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The Paraclete: Christ's Replacement or Christ's Connector?

Kristian Klepes
Northeastern Seminary

Abstract

Johannine scholars have debated whether the Paraclete promise of John 14–16 indicates that the Paraclete replaces Christ in light of his physical absence or brings Christ's presence to the Christ community. This article presents a chiasm in John 14:15–16:24 that, to date, has been uniformly missed in Johannine scholarship. For two reasons, this chiasm strongly supports the scholarly view that the Paraclete is portrayed in this passage as bringing Christ's presence to the Christ community. First, it makes clear that John 15:1–15 is the Paraclete promise's central point of emphasis, rather than an abrupt digression from the Paraclete promise. Second, it suggests that both Christ and the Paraclete perform the same functions in unison for the Christ community, rather than the Paraclete performing these functions on Christ's behalf. This article will largely apply Blomberg's criteria for detecting extended chiasm to demonstrate the significance that this chiasm provides for understanding the Paraclete's role in John 14–16.

Introduction

Scholars debate whether the Paraclete in John 14–16 is characterized as replacing Christ or bringing Christ's presence to the Christ community. Matt Searles, Marius Nel, Frederick D. Bruner, J. Ramsey Michaels, Johann Joubert, Ruth Sheridan, Craig S. Keener, Marianne M. Thompson, and Raymond E. Brown propose that the Paraclete promise consists of how the Paraclete brings Christ's presence to the Christ community, so the Paraclete and Christ can perform functions in unison for

the Christ community, i.e., the "presence" view.[1] Alicia Meyers, Andrew Lincoln, G. Beasley-Murray, D.A. Carson, C.K. Barrett, and Leon Morris assert instead that the Paraclete is promised as Christ's replacement who performs functions on Christ's behalf in light of Christ's physical absence following his ascension, i.e., the "replacement" view.[2] The presence view affirms the agency of both Christ and the Paraclete in empowering the Christ community. The Holy Spirit remained on Christ to connect him to the presence of the Father, who is the source of Christ's strength (1:32; 14:10). Likewise, the Paraclete abides with the Christ community to connect them to the abiding presence of Christ, who is the source of their strength (14:16; 15:5). In contrast, the replacement view asserts that only the Paraclete has agency, which precludes Christ's agency in empowering the Christ community.

This article presents a chiasm in John 14:15–16:24 that, to date, all scholars have uniformly missed. Of fourteen chiasms in the Gospel of John validated by Roger DePriest, none of these include this chiasm in John 14:15–16:24.[3] I will

1 Matt Searles, "'THESE THINGS I HAVE SAID TO YOU': AN INVESTIGATION OF HOW PURPOSE CLAUSES GOVERN THE INTERPRETATION OF JOHN 14–16," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 60, no. 3 (2017): 516; Nel Marius, "The Notion of the Holy Spirit as Paraclete from a Pentecostal Perspective: Original Research," *In die skriflig : tydskrif van die Gereformeerde Teologiese Vereniging* 50, no. 1 (2016): 6; Frederick D. Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 629; Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 342; Johann Joubert, "A Theological Assessment and Interpretation of the Johannine Paraclete- Spirit," *In die skriflig : tydskrif van die Gereformeerde Teologiese Vereniging* 41, no. 3 (2007): 510; Ruth Sheridan, "The Paraclete and Jesus in the Johannine Farewell Discourse," *Pacifica: Australian Theological Studies* 20, no. 2 (2007): 128; J. Joubert, "Johannine Metaphors / Symbols Linked to the Paraclete-Spirit and Their Theological Implications," *Acta theologica* 27, no. 1 (2007): 83–103; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary Volume Two*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 973; Marianne M. Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 181; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (xiii–xxi),* The Anchor Bible (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), 645.

2 Alicia Meyers, *Reading John and 1, 2, 3 John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2019), 160; Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to St. John*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 2005), 395; George R. Beasley–Murray, *John Volume 36*, Word Biblical Commentary, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 258; D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 501; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek text* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), 464; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 651.

3 Roger G. DePriest "An Examination of Literary Chiasms in the Fourth Gospel in Light of the Discourse Function of Verbal Aspect". ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2012, iv, 148. In 1999, using Blomberg's criteria for detecting extended chiasmus, Brouwer published a dissertation claiming that John 13–17 constitutes an extended macro-chiasm. I do not find Brouwer's chiasm convincing in large part because he artificially divides the five Paraclete pericopes into just two sections. Even if Brouwer's chiasm were convincing, however, nothing in Blomberg's criteria precludes overlapping macro-chiasms. In fact, chiasms can overlap in various ways. John Breck, "Biblical Chiasmus: Exploring Structure for Meaning," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 17, no. 2 (1987): 70, 73.

largely use Blomberg's criteria to propose that John 14:15–16:24 constitutes an extended macro-chiasm. While the following will apply all nine of Blomberg's criteria, it is notable that these criteria have cumulative weight and thus are seldom fulfilled *en toto*.[4]

In applying these criteria, I will explicate the following: (1) the current problem in perceiving John 15:1–15's relationship to the Paraclete promise; (2) clear examples of parallelism between the chiasm's halves; (3) verbal parallelism and conceptual parallelism; (4) central or dominant imagery or terminology; (5) words and ideas not regularly found elsewhere, (6) multiple sets of correspondence; (7) the division of the text at natural breaks; (8) the theological significance of the chiasm's center; and (9) the avoidance of ruptures. Beyond Blomberg's criteria, I will additionally provide two contextual arguments, drawing from John 17:20–26 and 10:7–16, in support of the "presence" view and thus the proposed chiasm.

The weight of evidence derived from all nine criteria, along with the additional contextual arguments, demonstrates the chiasm's legitimacy. For two reasons, this chiasm renders the "presence" view significantly more likely than the "replacement" view. First, it makes clear that John 15:1–15 is the central point of emphasis for the Paraclete promise, whereas the "replacement" view renders John 15:1–15 as an abrupt digression from this promise. Second, it suggests that both Christ and the Paraclete perform in unison the same functions for the Christ community. As such, John 14:15–16:24 read as a macro-chiasm demonstrates that the Paraclete implicitly enables the Christ community to see Christ (14:15–20; 16:4–24) (A; A') and implicitly enables Christ to equip them for discipleship (14:21–31; 15:16–16:3) (B; B') by connecting them to Christ's abiding presence (15:1–15) (C).

The Chiastic Structure of John 14:15–16:24 According to Blomberg's Criteria

The chiasm has the following structure:

A – The Paraclete implicitly enables the Christ community to see Christ (14:15–20)

B – The Paraclete implicitly enables Christ to equip the Christ community for discipleship (14:21–31)

C – Christ abides in the Christ community (15:1–15).

B' – The Paraclete implicitly enables Christ to equip the Christ community for discipleship (15:16–16:3)

4 DePriest, "An Examination of Literary Chiasms," 138.

A' – The Paraclete implicitly enables the Christ community to see Christ (16:4–24)

1. John 15:1–15: Digression from the Paraclete Promise or the Heart of the Paraclete Promise?

Blomberg's first criterion is that there must be a problem in perceiving the text's structure, which more conventional outlines fail to resolve.[5] The problem in perceiving John 14–16's structure is that John 15:1–15 on the surface has an unclear relationship to the Paraclete promise of John 14–16. The replacement view overtly understands John 15:1–15 as an abrupt digression from the Paraclete promise. Although Keener, who affirms the presence view, claims that the indwelling of the Spirit mediates Jesus's activity as the source of fruit in John 15, neither Keener nor any other presence scholar provides an explicit rationale beyond general context to connect John 15:1–15 to John 14–16.[6] The passage understood as part of this chiasm more firmly establishes that the abiding Christ empowers the Christ community to bear fruit (15:1–15) due to the implicit agency of the Paraclete (14:15–20; 14:21–31; 15:16–16:3; 16:4–24).[7] In large part, this is why the surrounding chapters specifically discuss the Paraclete. Accordingly, *John 15:1–15 is actually the heart of the Paraclete promise because the Paraclete empowers the Christ community by implicitly bringing Christ's presence to them.*[8]

2. Clear Parallelism of Seeing Christ and of being Equipped for Discipleship

Blomberg's second criterion is that there must be clear examples of parallelism between the two "halves" of the hypothesized chiasm, to which commentators call attention, even when they propose quite different outlines for the overall text.[9] The chiasm in John 14:15–16:24 demonstrates precisely this sort of parallelism in both its inner and outer layers.

A. The Outer Layer: 14:15–20 (A) | 16:4–24 (A')

Outer Layer Parallel #1. The first parallel in the outer layer of the text concerns the role of the Paraclete in seeing Christ. In 14:16, 19 (A) and 16:7, 16 (A'), the Paraclete implicitly enables the Christ community to see Christ. This inference is necessary because the Christ community to whom John is writing, who were not representative of Christ's immediate disciples, could clearly not

5 DePriest, "An Examination of Literary Chiasms," 317.
6 Keener, *The Gospel*, 998.
7 Indeed, the ascended Christ cannot physically empower the disciples, thus necessitating the Spirit's agency.
8 See a similar notion found in Galatians 5:13–6:10. See also Nel, "The Notion," 5. Nel likewise suggests that the Paraclete abides with the Christ community forever to enable them to abide in Christ as their true vine.
9 DePriest, "An Examination of Literary Chiasms," 317.

physically see the resurrected or subsequently ascended Christ. As a result, the Christ community must be provided a "spiritual sight" of Christ, which is made possible only by the agency of the Paraclete.[10]

Other scholars have called attention to this parallelism. Nel and Joubert observe that the comparisons between Jesus and the Paraclete in John 14–16 indicate that the Paraclete makes Jesus present to the Christ community in a different form and manner.[11] Similarly, Brown, Thompson, and Keener suggest that (1) the Paraclete implicitly enables Christ's presence to permanently come to the Christ community (14:16–20), and (2) Christ's promise of permanent joy was fulfilled by his presence with them via the Spirit, as opposed to the resurrection appearances or second coming (16:16–24).[12] Furthermore, Bruner and Michaels propose that the Paraclete provides a positive means by which the Christ community can recognize Christ's presence, as the Paraclete is the Spirit of truth (14:16; 16:13) and Christ is the truth (14:6).[13]

Though coming to quite disparate conclusions and yet still calling attention to the parallel nature of John 14:15–20 and 16:4–24, Carson, Beasley–Murray, Barrett, and Lincoln assert that the Christ community "sees" Jesus in both John 14:19 and 16:16–17.[14]

Outer Layer Parallel #2. The second parallel in the outer layer of the text concerns the identical revelatory functions that both the Paraclete and Christ perform for the Christ community. Just as the Paraclete and Christ perform identical revelatory functions in 14:15–20 because they both dwell with the Christ community (14:17–18, 20), they also perform identical revelatory functions in 16:4–24 because they both speak to the Christ community (16:7–15).[15]

Here as well, this parallel is recognized by a number of scholars. Searles, Sheridan, Nel, and Joubert propose that the Paraclete and Christ both dwell with the Christ community and speak to the Christ community (14:16–20; 16:12–15).[16] Bruner and Brown remark that the Spirit of truth in both passages guides the

10 Christ sends the Paraclete (16:7) only because he asks the Father if he can send the Paraclete on the Father's behalf (14:16).

11 Nel, "The Notion," 510; Joubert, "A Theological Assessment," 508–509.

12 Brown, *The Gospel*, 645–646, 729–730; Thompson, *The God*, 181-182; Thompson, *John*, 341, 343; Keener, *The Gospel*, 973, 1043, 1046.

13 Bruner, *The Gospel*, 626, 690; Michaels, *The Gospel*, 342, 362.

14 Carson, *The Gospel*, 543; Beasley–Murray, *John*, 284; Barrett, *The Gospel*, 464; Lincoln, *The Gospel*, 422. These replacement scholars believe that "seeing" Jesus in both passages refers only to the resurrection appearances.

15 Dwelling with the Christ community is a revelatory function because the dwelling of both the Paraclete and Christ reveals to the Christ community the power and identity of Christ, which the world cannot see because neither of them dwell with the world (14:17–18, 20). Christ still has many things to say to the Christ community (16:12), which he says through the mediation of the Paraclete (16:14), who shows the Christ community how to convict the world (16:7–11).

16 Searles, "THESE THINGS," 516, 522; Sheridan, "The Paraclete and Jesus," 127; Nel, "The Notion," 6; Joubert, "A Theological Assessment," 509.

Christ community into all truth (16:13) by guiding them to the presence of Christ, who is the truth (14:6, 18; 16:12).[17]

While having a different understanding about how Jesus performs these revelatory functions for the Christ community, Lincoln and Barrett affirm the parallel nature of John 14:15–20 and 16:4–24 by acknowledging that the Paraclete and Christ both come to the disciples and speak to the Christ community.[18]

While Blomberg's criteria suggests that the parallels indicative of an authentic chiasm must be widely recognized, I wish to nevertheless point out here one more parallel that has not readily been detected in the relevant scholarship. Each section's ordering is identical, as the Paraclete's revelatory functions of dwelling and speaking (14:16–17; 16:7–11) are stated prior to Christ's identical revelatory functions of dwelling and speaking (14:18–20; 16:12–16). That not just the subject matter, but also the ordering of it follows a specific pattern is further evidence that the author organized the material via a literary chiasm as argued here.

B. The Inner Layer: 14:21–31 (B) | 15:16–16:3 (B')

Inner Layer Parallel #1. The first parallel in the inner layer of the text pertains to the Paraclete's role equipping the Christ community for discipleship. In 14:21–22, 26 (B) and 15:16, 19, 26 (B'), the Paraclete implicitly enables Christ to equip the Christ community for discipleship by revealing himself to them and choosing them out of the world. Moreover, both B and B' have a twofold emphasis on revealing himself to them (14:21–22) and on choosing them out of the world (15:16, 19). As with the notion of "seeing" Christ found in the first parallel of the outer layer, the resurrected and ascended Christ cannot physically interact with the Christ community to whom John is writing, and thus this revelation of Christ must be "spiritual" in nature. Accordingly, Christ reveals himself to disciples and chooses disciples out of the world only via the Paraclete's implicit agency.

This parallelism is likewise recognized by other scholars. Sheridan and Joubert propose that both the Paraclete and Jesus teach and testify to the Christ community, as the Paraclete implicitly "re-presents" Jesus to them (14:21–22, 26; 15:16, 19, 26).[19] Furthermore, Bruner and Michaels remark that (1) Christ reveals himself to the Christ community by giving them spiritual insight about himself (14:21–22), and that (2) Christ provides people the initiative to join the Christ community as disciples, especially due to Christ's twofold emphasis in declaring "I chose

17 Bruner, *The Gospel*, 694; Brown, *The Gospel*, 715.

18 Lincoln, *The Gospel*, 394-395, 420-421; Barrett, *The Gospel*, 463-464, 488-489. As replacement scholars, Lincoln and Barrett both claim that Jesus came to the Christ community only in the resurrection appearances, and that the Paraclete speaks to the Christ community on Christ's behalf.

19 Sheridan, "The Paraclete," 127; Joubert, "A Theological Assessment," 508–509. "Re-presents" indicates that just as Jesus presented himself to the world in his earthly ministry, Jesus is presented to the Christ community again through the implicit agency of the Paraclete.

you" (15:16, 19).[20] Moreover, Keener and Brown suggest that the Paraclete's union with Christ enables him to mediate how Christ teaches and testifies to disciples (14:21–22, 26; 15:16, 19, 26).[21]

Although they have different interpretations about how Christ's dual work is done, Morris and Meyers affirm the parallel nature of John 14:21–31 and 15:16–16:3 by asserting that the Paraclete continues Christ's work of teaching and testifying.[22]

Inner Layer Parallel #2. As was the case with the outer layer, the second parallel of the inner layer also concerns how both the Paraclete and Christ perform identical revelatory functions for the Christ community. Both the Paraclete and Christ teach the Christ community in 14:21–31, because Christ reveals himself to the Christ community through the Paraclete's implicit agency (14:21–22, 26). So too, they both testify to the Christ community in 15:16–16:3, because Christ chooses them out of the world through the Paraclete's implicit agency (15:16, 19, 26). Revealing himself to his disciples that love him by keeping his commandments, Christ teaches them about his true identity (14:21–22). When Christ chooses disciples out of the world, he testifies as to why they should follow him to bear fruit instead of following the world (15:16, 19). The Paraclete teaches the Christ community about Christ by reminding them of all that he reveals to them (14:26). Further, the Paraclete testifies about Christ to the Christ community on Christ's behalf by testifying as to why disciples should accept Christ's call out of the world (15:26).[23]

Observing this parallelism, Keener, Brown, Michaels, Bruner, and Joubert propose that the Paraclete implicitly enables Christ to teach and testify to disciples by continuing Christ's presence in the Christ community.[24]

Despite their rather different conclusions, Barrett and Lincoln affirm the parallel nature of John 14:21–31 and 15:16–16:3 by acknowledging that the Paraclete's purposes of teaching (14:26) and testifying (15:26) about Christ are interrelated.[25] Morris additionally points out that in both passages (14:26; 15:26) the Holy Spirit is sent in Jesus's name.[26]

Once again, each section's ordering is identical. In both passages, the

20 Bruner, *The Gospel*, 631, 667; Michaels, *The Gospel*, 343, 356.
21 Keener, *The Gospel*, 977, 1024; Brown, *The Gospel*, 652–653; 698–699.
22 Morris, *The Gospel*, 656; Meyers, *Reading John*, 160, 167. These replacement scholars believe that the Paraclete takes Christ place to teach and testify on his behalf, precluding Christ's agency mediated through the Paraclete.
23 Because the Father sends the Paraclete in Christ's name (14:26) and Christ sends the Paraclete from the Father (15:26), the Father sends the Paraclete through Christ (14:26; 15:26).
24 Keener, *The Gospel*, 975–976, 1024; Michaels, *The Gospel*, 343, 356; Brown, *The Gospel*, 652–653, 698–699; Bruner, *The Gospel*, 631, 667; Joubert, "A Theological Assessment," 509.
25 Barrett, *The Gospel*, 467; Lincoln, *The Gospel*, 397, 412.
26 Morris, *The Gospel*, 656.

Paraclete's revelatory functions of teaching (14:26) and testifying (15:26) are stated before Christ's identical revelatory functions of teaching (14:21–22) and testifying (15:16, 19).

3. Verbal Parallelism and Conceptual Parallelism of John 14:15–16:24

Blomberg's third criterion is that both verbal and conceptual parallelism should characterize most, if not all, of the corresponding pairs of subdivisions.[27] Verbal and conceptual parallels in the outer layer are as follows.

A. Verbal Parallelism in the Outer Layer: 14:15–20 (A) | 16:4–24 (A')

- "Advocate" (Παράκλητον) (14:16; 16:7)
- "give you" (δώσει ὑμῖν) (14:16); "send him to you" (πέμψω αὐτὸν πρὸς ὑμῖν) (16:7)
- "be with you forever" (ᾖ μεθ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα) (14:16); "come to you" (ἔλθῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς) (16:7)
- "the Spirit of truth" (τὸ Πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας) (14:17; 16:13)
- "I am coming to you" (ἔρχομαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς) (14:18); "I still have many things to say to you" (Ἔτι πολλὰ ἔχω ὑμῖν λέγειν) (16:12)
- "a little while" (μικρὸν) (14:19; 16:16–17, 19)
- "see me" ([θεωρεῖτέ με] 14:19; [ὄψεσθέ με] 16:16–17, 19)

B. Conceptual Parallelism in the Outer Layer: 14:15–20 (A) | 16:4–24 (A')

- The Paraclete is sent to the Christ community (14:16; 16:7)
- The Paraclete performs revelatory functions for the Christ community: dwelling with them, and speaking to them (14:16–17; 16:8–11, 13–15)
- Christ performs the identical revelatory functions for the Christ community: dwelling with them, and speaking to them (14:18–20; 16:12–15)
- The Christ community sees Christ through the Paraclete's implicit agency (14:16, 19; 16:7, 16–17)

Verbal and conceptual parallels in the inner layer are as follows.

A. Verbal Parallelism in the Inner Layer (14:21–31; 15:16–16:3) (B; B')

- "reveal myself to them" (ἐμφανίσω αὐτῷ ἐμαυτόν) (14:21); "you will reveal yourself to us" (ἡμῖν μέλλεις ἐμφανίζειν σεαυτὸν) (14:22); "I

27 DePriest, "An Examination of Literary Chiasms," 317.

chose you" (ἐγὼ ἐξελεξάμην ὑμᾶς) (15:16); "I have chosen you out of the world" (ἐγὼ ἐξελεξάμην ὑμᾶς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου) (15:19)
- "Advocate" (Παράκλητον) (14:26; 15:26)
- "the Holy Spirit" (τὸ Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον) (14:26); "the Spirit of truth" (τὸ Πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας) (15:26)
- "the Father will send in my name" (πέμψει ὁ Πατὴρ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου) (14:26); "I will send to you from the Father" (ἐγὼ πέμψω ὑμῖν παρὰ τοῦ Πατρός) (15:26)
- "teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you" (ὑμᾶς διδάξει πάντα καὶ ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς πάντα ἃ εἶπον ὑμῖν ἐγώ) (14:26); "testify on my behalf" μαρτυρήσει περὶ ἐμοῦ) (15:26)

B. Conceptual Parallelism in the Inner Layer (14:21–31; 15:16–16:3)

- Christ performs revelatory functions for the Christ community: revealing himself to disciples, and choosing disciples out of the world (14:21–22; 15:16, 19)
- The Paraclete is sent to the Christ community (14:26; 15:26)
- The Paraclete performs identical revelatory functions for the Christ community: teaching disciples, and testifying to disciples (14:26; 15:26)
- Christ equips the Christ community for discipleship through the Paraclete's implicit agency (14:21–22, 26; 15:16, 19, 26)

4. Central Imagery or Terminology

Blomberg's fourth criterion is that the verbal parallelism should involve central or dominant imagery or terminology, not peripheral or trivial language.[28] This criterion is met here, as the outer layer and the inner layer both contain all of John's uses of the term "Paraclete" (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), who is the subject of the Paraclete promise. Moreover, the verbal parallelism involves: (1) the dominant imagery of the Paraclete's agency in abiding (14:16–17), teaching (14:26), testifying (15:26), and speaking (16:8–11, 13–15); and (2) Christ's abiding (14:18–20), revealing himself (14:21–22), choosing disciples out of the world to himself (15:16, 19), and speaking (16:12–15) through the implicit agency of the Paraclete.

5. Unique Words and Ideas

Blomberg's fifth criterion is that both verbal and conceptual parallelism should involve words and ideas not regularly found elsewhere within the proposed

28 DePriest, "An Examination of Literary Chiasms," 317.

chiasm.[29] "Seeing" Christ in a "little while" (14:19; 16:16–17) by the implicit agency of the Paraclete (14:16; 16:7), and the Paraclete and Christ's "abiding" with (14:15–20) and "speaking" to (16:8–15) the Christ community is only found in the outer layer. Moreover, Christ's "revealing himself" to disciples (14:21) and "choosing" disciples out of the world to himself (15:16, 19) by the implicit agency of the "Paraclete" who "teaches" (14:26) and "testifies" (15:26) to the Christ community is discussed only in the inner layer.

6. Multiple Sets of Correspondence

Blomberg's sixth criterion is that in addition to multiple sets of parallels between opposing layers in the chiasm, there are several layers to it as well.[30] While this chiasm does not register as strongly in this criterion, it does meet the minimum standard, possessing an outer layer (14:15–20; 16:4–24), inner layer (14:21–31; 15:16–16:3), and center (15:1–15).

7. Five Natural Breaks

Blomberg's seventh criterion is that the outline should divide the text at natural breaks, which would be agreed upon even by those proposing very different structures to account for the whole.[31] The data between scholars is quite close regarding the natural breaks for the Paraclete promise of John 14–16. Keener, Thompson, Lincoln, Meyers, and Barrett propose that there are four natural breaks corresponding to the four uses of the term "Paraclete" (14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7).[32] Sheridan and Beasley–Murray propose that there are five natural breaks (14:16–17; 14:25–26; 15:26; 16:7–11; 16:13–15), dividing the fourth Paraclete text (16:7–24).[33] Nel and Brown assert that there are three natural breaks (14:16–26; 15:26–27; 16:7–15), combining the first two Paraclete texts (14:15–20; 14:21–31).[34] This article resonates with these scholars' findings by proposing five natural breaks. Four natural breaks correspond to the four usages of "Paraclete" (14:15–20; 14:21–31; 15:16–16:3; 16:4–24). The fifth natural break comprises the center of this chiasm, John 15:1–15. This article suggests that John 14:15 should begin the chiasm because it contains the prerequisite for receiving the Paraclete, which is obeying Christ out of love for him. John 16:24 should end the chiasm, as it concludes Christ's explanation for "seeing" him in a "little while," which is mediated by the implicit agency of the Paraclete.

29 DePriest, "An Examination of Literary Chiasms," 317.
30 DePriest, "An Examination of Literary Chiasms," 317.
31 DePriest, "An Examination of Literary Chiasms," 317.
32 Keener, *The Gospel*, 953; Thompson, *The God*, 177; Lincoln, *The Gospel*, 393; Meyers, *Reading John*, 160, 166–167; Barrett, *The Gospel*, 461.
33 Sheridan, "The Paraclete," 125; Beasley–Murray, *John*, 255.
34 Nel, "The Notion," 8; Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, Ed. Francis J. Moloney, Anchor Reference Bible Library (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 308–309.

8. John 15:1–15 as the Chiasm's Center

Blomberg's eighth criterion is that the chiasm's center and climax should be a passage worthy of that position due to its theological or ethical significance.[35] While Keener claimed the indwelling of the Spirit mediates Jesus's activity as the source of moral fruit, he did not substantiate his claim with an explicit literary justification.[36] This article's chiasm constitutes just such a justification. The chiasm's center focuses on the way that only Christ's abiding presence can empower the Christ community to produce fruit (15:4–5). Clearly, John 15:1–15 satisfies this criterion because only the Christ community's reliance on the abiding Christ to produce fruit demonstrates that they are his disciples (15:8). In fact, lacking Christ's abiding presence results in being removed, thrown away, withered, and burned (15:2, 6). In John 15:1–15, Jesus does not mention the Paraclete. This chiasm proposes that the Paraclete is not explicitly mentioned in John 15:1–15 precisely because Christ's abiding presence is the Paraclete promise's central point of emphasis. That is, the Paraclete implicitly brings Christ's abiding presence to the Christ community to empower them to produce such fruit.[37] Accordingly, then, John 15:1–15 can be properly interpreted only in terms of the Paraclete's implicit role in connecting the Christ community to Christ's abiding presence.

9. No Ruptures in the Chiasm

Blomberg's ninth and final criterion is that ruptures in the outline should be avoided if at all possible.[38] A rupture would occur if a section of the chiasm does not account for something in the text. The chiasm proposed here avoids all ruptures, as each section flows seamlessly into the next. First, John 14:15–20 focuses on how the Paraclete dwells with the Christ community (14:15–17) and then on how he implicitly enables the Christ community to see Christ dwell with them (14:18–20). Second, John 14:21–31 focuses on how Christ equips disciples by revealing himself to them (14:21–25) and then on how he does so through the implicit agency of the Paraclete who teaches disciples (14:26–31). Third, John 15:1–15 focuses on how Christ abides in the Christ community to empower them to produce fruit due to the implicit agency of the Paraclete. Fourth, John 15:16–16:3 focuses on how Christ chooses disciples out of the world to bear fruit (15:16–15:25) and then on how he does so through the implicit agency of the Paraclete who testifies on Christ's behalf (15:26–16:3). Fifth, John 16:4–24 focuses on how the Paraclete

35 DePriest, "An Examination of Literary Chiasms," 318.
36 Keener, *The Gospel*, 998.
37 See the similar notion found in Galatians 5:13–6:10. See also Nel, "The Notion," 5. Nel likewise suggests that the Paraclete abides with the Christ community forever to enable them to abide in Christ as their true vine.
38 DePriest, "An Examination of Literary Chiasms," 318.

speaks to the Christ community (16:4–11) and then on how he implicitly enables Christ to speak to them (16:12–24).

Contextual Arguments

Adding to Blomberg's criteria, two contextual arguments in support of the "presence" view and thus the proposed chiasm are worth noting here. These contextual arguments demonstrate correspondence with the notions of spiritually "seeing" Christ in the outer layer and of being equipped for discipleship by Christ in the inner layer. First, corresponding to the outer layer, Christ's prayer in John 17:20–26 comprises the only other section in John that discusses how the Christ community beyond the immediate disciples sees Christ after his ascension. Fernando Segovia observes that this section of Christ's prayer focuses on the glorification of both Christ's immediate disciples and all future disciples in the Christ community (17:20–26).[39] He proposes that "seeing" Christ's glory refers to how Christ himself will be present in the disciples to continue to make the Father known to them (17:24–26).[40] Brown and Bruner suggest that the indwelling presence of Christ may make the Father's name known through the work of the Paraclete (17:26; 14:26; 16:13–15).[41] Particularly, Christ linked the Christ community's "seeing" his glory with his being in them (17:23–24, 26), just as he linked the community's "seeing" him with his being in them in John 14:19–20. As such, his prayer indicates a continuous "spiritual" sight of him via the implicit agency of the Paraclete for the Christ community at large.

Second, corresponding to the inner layer, the "gate and good shepherd" parable of John 10:7–16 comprises the only other section of John that demonstrates how Christ simultaneously testifies to disciples (10:7, 9, 16) and teaches disciples (10:11–16). As the gate, he testifies to disciples to follow him rather than thieves (10:7, 9, 16). As the good shepherd, he teaches disciples to know him (10:11–16). The gate is a self-referential metaphor that points to Christ as the means of entrance into the community of the Father's people (10:7, 9, 16).[42] Wendy North remarks that John 10:7, 9 uses the same term θύρα as found in John 18:16, where the beloved disciple helps Peter follow Jesus by convincing the doorkeeper to let Peter enter the courtyard's gate.[43] Further, she remarks that John uses the same term αὐλῆς to refer to both the "courtyard" in John 18:16 and the "fold" in 10:16.[44]

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39 Fernando F. Segovia, "Inclusion and Exclusion in John 17: An Intercultural Reading," in *What is John? Literary and Social Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, vol. 2, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 197–198.
40 Segovia, "Inclusion and Exclusion," 198.
41 Brown, *The Gospel*, 781; Bruner, *The Gospel*, 1011.
42 Beasley–Murray, *John*, 169.
43 North, *What John Knew*, 36.
44 North, *What John Knew*, 36.

Accordingly, entering the courtyard's gate symbolizes a willingness and ability to follow Jesus. Bruner suggests that the Paraclete is the gatekeeper who opens the gate, thereby enabling the Christ community to listen to the good shepherd (10:3).[45] As such, the Paraclete enables Christ to testify to the Christ community (15:16, 19, 26).

The good shepherd is another self-referential metaphor pointing to Christ's function, as per a messianic reading of Ezekiel 34, in which God promises to set his servant David, i.e., the Messiah, as the shepherd of God's people who will gather and pasture his sheep (10:11–16).[46] Keener observes that the sheep hear Christ's voice through the Spirit who reveals him to them (John 16:7–15).[47] Accordingly, this parable suggests that Christ cooperates with the Paraclete to simultaneously testify to disciples by choosing them out of the world (15:16, 19, 26) and teach disciples by revealing himself to them (14:21–22, 26).

Conclusion

The Holy Spirit remained on Christ to connect him to the presence of the Father, who is the source of Christ's strength (1:32; 14:10). Likewise, the Paraclete abides with the Christ community to connect them to the abiding presence of Christ, who is the source of their strength (14:16; 15:5). Thus, the Paraclete can hardly be understood in John as Christ's replacement. The chiasm in John 14:15–16:24 strongly supports this view. The Paraclete implicitly enables the Christ community to see Christ ([A] 14:15–20; [A'] 16:4–24) and implicitly enables Christ to equip them for discipleship ([B]14:21–31; [B'] 15:16–16:3) by connecting them to Christ's abiding presence ([C] 15:1–15). In turn, because of its support of the "presence" view—particularly in terms of its affect upon the interpretation of 15:1–15—the chiasm impacts the Godhead theology found in the Gospel of John by affirming the agency of both the Paraclete and Christ in empowering the Christ community. The chiasm, then, resolves the problem of perceiving John 15:1–15 as an abrupt digression from the Paraclete promise of John 14–16.

Additionally, the chiasm more firmly establishes that, for John, both the Paraclete and Christ perform revelatory functions in unison for the Christ community. In all, it demonstrates that the implicit agency of the Paraclete brings Christ's abiding presence to the Christ community.

There is, of course, a circularity to this argument, as the "presence" interpretation is required to detect the chiasm. Nevertheless, once seen, the chiasm constitutes a proverbial silver bullet in favor of the "presence" view. That is, it confirms

45 Bruner, *The Gospel*, 610.
46 Beasley–Murray, *John*, 168.
47 Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary Volume One* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 808.

the "presence" view by consistently demonstrating that both Christ and the Paraclete perform functions in unison for the Christ community through the Paraclete's implicit agency in bringing Christ's abiding presence to the Christ community. Finally, it rightly demonstrates that John 15:1–15 is the Paraclete promise's central point of emphasis.

Persons in a Relationship-of-Grace: Imaging the Life and Mission of the Church After the Triune God

Timothy Hutton
Canadian Baptist Ministries

Abstract

This study frames grace (*charis*) as a social system of reciprocity and considers how the concept serves to constitute the Trinity as persons in a relationship-of-grace. There is subsequent exploration into the nature of the church's participation in the life and mission of the triune God. Investigation begins by approaching Paul's use of grace amidst the backdrop of the Greco-Roman system of gift-giving and reciprocity wherein grace establishes a social bond and is expectant of a response. This understanding of socially reciprocal grace is then considered through a perichoretic relational trinitarianism, followed by an anthropology of personhood shaped by God's gift of atonement. By proposing the triune God to be constituted as persons in a relationship-of-grace, the ecclesial body itself can further be depicted as bearing image to this grace-oriented relationship. Accordingly, missional ecclesiology is shown to be rooted in holistic reconciliation as grace is continually received and reciprocated, offering a social approach to missiological practice. Within this renewed vision of God and humanity, the church is established as a participant in the life of the Trinity as it comes to reside in the divine reciprocal dynamic while simultaneously realizing corporate ecclesial communion.

Trinitarian theologies, despite their myriad of approaches, remain largely concerned with addressing how the entities of the triune persons are constituted by way of their relations to one another.[1] Though God has been conceived in social relations by both church fathers and contemporary theologians, such analogies

1 For a detailed investigation of intra-trinitarian relations, see Wesley Hill, *Paul and the Trinity: Persons, Relations, and the Pauline Letters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), at 44: though diverse trinitarian theologies conceive of "relations" differently, their "disagreements underscore a shared commitment to the importance of the category of 'relations.'" There is accord that "each person is only identifiable by means of reference to the others."

remain diverse and rather contentious.[2] Yet, if humanity is called to image God and participate "in Christ," it is reasonable to ask what they are imaging and participating in.[3] This question inevitably leads to the doctrine of the Trinity.

A central distinctive of the Trinity is the reciprocity shared between the three persons in an eternal exchange of gifting. In antiquity, reciprocity itself was expressed through the Greek term *charis* meaning *gift* or *grace*; as a social system, *charis* offers critical insight into the practice of gift-giving. Grace, of course, has a diverse understanding amongst its many interpreters and some may reasonably assume it to have no place in the intra-trinitarian communion. Indeed, the common perception of *pure* grace as unmerited, undeserved, and often incongruous, would necessarily limit its role in the relationship of the Trinity who inhabit one another in perfect love.[4] However, more recent studies with greater historical investigation into the socio-cultural background of the NT see context as determinative, where the concept of grace could justifiably be situated within a system of reciprocity.[5] Though often viewed as a narrow one-directional inference of redemption and blessing, grace is increasingly recognized as a relational experience shaped in mutuality. This elaboration of grace has implications for the apprehension of God, the human person, and the church. The essential being of each of these entities, moreover, directly informs the practice of mission.

To this end, this study will establish the Trinity as persons in a relationship-of-grace and identify how their divine communion is extended to both human beings and the ecclesial body. This will first require an approach to grace that is more comprehensive and polyvalent, allowing for different emphases and bypassing limitations created by a narrow treatment of the term. Following

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2 There is a concern that human relations are projected onto God and swiftly reflected back as the appropriate ecclesial model after the likeness of the Creator. For a thoughtful critique of social trinitarianism, see Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (New York: Cambridge, 2010), 207–46; and also Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity," *New Blackfriars* 81:956 (2000): 432–45.

3 Participation refers to a view of the gospel as God's engagement in humanity and His people's mutual participation in the life of the Trinity (ex. 1 Cor 1:9, 10:16; Gal 3:26–27). For a thorough exploration of the theology of participation, see Michael J. Thate et al. eds., *"In Christ" in Paul: Explorations in Paul's Theology of Union and Participation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).

4 A recent New Testament text describes grace as "the free and unmerited favor of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of undeserved blessing." See Mark Allan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 561. Applying this definition directly to the trinitarian relations would rightly raise concerns of Arianism and possible imperfection within the Godhead. Referencing the Orthodox tradition for instance, James Payton explicitly states, "We cannot assert, though, that grace is involved in the relationship of the three persons of the Trinity." See James R. Payton, *Light from the Christian East: An Introduction to the Orthodox Tradition* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007), 162.

5 Referring to the polyvalent *perfections* of grace outlined by John Barclay, Wendell Willis clarifies "Paul does not have a singular 'correct' perfection, but makes different emphases in his varied uses." Wendell L. Willis, "Paul, the Gift and Philippians," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 41:2 (2019): 175.

contemporary NT scholarship, Paul's theology will be situated within the social structure of reciprocal grace. This renewed vision of biblical *charis* will then be considered in relation to the doctrine of God, approaching it through a perichoretic trinitarianism where members of the Trinity exist in unified relation to each other in a social bond of grace. Subsequently, human relationality and the meaning of the atonement gift offered to all people is investigated in light of the God being imaged. Rather than a direct replication of the divine relations, humans will be shown to participate in this relationship as is eschatologically inherent to their anthropology. This enables the necessary groundwork to present the church itself as participants in the life of the triune God—understood as a relationship-of-grace—characterized by a missional ecclesiology rooted in holistic reconciliation. Thus, the first task undertaken will be the establishment of a more biblically contextualized comprehension of grace.

Framing Grace Within its Biblical Context

Recent scholarship has reconsidered the significance of *charis* within ancient society and the implications this has on Paul's use of the term in his epistles. This section will provide a concise study of the way gifts functioned in the Greco-Roman socio-cultural context within which Paul was communicating, offering clarity around the meaning of grace. As its relation to God, humans, and the church will be subsequently considered, first establishing a theological framework for grace will therefore be pivotal to the ensuing argument that the Trinity exists in a relationship-of-grace.

In antiquity *charis* was a gift or benefit, the object of favour, as well as the resulting gratitude. John Barclay observes that *charis* itself carried little theological significance in the Greek of Paul's day; rather it implied an "act (or attitude) of favor or benevolence—not a special kind of gift, just any favor or benefit."[6] Yet, benefaction was often comprised of calculated gift exchanges serving to enhance social cohesion through an ethic of reciprocity.[7] It is this reciprocity that shapes the fundamental structure of gifts within the system of grace—giving, receiving, and reciprocating. *Charis* describes the giver, the gift, as well as the recipient's gift in response. The Old Testament depicts those of equal status, both Jews and non-Jews, participating in reciprocal exchange of gifts.[8] Though

6 John M. G. Barclay*, Paul and the Power of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), xiv, 2. Note how these meanings of *charis* capture a circular movement: "a gift given to a favored person creates gratitude in return."

7 Enoch O. Okode, *Christ the Gift and the Giver: Paul's Portrait of Jesus as the Supreme Royal Benefactor in Romans 5:1–11* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2022), 3.

8 See Gen 33:1–11; Exod 2:16–22. *Equality* nor *reciprocity* are in opposition within either the Hebrew Scriptures or Greco-Roman philosophy; see John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 40.

recipients of gifts within Greco-Roman culture did not sense themselves contractually obligated as this held no legal standing, there was a strong moral and social obligation that arose from them.

Beneficiaries often considered themselves in debt as some form of reciprocity was expected toward the giver, even if only gratitude, honour, and chiefly loyalty.[9] The stoic philosopher Seneca considers the social expectation of gifts and recognizes that there are instances where gratitude may be the only means of appropriate response, as it is a virtue capable of fulfilling the required social obligation.[10] Collectively, citizens would offer honour towards elite municipal benefactors, often encapsulated by status, titles, and privileges. These incongruous gifts disregard the worth or capacity of the recipient, as well as the value of their corresponding gift; yet there was a clear expectation for a response. Contemporary biblical studies increasingly suggest that Paul's use of *charis* also carries this expectation of recipients.[11]

This system, moreover, was not only practiced at the political and elite level but amongst every social group, including the poor. Ryan Schellenberg's scholarship exploring the ethnography of both ancient and modern poverty observes the many studies in which reciprocal modes of exchange among those at the subsistence-level have been documented both in tribal societies and among the urban poor globally. He stresses the unpredictability of resources amongst the poor and how this fosters a practice of reciprocity (or swapping) to manage such a fluctuation in stability.[12] Generous compassion towards peers when one is economically sufficient could later help mitigate a personal crisis as friends graciously do the same.

Other anthropological studies indicate that when reciprocal obligations are incurred as a group (such as a church) they allow for more diverse sets of mutual partnerships to be formed with the marginalized.[13] This social practice extends beyond one-to-one gifting as collectivists promote giving as a community, helping to strengthen corporate identity.[14] This all upholds the assertion that Paul promoted reciprocal forms of giving within ecclesial networks as a strategic means of generosity during times of misfortune and extreme need.

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9 E. Randolph Richards and Richard James, *Misreading Scripture with Individualist Eyes: Patronage, Honor, and Shame in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2020), 77–79.

10 David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2022), 108, 115; Barclay, *Paul and the Power,* 8.

11 For instance, Paul often presents a lifepath towards or away from God, where even "under grace" there are obligations of obedience (Rom 6:14–18).

12 Ryan S. Schellenberg, "Subsistence, Swapping, and Paul's Rhetoric of Generosity," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 137 (2018): 222–23.

13 A study of reciprocal relationships in Bolivia, for instance, found that despite a decline in traditional bonds, there is a distinct increase in reciprocity amongst evangelicals in this region. See Amber Wutich, "Shifting Alliances: Reciprocal Relationships During Times of Economic Hardship in Urban Bolivia," *Chungara: Revista de Antropología Chilena* 43 (2011): 127.

14 Richards and James, *Misreading Scripture,* 68.

As a social practice, reciprocity becomes fundamental to Paul's use of *charis* when framed within the Roman *patron-client relationship*. This enabled relationships between persons and groups of unequal-statuses complete with expectations of benefaction and obligation. It may be that Paul's motive for refusing financial support from the Corinthian church, while gratefully accepting it from Philippi and elsewhere, relates to these client obligations.[15] Moreover, this patron-client framework extends into Greek and Roman religion, wherein it was generally understood that the gods initiate the cycle of reciprocity and human benefactors respond with sacrifice and worship. Both the social and religious outcome of gifts (whether in equality or incongruity) was to tie those involved together, as the giving and receiving of a gift constituted a social bond.[16]

Polyvalent Perfections of Grace

The motif of grace can be disaggregated to encompass several definitions of *perfected grace* (that is its ultimate reduction) frequently identified within antiquity and theology. As gifting within the system of *charis* is a multifaceted experience, grace can be perfected in multiple ways; yet each of the distinct understandings of grace can stand alone, without requiring one to commit to them all. The following briefly examines some of these perfections of grace.[17]

Superabundance references the large scale, lavishness, and all-encompassing quality of the gift. There is less concern for its contents, and more for the gift's overall size and even permanence or duration. *Singularity* focuses on the giver's attitude and approach as *solely* benevolence and goodness, refraining to punish or judge. *Efficacy* expresses the impact of the gift on the nature or agency of the recipient. Gifting birth or rescuing life have immense effect. Finally, *incongruity* (as discussed above) is to gift without regard to the worth of the recipient. Impressive generosity might strive to be as unselective and indiscriminate as possible. Each of these polyvalent classifications of grace has been depicted as the standard expression of *pure* and *perfected* grace. Any one or any combination of them may perfect a facet of grace without necessarily comprising them all.

Faith in Relation to Grace

Concise attention will be given here to *pistis* as a response to *charis*. Patrons were to bestow *charis* towards clients who would in turn offer loyalty expressed as *pistis* (translated as *faith*). Referencing "faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal 2:16), Barclay asserts

15 N.T. Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 251.

16 Okode, *Christ the Gift and the Giver*, 6, 30; Schellenberg, "Subsistence, Swapping," 222. Notably, faith is practiced in both patron-client relations and equal "friendships." See deSilva, *Honor, Patronage,* 120.

17 The subsequent classifications of perfected grace are a selection from Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 70–75.

pistis Cristou as "trust in Christ," arguing that "trust" is a preferable translation to "faith" as it evokes a sense of relationship.[18] Paul is not referring to belief in an impersonal doctrine, he contends, but rather a personal dependence on what God accomplished in the death and resurrection of Jesus—the gift. Trust in Christ becomes the appropriate response to the grace of God.

Matthew Bates, nevertheless, advocates that *pistis* is better understood as "allegiance" and that the gospel should be reconsidered accordingly. Part of his conviction stems from Paul's frequent titles for Jesus such as Christ and Lord, indicative of the allegiant relationship a people would hold towards their Messiah and King. Bates contends that if the gospel's apex is Christ's enthronement and *pistis* is understood largely as allegiance, then Paul's gospel and mission seek to bring about practical obedience (characteristic of allegiance) to King Jesus.[19]

Barclay, however, takes issue with the translation "allegiance" due to its over-emphasis on the action of believers rather than a dependence on the primary promise and act of God in Christ.[20] Yet, while trust may imply slightly more interiority, it likewise conveys an active relationality. In fact, Bates observes that Barclay himself often seems to suggest that Paul construes faith as allegiance, at times using the terms interchangeably in his own writing.[21] For instance, discussing Paul's desire for the Corinthians to support Jerusalem, he states that it was their "shared *allegiance* to Jesus Christ" that united these early believers across borders, portraying them as "participating in the *charis* of God," on this occasion with a literal gift.[22] Far from inferring self-reliance, *pistis* becomes a reciprocal response to the grace of the gospel received in faith. Trust and allegiance are necessarily incorporated into *pistis* within a grace-faith structure.[23] To live by faith is to respond in *trusting-allegiance* to the Christ-gift.

The implication then, is that Paul used the social structure of reciprocal

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18 Barclay, *Paul and the Power,* 48. Though not the intention of this article, it is difficult here to avoid entering what can be called the *pistis Cristou* debate regarding whether such passages refer to the *pistis* of Paul (the objective genitive reading) or that of Christ (the subjective genitive reading). For an overview see Nijay K. Gupta, "Paul and *Pistis Christou*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Pauline Studies*, ed. Matthew Novenson and R. Barry Matlock (New York: Oxford, 2022), 470–87.

19 Matthew W. Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 85–86. Michael Gorman likewise posits Paul's ministry as eliciting an "obedience of faith," "faithful obedience," or even "believing allegiance," see Gorman, *Participation in Christ: Explorations in Paul's Theology and Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 10.

20 Barclay, *Paul and the Power,* 49n19.

21 Barclay's own notion of *pistis* is not entirely inconsistent with Bates' view as he himself emphasizes that Paul's "allegiance is now exclusively to Christ, the source of his new life in faith." Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 398.

22 John M. G. Barclay, "Paul and the Gift to Jerusalem: Overcoming the Problems of the Long-Distance Gift," in *Poverty in the Early Church and Today: A Conversation*, ed. Steve Walton (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 95; emphasis mine.

23 David deSilva similarly argues that NT "faith" is meant to arouse both *trust* and *loyalty* towards God, as *pistis* integrates both concepts. See deSilva, *Honor, Patronage*, 120–21, 155.

grace-faith as an analogy for the divine-human relationship. God gives freely and benevolently (grace) to his people, who respond in trust, loyalty, and allegiance (faith). This relationship can be observed in Galatians 2:19–21 as follows: Paul acknowledges "the grace of God" by in turn giving up his life and choosing to "live for God," that is to "live by faith," reciprocating the gift of the Son who first "loved" him and "gave himself" for the apostle.

Consequently, Jewish gifting practices were generally comparable with the surrounding culture, with a notable exception: Hebrews were to give to the poor generously even though they were clearly unable to reciprocate.[24] Having received God's gracious gift of divine liberation, justice and compassion, Israelites were to respond with justice and compassion themselves as an act of faith. Their benevolent redemption becomes a powerful basis amongst the people of God for practicing social justice and inviting others to share in their gift. As Barclay explains, "Jews were expected to live out their *allegiance* to God, and their commitment to 'righteousness,' in giving to the poor," corresponding with the resources available to the giver.[25] What is more, though the destitute may have nothing to give in return, even here there is an element of reciprocity as it was God who would repay the giver with blessing. Jews had an arguably stronger motive for compassion towards the poor and marginalized since they anticipated a response not from their neighbours but from Yahweh.[26] This has missiological implications, as the early church often responded to the gift of the gospel with the "grace of giving" towards those outside their social group (Phil 4:14–17; 2 Cor 8:1–7).[27]

Today there is evidence that this invigorating theology of grace can help facilitate an ecclesial and missiological approach to relational reconciliation through an ethic of reciprocity.[28] Having received such abundant gifts from God, many contemporary Christian communities model a faith-filled response as they

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24 For instance, Proverbs 11:24–25 follows the Greco-Roman framework of reciprocity, while Proverbs 19:17 exhibits this ethic of giving to the poor without expectation of return.

25 For Barclay, to be righteous is to stay loyal to the truth of the gospel by deriving life from the Christ-gift in faith, the ground of one's being. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 43, 377–79; emphasis mine.

26 See this ethos in Deut 24:13 and further consistency with Jesus' teaching in Matt 6:1–4 and Luke 6:38; 14:12–14. Notably, this practice extends beyond family and nationality to include foreigners, see Exod 23:9; Lev 19:33–34; Deut 15:12–15. Barclay refers to the interchange of grace as being "triangulated" between humans and God, as God's people pass on what they have divinely received. See Barclay, "Paul and the Gift to Jerusalem," 95.

27 Willis, "Paul, the Gift and Philippians," 178–79.

28 Consider John Perkins who for decades has been undertaking a holistic approach to community development. Perkins insists that initiatives based in reconciliation must "create value and gratitude" for the gift invested. In his words, "it's an issue of grace – there's undeserved favor, and you feel a huge gratitude for it. He [Christ] gave me and forgave me, and now I love him." See John M. Perkins, "Reconciliation and Development," in *Following Jesus: Journeys in Radical Discipleship – Essays in Honor of Ronald J. Sider*, ed. Paul Alexander and Al Tizon (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 77, 80.

gratefully follow Christ out into the world. As will be shown, grace itself is located in the very communion of the triune Creator to which we now turn.

Perichoretic Relationship-of-Grace

What of the place of *charis* within the identity of the triune God? With a renewed perspective of biblical grace, social reciprocity will now be explored as an essential distinctive inherent within the being of the Trinity. This is best understood following the classic trinitarian doctrine of *perichoresis*, as well as the modern development of a more relational trinitarian theology with no fixed order among the persons-in-relationship. The doctrine of the Trinity acknowledges a dialog between the Father, Son, and Spirit, as well as with humans within the economy of redemption, best expressed through social analogies.[29]

The trinitarian relations are complementary, or in Wolfhart Pannenberg's explanation, the three persons are "living realizations of separate centers of action" where God can act only as a communion of the different persons within one another.[30] Furthermore, the persons of the Trinity are distinct not only in their being interdependent but also *mutually internal*: "the Father is in me and I am in the Father" (John 17:21). They indwell and mutually permeate one another while still remaining distinct persons. Miroslav Volf refers to this indwelling relationship of mutual giving and receiving as the *reciprocal interiority* of the trinitarian persons.[31]

A reciprocal trinitarianism is inclusive of both Christology and Pneumatology as the relations among the divine persons and their ministry in the world are germane.[32] This approach does not separate attention towards the life of Christ from the relationship among the divine persons, but rather the Son is considered within a trinitarian framework, relocating Christ and his work within the Trinity. Likewise, this is true of the Holy Spirit who risks being isolated from the work of the triune God when in fact the ministry of the Spirit should be identified in the

29 Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace, Revised and Updated: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2019), 327; Dudley Brown, "Holy Spirit and the Trinity in the Black Church," *Canadian-American Theological Review* 10:1 (2021): 33. Intriguingly, Brown observes how African Trinitarian reflections often emphasize such social analogies within a relational and dynamic communion.

30 Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdman, 1998), 215.

31 Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 209.

32 Volf feels that Kathryn Tanner holds a position of Christological exclusivity, leading her to a misplaced critique of his social trinitarian view. See Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 328, and also Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 207. Wesley Hill likewise suggests that Christology is misconstrued when isolated from the other divine persons, offering instead an approach through a mutually interpretive relational matrix. See Hill, *Paul and the Trinity*, 25–30.

incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.[33] Each Trinity member's life-giving activity is co-constitutional of the personal identity of the others. Trinitarian personhood is realized through the giving and receiving that occurs within their dynamic relational reciprocity.[34]

The theological concept for this co-constitutional mutual indwelling is *perichoresis*, a co-inherence in one another without any coalescence. Gregory of Nazianzus is the first to employ the term theologically in his *Epistle* 101, while Pseudo-Cyril of Alexandria later applied the noun to capture trinitarian mutual abiding and co-inherent unity. In these contexts, one dimension of the verb (περιχωρούσων) can be interpreted as "pass reciprocally" or "to reciprocate" while the noun (περιχώρησις) can refer to "reciprocity."[35] The envisioned reciprocal back and forth of the early church fathers came to be expressed much like a synergistic dance with a mutual inter-sharing of attributes. This dance is reminiscent of the *Charites* (or Graces) of Greek mythology. Portrayed as three sisters dancing hand-in-hand, they represent a circular relationship of reciprocity. The *Charites* allegorize divine favour, the giving and receiving of gifts, and the social bond of *charis* "so fundamental to Greek culture."[36] Within the perichoresis, God is movements of relationship (the patterns of the dance itself), a living expression of circular giving and receiving.[37] Perichoretic unity is predicated on the reciprocal relations of the divine persons as they themselves are constituted through their mutuality.[38]

More recently, relational trinitarians have suggested initiating the exploration of God with the "self-reciprocating identity and love" inherent within the

33 This enables what Steven Studebaker has deemed a trinitarian paradigm of grace and a participatory theology of atonement. See Steven M. Studebaker, *The Spirit of Atonement: Pentecostal Contributions and Challenges to the Christian Traditions* (New York: T&T Clark, 2021), 40, 56–57.

34 Studebaker compellingly argues for the full personhood of the Spirit within the Trinity who likewise contributes to the co-constitution of both the Father and Son's personal identities. Steven M. Studebaker, *From Pentecost to the Triune God: A Pentecostal Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 107–108, 142–43.

35 Verna Harrison, "Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 35 (1991): 54–56.

36 Jennifer Larson, *Ancient Greek Cults: A Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 162. Non-reciprocal isolated acts of grace were "entirely foreign to the ideal of giving in the first century." deSilva, *Honor, Patronage*, 109.

37 Paul Fiddes observes that "in the divine dance, so intimate is the communion that they move in and through each other so that the pattern is all-inclusive," much like "a perichoresis of *movements*." Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (Louisville: WJK, 2001), 72–73.

38 For Pannenberg, the perichoresis captures how the deity of each member of the Trinity is ontologically dependent on the activity of the other two as they mutually glorify one another. Gifted from each person to the others, theirs is a "received divinity." See Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 48–50.

community of the Trinity.[39] Stanley Grenz captures this perichoretic approach succinctly: "the three members of the Trinity are 'person' precisely because they are persons-in-relationship; that is, their personal identities emerge out of their reciprocal relations."[40] This enables Father, Son, and Spirit to be in one another without requiring their mutual indwelling to limit trinitarian plurality. The mutual self-differentiation of the three constitutes the concrete form of the trinitarian reciprocal relations.

Accordingly, there is a clear alignment with the above description of grace as a fundamental structure of gifts within a relational system of reciprocity—giving, receiving, and reciprocating. The sharing of grace within the triune God maintains the same outcome of gifts within Greco-Roman society: uniting participants together in a social bond. Their identity forms out of their grace-filled communion; thus, the Trinity can be perceived as persons in a relationship-of-grace.

It is prudent to clarify that the intra-trinitarian experience of grace is not identical with the grace afforded to creation.[41] There is no hierarchy amongst the divine persons, discarding any parallel with a patron-client relationship.[42] It does not include the unmerited favour and undeserved blessing extended towards humans, as the Holy Trinity is innately worthy of the divine gifts they reciprocate in their being. Given his audience, Paul discusses grace in relation to the human experience of gospel salvation; yet if grace is understood to be multifaceted, the term remains flexible enough to be applied towards God using specific facets of grace. This returns us to the polyvalent perfections of grace. First, if God is to give such abundant and surpassing grace to humans (Rom 5:17; 2 Cor 9:14), it is hard to imagine any less extravagance being gifted amongst the persons of the Trinity. The life of Jesus offered in obedience or the Father appointing the Son as heir of all things at his right hand (Heb 1:2–3) reflect a *superabundance* of grace, as does the permeance of their eternal reciprocal interiority. Second, while a divine-human gift motivated by *singular* benevolence and goodness has proven difficult to reconcile with God's necessary enactment of justice and judgement, within the Trinity there is no need to account for such relational transgressions. The essence of each is holy and righteous, freeing the triune persons to gift

39 Jason S. Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz* (New York: T&T Clark, 2013), 58.

40 Grenz, *The Social God*, 332.

41 Within the Orthodox doctrine of grace, the persons of the Trinity dwell in eternal communion as the divine essence, while the divine energies are God acting outside the divine essence, working within and sustaining creation as grace itself. See Payton, *Light from the Christian East*, 163–64. This article proposes that the divine essence is in fact a relationship-of-grace through which characteristics such as love are reciprocated, and by which the three persons of the Trinity gift co-constitution in self-differentiated unity.

42 DeSilva, however, emphasizes that persons of equal statues could practice *faith* in a reciprocal exchange that "deepens relationships of trust, loyalty, and mutuality." See deSilva, *Honor, Patronage*, 109, 121, 124.

themselves in singular goodness to one another. Finally, the *efficacy* of the grace shared within the Trinity is evident in how the three co-constitute one another's personhood through their life-giving activity. Their mutual gifting has a profound impact on the nature and agency of each member.

As has been demonstrated, however, it is in how the triune persons express the reciprocal nature of gifts that the Trinity most clearly displays a relationship-of-grace. Indeed, John's proposal that "God is love" can be understood to be grounded in a dynamic relational reciprocity, framed within the biblical system of *charis*. As the reciprocity of love requires both a subject and object between whom a bond is created, this relationality can be found precisely within the communion of the triune God (negating that God can only be love via his creatures). Thus, love is a central attribute that is mutually given and received in grace, where the persons of the Trinity are constituted as both lover and beloved. Just as the love of God is eternal, so too is the grace of God which eternally gifts love within the intra-trinitarian communion. The divine reciprocal interiority as a coinherence of mutual self-giving love is of the essence of God.[43]

What is more, it is into this dynamic relational reciprocity—the perichoretic community of persons in a relationship-of-grace—that humanity is drawn and graciously invited to participate in together. Here the telos of both the *imago Dei* and the *ecclesia* come into focus as the Trinity informs and inspires the social vision of the church. In the following section humans and their relationship to the God of grace will be examined.

Gifting Reconciliation

Consideration as to how individuals and the church may model the Trinity raises anthropological inquiries as to how humans relate to their Creator. Truthfully, life within the loving unity of the Trinity is questionable for humans who are marred by sin; yet Scripture speaks of a hope that persons can be reconciled to their God. Foundational here is the biblical concept of the *image of God*. Grounded in the nature of the Trinity, the divine image is a gift to all people while God's likeness is humanity's proper pursuit.[44] The Greek term for image is *eikon*, meaning "icon," implying that to serve as the icon of the Trinity is to usher in His presence and earthly rule as a governing ambassador, operating somewhat like an idol meant

43 Correspondingly, Clark Pinnock suggests "It is the essence of God's nature to be relational. This is primordial in God and defines who God is." The argument is predicated on the assumption that "the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity. The immanent Trinity . . . is revealed by the economic Trinity." Pinnock concludes, "Thus the self-giving love that we see in the Gospels has roots in what transpires within God the Trinity." Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1996), 32–35.

44 Many of the Church fathers distinguish between *image* (a universal statues) and *likeness* (an anthropological goal). James R. Payton, Jr., *The Victory of the Cross: Salvation in Eastern Orthodoxy* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2019), 25–26, 117.

to direct worship to the Lord while also reflecting His character and dynamic stewardship back into the world.[45] Redemptive love and creative power are integrated within the *eikon*, where human relationships are meant to reflect the divine "gracious self-giving" as power *with* rather than power *over* others.[46]

Anthropologically, to be human is to be embedded in a complex web of multivalent relationships through which personhood is constituted. Emmanuel Katongole outlines the *integral ecology* within which humans are held in bonds of social life comprised of solidarity and belonging.[47] This notion is expressed with theological variance but effectively promotes a holistic vision of personhood: humanity was created to be in perfect union with God, others, oneself, and creation, but this intent was disrupted by *eikons* themselves.[48] Yet, the God of love longs to reconcile sinful humanity and draw this new creation into grace-filled communion within the perichoretic life. Given the triune God's desire for humanity to participate in its *reciprocal interiority*, Scot McKnight is perceptive in affirming that "genuine reality then is relational; genuine atonement is reconciliation."[49] As God is triune persons-in-relationship, Grenz posits that the *imago Dei* must in some sense entail humans-in-relationship who through their social bonds reflect the divine love as a reconciling community.[50]

A relationally fractured *eikon*, therefore, requires that expiation attend to more than a narrow view of sin; a central task must be the restoration of right relationships. Fortunately, God does offer an atonement that has personal, corporate, and cosmic implications, capable of reconciling human relationships in all four directions and ultimately renewing the vibrant image of God within His created beings. Atoning salvation is not a divine-human transaction, but rather salvation is

45 G. K. Beale and Mitchell Kim, *God Dwells Among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2014), 30; Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone*, 145–61. The Hebrew *ṣelem* (image) likewise has a semantic range including idol or a cult image. See J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 17, 128–29.

46 Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 177–78, 183. Richard Middleton suggests that God shares power with creatures as an act of generosity and love, inviting them to participate in the creative process itself.

47 Emmanuel Katongole, "Mission as Integral Ecology: Doing Theology at Bethany," *Mission Studies* 39 (2022): 167. Katongole draws inspiration from Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

48 See Katongole, "Mission as Integral Ecology," 173; Al Tizon, *Whole and Reconciled: Gospel, Church, and Mission in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 97–108; Scot McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007): 36; Howard A. Snyder and Joel Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed: The Ecology of Sin and Grace* (Eugene: Cascade, 2011), 147–49.

49 McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 16. Rudolf Bultmann's analysis of Pauline "sin" suggests that it is not a transgression of divine commands but the idea that life (rather than being received as a gift from God) can be procured by one's own power. Sin is to live from one's own self-reliance rather than from the grace of God. See Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 137. This distortion of power does violence to multi-relational humanity.

50 Stanley J. Grenz, "Ecclesiology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 265–67.

relational, reincorporating persons into their Lord.[51] God saves by enabling *eikons* to become His adopted childen by grace, inviting them to share in the fellowship that God's only natural Son has eternally enjoyed with the Father.[52] Within the Orthodox perspective, "grace is God himself," working in humanity for their transformation into his likeness.[53]

Paul's theology emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the perfect *eikon* of which humans are gloriously being transformed into through the Spirit (2 Cor 3:18). This transformation, suggests Susan Eastman, comes through participation in a relational interchange larger than oneself, facilitating a network of reciprocal exchange. The constitution of the self "in Christ" with other believers in the Spirit becomes "intersubjective all the way down, in relationship to Christ and in relationship to others."[54] Divine reconciliation demonstrates an abundance of trinitarian love, whereby personhood is realigned with the relational God whom humanity mirrors—triune persons in a relationship-of-grace.

Within this newly restored relationship, atonement can be understood as a gift from God; however, to receive the Trinity's restorative atonement (to be saved by grace) has a reciprocal expectation: faith, trust, and allegiance. That God has given such amazing gifts to human-clients who have not upheld their obligations subverts the Greco-Roman system while elevating the Lord as the great patron. Indeed, that God gave while we were still sinners (Rom 5:8) demonstrates an *incongruous* perfection of grace. Life in the Trinity is offered as an unmerited gift when the redeemed are united by faith in Christ through the Spirit; yet this does carry an expectation of its recipients.[55]

In her review of the patristic models of atonement, Darby Kathleen Ray outlines their relational view of sin and corresponding atonement theology requiring a "transformation in one's relationship to evil . . . interpersonally, communally, institutionally, and globally."[56] Likewise, Robert Schreiter discusses this

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51 Robert J. Daly, "Images of God and The Imitation of God: Problems with Atonement," *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 50.

52 Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 185.

53 Payton, *The Victory of the Cross*, 166. In the Orthodox tradition, all that is came into being either through God's creative activity or it must be God himself. God did not become gracious sometime after creation (for God did not change with creation), but rather grace existed in God throughout eternity. Grace is uncreated (*gratia increata*) and therefore it is God himself. Payton emphasizes that this grace is limited to God as the divine energies, to the exclusion of the divine essence. See Payton, *Light from the Christian East*, 162–64.

54 Susan Grove Eastman, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 173.

55 While humans can only receive from God without "giving" anything in return, faith, trust, and allegiance are appropriate responses to God's gifts as an expression of love towards the divine giver.

56 Darby Kathleen Ray, "Praxis of Atonement: Confounding Evil Through Cunning and Compassion," *Religious Studies and Theology* 18 (1999): 39–41.

transformative power of grace where God's reconciliation is offered first to those who have been sinned against as a gift in faith, enabling them to reencounter their humanity. A subsequently restored *eikon* then becomes an agent of reconciliation, discovering God's grace to both forgive one's perpetrator and also help them rediscover their own humanity.[57] Thus, as Ray states, holistic reconciliation necessitates "the redefinition of self as self-in-relation, the relocation of agency within the limits of reciprocity."[58] Restored humans love because God first loved and sent the Son to atone for sin, enabling the grace-filled participation of *eikons* in the divine ministry of reconciliation. This is how love is known to humanity (1 John 3:16).[59] The gift of atonement establishes a social bond, which in practice reveals that reconciliation is first the work of God, yet that into which we are invited together. Here, personhood should be viewed as a relational gift, "the gift to me of others."[60]

Finally, to be a restored *eikon* is to be a missional being sent to represent the creator by participating in the perichoretic relationship and image love in grace after God's likeness.[61] This is seen in how the Gospel of John instructs the disciples to first *abide* and then *go*. For Michael Gorman, *abiding* is as intimate as the language of *mutual indwelling* within the perichoresis, with connotations of a "permanent, roots-in-the-ground relationship with Jesus."[62] Once they firmly abide in him (and only then), those in Christ are sent to *go* and *do* the ministry into which they are invited, giving shape to a participatory missiology. So, human missional activity flows from the reincorporation of image bearers into the triune God as welcomed participants in the self-giving community-of-grace.

Grace enables humanity to discover its relationality and the reciprocity that holds it together. The gift of reconciliation signifies a summons to enter into God's overflowing perichoretic love and live in faithful reciprocity. Reintegration within a relationally *integral ecology* asks that God's people approach mission through attentiveness to oneself, to others, to the earth, and to God. This further

57 Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000), 27, 32. In 2 Cor 5:18–21 God both reconciles and gives the ministry of reconciliation.

58 Ray, "Praxis of Atonement," 40.

59 Love (*agape*) describes both the eternally divine community, and the core attribute God shares in relationship to creation. Grenz concludes, "*Agape*, therefore, is predicated of both the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity." Grenz, *The Social God*, 313–17. Having reframed grace as gifting through social reciprocity, this article further suggests *charis* is likewise predicated of both the immanent and economic Trinity.

60 Timothy Chappell, cited in Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 171.

61 God's being as self-giving love, argues Volf, is that which should be reflected back to God. This is a love first gifted by the Trinity and then reciprocally passed downward towards humanity in order to be taken up again into the divine community. See Miroslav Volf, "'The Trinity is our Social Program': The Doctrine of the Trinity and The Shape of Social Engagement," *Modern Theology* 14:3 (July 1998): 417.

62 Michael J. Gorman, "John: The Nonsectarian, Missional Gospel," *Canadian-American Theological Review* 7 (2018): 159.

connotes participation in ecclesial life, as the *missio Dei* is of the essence of the church as it embodies the loving action of God moving out in continual renewal and redemption. In this final section, the people of God will be explored as an ecclesial body welcomed into the divine community of persons in a relationship-of-grace.

A New Humanity in Christ Together

Now consider the place of the church within the reciprocal interiority of the Trinity. If the perichoretic unity of the triune God—in its profoundly intimate and gracious love—is understood to be grounded in their *mutually interior* being, in a strict sense, there can be no equivalence to the interiority of the divine persons at the human level. Here is one of the clear limitations of this model: humans cannot be internal to another's self in perfect communion. Moreover, humans are engrossed in a life of sin that inhibits them, as of yet, from being fully restored into the image of the triune God which they are eschatologically destined to become.[63] A human self can surely exhibit the selflessness of love; however, a person can in no way indwell the being of another, preventing perichoretic interhuman unity.

Nevertheless, the argument set forth is that there is a correspondence between the Trinity and the church. Acknowledging critiques of theologies that overreach in aligning the two models, any reflection on the relation between the Trinity and the church must consider God's uniqueness. Still, Volf posits that an analogy between the unity of the triune God and human unity is possible, predicated on faith simultaneously incorporating one into communion with God and the church.[64] This is a full participation in the life of the Trinity where believers are a temple corporately, indwelt by the Spirit, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone (Eph 2:19–22).

There is certainly scriptural basis for supposing redeemed Christian communities may in fact dwell within the Trinity, just as Jesus prayed that his people "be in us" (John 17:21). As Christ is in reconciled humans (John 14:20) through the Spirit, so these persons are in the triune God "by grace . . . through faith. . . . it is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8). Christ lives and offers himself to God through the Holy Spirit so that he can offer that same Spirit-breathed life to all people—united to him as co-heirs—who enter into communion with the living God.[65] Yet, for Paul, when the church is inhabiting Christ, it is inhabiting God; his Christocentricity is

63 See Volf, "'The Trinity is our Social Program,'" 405.
64 Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 327; Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 192.
65 Studebaker, *The Spirit of Atonement*, 104. This has been posited by Pannenberg as a Christological anthropology, where humans have fellowship with God through participation in the communion of the Son with the Father by the Spirit in the life of the Trinity. See Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology*, 59.

really an implicit Trinitarianism.[66] Baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, leads restored beings "simultaneously into both trinitarian and ecclesial communion."[67] The self-in-relationship becomes what Grenz terms the *ecclesial self*, where the intended outcome of Christ's atonement establishes the new humanity within the triune God and His people.[68] To be "in Christ" incudes a relational reality that is both personal and corporate, transcending the local church community as members "are in Christ *together*."[69]

From here, Volf meticulously establishes the argument that where Christ followers assemble, together they serve as an image of the triune persons and reflect the trinitarian unity of God.[70] While there is no mutual interiority amongst individual people, the indwelling of the Spirit in each Christian establishes the church as a body in communion with the Trinity. As the people of God enter into the living temple—the place where God and humans meet—they also encounter one another. For Volf, the *ecclesia* can be modeled after the triune God in so far as churches are "concrete, anticipatory experiences, rendered possible by the Spirit, of the one communion of the triune God."[71] The church then, can be said to be an image of the Trinity.

Accordingly, the transfer from an external to an internal relocation within the Trinity implies that the church too become persons in a relationship-of-grace. As Eastman explains it, the gift of God's graciously self-giving presence in daily life conforms personal identity around the reception of a gift. Therefore, gifts based in both corporate and individual relationships are essential to the transformed intersubjective life that Paul proclaims.[72] Following the framework above, grace remains a relational bond that remodels the collective within God's gift-giving dynamic. More than an individualistic one-to-one relationship, "faith means swearing allegiance to Jesus and his household . . . . by God's grace, I am made part of God's household."[73] The sharing of gifts within the community occurs amongst humans and God, as grace is constantly received and reciprocated. As a community imaging their God, interhuman gift-giving becomes a means of participation in grace, "as believers are drawn into something both utterly beyond

66 Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 4. Gorman employs the term *theosis*, arguing "to be one with Christ is to be one with God; to be like Christ is to be like God."

67 Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 195. See Matt 28:19; Eph 4:4–6.

68 Grenz, *The Social God*, 305, 332. The *ecclesial self* offers an eschatological view of the *eikon* where personal identity is formed through participation in the divine dynamic of love as those who are "in Christ" form a "corporate personality."

69 Gorman, *Participation in Christ*, 5; emphasis original.

70 Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 197. Church fathers as far back as Tertullian have affirmed this allusion in their ecclesiology.

71 Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 195. See 1 John 1:3–4; Rev 21–22.

72 Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 170–71.

73 Richards and James, *Misreading Scripture,* 109.

them and wholly integral to what they do."[74] Through the Spirit the people of God are benevolently invited to share in the grace-filled relationship of love the Son enjoys with the Father.

This invitation to have God dwell among humanity and humanity within God is at once the gift and the mission to which the church is called to partake in trusting-allegiance. There is a divine intent that *eikons* locate themselves within the ecclesial community as representatives of the trinitarian reality, whereby "the goal of human existence is to be persons-in-relation after the pattern of the perichoretic life disclosed in Jesus Christ."[75] McKnight recognizes the implication here, arguing that eschatological reality for humans is to "participate in the reciprocal interiority of the Trinity in Christ through the Spirit, and to extend this interiority to others as an approximation of that *perichoresis*."[76] It is therefore imperative that the church image God's incarnational and missional presence as a community-in-relationship full of grace.

Gorman has elevated the missional gospel embedded within the New Testament, offering a holistic interpretation of the life found in the triune God. The abundant life of Jesus offered through the grace of God is at once material, physical, as well as spiritual and God's people are to extend this divine life to others in both words and deeds.[77] The living water of Christ may in some instances include literal water by way of his followers, revealing the presence of divine life here and now. Yet, such missiological activity can only occur by *abiding* in Jesus as a church in discerning communion with the Trinity. New life in God is embodied such that missional ecclesiology involves a reconciling community bound together by a shared dependence on the grace of God (Phil 1:7) and a desire to mutually reciprocate an abundance of gifts.

Within a relational anthropology, human vocation is attained in sharing life with the other whereby image bearers extend themselves through reconciled relationship.[78] Dudley Brown explains how much of Black Theology's concept of the Godhead is embedded in a relationally dynamic lived trinitarian view, where the triune God is manifest in the experience of the oppressed and marginalized.[79] The encounter of divine restoration remains the medium amongst the people of God

74 Barclay, *Paul and the Power,* 135.
75 Grenz, *The Social God*, 332.
76 McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 16.
77 Gorman, "John," 150, 153, 156.
78 Perkins grounds the ministry of reconciliation in God's gift of grace to which the church is to respond in faith by taking up the mission to be one with every other believer in Christ. See John M. Perkins, *One Blood: Parting Words to the Church on Race and Love* (Chicago: Moody, 2018), 131, 145. For a discussion of relational anthropology as Christian mission, see Pavol Bargár, "Toward Comm/unity amid Brokenness: Christian Mission as (a Pursuit of) Relational Anthropology," *International Review of Mission* 110:2 (2021): 240.
79 Brown, "Holy Spirit and the Trinity," 35–37.

for practicing social justice, compassion, and the grace of giving (2 Cor 8:1–7). Together the church images God by participating in divine reconciliation, fostering right and loving relationships in all areas of life: with God, self, others, and creation. As a reconciled body, this must include the church's reckoning with power structures containing inherent "institutional corporate sin."[80] Thus, the characteristic action of the *ecclesia* becomes grace-infused mission as the deeply other-oriented character of God shapes the identity of the church.

The atoning grace of God renews the self and transforms the ecclesial community, reshaping social practices within the fabric of the church. This is precisely how Aimee Byrd proposes to confront ecclesial tension amongst the sexes; not by homogenizing men and women but by empowering them to exercise their gifts in reciprocity.[81] Mutual interdependence within the church body allows *eikons* to truly encounter the other, while reflecting the diversity and personal distinctiveness of their creator.

Ruth Padilla-DeBorst shares of a diverse congregation in Argentina where all members were ordained and affirmed in their value, expressing how no one was more worthy or more sacred than another. Young and old, male and female, all were considered "responsible citizens in God's economy" with gifts from the Spirit meant to contribute to the faith community as they participated in the mission of God.[82] Such a socio-dynamic church challenges more authoritarian ecclesial models (often reflecting a hierarchical Trinity) through equitable practices that emphasize instead a community comprised of relational mutuality.

This necessitates multiple interpretive and structural approaches to human experience, context, and histories.[83] Reactionary resistance to divergence in theological perspective can be better reconciled through ecclesial self-differentiated unity. Chul-Ho Youn suggests that if the church is to recenter its mission in the *missio Dei trinitatis*, it should follow a hermeneutical process that seeks mutuality through transcultural dialogue, facilitating "diverse stories derived from diverse understandings of the biblical narratives in diverse cultures."[84] An ethic of incongruous gift-giving insists that a person's worth or status not only be disregarded, but that members be afforded space to mutually reciprocate with

80 Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2020), 39. McCaulley draws attention to Paul's reprimand of the authorities rather than the Roman officers themselves, focusing on the corporate structure perpetrating social injustice (Rom 13:3–4).

81 Aimee Byrd, *Recovering from Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: How the Church Needs to Rediscover Her Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 146–52.

82 Ruth Padilla-DeBorst, "Church, Power, and Transformation in Latin America: A Different Citizenship is Possible," in *The Church from Every Tribe and Tongue: Ecclesiology in the Majority World*, ed. Gene L. Green et al. (Carlisle: Langham, 2018), 35–36, 47.

83 Bargár, "Toward Comm/unity," 238.

84 Chul-Ho Youn, "*Missio Dei Trinitatis* and *Missio Ecclesiae*: A Public Theological Perspective," *International Review of Mission* 107:1 (2018): 235–39.

personal experience and creative power. The missiological implication is a flourishing of diversity within a community relationally dependent upon the other. In making room for strangers, in all their multiplicity and uniqueness, a church community is formed as persons in a relationship-of-grace—imaging their God.

Conclusion

The divine persons are co-constituted by their eternal gift-giving in a perichoresis of unified mutuality. This reciprocal interiority therefore realizes a mutual self-giving expressed as persons in a relationship-of-grace within the trinitarian life. It is this God who sustains creation and grants the Christ-gift (though distinct from the intra-trinitarian facet of grace), facilitating reconciliation and reincorporation into the divine life. It is not that humanity directly mimics the communion of God but rather they follow after the triune persons as *eikons* invited (and indeed expected) to participate in the self-giving community-of-grace as both individual and corporate image-bearers. Consequently, as the church enters into new life with the triune God, they too become persons in a relationship-of-grace. Following the proposed understanding of grace accordingly offers a framework for participation in the divine life, the ecclesial life, and the missional life. At their best, contemporary churches assume their identity as people of the triune community-of-grace and live out this model of reciprocal relationality as they abide in their God and follow Him into the world.

Stargazing with the Saints: Exploring Genesis, Celestial Creation, and the Legacy of the Masoretes

Dustin Burlet
Millar College of the Bible

Abstract

The Masoretic accentuation of Day Four of creation (Gen 1:14–19) confirms the (primary) witness of the rest of Scripture (Ps 136:7–9; Jer 31:35) that the "stars" (כוכבים) and moon together are coregents of the night sky. Said otherwise, despite the anti-mythological, polemical thrust of Genesis 1, the (secondary) voice of the Masoretes supplements the primary text of Scripture in refuting any interpretation or translation of these heavenly bodies that does not do justice to this canonical truth.

"See the Way… He Holds… The Stars in His Hands…
See the Way… He Holds… My Heart…"

– Misty Edwards

Introduction

If one has ears to hear, astronomy speaks a "powerful word" about Yahweh as Creator.[1] This is, perhaps, especially so concerning the כוכבים, i.e., the "stars" (see Ps 19:1–6).[2] This paper argues that the "stars" (כוכבים) of Creation (Day Four) should be understood as being co-rulers together with "the moon," i.e., the "lesser

1 Merrill, Eugene H. "Foreword" (9–11, quote from page 11) in Danny R. Faulkner with Lee Anderson Jr., *The Created Cosmos: What the Bible Reveals About Astronomy* (Green Forest, AR: Master, 2016).

2 Jonathan D. Sarfati, *The Genesis Account: A Theological, Historical, and Scientific Commentary on Genesis 1–11*. (Powder Springs, GA: Creation Book Publishers, 2015) rightly maintains that the biblical meaning of "star" is "any small bright heavenly object." This sense includes comets and meteors, i.e., "shooting stars," and what the ancient Greek astronomers called *aster planētēs*, "wandering star(s)," something which we now (scientifically) call "planets" (distinguished from "stars") 205. See also *DCH* 4:371; *HALOT* 1:463; Newman, *NIDOTTE*, 2:609, 14; Hartley, *TWOT*, 1:425–26. Cf. *TLOT* 1:63–67. For more details concerning Psalm 19 (aside from the commentaries), some of the most recent works include, Lee Roy Martin, "Science, Scripture, and Self: Epistemological Implications of Psalm 19," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 103 (2022): 1–17; Frederick J. Gaiser, "'The Law of the Lord Is Perfect': The Wisdom Psalms," *Word & World* 41 (2021): 201–10; William P. Brown, "The Joy of Lex and the Language of Glory in Psalm 19," *Journal for Preachers* 43 (2020): 11–17; Rüdiger Lux, "Theologie im Vorhof: Psalm 19 und die Predigt der Psalmen," *Pastoraltheologie* 107 (2018): 4–13. Cf. T. A. Perry, *Psalm 19: Hymn of Unification* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2016).

light," to govern the night (Gen 1:14–19).[3] Conjointly (and for this reason) despite the anti-mythological, polemical thrust of Genesis 1, *in toto*, the "stars" (כוכבים) of the cosmos were no mere "afterthought."[4]

As will be shown later, this assertion involves closely examining the Masoretic accentual system. The Masora system of the Masoretic Text (MT) of Scripture is a "sophisticated" and "integrated" mechanism of interpretation and transmission for the purpose(s) of copying and preserving the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (HB/OT).[5]

Said otherwise, the Masoretic accentuation system, an "encoded" method of interpretation that is "far closer to the original community than our own," confirms Scripture's witness (see Ps 136:7–9; Jer 31:35) that the "stars" (כוכבים) are joined to the "lesser light," i.e., the moon, and, therefore, "implicitly share in the rule of the night."[6] Thus, to think of them as being some sort of afterthought by God is altogether erroneous.

This paper will seek to elucidate the above matters while also providing a brief exposé to certain general matters concerning the overarching context of Genesis One.

Genesis One – Sequence and Chronology

The first chapter of the Bible's first book lays the theological foundation for all that follows in Scripture.[7] As Tremper Longman III relates: "Genesis 1–11 is the foundation of the book of Genesis, which is the foundation of the whole Bible [OT and NT]."[8] Incontrovertibly, the significant import of this biblical book cannot be understated.[9]

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3 For exhaustive scriptural references concerning the "moon" (including its not insignificant theological import), see Ryken, et al., eds, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), "Sun, Moon, and Stars," 827–28 alongside the (many) related entries accompanying this specific article.

4 The term "afterthought" comes from Mark D. Futato Sr., *Basics of Hebrew Accents,* Zondervan Language Basics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 40. Polemics, as a whole, will be addressed later on.

5 Yosef, Ofer, *The Masora on Scripture and Its Methods*, Fontes et Subidia ad Bibliam pertinentes (FoSub) 7 (Boston, MA: de Gruyter, 2020), xi.

6 Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 40. Cf. C. John Collins, *Reading Genesis Well* (Zondervan, 2018), 156.

7 See Dustin Burlet, *Judgment and Salvation: A Rhetorical-Critical Reading of Noah's Flood in Genesis* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2022), 1, 29.

8 Paul Copan and Douglas Jacoby, *Origins: The Ancient Impact and Modern Implications of Genesis 1–11* (New York: Morgan James, 2019), i.

9 For a thorough review of some contemporary works published on Genesis (2015 to 2020) see Tammi J. Schneider, "In the Beginning and Still Today: Recent Publications on Genesis," *Current in Biblical Research* 18 (2020): 142–59. For academic resources on Genesis published prior to 2015, the most comprehensive tool currently available is John F. Evans, *A Guide to Biblical Commentaries and Reference Works,* 10th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016): 67–78. Cf. Kenton L. Sparks, *The Pentateuch: An Annotated Bibliography* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2019).

All too often, however, "the richness and beauty" of the first creation account is "overwhelmed by acrimony."[10] Many debates tend to focus on whether or not Genesis 1 was intended to offer a list of the divine creative acts *vis à vis* a chronological order.[11] That is, many scholars opine that the seven days of creation are only intended to convey "*theological* truths—not *chronological* truths."[12] Paul Copan and Douglas Jacoby, for instance, maintain: "the six days in Genesis 1 appear to be topical, not sequential."[13]

This dubious assessment, however, tends to break down upon further analysis. Specifically, do not the waters of "Day One" need to exist prior to them being able to be separated on "Day Two" and for the events of "Day Three" to occur? Likewise, is it not logical to assume that in order for humanity to rule over the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea as the LORD commanded (see Gen 1:28), at least some of these things would need to have been created earlier? In addition, although one may, perhaps, argue that not everything in the Creation week is necessarily sequential since "light" is created before the traditionally accepted sources of the light (i.e., the heavenly bodies; cf. Gen 1:3–6 and Gen 1:14–19), it nonetheless remains evident that some kind of ordered,

10 Gregg Davidson and Kenneth J. Turner, *Manifold Beauty of Genesis One: A Multi-Layered Approach* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2021), 3. A nigh exhaustive analysis of this controversy (*sans* an effective discussion of so-called Young Earth [Age] Creationism, something that may, perhaps, be due to the differences between British and American evangelicalism) may also found be in the quite aptly but rather provocatively titled volume of John C. Lennox, namely *Seven Days that Divide the World: The Beginning According to Genesis and Science,* 10th Anniversary Edition (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2021).

11 See Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary,* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1967), 54–58. Cf. Denis O. Lamoureux, *The Bible and Ancient Science: Principles of Interpretation* (Tullahoma, TN: McGahan, 2020), 165.

12 Copan and Jacoby, *Origins,* 62. Italics original. Cf. Kline, "Space and Time," 2–15.

13 Copan and Jacoby, *Origins,* 69. To be clear, among other things, certain scholars maintain the lack of the article on "each of the first five days suggests they may be dischronologized." See Johnny V. Miller and John M. Soden, *In the Beginning . . . We Misunderstood* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012), 50. An effective refutation of this assertion (grammatically/syntactically) may be found in Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Days of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal 'Days' or Figurative 'Periods/Epochs' of Time?" *Origins* 21 (1994), 5–38 (esp. 7–8). Cf. Andrew E. Steinmann, "אחד as an ordinal number and the meaning of Genesis 1:5," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45 (2002): 577–84 alongside his "A Note on the Refrain in Genesis 1," *Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament* 5 (2016): 125–40. Other contrastive details are also able to be found in Conrad M. Hyers, "Narrative Form of Genesis One: Cosmogonic, Yes; Scientific, No," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 36 (1984): 208–15 and C. John Collins, "The Refrain of Genesis 1: A Critical Review of Its Rendering in the English Bible," *Technical Papers for The Bible Translator* 60 (2009): 121–31.

chronological sequence is still assumed by Scripture itself (cf. Exod 20:11).[14] To sum up, it would seem evident that most attempts to rearrange the days of the creation week tend to force impossibilities or reduce them into absurdities.[15]

Genesis One – Parallel Structure

Another thorny issue involves the parallel structure of the days of creation. To be clear, "some . . . have challenged the existence of a parallel structure (days 1–3 aligned with days 4–6) arguing that the luminaries of day 4 were placed in the heavens of day 2 (not day 1), and [the] fish from day 5 were placed in the seas of day 4 or the water made prior to day 3 or the water made prior to day 1 (not in the 'waters below' of day 2)."[16] In response to this, Gregg Davidson and Kenneth J. Turner (cogently) maintain:

> If attention is only given to the *placement* of the luminaires in day 4, then perhaps an argument can be made against a parallel with day 1 because of the expanse (*raqia'*) into which the luminaires were placed was made in day 2. If we are considering *purpose*, however, the parallel is strong. Day 1 and day 4 both serve to separate light from dark and day from night. The objection of aligning the water of day 2 with the fish of day 5 is that the seas (*yammim*) are not named until day 3. But if we again give attention to *purpose*, the expanse (*raqia'*) in day 2 was made in order to separate the waters on the earth from the water above the dome (or expanse) of the sky, giving rise to the realms of ocean and sky. This is consistent with the structure and word choice of the fifth day. Day 5 begins with fish filling the waters (*mayim*) and birds flying across the surface of the heavens (*shamayim*). The parallel structure thus proves to be robust.[17]

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14 As one scholar (perhaps baldly, but not un-cogently) asserts: "Exodus 20:8–11 resists all attempts to add millions of years anywhere in or before Genesis 1 because in Exodus 20:11 . . . God says He created the heavens, the earth, the sea, and *all that is in them* during the six days described in Genesis 1. He made nothing before those six days. It should also be noted that the fourth commandment is one of only a few of the Ten Commandments that contains a reason for the commandment. If God created over millions of years, He could have not given a reason for Sabbath-keeping or He could have given a theological or redemptive reason as He did elsewhere (cf. Exod 31:13 and Deut 5:13–15). . . . Ultimately, the question of the age of the earth is a question of the truth and authority of Scripture. That's why the age of the earth matters so much and why the church cannot compromise with millions of years (or evolution)." Terry Mortenson, "Young-Earth Creationist View Summarized and Defended." No Pages. Online. Italics original. https://answersingenesis.org/creationism/ young-earth/young-earth-creationist-view-summarized-and-defended/. Cf. C. John Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Philipsburg, NJ, 2006), 56–58, 83, and, especially, 122–29, alongside 249–67.

15 See Burlet, Review of *Origins* by Copan and Jacoby in *Conspectus* 32 (2016–17): 214–17 from whom much of this paragraph's wording (including exact phrasing at times) has been derived.

16 Davidson and Turner, *Manifold Beauty of Genesis One*, 37.

17 Davidson and Turner, *Manifold Beauty of Genesis One*, 38. All italics original.

In brief, there seems to be a "definite structure" or a "definite schema" wherein the first three days of creation (Gen 1:3–13) correspond to the following three (Gen 1:14–31).[18]

This chronological, sequential order of events poignantly communicates God's "providence and forethought" via the "problem, preparation, and population" rubric.[19]

Outline of Genesis 1

Problem (v. 2)	Preparation (days 1–3)	Population (days 4–6)
Darkness	1a Creation of Light (Day) 1b Separation from Darkness (Night)	4a Creation of Sun 4b Creation of Moon, Stars
Watery Abyss	2a Creation of Firmament 2b Separation of Waters Above from Waters Below	5a Creation of Birds 5b Creation of Fish
Formless Earth	3a Separation of Earth from Sea 3b Creation of Vegetation	6a Creation of Land Animals 6b Creation of Humans

To conclude, the above framework appreciates how God is characterized by peace—not chaos, confusion, and disorder (1 Cor 14:33)—while effectively teaching how the cosmos is not the result of incidental/mere chance but careful planning, wisdom, and insight.[20]

Ancient Near Eastern Culture – Rhetoric, Worldview, and Polemics

With the above in mind, one can more carefully examine what will be the primary

18 See Copan and Jacoby, *Origins*, 73. Cf. Craig H. Robinson, "The De-Creation of Genesis 1 in the Trumpets of Revelation 8–9," *Trinity Journal* 43 (2022): 59–83.

19 Copan and Jacoby, *Origins*, 73. Copan and Jacoby further state (74): "Each of the problems is remedied by a corresponding separation (vv. 4, 7, 9– although the word 'separate' is only implied in the third instance). Once the barriers are removed, the earth will return to its primordial state. This is precisely what will happen in the Flood (Gen 6–8)." Cf. Burlet, *Judgment and Salvation,* 152–53. While certain tensions (chronologically) may still, perhaps, be present even within this rubric (one notes, for instance, that the text of Genesis 1:2 actually has the "Formless Earth" come first, then the "Darkness" and, lastly the "Watery Abyss") I remain persuaded that the basic gist remains the same. I am indebted to Matt Woodmass (via private communiqué) for drawing my attention to these important matters. NB: the following chart comes from Copan and Jacoby, *Origins*, 74 crediting Hyers, "Narrative Form of Genesis One," 211b. For similar tables of the parallel structure of the Creation week, see Davidson and Turner, *Manifold Beauty of Genesis One*, 29, 31, 38; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15,* Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 7; Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 185–86. Cf. Elizabeth B. Hayes, "Whose World? Whose Time? A Text World Theory Examination of the Style and Message of Genesis 1:1–2:25," in *Doubling and Duplicating in the Book of Genesis: Literary and Stylistic Approaches to the Text,* edited by Elizabeth R. Hayes and Karolien Vermeulen (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016), 144–66 (especially the diagram on page 162).

20 See Copan and Jacoby, *Origins*, 73. Cf. Waltke and Yu, *Old Testament Theology*, 183–84.

focus of this work, namely the fourth day of Creation (Gen 1:14–19). Day Four delineates each of the main types of astronomical bodies, i.e., the sun, moon, and stars.[21] To be clear:

> The text goes to great length to discuss the creation of these lights, suggesting that the subject was very important to the ancients. Since these 'lights' were considered deities in the ancient world, the section serves as a strong polemic . . . . The Book of Genesis is affirming they are created entities, not deities. To underscore this the text does not even give them names. If used here, the usual names for the sun and moon [*Shemesh* and *Yarih*, respectively] might have carried pagan connotations, so they are simply described as greater and lesser lights. Moreover, they serve in the capacity that God gives them, which would not be the normal function the pagans ascribed to them. They merely divide, govern, and give light in God's creation.[22]

Put otherwise, in contrast to the "pagan impulse" which deified the "heavenly bodies" for their capacity to give light, something required for all life (plants, animals, humans), the text of Genesis (cf. Wis. 13:2) consistently separates "light from its Creator, making it an index to the divine instead of deity itself" (cf. Ps 33:6–9; 74:16; 147:4; 148:1–6).[23]

C. John Collins astutely notes that the "purpose of the [Genesis] stories is to lay the foundation for a worldview . . . . Thus, Genesis aims to tell the story of beginnings the 'right' way, to counter the other stories; it professes to offer the divinely authorized way for its audience to picture the events."[24] In this manner, the rhetoric used in Genesis is "tacit."[25] Kenneth A. Mathews (rightly) asserts: "rather than actual polemic, the Genesis accounts are *inferentially* undermining

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21 For exhaustive scriptural references (including their theological import), see Ryken, et al., eds, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, "Sun, Moon, and Stars," 827–28 and each of the related (article) entries.

22 The NET Bible. See also Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Significance of the Cosmology in Genesis 1 in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Parallels," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 10 (1972): 1–20 alongside his "Polemic Nature of the Genesis Cosmology," *Evangelical Quarterly* 46 (1974): 81–102. Cf. Shay Zucker, "Hebrew Names of the Planets," *Proceedings of The International Astronomical Union* 260 (2011): 301–305 and John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 171–72.

23 Ryken, et al., eds, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, "Light," 509.

24 Collins, *Reading Genesis Well* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 153. For more details on this not insignificant aspect of Genesis, something which I, myself, term "worldview formative rhetoric," see Burlet, *Judgment and Salvation*, 8, 65–70.

25 John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 103. Cf. Brian Neil Peterson, *Genesis as Torah: Reading Narrative as Legal Instruction* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018), 63–64; Wenham, *Genesis*, 51.

the philosophical basis for pagan myth. There are undertones of refutation in Gen 1–11, but they are not explicit disputations."[26]

While Scripture seems to explicitly engage with many ancient Near East mythologies (ANE), such as the Enuma Elish, it is vital to recognize that Genesis utilizes "imagery, not theology, from pagan myths."[27] John H. Sailhamer poignantly states:

> Behind this narrative is the author's concern to emphasize that God alone created the lights of the heavens, and thus no one else is to be given the glory and honor due only to God (cf. Ne 9:6 [Deut 4:19; Isa 47:13]). The passage also states that God created the lights in the heavens for a purpose, namely to divide day and night and to mark the 'seasons and days and years' (vv. 17–18). These two concerns form the heart of [Gen] ch. 1. God alone is the Creator of all things and worthy of the worship of people.[28]

The theological import of the creation account (Gen 1) may also be highlighted by the specific order in which the luminaires appear, namely, the sun, moon, and stars (Gen 1:14–19). This is something that contrasts with the Enuma Elish where priority is given to the stars.[29] Marduk first makes constellations (the stars), then organizes time, i.e., sets the calendar, and fixes the polestar before, finally, instructing the moon and the sun (in that order).[30] An English translation of the Sumero-Akkadian text is found below:

> He bade the moon come forth;
> entrusted night (to him);
> assigned to him adornments of the night
> to measure time;
> and every month, unfailing,
> he marked off by a crown.
> "When the new moon is rising
> over the land

26 Mathews, *Genesis 1–11,* Christian Standard Commentary (China: Holman Reference, 2022), 517. Italics original. Cf. Davidson and Turner, *Manifold Beauty of Genesis One*, 55–75.

27 Waltke and Yu, *Old Testament Theology*, 181 (see too page 176).

28 Sailhamer, *Genesis* in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Revised Edition*, edited by Tremper Longman III and David Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 21–331 (quote page 65). For more details on biblical chronology in general with respect to the cult, see Michael LeFebvre, *The Liturgy of Creation: Understanding Calendars in Old Testament Context* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019).

29 A thorough review of these creation accounts is found in Waltke and Yu, *Old Testament Theology*, 198.

30 See Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* Revised Edition (New Haven: CT: Yale University Press, 1978), 179.

Shine you with horns, six days to measure;
the seventh day, as half (your) crown (appear)
and (then) let periods of fifteen days be counterparts,
two halves each month.
As, afterward, the sun gains on you
on heavens foundations,
wane step by step,
reverse your growth!"[31]

In stark contrast, Scripture clearly communicates the stars were "created by God (Gen 1:16; Ps 8:4[4]) and are under his providential control (Isa 40:26; Jer 31:35[34]). . . . Thus, stars are a part of God's self-revelation in nature, his handiwork pointing beyond themselves to God's brightness, purity, greatness, and power" (Ps 19:1[2]).[32]

Indeed, there is only one true and living God who is supreme and sovereign over creation.[33] God is "unquestionably superior even to the highest stars (Job 22:12) . . . In climax, the individual who will bring salvation to Israel is foreseen as 'a star [which] shall come forth out of Jacob' (Num 24:17). Jesus, in Rev. says, 'I am . . . the bright morning star' (Rev 22:16; cf. II Peter 1:19). Then too the faithful who diligently labor to people to God shall shine like the stars forever (Dan 12:3; cf. I Cor 15:41f."[34]

The Stars and English Bible Translations

It is extremely unfortunate that many English translations fail to clearly communicate the not insignificant role that the stars (along with the moon) have in ruling over the night. This issue, however, does not seem to depend on any differences in Bible translation philosophy, i.e., "formal" equivalence vs. "functional" or dynamic equivalence.[35]

For example, the New King James Version, the New American Standard Bible (1995 update)/the New American Standard Bible (2020), the New English Translation, the New International Version (1984/2011), and the New Living

31 Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness*, 179.
32 Newman, *NIDOTTE* 2:611.
33 Babatunde A. Ogunlana, "Inspiration and the Relationship between Genesis 1:1–2:4A and Enuma Elish," *BTSK Insight* 13 (2016): 87–105 (quote from page 100).
34 Hartley, *TWOT*, 1:426. Aside from the commentaries, stimulating details concerning Paul's words in 1 Cor 15:41 may also be found in Keith Starkenburg, "What is Good for Christ is Good for the Cosmos: Affirming the Resurrection of Creation," *Pro Ecclesia* 30 (2021): 71–97.
35 Comprehensive details on these different philosophies of Bible translation(s) may be found in Mark L. Strauss, *40 Questions about Bible Translation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2023) and William D. Barrick, *Understanding Bible Translation: Bringing God's Word into New Contexts* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2019); See too Ward, *Authorized: The Use and Misuse of the King James Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2018).

Translation, alike, each render the end of Genesis 1:16 as something very much akin to "He made the stars also." That is, each one of these (otherwise excellent!) translations starts a new sentence when detailing the stars specifically. Regrettably, though, this interpretation fails to explicate the star's function and purpose in creation. It also needlessly ambiguates their divinely appointed role as co-rulers of the night with the moon, i.e., the lesser light, in accordance with the Masorah tradition (the details of which will be explained at length later on).[36]

Choosing not to start a new sentence, however, does not necessarily solve things. The Revised Standard Version reads: "And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also" (Gen 1:16). The King James Version has: "And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: *he made* the stars also" (Gen 1:16 - italics original). John Goldingay's *First Testament* rendering of Gen 1:16 reads: "God made the two big lights (the bigger light to rule the day and the smaller light to rule the night) and the stars." My critique of these renderings is similar in nature to that already noted above. In brief, it is extremely difficult (if not impossible) to see what significance (if any) the stars have within Day Four of creation (Gen 1:14–19). "What do the stars actually *do*?"

Again, merely changing the punctuation fails to fix the problem. The English Standard Version, for instance, states: "And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars" (Gen 1:16). The Christian Standard Bible renders Gen 1:16: "God made the two great lights — the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night — as well as the stars." The Holman Christian Standard Bible has: "God made the two great lights—the greater light to have dominion over the day and the lesser light to have dominion over the night—as well as the stars" (Gen 1:16). The New Revised Standard Version puts Gen 1:16 as: "God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars." The Bible in Basic English (BBE) and The Message, by Eugene Peterson, are both quite similar to this. Interestingly, the Common English Bible distinctively renders the text: "God made the stars and two great lights: the larger light to rule over the day and the smaller light to rule over the night" (Gen 1:16).

To critique, while each of these translations effectively communicates that the primary job of the sun and moon is to rule over day and night, respectively, none of them fully delineate the stars' function and purpose in creation. They each also needlessly ambiguate the stars' divinely appointed role as co-rulers of the night with the moon.[37]

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36 Compare Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 40–41 alongside Collins, *Reading Genesis Well*, 156.
37 Compare Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 40–41.

Various Commentaries on Genesis One and the Stars (Day Four)

In a related way, while many commentators do an excellent job of stressing the polemical nature of the Genesis 1 text, they also, lamentably, tend to underplay that the stars "co-rule" the night along with the moon (Gen 1:16; cf. Ps 136:7–9; Jer 31:35). A few (select) examples from certain contemporary, reputable, commentators should suffice.

Victor P. Hamilton (1990) opines: "It is significant that in Gen. 1 the reference to the stars, which are so prominent in pagan cosmogonies, is touched on so briefly and quite anticlimactically. Given the MT's word order in v.16, one may safely describe the creation of the stars as almost an afterthought or a parenthetical addition."[38] Nahum M. Sarna (1991) maintains that the brief dismissal of the star's creation is a "tacit repudiation of astrology."[39] Bruce K. Waltke with Cathi J. Fredricks (2001) also maintains: "The slight, almost passing mention of the stars may have a polemical function, since ancient Near Eastern people often believed stars directed people's destinies."[40]

David M. Carr (2021) likewise asserts: "God's initial creation speech (1:14aβ) and the report of God's installation of the lights in the heavenly plate (18aα) do not explicitly exclude the stars from the function of distinguishing day and night in the first of its list of functions of the astral bodies, but this is clarified in 1:16 by the clear exclusion of stars from 'rule' over day and night in the list of functions of these bodies when God actually creates them."[41] Lastly, Kenneth A. Matthews (2022), plainly states:

> The God of the Hebrews . . . revealed to his people that the sun and moon were no more than creations that were subject to this purposeful will. The passage also limits the importance of the stars. In the Babylonian cosmogony *Enuma Elish*, the stars have a prominent role; but in the Genesis account the creation of the stars is treated almost as an aside, downplaying their role in God's sight. The Hebrew text simply adds [afterward], as if a mere afterthought—'as well as the stars' ([Gen] 1:16).[42]

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38 Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 128. In like manner, Sarfati (2015) also states: "But despite the enormous power and number of the stars, Genesis 1:16 just says, 'and the stars,' almost as an afterthought. That is, creating even these uncountably many enormous hot balls of gas was effortless for the Almighty Elohim! Also, unlike the sun and moon, they [the stars] have no ruling function." *The Genesis Account*, 207–208.

39 Sarna, *Exodus,* The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 10. See too Sarfati, *The Genesis Account*, 208 from whom this reference was derived.

40 Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 63.

41 Carr, *Genesis 1–11,* International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2021) 61.

42 Mathews, *Genesis 1–11*, 101.

Oddly, even when the ruling role of the stars is mentioned, the specifics are often understated and/or rather muted and impotent. Derek Kidner (1967), for instance, states:

> . . . the dominant interest is theological. Sun, moon and stars are God's good gifts, producing the pattern of varied *seasons* (14) in which we thrive (*cf*. Acts 14:17) and by which Israel was to mark out the year for God (Lv. 23:4). As *signs* (14) they will speak for God, not for fate (Je. 10:2; *cf*. Mt. 2:9; Lk 21:25, 28), for they *rule* (16, 18) only as light bearers, not as powers. In these few simple sentences the lie is given to a superstition as old as Babylon and as modern as a newspaper-horoscope."[43]

Similarly, John Goldingay (2020) maintains:

> While God thus makes sun and the moon, they are not named, unlike day, night, heavens, earth, and seas. Alongside this odd fact is the offhand determination of a further object of God's making, 'and the stars.' Even for people who do not know what a vast panoply the stars comprise, this comment might seem to understate their impressiveness. Therein may lie the point. For many people in Israel's context, sun, moon, and stars signified deities standing behind those entities, which were the means of the gods' determining events on earth. Genesis puts them in their place as mere lampposts in the sky. They rule, but they rule on behalf of the real God and in a way that helps people structure their relationship with God.[44]

To restate my primary argument, the Masoretic accentuation of Day Four of creation (Gen 1:14–19) confirms the witness of the rest of Scripture (Ps 136:7–9; Jer 31:35) that the "stars" (כוכבים) and the moon are coregents of the night. Said otherwise, despite the anti-mythological, polemical thrust of Genesis 1, the (secondary) voice of the Masoretes supplements the primary text of Scripture in refuting any "afterthought" interpretation of these heavenly bodies.[45] The final section(s) of this work will focus on each of these aspects (in turn), beginning with a general orientation to the MT accents.

The Masoretic Accentual System: General Orientation

Besides the familiar diacritical marks known as vowel points, the Masoretic Text

43 Kidner, *Genesis,* 48–49. All italics original.
44 Goldingay, *Genesis*,
45 I am indebted to Matt Woodmass (private communiqué) for his clarifying comments regarding my thesis.

(MT) of the HB/OT also uses various other marks of significance. They consist of (1) marks denoting possible textual problems, (2) marks referring to marginal notes, (3) marks signifying the phonetic union of words, and (4) marks of accentuation.[46] It is this fourth category, marks of accentuation, that will be the focus of the rest of this article.[47]

There are two main systems of accentuation within the HB/OT.[48] One system of accentuation marks is used in the so-called "poetic" books of Job, Proverbs, and Psalms.[49] The remaining Twenty-One Books, i.e., the so-called "prose" books, use a functionally similar but different accentuation system.[50] This includes, of course, the book of Genesis.

Although the Masoretic accentuation system presupposes that the biblical text had previously been divided into verses, Paul Joüon and Takamitsu Muraoka astutely recognize that these verses are each of varying length (but no less than three words) and that the actual division into verses does not always accord with logic; i.e. the apodosis is sometimes separated from its protasis in order to avoid too long a verse (see, for example, Deut 19:16–17; 1 Kings 3:11–12; 21:20–21; Ruth 1:11–13).[51]

As noted above, since the accents preserve the traditional understanding of the text: "No serious expositor of Scripture should neglect such important keys to Biblical exposition."[52] David Robinson and Elisabeth Levy put it well in stating:

> The Masoretic pointing as a whole, and the punctuation in particular, is arguably one of the greatest literary and linguistic achievements in history. Its development spanned more than a thousand years and was

46 Much of this sentence, including instances of specific wording, has been derived from James D. Price, *The Syntax of Masoretic Accents in the Hebrew Bible,* SBEC 27 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990), 1. Cf. Marcus A. Leman, *Reading with the Masoretes: The Exegetical Utility of Masoretic Accent Patterns,* GlossaHouse Dissertation Series 8 (Wilmore, KY: Glossahouse, 2019), 3, 8–11.

47 Another scholar states that the Hebrew accents are indicators of three things: (1) the stressed syllables in words, (2) the intonation of words for singing/chanting, and (3) the syntactic relationship between words, i.e., "meaning" or "sense." Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 14.

48 I. Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah* Translated and edited by E. J. Revell SBLMS 5 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1980), 165–74; *BHRG* §9.5; JM §15.d; *IBHS* §1.6.4; GKC §15.

49 A notable exception is the narrative portion(s) of Job, i.e., Job 1:1—3:1 and 42:7–17. These "Three Books" are also called the "Books of Truth" because of the acronym "truth" אמת derived from the first letters of their original names, i.e., "Job," אִיּוֹב, "Proverbs," מִשְׁלֵי, and "Psalms," תְּהִלִּים. Sung Jin Park, *The Fundamentals of Hebrew Accents: Divisions and Exegetical Roles Beyond Syntax* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 149; JM §15.d. Though several signs used in the Three Books are identical to those used in the Twenty-One Books, their names are "different in accordance with their difference in functions." Park, *Fundamentals of Hebrew Accents*, 149. See too Price, *Syntax of Masoretic Accents*, 161.

50 See Park, *Fundamentals of Hebrew Accents*, 149.

51 See JM §15.e from whom much of the structure and wording/phrasing of this sentence has been derived.

52 Price, *Syntax of Masoretic Accents in the Hebrew Bible*, 7.

> only possible through the co-operation of countless forgotten scholars whose dedication to accuracy was without parallel. It offers to all the 'people of the Book' a detailed explanation of how the great biblical teachers understood their sacred text.[53]

To say again, though by no means inerrant in any sense, the MT accentual system helps interpreters determine the primary units of thought by revealing the joints/seams of a text and, for this reason, close attention should be paid to them as they frequently "offer material assistance in unraveling the sense of a difficult passage" and "the best authorities continually appeal to them, on account of their bearing upon exegesis."[54] As Marcus A. Leman puts it: "While the Masoretes are not infallible, they evince faithfulness and rigor in the interpretation they have provided to subsequent generations. Their work continues to demand careful analysis throughout the exegetical process."[55] The essence of this thoughtful exhortation is further echoed by Bruce K. Waltke, who judiciously opines:

> So important is the accentuation of Hebrew grammar for understanding that medieval Jewish sources paid more attention to it than to establishing the correct pronunciation of words . . . . At present it is best to consider the accents as an early and relatively reliable witness to a correct interpretation of the text.[56]

Given such, the remainder of this paper will examine how the MT accentual system can help to assist in the effective interpretation and translation of Genesis 1:16 with respect to the stars themselves and their key role as "co-rulers" with the moon.

The Masoretic Text of Genesis 1:16: Analysis and Translation

The analysis will begin with a fresh English translation alongside a select commentary of certain grammatical/syntactical features.[57] The MT of Genesis 1:16 may be seen below:

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53 Robinson and Levy, "The Masoretes and the Punctuation of Biblical Hebrew," in *British & Foreign Bible Society*, May 2, 2002, 25. http://lc.bfbs.org.uk/e107_files/downloads/masoretes.pdf

54 S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew and Some other Syntactical Questions* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1892), 101–102.

55 Leman, *Reading with the Masoretes*, 145.

56 Waltke, "The New International Version and Its Textual Principles in the Book of Psalms," 25–26. It is, therefore, quite interesting how "sparsely" Waltke's (otherwise superb) *IBHS* volume treats accents. See Price, "The Syntax of Masoretic Accents in the Hebrew Bible," 7 from whom this quote was plundered.

57 See Burlet, *Judgment and Salvation*, 95–96.

וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־שְׁנֵי הַמְּאֹרֹת הַגְּדֹלִים
אֶת־הַמָּאוֹר הַגָּדֹל לְמֶמְשֶׁלֶת הַיּוֹם
וְאֶת־הַמָּאוֹר הַקָּטֹן לְמֶמְשֶׁלֶת הַלַּיְלָה
וְאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים׃

"*Then*[a] *God*[b] *made*[c] *the two*[d] *great*[e] *lights,*[f]
the greater luminary[g] *to*[h] *govern*[i] *the day*
even[j] *the lesser luminary to govern the night*
[accompanied] with[k] *the stars.*[l]"

a. The *waw* is sequential, i.e., it expresses "temporal sequence, describing an action or situation subsequent to a previous action or situation." *GBHS* §3.5.1.a. See also Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids; Baker, 1998), 120 (hereafter abbreviated EE). NB: "the seemingly endless functions of *waw* are actually not so much functions of *waw* alone but of the larger clausal and supra-clausal structures of which *waw* is a part." Miles Van Pelt, ed., *Basics of Hebrew Discourse: A Guide to Working with Hebrew Prose and Poetry* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2019) 60; *BHRG* §40.23. Cf. R. C. Steiner, "Does the Biblical Hebrew Conjunction- ו Have Many Meanings, One Meaning, or No Meaning at All?," *JBL* 119 (2000) 249–67. This linguistic truth is presumed throughout this (textual) analysis.
b. "The more generic name *Elohim* is often used to emphasize God's general relationship to his creatures" while "God's proper name *Yahweh* highlights his covenant relationship with individuals and groups." Andrew E. Steinmann, *Genesis* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019) 12.
c. Aside from the lexicons, a stimulating excursus on *'āśâ* with respect to creation and function may be found in Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology*, 133–39.
d. For grammatical details on the numeral here, see DG §46b; JM §142.c.
e. For more information on the correlative comparatives, see GKC §133f alongside Fuller and Choi, *Invitation to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, §23c.
f. For exhaustive scriptural references to this term (including its theological import), see Ryken, et al., eds, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, "Sun, Moon, and Stars," 827–28 and the related entries.
g. Helpful syntactical notes on apposition here may be found in *IBHS* §12.5.a.
h. The *lamed* (preposition) denotes purpose. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, §277; *GBHS* §4.1.10.d.

i. The verb specifically refers to "the act of having control or dominion over and is therefore not exclusively bound to the king as subject." Nel, *NIDOTTE* 2:1137.
j. The *waw* + non verb construction is disjunctive (contrastive). See Chisholm, *EE*, 126 alongside Robert B. Chisholm, *A Workbook for Intermediate Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006) 264.
k. The disjunctive *waw* serves to expand on that which preceded it. *GBHS* §4.3.3.d.
l. For details on the generic use of the article (generic), including its usage with plurals, see *IBHS* §13.5.1.f alongside JM §137.m. Cf. *BHRG* §24.4 and Peter Bekins, "Non-Prototypical Uses of the Definite Article in Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 58 (2013) 225–40. NB: It is interesting that the *tiph-cha* on את suggests the grouping with the prior material on the lesser luminary, rather than pointing ahead to the object (whether it is a DDO or not). I am indebted to Douglas K. Smith for this insight (private communiqué). Alongside this, it seems reasonable to maintain that the lack of a *maqqeph* may be because the stars don't have an associated prep phrase with a purpose statement (which is a kind of disjunction). In addition, the NETS understands the את as being a DDO (and not a preposition). This seemingly helps to maintain the obvious parallel with the previous objects. Much (much!) thanks also to David J. Fuller (private communiqué) for helping me to (begin to) wrap my head around this. Cf. Robert Althann, "Does 'et ('aet-) sometimes signify 'from' in the Hebrew Bible" *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 103 (1991) 121–24. Further grammatical information about this verse, as a whole, may also be found in *IBHS* §14.2.d; DG §113f, 118c (see page 148).

As seen above, the MT of Genesis 1:16 is divided in half by the *athnak*.[58] This major disjunctive accent separates the "predicate ('made'), subject ('God'), and direct object ('two great lights') from the amplification of the direct object ('the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night'). . . . The first half of this verse is then divided in half by *zaqeph* [on the word *Elohim*] . . . which separates the predicate and subject ('God made') from the direct object ('two great lights')."[59]

The second half of Gen 1:16, i.e., the portion following the *athnak*, uses *zaqeph* twice: first on the initial phrase "the day," and secondly on the later phrase "the night." Mark D. Futato Sr. states: "whenever *zaqeph* is repeated in a half verse, the first *zaqeph* is the one that divides the half in half; the second *zaqeph* divides

58 NB: these half divisions are not reckoned in accordance with word count but sense. See *BHRG* §9.5.2.1; Fuller and Choi, *Invitation to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 371; Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 36.

59 Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 36. Cf. Barry Bandstra, *Genesis 1–11: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text,* Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible (Waco, TX: Baylor, 2008). NB: the *zaqeph qaton* is another major disjunctive accent that divides the units created by the *athank* in half. See *BHRG* §9.5.2.1.

the second half of the half in half. That being said, the first *zaqeph* separates the greater light that rules the day from the lesser light and the stars that shine at night."[60]

To summarize, were the Masoretes intending to altogether separate the stars from the moon and the sun, i.e., two great lights, one might expect the *athnak* to be on the phrase "the night" but it is not—instead, as seen above, the second *zaqeph* is on "the night," thereby demonstrating that the Masoretes understood the moon and the stars together to be co-rulers over the night and no mere "afterthought" of God's creation.[61]

Other canonical references further vindicate this assertion (Ps 136:7–9; Jer 31:35).[62]

Genesis 1:16 and Psalm 136:7–9

Psalm 136 is the last of the *hallel* psalms of Book Five of the Psalter.[63] For this reason, it is sometimes referred to as *Hallel HaGadol*, i.e., "The Great Halell."[64] The most pertinent section of text for our purposes is Ps 136:7–9 which reads:

לְעֹשֵׂה אוֹרִים גְּדֹלִים כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
אֶת־הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לְמֶמְשֶׁלֶת בַּיּוֹם כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
אֶת־הַיָּרֵחַ וְכוֹכָבִים לְמֶמְשְׁלוֹת בַּלָּיְלָה כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃

"*To*[a] *the maker*[b] *of the great lights*[c]—
for[d] *his steadfast love*[e] *is everlasting*![f]
The sun[g] *to rule*[h] *by day*[i]—
for his steadfast love is everlasting!
The moon and stars to rule the night—
for his steadfast love is everlasting!"

60 Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 40. For more details, see the resources listed above.
61 Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 40–41.
62 Cf. Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 41.
63 The correspondence between the five-fold structure of the Psalms and the Pentateuch, i.e., the five books of Moses, is noted in a midrash from the Talmudic period on Psalm 1 which reads: "As Moses gave five books of laws to Israel, so David gave five books of Psalms to Israel (Braude 1:5)." Waltke, *NIDOTTE* 4:1110. For more details, see Tremper Longman III, *How to Read the Psalms* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1988) 43 alongside Willem VanGemeren, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2017).
64 Yitzhak Bauxbaum, *The Light and Fire of the Baal Shem Tov* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006), 399. James V. Hamilton Jr., states that as "one of the most grammatically and structurally parallel poems in the whole of the Psalter, Ps 136 has as its most characteristic element the refrain that stands at the end of every one of its twenty-six verses, 'for to the age his loving-kindness.'" James M. Hamilton Jr., *Psalms Volume 2: Psalms 73—150,* Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2021), 435.

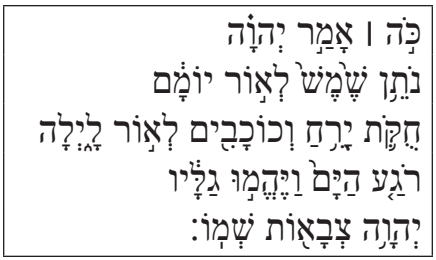
a. For grammatical details on the prefixed *lamed* preposition, see *BHRG* §39.11.
b. This phrase could also be rendered as "to he who made/works." Hamilton, *Psalms 73–150*, 435.
c. "The description of the creation of the sun, moon, and stars compares with that in Gen. 1:16–18, where God makes the two great lights (there *mĕ'ōrōt*, here the more common *'ôrîm*) to rule the day and the night (though the psalms says 'rule over'). John Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150* Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008) 592.
d. "The rule . . . is that *kî* be given its more usual causal sense unless greater sense can be extracted by taking the conjunction as a concessive or emphatic." For more details, see Burlet, *Judgment and Salvation*, 15. Cf. *BHRG* §40.29.
e. "The concept of faithfulness, steadfast love, or more generally kindness, represented by *ḥesed*, has a strong relational aspect that is essential to any proper definition of the term . . . the divine exercise of *ḥesed* is based on God's covenantal relationship with his people . . . *ḥesed* is the 'essence' of the covenant relationship" of Yahweh. Baer and Gordon, *NIDOTTE*, 2:211.
f. This term conveys the sense of "a long time . . . usually eternal . . . but not in a philosophical sense." *HALOT* 1:1798.
g. "Genesis 1 keeps sun and moon in their place (Babylonian religion turned them into deities) by not naming them; they are simply the greater and less light. The psalm (not needing to safeguard against that error?) calls them by their familiar names." Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 592.
h. The *lamed* preposition denotes purpose. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, §277.
i. The *beth* preposition is temporal. *GBHS* §4.1.5.b.

As seen above, there is no separation whatsoever between the sun's rule/governance over the day (Ps 136:8) and the moon and the stars ruling together over the night (Ps 136:9).[65] This intertextual (biblical-theological) connection provides further evidence, canonically speaking, that the stars should be understood as being co-rulers together with the moon.[66]

Genesis 1:16 and Jeremiah 31:35

The final text that vindicates the primary thesis of this paper is Jeremiah 31:35. It reads:

65 See Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 588, 92 alongside Collins, *Reading Genesis Well*, 156.
66 Cf. Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150,* Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Nelson, 2002), 294.


כֹּה ׀ אָמַר יְהוָה
נֹתֵן שֶׁמֶשׁ לְאוֹר יוֹמָם
חֻקּוֹת יָרֵחַ וְכוֹכָבִים לְאוֹר לָיְלָה
רֹגַע הַיָּם וַיֶּהֱמוּ גַלָּיו
יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ׃

"Thus says the LORD . . .[a]
who gives[b] *the sun for*[c] *light by day*[d]
the decrees regarding[e] *the moon and the*
stars for light by night.[f]
who stills the sea[g] *when its waves roar —*
the LORD of armies[h] *is his name!"*

a. Speeches and dialogue "express thoughts, motives, desires and beliefs." That is to say, "Divine monologues lead us directly into Yahweh's mind . . . This indeed is the value conventionally ascribed to the monologue: it imprints on a speech the mark of *utmost sincerity* and of absolute *truthfulness* . . . Moreover, what the speaker says will always express faithfully what he thinks, since he is supposed to 'think' the very words of the text." See Burlet, *Judgment and Salvation*, 75, 108. NOTE: "LXX has v.37 before vv.35–36." John Goldingay, *The Book of Jeremiah* The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 2021) 659.
b. Notably, the same verb is also used in Gen 1:17. F. B. Huey Jr., *Jeremiah/ Lamentations* New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B. & H., 1993) 287.
c. For grammatical details on the prefixed *lamed* preposition, see *BHRG* §39.11.
d. NOTE: "Tg 'to give light' here and in the next colon parses lə'ôr as a verb rather than a noun." Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 659. For more details, see Robert Hayward, *The Targum of Jeremiah: Translation, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes* The Aramaic Bible: The Targums (Collegeville, MN: College Press, 1987).
e. See BDB 349–50; *HALOT* 1:346 for further defense of this translation.
f. NOTE: "LXX lacks *the decrees regarding*." Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 659.
g. "Tg, Syr thus take the verb as *raga'* II as in v.1, not *raga'* I ('stir up'; so LXX, Vg); the subsequent *waw*-consecutive is then epexegetical (*TTH* 75–76; *IBHS* 33.2.2; JM §117j). Goldingay, *Jeremiah,* 659.
h. See Tremper Longman III and Daniel Reid, *God is a Warrior* Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic 1995) for more details on this key theme.

As seen above, while the sun is clearly reckoned to give light by day, no partition exists between the moon and the stars concerning their ordinance(s) to give light by night.[67]

This regular "patterned movement of sun, moon, and stars" gives hope to Judah who, like Ephraim, "could seem all but obliterated as a people."[68] To put things differently:

> To emphasize the unchangeable nature of God's love (cf. Rom 8:38–39), Jeremiah stated that there is as much chance of God's rejecting Israel as the fixed order of nature to break down (cf. 33:20–26). Israel's existence as a nation, the Lord says, is as permanent as creation itself, and his promise is as sure as the greatness of his power and the faithfulness of his character (cf. 32:17–20; 33).[69]

God gives hope to his people by demonstrating his sovereignty over all creation—the sky above and the sea below.[70] As Karl Barth eloquently states: "'The day continually dawns for man, and the sun, moon and stars which indicate the separation of day from night shine for him' in order that they may know that he has time and place when 'the Word of God is spoken to man, and judges him, and becomes his radically saving and preserving promise, and summons him to pray for the grace of God.'"[71] To God alone be praise!

Conclusion

This paper contends that the "stars" (כוכבים) of Creation (Day Four) should be understood as being co-rulers with the moon to govern the night (Gen 1:14–19). Conjointly (and for this reason) despite the anti-mythological, polemical thrust of Genesis 1, as a whole, they should not be thought of as being only a mere "afterthought."[72] According to the nuances and intricacies related to the (Hebrew) Masoretic accentual system, an "encoded" method of interpretation that is "far closer to the original community than our own," the "stars" (כוכבים) are joined to the "lesser light," i.e., the moon, and, therefore, "implicitly share in the rule of the night."[73] This comports with other canonical references which provide further

67 See Michael B. Shepherd, *A Commentary on Jeremiah* Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids; Kregel 2023), 665–78.
68 Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 659 quoting Barth, *CD* III, 1:164.
69 Huey, *Jeremiah*, 297.
70 Michael L. Brown, *Jeremiah* in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Revised Edition*, edited by Tremper Longman III and David Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 405.
71 Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 659 quoting Barth, *CD* III, 1:164.
72 The language of "afterthought" has been derived from Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 40.
73 Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 40–41.

vindication and Scriptural witness of this thesis (see Ps 136:7–9; Jer 31:35).[74] *Soli Deo gloria*.[75]

74 Cf. Futato, *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, 41 alongside Collins, *Reading Genesis Well*, 156

75 This paper, which I had initially considered titling "Stellar Insights from the Masoretes," partly because I had asked ChatGPT to help me (thank you AI!), has benefited immensely from the thoughts, comments, feedback, and critique provided by the various fellows of the Creation Theology Society (hosted by Cedarville University [Cedarville, Ohio] in tandem with the 9th International Conference on Creationism) and the Canadian American Theological Association. A special thank you must go to Christopher Zoccali for his willingness to accept my invitation to submit an article for consideration for publication with *CATR* and especially, David J. Fuller, without whom I simply would not have been able to publish this article.

Resurrection and the Future of Marriage: Interpreting Luke 20:34–36 in its Hebraic Context (Part 1)

Sarah Giles
Jacksonville, Florida

Abstract

When the Sadducees challenged Jesus with their marriage riddle, he replied that "the sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage" (Luke 20:34–35). The church has long viewed this as evidence that resurrection marks the start of an eternally celibate existence.

Yet many vital questions surrounding this interpretation have remained largely unexplored. How did the early church fathers view the passage, and what interpretive lens shaped their conclusions? Does the rest of the biblical data say anything about resurrected celibates? Is the concept of *eternal celibacy* an accurate reading of Jesus' words in their original Hebraic context?

This two-part series will examine the historical record and the Hebrew Scriptures for answers to those questions. It will argue that Jesus' remarks regarding "marrying and giving in marriage" in fact fell prey to misinterpretation by the Hellenized church fathers, which in turn obscured the biblical portrait of the future of marriage.

In part 1, we will first trace the interpretive history of the passage and identify potential influences behind the popular reading. We will then examine three indications that Jesus actually had a very different meaning in mind. In part 2, we will present an alternative reading that proposes a specific Old Testament text as the background for his famous reply.

The Question

On the final day of his public ministry, Jesus is accosted by a group of Sadducean priests with a challenge rooted in the Mosaic Law. It involves the Levirate

marriage statute that was designed to keep the family's inheritance within the family line:

> If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. (Deut 25:5–6)

These instructions in the Torah form the linchpin of their carefully crafted scenario:

> "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and died without children. And the second and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. Afterward the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife." (Luke 20:28–33)

The Sadducees presume that the resurrection would cause the woman to be married to all seven brothers at once. This, of course, would violate the Lev 20:21 law against a man being married to his brother's wife while the brother is still alive. The goal of their absurdly exaggerated scenario is transparent: they are trying to prove the resurrection impossible on the grounds that it would violate the Torah.

The Traditional Interpretation

Jesus' response has historically been considered a declaration about the fate of human marriage. The traditional view interprets it something like this: "Ignorant Sadducees, marriage is for this age, not the age to come!" If such is the case, however, it is the first and only time Jesus has mentioned the idea of eternal celibacy for the resurrected.

We might have expected a revelation of this magnitude to take the form of didactic teaching during his ministry, but instead we find only a sharp retort aimed at his enemies shortly before he is arrested. And even this exchange does not elaborate on the concept, as Ben Witherington notes: "Nowhere in the Synoptic accounts of this debate are we told that we become sexless, without gender distinctions like the angels, or that all marital bonds created in this age are dissolved in the next."[1]

Turning to the rest of the NT, we find that celibacy in the present age is

1 Ben Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 35.

permitted in certain cases such as an urgent spiritual mission (Matt 19:12) or impending tribulation (1 Cor 7:29–31).[2] Yet these exist as exceptions within a worldview that highly esteemed the institution of marriage and so condemned ascetic teachers who were forbidding people from marrying.[3]

To be sure, a handful of passages are often thought to hint at the idea of celibacy in the *future* age. These include the corporate marriage of Christ and the church in Eph 5 (thought to replace individual human marriages) and the "spiritual" resurrected body in 1 Cor 15 (thought to be an asexual body). But even in such places, the idea of eternal celibacy is neither explicitly stated nor even clearly implied.[4] Thus we are left without a definitive articulation of this view in the remainder of the New Testament.

The most significant witness to the teachings of Jesus outside of the NT are the writings of the Apostolic Fathers (ca. 70–150 CE). As one might expect, their commentary reflects the same pattern established in the scriptures. Celibacy in the *present* age is permitted in specific cases[5] that are exceptions to the prevailing

2 Witherington comments on Matt 19:4–12: "That Jesus offers two equally valid callings, either to life-long marriage or to being a eunuch for the kingdom, is in itself evidence that Jesus did not have negative views about human sexuality or sexual relations in marriage. . . . There is no hint here that being a eunuch for the Kingdom was a higher or more holy calling than lifelong marriage." See *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, 32. Similarly, although in 1 Cor 7 Paul presents celibacy as advantageous for those who can abide it, he also respects the marital norm established in the Hebrew Bible. See Craig Keener, *1–2 Corinthians* (The New Cambridge Bible Commentary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 68–69.

3 For passages that explicitly honor marriage see, e.g., Matt 19:3–6; 1 Cor 6:16–18, 7:4; 1 Tim 5:14; Eph 5:28; Col 3:19; Heb 13:4; 1 Pet 3:7. For the condemnation of the ascetic prohibition of marriage see 1 Tim 4:1–3.

4 The marital imagery used to describe the church's relationship with Christ in Eph 5 evokes the marital language used of Israel's corporate covenant with Yahweh (e.g., Ezek 16:8–14; Isa 54:5–6). As Yahweh's figurative "wife," Israel received his covenant blessings, which included the multiplication of her numbers via marriage and childbearing (Deut 1:10–11). Just as her corporate marriage to Yahweh did not preclude literal marriages among the people, so also the church's corporate marriage to Christ is never said to replace literal marriages. In fact, Paul points to Christ's covenantal sacrifice as the very model for love between husbands and wives in Eph 5:25–29 with no termination point in view. Regarding the "spiritual" (*pneumatikos*) body in 1 Cor 15:42–49, Craig Keener points out that "*-ikos* adjectives . . . normally denote mode of existence rather than substance." See Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 133. This is the case earlier in the letter in 1 Cor 2:14–3:3, where the *pneumatikos* man is described as one who lives in obedience to the Spirit of God. The *body* of such a person is later confirmed to be the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16, 6:19), a state which does not prevent it from entering a sexual marriage relationship (1 Cor 7:4). Paul gives no indication that the resurrected *pneumatikos* body in 1 Cor 15:44 will be any different with respect to its capacity for marriage. Keener suggests Paul may have seen a correlation between resurrected humans and the angels, since the *glory* of the resurrected body is compared with the *glory* of the stars in 1 Cor 15:41–42, and stars are viewed as angels elsewhere in Second Temple Judaism (Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 131). But it is instructive that Paul also contrasts the *glory* of the resurrected body with the *dishonor* of the mortal body in v. 43, showing that future exaltation (rather than future celibacy) is in view. For more on exaltation as the point of comparison between starlike angels and humans, see David Burnett, "So Shall Your Seed Be: Paul's Use of Genesis 15:5 in Romans 4:18 in Light of Early Jewish Deification Traditions," *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 5(2) (2015): 211–236.

5 E.g., Ign. *Pol.* 5.2; Herm. Mand. 4.4–11.

high regard for marriage.[6] By contrast, the idea of *future* eternal celibacy for the resurrected is simply never mentioned by any Apostolic Father.

It turns out that the popular view of Jesus' reply does not arrive on the scene until around the mid-second century CE. By this time, Christianity had spread into a Greco-Roman culture saturated in the teachings of the Greek philosopher Plato. Numerous influential church fathers from this era had been trained in Platonic philosophy prior to converting to Christianity, and most continued to express great admiration for it after their conversion.

The Platonist version of the afterlife had no room for bodily resurrection. Instead, the soul was thought to shed the body like a husk and ascend to the heavens to dwell in eternal celibacy among the gods. The mortal body, according to Plato, was little more than a prison that hindered one from seeking spiritual truth. He therefore urged his followers to "avoid, so far as possible, intercourse and communion with the body, except what is absolutely necessary."[7]

This paradigm naturally engendered disdain for all aspects of human physicality. Tim Connolly explains that "the true philosopher despises bodily pleasures such as food, drink, and sex, so he more than anyone else wants to free himself from his body . . . . philosophy itself is, in fact, a kind of 'training for dying,' a purification of the philosopher's soul from its bodily attachment."[8]

Ascetic celibacy soon began to infiltrate the early church. Joseph Lynch comments that "the ordinary believers and even clergy who did not adopt an ascetic way of life were increasingly regarded as real but second-class Christians. The ascetics gradually became the Christian elite, who did what Jesus had recommended to those who wanted to be 'perfect.'"[9]

This worldview left an indelible mark upon the theology of the Hellenized church fathers in the second century and beyond. In particular, many of their works reveal a striking connection between their prevailing low view of marriage and the emergence of an eternal celibacy interpretation of Jesus' reply to the Sadducees. A representative sampling from the first four centuries of the church offers some interesting insights in this regard.

We begin with *On the Resurrection* (ca. 150–180 CE), a work traditionally

6 E.g., 1 Clem. 1.3, 6.3; Pol. *Phil.* 4.2; Ign. *Pol.* 5.1.

7 Plato, *Phaedo* 67a. Translation from https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DPhaedo%3Asection%3D67a

8 Tim Connolly, "Plato: Phaedo," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* https://www.iep.utm.edu/phaedo.

9 Joseph H. Lynch, *Early Christianity: A Brief History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 195.

attributed to Justin Martyr.[10] Our author holds to a literal resurrection of the flesh and debates an opponent who rejects such a resurrection largely because it would be pointless to resurrect one's sexual organs if the resurrected are celibate (as both men presume Jesus taught).

Justin answers his opponent by pointing to voluntary celibates in the present age, most notably Christ. He asserts that Christ was born of a virgin "for no other reason than that he might destroy the begetting [of children] by lawless desire."[11] Here he refers to children conceived *within* the bond of marriage. In line with the ascetic paradigm, he considers all sexual desire inherently sinful.

The very institution of marriage, he claims, was "made lawless through lust"[12]—that is to say, through sexual desire shared between spouses. He views Christ's single life as a condemnation of the institution itself and is therefore quite comfortable interpreting Jesus to mean that "in the future world, sexual intercourse should be done away with."[13]

Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215 CE) rejected a literal resurrection and argued instead that the New Testament supported the Platonic idea of eternal disembodiment in the heavens.[14] He was a moderate ascetic who supported marriage but discouraged the enjoyment of conjugal relations. Husbands were instructed to suppress any physical desire they might feel for their wives because "the human ideal of continence, I mean that which is set forth by Greek philosophers, teaches that one should fight desire."[15] This worldview provides the backdrop for his interpretation of Jesus' reply to the Sadducees:

> "For in this world," he says, "they marry, and are given in marriage," in which alone the female is distinguished from the male; "but in that world it is so no more." There the rewards of this social and holy life, which is based on conjugal union, are laid up, not for male and female, but for man, **the sexual desire which divides humanity being removed**.[16]

Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 130–202 CE) affirmed a bodily resurrection followed by a millennial reign of the Messiah. Nevertheless, he interpreted Jesus' reply to the

10 While the authorship of this document is dubious, its antiquity is not, and therefore it still provides a window into early church views. We refer to its author as Justin for the sake of convenience. The one authentic text by Justin that mentions Jesus' reply to the Sadducees, *Dialogue with Trypho* 1.81, quotes Jesus without interpretive comment and so is not examined here. Nevertheless, Justin's inclination to extol lifelong celibacy is evident in places such as *First Apology* 1.15.

11 Justin, *On the Resurrection* 1.3 (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers.* Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 1885–1887. 10 vols. Repr. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995), 295. Brackets mine.

12 Justin, *On the Resurrection* 1.3 (ANF 1:295).

13 Justin, *On the Resurrection* 1.3 (ANF 1:295).

14 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 4.5 (ANF 2:416).

15 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 3.7.57 (ANF 2:391).

16 Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor* 1.4 (ANF 2:211). See also 2.10 (ANF 2:263).

Sadducees much like his contemporary Clement, with one notable difference—he explains the apparent cessation of marriage in more pragmatic terms:

> All those who have been enrolled for [eternal] life shall rise again . . . . Those, on the other hand, who are worthy of punishment, shall go away into it . . . . Both classes shall then cease from any longer begetting and being begotten, from marrying and being given in marriage; **so that the number of mankind, corresponding to the foreordination of God, being completed, may fully realize the scheme formed by the Father.**[17]

He borrows the idea of a "number of mankind" from the Jewish tradition that a certain number of humans are ordained to be born; to this tradition he adds his own conclusion that when the foreordained number is reached—thereby triggering the resurrection—the resurrected will be made celibate to prevent any further multiplying among them.[18]

But Irenaeus is unique among the church fathers in that he attempts to produce Old Testament support for the eternal celibacy interpretation of Jesus' reply. He rests the full weight of his case upon Isaiah 6:11–12 as found in the Greek Septuagint (LXX):

> "For, behold," says Isaiah, "the day of the Lord cometh past remedy, full of fury and wrath, to lay waste the city of the earth, and to root sinners out of it.". . . And when these things are done, he says, "**God will remove [us] men far away, and those that are left shall multiply in the earth.". . . For all these and other words were unquestionably spoken in reference to the resurrection of the just.**[19]

Irenaeus presents Isa 6:11–12 as proof that a foreordained number of superior Christians (among whom he includes himself) will be resurrected and removed to a heavenly Jerusalem to live as celibates during the millennium. They will rule over the least worthy believers who remain on earth at Christ's return in order to do the multiplying mentioned by Isaiah.[20]

17 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2.33 (ANF 1:411). Brackets mine.

18 The Jewish work known as 2 Baruch (ca. 90 CE) describes a tradition in which God responds to Adam's sin by determining the number of men who would be born and decreeing that the dead would not live again until that number was complete (2 Bar. 23:4–5).

19 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.35 (ANF 1:565). Our insertion of "us" in brackets is based on his earlier citation of the same passage in which he explicitly says "God will remove *us* men far away." See *Against Heresies* 5.34 (ANF 1:564).

20 It is unclear how his alleged bottom tier of believers who continue to bear children comports with his view that the "number of mankind" is completed at the resurrection. Further, his portrayal of marriage and childbearing as a task relegated to subpar Christians clashes sharply with the OT, which depicts these things as a great reward for God's people in the future age. His postulated superior class of resurrected celibates, meanwhile, is nowhere to be found in the Hebrew Bible.

But this reading comes at the cost of the passage's historical context. Scholars almost universally recognize it as a prophecy of judgment that describes the people of Judah being removed not to heaven but to exile.[21] The subsequent multiplying (mentioned only in the LXX) refers to the surviving remnant who fruitfully reproduce (Isa 6:13), thereby ensuring the continuation of the nation. In other words, the removal in Isa 6:11–12 has nothing to do with the resurrection.

Nevertheless, the eternal celibacy view continued its rise to prominence in the third century by way of two notable church fathers. The first of these, Tertullian (ca. 155–220 CE), was a gifted theologian from Africa who composed entire treatises extolling asceticism in general and celibacy in particular. He wrote a letter to his wife in which he urged her to remain a celibate widow after his death, based upon his understanding of Jesus' remarks to the Sadducees:

> But to Christians, after their departure from the world, no restoration of marriage is promised in the day of the resurrection, translated as they will be into the condition and sanctity of angels. . . . The question raised by the Sadducees has yielded to the Lord's sentence. . . . **There will at that day be no resumption of voluptuous disgrace between us. No such frivolities, no such impurities, does God promise to His (servants).**[22]

Tertullian's characterization of marriage as frivolous, disgraceful, and impure betrays a strong inclination to read the passage through an ascetic lens. His contemporary Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185–253 CE) took a similarly dim view of marriage. Considered one of the most influential theologians of the third century church, Origen was an outspoken Platonist and avowed ascetic who reportedly castrated himself in a zealous commitment to celibacy.[23]

The notion of a resurrected physical body clashed with Origen's ascetic paradigm. He thus viewed the resurrection and other OT eschatological prophecies in a purely figurative sense.[24] This interpretive matrix is evident in his polemic against some Christians in his day who evidently believed on the basis of the OT

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21 See, e.g., John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1–39*, (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 189–191.

22 Tertullian, *To His Wife* 1.1 (ANF 4:39). While he advised against remarriage for the widowed and generally approved of those who chose not to marry in the present life (e.g., *On Exhortation to Chastity* 13.4), he was not opposed to monogamous marriage (e.g., *On Monogamy* 1.1) and so reflected a moderate ascetic position similar to that of Clement.

23 Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* 6.8 (NPNF 2/1:254).

24 E.g., Origen, *Against Celsus* 5.19 (ANF 4:551). He understood the "spiritual" body described by Paul in 1 Cor 15 to mean that the resurrected body would be composed of spirit rather than flesh, so that it would not have the ability to eat, drink, or have sex. On his allegorical approach to interpretation, see *De Principiis* 4.1.16 (ANF 4:365).

Scriptures that marriage and childbearing would indeed continue for the resurrected.[25] Such a belief, in his opinion, could only be motivated by lustful desire:

> **Certain persons . . . adopting a superficial view of the letter of the law, and yielding rather in some measure to the indulgence of their own desires and lusts** . . . are of opinion that the fulfilment of the promises of the future are to be looked for in bodily pleasure and luxury. . . . And consequently they say, that after the resurrection there will be marriages, and the begetting of children.[26]

The eternal celibacy paradigm marched onward into the fourth century through the teaching of prominent ascetic theologians Augustine and Jerome. As an affirmed Platonist,[27] Augustine held that "continence is preferred to wedded life, and pious virginity to marriage."[28] Jerome, meanwhile, admitted that his view of marriage was influenced by Plato's *Phaedrus*[29] and ultimately disavowed the institution as nothing short of a "defilement."[30]

It is therefore unsurprising that Augustine thought resurrected females "shall then indeed be superior to carnal intercourse and child-bearing,"[31] or that Jerome used Jesus' reply to promote celibacy in the present age: "After the resurrection there will be no wedlock. But if death be the end of marriage, why do we not voluntarily embrace the inevitable?"[32]

In this brief survey, we have seen that the eternal celibacy interpretation of Jesus' words cannot be found in the remainder of the NT or in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. Nevertheless, many influential Christians in later centuries interpreted Jesus in precisely this way. But their predominantly negative view of marriage and corresponding inclination to exalt celibacy reveals an interpretive bias that likely hindered them from considering the scene in its original Hebraic context.

Indications of a Different Meaning

The traditional reading of Luke 20:34–36 overlooks several indications that Jesus had something other than eternal celibacy in mind. We will examine three key examples in detail below.

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25 Ironically, Origen admitted that these Christians sought to establish their views "on the authority of the prophets by those promises which are written regarding Jerusalem," but dismissed their interpretation as too "Jewish." See *De Principiis* 2.11 (ANF 4:297).
26 Origen, *De Principiis* 2.11 (ANF 4:297).
27 E.g., Augustine, *Letters* 1.1 (NPNF 1/1:219).
28 Augustine, *Of Holy Virginity* 1.1 (NPNF 1/1:417).
29 Jerome, *Against Jovinianus* 1.49 (NPNF 2/6:386).
30 Jerome, *Against Jovinianus* 1.26 (NPNF 2/6:366).
31 Augustine, *City of God* 22.17 (NPNF 1/2:496).
32 Jerome, *Against Jovinianus* 1.13 (NPNF 2/6:357).

1. Jesus Appealed to the Old Testament Scriptures and the Scribes Affirmed his Reply.

Jesus began his reply to the Sadducees by rebuking them for failing to understand the Scriptures (Mark 12:24; Matt 22:29). He later concluded by citing Exod 3:6, which reads: "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

He likely pointed to this verse from the Torah—rather than something more obvious like Dan 12:2—because the Sadducees held the five books of Moses in exceptionally high regard. Even so, this particular text was an unusual choice. While the rabbis had a list of passages used to prove the resurrection, there is no indication they ever called upon Exod 3:6.[33]

One significant effect of choosing this verse is that it placed the Abrahamic Covenant front and center in the debate. As Darrell Bock explains, Exod 3:6 conveys the idea that "God is the God of promise and covenant."[34] Jesus therefore used it to remind the Sadducees that "the patriarchs are not dead—and neither are God's promises to them. For the promises to the patriarchs to come to pass and for God to still be their God, resurrection must be a reality."[35]

The interesting thing about these patriarchal promises is that they prominently feature marital fruitfulness.[36] We encounter them in the Torah shortly after the story in which God unites Adam and Eve together in marriage. He charges the first couple to rule over the earth and populate it with their offspring (Gen 1:26–28),[37] but they eat the forbidden fruit before they reproduce, bringing sin and death into the picture. Jonathan Huddleston argues that the subsequent promises given to the patriarchs serve as a beacon of hope:

> **Genesis' story of loss and of promise** does not just describe the origins of the present imperfect world; it also **evokes an eschatological hope for future Edenic fruitfulness**. . . . For Genesis' audiences, **all of this language of [future] multiplication and fruitfulness evokes . . . a creation blessing expressing the creator's will for all life upon the earth**.[38]

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33 Martin McNamara, *Targum and Testament Revisited: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 204. He notes that the rabbis of the third and fourth centuries typically cited Deut 33:6, Exod 15:1, Ps 84:4, and Gen 3:19.

34 Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 1625.

35 Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 1625.

36 E.g., Gen 15:5; 17:5–6; 26:24; 28:13–14.

37 Once the earth had been filled, presumably childbearing would have ceased naturally but marriages would have remained intact.

38 Jonathan Huddleston, *Eschatology in Genesis* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 149, 151. Brackets mine.

Huddleston has put his finger on a central theme of Old Testament eschatology: that God's original Edenic intentions for humankind will finally be realized in the eschaton. Thus the Abrahamic promise of fruitful marriages is not reserved for the present age alone but is also anticipated throughout the Hebrew Bible to be a central blessing of the *future* age.[39]

Ezekiel 37 is perhaps the quintessential example. Here we find an eschatological blessing of fruitful marriages bestowed upon people who are expressly said to have been raised from the dead. Composed of two closely related visions known as the Dry Bones (vv. 1–14) and the Two Sticks (vv. 15–28), Ezekiel 37 describes the bodily resurrection of "the whole house of Israel" (v. 11), which is then placed in the Promised Land and blessed with fruitful marriages:

> **And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves**, **O my people.** And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land**.** Then you shall know that I am the LORD. . . . **They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever**. I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. **And I will set them in their land and multiply them**, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. (Ezek 37:13–14, 25–26)

Many scholars regard the corporate resurrection in Ezek 37:1–14 as nothing more than a vivid metaphor for the restoration of the nation (in which case the subsequent marriages would not necessarily be those of resurrected people). While this is possible, it is also worth considering several lines of evidence that indicate an actual resurrection is indeed in view.

A key observation, as Daniel Block points out, is that the reference to Israelites being resurrected and returned to the land (vv. 11–14) is not part of the vision itself. Rather, it is the *interpretation* of the vision.[40] This suggests that the metaphorical pile of dry bones represents Israelites from the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities who perished among the nations and so were cut off from any hope of returning home (cf. Lev 26:38)—a fate Ezekiel and most of his generation would

39 E.g., Ps 69:35–36; Isa 54:3; 59:21; 60:21–22; 61:9; 65:23; Jer 23:3–4; 30:19–20; 31:27; 33:10–11; Zech 8:3–5.

40 Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48* (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 379.

experience.[41] Moreover, the stated interpretation in vv. 11–14 implies that Israel's national restoration is closely linked to the physical resurrection of her exiles.[42]

The Qumran community evidently understood Ezek 37:1–14 along these lines. In *4QPseudo–Ezekiel* (ca. 150 BCE–70 CE), the author reworks Ezekiel's Dry Bones vision into his own rendition of the scene. Benjamin Wold notes four modifications to the vision which have led multiple DSS scholars to conclude that *4QPseudo–Ezekiel* describes the personal resurrection of righteous Israelites. Wold agrees that this text portrays "a resurrection of individuals and recompense for the righteous in the eschaton."[43]

Equally striking is the series of paintings known as the "Ezekiel Panel" found on the walls of a 3rd century CE Jewish synagogue in Syria. This panel, containing scenes from Ezekiel 37, seems to portray both the bodily resurrection and national restoration of Israel. Viewers are presented with a depiction of individual human body parts such as heads, arms, and legs scattered across the ground, in the process of reassembling. Standing in their midst are two distinct groups of apparently resurrected people that Rachel Wischnitzer-Bernstein concludes are the ten tribes of Israel and the two tribes of Judah (along with the tribe of Levi).[44]

Perhaps most intriguing of all is the possibility that Jesus affirmed a similar view. In John 5:21–29, he predicts that his voice will bring forth the dead from their tombs to receive either eternal life or judgment. This dichotomy recalls the Dan 12:2 resurrection unto everlasting life or contempt. But, as Stefanos Mihalios points out, Jesus' words also have close ties to Ezek 37:1–14: "Ezekiel 37 is the only place in the OT in which the hearing of the divine voice leads to a

41 The related Two Sticks vision (Ezek 37:15–28) strongly implies that the Israelites in view in Ezek 37:1–14 are those from the two divided kingdoms who were sent into exile. The identification of the dry bones as "the whole house of Israel" in Ezek 37:11 is also noteworthy. In Ezek 11:15–20, this phrase explicitly refers to Ezekiel's own generation, which is promised participation in the final restoration of Israel (cp. Ezek 36:10, 17, 21, 22–32).

42 Block points out that the notion of restoration through resurrection was anticipated by the earlier prophets in places like Hos 6:1–3 and Isa 26:19 (though as with Ezek 37:1–14, scholars debate whether such references to resurrection should be taken literally). See Daniel I. Block, *By the River Chebar: Historical, Literary, and Theological Studies in the Book of Ezekiel* (Eugene: Cascade, 2013), 196–198. Significantly, a similar framework may also be implied in Dan 12:1–2. The context for the resurrection mentioned in v. 2 is the eschatological deliverance of Israel, as stated in v. 1: "at that time your people shall be delivered (*mālaṭ*)." The verb *mālaṭ* is used in Isa 49:25 to describe the eschatological return home of exilic Israel, and in Joel 2:32 to describe the eschatological restoration of Judah. Thus Dan 12:1–2 appears to envision a link between national restoration (implied in v. 1) and physical resurrection (described in v. 2).

43 Benjamin Wold, "Agency and Raising the Dead in 4QPseudo-Ezekiel and 4Q521 2 ii," *Academia.edu,* https://academia.edu/306575/Agency_and_Raising_the_Dead_in_4QPseudo-Ezekiel_and_4Q521_2_ii.

44 Rachel Wischnitzer-Bernstein. 1941. "The Conception of the Resurrection in the Ezekiel Panel of the Dura Synagogue." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 60, no. 1:43–55.

resurrection."[45] Mihalios goes on to document no less than five lexical parallels between Ezek 37:4–12 and John 5:21–29.[46]

It seems evident that many ancient Jews—possibly including Jesus himself—understood the Ezekiel 37 resurrection quite literally. In fact, James Edwards observes that it is because of this passage that "the rabbis [of Jesus' day] argued for the continuation of earthly circumstances and conditions in the resurrected state, including marriage and sexual intercourse in it."[47]

But whatever one makes of Ezekiel 37, this much is certain: the OT describes resurrection *into* the future age and fruitful marriages *during* the future age, without any hint that the former excludes one from the latter. This fact shaped how Jews of the Second Temple period and beyond viewed the future age. Based on his exhaustive survey of marriage and sexuality in the Jewish pseudepigraphal literature (ca. 300 BCE–300 CE), William Loader concludes:

> The most common and widespread Jewish expectation was that the [eschatological] future . . . will be a time of abundance, including abundant offspring . . . . **the assumption is that life will resemble its current forms, including, therefore, sexual relations and procreation, often in association with [Old Testament] promises that barrenness will cease and progeny be abundant**.[48]

Consequently, the idea of an eternally celibate state was virtually unknown to Jews at the time of Christ.[49] This is why the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, still assumed marriage for the resurrected in their challenge. And while the scribes sought to "catch him in what he said" (Luke 20:19–20), it is telling that

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45 Stefanos Mihalios, *The Danielic Eschatological Hour in the Johannine Literature* (Library of New Testament Studies. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2002), 110.

46 Mihalios, *The Danielic Eschatological Hour in the Johannine Literature,* 110–111. For additional proposals of other New Testament allusions to Ezek 37:1–14 that suggest a literal view see J. Grassi, "Ezekiel xxxvii. 1–14 and the New Testament," *NTS* 11(2) (1965): 162–164. See also Shelly Matthews, "Elijah, Ezekiel, and Romulus: Luke's Flesh and Bones (Luke 24:39) in Light of Ancient Narratives of Ascent, Resurrection, and Apotheosis," *Academia.edu,* https://www.academia.edu/28728390/Elijah_Ezekiel_and_Romulus_Luke_s_Flesh_and_Bones_Luke_24_39_in_Light_of_Ancient_Narratives_of_Ascent_Resurrection_and_Apotheosis.

47 James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 368 (fn 42). Brackets mine. See, e.g., b. Sanh. 92b, though in this text the Ezekiel 37 resurrection was not regarded as eschatological. The resurrected are said to have married, borne children, and later died again.

48 William Loader. 2014. "Sexuality and Eschatology: In Search of a Celibate Utopia in Pseudepigraphic Literature." *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 24.1:45, 53. Brackets mine.

49 Loader finds only two pseudepigraphal texts suggesting an eternally celibate future, *Sibylline Oracles 1–2* and *Apocalypse of Moses.* He points out that both works espouse negative views of sex within marriage in the present life, which runs counter to Biblical Judaism (*Sexuality and Eschatology*, 50). He thus considers "the belief that eternal life makes procreation and so marriage and sexual relations redundant" to be the *least* likely Jewish background for the scene with the Sadducees (*Sexuality and Eschatology*, 64).

they did not question Jesus' response, despite being aware of the many OT promises that marriage would persist into the future age.

Moreover, the eternal celibacy view asks us to believe that while Jesus grounded his argument for the resurrection in a text that evoked the patriarchal promises, he also introduced a new doctrine about the future of marriage which was in direct conflict with those same promises—and his enemies accepted this without a trace of protest.[50] Such a scenario defies credibility.

The fact that the scripturally astute scribes admitted that Jesus had "spoken well" (Luke 20:39) implies they believed his entire reply was supported by the OT Scriptures. This makes it highly unlikely that Jesus was announcing the future cessation of marriage.

2. Jesus was Contrasting Righteous Sons and Wicked Sons Living in the Present Age.

The phrase "the sons of this age" (*hoi huioi tou aionos toutou*) is an unusual expression that appears only twice in the Bible. Significantly, both instances are found in Luke's gospel. The first usage appears in the parable of the shrewd manager (Luke 16:1–8), where Jesus identifies the manager as "unjust" (*adikias*) and associates him with "the sons of this age" (16:8).[51]

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50 Faced with the absence of OT support for the eternal celibacy view, commentators often attempt to locate the background for Jesus' reply in a few extra-Biblical Jewish traditions. Three are commonly cited: b. Ber. 17a, 1 En. 15:6–7, and 2 Bar. 51:10. Berakhot 17a, found in the Babylonian Talmud, creatively interprets Exod 24:11: "In the future world there is no eating nor drinking nor propagation nor business nor jealousy nor hatred nor competition, but the righteous sit with their crowns on their heads feasting on the brightness of the divine presence, as it says, 'And they beheld God, and did eat and drink.'" However, this imposes a strikingly Platonic view of the future onto a verse that has nothing to do with marriage in the future age. As such, it seems an unlikely background for Jesus' reply to the Sadducees.

In 1 En. 15:6b–7 (ca. 200 BCE–100 CE), Enoch rebukes the angelic Watchers who fell from heaven to beget children: "But you were formerly spiritual, living the eternal life, and immortal for all generations of the world. And therefore I have not appointed wives for you; for as for the spiritual ones of the heaven, in heaven is their dwelling." Yet in this passage Enoch addresses the angels and so says nothing about the marital status of resurrected humans. Interpreters who cite it typically neglect 1 En. 10:17, which anticipates that righteous humans (unlike the angels) *will* marry: "And then shall all the righteous escape, and shall live till they beget thousands of children, and all the days of their youth and their old age shall they complete in peace."

In 2 Bar. 51:10 (ca. 100–200 CE), we are told: "For in the heights of that world shall they dwell, and they shall be made like unto the angels, and be made equal to the stars, and they shall be changed into every form they desire, from beauty into loveliness, and from light into the splendor of glory." But the marital status of resurrected humanity is not mentioned here. Any such notion is simply read into the text. Furthermore, 2 Bar. 70:7 explicitly affirms Isaiah's prophecy of marriage and childbearing in the future age: "And women shall no longer then have pain when they bear, nor shall they suffer torment when they yield the fruit of the womb."

51 There has been much scholarly debate surrounding the fact that the wicked steward is commended for his shrewdness. Some have tried to paint the steward as a good man, but the fact remains that Jesus explicitly labeled him immoral (*adikias*). This word is elsewhere rendered *unrighteousness, injustice, iniquity, evildoers,* and *wickedness* in the NASB. The only other time it appears in Luke, we find it on the lips of Jesus: "Depart from me, all you workers of ***adikias***" (Luke 13:27).

These sons are connected with a generation that was previously characterized as "faithless" (9:41) and "evil" (11:29), thereby reinforcing their morally bankrupt character.[52] They are then contrasted with the righteous "sons of light," who coexist alongside them.[53] Thus the first time we encounter the phrase "the sons of this age" in Luke's gospel, it refers to the wicked in the context of a moral contrast that is set in the present age.

The Hebraic origin of this phrase further confirms its negative connotation. As I. Howard Marshall notes, "[using] *hoi huioi* [i.e., 'the sons'] with a genitive is a common Semitic phrase to denote people belonging to a particular class."[54] E. W. Bullinger agrees that "the word 'son,' when qualified by another noun, denotes the *nature* and *character* of the person or persons so named."[55]

For example, "the sons of disobedience" in Eph 2:2 is a designation for the wicked, while "the sons of light" in Luke 16:8 refers to the righteous. The expression "the sons of this age*"* similarly implies that these "sons" embody the character of "this age." What then is the character of the present age in Jewish thought? It turns out that the literature of the Second Temple period widely regards it to be an *evil* age.[56]

The Dead Sea Scrolls *Damascus Document* and *War Scroll* are two such texts that both refer frequently to the present "age of wickedness" in which "the sons of darkness" and "the sons of light" coexisted. This pattern continues into the New Testament, where Jesus identified the "end of the age*"* as a time when "the sons of the evil one" are judged after "the sons of the kingdom" are delivered (Matt 13:37–43).

The apostle Paul likewise portrayed this period as "the present *evil* age*"* (Gal 1:4) to which believers should not be conformed (Rom 12:2).[57] In addition, "the age (*aiona*) of this world" is associated with "the sons of disobedience" in Eph 2:2, prompting S. M. Baugh to write that "the 'age of this world' clearly has a

52 Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 720. Luke Timothy Johnson notes that "Luke uses [the term 'generation'] increasingly of those opposed to the prophet's message (Luke 9:41; 11:29, 30, 31, 32, 50, 51; 16:8; 17:25; Acts 2:40)." See *The Gospel of Luke*, (Sacra Pagina. Collegville: The Liturgical, 1991), 123.

53 Crispin Fletcher-Louis identifies the two groups in this passage as "the righteous and unrighteous" who "coexist" in the present age. See *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 82.

54 I. Howard Marshall*, The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 620. Brackets mine.

55 E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1898), 503. Emphasis mine.

56 See Richard Bauckham, "The Delay of the Parousia," *Tyndale Bulletin* 31 (1980), 8.

57 The term "this age" is used in a neutral sense on occasion, e.g., Matt 12:32. But it predominantly carries a negative connotation that is usually explicit but also occasionally implicit (e.g., the foolish "wisdom of this age" and the doomed "rulers of this age" in 1 Cor 2:6).

negative reference . . . the sons of this age (Luke 16:8; cf. Luke 20:34) . . . are accordingly called here the sons of disobedience."[58]

The seemingly innocuous term "this age" was in reality fraught with negative connotation in first century Jewish thought. This further indicates that the phrase "the sons of this age" is not neutral but instead denotes the *wicked*. With this in mind, we now turn to Luke's final use of the phrase in Luke 20:34.

As in Luke 16:8, Jesus again contrasts "the sons of this age" with a righteous group of sons using the present tense. But here the "sons of this age" *are marrying* (*gamousin*), while the "sons of God" *are not marrying* (*oute gamousin*). The ones who are not marrying are not said to be living in the future age; instead they are considered worthy to *attain* to the future age.

As Crispin Fletcher-Louis and others have noted, the present tense verbs indicate that both groups of sons are living in the present age, with the sons worthy of resurrection being identified by their marital restraint. Fletcher-Louis sums it up well: "[the activities in] the present tense in [Luke] 20:35b–6 should be attributed to the present life."[59]

But this was no call to a life of celibacy. As we have seen, "the sons of this age" identifies the group of sons who marry as *wicked* sons, signaling that a particular sort of marriage is in view. Jesus was by implication referring to *forbidden* marriages.[60]

3. Jesus Later Applied the Phrase "Marrying and Giving in Marriage" to Illicit Marriages.

The expression "marrying and giving in marriage" (*gamousin kai ekgamiskontai*) is another rare phrase found in only two New Testament scenes. Jesus used it in his reply to the Sadducees, and then again in the Olivet Discourse just a few hours

58 Steven M. Baugh, *Ephesians* (Evangelical Exegetical Commentary. Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), 149. Pauline authorship of Ephesians has been disputed by many scholars, but our point here is simply that this text represents another NT example of the negative view of the present age.

59 Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology*, 82. Brackets mine. For a similar view see also David Aune, "Luke 20:34–36: A 'Gnosticised' Logion of Jesus?" Geschichte-Tradition-Reflexion: Festschrift fur Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag, ed. H. Cancik, H. Lichtenberger and P. Schafer. 3 vols. (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 121. Such scholars generally take the view that Luke 20:34–36 is a call to celibacy in the present age.

60 Jesus had previously denounced forbidden marriages in Luke 16:18: "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery."

later.[61] In the latter case, he was describing the marrying and giving in marriage that would occur shortly before his return:

> For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. **For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage**, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, **so will be the coming of the Son of Man.** (Matt 24:37–39)

This passage is commonly thought to contain two pairs of morally neutral activities. But Bock rightly challenges the popular view: "the verbs may seem neutral, but anyone familiar with the flood story would know that they connote moral corruption."[62] In fact, upon closer inspection of these two pairs of activities, we will find evidence that Jesus was warning his disciples not to participate in them.

Eating and drinking. It is often overlooked that Jesus elaborated on this activity later in his discourse (Matt 24:42–51; Luke 21:34–36). There we discover he had in mind a certain form of eating and drinking that would render his disciples unprepared for his return and ultimately consign them to the fate of the wicked, as shown in the table below:

Warning About the Son's Return	Elaboration on the Warning
For as **in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking,** marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (Matt 24:38–39)	**Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming . . . . But if that wicked servant** says to himself, "My master is delayed," and begins to beat his fellow servants and **eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him** and at an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces. (Matt 24:42, 48–51) But **watch yourself lest your hearts be weighed down with** dissipation and **drunkenness** . . . and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap . . . . **But stay awake at all times.** (Luke 21:34, 36)

61 Matthew and Mark place it in the Olivet Discourse. In Luke, Jesus uses a similar phrase to describe the same eschatological scenario, but delivers it prior to entering Jerusalem (Luke 17:27). There is no scholarly consensus on why Luke places this scene prior to the Olivet Discourse in Jerusalem. Bock suggests that Luke had an additional source (besides Mark and Matthew) which had an eschatological discourse occurring outside of Jerusalem. In Bock's theory, Luke decided to use this source and omit the duplicate material found in the Olivet Discourse. See *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 1422–1423.

62 Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 1432.

The charge to "stay awake" is an eschatological metaphor with both spiritual and physical connotations. The disciples were to be *spiritually* sober, which involved *physically* refraining from the kind of eating and drinking that leads to debauchery. We find precedent in the OT, which strongly condemns eating and drinking in the context of idolatrous rituals (e.g., Exod 32:5–6) or overindulgence (e.g., Deut 21:20). The latter is often associated with other sins like violence and the neglect of the poor, as was the case with Israel's wicked leaders in Isaiah 5:

> **Woe to those who** rise early in the morning, that they may **run after strong drink**, who tarry late into the evening as **wine inflames them**! **They have lyre and harp, tambourine and flute and wine at their feasts, but they do not regard the deeds of the LORD**, or see the work of his hands. (Isa 5:11–12)

The *Assumption of Moses*, a Jewish work dated by R. H. Charles and others to around the first century CE, reveals the similar expectation of immoral eating and drinking in an eschatological context:

> And, in the time of these, **destructive and impious men shall rule . . . [they will be] filled with lawlessness and iniquity from sunrise to sunset: saying: "We shall have feastings and luxury, eating and drinking,** and we shall esteem ourselves as princes." And there shall come upon them a second visitation and wrath, such as has not befallen them from the beginning until that time.[63]

These texts illustrate the sort of eating and drinking Jesus had in view. He identified it as the behavior of the wicked at the time of the flood and later associated it with drunkenness, confirming it to be immoral in nature. This implies that the next pair of verbs he mentioned will also denote immoral behavior.

Marrying and giving in marriage. Jesus set this "marrying and giving in marriage" within a very specific context: the days of Noah before the flood. It is clearly an allusion to Genesis 6, which mentions the marriages that took place precisely because they were forbidden:

> When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, **the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose**. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." (Gen 6:1–3)

The connection between illicit marriages and the flood judgment was firmly

63 R. H. Charles, "The Assumption of Moses" (vol. 1 of *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament;* Berkeley: Apocryphile Press, 2004), 419–420. Brackets mine.

embedded in Israel's national consciousness. Ellen Robbins observes that sexual immorality as the primary cause of the flood "remains the dominant motif in later interpretation."[64] One example is the tradition found in the book of *Jubilees* (ca. 150 BC):

> **Noah . . . exhorted his sons to . . . guard their souls from fornication and uncleanness and all iniquity. For owing to these three things came the flood upon the earth, namely, owing to the fornication wherein the Watchers** against the law of their ordinances went a whoring after the daughters of men, and **took themselves wives of all which they chose**: and they made the beginning of uncleanness.[65]

Both the OT and most other Second Temple Jewish texts regard illicit marriages as a primary cause of the flood. Jesus' disciples therefore would have instantly recognized his reference to "marrying and giving in marriage" in the days of Noah as a warning against becoming entangled in sexual immorality.

This is corroborated by the fact that Jesus chose to connect the act of "marrying and giving in marriage" with the act of "eating and drinking" in particular. Luke Timothy Johnson remarks that "for ancient moral logic generally, incontinence with respect to food is integrally linked to incontinence with respect to sex."[66] And indeed, sexual immorality and drunkenness appear together in several NT passages that allude to the Olivet Discourse.

Peter compared his generation with the "days of Noah" (1 Pet 3:20–21) and cautioned believers to avoid "doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in *sensuality*, *passions*, *drunkenness*, *orgies*, *drinking parties* and lawless idolatry" (1 Pet 4:3). And Paul told the Roman church that "the hour has come for you to wake from sleep" (Rom 13:11), meaning that they should "walk properly as in the daytime, not in *orgies* and *drunkenness*, not in *sexual immorality* and *sensuality"* (Rom 13:12–13).

It seems apparent that the activities Jesus mentioned in the Olivet Discourse are a list of sinful behaviors which will be prevalent in the days leading up to his return (cf. Matt 24:12). This means that just a few short hours after he first used

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64 Ellen Robbins, "The Pleiades, Flood, and Jewish New Year," in *Ki Baruch Hu: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Judaic Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine.* Ed. R. Chazan, W. Hallo, and L. Schiffman, (Winona Lake 1999), 341. The question of whether the "sons of God" are human or angelic has long been debated among interpreters. However, the salient point is the universally recognized immoral nature of these antediluvian marriages.

65 R. H. Charles, "The Book of Jubilees," (*The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 24. Other examples include Judith 16:7; Tobit 4:12; 3 Maccabees 2:4; 1 Baruch 3:26; Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs 5:5–6; 1 Enoch 6–16; CD Geniza A Col. 2 lines 14–21.

66 Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews*, (The New Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 325.

the phrase "marrying and giving in marriage" in his confrontation with the Sadducees, he used the same phrase a second time to describe the *sexual immorality* that would occur at the end of the age.[67]

Conclusion

The foregoing evidence raises serious concerns about the traditional eternal celibacy interpretation of Jesus' reply to the Sadducees. We have found that this view did not arise until the second century, and that the church fathers who developed it had a distinct anti-marriage bias. More importantly, we also noted several indications that Jesus actually had a very different meaning in mind. Our next article will make the case that in fact he based his reply upon a specific Old Testament text uniquely suited to the situation at hand.

67 No less immoral is the list of activities in Luke 17:28–29, where the people of Sodom were "eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building" just before the city's demise. This passage predicts the judgment of Jerusalem, whose sins are often compared to those of Sodom in the OT. Thus Bock points to Isa 1:9–10—where Israel's leaders are derisively called "rulers of Sodom"—as a likely background text (*Luke 9:51–24:53*, p. 1433). In Isa 3:9 we are similarly told Israel's wicked leaders "proclaim their sin like Sodom" by committing a series of transgressions with unjustly gained wealth: they greedily purchase numerous fields, plant vineyards, acquire large houses, and participate in drunken feasting (Isa 5:8–12). In other words, they are "eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building." This supports Bock's conclusion that the verbs in Luke 17:26–27 are used in the *negative* sense, implicitly referring to the *excess and abuse* of the activities listed (*Luke 9:51–24:53*, p. 1433). See also William Loader, *Sexuality and the Jesus Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 141.

Resurrection and the Future of Marriage: Interpreting Luke 20:34–36 in its Hebraic Context (Part 2)

Sarah Giles
Jacksonville, Florida

Abstract

When the Sadducees challenged Jesus with their marriage riddle, he replied that "the sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage" (Luke 20:34–35). The church has long viewed this as evidence that resurrection marks the start of an eternally celibate existence.

Yet many vital questions surrounding this interpretation have remained largely unexplored. How did the early church fathers view the passage, and what interpretive lens shaped their conclusions? Does the rest of the biblical data say anything about resurrected celibates? Is the concept of *eternal celibacy* an accurate reading of Jesus' words in their original Hebraic context?

This two-part series will examine the historical record and the Hebrew Scriptures for answers to those questions. It will argue that Jesus' remarks regarding "marrying and giving in marriage" in fact fell prey to misinterpretation by the Hellenized church fathers, which in turn obscured the biblical portrait of the future of marriage.

In part 1, we will first trace the interpretive history of the passage and identify potential influences behind the popular reading. We will then examine three indications that Jesus actually had a very different meaning in mind. In part 2, we will present an alternative reading that proposes a specific Old Testament text as the background for his famous reply.

Our previous article examined historical and exegetical evidence that calls into question the traditional *eternal celibacy* reading of Jesus' reply to the Sadducees' marriage riddle. In this article, we will offer an alternative reading of the scene that better fits the evidence discussed. Before embarking on this journey, however,

it is worth noting that other interpreters have likewise challenged the traditional view with a diverse range of alternative conclusions.

Outi Lehtipuu, for example, argues that Luke 20:34–36 is actually a call to celibacy in the *present* age (though it presumably continues into the future age).[1] By contrast, Ben Witherington theorizes that since the text refers to the act of marrying but says nothing about existing marriages, Jesus was merely saying no *new* marriages would be formed in the future age (i.e., eternal celibacy only for the unmarried).[2] Dru Johnson finds no celibacy at all in the passage, suggesting that "marrying and giving in marriage" is emblematic of life as usual and is therefore simply a metaphor for spiritual sluggishness in the face of coming judgment.[3]

These disparate readings have in common the assumption that Jesus was referring to marriage in a general sense. However, our previous article demonstrated that he most likely had forbidden marriages in view, and that his answer was most likely rooted in the Old Testament Scriptures. Our approach will therefore differ from most other readings in that we will evaluate the context of the scene for indications of an OT background involving the prohibition of illicit marriage.

In particular, our goal will be to show that Luke's account expands upon the shorter versions of the conflict with the Sadducees in order to follow more closely a specific section of the book of Malachi that stands in the background. We will accomplish this task by considering two underappreciated elements of the scene—the marital sins of Jesus' antagonists and the series of temple confrontations leading up to his reply.

Considering the Audience: The Marital Sins of the Sadducees

The Sadducees' levirate marriage scenario is inhabited by seven righteous brothers "among us" (Matt 22:25). While this scenario may simply refer to the general Israelite populace, levirate marriage was rare in first century Judaism and found primarily among the aristocracy, which largely consisted of the wealthy Sadducean priests.[4]

It may be, then, that the Sadducees were casting *themselves* in the role of these seven righteous brothers who faithfully obey God's marital laws. But would such

1 Outi Lehtipuu, "No Sex in Heaven—Nor on Earth? Luke 20:27–38 as a Proof-Text in Early Christian Discourses on Resurrection and Asceticism," in Bodies, Borders, Believers: Ancient Texts and Present Conversations Essays in honor of Turid Karlsen Seim on her 70th Birthday (Eugene: Pickwick, 2015), 22–39. See also Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 82–86.

2 Ben Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 34.

3 Dru Johnson, "Q&A Series: Is There Marriage in Heaven?," July 22, 2022 in The Biblical Mind Podcast, podcast, MP3 audio, 28:11, https://hebraicthought.org/podcast/is-there-marriage-in-heaven-dru-johnson/.

4 Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*: *An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 93.

a self-characterization be in keeping with their actual marital practices? Let us consider the evidence.

The Sadducees set the stage for their riddle by pointing out that a man must "raise up seed" for his deceased brother by taking his brother's wife. This phrase specifically alludes to the levirate marriage mentioned in Gen 38:8, where Judah instructs his son Onan to "raise up seed" for Onan's deceased brother.[5] The irony in alluding to this scene is that Judah sired Onan through a *forbidden* marriage with a Canaanite woman (cf. Gen 24:2–4). So began a pattern that would plague Israel throughout her history, despite God's stern warning in the law:

> When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you . . . . **You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons**, for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. (Deut 7:1, 3–4a)

The prophets would rebuke Israel time and again for participating in such forbidden marriages. It reached a climax in the book of Malachi, which concludes the Old Testament with an echo of Judah's forbidden marriage to a pagan Canaanite, but this time it is Judah the *nation,* and specifically the *priests*, who contract forbidden marriages with pagan women (Mal 2:11).

The intertestamental period leading up to the time of Christ was no different. Martha Himmelfarb writes that "priestly families made up a large part of the Jerusalem aristocracy . . . and thus they were more likely than common people to intermarry as a means of cementing cordial relations with neighbors who were political allies or trading partners."[6] She continues:

> **Charges of fornication and improper marriages continue to figure prominently in condemnations of the people in the later Second Temple period** as in the Damascus Covenant (col. 4, lines 12–19) and the Psalms of Solomon (2:11–13[13–15]; 8:9–13[9–14]). **Such charges are also directed specifically against the priests**.[7]

Illegitimate marriages among Israel's leaders continued unabated into the time of Christ, when Herod the Great—an Edomite who professed Judaism—married

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5 Scholars widely recognize this allusion. See, e.g., I. Howard Marshall*, The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 739; Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 719.

6 Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish & Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 21.

7 Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 21.

no less than ten wives.[8] Two of these wives are woven into the genealogical history of the Sadducean priests.

At the beginning of his reign, Herod banished his first wife Doris from Jerusalem in order to wed the descendant of a long line of Sadducean priest-kings named Mariamne.[9] He later executed Mariamne for suspected treason and eventually sought to renew his alliance with the Jews through yet another marriage.

The Sadducean priest Simon Boethus was more than willing to oblige. In exchange for an appointment as High Priest, Boethus gave his daughter Mariamne II in marriage to the Edomite king[10] who had illegitimately separated from his first wife and executed his second.[11]

Following Herod's line into the next generation, we encounter the most prominent forbidden marriage among Israel's leaders at the time of Christ—that of Herod Antipas and Herodias. Herodias was the granddaughter of Mariamne I and thus also a descendant of multiple Sadducean priest-kings.

She was originally married to Herod Philip, but when Philip's half-brother Herod Antipas fell in love with her, she and Antipas deserted their spouses to marry each other. John the Baptist therefore rebuked Antipas for violating the Mosaic Law that forbade a man from marrying his brother's wife (Lev 18:16; 20:21). It was the real-life antithesis of the Sadducees' levirate marriage scenario, for it involved a man marrying his brother's wife *illicitly*.

This historical background gives us a better picture of what is taking place when the Sadducees challenge Jesus: they are seeking to trap him with a question about lawful marriage, when they themselves have a long history of *unlawful* marriages.[12]

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8 Josephus, *A.J.* 17.1.3.

9 Mariamne descended from the Hasmonean high priest John Hyrcanus, whom Josephus identified as a Sadducee (*A.J.* 10.6). Many subsequent priest-kings from the Hasmonean Dynasty were also Sadducees. For a full genealogy of Mariamne's descent, see Josephus, *B.J.* 1.

10 Marriage to an Edomite was forbidden (1 Kgs 11:1–2). While Herod claimed to be a Jewish convert, the authenticity of his claim is debatable given his flouting of the Torah's marriage laws and his accommodation of pagan culture.

11 Josephus, *A.J.* 15.9.3.

12 In addition, early Jewish tradition suggests that the family line of Sadducean high priest Joseph Caiaphas was involved in questionable levirate marriage practices. The Tosefta (ca. 200 CE) describes a situation in which a man takes two wives, the second of whom is related to his brother (e.g., his brother's daughter), and later dies without children. At issue is whether or not the surviving brother was then allowed to marry the "co-wife" (the second of the two wives, e.g., his own daughter) via the levirate marriage law. Evidently Shammai permitted such a marriage among priestly families, while Hillel did not. It seems this sort of marriage happened in the line of Caiaphas, as attested in t. Yev. 1:10: *"*I testify concerning the family of the house of Alubai from Bet Tzevaim and concerning the family of the house of Qayaphai [i.e., Caiaphas] from Bet Meqodech, that they are the sons of co-wives, yet among them were high priests who used to present offerings on the altar.*"* Brackets mine. See also Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus,* 93–94, 218.

Considering the Context: The Three Temple Disputations

The Sadducees' levirate marriage scenario is the last in a series of three hostile questions put to Jesus by his adversaries shortly before his crucifixion.[13] These debates—which all occur within the temple courts on the same day—are presented as a single unit that begins with the initial approach of the chief priests and scribes (Luke 20:1) and ends with Luke's observation that they no longer dared to ask Jesus any question (Luke 20:40).[14]

The obvious goal of each confrontation is to publicly discredit Jesus or trick him into saying something that can be used against him. But Jesus has his own goal to accomplish in the temple: to be "rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes" (Luke 9:22, cf. 17:25). This suggests that his replies will be calibrated to confront Jerusalem's leadership, in keeping with his scathing criticism of the temple operations the day before (Luke 19:45–46).

Jesus' opening move brings John the Baptist into a discussion that initially has nothing to do with the Baptizer (Luke 20:2), revealing much about the direction he will take in these controversies. We are reminded of his earlier rebuke of Israel's religious leaders for rejecting both himself *and* John (Luke 7:31–35), whose ministries were closely related. But our attention is also drawn to the primary background that accompanies the figure of John the Baptist—the book of Malachi.

Luke's gospel frequently makes connections between John the Baptist and the prophecies of Malachi.[15] And yet, little attention has been paid to this background in terms of the role it might play in the temple disputes. But when we consider each of the three related confrontations in more detail, we will find that the book of Malachi plays a significant role indeed.

Dispute #1: They Question the Source of His Authority (Luke 20:1–8)

The chief priests were no doubt surprised when Jesus did not defend his own heavenly commissioning but instead asked what they thought of John the Baptist. This response pressed them into a tight spot: if they denied John's divine appointment, they risked angering the masses who considered John a genuine prophet; if they affirmed it, they risked being rebuked for failing to believe John.

Jesus' counter-question effectively highlighted their rejection of John in his

13 A fourth question is mentioned in Mark and Matthew, but is distinct from the previous three in that it is a sincere inquiry by a sympathetic scribe who had observed Jesus' wise replies (Mark 12:28–34). See James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 370.

14 Robert Stein notes a similar construct in Mark 11:28–33. Robert L. Stein, *Mark* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 523. See also Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 710–11.

15 E.g., Luke 1:17, cf. Mal 4:5–6; Luke 3:17, cf. Mal 3:19; Luke 7:27, cf. Mal 3:1a.

role as the Mal 3:1 forerunner of the Messiah.[16] By reminding them of John's ministry, he evoked the Mal 3:1 warning that "the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple" to "purify the sons of Levi" (i.e., the priesthood).[17] At that moment, Jesus was quite literally standing in the temple precincts face to face with the corrupt "sons of Levi."

Dispute #2: They Ask if Paying Taxes to Caesar Violates Mosaic Law (Luke 20:21–22)

The spies of the chief priests next presented Jesus with a financial question designed to trap him no matter how he replied.[18] If he said that paying the tribute tax would violate Mosaic law, he would be committing sedition against Rome; if he said that it was compatible with Mosaic law, he would anger the Jews who resented Rome's tyranny.

The answer Jesus gave is both surprising and ingenious. Proclaiming them hypocrites, he asked them to identify the image and inscription found on a denarius. When they replied that it was Caesar's, he instructed them to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (Luke 20:25).[19]

In considering his reply, it should be kept in mind that the challenge regarded a financial aspect of Mosaic Law and was issued by a group of hypocritical priests whom Jesus had come to Jerusalem to indict. These things signal that his answer will be designed to expose their mistreatment of God's financial laws as outlined in the Torah.[20]

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16 See Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, (Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 29–30.

17 Many scholars consider Jesus' cleansing of the temple an evocation of Mal 3:1. See, e.g., Craig Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction*?" The Catholic Bible Quarterly* vol. 51 no. 2 (1989): 252. See also Evans' list of scholars who concur in note 53. The temple cleansing is also thought by many to be the impetus for this first dispute about Jesus' authority. We suggest the temple cleansing and the subsequent three temple controversies are all of a piece and so jointly evoke Mal 3:1.

18 Luke makes it clear that the chief priests and scribes were ultimately behind this challenge (20:19–20). Mark likewise emphasizes this in 12:13 (cf. 11:27).

19 Green notes that the verb *apodote,* translated *render*, is "better understood as 'to give back,' to 'return,' or even 'to pay what one owes.'" See *The Gospel of Luke*, 716. He cites these usages of the verb elsewhere in Luke: 4:20; 7:42; 10:35.

20 Interpreters often suggest Jesus was drawing a parallel that revolves around the image on the coin: just as a coin bearing Caesar's image should be rendered to Caesar, so also man, who bears God's image (Gen 1:27), should dedicate his whole self to God. However, the idea that Jesus offered a benign reply in this final showdown with his enemies is highly implausible. A more specific answer targeting his immediate audience seems the better option. The inscription on the denarius called Tiberius Caesar "son of divine Augustus" and identified him as "high priest" (Bock, *Gospel of Luke*, 1612); similarly, the Levitical priests were considered sons of God who reflected his image in a unique way and so were held to a very high standard (cf. Mal 1:6). Jesus' answer is therefore likely addressing their priestly duties in particular, which prominently included administering the tithes and offerings.

The chief priests certainly rendered unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's. As members of the Sanhedrin, they themselves were responsible for collecting the tribute tax at issue.[21] And they administered this task faithfully, for they knew it was only at Rome's good pleasure that they maintained power over the people.

But did they also faithfully "render unto God the things that are God's"? According to Jewish historian Josephus, the ruling first century priests instead took by force the portion of the tithes designated by law for the lower-tier priests and Levites.[22] Rabbinic tradition (70–200 CE) also reports that the Sadducean high priestly family of Annas refused to tithe their produce as obligated by Jewish law.[23]

Furthermore, the family of Annas profited handsomely from the money-changers that Jesus drove out of the temple for making God's house a "den of robbers" (Luke 19:45). It is therefore unsurprising that later Jewish tradition remembered the first century priesthood as those who "robbed the sacrifices of the Lord."[24]

A similar situation is recorded in Mal 3:8. Here the prophet charges the entire nation of Judah—and particularly the ruling priests—with "robbing God" of his "tithes and contributions" required by law to support the lower-tier priests and Levites.[25] Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown comment on the striking parallel between the actions of the ruling priests in these two eras:

> **The priests [of Malachi's day] . . . appropriated all the tithes, robbing the Levites of their due nine-tenths; as [the first century priests] did also, according to Josephus, before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus.** [They were] . . . robbing God of the services of the Levites, who were driven away by destitution.[26]

Malachi 3:3–5 expects such financial corruption to continue until the arrival of the Messiah. It is in this context that Jesus instructed his hypocritical antagonists to "render unto God the things that are God's." Joel Green aptly states that "Jesus in essence charges [his questioners], together with the Sanhedrin, with being

21 E. P. Sanders writes that "the Roman prefect or procurator had to maintain domestic tranquility and collect tribute. Both tasks he turned over to Jewish aristocrats, especially the priestly aristocrats, headed by the high priest." (E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 268. See also Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 712.

22 Josephus, *A.J.* 20.8.8. On this requirement in the law, see e.g., Num.18:30; 2 Chr 31:4.

23 Craig Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple and Evidence of Corruption," *Academia.edu*, https://www.academia.edu/11940525/Jesus_Action_in_the_Temple_and_Evidence_of_Corruption_English_, 327, 332. On this requirement in the law, see Deut 14:22–23; 18:4.

24 Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple and Evidence of Corruption," 327.

25 Peter A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 305. See also the parallel account in Neh 13:10–13.

26 A.R. Fausset, David Brown, and Robert Jamieson, *Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961), under Malachi 3:8. See also Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 304.

about the business of Rome rather than the business of God."[27] Moreover, Jesus turned this would-be trap into an opportunity to rebuke the priests for robbing God of the tithes and offerings, just as their forebears had done in Malachi's day.

Dispute #3: They Imply that the Resurrection Would Violate Mosaic Law (Luke 20:27–33).

As in the previous challenge, the Sadducees' levirate marriage scenario is ostensibly motivated by concern for Mosaic Law. But the question is disingenuous on two counts—in reality they *denied* the resurrection and were historically *unfaithful* to God's marriage laws.

In this regard they mirrored the priests of Malachi's day, who likewise taught false doctrine (Mal 2:8) and led the nation into forbidden marriages (Mal 2:11, cf. Neh 13:25–29). Significantly, Malachi 3 anticipates such sexual immorality among the priests at the time of the Messiah. The close parallel between Jesus' reply and the situation described in Malachi 1–3 is shown in the table below:

Luke 20:34–36	Malachi 1–3
And Jesus said to [the Sadducean priests], "The sons of this age	**A son honors his father,** and a servant his master. **If then I am a father, where is my honor?** And if I am a master, where is my fear? **says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name.** (Mal 1:6)
marry and are given in marriage,	**For Judah** has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD, which he loves, and **has married the daughter of a foreign god.**[28] (Mal 2:11)

27 Joel Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 715. Brackets mine.

28 Peter Verhoeff and others note that the expression "Judah has married the daughter of a foreign god" refers to the intermarriages with pagan women that took place among the priests and the people. See Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 275. Beth Glazier-McDonald explains why such intermarriages would have prompted Malachi's diatribe against divorce (brackets mine): "Desirous of upgrading their economic and social status, many [Jewish] men chose to marry women from wealthy foreign families. However, the relatives of these woman demanded, as a condition of the proposed marriage, that the men first divorce their Jewish wives so that the new spouse would not be neglected." See Beth Glazier-McDonald. 1987. "Intermarriage, Divorce, and the Bat-'el Nekar: Insights into Mal 2:10–16." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106, no. 4: 605.

Some scholars argue that this unusual expression is purely figurative marital imagery describing Judah's violation of her covenant with God and therefore says nothing about illicit marriages. But Glazier-McDonald notes that the attestation of intermarriage in Nehemiah and Ezra makes it unrealistic to suppose this problem did not exist in Malachi's time. She further points out that "any Israelite who intermarried violated the covenant obligations and severed his ties not only with his God but with his fellows as well" (p. 607). She therefore rightly discerns both a figurative and literal element to this expression. The nation had figuratively married a foreign god by engaging in syncretistic pagan practices which were very likely precipitated by literal intermarriages with pagan women.

Luke 20:34–36	Malachi 1–3
but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection of the dead	The LORD paid attention and heard them, and **a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name.** (Mal 3:16)
Neither marry nor are given in marriage	guard yourselves in your spirit, and **let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth [i.e., do not divorce your wives to marry foreign women].** (Mal 2:15b)
for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels	**My covenant with Levi was one of life** and peace . . . the lips of **a priest** should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he **is the messenger [*ma'lak*, lit. "angel"] of the LORD of hosts.** (Mal 2:5a,7)
and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection."	They [who fear God] shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts . . . and **I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him.** Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked. (Mal 3:17–18a)

Malachi identified two groups of sons co-existing in the nation of Judah, one legitimate and the other not. The false sons—identified as the priests—were those engaging in a litany of sins that prominently included forbidden marriages. The true sons were those living holy lives in faithfulness to God. Only the latter group was considered worthy of salvation on the day of judgment.[29]

Jesus formulated his reply to the Sadducean priests using precisely this theme. Thus, he constructed his answer in the present tense: the "sons of this age" are those presently contracting marriages that are by implication forbidden. The "sons of God" are those who do not contract such marriages. Only the latter group is considered worthy of the resurrection.

Interpreters often fail to notice that the status of being "equal to angels" is also in the present tense. David Aune confirms that "there is no manuscript or lectionary evidence known to me that replaces the present tense verb found in Luke

29 The day of judgement described in Mal 3:5, 3:17, and 4:1—later referred to in the gospel of John as the "last day"—was understood to entail resurrection. See John 6:40; 11:24.

20:36 and its Synoptic parallels . . . 'they *are* like angels' with the future verb . . . 'they *shall be* like angels.'"[30]

The notion of men being like the angels in the present age was a familiar concept to the priests whom Jesus addressed. In the OT, the phrase "angel of the LORD" (*ma'lak Yehovah*) usually refers to heavenly beings, but in two key instances it refers to God's divinely appointed *human* agents—the prophet (Hag 1:14) and the priest (Mal 2:7).

This title signified that these ordained human agents of God functioned in a manner similar to the holy angels. Crispin Fletcher-Lewis points out that "there are times in the liturgical drama when the priest may be said to be and to act as an angel. For example, when he brings revelation to the people from God."[31]

The Dead Sea Scroll *1QSb 4:24–26* even anticipates this duty continuing into the future age. The author of the scroll blesses the High Priest by saying, "May you abide forever as an Angel of the Presence in the holy habitation, to the glory of the God of hosts. May you serve in the temple of the kingdom of God, ordering destiny with the Angels of the Presence."[32]

Keil and Delitzsch confirm that in Mal 2:7, "the standing epithet for the angels as the heavenly messengers of God is here applied to the priests."[33] Crispin Fletcher-Lewis similarly emphasizes that in this text the "priest is God's angel (not merely his 'messenger')."[34] And Andrew Hill concurs: "Malachi affirms the complementary role of human and angelic agents in the mediation of Yahweh's word and will."[35]

Jesus himself highlighted this priest-angel comparison prior to his

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30 Aune, *Luke 20:34–36: A "Gnosticized" Logion of Jesus*, 126. Aune notes that later church fathers regularly misquoted Jesus by incorrectly making the verb future tense. Several biblical and extra-biblical texts do expect resurrected humans to possess a shining physical appearance like that of the angels (e.g., Dan 12:3; Matt 13:40–43; 4 Macc 17:5–6; Wis 3:7–8; 1 En 104:1–6; 2 Bar 51:1–11), but this glorified state is not said to entail a new asexual ontology. A rare contrast is the Jewish Platonist Philo, who opined that the deceased patriarchs have already become "equal to angels" since in his view they have shed their bodies to become permanently incorporeal and thus also by implication permanently celibate (*Sacr. 2.5–6*).

31 Crispin Fletcher-Louis, "On Angels, Men and Priests (Ben Sira, the Qumran Sabbath Songs and the Yom Kippur Avodah)" in *Gottesdienst Und Engel* (Eds. J. Frey & M. Jost; Oxford: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 24. Angel-human parallels are also found in 1 Sam 29:9; 2 Sam 14:20; and 2 Sam 19:27, which compare David to the angel of YHWH with respect to wisdom and righteousness.

32 Wise, Michael, Martin Abegg Jr., and Edward Cook, eds. *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*. Rev. ed. New York: HarperCollins, 2005.

33 Franz Delitzsch and Carl F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament Vol. 6* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1857). Under Malachi 2:5–7.

34 C. Fletcher-Louis, "Priests and Priesthood," Page 699 in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Edited by Joel B. Green. Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2013. Brackets mine. That Malachi 2:7 was understood this way in later Judaism can also be seen in texts such as Jubilees 31:14, which refers to Israel's priests as "angels of the presence." While most Bible translations render the word for angel (Heb=*ma'lak*, Grk=*angelos*) "messenger" in Mal 2:7, this is purely an editorial choice of the translators that unfortunately obscures the implicit angel-priest comparison.

35 Andrew E. Hill, *Malachi,* (The Anchor Bible, Yale University Press, 1998), 213.

confrontation with the Sadducees. In Luke 7:27, he identified John the Baptist as the "angel" (*angelos*) who "will prepare the way before you." Scholars widely recognize this verse as a combined allusion to Mal 3:1 and Exod 23:20.[36] In the latter verse, God promised to send an angel to "guard you on the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared."

By comparing John—who was both a prophet and of priestly descent—to an angelic being, Jesus affirmed his function as God's holy messenger. The Baptizer may not have served at the temple in an official capacity, but he fit the Mal 2:7 priestly mold by faithfully instructing the people in the way of righteousness to prepare them for the coming kingdom.[37] This mission would ultimately include speaking out against an illicit marriage at the cost of his own life.

Indeed, as God's angel-like messengers, the priests were to be models of holiness and purity. This required a personal fidelity to God's law, including his statutes regarding the institution of marriage.[38] But like their forebears in Malachi's day, the Sadducean priests did not adhere to God's marital laws and so failed to live out their holy calling.

Jesus therefore turned their own hypocritical marriage scenario against them. Using their reference to legitimate marriage as a pivot point, he flipped the riddle on its head by describing the *forbidden* "marrying and giving in marriage" condemned throughout the OT in places like Deut 7:3: "You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons."

He reminded them that not all priests are true sons of God. Genuine sons—with John the Baptist implicitly a prime example[39]—are like the angels in that they are faithful to God's statutes and so refrain from (or repent of) the forbidden marriages that had plagued the priesthood for centuries. These sons alone are

36 E.g., Joel Green observes that in this verse Jesus "interweaves" Mal 3:1 and Exod 23:20 (*Gospel of Luke*, 298). See also the discussion in Bock, *Gospel of Luke*, 673–74.

37 Mark Boda, citing Robert L. Webb, convincingly argues that John's baptism should be understood as "a priestly duty" which "functioned as a protest against perceived abuses by the temple establishment." See Mark J. Boda, "The Gospel According to Malachi," in *The Language and Literature of the New Testament* (ed. Lois Fuller Dow, Craig A. Evans, and Andrew W. Pitts; Leiden: Brill, 2016), 367.

38 The Dead Sea Scrolls actually connect the presence of angels with fruitful childbearing in the eschatological future. William Loader points out that scroll 4Q285 assumes "marriage, sexual relations, and procreation are a normal part of life in the future as in the present. . . . The rationale for guaranteeing such fruitfulness is, notably, that God and the holy angels will be with them, a reason not for abstinence, but for fertility!" See *The Dead Sea Scrolls on Sexuality: Attitudes Towards Sexuality in Sectarian and Related Literature at Qumran,* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 377.

39 Citing Vernon K. Robbins, Mark Boda notes that Luke may have been intentionally contrasting the priesthood of the Sadducee Annas with John's priestly baptismal ministry in Luke 3:2, where he juxtaposed "'the high priesthood of Annas' in Luke 3:2 with the introduction of 'John the son of Zacharias.'" See *The Gospel According to Malachi,* 266.

considered worthy to attain the resurrection of the just. Like their angelic counterparts, they are no longer subject to the dominion of death.[40]

The Book of Malachi as an Interpretive Grid

As we have seen, the book of Malachi provides a clarifying lens through which to view the temple controversies. It allows us to identify Jesus' answers as a series of rebukes in which the scene with the Sadducees finds its purpose: to emphasize the consummate spiritual and moral failure of the first century priesthood, and the resulting need for a fundamental change to that priesthood.

It is appropriate that he would allude to this portion of the Old Testament, since it anticipated the financial and marital sins of his antagonists with striking specificity. Furthermore, by highlighting the priest—angel comparison in Mal 2:7, Jesus exposed as fallacious the Sadducees' denial of the existence of such beings. They could hardly fulfill their charge to function like an angel of God when they did not even acknowledge angels existed. His answer made it clear that the Sadducees were on the wrong side of this doctrinal debate as well (cf. Acts 23:6–10).[41]

Moreover, the emphasis on the failures of the priesthood at this critical juncture in the narrative serves to underscore the importance of Jesus' imminent crucifixion, which would inaugurate a superior eternal priesthood. It is thus fitting that the temple controversies are immediately followed by Jesus' citation of Ps 110 (Luke 20:42–43), a passage that depicts the resurrected Messiah enthroned beside YHWH as the eternal High Priest. His death would become the means by which these corrupt sons of Levi could be purified and participate in the far greater "kingdom of priests" (Exod 19:6) that God had in mind all along.

Whose Wife Would She Be?

One naturally wonders what Jesus might have said about the fate of the unfortunate woman in this scenario if he had chosen to answer his opponents directly. Would

40 We are reminded of the tradition found in 1 En. 69:11 (ca. 200–150 BCE), which interprets Gen 1:26 as a reference to God and his heavenly court, such that "men were created exactly like the angels, to the intent that they should continue pure and righteous, and death, which destroys everything, could not have taken hold of them." See R. H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch* (Oxford, 1912) 139. In this text, being "like the angels" did not exclude Adam and Eve from marriage and procreation. Instead, it reflected God's intention that man should possess the same righteous *character* as the angels and so remain deathless as they are.

41 The false doctrine of the Sadducees also included the claim that God did not care about the affairs of man, and here we find another parallel with the priests of Malachi's day. Commenting on Malachi 2:17, Andrew Hill writes that the skeptics in Judah, led by the priests, "questioned [God's] concern for and presence in the affairs of community life." See *Malachi*, (The Anchor Bible. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 213. Josephus similarly writes of the Sadducees that "[they] suppose that God is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil; and they say, that to act what is good, or what is evil, is at men's own choice, and . . . that they may act as they please." See Josephus, *B.J.* 2.162–66.

she be free to marry any brother she wishes, since death severs the marriage bond completely (Rom 7:2–3)? Or would she be married to her first husband, since only that union did not involve the law of levirate marriage, which is made obsolete by the resurrection?

Equally difficult questions arise when we look beyond the confines of the Sadducees' riddle. Imagine a man who is widowed after fifty years of marriage and decides to remarry just a few years before the resurrection occurs. When his first wife arises, will he now have to choose between the two women, so that his current wife suddenly finds herself in competition with the first one? Or will he remain married to his current wife, so that his first wife is suddenly forced to find a new spouse after a lifetime of marriage to him?

Thorny situations like these are plentiful in a world where marriage exists alongside death. However, much as we would like an answer for every possible complication, Jesus was apparently content to leave this line of inquiry unexplored in the interest of making a more pressing point. We might say that he followed the example set by the OT, which affirms marriage in the future age but does not explain how it will play out in light of the resurrection.

The Parallel Passages

The parallel versions of this scene present an obvious challenge. A surface reading of these texts has led many to conclude that marriage will cease for the resurrected. But such a conclusion neglects the considerations discussed in our series that point to a very different meaning. We will therefore take a closer look at these passages, which give comparatively brief versions of Jesus' reply:

Mark 12:25	Matthew 22:30	Luke 20:34–36
For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.	For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.	The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

Matthew and Mark lack the explicit moral contrast found in Luke.[42] But even if the shorter accounts are closer to Jesus' original words, his meaning would have been apparent to an audience familiar with the Hebrew Bible. His replies to the first two challenges already pointed to Malachi's prophecies about the corrupt priesthood. His third reply stands out for its focus on being "like the angels." This likewise would have drawn attention to the book of Malachi (*mal'aki*), whose name means "my angel" and in which we are told that the priest is the "angel of the LORD."

While the phrases "when they rise from the dead" (Mark 12:25) and "in the resurrection" (Matt 22:30) appear to set his reply in a future context, the careful reader will notice that everything—including the resurrection—is set in the *present tense*. This stands in contrast with the future tense verb used by the Sadducees ("whose wife *will* she be"), and the future tense verbs used by Jesus shortly afterward to describe eschatological events that implicitly include the resurrection (Matt 24:30–31; Mark 13:26–27).[43]

The implication is that Jesus' reply is primarily focused upon the present *spiritual* aspect of the resurrection that must precede the future *physical* aspect. Jesus' reference to "the dead" in Mark 12:25 is not unlike his comment to the church in Sardis that "you have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead" (Rev 3:1), or his parable of the prodigal son in which the father says that "your brother was dead and is alive" (Luke 15:32).

The "dead" in these cases were very much alive from a physical standpoint, but considered dead from a spiritual standpoint. In other words, if they continued down their present path, they would ultimately experience the second death described in Rev 21:8. Those in such a state can only "rise from the dead" by first turning away from their sin in submission to the Holy Spirit—a spiritual resurrection in the present that will culminate in a physical resurrection in the future. We can discern both elements of the resurrection in John 5:24–25:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, **whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me** has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but **has passed from death to life**. Truly, truly, I say to you, **an hour is coming, and is now here**, **when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live**."

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42 Matthew does, however, include the theme of two morally contrasting sons (identified as the wicked chief priests versus the repentant tax collectors and prostitutes) in the first of the three temple controversies (Matt 21:28–32). He also includes Jesus' negative use of the expression "marrying and giving in marriage" in Matt 24:38. Matthew and Mark both include Jesus' Mal 3:1/ Exod 23:20 comparison between John the Baptist and the angel of YHWH.

43 The present tense can, of course, be used to describe a future event in Greek. But here the usage stands out, given the presence of the future tense verbs used to describe the *same* event in the surrounding context.

Stefanos Mihalios explains that "John probably sees both the spiritual and physical aspects of the final resurrection as two sides of the same coin."[44] Understood in this light, the phrases "when they rise from the dead" (Mark 12:25) and "in the resurrection" (Matt 22:30) begin a pointed rebuke of the spiritually dead Sadducees. By setting the resurrection in the present tense, Jesus made it clear that he preached a resurrection rooted in repentance, which therefore must begin in the present age before it is completed in the future age by the raising of the body.

Luke's expansion of the scene inserts the idea of two contrasting groups of sons in the present age, thereby aligning it more closely with the indictment of the priests in Malachi. Interestingly, he also omits the parable of the two sons, which appears in the first temple controversy in Matthew's account (Matt 21:28–32). That parable describes two morally opposite groups of sons, with the wicked sons identified as the chief priests. Could it be that Luke used this material to expand the shorter version of Jesus' reply to the Sadducees in the third controversy?

His expansion also may have been influenced by the teaching of Paul, who was his ministry companion. In Pauline thought we find the concept of two morally opposite groups of sons co-existing in the present age (as highlighted in Luke's account) merged with the idea that the righteous are already raised from the dead in a spiritual sense that anticipates their future bodily resurrection (as emphasized in Matthew and Mark's accounts):[45]

> For you may be sure of this, that **everyone who is sexually immoral** or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), **has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God**. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for **because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience**. **Therefore do not become partners with them**; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. **Walk as children of light** . . . for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "**Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead**, and Christ will shine on you." (Eph 5:5–8, 14)[46]

But regardless of how Luke came to expand on the scene with the Sadducees, the expansion itself is intriguing. Perhaps it reflects a concern that the Gentiles

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44 Mihalios, *The Danielic Eschatological Hour in the Johannine Literature*, 113.

45 Scholarship is divided on the authorship of Ephesians. We follow here the traditional view that Paul authored the book. For a defense of this view, see Harold Hoener, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 2–61. For more on the present age aspect of the resurrection, see also Eph 2:1–6; Rom 6:4–11; 7:4–5; Col 2:13; 3:1–5.

46 The "children of light" in Eph. 5:8 are the "sons" referred to in Eph. 1:5. Steven Baugh notes that "the 'children of light' contrasts with the actions of the 'sons of disobedience' and their 'fruitless' works." See *Ephesians*, 429.

among his audience—steeped as they were in Greek ideas about a future incorporeal existence—would misunderstand Jesus' point in the shorter version. Given the interpretation that later arose among Platonically-influenced theologians, such a concern would not have been misplaced.

Conclusion

Despite its long-standing dominance, the eternal celibacy view of Jesus' reply to the Sadducees appears to be fatally flawed. One struggles to find even a modicum of support for this reading in the Old Testament Scriptures Jesus cited or the New Testament Scriptures that later followed. Moreover, rooted in the Platonic asceticism that permeated the second century church, it ultimately fails to consider Jesus' remarks in their native Hebraic context.

The reading we have proposed seeks to remedy these significant shortcomings in several ways. First, it identifies how certain key phrases in his reply are used elsewhere in Scripture. Second, it draws upon the background of his antagonists. And finally, it considers both the surrounding context of the temple disputations and the OT expectation that the Messiah will judge an enduringly corrupt priesthood for sins that include illicit marriage.

The picture that emerges is one in which Jesus turns the tables on his hypocritical opponents. The corrupt priests seek to disprove the resurrection of the dead using a marriage scenario that belies their own marital misdeeds. In response, Jesus alludes to Malachi's indictment of the priests for their forbidden marriages, thereby warning the Sadducees that such marriages would exclude them from the very resurrection they so foolishly denied.

Appendix A: Targum Jonathan

The Targum Jonathan on the Prophets is an interpretive Aramaic paraphrase of the Old Testament prophetic writings. Aramaic was the language of the masses in the first century, and consequently this translation was read aloud in the Jewish synagogues alongside the original Hebrew.

Targum Jonathan's rendering of Zechariah 3, dating from the late first century to the early second century CE,[47] holds particular significance for our study. In this scene, the high priest Joshua stands before the angel of the Lord in filthy rags, while Satan accuses him of being unfit to serve in the temple.

This priestly character was understood to be the high priest Joshua ben Jozadak, whose sons had married forbidden women shortly after returning from the

47 On the dating, see note 10 in Marvin A. Sweeney, "Targum Jonathan's Reading of Zechariah 3: A Gateway For the Palace" in *Tradition in Transition: Haggai and Zechariah 1–8 in the Trajectory of Hebrew Theology,* Eds. Mark J. Boda & Michael H. Floyd; New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 273–74. See also Paul V. M. Flesher and Bruce Chilton, *The Targums: A Critical Introduction* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 220–21.

Babylonian exile (Ezra 10:18).[48] He is instructed to dissolve all of these illicit unions, to marry a wife fit for priests, and to henceforth walk in righteousness, that he may be deemed fit for the resurrection which would allow him to serve in God's temple among the angels. Targum scholar Marvin A. Sweeney's translation of the Targum on Zech 3:1–7 is worth citing in full:

> (1) And he showed me Joshua, the High Priest, before the angel of YHWH, and the Sinner was standing by his right hand to accuse him. (2) And YHWH said to the Sinner, "YHWH rebukes you, O Sinner, and YHWH rebukes you, the One who chooses to cause His Shekhinah to dwell in Jerusalem! Is this not a firebrand saved from the fire place? **(3) And Joshua had sons who had married to themselves wives who were not fit for the priests, and he was standing before the angel. (4) And [the angel] answered and said to those who were serving before him, saying,** "**Speak to him, that he may drive out the wives who are not fit for the priest from his house.**" **And [the angel] said to him, "Behold! For I have removed from you your sins, and I have dressed you in righteous deeds." (5) And he said, "Place a pure turban upon his head!" And they placed a pure turban upon his head, and they caused him to marry a wife who was fit for the priests**. And the angel of YHWH was standing by. (6) And the angel of YHWH invested Joshua, saying, **(7) "Thus says YHWH Seba'ot, 'If the paths which are good before me you walk, and if the charge of My Memra you execute, then you shall govern those who serve in the house of My Sanctuary, and you shall oversee my courts, and at the resurrection of the dead, I will resurrect you, and I will grant to you feet walking between these seraphim**.'"[49]

Here the targumist emphasizes the gravity of the marital sins of the priests, warning that forbidden marriages would prevent them from participating in the resurrection to serve in God's temple among the angels (described here as seraphim). On the other hand, God-sanctioned marriage is explicitly endorsed and we are given no indication that such marriages will cease at the resurrection.

This Hebraic interpretive lens brings the words of Jesus to the corrupt Sadducean priests into sharp focus. In denouncing the illicit marriages that rendered them unworthy of the resurrection, Jesus was following a well-established pattern

48 This scene would have taken place a few decades before Malachi's ministry, and was likely the origin of the pattern of illicit marriages among the Second Temple priests that Malachi would later condemn.

49 Sweeney, *Tradition in Transition*, 279.

of prophetic rebuke. His specific warning was not new territory, for it was found not only in the pages of the Hebrew Bible but also in the Rabbinic Judaism of his own day.

Appendix B: The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs

The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (ca. 200 BCE–200 CE) is a work typically categorized as part of the Jewish pseudepigrapha. This categorization is not without debate; James VanderKam points out that scholars have identified a number of passages within the work that are obviously Christian in nature.[50] But given the relatively small number of such passages, VanderKam and others conclude it is likely a Jewish work with some Christian additions.

Its relevance to our study is found within the Testament of Levi. In chapters 14–15 of this work, Jacob's son Levi purportedly gives a prophecy to his own sons about the eschatological fate of the priesthood. He looks ahead to the future destruction of the temple and claims that the priests will bring about this calamity due to a specific set of sins:

> 14:1 Therefore, my children, **I have learnt that at the end of the ages ye will transgress against the Lord**, **stretching out hands to wickedness [against Him]; and to all the Gentiles shall ye become a scorn. 2 For our father Israel is pure from the transgressions of the chief priests [who shall lay their hands upon the Saviour of the world].** 3 For as the heaven is purer in the Lord's sight than the earth, so also be ye, the lights of Israel, (purer) than all the Gentiles. 4 But if ye be darkened through transgressions, what, therefore, will all the Gentiles do living in blindness? Yea, ye shall bring a curse upon our race, because **the light of the law which was given for to lighten every man this ye desire to destroy by teaching commandments contrary to the ordinances of God. 5 The offerings of the Lord ye shall rob, and from His portion shall ye steal choice portions, eating (them) contemptuously with harlots**. 6 And out of covetousness ye shall teach the commandments of the Lord, **wedded women shall ye pollute, and the virgins of Jerusalem shall ye defile; and with harlots and adulteresses shall ye be joined, and the daughters of the Gentiles shall ye take to wife, purifying them with an unlawful purification; and your union shall be like unto Sodom and Gomorrah. . . . 15:1 Therefore the temple, which the Lord shall choose, shall be**

50 James C. VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism,* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 100–101.

> **laid waste through your uncleanness**, and ye shall be captives throughout all nations.

In this translation by R. H. Charles, he places in brackets what he considers to be two obvious Christian interpolations and presumes that the remaining text is of older Jewish origin. Marinus DeJonge is less confident about the Jewish origin of T. Levi 14–15, given that it has no detectable parallel in the Dead Sea Scrolls, while other portions of T. Levi do.[51]

But whether we are dealing with a Jewish text that was later modified by a second century Christian, or a text that was written entirely by a second century Christian, we have before us an early text whose author(s) saw a relationship between the sins of the first century priests and the fall of the temple.

The specific sins mentioned—robbing God of the tithes, contracting illicit marriages, and teaching false doctrine—clearly match the sins of the priesthood listed in Malachi, which were expected to continue to the time of the Messiah (Mal 3:1–5). Other Jewish pseudepigraphal works such as the Psalms of Solomon (ca. 49–69 CE) also pick up on this theme by highlighting the financial and marital sins of the priests (e.g., Pss 2:11–15; 8:11–12), but T. Levi is explicit in connecting them with the destruction of the Second Temple.

We suggest the synoptic gospel authors similarly portrayed the series of confrontations between Jesus and the temple leadership at the close of his ministry as the occasion on which he indicted the priesthood for the sins listed in Malachi, in anticipation of the temple's eventual downfall.

51 Marinus de Jonge, "Levi in *Aramaic Levi* and in the *Testament of Levi*," http://orion.mscc.huji.ac.il/symposiums/2nd/papers/deJonge97.html.

BOOK REVIEWS

Travis Dickinson. *Logic and the Way of Jesus: Thinking Critically and Christianly.* Nashville: B&H Academic, 2022. Pp. xii + 367. ISBN 978-1-5359-8327-3. $37.93 (CDN) $21.99 (USD) paper.

In an age of information saturation, the regenerate are constantly assailed with different ideas demanding them to make an intellectual decision. Travis Dickinson in *Logic and the Way of Jesus* provides some much-needed clarity by guiding Christians through principles of critical thought which find their expression (and motivation) in Jesus. Dickinson approaches this task by: (I) demonstrating the tremendous need for critical Christian thought (5), (II) encouraging readers to pursue critical thinking in the light of Jesus (31–52), and (III) delineating key stratagems of deductive/non-deductive standards of argumentation (119–232).

Dickinson begins (Chapters 1–3) by laying a clear foundation for critical thinking. This is primarily done through examining the Church's intellectual impact and resulting contemporary cultural erosion (1–8), Scriptural imperatives relating to our intellectual pursuit of God (17), Christ's example of using logic/critical thinking (36–51), and, lastly, how these points can together lead to a thoughtful worldview so as to not be "accidental Christians" (75). Chapter 4 is both a primer to logic and an argument for God through the existence of logic principles (87).

In chapter 5, Dickinson defines critical thinking as, "Thoughtful evaluation of ideas and the reasons we have for holding those ideas" (101). Dickinson then explores the three principles of logic one uses when thinking rationally: (1) the Law of Identity, (2) the Law of Excluded Middle, and (3) the Law of Non-Contradiction (107–109). Dickinson also covers the interpretive tools needed to parse logical statements from mere prose (109–15). Chapters 6–8 cover validity, soundness, and other principles related to deductive logic (131–38) and the function of truth tables (155–72). The section on Categorical Logic (173–98) includes Venn Diagrams, thereby representing such statements in a helpful visual fashion.[1]

Chapters 9 and 10 explain non-deductive standards of argument and the scientific method, i.e., abductive reasoning (224). Chapter 11 includes definitions of

1 While other works, such as David Carl Wilson's *A Guide to Good Reasoning: Cultivating Intellectual Virtues* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Libraries, 2020), for example, follow a similar format to this, Dickinson's text is far clearer as he covers both complex and simple arguments that use either Universal or Particular statements or a combination thereof.

evidence, what counts as proper reasoning, various kinds of evidence(s), and how these contribute to background knowledge (246).[2] Chapters 13 and 14 delineate a whopping 25 (!) formal/informal fallacies (251–86) alongside a detailed outline of intellectual virtues (287–300). Dickinson concludes with this motivator: "Thinking well and critically is a crucial part of loving and knowing God" (309). A useful appendix of "practice problems" and a subject index round things out.

Dickinson has done an immense service to the Christian community at large with this work. While, perhaps, similar to other volumes, such as Moreland's *Love Your God with All Your Mind* (Navigators, 2012) and Holland Jr. and Forrest's *Good Arguments: Making Your Case in Writing and Public Speaking* (Baker, 2017), for instance, Dickinson makes a novel contribution by focusing on Christ as our example for the intellectual life prior to discussing the merits of critical thinking. Dickinson's approach of essentially surveying all core aspects of logic/critical thought is also highly beneficial as readers will be well-equipped to handle the many questions arising from living in a post-Christian cultural environment. Similarly, the author's superb handling of the Scientific Method (and the theoretical virtues involved therein) empowers Christians to cogently engage a society increasingly enamored with scientific pursuit.[3]

Typographically speaking, *Logic and the Way of Jesus* is easy to appreciate with ample margins, sufficient white space, and effective use of boldface type. Dickinson also writes well, pitching things just right for the uninitiated. The length of the book itself (367 pages plus!), however, may be off-putting for some students and instructors.

To critique, *Logic and the Way of Jesus* unequivocally accomplishes its primary aims, i.e., to encourage Christians to use reason and evidence in the development of their beliefs with Christ as their model and to positively influence the culture around them with Christian intellect (back cover). That said, it is not without fault. While (fortunately) quite rare, Dickinson's definitions were, at times,

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2 Dickinson takes an Evidentialist position regarding knowledge. He defines that view as follows: "The thesis of *evidentialism* says that one is not rational in believing some claim unless one has good evidence for that claim." (236, italics original). The author's adherence to such a position can be seen through his definition of 'intellectual assurance,' such as when he states, "if one has sufficiently good evidence for a belief, then one has intellectual assurance for that belief" (237). By defining evidence this broadly, Dickinson successfully avoids the false charge of putting justification for the beliefs of the average churchgoer out of their reach. Given, however, that his view makes evidence "easy to come by" (214) and that belief in God is (in Dickinson's mind) a "belief of consequence" (242) such that we should not "settle for easy" (242) it is unclear what actually has been gained. Cf. John DePoe, "What's (Not) Wrong with Evidentialism?" *Global Journal of Classical Theology* 13 (2016): 2–7.

3 Some 'classic' texts that also leverage this highly-effective approach include Richard Swinburne, *Is There a God?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) and J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and Against the Existence of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983). Another contemporary voice in the debate is Gerrit F. Lewis and Luke A. Barnes, *A Fortunate Universe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

somewhat ambiguous, thus impeding understanding. Some examples include his discussion of reason being the basis for our choice to put faith in Christ (21). To be clear, Dickinson fails to sufficiently delineate between good and bad reasons (aside from intuitive considerations such as believing in Christ due to fear of Hell) until chapter 11 where the nature of evidence and intellectual assurance is made clear. This unfortunate oversight is unlikely to have helped the reader track the author's (main) argument(s).

Other challenges include certain formatting issues. These include such things as the truth tables being broken-up on to multiple pages (see, for example, 170–71) and the lack of clear section headers to organize and differentiate the author's progression of thought. This problem is compounded by the sheer volume (and diversity!) of content. Would it not have behooved Dickinson to have leveraged a formal, overarching rubric to categorize and present his content?

Another quibble involves the choice to cover Categorical Logic rather than Predicate or Second-Order Logic. While the former is easier to translate into prose given the lack of symbols, quantifiers, etc., it is reasonable to argue that a small dive into the latter would have significantly assisted readers in their critical thinking journeys.

In conclusion, Travis Dickinson's *Logic and the Way of Jesus: Thinking Critically and Christianly* is not only an ideal text for introductory courses on critical thinking but also a great book for Christians seeking to become more intellectually responsible. Its primary users will likely include Bible college/Christian university/seminary students, certain Christian educators, pastors, and, one hopes, the invested lay person. For anyone interested in becoming salt and light in a culture gone stale, *Logic and the Way of Jesus* is a breath of fresh air. Highly recommended.

Brett Surbey
Sexsmith, Alberta

Bruce W. Longenecker. *In Stone and Story: Early Christianity in the Roman World*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020. Pp. 292. ISBN 978-1-5409-6067-2. $35.00 (USD) paper.

The last decade has seen several NT scholars write works in a variety of genres to help students and other non-specialists understand the historical background of the earliest Christian communities and the texts they produced.[1] To this body of literature, Bruce Longenecker, professor of religion at Baylor University, provides

1 See especially Craig S. Keener's *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, second edition (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014) and the seven-volume *Week in the Life* series of historical novellas set in the NT era (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012-2020).

a unique contribution in light of recent archaeological excavation at the Vesuvian towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

As a historian of early Christianity well acquainted with these historic sites,[2] Longenecker seeks to relate "texts of the early Jesus-movement to selected Vesuvian resources" in order to "explore ways in which Jesus-devotion was getting a foothold within that world" (1). Not intending to propagate a new historical thesis, Longenecker rather showcases points where "the world of the Vesuvian towns intersects with themes and issues evident in New Testament texts" (24).

Longenecker's expansive text is spread across nineteen chapters, divided into four parts. In the first part ("Protocols of Engagement") he introduces the basic facts of the Vesuvian towns (including their tragic end), the importance of honour and "status capture" in the Roman world, and other relevant information dealing with the vision of his book.

The second part ("Protocols of Popular Devotion") deals with the intersection between religious and political devotion in Pompeii, the larger Roman world and the NT texts. The place of temples, popular deities, the imperial cult, mystery religions, Roman imperial ideology, Epicurean philosophy and other related topics are all illuminated.

In the third part ("Protocols of Social Prominence") Longenecker details such diverse topics as the inner workings of politics, literacy, gladiator spectacles, law-courts, and business. Again, beginning with concrete archaeological data from Pompeii, the author then broadens his view to the larger Roman world. With this foundation set, Longenecker presents a variety of NT texts that relate to how the early Jesus-devotees accommodated, differed, or contextualised the larger cultural attitudes towards these matters.

Part four ("Protocols of Household Effectiveness") similarly discusses the topics of slavery, family order, household worship, spiritual powers in daily life, and memorials for the dead. Longenecker extensively discusses the way that slaves in Pompeii and the larger Roman world were used for the personal sexual gratification of their masters and for the pursuit of sex trade business interests. Subsequently he explores how the early Christians may have re-imagined and revised the master-slave relationship in light of texts like Galatians 3:28 and Revelation 18:13.

Longenecker concludes *In Stone and Story* by briefly discussing important topics that did not arise from the Vesuvian archaeological data but were important for the early Jesus-movement (their relationship with the Jews, Stoics, and the destitute). The book also includes a helpful appendix of further questions to consider that probe more NT texts in light of the historic data presented in each

2 See his *The Crosses of Pompeii: Jesus-Devotion in a Vesuvian Town* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016).

chapter. Although there are no footnotes offered in the main body, there is an extensive reading list organised by chapter that directs the still curious reader to a plethora of relevant materials.

While focusing mostly on archaeological data from Pompeii, Longenecker also helpfully includes many quotes from ancient authors like Cicero, Epicurus, Plutarch, and Seneca which augment his purposes. These two approaches ("Stone [archaeology] and Story [texts]") are proven to be complementary in presenting the historic data in a memorable and engaging way. Longenecker's "tour" through Pompeii complete with reoccurring historic "characters," makes the literary data (both NT and other) become more concrete and relatable to the experiences of daily Greco-Roman life. His inclusion of Pompeii graffiti was especially constructive in showcasing perspectives from the lower socio-economic classes, whose voices have not been preserved in historical texts.

Longenecker further includes valuable timelines that trace the composition of NT texts, and events regarding the Vesuvian towns (35–36). Another beneficial feature of the book is that nearly every spread contains at least one colour image of Pompeii sites, inscriptions, graffiti, and frescoes relevant to the text, most of them photographed by Longenecker himself.

Longenecker undoubtedly fulfills his goal of "assembling a helpfully creative resource for interested learners" (24). With great skill he smoothly weaves together concrete historical data from Pompeii with writings from the Greco-Roman world, culminating in engaging discussions of the early Christian communities and NT texts. For example, an understanding of the Egyptian Isis cult (which alongside Christianity rapidly grew in the first century) forces the reader to consider anew the Gospel of John's familiar themes of eternal life, resurrection, and living water. Likewise, understanding the ubiquitous belief in (and fear of) spiritual forces in the first century Greco-Roman world helps the reader to see in new light Paul's imperative for Christians to bless and not curse their persecutors (Rom 12:14). Longenecker engages with almost every NT book, giving the reader a myriad of thought-provoking connections to consider.

Longenecker's understanding of the NT documents and timeline of early Christianity understandably guides his analysis, which becomes clear throughout the book. For example, his conclusion that Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Timothy, (parts of) 2 Timothy, Titus and possibly 2 Thessalonians were written by disciples of Paul in the 80s–90s CE; and that the gospels, Acts and non-Pauline epistles were written between 70–130 CE, influences his discussion of the historical development of Christianity throughout the book. These judgements and their implications (understanding a loss of eschatological urgency and the gradual accommodation to Greco-Roman culture) will not sit well with some readers.

Despite many of Paul's actions and statements running contrary to the grain of

Greco-Roman culture (in regards to marriage, his support of women's active role in the Christian community) Longenecker interestingly and consistently describes Paul as a "relatively conservative Roman citizen" (78). For example, he concludes that "the overturning of slave status was a rather peripheral matter in Paul's strategic thinking about the advancement of his mission" (192) and that his "radical inversion of social relationships" was mostly contained to the gatherings of the "Jesus-devotees" (191).

On a related note, Longenecker is most adept at demonstrating how other NT authors differed "in their assessment of how the novelty of their worldview was to take shape in concrete from in their first-century world" (250). For instance, he gives a fair amount of discussion to the author of Revelation's more radical attitudes towards the economy and slavery.

Whether one agrees with Longenecker's views or not, his unique and engaging tour through the Vesuvian towns in conversation with NT texts is an incredibly instructive resource for understanding the world of the NT. *In Stone and Story* would be a well-suited supplemental text for NT introductory classes and is highly recommended for any non-specialist interested in Pompeii and/or the NT.

Jonathan Tysick
Wycliffe College, University of Toronto

Edward Cook. *Biblical Aramaic and Related Dialects: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. 416. ISBN 978-1-1087-1448-8. $51.43 (CDN) $44.99 (USD) paper.

Aramaic is a language of central importance for a close study of the ancient world (1). Aramaic is also indispensable for effective exegesis and interpretation of Scripture. While its influence is keenly felt in the Greek text of the New Testament, the basis of the grammatical description in Edward Cook's book, *Biblical Aramaic and Related Dialects: An Introduction*, is primarily the Aramaic sections of the canonical books of Ezra and Daniel (being aware that Aramaic also appears in Jeremiah 10:11 and Genesis 31:47). Cook states: "this introductory grammar will bring students to a reading knowledge of these important texts, as well as others written in the same dialects, and enable them to move forward, well equipped, to more advanced study" (ix). While Cook ably meets this modest objective, it remains prudent to outline how this work distinguishes itself from the plethora of other volumes currently flooding the market. Prior to offering a full-scale critique, however, a brief overview of the text, as a whole, is in order.

Biblical Aramaic and Related Dialects is divided into two main parts: (1) the grammar and (2) the readings. In the first chapter, "Aramaic and Its Dialects," Cook explains his understanding of the beginnings of Aramaic, its different stages

throughout history (more on this later on), and various artifacts comprised of Aramaic, such as, for example, the Elephantine Papyri, the Arshama Letters, and the Hermopolis Papyri, alongside different documents found in the Qumran area, such as the Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen) and the Targum of Job (11QtgJob).

A handy annotated "tools for research" section—comprised of Bibliography Resources, Text Editions, Dictionaries and other Lexical Resources, Grammars, and Concordances—concludes this section (16–18). Despite its usefulness, would that the author had showcased the immense help for students provided by a number of other guides to Aramaic which (seemingly) were overlooked. John A. Cook's *Aramaic Ezra and Daniel: A Handbook of the Aramaic Text* (Baylor University Press, 2019), for instance, is an indispensable resource for all serious scholars and Scott N. Callaham's *Biblical Aramaic for Biblical Interpreters: A Parallel Hebrew-Aramaic Handbook* (Glossa House, 2021) is also *sui generis* vis à vis his unique method of direct comparison/contrast with (biblical) Hebrew. At the risk of belaboring things, James A. Swanson's *A Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Aramaic (Old Testament)* 2nd ed (Logos Research Systems, 2001) remains the only lexicon of its kind for biblical Aramaic but (regrettably) it, too, was glossed over by Cook. Lastly, briefly highlighting the most helpful original language commentaries would surely have benefited the reader. Alas, Edward Cook fails to highlight any commentaries whatsoever within his "tools for research." Why?

Concerning the grammar itself (chs. 2–17), which constitutes the bulk/main portion of the book, Cook begins with the basics (orthography, phonology, etc.) prior to delineating the fundamental elements of nouns, adjectives, prepositions, numerals and the like. With respect to verbs, which the author judiciously labels as the suffix and prefix conjugations as opposed to the linguistically inaccurate "imperfect" and "perfect," respectively, Cook thoroughly covers tense, aspect, and mood (TAM) alongside valence, voice, and *Aktionsart*, that is, "type of action." While, perhaps, not as pedagogically sensitive and/or intuitive for the uninitiated reader as using the traditional names, i.e., Pəʿal, Pəʿil, (H)ithpəʿel, Paʿel, (H)ithpaʿel Haphʿel (or Aphʿel), Hophʿal, and (H)ittaphʿel, *Biblical Aramaic and Related Dialects* leverages alphabetic abbreviations (letters) for all stems, namely G (*Grundstamm*), Gp, tG, D, tD, C, Cp, and tC.

The last three chapters of the grammar proper (Ch. 15: Clause Combining: Coordination, Ch. 16: Clause Combining: Subordination, and Ch. 17: Discourse Markers (Half-Conjunctions)) warrant extended discussion. Cook's analysis is not only markedly superior to anything else on the market but also quite nuanced. As such, readers will profit from an especially close read here.

For clause combining (see p. 243) Cook notes that coordination is "to be distinguished from the mere succession of clauses; it refers to clauses that are joined

with some kind of cohesion between them, whether semantic (e.g., dealing with the same events or entities, or the same causal forces) or structural (with, e.g., pronominal reference, parallel syntax)." On subordination, i.e., the linking of a main clause to a second, dependent clause which modifies the main clause adverbially, Cook cogently reports: "The linking is usually marked by a subordinating conjunction, although in some cases a coordinating conjunction is used, and the subordination is semantic rather than syntactic" (247). Lastly, Cook (astutely) understands that discourse markers, or half-conjunctions, "do not link two sentences together. Rather, they link a sentence to a preceding discourse, logically or temporally" and that "unlike 'full' coordinating conjunctions, they do not mark the B-clause of coordinated pairs" (261). To conclude, Cook's descriptions of these grammatical functions are truly outstanding in their depth and specificity.[1]

Ch. 18. "Reading Guide for Biblical Aramaic and Related Dialects" includes portions of biblical text, namely Daniel 3, 4, 6, 7, and Ezra 4:24–5:17, selections from the Dead Sea Scrolls, such as the Targum Job from Qumran (cols. 37–38) and the Genesis Apocryphon (cols. 21:23–22:26) alongside certain papyrus discoveries from ancient Egypt, such as the Seventeen Proverbs of Ahiqar and the Petition to Rebuild the Temple in Elephantine (TAD A4.7). Cook maintains: "The guide is meant to direct the reader through an inductive reading of Biblical Aramaic. For most effective use, consult the indicated sections of the textbook whenever they are mentioned, even if it seems repetitive. Repetition is the point" (264). This is a fair assessment as indicated by my own teaching experience and Second Language Acquisitions research (among other things).[2]

Biblical Aramaic and Related Dialects rounds off with: (A) a set of two appendices comprised of extensive, clear, paradigm charts (355–63) and a reproduction of the Genesis Apocryphon (cols. 21:23–22:26) with the added (hypothetical) Tiberian Vocalization (364–65), (B) a complete glossary (which includes all of biblical Aramaic, including passages not included in the guided readings) as well

1 Do note, however, that there is some not insignificant discussion concerning the *waw* consecutive with *yiqtol* that Cook fails to delineate for his readers, the gist of which may be adequately summed up in the following. See, J. A. Emerton, "New Evidence for the Use of *Waw* Consecutive in Aramaic," *Vetus Testamentum* 44 (1994) 255–58; Victor Sasson, "Some Observations on the Use and Original Purpose of the *Waw* Consecutive in Old Aramaic and Biblical Hebrew," *Vetus Testamentum* 47 (1997) 111–27; Takamitsu Muraoka and Max Rogland, "The *Waw* Consecutive in Old Aramaic? A Rejoinder to Victor Sasson," *Vetus Testamentum* 48 (1998) 99–104.

2 On the latter, see, for instance, Jennifer E. Noonan's *A Handbook of Second Language Acquisition for Biblical Studies: Insights of Modern Language Instruction for Teaching Biblical Languages* (GlossaHouse, 2022). For more details on "Teaching and Learning the Biblical Languages," see Benjamin J. Noonan's *Advances in the Study of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic: New Insights for Reading the Old Testament* (Zondervan, 2020), 261–77 alongside Paul S. Evans's "Teaching Biblical Hebrew: Practical Steps for Introductory Courses," in *Those Who Can, Teach: Teaching as a Christian Vocation*, edited by Stanley E. Porter (Wipf and Stock, 2013) 135–57. NB: I am indebted to Benjamin J. Noonan (private communiqué) for helpful tips about this paragraph's phrasing and these resources.

as the required vocabulary for the Elephantine Petition/Ahiqar Proverbs and the Genesis Apocryphon/Targum Job, each of which are divided section by section (384–88), (C) a remarkably up-to-date bibliography (389–95), and, lastly, (D) two indices, namely: (1) Scripture/Other Literature, (2) Subject. Disappointingly (inexcusably?), however, despite the large number of cross-references to different Bible passages included within the Reading Guide (ch. 18), the Scripture index fails to include any citations from that entire section, thus severely impeding the overall effectiveness of the text. Could not the editors have provided some sort of method (such as special shading and/or italicization, for example) to have helped differentiate between the two sections if they were, perhaps, concerned about any potential confusion on the part of the user? It is also disheartening that there is no author index.

Typographically, the extensive use of headings/sub-headings (in the main text of the grammar itself), alongside an effective use of white space, bold typeface, and the like make for an exceptionally pleasing format. The MT pointing on all canonical texts is quite clear, the font size is sufficient in all regards, and the numerous charts/tables etc. are all very well formatted. Another nice touch is the special shading on each page edge (marking chapter numbers).

That said, "cruising" the grammar is incredibly tedious and unnecessarily cumbersome. This is primarily because there are no "main" subject headings (adjectives, prepositions, etc.) at the top of each page. The fact that none of the book's copious section markers (435 in total!) appear at the top of each page as well only exacerbates this (highly irksome) problem.

NB: black ink with white background is used throughout, i.e., all diagnostics are not color-coded.

Pedagogically, I feel somewhat conflicted. While the subtitle marks this book as "an introduction" the back cover also boasts that it "provides more detail than previous textbooks" and "offers a comprehensive view of ancient Aramaic." Veritably, this is a fair assessment. Cook has truly outdone himself! *Biblical Aramaic and Related Dialects* is one of the most informed (and informative!) grammars ever printed that is sensitive to contemporary linguistics. That said, while many advanced students will readily appreciate the wealth of technical detail(s) that are provided throughout the text there will also be (from my experience) quite a few students (and not just the fledgling ones!) unable to see the forest through the trees. Sometimes, less is more.

This is especially so, I believe, for so-called "introductions." As a reference grammar, however, which is (I maintain) more or less how Cook's book will be practically used, this is a strength.

One last thing to note concerns the dating of the book of Daniel. Cook (10) opines: "Despite the setting in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian period, it is clear

from internal evidence (particularly the prophetic visions of chapters 2 and 7, and the Hebrew of chapters 8–12) that the real time of composition was the 2nd century BCE against the backdrop of the Antiochene crisis (166–164 BCE)." For the sake of clarity, while 537 BCE is the last (exact) date given in the book (see Dan 10:1) it is not the last event as the fifth, fourth, and third centuries, not to mention, also, (even) some of the second century, are all covered in the latter half of the book (Dan 7–12).

Other key calendar references include the first year of Cyrus, i.e., 539 BCE (Dan 1:21) and the third year of that great Persian ruler's reign, i.e., 537 BCE (Dan 10:1). It is thus reasonable to conclude that the purpose of these statements is to indicate that Daniel's (long) life "spanned the entire period of the neo-Babylonian empire" including some of the "early years of the Persian control of Babylon. However, by that time his age was quite advanced; he probably died sometime in the 530's B.C."[3] Scholars calculate that Daniel was likely over eighty years old.[4]

Were this only a question of chronology/calendar it need not detain us here. The question, though, centers on whether or not Aramaic Daniel (Biblical Aramaic) should be classified as Imperial Aramaic, i.e., *Reichsaramäisch*/official Aramaic (600–200 BCE) or Middle Aramaic (200 BCE–250 CE).[5] Speaking pointedly, the date of Daniel "cannot be decided upon linguistic grounds alone. It is equally obscurantist to exclude dogmatically a sixth-fifth (or fourth) century date on the one hand, or to hold such a date as mechanically proven on the other, *as far as the Aramaic is concerned*."[6] In brief, while the Daniel text exhibits an Aramaic that is in some ways more idiomatic than Ezra's there are hardly any real

3 See the NET Bible study notes (Dan 1:1).

4 See Joyce Baldwin, *Daniel*, (IVP, 2009), 35.

5 See Noonan, *Advances in the Study of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic*, 245; Andreas Schuele, *An Introduction to Biblical Aramaic* (Westminster John Knox, 2012), 2; Alger F. Johns, *A Short Grammar of Biblical Aramaic: Revised Edition* (Andrews University Press, 1972), 1. Holger Gzella's *Aramaic: A History of the First World Language* (Eerdmans, 2021) is currently the most exhaustive resource concerning the most minute of these matters.

6 K. A. Kitchen, "The Aramaic of Daniel," in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel*, edited by D. J. Wiseman, (Tyndale, 1965) 31–79 (quote from pg. 79). All emphases original. For more linguistic details, especially about the particle ʾăšer (which had become rarer in the Maccabean period and had essentially dropped out of the Mishnaic Hebrew which flourished in the first to fourth centuries AD), the *nâ* suffix (which Mishnaic Hebrew lost for the second and third feminine singular verb forms, yet cf. Dan 8:22), and the (Danielic) spelling of Jerusalem, see Paul J. Tanner, *Daniel: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Lexham, 2021), 80. For (yet more!) details, see Benjamin J. Noonan, "Daniel's Greek Loanwords in Dialectal Perspective," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* (2018) 28:575–603, alongside Noonan, *Non-Semitic Loanwords in the Hebrew Bible: A Lexicon of Language Contact* (Eisenbrauns, 2019); Noonan, *Advances in the Study of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic*, 244–60. NB: I am indebted to Benjamin J. Noonan (private communiqué) for helpful tips concerning the many varied resources in this paragraph.

differences in morphology and syntax.[7] If only Cook had rightly appropriated such linguistic insight/nuance in his analysis of Daniel.

To conclude, despite the (not insignificant) dearth of detailed, technical grammars for Aramaic and despite the remarkable benefits Edward Cook's *Biblical Aramaic and Related Dialects: An Introduction* provides, the sheer thoroughness of this text makes it something of a challenge to wholly commend it as an introduction and not as a reference grammar *per se*.

One also hopes that new printings/editions will correct some of the text's infelicities, especially those relating to its user-interface and typography (see above) so that all serious expositors and teachers of Scripture can benefit as much as possible from Cook's notable work. Its primary users will likely be advanced language students of Christian University College/Bible College/Theological Seminaries alongside many (research based) faculty/professors of Aramaic.

Dustin Burlet
Millar College of the Bible (Winnipeg)

Jeffrey P. Bishop, M. Therese Lysaught, & Andrew A. Michel. *Biopolitics After Neuroscience: Morality and the Economy of Virtue*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. Pp. 304. ISBN 978-1-3502-8844-7. $115 (USD) hardcover.

One does not have to look far to recognize the saturating presence of neuroscientific discourse, which now extends into conversations regarding morality, criminality, and state intervention. Bishop et al. interrogate the subaltern foundations of the economic theories which undergird the present scientific discourse, ultimately finding the assumed anthropology to be "a mutation in the relatively recent construct of the *Homo economicus*" (16, emphasis original). Bishop et al. follow this anthropology in reverse to map its historical development, exposing neuroscientific discourses surrounding morality as built upon neoliberal capitalist theories of political economy, a theory which is reified in the scientific understandings of social and anti-social behavior.

The first chapter interprets contemporary neuroscientific literature and its theories surrounding so-called "anti-social behavior," which Bishop et al. argue is the neuroscientific narrative of *vice*. These contemporary studies theorize that

7 Schuele, *Biblical Aramaic*, 2. Another (biblical) scholar (pg. 120) states: "Comparisons of the Aramaic of Daniel with the material from Elephantine (fifth century BC), Samaria (fourth century BC and later) and Qumran (second century BC and later) suggest that Daniel's Aramaic is closest to that of the Samaritan papyri than that of Qumran . . . . Overall, it is clear that Driver's claim that the linguistic evidence demands a second century BC date is no longer valid, though it does seem to favor a late postexilic date." Ernest Lucas, "Daniel: Book of," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets*, edited by Mark. J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville (IVP Academic, 2012), 110–23.

antisocial behaviors can be traced through the genetic traits of the brain, or as Bishop et al. summarize, "genes 'make' the brain; genes confer 'bad' behavior" (31). Ideally, the neurosciences are able to discover the correlative traits of these "bad" behaviors and subsequently intervene to prevent them. However, as Bishop et al. illustrate, the standard for what counts as "anti-social" behavior is largely constructed along economic lines, with the primary "causative variable" in neuroscientific studies of environmental impacts on the brain being socio-economic status (33). The concept of socio-economic status is contested and reveals a reliance in the neurosciences on a socially informed conception of the relationship between environment and various genetic traits of the brain. In other words, the "operational definition" of socio-economic status becomes self-perpetuating, rooted in a particular history of the notion of "poverty" (39, 45) and reified into diagnostic criteria.

Chapter two then traces the neuroscientific narrative of virtue, exploring the various genetic traits which the neurosciences theorize cause the virtues of prosocial attitudes. These prosocial attitudes mirror the accepted behaviors in Western liberal society (69). Bishop et al. chillingly survey various influential thinkers who advocate for the screening of these genetic traits, concluding that "we have a biopolitics, in which the political economy of the dominant and powerful create new knowledge that further reinforces the dominance of those in power" (71). In sum, society can manipulate and control life according to the economic aims of the social body. The popular dissemination of these ideas is traced in chapter three, where the roles of brain chemicals (84) and Western capitalist economy (89) are shown to shape concepts of prosocial attitudes and justify social control (99) in popular media. This concept is related to the concept of a "thought-community" (16), which forms the relationship between the social imagination and scientific thought.

The subsequent chapters trace the moral anthropology of this neuroscientific biopolitics, and the political justification for intervention on the poor. Chapter four follows the development of morality in neoliberal economic theory. The concept of *Homo capitalus*, the human person as capital, develops from the Chicago School of economics (114). Figures like Gary Becker argued that social behaviors and their improvement were tied to capital, encouraging forms of social control (124). Other figures, like Milton Friedman, developed a moral anthropology free from others (129), positing the human person and all her activity as economic (134). Poverty is thus a vice which requires biological intervention and enhancement.

Chapter five explores the philosophical background to this *Homo capitalus* and the Western concept of social management of the poor. Through an analysis of social engineers like John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, Bishop et al.

illustrate how contemporary neuroscience's conceptions of poverty, prosocial, and antisocial traits are linked to Bentham and Mill's advocacy for a political economy tied to the social control of citizens (143). Here, we see the birth of *Homo economicus* (149) as the ideal human person, morally restrained and economically mobile. Unlike this ideal human, the poor are less rational, "antisocial," and only deserving of charity if they "conform to the biopolitical economy" that Bentham, Mill, and others developed (167).

Perhaps the most complex portion, chapter six returns to the Chicago School's claim to draw their capitalist anthropology from both David Hume and Adam Smith. Bishop et al. complicate this narrative lineage, arguing that Hume and Francis Bacon are the primary originators of the social anthropology of political economy. Bacon's conception of "power ontology" (mastery through knowledge and force) was mobilized in Hume's scientific notions of wealth as the key to social and moral transformation (172). Bishop et al. argue, in contrast, that Smith's anthropology has more room for the agency of the poor, and sympathy as the driving force for human social relations and equality (191). Finally, a brief conclusion details Bishop et al.'s calls for a tempered science which acknowledges "that human knowing is a social activity embedded in a cultural context" (207). They conclude that the solution is "an aspirational vision of what it means to be fully human" (214).

This book is a necessary read for anyone interested in theological ethics, bioethics, or the neurosciences. Bishop et al. weave a complex yet clear narrative of the underlying anthropologies which govern the contemporary political economy and its relation to the neurosciences. By exposing the reality that the neurosciences are not value-neutral, they are able to detail the fluid history of political economy and science which justifies a biopolitics of social control. Bishop et al. have staged a worthwhile intervention by undermining neoliberal capitalism's totalizing claims on human life.

While Bishop et al. display the deep social embeddedness of biopolitical regimes and their disciplinary power, their recommendations to individual neuroscientists seem to lack a certain robustness. Is a more carefully thought-out anthropology and a cautious awareness of the relationship between thought-communities enough to rearrange such ingrained techno-scientific economies? If neoliberalism is indeed all encompassing, it seems that calling for tempered practices in the sciences might emphasize the individual as a primary actor, reifying neoliberalism's notion of the human person. Lastly, while Bishop et al. do not fully endorse Adam Smith's anthropology, they fail to acknowledge the role it plays in establishing an impetus for the moral formation of the poor. Relying on the work of Michel Foucault as they do, it is surprising that Bishop et al. do not extend Foucault's genealogical critique to the concept of disciplinary power as not only

tied to the management of biological life but also to discipline as moral formation. Moral intervention through formation of the poor too represents economic disciplinary power, an idea that genealogically seems in line with Smith's views on poverty as primarily due to moral habits and customs (191–92). Despite this, Bishop et al. provide theologians in particular with tools to assess the modern neoliberal moral anthropology, inspiring new conversations around ways that Christian theological anthropology can resist the totalizing force of biopolitical economics. Theological resources in formulating such an anthropology are plentiful and provide an avenue for expanding on the work initiated here.

Cody Bivins-Starr
University of Aberdeen

James Crossley and Robert J. Myles. *Jesus: A Life in Class Conflict*. Winchester: Zer0 Books, 2023. Pp. xiv + 281. ISBN 978-1-8034-1082-1. $25.95 (USD) paper.

This volume by James G. Crossley and Robert J. Myles stands as a powerful corrective, in many respects, to the traditional and neoliberal biographies that have been written about Jesus of Nazareth, and the general perception and representation of him within the category of "great men," a view of history which promotes the achievements of singular individuals as these exceptional figures, excised from the context and communities which allowed these figures to actually come forth to begin with. The principal theme of this book is that Jesus, the person, was in fact rooted in the historical circumstances (particularly class conflict) of his day. Instead of the "overemphasis on isolated and entrepreneurial initiatives of atomized individuals" (254), Crossley and Myles present a human Jesus whose life and movement came about due to the circumstances around them, and disavows this attempt to see an isolated "great man" figure. In many respects, one is reminded that this volume offers the corrective that activists such as Angela Y. Davis have called for, to "resist the depiction of history as the work of heroic individuals," which itself serves what she labels "the insidious promotion of capitalist individualism."[1] The volume promotes Jesus as a millenarian prophet who expected a new theocratic dictatorship to occur that would have immense ramifications on the economic and social world he lived in, and this dictatorship would serve "the interests of the peasantry" (21).

In this volume, the life of Jesus emerges as one of the intense economic conditions which affected the peasantry. According to Crossley and Myles, for instance, Jesus was raised in Nazareth where Jesus was exposed to the effects of

1 Angela Y. Davis, *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2016), 1–2.

Imperialization and gentrification. The Romans sacked Sepphoris, and life was no doubt hard. As Crossley and Myles note, the peasantry at any time was likely "one crop failure away from famine or a life of banditry" (33). Galilee itself was going through notable economic changes, notable enough that a figure like Jesus could become the vehicle for the concerns of the peasantry. Further, the millenarian ideologies which were associated with a liberation of the peasantry through divine intervention would no doubt have been quite attractive to the peasantry given the conditions under which they suffered. The time was, essentially, set for this type of a movement to emerge. For instance, the authors push back against attempts to view Antipas' building projects as having been a positive, noting this has a "'trickle-down' logic" (40), and note these arguments of a "tranquil" (41) Galilee are based entirely on an argument from silence (i.e., that previous scholars saw no evidence for class conflict in Galilee at this time). These building projects and other changes would lead no doubt to people observing the changes, and resentment and discontent were sure to be among those feelings, knowing that their resources, land, and money were being taken and competitions introduced (39–49).

This volume has a number of qualities to praise. The focus on the economic disparities, the gender norms and expectations, millenarian ideologies, etc. and how these all intertwined with the movement create a complex and engaging view of Jesus and the emerging Jesus movement and offer numerous correctives to how biographies of Jesus have been written up to this point: by presenting Jesus and the Jesus movement as the product of class conflict, not as an isolated great man, whose entrepreneurial behavior was special and unique in history, as so many have attempted to make him out to be. The unique focus on the various dynamics of the ancient world Jesus grew up in (gender, class, ethnicity, imperialism, etc.) all coalesce and intersect in this volume to create perhaps the most feasible and convincing reconstruction of Jesus's life that I have read.

Nonetheless there will be of course points to criticize in any volume on Jesus. On occasion, Crossley and Myles are arguably far too trusting of their sources, and do not engage them enough as highly literate and even fictional in nature. As a few examples, they elaborate in detail about Jesus' role as an artisan (*tekton*) and his potential literacy and specifically ask questions such as "how did someone from Jesus' unremarkable background come to have a movement form around him?" (39). But questions like these are perhaps betrayed by analyzing these texts as literary products and looking to other Greco-Roman *bioi*. There we find the "humble beginnings" trope to be a fairly consistent feature of the genre, for instance, Romulus and Remus being raised as swine herders, and very little being known of their childhoods (see Plutarch's *Life of Romulus*). Perhaps we simply have the Gospel of Mark utilizing these tropes to great effect in his own volume,

and then Matthew and Luke attempting to renegotiate this. Was Jesus an artisan? Arguably not.

Similarly, one can argue this is also the case with the baptism of Jesus. In this case, we have a problematic usage of the criterion of embarrassment emerging (though not by name), noting how Matthew, Luke, and John all seem to show discomfort at the idea of Jesus baptized, since it (A) implies his sinfulness, and (B) his subordination to John the Baptist (67–68). Likewise, they contend it is "difficult to see why John baptizing Jesus would have been invented" (68). Contra this remark, however, it does not seem that particularly difficult. Mark, in particular, as they admit (68), firstly shows no embarrassment at the story. Secondly, we can see several literary devices occurring. As there was a known belief that the Messiah must be anointed by Elijah (cf. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 8), and John is specifically modeled on and identified with Elijah in Mark's text (Mark 9:10–12), we can see one specific reason he could invent the text. John would provide a convenient way of having Jesus anointed as the Messiah, by John, and because John's identity as Elijah is not known for sure, this would maintain the messianic secret theme of the gospel. Additionally, recent studies have also noted the Imperial imagery in the passage, which calls to mind adoptionism. Notably, many of the most well-known Caesars are all adopted figures. Thus, it implies Jesus as both Messiah and Caesar. Lastly, choosing John (who had a lasting movement that, even after his death, seemed to continue if the Mandaeans are to be believed) would also give Jesus more historical authority, by having Jesus become the divine authority anointed by a somewhat well-known individual. It serves Mark's literary aims quite well to invent the passage if we look at what Mark stands to gain literarily. This means the other Gospels are not "embarrassed" by historical fact but by Mark specifically. It appears that on these occasions, Crossley and Myles have spent so much effort in analyzing and elucidating material and social conditions around Jesus and which he took part in, that they do not attend to the literary qualities and contexts of the Gospels as sources, which are written in a later time, with perhaps very different motives and material conditions surrounding them (especially in a world post-Jesus, where the millenarian revolution failed and where the world was being overturned as Imperial forces destroyed the Temple and ransacked the country).

These are, of course, the critiques of one much more skeptical and minimalistic, but I also do not consider these critiques remotely detrimental to the volume, nor do they detract from it substantially. There are other minor quibbles one could remark upon, such as their use of the Q document (is it methodologically sound to use a completely hypothetical document as equivalent to an extant one, such as p. 70), or other disagreements on what is or is not historical. But none of these significantly detract from the volume.

Even with the above remarks about occasional instances where their reconstructions may falter, the volume itself is perhaps one of the most important and satisfying biographies of Jesus written in the last twenty-five years. This volume undermines attempts to subsume Jesus through seeing him as a "change agent" (254), something of a "fetish" in the neoliberal world, and instead sees him as very much the product of his age, and how class conflict, oppression, gender, and more all intersected in curious ways to produce this movement and how it ultimately failed in its revolution. As Crossley and Myles note, "Jesus and his associates were changed by and through history from below" (254). This is a volume not about how great men changed history, but instead how history created these men. It stands as a powerful corrective to Jesus research and comes highly recommended.

Christopher M. Hansen
Grand Blanc, MI, USA

Douglas Groothuis. *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith.* 2nd edition. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2022. Pp. xiii + 834. ISBN 978-1-5140-0275-9. $69.97 (CDN) $36.99 (USD) paper.

Comprehensive apologetics books are rarer than one might assume. Still, there is value in bringing the various strands of conversation together into a single 'master-textbook' type of resource as such which can serve as a roadmap, of sorts, providing an overview of the apologetic journey and identifying specific routes of exploration which can then be supplemented by more specialized resources and discussions. Douglas Groothuis' *Christian Apologetics*, now in its second edition, provides just such a roadmap. Not only does this work guide us along the well-tread roads of standard issues and arguments, it also explores some less common pathways, all without losing sight of the Christian worldview it defends. Prior to elaborating on the particulars of what distinguishes this second edition, a brief overview of the book, as a whole, is in order.

Christian Apologetics is divided into three main sections: (1) "Apologetic Preliminaries," (2) "The Case for Christian Theism," and (3) "Objections to Christian Theism." Two appendices, "Hell on Trial" and "Apologetic Issues in the Old Testament" (written by Richard Hess) round out the volume. The back matter includes three thorough indices (names, subject, and Scripture), a three-page glossary, and a seventy-five-page bibliography organized by chapter. Chapter twenty-one, "Jesus of Nazareth: How Historians Can Know Him and Why It Matters" was written by esteemed New Testament scholar, Craig L. Blomberg.

Section One, "Apologetic Preliminaries," lays the foundation for Groothuis' case with discussions on truth and worldview, as well as a "prudential" appeal

drawing on Pascal's Wager to "invoke a healthy self-interest that encourages unbelievers to inquire into Christianity" (158). While the author's apologetic strategy has obvious affinities with classical apologetics, Groothuis frames it as a "worldview hypothesis evaluation and verification through a cumulative-case method" (41). Groothuis' contention is that the Christian worldview best satisfies the necessary criteria for a viable worldview, making it most likely to be true.

The second (and largest) section, "The Case for Christian Theism," contains the so-called 'classic theistic arguments' (ch. 10–12, 14–16) plus additional appeals to religious experience (ch. 17), consciousness (ch. 18), and "deposed royalty," i.e., humanity as great-yet-wretched (ch. 19). New (and welcome!) to the second edition are an argument from beauty (ch. 13), an argument for primitive monotheism (ch. 9) as "the original religion of humanity" (174), and an exploration of doubt and the hiddenness of God (ch. 20).

From here the case moves to the question of Christ. Again, we find usual suspects: reliability of the Gospels (ch. 21), the incarnation (ch. 25), the uniqueness of Jesus (ch. 22), and the resurrection (ch. 27). The second edition also extends the discussion on miracles (ch. 26), offers a brief apologetic for the Church as evidence for Christianity (ch. 28) and adds a two-chapter defense of substitutionary atonement (ch. 23–24).

While atonement may seem like an odd topic, Groothuis' project is to defend Christian orthodoxy (67, 71), not some vague Christo-Theism. Pluralistic and relativistic incursions into Christian doctrine require today's apologists to identify orthodoxy as well as defend it. Also, given the popularity of criticisms like penal substitutionary atonement constituting "Divine Child Abuse," an exploration of Christ's sacrifice is quite appropriate.

In Section Three, "Objections to Christian Theism," Groothuis compares Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism (ch. 29) to demonstrate that all religions are *not* essentially the same (630). He also compares Christianity to Islam, addressing Muslim critiques and presenting the Christian worldview as the more satisfying solution to human brokenness and estrangement from God (ch. 30). Groothuis then tackles the question of suffering and evil (ch. 31), offering a greater good defense as the primary way forward (685–94). Finally, a new chapter (ch. 32) proposes Christian lament as a form of apologetic, in that Christianity alone "gives meaning and purpose to suffering such that the human lament [when grounded in the narrative of creation, fall, and redemption (698)] does not end in frustration or final defeat" (702).

The appendix on Hell is a biblical and logical defense of Hell. Eternal conscious torment is assumed rather than defended explicitly, which may disappoint those hoping for a discussion of various positions. Richard Hess' essay involving the Old Testament defends its historical reliability and addresses criticisms that it

contains questionable ethics and a genocidal God. For example, he criticizes the "new atheists" (specifically Harris, Dawkins, and Hitchens) for regularly misreading the content and/or intent of Old Testament passages (719–23) and argues that the Canaanite cities attacked in Joshua's campaign, like Jericho and Ai, were military targets, not civilian centers (728–31).

The comprehensiveness of Groothuis' *Christian Apologetics* is quite impressive and demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the apologetic enterprise. Groothuis' worldview-analysis approach, while not laying entirely new tracks, provides an accessible pathway for evaluating Christianity against its competitors. While his arguments are primarily rational and evidential, Groothuis recognizes the legitimacy of intuitive and experiential pathways to faith. For example, the author acknowledges the "existential bite" of moral argument (362), and shares how his own lived lament over his own wife's illness and death added existential weight to his philosophical position on evil and suffering (695–96).

As for revisions to arguments found in the first edition, most are relatively minor. For example, in chapter two (Apologetics Method) one notes an increased emphasis on cumulative case worldview, additional comments concerning the critique that apologetics is too tied to modernism, and a more careful distinguishment between Groothius' approach and Classical apologetics. In chapter fourteen (Origins, Design, and Darwinism) where one might anticipate significant revisions in light of new data, Groothuis indeed cites a number of new works and studies, mostly from Intelligent Design authors, but his general arguments do not substantially change. Groothuis' revisions elsewhere are also fairly incremental. Yes, there are newer sources in the footnotes and the bibliographies of most chapters, but the most significant updates are his new chapters.

To critique, while it may seem like nitpicking to suggest that an already massive book should have even more material, nevertheless a few items deserved some more attention. Groothuis' engagement with alternatives to Big Bang cosmology is disappointingly minimal. His discussion on consciousness does not wrestle with animal sentience (ch. 18) and his chapter on suffering skips both natural evil and animal suffering (ch. 31). Finally, given its current popularity, perhaps Jesus Mysticism could have been directly addressed.

A few arguments could also have benefited from increased clarity. Groothuis' argument from objective beauty seems to assume rather than define objective beauty—but why, *precisely*, is a van Gogh more beautiful than a Kincaid (259)? While intuitively appealing, and seemingly self-evident to those who claim artistic taste, the objectivity of beauty remains notoriously elusive, weakening a transcendental-type argument. The exploration of Jesus' view of Scripture also seems underdeveloped. Groothuis' claim, that Jesus "anticipates the divine inspiration of the New Testament through his authorization of the apostles," needs more

apologetic than is offered (509). Jesus nowhere explicitly predicts the writing of new Scriptures, and the majority of the New Testament was not written by his twelve apostles. Lastly, Groothius' apologetic for the Church (chapter 28), is underwhelming. Perhaps he could have dispensed with the description of the Church and written more about how the church, specifically, "through the ages has, on balance, made the ages far better than if the church been snuffed out . . ." [sic] (619).

Nevertheless, Douglas Groothuis' *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith Christian Apologetics* is a pleasure to read and sets the bar for comprehensive apologetics books going forward, particularly now that its second edition is available. Groothuis' coverage of issues is superb, and the inclusion of less common topics provides fresh lines of thinking and thoroughly enhances the cumulative case he builds. *Christian Apologetics* has shot to the top tier of my recommended apologetics textbooks and is a great one-stop resource for any reader wanting a strong and lucid overview of evangelical Christian apologetics.

Brad Cowie
Peace River Bible Institute

John G. Stackhouse Jr. *Evangelicalism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. 160. ISBN 978-0-1900-7968-0. $11.95 (USD) paper.

During a trip to Washington in 1969, the former Prime Minister of Canada Pierre Trudeau famously described Canada's relationship to the United States as like being in bed with an elephant. This is certainly the case when it comes to evangelicalism, as Canadians are bombarded by media reports on the latest political antics of American evangelicals, churches are submerged in the musical offerings of CCLI, and many parishioners devotedly follow their favourite American celebrity preacher on various platforms. John Stackhouse's *Evangelicalism: A Very Short Introduction* provides us with a salutary reminder that while American evangelicalism may be an elephant, the evangelical bed is much larger than we often imagine, and it is filled with all sorts of magnificent and unusual creatures.

Stackhouse presses this agenda right out of the gate by asking his readers to imagine an evangelical. While many in North America will instinctively picture a white, wealthy, male pastor of a large Southern church, this is a stereotype. The typical evangelical is more likely to be a gainfully employed woman somewhere in sub-Saharan Africa or Latin America. This opening salvo sets the tone for the discussion of evangelicalism that follows, a discussion that provides much-needed historical depth and global breadth for frequently myopic North Americans.

The opening chapter traces the historical developments behind evangelicalism. The players, events, and movements presented in this chapter are standard fare in most accounts of evangelical origins. There are brief discussions of the biblical term *euanggelion*, the proto-Reformers, and the Protestant Reformers, the latter of whom preferred to be called evangelicals. Attention is then turned to the Pietists and Puritans, and finally those caught up in the revival movement of the eighteenth century, whom Stackhouse calls "ur-evangelicals"—notably Edwards, Whitefield, and Wesley.

Stackhouse begins the second chapter by suggesting that there are three ways of thinking about what distinguishes evangelicals from other Christians. The first is to think of evangelicals as representing the true Christian faith and the second is to construe evangelicalism as a movement. Stackhouse dismisses the first on social-political grounds as being unnecessarily divisive, while the second does not ring true in Stackhouse's opinion because historically there have been no evangelical institutional bodies that have provided a common umbrella under which all groups that might be identified as evangelical have gathered. (At this point a question arises about the presumption that a movement requires exhaustive institutional unity. For instance, a variety of different, sometimes overlapping but not mutually exhaustive groups, like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Nation of Islam, and the Black Panthers, could be considered to have been part of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States.) Instead, Stackhouse suggests that evangelicalism is best thought of as a style. Whereas conservativism defers to the tradition and liberalism prioritizes the experiences and demands of the present day, evangelicals "attempt to construe and to practice Christianity in the creative tension between the heritage they inherit and the challenges they now face" (24). While seeing the Christian playing field as a continuum between liberalism on one pole and conservatism on another has its advantages, on its own the previous quote is not particularly helpful, as both liberals and conservatives would see themselves as inhabiting the same type of creative tension in their own particular way. To further substantiate these distinctions Stackhouse turns to a discussion of the things evangelicals "characteristically care about" and what "they typically do" (24). He presents six key adjectives that define evangelicalism: Trinitarian, biblicist, conversionist, missional, populist, and pragmatic. It is the commitment to a biblically-informed, robustly Trinitarian faith that sets evangelicals apart from liberals. It is the conversionist and missional impulses, alongside the corresponding populism and pragmatism, that distinguishes evangelicals from conservatives. Coming to grips with evangelicalism thus involves the study of beliefs, convictions, and practices, as evangelicalism is nothing other than "*authentic, vital, and missional Protestantism*" (45, original emphasis).

While the historic and conceptual frameworks laid out in chapters one and two are necessary and helpful, it is in chapters three to five where Stackhouse makes what may be his most important contribution. In chapter 3, Stackhouse traces the spread of evangelicalism through the 19th and 20th centuries, tracing revivalist movements, missions, and the rise of Pentecostalism. The discussion features prominent Western names and movements with equal attention paid to concurrent global developments, often with an eye to how global expressions of evangelicalism subvert Western assumptions. Along these lines, the account of the Indian-born woman and missionary Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati was particularly illuminating.

In the final two chapters, Stackhouse considers the contemporary challenges facing evangelicalism and ponders its future. As "the distinctively modern form of standard Christianity" (85), evangelicalism has both uniquely benefited from and is uniquely challenged by the modern soil in which it has taken root. The rise of historical criticism and liberal theology have threatened to undermine evangelicalism's core theological commitments, while the rise of the scientific worldview and secularism have raised their own sets of problems—problems that, Stackhouse notes, are not nearly as acutely felt in the Two Thirds World as in North America. While the 'ur-evangelicals' demonstrated a robust commitment to social engagement, the twentieth century witnessed an eclipse of social action among evangelicals. Stackhouse's narrative would seem to suggest that contemporary evangelicals would do well to find a way to minister to the whole person, while avoiding the pitfalls of the Imperialism that some evangelicals have been ensnared within in the past and present.

Stackhouse concludes his book by sketching four quagmires that evangelicals must find a way to faithfully navigate through or else, as the title of the chapter implies, risk facing "the end of evangelicalism." The first has to do with the question of the authority and the place of Scripture, as occasioned by debates over same-sex marriage. The voluntaristic and populist character of evangelicalism contributed to the neglect of the intellectual life and left little defense against appeals to the experience of the autonomous self, in effect, "rendering evangelicals liberals in all but name" (116). Stackhouse also points to the challenge of mission in a post-colonial age, the opportunities and dangers of political involvement, and the consequences of success, warning evangelicals to seek first the Kingdom of God, "rather than settling for, and even celebrating, a pale, narrow approximation . . . or an idolatrous one" (124).

Funded by the author's long and personal engagement with the world of evangelicalism, Stackhouse's *Evangelicalism* is a welcome contribution to the field. Throughout the book Stackhouse draws upon his own immersion within the cultural forms of North American evangelicalism, while also demonstrating that he

has his finger on the pulse of global evangelicalism. He writes with a light touch, rarely offering prescriptions to his readers, but instead allowing readers to draw their own conclusions from the narratives of historic and global evangelicalism he has winsomely presented. The format of the book, as part of the *Very Short Introductions* series is both a strength and weakness. Lay people, pastors, and hopefully journalists, alongside of other interested non-specialists, will find the brisk pace of this short book engaging and come to the realization that evangelicalism is a much deeper and broader phenomenon than whatever manifestation of it they are familiar with. Specialists will long for footnotes, and perhaps larger type.

The word "evangelical" is too important to allow contemporary Americans to determine what it means, while the rest of the world, past and present, stands on the sidelines. Thanks are due to John Stackhouse for entering the arena.

Robert J. Dean
Providence Theological Seminary

Nijay K. Gupta. *15 New Testament Words of Life: A New Testament Theology for Real Life*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2022. Pp. 240. ISBN 978-0-3101-0905-1. $19.99 (USD) paper.

Nijay Gupta, a professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary, transforms fifteen word studies from mundane examinations of the history of language to a life-transforming series of biblical interpretation and application that is accessible to a large diversity of readers. The thrust of this book is simple, going through most of the New Testament books in groups of one, two, or three, selecting one key word from the biblical text, and examining it in the contexts of the Old Testament, the Greco-Roman world, the chapter's focal book(s), another New Testament passage, and contemporary applications. Gupta shares his heart for this work in his introduction, saying, "The gospel is greater than the words we use to describe it; and yet those words are still the way we give and receive that life" (xiv). He explains how he wants to inspire his students and those in his life to stop viewing the Bible as "irrelevant or antiquated" but to turn instead to the life-giving power of the Scriptures as they apply to our lives today.

By individually looking at words that Gupta believes have become mundane "Christianese"—flimsy words thrown around in the church without any real impact or purpose—he shows a new, life-filled way of reading the Bible. In Matthew, Gupta looks at *righteousness*, focusing on how this concept is much more than religious piety but instead teaches justice, honesty, and integrity. In the next chapter, studying Mark, he presents *gospel* as a transformative idea, more than merely a means to get to heaven but as a way Christians can live each day in hope and victory over the evil of the world. Then, examining both Luke and Acts,

forgiveness is presented as a way that believers are embraced into the family of God and, consequently, are bringers of healing and restoration to the world. Turning to John, Gupta examines *life*. He pushes back on the idea that the "eternal life" promised in this Gospel is simply a future promise of heaven but is truly about abundant life found in walking with Jesus, connected like a fetus to its mother or a branch to a vine.

Next, Gupta looks at *the cross* in 1 and 2 Corinthians, presenting the idea of cruciformity, that is, obedience to God's will that results in sacrificial love, humility, and hope. The next chapter turns to both Galatians and Romans, examining the concept of *faith*. Gupta demonstrates how faith is not simply a set of religious beliefs, but instead, throughout the Bible, is a lifestyle of prayer, worship, and love, foolish by the world's standards. In the next chapter, which looks at Ephesians, Gupta discusses *grace* and the way that Paul teaches about God's character as one who gives undeserved, unifying grace. In Philippians, Gupta looks at *fellowship,* rebelling against the shallow connection of believers in the modern American church by presenting Paul's vision of fellowship, one that shares in the Spirit in sufferings, uniting in life and mission for Christ. Next, studying 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Gupta looks at *hope* in spite of death and persecution, encouraging believers to live boldly and confidently, knowing that sin and evil are ultimately defeated. Turning to the Pastoral Epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, Gupta talks about *salvation.* He rejects the narrative of salvation being an end unto itself. Instead, he argues that Paul teaches of a salvation "for a new life and calling . . . to contribute to the overall welfare of the community" (128).

Turning to Hebrews in the next chapter, Gupta looks at *peace*. He examines how, with Jesus as the High Priest and mediator, believers have a peace with God that they then must spread in the world. He calls believers to be "a peace-waging people," actively choosing to bring peace into a broken world. The next chapter looks at *religion* as found in James, reworking the idea that religion is simply a personal choice or an antiquated set of rules. He shows how James teaches that the religious must live ethical lives, caring for those in need, especially in financial matters. His next topic is *holiness,* as seen in 1 Peter, which Gupta explains is a life set apart and different from the world. This difference is not a mindset of superiority; instead it is gentle and inviting to others. In looking at 1 John, Gupta talks about *love*, calling believers to reaffirm that they are loved by God and thus love God, one another, strangers, and enemies, giving attention to the tension of truly being transformed by love without allowing abuse or mistreatment to continue. Finally, he looks at Revelation, examining the concept of *witness.* He urges believers to recognize that their lives are witnesses to the gospel and must live differently as a result, being marked by accountability, justice and respect, simplicity and generosity, and attempting great things for God.

Gupta's book does not need to be read directly through; each chapter could be studied on its own. Yet throughout the entire book, Gupta returns to two key themes that are foundational to his understanding of New Testament theology and show the strength of the book's structure. First, he continually emphasizes that faith must move into action, creating lifestyles that reflect Jesus instead of living only for the future promise of heaven. He calls his readers to practical applications, seeing that they need to have transformed lives that are radically different from the surrounding world. Second, he emphasizes the unity of the entire Bible. The book contains frequent reminders that preconceived separation of the Old and New Testament is incorrect. God's character and message do not change. By showing how each key word is found throughout all of Scripture, Gupta transforms how people view the large story of God's people and ultimately, God's character.

This book is an incredible resource to all believers that would be an excellent addition to personal devotions, Sunday school classes, or introductory university New Testament courses. It is modern and approachable. Gupta includes numerous pop culture references—from *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* to Lin Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton*—that are sure to connect to readers at a popular level. Although the modern references and contemporary applications may become outdated in coming years, I believe that the discussions of the themes will remain relevant and helpful. There is certainly much more that could be said about each topic and New Testament book (as some are not even covered), but Gupta's book succeeds as a clear introduction to strong exegetical reading of the Bible, demonstrating how to connect passages throughout the Bible without cherry-picking verses and logically applying it to one's life. By modeling these important skills, Gupta will transform readers' approach to Scripture.

Lauren Raatz
Evangel University

Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson. *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology*. 2nd ed. Invitation to Theological Studies Series. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021. Pp. 704. ISBN: 978-0-8254-4676-4. $67.56 (CDN) $33.34 (USD) hardcover.

Regardless of the student's earnest desire to learn the subject at hand or the instructor's eminent experience in the classroom, teaching the intricacies of effective biblical interpretation can be an extremely taxing process for many educators. Enter Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson's *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* now in its second edition. Köstenberger and Patterson state:

> This book is trying to teach a simple method for interpreting the Bible. It involves preparation, interpretation, and application. The method for interpretation is built around the hermeneutical triad, which consists of history, literature, and theology. In essence, our core proposal is this: for any passage of Scripture, you will want to study the historical setting, the literary context, and the theological message (21).

Though (unequivocally) succeeding in this matter, to what degree does the second edition of this volume differ from the first and in what capacity do the authors utilize and/or leverage the most recent resources that are available? Prior to offering a clear delineation of these things and a full-scale review, though, it is prudent to first provide a general orientation to the text, as a whole.

Invitation to Biblical Interpretation is comprised of three main sections: (1) Preparation: The Who, Why, and How of Interpretation (chapter one), (2) Interpretation: The Hermeneutical Triad (chapters two to fourteen), and (3) Application and Proclamation: God's Word Coming to Life (chapter fifteen). To be clear, Section 2 has three main parts: (1) The Context of Scripture: History (chapter two), (2) The Focus of Scripture: Literature (chapters three through eleven), and (3) The Goal: Theology (chapter fourteen). More specifically, part 2 also has three main units: (1) Canon: Old and New Testament (chapters three and four), (2) Genre: Old Testament Historical Narrative, Poetry and Wisdom, Prophecy, Gospels and Acts, Parables, Epistles, Apocalyptic (chapters five to eleven), and (3) Language (chapters twelve and thirteen).

Each chapter begins with a thorough list of objectives and a detailed content outline. They conclude with an overarching set of interpretive guidelines, a glossary of key words, some well-crafted study questions/assignments (more on both of these later), and a bibliography—all of which have been tailored to the subject of that particular chapter. The book rounds off with a thirteen-page glossary (no words from any of the previous listings are included) and three indices (Scripture/Author/Subject). While some may quibble over the small size of the subject index, the extensive table of contents and complete outline for each chapter should more than compensate.

With respect to the primary differences between the two editions, the authors claim:

> For this second edition, all chapters have been thoroughly updated. Chapter 2, in particular, was thoroughly reworked and updated in light of the latest scholarship in chronology and archeology. Chapter 3 on the Old Testament canon is completely new. . . . The chapter on figurative language was assimilated into chapters 6 (Old Testament wisdom) and 13 (language), respectively. Chapter 14 (previously chap.

> 15) was expanded to include Old and New Testament themes (Old Testament themes [were] previously included in chap. 3) as well as a discussion on the relationship between Biblical and Systematic Theology. Chapter 15 (previously chap. 16) on application and proclamation was [also] significantly reworked and recast (20).

Another substantial change is to the actual shape of the book itself. While the first edition of *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation* was 6 ¼ inches wide and 9 and ¼ inches tall, the second edition is an impressive 7 and ¾ inches wide and 9 and ½ inches tall. This new format is quite pleasing to use, lays flat well, and conforms now with the rest of the Kregel 'Invitation' series.

Despite these welcome and (relatively speaking) rather robust changes to the text, many long-term users will likely be disappointed that the authors did not do a more extensive revision.

To begin, one laments that there is still no effective discussion about how the growing field of linguistics can distinctly and directly influence and impact exegesis and interpretation. As such, true discourse analysis (involving register, field, tenor, mood, etc.) is often brushed to the side (cf. pg. 474–75, 487–501). In addition, while the author's discussion of the basic characteristics of New Testament Greek (478–87) is fittingly appropriate to their target audience, the absence of Constantine R. Campbell's *Advances in the Study of Greek: New Insights for Reading the New Testament* (Zondervan, 2015) and Stanley E. Porter's *Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament: Studies in Tools, Methods, and Practice* (Baker, 2015) causes one to firmly question the idea that each chapter has, indeed, been "thoroughly updated" (20). It also seems injudicious that there is no comparable type of discussion concerning biblical Hebrew (or biblical Aramaic).

The inexplicable absence (yet again!) of the *crème de la crème* work concerning the meaning of words (linguistics, semantics, exegetical fallacies, and figurative language), namely Moisés Silva's *Biblical Words and Their Meaning*: *An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* revised and updated edition (Zondervan, 1995), which, in my opinion, ought to be required reading in any course on effective biblical interpretation alongside Benjamin L. Baxter's '*In the Original Text It Says*' (Energion, 2019), is also (quite) odd and difficult to appreciate. In addition, the fact that the acclaimed five volume *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* 2nd ed. (Zondervan, 2014) edited by Moisés Silva, now available as *The Concise New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, edited by Christopher A. Beetham (Zondervan, 2021), is altogether not mentioned forces one to reconsider the overall effectiveness of their guidelines for doing "semantic field studies," i.e. "word studies" (517).

One also notes that David Cline's *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield,

1993–2016), HALOT, and *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Zondervan, 1997) edited by Willem A. VanGemeren, are all conspicuously absent but the hopelessly out-of-date BDB is explicitly mentioned as being a standard reference lexicon (see pg. 544). Needless to say, far more work could have been done in helping students learn, step-by-step, how to use up-to-date language works. There is also no mention of STEP (Scripture Tools for Every Person).

More details concerning English translations, in general (arguably the first step for most student's engagement with biblical interpretation), would surely have proven beneficial to have included as would have been a section specially devoted to Old Testament Apocalyptic literature. NB: for further details on this subject, see Richard A. Taylor's *Interpreting Apocalyptic Literature: An Exegetical Handbook. Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis* (Kregel, 2016). The lack of inclusive language may also be grating to some readers (see, for example, pg. 56).

Pedagogically speaking, while the study questions/assignments are well-constructed and clear they vary quite widely (wildly?) in number. Some chapters have four assignments while others have eight. Some chapters have five to eight study questions while others have twelve (!). While such differences may be justifiable given the subject matter at hand, might it not have been more effective to have had a standard allotment devoted to each chapter? In a similar way, while students are likely to appreciate the inclusion of various 'key words' within any given chapter, would it not have made more sense simply to have included one large(r) glossary? Who could possibly be expected to remember what specific chapter any given 'key word' appears in?

Lastly, while it makes sense for the second edition of *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation* to have deleted the appendix i.e., "Building a Biblical Studies Library" (pp. 809–32), at least some annotated reference(s) to certain specialized volumes which offer assistance to that area, such as John F. Evan's superb (and affordable!) volume, *A Guide to Biblical Commentaries and Reference Works* 10th ed. (Zondervan, 2016), would surely have helped the fledgling student(s).

To conclude, despite these infelicities, I heartily recommend Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson's *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology*. While I am not persuaded that it is "destined to become the standard textbook for colleges and seminaries" (see back cover) it remains "an invaluable guide for the student working through the labyrinth of issues that make up the task of biblical interpretation" (back cover). One can only hope that future edition(s) might be able to correct and/or augment some of the challenges involved in this second edition so

that all serious students of Scripture can benefit as much as possible from Köstenberger and Patterson's notable work.

Dustin Burlet
Millar College of the Bible (Winnipeg, MB)

Mitzi J. Smith and Michael Willett Newheart. *We Are All Witnesses: Toward Disruptive and Creative Biblical Interpretation*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2023. Pp. 174. ISBN 978-1-6667-1463-0. $24.00 (USD) paper.

We Are All Witnesses is a provocative volume by Mitzi J. Smith and Michael Willett Newheart that seeks to decenter biblical studies by placing forward a model of disruptive and creative biblical interpretation. Smith is J. Davison Philips Professor of New Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary and Newheart is professor emeritus of New Testament at Howard University School of Divinity and is an interim ministry specialist for American Baptist Churches of the USA. They begin their book by "testifying." The first chapter of *We Are All Witnesses* acts as both a thesis statement and a beginning memoir. Both authors share not only their faith histories, to provide better contexts for themselves and this book, but also their deep-seated conviction that the Bible is best read when one's context is set in as a centerpiece to biblical interpretation, and this then leads to "testifying." Chapters two and three then begin to develop the methodology that the two authors will showcase in chapters four through nine.

Chapter two discusses the importance of context when reading. For Smith and Newheart context is the backbone of all biblical interpretation, but that is not limited to solely historical and literary context, but rather it also includes the social context of the audience, who ultimately determines how the text is "testifying." Chapter three then begins to further develop how the two authors will view the New Testaments texts. They take the position that the New Testament texts are testaments that the authors were wishing to share with the result of sharing the contextual message of the biblical author amidst the original intended audience. This "testifying" is the biblical author attempting to achieve a change or response in the community that received their message. These texts, based on the witness of others, were then later canonized as Scripture. It is also here that the authors place forward their method and desire to read the New Testament text in a justice-focused hermeneutic as a way of testifying to the injustice that they either have seen or experienced.

Chapters four through nine then shift into the main section of the book. Each chapter follows a similar pattern of the author choosing a New Testament text and then sharing as to why they chose the text they did, usually due to personal importance. Then they examine the text and raise preliminary questions regarding the text

from reading with a justice-centered hermeneutic. Lastly, they examine the text in its literary context and draw conclusions based on the reading that took place. Each chapter also has a section for further reading. These sections are also carefully curated to include resources from female and BIPOC authors. These chapters are the body of the book and seek to show Smith's and Newheart's vision for a justice-centered hermeneutic that is centered in the context of the reader. The book then ends with a brief conclusion summarizing the importance of "testifying."

Perhaps one of the greatest strengths of *We Are All Witnesses* is the model it provides for asking questions that go against the grain of traditional readings. This is also a deeply intentional feature. As Smith states in chapter three, "We must read against the grain, employing a deconstructive and/or oppositional justice-focused hermeneutical perspective" (55). As someone who has been reared and educated in more traditional approaches to biblical hermeneutics their modeling of disruptive questions was informative and helped me to begin to more carefully examine how I read the Bible and the questions that I am conditioned to ask of the text. Their sections for further reading/research that accompanied each of the body chapters (chs 4–9) were also a wonderful addition for students who have not been provided the experience in reading minority interpretations or the knowledge of how to find the spaces where these minority voices write.

The deeply personal nature of *We Are All Witnesses* serves to its benefit often. Smith's and Newheart's honest and raw testimonies help to provide context for the rest of the book and its purpose. It also encourages the reader to search their own life and seek how the experiences that have shaped them as a person also shape how they testify to the biblical text. Smith and Newheart's testimonies help them to become living people on the page of the text. I left *We Are All Witnesses* with a deeper appreciation for their work and them as scholars by way of their personal stories and conversation with the audience.

However, *We Are All Witnesses* is not without shortcomings. Despite the affective relationship between the authors and the reader that is built by the person writing, there never seems to be a well-defined balance in tone. Smith and Newheart's best attempts at this hybrid of memoir and textbook are disappointing. It seems as if there is never a clear distinction between the multiple genres. The result is a charming but ultimately disjointed product that leaves the reader without a clear sense of the writing tone.

Another shortcoming of *We Are All Witnesses* is the lack of a defined audience. The back cover of the book claims that it is accessible to laypersons, college students, and seminary students. However, this is only provisionally true. Throughout the body of the book Smith and Newheart appeal to a contextualized reading that considers both the historical and literary context of the passage. Although each chapter offers a dedicated section to the literary context of the passage, the

historical context is noticeably absent in their interpretation. This is not to say that they do not consider it, but rather it hides away implicitly in their conclusions. The college and seminary students who have had prior exposure to biblical interpretation will likely have the training to do independent research on the historical context, but the layperson with no such training may feel lost attempting to wade their way through the sea of sources or material available. There seems to be a desire from the authors to have written for too wide of an audience that now leaves *We Are All Witnesses* as a serviceable volume to many but lacking the nuance or intentionality of a specific audience.

However, despite these shortcomings, *We Are All Witnesses* is an experimental work that should be applauded for what it does well. It provides a model forward in biblical interpretation that seeks to ask disruptive questions, not with the intention of provocation but for further research. It breathes new life into how academia can consider teaching and introducing biblical interpretation to first-time students. It is a brave and necessary call for the need for inclusion of minority voices in biblical interpretation. Although not everything comes together as intended, this is a useful and recommended book for those who take an interest in biblical interpretation and its current trends. *We Are All Witnesses* will pave the way forward for more works of its kind and help open the doors to continuing disruptive biblical interpretation.

Levi Moberg
Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

Wendy E. S. North. *What John Knew and What John Wrote: A Study in John and the Synoptics*. Interpreting Johannine Literature. Minneapolis: Fortress Academic, 2020. Pp. 174. ISBN 978-1-9787-0881-5. $39.99 (USD) paper.

With her opening six words ("It is a truth universally acknowledged") Wendy North captured my attention, and the rest of the book did not disappoint. Dr. North, Honorary Research Fellow at Durham University, attacks the perennial question of the relationship of the Gospel of John to the Synoptics. She first asks how the author of the Fourth Gospel handles already-recognized allusions: to his own writing, to the LXX, and to the Synoptics. With a resulting list of ten elements of a pattern in hand, North examines the way these play out in four specific Synoptic references. This approach struck me from the beginning as so eminently sensible that I was eager to see how it developed.

Although there is some agreement between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics, John does not consistently follow Mark, Matthew, or Luke. He acknowledges (20:30–31; 14–16) that he is not only culling the Jesus-memories but interpreting them. The question that North intends to tackle, however, is not whether John

relied on memories or traditional material, but rather whether the evidence suggests that he also had access to the Synoptics in some written form.

North's approach is particularly incisive: John is not categorized as a Synoptic Gospel because John does not use Mark in the same way that Matthew and Luke do. It is therefore useless to use the way Matthew and Luke use Mark to determine whether John uses Mark (or Matthew or Luke) at all! In fact, dependence such as we find in Matthew and Luke is quite unusual among ancient authors.

John's repetition of his own material, usually with some sort of extension or creative alternations, is a part of his particular style. In chapter 2, North examines material that reappears later in the Gospel, often far outside of the original context. Nicodemus, for example, appears three times; each time his character is useful for a point John is making in that later context. Key vocabulary links associated sections, and early contexts may be relevant in later passages although often with variety in purpose and creativity in referents. North wraps up this second chapter with a summary of the ten characteristics of John's reuse of his own material (38).

In this chapter, as throughout the book, North's thorough knowledge of the Gospel means that she makes connections with facility. However, North's facility is also sometimes a drawback, as when John's purposes are asserted rather than argued or observations are made but their relevance is not explained. Regarding Caiaphas, I wondered if his sole purpose in the later passage was to introduce Annas, and I would have liked to understand better how North's "two further observations" (22) related to the discussion. I am sure this is obvious to North, and probably to some readers, but not yet to me.

Because she is trying to establish patterns based on uncontroversial passages, in chapter 3, North relies on Maarten J. J. Menken to identify both "formal quotations" (43) and allusions. This allows her to focus on *how* John alludes to (mostly) the LXX rather than *whether* he does so. North works through ten examples and in each case notes the "signal," the "echoes," and the "relevance" (45, following Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*) of the references. Although this skeleton of Hays' work certainly functions well for many analyses, I wonder if in general Ziva Ben Porat's framework might not more neatly set out equally useful categories. Ben Porat ("The Poetics of Literary Allusion") offers a structure that focuses more on function than on form, but that nevertheless prioritizes the "marker" (similar to Hays' "signal"), the original context, and the effects of the use of the marker in the new context.

After an analysis of eleven of John's scriptural quotations, North looks at eleven passages with similarities to the Synoptics. In these quotations, John follows eight out of the ten characteristics discovered in chapter 2. In order to focus on John's reuse of Synoptic material, North regularly sets out her assumptions. Those assumptions, of course, determine in part how she proceeds, so those

wishing to adopt her thesis will need to either agree or determine how different assumptions might or might not impact the viability of her thesis. This process may be somewhat hampered by the location of some debates in end-of-chapter notes. This choice creates a book that is clear, concise, and progresses logically. However, I often found myself missing a more robust discussion within the chapter itself. Such are the vicissitudes of authorial decisions.

In chapter 4, then, North describes the way the feeding narrative in John (6:1–15) follows first Matthew, then Mark with echoes of 2 Kings, then Matthew again with an emphasis on oneness. John's conclusion emphasizes Jesus's superiority to Moses and a reference to the Passion with the misunderstanding of Jesus's kingship. In the anointing, John (12:1–11) borrows from Mark and Luke but adapts the story for his very different narrative. John's distinctive purpose is a narrative of self-giving love. Jesus's trial (18:12–19:16) shows elements of all the Synoptics. John focused his passion narrative mainly on the trial before Pilate while nevertheless targeting 'the Jews.' And in the race to the tomb (20:3–10), John has nine words in common with Luke, words and phrases otherwise unusual for John. Clearly, John did not use Mark in the same way Matthew and Luke did, but narrative passages found in the Synoptics as well as the Fourth Gospel reflect the by-now-familiar pattern of John's use.

North has not attempted to prove that John knew or used the Synoptics. What North has persuasively shown, however, is that John has a pattern to his style of reusing material. John creatively retells (#5 in North's list) and may amplify (#6) material from sometimes several (#8) sources, integrating them into his own themes and purposes (#10). He often only gives an abbreviated form of the original (#4) but may revisit part of the original story in some other context (#2). Elements surrounding the Synoptic stories find their way into John's recompositions (#3). However, this creativity does not preclude an attention to source details. Catchwords from the original are retained in the new version (#1). Vocabulary or grammatical details may allow John to concatenate several different texts (#7), but this practice sometimes results in unevenness in John's own work (#9). Although all ten elements may not appear in every example, this pattern suggests that more of the Synoptics echo through John than has previously been recognized.

The analysis is deft and North's familiarity with the Gospels and with Johannine research provides a smooth, clear discussion. Furthermore, the bibliography could easily provide a reading list for new students of John. I look forward to future scholarly discussions of these characteristics North has elucidated for us which go a long way towards explaining why and how John composed this most spiritual of Gospels.

Laura J. Hunt
Spring Arbor University

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