66] Nothing from this passage, much like its provenance in Jeremiah, even mildly conveys that the NC is a current reality for the church (as in Compton and Showers) or "terminated" by/in Christ (as in Wellum and Gentry).[67]

Rather, as Roy Beacham points out, "Indeed, the only human parties ever specified anywhere in the text of Scripture, Old Testament or New Testament, as legal enactors of the new covenant are the house of Israel and the house of Judah."[68] Thus,

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[63] Because this article is focused solely on *Christ's* relationship to the covenants, it is mainly to this theme that the current treatment on the New Covenant is devoted. It lies outside the article's scope to more fully address the relationship between the covenants themselves, for example, the reality of the New Covenant's role in the promised blessings for nations as being a development of the Abrahamic Covenant (cf. Gen 12:1–3). See J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 71–72, for more on this.

[64] E.g., Bruce Compton, "Dispensationalism, the Church, and the New Covenant," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 8, no.1 (Fall 2003): 3–48, who sees the church as presently "participating" in the NC while Israel will "fulfill" it in the future; cf. Renald Showers, *There Really is a Difference*, 108, for essentially the same view.

[65] This is the position taken by Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 24n7, who boldly state: "All the [biblical] covenants are terminated, culminated, and fulfilled in Christ and the arrival of the promised new covenant age." While it lies outside the scope of this essay to fully address their position, Wellum and Gentry's view is flawed on several grounds (e.g., geographical borders promised to Israel are somehow "terminated" in Christ)—all having their base in an abandonment of a literal interpretive approach.

[66] Thomas Edward McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1985), 156–61, defends the notion that because the author of Hebrews quotes the NC passage of Jeremiah in its *entirety*, that is, past the named Israelite recipients in vv. 31, 33, the benefactors of the covenant must extend beyond national Israel. His reasons for this are dubious at best.

[67] This is not meant in any sense to suggest the church is of lesser value to God than Israel. On the contrary, Paul is clear that the church was always part of the eternal plan of God to demonstrate His manifold wisdom (Eph 3:10–11). Rather, it is to point out that the original intended meaning of the NC, in both Jeremiah and Hebrews by way of consistent literal, grammatical-historical interpretation, can only conclude that the recipient of the NC is national Israel. The church (both Jew and Gentile), by contrast to national Israel, enjoys a direct relationship with God through their faith in His Son Jesus Christ—an amazing benefit of grace distinguishing the current church economy from the covenantal program designed for Israel (cf. Heb 1:1– 2; 1 John 2:23).

[68] Roy E. Beacham, "The Church has no Legal Relationship to or Participation in the New Covenant," in *A Dispensational Understanding of the New Covenant* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 2012), 135.

it is only national Israel to whom this covenant belongs (cf. Rom 9:4). "The new covenant," explains Beacham, "is fundamentally a legal instrument whereby God will contract specific indivisible benefits with national Israel exclusively, the covenant being formally ratified by oath of the stated parties once in human history at a clearly specific eschatological time and place still future, precisely foretold by prophetic Scripture."[69] In agreement with Beacham, this writer sees no biblical-theological reasons to understand the NC as otherwise; it is a binding contract to be fulfilled in the eschaton.

The second aspect worth noting here is the mediating place of Jesus Christ in relation to the NC. This is made plain in Hebrews 9:15: "And so, He [that is, Christ] is the mediator of a new covenant" (cf. 12:24). Capturing Christ's central mediating role over the NC and the writer of Hebrews' focus on *Him* over any covenantal system by use comparative syntax, Andreas Köstenberger states: "Because Christ is superior to the old system in every way, nothing less will do than compete obedience and allegiance in both belief and practice to the One who is 'the new and better way' who has instituted the New Covenant with His people."[70] It is *Christ's mediation* of the NC serving as the premier message behind the NC restatement in the book of Hebrews, not His inauguration, fulfillment or termination of it. As Christopher Cone points out, "There is no new teaching about the content of the NC. It is cited here [Hebrews 8] to advance the argument that Jesus Christ is superior, being the mediator of a better covenant."[71]

Unfortunately, there is some confusion regarding Christ as the mediator (or dispenser, arbiter, or even guarantor) of the NC due to certain English translations choosing to swap nouns for verbs in the original grammar of the text. For instance, at Hebrews 8:6 the English Standard Version states that "the covenant [Christ] *mediates* is better" (emphasis added), as to imply it is currently in operation. However, the Greek text uses the predicate noun μεσίτης (mediator), not any verbal, read literally as: "He is a covenant mediator."[72] Further, the placement of the genitive διαθήκης (covenant) suggests its function as one of subordination, emphasizing the dominion or rulership of the head noun. As such, the nuance of the verse is that Jesus is the mediator *over* a better covenant."[73]

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[69] Ibid., 109. Beacham's use of "oath" as the covenant-ratifer is meant to distinguish it from any view that posits Christ inaugurated the NC at the cross. Beacham maintains the sworn-oath as the distinguishing mark for covenant ratification against the backdrop of ANE covenants, which he assumes is the same paradigm given for the NC. Beacham's virtual equating of all ANE covenant structures is, this writer believes, worthy of critique.

[70] Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Jesus the Mediator of a 'Better Covenant': Comparatives in the Book of Hebrews," *Faith and Mission* 21, no. 2 (Spring: 1994): 40. While Köstenberger rightly emphasizes the superiority of Jesus as the point of the NC passage in Hebrews, this author does not agree with his implied position that Christ has "already" inaugurated the NC with His people.

[71] Christopher Cone, "The New Covenant in Hebrews," in *An Introduction to the New Covenant* (Hurst, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2013), 264.

[72] In fact, all six appearances of μεσίτης (mediator) in the NT is used exclusively in its noun form (Gal 3:19, 20; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24).

[73] For more on the genitive of subordination, see Daniel P. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 103; and Andreas

Thus, it is *Christ's mediatorship* of the NC that Hebrews 8–9 extols, not any new participants for its blessings or reinterpretation of its still-future inauguration.[74] Indeed, the point of the NC passage in Hebrews is to exalt Christ as the divine mediator of the NC, not to recast a new vision for the NC itself. Moreover, in addition to the NC specifically having Christ as its mediator, the very presence of *any* mediator makes this particular covenant matchless in contrast to the others—as this covenant is utterly dependent upon a worthy arbiter for its enactment.[75] As the book of Hebrews builds its case, Jesus is relentlessly presented as infinitely superior to all human or angelic institutions—including His place in the covenants. As such, Christ is not a recipient or even fulfillment of the NC. He relates to it directly as its divine mediator, arbiter, or ruler.

Summation of Christ's Connection to the Covenants

It is appropriate here to offer a closing summation of Christ and the covenants as demonstrated throughout. The role Christ plays in each of the biblical covenants are as follows.

(1) He is *recipient* of promised land; that is, Christ is the ultimate recipient of the land aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant further amplified in the Land Covenant, a land over which He is to rule over future Israel as their King; (2) He is the *fulfillment* of three separate covenants: First, as the "one seed" concept embedded in the Abrahamic Covenant, further amplified by Paul in Galatians. Second, as actively fulfilling all the requirements of the Law-unit, according to His statement in the Sermon on the Mount, which was the codified expression of the Mosaic Covenant. And finally, He fulfills the Davidic Covenant according to Gabriel's announcement to Mary that Jesus would rule on David's throne over national Israel; and (3) Christ relates to one covenant as *mediator*; that is, He is the sole mediator of the New Covenant whom the writer of Hebrews explicitly identifies as Jesus Christ. Moreover, the writer of Hebrews restates and thus reconfirms Jeremiah's prophecy, that the actual fulfillment of the NC still awaits a future national Israel in accordance with their prophesied land. Therefore, Christ relates to each of the biblical covenants treated here as either recipient, fulfillment and/or mediator, and does so without abrogating any promised benefits concerning national Israel.

J. Köstenberger, Benjamin L. Merkle, and Robert L. Plummer, *Going Deeper in Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament* (Nashville: Baker Books, 2016), 103n59.

[74] While this article is delimited to Christ's relation to the covenants, which excludes timing issues, it can be stated here that this author believes the NC, as well as the other unilateral covenants, will be fulfilled and finally realized in the Millennial Kingdom of Revelation 20:2–7, the prophesied time immediately succeeding Christ's Second Coming when repentant Israel "mourns for Jesus whom they pierced" (Zech 12:10). Cf. Ron J. Bigalke and Mal Couch, "The Relationship Between Covenants and Dispensations," in *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 36.

[75] This position is in contrast to Niehaus, *Biblical Theology*, 2:101–2, 249–50, who believes that all of the biblical covenants are dependent upon various "covenant-mediator prophets." While exception is taken to Niehaus's inclusivity (i.e., *all* the covenants having prophet mediators), a case could be made for Moses being a mediator between God and Israel in the giving of the Land Covenant, as Deut 29:1 explicitly records the prophet as the one who actually made the covenant with Israel at the command of Yahweh.

Conclusion

After disclosing preliminary yet important assumptions, such as theological and hermeneutical methods, this article's position was driven by its belief that because the biblical covenants are ultimately subsumed under the Abrahamic Covenant—which promises land, seed, and blessing—Christ occupies a role in all of them. This was further suggested by Paul's claim that all the promises of God find their "yes" in Christ (2 Cor 1:20). Yet, equally demonstrated was that Christ being the "yes" of the covenants does not preclude, in any way, blessings promised to national Israel, for instance as seen in the New Covenant—which is to be exclusively mediated by Christ Himself.

Though space limited which of the seven biblical covenants could be adequately covered, one aspect concerning all of the treated were questions related to Jesus Christ and His relationship or involvement in each of the covenants. Against the backdrop of various opinions from differing scholars, ultimately, the thesis advanced was that Christ relates to each of the biblical covenants either as *recipient* (Land, over which to rule), *fulfillment* (Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic), and *mediator* (New Covenant)—and does so without collapsing any promised future for national Israel. This position was reached by a hermeneutical method driven as consistently as possible with a view toward grammatical, historical, and contextual placements of the passages examined, which illumined not merely their redemptive aim, but doxological focus as well

While this article does not presume to offer the final judgment concerning questions related to Christ and the covenants, it is the sincere hope of its author that perhaps, because of its adamant defense of literal hermeneutics and the implications stemming from such a method, more attention might be paid by scholars to vital biblical distinctions in an effort to continue the ongoing dialogue. As the connection between Christ and the covenants never ceases to provide a fascinating study for biblical theologians, it is well worth the effort to welcome competing voices into the discussion—voices who equally love the Lord Jesus Christ yet might otherwise occupy different sides of the table.
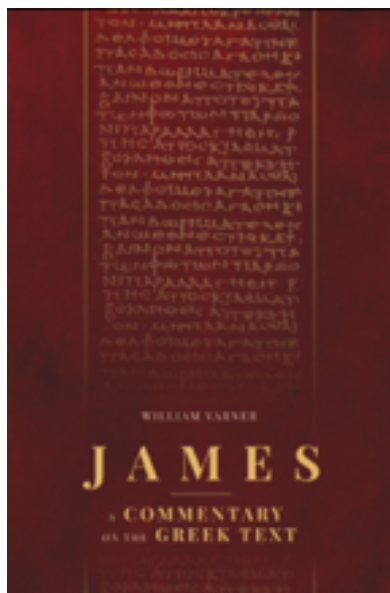
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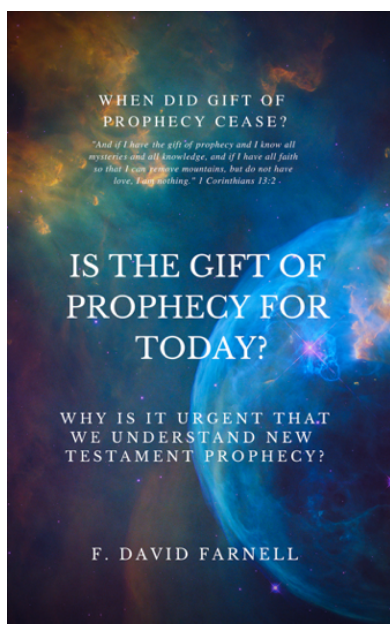
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ROMANS 7: AN OLD COVENANT STRUGGLE
SEEN THROUGH NEW COVENANT EYES

Jay Street, ThM
The Master's Seminary

Romans 7 is possibly one of the most cherished texts in church history. But it is also one of the most controversial passages in Scripture. Many resonate with Paul's ambivalence and insist that Paul is speaking about the Christian's daily struggle with sin. Others strongly disagree and purport that Paul's struggle is too defeating for the Christian life, and he must be speaking for unbelievers. However, it will be argued in this article that both sides of the debate have been speaking past each other for centuries because both sides are asking the wrong question. This is not a passage about whether Paul is speaking as a Christian or not, but whether Paul is speaking as someone under the Old Covenant or the New Covenant. Thus, when the reader's perspective is properly adjusted, he can rightly ascertain Paul's spiritual status in the passage—Paul is speaking as a believer under the Old Covenant before the inauguration of the New Covenant.

* * * * *

Introduction

Most people do not realize it, but their vision is clouded. This is not referring to physical blindness or short-sightedness, but to the popular evangelical perception of one biblical passage—Romans 7:14–25. Today, this text is as popular as it is controversial.[1] Not only is the passage well-known, it has actually been one of the most cherished biblical texts in history. This is especially the case for those who have advocated that Romans 7 conveys the Christian's battle with sin, because many have discovered an inviting home in this emotional, heart-wrenching text. Sincere Christians have seen this as a personal validation in believing that the "great" apostle Paul struggled so fiercely with his sin. Many have been consoled with the thought, "If Paul

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[1] Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, NAC 27 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 166. Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1949), 284. J. Knox Chamblin, *Paul and the Self: Apostolic Teaching for Personal Wholeness* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 171.

so labored with his sin as a Christian in Romans 7, then I know that my sinful struggles are not out of the ordinary." Though not applicable to all, many Christians' perceptions of the passage are subjected to these feelings, and any attempts to convince them otherwise are met with emotional roadblocks. In this way, application precedes diligent observation and accurate interpretation. Experience drives exegesis.

This article has been titled "Romans 7: An Old Covenant Struggle Seen through New Covenant Eyes" because this writer will argue that this is what has been taking place for nearly two thousand years of church history when it comes to this passage. While many Christians feel validated by this text, most have missed its point altogether. A clear vision of the passage as Paul intended it is muddied by their haste to see its truths strictly from a New Covenant perspective that correlates with their personal situation.[2] Therefore, they have imposed their experience on the text and have highlighted observations that serve to proof-text this understanding. "This sounds and feels like my struggle with sin" turns into "This must be Paul's (and every Christian's) struggle with sin."[3] They have assumed that Paul is speaking about the New Covenant Christian; therefore, they have overlooked or ignored details in the text that direct them to the Old Covenant Law. In reality, by hastily seeking validation for one's experience in Romans 7, the reader's trajectory is off from the start. Therefore, his arguments may have some logical consistency at best, but his beginning point is wrong, and therefore his conclusion as well.

Asking the Right Question

Throughout church history, many have asked, "Is Paul speaking as a Christian or as an unbeliever in Romans 7?" But this question is misguided, and it leads to improper conclusions. Instead, the question should be asked this way, "Is Paul speaking about someone under the Old Covenant or someone under the New Covenant?"[4] With Paul's emphasis on the Law in Romans 6–7 and his contrast of the Old Covenant Law and the New Covenant Spirit between Romans 7 and 8, this question better

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[2] This is not to say that the New Covenant should not influence the Christian's understanding of biblical truth or how they apply it, but it is easy to apply New Covenant principles to areas of Scripture that were under Old Covenant domain. For instance, it is easy to assume that believers under the Old Covenant were provided equal benefits of sanctification that New Covenant believers are afforded. But of course, if that was the case, then what is new about the New Covenant?

[3] A qualification must be made—it is not being suggested that Christians do not struggle with sin, even passionately so at times (cf. Gal 6:1; Jas 4:1–10). It is also not being suggested that Christians never feel ambivalent in the flesh as seems to be depicted in Romans 7. Evidently, Christians can share similar *feelings* to what Paul expresses in Romans 7. However, just because a Christian experientially relates to Paul in Romans 7 does *not* necessitate that he is relating a Christian's experience. This is because Paul is not only expressing subjective *feelings* about his struggle against sin, but his objective *status and relationship* with sin and the Law. As will be presented in the remainder of the article, Romans 7 is too Jewish, too Law-focused, too rhetorical, too defeating, too enslaving, too hopeless, too Spirit-less, and too fruitless to be a Christian's experience.

[4] By rallying all views (many of which are listed in the next section of this article) around this one question, the number of positions to this query is reduced to two—either the person is under the New Covenant or under the Old Covenant. There is no third view. All prominent views may act as subcategories under one of these two positions.

honors the context and grammar of the passage and will lead readers to the right conclusion.[5] Furthermore, this question is appropriate, not only because it aligns the Romans 7 problem more faithfully with the context, but it also takes into account the burning question in most readers' minds when it comes to the passage, "Is Paul speaking as a Christian or not?" Whether Paul is speaking as a Christian in Romans 7 is best answered when the reader first satisfies the query as to whether he is speaking as someone under the New Covenant or under the Old Covenant.

This short article[6] will reveal eight misconceptions about Romans 7 that have historically prevailed in evangelical circles for over fifteen hundred years and provide a response that will hopefully realign the reader's understanding to a faithful and careful reading of the text. If the reader is willing to approach Romans 7 from a fresh and reasoned perspective, he should come away with the conclusion that Paul is not speaking about a New Testament Christian's experience, but about a *believer's* experience under the Law *before* the New Covenant.

The Christian View

Most scholars engaged in this debate admit that there are many views with which to contend beyond the typical Christian view. A recent work entitled *Perspectives on Our Struggle with Sin: 3 Views of Romans 7*[7] makes it seem as though there are only three views in the Romans 7 debate. But in reality there are quite a few perspectives to consider. Several of the more prominent views of whom Paul is speaking for in Romans 7 include the following:[8]

- Paul (Christian)[9]
- Paul (unbeliever-Pharisee)[10]

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[5] With this right question in mind, the reader affirms Paul's twenty three uses of the word 'law' in Romans 7 and other grammatical clues of covenantal language that bookend Romans 7:7–25, including "newness of the Spirit" (New Covenant; 7:6), "oldness of the letter" (Old Covenant; 7:6), "Law of the Spirit of Life" (New Covenant; 8:2), "Law of Sin and of Death" (Old Covenant; 8:2), "under grace" (New Covenant; 6:14), and "under Law" (Old Covenant; 6:14).

[6] The complexity of the Romans 7 debate is enormous to say the least. A short article like this will not satisfy the hungry mind that wants to explore its depths. If the reader wants to pursue this argument more, this writer recommends his thesis on the topic, from which much of the content of this article derives. See John David Street III, "Looking with New Covenant Eyes at an Old Covenant Problem: Resolving the Romans 7 Riddle" (ThM thesis, The Master's Seminary, 2018).

[7] Terry L. Wilder, ed., *Perspectives on Our Struggle with Sin: 3 Views of Romans 7* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2011).

[8] This writer consulted two sources primarily for the compilation of these views, while also being influenced by many other authors and commentaries on the subject. Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 425–26; 445–47. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 33:463–66.

[9] Cranfield supports this view. See C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (New York: T&T Clark, 1979).

[10] For a basic critique on this view, see Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1978), 286.

- Everyday Christian (representative)[11]
- Immature Christian (representative)[12]
- Adam (Garden of Eden)[13]
- Israel[14]
- General unbeliever (representative)[15]
- Unbeliever becoming a believer (representative)[16]
- Jewish unbeliever (representative)[17]
- Old Testament believer (not New Testament Christian; representative)[18]

Even the ten views listed here are not comprehensive, nor do scholars feel as though there cannot be overlap between the views. Furthermore, these positions are not demarcated by consistent rules. In other words, some positions are more defined according to the person whom Paul is speaking for in the passage (e.g., himself, Adam, Israel, etc.), while others are more delineated according to this person's ethnicity, conversion state, or maturity (e.g., any general Christian, an immature Christian, Jewish unbeliever, etc.).

But one of the most popular views in evangelical history is the Christian view, and that to some degree or another Paul is portraying his daily experience with sin at the time he wrote Romans.[19] In this case, these proponents would necessarily say that Paul is speaking as someone under the New Covenant with the indwelling ministry

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[11] It seems that Steven Patrick Black lands close to this view. See "The Spiritual Condition of *Egō* and His Relationship to the Law in Romans 7:14–25" (MDiv thesis, The Master's Seminary, 2005).

[12] This writer has heard many lay persons and pastors claim this view as distinct from the everyday Christian view.

[13] For a prominent advocate of this position, see James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, WBC 39 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988).

[14] For evaluation of this perspective, see Michael Paul Middendorf, *The "I" in the Storm: A Study of Romans 7* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Academic Press, 1997), 139–43 and Jan Lambrecht, *The Wretched "I" and Its Liberation: Paul in Romans 7 and 8* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 62–64.

[15] Stauffer notes this in his contribution to the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. See Ethelbert Stauffer, "ἐγώ," *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 2:358–62.

[16] Lloyd-Jones is known to have held this view. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapters 7.1–8.4: The Law: Its Functions and Limits* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973).

[17] Douglas Moo, in *The Epistle to the Romans*, is a primary proponent of this view.

[18] Dr. Michael Vlach at The Master's Seminary advocates this view, and so does this reader. Also, Walt Russell has written an excellent article promoting this understanding of the passage. See Walt Russell, "Insights from Postmodernism's Emphasis on Interpretative Communities in the Interpretation of Romans 7," *JETS* 37, no. 4 (December 1994). Craig Keener also considers this a valid explanation of the passage. See Craig S. Keener, *The Mind of the Spirit: Paul's Approach to Transformed Thinking* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016).

[19] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans*, 176.

of the Holy Spirit for sanctification. It is this view that will be critiqued in this article.[20] Before doing so, it will be advantageous to briefly address the history and main tenets of the Christian view.

History

The Christian view of Romans 7 did not begin in the earliest days of the church[21] as some might anticipate. Rather, it was not until the mid-to-late 300's that Augustine adopted this understanding of the passage[22] that subsequently became popular throughout Christendom until this day. It was especially attractive to the Roman Catholic Church during the medieval era, as many found the Romans 7 struggle with sin a fine explanation for the Christian's reasoning power to fuel his battle against the flesh.[23] Though Reformers like Luther and Calvin reacted vehemently to Roman Catholic authority, they too maintained a similar position to Romans 7—that Paul is speaking as a believer under the New Covenant dispensation.[24] And of course, the modern era of Christian scholars and commentators has had a contingent of proponents for the Christian view, including the eminent Karl Barth.[25]

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[20] Space is limited to critique all the other views that are listed, especially another more popular one among evangelical laymen and laywomen today—Paul is speaking for *unbelievers generally*. The advantage of the unbeliever view is that it shares with the Old Testament believer view the same perspective that Paul is speaking as someone under the *Old Covenant*. Rather, it is of most interest to critique the Christian view that suggests that Paul is speaking as someone under the New Covenant. Evaluation at this level is far more important than whether he is a believer or an unbeliever under the Old Covenant.

[21] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans*, 177.

[22] Augustine, *Augustine on Romans: Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans: Unfinished Commentary on the Epistle to the Roman*, trans. Paul Fredricksen Landes, Text and Translations Early Christian Literature Series (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 19. Also see Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans*, IBC (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1985), 120.

[23] Jean Doutre, "Romans as Read in School and Cloister in the Twelfth Century: The Commentaries of Peter Abelard and William of St. Thierry," in *Medieval Readings of Romans*, ed. William S. Campbell, Peter S. Hawkins, and Brenda Deen Schildgen (New York: T&T Clark International, 2007), 46. Doutre was speaking in context to William of Saint Thierry's remarks in his commentary, *Expositio in epistolam ad Romanos*.

[24] Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, trans. J. Theodore Mueller (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1967), 112. John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, Calvin's Commentaries, trans. Ross Mackenzie, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 146–47, 150.

[25] Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 270. Along with Barth, many commentators would agree, including Chamblin, Nygren, Dunn, Mounce, Osborne, Cranfield, Bruce, Schreiner (at least as of Spring 2018—he has gone back and forth by his own admission [Thomas R. Schreiner, "Here We Go Again!" Chapel Message at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLBA1qC8OOEJC8F3hI-nuiEHSOMEodh_JMG&time_continue=1318&v=7vbV8wKH1nI (accessed December 3, 2019)]), etc.

Main Tenets

The core evidence mustered by those with the Christian view derives mainly from a few keystone arguments. First, probably the most common assumption that Christian view advocates maintain is that Paul is speaking from his own situation when he says 'I', 'me', or 'my' in Romans 7.[26] Even Douglas Moo, who is not a Christian view proponent of this passage, anticipated what the average Christian might be wondering, "'What is all the fuss about!'… Who else except Paul would it be?"[27] Indeed, many scholars have concurred; when Paul says 'I', he means Paul. This is the most natural way to understand it.[28] Nevertheless (and this may come as a surprise for some lay Christians), most scholars today—even those in the Christian view—confess that Paul is not speaking purely about his situation, but also representatively on behalf of others.[29]

But second to this assumption is probably one of the most commonly used arguments in the Christian view—that Paul speaks in the present tense in Romans 7:14–25, and therefore, he is speaking about his current Christian experience.[30] It is hard for the today's Western mind to conceive that Paul would be speaking in the present tense without the situation actually taking place in the present. For many Christian view advocates, this is the "nail-in-the-coffin" argument to any non-Christian views of Romans 7.[31]

Finally,[32] there are several go-to verses in Romans 7:14–25 that Christian view proponents will cite in defense of their position. For instance, Paul admits in 7:22, "For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man."[33] How can pleasure of this kind in God's Law come from anyone other than a Christian? Or, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (7:24). How can someone without the Holy Spirit admit his wretchedness? Or, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (7:25a). No one but a New Covenant Christian can praise God for sending Jesus Christ as victory over death and sin. It seems clear that he is speaking as a Christian.

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[26] In fact, the assumption is so basic for many in this camp that most laymen and laywomen who believe that Paul is speaking as a Christian do not realize that this is even a debated issue. As a teacher for a Romans class at The Master's University, this writer has read *many* students who insist that they never realized this was a matter of debate.

[27] Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 425.

[28] Grant R Osborne, "The Flesh without the Spirit: Romans 7 and Christian Experience," in *Perspectives on Our Struggle with Sin: 3 Views of Romans 7*, ed. Terry L. Wilder (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2011), 6.

[29] Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 378. For instance, Cranfield takes a hybrid view—Paul is speaking for himself and "in the shoes" of other Christians. See Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:341.

[30] J. Knox Chamblin, *Paul and the Self*, 172.

[31] Lloyd-Jones, *Romans*, 183.

[32] For sake of space, other arguments will be addressed throughout the various misconceptions that frame the rest of the article.

[33] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations will be taken from the New American Standard, 1995 Update (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), abbreviated as NAU.

These tenets, among many others, act as the bedrock for the Christian view. While all of these observations are valid, the interpretation that derives from these observations is short-sighted because it is missing other key observations from the passage that must be accounted for. In other words, because the Romans 7 debate has diverged into two popular positions historically, that Paul is either speaking as a Christian or as an unbeliever, advocates of these two views have been speaking past one another for centuries. This is because both sides have observed valid truths that support their positions, but rarely have all the observations been put together cohesively and convincingly.

This article will realign the reader's understanding from a Christian versus non-Christian question to an Old Covenant versus New Covenant question and argue that Paul is speaking on behalf of Old Covenant believers, not New Testament Christians or pagan unbelievers. Throughout the rest of the article, eight misconceptions about Romans 7 will be presented and responded to, so as to reshape the reader's view of the passage toward the Old Covenant versus New Covenant contrast that Paul establishes in Romans 7 and 8. With this corrected understanding, the Old Testament believer position gains significant credibility.

To begin, each misconception of the Christian view will follow the same formula: *Paul is speaking as a Christian because….*

Misconception 1:
Romans 7 Is in the Sanctification Section of the Book

This misconception has often been advocated by those in the Christian view.[34] Essentially, the argument goes—since Romans 7 falls within Romans 5–8, which has much to do with sanctification, then Romans 7 must be speaking about the Christian who is being sanctified. The argument is anchored in how most scholars outline Romans 1–11 as a chronological walkthrough from sin (1:18–31), to indictment (2:1–3:20), to justification (3:21–4:25), to sanctification (5:1–8:17), to glorification (8:18–39), etc. However, although it is generally true that Paul develops his gospel argument in Romans 1–11 chronologically from sin to glorification, the fallacies in this assumption are that this is the primary superstructure of Romans 1–11, that Paul is restricted to this chronology, and that he in fact strictly holds to this chronology.

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[34] For example, Robert Mounce drew his conclusion of Romans 7 from what he subjectively deemed is more likely for Paul to communicate to his readers at this point in the letter. Mounce wrote, "At this point in his discussion of sanctification, would Paul have been more apt to tell his readers about his struggle with sin before he became a Christian or describe his ongoing difficulty in actually living out his deepest spiritual desires?" Mounce, *Romans*, 167. But that question presumes that sanctification is the primary superstructure of Romans 5–8 (i.e., "The Righteousness in Which We Are to Grow"; Ibid., 57) that influences the meaning of Romans 7 instead of the thirty or more rhetorical questions in Romans 3–11. It is concerning that this is a watershed issue for Mounce and other scholars when it comes to the Romans 7 debate. See also Everett F. Harrison and Donald A. Hagner, "Romans," in *Romans-Galatians*, EBC 11 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 126.

In reality, the outline of Romans 1–11 (or at least Romans 3–11) is constructed grammatically by the rhetorical questions that Paul employs.[35] This better honors the author's intended outline with objective *grammatical* features, not the reader's perceived outline with subjective *thematic* features. These questions act as discourse markers that transition Paul's thoughts from one concept to another.[36] For the most part, Paul leverages these questions to speak for and with an imaginary Jewish opponent (which begins in 2:1) to educate[37] his mostly Gentile audience[38] how to defend the gospel.[39] The method is significantly rhetorical and a tool that was used by many Greek rhetoricians in Paul's day.[40]

Two of these rhetorical questions find their home in Romans 7:7 and 7:13. With these two questions, Paul focuses on the Law's relationship to God's people and seeks to vindicate the Law from any moral devaluation.[41] With this focus on the Law, nearly all scholars[42] (including Christian view scholars) confess that Romans 7:7–12 is not about the Christian experience, but is a description of the unbelieving state for

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[35] For a full listing of all the rhetorical questions in Romans, the following has been compiled: 3:1 (2x), 3, 5, 7–9, 27 (2x), 29, 31; 4:1, 9–10; 6:1, 15; 7:7, 13; 8:31; 9:14, 19, 30, 32; 10:14–15 (?) (4x), 18–19; 11:1, 7, 11. The inclusion of a rhetorical question in the list is debated by scholars, but the number of questions is significant no matter which list a reader consults. Stanley Kent Stowers, *The Diatribe and Paul's Letter to the Romans*, SBL 57 (Chino, CA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1981), 122–23.

[36] Of course, Paul is not restricted to using a rhetorical question to transition his thoughts (e.g., 8:17–18), but when he employs a rhetorical question, he makes a transition.

[37] Osborne, "The Flesh without the Spirit," 14.

[38] The background to the Roman church is essential to understanding the argumentation and purpose of the book. The church (or churches) was likely began by sojourning Jews and proselyte Gentiles who were converted by Peter's message at Pentecost (Acts 2:10). David A. Fiensy, *New Testament Introduction*, CPNIV (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1994), 223. See also Boyce W. Blackwelder, *Toward Understanding Romans: An Introduction and Exegetical Translation* (Anderson, IN: The Warner Press, 1962), 28. As secular historical documentation also confirms, Jews were expelled from Rome in AD 49 by Emperor Claudius (cf. Acts 18:1–2) over what he thought was a Jewish revolt. After he died in AD 54, so did the Jewish ban, and both Christian and non-Christian Jews began returning to their churches and synagogues, respectively. Fiensy, *New Testament Introduction*, 222, 224. Hence, when Paul writes in AD 57 or 58, the mostly Gentile audience (with a few Christian Jews who had returned) needed exhortation to accept one another (14:1–15:7). But mostly, Paul was concerned about establishing the first apostolic authority for this church (1:1–15; 15:14–33) and about teaching a keen defense of the gospel so that the Gentiles would know how to respond to the Jewish skeptics returning to their synagogues. That is why Romans 1–11 comprises the majority of the book, even though the audience was "filled with all knowledge" about the gospel contents (15:14). They still needed to learn how to *argue* what they knew.

[39] A. H. McNeile, *St. Paul: His Life, Letters, and Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), 190. Though McNeile devalued the local Jewish confrontation in Rome, the lofty *apologia* of Romans and the local Jewish setting are not mutually exclusive. In fact, since Paul likely anticipates that the Roman Christians will experience opposition from returning orthodox Jews, he composes a comprehensive *apologia* so that they will be ready for any kind of attack. Because the confrontation had yet to precipitate, he did not have any specific theology for which to train the Romans as he does in other epistles for churches he knows so well.

[40] Stanley K. Stowers, "Romans 7.7–25 as a Speech-in-Character (προσωποποιΐα)," in *Paul in His Hellenistic Context*, ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 180–202.

[41] Osborne, "The Flesh without the Spirit," 14–15.

[42] There are some who suggest that Paul is speaking of the Christian experience throughout 7:7–25. Obsorne noted a few: Augustine, the Latin Fathers, Dunn, and Packer. Ibid., 24.

someone who first encounters the Law.[43] With such statements like, "I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died" (7:9) and "sin… deceived me and through [the commandment] killed me" (7:11), it is evident to most that this cannot be the Christian experience.

In this case, 7:7–12 discontinues the sanctification trajectory. Paul evidently returns to a time "before Christ" when he relates a person's relationship with the Law. However, what is surprising is that scholars overlook this exception and claim that the subsequent section of 7:14–25 must be a Christian experience because the passage resides in the "Sanctification Section of Romans" (5:1–8:17). But if 7:7–12 is an exception, is it not possible that the exception continues through 7:13–25, especially since both sections focus on a person's relationship with the Law? Sadly, this is ignored or overlooked by many. That is why it is a misconception to insist that Romans 7:14–25 must be a Christian experience because of the "Sanctification Section." It is simply an argument that disregards the contextual evidence.

Misconception 2: Paul Is Speaking to Gentiles

It is often supposed that Paul is speaking to Gentiles in Romans 7 because Romans is written to a mostly Gentile church[44] and the themes of sanctification saturate Romans 5–8. But this assumption misses a key observation—Paul delimits his focus in Romans 7 to the cross-section of his audience that has experience under the Law. In 7:1 Paul remarks, "Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the Law)…." The word "know"[45] typically conveys "experience" and "acquaintance" in its sphere of connotation, as opposed to the assent of facts.[46] In other words, most in Paul's audience, if not all, knew *about* the Law, but there was a smaller section of Jews (and possibly a few Gentile proselytes from Pentecost) who knew the Law intimately. This cross-section of his readership was experienced living under the Law and could relate with the struggle of 7:7–25.

But some have argued that Paul is insisting that *all* of his audience knew the Law.[47] In other words, Paul would be saying, "Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to [an audience] that know[s] the Law." D. Theodor Zahn suggested that Paul should have written "I am speaking to *you* who know the Law" if he was speaking to a section of his audience, not to all (cf. 11:13).[48] But this argument rests upon

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[43] Ibid., 23. This writer argues that Paul is speaking rhetorically on behalf of Israel in corporate solidarity of all Jews under the Law (cf. 7:1, "I am speaking to those who know the Law"), and that 7:7–12 is representative of Israel at Sinai receiving the Law. For more on this, see Misconceptions 2 and 3.

[44] Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1961), 395–96.

[45] The Greek term in 7:1 is γινώσκουσιν.

[46] Rudolf Bultmann, "γινώσκω, γνῶσις, ἐπιγινώσκω, ἐπίγνωσις," *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 1:690. Bultmann proposed that "acquaintance" is a good translation for this word in 7:1.

[47] Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 412.

[48] D. Theodor Zahn, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer*, in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Leipzig: A. Deichesrtsche, 1910), 328. Emphasis added. The Greek would look something like this: τοῖς ὑμῖν

what the text speculatively should read, not what it actually says.[49] And more significantly, this argument creates more problems than it solves. Apparently, whomever Paul is addressing in Romans 7:1 are also those who have "die[d] to the Law" and were "released from the Law" according to 7:4 and 7:6, respectively, and were at one time so subjected to the Law's influence in their lives that their "sinful passions… were aroused by the Law" (7:5). It is difficult to conceive that this mostly Gentile audience had such "knowledge" of the Law that their sinful passions were aroused by this Law.[50] Only those who lived under the Law could resonate with this experience. The life-situation depicted in 7:1–6 is nothing more than Jewish life under the Old Covenant, which sets up perfectly for 7:7–25.[51] Therefore, it is a misconception to presume that Romans 7:14–25 must be referring to a Christian because Paul is speaking to his entire audience of mostly Gentile Christians. Actually, Romans 7 is targeting Paul's Jewish audience starting with verse one.

Misconception 3: Paul Is Speaking from His Experience

The heart of the Romans 7 debate is whether Paul is speaking autobiographically, rhetorically, or both. Today's Western minds have a hard time conceiving that Paul might speak for anyone but himself when he says 'I', 'me', or 'my' in Romans 7. But it is a misconception to hastily presume that Paul is not speaking rhetorically here, and there are seven reasons why.

First, according to Moo, the rhetorical use of 'I' has been well established by Werner Georg Kümmel and is now widely accepted among commentators.[52] Such a stylistic device has been called "Character-in-Speech,"[53] and it was a common phenomenon in Greek literature of Paul's day. As Stowers put it, it was "a rhetorical and literary technique in which the speaker or writer produces speech that represents not himself or herself but another person or type of character."[54] In colloquial vernacular, the author would "step into the shoes" of someone else and pretend to speak for him. Greek authors such as Cicero, Quintilian, Hermogenes, and Aphthonius made use of

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γινώσκουσιν νόμον. Compare this with Paul's address to his Gentile audience in 11:13, "Now I am speaking to you who are Gentiles." Gk. Ὑμῖν δὲ λέγω τοῖς ἔθνεσιν.

[49] Although there is sometimes warrant for arguments based upon what an author should have said, especially when there is a precedent to do otherwise elsewhere, these arguments are typically weaker and should be evaluated with caution.

[50] Even Moo, who asserts that Paul is speaking for his entire audience in 7:1ff, communicates that 7:4–6 is primarily referring to Israel, which acts as a paradigm for Gentiles. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 417. See also footnote 42.

[51] Mark A. Seifrid, "Romans 7: The Voice of the Law, the Cry of Lament, and the Shout of Thanksgiving," in *Perspectives on Our Struggle with Sin: 3 Views of Romans 7*, ed. Terry L. Wilder (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2011), 138–39.

[52] Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 427.

[53] Or *prosōpopoeia* (προσωποποιΐα). Stanley K. Stowers, "Romans 7.7–25 as a Speech-in-Character (προσωποποιΐα)," 187.

[54] Ibid., 180.

this clever educational tactic.[55] Even "Euripides' tragedies were prime fodder for the anthologies of quotations used for the instruction of schoolboys in rhetoric."[56] Plutarch and Euripides also conveyed passionate thoughts from someone else's perspective that sound closely akin to statements found in Romans 7![57] Clearly it is not outside the bounds of reason to speak with passion from the perspective of someone else, despite what some authors have argued.[58] And that is exactly what Paul is doing in Romans 7. He is conveying thoughts as representative of his Jewish audience and their struggles under the Law. Clearly, there is a historical precedence.[59]

Second, this rhetorical use of 'I' is not foreign to Romans at all. In fact, Paul steps into the shoes of his opponent at various times throughout the book (3:1, 5; 9:19; 10:18, 19),[60] including 3:7 when he counter-argues against himself, "But if through *my* lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am *I* also still being judged as a sinner?" Certainly, there is a contextual precedence in Romans.

Third, Paul not only speaks several times rhetorically from someone else's viewpoint, he also speaks rhetorically to an imaginary opponent with eighty-five instances of second-person singular pronouns or verbs in Romans.[61] Combining these instances

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[55] Ibid., 180–202. As part of a Hellenized student's studies, Stowers explained, "In every passage the student had to ask, 'who is speaking'. Homer, for example, was the favorite text for elementary instruction although many others were also used. Sometimes Homer speaks in the authorial voice; sometimes one character or another speaks but often without the poet specifically indicating that such-and-such has begun to speak by keeping the words in character with the speaker." Ibid., 183.

[56] Das, *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 225.

[57] For instance, Plutarch quoted Euripides, crying out, "Wretched I am, this evil comes to men from God…" (compare with Romans 7:24). Euripides rhetorically exclaimed, "I am being overcome by evils. I know that what I am about to do is evil but passion [wrath] is stronger than my reasoned reflection and this is the cause of the worst evils for humans" (compare with Romans 7:17, 23). Ibid., 223–26.

[58] Black, "The Spiritual Condition of *Egō* and His Relationship to the Law in Romans 7:14–25," 48. In a similar vein, Lambrecht evoked: "[I]t cannot be denied that in this pericope Paul speaks in a vivid, emotional and pathetic manner. Personal experience is presumably to a large extent responsible for this kind of speech." Jan Lambrecht, *The Wretched "I" and Its Liberation*, 78. Thus, many scholars cannot but see Paul's personal experience in Romans 7:7–25 due to the evocative emotional language he conveys therein. Gundry would agree and remarked that Paul's cry in 7:24–25 "would be incredibly theatrical" if he spoke rhetorically and not autobiographically. Robert H. Gundry, "The Moral Frustration of Paul before His Conversion: Sexual Lust in Romans 7:7–25," in *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to Professor F. F. Bruce on His 70th Birthday*, ed. Donald H. Hagner and Murray J. Harris (Devon, England: Paternoster Press, 1980), 229.

[59] In fact, not only is there a historical precedence, but there is a modern precedence as well. It is common in modern English to speak for others in the first person (see the example in the first paragraph of this article when this writer said, "If Paul so labored with his sin as a Christian in Romans 7, then I know that my sinful struggles are not out of the ordinary."). For instance, in the classroom, a teacher might find that the best way to communicate a point to his students is to place himself "into their shoes." He might relate, "I know what you are thinking about this math problem; *I* want to find 'x', but *I* do not want to take the long way around. If *I* use the Pythagorean Theorem, the solution is quick and easy." The teacher uses the first person singular to represent what the students might be thinking. This is what Paul is doing in Romans 7:7–25. He is representing how his Jewish readers used to think under the Law.

[60] In fact, many of Paul's rhetorical questions in Romans may be from the perspective of his theoretical Jewish opponent.

[61] In fact, he uses the rhetorical use of the second person singular in Romans at least four times the amount of any other use of the second person singular. Nearly every other use of the second singular 'you'

with the thirty or more rhetorical questions in the book, Paul's extensive personifica-
tion of sin and the Law, and several diatribe tactics, it is evident that Romans stands
head and shoulders above any other New Testament book when it comes to rhetorical
devices and strategy. Therefore, it should not be surprising that a lengthy rhetorical
representation of Jews under the Law is found in Romans 7 at the heart of Paul's
gospel argument. There is a stylistic precedence.

Fourth, while some commentators have propagated the notion that there is no
precedence in Pauline epistles to express the first person singular rhetorically in such
a large span of Scripture,[62] it is important to recognize the unique nature of Romans
7:7–25. It is not like any other section in Paul, and therefore the reader should not
expect it to be like his other uses of 'I'. This is because Romans 7:7–25 is the densest
use of first person singular pronouns and verbs in Pauline epistles, but unlike any
other dense sections in Paul, there is no personal characteristic, time, or location that
can associate this section to Paul and no one else.[63] Every other section in Paul that
is dense with first person singulars contains at least one or more characteristic, time,
or location that associates the description to Paul or his current situation. Therefore,
Romans 7 is in a league of its own because it is timeless and generic in every way.
Autobiography is not the focus. In fact, it must be assumed into the text. Patently,
there is an exceptional precedence.

Fifth, the rhetorical questions in 7:7 and 7:13 are unique and instructive to Paul's
rhetorical strategy. In 7:7 Paul rhetorically asks, "What shall *we* say then? Is the Law
sin?" and follows with the response, "*I* would not have come to know about sin…."
The "What shall we say then" question is a common formula in Romans (3:5; 4:1;
6:1; 7:7; 8:31; 9:14, 30) that implies a diatribe tactic.[64] Throughout Romans this is

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is contained in an Old Testament quote. Hence, nearly all uses outside of Old Testament quotes are rhe-
torical in Romans. A comprehensive search of second-person singular pronouns and verbs in Romans,
using Logos Bible Software provided the following results, organized as follows: *Rhetorically* (85x): 2:1
(5x), 3 (3x), 4 (2x), 5 (3x), 17 (4x), 18 (2x), 19 (2x), 21 (3x), 22 (2x), 23 (2x), 25 (3x), 27; 8:2; 9:19, 20
(2x); 11:17 (3x), 18 (5x), 20 (4x), 21, 22 (5x), 24 (3x); 12:21 (2x); 13:3 (3x), 4 (3x), 9 (2x); 14:4 (2x), 10
(6x), 15 (4x), 20, 21, 22 (4x); *Old Testament Israelite* (20x): 7:7; 10:6 (2x), 8 (3x), 9 (5x); 12:20 (4x); 13:9
(5x); *God* (12x): 3:4 (4x); 8:36; 9:20; 11:3 (2x), 10; 15:3, 9 (2x); *Abraham* (3x): 4:17, 18; 9:7; *Pharaoh*
(2x): 9:17 (2x).

[62] Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 427. Black, "The Spiritual Condition of *Egō* and His Relationship
to the Law in Romans 7:14–25," 48.

[63] For a passage to qualify, this writer set a minimum of 10 verses for a paragraph to contain a
significant number of first person singular pronouns and verbs. Romans 7:7–25 contains the highest first-
person singular instances to verse ratio at 52 instances in a span of 19 verses, achieving a 2.74 instance-
to-verse ratio (if one delimits the focus of the passage to Romans 7:14–25, it contains a 39/12 ratio, equal-
ing a 3.25 instance to verse ratio). A close second is 1 Cor 9:15–10:1 at 37/14 = 2.64. The rest of the
significant paragraphs in Paul were calculated as follows: 2 Cor 11:1–13:3 = 122/57 = 2.14; 2 Cor 2:1–13
= 26/13 = 2.00; Gal 4:11–21 = 19/11 = 1.73; 2 Tim 4:6–20 = 25/15 = 1.67; Phlm 4–24 = 34/21 = 1.62;
Gal 1:6–3:2 = 66/42 = 1.57; Phil 2:12–3:1 = 31/20 = 1.55; 1 Cor 14:11–19 = 17/11 = 1.545; Phil 3:4–4:4
= 31/22 = 1.41; Rom 15:14–32 = 26/19 verses = 1.37; 1 Cor 4:14–5:3 = 15/11 = 1.36; 1 Cor 16:1–17 =
23/17 = 1.35; Col 1:23–2:5 = 16/12 = 1.33; 2 Tim 1:3–2:2 = 24/18 = 1.33; 1 Tim 1:11–2:1 = 14/11 = 1.27;
Phil 1:3–2:2 = 36/30 = 1.20; 2 Cor 7:3–8:3 = 19/17 = 1.12; 1 Cor 10:14–11:3 = 21/23 = 0.91; 1 Cor 7:6–
40 = 21/35 = 0.60.

[64] Osborne, "The Flesh without the Spirit," 14.

Paul's way of asking what the audience should say in response to the rhetorical question. For instance, in 7:7, "What should we [the audience] say [in response to the antagonistic Jew]? [Should we say that] the Law is sin? May it never be!" Then, Paul follows the rhetorical question with what the *audience* should say, "I would not have come to know sin except through the Law…." Since 7:7 is the only instance in which Paul transitions from a first person *plural* rhetorical question to a first person *singular* rhetorical answer,[65] then the audience should expect that Paul is relating *their* response for them in 7:7–25; he is not communicating his own response or experience.

Then in 7:13 Paul asks a rhetorical question with the first person singular. But what is striking is that Paul does not use the first person singular with reference to himself in any rhetorical question in Romans.[66] Therefore, since the question in 7:13 is rhetorical, the 'I' that follows is rhetorical as well. And if the 'I' is rhetorical, then every instance of 'I', 'me', and 'my' in 7:7–25 is rhetorical. In other words, this is not Paul's question in 7:13, but someone else's question, and this is not Paul's experience in 7:7–25, but someone else's experience. There is a rhetorical precedence.

Sixth, after the rhetorical question in 7:7, Paul does not use another first person *plural* except in 7:14 ("we")[67] and 7:25a ("our"). Paul stays in the 'I' almost entirely throughout Romans 7:7–25. But in 7:25a, he interrupts the numerous uses of 'I' to say 'our', and then he returns to 'I' in 7:25b. The only adequate way to explain this anomaly is that Paul intentionally interrupts his representation of Jews under the Law

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[65] The only other instance in Romans in which a first-person plural rhetorical question is followed by a first-person singular response is found in 3:5–6, but clearly in this case, Paul steps out of character in the first person singular to momentarily explain to his audience that he is speaking in human terms (i.e. speaking on behalf of others).

[66] If the reader supposes that 10:18, 19; 11:1, 11 are referring to Paul, then the Λέγω (i.e., "I say") in each of these verses necessarily falls outside the rhetorical question and therefore does not qualify as a first-person singular in a rhetorical question.

[67] However, this is more debatable than scholarship has given credit. Textual criticism actually gives credence to a convincing variant. Instead of "For we know" (Οἴδαμεν γὰρ), it may be rendered "For on the one hand I know" (Οἶδα μεν γὰρ). Although variants are slim in support of the latter (minuscule 33, Jerome, and a few manuscripts), the earliest texts must be *factored out* of the decision because these majuscules were composed with no spaces between words (i.e. ΟΙΔΑΜΕΝΓΑΡ). In other words, the text "For I know" is based exclusively on the decision of eighth- and ninth-century scribes who interpreted ΟΙΔΑΜΕΝΓΑΡ as ΟΙΔΑΜΕΝ ΓΑΡ and not ΟΙΔΑ ΜΕΝ ΓΑΡ. The important majuscules that play a watershed role in every New Testament variant (Codex Sinaiticus [א], Alexandrinus [A], Vaticanus [B], etc.) cannot be included in the assessment because they do not take a side on the issue. Therefore, there are two arguments in favor of the plural "we know," and they include the minuscule textual evidence and how common Paul employs "For we know" in Romans and Corinthians. See Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:355. However, in favor of the singular "I know" is the fact that Paul uses "For I know" in the immediate context (7:18; οἶδα γὰρ), the first-person singular continues uninterrupted from 7:7b–7:24 if 7:14a is singular, the μὲν… δὲ construction is preserved in the verse, and the awkward shift from "For we know" to "but I am" in the same sentence is avoided. For examples where γὰρ follows μὲν, when it is fronted by a word, see Acts 23:8; Rom 2:25; 5:16; 14:5 (there is a textual issue here, whether γὰρ appears at all or not); 1 Cor 5:3; 11:7; 12:8; 14:17; 2 Cor 9:1; Heb 7:18, 20; 12:10. The search result also yielded no examples in which γὰρ precedes μὲν near the beginning of any sentence in the New Testament. Most of these examples are Pauline, and if Hebrews is at least influenced by Paul, it gains more credence. Therefore, the order of the words, Οἶδα μεν γὰρ, is grammatically acceptable and common. The statistic was compiled using a Logos Bible Software search.

to praise God for the New Covenant that he *and his readers* know has been inaugurated.[68] But the person whom Paul represents in 7:7–25 has no concept of this deliverance. Hence, whenever Paul speaks with 'I' in 7:7–25, it is not his story, but the story of someone under the Law. Evidently, there is an intentional precedence by Paul.

Seventh, and most convincingly, Paul employs a second singular 'you' in 8:2.[69] As noted before, there are eighty-five instances in Romans in which Paul uses a second singular pronoun or verb to speak rhetorically. Almost all others are found in Old Testament quotes. This singular 'you' is likely rhetorical as well. Its isolated instance here can only be explained if Paul is speaking rhetorically to the person he just represented in 7:7–25.[70] In other words, after stepping into the rhetorical shoes of a Jew under the Law in 7:7–25, Paul steps back into his own shoes in 8:2 to speak *to* that person about the freedom found in the New Covenant. Romans 7:7–25 is rhetorical because Romans 8:2 is rhetorical. There is a grammatical precedence.

With these seven reasons, evidently the case for the rhetorical 'I' is sound. It is not merely a secular, Greek tactic imposed on the Romans 7 text. The rhetorical 'I'

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[68] Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 467.

[69] Gk. σε. There is a textual variant here that is worth noting. Though "us" (ἡμᾶς) is one of the variants replacing σε in some manuscripts, it is found in only a few insignificant texts (Ψ and the Bohairic texts). It is easy to see why a minority of scribes would have changed the text to fit the flow of second-person plural pronouns that continue in the subsequent context. The only other variant is more difficult to determine against the stated text: instead of "you" (σε), other manuscripts have "me" (με)—only a one letter difference in Greek. It is possible that σε was reduplicated when a scribe accidentally mistook the final three letters of the previous word (ἠλευθέρωσέν) for the second person pronoun "you" (σε) and subsequently dropped off the final *nun* (ν). With the words running together in the original manuscripts, this would have been an easy foible for a scribe to make. Furthermore, the first-person singular pronoun seems to correspond with the context of 7:14–25 (though against it is the temptation to amend the text to fit the context; Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. [Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007], 456). Even more so, the textual witnesses for με include Alexandrinus (A), the Western Text (D), the Majority Text and a few other minuscules, textual groups, and attested by Clement of Alexandria. However, Metzger does a fine job sorting through the evidence and explains, "Impressed by the weight of the combination of Alexandrian and Western witnesses [particularly א and B], a majority of the Committee preferred σε as the earliest attainable text." Ibid. Stauffer's explanation of the emendation is also highly convincing. See Ethelbert Stauffer, "ἐγώ," *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 2:361n154. It is also the harder, but very reasonable, reading and should be preferred. Thus, it is best to stay with the text as it is.

[70] This also makes sense because a singular 'you' (verbal form) is used in an Old Testament quote in 7:7, "*You* shall not covet" (Οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις). The tenth commandment shares the second singular in both Masoretic Hebrew (לֹא תַחְמֹד) and Septuagint Greek (οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις) in Exodus 20:17 and Deuteronomy 5:21. Paul is certainly making an exact citation. Nevertheless, the commandment was written to corporate Israel and was to be fulfilled individually in unity for the greater solidarity of the whole. Hence, the second singular reflects the corporate unity assumed in the command. So too, Paul uses the second singular to speak *to* Israel corporately (7:7) and *for* Israel corporately (7:7–12) so that each Israelite might fulfill the Law individually in unity together (7:13–25). Therefore, the singular 'you's of 7:7 and 8:2 act as bookends that signal the *beginning* and *end* of the rhetorical 'I' section of 7:7–25. This cannot be a coincidence.

of Romans 7 is established historically, contextually, stylistically, exceptionally, rhetorically, intentionally, and grammatically. These reasons cannot be ignored or dismissed.

Misconception 4:
Paul Is Speaking about His Current Experience

Probably the most common misconception coming from the Christian view of Romans 7 is that Paul must be speaking about his current Christian experience because he employs present-tense verbs in 7:14–25.[71] But there are four reasons why this is a misconception.

First, even though the present tense is common in both modern English and Koine Greek, these tenses are not employed identically in both languages, even though there is plenty of commonality between them. Greek scholars have noted that Koine Greek verbs do not intimate the element of time as much as English verbs do.[72] In Greek "[t]he kind of action is always predominant over the time of the action."[73] In this way, the fact that an author in the New Testament uses the present tense is not sufficient enough of an argument to prove that the author must be speaking about his current situation.

Second, there is plenty of precedence for the present tense in the New Testament that is not speaking about current situations. For instance the gospel narratives are regularly written in the present tense.[74] Paul also employs the present tense in his letters when not speaking about his current situation, such as the present participles in Philippians 3:3–6 when speaking of his past life in Judaism,[75] or the present indicative verbs when relating his past intention to see the Corinthians (2 Cor 1:17). In these examples, Paul employs the present tense to relive the moment for his readers so that they can "step into his shoes" and relate with him as though it is happening right now. Even today, modern English speakers do this all the time to narrate or write evocatively.[76] So too, Paul conveys his graphic struggle in Romans 7:14–25

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[71] Chamblin, *Paul and the Self*, 172.

[72] Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2005), 25.

[73] Wesley J. Perschbacher, *The New Testament Greek Syntax: An Illustrated Manual* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 278.

[74] Scholars call this the historical present. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 529. In fact, so extensive is the use of historical present in gospel narratives that the editors of the NAU supply a star next to each occurrence that directs the reader to the preface, where they explain, "Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence." See Lockman Foundation, ed., *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), vii.

[75] Gundry, "The Moral Frustration of Paul before His Conversion," 228.

[76] For instance, modern English speakers do this well when relating a story, "I flew to Denver the other day, and I had a strange thing happen to me. We took off and during the flight one of the stewardesses began getting orders for drinks. As she *comes* to my row, I *am* unaware that my foot it slightly in the aisle. Then, we *hit* some turbulence, and the cart *slams* against my foot!" All italicized words in the previous

with the present tense for vividness sake. Because of the turbulent inner conflict in these verses, there is hardly a better passage in the New Testament for him to be using the present tense for vividness.

Third, and maybe most important of all, if Paul is speaking rhetorically for someone else in Romans 7:7–25, then his present-tense verbs in 7:14–25 have no bearing whatsoever on when this struggle took place because it is hypothetical. Certainly many Jews have faced this internal ambivalence in the past, but if Paul is speaking representatively for others, then the turmoil of 7:14–25 is representative and timeless.[77] Thus, if Paul is speaking rhetorically here, then the present-tense argument from the Christian view completely dissolves.

Fourth, because of the variety of uses of the present tense in Greek, it is best not to nitpick at the verb tenses to prove whether a passage is speaking to a current situation or not. Rather, scholars have shown that Greek *adverbs* are often the true telltale sign of the passage's relationship to time.[78] In Romans 7 there are no temporal adverbs in 7:7–25. However, the passage is bookended with two temporal adverbs— *núni* and *nún*[79]—in 7:6 and 8:1, respectively. This is not a coincidence. Paul intentionally addresses his and his readers' current situation under the New Covenant in 7:6 and then returns to their current situation in 8:1. Otherwise, for everything else between (i.e. the entire section of the rhetorical 'I' in 7:7–25), no temporal adverbs exist.[80] Therefore, the section is a timeless representation of life under the Old Covenant.

These four reasons capably demonstrate why it is a misconception that Paul's present-tense verbs in 7:14–25 prove that he is speaking about his current Christian experience. Instead, it is best to conclude that the struggle of 7:7–25 is timeless, and the present tense verbs in 7:14–25 are used to evocatively convey a theoretical event.

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Misconception 5:
Paul's Godly Desires Are Evidence of the Spirit and Fruit

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One of the more troubling misconceptions about Romans 7 is that that the Holy Spirit and righteous fruit-bearing can be found in Romans 7. To evince this, scholars

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sentence are written in the present tense. Such a tactic is natural for modern English speakers even if the event took place in the past. In fact, this is one of the best ways to convey a story evocatively. It is also common practice in English school systems to train students to write their essays in the present tense to communicate in vivid ways. In fact, this writer has been doing this throughout the article by conveying Paul's words in Romans with the present tense, as though what he is saying is happening today. This method helps the reader engage more closely with Paul and his words. It is shame how quickly readers can limit what they think biblical writers can or cannot do when they practice such things all the time!

[77] This is because hypothetical (or theoretical) situations require the present tense because if a future or past tense verb is used (at least in English), it anchors the event in real space and time, and the reader is led to believe that the situation may not be hypothetical.

[78] Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 25.

[79] Gk. νυνὶ and νῦν.

[80] The adverb νυνὶ in 7:17 is a logical, transitional use of the adverb, not temporal. As Moo put it, " 'But now… no longer' is logical, not temporal; it states what must 'now,' in light of the argument of vv. 15–16, 'no longer' be considered true." Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 457.

have claimed that Paul's godly desires in Romans 7 are evidence of the Spirit-filled life[81] marked by fruit and even victory.[82] But this is a misconception because it is only an implication of the passage, not a textual observation.

In fact, the Spirit is not mentioned once in Romans 7:7–25.[83] Some may claim this as an argument from silence fallacy—just because the Spirit is not mentioned in the passage does not mean He is not intended there. While that argument would normally have some warrant here, it actually fails in this case because Paul intentionally bookends 7:7–25 with the Spirit in 7:6 and 8:2.[84] This is a far cry from an argument from silence fallacy. Rather, Paul intentionally bookends the section with the Spirit and leaves Him out of the discussion between these verses because he is contrasting life under the Old Covenant (7:7–25) with life under the New Covenant (7:6; 8:1ff). Even more so, Paul juxtaposes his fleshly nature with "the spiritual" in 7:14, "For we know that the Law is *spiritual*, but I am of *flesh*...." What would normally be a perfect time to champion the indwelling of the Spirit, Paul actually contrasts his flesh with the "spiritual" Law[85] to magnify the need for all people under the Law to partake of the New Covenant. In essence, the people of God cannot fulfill a *spiritual* Law without the *Spirit*.

Yet, some have suggested that the Spirit is working in Paul's upright desires in the passage,[86] such as when he says, "For I joyfully concur with the Law of God in the inner man" (7:22), or "So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the Law of God…" (7:25b). But if the reader is honest with what Romans 7 is saying, such an observation actually reduces the Spirit to the agent of good desire *without* good fruit because, according to the passage, these desires are insufficient to translate into fruit. This actually defies and redefines what the rest of the New Testament says about the Spirit under the New Covenant—that He is first and foremost the agent *of* good fruit (Rom 7:6; 8:3–17; Gal 5:16–26; 2 Pet 1:3–11; 1 John 3:4, 7–8, etc.).

Simply put, many have fallaciously supposed that Romans 7:14–25 is a Christian's story of "sometimes doing good and sometimes doing bad." For instance, some have assumed that 7:18a is a clear implication of the Spirit versus the flesh in the Christian life.[87] But in reality, there is no mention of Paul ever *doing anything good*

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[81] Chamblin, *Paul and the Self*, 175. See also Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 411–12.

[82] Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 114. See also Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 268.

[83] Russell, "Insights from Postmodernism's Emphasis on Interpretative Communities in the Interpretation of Romans 7," 525.

[84] In 7:6 Paul calls to mind the "newness of the Spirit" (καινότητι πνεύματος; a metonym for the New Covenant) by which Christians should walk. In 8:2 he relates the "Law of the Spirit of Life" (ὁ… νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς; i.e. another metonym for the New Covenant) that governs Christian living. These are patently absent from his discussion in 7:7–25.

[85] Mounce, *Romans*, 168.

[86] Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 270.

[87] Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:360–61. Here Paul declares, "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh." The last phrase, "that is, in my flesh" (τοῦτ᾽ ἔστιν ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου) is what some believe is an implication of the Spirit. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 458. In other words, when Paul is walking in the flesh, no good dwells in him, but something good dwells in him when he is walking in the Spirit.

in this passage.[88] He only *desires* to do the good. He is *never* able to bring that desire to fruitful fulfillment. Commentators who make the unfounded claim that Spirit and fruit are implied in 7:18a often ignore Paul's own explanation[89] in 7:18b, "for the *willing* is present in me, but the doing of the good is not." Paul is not making a distinction between the flesh and the Spirit as he does in Galatians 5:16–26 or other similar New Testament passages. It is actually a battle of mind versus flesh (7:25b), not Spirit versus flesh. The former is a battle of the Old Covenant as a believer is left to his own resources (i.e. his mind, will, flesh) to fulfill the Law (e.g., Rom 7:14–25). The latter is a battle of the New Covenant where the believer is granted the Spirit for the producing of righteous fruit (e.g., Gal 5:16–26). This passage is not about good fruit versus bad fruit. It is about good *desires* versus bad fruit.[90] It is willing versus doing (7:18), not good-doing versus bad-doing. It is not victory in defeat under the New Covenant. It is *inability* to produce fruit under the Old Covenant.

The New Testament always boasts that fruit is the evidence of Spirit-filled living, not desire irrespective of fruit (cf. 8:4, 12–13; Gal 5:16–26). But the Christian-view of Romans 7 has regrettably overemphasized Paul's success in loving God and His Law as preeminent in the passage. In reality, the true emphasis of Romans 7 is the frustration and inability to convert godly motives into action. That is why it is a misconception to assume that Spirit and fruit are inherent in the text. Actually, the Spirit is intentionally left out, and fruit-bearing is nowhere to be found.

Misconception 6: Paul Is Enslaved to God

One marquee verse for the Christian view is 7:25b, "So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin."[91] Evidently, Paul must be speaking for the Christian because just as the Christian has been enslaved to righteousness (6:18), so the person in 7:25b is enslaved to God and His Law. But this is a misconception because it misunderstands the distinction between mind and flesh in the passage.

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[88] Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, 290–91.

[89] The explanatory conjunction γὰρ in 7:18b indicates that Paul is further expounding what he means in 7:18a.

[90] In fact, a simple question can be posed that unravels the Christian view of Romans 7—is Paul's godly desires Spirit-driven? If 'No,' then the Christian view has no evidence of support. But if 'Yes,' then why are these desires insufficient to produce fruit? At this point, the Christian view of Romans 7 is placed in a near self-refuting situation. Should the Christian advocate respond by claiming that the godly desires must occur at a different time from his sinful actions, then he should be reminded that Paul's argument rests heavily on the godly desires happening in unison with his ungodly actions; otherwise, he could not conclude, "So no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me" (7:17, 20). Paul's perception of sin as the culprit only makes sense if the desires and deeds happen simultaneously and if Paul has an alibi during the crime (i.e. that he agrees with the Law [7:16] at the time of the sinful deed [7:15, 17]); otherwise, Paul cannot be sure that a law of sin is truly the culprit that imprisons his godly mind (7:23, 25). Paul's godly motives are actually evidence that he is *not* a Christian in this passage, because his godly desires are insufficient for fruit-bearing.

[91] Osborne, "The Flesh Without the Spirit," 25.

As noted in the previous misconception, Paul is not insisting in 7:25b that he sometimes walks in the Spirit and other times walks in the flesh. Rather, he is depicting two different arenas—his mind and his actions. His mind is set upon God, but his actions are set upon sin.[92] Moreover, this misconception overlooks clear terminology of enslavement to sin that is foreign to Christian living. This is demonstrable in four phrases found in 7:14–25 that would otherwise contradict the immediate context of Romans 6–8 if Paul is speaking as a Christian.

First, Paul not only claims that he is unspiritual by contrast of the "spiritual" Law in 7:14a, he also asserts that he is "sold into bondage to sin" (7:14b). The words "sold into bondage" are an interpretative translation of the Greek term πιπράσκω (*pipraskō*), which means "to sell," and in the arena of human slavery as a commercial transaction, the connotation always engenders enslavement[93] and ownership[94] in Scripture. In other words, Paul is illustrating the selling of a human into slavery in 7:14, implying a master-slave relationship.[95] Furthermore, with the perfect tense,[96] Paul insists that the slavery which began in 7:7–12 continues into 7:14 and following. But the Christian has died to the Law (7:4) and has been released from the Law (7:6). He is not "sold into bondage to sin" as 7:14 unequivocally declares. If Paul is speaking as a Christian in 7:14b, then he is contradicting what he made known in 7:4, 6.

Second, Paul elucidates that he is unable to do good in 7:18b, "[F]or the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not." As noted in the previous misconception, Paul is not implying the Spirit in 7:18a, but rather he is contrasting his willing and his doing.[97] There is good that resides in his intentions (7:16, 22, 25b), but there is no good that comes forth from his deeds (i.e. his flesh; 7:15, 18, 19, 23. 25b). Essentially, when seeking to fulfill the Law apart from the New Covenant Paul is unable to do anything good, even though he desires it. But if Paul is speaking as a Christian in 7:18, then it defies what he says about Christians in 8:1–4, that Christians are enabled by the Spirit to fulfill the righteous requirement of the Law.

Third, Paul communicates prisoner-of-war terminology in 7:23 when he says, "[B]ut I see a different law in the members of my body, *waging war* against the law of my mind and making me a *prisoner* of the law of sin which is in my members." The battle is not back and forth skirmishes or a stalemate conflict. Paul is not suggesting that he is slowly gaining traction against sin as he fights for adherence to the

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[92] This is why his enslavement to God and his enslavement to sin can be seen as simultaneous in 7:25b.

[93] Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 461.

[94] Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 454n38.

[95] Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 474.

[96] The verb is written πεπραμένος (*pepramenos*). Since the perfect tense is not as frequent in the New Testament as the present, aorist, future, or imperfect tense, it can be surmised that "there is usually a deliberate choice on the part of the writer." Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 573. In contrast with the aorist and imperfect tenses, the perfect tense implies a past event with an emphasis on its results felt in the present. Ibid., 573–75. Applying this understanding to πεπραμένος (literally, "having been sold") and considering Paul's use of the preposition "under" (*hypo*; ὑπὸ) which follows the verb in 7:14b, Paul stresses the effects of slavery.

[97] Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 459.

Law. Rather, as Moo put it, "the result of the battle between 'the law of sin' and 'the law of my mind' is an unqualified victory for the former…."[98] Though his mind has put up an admirable fight, he learns the harsh reality that has been true all along—he is a prisoner of war, and he can do nothing about it. It is total defeat.[99] He is owned by sin (7:14b). But if Paul is speaking as a Christian in Romans 7, then this would oppose what he will announce four verses later, that the law of the Spirit of life has freed such a person from the law of sin and of death. The wording is not coincidental. The Law of Sin that made Paul a prisoner of war in 7:23 is the same Law of Sin from which Christians are truly freed in 8:2. There is no going back. Once free, always free (cf. John 8:36). Certainly Christians can subjectively *feel* enslaved to sin from time to time, but objectively they will never *be* enslaved again. But Romans 7 is not simply what Paul *feels* is true about his struggles with sin; it is what Paul *knows* is true—he *is* enslaved to sin.

Fourth, Paul is not only enslaved to God with his mind, he is enslaved to sin with his flesh (7:25b). Here Paul concludes and summarizes what he depicted in 7:7–25.[100] His willing is for God, but his doing is for sin. Desire is not converting into fruit. Some scholars seemingly want to emphasize hopefulness in these verses and promote a balance between desiring good and practicing sin in 7:25b.[101] But in reality, Paul intends a pessimistic conclusion because good desire without good fruit is still failure. There is no balance of good versus evil here. It is only good motives obscured (or suppressed) by evil deeds. The same word "serve"[102] governs both actions so that the best Paul can say is that he is internally committed to God. Otherwise, his mind already lost the battle to the law of sin so that he is unable to produce the good (7:23). This same (or similar) root for "serve" is also found in 6:18, 22 and 7:6 where Paul avers that Christians serve God, not only with their intentions, but for the bearing of fruit. But if Paul is speaking as a Christian in 7:25b, then it would stand antithetical to these propositions.

In these four verses (7:14, 18, 23, 25b) Paul portrays a person unambiguously enslaved to sin. His enslavement to God in 7:25b is only that of mind and will. However, the central theme of Romans 7:14–25 is that his mind and will are not translating into fruit. That is *not* the definition of Christian living (cf. John 15:1–8). That is the definition of *inability* under the Old Covenant.

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[98] Ibid., 465.

[99] Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 396.

[100] John D. Harvey, *Romans: Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2017), 186.

[101] Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 298. Mounce, *Romans*, 171.

[102] Gk. δουλεύω.

Misconception 7:
Paul's Godly Desires Are Christocentric[103]

It is easy to suppose that Paul's devout intentions in Romans 7 highlight Christ as the focus. The reasoning goes like this—if Paul is relating a Christian experience, then his godly motives must be the result of the New Covenant gospel.[104] But this is reading into the text what is simply not there. In fact, a careful reading of Romans 7:7–25 reveals that Paul speaks *nothing* of the standard New Testament graces that he regularly communicates in his epistles, such as faith, the gospel, forgiveness, repentance, redemption, reconciliation, hope, mercy, love, peace, grace, the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ.[105] Instead, the reader must prejudice the text with these themes to make this claim. In reality, the words and themes that occur regularly in Romans 7 are the Law (e.g., 7:1, 4, 22, 25b, etc.), death (7:5, 13, 24), sin (7:7, 13, 14, 23, 25b), enslavement (7:5, 14, 23, 25b), inability (7:15, 18, 19), defeat (7:14, 23–24), hopelessness (7:24), and wretchedness (7:24). In essence, this passage is not about godly ambition for Christ, the gospel, or the New Covenant, but rather godly ambition *for the Law* and an inability to fulfill it. This is evident because Paul uses the term 'law' twenty three times in the passage, most of which refer directly to the Old Covenant Law.[106] Unfortunately, many scholars overlook these facts.

Other scholars reinterpret the meaning of 'law' in Romans 7 to maintain the Christian view.[107] But throughout Romans, beginning in 2:12, 'law' has been used exclusively to refer to the Old Covenant Law of Moses (2:12–29; 3:19–21, 27–31; 4:13–16; 5:13, 20; 6:14–15, 19). In fact, while the Law took somewhat of a backseat in Paul's gospel presentation in Romans 4:1–6:13, it was reintroduced in Romans 6:14 to set up for the dense discussion in Romans 7. In 6:14, Paul declares, "For sin

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[103] This writer is using this term differently than the Christocentric hermeneutic expression that has become well-known in modern biblical scholarship. He means it purely in the sense that Paul's desires are centered on Christ, fully aware of His first coming and work.

[104] Mounce, *Romans*, 170.

[105] There is one exception to this fact. In 7:25a Paul exclaims, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν). The phrase "Jesus Christ our Lord" is the only instance in 7:7–25 in which Paul mentions any New Testament theme. However, as noted in Misconception 3, his use of 'our' in "Jesus Christ *our* Lord" is not coincidental. The fact that Paul implements a first-person plural for only the third time in the passage (see 7:7, 14 for the other two; however perhaps 7:14 is a first-person singular; see footnote 67) suggests that Paul is stepping out of character in the rhetorical 'I' of 7:7–25. The instance of 'our' here makes little sense otherwise. In other words, the 'I' of 7:7–25 knows nothing yet of Jesus Christ. Rather, Paul's praise in 7:25a is a momentary stepping out of character to thank God *with his readers* for the New Covenant. In fact, this explains why Paul subsequently says, "So then… *I myself*..." in 7:25b. He infers to his readers that he is stepping back into character one more time by drawing attention to the first-person singular with two pronouns "I myself" (αὐτὸς ἐγὼ). Contra R. St. John Parry, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, CGTSC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921), 107.

[106] Probably eighteen of these instances refer directly to the Law of Moses (i.e. the Old Covenant), and five act as paronomasia on the word to personify sin and the mind (7:21, 23 (3x), 25b). See also the play on the word 'law' in 8:2 with the "law of the Spirit of life" (i.e. the New Covenant).

[107] Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 187.

shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace."[108] Reversing the logic, Paul insists that when God's people are under Law, sin is their master. But if they are under grace, they are free from sin (cf. 7:4, 6; 8:2). Therefore, according to the reasoning of 6:14, while Israel (both believing and unbelieving) was under the Law—without the inauguration of the New Covenant and the Spirit—all Israelites were mastered by sin. It was not until the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that the New Covenant rescued Israel from the Law and placed them under grace (Gal 4:4–5).[109] That is why Paul portrays a frustrating situation for those under the Law in Romans 7. It is a life marked by enslavement to sin with no access to the Spirit for the bearing of fruit.

Simply put, it is easy to rummage the passage for application before ascertaining its meaning. Modern readers peruse Romans 7 wearing Gentile-Christian glasses that conform the meaning of the passage to something more applicable to the reader rather than conforming the reader to the passage.[110] As Russell put it, "Our interest in the west in the internal struggle of the persons represented in this passage has caused us to make rather facile leaps in interpreting key terms within the passage."[111] In other words, passion for the Law in Romans 7 is reinterpreted as passion for the gospel. When this misconception is corrected, the reader should wonder why Paul is singularly trying to fulfill the Law in the first place? Paul's warning in Galatians 4:21 and 5:1 would be more apt for the person in Romans 7, "Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?… It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."

Therefore, it is a misconception to assume that Paul's pious ambitions in Romans 7 are informed by New Covenant graces, such as knowledge of Christ's first-coming ministry or the power of the Spirit for sanctification. Actually, his desires are *exclusively* attentive toward the Law in this passage, which would be strange, if not dangerous, for someone who has been freed from the Law (Rom 7:4, 6; Gal 5:1).

Misconception 8:
The Reader Is Asking the Right Question

As noted at the beginning of this article, most people approach Romans 7 with the question, "Is Paul speaking as a Christian or not?" But this question approaches the text seeking the reader's intent, not the author's. When this perspective takes a hold, it becomes the driving force that obfuscates the reader's judgment. He sees what

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[108] The phrases "under Law" and "under grace" are metonyms for the Old Covenant and the New Covenant eras, respectively.

[109] Certainly all of God's people are saved by grace, but being "under grace" refers not to the means by which a person is saved, but to the era of God's redemption plan.

[110] Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 225–26. In fact, if the reader is patient to discover the true meaning of the passage, often he will find the application far more rewarding than the superficial help he initially desires.

[111] Russell, "Insights from Postmodernism's Emphasis on Interpretative Communities in the Interpretation of Romans 7," 523.

he wants to see and ignores or reinterprets anything in the passage that does not conform to it. But a careful, impartial approach to the passage will note that whether Paul is speaking as a Christian or not is a secondary query to the more prominent issue, "Is Paul speaking as someone under the Old Covenant or the New Covenant."

The surrounding context of Paul's representation of Jews under the Law in 7:7–25 is intentionally saturated with terminology that signifies the Old Covenant and New Covenant. Phrases such as newness of the Spirit (7:6) versus oldness of the letter (7:6), law of the Spirit of life (8:2) versus law of sin and of death (8:2), and under grace (6:14) versus under Law (6:14) are just a few of these indicators. Other concepts, such as the bookending uses of "now" and the Spirit in 7:6 and 8:1–2 reflect a life under grace (8:1–17) in contrast to a life under the Law (7:7–25). In other words, Romans 7 is not so much about a contemporary issue of a converted or unconverted Christian, but more about an Old Covenant era no longer valid for the modern Christian. By doing this, Paul is not avoiding application for modern readers. Rather, he is educating his audience and all future Christians as to why the Law, though holy and pure (7:12), has no part to play in a Christian's sanctification. He is growing the reader's appreciation for the New Covenant and the Spirit—blessings that Old Testament Israel did not possess.

In fact, so clear is this Old Covenant versus New Covenant theme that Paul actually provided a blueprint for this discussion in 7:4–6. Several grammatical similarities between 7:4 and 6:1–23, 7:5 and 7:7–25, and 7:6 and 8:1–11 indicate that Paul deliberately summarizes where he came from in Romans 6 (7:4) and where he is going in the rest of Romans 7–8 (7:5, 6).[112] By addressing the necessity of fruit in the Christian life in Romans 6, Paul recaps this in 7:4 before prefacing the rest of Romans 7 and 8 about the contrast between the Old Covenant (7:5) and the New Covenant (7:6) in 7:7–25 and 8:1–17, respectively.[113] In other words, the grammatical similarities elucidate that if 7:5 is about the Old Covenant experience, then 7:7–25 is intended to be so as well.

But what is even more of interest are two characteristics that define the Christian in 7:4 and 7:6. The Christian has died to the Law "to bear fruit for God" (7:4) and "to serve in newness of the Spirit" (7:6). These two purpose statements set the boundaries for true Christianity for this context—Christians bear fruit and walk by the Spirit. But surprisingly neither of these concepts can be found in 7:7–25. This is no coincidence. These two features are patently missing because Paul intentionally left them out. He is not describing the Christian experience marked by fruit and Spirit in 7:7–25. Instead, he is referring to the frustrating aspects of life under the Old Covenant before these blessings were available to God's people.

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[112] Grammatical terms and themes shared between 7:4 and 6:1–7:3 include *death to sin* (6:2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11; 7:2–3), *association with Christ's body* (6:3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12–13), and *fruit* (6:21, 22). Likewise 7:5 and 7:7–25 share terms and themes, including *flesh* (7:14, 25b), *passions* (7:7, 8, 15, 16, 18, 19, 22, 25b), *aroused by the Law* (7:8, 17, 20, 23), *working* or *producing* (7:8, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20), and *death* (7:10, 13, 24). Finally, comparing 7:6 and 8:1–11, grammatical terms and themes include the word "*now*" (8:1), *release* or *freedom* (8:2), *serve* (8:15; contrast with 7:23, 25b), and *Spirit* (8:2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16).

[113] Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 420.

Essentially Romans 7 is the Old Covenant; Romans 8 is the New Covenant. Those who believe that Paul is speaking as a Christian must downplay the stark contrast Paul is making between the two chapters. As Russell aptly related, "We have entered a new covenant and thereby a new era in God's program. Our lives are not to be characterized primarily by human frailty but by divine enablement."[114] Thus, Romans 7 can be summarized by one word—*inability*. Under the Law of the Old Covenant, man is unable to be all that God wants him to be. Praise the Lord for the New Covenant!

Summary and Implications

Now that the eight misconceptions have been addressed, a brief summary of them is in order, followed by a few vital implications for the reader's thinking when it comes to this passage.

First, it is a misconception to claim that Paul is speaking as a Christian in Romans 7 just because he is in the "Sanctification Section" of Romans. Actually, the rhetorical questions in Romans 3–11 plot the trajectory of Paul's argument which can backtrack to a time before Christ (e.g., 7:7–12). Second, Paul is not speaking to Gentiles primarily in Romans 7, but he delimits his audience to the minority of Jewish readers starting in 7:1. Third, Paul speaks rhetorically for Jews under the Law in 7:7–25, not about his own situation, and this was proved historically, contextually, stylistically, exceptionally, rhetorically, intentionally, and grammatically. Fourth, since Paul speaks representatively in this passage, the present tense is the most appropriate way to vividly portray a representative experience for those struggling with sin under the Law. He is not using the present tense to indicate that this is his current experience. Fifth, the Holy Spirit and fruit-bearing are intentionally mentioned in 7:4–6 and 8:2–4, but missing everywhere in between because Paul is signifying that he is speaking about life without the Spirit in 7:7–25. Sixth, Paul is not enslaved to God in his deeds, but only in his mind. Instead, terminology in the passage demonstrates that he is externally enslaved to sin (7:14, 18, 23, 25b) and that his mind is stifled (or buried) by this slavery. Even if he desires good, he is still failing because he is not bearing fruit. In fact, how ironic it is that his godly desires are not enough to convert into fruit. Seventh, Paul is not conveying godly motives for Christ, the gospel, and other New Testament graces in this passage. Rather, he is seeking adherence to the Law of Moses, which is foreign to New Testament Christian living. Eighth, the proper question is not whether Paul is speaking as a Christian or a non-Christian, but whether he is speaking as someone under the Old Covenant or under the New Covenant.

Having summarized the contents of the article, there are a few implications that cannot be ignored, especially as it relates to the Christian view. It is important that the reader carefully consider these matters as they affect his view of sanctification. These are briefly related as follows.

First, those who believe that Paul is speaking for Christians in Romans 7 must conclude that the Christian abides in an awkward tension between Romans 7 and

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[114] Russell, "Insights from Postmodernism's Emphasis on Interpretative Communities in the Interpretation of Romans 7," 525.

Romans 8, even though Romans 8:2 has already proclaimed freedom for the Christian. The Christian aspires to chapter 8, but regrettably, he will remain in chapter 7 for the rest of his life. So a contradiction remains—he is imprisoned and enslaved as Romans 7:23 and 7:25b insist, but he is also free as Romans 6:18, 22 and 8:2 declare. He is unable to bear fruit according to Romans 7:18, and yet he is somehow able to bear fruit according to Romans 7:6 and 8:4. But for those who believe that Paul is speaking for the Old Testament saint, they completely avoid this contradiction.

Second (and this does not apply to all in the Christian camp), very often Paul, not Christ, becomes the standard of godliness for those who are convinced he is speaking as the everyday Christian in Romans 7. Too often, many Christians find solace in the fact that someone as godly as Paul struggled so powerfully with sin as he does in Romans 7:14–25. Rather than being an impetus to righteous living, this notion actually makes Christians more comfortable in their sin. In this way, the person may feel better because he is in "good company" with Paul, but the situation before God has not changed. Sin has not been addressed. In fact, it is often not dealt with as quickly or effectively because Paul evidently had a hard time dealing with his sin quickly and effectively. Instead of aspiring to holiness, the Christian almost unconsciously reduces the standard from Christ to Paul. One does not need to travel far before he hears a Christian speaking about how encouraging Romans 7 is because Paul mightily struggled with sin. But that is the opposite of sanctification. Any time Christians become more comfortable in their sin because they see someone else that they deem more spiritual than they struggling with his sin, they are going the wrong direction.

Third, if the position that Romans 7 is about the everyday Christian experience is adopted, then there is a subtle lie that the Holy Spirit can only aid in victory over *some* sins, not all, and this becomes the humdrum tune of the Christian life. So, Christians inevitably neglect the powerful promise found in Galatians 5:16, which insists that when God's people "walk by the Spirit… you will *never* carry out the desire of the flesh." Or as 2 Peter 1:10 says, "For as long as you practice these things, you will *never* stumble."[115] As Romans 8 announces, the Spirit was given so that Christians *never have to* walk in the flesh again. It is vital that the church proclaim this truth to its people, otherwise they will always settle for a lesser standard of righteousness that is not worthy of the calling they have been called to (cf. Eph 4:1).

Fourth, if Romans 7 is not the Christian view, but the Old Covenant experience under the Law, then the onus resides on the Christian today to start walking in righteousness today, because he has all the resources given to him to abide in the Spirit and resist the flesh *immediately*. Certainly to maintain a life of walking in the Spirit is not easy and requires discipline, training, and perseverance. Sinful habits are hard to break because Christians have conditioned themselves to give in to temptation. But because they have the Spirit, they *always* have the freedom to choose what is pleasing to God right now, and they will spend the rest of their lives learning how to

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[115] In both of these passages, this writer translated the word "never" because Paul and Peter use double Greek negative particles (οὐ μὴ) to reinforce how impossible it is for the Christian to walk in sin when he is walking in obedience by the Spirit. Emphasis in translation mine.

sustain a walk in the Spirit without breaking stride.[116] Christians can never use Romans 7 as an excuse and claim, "Well, inevitably I *will* be defeated (or enslaved) by sin from time to time." Anytime they concede this excuse, they deny that they *always* have a conscious choice to start walking in the Spirit and thus avoid the flesh. They subtly negate that they are responsible for their choices to sin. They ignore that God has granted them immediate ability to resist temptation today (2 Pet 1:3–4). In other words, *it is never inevitable to sin when a believer has the Spirit.* This truth is not taught enough in today's churches.

Fifth, the Christian view of Romans 7 defines a Christian according to desire, not action. This is dangerous because it promotes the idea that godly fruit is not a necessary by-product of being a Christian, only desire is. The hyper-grace (or free-grace) movement that is systemic in churches today insists that having strong affections and feelings for God is all that Christians really need to be Christian. Obedience is semi-optional at best, or often it is regarded as hard-nosed legalism and too behavior-focused. For those in this camp, Romans 7 is one of the primary proof-texts for this kind of thinking. If Paul is a Christian in Romans 7, then the best one can say about Christians from this passage is that they have strong passions for God *without* the ability to obey Him. But the church today cannot have it both ways. Either Romans 7 teaches the Christian view and that being a Christian is strictly defined by good desire, not godly fruit, or the case for the Christian in Romans 7 is weak and unsustainable.

Sixth, and finally, as Russell aptly remarked, "If this understanding of the passage is correct, then the experience of Rom 7:7–25 is not worthy to be brought under the banner of the new covenant."[117] In other words, the themes of total defeat and inability as described in Romans 7 do not belong in the New Covenant discussion. This is not to negate that Christians struggle with sin on a daily basis. Many New Testament passages are clear that Christians have challenging struggles with temptation and sin (Gal 5; 1 John 1:8, 10). Even so, there are many genuine Christians that can become enraptured by sins and feel addicted and enslaved (Gal 6:1). But *feeling* enslaved and *being* enslaved are two different things. What Paul is describing in Romans 7 is not the feeling of enslavement, but the objective reality of being enslaved. It is a passage that is devoid of the Spirit (7:14), defeating (7:14b), fruitless (7:18), imprisoning (7:23), enslaving (7:25b), and hopeless (7:24). Such a portrayal as found in this passage more disgraces the New Covenant than provides a justification for it. The Christian who feels enslaved to his sin has hope to start walking in obedience today, unlike the Old Testament saint under the Law as described in Romans 7. Therefore, as a final warning: The reader must be careful how he perceives what Paul is saying, lest his New Covenant vision obscure the truth of this Old Covenant text.

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[116] That is why 1 John 1:8 and 1:10 insist that Christians will not be perfect in this life, because, as Galatians 5:25 implies, the Christian's process of sanctification is a lifelong lesson of keeping in-step (στοιχῶμεν) with the Spirit through the unique trials and temptations that they all face. Yet, Christians *always* have the unhindered choice and ability to do what is right because the Spirit *always* dwells within them.

[117] Russell, "Insights from Postmodernism's Emphasis on Interpretative Communities in the Interpretation of Romans 7," 527.

THE REFORMATION'S "MACEDONIAN CALL"
TO AFRICA—THE LONG WAY AROUND

Dr. David Beakley, Academic Dean at Christ Seminary;
Director of TMAI-Africa Region; Sr. Pastor, Christ Baptist Church

Johann Odendaal, Lecturer at Christ Seminary

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate how the influence of the Reformation came to Africa. The article is divided into two sections. The first section explains how the Reformation was stopped in North Africa through two problems: indigenization lacking doctrine, and doctrine lacking indigenization. The second section details the open door for the Reformation through the German Baptist mission work in South Africa. Finally, the article concludes with recommendations for creating sustainable mission work through a focus on strong discipleship model along with a commitment to indigenization of church leadership.

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Introduction

After the church and the New Covenant was inaugurated in Acts 2, the next big kingdom activity was growth. The Lord saw fit to take this infant bride and grow it to maturity by spreading first through Jerusalem, and then to Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. In essence, the next big event was missions.

In Scripture we can identify two major mission events involving the apostle Paul: the Macedonia call to not go north but west, and Paul's trip to Rome. Both of these had a significant impact on the spread of the Gospel, and it was clearly the Lord who directed the flow of the Gospel to specific people groups. Rather than go north to Asia (Acts 16:6–10), Paul concluded that God had called him to preach the Gospel in Macedonia first. The missionary team was pushing for Bithynia (v. 7), but the Spirit of Jesus closed the door. As the team was forced to go west, God provided a vision to direct Paul to Troas, Philippi, and Macedonia. Regarding Paul's trip to Rome, we know from Scripture that if Paul had not appealed to Caesar, he would have been set free while in prison in Caesarea (Acts 26:32). Instead, it was God's plan not to streamline Paul to Rome on a well-funded missionary journey, but rather through a shipwreck and a snakebite. We can say that both of these important missionary endeavors took the long way around from what Paul would have planned.

Since those early mission moments in the 1st century, perhaps the most impactful event in the spreading of the true Gospel was the Protestant Reformation which began in the early part of the 16th century with Martin Luther and others. The theological transformation brought by the Reformation had its beginnings in various cities in Europe championed by various leaders and spread quickly. With cities of great theological heritage in North Africa like Alexandria and Carthage, one would think that the Reformation would accelerate through the continent of Africa—just like Europe. But analogous to the missions endeavors of the apostle Paul, God had another plan. God's plan for Africa was the long way around.

This article will seek to highlight the path of the Reformation in Africa. The focus of the article will be twofold. First, we will explore how the Lord "shut the door" for the Reformation in North Africa before the Reformation took place. Secondly, we will survey the effect of the Reformation on Africa through the country of South Africa, and in particular the work of the German Reformed Baptists.[1] Finally, after discussing the methods and principles employed both in the region of North Africa and the country of South Africa, we will draw some applications with a recommended "Way Forward" for continued missions work in Africa.

The Closing of the Door to North Africa

The church in North Africa rose quickly from the first two centuries. In particular, we can track the growth and demise of the church from two ancient cities; Alexandria and Carthage.

The Coptic Church—Indigenization Lacking Doctrine

In Acts 2:10 we see many Egyptian Jews in Jerusalem celebrating Pentecost. In all probability these Greek-speaking, Hellenized Jews returned from Jerusalem back to Alexandria in Egypt and they planted the church in North Africa. During this time, the city of Alexandria played a prominent role in the development of the church's theology. The theological mindset in Alexandria revolved around two main lines of thinking: The first is that of Clement, Origen, and Arius, who were influenced by Neo-Platonistic Greek philosophy, which prioritized the allegorical use of Scripture in almost every sense in discerning spiritual truth. The second line of theological thinking was that of Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria. This resulted in the formation of two distinct Christian churches in Egypt: Hellenized "urban" churches in cities like Alexandria, and more indigenous churches in rural Egypt—like the Coptic Church.

The word "Copt" is derived from the ancient Egyptian words "HAK KA PTAH," which translates to "the spirit of Ptah," the Egyptian god of creation. Coptic would

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[1] It is acknowledged up front that there have been many commendable people and denominations that labored to bring the Gospel to South Africa over the past four centuries. The focus of this article is on the work of Hugo Gutsche, a German Reformed Baptist who followed a strong biblical approach to missions and church planting. The result of Gutsche's work has not only produced much fruit, but it has produced fruit that remains.

then refer to anything Egyptian.[2] As persecution arose in Egypt,[3] Christians fled to the interior of the country. During this exodus, they spread the Gospel in the Coptic language and planted churches wherever they went.[4] This resulted in a rapid growth of Christians from the non-Greek speaking segments of the population, which created a strong market for Bible translations in the vernacular.[5]

The Scriptures were available by AD 300 in all the Coptic dialects of this region,[6] and in the fourth century Coptic became the language used by the monks. Within a short span it became the liturgical language of the Coptic Church. The growth of the Coptic Church created a hunger for Bible translations and from the third to the eighth century a large number of Bible translations appeared in the Coptic dialects of this region: Sahidic, Bohairic and Bashmuric. As a result the church grew fast and the Christian faith gained a stronghold in Egypt.[7]

After a century of growth, in the middle of the 5th century, a major dispute about the exact nature of Jesus Christ arose which involved the Coptic Church. Nestorius (bishop of Constantinople from 428) supported the view that Jesus Christ had two distinct natures, and that Mary, the mother of Jesus, must be *theotokos*, the bearer of God. Cyril of Alexandria strongly refuted this view at the Council of Chalcedon resulting in the Chalcedonian Definition of "two natures and one person" of Christ. In part due to political and ecclesiastical differences, the Coptic Church split from the Imperial Eastern Church and Cyril, which brought about an important development in Egyptian Christianity: *indigenization*.

The Coptic Church of Egypt became increasingly indigenized after the church Council of Chalcedon in 451. They were proudly Coptic, and their theological controversies and disputes did not happen outside their political and ethnic convictions and origins. They were proudly Coptic and proud of their leaders, like Cyril of Alexandria, who was fluent in the Copt language.

By the strong presence of the Scriptures in the Coptic dialects, the Coptic Church was able to retain its independence and to continue a ministry to its members during the difficult centuries of Muslim invasion that would follow.[8] Even though their numbers were heavily reduced because evangelism was forbidden, even now today 12% of Egyptians still belong to the Coptic Church. There are currently about fourteen million Coptic Christians in this region, and this is mainly due to the presence of Coptic leadership. Because of its local control, the church had a legal status. Their own patriarchs directed the ministries of the church apart from external influence or

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[2] G. J. Pillay and J. W. Hofmeyr, *Perspectives on Church History, an Introduction for South African Readers* (Pretoria: Haum, 1991), 42.

[3] This is the persecution of the Christian church during the 2nd and 3rd centuries from the time of Emperor Severus (193–211) to Emperor Diocletian (284–305).

[4] Peter Falk, *The Growth of the Church in Africa* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 57.

[5] Mark Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 35.

[6] J. H. Greenlee, "Versions of the Bible, Medieval and Modern" in *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 875. Also see Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 79–81.

[7] Shaw, *Kingdom of God in Africa*, 35–37.

[8] Falk, *Growth of the Church in Africa*, 70–71.

control. The use of a Coptic Bible and the unity of the church under Coptic leadership helped the Coptic Church to survive twelve centuries of Muslim domination. This resulted in Egyptian Christians nurturing a loyalty towards their church—a loyalty admired even by their later Muslim rulers.[9]

Despite the onslaught of Islam in North Africa, the Coptic Church resisted the cultural, social, economic, and physical pressure of the Moors for over 12 centuries. In fact, the Coptic Church was highly influential in securing a permanent Christian foothold in other countries like Ethiopia, where until the 20th century, the head of the Ethiopian church was a Copt appointed by the Egyptian church.[10] Essentially all other churches in North Africa succumbed to the Islamic invasion, and were either snuffed out or its nominal believers converted to Islam. It is the Coptic Church members who were grounded in their faith due to owning a translation of the Bible in their vernacular, and having established, local indigenized Copt leadership.

As we have seen, the Coptic Church was strong in having its own Bible translation and its own indigenous leadership. But, the church was restricted from growth from both without and within. From without, the civil authorities forbade the practice of evangelism, so there was very limited sharing of the faith. From within, there was a failure to continue to train local leaders, and the church fell into a more ritualistic and liturgical religion.

This lack of theological training of young leaders caused Coptic Christianity to adopt a syncretistic practice of mingling the Gospel of the resurrected Savior with the local Egyptian legend of Osiris.[11] Part of this can be traced to theological decisions taken during the early years that caused them to veer from orthodoxy. The church had strong discipleship available from Athanasius of Alexandria, who spoke the Coptic language, yet after their turn towards Monasticism in the 5th century, they wrongly rejected the Council of Chalcedon thinking the council was opposed to their hero Cyril of Alexandria. This led to the acceptance of monophysitism,[12] which grew strongly and led to the demise of Chalcedonian Christianity in the region, which held to Jesus Christ having two distinct natures in perfect union within one body.

The theological break was critical to the future of the Coptic Church because it alienated itself from the Western church and became totally inward looking. The Coptic Church focused only on the Coptic people, and did not reach out to the peoples of the West, North, and South. As a result, the church grew stale, ritualistic, and even nationalistic. Doctrine was not as important as tradition. Indigenization became an end rather than a means, and superseded doctrine as the chief pillar of the church. The result is a powerfully indigenized church that is decaying from the disease of self-reflection and diluted theology.

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[9] Pillay and Hofmeyr, *Perspectives on Church History*, 46.

[10] Ibid., 50.

[11] Falk, *Growth of the Church in Africa*, 35.

[12] The main argument of monophysitism is that Christ had one nature only. Many Coptic theologians today deny monophysitism, but also reject Chalcedon. But it is clear from history that the rural churches of Egypt did accept monophysitism due to their break from the "imperial" edicts of the Western church. National and ecclesiastical politics played a large role in the theological decision by the Coptic Church.

Roman North Africa—Doctrine Lacking Indigenization

During the early part of the fourth century Christianity was firmly rooted in North Africa, and by the fifth century Egypt was considered a Christian country. Yet, notwithstanding the rise of the Coptic Church, the church in North Africa at large had an inherent weakness. It was not a truly African church because its members were from the Roman-Greek middle classes, who lived apart from the indigenous peoples.[13] As a result the Punic and Berber-speaking people of this region were superficially Christianized—they "became Christian only to the degree that they became Latinized and that the Latin language was the sole vehicle of Christian preaching."[14]

The main theological leaders in this region were Tertullian, Cyprian and Augustine. Tertullian's greatest impact on African Christianity was in his being a champion of holiness. He declared war against spiritual mediocrity, and taught the idea that Christians should live lives distinct from the world. Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage and a student of Tertullian, advanced this thought and shifted the burden of holiness from people to priest.[15] Augustine wrote *The City of God* in response to the fall of Rome, and presented the true hope for Christians which was in the coming City of God rather than the worn and doomed City of Man. Like Tertullian and Cyprian, he expanded the holiness tradition by showing that wherever God-centered love is shown, this demonstrates a witness to the true kingdom of God. Even today some consider Augustine "..between Paul the Apostle and Luther the Reformer, the greatest the Christian Church possessed."[16] Augustine's theological influence changed the course of history. His teaching gave expression to monergism. And it was monergism that would identify the theology of John Calvin during the Reformation.

Needless to say, the Roman-cultured church in North Africa had excellent theological leadership. The question, then, is why did the church not survive in Roman North Africa as it did in Egypt and its surroundings during the Muslim invasions of Africa? The answer is not lack of purity in doctrine, but lack of indigenization.

The population of North Africa was divided into three distinct cultural groups: the Berbers, Punic, and the Roman people. The aboriginal people were the Berbers (Lybians), and the Punic people were descendants of the Phoenicians, who had colonized the lands in the 9th century BC.[17] In BC 146 Rome conquered Carthage and colonized it as a Roman province, bringing many Latin-speaking immigrants to make Africa their new home. Following the normal process of colonization, the Romans immediately established themselves as the upper class. As Rome poured into North Africa, Christianity was then introduced to the people of North Africa through the colonization process. Even with the expansion of Christianity, there was no economic

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[13] G. C. Oosthuizen, *Post Christianity in Africa* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 1.

[14] K. S. Latourette, *The First Five Centuries* (New York: Harper, 1937), 93.

[15] Shaw, *Kingdom of God in Africa*, 47.

[16] Ibid., 114.

[17] Ibid., 41.

or social impact on society. An indigenous person still had to become culturally integrated with the Romans to have social and financial status.

The three faces of Africa were in tumult, and especially in the city of Carthage. This great city of the Roman Empire was completely razed by the Roman army, yet it was raised from the dead and brought to life by the veterans of the Roman army. But the city had a divided soul. On one side, there was a strong desire for religion through the rise of Christianity, and on the other side was a society that exemplified man in his darkest moments.[18] There were not only a multitude of Christian churches but also many, many temples dedicated to the idol gods of the time with Punic and Latin names. It was this city in which young Augustine lived and developed his theology. And despite the existence of the Latin upper-class, the majority of the people spoke Berber or Punic.[19]

Because of class distinction (and often rejection), the Berbers hated the Romans especially for their heavy taxation and disregarded their social and cultural needs. Many did become Christians but they did not join the Catholic Church, but rather joined the Donatist movement.[20] They wanted their society to be free from the Roman church and even turned against Augustine. The rich estate owners and even Catholic clergy were attacked and the state suppressed it with the sanction of Augustine.

The church in North Africa failed to address the needs of the rural Berbers of this area by not producing an African liturgy or a Punic or Berber translation of the Bible. Furthermore, the church failed to address the social needs of the rural Berbers by identifying with the Roman culture which the Berbers hated and resisted. To be truly Christian was to be Latin or "Western." Finally, the church not only failed to allow the indigenous rural Berbers to be part of the ecclesiastical structure, it also failed to penetrate the nomadic tribes of the mountains.[21] The church had no concern to provide a Berber translation of the Bible and insisted that the Berber and Punic people adopt the new Roman culture as being "Christian."[22] The lack of Gospel penetration was always present, and was especially evident when the Vandals attacked Carthage: the Berbers sided with the attackers.

When Islam invaded North Africa in 697, Carthage fell to the Arabs. It was quite astonishing how many Berber "Christian" groups had remained transformationally untouched by the Gospel and embraced Islam without hesitation. The reason that Islam succeeded here where it failed to enslave the Coptic people is that the church failed to accept and implement indigenization. The lack of numerous Berbers in the church seems to indicate that the leaders saw no need to use the Berber language. No passage of Scripture and no prayer has ever been found written in the Berber tongue

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[18] Ibid., 42.

[19] Johannes Van Oort, "Van Vergilius en Mani tot de Catholica: Augustinus' oorspronklijke Spirituaaliteit," in *Augustiniana Neerlandica: Aspecten van Augustinus' Spiritualiteit en haar doorwerking*, ed. P. Van Geest and J. Van Oort (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 13.

[20] The Donatist movement was Christian sect that had a strong focus on holiness. It was named after the Christian Berber bishop Donatus Magnus.

[21] Pillay and Hofmeyr, *Perspectives on Church History*, 61.

[22] Falk, *Growth of the Church in Africa*, 85.

or in the Punic language.[23] Even though the North African church was blessed with tremendous thinkers and theologians, those men (like Augustine) saw no use in moving away from a Latin Bible to a Bible in the vernacular. In addition, since the church began with almost all Latin-speaking Italian immigrants, the church and its patriarchs assumed Christianity was intertwined with Latin culture. With such an emphasis on holiness from Tertullian to Augustine, the misguided presupposition was that holiness "looked" Latin. The Berbers and the Punics needed to adjust from their "pagan" ways, practices, and speech to truly accept the Gospel and its transforming power.

The last straw that broke the back of the North African church was the draining of its leadership. Without leaders the church became rudderless. This was a critical mistake, and it might have been driven by nationalistic pride—especially when that nationalism was bound up in perceived Christianity, like the Roman church and Roman government. Almost a millennia later, Calvin saw this problem during the Roman Catholic persecution, and encouraged the pastors to train up local leadership to tend the flock when the pastors were imprisoned or martyred.

It is true that the Western church owes much to Africa. The ancient church of North Africa still captures our imagination. We wonder about the rapid growth and expansion, but we cannot help being amazed as to how quickly it almost disappeared. Statistics have revealed that the number of Christians in North Africa decreased from 8 million in AD 500 to 5 million by 1000. This near 50% reduction was then compounded by further reductions to 2.5 million by 1200, and then again to only 1.5 million by the time of the Reformation.

Even with the great theologians Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine—men who were Africans, the North African church could not stand against the rise of Islam. They had very strong theological doctrine, yet their practice—one could almost say how they should practice love and unity—was almost non-existent. In the early church in North Africa the traditions of Europe and Africa met one another,[24] yet it was the traditions of Europe that rejected the people of Africa while at the same time offering a Gospel of transformation—as long as that transformation looked and sounded European and Latin.

The Open Door to Africa through the Work
of the Reformed Baptists in South Africa

The Protestant Reformation hit the shores of South Africa on April 6, 1652 with the arrival of three ships at the Cape in Table Bay commanded by Jan van Riebeeck, whose mission was to set up a resupply station for the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compajnie (Dutch East India Company—VOIC). From the start, van Riebeeck was recognized as the father of the nation of South Africa, and his image has appeared on stamps and currency from the 1940s until 1980.[25] On this assignment was William

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[23] John Baur, *2000 Thousand Years of Christianity in Africa* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2009), 29–30.

[24] Steven Paas, *Christianity in Eurafrica: A History if the Church in Europe and Africa* (Wellington, South Africa: Christian Literature Fund, 2016), 292.

[25] Peter Hammond, *Sketches from South African History* (Cape Town: The Reformation Society, 2016), 3.

Wylant, who was the spiritual comforter of the people (about 90 people who lived in tents). Although there was no ordained minister in the group, and the sailors and soldiers were of various nationalities, van Riebeeck ruled with an iron fist. He demanded strict observance of a single service on Sundays (two services were not allowed because of the demanding nature of the weekly work). Some seven years later, the first permanent minister arrived at the Cape and began baptizing the children.

The religious environment at the Cape was hardly one of missionary work, much less true spiritual transformation. One of the main reasons for this was the soporific theology that was transported from the Netherlands. The slowly numbing theology of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands was effected by three main factors:[26]

1. Cartesianism (from the Roman Catholic René Descartes) had significant negative influence on their theology through the introduction of rationalism.
2. A strong brand of Covenant Theology, taught by Johannes Cocceius, which embraced an allegorical interpretation of Scripture.
3. An extreme loyalty to Reformed confessions of faith, which developed into doctrinal orthodoxy—which moved the people away from the authority of Scripture.

With this "corporate" theology exported from the home country, and a mission of extracting profits from Africa and colonizing its vast and arable land, it is apparent why there would be little interest in missions work. Yet, all was not lost. The writings of the pietistic "oude schrijvers" (old authors) of the Second Reformation spoke of human depravity, the sovereignty of God, and the predestining grace of God in the work of man. They preached about a personal commitment to Christ, and like the prophets of old—lamented the unspiritual state of the nation. This had a profound effect on the thinking of the Afrikaner population in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[27]

Help Arrives

The establishment of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in South Africa might give the false impression that they were the dominant religious and missional group in South Africa. As God saw fit, there were many others who were led to reach the African people, such as; the French Huguenots, the Moravians, and the Baptists. And, before there could be a true missional effort in this land that was new to the Reformation, there must first be doctrinal clarity and sincerity in devotion.

In a similar fashion of how He moved Israel to Egypt for protection, God providentially cared for the French Calvinists by sending them to South Africa. In October 1685, the Edict of Nantes, which provided some religious freedom for Protestants in a mostly Roman Catholic France was revoked by King Louis XIV. This led to an

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[26] Pillay and Hofmeyer, *Perspectives on Church History*, 12.

[27] Ibid., 12.

exodus of sorts of the true Christians out of France,[28] where some emigrated to the Netherlands, and many fled to South Africa. These French Christians were all of the Reformed faith, and staunchly Calvinists. And, unlike their Dutch predecessor, their influence did not remain limited to the Cape, but was important for the whole of South Africa.[29]

The Huguenots assimilated well with the Dutch settlers, and even though they were poor, they were excellent farmers and artisans and helped create the newly formed nation through the hard work and good will that came with their Calvinism and Reformed faith.[30] By 1730, they were singled out as the hardest working congregation in the country, and were very focused on their spiritual growth. The Huguenot minister, Pierre Simond re-rhymed the Psalms of David and published *Les Veilles Afriquaines ou les Pseaumes de David Mis en Verse Francois*, which was published in Amsterdam in 1704, and is possible the first book written in South Africa.[31] This work was a very important contribution to the Reformed Theology of South Africa, which influenced the versified Psalms of Clement Marot and Theodore de Béze.[32] In particular, his re-rhyming of Psalm 8:4 was critical in keeping the words "Son of Man" in the French translation (which had been lost).[33]

After almost a half-century of a near-comatose Reformed faith in South Africa that was bound by cultural and economic pressures, the Huguenots were a shot of adrenaline to the Dutch Reformed Church. Overall, the Dutch Reformed Church would have been much poorer in sound principles, and completely devoid of practical application had it not been for these brave yet confident sojourners in the faith.[34] Even though there was not much effort to evangelize the indigenous people, the core doctrine of the faith was revitalized among the small colony that was forming.

The First Reformational Missionaries

The first serious missionary work for the Gospel and the effects of the Reformation in the Cape was through the Moravians, who arrived some 200 years after Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door at the church in Wittenberg. Before the formation of various mission societies in the late 1700s like the London Missionary Society (LMS) and Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), a German missionary from the Herrnhutters (or Moravians) established the first mission station in Genadendal in 1737. Perhaps the largest challenge for Georg Schmidt and his co-workers was the fact that the VOIC was taken up with profit-making, and the Moravian mission was

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[28] The Huguenots were especially motivated to leave France in the light of the earlier St. Bartholomew's Day massacre in August of 1572, where over 30,000 Protestants were murdered, and over 5,000 in Paris alone.

[29] P. Coertzen, "The Contribution of the French Huguenots to Calvinism in South Africa" in *Our Reformation Tradition* (Potchefstroom, South Africa: IFR, 1984), 424.

[30] P. Coertzen, "The Huguenots of South Africa in History and Religious Identity.," *NGTT* 52, no. 1 (Jan-Feb, 2011), 45.

[31] Ibid., 51.

[32] Coertzen, "Contribution," 429–30.

[33] Coertzen, "Huguenots," 52.

[34] Coertzen, "Contribution," 430.

to spread the Gospel to all—outside of the jurisdiction of the DRC. The challenge was expected, as the DRC Council from the beginning regarded Schmidt with suspicion and had subjected him to a strenuous examination that lasted almost 18 months.

The main focus of Schmidt and the Moravian mission was the evangelization of the indigenous people called the Hottentots (or Khoi-Khoi), and not the settlers in the Cape. The Khoi-Khoi people (who were called "Bushmen") were religious, yet pagan in nature. They were dualistic (the clash of good vs. evil) in their thinking, and mystical and even demonic in their approach to worship.

After almost a century of having Reformed doctrine in the Cape, finally the truth of salvation by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone was now permeating the indigenous people. Even though the citizens of Cape Town ridiculed his efforts, Schmidt was undeterred. He noted in his journal: "Every evening I visited the Hottentots; sat down among them. I told them that, moved by sincere love, I had come to them to make them acquainted with their Saviour and to assist them to work."[35]

The young Moravian lasted seven years in his work, teaching the Khoi-Khoi about the doctrines of the Reformed Christian faith as well as practical skills in planting and cultivating. He was a true missionary to the indigenous people that did not require the adopting of Dutch or European culture to be converted.

The work was difficult, yet rewarding. Through perseverance, five Khoi-Khoi committed their lives to Christ, and after intense discipleship, they were baptized in a believer's baptism by immersion. But as the work of the Gospel was bearing fruit, it was not the rigorous lifestyle of living indigenously that smothered Schmidt's enthusiasm. From the beginning, the DRC Council stated that there had been no evidence of a Khoi-Khoi being converted. And since the policy of the VOC stated that only ordained ministers of the DRC were permitted to baptize, Schmidt's ordination was in question—especially since he baptized by immersion. Schmidt's official letter of ordination sent by Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf was summarily rejected, and he was summoned back to Holland, where he failed to gain authorization from the DRC. Undeterred regarding his passion for preaching the Gospel, Schmidt ministered the rest of his life in Moravia.

Commensurate with how the advance of the Gospel has persevered in history, those difficult seven years that Schmidt experienced were not in vain. Almost 50 years later, in 1792, the Cape was open again to Moravian missionaries. This paved the way for increased conversions among the indigenous people, and the development of closed settlements, or mission stations. The Moravian mission stations were one of the most outstanding ecclesiastical contributions to South Africa.[36] The Moravian's approach was to actually settle among the people. In order to teach, they had to "tabernacle" among them. And what was highly unusual was that their settlement was a means rather than an ends. They were not colonizing, and they were not interested in making a new life. Their focus was to give the Protestant Gospel to a lost people. Reformation mission work was now a reality.

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[35] Hammond, *Sketches from South African History*, 19.

[36] Pillay and Hofmeyer, *Perspectives on Church History*, 23.

Doctrine and Indigenization—the German Reformed Baptists

As more European people spread to South Africa through the Cape, ethnic tensions increased. Most immigrants turned to the DRC at the Cape for ministers, and local missionaries were scrutinized quite closely. The Boers[37] even acted against the work of noted missionary David Livingstone, who ministered among the colored and black people. Overall, the immigrants generally viewed missions work as "pitiful" and were not supportive of LMS missionaries who promoted the "equalization" of whites and colored people in the colony.[38]

Some 200 years after van Riebeeck landed at the Cape, during the latter half of the nineteenth century the Cape had morphed into a plethora of Christian congregations: Anglican, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians—not to mention the well-established DRC. But most of these (if not all) denominations were focused on ministering to their specific denominational immigrants.

During these frustrating years, the Lord was busy raising up a young herald from Germany. Johannes Gerhard Oncken, whom Charles Spurgeon called "The Apostle Paul of Europe" was a man of international experience. He was born a Lutheran, and was confirmed as a full member of the Lutheran State Church. However, during a visit to a Methodist meeting in England, Oncken was converted. And after being convinced of believer's baptism through personal study of the Scriptures, Oncken was baptized in Germany by an American Baptist despite laws in Hamburg outlawing baptism by immersion. No doubt, Oncken's association with Christians of varying denominations (including even the Mennonites) enflamed his missionary zeal. While travelling across Europe preaching and handing out Bibles, Oncken lived out his famous missions dictum, "Every Christian a missionary" or "Every Baptist a missionary."

The Germans in the Cape Colony[39] in South Africa had applied to the Rhenish Mission Society for a missionary but were rejected. They sent several written letters to Oncken for help, but Oncken's response was firm: "I must ask you to be patient. You want an extraordinary man for South Africa, one who can preach in German and English, can establish schools and deal with Government authorities, lead the flock and build up the churches…. Such men are far and between, and as yet we cannot produce them ourselves as the baker bakes his bread, we just have to ask the Lord to supply one for us in His good time…."[40]

In time, Oncken had found such a man. In October 1867, Carl Hugo Gutsche arrived in South Africa as a young German Baptist pastor. Gutsche's years with Oncken drove him to concentrate on church history, Spurgeon's sermons, and pastoral theology. And he came to South Africa with a burning desire to cultivate every

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[37] The word "Boer" is the Afrikaans word for farmer. This is a common term describing an Afrikaner.

[38] Pillay and Hofmeyer, *Perspectives on Church History*, 116.

[39] This territory was called "British Kaffraria."

[40] Jack C. Whytock, "Rev. Carl Hugo Gutsche: German Baptist Missionary to South Africa," *Haddington House Journal* 16 (2014): 23.

Christian to be a "vocational missionary." Immediately upon arriving in South Africa, Gutsche began to advance his purpose—he came to serve all peoples. He preached to many multicultural groups and began to organize a process to secure an indigenous missionary for further missions work. So, the earliest work of indigenous missions was through the German Baptist Hugo Gutsche.[41]

Simultaneous with the transformation of Oncken and Gutsche in Germany, a similar change was taking place in the life of Jacobus Daniel Odendaal—the great-great grandfather of one of the writers of this article. Odendaal was not an immigrant, but was born an African just three years before Gutsche. Being an Afrikaner (not Dutch or European), he was sent to Stellenbosch to study theology to become a DRC minister.[42] But, after only one year of study, he left because he could not see infant baptism in the Scriptures. With much dismay to him and his family, Odendaal returned home only to be expelled from the DRC.[43]

One evening, a travelling horse dealer stopped at Odendaal's farm and was received for the night. During devotions, right after Odendaal had explained the Scriptures, the salesman asked, "Are you a Baptist?" This was surprising as Odendaal had never heard of the term. The salesman told him that he prayed and acted just like the German Baptists. After inquiring where he might find such like-minded people, Odendaal took the instructions and a few days later embarked on the 350 kilometer journey by cart to find these Baptists. As he sat under a tree while resting his horses, two passing Stutterheim Baptists saw him reading his Bible and after some conversation got quite excited to find a like-minded believer in deep meditation. They learned of Odendaal's quest for truth, and led him to Hugo Gutsche, the young German Baptist pastor who had just arrived in South Africa.

In his ministry of sixty years, Hugo Gutsche baptized hundreds of converts from different ethnic backgrounds in South Africa. But, on his very first big Sunday in Grahamstown, the sermon was not in German, but in English! And in King William's Town in Dec. 1867, Jacobus Daniel Odendaal was the first person that Gutsche baptized. The German Baptists were totally amazed that someone from the Boer (Afrikaner) farmers would be in perfect harmony with them in matters of doctrine and worship. From this, Odendaal and Gutsche became lifelong friends, and Odendaal was ordained by the Baptist pastor in Berlin (South Africa). Jacobus Odendaal then went on to preach, gained a few dozen converts, and founded the *Afrikaanse Baptiste Kerk* (ABK) in South Africa. Gutsche went on to establish the Baptist Union of South Africa in 1877, whose objective was "to maintain the right of all men everywhere to freedom from legal disadvantage in matters purely religious".[44]

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[41] Ibid., 21.

[42] This is actually an ordained pastor or minister. The Afrikaans term is *Dominee*.

[43] Fritz H. Haus, "Carl Hugo Gutsche (1843–1926): The Significance of His Life and Ministry for the Baptist Churches and Missions in Southern Africa" (PhD diss., University of Stellenbosch, July 1999), 135. The actual branch of the DRC was the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* [NGK] of Burgersdorp.

[44] Pillay and Hofmeyer, *Perspectives on Church History*, 125.

During his ministry, Hugo Gutsche helped establish thirty-eight schools, and formed a mission school in the town of Tshabo. This mission school was the main focus for Gutsche, and through this he introduced the first black evangelist into the service of the Baptist Union of South Africa—John Adams (1861–1893). Even though Gutsche's first church was in King William's Town, almost all of his members did not live there. His diary states that these "[blacks][45] and their friends" were actually the first congregation. So, Gutsche was true to the "every Baptist a missionary" motto and worked with the indigenous people to help them grow in Christ, as well as to continue to invest in their lives helping supply them with useful employment. Through his efforts in influencing many German Baptist immigrants, Gutsche was able to bring Carl and Louise Pape to join him in the mission work, who were both fluent in the Xhosa language. Thus many songs were translated into Xhosa and the first Baptist church and school for the Xhosa people was established at Tshabo. With this inspiration, Hugo Gutsche's work led to the establishment of the Bantu Baptist Church in 1927, the year following his death. Because of his vision in true cross-cultural missions work, Hugo Gutsche was pivotal in the establishment of an indigenized church based on the doctrines of the Reformation.

Finally, there must be one more observation about the missional principles of Hugo Gutsche. Like his mentor Johannes Oncken, Gutsche was a firm believer in preparation. During his time in South Africa, Gutsche oversaw the building of over twenty church buildings. His guiding principle was "not to consecrate a single place of worship until it had been paid for."[46] He believed strongly in patiently waiting for the preparation of the qualities and skills of the servant, preparation of the solvency and longevity of the infrastructure, and preparation of the hearts of the indigenous people. Hugo Gutsche was about the Lord's timing. As these conditions were met by the Lord, only then would he see the Lord's hand and move on to another work.

The work of the German Reformed Baptists was somewhat unique in that their philosophy was truly "to win an African, one must become an African." The bulk of Christian expansion in Africa has followed the fallacy and failures of the North African Church. Typically, African Christians were given new European names. The Africans living at the mission station were in effect, living in a foreign land. And the common complaint that has resounded all over Africa is that African Christians are forced to adapt to a foreignness in approach, worship, life, and way of living resulting in a persistent attachment to non-African patterns and institutions.[47] The warning of this truth was provided by G. C. Oosthuizen in his indictment of the 20th-century Western missions philosophy in Africa, which looks strangely familiar to the approach of Augustine and the North African Church.

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[45] This is the writer's translation. Gutsche used a word that was common and not offensive in the 19th century that meant "indigenous person" much like the word "aboriginal," but since the apartheid government was installed in the middle of the 20th century that word became highly offensive to the indigenous people of South Africa. The term "black" is acceptable.

[46] Whytock, "Rev. Carl Hugo Gutsche," 24.

[47] Oosthuizen, *Post Christianity in Africa*, 3.

This fallacy in the Western approach has been due to the development of Western Christianity itself. Hemmed in by Islam, the Gospel had been accommodated to the social and personal life of the European peoples to such a degree that the false idea developed that a nation can be conceived of as corpus Christianum. This fallacy is alive in the concept of Western Christian civilisation. The synthesis that has taken place between Gospel and culture in the West has not only affected the expansion of Christianity but distorted its very depth and vitality. Henry Venn's three-self formula of self-support, self-government, and self-expansion was changed by others into 'to make the African civilised in his ways, Christian in his beliefs and English in his language.' [48]

South Africa can be greatly thankful not only to the work, but also the philosophy of Hugo Gutsche and his mentor Johann Oncken. Regardless of the how colonization affected the transfer of the gospel to South Africa through the centuries, these pioneers were used by God (among others) to correct the course and be a "light to the Gentiles."

The Way Forward

While God shut the front door of Africa, we can be very thankful that the back door was wide open. Yet, there is much to be gleaned from learning the history of early churches in the region of North Africa and the country of South Africa. The lessons learned will have a profound impact on missions philosophy. A common denominator found in all of this history is that before mission work can have a chance to succeed, there must be strength and soundness in doctrine. Without doctrine, there is no message. But inseparably coupled with purity of doctrine is a requisite passion and devotion for the indigenous people of the country, and their need be independent of outside interference. Achieving and maintaining both of these goals is not only admirable—it is a requisite task. Without both, the North African scenario will ultimately play out and the church will either die from lack of doctrine or mutate into a syncretistic mess.

Achieving and sustaining the twin pillars of purity of doctrine and indigenized leadership requires a plan. Based on the lessons just learned, and an understanding of the sub-Saharan African people, the following is a 21st-century strategy for continuing to empower the Reformation's advance in this complex, multi-ethnic environment.

First, every major tribal group must have a Bible in their own language—like the Coptic Church. The African people on the whole neither invented nor implemented an alphabet for the art of reading and writing, which prevented them from recording their own histories. Instead, all necessary information was passed on from person to person, generation to generation, by word of mouth.[49] For an African to

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[48] Ibid., 3.

[49] John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 2nd ed. (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational, 1975), 4.

embrace written truth, it must be in the language in which they think and conceptualize. Otherwise, they are speaking another man's language, and learning another man's religion.

Second, there must be significant effort by the missionary or pastor to challenge the African view of spiritual authority. Prior to the 20th century Africans did not rely on written historical truth, but rather mediated through individuals. [50] The lack of a written law and history has led to challenges in establishing effective communication—especially in the area of biblical authority. The missionary must continue to emphasize submission to God's written truth in all matters of life.

Third, every foreign missionary or pastor must admit to a blindness to their own worldview. One of the greatest impediments to missions in South Africa is the picture that is constantly portrayed to the indigenous people by the missionary. Like the picture painted by the North African immigrant Christians, that picture can be one of endowed supremacy, or imperialism. This was the problem with the church in North Africa, as well as problem of the DRC and others in the 17th–18th centuries. It can be discomforting to mix and worship with the indigenous people due to differences in language, customs, and lack of "sophistication." This can cause the people to be unintentionally treated as second-class citizens. Because of this, modern-day, 21st-century missionaries need to be very mindful of bringing their own mindsets of "correct" ideas of corporate worship, prayer, fellowship, and fighting culture. Enforcing "Western" ways only exacerbates the pains of the people to which one is ministering—especially in South Africa with its checkered political past and present.

Fourth, besides understanding the role their own worldview plays, all missionaries in Africa need to continually seek to understand the African worldview. In sub-Saharan Africa, the people mediate all authority (including spiritual authority) through individuals, such as the chief, *enduna*, [51] spiritual shaman, uncle, or direct family. The lack of a written law and history has led to challenges in establishing effective communication—especially in the area of biblical authority. Even though Africans might be able to process biblical information properly, the missionary will still not know how they think. If the missionary does not probe, they will never be able to understand how the African prioritizes authority, especially biblical authority. This will only be seen as one walks with an African through trials, difficult situations, and times when culture is directly confronted. Africans are communal by nature, and it is a greater sin to "break community" than to confront error with truth—thus they will always tell the missionary what they want to hear. Taking tests on Bible knowledge and literacy are helpful, but could be misleading. Missionaries and people

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[50] In South Africa, Xhosa literature began a bit earlier in the 19th century, and that mostly by foreign (Western) missionaries (like those mentioned under Hugo Gutsche), who were concerned more with moral edification and the propagation of Christianity. This was largely due to the efforts of Western Protestant missionaries who reduced the local language to a written form, and then translated biblical passages and works like *The Pilgrim's Progress*. See Albert S. Gérard, ed. *European Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986), 17, 168.

[51] An *enduna* is basically the "headman" whose job is to assist the chief in all functions. He is essentially the "Chief of Staff."

involved in the training of national pastors must understand what Ichabod Spencer said in the mid-nineteenth century:

> We do a far better office for men when we lead them to think, than when we think for them. A man's own thoughts are the most powerful of all preaching. The Holy Spirit operates very much by leading men to *reflection*—to employ their own mind. I should hesitate to interrupt the religious reflections of any man in the world, by the most important thing I could say to him. If I am sure *he* will *think*, I will content to be still. But men are prone to be thoughtless, and we must speak to them to lead them to reflection.[52]

Our biggest challenge is not to pour theological content into eager and empty receptacles of the mind. The challenge is to spend every moment cleaning, scrubbing, scouring, re-inspecting, scrutinizing, and challenging every worldview that sets itself up as a stronghold against the mind (2 Cor 10:5), and only then trust the Holy Spirit to take the biblical information that is provided to the indigenous African and convict him to *think*.

Fifth, the churches, mission agencies, and missionaries must be willing to spend the time and investment to prepare for a life-long endeavor. We have seen the success due to the patience and determination by men like Hugo Gutsche and Johann Oncken. Are we willing to take time to prepare? Is the missionary prepared to deal with the flaws of their own personal worldview and their own misunderstanding of the African worldview? Are they prepared to spend time with the Word of God (critiquing and solidifying their own points of view), and spend much time living and socializing with Africans to better understand their true fears and points of authority? Do they desire to understand where theology meets with practical living for the African? This preparation is just as important as preparing for financial support and theological training.

Finally, the missionary must be prepared to give up his tight-fisted control of the ministry. Is he or she prepared to live and operate continuously in the local vernacular? Can the missionary develop a spirit of trust with the indigenous people? Will the missionary allow the indigenous leaders to make mistakes and then lovingly disciple them to see the errors? Is the missionary prepared to submit to nationals—people whom they have trained from infancy?

In Africa, as we look to the future these questions have yet to be answered. The way forward is still unclear as Christian denominations and mission agencies struggle with doctrinal issues and a desire for "quick fix" mission work resulting in the sending of untrained and ill-equipped missionaries. But these are the questions which mission agencies and churches must continually raise, and scrutinize their missionaries and hold them accountable if the Reformation train will continue its journey through time in Africa—albeit from the long way around.

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[52] Ichabod Spencer, "No Escape," in *A Pastor's Sketches or, Conversions with Anxious Inquirers Respecting the Way of Salvation* (1857; repr., Port St. Lucie, FL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2013), 356. Emphasis added.

IMPLICATION AND APPLICATION IN EXPOSITION, PART 2: PRINCIPLES FOR CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

Carl A. Hargrove
Dean of Students and Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministries
The Master's Seminary

A significant concern for the expositor is navigating the relationship of interpretation and application. A part of the navigation is understanding the complement of the implications of a given text to the proper application. Teachers and expositors who want to make meaningful application of the passage or verse must bear in mind appropriate principles if they are to navigate from the ancient context to their contemporary audiences; if not, there will be misapplication on the one hand or not using the Scriptures to bear on the actions of listeners on the other.

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Introduction

The relationship between hermeneutics, exegesis, and application has not always been the easiest to navigate for preachers and teachers. However, it is one of the most important roads to travel if one is to be effective in communicating the truth of the Word and equipping the church to fulfill its role in the world. In part one of the series, expository preaching and the categories of application were defined.[1] In this article, the principles for navigating the ancient text to contemporary life are investigated.

Defining the Ancient to Contemporary Bridge

The bridge from ancient to contemporary has been crossed for nearly two thousand years and aided the church in its maturation, and at times caused spiritual harm when Scripture was misapplied. Any instance of regression was caused by a faulty hermeneutic which in turn resulted in inappropriate applications of the text. It is not the intention of this article to present every method or nuance. The time spent in this

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[1] Carl A. Hargrove, "Implication and Application in Exposition: A Complementary Relationship, Part 1: Expositional Definitions and Categories," MSJ 30/1 (Spring 2019): 65–91.

section will focus on those principles deemed most valuable for applicational exposition.

However, there is still the question of how to make appropriate applications for contemporary life. McQuilken discusses the importance of understanding the context of the modern reader and audience to make proper application of the text. He believes that "all authentic" interpreters of the Bible are those who seek to apply the meaning of the text to the present situation of the audience. The thesis of his article cautions any application of Scripture that allows the contemporary relevance to overshadow the normal interpretive guidelines. A text may be contextualized; however, it is first done so to understand the import for the original audience before the contemporary—cultural relevance cannot become an interpretive principle but an applicational guideline that is secondary to meaning. Expositors must be cautious that they do not engage in a "dynamic equivalence" interpretation that moves too quickly from the ancient context to the contemporary.[2] It was John Stott who spoke of preaching as "bridge-building" in the effort to "enable God's revealed truth to flow out of the Scriptures into the lives of the men and women of today."[3] Stott spoke emphatically of the need to speak to the culture of the day with the ancient text when he said,

> This earthing of the Word in the world is not something optional; it is an indispensable characteristic of true Christian preaching. Indeed, it is an obligation laid upon us by the kind of God we believe in and by the way in which he has himself communicated with us, namely in Christ and in Scripture, through his living and his written Word.[4]

The realization that proper interpretation is a necessity for valid application led Bernard Ramm to reaffirm that "all lessons, applications, and devotional material, must be governed by Protestant hermeneutics."[5] If there is no binding relationship to hermeneutics then application is determined only situationally (subjectively) instead of exegetically and contextually.

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[2] J. Robertson McQuilken, "Limits of Cultural Interpretation," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 150, no. 598 (June 1980): 114; Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 441; Hendrik Krabbendam, "Hermeneutics and Preaching," in *The Preacher and Preaching, Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1986), 212–45; Scott A. Blue, "The Hemeneutic of E.D. Hirsch, Jr. and Its Impact On Expository Preaching: Friend or Foe?," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44, no. 2 (June 2001): 265–69.

[3] John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 138.

[4] Ibid., 145. Stott's call to build the bridge to the contemporary world is not without a concern for its starting point and the need to first understand its message for the new world in which it will be preached. He said: "Our bridges too must be firmly anchored on both sides of the chasm, by refusing either to compromise the divine content of the message or to ignore the human context in which it has to be spoken." Ibid. The goal of *Between Two Worlds* is not to provide an offering on the hermeneutical questions facing this chapter, but an emphasis on the need, and homiletical technique, once the message of the ancient world is discovered.

[5] Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1970), 185.
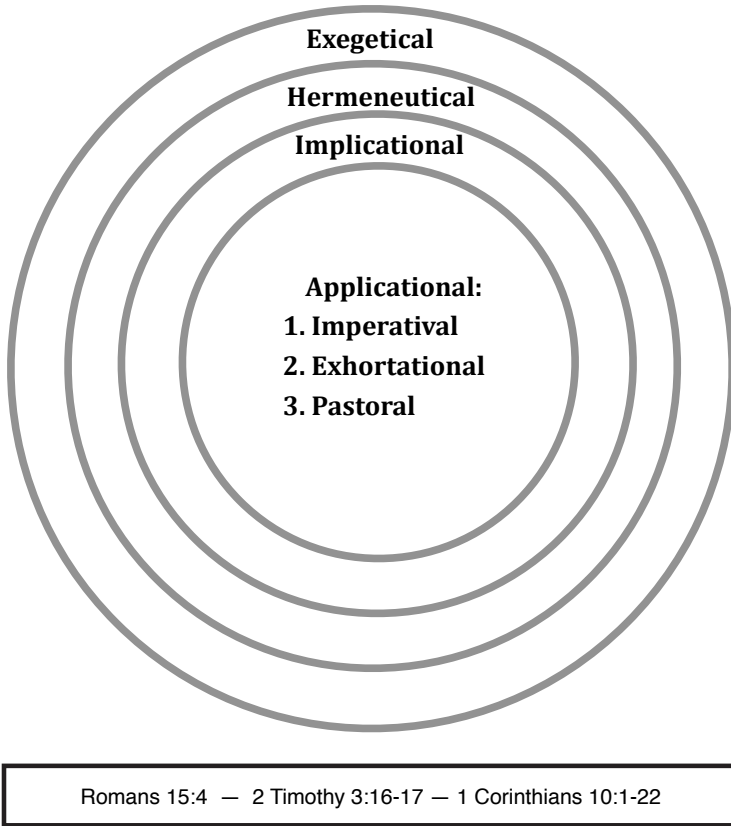
Crossing the figurative bridge from ancient culture to the present involves caution but it is not prohibited.[6] The principles used to determine the journey from the ancient world to the modern provide the proper parameters for legitimate application of the text while under the ministry of illumination. Illumination is mentioned because, just as there is illumination in the interpretive process, there is illumination when considering the application of Scripture. This does not make application subject to the interpreter but subject to the same principles that governed interpretation and lead to discovery (illumination) in understanding a text.[7]

There must be consistent governing principles to help make a proper connection between the ancient world, the particular passage's contextual meaning, and the contemporary world, and its practical and universal significance. The categories elucidated in part one are confined by the exercise of governing guidelines.

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[6] Gary F. Findley while addressing the Kerux Conference in 1999 voiced strong criticisms against the bridge-building model. His address (Biblical Theology and Application) asked whether we should be building *Bridges or Ladders?* He believed that pastors are "obligated to make their sermons relevant to the lives of their congregations." However, he is not an advocate of the applicational bridge which joins the ancient to the contemporary. This is too horizontal, whereas true Reformed preaching must be vertical—an applicational ladder. He criticizes the model of bridge building because it seeks to join two "contesting or opposing cultures." This is not however accurate. The need for the bridge is not always in contrast or opposition but distinction. His criticism is in part due to the relationship he sees with the Bultmannian approach to interpretation and his misunderstanding of the divide between today's world and the biblical. This is an unfair comparison, as Bultmann's method was steeped in higher criticism and existentialism. Advocates of the figurative bridge seek to join the two worlds, starting with the church, which does not *oppose* the ancient text but remains distinct. This bridge is created because the meanings of words have changed and not every expectation (command, ordinance) is intended for application in today's world. Findley is guilty of caricature and simplification in his position that the bridge model is a "preoccupation of certain preachers to focus all of their attention, all of their time and all of their energy upon the earth, forever busy looking for a place to build a bridge." Had he mentioned men like Joel Osteen or Doug Pagitt, his point would have been well taken, but not Kaiser, Chappell, or Osborne. He believes that the apostle Paul's model was a ladder—being no less the person of Christ who connects men to God. No author cited in this article would disagree. And it is to this end that the figurative bridge is used so that men may better understand God's calling, and once they have crossed the bridge from the ancient to the contemporary and have a proper understanding of the text at hand, may ascend the ladder to a fuller understanding of the call of faith. One may even say that the bridge is in fact the ladder because it gives understanding of the ancient revelation and its eternal and universal consequences. Findley's position doesn't fully recognize a cultural gap between the ancient and the redeemed and unredeemed of today. The only gap of concern for Findley is the gap created by sin. Hence, an ultra-redemptive-historical method is employed. There are points of agreement: There must be caution to ensure that application does not become a "euphemism for interpretation." Legitimate sermon application "must cause people to identify with biblical history." Before there can be any application to specific situations, there must be an understanding of the "spiritual alienation" that has caused the need for divine intervention.

[7] R. C. Sproul, "The Internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit," in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1980), 337–54.

Figure 1. Parameters for Application

Exegetical

Hermeneutical

Implicational

Applicational:
1. **Imperatival**
2. **Exhortational**
3. **Pastoral**

Romans 15:4 — 2 Timothy 3:16-17 — 1 Corinthians 10:1-22

Principles for Navigating the Contemporary Bridge

Although not exhaustive, five principles for joining the ancient to the contemporary are offered as guidelines for expositors. They act as tolls that must be paid so that legitimate applications may be presented to congregants and audiences for their edification.

Principle #1:
Bridge the Gap by Understanding the Role of Meaning and Significance

Having stated the importance of proper interpretation to exposition and in turn application, it is important that we distinguish meaning from application. In a grow-

ing number of hermeneutical methods, application is considered an aspect of interpretation.[8] *Meaning* is the starting point for the expositor because without it there can be no knowledge of God's intention for inspiring the biblical author. Without divine intentionality, there can be no valid application.[9] E. D. Hirsch wrote, "Meaning is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent. Significance, on the other hand, names a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation, or indeed anything imaginable."[10]

Duvall and Hays define meaning as "that which the author wishes to convey with his signs." The signs are the components of language, such as syntax, grammar, and lexical range.[11] The author uses his signs to communicate his intention to the audience; the signs must be used with the principles of hermeneutics to determine the meaning in context and for today.

Hirsch's statement has several implications for this article. How should the applicational expositor understand and apply both terms in the preaching event? Hirsch communicated the need for expositors to be bound by the author's meaning, but demonstrate freedom once they have gained understanding. In reference to understanding, Hirsch believed that "understanding" was used because it addressed the "perception of the author's meaning, but also the perception of how that meaning fits into his world or our own."[12]

This would lead expositors to interpret Hirsch's principle that *there may be many significances* as freedom to arbitrarily apply the meaning in accord with his own values or the values of contemporary society. However, he footnotes himself and communicates that one may not "completely relinquish the author's perspective" because of the permanent bond in his meaning to his perspective.[13] He further states that to be free from the author is an emancipation that leads to being "enslaved by whatever reality it is to which we have chosen to relate his work."[14] It is clear if the interpreter

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[8] Although this is a legitimate concern, the question remains as to the proper relationship of application to hermeneutics. Does a clear line of demarcation separate the relationship or should application be a sub-branch of hermeneutics? Since the goal of hermeneutics is accurate interpretation for life change, and application is the means to change—there must be understanding before there is spiritual formation—hermeneutics should help determine how and when the text applies. An interpretation is conjoined to the response of the audience to the interpretation gained by proper hermeneutics. Hermeneutics sets limits on the accommodation of the pericope for every audience. Hermeneutics will inform interpreters what they can, cannot, and may be allowed to say concerning any given text. Since hermeneutics controls application is it not then a subset of the science?

[9] Daniel M. Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2001), 18–19; Norman L. Geisler, "The Relation of Purpose and Meaning in Interpreting Scripture," in *Rightly Divided: Readings in Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996): 143–47.

[10] E.D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1967), 8.

[11] Scott J. Duvall, and Daniel J. Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands on Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 180.
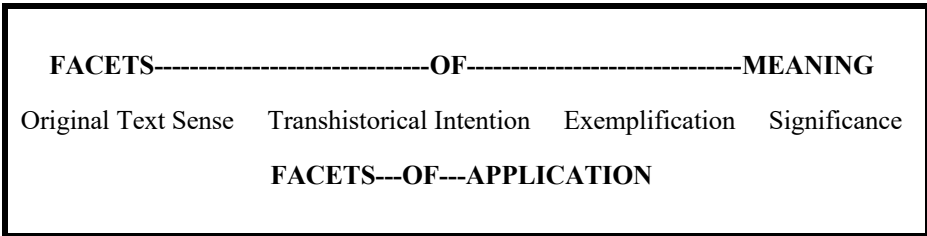
[12] Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 142.

[13] Ibid., 142n6.

[14] Ibid., 143.

is bound to the meaning of the author that his natural parameter/context is set, because when one "understands meaning; one judges significance."[15] In his statement, understanding is constrained by meaning, and understanding provides the context for significance and its broad expressions.

When bridging the ancient to the present, the interpreter operates with a "fused perspective"[16] that adapts to the author's and allows it to inform the interpreter and in turn gain a proper understanding. Abraham Kuruvilla provides a nuance to meaning that is worthy of consideration. He highlights the facets of meaning in the text.

Figure 2. Facets of Meaning

<div style="border:2px solid black; padding:1em;">

FACETS------------------------------OF-------------------------------MEANING

Original Text Sense   Transhistorical Intention   Exemplification   Significance

FACETS---OF---APPLICATION

</div>

Kuruvilla espouses three facets of meaning.[17] They are *original text sense*, *transhistorical intention*, and *exemplification (within meaning)*. Transhistorical intention replaces what is normally stated as transcultural; exemplification is the bridge from meaning to application (it is both meaning and application); significance is the valid application of the text to the "world in front of the text."[18] The "world in front of the text" is the contemporary audience that the text addresses in the here and now of life.

<div align="center">Amplifying the Key Terms</div>

Original Text Sense

This is the "explicit utterance meaning of the text."[19] Original text sense is preferred over authorial intent because its focus is the text, hence, the title—*Privilege the Text*! Kuruvilla's emphasis is accepted; however, the distinction is not one of true

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., 254–57. The use of the word fused/fusion captures the sense in which the interpreter has his own perspective as he approaches the perspective of the text but maintains an awareness of the author's. This awareness, which is gained by exegesis, provides the fence for maintaining applications within a certain field of allowance. Applications become an indicator of whether an expositor understands the meaning of the text. Applications that do not reflect their starting point in the author's meaning are evidence of poor exegesis or an unwillingness to submit to the text's authority.

[17] Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text! A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 62.

[18] Ibid., 39–64.

[19] Ibid.

significance if authorial intention is understood as the author, under the inspiration of the Spirit scripting the God-intended message of the text. Authorial intent is not in contradiction or reemphasis to original text sense. The original text sense is the authorial intent. The author's intention cannot be separated from the original text. The explicit utterance is the exact intention for the audience during the time in which it was written (and future audience in the case of prophetic genre). The original text sense of Revelation 2:2 includes the commendation of the Ephesians for their toil, perseverance, and doctrinal purity in the context of the Nicolaitan and false apostle error (the specifics of the error we are not fully aware). Today, there is still commendation for diligently toiling for the cause of Christ and maintaining doctrinal purity, although the context and challenges are different.

Transhistorical

Transhistorical is "meaning, in light of this future-directedness, includes a transhistorical intention—a conceptual entity projected by the text that carries its thrust beyond the immediate time-space circumstances of the writing—and also future exemplifications—i.e., valid applications arising from that transhistorical intention."[20] The historical emphasis is meant to highlight the chronological and cultural freedom and intention of the text to impact the lives of multiple generations in the interim between the covenants and final consummation. The many theological implications drawn from the text continue to transcend history and fulfill God's intention for the church and mankind.

Exemplification

These are valid applications of the text that demonstrate the integral intention of the passage. Because of the universal and eternal nature of Scripture, its scope is not limited to its original place and audience. An expositor may preach the exemplification (application) of the text and know that the transhistorical intention is based on his passage. Examples: Christ's call to "put away your sword" is not limited to *swords* but includes all arms (not developed at that time); the injustice that often came because of the *unfair scales* would be applied to even the most sophisticated and dishonest business scheme of today. Kuruvilla defines significance as "outside meaning" and exemplification "within meaning" which affords the preacher the freedom to suggest "significances for application" that accommodate fulfilling the exemplification that the text demands of the audience.[21]

Significance

They are applications that are not a part of the transhistorical intention but act as means to help the audience apply the intention of the text. We may say that the intention of the text that speaks against unjust scales also intended to condemn Ponzi

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[20] Ibid., 44.

[21] Ibid., 63.

schemes, but it does not advise you to Google the person's investment history (significance). The teacher will not say that a Google search was the intention of the text, but he may say that it is a *significance* (a means to help fulfill the intention). Another example is advising a men's group to cancel their subscription to a certain fitness magazine because of the sections with sensual images and sexually suggestive ideas for relationships with women. This application (significance) will help fulfill the call to personal purity (exemplification). The two significances offered would be categorized as specific pastoral applications and the exemplification as exhortational application.

The following table shows examples of Kuruvilla's use of meaning and application which are followed by my modification of his usage and examples of the project definition of application (imperatival, pastoral, and exhortational). Although the modification places application in the column of Kuruvilla's exemplification, this author does not agree that pastoral and exhortational applications are "within meaning." Original Text Sense equals Imperatival Application; Transhistorical Intention equals the Transcultural Bridge; Significance is restated as Exhortational and Pastoral Application. Each example is read from the left to right column—Original Text Sense to Application (Significance).

Table 1. From Text to Application (Significance)

Original Text Sense (OTS)	Transhistorical Intention	Exemplification	Significance
No drunkenness with wine	No drunkenness with alcohol	No drunkenness with vodka	Cancel the subscription to Wine Spectator
Imperatival Application (OTS)	**Transcultural Bridge**	**Pastoral Application (Exemplification)**	**Exhortational Application (Significance)**
No drunkenness with wine	No drunkenness with alcohol	No drunkenness with vodka	Cancel the subscription to Wine Spectator
Original Text Sense (Imperatival Application)	**Transcultural Bridge**	**Pastoral Application (Significance)**	**Exhortational Application (Significance)**
Do good to all men	Do good to all men	Help the needs at the local shelter	Fight the propensity to be narcissistic
Imperatival Application	**Transcultural Bridge**	**Pastoral Application (Significance)**	**Exhortational Application (Significance)**
Flee immorality	Flee immorality	Avoid the Central Ave area on weekends	Grasp the potential for anyone to fall into sexual sin

Imperatival Application	Transcultural Bridge	Pastoral Application (Significance)	Exhortational Application (Significance)
Love God with all your heart	Love God with all your heart	Avoid the trends of emotional outpouring without substance	Put away the following which may distract you
Original Text Sense	**Transcultural Bridge**	**Exhortational Application**	**Pastoral Application**
God is sovereign	God is sovereign	Trust Him in all circumstances	Reject the false teaching of the prosperity gospel
Original Text Sense	**Transcultural Bridge**	**Exhortational Application**	**Pastoral Application**
Condemnation of the Judaizers	Condemnation of modern legalists	Be bold in defending the faith	Do not support the ministry of _____.

Kuruvilla provides a useful summary of the distinguishing marks of his nuanced definition of meaning and its relationship to implication and application. His summary highlights the "futurity" of the text for the life of the church even in cultural contexts which are dissimilar to the original audience.[22] The reach of the text into the future underlines the need of the expositor to grapple exegetically with the text to understand the underlying implications and make justifiable applications of the text to the church. Silva was correct when he said, "We can hardly expect to contextualize a biblical passage in a responsible way unless we have first identified accurately its significance in the original context."[23] The language of the contemporary projection of the text is not a reader-response hermeneutic but addresses intentionality of revelation to speak authoritatively to its future audience.

The expositor is not seeking to find meaning "behind the text" in the vein of higher criticism which emphasized the unique context and its influence on the meaning. Neither is he seeking meaning "in front of the text" in the vein of the reader-response method of contemporary hermeneutics. The primary meaning of any text is "within the text" and discovered by engaging the rules of exegesis and noting the author's markers to see and apply the meaning to the contemporary audience.[24]

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[22] Ibid., 60. In sum, the prescriptive nature of the Bible renders it profitable for application in the life of its readers; its perennial standing projects its relevance across the span of time; its plurality enables a wide variety of valid applications in any number of specific circumstances for a spectrum of discrete audiences in the future. These critical attributes of a classic suggest that for the biblical canon, future-directedness is an intrinsic property of its textuality and its referent (the world it projects/transhistorical intention/what authors do). Indeed, it is by means of this futurity that the canon is endowed with a reach that extends beyond the immediate time-space realms of its composition. Such an orientation to the future enables readers to deploy the biblical text for application in circumstances distant from, and dissimilar to, the original contexts of its composition.

[23] Moisés Silva, *Has the Church Misread the Bible?* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1987), 1:110.

[24] Daniel L. Akin, Bill Curtis, and Stephen Nelson Rummage, *Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2011), 32–34.

Principle #2: Bridge the Gap by Principlizing the Text

One of the most important principles for applying the message of Scripture is principlizing the biblical text. Ramm's statement that "the Bible is more a book of principles than a catalogue of specific directions"[25] is the starting point to build the most prominent principle. Ramm's position is based on the conviction that the Bible's "emphasis" is on conveying moral principles for spiritual growth, not on "specific and itemized lists of rules for moral and spiritual conduct."[26] He provides two reasons for the Bible's approach to moral principles:

> If it were entirely specific in its practical teachings, then it would be provincial and relative. If Paul had classified sin solely in terms of specifics and therefore in terms of the culture of his day, then as new ways of sinning were devised by man, and as culture changed, Paul's teaching would no longer be relevant. [Paul] was able to put his finger on the universal element of human sin, and so provide every generation in all cultures with a reliable guide to moral and spiritual behaviour. If it were a legal code of rules, then the Bible would foster an artificial spirituality, and indirectly sponsor hypocrisy.… Real spiritual progress is made only if we are put on our own. Unless we must take a principle and interpret its meaning for a given situation in life, we do not spiritually mature.[27]

Ramm's statement is logical and practical. Logically, it is consistent with the intention of preaching and the Scripture to stimulate spiritual growth in the body (Col 1:28; 1 Pet 2:2) and the responsibility of the believer to desire and pursue sanctification (Phil 2:12; 3:12–17). Practically, it is consistent with the everyday reality that personal growth must be an individual choice. A preacher cannot be fully responsible for a listener's maturation; the challenge to Christlikeness must be accepted and integrated by the person hearing the truth. Unless the truths heard in a message are understood, accepted, and applied by the hearer, the growth of the listener will be stagnant. In the effort to help stimulate maturity in the hearts of those exposed to preaching, Kaiser said,

> The interpreter must bridge the gap between the cultural elements that are present in the text of Scripture and those in our own times. One proposal to bridge this gap is *ethnohermeneutics*, which recognizes three horizons in cross-cultural interpretation: the culture of the Bible, the culture of the interpreter, and the culture of the receptor. Care must be exercised not to let the second and third horizons dictate the message of the first horizon. The early church fathers used the terms *condescension*, *accommodation*, and *acculturation* to deal with cultural matters in the text. In their view, the cultural

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[25] Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 186.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., 186–87.

aspects of the Scriptures were meant to make the truth more accessible and to assist us in applying the text to our own day.[28]

The use of condescension, accommodation, and acculturation points to mechanisms used to make the truths of Scripture readily available to the audience. These mechanisms include the cultural signs that make the text relevant to the audience of the past and accessible to the here and now once the author's signs are studied in their cultural context. The expositor directly or indirectly communicates that the cultural elements of the past do not have to remain in conflict with the changing culture of today when principlizing the text. Instead of seeing them as obstacles, they are "meant to actually help in the task of applying the text to other times and places."[29] This occurs when the exegete has studied each properly and gleans the appropriate truth that transcends the culture of the day and serves as a legitimate application for the contemporary world and audience.

Kaiser defines principlizing as the ability to "[re]state the author's propositions, arguments, narrations, and illustrations in timeless abiding truths with special focus on the application of those truths to the current needs of the Church."[30] Kaiser provides caution when principlizing when he says, "Allegorizing, psychologizing or any other form of playing with the text cannot substitute for the hard work of sticking with that text until we see the point that the author was attempting to make from that passage first before we look for contemporary applications."[31] This approach is demonstrated in the categories of imperatival, exhortational, and pastoral application as the implications of the truths provide the basis for general exhortations and more specific applications to the preacher's audience. The nature of Scripture and its intention for the past and present (2 Tim 3:16–17) avows a sense of Kaiser's "ever-abiding meaning"[32] because its divine nature and intention has an eternal and universal goal—to provide instruction for believers to walk a path of righteous living (Rom 15:1–14; Col 1:28).

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[28] Walter C. Kaiser Jr., and Moisés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 172. When interpreting cultural aspects of Scripture, three options are available. We may (1) retain the theology taught along with the cultural-historical expression of that principle, (2) retain the theology of a passage but replace the expression of the behavior, or (3) replace both the principle and the practice. Five guidelines for doing this are (1) to observe the reason given in the text for a cultural element, (2) to modify the cultural form but retain the content, (3) to avoid all practices integral to pagan culture, (4) to retain practices grounded in the nature of God, and (5) to adjust when the circumstances alter the application of a law or principle. But above all, it is important to be hesitant and humble in all cases where we are uncertain. See Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "A Principlizing Model," in *Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology*, ed. Gary T. Meadors, Counterpoints: Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 20.

[29] Kaiser Jr., "A Principlizing Model," 19.

[30] Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 152.

[31] Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable & Relevant?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 174.

[32] Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 152.

There are biblical examples of Scripture's intention for multiple generations:

- Deuteronomy 4:10 "Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'"
- Deuteronomy 29:14–15 "Now not with you alone am I making this covenant and this oath, but both with those who stand here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God and with those who are not with us here today."
- Romans 15:4 "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."
- 1 Corinthians 10:6 "Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved."
- 1 Corinthians 10:11 "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

This undeniable truth is a motivation to better understand the means for applying the Word to the lives of those for whom it was written. Kaiser helps attain this goal by proposing several guidelines,[33] which in this article will be named *particular dynamic*, *theological and cultural affirmation*, and *theological-cultural separation.* These guidelines offer the framework for translating the endless truths of Scripture into applications for today's church.

Particular Dynamic

Particular dynamic includes cases where the biblical author uses particular names of people, places, or even statistical information, and, despite the particular nature of the situation, the principle derived is universal. Kaiser's example of Philippians 4:2 and Paul's admonition for Euodia and Syntyche is a model for the universal principle of the believer's call to live harmoniously. Paul's particular example does not limit its application to the historical setting but makes it relevant in today's culture. When preaching Philippians 4:2, the expositor should cite the dangers of disunity and the benefits of harmony in the church for the cause of Christ. Another example of this principle is Paul's warning to Timothy to be aware of the harm done by Alexander the coppersmith (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 4:14) and the challenge from those who create difficulty for genuine ministers of the gospel. Like Paul, leaders may surrender men to the sovereign discipline of God and must warn others of their character flaws in order to protect the church body. In Paul's letter to Philemon, his call for reconciliation between Philemon and Onesimus is relevant for today when we call brothers to avoid class distinction and forgive the offenses of the past. The release in the year of Jubilee (Lev 25) is not simply a law bound to the Old Testament, but a

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[33] Kaiser Jr., "A Principlizing Model," 20–21.

timeless example that communicates the need for compassion and considering the appropriateness of forgiving debts. It cannot be binding for believers to forgive those who may owe another, but it does call for consideration.

Theological and Cultural Affirmation

Theological and cultural affirmation involves biblical examples where both the theology of the passage and the cultural expression are relevant for today. A concrete example of this is marriage.[34] There was no shift in the cultural expression of the theology of marriage. Therefore, a teacher would regard the cultural expression while maintaining the theological code of marriage. Applicational exposition would affirm the theological reason for marriage, exhort believers to hold fast to its sanctity, and encourage couples to be models for the church and world, which provides a spiritual example of Christ's love for the church (Eph 5:22).

Theological-Cultural Separation

An example of this guideline is the punishments for violations under the Law.[35] The theology of God's holiness and justice as the foundation for the punishment remain; although the moral violations are still recognized, the cultural response of stoning is not relevant for today. Capital punishment for sin is replaced with excommunication for those who persist in it (Matt 18:15–20). When teaching passages that represent theological-cultural separation, God's holy standard is maintained while expressing the grace of God in excommunication, which provides the opportunity for repentance not afforded with the Old Testament law of stoning.

It is God's intention that the principles derived from both Testaments continue to have a relevant impact on the church. In the same manner that the Old Testament was written with a purview to the New (Rom 15:4), so, the New Testament age was intended to provide the foundation for the present church age. Expository preaching is not simply the presentation of historical lessons without relevance for today but an event in which the ancient is bridged to the contemporary for the edification of today's audience, the church.

There are numerous examples of the principlizing principle for use in teaching. When moving from the biblical concept or main idea of the passage, the teacher is looking to connect the concept of the main idea with the implicational principle of the passage and direct it to a life response(s). When principlizing the text, the implications of the passage or verse are identified then contextualized for the present life of the church. The following examples will help demonstrate how the conceptual moves to the concrete. It may also prove helpful to use examples from various genres, as the biblical teacher will be fortunate to expound texts from each.

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[34] Ibid., 21.

[35] Ibid.

Figure 3. Direct to Indirect Statement
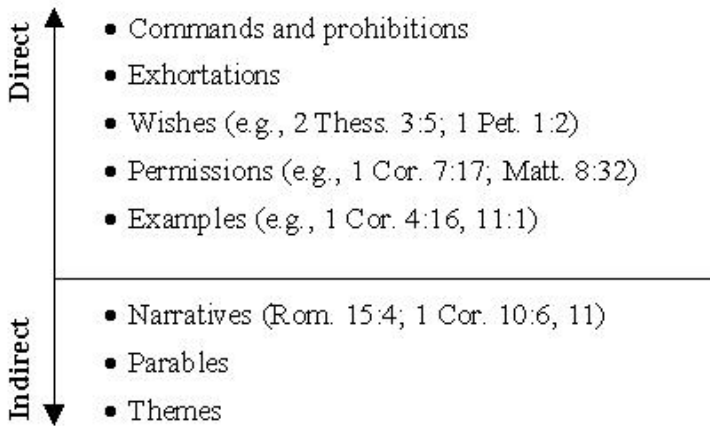
Kuypers' diagram shows the movement from direct statement to indirect and with this association there must be an increasing amount of caution when applying the text to the world today. [36] Imperatival applications do not come from the implication of the text but the directive in the verse or passage. Although "thou shall not kill" has implications, the primary application is direct obedience to the imperative not to take the life of the innocent. The furthest distance is a theme of Scripture that has little to no direct statement and requires the most caution when applying the text, and will almost always result in general applications.

Biblical Examples

Genesis 50:20 states, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive." Although addressing a particular situation, the endless truth of God's sovereignty over evil events remains. What was truth for the suffering of Joseph is a comforting perspective for believers in the New Testament (Rom 8:28) and today.

Exodus 1:17 records, "But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live." Here, the principle of spiritual priority in allegiance is in the forefront. The allegiance is the same as that of the apostles in the Acts 5:29, who decided that obedience to God was always the choice when human and divine expectations contradicted one another. This principle is needed more each day as the culture becomes more hostile toward God's divine revelation and the mission of the church to act as the pillar and support of the truth (1 Tim 3:15).

Judges 4:21 narrates, "But Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and seized a hammer in her hand, and went secretly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it

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[36] Wayne Kuypers, "Validity in Bible Application" (Class paper, ThM Seminar on Bibliology, Sun Valley, CA: The Master's Seminary, 2004).

went through into the ground; for he was sound asleep and exhausted. So he died." The cultural expression of Jael's commitment to God's cause is altered today and replaced by a zeal to stand for the Lord against the ideological and theological attacks of the world. The theology of honoring God remains timeless while the expression is altered.

Judges 5:24 continues, "Most blessed of women is Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; most blessed is she of women in the tent." The praise offered Jael is as relevant then as it is today. The church should hold women in high esteem, who have expressed an unyielding commitment to the cause of Christ.

Psalm 12:1 recounts, "Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases to be, for the faithful disappear from among the sons of men." As the psalmist observes the increasing effects of the ungodly in the land, it obscures the presence of those who fear God and His Word. The psalmist's prayer to intervene should be a regular cry of the church—the need for divine intervention in the decaying society and the call for godly men and women to grow in the faith and represent God in the marketplaces of life.

Psalm 32:10 avers, "Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him." The psalmist affirms the timeless contrast of the security found in the saving knowledge of God and the isolation and spiritual trouble of those who reject the counsel of the Lord when recounting the blessing of forgiveness. This theological theme is equally relevant today as then. There should be exposition that highlights the eternal divide between the righteous and unrighteous and reminders of the consequences of rejecting the covenant call of God.

In the forty-three verses of the historical Psalm 107, the psalmist reminds the people of God then and now of His faithfulness to keep His covenant. In context, the recounting of the return from exile acts as a demonstration of God's sovereign hand moving to extend grace to a people who have faced discipline because of their sinful choices. The call for the "redeemed" to "give thanks" is a pregnant exhortation for the church. Like Israel, the church has been redeemed from the world by God's gracious hand and must warrant the same response—thanksgiving to the only One deserving praise.

In Proverbs 1:20–33 the image of wisdom calling in the streets is the task of the present herald. He is one who calls men and women to repentance. The picture of wisdom being ignored in the midst of noisy commerce, the consequence of rejecting wisdom, and God's desire for men to repent are eternal realities of gospel ministry and preaching.

John 13:15 explains, "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you." Although some have taken the words of Christ literally and advocated foot washing among leadership, the applicational principle is humble service within the body of Christ. The words of Christ are spoken to the disciples, yet the timeless example of Christ's humility still shines as a spiritual motivation for those in leadership to imitate the servant-leadership of the Lord.

Luke 16:31 reports, "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'" The words spoken in the parable provide an awareness of the human heart's inability to comprehend truth apart from divine intervention. Expositors must have a confidence in preaching the sufficiency of Scripture and not rely on presentation to convince men of their spiritual need.

Acts 16:25 reports, "But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them." This specific historical event is an example of contentment, the priority of worship, and the power of genuine example. Based on the time and location of preaching this text, the cultural expression may translate for those in persecuted nations, and for others, the principle of a right attitude when suffering for Christ is evident.

Romans 16:16 says, "Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you." Whatever the particular way in which believers greeted each other in the New Testament church, the principle for the church is an expression of brotherly love and sincerity. What frames the context for the expression is not the word "kiss" but "holy" which implies genuineness and distinction—the family of God was (is) to greet each other in a way that its distinctly different than the world—with a unique bond of the faith.

First Peter 4:14 attests, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you." The churches of Asia Minor faced harsh persecution, which also afforded them a unique opportunity to witness for the Lord by their godly response. The reality of God's gracious support in suffering has not changed. There is no variance in His degree of support for the New Testament church and the present.

Principle #3:
Bridge the Gap by Considering the Old Testament Intention of Scripture

The job of the expositor is to communicate the meaning of the passage as the author intended and the significance of the passage for lifestyle changes. The divine intention of the Old Testament is to set an example for New Testament believers (1 Cor 10:1–22; Heb 11).

The lifestyle choices of Old Testament believers offer spiritual guidelines for New Testament saints. The purpose of the Old Testament was not limited to giving a historical account of the former covenant people—it acts as a moral compass for the present age. The moral features of Israel provide an example both positively and negatively. The duplicitous nature of Israel's covenantal journey includes examples worthy of following and those that the New Covenant people must avoid at all cost. The many occurrences of Israel's repentance were preceded by an equal number of rebellious actions. The cycles of sin in the book of Judges, the pattern of reform and renunciation under the Kings, and the wavering judgments of its spiritual leaders are examples of a people who could not sustain their covenant loyalty. Their moments of vibrant worship were too often polluted by the influences of the nations to whom they were created to set an example (Isa 42:6, 7; 49:6; 51:4; 60:1, 3; Acts 13:47; 26:39).

Paul is especially clear of this principle in force, when he said, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope (Rom 15:4)." Therefore, when preaching an Old Testament text and seeking application of the text to the present audience, it is within the parameters of the one proclaiming the truth that moral applications are made based on the responses of the biblical characters in

the passage taught. Note that this principle is not only in effect when preaching from a text on corporate Israel; it has equal force when preaching biographically.

Although biographical preaching should always highlight the character of God on display in the life of the character, it may include the life lessons gleaned from the central figure of the text (Heb 11).[37] Actually, including the moral choices of the character is necessary for the divine attributes to be highlighted. By noting the human decisions, whether sinful or godly, the various manifestations of divine grace are brought to the forefront of the text and in the mind of the audience. There are various examples of these teaching opportunities in the Old Testament, where individual and corporate choices provide life lessons and highlight divine attributes.

The imagery of Israel as a "wife of harlotry" in Hosea 1:2 is a vivid example of Israel's unfaithfulness as they yielded to the ungodly influences of the nations and compromised spiritual leadership (Hos 4:9).The context of Hosea's preaching highlights the faithful love of God despite Israel's failure to reciprocate (Hos 11). This is particularly captured in the language of verses 8, 9, 12.

> How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart is turned over within Me, all My compassions are kindled. I will not execute My fierce anger; I will not destroy Ephraim again. For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath…. Ephraim surrounds Me with lies and the house of Israel with deceit; Judah is also unruly against God, even against the Holy One who is faithful.

Israel during the Preaching of Jeremiah

Jeremiah's focus on the corrupt spiritual leadership of Judah and the ensuing effects on the people (Jer 3:12–14; 5:23–31; 6:9–16; 8:18–21; 14:13–22) is a warning to the church to maintain its faithfulness, be discerning, and never compromise on the standards for leaders. It also highlights the faithfulness of God to fulfill His promises to a people who are underserving (Lam 3:22–23).

There have been many narrative messages preached on the life of David. David, not unlike Judah, can be a sterling example as one who sought the Lord and His favor (Pss 16:11; 23; 27:4; 1 Sam 13:14). Because of the detail and expanse of David's life narrative, it can provide a host of life lessons and the examples of God's glory displayed. His was a life of suffering, sinful choices, exemplary leadership, intimate worship, and unquestionable courage. In these life episodes, God's faithfulness, grace, anger, justice, patient, and mercy, among other attributes were displayed, offering welcome reminders to the church of God's divine intervention in the believer's life journey.

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[37] Irvin A. Busenitz, "Must Expository Preaching Always Be Book Studies? Some Alternatives," *MSJ* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 155–57.

The Example of Abraham

The life of the father of genuine faith is illustrated with various applications for the Christian journey. Abraham's experience affords the preacher valuable pictures of the sovereignty of God, the frailty of men, the assurance of God's promises, lessons in avoiding the fear of men, how to stand courageously under overwhelming circumstances, and the faithfulness of God.

The Example of Manasseh

When preaching the life of this sinful king of Judah, there is opportunity to amplify one of the most pronounced examples of God's grace in the Bible. The reality of Manasseh's repentance (2 Chr 33:10–20) is often missed in exposition. This humiliation he suffered at the hands of the Assyrians (v. 11) was an act of grace because it led to him humbling himself and making sweeping reformations in his life and kingdom (v. 12).

An implication of this passage is God's use of humiliation to create in men a sense of humility. History is full of rich stories of men and women whose pride was broken by the humbling hand of God. Sadly, it also includes many who hardened their hearts instead of allowing God to break their inclination for self-sufficiency. A person will either be a Pharaoh or a John Newton. Grace resisted leads to destruction, while grace received opens the floodgates of mercy. Manasseh was broken by grace and it became evident as the verbal line is followed through the passage—*distress, entreated, humbled, prayed, knew, built, removed, set, and ordered* (vv. 12–16). The authenticity of his faith is seen in his actions for the Lord he had for so long forsaken. The intention of the text is to highlight God's amazing grace, which remains the intention of Scripture and the role of the church. In the examples offered, each has a unique episode in biblical history that is relevant for believers today, demonstrated in the timeless impression of theological revelation.

Timeless Theology

The great doctrines of the faith such as justification, sanctification, original sin, the incarnation, imputational righteousness, and unmerited grace are intended to be understood and appropriated in the lives of God's people. The theological implications of theology and biblical narrative are meant to stimulate and propel the faithful in a greater knowledge of God.[38]

The intention of the pericope is always the teacher's obligation, and once gained, he is also obligated to communicate the limitless nature of the Word to those fortunate to hear the principles of revelation. In his Yale preaching lectures, Phillips Brooks

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[38] Joel Randall Breidenbaugh, "Intergrating Doctrine and Expository Preaching: A Proposal and an Analysis for the Twenty-First Century" (PhD Diss., The Southern Baptist Seminary, 2003), 180–91.

spoke on the preacher's obligation to preach truth (contextually) and the timeliness of truth (application) to those under his care.[39]

Brooks' instruction is timeless in that it addresses the contemporary needs of preaching today and supports this project. Despite being spoken nearly two hundred and forty years ago, his words are relevant for today's expositor. There must be an order to sermon formation that prioritizes exegesis and the discovery of the truth of the passage, and then combines contemporaneity in delivery as the timeless truth of Scripture is applied through history.

Brooks' view that combined truth and relevance (timeliness) as a means to enlarge, not diminish the thinking of one's audience is consistent with this article's thesis. Some may conclude that seeking timeliness leads to a weakened view of truth; however, this is not necessarily true. Granted, there is a growing trend in preaching that leads to this result, but the two are to be maintained in a balance that exalts the Word, the God of the Scriptures, and enlarges the minds of those who hear. Seeing the eternal relevancy of the ancient text to contemporary life is one way the enlargement occurs. This observation helps the audience see the historical scope of Scripture and God's intention in the ancient and modern world, which acts as another testimony of the perspicuity and sufficiency of the Word. The Word will always accomplish its purpose in time and space (Isa 55:11; 2 Tim 3:16–17).

In a seminal work of Kostenberger and Patterson, they propose a paradigm based on a hermeneutical triad of historical relevant, literary consideration, and a theological message.[40] When moving to the application of the text Kostenberger and Patterson offer extensive guidelines for the expositor. The principles discovered can be succinctly stated as follows: When preaching Old Testament Narratives, make sure you are familiar with the literary context. The narrative is unfolding a larger story in the context of the immediate, broader, and complete context of Scripture. There must be caution in applying a "macro-chiastic structure" to OT narratives. Attempts at this

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[39] "It is the first sort of preaching that wearies men when they complain of what they call a very profound but a very dull sermon. The second is what makes people dissatisfied with a sense of unthoroughness as they come home still mildly tingling from what they call a sensational sermon. The first man has aimed at truth without caring for timeliness. The second man has been so anxious to be timely that he has perhaps distorted truth, and certainly robbed her of her completeness. Truth and timeliness together make the full preacher. How shall you win such fulness? Let me say one or two general words, and leave particulars of the method to come out, if they may, all through the lecture. First, seek always truth first and timeliness second, — never timeliness first and truth second. Then, let your search for truth be deliberate, systematic, conscientious. Let your search for timeliness consist rather in seeking for strong sympathy with your kind, a real share in is going on. And yet again; let the subjects of your sermons be mostly eternal truths, and let the timeliness come in the illustration of those truths by, and their application to, the events of current life. So you will make the thinking of your hearers larger, and not smaller, as you preach to them." Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching, Delivered before the Divinity School of Yale College in January and February 1877* (New York: Dutton, 1877), 220–21."

[40] Andreas J. Köstenberger, and Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology*, Invitation to Theological Studies Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 78–81. The main thesis of the hermeneutical triad presented proposes that the end result of theology is application of the theological theme to life and the proclamation of the theme, which will motivate and effect change in the life of the listeners. In biblical literature, the volume provides the principles that will properly interpret and show the relationship of the Canon, Genre, and Language.

method are reminders of the redaction-critical studies that disregarded narrative specifics without justifiable reasoning.[41] Although evangelical hermeneutics rejects allegorizing as a legitimate hermeneutical method, far too often the moralization of texts in preaching reflect this method. Expositors will arrive at the theological theme of the message, which will enable them to apply the theological point of the author to their present context as they follow the literary structure of the pericope as they note the "individual scene of the narrative cycle."[42]

Principle #4: Bridge the Gap by Finding Commonality

Bryan Chappell has made a significant contribution to homiletical dialogue with the development of his Fallen Condition Focus (FCF) principle.[43] Chapell's FCF is another method used in determining legitimate application in exposition by determining the purpose of the text and the message exposited. The essential question of the FCF is finding commonality with the ancient audience to whom the passage was written. Richard notes that the application of the text to the present-day hearer is initiated by asking how it relates to their culture and life experience, which was not needed for the original hearers:

> An important difference between what "application" meant to the immediate audience and what it means to readers today also needs to be stressed…. Since they shared in the environment of the writer, the extra step of having to sense how the truth related to life was unnecessary…. Early audiences did not have to ask how the directives related to their lives. They had only to choose to obey or disobey. In that sense application was specifically known then is not known now. Believers today, however, must ask the preliminary application question of relationship-to-life, before applying it in obedience is possible.[44]

Chapell defines the FCF as, "the mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with those to or about whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage for God's people to glorify and enjoy him."[45] Chapell's emphasis on the grace needed is the hinge that maintains the focus on the undergirding reality that any genuine life change will take place only as the Spirit energizes it and in doing so respondents will avoid moralizing the text because they have properly understood the

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[41] Ibid., 742.

[42] Ibid., 743. These cycles or episodes will be joined by character, place, setting or incidents. It is noted that most plot structures are the "problem-resolution" form. Ibid., 744–52.

[43] Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 48–57.

[44] Ramesh P. Richard, "Methodological Proposals for Scripture Relevance Part 3: Application Theory in Relation to the New Testament," *BSac* 150, no. 598 (July 1986): 209–10.

[45] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 50.

passage and the basis for the moral instruction. Terry captures the importance of stressing the grace of God in application when he said,

> There can be no true application, and no profitable taking to ourselves of any lessons of the Bible, unless we first clearly apprehend their original meaning and reference. To build a moral lesson upon an erroneous interpretation of the language of God's Word is a reprehensible procedure. But he who clearly discerns the exact grammatico-historical sense of a passage, is the better qualified to give it any legitimate application which its language and context will allow…. To misinterpret the sacred writer is to discredit any application one may make of his words.[46]

Chapell is correct in asserting that exploring a text's purpose drives us to consider certain questions. These questions will help form the application of the message to the lives of the modern audience. If the message is to be relevant to the audience, the teacher must ask questions that probe the text's purpose and organize the truths discovered for proclamation—probing questions such as, What circumstances led to the concerns expressed (implicitly or explicitly)? What is unique about the audience that will help determine purpose and form the sermonic element of the passage? In the discovery of the text's purpose, there is an awareness that multiple purposes may exist. Purpose in this use represents the multi-level application drawn from the implication of the text.

Chapell's questions for forming the FCF include:
1. What does the text say?
2. What spiritual concern(s) did the text address (in its context)?
3. What spiritual concerns do listeners share in common with those to (or about) whom the text was written?[47]

There are numerous points of common life the contemporary audience shares with the ancient. The core values, wants, needs, struggles, and questions are virtually unchanged through time. Today, like then, there are certain staples of life that all men share in common, and they transcend time and culture—family, the need for love, the struggle with the pride of life and the love of the world, a desire to understand one's final destiny and purpose. These, among others, have and will be shared through the ages. It is the job of the expositor to direct his audience to the same abiding source for lasting answers—the Creator and His word. Here is the very lifeline of preaching—to direct people with the common need to experience the only lasting solution for the concerns and answers to life.

The timeless needs of the human heart are unchanged and so the expositor's task is firm—preach to the need(s) of the congregation, whether they are realized by them or not, because they share a commonality with the ancient world placed in a modern context. The expositor should not be naïve to the common strengths and flaws of his

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[46] Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, rev. ed. (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1890), 470.

[47] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 52.

audience. Richard emphasizes that the commonality of the two is one of a theological continuity when he said,

> What extends New Testament meaning to the present is audience-trait, that commonality the audiences share because of a relationship posited between people by the Scriptures. The relationship between the present church and the early church is one of direct theological heritage, particularized by the ecclesiological factor. This means that application is not based so much on existential analogies between the original audience and today, as on the theological relationship of continuity between the two segments of the church.[48]

The continuity shared is one of intention (Rom 15:4) that is not simply the ancient church and the modern, but the ancient people of God and God's people through the ages. What maintains the continuity of intention is the overarching purpose of God to have a people for his name, who will represent Him in the world as they reflect His image. Richard communicates,

> The task of application, then, is to determine the appropriate degree of transfer between the fixed point of the original audience of the text (as determined by careful exegesis of the passage in its original context) and the variable points of a range of target audiences. This measure determines the legitimacy and specificity of application for each target audience in view.[49]

A proper understanding of the cultural background will help the expositor derive the implication of the text and place them in proper relationship to his present audience. Osborne has restated the FCF principle when he said,

> Determining the situation behind the text is a major factor in differentiating the cultural from the supracultural elements in the text (see p. 423). While in many cases we cannot ascertain the exact situation with precision (esp. in narrative portions; see p. 421), what we can discover is very helpful. This decision affects contextualization or application and provides the basis for the other principles that follow. By noting the situation behind the surface command, the interpreter can see how the author has contextualized his underlying theological principle (stage two) and can seek parallel situations in the life of his current congregation (stage three).[50]

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[48] Richard, "Methodological Proposals Part 3," 209. Richard suggests 5 audience-traits that the church today shares with the early church (209–10). Certain dissimilarities and similarities exist between the people of God in the N.T. and those in the O.T. "The fundamental dissimilarity occurs because Israel preceded the Cross and the church succeeded the Cross (Richard, "Methodological Proposals Part 3," 304).

[49] Ibid.

[50] Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 442.

Principle #5 Bridge the Gap by Implementing Probing Questions

There are various questions that should be asked of the passage to aid in closing the cultural and time gap. When determining whether texts are cultural, transcultural, normative, or nonnormative, expositors probe to discover its relevance for today's audience and the degree of transfer in the preaching.

The questions presented by Virkler are heavily influenced by those presented by Kaiser. (1) Is it legitimate to retain the principle along with the form (i.e., the cultural-historical expression of that principle)? These are occasions when the principle and expression is unchanged in the movement from the ancient to contemporary. (2) Retain the principle but modify or replace the form/behavioral expression of the principle with an equally meaningful expression that corresponds to the culture. Here, the preacher will use the principle and its universal import in a manner that allows it to have contemporary significance. (3) Change both the principle and the form—if they can be deemed culturally bound and, therefore, no longer valid.[51]

McQuilken, Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard contribute the following questions to the process of making appropriate applications of the ancient text:
1. Does the text present a broad theological or moral principle?
2. Does the context limit the recipient or application in any way, or does it promote a more universal application?
3. Does subsequent revelation limit the recipient or the particular application?
4. Is the specific teaching in conflict with other biblical teaching in ways that show it was limited to exceptional situations?
5. Is the specific teaching a general moral principle, or are there cultural conditions, mentioned or assumed, that make it a particular cultural directive and therefore inappropriate to apply in the same way?
6. Is the particular cultural form present today? If so, does it have the same significance as it did then?
7. Is there an indication of the author's intent or a general biblical principle behind the particular directive?
8. Is there a rationale for the application offered by the biblical author, and is that rationale treated as normative (i.e., is it rooted in a creation ordinance, in the character of God, or the redemptive plan for humanity)?
9. Does the Bible treat the command or application at variance with standard cultural norms? [52]

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[51] These three propositions are derived from Virkler's transcultural discussion, with modifications (see Henry A. Virkler "A Proposal for the Transcultural Problem," In *Rightly Divided*, 240.

[52] These questions are simply stated for the sake of space. The questions posed are not exhaustive, but representative of the general similarities in various lists proposed by McQuilken in "Problems of Normativeness," 219–40; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 411–20; Johnson, "Response," 272–80; and Virkler, "A Proposal for the Transcultural Problem," 239–44.

Doriani proposes the following list of questions:[53]

1. What should I do? That is, what is my duty?
2. Who should I be? That is, how can I become the person or obtain the *character* that lets me do what is right?
3. To what causes should we devote our life energy? That is, what *goals* should we pursue?
4. How can we distinguish truth from error? That is, how can we gain *discernment?*

Kuhatschek, however, has proposed three simple questions in order to identify the general principle in a passage:

1. Does the author state a general principle?
2. Why was this specific command or instruction given?
3. Does the broader context reveal a general principle?[54]

Osborne provides perhaps the best synthesis of principles for applying the text. Because he views application as "crucial to the task of biblical interpretation" there must be diligence in making the transfer from the meaning of the text to the application in the modern arena of life.[55] He espouses three levels in the hermeneutical task: *meaning*—considering the intended message of the text; *interpretation*—asking to what extent its message is determinative for our own day; and *contextualization*—seeking the form that will best communicate that normative message and lead to concrete application to people's daily lives.[56] The final level is the ultimate goal of the hermeneutical process—communicating the authoritative message of Scripture to the lives of the people under the care of those who speak for God.

A summary of the three levels is as follows.[57]

Table 2. Tri-Level Hermeneutical Tasks.

Level 1: Meaning/interpretation (6 steps)
This level seeks to understand the intention of the author.
Get the big picture of the text (*look at the whole*). Take notes of the ebb and flow of the book's thought development. Note the biblical theology of the book and the author's emphasis. Determine a thesis statement that will control the message and application.

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[53] In Doriani's "The Four Aspects of Application" (*Putting the Truth to Work*, 97) he provides a detailed explanation for the questions presented.

[54] Jack Kuhatschek, *Applying the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 57–60.

[55] Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 451.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid., 451–55.

Consider the genre and ask the particular questions that highlight its unique role in the canon.
In the movement from the big picture of the text to the supporting parts is the investigation of grammar, semantics, and syntax.
Consider the historical/cultural background to understand the significance of the passage for the lives the original audience and the present. Take advantage of the illustrative influence of ancient culture and the relevant parallels today.
Consider the analogy of Scripture in view of the diversity of the other parts (1–4).
Consider the analogy of the faith. The expositor must investigate the historical interpretation and application of the text.
Level 2: Interpretation/relevance (5 steps) This level seeks to determine the level of normativeness of the text.
If the text has an anchor in a far-reaching Old Testament text, the words of Christ or a canonical creed (1 Cor 15:3–5) are indicators that intention is not limited to the cultural situation.
Look for the circumstances and underlying theological or ethical principle. Ask whether the principle or situation is prescriptive or descriptive.
"Determine whether the teaching transcends the *cultural biases* of the age. If it does transcend those norms of society, it will provide a clear signpost for the supracultural relevance of the command. If it does not, we must consider the other principles, for we may then need to contextualize it within the new situation."
Distinguish between cultural and theological/moral teachings.
"Recognize that the *supracultural content of Scripture is eternal and universal* and cannot be altered, while cultural forms may be changed depending on the context. This of course provides a transition to the last level. The major point is that our decision regarding eternal norms is binding on all cultures. Pragmatic considerations should not be allowed to overrule biblical demands."
Level 3: Contextualization/application (5 steps) The goal is the clear and available delineation of the gospel to all men
Understand the audience to whom we preach the truth.
"Allow the Word to encounter the world" by constructive confrontations with the culture and adaption to help communicate truth. This may include content retention with cultural adaptation. Stress the importance internalization of the message before proclamation to others.
Speaking authoritatively to the eschatological and apocalyptic issues of today as those with the sole solutions for the age in which we live.

> Be aware of the priority of authority. A message's authority is bound to meaning. Contextualization is a step removed and yet equally "dependent on the Spirit's illumination and still another step removed from text since it depends on the interpretation and our own decision" as the normalcy and application of the text.

> Understand the necessity of "praxis" in the life of the church. The faith is one of understanding that leads to response. It is a faith of *hear* and *obey*. Exposition should align itself with this expectation.

Summary

While part one of the articles defined the key terms and showed the use of those terms in preaching, part two focused on the principles deemed essential for taking the message of the past and showing its relationship in applicational exposition. The task of building the figurative bridge from the ancient to the modern does require caution but it should not cause stagnation in the expositor's pulpit. The most important principle is stressing the need to always have an exegetical starting point when moving from the past to the present. If not, whatever applications are provided must be met with a certain degree of suspicion. The cultural divide affords two opportunities: (1) the discovery of God's truth as the author's signs are followed in view of their contextual usage (2) the potential for the audience's thinking to be enlarged as they observed the transcendent nature of the Scriptures. Although a passage may have varying applications, those applications are still bound to the intention of the text—application is not anarchical but subject to the meaning of the passage.

An emphasis on the transhistorical intention of the text and exemplification is useful, since they are aspects of hermeneutics and homiletics, while principlizing the text is the guideline that helps amplify the implication of a text and support expositors in bridging the time and cultural gap. The cultural gap may amplify distinction, but it does not require there to be contrasts even when the cultural norms are vastly different because the timeless nature of the Bible transcends distinction and creates continuity. Recognizing and using the principles associated with Particular Dynamic, Theological and Cultural Affirmation, and Theological-Cultural Separation are strategic in disclosing the "ever abiding meaning" for today's listener. When applying these principles, the expositor must be aware of the range of directness and authority when applying the text. There is a movement from the most direct in imperatives to the least direct in passage themes.

Chapell's Fallen Condition Focus is another means to bridge the gap from the ancient to modern. In the same manner in which we share a common faith, goal, and spiritual foundation with the original audience and authors, we also share the same shortcomings and strengths. Applicational exposition recognizes the commonality of the audiences and investigates ways to speak authoritatively to those common fronts with the relevant application of the text to life. When bridging the gap of time and culture, the expositor must ask probing questions of the text to help in determining the applicability of the text to the present.

The questions provided in this article are not exhaustive but foundational for properly traversing the figurative bridge from the ancient to the present. The emphasis on the importance of application is tempered by the exhortations to be aware of the proper order of authority. This authority begins with properly understanding the author's intention within the text, which only then affords the preacher opportunity to proclaim the relevancy of the life-changing message of God's revelation. In part three, we will note the use of the principles that bridge the ancient gap and the categories of application in reformational, puritan, and modern preaching.

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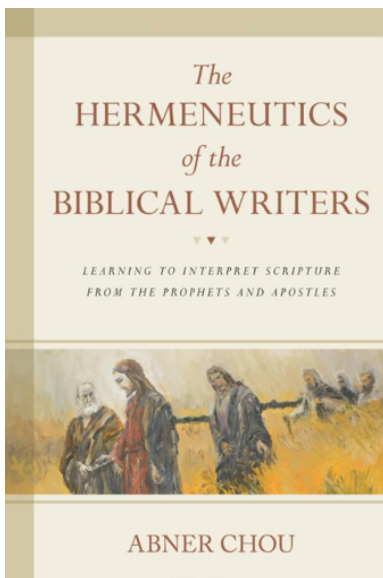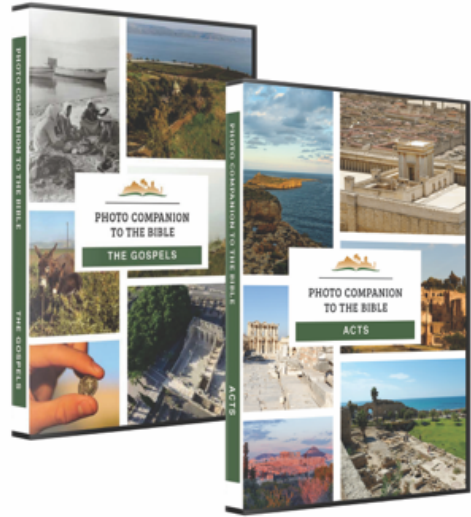
**The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers:
Learning to Interpret Scripture from the
Prophets and Apostles**
by Dr. Abner Chou, John F. MacArthur Endowed
Fellow in Biblical Studies at The Master's Univer-
sity and Seminary

A method of interpretation—a hermeneutic—is in-
dispensable for understanding Scripture, construct-
ing theology, and living the Christian life, but most
contemporary hermeneutical systems fail to
acknowledge the principles and practices of the bib-
lical writers themselves. Dr. Chou proposes a "her-
meneutic of obedience," in which believers learn to
interpret Scripture the way the biblical authors did,
including understanding the New Testament's use
of the Old Testament.

Kregel Academic, $23.99, 256 pages, Paperback,
ISBN: 9780825443244

REVIEWS

William D. Barrick. *Understanding Bible Translation: Bringing God's Word into New Contexts.* Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2019. 248 pp. $21.99. Paperback.

Reviewed by Aaron M. Shryock, Director of the Tyndale Center for Bible Translation, The Master's Seminary.

William D. Barrick's *Understanding Bible Translation: Bringing God's Word into New Contexts* is an introduction to the ministry of Bible translation. With the heart-felt appeal of a pastor and the precision of a veteran professor, Barrick draws from his years of experience in Bible translation in Bangladesh and as a professor of Old Testament at The Master's Seminary to present a personal challenge to the reader to grasp the significance of Bible translation while not being deterred by the technical and often daunting nature of the ministry.

Barrick first engages the topic of translation by underscoring the importance of translations that are understandable, preferably using the common language or vernacular. He proceeds to discuss the concept of a common language, drawing on his experience in Bangladesh. Barrick transitions in Chapter 3 to the topic of meaning and the challenges of translating from the culture of the Ancient Near East to the contemporary culture of the target language. In Chapter 4, Barrick returns to the importance of common language, noting the importance of simplicity and clarity. Barrick then shows in Chapter 5 how translation and theology are interwoven. Barrick then leads the reader through a detailed analysis of the translation of Psalm 23 in English, surveying translation methods and discussing the translation of the Tetragrammaton, YHWH. In Chapter 7, Barrick examines the translation of Provers 8:1–11 in depth, discussing the issues a translator would have to address in translating this portion of Scripture.

In Chapter 8, Barrick turns to the single most common question in Bible translation for English speakers—which English Bible is best? He presents an analysis of several major versions, pointing the reader to the kind of research to be done, rather than to a specific answer. He also advises church leaders to give enough time to the process of choosing a translation as their pew Bible. He concludes with an acknowledgement that no Bible translation is perfect; consequently, church leaders and the evangelical community more generally must stay involved in the task of English Bible translation.

Barrick moves from professor of Old Testament to missionary and mentor in Chapter 9, where he shifts to the topic of personal preparation for the ministry of translation. He then addresses another topic essential to translation in Chapter 10, working as a team with agreed principles of translation. Barrick concludes in Chapter 10 with an appeal to prayer and dedication to this vital ministry: "Without it you would not have come to Christ for salvation. Without it you would have no church to attend, no preaching to hear, and no service to perform" (221).

With this volume, *Understanding Bible Translation: Bringing God's Word into New Contexts*, Barrick makes a valuable contribution to the literature on Bible translation. He has, first and foremost, reminded the reader of the importance of translation as a ministry that glorifies Christ and advances the kingdom. Furthermore, he does not avoid the challenges of a very demanding and technical work, but methodically leads the reader through a variety of issues as an experienced translator and professor.

Despite the merits of this work, Barrick's introduction to this topic could be strengthened with more attention to defining basic terms such as *translation, paraphrase,* and *vernacular* as well as more technical terminology such as *unmodified literal translation, restructured free translation,* and the like. Furthermore, the chapters present engaging but often unrelated topics which don't build upon each other and thereby contribute to an overarching argument. In lieu of the chapter on which English version is best, the reader could have benefits from Barrick's experience in Bangladesh with a chapter on revision and another on the topic of producing Bible translations designed to minister to specific religious communities. Finally, it would be helpful to gain some of Barrick's thoughts on modern theories of Bible translation such as relevance theory, even noting the topic of modern theories and including some pertinent readings in Chapter 9.

Understanding Bible Translation: Bringing God's Word into New Contexts offers a personal introduction to the ministry of Bible translation, approaching the topic as only an experienced missionary, Bible translator, and professor of Old Testament could. Any student of Scripture interested in translation will benefit from this volume. I hope that many readers of this volume will be moved to enter the ministry of Bible translation and, after years of ministry, be able to join Barrick in saying, "No greater legacy can be found than bringing the Bible into another language for yet another people" (221).

Jongkind, Dirk, *An Introduction to the Greek New Testament Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. 124 pp. $14.99. Paperback.

Reviewed by William C. Varner, Professor of Bible and Greek, The Master's University.

In 2017 Crossway published the *Tyndale House Greek New Testament (THGNT)*, under the leadership of scholars at Tyndale House in Cambridge, England. I was privileged to serve as a proofreader for sections of the work. At the end of the edition was a thirteen page "Introduction" that explained the basics of the critical

edition, including the textual philosophy behind the choices made and the reasons for utilizing the smaller number of manuscripts compared to the many cited in the apparatus of the Nestle-Aland (*NA*) and the United Bible Society (*UBS*) New Testament editions.

The chief editor of that *THGNT*, Dirk Jongkind, has now written a more complete *Introduction to the Greek New Testament* with the subtitle: *Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge.* For this edition, two of my Greek students, Caleb Fisk and David Lunceford, worked with the manuscript as proofreaders. The Masters University, therefore, is heavily vested in both these publishing projects.

This 124-page volume is more than a guide to the *THGNT* since it is intended to serve as a guide to NT textual criticism in general. Due to its length, it is not intended to replace the substantial works on the subject by such scholars as Bruce Metzger (*The Text of the New Testament*, 4th ed. with Bart Ehrman) and the Alands (*The Text of the New Testament*, 2nd ed.). Jongkind introduces the reader to the manuscripts themselves, various textual theories, and the actual praxis of text criticism. He also surveys the major textual problems and even suggests some theological reflections on the reality of textual variants, something not normally attempted in such guides. One of the leading evangelicals working in this field, Daniel B. Wallace, remarks on the cover that "it is no easy task to render this field of study within the grasp of any interested reader, and Jongkind has done so in a remarkably disarming manner." This reviewer is in hearty agreement with this assessment.

After a brief chapter to explain why there is a need to do textual criticism (17–26), in the second chapter Jongkind deals with some very practical issues like using your Greek New Testament and reading the apparatus at the bottom of the page. As a professor myself, I know how bewildering the textual apparatus can be, even for an advanced student. He also explains some of the peculiar characteristics of the *THGNT* such as different book order (one that actually follows the order of the books until the 16th century). The paragraphing and spelling features of the *THGNT* are also clearly explained and justified. In Chapter Three Jongkind explains the major manuscripts, namely the larger papyri codices and the early majuscule texts such a Sinaiticus and Vaticanus.

With a good review of the basic materials of textual criticism, Chapter Four then explains how textual decisions are made. Some important variants are then discussed, such as the ending of Mark, the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53–8:11, the sweat like drops of blood (Luke 22:43–44), and Jesus' prayer of forgiveness on the cross (Luke 23:34a). Two valuable chapters then follow that explain why Jongkind and the majority of text critics do not favor the Textus Receptus (Chapter 5) and the Byzantine text (Chapter 6). The author is irenic but firm as to why these textual traditions are later and do not represent the earliest form of the NT texts.

A unique contribution is the chapter, "Biblical Theology and the Transmission of the Text" in Chapter 7 (101–8). This is especially valuable since advocates of the Textus Receptus and Byzantine texts often argue for the priority of these traditions from a theological viewpoint. Jongkind has offered a theological perspective on these issues that should be received well by evangelical theologians. It should be of great interest to readers with a high view of Scripture that we now have a volume explaining textual criticism by one who also shares the same approach to the infallible word.

Recognizing that his work is not the final word on this subject, Jongkind concludes with a chapter, "Where Do We Go from Here?" (209–10) that explains how wide open this field is because of the abundance of the manuscripts now available in digital editions, a blessing not known to the Metzgers and Alands of the past. A helpful glossary of technical terms (113–16) concludes the volume.

One can see from the brevity of this work that it could be very helpful to the beginner in sorting out and simplifying the often confusing field of Greek manuscripts and textual theories. Because of the fresh "documentary" approach of the *THGNT*, it is vital for all scholars to understand that edition better, whether one uses it or not. Not only is this little book a very helpful guide to the use of the *THGNT*, it is invaluable to anyone who uses any other edition of the *GNT*. Many readers of this review may have forgotten some of the intricacies of text criticism studied so hurriedly in seminary. This book can help the reader to review an old subject, and it can also reintroduce you to some new approaches. I can offer no better recommendation than affirming that I am already requiring it in my own Greek courses.

Patterson, Todd L. *The Plot-structure of Genesis: 'Will the Righteous Seed Survive?' in the Muthos-Logical Movement from Complication to Dénoument*. Biblical Interpretation Series 160. Leiden: Brill, 2018. 246 pp. $132.00. Hardcover.

Reviewed by Paul Twiss, Instructor of Bible Exposition at The Master's Seminary.

Todd L. Patterson is a graduate of Trinity International University (PhD) and currently serves as Assistant Professor of Old Testament at Matej Bel University in Slovakia. His book, *The Plot-structure of Genesis*, published by Brill, is the distilled version of his doctoral dissertation. The book presents a literary reading of Genesis arranged broadly according to the *tôledôt* headings, and argues for a twofold plot-structure inherent to the narrative. The first of these schemas results from understanding Genesis as part of the broader biblical narrative, and asks the question of humanity's return to the presence of God via the line of promise. The second considers Genesis in isolation and posits the Cain and Abel narrative as the initiating complication within the book. Patterson argues for a plot-structure driven by the question of the seed's survival in the face of unrighteousness (10). Thus, *The Plot-structure of Genesis* is an attempt to articulate the narrative flow of Genesis according to these proposed plot-structures, with particular attention given to the latter.

The first two chapters of Patterson's work delineate his methodology and shall serve as the focus of this book review. The reason for this rationale is twofold. Firstly, in reading Patterson's treatment of the text itself it becomes clear that he has followed his reading strategy meticulously. Each 'plexus' is subjected to the same control questions and Patterson's analysis is consistent. Therefore, the success of the project can be evaluated in large measure by scrutinizing the validity of the methodology. Secondly, by the author's own admission he is not primarily seeking to offer new interpretations for individual pericopae (31). Rather, Patterson's main contribution is the holistic interpretation of Genesis that he offers—one that seeks to apply the Aristotelian notion of emplotment to Scripture. Thus, critical engagement with the book

should gravitate towards the introductory chapters and evaluate the reading strategy offered therein. On this note, several points of commendation are warranted.

First, although *The Plot-structure of Genesis* is not intended to function as a direct critique of source-critical methods it challenges this branch of Pentateuchal scholarship indirectly. To be clear, Patterson briefly discusses synchronic reading strategies as he delineates his methodology (8), and is clear to articulate their shortcomings. However, it is primarily by espousing a unity to the narrative of Genesis that the book functions as an indirect retort to source-critical approaches. In particular, *The Plot-structure of Genesis* challenges the most recent articulation of the Documentary Hypothesis, which claims a breakdown of plot-structure as justification for a composite view of the text.[1] By considering the matter of emplotment Patterson's work infers that these source-critical conclusions should be reexamined.

A second point of commendation concerns the book's contribution to literary criticism, and our understanding of Hebrew narrative. Though much work has been done in the area of 'close reading' in recent times,[2] there is undoubtedly a need for more formally defined methodologies. *The Plot-structure of Genesis* points the reader in this direction. Specifically, Patterson proposes what he calls a '*muthos*-logical mode of reading,' wherein the emphasis is placed on interpreting the text according to one holistic movement, from complication to dénouement. Though some readers may have questions regarding the validity of imposing Aristotelian thought on an ANE text, at the very least Patterson should be commended for harnessing recent research concerning Hebrew narrative towards a more rigorously defined reading strategy.

The third noteworthy contribution made by *The Plot-structure of Genesis* concerns its intersection with a much broader discipline, namely biblical theology. Although there is no formal discussion within the book to this end the implications are clear. Biblical theology has long suffered under the question of a *Mitte*, or center. Contributions from Alter, Sternberg, et al. have indirectly influenced the pursuit by emphasizing the premise of narrative continuity.[3] Indeed, much more attention has been given in recent times to the literary nature of the text and the contribution of this feature to any proposed meta-narrative. Patterson's work serves as an example of this by arguing for a plot-structure within Genesis that serves a bigger picture, specifically that of the biblical meta-narrative. The methodological ramification of this is to highlight further the importance of narrativity in the field of biblical theology.

With these commendations noted some critiques should also be mentioned, pertaining again to Patterson's proposed reading strategy. Firstly, he claims an Aristotelian model of emplotment, modified and advanced by Paul Ricœur (1). However,

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[1] See for example, Joel S. Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

[2] See for example, J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991); Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994); Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001); Shimeon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004).

[3] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985).

Patterson's subsequent engagement with Ricœur's work, *Time and Narrative*, is limited. He engages with Volume 1—an extended argument for the narrative nature of history—while neglecting to consider Volumes 2 and 3. While there is nothing inherently wrong with this approach—Patterson is not obligated to embrace the entirety of Ricœur's argument—the subsequent modification to Aristotle's tragic *muthos* is necessarily limited. That is to say, Patterson's reading strategy does not fully reflect the threefold mimetic model traced out in *Time and Narrative*, with apparently little acknowledgment of the pre-figuration and reconfiguration of the text. This raises the question as to how *The Plot-structure of Genesis* would be further strengthened if the methodology more fully reflected Ricœur's work. Would Patterson's analysis of narrative continuity be yet more satisfying? Would further insight be offered concerning the narrator's mimetic strategy? A more extensive acknowledgement of the Ricœurian modification to Aristotle would be welcome.

Secondly, in Chapter 1 Patterson introduces two control questions for assessing his proposed plot-structure. The first is whether all the narrative episodes contribute to the plot-structure (6), the second, whether the plot-structure works together with recognized features of Genesis (8). Although Patterson explains the derivation of these questions, their validity as a controlling measure for the success of the project could be further scrutinized. That is to say, there appears to be a degree of subjectivity inherent to the questions. This becomes apparent as Patterson speaks of narrative progression in terms of that which is probable, inevitable, or natural (8). A more persuasive argument in defense of the control questions, or a survey of how others have sought to test proposed plot-structures would have done much to remove the perceived subjectivity at this point.

Finally, Patterson's model of a twofold plot-structure for Genesis is relatively complex. The idea of two concurrent schemas for reading the text will undoubtedly be new to many readers, unfamiliar with the theory of narrative logic. Although the proposal is reasonable—both as a literary concept and based upon the supposition that Genesis functions as part of a biblical meta-narrative—Patterson could have perhaps explained it at greater length. By more fully articulating the proposed twofold plot-structure, reader expectations would be better established prior to the body of the book, thereby bringing further clarity to certain corners of the narrative.

In sum, *The Plot-structure of Genesis* offers a literary reading of the narrative that should be welcomed. Patterson's methodology with his attention to the *muthos*-logical movement of the text provides new insight at the holistic level. It furthers more recent efforts to explore the idea of emplotment within the biblical text and beckons for further studies in the same vein. Though there are aspects of Patterson's reading strategy that could be strengthened, such should not detract from the positive contribution made by *The Plot-structure of Genesis* to Pentateuchal scholarship.

Van Mastricht, Petrus. *Theoretical-Practical Theology: Prolegomena*. Translated by
    Todd M. Rester. Edited by Joel R. Beeke. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage.
    2018. 336 pp. $50.00. Hardcover.

Reviewed by Kevin D. Zuber, Professor of Theology, The Master's Seminary.

As is perhaps the case with other students of the history of western philosophy,
I first became acquainted with the name of Petrus van Mastricht while engaged in the
study of the life, work and intellectual impact of the acknowledged "father of modern
philosophy," René Descartes (1596–1650). By the time of his death in 1650, Des-
cartes' "New Philosophy" had stirred no little "intellectual turmoil" in "the Dutch
Republic and the Calvinist states of Germany."[1] It was inevitable that "philosophical
conservatives," such as the great Utrechet University professor Gijsbertus (Gilbert)
Voetius (1589–1676)[2] and his successor to that post, Petrus van Mastricht, would
oppose the "New Philosophy," and oppose anyone who would seem to make conces-
sions to it.[3] And as if to leave no doubt about his estimate of Cartesianism, van Mas-
tricht entitled his most philosophically oriented work *Novitatum Cartesianarum Gan-
grena* (1677) (in English, *The Gangrene of the Cartesian Novelties*).[4]

By all accounts, this work established van Mastricht as a first-rate philosophical
thinker whose arguments and reasoning were considered by others to be philosophi-
cally equal to the task of refuting the "New Philosophy."[5] It is interesting, as Rester
notes in the "Translator's Preface," that an "ever-present and imminent concern" that
loomed over van Mastricht's work was a "Socinio-Cartesianism," which Rester de-
fines as "a broad concept of greater confidence in unregenerate human reason than
reliance on the Holy Scriptures and the work of the Spirit through regeneration."[6] In
van Mastricht's day, under the influence "methodological doubt and a high confi-
dence in unregenerate human reason" all truth (including Scripture) was to be "held
up to the scrutiny... of autonomous reason."[7] Those familiar with latter masters of

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[1] Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750*,
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 24.

[2] Israel writes that Voetius adhered to "a fundamentalist, hard-line confessional orthodoxy" (Ibid.,
25).

[3] Israel suggests that even the dispute between Voetius and the equally renowned Johannes Coc-
ceius (1603–1669) "became intertwined with the issue of Cartesianism." (Ibid.)

[4] This work was actually directed at Christopher Wittich (Witthius) (1625–1687), a professor at
the University of Duisburg, who is identified by Israel as one of the Cartesio-Cocceians, and "a cham-
pion of philosophical reason," (Ibid., 25) who "appreciated Descartes's philosophical thought" and "
(Adriaan C. Neele, "Petrus van Mastricht (1630–1706): Life and Work," in Petrus van Mastricht *Theo-
retical-Practical Theology: Prolegomena*, trans. Todd M. Rester, ed. Joel R. Beeke, [Grand Rapids:
Reformation Heritage Books, 2018], xxviii and xxxv). Neele does a good job of identifying van Mas-
tricht's anti-Cartesianism but provides a balance by bringing out van Mastricht's collegiality with others
with whom he disagreed, for instance the Labadists (see Ibid., xxxiii–xxxiv).

[5] See Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 215–16; Neele, "Life and Work," xxxv.

[6] Todd M. Rester, "Translator's Preface," in Petrus van Mastricht *Theoretical-Practical Theology:
Prolegomena*, xix.

[7] Ibid.

Dutch Reformed theology and apologetics (Herman Bavinck, Abraham Kuyper, Cornelius Van Til, et.al.) can easily perceive the seeds of their thinking in van Mastricht's opposition to the "mind of the (autonomous) natural man" in his day.

However, van Mastricht, was not first and foremost a philosopher[8] nor primarily a controversialist—he was a theologian (indeed, a pastor) and it is a pleasure to see the work of this notable Dutch Reformed master theologian being made available in English, to provide a more theological, and indeed pastoral,[9] dimension to the overall impression of van Mastricht and his body of work.

The volume under review here is the first of a proposed seven-volume set: "This volume, *Prolegomena*, contains Part I, Book 1 (1.1)" to be followed by "2. *Faith in the Triune God* (1.2); 3. *The Works of God and the Fall of Man* (1.3–4); 4. *Redemption in Christ* (1.5); 5. *The Application of Redemption and the Church* (1.6–7); 6. *The Covenant of Grace* (1.8); and 7. *Morality and Piety* (2.1–3, 3.1–4) with an estimated combined length of four thousand pages."[10]

The content of this particular volume includes (as already indicated by the notes) an "Editor's Preface," by Joel R. Beeke, a "Translator's Preface," by Todd M. Rester and a brief biography of Petrus van Mastricht by Adriaan Neele, "who did his doctoral work on Mastricht."[11] All three are helpful to the reader in the usual ways such prefaces are helpful (again as indicated by the notes below), but Neele's biography is especially useful, indeed, crucial to appreciating the context and therefore the content of van Mastricht's work.

Also, included is the "Funeral oration on the death of Petrus van Mastricht by Henricus Pontanus" which seems to have been included here because it was printed in an early (1715) edition of the *Theoretico-practica Theologia*.[12] This work includes some supplemental information to Neele's biography (but, frankly, introduces the reader to some seriously meandering and historically obscure "rabbit trails" away from the main point—van Mastricht! One line of this oration is worth repeating: "Since Christ's birth no method of philosophy has been maintained whose abuse did not harm holy Christians."[13] The paragraphs to follow elaborate on the point—but are, alas, a distracting "rabbit trail." However, another worthwhile line is: "All those who are swollen with the vanity of knowledge and seek to be called doctors, magistrates, and great, illustrious and honored men, but are devoid of Christian charity, are

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[8] As Aza Goudriaan argues, van Mastricht and his anti-Cartesian colleagues were not attempting to prop up a rival philosophy (i.e. Aristotelianism as inherited from the Medieval scholastics) but to ground theology in *sola Scriptura*. (See Aza Goudriaan, *Reformed Orthodoxy And Philosophy, 1625–1750: Gisbertus Voetius, Petrus Van Mastricht, And Anthonius Driessen*, Brill's Series in Church History: Vol. 26 (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

[9] "Mastricht is a pastor writing to train pastors..." (Rester, "Translator's Preface," xviii).

[10] Joel R. Beeke, "Editor's Preface," "Petrus van Mastricht (1630–1706): Life and Work," in Petrus van Mastricht *Theoretical-Practical Theology: Prolegomena*, xi.

[11] Ibid., xii. See Adriaan C. Neele, *Petrus van Mastricht (1630–1706). Reformed Orthodoxy: Method and Piety* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

[12] "Funeral oration on the death of Petrus van Mastricht by Henricus Pontanus" in Petrus van Mastricht *Theoretical-Practical Theology: Prolegomena*, lxvi.

[13] Ibid., lxxxvi.

the most foolish of all mortals and will be rejected and mocked by God and the inhabitants of heaven."[14] We can assume the orator did not attribute such vanity to van Mastricht!)

The substance of van Mastricht's work is introduced (after ninety pages!) with a practical treatise titled "The Best Method of Preaching."[15] As the title indicates, this short work (about thirty pages) is an outline of instructions for preaching. The author arranges his instruction under four main headings: invention, arrangement, elaboration, and delivery.[16] To illustrate each of these main points of instruction the author uses Colossians 3:1 as an example.

Invention has to do with the selection of a text. Arrangement has to do with the order or outline of the exposition. Elaboration has to do with the content (exegesis, doctrine) and "use" (application) of the exposition. Several types of "use" are identified—informatory, elenctic, consolatory, rebuking, exploratory (i.e. probing the hearers motives, and affections), hortatory (imperative). Delivery has to do with "style, voice and gestures." (This last part is reminiscent of Spurgeon's *Lectures to My Students*.[17]) Throughout the outline van Mastricht includes very practical directions. For instance, in the matter of analysis or outlining of the text, the author advises "… the content is divided into its own parts..." and "the immediate parts should be adequate to the content and entirely exhaust it…" but "the parts should not be superfluous."[18] As concerns "the affections" in the introduction, they should not be entirely absent but "ought not to be aroused as much as the argument."[19]

I came away with at least two impressions from this brief practical work: one—it is clear that the author knows his craft—from the perspective of the listener, the perspective of the preacher and the perspective of the inspired text being preached. Two—the author has provided some practical principles from his own experience—not only of his own efforts at preaching but possibly from that of listening to the attempts of the aspiring preachers he is here instructing.[20]

The major portion of the volume is the first part of *The Theoretical-Practical Theology*. First, the reader can expect: the "1699 Dedication,"[21] and the "1699 Preface."[22] Both of these portions of the volume are helpful for setting the sense and focus

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[14] Ibid., ixxxviii.

[15] Petrus van Mastricht, "The Best Method of Preaching," in Petrus van Mastricht *Theoretical-Practical Theology: Prolegomena*, 1.

[16] Ibid., 5.

[17] Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth), 2008.

[18] Van Mastricht, "The Best Method of Preaching," 9.

[19] Ibid., 8.

[20] For instance, here is his instruction on dealing with "obscurities" and "textual controversies": The "preacher should not strive to explain things that by themselves are clear and perspicuous enough, for in so doing, not only would it steal time away from the argument, but would further obscure the text in his desire to elucidate it." Ibid. 10. And on the delivery: "Should not be pompous, courtly or long-winded (lit. *sesquipedalis* "a foot and a half long" Ibid 30n27)… but it should be manly and spiritual." Ibid., 30.

[21] van Mastricht, "1699 Dedication," 39.

[22] van Mastricht, "1699 Preface," 43.

of the work to follow. Then follows an analytical outline of the work—"Methodological Arrangement of the Whole Work"[23]—that extends for sixteen pages. This outline covers the contents of this volume and the other proposed volumes (up through 3.4, see above; the editors have reworked van Mastricht's original outline but, it seems, for the better without any loss of content from the original[24]). Such outlines often prove to be among the most valuable parts of such a work—often more valuable than a simple table of contents or an index. The remaining one hundred and fifty pages contains the "meat" of the book.

Three chapters make up the remainder of this volume: "Chapter One: The Nature of Theology,"[25] "Chapter Two: Holy Scripture,"[26] and "Chapter Three: The Distribution of Theology."[27] "Chapter One: The Nature of Theology" concerns matters of Prolegomena. In the section on "The Exegetical Part" van Mastricht begins with a brief exegesis of 1 Timothy 6:2–3[28] and he thereby signals that this work will be exegetical in orientation; he continues this orientation in the subsequent chapters—2 Timothy 3:16–17[29] for Chapter Two and 2 Timothy 1:13[30] for Chapter Three.

In Chapter One the argument is developed by the elucidation of three "theorems": "First Theorem—The Method of Theology,"[31] "Second Theorem—The *Definitum* of Theology,"[32] "Third Theorem—The Definition of Theology."[33] Each of these "theorems" is developed by the aforementioned "The Exegetical Part," followed by "The Dogmatic Part," "The Elenctic Part," and "The Practical Part." Likewise, Chapters Two and Three follow the "Exegetical, Dogmatic, Elenctic, Practical" outline. Each one of these sections is then developed with appropriate subheads that explain, argue and apply the theological subject matter being discussed. These outlines and subheadings make the work quite easy to "navigate." Protestant scholasticism it may be, but the content is rich (but not verbose and dense); and it is "practical"—not just in the sections so designated. Indeed, the sections designated "The Practical Part"[34] should dispel the characterization of Protestant scholasticism as dry and unrelated to life. In another place van Mastricht asserts, "Again, theology is the

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[23] van Mastricht, "Methodological Arrangement of the Whole Work," 47–62

[24] Ibid., 47n1.

[25] van Mastricht *Theoretical-Practical Theology: Prolegomena*, 63.

[26] Ibid., 113.

[27] Ibid., 203.

[28] Ibid., 64–66.

[29] Ibid., 113–17.

[30] Ibid., 203–4.

[31] Ibid., 67.

[32] Ibid., 73. The distinction of the terms *definitum* and "definition" is explained in the footnote, Ibid, 30n1.

[33] Ibid., 98.

[34] Ibid., 71ff, 86ff, 208ff.

doctrine of living, and of living for God, and for God through Christ."[35] Theology must not be dry and "lifeless" and in van Mastricht's presentation it certainly is not.

The actual theological depth of the work is far too rich for us to go into in this brief review. Perhaps if I can zero in on one discussion it will illustrate the fuller value of this work. One of the more warmly debated issues in Reformed theology today is the question of the place of "natural theology." Karl Barth's rejection of natural theology made it a question for contemporary (twentieth-century) theology[36] and Michael Sudduth's book *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology*[37] revived the discussion in Reformed circles. In the light of these more recent discussions van Mastricht's brief comments on "natural theology" seem startlingly contemporary.[38] He notes, there are some who see no use to natural theology at all, while there are some who see it as sufficient for salvation. He adds, "The Reformed certainly acknowledge that natural theology is useful for refuting atheists, for demonstrating the deity, for some kind of worship of God (Rom 1:19–20), and for rendering the pagans, including the philosophers, without excuse (Rom 1:21–14, 32; Acts 17:24ff; 1 Cor 11:13–14) but they consider it in no way sufficient for salvation."[39] This and several other matters demonstrate that van Mastricht may be over three centuries old, but his work is not untimely!

Final comments: The translation is readable and Todd Rester is to be thanked for that; it is not always the case that very good works remain so in translation. The use of this volume (and the volumes to come) by preachers as well as scholars will prove the worth of the effort in production and the ongoing value of van Mastricht's work. It seems superfluous to recommend it (it will recommend itself)—nevertheless I do. But then, as far as recommendations go, a work recommended by none other than Jonathan Edwards (see the back cover of the book) can hardly be surpassed. If Edwards said (as he did) that Mastricht was "better than Turretin," then this is a must-have work for anyone interested in practical Reformed theology. It is a work that is biblically sound, theologically rich and warmly practical. One wonders why it took so long for van Mastricht to be translated, and Reformation Heritage Books is to be cordially thanked. I look forward eagerly to the subsequent volumes.

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[35] Ibid., 101.

[36] See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics II. 1: The Doctrine of God*, trans, by T.H.L. Parker, W.B. Johnston, Harold Knight, J.L.M. Haire, ed. by G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, T & T Clark: London/New York, First English edition, 1957; paperback edition 2004, Original German edition *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik II: Die Lehre von Gott 1*, Evangelischer Verlag A.G. Zollikon: Zurich, 1940.

[37] See Michael Sudduth, *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009).

[38] Van Mastricht *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, 82–84.

[39] Ibid., 83–84.

Watkin, Christopher, *Michel Foucault,* Great Thinkers series. P&R, 2018. 216 pp. $11.50. Paperback.

Reviewed by William C. Varner, Professor of Bible and Greek, The Master's University.

Book reviewers must always keep in mind the readers of their work. It is probably a safe assumption that the readers of this review are not professional philosophers but likely pastors, students, and academics in biblical and theological studies. Therefore, what is the relevance to your life, personally and professionally, of an analysis of the overall thought of a postmodern French philosopher and social critic, who was also a confessed atheist?

Let me try to offer an idea that understanding Michel Foucault is relevant to your life and ministry. Foucault was and is a hugely influential thinker whose work influenced a wide range of disciplines, "from history and sociology to fine arts, feminism, and gay and lesbian studies" and he "has also profoundly shaped Western culture at a street level" (back cover).

I will never forget being accused of post-modernist influence simply because a Web search had indicated that Foucault had said a lot about "language discourse"—thus my own study of "discourse analysis" must be post-modern! Actually Foucault's influence on the biblical discipline of "discourse analysis" was absolutely nil, and the Web search simply indicated that he wrote about many subjects.

Another postmodern philosopher has tried to define postmodernism as marked by an "incredulity toward any meta-narrative" (Lyotard). In other words, there exists no overarching approach to reality that accounts for it as a whole. In other words, at the most basic level there is nothing like a macro-explanation for reality. There are only mini-narratives that cover small segments of the human condition. If that is true, then Foucault is definitely a post-modernist. An analysis of his work, however, reveals that he wrote so much more than philosophical musings. He actually spoke largely to the abuse of power throughout history. Of course, according to Foucault, any attempt at offering a meta-narrative would be in itself an abuse of power. His main book titles actually may surprise most observers—e.g., *The History of Madness* and three volumes on *The History of Sexuality*, of all things! How does one even begin to get his head around such diverse subjects?

Enter Christopher Watkin, professor in Melbourne, Australia, who, unlike most of us, has read Foucault and understands his great significance for the modern world. His excellent summary of Foucault's ideas is only the beginning (1–75) of this truly superb treatment. Yes, it can be dense reading at times, but this approach to life is what your university students are being fed. What all readers will benefit from in this book is Watkin's superb theological response to Foucault (77–138). In these pages Watkins expounds, on the basis of two great NT texts (Phil 2:5–11 and 1 Cor 1:18–31), what he calls the "Cruciform Great Reversal." The theological and exegetical reader will be pleased and challenged by Watkin's handling of these two significant NT texts that can also serve as the Christian response to all of modern thought, Foucault being the most current example at hand.

Watkin has sought "to discern what Foucault wants or values, to show how he proposes to attain it, and to compare his approach with biblical passages that address similar concerns" (137). It is mind-bending to learn that Paul faced the very same issues that modern philosophers raise, and these two NT passages deal with an answer to these issues.

It is best simply to let Watkin sum up the issues in his own words. "If the Greeks seek true wisdom, then they must embrace the foolish cross; if the Jews seek true power, then they must embrace the weakness and the offense of the cross. If Foucault seeks a radical transformation of the self, then he must leave behind the control inherent in the "self-" of self-transformation and abandon himself to the only radically other who can open the self to a non-circular transformation at the deepest level" (138).

Undoubtedly there are some readers who may wonder if Foucault never crosses their paths, why they should waste their time with a book like this? As a communicator to this generation, you should know that post-modernists like Foucault have captured the minds of those kids who sit in our pews and classrooms, even when they don't know why they think as they do. It is our task to offer them the Gospel "Great Reversal" that Jesus displayed in His own teaching, and how a preacher like Paul applied it to the thought of his own day, which thought was remarkably more "modern" than we often realize.

And even if you never have a need to mention a thinker like Foucault in your own lectures or messages, you will learn a lot from Watkin about how Paul preached and applied the message of these two great New Testament texts, and their relevance to modern, and post-modern, people.

Michael Kibbe. *From Topic to Thesis: A Guide to Theological Research*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2016. 153 pp. $12.60 paperback.

Reviewed by Cory M. Marsh, Associate Professor of New Testament at the College at Southern California Seminary

Michael Kibbe (PhD, Biblical and Theological Studies, Wheaton College, 2014) was formerly Assistant Professor of Bible at Moody Bible Institute in Spokane, Washington before accepting his current position as the Dean of College of Communication and Theology and Assistant Professor of Bible at Great Northern University, also in Spokane. In the Acknowledgements section of *From Topic to Thesis*, Kibbe discloses that the book had its roots as a two-hour workshop on writing and research at Fuller Theological Seminary in 2009. Various colleagues of Kibbe used the developing manuscript as test cases in their theological writing classes until InterVarsity Press brought the drafts to completion in book form. As such, *From Topic to Thesis*, while still less than five years old, is a "tried and true" academic product.

The book's purpose is summed up nicely in its title, "from topic to thesis." That is, what Kibbe hopes to accomplish in the work is to guide the student in crystalizing a chosen topic into an actual working thesis. That the entire work is around 150 pages in half-size proportion makes it a book accessible to the busy student or researcher, able to be read in a few hours. As the book points out, the research process can be

overwhelming to seminary students. This is because it takes a network of skills in which the student must learn to develop to survive graduate studies. For instance, Kibbe outlines the research process in three broad sweeps: finding information; skillfully processing that information; and persuasively communicating that information (12). While these three steps seem easy enough, the student juggling multiple classes and papers can quickly find himself overwhelmed at the prospect. The once-confident student then becomes panicked because he quickly realizes just how unaware he is on *how* to narrow down a monumental theological topic to a thin, memorable proposition and argument. That is where *From Topic to Thesis* steps in to help direct the student in the process. According to Kibbe, "It is a simple book designed to take you step by step from a research *topic* to a research *thesis*" (14); hence, the book's title. In other words, the book takes the reader through various stages from identifying a topic to actually making an argument about that topic.

The book is laid out in five chapters which are devoted to five distinct steps Kibbe sees as vital to developing an actual thesis. Step one, "Finding Direction" (45–53), introduces the student to the process of researching a given topic. Primary and tertiary sources are explained and encouraged for the student to become familiarized, while secondary sources are not touched at this stage. By first exploring a topic to further develop, this stage precludes any decision on what the paper will argue (45). In step two, Kibbe discusses the process of "gathering sources" (56–64). It is in this step where secondary sources are now explored, and primary sources read diligently—both of which the tertiary sources from the previous stage illumined. No one source should consume all the researcher's time, as this stage is really about building a working bibliography (64). Throughout this chapter, Kibbe reminds the student that research is largely about primary sources, even while "searching for secondary sources, always com[ing] back to your primary sources" (57).

In step three's, "Understanding the Issues" (65–75), Kibbe tells the reader: "You are not reading sources for their own sake, but rather for the sake of your paper" (69). It is particularly during this step that the researcher zeros in on secondary sources and begins to frame the on-going discussion for their topic. Large segments are devoted to reading during this stage. Once the researcher arrives at Kibbe's step four, "Entering the Discussion" (77–85), he should be done looking for sources. This is the stage in which to begin the actual writing, and Kibbe provides four helpful questions the student can answer in making sure the developing thesis is relevant to the conversation (79).

Finally, step five is all about "Establishing a Position" (87–89). This is the shortest chapter of the book, as it is here where the other four steps bear their fruit. Very simply, once the researcher gets to step five, he is, in Kibbe's words, to "Write your paper!" (87). The thesis is the heart of the paper and anything not contributing to the argument needs to be cut out. Kibbe does not end the chapter without offering two pieces of advice to help in the endeavor: "(1) let your research mold your thesis and (2) let your thesis mold your paper" (88). At the end of the day, Kibbe reminds researchers, "Your paper needs [*sic*] demonstrate three things: that you are *aware* of the conversation, that you *understand* the conversation and that you can *participate in* that conversation" (88). While there are several appendices attached to the book, it is these five chapters that make up its DNA.

Some may legitimately question as to why a book now over three years old deserves a current review. After all, would go the objection, more recent titles published on theological research method exists as well as some undeniable classics in academia. Nancy Jean Vyhmeister's *Guide to Quality Research Papers* (Zondervan, 2014) comes to mind as a recent classic and a new work by Glenn Kreider and Michael Svigel, *A Practical Primer on Theological Method* (Zondervan, 2019), addresses some ideas related to Kibbe on a more popular level. While these books certainly have value, Michael Kibbe's *From Topic to Thesis* standouts as the best tool available for the overwhelmed student currently in the throes of theological research. Its brevity and practical, sage advice make the book an instant classic and, quite frankly, reserves it a spot among the best works on how to *write* clear theology.

Though *From Topic to Thesis* is geared specifically for students at the graduate and post-graduate levels, it is helpful for undergraduates as well. Every struggling researcher, no matter their program level, should invite assistance in forming a process for developing and writing an actual academic thesis or proposition—and Kibbe's book serves as a helpful guide. While some might dismiss such a work, claiming they already have their "own way of doing it," they would probably be dishonest if they were not at least curious to see how someone else does it. Kibbe may not have broken any new ground with his book, but what he does offer is a brief, crystallized stepping-process to help the overwhelmed student accomplish their task.

Perhaps the book's biggest strength is its ability to serve a dual role in assisting both professor and student. For example, no teacher would object to Appendix A in the book: "Ten Things You Should *Never* Do in a Theological Research Paper" (93–96). The list Kibbe provides reflects the frustration just about every college or seminary teacher has experienced when reading a student's final paper. Here, one is reminded of Michael J. Vlach's little gem, *20 Tips for Writing Seminary Papers* (Theological Studies Press, 2009), which is outlined around many of the topics Kibbe's discusses accompanied by various "what not to do's" interspersed throughout. Whether *ad hominem* attacks, misrepresenting an author's position, neglecting to implement professor feedback, or the unforgivable sin of plagiarism, these ten points say everything a professor would like to say to their students about what *not* to do.

Kibbe's explanations of the various level of sources (primary, secondary, and tertiary) in the Introduction and throughout the book are themselves worth the price of the book. It has been this reviewer's experience that students in the classroom have often never heard these terms or noticed their distinctions when engaged in the research process. Generally, they are concepts that the student is basically expected to know and are assumed to be well acquainted. As a personal aside, Kibbe's clear distinctions between the three types of sources is a main reason why this professor has assigned the book to an undergraduate research and writing class the past three years. The feedback from students has been overwhelmingly positive.

If there was a negative critique to offer, it may lie in the product-placement for Zotero in Appendix E. While there is no doubt Bibliography/notetaking software can help in the research process, the chapter smacks of a relentless infomercial. Some may object to this critique since Zotero *is* a valuable tool and aid to overwhelmed researchers. Yet, it is difficult to ignore the tone of the chapter which, while offering helpful steps if one decides on Zotero, functions more like an extended advertisement. Moreover, it is a needless risk to promote *any* particular software program

since it is sure to be outdated within a year or two. It is simply impossible to keep up with the turnover rate for new products, including Zotero—which has already spun out a new edition since the snap shots Kibbe presents in the chapter.

Another possible critique worth mentioning is the brevity in which Kibbe presents the research process. Much is lost in the details, for example, between step four (entering the discussion) and step five (establishing a position). How one actually takes what they learned in their research of others and crystallizes their own thesis statement and argument is never actually discussed; it is merely assumed. However, this critique can just as easily be turned around to a positive as the book's brevity invites the already-busy researcher to enjoy some pithy advice without adding the burden of another technical resource to read. Ironically, it is in the book's quick-paced overview of the research process where its strength shines. In the end, *From Topic to Thesis* is an enjoyable read with helpful advice and refreshers for theological researchers at all levels. Certainly, it deserves a place in a backpack or on a shelf within arm's length.