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"A Ghost Does Not Have Flesh and Bones": An Apotropaic Reading of Luke 24:36-43

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Abstract

Previous scholarship on Luke 24:36–43 has concentrated primarily on features such as manuscript differences, post-Easter theology, and the development and sources of the Gospel writer, among other issues. Little attention, however, has been given to some of the more peculiarly "magical" features of this passage. Luke's mention of Jesus appearing as a spirit/ghost and his desire to consume a piece of broiled fish alerts the reader to an apotropaic reading of this scene. In addition to contributing to an anti-docetic apologetic, this story also demonstrates that Jesus was not an *evil* spirit. This article explores the apotropaic function of fish within Luke's narrative by comparing it with the apotropaic use of fish in the Jewish book of Tobit and the *Greek Magical Papyri*. This apotropaic reading of the text allows for Luke's subtle narrative strategy to implicate the disciples for their unbelief and further demonstrates the author's knowledge of Greco-Roman religious ideas.

Introduction

The post-resurrection appearance of Jesus in Luke 24:36–43 contains a number of peculiar narrative elements not found in the other Synoptic Gospels or John.[1] Unlike Matthew and Mark, Jesus's appearance to the disciples in Luke causes them to react in "terror" (πτοέω).[2] Indeed, Matthew and Mark do not even mention this episode, while John only records that Jesus "showed them his hands and his

1 François Bovon, *Luke 3: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 19:28–24:53*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. James Crouch (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 387: "By general agreement, however, vv. 44–49 carry the mark of the evangelist. This statement is true for both the manner of expression and the themes. Nevertheless, some elements of this last speech of Christ are not especially Lukan: principally the preaching of repentance and the forgiveness of sins as expressions of salvation."

2 𝔓[75] and Codex Vaticanus (B = 03) use the verb θροέω.

side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord" (20:20).[3] According to Luke, however, the disciples perceive this appearance to be the manifestation of a spirit (πνεῦμα) or ghost (φάντασμα).[4] In order to ease their discomfort, the risen Jesus provides three evidences that he is not a spirit: 1) sight ("look at my hands and my feet"; v.39); 2) physical touch ("Touch me and see"; v. 39); 3) and the consumption of food ("have you anything to eat?"; v. 41). Jesus's proofs are premised on the idea that "a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have" (v. 39).[5] Finally, after the disciples give Jesus a piece of "broiled fish" (ἰχθύος ὀπτοῦ; v. 42),[6] he then commissions them to go share his message.

Previous studies of the narrative found in Luke 24:36–49 have primarily concerned themselves with differences within the manuscript tradition and their post-Easter theological importance,[7] the development and sources of Luke's narrative,[8] and pinpointing the original geographical location of this story (Galilee or Jerusalem).[9] Little attention, however, has been given to the possible apotropaic characteristics of this passage.[10] By reading this pericope within the broader cultural and

3 Though John's account might suggest that the disciples only became "glad" (ἐχάρησαν) after realizing Jesus was not a hostile spirit, it is only Luke's account that spells out the reason for their turmoil. The reason for the fear of the disciples is told to us in John 20:19 and is a fear of persecution from the Jews. See Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John i-xii and John xiii–xxi, 29 and 29a* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1966, 1970), 1020.

4 The word φάντασμα is found in Codex Bezae (D = 05). See BDAG, s.v. "φάντασμα."

5 The later midrash *Ruth Rabbah* contains a similar sentiment: "And he [Boaz] turned himself" she [Ruth] clasped him like ivy and he began to touch her hair, and said 'spirits do not have hair' and so he said to her 'who are you,' a spirit or a woman" (6:1). Likewise, Odysseus' attempt to hug the spirit of his dead mother results in her stating: "for muscles no longer have flesh and bones" (σάρκας τε και οστέα; Od. 11.204–22; cf. Aen. 2.768–95).

6 The pairing ἰχθύος ὀπτοῦ includes the *hapax legomenon* **ὀπτός**, which can mean "roasted," "baked," "forged," "scorched," or "broiled" though a homograph of **ὀπτός** exists that means "visible," from the verb ὁράω (Luc.*Lex*.9, Ath.8.338c.). It is doubtful, however, that Luke is trying to create a play on words here about the visible Christ (although perceived as a ghostly, transient being) and the fish. See BDAG, s.v., "**ὀπτός**."

7 Some manuscripts include the phrase "and some honeycomb" alongside the fish that Jesus eats. Bovon, *Luke 3,* 392 notes that "we know that in antiquity fish and honey often appeared on the communion tables along with bread and wine. Since honey was also regarded as paradisiacal food, we cannot rule out an eschatological connotation." See also E. Nestle, "The Honeycomb in Luke xxiv," *ExpTim* 22 (1910–1911): 567–68; G. D. Kilpatrick, "Luke 24:42–43," *NovT* 28 (1986):306–308. The Italian scholar, Beatrice Cherubini has written an extensive dissertation about this passage: Beatrice Cherubini, "'Mangiò pesce e miele': Un' antica tradizione sul Risorto" (PhD diss., Università di Roma Tre, 2005–2006).

8 Gerald O'Collins, "Did Jesus Eat the Fish (Luke 24:42–43)?" *Gregorianum* 69.1 (1988): 65–76, for example, looks at three stages of the development of this pericope and its function in the life of the early Church: "Luke himself (stage three of the tradition) uses the fisheating motif as one of his means for expressing at least three things: a) the bodily reality of the risen Lord; b) the qualifications of the apostles as witnesses and c) the ongoing liturgical presence of the Lord" (76).

9 See, for example, the older studies of J. M. Creed, *St Luke* (London: Macmillan, 1930), 299; E. Klostermann, *Das Lukasevangelium* (HKNT; Tübingen, 1929), 241.

10 Michael J Morris, *Warding Off Evil* (WUNT 2/451; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017) gives almost no attention to this pericope in his recent monograph on the topic of apotropaism in the New Testament. The examination that comes closest to dealing with the current topic is Deborah Thompson Prince, "The 'Ghost' of Jesus: Luke 24 in Light of Ancient Narratives of Post-Mortem

religious framework of apotropaic rituals found in early Judaism and Greco-Roman magical techniques, I argue that Jesus's tactic of eating broiled fish in this narrative is not only a polemic against docetic beliefs,[11] but is also a natural Second Temple Jewish response to the disciples' terror.

This study will begin with acclimating the reader to the use of apotropaic objects in early Judaism. In the following sections I will analyze how fish were used in expelling and supplying apotropaic protection to Tobias and Sarah in the Jewish book of Tobit. Afterwards, I will conduct a survey of some of the uses of fish in rituals found from the *Greek Magical Papyri*. Next, we will turn to the kind of spirits that Jews in the first century might have been concerned about and in turn how such spirits were dealt with in Greco-Roman sources. Finally, I will apply this apotropaic understanding to the narrative of Luke 24:36–43 and demonstrate how it contributes to reading the pericope as a whole.

Apotropaic Objects in Early Judaism

Second Temple literature reflects a growing concern among Jews for protection against, and deliverance from, evil spirits. Defense against these malevolent forces came in various forms. A handful of texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, contain an assortment of anti-demonic prayers, songs, and rituals (e.g., 11Q11). These activities included curses aimed towards demons and their leaders (e.g., 4Q280, 4Q286 7 II, 1–12), praise to God intended to frighten away evil spirits (e.g., 4Q510 1 1–9 = 4Q511 10 1), and rules for community members to obey in order to resist the influence of evil powers (e.g., 1QS I, 16-19, CD XII, 2–6; XVI, 4–6). The Scrolls portray the covenant community as participants in a

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Apparitions," JSNT 29.3 (2008): 287–301. Yet, Prince does not discuss the topic of eating fish in the article, but see pp. 290–91 where she briefly talks about funerary rites and libations and food offerings. Jake H. O'Connell, "Did Greco-Roman Apparitional Models Influence Luke's Resurrection Narrative? A Response to Deborah Thompson Prince," JGRChJ 5 (2008): 198 has offered a response to Prince's article that is also worth noting: "We need, however, to return to the question of whether Luke contains any indications of non-Jewish Greco-Roman ideas about apparitions. This passage does seem to provide one such example. Since the ability or inability of ghosts to eat is a question addressed in Greco-Roman literature, this together with Luke's reference to Jesus's flesh and blood as a possible allusion to Homer's Od. 11.204–22, can be taken as evidence that Luke is indeed interacting with Greco-Roman ideas of apparitions in this passage. However, there should be two caveats here. First, Judaism had its own stories of ghosts, and Palestine, while avoiding outright syncretism with pagan religious beliefs, was still significantly influenced by Greco-Roman culture. Thus, one cannot be sure the notion of ghosts not having flesh and blood and being unable to eat was confined to Greco-Roman conceptions of ghosts."

11 Jack Finegan, *Die Überlieferung der Leidens- und Auferstehungsgeschichte Jesu* (Giessen, 1934), 91; Vincent Taylor, *The Passion Narrative of St Luke: A Critical and Historical Investigation*, ed. Owen E. Evans (SNTSMS 19; Cambridge: University Press, 1972), 112–14; Jürgen Roloff, *Das Kerygma und der irdische Jesus: Historische Motive in den Jesus-Erzählungen der Evangelien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 255.

cosmic war against the head demonic force Belial and his lot.[12] The community members actively confess sin (1QS I, 24), curse Belial and his human and demonic lot (1QS II, 1–10; 1QM XIII, 2–5; 4Q286 7 II, 1–5), and supplicate God to protect them from evil spirits (4Q511 10, 9–11).[13]

Besides the use of curses, prayers, and songs, physical objects were used to protect oneself from evil spirits as well, such as written amulets[14] and botanical substances.[15] Josephus (*J.W.* 7.180–85), for example, describes a certain deadly plant that, when brought to a patient ("sick one"; νοσοῦσι), "expels" (ἐξελαύνει) demons. No instructions are given on how to use the root, only that its deathly

12 Belial's "lot" (גורל) can refer to human beings under his control (e.g., 1QS II, 1–10) or to evil spirits (4Q286 7a II, 1–6). See BDB, s.v., "גּוֹרָל."

13 Sometimes leaders in the community were the ones reciting prayers and songs to ward away evil. The Maskil (משכיל), for example, played an important role in the community and the term is usually translated as "instructor" or "sage" (e.g., 1QS III, 13; 1QSb I, 1; 1QM I, 1; 1QH[a] XX, 14; CD XII, 21; 4Q510 I, 4). In some texts the Maskil is described as having received supernal knowledge and a position of spiritual authority within the community (1QS IX, 12-21; 4Q511 18 II, 8). This authority extends not only to the instruction of the community members about the nature of humanity and the cosmic war (1QS III, 13–IV, 26), but also to the warding off, aversion, or eviction of evil spirits (4Q510 1, 4–6). See Joseph Angel, "Maskil, Community, and Religious Experience in the Songs of the Sage (4Q510–511)," *DSD* 19.1 (2012): 1–27, who argues that apotropaism in 4QSongs of the Sage[a-b] is not actually a form of "magic," but the result of the community's transformed mind.

14 In 2019, a preliminary reconstruction, translation, and commentary of 4Q147 was supplied by Ariel and Faina Feldman. This work had been previously catalogued as a tefillin by J.T. Milik, who was unable to decipher the work on account of the handwriting which he described as "pratiquement indéchiffrable" (DJD 6, 37). The work contains the remains of language reminiscent of other apotropaic works found at Qumran and therefore has been suggested to be the remains of an amulet. Tefillin and mezuzot have sometimes been viewed as apotropaic by scholars. The tefillin and mezuzot consist of scriptural quotations affixed to the hand/forehead or doorpost based on the instruction of Exod 13:9, 16 and Deut 6:8; 11:18. The tefillin found at Qumran mostly follow the expected passages found in later rabbinic Judaism, namely Exod 13:10–16, Deut 6:4–9, and Deut 11:13–21, though some have been found to contain the ten commandments or other biblical texts (sometimes harmonized). The word Tefillin is often translated as phylactery, which suggests that it was used for protective purposes similar to amulets (perhaps they *were* amulets). 4Q560 was also found bound in a leather case similar to the tefillin which points towards a prophylactic use of scrolls. Yet, it is difficult to argue that the tefillin or mezuzot were apotropaic in nature, since the wearers were simply trying to keep the command found in the Hebrew Bible. See Yehudah Cohn, "Were Tefillin Phylacteries?" *JJS* 59 (2008): 39–61.

15 According to Josephus, the Essenes displayed "an extraordinary interest in the writings of the ancients, singling out in particular those which make for the welfare of soul and body; with the help of these, and with a view to the treatment of diseases, they make investigations into medicinal roots and the properties of stones" (*Ant.* 8.44). In this paper I adopt the consensus view that the repository of scrolls reflect the library of a sectarian group that studied, worshipped, and at different times lived at Qumran and reflects a group similar to, if not identical with, the Essenes referred to by ancient authors such as Josephus (*J.W.* 2.8.2–13; *Ant.* 5.13.9; 15.10.4–5), Philo (*Hypoth*. 11.1–18; *Prob*. 75–91), and Pliny (*Nat.* 5.15); For more on this topic, see James C. VanderKam, "Identity and History of the Community," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls After Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment*, 2 vols., eds. P. W. Flint and J. C. VanderKam (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 2:487–533. For a detailed history of the relationship between Qumran, the Essenes, and the Dead Sea scrolls in scholarship, see Gwynned de Looijer, *The Qumran Paradigm: A Critical Evaluation of Some Foundational Hypotheses in the Construction of the Qumran Sect* (Atlanta: SBL, 2015). Whether the Qumran Community ought to be associated with the Essenes or not, such a description of a group of Jews interested in the healing properties of plants and stones likely had magico-medical functions, some of which could have possibly been apotropaic.

powers are diminished when first picked, making them useful for expelling evil spirits. The root could have been worn as an amulet, pressed against the patient, used in fumigation, or possibly just had to be in the same vicinity as the individual.[16] *Jubilees* 10:10-14 also preserves the apotropaic use of plant matter. After binding most of Mastema's spirits, God instructs the angels to teach Noah a series of healing rituals by using the "herbs of the earth." These herbs are able to heal both "illnesses" and "seductions" caused by the demons. They may have had both exorcistic and apotropaic powers. Since "healing" seems to infer that the target is already under demonic attack, we may presume that that the herbs in this case were used for exorcism. The herbs are also used, however, so that "the evil spirits were restrained from following the sons of Noah" (10:13). This function is best understood as apotropaic, since the spirits are being thwarted from initiating contact with humans. How the herbs were used is not stated. They could have been worn as amulets, consumed, topically applied, used for fumigation, smudged, or any number of combinations, perhaps depending on what affliction needed to be dealt with.

The use of fumigation was a common tactic for dealing with evil spirits. In the later rabbinic work *Pirke de-Rab Kahana,* for example, it describes how Yohanan ben Zakai (first century CE) told a Gentile how to deal with demoniacs through fumigation with roots and pouring water over them.[17] Likewise, Justin Martyr describes the Jewish and Gentile exorcists as using "fumigations and adjurations" (θυμιάμασι καί καταδέσμοις χρωνται; *Dial.* 85.3) in their rituals, contrasted by the Christian use of Jesus's name as a form of power-authority. Fumigation is also used in the Jewish book of Tobit to which we will now turn our attention.

Fish in the Book of Tobit

Among the items used for apotropaism in early Judaism and Greco-Roman rituals, fish was of particularly potent power.[18] One of the most iconic stories we have from the Second Temple Period of an apotropaic object is Tobias' use of the innards of a fish to ward away the demon Asmodeus. According to Tob 6:8, Raphael instructs Tobias to burn a fish's heart and liver in front of a person afflicted by an evil spirit

16 Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 92 describes the root as a parallel to Tobias' fish in the book of Tobit, in that it has a "built in" power.

17 See B. Mandelbaum, *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana According to an Oxford Manuscript with Variants from all Known Manuscripts and Genizoth Fragments and Parallel Passages with Commentary and Introduction*, 2 vol.; 1 rev ed. (New York, 1962), 74 and parallels.

18 The medicinal purposes of fish have been examined elsewhere and the use of a fish's gall for healing eye conditions is known throughout the ancient world. For Assyrian and Babylonian examples, see W. von Soden, "Fischgalle als Heil-Mittel fur die Augen," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 21 (1996): 81–83. For classical examples, see B. Kollman. "Gottliche Offenbarung magisch-phramakologischer Heilskunst im Buch Tobit," *ZAW* 106 (1994):294–97 and I. Papayannopoulos, J. Laskaratos, and S. Marketos, "Remarks on Tobit's Blindness," *Koroth* 9 (1985): 181–87.

or demon. The use of smoke suggests that a kind of fumigation is in mind that is meant to coax the spirit to leave. The instruction also states that by doing this the demon will "flee away and never remain with that person any longer." This long-term effect is best understood as apotropaic. For our purposes, however, we are interested in the use of the fish's heart and liver, as well as the use of smoke. Tobias is described as having put the fish's parts in the θυμιάματος ("incense burner"),[19] probably originally used for the wedding feast or for fumigating the bride's dress.[20]

The use of fish may have had apotropaic qualities based simply on the smell.[21] Depending on the state of the fish (fresh, rotten) or the species, the odour it emitted could have had a sympathetic magical effect. Just as a foul odour repels human beings, so too it may have been thought to work for evil spirits. As Bohak notes: "it is the *smell* which drives the demon away, and no further actions – neither verbal nor written incantations, nor any additional implements or rituals – are needed to perform this task."[22] Additionally, the size of the fish may have contributed to its apotropaic potency. The fish is described in Tob 6:3 as a "large fish" (ἰχθὺς μέγας) that was able to "swallow" (καταπιεῖν) Tobias' foot. The species of fish has been variously speculated: 1) large pike or shad;[23] 2) crocodile/hippopotamus;[24] 3) "Tigris Salmon" (*Barbus esocinus).*[25] These fish range anywhere from a couple feet to two metres in length. With such a large fish, the amount of smoke produced (or simply the size itself) may have aided in amplifying the apotropaic power (if not lengthening the time of its efficaciousness).

Moreover, Tobias may have protected himself by actually consuming the fish. Tob 6:6 states that after catching the fish, Tobias roasts and eats some of it. Notably, Raphael does not eat the fish (cf. Tob 12:19). The reason for this is not given,

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19 See BDAG, s.v., "θυμίαμα."

20 Robert J. Littman, *Tobit: The Book of Tobit in Codex Sinaiticus* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 124; Deborah A. Green, *Soothing Odors: The Transformation of Scent in Ancient Israelite and Ancient Jewish Literature* (PhD diss., Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003); Kjeld Nielsen, *Incense in Ancient Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1986); Carol Meyer, "Fumes, Flames or Fluids? Reframing the Cup-and-Bowl Question" in *Boundaries of the Ancient Near Eastern World: A Tribute to Cyrus H. Gordon*, eds. Meir Lubetski, Clare Gottlieb, and Sharon Keller (JSOTSup 273; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 30–39.

21 In mocking a Jewish exorcist, Lucian of Samosata said that "many demons were expelled by the bad-breathed exorcist. Not by his adjurations, but by the smell of shit!" (*AP* 11.427). While such a statement is obviously not meant to reflect actual exorcistic practice, this passing reference to foul odours repelling demons is at least worth considering as an accidental reference to a known mechanism.

22 Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic,* 90. Bohak views the ritual as exorcistic. Curiously, however, he likens the ritual to "those little electric "fumigators" which are used today to drive mosquitoes away by slowly burning a chemical substance whose effects they would rather avoid." Such an analogy, however, seems to be more apotropaic than exorcistic in nature.

23 Otto F. Fritzsche, *Die Bücher Tobia und Judith erklärt* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1853), 52.

24 See Moore, Carey A. 1996. *Tobit A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday), 199.

25 Robert J. Littman, *The Book of* Tobit *in Codex Sinaiticus* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 108.

though it is possibly twofold. Firstly, Raphael has taken on a human form named Azariah. Sometimes, angels refuse to accept meals from humans (Judg 13:16), while other times they seem to be okay doing this (Gen 18:8). Secondly, not eating a fish may be for the same logic found in the *Greek Magical Papyri* surveyed below. Fish are harmful for spirits. Thus, Raphael refuses to partake in eating the fish, lest his clever guise is found out. In Tobias' case, however, consuming the fish may have helped protect him when entering the bridal chamber, although this is never stated.[26] Which part of the fish Tobias eats is also unclear. The text states that he "gathered together (συνήγαγεν/ λαβὼν) the gall, heart, and liver" and "roasted and ate some of the fish (καὶ ὤπτησεν τοῦ ἰχθύος καὶ ἔφαγεν), and kept some to be salted (ἀφῆκεν ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἡλισμένον)." Presumably, the parts he ate were not the insides that he gathered together for separate use. Eating any part of the fish, however, still may have had residual apotropaic power.

Thus, the use of a fish in warding away evil spirits in Tobit was perhaps based on multiple factors. The fish itself has a "built in" apotropaic power. If Tobit was penned in an Egyptian context, the taboo nature of fish in that culture may have contributed to the origins of the purported efficaciousness of this object.[27] Such food laws certainly influenced the later *Greek Magical Papyri* to which we now turn.

Fish in Greco-Roman Magic

The *Greek Magical Papyri* (*PGM*) and *Demotic Magical Papyri* (*PDM*) are a collection of magical texts from Egypt. The spells range quite considerably in their dating: "the extant texts are mainly from the second century B.C. to the fifth century A.D."[28] Importantly, the *PGM* seem to borrow from early Jewish and Christian forms of magic and exorcism. Jewish titles for God, for example, such as Iao, Sabaoth, Adonai, and Eloe appear quite regularly throughout the spells (e.g., *PGM* IV. 1577; V. 481; VII. 400; XXXVI. 42; XLIII. 13).[29] In another instance, Jesus himself is used as a source of power for driving out daimons:

26 "He ate" (ἔφαγεν); G1 has the plural, as does one Vulgate manuscript. 4Q197 4 I, 10 contains the singular אכל.

27 On the forbidden nature of fish in Egypt, see William Jefferson Darby, *Food: The Gift of Osiris* (2 vols.; London: Academic Press, 1977), 1:380–404; Several uses of fish oil for apotropaic purposes can also be found in Mesopotamian texts. For example, the following prescription states: "If ditto (a person continually sees dead persons in his dreams), 'hum[an] semen', fish oil, (and) naphtha you repeatedly rub on [him . . .]." For texts and translations, see JoAnn Scurlock, *Magico-Medical Means of Treating Ghost-Induces Illnesses in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Leiden/Boston: Brill/Styx, 2006), 254, 401, 614, and also 67. On the unclean nature of pork, see H. Bonnet, *Reallexikon der Ägyptische Religions geschichte* (Berlin, 1952), 690–91; J. Bergman, "Isis auf der Sau," *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis* 6 (1974): 81–109; Darby, *The Gift of Osiris,* 1:171–209.

28 Hans Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri* (Chicago: University Press, 1986), xlii. Translations of the *PGM* and *PDM* in this paper are from Betz.

29 *PGM*, XIII contains the remains of a text referred to as the "Eighth Book of Moses," which includes other works such as the "Key of Moses" (XIII, 21) and "The sacred secret book of Moses

> Excellent rite for driving out daimons: *Formula* to be spoken over his head: Place olive branches before him, and stand behind him and say: "Hail, God of Abraham; hail, God of Isaac; hail, God of Jacob; Jesus Chrestos, the Holy Spirit, the Son of the Father, who is above the Seven, who is within the Seven. Bring Iao Sabaoth; may your power issue forth from him, NN, - until you drive away this unclean daimon Satan, who is in him (*PGM* IV. 1227–39).

Such an overlap in material reveals that there was overlap or exchanges of different ideas and techniques in antiquity, even of opposing religious systems.

In various spells from the *PGM*, spirits avoid or are predisposed to dislike fish.[30] This reluctance to engage with those who consume fish and the use of fish in certain rituals such as conjuration is rooted in Egyptian religion, namely its mythology and purity laws.[31] According to Egyptian mythology, Osiris' phallus was eaten by fish after his younger brother Seth threw his body into the river.[32] Followers of Seth honored various fish at certain times and locations in Egyptian history,

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called the eighth or holy" (XIII, 343f). Additionally, a magical text known as the "Prayer of Jacob" (*PGM*, XXIIb) also appears in this work with more Jewish elements than pagan. See also Bruce Chilton, "God as 'Father' in the Targumim, in Non-Canonical Literatures of Early Judaism and Primitive Christianity and in Matthew" in *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation*, eds. James H. Charlesworth and Craig A. Evans (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 151–69; Martin Rist, "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: A Liturgical and Magical Formula." *JBL* 57.3 (September 1938): 289–303.

30 That fish were a regular ingredient in magical formulae is evident from Apuleius' rhetorical question (158/9 CE): "Are these your proofs of my magic–the fall of a boy, the marriage of a woman, and shopping for fish?" (*Apology 2*, 46). Nicole B. Hansen, "Ancient Execration Magic in Coptic and Islamic Egypt" in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World,* eds. R. Van Den Broek, H.J.W. Drijvers, and H.S. Versnel (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 141; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 435: "Another animal that often was involved in the execration ritual was the fish. In one ancient text, figurines were said to be placed in fish skin. In another case, the name of the victim was inscribed, using a fish bone on the chest of a wax figure representing him. In a text from Esna Temple, the victims were identified with the fish."

31 Hippocrates, *On the Sacred Disease* 1.10–46, notes: "I think that the first people to have projected this disease [epilepsy] as "sacred" were men like those who are now mages [magoi] and purifiers [kathartai] and beggar-priests [agurtai] and vagrant-charlatans [alazones]. . . They added further appropriate arguments to render their method of healing safe for themselves. They applied purifications [katharmoi] and incantations [epaoidai] and told people to refrain from bathing and many foods unsuitable for the sick to eat: among fish they banned red mullet, black-tail, grey mullet, and eel (for these are the most hazardous); among meats goat, venison, pork and dog (for these are the meats that upset the stomach most)."

32 "Of the parts of Osiris's body, the only one which Isis did not find was the male member, for the reason that this had been at once tossed into the river, and the lepidotus, the sea-bream, and the pike had fed upon it; and it is from these very fishes the Egyptians are most scrupulous in abstaining. But Isis made a replica of the member to take its place, and consecrated the phallus, in honour of which the Egyptians even at the present day celebrate a festival" (Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, 358B). Despite this connection, Youri Volokhine*,* ""Food Prohibitions" in Pharaonic Egypt. Discourses and Practices" in *Food Taboos and Biblical Prohibitions: Reassessing Archaeological and Literary Perspectives,* eds. Peter Altmann, Anna Angelini, and Abra Spiciarich (Archaeology and Bible 2; Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 51 notes: "The idea that fish is suspect because it is linked to the devouring of Osiris' member is Greek, and it is not clearly attested by Egyptian texts."

which resulted in the avoidance or particular use of fish in various rituals.[33] Comparatively, followers of Osiris avoided fish because of this conflict with Seth, yet could also be used in threats against Osiris to have the god follow the ritualists commands. This general mythos seems to have influenced the practical belief on the limitations of what conjured spirit assistants could accomplish for the spell-caster. *PGM* I. 96–105, for example, reads as follows:

> This is the sacred rite for acquiring an assistant. It is acknowledged that he is a god; he is an aerial spirit, which you have seen. If you give him a command, straightway he performs the task: he sends dreams, he brings women, men without the use of magical material, he kills, he destroys, he stirs up winds form the earth, he carries gold, silver, bronze, and he gives them to you whenever the need arises. And he frees from bonds a person chained in prison, he opens doors, he causes invisibility so that no one can see you at all, he is a bringer of fire, he brings water, wine, bread, and [whatever] you wish in the way of foods: olive oil, vinegar – with the single exception of fish.

The conjured spirit assistant, referred to as a πάρεδρος, was commonly understood to be the spiritual manifestation of a celestial body, a god/goddess, or the spirit of a dead human.[34] Through a series of ritual actions, the spell-caster would summon the πάρεδρος to aid them in further magical ventures such as divination or other practical feats. The πάρεδρος in this spell will complete a number of tasks (including stopping "very many evil [daimons]; *PGM* I. 116), with the exception of bringing their master fish or pork (*PGM* I. 105–106). Since the spirits were sometimes unpredictable, ritualists required protective measures to ensure their obedience. In an Apollonian invocation (PGM I. 262–347) used to summon gods and "chthonic daimons," for example, the spell-caster is reminded not to lose a leaf inscribed with various magical symbols because it is meant to protect them from daimons, likely including the one they are summoning.[35] As Ciraolo notes: "knowledge of the name of the πάρεδρος enables the practitioner to summon and *control* him."[36] Yet, despite the use of protective counter-measures and the binding of the spirit

33 Darby, *The Gift of Osiris,* 1:383: "Interpretation of these contradictions may be attempted within one or more frameworks: the Osiris-Seth conflict; the deification of fish not associated with the Osirian epic; class differences; and imposition of dietary restrictions by foreign conquerors."

34 See Leda Jean Ciraolo, "Supernatural Assistants in the Greek Magical Papyri" in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, eds. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 279–95. Volokhine, ""Food Prohibitions"," 50, states: "If scenes depicting fishing and the preparation of fish are well attested, it is also clear that, for some periods – especially the Old Kingdom – and certain contexts, one can observe an absence of fish in representations of offerings: sometimes gods, kings, and the dead do not touch them." See also LSJ, s.v., "πάρεδρος."

35 One early 19th–18th century BCE statuette shows a girl wearing a fish amulet. See Geraldine Pinch, *Magic in Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum Press, 1994), 107.

36 Ciraolo, "Supernatural Assistants," 281 (emphasis mine).

assistant to complete the tasks assigned to it, the πάρεδρος in *PGM* I. 96–105 will not transport fish to the summoner. That the πάρεδρος will not complete this task is best explained by the Egyptian mythological context of the spell itself. Yet, it is unclear whether the spirit will not bring fish for purely ceremonial reasons (i.e., because fish are considered ritually unclean)[37] or because the πάρεδρος actually fears fish due to what happened to Osiris' body.[38]

In addition to not retrieving fish for the spell-caster, conjured spirit assistants may also refuse to comply to commands if they are predisposed to dislike the summoner for various reasons. Thus, *PGM* I. 278–92 reads as follows:

> Now this is the rite: Take a lamp which has not been colored red and fit it with a piece of linen cloth and rose oil or oil or spikenard, and dress yourself in a prophetic garment and hold an ebony staff in your left hand and the protective charm in your right (i.e., the sprig of laurel). But keep in readiness a wolf's head so that you can set the lamp upon the head of the wolf, and construct an altar of unburnt clay near the head and the lamp so that you may sacrifice on it to the god. And immediately the divine spirit enters. The burnt offering in a wolf's eye, storax gum, cassia, balsam gum and whatever in valued among the spices, and pour a libation of wine and honey and iLuke and rain-water, [and make] 7 flat cakes and 7 round cakes. These you are going to make completely [near] the lamp, robed and refraining from all unclean things and from all eating of fish and from all sexual intercourse, so that you may bring the god into the greatest desire toward you.

The ritualist who is performing a burnt offering in order to summon a god must cease from eating fish so that they may "bring the god into the greatest desire toward you" (*PGM* I. 291).[39] Of the things the ritualist should avoid, fish is

37 *PGM* I, 42–43 refers to this spell as being from a certain Pnouthios to Ketyx. Ketyx has been interpreted as referring to a priestly figure. See W Quandr,"Ketyx." *PRE* 21 (1921): 348–49.

38 This spell does not seem to represent a particular Sethian curse. Based on the available evidence, only the Oxyrhynchus fish can be properly identified as religiously abhorrent to followers of Seth. Thus, Darby, *The Gift of Osiris,* 1:389: "The speculation that the Egyptian tombs which portrayed the Oxyrhynchus belonged to followers of Seth, or that they were only of local significance, may be discarded purely on the basis of the widespread geographic and chronologic depiction of the Oxyrhynchus. All of these tombs could not belong to worshippers of Seth."

39 "As for sea-fish, all Egyptians do not abstain from all of them, but from some kinds only; as, for example, the inhabitants of Oxyrhynchus abstain from those that are caught with a hook; for, inasmuch as they revere the fish called oxyrhynchus (the pike), they are afraid that the hook may be unclean. . . The priests, however, abstain from all fish; and on the ninth day of the first month, when every one of the other Egyptians eats a broiled fish in front of the outer door of his house, the priests do not even taste the fish, but burn them up in front of their doors. For this practice they have two reasons, one of which is religious and curious, and I shall discuss it at another time, since it harmonizes with the sacred studies touching Osiris and Typhon; the other is obvious and

separated as unique from "all unclean things" and sexual intercourse, suggesting that fish was especially dangerous or displeasing to the spirit. Upon completing the previous forms of the ritual, the spell-caster is told to recite a chant to adjure the god to heed his request. Notably, the summoner is to chant ". . . send him gentle, gracious, pondering no thoughts opposed to me" (*PGM* I. 321–22). Additionally, the spell-caster requests that the god not be "angry at my sacred chants" (*PGM* I. 322–23) and petitions for protection: "guard that my whole body come to light intact" (*PGM* I. 323–24). These protective measures are in place because if the conjured spirit does not approve of the ritualist, they may lash out against them. Thus, eating fish may have either angered the spirit or, more likely, dissuaded it from engaging the spell-caster at all.

Fish are also used as part of a threat against Osiris as insurance that he will dispense revelatory knowledge to the ritualist: ". . . Come to me, you under the earth, arouse [yourself] for me, great daimon, he of Noun, the subterranean. . . Unless I know what is in the minds of everyone. . .Your belly is eaten by fish, and I will not stop the fish chewing your body with their mouths, nor will the fish shut their mouths" (*PGM* V. 249–81). *PGM* V. 213–303 describes how to make and use a ritual scarab for divination. The spell-caster takes on the persona of the Egyptian god Thoth and adjures Osiris to arise from the underworld to answer his questions. The summoner threatens Osiris by suggesting that if he does not obey the ritualist the rest of his body will be destroyed, not simply his phallus.

Another example of the apotropaic use of fish can be found in *PGM* XII. 365–70:

> Charm for causing separation: On a pot for smoke fish inscribe a spell with a bronze stylus and recite it afterward and put it where they [i.e., your victims] are, where they usually return, repeating at the same time this spell: "I call upon you, god, you who are in the empty air, you who are terrible, invisible, and great, you who afflict the earth and shake the universe, you who love disturbances and hate stability and scatter the clouds from one another. . .

This ritual, which involves engraving a spell to summon a god to torment a victim, is to be performed over a "pot for smoked fish" (ταρίχου ὄστρακον).[40] Since a fish

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commonplace, in that it declares that fish is an unnecessary and superfluous food. . ." (Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, 358B). According to one Egyptian stele of king Piye/Piankhi: "They could not enter the palace because they were not circumcised and eat fish. King Nimlot, however, entered the palace because he was a clean one and did not eat fish. They stood (there) and (but) one entered the palace: (lines 150–53 = Urk. I, 50/16–51/1) See N.-C. Grimal, *La stèle triomphale de Pi('ankh) y au Musée du Caire, JE 48862 et 47086–47089* (PIFAO; Cairo, 1981).

40 Jacco Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites: The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual (100–300 CE)* (Religions in the Greco-Roman World 153; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 136, suggests translating this phrase as "potsherd (of a vessel) for smoked fish".

is not actually being smoked during the ritual, the idea seems to be an extra layer of protection so that the spirit does not turn around and afflict the ritualist. The remnants of the fish in the pot or on the potsherd (and possibly the smell) would have made the spirit aware of the possibility of fumigation. Once again, the spell-caster is calling upon the Osiris myth: "give to him. . .enmity, just as Typhon [= Seth] and Osiris had" (*PGM* XII. 373–74). Yet, the god that is summoned in this spell is not Osiris himself. Since the gods of the Egyptian pantheon and lesser spirit beings were apparently expected to know about such mythology, it is appropriate for the spell-caster to use the Seth-Osiris conflict as a magical trope in the ritual. Thus, fish once again are used as an apotropaic measure against possibly hostile spirits.

In addition to the *PGM,* we also have two examples in the *PDM* that point towards an apotropaic use of fish. The first can be found in *PDM* XIV. 335–55:

> [A spell for making] a woman love a man . . . . You should grind these [ingredients]. You should put them into a clean [vessel]; you should put the oil on top of them one day before the beginning of the lunar month. When the lunar month occurs, you should bring a black Nile fish measuring nine fingers . . . its eye(s) being variegated(?) in color . . . . You should take it [to your] house; you should bring the [fish] up out of the oil; you should tie it by its tail and strip of flax; you should hang it up [by the head on] the vine. . . You should put it in a hidden place or in [your house]. You should spend two more days, reciting to the oil again, making seven days. You should keep it. When you [wish] to make it do its work, you should anoint your phallus and your face and you should lie with the woman to whom you will do it.

The spell-caster is provided with an incantation to speak over the oil which consists of identifying himself as various deities and royal epithets. In addition to the use of fish in the ritual, the mention of the "lake of Wu-poke" deserves attention. Wu-poke is the precinct of Osiris at Abydos. *PDM* XIV. 170–75, for example, refers to this location as the place where the guardian for the "great corpse" of Osiris dwells. The deity being summoned is a goddess based on the feminine singular "you" found in *PDM* XIV. 351–52: "You are the first one, the great one, great of magic, the living uraeus." The goddess is invoked to cause women to fall in love with the spell-caster, but it is unclear whether she does this by means of intermediary spirits or not.[41] The use of fish and the mention of Wu-poke seems

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Additionally: "A potsherd that had been in contact with fish could therefore serve as an appropriate writing medium for a Sethian curse formula" (136 n. 88).

41 A similar spell offered in *PDM XIV,* 355–65 has the goddess called upon as Sakhmet. The goddess is petitioned to send favor and love into the oil of the ritualist and then recite an invocation over a black Nile fish. Combined with this is to be used a "small amulet plant(?)-of-Isis". Again, it is unclear whether the goddess herself will fulfill the magical component for the spell-caster or

to be invoked for the latter. Since the goddess resides in the waters where Osiris' phallus was eaten, she must be feared by other spirit beings. Their disobedience or noncompliance to the spell-caster's whims would therefore put them in danger of facing the goddess's wrath, perhaps a punishment similar to Osiris. Thus, the use of fish in this ritual seems to be an apotropaic threat against the summoned spirit.

The final example of fish being used for apotropaic purposes is found in *PDM* XIV. 875–85. In this ritual, a youth is brought to a high place and has his eyelids painted with a magical ointment so that, when his eyes open, he will see the gods and be able to speak with them. The ointment given is described as follows:

> [The ointment] which you put in the youth's eyes when he goes to any vessel inquiry of the sun: you bring two *buri* fish of the river, both being alive; you burn one of them with vinewood before the sun; you add the blood of the other to it . . . you should spread (?) [it] in his eyes. . . . If you fill your eyes with this drug and look at the sun when it fills the sound-eye, your eyes being open toward it, he reveals himself to you and tells you an answer to everything. Its chief factor is purity. It is more profitable than the youth; it is profitable for you yourself as a person [acting] alone.

Notably, the use of the ointment is given. Its main function is for purity. The specific use of *buri* fish may mean that it was not considered ritually impure to consume or come in contact with. At the same time, the use of fish might have been used in the ritual with the pretense that when the youth or spell-caster opens their eyes and sees the summoned god, it would have prophylactic elements necessary for the encounter to go smoothly.[42]

In the six spells from the *PGM* and *PDM* analyzed above, fish were viewed as having apotropaic power. Such a belief is best understood within the context of ritual purity laws and the Egyptian mythology situated around the god Osiris. Fish were used to pre-emptively nullify antagonistic spiritual encounters and avoided to bring favor to the spell-caster during a summoning. Such views of fish likely influenced the author of the book of Tobit in using fish to ward away the evil spirit Asmodeus.

Spirits of the Dead in Jewish and Greco-Roman Thought

In order to understand Luke's specific post-resurrection narrative choices, it is important now to briefly turn to what ideas of the dead returning were common

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another spiritual assistant sent by her. In a prayer offered to Ptah, Sakhmet, Ptah-Sokar, and Osiris, they are petitioned as follows: "May you listen to me praying every day like the transfigured spirits whom you made so glorious."

42 See n. 28.

during the first century CE. Below I have highlighted the most salient features to consider.

The New Testament authors primarily relied on an "Enochic" etiology for the origins of evil spirits. Jewish legends from the Second Temple period commonly explain that, prior to the flood account of the book of Genesis, angelic spirits (called "Watchers") came to Earth and had sexual relations with human women. As a result of these sexual unions, the women gave birth to giants, who subsequently turned to destroy human beings. God punished the Watchers by binding them in a subterranean prison and causing the giants to kill one another. Upon the death of the giants, however, evil spirits sprang forth from their bodies (1 En. 15:8).[43] Thus, demons, or the "bastard spirits" according to a number of texts from Qumran (e.g., 4Q510 1 4–6), were disembodied spirits that once had physical bodies. Their transient existence was a punishment for crossing the boarders between the divine and human realms. Thus, their desire to inhabit human bodies makes sense. Yet, such a complicated mythos does not tell us about Jewish beliefs of the normative human dead returning as spectral beings.

The Enochic etiology of evil spirits was not necessarily ubiquitous among Jews during this time and it is likely that overlapping and seemingly contradictory beliefs existed among Jews of the Second Temple Period.[44] Josephus, for example, in speaking about the properties of the *Baaras* root says: "With all these attendant risks, it possesses one virtue for which it is prized; for the so-called demons – that is, the spirits of wicked men which enter the living and kill them unless aid is forthcoming – are promptly expelled by this root, if merely applied to the patients" (*J.W.* 7.180–85). Josephus' statement here to the "spirits of wicked men" may be an example of him attending to his Greek audience.[45] Yet, such a conflation of ideas is not uncommon to Jewish thinkers of the first century CE. Philo too parallels demons with the spirits of the dead in his work *On the Embassy to Gaius* (65).[46] Such a belief may be rooted within the Hebrew Bible itself. The

43 Jub. 10:5 and other works such as the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* (e.g., T. Reu. 5:6) along with various works at Qumran (e.g., 4Q510 1 5; 1QapGen II, 1; CD II, 18) attest to a common belief that the Watchers were the fathers of the evil spirits.

44 Gideon Bohak in his contribution to "Demons, Demonology" in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception: Dabbesheth – Dreams and Dream Interpretation*, eds. Hans-Josef Klauck, Volker Leppin, Bernard McGinn, Choon-Leong Seow, Hermann Spieckermann, Barry Dov Walfish, and Eric J. Ziolkowski, Vol. 6 (De Gruyter, 2012), 548 states, however: "These widely-divergent accounts of the demons' ultimate origins should not be seen as conflicting or contradictory, since it is quite clear that ancient Jews believed in many different types of demons, and therefore saw nothing wrong with the proliferation of different etiologies."

45 Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic,* 92 n. 62.

46 On this point see Giovanni B. Bazzana, *Having the Spirit of Christ: Spirit Possession and Exorcism in the Early Christ Groups* (London: Yale University Press, 2020), 79. In his work *On the Giants*, Philo states: "So if you realize that souls and demons and angels are but different names for the same one underlying object, you will cast from you that most grievous burden, the fear of demons or superstition" (4.16).

necromancer in 1 Sam 28 was able to raise the spirit (אֱלֹהִים)[47] of Samuel and it was likely taken for granted that some nebulous remains of the dead existed and could be communicated with.[48] Several midrashim record a common belief that the soul of the dead hovered above the corpse for a period of three (*Genesis Rabbah* 100:7; *Leviticus Rabbah* 18:1) or seven days (*Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, 34). Such beliefs are late and we should be cautious of reading these mentions of spirits back into first century Palestine. Nonetheless, based on the testimonies of Josephus, Philo, and the Hebrew Bible, folkloric beliefs about the dead returning as spirits was not foreign to Luke or his audience.

Greek texts give a wider array of stories and references to the spirits of the dead.[49] In general, they appear as recognizable remnants of their former selves (Homer, *Il.* 23.103–104; *Od.* 11.204–23), sometimes even with the physical indicators of how they died (Vergil, *Aen*. 1.355; Apuleius, *Mei*. 8.8). Additionally, they are able to teleport (Lucian, *Philops*. 27; Pliny 7.25.10; Phlegon, *Book of Marvels* 2.10), similar to Jesus's sudden appearances and disappearances. Sarah Iles Johnston has argued that there are three partially overlapping groups of spirits of dead humans in Greek literature: 1) ἄωροι (the "untimely" dead),[50] 2) αταφοι (the "unburied" dead),[51] and 3) βιαιοθάνατοι (the "violent" dead).[52] These spirits were sometimes called upon in magical spells or curses. Spell-casters made use of such spirits because, as Johnston points out: "the practitioner knew that uninitiated souls would be easier to manipulate because, like these others, they were shut out of the best-protected parts of the Underworld."[53] When not used for magic, however, the spirits themselves could cause havoc on the living. In Homeric and Classical Greek literature, the βιαιοθάνατοι avenge their death by indirect means such as agents. This was usually portrayed as an internal, psychological, attack. Later Greek literature portrays the βιαιοθάνατοι as becoming self-engaged with their vengeance and the attacks are more physical in nature. This progression

47 Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel* (NAC 7; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 268: "In the present instance it seems reasonable to conclude that the medium's words reflected a pagan belief that Samuel had become a "god"—a spirit-being possessing capabilities beyond those of mortals—following his death. The writer, wishing to demonstrate linguistically that she was speaking heretically, employed a plural verb form with the subject ʾĕlōhîm."

48 Some later rabbinic texts also hold to the belief that the spirits of the dead can linger in the world. Thus, *b.* Berakhot 17b–18b records an instance in which a man slept in a graveyard and overheard two spirits talking to each other about their plans to float about the earth. Similarly, *b.* Nidah 17a condemns people who sleep in graveyards "In order that an impure spirit rest upon him – at times it might endanger him." Such a condemnation in the gemara may reflect some kind of necromancy. S. Lowy, "The Motivation of Fasting in Talmudic Literature," JJS 9 (1958): 33–34; See also Aryeh Cohen, ""Do the Dead Know?" The Representation of Death in the Bavli" AJS Review 24.1 (1999): 67 n. 39.

49 For more examples and categories of the dead, see Price, "The 'Ghost' of Jesus," 290–95.

50 LSJ, s.v., "ἄωρος."

51 LSJ, s.v., "ἄτᾰφος."

52 LSJ, s.v., "βῐαιοθάνᾰτος."

53 Johnston, *Restless Dead,* 107.

from passive to active agent likely stems from the development of dualistic thoughts about body and soul within Hellenism.[54] While the αταφοι could be appeased by conducting proper funerary rites, the apotropaic measures used against ἄωροι and βιαιοθάνατοι were varied. Of note, the use of food sacrifices and libations to appease the violent dead are known.[55]

The Narrative Function of Fish in Luke 24:36–43

The necessary elements to produce Luke's rationale for including the post-resurrection details he did can now be considered. Recognizing the patterns in Greco-Roman and Jewish thought, we now turn to the account in Luke 24. When Jesus appears before the disciples, their terror is not rooted in the sudden appearance itself, but because they thought he was a spirit (πνεῦμα). Codex Bezae's variant of "ghost" (φάντασμα) is best explained as an interpretation of the general word πνεῦμα and is quite appropriate. In Judaism during this time, dualistic Greek thought about the body and soul had already permeated Jewish thinking (e.g., Jub. 23:1; 1 En. 22; 4 Ezra 7:76–101; b. Ber. 18b).[56] The nature of Jesus's body was such that, while recognizable, was still different enough to inspire fear. Such a view of the resurrected body is found also in the writings of Paul (1 Cor 15:12–54). Yet, their fear also may tie into the popular conception of the Greek βιαιοθάνατοι. The disciples' terror is thus not borne out of Jesus simply being a phantasm, but a vengeful ghost that had died a violent death. Their abandonment of their leader may have prompted them to fear retribution for their betrayal as was typical of such hostile spirits. Luke's audience may well have been aware of such categories of spirits.

Critical biblical scholarship has often pointed to unique non-Lukan vocabulary and style in this pericope as evidence that Luke was dependant on an earlier tradition.[57] Additionally, there are parallel accounts found in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt 28:16-20; Mark 16:14–18). Strikingly, the Gospel of John (20:19–23) shares a number of word-for-word phrases and other similarities with Luke's account. Thus, as Bovon states: "Luke and John share here not only common

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54 Johnston, *Restless Dead,* 144, 147.

55 Johnston, Restless *Dead,* 47: "we occasionally find references to the use of libations and food to appease the dead in off-hand remarks such as that of Plutarch, who describes the libations that Apollo made after killing Python as being the same as those that people offer to soften the anger of 'daimones whom they call *alastores* and *palamnaioi*'- that is, the dead who seek vengeance for their violent deaths or the supernatural agents who act on behalf of those dead."

56 In Acts 12:14–15, for example, after Peter escapes from prison, he is perceived by Rhoda to be his "angel" (Ὁ ἄγγελός ἐστιν αὐτοῦ). Those who hear Rhoda's initial pronouncement that Peter is at the door accuse of her of being "out of your mind" (Μαίνῃ; Acts 12:15). It may be, as Keener, suggests, that Rhoda or those criticizing her perceive her to be having an ecstatic trance-state. Jesus himself had claimed that those who rise from the dead are like the angels (Luke 20:36), sharing similar sentiments to other Jewish thinkers in the Second Temple Period (e.g., 1 En. 104:4).

57 Bovon, *Luke 3,* 386-387.

memories but also a strong tradition. Of course, they make use of it freely, but they do so with the same respect."[58] These parallels, however, contain dramatic changes of location among other factors, one of which is that Luke is the only author to include the use of eating fish as evidence for Jesus's physical resurrection.

From a surface reading of Luke 24:36–43 Jesus's request to eat something seems to serve the basic purpose of showing he is not a disembodied spirit.[59] Yet, divine beings were not incapable of consuming physical food (Gen 18:6–8; Ps 78:25; Homer, Il. 5:341). Luke's interest in the supernatural extends beyond simply recording miracles, but informs the structure and particular elements within his narrative. Graham Twelftree, for example, has argued that, unlike Mark, who begins Jesus's ministry with powerful displays of exorcism that eventually dwindle in importance, Luke structures his narrative in such a way so that exorcism is seen as an ongoing and important work of Jesus in and through the early Church.[60] Additionally, throughout Luke-Acts we see a number of apparent familiarities with Jewish and Greco-Roman magic.[61] Acts 5:15 and 19:12 , for example, describe the miraculous expectations and uses of shadows (σκιὰ),[62] handkerchiefs (σουδάρια),[63] and aprons (σιμικίνθια).[64] Moreover, Luke's use of the phrase "finger of God" *contra* Matthew's "spirit of God" is meant to mirror the miraculous ministry of Moses and Aaron in Exod 8:19 (cf. Exod 31:18; Deut 9:10; Ps 8:4), a ministry contrasted with Egyptian magic, but also reliant on various *materia magica* nonetheless.[65] Finally, Luke broadens the scope of demonic activity compared to the other Gospels. Twelftree, for example, notes that Luke "has blurred the distinction between demon possession and other kinds of sickness so that in effect all sickness (and healing) is given a demonic and cosmic dimension . . . all healing is defeat of the demonic."[66] Thus, I suggest that the "broiled fish" (Luke 24:42) introduced in Luke's account of this appearance is best understood as part

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58 Bovon, *Luke 3,* 388.
59 cf. Tob 12:19; Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.11.2, Philo, *On Abraham* 118.
60 Graham Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians* (Grand Rapid, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 132.
61 See Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989); Florent Heintz, *Trois Études Préliminaires: Actes 13:6–12; 16:16–19; 19:11–20. Pour Servir À L'élucidation Des Rapports Entre Pratiques Magiques et Monde Démoniaque Dans Le Christianisme Primitif, Mémoire de Spécialisation Inédit* (Geneva: Faculté autonome de théologie protestante, 1991).
62 BDAG, s.v., "σκιὰ." See P. W. Van der Horst, "Peter's Shadow: The Religio-Historical Background of Acts v. 15," NTS 23 (2, 1977): 204–12.
63 BDAG, s.v., "σουδάριον."
64 BDAG, s.v., "σιμικίνθιον." See Craig Keener, *Acts* (New Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: University Press, 2020), 473.
65 E.g., Aaron's Staff (e.g., Exod 7:8), dust (Exod 8:16), and soot (Exod 9:8).
66 Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 154.

of a deliberate narrative choice based on Jewish and Greco-Roman magical views of fish.

Matthew's and Mark's accounts show great reluctance by the disciples to believe it is truly the resurrected Jesus standing before them. Matthew simply says that some of the disciples doubted (28:17). In the long ending of Mark, however, Jesus "rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen" (16:14). This hostile episode regarding the disciples' lack of faith is not foreign to Mark (c.f. 4:40; 6:52; 8:17; 10:5) and it should not be surprising that the other three Gospels soften Jesus's appearance to the eleven. It is interesting, however, that Jerome adds the following conversation between Jesus and the disciples at this point in Mark: "And [the disciples] made excuse, saying: "This age of iniquity and unbelief is under Satan who, through unclean spirits, does not permit the true power of God to be apprehended. Therefore, reveal your righteousness, now'" (*Against Pelagius* 2.15). Regardless of the dating of the traditions from which the long ending of Mark and Jerome are dependent, it is worth considering how Jesus's response of eating fish in Luke affects the reading of this pericope.

While Jesus's consumption of food certainly aided in anti-docetic apologetics, one of its functions was, in addition to proving he was not simply physical (in fact, he had a different *glorified* body), that he was not an *evil* πνεῦμα or φάντασμα. It is worth noting that in Acts, when Paul is confronted by the Pharisees and Sadducees, they debate amongst themselves about the origins of Paul's message: "What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?" (Acts 23:9).[67] Whether the πνεῦμα mentioned in Acts 23 ought to be identified as an evil spirit in their speculation is unclear, though it does open the possibility that such questions may have been circulating. The particular use of fish in the Lukan retelling of this story may have aided readers or opponents to the faith who argued that the risen Jesus was perhaps just a deceptive spirit or daimon. Since fish (especially burned fish) were used within the story of Tobit and Greco-Roman magic to repel evil, Luke's addition of this element in the story is appropriate.

It is notable that it is Jesus who asks for the fish. The disciples are not using the fish as a test against Jesus. Rather, Jesus is presenting it as further evidence that he is not a spirit, and certainly not one that means them any harm. This also reflects a concern of testing God in Luke-Acts (Luke 4:12; Acts 15:10; cf. Luke 10:25; 11:16; 22:28; 23:14; Acts 17:11). Of particular importance is the Beelzebub controversy. Scholars have long noted that the parallel between Matt 12:22–30, 43–45 and Luke 11:14–26 of this story are best explained as both depending

67 See Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary on the Book of Acts*, ed. Harold W. Attridge (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 574–75.

on Mark (3:22–30) and another common source (i.e., Q).[68] Whether Luke's account is meant to be apologetic, missiological, or Christological need not detain us.[69] It is clear that Jesus's opponents wished to classify his miracles as magic.[70] They do not deny that the exorcism is effective, but rather it is the *source* of the power that is contested. One sector of the crowd sought to "test" Jesus by having him perform more miracles. Following this controversy, Jesus rebukes the crowd: "This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah" (Luke 11:29). This rebuke, I argue, influenced Luke's retelling of the post-Easter appearances. Jesus's anger at the crowds for their "magic-on-demand" approach to miracles is to point them towards the greater miracle of his resurrection. Jesus actually reverses this approach in his appearance to the eleven in Luke 24. Jesus's appearance is not to be "tested," but in itself is proof. Thus, Jesus's eating of the fish proves his resurrected body to be legitimate, but it is of his own volition, not the whims of the crowds earlier in Luke.

Still, Luke's inclusion of the use of fish for apotropaic protection serves as a subtle jab to the disciple's superstition. Jesus condescends to this folkloric belief of warding away evil as a way of showing them that they are still not yet fully prepared to go out into the world and proclaim his message. This spiritual immaturity, however, would later be remedied by receiving the Holy Spirit: "But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

Conclusion

By studying the magical beliefs current around the time of Luke's Gospel, it is possible to read the inclusion of Jesus eating fish in Luke 24:36–43 as a literary tactic used, not only for anti-docetic purposes, but for anti-demonic reasons. The main concern for Luke is that Jesus is not viewed as an evil or hostile spirit. Based on the study of Tobit, the magical papyri, and Luke's writing interests and habits, I have argued that Luke likely knew of the apotropaic function of fish and used it purposefully in his narrative retelling of Christ's post-Easter appearances.

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68 For a brief bibliographic history of this dependence, see François Bovon, *Luke 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51–19:27*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. Donald S. Deer (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 115 n. 5.

69 Josef Ernst, *Das Evangelium Nach Lukas: Übersetzt Und Erklärt* von Josef Ernst (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1977), 373.

70 Hence Celsus' argument that "It was by magic that he was able to do the miracles" (*Contra Celsum* 1.6).

Participating in the Ministry of the Cross: A Three-Dimensional, Relational View of Atonement

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Abstract

This paper correlates the objective, subjective, and classic/cosmic dimensions of atonement with (1) Christ's threefold ministry as high priest, apostle/prophet, and king and (2) Christ's self-identification as the way, the truth, and the life in relation to the Father (cf. John 14:6). Rather than presenting a novel atonement theory, this paper innovatively integrates and synthesizes various dimensions of atonement and relates them to the life and ministry of the church today. This paper argues that in union with Christ through the Holy Spirit according to the will of the Father, the church participates in the priestly confession of sin (the way of objective atonement), the embodied apostolic and prophetic expression of divine love (the truth of subjective atonement), and the royal redemptive victory over sin and death (the life of classic/cosmic atonement) for the sake of the world and to the glory of God.

"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead" (Phil 3:10 NRSV).

Introduction

While overly Christocentric and crucicentric approaches have characterized evangelical atonement theologies,[1] this paper aims to clarify the ministry of Christ on the cross with an integrated view of the objective, subjective, and classic/cosmic dimensions of this ministry so that the church can approach participation in Christ's life and ministry in more theologically appropriate ways—that is, more

1 See Steven M. Studebaker, *The Spirit of Atonement: Pentecostal Contributions and Challenges to the Christian Traditions*, Systematic Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology, (London: T&T Clark, 2021), 1–2, 19, 56, 200; cf. Clark H. Pinnock, "Salvation by Resurrection," *Ex Auditu: An International Journal of Theological Interpretation* 9 (1993): 1.

faithfully. Put differently, this paper seeks to view the cross of Christ from a Trinitarian theological perspective that sees the ministry of the cross as the actions of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in united harmony rather than a conflict and resolution of relations within the Trinity. Since the church consists of the ambassadors of Christ who share in his ministry of reconciliation of the world to God (not God to the world; cf. 2 Cor 5:11–21; Eph 2:16; Col 1:20), then the ministry of the cross should coherently fit within this broader salvation activity and theology rather than being the exception. Therefore, rather than presenting a novel atonement theory, this paper innovatively integrates and synthesizes various dimensions of atonement in a three-dimensional, relational view, especially regarding the ministry of the cross. This view helps inform the life and ministry of the church in the midst of present hardship yet in light of Christ's victory. It argues that in union with Christ through the Holy Spirit according to the will of the Father, the church participates in the priestly confession of sin (the way of objective atonement), the embodied apostolic and prophetic expression of divine love (the truth of subjective atonement), and the royal redemptive victory over sin and death (the life of classic/cosmic atonement) for the sake of the world and to the glory of God.

This paper begins by defining atonement relationally (rather than forensically or transactionally) and considering an appropriate method for constructing and considering a coherent and practical theology of atonement. The need for a relational orientation according to a coherent Trinitarian theology is highlighted in this section. Next the objective, subjective, and classic/cosmic dimensions of atonement are considered respectively in relation to the high priestly, apostolic and prophetic, and royal aspects of Christ's ministry as well as Jesus' self-identification as the way, the truth, and the life in relation to the Father (cf. John 14:6). After establishing the need for the life and ministry of the church to participate in the life and ministry of Christ, each correlation above is discussed in terms of Christ's ministry of reconciliation, including the ministry of the cross, and the church's life and ministry in union with Christ. The paper concludes with some brief comments regarding the notion of a substitutionary dimension of Christ's life and ministry with suggestions for further study.

The Task of Integration for Atonement: A Methodology for the Cross

Rather than an appeasement of a vengeful God or a satisfaction of needs within God, Christian atonement is relational reparation or reconciliation.[2] As James

2 More relational views of atonement with God are not a modern or even a Christian notion. See, for example, the Qumran community (or *Yahad*) view of humility and the work of God's Spirit in atonement in 1QS3.4–9. See Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Franciso: HarperCollins, 1999), 129. This view is not unlike the later Christian theology of *theosis*. Cf. Michael P. Knowles, *The Unfolding Mystery of the Divine Name: The God of Sinai in Our Midst* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 215–17.

Beilby and Paul Eddy note, the English word *atonement* "refers to a reconciled state of 'at-one-ness' between parties that were formerly alienated in some manner."[3] Or, as Colin Gunton says, atonement is "the reconciliation between God and the world which is the heart of Christian teaching."[4] Likewise, Steven Studebaker says, "atonement is the fundamental work of redemption," and the fundamental meaning of atonement is *reconciliation*.[5] In other words, redemption is ultimately aimed at reconciliation, which is the telos of the overarching scope of atonement.

In *The Spirit of Atonement*, Studebaker articulates a Pentecostal theology of atonement, which places the death and resurrection of Christ within the broader, ongoing work of the Spirit in creation and redemption.[6] Accordingly, since "Pentecost is a critical revelatory telos and participatory nexus in the broader story of redemption. . . . Pentecost, not the cross, is the *telos* of redemption."[7] At the same time, Studebaker concludes that further consideration is warranted regarding "the nature of death both for Christ and the Christian and the Holy Spirit's place in it."[8] Therefore, as noted above, this paper will focus on Christ's ministry of the cross, which includes his death, and explore the ways the church may participate in this part of the ministry of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit according to the will of the Father. This does not constitute a comprehensive study of the nature of death according to Christ, but it may contribute towards this significant theological task by recognizing certain salient points.

Integrating the various dimensions of atonement theology is one of the key tasks in articulating and implementing the ministry of the cross of Christ. As Paul Fiddes notes: "no theory of atonement can be entirely subjective or objective, but there will be a shifting balance between the two elements in different understandings of atonement. . . . [T]he question to be asked [of a given view of atonement] is how well it integrates the two elements."[9] I agree that a well-balanced integration is necessary, but as noted above, I think that more than just the objective and subjective dimensions of atonement should be balanced and integrated.

There have been many approaches to integration within theologies of atonement, which Joshua McNall situates on a continuum ranging between the extremes

3 James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, eds., *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, Spectrum Multiview Books (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 9; cf. Robert S. Paul, *The Atonement and the Sacraments* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1960), 20.

4 Colin E. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality, and the Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 2.

5 Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, ix, 8. Cf. Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989), 3–4; Eleonore Stump, *Atonement*, Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 7.

6 See Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, esp. ch. 2, "Pentecost," 17–39.

7 Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 17–18.

8 Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 202.

9 Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 26. Gunton argues that no one image, metaphor, or interpretation of the cross encapsulates its fullness (see *Actuality of Atonement*).

of reductionism and relativism.[10] In his view, reductionism produces a "defensive hierarchy [that] reduces the multifaced nature of the atonement by elevating a single model as somehow most important."[11] On the other hand, relativism produces a "disconnected plurality" in which various views are all deemed important yet there is a failure to "relate . . . different models of atonement in *particular* ways."[12] McNall aims to reintegrate views of atonement in an ordered yet not rigid manner so that when they are viewed as parts of a whole, they faithfully and truly image Christ and inspire worship.[13] Accordingly, he discusses and arranges four of the most famous models in relation to one another such that the feet of Christ are represented by recapitulation, the heart by penal substitution, the head by Christus Victor, and the hands by moral influence.[14]

As viewers of the Christoform mosaic of atonement (according to McNall's configuration or any other), we must also acknowledge that the position from which we view it will affect our perception.[15] That is, our perspective can skew the image even if the pieces are ordered correctly. At this point the metaphor breaks down to some degree since a mosaic is basically two-dimensional and the love of God revealed in Christ is infinitely multi-dimensional (cf. Eph 3:18). Yet a proper orientation (or posture) is still required to begin to see the manifest love of God in and through Christ, including his work on the cross.[16] As Andrew Purves says: "Theology is an expression of our baptismal identity in and of our belonging to God."[17] And as such it must be relational (which includes both experience and thoughtful reflection), rather than an attempt to speak about God "at some kind of distance, remotely, neutrally."[18] Thus, a faithful theology of atonement must be based on and in one's relationship with God and should rightly keep the

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10 See Joshua M. McNall, *The Mosaic of Atonement: An Integrated Approach to Christ's Work* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019), 19–21, 310.

11 McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 20.

12 McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 20; emphasis original. He says Joel Green's kaleidoscopic view of atonement (in Beilby and Eddy, *Nature of the Atonement*, 157–85) helpfully moves away from polemical reductionism, but is too relativistic.

13 McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 21–22, 25, 309–10. Similarly, Purves says atonement is "surely a mystery to be adored and received rather than a theological problem to be picked apart, analyzed and solved." Andrew Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement: Conversations with John McLeod Campbell, H. R. Mackintosh and T. F. Torrance* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015), 13.

14 His rationale for selecting these models is not that they are the only viable ones, but simply because they are well-known, well-attested, and therefore presumably possible to integrate in some manner (cf. McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 19). More specific, sustained attention to the reasons for selecting particular models would be helpful in a monograph-length treatment.

15 It is a mark of postmodern methodology to have "greater recognition of the situated nature of the theologian." Dan R. Stiver, "Theological Method," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 179.

16 This is not to say that there cannot be a multiplicity of perspectives for we each see in part and know in part (cf. 1 Cor 13:9–12).

17 Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 18.

18 Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 18.

relationship of the Father and Son in the Spirit as a central focal point. In this way we can begin to "know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge" (Eph 3:19; cf. 2 Cor 5:16).[19]

The need for a relational perspective of atonement is determined by the relationship of the Father and the Son, for if we approach the Father in and through the Son (cf. John 14:6), then a non-relational orientation to the theology of atonement would be our own work rather than a faithful way to speak of the work of Christ in the Spirit. Purves argues that the result of "the relationship between Jesus Christ, who is the incarnate Son, and the Father . . . is the atonement, for in the incarnate Son the relation between God and humankind is savingly established."[20] Rather than a forensic, legal, economic, or abstract undertaking, "the atonement is presented as a kinetic, relational and personal event entirely worked out through the relationship between the Father and the incarnate Son."[21] It is this relationship that, in my view, stands at the centre of atonement—the reconciliation of humanity to God—and therefore also the life and ministry of the church. This might seem to veer towards the reductionism of a defensive hierarchy. However, since God is the Creator of all else, the relationally communing being of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit surely stands at the centre of all creation and permeates all else (cf. Col 1:15–20).[22] At the same time, the multidimensional aspects and effects of the Trinitarian Father-Son in the Spirit relationship should be considered in both ordering and orienting a theologically coherent and practically participatory view of atonement.

As a "view" of atonement, one of the aims of this paper is to regard the ministry of the cross of Christ from a particular relational orientation: a Trinitarian theological perspective.[23] As Purves says, "the actual practice of God in human history" should inform "a Trinitarian practice through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit."[24] From a relational perspective, the ways that the life and ministry of the church participate in the life and ministry of Christ become more clear. Purves argues that ministry is "a participation in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, on earth, in heaven, and as the one who will come again."[25] Similarly, Stephen Seamands argues that the ministry of the church "is the ministry *of* Jesus Christ, the

19 Cf. Knowles, *Unfolding Mystery*, 21.

20 Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 9, 253–54.

21 Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 11. Similarly, Studebaker says that atonement is organic, relational, participatory, personal, transformational, and Trinitarian, not forensic or extrinsic. Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 40, 50, 54.

22 Cf. Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 55.

23 Other less relational perspectives on atonement might include cultic/forensic, legal/juridical, or economic/transactional. Not all these views are theologically compatible.

24 Andrew Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), xxi; cf. Andrew Purves, "The Trinitarian Basis for a Christian Practical Theology," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 2, no. 2 (1998): 222–39.

25 Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, xvi.

Son, *to* the Father, *through* the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the church and the world."[26] As a crucial aspect of the life and ministry of Christ, the ministry of reconciliation (atonement)—including the ministry of the cross—is not an aspect of the active being of Christ from which the church is excluded.[27]

The operational outworking of a given view of atonement is important because the work of Christ is never mere theory or abstraction.[28] The work of Christ is not just actions done to us or for us, but actions in which we now participate in union with Christ. As Purves says, the life and ministry of the church happens "in union with Christ, who is both God's word of address to us and the fitting human response to God."[29] In order to form a cohesively ordered image of Christ, each dimension of Christ's ministry of the cross must not only be integrated in some way on a theoretical level (the way we view it), it must also be operationally actualized in the life and ministry of church in some way (the way we participate in it).[30] Rather than remaining disconnected from daily life in Christ, theological theory should inform the praxis of the church.

Objective, Subjective, and Cosmic Dimensions of Atonement and the Ministry of Christ

McNall argues that it is important to recognize the particular *functions* of each interpretation of Christ's work within "God's masterpiece of redemption."[31] Zooming out from individual theories, Beilby and Eddy categorize various atonement images and theories from throughout church history into three broad paradigms: objective, subjective, and classic/dramatic.[32] Objective theories include satisfaction (Anselm), penal substitution (Calvin), and moral government (Grotius). Subjective theories include moral influence (Abelard) and moral example (Socinus). And classic theories include recapitulation and ransom theories (e.g., Irenaeus and Athanasius) and *Christus Victor* (Aulén). But rather than assigning particular models or theories certain roles (as McNall does), taking these paradigms as overarching categorical dimensions for ordering and orienting a balanced, integrated, coherent, and practical view of atonement is more helpful. Not all the *theories* in each categorical dimension will be compatible with others, but each *dimension* is vital to a properly balanced, theologically coherent, and practically applicable

26 Stephen Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005), 9–10, 15, 20; emphasis original.

27 "Christ's being and action are one reality" (Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 9).

28 Cf. Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 18.

29 Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, xx.

30 This claim is in line with the "practical turn" Stiver identifies in postmodern theology which "makes theology a practical and not simply a speculative, theoretical discipline." Stiver, "Theological Method," 183.

31 McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 311.

32 See Beilby and Eddy, *Nature of the Atonement*, 11–21.

view of atonement. Beilby and Eddy also orient these paradigmatic categories according to particular focal points or trajectories. Objective theories are oriented primarily towards God the Father, often viewed as addressing a necessary demand of or need in God.[33] Subjective theories are aimed at humans and creation, emphasizing human needs and the changes inspired or effected in us by atonement.[34] Finally, classic or dramatic theories are mainly directed at Satan or sin, usually highlighting divine conflict against and victory over the powers of evil under which humanity was enslaved.[35]

Although this third dimension has been called *classic* (because of its early forms of articulation in the "recapitulation" and "ransom" theories)[36] or *dramatic* (because of "the active and victorious intervention of God in rescuing and saving us"),[37] I suggest that *cosmic* may be a more fitting term since it carries spiritual connotations and is etymologically rooted in the Greek word κόσμος, which is sometimes used in the New Testament to refer to a realm of conflict in which we live amidst hardships yet over which Christ is victorious. For example, Jesus tells his disciples (before his death), "I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world [τῷ κόσμῳ] you face persecution; but take courage, I have overcome the world [τὸν κόσμον]!"[38] Thus, the cosmic dimension of atonement describes not only Jesus' victory over sin but places it within the broader context of his life and ministry while recognizing the paradoxical presence of peace in the midst of persecution, suffering, and even death. These three dimensions of atonement theologies—objective, subjective, and cosmic—can also be described as the various trajectories of Jesus' ministry to the Father, for humanity and creation, and over against sin and Satan, which are all carried out in and through the Holy Spirit.

Additionally, these three theological dimensions and ministerial trajectories can be aligned with three key facets of the ministry of Christ, also known as the *triplex munus* or threefold office of Christ: priest, prophet, and king.[39] According to T. F. Torrance, the priestly office of Christ corresponds to his passive obedience in the cultic-forensic aspects of redemption.[40] The prophetic office corresponds to the ontological or incarnational aspect of redemption in the assumption of

33 Beilby and Eddy, *Nature of the Atonement*, 14.

34 Beilby and Eddy, *Nature of the Atonement*, 18.

35 Beilby and Eddy, *Nature of the Atonement*, 12.

36 Beilby and Eddy, *Nature of the Atonement*, 12–13.

37 T. F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 53.

38 Also note that *this* refers to the fact that the disciples will be scattered and leave Jesus alone, yet he is not alone because the Father is with him (see John 16:32).

39 Cf. Torrance, *Atonement*, 58–59. Torrance also suggests some ways that Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed, Greek Orthodox, and Roman Catholic theologies have emphasized various dimensions (55).

40 Torrance, *Atonement*, 50–60.

humanity.[41] And the kingly office corresponds to Jesus' active obedience in the dramatic aspects of redemption.[42] Similarly, I think the offices or facets of Christ's ministry may be helpfully correlated to the foci/trajectories identified by Beilby and Eddy above. However, it is important to note that any such categories and their correlations should not be too rigidly compartmentalized as if Christ were constantly switching between different modes of operation or as if any one dimension could be carried out without the others. Instead, speaking of the trajectories and offices of Christ's ministry is a way of focusing on certain dimensions of a unified whole with the goal of integrated balance in view.

Altering Torrance's correlations to some extent, I suggest that Christ's high priestly ministry on the cross enacts the perfect human confession of sin to the Father, constituting a key objective dimension of atonement. As a key subjective dimension of atonement, Christ's apostolic and prophetic ministry comprises the incarnate expression of divine presence, love, and forgiveness, calling us to reconciliation, which is embodied in its most naked and raw form on the cross. And as an aspect of the cosmic dimension of atonement, the royal messianic ministry of Christ ransoms and redeems humans from evil, sin, and death into freedom and life in Christ through his body and blood, broken and poured out on the cross. These descriptions focus on Christ's ministry of the cross, but these ministerial dimensions are not limited to the cross; for example, the resurrection of Christ and Pentecost should also be considered for a more comprehensive description.

Therefore, none of these descriptions should be viewed as full or definitive. For instance, Christ's high priestly ministry should not be limited to the confession of human sin on the cross; other aspects of the life and ministry of Christ should be considered as well, such as the cleansing of the temple (cf. Matt 21:12–17; Mark 11:15–19; Luke 19:45–48; John 2:13–16). And noting the combination of the apostolic and prophetic offices above, none of these should be viewed as fully separable from the others: Christ (the Messiah) is king, apostle, prophet, and high priest. And he fulfills all these offices or ministries as fully God, fully human through the power of the Spirit (hypostatic union).[43] Each of these areas of ministry and dimensions of atonement will be discussed further below, but for now *Table 1* sums up and compares my correlations alongside Torrance's:

41 Torrance, *Atonement*, 50–60.

42 Torrance strictly matches these offices with particular Hebrew words (*kipper* to priest, *goel* to prophet, and *paddah* to king). However, in my view, these lexical pairings too rigidly constrain the semantic range of the Hebrew terms, even though they may have some heuristic value. Cf. Torrance, *Atonement*, 50–60.

43 Robert Jenson thinks many Western Christians have become "secret Nestorians" who think of Christ's two natures too discretely or separately so that the oneness of the person of Christ is lost. Robert W. Jenson, "How Does Jesus Make a Difference?" in *Essentials of Christian Theology*, ed. William C. Placher (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 185.

Table 1: The Ministry of Christ

Torrance's Reformed *Triplex Munus* View			**Three-Dimensional, Relational View**		
Office or Ministry	**Dimension of *Redemption***	**Focal Point or Trajectory**	**Office or Ministry**	**Dimension of *Reconciliation***	**Focal Point or Trajectory**
Priest	*Cultic-forensic*	*Passive obedience*	High Priest	*Perfect human confession*	*Objective The Father*
Prophet	*Ontological or incarnational*	*Assumption of humanity*	Apostle/ Prophet	*Incarnate expression of God's love*	*Subjective Humanity/ Creation*
King	*Dramatic*	*Active obedience*	Royal Saviour	*Liberating redemption*	*Cosmic Sin/Satan*

Much like the two-sided balance between objective and subjective theories that Fiddes calls for, Torrance's schema emphasizes two trajectories: humanward (in the prophetic, incarnational assumption of humanity) and Godward (in the priestly passive and kingly active obedience of Christ). The kingly active trajectory touches on the sinward trajectory or cosmic dimension that I have named, but it is primarily described in relation to the will of the Father. This is not necessarily inaccurate, but it may influence an imbalance, particularly regarding the agency of the Persons of the Trinity. Torrance's view is firmly rooted in Reformed tradition and accordingly sees both the passive and active obedience of Christ as imputed to us rather than inferred or infused.[44] However, I find the notion of Christ's passive obedience problematic since, as Studebaker says, Jesus' "death on the cross was not a passive act."[45] And Studebaker also brings much-needed attention to the agency of the Spirit in creation, redemption, and incarnation.[46] Note also that Torrance's Reformed view describes each office as an aspect of *redemption*, while my three-dimensional, relational view considers dimensions of *reconciliation*, which

44 See T. F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 90; cf. Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, 74. The problem here is that "[i]mputed righteousness does not change anything in believers in Christ" (Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 58). I view the righteousness of God as an essential to the new nature of human beings who are new creations *in* Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:17).

45 Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 69; cf. Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 74.

46 See Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 40.

is a more broad and explicitly relational concept that, in terms of our relationship with God, includes redemption.[47]

The Ministry of the Cross in the Life and Ministry of Christ and the Church

For followers of Christ, the necessity of participating in Christ's ministry of the cross is made explicit by Jesus himself in the synoptic Gospels: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23; cf. Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34). Note that, in Luke's version, this is a daily, ongoing undertaking, and it begins before the crucifixion itself. Thus, Jesus' ministry of the cross is not limited to literal crucifixion, but rather is part of the lifestyle of self-sacrificial submission to the will of God that involves crucifixion and resurrection. While death and resurrection are literal events in the life of Christ, they are also metaphorical in terms of Christ followers' repeated, ongoing submission to the Father in Christ through the power of the Spirit. We endure "deaths" every day, and we enter into new life in Christ. While the cross may signify suffering in general at the point that Jesus gives this call in the Gospel narratives, it takes on particular, definitive Christological meaning after the historical events of the death and resurrection of Christ, with implications for the church as the body of Christ. Therefore, the call of Christ to enter into the ministry of the cross is an invitation to have suffering and death transformed from meaningless oppression to Christ-centred fellowship, which always has the hope of joy and glory set before it (cf. Col 1:27; Heb 12:2).[48]

As stated earlier, the ministry of Christ, including the ministry of the cross, does not involve appeasing a vengeful God or satisfying an otherwise lacking need in God (for blood or anything else).[49] Instead, the ministry of the cross is a costly part of the ministry of reconciliation. In 2 Cor 5:16–21, Paul explicitly describes Christ's ministry of reconciliation in which we now participate:

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47 Torrance provides attention to atonement as justification, reconciliation, and redemption in separate chapters (*Atonement*, 97–200). While I agree with his description of reconciliation as atonement in the "fullest personal sense" (137), as the "pure act of God's love" (145), and as "the full outworking of the hypostatic union" (149), I disagree with the forensic, juridical, and transactional basis he posits for this reconciliation. Note also that Torrance ends his discussion of redemption with explicit attention to reconciliation (198–200). I argue that the relational nature of atonement as reconciliation is both the origin and telos (cf. Rev 1:8, 17–18; 21:6; 22:13; Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 8).

48 As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "By His passion and death on the cross Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can henceforth configure us to him and unite us with his redemptive passion" (Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori: Liguori, 1994), §1505).

49 A full treatment of the notion of Christ (the Son) appeasing or satisfying God (the Father) is not within the scope of the paper. For a view of Christ's crucifixion that addresses such penal views and does not involve satisfaction of a retributive notion of justice see Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, ch. 4, "Crucifixion," 56–76.

> From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

It is important to note that God (the Father) is not being reconciled *to us* through Christ (as a retributive notion of atonement would suggest); instead, Paul repeatedly stresses that we and the world have been reconciled *to God* through Christ (cf. Col 1:20). Put differently, the reconciliation with God is necessary because of a problem in humans, not a deficit within God. Reconciliation with God happens through Christ because there is no other way for us to be freed from sin, begin to understand God's love, and be able to repent and approach God appropriately in order for relational reconciliation to happen, for communion to be restored. As Robert Jenson says, "humankind is in fact alienated from God and . . . the work of the incarnation . . . is to reconcile us to him. . . . [I]n Scripture it is never God who is reconciled to us; it is always God who reconciles us to himself."[50] This properly oriented view of reconciliation places the ministry of the cross within the ministry of the incarnation according to the relationship of the Father and Son in the Spirit. That is, through Christ we come to relate to the Father according to the way the Son has always communed with the Father in the Spirit—not through punitive legal transactions or economic exchanges, but in the eternal communion of love and life.[51] As Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Therefore, each dimension and its ministerial correlation will be discussed as an aspect of Christ's self-identification and his invitation to commune with the Father in him through the Spirit.

The Way: Objective Atonement & Christ Our High Priest as Perfect Confession

Christ is not the instrumental mechanism of the Father's forgiveness, as some

50 Jenson, "How Does Jesus Make a Difference?" 203.

51 McLeod Campbell insists that we stand before God not on legal terms, but on the filial terms of restored relationship. John McLeod Campbell, *The Nature of the Atonement and Its Relation to Remission of Sins and Eternal Life*, ed. James B. Torrance (Cambridge: MacMillan, 1856; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 145.

objectively imbalanced or misoriented views claim.[52] Rather, as our high priest, Christ on the cross is and embodies the perfect human confession of sin to the Father. As John McLeod Campbell says, the Son takes the form of the "perfect confession of our sins" to the Father.[53] This is an essential yet at times neglected aspect of the objective dimension of atonement directed toward the Father. Torrance similarly describes both Christ's high priesthood and apostleship as confession and witness:

> In this particular passage [Heb 3:1–6] the work of Christ as Apostle and High Priest, both in the sense of "the Son over the House," is described in terms of confession, *homologia*, a word which occurs in three other passages (3:1; 4:14; 10:23). In each case it sets forth primarily the confession made by the High Priest as he enters within the veil. It is the confession of our sin before God and the confession of God's righteous judgement upon our sin. As Apostle Christ bears witness for God, that He is Holy. As High Priest He acknowledges that witness and says Amen to it. Again as Apostle of God He confesses the mercy and grace of God, His will to pardon and reconcile. As High Priest He intercedes for [humans], and confesses them before the face of God.[54]

The apostolic dimension will be addressed later, but for now Christ's high priestly confession of sin should be understood as undertaken on our behalf by Christ so that we can subsequently participate in his perfect confession to the Father. As Studebaker says, "Christ's priestly service . . . is not retributive, but restorative."[55] Hebrews later says Jesus is "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb 12:2). Hence, a crucial aspect of the faith that Christ pioneers or leads us into is perfect confession and true repentance.

While this aspect of Christ's high priestly ministry is directed towards the Father, that does not mean that the Father—or the relationship of the Son and the Father—would be lacking something without such a confession. In terms of

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52 See Thomas R. Schreiner, "Penal Substitution View," in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, ed. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, Spectrum Multiview Books (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 67–98; cf. Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 57–58. Along with T. F. Torrance, here I follow C. H. Dodd's interpretation of the ἱλασμός and ἱλάσκομαι word group in the NT (e.g., Heb 2:17; 1 John 4:17) as merciful purification, cleansing, or expiation rather than propitiation as Leon Morris argues. See C. H. Dodd, "*hilaskesthai*, its Cognates, Derivatives, and Synonyms in the Septuagint," *Journal of Theological Studies* 32 (1931): 352–60; Leon Morris, "The Use of *hilaskesthai*, etc. in Biblical Greek," *Expository Times* 62 (1951): 227–33.

53 McLeod Campbell, *Nature of the Atonement*, 118.

54 T. F. Torrance, *Royal Priesthood: A Theology of Ordained Ministry*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 12. However, as noted above, I disagree with Torrance regarding some aspects of Christ's high priesthood.

55 Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 71.

God's eternal being, he does not need human confession any more than he needs human existence. However, our communing relationship with him, which he deeply desires, cannot rightly, properly, and fully be restored without an appropriate confession of sin: confession is a necessity of relational reconciliation. Pretending sin did not happen is not righteous or appropriate, so confession involves agreement with the Father's righteous judgement on sin: it must be overcome and removed. Thus, confessing sin and thereby entering into restored relationship takes sin seriously yet does not allow the relationship to be conditioned by it.

Significantly, God's forgiveness is not predicated upon confession—either Christ's or ours in Christ.[56] But it is, somewhat paradoxically, only through a proper understanding of our sin that we can more fully understand, experience, and live in the forgiveness of the Father. When Jesus says, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34),[57] surely the Father's knowledge or memory is not what Jesus is calling into question, as if God is unable to see something Jesus can or as if he needs reminding. Rather, the statement is a type of dramatic irony that *reveals to us* that we do not truly know what we are doing: we do not even recognize much less properly understand sin, even as it involves the torture and murder of the Son of God. Mercifully, the more fully we understand what we are being forgiven for (sin), the more fully we appreciate God's forgiveness and the more fully we are reconciled to him. Therefore, the end result of a proper confession of sin is the worship of God in communion with God.

In terms of our participation in the cruciform confession of sin, the proper effect is never shame nor is it perpetual guilt and remorse. Instead, we move through appropriate guilt and remorse through Christ, who absorbs sin and enables our repentance not only to a state of but also to an experience of restored connection to the Father.[58] As a "holy priesthood" (1 Pet 2:4–5), we may also (along with the Father, in a sense) receive others' confessions (cf. Jas 5:16). This is a serious responsibility to be carried out in sacred confidentiality as we trust in the Father's forgiveness and healing. The other effect of confession is that when we more deeply understand the evil, alienating devastation of sin, we are more powerfully motivated by love not to cause more damage. Moreover, we will also take the alienating damage of sin in the lives of others and the world at large more seriously. By confessing sin in Christ, we participate in his death which frees us from continuing to live in sin (cf. Rom 6:1–4). Thus, Christ's high priestly

56 Cf. McLeod Campbell, *Nature of the Atonement*, 45.

57 Although this verse has a dubious textual origin (being absent from a variety of important early witnesses), Metzger believes that it was retained and later included because of its authentic origin as words of Christ. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on The Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (Fourth Revised Edition)*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; United Bible Societies, 1994), 154.

58 Cf. McLeod Campbell, *Nature of the Atonement*, 118.

confession of sin is both liberating and restorative, while empowering and entrusting us with the ministry of reconciliation, including the cross.

The Truth: Subjective Atonement & Christ Our Apostle and Prophet as Incarnate Expression

As the Word made flesh (cf. John 1:14), Jesus is the incarnate expression of divine presence, love, and forgiveness, inviting us to reconciliation. The apostolic and prophetic ministry of the incarnate Son is embodied in its most naked and raw form on the cross. Michael Gorman puts it well: "Christ's death for us both *demonstrates* and *defines* divine love. This divine love is the love of the Father who sends in love, the Son who dies in love, and the Spirit who produces the fruit of love in those hearts he inhabits."[59] Once again, this incarnate message of love is the message of the Father's love to humanity, not the message of the Son's love for us which also changes the heart of the Father.[60] As Seamands says, "Jesus was merely revealing what has always been."[61] Or in Gorman's words: "the cross is the demonstration of God's love and of the Son's love, both of which become real by the action of their one Spirit."[62] And as McLeod Campbell says, "the atonement must be the form of the manifestation of the forgiving love of God, not its cause."[63] Therefore, the death of Christ is not instrumental in terms of conditioning the Father's love for us or his stance towards us; rather, it is part of God's incarnate expression of love.

However, in keeping with the theme of the revelation of divine identity in apostolic and prophetic ministry, Christ's death is instrumental in our understanding of God's love, for we would not be able to properly understand the Father's love without the Son's death. Referring to Matt 11:27, Purves says that "the ontological relation between the Father and Son in being and act [is] the sole ground of revelation and salvation."[64] The Apostle John says, "We know love by this, that he [Jesus] laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16). And again, "God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9). Divine self-revelation in the midst of sin takes its most extreme form on the cross, and it addresses a human need: we cannot come to know God through our own devices. Instead, it is always the gracious

59 Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 73; emphasis original; see also his discussion of avoiding patripassianism (8).

60 Purves paraphrases key problematic points in Calvin's writing thus: "for Christ's sake the Father has a change of heart, looking on us now with complete acceptance and love." Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, 121; cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (2 vols. London: James Clarke, 1962), 2.16.16; 3.2.24. In my view, positing a change of disposition within the Father but not the Son is not coherent Trinitarian theology.

61 Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God*, 60.

62 Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 74. Cf. John 5:19; 10:30; 17; Matt 11:27; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3.

63 McLeod Campbell, *Nature of the Atonement*, 45.

64 Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 22.

act of divine self-revelation through which we come to rightly know God.[65] It might be objected that such a brutal crucifixion is not necessary for us to know God's love.[66] Yet this reasoning—which is myopic at best and arrogant or ignorant at worst—fails to account for the depth of our need and the severity of our brokenness. Even among human relationships, it becomes clear to us who really loves us when we are suffering: we know those who suffer *with* us and *for* us truly love us the most. Therefore, God with us in suffering and death demonstrates that God's love is not removed and distant, but personal and intimate.

Similar to the confession of sin, there is a sort of paradoxical relationship between our brokenness and God's self-revelation of his character and love. Michael Knowles says that "divine revelation comes not because of [our] fidelity, but rather in light of its absence."[67] Accordingly, the "shocking good news" is that "unconstrainable divine mercy meets, but is not caused by, human need."[68] Thus, the message of divine love and grace embodied and proclaimed by Christ is the natural expression of the "exact imprint of God's very being" (Heb 1:3) that meets us in our profoundly broken need, but is not caused by our need since it is fundamentally God being God with us (cf. Matt 1:23). "Moreover," says Knowles, "given that it is God's nature to be merciful and forgiving, and to demonstrate saving compassion to those who are oppressed and broken, human failure provides the necessary backdrop for such qualities to emerge."[69] This is a truly redeeming characteristic of Christ's apostolic and prophetic ministry: the revelation of divine mercy, forgiveness, and saving compassion is not in spite of our failures but because of them. Again, God's mercy is not caused by human failure, but mercy is revealed most starkly in the midst of failure. Surely the murder of the Son of God is the rock bottom of human failure; yet in this ignorant atrocity God's love and mercy are revealed in their fullness through Christ on the cross.

As with the high priesthood of Christ, the apostolic and prophetic ministry of Christ inspires worship. As Knowles says, "it is precisely God's revelation of his gracious character that gives rise to worship."[70] And in terms of our participation in the apostolic and prophetic ministry of Christ, it seems obvious that in accordance with apostolic and prophetic ministry, the evangelism, preaching, teaching, and pastoring of the church are clear callings, all of which should reveal Christ and edify others with the love of God (cf. Eph 4:11–13). But before we participate in the expression of God's love, we must first experience and know God's love.

65 Cf. Knowles, *Unfolding Mystery*, 34.
66 See Torrance's objections to a student's paper describing "the death of Christ simply as a demonstration of the love of God" (quoted in McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 187).
67 Knowles, *Unfolding Mystery*, 46.
68 Knowles, *Unfolding Mystery*, 46.
69 Knowles, *Unfolding Mystery*, 46.
70 Knowles, *Unfolding Mystery*, 46.

Seamands calls "joyful intimacy" the "foundation of Trinitarian ministry."[71] Essentially, this means that we must not only acknowledge the Son's incarnate expression of the Father's love, we must experience and abide in it as Jesus did such that "the Father's love is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit [who] communicates the Father's approval and delight."[72] It should not be surprising that we must first be filled with the love of God before we are able to share it with others.

But what of the ministry of the *cross*? One apparent aspect is that we must be willing to suffer and die with Christ in the midst of rejection and persecution. The most extreme outworking of this in the life and ministry of the church is literal martyrdom, which is the most uncompromising participatory witness of the love of God in Christ through the Spirit. Most modern Western Christians will not face this extreme, but we all face death. Therefore, it is the lived expression of hope in resurrection life throughout all seasons and stages of life[73] that gives voice to the church's perennial chorus of the apostolic and prophetic ministry of the cross: "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again."[74]

The Life: Cosmic Atonement & Christ Our King as Victorious Redemption

The royal messianic ministry of Christ ransoms and redeems humans from evil, sin, and death into freedom and life in Christ through his body and blood, broken and poured out on the cross and resurrected from the grave. According to the Apostle John: "The Son of God was revealed for this purpose: to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). And the hymn in Rev 5:9–10 links the death of Christ, the Lamb, with the priesthood and reign of the saints:

> You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals,
> for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God
> saints from every tribe and language and people and nation;
> you have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God,
> and they will reign on earth.

Thus, the pioneering high priestly and revelatory apostolic/prophetic ministries of Christ are intrinsically linked with and inseparable from his ministry of royal redemption and salvation.

It is especially important to accurately orient the cosmic focal point or trajectory of the royal dimension of Christ's ministry for a well-balanced integrated

71 Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God*, 53–74.
72 Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God*, 64.
73 From a pastoral standpoint, it must be noted that hope in Christ does not exclude grief and mourning.
74 This is called the "Memorial Acclamation" in some liturgical contexts. Cf. Episcopal Church, *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 363.

view of atonement. In the Gospel of John, when Pilate asks what Jesus has done, Jesus says, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish religious leaders. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here" (John 18:36). The origin and location of Christ's royal authority is crucial as is the implication that the fundamental battleground for freeing humans from sin and death is not this world but rather the spiritual realm. The church is likewise involved in the same cosmic struggle: "For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12).[75] Thus, the church participates in Christ the king's cosmic victory not through bloodshed and violence, but through the shed blood of Christ which restores us to life.

This cosmic spiritual orientation helps make proper sense of much of the seemingly transactional or economic language in reference to atonement—specifically, *ransom* and *redemption*. The cosmic dimension of atonement is described as primarily directed towards sin or Satan, not the Father as if he were holding humans hostage. So any way that Jesus' death "pays" for our freedom is not a transaction between the Father and Son, but rather a way of dealing with death itself. Note that this is not really a deal *with* death, but a way of *dealing with* death. Cosmic theories are often charged with imagining a dualistic conflict between God and the devil, which God eventually wins but at extreme lengths through the death of Christ.[76] While we may understandably balk at the extremity of Christ's death, I suggest the severity of the event is not due to the nearly insurmountable magnitude of the power of demonic forces, but rather the depth of human suffering and brokenness and the revelation of God's love in such a context (as discussed in the previous section).[77] And as Paul says, to those who are being saved, the cross of Christ is the power of God (cf. 1 Cor 1:18, 24). Thus, the victory of Christ, the Prince of Peace (cf. Isa 9:6), in death as an expression of love for us is both more *powerful* and *relationally integrated* than a violent annihilation of evil.[78]

Another objection to some cosmic theories is that if God "tricks" the devil, then God is pictured as intentionally deceitful in some way.[79] However, this objection gives too much credit to the cosmic forces of evil. As John says: "The light

75 Here I assume the reality of evil spiritual beings, such as demons and/or Satan, as well as spiritual beings who serve God, such as angels.

76 See, for example, McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 16, 195–210.

77 Cf. Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 68.

78 For a description of "divine Aikido" or "the way of peace" in "nonresistant combat," see Gregory A. Boyd, *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God: Interpreting the Old Testament's Violent Portraits of God in Light of the Cross* (2 vols. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 2:767. Athanasius notes the need to unite Jews and Gentiles in Christ (*Incarnation of the Word*, §25; *NPNF* 2/4:49).

79 See McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 17, 195–210.

shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend or overcome it" (John 1:5).[80] Thus, God does not devise a scheme to deceive the cosmic powers of darkness; instead, God is God and cannot be either comprehended or overcome by evil.[81] This is also dignifying to humans since, as beings made in the image of God, we have the capacity to recognize God through the grace of God. Although demons might seem to recognize the identity of Christ in the Gospel narratives (e.g., Mark 1:21–28),[82] in the ancient context the attempts to name Jesus are actually confrontations since to know and use someone's name was thought to give one power over them.[83] There are multiple levels of dramatic irony here;[84] and in each case, Jesus silences the demons, thereby demonstrating his power as well as their incomprehension and comparative impotence.

Regardless of one's view on the spiritual reality of demonic forces, Satan, and so forth, the reality of evil, sin, suffering, and death in the world cannot be ignored. The royal ministry of Christ on the cross as "King of the Jews" (Luke 23:38) is God's most direct and personal attention to this matter. However, Kathryn Tanner argues that *Christus Victor* is not a model of atonement because it fails to address the "mechanism of the atonement," that is, *how* Christ defeats sin and evil.[85] As I have argued, the defeat of sin and evil is important, but it is only one aspect of a balanced view of atonement, which is better understood as the reconciliation of humans to God. Salvation comes through Christ's presence with humanity in suffering and death which leads to resurrection life. Thus, the crucifixion is not fundamentally a mechanism of the defeat of sin and death so much as it is part of the divine assumption of humanity. Once again, the relational aspect is vital and the need is properly located in humanity, not God. Answering the question, "Why the Cross, of all deaths?" Athanasius says that "no other way than this was good for us."[86] And as Hebrews says, "since the children share in blood and flesh, he [Christ] also in like manner shared in these same things, in order that through death he could destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and could set free these who through fear of death were subject to slavery throughout all their lives" (Heb 2:14–15). Thus, the destruction of death through the death of Christ is inextricably linked to not only our freedom from fear and death, but also

80 The Greek word καταλαμβάνω may refer to either *overcoming* or *comprehending*. Given the poetic context, a multivalent interpretation/translation is most fitting. Cf. Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

81 Cf. T. F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008), 244.

82 Cf. McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 17.

83 See William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, ed. F. F. Bruce, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 74.

84 Cf. Lane, *Gospel of Mark*, 40.

85 Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 253.

86 Athanasius, *Incarnation of the Word*, §25 (*NPNF* 2/4:49–50).

to God's presence with us as he shares in these sufferings. It is not the power of evil that makes it so, but the nature of God with us (as discussed above). As Henri Nouwen says, "cure without care is as dehumanizing as a gift given with a cold heart."[87] And he later says that "[c]ure without care makes us into rulers, controllers, [and] manipulators."[88] Therefore, in participating in the royal salvation of the ministry of the cross, we are not merely victors over sin in Christ, we are "more than conquerors" (Rom 8:37), which includes trusting God and reaching out with God's love to one another in the midst of suffering and death.

The ministry of the cross must also be placed in the wider context of the incarnation of Christ and the eternal being of God. Jesus delivered people from demons, healed bodies, and even raised one from the dead throughout the course of his ministry before the crucifixion and resurrection. Therefore, the cross and resurrection—which are not properly divisible—are rightly viewed as pivotal historical and spiritual events, but not as mechanisms for change within God. Hence, the cross and resurrection do not give God power over sin and death; rather, through the cross and resurrection, God gives us power over sin and death in union with Christ. Moreover, there is an eschatological horizon of hope that can be seen from the vantage point of the cross, for at Christ's return not only will death be defeated, it will be no more, and all that was stolen, killed, and destroyed will be restored in abundant life (cf. John 10:10). Thus, the restoration of life—which is God's way of exacting "retribution" on death itself—is the outworking of God's justice in the cosmos.[89]

Accordingly, the way Jesus ransoms or redeems us from captivity to sin is much like the way the Israelites are redeemed from slavery in Egypt.[90] Rather than the Pharaoh being paid off by God, the people of God leave Egypt with the wealth of the nation heaped upon them (cf. Exod 12:33–36). Thus, the "transaction" of redemption or ransom is decidedly one-sided rather than dualistic: not only can death not hold the life of Christ, but our lives are snatched away from the grave as well. It is important to keep in mind that the way God ransoms and redeems, loves and gives, and so forth, is categorically different than the world's ways (cf. Isa 55:8–9; John 14:27).

The church participates in the cosmic and royal dimensions of the ministry of the cross as royal ambassadors of reconciliation in the world (cf. 2 Cor 5:20) and as coheirs with Christ in the kingdom of God (cf. Rom 8:17). And although this

87 Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Out of Solitude: Three Meditations on the Christian Life* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria, 1998), 32.
88 Nouwen, *Out of Solitude*, 36.
89 Cf. Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 67. The presence of Christ with us in suffering and death as well as the hope of eschatological resurrection life respond to the concern that evil still persists.
90 Cf. Brad Jersak, *A More Christlike God: A More Beautiful Gospel* (Pasadena: Plain Truth Ministries, 2015), 244–48.

may involve a war-like struggle at present in that we continue to sin and suffer dehumanizing hardships and death, as noted above, we do not war against flesh and blood (cf. Eph 6:12). However, in Christ we may help to save, heal, and reconcile flesh and blood humans, as Jesus did in his life and ministry. This is not a triumphalistic prosperity gospel, yet it does recognize the power of God in the midst of present suffering while emphasizing the need to trust that God is, in fact, the supreme, uncontestable creator and ruler of the universe.[91] Therefore, once again, worship of God, who provides hope, is an essential response to the royal cosmic dimension of the ministry of the cross.

Conclusion

It has been a methodological assertion in this paper that in order to speak faithfully about God, we must first know God; we must encounter him relationally. And more than speaking faithfully about God, it is the task of the church to introduce the world to God, to participate in offering a relational encounter with God.[92] Toward this end, this paper sets forth a three-dimensional and relational view of the atonement. John 14:6 is helpful in summing up this view: Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." In his high priestly confession, Jesus is the way for us to approach the Father, rather than remaining alienated, distant, and afraid in sin. In his apostolic and prophetic incarnate expression of divine love, Jesus is the truth of the revelation of the Father and his love so that we may no longer be deceived, confused, and ignorant in sin. And in the royal salvific redemption of Christ, we abide in the freedom of eternal life in submission to God, rather than being subject to sin's slavery, suffering, and death. The way, truth, and life of Christ are not in conflict with one another, but rather constitute a succinct summary of his inseparably united identity and action in the world. This paper innovatively integrates and synthesizes the objective, subjective, and cosmic dimensions of atonement while relationally orienting them according to a coherent Trinitarian theology which emphasizes the creative love of God, who chooses to meet human needs and, more fundamentally, meet humans in their needs.

This paper has not attempted to address all angles or objections to the various views under consideration; instead, it has focused on some of the ways the life and ministry of the church participate in Christ's ministry of reconciliation, especially the ministry of the cross. Considering the resurrection and Pentecost, for

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91 See David Courey, *What has Wittenberg to Do with Azusa? Luther's Theology of the Cross and Pentecostal Triumphalism* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 256.

92 H. R. Mackintosh observes that most people do not believe in Christ because of an "irrefutable argument," but because of an "irresistible impression," usually on the conscience. H. R. Mackintosh, *The Christian Apprehension of God* (London: SCM, 1929; repr., Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 56; cf. Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 245.

example, would help move towards a more comprehensive view. And further attention to the notions of incorporation, (vicarious) representation, or substitution in regard to atonement is warranted to determine whether and to what extent the church might participate in the life and ministry of Christ.[93] As a brief concluding comment, we do not become Jesus, but we do become one with him (cf. John 14:20; 1 Cor 6:17). We do not participate in Christ's life and ministry as if we were Jesus himself, but we do participate in Christ's ministry in him through the Spirit.[94] Hence, the mystery of divine-human relations remains an important dimension to keep in mind. Nonetheless, in union with Christ through the Holy Spirit according to the will of the Father, the church participates in the confession of sin, the embodied expression of divine love, and the redemptive victory over sin and death for the sake of the world and to the glory of God.

93 For a well-nuanced discussion of what might be *penal* and/or *substitutionary* about Christ's death, see McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 99–107. Much like I have argued, Studebaker says Jesus' life was "substitutionary for the sake of participation" (Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 69–72, 72 quoted). See also Leanne Van Dyk, "How Does Jesus Make a Difference?" in *Essentials of Christian Theology*, ed. William C. Placher (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 215–18.

94 Cf. Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, esp. 17–39.

Christianity and Critical Theory: A Brief Case for Complementarity

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Abstract

Contemporary discourse on the intersection of Critical Theory (CT), Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Christian theology and ethics has reached an all-time high. This is particularly true with white evangelicalism in the U.S., where denominations, popular figures, and an endless stream of media regularly, publicly, and explicitly decry "Critical Theory" in all its forms—even if it is clear that critics have not informed themselves of what exactly they are critiquing. What explains this social and cultural phenomenon? And is CT really inherently opposed to all things "Christian"? This presentation will suggest that, despite being categorically different, CT and certain traditions of Christian thought are highly complementary, even to the point where specific ideas of specific Critical Theories function as extensions of classical theological dogmas. Specific attention is given to the psychology of racism in Critical Race Theory and the doctrine of total depravity in reformed thought, among others.

Introduction[1]

It is difficult to overstate the cultural chaos and discursive invective surrounding the subject of Critical Theory (henceforth CT) in contemporary North America. This is particularly true in the U.S. Several states have already banned Critical Race Theory from primary education, while others propose banning use of words like "patriarchy" and "social justice"[2] in classrooms, ending "requirements that public schools include writings on women's suffrage and the civil rights movement

1 An earlier draft of this paper was presented at the 2021 American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas.

2 Reid Wilson, "'Woke, 'multiculturalism,' 'equity': Wisconsin GOP proposes banning words from schools," *The Hill* (September 29, 2021).

in social studies classes,"[3] and eradicating Native Americans from American history.[4]

This radical movement can be framed in many ways, such as embodying a larger "fascist resurgence" that parallels contemporary movements in Brazil, India, and Russia. But it can also be framed as integration with white Christian nationalism and evangelical fundamentalism.[5] As it will be discussed below, there are now books, conferences, and theological documents written by seminary presidents dedicated to being "anti-woke" and anti-CT. In this context, the academy is seen as particularly insidious; "Professors are the enemy," as J. D. Vance remarked in 2021.[6] The argument is also explicitly made that anything non-conservative (whether political, ethical, or theological) is inherently *anti-Christian*. "Critical Theory" (and its various expressions) is said to be cause of social strife, ideological extremism, and the decline of Western civilization itself.

While this movement is undoubtedly characterized by political and religious fanaticism, there are nevertheless clear and sharp claims about the limits of Christian thought and behavior, and a powerful class of society that is invested in enforcing these limits. In other words, the anti-CT movement is too concerning to try to ignore, even if responding to it risks public embarrassment by scholars.

What I suggest below is that Critical Theory, broadly understood, is actually more complementary to Christian faith than antagonistic. By revisiting the life and teachings of Jesus in earliest Christian memory, and revisiting traditional doctrines (e.g., sin and depravity), the centrality of social justice becomes acutely apparent. While this will leave many questions unanswered, in keeping with this journal's focus on "theology, scripture, and culture," it will hopefully show the profound contradictions and social consequences this debate will likely produce within the hardened, fundamentalist Christian religious tradition that has developed.

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3 Paul Stinson, "Texas Senate Votes to Remove Required Lessons on Civil Rights," *Bloomberg Law* (July 16, 2021).

4 Stephen Groves, "Indigenous history, culture cut from South Dakota standards," *Associated Press* (August 10, 2021).

5 See Samuel Perry and Philip Gorski, *The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022); Andrew Whitehead and Samuel Perry, *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022); Katherine Stewart, *Power Worshippers* (New York: Bloomsbury Adult, 2022); Eric L. McDaniel, Irfan Nooruddin, Allyson F. Shortle, *The Everyday Crusade: Christian Nationalism in American Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022); Paul Miller, *The Religion of American Greatness: What's Wrong With Christian Nationalism* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Academic, 2022);

6 Henry Reichman, "'The Professors Are the Enemy'," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (December 14, 2021).

On "Critical Theory"

For the purposes of this article, I define CT in its broadest sense as social theory—not simply the Frankfurt School philosophy, nor contemporary literary criticism (though it certainly involves both), but rather, something close to what Lois Tyson says in her text *Critical Theory Today*:

> . . . even our 'personal,' 'natural' interpretations of literature and of the world we live in . . . are based on assumptions, on ways of seeing the world, that are themselves theoretical and that we don't realize we've internalized. In other words, there is no such thing as a non-theoretical interpretation. We may not be aware of the theoretical assumptions that guide our thinking, but those assumptions are there, nevertheless.[7]

To borrow from Herbert Marcuse, "Critical theory strives to define the irrational character of the established rationality . . ."[8]

Thus, for example, the critical theory of feminism looks at our "rational world" and notices that over half the population is female, but all U.S. Presidents, most CEOs, owners of businesses, church ministers, judges, and professors are *male*, and it asks: "why?" It notices that "man" in language represents the generic human, but not "woman." It observes a history of prohibiting women from owning property, going to college, teaching, serving on jury, and studies a mind-boggling history of violence of men against women (all unparalleled for the history of men)[9] and challenges whether this world is truly "rational" and just.

Similarly, the radical economic tradition (often abbreviated "Marxist Theory") looks at a world of vast economic inequalities and the drudgery of wage labor under a hierarchy of power and exploitation and asks if this is really the best mode of material production. It observes everything from money, to property rights, employment, fiat currency and central banks, and all the other givens and places them in a historical context instead of seeing them as eternal.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) observes that white households have ten times the average wealth of black households; that African Americans are disproportionately pulled over by police, sentenced, and incarcerated; and that the history of this country is one of slaveholding, racial segregation, and abuses of all kinds by white people against African Americans.[10] In response to these observations it

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7 Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today,* 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 3-4.

8 Herbert Marcuse, "The Catastrophe of Liberation," in *Critical Theory: The Essential Readings* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1992), 104.

9 Elaine Storkey, *Scars Across Humanity: Understanding and Overcoming Violence Against Women* (London: SPCK, 2015).

10 See Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (New York: The New Press, 2012); Ibram X. Kendi,

asks, "Why? How did this happen? How does it still keep happening? Is this really 'nature' and 'God's design' as we've been told, or is it irrational and unjust?"

One could make similar observations for post-colonial, queer, deconstructionist, and other theories—though (a) some "critical theories" do not fit this line of reasoning as neatly as these three examples;[11] (b) this general framework is always evolving, and (c) critical analysis predates these formal approaches. Nevertheless, it is adequate enough to say that *CT as it functions today is simply critical-thinking about society*.

1. It looks primarily at *society*[12] or group behavior—and especially critically evaluates contemporary *capitalist* society.
2. It sees social phenomena as social constructs, inevitably products of their time.[13]
3. As such, it questions the legitimacy of what is considered "normal" in society.[14]
4. The underlying concern is the "concern for the abolition of social injustice."[15]

CT is therefore an essential framework for social science. It reflects "the beginner's mind," the mindset that "approaches the world without knowing in advance what it will find; it is open and receptive to experience."[16] Or at least, it *should* be that way.

Any theoretical framework can become reductionistic and unhelpful—something critical theorists are often (though not always) aware of.[17] For example, Ibram Kendi in *How to Be an Antiracist* argues that "there is no such thing as a

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Stamped from the Beginning (New York: Type Books, 2016); Jemar Tisby, *How to Fight Racism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021).

11 E.g., Freudian psychology, if it is considered a "critical theory."

12 Max Horkheimer, "The Foundations and Methods of Critical Theory," 246: "Critical thinking is the function neither of the isolated individual nor of a sum-total of individuals. Its subject is rather a definite individual in [their] real relation to other individuals and groups, in their conflict with a particular class, and finally, in the resultant web of relationships with the social totality and with nature."

13 E.g., Max Horkheimer, "The Foundations and Methods of Critical Theory," 242: "It is not only in clothing and appearance, in outward form and emotional make-up that [people] are the product of history. Even the way they see and hear is inseparable from the social life-process as it has evolved over the millennia . . ."

14 Horkheimer, *Foundations and Methods* 244: "in Horkheimer's words: "the critical attitude . . . is wholly distrustful of the rules of conduct with which society as presently constituted provides each of its members."

15 Horkheimer, *Foundations and Methods*, 253.

16 Kerry Ferris and Jill Stein, *The Real World: An Introduction to Sociology,* 6th ed. (New York: W & W. Norton, 2019), 10.

17 Note, for example, the remarks of Tyson, *Critical Theory Today,* 3; Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory,* 3rd ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2017), chs. 6–7.

not-racist idea, only racist ideas and antiracist ideas."[18] Assertions like these are difficult to square with others made by the same author—namely that racist ideas have a timeline, and certainly post-date "ideas" in general. Similarly, feminist frameworks may presume discrimination when a certain woman is paid less than a man when this difference may have to do with different variables. The catastrophic failures of Marxist reductionism can be easily witnessed when examining the first two years of Lenin's reign and in several years of Stalin's dictatorship in Russia—where class enemies and endless varieties of the bourgeoisie were manufactured, and nearly all aspects of human life were reduced to one's relation to the communist state.[19] Some of Freud's ideas have become the butt of jokes because of their notorious lack of falsifiability. In short, ideological frameworks are meant and used regularly to open one's eyes to dimensions, relations, and experiences that were previously invisible, and without incorporating other frameworks, they naturally run the risk of absolutizing the dimension and perspective they seek to understand.

The whole enterprise of critical theory is also *interconnected*. Capitalism, for example, has historically been both racist and sexist. Whether one turns to the African American slave trade or to women's unpaid domestic labor, this interdependence and *intersectionality* is evident.[20] Regimes of power and systems of exploitation reinforce each other,[21] as seen in (for example) increased violence against transgender persons of color.[22] "The forces that impose class injustice and economic exploitation are the same ones that propagate racism, sexism, militarism, ecological devastation, homophobia, xenophobia and the like."[23]

18 Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (New York: Random House, 2019), 20.

19 See Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1996); Olev Khlevniuk, translated by Nora Seligman Favorov, *Stalin: New Biography of a Dictator* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015). These works should be balanced by Robert C. Allen, *Farm to Factory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Walter Rodney, *The Russian Revolution*: A View from the Third World (London: Verso, 2018).

20 Kimberlé Crenshaw, a co-founder of Critical Race Theory (as a technical discipline in the field of law), coined the term "intersectionality" in a 1989 paper to help explain the oppression of African-American women. Standard sociology textbooks now define it as "a concept that identifies how different categories of inequality (race, class, gender, etc.,) intersect to shape the lives of individuals and groups." Ferris and Stein, *The Real World,* 188.

21 Hence bell hooks' use of the phrase "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy." Cf. Cornel West, *Prophecy Deliverance: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 122–25.

22 See "Fatal Violence Against the Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Community in 2020," *Human Rights Campaign*; Anna Marie Forestiere, "America's War on Black Trans Women," Harvard Civil Rights Law Review (September 23, 2020). Cf. Wirtz, Andrea L., Tonia C. Poteat, Mannat Malik, and Nancy Glass. "Gender-Based Violence Against Transgender People in the United States: A Call for Research and Programming," *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 21:2 (April 2020): 227–41. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838018757749. "

23 Michael Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds* San Francisco: City Light Books, 1997), 151.

On "Christianity"

Again, for our purposes, "Christianity" here refers to its broadest sense: a religious tradition that finds its inspiration in the life, teaching, and legacy of Jesus of Nazareth. "God," the Creator of the world, has been revealed in various ways—significantly, however, in Jesus. Various people using various philosophical and theological frameworks grasp at this "Christ-event" (Barth), whether Greek philosophy (John calls Jesus the "*logos*"), or in terms of the contemporary Roman emperor ("Lord and Savior," "son of God," etc.), or simply "God with us" ("Immanuel"), or through Jewish images, metaphors, and models ("son of man," "anointed one," etc.). In Christ, we learn the good news that God loves the world and calls humans to join in the work of restoration and transformation. We also learn the risks of this social, economic, and spiritual work: Jesus was crucified by the Romans on charges of insurrection.

Even given such a minimalist construction, overlap with CT is immediately evident. Scholars, for example, have recently appreciated how deeply concerned Jesus was about justice in the Jewish village community and beyond.[24] The parables of Jesus are themselves a form of subversive social analysis.[25] Indeed, while certain responses can be expected from any group under military occupation or economic and political oppression (e.g., resistance, subversion, integration, etc.), it was and remains hard to ignore the lengths to which Jesus goes to show *inclusive* love.

For example, Jesus was remembered to dignify or include such people as *ethnic minorities,* like Samaritans (John 4; Luke 10:25–37; cf. Ethiopians in Acts 8), and the children of immigrants (Mark 7:24–30); *those oppressed by virtue of their sex and social state*, like eunuchs (Matt 19; Acts 8), women (John 4; Luke 8:1–3), divorced women (John 4; Matt 19; Mark 10), bleeding women (Matt 9:20–22, Mark 5:25–34, Luke 8:43–48), accused women (John 8), sick women (Luke 13), widows (Mark 12; Luke 20–21; 1 Tim 5); the sick (John 5; Acts 3; Matt 9:20–22; Luke 14), disabled (Mark 7; 8:22; Mark 10; John 5; 9; Matt 9; Mark 2), diseased (Matt 8; Luke 17), and others ritually unclean like fisherman (Luke 5); and others who were both vulnerable and habitually disrespected, like children (Matt 19:14; Mark 10; Luke 17:2).[26]

The *way* in which Jesus included these people is also significant. Marcus Borg notes, for example, that "Sharing a meal was a form of social inclusion, and

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24 See in particular, Richard Horsley, *Covenant Economics: A Biblical Vision of Justice for All* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009) and William Herzog II, *Jesus, Justice, and the Reign of God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000).

25 Willilam Herzog II, *The Parables as Subversive Speech* (Louisvile: Westminster John Knox, 1994).

26 Others humanized by Jesus were tax-collectors (the economically exploitative) and Roman centurions (the physically violent and oppressive). What all of these groups seem to have in common is a marked degree of real or potential shame.

refusing to share a meal was a form of social exclusion."[27] For crossing these cultural boundaries, Jesus was rebuked.[28] The Apostle Paul would later rebuke Peter for doing the opposite (Gal 2–3) and excluding Gentiles at the table. (This was actually the origin of Paul's famous doctrine of "justification."[29])

The late James Dunn recently concluded in his final book that there are "a number of emphases and priorities that we can say with some confidence the first followers of Jesus attributed to Jesus."[30] Most, if not all, of them embody an ethos of inclusion. In his textbook on ethics, David Gushee makes similar observations, noting how the famous command in Matthew 5:48 should be rendered, "Be complete or all-inclusive therefore, as your heavenly Father is complete or all-inclusive."[31]

Christianity and Critical Theory

If, therefore, there is any coherent overlap between "Critical Theory" and a historically-informed understanding of early Christianity, it would seem to be this concern for social and economic justice in an unjust and oppressive world. It would also seem obvious that this ethos is extremely important for the present condition. This is evident given recent events in North America, but also in the larger, global picture. For example, economist Jeffrey Sachs argues in *The Age of Sustainable Development* that for our planet to survive and thrive at all, we need to achieve three goals—one of which is "broad-based social inclusion."[32]

Jesus was very much standing in line with the prophetic tradition in this regard,[33]

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27 Marcus Borg, *Jesus: The Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary* (New York: HarperOne, 2006), 159.

28 Mark 2:16; Luke 7:34; 15:2; 19:7; Matt. 11:19. Cf. John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (New York: HarperOne, 1994), 220: "The deliberate conjunction of magic and meal, miracle and table, free compassion and open commensality, was a challenge launched not just on the level of Judaism's strictist purity regulations, or even on that of the Mediterranean's patriarchal combination of honor and shame, patronage and clientage, but at the most basic level of civilization's eternal inclination to draw lines, invoke boundaries, establish hierarchies, and maintain discrimination."

29 N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 190: "Galatians 2 offers the first great exposition of justification in Paul. In that chapter, the nub of the issue was the question, who are Christians allowed to sit down and eat with? . . . Many Christians, both in the Reformation and in the counter-reformation traditions, have done themselves and the church a great disservice by treating the doctrine of justification' as central to their debates, and by supposing that it described the system by which people attained salvation. They have turned the doctrine into its opposite. Justification declares that all who believe in Jesus Christ belong as the same table, no matter what their cultural or racial differences."

30 "The Love Command," "Priority of the Poor," "Openness to Gentiles," "Women among His Close Followers," "Openness to Children," "Relaxation of Food Laws," and "The Last Supper or Lord's Supper." James Dunn, *Jesus According to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019).

31 David Gushee and Glenn Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context,* 2nd. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 101.

32 Jeffrey Sachs, *The Age of Sustainable Development* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 182.

33 G. M. Williamson, *He Has Shown You What Is Good: Old Testament Justice Then and Now*

and that is how CT can function as well: for questioning what is "normal," speaking truth to power, subverting the dominant discourse, and, as Cornel West puts it, to "bear witness to people's suffering" and "overcome injustice."[34] In fact, it may be this relationship that seems to bother anti-CT religious conservatives the most: academia, the dangerous "secular university," is doing a better job than the church imitating this powerful and prophetic "spirit of Christ." In any case, the French Christian sociologist Jacques Ellul framed this orientation in poignant terms:

> Christians were never meant to be normal. We've always been holy troublemakers . . . creators of uncertainty, agents of dimension that's incompatible with the status quo; we do not accept the world as it is, but we insist on the world becoming the way that God wants it to be.[35]

Transformation, however, assumes a definable state of misery and corruption. This is where Critical Theory and Christian theology overlaps the most.

Systemic Sin

In his 2018 presidential AAR lecture "In the Ruins of White Evangelicalism," David Gushee quotes extensively from the writings of African American literature as a lens to understand racist white Christians (i.e., slave owners, or church members who opposed civil rights, etc.) under the three themes of "moral debasement," "religious powerlessness," and "perceptual blindness."[36] How is it that so many Christians in so many places and for so long systematically dehumanized other human beings and did not see a problem?[37] His brief literary analysis clearly demonstrated how racism is upheld for personal economic benefit, for establishing pride and superiority, involves slander against the oppressed, arbitrary use of power, unchecked anger and violence, relational alienation, and willful blindness. This condition was not "forged overnight," for it was "the practiced habit of jabbing out one's eyes and forgetting the work of one's hands."[38]

This presentation was a vivid description of "total depravity," and it challenges the idea that Calvin's picture of humanity is far too cynical and pessimistic to be

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(Eugene Wipf and Stock, 2012; originally published by Lutterworth Press). Jemar Tisby, author of *The Color of Compromise,* posted a short video of his computer screen, where he searched for the word "oppress" in the NIV Bible. It returned over a hundred results; he highlighted Ps 9:9; Isa 1:17; Jer 22:3; and Luke 4:18.

34 Cornel West, *Black Prophetic Power* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 2.

35 Despite its wide currency in a variety of publications, I have not been able to locate the primary source of this quotation (even after asking the Jacques Ellul Society for insight). Having read many of Ellul's books myself, however, it seems characteristic of his tone and perspective.

36 Available on the AAR YouTube page at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPkl-sBFzdQ

37 Some certainly did see this contradiction with Christian faith and life. See for example, Ida B. Wells, *The Light of Truth* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2014), 41, 173, 174, 182, 183, 197, 224, 241, 261, 262, 283, 289, 297, 300, 308, 309, 311, 401, 402, 405, 406, 414, 451, 452, 554.

38 Ta-Nahisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2015).

real.[39] Indeed, Calvin's own description of sin seems as penetrating as contemporary social critics, ethicists, and critical theorists:

> Men . . . are so inclined to self-flattery that they always want, as far as possible, to dissuade the mind from recognizing their sin. This, I think, was what led Plato to maintain that we do not sin except through ignorance. That might be an apt saying of his if man, in his hypocrisy, could hide his faults so that the conscience was able to escape the judgment of God. But since the sinner, his heart failing to discern good from bad, is each time forcibly brought back to the fact of sin, and cannot close his eyes without sometimes having, however reluctantly, to open them, it is wrong to say that he sins through ignorance.[40]

Calvin notes that people often sin when "personal considerations arise," and elsewhere writes that "our mind is so blind in this respect to God's law that it cannot appreciate how evil are its appetites. . . . When philosophers speak of the unruly impulses of the heart, they mean those which are plain to see," not hidden out of view.[41]

In a recent interview with Tripp Fuller, liberal seminary President Stephen G. Ray Jr. maintained his "Calvinist" label essentially for this reason: this level of depravity is *real*.[42] And while Calvin may have emphasized the individual and internal aspects more than the social, the whole point is that sin is *systemic*—passed down each generation throughout the whole world. This is, after all, why the whole cosmos, not just human souls, needs redemption. In Calvin's words, "through man's fault a curse has extended above and below, over all the regions of the world,"[43] and "this perversion of our nature is never passive in us, but continually produces new fruit. . . . In the same way a fiery furnace always spews out flames and sparks . . ."[44]

The irony is that contemporary evangelical Protestants fail to see that such systemic sin actually exists in the real world, and that it has specific names, like "systemic racism," "patriarchy," "economic exploitation," etc. In fact, they either deny such sin exists, or affirm it as God's design, in a variety of ways.

For example, in fall of 2020, six Southern Baptist seminary Presidents issued

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39 E.g., John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* trans. Robert White (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 2015, orig. 1541), 36: "Man is, in himself, nothing but lust."

40 Calvin, *Institutes*, 60.

41 Calvin, *Institutes*, 62.

42 Tripp Fuller, "Stephen G. Ray Jr: how to be a passionate progressive dye in the wool Calvinist" (July 14, 2021). Available online at: https://trippfuller.com/2021/07/14/stephen-g-ray-jr-how-to-be-a-passionate-progressive-dye-in-the-wool-calvinist/

43 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* ed. John McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006, orig 1559), II.1.5.

44 Calvin, *Institutes* (1541)*,* 36.

a statement on the twentieth anniversary of the *Baptist Faith and Message*,[45] saying, "We stand together on historic Southern Baptist condemnations of racism in any form and we also declare that affirmation of Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality, and any version of Critical Theory is incompatible with the *Baptist Faith & Message*."[46] This is a contradictory claim, since the most mild version of CRT is generic anti-racism, which these authors claim to support. It is also not by chance that the representative institutions of these Presidents were largely built by slave labor/slaveowners.[47] In response to this discovery at SBTS, President Albert Mohler insisted on inaction—even refusing to offer tuition discounts to the descendants of such slaves (as other universities have done).[48] Critical Theory could help explain this callousness, and explain why some religious institutions remain so allergic to anti-racism.

The allergic reaction is, indeed, very strong. Voddie Baucham, another seminary administrator, anti-CT celebrity, and author of *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe*, was recently shown to intentionally misrepresent and plagiarize the work of Critical Race Theorists.[49] Owen Strachan, another seminary dean, authored another best-seller of similar quality called *Christianity and Wokeness: How the Social Justice Movement Is Hijacking the Gospel - and the Way to Stop It*. The first two pages of the preface by pastor and former seminary President John MacArthur are iconic of the anti-CRT movement as a whole: error-ridden, uncritical, and downright convoluted, making embarrassing claims, like that the word "colonization" is a "buzzword" of CRT, that CRT is a "worldview," and that (nevertheless) such critics of CRT are of "the keenest minds in the academic world."[50]

MacArthur, Baucham, and other reformed and Baptist pastors produced/signed the 2018 "Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel," an earlier event that added fuel to this socio-religious fire. Chapter 8 states that "WE DENY that political or social activism should be viewed as integral components of the gospel or primary to the mission of the church." Chapter 14 states that "we emphatically deny that

45 The statement was in response to an earlier 2019 resolution that was adopted, which labeled CRT a useful "analytical tool."

46 George Schroeder, "Seminary presidents reaffirm BFM, declare CRT incompatible," *Religious News Service* (November 30, 2020). Available online at: https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/seminary-presidents-reaffirm-bfm-declare-crt-incompatible/

47 Ken Shepherd, "Baptist Seminary Acknowledges Its Founders Owned Slaves; No Name Changes Planned," *Associated Press* (December 13, 2018).

48 Shepherd, "Baptist Seminary Acknowledges."

49 Nicola Menzie, "'Fault Lines' Author Voddie Baucham Confused or Making Things Up, Richard Delgado Says in Response to Misquote on 'Righteous Actions' of Whites" (August 3, 2021). Available online at: https://faithfullymagazine.com/fault-lines-voddie-baucham-crt-richard-delgado

50 John MacArthur in Owen Strachan, *Christianity and Wokeness: How the Social Justice Movement Is Hijacking the Gospel—and the Way to Stop It* (Washington D.C.: Regnery, 2021). Cf. Mark Driscoll, *Christian Theology vs. Critical Theory* (Real Faith, 2021).

lectures on social issues (or activism aimed at reshaping the wider culture) are as vital to the life and health of the church as the preaching of the gospel and the exposition of Scripture."[51] It is strange that the authors' staunch anti-abortion activism isn't included in these rejections of social/political activism, nor does it occur to the authors that "preaching of the gospel and exposition of Scripture"—at least as they understand it—simply failed to make a difference when it mattered most, time after time throughout history. In fact, some of history's most popular preachers, from Whitefield to Edwards, owned slaves. (This has always been the problem with *sola scriptura* of the most reductionistic kind: if it doesn't deliver on its promises—like saving people from a life of active sin—what's Plan B?[52]) The authors also ignore how the Jesus movement was and remains inescapably social.[53]

To many religious observers, then, this coordinated enterprise embodies not a commitment to truth, but in some ways actually expresses the kind of depravity described by Calvin.[54] Such reactionaries are too caught up in being "anti-woke" to recognize that the "woke" metaphor means "waking up to our world of sin and embarking on a radical new life." This is, after all, what Jesus meant when calling sinners to be "born again." *Waking-up* has been central to early Christian tradition ever since (John 11:11; Rom 13:11; Eph 5:14; Rev 3:2–3; cf. Luke 9:32; 1 Cor 16:13; 1 Thess 5:6). How ironic, then, that religious authorities today have made this metaphor the focal point not for determining who is *in* Christ, but who is *outside* of Christ.

This is not to deny that there exists a superficial kind of "wokeness"—one that is commercialized and utilized for validating political goals. In my experience and that of others I know, there is considerable skepticism regarding the authenticity of corporations and businesses that put on a public appearance of being "inclusive" precisely by those within marginalized groups. Marketing is marketing. The white liberalism characteristic of Harvard, New York Times, the

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51 Available online at: https://statementonsocialjustice.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/SSJG-FINAL.pdf.

52 E.g., "When the negro has appealed to the Christian and moral forces of the country—asking them to create a sentiment against this lawlessness and unspeakable barbarism; demanding justice and protection of the law for every human being regardless of color—that demand has been met with general indifference or entirely ignored." Ida B. Wells, *The Light of Truth* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2014), 405-6.

53 Cf. Herzog, *The Parables*; Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016); Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: MacMillan, 1917), *idem, Christianity and the Social Crisis in the 21st Century* (New York: HarperOne, 2007).

54 It is similar to when Ida B. Wells observed that Christians are too worried about saving people from hell-fire to save people from the real fires that they're lighting here on earth. See Wells, *The Light of Truth,* 173–74. Many today seem too worried about CRT being "taught in schools" to notice the outright racist, sexist, heteronormative, Eurocentric, colonialist history that they have created, funded, and propagated for centuries.

Democratic Party, and to some extent, denominations like the PCUSA, seems saturated in more virtue-signaling than authentic, radical compassion. In the end, however, such rhetoric is neither here nor there, for as Jesus said, "you will know them by their fruits" (Matt 7:15–20).

Conclusion

CT and CRT essentially function similar to how feminism and communism did throughout the 1970s and 1980s: it functions as a scare-tactic, but also as a threat to male capitalist hegemony. Thus, when Tom Buck spoke at the 2021 Wokeness and Gospel Conference, he tweeted that CRT is the "worse threat to Christianity since communism."[55] This comparison was not arbitrary. Ultimately, then, CT is the latest ideological scapegoat for a group whose monopoly on power is slipping, though the threat is real. CT, which is little more than critical thinking about society, poses a basic threat to any perspective, movement, or religion that cannot survive such basic scrutiny.

This explains both the prohibitions of CRT in schools and attacks on the social sciences in general. If racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. are no longer legal, and are falling out of style in societal institutions, these attitudes and institutions can at least make a last stand behind lecterns as much as pulpits. In addition to Baucham and Strachan, the Toronto psychologist Jordan Peterson and mathematician James Lindsay[56] frequently criticize anthropology, sociology, English literature, women's studies, and other fields for being hopelessly corrupted. (It is not clear what this *un*corrupted social science, free from the chains of CT, would actually look like.[57]) This stance reveals the anti-academic nature of the anti-CT movement where professors are the enemy.

The threat of a changing world is, however, always real to those who resist change. Kristin Kobes DuMez argued in *Jesus and John Wayne* that conservative evangelicals did not support Trump despite their beliefs and culture, but *because* of them.[58] While DuMez demonstrated that white evangelicalism has always been patriarchal and hyper-masculine, Jemar Tisby and Anthea Butler in their recent monographs demonstrated that it has always been racist.[59] Meanwhile, Kevin

55 This tweet (and Buck's account) was subsequently deleted. I quote here from memory. Similarly, Strachan (citing MacArthur) in *Christianity and Wokeness*, 26, calls wokeness "the greatest danger to the church . . . in six decades."

56 For example, both have been positively interviewed by the reformed Baptist nationalist organization Sovereign Nations (see https://sovereignnations.com). Baucham also gives credit to Lindsay's influence on his thought in *Fault Lines*. Albert Mohler warmly interviewed James Lindsay on his podcast.

57 The University of Austin (UATX) is one attempt.

58 Kristin Kobes DuMez, *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation* (New York: Liveright, 2020).

59 Anthea Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 136.

Kruse has demonstrated that, since the 50s, it has been nationalist. Charles Fensham and others have demonstrated that it has been violent towards gender and sexual minorities.[60] In that sense, CT is indeed incompatible with what (for example) *Baptist Faith and Message* historically represents, and the "catastrophe of evangelicalism" *really is* the issue of "social justice." That is, to the extent that contemporary Christianity—and "Western Civilization"—is sexist, racist, homophobic, heteronormative, and economically predatory, in a word, built on power and domination, CT *is* an existential threat. CT is where people can learn about and expose such harmful power differentials, and organize resistance. Like Jesus' parables in occupied Palestine, CT may be able to help carve out room for a message of hope in the lives of the oppressed.

Academia has indeed furnished frameworks of interpretation that are proving more meaningful to young people than traditional religious ideas and institutions. But in the absence of what William James calls "dogmatic theology,"[61] many religious identities are no longer *religious*, but strictly cultural and political.[62] And while CT is a way of thinking, it is not a "worldview" or world religion. Nevertheless, there are at least potential areas of positive overlap, if not a complementary relationship on some important matters. If the result is a more just, equitable, and flourishing society, religious practitioners and professors ought not hesitate to join hands.

60 Charles Fensham, *Misguided Love: Christians and the Rupture of LGBTQI2+ People* (Journal of Pastoral Publications Inc., 2019).

61 "We must therefore, I think, bid a definitive good-by to dogmatic theology. In all sincerity our faith must do without that warrant." William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, orig 1902), 341.

62 This is true with "evangelical" and "republican." Ryan Burge, "Why 'Evangelical' Is Becoming Another Word for 'Republican'," *The New York Times* (October 6, 2021).

Israel, The New Christian Zionism, and the Future of Pentecostal Eschatology

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Abstract

A historic affinity for national Israel among classical Pentecostals, largely due to the widespread influence of dispensational theology within their movement, is well documented. Nonetheless, in recent years, dispensational hermeneutics have been criticized by some Pentecostals who claim that their appropriation by the movement was a mistake that has hindered the development of Pentecostal ecclesiology. At the same time, there has arisen within evangelicalism an innovative approach to the State of Israel known as "The New Christian Zionism," which, proponents claim, does not presuppose dispensational principles. This paper discusses the role that national Israel has historically played in Pentecostal eschatology and suggests that New Christian Zionism may provide a framework for dialogue between dispensational and non-dispensational Pentecostals who believe that national Israel should continue to occupy a key role in Pentecostal eschatology.

Pentecostalism has demonstrated a strong eschatological bent since the movement's infancy. As adherents experienced a new work of the Spirit, empowering the church for witness through Pentecostal baptism, many became convinced that the end of time was drawing near. One may sense an eschatological fervor from a cursory reading of early denominational literature, as world events were being interpreted through an apocalyptic lens.[1] However, another young, burgeoning movement started gaining momentum around the turn of the century that heavily impacted the development of Pentecostal eschatology. Modern Zionism, fuelled by the Jewish people's desire to establish a new state, started gaining serious traction in the 1880s through the World Zionist Organization.[2] In light of an

1 *The Weekly Evangel*, 184a (April 10, 1917), 1–3.
2 Ben Halpern and Jehuda Reinharz, *Zionism and the Creation of a New Society*, Studies in Jewish History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 8.

impending restoration of the biblical people of God to their ancient homeland, many Christians—Pentecostals included—believed that the Lord was fulfilling his promises to national Israel and that Christ would soon return. Speculating on the prospect of a British takeover of Palestine toward the end of the First World War, *The Weekly Evangel* declared that the establishment of a Jewish state would serve as a precursor to the Second Coming:

> The Jew will flock back, Britain merely being the trustee for the Jew and guarantee against outside molestation. Jerusalem then will be trodden under Gentile feet no longer. The times of the Gentiles will have been fulfilled. Then we may look for the closing of this dispensation. The Lord's coming is very near. These are not theories, but Christ's own words and the facts you can verify from your daily paper.[3]

The years immediately preceding the First World War offered much encouragement for those who saw Israel's restoration to Zion as a sign of the times. In 1896 Theodore Herzl, widely considered the father of modern Zionism, authored his landmark essay *The Jewish State*, in which he lamented the intolerable persecution of his people in the diaspora and laid out his detailed vision for a Jewish political entity.[4] However, it would be amiss to conclude that the efforts and circumstances of the Jewish people alone encouraged Pentecostals toward their popular eschatology. One of the prime catalysts for the rise of the pro-Israel sentiment among Pentecostals was a dispensational eschatology, adopted by much of the movement at an early stage. As Dale Coulter notes, "On the whole, Pentecostals have shared the dispensational view of the end articulated in the Left Behind series. They have preached it from their pulpits and promoted it through their official Church publications."[5] Notwithstanding, in recent years, some Pentecostals have suggested that the dispensational view of Scripture, which undergirds dispensational eschatology, may not be the natural fit within Pentecostalism that many early adherents believed it to be. Peter Althouse, in a 2012 work on Pentecostal eschatology, contends that

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3 *The Weekly Evangel*, 184a (April 10, 1917), 3.

4 See Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State: The Historic Essay That Led to the Creation of the State of Israel* (New York: Skyhorse, 2019). While early Pentecostals insisted that a Jewish return to Zion would be an essential component of the end of days, Herzl proposed Argentina as an alternative should a return to Palestine be unattainable, declaring that "We shall take what is given to us, and what is selected by Jewish public opinion" (11). Thus, in a truly ironic sense, it appears that the father of modern Zionism himself was less dogmatic about the necessity of a Jewish return to Zion than many Pentecostals.

5 Dale M. Coulter, "Pentecostal Visions of the End: Eschatology, Ecclesiology and the Fascination of the Left behind Series," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 14.1 (2005): 82. Coulter says that the system "appealed to Pentecostal theological sympathies because it allowed them to articulate their primitive impulse in a way that would maintain the continuity between the eschatological fervor of the early years and the entrenchment of the later years."

dispensationalism represents a marked departure from the optimism characterizing many early Pentecostal adherents' expectation for the end of the age:

> Dispensationalism is undergirded by a cessation doctrine, which argues that all the spectacular charismatic gifts ceased in the apostolic age. The problem of wedding dispensationalism to Pentecostal pneumatology is immediately obvious, and, as Gerald Sheppard skillfully argues, undercuts Pentecostal ecclesiology and the doctrine of Spirit baptism. The meaning of the Blessed Hope thus changed from the advent of the Second Coming to this new view of the rapture. Passive withdrawal from society thus replaced the original vision of hope in Pentecostal eschatology.[6]

The dispensational system has also come under increasing scrutiny in ecclesial bodies. In 1984 The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada amended its *Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths* to allow for its credential holders to believe in a mid-tribulation rapture of the church rather than the classic dispensational pre-tribulation position.[7] And since 2018, its Theological Study Commission has continued the discussion on how such traditional doctrines as Spirit baptism and dispensational eschatology should be defined within the denomination, with both earmarked for possible revision—perhaps, opening the door for ministers to hold the post-tribulation view, a clear departure from dispensational eschatology.[8] Although no official revisions have yet been made, observers have noted a marked decline in eschatological preaching among PAOC pastors in more recent times, as compared with the those of the early movement,[9] suggesting that support for dispensationalism is no longer a firm commitment of Pentecostal clergy.

An Uncertain Future?

Whether Pentecostals should or should not hold to a traditional dispensational eschatology is beyond the scope of this paper. The purpose here is to consider the implications of the current debate among Pentecostals over that question for the movement's attitude toward national Israel. Indeed, recent changes in eschatological attitudes among Pentecostals raises the question of whether national Israel

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6 Peter Althouse, "The Landscape of Pentecostal and Charismatic Eschatology," in *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies: World Without End* (ed. Peter Althouse and Robby Waddell; Cambridge: James Clarke, 2012), 15.

7 Thomas William Miller, *Canadian Pentecostals: A History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada* (Mississauga: Full Gospel, 1994), 361.

8 See Andrew K. Gabriel, "The Changing of the PAOC's Statement of Faith. . .Again," n.p. [cited June 2, 2020] Online: https://www.andrewkgabriel.com/2018/04/10/changing-paoc-statement-of-faith/.

9 Van Johnson, "The End of Pentecostal Preaching," in *Pentecostal Preaching and Ministry in Multicultural and Post-Christian Canada*, McMaster Ministry Studies Series (ed. Steven M. Studebaker; Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019), 103–24.

will continue to factor into Pentecostal eschatology.[10] So far, trends are indicating that if the dispensational system—which influenced Pentecostals to place a high importance on the Jewish nation in their eschatology—declines in popularity, then the number of Pentecostals who see Israel's future as theologically relevant to their movement will decline as well.[11] That said, an increasing number of evangelicals who are not dispensational but find great merit in Christian support for Israel insist that Christian Zionism is not strictly a feature of dispensational theology. A 2016 volume entitled *The New Christian Zionism*, edited by Gerald McDermott, includes essays both from scholars in the progressive dispensational camp and those who hold to covenant theology.[12] All contributors to the volume agree that supersessionism—the replacement of Israel as a nation by the church—is a misguided notion, and that Christians should still view the Jewish nation as essential not only to salvation history, but to our eschatological future. "Most scholars have assumed that all Christian Zionism is an outgrowth of premillennial dispensationalist theology," McDermott claims; however, the New Christian Zionism (hereafter referred to as NCZ) "looks to a long history of Christian Zionists who lived long before the rise of dispensationalism and to other thinkers in the last two centuries who have had nothing to do with dispensationalism."[13] McDermott's work should interest Pentecostals as their movement's relationship with dispensationalism evolves from one of firm commitment to open debate. What impact might such changes have on their eschatology? How might Pentecostals on opposite sides of the dispensational question handle the question of national Israel? How might Pentecostal history inform this ongoing discussion?

In an effort to address some of these questions, this paper will first document Israel's indispensable role in Pentecostal theology, discussing how the movement's theology of Israel was shaped, developed, and revised throughout its history. It will suggest that if Pentecostalism continues to grow more diverse in its attitude toward dispensationalism, this NCZ that McDermott and his colleagues espouse could serve as a bridge for Pentecostals on both sides of the dispensational-covenantal divide who desire to maintain their long-held affinity for the Jewish people. Just as this position has managed to bring together dispensational and covenantal scholars from outside the Pentecostal camp on several central

10 Note that this article has in mind classical Pentecostal bodies, such as the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada or the Assemblies of God, not independent or third wave streams of the charismatic movement. The eschatologies of the latter are beyond the scope of this paper.

11 Some studies have already led Evangelicals more broadly to recognize such a trend among adherents. See "Evangelical Attitudes toward Israel Research Study - Lifeway Research," accessed October 29, 2022, https://research.lifeway.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Evangelical-Attitudes-Toward-Israel-Research-Study Report.pdf.

12 Gerald R. McDermott, ed., *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel and the Land* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2016).

13 McDermott, *The New Christian Zionism*, 11.

convictions regarding the church and the Jewish people, one wonders if NCZ might do so for those within the Pentecostal movement as well.

Restoration To Zion

There is perhaps no more extensive a work on Pentecostalism's long held regard for Israel as an object of its eschatological study than Ray Gannon's *The Shifting Romance with Israel*.[14] Gannon documents the rise of what he considers twin movements, classical Pentecostalism and Zionism, including their rise at the turn of the twentieth century and their relationship since. He discusses how many Pentecostals saw the church's restoration to its apostolic, Spirit-empowered form as parallel with the Jewish nation's restoration to the Holy Land.[15] For Gannon, Zionists and Pentecostals were twins of sorts, fulfilling their respective destinies in the program of God; thus, he laments Pentecostalism's subtle shift away from its unflinching support for the State of Israel that began to take place around the mid-1970s.[16] He documents staunch support for the idea of Israel's future restoration and salvation among early Pentecostals, quoting from leaders such as David Myland and Bennett Lawrence who spoke of their own movement as parallel with the Zionist project. Myland claimed that spiritual latter rain was falling in the Pentecostal revival, just as physical latter rain was falling on the Holy Land through the return of the Jewish nation.[17] Lawrence, for his part, spoke extensively about the state of Jerusalem during the Messiah's reign, envisioning it as the seat of Christ's government and the heart of the Jewish homeland.[18] Both viewed God's renewal of the church as analogous to his renewal of national Israel. However, perhaps the most adamant Christian Zionist among the early Pentecostals was Charles Parham. In an innovative twist, he identified the bride of Christ mentioned in the New Testament as those Christians who would return to the land with the Jewish people to establish their new state. So convinced was he of this novel interpretation

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14 Ray Gannon, *The Shifting Romance with Israel* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image, 2012), 8. Gannon notes that he was encouraged to complete this work by his friend Moishe Rosen, the founder of Jews for Jesus, and subsequently undertook his research at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

15 Gannon, *The Shifting Romance*, 21–22.

16 Gannon, *The Shifting Romance*, 138. It is fascinating to note that, incidentally, it was in the very next decade, the 1980s, when the PAOC altered its *Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths* to allow for a non-dispensational eschatology, and Gerald Sheppard presented a paper at the 1984 Society for Pentecostal Studies conference critical of dispensational hermeneutics (see Gerald T. Sheppard, "Pentecostalism and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism: Anatomy of an Uneasy Relationship," Pneuma 6.2 (Fall 1984)).

17 See David W. Myland, *The Latter Rain Covenant and Pentecostal Power,* in *Three Early Pentecostal Tracts*, ed. Donald Dayton (New York: Garland, 1985), 4, quoted in Newberg, *The Pentecostal Mission*, 161. Newberg labels Myland "perhaps the most theologically innovative of the Pentecostal proponents of Zionism" based on his "Latter Rain Covenant" theology.

18 Gannon, *The Shifting Romance*, 64–65. One of the founders of the Assemblies of God denomination in the United States, he was a convinced proponent of Myland's Latter Rain theology.

that he labelled anyone who rejected such an interpretation a false teacher.[19] He also claimed that, once the nation was restored, it would mark the beginning of a 7-year countdown to Christ's return on earth—an ironic assertion considering he often criticized others for setting specific dates for prophetic matters.[20]

In addition to the theology of such figures, any discussion of Christian Zionism within early Pentecostalism would be incomplete without mentioning resources like the Scofield Reference Bible.[21] According to Paul Alexander, the impact of this work "can scarcely be understated despite attempts to show that Pentecostals were not originally dispensational."[22] Just as it had been for nineteenth-century fundamentalism, for Pentecostals "the premillennial, pretribulational brand of dispensationalism . . . . nearly became dogma."[23] With its extensive system of cross-references, commentaries, and historical surveys, Scofield's Bible had great appeal for those who had little access to formal education.[24] Though Scofield rejected the Pentecostal view of spiritual gifts, the popularity of his Bible grew in large part through the growth of Pentecostalism. Todd Mangum and Mark Sweetnam note that in the years immediately following the Azusa Street Revival,

> *The Scofield Reference Bible* became the Bible of choice among converts of those revivals. This was despite the fact that Scofield's notes do not consistently support Pentecostal theology. In fact, a couple of points distinctive to Pentecostal theology are actually opposed in Scofield's notes . . . . Yet, except for its difference with dispensationalism's cessationist view of apostolic sign gifts of the Spirit, Pentecostalism firmly upholds other dispensationalist discontinuities. Pentecostalism typically affirms a revival of ethnic, national Israel in the last days, a pre-tribulation rapture, and, often, even seven distinct dispensations.[25]

Due to their apocalyptic outlook, Pentecostals were willing to lock arms with dispensationalists and adopt their eschatological distinctives despite deep

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19 Parham, *A Voice Crying*, 80, quoted In Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit*, 45. Parham also notoriously espoused a form of British Israelism, and blatantly embraced white supremacist ideals to the point of rejecting the Holy Spirit's work at Azusa Street on account of its racial diversity. For further reading, see Chris Green "The Spirit That Makes Us (Number) One: Racism, Tongues, and the Evidences of Spirit Baptism," *Pneuma* 41.3–4 (2019): 397–420.

20 Parham, *A Voice Crying*, 122, quoted In Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit*, 35.

21 Calvin Smith, "Revolutionaries and Revivalists: Pentecostal Eschatology, Politics and the Nicaraguan Revolution," *Pneuma* 30.1 (2008), 62.

22 Paul H. Alexander, "Scofield Reference Bible," in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements,* Stanley Burgess and Gary McGee, eds. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 771.

23 Alexander, "Scofield Reference Bible," 771.

24 Todd R. Mangum and Mark S. Sweetnam, *The Scofield Bible: Its History and Impact on the Evangelical Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012), 174.

25 Mangum and Sweetnam, *The Scofield Bible*, 173–74.

pneumatological and even ecclesiological differences. With the spread of the dispensational system came the spread of its distinctive view of Israel's future, one that included restoration to the land and national salvation. As a result of such an influence, early Pentecostalism was so thoroughly Zionist that those who rejected the idea of Israel's restoration were sometimes branded as false prophets. It is striking that even when the movement was still in its primitive stages, with little systematized theology, national Israel, as a subject of its eschatology, demanded significant attention.

A New State

If the Zionist rumblings of the early 1900s convinced Pentecostals that the end was drawing near, it stands to reason that the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 would have only cemented that conviction. However, the state's establishment also brought with it a new and unique set of challenges to Pentecostal eschatology. During the interwar period, Pentecostal periodicals often included segments on the Jewish people and their restoration to the Holy Land, concurring with Zionist leaders that their cause was "more than a mere political move."[26] Decrying such injustices as the 1929 slaughter of Jewish residents in Hebron,[27] Britain's subsequent suspension of Jewish immigration to Mandate Palestine in 1930,[28] and rising antisemitism in Europe during the 1930s,[29] Pentecostals demonstrated deep solidarity not only with the Jewish people but their efforts to re-establish themselves in their homeland. After the Second World War, Pentecostals—indeed, Christians in general—gained another reason to be supportive of a Jewish state that transcended eschatology: the horror of the Holocaust. A deep sense of compassion for a people mercilessly persecuted under the Nazi regime, coupled with an already existing theological framework that looked forward to Israel's restoration, led postwar Pentecostals to respond positively to the establishment of the Israeli state—albeit with some caution due to its secular nature.[30] Indeed, were one to read the predictions of early Pentecostal leaders of Israel's return to Zion, one would find they hardly envisioned a liberal democracy.[31] Far from ready to accept her Messiah, in

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26 *The Pentecostal Evangel* (November 15, 1930), 4–5.

27 *The Pentecostal Evangel* (November 15, 1930), 5.

28 *The Pentecostal Evangel* (November 15, 1930), 4.

29 *The Pentecostal Testimony* 2.16 (February 1935), 1–2. See Donald Gee's article. Although Gee's condemnation of German antisemitism falls short of the sharp rebuke from fellow Pentecostals, he asserts their treatment during his 1934 visit to be "beyond defence of the broader bar of humanity."

30 Gannon, *The Shifting Romance*, 115.

31 Charles Parham, for example, "thought that the seven-year sequence that would conclude the present age would begin the moment Israel declared itself a free and independent state. The ruler of the newly restored nation of Israel would be a charismatic figure whom many, both within Israel and outside, would come to consider the long-promised Messiah" (See Jacobsen, *Thinking In the Spirit*, 36). This vision was in stark contrast to the parliamentary democracy that Israel adopted, resembling western governments far more than the theocracy envisioned by Parham.

1948 the State of Israel contained less than 100 Jewish believers and no known Messianic congregations.[32] This was a far cry from anything Myland envisioned when he spoke of God pouring out his Spirit on the nation, or when A.A. Boddy predicted that the Jews would join and bolster the Pentecostal missionary effort in the Land.[33] To what extent, Pentecostals asked, should they embrace the new State when most of its citizens still rejected their Messiah? This question came to be regarded as of the utmost importance after the Jewish people were restored to the land as nonbelievers.

Pragmatic political concerns also hampered Pentecostals from embracing the Jewish state as eagerly as one would expect. Surrounded by enemies, what effects could its destruction have on Pentecostal eschatology if it were annihilated at the hands of Islamic neighbours?[34] Ironically, one of the key tenets of Pentecostal eschatology that the movement's founders anticipated—the establishment of a Jewish state—induced a degree of hesitation among 1940s Pentecostals that Parham and Myland never foresaw. One could credit this hesitation to a better knowledge of global events; Eric Newberg notes that Pentecostal missionaries who travelled to Ottoman Palestine in the early 1900s realized that American Pentecostals were quite ignorant of its life and culture, explaining:

> The Pentecostal missionaries arrived in Jerusalem with little knowledge of the culture, languages, people, history, politics, and religions of Palestine. Their image of Jerusalem was constructed from mental pictures derived from their reading of the English Bible, anti-Arab stereotypes in popular Christian literature, slanted Western newspaper reports of current events in the Middle East, and travel journals of Christian pilgrims. . . . Pentecostals possessed an image of Jerusalem that was slanted by their ideological interests.[35]

In contrast, by the time of the UN partition plan of 1947 and the subsequent Arab-Israeli War, the writers and editors of Pentecostal denominational publications, while far from political scientists, certainly were more familiar with the facts on the ground. An April 1948 edition of the *Evangel* informs readers of the ongoing conflict; while the author reassures readers that Israel would indeed be reborn, consistent with God's promises, he also recognized the dire situation the

32 Erez Soref, "The Messianic Jewish Movement in Modern Israel," 161–77 in *Israel, the Church, and the Middle East: A Biblical Response to the Current Conflict*, Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser, eds. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2018), 167.

33 See Newberg, *The Pentecostal Mission*, 18. Newberg notes that Boddy, one of the leading founders of the movement in the United Kingdom, actually exceeded the likes of Charles Parham in his extravagant parallels between the Pentecostal movement and national Israel's restoration.

34 Gannon, *The Shifting Romance*, 114–15.

35 Newberg, *The Pentecostal Mission*, 39.

Jewish people found themselves in militarily.[36] By this time, Pentecostals were much more informed of the realities of life in Israel-Palestine than their predecessors, who had leaned heavily on predefined notions and unsubstantiated myths. This still did not change the fact that Pentecostals continued to believe in a future for national Israel as a crucial component of God's eschatological plans. What changed was the way this belief was articulated—less fervently than it was by first-generation Pentecostals, with closer attention paid to the harsh realities of the rapidly changing Middle East. Perhaps a quote from the *Evangel's* May 15, 1948, edition—published the day after the State of Israel declared independence in the city of Tel Aviv—can sum up the conflicted Pentecostal reaction:

> The Jews already have set up a 31-member Provisional council of Government and a Cabinet of 13. "The Jewish State already is a fact," they claim. David Ben Gurion, chairman of the Jewish Agency executive, has been named head of the Cabinet as Premier. So the Jews have a government with a David at the head of it—but it is a far cry from that time which is foretold in Hos. 3:5, when the children of Israel shall "return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days."[37]

Thus, it certainly wasn't that Pentecostals ditched their belief in a future-restored Israel; indeed, the above quotation clearly assumes that belief. What seemed clear to them, however, was that Ben-Gurion's government in this renewed Israel would not fulfill their expectations.

Some have looked to factors beyond secular Israel's emergence to explain this development; Gannon, for example, points to the movement of Pentecostalism from its status as a radical sect to a credible part of evangelicalism, which he believes led to Pentecostalism downplaying its eschatologically oriented mindset.[38] The hallmark of Pentecostalism shifted from the soon return of Jesus to Spirit baptism—the distinctive for which it is best-known today. With a subtle shift away from emphasizing the Second Coming came a subtle shift away from the strong concern for Israel that first-generation Pentecostals expressed. Certainly, support for national Israel's reestablishment remained strong following independence, with major denominations such as the Assemblies of God continuing to identify Israel's future salvation as key to God's eschatological plans.

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36 See *The Pentecostal Evangel* (April 1948), 9, in which the author declares, "By force of arms the Jews are staking their claim to the Promised Land—but the situation is anything but promising. They are so few in number. They hold such a little plot, surrounded on every side by such large Arab lands. Every nation on which they have leaned has broken its word in the end. But God has made promises, too . . . He will fulfill His promise if the Jews will meet His conditions."

37 *The Pentecostal Evangel* (May 15, 1948), 10.

38 Gannon, *The Shifting Romance*, 119.

Likewise, the PAOC reaffirmed its commitment in the 1980 edition of its *Statement of Fundamental & Essential Truths*, declaring that Christ would restore Israel to its homeland before the end of the age.[39] Pentecostals, in the decades following Israel's rebirth, may not have expressed the same fervor as Parham or Myland, but most of the movement remained resolutely committed to keeping Israel at the heart of their end times theology.

Ditching Dispensationalism

As the Pentecostal tradition matured and broadened, so did its eschatology; it was inevitable that some would question the wisdom of Pentecostals adopting their eschatology from cessationists like Scofield. The long indispensable union appeared, in some ways, mismatched;[40] although, the movement is not anywhere near a disassociation with its historical eschatology, nor its position on Israel. After all, even with subtle shifts taking place, major Pentecostal bodies such as the AG and the PAOC still hold to a future for national Israel. What has changed, however, is that what was once a clear distinctive—a basically dispensational eschatology—may no longer be assumed of all Pentecostals. This once unquestioned hallmark has become ground for debate, particularly within Pentecostal academia.

Gerald Sheppard, for example, claims that Pentecostal ecclesiology has been harmed by the movement's attempt to wed itself to dispensationalism. He argues that not all early Pentecostals held to a pretribulation rapture—or, indeed, dispensational assumptions about eschatology at all —and that the hermeneutical principles utilized by dispensationalists to support such doctrines are anathema to Pentecostal pneumatology. Sheppard records that the dispensational view of Scripture considers the church a parenthesis between Acts 2 and the rapture, a result of the Jews rejecting the Kingdom of God during Jesus' first coming.[41] According to dispensationalism, the church must be removed by the rapture prior to God's resuming his program with Israel. Not only have Pentecostals historically rejected that interpretation, but some such as Myer Pearlman have identified the church itself as the Kingdom of God, undermining the very essence of classic dispensationalism.[42] Thus, some see dispensationalism as not only detrimental to Pentecostal ecclesiology, but essentially incompatible with it. Notably, the early Pentecostal adoption of Scofield-style dispensationalism resulted not from doctrinal consensus between fundamentalists and Pentecostals, but, as Matthew

39 Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, *Statement of Fundamental & Essential Truths: Article V of the General Constitution and Bylaws Adopted by General Conference 1980* (Toronto: Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, 1980).

40 Gerald Sheppard, *Pentecostals and Dispensationalism: The Anatomy of an Uneasy Relationship* (Society for Pentecostal Studies Papers, 1983), 1–26.

41 Sheppard, *Pentecostals and Dispensationalism*, 8.

42 Sheppard, *Pentecostals and Dispensationalism*, 8–9.

Thompson writes, the "cultural-religious wars of the early twentieth century between Christian liberalism and fundamentalism."[43] That war forced many Pentecostals to feel as though they, like virtually all of American Christendom, had to take a side. "Whatever their misgivings about fundamentalism," Thompson claims, "Pentecostals apparently saw it as the lesser of two evils,"[44] and therefore accepted it, though a system largely incompatible with their pneumatology.

Recognizing such an incompatibility, a 2012 volume edited by Althouse and Robby Waddell includes the work of several Pentecostal scholars offering alternative eschatological perspectives for the Pentecostal movement to consider. John A. Bertone, for example, charges that the apostle Paul himself contradicts the dispensational principle that the Old Testament promises applied to Israel in no way find their fulfillment through the church, most explicitly in Gal 3,[45] and charges dispensationalism with making too much distinction between blessings to be enjoyed by Israel in the Millennium and those for the church presently. However, the same volume includes an essay from Murray Dempster, who grants that dispensationalism, with its doctrine of the imminent rapture, was partly responsible for the Pentecostal zeal for world evangelization.[46] Thus, it appears that the question cuts much deeper than Israel alone; will the Pentecostal zeal for evangelism survive if dispensationalism falls by the wayside?

Then there is the question of Palestinian believers, most of whom feel that the Israeli state behaves unjustly toward them. Though hardly a new challenge for Christians in the land, the lingering political stalemate between Jews and Arabs has made it impossible for believers globally to avoid the question.[47] Moreover, the work of Palestinian theologians—including some Pentecostals—on matters of peace and justice has rightly drawn sympathy from those who have been skeptical of some evangelicals' unquestioning support of the Jewish state.[48] The issue is further complicated by the fact that the vast majority of Messianic Jews may also be classified as broadly Pentecostal-Charismatic, including roughly 85 % of adherents worldwide and 60 % of those in Israel.[49] One wonders, therefore, if the Pentecostal movement can serve as a home both for those who see Zionism as

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43 Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 50. The author, in line with Sheppard, disagrees with the view held by many other Pentecostals that all the early leaders of the movement were more or less dispensational.

44 Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 50.

45 John A. Bertone, "Seven Dispensations or a Two-Age View of History," in *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies*, 73.

46 Murray W. Dempster, "Eschatology, Spirit Baptism, and Inclusiveness: An Exploration into the Hallmarks of a Pentecostal Social Ethic," in *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies*, 157.

47 Newberg, *The Pentecostal Mission in Palestine*, 153.

48 Newberg, *The Pentecostal Mission in Palestine*, xiii.

49 Peter Hocken, *The Challenges of the Pentecostal, Charismatic and Messianic Jewish Movements: The Tensions of the Spirit*, Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 97.

crucial to their identity and those who view it as a questionable political ideology.

Incidentally, the Israeli-Palestinian political divide brings up another point that may be lost on Western Pentecostals.. While Pentecostalism, and its dispensational eschatology, may have deep roots in the United States, it would be a mistake to conclude that Zionism is relevant only in the eschatology of American Pentecostals. The idea that national Israel will play a key role in the end of days has become quite popular globally, even affecting the internal political affairs of other nations. In Nicaragua, for example, Pentecostals found themselves caught in the fray during the 1979 revolution, in which some Christians aided the Marxist Sandinistas' rise to power.[50] Due in no small part to their eschatological convictions, including staunch support for the State of Israel, Pentecostals rejected the communist-aligned—and therefore anti-Israel—convictions of these revolutionaries. A dispensational eschatology that included a future for the Jewish nation caused most Pentecostals to break with proponents of liberation theology, highly popular among the Sandinistas.[51] The former viewed the God's Kingdom as an eschatological reality yet to come; the latter proposed it was something to be manifested in the present world. Likewise, in Korea, a majority of evangelical believers may be classified as Christian Zionists, Pentecostals included.[52] They hold to such doctrines as the pre-tribulation rapture, a distinction between the church and Israel, and a future salvation for the Jewish nation. This has profound implications for the future of global Christianity, as South Korea sends out more missionaries than any other nation besides the United States.[53] As these missionaries share their faith abroad, their presentation of Christianity will inevitably involve their eschatological distinctives as well. Therefore, if the Pentecostal movement does jettison dispensationalism—and the Christian Zionism that stems from it—what effect will it have on global politics, given its impact in the past? Most of the debate, as discussed so far, has taken place in North American denominations and academia. But could Western Pentecostals find themselves at odds with their brethren the world over on the question of Israel, were the former to drift away from their traditional view while the Majority World maintains it? Perhaps Sheppard and his dispensational counterparts could at least agree that eschatology is inseparably tied to ecclesiology. This impending divide is one that calls for a creative solution—one that involves looking outside dispensational, even Pentecostal, circles.

50 Smith, "Revolutionaries and Revivalists," 55–56.
51 Smith. "Revolutionaries and Revivalists," 59.
52 Sung-Gun Kim, "Korean Christian Zionism: A Sociological Study of Mission," *International Review of Mission* 100.1 (2011): 88–89.
53 Kim, "Korean Christian Zionism," 85–87.

The New Christian Zionism: A Potential Bridge?

Gerald McDermott is a far cry from the caricature of the "Christian Zionist." As the Anglican Chair of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School, he admits that at one point, "[he] had been convinced that the Church is the New Israel. This meant that after Jesus died and rose again, the covenant that God had made with Israel was transferred to those who believed in Jesus."[54] However, upon further study, he became convinced that such a position was unbiblical. Scripture, he notes, never uses the term "New Israel" to refer to the church. Moreover, Paul's teaching in Romans 9–11 that the Jews "were still beloved by God," and Jesus's statements about returning to a Jewish Jerusalem at the end of the age convinced him that supersessionism was unscriptural.[55] Though McDermott affirms that, eschatologically, "there will be a distinction between Israel and the world," he also rejects the dispensational hermeneutic that views the church as a parenthesis in the plan of God and suggests that all biblical covenants—the Mosaic, the Davidic, etc.—are all "aspects of that one basic covenant with Abraham."[56] Thus, contrary to what many would assume, McDermott clearly believes that one need not hold a dispensational view of Scripture in order to recognize a unique role for the Jewish nation in the future program of God. He further asserts this in a 2016 edited volume entitled *The New Christian Zionism*, noting:

> The authors of this book reject those dispensationalist approaches that are confident they can plot the sequence or chronology of end-time events. We also disagree with many of the political beliefs associated with dispensationalism at the popular level (most of these are not embraced by dispensationalist scholars), such as the idea that the present state of Israel is never to be criticized because it is God's chosen people, or that any concessions of land are forbidden on theological grounds.[57]

The contributions to McDermott's edited volume bear out his above quote clearly, with support from both dispensational and non-dispensational authors. Diverse enough to include a chapter on the future of Christian Zionism by Darrell Bock, professor at the markedly dispensational Dallas Theological Seminary, as well as an essay on morality and theology by Shadi Khalloul, an Israeli citizen and Aramean Christian, it is undeniable that this brand of Christian support for the Jewish state has precious little to do with the Left Behind series or Scofield Reference Bible. In fact, in his introduction, McDermott makes frequent use of the "olive

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54 McDermott, *Israel Matters*, xi.
55 McDermott, *Israel Matters*, xiii–xiv.
56 McDermott, *Israel Matters*, xiii.
57 McDermott, *The New Christian Zionism*, 14.

tree" analogy to refer to God's people,[58] a classic symbol of covenant theology and its vision of one united people of God. For NCZ, Israel's destiny is viewed as a part of God's larger story that includes his purposes for both the church and ethnic Israel under one covenant—not with the church and Israel on two distinct tracks, one with an earthly purpose and one a heavenly, as in classical dispensationalism. While a pretribulation rapture is not ruled out *per se*, it is not necessarily required—hence the potential for unity between Pentecostals on both sides of the dispensationalism question.

While dispensationalism itself is a fairly recent development in church history, advocates of NCZ claim that it is, in essence, an ancient doctrine. They draw support from a diverse array of historical voices who have not held to dispensationalism yet insisted on a key role for the Jewish nation, restored to the land, as part of God's eschatological purposes.[59] In contrast to certain traditional Pentecostals, who have been ambivalent toward the idea of a secular Israel, hoping for a restoration of the Old Testament Kingdom (or something resembling it), NCZ celebrates the existence of this Israeli state precisely because it is not a theocracy, having legal protections for ethnic and religious minorities similar to that of other western countries.[60] Notably—and mercifully—NCZ also resists setting dates and pinpointing the timing of eschatological events, which have been popular both in classical dispensational and Pentecostal circles. McDermott writes that NCZ,

> Holds that the schedule of events leading up to and including the eschaton are in God's secret providence. We believe that the return of Jews to the land and their establishment of the state of Israel are partial fulfillments of biblical prophecy and so are part of God's design for what might be a long era of eschatological fulfillment. As Mark Kinzer puts it, today's state of Israel both awaits redemption and is a means to it. It is a proleptic sign of the eschaton, which means that it is a provisional sign of the not-yet-actualized consummation. While a sign of God's final redemption, perhaps a type (divine prefigurement) of the new earth with Israel at its center, the state of Israel is still only a pointer to a far greater consummation to come.[61]

So, advocates of NCZ agree with dispensationalists that a restored Israel is vital to "eschatological fulfillment," but do not demand an airtight chronology of apocalyptic events or relegate God's Kingdom to a future era rather than seeing it as an inaugurated reality.

58 McDermott, *The New Christian Zionism*, 15, 26, 28.
59 McDermott, *The New Christian Zionism*, 27–28.
60 McDermott, *The New Christian Zionism*, 24.
61 McDermott, *The New Christian Zionism*, 14.

NCZ also seems much better positioned to address the plight of the Palestinian people than classical dispensationalism, often criticized for its uncritical support of the Jewish state's actions. This is a matter on which Pentecostalism has a rather unenviable track record; Newberg notes that many of the early Pentecostal missionaries in the land alienated vital co-workers, local Arab pastors and laity, by attaching themselves to the Zionist project without properly considering how this affected Arab believers.[62] They often viewed Arab resistance to the establishment of a Jewish state as a sign of the near return of Christ,[63] not as an outworking of the concerns of a people worried about their own national survival. Denominational publications often fared no better, with a May 1948 issue of the *Evangel* declaring, "the entry of Jews has worked no harm to Arabs"—a striking statement when one considers the enormous refugee crisis triggered by the Arab-Israeli War.[64] NCZ, in contrast, holds the potential to be much more balanced in its assessment of the Middle East's geopolitical realities. One need only recall McDermott's statement that NCZ's proponents reject "the idea that the present state of Israel is never to be criticized because it is God's chosen people, or that any concessions of land are forbidden on theological grounds," to see that this form of Zionism is a far cry from that of the charismatic televangelists,[65] or even old school dispensationalists, who rarely grant that the Palestinians have any right to live in the land as well.[66] Indeed, the very fact that McDermott's volume includes a chapter on the legal questions surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian land dispute,[67] and praises the internal debate in Israeli politics regarding Palestinian relations, shows NCZ to be markedly different from old school dispensationalism, which had given very little attention to such questions.[68] The understanding advanced by McDermott and his colleagues avoids supersessionism, while stopping short of bare nationalism. Moreover, by encouraging a balanced critique of the Jewish state and refusing to close the door on conceding land to a hypothetical Palestinian state, NCZ invites more credibility than other forms of Christian support for Israel. Therefore, it may lend a voice toward encouraging a lasting peace

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62 Newberg, *The Pentecostal Mission in Palestine*, 115.

63 Newberg, *The Pentecostal Mission in Palestine*, 214.

64 *The Pentecostal Evangel* (May 15, 1948), 10.

65 For an example of this combative brand of Zionism, see this article by Texas pastor John Hagee entitled "Who Owns the Land of Israel?" *Israel Hayom,* n.p. [cited June 3, 2020] Online: https://www.israelhayom.com/2020/05/31/who-owns-the-land-of-israel/. Hagee insists that "The land was given to the Jewish people exclusively and eternally in Genesis," and "The concept that the Palestinians have owned the land of Israel in times past that God almighty promised Abraham and the Jewish people forever is one of history's greatest frauds."

66 See, for example, Hindson and LaHaye, *Target Israel*, 145, in which the authors decry the "heresy that this land is the home of the Palestinians."

67 McDermott, *The New Christian Zionism*, 29.

68 McDermott, *The New Christian Zionism*, 24.

in the region. In short, this is not only a new form of Christian Zionism, but a much more responsible one.

What is most striking about NCZ, especially for Pentecostal eschatology, is its ability to bring together dispensationalists and non-dispensationalists around several common convictions. If NCZ has bridged the divide between dispensationalists and covenant theologians within broader Christendom—Aramean Christians, Anglicans, Baptists, and others—could it also accomplish such within the Pentecostal movement? On the one hand, NCZ does not rule out a pre-tribulation rapture, which many Pentecostals insist on; on the other hand, NCZ does not require it, as dispensationalism seems to. NCZ thus allows dispensational Pentecostals to maintain their core convictions, even while enjoying common ground with their covenantal counterparts. For the non-dispensationalist, who insists that not all early Pentecostals were dispensational, NCZ allows them to maintain a unique role for national Israel, even while rejecting a hermeneutic they consider deeply flawed. In bodies like the PAOC, currently engaged in serious reflection over the future of Pentecostal eschatology and its relationship to dispensationalism, the view articulated by McDermott and his colleagues could serve as a timely contribution.

Conclusion

Considering how intensely many of the founders of the Pentecostal Movement were influenced by the idea of Christian Zionism, it is not difficult to understand why the concept continues to hold a powerful influence. Given current trends in Pentecostal academia, and even denominational discussions, however, the question is unavoidable: will Pentecostals still hold a special place for national Israel in God's eschatological plan, even as dispensationalism's influence declines? Considering that NCZ is not grounded in the dispensational framework, it seems to provide a natural starting point for those who, while differing over hermeneutics, reject supersessionism. While some Pentecostals may favour an approach to biblical interpretation in line with the historic Roman Catholic and Reformed traditions, viewing the church as Israel's successor, such is unlikely to be popular with Pentecostal laity, clergy, or even academics who wish to maintain their support for the Jewish nation. Based on their theological tradition and their understanding of Scripture, many Pentecostals will inevitably cling to a distinct and crucial role for Israel in the eschatological plans of God—even those who bear some discomfort with dispensationalism. Indeed, it is on this point that NCZ may prove a rewarding concept for discussion. Given Pentecostalism's uncanny ability to adapt to its time frame and cultural context, as proven by its remarkable global growth over the past century, it will be fascinating to observe how its adherents adjust to this emerging theological challenge.

Prose Prayers of Disorientation in the Hebrew Bible (Genesis to Esther)

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Abstract

Walter Brueggemann maintains that the only subcategory to be accommodated within the general category of disorientation prayers (the other two broad categories being orientation and new orientation) is that of lament. Challenging Brueggemann's proposition, however, Mark J. Boda argues in favor of two subcategories: lament and confidence/penitence (to which he attaches the vow form). Yet even Boda's proposal seems incomplete. By challenging the prevailing consensus, this article demonstrates that within the prose prayers of disorientation in the Hebrew Bible (i.e., within the borders of Genesis and Esther), rather than only two, accommodation should be afforded the following six subcategories: lament, imprecation, vow, penitence, confidence, and thanksgiving praise.

Introduction

Commensurate with the lived reality of human beings, Walter Brueggemann characterizes the prayers of the covenant people of Yahweh God in the Hebrew Bible (HB) into three general forms or categories.

1. Prayers of Orientation—these prayers arise within life situations of well-being that evoke a sense of peace for the constancy of divine blessing. They articulate the confidence, joy, delight, goodness, coherence, and reliability of God, God's creation, and God's governing law. Here, primary accommodation is afforded the subcategory of praise.
2. Prayers of Disorientation—these prayers arise within life situations of hurt, alienation, pain, suffering, and death, which evoke grief, rage, resentment, self-pity, and even hatred. They articulate the raggedness and painful disarray of life to God and permit the extravagance,

hyperbole, and abrasiveness needed for the experience of despair. Here, primary accommodation is afforded the subcategory of lament.

3. Prayers of New Orientation—these prayers arise within life situations of surprised joy when God breaks through despair with a fresh intrusion of felicity as he makes all things new. They articulate the overwhelming happiness that arises when despondency turns into delight on account of the inbreaking of God's new creation. Here, primary accommodation is afforded the subcategory of thanksgiving.[1]

As mentioned above, Brueggemann only affords accommodation to the subcategory of *lament* within the general category of prayers of disorientation.

Appreciative of his proposal, Mark J. Boda remarks, "The basic categories advanced by Walter Brueggemann are helpful because they root the forms of prayer more firmly in human experience."[2] Boda also observes that each of these three general categories find justification in 1 Chr 16:4–6 as "the Chronicler presents David's commission to the Asaphites to 'minister before the ark of the LORD, to make petition [prayers of disorientation], to give thanks [prayers of new/reorientation], and to praise [prayers of orientation] the LORD God of Israel.'"[3] Despite this, Boda nevertheless takes exception particularly to Brueggemann's subcategorization of prayers of disorientation, which allows accommodation only to the lament form. Consequently, in view of what he perceives to be an *Ausblick aufs Lebens* or "the outlook/perspective on life,"[4] Boda develops a two-tier taxonomy of prose prayers of disorientation based on the level of protest in the HB.

i. Disorientation Stage 1 Prayers (i.e., those prayers that arise within a context of distress, expressing despair and longing for salvation; the tone of

1 See Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms: Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2007), 2–4; Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1984), 19–21; Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, ed. Patrick D. Miller (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 8–15. *This article will also be contained in a chapter of my *Compassionate Pastoral Care Practices for Coping with Grief* (Cumbria, UK: Langham Monographs, forthcoming).

2 Mark J. Boda, "Prayer," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*, eds. Bill T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 806.

3 Boda, "Prayer," 807.

4 See Boda, "Prayer," 806–11; Boda, "Form Criticism in Transition: Penitential Prayer and Lament, *Sitz im Leben* and Form," in *Seeking the Favor of God*: *The Origins of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism*, eds. Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk, and Rodney A. Werline, Early Judaism and Its Literature 21 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 1:181–92; Boda, "Varied and Resplendid Riches: Exploring the Breadth and Depth of Worship in the Psalter," in *Rediscovering Worship: Past, Present, Future*, ed. Wendy J. Porter (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015), 61–82.

this type of prayer is noted by the stinging lament questions to God of "why?" and "how long?").[5]

ii. Disorientation Stage 2 Prayers (i.e., those prayers that arise within a context of distress, but with a different tone: on the one hand, they express confidence in God's salvific work,[6] and on the other hand, they express contrition before God's discipline and do not question God's action or inaction, thus, they possess a sense of penitence that God will forgive).[7] Corresponding to Disorientation Stage 2 Prayers is the *vow* form, which according to Boda, "requests something from God and provides a motivation in a human response following the divine intervention (Judg 11:30; 1 Sam 1:11)."[8]

But even with this taxonomy, a lacuna in scholarship still nevertheless persists in relation to the subcategories of the prosaic prayers of disorientation in the HB (i.e., within the borders of Genesis and Esther)[9] and their attention to ancient human experience. This article is thus motivated by a threefold impetus: (i) A plethora of work in recent years has been completed within the poetic prayers of the HB to the virtual neglect of the prosaic prayers, (ii) In comparison to the poetic prayers, the prosaic prayers of the HB yield a greater variety of prayer subcategories, especially those uttered within a generic context of disorientation, and (iii) With the actual generic context of disorientation furnished by the *text* itself, *conjecturing* the life setting of the prayer subcategory no longer becomes a necessity, as is usually the case with the employment of Form Criticism to prayers in the HB (especially the Psalms).

Methodology: Renewed Form Criticism

Generating a robust taxonomy of disorientation subcategories from within the ancient yet timeless context of the prosaic prayers of disorientation in the HB

5 E.g., Josh 7:6–9; Judg 21:2–4; 1 Kgs 17:20–21; described in Judg 2:4; 3:9, 15; 4:3; 6:6; 1 Sam 1:10–18, 27; 8:18; 9:16; Esth 4:1–3. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the NASB 2020.

6 E.g., Josh 10:12; Judg 13:8; 2 Sam 15:30–31; 1 Kgs 3:6–9 // 2 Chr 1:8–10; 1 Kgs 8:22–53 // 2 Chr 6:14–22; 1 Kgs 8:55–61; 18:36–38; 2 Kgs 6:17–20; 19:14–19; 20:2–3; 1 Chr 4:10; 29:10–19; 2 Chr 14:9–11; 20:4–19; Ezra 8:21–23; Neh 5:19; 6:9, 14; 13:14, 22, 29, 30; described in 1 Sam 6:8; 2 Kgs 19:4; 1 Chr 5:20; 2 Chr 15:4; Ezra 6:10; Neh 2:4; 4:9.

7 E.g., Judg 10:10, 15; 1 Sam 6:6; 12:10, 19; 2 Sam 24:10 // 1 Chr 21:8; 2 Sam 24:17 // 1 Chr 21:16–17; 2 Chr 30:19; Ezra 9:1–10:1; Neh 1:4–11; 9:5–37; described in Neh 9:1–5; Ezra 10:6; 2 Chr 33:12–13.

8 Boda, "Form Criticism in Transition," 187–90; Boda, "Prayer," 806–11; Boda, "Varied and Resplendid Riches," 61–82.

9 It is worth acknowledging here that there are prose sections in the prophetic books of the HB, and also that prayers can be identified in those sections as well (e.g., Isa 38). Additionally, though many prosaic prayers are largely poetic, the key here in my decision-making process is that of the context as prosaic, rather than independent or poetic. Noted here also is the fact that while Esther is part of the prosaic section of the HB, no prayer category is yielded therein.

subsequently necessitates the application of what I would like to call *Renewed Form Criticism*. By way of a general description, and in a manner analogous to Old Form Criticism (OFC) and New Form Criticism (NFC), Renewed Form Criticism (RFC) adheres to four fundamental steps in its analysis of the biblical text/unit. But whereas OFC identifies the genre *prior to* seeking out the comparative life setting, in RFC, a generic life setting of orientation, disorientation, or new orientation is established *in advance of* pursuing the subcategory of the text/unit. By reversing steps two and three, this hermeneutical approach will once again undergo another modification, i.e., from OFC to NFC to RFC.[10] The four essential steps of RFC are as follows:

1. Determine the unit—nothing more or nothing less than the entire unit wherein the prayer of orientation, disorientation, or new orientation is positioned is required for the correct identification of the literary stage or subcategory.[11] With regards to this article, the determinative unit will be one wherein the prayer of disorientation is positioned.
2. Describe its setting in life (*Sitz im Leben*)—the original oral social context is assumed to be either the generic life setting of orientation, disorientation, or new orientation. The original social context assumed in this article, however, is that of the generic life setting of *disorientation*. Moreover, the answer to the question regarding the kind of thinking that gave rise to such an expression, as well as the possibility of knowing something about the people from the way they spoke and/or acted, is sought after.[12]

10 See Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi, eds., *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). Gratitude to Boda for assisting me in formulating a name for this new biblical criticism.

11 Tucker, however, prefers "Analysis of the structure," where structure refers to "the outline, the pattern or schema of a given piece of literature or a given genre." Gene M. Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament*, GBS (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 11–12.

12 Tucker prefers "Definition of the setting or settings." Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament*, 11. It is worth mentioning here that NFC prefers to emphasize an intended literary reception/readership rather than an intended oral original context. See e.g., Erhard Blum, "*Formgeschichte*–A Misleading Category? Some Critical Remarks," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-first Century*, eds. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 45. However, in as much as we currently have in our possession the literary texts, it seems inconceivable to think that such literary texts were devoid of an oral lifeform, especially since ancient Israel lived within both an oral and simultaneously literary society. Textual evidence lending its aid to this contention appears in Ps 44:1, "God, we have heard with our ears, / *Our fathers have told us*" (emphasis mine; see also Exod 12:26–27; Deut 6:20; Judg 6:13; Ps 78:3). This, in conjunction with my challenge to OFC that argues for a rigid correspondence between genre and life setting, has encouraged the formation of the research methodology I am here espousing as *Renewed Form Criticism*. Also, in choosing to speak of a generic life setting of disorientation rather than "hard, fixed realities," I concur with Sparks that "comparative taxonomies [are] created by readers." Kenton L. Sparks, "Form Criticism," in *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (New York: Routledge, 2007), 113.

3. Decipher the literary genre (*Gattung*)—in this step, a robust taxonomy of the literary stages or subcategories (*Gattungen*) of prayers of orientation, disorientation, or new orientation will be generated. In reference to this article, however, the robust taxonomy of the literary stages or subcategories will only be related to the prosaic prayers of disorientation in the HB.[13]
4. Discern its purpose—this final step seeks to address the function or purpose of the prosaic prayer of orientation, disorientation, or new orientation. But in the case of this article, it refers to the prosaic prayer of disorientation in the HB in the original oral stage, and also to the purpose it now serves within the larger literary work of which it is part. Accordingly, it seeks to trace what changes took place in the saints of the HB by knowing how these two uses (i.e., oral and written) differ.[14]

Prose Prayers of Disorientation in the HB: From Lament to Thanksgiving Praise

With this in mind, a robust taxonomy of the prose prayers of disorientation in the HB (i.e., within the borders of Genesis and Esther) can now be developed and expanded to include other subcategories that have passed undetected beneath the radar of genre categorization. As we make our way through our genre recategorization, we will continue by looking more closely at the verbal expressions that leaders from within the ancient Israelite community of faith of the HB communicated to/before God amidst a generic life setting of disorientation. Here we will address what I would like to refer to by nomenclature as follows:

- Disorientation Stage 1 Prayers: DS1 Lament
- Disorientation Stage 2 Prayers: DS2 Imprecation
- Disorientation Stage 3 Prayers: DS3 Vow

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13 Tucker prefers "Describing the genre." Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament*, 11. To prevent any further nebulosity regarding 'form' (shape/structure) and 'genre' (type), I have sought to rename this step "Decipher the literary genre (*Gattung*)." In doing so particularly with regards to this article, Boda's two-tier taxonomy (i.e., Disorientation Stage 1 Prayers and Disorientation Stage 2 Prayers) will move to another level. In seeking after a robust taxonomy of prosaic prayers of disorientation stages in the HB, however, it is not my intention to pursue an ideal genre/stage/subcategory, but rather a 'diagnostic tool' that will enable Bible students to correctly divide and analyze the Word of God through a careful distinction of the assortment and mixture of the prosaic prayers of disorientation in the HB. At the same time, by moving from the generic life situation of disorientation *prior to* deciphering the genre, rather than vice versa, it is hoped that Bible students will avoid further literary nomenclature squabbles over identifying the genre of the prayer as either prayers of lament, complaint, protest, petitions, or even prayer, etc. In other words, the names given to the variety of disorientation prayers in this article will simply be as follows: *Disorientation Stage 1* through *6 Prayers*.

14 Tucker prefers "Statement of the intent, purpose, or function of the text." Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament*, 11.

- Disorientation Stage 4 Prayers: DS4 Penitential
- Disorientation Stage 5 Prayers: DS5 Confidence
- Disorientation Stage 6 Prayers: DS6 Thanksgiving Praise[15]

Each of these stages or subcategories of prose prayers uttered to Yahweh within a generic life situation of disorientation will be developed below.

Disorientation Stage 1 Prayers: DS1 Lament

The first and the majority subcategory accommodated within the prose prayers of disorientation in the HB is Disorientation Stage 1 Prayers: DS1 Lament. Strangely, however, the first recorded lament is heard *metaphorically* from a deceased person: "The voice of your brother's [Abel] blood is crying out to Me [Yahweh] from the ground" (Gen 4:10). And as Sanballat and Geshem conspire to terrify Nehemiah and all those working to rebuild the city wall of Jerusalem, the final recorded lament comes from Nehemiah: "But now, *God*, strengthen my hands" (Neh 6:9).

Sandwiched in between are the laments of the patriarchs and matriarchs. Abraham prays to Yahweh for an heir amidst Sarah's barrenness (Gen 15:2); Hagar intercedes for the life of her son Ishmael (Gen 21:16b); Ishmael cries out to God amidst malnutrition (Gen 21:17); Isaac intercedes on behalf of his barren wife Rebekah (Gen 25:21); Rebekah inquires of Yahweh concerning the conflict between her twin sons within her stomach (v. 22); Leah prays to God for another child (Gen 30:17); and Jacob entreats God for deliverance from his twin brother Esau (Gen 32:9–12).

Additionally, the children of Israel groan under the weight of their oppression (Exod 2:23–24; 3:7–9); Moses laments his inability to lead the children of Israel out of bondage under Pharaoh (Exod 3:11; 4:1); and Joshua questions God concerning the serious blow he and the army of Israel experience at the hands of the men of Ai (Josh 7:7–10). And during the days of the judges, not only do the children of Israel repeatedly cry out to God for deliverance (Judg 10:10, 15), but even one of the judges, Gideon, adjures the angel of Yahweh to determine whether or not Yahweh is really with his people (Judg 6:13).

Similarly, the prophets pour out their laments to Yahweh. Samuel cries out to Yahweh for the people of Israel as the elders demand a king like that of the

15 Rather than by the presence of the precise words in the text, such as lament, imprecation, vow, etc., the nomenclature of each of these subcategories of prose prayers of disorientation in the HB (e.g., DS1 Lament, DS2 Imprecation, DS3 Vow, etc.) arises from their intrinsic characteristics (e.g., DS3 Vow prayers include the words "If . . . then. . . ."). Also, as noted earlier, in his two-tier taxonomy, Boda divides prayers uttered amidst disorientation into Disorientation Stage 1 Prayers (lament) and Disorientation Stage 2 Prayers (confidence/penitence-vow). But for the purpose of this article, Boda's Disorientation Stage 2 Prayers are recategorized as follows: Vow prayers are recategorized as *Disorientation Stage 3 Prayers: DS3 Vow*, penitential prayers are recategorized as *Disorientation Stage 4 Prayers: DS4 Penitential*, and confidence prayers are recategorized as *Disorientation Stage 5 Prayers: DS5 Confidence*. For additional details, see below.

surrounding nations (1 Sam 8:6); Elijah intercedes for the life of the deceased son of the widow at Zarephath to be restored to him (1 Kgs 17:21); Elisha intercedes for the life of the deceased son of the Shunammite woman to be restored to him (2 Kgs 4:33); Isaiah mediates on behalf of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20:11); Ezra seeks God for both his personal protection as well as for all those returning to Jerusalem (Ezra 8:21, 23); and Nehemiah prays to God for help as he stands in front of King Artaxerxes requesting his favor to return and rebuild the city of Jerusalem (Neh 2:4).

Furthermore, the kings also cry to Yahweh for help. Saul inquires of God concerning his battle against the Philistines (1 Sam 28:6); David inquires of God concerning the life of the child to be born through his clandestine intercourse with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam 12:16); Hezekiah petitions God for healing from his illness (2 Kgs 20:3); through the prophetess Huldah, Josiah inquires of God for himself, the people, and all Judah concerning the words of the book of the law (2 Kgs 22:13–14); and Manasseh entreats God while in captivity (2 Chr 33:12).

Here, only a sample of the plethora of the lament prayers, both individual and communal, have been furnished. Claus Westermann points out that, "The texts in the O.T. show that throughout its history (that is, both in the Psalms and its earlier and later development) lamentation is a phenomenon characterized by three dominant elements: the one who laments, God, and the others, i.e., that circle of people among whom or against whom the one who laments stands with a complaint."[16] In his description of lament prayers, Allen P. Ross proffers that

> Laments are cries to God in times of need, whether sickness, affliction, slander, war, or some other crisis. In ancient Israel, the worshiper could cry out to God anytime, anywhere; but if possible, he would normally go to the sanctuary to offer the petition, and in many cases the officiating priest might offer the prayer on his behalf. Laments form the starting point of the prayer and praise cycle.[17]

Accordingly, prayers begin with lament and end with thanksgiving praise, though not always *after* or outside a crisis situation, but even *amidst* a life setting of disorientation, as will be demonstrated later.

Although not the norm, there are times when the brunt of the anguish of the lament prayer is directed towards *Yahweh*. As June F. Dickie remarks, "The essence of lament is the relationship with God, the lamenter's refusal to give up the relationship, even as he/she grapples with God about *God's part* in the

16 Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 53–54, 66–69, 169.
17 Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 1:111.

difficulty being experienced."[18] But even when God himself is responsible for the problem at hand, there is still no one else that the supplicant would rather turn to for deliverance than the covenant-keeping God of Israel whose name is Yahweh.[19] And even "When Yahweh is not to be blamed, he is nonetheless regarded as the only one who can intervene in a decisive and helpful way."[20]

DS1 lament prayers can therefore be described as those prayers that arise out of a situation of disorientation,[21] the anguished plea or passionate cry for help of the supplicant indicative of the fact that the supplicant is helpless, in grief and despair, and thus in desperate need of Yahweh's salvific intervention.[22] Even on occasion when Yahweh appears to be the enemy, Yahweh is nonetheless the only deliverer whom the supplicant clings mightily to. While it is not atypical for DS1 lament prayers to ask the stinging protest question of "Why?", when words are difficult to come by, *groans*,[23] which are deep, inarticulate, and mournful sounds, are evoked from the heart of the supplicant, consequently activating Yahweh's compassionate response in effecting his salvific rescue mission in favor of the helpless supplicant. At the same time, it should be noted that even beyond Yahweh's salvific intervention on behalf of the supplicant, or even the "recovery of communion with God,"[24] is that of the ultimate goal of lament prayers, which is nothing short of thanksgiving praise prayers to Yahweh, the God who saves.[25] It

18 June F. Dickie, "Practising Healthy Theology in the Local Church: Lamenting with Those in Pain and Restoring Hope," *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 7.1 (2021) np. http://dx.doi.org/10.17570/stj.2021.v7n1.a3; emphasis mine. See for example, Exod 5:22–23; cf. 32:11–13; Num 11:11–15, 21–22; 16:22; Josh 7:7–9; Judg 6:13.

19 See also Longman III, *How to Read the Psalms*, 27.

20 Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 89.

21 Balentine states that, "lament has its origin in the existential experience of suffering." Samuel E. Balentine, *Prayer in the Hebrew Bible: The Drama of Divine-Human Dialogue*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 168.

22 See also my "Recovering the Language of Lament for the Western Evangelical Church: A Survey of the Psalms of Lament and their Appropriation within Pastoral Theology," *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry* 16 (2014–2015): 102–103, 120.

23 See also Exod 6:5; Judg 2:18; cf. Job 3:24; 23:3; 24:12; Pss 12:5; 22:1; 38:8; 79:11; 102:5, 20; Acts 7:34; Rom 8:22–23, 26; 2 Cor 5:2, 4.

24 William M. Soll, "The Israelite Lament: Faith Seeking Understanding," *QR* 8 (1988): 79. This of course assumes that there is a disruption in the divine-human dialogue of which Ellington observes, "Biblical lament at its core is about the threat of the breakdown of relationship between the one praying and his or her covenant partner." Scott A. Ellington, *Risking Truth: Reshaping the World through Prayers of Lament*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 98 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008), 10.

25 See also Craig C. Broyles, "Lament, Psalms of," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, eds. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 396; and my "Recovering the Language of Lament for the Western Evangelical Church," 120. See below for a more detailed discussion of thanksgiving praise prayers to Yahweh albeit amidst a generic life setting of disorientation rather than orientation or new orientation. For examples of thanksgiving praise prayers amidst a generic life setting of new orientation, see Gen 29:35; 2 Chr 5:13; 29:30; Ezra 3:10–11; Neh 12:27–43. For examples of thanksgiving praise prayers uttered amidst a generic life setting of orientation, see 1 Chr 16:4; 23:5; 29:10–20; 2 Chr 7:3, 6; 23:12.

thus seems reasonable to aver that thanksgiving praise prayers ring hollow where DS1 lament prayers to Yahweh are not first articulated.

Disorientation Stage 2 Prayers: DS2 Imprecation

The second subcategory accommodated within the prose prayers of disorientation in the HB is Disorientation Stage 2 Prayers: DS2 Imprecation. As the children of Israel proceed from the mountain of Yahweh to a resting place of Yahweh's choosing, Moses adjures Yahweh to "Rise up, LORD! And may Your enemies be scattered, and those who hate You flee from Your presence" (Num 10:35). Then, in the context of a wrangle between him and Dathan and Abiram (the sons of Eliab), an exasperated Moses petitions God to "Pay no attention to their offering!" (Num 16:15a).

Subsequent to his capture at the hands of the Philistines, Samson approaches Yahweh with this imprecation: "Lord God, please remember me and please strengthen me just this time, O God, that I may at once take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes" (Judg 16:28).

In 2 Sam 3:28–29, David brings the following imprecation to Yahweh: "I and my kingdom are innocent before the LORD forever of the blood of Abner the son of Ner. May it turn upon the head of Joab and on all his father's house; and may there not be eliminated from the house of Joab someone who suffers a discharge, or has leprosy, or holds the spindle, or falls by the sword, or lacks bread." Additionally, in 2 Sam 3:39, David petitions Yahweh, "May the LORD repay the evildoer in proportion to his evil." Then upon learning of Ahithophel's machination with Absalom to usurp his throne in Jerusalem (see vv. 12, 31a), David implores Yahweh, "LORD, please make the advice of Ahithophel foolish" (2 Sam 15:31b).

As the Aramean army plots to capture him, the prophet Elisha importunes Yahweh, "Please strike this people with blindness" (2 Kgs 6:18). When the sons of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir attempt an incursion on the southern kingdom of Judah, King Jehoshaphat enters the house of Yahweh, and as he stands in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, he prays:

> LORD, God of our fathers, are You not God in the heavens? And are You not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You. Did You not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land from Your people Israel, and give it to the descendants of Your friend Abraham forever? They have lived in it, and have built You a sanctuary in it for Your name, saying, 'If disaster comes upon us, the sword, *or* judgment, or plague, or famine, we will stand before this house and before You (for Your name is in this house) and cry out to You in our distress, and You will

> hear and save *us*'. Now behold, the sons of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, whom You did not allow Israel to invade when they came out of the land of Egypt (for they turned aside from them and did not destroy them), see *how* they are rewarding us by coming to drive us out from Your possession which You have given us as an inheritance. *Our God, will You not judge them*? For we are powerless before this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You.' (2 Chr 20:5–12; emphasis mine)

Then as Sanballat and Tobiah stir up trouble and mock the Jews engaged in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, Nehemiah entreats Yahweh, "Hear, O our God, how we are *an object of* contempt. Return their taunting on their own heads, and turn them into plunder in a land of captivity. Do not forgive their guilt and do not let their sin be wiped out before You, for they have demoralized the builders" (Neh 4:4–5).[26] Two chapters later, Nehemiah prays, "Remember, my God, Tobiah and Sanballat in accordance with these works of theirs, and also Noadiah the prophetess and the rest of the prophets who were *trying* to frighten me" (Neh 6:14).[27] Finally, Nehemiah beseeches Yahweh against some of the Jews guilty of engaging in intermarriage, "Remember them, my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites" (Neh 13:29; Lev 11:44–45). While Nehemiah's cries for divine remembrance in the latter two prayers do not explicitly state a curse against his opponents, the tone or mood appears to be one of divine judgment. The fact that he also chases one of his own Jewish counterparts away from him (Neh 13:28) gives the impression of something unpleasant in Nehemiah's supplication for Yahweh to remember those who have defiled the priesthood.[28]

From the examples furnished above, it is noted that the supplicant's imprecation can be directed against one internally (Num 16:15; Neh 13:29), or externally related to the covenant community of Yahweh (2 Kgs 6:18; Neh 4:4–5; 6:14). By submitting their imprecation to Yahweh, the supplicants—Moses, Samson, David,

26 Note the contrast in Neh 13:14 where the prophet asks Yahweh not to blot out his loyal deeds performed for the house of God and its services.

27 Whenever Nehemiah petitions Yahweh to remember him, it is always for his good (Neh 13:14, 22, 31). Contrast this with Nehemiah's adjuration of Yahweh to remember his opponents such as Sanballat, Tobiah, and Noadiah, and even those who defiled the priesthood, it is (6:14; 13:29).

28 Nehemiah's cry for divine remembrance with an implicit cry for divine imprecation in Neh 6:14, appears to bear a modicum of semblance to that of Ps 137, wherein the psalmist cries out to God: "Remember, LORD, against the sons of Edom" (v. 7; cf. 83:6), even while sitting by the rivers of Babylon, weeping, and remembering Zion (v. 1). See also McCann's comments on Ps 137 and the importance of remembrance/memory by the psalmist's in relation to Zion/Jerusalem. McCann further notes that while not explicit, "this submission of anger to God obviates the need for actual revenge on the enemy." J. Clinton McCann, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 118–19.

Elisha, Jehoshaphat, and Nehemiah—thus avert the fatal error of vengeance (Lev 19:18), the sole prerogative of Yahweh the just Judge of all the earth (Deut 32:35; Ps 94:1; Isa 35:4; Nah 1:2; cf. Rom 12:19; Heb 10:30). Imprecatory prayers, however, are not simply complaints about the experiences of injustice at the hands of the unrighteous, but rather complaints submitted to Yahweh for the express purpose of "*moving God to be just*. These are prayers offered in the certain conviction that God must stay in the world as a God of justice,"[29] as Samuel E. Balentine avers.

What is therefore being emphasised here is that imprecatory prayers calling for the administration of Yahweh's justice are indeed prayed within a prosaic context of disorientation.[30] Patrick D. Miller maintains that, "The corollary of blessing is curse. . . . While such curse prayers, or imprecation, as they are sometimes called, do not seem to be as numerous as the blessings, they are present, most noticeably within the Psalms."[31] Miller further affirms that, "In form they are similar to the blessings. That is, the curses are a prayer-wish, usually jussive in form, 'May the Lord do . . . .' The content, however, is a prayer for disaster of some sort to fall upon another individual or group. . . . As with the blessings, the Lord is not always mentioned in the curse, but the divine agency is to be assumed and frequently made explicit."[32] By inference, DS2 imprecatory prayers acknowledge before Yahweh that the predicament at hand from which the supplicant seeks divine deliverance has been instigated by the supplicant's opponent(s) who is believed to be deserving of divine punishment. From the aforementioned data, it is further observed that DS2 imprecatory prayers even periodically venture boldly to explicate the manner in which Yahweh should administer his judgment or curse upon the supplicant's opponent(s).

This is not to say that Yahweh responds in conformity with the supplicant's entreaty, but it nevertheless allows for Yahweh's human covenant and righteous prayer partners to adjure him with such detailed intensity without ever being censured by him. In this way, Yahweh implicitly sanctions their supplications for divine imprecation to be inflicted upon their enemy, be it that of a person who is internal or external to the covenant community. In DS2 imprecatory prayers, with

29 Balentine, *Prayers in the Hebrew Bible*, 286; emphasis original. Alternatively stated, should Yahweh forget it, evil will have free rein to perpetuate its unimaginable and ineffable horrors. When Yahweh remembers it, however, evil is brought to justice by God the righteous Judge, thus allowing for the perpetuity of justice rather than evil on God's good earth.

30 Prior to this article, neither Brueggemann nor Boda considered imprecation as a subcategory within the prose prayers of disorientation in the HB.

31 Patrick D. Miller Jr., *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994), 299–300. While the majority of imprecatory invocations are positioned within the Psalter (e.g., Pss 5, 6, 11, 12, 35, 40, 52, 54, 56, 58, 69, 79, 83, 89, 109, 137, 139, and 143), a minimal amount is observed within the prophetic corpus (e.g., Hos 10:14–15; Mic 7:16–17; Jer 8:21–22).

32 Miller, *They Cried to the Lord*, 300.

a verdict of guilty having been reached by the righteous supplicant, albeit in light of Yahweh's righteous law, justice must be meted out in vengeance against the one(s) who has acted unjustly toward Yahweh's righteous servant, and that by the righteous Judge of all the earth. For Yahweh's righteous supplicant then, the underlying supposition is thus: "Since God is a righteous God, God will protect those who seek to live in a righteous way and punish the evildoers."[33] Otherwise stated, "The appeal is not to the enemy that the enemy should desist, for that is a hopeless plea. The appeal is that Yahweh should intervene to right the situation and punish the destabiliser."[34]

DS2 imprecatory prayers can therefore be described as those prayers that arise out of a situation of disorientation whose contents are that of either an implicit or explicit cry for divine judgment or curse to be administered to one's opponent(s). In DS2 imprecatory prayers, the source of the emergency at hand is the opponent(s) whose identity can be either one that is internal or external to the covenant community of Yahweh. DS2 imprecatory prayers call on Yahweh to right the wrong that has been committed, and in his perfect justice, execute his righteous judgment upon the unscrupulous offender(s), with the objective of reversing instability, and resuming peaceful (*shalom*) relations within a human-to-human dynamic.

Disorientation Stage 3 Prayers: DS3 Vow

The third subcategory accommodated within the prose prayers of disorientation in the HB is Disorientation Stage 3 Prayers: DS3 Vow. In Num 21:2, as the Canaanites take up arms against them, Israel entreats Yahweh, "If You will indeed hand over this people to me, then I will utterly destroy their cities." Then in Judg 11:30–31, as the sons of Ammon wage war against the children of Israel, Jephthah implores Yahweh, "If You will indeed hand over to me the sons of Ammon, then whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return safely from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the LORD's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering." Regrettably, the text says that "At the end of two months she [Jephthah's daughter] returned to her father, who did to her what he had vowed" (11:39a). And struggling with infertility, Hannah beseeches Yahweh, "LORD of armies, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your bond-servant and remember me, and not forget Your bond-servant, but will give Your bond-servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head"

33 José E. A. Chiu, *The Psalms: An Introduction* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2014), 51.
34 Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 88.

(1 Sam 1:10–11). Finally, Absalom *apparently* prays to Yahweh, "If the LORD will indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD" (2 Sam 15:7–8).[35]

In the four examples listed above, it is observed that the *vow* subcategory stands *alone*; it neither accompanies prayers of penitence, nor prayers of confidence, as suggested by Boda.[36] As a matter of fact, the presence of the word "if" within vow prayers appear to indicate an *absence*, rather than a presence of confidence. There is thus no assurance on the part of the supplicant that Yahweh will answer favorably. Nevertheless, the supplicant brings their vow before Yahweh in hopes that Yahweh's response will be in their favor.

What is also worth mentioning here is that while Westermann refers to the vow as "a vow of praise,"[37] as evidenced in our four examples, there is *no* vow of praise to Yahweh inherently connected to the vow prayer. In each of these situations, thanksgiving praise does not accompany the vow, but rather occurs sometime *after* Yahweh responds favorably (e.g., Hannah's praise comes at least nine months later; see 1 Sam 2:1–10).

DS3 vow prayers can thus be described as those prayers that arise from within a context of disorientation, wherein the supplicant presents a conditional petition to Yahweh (If . . .), which is accompanied by a promise to do something in favor of Yahweh which the supplicant deems approving to Yahweh should Yahweh deliver the supplicant (Then . . .). It is this *promise* that thus appears to function as the motivating factor for the divine favorable answer. In response to obtaining Yahweh's deliverance, the supplicant then proceeds to honor their part of the vow to Yahweh. Punctuated here, however, is the fact that the supplicant's vow prayers are made amidst a life context of disorientation, yet without any connection to penitence or confidence or even thanksgiving praise.

Disorientation Stage 4 Prayers: DS4 Penitential

The fourth subcategory accommodated within the prose prayers of disorientation is Disorientation Stage 4 Prayers: DS4 Penitential. In Exod 32:31–32, Moses petitions Yahweh, "Oh, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves! But now, if You will forgive their sin, *very well*; but if not, please wipe me out from Your book which You have written." Nehemiah 9:5–38 appears to be the final penitential prose prayer of disorientation in the HB. Here, the following penitent words shine through:

35 The word *apparently* is employed here because it is uncertain whether Absalom actually made this vow to Yahweh. In light of the succeeding verses, it would appear that he told his father David about this supposed vow with the intention of gaining his father's approval so that he could go to Hebron and conspire with his followers *against* his father for the purpose of usurping David's throne. Nevertheless, the vow is included here as it is a vow found within a prosaic context of disorientation.

36 Boda, "Transition," 187–90; Boda, "Prayer," 806–11; Boda, "Varied," 61–82.

37 Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 77.

> Now then, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps *His* covenant and faithfulness, do not let the hardship seem insignificant before You, which has happened to us, our kings, our leaders, our priests, our prophets, our fathers, and to all Your people, from the day of the kings of Assyria to this day. However, You are righteous in everything that has happened to us; for You have dealt faithfully, but we have acted wickedly (Neh 9:32–33).

Sandwiched between these two Scripture references, one finds the prophet Moses constantly mediating on behalf of the children of Israel who make it a habit of offending Yahweh, and thus kindling his anger. So, for example, when the children of Israel grumble against Moses and Aaron, even desiring to return to Egypt, thus igniting Yahweh's anger, Moses steps in and importunes Yahweh for their forgiveness (Num 14:13–19). And when Yahweh directs fiery serpents to infuse their venom into their bodies, killing some of them, Moses intervenes as he acknowledges their sin and implores Yahweh to pardon them (Num 21:7).

In Num 22:34, Balaam confesses his sin to the angel of Yahweh, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the way against me." According to Judg 10:10, the sons of Israel cry out to Yahweh, "We have sinned against You, for indeed, we have abandoned our God and served the Baals." Upon realizing their sin in demanding a king like that of the nations around them, Samuel and all Israel pray to Yahweh, "We have sinned against the LORD" (1 Sam 7:6). Approaching the prophet Samuel after failing to utterly destroy everything belonging to the Amalekites, Saul confesses, "I have sinned, for I have violated the command of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice. Now then, please pardon my sin and return with me, so that I may worship the LORD" (1 Sam 15:24–25; cf. v. 30). Rebuking him for his adultery with Bathsheba, and the murder of Uriah, David confesses his sin to the prophet Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD" (2 Sam 12:13). David also confesses his sin to Yahweh for taking the census of Israel and Judah, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, LORD, please overlook the guilt of Your servant, for I have acted very foolishly" (2 Sam 24:10; cf. vv. 14, 17; see also 1 Chr 21:8). Recognizing the danger of partaking in the Passover meal without being purified, Hezekiah entreats Yahweh in support of the unholy multitude of people, "May the good LORD pardon everyone who prepares his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though not according to the purification *rules* of the sanctuary" (2 Chr 30:18–19). And in Ezra 9:1–10:1 the penultimate penitential prayer is heard from Ezra the priest and scribe as he confesses to Yahweh that His people, Israel, have engaged in unlawful intermarriage with the peoples of the land—the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites.

Ezra 9:15 reads, "LORD God of Israel, You are righteous, for we have been left an escaped remnant, as *it is* this day; behold, we are before You in our guilt, for no one can stand before You because of this."

From the few examples submitted here, DS4 penitential prayers embrace a confession of sin and a plea for forgiveness, either directly from Yahweh, or through the mediation of one of Yahweh's prophets. Whereas in most disorientation prayers "blame for a lamentable condition is attached to enemies or to sickness" (e.g., DS1, DS2, DS3), Craig C. Broyles maintains that penitential prayers tend to be "introspective before God."[38] As such, the awareness of sin appears to be prompted either "by circumstances or the inner conscience instructed by God."[39] Resting on the foundation of Yahweh's grace, compassion, slow anger, abundant faithfulness, and forgiving nature (see Exod 34:6–7), however, the penitent pray-er appeals to Yahweh for forgiveness, and with it, the restoration of the ruptured relationship. It is worth underscoring here that the basis for the forgiveness of sin and simultaneous restoration of the divine-human relationship is not primarily contingent upon the repentance of the penitent pray-er,[40] but rather on account of *Yahweh's* forgiving character. By virtue of his intrinsic character to pardon the authentically penitent pray-er, Yahweh does not despise a heart that comes broken and contrite before him (see Pss 34:18; 51:17; Isa 66:2).

DS4 penitential prayers can thus be described as those prayers that arise amidst a situation of disorientation wherein the pray-er, through introspection, comes to the realization that they have sinned against Yahweh, which has resulted in a rupture within the divine-human relationship (cf. Isa 59:2). Accordingly, for restoration to occur, the penitent pray-er sincerely repents of their sin(s) and/or that of the covenant community, and receives Yahweh's merciful forgiveness, which is entirely predicated upon Yahweh, whose inherent nature it is to forgive all who are humble and contrite of spirit, and who tremble at his word.

Disorientation Stage 5 Prayers: DS5 Confidence

The fifth subcategory accommodated within the prose prayers of disorientation in the HB is Disorientation Stage 5 Prayers: DS5 Confidence. In Gen 20:17, Abraham intercedes for Yahweh's healing upon Abimelech, and especially his wife and maids whose wombs Yahweh has closed in view of the fact that Abimelech takes Sarah as his wife, even while she remains Abraham's wife, and not his sister. In Exod 8:12, Moses cries to Yahweh concerning the removal of the frogs. Then

38 Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 226.

39 Broyles, *Psalms*, 226.

40 See also Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 15–16 (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 219.

in Exod 9:30, Moses supplicates Yahweh concerning the removal of the thunder and hail.

Confidence is the category assigned to each of these three cries to Yahweh in view of the fact that in each case, the supplicant is certain or confident that Yahweh will hear and answer favorably (see Gen 20:7; Exod 8:10–11; 9:29). Confidence prayers, specifies Mark D. Futato, "lack the anguish and the structural elements that characterize the laments."[41] They express a sense of confidence in "God's power to save,"[42] even while Yahweh's salvation is yet to be realized. This confidence is possible, however, not only because the supplicant firmly believes that Yahweh is ever-present to hear and to help (cf. Ps 23:4), but also because Yahweh's ability to help the supplicant has already (in)directly been hinted at or disclosed *even prior to* the supplicant's petition.

Thus, in the case of Abimelech acquiring Sarah the wife of Abraham as his wife or concubine, Yahweh appears to Abimelech in a dream, and says to him, "Now then, *return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live*. But if you do not return her, know that you will certainly die, you and all who are yours" (Gen 20:7; emphasis mine). Then in v. 17 we read, "And Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his female slaves, so that they gave birth *to children*."

In Moses' first example, Pharaoh implores Moses to plead with Yahweh to remove the frogs (Exod 8:8). Moses then replies, "The honor is yours to tell me: when shall I plead for you and your servants and your people, that the frogs be destroyed from you and your houses, *that* they be left only in the Nile" (Exod 8:9)? After Pharaoh replies "Tomorrow," Moses then says to him, "*May it be* according to your word, so that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God. *The frogs will depart* from you and your houses, and from your servants and your people; they will be left only in the Nile" (v. 10; emphasis mine). At this, Moses petitions Yahweh concerning the frogs, and Yahweh does exactly according to the word of Moses: the frogs die outside of the houses, the courtyards, and the fields (vv. 12–13). Then in Moses' second example, Pharaoh implores Moses and Aaron to plead with Yahweh to remove the thunder and hail (9:28). Moses subsequently responds, "As soon as I go out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the LORD; *the thunder will cease and there will no longer be hail*, so that you may know that the earth is the LORD's" (v. 29; emphasis mine). Four verses later, we read, "So Moses left the city from *his meeting* with Pharaoh, and spread out

41 Mark D. Futato, *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook*, Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 160.

42 Futato, *Interpreting the Psalms*, 161.

his hands to the LORD; and the thunder and the hail stopped, and rain no longer poured on the earth" (v. 33).[43]

DS5 confidence prayers can therefore be described as those prayers that arise out of a context of disorientation, the pray-er confident of Yahweh's ever-abiding and comforting presence as well as his forthcoming favorable answer. This favorable answer, however, comes as a revelation to the supplicant, disclosed (in)directly by Yahweh even prior to the supplicant's petition. Owing to this prior knowledge, DS5 confidence prayers therefore lack the discomfort and uncertainty of lament, imprecation, penitence, or even a vow, yet they occur in the life context of disorientation. However, the confidence of a favorable answer is awakened for the very reason that there is a guaranteed assurance that Yahweh's mighty deliverance will prevail.

Disorientation Stage 6 Prayers: DS6 Thanksgiving Praise

The final subcategory accommodated within the prose prayers of disorientation in the HB is Disorientation Stage 6 Prayers: DS6 Thanksgiving Praise. In 2 Chr 20, the sons of Moab, the sons of Ammon, and some of the Meunites band together to make war against Jehoshaphat king of Judah. Following his DS2 imprecatory prayer to Yahweh (vv. 6–12), and Jahaziel's priestly word of victory, we read in vv. 18–19, "Jehoshaphat bowed his head with *his* face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. The Levites, from the sons of the Kohathites and from the sons of the Korahites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel, with a loud voice." Furthermore, on the day of the battle, we read in vv. 21–22 that,

> When he [Jehoshaphat] had consulted with the people, he appointed those who sang to the LORD and those who praised *Him* in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, 'Give thanks to the LORD, for His faithfulness is everlasting'. When they began singing and praising, the LORD set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come up against Judah; so they were struck down.

Accordingly, on both days, even within the life context of disorientation (since the battle is yet to be fought and the victory won), there is a joyful outburst of thanksgiving praise prayers to Yahweh.

Jacob M. Myers suggests, "Apparently the writer viewed the whole expedition as a holy war, since the cultic personnel accompanied the army and played a

43 Perhaps, in consideration of his speech impediment (Exod 4:10), this was Moses' sign language to Yahweh.

major role in the campaign."[44] At the same time, John A. Thompson avers, "Whereas in most battles a battle cry is heard, here it is replaced by singing and praise."[45] In contradistinction to Thompson, however, Louis C. Jonker posits "The Chronicler conducts this battle with the liturgy of a holy war: the vanguard is to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness. *Their battle cry is*, Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever (20:21)."[46] In this regard, Raymond B. Dillard's remark seems apt: "One must not forget the role of music in warfare. . . . Particularly within Israel's tradition of holy war, music has been assigned an important function (13:11–12; Josh 6:4–20; Judg 7:18–20; Job 39:24–25); music accompanies the appearance of the divine warrior to execute judgment."[47] And this is precisely what is in view in 2 Chr 20:21–22.

As noted earlier, Brueggemann maintains that prayers of thanksgiving praise surface only within a context of new orientation, on the other side of disorientation. For him, the occasion for such thanksgiving praise prayer is that "the speaker has complained to God and God has acted in response to the lament. The result of God's intervention is that the old issue has been overcome. The speech concerns a rescue, intervention, or inversion of a quite concrete situation of distress which is still fresh in the mind of the speaker."[48] On a similar note, Boda contends, "The condition of disorientation does not endure forever, and when it is resolved and the supplicant experiences salvation, a new form of prayer is employed: the prayer of reorientation—that is, the prayer thanking God for salvation from distress."[49]

Far from being the case, however, it is observed that the context of the situation at hand in 2 Chr 20:21–22a is *not* new/reorientation but rather *disorientation*, for God is *yet* to act favorably on behalf of the supplicant(s) effecting divine

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44 Jacob M. Myers, *II Chronicles: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB 13 (New York: Doubleday, 1965), 116.

45 John A. Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, NAC 9 (Nashville: B&H, 1994), 295.

46 Louis C. Jonker, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 231; emphasis mine. Here it is also worth mentioning the words of Holladay who observes that, "the same word that has been translated 'beauty' or 'array' (Hebrew *hadrat*) turns up in a Ugaritic text in parallelism with the word meaning 'dream' or 'vision'. . . . That is to say, the word in Ugaritic does not mean 'beauty' or 'ornament' but '(splendor of) divine visitation' or 'revelation'. It refers to a theophany, an appearance of the god. . . . The word does not refer to the vestments of the worshipers but to the glory of God." William L. Holladay, *The Psalms through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 20. On this note, it seems more plausible to say that the Levitical musicians and singers in 2 Chr 20:21 did not necessarily (or only) worship Yahweh in their holy attire, but rather (or also) amidst Yahweh's holy visitation or revelation.

47 Raymond B. Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, WBC 15 (Dallas: Word, 1987), 158.

48 Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 126. See also Pemberton who argues that "Laments [lead] to thanksgiving, to a New Orientation." Glen Pemberton, *After Lament: Psalms for Learning to Trust Again* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2014), 89.

49 Boda, "Prayer," 807.

victory.[50] Nonetheless, the supplicant, explodes in doxological thanksgiving praise to Yahweh. Which is to say that the situation is still one of distress wherein Yahweh's salvific intervention is yet forthcoming. Contrary to Brueggemann, it is not on the other side of, but rather *inside* of disorientation that such jubilant thanksgiving praise surges. Even if there is an oracle of salvation from, for example, a priestly voice such as Jahaziel (vv. 14–17)[51] that foreshadows divine deliverance, Yahweh has not yet fully and favorably answered the supplicant(s) in DS6 thanksgiving praise prayers; the prayer is yet to be answered completely on the battlefield when Yahweh effects victory on behalf of His covenant supplicant(s) for the sake of His great Name. Through a priestly voice, Yahweh evidently commits Himself to acting favorably on behalf of the supplicant(s) who eagerly anticipate Yahweh making good on His promise of victory on their behalf. Yahweh thus becomes the object of the supplicant(s) vivacious thanksgiving praise even amidst disorientation because the supplicant(s) is fully assured that Yahweh will be faithful to His promise (see also Josh 21:45; 23:14; Jer 1:12).

DS6 thanksgiving praise prayers can thus be described as those prayers that arise out of a situation of disorientation, the content of which is thanksgiving praise, even in anticipation of the actualization of Yahweh's deliverance in favor of His covenant people. Located not within a context of new/reorientation, as is typically the case, but rather amidst a context of disorientation, DS6 thanksgiving praise prayers might be accompanied by a priestly word of divine deliverance, yet it nevertheless awaits a visibly manifested favorable answer from Yahweh. Owing therefore to a promise of imminent salvation through Yahweh's priestly messenger (which might then contribute to a positive outlook/perspective on life, as noted by Boda),[52] DS6 thanksgiving praise prayers go a step further than DS5 vow prayers, and thus lift an extolling voice of thanksgiving praise to Yahweh, even in the intermission of an oracle of salvation and its subsequent fulfillment, which is still nonetheless, a context of disorientation.

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50 Interestingly, prior to this article, thanksgiving praise was not afforded accommodation within the prose prayers of disorientation in the HB.

51 See also 1 Sam 1:17 where Eli offers a priestly word of salvation to Hannah, which in effect assures Hannah that God has heard her vow and has already begun the process of answering her favorably, that is, he will make good on his promise to bless her with the child of her vowing (v. 11). However, the reason that Eli's priestly word of salvation from infertility to Hannah is excluded in this section of DS6 Thanksgiving Praise is because Hannah's thanksgiving praise to Yahweh God only erupts *after* the boy Samuel has been weaned and presented to God in the house of Yahweh at Shiloh (see 1 Sam 2:1–10). Which is to say that since Hannah's thanksgiving praise to God did not surge in the very context of her still *not* being with child while eagerly anticipating Yahweh's faithfulness to his promise to her on account of Eli's priestly word of salvation from infecundity, it cannot be considered as DS6 Thanksgiving Praise. Hannah's praise thus occurs in a situation of new orientation. Nevertheless, 1 Sam 1:17 does offer an example of a priestly word of salvation through the mouth of God's servant, Eli.

52 See n. 4 above.

Conclusion

By way of recapitulation, a lacuna in prose prayers of disorientation in the HB (i.e., within the borders of Genesis and Esther) is addressed herein. Whereas in previous scholarship on such prayers only two stages were said to be extant, this section demonstrates the possibility of six stages altogether, namely:

- Disorientation Stage 1 Prayers: DS1 Lament
- Disorientation Stage 2 Prayers: DS2 Imprecation
- Disorientation Stage 3 Prayers: DS3 Vow
- Disorientation Stage 4 Prayers: DS4 Penitential
- Disorientation Stage 5 Prayers: DS5 Confidence
- Disorientation Stage 6 Prayers: DS6 Thanksgiving Praise

These six stages or subcategories of disorientation prayers range from *lament* (consisting of either words, or at times, groans) to *thanksgiving praise*. Whereas *thanksgiving praise* was said to be located *only* within a context of new/reorientation, that is, *after* God's intervention and deliverance, here it is observed *also* within a context of disorientation. Interestingly, *imprecation* was never considered before as a stage of disorientation prayers. At the same time, whereas the *vow* was associated with *penitence* and even *confidence*, here, no such relation exists.

DS1	DS2	DS3	DS4	DS5	DS6
Negative / Sorrowful					Positive / Joyful

Considered along a continuum, prose prayers of disorientation move from a negative language (sorrowful) to a positive language (joyful). This movement appears to be contingent upon a priestly or prophetic word of salvation from Yahweh when it comes to disorientation language located to the right of the continuum. It is worth mentioning here, however, that this continuum is *not* constructed to prove that the order of the prayers of disorientation *always* moves from DS1 lament prayer to DS6 thanksgiving praise prayer. At the same time, the order of the prayers of disorientation from DS1 lament prayer to DS6 thanksgiving praise prayer in no way accentuates any on the continuum as being less or more important. Rather, this continuum simply serves to demonstrate that there are at the very least *six* stages or subcategories of prayers of disorientation in lieu of two as was previously proposed. Even further to this, room is left for the likelihood of any of these six stages or subcategories of prayers of disorientation to occur *coevally*. Any attempt therefore to constrict these six stages or subcategories of prayers of disorientation into a *rigid* movement from DS1 lament prayer to DS6 thanksgiving praise prayer without leaving room for other movements, should therefore be avoided.

BOOK REVIEWS

Peter J. Leithart. *Baptism: A Guide to Life from Death*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021. ISBN 978-1683594635. Pp. 140. Paperback. $15.99 (USD).

Baptism: A Guide to Life from Death is a short yet robust work by Peter J. Leithart, Reformational theologian, prolific author, and president of the Theopolis Institute in Birmingham, Alabama. The book is part of the Lexham Press *Christian Essentials* series, a multi-authored set of short works expounding the foundations of the faith in conversation with the Great Tradition and Scripture. While the series aims at catechesis, *Baptism* is no mere primer on the subject. Rather, it is a theological interpretation of the biblical witness to baptism, a witness Leithart finds not only in explicit baptism texts but in a host of passages and motifs where God uses water for divine purposes, the apex being Christian baptism. While this is not Leithart's first book on baptism,[1] his stated purpose here is to help Christians move beyond their present state of division over this very symbol of their unity. He does so, not by offering solutions to intractable questions such as the proper mode and subjects of baptism, but by trying to recover the rich baptismal imagination found in the ancient church and in the Bible itself.

Indeed, Leithart's own baptismal imagination is on full display throughout. The book consists of ten brief chapters plus an epilogue. It is introduced in chapter one with Luther's "Great Flood Prayer," which assigns a high and wide-ranging efficacy to baptism. While this makes some Christians uncomfortable, Leithart claims it reflects the way most Christians, and Scripture itself, speak about baptism. It is not a mere symbol pointing to spiritual realities, but God's appointed means of conveying those realities. "What baptism pictures happens—at baptism. Baptism works" (4). Chapters two and three then survey a wide range of biblical images and rites that are fulfilled in Jesus and in the baptism which unites believers to him.

Having surveyed baptism and its biblical figuration in broad terms, the remainder of the book seeks to answer the question, "How can a little water give new life?" (31). To this end Leithart explores biblical types and figures that contribute in some way to an overall understanding of the rite. Chapters four through six probe deeper into Old Testament images which the New Testament explicitly

1 See his *The Baptized Body* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 2007).

connects to baptism, namely, the flood (1 Pet 3), circumcision (Col 2), and the crossing of the Red Sea (1 Cor 10). The ark pictures believers entering the church through baptism to escape God's judgment on the world. Circumcision is fulfilled in the death of Jesus, and those united to him in baptism have their sinful flesh removed. The "baptism into Moses" at the Red Sea emphasizes the need for the baptized to persevere in the faith. Though Leithart set out to avoid controverted questions, and while he relates his baptismal theology to Baptists and paedobaptists alike, he does make a defense of infant baptism in these chapters, arguing the church is a whole *people* rather than a voluntary society of believing adults. Further, whether one is baptized as an infant or as a professing believer, the sacrament inaugurates a life of repentance; it is not mainly the capstone of a conversion (as Baptists might have it).

Chapters seven through ten connect baptism with the three-fold vocation believers share on account of their union with Jesus. For one, they are made priests, and the Levitical washings prefigure how God cleanses them through baptism so they can draw near for divine worship and service. They are also made conquering kings and queens. As Joshua led the people through the Jordan into the promised land, so too do believers pass through baptism and enter into spiritual battle *en route* to their inheritance. And just as Israel's king is idealized as one whose justice falls like rain, so too do the baptized reign with Christ to spread his goodness. Finally, the Spirit was poured out on all the baptized at Pentecost, inaugurating the New Covenant age where all God's people would serve as prophets, in fulfilment of ancient prophetic hope.

The Epilogue draws the main themes together in a direct appeal to the baptized. "Baptism is the gospel with *your name* on it" (103; emphasis original), Leithart proclaims, and he exhorts believers to continuously appropriate baptismal realities, for "Baptism's power doesn't stop when the water dries" (104).

In as far as Leithart aims to deepen the reader's baptismal imagination, this short work may be considered a success. By focusing on the way that the Bible talks about baptism, as an effective sign that does what it symbolizes, he unapologetically urges evangelicals to embrace a more sacramental view of this divine ordinance. By drawing heavily on the church fathers and the likes of Luther, he puts modern believers in touch with their catholic heritage where they may find resources to enrich their understanding of baptism, which is all-too-often impoverished by a modern mindset that is afraid to see God working through the material means of the world he created. This sacramental theme, introduced early on and running throughout the book, leaves the reader with a profound sense that baptism is meant to be a central spiritual reality in the life of the church.

He also inspires a deeper imagination by following Scripture itself in seeing baptismal realities signified in Old Testament events and fulfilled in Christ. He is at his strongest when he looks at the New Testament texts that explicitly probe the Old Testament for baptismal images. His interpretation is a little more reaching when he links baptism to the believer's role as prophet, priest and king. For example: "We're all Naaman, lepers reborn. We're all iron sinking toward Sheol until the wood and water save us. We're all Elijah, led to brooks in the wilderness. We're all Elisha, baptized into Jesus' Jordan baptism to share his Spirit" (98). It is not that such interpretations are necessarily wrong or misleading. They are just highly imaginative and not all readers will find them compelling. Even here, if not always convincing, he is certainly interesting, showing just how active his own baptismal imagination can be.

As for his other primary goal, the book indeed holds promise for fostering Christian unity. Most works on baptism assume a particular historical position and develop that view over against competitors. In light of such divergence, how can Christians confess that they have "one baptism"? Leithart points a way forward. To be sure, he does weigh in on some of the controverted questions, showing his passion for infant baptism, and even putting in a word for paedo-communion. But in the main he focuses on a theology of baptism that applies to all Christians, stressing that much of what baptism symbolizes—union with Christ, refuge from judgment, a call to perseverance, indwelling of the Holy Spirit—is not restricted to the one-time rite but transcends that moment-in-time, extending to the whole of the Christian life. This relativizes differences over questions such as the proper subjects and mode of baptism. It is not that those questions are unimportant, but Leithart shows there is a way to think about the heart of baptism that can garner the affirmation of both paedobaptists and Baptists, of those who sprinkle, immerse, or pour. Indeed, the book's cross-confessional endorsements confirm its ecumenical value at precisely this point. If there is a lot Christians can agree on regarding baptism, perhaps they can with more integrity confess that they have "one baptism." A century ago, P. T. Forsyth urged English Congregationalists and Baptists to unite, isolating baptism as the only meaningful difference separating them. He reasoned that one group baptized infants *unto* Christian realities, the other baptized believers *into* these realities. In both cases the realities themselves are the same. Leithart's work represents a similar perspective and would be read with great value by any theologians, pastors, students or lay Christians seeking to deepen their own understanding of baptism, and it could build a bridge between Christians divided over this sacrament meant to join them to Christ and to one another.

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Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South. Mark A. Lamport, ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018. Two volumes. ISBN 9781442271562. Pp. 1073. R4066 Hardcover. $263.00 (USD).

The growth of Christianity in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, particularly during the twentieth century and early twenty-first century, has been widely recognised and discussed in academic literature. This significant volume makes a substantial contribution to the study of Christianity in all its expressions in different parts of the world by drawing together an international team of scholars to focus attention on Christianity in "the Global South."

The editor and his large team of colleagues ("250 contributors from 70 countries," according to the Preface, xxii) have produced a reference work which provides, for those who are able to access it, a superb resource for students and scholars of world Christianity.

The title reflects the need to choose a convenient means of describing areas of the world which are not easily categorised in a simple phrase. In the Preface, Lamport recognizes the contested nature of the chosen terminology and reflects on the complexity of the circumstances that lead to every designation being less than fully satisfactory.

The Preface explains that the *Encyclopedia* (to abbreviate the long title) is intended to accomplish several tasks: to examine "methodological" issues relating to the study of "world Christianity"; to provide "a diachronic study concentrating on the historical evolution of Christianity in the 164 countries/entities that are generally considered to constitute the Global South"; and to provide "a synchronic study that presents the state of the Church and the various denominations in each country, their strengths and weaknesses, and their threats and opportunities" (xxii).

Given the scale of this work, it would be easy for the reader to be left in a state of bewilderment, uncertain where to begin the process of digesting the book's vast contents. Thankfully, the *Encyclopedia* has been carefully designed with the needs of the reader in mind. Five "Prologues" on particular geographical regions, each written by a specialist, provide brief (around two pages each) orientation to the region. Then, immediately prior to the first main entry, Philip Jenkins, whose book *The Next Christendom* (third edition, Oxford, 2011) has introduced many readers to recent developments in the shape of world Christianity, contributes a brief "Introduction" to the work as a whole.

The most substantial portion of the *Encyclopedia* is a collection of articles in alphabetical order, ranging from "Aboriginal Christianity" (1) to "Zoroastrianism, Christianity and" (879–81). The articles might be categorized, as suggested by the Preface, into several categories. Some deal with broad themes. For example, there are articles on "Contextual Theology" (interestingly, there is a separate article on "Theology in Contexts: Historical Development in the Global South of"), "Integral Mission," and "Theological Education." In the latter case, there are distinct articles on "Theological Education in [Africa, etc]" dealing with the major geographical regions. Other articles deal with specific countries. These vary somewhat in form. For example, the article on Nicaragua (585–88) includes substantial detail concerning the geography, ethnic composition, languages, religions and more. There is also a timeline specific to the country. (Strangely, although the article refers to various proportions of the population in percentage terms, it does not appear to indicate the population in numerical terms.) Most articles on a specific country seem to follow this format. The article on "Senegal" (710–12), however, is primarily composed of a historical narrative, with only the final two sentences mentioning the contemporary situation.

There then follows a series of articles on different geographical regions, but with a measure of greater specificity than the opening prologues. So, for example, distinct articles in this section address East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. The articles in the first series are all entitled "History of the [African, etc.] Experience with Christianity." The articles in the second series are entitled "Contemporary [African, etc.] Experience with Christianity."

The articles in the *Encyclopedia* conclude with several "Afterwords." In these short pieces, the authors reflect on the contribution of the *Encyclopedia* and also suggest issues that require further consideration going forward. A detailed "Timeline of Christianity in the Global South" (959–82) lists key events from AD30 to 2016. Each event in the timeline is associated with an article (sometimes several) included in the *Encyclopedia*. Finally, it concludes with a substantial bibliography (985–98), including entries for themes and for specific geographical regions; two appendices which list the articles by theme and by author; credits; an index of names; and a list of the contributors, including brief biographical details.

There are numerous features of this two-volume work that deserve attention. First, I want to emphasize what a rich resource this is. It is a trove of fascinating information which will inform the work of students and established scholars for many years. The calibre of the scholars who have been enlisted to write the articles is outstanding. Readers have the opportunity to engage with the work of well-known names in the field of world Christianity and mission studies such as Professors Brian Stanley, Dana Robert, and J Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, but also with the work of many authors who may not be so familiar. A substantial number of the contributors carry out their teaching and scholarship in the Global South.

The topics addressed in this work indicate the close relationship between the discipline of missiology/mission studies and the discipline of world Christianity. Although there is no explicit reference to "mission" in the title of the *Encyclopedia*, it is clear that mission is a significant theme in many of the articles. Along with standard article titles, such as "Mission, Biblical Theology of," it is good to see articles that highlight the mission work which issues from various nations in the Global South entitled "Mission from Africa," "Mission from Asia," and so on. Likewise, the article "Mission in and to Africa" recognizes the contribution made by Africans to the growth of Christianity in the past and today.

With so many different articles by so many contributors, it is impossible to engage with the strengths and weaknesses of the individual contributions. The articles are, however, consistently scholarly in tone and will provide the reader with useful orientation to the topics as a foundation for further research. As expected, each article in the *Encyclopedia* is followed by a brief bibliography. These are typically composed of standard academic works, some more recent scholarship, and occasionally some online resources. These bibliographies frequently include resources published within a year or two of the publication of the *Encyclopedia* itself. Given the challenges involved in bringing a multi-author reference work to publication, the editor and his team are to be commended for achieving such a level of currency.

With respect to the theological perspective(s) represented in the work, there is no explicit identification of a particular theological framework. Many of the editors and contributors would, I suspect, associate themselves broadly with an "evangelical" theological framework (perhaps using David Bebbington's "quadrilateral" as a useful way of defining the term, and recognising numerous different denominational affiliations), though some represent a Roman Catholic perspective (such as the distinguished senior scholar Professor Steven Bevans) and it is likely that a range of theological perspectives is represented among the contributors.

With respect to the physical book, the publisher has produced a very handsome resource. The text is clear and comfortable to read. While it is inevitable that there will be some typographical errors in a work of this scale, the proofreading appears to have been meticulous. The volumes feel substantial and robust, and appear to be produced to a high standard.

I cannot avoid a brief comment on the price of the *Encyclopedia*. While the scale of the project and the quality of the final product are unquestionable, it is sadly ironic that many (most?) Christian students, scholars, and institutions will perhaps be unable to benefit from it because they cannot justify the expense of purchasing this excellent resource. Might it be possible for the publisher to make some kind of provision to enable institutions in the Global South to access the research in this volume at a more affordable price?

In conclusion, careful engagement with the contents of the *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South* will expand the reader's perspectives on the history and contemporary expressions of Christianity and will enable deeper engagement with the major questions which are raised by the shape of world Christianity now and in years to come.

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A.J. Culp. *Memoir of Moses: The Literary Creation of Covenant Memory in Deuteronomy.* London, Lexington Books, 2019. ISBN 978-1-9787-0691-0. Pp. 233. $95.00 (USD).

This monograph is A.J. Culp's reworked PhD completed in 2012 under Gordon Wenham at Trinity College, Bristol (UK) (2). The most interesting facet of his study is its interdisciplinarity. Another reviewer rightly remarks that Culp "provides a useful model of how the social sciences, literary approaches to exegesis, and theological interpretation of Scripture can work in complementary ways."[1]

Culp looks at the Bible as a "world-building" text, where readers can encounter the divine (233). Deuteronomy, he argues, contains mechanisms of memory that are meant to ingrain in each generation a sense of the importance of covenant life (2). In the first half of the monograph (chapters 1–4) he reviews relevant approaches in memory research as well as where biblical scholarship stood in relation to it. For the last few chapters (5–7, con.) he examines the three memory vectors that he identified, first exegetically and then mnemonically, and evaluates his findings (175).

In chapter 1 Culp shows that in the twentieth century biblical scholarship had limited success with memory research because of a lack of methodological tools. When the tools became available, they were not utilized because biblical scholarship was not interested in texts as memory producers (14) but only as memory products (7), favoring diachronic methods (16). Chapters 2–4 ask the "Why?" "What?" and "How?" questions. Considering Deuteronomy goes further than any other OT book in that it not only emphasizes but demands memory and puts it at the center of covenant life, chapter 2 asks why this is so (33). In chapter 3 Culp asks what kind of memory Deuteronomy cultivates (63). He does this by looking at how group memory can become personal identity (66) and lead to obedience (83).

Chapter 4 explores how Deuteronomy cultivates memory in Israel. Culp does this by firstly looking at what kind of mechanisms inculcate memory into

1 Jerry Hwang, review of *Memoir of Moses: The Literary Creation of Covenant Memory in Deuteronomy*, by A. J. Culp, *CBQ* 82 (2020): 680.

individuals and secondly, he looks for Deuteronomy's main memory mechanisms (99). He shows that an effective memory vector needs to be 1) intentional, 2) performative, and 3) programmatic (105), though distribution is also important (104). He identifies story, ritual, and song as memory vectors and discusses these in chapters 5–7 (109).

Chapter 5 inspects Deuteronomy 6:6–9, 20–25 and shows how stories and religious habits help each new generation to see themselves as participating in the exodus (4). Chapter 6 looks at ritual as memory vector (99). Ritual has a unique place in Deuteronomy's memory-making program (141) since it discusses the three pilgrimage festivals together, making Israel's calendar a yearlong commemoration of the exodus pilgrimage (162). Culp inspects Deuteronomy 16:1–17 and looks at how the feasts sediment memory into the Israelite community (159–161). Chapter 7 focuses on The Song of Moses (Deut 32) as memory vector and notes the mark it left on the rest of the Bible as well as Second Temple Jewish Literature (175). In the concluding chapter he considers how his work contributes to letting people live in the world that Scripture produces (192).

To my knowledge, Culp's work on Deuteronomy has not been done in biblical or memory research. His unique study of memory research is built on his own theoretical scaffolding. For this he drew on psychology of memory and autobiographical memory (63). In his view, no one has looked at how Deuteronomy was used to shape the community (2), and while some have studied covenant in Deuteronomy it has never been brought into conversation with memory research (3). His study on songs as a memory vector is also one among very few attempts (175). While the five aspects of memory in Deuteronomy (patriarchal promise, promised land, exodus, Horeb, and the wilderness) have been studied, others have not studied their serial relationship and presence in Deuteronomy 6:20–25 (131). Culp says that studies on the world *behind* and the world *of* the text abound, but he adds to the little work done on the world *in front of* the text (191).

Culp's work contributes to Luke Timothy Johnson's vision of faithful interpretation,[2] which should have as its aim focusing on the world that Scripture produces (5). Further to this point, little research has been done on the relationship between the aural and visual factors in Scripture for creating an encounter with God's "real presence" and Culp's work contributes to this (197–98).

Turning to some notes of assessment now, I repeat that the interdisciplinarity of the study is a strong contribution. He is patient about reviewing scholarship that went before, especially in his first three chapters, to show how his memory research provides him with fresh insights that are superior to what preceded him.

2 Luke Timothy Johnson, "Imagining the World Scripture Imagines," in *Theology and Scriptural Imagination,* ed. L. Gregory Jones and James J. Buckley (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 3.

He shows how Childs did not quite get Deuteronomy as memory device (9)[3] and that Schottroff had some good ideas but lacked methodological tools (10–11).[4] Halbwachs later developed an approach to memory that could have helped both gain better insight (12).[5] He also provides great insight into the views of some scholars who came close to seeing Scripture as a memory producer but did not quite get there (21–26, 35, 37, 41, 43, 46).

For each of the three chapters on the memory vectors (5–7) he starts by looking at them exegetically and does this well, while drawing on the most appropriate sources who influenced the conversation on that topic. He also argues well for why he supports them or why he takes it in a previously unexplored direction. He puts forth a convincing argument for why the two most important "contemporizing techniques" found in Deuteronomy are decision making and the "eyes" motif (37). On the "eyes" motif, he shows how previous scholarship has come to faulty conclusions because they have neglected the visual aspect of the Horeb theophany (73).

One negative point is that seven years elapsed between Culp finishing his PhD and the publication of the monograph and he has less than ten bibliographic entries from the intervening years, so it is not that up to date. One particular work that might have been appropriate is the 2013 commentary by Lundbom.[6] Culp engages with the rhetoric of Deuteronomy a fair bit, so one would expect him to engage with "a commentary bursting with helpful information about . . . rhetorical features of the Hebrew text."[7]

Another drawback, a physical one, is that the book uses endnotes rather than footnotes, which makes navigating it cumbersome.

Hwang also finds that the study might be "methodologically conflicted"[8] in that it is an "ahistorical study of Deuteronomy that nonetheless attempts to explore how the book brings the past and present to bear on the future."[9] Hwang also makes the valid point that the essays of Lohfink[10] and Strawn[11] drew similar conclusion to Culp without the need of a heavy theoretical frame (680).

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3 Brevard Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel,* (London, UK: SCM, 1962).
4 Willy Schottroff, *Gedenken im Alten Orient Und im Alten Testament,* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1967).
5 Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory.* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1980).
6 Jack Lundbom, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013).
7 Timothy M. Willis, review of *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, by Jack R. Lundbom, *RBL* 17 (2015): 89.
8 Hwang, "Review," 679
9 Hwang, "Review," 680
10 Norbert Lohfink, "Reading Deuteronomy as Narrative," in *A God so Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honor of Patrick D. Miller,* ed. Brent A. Strawn and Nancy R. Bowen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003) 261–81.
11 Brent Strawn, "Keep/Observe/Do—Carefully–Today! The Rhetoric of Repetition in Deuteronomy," in *A God so Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honor of Patrick D. Miller,* ed. Brent A. Strawn and Nancy R. Bowen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 215–40.

However, all things considered I would agree with Richard S. Hess (i) that this volume is "essential reading for memory studies and Deuteronomy Research."

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David Bentley Hart. *That All Shall Be Saved: Heaven, Hell & Universal Salvation.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019. ISBN 9780300246223. Pp. 222. $26.00 (USD)

"To say that, on the one hand, God is infinitely good, perfectly just, and inexhaustibly loving, and that, on the other, he has created a world under such terms as oblige him either to impose, or to permit the imposition of, eternal misery on finite rational beings, is simply to embrace a complete contradiction" (202).

I was initially interested in reading David Bentley Hart's (henceforth DBH) book after becoming aware that universal salvation was historically an orthodox, even common, belief. I haven't been an evangelical Christian for several years at this point so I no longer hold a vested interest in upholding doctrines about hell. I was, however, still curious as to what a belief in universal salvation looked like and what a person was to do with hell. As I was brought up a good Baptist fundamentalist, these were new but intriguing teachings.

DBH opens the book with a personal account of his relationship with "infernalist" doctrines of hell; these are doctrines that support the idea of hell being a place of punishment where some will be destined to spend their eternities in suffering. DBH is clear from the start that he has always doubted these; not only is he repulsed upon personal conscience but also from logical coherence. This sets the basis for his argument against eternal conscious torment.

The book is divided into two parts: part 1 is a summary and presentation of his basic arguments and part 2 is a series of "meditations" on the argument. Part 2 gets more technical and deals with more advanced historical theological arguments, and these "meditations" are dealt with in a series of four questions: Who is God? What is Judgement? What is a Person? What is Freedom? Honestly, I would say most lay readers would get more than enough from reading Part 1 (which goes to page 62). DBH is quite incisive in demolishing the ethical and logical grounds for belief in an eternal hell. If you are sympathetic or even marginally open to the idea of being persuaded on this topic, I think you'll find it overwhelmingly convincing. If not, I don't think the meditations will get you much further, though they may be interesting to more academic readers that want to debate these issues in a public sense and who are not reading simply for themselves. DBH alludes to as much himself, "I found it a strange experience to be writing a book that I expect will convince nearly no one. The truth is that I find it even more unsettling to have written a book that I believe ought never to have needed to be written in the first place" (202).

DBH has a notoriously punchy and sharp writing style; it may put off some readers as pompous, but I find it charming and even amusing at times. He does argue his position well, and it's difficult to dismiss the ridiculousness of many doctrinal points of the "infernalists." DBH has no difficulty filling pages, as his other works are of significant length, yet this book is a quick 222 pages. In fact, I found it feeling redundant after the first half. I honestly believe this is due to the fact that hell is taken so unquestionably as a core tenant of (western classical) Christian belief that when one actually takes a moment to approach it with any real skepticism, it disintegrates. In some ways I feel like the best summary of this book is, "Hell: It's Stupid." I think this could leave many reeling if they are not acquainted with using critical thinking in their belief system. In a larger sense, this book reveals how unequipped the church generally is to revise doctrine and question itself and admit where it went wrong.

All in all, this is a well-written and persuasive little book. It has everything you need to quit hell for good. (And if you find it dismissible, I would say you either don't care at all about the coherence of your beliefs or have a serious problem with logical reasoning.) As someone who no longer had an investment in hell to begin with, I found it a bit redundant at times. I also was somewhat disappointed that other than a brief note here or there, not much was really articulated about universal salvation, either in its history or theological elucidations. It was really more of an implied reality; if hell is absurd, universal salvation is what we are left with. Universal salvation is really the only comprehensible conclusion of the Christian gospel. Thus, this book will deal well with the absurdity of hell, but not get you very far in understanding the fullness of universal salvation.

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David A. deSilva. *Discovering Revelation: Content, Interpretation, Reception*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021. ISBN 978-0802872425. Pp. 235. Paperback. $27.44 (CDN). $20.80 (USD).

During the COVID 19 pandemic (with eschatological fever on the rise) do we need yet another book on the Apocalypse? Some might bemoan this question with a sense of jaded cynicism. But others (such as this reviewer) warmly welcome the erudite contribution of David deSilva's *Discovering Revelation: Context, Interpretation, Reception*, one of the newest additions to the steadily growing series "Discovering Biblical Texts." The author states that "the aim of this book [is] to lay out the various contributions made to the understanding of Revelation through a variety of approaches" including content (context), interpretive questions, and historical reception (3).

Discovering Revelation is comprised of twelve chapters of roughly equal length: chapter one (introduction) provides key comments on the overall structure of the book of Revelation as well as a brief history of its reception, something which deSilva poignantly puts as being somewhere "between fascination and repugnance" (1); chapters two to four lay down the interpretive groundwork foundations. One notes that this carries the necessary assumption that "John's text potentially shapes his audiences' perceptions of and responses to those elements of their shared, lived context" (45); chapters five to eleven serve as an introductory commentary on Revelation (broken up with a sensitivity towards its multiple cycles). DeSilva's engagement with the Greek, i.e., references to grammars and lexicons, is minimal. Transliteration is used throughout. The conclusion concerns Revelation's relevance for today. Rounding off the volume is an extensive bibliography (17 total pages) alongside thorough indices (Scripture, author, subject).

In a nutshell, chapter one offers a brief overview of the book of Revelation. Most notably, deSilva directs the reader to the sequence of repetitive sevens throughout Revelation as well as the elements of contrast and parody that portray stark alternatives (10–11). With respect to this point, the author maintains that the worship of the dragon (Rev 13) may, perhaps, be a parody of the worship of God and the Lamb in Rev 4–5 (see 11). DeSilva also suggests that "the pervasive presence of alternatives—which are presented as mutually exclusive within the narrative world of Revelation—might suggest that the act of interpreting this text should focus not primarily on decoding a linear plot but on responding in one's situation to the alternatives it identifies as these are manifested in that situation" (11).

Chapter two explores multiple strategies for reading Revelation. DeSilva helpfully guides the reader through the "three worlds"—the world *behind* the text, the world *within* the text, and the world *in front of* the text (12–16). DeSilva also gives special attention to the three *different* genres of Revelation. As a letter, Revelation is a "time-and-situation-specific communication to its explicitly named audience" (19). Here, deSilva demonstrates that it is important to note the clear parallels between Revelation and other Greco-Roman letters (see 17–19). As a book of prophecy, deSilva helpfully distinguishes between *forth-telling* and *foretelling*, since how one approaches these particulars "will have significant ramifications for one's approach to Revelation" (24). As an apocalypse (proper), Revelation is also the unveiling of God's perspective on the world.

In chapter three, deSilva draws special attention to the question(s) of the origins and transmission of the text of Revelation. With respect to composition, deSilva asks whether (the apostle) John had an ecstatic experience (as in a vision) whereby he transcribed what he saw, or did he, perhaps, craft a brilliant piece of literature rooted in the Jewish Scriptures? As to dating, deSilva upholds the "hypothesis that John's work was entirely composed during Domitian's reign to address the situation of Christians in Roman Asia" (38).

In the following chapter, the author explores the religious, ideological, economic, and military contexts of Revelation (44–54). Concerning these things, deSilva asserts that it is the civil religion of emperor worship that John seeks to engage and deconstruct; considering the gospel of Jesus Christ as the true alternative to the gospel of Augustus (50, see also 118).

The remaining eight chapters of *Discovering Revelation* are abbreviated commentaries. Though introductory in scope, the degree to which deSilva engages with a variety of complex interpretive approaches is quite detailed. Especially helpful is the attention given to the sensory experience that one finds in John's language of "seeing" and "hearing" in Revelation 5. DeSilva notes the tendency of interpreters to "break the code" in Revelation as though it is a trove of visionary information to be endlessly decoded when, instead, it should be understood as literary prophetic art—meant to be experienced (66).

Particularly noteworthy is deSilva's exploration of how John uses aspects of the Exodus story as his framework for helping his readers interpret their own situation (111–20). This framework assures the original readers of Revelation that just as God was with the oppressed Israelites in Egypt, he is with them now in their present situation: "their hope must be placed in God's liberation rather than accommodating to bondage" (118).

In addition to the above, special attention must also be given to the author's handling of the closing visions in Revelation 19:11– 22:5 (see 167–89). Here, deSilva wisely points out the disproportionate attention these "mere three verses" bear on the millennium (172). To this end, deSilva suggests that the primary purpose of the 'millennium' concerns "God's justice towards his faithful and, above all, towards those who have sacrificed the most for the sake of their loyal obedience" (177).

In sum, it is difficult to critique this volume. The author's attempt to map out interpretive approaches is well done as is the attention that is given to the historical reception of Revelation. His pastoral sensitivity is also quite commendable. There are, however, a few quibbles.

To begin, very little space is given to the robust scholarship that is available in defense of the three major evangelical views on final judgment in Revelation, i.e., (1) Eternal Conscious Torment, (2) Conditional Immortality, and (3)

Universal Reconciliation. Instead, deSilva seems to tow the party line in his rather vague concession for the traditional view of Eternal Conscious Torment. Knowing that the overall purpose of this volume is to inform the reader of the various interpretative approaches in Revelation (see 3), this seems to be a somewhat curious decision for the author to have made. One also notes that the citation formatting flip flops between parenthetical citations and footnotes which is distracting. Lastly, the book itself is rather lack-luster with respect to tables, charts, graphs, and/or illustrations. By way of example, could one not, perhaps, have better explained the circular structure of Revelation through some sort of pictorial representation, for instance?

To conclude, David deSilva's *Discovering Revelation* is a welcome addition to the ever-increasing library of the Discovering Biblical Texts series and anyone else who is interested in the book of Revelation. Its primary audience will, most likely, be Bible College/Christian University (College) and/or seminary students, studious pastors, and the invested layperson. Highly recommended!

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Paul Copan. *Loving Wisdom: A Guide to Philosophy and Christian Faith.* 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020. ISBN 9780802875471. Pp. 372. Paperback. $29.99 (USD).

Paul Copan seeks to share the intellectual fruit of the Christian faith through the discipline of the Philosophy of Religion. While there is no dearth of texts related to the topic, Copan's book *Loving Wisdom: A Guide to Philosophy and Christian Faith* (now in its second edition) provides a well-rounded approach directed at a general audience while still exhibiting some of the notable virtues which make philosophy such a valuable enterprise. To what degree, however, does the second edition of this volume differ from the first and in what capacity does Copan leverage the most recent resources of the last thirteen years since the first issuing of this text? Prior to offering a delineation of these matters and a full-scale review, it is prudent to provide a general orientation to Copan's *Loving Wisdom*.

The book's *modus operandi* is laid out in the form of four emphases: (1) direct engagement with the metanarrative of the biblical story (xi), (2) a thorough delineation of philosophical themes via a distinctly Christian background (xi), (3) a clear emphasis on *praxis*, i.e., how to live out the book's implications in a godly way (xii), and (4) a heavy weight on the *euangelion*, i.e., how to better understand and share the gospel (xiii). It is also salient to note that while Copan comes from an evangelical perspective, he endeavors to write from the position of so-called "mere Christianity" (xiv).

Copan structures his text into four (roughly equal) parts: (I) "God," (II)

"Creation," (III) "Fall," and (IV) "Re-Creation." A short prolegomenon, "Preliminaries on Philosophy and Faith" (1–50) and three thorough indices (Scripture, subject/author) round out the volume. Regrettably, there is no conclusion and/or final thoughts.

Copan states he has "thoroughly revised nearly all of the chapters from the first edition" (xiv). To be specific, greater attention has been given to Part II which is now comprised of eight chapters as opposed to four. The most welcome adjustment has been further discussion regarding arguments for God's existence. For example, with respect to the validity of the *Principle of Sufficient Reason*, Copan has added more details surrounding the differences between contingent and necessary forms of existence via an examination of the kinds of properties each kind of existence is associated with (see 150–55). In addition to this, the section on the *Problem of Evil* has been expanded from four chapters to six while the chapter concerning *The Hiddenness of God* has been altogether removed. Lastly, there is also now the welcome addition of having lists of various reference works (roughly six books) at the end of each chapter. While serving as a guide for further reading and research, the lack of annotations is somewhat disappointing.

To critique, it is hard to fault this volume. Copan displays a strong prominence on the Bible and his intention to directly engage with the metanarrative of Scripture is easy to appreciate. Alongside this, the author's focus that a philosophically bolstered view of Scripture is helpful for sharing the Gospel is highly intuitive, provided that one accepts Plantinga's view of philosophy which Copan aligns with; that it is, "not much different from thinking hard" (5).

In addition to this, Copan has succeeded at making "important philosophical themes accessible" (xi). Copan simplifies (but does not oversimplify) complex arguments and assumptions into smaller pieces. A great example is the helpful table which compares the explanatory breadth of *Theism* and *Naturalism* (see 142–44). Lastly, Copan's pedagogically sensitive approach to start with definitions then proceed with analysis, such as with his treatment of miracles (201) and evil (213), sets out a helpful thought pattern often used by other scholars.[1]

While *Loving Wisdom* brought forth many helpful tools and insights, there were some instances where Copan seemed to misinterpret or misunderstand his opponents. Copan's analysis of naturalist "freethinkers" (19) seems to overstep when he dives into their reasons for excluding miracles and other supernatural claims. To be clear, Copan states, "Every philosophical system will have limits as to what is true . . . . Rather than being a 'freethinker' who can explore whether

1 See, for example, Richard Swinburne, *Is There a God?,* Revised Edition (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010). Cf. Evans & Manis*, Philosophy of Religion: Thinking About Faith*, 2[nd] ed. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009).

genuine miracles occur, he [sic] will exclude this possibility from the outset. Instead of being open to the existence of the soul . . . he [sic] says this is unthinkable or unlikely. He [sic] will seek alternative explanations of how the universe began" (19–20). It should be noted that Copan's argument against freethinkers seems to turn against itself when he argues that Christianity (a philosophical system) is more "mind expanding" (20). Copan's statements also do not consider how one usually arrives at such a philosophical system: with reason, evidence, and experience. Surely if the naturalist has reasons that seem plausible as to why God cannot exist, is it not a function of their epistemic duties–not their worldview–to reject claims to the contrary?

More evidence of possible misconstrual can also be found in Copan's treatment of Erik Wielenberg's paper, *In Defense of Non-Natural Non-Theistic Moral Realism,* in which Wielenberg defends the idea that God is not required for *Moral Realism* to be true.[2] Copan quips, "Wielenberg optimistically asserts: 'From valueness, sometimes value comes.' But to assert is one thing; to justify is another" (139). That being said, however, Wielenberg *does* aim to provide a defense of his position, which he notes is compatible with atheism: "In calling the view *non-theistic,* I do not mean to imply that the view entails atheism; the view is compatible with theism . . . ."[3] Though Copan may object that Wielenberg's position ultimately has no justification, this misses the point. There is substantial difference between the claim that one is merely asserting something and *not justifying it,* and that they are arguing for something that *has no justification.* The assertion without justification is apprehended immediately, as the interlocutor has merely given a description of their current belief—or psychological state—on a topic (Noah thinks Jesus did not exist). However, the claim that a position has no justification can only be arrived at after responsibly engaging with and defeating the evidence (justification) for the said claim vis-à-vis undercutting or rebutting defeaters. This has not been attempted by Copan in his treatment of Wielenberg's thesis.

Despite these infelicities, Copan has done a massive service to the apologetics community in the second edition of *Loving Wisdom: A Guide to Philosophy and Christian Faith*. His expansive treatment of many issues from a Scriptural perspective combined with analytic philosophy is not only a good steppingstone for those engaging in the discipline as either sceptics or believers but also a helpful reference to those that are scholars in their own right. To conclude, Copan has given a valuable contribution to the field in showing that Christianity is

2 Wielenberg, "In Defense of Non-Natural, Non-Theistic Moral Realism," *Faith and Philosophy* 26 (2009) 23–24.

3 Wielenberg, "In Defense of Non-Natural, Non-Theistic Moral Realism" *Faith and Philosophy* 26 (2009) 24.

"historically rooted, philosophically sound, and existentially relevant" (305). Its primary readers will likely be invested laypersons, pastors, Christian leaders, and/or Bible College/Christian university students. One also hopes that this volume might be leveraged as an apologetics tool to help those looking for theistic viewpoints on Philosophy. Highly recommended.

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