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BOOK REVIEWS

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Fall 2024 issue of the Midwestern Journal of Theology. It has been my pleasure to serve as Guest Editor for this issue as Michael McMullen has been away on sabbatical. I would like to thank Dr. McMullen for his work on the initial phases of this edition, Blake Hearson for the compilation and review of its book reviews, and Jason Duesing for his oversight as Academic Editor.

This volume is especially dedicated to showcasing the work of Midwestern's PhD students. As can be seen here, these men and women are positioned to make genuine contributions in diverse theological fields, each with convictions and inclinations *for the Church.*

The opening article is the semester's faculty address, a riveting *status quaestionis* on Pauline divine Christology from John J. R. Lee. PhD student articles include an examination of John Wesley's anthropology and soteriology from Trevor Cartwright, arguing for a 'semi-Augustinian' reading of Wesley; a philosophical-theological application of the concept of 'pure act' to divine omnipotence from Andrew Robert Cole; an exegetical-ethical study in 'modesty' from Catherine Garrison, in conversation with a flurry of recent popular-level works on the topic; a status-quo-challenging look at the missiology of Luther and Calvin from Joshua D. Thomas; a proposal of Exodus's allusions to Genesis, particularly regarding the 'seed promise' of Gen 3:15, from Brian Verrett; and a thematic study of the close ties of 1 Peter and 2 Peter from Sam Whittaker, supporting their common Petrine authorship. We close with many timely book reviews, the semester's PhD graduates and their dissertations, and a list of recent works received for review.

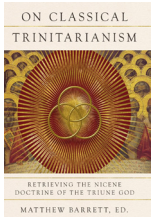
We expect to revert to publishing general submissions in the Spring 2025 issue, so if you have an interest in submitting an article for consideration, please submit a Word document to Dr. Michael McMullen at mmcmullen@mbts.edu, formatted in SBL style. We are sorry we are not able to publish every article we receive.

Gratefully,

Travis James Montgomery, PhD
Guest Editor

Books in Brief

New and upcoming releases from the Midwestern Seminary community



ON CLASSICAL TRINITARIANISM: RETRIEVING THE NICENE DOCTRINE OF THE TRIUNE GOD

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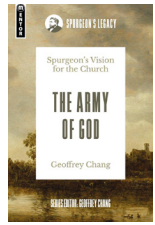
(IVP Academic)
OCTOBER 1, 2024

With contributions from a variety of scholars, Matthew Barrett's *On Classical Trinitarianism* retrieves the robust tradition of Nicene orthodoxy, responding to modern challenges and strengthening trinitarian theology for the church today.



THE ARMY OF GOD: SPURGEON'S VISION FOR THE CHURCH

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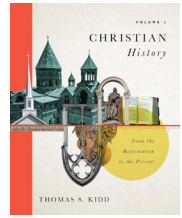
SEPTEMBER 10, 2024

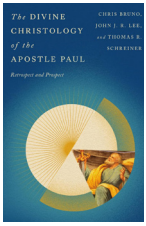
From Spurgeon Library Curator Geoffrey Chang, *The Army of God* explores Spurgeon's view of the Church as God's army, offering pastors and scholars practical new insights on the ecclesiology of the Prince of Preachers.



CHRISTIAN HISTORY: FROM THE REFORMATION TO THE PRESENT

by Thomas S. Kidd
(B&H Academic)
SEPTEMBER 1, 2024

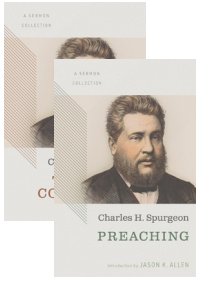
Thomas S. Kidd's *Christian History* offers a fresh approach to the study of modern Church history, focusing on the legacy of the great tradition and the factors leading to Christianity's flourishing in the Global South.



THE DIVINE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

by John J. R. Lee, Chris Bruno, and Thomas R. Schreiner
(IVP Academic)
MAY 28, 2024

John J. R. Lee's *The Divine Christology of the Apostle Paul*, coauthored with Chris Bruno and Thomas R. Schreiner, engages recent Pauline scholarship and New Testament exegesis to show that Paul identified Jesus as the God



PREACHING and **THE GREAT COMMISSION**

Edited by Jason K. Allen
(B&H Books)
JUNE 4, 2024

Compiled by Jason K. Allen, these two new volumes of Charles Spurgeon's sermons offer preachers a model to follow in the dominant theme of Spurgeon's preaching: the central importance of Christ and His salvation for sinners.

Midwestern Journal of Theology 23.2 (2024): 1–18

Faculty Address – Fall 2024

"Jesus is Lord": A Conversation with Key Recent Proposals for Pauline Divine Christology[1]

JOHN J. R. LEE
Professor of New Testament,
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Saul of Tarsus (Paul here onward) was traveling to Damascus to arrest adherents of a new sect of Judaism who had the audacity to claim that the Messiah had been executed and resurrected. The young Pharisee then suddenly encountered the risen Jesus and experienced a radical turning in his life.[2] Some years later, writing a letter to his ministry supporters, Paul confesses: "[Whatever] gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him" (Phil 3:7–9, ESV). As this passage and many other parts of Pauline writings imply, Jesus was the center of the apostle's life and the recipient of his undivided devotion.[3]

In what sense, however, was Paul able to reconcile his Jewish monotheistic faith (or his commitment to the Shema)[4] with his

[1] This faculty lecture is adapted from chapters 1–6 of *The Divine Christology of the Apostle Paul* by Chris Bruno, John J. R. Lee, and Thomas R. Schreiner. Copyright (c) 2024 by Christopher Bruno, John J. R. Lee, and Thomas R. Schreiner. Used by permission of InterVarsity Press, P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515, USA. www.ivpress.com. John J. R. Lee was the primary author of these chapters and the three appendices. The readers who want to have a more in-depth understanding of the material summarized in this lecture are strongly recommended to consult the above-mentioned book.

[2] See the three accounts in Acts 9, 22, and 26.

[3] E.g., 1 Cor 2:2; cf. Gal 6:14.

[4] Or his commitment to the Shema of Deut 6:4 and the first two commandments of the Decalogue.

devotion to Jesus as a divine figure? How could a teacher in Israel, who once was so passionately devoted to the worship of the one God and was willing to do even violence against a perceived threat to this worship, see his faith in Jesus as the fulfillment of the Torah?[5] This was, undoubtedly, a crucial question in the first century AD, and it remains so two millennia later.

Many people still claim that worship of Jesus as divine was impossible within Second Temple Jewish monotheism. Consequently, the divine Christology of the New Testament is seen to reflect a pagan influence or an anachronistic projection of later dogmatic theology into earliest Christian writings. Fortunately, however, we are not the first ones to wrestle with this crucial question of how Jewish monotheism and Christ's divinity go hand in hand. The history of the church provides a rich pool of resources for this matter, and, in recent decades, capable scholars, including the four the current lecture will introduce, have intensely dealt with this question and have advanced the conversations in some meaningful directions. My modest hope is to provide a representative overview of the recent arguments *in support of* Pauline divine Christology and offer a snapshot of an entry-point into the current conversations. I have chosen to focus on Richard Bauckham, Larry Hurtado, Chris Tilling, and N.T. Wright, based on the distinctive nature and the scholarly influence of their respective paradigms in recent conversations on Pauline divine Christology. I want to admit that I have learned a lot from each of these four scholars and that I agree with their overall conclusions. Yet, I also have some notable questions and concerns as revealed in my interaction with each of them below.

I acknowledge that not everyone accepts the view that earliest Christians had a divine Christology following Jesus' resurrection.[6] Holding that Jewish people were disgusted by pagan notions and practices, some scholars continue to question whether NT Christology

[5] Rom 10:4.

[6] To be fair, there are still tangible objections to and qualifications of divine Christology, often with various tendencies that regard it as incongruent with Jewish monotheistic sensibilities. Refer to the immediately following footnote.

could truly be divine,[7] while others propose more nuanced positions which evaluate NT Christology as relatively high but not reaching a fully divine view of Jesus, as exemplified by James D. G. Dunn.[8] Yet, an early and high Christology has attracted growing scholarly support over the last few decades partly due to the influence of Richard Bauckham and Larry Hurtado and is now even referred to as an "emerging consensus," at least by some scholars.[9]

Bauckham's and Hurtado's influences are easily felt in recent discussions of Pauline Christology. In recent years, a number of scholars have offered their fresh explanations of early and high Christology, but their discussions normally evolve around Bauckham and Hurtado. The two other scholars, whom this lecture will introduce (that is, Chris Tilling and N. T. Wright), and many other scholars working in the field of Pauline/NT Christology are in conversation with Bauckham and Hurtado in one way or another. In that sense, it is justifiable to begin my discussion of recent scholarship on Pauline divine Christology with Bauckham and Hurtado.

Richard Bauckham's Divine Identity Paradigm[10]

Richard Bauckham argues for a "divine identity" approach and explores NT Christology with a focus on Jesus' inclusion in the unique identity of the one God of Israel. Some of his key emphases include the following:

- Criticism of the traditional approach of ontic vs. functional Christology[11] in favor of a divine identity Christology.

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[7] See Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Essays on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2008), 2 and the scholars mentioned in 2n2.

[8] See James D. G. Dunn, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus? The New Testament Evidence* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010).

[9] E.g., Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *Jesus Monotheism, Vol. 1: Christological Origins, the Emerging Consensus, and Beyond* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015), 3.

[10] The following summary of Bauckham's approach is based on Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1998) and *Jesus and the God of Israel.* The former book has been incorporated as chapter 1 of the latter.

[11] See Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel,* chapter 1, especially x, 30–31.

- Replacing categories of ancient Greek categories with a Second Temple Jewish understanding of Israel's God and who that God is.
- The exclusion of any other figure from a place in God's unique identity as sole creator and sovereign of the universe and as the only one worthy of worship.
- The understanding that Paul and other NT writers included Jesus in the identity of Israel's God and identified Jesus uniquely with God.

Bauckham argues that, with strict Jewish monotheism and monolatry in the background, Paul and other NT authors found Jesus within the unique identity of Israel's God and, thus, interpreted Jewish monotheism Christologically.[12]

Worship of Jesus, Bauckham suggests, is not the foundation of divine Christology but its consequence. Notably, one finds here some difference between Bauckham and Hurtado, as we will see more clearly once both Bauckham's and Hurtado's approaches have been overviewed. According to Bauckham, NT Christology does not signify a compromise, distortion, or disposal of ancient Jewish monotheism but, instead, its Christological explanation. Per Bauckham's divine identity paradigm, NT Christology did not develop through an evolutionary process. Rather, "[the] earliest Christology was already the highest Christology," Bauckham stresses.[13]

Bauckham's attempt to overcome the dichotomy of ontic *versus* functional Christology is noteworthy. Earlier generations of scholars often utilized an ontic *versus* functional dichotomy and then attempted to limit Jesus primarily within the functional category,

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[12] See, e.g., Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel,* chapter 6. Drawing from David Capes's monograph, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul's Christology, WUNT 2/47* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992) and Gordon Fee's exegetical-theological work, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), Bauckham explores Paul's Christological appropriation of the OT YHWH texts for Jesus, as seen in Romans 10:13, Philippians 2:6–11, and 1 Corinthians 8:5–6, among others.

[13] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel,* x. Along this line, he notes that interest in intermediary figures (such as chief angels and heroes from the past), in the study of Christian origins, has been exaggerated (see, e.g., *Jesus and the God of Israel,* 2–5, 14–16).

arguing that Jesus is divine only in a functional sense but not in an essential sense.[14] Bauckham's divine identity Christology seems to offer at least a partial remedy for such one-sidedness, and it possibly provides a way forward in an area where other scholars may have been stuck in the proverbial mud.[15]

Critique of the Divine Identity Paradigm

Although I do overall appreciate Bauckham's attempt with his divine identity Christology presented in his admirably clear writing style, there are still some questions to raise related to his approach. First, the term "identity," as part of his key phrase "divine identity," is ambiguous and thus slippery, and yet Bauckham does not define it clearly in his key books on NT Christology: *God Crucified* (1998) and *Jesus and the God of Israel* (2008). Bauckham just briefly explains the term "divine identity" as follows:

> Reference to God's identity is by analogy with human personal identity, understood not as a mere ontological subject without characteristics, but as including both character and personal story (the latter entailing relationships). These are the ways in which we commonly specify "who someone is."[16]

In terms of modern usage and understanding of the term, "identity," this approach is correct. Nevertheless, the given concept is susceptible to misunderstanding. Considering that the term, "identity," is not drawn directly from primary sources (i.e., Scripture

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[14] Cf. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, x, 30–31.

[15] One of the strengths of Bauckham's divine identity paradigm is that it is very easy to follow. This particular strength might have to do with the fact that Bauckham began his academic career as a theologian rather than a NT scholar. In any case Bauckham explains his paradigm in a manner that anyone with basic theological training can understand without much difficulty. Regardless of whether one agrees with him or not, Bauckham's presentation itself tends to be clear and straightforward.

[16] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 6n5. Here, the word "relationship" is particularly important because Bauckham argues for the unique identity of Israel's one God with attention to how God *relates* to all reality—as the sole creator; as the only sovereign of the universe; and as the only one worthy of worship (*Jesus and the God of Israel*, 6–13).

or Second Temple Jewish literature), it is surprising that Bauckham did not make serious efforts in his key books on NT Christology to explain the term or justify his use of the term. Relatedly, it is not entirely clear whether all Second Temple Jewish people would have understood the notion of "divine identity" as clearly as Bauckham does, and, if so, we should ask whether Bauckham's case is immune to some type of anachronism.[17]

Moreover, while Bauckham attempts to include Jesus' life, suffering, and death in the divine identity rather than connecting it with Jesus' humanity,[18] a further inquiry is needed to examine whether Bauckham's approach accounts for the NT data better than the classic explanation of the concurrence of Jesus' divinity and humanity in paradox or as mystery.[19]

Second, although it is helpful that Bauckham discusses Jewish monotheism and divine identity Christology with two relational dimensions in view, that is, (1) God's relationship with Israel, and (2) his relationship with all reality—it is unfortunate that Bauckham does not consider the former in much detail. A close examination of Paul's Christology in light of God's relation to Israel will bring some meaningful insights, as Chris Tilling's study, *Paul's Divine Christology* (2012), has demonstrated, which we will discussion below.

Third, since God's relation to Israel and his relation to "all reality" are organically bound up with each other, if just one of them is considered and the other is neglected, such discussion is destined to be limited in its effect. Indeed, Bauckham's proposal seems to suffer that problem.[20]

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[17] Another issue is what Bauckham meant by the "*inclusion* of Jesus in the unique, divine identity" (e.g., *Jesus and the God of Israel*, x; emphasis added) is not clear.

[18] See Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 32–59.

[19] Cf. Dunn, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus?*, 141–44.

[20] Bauckham's discussion primarily focuses on God's relation to all reality, thus missing a rich pool of evidence for Pauline divine Christology based on God's relation to his people (Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology*, 61–62). Moreover, while Bauckham emphatically downplays the significance of Second-Temple Jewish intermediary traditions—and those traditions have, in fact, been abused by some scholars in accounting for Christian origins—he seems to overcorrect the problem by negating their significance altogether (Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 2–5, 14–16).

Larry Hurtado's Corporate Worship Paradigm[21]

Larry Hurtado presents a 'corporate worship' paradigm for Pauline and NT Christology, which looks at the question of Jesus' divinity from liturgical practices of his early followers, such as Paul and his churches. According to Hurtado, public and organized worship acts offered to Jesus guarantee that early Christians accepted Jesus as a divine figure.

Originally influenced by Bauckham's 1981 article, titled "The Worship of Jesus in Apocalyptic Christianity,"[22] which gave attention to the worship of Jesus in the book of Revelation, Hurtado has pursued the thrust of that article thoroughly and has located worship acts devoted to Jesus at the very center of Pauline and NT divine Christology, i.e., the view that Bauckham himself has subsequently qualified.[23]

Hurtado observes that even pagans used 'one-God' or 'only-God' language for their 'high god' figure. However, pagans still sacrificed to lesser deities and were thus pluralistic in their cultic practices, while using the 'one God' or 'only God' rhetoric for their supreme deity. In contrast, Second Temple Jews were monotheistic both in their religious rhetoric and in their worship practices; though it is true that in Second Temple Jewish literature some angels and patriarchs were attributed with remarkable rhetoric on several occasions, they were never regarded as legitimate recipients of worship. The radical difference between Second Temple Jews and neighboring pagans had to do more with their worship practices rather than their use of monotheistic-sounding language. Thus, worship practices should be taken centrally in considering any religious phenomenon of the first-century Mediterranean world. In light of that, religious rhetoric alone,

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[21] The summary of Hurtado's approach below is based on Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003); *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (3rd ed.; London: T&T Clark, 2015); *Honoring the Son: Jesus in Earliest Christian Devotional Practice* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018). The last work presents Hurtado's own accessible summary of his life-long scholarship on NT Christology as exemplified in the first two works.

[22] Richard Bauckham, "The Worship of Jesus in Apocalyptic Christianity," *New Testament Studies* 27 (1981): 322–41.

[23] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, e.g., 11–12 and 11n20.

even the most impressive kind, cannot guarantee a biblical sense of monotheism or the full divinity of Jesus, in Hurtado's view. It is corporate worship acts directed to Jesus along with God the Father, with the background of Jewish monotheism, that guarantee the fully divine view of Jesus.[24]

In his book, *Lord Jesus Christ*, Hurtado carefully examines Christological titles such as "Christ," "Son of God," and "Lord (*Kyrios*)" as well as their respective significance.[25] Hurtado also gives attention to Christ's preexistence based upon Philippians 2:6-11 and 1 Corinthians 8:6 and carefully looks at the crucial role of Jesus' death and resurrection in redemption.[26] Thus, Hurtado does not deny the place of religious rhetoric in Paul's Christological and theological construct.

Nevertheless, Hurtado does not allow religious rhetoric a central place. Religious rhetoric reserved for Israel's God alone in the OT and in Second Temple Judaism is now appropriated for Jesus in Pauline writings (as we can see from the application of OT YHWH texts to Jesus[27]), and that is indeed impressive. But such rhetoric is authenticated when it is accompanied by worship acts directed to Jesus. For Hurtado, Paul's dyadic devotional pattern, which includes Jesus as a corecipient of worship together with the Father, is the clearest evidence for Jesus' divine status and significance among his earliest followers—who were Jews and thus knew that such worship acts were supposed to be reserved only for Israel's one God. Various devotional acts such as dyadic prayers including Jesus alongside God the Father, prayers offered to Jesus, confession of Jesus as divine κύριος, baptism in Jesus' name, the practice of the Lord's Supper, hymns focusing on who Jesus is and what he has done, and so forth do reveal a devotional pattern that includes Jesus as a legitimate recipient of worship, together with God the Father.[28]

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[24] See Hurtado, *Honoring the Son*, 19–64. For further discussion refer to his *One God, One Lord*, and *Lord Jesus Christ*.
[25] Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 98–118.
[26] Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 118–33.
[27] Cf. Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul's Christology*.
[28] Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, chapter 5; *Lord Jesus Christ*, 134–53; *Honoring the Son*, chapters 4–5.

Critique of the Corporate Worship Paradigm

Hurtado's account for Paul's divine Christology shows a genuine effort to integrate intense historical investigation and Christological reflection. Moreover, his observations on the nature of Christian worship and its Christological significance is stimulating. Despite these strengths, however, I wonder if Hurtado has downplayed a little too much the independent weight of religious rhetoric in Paul's Christological and theological construct.[29] Along with Bauckham, I think that it would be simply inconceivable for an early Jewish follower of Jesus to worship him without the prior conviction that he is divine and that he is one who fundamentally corresponds to the one God of Israel in his status and significance.[30] Otherwise, corporate worship of Jesus becomes a practice of mysticism. Identifying the worship of Jesus as worship of God, in the first century context, may not require a fully elaborate Christology as found in our systematic theology books. Yet, there should be some fundamental and sufficient understanding of who Jesus really is and why he is worthy of worship *as* a foundation for the devotional acts offered to him. While appreciating Hurtado's learned treatment of various issues related to Christology and the worship of Jesus, I wonder if his language is either hyperbolic or somewhat out of balance at this point.

Second, one may question Hurtado's distinction between religious rhetoric and worship acts, with more weight placed on the latter by him, and also question if such a distinction is artificial because descriptions of the worship acts, to which Hurtado refers, are parts of Pauline letters and thus parts of Pauline religious rhetoric. Then, it is not entirely clear in what sense the Pauline passages that Hurtado

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[29] On this point, Bauckham's criticism targeting Hurtado and the earlier position taken by Bauckham himself is helpful: "Some recent argument has tended to the position that the exclusive worship of the one God is really the factor that defines God as unique in Second Temple Judaism. This . . . is a confusion, because the exclusive worship of the God of Israel is precisely *a recognition of and response* to his unique identity. It is God's unique identity which requires worship of him alone." See Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 11–12 (italics original). Overall, Hurtado has underestimated, though not denied or dismissed, the importance of religious rhetoric in his examination of Paul's divine Christology while acknowledging the crucial place of cultic veneration.

[30] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 11–12.

categorizes as "liturgical" or "devotional" do not belong to the apostle's religious rhetoric. At least some clarification, if not a more nuanced approach, is desirable in this regard.

Third, as Chris Tilling has pointed out, the whole scope of life, and not just the matters directly related to worship acts, should be considered in fathoming Jewish monotheism and Pauline divine Christology (see Rom 12:1). Otherwise, one may commit the same error, against which the OT prophets accused Israel: paying attention to sacrificial matters while turning away from Israel's one God himself.[31]

Chris Tilling's Christ-Relation Paradigm[32]

Though not having the long tenure of Bauckham or Hurtado, Chris Tilling has recently advanced the conversation on Pauline Christology in important ways. Tilling's approach is summarized as a "Christ-relation" paradigm by Tilling himself.[33] Carefully building from and critically engaging with Bauckham's "divine identity" paradigm, Hurtado's attention to a devotional pattern found in Pauline writings, and Gordon Fee's exegetical insights, Tilling focuses on Paul's language regarding the relationship between believers and Christ, which is analogous to the relationship between Israel and her God in the OT.[34] Bauckham himself recognized the two dimensions in God's relation: his relationship to Israel *and* his relationship to all reality.[35] Nevertheless, Bauckham ended up focusing on the latter while neglecting the former.[36] Tilling's monograph gives due attention to

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[31] Chris Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), notes that, for Paul, "worship" covers the entire life as seen, for example, in Romans 12:1 (60), and in that sense Hurtado's account for Pauline Christology, which focuses primarily on a cultic worship pattern, is "insufficiently Pauline" (254). For further, see Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology*, 56–61. With such criticism, Tilling proposes his Christ-relation paradigm, which will be summarized and evaluated in the very next section.

[32] The summary of Tilling's approach is based on Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology*.

[33] Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology*, e.g., 6–10.

[34] See Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology*, chapter 3, for his interaction with the three scholars mentioned: Bauckham, Hurtado, and Fee.

[35] Bauckham, Jesus and the God of Israel, 7–8.

[36] Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology*, 61–62.

what Bauckham identified but failed to pursue in his work, that is, God's relation to Israel, which Tilling uses in his study as a key background for Pauline divine Christology.

Tilling's study is a welcome addition to the conversations of Paul's Christology, as he takes a notable step forward in arguing for a Pauline divine Christology, especially by exploring Christ's relationship with believers as something comparable to God's relationship with Israel. Tilling argues that Paul's pattern of language relating Christ to believers directly mirrors the pattern relating God to Israel in the OT and Second Temple Judaism (e.g., 1 Cor 8:1–10:22; 16:22), claiming that this overlapping *relational* pattern does most forcefully prove a divine Christology in Paul.[37]

In considering Pauline texts, Tilling's study is not limited to a few key passages or a set of individual data but instead seeks to trace, analyze, and integrate various themes in the Pauline corpus, thus locating a holistic pattern.[38] Tilling's approach is, thus, a strong contribution in and of itself.

In crafting his argumentation, Tilling begins with the exegesis of the Pauline corpus and then examines Second Temple Jewish texts—rather than going the other way around, which is the common way of progression in NT Christology scholarship. Tilling's order of progression, i.e., dealing with Pauline corpus first and then Second Temple Jewish texts, seems to be helpful in terms of giving due attention to the most important primary source in the pursuit of Pauline Christology: Paul's own writings!

Critique of the Christ-Relation Paradigm

With the above-mentioned strengths affirmed, however, Tilling's order of progression has a danger of making his investigation of background material (especially Second Temple Jewish sources) very

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[37] Tiling's key point is summarized in statements like this: "The Christ-relation was Paul's way of expressing a divine-Christology" (*Paul's Divine Christology,* 9).

[38] This is most clearly seen from Tilling's examination of the undisputed letters in chapter 6 of *Paul's Divine Christology*, where Tilling's examination of Pauline data has a holistic shape that looks at the pattern of themes found across the relevant letters.

shallow.[39] His order of progression has made his study firmly founded on Pauline texts. Yet that very order has made Tilling's discussion of Jewish monotheism and the relevant Jewish texts very limited. Early in his study, Tilling presents the following as one of his two core research questions: "How does Paul's Jewish-style faith in God affect our understanding of his Christology?"[40] One is, however, led to ask whether understanding the apostle's Jewish-style faith in God is indeed a crucial part of Tilling's investigation, given the absence of serious treatment of Second Temple Jewish monotheism and the related primary sources within his study. Rather than examining Second Temple Jewish texts himself, Tilling mainly cites secondary literature. The only notable exception is found in chapter 9 of his monograph, where Tilling examines three Jewish apocryphal and pseudepigraphal texts: Sirach 44–50, the *Life of Adam and Eve*, and the Similitudes of Enoch. Though that discussion itself is useful, what Tilling provides there is more of a test case rather than a substantial investigation. Overall, in-depth discussion of Jewish monotheism is lacking in Tilling's study.[41]

Second, what is also lacking in Tilling's study is the discussion of the relation between Christ and God. Looking at Paul's Christology from a notably *relational* angle is certainly relevant and even necessary. And comparing Christ's relationship with believers in Paul to God's relationship with Israel in the OT is enriching and rewarding. But what about Christ's relation to God, and God's relation to Christ? For Tilling's study to be more holistically *relational*, he should consider the God-Christ relation, too, which involves both unity and distinction between the two persons.[42] As a result of not significantly

[39] As I critique Tilling here, I want to note that he has not written as much as the other three scholars surveyed in this lecture, so the questions raised here intend to seek his further clarification.

[40] Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology*, 6; also 63, 253.

[41] It seems that Tilling has overcorrected the issues noted in some previous studies, which gave primary attention to Second Temple Jewish or Greco-Roman texts while assigning only a limited discussion to the pertinent Pauline/NT texts—usually towards the end of the study.

[42] Although Tilling himself criticizes Bauckham, Hurtado, and Fee for leaving important aspects of Pauline Christology, especially by neglecting the "Christ-relation" relational pattern in the Pauline corpus, Tilling's approach itself seems to have some notable lacuna as well. As Hurtado, *Honoring the*

considering the relation between God and Christ, Tilling's account of Christ-relation is only partially complete. If Bauckham's account of divine identity Christology was lacking with regard to giving attention to the God-Israel relation as helpfully noted by Tilling,[43] Tilling's own approach is lacking with reference to fathoming the God-Christ relation substantially.

Third, Tilling's case needs to be substantiated further by facing more directly and rigorously the so-called subordination texts as they relate to cases of Pauline divine Christology. In chapter 10 of his study, Tilling integrates his substantial arguments from the preceding chapters, and he attempts to establish his case for Pauline divine Christology, especially from the angle of Christ's relation to his people. As part of such efforts, Tilling mentions texts like Romans 15:6 and 2 Corinthians 1:3 and 11:31 (which describe the Father as Jesus's God) and other passages describing Christ's mediatory role.[44] Nonetheless, Tilling never seriously or directly addresses the so-called subordination question. It is surprising that Tilling does not rigorously engage with the subordination texts, after he himself complains, "modern publications affirming a Pauline divine-Christology have not engaged with such [i.e., subordinationist] material and scholarly arguments . . . thoroughly enough."[45] Instead,

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Son, 13, observes, "typically in early Christian texts Jesus was reverenced in, and on account of, his relationship to the one God, for example, as the unique Son of God, Word of God, and image of God." If so, it is somewhat surprising that Tilling does not consider the relation between Christ and God. Without considering the God-Christ relation, Tilling's otherwise helpful, relation-oriented account seems to remain only incomplete. In part, filling this lacuna will require Tilling to do the additional work of considering differences between the Christ-relation and the God-relation found in the Pauline corpus, something that Tilling himself acknowledges (*Paul's Divine Christology*, 235–36), but does not seek an explanation in any substantial manner.

[43] Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology*, 61–62.

[44] See, e.g., Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology*, 245–46.

[45] Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology*, 27. For an additional critique, Tilling uses the term "worship" in a somewhat imprecise manner, not clearly distinguishing its use with a cultic sense and without, for instance, when he states that in "the Similitudes of Enoch, the *Life of Adam and Eve* and Sirach 40–55 . . . various [exalted] figures are certainly worshipped" (Tilling, *Paul's*

Tilling states that, due to its "relational nature," Paul's understanding "could embrace mystery, paradox and tension" —the coexistence of (1) Paul's Christ-relation intersecting with the God-relation, and (2) Paul's subordination language applied to Christ.[46] In Tilling's view, "the problem [of this tension] may well be ours, but it was not Paul's."[47] I agree with Tilling that there is room for mystery and that Paul's Christology could and does facilitate a paradox. Nevertheless, Tilling's answer appears to be too general and brief and even rushed. Moreover, his response seems to essentially evade the challenges posed rather than attempting to face and address them. Thus, R. B. Jamieson critiques Tilling in that his "solution, it seems, either dodges the question or pushes it back a step." [48] Jamieson also asks, "What is a 'relational epistemology,' and how does it enable us to conceive of the Son as both divine and submissive to the Father?"[49] Tilling's answer on the Pauline subordination texts is not satisfactory or at the very least incomplete.

N. T. Wright's "YHWH's Return to Zion" Paradigm[50]

N.T. Wright proposes the "YHWH's return to Zion" paradigm, which emphasizes the narrative of the return of Israel's God to Zion, as he accounts for the deity of Jesus the Messiah in Pauline writings. According to his "YHWH's return to Zion" paradigm, which takes Bauckham's divine identity approach[51] with a decisive eschatological thrust, Wright claims that Paul understood the life, death, and

Divine Christology, 71; italics original). Given that "worship" is a key term employed by Tilling, for instance, in his interaction with Hurtado's case for a divine Christology (*Paul's Divine Christology*, 52–61), a more measured and nuanced use of the term would be desirable.

[46] Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology*, 247.

[47] Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology*, 248.

[48] R. B. Jamieson, "1 Corinthians 15.28 and the Grammar of Paul's Christology," *New Testament Studies* 66, no. 2 (2020): 192.

[49] Jamieson, "1 Corinthians 15.28 and the Grammar of Paul's Christology," 192.

[50] The following summary of Wright's approach is based largely on N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), chapters 9–11.

[51] See Bauckham, *God Crucified*; *Jesus and the God of Israel*, especially chapters 1 and 6. Refer also to the discussion on Bauckham above.

resurrection of Jesus and the indwelling of God's Spirit as fulfilling the ancient Jewish hope for YHWH's personal return to Zion—which was often expressed in the language of the exodus (e.g., Isa 40–55).

According to Wright, the hope that YHWH, who had judged Israel and sent them into exile, would return to Zion, reside gloriously in the temple, and rule as the king of the whole world, was a widespread belief among devout Second Temple Jews—who Wright argues viewed themselves as still in exile. Recognizing Jesus' death and resurrection and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit as YHWH's own return was the key essence for Pauline divine Christology in Wright's view. He asserts that only when one understands the significance of YHWH's return in Jesus the Messiah can one arrive at the core of Paul's divine Christology. For the apostle, Wright proposes, Jesus the Messiah and the Holy Spirit have fulfilled what YHWH himself had promised to do: to return to Israel, lead his people in a new exodus, and dwell with them. Such an understanding implies that Paul included Jesus in the divine identity of Israel's one God, thus reaffirming and redefining Second Temple Jewish beliefs about one God, about election, and about the eschaton, the three of which are tightly bound with one another, according to Wright.

The link between Pauline divine Christology and the theme of YHWH's return to Zion is intriguing. Also, Wright's discussion of Paul's divine Christology is impressive in its scope; he relates Christology to suffering, ecclesiology, pneumatology, the kingdom of God, the problem of evil, and even more. Additionally, Wright's integrative effort to bridge the discussions of Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology is commendable, given that NT scholars have often separated their Christological investigation from other components of Pauline theology.

Critique of the "YHWH's Return to Zion" Paradigm

While Wright's account is stimulating and it advances the ongoing conversation about Pauline divine Christology, some questions remain. First, given that Wright adopts Bauckham's divine identity approach and then nuances it eschatologically from the angle of YHWH's return to Zion, we can direct to Wright the very question raised for Bauckham's use of the term "divine identity." Since the phrase, "divine identity," was not drawn directly from primary sources (i.e., Scripture or Second Temple Jewish literature) and was, instead,

coined by Bauckham himself for its technical usage, it is somewhat surprising that a scholar of Wright's caliber has not made much effort to carefully define the term or justify its adoption.[52]

Second, although YHWH's return to Zion was expected by many Second Temple Jews, it is not fully clear whether the majority believed that they themselves were still in exile, while living back in their homeland. I agree that many of the theological issues surrounding the exile remained unresolved in the first century AD —such as the presence of YHWH, the reign of the Davidic king, and the forgiveness of sin. However, Wright does not seem to sufficiently consider diversity within first-century Judaism. Some first-century Jews might have held this view, but it is not clear whether that would apply to the majority of first-century Judaism. [53] As Timo Laato has pointed out, Wright's language is exaggerative, if not too simplistic, when he equates the socio-political oppressions and limitations with an exile.[54] Those oppressions and limitations were certainly present in the Second Temple period. Nevertheless, whether Second Temple Jews themselves identified those experiences as an "exile" is another matter, or at least a matter at another level. While the concept can be present without a key word, it is still noteworthy that the New Testament does not speak of "exile" explicitly except in one place, that is, the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:11–12, cf. v. 17 [μετοικεσία]), i.e., the passage that expresses the "exile" but does not end with it right there and, instead, moves on to the subsequent generations of the genealogy.[55]

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[52] Cf. Dunn, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus?*, 141–44.

[53] Cf. Timo Laato, "A New Quest for Paul: A Critique of the New Perspective on Paul," in *The Doctrine on Which the Church Stands or Falls*: *Justification in Biblical, Theological, Historical, and Pastoral Perspective*, ed. Matthew Barrett (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 295–325.

[54] Laato, "A New Quest for Paul," 295–325 (306–18).

[55] Such a phenomenon does not seem to work well with Wright's projection that first-century Jews were thinking that they themselves were still in exile. Various degrees and extents of oppression and problems were certainly there among the Second Temple Jews, but those experiences cannot and should not be too hastily or flatly equated with an "exile." To demonstrate that this notion of "exile" is central to Paul and the NT authors, Wright should answer the question of why they do not express it very often.

Third, it should also be noted that Wright's formulation of Paul's divine Christology around a singular, narrow focus like the lens of YHWH's return to Zion seems to be somewhat reductionistic and is liable to an all-or-nothing sort of fallacy. N. T. Wright has helpfully noted but overstated the significance of the OT promise of YHWH's return to Zion when he presents it as "*the* key initial Christological resource appropriated in earliest Christian circles."[56]

Conclusion

Despite the diversity of the proposals outlined above, there is a fundamental unity to the observations and conclusions of the four scholars we have considered: Their respective proposals on Pauline Christology conclude that the apostle uniquely identified Jesus of Nazareth with the God of Israel.[57]

I have also observed the variety of methods and conclusions from each of these four scholars and have raised some questions, pointing out lack of clarity, consistency, and integration in their specific approaches. I hope the presented interaction will be useful in refining and improving subsequent conversations. These proposals, though helpful, at times fail to integrate all the evidence and to consider how Paul's Christology fits within his larger theological construct. Nonetheless, I acknowledge that Bauckham, Hurtado, Tilling, and Wright have each advanced the conversation and have strengthened our overall understanding of Pauline divine Christology.

We have looked at four representative scholars in the field of Pauline Christology. But the task of doing Pauline Christology or NT Christology is not bound with these few representative experts. It is equally our task—if Paul indeed matters, if the NT truly matters, and if Christology really matters. Yes, all of us need to do our own work of Christology—not only with our pen and with our mouth but also with our life and with our obedience—because this confession does not

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[56] The quoted wording is from Larry Hurtado, "YHWH's Return to Zion: A New Catalyst for Earliest High Christology," in *God and the Faithfulness of Paul: A Critical Examination of the Pauline Theology of N. T. Wright*, ed. Christoph Heilig, J. Thomas Hewitt, and Michael F. Bird (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 420; italics original.

[57] The clear consensus among these scholars as such signifies that Paul's Christology is essentially consistent with later orthodoxy.

belong only to Paul but also to each of us: "[Whatever] gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him" (Phil 3:7–9, ESV).

Amen. Jesus is Lord.

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An Analysis and Assessment of John Wesley's Anthropology and Soteriology in Light of the Theological Positions of Pelagius and Augustine

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Introduction

Due to some superficial doctrinal similarities with the notorious heretic Pelagius, some of John Wesley's opponents accused him of believing that the human will is inherently neutral and is capable of achieving a works-based salvation. Some of Wesley's writings show how he was forced to clarify and defend his positions concerning these issues. For example, in a letter to Mr. Alexander Coates, Wesley, distancing himself from the Pelagian label, writes the following, "I know no creature (of us) who says, 'Part of our salvation belongs to Christ, and part to us.' No; we all say, Christ alone saves us from our sin."[1] In another writing, *Some Remarks on Mr. Hill's 'Review of all the Doctrines Taught by John Wesley*,' Wesley responds to Mr. Hill's accusation that Wesley teaches salvation by works by clearly (and passionately) stating his opposition to both TULIP theology and salvation by works.[2] More examples could be supplied,[3] but the point is clear. Several of Wesley's opponents alleged that Wesley elevated human will and effort to the Pelagian level. Wesley decried any such labels, but he and his opponents often talked past each other, failing

[1] John Wesley, "CCVI—Letter to Mr. Alexander Coates," *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., 14 vols. (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872. Reprint, Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1978), 12:239–41. (Hereafter referred to as *Works*).

[2] "Mr. Hill's Review" (*Works* 10:378–9).

[3] See, for example, "The Consequence Proved" (*Works* 10:370–4). Wesley responds to one Mr. Toplady, a Calvinist who accuses Wesley of teaching salvation by works. Wesley also attacks Mr. Toplady's pessimistic estimation that for every twenty people, one is elect and the other nineteen are destined for damnation.

to recognize the nuances and intricacies in their views and vocabulary.

Did Wesley truly hold to Pelagian ideas, or were his opponents mistaken? Is there any merit to the claim that Wesley believed one's natural faculties allow one simply to work hard enough to be saved? This paper argues that John Wesley held to a semi-Augustinian anthropology and soteriology.

In order to determine the veracity of this statement, this paper will begin by reviewing extensively the debates between Augustine of Hippo and Pelagius, establishing substantially and accurately their respective perspectives on anthropology and soteriology. The following section will evaluate the data from the debates and establish key terms. The third section will explore the controversies surrounding the anthropology and soteriology of John Wesley. Finally, the paper will conclude by determining where the anthropology and soteriology of John Wesley lands on the spectrum between the extremes of Pelagius and Augustine.

Augustine Versus Pelagius: Biographies and Point of Contact

One would be hard pressed to find a theology book that does not explore the pivotal anthropological and soteriological debates between Augustine and Pelagius. Indeed, one's perspective on these core issues centrifugally affects surrounding doctrinal issues.[4] In this first section, this paper will briefly review the stories of Augustine and Pelagius. It will then recount the core of their doctrinal dispute, namely, anthropology and soteriology. Next the outcome of the debate will be evaluated. Finally, this section will discuss briefly the

[4] For example, the anthropology of the American progressive movement of the early twentieth century shares more than a superficial resemblance to Pelagianism. Tracing the trajectory of major ecclesiological developments in several traditions, Thomas Oden argues convincingly that while the heterodox tendency of conservative evangelical churches is Gnosticism, the tendency of "activist" churches (e.g. liberal Mainline Protestant churches) is Pelagian pragmatism. Indeed, the entire conceptual apparatus for social change hinges on the malleable anthropology of Pelagius. The whole enterprise of progressivism fails by default without this foundation. See Thomas Oden, *Classical Christianity*, (New York: HarperOne, 1992), 693–4.

subsequent formation of the systems of semi-Augustinianism and semi-Pelagianism.

Augustine of Hippo has had an incalculable influence on Western Christianity. From his work on the Trinity to his controversial soteriological stance of predestination, Augustine has influenced many theologians. He was born in Thagaste, Africa in 354 to a Christian mother, Monica, and a pagan father, Patricius. He spent his teenage years and his twenties investigating various belief systems. He spent several years as a Manichee,[5] and he dabbled in the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus after he became disillusioned with Manichaeism.[6] After these futile religious pursuits, however, Augustine finally became a Catholic at the age of thirty-one. He spent the rest of his life writing books on Christian doctrine, many of which have risen to monumental importance.[7] He was appointed bishop of Hippo Regius in 394, where he would serve until his death in 430.

Pelagius, however, came from a much different background. Scholars lack an abundance of biographical information on Pelagius, but they do agree on some basic facts. Pelagius was a British monk,[8] who, like Augustine, moved to Rome in order to further his career.[9]

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[5] Manichaeism was a Persian dualistic religion founded by Mani. The belief system holds to a pessimistic anthropology. One becomes enlightened when one realizes that light and darkness reside in every individual. The system teaches that one's light side remains untarnished throughout one's life, but one cannot avoid the effect of the dark side, which results in evil actions. The ultimate salvation of Manichaeism occurs at the end of one's existence, when the light jettisons the dark. There is hope for one *after* life ends, but the system allows little room for progress *during* life, though the system allows the individual to absolve himself for any sins committed in the body since it is the darkness alone that generates all sinful behavior. For more information on Manichaeism, especially as it relates to the development of Augustine, see Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 35–42.

[6] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 45–9.

[7] His *On the Trinity, Confessions,* and *City of God* serve as a few examples of Augustine's massively influential writings.

[8] Pelagius did not belong to a monastic order. The term designated his status as a "servant of God." See J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. (New York: Continuum, 1977), 357.

[9] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 341.

Teaching his anthropologically optimistic theological system brought him renown in Rome.[10] However, Pelagius, along with his disciple Celestius, was forced to flee from Rome in 409 due to Alaric's impending sack of Rome.[11] Pelagius and Celestius landed in Carthage, where the latter decided to stay. This fateful decision resulted[12] in the Pelagian school coming into contact with the North African school, resulting in one of the largest and most contentious debates on human nature, divine grace, and free will. Debates on these and various other issues raged on for several years before Jerome and Augustine identified Pelagius as the head of this nascent threat to orthodoxy.

Before delving into the theological specifics, a brief caveat needs mentioning. Much mystery shrouds the "system" of Pelagianism. Scholars are uncertain as to who developed the system that bears Pelagius's name. After all, no Pelagian systematic theologies have ever been uncovered. In fact, Peter Brown states that "Pelagianism as we know it, that consistent body of ideas of momentous consequences, had come into existence; but in the mind of Augustine, not of Pelagius."[13] So, it seems likely Augustine actually systematized Pelagianism in his apologetic works. Why, then, did Augustine and Jerome refer to this loose collection of ideas as Pelagianism?

B. R. Rees argues convincingly that three figures stand out as likely candidates for the leader of the Pelagian movement: Pelagius, Celestius, and Rufinus of Syria. So, why did Jerome and Augustine finally settle on the term *Pelagiani* in 415, after the debates had raged on for a few years?[14] What caused these two eminent Western doctors to single out this British monk and unleash their fury on him? Rees argues that Rufinus was likely dead by 415 and that Celestius was in Ephesus, far away from the scene. So, Pelagius, who was in Palestine at the time, became the most accessible target.[15] In any case, Pelagius was certainly an important and influential representative of the

[10] Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 357.
[11] Alaric sacked Rome the following year, in 410.
[12] Or was it perhaps predestined?
[13] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 346.
[14] B. R. Rees, *Pelagius: Life and Letters*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), 21. (Hereafter referred to as *Life and Letters*).
[15] Rees, *Life and Letters*, 3.

movement. His primary sources[16] certainly work well for the present purpose of elucidating the doctrines of this system.

Augustine Versus Pelagius: Doctrinal Differences

What did Pelagius believe that Augustine feared so immensely? Why did the aging Augustine dedicate so much time and ink to refuting this ostensibly benign Briton? Pelagius taught on many subjects, but this next section will focus on the core of Pelagius's theology, his anthropology and his soteriology. Pelagius's *Letter to Demetrias* provides an excellent starting point for reconstructing Pelagius's views.[17] According to B. R. Rees, this letter has internal and external evidence to support Pelagian authorship, so the letter

[16] Scholars have long debated what documents qualify as authentic writings of Pelagius. Rees notes that the formal condemnation of Pelagianism forced a suppression of any documents bearing the infamous name of Pelagius. So, many of Pelagius's documents were smuggled into other collections (even into the collections of some of Pelagius's opponents, such as Jerome and Augustine!), and this process of concealment has resulted in not a little difficulty for historians and textual critics to determine what documents Pelagius actually authored. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the historical debates regarding Pelagian authorship. Suffice it to say that this paper will stick primarily to the Evans Letters collection, which is generally regarded as an authentic collection of Pelagius's primary sources. While the Pelagian authorship of some of the writings in this collection, such as *To Celantia* and *On the Christian Life* are still debated by some, scholars generally agree that these writings accurately represent Pelagian thought. Moreover, the Evans collection contains Pelagius's vitally important *Letter to Demetrias*, which has external evidence to substantiate its claim to Pelagian authorship. For more information on the difficult task of recovering and identifying Pelagius's authentic writings, see Rees, *Life and Letters*, 12–20. At any rate, all of the letters this paper cites certainly contain authentic Pelagian thought, so we can garner sufficient details to define the key tenets of Pelagianism, namely, the Pelagian perspective of anthropology and soteriology.

[17] While in Palestine, Pelagius received a letter from a widow named Juliana in 413 asking him to give some advice to her fourteen-year-old daughter Demetrias who had recently committed her life to celibacy. Pelagius provided the adolescent with advice, but he also utilized the letter to make his own views known to the world. He clearly intended more eyes than Juliana's and Demetrias's to see this letter. For more information, see Rees, *Life and Letters*, 29; Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 342.

provides safe, reliable information to work with.[18] In fact, Rees states that the *Letter to Demetrias* contains the most complete statement of Pelagius's view on the goodness of human nature and human freedom of choice.[19] Moreover, as Peter Brown rightly argues, Pelagius circulated this letter in 413 with the purpose of making his message known to the world.[20] So, this letter not only contains an authentic summary of Pelagius's views; it was intended to educate the masses on Pelagianism.

The Doctrine of Pelagius

Pelagius begins this educational letter, clearly with his opponents in mind, by claiming boldly his intention to demonstrate the "power and quality of human nature."[21] Delving into anthropology, he reasons that God, who is utterly good, created humankind in his image. So, it must follow that human nature is good.[22] Pondering what separates humans from animals, Pelagius determines that God gave humans reason, wisdom, and a free will.[23] Moreover, he surmises, because God implanted a free will[24] in human nature that bends neither toward evil nor good, it follows that humans can truly perform good works according to their own nature.[25]

Surprisingly, Augustine's refutation of *Letter to Demetrias*, titled *On the Grace of Christ*, (arguably) systemizes Pelagius's anthropology more clearly than the original source. Augustine writes that "Pelagius posits and distinguishes three faculties:" *Capacity:* the ability to be righteous; *Volition:* that by which one wills to be righteous; *Action:* that by which one actually is righteous.[26] Augustine states that the

[18] Rees, *Life and Letters*, 12.
[19] Rees, *Life and Letters*, 32. All references to this letter are sourced from Rees, *Life and Letters.*
[20] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 342.
[21] *To Demetrias* 2.1.
[22] *To Demetrias* 2.1.
[23] *To Demetrias* 2.2.
[24] Diane Leclerc helpfully provides a simple definition of human will: "The part of the human being that makes decisions." See Diane Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness: The Heart of Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2010), 320.
[25] *To Demetrias* 3.2.
[26] *On the Grace of Christ* 1.4 (*NPNF*[1] 5:219).

first faculty, capacity, is bestowed by the Creator, but the other two faculties proceed from human nature.[27] Augustine's description fits well with Pelagius's words. Pelagius writes that God implanted the possibility of choice in human nature (capacity), and that each human can "bend his will" in the direction of good or evil (volition).[28] (The action will surely follow volition; this is implied.)

At this juncture, one is probably asking what role original sin and Adamic depravity play in Pelagius's conception of free will. The topic of original sin is a core concern in Pelagius's system. Bryan Litfin correctly states that the diversity of Pelagian ideas all generally agree that individuals do not inherit the effects of Adam's sin.[29] Considering the emphasis that Pelagius places on individual responsibility, the doctrine of original sin severely runs against the grain of his entire system. Augustine spends considerable time addressing Pelagian doctrine in his work *On Original Sin*.[30] Pelagius and his disciple Celestius taught that Adam's sin only injured himself; all infants have the same state of innocence that Adam had before he sinned.[31] Indeed, Pelagius writes, one is condemned by imitating Adam's sin.[32] So, one does not inherit any guilt from Adam, but one does inherit a bad moral influence, and this influence leads to personal sins and personal guilt.

So, Pelagius believes that humans possess an untainted free will by nature, but how exactly are humans supposed to exercise this free will? At this point, Pelagius delves into soteriology. He argues that in

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[27] *On the Grace of Christ* 1.4 (*NPNF*[1] 5:219).

[28] *To Demetrias* 3.2. Later in the letter, Pelagius notes that the will can become more biased toward good or evil, depending on one's consistent choices. This is why he emphasizes the importance of training children in virtuous living. He says that a child's will is especially flexible until age five. *To Demetrias* 13.

[29] Bryan Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 223.

[30] Sadly, we only possess fragments of documents that discuss Pelagius's views on original sin. However, Augustine quoted Pelagius frequently in his works, albeit with the intention of debunking Pelagius's views. However, it seems likely that Augustine conveyed at the least the essence of Pelagius's thoughts concerning the core issues of Adamic depravity and human nature.

[31] *On Original Sin* (see esp. *NPNF*[1] 5:238; 5:241–2).

[32] *On Nature and Grace* (*NPNF*[1] 5:124). Thomas Oden suspects that Pelagius anticipates the focus of moral influence theories of Peter Abelard and Socinus. See Oden, *Classical Christianity*, 429.

addition to implanting a free will in human nature, God has also implanted his law into the human heart.[33] Pelagius argues that Paul makes this principle known in Romans 2:15–16, when Paul mentions noble, virtuous Gentiles.[34] No human being, therefore is without excuse; all are required to follow God's law by avoiding evil and doing good.[35] To be sure, some have received more light than others, namely, those who have heard the Gospel.[36] (Those who have heard the gospel have greater potential for perfection.) However, Pelagius quickly reminds Demetrias that even certain Old Testament figures, such as Job and Noah, followed the law and were commended by God for their faithfulness.[37] Indeed, Pelagius refers to Job as "a man of the gospel before the gospel was known."[38] Therefore, all human beings, Christian or otherwise, must use their free will to do good and to avoid evil.

Pelagius's works-based soteriological blueprint[39] leads to gradations of glory for the saved and gradations of suffering for the damned.[40] Pelagius held no qualms about using the specter of eternal damnation to encourage righteous behavior in the present. He even speaks of different forms of "torture" for sins of differing degrees.[41] Perhaps most convicting of all, Pelagius reminds his readers of biblical figures who incurred God's wrath (e.g., Lot's wife, Judas, and Ananias and Sapphira) and reminds his readers that they probably commit

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[33] *To Demetrias* 4.2.

[34] *To Demetrias* 4.2. Romans 2:15–16 is probably the best proof text for Pelagianism. Augustine attempts to address this passage, but his clumsy handling of it leaves much to be desired. See *On the Spirit and the Letter* (*NPNF*[1] 5:103–104).

[35] *To Demetrias* 8.4; 15.

[36] *To Demetrias* 8.4. Does Pelagius leave the door of heaven open to those who have not heard the name of Jesus but have followed the moral law inscribed on their hearts to the best of their ability?

[37] *To Demetrias* 6.1; 8.2.

[38] *To Demetrias* 6.3.

[39] See, for example, *On the Christian Life* 2.3; 3.1.

[40] *To Demetrias* 17.2; Also, see *On the Divine Law* 7.2.

[41] *On the Divine Law* 7.2. Surprisingly, in the same letter, Pelagius states that human reason cannot accurately differentiate major and minor sins. See *On the Divine Law* 5.1.

worse sins than these biblical figures on a daily basis.[42] So, Pelagius warns, one should not let the day of vengeance and retribution find one idle.[43]

But what role does grace play in Pelagius's soteriology? If God has already equipped human nature to discern and do good actions, then what role does grace play, if any? Augustine quotes Pelagius as defining grace as "free will, or in law and teaching."[44] To be sure, Pelagius acknowledges that grace "freely discharges sins," but he quickly subsumes this effect in the free will of the individual.[45] In fact, Pelagius almost mentions this fact in passing. He moves right back to emphasizing the responsibility of the individual to earn his own salvation by following the law.[46] In fact, Pelagius appears to link grace with merit: the latter creates the condition for the possibility of the former. However, perhaps the clearest summary of Pelagius's view of living in an age of grace comes from his *Letter to Demetrias.* He writes,

> Even before the law was given to us, as we have said, and long before the arrival of our Lord and Savior, some are reported to have lived holy and righteous lives; how much more possible must we believe that to be after the light of his coming, now that we have been instructed by the grace of Christ and reborn as better men: purified and cleansed by his blood, encouraged by his example to pursue perfect righteousness, we ought surely to be better than those who lived before the time of the law, better even than those who lived under the law, since the apostle says: For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace (Rom 6:4).[47]

In the preceding quote, Pelagius clearly states that living under grace really means a far greater possibility of pursuing perfect righteousness by following the moral example of Christ.

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[42] *On the Divine Law* 4.4–5.
[43] *On the Divine Law* 9.2.
[44] *On the Grace of Christ* (*NPNF*[1] 5:218).
[45] *On the Divine Law* 3.
[46] *On the Divine Law* 3.1. Pelagius states that one needs "knowledge of divine law and discipline to be saved." See also *To Demetrias* 10.1.
[47] *To Demetrias* 8.4.

The Doctrine of Augustine

On the entirely opposite end of the doctrinal spectrum stands Augustine. Augustine vehemently opposed Pelagius and his anthropocentric soteriology. This section will explore the anthropology and soteriology of Augustine.

Augustine held to a rather pessimistic anthropology. He believed that every human being inherits the effects of Adam's sin, namely, a corrupt nature and even guilt.[48] Contra Pelagius's emphasis on the dignity of the individual, Augustine lumps all humans together as an "entire mass deserving punishment of condemnation," and he even says that the one who truly understands the "entirety of this whole subject could not blame the justice of God in wholly condemning all men whatsoever."[49] So, all humans are born with a corrupted nature and the guilty of Adam's sin. But how corrupt is the human will? Can the human will still choose to do good at least some of the time?

Augustine adamantly rejects any inherent goodness of the will. Augustine states that the human will naturally forsakes God, which is why humans need to pray constantly not to be led into temptation.[50] While Pelagius sees the human will as neutral,[51] Augustine essentially argues that the will left to itself naturally bends away from God. Due to the natural corruption of the human will, Augustine writes that one must not entrust oneself partly to God and partly to oneself.[52] One absolutely needs grace to restore true freedom of choice to one's will.[53] So, the human being is guilty by default and, left alone, naturally seeks wickedness. How, then, can one be saved?

Not surprisingly, Augustine's soteriology also radically opposes the Pelagian perspective. While Pelagius emphasizes following the law and striving for perfection, Augustine emphasizes the utter necessity of grace. What is the purpose of the law? According to

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[48] *On Nature and Grace* (*NPNF*[1] 5:122–3); *On Original Sin* (*NPNF*[1] 5:249).
[49] *On Nature and Grace* (*NPNF*[1] 5:123).
[50] *On the Gift of Perseverance* (*NPNF*[1] 5:529).
[51] See, for example, *To Demetrias* 3.2.
[52] *On the Gift of Perseverance* (*NPNF*[1] 5:530). Also, recall the three faculties of Pelagius's paradigm. God provides the capacity to choose good and evil, while the human faculties provide the means for freedom of choice. See *On the Grace of Christ* (*NPNF*[1] 5:219).
[53] *On the Spirit and the Letter* (*NPNF*[1] 5:84–5).

Augustine, the law exists to show sinners how desperately they need grace; [54] it exists to compel the sinner to seek grace.[55] Furthermore, Augustine asks how one can be saved "freely by grace" if one is also required to do good works to secure justification.[56] Would not obligatory works contradict the *gift* of justification, which is wrought by faith? Moreover, while Pelagius pushes his followers to follow the law and attain perfection in this lifetime,[57] Augustine reminds his readers that Christians are required constantly to pray the Lord's prayer, which includes the line, "Forgive us our debts."[58] In other words, Augustine senses that Scripture expects Christians to struggle with sin for their whole lives, rendering perfection virtually impossible.[59]

At this point, one might accuse Augustine of antinomianism. However, Augustine never states that good works do not matter. Augustine admits that perfection cannot come in this lifetime, but he encourages his readers to "pursue the course to perfection," while recognizing that perfection will not come until this life ends.[60] Further, Augustine differentiates venial and damnable sins. He says that prayer and almsgiving can cleanse the former, but the other type of sin, damnable sins, endangers one's eternal destiny.[61] Therefore, one's

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[54] *On the Spirit and the Letter* (*NPNF*[1] 5:86). Augustine quotes Romans 5:20–21 to substantiate his point. God uses the law to help one recognize one's need for grace. However, God never expects one to use law as an instrumental means toward the end of salvation.

[55] *On the Spirit and the Letter* (*NPNF*[1] 5:97).

[56] *On the Spirit and the Letter* (*NPNF*[1] 5:102).

[57] *To Demetrias* 1.2; 8.4; 10.3.

[58] *On the Gift of Perseverance* (*NPNF*[1] 5:528–9).

[59] Augustine conceded the possibility of perfection, but he really states this as a logically necessary possibility. He does not believe that anyone will *actually* attain perfection in this life. See *On the Spirit and the Letter* (*NPNF*[1] 5:83–4).

[60] *On Man's Perfection in Righteousness* (*NPNF*[1] 5:165).

[61] *On Man's Perfection in Righteousness* (*NPNF*[1] 5:166). Interestingly, Pelagius mocks any attempt to differentiate major and minor sins. After listing several examples of biblical figures who incurred severe punishment for ostensibly minor sins and others who received blessings for controversial actions, he writes, "Do you see how greatly divine judgment differs from human sentiments because of our ignorance?" See *On the Divine Law* 5.1.

actions really do matter in the eyes of Augustine.[62]

Augustine's soteriology clearly emphasizes the utter necessity of God's grace. While Pelagius believed that human nature can produce good works, Augustine believed that any good action must necessarily come from God.[63] Indeed, while Pelagius saw God as a teacher, Augustine saw God as a helper.[64] The indwelling of the Holy Spirit assists the will; this is what allows humans to find God, to grow in relationship with him, and to experience an "ardent desire to cleave to the Creator."[65] One can see that grace is truly indispensable in Augustine's system. Grace functions as much more than free will and knowledge of the law; it empowers one's will to choose God and to walk with God continually in relationship.

Summary of the Debate Between Pelagius and Augustine

The preceding section discussed the key doctrinal differences between Pelagius and Augustine. While Pelagius emphasized human free will and salvation by works, Augustine focused on divine initiative and grace. Augustine summed up the three points of Pelagianism that the catholic Church found most odious:

1. Grace of God given by merit
2. That some live sinless lives in the corruptible body of flesh
3. Man is born not guilty of Adam's sin[66]

It is beyond the scope of this paper to trace the entire history of the controversy, but suffice it to say that Pelagianism was officially condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431. Historically, Augustine's view won the battle, at least as far as which view the Church

[62] Augustine believed in the doctrine of predestination, which states that God has foreordained those whom he will save. It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into this controversial doctrine. Suffice it to say that Pelagius despised this doctrine because it greatly diminishes the soteriological significance of the human decision. For more information on Augustine's view of predestination, see *On the Predestination of the Saints* (*NPNF*[1] 5:467–519).

[63] *On the Spirit and the Letter* (*NPNF*[1] 5:103–4).

[64] *On the Spirit and the Letter* (*NPNF*[1] 5:84).

[65] *On the Spirit and the Letter* (*NPNF*[1] 5:84–5).

[66] *On the Gift of Perseverance* (*NPNF*[1] 5:527).

recognized as orthodox. But why did the catholic Church condemn Pelagius so harshly? Paul Burnaby perhaps best sums up the greatest danger of Pelagianism. He warns, "The theology of Pelagius was the theology of Deism: his ethics were the ethics of naturalism."[67] Perhaps the orthodox recognized this subtle but dangerous trajectory inherent in Pelagianism. In any case, Augustine's view was mostly[68] upheld because he understood (and emphasized) the utter necessity of grace.

Further Historical Developments

Before proceeding to the next section, it will be helpful to note briefly how Pelagius's and Augustine's ideas were later modified by more moderate individuals. Semi-Pelagianism is essentially "Pelagianism light." A monk named John Cassian, who was joined by Vincent of Lerins and others, agreed that Pelagius had gone too far in his positive estimation of human nature, but he also disliked Augustine's doctrine of predestination and his (really) low view of human freedom.[69] So, Cassian proposed two key points: one, the human will is weak but still present and, two, God's predestination rests on his divine foreknowledge of what humans will do.[70] So, the soteriological initiative ultimately still belongs to humans rather than to God in Cassian's system. Richard Muller rightly warns that this soteriology creeps perilously close to Pelagianism.[71] Indeed, salvation becomes a synergistic joint endeavor between humans and God.[72] Cassian's ideas were condemned at the Synod of Orange in 529.

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[67] John Burnaby, trans. and ed., *Augustine: Later Works* (Louisville: WJK Press, 2006), 192.

[68] Augustine's view of predestination was condemned at the Synod of Orange in 529.

[69] Erwin Fahlbusch et al., eds., *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 125.

[70] Fallbusch et al., *Encyclopedia of Christianity,* vol. 4.

[71] Richard A. Muller, "'Semipelagianism' and Arminianism in Early Modern Debate," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 29 (2018): 9.

[72] Muller, "'Semipelagianism' and Arminianism," 11. Muller also notes correctly that it did not take long for Calvinists to attach this hazardous label of semi-Pelagianism to Arminians and Molinists.

Caesarius of Arles presided over this synod, and it was he who pieced together what some have called semi-Augustinianism.[73] Caesarius basically defended Augustine, but he rejected double predestination. Instead, Caesarius posited that God's grace is available to all, but God always takes the initiative, not humans.[74] So, any human can be saved but only because God has made the first step by extending his grace to all human beings: "the 'beginning of faith' was always due to the Holy Spirit."[75] Those present at the Synod of Orange upheld this modified form of Augustinianism.

Terminology

Now that this paper has covered the historical development of the respective doctrines of Augustine and Pelagius and the modified form of each that appeared later, it is necessary to clarify a few key terms before proceeding to the debate concerning John Wesley's perspective on the matter. R. C. Walton provides an excellent summary of the four primary perspectives associated with Augustine and Pelagius:[76]

> 1. *Pelagianism:* Man is born essentially good and capable of doing what is necessary for salvation. He sins because he follows bad examples, but Christ came to set a good example.
> 2. *Augustinianism:* Man is dead in sin; salvation is totally by the grace of God, which is given only to the elect.
> 3. *Semi-Pelagianism:* The grace of God and the will of man work together in salvation, in which man must take the initiative.
> 4. *Semi-Augustinianism:* The grace of God comes to all, enabling a person to choose and perform what is necessary for salvation.

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[73] See, for example, Robert Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of Church History* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 51.

[74] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)*, *Vol. 1: The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 328.

[75] Pelikan, *Emergence of the Catholic Tradition,* 328.

[76] Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of Church History*, 51. I have used the exact text from Walton's book for each definition because he defines each term succinctly yet precisely.

John Wesley

The preceding section clearly differentiated the views of Augustine and Pelagius. Moving forward, this paper will determine if John Wesley's Wesleyan-Arminian theology[77] actually conceals a semi-Pelagian heart. In order to determine the veracity of these claims, this next section will explore Wesley's anthropology and his soteriology, examining how his views compare to Augustinianism and Pelagianism.

As discussed earlier, Pelagius believed that human nature contains a neutral free will that allows for freedom of choice between right and wrong thoughts and actions, while Augustine believed that the human will naturally bends toward evil. Like Augustine, Wesley certainly did not applaud human nature. The opening to his sermon entitled "Original Sin" leaves no doubt that Wesley rejected Pelagius's anthropology. In the sermon, Wesley opens by lambasting the optimistic thinkers, secular and Christian alike, who see human nature as angelic.[78] Wesley responds by asking, "But in the meantime, what must we do with our Bibles?"[79] Wesley then lists a series of Bible verses[80] that describe human nature as completely evil and wanton. Following Augustine, Wesley did not believe that human nature is good or even malleable; he believed that it is wholly corrupt. And, like Augustine, Wesley links this corruption back to the first man, Adam.

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[77] While the term "Arminian" could broadly be used to describe Wesley, I will use the term "Wesleyan-Arminian" to emphasize the particular trajectory of Arminianism that Wesley and his followers in the Wesleyan-Holiness traditions embrace. W. Stephen Gunter speaks of three Arminian trajectories. The *first trajectory*, which was headed by Arminius's student Simon Episcopius, embraced the principles of the Enlightenment and lost focus of its soteriological concerns. The *second trajectory*, which was headed by William Laud, became overly focused on a state-led ecclesiology. The *third trajectory*, the Arminianism of John Wesley, characterizes the heart of John Wesley's soteriology. See W. Stephen Gunter, "Arminian Theology," *Global Wesleyan Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Al Truesdale (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2013), 62.

[78] Sermon 44, "Original Sin" (*Works* 6:54–5).

[79] Sermon 44, "Original Sin" (*Works* 6:55)

[80] Wesley mentions Rom 3:23; 5:19; Eph 2:1; and several other verses.

Article VII of the *Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church*, which is almost identical to Article IX of the Anglican *Thirty-Nine Articles*, states the following:

> Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.[81]

Clearly, the train of corruption started with Adam and has continued into the present. Following Anglican theology, the Methodist doctrinal statement explicitly rejects the Pelagian view of original sin. Rather, Wesley believed that Adam's descendants inherit Adam's *corrupt* nature; they do not just *imitate* Adam's failures, as Pelagius believed.[82] And all of Adam's descendants have inherited this corruption. Seeing Adam as a "public figure" or a "federal head" of humanity, Wesley believed that all humans are corrupt and in desperate need of grace, though Wesley only followed Augustine partially here; Wesley rejected the notion that Adam's descendants inherit Adam's guilt.[83] How significant is this Adamic corruption in Wesley's eyes? What effects has it wrought on the human race?

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[81] It is important to note that the Anglican *Thirty-Nine Articles* function as the core of Wesley's 1784 *Articles of Religion*. The *Articles of Religion* is essentially an abridged version of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. Wesley compressed the 39 articles into 25 of his own, removing much of the Calvinistic doctrine. Article VII, "Of Original or Birth-Sin" line up mostly with article nine of the Anglican *Thirty-Nine* Articles, but Wesley removed the part of Article IX that speaks of every person deserving God's wrath and damnation. Wesley focused on the inheritance of Adam's corrupt nature. See, "The Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church," United Methodist Church, https://www.umc.org/en/content/articles-of-religion#original-sin.

[82] Kenneth Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 65. This is one place where Wesley's anthropology leans more towards Pelagius, but overall, Wesley leans strongly toward Augustine.

[83] See how Wesley interprets Ezek 18:20 in Sermon 44, "Original Sin" (*Works* 9:315–17). Wesley's emphasis on personal guilt has carried on into Methodism and its offshoots. The Church of the Nazarene, for example,

Wesley believed that the catastrophic consequences of Adamic corruption encompass the entire human race.[84] Wesley lists several of these consequences in his sermon on original sin. Wesley believed this natural corruption causes all humans to be born as atheists, devoid of knowledge of God and love for God.[85] Indeed, one cannot *naturally* attain love for God.[86] Also, despite humankind's "boasted reason," sensual appetites hold every person captive.[87] Moreover, humans become idolaters and addicted to praise from other humans.[88]

In the final estimation, then, Wesley clearly rejected the Pelagian notion that humans are born naturally free to follow God. Following Augustine's anthropology, Wesley taught that Adam's sin causes all Adam's descendants to be born in a state of "supiness, indolence, and stupidity."[89] Clearly, Wesley did not consider original sin a minor doctrine. In fact, Wesley considered original sin foundational to the Christian worldview, and he warned that the whole system falls apart without it.[90] Indeed, he asked, "Why would one need a cure if one is not sick in the first place?"[91] Furthermore, Wesley stated boldly that anyone who denies original sin is a heathen.[92] So, Wesley believed in the corruption of human nature. And he believed that human nature in its natural state is utterly hopeless. So, then, how can one be saved?

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differentiates between *original* and *personal* sin. The former refers to the inherited propensity to sin, while the latter refers to sins committed deliberately. Furthermore, no one is held accountable for simply having the propensity to sin. One becomes guilty when one sins voluntarily. See Church of the Nazarene, *Manual* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2017–21), 27–8. We must also note that, while Wesley held to infant baptism, he did not follow Augustine's belief that unbaptized infants are damned to hell.

[84] *The Doctrine of Original Sin According to Scripture, Reason, and Experience* (*Works* 9:404).

[85] Sermon 44, "Original Sin" (*Works* 6:58–9).

[86] Sermon 44, "Original Sin" (*Works* 6:59).

[87] Sermon 44, "Original Sin" (*Works* 6:61).

[88] Sermon 44, "Original Sin" (*Works* 6:62–3).

[89] Sermon 3, "Awake, Thou That Sleepest" (*Works* 5:25).

[90] *The Doctrine of Original Sin According to Scripture, Reason, and Experience* (*Works* 9:194).

[91] *The Doctrine of Original Sin According to Scripture, Reason, and Experience* (*Works* 9:194).

[92] Sermon 44, "Original Sin" (*Works* 6:63).

The preceding section made it clear that Wesley stood with Augustine's pessimistic view of human nature. Both Augustine and Wesley believed that no human is capable of doing good (unless some help is provided). This next part will explore Wesley's soteriology. It will begin by quickly reviewing Wesley's *ordo salutis* ("order of salvation"), and then it will focus on the most important aspect of Wesleyan-Arminian theology for the present discussion, prevenient grace.

The Wesleyan *ordo salutis* has been at the center of many debates between Calvinists and Wesleyan-Arminians. One must be careful not to miss any of the important nuances in any theological system because every detail matters and affects other details. Perhaps considering the overarching goal serves as the best way to begin a discussion on the Wesleyan *ordo salutis:*

> By salvation I mean, not barely, according to the vulgar notion, deliverance from hell, or going to heaven; but a present deliverance from sin, a restoration of the soul to its primitive health, its original purity; a recovery of the divine nature; the renewal of our souls after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness, in justice, mercy, and truth.[93]

Salvation is not overly restricted to justification in Wesleyan soteriology. In fact, Randy Maddox argues that Wesley's soteriology combines a "Western *juridical* emphasis on guilt and absolution with an Eastern Orthodox emphasis on *therapeutic* healing for our sin-diseased nature."[94] Wesleyan theology, then, includes much more than forgiveness of sin; it includes one finding healing in this life. It is critical for one to understand how much Wesley emphasized healing. He understood good works not as a means to earning salvation but rather as part of the process of experiencing a "present deliverance" from sin.

On the surface, Wesley's emphasis on good works appears to align with Pelagianism. However, Wesley and Pelagius emphasized works for vastly different reasons. While Pelagius emphasized works to

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[93] *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (*Works* 8:47).

[94] Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood, 1994), 23.

avoid damnation and to ensure a better spot in heaven,[95] Wesley emphasized works in the context of sanctification and healing.[96] Any resemblance here must be judged as merely superficial.

So much for the primary concerns of a Wesleyan soteriology. What about the steps of the Wesleyan *ordo salutis*? The Wesleyan *ordo salutis* can be characterized as follows:

> *Prevenient Grace:* Wesley refers to prevenient grace as "all of the drawings of the Father."[97] Diane Leclerc clarifies succinctly that prevenient grace "gives a certain amount of light to every human being and awakens the spiritual senses. God takes the initiative in the matter of conversion, inclining us to turn, but never irresistibly."[98]
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> *Convicting Grace/Repentance:* The sinner becomes convinced of his sinful state and repents of his sin.[99] The semi-Augustinian Wesley believed that *any* person can repent, not just a predestined few. According to Wesley, any person who responds to God's prevenient grace will become convicted of his sin. God will give such a person grace to repent of his sin and become justified and regenerated.[100]

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[95] See, for example, *To Demetrias* 17.2; *On the Divine Law* 7.2.

[96] Wesley focused heavily on the importance of means of grace. He distinguished between works of piety and works of mercy. The former category involves spiritual disciplines, such as Bible reading, prayer, and Eucharist. The latter category involves works of service for others, such as visiting the sick and feeding the hungry. For a helpful and simple explanation, see "The Wesleyan Means of Grace," United Methodist Church, https://www.umc.org/en/content/the-wesleyan-means-of-grace. Also, see Sermon 15, "The Means of Grace" (*Works* 5:185–201).

[97] Sermon 23, "The Scripture Way of Salvation" (*Works* 6:44).

[98] See Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness*, 31; Wesley, Sermon 85, "Working Out Our Own Salvation" (*Works* 6:509).

[99] Sermon 85, "Working Out Our Own Salvation" (*Works* 6:509).

[100] Wesley brilliantly explains how the sinner comes to repentance in Sermon 3, "Awake, Thou That Sleepest" (*Works* 5:25).

Justification: Wesley states that this is another word for pardon. The term refers to forgiveness of sins.[101]

Regeneration: One is born again, born of the Spirit.[102] This occurs at the same time as justification.[103]

Sanctification: One begins to grow in love for God and neighbor. This step also begins when one is justified and regenerated.[104]

Entire Sanctification: Known as perfection, this occurs when the Holy Spirit empowers one to love God with one's entire heart.[105]

Sanctification: One continues to grow in love for God and neighbor.

Glorification: This occurs in the end, when one is in the presence of God and sin is forever extinguished.

Importantly, Calvinists and Wesleyan-Arminians do not place justification and regeneration in the same order. The former believe that God regenerates the individual, and then the individual asks God to be justified.[106] The Holy Spirit gives spiritual life to the individual so that he can choose to be forgiven of his sins; it is the "spiritual

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[101] Sermon 23, "The Scripture Way of Salvation" (*Works* 6:44).
[102] Sermon 23, "The Scripture Way of Salvation" (*Works* 6:45).
[103] Wesley describes the marks of the new birth in Sermon 45, "The New Birth."
[104] Sermon 45, "The New Birth."
[105] Much confusion and controversy have surrounded this doctrine ever since its inception, prompting Wesley to write *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Wesley never taught that one can live an entirely sinless life. Rather, Wesley emphasized the process of God filling one's heart so much so that he becomes wholly dedicated God. The Church of the Nazarene's *Manual* does a good job clarifying the doctrine: "We believe that there is a marked distinction between a pure heart and a mature character. The former is obtained in an instant, the result of entire sanctification; the latter is the result of growth in grace." See Church of the Nazarene, *Manual* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2017–21), 32.
[106] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 702–4.

ability to respond to God in faith."[107] Wesley, however, argued that one does not need to be regenerated in the same sense that Calvinists believe.[108] This is where Wesleyan-Arminian theology introduces the vastly important doctrine of prevenient grace.

Prevenient (preceding or preventing) grace refers to the grace that "comes before." That is, God always takes the first step toward humans; God takes the initiative. Wesley defined prevenient grace as "all the drawings of the Father: the desires after God, which if we yield to them, increase more and more."[109] One might reasonably ask at this point exactly how one can yield to the drawings of the Father if one is dead in one's sins. Wesley states that God supernaturally restores a measure of free will to each person, and this freedom works in tandem with the light of Christ, allowing one to make a choice.[110] Indeed, Wesley reiterates that human will is only "free to do evil" but that God's grace supernaturally restores the ability to choose God and God's righteousness.[111] On the surface, Wesley and Pelagius seem to believe that the human will is the decisive soteriological factor. Again, this is a mere superficiality. Wesley makes it abundantly clear that God always takes the initiative; human merit has nothing to do with salvation.[112] So, while God in his sovereignty allows humans to choose him, he himself creates the condition for the possibility of the response in the first place; this ability is not inherent to human nature, as Pelagius vainly believed.

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[107] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 702.

[108] Donald Thorsen provides a simple and helpful acrostic device to help one recall the core tenets of Arminianism. While Calvinists hold to TULIP theology (total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints), Thorsen proposes the acrostic ACURA (all are sinful, conditional election, unlimited atonement, resistible grace, and assurance of salvation). One will notice that, although both systems share the same orienting concerns, they move in opposite directions doctrinally. See Donald A. D. Thorsen, "Tulip vs. Acura: Reframing Differences Between Calvin and Wesley," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 50, no. 2 (2015): 97.

[109] Sermon 23, "The Scripture Way of Salvation" (*Works* 6:44).

[110] *Predestination Calmly Considered* (*Works* 10:229–30).

[111] "Mr. Hill's Review" (*Works* 10:392).

[112] Sermon 128, "Free Grace" (*Works* 7:373).

It is critical to note that Wesley's view of the universality of prevenient grace is the key difference between Augustinianism and semi-Augustinianism. While Augustine believed that God predestined *some* humans to receive grace,[113] Wesley believed that God's grace extends to *all* humans, enabling the possibility of salvation for all who respond to this grace.[114] Therefore, Wesley's particular view of universal prevenient grace places him squarely in the semi-Augustinian camp.

Prevenient grace plays a major role in Wesleyan theology. Interestingly, while Calvin taught that sanctifying grace is irresistible, Wesley taught that prevenient grace is irresistible.[115] Indeed, Wesley writes, "Every man has a measure of this [prevenient grace] which waiteth not for the call of man."[116] No human being can stop God from restoring life to his otherwise dead faculties, and, as Kenneth Collins helpfully summarizes,[117] this restored faculty provides the following benefits:

1. Basic knowledge of the attributes of God
2. Re-inscription of the moral law
3. Conscience
4. A measure of free will graciously restored[118]
5. The restraint of wickedness

It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore these benefits in depth. The main point is that the Wesleyan-Arminian view of prevenient grace clearly states that God initiates the process of salvation, not humankind. Wesley, therefore, rejected the Pelagian

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[113] See Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints* (*NPNF*[1] 5:467–519).

[114] For Wesley's view on the salvation of those who have not heard the name of Jesus but have responded to God's prevenient grace, see Sermon 63, "On the General Spread of the Gospel." The problem of the unevangelized is a serious debate that lies beyond the scope of this paper, but this sermon lays out clearly Wesley's speculation on the matter.

[115] Kenneth Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley's Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 44.

[116] Sermon 85, "Working Out Our Own Salvation" (*Works* 6:513).

[117] Collins, *Theology of John Wesley*, 78.

[118] Wesley says that some receive a greater measure of prevenient grace than others. See Sermon 85, "Working Out Our Own Salvation" (*Works* 6:512).

notion that humans must use their imbedded free will to earn enough righteousness to attain salvation. Instead, Wesley followed Augustine's understanding of humanity's utter need for grace. However, Wesley departed from Augustine's view of predestination and held to the semi-Augustinian idea that God's prevenient grace allows *all* to come to salvation.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to prove that John Wesley held to a semi-Augustinian anthropology and soteriology. Wesley believed that God's prevenient grace, which he gives to all people, enables one to follow God. Wesley rejects the idea that human nature is inherently good or even malleable; one cannot come to God unless God's grace provides the opportunity to do so.

Accusations of Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism against Wesley and his followers are groundless, and they are usually based on superficial similarities, namely, that Wesley and Pelagius both emphasized the importance of works and freedom of choice. But a comparison of Wesley and Pelagius reveals that Wesley and Pelagius held to much different anthropological and soteriological presuppositions. Pelagius believed he could work hard enough to escape eternal damnation and earn a better status in the world to come. But Wesley knew better than to trust in human nature. Like his Reformed brothers, Wesley knew that humanity is totally doomed without God's precious grace. In fact, one can almost picture Wesley standing next to Charles Spurgeon, John Gill, and Jonathan Edwards, singing, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!" But perhaps Wesley's ultimate soteriological goal can best be summarized by stanzas one and four of the hymn "Love Divine," which his brother Charles wrote:

> Love divine, all loves excelling,
> Joy of heaven to earth come down,
> Fix in us thy humble dwelling,
> All thy faithful mercies crown.
> Jesus, thou art all compassion,
> Pure, unbounded love thou art;
> Visit us with thy salvation,
> Enter every trembling heart.

Finish then thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in thee;
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love and praise.[119]

[119] Charles Wesley, "Love Divine," https://hymnary.org/text/love_divine_all_love_excelling_joy_of_he.

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Pure Omnipotence: Understanding God's Power Through the Lens of *Actus Purus*

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Introduction

The doctrine of omnipotence is a wide area of study that boasts countless books, articles, blogs, and blurbs. However, within the literature today, there remains a gaping neglect as to how the notion of *actus purus* directly affects one's understanding of God's power. An embrace of *actus purus* has far-reaching implications for how one understands the doctrine of omnipotence, as it pertains directly to who God is in his nature. A focused study on *actus purus* and the doctrine of omnipotence will provide a fuller account of how we understand God's power in light of the creator-creature distinction, the nature of God, and the concept of divine freedom.

God having power is far from being a foreign concept in the Bible. Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, the concept of God's having a distinct and unique power that transcends all of creation is made abundantly clear. Ironically, the quintessential passage revealing the power of God does not include the term *power* at all. Genesis 1:1 states, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The creation account of Genesis establishes God's power in the simple fact that everything that exists finds its source and origin in the power of God. This passage further highlights what Christians have traditionally known as *creatio ex nihilo*, in which God creates everything out of nothing.[1] Unlike the conception of Plato, God did not

[1] Augustine directly connects the concept of *creatio ex nihilo* to the doctrine of divine omnipotence when stating "Lord God almighty, you it is who have created something out of nothing .... Apart from yourself nothing existed from which you might make them, O God, undivided Trinity and threefold Unity, and therefore you made heaven and earth out of nothing—heaven and earth, a great thing and a small thing, because you are omnipotent and your

bring the universe into being by shaping eternally existing materials, but through his power made everything to be that is (Col 1:16–17). Moreover, God's power continues to supersede creation in every way. This is not only evident from God being the origin and source of creation, but also due to creation's continual dependence upon God for its con existence (e.g. Acts 17:28; Col 1:17; Heb 1:3).

Based on the biblical text, it seems fairly incontrovertible to argue that God has power in some sense. Yet, the question here is not so much whether or not God has power but rather what that power is and to what extent God has it. This question has stirred conversation and debate for centuries and has led to various conclusions as to the extent and degree of God's power.[2] The position that will be assumed here is that of the traditional strand of orthodoxy as particularly articulated by Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. As Augustine puts it, God is "rightly called omnipotent, though He can neither die nor fall into error. For He is called omnipotent on account of His doing what He wills, not on account of His suffering what He wills not; for if that should befall Him, He would by no means be omnipotent. Wherefore, He cannot do some things for the very reason that He is omnipotent."[3]

Aquinas adds to the Augustinian notion of omnipotence by stating that "this phrase, 'God can do all things,' is rightly understood to mean that God can do all things that are possible; and for this reason He is said to be omnipotent."[4] Thus, for God to be omnipotent is to have the power to bring about any possible state of affairs that he should will in accordance with his divine nature. With this notion of omnipotence in the foreground, *actus purus* functions as a sort of norming principle for understanding how God's power is uniquely distinct from the

goodness led you to make all things, a mighty heaven and a tiny earth." See Augustine, *Confessions* 12.7.

[2] For a survey on the general conversation on omnipotence see Gijsbert van den Brink, *Almighty God: A Study of the Doctrine of Omnipotence* (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing, 1996.); Anna Case-Winters, *God's Power: Traditional Understandings and Contemporary Challenges* (Louisville: John Knox, 1990); Howard A. Redmond, *The Omnipotence of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964); Brian Leftow, "Omnipotence," *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[3] *City of God* 5.10

[4] *Summa Theologica* 1.25.3.

creature, coincides with God's nature, and allows for freedom in the divine will.

God's Power as Distinct from the Creature

One of the greatest issues revolving around the contemporary discussion of God's power is that of collapsing the creator-creature distinction. In the modern abandonment of classical Christian metaphysics, there has been a diminishment in the recognition of the necessary qualitative differences between God and creation. God has almost invariably become a being that is distinguished from creation by merely being greater in degree rather than kind.[5] Thus, it is proper to begin this study by framing God's power in light of the distinction that exists between the creation and the one who created. It seems that what is at the heart of this distinction is the concept of *actus purus*. Without the conception of *actus purus* in the theological framing of God's nature, there cannot be a true and robust distinction between God and creatures.[6] Thus, for those who reject the concept of *actus purus* and its presupposed metaphysics, there is an inevitable collapse of the creator-creature distinction specifically in reference to God's power.[7]

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[5] For a greater explication of the abandonment of classical metaphysics, see James E. Dolezal, *All That is in God*: *Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2017).

[6] It should be noted that *actus purus* need not necessarily be explicitly formulated to have a proper understanding of the creator-creature distinction. For instance, Augustine and Anselm did not use this term, yet the implicit notion of *actus purus* was present in their thinking, which allowed them to properly understand God as distinct in more ways than simply quantitative differences. See Augustine, *The City of God* 9.10; *The Trinity* 5.2.3;, Anselm, *Monologion* 16.

[7] Many contemporary theologians never explicitly reject *actus purus*, which often requires one to read between the lines on their other doctrinal positions. For example, Wayne Grudem never seems to mention *actus purus* at all but makes his denial apparent in his rejection of the doctrine of impassibility. See Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 1994), 165–6. Similarly, Millard Erickson's brief reference to impassibility and what he deems "the strange doctrine of simplicity" seems to imply a rejection of *actus purus*. See Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker

This flattening of the creator-creature distinction, however, is often implicit in the contemporary treatment of omnipotence. For instance, popular theologians, such as Grudem and Erickson, classify omnipotence among what are known as the "communicable attributes" of God.[8] In classifying omnipotence as a communicable attribute, it seems that God's power is something that differs primarily in degree from that of creation. Grudem states, "We do not, of course, have infinite power or omnipotence any more than we have infinite freedom or any of God's other attributes to an infinite degree. But even though we do not have omnipotence, God has given us *power* to bring about results…."[9] In this framing, infinitude is understood in merely quantitative terms; humans have the power to bring about some results, while God has *more* power, so as to bring about any

Academic, 2013), 235–6; 268–9. Although Erickson does briefly mention pure actuality elsewhere, he seems to implicitly reject it as an Aristotelian concept necessitating a static god. See Millard Erickson, *God the Father Almighty* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 100, 112. See also John Frame, *The Doctrine of God: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2002), 224.

[8] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 216–18; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 237. The very distinction of God's attributes as communicable and incommunicable seems to be a somewhat unhelpful and even a potentially problematic view of God's attributes. In dividing God's attributes in such a way, it seems to imply the false view that there are certain attributes of God that differ from humans by degree rather than kind. In this understanding, there are attributes that are not shared with humanity (i.e., different in kind; eternity, simplicity, immutability, etc.) and there are attributes that are shared with humanity (i.e., different in degree; omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, etc.). As regards those attributes which we do share with God, humans have some ability to exercise that attribute in a limited capacity, whereas God has an unlimited capacity to exercise that attribute. This is problematic, as it seems to undermine the notion that all of God's attributes are distinct from the creature in way of kind due to God himself being distinct from creation. The concept of *analogia entis* recognizes that we share in God's being and thus experience a sort of communication of God's attributes, but this communication is only understood in light of the greater dissimilarity in the nature of God. See n12.

[9] Grudem, *Systematic Theology,* 218.

result. What is implicit in this conception of God's power is that it is essentially univocal to that of creaturely power.[10]

With a univocal view of power implicitly in the background, the contemporary conversation surrounding omnipotence tends to merely focus on what God can and cannot do.[11] While this is, of course, an aspect of omnipotence that must be considered, it is the metaphysical question of *how* God's power works that most clearly delineates how God's power differs from that of the creature. With the inclusion of *actus purus* as a philosophical lens, God's power can be contemplated in a way that goes beyond simply considering what God can and cannot do. *Actus purus* helps to show how God's power functions in a way that is unique to him rather than simply being greater in degree than creatures.[12] Although there are many ways in

[10] Thomas addresses the problem of univocal predication in multiple places. See, e.g., *Summa Contra Gentiles* 1.32.; *Summa Theologica* 1.13.5.

[11] For example, see Erickson, *God the Father Almighty*, 165–83; Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 513–42; Richard Swinburne, "Omnipotence" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 10, no. 3 (July 1973): 231–37; and Edward R. Wierenga, *The Nature of God: An Inquiry into Divine Attributes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 12–35.

[12] Considering the uniqueness of God's power places creatures in an epistemological conundrum. If God's power ontologically differs from that of the creature, how can the creature, in any real sense, contemplate or understand that power? The answer that will be assumed in this study is that of analogical predication. While there is some similarity between God's power and that of creatures, analogical predication entails that this similarity should be viewed in light of an ever-greater dissimilarity. See Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, trans. John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 232–33. While God's essence as pure act sets him as being completely transcendent over creation, there is a sense of participation between being in act and He who is pure act. See Thomas Joseph White, *Wisdom in the Face of Modernity: A Study in Thomistic Natural Theology* (Ave Maria: Sapientia, 2016), 84–5; John R. Betz, *Christ, the Logos of Creation: An Essay in Analogical Metaphysics* (Steubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2024), 384. Within this participatory relationship, as beings in act, creatures can know in a finite and limited degree that God is act in the purest and fullest sense of the term. As analogical knowledge, the positive claim that God is pure active potency must be continually tempered by the apophatic reality of God's incomprehensibility. See Betz, *Christ, the Logos of Creation*, 380.

which this is the case, the focus here will be on the uniqueness of God's power in relation to reciprocity, energy, and time.

Reciprocal Actualization

In considering God as *actus purus*, it is necessary to understand a particular facet within the distinction of act and potency. Although the categories of act and potency arose with Aristotle, there has been a wide embrace of these metaphysical distinctions of being, most notably in Thomas, the Reformed Orthodox, and subsequent Thomistic theologians.[13] However, something that does not seem to be considered in the schema of act and potency is the reciprocal actualization that occurs when a being in act brings about the actualization of a passive potency.

As is properly understood in the framework of act and potency, creatures have an established set of passive potencies that limit what they can and cannot become.[14] These passive potencies can only be brought into reality by a being in act that has the active potency to actualize a particular potential.[15] For instance, a piece of paper has the potential to be written on, but that potential is only actualized when a being in act (a person) uses an active power (the ability to write) on an agent that has a particular potency (the paper). Most often, this is where the articulation of actualization ends. However, the actualization of potential does not end once the direct object (the paper, in this instance) is actualized. Since the acting agent also has passive potency to be other than it is, there is a reciprocal actualization that also occurs on the acting agent through the actualization of the direct object. Continuing with the illustration of paper being written on, once the active agent actualizes the potential

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[13] Act and potency are fundamental categories of being within Thomistic and Scholastic thought. See W. Norris Clark, *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2014), Ch. 7; Henri Renard, *Philosophy of Being* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1947), Sec. 1.

[14] Bernard Wuellner, S.J., *Summary of Scholastic Principles* (Fitzwilliam: Loreto, 2023), 120.

[15] For a more detailed analysis of act and potency, see Edward Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (Piscataway: Rutgers University, 2014), 36–8; Reginald Marie Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *Reality: A Synthesis of Thomistic Thought* (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1950), 37–60.

of the paper by writing on it, the active agent's passive potency to become a writer is subsequently actualized. Thus, not only is the direct object (paper) being actualized, but the active agent (person) is actualized through the expression of their active potency. Thus, in the actualization of a potential, the actualizer is reciprocally actualized in the process.[16]

The concept of reciprocal actualization effectively illustrates how creatures are not only affected by the actions of other agents but are also affected by every action they themselves precipitate. There is no instance in which a creature can actualize potential in a way that is divorced from their own admixture of active and passive potency; passive potency and active potency are coexisting in creation in such a way that one cannot exercise active potency apart from their own potential to be actualized. This reciprocal actualization, however, is often neglected and inadvertently projected onto God. This can be seen in contemporary conversations surrounding the creation account. For example, when Thomas F. Torrance talks about creation, he argues that in bringing creation into being, God subsequently *becomes* creator.[17] In other words, before the moment of creation, God necessarily could not be described as a creator since He had not created anything. The implication in this is that God is actualized in some way when He brings about creation. In other words, for God to do something realizes the potential in God for having done that thing; although nothing happens to God directly from another agent, there is

[16] Dolezal briefly mentions a similar formulation when stating "the creature is ontologically correlative to those things upon which its active power operates so that effecting new forms of reality in others entails the appearance of a new relation in the creaturely agent." James E. Dolezal, *God Without Parts: Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2011), 39. Peter Weigel also briefly touches on this in stating, "Active potency *is* attributed to God as the first efficient cause of all things, although not according to the same concept applicable to creatures. In creatures the operation of active potency involves the agent becoming more complete or actualized by the operation." Peter Weigel, "Aquinas on Simplicity—No Simple Matter" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1999), 58.

[17] Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 208.

the implicit notion of an actualization that reciprocally occurs as a result of God's own action.[18]

One problematic implication of Torrance's perspective, as well as any perspective that introduces potentiality in God, is that it undermines the traditional notion of immutability. As seen in Thomas's *Summa Theologica*, *actus purus* and immutability are intrinsically linked. Thomas states that God "must be pure act, without the admixture of any potentiality, for the reason that, absolutely, potentiality is posterior to act. Now, everything which is in any way changed is in some way in potentiality. Hence, it is evident that it is impossible for God to be in any way changeable."[19] For God to be immutable is to be *actus purus* and for him to be *actus purus* is to be immutable; any compromise of one will inherently undo the other. Thus, for potentiality to be introduced in God, even in the subtlest of ways, introduces a level of change in God that undoes the notion of immutability.[20]

Furthermore, the notion of God being actualized can only be brought forth in lieu of a genuine creator-creature distinction. One must assume a flattening of the distinction between God and his creation in reference to power to make the claim that God is affected through expressing his power in the same way that creatures are affected by expressing their power. In light of this, it becomes clear that univocal predication is presupposed. *Actus purus*, however, entails that God's power is distinct as it lacks any passive potentiality. As pure actuality, God cannot be affected by any reciprocal actualization as He has no admixture of passive potencies to be actualized. Thus, it is improper to presuppose that God's actions affect God in a reciprocal manner (e.g., God becoming creator after creation).[21]

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[18] This also has direct implications on the eternality of God, which will be discussed later.

[19] *Summa Theologica* 1.9.1.

[20] See also Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Change: The Word's Becoming in the Incarnation*, Studies in Historical Theology 4 (Still River: St. Bede's, 1985).

[21] Dolezal rightly notes that "our God-talk must eschew any notion of change in God. Whatever we are to say of God's work in the world—creation, judgement, redemption, consummation—we must insist that this work produces no change in Him." Dolezal, *God Without Parts*, 80.

Considering God's power in light of *actus purus* creates an inherent distinction between God's power and the creature's power. God's purely actual power cannot have a reciprocal effect but only causes an effect in the direction of the creature. While actualization occurs horizontally across creatures both actively and reciprocally, for God it only occurs downward to the creature. If one rejects *actus purus* as an inappropriate conception of God, one is left without a metaphysical basis to defend the idea of God being unaffected by his own actions in the way that creatures are. This then creates the opportunity to introduce change in God, such as the case with God becoming a creator at the point of creation.[22]

Energy

Understanding God as *actus purus* is indispensable for articulating the creator-creature distinction in reference to God's power, as it is a power that cannot bring change upon the actor. Within this conception, *actus purus* must also lead to the conclusion that there is no exertion or expenditure of energy in the acts of God. Any exertion or loss of energy on the part of God necessarily entails change and potentiality since it would mean that God's capacity has the potential to be more or less. In contrast, as creatures imagine the actualization of potential in their mind and will it to be done, they can only actualize that potential through the expenditure of energy and the exertion of power. However, there is a very real possibility of that potential remaining unactualized due to a lack of energy or power on the part of the acting agent.[23] This possibility of not actualizing potential stems from an admixture of active and passive potencies; creatures are limited by the potential of other objects, their own potential, and, subsequently, a finite level of active power. This, however, is not the case with God. If God wills something to be, there is no possibility of

[22] One could also see how this creates complications in articulating the incarnation in such a way that does not introduce change into God's nature.
[23] John F. Wipple, "Thomas Aquinas on Demonstrating God's Omnipotence" *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 52, no. 204 (June 1998): 229.

that thing not being as God had intended.[24] God's power will always bring into reality that which God wills.[25]

This being the case, God's actions in no way bring about a lessening of God's energy nor does God have to exert himself in any way outside of simply willing what he desires. While creatures expend energy in the exercise of power, God, as *actus purus*, has no limit of energy to be expended. As Thomas says, "active power exists in God according to the measure in which he is actual."[26] As pure actuality, God has no capacity to be or have less than what he is. If his power is commensurate with his actuality, as Thomas says, then his power must be seen as equally infinite and incapable of diminishment. It is not as if God simply has *so much* energy that he practically loses nothing, as a human practically loses zero calories by flicking a finger. God's energy is not properly understood as being quantitatively infinite so as to be able to exert energy without ever running out. Rather, God cannot lose anything in the exercise of power because, as *actus purus*, he has no level of energy that can be diminished. His energy is not limitless in quantity as if any amount that is lost is completely dwarfed by how much remains. Rather, his power is qualitatively different from the creature so as to not lose anything whatsoever. Unlike the creature, God's power is not like a filled bucket in which a drop is removed when he acts but an infinite, immutable, undiminished, and wholly complete power that is unaffected in any way by the actions he brings forth.

Moreover, when creatures exercise power and expend energy, there is a necessary exertion that occurs; creatures must struggle, even in the slightest sense, to act upon other agents. Creatures are always working against the power of other objects of creation to bring about the actualization of a potential.[27] God, in his actions, is never attempting to overpower anything in the way that a creature is

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[24] *Summa Theologica* 1.19.6.

[25] Dolezal makes a similar argument when discussing the eternal act of God producing temporal effects: "The divine act of creation is nothing other than the eternal action of God's immutable will. Thus, there is no distinction in agency between God's will to create and the act of creating." Dolezal, *All That is in God*, 100.

[26] *Summa Theologica* 1.25.2.

[27] Wipple, "Thomas Aquinas on Demonstrating God's Omnipotence," 229.

required to (i.e., as a force overpowering another force). God is not akin to a river that overpowers a car due to the sheer amount of force that overwhelms the power of the car. Rather, God's power, as a purely actual power, has no potential in relation to other active potencies; God's power does not have the passive potentiality or limit so as to be thwarted by another power. This is a key aspect of God's power that was often recognized in the classical formulation of God's omnipotence.[28] For God to be truly omnipotent, He must have a power that can accomplish all that He wills, as well as a power that cannot be undone or undermined by any other being. As *actus purus*, both of these realities are true of God; God's power is purely actual in such a way that it is the actualizing force of all created beings as well as lacking all potentiality so as to be unaffected by any other active power. As God has no quantitative energy limiting his power, all other power, which *is* limited by quantitative energy, is inherently impotent in the shadow of God.

Temporality

Another clear distinction between the power of God and the power of creatures is the relationship to time. Creaturely power is thoroughly temporal. There can be no instance of creaturely power that is not dependent and limited by time. Aristotle helpfully explains that time is to be understood as the measurement of change.[29] Thus, time is not possible without change and change is not possible without time. This sequence of time is seen in the process of actualization as a creature begins with intending a change, exerting themselves in effort to bring that change about, the following expectation for the change to occur following the exertion of energy, and the reciprocal actualization on the acting agent. None of this process is possible without a sequence of time. In reference to actualizing potential, and by extension reciprocal actualization, time is necessarily implied, as cause and effect can only happen within the context of a temporal reality. Cause and effect cannot exist in one moment as one thing, nor can effect precede cause. To say anything to the contrary of this, such

[28] See Augustine, *The City of God* 5.10; John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 1.8; Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* 3.21.2.

[29] *Physics* 4.12.

as a piece of paper can have writing on it before having been written on, is absurd and undermines any ability to understand change or reality in any intelligible sense.

Thus, for creatures, all actions brought about through power necessarily occur within a temporal framework.[30] The very temporality of creatures is a necessary consequence of having passive potentiality. Without passive potency, there would be no potential to be changed, and without change, there is no passive potency which could be actualized. This includes even the minute change of moving from one moment in time to another. Even if every aspect of the creature were to remain constant, there is still a potential in relation to time being actualized in the creature. For example, consider John existing at a particular time (t_1). While John currently exists at t_1, he has the potential to exist at t_2. When John arrives at t_2, he also has the potential to be at t_3. Regardless of what time John is currently existing, there is always a passive potency to exist at another time. Thus, passive potency is required to exist in time, as it necessitates potentiality in relation to time.[31]

In light of the temporality of passive potency and actualization, creaturely power must inherently be temporal in nature. Actualization, for creatures, can only ever be characterized by being and action that occur in time. Thus, creaturely power is limited by temporality. There is no creaturely actualization that occurs instantaneously, but it always requires a sequence of cause and effect. Creaturely power is thus limited by the creature's temporal nature. If such temporality were introduced to God, God would necessarily have passive potency in relation to each moment of time. In turn, this would

[30] Keith Ward highlights this fact in stating, "God does not first perform an act of intending, which causes a further state of affairs to exits. He simply brings a state into being, in virtue of his knowledge of its nature and for a reason." While a creature's intention is a separate act from the act itself, requiring a temporal sequence, God's intention and act are one and the same and function without temporal sequencing. Keith Ward, *Divine Action* (London: Flame, 1990), 18–19. See also Katherin A. Rogers, *Perfect Being Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 98.

[31] See Edward Feser, "Actuality, Potentiality, and Relativity's Block Universe" *Neo-Aristotelian Perspectives on Contemporary Science,* Routledge Studies in the Philosophy of Science (New York: Routledge, 2019), 35–60.

limit God's power in such a way as to make it temporal, further flattening the creator-creature distinction.

In spite of all of this, the inherent temporality within the acts of creatures seems to be commonly projected onto the acts of God.[32] However, as *actus purus*, having no passive potency entails that God cannot exist in time or be affected by time in any way; for it to be argued that God has potentiality would require that God exist in some sort of temporal sequence. Rather, if God is atemporal due to him being *actus purus*, then it must follow that his power is atemporal and is free from any temporal actualization of potential. Although from the creature's perspective God's power is expressed through the manifestation of particular acts at particular times, it is not as if God were doing such acts in time.[33] God's power is not distinct from God's nature so as to be temporal when God is not. Rather, God's power is expressed in a single act in himself and is manifested in a sequential manner within a temporal world.[34] Thus, God bringing about his will through his power must be an eternal act in God himself. As Augustine states, "There was neither precedence nor subsequence in Him to alter or abolish His will, but all that ever He created was in His unchanged fixed will eternally one and the same: first willing that they should not be, and afterwards willing that they should be, and so they were not, during His pleasure, and began to be, at His pleasure."[35] God's power is an atemporal power, further delineating it from the power of the creature.

God's Power in Relation to the Divine Nature

Having established that God's power is distinct from that of the creature, there must be consideration as to how God's power should be understood in light of his own nature. As has been stated, God as

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[32] See Isaak August Dorner, *Divine Immutability: Critical Reconsideration*, Fortress Texts in Modern Theology, trans. Robert R. Williams and Claude Welch (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 143; William Lane Craig, *Time and Eternity: Exploring God's Relationship to Time* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), 30–32.

[33] Edward Feser, *Five Proofs of the Existence of God* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2017), 201.

[34] Feser, *Five Proofs*, 201.

[35] *City of God* 12.17.

actus purus entails that God has no passive potency in his being to be other than what he already is. God is all that he is to the fullest and purest extent. God cannot be more than he already is, not because he has reached some sort of limit, but because God in himself is limitless and infinite. Thus, God's nature is defined by the infinitude of his being. Furthermore, as *actus purus*, God's attributes cannot exist in a potential relationship but must be inherently unified.[36] Nothing can be conceived of God apart from who he is. This entails, then, that God's power cannot be abstracted nor understood apart from the whole nature of God, because God is metaphysically simple. Divine power, then, must also be understood as a simple power that is perfectly and wholly united with the nature of God. Just as God's power is limitless and infinite due to his nature being such, so God's power is likewise simple and unified in his nature.[37]

The neglect of God as *actus purus* through the abstraction of God's power from the rest of his nature is one of the chief errors of the late-

[36] To conceive of God's attributes as being parts of God would necessarily undermine the concept of *actus purus*, as it would entail that God's attributes either actuate themselves or exist as parts that are potential to the whole. See Dolezal, *God Without Parts*, 33–4.

[37] Thomas naturally situates divine simplicity in relation to divine power. In Thomas's explication of power in his *Summa Contra Gentiles* and *The Power of God*, Thomas connects divine power with divine simplicity. This is done to protect against the idea of God's power being other than God himself as well as an addition to God's nature. Thomas states "Now God is very act; nor is he being in act by some act that is not himself; since in him there is no potentiality […] Therefore he is his own power." And again, "Whatever is powerful and is not its own power is powerful by participating in another's power. But nothing can be ascribed to God by participation, for he is his own being […]. Therefore he is his own power." *Summa Contra Gentiles* 1.8. Furthermore, Thomas argues, "Accordingly we ascribe being and substance to God; but substance by reason of subsistence not of substanding; and being by reason of simplicity and completeness, not of inherence whereby it inheres to something. In like manner we ascribe to God operation by reason of its being the ultimate perfection, not by reason of that into which operation passes." *The Power of God* 1.1. In other words, God's power being simple and unified with his nature entails that the effects of God's power do not imply a potentiality on God's end.

medieval nominalists.[38] The nominalists held to an understanding of omnipotence that freed God from any and every constraint.[39] This supposes that having all power must mean that God is not limited by anything. Thus, God must be free to bring about any possibility as well as any seeming impossibility. For example, God could bring about contradictions such as making a circle square, commanding evil, making that which is true false, and so on.[40] As Bavinck succinctly puts in, within this schema, "God is pure arbitrariness, absolute potency without any content, which *is* nothing but can *become* anything."[41] Ultimately, the nominalist conception of God's power inherently separates God's power from the rest of His nature, namely goodness, perfection, omniscience, and simplicity. Contra nominalism, *actus*

[38] As the name *nominalist* suggests, the underlying metaphysics is that universals are merely names and are not grounded in reality. Ultimately, the denial of universals renders an arbitrariness to creation and the acts of God. Nominalism holds that there is no underlying nature within creation that associates each individual thing with a foundational reality. Rather, nominalism sees each individual thing as an independent and isolated occurrence. When nominalists conclude that all things are ultimately arbitrary, the resulting consequence is that God's acts are arbitrary; if what is made is arbitrary, then what God does is arbitrary. Metaphysical realism, on the other hand, affirms the reality of universals in which particulars participate. Realism undermines any arbitrariness in the acts of God because it affirms that all universals have their origin in God. The realist metaphysics undergirds the entirety of the *analogia entis* as all of creation is derived from God and analogically participates in him. As will be seen, a proper understanding of God as *actus purus* entails an adherence to realism as the foundational metaphysics because it reinforces, rather than undermines, God's lack of potentiality in his nature by substantiating the existence of universals in the nature of God himself. Nominalism, however, inevitably leads to the introduction of potentiality through the arbitrariness of his acts. For more on nominalism and realism, see Heiko A. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Durham, NC: The Labyrinth, 1983); Etienne Gilson, *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge*, trans. Mark A Wauck (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1983).

[39] L. A. Kennedy, "The Fifteenth Century and Divine Absolute Power," *Vivarium* 27. no. 2 (1989), 125–52.

[40] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 2: God and Creation*, trans. John Vrien, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2004), 247.

[41] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 2*, 247.

purus is a norming principle that defines how we understand God's power, and by extension, omnipotence, in light of God's nature. God's power cannot abstracted from his nature, but must be understood in light of his unified, simple, and purely actual being.

God's power, then, cannot be conceived of apart from his other attributes, because God's power is not something that exists in a potential relationship to those other attributes. In other words, God's power cannot be conceived as something logically or temporally prior to his goodness, love, omniscience, and so on, as if those are somehow lesser parts of God compared to his power. Furthermore, conceiving of God's power as disconnected from the rest of his nature entails that God's power is actualized or completed once it is brought into relation with those other attributes.[42] This would mean that God's power, considered absolutely, could be evaluated apart from the rest of God's nature, entailing that the nature of God, in some way, actualizes God's power. In this framework, God's power exists in potency and is actualized by what is, or determined by God to be, good, loving, true, and so on. To hold to any view of omnipotence that abstracts God's power apart from his nature, one necessarily must reject the doctrine of *actus purus* because such an abstraction necessitates that God's power has potentiality.

In considering God's power in relation to his nature, the distinction of *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata* are helpful categories for showing how God's power can be both purely actual as well as acting upon creation.[43] Without this distinction, theologians can find

[42] This is not to say that the nominalists conceived of God's power as actually existing before the other attributes chronologically. It does, however, imply that there was a sense in which they abstracted God's power in a way that allowed it to be considered logically prior to the other doctrines of God, thus being able to be conceived in a way that is unaffected by attributes such as goodness or truth.

[43] The origin of the *absoluta*/*ordinata* distinction is often erroneously attributed to William of Ockham and the nominalists. For example, see Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 523; Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 2*, 247. While it is clear that the nominalists appealed to this distinction in their formulation of God's power, they did so by distorting the intended purpose of the distinction, which had been established by the beginning of the thirteenth century. See W. J. Courtenay, "Dialectic of Divine Omnipotence," *Covenant and Causality in Medieval Thought,* Studies in

themselves overemphasizing God's action in the world to the point of ascribing potentiality to his power, or they may conflate God's power with his acts in such a way that his acts become indistinguishable from who God is. Furthermore, the distinction is helpful in being able to contemplate God's power as that which is pure, unchanging, infinite, and unactualized, while also being a power that brings about particular realities at particular moments in time.

The notion of God's *potentia absoluta* is understood as referring to God's power without reference to what God has willed and done in creation.[44] In this way of considering God's power, it is fairly easy to conceive of it as being fully actualized without any passive potency or potentiality that is not bound, determined, or brought forth by anything external to God. God's *potentia ordinata*, on the other hand, is understood as referring to what God has ordained and willed to be in creation.[45] Ultimately, the *absoluta*/*ordinata* distinction provides us with a category to distinguish between God's power understood in himself and his power expressed in the world.[46] It is worth

Philosophy, Theology, and Economic Practice (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984), 4–5; Van den Brink, *Almighty God*, 84; Francis Oakley, *Omnipotence and Promise: The Legacy of the Scholastic Distinction of Powers,* The Etienne Gilson Series 23 (Ontario: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2002).

[44] Courtenay, "Dialectic of Divine Omnipotence," 5.

[45] Courtenay, "Dialectic of Divine Omnipotence," 5.

[46] It is important to note that the Protestant Reformers rightly rejected the nominalist abuse of the *absoluta*/*ordinata* distinction while not rejecting the distinction wholesale. Stephen Charnock appealed to the *absoluta*/*ordinta* distinction as a means of distinguishing between what God could do and what God has ordained to be. *Existence and Attributes of God*, 10.2. Francis Turretin, likewise, concludes that "we must remark that from the absolute power to the work, […] God can do many more things than he actually does." *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* 3.31.3. The major rejection of the distinction on the part of the Reformers was not a rejection of the classical understanding of *potentia absoluta*/*odinata* as put forth by Lombard and Aquinas but of the abuses found in *via moderna*, particularly from thinkers such as Ockham and Biel. For example, Turretin makes note of Calvin's departure from the *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata* distinction. However, he states that Calvin only does so in response to those who made erroneous conclusions based on an abuse of the distinctions. Turretin asserts that Calvin was "unwilling to deny that God (by his absolute power) can do more things than he really does by his actual power." See *Institutes of Elenctic*

mentioning, however, that is not an actual distinction or separation of God's power per se, but an artificial construction for reflecting on how the effects of God's power are actualized in time.[47]

Thomas helpfully tempers the temptation to overemphasize the *absoluta*/*ordinata* distinction when stating:

> What is, however, attributed to the divine power, according as it carries into execution the command of a just will, God is said to be able to do by His ordinary power. In this manner, we must say that God can do other things by His absolute power than those He has foreknown and pre-ordained He would do. But it could not happen that He should do anything which He had not foreknown, and had not pre-ordained that He would do, because His actual doing is subject to His foreknowledge and pre-ordination, though His power, which is His nature, is not so. For God does things because He wills so to do; yet the power to do them does not come from His will, but from His nature.[48]

As Thomas shows, it is possible to consider God's power in light of his infinite and purely actual nature, but we should be careful to temper that recognition with the fact that God has willed creation to be set and actualized in a particular way in accordance with his

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Theology 3.21.5; see also John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 3.23.2. Calvin and others, Turretin insists, did not reject the distinction "absolutely, but relatively, with regard to the abuse of the Scholastics who deduced from it many monstrous doctrines." *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* 3.21.5. Likewise, Richard Muller shows how Petrus van Mastricht did not reject the distinction *per se* but the abuses found in the Weigelians and Cartesians. Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, vol. 3. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 535.

[47] Van den Brink, *Almighty God*, 74. This is not dissimilar to when theologians distinguish between the attributes of God in light of simplicity. It is recognized by classical theologians that these attributes are not real distinctions in God but artificial distinctions to help composite creatures understand a simple God using composite language. See Dolezal, *God Without Parts*, 125–26.

[48] *Summa Theologica* 1.25.5.

nature.[49] We can conceive of God's power in light of his nature absolutely, but we cannot act as if God's absolute power and ordained power are two separate things that can be truly distinguished as two separate powers.

While God's *potentia absoluta* allows for the contemplation of God's power without reference to what God has done in creation, it does not allow contemplation of God's power without reference to who God is. In light of *actus purus*, God's absolute power can only be understood in reference to the whole of God's nature. This, however, must also be understood in a way that is not actualizing God's power, as there is no temporal or logical priority in God. God's power does not exist prior to his other attributes but in perfect unity with them. God's power in himself is a power that is not distinct from goodness, justice, beauty, and truth.[50] When one abstracts the power of God from God's nature, as the nominalists tend to do, the necessary implication is that God's nature exists in parts that can be abstracted from and without reference to one another. If this is the case, then God is not simple but metaphysically composite, thus creating in God potentiality in relation to his attributes.[51]

God's *potentia absoluta*, then, must be seen as a power that is inseparable from his nature. If this is the case, then God does not have the power *de potentia absoluta* to bring about anything that would be deemed contrary to that nature, such as evil and incoherence. Rather, God's power can only be a power that is wholly inseparable from goodness, beauty, truth, justice, and so on. Contra nominalism, God's absolute power only extends to that which is consistent with his

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[49] It is noted by Lawrence Moonan that Aquinas used the *absoluta*/*ordinata* distinction over thirty times throughout his theological work. Lawrence Moonan, *Divine Power: The Medieval Power Distinction Up to Its Adoption by Albert, Bonaventure, and Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 229.

[50] Gabriel Biel, for example, seems to indicate priority of God's power over goodness when he states that God "could by himself produce an act of hatred of God, since God can do by Himself whatever He can do along with creatures." See Kennedy, "The Fifteenth Century and Divine Absolute Power", 132. Paul Scriptoris says likewise in reference to truth when stating, "Christ has said that there will be a Day of Judgment. But this is only a contingent matter. God could falsify this promise." See Kennedy, "The Fifteenth Century and Divine Absolute Power," 136.

[51] Dolezal, *God Without Parts,* 33–4.

nature. This maps on well with the classical conception of omnipotence as only being the ability to do all that is good and true.[52]

From this understanding of God's *potentia absoluta*, God's *potentia ordinata* can only be understood as external acts that flow from God's *potentia absoluta* as proscribed by his nature. Thus, nothing brought to be through God's *potentia ordinata* can be in conflict with God's nature. While God's acts in the world are not the extent of what God can do, there is no way in which those acts can be contrary to God's good and true power in himself. Furthermore, God's *potentia ordinata* can in no way bring about a change in God as if his works actualize him in some way.

God's Power in Relation to Divine Freedom

Opposed to the nominalist perspective of God's absolute freedom of power are those of a more platonic or neoplatonic perspective. Without reference to the *absoluta*/*ordinata* distinction, the platonic framework overly conflates God's power, will, and acts.[53] The conclusion that arises out of this is that there is no distinction between that which is possible and that which is real; that which God has not done, God could not do.[54] Any understanding of God's actions must be collapsed into God's will, subsequently making God's external works as necessary as God himself. This platonic perspective sees God's omnipotence as corresponding one-for-one with what God does. In other words, God's power cannot extend beyond what God does. Only what God wills is possible, thus God can do all that is possible because

[52] See Anselm, *Proslogion* 7; Augustine, *A Sermon to the Catechumens on the Creed* 2.

[53] Thomas helpfully establishes that there is a will in God since every intellect entails a will that is aimed toward a particular end. However, God's will is not fixed to some end outside of himself but finds its terminus in goodness itself which is God. Therefore, just as God's intellect is his own existence, so his will is his own existence. *Summa Theologica* 1.19.1. Furthermore, Francis Turretin helpfully elaborates on the will of God in his *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*. Turretin states that God's will can be understood in two senses, necessary and hypothetical. The necessary will of God relates to that which God must will, such as goodness and truth, whereas the hypothetical is that which God could have willed otherwise. *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* 3.14.1–2.

[54] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 2,* 247.

He does all that He wills.[55] Essentially, this understanding holds that there is nothing that God can do other than what He does. The major problem that arises with this perspective is that it erases any notion of divine freedom and subsequently collapses God's external works into God's internal essence.[56]

The first problem one will encounter in regard to denying divine freedom are the biblical passages in which God is understood to have the power to have done otherwise. One such example is that of Matthew 3. Within the context of John the Baptist's ministry, John sees the Pharisees and Sadducees and criticizes them for their presumption of believing they are right with God due to being physical children of Abraham (Matt 3:7–9) However, in the criticism leveled against the religious leaders, John claims that "God is able from these stones to raise up children of Abraham" (v. 9) In spite of God never raising children of Abraham from the stones, the language of δύναται and ἐγεῖραι have clear connotations of power and capability; just as God *did* bring Adam forth from dust, so God *could* bring Israel forth from stones.[57] The clear implication of this passage is that God could have done other than what He had clearly ordained to not be the case.[58]

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[55] Abelard is a key proponent of such a view, stating, "God cannot do more than He does, or do the things better, or cease from doing them; but that He does everything as He does by a certain necessity." Peter Abelard, "Theologiae Christianae" V., in J. Ramsay McCallum, *Abelard's Christian Theology* (Merrick: Richwood, 1976), 93. This view was also held by Spinoza and Schleiermacher. See Baruch Spinoza, *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy* 2.9; Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, §54.

[56] This also seems to lead to the logical problem of McEar, originally introduced by Alvin Plantinga. Plantinga claims that collapsing God's omnipotence to a state of only being able to do what he actually does leads to the conclusion that a being (McEar) who is only able to scratch his left ear and does so, must be considered omnipotent. Alvin Plantinga, *God and Other Minds: A Study of the Rational Justification of Belief in God* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 170.

[57] Charles L. Quarles, *Matthew,* Exegetical Guides to the Greek New Testament, eds. Andreas J. Köstenberger, and Robert W. Yarbrough. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), 34–5.

[58] This conclusion can also be implied from Matthew 26:53, in which Jesus claims he could call twelve legions of angels to rescue him from the cross, as

Thomas Aquinas also denies the jettisoning of divine freedom on several levels.[59] First, Thomas argues that what acts out of natural necessity must be acting toward some end that has been determined by some other agent.[60] One illustration provided by Thomas is that of that natural necessity of nutrition and growth.[61] Since natural growth is neither established nor controlled by the will of the creature, there must be an external agent in which this natural necessity finds its origin. The telos, then, of a natural necessity is derived by something outside of the agent affected by the necessity. Based on this, God cannot have any natural necessity because that would imply some sort of cause that is external to God.

The second problem that Thomas has with denying divine freedom is in relation to the end of God's will being that of divine goodness.[62] While Thomas certainly affirms that the end of God's will is divine goodness, he follows by stating, "Creatures are not commensurate with this end, so that the divine goodness cannot be manifested without them."[63] Thomas is highlighting the fact that the manifestation of God's goodness is not dependent, in an ultimate sense, upon what God has done in creation. Thus, God could will other beings and outcomes which would reveal his goodness in the same way as any other determination he could make. Thomas concludes that the error of believing God is only able to do what he has done is the error of believing "creatures to be commensurate with divine goodness, as if divine goodness could not exist without that order."[64]

Although Thomas does not mention *actus purus* in his refutation of denying divine freedom, the implications relating to it can be quickly realized. Making creatures commensurate with divine goodness necessarily imports a sense of passive potency to God's power. Within

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well as James 4:2–3, in which believers are told that God could have given them their desires should they have asked for them.

[59] Anselm also speaks briefly to this, stating, "God does nothing under compulsion of necessity —because he is in no way forced to do, or prohibited from doing, anything." Anselm, *Why God Became Man* 2.5.

[60] *The Power of God* 1.5.

[61] *The Power of God* 1.5.

[62] *The Power of God* 1.5.

[63] *The Power of God* 1.5.

[64] *The Power of God* 1.5.

the general framework of scholastic metaphysics, it is understood that the only thing which can limit act is potency.[65] To argue, then, that God's power is limited to only doing what God does, implies the function of a passive potency in some way. In other words, since God's power is limited to such a narrow outcome of only being that which God does, there must be a functional passive potentiality behind that limitation. Regardless of whether this passive potency is derived from creation or God himself, both lead to problematic conclusions. If from creation, it must be concluded that God's power is determined by something external to himself. If from himself, it must be concluded that there is, in fact, passive potency in God that limits God's being.

However, as can be expected, *actus purus* does not allow for any conclusion that leads to God's power being affected by passive potency. God's power cannot be such that it is dependent on anything external to him, nor can it be limited by some deficiency in God himself. Rather, God's power is such that it is fully and completely actualized in himself and independent of all things external to him. The notion that God's power only encompasses what God doe, is to make creation as a whole a sort of passive potency that limits God's act. In the same way that a creature's act is limited by the passive potency of the world, so God's power is limited by what seems to be some sort of passive potency of what would be willed. This creates the problem of placing potency as ontologically prior to act.[66]

Furthermore, the formulation of God's act as being necessary leads to a collapse of God's being with his works. If God acts out of necessity, then one could argue that what God has done is necessary for God to be God. Had he not done these things that are necessary, then he would be other than what he is. Thus, God's external acts and God's internal nature are inseparable from one another. Therefore, if God's nature is identical to his power, and his power is identical to his will, and his will is identical to his acts, then it would seem to be a logical conclusion that God's acts are identical to his nature. From this point, it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that God's acts and God himself are one and the same. In the best-case scenario, this sounds

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[65] Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 36; 162.

[66] In both Aristotle and Scholastic thought, act is recognized as being ontologically prior to potency. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 9.8; Bernard Wuellner, *Summary of Scholastic Principles* (Fitzwilliam: Loreto, 2023), 11.

eerily similar to Karl Rahner's famous (or infamous) line: "The 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity."[67] In the worst-case scenario, the conflation of God's power and acts devolve into either pantheism or panentheism.[68]

Ultimately, as Thomas makes clear, we cannot attribute power to God by reason of what he does but by reason of his nature.[69] Regardless of whether God created more than what is currently known or if He created absolutely nothing, it would be irrelevant to the status of God's power and him being omnipotent. This is due to the fact that God's power is independent of anything external to God. As *actus purus* makes clear, external works in no way actuate God's power, since God's power has no potency to be actuated. Just as God is *a se*, so his power is *a se*. Thus, God's power is not conditional in some way upon creation but independent. If God were to ordain that grass be blue rather than green, this would in no way affect God's power in and of himself, as if blue or green grass actualize differing potentialities in God. While it is certainly true that God cannot do what God cannot will, such as evil or incoherence, it does not follow that God could not have willed other than what He did, so long as it is in accordance with his nature.[70]

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[67] Karl Rahner, *The Trinity,* trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Burns and Oates, 2001), 22.

[68] John Cooper's work on panentheism helpfully elucidates how the panentheistic view imports passive potency into the nature of God, thus removing the conception of *actus purus*. Cooper states that with panentheism "God's essence is eternal and immutable, but his existence involves growth, change, and suffering. God in himself is personal, but God in actual existence acquires personhood by developing in and through the world, especially its conflict and suffering." John S. Cooper, *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 102. This conception of God entails that God must have an existential passive potency that allows for his growth, change, and suffering. With such an understanding, God's relationship to his creation is one in which God is dependent and molded by what is created; God could not be who he is without the actualizing effects of the created order.

[69] *The Power of God* 1.1.

[70] Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* 3.21.13.; 3.21.25.

Conclusion

Used as a lens through which to view divine power, *actus purus* serves as means of bolstering the creator-creature distinction, showing how God's power is unified to the divine nature, and upholding the notion of divine freedom. As *actus purus*, God's power is distinct in that it is without reciprocal actualization, unaffected by exertion or energy, and is not bound by the limitation of time. *Actus purus* further undergirds the unified nature of God in a way that God's power cannot be abstracted from the rest of God's nature. Lastly, God's power is seen, through *actus purus*, as not being limited to that which God has ordained to be but as infinite in God's nature.

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Modesty, Misogyny, and #MeToo: A Biblical Exploration of Modesty and Why It Matters Today

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Introduction

In response to abuses exposed by the #metoo and #churchtoo movements, a backlash has surfaced in recent years against constraints on women's and girls' dress and self-expression that are associated with Christian teachings on modesty, particularly teachings associated with "evangelical purity culture." The backlash comes both from Christians and non-Christians who charge that evangelical purity culture's teachings harm women and girls by encouraging them—and men and boys—to internalize beliefs about male and female sexuality that purportedly promote misogyny and abuse in families, churches, and society more broadly. Out of a desire to defend rape victims' innocence, some who object to purity culture's standards for modesty argue that women and girls should not need to dress modestly because men should control themselves and take responsibility for their own actions. This contention is often coupled with expressive individualism and feminist ideas of empowerment: women and girls should have the freedom to express themselves in whatever ways make them feel good about themselves, such freedom of expression is empowering to them and necessary for being true to oneself, and it is oppressive and misogynistic to restrain women and girls from authentic self-expression. Additionally, some critics believe that any call for modesty in self-presentation suggests that women and girls are at least partially culpable for men's sexual sins, in effect placing blame on women and girls for men's lustful thoughts or immoral or abusive sexual actions. Others reject modesty because they struggle to define it and because standards of modesty vary among cultures.

While much has been written critiquing problematic representations of modesty in evangelical purity culture and abuse

within churches, there is a need to go beyond critique of purity culture conceptualizations and present a positive explication and defense of modesty as presented in the Bible that is sensitive to the current cultural moment and takes the problems of purity culture teachings into consideration. This paper will argue modesty is an important theological concept that should be affirmed and embraced by Christians despite current challenges against it. To support this thesis, the paper will survey arguments against modesty, explore biblical passages related to modesty to clarify the concept, respond to arguments undermining modesty, and explain the scriptural significance of pursuing modesty. The paper's conclusion will propose that based on a scriptural understanding of modesty, believers (both men and women) should evaluate their self-presentation by 1) what it may communicate in the particular context, 2) how it aligns or does not align with Christian virtue, godliness, and right relationship to other people and God, and 3) how it may affect an unbeliever's receptiveness to the gospel.

Current Attitudes Towards Modesty and Factors that Undermine Modesty

Current objections to modesty fall into three main categories. These include objections to Christian teachings associated with evangelical purity culture, objections based on expressive individualism and feminist empowerment, and the objection that there is no consensus on what clothing counts as modest or immodest. Some of the challenges are contrary to biblical teachings and should be rejected by Christians pursuing a biblical modesty ethic, but other criticisms expose legitimate problems with some approaches to modesty and warrant careful consideration to determine a biblical response.

Objections to Christian Teachings Associated with Evangelical Purity Culture

According to Rachel Joy Welcher, evangelical purity culture is associated with "a movement that utilized pledges, books, and events to promote sexual abstinence outside of marriage"[1] which fostered

[1] Rachel Joy Welcher, *Talking Back to Purity Culture: Rediscovering Faithful Christian Sexuality* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2020), 11.

"the idolization of virginity," pitched "marriage and sex as the reward for chastity," stereotyped "men as lust machines," and taught that women are "responsible for the purity of men."[2] Welcher notes that the movement that began in the 1990s was "an earnest response to the age-old problem of sexual immorality and the modern crisis of STDs and teenage pregnancy"[3] but has resulted in men and women developing a distorted and harmful view of sex and sexuality, the nature of men and women, and biblical sex ethics. In relation to modesty, women and girls are "taught to be aware of how their actions, glances, and dress could inspire male lust"[4] and are cautioned to avoid dressing in ways that might inspire such lust lest they become "stumbling blocks" to men through their physical appearance.

Many who reject modesty in response to purity culture teachings charge that they often overemphasize women's clothing and self-presentation and rarely address that of men.[5] Critics contend that suggesting that women and girls who dress immodestly can be "stumbling blocks" (based on Rom 14 and 1 Cor 8) objectifies women and girls, blames them for men's sinful and abusive actions, and teaches them that their bodies are dishonorable or evil.[6] For instance, one book targeting 8- to 10-year-old girls warns that they can "play the role of Satan in someone's life" through clothing choices[7] and tells girls to cover up their bodies. The author encourages prepubescent girls to wear rash guard shirts and knee-length board shorts over a regular swimsuit when swimming to avoid inciting others' lust.[8] Opponents of purity culture argue that rather than women and girls covering more of their bodies, men should learn to treat women and

[2] Welcher, *Talking Back to Purity Culture*, 15.
[3] Welcher, *Talking Back to Purity Culture*, 9.
[4] Welcher, *Talking Back to Purity Culture*, 41–2.
[5] Welcher, *Talking Back to Purity Culture*, 34. Emily Joy Allison and Lyz Lenz, *#ChurchToo: How Purity Culture Upholds Abuse and How to Find Healing* (Minneapolis: Broadleaf Books, 2021), 44–5.
[6] Sheila Wray Gregoire, Rebecca Gregoire Lindenbach, and Joanna Sawatsky, *The Great Sex Rescue: The Lies You've Been Taught and How to Recover What God Intended* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2021), 94.
[7] Dannah Gresh, *True Girl: Discover the Secrets of True Beauty* (Moody Publishers, 2019), 16.
[8] Gresh, *True Girl*, 87–8.

girls with respect, control their own thoughts, desires, and actions, and not objectify women and girls' bodies.

Critics further assert that purity culture depicts men as having nearly uncontrollable sexual desires that are considered natural and are attributed to the way God designed men, and they maintain that this depiction places an unreasonable burden on women to keep men's impulses under control based on the assumption that if women dress modestly, men will have less temptation.[9] They object that women are not their brothers' keepers and contend that purity culture teachings about male libido and female modesty suggest that women and girls are to some degree responsible for being mistreated when men mistreat them sexually; such blame-shifting is deemed particularly insidious when victims of sexual abuse are blamed for the sins committed against them because of their appearance rather than their abusers taking full blame for lusting after the women and girls and acting on sinful desires.[10] Additionally, they believe that purity culture depicts women as being uninterested in sex or having a much lower, more readily controlled sex drive than men,[11] which trivializes, overlooks, or ignores women's struggles with sexual temptation.[12] They are also concerned that purity culture teachings on modesty can result in women internalizing the idea that their bodies cause others to sin, resulting in women believing that their bodies are dangerous and evil and that there is something intrinsically wicked about being female if an essential and immutable element of their being (i.e., their gendered body) is a cause for others' sin.[13] Linda K. Klein expresses this idea in dramatic fashion: "Imagine growing up in a castle and hearing fables about how dragons destroy villages and kill good people all your life. Then, one day, you wake up and see scales on your

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[9] Welcher, *Talking Back to Purity Culture*, 33; Allison and Lenz, *#ChurchToo*, 43.

[10] Linda Kay Klein, *Pure: Inside the Evangelical Movement That Shamed a Generation of Young Women and How I Broke Free* (New York: Atria Books, 2018), 92; Allison and Lenz, *#ChurchToo*, 44.

[11] Welcher, *Talking Back to Purity Culture*, 32; Gregoire, Lindenbach, and Sawatsky, *The Great Sex Rescue*, 125.

[12] Emerson Eggerichs, for example, states plainly: "If your husband is typical, he has a need you don't have." *Love & Respect: The Love She Most Desires; The Respect He Desperately Needs* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 257.

[13] Welcher, Talking Back to Purity Culture, 43.

arms and legs and realize, '. . . I'm the dragon.' For me, it was a little like that."[14] As purity culture teachings are increasingly rejected, modesty has become a more nebulous concept and continues to provoke resentment.

Expressive Individualism and Feminist Empowerment

Expressive individualism and feminist empowerment are powerful and pervasive ideologies. Carl Trueman describes expressive individualism as finding "meaning by giving expression to our own feelings and desires"[15] and asserts that "the expressive individual . . . grants his own personal preferences the status of universal moral imperatives."[16] With respect to modesty, this ideology suggests that to be authentic and true to themselves, women and girls should be allowed to express themselves as they wish without regard to others' opinions or moral struggles. These ideas are often coupled with feminist empowerment that insists that women should have the freedom to express their authentic selves as they see fit, and such expression is essential to women being empowered. For example, during the 2020 Super Bowl halftime show, many viewers were shocked at the sexually charged performance of Shakira and Jennifer Lopez coupled with costumes that many considered extremely immodest, but others celebrated their provocative clothing and dancing as empowering, with one journalist explaining that "the empowerment comes from the women onstage *deciding on their own terms* that *they want to show off* not just *the way their bodies look*, but all that they're capable of doing."[17] To those who subscribe to the ideologies of expressive individualism and feminist empowerment,

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[14] Klein, *Pure*, 4.

[15] Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 46.

[16] Trueman, *Rise and Triumph*, 86.

[17] Hannah Yasharoff, "JLo and Shakira's Super Bowl Halftime Performance Was Empowering, Not Objectifying. Here's Why," *USA TODAY,* https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/celebrities/2020/02/03/super-bowl-halftime-why-jennifer-lopez-shakiras-performance-empowering/4643848002/. Emphasis added.

calls for modest clothing are thus oppressive and misogynistic because they restrict women's authentic self-expression.

The Problem of Defining Modesty

Many people object to modesty because they cannot neatly define and identify it. There is no consensus on what clothing counts as modest or immodest, and if modesty cannot be defined, it cannot be assessed, much less achieved.[18] Paired with expressive individualism and feminist empowerment, calls for modesty may be viewed as bigoted, because modesty is "in the eye of the beholder" and one person's standards for modesty should not be imposed on anyone who defines it differently.

Defining Biblical Modesty

Given the pervasiveness of current objections against modesty, the concept warrants further investigation for believers to know how to understand what biblical modesty is and how to present themselves modestly. The two passages most frequently cited in relation to modesty are 1 Timothy 2:8-15 and 1 Peter 3:1-6. While they do not provide an explicit definition, they do help clarify the concept of modesty as it is used in Scripture and offer insights for modern believers struggling to identify standards for modesty in a variety of contexts. The two "stumbling block" passages, Romans 14-15:7 and 1 Corinthians 8:4-13, are also cited often to promote female modesty by applying the principles of Christian liberty to women and girls' clothing and self-presentation choices. Other passages provide insights for distinguishing what is modest or immodest through the use of terms related to clothing and through the description of clothing in narrative contexts.

Modesty in 1 Timothy 2:8-15: Part of a Virtuous Life That Honors God and Points to the Gospel

> **8** I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; **9** likewise also that *women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and*

[18] Allison and Lenz, *#ChurchToo*, 43.

> *self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire,* **10** *but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.* **11** Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. **12** I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. **13** For Adam was formed first, then Eve; **14** and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. **15** Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they *continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control* (1 Tim 2:8-15).[19]

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[19] Unless otherwise specified, all Bible references in this paper are to the English Standard Version (ESV) (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2001). The meaning of the phrase "yet she will be saved through childbearing" in verse 15 is unclear and enigmatic. Most commentators acknowledge the ambiguity and offer only tentative interpretations for it. Few scholars interpret it to mean that women must have children to obtain spiritual salvation or that Christian women will be preserved when they have children (as opposed to dying from childbirth). Some suggest that "childbirth" is used in a literary sense to point to women embracing their feminine nature and roles, both of which are uniquely expressed in childbirth because only women can birth children. Many suggest that the "she" refers to Eve because "childbearing" has a definite article, rendering it "*the* childbearing" of the Seed promised in Genesis 3:15, which Paul identifies as Jesus in Galatians 3:16, suggesting that the birth of Christ in fulfillment of Genesis 3:15 brought salvation to women. If the birth of Jesus is understood to be the catalyst for redemption through His sacrifice on the cross, this interpretation is satisfactory. Paul's emphatic teaching elsewhere that salvation is obtained through faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross renders interpreting the verse as being saved through having children, the incarnation apart from the cross, and embracing femininity as contradictory with clear teachings of Scripture. The second option cannot be the case because Christian women do sometimes die from childbirth. See Knute Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, vol. 9, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 172; Daniel C. Arichea and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on Paul's Letters to Timothy and to Titus*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1995), 61; Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, vol. 34, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 102; and George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids; Carlisle: Eerdmans; Paternoster, 1992), 145.

First Timothy 2:8-15 is in the context of Paul's instructions to Timothy for prayer. Paul urges Timothy to pray for all men (2:1) so that believers may live a quiet, peaceable, godly, reverent life (2:2) because God desires all men to know the truth of the gospel (2:4). Therefore, Paul instructs that men ought to pray in a certain way (2:8) and women should dress with modesty and propriety (2:9), pursue godliness, do good works (2:10), relate to men's leadership in the church appropriately (2:11-14),[20] and persevere in faith, love, holiness, and self-control.

Aidōs (αἰδώς) is the term in 1 Timothy 2:9 that is translated "modesty." William Arndt et al. identify *aidōs* as modesty, reverence, or respect and describe it as expressing "the opposite of considering or treating something in a common or ordinary manner; a respect for convention."[21] Modesty is presented as desirable along with respectable apparel, self-control, appropriateness, godliness, and good works and is contrasted with braided hair and expensive jewelry and clothing. According to Andreas Köstenberger and Thomas Schreiner, in the first century Ephesian context, *plegma* (πλέγμα), "braided hair," denoted extravagant hairstyles associated with wealth

[20] The meaning of verses 12 through 14 is and has been controversial for some time. In particular, many question whether the instructions that women should "learn quietly with all submissiveness" (v. 11) and are not permitted to "teach or to exercise authority over a man" (v. 12), which are linked to the creation narrative, are true for the Church in all times and all places or if it refers to a limited context or period. It is clear on a broad level that Paul intends for women to relate to men in certain ways in certain contexts. Understanding the concept of modesty in the passage does not require a determination whether or how the prohibitions in verses 11 and 12 are applicable today, as Paul shifts his focus from appropriate self-presentation in verses 9 and 10 to appropriate modes of learning and teaching in verses 11 and 12. I intentionally leave the summary of verses 11 and 12 somewhat ambiguous because their interpretation is tangential to my argument and I prefer to leave the summary broad enough for those with differing views to be able to assent to it and not be divided on the topic of modesty due to disagreements on the topics of verses 11 and 12.

[21] William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 24.

and sexual immorality.[22] They argue that Paul's injunction against braided hair is today's "equivalent of warning Christians away from imitating styles set by promiscuous pop singers or actresses. How one dresses can often convey rebellious or ungodly messages whether intended or not."[23] Paired with the admonitions in close proximity to the instruction to present oneself modestly, "modesty" gives the sense of propriety as opposed to licentiousness or ostentatiousness—one factor being of a sexual nature and the other of inappropriate displays of wealth or status.

In sum, Paul has a concern that women's self-presentation and behavior honor God and point people to the truth of the gospel. He gives an admonition that women should dress in a manner consistent with moderation and propriety. Instead of drawing attention to themselves through their appearance—whether in an ostentatious display of wealth or in a sexually suggestive or provocative manner—they should pursue godliness, do good works, relate to men's leadership in the church appropriately, and persevere in faith, love, holiness, and self-control.

Modesty in 1 Peter 3:1–6: Part of a Life That Points Others to Christ

> **1** Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, **2** when they see your respectful and pure conduct. **3** Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— **4** but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. **5** For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own

[22] Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, *Women in the Church: An Interpretation and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, third ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 51, 53. Some scholars also believe it was related to the Artemis cult. See Lucy Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture's Vision for Women: Fresh Perspectives on Disputed Texts* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2019), 148.

[23] Köstenberger and Schreiner, *Women in the Church*, 54.

> husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening (1 Pet 3:1–6).

First Peter 3:1–6 is in the context of instructions to persecuted Christians in Asia Minor for living in such a way that others will see the believer's good deeds and glorify God (2:12). Preceding sections address submission to government (2:13–17) and submission of slaves to masters (2:18–25). It is immediately followed by an admonition to husbands to honor and respect their wives, with the rationale that men and women are heirs of God's kingdom together (3:7). Peter's subsequent focus is how believers should endure suffering (3:8–5:14), which is the overarching concern of the entire letter.

Verse 1 specifically addresses women whose husbands "do not obey the word." Schreiner notes that "the 'word' (*logos*) here, as in 2:8, refers to the gospel. All disobedience, of course, stems from unbelief, but the emphasis here is on the rebellion of husbands who refuse to adhere to the gospel."[24] Peter hopes that the wives' conduct will influence their unbelieving husbands to repent, believe, and choose obedience. Thus, Peter's instructions regarding the self-presentation of women are tied to living a virtuous life that points others to Christ. Like Paul, Peter enjoins women to avoid elaborate hair braiding and ostentatious, excessively expensive, or seductive clothing and jewelry[25] and similarly directs them instead to pursue virtuous character and behavior: "respectful and pure conduct," "a gentle and quiet spirit," proper interactions with their husbands,[26] good works, and courage.

The idea of "respectful and pure conduct" encompasses more than moral and sexual purity: Daniel Arichea and Eugene Nida contend that

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[24] Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 149.

[25] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 153–4.

[26] I again intentionally opt for a broad summary of controversial phrases. The meaning of the instructions regarding wives relating to their husbands is tangential to the instructions about modesty and need not divide readers on their understanding of modesty based on their understanding of marital interactions.

it "is used here in the broader sense of good, sincere, honest, acceptable behavior."[27] Peter's call for women to have a "gentle and quiet spirit" is frequently misunderstood to be promoting "gentle" and "quiet" *mannerisms*; however, the terms actually carry the idea of *virtue* in the forms of strength, self-control, humbleness, considerateness, calmness (not being easily disturbed or prone to anxiousness), dignity, and strong character rather than a reserved or taciturn disposition.[28] That is good news for women with bubbly, outgoing personalities! Every woman has the capacity to cultivate and adorn herself with such virtues, giving them "imperishable beauty" that is precious to God and points others to Christ regardless of their outward appearance or economic status.

There is significant overlap between Paul and Peter's instructions. Based on these two passages, modesty can be understood as having *outward*, *inward*, and *relational* aspects and being *not* primarily sexual in nature. Both Paul and Peter teach that women should dress modestly, emphasizing self-presentation that aligns with virtue, godliness, and right relationship to others and God with a special concern that the gospel message be promoted rather than hindered.[29]

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[27] Daniel C. Arichea and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on the First Letter from Peter*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1980), 89.

[28] David Walls and Max Anders, *I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude*, vol. 11, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 49; Arichea and Nida, *A Handbook on the First Letter from Peter*, 91.

[29] It is perhaps worth noting that egalitarian interpretations of these passages often emphasize the cultural links to suggest that, because braided hair is bound to the cultural context of the ancient Greco-Roman Empire and is not an issue in modern times, the instructions regarding women's relationships to men in church and marriage are culturally bound as well and do not apply today. In contrast, complementarians contend that the passages affirm male leadership in the church and home. Perhaps the interpretation of the controversial statements about submission and leadership explains why so little is written on modesty in commentaries, textbooks, and Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias: the teaching on moral behavior in these passages aside from submission and leadership is unfortunately overshadowed by the feminist debate. Most writing on modesty is written at a popular level for young girls and teens and their parents by women who do

These insights require further exploration to attain a practical definition of biblical modesty for believers today, as 1 Timothy 2:8–15 and 1 Peter 3:1–6 do not provide a concrete rubric for what counts as "modest" in modern contexts.

Purity Culture and Christian Liberty: Can Clothing Be a Stumbling Block? Am I My Brother's (or Sister's) Keeper?

The "stumbling block" passages found in Rom 14–15:7 and 1 Cor 8:4–13 are often used to admonish women and girls to dress modestly to avoid causing men to stumble into sexual temptation. The purity culture argument is that by dressing immodestly, women entice men to lust and sexual sin, so women should dress modestly to prevent or at least lessen men's lustful thoughts and behavior. Critics of purity culture challenge this application because, in context, the passages are related to mature believers causing immature believers to violate their consciences by eating food that they think is sinful, not about inciting lust by dressing immodestly.[30] The disjunction between the nature of the causes and the nature of the sins undermines the applicability of the passage to modesty.

While critics are right that the passage does not refer to sexual sin directly and that there is not a one-to-one correspondence in the scenarios, the principles of Christian liberty nevertheless must apply to modesty in certain ways because Christians are obligated to look out for the interests of others before their own (Phil 2:4) and the way one dresses can impact others. Romans 14–15:7 and 1 Cor 8:4–13 present principles for determining how to interact with other believers who have different views on the morality of certain behaviors. Paul observes that "we who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Rom 15:1) and enjoins mature believers to "take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak" (1 Cor 8:9). He goes so far as to exclaim, "Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble." As mature believers are instructed to refrain from eating certain foods if their eating them will encourage a less mature believer

not have theological training and who make judgments without adequate research and frequently employ poor hermeneutics and logic.

[30] Klein, *Pure*, 29.

to sin against his conscience, believers who see nothing wrong with certain types of clothing should consider refraining from wearing clothes that they anticipate will likely exacerbate another believer's temptation to sin sexually.

Similar to how a good friend does not drink alcohol in the presence of a friend she knows to be a recovering alcoholic, even if the good friend otherwise considers drinking alcohol morally permissible for herself, consideration for others' weaknesses can rightfully motivate Christians to choose to dress in ways that communicate virtue and to avoid wearing clothing that is likely to elicit sexual thoughts in their cultural context. Certainly no one can control another person's thoughts or actions, nor can anyone know others' thoughts so fully as to anticipate every weakness and serve as his or her "keeper"; however, most people know generally what elicits a sexual response in their contexts and can choose to avoid clothes that will draw sexual attention to them.[31] Those who teach modesty from these passages must be clear that men bear the full weight of their sin and that women's and girls' bodies are not evil, but it is not inappropriate to suggest that believers take each other's weaknesses into consideration when exercising their own freedom. Of course, knowing that women are not immune to sexual temptation, the same admonition should be given to men, which purity culture proponents generally fail to do.

These passages are likewise relevant to the aspects of modesty that are not sexual, as clothing can also be a "stumbling block" by its potential to elicit sinful thoughts and feelings such as jealousy, covetousness, pride, inferiority, superiority, partiality, and judgment, which may have been a concern Paul and Peter had when they wrote about ostentatious clothing, jewelry, and hairstyles. One who has nice clothes may become prideful, while another who does not have nice clothes may feel envious; both attitudes contrast with the virtue of Christian love, which "does not envy or boast" and "is not arrogant" (1 Cor 13:4). Additionally, some may treat people differently based on their appearance, especially when it conveys wealth or poverty—an

[31] Missionaries and people who visit other cultures often take pains to ensure that their clothing and behavior are acceptable in the other culture so as not to offend or cause trouble. Believers should attempt to do the same in their native cultures.

action explicitly condemned in James 2:1–9. Such attitudes and actions conflict with Christian virtue, godliness, and right relationship to others and God and can deter others from coming to Christ.

The stumbling block passages indicate that part of being in a right relationship to other people is seeking their welfare and helping them follow Christ. Thus, believers should consider others' weaknesses, whether sexual or otherwise, when choosing clothing because they should care about others' spiritual and emotional well-being. The choice to set aside personal freedom and preference to present oneself modestly can be motivated by a concern for the good of others and their relationship to God.

At the same time, the passages must not be construed in a manner that wrongfully licenses one person to sin if the other neglects to take the others' weaknesses into consideration. The sins Paul attributes to the one who stumbles in Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8 are sins of conscience in which the stumbler does something he or she thinks is or might be wrong. The act in fact is not wrong, but it becomes wrong if one does it while being conflicted about whether it is right or wrong, because "whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (Rom 14:23b). In contrast, lust and sexual activities outside of marriage are very explicitly condemned in Scripture: there is no question that giving in to such temptations incurs guilt. Another person's behavior and dress can make the temptation more or less intense, but temptation is not coercion; sexual sin is not excused by the presence of temptation.

Honoring God and Expressing Love for Others with Self-Presentation

Clothing, behavior, and self-presentation should also honor God and express love for others. In Col 3:12–17, Paul employs rhetorical language of clothing oneself to instruct believers to "put on" Christian virtues:[32]

> Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, *compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other*; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And

[32] William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 333. The term ἐνδύω can be used in the senses of clothing oneself in apparel and of clothing oneself in virtue.

> above all these put on *love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony*. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And *whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus*, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The virtues in this passage should foster unity and right relationships to others and God, and many of them overlap with the virtues Paul and Peter admonish women to cultivate in 1 Ti 2:8–15 and 1 Pet 3:1–6. Rather than calling attention to themselves through self-presentation (in a sexual manner or otherwise), believers are to clothe themselves with virtue. Ultimately, believers are to honor God in all things—including self-presentation.

Distinguishing between Modesty and Immodesty: Clothing as a Form of Communication

In his concurring opinion on the 1964 *Jacobellis v. Ohio* Supreme Court decision, Justice Potter Stewart made the statement "I know it when I see it" when trying to define pornography. It is similarly difficult to define what clothing counts as modest or immodest, and many Christians adopt a vague standard like Justice Stewart: they know modesty or immodesty when they see it. In the current cultural moment, however, believers need a more concrete way to discern what is modest and what is not. A survey of biblical passages that describe various types of clothing suggests that clothing is a form of communication that gives different messages in different contexts, some aligned with Christian virtue and others not.

Examples of the significance of clothing in the Bible include clothing that indicates sexual availability or unavailability (Gen 38:14–17; 2 Sam 13:18; Prov 7:10), special celebrations (Matt 22:11–12), social status (Esth 5:1), allegiance to Yahweh or foreign gods (Num 15:38–40; Deut 22:12; Zeph 1:8),[33] solemn occasions (Exod

[33] According to Kenneth L. Barker, "Wearing the clothes of foreigners signified the desire to be like the Assyrians and others in every way, including the worship of pagan gods. 'The princely households [were] frivolously

19:10–11; Esth 5:1), roles or duties (Exod 28:40–43), emotion (2 Sam 13:19; Esth 4:1), social relationships (Gen 2:25; 24:65), wealth or poverty (Jas 2:2–3), and gender (Deut 22:5). The messages conveyed by clothing vary from context to context, but to those familiar with the context, the messages are generally clear. Several of these passages relate to modesty.

Passages relating to modesty of a sexual nature include Genesis 38:14–17; 2 Samuel 13:18; Genesis 24:65; and Exodus 28:40–43. In the first Genesis passage, Tamar's initial outfit was indicative of her status as a widow, but when Tamar put on clothing that suggested she was a prostitute, Judah readily recognized her clothing as inviting a sexual encounter. In contrast, in 2 Samuel, Tamar the daughter of David wore "a long robe with sleeves" that indicated she was a virgin and the daughter of the king, not open to a sexual encounter. In the second Genesis passage, Rebekah veiled herself when she was about to meet Isaac for the first time, exhibiting modesty in the presence of the man whom she would soon marry, and in Exodus, priests had special garments reserved for their use, including underwear designed to keep others from seeing their genitals as they performed priestly duties. Clothing very clearly has the capacity to indicate a desire for or openness to sexual interaction as well as sexual unavailability, so care should be taken to avoid conveying an inappropriate sexual message.

Passages related to expensive or ostentatious clothing include Esth 5:1; Jas 2:2–3; and, of course, 1 Tim 2:9–10 and 1 Pet 3:3. Esther wore her "royal robes" when she went to see the king while he was holding court, appropriately signifying her role as well as the seriousness of the occasion and setting.[34] James warned not to show partiality based

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dazzled by supposed foreign sophistication…. The issue at stake was the distinctiveness of the people of God.' For this reason, God determined to visit those in judgment who clad themselves in foreign clothes." *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, vol. 20, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 430.

[34] Notably, while Esther's royal clothing had the potential to incite jealousy or envy, her clothing was nonetheless appropriate for the occasion as a sign of her position and her respect for the king; she carried herself in a humble but strong manner, not desiring to display her wealth and status to elicit attention or praise for herself but displaying propriety while leveraging her position on behalf of her people.

on whether a person wears clothing that indicates that he is rich or poor. Likewise, Paul and Peter's assumption was that expensive clothing and braided hair can communicate messages at odds with Christian living.

Admittedly, it is difficult to determine definitively what constitutes modest or immodest clothing in a universal sense. Fortunately, most people are aware of what various forms of clothing communicate in their own contexts, and there is no need to universalize specific principles for fashion—what is too short, too tight, too gaudy, and the like. Instead of an "I know it when I see it" approach to evaluating modesty, believers should assess 1) what it may communicate in the particular context, 2) how it aligns or does not align with Christian virtue, godliness, and right relationship to others and God, and 3) how it may affect an unbeliever's receptiveness to the gospel.

What Critics of Purity Culture Get Right

The preceding sections have proposed corrections to arguments of purity culture proponents as well as to objections of its critics related to the interpretation of Scripture and the need for clear criteria to distinguish between modesty and immodesty, but there are many valid critiques of modesty as it has been taught in churches in recent decades that should be acknowledged and emphasized. First, believers should affirm the challenge to purity culture that modesty is not exclusively a women's issue. Perhaps men in the early churches were not dressing in the ways that women were, but men today have the ability to dress and behave in ways that meet the criteria of immodesty, too. The biblical call for modesty applies to both men and women.

Likewise, critics of purity culture are correct that men (and women) should be responsible for their own lustful thoughts and actions. Jesus said that the man who looks at a woman with lust has committed adultery in his heart (Matt 5:28), but He did not place any blame on women for men's lust. Indeed, He pointed to *the man's eye* as the cause of sin when He said, "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away," and with hyperbolic language placed responsibility on the man to find a way, even a drastic one, to control himself (Matt 5:29). James, too, squarely places the blame for sin on

the individual sinner, explaining that "each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death" (Jas 1:14–15). Similarly, Paul's admonition that "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Cor 10:13) indicates that individuals are culpable for their own sin but also offers the encouragement that believers can escape sexual temptation with God's help.

At the same time, Christian leaders need to make a distinction between noticing another person's attractiveness and looking with lust. Sheila Gregoire, et al. insist that "sexual attraction is not lust. It is possible to notice that someone is very good looking and then do absolutely nothing else with that information."[35] Welcher similarly observes that too often, purity culture depicts men "as monsters who cannot control their lust," which she rightly considers dehumanizing.[36] She argues that Christians should be concerned with developing men's character and promoting right relationships between men and women where each sees the other "as brothers and sisters, image bearers, and coheirs of the kingdom of God."[37]

Just as men (and women) should take responsibility for their own thoughts and actions, they should also be regarded as culpable for their actions, regardless of the circumstances or source of temptation. In the Genesis Fall account, Adam and Eve tried to shift blame to others for their actions (Gen 3:12–13), but Adam and Eve were both held accountable for their own actions. God did not punish the serpent for Eve's sin or Eve for Adam's sin; they each received the penalty for their actions without regard to the circumstances or who or what tempted them (Gen 3:14–19). In concrete terms, this means that men who rape women who are dressed provocatively bear full responsibility for their decision to commit rape. While it may be imprudent to dress provocatively when sexual attention or interaction is not desired, men's actions are entirely within their own power to control, and a woman's clothing does not reduce or negate a

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[35] Gregoire, Lindenbach, and Sawatsky, *The Great Sex Rescue*, 81.
[36] Welcher, *Talking Back to Purity Culture*, 63, 65.
[37] Welcher, *Talking Back to Purity Culture*, 63.

man's responsibility to exercise self-control. It is not acceptable to "blame the victim."

Believers should also acknowledge that self-presentation is not always a factor in sexual abuse. This observation is most plainly seen in instances of infants being sexually abused: clearly, an infant does not dress or present herself in a manner intended to elicit sexual interest, yet even infants are sexually abused. Similarly, women wearing burkas—perhaps the epitome of modest clothing—are not exempt from being raped.[38] Regarding abuse of infants and children, critics of purity culture are also correct in contending that Christian leaders should unequivocally condemn pedophilia and ephebophilia and disavow any implication that a child deserves sexual attention.[39]

Additionally, it should not be controversial to say that abuse should not be tolerated in churches and victims should be protected. All too often, churches defend and protect their leaders and try to preserve their churches' reputations rather than defending and protecting the victims, and rather than receiving help and protection, the victims become ostracized, harassed, alienated, and rejected. Many churches also attempt to handle the matter internally through church discipline rather than allowing the justice system to fulfill its God-given role as a "servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer" (Rom 13:4).[40] Some even pressure victims

[38] Rachael Denhollander expressed this idea poignantly in a Twitter post on June 21, 2022: "'Was it really my fault?' Asked the short skirt. 'No. It happened with me too' replied the burqua. The diaper in the corner couldn't speak." Her comment was coupled with a post showing an exhibit of clothing worn by rape victims at the time of their rapes; the pictures suggest that many women—and infants—are not wearing provocative clothing when they are assaulted. The post concludes: "It's time to shift the blame to where it really belongs." https://twitter.com/r_denhollander/status/1539273251372802050.

[39] Gregoire, Lindenbach, and Sawatsky, *The Great Sex Rescue*, 95. Leaders should care for those who struggle with sexual attraction to children and should do what they can to help them overcome such temptation.

[40] While churches certainly should exercise church discipline if the sin of abuse has occurred, criminal behavior should be reported to law enforcement. As seen in Rom 13, one of the God-given responsibilities of governments is to punish crimes. It is not the church's role to investigate crimes or administer justice when laws have been broken. Because churches

to acknowledge that they contributed in some way to the leader's wrongdoing and to extend forgiveness and restore the broken relationship when no apology or repentance has been expressed by the offender.

Every man, woman, and child's life *and body* matter to God as He made each of them in His image. Abuse desecrates and profanes that sacred image, and when Christians treat abuse lightly, they mock the doctrine of the *imago Dei* and treat the sanctity of human lives with contempt. As abuse in churches continues to surface, Christians' responses have the potential to point people to Jesus and show them God's goodness and love or to turn them away from Christ. Through their actions in handling abuse allegations, Christians can tell the world that human life is sacred and that people matter to God *or* that some lives are worth more than others and God does not care about those who have been violated, harmed, and treated shamefully. Handling abuse cases with integrity, justice, and compassion is difficult but is also critical for the well-being of those who have been abused, others affected by the abuse, and the watching world that often judges Christ—for good or bad—by the actions and attitudes of His Bride.

Christian Liberty Counters Expressive Individualism and Women's Empowerment

The concepts of Christian liberty counter the secular idea that clothing choices are a means of self-expression that is crucial for women's empowerment. In 1 Cor 10:23–24, 31, Paul exhorts believers that "'All things are lawful,' but not all things are helpful. 'All things are lawful,' but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor …. So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." He even declares that he "endure[d] *anything* rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ"

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have not been granted that authority by God, they should work to ensure that crimes are investigated by the appropriate governmental authorities and punished according to the law. For a helpful discussion on this topic, see "Ministry Tension: Matthew 18 Complements (Doesn't Compete with) Romans 13" in Rachael Denhollander et al., *Becoming a Church That Cares Well for the Abused*, ed. Brad Hambrick (Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 2019), 17–30.

(1 Cor 9:12). Here again, the good of others, the glory of God, and the furtherance of the gospel are elevated over personal preferences. Unbelievers may balk at setting aside one's own preferences for the sake of others, but Christians are enjoined to care for others even down to clothing and food decisions and to do it for God's glory. Indeed, the love of Christ compels us, "because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and He died for all, that those who live might *no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised*" (2 Cor 5:14–15). While our culture promotes expressive individualism and feminist empowerment through self-presentation, the Bible teaches believers should yield their liberties for the sake of the gospel and God's glory and put others first more than seeking their own empowerment through clothing and appearance.

Conclusion: The Importance of Pursuing Modesty for Christian Men and Women

Modesty in the Bible includes but is not limited to hairstyles, jewelry, and apparel and is not primarily about restricting clothing as a means for controlling others' lust. For believers, modesty matters because one's self-presentation is an indicator of virtue, godliness, love and concern for others, love for God, and a desire to please and honor Him. This includes acting in ways that attract others to Christ and do not hinder evangelism. Out of love for God, love for others, and a desire that all people might come to know Christ, believers should affirm and embrace biblical modesty while rejecting misconstruals of modesty; condemning mistreatment, manipulation, and abuse of women resulting from twisting and misapplying biblical teachings; and repudiating arguments against modesty based on expressive individualism and feminist empowerment.

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What the Reformers Really Thought About the Great Commission

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Introduction

The Reformers did not give much attention to the Great Commission, nor to fulfilling it. That is what a number of scholars charge, anyway, although usually in more general terms. Contrary to this line of thinking, this paper will argue that the Reformers—namely, Martin Luther and John Calvin—contributed to the Great Commission's fulfillment in word and deed. It will begin by highlighting certain claims made by scholars, then consider reasons scholars have given for the Reformers' lack of mission.[1] Next, it will look at what Martin Luther and John Calvin said and wrote on Great Commission passages, and then show how each of them contributed to the fulfillment of the Great Commission in their lifetime and beyond.

For the purposes of this paper, the terms *mission*, *missions*, and *missional* refer to *making disciples of all nations*. In doing so, this paper also assumes the following: to make a disciple is to make a true follower of Christ, even if that true follower was either a nominal follower before, or in an area that would be considered "reached" today.[2] Further, to participate in making disciples of all nations does not necessarily require physically going to another people group for the purpose of sharing the gospel, but it does assume active

[1] Efforts to distinguish these terms are worthwhile and can be helpful, but such precision is unnecessary here due to the narrow focus of this paper. For examples of how they have been delineated, see A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 17, 72; Robin Hadaway, *A Survey of World Missions* (Nashville, B&H Academic, 2020), 1–3.

[2] For a helpful breakdown of this concept, see "What is a UPG?" Global Frontier Missions, https://globalfrontiermissions.org/gfm-101-missions-course/the-unreached-peoples-and-their-role-in-the-great-commission.

involvement in disciple making, especially disciple making that contributes to conversions in people groups other than one's own.

Guilty as Charged?

These first two sections constitute something of an annotated literature review. Although not comprehensive, the texts referenced provide a sampling of scholarly opinion over the last two hundred years. It begins with the two-volume *Origin & History of Missions* published in the early 1830s. In over 1300 pages, Luther is only mentioned a handful of times (Calvin only once), most directly in the introduction, which gives an overview of missions from the first to the nineteenth century. There, "the intrepid and persevering Luther" is credited for the Reformation, which caused "the pure light of the gospel… to irradiate the church," but nothing is said of his missiology.[3] Calvin is not named directly, but the 1556 mission to Brazil with which he was associated is noted. About fifty years later, Scottish historian George Smith characterized the Reformation as "only indirectly missionary" and a "home mission."[4] Then, in 1906, German missiologist Gustav Warneck put it bluntly: "Notwithstanding the era of discovery in which the origin of the Protestant church fell, there was no missionary action on her part in the age of the Reformation."[5] In a 1930 book entitled *History of Christian Missions*, Charles Robinson paints the era as void of missions and, with the utmost brevity (two paragraphs), summarizes Luther and Calvin as believing missions to be "useless."[6]

In a chapter in Gerald Anderson's *The Theology of the Christian Mission* (1961), William Hogg is more reasonable. He begins, "The Reformers evidenced no concern for overseas missions to non-

[3] Thomas Smith and John Choules, *Origin & History of Missions* (Boston: S. Walker, 1832), 1: xxvii.

[4] George Smith, *A Short History of Christian Missions* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1884), 110.

[5] Gustav Warneck, *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1906), 8. Despite this rather univocal opening statement, he admits an extensive home mission in the same paragraph.

[6] Charles Robinson, *History of Christian Missions* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), 42–3.

Christians," but notes too that "foreign" is not all there is to "missions."[7] Similarly, he highlights the absence of a "theology of missions" in both Luther and Calvin, but does so with explanation and admits implicit connections.[8] In his own theology of mission (1980), David Bosch eschews any direct charges and frames Luther and Calvin in terms of the greater Reformation context and the validity of the home mission.[9] If the lack of an express charge is subtle, the lack of evidence to support his claims is not. In a chapter in *The Great Commission* (2008), Glenn Sunshine gives more attention to evidence (mostly secondary) and explanation in answering charges, nevertheless prefacing his essay with, "It must be said that foreign missionary activity was in fact distinctly lacking among all Protestants in the sixteenth century, even among Anabaptists."[10] In the last ten years, the tune has not much changed. Missiologist Justice Anderson says of the Reformers, "One of the puzzling riddles of Christian history is the lack of missionary zeal on the part of the Magisterial Reformers."[11] More recently, in a text on the Great Commission, Daniel Akin recognizes the Reformers' lack of mission, but also says, "They did believe in mission or missions. They simply looked to other biblical passages for support."[12] Akin cites only one commentary example. Finally, in *A Survey of World Missions*

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[7] William Hogg, "The Rise of Protestant Missionary Concern," in *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, ed. Gerald Anderson (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1961), 95.

[8] Hogg, "The Rise of Protestant Missionary Concern," 97–9.

[9] David Bosch, *Witness to the World* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1980), 120–3. About twenty years later, the authors of *Introducing World Missions* would take a similar approach. Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions,* 120–1. Ralph Winter, on the other hand, would say, "Protestants… did not even talk of mission outreach"; they did not share in missions, nor did they try; they "sent none." See Ralph Winter, "The Kingdom Strikes Back," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph Winter and Steven Hawthorne, 4th ed. (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 224.

[10] Glenn Sunshine, "Protestant Missions in the Sixteenth Century," in *The Great Commission*, ed. Martin Klauber and Scott Manetsch (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 13.

[11] Justice Anderson, "Medieval and Renaissance Missions (500–1792)," in *Missiology*, ed. John Terry (Nashville, B&H Academic, 2015), 167.

[12] Daniel Akin, Benjamin Merkle, and George Robinson, *40 Questions About the Great Commission* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2020), 65.

(2020), Robin Hadaway says, "Luther, indeed most of the Reformers, did not pursue international missions."[13] Notably, he cites several examples of how Calvin was missional, many of which will be returned to later.

Although the opening statement of this paper is pointed for effect, it is not far from the mark in fact. If it is an oversimplification, it is one based on what many have taken to be the case for some time. If, as this paper argues, Luther and Calvin did contribute to missions—and the Great Commission in particular—in meaningful ways, why have some concluded otherwise? There are probably a variety of reasons, but much of it appears to come down to a lack of due diligence, or what historians Michael Haykin and C. Jeffrey Robinson call "theological and historical naiveté."[14] In other words, though sources were available, scholars did not study them carefully, perhaps hoping simply to bank on dominant narratives (e.g., popular knowledge of the Reformers' work, or the deceptive notion that unconditional election negates missions). Despite this, many of the same authors give reasons for why the Reformers were not more missional, which the next section will enumerate.

Scholars to the Rescue!

For those familiar with the history of missions and missiology, one noticeable omission from the above review was any comment from Kenneth Latourette's seven volume *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (1937). In the third volume, *Three Centuries of Advance*, he summarizes the expansion of Christianity like this: "All three branches of Christianity which experienced the awakenings [Protestant, Catholic, Russian] directed part of their energy towards the propagation of their religion. All three took advantage of the geographic discoveries, the commerce, and the migrations of

[13] Hadaway, *A Survey of World Missions*, 74.

[14] Michael A. G. Haykin and C. Jeffrey Robinson Sr., *To the Ends of the Earth* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014), 24–5. While the original comment is in reference to Calvin, it is relevant to critiques of Luther also. For a detailed analysis of the methodology of Warneck and others, see Elias Medeiros, "The Reformers and 'Missions' – Part 1," *Fides Reformata* 18, no. 1 (2013); Elias Medeiros, "The Reformers and 'Missions' – Part 2," *Fides Reformata* 22, no. 2 (2017).

European peoples to spread the Christian message…."[15] With those three centuries still in view, he goes on to say, "The most active in the extension of Christianity during this period was Roman Catholicism."[16] Rather than explicitly indicting the Protestants, Latourette highlights the greater success of the Catholics, giving six reasons for the Protestants' meager performance.[17] His detailed list is a most helpful starting point, one to which additions will be made in short order:

1. Internal concerns, generally (e.g., clarifying theology, controversies, organization)
2. No perceived obligation (i.e., due to apocalypticism, biblical interpretation)
3. Religious wars (i.e., between Roman Catholics and Protestants), Protestant government inaction (i.e., because church and state were still knit together, "secular" authority still held sway)
4. Lack of agents (Here, Latourette notes that monks were the main missionaries for 1000 years. With the dismissal of monasticism, Protestants had no readymade replacement.)
5. Lack of contact (i.e., with thoroughly unbelieving people groups)

Although a greatly reduced summary, this list captures many of the oft-articulated reasons for why Protestants did not engage in missions. The remainder of this section will highlight others from the authors above. First, George Smith says, "All the evangelical Reformers showed a remarkable ignorance of the doctrine of the Kingdom."[18] Though missions is obviously in view, such a sweeping statement warrants some explanation. Smith, however, is comfortable with only anchoring it in "obscured eschatology" (namely, apocalypticism; cf. Latourette, point two). Though latent in Latourette's list above, it is worth specifying two points Warneck highlights, especially since they

[15] Kenneth Latourette, *A History of The Expansion of Christianity, Vol. 3: Three Centuries of Advance* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1939), 24.
[16] Latourette, *History of The Expansion of Christianity, Vol. 3*, 24.
[17] Latourette, *History of The Expansion of Christianity, Vol. 3*, 25–6.
[18] Smith, *A Short History*, 111.

are often underlined. The first is that the Reformers generally believed—not uncommonly—that the Great Commission was for the Apostles only and was thus (in some sense) fulfilled by them.[19] The second has to do with election. Warneck summarizes: "God… has everywhere His elect, whom by divers means He leads to faith; but how He brings this to pass, that is matter [*sic*] of His sovereign grace—a human missionary agency does not lie in the plan of His decree."[20] Hogg cites Latourette's six causes, but goes further, noting the Reformers' rejection of three missional entities of the era: the papacy, generally; monasticism, particularly (cf. Latourette, point five); and the Anabaptists.[21] Though he does not cite primary sources, Bosch claims that the Reformers believed that "Europe, too, was a mission field," in the sense that the world had infiltrated the church.[22] Moreau, Corwin, and McGee make a similar point.[23] After reiterating several of the reasons already mentioned, Sunshine delves into some particular aspects of a couple of those reasons. First, he argues that Calvin did not believe the Great Commission was only for the Apostles but that "properly trained ministers of the Word—the successors of the Apostles—should preach" (albeit, in service of a particular church).[24] Second, he attributes the *existing*, but *different*, missiology of the

[19] Warneck, *History of Protestant Missions,* 12–13. Cf. Robinson, *History of Christian Missions,* 44, who gives further explanation.

[20] Warneck, *History of Protestant Missions,* 16. This is the first thing Robinson says about Calvin, citing Calvin as saying, "We are taught that the kingdom of Christ is neither to be advanced nor maintained by the industry of men, but this is the work of God alone" (no source info). Interestingly, he also points out how Calvin was involved in an overseas missionary endeavor to Brazil. Robinson, *History of Christian Missions,* 43–4.

[21] Hogg, "The Rise of Protestant Missionary Concern," 99–100. He also notes the general insularity of Protestantism during this time.

[22] Bosch, *Witness to the World,* 123.

[23] Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions,* 120–1. In doing so, they quote missiologist James Scherer, who said, "Luther's obedience to mission meant reestablishing the church on its one true foundation in Jesus Christ and the gospel." See James Scherer, *Gospel, Church, and Kingdom* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 55.

[24] Sunshine, "Protestant Mission in the Sixteenth Century," 15. Cf. Akin, Merkle, and Robinson, *40 Questions About the Great Commission*, 65, who argue otherwise, citing an abridged version of the *Institutes*.

Reformers to a "divergent ecclesiology," one in which the fused relationship of church, state, and society engendered the priority of sanctifying culture and citizen through the vehicle of government.[25] As Justice Anderson points out, such nationalistic tendencies were natural.[26] Akin and Terry cite some version of those reasons already mentioned.

Great Commission Passages

Considering the enormous output of Luther and Calvin, assessing their missiology in the span of a monograph would be challenging, much less a paper. For that reason, Great Commission passages (below) will be used to narrow the present analysis. Although it is difficult to pinpoint the provenance of "Great Commission" as a label, it is undoubtedly anachronistic with regard to the Reformers.[27] Nevertheless, the passages to which it refers were obviously available to, and read and studied by, the Reformers. Consequently, to identify and use those passages for the present assessment presents no issue at all.

What are the Great Commission passages? Although Matthew's version invariably headlines, there are five parallel passages found in the New Testament: one in each of the Gospels, and one in Acts. Though the pericopes vary somewhat across translations, they are generally very consistent. Within those pericopes, however, the actual commissioning takes up less space. If Jesus's speech is used to zero in on the most relevant parts, then the following passages result: Matt 28:18–20; Mark 16:15–18;[28] Luke 24:46–49; John 20:21–23; and Acts

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[25] Sunshine, "Protestant Mission in the Sixteenth Century," 19. Further, he says, "The magisterial strategy was quite different from this and thus has gone unrecognized by many missiologists."

[26] Anderson, "Medieval and Renaissance Missions," 168. He makes note of almost all of the other reasons mentioned.

[27] See Akin, Merkle, and Robinson, *40 Questions About the Great Commission*, 17–18 for a brief history of the possible origins of the term. The earliest they cite is 1595.

[28] The Markan Great Commission is located in the "longer ending of Mark," the canonicity of which is contested. Bruce Metzger, for example, points out several reasons for it being a later addition to the text. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1994), 104–5. This being said, because it coheres with the

1:7–8.

In the next section, Luther and Calvin's views on these passages will be explored. Again, because their writings are voluminous, the review cannot be comprehensive. Nevertheless, it will aim to provide an honest and accurate sampling from their commentaries and sermons in the first place, and other of their writings in the second.

What They Really Thought—In Word

Luther—Commentaries and Sermons

Luther lectured and preached extensively throughout his life and career, expositing much of the Bible. Unlike Calvin, however, he did not set out to write a full-fledged commentary on it. His systematic expositions are best represented by his lectures and sermons, which are scattered throughout his collected writings (though there are several instances where both are naturally compiled). Of his collected writings, this paper is generally limited to those published in the American Edition of *Luther's Works* (*LW* hereafter), although the Weimar Edition (*Weimar Ausgabe*; *WA* hereafter) will occasionally be cited.[29] Of the five books that contain Great Commission passages, Luther only handled Matthew and John systematically. He preached through most of both books, stopping at Matt 24 and John 20, respectively.[30] In light of this, those places where he referenced any verse of the Great Commission passages in either of the two volumes dedicated to his sermons (Vols. 51–2, American Edition) were considered for this section.[31] The breakdown is as follows: Matt (51:

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thrust of the other passages, and because it does not include anything patently unbiblical, it will be used here to enhance the assessment.

[29] Martin Luther, *Works* (American Edition), 55 vols. (Saint Louis; Philadelphia: Concordia; Fortress Press, 1968–2022). This edition is distinguished from the Weimar Edition, about which more information can be found here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weimar_edition_of_Martin_Luther%27s_works; http://www.lutherdansk.dk/WA/D.%20Martin%20Luthers%20Werke,%20Weimarer%20Ausgabe%20-%20WA.htm.

[30] Matthew: Vols. 67–8; John: Vols. 22–4, 69. Cf. Weimar Edition also. Unfortunately, the volume containing his work on John 20 was unavailable at the time of this writing.

[31] *Sermons I–II* were published in 1968. Since then, *Sermons III–V* were published from 2010–19. Unfortunately, the latter three volumes were unavailable at the time of this writing.

3x; 52: 0); Mark (51: 4x; 52: 3x); Luke (51: 0x; 52: 0x); John (51: 2x; 52: 0x); and Acts (51: 0x; 52: 0x).

In most instances, the way in which Luther quotes the Great Commission passage does not shed light on his views of it in terms of missions per se (e.g., quoting Mark 16:16 for its soteriological benefits). In the case of Matthew, however, how he cites verse 19 is significant. Although each reference is made to support the immediate relevance of baptism, he nevertheless quotes the missional part of the verse in each appeal: in the first place, "Go and baptize"; in the second, "Go into all the world and baptize…"; in the third, "Go and baptize all nations."[32] Although such moves are not decisive, they do seem to reveal that he did *not* hold the Great Commission to be "for the Apostles only," including the command to "Go."

Most of his references to the Markan Great Commission relate to soteriology, as noted above. In a sermon on John 1, however, he cites Mark 16:15 in expositing John 1:9: "It was a true light which enlightens every man who comes into this world."[33] He prefaces his full quotation of Mark 16:15 this way: "This passage may also mean that the evangelist wishes to say that the gospel and faith are preached in all the world and that this light has risen in the sight of all the people of this world."[34] With this concept of light in view, such a possibility recalls Matthew 5:14, where Jesus says to His disciples, "You are the light of the world…" Luther interprets the preceding passage—Matthew 5:3–12 (the Beatitudes)—as for all followers of Jesus, concluding that section of his exposition with remarks like, "Every Christian should be ready at all times to take a stand, by himself if necessary, to confess his Lord and to represent his faith." [35] Although his references to the pastoral office increase in verses 13–16,[36] he

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[32] *LW* 51:308, 320, 376.

[33] *LW* 52:70–5. This is the version of John 1:9 quoted.

[34] *LW* 52:73.

[35] *LW* 21:53. This statement comes in the final paragraph of Luther's comments on the Beatitudes, the final section of which has to do with persecution (Matt 5:12). The preceding sentence reads, "So far Christ has been equipping and preparing His Christians to live and suffer in the world, especially those who are to hold public office in Christendom."

[36] To support the view that "the Great Commission… was fulfilled by the original apostles and did not apply to the church in succeeding generations," R. E. Davies cites a Luther comment on Mark 16:15, where Luther says, "After

nevertheless makes universal statements as well, such that it seems quite clear that he believes that all Christians are to be "the salt of the earth" (v. 13) and "the light of the world" (v. 14). Of the former verse, he says:

> It is a hard job to be an apostle or a preacher and carry out this kind of office, yes, an impossible one, judging according to flesh and blood. But they must be people who do it gladly for the sake of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. He does not want to compel anyone or drive him with commandments. For the state of being a Christian is one that requires only willing hearts. Anyone who does not heartily want it had better leave it alone. But this is our consolation: When we are in trouble and the world and the devil are glaring at us and acting as cruelly as possible, then He says to us: "You are the salt of the earth."[37]

And of the latter (vv. 14–16), he says:

> Thus the most reliable index to a true Christian is this: if from the way he praises and preaches Christ the people learn that they are nothing and that Christ is everything. In short, it is the kind of work that cannot be done in relation to one or two people, remaining hidden like other works. It has to shine and let itself be seen publicly, in front of the whole world.[38]

Though a step away from the Great Commission, Luther's thoughts on Matt 5:13–16 relate directly to it, for he conveys his understanding of a Christian's responsibility to witness to the world. A stronger

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that, however, no one again received such a general apostolic command, but every bishop or pastor has his own particular parish." This comment corroborates Luther's emphasis on the pastoral office in Matthew 5:13–16. As will be seen below, Calvin had the same penchant. See R. E. Davies, "The Great Commission from Calvin to Carey," *Evangel* 14 (1996), 44. Note: Davies cites *WA* 31:210 for the Luther quote above.

[37] *LW* 21:54–5.

[38] *LW* 21:66. Just before this he states that the "good works" mentioned in verse 16 are not "ordinary works," but the "distinctly Christian work of teaching correctly…"

connection comes in his comments on the Lukan version: "As therefore the Apostles have preached according to the command of Christ, so too must we do, and say that all men are conceived and born in sin [and] Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners, so that all who believe in him, should not perish, but receive everlasting life."[39]

Luther—Other Writings

Though some have unambiguously stated that Luther believed the Great Commission was for the Apostles only,[40] his exposition of Great Commission passages is not so explicit, as seen above. This section will expand the search, looking at citations beyond the two sermon volumes. If space allowed, surveying the nearly 250 entries for some portion of the Great Commission passages in the American Edition Index, or even those verses of the passages that include the missional aspect of the Commission (of which there are over 80), would be ideal.[41] Space constraints permit only a sampling, which the following paragraphs aim to provide.

The first two examples, as well as the ones that follow, illustrate that Luther understood the universality of the Great Commission, both in terms of who should be reached and who should do the reaching. For instance, in his "Preface to the New Testament," he says, "Christ, before his death, commanded and ordained that his gospel be preached after his death in the entire world [Luke 24:44–47]. Thereby he gave to *all who believe*, as their possession, everything he had."[42] In "How Christians Should Regard Moses," he says:

> I listen to that word which applies to me. We have the gospel. Christ says, "Go and preach the gospel," not only to the Jews as Moses did,

[39] Martin Luther, *The Complete Works of Martin Luther,* vol. 4 (Harrington: Delmarva, 2000), 99–100.

[40] Cf. Davies, "The Great Commission from Calvin to Carey," n34.

[41] In the first case, Matt 28:18–20 (69x); Mark 16:15–18 (124x); Luke 24:46–49 (21x); John 20:21–23 (17x); and Acts 1:7–8 (13x). In the second case, Matt 28:19 (30x); Mark 16:15 (29x); Luke 24:47 (16x); John 20:21 (1x); and Acts 1:8 (8x).

[42] Martin Luther, *Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy Lull and William Russell, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 94. Emphasis added. *BTW* hereafter.

> but to "all nations," to "all creatures" [Mark 16:15]…. If Christ had not added, "preach to all creatures," then I would not listen…. However because Christ says: not to one people, nor in this or in that place in the world, but to "all creatures," therefore no one is exempt.[43]

In both "The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ" and "Concerning Baptism" he speaks similarly. In the former, he emphasizes that those who receive the benefits of the Supper (namely, forgiveness) are then to "preach" and "proclaim" it.[44] In the latter, he emphasizes this and the global nature of the task. For example, he says, "Just as Christ commanded us to teach and baptize all heathen, without exception, so the apostles did…."[45] A final example comes from his letters. In a letter to Elector John Frederick, he says of the command to "go into all the world, preach, etc." that "we are doing this with our writings."[46] Although this comes as part of a refusal to send Melanchthon to England, it also illustrates how Luther understood an aspect of his ministry in light of an aspect of the Great Commission. Further, he concluded that same sentence thus: "In addition to this, also to abandon our present work is not commanded us," an explanation that reflects a sense of calling that will be considered later in this paper.[47]

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[43] *BTW* 113.
[44] *BTW* 233, 234, 237.
[45] *BTW* 250.
[46] *LW* 50:203. In "'Teaching Then to Observe All that I Have Commanded You,'" John Davis frames this negatively, but goes on to cite other instances of where "Luther does recognize the church's task now called 'foreign mission'" (70). One such place is *WA* 16:215ff. and another is *LW* 14:9, 334. See John Davis, "'Teaching Them to Observe All that I Commanded You,'" *Evangelical Review of Theology* 25, no. 1 (2001), 70–1.
[47] Along with an analysis of Luther's missiology, J. Tristan Hurley gives a couple of reasons why Luther stayed in Germany, including his status as "an outlaw and an enemy of the Roman Church" (69) and his "view of the pastoral ministry" (71). See J. Tristan Hurley, "Missiologia Crucis: Martin Luther's Missiology," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 60, no. 1 (2017): 69–72.

Calvin—Commentaries and Sermons

Calvin's commentaries are well known and still well used.[48] With regard to the Great Commission passages, he considers the first three together in his *Harmony of Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, then *John* and *Acts* in separate commentaries.[49] In expositing each of these passages, however, the "preaching of the gospel" is clearly Calvin's emphasis. With that, it also becomes clear that this preaching is not just for the Apostles only.

In expositing Matt 28:19, Calvin indicates that there is an apostleship that transcends the Twelve but that is nevertheless grounded in teaching and preaching. He says, for example, "No man can be a successor of the apostles who does not devote his services to Christ in the preaching of the gospel."[50] Regarding going to the nations, he says, "The Lord commands the ministers of the gospel to go to a distance, in order to spread the doctrine of salvation in every part of the world."[51] Concerning baptizing converts, he says, "Since this charge is expressly given to the apostles along with the preaching of the word, it follows that none can lawfully administer *baptism* but those who are also the ministers of doctrine."[52] Moving on to Mark, he says of verse 17, "*Believers* will be ministers of the same power which had formerly excited admiration in Christ… To testify the glory and the divinity of Christ…."[53] Returning to Matthew, he makes three additional remarks that demonstrate he has more than the Twelve in view in his interpretation of 28:20: first, he assumes the teaching referred to is a general, ongoing office; second, he understands Jesus's presence to be for all "followers," shown further by his repetition of "us"; finally, he states that Jesus's promised presence is for all believers, for all time. He says, "This was not spoken to the apostles alone; for the Lord promises his assistance not for a single age only,

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[48] John Calvin, *Commentaries*, 22 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984). *CC* hereafter.

[49] Calvin covers the passages in the following places: Matt 28:18–20 (vol. 17, pp. 381–91); Mark 16:15–18 (vol. 17, pp. 380–81); Luke 24:46–49 (vol. 17, pp. 376–380); John 20:21–23 (vol. 18, pp. 265–74); and Acts 1:7–8 (vol. 18, pp. 44–9).

[50] *CC* 17:384.

[51] *CC* 17:384.

[52] *CC* 17:385. Italics original.

[53] *CC* 17:389. Italics original.

but *even to the end of the world.*"[54]

In his exposition of the Lukan Great Commission, Calvin reiterates the global mission but also makes some new points. First, in explaining verse 49, he emphasizes the Spirit's presence as a universal qualification for preaching and teaching: "All whom God raises up to be ministers of the gospel must be endued with the heavenly spirit."[55] Next, drawing on the order to "remain at Jerusalem," he indicates the idea of calling: "We ought to attempt nothing but as the Lord calls us to it."[56] Commenting on John 20:21, Calvin makes abundantly clear that Jesus has in mind a "perpetual office of teaching."[57] Just as the Father appointed the Son, and the Son appoints the Twelve, so the Twelve will appoint preachers who will appoint other preachers ad infinitum. He even cites and interprets Eph 4:11 in this way. He notes too that this passage is primarily concerned with "the preaching of the Gospel" and the "appoint[ment of] ministers and pastors to govern the Church."[58] Lastly, commenting on Acts 1:7–8, he reiterates the primacy of preaching and the global nature of the task.

Calvin—Other Writings

Apart from his commentaries, Calvin's most famous work is his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. In the *Institutes*, there are, according to the index, *twenty-four* references to Matt 28:18–20 (in part or whole, and hereafter), *eight* references to Mark 16:15–18, *four* references to Luke 24:46–49, *seventeen* references to John 20:21–23, and *one* reference to Acts 1:7–8. In many cases, these passages (or parts thereof) are referenced in support of other theological points; only a handful of them speak to whether or not Calvin thought the Great Commission was for more than the Twelve. However, the relevant comments seem decisive. Generally, the answer to what Calvin thought is summed up in his answer to the question, Who is our neighbor? He says, "We ought to embrace the whole human race

[54] *CC* 17:391. Italics original.
[55] *CC* 17:379.
[56] *CC* 17:380. See also the "Calling" section below.
[57] *CC* 18:266.
[58] *CC* 18:267.

without exception in a single feeling of love."[59] Surely, there is no need to question Calvin's belief that preaching the gospel to one's neighbor is the greatest exhibition of love. Nevertheless, due diligence requires the exploration of more particular commentary.

One common argument for the applicability of the Great Commission to *all* disciples is Jesus's promised presence "to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20). As Akin asserts, "This statement alone decisively proves that the Great Commission is for the whole church, for the whole period between the two advents of the Lord."[60] To this end, Calvin quotes Matt 28:20 specifically and says that the promise was "not only to the Twelve together but also to them individually, as well as to other disciples, either those whom he had already received or those who would afterward be added."[61] Though the plausibility is apparent, it must be admitted that Calvin does not here connect the universal promise to a universal command. For such a tie, it is worth considering his comments on Eph 4:11, which both aid and appear to convolute the situation.

In a section on the ministers of the church, Calvin cites Eph 4:11. It reads, "And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers…." (NASB95). The very first thing he says regarding the God-ordained offices is that the final two are permanent and the first three are temporary, "raised up… at the beginning of his Kingdom, and now and again revive[d] as the need of the times demand."[62] In describing the "apostles' function," he immediately cites Mark 16:15: "Go, preach the gospel to every creature." There, Calvin emphasizes the global mission of apostles. Having just asserted the provisional nature of apostles, here would be the perfect place for Calvin to clarify that the Great Commission was for the Twelve only, but he does not. Even as he cites Paul's missionary

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[59] John Calvin, *Institutes*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1:419. *CI* hereafter.

[60] Akin, "To Whom Was the Great Commission Given?", in Akin, Merkle, and Robinson, *40 Questions About the Great Commission*, 25.

[61] *CI* 2:1159.

[62] *CI* 2:1056. A moment later he reiterates this: "I do not deny that the Lord has sometimes at a later period raised up apostles, or at least evangelists in their place, as has happened in our own day" (2:1057). A footnote on the same page clarifies that with "in our own day," Calvin has Luther in view.

efforts, Calvin makes no effort to restrict the command. Instead, he does something unexpected: he parallels the offices of pastor and teacher with apostle and prophet, thereafter affirming (and qualifying) some of the logical implications.[63]

He says, "By the meaning and derivation of the word all ministers of the church can properly be called 'apostles,' because all are sent by the Lord and are messengers."[64] He then says, "Pastors (except that they each govern the several churches assigned to them) have the same charge as the apostles," the charge being to "preach the gospel and administer the sacraments."[65] According to Calvin, the charge transfers, but the scope does not (as intimated by his parenthetical qualification above): "What the apostles performed for the whole world, each pastor ought to perform for his own flock, to which he is assigned."[66]

That Calvin emphasizes the local pastor is certainly due to Scripture, but also to the political context in which he lived, where the church and state were still very close-knit and parishes were well established. But did Calvin not think of the formation of new local churches? Far from it. He rather located that activity with God—and he did so with the world in view.[67] That God would call pastors to lead these churches was for him self-evident. Nevertheless, Calvin poured himself into training such pastors, as will be shown.

What They Really Thought—In Deed

As the old saying goes, actions speak louder than words. Even if the letter is right, if the life is wrong, then truth is undermined. Conversely,

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[63] Calvin does not pass over the office of evangelist, but he does not give it much attention either. He says, "'Evangelists' I take to be those who, although lower in rank than apostles, were next to them in office and functioned in their place. Such were Luke, Timothy, Titus, and others like them; perhaps also the seventy disciples, whom Christ appointed in the second place after the apostles." *CI* 2:1057. Cf. n61 above for another reference to evangelists.

[64] *CI* 2:1058.

[65] *CI* 2:1058.

[66] *CI* 2:1059.

[67] In his exposition of the second petition of the Lord's Prayer, Calvin writes, "We must daily desire that God gather churches unto himself from all part of the earth; that he spread and increase them in number; that he adorn them with gifts; that he establish a lawful order among them…." *CI* 2:905.

if both are right, truth is exponentially helped. We have seen that both Luther and Calvin spoke more favorably of the Great Commission than one would be led to believe from certain surveys. But did their lives match up? This section and the next consider that question and show how both Luther and Calvin contributed to fulfilling the Great Commission, even if it was not their banner text for disciple making. But the heart of the Great Commission is indeed disciple making. Considering the grammar, some have asserted that going, teaching, and baptizing are how the command is carried out.[68] With that frame in view, it is easier to see that the common contention is primarily that Luther and Calvin did not "go," especially to the nations. These sections will mainly consider their ministry in light of that particular charge, surveying their preaching, teaching, writing, training, and sending.

Preaching and Teaching

Needless to say, Luther and Calvin spent the bulk of their lives preaching and teaching. Luther began teaching in the winter of 1508 and preaching as early as 1510 (although officially in May 1512).[69] He preached his final sermon just a few days before he died.[70] All told, he preached and lectured thousands of times, the vast majority of which is extant. Calvin began preaching as early as the summer of 1529 and continued to the very end of his life, even insisting on being carried to the pulpit when he could no longer move easily.[71] He too preached and lectured thousands of times, with most of his work also being preserved.[72] Clearly, both Luther and Calvin placed a very high emphasis on pastoring and preaching, viewing the proclamation and application of the Word as of utmost importance. In dedicating their

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[68] See Craig S. Keener, "Matthew's Missiology: Making Disciples of the Nations (Matthew 28:19–20)," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 12, no. 1 (2009): 3.

[69] Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1977), xvii. *LW* 51:XIf.

[70] *LW* 51:IX.

[71] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Vol. 8: The Swiss Reformation* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1892), 301. Donald McKim, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 106.

[72] McKim, *Cambridge Companion to John Calvin,* 106.

lives to it, they dedicated their lives to disciple making. Aside from preaching and lecturing, they not only catechized their flocks but they both wrote catechisms as well.[73]

How they viewed and encouraged "going" (especially in terms of evangelism) is reflected in excerpts from their sermons above. It is also worth noting that in their focus on the church, they were edifying the very institution God ordained to reach the world. Though individuals are part of fulfilling the Great Commission, it cannot be forgotten that the Great Commission is the church's task.[74] Additionally, it should be remembered that in two of the Great Commission passages, Jerusalem is cited as the starting point for witnessing, representing the importance of home mission, to which Luther and Calvin were clearly committed.[75] On the topic of home mission, it is also worth considering globalization. Increasingly, it is pointed out today that the nations are in our own "backyards," by way of international students, refugees, immigrants, and more.[76] Akin notes these three categories particularly in *40 Questions*; notably, both Luther and Calvin engaged each category in their careers, especially Calvin in the melting pot of Geneva. Although they both were professors (Luther at Wittenberg University, Calvin at Geneva's Academy[77]), Calvin had a unique opportunity to minister to countless refugees during his time in Geneva, among whom were several ministers.[78] In fact, the movement of refugees contributed significantly to the spread of Reformed Protestantism.[79]

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[73] Luther in 1529 and Calvin in 1537. Manetsch remarks that Calvin's was not only patterned off his *Institutes* but also "showed significant dependence of the writings of Martin Luther…." Scott Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastor's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 19.

[74] Cf. Akin, Merkle, and Robinson, *40 Questions About the Great Commission*, 26.

[75] See Luke 24:47 and Acts 1:8. Although written by the same author, the instances are unique.

[76] Akin, Merkle, and Robinson, *40 Questions About the Great Commission*, 277.

[77] Cf. Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors,* 49. Cf. Haykin and Robinson, *To the Ends of the Earth,* 68.

[78] Cf. Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors,* 51f.

[79] See Carlos Eire, *Reformations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 307. He says, "Italians, Spaniards, Germans, Scots, Englishmen,

Writing

Along with their preaching and teaching, Luther and Calvin never stopped writing. While refugees aided the spread of Reformed Protestantism, the initial (and continuing) strength of the Reformation owed much to the printing press, which Luther made the most of from the beginning. By the end of their lives, Luther and Calvin wrote tens of thousands of pages each, between their sermons, lectures, commentaries, books, tracts, letters, and songs.[80] The work of each of these categories had the potential to reach far and wide, and in most cases it did.

It is well known that Luther's writings spread like wildfire in Germany, as well as beyond. As William Russell puts it, Luther "strove to articulate his teachings in a larger, more international context."[81] One place beyond the borders of Germany, even beyond the coast of continental Europe, that was affected by Luther's influence was England. Within just a couple of years of the posting of the Ninety-Five Theses, Englishmen were reading and discussing his works.[82] While there were English Reformers before Luther, that his writings contributed to the English Reformation is undeniable.[83] As is the

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Netherlanders, Poles, Hungarians, Moravians, and others took up residence, or passed through."

[80] The American Edition of *Luther's Works* exceeds 20,000 pages, while the *Weimar Ausgabe* runs to about 80,000 pages. Calvin's Commentaries alone exceed 20,000 pages.

[81] *BTW* xx.

[82] A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1964), 103. With reference to the Cambridge scholars who met at the White Horse to talk over Luther's works (Tyndale being one), Dickens says that their meetings "could have begun before the year 1520, since the first holocaust of Lutheran books in Cambridge seems to have taken place at the end of that year or early in the next."

[83] Latourette, *History of The Expansion of Christianity, Vol. 3*, 435. For a closer look at Luther's influence on the English Reformation, see E. George Pearce, "Luther and the English Reformation," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 31 (1960).

contribution of Calvin, when his writings are considered.[84] If space allowed, highlighting the impact of their letters and musical contributions for advancing the gospel would be well worth the effort, especially since they do not often get as much fanfare as other of their works.[85]

From a twenty-first-century vantage point, the influence of Luther and Calvin is a given. It is important to keep that in view when considering their fulfillment of the "Go" of the Great Commission. Their widespread and timeless influence is one way to see it, even if it requires an atypical understanding of "Go."[86] But for a more conventional understanding, this paper will now consider how Luther and Calvin trained and sent.

Training and Sending

Luther and Calvin both participated in the training and sending of believers to preach the Word, throughout Europe and beyond. These individuals were generally pastors, not the stereotypical "missionary" we tend to envision today. But, insofar as they made disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching, they participated in the Great Commission.

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[84] This is especially the case when one considers the rise of Puritanism, in which Calvinism played no small part. Cf. Latourette, *History of The Expansion of Christianity, Vol. 3*, 388.

[85] Luther's extant letters exceed 2,500. See Wolf-Friedrich Schäufele, "Martin Luther's Occasional Writings: Table Talk, Letters, and Prefaces," Oxford Research Encyclopedias, March 29, 2017, https://oxfordre.com/religion/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-294. Calvin's letters number over 4,200 (sent and received). See Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Vol. 8,* 269n8. That Luther wrote hymns is well known; Calvin did not so much write hymns as organize hymnals, which were highly influential. Cf. Eire, *Reformations,* 316.

[86] Furthermore, making disciples has always entailed continuing reproduction (cf. 2 Tim 2:2). By the same token (i.e., international and enduring influence), Luther and Calvin achieved this also. In the latter half of *To the Ends of the Earth* (chs. 4–6), Haykin and Robinson trace Calvin's missiological legacy through the 1800s. Though they do not trace it to the present, they make clear that Calvinism is fully compatible with the Great Commission, that Calvin himself believed in (and acted on) it in principle, and that Calvinists have been and continue to be believers and key actors in missions.

As noted earlier, Luther was a professor at Wittenberg University, teaching his first semester in the winter of 1508, formally transferring there in early 1511.[87] Although this is prior to his conversion, he taught there for many years, training many students who would stay in the region, and many who would go beyond. Russell observes, "The Wittenberg of Luther's day was a crossroads for students from many countries who returned to bring the Reformation to their own peoples and churches."[88] A small handful of examples will suffice. Swedish brothers Olaus and Laurentius Petri studied under Luther (and Melanchthon) in Wittenberg from 1516–18, thereafter returning to Sweden to preach the gospel, with certain Reformation emphases.[89] A Danish monk named Hans Tausen also studied under Luther. Upon being recalled to Denmark, he preached the gospel and soon began translating Luther's works into his native tongue.[90] A third example comes in Mikael Agricola. Although he was not the first to preach the gospel in Finland, he did study under Luther and, with various ecclesiastical appointments, "shaped the Reformation in Finland" through pastoral training and his productive writing.[91] Finally, there is the case of Icelander Gizur Einarsson. He too sat under the teaching of Luther; upon returning home in the early 1530s, he taught Lutheranism, and later became a bishop.[92]

It is well known that Calvin was the foremost pastoral leader in Geneva while he was there. There were, of course, many other leaders, spiritual and otherwise. But what is less known is how integrated the Genevan church was—inside and outside the city—and how much Calvin was involved in the oversight and training of Geneva's pastors, known as the Venerable Company or Company of Pastors.[93] Not only

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[87] Bainton, *Here I Stand,* xvi.

[88] *BTW* xx. Russell goes on to say, "Indeed, Shakespeare tipped his dramatic hat to this dimension of Luther's work when he wrote into Hamlet's character the Prince of Denmark's connection to Wittenberg."

[89] Thorsten Prill, "The Protestant Reformers and the Mission of the Church," *Haddington House Journal* 19 (2017): 150–1. E.g., against indulgences.

[90] Prill, "Protestant Reformers," 152–3.

[91] Prill, "Protestant Reformers," 154.

[92] Thorsten Prill, *Luther, Calvin and the Mission of the Church* (Munich: GRIN Verlag, 2017), 42–3. Along with Einarsson, Oddur Gottskalksson and Gisli Jonsson also helped spread Lutheranism in Iceland.

[93] Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors,* 2–3.

did Calvin aid in the preparation of local pastors but also of pastor-missionaries who would minister beyond the parishes of Geneva. In 1561, for example, 151 pastor-missionaries left Geneva for France.[94] Besides France, Calvin and other leaders from the Venerable Company trained pastor-missionaries who were sent to Italy, the Netherlands, Hungary, Poland, and parts of the Rhineland.[95] One rather extraordinary venture that is occasionally cited is Calvin's involvement in sending missionaries to Brazil.[96] Although the endeavor was ultimately unsuccessful, it does represent a clear attempt to go to the furthest of nations for the spread of the gospel.

Calling

In *40 Questions About the Great Commission*, Akin says, "Every disciple may not fulfill every aspect of the Great Commission. Some may be more gifted in evangelism, some in teaching, and some in service to the body. In the same way, not every Christian must go to the nations. Some send, others go. But on a fundamental level, every Christian must bear witness to the gospel and make disciples."[97] Although this is not a universal opinion, it is certainly a prevailing one. More importantly, it is biblical. It is interesting, then, that it gets ignored in the case of the Reformers. It is as if they are held to a higher standard, as if, because they were *the* Reformers, they ought to be "the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors *and* teachers" (Eph 4:11, emphasis added). Each one has a part to play, and those parts are determined by the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 12). From a human perspective, this is often understood in terms of calling, a concept that both Luther and Calvin recognized and wrote about.

There are hundreds of entries for "calling" and its related terms in

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[94] John Woodbridge and Frank James, *Church History, Vol. 2* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 177. For more on the mission to France, see Haykin and Robinson, *To the Ends of the Earth,* 66–70.

[95] Woodbridge and James, *Church History, Vol. 2,* 178.

[96] Woodbridge and James, *Church History, Vol. 2,* 178. A firsthand account of the venture was published in 1578 by Huguenot Jean de Léry (1536–1613) as *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre de Brésil*. An English translation by Janet Whatley was published in 1993 as *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil* (University of California Press).

[97] Akin, Merkle, and Robinson, *40 Questions About the Great Commission*, 25.

the Index to *Luther's Works*.[98] In one place, in a treatise on the extent of temporal authority, he answers the question, "Why did not Christ and the apostles bear the sword?" Part of his answer includes, "Christ pursed *his own office and vocation*." [99] Further along, he says of spiritual leaders, "In order to do their job right they are so busily occupied with the spiritual sword, the Word of God, that they must perforce neglect the temporal sword…. For each one must attend to the duties of his own calling." Although only a glimpse, this excerpt demonstrates his understanding of calling, especially as it relates to spiritual leaders, of which he himself was obviously one.

As for Calvin, his appreciation of calling is vividly illustrated in Carlos Eire's summary of Calvin's initial entry into Geneva.[100] Calvin was on his way to Strassburg to "lead a scholar's life in peace," but having had to detour through Geneva, and having been accosted by Farel, Calvin decided to stay. Eire says:

> Calvin was never happy about being there; in fact, he complained loudly about the role God had assigned him while giving it his all. Reforming Geneva was his calling, revealed to him by Farel, and the fact that it was a difficult task was the clearest possible indication that it was what God had willed for him, and what he must do. Predestination may have been a godly person's greatest comfort, but one's calling in this life was not necessarily trouble-free. In fact, trouble was an essential part of the deal.[101]

Without a doubt, Luther and Calvin understood the concept of calling, just as virtually everyone does today at a basic level. Although it can be a loaded term, and although discovering it is not always the easiest, one thing all believers can agree on is that the individual believer is not meant to do everything for the Kingdom. Luther and Calvin understood this, and they poured their lives out in doing their part for Kingdom advancement, letting Christ be *everything* in the process.

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[98] *LW* 55:37–8.
[99] *BTW* 439. Emphasis added. Cf. *LW* 45:81–129.
[100] Eire, *Reformations,* 296–8.
[101] Eire, *Reformations,* 298.

Conclusion

Even though Luther and Calvin did not hold the Great Commission up as a banner text for missions or disciple making, it is clear that many surveys have mischaracterized them—their opinions and their efforts. By considering what Luther and Calvin really thought about the Great Commission—their words and their deeds—this paper aimed to correct such misrepresentations and, moreover, to show how they contributed to fulfilling the Great Commission in their time. That their positive influence is still felt in our own time is perhaps the greatest proof that they did so.

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A Narrative Analogy: Exodus 1:7–2:2 Set on Analogy to Genesis 1–3

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Michael Fishbane's seminal work, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*,[1] alerted scholars to the Hebrew Bible's use of itself. Since his publication, studying the Hebrew Bible's use of itself has blossomed into its own field.[2] Scholars have advanced Fishbane's insights by further identifying and interpreting additional instances of innertextuality and intertextuality within the Hebrew Bible, and the book of Exodus is no exception.

Scholars have noted that Exodus's first two chapters contain innertextual links anticipating the remainder of the book.[3] For example, Israel building cities for Pharaoh anticipates Israel building the tabernacle for YHWH.[4] Pharaoh drowning Israelite boys in the Nile anticipates the Egyptian army drowning in the sea.[5] Pharaoh "seeking" (√בקשׁ) to kill Moses anticipates when those "seeking" (√בקשׁ) Moses's life have died (Exod 2:15; 4:19).[6] Pharaoh's daughter

[1] Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, reprint ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989).
[2] Gary Schnittjer, *Old Testament Use of Old Testament: A Book-by-Book Guide* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2021).
[3] For an especially helpful overview of the scholarship of Exod 1–2, see Keith Bodner, *An Ark on the Nile: The Beginning of the Book of Exodus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3–9. The following examples and more can be found in Bodner's survey.
[4] Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, paperback ed., Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 1.
[5] Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: Norton & Company, 2004), 302.
[6] Jopie Siebert-Hommes, *Let the Daughters Live!: The Literary Architecture of Exodus 1–2 as a Key for Interpretation*, BIS 37 (Boston: Brill, 1998), 112.

paying Moses's mother to nurse Moses anticipates Israelite women plundering the Egyptians.[7]

Besides innertextual links, it is particularly important to this paper that Exod 1–2 sets the narrative of Moses's affairs in Exod 2 on analogy with Israel's later deliverance from Egypt.[8] Pharaoh's daughter rescuing Moses from the Nile's reeds (סוף; 2:3, 5), Moses delivering an Israelite by slaying an Egyptian (vv. 11–14), and Moses fleeing into the wilderness (vv. 15–16) where he encounters YHWH's fiery presence at Mount Sinai (3:1–6) is set on analogy to God rescuing Israel at the Sea of Reeds (ים־סוף; 13:18) when Moses delivers Israel and slays the Egyptians (14:1–31), Israel fleeing further into the wilderness (15:22–18:27), and Israel encountering God's fiery presence at Mount Sinai (chs. 19–20).[9]

Besides being rich with innertextual links and employing extended narrative analogy, Exod 1–2 also contains intertextual links to Genesis. For instance, scholars note that Moses's placement in an "ark" (תבה; 2:3) recalls Noah's ark (תבה; Gen 6:14).[10] Such intertextual links should come as no surprise since Exodus continues Genesis's storyline.[11]

Given the rich textual nature of Exod 1–2, the extended narrative analogy in Exod 2, and these chapter's intertextual connections to Genesis, this paper proposes that Exod 1:7–2:2 is set on narrative analogy with Gen 1–3. After briefly defining and situating narrative analogy within the contested field of intertextuality, this paper will demonstrate this thesis in two steps. First, it will argue that Exod 1:7–

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[7] James Nohrnberg, *Like Unto Moses: The Constituting of an Interruption*, 1st ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 136.

[8] See below for an explanation of what constitutes one narrative being set on analogy to another.

[9] For these narrative analogies and more, see Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 94; Everett Fox, *The Five Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 of *The Schocken Bible* (New York: Schocken, 1997), 253.

[10] Bodner, *An Ark on the Nile*, 4, 89–116; Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary*, 312. See below for additional intertextual links via narrative analogy to Gen 1–3.

[11] See below for additional links to Genesis.

2:2 is set on narrative analogy with Gen 1–3 due to comparable plotlines and shared vocabulary. This narrative analogy yields four figurative representations: (1) Israel represents Adam/humanity; (2) Pharaoh represents the serpent; (3) Egypt represents the world; (4) Moses represents the woman's promised offspring.[12] Second, it will further defend the narrative analogy by demonstrating that other canonical passages recognize these four figurative representations. This paper will then briefly state the proposed narrative analogy's exegetical significance and conclude.

Narrative Analogy as a Form of Intertextuality

We begin with the contested task of defining intertextuality.[13] With Ched Spellman, the present author understands intertextuality to be production-oriented rather than reception-oriented.[14] Given our production-oriented approach, we define intertextuality as follows:

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[12] This paper defines figurative representation as an author intending that an element within a narrative function at both a historical and a literary level. A narrative element functioning "literarily" means that it stands for (i.e., figurative representation) a literary element lacking in the immediate context. For example, in Judg 19 Gibeah functions as a historical Israelite city, but it literarily functions as a new Sodom due to numerous links to Gen 19 despite "Sodom" not being mentioned. See D. Gunn, "Joshua and Judges," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 119.

[13] For a survey of modern biblical scholarship's various understandings of intertextuality see Ched Spellman, *Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading of the Bible: Exploring the History and Hermeneutics of the Canon*, New Testament Monographs 34, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2020), 142–54; Russell Meek, "Intertextuality, Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Ethics of a Methodology," *Biblica* 95.2 (2014): 280–91; Geoffrey David Miller, "Intertextuality in Old Testament Research," *CBR* 9.3 (2011): 283–309.

[14] Spellman, *Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading of the Bible*, 150–54. The following discussion of intertextuality and exegetical analysis of Exod 1:7–2:2 employs a "text-centered" approach. For a summary of this approach see Seth D. Postell, *Adam as Israel: Genesis 1–3 as the Introduction to the Torah and Tanakh* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 43–74.

"the study of an authorially intended relationship existing between two or more literary texts."[15]

When scholars speak of intertextuality, they frequently have in mind "shared lexical features" between texts.[16] These shared lexical features consist of citations, allusions, and echoes.[17] However, Miller speaks of two additional types of intertextuality. One of these is repeated characterization in which an author associates one character with another.[18] The other type is shared themes or motifs.[19] Miller further elaborates that one text sharing a "theme" or "motifs" from another text occurs when the later narrative borrows "elements of the earlier text's plot."[20]

Five comments now clarify this last plotline-based form of intertextuality. First, though Miller legitimately distinguishes the above forms of intertextuality, his categories significantly overlap. It is unlikely if not impossible that one story could repeat another story's plotline without similar characters. Also, verbal links would likely arise in shared plotlines though this may not always occur given

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[15] This definition modifies Spellman's minimal definition of intertextuality: "the study of the relationship between two or more literary texts" (*Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading of the Bible*, 150).

[16] Miller, "Intertextuality in Old Testament Research," 295.

[17] Spellman, *Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading of the Bible*, 154–61. For the differentiation between and echo and allusion, see Christopher A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, vol. 96 of *Biblical Interpretation Series* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 27–35.

[18] Miller, "Intertextuality in Old Testament Research," 296.

[19] Miller, "Intertextuality in Old Testament Research," 295–96.

[20] Miller, "Intertextuality in Old Testament Research," 296. The present author holds to substantial Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Thus, distinguishing between a chronologically earlier and later text is not so relevant for a narrative analogy between Genesis and Exodus. Instead, this study approaches the "source" text and "receiving" text literarily. Literarily speaking, Exodus comes after Genesis and draws upon Genesis rather than the other way around. For arguments in favor of substantial Mosaic authorship, see Duane A. Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the First Book of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991); Eugene H. Merrill, Michael A. Grisanti, and Mark Rooker, *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 133–69; Herbert Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 1st ed. (Moody, 1991), 51–78.

the existence of synonyms. Second, this paper will call "elements of the earlier text's plot" *narrative analogy,*[21] though different names exist.[22] Third, variation must exist between texts sharing plotlines. If there is no variation, then only one story exists making intertextuality impossible.[23] This third observation naturally leads to the fourth, which is that common human experience informs us that there is more than one way to faithfully produce a narrative's plotline (i.e., tell a story). Thus, the later story must only reproduce enough plotline correspondences such that one can say there is a sense in which the second story repeats the first story's plotline.[24] And fifth, since these

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[21] Others use comparable terminology. Jonathan Grossman ("'Dynamic Analogies' in the Book of Esther," *VT* 59.3 [2009]: 394–414) calls them "dynamic analogies." Meir Sternberg (*The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* [Bloomington: Indiana University, 1985], 132) occasionally calls this phenomenon "analogical patterning."

[22] Robert Alter follows Walter Arend and calls these plot correspondences "type scenes," though by this term they mean something slightly different but still relevant to the present discussion. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, rev. and updt. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 163; Walter Arend, *Die Typischen Scenen Bei Homer* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1933). John H. Sailhamer calls this literary phenomenon "narrative typology." *Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, LBI (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992]), 37. Concerning the New Testament's use of the Old, G. K. Beale calls this form of intertextual patterning a "blueprint" or "prototype." .

[23] Similarly, Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, *Vol. 1: The Gospel According to Luke*, Foundations and Facets (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 170; Kang Hwagu, *Reading the Wife/Sister Narratives in Genesis: A Textlinguistic and Type-Scene Analysis* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018), 34.

[24] Think, for example, of the many differences between what is probably the most commonly accepted narrative analogy in the Hebrew Bible: Gibeah in Judg 19 as a new Sodom. Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 532–34; Victor H. Matthews, *Judges and Ruth*, NCBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 183–90. In the Gibeah story, the sojourners are warned before they depart (Judg 19:9), do not necessarily intend to lodge in Gibeah at the journey's beginning (v. 18), believe Gibeah would suit them (vv. 12–13), can choose in which city to lodge (vv. 11–13), are not supernatural beings, are three in number (v. 9), contain a female in their number (v. 9), and originally wish to lodge in a citizen of

shared plotlines are a form of authorially intended intertextuality, the reader ought to derive interpretive significance for those elements set on analogy to one another.

Exodus 1:7–2:2 as a Narrative Analogy of Genesis 1–3

Having overviewed the relevant scholarship, this paper now proposes the following narrative analogy between Exod 1:7–2:2 and Gen 1–3.[25] In both accounts (1) God's fruitful and multiplying people (2) encounter a wise enemy who opposes them (3) such that they experience death, (4) resulting in needed deliverance from a male born of a woman. We will now consider each of these four plot points.

Plot Point 1: God's Fruitful and Multiplying People

Strong lexical correspondences between Gen 1–3 and Exod 1:7 establish the first shared plot point. As seen in the chart below, the words "fruitful" (√פרה), "multiply" (√רבה) "them" (*mem* 3mp suffix), and "fill the land" (√מלא + הארץ) describe Adam and Eve as well as the sons of Israel (Gen 1:28; Exod 1:7).[26]

Gibeah's house (vv. 15, 18). In the Sodom story, the angelic messengers receive no warning before departing, go to Sodom because YHWH sent them (Gen 18:20; 19:1), originally have Sodom as their destination (18:20), likely expect the city is wicked (vv. 20–21), are supernatural beings (19:1), are two in number (v. 1), lack a female (v. 5), can only sleep in Sodom, wanted to sleep in the town square (v. 2), and are housed in a sojourner's house rather than a native (v. 9). Though more differences exist, it is nevertheless evident that Gibeah represents a new Sodom in Judg 19 due to the core plotline similarities that set Gibeah and Sodom on analogy to each other. For the similarities between these two accounts see, Michael B. Shepherd, *The Text in the Middle*, StBibLit 162 (New York: Lang, 2014), 19–20.

[25] On one level, beginning the narrative analogy at Exod 1:7 may seem arbitrary since it does not begin a new narrative as evidenced by the initial disjunctive *waw* contrasting Joseph's death with Israel's growth. Nevertheless, on another level, Exod 1:7 begins the plot of Exodus since verses 1–6 recount Genesis's conclusion. Ending at 2:2 is justified since, as noted above, Moses's "ark" salvation in 2:3–10 begins a new plotline set on narrative analogy to Israel's later salvation from Egypt.

[26] The verbal root √שרץ (to swarm) occurs twenty-three times in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 1:20 [x2], 21; 7:21; 8:17; 9:7; Exod 1:7; 7:28; Lev 5:2; 11:10, 20–

Verbal Links of Genesis 1:28 and Exodus 1:7		
Gen 1:28	And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Bear fruit, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the sea, and birds of the skies, and over every living creature swarming on the earth."[27]	וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמִלְאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְכִבְשֻׁהָ וּרְדוּ בִּדְגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל־חַיָּה הָרֹמֶשֶׂת עַל־הָאָרֶץ׃
Exod 1:7	But the sons of Israel bore fruit, and they swarmed, and they multiplied, and they were numerous in exceedingly large *numbers,* and the land was filled with them.	וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל פָּרוּ וַיִּשְׁרְצוּ וַיִּרְבּוּ וַיַּעַצְמוּ בִּמְאֹד מְאֹד וַתִּמָּלֵא הָאָרֶץ אֹתָם׃

Scholars readily recognize Exod 1:7's lexical dependence on Gen 1:28.[28] Additionally, they typically consider these textual links to go beyond mere semantic similarity but rather to serve to connect Exodus's storyline to the beginning of Genesis's.

Adam failed to be fruitful and fill the earth with God's image, so now Israel picks up where Adam failed and again multiplies and bears fruit. Thus, James Ackerman writes that what God began to do through humanity in creation is now "in the process of being fulfilled by the descendants of Israel."[29] Noting the verbal similarities above, Terence

21, 23, 29 [x2], 31, 41–44 [x7], 46; 22:5; Deut 14:19; Ps 105:30; Ezek 47:9). Animals of some sort function as the subject of this verb in all instances except for Gen 9:7 and Exod 1:7, suggesting that Exod 1:7 borrows from not only Gen 1:28 but also 9:7.

[27] All English translations are the author's.

[28] See, for a representative example, T. Desmond Alexander, *Exodus*, ApOTC 2 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 42–43.

[29] James Ackerman, "Literary Interpretation of Biblical Narratives," in *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, ed. Kenneth R. R. and Gros Louis (Nashville, 1974), 77.

Fretheim writes, "The point here is that *God's intentions in creation are being realized in this family*…. This is *a microcosmic fulfillment of God's macrocosmic design for the world*."[30] Such lexical dependence and storyline continuity provides a strong basis for Exod 1:7–2:2 to repeat Gen 1–3's basic plotline.

Plot Point 2: A Wise Enemy Opposes God's People

Upon seeing Israel's exceptional growth, Pharaoh opposes Israel and thus God's program for the world. Such opposition is reminiscent of the serpent's opposition against Adam and Eve. As is the case in Exod 1:7–10, the serpent opposed Adam and Eve shortly after statements about God's people being fruitful and multiplying (Gen 1:28; 3:1–5). In this way, the serpent also not only opposed Adam and Eve but God's program for the world.

Additionally, these oppositions contain a verbal link. In both narratives, the antagonists oppose God's purposes being carried out by his people with wisdom language. In Gen 3:1 the serpent is introduced as being "prudent," "shrewd," or "crafty" (ערום) immediately before he opposes God's purposes by tempting Eve in verses 2–5.[31] Hence, the reader is supposed to understand its opposition against Eve and Adam as a manifestation of his "prudence." Parallel to the serpent shrewdly opposing Adam and Eve is Pharaoh's "wise" plan to thwart Israel: "He said to his people, 'Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are great and more numerous than us! Come! Let us act wisely (נתחכמה) against [Israel]!'" (Exod 1:9–10). It is based on his and Egypt's collective wisdom that Pharaoh opposes Israel and God's purposes through them.

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[30] Fretheim, *Exodus*, 25, italics original.

[31] Of the eleven times √ערום occurs in the Hebrew Bible, the ESV translates it as "crafty" three times (Gen 3:1; Job 5:12; 15:5) and "prudent" eight times (Prov 12:16, 23; 13:16; 14:8, 15, 18; 22:3; 27:12). Holliday glosses √ערום as "subtle, shrewd, crafty." William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 283. The word is morally neutral and merely denotes one who is able to carry out his purposes with knowledge.

Several factors demonstrate that "prudence" (ערום) has an overlapping semantic range with "wisdom" (חכמה). To begin, ערום has an especially high rate of occurrence in both Job and Proverbs, which suggests a broader wisdom domain.[32] Furthermore, within Proverbs, the "simple" (√פתי) need both "wisdom" and "prudence" (e.g., Prov 1:20–22; 8:5). Furthermore, "wisdom dwell[s] with prudence (ערמה)" (8:12).[33] Finally, those with "prudence" possess "wisdom": "The wisdom of the prudent (חכמת ערום) is to understand his way, but the folly of the foolish is deception" (14:8).

Plot Point 3: God's People Experience Death

Both Pharaoh and the serpent's wise opposition against God's people result in death. Though the word for "death" (√מות) does not appear within Exod 1:7–2:3, the concept is apparent. Pharaoh's wise plan had three stages, each of which began with a speech from Pharoah announcing a new tactic: harsh labor (Exod 1:10–14), midwives killing Hebrew baby boys (vv. 15–17), and throwing Hebrew baby boys into the Nile River (vv. 18–22).

Likewise, the result of the serpent's plan against Adam and Eve was death. God told Adam that "in the day" he ate from the forbidden fruit, he would surely die (Gen 2:17). Such a warning seems to imply that there was some sense in which Adam died not hundreds of years later as Gen 5 recounts but when sinned. The immediacy of Adam and Eve's death is to be understood as a spiritual or relational death (cf. Eph 2:1). When Adam sinned, God cast him out of the garden in anticipation of Israel's later exile.[34] It should come as no surprise then that Israel's later exile is spoken of as nothing less than a death.[35] In

[32] Roughly ninety-one percent (10/11) of ערום references occur in Job and Proverbs. For references, see the immediately preceding footnote.

[33] Note that Prov 8:12 uses the related word ערמה ("crafty," "cunning") instead of ערום.

[34] Sailhamer, *Pentateuch as Narrative*, 100; Seth D. Postell, Eitan Bar, and Erez Soref, *Reading Moses, Seeing Jesus: How the Torah Fulfills Its Goal in Yeshua*, 3rd ed. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2017), 58–59.

[35] Israel's exile being spoken of as a form of death is especially common in Deuteronomy. See Deut 4:26; 6:15; 8:19–20; 11:16–17; 28:20–24, 45–51,

both Genesis and Exodus, the opponent of God's multiplicative people employs wisdom such that death results.

Plot Point 4: Needed Deliverance from a Male Born of a Woman

Immediately after Pharaoh's wise death-dealing plan takes full effect, the Exodus narrative introduces Moses's birth (Exod 2:1–2). The narrative introduces Moses at this point because he is the means by which YHWH will defeat Egypt and deliver his people from Egyptian slavery and death (3:7–9). Thus, Moses's birth does not merely follow Pharaoh's genocidal attempts. Rather, Moses's birth is God's response to Israel's hope against Pharaoh and Egypt's wise death-dealing plan.

Genesis 3:15 also announces a promised offspring shortly after the serpent's plan introduces death. Though scholars disagree over this offspring's identity,[36] good reasons exist for regarding the offspring as a single, male who will both deliver God's people from their plight brought about by the serpent's craftiness and come to be known in later Scriptures as the Messiah.[37]

Beyond these plotline correspondences, verbal links also suggest that Exod 2:1–2 depends on Gen 3:15 and its surrounding context. Especially important is Exod 2:2a: "And the woman (האשׁה) conceived (√הרה), and she birthed (√ילד) a son." Though many texts mention a woman "conceiving" and "birthing" offspring (e.g., Gen 16:11; 21:2; 29:32), the only specific verse prior to this point in the Pentateuch in

61–64; 30:17–18. For an extended defense of Israel's exile as a death see Kenneth J. Turner, *The Death of Deaths in the Death of Israel: Deuteronomy's Theology of Exile* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011).

[36] For an overview of the options, see Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic?*, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology 9 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010), 131–35.

[37] For a recent overview of the messianic interpretations of the offspring of the woman, see, Jonathan Cheek, "Recent Developments in the Interpretation of the Seed of the Woman in Genesis 3:15," *JETS* 64.2 (2021): 215–36. For a demonstration that the offspring of the woman comes to be known as the Messiah, see Brian A. Verrett, *The Serpent in Samuel: A Messianic Motif* (Eugene, OR: Resource, 2020), 114–77.

which "the woman" (האשׁה) conceives (הרון)[38] and gives birth (√ילד) is Gen 3:16.[39] Given the proximity of Gen 3:15 to verse 16, it is natural to expect the promised messianic offspring of verse 15 to undergo the process of verse 16 in which "the woman" "conceives" and "births" just as Moses's mother was "the woman" who "conceived" and "birthed."

Exodus 2:2b likely also alludes to Gen 3:15–16: "And she saw him—that he was good" (ותרא אתו כי־טוב הוא). Two observations that we will consider in opposite order support this proposed allusion: (1) the presence of "he" (הוא) in verse 2 is unnecessary; (2) scholars and inner-biblical exegesis regard Moses's mother "seeing that the child is good" as an allusion to God's creational seeing from Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31.[40] The following chart displays how similar these respective constructions are.

[38] It is best to regard הרון in Gen 3:16 as meaning "conception" and as a byform of הירון (Ruth 4:13), both of which are nominal forms of the verb √הרה. For a discussion, see Tzvi Novick, "Pain and Production in Eden: Some Philological Reflections on Genesis iii 16," *VT* 58.2 (2008): 239–40.

[39] Besides Gen 3:16 and Exod 2:2, only Exod 21:22 is the only verse in which "the woman" (האשׁה) "conceives" (√הרה) and "gives birth" (√ילד) in the Pentateuch. Outside of the Pentateuch, the only verses containing such language are Judg 13:3 and 2 Kings 4:17.

[40] See Fretheim, *Exodus*, 38. In Acts 7:20, Stephen says that God saw that baby Moses was beautiful rather than Moses's mother: "And he was handsome before God" (καὶ ἦν ἀστεῖος τῷ θεῷ). Seeing Exod 2:2b as alluding to Gen 1 best explains Stephen's assessment.

Genesis 1 and Exodus 2:2b's Verbal Link							
Gen 1:4	**Gen 1:10**	**Gen 1:12**	**Gen 1:18**	**Gen 1:21**	**Gen 1:25**	**Gen 1:31**	**Exod 2:2b**
וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִי֨ם אֶת־ הָאוֹר כִּי־ טֽוֹב	וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טֽוֹב	וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טֽוֹב	וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טֽוֹב	וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טֽוֹב	וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טֽוֹב	וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־כָּל־ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה־טֽוֹב מְאֹד	וַתֵּרֶא אֹתוֹ כִּי־ טֽוֹב הוּא
And God saw the light—that it was good.	And God saw that it was good.	And God saw that it was good.	And God saw that it was good.	And God saw that it was good.	And God saw that it was good.	And God saw all which he made, and behold, it was very good.	And she saw him—that he was good.

As shown, Exod 2:2b is closest to Gen 1:4 since it contains the direct object marker and explicit direct object and lacks the adverb "very" (מאד) and climactic "behold" (הנה) clause in verse 31.[41] Nevertheless, it is significant that only Exod 2:2b provides an explicit predicate nominative (הוא) in its concluding כי clause. As seen by the other texts, including this explicit predicate nominative is not only unexpected given the allusion to Gen 1:4 and the other texts, but it is quite unnecessary.

Given the other allusions to Gen 3:16 noted above and that verse's close connection to Gen 3:15, it is worth considering if the inclusion of the demonstrative pronoun הוא in Exod 2:2b is yet another verbal link connecting Moses's birth to the arrival of promised offspring. This suspicion is strengthened since Gen 3:15 speaks of the woman's offspring as "he" (הוא).

[41] By alluding to Gen 1:4, the text presents Moses's birth as the dawning of a new creation (cf. Isa 8:23–9:6 [ET 9:1–7]).

Seeing intertextual significance in such a common pronoun may seem pedantic, but in this instance such an allusion fits the context and accounts for the inclusion of an unnecessary word. Furthermore, and intriguingly, Kevin Chen has already recognized that one way "offspring" passages throughout Scripture allude to the Gen 3:15 messianic offspring promise is to use the demonstrative pronoun הוא (e.g., Gen 15:4; 2 Sam 7:13; 1 Chron 17:12–13; Isa 53:4–5, 7, 11–12; Zech 6:13).[42] To these texts, we now add Exod 2:2.

Moses as Noah and the Woman's Promised Offspring

The similar function that both Moses and the promised offspring of the woman share in their respective narratives and the shared language noted above suggests that Moses's birth is patterned on the promised offspring from Gen 3:15 who will overcome the serpent's wise machinations. And yet, we noted above that Moses's placement in the "ark" on the Nile River strongly recalls Noah's time in the "ark" on the flood waters (Exod 2:3). Thus, a question arises: If Moses's birth and early childhood is so strongly linked to Noah's in Exod 2:1–10, is he not being compared to Noah rather than the woman's promised offspring?

Such an either-or approach lacks sufficient nuance since the Noah narratives themselves present Noah as one who figuratively represents the promised offspring of the woman. Critical for seeing how Noah represents the promised offspring of the woman is Gen 5:29–32. There Lamech names his son "Noah" (נח) as a play on words with the verb "to comfort" (*piel* of √נחם) in hopes that he will reverse the curse YHWH placed upon the earth's soil (cf. 3:17; 5:29).[43] Such an expectation assumes that a single, male offspring would renew creation. Presumably, such a renewal would occur by conquering the serpent since its deception led to the cursing of creation. Thus, while speaking of his son Noah, "Lamech is presented as making a statement

[42] Kevin S. Chen, *The Messianic Vision of the Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 43–45.

[43] James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*: *A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 88.

reflecting his hope that the seed of the woman will reverse the curse on the land."[44]

Observing that Lamech presents Noah as the promised offspring of the woman also accounts for Noah being called a "son" (בן). Genesis 5 is an extended genealogy that repeats the same basic pattern ten times over. This pattern mentions the (1) age and name of the father, (2) father's male offspring's name, (3) amount of time the father lived after the male offspring's birth, (4) father begetting other sons and daughters, and (5) father's total life span. In such a highly structured and monotonous genealogy, it significant that Noah alone is explicitly described as a "son." Verse 28 reads, "When Lamech lived 122 years, he begot a son."

Likewise, this genealogy only describes Noah with the common idiom as being a "son of __ years" despite it providing the age of the nine other fathers. In Noah's case, verse 32 says he is "the son of 500 years" (ויהי־נח בן־חמש מאות שנה). The particular interest of only presenting Noah as a "son" in a chapter filled with sons further supports the uniqueness of Noah's birth and is best accounted for by his presentation as figuratively representing the promised male offspring (i.e., a son) from Gen 3:15.

Thus, it is on account of Noah's figurative representation of the promise offspring of the woman that Exod 2:1–10 can cast Moses as simultaneously recalling both Noah and the woman's promised offspring.

Narrative Analogy's Figurative Representations

This paper has argued that Exod 1:7–2:2 is set on narrative analogy to Gen 1–3. In both stories, God's fruitful and multiplying people encounter a wise enemy who opposes them such that they experience death resulting in needed deliverance from a male born of a woman. Thus, the following literary correspondences emerge: (1) As Adam was to multiply and be fruitful, Israel multiplied and was fruitful; (2) As Adam was to fill the world, Israel filled Egypt; (3) As the serpent opposed Adam and Eve, Pharaoh and Egypt opposed Israel; (4) As the woman's promised offspring would resist the serpent, so Moses was born to resist Pharaoh.

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[44] Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 88.

Figurative Representation of Genesis 1–3 and Exodus 1:7–2:2[45]		
Genesis 1–3	**=**	**Exodus 1:7–2:2**
• Adam • World • Serpent/Serpent's Offspring • Woman's Promised Offspring		• Israel • Egypt • Pharaoh/Egypt • Moses

Though space prevents full treatments, the following sections will briefly defend the proposed narrative analogy by demonstrating that it provides a basis for why later biblical passages equate the respective elements within these four correspondences.

Israel as the New Adam/Humanity

In recent years, scholars have frequently identified Israel as a corporate Adam and a new humanity.[46] Within the immediate context of Exod 1–2, Dempster sees Israel as a new Adam/humanity because of general similarities shared between Egypt's hostility and the serpent's.[47] Seventy arriving to Egypt further depicts Israel as a new humanity (Exod 1:1–6). Being a multiple of seven, seventy represents completeness and naturally lends itself toward representing humanity.[48] The odd emphasis on exactly seventy Israelites traveling to Egypt likely recalls the seventy nations representing the world from Gen 10. Israel is a new humanity.

[45] In addition to these figurative representations, Goshen, which is "the best of the land" of Egypt and Israel's home (Gen 47:6) likely corresponds to the garden within Eden. We have not included Goshen in the present discussion since it does not appear in Exod 1:7–2:2, though its literary function as the setting should be assumed.

[46] Adam (אדם) represents humanity in Gen 1–3 not merely because of the meaning of his name, which means "human" or "humanity," but also because he was for a brief time the totality of humanity upon the earth.

[47] Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 94.

[48] Similarly, Benjamin L. Gladd, *From Adam and Israel to the Church*, ESBT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2019), 37.

Being a new Adam/humanity, Israel should carry out Adam's original calling.[49] Adam was God's son (cf. Gen 1:28; 5:1–3)[50] like Israel was (Exod 4:22).[51] Also, as Adam was to mediate God's authority over the world as a king and priest (Gen 1:28; 2:15),[52] so God calls the nation of Israel to be a royal priesthood and spread his authority throughout the world (Exod 19:6).[53]

Explorations in narrative analogy have also suggested that Israel is a corporate Adam. William Dumbrell noted that Israel's basic story parallels Adam's. As God created Israel as a nation outside of the promised land, made them as royal kingdom of priests, told them to keep the Mosaic covenant in the land, and exiled them for covenant infidelity, so God made Adam outside the garden, tasked him as a priest-king, told him to keep God's command in Eden, and exiled him for breaking the command.[54] More recently, Seth Postell has strengthened Dumbrell's schema by convincingly arguing that the verbiage in Gen 1–3 casts Adam's relationship with God and his subsequent disobedience as foreshadowing Israel's covenant at Sinai, covenant infidelity in the land, and exile.[55]

Pharaoh and Egypt as the Serpent

Scholars also recognize that Pharaoh and Egypt are serpentine. John's Currid's work is especially helpful here. Significant to his insights is Exod 7:8–13. Here Moses opposes Pharaoh for the first time with his staff. Moses's staff "swallows" (√בלע) Pharoah's magicians' staves and anticipates when the earth would later "swallow" (√בלע)

[49] Nicholas Majors, *The King-Priest in Samuel: A Messianic Motif* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2023), 67.
[50] Gladd, *From Adam and Israel to the Church*, 11; Majors, *The King-Priest in Samuel*, 47–48.
[51] Majors, *The King-Priest in Samuel*, 65.
[52] G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 32–34.
[53] Majors, *The King-Priest in Samuel*, 46–51; Jason S. DeRouchie, "Understanding and Applying Exodus 19:4–6," *JBTS* 6.1 (2021): 118.
[54] William Dumbrell, "Genesis 2:1–17: A Foreshadowing of the New Creation," in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 61–62.
[55] Postell, *Adam as Israel*, 114–34.

Egypt crossing the sea (7:12; 15:12). These two "swallowing" narratives begin and end Moses's opposition against Egypt with his staff. As Pharaoh's serpentine staves were swallowed, so Egypt was swallowed.[56]

Currid's insights also explain why when Moses and Pharaoh's magicians cast down their staves, they did not merely become "serpents" (√נחשׁ) as God originally stated (4:3; 7:15) but "sea monsters" (√תנין; 7:10, 15), which is a subset within the broader category of serpents (cf. Isa 27:1).[57] Since the swallowing of the magicians' staves anticipates Egypt's later swallowing in the waters, it is fitting that their staves become "sea monsters" since such creatures would normally die in the sea.

Such an understanding of Pharaoh and Egypt as serpentine also accounts for prophetic texts speaking of Egypt as a serpentine sea monster. Ezekiel speaks of Pharaoh and Egypt as a "sea monster" (√תנין) twice (Ezek 29:3; 32:2). Isaiah also refers to Egypt as the "sea monster" (תנין) whom YHWH defeated at the time of the exodus (Isa 51:9–11).[58]

Egypt as the World

Good reasons outside of Exod 1–2 exist for seeing Egypt as representing the world. Scholars have noted that YHWH's judgments against Egypt are nothing short than a de-creation since they undo God's creative acts in Gen 1.[59] Thus, Egypt's destruction as a de-creation sets it on analogy to the created world God established in Gen 1 making it a microcosmic destruction anticipating a final macrocosmic destruction of all rebellion.[60]

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[56] John D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 85–86.

[57] Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 392.

[58] J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 408–10. For additional aspects of Egypt's serpentine characteristics, see Andrew David Naselli, *The Serpent and the Serpent Slayer*, SSBT (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 69–75.

[59] Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*, 113–17.

[60] Dane C. Ortlund and G. K. Beale, "Darkness Over the Whole Land: A Biblical Theological Reflection on Mark 15:33," *WTJ* 75.2 (2013): 231–32.

The New Testament also speaks in terms that imply Egypt represents the entire world. For example, in John's gospel, Jesus is the Passover lamb who has come to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29; 3:16; 19:14).[61] Since the Passover secured Israel's freedom from Egypt, Jesus's death as the Passover for the world sets the world and Egypt on analogy to each other.

Egypt also represents the world in Rev 8:2–13. In these verses, the blowing of trumpets announces "a series of plagues that is to fall upon the earth."[62] The first four trumpets constitute a unit, and in keeping with the proposed narrative analogy, each trumpet unleashes an Egyptian plague.[63]

Moses as the Seed of Woman

As seen, Moses is set on analogy to the promised offspring of the woman, who in later texts comes to be known as Messiah. Scholars readily recognizing that the Messiah is the prophet like Moses strengthens the proposed figurative representation and is not to be underestimated.[64]

Nevertheless, this paper now seeks to corroborate the above findings by demonstrating in three steps that Num 24:7–9, 15–19 set Moses from Exod 1:7–2:2 on analogy to the woman's offspring in Gen 3:15. First, it notes Sailhamer's observations that Exod 1:7–2:2 is set on analogy to Num 22–24. Second, it infers that Num 24's royal eschatological deliverer should be both a Moses-like figure (i.e., new Moses) since Num 24's royal eschatological deliverer is set on analogy to Moses in Exod 1:7–2:2 and also the woman's offspring since Moses in Exod 1:7–2:2 is in turn set on analogy to the woman's offspring in Gen 1–3. Third, it will detail those qualities of Num 24's royal

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[61] Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God*, BTNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2009), 255.

[62] Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 172.

[63] G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 465, 473, 477, 481.

[64] See, for example, Patrick Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe: The First Gospel and Its Portrait of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 131–68.

eschatological deliverer that reveal him to be the woman's offspring and new Moses.

Exodus 1:7–2:2 Set on Analogy to Numbers 22–24

Sailhamer has demonstrated that the Balaam account in Num 22–24 is set on narrative analogy ("narrative typology" in his words) to the exodus story.[65] In both stories (1) a powerful king (Pharaoh/Balak) of an enemy nation is in "dread on account of the sons of Israel" (√קוץ + מפני בני ישׂראל; Exod 1:12; Num 22:3) being a "large" (רב; Exod 1:9; Num 22:3) "people" (√עם; Exod 1:9; Num 22:3, 5) "more numerous than" (√עצום + ממנו/ממני; Exod 1:9; Num 22:6) his own. (2) Being afraid, he attempts to destroy Israel three times (Exod 1:10–14, 15–17, 18–22; Num 24:10), which in both narratives has the effect of preventing Israel from seeking the promised land. (3) However, this three-staged plan fails and the narrative uses the third lethal attempt to announce Israel's deliverer (Exod 2:1–2; Num 24:7–9, 15–19). In Exodus, this deliverer is Moses, and in Numbers, this deliverer is the promised eschatological deliverer, who is later known as the Messiah.[66]

Though Sailhamer does not make the following correspondences explicit, his proposal yields these analogous relationships:

[65] The following comments synthesize Sailhamer's approach to Num 22–24: Sailhamer, *Pentateuch as Narrative*, 41–45, 407–9.

[66] For a defense of the messianic reading in Numbers 24:7–10, 15–19, see Chen, *The Messianic Vision of the Pentateuch*, 199–223; John H. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 519–20.

Figurative Representations of Exodus 1–3 and Numbers 22–24[67]	
Exod 1:7–2:2	**Num 22–24**
• Pharaoh • Egyptians • Egypt • Moses	• Balak • Balaam • Moab • Eschatological Deliverer

Genesis 1–3, Exodus 1:7–2:2, and Numbers 22–24 Set on Analogy

Numbers 22–24 is set on narrative analogy to Exod 1:7–2:2, which we have seen is in turn set on narrative analogy to Gen 1–3. Thus, one should expect Num 22–24 to incorporate elements from not just Exod 1:7–2:2 but also from Gen 1–3. Critical for our purposes is that demonstrating that corresponding elements from both Gen 1–3 and Exod 1:7–2:2 appear in Num 22–24 would provide strong evidence that Exod 1:7–2:2 is indeed set on analogy to Gen 1–3. Though the following chart presents the four primary correspondences existing between these three passages, our focus will be on Num 24's presentation of the royal eschatological deliverer as a new Moses and the woman's offspring.

Figurative Representations of Genesis 1–3, Exodus 1–3, and Numbers 22–24		
Genesis 1–3	**Exod 1:7–2:2**	**Numbers 22–24**
• Adam • Serpent • World • Promised Offspring	• Israel • Pharaoh/ Egyptians • Egypt • Moses	• Israel • Balak/Balaam • Moab • Eschatological Deliverer

[67] Sailhamer does not explicitly limit his narrative typology to Exod 1:7–2:2. Nevertheless, an evil king seeking to thwart Israel on account of their large size with a three-staged plan that results in the mentioning of Israel's deliverer all occur in Exod 1:7–2:2.

Royal Eschatological Deliverer as Woman's Offspring and New Moses

Numbers 24 presents the royal eschatological deliverer in the likeness of Moses in at least two ways. First, and as noted, just as the narrative introduces Moses in Pharaoh's third attempt to destroy Israel, so the royal eschatological deliverer appears the third time Balak and Balaam try to destroy Israel (24:7–10, 15–19). Second, just as God used Moses to bring Israel out of Egypt (Exod 3:10; Num 23:22), so God will bring the royal eschatological deliverer out of Egypt (Num 24:8).[68] In these ways, Balaam's oracles cast the royal eschatological deliverer in Num 24 in the likeness of Moses.

And yet, we have maintained that Moses in Exod 1:7–2:2 is set on analogy to the woman's offspring from Gen 3:15. Thus, Num 24 comparing the royal eschatological deliverer to the promised offspring of Gen 3:15 is to be expected. Like the promised offspring who will crush the serpent's head, the royal eschatological deliverer is a skull crusher: "A star from Jacob will tread, and a scepter from Israel will arise, and he will smite the corners of Moab and the crown of the head of all the sons of Seth" (Num 24:17b).[69]

Scholars rightly see this coming deliverer smiting the corners of the head of Moab and the head of the sons of Seth as alluding to the woman's offspring. This deliverer's presentation is in keeping with "the analogy of the serpent's defeat at the hands of the seed of the woman in Genesis 3:15."[70] Indeed, "in Num 24:17" the mention of skull-crushing "appears to be the interpretation of Gen 3:15."[71]

In summary, Num 22–24 supports our contention that Exod 1:7–2:2 is set on narrative analogy with Gen 1–3 by taking up corresponding elements from both narratives. Using these corresponding elements is to be expected since Num 22–24 is set on analogy to Exod 1:7–2:2. Though our focus was on the royal

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[68] See above for references defending the messianic interpretation of Num 24:8.

[69] This reading accepts the *BHS*'s suggestion to read וקרקר ("and he will tear down") as וקדקד ("and top of the head") with the Samaritan Pentateuch, Jer 48:45, and most translations.

[70] Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 117.

[71] James Hamilton, "The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15," *SBJT* 10.2 (2006): 34.

eschatological deliverer as a new Moses and the offspring of the woman, we now briefly note that Moab will receive crushed skulls like the serpent since they are set on analogy to Egypt. It is also no accident that the "bless" (√ברך; e.g., Num 24:9–10) and "curse" (√ארר; e.g., 23:7; 24:9) language from the Adam narratives applies to Israel, since Israel in Num 22–24 is set on analogy to Israel from Exod 1:7–2:2, who is in turn set on analogy to Adam from Gen 1–3 (Gen 1:28; 3:14, 17). Lastly, since Moab is a new Egypt, which represents the world, it comes as no surprise that in a text like Isa 25:10 Moab is singled out as undergoing a coming "world disaster."[72]

Exegetical Implications

Though space prohibits a proper treatment, we now state this study's exegetical implications in need of further exploration. First, provided one accept the messianic interpretation of the woman's offspring from Gen 3:15, the whole of the exodus narrative is cast as the Messiah's victory over the serpent and all of its negative associations such as sin, death, and uncleanness. Understood in this way, one can not only read the exodus narrative typologically, but one should do so to honor the author's apparent intent in setting Exod 1:7–2:2 on analogy to Gen 1–3. Isaiah himself makes much use Exod 1:7–2:2's intended figurative meaning. For Isaiah, Israel's exodus from Babylon by Cyrus is nothing less than a new exodus (e.g., Isa 52:11–12) anticipating a greater messianic exodus (52:13–53:12).[73]

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[72] Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 211.

[73] For extensive language drawn from the exodus narrative in Isa 52:13–53:12, see Anthony R. Ceresko, "The Rhetorical Strategy of the Fourth Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13-53:12): Poetry and the Exodus-New Exodus," *CBQ* 56.1 (1994): 47–50. Ceresko misses the mark, though, when the states that the exodus language in this fourth Servant Song "echoes not so much the exodus … but rather … the condition of servitude imposed on the Hebrew people" (Ceresko, "The Rhetorical Strategy of the Fourth Servant Song," 48). Isaiah's logic seems to be that the suffering servant functions as a substitute. He takes Israel's place of servitude as one bearing the consequences of sin so Israel may be free (i.e., forgiven) in a spiritual new exodus. For Cyrus's exodus preceding a later new exodus, see Rikki E. Watts, "Consolation or Confrontation: Isaiah 40-55 and the Delay of the New Exodus," *TynBul* 41.1 (1990): 31–59.

This greater exodus is from sin (52:13–53:12), death (25:8; 26:19), and uncleanness (52:1) unto a new creation (9:1–10; 65:17–25), and it is led by the new Moses, YHWH's servant (cf. Num 12:7; Deut 34:5).[74]

Second, the present study makes a significant contribution to the identity of the messianic prophet like Moses. Evangelical scholars have traditionally maintained that the Pentateuch's prophet like Moses is the Messiah in Deut 18:15–19.[75] However, they have often failed to identify that the Pentateuch itself has already presented the offspring of the woman and the royal eschatological deliverer in the likeness of Moses. Such a likeness increases the probability that not only is a single individual both the woman's offspring and the royal eschatological deliverer but also that this individual is the long-anticipated prophet like Moses.

Conclusion

As stated before, this paper proposed that Exod 1:7–2:2 is set on narrative analogy with Gen 1–3 since they shared comparable four-fold plotlines. The shared plot was as followed: (1) God's fruitful and multiplying people (2) encounter a wise enemy who opposes them (3) such that they experience death, (4) resulting in needed deliverance from a male born of a woman. While arguing for the legitimacy of this shared plotline, we noted numerous verbal links that further strengthened our contention.

In the second half of this study, we noted that the proposed narrative analogy yielded four figurative representations. These representations were as follows: (1) Adam was Israel; (2) Pharaoh

[74] Since Moses led the original exodus, those arguing that Isaiah's new exodus lacks a new Moses figure bear the burden of proof. For Isaiah's servant as a new Moses, see Gordon. P. Hugenberger, "The Servant of the Lord in the 'Servant Songs' of Isaiah: A Second Moses Figure," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. Philip. E. Satterthwaite, Richard. S. Hess, and Gordan. J. Wenham (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1995), 105–40. For a new exodus involving the forgiveness of sin, see Robert B. Chisholm Jr., "Forgiveness and Salvation in Isaiah 53," in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53: Encountering the Suffering Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2012), 208–10.

[75] Chen, *The Messianic Vision of the Pentateuch*, 224–46.

and the Egyptians were serpent; (3) the world was Egypt; (4) the promised offspring was Moses. We then substantiated these figurative representations by demonstrating that other texts present these individual elements within these four coordinated pairs as literarily interchangeable.

Besides offering new insight in the design of Exod 1:7–2:2, this study provides an example of the legitimacy of figurative interpretation by rooting such interpretive practices in the human author's intent. Such an emphasis yielded new arguments to support the messianic interpretation of the promised offspring and the prophet like Moses. Furthermore, it makes a case for reading the entirety of the exodus narrative as anticipating the later work of the promised offspring and new Moses.

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Inaugurated Eschatology and the Petrine Imagination: An Argument for the Unity of 1 and 2 Peter

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Introduction

The Petrine epistles contain a significant strand of theological continuity that has not been adequately considered, namely, the shared eschatological framework behind Peter's exhortations to endurance and obedience in the midst of suffering. This eschatological framework provides not only a vivid and empowering picture of the Christian's standing in the world but also an area of significant theological and literary overlap between 1 and 2 Peter; epistles which have long struggled for historical and theological legitimacy. In both letters, Peter encourages struggling believers by grounding their current eschatological position *between the past victory and the future return of Christ*, a position of great stability from which to pursue faithful endurance and obedience. Peter then vividly illustrates his eschatological vision by marshalling a complex array of images and references from primeval and apocalyptic narratives to form a shared world of allusion between the two letters. These areas of overlap represent a significant and heretofore underappreciated basis for upholding the common authorship and theological unity of 1 and 2 Pet.

This paper will proceed by first examining the historical situation of 1 and 2 Pet and their initial recipients before focusing on the nature, severity, and cause of the suffering to which Peter refers. Following this, the main body of the paper will focus on Peter's eschatological call to endurance by examining how it is presented and illustrated in three key pericopes of 1 Pet, with related examples from 2 Pet. This study will therefore demonstrate that the two epistles share a unified theological vision and spring from a common imaginative source.

Historical-Cultural Background

1 Pet

It is common among modern scholarship of the more liberal persuasion not merely to argue for but in fact *assume* that 1 Peter is a pseudonymous work.[1] In spite of this assumption, Williams and others argue that "the case for the letter's authenticity is noticeably stronger than many recent commentators have acknowledged."[2] Schreiner argues that because the claim to Petrine authorship in the letter is explicit (1:1; 5:1), this claim should be accepted unless firmly proven otherwise.[3] In addition to significant internal evidence that Petrine authorship is authentic,[4] the testimony of the early Church supports this view, as the majority of church fathers held Peter to be the author.[5] This majority position was so firmly established that Schreiner writes, "there was no controversy over Petrine authorship in the early Church."[6] This paper will therefore take the position that Peter is the genuine author of 1 Pet.

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[1] Travis B. Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter: Differentiating and Contextualizing Early Christian Suffering*, Novum Testamentum, Supplements (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 22.

[2] Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 30.

[3] Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37, The New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 22.

[4] McKnight summarizes this internal evidence: "Similarities between the teachings of Jesus and 1 Peter support an author who spent time with Jesus (cf. Luke 12:35 and 1 Peter 1:13; Luke 11:2 and 1 Peter 1:17; Matt. 5:16 and 1 Peter 2:12; Luke 6:28 and 1 Peter 3:9; Matt. 5:10 and 1 Peter 3:14). There are also similarities between Peter's speeches in Acts and 1 Peter (cf. Acts 5:30, 10:39 and 1 Peter 2:24; Acts 2:23 and 1 Peter 1:20)." Scot McKnight, *1 Peter*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 28.

[5] Gerald Bray, *James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude*, vol. XI, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, ed. Thomas C Oden (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 65.

[6] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude,* 35. Polycarp demonstrates likely dependence upon 1 Peter in the early second century, and Eusebius affirms in the fourth century that 1 Peter was broadly recognized as a New Testament document. See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.17. Quoted in Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 17, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. Leon Morris (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1988), 22.

How one dates the letter depends directly on whether or not one accepts Peter as the author. If so, then the reference to "Babylon" in 5:13 serves as an indication that Peter wrote from Rome,[7] near the end of his life, likely in the early 60s AD.[8] This is another point about which the church fathers were broadly unanimous.[9] Peter's identification of Mark as a companion, also in 5:13, serves as another indicator that Peter was in Rome at the time of writing when compared to Col 4:10 and Phlm 24.[10] All of these factors indicate a date of approximately AD 62–63. This is significant for our understanding of the nature of the persecution faced by the recipients of 1 Pet (discussed below), as well as the notable differences in Peter's focus in 2 Pet.

The recipients of 1 Pet were in Asia Minor (1 Pet 1:1), an area that encompassed a diverse range of demographics and geography.[11] In Acts we learn that Paul had evangelized some of Asia Minor but had been prevented by the Holy Spirit from entering the specific region to which Peter writes (Acts 16:6–7). Another point of contact with Acts is the possible presence of diaspora Jews from the area—evidence of whose existence is available in both ancient documents and inscriptions[12]—at Peter's sermon on Pentecost.[13] Current scholarly consensus is that the recipients of 1 Pet would have been predominantly Gentile converts from paganism.[14] There is significant internal evidence to this end (1 Pet 1:14, 18; 2:10; 4:2–4),[15] as well as

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[7] Clowney represents the common scholarly opinion that Rome is the natural referent for "Babylon." Edmund P. Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter*, The Bible Speaks Today, ed. John R. W. Stott (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 23.

[8] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 36.

[9] Bray, *James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude,* 62.

[10] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 37.

[11] Fika Van Rensburg, "Ransomed by God into His Household: Interpreting the Ransom Imagery in 1 Peter within the Economic Context of Its Author and Addressees," *Acta Theologica* 33, no. 2 (2013): 258.

[12] Van Rensburg, "Ransomed by God," 258.

[13] Peter Davids believes this is likely. Peter H. Davids, *1 Peter*, Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 3. See also Clowney, *1 Peter,* 17.

[14] Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 92.

[15] McKnight *1 Peter,* 22. Clowney, *1 Peter,* 18.

a marked lack of reference to circumcision controversies or other Jewish-oriented tensions.[16] While the Gentile audience was likely the majority, there were almost certainly some Jewish converts in the Christian community as well,[17] and even the Gentiles to whom the letter was directed clearly had developed some familiarity with the Jewish Scriptures, as Peter makes frequent quotations and allusions from the Old Testament in a manner that assumes some understanding of the material.[18]

2 Pet

Robert Wall is not hyperbolic when he writes, "No New Testament writing has struggled for theological respectability more than this one."[19] Compared to 1 Pet, 2 Pet is often overlooked because of its short length and questions about its authenticity.[20] In spite of this, Schreiner and others defend the letter as authentic and argue that scholars critical of it have largely misread it.[21] Additionally, although, "NT theologies today simply do not link 1–2 Peter together," Blomberg argues convincingly that these two books share a significant number of thematic parallels (in addition to the parallels put forth by this paper), many of which will be explored below.[22]

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[16] Davids, *1 Peter,* 4.

[17] McKnight, *1 Peter,* 23. Grudem also considers this to be a given based on the aforementioned likely presence of Jews from these regions at Pentecost. Grudem, *1 Peter,* 39.

[18] Based on this, McKnight argues they were "probably" proselytes or at least God-fearers before conversion. McKnight, *1 Peter, 23.* Schreiner disagrees and, citing 1 Cor as an example, writes that it was normal for NT authors to utilize allusions from the OT even when writing to gentiles. This is an indication that new Christians received "significant instruction" in the OT. Schreiner, *1 Peter,* 38.

[19] Robert W. Wall, "The Canonical Function of 2 Peter," *Biblical Interpretation* 9, no. 1 (2001): 64.

[20] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 253.

[21] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 254.

[22] Craig L. Blomberg, *A New Testament Theology* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2018). Blomberg's concise presentation of these parallels can be found on pages 567–71.

Regarding authorship, "most scholars" consider 2 Pet to be pseudonymous.[23] On the side arguing for a deceptive forgery, Schreiner presents the most common arguments: a strong dependence on Jude, Hellenistic language and arguments, the presence of 57 unique Greek words (32 of which do not even appear in the LXX), a surmised late date (based on posited opposition to Gnostic teaching), an appeal to Pauline writings as Scripture, and alleged similarities to other works of later, Roman Christianity.[24] In spite of these arguments, many of which are tenuous and depend upon certain assumptions about its interpretation, Schreiner argues that Petrine authorship is "still the most credible position," and Moo agrees.[25] In addition to internal evidence,[26] Schreiner identifies several convincing pieces of external evidence: the strong possibility of allusions in the apostolic fathers, early acceptance into canon despite the early church's rejection of several pseudo-Petrine documents, and the strong possibility that any stylistic-linguistic differences between 1 and 2 Peter can be accounted for by the use of a different amanuensis.[27] These arguments—particularly the

[23] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude,* 256. While the majority of skeptical scholars argue that this was a letter written to be intentionally deceptive, Richard Bauckham argues that 2 Pet was written as a "Testament" and was intended to be a work of "transparent fiction." Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, Word Biblical Themes (Dallas: Word, 1990). Referenced in Mark Dewayne Mathews, "The Genre of 2 Peter: A Comparison with Jewish and Early Christian Testaments," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 21, no. 1 (2011): 64. Many others disagree, and Mathews argues convincingly that 2 Pet lacks many of the fundamental features of the Testament genre, concluding that, "as an epistle written in the first person, we can surmise that 2 Peter would have been received as either a genuine letter or a forgery." Matthews, "The Genre of 2 Peter," 64.

[24] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude,* 256–9.

[25] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 260; Douglas J. Moo, *2 Peter*, Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 35.

[26] i.e., Peter's unique self-identification (rather than a mere copy of the identification in 1 Pet), the equalizing title "beloved brother" for Paul (3:15), and some significant thematic overlap.

[27] Each of these lines of evidence is explored in greater detail in Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude,* 260–9. Blomberg posits the possibility of the use of an

testimony of the early church—are more convincing than is often admitted in modern scholarship. As will be argued below, there is yet stronger internal evidence worthy of greater attention.

The recipients of 2 Pet seem to be "more stable and middle class" than those of 1 Pet, and Peter is less concerned about persecution from without in this work.[28] Instead, he writes to warn of danger from *within.* Wall summarizes the difference in emphasis: "The theological function of 2 Peter is no longer to interpret the hostile relations between the elect community and those on the outside; the theological crisis presented here is not provoked by circumstances external to the community (so 1 Peter); for 2 Peter, the threat is internal and concerns the theological purity of the tradition inherited from the Apostle."[29] This difference in focus, which can be explained by the drastically different "pastoral situations" of the letters, helps to explain some of the variance in emphasis between them. [30] The possible nature of the false teaching Peter is opposing in 2 Pet will be explored in the following section as a primary means of explaining the apparent of dissimilarity between the two epistles.

The Nature of Their Suffering

While some scholars have sought to link the persecution referenced in 1 Pet with the persecution famously described by Pliny the Younger in his letters to Trajan, the descriptions provided by Peter indicate that the suffering undergone by the Christians in Asia Minor was less dire and systematic than that described by Pliny, and the likely time of writing presented above does not accord with his letter.[31] There is still, however, ongoing debate as to whether Peter describes "official" or "unofficial" (i.e., state-sponsored) persecution.[32] In his comprehensive study, Williams concludes that, despite the

amanuensis for 2 Pet but not for 1 Pet: Blomberg, *New Testament Theology,* 565.

[28] Wall, "The Canonical Function of 2 Peter," 67.

[29] Wall, "The Canonical Function of 2 Peter," 76–7.

[30] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 265.

[31] Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Rohert H. Stein (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 9.

[32] Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 297.

division in scholarship between those two options, more nuance is warranted: "The situation was certainly not 'official' in that there were no imperial laws driving the hostility, nor were the Roman authorities actively pursuing Christians in an effort to bring them to justice. On the other hand, the escalation of the conflict went somewhat beyond the discrimination and verbal abuse which is postulated by the 'unofficial' position."[33] Marshall agrees, arguing that 1 Pet likely refers to local and sporadic, not organized, persecution.[34] What, then, was its cause?

Williams (among others) argues that the Christians' change in lifestyle and religious conviction led them to withdraw from a variety of guilds, clubs, and other forms of voluntary group associations and communal activity.[35] These withdrawals led to negative attention and, eventually, persecutive action. Withdrawal may have been due to the debauchery connected to these social and professional groups (1 Pet 4:3–4) but likely also stemmed from the close association between these groups and pagan religious ritual; historical evidence strongly indicates that clubs and guilds of this time period saw their activities as "integrally connected to the realm of the gods."[36] Breaking such ties would inevitably result in negative professional, familial, and social consequences and, while their new position as Christians clearly brought positive social change via their newfound Christian community, they would almost certainly have also experienced, "intense ostracizing and discrimination, with the inevitable economic consequences."[37]

In addition to this social and professional withdrawal, Christians likely also suffered because of withdrawal from participation in the Imperial Cult.[38] Such participation was associated not only with overt

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[33] Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 297.

[34] I. Howard Marshall, *1 Peter*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove: InterVarsity 1991), 23–4. Clowney and Grudem agree: Clowney, *1 Peter,* 20; Grudem, *1 Peter*, 36.

[35] Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 243.

[36] Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 243.

[37] Van Rensburg, "Ransomed by God," 261.

[38] Warren Carter provocatively suggests that Peter actually *encourages* his readers to participate in emperor worship. Warren Carter, "Going All the Way? Honouring the Emperor and Sacrificing Wives and Slaves in 1 Peter 2.13–3.6" in *A Feminist Companion to the Catholic Epistles and Hebrews,* eds.

religious ritual but also with joining in festivals, games and other forms of celebration and entertainment,[39] absence from which would have served to increase the ostracization described above. In addition to emperor worship specifically, Christians would also have withdrawn from pagan religious activities generally (1 Pet 1:18). Christian exclusivity in worship made them a rare exception to the general Greco-Roman climate of openness to new religions.[40] This kind of withdrawal was not taken lightly, as its growth in a community could lead to economic impact, as recorded in Acts 19:23–27. The result of all these changes and withdrawals would have led to the Christians' position as "sojourners and exiles" in their community (2:11), a reality with social, spiritual, and economic implications.[41]

Perhaps most significantly, Peter repeatedly describes his readers as suffering for *good* or *righteous* behavior (1 Pet 2:20; 3:6, 14, 16, 17; 4:19). There is a great deal of scholarly division over the kind of behavior to which Peter is referring. Williams demonstrates that older commentators argued that the "good works" were meant to describe "the exercise and promulgation of the Christian religion," while in the 19th and 20th centuries a more Hellenistic background was inferred, leading to a general scholarly consensus that Peter was describing behavior in accord with the standards of the pagan civic environment.

Amy-Jill Levine and Maria Mayo Robbins (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 14–33. Du Toit responds with a well-reasoned rebuttal, defending the traditional reading. Sean du Toit, "Practising Idolatry in 1 Peter," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 43, no. 3 (2021): 416–20. Du Toit's strongest point outside of internal evidence (1:18 as a prime example) is Pliny's recognition that "a key *test* of a real Christian is that they *cannot*: (1) invoke the gods, (2) worship the emperor and (3) curse Christ." Additionally, the very fact that the readers are faced with social persecution in the first place indicates that they have not capitulated to Emperor worship.

[39] Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 250–1.

[40] Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 255.

[41] Exile, for Peter, is a term of "spiritual ontology" rather than a physical situation which "link[s] the peoples of God across epochs." Brett M. McDonald, "Exile, Suffering, and Holiness: The Use of Psalm 34 in 1 Peter," *Presbyterion* 48, no. 2 (Fall 2022): 71.

This view is still primary in modern scholarship.[42] Overall, it is best to see the good works as a call to Christian virtue, which would sometimes lead to a positive response from the pagan world (1 Pet 2:14–15; 3:1) and other times lead to persecution (1 Pet 2:20; 3:14, 16).[43] The initial severance from the aforementioned pagan activities would likely have created a social tension under which subsequent Christian good works would have been viewed with suspicion and hostility.[44]

Compared to 1 Pet, 2 Pet does not reference suffering as a result of tension with the pagan world. Instead, Peter is focused on danger from *within* the Church, specifically the presence of influential false teachers (2 Pet 2:1). Scholars have argued variously that these teachers should be seen as everything from early Gnostics to Epicureans. However, there is not sufficient evidence to determine if they belonged to either of these or any other specific school.[45] Moo

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[42] Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 258–9. Though this view is common, it is difficult to reconcile with Peter's explicit linking of the good works and the suffering his readers received at the hands of their pagan neighbors.

[43] Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 264.

[44] Williams compiles an impressive list drawn from the letter itself of the types of "good works," both active and passive, that Peter has in mind: "The letter is filled with personal virtues or traits which the author expected would be developed and fostered within the Christian communities: self-discipline (1.13; 4.7; 5.8); holiness (1.15); fear of (or reverence for) God (1.17; 2.17); righteousness (2.24; 3.12, 14; 4.18); inner purity (3.2–4); sympathy and tender-heartedness (3.8); and humility (3.8; 5.5–7). Along with the individual aspects of the Christian life, he also encourages his audience to display inter-personal 'goodness': loving one another (1.22; 2.17; 3.8; 4.8); submitting to proper authorities (2.13–14, 18; 3.1; 5.5); showing honor to everyone and in particular the emperor (2.17); endurance under unjust suffering (2.19–20); living with one's wife according to knowledge (3.7); maintaining unity (3.8); non-retaliation (3.9–11); hospitality (4.9); ministering to one another through spiritual gifts (4.10–11); and shepherding the flock of God (5.2). But the good works of 1 Peter were not merely pursuits in which Christians actively participated. In some cases, the 'good' which the author expects is simply abstinence (e.g., 1.14; 2.1, 11; 3.3, 6, 9, 14; 4.1–3, 15). By avoiding the sinful behaviors which previously consumed their lives and which presently tested their faithfulness, they were actually doing good." Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 272–3.

[45] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 280.

suggests that it is best not to try to identify a particular religious or philosophical movement but instead to understand the false teachers according to what can be clearly inferred from the text itself.[46] Along these lines, it appears that these false teachers taught "eschatological skepticism,"[47] denying the future return of Christ (2 Pet 1:16–18; 3:4–7) and future judgment (2 Pet 2:3–10). They therefore encouraged moral antinomianism (2 Pet 2:1–3, 11–16). In spite of what seems to be a dramatically different focus than that of the suffering in 1 Pet, the relevance of this context in terms of thematic overlap between the two letters will become increasingly apparent throughout our exploration of Peter's teaching on suffering and endurance below.

Eschatological Endurance

Endurance through suffering is at the heart of 1 Pet. Schreiner expresses a common position, stating that, "The purpose of [1 Pet] is to encourage believers to stand fast while they endure suffering and distress in the present evil age."[48] Suffering is inevitable because Christians are called to live "by new, eschatological values in this old, fallen world."[49] Because suffering was to be expected for those who follow the example and teaching of Jesus, Peter does not give advice for how to avoid suffering but instead exhorts his readers with encouragement to *endure* it.[50] It is therefore unsurprising that Peter's instruction for endurance is fundamentally eschatological. Throughout the letter, Peter exhorts Christians to understand and live according to their eschatological position between the victorious resurrection of Christ in the past and in hopeful anticipation of his triumphant return in the future. More than that, Peter understands that the accomplishments of Jesus, appropriated by his readers, change their current position to one not merely of anticipatory hope for the future but one of eschatological participation in those future promises *even in the present*. With this context, the concern of 2 Pet to resist the eschatological skepticism being taught by the false teachers

[46] Moo, *2 Peter,* 37.
[47] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 277.
[48] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 45. See also Grudem, *1 Peter,* 40.
[49] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 45.
[50] P. F. Steenberg, "Christ: A Solution to Suffering in First Peter," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 22, no. 2 (2001): 392.

becomes a point of significant theological overlap and pastoral urgency.

Following the standard divisions of 1 Pet exemplified by Schreiner and Jobes, the letter can be taken as five sections[51]: The opening greeting (1:1–2), reassurance of Christian identity (1:3–2:10), exhortation to Godly living and endurance (2:11–4:11), consolation and encouragement in suffering (4:12–5:11), and the concluding greeting (5:12–14). Space does not permit analysis of every relevant verse on the pervasive theme of suffering, so what follows will focus on key passages from each major section. These selections showcase the primacy of this theme and also provide opportunities to demonstrate the interconnected themes of 2 Pet, which will be addressed throughout.

The Inaugurated Eschaton: 1 Pet 1:3–12 and 2 Pet's False Teachers

Peter's clearest and most didactic presentation of his eschatological understanding of Christian suffering and endurance comes in the first major section, particularly 1:3–12. Verses 3–5 bring past, present, and future together with particular clarity. Here Peter begins his letter by telling his readers that God *has caused* us to be born again, to an inheritance kept for *the future*, with the promise that in the present they are *being guarded.* Historical past and eschatological future are held before his readers, but for Peter, "his eschatological perspective is to be the source of Christian joy *now* and the motivation for Christian living *now*."[52]

Peter introduces another central theological element of his eschatology by linking each of these aspects of the Christian experience to the resurrection of Jesus, the culminative, concrete action of God in history. It is the unifying point of contact between the believer, their new birth in the present, and their hope for the future; it is "the instrumentation by which people are 'born again.'"[53] It is also that which inaugurates the eschaton. Verses 5 and 20 make Peter's eschatological perspective explicit by referencing the "last time(s)"

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[51] Schreiner *1, 2 Peter, Jude,* 48; Jobes, *1 Peter,* 56–7.

[52] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 50. Emphasis original.

[53] G. K. Beale, *Union with the Resurrected Christ: Eschatological New Creation and New Testament Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023), 493.

using the Greek *eschatos*. Significantly, v. 5 uses the term in reference to the future salvation for which his readers wait, while v. 20 says that Jesus was, "known before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the *last* times…" (emphasis mine). Beale argues that these two verses taken together give "clear expression to the 'already and not yet' latter days."[54]

As Blomberg affirms, "It is obvious that Peter recognizes that the shift from the old age to new age has begun."[55] The idea of an anticipated shift from the corrupt old age to an eschatological new age was pervasive throughout Judaism around the time of Christ.[56] N. T. Wright summarizes the Christian adaptation of it succinctly: "With Christ as the climax of history, then, history can be divided into two 'eras,' or 'aeons,' each with its own founder—Adam and Christ, respectively—and each with its own ruling powers—sin, the law, flesh, and death on the one hand; righteousness, grace, the Spirit, and life on the other."[57]

Verse 5, then, begins the letter by ushering Peter's readers into the beginning of their inheritance, an inheritance with aspects both future ("the full completion of their salvation by physical resurrection in a newly created cosmos"[58]) and present. Once again, the resurrection is at the heart of this, as Beale articulates beautifully: "The coming new creation penetrated back into the old world through the resurrected, new-creational body of Jesus."[59] Peter urges his readers to recognize that a resurrection like Jesus's is both promised to them in their future *and has already* caused them to be born again.

Most significantly, for Peter, the past resurrection of Jesus Christ is not only the means by which Christians are born again; it is also that which motivates and exemplifies the kind of endurance required in the present. This theme of endurance is introduced in the verses that follow, 1:6–9. Here Peter introduces the "trials" discussed above, in the face of which he encourages his readers to "rejoice." Grudem

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[54] Beale, *Union with the Resurrected Christ*, 54.
[55] Blomberg, *A New Testament Theology*, 541.
[56] N. T. Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters: Some Contemporary Debates* (London: SPCK, 2015), 158.
[57] Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters*, 23–4.
[58] Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters*, 491.
[59] Beale, *Union,* 70.

points out that "rejoice" represents the Greek word *agalliaō*, which is used exclusively by Christian writers to, "[signify] deep spiritual joy, a rejoicing in God or in what he has done."[60] Once again, what God *has done* is connected to hope in the future "revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 1:7), this time explicitly as the motivating means of enduring current trials.

Verses 8–9 present an incredibly concise summary of this entire section: his readers' salvation is the outcome of faith, faith which is expressed artfully as lov[ing] (*agapaō*), believe[ing] (*pisteuō*) and rejoic[ing]/exult[ing] (*agalliaō*) in Jesus Christ, who the believer cannot currently see but who has been vindicated following his own suffering.

Verses 10–12, in discussing the prophetic witness to Christ's coming, present Christ as the prime example of faithful suffering which God vindicates. Peter writes that that these prophets, "predicted the suffering of Christ and the subsequent glories" (1 Pet 1:11). This suffering and glory has been "announced" to the readers through the preaching of the gospel (1 Pet 1:12).

Throughout this section, the future vindication of Christians—exemplified in Christ's vindication as demonstrated in the resurrection—is held out with particular emphasis (1 Pet 1:4, 5, 7, 9).[61] Jobes identifies the Christians' new birth as "the alpha point" framing Peter's eschatology and the final judgment as its "omega point."[62] This emphasis on future hope continues beyond the first chapter and is frequently referenced by Peter in the context of enduring suffering (1 Pet 2:12; 4:13; 5:1). Once again, this is not just an abstract hope but a hope that "is transferred into the present," although its "full existence and enjoyment" remains to be attained in the future.[63] This not only grounds Christian expectation but also motivates Christian ethics: Christian obedience in the face of suffering is only possible because of the promised reckoning that is yet to

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[60] Grudem, *1 Peter,* 65.

[61] Mark E. Taylor, "Righteousness and the Use of the Old Testament in James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and Jude," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 64, no. 1 (Fall 2021): 115.

[62] Jobes, *1 Peter,* 49.

[63] Adolf Schlatter, *Faith in the New Testament : A Study in Biblical Theology*, trans. Joseph Longarino (Bellingham: Lexham, 2022), 338.

come.[64] Therefore, "The meaning of resurrection for those whose calling is to resist evil (from without and from within) is a meaning that can only be made within those puzzling spaces where suffering and hope converge."[65]

In 2 Pet, this theme is not as obviously apparent, and its elusiveness is heightened by the aforementioned challenges to authenticity, which lead many interpreters to dissociate it from 1 Pet on historical grounds. That this is a mistake is readily apparent when the aforementioned historical situation of the audience of 2 Pet is in view: Peter's need to address the content of the false teaching—namely, a denial of the *parousia* that allowed moral license. This pastoral need clearly coincides with the theme of inaugurated eschatology in 1 Pet. The difference is that in 2 Pet, Peter is not primarily concerned with ethical faithfulness *in the face of suffering* but ethical faithfulness *in resistance to false teaching.* The specific pastoral situation has changed, but the eschatological picture is the same: the exhortation to moral virtue is grounded in the past accomplishment of Jesus (2 Pet 1:1, 5–9) and the promise of future hope (2 Pet 3:13).[66]

If anything, Peter draws the eschaton into the present even more dramatically in his focus on the transfiguration (2 Pet 1:16–18), an indication that Peter believed "Christ's kingship… commenced during his earthly ministry."[67] That Peter sees this already/not yet reality as applicable to his readers is made clear in 1:4, in which he writes that, as partakers in the divine nature, Christians have *already* "escaped from the corruption that is in the world" (2 Pet 1:4). Beale therefore summarizes the message of 2 Pet 1 thus: "Believers commence to be identified with Christ's resurrection glory in the present age, and this glory will be completed in them at the last day, when the resurrected Christ will return in his glory."[68] This is precisely the same

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[64] Blomberg, *A New Testament Theology*, 561.

[65] Philip H. Towner, "Resurrection in 1 Peter," *The Biblical Annals* 9, no. 3 (2019): 522.

[66] Taylor, "Righteousness," 120–1.

[67] Beale, *Union with the Resurrected Christ*, 54.

[68] Beale, *Union with the Resurrected Christ*, 422. Beale also notes that 2 Pet 1:4 harmonizes particularly strongly with 1 Pet 5:1: "2 Peter 1:4 is an 'echo' of 1 Peter 5:1: Peter was 'a sharer in the glory [*doxēs koinōnos*] about to be

eschatological picture as that which Peter uses to bolster endurance in his first epistle.

Allusions and Imagery in 1 Pet 3:18–22 and 2 Pet 2:4–10

If the first chapter of 1 Pet exemplifies Peter at his clearest, the middle of chapter three is—at least for the modern reader—Peter at his most opaque. Although it is rife with exegetical difficulties and theological controversy, 1 Pet 3:18–22 is nonetheless well worth untangling. Here Peter compresses a set of connected images together to present his readers with a kaleidoscopic picture of their hope-filled participation in the past and future victory of Jesus. At the center of this picture is baptism, the event in the life of the Christian that most concretely unites past, present, and future.

In chapter two, Peter continues to spiral between the accomplishments of Jesus, what those accomplishments mean for his readers, and how they are to live in light of them. This includes a great deal of specific ethical instruction, including how Christian citizens are to relate to their pagan neighbors and the imperial government and how Christian servants are to relate to their masters (1 Pet 2:9–12, 13–17, and 18–25, respectively). In all of these situations, Christians can maintain their obedience in the midst of persecution and difficulty because of the knowledge of who they are as a result of Christ's victory (1 Pet 2:9–10), by looking to his example in his own suffering (1 Pet 2:21–25), and because he will finish what he has begun (1 Pet 2:12).

Chapter three continues in this vein, specifically addressing how Christians ought to conduct themselves in marriage (1 Pet 3:1–7) and within the Christian community (1 Pet 3:8–12). This culminates in another section urging a faithful and upright witness both in words and conduct toward outsiders, including willingness to suffer for the sake of following God's will (1 Pet 3:13–17). This return to the central theme of faithful endurance of suffering forms the immediate context for the complex illustration which follows and is our focus.

The conjunction *hoti* connects the previous paragraph to the example of Christ, who suffered in order to "bring us to God" (1 Pet 3:18). Though Christ died "in the flesh," he was "made alive in the

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revealed' (note the parallel wording of *theias koinōnoi physeōs* in 2 Pet. 1:4). Peter's sharing in the glory (1 Pet. 5:1) was an inaugurated reality." 426.

spirit" and proclaimed/preached (*kērykssō*) to imprisoned spirits who had been disobedient in the days of Noah (1 Pet 3:19). This initial thought is already quite complex. Peter next heightens the complexity by shifting within the Noahic allusion to the *ark*, in which Noah and his family, "were brought safely through water" (1 Pet 3:20). Finally, he connects this vivid imagery directly to his readers by saying that baptism corresponds typologically to it.

The first (and most difficult) layer in this multifaceted image is that of Christ proclaiming to imprisoned spirits from the days of Noah. There are a range of views regarding this allusion. The majority of early church fathers held that it refers to Christ preaching to the dead in Hades between his death and resurrection,[69] while Augustine believed that, "the pre-existent Christ, working through the spirit, preached through Noah to Noah's generation."[70] Keener and others hold that "Christ probably went not *as* a disembodied spirit to preach to the dead in Hades, but rather 'by the Spirit' who raised Him to announce His triumph over the fallen angels."[71] This vision of a pronouncement of victory over fallen angels seems to make the most sense in light of the theological focus of the pericope, particularly the manner in which it concludes by describing Jesus in heaven, "with angels, authorities, and powers having been subject to him" (1 Pet 3:22). Peter is bringing his readers' attention to the past victory and present heavenly rule of Christ.

The full implications of this image come into view when it is seen in light of Peter's likely allusion to the Book of Enoch, a tremendously popular Second-Temple Jewish work of apocalyptic pseudepigrapha.[72] The Enochian books, along with others (The Book of Jubilees and The Book of Baruch, for example) contributed to a widespread "notion that the 'sons of God' who sinned in Genesis 6:4 are fallen angels."[73]

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[69] Craig S. Keener, "'He Did Not Come to Help Angels': Posthumous Salvation in 1 Peter 3?," *Lutheran Forum* 54, no. 1 (Spr 2020): 47.
[70] Keener, "'He Did Not Come to Help Angels,'", 48.
[71] Keener, "He Did Not Come to Help Angels," 47. See also Blomberg, *A New Testament Theology*, 550.
[72] Kim Papaioannou, "The Sin of the Angels in 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 140, no. 2 (2021): 396-97.
[73] Keener, "He Did Not Come to Help Angels," 48. See I Enoch 106:13–15; Jubilees 7:21; and II Baruch 56:10–15.

That those fallen angels were held in chains was also part of this common view. Sofanit Abebe, in line with a great deal of scholarship since the late-19th century, argues convincingly that the "apocalyptic worldview" of 1 Pet has a great deal of overlap with that of 1 Enoch.[74] Most significantly for our subject matter, this included the idea that "the eschaton and the final judgment are imminent, and the reader can take comfort in the knowledge that, in spite of present tribulation, heaven holds a reward, as yet unseen, for the righteous."[75] One can easily see how these overlapping themes make Enoch a particularly apt point of reference for Peter to draw upon. Peter does not, however, stop short at presenting Christ as "an Enoch-like figure;"[76] Peter is able to greatly surpass the hero of Enochian legend, because Jesus is not merely an exalted human who has accomplished a great victory over the chained spirits but is in fact *God himself* who also shares the results of that victory with his followers.[77]

The likely reference to I Enoch, with its close association to Gen 6, giants, and God's subsequent judgment, provides a natural transition to the second related image, the flood. This is employed by Peter as a primeval narrative example of God's faithfulness to preserve the faithful in the midst of corruption and death.[78] Peter's readers would find in Noah a relatable figure, surrounded as he was by hostility and moral degeneracy,[79] and therefore he could serve as a perfect example of both faithful obedience and the vindication that follows from it.

Weaving this allusion into even more brilliant complexity, Peter then, "[describes] baptism as an *antitupos*—a corresponding image—to the water of the flood."[80] This typological relationship not only

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[74] Sofanit Tamene Abebe, "Apocalyptic Spatiality in 1 Peter and Selected 1 Enoch Literature: A Comparative Analysis" (Electronic Thesis or Dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2022), British Library EThOS. 9.

[75] George Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001). Quoted in Abebe, "Apocalyptic Spatiality," 80.

[76] John Hall Elliott, "1 Enoch, 1 Peter, and Social-Scientific Criticism: A Review Article on a Major 1 Enoch Commentary," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 39, no. 1 (2009): 41.

[77] Abebe, "Apocalyptic Spatiality," 252.

[78] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 192.

[79] Grudem, *1 Peter,* 168.

[80] Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 191. There is some debate as to whether it is more appropriate to

provides insight into baptism but also connects the entire image to the theme of the letter and the readers' place in it. The flood waters are waters of judgment that kill and destroy.[81] Christ, who has passed through the waters of death in victory, is our ark. Baptism, which Peter assumes his readers have undertaken, is the means by which Christians participate in and subjectively appropriate this objective, cosmic victory and therefore pass through the waters of judgment safely by the death and resurrection of Jesus just as Noah's family passed through the flood in the ark. The power of baptism is therefore intrinsically connected to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, grounding this entire complex image firmly in the plain teaching of 1:3–12.[82] Just as believers have been born again *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ* (1 Pet 1:3), so we have been saved *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ* (1 Pet 3:21).[83]

Finally, the verse which immediately follows, 3:22, reintegrates the Enochian imagery of v. 18. Jesus has not only victoriously passed through death into life, he has ascended beyond all rebellious spiritual powers and is enthroned above them. As a result, "No power therefore can assail the Christian baptized in his name."[84] The implications for

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understand baptism as corresponding typologically to the flood as a whole or to the water specifically. For example, Beasley-Murray prefers to take *antitypon* as referring to the entire clause that precedes it. George R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 262. I follow Ferguson and others in holding that the waters make more sense both theologically and grammatically.

[81] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude,* 194; Grudem, *1 Peter,* 174.

[82] Thomas R. Schreiner, "Baptism in the Epistles: An Initation Rite for Believers," in *Believer's Baptism*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology, eds. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006), 68.

[83] Addressing the soteriological debate surrounding 1 Pet 3:21 and baptismal regeneration is beyond the scope and outside the focus of this paper. This paper assumes that Peter is *not* teaching baptismal regeneration and follows Blomberg in holding that Peter uses baptism as "a metonymy for the whole salvation process." Blomberg, *A New Testament Theology,* 546. Such a metonymy would be consistent with Peter's multifaceted view of salvation throughout 1 Pet.

[84] Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 262.

the eschatological position of the baptized Christian are brilliantly tied to the story of I Enoch by Abebe:

> What is accomplished in baptism for believers through Christ's ascension and victory corresponds to God's handling of evil cosmic beings in the Noah story. According to the flood tradition, the deluge resulted in the physical destruction of the giants and an end to their cannibalistic violence against humanity. Thus, through baptism, believers receive protection from cosmic evil beings and experience the removal of the defiling force of moral impurity which may be connected in some sense with evil spirits.[85]

Thus, the magnificent image displayed in 3:18–21 combines and compresses multiple images and attaches them to a concrete experience undergone by every Christian, giving them an increased confidence in their current position in the eschatological victory of Jesus, faithful examples to follow in enduring persecution, and an increased confidence in the supremacy of Christ over all spiritual powers.

2 Peter is most commonly paired with Jude; however, the allusions to the flood narrative and Enochian tradition in 2 Pet 2:4–10—and, more importantly, the theological point being made through their use—constitute significant overlap with 1 Pet. In his condemnation of the false teachers, Peter once again reinforces a clear teaching by combining numerous allusive images: the condemnation of sinful angels, the flood, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The first image in v. 4 is almost certainly a reference to I Enoch:[86] "cast them into hell" represents the single Greek verb *tartareō*, a common term used by Jewish writers to communicate the idea of hell to a Greek audience.[87] The specific use of the phrase "gloomy darkness" (gk.

[85] Abebe, "Apocalyptic Spatiality," 181–2. For the account referenced in this quote, see I Enoch 89:6.

[86] The majority of scholars agree that 2 Pet 2:4 is referencing intertestamental tradition about Gen 6. Taylor, "Righteousness," 122.

[87] Moo, *2 Peter*, 46.

zophos) has a parallel Enochian referent,[88] as does the use of the term *doxai* to describe spiritual beings.[89]

The overlap with 1 Pet is obvious, and summarized well by Bauckham: "If the apostate angels, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Flood are types of eschatological judgment, then Noah and Lot must be models of righteousness of the last times."[90] Therefore all of these images are explicitly employed to illustrate Peter's main point: "the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority" (2 Pet 2:9–10). This not only serves as a resounding condemnation of the false teachers but also as an exhortation directly in line with the point of 1 Pet 3:18–22: Christians must prioritize righteous obedience and ethical steadfastness in anticipation of the final end. The examples marshalled in 1 Pet and 2 Pet appear to spring from the same imagination, and the manner in which they are deployed gives significant evidence of a single voice.

The Final End: 1 Pet 4:7–19 and 2 Pet 3:8–14

While the idea of living with the end in mind as participants in an inaugurated eschatological reality pervades both letters, 1 Pet 4:7 brings the concrete, final eschatological end into sharp focus: "The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers." While Peter urges his readers that the end is "at hand," the ethical imperative clarifies that Peter's concern is less about the actual *timing* of the end of all things and more about the moral urgency necessitated by an imminent eschaton.[91] Once again cosmic, eschatological realities bring about immediate practical application. Verses 8–11 detail the specifics of v. 7's general exhortation, urging loving and ethical behavior for the purpose of glorifying God "through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 4:11).

Next, Peter returns to the expectation of suffering. Peter urges his readers to expect a "fiery ordeal" as an inevitable part of their

[88] I Enoch 10:4.
[89] II Enoch 22:6–7.
[90] Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter,* 314.
[91] Jobes *1 Peter,* 50.

Christian life (1 Pet 4:12).[92] In the following verse, Peter once again concisely grounds the present experience of his readers in both the past and the future: "But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed" (1 Pet 4:13). Beale sees great significance in the concept of Christians sharing in the suffering of Christ. Christians can be said to participate in the suffering of Jesus because "all Jesus did and accomplished continues to be a status with which he is presently identified, though the activity has been completed in the past."[93] Yet again, because of the work of Christ, the present is grounded in past victory and future hope.

Beale also emphasizes the power of this image by demonstrating that in chapter two, Peter has already established the connection between Christ and the Suffering Servant of Isa 53. His explication of this connection, which culminates in 1 Pet 4:13, is complex but worthy of quoting in full:

> The association is clearly expressed in 1 Peter 2:22–25, where Christ's suffering is described through four allusions to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 (Isa. 53:9 = 1 Pet. 2:22; Isa. 53:7 = 1 Pet. 2:23; Isa. 53:5 = 1 Pet. 2:24; Isa. 53:6 =1 Pet. 2:25)! So the "example" that Peter's readers are to "follow" is that of Christ's suffering as Isaiah's Suffering Servant, which "sufferings" they "share" in (1 Pet. 4:13).[94]

This is a profound observation, as it demonstrates that Peter sees Christian suffering not as an arbitrary consequence of living in a fallen world, but as an act of *participatory fulfillment* in the plan of God. This association also grounds the hope to which Peter urges his readers to cling. For it is not only the suffering of Christ which Christians

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[92] While some have argued that the language of "fiery trials" indicates severe persecution, Jobes and others argue that it is better read as metaphoric imagery meant to describe "trial faced by Christians that test the mettle of their faith." Jobes, *1 Peter,* 9. The image of *fire* should therefore be read in the sense of that which tests and purifies. This conclusion is also supported by 1 Pet 4:17, which will be discussed below.

[93] Beale, *Union with the Resurrected Christ*, 402.

[94] Beale, *Union with the Resurrected Christ*, 265.

participate in but also his future glory, in which they will "rejoice and be glad" (1 Pet 4:13). For Peter, "the destiny of Christ is the destiny of the Christian," both in suffering and in vindication.[95]

Verses 14–16 clarify the important point that Peter has in mind *Christian* suffering, not suffering which results because of sin. Following this, Peter brings the future judgment described in v. 7 into the present: "For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Pet 4:17). Peter supports this common Jewish "lesser to greater" rhetoric by quoting Prov. 11:31 from the LXX.[96] The statement is stunning: Peter is saying that the judgment to come in the future is *moved into the present* via the testing that is brought about by persecution.[97] Beale helpfully shows how this immanentized eschatology combines with Peter's opening statement in ch. 1 to provide a message of hope: "Those who are able to persevere in faithfulness will receive definitive 'salvation ready to be revealed in the last time' (1:5 [cf. 1:9]), when Christ returns again (1:13) and his followers can fully rejoice in the greater manifestation of his glory (4:13; cf. 5:1)."[98]

It is in this theme of final judgment that the thematic overlap with 2 Pet is clearest. In 2 Pet 3:8–13, Peter once again reminds his readers that they must live with the end in mind: God is always faithful to fulfill his promises. Though his patience may result in a period of anticipation that feels long from the human perspective (2 Pet 3:8–9), when God chooses to act it will be dramatic and conclusive. The imagery that follows describes a cosmic, fiery end that can appear frightening when separated from Peter's plainly stated purpose in introducing it: to encourage "lives of holiness and godliness" in anticipation of the "new heavens and new earth" to follow (2 Pet 3:12–13). The purgative element of the destruction Peter describes gains greater meaning when read with the flood—one of Peter's central allusions—in mind: "The flood ended human wickedness, and we can anticipate something similar in the future."[99]

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[95] Jobes, *1 Peter,* 45.
[96] Davids, *1 Peter.* 28.
[97] Jobes, *1 Peter,* 50.
[98] Beale, *Union with the Resurrected Christ*, 58.
[99] Blomberg, *A New Testament Theology*, 574.

But it is yet again the ethical imperative that is Peter's focus, as is made clear in the verse immediately following. Peter makes the connection explicit with the conjunction *dia:* "*Therefore*, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace" (2 Pet 3:14, emphasis mine). The eventual final end of the present age should not lead Christians to cower as they await doomsday; rather, specifically *because* the present world with its suffering and difficulties will one day end and a new, healed creation will follow, Peter's readers are to maintain their obedience and live righteously as citizens of the future heavens and earth "where righteousness dwells" (2 Pet 3:13).

Conclusion

As Christians strive to live in light of that spiritual reality, Jesus Christ stands both as the source of their hope (1 Pet 1:3, 13, 21; 5:10) and their example of faithful obedience and vindication (1 Pet 2:21; 4:13). Abebe brilliantly weaves together Peter's characterization of Christ as his readers' chief example:

> Christ was blameless and pure (1:19; 2:22), righteous (3:18), he did not retaliate (2:22, 23) but rather entrusted himself to God who judges justly (2:23) and who foreknew his suffering (1:11). The readers are thus reminded that their suffering is akin to that of Christ. It is in fact a sharing in the sufferings of the Christ (4:13). They are thus to imitate Christ "by their behaviour [2:21], thinking [4:1], and the reason for suffering [2:20–21; 3:7–18]."[100]

Jesus is both the example and means of faithful endurance.

In both of his letters, Peter strives to show his readers that their manner of life in the face of present suffering and persecution is to be shaped by the eschatological reality into which they have been brought by the death and resurrection of Jesus. The core theological vision contained in these exhortations, as well as the unique means of illustrating it, bear witness to a common mind behind both letters. In both 1 Pet and 2 Pet it is the victory of Christ, accomplished in the concrete past, that has resulted in a "living hope" into which Christians are welcomed and in which they are "guarded" until the

[100] Abebe, "Apocalyptic Spatiality," 15.

joyful vindication which will arrive in "the last time" (1 Pet 1:3–5). All Christians who suffer as exiles can find in Peter's exhortation the basis and means by which they are to pursue "lives of holiness and godliness" as they wait for "new heavens and a new earth" (2 Pet 3:11, 13).

***Rethinking the Dates of the New Testament: The Evidence for Early Composition*. By Jonathan Bernier. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022. 318 pp. $32.00, Paperback. ISBN 9781540961808.**

Jonathan Bernier argues herein that all the New Testament (NT) texts are first-century compositions. Prior to this monograph, only John A. T. Robinson in *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1976), had presented this argument so thoroughly. Nevertheless, Bernier makes a unique, necessary contribution to this subject. Bernier's introductory chapter thoroughly presents his methodology, which he then uses to investigate when the NT texts were likely written. In four parts, he successively treats (1) the Synoptic Gospels and Acts; (2) the Johannine tradition; (3) the Pauline corpus; and (4) Hebrews, James, the letters of Peter, and Jude. In the fifth part, he examines when four early extracanonical Christian writings were written (since Robinson also included them in his book), and his conclusion summarizes his findings and sets the stage for future scholarship on early Christian history.

Bernier's introduction is most significant for its explanation of his threefold methodology: (1) synchronization, (2) contextualization, and (3) authorial biography. Through synchronization, "establishing the text's temporal relationship to other events or situations," Bernier is able to postulate the earliest and latest dates within which a text could have been written (p. 23). Contextualization, which "establish[es] the text's probable relationship to the general course of early Christian [theological] development," may help narrow the date range suggested by synchronization (p. 26). Finally, "no procedure in principle permits greater precision than that of authorial biography," which proposes a timeframe in the author's life within which "a given text is best situated" (p. 27). For each NT and early Christian text treated in this book, Bernier presents arguments from synchronization, contextualization, and authorial biography to support his argument that each text should be assigned an early date of composition.

Based on this methodology, Bernier concludes that all of the NT texts are first-century writings. Bernier accepts the theory of Markan priority regarding the Gospels' composition history. Furthermore, he concludes that the composition of Acts around AD 62, before the

conclusion of Paul's two-year Roman imprisonment, compellingly explains why Luke does not narrate that imprisonment's end: "Luke did not write of Paul's fate because Paul had yet to meet it" (p. 66). If Acts was written in AD 62 as a sequel to Luke's Gospel, then Luke's Gospel must be dated before then. Bernier hypothesizes that Luke was published in AD 59, at the end of Paul's Caesarean imprisonment. Consequently, two sources for Luke—Matthew and Mark—must be even earlier compositions. Bernier dates Mark to AD 42-45 and Matthew to AD 45-59. Though even conservative NT scholars date John's Gospels, Letters, and Revelation to the 90s, Bernier concludes that John's Gospel must predate AD 70, since John 5:2 presupposes that the Pool of Bethesda still stands at the time of the Gospel's composition and since the pool was likely destroyed in AD 70 (pp. 97–102). Similarly, Bernier argues that Revelation was written AD 68–70 because Nero was likely dead at the time of writing. Revelation 11 makes more sense before AD 70 than after it, and the book's concern with food sacrificed to idols fits early church debates of the 40s–60s (pp. 120–26). John's letters could have been written before AD 70 but must have been written before AD 100. Thanks to Acts and detailed extrabiblical sources, Bernier affirms the scholarly consensus regarding the dates of Paul's (mostly) undisputed letters (Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, and 1–2 Thessalonians). He locates Paul's prison epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon) to the apostle's Caesarean imprisonment (AD 57–59). Given arguments for the pseudonymity of the epistles to Timothy and Titus, Bernier proposes two ranges of dates for these letters: AD 63–68 if Pauline and AD 60–175 if pseudo-Pauline. Given the anonymity of Hebrews, Bernier proposes that it could have been written anytime AD 50–70. For James, he is no more specific than saying that it must predate James's death in AD 62. Bernier concludes that 1 Peter is genuine, so he dates it to the 60s, but since "2 Peter is probably the strongest candidate for pseudonymous authorship in the NT corpus" (p. 228), he dates it to the 60s, if genuine, and to AD 60–125, if pseudonymous. Finally, Jude must have been written before AD 96 (the end of Domitian's reign), since Domitian "ordered the execution of … Jude's grandsons rather than Jude himself," who had, therefore, already died (p. 234).

Bernier's even-handed argumentation makes this book's admittedly controversial conclusions logically sound. He often nuances his statements with modifiers, such as "probably" and "more likely than not." Bernier presents evidence against early dates of composition, and he counters it. For example, when he argues for Revelation predating AD 70 and for 1 Peter being a genuine letter of the apostle Peter, Bernier acknowledges the objection that references to "Babylon" in these books mean that these writings originated after AD 70 (Rev 14:6; 16:19; 17:4; 18:2, 10, 21; 1 Pet 5:13), but he correctly identifies this objection as a fallacious argument from silence (pp. 124, 222–23). When he argues that Paul's prison epistles date to AD 57–59 and originate from Caesarea, not Rome, Bernier admits that the Roman hypothesis has much to commend it: Paul had relative freedom to work during his first Roman imprisonment, and the distance from Rome to Colossae may have been attractive to the runaway slave Onesimus, rather than daunting to him (pp. 166–67). Nevertheless, Bernier concludes that Caesarea is the most likely origin for Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon because Paul may have originally hoped to travel to Rome after his Caesarean imprisonment over land rather than by sea. This supposition makes better sense of Paul's request for Philemon to prepare him a guest room (Phlm 22) than if Paul was writing from Rome, since Romans 15:28 shows that Paul planned to travel westward from Rome (p. 167).

Though this book's arguments are often strong, a few are relatively weak. For example, Bernier's proposed date for Mark in the 40s seems unduly dependent on his acceptance of the Markan priority theory for resolving the Synoptic Problem. He does not answer the following question: If Mark dates to the 40s and derives from Peter's preaching, why do none of the NT letters (all of which postdate Mark according to Bernier), but especially 1 Peter, written by Mark's main source, not quote Mark but instead merely allude to Jesus's teachings or echo them? He also considers that the first letter implied in 2 Peter 3:1 may not be 1 Peter but could be "a now-lost letter, 2 Peter 1 …, or the Epistle of Jude" (p. 225). However, none of these three theories has solid evidence to support it, so each is an argument from silence, which Bernier elsewhere rightly disavows.

Despite these minor flaws, *Rethinking the Dates of the New Testament* is a landmark study. As Bernier notes in his conclusion, proposals for early dates of the NT writings now have two monograph-length arguments published in the last hundred years, whereas higher dating systems have no equivalent presentation (p. 280). This book is thus required reading for any NT commentary author or scholar doing historiographical work on early Christianity. Thankfully, the book's price also makes it accessible for church pastors, who will find in it a thought-provoking timeline for each part of the NT related to the whole.

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***The Great Story and the Great Commission*. By Christopher J. H. Wright. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2023. 156 pp. $23.99, Hardcover. ISBN 978-1-5409-6616-2**

Unfortunately, there is a lot of disagreement among Christians today about what exactly is the mission of the church. This review seeks to accurately and fairly evaluate and critique Christopher Wright, a leading missiologist who discusses the mission of the church in his book, *The Great Story and the Great Commission*. Wright is a well-known missiologist and biblical theologian who has spent his long academic career exploring the mission of the church. The two most relevant books he has written that pertain to this topic include *The Mission of God* and *The Mission of God's People*. *The Great Story and the Great Commission* is a condensed version of *The Mission of God's People*, since they both specifically consider the mission of the church and they both arrive at the same conclusions. In short, Wright is convinced of a holistic approach to the mission of the church, breaking the mission into three broad categories: building the church, serving society, and stewarding creation.

Wright's thesis is, "The mission and missions of God's people flow from and participate in the mission of God" (p. xiii). In chapter one, Wright argues that Christians need a missional hermeneutic when

reading Scripture, which means *all* of Scripture is God's mission and therefore God's people should understand their mission to also compromise *all* God intends to do in this world. By Wright focusing on "*all* of Scripture" and "*all* God intends to do" he begins to show his hand to the holistic approach of missions. In chapter two, Scripture is explored as the great story of God's redemptive plan. This great story is where Christians see the mission of God. In chapter three, Wright considers the question, "If that is God's 'big story,' what part in it is played by our 'little stories,' here and now in our own small slice of it?" (p. xiv). This chapter is crucial to understanding Wright's perspective on the mission of the church. In chapter four, Wright discusses the value of taking the whole-Bible approach when considering the mission of the church. In chapter five, Wright discusses the first broad category that he labels as the mission of the church – building the church through evangelism and teaching. In chapter six, Wright discusses the second broad category – serving society through compassion and justice. In chapters seven and eight, Wright discusses the third broad category – stewarding creation. Finally, in chapter nine, Wright gives some helpful implications for the church and the individual church members based on these three broad missional categories, which makes up the holistic missional approach.

This holistic approach to the mission of the church is not new with this book. Wright has received criticism for decades from those who hold to a narrower approach to the mission of the church. For example, Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert wrote a book together in 2011 called *What is the Mission of the Church?*, in which they argue for a narrower approach. DeYoung and Gilbert and others believe that, since the holistic approach makes everything missions, there is a danger of losing the emphasis on the proclamation of the gospel. According to DeYoung and Gilbert, the Great Commission found in Matthew 28 is the mission of the church: to baptize (evangelize) and teach (disciple) in order to make mature disciples of Christ so that healthy local churches are planted all around the world. This means they will only hold to the Wright's first category, the building of the church. The other two categories are accomplished as Christians remain faithful to the narrower mission and God, who in his sovereignty, does the rest.

The reason those such as DeYoung and Gilbert are not convinced of Wright's holistic approach is that they believe there is a distinction between God's mission and the church's mission in the world today. The mission of the church does flow out of God's mission; however, not in the holistic sense as Wright assumes. In other words, not everything God does, and will do, in creation is intended for the church to also do. This point of distinction comes out of Wright's less convincing arguments found in chapters three and four. In chapter three, Wright attempts to make the jump from God's mission to the mission of the church to prove they are the same. However, Wright, in the end, still assumes the direct correlation between God's mission and the mission of the church. This assumption comes out in the way Wright uses the missional hermeneutic with such statements as, "Once we understand that the Bible is a *purposeful* story, driven forward by the plan and purpose of God, then we also realize that our lives now are to be part of the way God has chosen to accomplish that plan" (p. 59). Wright assumes that "God has chosen to accomplish that plan" with the holistic approach. In chapter four, Wright continues with this assumption as he begins to lay out the holistic approach noting, "Our proper starting point in thinking about mission *biblically* should be first of all *the mission of God*, the divine, sovereign purpose that is the governing theme of the whole Bible narrative" (p. 65). Again, Wright takes for granted that God's people are intended to do *all* that God is doing.

Yet, *The Great Story and the Great Commission* is still a well-developed book and Wright is successful in accomplishing what he intended to do. Wright does not intend to argue from the narrower missional perspective. Rather, he wants to give a concise version of his main thesis, found in *The Mission of God* and *The Mission of God's People*, that the mission of God is now also the mission of God's people. Each chapter does flow together well, and the reader can easily see how Wright builds his arguments. Wright writes in an easily accessible way that the average church member can understand. I would recommend this book, along with DeYoung and Gilbert's book *What is the Mission of the Church?* to anyone who desires to know what their mission is as part of the body of Christ. It is important to understand both sides of the argument when thinking through this important topic. The church and its mission is a topic that seeks to

answer the very purpose of the Christian's life, and that is an endeavor worth pursuing.

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***Crowned with Glory and Honor: A Chalcedonian Anthropology*. By Michael A. Wilkinson. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2024. 354 pp. $34.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-68359-730-8.**

Michael Wilkinson's *Crowned with Glory and Honor: A Chalcedonian Anthropology* is a daring project in theological retrieval. It aims to cut through gridlocked debates in theological anthropology by extending the conceptual rubric of the Christological council at Chalcedon (A.D. 451) from the incarnate Christ to humanity in general. Wilkinson is a recent Ph.D. graduate from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and this book is adapted from his doctoral dissertation. As Wilkinson notes, many of the issues facing the church in the 21st century are anthropological in orientation (p. 20). As such, his book is a timely offering in 2024.

Wilkinson opens by painting the current state of theological anthropology as a stalemated debate between substance dualists on the one hand, who hold that the human being is composed of soul and body (p. 8), and physicalists on the other hand, who hold that human ontology is entirely explicable in terms of the physical or material (p. 12). Wilkinson therefore aims to start his project outside of the current debate by "…proposing that the church should define human being in Christ by extending his human ontology as *the* man (par excellence) in Chalcedonian *Christology* to our ontology as *mere* man (par ordinaire) in a Chalcedonian *anthropology*" (pp. 25–26).

Wilkinson finds in Scripture a unified witness to Christ as both fully God and fully man. This *ontological identity* is crucial for Christ to fulfill his *theological identity* as the redeemer of the redeemed (pp. 64–65). But this ontological identity does not move from man to Christ. Rather, Christ stands as the true and archetypal image of God who provides the model for humanity (p. 63). He concludes that, "The

incarnation of the Son as the Christ must have provided him with a human constitution that is ontologically similar to our constitution" (p. 79). For Wilkinson, the epistemological warrant for the theological move is grounded in the creedal statement of the council of Chalcedon, the *Chalcedonian Definition*. The *Definition*, according to Wilkinson, identifies two different person-nature constitutions within Christ, in which the person of the Son shares the divine nature with the Father and a created human nature with the rest of humanity. These two person-nature constitutions stand in analogous relationship to one another in a proposed Chalcedonian analogy of being (p. 102). Wilkinson argues that the analogy between the divine and human constitutions in Christ warrant an analogical extension of the Chalcedonian concepts used to describe Christ's humanity to theological anthropology more broadly.

Wilkinson next moves into the historical warrant for his position. Wilkinson rightly roots Chalcedon in Nicaea, where the church formally established a person-nature (*hypostasis*-*ousia*) vocabulary to address the Arian controversy. This framework expressed the ontological unity of the Trinity in terms of the *ousia*, or substance/nature, and the diversity within the Trinity in terms of the *hypostasis*, or person (pp. 150–51). Chalcedon extended this ontological rubric to define the Son's incarnation into our humanity (p. 182). In the centuries that followed Chalcedon, Wilkinson sees continued Christological development of the Nicene-Chalcedonian concepts (p. 195). Of paramount importance in this period was the Christology of Maximus the Confessor, in which the person-nature distinction entails a person-nature constitution of Christ's the man (p. 221). In this constitution, the natures provide the *what*, and the person provides the *who*. Consequentially, the person was *subject* of Christ's human and divine natures.

Wilkinson's proposal, expressed in three propositions, is to extend these Pro-Chalcedonian conclusions into theological anthropology. First, as the person of Christ is the ontological subject of his being, the "created human person is the ontological subject of a merely human being" (p. 287). Second, even as the person-nature distinction also entails a person-nature constitution of Christ, so too does a created human person subsist in a body-soul nature (p. 290). Third, a created human person is the acting subject of his human nature (p. 293). The

first and third propositions entail that the person is the *who* of a human being. It is the person that acts and provides the dimension of individuality. The nature is the *what* of a human being. According to the second proposition, these two levels of ontology, really distinct from one another (p. 292), together constitute a human being.

The motivation to undertake a theological retrieval project in the realm of theological anthropology, especially given the nature of the cultural debates in which the contemporary church is embroiled, is to be thoroughly commended. Unfortunately, Wilkinson's execution is deeply flawed on multiple levels. First, Wilkinson introduces his project by lamenting that the church's anthropological witness has been somewhat successful but limited by its lack of a basic orthodoxy of human being (p. 21). Despite this, he devotes zero space to demonstrating that his ontology provides a firmer footing for answering pressing anthropological concerns than prevailing models, and so fails to explain why his project matters.

Second, his three propositions about human being have severe liabilities for his overall project. Propositions one and three concerning the *subject* of a human being, abstracted from the rest of his project, are not at odds with many of the various anthropological models Wilkinson decries in his introduction. His second proposition is relatively novel, but it introduces theological consequences of seismic proportions. Wilkinson explicitly frames his really-distinct person-nature constitution of humanity as an answer to the question of the "*whatness*" of man (pp. 326–28.) But since, as Wilkinson affirms repeatedly, a thing's nature is its "whatness," man's "whatness" will necessarily be defined tautologically as a constitution of his "whatness" and his personhood. Being tautological, this definition is philosophically absurd, and ultimately collapses into itself. It also has devastating implications for the doctrines of Christ and salvation. Wilkinson's entire project assumes a key insight from classical Christology: there must be an ontological correspondence between the redeemer and the redeemed (p. 64–65). It was necessary for Christ to assume our whole nature to redeem our whole nature. But by including man's personhood in his "whatness," Wilkinson will have trouble avoiding the conclusion that Christ has not taken on our whole "whatness," i.e. our whole nature, and is unable to redeem the whole man. This is precisely the logic by which the Christological heresies of

Apollinarianism and Monothelitism were anathematized (pp. 165–68, 214–16). These liabilities could be entirely avoided by abandoning an ontology in which the human being is constituted by a really-distinct person and nature. But this would compromise his second proposition—the only proposition of his three that is not shared by the positions he critiques—and thus eliminate his distinct contribution. In short, he gains none of the ground promised in his optimistic introduction.

Third, on top of these major errors, *Crowned with Glory and Honor* contained smaller mistakes on various levels. For example, Wilkinson calls Daniel Dennet, famously dubbed one of the "four horsemen" of the New Atheism movement, a Christian philosopher (p. 12). He confuses the terms "type" and "antetype" (p. 45), and he refers to Cyril of Alexandria's theology as an "unorthodox Christology" in the same breath as Nestorius' (p. 191). Unfortunately, Wilkinson's book will be potentially misleading for students and will contribute minimally for more advanced readers. I do not recommend it for either group.

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***Apostolikos Thronos: Rival Accounts of Roman Primacy in Eusebius and Athanasius*. By Vincent Twomey. Steubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2023. 568 pp. $59.95, Hardcover. ISBN 9781645853107.**

Few Christian figures in the fourth century CE stand out more than Athanasius of Alexandria (pp. 295–373) and Eusebius of Cæsarea (pp. 260–340). In their writings, each author makes various appeals to authority as a support for their causes. Given this fact, one might wonder whether they share a common view of different ecclesial authorities. In *Apostolikos Thronos*, Vincent Twomey (S.V.D, Ph.D.) seeks to challenge the general assumption by scholars that there was no developed primacy associated with the Roman bishop (p. 7). As a revised edition of the work, originally published in 1982, Twomey has updated several of his arguments given the increased interest in

studying both these fourth century authors. This review will present a brief summary of the arguments presented, followed by a critique of Twomey's arguments. Finally, the review will discuss the value of the book to the church as a whole.

It should be noted at the outset that Twomey is not arguing that there is a fully developed ecclesiology with ultimate Roman authority. Twomey states this explicitly in the introduction to the revised edition (p. xx). Instead, Twomey's argument is simply that the See of Rome was held in higher esteem in the fourth century than many scholars suggest. This is important for Protestants as there could be a hard reaction against the work, simply based on assumption of the argument.

Twomey divides the work into two major sections, one for each author. In each section, Twomey analyzes works from each author, focusing on their function as a historical apologetic work. For Eusebius, Twomey focuses solely on the work *Church History*. Athanasius is presented much more broadly, with Twomey interacting with many of Athanasius' writings. Twomey presents an interesting argument for Eusebius' intention in highlighting the primacy of Rome in the beginning of his writing, while shifting away from that toward the end of *Church History*. Twomey suggests Eusebius selects the "most illustrious" (p. 34) of the Apostles to the cities of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch because he intends to argue for Petrine authority in each case. Rome and Antioch have Petrine authority, given their direct association with him as bishop. Alexandria has derived authority because of the connection with Mark, Peter's disciple (pp. 109–10). Twomey notes that Eusebius emphasizes Petrine authority to show Peter as the spokesman of the apostles, with the preeminence that comes along with it (p. 56). This shifts through Eusebius' revision that came after the Great Persecution (ca. AD 311), where Eusebius begins to move the grounding of the primacy of Rome as the imperial city (p. 183).

In Athanasius, Twomey notes the opposite focus with Rome holding significant weight over ecclesiological matters. The contrast here is, in Twomey's understanding, important to show the primacy of the Roman See (p. 332). In each text Twomey examines, he sees Athanasius as presenting the influence of Roman authority over the imperial authority. Instead of arguing for imperial apostolic

succession, where Eusebius turned, Twomey notes Athanasius presents the theological significance of Roman primacy (p. 550). Ultimately, Twomey sees the focus of the early Eusebius and the totality of Athanasius as showing the fourth-century Church in the East and West understood Rome to carry a unique authority over the rest of the church. Rome had a special place given the special place of its first bishop, Peter (p. 562).

There are several assumptions Twomey makes in his arguments that should be challenged. First, Twomey asserts that the Roman See had a "theological authority not confined to the West but universal" (p. xx). Given Twomey's limitation on what constitutes the West/East divide, this is an issue. Twomey presents this divide as if it were focused solely on the Roman Empire. This argument avoids those churches that existed outside of the Roman Empire, though they flourished under regimes that had varying degrees of persecution. The obvious example of this is that of the Church of the East. The Church of the East did not even acknowledge the Council of Nicæa until AD 410 at the Council of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. This is of concern given its impact on how Twomey views both Eusebius and Athanasius. It colors how he understands the authority of Rome in each author's work.

A second assumption Twomey makes regarding Eusebius' intentions is that he assumes Eusebius only discusses three major Sees because of his goal of a Peter/Mark analogy (p. 34). Eusebius does not make it clear that he is trying to show an analogy between the relationship of Peter and Mark with Rome and Alexandria. This also fails because it does not properly deal with Antioch, where Peter is said to have been bishop first. There are also issues where Paul is included as an authority in Eusebius' work, which Twomey regularly notes (pp. 65–6, 77, 88, etc.). This does not contradict the Peter/Mark connection, but it would at least push back on Peter as the authority, which weakens the Peter/Mark to Rome/Alexandria argument.

Finally, Twomey also presents the assumption that Athanasius understood, as did all the church (East and West), that the authority of the bishops flowed from Rome to Alexandria and Antioch (p. 263). In his treatment of Athanasius' understanding of Peter as the spokesman of the Apostles, Twomey offers a weak argument for Petrine preeminence based on Matthew 16:16. Twomey argues that

Athanasius consistently refers to Peter, at times to the detriment of the other Apostles (p. 274n23). The trouble with this reading is twofold. First, it assumes Petrine authority is being ascribed to the See of Rome through the biblical witness, rather than arguing for it. Second, the biblical text has only a few explicit declarations from any of the Apostles, much less making one spokesman with the intent of maintaining that authority to those who followed him. Twomey admits this in several points when he notes that Peter's "representative role is implied" (p. 275) but is not explicit.

For the church, this book is going to be beyond the scope of interest and benefit for all but the most scholarly with a particular focus on 4th–century church history. The book is highly scholarly with extensive footnotes and untranslated Greek, Latin, and German which would make it difficult to follow for most. As a scholarly work, it offers an interesting argument for a higher understanding of the primacy of the bishop of Rome than is typically argued regarding the fourth century, though it is lacking in several points. There are also a surprising number of typographical errors throughout. They do not impair reading significantly but can be distracting at times.

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A Ransom for Many: Mark 10:45 as a Key to the Gospel. **By John J. R. Lee and Daniel Brueske. Lexham Press, 2023. 200 pp. $24.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1683595618.**

What is the central focus of the Gospel of Mark and what message does it seek to convey? An extensive analysis of the second Gospel by John J. R. Lee and Daniel Brueske, presented in the book *A Ransom for Many*, provides insights to these questions. John Lee, who earned his Ph.D. from the University of Edinburgh, is the author and co-author of multiple books, including *Christological Rereading of Shema in Mark's Gospel*, and currently serves as a professor of New Testament studies at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Daniel Brueske, a Ph.D.

candidate at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, serves as an associate pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in Lenexa, KS.

Chapter one of this book offers a brief introduction, highlighting how Mark 10:45 serves as a key to understanding the Gospel of Mark and outlining how this will be demonstrated in the subsequent chapters. Chapter two examines the context in which Mark's Gospel was written, with a particular emphasis on the occasion that influenced its composition. They propose that the Gospel of Mark was written for Roman Christians who were experiencing or would soon experience persecution because of their commitment to following Jesus in the mid-to-late 60s, around the time of the Neronian persecution (pp. 29–30). Chapter three delves into the purpose behind the Gospel of Mark. Unlike the other gospels, Mark does not clearly state why it was composed (p. 31). However, the authors, through their examination of the genre, content, and exceptional writing abilities of Mark, propose the purpose as follows: "The purpose of Mark's Gospel is to offer [the] story about who Jesus is and what he has done as a model of servanthood and loyalty to God in the face of even the most extreme shame and suffering, encouraging followers of Jesus to faithfully persevere, just as Jesus did" (p. 68). As this chapter concludes, the authors reaffirm that, based on the analysis of the occasion and purpose, Mark 10:45 encapsulates the essence of Mark's Gospel.

Having identified Mark 10:45 as a key verse in the previous chapters, Chapter four now provides a detailed analysis of its meaning and significance. The central part of Mark's Gospel includes the three passion predictions (8:27-10:45) that convey the core message of the entire Gospel, bookended by the two thematically similar stories (8:22-26, 10:46-52). Mark 10:45 is located at the climax of the final prediction. Along with its positional significance, Mark 10:45 provides the initial explanation for the reason behind Jesus' death. The authors also reveal that 'the Son of Man' in Mark 10:45 alludes to 'the Son of Man' in Daniel 7, suggesting that Mark utilizes irony to sharpen the message he aims to deliver in 10:45 (pp. 98–102). Chapter five adopts a more extensive view to demonstrate how Mark 10:45 functions and contributes to the overarching narrative of Mark's Gospel. The authors illustrate that Mark 10:45 binds the entire text together, enhancing our comprehension of Mark's Gospel as a whole. The

narrative from chapters 1 to 8 progresses towards the three passion predictions, culminating in 10:45 with the fulfillment of these predictions occurring throughout the preceding chapters 9 to 16. Chapter six reviews the analysis presented in the previous chapters and explores the insights from Mark's Gospel. The authors explain what it means to live a life of true servanthood, as exemplified by Jesus, and provide encouragement to live out this commitment. Subsequently, they conclude the book by highlighting the portrayal in the Gospel of Mark of those who, despite their failures, repent and return to faith, emphasizing the importance of continuous repentance and belief (pp. 159–62).

As summarized above, the authors offer a detailed examination of the Gospel of Mark, delving into its contents, writing techniques, and genre, while also considering external factors such as the date of authorship and targeted audience. Their analysis, however, primarily depends on the intrinsic factors within the Gospel itself, distinguishing the work by prioritizing the text's own declarations over extrinsic factors. This hermeneutical approach not only underlines the unique strengths of this book but also promotes a cohesive and consistent scholarly interpretation.

The analysis begins with an exploration of the broader context, encompassing the occasion and the purpose of the gospel, and delves deeper by examining Mark's writing techniques and the contents. This methodical approach sets the stage for a gradually compelling argument, leading readers to an inevitable consensus with the authors as they land at the intricacies of 10:45. The strength of their analysis lies not merely in the persuasiveness of their evidence but in the strategic structure and presentation of their argument, drawing readers into a comprehensive understanding of their line of reasoning. Having effectively captured the reader's attention through a transition from broader segments to specific intricacies, the authors subsequently redirect their attention to a broader perspective. If Mark 10:45 indeed serves as the focal point, the Gospel of Mark as a whole should align coherently with the thematic essence of this particular verse. The authors demonstrate this by exploring the pervasive influence of the essence of the verse, explaining its role in bridging the first half of the Gospel and the second half, thereby fostering a thematic unity across the entire Gospel. From a scholarly perspective,

this two-way validation method—macro to micro and micro to macro—presents compelling evidence to the reader.

While the book excels in its analysis and has numerous strengths, there are areas that could benefit from refinement. First, the recurring visitation of what was already explored previously throughout the book leaves something to be desired, as the frequency of repetition may cause redundancy. Though the authors exhibit an intent to minimize such occurrences (p. 113), its prevalence remains a notable aspect within the book. Another point of the book that deserves our attention is the conclusion section, where the emphasis lies on the theme of repentance. Undoubtedly, it is significant to underscore the meaning of repentance, a theme occasionally expounded upon in the Gospel of Mark; however, it appears that Mark 10:45 does not overtly address this theme. The verse could potentially support the theme of repentance, but it cannot be posited that this theme is explicitly present within the essence of the verse itself. Given the overall framework of the book, it would have been conceptually consistent to conclude with an emphasis on 'sacrificial servanthood' rather than the theme of repentance.

Although these minor points of criticism exist, the book's strengths and merits far outweigh them. As outlined earlier, it serves as a great model for pastors and scholars alike in effective biblical hermeneutics. A further advantage is that the book is not limited to being a scholarly text but is accessible to a broader range of Christian readers. While the book's content is a meticulously constructed hermeneutic by the authors, it is articulated in a manner that is understandable to those without specialized knowledge. In sum, I highly recommend this book to Christians who are passionate about interpreting biblical texts, particularly those wanting a detailed grasp of the Gospel of Mark. Readers will appreciate how the insights offered in this book enhance their understanding of sound biblical interpretation and provide strong encouragement to live a life of sacrificial servanthood modeled by Jesus Christ.

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***John Leland: A Jeffersonian Baptist in Early America*. By Eric C. Smith. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2022. 284 pp. $120.00, Hardback. ISBN 978-0197606647.**

Eric Smith has written a superb biography of John Leland. Leland was a larger-than-life character in both Baptist and American history, and he deserves this sort of historic and biographical treatment. Smith presented Leland in true form, including both his grandeur and his foibles. Smith begins and ends this story just as Leland himself did, giving the reader a panorama of Leland's early-life formation and his eventual demise. With the chapters in between, Smith helps the reader understand Leland's place in Baptist and American history, even addressing some of the scholarly debate (Leland's Calvinism, or lack thereof) and an area of popular interest in our current cultural moment (Leland's vacillating position on American slavery and the plight of African Americans during the nineteenth century).

Smith says that his primary goal with this book is to "tell Leland's story" (p. 8). He has certainly accomplished this goal and more. He has presented the reader with a particular perspective of "the transformation of early America," which as Smith says himself runs somewhat in parallel to Leland's own life (roughly 1760–1840; p. 9). Indeed, "John Leland's life intersected [many] major themes" of religious and cultural development in the fledgling nation (p. 9).

According to Smith, Leland "has never received a full biographical treatment" (p. 8). If this is so, then Eric Smith has certainly set a high standard for any that may come after. There may well be a more scholarly and technical biography written, and one might write a shorter and more popular level story, but Smith has shot the target right in the middle. This is no easy mark, and those of us who are interested in American, Christian, and Baptist history are grateful for the effort.

Smith begins the Leland story at his birth and early baptism. Leland was born on May 14, 1754, in Grafton, Massachusetts. Leland's own account of his baptism at three years old is the source of this tale, but it pictures Leland's staunch independence, whether it is true or not. In short, Leland was baptized by a Congregationalist minister at the command of his father, and all completely against his own will. If

the story is true, then Leland came into the world believing "instinctively" that "religious acts must be free and voluntary to be genuine" (p. 11). If it is a tall tale, then Leland wanted everyone to think that his lifelong convictions regarding religious freedom and freedom of conscience were present from the earliest age.

While Leland's first "baptism" was involuntary, the "two defining issues of his life, his conversion and his call to preach" were "resolved" between Leland and his God "alone" (p. 5). Smith says, "At no point did [Leland] consult a local minister or involve the church in his spiritual quest" for spiritual conversion. Indeed, Smith notes, "His conversion story is striking for its solitary character" (p. 24). So too, Leland "determined to present himself as a candidate" for baptism when a Separate Baptist preacher named Noah Alden "came to nearby Northbridge to hold a baptism service" (p. 30). Leland even helped Alden baptize others immediately thereafter, Alden being "a short man and [fearing] that he could not raise all the female candidates from the water" (p. 30).

Not long after that waterlogged day, experiencing believer's baptism and administering the same to others, Leland was at a "meeting" wherein "no preacher showed up." Leland "stood to deliver the morning sermon," and "from then on, John decided to preach at every opportunity he received" (p. 31). Leland didn't just wait for opportunities to arise, he "launched into an itinerant ministry, setting up a forty-mile circuit around New England" (p. 31).

Throughout this book, Smith is diligent to continue returning to the subject of Leland's erratic and persnickety relationships with local churches, especially one in Cheshire, Massachusetts. Leland was an itinerant preacher first, and somewhere further down his list of priorities came the duties of pastoring among a local church. The first church that sought and embraced Leland as a pastor was Mount Poney Baptist Church in northern Virginia. They accepted Leland's demands to be exempt from the customary examination and ordination by a board of local Baptist elders as well as Leland's refusal to preach at Mount Poney more than half the Sundays in a year (p. 43). This arrangement lasted months, not years, and Leland continued his itinerant ministry in earnest.

By the time Leland moved to Cheshire, Massachusetts, in 1793, he had built quite a reputation, and he was heavily involved in Baptist

efforts in Virginia to pull on political levers in order to move the massive institution of the religious establishment. Indeed, Smith notes that it was political expedience that compelled Leland finally to participate, if only farcically, in a formal pastoral ordination event (p. 73). Leland was far more recognizable as a Jeffersonian political activist than as a typical Baptist elder or pastor in the latter decades of the eighteenth century, but Smith more than adequately demonstrates that Leland was a remarkable proponent of democratic-republicans like Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

In the end, John Leland was a new kind of Baptist that would shape what it means to be Baptist in America for a long time to come. Smith even proposes through lines from Leland's individualistic proclivity in the views of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Francis Wayland, J. L. D. Hillyer, and the notoriously individualistic E. Y. Mullins. Lamentably, Smith says, "Under Leland's influence, Baptists 'came to see the church as merely a gathering of like-minded individuals joined to observe the duties of religion rather than as a vital part of the saving process'" (p. 127).

So too, many Baptists (certainly many Evangelicals) today might also lament the religious pluralism Leland embraced and promoted throughout his life. Unlike most Baptists of his day, Leland was not only willing but eager to dismantle any civil preference for Protestant Christianity. Leland believed that Christianity was true and that it was the only hope of sinners around the world, but he also believed that absolutely nothing outside of a man's own mind and conscience should compel him to embrace any doctrine.

Eric Smith has written this biography quite well. His historical detail is well-supplied, and his scholarly citations are numerous (even citing meticulous sources like church meeting minutes and newspapers). These features are combined with good storytelling and a quality writing style to give the reader a biography that is not only informative but enjoyable. The main character is interesting in his own right, drawing the reader into the turbulent waters of his life, and Smith acts as an informative tour guide, helping the reader to travel steadily down the various tributaries that all connect to this energetic river.

With a story like this, including several features and events that unfold over the course of years and even decades, it is hard to decide

how to arrange the chapters. Smith seems to have chosen both of the two basic options – chronology and topic. Smith begins and ends the biography with the chronological beginning and end of Leland's life. This suits the biography well, and it makes the reader feel as though the whole man has been on display from start to finish. Yet, between these two ends, Smith allocated several chapters for various topics of great importance in Leland's life—Leland's radical independence, his populist Calvinism, his vigorous tribalism among democratic-republicans, and his not-so-consistent views on American slavery. The reader may have a tough time remembering where the story is at any given moment on the timeline of Leland's life, trying to make comparisons in Leland's progress or regress in one area with another, but the topics Smith covers deserve the lengthy and focused treatments.

This book was a joy to read. Smith's introduction was particularly well-written and substantive, and his artistic conclusion revisited and tied together various pieces of the story quite well. Those who enjoy history, especially the religious history of America, will probably find this book among the better-quality biographies on their shelves. It has earned such a status in my own library.

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***Let Men Be Free: Baptist Politics in the Early United States 1776–1835*. By Obbie Tyler Todd. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2022. 256 pp. $50.94, Hardcover. ISBN 9781666743777.**

In his foreword to this book, Thomas Kidd writes: "Baptists in the English-speaking world have tended to engage rather than withdraw from the political sphere […] there has always seemed to be a natural affinity among Baptists for politics, especially in the United States" (p. ix). Obbie Tyler Todd has written this book to provide a historically accurate summary of that Baptist affinity and the various features of the interplay between Baptist politics and Baptist theology and practice. For the historian, this book is a welcome addition to the

conversation about Baptists in American history. For the interested reader, this book is an accessible and informative counterweight to the common assumptions that Baptists were either political party sycophants or complete outsiders to the American political experiment.

Todd claims that this book is the "first comprehensive treatment of Baptist politics in the new American nation" (p. xiii). This claim may well be true since Todd explores in detail both Baptist politics and Baptist doctrine, as well as the ways in which the former helped to shape the latter. As he describes it, "In a nation that separated church and state, religion and politics were still inextricable. Therefore, the story of Baptists in the early United States cannot be told without accounting for the theological convictions that propelled them to action and the political consequences that animated their decisions" (p. xiv).

It is true that Baptists in America, and Americans in general, have embraced at least one shared fundamental freedom, religious liberty. However, as Todd argues and documents in this book, "Baptists did not always define religious liberty in quite the same way" (p. xv). Indeed, the same could be said of the pluralistic society that America has been since its founding as a nation. That is why Todd's book is so fascinating. He affirms, like many others, that Baptists were shaped by American politics, but he also argues that America's political philosophy was, and is, shaped by Baptists as well.

This book also contributes a new perspective with which to view Baptists' political involvement in the new nation, Baptist Federalists. Baptist alignment with the early Republican Party (i.e., Thomas Jefferson) is well known among historians; but the story often left untold, and therefore mostly unknown, is that of the many Baptists who fought against Republicans and their descendants. It has been documented that Baptists publicly embraced and argued for the Federalist Party's candidates and programs. From Todd's perspective, "Baptist politics was defined not by a candidate or party or even a single issue, but by its goal: religious liberty" (p. 1). There were Baptists among both Republicans and Federalists, but the Baptist goal of religious liberty "seemed," then as now, "to demand participation (and persecution) in the public square," and Baptists participated vigorously (p. 1).

The book is structured in three basic parts. The first four chapters describe the "principles, patriotism, and partisanship" of Baptists in America during the early years (roughly 1770s through to the beginning of the Andrew Jackson presidency; p. xvii). During this period, Baptists were perceived as political and cultural outsiders, but their involvement in both American politics and American culture was remarkable. The last three chapters explain the "policies, programs, and progress" of Baptists as they discovered and, in many ways, created their own sort of respectability and influence (p. xvii). This was especially notable in American society and politics after the Revolutionary War and following the pivotal presidency of Thomas Jefferson.

Chapter five serves as a sort of hinge for the book, providing the reader with additional content that is not normally available in a historical exploration of this sort. Todd gives considerable detail about the various perspectives among Baptists in America with regard to the morally troubling realities of African slavery and the treatment of Native Americans. He addresses head-on the irony that many Baptists argued for a kind of religious liberty for white Baptist men that they did not do for African Americans or Native Americans. Todd also documents the divergent views among Baptists on each of these important issues.

Todd writes, "It would be no exaggeration to suggest that behind every article for religious liberty in the national and state constitutions in the early republic, there were Baptists" (p. 11). He also undergirds this claim with the historical facts. Baptists were not the only proponents of religious liberty, but they were absolutely a vocal and active coalition of politically interested Christians, who viewed religious liberty as a necessity for their existence. As Todd says, "For Baptists, the relationship between church and state was a two-way street. Just as religion influenced civil government, civil government inevitably shaped religion. Therefore, Baptists regularly argued that religious freedom wasn't simply about civil liberty; it was essential to biblical Christianity" (p. 25).

That political and religious conviction that seemed to unite all Baptists was indeed religious liberty. Todd writes, "If Baptists agreed on one thing, it was the evil of state-sponsored religion" (p. 28). Baptists often disagreed about the meaning and practice of religious

liberty. Todd also says, "However, if Baptists disagreed on one thing, it was the nature of this 'court of judicature, erected in every breast' [i.e., the 'empire of conscience' as John Leland called it], and to what extent it should be respected in those outside the Protestant faith" (p. 29). Some Baptists were quite adamant that religious liberty did not mean that atheists, Roman Catholics, or Muslims should be allowed to hold political office or free to promote their own political theology.

This disagreement among Baptists in early America is on display in their divergent party affiliations, Republicans and Federalists. Todd notes that many scholars, "from Nathan O. Hatch to Daniel L. Dreisback to Thomas Kidd have tended to frame Baptists as Jeffersonians due to their mutual defense of the First Amendment" (p. 83). Todd also argues that "this telling of the Baptist and American history is incomplete" (p. 83). Baptists did align themselves with Thomas Jefferson on the issue of religious liberty, but "America's Baptist leadership… [was] in fact predominantly and distinctly Federalist" (p. 83).

It would be inaccurate to say that Republicans were champions for religious freedom and Federalists were champions of religious establishment, though Congregationalist Federalists were certainly on the side of establishment. Baptist Federalists, however, advocated for religious disestablishment without the complete neglect of civil religion. Todd writes, "Baptist Republicans and Federalists quarreled over the best way to procure and protect this most sacred freedom. In general, Baptist Republicans emphasized the restraint of government and the importance of individual rights while Baptist Federalists stressed the responsibility of government and the importance of public virtue" (p. 72).

And while the Federalist and Republican parties did not continue as such after the defeat of Rufus King by James Monroe in the presidential election of 1816, the general perspective of Baptists in America, both among leaders and commoners, continued to reflect similar characteristics. Baptists wanted and formed institutions for cooperation, for missions, and for social improvement. Indeed, "Religious liberty and religious nationalism were by no means mutually exclusive in the early American nation" (p. 141). Baptists seemed to envision American advancement in domestic moral

improvement and in foreign missional efforts as Baptist and Christian advancement in the world.

In the end, Baptists did not want established religion in the sense of government-coerced religious institutions and participation. However, many Baptists did want a kind of voluntary religious establishment, in the sense that they believed the good of the nation depended upon the voluntary (and even sometimes state-encouraged) growth of Christian churches and Christian people among the nation. Thus, the Baptist view of religious liberty (both past and present) is not so easily described by the oft repeated and seldom defined phrase "separation of church and state."

This book is well-researched, well-written, and much needed in the current American political debate. Baptists are a major segment of the American population, having gained many converts during the nineteenth century and many more in the twentieth. Still today, Baptists are deeply interested in religious liberty and vigorously active in the political arena. Readers of all sorts may find this book a fascinating and informative dive into the historical narrative that has shaped much of what we are experiencing today. Those particularly interested in history, politics, and Baptist political theology should consider it a must-read.

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***Christ of the Consummation: A New Testament Biblical Theology.* By O. Palmer Robertson. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2022. 360 pp. $27.99, Paperback. ISBN 9781629956305**

Confusion is a striking characteristic of our age. Christianity is affected also because "behind this confusion lie diverse sources of references."[1] The solution to confusion is found in the Bible: "God is not a God of confusion but of peace" (1 Cor. 14:33a). In *Christ of the*

[1] L. Nelson Bell, "Confused and confusing," *Christianity Today*, July 4, 1969, vol. 13, no. 20, https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1969/july-4/confused-and-confusing.html.

Consummation, Robertson offers a solution to confusion regarding the testimony of the four gospels, who are the unsurpassed references when it comes to Christianity.

O. Palmer Robertson is a renowned pastor, professor, and prolific writer with vast experience in the "realm" of theology. Educated at Union Theological Seminary, Robertson has extensive teaching experience at a few seminaries in the United States and Uganda. The author is well positioned in writing this book, especially after doing a significant amount of research on the person of Christ. His research resulted in the following books: *Christ of the Covenants* (1981), *Christ of the Prophets* (2004), and *Christ of Wisdom* (2017).

Christ of the Consummation was born following the influence of Geerhardus Vos upon the author's thinking, who believed "that proper biblical theology should be anchored in the historical development of redemptive history—or, more precisely, in the historical progression of the revelation process" (p. xxi). Thus, indirectly, the author discloses that in *Christ of the Consummation*, he attempts to trace the "historic progressiveness of the revelation process" across the apostolic period (p. xxxviii).

Robertson's book comprises eight chapters, including a foreword by D. A. Carson, a further word by Richard B. Gaffin Jr., and a preface. In the introduction, the author outlines his methodology and presuppositions. The author contends that the four gospels are not "traditions handed down across decades, being shaped and remolded by a string of unknown, unknowable faceless 'redactors,'" but these gospel writers were eyewitnesses (pp. 5–6). Robertson uses the redemptive-historical approach despite the challenges associated with this method (p. 9). Chapter two deals with preliminary revelations. Thus, Robertson contends that "the annunciations rightly underscore the supernatural character of the revelations and the events that inaugurate the age of the new covenant" (p. 24). This chapter ends with a discussion regarding the confrontation with the Devil, in which "Jesus overcomes Satan by submitting his will to the Father" (p. 36). Chapter three is a treatment of Jesus's self-testimony. This discussion is vital because "the testimony provided by the four gospels is the only Jesus that can be known (p. 39). Thus, the author uses three lines of argument to present Jesus' self-testimony. The third line of argument, namely "Jesus' self-testimony by the titles he

applied to Himself or accepted from others," is developed by Robertson at length. Therefore, the author discusses the three most important titles, Son of Man, Messiah, and Son of God, because “these three titles provide an adequate framework for understanding who Jesus thought he was” (p. 73).

In chapter four, the author analyzes the life and ministry of Jesus. Robertson first discusses the teaching ministry of Jesus. Thus, "Jesus appears as the Master Teacher who reigns by wisdom over the whole realm of creation and redemption" (p. 76). Surprisingly, Jesus focuses "on the Kingdom of God rather than the covenants made with Israel” (p. 77). Robertson closes this chapter by analyzing the miraculous works of Jesus. In chapter five, the author deals with the progressive revelation of the kingdom of God in the gospels. First, Robertson establishes the framework stating that “the kingdom of God in the gospels must be defined by the person of Jesus as the Christ” (p. 94). The pinnacle of the revelation of the kingdom of God is seen at the crucifixion of Jesus when “on the cross the kingdom of God has come” (p. 126). Chapter six discusses the main events in Jesus' life: His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. Robertson rightly claims that “the focal purpose of his coming into this world was to die for his people—and to rise again” (p. 129). This section ends on the highest note, with the author stating that “the resurrection of Christ is an event as significant as the creation of the world” (p. 140). In chapter seven, the author focuses on the four gospels to uncover the distinctive witness of each of these accounts (p. 160). First, Robertson takes time to analyze the particularities of the synoptic gospels, emphasizing “their united witness” (p. 161). Secondly, the author analyzes each Evangelist's unique witness in a recommended chronological order of writing: Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John. The author sees Mark's gospel as "a profound testimony to the person and work of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God” (p. 195). Furthermore, Matthew is viewed as having a distinctive testimony constituted by "the employment of overlapping multiple structures that develop progressively across his gospel to their climax with the death and resurrection of Jesus" (pp. 218-219). Additionally, Robertson claims that "Luke stands out as being quite distinctive when compared with Matthew and Mark thus 664 verses are unique to Luke (p. 219). John's gospel is viewed by the

author as "the Gospel of Belief" (p. 257). The last chapter contains the main conclusions of this study.

There is no doubt that anyone, after reading *Christ of the Consummation* carefully, will conclude that Robertson argued his thesis successfully. Using logic, careful study, and being a wordsmith, the author traced the historical progressiveness of the revelation process across the apostolic period.

The book has many strengths despite the great ambition of this project. First, the author proves to be well-versed in Scripture, making the most appropriate connections to support his ideas. Second, Robertson has a special gift for knowing how to condense ideas and explanatory materials without diminishing the force of the argument that is being conveyed. Third, Robertson's stress on application, merged with his simplicity of communication and the gift of spinning a phrase, gives a peculiar character to his writing. Fourth, the author's writing has a devotional and sometimes a passionately evangelistic tendency, as he challenges the reader to respond accordingly to the gospel's calls and promises (pp. 138, 178, 218, 250, 262, etc.). Additionally, the bibliography offered at the end of the book is a tremendous help for anyone wanting to study this topic further. Lastly, the indexes of Scripture, subjects, and names at the end of the book are helpful for anyone wanting to read something specifically.

Christ of the Consummation should be present on any pastor's desk or the desks of students who aspire to be pastors one day. This book offers a crystal-clear window into the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. A complete picture of Christ can be obtained only by knowing and understanding the four gospels' accounts. I highly recommend *Christ of the Consummation* to anyone who is preaching or will preach on the person of Christ.

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Theology for Ministry: How Doctrine Affects Pastoral Life and Practice. **Edited by William R. Edwards, John C. A. Ferguson, and Chad Van Dixhoorn. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing Company, 2022. 644 pp. $30.49, Hardcover. ISBN 9781629956558.**

Sound, rich, and profound theology is essential for any pastor. The Lord directly connects the well-being of His people, knowledge, and the pastor's faithfulness. Thus, through Hosea, the Lord announces His judgment: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me" (4:6). Unfortunately, at a close study of the landscape of Christendom, will force us to conclude that God's accusation is a reality. At this critical point, *Theology for Ministry* comes into focus, helping us find the answer to this question: How can we address all the erroneous approaches to pastoral life and ministry?

Theology for Ministry was written "as a present for and tribute to Sinclair B. Ferguson" (p. xi) and comprises twenty-six chapters penned by well-respected pastor-theologians. Edited by three well-known pastor-theologians, the book "roughly follows the pattern found in the Westminster Confession of Faith and other Reformation and post-Reformation confessions" (p. xxv).

The purpose of *Theology for Ministry* is clearly articulated in the introduction: "This book aims to encourage a thriving ministry through examining the biblical-theological framework that must inform our ministry in a way that addresses both the pastor and his work" (p. xxii). Generally, ministers and churches are striving to find novel techniques for approaching pastoral ministry. *Theology for Ministry* aims "to recover the rich biblical-theological framework for ministry found in Scripture" (p. xxii).

The Scripture is the heart and the compass of a pastor's life and ministry, and it is discussed in chapter one. Wynne explores the grand theme of the Scripture under three headings, thus emphasizing its veracity. The author firmly believes that: "A pastor must feed his flock with the whole counsel of God" (p. 9). In another part, Letham addresses the Trinity. However, the author contends that "the eternal generation of the Son is about the most relevant topic one can have" (p. 26). Rightly, "The doctrine of God must be the bull's eye on the preacher's dart-board, the center of our thinking, living, and

preaching" (p. 32). Kelly deals next with the decrees of God, contending that "pastors must preach the truth of God's all-comprehensive plan" (p. 38). The following four chapters focus on God's purpose and providence regarding creation and the need for theological anthropology in the frame provided by covenant theology because "God is a covenant God" (p. 110). The following three chapters are built around the Son of God. Tipton analyzes the Person of Christ by exegeting Colossians 1 and bringing insightful quotes from Ridderbos. In his quest, the author is developing this topic, focusing on the Son as the "image of the invisible God," which is uniquely insightful (p. 134). The work of Christ is discussed next by Gibson, who argues that its goal is "the fellowship of perfection" (p. 150). However, to that end, "Christ can forgive and make righteous" (p. 168). Ryken explores the union with Christ in chapter ten. This "normative dogma of Reformed Christianity" is central to pastoral ministry (pp. 172, 173). This is the key concept that "every preacher needs to experience to be fully effective and maximally fruitful in ministry" (p. 185). Furthermore, Johnson discusses the Holy Spirit, the new creation power for God's redeemed people. The author contends that the pastor's service is "the ministry of the Spirit carried out in the presence and by the power of Christ's indwelling Spirit" (p. 202).

The following six chapters (12–17) deal with the doctrines of justification, adoption, sanctification, faith and repentance, perseverance, and assurance of faith. "In proclaiming the gospel, the faithful preacher seeks to be faithful to the word," and thus explain and apply these critical doctrines (p. 234). Each contributor maintains a solid commitment to biblical and confessional theology. In chapter eighteen, Ross discusses the sensitive topic of the Law of God. Next, Strain deals with another delicate topic, Christian liberty. The author rightly contends that the minister should "navigate these waters with care and compassion, but without compromise" (p. 368).

Five chapters (20–24) deal exclusively with the affairs of the church: worship, the Church, the communion of the saints, the sacraments, and missions. The theology behind the church's various aspects "must be learned from the Scriptures" (p. 385). Furthermore, Horton discusses the subject of eschatology in chapter twenty-five. The last chapter, written by Dixhoorn, honors Sinclair B. Ferguson by

considering him as a teacher, pastor, preacher, and author. Dixhoorn concludes magnificently: “When we look at Sinclair Ferguson as a man and minister,” we “see a servant of Christ who has helped us to see the Master” (p. 543).

There is no doubt that anyone, after reading *Theology for Ministry* carefully, will conclude that the thesis of the book was argued successfully. Accordingly, the book first explains a particular doctrine and then offers practical help for the minister in applying that doctrine in his pastoral life and ministry.

The book's strengths are many, considering its importance and the number of chapters discussed in its pages. First, the book is grounded in sound doctrine, rooted in the Bible, and the authors are savvy in using the Westminster Standards to enhance the weight of their arguments even more. Secondly, the section at the end of each chapter offers additional resources and discussion questions to stir and encourage even more practical applications for ministers. Third, the bibliography offered at the end of the book is of tremendous value for anyone interested in studying the person and ministry of Sinclair B. Ferguson. Also, the glossary of dedicated concepts with explanations at the end of the book is handy for any student of the Bible.

Theology for Ministry is beneficial for any pastor because it offers practical advice in most areas of pastoral life and practice. Therefore, this book should be on every pastor's desk for quick reference. I recommend this book enthusiastically to any seasoned or freshly ordained minister of the Word. This book will help any minister to honor Ferguson's legacy by continuing to help others "see the Master." That is the goal of any faithful minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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***Perspectives on the Historical Adam and Eve: Four Views*. Edited by Kenneth D. Keathley: B&H Academic, 2024. 230 pp. $24.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1087764900.**

Different views of the historicity of the Genesis account of creation, and the beginnings of humanity through the original couple Adam and Eve, has been developing for well over a decade in light of new scientific evidence, which places doubt on the Biblical account (p. 2). Keathley, therefore, compiles essays on this subject which span an array of evangelical beliefs from there being no likelihood that Adam and Eve ever existed to the insistence of Adam and Eve as not only having been created *de novo* by God but that the entirety of the Genesis account from creation to Babel is historically accurate and sound according to both the Scriptural text and a scientific perspective. In between these extreme bookends lie two views which may be placed somewhere in the middle-ground. The greatest contribution for the volume is in these middling beliefs, two new arguments discussing the historicity of Genesis 1-11 with specific attention given to whether Adam and Eve were the original parents of all humanity (p. 2). Keathley notes that the question of whether Adam and Eve were, in fact, historical figures may have implications over theology as a whole. This is because through these two figures sin entered into the world and if they are only literary or mythological figures, this may cause problems for the ontology of the theology of original sin (p. 13).

Kenton Sparks opens the book's essays with his view that Adam and Eve are not historical people who existed. Sparks, the only author of the four contributors to this volume who is a biblical theologian (p. 204) is also the only one who does not believe that Scripture is inerrant. This is largely his argument for excluding the notion that Genesis 1-11 should be reconciled at all with scientific evidence (p. 21). He points out other instances where the Bible should not be regarded as inerrant (pp. 22–25). Sparks then suggests that when Scripture faces challenges from modern scientific evidence, the science should take precedence over biblical accuracy or authority, stating, "The historicity of Genesis faces challenges from nearly every applicable discipline of modern scholarship" (p. 30). Sparks makes mention of earlier scientific theories which later proved to be false (p.

41). However, he does not seem to consider the possibility that the evidence and theories of today's scientific discoveries might in some way be incomplete. His essay seems to argue that if there is a prevalent theory of science and it goes against biblical teachings or calls into question a passage's historicity, one should be willing to discard that teaching as the truth in the Bible. On this point, he states, "Because my view of Scripture does not expect conformity of the Bible with science, I see no point in searching for solutions that make them conform. I much prefer to accept the Bible as the divine but very human book that it is, and the scientific evidence such as it seems to be" (p. 44).

William Lane Craig writes Chapter 2 on the Mytho-Historical Adam View. Craig argues for a more conservative view of the biblical account of Adam and Eve than does Sparks, but he is still willing to give up the historicity of Adam and Eve in favor of modern scientific theory (p. 77). Craig writes that these first few chapters of Genesis, 1–11, should be considered Israeli mythology of sorts and "need not to be read literalistically" (p. 77). Therefore, by shifting the argument to literary genre, Craig decides that science can be upheld, along with the inerrancy of Scripture, since the latter is only meant to serve as a story, as Sparks points out, much like the parables of Jesus which were not supposed to be taken literally, but as a story, through which to share truths (p. 91). Thus, the literary genre of myth is the key aspect of Craig's argument.

Andrew Loke then presents a budding theory on the historicity of Adam and Eve called the Genealogical Adam and Eve Model. The beginning of the argument determines which conflicts within the Bible, as it pertains to science, is true and which could be allowed in some way as possible (p. 107). Admittedly, the model is difficult to contain within the confines of a solid argument, something that Sparks admitted he struggled with and needed aid from others to grasp (p. 65), and is an almost fluid type of form of defense for the compatibility of the Genesis account in chapters 1-11 and modern scientific theories of the origins of man (p. 108). He, therefore, does not look to prove that the Bible or science are right or wrong, but merely to show how it may be possible that both are true at the same time. He writes that, "It is one thing to argue that the Bible is conveying modern science; it is another thing to argue that it could be

the case that the Bible is not inconsistent with modern science" (p. 115). Therefore, Loke jumps through hoops like a theological acrobat, discussing even what can be done with the mentally handicapped, and argues for a model that is broad and passive enough to pacify the masses (pp. 117–21). Loke ends his debate with soteriological fallacies by comparing the eternal destiny of human infants with perhaps early versions of humans who were not *Homo Sapiens* and who did not bear the image of God (pp. 130, 135). The biggest concern about the model that Loke presents is that it attempts to please everyone which, ironically, is what he asserts as its greatest strength. The good news is that the Genealogical Adam and Eve Model is in its infancy and is likely to grow more robust as these discussions continue and theologians are able to wrestle with the problems of the theory.

Marcus Ross is the proponent of the traditional view of the historicity of Adam and Eve with his essay on Young Earth Creationism (YEC; pp. 149–50). In stark contrast to the wishy-washy, willy-nilly approach of the Genealogical Adam and Eve Model, Ross begins and ends his essay with confidence and certainty (pp. 150-187). This is likely because the traditional view has been debated for a longer period than the newer theory. This can also be attributed to the fact that Ross is not only well-versed and trained in the traditional theological approach to Scripture, but also a paleontologist (p. 185). As such, Ross is the only author who admitted that the theories he presented, as well as scientific data, should be consulted in order to determine the truth of many matters of Biblical interpretation insofar as historical accuracy is concerned. He also is the only author who advocated for more scientific discovery to help determine the truths in the current discussion. He writes, "Improving and refining [the young-earth paradigm] will require creative thinkers from numerous disciplines who possess rigorous training and can bring new insights, discoveries, and skills to this effort. The more the merrier!" (p. 185).

One of the main reasons for the book was recent findings in scientific discovery which calls into question the historicity of Adam and Eve as has traditionally been defended (p. 201), as well as the new theories such as Craig's Mytho-hystorical approach and Loke's Genealogical Adam and Eve Model (p. 2). A benefit of the volume is the dialog between authors. After each section, the other authors give a

critique of each other's essay. Then the author of the original essay has a chance to defend their argument against the critiques. A common defense was simply that the others did not understand their perspective (pp. 63, 143). Interestingly, the authors' critiques of each other, as well as their defense of themselves, came from what they considered the most important part of their argument. For Sparks, this was that scripture is not inerrant. In his critiques, he continues to make this point. Craig, too, is locked onto the genre as the most important aspect. His essay, critiques, and defense of his position all point to this. Loke holds to the model and being able to make scripture compatible with science as the most important, while Ross looks to the traditional arguments for a plain reading of scripture as paramount to all else. It is in this, however, that the book contributes the most. In this vein, the afterword by S. Joshua Swamidass encourages readers to not consider their own view and oppose it against the rest; instead, determine what their second-best option is, given that their first view is hypothetically unavailable, and see where that road will take them (pp. 214–15).

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Illustrating Well: Preaching Sermons That Connect. **By Jim L. Wilson. Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2022. 197 pp. $19.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-68359-589-2.**

Illustrations enhance sermons. When used effectively, they assist the listener in understanding, applying, and experiencing the text (p. 1). Jim Wilson provides a thorough, yet easy-to-read guide for enabling the preacher to allow his sermon illustrations to shine, but more importantly, allow them to illuminate the biblical message that he proclaims. Wilson is the Director of the Doctor of Ministry program and the Distinguished Professor of Leadership Formation at Gateway Seminary in Ontario CA. His publications include *Impact Preaching*: *A Case for the One-Point Expository Sermon* (Lexham, 2018), and *Pastoral Ministry in the Real World* (Weaver, 2016). You can also find

his sermons and illustrations on Logos Bible Software and FreshMinistry.org. *Illustrating Well*'s aim is: 1) to find a consensus among preachers and homileticians about what makes an effective sermon illustration, and 2) to define eight types of sermon illustrations and determine the relative frequency with which preachers were using them (pp. 8–9). His goal for the preacher "is to moderate a conversation that enables you to arrive at conclusions about your own use of sermon illustrations" (p. 8).

The book consists of two sections and a brief but important conclusion. Section 1 (*Using Sermon Illustrations Effectively*) includes three chapters that answer the question, *What makes an effective sermon illustration?* Section 2 (*Using a Variety of Illustration Types Well*) comprises five chapters and will answer the question, *What are the eight types of sermon illustrations, and what constitutes a balanced varietal approach based on Wilson's research?* Although Section 2 (107 pages) is significantly lengthier, Section 1 (62 pages) contains the homiletical meat. Chapter 1 ("Four Metaphors for Sermon Illustrations") describes how sermon illustrations are *bridges*, *windows*, *lights*, and *pictures* and contribute cumulatively to the preacher's understanding of illustration function in a sermon (p. 17). An illustration as a bridge will build from the familiar to the unfamiliar, bridging understanding, culture, and worldview. As a window, it allows light in (insight) and a cool breeze (freshness to sermon dullness). As light, it illuminates or clarifies the truth. As a picture, the abstract becomes concrete, and it turns the ear into an eye.

While these metaphors convey potentially effective illustrations, the truth is that sometimes they are obstacles instead of aids. Chapter 2 ("Four Characteristics of Effective Sermon Illustrations") answers, *What makes sermon illustrations effective*? Wilson provides a Sermon Illustration Evaluation Rubric covering the four characteristics of whether they are *familiar*, *clear*, *interesting*, and *appropriate*. By *familiar* Wilson means familiar to the congregation, not just the preacher. It is a powerful vehicle when it is relatable to both. Whether an illustration is *clear* speaks to its efficacy, "If the illustrations are not clear because of extraneous or erroneous details, it will be impossible to clarify the text" (p. 45). The third characteristic is that it must be *interesting*, "The interest is only helpful if the illustration generates

interest in the message" (p. 50). The final trait of an effective illustration is its *appropriateness*. The preacher should make considerations for *secondary audiences* as well as *confidentiality and ethical concerns* (pp. 52–54).

Chapter 3 ("Illustration Location and Sermon Structure") will answer, *How do illustrations function in the parts of the sermon and various structures?* There are several legitimate uses for the illustration within a standard inductive sermon. Sermon introduction illustrations: 1) *establish a connection* between preacher and hearer, 2) *create interest* in the subject or text, and 3) *orient the listener* by providing essential background (pp. 57–64). Illustrations within the body of the sermon increase listening capacity, helping to make the unfamiliar more understandable and help to clarify the obscure (p. 65). Illustrations used in the sermon conclusion will drive home the final application of the sermon's main idea and call the listener to action, thereby "sermon illustrations can assist in promoting transformation" (p. 66). Illustrations will typically be employed less frequently in an inductive sermon because narrative literature tends to accomplish for itself what illustration accomplishes for the deductive sermon.

The last five chapters cover the eight types of illustrations: *personal*, *fresh*, *biblical*, *hypothetical*, *historical*, *classic*, *fictional*, and *object lessons*. While most of those surveyed favored *personal illustrations*, there is the danger of allowing too much light on the storyteller, especially if he is the hero (pp. 86–87). Wilson urges for a "middle ground" with all personal illustrations needing to be: 1) authentic, 2) ethical regarding friends and family, 3) proportionate, and 4) suitable (pp. 88–97). *Fresh illustrations* may require more developmental time for creation and their greatest challenge "is to make sure they do not overpower the text and are appropriate for the occasion" (p. 123).

The chapter on *biblical illustrations* was most enlightening. Unlike all other illustrations, biblical illustrations are authoritative when they: 1) are clear, 2) are appropriate, 3) ensure the point of the story mirrors the sermon's point, 4) are complete in detail, and 5) do not spiritualize the narrative events. Effective use will promote biblical literacy, exposing the congregation to the full counsel of the Word of God. Not surprisingly, Wilson uses John MacArthur as a champion of

the biblical illustration, but some may be surprised by opponents of the practice—Jay Adams and Donald Sunukjian. *Hypothetical illustrations* provide an indirect way to surface an issue, offer case studies to examine, and are inclusive. Nevertheless, they are not as moving as an actual story and may not be as credible, since they are not factual. *Historical illustrations* can add to historical literacy, especially church history where one can observe how people faithfully lived the Christian life. The least common illustrations employed are the *classic*, the *fictional*, and the *object lesson*. Classic illustrations may fail because of familiarity and a lack of clarity in the details. Fictional illustrations (preacher's stories) fail for the simple fact that they are not true. Wilson believes that the preacher should employ object lessons prudently and selectively.

Wilson's Conclusion ("Four Encouraging Words") strikes the final hammer blows for sermon illustrations. First, *Keep Illustrations in the Servant's Role* reminds the preacher that: 1) illustrations serve the sermon, 2) sermon illustrations serve the text, and 3) illustrations serve the listeners. Second, *Keep Your Audience in Mind* puts the onus on the preacher to understand the congregation he is preaching to and his context. He must also consider his secondary audience of those who listen via media. Third, *Remember the Secondary Purposes of Each Illustration Type* (the first five) which will aid in spiritual growth. Finally, *Remember That You Are Still Preaching*, "Just as the sermon as a whole must communicate the message to the people, so must all of its component parts. Preachers need to be as careful, prayerful, and intentional in selecting their sermon illustrations as they are with biblical exegesis" (p. 185). There are no concerns with this work at all. Wilson has done yeomen work shedding light on the function, effectiveness, and types of sermon illustration. This work is serviceable across the board: for the lay preacher, the seasoned preacher honing his homiletical tools, or any level of seminarian. This is not an illustration book, like so many others, full *of* illustrations alone—this may be the only book solely devoted to the usage, function, and effectiveness of illustrations and their varying types. This is a must-read for all preachers.

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1 Peter, A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching. **Kerux Commentaries. By Timothy E. Miller and Bryan Murawski. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Ministry, 2022. 296 pp. $23.28, Hardcover. ISBN 978-0-8254-5841-5.**

While it is tremendously important for a pastor to obtain and understand highly technical commentaries on Scripture, pastors more than scholars can benefit from commentaries with a more practical edge. The dual authored commentary under examination in this review seeks to aid pastors in bridging the gap between technical exegesis and preaching.

The first author, Timothy E. Miller, earned a Ph.D. from Westminster Theological Seminary in historical theology for his dissertation titled, "The Theological Method of John Frame and Vern Polythress: Examining the Trinitarian Roots of Perspectivalism." In 2018, Miller earned a second Ph.D. from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary for his dissertation titled, "Echoes of Jesus in the First Epistle of Peter." His first dissertation was modified for publication and the commentary under review appears to be an outgrowth of his work at Midwestern. Miller taught at Maranatha Baptist University for four years and currently holds the role of Assistant Professor of New Testament at Dallas Baptist Theological Seminary. He served as the exegetical author of this commentary.

The second author is Brian Murawski who holds a Ph.D. in Old Testament from Westminster Theological Seminary. After serving as a pastor for 15 years, he has taken the role of associate professor in the Divinity School at Cairn University. He published *Preaching Difficult Texts of the Old Testament* in 2021, has received several awards, and manages the website www.preachdifficulttexts.com.

This commentary on 1 Peter resides within the Kerux Commentary Series. The series has set out specifically to aid pastors in helping their congregations understand and apply the texts they are preaching. The book begins with a separation of passages into sections reasonable in size to cover in a sermon. The authors offer concise statements on the main "exegetical idea" and "theological focus" of each passage along with a "preaching idea" and some pointers for preaching. These first four emphases appear again at the beginning of each section when the authors begin commenting on the text. Following this overview of

passages, the authors provide a section with introductory material to first Peter covering some of the most prominent arguments concerning authorship and recipients, location and date, historical background information, occasion for writing, theological emphases, and sources of the epistle. After breaking the text of 1 Peter into major sections with summary statements, the commentary moves through the text verse by verse, helped along by sections on structure and theological foci. Unique to the commentary is the final section of each passage, "preaching and teaching strategies." This final section synthesizes the material, offers a preaching idea, makes contemporary connections by asking three questions, and considers how a preacher can creatively present the text of the sermon.

There are several commendable aspects of this commentary. First, in the "introduction" material, the authors include tables with the probable sources Peter used to construct his epistle (pp. 41–44). These charts helpfully highlight and categorize Old Testament references and references to Jesus' words in a way other commentators have forgone. Second, the "literary structure and themes" sections that begin each chapter provide concise overviews that help one see the major movements of the epistle. Following the structure and themes, the exposition excels in treating the epistle carefully and addressing major interpretive differences. Areas that shine particularly well here are the authors' treatments of difficult words, visually showing the grammar in several instances, and serious interaction with the New Testament use of the Old Testament. For instance, on page 73, the authors offer a small excursus on the phrase "Spirit of Christ" in the New Testament, simply listing the passages so the reader can see the way the phrase is used. An example of visual grammar can be found on page 125 where a graphic displays the sentence structure of 1 Peter 2:9, helping a reader to see clearly that the various phrases used to describe the people of God are given so that they might declare the praises of God. Additionally, the authors deal frequently with the way Peter uses the Old Testament, deciphering whether he is using the LXX or the Hebrew Bible to explain some new point that is true because of Christ's work (e.g., see pp. 48 or 164). Side by side interpretations from other commentators are offered on difficult passages, such as 1 Peter 3:18–22, where the authors present the various interpretations with explanations and

conclusions on each one (p. 215). Finally, the preaching sections succeed at making serious connections to the real experience a pastor preaching the epistle of 1 Peter would have in the modern world by dealing with identity issues, authority, and social media (pp. 147, 197).

Unfortunately, what the commentary does not do in the exposition section is treat those perspectives outside of the baptistic evangelical tradition. For instance, as the authors are working through 1 Pet 1:1, no Roman Catholic view of Peter is mentioned, nor is the Charismatic understanding of the role of an apostle treated (p. 47). The diverse contexts that local church pastors experience will inevitably have interactions with these traditions and their arguments somewhat frequently. In addition, while the authors do present material for preachers to make bold statements concerning the raw truths of Scripture, sometimes the creativity in preaching sections seems foreign to the tradition within which the authors appear to be writing. Preaching is a serious endeavor and should be handled with care, but suggesting the preacher should embed short dramas within the sermon to illustrate the prophetic office, fill his pulpit with poorly watered plants to illustrate decaying flesh, or wear extra clothes and remove them to demonstrate the way believers are meant to "put off" sin come off as gimmicky next to the serious exegesis (pp. 78, 103, 111). Pastors may find these examples distracting and silly if they have strong convictions about the intensity and reverence towards God the preached Word ought to emulate.

Shortcomings aside, this commentary will prove tremendously helpful for local church pastors. The work is highly practical compared to other commentaries that are academic and technical. Preachers will find a clear exposition of the text that presents a thorough yet concise explanation of 1 Pet. I recommend preachers pick up this commentary if they are preaching through the epistle of 1 Pet, for they will be aided greatly by Miller and Murawski's work.

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PhD Graduates (2024)
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

PhD Graduates (2024) from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, with their PhD emphases, dissertation title and supervisory committee members.

Dec 2024—PhD Graduates

Connor A. Alford, PhD-BS (Biblical Ministry)
"We Should Not Only Have Faith, But Act It": Thomas Manton's Centrality of Sola Fide in His Works and Preaching
Dr. Jared Bumpers and Dr. Brian Albert

Chee Ping Au, PhD-BS (Missiology)
The Rise of Women Pastors in China's Unregistered Churches
Dr. Robin Hadaway and Dr. Thor Madsen

Daniel Brueske, TRPhD-BS (New Testament)
The Discourse Function of Verbal Aspect in Mark's Gospel: An Analysis of Narrative and Non-Narrative Material
Dr. John Lee and Dr. Todd Chipman

James W. Campbell, PhD-BS (Old Testament)
Did Zechariah in Fact Use Joshua? An Intertextual, Rhetorical, and Theological Analysis of Zechariah 8:9–13, 9:1–8, and 10:6–12
Dr. Steve Andrews and Dr. Rusty Osborne

William B. Collins, PhD-BS (Biblical Theology)
Make Every Effort: A Petrine Approach to Spiritual Formation
Dr. Eric Turner and Dr. Kyle Quinn

Kyle J. Ferguson, PhD-BS (Old Testament)
Honor and Dishonor in 1 and 2 Samuel
Dr. Trey Bechtold and Dr. Blake Hearson

J. Seward Gelatt, PhD-BS (Biblical Theology)
Isaiah's Justice in Matthew's Messiah: An Intertextual Reading
Dr. Blake Hearson and Dr. David Turner

Donald Ray Hargrove, PhD-BS (Ethics)
The Pernicious Problem of Acculturated Christianity: Examination of Glen Stassen's Sermon on the Mount as a Viable Solution
Dr. Jason Alligood and Dr. Brett Akright

Randall M. Johnson, PhD-BS (Preaching)
Establishing Biblical Parameters for Calling Sinners to Respond to The Gospel
Dr. Stephen Rummage and Dr. Rick Holland

Carissa Jones, PhD-BS (Historical Theology)
Living Words, Living World: The Inklings and Enchanted Language
Dr. Jason Duesing and Dr. Paul Gould

Tom Kelby, PhD-BS (Biblical Theology)
Christ's Prayers and the Saints' Songs: The Eschatological King and His People in Book One of the Psalter
Dr. Jason DeRouchie and Dr. David Howard

C.J. Moore, TRPhD-BS (Missiology)
The Art of Plodding: William Carey's Response to Fruitless Labor as a Corrective Model for Missionaries Today
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