Canadian-American Theological Review

Contents

CANADIAN-AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

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Contents

Foreword

This issue of *Canadian-American Theological Review* includes articles that explore questions of significant import for both the contemporary church and world at large, textual issues that challenge our reading of the Bible, and also the various forms of contemporary Reformed Theology. Spalione examines the ethics and biblical worldview informing the matter of immigration in the United States. Explicating the relationship of love and marriage, Hartin interacts with the views of Augustine vis-à-vis a fresh reading of Scripture. Understanding the complexity of positions held within the broad category of Reformed Theology is a daunting task. In this light, Hübner presents an exhaustive, systematic exposition of the many Reformed groups within contemporary Christianity. Mehlman and Hunt delve into Paul's understanding of identity and diversity within the Christ movement, and how this may shape Christian views of mission and church formation. Rounding out this issue of *CATR*, Janzen and Lemcio provide fascinating textual analyses of Psalm 1 and the genealogy in the Gospel of Luke, respectively.

Christopher Zoccali,
Editor-in-Chief

People, Power, and Place: Ecclesiology and the Ethics of Land

Michael Spalione
University of Aberdeen

Abstract

This essay attends to the Christian ethics of land in light of the pilgrim identity of the people of God. A survey of some of the most pressing concerns of social ethics such as the Syrian refugee crisis, America's treatment of migrants, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and ecological crises demonstrates that land is a focal point of power accompanied by numerous moral issues. The essay examines the ethics of place through the lens of ecclesiology by attending to the apostolic vision of the church as a new exodus assembly of sojourners and addressing the effects of that vision on the ethics of land.

Introduction

All of life is spatial.[1] Human existence does not occur in a vacuum; rather, it is rooted in place. Place offers a sense of traditioned unity and continuity with previous generations. It also divides societies, forming insiders and outsiders, aristocrats and scapegoats. Furthermore, humans exert sovereignty upon land itself—the flora and fauna of nature—so that *terra firma* is a source of not only vitality and survival but also wealth and capital. As Gerald O'Hara tells his daughter in the iconic American film *Gone with the Wind*, "land is the only thing in the world worth workin' for, worth fightin' for, worth dyin' for, because it's the only thing that lasts."[2]

A brief survey of some of the most pressing concerns of social ethics today—the Syrian refugee crisis, the United States' treatment of migrants, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, loss of biodiversity, the environmental impact of war, and global hunger—demonstrates that the way people entwine power with place requires sustained reflection on the theopolitical significance of land. Multiple theological

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1   I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers for the journal whose thoughtful comments helped me sharpen the argument of this essay considerably.

2   *Gone with the Wind*, film, directed by Victor Fleming (United States: Warner Brothers, 1939).

avenues are available to the Christian ethicist in order to reflect on the moral importance of human interaction with creation. Dogmatically, one could begin with first article theology, the Father as the "Maker of heaven and earth"; or with Jesus Christ, the second article of the creed "by whom all things were made"; or with the third article, "the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life."[3] Thematically, one could attend to various concepts such as *shalom*, *imago dei*, or reconciliation. With regard to methodology, one may proceed exegetically, examining key biblical texts such as Gen 1–2, or historically, highlighting useful figures such as Francis of Assisi.

This essay will offer a constructive proposal for addressing the moral significance of human interaction with land by taking its point of departure with the fourth article of the Nicene Creed—"[We believe] in one holy catholic and apostolic Church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come." Thematically, the pilgrim identity of the people of God is emphasized, and methodologically, I highlight the hermeneutical importance of the Noahic and Abrahamic covenants found within the scriptures in order to yield an ecclesiological self-understanding. Finally, I point to how this study is suggestive for ecological and social ethics regarding human interaction with place.

Israel, Church, and World

In taking our dogmatic starting point with ecclesiology, we are immediately met with a problem—what in the world is the church? As Avery Dulles has shown, visions of the church have abounded throughout the two thousand years of its existence.[4] Furthermore, while the notion of the church as the pilgrim people of God has gained prominence in ecclesiology since Vatican II's influential document *Lumen Gentium*,[5] for all intents and purposes, pilgrimage appears to be simply one metaphor among many that says something about what the church is *like* rather than naming a defining mark of the church.[6] My contention, and the thesis of this essay, is that pilgrimage defines the church's life in the world, which in turn clarifies the Christian ecological and social ethics of land.

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3   Karl Barth gestured towards this way of dividing dogmatics in his essay "Nachwort, or Concluding Unscientific Postscript on Schleiermacher," in *The Theology of Schleiermacher: Lectures at Göttingen*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1982), 278.

4   For an overview of metaphors for the church, see Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, expanded ed. (New York: Image, 2002).

5   For example, see Joseph Ratzinger's evaluation and explication of the concept of the church as a pilgrim people in *Church, Ecumenism, and Politics: New Endeavors in Ecclesiology* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2008), 13–35.

6   A welcome exception to this pattern is George Lindbeck's sketch of an Israel-like ecclesiology, "The Church," in *The Church in a Postliberal Age*, ed. James Buckley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 145–68.

Supersessionism: A False Foundation

If pilgrimage truly names something essential about the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, what ideology threatens such an understanding of the church as the sojourning people of God? I will argue that supersessionism names such an ideology. Supersessionism is the notion that the church has replaced Israel in God's heart and purposes for the world. However, throughout its long existence, supersessionism has not taken just one form. R. Kendall Soulen offers a typology of two different models of supersessionism—standard and structural—saying,

> [The standard model designates an] explicit doctrinal perspective, i.e., that carnal Israel's history is providentially ordered from the outset to be taken up into the spiritual church (economic supersessionism), and that God has rejected carnal Israel on account of its failure to join the church (punitive supersessionism). Structural supersessionism, in contrast, refers not to an explicit doctrinal perspective but rather to a formal feature of the standard canonical narrative as a whole. Structural supersessionism refers to the narrative logic of the standard model whereby it renders the Hebrew Scriptures largely indecisive for shaping Christian convictions about how God's works as Consummator and Redeemer engage humankind in universal and enduring ways.[7]

To these two forms of supersessionism Scott Bader-Saye identifies a third: national supersessionism. Noting the rise of political liberalism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with figures such as Thomas Hobbes and Baruch Spinoza, Bader-Saye demonstrates the deep logic of supersessionism in the formation of the modern nation-state, "which took over the language of covenant and election."[8] Out of the rubble of the Holy Roman Empire, supersessionism split

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7   R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 181 n 6. Punitive supersessionism is significantly less common in the context of contemporary Christian theology than economic supersessionism. For an example of economic supersessionism without a punitive dimension, see Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. III.2 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 584. Alternatively, Soulen argues that the structural model is fundamentally a way of reading the Hebrew Bible as mere background to the New Testament so that "God's way with Israel necessarily receives a *qualitatively* small amount of exegetical and theological attention" (32). See also Brent Strawn, *The Old Testament Is Dying: A Diagnosis and Recommended Treatment* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).

8   Scott Bader-Saye, *Church and Israel After Christendom: The Politics of Election* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 60. Recently, Yoram Hazony has contested this kind of critique of nationalism in *The Virtue of Nationalism* (New York: Basic, 2018). However, there are numerous and fundamental flaws in Hazony's work. Two examples will suffice. The first is that he seeks to distinguish nationalism from imperialism. While presenting his commendation of nationalism as pragmatic and empirical, he treats imperialism as an accidental and irregular occurrence that does not share an organic connection to nationalism. His commendation of nationalism is thus constructed on a distinction without meaningful difference. Secondly, while anchoring his endorsement of nationalism on his earlier work *The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), he fails to draw any connection between the Hebrew Bible's

politics and religion in liberalism so that the state superseded Israel politically and the church was understood to have superseded it religiously.[9] Such a vision saw Israel as abandoned by God due to disobedience, and now their political covenant may be "taken over *not by the church* but by another sovereign nation."[10]

Such a conception of the politics of covenant construes the church as an apolitical entity so that the church serves what is understood to be the truly political: the state. With Ernst Troeltsch and Max Weber, one may differentiate between a church and a sect and decorate them with a variety of different flairs and fashions—conservative or liberal, upper or lower class, voluntary or cultural, quietist or activist, egocentric or esoteric—but however national supersessionism may dress the church, a church uprooted from the politics of the covenant exists in service not of the world but of its own native nation.[11] Moreover, national supersessionism depoliticizes Christ so that faith in Christ is seen as a private matter separable from the politics of the public square.[12] Bader-Saye notes this "became a way of claiming divine sanction for, and thus legitimizing, the oppression and domination of others" so that "by the early twentieth century, many Western nations exhibited this unstable alliance of biblical election, racial superiority, and empire building."[13]

Thus, supersessionism names the ideology that threatens an understanding of the church as the sojourning people of God. It does so by offering an alternative to water baptism's incorporation into pilgrimage. Instead, supersessionism, particularly of the national variety, naturalizes fidelity to Jesus as Lord into baptism of soil wherein Christ's sovereignty is subordinated by the competing claims of allegiance to one's nation. As such, despite the rise in "pilgrim" language in

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persistent warning against idolatry and the possibility that allegiance to one's nation may be precisely that—idolatry.

9   Here "liberalism" is not about left- and right-wing politics or a theological spectrum; rather, it is the philosophy that lies at the core of the modern nation-state in which the establishment and protection of individual liberties (from the Latin *liber*) is the central concern of law and society.

10   Bader-Saye, *Church and Israel After Christendom*, 60, italics mine.

11   Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. Olive Wyon, 2 vols. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931), esp. vol. 1, 331–81 and vol. 2, 993–1013. Troeltsch's distinction between a church and sect was based on Max Weber's work in *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Stephen Kalberg, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). For an elaboration on Troeltsch's and Weber's typology, see David Moberg, *The Church as a Social Institution: The Sociology of American Religion*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1984).

12   He ties this impulse back to Spinoza and Hobbes. For Spinoza, Jesus is a teacher of universal and spiritual morals, and for Hobbes, Jesus's kingdom is not of this world, which meant for Hobbes that it is not in this world and will not be until the final resurrection. Bader-Saye, *Church and Israel After Christendom*, 60–65.

13   Bader-Saye, *Church and Israel After Christendom*, 64–65. On the racist heritage of supersessionism, see Willie Jennings and J. Kameron Carter who lay the guilt of modern racial practice and discourse at the door of supersessionism. Willie Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

modern ecclesiologies, the baptism of soil often proves to be thicker than the baptism of water.

Supersessionism has dominated ecclesiology in one form or another for nearly the whole of the church's history, yet there are flaws in its logic. Not only does it fail to account for the obvious: "Jesus was a Jew, the apostles were Jews, the New Testament is a patently Jewish book, and the early messianic congregation saw the unity of Jew and Gentile within its halls as the paramount sign of God's having reconciled the world to himself (Ephesians 2:11–22)"[14]; it also cannot adequately account for Israel as those for whom the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable (Rom 11:29);[15] nor can supersessionism properly name the sojourning nature of the church. Thus, in order to understand the centrality of pilgrimage for the church, we will now turn to a more-firm foundation—covenant.

Covenant: A Firm Foundation

In discerning the significance of ecclesiology for Christian ecological and social ethics of land, I will argue that the Noahic and the Abrahamic covenants can hold that weight.[16] Covenants establish relationships of authority. Regardless of whether the covenant type is suzerainty (in which the vassal swears fealty to the suzerain), parity (in which both parties swear mutual allegiance), or grant (in which the suzerain swears faithfulness to the vassal), every covenant institutionalizes social responsibilities and devotion, legitimizes power, and recognizes a region of sovereignty.[17]

Covenant, creation, and enthronement (Gen 1:1–2:3). Insofar as we see authority being established in the creation account of Genesis, we can argue that there is at least some version of a proto-covenant or covenant-like relationship being founded there.[18] For our purposes, what is significant to note is that God's

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14 Mark Kinzer, *Israel's Messiah and the People of God: A Vision for Messianic Jewish Covenant Fidelity*, ed. Jennifer Rosner (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 11.

15 Literally "unrepentable" (ἀμεταμέλητα).

16 I will interact with the historical claims of Christian scripture—particularly for my purposes in the significance of the covenants—as substantially grounded in history, which means that something happened. There was a historical event. However, the details and extent of those events are not the concern of the scriptures because Scripture is interpreting those events, not dictating them. For instance, I am not concerned with whether the flood event was global or local. However, that there was a real event which lies behind the Scripture's interpretation, and that the event recorded in Scripture is not mere myth is important. This is because unlike the God of Deism, the triune God is concerned with and interactive within time. This approach has, not without serious debate, been named the redemptive historical approach to Scripture. On the nature and history of the debate, see Yung Hoon Hyun, *Redemptive-Historical Hermeneutics and Homiletics: Debates in Holland, America, and Korea from 1930 to 2012* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012).

17 By synthesizing the earlier and later work of George Mendenhall, Hal Harless comes to the conclusion that there are three kinds of covenant: suzerainty, parity, and grant. See *How Firm a Foundation: The Dispensations in the Light of the Divine Covenants* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 12–13.

18 Whether creation is in fact a covenant is a point of scholarly debate. Compare the oft-cited essays

authority as the great king is being established in the formation of three realms in the first set of three days of creation (days 1–3): the heavens, sea, and land. In the second set of three days (days 4–6), God sets up pairs of rulers over each respective realm: the sun and moon, sea serpents and winged birds, and the male and female image of God.[19] Lastly, on the seventh day of creation God is enthroned and rests as the great king or suzerain over the three vassal kingdoms comprised of the three realms of the heavens, sea, and land and their respective pairs of rulers.[20]

Covenant, Eden, and election (Gen 2:4–4:26). While the first creation account (Gen 1:1–2:3) portrays God's universal reign over all creation and the establishment of his authority over the three kingdoms of creation, the second account (Gen 2:4–4:26) depicts God's interaction with the elect kingdom.[21] For our purposes, it is significant to note that God gives a desirable and defined land, a place, to a man and woman.[22] Furthermore, God gives them a commandment to keep. Lastly, breaking the commandment does not erase their relationship to God, who continues to be their God and that of their descendants. Even after Cain kills his brother, God does not abandon him. As with Adam and Eve, God's judgment on Cain is exile (Gen 4:12), but in mercy God puts a sign on him. Though it is difficult to determine what the sign of Cain is, a reading of the text that attends to Gen 2:4–4:26 within the logic of covenants of grant would identify the sign as the city that Cain goes on to build and that his son inherits after him.[23]

Noah and the birth of nations. The Edenic narrative is significant when interpreting the Noahic covenant. Noah is portrayed as a second Adam who like Adam walks with God (Gen 3:8; 6:9) and receives a commandment from God

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by John Stek, "Covenant Overload in Reformed Theology," *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994): 12–41; and Craig Bartholomew, "Covenant and Creation: Covenant Overload or Covenantal Deconstruction," *Calvin Theological Journal* 30 (1995): 11–33.

19 This way of reading Genesis 1 is often called the framework hypothesis. See Bruce Waltke and Cathi Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 55–78.

20 On the seventh day of creation as God's enthronement, see Moshe Weinfeld, "Sabbath, Temple and the Enthronement of the Lord: The Problem of the *Sitz im Laben* of Genesis 1:1—2:3," in *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l'honneur de M. Henri Cazelles*, ed. Henri Cazelles et al. (Kevelaer, Germany: Butzon & Bercker, 1981), 501–12.

21 Genesis is internally organized into ten units with genealogies (תולדה) functioning as section headings. Genesis 2:4—4:26 is one of these sections, falling between the תולדה in 2:4 and the one in 5:1. See Matthew A. Thomas, *These are the Generations: Identity, Covenant, and the* toledot *Formula* (London: T&T Clark, 2011).

22 On the kingship imagery in Genesis 2, see Walter Brueggemann, "From Dust to Kingship," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 84 (1972): 1–18.

23 On the mark of Cain as a city, see Oliver O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment: The Bampton Lectures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 66. See also John Sailhamer, who argues that Cain's city is a city of refuge, in *Genesis–Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 102–103. The inheritability of royal land grants may be seen in the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants—the other two royal grant covenants in the Hebrew Bible. The covenant benefits are promised not just to Abraham and David but also to their descendants. Other examples of grant covenants in the ancient Near East may be found in Gary Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts* (Grand Rapids: Scholars, 1996), 30–32.

(Gen 2:16; 6:22). Like Eden, the ark is a space surrounded by water (2:10–14; 7:6–24) and filled with animals and food (Gen 2:16–20; 6:14–21).[24] Both Noah and Adam are farmers (2:15; 9:20), and both were naked and ashamed when they took and consumed fruit (Gen 3:7; 9:20–21). However, when we come directly to the covenantal formula in the Noahic narrative, we find significant overlap with the creation account of Gen 1:1–2:3. As with the three kingdoms of creation, God's authority is established with Noah and his three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Furthermore, God's creational blessing and commission are reiterated with Noah, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen 1:28; 9:1).[25] The image of God language from Gen 1:27 is repeated for the last time in the Hebrew Bible in Gen 9:6.[26] Lastly, the meaning of Noah's very name—"rest"—calls to mind God's enthronement on the seventh day of creation.

This is significant because just as the first creation account tells the story of the founding of God's reign over the three realms and rulers of creation (Gen 1:1–2:4), so in the Noahic covenant (Gen 9:1–17) God establishes his authority not only with Noah but also with Noah's three sons (Gen 9:8–9) as well as the kingdoms that proceed from them (Gen 10). Most significant for our purposes is that the Noahic covenant is an "everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth" (Gen 9:16) and that the covenant functions in Scripture as a redemptive-historical marker of God's authority over the nations, which is seen in the following passage (Gen 10)—the genealogy of the kingdoms that proceed from Noah's three sons.[27]

Abraham and the holy nation. As Hannah Arendt argues, authority may only be recognized fully when it is called into question.[28] Human violence disputed God's authority, and God destroyed the life he had authored. However, as the tower of Babel narrative shows, God's authority continues to be contested by the nations (Gen 11:1–9). This crisis of authority occasions God's election of Abraham, as Walter Brueggemann argues: "The call of Israel is juxtaposed to the crisis of the world, a crisis that arises because the nations have not accepted their role in a

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24 On the temple imagery of both Eden and the ark, see S. W. Holloway, "What Ship Goes There: The Flood Narratives in the Gilgamesh Epic and Genesis Considered in Light of Ancient Near Eastern Temple Ideology," in *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 103 (1991): 328–54.

25 William Dumbrell explores the connection between the Noahic covenant and creation. See *Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Covenant Theology* (London: Paternoster, 2013), 1–19.

26 On the significance of the *imago dei* in creation and in the Noahide narrative, see J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 185–233.

27 See Jeremiah Unterman's excellent comparison of the Genesis flood account with other ancient Near Eastern flood stories in which he notes significant ideological and ethical differences: *Justice for All: How the Jewish Bible Revolutionized Ethics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 9–14.

28 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 199–207.

world where Yahweh is sovereign. . . . Israel's life is for the well-being of the world."[29]

Like the first creation account of Gen 1:1–2:3, which tells of God's cosmic rule, the Noahic covenant is universal in scope since it was made with the whole earth and every nation of the earth. Within this diverse and worldwide setting, God elects a single man and makes a promise to him:

> Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (Gen 12:1–3)

Michael Wyschogrod notes that "it is not Abraham who moves towards God but God who turns to Abraham with an election that is not explained because it is an act of love that requires no explanation."[30] Moreover, in making this covenant promise to this one man, a whole series of covenants proceeded forth from it. Thus, while we can differentiate the Sinai covenant (Exod 19–24) from the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7; 1 Chr 17:11–14; 2 Chr 6:16) and the Levitical covenant (Num 25:13; cf. Neh 13:29; Mal 2:1–9) from what I will refer to as the Deuteronomic covenant (Deut 29:1ff; 30:6; 32:43; Jer 31:31–33; Ezek 37:26),[31] we cannot and must not separate these covenants from God's covenant with Abraham, for it is the source without which all further covenants are rendered meaningless.

Deuteronomic assembly. In his *Theology of Liberation*, Gustavo Gutiérrez rightly argues that God's deliverance of the children of Israel culminates in the Sinai covenant as a recapitulation of creation through salvation.[32] Indeed, the sign of the covenant is nothing other than the Sabbath. In keeping the Sabbath day holy Israel acknowledges God's enthronement over the whole of creation. Thus, Israel is a sign set up in the midst of the nations who dispute God's reign and "a people who dwell alone, not counted among the nations" (Num 23:9) to show that YHWH alone is Lord.

Here in the exodus sojourning we meet the church, or as Stephen called it, "the assembly in the wilderness" (τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ) (Acts 7:38). In the

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29 Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 431–32.

30 Michael Wyschogrod, *The Body of Faith: Judaism as Corporeal Election* (New York: Seabury Press, 1983), 64.

31 I use the title "Deuteronomic covenant" rather than "new covenant" in order to intentionally combat the apocalyptic idealization in new covenant terminology in which something "new" invades and replaces what is now "old."

32 Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. and ed. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson, rev. ed. (New York: Orbis, 1988), 83–104.

Septuagint's translation of the Hebrew Bible (LXX), ἐκκλησία is almost always used to translate קהל and refers to an assembled group.[33] The majority of the occurrences of ἐκκλησία in the LXX are clustered in Deuteronomy. As a Deuteronomic nomenclature, ἐκκλησία carries two notions: first is the strong language of pilgrimage and the anticipation of a land; next is the pervasive concept of renewal, a second giving of the law after Mt. Sinai on the plains of Moab (Deut 5:2; 29:1).[34]

Furthermore, the expectation of the Deuteronomic covenant—in which Israel is renewed after all the blessings *and* curses promised in the Sinai covenant have been enjoyed and enacted (Deut 29:27; 30:1)—will be accompanied with pilgrimage akin to the sojourning of the exodus from Egypt (Deut 29:28; 30:15). Isaiah anticipates this new exodus as one in which Israel and the nations will both participate (Isa 2:2–4; 25:6–10; 40:3–5; 55:12–13; cf. Mic 4:1–4; Zech 8:20–23). And the Christ-event is portrayed as that new exodus in which Jews as Jews and Gentiles as Gentiles are made co-members of "the commonwealth of Israel" (Eph 2:12),[35] united by their allegiance to Jesus as King and their shared reception of the Spirit.[36]

By choosing ἐκκλησία as their self-designation, first century Christ-followers were actively naming themselves as the people of this Deuteronomic covenant and thus new exodus sojourners, strangers, and exiles awaiting a land. These observations lead to my definition of the church: *the church is an exodus people sojourning towards the land of their inheritance*. Therefore, pilgrimage is *not* another of many metaphors to be applied to the church. Pilgrimage is a *defining* mark of the church, without which she cannot be understood.[37]

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33 K. L. Schmidt argues that in almost every case of ἐκκλησία in the LXX, "the context makes it plain that the ἐκκλησία is the community of God. In any case, the addition του Θεού is either explicit or implicit." "ἐκκλησία," in Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. G. W. Bromiley, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 527.

34 These two themes, pilgrimage and renewal, are seen in the other LXX books where ἐκκλησία is heavily used: Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1 and 2 Chronicles. Ezra and Nehemiah tell the story of Israel's return from exile to her land of inheritance while 1 and 2 Chronicles, like Deuteronomy, are renewal books as second reiterations of Israel's history following 1 and 2 Kings with different points of emphasis.

35 For various examinations of the new exodus theme in the New Testament, see Rikki Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001); David Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016); Carla Swafford Works, *The Church in the Wilderness: Paul's Use of Exodus Traditions in 1 Corinthians* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

36 On the kingship of Jesus, see Joshua Jipp, *Christ Is King: Paul's Royal Ideology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 43–76. On the shared participation in the Spirit as the source of unity, see Julien Smith, *Christ the Ideal King: Cultural Context, Rhetorical Strategy, and the Power of Divine Monarchy in Ephesians* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 226–33.

37 A notable exception to the all too common neglect of the exodus for understanding the church may be found in the work of Gerhard Lohfink who argues, "Ultimately, *ekklésia* points to the people of God gathered at Sinai." *Does God Need the Church?: Toward a Theology of the People of God*, trans. Linda M. Maroney (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1999), 219.

Summary

This section has sought to demonstrate two points: first, I have argued that supersessionism is a rotten foundation upon which a theology of the fourth article may not be built; second, I have briefly sketched an alternative proposal founded on covenant that can hold the weight of the church and demonstrate the centrality of pilgrimage as a defining mark of this exodus assembly. This results in the following conclusion: under the Noahic covenant, the nations have been given a land to steward as tenants, but in the Deuteronomic covenant the Jews and Gentiles that comprise the assembly of the church possess no land, only the promise of a place to be inherited. In what follows, I will examine the potency of this ecclesial vision for clarifying the interconnection of people, power, and place before examining the ecological and social ethics of human interaction with land.

People, Power, And Place

Politics is a complex and nuanced topic with numerous moving parts; however, three elements are constant: a human community governed by a régime, the ability to enforce obedience and punish defiance, and a differentiated space wherein culture and tradition may flourish—people, power, and place.[38]

People: Baptizing Them in the Name

God is the covenant Lord whose authority all the nations including Israel are under. The Noahic covenant provides a redemptive historical account of God's authority over the nations. What we discover in the Abrahamic covenant is God's election of a people. Furthermore, attention to the oneness of the covenants that proceed from Abraham yields an understanding of the Deuteronomic covenant: it is simultaneously a covenant of renewal with the members of the Abrahamic covenant and one of novelty with the members of the Noahic covenant, such that the two—Jews and Gentiles—are united in one Lord, one faith, and one baptism (Eph 4:5). This unifying baptism does not annihilate Jewish and Gentile ethnicities to form a "third race" of humanity.[39] Rather, as Caroline Johnson Hodge argues,

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38 Oliver O'Donovan examines a version of these three themes with slightly different emphases in his Bampton Lectures; however, he names them salvation, possession, and judgment. See *The Ways of Judgment*.

39 This "third race" view, common in Christian writings prior to the legalization of Christianity in the Roman Empire through the Edict of Milan (313 CE), was one in which identity as a Christian was understood to make one a separate—third—*ethnos* from Jews or Romans. See Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). Endre von Ivánka traces the way in which, after the Edict of Milan, Eusebius of Caesarea understood the Roman Empire to be part of God's saving plan for the world. He thus collapsed being Christian with being Roman and construed Christians as a third people into which the other two—Jews and Gentiles—are dissolved. See Endre von Ivánka, *Rhomäerreich und Gottesvolk* (Freiburg, Germany: Alber, 1968), 51–57.

Paul gives baptism ritual significance to create kinship bonds which "rely upon the logic of 'shared blood,' even as they serve as alternatives to 'blood' relationships."[40]

Furthermore, trinitarian baptism understands Jesus as the one on whom "all authority in heaven and on earth" has been bestowed (Matt 28:28) and is thus baptism into a life of obedience to Christ,[41] the living law of his people.[42] Therefore, this ἐκκλησία is a political society consisting of a *people* under the *power* of Christ.[43] However, in contrast to other political societies, this people of the Deuteronomic covenant are a society without a possessed *place*.

Thus, a covenantal hermeneutic yields what supersessionism cannot. Namely, an understanding of the church as new exodus people in which the major feature of novelty—the "newness" of the Deuteronomic covenant—is twofold. First is the presence of those who were once far off without God in the world, separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope, and without God in the world;[44] these have been brought near—wild branches grafted into the olive tree (Eph 2:12–13; Rom 11:17).[45] Second is the pilgrim identity of that people. Unlike the nations and

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40 Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 77. Where Johnson Hodge's study focuses on Paul's construal of baptism as an adoption ritual whereby Gentiles are made sons of Abraham, Christopher Zoccali helpfully attends to Jewish identity in the Christ community. He argues that "Paul construes Israelite/Jewish identity on two different levels." On one level, Paul understands Israel to be a multiethnic community, united by faith in Christ and reception of the Spirit. On another level, Paul never abandons an understanding of Israel defined by traditional ethnic markers. See Christopher Zoccali, *Whom God Has Called: The Relationship of Church and Israel in Pauline Interpretation, 1920 to the Present* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 132. See also Christopher Zoccali, *Reading Philippians After Supersessionism: Jews, Gentiles, and Covenant Identity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017); also J. Brian Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling: Paul and the Continuation of Social Identities in 1 Corinthians* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011).

41 On the trinitarian identity of the divine name in baptism, see R. Kendall Soulen, *The Divine Name(s) and the Holy Trinity, Volume One: Distinguishing the Voices* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 182–85.

42 On Christ as the living law, see Jipp, *Christ Is King*, 43–76.

43 Michael Gorman has a helpful examination of the church as a politic; see *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 349–67.

44 None of this is to say that the inclusion of non-Israelites into the people of God is a novelty exclusive to the Deuteronomic covenant. Incorporation of the outsider into Israel's covenant life is a pattern that we see throughout the Hebrew Bible. See, for instance, David Firth, *Including the Stranger: Foreigners in the Former Prophets* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019). However, it is to say that Deuteronomy is significant in the recognition, development, and reception of this theme. See Mark Glanville, *Adopting the Stranger as Kindred in Deuteronomy* (Atlanta: SBL, 2018).

45 This newness is further seen in Paul's use of justification language. As Garwood Anderson argues, in different epistles Paul uses justification either to name the necessity of Jewish believers to recognize Gentile believers as members in Abraham's family (Galatians), or conversely for Gentile believers to recognize their dependence on Israel in order to share in Abraham's household (Romans). Either way, justification is about the essential familial life of Jews and Gentiles under Israel's enthroned Messiah. See Garwood Anderson, *Paul's New Perspective: Charting a Soteriological Journey* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016), 287–96.

ancient Israel who are tenants and stewards of a given territory, the church owns no land, only the promise of a future inheritance.

Power: I Will Hear Their Cry

Walter Brueggemann argues in his benchmark volume that land is both a gift from God and a source of temptation.[46] This theme of land as gift and temptation is explicitly examined throughout the Hebrew Bible, especially regarding the land of Canaan in the history of the kingdom of Israel. However, what is also explored within the Hebrew Bible is God's sovereignty over all lands—"all the earth is mine" (Exod 19:5). In such a vision, Ton Veerkamp is able to contend that Lev 25:23 is the most important verse in all of Scripture: "the land is mine; with me you are all but aliens and tenants."[47]

Israel's status as a tenant of the land is conditioned on the way they respond to strangers, refugees, the fatherless, and widows:

> You shall not wrong a foreigner or oppress them, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt. You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless. (Exod 22:21–24)

While offensive to modern sensibilities, such passages remind us that God loves "the least of these" and that, as James Cone argues, "a God without wrath does not plan to do too much liberating."[48]

But God's power to govern and judge is not unique to Israel. As seen in the Noahic covenant, God is Lord over all the nations. As the Lord of all lands of whom all the nations are mere tenants, God dispossesses stewards of their granted place when they fail to uphold justice. Furthermore, such justice is not sentimental or generic but has concrete criterion. At the heart of Deuteronomy when Israel is preparing to take possession of the land of Canaan, there is a brief covenantal summary and short history of Israel's relationship to YHWH (Deut 10:12–22). Accompanying the command to fear the LORD and keep his statues, there is a single imperative: "Love the foreigner" (v. 19).

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46 Brueggemann goes so far as to say, "Land is a central, if not *the central theme* of biblical faith. Biblical faith is a pursuit of historical belonging that includes a sense of destiny derived from such belonging." *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, 2nd rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 3; emphasis original.

47 Ton Veerkamp, *Autonomie und Egalität: Ökonomie, Politik und Ideologie in der Schrift* (Berlin: Alektor, 1993), 98.

48 James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989), 69.

Place: All the Earth is Mine

At least since Albert Schweitzer, much attention has been devoted to time in New Testament studies,[49] and George Eldon Ladd is well remembered for his articulation of "the already and not yet" of eschatology.[50] However, space has not received equal attention. Instead, as Oliver O'Donovan argues,

> Two broad lines of mistaken assumption about place can be traced through Western culture, and have a certain philosophical affinity with each other. One is the attempt to abolish or escape from it into place-lessness, the characteristic Platonist temptation; the other is the attempt to make it comprehensible as property.[51]

I argue for a third ecclesiological understanding of place. As we saw in the previous section, the creation account and the Noahic covenant both articulate a vision of God's reign over every realm of creation—heavens, seas, and lands—and his sovereignty over every ruler, be they impersonal such as the sun and moon or personal such as the kingdoms listed in the table of nations. Thus, God declares Godself to be the cosmic landlord; "all the earth is mine" (Exod 19:5; Deut. 10:14). Importantly, Israel's Abrahamic election is politically ratified while still a landless people at Mt. Sinai when she is declared to be a "kingdom of priests and holy nation" (Exod 19:6).[52] What is unique about Israel's covenant is that her people-hood, rather than her territory, is that which constitutes her election; "thus God's presence with them as well as God's jurisdiction over them extends beyond any boundaries."[53]

The nations are those to whom God leases land, and as such, they are tenants who are removed when they fail to uphold justice (Deut 2–3).[54] In the ebb and flow of possession and dispossession of place, the prophets continually challenge the pride of Israel by reminding her that she is not alone as a people given a land and not exempt from divine punishment: "Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir? Behold the

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49 Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, trans. W. Montgomery (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2005).
50 George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).
51 O'Donovan, *Ways of Judgment*, 256.
52 For an examination of Israel's political identity established at Sinai, see Munther Isaac, *From Land to Lands, from Eden to the Renewed Earth: A Christ-Centred Biblical Theology of the Promised Land* (Cumbria, UK: Langham, 2015), 99–102.
53 Bader-Saye, *Church and Israel After Christendom*, 35.
54 The question that naturally arises is: what is justice? While a full orbed theory of justice is beyond the scope of this essay, I have highlighted one theme found throughout Scripture regarding God's evaluation of a nation's justice or injustice, righteousness or unrighteousness, based on the concrete criterion of how the poor, the migrant, the orphan, and the widow are treated within that nation.

eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the surface of the ground" (Amos: 9:7–8; cf. Ezek 16:44–52).

By attending to the theme of pilgrimage and the hermeneutics of covenant, we are able to discern the importance of land in the Abrahamic covenants. In the Sinai covenant, Israel is first founded as a nation before proceeding to sojourn towards the land of inheritance. Isaiah picks up the theme of a coming new exodus, and the Christ-event is portrayed as that new exodus. Therefore, in the wake of the ascension, Jews and Gentiles are made co-members in Israel's commonwealth by faith in Israel's messiah and shared reception of the Spirit. Like the Sinai assembly, this church is neither placeless in the Platonic sense nor is it a civil religion—baptized in soil. The church is a pilgrim people, a political society without a possessed place. Sojourners to whom God has not (yet) entrusted a land. Wayfarers journeying across time *and space* towards the land that they will inherit when the Christ who once ascended descends again—a new heavens and a new earth wherein righteousness dwells (2 Pet 3:13).[55]

Only by neglecting the themes of exodus, sojourning, and inheritance is it possible to articulate the view that "the Old Testament is full of the sense of place, but the New Testament is indifferent to it."[56] However, like the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament is quite concerned with land albeit in the form of promise. And as a pilgrim people, the church must resist the temptation of an over-realized eschatology—a baptism of soil that identifies the church with a place—the so-called "Christian" nation. While it is not necessary (or desirable) to flatten the worldview of the New Testament authors into a single perspective, they do appear to share a common view of the people of God in the world as they describe them as wanderers (1 Cor 10:6), sojourners (1 Pet 2:11), strangers and exiles (Heb 11:13)—people called thus because they make it clear that they are seeking a homeland (Heb 11:14).

Christian Ethics of Land

The God of Abraham is the Lord of every land, and in their realms, the nations are all but aliens and tenants. Unlike the nations, as a new exodus assembly baptized into kingdom citizenship and fidelity, the church is a pilgrim people possessing no

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55 Admittedly, the character of such a new heavens and new earth is difficult to discern; however, Jesus's resurrected existence provides the best clue into the corporeal nature of the eschaton. As N. T. Wright has helpfully argued, Jesus's resurrection body is "transphysical," a label he chooses in order to demonstrate the "fact that the early Christians envisaged a body which was still robustly physical but also significantly different from the present one." N. T. Wright, *Resurrection and the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 477–78. See also J. Richard Middleton's important work on the physical nature of Christian eschatology, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014).

56 Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan, *Bonds of Imperfection: Christian Politics, Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 307.

place. This baptism encroaches upon and relativizes all other loyalties, subjecting them to profound reorientation. In this section, we will briefly examine the implications of the church's pilgrim identity on the ecological and social ethics of land.

Ecological Ethics

In his famous and oft-cited essay, Lynn White argues that "Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt" for the disastrous ecological effects caused by science and technology on the world.[57] Christianity's culpability as "the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen"[58] has tainted science and technology because "modern science is an extrapolation of natural theology" and "modern technology is at least partly to be explained as an Occidental, voluntarist realization of the Christian dogma of man's transcendence of, and rightful mastery over, nature."[59] Furthermore, White argues that the solution is not more science and technology, saying, "[these] are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one."[60]

While environmental proposals have increased beyond number, White's criticism remains just as potent today as when he first penned the words over half a century ago. Perhaps we should despair that Christianity simply cannot yield the *right* moral stances on the ethics of land.[61] Personally, I take White's accusation of anthropocentrism as a matter of pride. I can do so because I do not think that anthropocentrism lies at the heart of the problem of human exploitation of the earth. That error lies in neglecting humanity's status as a co-creature caring for creation, a point that must be maintained if God's ultimate authority is to be confessed and upheld. In such a vision, use and profit from the land's resources must be done as a steward and tenant. Wendell Berry puts it this way,

> The task of healing is to respect oneself as a creature, no more and no less. A creature is not a creator, and cannot be. There is only one Creation, and we are its members. To be creative is only to have health: to keep oneself fully alive in the Creation, to keep the Creation fully alive in oneself, to see the Creation anew, to welcome one's part in it anew.[62]

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57   Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967): 1206.
58   White, "Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," 1205.
59   White, "Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," 1206.
60   White, "Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," 1206.
61   David Horrell raises this concern regarding ecological ethics in *The Bible and the Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2014), 117–18.
62   Wendell Berry, *What Are People For?: Essays*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2010), 9. See also Waldemar Janzen, *Still in the Image: Essays in Biblical Theology and Anthropology* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life, 1982), 158–69.

Social Ethics

Current global trends indicate that nationalism is on the rise, a phenomenon always accompanied by a struggle for definitions.[63] Who constitutes "us"; who constitutes "them"; what is entailed in patriotism; and how far does a nation's sovereignty extend—these are questions being asked in one form or another not only in my own country of the United States but also in many nations across the globe. What this study shows is that despite their contention to the contrary, human governments are not the final arbiters of power. The nations do not own the land they sit on. They pay rent to another and higher Lord, and the currency of their tribute is benevolent treatment of the "least of these."

When Jesus claims the totality of power announcing, "all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me" (Matt 28:18), there is no differentiation of realms in which Jesus gets all the *spiritual* stuff and Caesar gets all the *actual* stuff. Every principality and power, be it in the form of law, government, or politician is an authority under authority; and as the prophetic tradition warns, "If a nation is to continue possessing its land, it cannot practice injustice toward migrants."[64] Furthermore, those who protest that migration must be done within the constraints of the rule of law in a host nation must remember humans do not exist to serve laws. Laws exist in service of humanity. Where unjust migration laws abuse "the least of these," Christians—especially Christians who are citizens of those nations with unjust migration laws—are to speak and act as ambassadors of reconciliation and do the hard work of persuasion in order to change those laws.

To give a specific example, in April of 2018 President Trump issued a "zero-tolerance" border policy that separated families (children from parents) who had crossed the southern U.S. border, be it illegally or as asylum seekers. In June of the same year, President Trump signed an executive order ending that family separation policy. However, despite this executive order, in July of 2019 the ACLU submitted evidence that the practice of separating families had continued in over 900 instances.[65] In the context of the United States' migrant family separation practices, it must be emphatically argued that an "objective reason to believe the parent is unfit or a danger" must be provided before separating child from parent

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63 Zsuzsa Csergő, "Ethno-nationalism and the Subversion of Liberal Democracy," *Ethnopolitics* 17 (2018): 541–45.

64 Robert Heimburger, *God and the Illegal Alien: United States Immigration Law and a Theology of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 121. See also Tisha Rajendra, *Migrants and Citizens: Justice and Responsibility in the Ethics of Immigration* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 93–113.

65 Lee Gelernt et al., "Memorandum in Support of Motion to Enforce Preliminary Injunction," CDN. CNN.com http://cdn.cnn.com/cnn/2019/images/07/30/ms.l.pdf (accessed August 9, 2019).

at a border or otherwise.[66] Breaking up families migrating to preserve or better their lives most certainly does not constitute *an objective reason*. Therefore, the separation of migrant child from parent is an unjust application of law that oppresses the most vulnerable.

Furthermore, the baptism of the pilgrim church is thicker than the soil of the nations in which they sojourn. Economics is a powerful thing, and as brothers and sisters in the family of Abraham, Christians are comembers of a commonwealth (Phil 3:20; Eph 2:12–14) not defined by a place but by peoplehood. Thus, Christians need not rely on voting as a zero-sum game for changing political systems of injustice.

For instance, in the polarized environment of the United States with its belligerent dialogue over the place of migrants in America, what could it mean for Christians north of the U.S. border to put their money where their mouth is, open their check books, and partner with Christians south of the border as co-members of the new exodus commonwealth in order to meet the concrete needs of all who lack, especially those who are of the household of faith (Gal 6:10)? Such a witness would not only be a judgment against the arrogance of American politics—as the pilgrim people who are defined not by a place but by a common allegiance to Jesus—it also would be an enactment of the ministry of reconciliation.

Conclusion

This essay has been a constructive proposal that has examined the significance of the pilgrim identity of the church for understanding the ecological and social ethics of land. Through an examination of the hermeneutical significance of the Noahic and Abrahamic covenants, I have argued that God alone is Lord of the land before whom all nations are mere tenants. Additionally, I have argued that the church is the Deuteronomic community of the new exodus who do not possess a place, only the promise of a coming inheritance—a new heavens and a new earth wherein righteousness dwells. My argument has, admittedly, focused on the divine command aspect of Christian ethics. It is doubtful that I will have convinced anyone who is not already persuaded that Jesus Christ is Lord that Jesus is in fact, as Peter announced on the day of Pentecost, "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). However, just as "an affirmation of natural law is required in order for the normative claim of revealed law to be intelligible,"[67] so also divine command is necessary in order

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66 Lee Gelernt et al., "Memorandum in Support of Motion to Enforce Preliminary Injunction," 32. An "objective reason" is precisely what the ACLU argues to be lacking in the overwhelming majority of the more than 900 instances of family separations that occurred from June 2018 through July 2019 at the southern U.S. border.

67 David Novak, "Natural Law and Judaism," in Anver Emon, Matthew Levering, and David Novak, *Natural Law: A Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Trialogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 19.

for natural law to be authoritative. Moreover, divine command arguments ought to be made even when, and perhaps especially when, no one cares to hear them because this is when their polemical force is most acutely felt.

Consumerism does not want to hear the shrill voice of stewardship, especially not one that humbles the human station to that of a creature who answers to another sovereign. Similarly, the glory of nations does not wish to be told that her life in her realm is contingent and conditional upon benevolent treatment of the poor, the migrant, the orphan, and the widow. But this is the message of a long line of sojourners, strangers, and exiles—a people not counted among the nations—who in their pilgrimage make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. "Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city" (Heb 11:16).

St. Augustine and the Scriptural Vision of Married Love

Cole Hartin
Wycliffe College

Abstract

This paper begins by using Augustine's vision of marriage as presented in his work *The Excellence of Marriage,* along with the canonical scriptural vision of marriage as two loci for evaluating the current theologies of matrimony present in Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches. First, this paper examines Augustine's vision of marriage situated within his context of debate with thinkers such as Jovinian and Jerome. The paper then critically evaluates this vision of love in view of the portrayal of marriage within the whole canon of Christian Scripture. It argues that, while Augustine clearly sets forth much of this scriptural vision, he leaves behind the distinctive biblical vision of married love. Next, the paper addresses the Roman Catholic and Anglican heirs of the Augustinian tradition, noting where their official teachings on love coalesce with the vision presented by Augustine, and where they depart. Special note is given to the way both churches have more recently tended toward the more biblical vision of married love while at the same time moving away from Scripture with respect to other facets of an Augustinian vision of marriage. Finally, the paper proposes some possible explanations for this departure from Scripture typified by Augustine before moving to a constructive account of the return to Christian marital love.

Introduction

St. Augustine is a polarizing figure. It is no surprise, then, that his writing on marriage is also polarizing. While he suggests that offspring, fidelity, and sacramentality are goods of marriage, he does not give any space for love. Nevertheless, slavishly following Augustine or simply dismissing him is irresponsible. Rather, careful theologians ought to be able to appreciate Augustine's theology, even if that appreciation includes critical evaluation or disagreement. The aim of this

paper is to look critically at Augustine's work on marriage in hopes of retrieving the richness he has to offer, while also drawing focus to one area in which he is missing an important element of marriage: love.

In his book, *Creation and Covenant,* Christopher Roberts traces, from the Fathers to the present, the attitudes that key Christian thinkers have had toward sexual difference. In dealing with Augustine, Roberts offers a sympathetic account, touching on the famous three goods of marriage, but also noting some of Augustine's ideas that have been overlooked.[1] As Roberts offers a comprehensive and faithful account of Augustine in this respect, it becomes clear that while his thoughts on marriage are at once insightful and perhaps troubling, for Augustine, mutual love does not play a significant role in marriage. This is noteworthy because Augustine's view of marriage is not representative of his time: his contemporaries, in fact, developed a love-based view of marriage drawn from Scripture. This departure from his contemporaries is the result of an incomplete vision of the wholeness of Scripture's witness on the subject of marriage.[2]

This paper traces a scriptural vision of marital love along with Augustine's own formulation, which has laid the trackwork for subsequent Christian traditions. Ultimately, it aims to account for some possible explanations for this Augustinian departure from a more direct scriptural theology before moving to a constructive account of a return to Christian marital love.

In his treatise, *The Excellence of Marriage*, Augustine spares very few words on the place of love within Christian marriage.[3] In so doing, Augustine takes a decidedly different tack from the witness of the both the Old and New Testaments. Now many centuries after his death, Christian traditions influenced by Augustine (both the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches, for example) have returned to a vision of Christian marital love that is more confluent with the scriptural vision than Augustine's, though his thinking on the other goods of marriage have been immensely influential. Further, while Augustine has often been viewed as one of the luminaries of Western theology (and sometimes tragically so), this paper

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1   Roberts notes that friendship is one of Augustine's other goods of marriage, one that is not given much attention. See Christopher Chenault Roberts, *Creation and Covenant: The Significance of Sexual Difference in the Moral Theology of Marriage* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 52.

2   For one example of a scriptural vision of marital love, see St. John Chrysostom's homily on Eph 5:22–33 in St. John Chrysostom, *On Marriage and Family Life,* trans. Catherine P. Roth and David Anderson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986), 43–64. While there has been a lack of systematic reflection on Christian marital love, one notable exception is John Witte Jr, *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997). While Witte does not tackle the subject of marital love head on, his tracing of the legal development of marriage in the Western world informs questions about love quite nicely.

3   St. Augustine, *The Excellence of Marriage* in *Marriage and Virginity*, trans. Ray Kearney, ed. David G. Hunter (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1999), 33–64.

argues that Augustine represents a breach in the Western Christian tradition insofar as he moves away from the scriptural vision of marital love.[4]

Before Augustine

Augustine's vision of marriage will remain obfuscated so long as it is detached from the Christian tradition preceding him. To fully understand it, one must first look at the earliest Christian reflection**s** on the subject as well as Augustine's cultural context.

Because of its normative weight in the Christian community, Christian Scripture is a fitting starting place for understanding how marital love ought to look.[5] From this early vantage point, we can see a vision of marital love that is at once recognizable and evolving. I will be treating Christian Scripture as a united whole, not least because this was generally how it was read in the Church prior to the Reformation, but also because it was how Augustine himself understood Scripture.[6] Within the whole of Scripture's complex vision, marriage is portrayed as unitive, stabilizing, erotic, requiring commitment, aiding in fidelity, sacramentally reflecting Christic love, and finally, procreative. I will refer to texts of Scripture that illustrate these elements.

I will be examining texts of Scripture that are descriptive of the figure of marital love in some general sense. Even specific marriages, such as the marriage of Ruth and Boaz, can be illustrative of married love in a broader sense, so I will include both prescriptive and illustrative texts. For the sake of brevity, I must be selective, but will examine texts from across the biblical canon, including Old and New Testaments, and varying genres. As I noted above, I am assuming that Scripture is a theologically united whole, despite the differentiation one sees in its various parts. Michael Cameron points out that this was the standard way ancient interpreters approached the Bible. He suggests, "Scripture for them was first of all a divine unity, mysterious but accessible, mediated through a wild variety of

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4   For one recent example of Eastern Orthodox animosity toward Augustine's reading of Romans, for example, see David Bentley Hart, "Traditio Deformis," *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life* 253 (2015): 71–72.

5   When I refer to "Christian Scripture" I am referring to the Old and New Testaments as they have been received by the Church. For Augustine, this also included some books now deemed deutero-canonical. Because Augustine reads them as a united witness, I will do the same. I will say more about this methodological move below.

6   For the claim that Scripture was read as a unified and authoritative collection of writing, see Michael Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3. Augustine was able to view Scripture as a united whole because he saw the Old Testament as figuring the new, so that Christ's words were spoken and heard in both Testaments. See St. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana,* trans. R. P. H. Green, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), III.5; and St. Augustine, *St. Augustine on the Psalms*, vol. 2, trans. Felicitas Corrigan (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1960), 13. Note that Augustine viewed Scripture not to be united merely as one continuous narrative, but theologically united as the words of Christ from Christ, and thus serving as a coherent witness to him.

earthly voices, genres, events, teachings, and even contradictions, all of which were kaleidoscopic variations of a single divine picture."[7] Based on the premise held by Augustine and his contemporaries that the theological vision of Scripture is united, it follows that when it speaks of marital love, for example, it presents a coherent vision of the same.[8] The interpreter should consult the whole of Scripture in light of Christ to most comprehensively understand its figures, which in this case, is the figure of marital love. Because we are reading the Bible theologically, trying to understand the figure of married love in light of Christ, Scripture is not merely an historical text, but a normative one, addressing the struggling Christian community in the present.[9] This is to avoid suggesting the Bible presents some a-historical, timeless truth, on the one hand, or that it is simply an interesting relic of the past, on the other. Because the Bible is God's communication, it addresses God's people throughout time even with its historical particularity.

Beginning then, with the book of Genesis, one sees God ordaining the union of man and wife as they bind themselves together; from this basis, one sees the contours of a marriage relationship continue to develop within the larger scriptural framework.[10] In Genesis, we see the unitive character of marriage, the

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7   Michael Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine's Early Figurative Exegesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 15. On the unity of Scripture, see also Augustine, *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians,* ed. Eric Antone Plumer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 95.

8   This is not to say that the figure of marriage in Scripture will not be differentiated, but that the manifold references to marriage will share a common vision. The logic behind such a conviction also comes from a belief in divine providence that asserts that Scripture communicates what God intends it to. Vernon White, in an elucidating discussion of God's radical transcendence, is useful for illuminating the witness of Scripture. Authorial intention is not a zero-sum game between God, the human authors, redactors, scribes, etc. White notes, "God is in a position always to re-frame temporal events to give them new (redemptive) meaning. It is a construal which means we are conceiving a dimension in which events in history can always be brought into new relations with other events (historical and eternal) to give them such meaning. In particular, it means that all events could be redeemed by being brought into a new relation specifically with the event of Christ . . ." Vernon White, *Purpose and Providence: Taking Soundings in Western Thought, Literature and Theology* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 132. God, then, preserves the integrity of its human contributors to Scripture while using those contributions to his own ends. This is a theological rather than an historical argument.

9   I am echoing Childs here. See Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 86–87.

10 I have decided to set aside discussions on historical-critical reconstructions and redactions that may be helpful in some areas of biblical studies. While not insensitive to the human authors of the text, I will approach the Bible canonically, which is how Augustine reads it. See *De Doctrina Christiana, II.8–9,* for a discussion of Augustine's visions of canon. By focusing on the overall shape of the canon and thus seeing it as a united witness, I am interpreting the Old Testament in light of the New, and vice versa. Looking at the theology of marriage from a discrete period in Israel's history (e.g. the patriarchal age) and reading it outside of the finalized form of the canon may create tensions around the parameters of married love (e.g. it may be inclusive of polygamy). Though they may be fruitful for exploration, for the sake of this essay I will leave these tensions aside.

two-becoming-one, and the fruitfulness that flows from this (Gen 2:24). The first marriage is also shown to be the cure for loneliness, with man not finding a suitable "helper as his partner" (Gen 2:20) and woman being formed from "what was taken from the man" (Gen 2:21).[11] Love is not explicitly brought into the picture, but is implicitly present in the way the first marriage joins two for mutual completion and community. Furthermore, the Genesis texts are referenced and reiterated by Christ in Mark 10:1–10 and Matt 19:1–9. They stand over the rest of the Bible as a general standard of what marriage is, though the accidents of each marriage are as different as the men and women who make them. That is to say, though many marriages in the Old Testament take on their own particular texture, filled with brokenness and hope, the normative picture of marriage involves two becoming one for mutual support.[12]

In Exodus, this unitive purpose of marriage is taken for granted in the renewal of God's covenant with Israel (Exod 34). The Lord speaks to Israel, commanding them to drive out the inhabitants from the promised land, warning Israel that they are forbidden to make a covenant with the people from other nations. The Lord declares that such a covenant will lead to Israel taking "wives from among their daughter for [their] sons," so that "their daughters who prostitute themselves to their gods will make [Israel's] sons also prostitute themselves to their gods" (Exod 34:16). This sentiment is reiterated throughout the Pentateuch, namely, that marriage is unitive in its character, and the effect of this is that marriage to idolaters will distort the faith of Israel. Prohibiting exogamies is a negative means of indicating the nature of marriage as a drawing together of two into one.

The Levitical laws surrounding marriage also bring further insight to married love. The various sexual and marital prohibitions help to narrow and separate what the author sees to be God's intent for marriage from other uses of marriage and sexuality (see Lev 18–21). Though the narrator conveys that "the Lord spoke to Moses" (Lev 18:1), the role of Leviticus has been questioned throughout its reception as has been the regulative weight it bears on the Christian Church. For example, Article 7 in the Book of Common Prayer notes that "although the Law given from God by Moses, as touching Ceremonies and Rites, do not bind Christian men, nor the Civil precepts thereof ought of necessity to be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian man whatsoever is free from

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11 All biblical quotations are taken from the NRSV unless otherwise noted.
12 On marriage in the Old Testament, see Stanley Grenz, *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 31–56; and Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones *God, Marriage and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 31–60.

the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral."[13] The distinction between what is "moral" and "ceremonial" may be contestable, but the fact remains that the Levitical portrayal of sexuality and marriage shaves off the possibility of sexual expression in various extra-marital situations. These expressions of sexuality or love outside of the normative bonds of marriage portrayed in Genesis bring clarity about the purpose of marriage by way of negative perversions of the same.

In Genesis, Eve is presented as providing help and stability to Adam, but this is contrasted in the book of Ruth, where Naomi counsels her widowed daughter, Ruth, to marry Boaz for "security" or stability (Ruth 3:1). In this passage, the male, Boaz, is the one to help and stabilize the female, Ruth. In fact, the book begins with marriages dissolving because of death, and notes the instability that ensues (Ruth 1). This implies, like Genesis, that marriage and security are correlated. Moreover, the remarriage that is portrayed in Ruth has links to Leviticus, and the laws for kindred redeemers (Lev 25). While, as Jeremy Schipper notes, any speculation on marital *love* or sexual attraction in the book of Ruth is speculative, I suggest that a primary function of the marriage of Ruth and Boaz is for mutual aid.[14] As these images of married love in the Old Testament continue to be juxtaposed, we see an emerging sketch of married love as having a unitive character between a husband and wife that by definition excludes other loves. Marriage in this sense brings stability and fosters mutual support between the spouses.

There is another development in the character of Christian marital love in the Old Testament that is not as evident in the first marriage of Genesis. One sees a movement throughout the canon toward a more passionate picture of love in the Wisdom books. For example, the author of Proverbs dwells on the more erotic elements of marriage:

> Let your fountain be blessed
> And rejoice in the wife of your youth,
> A lovely deer, a graceful doe.
> May her breasts satisfy you at all times;
> May you be intoxicated always by her love.

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13 Mark Elliott's exploration of Calvin's "spiritually edifying" interpretation of explicitly ceremonial laws in Leviticus reveals that even typological readings can be practically useful for Christians. Mark Elliot, "Calvin and the Ceremonial Law of Moses," *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 11.3 (2009): 282.

14 Jeremy Schipper, *Ruth: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 35–38. Schipper goes on to note that the absence of explicit discussion on sexuality opens Ruth to queer readings that do not assume stabile constructed sexual orientations. Furthermore, the marriages in Ruth complicate the Scripture's portrayal of exogamy when the book is read canonically.

Why should you be intoxicated, my son, by another woman
And embrace the bosom of an adulteress? (Prov 5:18–20)[15]

This is of course echoed descriptively in the Song of Solomon with calls for kisses and amorous depictions of the lover's bodies (Song 1:1; 3:5, 6); the author of Ecclesiastes calls the reader to "enjoy the life with the wife whom you love" (Eccl 9:9). Passages such as these add to the image of marriage in Genesis, infusing the mutual helping of the two-become-one with a celebration of sexual intimacy.

The Psalmist takes this is in somewhat different direction, tying the delight in one's wife with "fruitfulness" and broader familial life (Ps 128). This is done without negating the sensual facets of married love described in the Wisdom books, but links this back to the vision of two-becoming-one that is so central in Genesis. It also anticipates New Testament discussions of family life such as those in the Pastoral Epistles by noting the connection between blessing, marital love, and the rearing of children. I think Candida Moss and Joel Baden are correct in their suggestion that the blessing of "fruitfulness" or fertility is not an individualized promise. Rather, "Despite the regularly voiced belief that God's words encourage a large family, it is not the number of children produced that is at stake in the divine blessing of fertility. It is the people who, far in the future, will descend from those who are blessed."[16] No matter how one interprets the blessing of procreation, however, it is still deeply connected to marriage.

Turning to the prophets, we see the relationship that God has with Israel likened to a marriage relationship in places such as Isa 54. The text is challenging, because the metaphor of marriage is used to illustrate the disobedience and punishment of Israel by the Lord. The Lord is portrayed as the husband who "casts off" the wife of his youth, but who, after abandoning her, "gathers" her with compassion (Isa 54:6–7). The image is strong and raises provocative questions about judgement and grace. Though it may be troubling to read that the Lord abandons his people, John Goldingay and David Payne suggest that "Yhwh attempts to take the edge off" his alleged abandonment of Israel by noting its momentary nature, the comparatively great compassion he will proceed to show, and Israel's future ingathering.[17] I do not think this attempt to soften the text effectively removes any difficulties, thought it does provide some context.

15　See Robert B. Chisholm Jr., "'Drink Water from Your Own Cistern': A Literary Study of Proverbs 5:15–23," *Bibliotheca sacra* 157:628 (2000): 404–405, for a textual analysis. Chisholm sees the father figure in the text to be asking God to bless his son's marriage by providing sexual pleasure between the spouses, among other things. Chisholm also points out that "love" as it is used in the text can be found to refer to "romantic, sensual love" elsewhere.

16　Candida R. Moss and Joel S. Baden, *Reconceiving Infertility: Biblical Perspectives on Procreation and Childlessness*, ed. Baden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 75.

17　John Goldingay and David Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40–55,* vol. 2, International Critical Commentary (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 348–49.

However, despite the challenging nature of the Lord's actions, the integrity of the symbol of married love is striking. Though one's wife can be "forsaken," "cast off," and "abandoned," and though a husband can "hide his face" from her, his "everlasting love" endures (Isa 54:6–8). This image points not only to the stable nature of love, but to the brokenness and decay through which it remains strong. Again, the nature of marriage here includes the mutual support that Genesis describes, but to this portrayal is added the texture of frailty and disintegration that damages but does not destroy married love. That marriage is used as a theological metaphor here also anticipates the Christological symbolism that is more explicitly drawn in the New Testament.

Moving to the minor prophets, the image of married love takes on a deeper dimension. In the book of Hosea, for instance, it is a figure or symbol that transcends the marriage relationship itself. God commissions Hosea to take Gomer as a wife, being faithful to her despite her waywardness. This relationship not only demonstrates the fierce, committed love of a husband for his wife, but this love is elevated so that it illustrates God's love for his people, Israel. The book of Malachi addresses marriage as well, with the author describing it as not only a covenant between a husband and wife, but one in which "the Lord was a witness" (Mal 2:14). The author goes on to decry the unfaithfulness of Judah by use of the metaphor of a husband who is unfaithful to his wife, writing, "For I hate divorce, says the Lord, the God of Israel" (Mal 2:16a). The text is instructive not only as a reminder of the importance of the spiritual fidelity of God's people but is also didactically useful for the ethics of marriage and family life for Christians.[18]

In the New Testament, the Pauline writings offer us the deepest insight into the mechanics of marital love. First, we need to be clear that these letters do not speak with a single voice but are multifaceted as they prescribe a certain vision of marriage. One facet of this Pauline theology of marriage is admittedly less exalted than that which one finds the in Old Testament; this vision sees married love as a shield against infidelity. In 1 Cor 7, for example, the author encourages marriage as a suitable alternative to engaging in adulterous practices made enticing by lustful desires (vv. 1–6). This same chapter also focuses on the virtues of celibacy (vv. 25–35).

In the letter to the Ephesians, the vision of marriage is more genial; in it is described the mutual love and sacramental character inherent to Christian married life (Eph 5:21–33). This vision of love contrasts with the more erotic vision presented in the Wisdom literature above, toward a more Christic, self-giving love. Finally, one must not forget the Pauline instructions for aspiring bishops and

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18   See the ecclesial ramifications of this in Blessing O. Boloje and Alphonso Groenewald, "Marriage and Divorce in Malachi 2:10–16: An Ethical Reading of the Abomination to Yahweh for Faith Communities," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 35.1 (2014): 7–10.

deacons in 1 Tim 3. While the character of marriage is not a point of focus, and so remains vague in these verses, it is important that the text is presuming that those aspiring to positions of leadership in the Church would be married only once and responsible in family life. That is, one of the qualifications for those aspiring bishops or deacons is faithfulness in married life, implying that, despite less positive portrayals of marriage elsewhere in the New Testament, faithful love between a husband and wife is a significant determining factor for leadership candidacy.[19] Though, as Jay Twomey notes, there has been some dispute over the authorial intention of these instructions (for example, are they forbidding polygamy, or is remarriage more of the issue?), they portray marriage between a husband and wife as commendable *in some sense*. Twomey goes on to write that those in support of clerical celibacy have tended to read these passages spiritually (for instance, a bishop is "married" to the church), but even here the effect is that marriage, whether in a concrete or symbolic sense, is prescribed.[20] Even those who read the Pauline qualifications allegorically do not dispute the marital imagery, but suggest that it should be viewed in its sacramental rather than empirical dimensions. This only bolsters the unfolding canonical portrayal of married love as eminently positive for Christian leaders.

This survey of the scriptural witness reveals a series of images of marriage that, when viewed together, coalesce into a fuller, multifaceted vision of married love than each manifest on their own. It begins with the basis of married love that is unitive (Genesis, Exodus) and stabilizing (Ruth, Leviticus) and further includes the notions of eroticism (Wisdom literature), unswerving commitment (Isaiah, Hosea, Malachi), protection against infidelity (Corinthians), sacramentality, and Christic love (Ephesians). This is to say nothing of married love's procreative capacity (Psalms). Of course, much more could be said, and an exhaustive study of marital love would be illuminating, but as it stands, the above serves as a sufficiently clear sketch of some of the biblical contours of married love.

There is one additional angle from which to view a biblical vision of married love, and that is through the lens of virginity. Clearly, in the Old Testament there

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19 Luke Timothy Johnson points out that the words "married once" can be interpreted in several ways, though I argue that whether they are forbidding remarriage, polygamy, or celibacy, in any case they are portraying the Gen 2 description of marriage positively. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with an Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 213–14. Moreover, David Hunter notes that there were different interpretations of these words throughout the patristic period, but that "eventually, the presence of a requirement of strict monogamy for the clergy, based on the Pauline text, directly influenced the notion of Christian marriage as an indissoluble union, which Augustine and others were to call its *sacramentum*." David G. Hunter, "'A Man of One Wife:' Patristic Interpretations of 1 Timothy 3:2, 3:12, and Titus 1:6 and the Making of the Christian Priesthood," *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi*, 32.2 (2015): 335.

20 Jay Twomey, *The Pastoral Epistles Through the Centuries,* Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 55–56.

are certain instances where virginity is a theme (literal virginity in Deut 22:13–19 and Judg 11:37–8; spiritual virginity in Ezek 23:38 and Jer 31:4, for instance) and in the New Testament Jesus's birth and subsequent life raise questions of virginity, as does 1 Cor 7:25–40.[21] This latter text has been especially puzzling to scholars, with some suggesting that Paul urged virgins to remain unmarried because of his Stoic view of marriage and apocalyptic view of the future.[22] Others note that for most of Christian history, this text has been interpreted as a balanced, positive portrayal of both marriage and celibacy, and was only recently interpreted as Paul's response to extreme ascetics.[23] In any case, while I recognize the text's suggestion that marriage, in some circumstances, may be more difficult, it does not greatly detract from the vision of marriage I have sketched in proceeding paragraphs.

We shall now turn to Augustine's vision of marriage as he presents it, noting especially the similarities with and divergences from Scripture.

Augustine

Background

Augustine's theology of marriage is most clearly set forth in his work *The Excellence of Marriage*. It is important not only to have a grasp of the scriptural precursors to Augustine's work, but also an understanding of the situation in which he was writing. David Hunter reminds us that in his revisions, Augustine "wrote these two books [*The Excellence of Marriage* and *Holy Virginity*] in response to the "heresy of Jovinian." Jovinian was a monk who had been condemned in the early 390s by synods at Rome and Milan. His primary offenses had been to argue that neither celibacy nor ascetic fasting gained for the Christian any special merit."[24] There are no extant copies of Jovinian's writings in their entirety, but, fortunately, he was often quoted by his opponents, such as Jerome. From this quoted material, Hunter has provided a reconstruction of Jovinian's thesis, and lists the following four aspects:

1. Virgins, widows, and married women, once they have been washed in Christ, are of the same merit, if they do not differ in other works.
2. Those who have been born again in baptism with full faith cannot be overthrown by the devil.

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21 For an overview and summary of early and pre-Christian writing on virginity see Roger Steven Evans, *Sex and Salvation: Virginity as a Soteriological Paradigm in Ancient Christianity* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003).
22 Will Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy: The Hellenistic Background to 1 Corinthians 7,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 172–73.
23 Alistair Scott May, *'The Body for the Lord': Sex and Identity in 1 Corinthians 5–7,* Library of New Testament Studies 278 (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 52–55.
24 Hunter, "General Introduction" in *Marriage and Virginity*, 14.

3. There is no difference between abstinence from food and receiving it with thanksgiving.
4. There is one reward in the kingdom of heaven for all who have pre-served their baptism.[25]

It is noteworthy that all but the second point of Jovinian's thesis would not seem to many today to be overly contentious. Jovinian's reception in the fourth century, however, was far from a welcome one. Jerome, among other prominent Church leaders, attacked him vociferously. It is in the midst of this theological maelstrom that Augustine chimes in with *The Excellence of Marriage*. What is especially pertinent to this article is the first aspect of Jovinian's thesis, as it more directly relates to Augustine's description of marriage, written partly in response to it. Hunter notes that, relative to the other responses to Jovinian, Augustine's response reads as remarkably amicable. Hunter explains,

> Instead of taking a directly polemical stance, Augustine attempted to develop a genuine theology of marriage and celibacy that steered a middle path between the extremes of Jovinian and Jerome: he main-tained the genuine goodness of Christian marriage (against Jerome), while arguing for the superiority of the celibate life (against Jovinian). In the course of his discussion, Augustine developed novel concep-tions of sexuality and sacramentality. The result, while not always consonant with modern Christian understandings of marriage and sex-uality, was for its time a remarkably humane treatment of a difficult, previously underdeveloped topic.[26]

Thus, Augustine's defense of both marriage and virginity was written to mediate between the more extremist positions of his interlocutors, Jerome and Jovinian. Augustine's treatments of marriage and virginity are not, then, detached, purely constructive works of systematic theology meant to foster clarity on particular issues. Yes, Augustine engages in exegetical work to draw out what he sees to be the thrust of Scripture, but he does this within a particular time and circumstance that no doubt affected his emphases. Having briefly considered the occasion of Augustine's treatise, one must now turn to examine the content of his work.

The Excellence of Marriage

Turning to *The Excellence of Marriage,* one sees Augustine giving a defense of the several goods of marriage and clarifying the nature of these goods. Hunter, in

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25 David G. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 26.
26 Hunter, "General Introduction," *16*.

his introduction to the text, organizes Augustine's treatment of marriage into three goods that have since become the standard in Catholic moral theology. Hunter lists these as the procreation of children, fidelity, and sacramentality.[27] While a threefold list is helpful for keeping track of Augustine's thoughts (for Augustine himself notes these three goods in 24, 32), there is more going on here, as there are in fact five distinct though overlapping goods of marriages presented by Augustine. These are procreation, sociability, fidelity, sacramentality, and protection against sexual temptation.

Augustine notes that the primary and obvious reason for marriage is the procreation of children; he suggests, "Among all peoples marriage exists for the same purpose, namely to have children, and however they turn out, marriage is instituted for them to be born in a regulated and honourable way."[28] This is so central to marriage that Augustine is even willing to question the veracity of those marital unions that are formed without the intent to produce offspring:

> It is often asked whether one should call it a marriage when a man and woman, neither of whom is married to anyone else, form a union solely for the purpose of giving in to their desires by sleeping together, and not for the purpose of having children, though with the understanding that neither of them will sleep with anyone else. It is not absurd perhaps to call this a marriage, provided they maintain the arrangement until the death of one or the other of them, and provided they do not avoid having children either by being unwilling to have children or even by doing something wrong to prevent the birth of children. On the other hand, if one, or both, of these conditions is lacking, I do not see how we can call these marriages.[29]

For Augustine, then, procreation is not only one good of marriage but a necessary good of marriage. Therefore, in Augustine's eyes, "married" couples not intending not to have children, or those actively preventing conception, are not really married at all.

A second good of marriage according to Augustine is that of sociability, which is one of the elements of marriage by which he justified the continuing union of the elderly:

> It seems to me to be not only because of the procreation of children, but also because of the natural sociability that exists between the different sexes. Otherwise in the elderly it would no longer be called

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27 Hunter, "General Introduction," 30.
28 Augustine, *The Excellence of Marriage,* 17.19.
29 Augustine, *The Excellence of Marriage*, 5.5.

marriage, especially if they had lost their children or had not had any. As it is, in a good marriage, even with older people, although the passion of youth between men and woman has waned, the relationship of love between husband and wife continues strong, and the better persons they are, the earlier they begin by mutual consent to abstain from carnal union.[30]

It is fascinating here that Augustine sees the good of sociability as something that is separate and independent of the conjugal act. This can by deduced from Augustine's exhortation that if procreation is no longer a viable aim within a particular marriage, but the couple remains faithful to one another, the goal should then be to refrain from "carnal union." Presumably, the good of sociability could be found in a variety of other kinds of relationships, such as other familial bonds, friendships, etc. While this seems to be the case, Augustine does mention elsewhere that, just as food and drink are taken for the good of health, so marriage and sleeping together are "necessary for friendship." This seems to suggest that perhaps to Augustine there are certain kinds of sociability and friendships that can only be gained within the context of marriage.[31]

Somewhat related to sociability is the good of fidelity. This mutual faithfulness extends to the exclusive sharing of the conjugal act by the married couple for the sake of children, but also "to relieve each other's weakness, and thereby avoid illicit unions."[32] Thus the married couple ought to support each other by providing legitimate and godly expression to sexuality. By doing so, husbands and wives are also providing a protection against the desire to express sexuality in ways that would be displeasing to God.

The fourth good of marriage in Augustine's work is the good of sacramentality, or the deeper reality that marriage represents. It is a curious thing that Augustine's sacramental treatment of marriage differs from that of Paul in Eph 5, as discussed above. Whereas Paul posits that marriage is a sacramental reflection of Christ's love for his Church and the Church's love for him, Augustine sees marriage as signifying other realities. In Christian marriage, Augustine sees the sacramental reflection to be that of unity, of a single heart turned toward God. He writes:

For this reason in our age the sacrament of marriage has been restored to being a union between one man and one woman, so much as that no one is allowed to be ordained a minister of the Church except a man who has had only one wife. This was well understood by those who held the view that even someone who had a second wife while

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30 Augustine, *The Excellence of Marriage*, 3.3.
31 Augustine, *The Excellence of Marriage,* 9.9.
32 Augustine, *The Excellence of Marriage,*, 6.6.

still a catechumen or a pagan should not be ordained. What is at issue is not sinfulness, but the sacrament, as all sins are taken away in baptism.[33]

While Augustine's understanding of sacramentality brings with it unique theological insight concerning the unity of the people of God, it is strange that he does not directly note the plain sense of Ephesians in the way that later theologians in the Catholic tradition have (see below). What is more, Augustine sees polygamous marriages such as those in the Old Testament as having a sacramental character reflecting the plurality of people who would one day be subject to God.[34]

This leads to the fifth and final good of marriage, which is most closely related to that good of fidelity: the good of protection from temptation. According to Augustine,

> marriages also have the benefit that sensual or youthful incontinence, even though it is wrong, is redirected to the honorable purpose of having children, and so out of the evil of lust, sexual union achieves something good. Furthermore, parental feeling brings about a moderation of sensual desire, since it is held back and in a certain way burns more modestly."[35]

In other words, marriage both redeems sexual acts while also mitigating sensual desires as a natural consequence of "parental feelings." The married are not exempt from concupiscence by any means, and in Augustine's view there are still plenty of ways that one can become stained even within the confines of marriage.[36]

These five goods, then, serve as the purpose of marriage for Augustine. Marriage is not to be viewed as something desirable in itself, but only in so far as it leads to the goods mentioned above. Further, it is worth noting that there are certain goods that marriage, in Augustine's view, is not meant to foster, such as the good of spouses bringing each other sexual pleasure (for Augustine, this would surely be anathema). More significantly for our discussion here, marital love is not a good, nor does it play a prominent role in marriage for Augustine. In fact, one of the few passages in *The Excellence of Marriage* wherein marital love is referenced is the following: "As it is, in a good marriage, even with older people, although the passion of youth between men and woman has waned, the relationship of *love* [*caritatis*] between husband and wife continues strong, and the better

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33 Augustine, *The Excellence of Marriage,* 18.21.
34 Augustine, *The Excellence of Marriage,* 21.
35 Augustine, *The Excellence of Marriage,* 3.3.
36 Among these are engaging in sexual acts with one's spouse for the purpose of passion (5.5), engaging in sexual acts in times of known infertility—including during pregnancy (6.5), and engaging in sexual acts without moderation (11.12).

persons they are, the earlier they begin by mutual consent to abstain from carnal union."[37] Thus, it is clear that the description of love within marriage is not completely foreign to Augustine, but neither is it something that is drawn to the forefront.

Analysis

Having surveyed both Scripture and Augustine's *The Excellence of Marriage* for descriptions of marriage, it is crucial to note that, though there is overlap, Augustine neglects significant facets of the portrayal of marriage surveyed above. First, Augustine does not see marriage as having the same character as that portrayed in Scripture. While in Scripture marital love is central (along with other goods such as procreation, which Augustine does mention), for Augustine it is an afterthought, except for his focus on the rather dour (at least when it is isolated from the wider canonical witness) Pauline text of 1 Cor 7. To his credit, Augustine's discussion on fidelity and sacramentality does require spouses to love, but this love is always and exclusively directed toward God. In Augustine's view, spouses are not to love one another for their own sake, but rather for the sake of Christ.[38] If Augustine does mention conjugal love, it is in passing, and it seems to be downright "unerotic," and perhaps even cold.[39]

The other strange departure Augustine makes from marriage as it is described in Scripture is his focus on sacramentality. I will explore this in more detail below, but the essence of the issue is this: Augustine sees the sacramental character of marriage to be a unitive image, while the Pauline description of marital sacramentality points to an image of divine love. Not only does Augustine obscure Paul's point in shifting the focus of sacramentality, but he also fails once again to notice the love at the heart of Christian marriage as it is described in Scripture.

After Augustine: His Influence Today

Having discussed the notable differences between biblical and Augustinian treatments of marriage, one must ask whether Augustine is the catalyst to and representative of a trajectory of thinking within the Western Church. This trajectory increasingly has focused on several scriptural goods of marriage (procreation and fidelity, for example) at the expense of others. In other words, is Augustine's voice an anomaly in the broader tradition, or perhaps even a deviation from it?

This question cannot be answered easily or fully, because, as Nygren notes:

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37 Augustine, *The Excellence of Marriage,* 3.3.
38 Not that the two loves—love of God, and love of one's spouse—are mutually exclusive.
39 It is interesting that though spousal love is described rather flatly in Augustine, his discussion on love in his treatise on virginity is very impassioned. See Daryl Ellis, "The Ambivalence and Lust of Marriage: With and Beyond Augustine Towards a Theology of Marriage as Consecrated Sacrifice," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 66.1 (2013): 45.

> To describe the changes that the Christian idea of love has undergone through the centuries would be ultimately the same as to write the entire inner history of Christianity. Every generation has had to face the problem of Christian love, and every new period has made a characteristic contribution to its history. These contributions, it is true, have not always been such as to disclose fresh aspects of the Christian idea of love; but then they are all the more revealing in respect of the structure and spiritual temper of their times.[40]

Though Nygren is correct in positing the impossibility of a complete history of love in all its complexity, it is evident there is an identifiable "drift" in the Christian West, or at least a family resemblance of ideas about marital love. In order to determine the extent to which Augustine's vision of marriage, and the minor role that love plays therein, has shaped the Western Christian tradition, we will examine texts concerning marriage in two major church traditions that are influenced by the marital theology of Augustine, namely, the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church.

Roman Catholic Heirs

Roman Catholic moral theology owes a great debt to Augustine, and most pointedly so when it comes to its theology of marriage. The official Church teaching as it is laid out in the Catechism explains that "[t]he intimate community of life and love which constitutes the married state has been established by the Creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws."[41] Not only is the married state referred to as a "community of life and love," but the Catechism continues by describing the mutual love between man and woman to be good in God's eyes.[42] Further, the Catechism speaks of "conjugal love,"[43] "love of spouses,"[44] and marital love as a sharing in God's "definite and irrevocable love."[45]

The goods of marriage, of conjugal love, according to the Catechism, are articulated in a manner reminiscent of Augustine's treatise on marriage; these goods include a unity that is indissoluble, faithful, and open to fertility.[46] Further, it is noteworthy that in Roman Catholic theology, marriage is thought of as one of the seven sacraments, which is also in line with Augustine's sacramental understanding of married life.

Looking to another source of Church teaching, the papal encyclical *Caritas Est,*

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40 Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (London: SPCK, 1954), 29.
41 *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Second Edition,* 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 1603.
42 *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* 1604.
43 *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* 1643
44 *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* 1644.
45 *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* 1648.
46 *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* 1643.

we may see that Benedict XVI makes the distinction between self-imposing *eros* and Christian *agape,* which he sees to be central to Christian marriage.[47] Still, even though these loves are not the same, the Church teaches that neither are they completely different:

> In philosophical and theological debate, these distinctions have often been radicalized to the point of establishing a clear antithesis between them: descending, oblative love—*agape*—would be typically Christian, while on the other hand ascending, possessive or covetous love —*eros*—would be typical of non-Christian, and particularly Greek culture. Were this antithesis to be taken to extremes, the essence of Christianity would be detached from the vital relations fundamental to human existence, and would become a world apart, admirable perhaps, but decisively cut off from the complex fabric of human life. Yet *eros* and *agape*—ascending love and descending love—can never be completely separated. The more the two, in their different aspects, find a proper unity in the one reality of love, the more the true nature of love in general is realized.[48]

Thus, *agape* completes and fulfills *eros*, bringing it to an honourable place. *Eros* is useful as the natural means by which men and women are drawn toward marriage, but this love is only perfected as humans share in the perfect love of God.[49]

In sum, while there are some notable similarities between modern Roman Catholic descriptions of marriage and those of Augustine, there has been a general move since his time in Roman Catholic teaching to embrace love as a vitally important descriptor of marriage; in this respect, more recent descriptions of love are not consonant with Augustine. To be fair, this move has been a generally recent one, with the emphasis changing after Vatican II.

Anglican Heirs

The Anglican Church has been shaped by both the catholic tradition and reformed impulses. Though it differs from the Roman Catholic Church in its teaching on marriage, especially as it is enshrined in the *Book of Common Prayer,* there is still much in common between the two traditions. The Augustinian legacy is clear in both. The marriage liturgy in the *Book of Common Prayer* states that "matrimony was ordained for the hallowing of the union betwixt man and woman; for the procreation of children to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord; and for the mutual society, help and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, in

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47   Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (Rome: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 2005), 1.3.
48   Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 1.7.
49   Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 1.10.

both prosperity and adversity."[50] This description borrows two of Augustine's three goods of marriage (procreation and fidelity) while omitting the third. And though the sacramental aspects of marriage are not explicitly mentioned in the *Book of Common Prayer*, it is worth noting that it draws implicitly on Pauline teaching, as matrimony "[signifies] unto us the mystical union betwixt Christ and his Church," and is consecrated as "an excellent mystery."[51]

In the wedding vows meant to be given and taken in the marriage ceremony in the *Book of Common Prayer* (the sense of which remains also in the modernized Canadian *Book of Alternative Services*), the engaged are asked by the priest if they will "love," "comfort," "honour," and "keep/protect" each other.[52] The couple's love is also mentioned several times in priestly prayers during the liturgy of the *Book of Common Prayer*.[53]

Here again, as in modern Roman Catholic theology, we see a partial borrowing from Augustine, but also a significant departure from his theology in making love an important aspect of marriage. To love is one of the central commitments couples make one to another, and this theme continues throughout the liturgy.

Modern Divergences

As stated above, the marital theology of Augustine clearly informs both Catholic and Protestant theologies today. What has remained constant in both traditions is the role that procreation plays as a central good of marriage, as well as the goods of fidelity and mutual help. The sacramental character of marriage has remained in the Roman Catholic tradition, but this import has been dropped from explicit mention in the Anglican texts above.[54] One notable way in which both Catholic and Anglican theology has moved away from Augustine is with their inclusion of marital love in their vision of matrimony.

Augustine's description of marriage as a sacrament seems to have had a different (though not contradictory) intent than the sacramental character of marriage described in the Roman Catholic Catechism. For Augustine, the sacramental character of marriage was reflected in the unity of one man and woman, a sign of the

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50 *The Book of Common Prayer* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1962), 564. I am using the Canadian prayer book as a benchmark here because it serves as a more recent articulation of an Anglican understanding of marriage. The 1662 prayer book remains the standard in the Church of England, and in addition to affirming the purposes of marriage given in the 1962 Canadian prayer book, it also includes the third Augustinian purpose of marriage, that it is "a remedy against sin".

51 *The Book of Common Prayer*, 564, 570.

52 *The Book of Common Prayer*, 565 and *The Book of Alternative Service* (Anglican Book Centre, 1991), 530.

53 *The Book of Common Prayer*, 566, 570.

54 The Reformation was an occasion for changing the understanding of marriage, focusing on companionate elements in the relationship and rejecting its sacramental nature. See Christine Peters, "Gender, Sacrament and Ritual: The Making and Meaning of Marriage in Late Medieval and Early Modern England," *Past & Present*, 169 (2000): 63–64.

united people of God.[55] The sacramental emphasis of the Catechism differs from this, for "[t]he entire Christian life bears the mark of the spousal love of Christ and the Church. . . . Christian marriage in its turn becomes an efficacious sign, the sacrament of the covenant of Christ and the Church."[56] This emphasis seems to be more consonant with the sacramental vision of marriage described in Eph 5. What is most noteworthy is the manner in which Augustine seems to avoid the plain sense of Eph 5, which is focused on Christ's love more than on the unity of the Church. Clearly, the Catechism takes this scriptural focus with far more serious-ness than does Augustine's view.

In sum, Augustine did not see love to be one of the central goods of marriage, but modern traditions influenced by him do. The question that this leaves is why these traditions have departed from Augustine on this score. And further, where does this leave the Western Church's relationship to Augustine? Has his theology been usurped or bypassed in some degree? Does he represent one step in a trajec-tory, or a figure that has been excluded from the modern concepts of marital love in theology?

In the next section of this essay I will suggest two possible catalysts to this movement in marital theology that, together, may partially account for its direc-tion toward the embrace of marital love.

The Movement of Love

The inclusion of love as a central motif in marriage is a complex and historic-ally-nuanced transition. This essay will not be able to trace all the details of how this has taken place, but, in dialogue with some recent scholarship on love, it will point in a couple of directions that will serve as fruitful ways to begin thinking about this.

A Return to Scripture

Perhaps one of the mechanisms by which marital love has come to be viewed in church documents has been a general movement toward a serious engagement with a scriptural vision of marriage. Commenting on the biblical portrayal of human love, Simon May notes that "[t]he Hebrew Bible nowhere expresses the enormous anxiety about sex that is found in the Christian tradition (less in what Jesus is reported as saying in the Gospels than in dogmas developed after his death, especially with Augustine)."[57] Augustine was certainly concerned about sex, and this was in part a response to Paul's theology, though not the whole of it.

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55 Augustine, *The Excellency of Marriage,* 18.21.
56 *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* 1617.
57 Simon May, *Love: A History*, reprint ed. (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2013), 22.

In Augustine's treatise on marriage, his reading of Scripture is largely focused on the Pauline texts extolling the celibate life, wherein marriage is to be sought as relief for those finding the weight of lust to be unbearable. Willemien Otten picks up on this vein in Augustine, showing us also the contextual realities that may have been pressing in upon him: "[B]y Augustine's time virginity had become a serious rival to marriage as the prime model for Christian life."[58] He goes on to suggest that as Christianity lost its distinctiveness, as the pagan culture was converted around the time of Constantine, Christians increasingly turned to celibacy as a way to reinforce their uniqueness, but this time amongst themselves; this satisfied a felt need for visible separation. It was not that marital love became disreputable, but rather that there was a press toward more wholehearted devotion to God. It was thought that the celibate life was a vehicle particularly well suited to this kind of devotion. Augustine felt his desire to love God more fully could only be satisfied if he took the path of virginity. With this in view, it is possible that Augustine did not want to focus on marital love because he saw it as something that would compete with love for God. Simon May picks upon this:

> And so nothing, Augustine continues in his Platonic vein, is more important than whether love seeks the right object—God, the source and sustainer of our being: the only object of love that can ultimately satisfy human needs—or whether it settles for the easier, more obvious, more immediately pleasing, but ultimately unsatisfactory, realm of the worldly. Since all genuine love is for God, when we love another person we are really loving God in her—and loving her for the sake of God. We never truly love her for anything else about her. Indeed, everything that is merely worldly is to be despised.[59]

While May is correct to point out that God ought to be viewed as the sustainer and ultimate end of love for Augustine, he goes too far in suggesting that for Augustine everything "worldly" was meant to be despised. Peter Cahall takes a more nuanced reading of Augustine here, drawing on both *The Excellence of Marriage* and *De Doctrina Christiana* to remind us that ultimately spouses can use (*uti*) their relationship for the enjoyment (*frui*) of God alone.[60] Yet Cahall is astute in noting that friendship is a good to be desired in itself, and that, "for Augustine, the essence of

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58 Willemien Otten, "Augustine on Marriage, Monasticism, and the Community of the Church," *Theological Studies* 59.3 (1998): 394. Gerald Schlabach picks up on this, suggesting that even sympathetic readers have found Augustine's views on celibacy to be idiosyncratic. Gerald Schlabach, *For the Joy Set before Us: Augustine and Self-Denying Love* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 96. Schlabach does go on here to indicate that Augustine's call to celibacy was something he never tried to universalize. The call was to him, not to all Christians.

59 May, *Love*, 90.

60 Perry Cahall, "The Value of Saint Augustine's Use / Enjoyment Distinction to Conjugal Love," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 8.1 (2005): 122.

the institution of marriage is a unique kind of loving friendship, and according to Augustine's understanding of love, true love is always focused on the good of the other and not on any benefit that the other can provide."[61]

Whatever Augustine may have said about marital love, it pales in comparison with the more robust statements in the Catechism, *Deus caritas est* and the *Book of Common Prayer*. All of these texts are reflections upon the Old and New Testaments. Commenting on *Deus caritas est,* for example, Avery Dulles notes that the Pope thinks Scripture to speak of marriage so often only because it is an icon of Christ's love for the Church and reflects something of God's love.[62] The positive portrayal of love in *Deus caritas est* is the result of a more thorough attention to the fullness of Scripture's witness. Whether or not this more comprehensive reading of Scripture was the conscious reason for the fresh articulation of marital love in the Catholic Church is disputable. Whatever the motive, though**,** in the last half-century, the Magisterium, influenced by the work of theologians such as Von Hildebrand, has elevated love to an equal footing with procreation.[63] In this respect, both for the Catholic Church and for the Reformers in England, a departure from Augustine meant a renewed emphasis on Scripture.

Literary Influence

Sketching a picture of marital love requires the images of Scripture, but the romantic details that are so often thought to inhabit this love come from other sources. Since the time Augustine wrote his treatise of marriage, a new kind love has come to the fore in Western Christianity, different from both the typical depictions of *eros* and *agape*. This more romantic vision of love is what C. S. Lewis describes as "courtly love," a form of love he traces from the eleventh century. This "courtly love" has much in common with what we assume to be part of marital love. Lewis notes:

> It seems—or it seemed to us till lately—a natural thing that love (under certain conditions) should be regarded as a noble and ennobling passion: it is only if we imagine ourselves trying to explain this doctrine to Aristotle, Virgil, St. Paul, or the author of Beowulf, that we become aware how far from natural it is. . . . French poets, in the

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61 Cahall, "The Value of Saint Augustine's Use," 123. Though, one wonders whether Cahall is stretching Augustine's conception of love too far here in applying what Augustine writes about in a general sense to a specific marital relationship. For the complexities of Augustine's understanding of love, see Elena Lombardi, *The Syntax of Desire: Language and Love in Augustine, the Modistae, Dante* (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 26.

62 Avery Cardinal Dulles, "Love, the Pope, and C.S. Lewis," *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life* 169 (2007): 22.

63 Dietrich Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2009). See especially the introduction by John F. Crosby on xiii. Cristina Richie, "Disrupting the Meaning of Marriage?" *Theology & Sexuality* 19.2 (2013): 125.

eleventh century, discovered or invented, or were the first to express, that romantic species of passion which English poets were still writing about in the nineteenth. They effected a change which has left no corner of our ethics, our imagination, or our daily life untouched, and they erected impassable barriers between us and the classical past or the Oriental present. Compared with this revolution the Renaissance is a mere ripple on the surface of literature.[64]

At one time, this conception of "courtly love" that was at once so desirable was often at odds with the religious description of marriage, according to Lewis.[65] It is not clear which overpowered the other, but now, as we have seen in the Catechism and *Book of Common Prayer,* love is no longer reluctantly accepted as a part of conjugal life, but rather celebrated; this includes the moves toward recognizing the legitimacy of the kind of erotic love most vividly portrayed in Song of Songs, for example. Lewis can note, then:

> A nineteenth-century Englishman felt that the same passion—romantic love—could be either virtuous or vicious according as it was directed towards marriage or not. But according to the medieval view passionate love itself was wicked, and did not cease to be wicked if the object of it were your wife. If a man had once yielded to this emotion he had no choice between 'guilty' and 'innocent' love before him: he had only the choice, either of repentance, or else of different forms of guilt.[66]

This change in religious attitude, I suggest, is precisely the development I have traced: a movement away from Augustine and toward a theology of marital love. This is not to say the love described in Ephesian 5 is much like that celebrated in Troubadour poetry; it self-evidently is not. What is clear is that in parts of Scripture love and marriage were intimately linked. In Augustine's writing they were unrelated. With the introduction of "courtly love" and then its gradual sanctification as a legitimate aspect of marriage, we find them reunited once again.[67]

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64 Lewis, *The Allegory of Love,* 2, 3.
65 Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, 13.
66 Lewis, *The Allegory of Love,* 10.
67 For a different take on this, see Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: How Love Conquered Marriage*, annotated ed. (New York: Penguin, 2006). The whole book is helpful in tracing trends in marriage, though on page 23, Coontz suggests that it was not until the last two centuries that people entered marriages for the purpose of love and psychological fulfillment. She presents some compelling evidence for this idea throughout her book, though her focus on this respect is why a couple would enter into a marital union in the first place. This is not to make any claims about why marriages happen, for surely the reasons are manifold in each case and impossible to pin down with any exactitude, especially in a general way, for someone writing centuries afterward. Still, it

Tentative Conclusions

Scripture and poetic literature have impacted a theology of marital love, and because of their influence, Augustine's thought on marriage now stands in a precarious place. It is rather obvious that Augustine's theology of marriage still plays a prominent role in official theologies, especially his focus on the goods of procreation and fidelity.[68] Still, Augustine's tacit refrain when it comes to a description of marital love is representative of a strain of Christianity that departs from both the Scriptures and the thrust of the Western tradition, especially as it has come to fruition in official Church documents in both the Protestant and Catholic traditions. One wonders why Augustine was so silent, especially in view of the texts of Scripture we know he was reading, and in view of his extended discussions of love (albeit of a different kind) in other works. I would argue it is too much to see Augustine's *The Excellence of Marriage* as an aberration from the Western theological tradition, but perhaps it would not be too much to see his work here as representative of a sombre segment of the tradition that has been relegated to the sidelines due to its overlooking or rejection of marital love.[69]

This is not to say Augustine's vision of love has not continued. Stanley Hauerwas, for example, is more attuned to the Augustinian articulation of marriage. Speaking about love and its place between spouses, Hauerwas suggests:

> When couples come to ministers to talk about their marriage ceremonies, ministers think it's interesting to ask if they love one another. What a stupid question! How would they know? A Christian marriage isn't about whether you're in love. Christian marriage is giving you the practice of fidelity over a lifetime in which you can look back upon the marriage and call it love. It is a hard discipline over many years.[70]

Now, Hauerwas is not eschewing love completely, but he is focused rather on the Augustinian good of fidelity, and it is only after this good has been realized that marital love can even be perceived. It may be that Hauerwas is simply taking

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is important to note that**,** for whatever reasons marriages were contracted, in Scripture at least, we see psychologically fulfilling and even thrilling instances of marital love.

68 There is potential for Augustine's good of procreation to be challenged: there is likely a trend of voluntary childlessness in parts of Europe. See Anneli Miettinen and Ivett Szalma, "Childlessness Intentions and Ideals in Europe," *Finnish Yearbook of Population Research* 49 (2014): 33. The degree to which Christians intend childlessness within marriage may influence Christian consensus about the particular good of procreation.

69 John O'Meara reminds us that Augustine is no stranger to the Western tradition in his low view of romantic love; others, such as Montaigne, held very similar views to Augustine. Romantic love was not particularly important in the views of many because it faded so quickly; friendship was more enduring, and thus more laudable. See John J. O'Meara, "St. Augustine's Attitude to Love in the Context of His Influence on Christian Ethics," *Arethusa: A Journal of the Wellsprings of Western Man* 2 (1969), 51–52.

70 Stanley Hauerwas, *The Hauerwas Reader*, ed. John Berkman and Michael G. Cartwright, 1ˢᵗ ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 617.

wedding vows seriously in a culture where they are often spoken with fingers crossed. Writing in a context where fathers are often irresponsible and absent from their own children, Hauerwas is emphasizing that marriage means commitment. But even this emphasis by Hauerwas would suggest, nevertheless, a general acceptance that marriage is something that requires love, and though the character of this love may often be misunderstood, it is commonly held among Christians to be central to married life. And while Hauerwas is given as an example of a theologian that is more in line with Augustine, his work is an exception that proves the rule: marital love is central in the spousal relationship.

Nothing has yet been offered in the way of a constructive account of Christian marital love. Partially, this is because it is so difficult to point to one expression of love and say, "this is it," or to point out several discrete qualities in an attempt to exhaustively describe Christian marital love. The reality is more muddled, but arguably it is possible to offer a rough outline of Christian marital love. Here is a brief outline:

Christian marital love is something that is necessarily rooted in the divinely inspired Christian Scripture. Not Scripture read merely in a propositional, historically referential manner, but rather Scripture when it is read as a united whole. In Scripture, one sees married love to be unitive, stabilizing, erotic, requiring commitment, aiding in fidelity, sacramentally reflecting Christic love, and, finally, procreative. It is not that Augustine is unfaithful to this scriptural vision, but his piecemeal sketches are really not as comprehensive as they ought to have been, even in his treatment of marriage in *The Excellence of Marriage*, which focuses mostly on the negative Pauline passages instead of embracing the wider scriptural witness.[71] Of course this scriptural vision works itself out imperfectly in many cultures and times, but it must remain rooted in the holy writ, anchored even as it is shaped by subsequent Christian traditions. Marriage, then, is a mystery pointing to the much richer reality of Christ's love for his Church, which involves fruitfulness, pain, tenderness, and companionship.

These few pages have only scratched the surface of a theology of married love that is firmly rooted in Scripture. Using Augustine as a focal point, this paper has

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71 It is not as if Augustine is unaware of the wider canonical framing of marriage, for we see him attempting to engage Song of Songs, for instance, in *De Doctrina Christiana,* but here his concern is not the plain sense of the text (as far as I can tell), but a figural reading that arbitrarily draws out the ecclesiological symbolism dormant in the text. For a treatment of this, see F. B. A. Asiedu, "The Song of Songs and the Ascent of the Soul: Ambrose, Augustine, and the Language of Mysticism," *Vigiliae christianae* 55.3 (2001): 308–11. On the other hand, as Hunter makes clear in his introduction to the English translation of *The Excellence of Marriage,* Augustine was faced with pressure from Jerome and Jovinian; Augustine wanted to extol the virtues of marriage against Jerome without capitulating to the heretical Jovinian, who wanted to elevate the married life to the status of celibacy. Augustine was treading a middle road that may have squelched any enthusiasm in him for defending the more erotic elements within marriage that Jerome would have found all the more contentious.

situated his vision of marriage in light of a larger tradition that extends before and after him. It has noted Augustine's contributions to the Western Church, and how they have both encapsulated Scripture in some places and deviated from it in others. Further, this paper has identified some Roman Catholic and Anglican theology that moves toward valuing marital love in its more complete scriptural rooting. More work has yet to be done in further fleshing out the historical developments leading up to the current place that marital love has in official theologies. Further, I hope that this paper could be an aid in spurring on theological reflection on marital love, a subject which has received scant scholarly attention, though much ink has been spilled on the idea of Christian love in a broader sense.

The Diversity of Contemporary Reformed Theology: A New Encyclopedic Introduction with a Case Study

Jamin Andreas Hübner
LCC International University

Abstract

Evangelical Protestantism in North America has undergone considerable evolution in the last century. One of the most notable movements is a resurgence of "reformed theology" and, along with it, the use of countless labels, such as "new Calvinism," "Neocalvinism," "Continental Calvinism," "the Young, Restless, and Reformed" (YRR), "Four-Point Calvinists," "Reformed Baptists," "Confessionally Reformed," "1689ers," "Reformational," "presuppositionalists," etc. Internal debate rages about who is "truly reformed" and what makes this the case. This article develops an original, encyclopedic introduction to contemporary reformed thought in four streams: (1) Confessional Reformed, (2) Calvinist Baptist, (3) Neocalvinist, and (4) Progressive Reformed, identifying the basic ideas, schools, figures, and systematic theologies within each group. It also identifies substantial differences between them, using bibliology as a case study.

Introduction

"Are you reformed?"

This is a question many Christians in North America have been asked in recent times. While the answer is clear for some, it is not for others. Consider the following scenarios:

- A Baptist church in the Midwest splits because of "the doctrines of grace," which is "the heart of reformed theology."
- A college application contains a drop-down menu for religious affiliation, which contains "Reformed," "Presbyterian," and "Lutheran," all as separate entries.

- A seminary professor gets fired for compromising the tenets of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, which is considered a "reformed" doctrine of Scripture.
- A local church that is "trying to be more reformed" refuses to play any instruments that aren't mentioned in the Bible.
- A liberal arts college prohibits faculty drinking with students to enforce its "reformed" identity—while another college *allows* it on the same basis.
- As a "reformed" group, one Presbyterian denomination allows ordained ministers to marry gay couples and sees no threats of its pastors embracing theistic evolution.
- As a "reformed" group, a (different) Presbyterian denomination prohibits such marriages and refuses to ordain anyone who is not young-earth creationist.

Clearly, the term "reformed" is not as meaningful and/or precise as many imagine. As a result, many have searched for clarity,[1] while others try to set the record straight.[2]

However, I suggest that many of these projects point in the wrong direction.[3] Instead of confronting the diversity of reformed theology, providing a meaningful explanation, and offering a thoughtful response, the debate is often whitewashed in order to proliferate a particular ("reformed") ideology. This reaction is more or less a power play—yet another attempt at monopolizing the "reformed" label once and for all to favor a particular group. Genuine variety is covered up, reduced,

1   This is in addition to all the regular infighting within "reformed" denominations and organizations (e.g., the popular rise and fall of professor and pastor members of "The Gospel Coalition," gender and LGBTQI+ debates, countless one-man "reformed" apologetics organizations, tense denominational conflicts over "Federal Vision," the heated exchanges over "two-kingdom theology," economics/racism/environmentalism, etc.).

2   E.g., R. C. Sproul, *What is Reformed Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016); John Piper, *The Five Points: Towards a Deeper Understanding of God's Grace* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2013); R. Michael Allen, *Reformed Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010); James Boyce and Philip Graham Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace: Rediscovering the Evangelical Gospel* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009); Michael Horton, *Putting Amazing Back Into Grace: Embracing the Heart of the Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011). Cf. more advanced works, such as Matthew C. Bingham et al., *On Being Reformed* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) and, with generally a more inclusive perspective, Oliver Crisp, *Deviant Calvinism: Broadening Reformed Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014).

3   This article emerges from my own experience in both academia and in the church. In academia, it emerges from studying theology at Dordt University, Reformed Theological Seminary, and the University of South Africa under a Roman Catholic nun from Zimbabwe (producing, nevertheless, an explicitly "reformed" dissertation). In the church, it emerges from teaching, preaching, and/or attending a variety of "reformed" churches, whether Confessional Reformed Baptist, PCA, PCUSA, Southern Baptist (of an explicitly Calvinist orientation), or otherwise. Jessica (my spouse) has a similar history, being raised Baptist Calvinist and having graduated from Westminster Theological Seminary's Christian Counseling and Education Foundation (CCEF). We currently attend a UCC church (which has roots in the "German Reformed").

and sanitized through a superficial filter, which has no room for variation or honest questions. This makes things more stressful for onlookers, who are then left with a false sense of knowledge that eventually gains popularity (typically in the name of "sound doctrine," "biblical truth," or whatever discourse is trendy at the time). Worse, victims of these tactics are left incapable of building meaningful relationships with other Christians—even within the same broader theological tradition. This creates separatism and a culture of superiority ("we're the *real* reformed Christians"—or worse, "*we're the real Christians*").[4]

The purpose of this article is to confront and understand the theological diversity that exists. Unity was Jesus's goal in the "High Priestly Prayer" of John 17.[5] And genuine unity comes from (at least) intentional tolerance of acknowledged difference, not premature *dismissals* of difference, real or imagined.

This project is not a historical genealogy. Rather, the question is, *if one were to try to identify the varieties of "reformed theology" here and now, what might this look like?* I propose four major strands (with a kind of "control variable" as a fifth):

1. Confessional Reformed
2. Calvinist Baptist
3. Neocalvinist
4. Progressive Reformed
5. The Theology of the Reformers (*control*)

The main (first) four categories are built like a net to catch most of the "reformed theologies" in contemporary North America. Some fish will naturally escape.[6] But, similar to Edward Klink and Darian Lockett in *Understanding Biblical Theology* (who offer five synthetic "types of biblical theology"), this particular organization is designed as a "heuristic schema."[7] It avoids confusing etiologies and cuts to the point.[8] However, as I will argue, these five categories are *more* than a heuristic tool.

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4   Case studies abound in popular media rhetoric. For example, the fundamentalist pastors and YouTube personalities James R. White and Jeff Durbin (Apologia Church) habitually refer to other fellow Confessional Reformed Baptists as "the brethren," while other Christians as "professing Christians." This practice (in this context) galvanizes and validates one's own religious identity while efficiently calling the legitimacy of others into question.

5   The implications of this text in ecumenism were first brought to my attention by the RCA Pastor John Armstrong in personal conversations and in his book *Your Church is Too Small* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014).

6   This includes Lutherans and Anglicans. Regarding the former, this exclusion is largely due to a distinction that took place early on (a) between Luther and Melanchthon, (b) between Calvin and Luther, and (c) between Zwingli and the work of other reformers. Together, these divergences (combined with differences in geography and demographics) forged a considerable gap between the "Lutherans" and the "Calvinists," and between "the Presbyterians" (following Calvin) and "the Reformed" (following Zwingli).

7   Edward Klink III and Darian Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 20–21.

8   Klink and Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology*, 20–21: "Even if a reader may want to adjust the position of one of the types (or their modern examples), the construct presents a useful tool."

They are authentic streams of thought with institutional, literary, and denominational representation.[9]

The fifth category, the "theology of the reformers," means "primarily the thought of Martin Luther and John Calvin." Most readers will find this point uncontroversial. Theology evolves and can traverse great distances. Other readers, however, will be confused. Many self-proclaimed "reformed" Christians are convinced that their version of "reformed theology" is synonymous with "the theology of the reformers." The two cannot be distinguished. On the contrary, one of the implications of this article is that the "theology of the reformers" is not even genuinely represented in many or most of today's embodiments of "reformed theology."[10] So, while one will find plenty of "Calvinists" and "Lutherans" at the local pub, one will be hard-pressed to find an individual, a denomination, or a large institutional representation of "reformed theology" if we mean "the theology of Calvin and Luther."

There are other qualifications about this project. First, it is evident that many "differences" in theology may turn out not to be differences at all. Especially when looking for them, differences in detail can be hazardously manufactured as evidence for digression. I consciously avoid this problem. Furthermore, the post-modern and linguistic turn have shown that debates about what is "true" are frequently the result of *competing discourses* and not simply incompatible propositions. Difference need not mean competition. Finally, there are many ways of explaining the same experience. If my view of a mountain is different than yours, maybe we are looking at a different mountain—or maybe we are looking at the same mountain from different viewpoints.[11]

Second, not all reformed theologians conceive of theology in the same way. For many of the "reformed," "theology" means "doctrine," and "doctrine" means

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9   It would be fair and appropriate to add sub-categories under each of these groups. But this proved too complicated.

10 There is (for example) a substantial difference between the "theology of Calvin" as found in his sixteenth century writings and "Calvinism" today. The same goes for "the theology of Luther" and "Lutheranism" today.

11 Cognitive linguistics has made some interesting contributions here. For instance, Stephen Shaver, "Eucharistic Spirituality and Metaphoric Asymmetry," in *Putting God on the Map: Theology and Conceptual Mapping,* ed. Erin Kidd and Karl Rinderknecht (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2018), 150–51: "Zwingli had come to believe that the Synoptic/Pauline words of institution must be figurative— which meant to him that they could be translated into an underlying literal equivalent: 'This signifies my body.' Neither Luther nor Zwingli questioned an assumption they both shared: that only literal language is adequate to express proper truth claims. . . . Both parties assumed that to agree that the words of institution contained a metaphor would be to agree that they were not, strictly speaking, true, but could rather be translated into an underlying literal equivalent. Recent advances in linguistic study have challenged this assumption. Contemporary developments in cognitive linguistics suggest that metaphor and metonymy are basic functions without which human thought would be profoundly impoverished, and that there is no clearly distinguishable boundary between literal and figurative language, but rather a continuum from more concrete to more abstract concepts—all of which are ultimately grounded in embodied physical experience."

true propositions or principles derived from biblical revelation. "Good theology," then, is generally centered upon factual information.[12] Others, however, are trying to run away from this (evidently) reductionistic and modern understanding of theology as fast and far as possible.[13] Instead of summarizing true propositions and timeless truths of the Bible, "theology" may refer instead to *spirit-directed performance*—because disembodied theology is really no theology at all.[14] Or, as Peter Hodgson argues, theology is a constructive discipline, "rather like sailing" where "the ultimate subject matter…the 'wind' that drives the ship—is *God*."[15] Others, like John Franke, see theology as "an ongoing, second-order, contextual discipline that engages in the task of critical and constructive reflection on the beliefs and practices of the Christian church for the purpose of assisting the community of Christ's followers in their missional vocation to live as the people of God in the particular social-historical context in which they are situated."[16] Michael Bird, also taking his cue somewhat from the post-liberal tradition,[17] says that "Theology is the conversation that takes place between family members in the household of faith about what it means to behold and believe in God."[18]

Zooming out even further are three professors from Calvin University, who say that theology is simply "a reasoned account of the God made known in the history of Israel and supremely revealed in the incarnation of Jesus Christ."[19] Daniel Migliore of Princeton describes theology in primarily interrogative instead of

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12 This general definition of theology is espoused in Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), xxv; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 21; R. C. Sproul, *Everyone's a Theologian* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2014), 11–12, 25; Robert Culver, *Systematic Theology* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2005), 29; Cornelius Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, ed. William Edgar (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2007); John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987), 76. Cf. Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 23; Bruce Riley Ashford and Keith Whitfield, "Theological Method," in *A Theology for the Church,* ed. Daniel Akin (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2014); Charles Swindoll and Roy Zuck, eds., *Understanding Christian Theology* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003). Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 1:16–18, sees no difference between "dogmatics" and "systematic theology," and says that it "deals with the . . . accepted doctrines of the Church."

13 Cf. Jamin Andreas Hübner, "The Progress (Or Extinction?) of Modern Creationism: A Critical Review of Crossway's *Theistic Evolution*," *Canadian-American Theological Review* 7 (2018): 2–55.

14 See Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 260–303.

15 Peter Hodgson, *Winds of the Sprit: A Constructive Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 3.

16 John Franke, *The Character of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 44.

17 See George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1984) and William Placher, *Unapologetic Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989).

18 Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 30.

19 Richard Plantinga, Thomas Thompson, and Matthew Lundberg, *An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

descriptive terms: "theology is not mere repetition of traditional doctrines but a persistent search for the truth to which they point and which they only partially and brokenly express. As continuing inquiry, the spirit of theology is interrogative rather than doctrinaire; it presupposes a readiness to question and to be questioned."[20]

All of the above theologians come from some version of "reformed theology" and yet disagree on what "theology" is or is about. Declaring theology be to a summary of the Bible's teachings is one thing. Declaring it to be public performance, an in-house conversation, a posture of curiosity, linguistic construction driven by the winds of the Spirit, or a theoretical framework of interpretation for a grand story, is quite another.[21] These different views need not be directly contradictory; they may actually complement one another.[22] However, they must also not be simplistically conflated, especially for those who are claiming to simply and authoritatively define theology.

Third and finally, it is clear that the approach of this article is inevitably contingent on the author's own reading and interpretation of sources. In addition to responding carefully to peer review, I have tried to quote as much as possible from representative theologians themselves to ensure that they do the speaking.[23] My analysis will not be acceptable to everyone.

With these prefaces out of the way, what follows is a new encyclopedic introduction to five varieties of contemporary reformed thought. I take this descriptive approach—followed by a topical case study—because it seemed the most effective way to demonstrate the nature and approach of the different reformed theologies. It is also long overdue given the amount of popular confusion on this entire subject.

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20 Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding,* 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 2.

21 I use "meganarrative" instead of "metanarrative" to avoid the baggage surrounding the latter term (and whether or not it can apply to Christianity). This was a big fuss in Myron Penner, ed., *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005)—bigger than was necessary in my opinion.

22 The differences between reformed theologies also extend beyond the question of *what* and into the question of *who*. Should theologizing be restricted to the church (and which church), or is the task of theology (and the Bible) also a "public" task? This line cuts through "reformed" theologies all the same—whether in the context of systematics, biblical theology, or otherwise. The same goes for *who* we are doing theology *for*. (Again, the answers vary depending on which reformed authority is consulted. Theology may be for the entire world [e.g., "public" theology], or it might be just for the believing community, or perhaps for a mixture of both—such as the religious community (those who acknowledge transcendent realities and revelation, but may not confess Christ as Lord). The shape and spirit of entire denominations depend on differing answers to this question alone.

23 It goes without saying that each of subcategories below are associated in different degrees. Some denominations or documents may be closer to the description of the category than others. Some categories, like denominations, are a snapshot in time since they will likely continue to morph over the next several decades. In particularly difficult cases, I have "cross-listed" an item in more than one category and noted this in footnotes.

Confessional Reformed Theology

Descriptive Summary

The Confessional Reformed category essentially represents the "traditionalist," "preservationist," or "conservative" branch of reformed theology. Alternative labels might include "hard Calvinist" (by onlookers) or "deeply Reformed" (by insiders). It has significant historical roots in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Puritanism.[24] Combined with a modern American context, many (but not all)[25] expressions today can be properly described as fundamentalist,[26] focusing on in-out dynamics and fixed lines of doctrinal demarcation, and often exhibit propositionalist biblicism,[27] groupthink, assertiveness in response to alienation (i.e., from the rise of secularism and theological liberalism),[28] and some degree of separatism.

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24 See David Wells, ed., *Reformed Theology in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) in conjunction with Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation* (New York: Viking, 2003) , and David Hall, *The Puritans: A Transatlantic History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

25 Tim Keller (a PCA Pastor in Manhattan), for example, generally lacks the typical authoritarian ethos of this group. Sathianathan Clarke, *Competing Fundamentalisms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2017), along with David Gushee, *Still Christian: Following Jesus Out of Evangelicalism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2016), have suggested that the cleavage between evangelicalism and fundamentalism has largely dissolved since the start of the twenty-first century.

26 Contrary to Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press: 2000), 245, "fundamentalist" is a sociological category in its own right like "Christian," "terrorist," or "demagogue," not solely a pejorative label. One of the most recent sociological definitions comes from Josie McSkimming, *Leaving Christian Fundamentalism and the Reconstruction of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 40: "Christian fundamentalism may be understood as a totalizing and highly influential social movement, thoroughly adept in the acculturation of its participant members through embracing and promoting a defensive collective identity, suspicious of 'the other' but also committed to mission and evangelism. It is apparent that a guarded, fortressed and self-perpetuating inward focus (with requisite identity specifications) emerges." See also George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); James Barr, "Fundamentalism," in *The Collected Essays of James Barr*, ed. John Barton, vol. 2, part V (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) ; Luca Ozzano, "Religious Fundamentalism," in *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics*, ed. Jeffrey Haynes (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016); Harriet Harris, "Fundamentalism," in *The Routledge Companion to Modern Christian Thought*, ed. Chad Meister and James Beilby (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2013); Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). See also the five-volume *Fundamentalisms Project* by University of Chicago Press.

27 Or "bibliolatry." For critical perspectives by other Christians, see Jamin Andreas Hübner, *Deconstructing Evangelicalism* (Rapid City: Hills Publishing Group, 2019); Craig Allert, *A High View of Scripture?: The Authority of the Bible and the Formation of the New Testament Canon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); Carlos Bovell, *Inerrancy and the Spiritual Formation of Younger Evangelicals* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007); Carlos Bovell, *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Authority of Scripture: Historical, Biblical, and Theoretical Perspectives* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011); Carlos Bovell, *Rehabilitating Inerrancy in a Culture of Fear* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012); James Dunn, *The Living Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); Christian Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2012), and the popular works of Peter Enns.

28 Cf. Clarke, *Competing Fundamentalisms*, and Hodgson, *Winds of the Spirit,* 58-60, who says, "The resurgence of conservative and evangelical Christianity in recent years is symptomatic both of the magnitude of the experienced threat and of the deep desire to recover stable ethical and religious foundations in a topsy-turvy age. . . . The predominant representations of religion in our culture have become anachronistic and anti-intellectual; what is offered too frequently is a fundamentalist

In this framework, "theology" is virtually indistinguishable from doctrine, and doctrine is what the doctrinal standards (creeds/confessions) contain, and what the doctrinal standards contain is simply "the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures."[29] This doctrinal system is ultimately a web (or list) of true propositions extracted from the inerrant text of God's Word[30] (either the *Textus Receptus* or a theoretical, singular autographic text).[31] Thus, to seriously question the doctrinal standards is to (*functionally*) question the entire system and, eventually, to question God. This means that deviations from the established doctrinal (confessional) norms are generally viewed with suspicion, and the ethical systems promoted are (at least from the perspective of outsiders) notoriously strict.[32] Much of this proves to be a point of tension given the idea of "always reforming" (*Semper Reformanda*). Indeed, in this category, the past tense of "reformed" comes out the most, and concerns about being "the true Reformed Christians" comes out the strongest.

The dynamics of the Christian life are generally viewed as an extension from these doctrinal foundations. With the right theology, everything else in the

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embrace of traditional beliefs and values and an explicit refusal to enter into dialogue with modernity. Religion provides a convenient escape for those who lack the strength to cope with the threats of modernity."

29 This phrase comes from the "Declaratory Statement" of the 1903 American revision to the Westminster Standards. It is frequently found on the websites of various Confessional Reformed organizations.

30 Major works supporting inerrancy from a Confessional Reformed perspective include N. B. Stonehouse and Paul Woolley, eds., *The Infallible Word: A Symposium by the Members of the Faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1967); Vern Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview: Answering Modern Challenges to the Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012); Vern Poythress, *Inerrancy and the Gospels: A God-Centered Approach to the Challenges of Harmonization* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012); E. J. Young, *Thy Word is Truth* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1972); Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God at His Word* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016).

31 The most recent and engaging debate on this subject is Douglas Wilson and James R. White, *Debating the Text of the Word of God* (Simposio, 2017). The debate largely revolves around what the *WCF* (and other reformed confessions) was referring to when it talks about the text of the Bible being preserved since a very limited selection of manuscripts were available in the mid-1600s (when the Westminster Standards were written). From Wilson's perspective, the question is how the *WCF* can be referring to a textual tradition—e.g., the early uncials and papyri—that wasn't available to the authors of the *WCF* (and didn't need to be). White, on the other hand, gives priority to a theoretical autographic text because the poor textual quality of the TR is well-known. But this appears to insert a contemporary concern into the intentions of the Westminster "divines" (authors), as well as of Jesus and the biblical authors, who appeared not to care about a theoretical autographic text. See Timothy Law, *When God Spoke Greek* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013) in conjunction with Brennan Breed, *Nomadic Text: A Theory of Biblical Reception History* (Indianapolis: India University Press, 2014).

32 There are other implications of this chain of thought—such as the idea that the biblical authors all understood and taught the same "system of doctrine." It would obviously be anachronistic (at the very least) to suggest that Paul, Peter, James, and other NT authors would have faithfully subscribed to "the five points of Calvinism" or the *Westminster Confession of Faith* if confronted with them in the first century. Nevertheless, this remains the general belief of many Confessional Reformed.

Christian life should generally fall into place. If there is any trouble, it can be assumed that faulty doctrine is somewhere to be found—or at least an inconsistent application of it.

Contemporary Figures

Kevin DeYoung, Robert Yarbrough, Tim Challies, R. C. Sproul, R. C. Sproul Jr., John Frame, Tim Keller, Vern Poythress, J. Ligon Duncan III, Michael Horton, R. Scott Clark, Douglas Wilson[33]

DOCUMENTS

    A. *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1648)—along with shorter and longer catechisms (together, with the *Book of Order,* are called the Westminster Standards). The *WCF* is thirty-three solid chapters of propositional doctrine, which was sponsored by the English parliamentary government and completed from 1646–48 by the "Westminster Divines." As a product of its time, its language, epistemology, and instruction on ethics indicate its European seventeenth-century context; the Standards are literary and theological artifacts of "Post-Reformation Scholasticism."[34] Many of these particularities in the *WCF* were excised and/or changed in the 1788 and 1903 revisions to it—changes that some accept and others reject.[35] Regardless, the Westminster system reached its apex in the work of Francis Turretin (1623–1687), which (still in Latin) became the default theological framework for Princeton Theological Seminary in America until the early 1900s. The *WCF* remains one of the most widely used Reformed confessions in the world (often simply referred to as "The Confession").

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33 The full spectrum of this group would probably locate Keller on the furthest "left" and Wilson on the farthest "right," though I realize these binary polarities are sometimes unhelpful or irrelevant.

34 For a thorough study on this topic, see Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725,* 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003). For a more concise and light treatment on the evolution of theology, including this period and topic, see William Placher, *A History of Christian Theology,* 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013) along with his two primary-source compendium volumes, *Readings in the History of Theology*, 2 vols. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015 and 2017).

35 E.g., removing the claim that the Pope is the anti-Christ, the sections that essentially wedded church and state, etc. Despite having a redaction/revision history and touting *Semper Reformanda* slogan, most Confessional Reformed are staunchly opposed to changing the Standards today. The event of the Westminster Assembly of the 1600s is generally viewed as the apex of doctrinal development, from which all Christians today are called to master, teach and re-teach, and embody. (Reformed Baptists are particularly zealous about the arrival of their confessional event in history, with "1689" appearing on apparel, digital avatars, email addresses and aliases, and even bodily tattoos.).

B. *Second-London Baptist Confession of Faith* (*LBCF*, 1689). A (second) Baptist revision of the *WCF,* with revisions to covenant theology, baptism, and other topics, but mostly unchanged.[36] Followers of this confession are known as "Confessional Reformed Baptists" or "Particular Baptists."

C. The "Three Forms of Unity" (A representation of "Continental Calvinism" because of its geographical representation; retains much of the same doctrinal content as the Westminster Standards.)

   a. *Belgic Confession* (1561, orig. French). Authored by a Dutch pastor and named after the *Belgica,* the Low Countries in present day Netherlands and Belgium.

   b. *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563, orig. German). Commissioned by Elector Palantine Frederick III (1515–1576) in the Kingdom of Germany as a teaching tool for churches.

   c. *Canons of the Synod of Dordt* (1618–1619, orig. Dutch). A list of canons that condemn Arminianism. This same synod added the previous two documents (above) to its approved theological documents, thus forming the "Three Forms of Unity."

D. *Second Helvetic Confession* (1560s). Written by Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575), published by Elector Palantine Frederick III, and endorsed by churches in Hungary, Poland, France, Scotland, and Switzerland.

E. *Helvetic Consensus* (1675). The most scholastic and strict of the reformed confessions and also the most representative of Turretin's thought.[37]

F. *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* (1978).[38] A primarily American doctrinal statement produced by both evangelical fundamentalists and Confessional Reformed pastors and theologians. It outlines a particularly strict understanding of the Bible's truthfulness and inspiration. While dated in its orientation of textual criticism (and "the originals") and typically not integrated into denominations, the document remains a benchmark (and requirement) for many seminaries, colleges, and organizations.

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36 The First London Baptist Confession was in 1644.
37 This particular document infamously ascribed inerrancy and inspiration to the vowel-points of the Hebrew Masoretic text.
38 Cross-listed under "Calvinist Baptist" below.

DENOMINATIONS[39]

1. Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). The second largest Presbyterian body in the U.S. Candidates for ordination must substantially adhere to the Westminster Standards but may have minor exceptions approved by the Presbytery.

2. Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). Perhaps the most conservative of Confessional Reformed denominations.

3. Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS). A descendant of the German Reformed Church and also a dissenting body of the 1934 United Church of Christ (UCC) initiative.

4. Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC). Allows local congregations to ordain women and tends to be more charismatic than PCA and OPC.

5. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC)

6. United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA)

7. Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC). Supported and influenced by Douglas Wilson, and James Jordan, and one of the few Reformed denominations that affirm paedo-communion and "Federal Vision" theology.[40]

8. Association of Reformed Baptist Churches in America (ARBCA). A pseudo-denomination of 1689 *LBCF*-subscribing churches.[41]

SCHOOLS

1. Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia, PA), or "Westminster East." Started by Princeton professors (John Machen, Cornelius Van Til) after Princeton "went liberal" and sees itself as having "preserved the heritage of old Princeton and passed it on to WSC."[42]

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39 See also Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC); Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA); Heritage Reformed Churches (HRC); American Presbyterian Church (APC); Bible Presbyterian Church (BPC); Netherlands Reformed Congregations (NRC); Protestant Reformed Churches in America (PRCA); Covenant Presbyterian Church (CPC); Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church (CRPC); Sovereign Grace Fellowship of Canada.

40 Federal Vision theology largely centers around the nature of God's covenant with chosen people and how it comes into being in the ordinances/sacraments of baptism and Lord's Table. Even though it is already an extreme minority view, Wilson found it necessary to publicly distance himself from it. His essay "Federal Vision No Mas" (dougwils.com, January 17, 2017) reads, "I have finally become convinced that the phrase *federal vision* is a hurdle that I cannot get over, under or around. . . . I have come to believe that my robust defense up and down the line *contributed* to the group-think that was going on."

41 ARBCA recently split over "divine impassibility" and the pastoral-coverup of pastor Tom Chantry's known charges of sexual abuse. (He was sentenced to twenty-four years in prison in summer of 2019). In October 2019, the Association held a vote to dissolve, which failed, and continues to lose more of its forty or so member churches.

42 "History," *Westminster Seminary California*, https://www.wscal.edu/about-wsc/history

According to its website, "Machen left the prestige of Princeton to stand for the truth of the Bible. He knew that theological compromise would harm the spiritual power of the church."[43]

2. Westminster Theological Seminary (Escondido, CA), or "Westminster West." Was a branch of Westminster Seminary East until becoming independent in 1979. It maintains partnership with Institute of Reformed Baptist Studies and remains one of the last seminaries in the United States that prohibits women from earning MDiv degrees.[44]

3. Reformed Theological Seminary (Jackson, MS; Charlotte, NC; Washington DC; Orlando, FL; Atlanta, GA; Memphis, TN; Dallas, TX; Houston, TX; New York City, NY). Founded in 1966 by conservatives from the Southern Presbyterian Church.

4. Covenant Theological Seminary (PCA)

5. Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

6. Covenant Baptist Theological Seminary. The main (only?) Confessional Reformed Baptist Seminary.

7. New Saint Andrews College (led by CREC Board members). Co-founded by Douglas Wilson and home to "Federal Vision," paedo-communion, and a constellation of other esoteric beliefs. Shares ties with the Theopolis Institute (James Jordan and Peter Leithart, who was NSA faculty).[45]

ORGANIZATIONS

1. Evangelical Theological Society (ETS).[46] Not explicitly "Reformed" but exhibits a very strong presence of Confessional Reformed and Calvinist Baptist members, and also exhibits a fundamentalist orientation.[47]

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43 "Our History," *Westminster Theological Seminary*, https://www.wts.edu/history/

44 Most other seminaries that prohibit women pastors simply prohibit women's ordination, not their earning of degrees.

45 See also Whitefield Theological Seminary; Knox Theological Seminary; Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary; Erskine Theological Seminary (ARPC); New Geneva Theological Seminary; Covenant Baptist Theological Seminary; Universitas Pelita Harapan (Indonesia); Covenant College (PCA); Erskine College (ARPC); Providence Christian College; Geneva College; Whitefield College.

46 Cross-listed under "Baptist Calvinist" below.

47 I.e., the original doctrinal statement of ETS was a sentence on the inerrancy of Scripture. However, after it became apparent that Mormons and other groups could be members, they added a statement on the Trinity (oddly, with an indefinite article). The doctrinal infighting was so toxic that it "split" twice, first in 1970–73 (introducing the Institute for Biblical Research, IBR), and again in 1990 (introducing the Canadian Evangelical Theological Association, CETA). Because (a) ETS's environment remains troublesome, (b) IBR is narrowly focused on biblical studies, and (c) post-conservative and post-liberal Christianity is growing exponentially, CETA recently became the Canadian-American Theological Society (CATA); it remains the only Christian, theological and ecumenical academic organization in North America.

2. Founders Ministries. Formerly "the Southern Baptist Founders Conference," a Confessional Reformed and Confessional Baptist group within the SBC led by Tom Ascol.[48]

3. World Reformed Fellowship. Founded by the PCA and focuses on uniting explicitly inerrantist and Confessional Reformed Christians.

4. The Gospel Coalition.[49] Started by D. A. Carson and Tim Keller (PCA) and boasts one of the highest-traffic evangelical blogs on the internet. The website says, "We are a fellowship of evangelical churches in the Reformed tradition deeply committed to renewing our faith in the gospel of Christ and to reforming our ministry practices to conform fully to the Scriptures."[50]

5. Institute for Reformed Baptist Studies. A course-credit program at Westminster Seminary West under James Renihan.

6. Presbyterian Reformed Ministries International

7. Ligonier Ministries (created by the late R. C. Sproul)

8. Theopolis Institute. Founded by Peter Leithart and James Jordan (both CREC), a small institute seeking to promote its highly idiosyncratic version of reformed theology in society.

9. Sovereign Nations.[51] A nationalist and politically conservative activist organization founded by Confessional Reformed Baptist Michael O'Fallon.

10. Ezra Institute for Contemporary Christianity. A conservative Neocalvinist organization in Toronto sympathetic to theonomy and the thought of Evan Runner.[52]

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48 The organization recently split over the *By What Standard?* video documentary; several board members stepped down after the public release of the trailer.

49 Cross-listed with "Baptist Calvinist" below.

50 "Foundation Documents," *The Gospel Coalition* (accessed December 12, 2017), https://www. thegospelcoalition.org/about/foundation-documents. TGC started in 2005.

51 Cross-listed with "Baptist Calvinist" below.

52 One might think of it as the fundamentalist, non-degree offering version of the Institute for Christian Studies.

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Calvinist Baptist Reformed Theology

Summary Description

Calvinist Baptists are like the Confessional Reformed in many ways except for a handful of differences. First, infant baptism is rejected, and believer's baptism is upheld. Second, Reformed confessions, catechisms, and similar documents tend not to have the same elevated status.[53] Third, the theology and overall ethos differs at various sub-points (see below).

The first subpoint surrounds the topic of biblical theology (or "canonical-theology," "whole-Bible theology," "redemptive-historical theology"). Calvinist Baptists exhibit a number of different frameworks such as dispensationalism, progressive dispensationalism, new covenant theology, and progressive covenantalism.[54] This diversity is largely due to less "confessionalism," since most of the Reformed confessions—originating from the same 150-year period—give little wiggle-room on this topic. Calvinist Baptists center their thought on certain aspects of Reformed theology, such as the Five Points of Calvinism,[55] the "Five

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53 Cf. Oliver Crisp, *Saving Calvinism: Expanding the Reformed Tradition* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2016), 18: "Many of those today who rally around the five points of Calvinism are themselves guilty of cherry-picking what they want to hold as Christians who are Reformed. Arguably, Reformed theology includes a particular account of theological authority that includes a role for creeds and confessions—something often sidelined in contemporary popular accounts of Reformed thinking."

54 See Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody, 2007); Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000); Fred Zaspel and Tom Wells, *New Covenant Theology* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2002); and Stephen Wellum and Brent Parker, eds., *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2016), respectively.

55 Typically summarized as Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement (or "Particular Redemption"), Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints (sometimes equivocated or substituted with "Eternal Security"). Hence the acronym, "TULIP." Although the basic substance of this conglomeration of ideas can be found in the Canons of Dordt (1619), according to Kenneth Stewart, *Ten Myths About Calvinism: Recovering the Breadth of the Reformed Tradition* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011), the earliest known use of the TULIP acronym is from a 1913 newspaper article.

Solas of the Reformation,"[56] or the all-encompassing sovereignty and providence of God.[57]

A second subpoint that divides Confessional Reformed and Calvinist Baptists is the divergence in denominational and institutional representation. Calvinist Baptists are represented only in a handful of denominational (and quasi-denominational) organizations and colleges/seminaries, with their main presence among independent Baptist churches and a few popular para-church ministries.

Finally, Calvinist Baptists seem to have a louder voice in public "culture wars" and tend to be more popular. In terms of the number of radio listeners and podcast downloads, John Piper, Albert Mohler, and John MacArthur will (at least in my estimation) surpass virtually any of the Confessional Reformed figures by a substantial margin.

All of these distinctives have forged a different set of denominations, schools, institutional loyalties, publishing houses,[58] and theological treatises. It is important to note that the largest Protestant denomination in the U.S., the Southern Baptist Convention, has been split over Calvinism for many decades. This embittered factionalism was publicly incarnated in the competing careers of Paige Patterson (the strongly anti-Calvinist President of Southwestern Theological Seminary) and Albert Mohler (the strongly pro-Calvinist President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary).[59] As I will note below, this divide is partly due to the Baptists' own confessionalism and not necessarily due to raw popularity and political maneuvers.

CONTEMPORARY FIGURES

John Piper, Wayne Grudem, John MacArthur, Albert Mohler, D. A. Carson, Mark Driscoll, Matt Chandler, Mark Dever, Alistair Begg, Daniel Akin, Chuck Swindoll, Daniel Wallace, Sam Storms, Denny Burk

DOCUMENTS

1. *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* (1978).[60] For Calvinist

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56 *Sola Scriptura, Sola Christus, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Sola Deo Gloria.*

57 This is one reason why the category is labeled "Calvinist Baptist" and not "Reformed Baptist." The second reason is because "Reformed Baptist" (or "Particular Baptist") typically refers to Baptists who adhere to the *Second London Baptist Confession* (listed above), which is a narrow subset to which I'm not here referring.

58 For example, Crossway remains the go-to publisher for Calvinists Baptists, Baker (and Baker Academic) for broader Protestant-Reformed authors, and Presbyterian and Reformed for the Confessional Reformed—though there is lots of cross-fertilization.

59 Patterson was forced to step down in summer of 2018 due to allegations of misconduct. See Kate Shellnut, "Paige Patterson Fired by Southwestern, Stripped of Retirement Benefits," *Christianity Today* (May 30, 2018). He was recently found guilty of covering up the rapes of a promising, charismatic SBC preacher and suppressing the voices of those he impregnated. See Robert Downen, "Women are Hurting," *Houston Chronicle* (August 22, 2019).

60 Cross-listed above under "Confessional Reformed."

Baptists, it tends to function as a litmus test not just for Protestant, Reformed, or evangelical theology, but for Christian orthodoxy in general.

2. *The Abstract Principles of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary* (1858). The confession/doctrinal statement of the flagship SBC seminary. It is Calvinist in orientation, including a section on "divine election," the fall of man (where the sinner is "wholly opposed to God and His law"), regeneration (which "is a work of God's free and special grace alone"), and "Perseverance of the Saints" (generally worded after the *WCF*).

3. *The Baptist Faith and Message* (1925, 1963, 2000). The official doctrinal statement of the Southern Baptist Convention (and affiliates). It is a hybrid of the *New Hampshire Confession* (1833) and *Abstract Principles.*[61] The 1963 revision added new sections, including one on the "Family" that defines the permanent roles of husbands (leadership) and wives (subordination to leadership).[62] The 2000 revision introduced even more content, such as sections on "Education," "Missions and Evangelism," "Social Services," "Cooperation," and "Stewardship." The section on "Church" added "the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture" (ruling out women pastors).[63] The *BF&M* is listed here under "Calvinist Baptists" because its Calvinist orientation is debated (see below), and, because of the size of the SBC, may exert considerable influence amongst "reformed" communities.

4. *Truth, Trust, and Testimony in a Time of Tension* (2013). "A Statement from the Calvinism Advisory Committee" of the SBC that urges "Southern Baptists to grant one another liberty in those areas within *BF&M* where differences in interpretation cause us to disagree." In a series of affirmations and denials, the document affirmed

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61 Some (but not all) of the Calvinist overtones have been softened. Discarding the *Abstract Principle*'s section on "Election," *BF&M* uses the *New Hampshire Confession*'s section "God's Purpose of Grace"; the "Fall of Man" has been revised; regeneration as "a work of God's free and special grace alone" is modified to be "a work of God's free grace conditioned upon faith in Christ"; the "Perseverance of the Saints" is condensed and simplified under "Perseverance."

62 "He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation."

63 This is despite the fact that "Three quarters (73.1%) of female Southern Baptists favor women in the pulpit, compared to just 58.1% of Southern Baptist men." See Ryan Burge, "Why Southern Baptists are unlikely to get female pastors," *Religion News Service* (June 11, 2019).

that Southern Baptists can be either Arminian or Calvinist but rejects "hyper-Calvinism" and extreme variants of Arminianism.[64]

5. *The Cambridge Declaration* (1996). Produced by the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, an exposition of the Five Solas that explicitly ties "evangelical" identity to the theology of "the reformation."[65]

6. *The Danvers Statement* (1987). Authored and endorsed by a number of prominent Calvinist Baptists. Produced by the Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW), the document is the larger predecessor to the *BF&M* short section on the Family. It outlines a model of manhood and womanhood (dubbed "complementarianism") and prohibits women pastors. Although not immediately a statement on "Reformed" doctrine, the Danvers Statement has been adopted by various Reformed institutions, institutions, and organizations and functions as a benchmark for Christian orthodoxy regarding gender, marriage, and women-in-ministry topics.[66]

7. *The Nashville Statement* (2017). Also authored by CBMW; a statement on gender, especially as it relates to homosexuality, transgender persons, and self-identity. It has been added to the list of required doctrinal statements for faculty at SBTS and was upheld by the PCA in 2019 but has not yet gained significant recognition.

8. *T4G Affirmations and Denials* (2006). A doctrinal statement put together by the inaugural "Together for the Gospel" conference. Essentially a condensed version of TGC's "Founding Documents" (2005).

DENOMINATIONS

1. The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). As noted above, the SBC's Calvinist identity is disputed. Regardless, the Calvinist strand within the denomination has a very strong presence and influence.

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64 Despite ambiguity regarding interpretation of the *Baptist Faith and Message* and direct ties to Calvinist ideas, the document says "We . . . deny that The Baptist Faith and Message is insufficient as the doctrinal basis for our cooperation. Other Baptist Confessions are not to be lenses through which The Baptist Faith and Message is to be read. The Baptist Faith and Message alone is our expression of common belief." Calvinism Advisory Committee of the SBC, "Trust, Truth, and Tension," *SBCLife* (June 2013). In this sense, strict Southern Baptists are, indeed, quite "confessional."

65 The statement says: "Evangelicals also shared a common heritage in the 'solas' of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation. Today the light of the Reformation has been significantly dimmed. The consequence is that the word 'evangelical' has become so inclusive as to have lost its meaning."

66 Indeed, it is difficult to find a Confessional Reformed or Calvinist Baptist person or group that substantially disagrees with the *Danvers Statement*.

2. Sovereign Grace Churches. An association of Baptist, Calvinist churches with a charismatic ("continuationist") orientation.
3. Acts 29 Network. A church-planting network with an explicitly complementarian and Calvinist bent. Co-founded by Mark Driscoll and also influenced by Matt Chandler.
4. Continental Baptist Churches. A small association of Baptist Calvinist churches with a New Covenant orientation.

SCHOOLS

1. Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Although not explicitly Reformed, many or most faculty of this well-known evangelical seminary are Calvinist Baptists.
2. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBC). One of the largest seminaries in the world.[67] As noted above, its original doctrinal statement is Calvinist in orientation.
3. The Master's College and Seminary. Founded and led by radio expositor John MacArthur; dispensational, Baptist, Calvinist.
4. Toronto Baptist Seminary and Bible College
5. Bethlehem College and Seminary. Based out of Bethlehem Baptist Church in St. Paul, MN (where John Piper was pastor).
6. Boyce College (SBC). The undergraduate arm of SBTS.

ORGANIZATIONS

1. Evangelical Theological Society (ETS)[68]
2. The Gospel Coalition (TGC)[69]
3. The Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. Like others, not explicitly Calvinist or "Reformed" but tends to share such theological orientations.
4. Grace to You Ministries (John MacArthur)
5. Shepherds Conference. A large, annual event of primarily Calvinist Baptists produced by Grace Community Church (where John MacArthur served as Pastor).
6. Together for the Gospel ("T4G"). A conference of primarily TGC members.
7. Desiring God Ministries (John Piper)

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67 As of 2019, the three largest seminaries in the U.S. (and likely North America) are all Southern Baptist. See Chelsen Vicari, "What are America's largest seminaries in 2019"? *Christian Post* (October 1, 2019).
68 Cross-listed above under "Confessional-Reformed."
69 Cross-listed above under "Confessional Reformed."

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Neocalvinist Reformed Theology

Summary Description

Neocalvinist reformed theology (or "Neocalvinism") enters the scene with the rise of modernity and work of several thinkers, pastors, and theologians from the 1800s, most notably Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920) and Herman Bavinck (1854–1921).[70] Generally speaking, Neocalvinism is (a) Dutch Reformed theology tempered by modernism, and (b) the more direct theological and intellectual descendant of John Calvin, having sidestepped both the entrenched scholasticism of Turretin and the fundamentalism of American evangelicalism. Given this orientation and the particular intellectual influences of the sixteenth and seventeenth century before Neocalvinism, Confessional Reformed theology and Baptist Calvinism may be considered deviations from the "theology of the reformers" (see the fifth category below) while Neocalvinism is an *revised extension* of the "theology of the reformers." All, of course, still remain "reformed theology," but the ideological paths through history are different and therefore give rise to different trajectories.

One scholar summarizes the distinctives of Neocalvinism in four points:

1. Neocalvinism insists on a comprehensive and integrated understanding of creation, fall and redemption.
2. Neocalvinism emphasizes God's good and dynamic order for creation.

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70 Following in their footsteps are a number of notable philosophers such as Herman Dooyeweerd (1894–1977), Evan Runner (1916–2002), and Roy Clouser. Note also that Neocalvinism is also regularly called "Kuyperianism," though some would distinguish the latter as a subset of the former.

3. Neocalvinism affirms the historical development or differentiation of creation.

4. Neocalvinism recognizes an ultimate religious conflict: the antithesis, in all of life.[71]

With the Confessional Reformed, Neocalvinists affirm the Westminster Standards and/or the Three Forms of Unity, but loosely. Instead of functioning as the explicit, active, internal grammar and focus of theological work, they are viewed as historical starting points instead of permanent points of arrival. While the eschatological emphasis in Confessional Reformed theology points towards converting more people to reformed confessionalism, Neocalvinism focuses more directly on the creative development of God's kingdom and the restoration of all of creation under Christ's Lordship. What exactly this "Lordship" embodiment should look like is internally debated. But modern dualisms like the sacred/secular, natural/supernatural, and others are regularly questioned. The result tends to be a grounded but noticeably open and "big-picture" ethos, with noticeable flickers of the *semper reformanda* spirit.

To quickly draw all of these distinctions in contrast to other views, Neocalvinists frequently use the label "reformational theology" instead of "reformed theology."

Contemporary Figures

David Bosch, Brian Walsh, Sylvia Keesmaat, Craig Bartholomew, James K. A. Smith, James Skillen, Roy Clouser, J. Richard Middleton,[72] Alvin Plantinga, Richard Plantinga, Richard Mouw, Nicholas Wolterstorff

Documents

1. Westminster Standards[73]
2. Three Forms of Unity[74]
3. *Belhar Confession* (1982). A response to the Dutch Reformed church's participation in South African apartheid. The Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DMRC) adopted the Belhar Confession as its "Fourth Form of Unity" in 1986, followed by acceptance in the Reformed Church of America (RCA) in 2010 and Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in 2012.[75] The short statement (originally in

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71 Craig Bartholomew, "Relevance of Neocalvinism for Today," *The Kuyperian* (2004), accessed 11/28/2017, http://kuyperian.blogspot.com/2004/09/relevance-of-neocalvinism-for-today.html.

72 Middleton identifies as a "Wesleyan Neocalvinist."

73 Cross-listed under "Confessional-Reformed" above.

74 Cross-listed under "Confessional-Reformed" above.

75 The CRC, however, did not adopt the Belhar as one of its "confessions" but as part of a new category called "ecumenical faith declaration." For some this was a good compromise, while others

Afrikaans) focuses on themes of unity, justice, reconciliation, diversity, and freedom.

4. *The Accra Confession* (2004). Produced by the World Council of Reformed Churches; "states that matters of economic and ecological justice are not only social, political and moral issues, they are integral to faith in Jesus Christ and affect the integrity of the church." Mainly critical of "economic neoliberal globalism"—the negative effects of globalized economies on society and environment, but is cautious not to endorse command economies as an answer.

5. Associated schools and denominations have written a host of theological, social, and ethical statements on topics of contemporary interest.[76]

DENOMINATIONS

1. Christian Reformed Church (CRC)
2. Reformed Church in America (RCA)

SCHOOLS[77]

1. Calvin Seminary (CRC)
2. Western Theological Seminary (RCA) (Michigan)
3. Calvin University (CRC)
4. Dordt University (CRC)
5. Northwestern College (RCA) (Iowa)
6. Kuyper College
7. Trinity Western University (British Columbia)
8. Trinity Christian College (Illinois)
9. Redeemer University College (Ontario)
10. The Free University (Amsterdam)
11. Institute for Christian Studies (Ontario)
12. Hope College (RCA)[78]
13. The Kings College (Alberta)

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saw it as embodying a (ironic) "separate but equal" status. It was a bitter debate for some in the CRC.

76　E.g., Kuyper College's "Statement on Racism," Hope College's "Position Statement on Homosexuality," the RCA's General Synod statements on "Christian Zionism," "Immigration," "Gun Control," "Gambling," "Abortion," etc.

77　Note that some of these institutions have no formal association with or oversight from the CRC or RCA but have a strong connection to these denominations and were founded by Neocalvinists.

78　Cross-listed under "Progressive-Reformed" below.

ORGANIZATIONS

1. Cardus
2. The Center for Public Justice
3. Christian Labor Association of Canada (CLAC)
4. The Coalition for Christian Outreach (CCO)
5. Association of Reformed Colleges and Universities (ARCU)

THEOLOGICAL WORKS

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Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics*. 4 vols. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.

———. *Our Reasonable Faith.* Translated by Henry Zylstra. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956.

Berkhof, Hendrikus. *Christian Faith.* Translated by Sierd Woudstra. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979.

———. *Studies in Dogmatics* (series). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952–1955.

Brownson, James. *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013.

Crisp, Oliver. *Deviant Calvinism: Broadening Reformed Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014.[79]

Dooyeweerd, Herman. *The Twilight of Western Thought.* Grand Rapids: Reformational Publishing Project, 2012 (orig. 1960).

Hoeksema, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics.* 2 vols. Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2005.[80]

Kuyper, Abraham. *Principles of Sacred Theology.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954.

Middleton, J. Richard, and Brian Walsh. *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian Worldview.* Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1984.

Plantinga, Richard, Thomas Thompson, and Matthew Lundberg. *An Introduction to Christian Theology.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Smith, James K. A. *Cultural Liturgies* (series). Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009, 2013, 2017.

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79 Crisp identifies as a "Reformed Catholic," whose views are idiosyncratic. It appears here because I didn't want to exclude his book from these bibliographies, and it seemed to fit best under Neocalvinism. He also authored *Saving Calvinism: Expanding the Reformed Tradition* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2016) and *Retrieving Doctrine: Essays in Reformed Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011).

80 Hoeksema isn't entirely representative given his rejection of Kuyper's popular teaching on "common grace," along with other eccentricities.

Smith, James K. A., and James Olthuis, eds. *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition: Creation, Covenant, and Participation.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.

Spykman, Gordon. *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.

Wolters, Albert. *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

Progressive Reformed

Summary Description

The Progressive Reformed is in many ways the "liberal" opposite of the Confessional Reformed. It tends to be more "forward-looking" than "backward-looking." Instead of recreating an expression of Christian thought, worship, and life after a golden era of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century reformed thought, adaptation and change is viewed as essential to survive and stay effective. Far from gearing up for war like the fundamentalists, the Progressive Reformed respond to Modernism with olive branches instead of bombs. A spirit of liberty, openness, sensitivity, and inclusiveness predominates the overall ethos.

The classic Reformed Confessions play a very small (if any) role in the local church and seminary. But it would be unfair to say that such documents play no role at all.[81] In fact, in the spirit of the Reformation, everything should be regularly re-evaluated; the church ought to "sing to the Lord a new song." This means new confessions, new perspectives, new theologies, and new embodiments of the gospel.[82] For "it is a mistake to limit 'the Reformed tradition' to a set of beliefs from the past."[83] More than all other branches of reformed thought, progressives seek to hear the Spirit of God in those outside a particular denomination and, indeed, outside the Christian faith itself. Ideas and activities hardly considered possible in other frameworks (e.g., interfaith dialogues, QUILTBAG[84] pastors and marriage, etc.) are not uncommon.

Nevertheless, like any group, there are highly divergent undercurrents pulling in multiple directions, and institutional (e.g., school or denomination) perspectives do not necessarily represent all of the local members and cannot necessarily be reconciled. It would also be a mistake, for example, to suggest that something

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81 In particular, see the first section of David Jensen, ed., *Always Being Reformed: Challenges and Prospects for the Future of Reformed Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016).

82 "Both place and date indicate a central feature of the Reformed tradition: church is called to confess its faith anew in each time and place." PCUSA, "Introduction," in *The 1967 Confession: Inclusive Language Edition* (Louisville: Congregational Ministries, 2002), 1.

83 William Stacy Johnson, *John Calvin: Reformer of the 21ˢᵗ Century* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 2.

84 Queer/Questioning, Unlabeled/Undecided, Intersex, Lesbian, Transgender, Bisexual, Androgynous, Gay/Genderqueer.

like Christian apologetics is nonexistent. In fact, many Progressive Reformed would argue that the only sustainable, intellectually credible, and truly Christian manifestation of gospel witness is one that is not afraid of the secular academy nor conditioned by the pre-determined answers of the past. Here, both the post-liberal and post-modern traditions of the twentieth and twenty-first century synthesize with Christian theology for a unique flavor.

In short, there are "conservative" and "progressive" ends of the Progressive Reformed spectrum. Some would adhere strictly to such things as the Nicene Creed (and, occasionally, even the Westminster Standards) and uphold propositional models of doctrine. Others on the far left might be easily identified as unitarian and universalist and see most forms of "evangelism" as outmoded. Many or most progressives would not fit either of these (contradictory) extremes, being closer to NeoOrthodox/Barthian, Revisionist/Constructionist, and post-liberal orientations.[85] As a whole, they do not feel threatened by changing culture as the Confessional Reformed and Baptist Calvinists often do. Many would self-identify as "reformed" while others would not.

Finally, the Progressive-Reformed is mostly represented by major mainline denominations such as the Presbyterian Church (USA), United Church of Christ (UCC), and Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC).

Contemporary Figures

Katie Geneva Cannon, Brian Blount, William Placher, Daniel Migliore, Dale Allison Jr., James Charlesworth, Bruce McCormack, Rob Bell, John Douglas Hall, Amy Plantinga Pauw, William Stacy Johnson, Shirley Guthrie, Peter Hodgson

Documents

1. *Auburn Affirmation* (1924). The most controversial document in the history of modern Reformed theology. According to the Confessional Reformed, the Presbyterian Church's affirmation of the Auburn Affirmation is iconic of the denomination's (and Princeton's) turn to liberalism (hence "old Princeton," which refers to pre-1924). According to others (including the Progressive Reformed), the document is iconic of certain reformed churches' turn to American fundamentalism. Regardless of these differing perspectives, it can be said less controversially that the document challenged the right of the General Assembly (what is now the PCUSA) to impose the "Five Fundamentals" as a test of orthodoxy without the vote of the presbyteries

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85   See the first section of David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996 [1975]).

(regional church bodies).[86] This is because from 1910–1923, the General Assembly required candidates for ordination to affirm the Five Fundamentals. In response, the *Auburn Affirmation* chiefly (a) re-affirmed the Westminster Standards as the system of doctrine taught in the Bible, (b) reminded readers that the General Assembly was not infallible and should not act as if it were, (c) said "There is no assertion in the Scriptures that their writers were kept 'from error'. . . . The doctrine of inerrancy, intended to enhance the authority of the Scriptures, in fact impairs their supreme authority for faith and life, and weakens the testimony of the church to the power of God unto salvation through Jesus Christ," and (d) explicitly affirmed the inspiration of the Bible, deity and incarnation of Christ, and substitutionary atonement while noting that "we are united in believing that these are not the only theories allowed by the Scriptures and our standards as explanations of these facts and doctrines of our religion." The document then ended with a call to liberty within limits and "the preservation of the unity and freedom of our church." The immediate fall-out was the leaving of Princeton faculty, John Machen and Cornelius Van Til, who then founded Westminster Theological Seminary. In the wake of these events, the conservative OPC (1936) denomination was formed.

2. *The Book of Confessions.* The collection of documents representing the PCUSA's theological orientation. It includes the Nicene Creed, Apostles' Creed, Scots Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Second Helvetic Confession, Westminster Standards (Confession with Shorter and Larger Catechisms), Declaration of Barmen, Confession of 1967, Belhar Confession (cross-listed above under "Neocalvinist"), and A Brief Statement of Faith (1983). The most recent documents in this collection are far more representative of the actual beliefs and ethos of the Progressive Reformed than the earlier sixteenth- and seventeenth-century confessions.

3. *The 1967 Confession* (1967; adopted into the *Book of Confessions* in 2002). A three-part confession oriented around God's reconciling work in the world. In contrast to the 1907 revision to the *WCF*, section 9.05 specifically says the 1967 Confession is "not a system of doctrine." It revisits the whole gamut of theological encyclopedia

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86 The five fundamentals are the inerrancy of Scripture, the virgin birth and deity of Jesus, substitutionary atonement, bodily resurrection of Jesus, and authenticity of Jesus's miracles in the New Testament. Most of these were upheld by Princeton's faculty, such as B. B. Warfield, Charles Hodge, John Machen, and Cornelius Van Til.

and summarizes them in new ways and language. It also addresses topics mostly absent from the other Reformed confessions, such as the story of Israel (9.18–19; 9.41), the purpose and relationship to other world religions (9.41–42), and the problem of "anarchy in sexual relationships" (9.47).

4. *Brief Statement of Faith* (1983). Essentially a condensed and liturgical-friendly version of the *1967 Confession,* also included in the *Book of Confessions*. It is unlike virtually all other Reformed documents in that it is (a) explicitly ecumenical (with no reference to a denomination), (b) liturgically and poetically crafted, and (c) the result of a church *rejoining*, not splitting (the consolidation between the Presbyterian Church in the USA [PCUS] and the United Presbyterian Church in America [UPCUSA]). Organized trinitarianly, the *Brief Statement* is one of the very few potential modern-day equivalents to a Nicene Creed (though obviously without a major consensus).

5. *Confessing the Faith Today: The Nature and Function of Subordinate Standards* (2003). "A study document for the Presbyterian Church in Canada." One of the most thoughtful documents on the nature and role of confessionalism in the church, with particular relation to the reformed confessions.

DENOMINATIONS

1. Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (PCUSA). The largest Presbyterian body in the U.S.
2. Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC)
3. United Church of Christ (UCC). Rooted primarily in the German Reformed church.

SCHOOLS[87]

1. Union Presbyterian Seminary (PCUSA)
2. Princeton Theological Seminary (PCUSA)
3. Princeton University (PCUSA)
4. Trinity University (PCUSA) (Texas)
5. Buena Vista University (PCUSA)
6. St. Andrews University (PCUSA)
7. University of Dubuque (PCUSA)

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87 See also Hanover College (PCUSA); Belhaven College (PCUSA); Sterling College (PCUSA) (Kansas); Andover Newton Theological School (UCC); Chicago Theological Seminary (UCC); Pacific University (UCC); Pacific School of Religion (UCC/UMC partnerships); Rocky Mountain College (UCC/PCUSA/UMC partnerships).

8. Grove City College (PCUSA)
9. Westminster College (PCUSA)
10. Hope College (RCA) (Michigan)[88]
11. Fuller Theological Seminary (PCUSA/UMC partnerships). One of the largest seminaries in the world (fourth largest in U.S. in 2019); still maintains biblical "infallibility" and condemns non-heterosexual marriage.

ORGANIZATIONS

1. World Communion of Reformed Churches. An organization comprised of over 200 reformed denominations from around the world. Has produced many documents in response to contemporary issues.

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The Theology of the Reformers

Summary Description

The "theology of the reformers" is primarily oriented around the theological contributions of Martin Luther (1483–1546) and John Calvin (1509–1564), with secondary focus on Ulrich Zwingli, Peter Martyr Vermigli, Philip Melanchthon, and the "pre-reformers" of John Hus and John Wyclif.

Major intellectual currents obviously contrast with Roman Catholic dogmas, practices, and institutions. However, both Catholic and reforming parties drank heavily from the same theological wells of Augustine and Thomistic/Medieval scholasticism.[89] Luther's concerns largely revolved around the oppressive system of Rome—its machine of relics, penance, indulgences, purgatory, and other practices that degraded the spiritual and intellectual lives of church members. His new translation of the Bible into German, teaching on the "priesthood of all believers," and public suspicion about the Pope's infallibility made him an enemy of the state-church. His own personal struggle and insecurities about God's judgment and righteousness led to a transformative application of Paul's letters. Sympathizing with Paul's struggle against the "Judaizers," Luther saw Paul's teaching on righteousness and "justification" as a radical, God-centered alternative to the entrapping legalisms of Rome.[90]

John Calvin, another lawyer, churchman, and "convert" out of Catholicism, brought together a generation of reformed thought into a cohesive whole in *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Like Luther, his work as a pastor and preacher informed much of his theology—as did his legal background. All editions of the *Institutes* reflect deeply on matters of piety, prayer, and church life (especially the sacraments) but even more on "classic" Calvinist topics like justification, knowledge of God, the law of God, faith, repentance, predestination and God's sovereignty, along with a slew of sharp arrows aimed at Rome. Some of the "rough" edges of Luther's thought re-emerge as smooth through the Paris-trained, humanist mind of Calvin.

With other reformers, major themes that emerge from the work of Luther and Calvin are (1) the sufficiency of Scripture in contrast to the (problematic)

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89 For example, theology proper is dominated by political metaphors of kingly sovereignty; Augustinian views of righteousness and original sin, along with substance dualism, drive theological anthropology; the relationship between state and church—along with violence against heretics—is viewed as good and proper, etc.

90 The restoration to a pre-Luther, Second Temple reading of Paul and others on justification is (oddly) now known as "the New Perspective."

pronouncements and traditions of Rome, (2) the adequacy and immediacy of God's grace and forgiveness in personal salvation, and (3) a deep suspicion about the state-church's monopoly on doctrine and on the "means of grace." As a whole, the reformation spirit is a paradoxical one characterized by both liberty (addressed extensively by both Calvin and Luther) and law-keeping (even to the point of physically punishing "heretics").[91]

A committed spiritual life deeply integrated with (select) biblical themes and theological doctrines remain prominent in the reformers' theology. But the Enlightenment project and scientific revolution noticeably split the 1400–1600s reformation movements down the center. Calvin and Luther were geocentrists, faced punishment for owning Bibles in their own language, and addressed their fragmenting European context; later reformed theologians saw the sun a bit differently, had personal copies of their own Bibles without worry, and found themselves one with the territorial boundaries (which were also *doctrinal* boundaries) of newly converted countries and monarchical administrations. The "theology of the reformers" has some sense of stability but still represents a transitory and experimental movement.

Doctrine of Scripture as a Case Study

With these reformed theologies briefly described, we now turn to a case study observing how they interact with a specific topic and concretely theologize. For this article, we will examine a subject that is important for all reformed theologies: the doctrine of Scripture (or "bibliology").

To systematize and streamline this analysis, priority will be given to the following representative works:

1. Confessional Reformed: Reymond's *A New Systematic Theology,* Sproul's *Everyone's a Theologian,* and Frame's *Theology of Lordship* series

2. Calvinist Baptist: Grudem's *Systematic Theology,* Akin's *A Theology for the Church,* and MacArthur and Mayhue's *Biblical Doctrine*

3. Neocalvinist: Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics,* Kuyper's *Principles of Sacred Theology*, and Plantinga et al.'s *Christian Theology*

4. Progressive Reformed: Shirley's *Christian Doctrine,* Hall's *Christian*

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91 Classic examples include the burning of Michael Servatus (on top of his own theology books) and the (intentionally ironic) drowning of Anabaptists. Perhaps this is the unsurprising result when *legal* scholars secede from a *legalistic* institution to create their own societies. In any case, the Puritan project in America bore witness to this paradox on a whole new level—where those fleeing religious persecution ended up establishing societies, cities, and colonies that were notorious for *their* religious persecutions. Standard treatments on this disheartening period of history can be found in MacCulloch, *The Reformation*; Philip Benedict, *Christ's Church Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Richard Dunn, *The Age of Religious Wars, 1559–1715* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1979); Cf. Hall, *The Puritans.*

Theology in a North American Context series, and Migliore's *Faith Seeking Understanding*

5. Theology of the Reformers: Calvin's *Institutes* and commentaries, and select works from Luther

Bibliology According to the Confessionally Reformed

For the Confessionally Reformed, the Bible does not merely *contain* God's "word" and "truth" but *is* these very things. Every single word of the scriptures is categorically divine writ. This is "verbal plenary inspiration" (or "plenary-verbal inspiration").[92] As a whole, the Bible is a perfect source of infallible truths and a source of facts, data, and propositions/assertions. The *story* and *purpose* of the Bible are also important and true, but they are secondary (at least in day-to-day function) to its primal nature of being divine, exhaustively true, "enscripturated" text. The Bible is not just the best way of learning about salvation; it is the perfect and ultimate standard for all truth claims whatsoever.

"Inspiration extends not simply to a broad outline of the information communicated by the earthly authors," R. C. Sproul writes, "but to the very words of Scripture themselves."[93] As such, "although God did not personally write down the words that appear on the pages of the Bible, they are no less his words than if they had been delivered to us directly from heaven."[94] To distinguish Scripture from what it points to is wrong, for (in Sproul's view) "orthodox Christianity claims that Scripture not only bears witness to the truth but *is* the truth. It is the actual embodiment of divine revelation."[95] The medium is the referent; the messenger is the message; the Bible is not a *record of* revelation, but revelation. All of this, Sproul argues, is essentially Jesus's own perspective (and the same as the "Reformers"). The Bible is therefore "infallible" (unfailing) and "inerrant" (having no error), for "if the Word of God cannot fail, and if it cannot err, it does not fail or err."[96] "Limited inerrancy," which restricts Scripture's inerrancy to matters of "faith and practice" and leaves "out what the Bible says about history, science, and cultural matters," is a heresy.[97] *Everything* communicated in biblical literature is *ipso facto* without error.

In making these arguments, Sproul interprets John 10:35 ("Scripture cannot be broken") not as faithfulness (coming to pass) or being in force[98] but as saying

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92 The "verbal" means inspiration extends to written speech; "plenary" means "full"—extending to every word and sentence, the meaning of sentences, the corpus, genre, the story, and all the rest. "Inspired" means it directly originates with God.

93 Sproul, *Everyone's a Theologian,* 28.

94 Sproul, *Everyone's a Theologian,* 26.

95 Sproul, *Everyone's a Theologian,* 29.

96 Sproul, *Everyone's a Theologian,* 34.

97 Sproul, *Everyone's a Theologian,* 31.

98 Note the CEB rendering ("can't be abolished") and NIV ("cannot be set aside").

"Scripture cannot make a mistake." He also interprets John 17:17 ("your word is truth") in the "High Priestly Prayer" not as meaning "what God says or promises in any form" but as essentially saying, "what the written scriptures assert." Matthew 5:18[99] is interpreted non-hyperbolically to show that the Bible is inspired on the level of words. 2 Timothy 3:16[100] is assumed to affirm this entire perspective as a whole. This package of nuanced interpretations is a standard feature of Confessional Reformed bibliology.

Christian Scripture therefore exists in binary categories, being "inspired" or "uninspired," with no blurring of lines. As the Westminster Confession records, the Protestant canon of sixty-six books identifies those "inspired" and those that are not (which have no higher status "than other human writings"[101]). The basis for this precise list is simply a re-working of the logic of the historical church and trusting that the church got it right.[102]

Following Warfield, Robert Reymond likewise argues that "it is because the Bible is God's Word that the church has always insisted not only upon its revelatory and divine character but also upon inspiration's concomitant effect, infallibility."[103] What is infallibility? "Essentially the same thing as" inerrancy—"namely that the Bible does not err in any of its affirmations, whether those affirmations be in the spheres of spiritual realities or morals, history or science, and is therefore incapable of teaching error." Like Sproul, we read that "because the Bible is God's Word, its assertions are as true as if God spoke to man today directly from heaven."[104]

Indeed, "we must approach the Scripture's phenomena not inductively but presuppositionally," meaning "we must not ground the case for the Bible's inerrancy or lack thereof simply in an inductive study of the Bible's phenomena alone" but "must take seriously what it says didactically about itself."[105] That means "full" inerrancy: "If the Scripture is erroneous anywhere, then we have no assurance

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99 "Not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished."

100 "All Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for teaching, rebuke, correction, and training in righteousness."

101 *WCF* 1.2–3

102 Sproul, *Everyone's a Theologian,* 39.

103 Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology,* 70. William J. Abraham, *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 328, offers a noteworthy point of correction on this matter: "the Church never at any time prior to the Reformation adopted a canonical account of inspiration. In fact, the early Church never even sanctioned a doctrine of divine revelation, content to leave this matter in the Scriptures and in the writings of the Fathers in an informal state. . . . Warfield's own predecessors more often than not held to a doctrine of divine dictation, the precise doctrine which Warfield rejected. Thus, to go no further than Turretin, whose massive text in systematic theology was used for a generation at Princeton . . . we find the following comment: 'Nor can we readily believe that God, who dictated and inspired each and every word to these inspired (*theopneustois*) men, would not take care of their entire preservation.' Warfield was so blinded by his own theorizing that he totally ignored this material."

104 Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology,* 70.

105 Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology*, 71.

that it is inerrantly truthful in what it teaches about [Jesus]." It is all or nothing. There is no general reliability or trustworthiness, or inspiration regarding message, story, or otherwise with regard to biblical literature. Either every single word has the same level of inspiration or none of it can be inspired.[106] Finally, as the literal Word of God, the Bible cannot appeal to higher standards of truth claims (e.g., be "verified" by external evidence). It is "intrinsically authoritative" and "self-authenticating."[107] Claims of contradictions or historical inaccuracies/errors are automatically discounted because the Christian already knows in advance that the Bible is always right.

Reymond's views on the canon and binary status is the same. In the end, there is no real way to tell what is "in" or "out." But, even so, "the Christian must accept by faith that the church. . . got the number and the 'list' right."[108] Whatever Luther was thinking by questioning the canonicity of James, "Luther got nowhere."[109] In other words, the canon is partly known because of which list ended up being the victor. Reymond also implements the same texts and stock interpretations of John 10:35; 17:17; Matt 5:18; and 2 Tim 3:16.

John Frame's bibliology is more sophisticated but essentially the same. The scriptures are self-authenticating, for "divine authorship is the ultimate reason why Scripture is authoritative" and its "authority is absolute because God's authority is absolute."[110] The same principle applies for all the "attributes" of Scripture. The Bible is entirely verbally inspired and therefore inerrant.[111] Indeed, "Scripture's claim to inerrancy is entirely clear. . . . It is God's personal word to us. We must believe it, despite what we may be tempted to believe through an inductive examination of the phenomena."[112] After all, "no one can fairly doubt that Scripture *claims* to be God's written Word."[113]

Likewise, inerrancy cannot be limited. The words of the prophets and apostles are "just as inerrant as the divine voice itself."[114] Furthermore, "The Bible is . . . not intended as a textbook of science, nor is it intended primarily to answer the types of questions we describe as scientific. Nevertheless . . . when Scripture

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106 Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology*, 73: "If then the Bible is God's Word . . . then the Bible must be true, that is, without scientific or historical error or logical contradiction. This is not Cartesian rationalism. It is simply biblical/Christian rationalism."
107 Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology*, 78–79.
108 Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology*, 67.
109 Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology*, 67.
110 Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2010), 165; cf. 441.
111 Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 184: "The Bible is God's permanent personal word," and "nobody has ever *proved* the existence of a single error." It is questionable how significant this point is since inerrancy (in a presuppositionalist self-authenticating view) is unfalsifiable.
112 Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 179.
113 Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 179.
114 Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 176.

touches on matters of interest to science, we must regard it as true and right."[115] None of these claims should raise any concerns amongst Christians, for "Unconditional obedience to verbal revelation is not idolatry of human words; it is simply a recognition of the divinity of God's own words."[116]

In summary, then: bibliology according to the Confessional Reformed is clear, certain, analytically deduced, and—much like the scriptures themselves—unquestionable for anyone who claims to be a Christian. Indeed, the epistemology assumed in formulating the doctrine is remarkably optimistic. The frequent use of "must" in the discourse is also notable—as is the defensive posture. There is no view of Scripture that is "too high," and anything less is a threat to the faith. The Bible is also weaponized; it coerces and imposes itself upon the world, and threatens all those who do not submit. And somehow, it remains "authoritative" even when it has no functional authority over individuals' day-to-day lives.

This black-and-white approach is also surrounded by explicit affirmations of *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.* Sproul, Reymond, and Frame all favorably cite this document in their explanations of Scripture's truthfulness. (Sproul himself co-authored it.[117]) More pertinent for this article is that the bibliology of the Confessional Reformed is viewed as an exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith. This is largely what makes the "Confessional Reformed" both "confessional" and "reformed." The authors we looked at above (Sproul, Reymond, and Frame) all make constant reference to the Confession and identify their view as the truly "reformed" view. The Confession does bear out many of the above conclusions, though not all.[118]

Bibliology According to the Calvinist Baptists

The bibliology of the Confessional Reformed and Calvinist Baptists[119] is virtually indistinguishable.[120]

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115 Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 197

116 Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 439.

117 What is referred to by this "attribute" is "the autographs" (or the "original manuscripts"), not copies (which may, indeed, contain errors). Despite not having access to these theoretical "autographs" (the concept itself is highly disputed because of the gradual, evolutionary development of the text), the belief that they are inerrant is still viewed as a fundamental pillar of Christian orthodoxy and of the Christian faith as a whole.

118 The Confession asserts verbal plenary inspiration, biblical infallibility, a binary view of the canon and downplaying "non-canonical books" as purely "human," and a generally propositional orientation regarding revelation. But the Confession also makes two notable assertions about the Bible that remain internally disputed—the Bible's aesthetic and literary superiority and preservation through time (i.e., being faithfully—though apparently not inerrantly—copied since the beginning). Both of these topics will be briefly taken up below.

119 If you recall, Calvinist Baptists are not a direct descendent of Confessional Reformed Baptists (i.e., adherents of the 1689 London Baptist Confession) but rather have some of their primary heritage/inspiration in later figures such as Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892), Augustus Strong (1836–1921), and others.

120 One caveat that should be noted, however, is that Calvinist Baptists have a sharper history of

Wayne Grudem argues that "the authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God."[121] This verbal-plenary inspiration summary is largely derived from the premise that there "are frequent claims in the Bible that all the words of Scripture are God's words." We know what the Bible is from reading what it purportedly says about itself. This perspective (along with other evidence) naturally suggests that "the words of Scripture are 'self-attesting,'" for it is the highest "absolute authority."[122] Anything that challenges "God's Word" (or at least a particular perception of what this means) is mistaken by the very nature of the case. For "God's Word is itself *truth*."[123] And for Grudem, this means that the Bible is not just God's true and inspired word but "the ultimate standard of truth." The Christian is "to think of the Bible as the ultimate standard of truth, the reference point by which every other claim to truthfulness is to be measured."[124] This remains so regardless of the subject area. The Bible "always tells the truth concerning everything it talks about."[125] It is a grave mistake to restrict Scripture's attributes to any particular area of knowledge or aspect of human experience.

This "inerrancy" therefore means "that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact."[126] These properties are also attributed not only to "the original manuscripts" but also to the 66-book Protestant canon. Inspired books, like the Confessional Reformed, are categorized binarily: they are either God-breathed ("scripture") or not. How does one know what is God-breathed? According to Grudem, God would not have given the church the wrong list: "Ultimately . . . we base our confidence in the correctness of our present canon on the faithfulness of God."[127] The "non-biblical" books are only valuable for "historical and linguistic research."[128]

MacArthur and Richard Mayhue's view is even more militant. The "biblical view" of inspiration is "Verbal, Plenary Inspiration."[129] This means that "God through his Spirit inspired every word penned by the human authors in each of the sixty-six books of the Bible in the original documents (i.e., autographs). . . . It

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asserting the Bible's "literalness" than the Confessional Reformed. Because the rich interpretational history of reformed theology tends to be lacking in the more recent Calvinist Baptist tradition—and because the Calvinist Baptist tradition is more deeply influenced by the High Modernism of the late 1800s and early 1900s (which privileges literal and propositional language forms)—this hermeneutical trend is still worth noting even though it isn't our focus.

121 Grudem, *Systematic Theology,* 73.
122 Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 78.
123 Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 83.
124 Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 83.
125 Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 83.
126 Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 91.
127 Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 66.
128 Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 60.
129 MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine,* 77.

refers to the direct act of God on the human author that resulted in the creation of perfectly written revelation." This is said to be the direct implication of 2 Tim 3:16 and the view of Jesus himself.[130] Despite being imperfect authors, "God produced infallible and inerrant words through them."[131] "Deniers" of inerrancy "seek to excuse sin and to affirm unbiblical behaviors" by being unwilling to accept all "that the scripture declares."[132] In other words, the reason people do not affirm inerrancy is not that they have studied it and come to different conclusions. Rather, they want a license to commit immorality.

Like the Confessional Reformed, the "inspired" and "uninspired" construct determines one's reading of church history on the canon.[133] The 66-book canon is known because there simply is no biblical reason to question it. In fact, MacArthur and Mayhue go further in suggesting that there *are* biblical reasons for believing in the 66-book canon.[134] Following the Confessional Reformed, the same set of proof-texts are used to substantiate this entire bibliology—which is explicitly identified as "biblicist."[135]

David Dockery's view in *A Theology for the Church* is, like Frame in the Confessional Reformed, more sophisticated and qualified.[136] But (again like Frame) the conclusions are all the same. In looking at "the Bible's Witness to Itself," the same arguments for "plenary-verbal inspiration" are made.[137] The Bible is inerrant about everything it addresses.[138] The Bible should be treated like it fell out of heaven—even though we know it did *not* fall "from heaven on a parachute."[139] Inerrancy may not be necessary for salvation, but it is required "to maintain an

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130 MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 91.
131 MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 81.
132 MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 109.
133 Although Sproul is known for saying "The Bible is a fallible collection of infallible books," the uncertainty this leaves has been recently closed by Michael Krueger, *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), who attempts to argue that the canon is, in fact, a product of God's own special work and therefore can have the kind of confidence Sproul seems to withhold. (A similar debate occurred between Sproul and Greg Bahnsen in the 1970s over the nature of certainty in apologetics; Sproul again, realizing human limitations, asserted that we can only have probabilities, while Bahnsen asserted certainty).
134 MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 126: "Based on solid biblical reasoning, we can conclude that the canon is and will remain closed. There will be no sixty-seventh book of the Bible."
135 MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 26.
136 Cf. his monograph on the subject, David Dockery, *Christian Scripture: An Evangelical Perspective on Inspiration, Authority and Interpretation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004).
137 Dockery, *A Theology for the Church,* 115: "[The Bible is] the Word of God written in the words of man."
138 Dockery, *A Theology for the Church,* 126: "It does not follow that because the Bible emphasizes one thing, it errs in less crucial or less important matters. . . . It is not proper to conclude that because the Bible emphasizes salvation, it can be trusted on that matter, but that since it does not emphasize history, it may err in historical details."
139 Dockery, *A Theology for the Church*, 128.

orthodox confession in salvific matters."[140] Indeed, "inerrancy applies to all areas of knowledge since all truth is God's truth."[141]

Dockery does not accuse "deniers" of this bibliology of legitimizing immoral actions like MacArthur and Mayhue do. In fact, he maintains that inerrancy "is not a direct teaching of Scripture (though Matt 5:18 and John 10:35; 17:17 may point in that direction) but is a direct implication and important corollary of the direct teaching about Scripture's inspiration."[142] Nevertheless, like Grudem and MacArthur, the canon is viewed as a fixed, binarily-categorized collection that should be believed because of God's providence in "collection and preservation."[143]

Bibliology According to Neocalvinists

The doctrine of Scripture according to Neocalvinists is both similar to and noticeably different from the Confessional Reformed and Calvinist Baptists. Instead of an explicit "verbal-plenary inspiration" doctrine, the Dutch theologians assert an "organic," "graphic," or "incarnational" view of the Bible. The two views overlap but exhibit fissures. The Dutch theologians also tend to speak of Scripture's "attributes" in a more qualified way. In fact, they intentionally distance themselves from hard conservative views (i.e., Old Princeton) even while maintaining continuity. The views of Kuyper, Bavinck, and Plantinga et al. (henceforth "Plantinga") represent a *theology in transition* that stretches from the modern period to more contemporary developments.

Kuyper begins his discussion of Scripture in *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology* with a noticeable philosophical tone because of the relationship between inspiration and miracles and because the whole cosmos is being re-created.[144] These bigger ideas shape one's bibliology. "Wherever the Scripture speaks of a *renewal,*" he argues, "it is never meant that a new *power* should originate, or a new *state of being* should arise, but simply that a new shoot springs from the root of creation itself, that of his new shoot a graft is entered upon the old tree, and that in this way the entire plant is renewed and completed."[145] "The miracle" is therefore "not

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140 Dockery, *A Theology for the Church*, 133.
141 Dockery, *A Theology for the Church*, 136.
142 Dockery, *A Theology for the Church*, 136.
143 Dockery, *A Theology for the Church*, 145.
144 Kuyper, *Sacred Theology,* 414: He talks about "the Divine energy" that "in the face of disorder brings His cosmos to realize that end which was determined upon in His counsel." And "every interpretation of the miracle as a magical incident without connection with the palingenesis of the whole cosmos, which Jesus refers to in Matt. xix. 28, and therefore without relation to the entire metamorphosis which awaits the cosmos after the last judgement, does not enhance the glory of God, but debates the Recreator of heaven and earth to juggler." "This entire recreative action of the Divine energy," he goes on (415–16), "is one continuous miracle, which shows itself in the radical renewal of the life of man by regeneration."
145 Kuyper, *Sacred Theology*, 428.

mechanically added to nature, but is organically united to it."[146] God's work in the world should not be viewed as an alien invasion, or God's revelation as the mere outside injection of new information. This is the modern, dualistic perspective of creation Kuyper is more or less countering. Instead, there is an "organic" relationship within (God's) world.[147]

Kuyper then introduces the study of inspiration (§ 77) with the following preface: "The naïve catechetical method of proving the inspiration of the Holy Scripture from 2 Tim. iii. 16 or 2 Pet. i. 21, cannot be laid to the charge of our Reformed theologians."[148] Kuyper is obviously aware of those who proof-texted in the reformed churches[149] and dissenters who "did not hesitate to expose the inconclusiveness of such circle-reasoning." However, for Kuyper, there is still a coherent logic to the self-authorization of Scripture.[150]

Kuyper then looks at Jesus's view of the Old Testament and comes to many conclusions of the Confessional Reformed.[151] He affirms the Bible's trustworthiness, authority, and central role in revealing God's redemptive plan for the world. But he also gets into details most others neglect, such as the problem of the continual evolution and redaction of the biblical text. His band-aid solution is that "graphic inspiration must then have been extended to these editors, since they indeed delivered the writings, in the form in which they were to be possessed by the Church."[152] But the revisions by editors who were "unauthorized . . . of course must be excluded."[153] In the end, the certainty of what we have today is not by arguments or "intellect" anyway, but by "faith." For "as soon as it is thought that the holy ore of the Scripture can be weighed in the balance with mathematical accuracy, the eye of faith becomes clouded, and the gold is less clearly seen."[154] In

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146 Kuyper, *Sacred Theology*, 428.

147 Later twentieth-century reformed thinkers would go further along this line (and some would argue, with some of Calvin's ideas), such as Jürgen Moltmann and other panentheists.

148 Kuyper, *Sacred Theology*, 428.

149 A possible emphasis on "*our* reformed theologians" might suggest he is contrasting to "those theologians" (aka American).

150 Kuyper, *Sacred Theology*, 429: "As the botanist cannot learn to know the nature of life of the plant except from the plant itself, the theologian also has no other way at command, by which to understand the nature of inspiration, except the interrogating of the Scripture itself."

151 E.g., that the authority of scriptural writings can, at least at times, be attributed "even to single words." Kuyper, *Sacred Theology*, 435.

152 Kuyper, *Sacred Theology*, 549.

153 Kuyper, *Sacred Theology*, 550. Readers aren't told how one discerns the difference between an "authorized" and "unauthorized" redactor, any more than one identifies a/the singular, autographic text. More confusion arises when Kuyper says (2.127) inspiration concerns "the production of the autograph in the form intended by God, at the moment it enters the canon." Typically, "entering the canon" is a separate event and subject from inspired "enscripturation" in Protestant theology. This "moment" also differs between books and may have extended over centuries.

154 Kuyper, *Sacred Theology*, 550.

fact, Kuyper goes as far as to say that "the Scripture by itself is as dull as a diamond in the dark," for only illumination by the Spirit can open our eyes.[155]

In putting up guard rails against an overly scholastic bibliology, he contends that this "process of conviction . . . ends as *Scripture* by imposing sacred obligations upon us, as *Holy Book* by exercising over us moral compulsion and spiritual power," and "it is moreover incapable of maintaining itself theoretically and of continuing itself according to a definable system."[156] The Bible as *living* and *compelling* is more important than its theoretical consistency.[157] Without the witness of the Spirit and personal conviction, "the truth . . . of graphic inspiration can never be derived."[158] Elsewhere, Kuyper pushes further against a rigid fundamentalist view: "Whoever in reading Scripture thinks that everything was spoken as precisely as it stands in the text, is totally mistaken."[159] Scripture provides not a verbatim account but a summary one (*procès-analytique* not *procès-verbal*).[160]

Kuyper then summarizes his views (in typical political overtones) in a sentence: "The whole question of inspiration virtually amounts to this: whether God shall be denied or granted the sovereign right of employing, if so needed and desired, the factors which He himself created in man, by which to communicate to man what He purposed to reveal respecting the maintenance of His own majesty, the execution of His world-plan, and the salvation of His elect."[161] In other words, *however* Scripture came into being, God has the right to use those means to produce something unique and for God's purposes.

Bavinck was as intellectually rigorous as Kuyper but more refined in his presentation.[162] He uses Paul's organic metaphor of the church (a "body") to help his readers get a sense of how the Bible is "inspired":

> Inspiration has to be viewed organically, so that even the lowliest part

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155 Kuyper, *Sacred Theology*, 551.
156 Kuyper, *Sacred Theology*, 561.
157 Kuyper was almost certainly aware of the flaws in his doctrine of Scripture and irresolvable problems such as those just mentioned above regarding the concept of "originals" and the evolution of the text.
158 Kuyper, *Sacred Theology*, 561.
159 The Confessional Reformed theologian Richard B. Gaffin Jr. summarizes the tension between all these claims in Kuyper's thought: "The biblical records are impressionistic; that is, they are not marked by notarial precision or blueprint, architectural exactness. At the same time this impressionistic quality does not detract from their certainty. . . . The biblical narratives do not record the past with stenographic preciseness or photographic exactness. Yet as historical records they are completely accurate and do not at all mislead." Abraham Kuyper, *Locus de Sacra Scriptura, creatione, creaturis* (Grand Rapids: J. B. Hulst, n.d.), 2.130–31, cited in Richard B. Gaffin Jr., *God's Word in Servant-Form: Abraham and Herman Bavinck on the Doctrine of Scripture* (Jackson: Reformed Academic Press, 2008), 34.
160 Kuyper cited in Gaffin, 34–35.
161 Kuyper, *Sacred Theology*, 552.
162 Bavinck replaced Kuyper as the chair of systematic theology at Vrije Universiteit (founded by Kuyper).

has its place and meaning and at the same time is much farther removed from the center than other parts. In the human organism nothing is accidental, neither its length, nor its breadth, not its color or its tint. This is not, however, to say that everything is equally closely connected with its life center. The head and the heart occupy a much more important place in the body that the hand or the foot, and these again are greatly superior in value to the nails and the hair. In Scripture, as well, not everything is equally close to the center. There is a periphery, which moves in a wide path around the center, yet also that periphery belongs to the circle of divine thoughts.[163]

The Confessional Reformed and Calvinist Baptists would rarely (if ever) speak of any part of the Bible as being "lowly" and also would be hesitant to say "not everything is equally close to the center." But, as Kuyper also summarized, *there is* a "center" for the Bible—and this matters for how the believer uses it.

Bavinck also uses the incarnation as another analogy: "For divine revelation to fully enter the life of humankind, it assumed the servant form of written language. In this sense Scripture too is an incarnation of God, the product of God's incarnation in Christ."[164] As such, "the word [logos] of revelation similarly assumes the imperfect and inadequate form of Scripture. But thus alone revelation becomes the good of humankind."[165] Again, it would objectionable for the Confessional Reformed and Calvinist Baptists to even use the terms "imperfect" and "inadequate" in reference to God's holy Word.[166]

"The right view," Bavinck continues, "is one in which Scripture is neither equated with revelation nor detached from it and placed outside of it." Contrary to verbal-plenary inspiration, where the Bible is essentially a "paper pope," the Bible *can* (and should) be distinguished from revelation. The same is true in

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163 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics,* 1:438–39. He continues, "Accordingly, there are no kinds and degrees in 'graphic' inspiration. The hair of one's head shares in the same life as the heart and the hand. There is one and the same Spirit from whom, through consciousness of the authors, the whole Scripture has come. But there is a difference in the manner in which the same life is present and active in the different parts of the body. *There is diversity of gifts, also in Scripture, but it is the same Spirit."*
164 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 354.
165 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 382.
166 This is especially true given *WCF* 1.5.

distinguishing between the sign and the signified.[167] However, for Bavinck, this is not the same as saying that the word (*logos*) "is" the Bible—which *can* be stated as such given its incarnational existence: "Scripture is the word of God; it not only contains but *is* the word of God. But the formal and material element may not be split up." Again, this assertion is made within the context of an incarnational bibliology: "it has the Word-made-flesh as its matter and content. Form and content interpenetrate each other and are inseparable."[168] Thus, the Christian can say "Jesus is God" and the "Bible is the Word of God" in a remarkably similar way, leaving plenty of room for mystery.[169]

In contrast to Confessional Reformed and Calvinist Baptist bibliologies, Scripture is not primarily viewed or used for its factual value, informative value, or even historical-narrative value. This modern emphasis needs correcting, for the *purpose* of the Bible is salvific and pragmatic:

> Holy Scripture is not an arid story or ancient chronicle but the ever-living, eternally youthful Word, which God, now and always, issues to his people. It is the eternally ongoing speech of God to us. It does not just serve to give us historical information; *it does not even have the intent to furnish us a historical story by the standard of reliability demanded in other realms of knowledge*. Holy Scripture is tendentious: whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.[170]

To put it differently, the Bible is primarily *theological* and ought to be read as such. Bavinck, like the Confessional Reformed and Baptist Calvinists, notes that the Bible is not written in regard to scientific matters. However, in contrast, Bavinck does not then conclude by saying a person has to believe whatever is asserted anyway. Instead, he points readers back to the Bible's point:

> [Scripture] is not designed to be a manual for the various sciences. It

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167 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 378: "But just as the thought embodies itself in a word, so words are embodied in Scripture. And language itself is no more than a body of signs, audible signs. And the audible sign naturally seeks stability in the visible sign, in writing. The art of writing is actually the art of recording signs and, in a broad sense, while it occurs among all peoples, has gradually developed from pictograms through ideograms to alphabetic script. However refined and increased in precision, it is inadequate. Our thinking, says Augustine, fails to do justice to the subject, and our speech fails to measure up to our thoughts; so also there is a big gap between the spoken word and the written word. The sounds are always only roughly reproduced in visible signs. Thought is richer than speech, and speech is richer than writing. Still, the written word is of immense value and importance."

168 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 443.

169 As Bavinck famously begins his *Dogmatics*, "Mystery is the lifeblood [or vital element] of dogmatics."

170 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 385; emphasis mine.

is the first foundation (*principium*) only of theology and desires that we will read and study it *theologically*. In all the disciplines that are grouped around Scripture, our aim must be the saving knowledge of God. For *that* purpose Scripture offers us all the data needed. In *that* sense it is completely adequate and complete. But those who would infer from Scripture a history of Israel, a biography of Jesus, a history of Israel's or early-Christian literature, etc. will in each case end up disappointed.[171]

Thus, in contrast to the Confessional Reformed and Calvinist Baptists, it is illegitimate to treat the Bible as the ultimate authority for all truth claims whatsoever. Bavinck would have rejected the Chicago Statement on how the Bible "is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches."[172] True, inspiration and authority are tied together.[173] Scripture is even said to be self-attesting.[174] However, as Bavinck labors to show, all of these claims (as conflicting as they may be),[175] must be understood within the larger context of the Bible's final purpose.[176]

One therefore ought to be cautious about emphasizing Scripture's inerrancy: "Inspiration should not be reduced to mere preservation from error, nor should it be taken in a 'dynamic' way as the inspiration of persons. . . . Neither a 'dynamic' nor a 'mechanical' view suffices. The proper view of biblical inspiration is the organic one, which underscores the servant form of Scripture. The Bible is God's

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171 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 444.

172 Point 2 under "A Short Statement" in the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

173 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics,* 462: "There is in fact only one ground on which the authority of Scripture can be based, and that is its inspiration. When that goes, also the authority of Scripture is gone and done with."

174 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatic*, 481: "There is no higher appeal from Scripture. It is the supreme court of appeal. No power or pronouncement stands above it. It is Scripture, finally, which decides matters in the conscience of everyone personally. And for that reason *it* is the supreme arbiter of controversies." Cf. 589: "The authority of Scripture rests in itself and cannot be proven. Holy Scripture is self-attested . . . and therefore the final ground of faith. No deeper ground can be advanced. To the question 'Why do you believe Scripture?' the only answer is: 'Because it is the word of God.'"

175 Focusing on these nitty-gritty details of bibliology illustrates Bavinck's liminality. He was a dedicated Christian thinker with a foot in two worlds—one in the sixteenth century and another in the hey-day of modernism and higher criticism.

176 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 444: "Scripture does not satisfy the demand for exact knowledge in the way we demand it in mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, etc. This is a standard that may not be applied to it. For that reason, moreover, the autographa were lost; for that reason the text—to whatever small degree this is the case—is corrupt; for that reason the church, and truly not just the layman, has the Bible only in defective and fallible translations. These are undeniable facts. And these facts teach us that Scripture has a criterion of its own, requires and interpretation of its own, and has a purpose and intention of its own. That intention is no other than that it should make us 'wise unto salvation.'" Notice the potential confusion in Bavinck's conflation of textual criticism and translational issues. To be consistent (assuming our translations of Bavinck's Dutch are accurate), he should have either said, "the text . . . is corrupt; for that reason the church . . . has the Bible only in defective and fallible *editions*," not "fallible translations" (which originate from critical editions).

word in human language."[177] While Bavinck affirms a type of verbal inspiration ("the Bible is God's word in human language"), he is again careful to distance it from the biblicism of his American contemporaries.[178] And, again, because "the purpose of Scripture" is "to make use wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3:15),"[179] not all Scripture has the same importance. "Though Scripture is true in everything, this truth is certainly not homogeneous in all its components."[180]

Plantinga et al. marks a further movement in the Neocalvinist tradition. What is implicit in much of Kuyper and Bavinck is made explicit (and extended), and what is downplayed is directly questioned. Hence, "Scripture is the faithful witness to God's historical redemptive acts that culminate in the Christ event."[181] Scripture is not "self-authenticating" as much as a signpost to the God who acts in history. Still, "The written word has its origin and inspiration in God, but it came to the covenant people through history, culture, language, and human mediation."[182] The real reason the Bible "can be referred to as the word of God [is] because it faithfully mediates the story of the incarnate Word, the gospel—Christianity's fundamental hope and declaration."[183]

This summary is similar to Kuyper's own conclusion but without the thick details about various "how" matters (e.g., modes of authorial consciousness, redaction inspiration, autograph production, etc.). The authors, like Bavinck,

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177 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 388–89. He continues: "Organic inspiration is 'graphic' inspiration, and it is foolish to distinguish inspired thoughts from words and words from letters. Scripture must not be read atomistically, as though each word or letter by itself has its own divine meaning. Words are included in thoughts and vowels in words. The full humanity of human language is taken seriously in the notion of organic inspiration." Gaffin, *God's Word in Servant-Form,* 81, says, "Admittingly Bavinck has little to say about the issue of error in relation to Scripture or its infallibility, at least in his development of the doctrine of inspiration. This is all the more remarkable in view of the times in which he was writing. This sparsity, however, should not be read as disinterest or uncertainty on the issue of biblical infallibility." I would suggest that it has to do with (a) a bibliology that is undergoing revision and reconstruction in light of critical scholarship and (b) a just and wise caution about conforming to old Princeton's staunch and increasingly loud biblicism.

178 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 438: "Nor does it follow that every word is full of divine wisdom, that every jot and tittle is charged with infinite content. Certainly, everything has its meaning, provided it is seen in its place and in the context in which it occurs. Scripture may not be viewed atomistically as though every word and letter by itself is inspired by God as such and has its own meaning with its own finite, divine content. This approach leads to the foolish hermeneutical rules of the Jewish scribes and, rather than honoring Scripture, dishonors it." Oddly, Bavinck later cites Jerome (401) saying "Each and every speech, all syllables, marks and periods in the divine scriptures are full of meanings and breathe heavenly sacraments" and himself, "Just as Christ's human nature, however weak and lowly, remained free from sin, so also Scripture is 'conceived without defect or stain; totally human in all its parts but also divine in all its parts" (435). Given this tension, perhaps it is no surprise that he concludes with some ambiguity: "Although in the last several decades a great deal of attention and effort has been devoted to the doctrine of Scripture, no one will claim that a satisfactory solution has been found" (419).

179 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 389.

180 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 447.

181 Plantinga, Thompson, and Lundberg, *Christian Theology*, 57.

182 Plantinga, Thompson, and Lundberg, *Christian Theology*, 57.

183 Plantinga, Thompson, and Lundberg, *Christian Theology*, 57.

implement the incarnation analogy: "just as Christ is the 'faithful witness' to who God is (Rev 1:5), so also the Bible is a faithful witness to the Christ event."[184] In interpreting 2 Pet 1:21 and 2 Tim 3:16, the authors avoid the weight that the Confessional Reformed and Calvinist Baptist put on them. Rather, it is simply said that "Christians hold that scripture has the very breath of God in it, that the very Spirit of God is at work in and through it."[185]

Finally, "scripture is completely dependable and trustworthy for doctrine and life, but not necessarily for other matters." And while "infallible" can legitimately mean "trustworthy" with reference to the Bible, "inerrancy" is "an overly modernist and constricting criterion of historical truth (largely in the attempt to meet the Enlightenment challenge on its own ground) that is foreign to the world of the Bible itself."[186]

Bibliology According to the Progressive Reformed

The Progressive Reformed view of Scripture is largely "modernized"' in the sense that it plainly acknowledges how past bibliologies are products of their time and need updating or replacing. Verbal-plenary inspiration, infallibility and inerrancy, canonical binarism, etc. are intentionally critiqued. The Bible is God's Word metaphorically, not literally.[187] And the dualism between "Scripture and tradition" is illusory, since it is recognized that Scripture, properly speaking, *is* tradition.

However, it would be a mistake to simply attribute Progressive Reformed bibliologies to a reductionistic "liberal theology" centered on morals and moral living, leaving the Bible to sit as a secular anthology of religious literature. Scripture's derivative nature is assumed since it is seen as a medium to communicate something crucial from God—and this more than spiritual truths and moral principles. In short, the Progressive Reformed do affirm that *God is speaking in scripture,* but it is primarily through Christ and transformative narratives instead of a magical process of "enscripturation" and "verbal plenary inspiration."

Guthrie in *Christian Doctrine* plainly states that "our faith is not in the book but in the God we learn to know in it. It is *God,* not the Bible, who rules and

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184 Plantinga, Thompson, and Lundberg, *Christian Theology*, 58.
185 Plantinga, Thompson, and Lundberg, *Christian Theology*, 59.
186 Plantinga, Thompson, and Lundberg, *Christian Theology*, 61.
187 Contemporary cognitive linguistics and etymologists have long noted how all words were once metaphorical and then gradually shift to more literal descriptions. The same appears to be true with specific theological doctrines. In this writer's experience, because conservative Reformed and evangelical thinkers are so steeped in the literal, quantifiable, imminent world of the Enlightenment, it takes considerable effort to get such persons to understand how metaphors like "God the Father" or "Jesus the Son" are metaphors and not literal descriptions. In fact, such efforts are frequently viewed as somehow threatening.

judges, helps and saves, in whom we trust."[188] This principle also applies to the authors: "We do not 'believe in' Isaiah or Paul or John; we believe in Jesus Christ."[189] And Christ is the supreme special "self-revelation of God." The Bible is important, authoritative, and "revelation" to the extent that it gives us access to this God. Similar to Bavinck, Guthrie concludes that "in this sense—a secondary sense—the Bible is not only a witness to revelation; it is itself revelation. . . . We know the word of God in person only in and through the written word of God."[190] In that way, "We believe the Bible just when we do not believe *in* the Bible but in the living, acting, speaking God to whom the biblical writers introduce us."[191]

Because of this key distinction, however, there is no period of "enscriptura-tion," as if divine words are supernaturally etched on a page and then never again for eternity. "God's self-revelation does continue," he argues. "Redemptive hist-ory," God's acts of grace and speech did not end with some real or theoretical closing of "the canon." How, then, does the church discern what is God's speak-ing today? *By reading the Bible*, for "it is only by listening to the story of the past revelation of God recorded in the Bible that we are able to recognize what God is saying and doing in and through the church in our time. The past revelation is 'normative' revelation that enables us to distinguish between what God is saying and doing in our time and what is only the questionable human word and work of the church, its ministers and/or its members."[192] Guthrie goes on to provide con-crete examples of this in the local church, for God continues to reconcile the world in the present just as much as in past "Bible times."

Douglas Hall in *Thinking the Faith* remarks that because the Bible is "event plus interpretation," the "Bible is of immediate and primary significance. . . because it is for all intents and purposes *the sole witness* to this foundational his-tory."[193] Theology itself therefore "assumes an ongoing dialogue with the biblical record." The challenging task facing the church is not raw obedience to divine propositions as much as participating in a life-changing conversation. Neverthe-less, this faith in the God of history and dialogue with the scriptures entail response. "Faith which intends to be Christian must be prepared to listen to and submit itself to the authority of the scriptures,"[194] Hall remarks. This is, in fact, the concept of *sola scriptura*: "Only of the canonical Scriptures of the two Testaments were the

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188 Shirley C. Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine*, anniv. ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2018 [orig. 1968; rev. 1994]), 63. The overlap of Plantinga et al.'s bibliology (the furthest "left" in Neocalvinist Reformed Theology) obviously overlaps with Guthrie (the furthest "right" in Progressive Reformed Theology).
189 Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine*, 63.
190 Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine*, 63.
191 Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine*, 63.
192 Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine*, 64.
193 Hall, *Thinking the Faith,* 258.
194 Hall, *Thinking the Faith,* 258.

Reformers willing to say this."[195] This is not the same as "American biblicism," which has "only slightly camouflaged fascistic political overtones"[196] and "makes it more and more difficult for responsible Christian scholarship to embrace a theology of biblical authority without appearing to endorse biblical literalism and much besides."[197] In other words, the explicit biblicism of the Confessional Reformed and Calvinist Baptists actually exhibits a *low* view of Scripture because it is neither credible academically nor helpful theologically and spiritually.[198] The challenge for the Christian today, Hall contends, is that "we have to justify theology's use of the Bible over against the secular charge of relativism; on the other hand we must explain why, unlike biblicism, we cannot treat the Bible as if *it* were absolute."[199]

Hall attempts to do this. To the secularists and hard liberals, he argues that if something is genuinely revealed or communicated, "then you must have access to the most reliable witnesses to those events and persons." If you do not, then theology is cut off from a key source of its work. Furthermore, to the biblicists and fundamentalists, who contend that "theology must be nothing more or less than the faithful exposition of the Scriptures," the absolute mystery of God must be part of theologizing. Theology is *theology;* the scriptures and traditions themselves assert that God "transcends all description and expression."[200]

For Hall, fundamentalist bibliologies are more problematic than refusing to acknowledge our epistemological limitations. "Christians who elevate the Bible to the level of the absolute are just as guilty of idolatry as other Christians (whom the biblicists invariably berate) who absolutize holy objects, or saintly persons, or ecclesial authorities. Biblicists are perhaps even more susceptible to the charge of idolatry, because their idol, the Bible, frankly, warns them against any such elevation of itself." For even Jesus "rejects the primitive biblicism of many persons whom he encounters" and "admonishes against literalism especially, for its rigid adherence to the letter precludes spiritual perceptiveness and imagination."[201] In this reading, "not even the words *Jesus* speaks, which these writers may or may not have transcribed accurately, can command our ultimate loyalty, but only the Word that Jesus *is. He* is 'the Truth' (John 14:6), and the world itself could not

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195 Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 258–59.
196 This criticism could be legitimately leveled against Kuyper (examined earlier), who predominately sees inspiration as essentially a coercive act of a divine sovereign that leaves earthly citizens without excuse.
197 Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 259.
198 Cf. Peter Enns, *The Bible Tells Me So: Why Defending Scripture Has Made Us Unable to Read It* (New York: HarperOne, 2015); and Bovell, *Rehabilitating Inerrancy*.
199 Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 258–59.
200 Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 258–59.
201 Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 258–59.

contain the books that would have to be written to describe the Truth that he is and does (John 21:25)."[202]

Hall therefore turns the fundamentalist/conservative argument on its head. A "high" view of Scripture is a realistic one that keeps God and the gospel at its center, not the Bible. The biblicist view is not the view of Jesus but the view of *his opponents,* who could mechanically quote chapter while missing the point. A rigid, "Bible-centered" orientation is detrimental.[203] The problem becomes visible when people say "I've got it right here in the Bible," where "the real emphasis, as distinct from the rhetorical one, is on the first word of the sentence—'*I've*'!"[204] This lust for certainty and objectification of the *living* Word kills it.[205] "Religion wants to have something quite concrete—something that can be *had.*" In these unfortunate cases of contemporary Protestant life, "The Bible appears a veritable extension of their persons."[206] Indeed, conservative pastors and thinkers ironically give their own opinions the weight of the divine word by denying that this is happening; "I'm just repeating what God says" is a cover.[207]

Another irony is that conservative Reformed theologies are a mirror-image of the Catholicism they were originally trying to refute. "An authoritarian church with concrete regulations and practices and rites," Hall remarks, "was replaced by an authoritarian book which could also convey the impression of concreteness and certitude—which even had the advantage of being portable, of being subject to ownership, of adorning one's home, one's meal table, one's bedsides."[208] The

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202 Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 261.
203 Cf. Enns, *The Bible Tells Me So*; Carlos Bovell, *Rehabilitating Inerrancy in a Culture of Fear*; Jamin Andreas Hübner, "Ryan Reeves and Charles E. Hill, 'Know How We Got Our Bible,'" *Canadian-American Theological Review* 6.2 (2017): 94–96. It is not a coincidence that Enns is a former professor of Westminster Theological Seminary (East), Bovell an alum, and Hübner an alum of Dordt University and Reformed Theological Seminary.
204 Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 261.
205 Cf. James Dunn, *The Living Word,* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), vii, 147: "A primary feeder of fundamentalism is the lust for certainty and security. It is the certainty that God has spoken in particular words and formulations which are clear-cut and fixed for all time, which alone gives the fundamentalist the security (s)he craves for. . . . Fundamentalism shows itself unwilling to accept the unavoidable inadequacy of human speech to express God's self-revelation, the degree of historical particularity in most biblical texts that prevents their being absolutized, and the different kinds of literature in scripture and the different conventions behind them, all of which should caution a modern reader straightforwardly reading off historical fact and Christian doctrine from these texts simply because they are in the Bible. The lust for certainty turns the icon into an idol, pulls the living word from the soil in which it was rooted, turns the metaphor into a mathematical formula, and abuses the scriptural authority it seeks to affirm."
206 Hall, *Thinking the Faith,* 261.
207 This problem is amplified in "from the pulpit" traditions. Via the raised platform, it is assumed that everyone is obliged to obey and believe as if God was speaking from the throne. It carries the same weight, and such "preaching of the Word" is spiritually binding on all persons. Hall contends that the opposite should be true: human words should be given the weight of human words, whether "from the pulpit" or not. Whether something unique and prophetic has happened during an oration (as may occur cannot be guaranteed by any assent to a confession or to any doctrine of Scripture).
208 Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 262.

real risk of arming the masses with the weapon of a paper-pope are evident in the immediate centuries following post-reformation scholasticism—from heretic burning, to internal dissension, to witch trials, to all-out wars. In the end, Protestants failed to put God (who alone is absolute) in the center.

What, then, are we doing with the Bible in theology? Not looking for "correct answers" but encountering it "as a storyteller lives with what seems the original and most authentic version of the story he or she is trying to tell, now, under difference circumstances. For the disciple community, in other words, the Bible exists as its fundamental source of imagination and courage."[209] *This* is its "inspirational function." The secondary function—providing true information—is important but "subservient to its inspirational function."[210]

Migliore shares all of the same basic concerns as Guthrie and Hall. The Reformers brought some common sense to a theological world gone wild. But the second and third generations of reformed theologians overshot the authority, accuracy, and place of the Bible. "Many people inside and outside the church equate the idea of the authority of the Bible with retrenchment rather than renewal, with coercion rather than liberty, with terror rather than joy. They know all too well how to the authority of the Bible has been invoked to suppress free inquiry and to legitimize such practices as slavery and patriarchy."[211]

The church has to get back to the real point of the Bible. "Scripture," Migliore plainly states, "is the unique and irreplaceable witness to the liberating and reconciling activity of God in the history of Israel and supremely in Jesus Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Scripture serves the purpose of mediating the good news of the astonishing grace of God in Christ that moves us to greater love of God and neighbor and calls us to the freedom for which Christ has set us free."[212] If the Bible does not produce those results, either something is wrong with the Bible or wrong with our perspective on the Bible.

Migliore identifies four "inadequate approaches to the authority of Scripture": (1) biblicism, (2) historical source, (3) religious classic, and (4) private devotional text. In each case, the Bible is reduced down to a single purpose or idea that cannot capture its real nature and, sometimes, is alien to the Bible's real purpose altogether. In biblicism, for example, "the Bible is authoritative by virtue of its *supernatural origin* and the direct identity of words with the Word of God."[213] One major problem with this view is its reduction to verbal-plenary inspiration because "the Word of God is not directly accessible, not a possession under our control." Rather, "The Word of God is an act of God in which the God who has

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209 Cf. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith.*
210 Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 262.
211 Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding,* 46.
212 Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 46–47.
213 Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 47.

spoken continues to speak here and now by the power of the Spirit through the witness of Scripture and its proclamation by the church."[214]

Another problem is "infallibility" and inerrancy. Like Hall, Migliore notes that "the church that wants an absolute guarantee of its faith and proclamation finds it in the parallel doctrines of biblical and papal infallibility."[215] Each doctrine evolved and became codified in parallel competition. "But a church with an infallible teaching office or an infallible Bible no longer allows Scripture to work as liberating and life-giving Word in its own way. Insistence on the infallibility obscures the true basis of Christian confidence."[216] In biblicism, the Bible is authoritative not because of "what" it tells us about God or humanity, or because of its "effect," or its "constitutive role in the life of the Christianity community," but simply because its words are God's words without qualification. With Bavinck, Migliore says the danger here is that it tends to level all the texts in terms of importance. "Biblicism turns the life-giving, Spirit-empowered authority of Scripture into a deadening authoritarianism."[217]

> Beyond the dead letter of biblicism, the uncritical assumptions of historicism, the narrowness of bourgeois privatism, and the detachment of aestheticism lies the real authority of Scripture in the life of the community of faith. Christians do not believe *in* the Bible; they believe in the living God attested *by* the Bible. Scripture is indispensable for bringing us into a new relationship with the living God through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, and thus into new relationship with others and with the entire creation. To speak of the authority of the Bible rightly is to speak of its power by God's Spirit to help create, nourish, and reform this new life in relationship with God and others.[218]

As such, all talk of "canon" must take into account this purpose—because this purpose is what gave rise to the canon. The Bible's table of contents, like its text, is not simply a fixed and divinely decreed code of zeros (out) and ones (in). Like Guthrie, Migliore says the narratives of Scripture are "still open"[219] because God continues the work of the Spirit beyond "Bible times." This also means interpreting Scripture as "the unique and normative witness to God's self-revelation

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214 Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding,* 47.
215 Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding,* 50.
216 Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 50.
217 Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 51.
218 Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 52.
219 Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 56

given above all in Jesus Christ are skills learned and strengthened by participation in the life of the Christian community."[220]

This bibliology—virtually opposite of the Confessional Reformed and Calvinist Baptists—is said to be distinctively Reformed by many others. Consider, for example, the following statements:

> The reformed tradition typically resists making fundamentalist arguments about biblical truth and its application to modern society.[221]

> The Reformed theologian's appeal to the Word of God as the criterion for reform in no way entails uncritical acceptance of the words of the Bible as the Word of God. . . . Sometimes the words of the Bible themselves need to be criticized or even rejected. . . . The word is never enclosed within the words in such a way that it could be a human possession. Quoting Bible passages as "proofs" in theological arguments may not, and often does not, have anything at all to do with the Word of God.[222]

Bibliology According to the Reformers

The bibliology of Luther and Calvin was born out their contemporary debates with the Roman Catholic Church. As such, their use and understanding of the Bible centered on such themes as biblical authority and adequacy (against the traditions of proclamations of the Roman church), and subthemes like the authority and adequacy of certain biblical books (against the official canon of the Roman church). This project of re-building theology and re-centering the church also therefore involved a hermeneutical revolution partially influenced by early modern and rationalist thought but also driven by earlier theological traditions. This leads to some unique situations. For example, Calvin practiced textual criticism in writing his commentaries, and Luther criticized Erasmus's new Greek New Testament because of its readings and textual choices. Both were more skeptical of allegorical readings than their patristic and medieval predecessors and more confident in using the Bible in proof-texting wars with their opponents. An icon of this situation was Luther's trial before the Diet of Worms in 1531, where he refused to back down and concede to Rome "unless it can be proven by Scripture," because his conscience was "held captive to the Word of God." With the future

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220 Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 61.
221 Rebecca Blank, "A Christian Perspective on the Role of Government in the Market Economy," in *Global Neighbors: Christian Faith and Moral Obligation in Today's Economy,* ed. Douglas Hicks and Mark Valeri (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 241.
222 Dawn DeVries, "Ever to be Reformed According to the Word of God," in *Feminist and Womanist Essays in Reformed Dogmatics,* ed. Amy Plantinga Pauw and Serene Jones (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 57.

of the European church in the balance, the text and books of the Bible mattered more than ever before.

The Confessional Reformed (among others) have not infrequently attempted to read back the details of their contemporary bibliology into the minds and words of Calvin and Luther.[223] Whether or not Donald McKim and Jack Rogers overstated their case in arguing the contrary,[224] there is no question that Luther and Calvin believed in something closely approximating "verbal-plenary inspiration" and some sense of "infallibility"; had reservations about a canon larger than the current Protestant consensus; held to a "self-authenticating" bibliology[225]; and yet they were not card-carrying, twentieth-century conservative Presbyterians.[226]

Scholars of reformed thought have long-noted the influence of Calvin's academic background and Aristotelian inclinations—not to mention his Bavinck-like paradoxical and contradictory perspective. In commenting on 2 Tim 3:16, Calvin speaks about scriptural "doctrine. . . dictated by the Holy Spirit."[227] The Old Princetonian B. B. Warfield explained this puzzling metaphor as follows: "What Calvin has in mind, is, not to insist that the mode of inspiration was dictation, but that the result of inspiration is as if it were by dictation, viz., the production of a pure word of God free from all human admixtures."[228] In that case, Calvin's view would not be different from the Confessional Reformed: the Bible did not fall out of heaven and was not dictated, *but it should be treated as if it was*.[229] However, John McNeill (editor of Calvin's *Institutes*) argued that "it is not said [by Calvin] that the Scripture is verbally dictated; the point is simply that its teaching

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223 E.g., J. I. Packer, "John Calvin and the Inerrancy of Holy Scripture," in *Inerrancy and the Church,* ed. John Hannah (Chicago: Moody, 1984); Matthew Barret, *God's Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016); Robert Godfrey, "Biblical Authority in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Question of Transition," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D.A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992 [1983]), 232–33; Gaffin, *God's Word in Servant-Form.*

224 Jack Rogers and Donald McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979).

225 E.g., "Scripture indeed is self-authenticated; hence, it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960, orig. 1559), 1.6.5.

226 This topic surrounds dozens of sources, which were summarized in an annotated bibliography by Roger Nicole, "John Calvin and Inerrancy," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25 (1982): 425–42. My discussion here is an extremely condensed narrative of this debate. My complaint with Nicole's assessment is the same for any inerrantist: there is an assumption that the doctrine of inerrancy is theoretically coherent, when it is not. See Hübner, *Deconstructing Evangelicalism*.

227 John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1856), 219.

228 Benjamin B. Warfield, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God," in *Calvin and Calvinism*, ed. Benjamin B. Warfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1931), 63.

229 Cf. "It has flowed to us from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men" (*Institutes*, 1.6.5).

(*doctrina*) is not of men but of God."[230] In that case, which seems to cohere with Calvin's general view of Scripture, the message of Scripture is the point, and the words/text is "inspired" and "truthful" to the extent that it gives rise to that content.

The same goes for Calvin's view of Scripture in general—which is similar to both Luther's and Kuyper's view: God is the author of the Bible[231] and is meant to "make himself known unto salvation,"[232] but Scripture is only the "word" of life when showing forth Christ.[233] The text of the Bible is not simply God's Word in and of itself but is such when the Holy Spirit illumines the mind. The living word is dead without illumination.

Things get further complicated in Calvin's doctrine of "accommodation." He said, "For who even of slight intelligence does not understand that, as nurses commonly do with infants, God is wont in a measure to 'lisp' in speaking to us? Thus, such forms of speaking do not so much express clearly what God is like as accommodate the knowledge of him to our slight capacity."[234] This allowed Calvin to make remarks that no Confessional Reformed person would have made a century later. For example, he says the author of Genesis "certainly, in the first chapter . . . did not treat scientifically of the stars, as a philosopher would do; but he called them, in a popular manner, according to their appearance to the uneducated, rather than according to truth, 'two great lights.'"[235] There is obviously no "rather than according to truth" for the contemporary Confessional Reformed or Calvinist Baptist.

Placher notes that the shift in bibliology from the reformers to the seventeenth century can be traced to new priorities and how, despite "the noetic effects of sin," reformed theologians had a remarkable optimism about the human mind's ability to prove the truth of biblical revelation. At first, publications like the *Institutes* and Augsburg Confession began with a discussion about God and the Trinity and then moved on to Scripture, or only addressed it in passing (cf. Nicene Creed). This changed with the *WCF,* which began with a centralized discussion on the Bible.

> "Of God, and of the Holy Trinity" comes in chapter 2. In chapter 1, "the Word of God" consistently refers to the Bible, not to Christ. Much seventeenth-century theology, in both Lutheran and Reformed traditions, likewise discussed scripture first and then the Triune God. One

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230 John T. McNeill, "The Significance of the Word of God for Calvin," *Church History* 28 (1959): 141.

231 *Institutes* 1.3.4.

232 *Institutes* 1.6.1.

233 *Institutes* 1.9.3.

234 Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.13.1.

235 Calvin, Commentary on Gen 6:14.

consequence was a change in the basis of scriptural authority. For Calvin, "those who wish to prove to unbelievers that Scripture is the Word of God are acting foolishly," since "Scripture will ultimately suffice for a saving knowledge of God only when its certainty is founded upon the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit." A seven-teenth-century Reformed theologians like Francis Turretin, on the other hand, could review the antiquity of the biblical texts, their accurate preservation, the candor of their writers in admitting their own faults, the majesty of their style, the harmony of their doctrine, and so on, and conclude, "The Bible . . . proves itself divine ratiocinatively by an argument artfully made from the indubitable proofs of divinity." No need then for the Spirit's illumination to establish scripture's authority. . . . While such theologians thought of themselves as defending biblical authority in the face of a rising tide of rationalism, they were in their own way rationalists. Human reason, Turretin insisted, could figure out the Bible's authority.[236]

Calvin's view of the canon was also not as "reformed" as one would have imagined. Presumably because of the canonical uncertainty in the first two centuries of the church (or just because he did not value these books as highly as others), Calvin wrote commentaries on all the biblical books except 2–3 John, and Revelation. His use and views of Baruch also suggest a canon with blurred edges—at least from a practical point of view.[237]

Luther (like the original King James Bible) included the "apocryphal books" in his original German Bible though said they were "not equal to the Holy Scriptures."[238] In fact, Luther considered Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation non-canonical, so the Lutheran German Bible ordered them last. On James in particular, Luther said at one point, "I . . . regard it as valuable although it was rejected in early days. It does not expound human doctrines, but lays much emphasis on God's law. . . . I do not hold it to be of apostolic authorship. . . . In the whole length of its teaching, not once does it give Christians any instruction or reminder of the passion, resurrection, or spirit of Christ."[239] He also considered excluding Esther from the Old Testament.[240] These attitudes are noticeably different from the

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236 William Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence: How Modern Thinking About God Went Wrong* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 168–69.
237 Calvin, Commentary on 1 Cor 10:20.
238 Quoted in William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, rev. ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1976), 7.
239 Martin Luther, "Preface to the Epistles of St. James and St. Jude," in *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings,* ed. John Dillenberger (New York: Anchor, 1962), 35.
240 Were he alive today, he would have found great support for this position since Esther is excluded entirely from the Dead Sea Scrolls (while the DSS *include* multiple copies of "apocryphal" works).

stark claims of the *WCF,* which (in 1.3) lists the books that are canonical and says the apocrypha "are no part of the canon of the Scripture, and therefore are of no authority in the church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writing."

Under the sway of Enlightenment rationalism (which has its roots in earlier Greek thought), *WCF* came to see the Bible not just as divine, but as a work of total perfection:

> And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God. (*WCF* 1.5)

Luther disagreed with this sentiment. In fact, he explicitly argued the opposite—as if anticipating how some of his followers might go overboard with *sola scriptura:* "Holy Scripture possesses no external glory, attracts no attention, lacks all beauty and adornment. You can scarcely imagine that anyone would attach faith to such a divine Word, because it is without any glory or charm. Yet faith comes from this divine Word, through its inner power without any external loveliness."[241] Contradictions like these—which are embedded in a confident rhetoric of certainty—vividly illustrate just how thick a reformed theologian's lens can be with regard to the sacred book.

At any rate, it is not surprising that Luther also maintains all of the features of the Neocalvinists: the incarnational analogy ("Just as it is with Christ in the world, as he is viewed and dealt with, so it is also the written Word of God"),[242] self-authentication, having primarily a saving function, and illumination by the Spirit.[243]

Reflections and Conclusions

This article has looked at only one case study to demonstrate how five streams of reformed theology handle a particular topic. The results are wide and varied. Subjects on the periphery illustrate even more discontinuity.

Consider, for example, the doctrine of creation. The Confessional Reformed and Calvinist Baptists generally affirm: (a) a literal reading of Genesis[244]; (b)

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241 Cited in Rogers and McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible,* 78.
242 Rogers and McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible,* 78.
243 See references in Rogers and McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible,* 79; and Martin Luther, *First Lectures on the Psalms* (on Ps 54:1), trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman, Luther's Works, vol. 10 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1974), 212.
244 Sproul, *Everyone's a Theologian,* 99; MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine,* 215–16; Grudem, *Systematic Theology,* 265–88.

creationism,[245] including Young-Earth Creationism[246]; and (c) a historical Adam and Eve as the first progenitors of humankind[247]; (d) reject common descent and the general theory of evolution[248]; and (e) see "natural" explanations as in competition with God's "supernatural" acts of creation instead of in harmony with them (but *not* for non-creative or non-"special" work of God).[249] Kuyper and Bavinck are mostly on the same page (though less so on [e]) and gave lengthy arguments against the new theory of evolution,[250] though most Neocalvinist pastors and professors today are evolutionary creationists.[251] The Progressive Reformed assume the evolutionary consensus.[252] Calvin and Luther do not exactly fit any of these categories. Their criticism of geocentrism might lead one to think they would have rejected evolution. But their understanding of God's agency and action within the "natural world" does not fit the creationist or Intelligent Design model.[253]

Another example is anthropology and gender. As already noted earlier, the Confessional Reformed and Calvinist Baptists fervently hold to female subordinationism (i.e., patriarchalism).[254] The Neocalvinists are varied throughout the last century. Kuyper was largely misogynist and criticized female suffrage.[255] His

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245 Sproul, *Everyone's a Theologian,* 99; MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine,* 215–16; Grudem, *Systematic Theology,* 265–88; as well as Chad Owen Brand, "The Work of God: Creation and Providence," in *A Theology for the Church,* 235–37.

246 Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology,* 392–96; John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002), 291; Brand, *A Theology for the Church,* 225–27.

247 Sproul, *Everyone's a Theologian,* 114–15; MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine,* 405–407; Grudem, *Systematic Theology,* 265–88; Brand, *A Theology for the Church,* 226; John S. Hammett, "Human Nature," in *A Theology for the Church,* 287.

248 Sproul says evolution "is unmitigated nonsense and will be totally rejected by the secular scientific community within the next generation. . . . Macroevolution is one of the most unsubstantiated myths that I've ever seen perpetuated in an academic environment" (R. C. Sproul, *Now That's a Good Question!* [Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 1996], 98). Cf. MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine,* 215–17; 405–47; Grudem, *Systematic Theology,* 265–88; Brand, *A Theology for the Church,* 225–27; Hammett, *A Theology for the Church,* 287.

249 Sproul, *Everyone's a Theologian,* 209ff; Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology,* 409–11; MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine,* 215–18; Grudem, *Systematic Theology,* chs. 15–17; Brand, *A Theology for the Church,* 225–27.

250 Kuyper's rectorial address "Evolution" (1899) argued that "the Christian religion and the theory of evolution are two mutually exclusive systems." See James Bratt, ed., *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 412ff. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics,* chs. 10–11, argues much the same, regarding the age of humanity, for example, that "there is no significant disagreement between Scripture and science" (1:523).

251 Plantinga, Thompson, and Lundberg, *Christian Theology,* 160–63. Note the significant number of faculty involved in the American Scientific Affiliation and BioLogos from Neocalvinist schools. CRC and RCA churches have also sponsored lectures and seminars on making the transition from a creationist to an evolutionary creation perspective. The Progressive Reformed obviously don't have this type of baggage to deal with.

252 Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine,* 151; Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding,* 117–22.

253 See Hübner, "The Progress (or Extinction?) of Modern Creationism."

254 The literature is too vast to include in this footnote.

255 Abraham Kuyper, *De Eerepositie der Vrouw* ("The Woman's Position of Honor"), trans. Irene Konyndyk (Kampen: Kok, 1932), 7, 19–28: "[T]he feminine nature, which glittering in her inner

protégé Bavinck initially rejected suffrage but then affirmed it.[256] Bavinck's publications demonstrate his evolution on the topic of gender in general.[257] Most importantly, he showed a general consciousness of patriarchy as a historical phase that was beginning to fading away: "His statement became famous in Christian circles: 'The soul of the woman has awoken and no power in this world will bring it back to its former state of unconsciousness.'"[258] Neocalvinists today, with the Progressive Reformed, follow Bavinck's trajectory by rejecting female subordinationism and proactively countering the effects of patriarchy.[259]

One finds the same result on virtually any other topic—church/state relations, the reasons for the sacraments,[260] church governing structures, eschatology, and

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emotional richness, will tolerate no supremacy of the intellect. . . . The private and public life form two separate spheres, each with their own way of existing, with their own task. . . . And it is on the basis of this state of affairs, which has not been invented by us, but which God himself has imposed on us, that in public life the woman does not stand equally with the man. Nor more that it can be said of the man that he has been called to achieve in the family that which is achieved by the woman. . . . For which the man is the appointed worker [the public domain], she will never be able to fulfill anything but a subordinate role, in which her inferiority would soon come to light anyway." Cf. Kuyper, "Uniformity," in *Reader,* 29: "In our country, prophetesses have arisen who insist—as though they were part of an antislavery league—on the emancipation of women and demand that they too be entitled to wear a liberty cap on their heads. In modern America a woman has recently taken a professor's chair at one of the colleges. . . . In Germany and Belgium women's skirts swirl around office stools."

256 "For a large part of his political career . . . Bavinck fought against suffrage and was against women having the right to vote (instead, Bavinck, typical of the Anti-Revolutionary Party, believed in suffrage being granted to fathers as the heads of families, with those families voting as units). His opinion later changed, eventually leading him to vote for individual male and female suffrage, despite being opposed to Revolutionary individualism in principle." James Eglinton in Herman Bavinck, *The Christian Family,* ed. Stephen Grabill, trans. Nelson Kloosterman (Grand Rapids: Christian's Library, 212), location 168 (Kindle).

257 E.g., on speaking about Eve, Herman Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith,* trans. Henry Zylstra, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 189–90: "She is out of Adam and yet is another than Adam. She is related to him and yet is different from him. She belongs to the same kind and yet in that kind she occupies her own unique position. She is dependent and yet she is free. She is *after* Adam and *out of* Adam, but owes her existence to God alone. . . . She is his helper, not as mistress and much less as slave, but as an individual, independent, and free being, who receives her existence not from the man but from God, who is responsible to God, and who was added to man as a free and unearned gift." Furthermore, when Bavinck spoke of marriage, it was primarily for companionship, not procreation or for the male person's higher "good."

258 Neils Van Driel, "The Status of Women in Contemporary Society: Principles and Practice in Herman Bavinck's Socio-Political Thought," in *Five Studies in the Thought of Bavinck, A Creator of Modern Dutch Theology,* ed. John Bolt (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2011), 153–95.

259 E.g., Plantinga, Thompson, and Lundberg, *Christian Theology,* 200–201. All Neocalvinist and Progressive Reformed denominations support women ordination. The acceptance (both in membership and ordination) of QUILTBAG persons is currently being debated, with many Neocalvinists affirming, others not.

260 For example, the average PCA minister today will baptize infants "because they are in the covenant" or as "a sign of the covenant of grace," while Calvin's logic was baptizing them "into future repentance and faith" (*Institutes*, 4.16.20), a concept I've never heard promoted by a contemporary Presbyterian, conservative or mainstream. W. Gary Crampton, *From Paedobaptism to Credobaptism: A Critique of the Westminster Standards on the Subjects of Baptism* (Owensboro: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2010) compellingly argues that infant baptism directly violates the "regulative principle of worship." Alan Conner, *Covenant Children Today: Physical or*

other loci of systematics.[261] Different degrees of the *Semper Reformanda* ("always reforming") spirit undoubtedly led to this incredible diversity. "Thus, over the centuries, we have challenged pretension at every point in church and society—even in our own classic heritage. That led most Protestants to read the Bible in critical ways, and to be very cautious about *sola Scriptura.* The debate over this issue is what divides Protestants from those who have taken the tradition toward Fundamentalism."[262]

It is almost as if diversity is what characterizes Reformed theology more than anything. So whatever "confessionalism" there is, it must necessarily be plural.

> An insistent focus on "essential" Reformed tenets may, in the end, result in a rather idiosyncratic understanding of the tradition, one that becomes rather distant from other bodies of the Christian family. An appeal to essential tenets may even violate the intents of the Reformers. The early proliferation of Reformed confessions points to an essential distrust of any one confession as being binding and authoritative for all time. At the signing of the First Helvetic Confession, Heinrich Bullinger claimed, "We wish in no way to prescribe for all churches through these articles a single rule of faith. For we acknowledge no other rule of faith than Holy Scripture." There is something about the dynamic of Reformed Christianity itself that demands multiple confessions. Instead of essential tenets, pluralism may constitute one of the "essential" features of Reformed Christianity.[263]

In glancing at the rear-view mirror, we indeed see that the varieties of Reformed thought can be categorized according to their willingness to reform. One might sketch this interpretation of history as follows.

The reformers themselves reformed only (or at least primarily) because their minds and consciences were "miserably vexed and flayed" (Luther at Diet of Worms) and were forced to do something. Doing something, they knew things would never be the same but did not fully comprehend what all this meant. Their

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Spiritual? (Owensboro: RBAP, 2007), also consistently argues that "covenant children" are spiritual children in the Gospels and New Testament message, not biological. Additionally, Richard Barcellos, ed., *Recovering a Covenantal Heritage* (Palmdale: RBAP, 2014), demonstrates that covenant theology lends more support to credobaptism than paedobaptism. Because Presbyterians maintain a majority over Reformed Baptists, and because Reformed Baptists do not have a positive academic reputation, such Presbyterians have not needed to engage these arguments. Nevertheless, Migliore and many other PCUSA figures realize the problems of paedobaptism and tend to "permit it" more than "promote it."

261 Crisp, *Saving Calvinism* and *Deviant Calvinism*, include a number of other such examples, including universalism and particularism in soteriology.

262 Max Stackhouse et al., *Christian Social Ethics in a Global Era* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 20.

263 David Jensen, ed., *Always Being Reformed: Challenges and Prospects for the Future of Reformed Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 5.

experience was initially one of persecution and escape from Roman authoritarianism. The experience of later generations of European reformers was one of laying new foundations via national identities and "getting doctrine right" once and for all. But in codifying their lengthy creeds and confessions into the dogmatic law of state-churches, they turned *Semper Reformanda* into *Never Reformanda*, and never really cleansed themselves of Rome's authoritarianism, conquer-and-colonize spirit, and incredulous claims of doctrinal finality. They had no intention of changing their theology in the near future and made (notorious) efforts to prevent it. The Neocalvinists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw how *Never Reformanda* worked out in the deaths of tens of thousands in the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and wisely retreated back to the spirit of the reformers. However, they were not under the gun of Rome anymore; they were under the "gun" of a world turned upside down by modern, rapid change—Industrialism, Darwinism, higher criticism, democratic nation-states, secularization, and various Enlightenment projects on steroids. With one foot in the Reformation and another foot in a brave new world of mass-produced study Bibles and bottled shaving cream, they did their best to erect provisional constructs of theological understanding and social ethics for their churches and communities, knowing that they too would inevitably change. The (proto-) Progressive Reformed continued the trajectory of the Neocalvinists, interbreeding with Protestant liberalism and postmodern thought in varying degrees to produce all the diversity that now exists within that stream. With the accelerated collapse of denominations and institutional Christianity in the West at large, and with continued splitting of reformed denominations into ever thinner subsets, Reformed thought appears to have fully flowered. It will still be some time, however, before Reformed Theology and its communities shrivel to the status of the Amish—if they ever will. (Arians, Arminians, and Nestorians still gather for worship in various places around the globe.)

Despite various internal arguments (and my own biases against the Confessional Reformed and Calvinist Baptists), all streams have something meaningful to contribute. In my assessment, for the reformers it is a bravery of conscience and determination that refuses to collapse under the weight of spiritual and social tyranny. The Confessional Reformed, an exercise and experiment of pushing the intellect to comprehend the incomprehensible, and taking seriously self-discipline and challenging standards of holiness. The Calvinist Baptists, the importance of conviction and cultural witness. The Neocalvinists, a grand cosmic and creative vision to see strange and unfamiliar sectors of creation—with all the rest—as part of a divine drama. The Progressive Reformed, a humility and bravery in listening to the voice of God in all of creation, and letting the future change the present instead of courting the past to needlessly haunt the present.

All streams also have blind spots. For the reformers, they missed that Christianity is bigger than European institutional churches, and that the Bible can never provide the kind of unity and results we often want and expect from it. Similarly, the Confessional Reformed fail to see that theology and doctrine are time-bound, language-bound constructs of the human mind and, as such, must never be enforced with any significant degree of organized authority—much less coercion. The Calvinist Baptists neglect that true power is not captured through baptisms or church planting or in the establishment of "Christian" civil laws or political officers. The Neocalvinists miss the fact that the divine drama—which began before our species—simply cannot be encapsulated into a biblical creation-fall-redemption, nor can all of life's experience be categorized as "unredeemed" and "redeemed." Finally, the Progressive Reformed need reminding that we must always cautiously discern what the winds of the Spirit really are (especially in conjunction with past and current models), and (in extreme cases), need reminding that to stand for everything is to stand for nothing.

Paul's Rule in 1 Corinthians 7:17–24: Contemporary Limitations and Challenges for Existing Identities in Christ

Elizabeth Mehlman
Independent Scholar

Laura J. Hunt
Ashland Theological Seminary

Abstract

Paul's "rule" in 1 Cor 7:17, 20, 24, and 26, that people should "remain in the situation they were in when God called them," (NRSV) has been variously interpreted. Scholars, such as J. Brian Tucker, applying social identity theory, understand Paul's rule as highlighting the social implications of the gospel, which are largely overlooked by traditional scholars. According to a social identity framework, Paul expects Jews and gentiles (and future Christians) to live out the gospel while remaining in their own social-ethnic identity. In this way, existing social identities, including ethnicities, continue for Christ-followers despite an overarching identity in Christ. Christians coming together can "remain as they are" keeping their previous identity while pursing unity with other believers upholding their own social-ethnic identity. This paper evaluates the claim that Paul's rule pertains broadly to social and ethnic identities, as interpreted by Tucker. It then examines the limitations of one proposal for prioritizing previous identities, the Homogeneous Unit Principle. Ultimately, it describes the creation and maintenance of non-homogeneous groups, unified in Christ using tools offered by psychological and social theories to address human desire for sameness and reluctance to cross ethnic-social barriers.

Introduction

Existing social and ethnic identities matter in Christ according to Pauline scholar J.

Brian Tucker.[1] For him, they provide a "hermeneutical key" to interpreting Paul's "rule in all the churches" that "each person [ought to] live as the Lord assigned to each one, as God has called each one" (1 Cor 7:17).[2] Tucker's understanding of identity is based on Tajfel and Turner's conceptual frameworks. Tajfel defines social identity as "that *part* of an individual's self-concept which derives from his [*sic*] knowledge of his [*sic*] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership."[3] Turner describes self-categorization as the process by which group identities are internalized, prioritized, and acted upon.[4] Tucker applies social identity in Pauline studies to "describe the relationship between Jewish and gentile identity with regard to the Christ-event."[5] Influential to Tucker's work, William S. Campbell argues that particularistic identity, as opposed to universalistic identity, is more representative of the Christ-movement, meaning that believers maintained their original social and ethnic identities in Christ (1 Cor 7:17–20).[6] Thus, individual differences from diverse previous social identities came into contact in the resultant complex communities. Paul establishes his rule within this context (1 Cor 7:17–24). This paper evaluates the claim that Paul's rule pertains broadly to social and ethnic identities, as interpreted by Tucker. It then examines the limitations of one proposal for prioritizing previous identities, the Homogeneous Unit Principle. Ultimately, it describes the creation and maintenance of non-homogeneous groups, unified in Christ using tools offered by psychological and social theories to address human desire for sameness and reluctance to cross ethnic-social barriers.[7]

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1   J. Brian Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling: Paul and the Continuation of Social Identities in 1 Corinthians* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014); J. Brian Tucker, *You Belong to Christ: Paul and the Formation of Social Identity in 1 Corinthians 1–4* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010); J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker, eds., *T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

2   J. Brian Tucker, *Reading 1 Corinthians* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), 9. Hunt translations used throughout.

3   Henri Tajfel, "Social Categorization, Social Identity and Social Comparison," in *Differentiation Between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. Henri Tajfel, European Monographs in Social Psychology 14 (London: Academic, 1978), 61–76.

4   John Turner, "Social Categorization and the Self-Concept: A Social Cognitive Theory of Group Behavior," in *Rediscovering Social Identity: Key Readings*, ed. Tom Postmes and Nyla R. Branscombe (New York: Psychology, 2010), 243–72; Philip F. Esler, "Group Norms and Prototypes in Matthew 5.3–12: A Social Identity Interpretation of the Matthean Beatitudes," in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 147–71. For more details, see Tucker and Baker, *T&T Clark Handbook*, 1–144.

5   Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 4.

6   J. Brian Tucker, "Diverse Identities in Christ According to Paul: The Enduring Influence of the Work of William S. Campbell," *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 38.2 (2017): 142. See also J. Brian Tucker and John Koessler, *All Together Different: Upholding the Church's Unity While Honoring our Individual Identities* (Chicago: Moody, 2018), 67. See also William S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 156–58.

7   The definition of identity used in this opening paragraph will be the one assumed for discussions of groups and identities throughout, even if the authors we are in dialogue with are less clear

Paul's Rule: Existing Ethnic and Social Identities in 1 Corinthians 7:17–24

First Corinthians 7:17–24 comes in the middle of Paul's discussion on sexuality and marriage, and the practicalities of these aspects of life for those whose main focus is the Lord (1 Cor 7:7, 15, 26, 31, 32, 35). Paul states his rule three times in this short passage, in vv. 17, 20, and 24 (and repeats it again in abbreviated form in v. 26). In the first instance, he sums up the general principle guiding his advice: "Except let each person live as the Lord assigned to each one, as God has called each one. This is also the way I am organizing all the churches" (7:17).[8]

Despite the many ambiguities in this passage,[9] only one is of interest here. While the application of this rule by some scholars makes existing identities irrelevant and invisible behind the call to salvation, others interpret Paul as referring to the continuation of such distinctions.[10] Noteworthy is Thiselton's interpretation that God has called believers in a secondary sense, beyond the entry into the community of God to "present circumstances." Joseph Fitzmyer allows for the possibility of a specific societal role or divine vocation.[11]

Conclusions on this issue hinge, in part, on the meaning of μερίζω (assigned) in 7:17 and καλέω (called) as it is carried over in 7:17, 20, 21, and 24.[12] Virtually all English translations render καλέω as "has called" or "called."[13] BDAG, citing 7:17, defines καλέω as choosing for "a special benefit or experience" and notes that both the New Testament and the LXX sometimes used this word to describe God's choice "of person(s) for salvation" (Gal 1:6, Rom 8:30, 9:24; Hos 2:1; Isa 40:26; 41:9; 42:6; 45:3–4).[14] But what is being assigned, and to what exactly are people called?

Conzelmann argues that μερίζω and καλέω are synonymous since in the church

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about their definitions. See critiques in, for example, Wayne McClintock, "Sociological Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle," *International Review of Mission* 77.305 (1988): 107–116. For details about the way social identity connects with ethnicity, as well as a helpful discussion of contemporary theories of ethnicity, see Aaron Kuecker, "Ethnicity and Social Identity," in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 59–77.

8   For the translation "except" as connected to 1 Cor 7:15–16, as well as the concept of principles and advice rather than order and rules, see Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling,* 70, 74.

9   Brad R. Braxton, *The Tyranny of Resolution 1 Corinthians 7:14–24* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 4; Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling,* 83.

10   Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 157; Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling,* 6, 68–69, 75–88; William S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 91–92, 118; John Barclay, "1 Corinthians," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1119.

11   Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 549; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, AB32 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 307.

12   Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling,* 70–71.

13   E.g., NKJV, NASB, ESV, CEB, NRSV, NIV.

14   BDAG, s.v. "καλέω."

"our natural standing no longer counts"; to change one's status would suggest that status impacted salvation.[15] Indeed, he argues that the individual is liberated to such an extent that "worldly differences are already abrogated . . . eschatological-ly."[16] According to Conzelmann, "Paul is not advocating a principle of unity in church order." He instead suggests that Paul is "attacking precisely the kind of schematization which postulates a specific mode of *klēsis* [calling]."[17]

C. K. Barrett similarly explains that "calling" means theologically "to become a Christian," dispensing with any sense of "calling *with*," "calling *to*," or "calling *by*."[18] Barrett cautions not "to import into this passage modern ideas of, for example, vocation to missionary service"; yet for him, one's "old occupation is given new significance."[19] Thus, Barrett, while mentioning both present status and future vocation, conflates the two verbs in v. 17.[20]

Gordon Fee, however, contends that the verbs μερίζω and καλέω are not synonymous given the different tenses and subjects.[21] Similarly to Tucker, he sees both a previous social setting and a future vocation referenced in this verse, although with the previous setting assigned (μερίζω) and the future vocation called (καλέω).[22] As Fee explains, Christ assigns saved persons a place in life, and then they are called to live sanctified lives in Christ.[23] But for Fee, Paul is not suggesting it is necessary to retain one's social identity; one is not "locked into that setting."[24] Instead, such settings have no "religious significance" and are therefore "obsolete" and "irrelevant."[25] Since theology arises out of specific cultural contexts, however, the setting in which a person will most likely be living out their faith is quite relevant.[26] In fact, Paul contextualizes "an observance of the laws of God" (v. 19) in such a way that, surprisingly for Jews, does not include circumcision. He thus allows gentiles to retain at least one marker of their previous social identity.[27]

Tucker distinguishes between μερίζω and καλέω concluding that the former

15 Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 126.
16 Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 126.
17 Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 126.
18 C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1968), 168–69.
19 Barrett, *The First Epistle,* 170.
20 Barrett, *The First Epistle,* 168.
21 Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, rev. ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 343.
22 Fee, *The First Epistle*, 343–44.
23 Fee, *The First Epistle*, 343.
24 Fee, *The First Epistle*, 343.
25 Fee, *The First Epistle*, 344–45.
26 Campbell, *Paul*, 52. As a contemporary example, we note that 19th and 20th century advances in science and changing Western culture have demanded complex theological discussions about life, gender, marriage, and the family.
27 Barclay, "1 Corinthians," 1119.

refers to "all the various life practices that result from different spiritual gifts."[28] God assigns different roles in life based on the gifts given (1 Cor 7:7).[29] Καλέω, on the other hand, is "an interior call to be in Christ" and both the ὡς ("as") that precedes it and the explanations that come afterwards (vv. 18, 20) show that this calling may come to people in a variety of social conditions.[30] "Each one in the condition in which one was called, in that let a person remain" (1 Cor 7:20). In this sense, then, one's calling in Christ supersedes but does not erase one's social location in life.[31] For Tucker, "being in Christ is the superordinate identity which deprioritizes all other indexes of identity."[32]

Tucker, who self-identifies with the post-supersessionist perspective on Paul, argues that Paul never ceased to be Torah observant, thereby maintaining his identity as a Jew even as a Christ-follower among gentiles.[33] Conversely, gentiles outside the old covenant, whom Paul instructs to maintain their identity, were not bound to follow a strict halakhah. Thus, Tucker's "approach to Paul . . . allows for previous identities to continue while maintaining the fundamental significance of oneness in Christ."[34]

Tucker is primarily concerned with how believers integrate existing social identities, culturally formed and reinforced by various local roles and responsibilities, into Christ-following identities as defined by the gospel.[35] This gospel orientation requires a reshaping of previous identities "for the glory of God" and the good of others (1 Cor 10:31–11:1).[36] Yet ongoing identities are valued because of Paul's surprising statement in 1 Cor 7:20 that everyone "should remain in the *calling in Christ* into which they were called."[37] However, these identities are no longer valued hierarchically (vv. 19–23).

The overlap with the marriage teachings both before and after this section (e.g., vv. 12–13 and 25–26) suggests that Paul has not digressed from his line of

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28 Tucker, *Reading*, 83.

29 Tucker, *Reading*, 83; Thiselton, *The First Epistle*, 548.

30 Tucker, *Reading*, 83. See Barrett, *The First Epistle,* 171.

31 Tucker, *Reading*, 83.

32 Tucker, *Reading*, 83.

33 This is a wide stream with many currents including the radical perspective on Paul, beyond the new perspective on Paul, the Paul within Judaism perspective, and the renewed perspective on Paul. For Tucker's approach, see J. Brian Tucker, *Reading Romans after Supersessionism: The Continuation of Jewish Covenantal Identity*, New Testament after Supersessionism 6 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018). For more about the origins of this perspective, see Kathy Ehrensperger, *That We May Be Mutually Encouraged: Feminism and the New Perspective in Pauline Studies* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 123–60.

34 Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling,* 134.

35 Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling*, 119.

36 Tucker and Koessler, *All Together Different*, 61.

37 Tucker, *Reading*, 84, translates κλῆσις as "calling" rather than "condition" (NRSV); emphasis original. BDAG defines κλῆσις as either: 1) an "invitation to experience a special privilege and responsibility, *call, calling, invitation*," or 2) "position that one holds, *position, condition*" citing only 1 Cor 7:20.

thinking.[38] However, he illustrates his principle using identity markers beyond marriage and celibacy: circumcision and enslavement (vv. 18–23).[39] This broad application suggests that Paul is not referring to an exception in 1 Cor 7:17 but noting a general principle that Christ-followers remain in the state in which they were called. Tucker's meaning is important; it suggests that Paul does not intend to reify social hierarchies, such as slavery, because even with a new status, God's call redefines and revalues identity.[40] When Paul restates the rule in 1 Cor 7:24, he uses a vocative to insert a pause in the discourse, building anticipation and emphasizing Paul's surprising instruction, intended for all his churches, not just those in Corinth (v. 17).[41]

Therefore, this rule covers the circumstances also mentioned in Gal 3:28 regarding the measures of social status most important in Roman 1st century CE culture. Jews must understand that gentiles could keep the commandments of God by remaining uncircumcised (1 Cor 7:19). Slaves receive a reversal of the social order in which they could remain slaves and yet consider themselves freed persons in the Lord. Free Corinthians are equated to slaves of Christ (v. 22). In the broader passage about male/female relationships, it is noteworthy that in the context of a Corinthian ethic, in which it was recommended that men not even touch their wives (7:1), husbands are required to share the marital bed (7:4), not to divorce their wives (7:11), and wives are to resist being divorced (7:10–11).[42] In these ways, Paul confirms pre-existing identities and evaluates them all as honorable in God's new household.

It is important to note the practical implications of this reevaluation. Anthony Thiselton suggests that an eschatological approach such as Conzelmann's, which revalues identity only in the eschaton, "is one-sided in one direction, just as 'Remain as You Were' would be one-sided in the other direction."[43] He points instead to Dale Martin's interpretation of slavery as "upward mobility," where slaves can rise in status when supported and advanced in life by their high-status owner-patrons.[44] Slavery was prevalent enough in the 1st century CE that Corinthians of any status could appreciate the social ramifications of Paul's theological arguments. Significantly, Paul here uses "in Christ" terminology to describe the

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38 Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 220.
39 William F. Cook III "Twenty-First Century Problems in a First Century Church (1 Corinthians 5–7)," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 6.8 (2002): 45; Gregory W. Dawes, "'But If You Can Gain Your Freedom' (1 Corinthians 7:17–24)," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52.4 (1990): 683.
40 Tucker, *Reading,* 84.
41 Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2010), 118–19.
42 Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Keys to First Corinthians: Revisiting the Major Issues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 32–42.
43 Thiselton, *The First Epistle*, 544–45.
44 Dale B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 65 (see 63–68).

identity into which Corinthians are being formed. First Corinthians 7:22 ("for a slave called in the Lord") is the first verse using a related phrase since 1 Cor 4:15–17. This wording heightens the status of a slave by relationship to Christ, a patron of the highest status.

Accordingly, Tucker argues that slavery becomes a "metaphorical" index of an in-Christ identity within the Christ movement (1 Cor 7:22–23).[45] Everyone's status has been improved by incorporation into "the household of Christ" because Christ's status is higher than that of any other head of household. But furthermore, within that household (7:22), the free (ἐλεύθερος) become slaves, and the slaves are declared freed persons (ἀπελεύθερος).[46] This index is echoed in the broader chapter, as Paul assumes women with some self-determination and gentiles who can be called law-observant without circumcision.

Thus, using gender, ethnic, and social location categories relevant to the 1st century CE, Paul provides a new identity for Christ-followers in which their existing ethnic and social identities can continue, but with equity of status. They are united into one household in which slaves, gentiles, and woman have status, but all are dependent on Christ. This means a social order where difference engenders mutuality, not stratification.[47]

Identity Challenges to Paul's Rule

Paul's rule implies churches should foster a particularistic mindset toward church development, inviting and nurturing diversity, and appreciating the unique strength each ethnicity and social identity brings to the body of Christ. However, the assumption that ethnic and socially diverse believers remaining in their existing identities can coexist within growing bodies of Christ was challenged in the mid-twentieth century by missiologist Donald McGavran's Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP).[48] Researching causes of church growth through case study, McGavran found that church growth was higher when churches concentrated on a single class, caste, or tribal group.[49] McGavran thus concluded that "[p]eople like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers."[50] He found that churches that produced racially or socially mixed congregations lacked

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45 Tucker, *Reading,* 85.
46 Martin, *Slavery*, 66–67; Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling*, 86; Barrett, *The First Epistle*, 170–71.
47 "Christena Cleveland on Embodying Mutuality: A Conversation between Christena Cleveland and Tod Bolsinger," Fuller Theological Seminary, July 7, 2015; see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpoSuhTgjIg.
48 Donald McGavran*, Understanding Church Growth,* 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 163–78.
49 McGavran*, Understanding Church Growth*, e.g., 165; for a positive assessment of the HUP, see C. Peter Wagner, "How Ethical is the Homogeneous Unit Principle?" *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 2.1 (1978): 12–19.
50 McGavran*, Understanding Church Growth*, 163.

significant growth.[51] Therefore, he prioritized new and countable converts to the church rather than addressing segregation and social justice projects.[52] In fact, he believed that conversion itself would naturally address these problems: "The Christian in whose heart Christ dwells inclines toward brotherhood [*sic*] as water runs down a valley."[53] McGavran appreciated the diversity of human culture, but encouraged the diversity of homogeneous churches, a kind of imagined, universal diversity in which believers share a unified identity in Christ but avoid the discomfort of being challenged by the presence of those bearing different ethnic identities. McGavran, committed to finding salvation for the un-evangelized, concluded that church growth is directly related to removing barriers of social difference.[54] This "Church Growth" or "people movement" strategy, as it is called, has had success, but also criticism.

René Padilla, for example, criticizes the HUP, asserting that when Christians are not required to look a sister or brother in the eye, one who is different from them in some important respects, the body of Christ becomes made up of "churches and institutions whose main function in society is to reinforce the status quo."[55] Yet Padilla does not sufficiently recognize the effort required to create heterogenous churches or institutions. He asserts, for example, that identity markers such as "Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, rich and poor," as well as "race, social status, or sex," and "all the differences derived from . . . homogeneous units . . . become irrelevant," replaced by "identity in Christ."[56] So, while he argues against assimilation, the specifics of this "identity in Christ" he proposes are quite unclear.[57]

Paul exhorts believers to remain where they are and to continue identifying with their specific ethnic and social group, and McGavran's strategy appreciates the salience of these ethnic and social identities.[58] Because the HUP advocates for contextualization, Wagner can assert that "[t]he application of the

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51 McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, e.g., 170.

52 McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 22–23.

53 McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 175, 177–78. He is sometimes a bit vague about this, as he recognizes that when history has obstructed such affiliations, "special action on the part of the church" will be necessary (175). But on the whole, he believes that "common sense" will address these issues, and that "[t]he church's real business is the proclamation of the gospel" (175, 177–78, 261–63).

54 McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 172.

55 C. René Padilla, "The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unit Principle," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 6.1 (1982): 23–30.

56 Padilla, "Unity," 29.

57 Padilla, "Unity," 26.

58 This is the case, despite some concerning statements. The Pasadena Consultation, for example, considers that somehow Jews and gentiles all keep their previous identity despite his assertion that "their racial and religious alienation symbolized 'by the law of commandments and ordinances'" was "abolished" by Christ. However, in what way Jews might continue to embody their previous identity without the Torah is quite unclear. John R. W. Stott, moderator, "Missiological Event: The Pasadena Consultation," *Missiology: An International Review* 5.4 (1977): 507–13.

homogeneous-unit principle is a powerful antidote for cultural chauvinism, racism, and discrimination."[59] However, this is only the case when compared with assimilationist strategies.[60] The HUP stops short of the particularistic, but unifying, approach of scholars such as Tucker. Here, ethnic identities are neither dissolved nor downplayed, but "recognized and accommodated with the larger group identity."[61] Accommodation, in this sense, involves both the evaluation of previous identities in light of the gospel, and a love ethic that makes room for the other under the prioritized body of Christ.[62] As mentioned with regard to 1 Cor 7:22 above, the in-Christ identity is one that reverses the status and power that accrue to differing identities in the culture outside of the church. Therefore, within the overarching in-Christ identity, it is the least-respected previous identities whose preferences must be prioritized.

But can respect for the continuation of previous identities go too far? One concern addressed to those who focus on particularized identities that continue in Christ is that this leaves open the possibility for two separate ways of salvation—one for Jews and one for gentiles.[63] For Eisenbaum, however, this is only a partial understanding of the issue, rooted in a preoccupation with individualism.[64] When particularistic identities are valued, and God's plan for the redemption of the world is in view, both Jews and gentiles may live out Torah differently. Christ's body is still unified because "[b]oth groups are supposed to be in concord with the will of God, both are called to obedience, and in their different roles, both are being faithful to the Torah."[65] Similarly, God's call to obedience will look different in the context of differing previous identities and future gifts (1 Cor 7:17), but the faithfulness to God is the same. It is the continuing validity of Paul's Jewish identity that, in fact, prevents anti-Judaism from becoming "a legitimate or essential aspect of Christian identity, though it is often represented as such."[66]

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59 Wagner, "How Ethical is the Homogeneous Unit Principle?", 17.

60 Wagner, "How Ethical is the Homogeneous Unit Principle?", 14. For a critique of HUP from an assimilationist perspective, see Bruce W. Fong, *Racial Equality in the Church: A Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Light of a Practical Theology Perspective* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996), e.g., 163.

61 Tucker and Koessler, *All Together Different*, 149.

62 Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 184–86; Tucker and Koessler, *All Together Different*, 137–41. See also Irenaeus's theory of recapitulation as discussed in Howard A. Snyder, "John Wesley, Irenaeus, and Christian Mission: Rethinking Western Christian Theology," *The Asbury Journal 73.1* (2018): *138–59. Note especially the concept of "all things together in proper relationship under Jesus Christ" (Eph 1:9–10), although Snyder does not mention cultures and identities (143).*

63 Daniel R. Langton, "Paul in Jewish Thought," in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 2nd ed., ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 741–44.

64 Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 251.

65 Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 252.

66 Campbell, *Paul*, 151.

Erik Hyatt offers an example of one method of implementing this vision.[67] With representatives from twenty different nations at their one-year anniversary in 2017, New City of Nations Church in Minneapolis, MN, uses English as the common language. However, in their leadership and their preaching, they insure that "[n]o single people group dominates the leadership."[68] Furthermore, through greetings, songs, and small groups, each language of the various identities has the opportunity to be expressed and celebrated. Paul's rule suggests that churches find similar approaches to expressing the relationship between ethnic and in-Christ identities in local congregations.

Techniques for Creating an Inclusive in-Christ Identity

On the one hand, Paul's rule would encourage previous identities to continue in Christ, contextualizing the gospel. On the other hand, previous identities will also be contextualized by the gospel. In other words, a culture may embody the gospel in unique ways, but the culture itself will also be affected by the gospel. For example, previous identities should not lead to boasting, nor should they cause offense, and they need to be realigned for unity, with a preference for those of lowest status.[69] Thus, the superordinate in-Christ identity may require individuals to adapt previous identities for the sake of both holiness and unity. This may entail significant challenges.

First, as just discussed, while believers are called to identify with their existing ethnic and social identities in Christ, the call to be in Christ is a superordinate identity that reprioritizes the importance of all other measures of identity.[70] "Nested like Russian dolls," all of believers' other identities are united under one overarching identity that they share with all other believers.[71] Despite differences, "all share the same interior call."[72] As a result, national, ethnic, or political identities must be worked out (and reconciled) underneath this overarching identity, eschewing an "us" versus "them" mentality.[73] This may be quite a difficult task. In Acts 6:1–7, for example, the immediate problem was solved so that the Hellenistic widows began to receive their share of food, but it was done by putting Hellenistic men in charge of the distribution (v. 5). The question of why the Judaic

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67 Erik Hyatt, "Missions Sunday: From Homogeneous to a Heterogeneous Principle," *Christianity Today* (January 29, 2017).

68 However, male identity dominates the leadership of New City New Church; see http://www.newc-ity.mn/meet-our-servant-leaders.html.

69 Tucker and Koessler, *All Together Different*, 137–38.

70 Tucker, *Reading,* 83.

71 Tucker and Koessler, *All Together Different*, 234.

72 Tucker*, Reading*, 85.

73 Tucker and Koessler, *All Together Different*, 235.

widows were being served while others were not is never raised in the text, nor is a deeper reconciliation attempted.[74]

Also, a narrow theology of difference may limit Paul's rule. Leanna Fuller explains:

> I propose a theological anthropology that is paradoxical in nature—one that sees human beings as both profoundly broken and participating in healing at any given moment. This vision understands human beings as individual centers of needs and desires that are often incompatible with one another, a fact which constitutes a tragic dimension to human life. At the same time, this tragic dimension may also contain within it the source for healing and wholeness.[75]

A sole focus on the tragedy of incompatibility will not only limit the effectiveness of Paul's rule, but also will limit the possibilities in multi-ethnic and multi-social church settings. Such limitations can be overcome by a vision such as Fuller's, which imagines possible forward movement within the divisions themselves.

Fuller points out that congregations in conflict can experience destructive defense mechanisms, such as splitting and scapegoating.[76] Object relations theory suggests that the mind internalizes aspects of other people, and functions based on the relations between various elements of self and others. If those relations become too complex, we may split off certain aspects of our self and project them onto others in order to reduce anxiety. Fuller notes how intense conflict in congregations causes "collective splitting," in which the larger group divides because they "are unable to tolerate the inclusion of diverse qualities within one religious body."[77] This division allows the identity markers rejected by one group to be solely attributed to the other, and this process may be further intensified by scapegoating, in which "a group displaces blame and anger onto . . . another group through defensive projection."[78] Accordingly, Fuller explains how "conflict arises so frequently in groups like congregations, which pride themselves on cultivating intimate relationships among their members."[79] The increase in familiarity is likely to result in viewing other ingroup members as complex, which makes the development of a singular group identity quite difficult.[80]

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74 With appreciation to Rev. Jeffery Harrold for this insight.
75 Leanna K. Fuller, *When Christ's Body Is Broken: Anxiety, Identity, and Conflict in Congregations* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016), 146. She elucidates the way these psychological insights generally considered on an individual level impact social identity, but also provide a roadmap towards an overall goal to glorify Christ through unified diversity.
76 Fuller, *When Christ's Body*, 75–83.
77 Fuller, *When Christ's Body*, 80.
78 Fuller, *When Christ's Body*, 80–83.
79 Fuller, *When Christ's Body*, 83.
80 Fuller, *When Christ's Body*, 83.

Christena Cleveland's work adds to the tools proposed so far for unifying diverse particular identities into one superordinate identity in Christ. She challenges congregations to negotiate complex identities by recognizing implicit bias and the detrimental effects of groupthink, and working to overcome these unconscious processes.[81] One helpful tool discussed in Cleveland's work is using "unifying language."[82] The simple creation of categories leads us to prefer those in "our" group.[83] "When different groups in the body of Christ are part of us, we like them more."[84] Thus, by referring to "them" as "us," perspectives change.

Yet, diverse existing ethnic and social identities may spark anxiety in certain people and subgroups. Fuller discusses the concept of anxiety, defined in her study as "perceived threats to *identity*."[85] Her approach to congregational group conflict is helpful because it shows the importance of both individual and collective identities "with each element both reflecting and influencing the other."[86] Tucker, somewhat similarly, notes how contemporary congregations struggle with conflict related to various aspects of identity and culture, such as "authority, sexuality, marriage, gender orientation, cultural pluralism, worship differences, philosophical doubts, leadership disagreements and economic inequality."[87] Thus, as differences along these lines become manifest, groups divide, and it is this very "*group polarization*" that "*causes anxiety*."[88] One of the ways to manage such anxiety, then, is "*differentiation*, which is the process by which individuals learn to define their selves more clearly within the context of relationships."[89] This increased self-definition provides a basis for people "to respond calmly in the midst of anxious systems, and to take full responsibility for their own thoughts, feelings, and actions."[90] As leaders develop this practice, they model to congregations how to maintain relationships with different subgroups, avoiding scapegoating while still maintaining previous group identities, which are reprioritized in Christ.[91]

Without the ability to maintain one's previous identity within a diverse, in-Christ group, members and leaders may struggle to manage the complex

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81 Christena Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2013), 61, 41.

82 Cleveland, *Disunity*, 62–64, 98–100, Note also the importance, in cross-cultural experiences, to have "a larger goal," for all participants to share "equal status," for "personal interaction," and for a leader who can navigate through the events (158).

83 Cleveland, *Disunity*, 62.

84 Cleveland, *Disunity*, 63.

85 Fuller, *When Christ's Body*, 49; emphasis original; see also 64–67 and 69.

86 Fuller, *When Christ's Body*, 106.

87 Tucker, *Reading*, 142.

88 Fuller, *When Christ's Body*, 119; emphasis original.

89 Fuller, *When Christ's Body*, 13; emphasis original.

90 Fuller, *When Christ's Body*, 13.

91 Fuller, *When Christ's Body*, 188–89. See also Cleveland, *Disunity,* 112–16 and 135–37. Although Cleveland does not use the term "differentiation," the practice she describes is quite similar.

identities among them.[92] Some of the values that Tucker and Koessler propose, such as "showing preference for others, intentional self-denial, and gracious with-drawal" may mitigate this struggle.[93] However, if too many members find them-selves unable to imagine an overarching in-Christ identity that encompasses those whose continuing previous identities include markers that they reject, unity is at risk, especially if one subgroup ultimately chooses to withdraw (even graciously). Such complex conflicts and responses to the clash of identities may be difficult for ministry leaders to recognize and negotiate.[94]

Fuller's research suggests that a focus on hospitality may help to manage the anxiety inherent in social differences.[95] She encourages churches to accept and even embrace the presence of multiple identities and the anxiety that such varia-tion will sometimes produce, describe and enact the superordinate in-Christ iden-tity as one that is able to include all of the particularistic identities of the congregation (and the surrounding area), and "cultivat[e] calm, connected leadership."[96]

In addressing the anxiety that differences produce, McGavran had argued that early Christians became Christian while remaining culturally Jewish, but that as more and more gentiles converted, less and less Jews were willing to join a "con-glomerate society."[97] In order to avoid this problem, McGavran followed Paul's rule by encouraging diversification to accommodate the previous identities of new converts. He concluded that churches grow when focused on a single homo-geneous people group with social relationships that create "bridges" across which the gospel can easily be communicated to other identities in the surrounding area.[98] Rick Warren advises, "[d]iscover what types of people live in your area, decide *which of these groups* your church is best equipped to reach, and then discover which styles of evangelism best match your target."[99]

Tucker and Koessler do acknowledge that "building a unified gospel-based church culture is a messy endeavor," and that "neat, cookie-cutter approaches are not likely to generate flourishing congregations."[100] However, another challenge that can stem from a singular, cookie-cutter ingroup identity is the potential for "[n]egative self-definition" against any groups not included within the ingroup,

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92 Fuller, *When Christ's Body*, 13, 83.
93 Tucker and Koessler, *All Together Different*, 206.
94 Fuller, *When Christ's Body*, e.g., 188.
95 Fuller, *When Christ's Body*, 13, 161–66.
96 Fuller, *When Christ's Body*, 167–93. Note that attention to the identities in the physical and social location of the congregation must be taken into account, but the conclusions drawn will be differ-ent than those of, e.g., C. Peter Wagner, *Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of Church Growth in America* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979).
97 McGavran*, Understanding Church Growth*, 170.
98 McGavran*, Understanding Church Growth*, 253–64.
99 Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 188; emphasis ours.
100 Tucker and Koessler, *All Together Different*, 141.

which has historically given rise to "deplorable, even horrific consequences particularly for . . . minorities (though its malicious influence also has destructive power in those who discriminate against others)."[101] Thus, a focus such as McGavran's on "multiplication" over "Christianizing the social order" does not necessarily line up with Paul's vision in 1 Cor 7:17–24, particularly when read in the light of 1 Cor 10:31–11:1, as previously mentioned.[102]

Tucker and Campbell, instead, would most likely agree with Howard Snyder's evaluation:

> Historically, there has been a tendency in Church Growth thinking to define the church's mission (and therefore growth and success) too much in terms of the church and not enough in terms of the kingdom of God. This leads to churches that celebrate their own growth but often have little vision for the justice, socioeconomic, and ecological dimensions of God's reign in the present order.[103]

The assumption that growth rate and size are the calculators of success is not necessarily correct, as can be seen from the proliferation of insular churches resulting from the HUP.[104] "In order for them to function as ingroups, . . . it seems necessary for them to function also as producers of outgroups."[105] For Kraft, this attitude evidences a group that is "using their homogeneity badly."[106] But denigrating the outgroup is an inherent aspect of ingroup formation, such that even if leaders attempt to create an ingroup identity that values outgroups, outreach is likely to degenerate into some form of saviorism.[107]

Saviorism, then, is another challenge to the incorporation of multiple identities into one body. Liu and Baker "have challenged the ways in which heroic leadership images constructed in the Australian media may fail to address how whiteness is silently reinforced as the norm and exemplar, and in turn, sustain the marginalisation of peoples of colour from the work of leadership."[108] White

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101 Campbell, *Paul*, 175.
102 McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 22–23; Tucker and Koessler, *All Together Different*, 61.
103 Howard Snyder, "A Renewal Response," in *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement: 5 Views* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 62–64. See further Howard Snyder, "Renewal View," in *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement*, 209–231.
104 C. Douglas McConnell, "Confronting Racism and Prejudice in Our Kind of People," *Missiology* 25.4 (1997): 387–404 (e.g., 396). Note that this was beginning to be addressed, at least partially, in, for example, Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, "The Pasadena Consultation: Homogeneous Unit Principle," *Lausanne Occasional Paper* 1 (1978): 5–7.
105 Charles H. Kraft, "An Anthropological Apologetic for the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Missiology," *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 2.4 (1978): 121–27.
106 Kraft, "An Anthropological Apologetic," 125.
107 Kraft, "An Anthropological Apologetic," 125; Helena Liu and Christopher Baker, "White Knights: Leadership as the Heroicisation of Whiteness," *Leadership* 12.4 (2016): 420–48.
108 Liu and Baker, "White Knights," 440.

culture, or the dominant culture in a given community, constructs the values and norms of leadership and concurrently neglects to recognize or value the norms of other cultures. Christena Cleveland, for example, describes two pastors of different races who attempted to create an ingroup identity for their two congregations. However, each group and associated pastor judged the other on their own "very different criteria for . . . leadership, criteria they thought were clearly superior."[109] Once they addressed these identity differences, their congregations moved towards acceptance, healing, and growth.

For successful cross-cultural interactions, different groups must have a common goal that they could not accomplish alone.[110] Members of each culture must also have equal status, echoing Paul's examples from 1 Cor 7:22.[111] Individuals from each group need to have opportunities to interact with one another.[112] Accordingly, leaders must offer a common narrative that will facilitate these interactions.[113] For Paul, this included: "Let each person live as the Lord assigned to each one, as God has called each one. This is also the way I am organizing all the churches" (7:17), a narrative in which particularistic identities were valued within a common, in-Christ identity.

Identities are intersectional and sometimes fluid.[114] People strive to self-determine their own belongingness, as much as they are able, and make complex distinctions between aspects of out-group identities. Furthermore, they decide which aspects of their previous identities must remain salient and which are more readily suppressed.[115] The immigrant and refugee groups that worship at New City of Nations Church (NCNC) live at the intersections of their own different identities—the one created in interactions between immigrant communities (who share a common experience of displacement), and a common identity as inhabitants of Minneapolis. Some of these identities create bridges between people who otherwise belong to different groups.[116] Yet, this church has not tried to found their

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109 Cleveland, *Disunity*, 72. See also 164–65.
110 Cleveland, *Disunity*, 158–64.
111 Cleveland, *Disunity*, 164–71.
112 Cleveland, *Disunity*, 171–73.
113 Cleveland, *Disunity*, 173–75.
114 Tite Tiénou, "Reflections on Michael A. Rynkiewich's 'Do Not Remember the Former Things,'" *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 40.4 (2016): 318–24; Kuecker, "Ethnicity," 68; Halvor Moxnes, "Identity in Jesus' Galilee—from Ethnicity to Locative Intersectionality," *Biblical Interpretation* 18.4–5 (2010): 390–416; Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1 (1989): 139–67; Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 21.
115 Cleveland, *Disunity*, 84–85. For more details, see Philip F. Esler, "An Outline of Social Identity Theory," in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 13–39.
116 Tiénou, "Reflections," 321.

practices only or even primarily on their common identities, nor have they imagined that a superordinate in-Christ identity would erase distinctions. Instead, NCNC illustrates how multiple identities can be successfully incorporated within one congregation where minority identities, often devalued in society, are revalued in Christ.

Conclusion

Paul's rule in 1 Cor 7:17–24, although delivered to the Corinthians and all his churches of varying backgrounds, is relevant today as Christians struggle to integrate the gospel and different ethnicities within God's kingdom. The goal is to live in Christ as part of a culture with ethnic and social differences. Existing identities continue to matter in Christ, presenting ethical implications for ethnic and social groups striving for peace, understanding, and unity in a diverse world. Valuing the identity of those who are different, not only within the church but beyond its borders, has the potential to impact the "well-being of contemporary society."[117] As a corollary to Paul's rule, an in-Christ identity includes the acceptance of different identities without bias, even amid different expressions of faith.[118] Different ethnic and social identities can challenge the balance of evangelism and unity. Helping others acknowledge that differences are part of being human while increasing one's tolerance of anxiety enables diverse ethnic and social identities to add strengths, wisdom, and gifts toward the unity of Christ-followers.[119]

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117 Campbell, *Paul*, 174.
118 Campbell, *Paul*, 174.
119 Fuller, *When Christ's Body*, 139.

Psalm 1 and The Torah that Transplants

J. Gerald Janzen
Christian Theological Seminary

Abstract

It is increasingly appreciated that the Psalter is a shaped collection, and that it displays a movement, from Pss 1 and 2 with their announcement of leading themes and problematic counter-themes, along a tortuous path winding through those dialectical thematics, and arriving at an undialectical resolution in unqualified praise, in Ps 150, by "all who have breath." The present paper seeks to demonstrate the significance, for this transformative movement of the verb šātûl in Ps 1:3, usually translated "planted," but by some (and here) taken to mean more specifically "transplanted." So understood, this verb forms the transitive nexus within the psalm itself, from the individual as solitary amid a hostile community in v. 1 to relocation amid the "congregation of the righteous" in v. 5. For the Psalter as a whole, the verb signals what happens to the individual who "meditates" on the Psalter "day and night" as God's *tôrāh* or "instruction" in how to pray and praise. The Psalter transplants one from wherever one may find oneself amid the dialectics of life's variable circumstances and into "the courts of God," a location that is (as Ps 73:17 expressly illustrates) further transformative.

In the present essay, I propose to examine two elements in Ps 1, the noun *tôrāh*, usually translated "law," and the verb šātûl, usually translated "planted." My primary focus will be on the verb. As I shall argue, these two words have a significance for our engagement with the Psalter—a significance for our own transformation in and through that engagement—that cannot be over-estimated.

I make the following assumptions, as supportable from the work of recent scholarship devoted to the Psalms and not needing argument here. (1) The Psalter is not just an aggregate of individual psalms somehow gathered together, but in

some sense is theologically shaped,[1] tracing a tortuous path toward an outcome, a *telos*. (2) Psalms 1 and 2 in their present form function as a joint introduction to the Psalter. (3) Key elements in these two psalms function as keynotes that will recur in subsequent psalms—keynotes serving to shepherd the diverse thematics in the various psalms along a path that, however tortuous, offers a "true and living way" to the *telos* of Ps 150.[2]

A Brief Word on *tôrāh*

As commonly recognized, the word denotes teaching or instruction. It comes from the verb *hôrāh*, the meaning of which is graphically instanced in Exod 15:25 where Moses "cried to the LORD" and God "showed him [*wayyôrêhû*] a log." If one were to translate the verb here as "directed him to,"[3] one could capture the semantic tones of the noun *tôrāh* as connoting "directions for living." In "Ikea" terms, *tôrāh* offers "directions for assembling and enjoying a life."

In special contexts, this word *tôrāh* can connote covenant law (as, prominently, in Deuteronomy), wisdom lore (as in the Book of Proverbs), and even, as in Isaiah, prophetic utterance (1:10; 8:16, 20; 30:9). John Goldingay has it that "[t]he Psalter's central concern is to teach people to praise, pray, and testify," and he proposes that "perhaps the teaching to which it invites meditation is its own teaching on praise, prayer, and testimony."[4] One can cite H. J. Kraus, James L. Mays, and Clinton McCann, among others, to similar effect. But if the Psalter is, by this word at the very outset, introduced as a set of "directions for praising, praying, and testifying," it does not merely "point out" how to carry out such practices. Like an Ikea website that includes a video demonstrating how to assemble the furniture, the Psalter proceeds to provide scores and scores of examples of how to begin and how to continue in these practices. More on this later.

šātûl as "Transplanted"

I turn, now, to the main focus of this paper, the verb *šātûl*. Occurring ten times in the Hebrew Bible, it is usually translated simply as "planted," beginning with

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1 Poets will gather poems that often were composed as separate, free-standing pieces, into collections that are so shaped as to constitute a coherent body of poems—what Robert Frost on one occasion referred to as "constellations of intention." The Psalter displays many such sub-groupings, shaped into constellations of theological intention; for example, Pss 93–100, as David M. Howard has shown; see David M. Howard, Jr., *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*, Biblical and Judaic Studies 5 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997). These constellations then go on to make up the Psalter as a galaxy that in its own way "declares the glory of God" and "shows forth his handiwork."

2 So, for example, Jerome Creach has shown how the word "refuge" in Ps 2 (together with associated words and images) occurs at strategic points to shape the Psalter and to guide its user to that "refuge." Jerome F. D. Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*. JSOTSup 217 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996).

3 In Prov 6:13, the verb makes explicit this connotation of "pointing out" as with one's finger.

4 John Goldingay, *Psalms, Volume 1: Psalms 1–41* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 84.

the Greek Septuagint that rendered it in Ps 1:3 (and Ps 92:14) with the verb *pefuteumenon*. But the 2nd century CE Jewish scholar Aquila, whose recension of the LXX is rigorously literal, in both places has *metapefuteumenon*, "transplanted," and in this was apparently followed by Symmachus and Theodotion in their recensions of the LXX.[5] Similarly, the Latin Vulgate in both places reads *transplantatum*, and at least a dozen modern commentators take the verb in Ps 1:3 with this connotation.[6] Finally, among the three most eminent modern lexicons the majority judgment is as follows. The Brown-Driver-Briggs *Hebrew and English Lexicon* of 1907 offers only "transplant" for *šātal* and "transplanted shoot, slip," for the noun, *šātîl* (Ps 128:3).[7] For its part, the Koehler-Baumgartner-Stamm *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (2000), while recognizing that an Arabic cognate verb *šatala* means "to plant, transplant," stays with "plant" alone for verb and noun in Hebrew.[8] Most recently, the multi-volume *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, edited by David J. A. Clines (1993–2011), lists as the primary meaning "transplant," and only in sub-entries 1 and 2 (active and passive voices, respectively) does it give the meaning as "transplant, plant," while for the noun *šātîl* it gives the meaning "(transplanted) shoot."[9]

Careful study of *šātal* in all its occurrences leads me to concur with the two lexicons and with the indicated ancient and modern interpreters. But even such commentators are for the most part preoccupied with the tree's fruitfulness, and they overlook the connotations implicit in the verb as a "kinesthetic image," what

5   Thomas Reider and Nigel Turner, *An Index to Aquila: Greek-Hebrew / Hebrew-Greek / Latin-Hebrew with the Syriac and Armenian Evidence*, Vetus Testamentum, Supplements, vol. 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 157.

6   T. K. Cheyne, *The Book of Psalms*, vol. 1 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1904), 1; W. S. McCullough and W. R. Taylor, "The Book of Psalms," in *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 10 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1955), 21; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I: 1–50: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 1: "[c]ommentators are correct in insisting that *shatal* properly means 'transplanted' rather than 'to plant'"; A. A. Anderson, *Psalms*, vol. 1, The New Century Bible (London: Oliphant, 1972), 60; J. W. Rogerson and J. W. McKay, *Psalms 1–50* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 17; *G. F. A. Knight, *Psalms, Daily Study Bible*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 17; Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Psalms 1* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983), 61; Martin S. Rozenberg and Bernard M. Zlotowitz, *The Book of Psalms: A New Translation and Commentary* (Lanham, MD: Jason Aronson, 1999), 1; Peter C. Craigie and Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 1–50*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 19 (Waco, TX: Word, 2004), 57; *John Goldingay, *Psalms, Volume 1*, 84; J. Clinton McCann, Jr., "The Book of Psalms," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 4 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 685; and Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 140. (Those who qualify the choice with "perhaps" are asterisked.)

7   Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907).

8   Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, with Johann Jakob Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2000).

9   David J. A. Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993–2011).

Freud calls a *Bewegungsbild*.[10] They overlook the action undergone that renders the tree capable of such flourishing. I take the temporal process implicit in *šātûl* as a *Bewegungsbild*, as the keynote to the psalm and to the Psalter. It images what happens, over time, within one who delights in the psalms and their *tôrāh*.

Importantly, and strategically, the verb *šātûl* is in the passive voice, a voice that is under-appreciated. In writing, students are often urged to use the active voice, an urging that betrays our preoccupation with active power, the power to effect change, and our depreciation of passive or passional power, the power to undergo change. Where the focus in a sentence is on who or what effects the change, then we properly use the active voice. When the focus falls on who or what undergoes the change, then we should properly use the passive voice. The point is nicely illustrated in Rom 14:4, as brought out by the translation in the *American Standard Version*:

> Who art thou that judgest the servant of another?
> To his own lord he standeth [*stēkei*, active voice, intransitive] or
>   falleth.
> Yea, he shall be made to stand [*stathēsetai*, passive voice];
> for the Lord hath power to make him stand [*stēsai*], active voice,
>   causative].

The passage begins with a critique of one person's judgment of another.[11] In the following three clauses the focus in the first two clauses falls on the individual who is being unfairly judged. First, the general fact: a servant stands or falls before the master's judgment. Second, the specific instance: a loyal servant of God will be enabled to stand. The shift to the passive voice throws the focus on one who, under religious censure by others, may be fearful of standing in the final judgment, and the clause gives assurance of being enabled to stand. Third, the shift back to the active voice, but this time with causative connotation, makes explicit and underscores that it is God who will so enable.

Consider, then, the imagery in Ps 1 where the *'ašrê* ("blessed / happy / enviable"[12]) individual does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, stand in the way

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10 For the phrase "kinesthetic image" and the citation of Freud's term, see Hans W. Loewald, "On Motivation and Instinct Theory," in his *The Essential Loewald: Collected Papers and Monographs*, (Hagerstown, Maryland: University Publishing Group, 2000), 130–31. In reference to šātûl as such an image, and with an eye to the term, "way, path," in Ps 1:6, I would translate *Bewegungsbild* as "image of movement along a path."

11 As, interestingly enough, when the gang in Ps 1 heaps scorn on the lone individual.

12 On the translation of this word, see William P. Brown, "Happiness and Its Discontents in the Psalms," in Brent A. Strawn, ed., *The Bible and the Pursuit of Happiness*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 98–99. As he summarizes, "the saying [initiated by this word] commends a condition, practice, or virtue considered eminently desirable . . . an externally observable objective condition of well-being." He cites Waldemar Janzen, "*'a*šrê in the Old Testament," *HTR* 58 (1965): 215–26, which takes the individual as one in an enviable state.

of sinners, or sit in the seat of scorners. Delighting in God's *tô*rāh and mulling over it day and night, she is transplanted into the "congregation of the right-eous"—whereas the wicked will not be able to "stand" in the judgment. This divine judgment forms an *inclusio* by the way it stands over against human judgments underlying and implicit in the "scorn."

The passive voice in the verb *šātûl* serves as the fulcrum for the psalm's internal shift in locus. The *tô*rāh-devotee does not transplant herself; she becomes transplanted. This verb is the dynamic key to the teleological movement within the psalm, and this movement within the psalm prefigures the teleological trajectory the Psalter traces along its tortuous path to Ps 150.

Transplanted through Meditation with the Psalms as *tôrāh*

But how does one become transplanted by *tô*rāh? The key is in the verb *h*āgā*h*. This verb refers to oral activity, a low, interior utterance, at times a groaning or moaning or sighing, at times a *sub rosa* meditative reflection.[13] The practice of such interior verbalizing is at home in the ancient system of learning where the student hears and then repeats the teacher's words until they become ingrained, informing the student's responsive perceiving, reflecting, understanding, and speaking.

In his book *The Person*, Theodore Lidz writes that we are born with a genetic inheritance and into a cultural inheritance. Language is critical. He illustrates with the story of Helen Keller's awakening through acquiring language at the hands of Annie Sullivan.[14] Samuel Taylor Coleridge puts the matter in his own inimitable way. Writing on "the Origin of the Idea of God in the Mind of Man," he locates this origin in the interaction between newborn infant and mother, whereby the mother's warm, nourishing bosom, her kisses, her smiles, and her first sounds excite and awaken the idea of God that is already enscripted in the infant's organic being but lies slumbering there. If emergence from the womb is an infant's physical transplantation to a new realm, in which its organic rootage through the umbilical cord is succeeded by rootage at the breast, its social-spiritual transplant-ation, for Coleridge, comes in and through this vocal interaction.[15] In another place, he describes these mother-infant interactions, first, simply:

> Tones as spontaneous now, and necessitated, by the Structure in part
> but still more by the sensitiveness and sensibility of the human
> infant[.]

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13 Psalm 119 doesn't use *h*āgā*h*, but repeatedly it uses *si*ăḥ, a close synonym, to the same effect as *h*āgā*h* in Ps 1. Compare the cognate noun *hegeh* in Ezek 2:10 ("words of . . . mourning"), Ps 90:9 ("sigh"), and Job 37:2 ("rumbling . . . from his mouth").

14 Theodore Lidz, *The Person: His Development throughout the Life Cycle* (New York: Basic, 1968), 3–5, 17.

15 Thomas McFarland, ed., *Opus Maximum*: *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* vol. 15 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 121–22.

Simply inarticulate tones at this point . . . like the *h*āgā*h* of the psalmist? But then, gradually, in the infant,

> [a]rticulation[,] the natural result of sensations overtaking each other—before the tone or cry from [the infant] has ceased, it is checked & deprest, and its place supplied by the Tone from [the mother] . . . a distinction without break of continuity is the Result. But this is *Articulation*. And then commences the Tale, or the Grammar of Nature, or the Book, Parentage and Education of the Parts of Speech.[16]

Just so, in his view, the *imago dei* slumbering in the infant soul is awakened in and through this process. The infant, born with a genetic heritage, is borne into—transplanted into—a cultural heritage by the infant's *h*āgā*h*-like imitation of its mother's voice.

I return, then, to the relation between the active and passive voice. I underscore that the passive voice is the voice of passive power, not of inertia or powerlessness. As Aristotle, John Locke, and Coleridge all emphasize, passive power is a form of agency. As the power of sensitive receptivity, it lies at the root of compassion or sympathy. Not apathy but sympathy. Like symphony, sympathy is rooted in resonance, interpersonal resonance. In Coleridge's example, it is the infant's resonant repetition of the mother's tones, at first flowingly inarticulate, then gradually articulated into words and sentences, at each step the infant following the mother, allowing the mother's sounds to shape and evoke its answering sounds. This early form of passive or passional power ends with the power to speak up and speak out in public—what the Greeks called *parrhēsia*, "freedom and boldness of speech." A privilege in Athens, *parrhesia* was confined to male citizens as alone qualified to stand in the assembly, a standing denied to women, children, and slaves.

The power of the *tôrāh* in the Psalter—teaching us, in John Goldingay's words, how to pray, praise, and testify—is the power, the *energeia*, to transplant us from a realm of muteness into a place, a standing, where we are able to find our own voice and speak out boldly. It is often observed that there is an intimate connection between the voice of Job and the voices we hear in the Psalms. One might suppose that the power he enjoys in voicing his grievances and his griefs is a power he has received from his immersion in the sort of psalmistic practice that we have in the Psalter. In the Psalms, we learn to speak candidly to God, *de profundis*, from out of our depths. If, in our despair, we make our bed in Sheol (if our

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16 Kathleen Coburn and Anthony John Harding, ed., *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Volume 5: 1827–1834*, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), note 5531 *f5-f5v*. The quoted paragraph concludes a concise essay with the title, "Language supposes Society as the condition of its Beginning" (note 5531 *f2-f5v*).

despair *is* our Sheol), God is there; if we flee from our enemies to the corners of the earth, even there God will be present to lead us, and God's right hand will keep hold of us. All this because, as Ps 139:15 testifies, our very beginnings in the womb took form *bassēter*, in "*the* secret place"—that maternal place likened to "the secret place of the Most High."

The Fruit of the Transplanted

This brings us to Ps 92 where we read (vv. 12–14): "The righteous flourish like the palm tree, / and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. / They are transplanted [*šātûl*] into the house of the LORD, / they flourish in the courts of our God. / They still bring forth fruit in old age, / they are ever full of sap and green, / to show that the LORD is upright; / he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him." This set of images signals to us that the psalmist, at this point in the pilgrimage from Ps 1, begins proleptically to experience the *telos* to which the Psalms finally transplant us—the inner presence of God, the *sēter*, the "secret place of the Most High."[17] (One might take the localities, "house of the LORD" and "courts of our God" as specifications of the more general "congregation of the righteous" in Ps 1.)

But what sort of "fruit" may one hope to bear in old age? At age 84, the novelist Philip Roth notes that "in just a matter of months I'll depart old age to enter deep old age." His interviewer asks, "Now that you've retired as a novelist, do you ever miss writing, or think about un-retiring?" Roth responds,

> No, I don't . . . by 2010 I had a strong suspicion that I'd done my best work and anything more would be inferior. I was by this time no longer in possession of the mental vitality or the verbal energy or the physical fitness needed to mount and sustain a large creative attack of any duration on a complex structure as demanding as a novel . . . Every talent has its terms—its nature, its scope, its force; also its term, a tenure, a life span . . . Not everyone can be fruitful forever.[18]

But what if one's "talent" is the capacity for praise? After all, that is what one does in a sanctuary—even as an infant's post-nursing, cooing response to its mother is what the infant does in that presence. Even so, Hosea would have us say to God, "Take away all iniquity; accept that which is good and we will render the fruit of our lips" (Hos 14:2). And the writer of the book of Hebrews urges, "Through [Christ] then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name" (Heb 13:15). Simply, our "fruit" is our resonant response to the resonant grace of God.

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17 One may note the interplay between the "secret place" and "refuge" of the Most High in Ps 91 and the "house/courts" of God in Ps 92.

18 Charles McGrath, *New York Times*, January 16, 2018.

If, then, the fruit that Ps 92 has us bearing is the fruit of praise, does this invite us to return to Ps 1, and in retrospect to hear in that psalm's reference to "fruit" also an implicit reference to praise? This would give added point to John Goldingay's comment that "[t]he Psalter's central concern is to teach people to praise, pray, and testify," and that "[p]erhaps the teaching to which it invites meditation is its own teaching on praise, prayer, and testimony."[19]

Psalm 92 affirms that this fruit we may bear, and offer to God, even as our physical bodies lose their vigor. And if our mental faculties begin to fail us, what then? Coleridge more than once asked this question in reference to himself; and in one late notebook entry on "old age" as a "Sabbath of our Life," he concluded, "when even the Judgement is gone, and the Reason can but feebly work in and by the Understanding—Conscience, Love, Hope, Faith have shone out, and illumined the face of the dying man as with an inward Sunshine."[20]

And where they have ceased to shine out for you and me to see, we may trust that *bassēter*, in the "secret place of the Most High," where another's life is "hid with Christ in God"—hidden, perhaps, even from that person's own inner consciousness—the rapport and the resonance continues, deep unto deep, and in that depth, face to face.

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19   Goldingay, *Psalms*, 84.
20   Coburn and Harding, ed., *The Notebooks*, note 6701 *f11v*.

The Role of Nathan, King David's Immediate Heir, in Luke's Genealogy: Proposal and Prediction

Eugene E. Lemcio
Seattle Pacific University
The University of Washington

Abstract

One does not have to be a biblical scholar to notice that the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke differ at many points—in particular, the listing of David's immediate heir: Solomon in the former (1:6–11) and Nathan in the latter (3:23–31).[1] Both were *royal* sons; but only one and his dynasty actually *reigned*. I propose that Nathan was one of the King's sons who served as priests (2 Sam 8:18). My educated guess takes its cues from the substantial number of cultic places, practices, and personnel that dominate the early chapters of Luke as well as the allusions to Old Testament figures and events.[2] I predict that yet-to-be-discovered contemporaneous artifacts—or Second Temple era documents—will show that Jewish tradition (whether Hebrew/Aramaic or Greek) regarded this descendent as such.

Questions

The genealogical phenomena lead one to ask a number of questions about the Third Evangelist's choice of ancestors for Jesus.

1. What was it about Nathan, this third son of four born in Jerusalem

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1   Kurt Aland, ed., *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1964) and Kurt Aland, ed., *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* [RSV] (New York: United Bible Societies, 1982). Extended genealogical lists available to each Evangelist occur in 1 Chr 1–2:1–15, 3:5–12, and Ruth 4:12–22. It is not (yet) known how much both Evangelists might have drawn on other oral or written traditions.

2   Neither Greek nor Hebrew critical texts show variants with the passages cited in what follows. K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* [HB], 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997). Alfred Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta*, vol. 2, 7th ed. (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1962). Except where it has been necessary to render the Greek differently, I have relied upon Albert Pietersma, ed., *New English Translation of the Septuagint* [NETS] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Elsewhere, I use the NRSV when not translating myself.

(2 Sam 5:14, 1 Chr 14:4) by Bathsheba (1 Chr 3:5), that Luke found more worthy of listing than Solomon, David's fourth son by her?[3]

2. What benefit would accrue from mentioning a line of sons and scions about whom Luke's Scriptures say next to nothing? What was to be gained by highlighting this Nobody and by ignoring a Somebody? Is it not better to go with a known quantity (however problematic) than with a non-entity?

3. Was the Third Evangelist avoiding rulers who, for the most part, opposed God's way of governing the People to such an extent that it brought about the division of the kingdom into North (Israel) and South (Judah), the destruction of the latter leading to exile in Babylon (Matt 1:7–11)?

4. If so, what kind of alternative dynasty was he proposing; or (at least) what was its head to be like? Was Luke attempting to identify another kind of royal heir and a different sort of kingship—neither marked by the use of conventional political maneuvering nor characterized by a syncretistic theology?[4]

5. Might he have had in mind the Deuteronomic ideal for kingship (17:14–20) that involves both negative and positive qualities and practices? Such a native-born ruler is to avoid multiplying horses, wives, and treasure. Nor is he to return the people to Egypt. Rather, this unconventional monarch shall have a copy the Law "written for him *in the presence of the levitical priests*" (v. 18; italics mine), becoming thoroughly acquainted with its contents and completely obedient to its requirements.

The Lukan Context: Cultic Places, Practices, and Personnel
The first two chapters of Luke (L material) are centered around the Temple in

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3   It should go without saying that this Nathan is to be distinguished from the prophet of the same name who later confronts David about his affair with Bathsheba and the death of her husband, Uriah (11:27b–12:14). No evidence supports a familial relationship between the King and the Prophet.

4   Raymond Brown asserts that, by making the otherwise unknown Neri the father of Shealtiel (3:27) rather than Jeconiah, the last king of Judah (as in Matt 1:12), Luke made a *theological* point. He avoided "having in Jesus' ancestry a figure whom Jeremiah cursed." See *The Birth of the Messiah. A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 94. That prophet had declared, "Record this man as childless (LXX: ἐκκήρυκτον ["banished"]) . . . ; for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah" (22:30). Darrell Bock opines that the accursed Jeconiah forfeited his *legal* right to reign. By adopting Nathan's dynasty, Luke avoided the charge that Jesus' ancestry was *not legitimate*. See *Luke 1:1–9:50*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 348 n.2; 354–57.

Jerusalem.[5] It is the place where the elderly priest Zechariah fulfills his duties (1:5, 8–10). There, the prophet Anna and the elderly Simeon greet the Holy Family (2:25–38) who had come to circumcise Jesus and to offer the appropriate sacrifices in obedience to Mosaic Law (2:22–24). It is where Jesus' parents later find him (in his Father's house) debating with the experts (2:41–52). Furthermore, Elizabeth as well as Zechariah is of priestly stock (1:5)—as is Mary, since she is her kinswoman (1:46). In chapter 3, Luke identifies Annas and Caiaphas as the priests who served in the political environment of Roman Palestine (vv. 1–2). This is the context in which Jesus' Davidic roots are mentioned: Joseph is the King's distant heir. He and Mary register in Bethlehem, the City of David (2:4), where the shepherds are to find the newborn child (v. 11).

At his baptism, Jesus—who had been *conceived* as God's Son—is publicly *declared* as such (3:22). The theme of sonship is emphasized dramatically by listing Jesus' ancestry backwards to Adam, 77 times: "z" was the son of "y," who was the son of "x" . . . (3:23–38).[6] It is at Salathiel/Shealtiel that both genealogies converge (Matt1:12 and Luke 3:27). They also include his son, Zerubbabel, the post-Exilic governor of Judah. This davidite was accorded quasi-messianic status by the prophet Haggai (2:20–23). However, Zechariah gives equal, if not superior, status to Joshua (עיהוש | Ἰησοῦς) the High Priest (chapters 3 & 4). God declares both to be "sons of oil, the ones serving the Lord of all the earth" (4:14).[7] The Evangelists' entries diverge at this point until they converge again at David—but (as we saw) with different sons as his immediate heirs.

Proposal

Given the heavy concentration of priestly persons, personnel, and places early in the Gospel, I propose that Luke regarded Nathan (Great David's Lesser Son) to have been the most illustrious of the un-named sons who served as priests (כהנים) during the King's early reign (2 Sam 8:18), whose heirs would mediate God to Israel and Israel to God. It would be a way of restoring the People's initial, collective identity and role: to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod 19:6).[8] Of course, not all translators and commentators, either ancient or modern, have

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5   See also Luke's second volume, especially the first half of Acts.

6   Although the usual word for "son" (υἱός) is not used throughout (as it was at the beginning of the genealogy in v. 23), the genitive singular of the definite article serves in each case to indicate this familial relationship.

7   Luke 11:50–51 and Matt 23:35 mention another prophet named "Zechariah" who perished in his role.

8   This association of the royal and priestly is related two chapters earlier: the king had worn the ephod when dancing before the Ark (2 Sam 6:14; see also 1 Chr 15:27.). However, not all are agreed on the cultic significance of the ephod in this instance (although priestly associations are prominent throughout the Bible).

rendered כהנים in cultic terms.[9] The corresponding version in 1 Chr 18:17 reads "the chief officials" (הראשנים).[10] This may reflect the author's routinely removing from accounts in Samuel–Kings any suggestion that David, Solomon, and "good kings" violated priestly prerogatives. Furthermore, in the immediately preceding verse (2 Sam 8:17), כהנים is used to identify Zadok and Ahimelech—sons of Ahitub and Abiathar, respectively—who were priests (כהנים | ἱερεῖς).[11] Might these suggest an earlier era when the distinction between royal and priestly function was not rigidly enforced,[12] followed by a later more scrupulous tradition (which ancient translations and some modern ones reflect)? This concurs with the view of P. Kyle McCarter, Jr.: "Almost all critics . . . have agreed that the readings of I Chr 18:17 and the versions in II Sam 8:18 are interpretive paraphrases of the reading of MT by scribes who considered it impossible that there should be non-Levitical priests."[13] He assumes, "with most interpreters . . . that in the time of David and Solomon (1) there were special priests assigned to the royal household . . . and (2) members of the royal family might serve in this capacity."[14]

Prediction

Prediction is risky business, even at the best of times and with the most favorable circumstances—especially if one is neither a prophet, nor the child of one.[15] With great tentativeness, I predict that, one day, someone will discover a bulla inscribed in paleo-Hebrew that reads the equivalent of "Nathan, son of David, Priest." Or, one may find the connection in Greek inscriptions or among Second Temple Qumran texts yet to be discovered or deciphered. Earlier tradents, Luke, and his readers would have been aware of such a relationship.

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9   The LXX translator rendered the Hebrew αὐλάρχαι, which the NETS translates as "chiefs of the court." After this phrase, J. Lust et al. parenthetically supply "of the temple?" apparently to suggest a cultic connection. See their *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, rev. ed. (Suttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), 94. The Vulgate has *sacredotes*. Most English translations (including the NRSV) retain "priests." The Ukrainian reads, "chiefs of the royal palace" [начальниками царського двору]; but a footnote acknowledges that the Hebrew says "priests" [священиками]: (Kyiv: Ukrainian Bible Society, 1993).

10 LXX: οἱ πρῶτοι διάδοχοι ("the foremost deputies").

11 Of course, the argument from context could cut both ways: that the meaning is "priest" in v. 18 because it is so in v. 17, or that v. 18 is meant to distinguish the sons of David from the others.

12 Perhaps such fluidity allowed the Hasmoneans (who were of priestly stock) to assume the kingship, an association that ended poorly.

13 McCarter, *II Samuel* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 255.

14 McCarter, *II Samuel*, 256–57.

15 Although he did not forecast the discovery of papyri 35 years later, the great NT scholar J. B. Lightfoot surmised in 1863 that "if we could only recover letters that ordinary people wrote to each other without any thought of being literary, we should have the greatest possible help for the understanding of the language of the NT generally." See J. H. Moulton, *Grammar of New Testament Greek. Prolegomenon*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908), 242. Such correspondence began flooding the academic world resulting from the excavations of Grenfell and Hunt along the Nile at Oxyrhynchus. Their story has been engagingly told by Peter Parsons, *City of the Sharp-nosed Fish. Greek Lives in Roman Egypt* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2007).

BOOK REVIEWS

Since the Beginning: Interpreting Genesis 1 and 2 through the Ages. Edited by Kyle R. Greenwood. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. ISBN: 978-0801030697. Xxiv Pp. + 308. $26.99 (USD).

It is difficult to underestimate the influence of the first two chapters of the canonical Hebrew Bible on both Judaism and Christianity. Countless books have attempted to draw out its meaning in various contexts—especially in the last century as contemporary issues of human origins, sexuality/gender, and similar facets of anthropology take center stage. What has not been given as much attention is the *history of interpretation (and/or "reception history")* of Gen 1–2.

Old Testament scholar Kyle Greenwood assembled a chronological selection of articles on this very subject in *Since the Beginning.* After he explains how Gen 1–2 functioned in the rest of the Old Testament, the book continues through time to see how Genesis was received and understood in Second Temple Jewish Literature (Michael Matlock), then the New Testament (Ira Driggers), early Rabbinic Judaism (Joel Allen), Ante-Nicene Fathers (Stephen Presley), Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (C. Rebecca Rine), the Medieval era (Jason Kalman in Judaism and Timothy Bellamah in Christianity), the Reformation (Jennifer McNutt), modern scholarship (David Tsumura), and finally a "post-Darwinian" era (Aaron Smith). To further structure the book, each contributor was asked to deal with (1) treatment of days, (2) cosmology, (3) creation and nature of humanity, and (4) the garden of Eden.

Readers can effectively trace the movement and meanings these portions of Genesis engendered for various audiences throughout church history because of this systematic format and other features. Each chapter has an introduction, body, and conclusion with "For Further Reading," "Primary Texts in Print," and "Primary Texts Online" appendices. It is clear from these materials that Greenwood's selection favored specialized scholars for their essays, making for a particularly juicy read.

As one might expect, readers come away with a deep appreciation to the wide variety of interpretation Gen 1–2 had and continues to have. This includes textual, theological, and philosophical dimensions. I wish I could provide a summary of the overall "movement," but the diversity *within* each era makes this complicated. One does find, of course, what one might expect of biblical interpretation in

general—such as more allegorical readings in the early Medieval period and more literal/propositional in the modern. But these kinds of generalizations remain too simplistic to be of much help.

It was striking, however, to see how much contemporary philosophy and thought had on the impact of readers. The same goes for the impact of texts—e.g., the role the LXX and DSS had to play in the Greco-Roman period, and the Vulgate in the Medieval period. There were also memorable nuggets of correction or insight that stuck out. One of these was the observation that "Adam" in Hos 6:7 doesn't even refer to a person, but a city (Josh 3:16), a "toponym alongside the other covenant-breaking cities of Israel" (15). Greenwood also notes in the conclusion to his article the strange absence of Eve in the rest of the OT (21).

Since the Beginning comes as a second major volume from Greenwood on the broader subject of Genesis, cosmology, etc. His earlier monograph *Scripture and Cosmology* contains his own digest on the popular Bible-and-science subgenre.[1] His other publications point to a particular interest in this field—no doubt spurred by some of the inner battles still being waged within evangelical universities.[2] Among other issues, "What will inevitably become clear by following the conversation," writes Greenwood in the preface, "is that a 'literal' reading rarely meant a univocal reading, where one word is assigned one and only one meaning" (xxiii).

Since the Beginning is a superb work of both biblical studies and Christian scholarship that deserves a wide reading for anyone who dares to cite from Gen 1–2 with any degree of hermeneutical depth. We thank Greenwood and the contributors for their laborious hours on such a worthwhile volume bound to become a standard work on this subject. This book is highly recommended.

Jamin Andreas Hübner
LCC International University

Who's Afraid of the Unmoved Mover?: Postmodernism and Natural Theology.
Andrew Shepardson. Eugene: Pickwick, 2019. ISBN: 978-1532656774. Pp. 186. Paperback. $24.00 (USD).

In his recent book, Andrew Shepardson provides a defense of natural theology, as well as the practice of "positive apologetics," from its postmodern detractors. He defines nature theology as "that branch of human inquiry which seeks to discover

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1 Kyle Greenwood, *Scripture and Cosmology: Reading the Bible Between the Ancient World and Modern Science* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015).

2 I am referring in part to the disturbing, theological cleansing of the theology/biblical studies department that took place at Colorado Christian University around 2015–2018, where a number of full-time professors (and first-rate scholars) were relieved from duty because of their "unacceptable" views of "biblical creation," "inerrancy," etc. Despite (or, because of) their excellent scholarly work on biblical interpretation, Greenwood and Smith (contributors to chapters 1 and 11) were among those cut down in this contemporary "heresy-hunt".

knowledge about the existence and nature of God apart from sources of revealed theology" (1). To accomplish this task, Shepardson critiques the work of three evangelical philosophers who are sympathetic to postmodernism and are critical of most forms of natural theology: James K. A. Smith, Myron B. Penner, and Carl A. Raschke. After providing a summary of the contents of *Who's Afraid of the Unmoved Mover?*, this review will respond to Shepardson's constructive proposal.

In chapter 1 Shepardson introduces his primary argument. In it he notes the presuppositions that will flow into the rest of the volume, mainly a defense of a correspondence theory of truth and the helpfulness of Western logic to the development of a "reasonable epistemology" (3). He also provides definitions to key terms used throughout the volume, such as evangelical, postmodern, general/natural theology, and apologetics.

The second chapter begins by summarizing the perspectives of some key figures in the background of the intra-evangelical debate on natural theology (Abraham Kuyper, B.B. Warfield, Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, C.S. Lewis, Cornelius Van Til, Carl F.H. Henry, and William Lane Craig). It then turns to a description of the three main figures in postmodern philosophy—Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, and Michel Foucault—before closing with a discussion of three significant Christian respondents to continental postmodern philosophy—Paul Ricoeur, Merold Westphal, and John Caputo.

The third and fourth chapters summarize and provide rebuttals to the work of Smith, Penner, and Raschke. Chapter 3 responds to the critique of universal reason and the correspondence theory of truth. Here Shepardson defends the law of non-contradiction and argues that Enlightenment rationality should not be identified with universal reason. He also defends a "modest foundationalism."

In chapter 4, Shepardson draws upon Paul's sermon at the Areopagus (Acts 17) to defend the "permissibility of arguing for a minimalistic theism" (112). After critiquing fideism, he argues that critiques of natural theology that emphasize the effect of sin on reason lack an adequate account of the *imago dei*. Lastly, Shepardson concurs with some of his interlocutors that apologists have at times sought to defend the Christian faith unethically. He, however, says this is not a problem with apologetics itself, but with apologists.

Then the final chapter further develops Shepardson's constructive proposal. In it he calls upon evangelicals to be apologists for truth (in particular, the correspondence theory of truth), hold to a balance of humility and confidence, to be apologists for science, and encourage the practice of natural theology within its educational institutions.

The constructive argument of Shepardson's volume has a few blind spots. First, he lacks a discussion of the apologetics as an *ad hoc* practice. While Paul appeals to the "unknown god" in Acts 17, he called upon the Philippian jailor to "[b]elieve

in the Lord Jesus Christ" in order to be saved (16:31). Second, appeals to universal reason have a tendency to universalize one's own cultural perspective, to expect others to conform to one's own rationality. Third, it seems dangerous to ground the Christian faith in one understanding of truth and rationality. While there are indeed perspectives on truth and rationality that are in tension with or blatantly contradict the Christian faith, one should not make one perspective on truth and rationality a prerequisite for accepting the Christian faith. Closely connected with this, Shepardson does not recognize that knowledge is historically conditioned. Attention to the historic conditionality of human knowledge does not mean one denies the existence of truth, but rather is a recognition that people in different times and places bring different perspectives to their search for truth. For example, in Smith's work, he does not deny realism per se, but rather critiques a naïve realism that does not recognize that one is always interpreting information within a horizon.

Despite these criticisms, Shepardson's volume has much to commend. First, he ably sets the terms of the current debate about apologetics and natural theology within evangelicalism. Second, Shepardson does not discuss the debate about natural theology in the abstract, but in connection with a particular community, evangelical Christians in the west, and seeks to demonstrate the implications of the debate for the church's mission. *Whose Afraid of the Unmoved Mover?* would benefit readers interested in philosophy of religion, apologetics, and natural theology.

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Shaun Brown
Villa Maria College

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The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus's Crucifixion. N. T. Wright. New York: HarperOne, 2016. ISBN 978-0062334381. Pp. 440. Hardcover. $28.99 (USD).

By six o'clock in the evening on the first Good Friday, the world was a different place. A revolution had begun, although Jesus's earliest disciples hadn't the slightest inkling. As they would come to understand in light of the resurrection and after years of reflecting on the meaning of Jesus's crucifixion, the kingdom of God had overthrown the powers of sin and death and the new creation had been inaugurated. That is the thrust of the argument in N. T. Wright's exploration of the meaning of Jesus's crucifixion.

The book, which began as a series of lectures drawing upon much of Wright's earlier scholarship, picks up the theme in *Surprised by Hope* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), in which he argues that the Christian hope is properly located in the resurrection and new creation, not in a Platonized, disembodied, and

other-worldly "heaven." Our eschatology and soteriology are intimately related, he argues, and both have become similarly distorted by the influences of Platonism and gnosticism. Reconsidering our eschatology, what we are saved for, requires reevaluation of how we are saved (28). Thus, his assessment of atonement theology diverges significantly from that found in his earlier work, particularly in his treatment of Romans.

The book is divided into four sections. In the first section, Wright introduces readers to the topics of the crucifixion and atonement theology, and specifically to the reason why he feels a need to add to the discussion: the current understanding of the meaning of Jesus's crucifixion as simply "God saving me from my 'sin,' so that I [can] 'go to heaven'" was not the primary interpretation held by Jesus's earliest followers, but was part of a much larger story (4). This larger story is one of revolution—the dark powers that held the world captive have been overthrown—and of restoration of the human vocation as the image-bearing royal priesthood over God's creation. Salvation, then, was never strictly a personal affair, but had far-reaching implications for the entire cosmos and the human role within it.

In his second chapter, Wright challenges readers to take up the task of theology (which need not be made overly abstract and irrelevant in its service to Christians) rather than to be content with oversimplifications, domestications, or distortions of the meaning of the crucifixion. We must, as Paul warned the church in Corinth, be mature in our thinking, lest we fail to grasp its meaning and make "ourselves immune to its ultimate and life-changing challenge" (23). He then dives into an overview of historical models and doctrines pertaining to atonement, explaining that the doctrine of "penal substitution" was developed specifically in reaction to the Roman Catholic doctrines of purgatory and the Mass. The Reformers, as Wright argues, were unfortunately providing the right answers to the wrong questions in their failure to question the underlying assumptions of Heaven, Hell, and the need to satisfy God's wrath. This problem, which began with the influence of Platonism in the church's early centuries, was exacerbated by Enlightenment Epicureanism, which emphasized a disembodied, spiritual heaven rather than the biblical eschatology of new creation. This has led to a common perception that "the cross has nothing to do with social and political evil" (36).

In the second section, Wright explores what it meant to the earliest Christians for Jesus to have been crucified "in accordance with the Bible"—meaning, of course, in accordance with the Jewish scriptures. First, he sets out to prove that the commonly-held understanding of atonement within the context of a "works contract," in which Jesus's moral achievements are transferred onto Christians through faith (thus allowing them to enter heaven), is misplaced, and ought rather to be located within the "covenant of vocation." The vocation is that of "being a

genuine human being, with genuinely human tasks to perform as part of the Creator's purpose for his world," namely as the image-bearing royal priesthood, "the people who are called to stand at the dangerous but exhilarating point where heaven and earth meet" (76). This vocation has been inverted through our idolatry: we have relinquished our own God-given power to created things by worshiping them rather than the Creator, thereby enslaving ourselves to them rather than acting as God's stewards over them. Our sin—our idolatry—leads to slavery, exile, and death. This thread, Wright demonstrates, runs throughout the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation.

Still in the second section, Wright discusses the importance for Israel of the divine Presence, its departure with the exile and the destruction of the Temple, and its longed-for return that would signal the end of exile, the forgiveness of sins, and the renewal of creation. He identifies several major themes that further characterized the Jewish hope, and so also colored the way the early Christians interpreted Jesus's crucifixion: the kingdom of God established on earth, redemptive suffering, and covenant love. The forgiveness of sins and end of exile were characterized as a "final great Passover" and would be accomplished "through the personal, powerful work of Israel's God himself" (138). The phrase, Wright reiterates, "for our sins in accordance with the Bible" was shorthand for the entire, multifaceted hope in the end of exile, of redemption, of the return of God's Presence, and of the salvation and renewal not just of Israel but of all creation.

The third section begins with a review of the eschatological "goal" of salvation: a renewed human vocation exercised within the new creation, rather than the "Platonized," "moralized," and "paganized" theology that currently holds sway (147). Wright then explores how Jesus's crucifixion was understood in the four gospels and Paul's letters, highlighting the themes of Passover, the representative substitution of Jesus as Israel's messiah, and "the power of self-giving love" in inaugurating God's kingdom and overthrowing the powers of the world (222). He stresses again and again that the meaning of the cross must remain rooted within Israel's story, as it was for Paul and the gospel-writers. It must find its meaning in the context of God's self-giving, covenant love.

In two chapters dedicated entirely to expounding the soteriology of Romans, Wright challenges the widely held "Romans Road" interpretation in favor of "the new Exodus" through which God's covenant faithfulness to the promises made to Abraham and his descendants is at last fulfilled. In a chapter focused exclusively on Rom 3:21–26, he addresses the interpretation of the Greek words *hilastērion* and *dikaiosynē*. Typically translated as "sacrifice of atonement," *hilastērion* refers to the lid of the ark of the covenant, the place where God would meet with his people through their representative, the high priest, who would make the appropriate cleansing of the "blood of the covenant" on the Day of Atonement. The

latter, *dikaiosynē*, often translated as "righteousness," is better understood as "covenant justice" and refers to God's faithfulness to his covenants with Abraham and Israel. Wright explains that "Jesus in himself, and in his death, is the place where the one God meets with his world, bringing heaven and earth together at last, removing by his sacrificial blood the pollutions of sin and death that would have made such a meeting impossible" (336).

In the final section of the book, Wright addresses what he sees as the necessary implications for missions and evangelism of the preceding reappraisal of atonement theology. His hope is that it will spur a new, holistic movement in missions in which both social concern, through the renewed human vocation as the priesthood of God's renewed creation, and personal evangelism are embraced. This is a natural outworking of a Christian self-perception as "Passover people," by which he means that Christianity is not a religion, but "a complete new way of being human in the world and for the world" (362). Therefore, it is imperative that we avoid the self-defeating and anti-Christian temptation to "make the world a better place" through the world's own power games, but must rather remember that "*the victory of the cross will be implemented through the means of the cross*"—through the self-giving, suffering love of Christ's people (366; italics original). This suffering love is revealed as the essence of true power in the new creation and the means by which the revolution is advanced.

Though admittedly "popular" in style, this book provides critical insight for preachers, teachers, and theologians as they seek to understand the meaning of Jesus's crucifixion and how it ought to affect our interactions with the world. Through its attention to the rich tapestry of biblical motifs found in the Old Testament and the gospels as well as for its reappraisal of Romans, the book presents a view of atonement that defies easy systematization or simplification into doctrinal statements. In a climate in which Christianity could reasonably be characterized as "too heavenly minded to be of any earthly good," this book offers a refreshing and energizing perspective on what it means to live in the world as one of Jesus's followers: as an agent of his kingdom furthering the revolution through self-giving love, as a member of the royal priesthood over the new creation, and as part of the new Temple in which God's glorious Presence has at last returned, joining heaven and earth together once more as a "new Eden," reconciling creation to himself through Jesus Christ. Highly recommended.

Ruth Ryder
La Porte, IN

Understanding Christian Doctrine. 2ⁿᵈ ed. Ian S. Markham. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017. ISBN: 978-1118964736. Pp. xii + 228. Paperback. $52.00 (USD).

There aren't many new "liberal orthodox" or "progressive Christian" textbooks on theology out there—much less systematic theologies from Episcopalians. But Ian Markham, Dean and President of Virginia Theological Seminary and Professor of Theology and Ethics, offers a unique synthesis along these lines in *Understanding Christian Doctrine*. His broader orientation can be captured in three theses, which he summarizes in the opening Introduction. First, "natural theology is a legitimate enterprise that supports and underpins religious experience" (2). Second, "Christian doctrine is the Christian response to the problem of evil," and finally, "this is a liberal theology." He contends that the word "liberal" needs "to be reclaimed." As an Episcopalian, Markham comes with a deep appreciation for traditional doctrinal emphases and ideas. Hence his remarks: "I defend the Trinity and the Incarnation as indispensable aspects of the Christian understanding of God and God's relations to the world. But this book is liberal in the sense of affirming the generous heart and disposition of Christian orthodoxy" (2–3). In other words, he integrates a variety of theological sources and traditions.

Readers therefore come across a thorough discussion of all the basic corpora of theological ideas in the context of contemporary developments. Feminist, liberationist, process, and post-modern theologies are seamlessly part of the conversation. Unlike other textbooks that simply add on sections for each of these developments, he just assumes these newer voices need to be listened to—and that theological developments in the last two centuries have, in a sense, something to say about everything. We cannot exclude certain voices from the outset just because of "tradition."

The book begins with various theories of religion, covering everything from Emily Durkheim's social theory, to Ludwig Wittenstein, Thomas Huxley and the rise of Modernism, Descartes, and the challenges and logic behind agnosticism. The second chapter lays out "the theistic claim," critically analyzing arguments for God's existence, and offering analysis about religious "experience" and its place in epistemology. The third chapter, entitled "The Nature of God," covers all the different theories and models of God from Barth, Schleiermacher, Yahweh in the Hebrew Scriptures, Classic accounts, Process, Feminist views, and otherwise. The fourth chapter looks at the "Trinity," covering biblical roots, developments, three dangers in interpretation, and modern accounts.

Chapter 5 concerns "the problem of evil and suffering" and examines the inadequacies of traditional responses, and various Christian responses (e.g., from Job). He examines closely the point of Ivan in *Brothers Karamazov,* which represents a

kind of "protest atheism." Chapter 6 explores "Creation and the Significance of Humanity," giving special attention to traditional assumptions about "the fall" and "sin," while dialoguing with Darwin's story and its impact. Markham favors the universal reading of Anne Primavesi (in conjunction with Tillich), where "humans are inevitably exercising freedom in ways that create tension with the rest of creation and God; it is both a growing up and a fall. Indeed, as every child learns, growth leads to autonomy and often leads to tension" (113).

Chapter 7 is entitled "God Incarnate." Here, Markham he touches on Christian origins (comparing and contrasting the views of Bart Ehrman and Larry Hurtado) and traditional Christological claims. His discussion is straightforward. "Early Christians were not stupid. The idea of one God becoming human was a difficult one to sort out" (124). He elsewhere reflects and concludes, "God was in Christ. This is the distinctive claim that Christians want to make" (131). The chapter also includes many reflections on gender and the radical implications of the Christ-event. The next chapter sorts out all the hairy issues regarding the atonement and other facets of the "redemption" category; particular stress is given on forgiveness.

Chapter 9 covers the "Holy Spirit and the Church," while chapter 10 concerns the "Sacraments and life of Virtue;" the latter is almost entirely centered on the Reformation debates. Both, again, touch on the problem of evil throughout. For example, Markham says in chapter 10 that "God's redemption was made possible by a cruel act of an occupying power against an innocent man. All Christians are required to remember the act and celebrate it afresh in the Eucharist" (177).

Chapter 11, entitled "Religious Diversity: What is God Up To?," reminds readers that religious diversity was always a challenge for Jews and Christians. It also brings to bear new problems brought about by evolution: "Exclusivism . . . seems to forget that the central claim is that there is one God who is the creator of the whole world. For thousands of years before Christ, this God was interested in the lives of humans who emerged on earth some 300,000 years ago" (187).

Chapter 12 looks at "Hope Beyond the Grave," examining resurrection, hell, and other related topics in dialogue with Wright's *Resurrection of the Son of God*, among other contemporary works. Chapter 13 is entitled "The End of the Age." Here, Markham first situates American readers to the fundamentalist and dispensationalist fanaticism surrounding the rapture. After a longer discussion about divine action and God's kingdom, he says, "the end of the age will be divine action analogous to creation. Indeed, as we have just seen, this is precisely what Jesus claims. In the same way that God worked with the forces of gravity and expansion to enable life to emerge, so God will work with those forces at the eschaton (the end of the universe)" (214).

Finally, Markham concludes with reflections on the work of doctrine and all Christians' role in participating in the conversation.

Understanding Christian Doctrine is in many ways a smaller, more rationalist, and less Barthian version of Daniel Migliore's excellent book *Faith Seeking Understanding*,[3] and overlaps with Placher's similar work, *Essentials of Christian Theology*.[4] It's format also feels more like a classroom textbook. It is remarkably deft in its implementation of first-rate theological primary sources of both the church tradition and high-caliber contemporary monographs. I found myself unexpectedly adding quite a number of unheard-of books to my Amazon shopping cart. Even more impressive was how penetrating Markham's discussion managed to be in such a short 200-page book—and not a sentence was boring. It packed no little punch.

While some of his discussions could have used a healthy dose of biblical-studies—and his reliance on Bart Ehrman for the Jesus subjects was somewhat surprising (and needless, though I realize he wanted to implement an antagonist into the discussion), Markham does manage to plug in some contemporary New Testament scholarship where helpful. He also doesn't fail to be genuine with his audience—especially given the interesting theme of evil and theodicy throughout the whole book. Philosophical and abstract debates are present but not distracting, and the familiarity with classic Christian themes and books keeps the discussion grounded in the past as much as in the future.

Understanding Christian Doctrine is a wonderful introduction to Christian thought that aims to be both convincing to the contemporary mind but doesn't "sell the farm" in the process. Markham is fully aware of what he is doing, of the landmines surrounding his pen, and does an excellent job of going from A to B— even while the whole discussion has a handful of idiosyncrasies (e.g., his particular lenience towards the thought of Keith Ward).

Jamin Andreas Hübner
LCC International University

Reading Genesis Well: Navigating History, Poetry, Science, and Truth in Genesis 1–11. C. John Collins. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018. ISBN 978-0-310-59857-2. 336 pp. Paperback. $36.93 (USD).

How does God's revelation in the Word illuminate His created world? How do Christian faith and science relate? What does it mean to be a faithful reader of the Bible? How do we take seriously the Hebrew stories that are contained within Gen 1–11? These are critical questions that are facing many Christians today. Esteemed

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3   Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014).
4   William Placher, ed. *Essentials of Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003).

Hebrew Bible/Old Testament scholar, C. John Collins, effectively answers these queries (and more) within *Reading Genesis Well: Navigating History, Poetry, Science, and Truth in Genesis 1–11.*

Collins begins his volume by noting that one's view of the biblical text wholly depends on one's interpretive approach. Regrettably, however, this "hermeneutic," i.e., one's interpretive position or stance, is often assumed rather than clearly demarcated. What's more, Collins maintains that "it is even controversial whether any such warranting is itself warranted or simply 'explaining away!'" (17). In light of this, Collins seeks to remedy the situation through developing a "reading strategy for Gen 1–11 that draws its ideas from theories in linguistics, literary study, and rhetoric" (17).

The author states that the goal for *Reading Geneses Well* is two-fold: "the first is to provide guidance to those who want to consider how these Bible passages relate to the findings of the sciences. The second is to establish patterns of good theological readings, patterns applicable for other texts" (32). To this end, Collins also asserts that "those who focus on one of these more than the other should understand that to me the two are intertwined, each playing a role in what it means to be a responsible audience" (32).

Collins' primary conversation partner in this endeavor is C. S. Lewis, a twentieth-century literary scholar and Christian writer who, according to Collins, has an intuitive grasp of the topic at hand that is not only unique with respect to its rigor and consistency but also its theological acumen. In brief, Collins maintains that C. S. Lewis, by means of his varied academic work and other writings, is able to "help us to *formulate a critically rigorous reading strategy for Genesis 1–11*" (18; emphasis original).

Reading Genesis Well is divided into eleven chapters of varying length. Chapter 1 is comprised of a short introduction, a concise history of nineteenth century literalism (with a special emphasis being placed upon the work of James Barr in dialogue with Benjamin Jowett), a few comments that explicate why Collins believes C. S. Lewis to be such an invaluable guide on these matters, and a final word about Collins' own educational background, persons of influence, and particular interest in this subject.

Chapter 2 delineates more clearly Collins' special "Lewisian, critically intuitive approach to hermeneutics" and discusses "pragmatic linguistics" alongside "rhetorical" and "literary" criticism (27). Chapter 3 elaborates on different types of language and the process of effective biblical interpretation through a systematic, in-depth engagement of an unfinished essay of Lewis' entitled "The Language of Religion." Chapter 4 details more precisely how communication takes place against a backdrop of shared experiences of the world. In this, Collins seeks to answer: "What makes an act of communication 'true'? How do rhetorical and

poetical features affect our answer—can we even apply a word like true to items with poetic and rhetorical devices? What do we mean by the word 'true'? Is something like 'trustworthy' a better rubric?" (95).

Chapters 5 and 6, together, treat various aspects of how to read Gen 1–11 well; that is, considering the different kinds of context (ch. 5) and the function (ch. 6) of these specific portions of Scripture. In chapter 7, Collins offers what he calls an "integrated rhetorical-theological reading" of Gen 1–11 (158). Chapter 8 relates what certain other readers (both ancient and modern, but especially canonical ones) have also seen in the text of Gen 1–11 on select topics and "what that tells us about how to read these passages well" (107). Chapters 9 and 10 examine various passages from Gen 1–11 using the specific method and tools that Collins developed within the preceding chapters. The final chapter specifies in greater detail how one is to undertake a "responsible appropriation for the ancient and the modern believer" (28). Within his conclusion, Collins states that Gen 1–11

> should not be pressed into a scientific theory, whether of the young-earth or old-earth or evolutionary kind; at the same time, I do see them as providing grounds for a proper critique—or at least pushback—for certain kinds of scientific theories, particularly those that overstep their empirical bounds and begin to make worldview assertions. (290)

The volume also includes a robust 19-page bibliography as well as three thorough indexes—subject, author, and ancient texts (including Bible, ancient near Eastern texts, deuterocanonical books, pseudepigrapha, ancient Jewish writers, rabbinic works, early Christian writings, and Greco-Roman literature). Scholars will note that most Patristic texts are cited from *ANF, NPNF¹* and *NPNF²* editions (218) and that most Greco-Roman texts are cited from the *LCL* editions (78).

With respect to some of the specifics that are relatively unique to Collins' work (particularly as they relate to matters concerning Gen 1–11), Collins states that though the literary form of Gen 1:1–2:3 is, indeed, narrative, the "style or register is *exalted prose* . . . these factors indicate something about the language type that we may expect, namely, that it will lean toward the poetic side of the spectrum from ordinary language" (157; emphasis original). Concerning the three enigmatic, first-person plurals by which God converses with "us" (Gen 1:26; 3:22; and 11:7), Collins takes them to be a "plural of self-address" and not a reference to the angelic council (111). It is also worth noting that Collins maintains that the seven days of creation should be understood "analogically," that is, they work together to convey the idea that "God's work and rest are *like* human rest and work in some ways and *unlike* it in other ways" (163; emphasis original). Alongside these things, Collins also asserts that the account of Gen 2:4–25 should not be understood as a second creation story altogether, a point of view that is in

contrast to "the conventional reading in the modern era" (168), but rather as something that is complimentary to Gen 1:1–2:4, i.e., an "expansion of the creation of humankind on the sixth day of Genesis 1" (225). Collins is also persuaded that the incident involving the so-called *Nephilim* (Gen 6:1–4), whom he takes to be the offspring of demonic, evil, angelic beings (187–90), is best understood as being within the Noachic Deluge narrative proper along with the pericope of Gen 9:18–29 (110, 185–94). In addition, though many recognize that there are a number of New Testament texts that relate directly to the Flood (such as Matt 24:37–39, Luke 17:26–27, Heb 11:7, 1 Pet 3:20, and 2 Pet 2:5, 3:6), Collins believes that Rom 8:21 should also "be added to the list" (235).

On a slightly different note, Collins also perceives *Enuma Elish*, i.e., the "Babylonian Epic of Creation," as having somewhat lesser value than the Mesopotamian story of Atrahasis for doing comparative analysis (114). Finally, concerning John Walton's view that the "interests of the creation story lie with the origins of the *functions* of the things described rather than with their *material origin*," Collins denounces the idea that "material and function are really inseparable" (168; emphasis original).

While some people may think the author to be "splitting hairs" in his discussion of what constitutes the differences between "antiquarian history" and "rhetorical history," Collins is prudent in insisting that "*history is not a literary form*; it is rather *a way of referring to persons and events* with a proper moral orientation . . . there is no reason to suppose that ancient Near Eastern writers and audiences required historical verisimilitude in literary compositions dealing with prehistory and protohistory in order for them to be credible" (141–42; emphasis original).

By way of critique, it should be noted that almost a third of the entire volume is an "orientation" or "guide" as to how to achieve an increased competency with respect to biblical interpretation and exegesis in general, i.e., how to be a better reader of Scripture *as a whole* (beyond the immediacy of Gen 1–11). Though this is something that some readers may begrudge, Collins states:

> Since I am contending for a way of reading biblical passages and also arguing that this way of reading has not received full attention in recent biblical scholarship, I offer what I take to be reasonable amounts of documentation on that score. I do not claim completeness nor do I claim to have written a critical commentary on the passages I address. I hope, however, that my readers will judge that I have given reasons for the positions I take. (33)

Some readers are also likely to take umbrage with the lack of any type of sustained discussion concerning evolutionary theory (in point of fact, the term "evolution"

does not even appear in the subject index of the volume!). Given that the sub-title of *Reading Genesis Well* is "navigating history, poetry, science, and truth in Genesis 1–11" this "oversight" seems to be quite amiss. Surely it would have behooved the author to have made more than just a few, passing comments about a topic that plays such an integral role with the subject matter as a whole, especially when he explicitly states that "there may be reasons, scientific and philosophical (and even theological) to subject the various kind of evolutionary theory to critical review. After all, there are several versions of the theories out there, and the idea of an impersonal and pointless process does not suit the data, either of biology or of the Bible" (288). Such statements clearly require more detail and analysis than what Collins has provided within his work. In brief, it is deemed insufficient and inadequate to avert the matter by stating "my attention here is on what the faithful are supposed to be getting from Genesis; that is, on the perspective of faith, that all of this comes from God and reflects his purposes for humankind" (288).

The above critiques notwithstanding, it is otherwise hard to find fault with this volume. The effective use of charts/tables, diagrams, and other images, alongside an ample amount of illustrations and poignant, clear examples (not to mention a high degree of pastoral awareness and sensitivity) make for a stimulating and engaging read. The author's engagement with some of the more complex or challenging topics (such as the connection between a world picture and a worldview, for instance, and the charge "hasn't explaining become explaining away?") is lucid and cogent. In addition to this, Collins' deftness and respect (without pomp or grandstanding) towards those with whom he disagrees or "wrangles" (96) is also commendable, as each of the comments made towards his detractors were fair and circumspect, free of *ad hominem* attacks, etc.

To conclude, *Reading Genesis Well* is a welcome addition to the on-going discussion concerning the Bible's earliest chapters. Its primary readers will likely be bible college/seminary and Christian university students, the invested layperson, and, one hopes, studious pastors/ministers. This book is superbly done and highly recommended!

Dustin Burlet
McMaster Divinity College

Reading Revelation in Context: John's Apocalypse and Second Temple Judaism. Ben C. Blackwell, et al. Editors. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. ISBN 978-0062334381. Pp. 208. Paperback. $21.99 (USD).

Revelation is a book that has long been plagued by variegated, often bewildering interpretations, ranging from a synopsis of the history of the church to a play-by-play prediction of the coming end of the world. However, Revelation has not

received this treatment entirely without fault; it is exceptionally difficult to interpret, given its rich symbolism, elusive character, and its stylistic distinction from the rest of the New Testament. These interpretive difficulties often intimidate many readers from even attempting to understand the book. However, they are precisely what *Reading Revelation in Context* (henceforth *RRC*) is intended to address.

The editors of *RRC* state that "there exist virtually no nontechnical resources for beginning and intermediate students to assist them in seeing firsthand how Revelation is similar to and yet different from early Jewish apocalypses and related literature" (27–28). *RRC* intends to fill this void, by following a method that is broadly comparative-literary: (1) The "comparator" text is introduced, and significant nuances are discussed; (2) the similar text in Revelation is introduced, and its nuances discussed; and (3) the similarities and differences are explored.

RRC follows this method through a series of 20 essays approximately 7 pages in length, gathered from an impressive list of scholars from a variety of backgrounds.[5] The essays cover well-known controversial elements of Revelation (e.g., the so-called "Antichrist") to those lesser discussed, but no less important (e.g., economic disparities). However, these themes are only ever explored within the context of specific passages of both Revelation and the comparator texts, rather than being traced throughout entire works. Given that *RRC* is intended for students, its language is deliberately simplified, and key terms are in bold, and defined in the back of *RRC*. The essays are short and sweet, with each passage only being given 3 pages of material (with approximately 1 page of comparison and conclusion). A short bibliography of suggested reading appears at the end of each essay, allowing eager readers to do further research into the topics discussed.

RRC has much to commend it. As stated previously, the list of scholars is impressive and various, allowing for a unique combination of voices and perspectives to be heard, as well as not coercing the reader to follow a singular interpretive approach. The essays are as diverse as the authors, allowing the reader to attain a broad understanding of various aspects of Revelation with Second Temple texts; they are also accessible, allowing those who do not have much prior knowledge to read without too much difficulty.

However, *RRC* falls short on several points. First, is oversimplification. While this is to be expected to some extent (since it is fruitless to coerce new students to immediately grasp all the nuances and complexities in a given field), it is at times done to an extent that is greater than necessary. For example, in the introduction, the Septuagint is treated as though it is one of many Greek versions, which seems to be an egregious misunderstanding of the term; additionally, it is suggested that

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5   John K. Goodrich, one of the editors, is a Professor at Moody Bible Institute, a premillennial school, for instance.

it contains the "Greek translation of the Old Testament as well as other Jewish writings," which greatly simplifies the state of the canonical process in the first century (31). This is no less true with the essays: 3 pages is simply not enough space to adequately address the various complexities of a text in a thorough manner.

The brevity also contributes to another major weakness of the work: it seems to be aimless in its target. It's not clear how the book should be used. The essays are too specified to contribute to more thematic understandings of Revelation, yet they are too short to be considered a major contribution to the understanding of individual passages. A similar problem remains for *RRC* as a whole. The subject matter is both too broad to be considered an advancement in a particular field of study of Revelation, and yet not comprehensive enough to contribute to the study of Revelation as a whole. Additionally, the lack of space means that the authors must move very quickly, giving the book the feel of being rushed overall, jumping from topic to topic at a pace that even the most excited primary school children could hardly compete with.

These deficiencies make it difficult to find a secure position for *RRC* in the study of Revelation. Its breadth of topics would make it a difficult book to use in a classroom, and its limited scope means that it must be treated as supplementary material rather than a main textbook.

However, one space remains for the book, and that is with the curious reader who just wishes to understand what might be going on in Revelation. *Reading Religion in Context* is accessible and compelling enough to successfully achieve two tasks: (1) to convince the reader that John the seer was thoroughly acquainted with Second Temple literature; (2) to give the reader a taste for how fruitful the study of Revelation in light of Second Temple texts can be. While these accomplishments are not as great as they could be, they are valuable, nonetheless.

Rob Ward
McMaster Divinity College