

CANADIAN-AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

A Journal of Theology, Scripture, and Culture

Contents

**Faithfulness to Christ as Loyalty to Both Truth and
Love—A Study in Charity and Public Discourse**

MEG GIORDANO

**Welcoming and Defending the Disabled Stranger:
Hospitality as Personal Relationship and Public Action**

JAMES GOULD

BETH GOULD NOLSON

**Jesus, Did You Know? Christ's Divine Omniscience and
Human Ignorance Considered in Light of the Partitive
Exegesis of Gregory Nazianzus**

STEPHEN SWAN

**Hellenization and Hubris in Early Jewish Christianity:
an Exploration via 'Faux Reviews' of Two Fictitious,
Modern Novels**

EUGENE E. LEMCIO

BOOK REVIEWS

CANADIAN-AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

2024
VOLUME 13
ISSUE 2

CANADIAN-AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

EDITORS

Editor-in-Chief

Christopher Zoccali

Book Review Editor

Rick Wadholm Jr.

Production Editor

William Glasgow

Editorial Board

Craig Allert, Trinity Western University

Mark Boda, McMaster Divinity College/McMaster University

Hans Boersma, Regent College

Dustin Burlet, Millar College of the Bible

Carlos R. Bovell, Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto

Joshua John Field Coutts, Providence Theological Seminary

Tony Cummins, Trinity Western University

Robert Dean, Providence Theological Seminary

David J. Fuller, Canadian Baptist Theological Seminary and College

David Guretzki, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

Doug Harink, The King's University College

Laura J. Hunt, Spring Arbor University

Tremper Longman, Westmont College

J. Richard Middleton, Northeastern Seminary

Ephraim Radner, Wycliffe College, University of Toronto

Josef Sykora, Northeastern Seminary

J. Brian Tucker, Moody Theological Seminary

Rick Wadholm Jr., Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

Jens Zimmerman, Trinity Western University

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The *Canadian-American Theological Review* (CATR; ISSN/ISBN 1198-7804) is published twice a year by the Canadian-American Theological Association (CATA). Memberships, which include a CATR subscription, are available for the annual fee of \$40 for individuals and for libraries. Student subscriptions are \$20. Subscriptions can be purchased through our website: www.cata-catr.com.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

Contributions to the CATR are welcomed in areas relating to the broader disciplines of Theology, Biblical Studies, and Missiology. To guide potential contributors, a more detailed description of the scope of CATR, as well as manuscript submission requirements is available at: www.cata-catr.com. All submissions will be evaluated and edited for suitability for CATR publication. Article submissions and related correspondence should be directed to the CATR Editor-in-Chief at: czoccali@gmail.com. Book review contributions and related correspondence should be directed to CATR Book Review Editor at: wadholm@gmail.com.

Contributors are not necessarily members of CATA and the views they express in CATR are their personal opinions. As such, please note that the views espoused in CATR do not represent the formal position of CATA or of the members of the CATR Editorial Board.

Contents

Faithfulness to Christ as Loyalty to Both Truth and Love—A Study in Charity and Public Discourse	1
<i>Meg Giordano</i>	
Welcoming and Defending the Disabled Stranger: Hospitality as Personal Relationship and Public Action.	20
<i>James Gould</i>	
<i>Beth Gould Nolson</i>	
Jesus, Did You Know? Christ's Divine Omniscience and Human Ignorance Considered in Light of the Partitive Exegesis of Gregory Nazianzus	44
<i>Stephen Swan</i>	
Hellenization and Hubris in Early Jewish Christianity: an Exploration via 'Faux Reviews' of Two Fictitious, Modern Novels	61
<i>Eugene E. Lemcio</i>	
BOOK REVIEWS	77

Faithfulness to Christ as Loyalty to Both Truth and Love—A Study in Charity and Public Discourse

Meg Giordano
Le Moyne College

Abstract

This paper engages the problem of social polarization, specifically with regard to the theological challenge of how Matthew 5:38–48 applies to the Christian’s role in contexts of social divisiveness. It begins with the problem of polarization both as experienced and contributed to by Christian communities. *Should* we be “turning the other cheek” when the world is antagonistic to Christian faith? The paper works through this difficulty by placing the ethos of Matthew 5 in conversation with Christ’s prayer in John 17. Our reading of that prayer challenges the common “in the world but not of it” dictum, understanding it instead as a call to be fully present in the world, just as Christ was. Finally, the paper imagines this incarnational vocation specifically in terms of the divisive realm of public discourse. It proposes that the typical framing of public discourse around a polemic of “fact-vs-opinion” is itself part of the problem. It offers an alternate framing of “fact and analysis”—a reimagining that is concretized in the dispositions of intellectual charity, moral imagination, and moral humility. The paper presents a vision of discourse as informed by Christlike charity, offering concrete dispositions that help us better cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the fulfillment of Christ’s difficult mandate to turn the other cheek, hand over one’s cloak, and go a second mile.

Introduction: What To Do with Matthew 5 in Today’s Climate?

The problem of polarized discourse presents a particular challenge for Christians, in addition to the commonly experienced distress it causes across communities and cultures in recent times. For Christians, who can be seen to be contributors to as well as recipients of the problem of polarization, a tension arises when self-protective instincts seem to stand sharply at odds with the practically paradigmatic biblical call in Matthew 5 to “turn the other cheek, go the second mile,” etc. (vv.

38–48). On the one hand, the impulses toward self-protection and personal justice are natural and understandable; on the other hand, the mandates of Matthew 5 seem very clear. How is the Christian to best approach the problem of polarization, especially in terms of the radical, others-oriented vision of Christian life proposed by Matthew 5? This essay will consider how a close examination of Christ’s magisterial prayer in John 17 can serve as a helpful lens through which to approach the problem of polarization and illumine the vision of being a Christ-follower found in Matthew 5. It will then apply this vision to the problem of public discourse, providing concrete help to Christians desiring to be better formed by Christlike charity.

The Problem of Polarization as Experienced by Christian Communities

Polarization has become a nearly ubiquitous feature of social life in North America. A 2022 Pew Research report on public experiences of political hostility in the US observes an increase in the personal orientation of such familiar polarization: “Increasingly, Republicans and Democrats view not just the opposing party but also the *people* in that party in a negative light. Growing shares in each party now describe those in the other party as more closed-minded, dishonest, immoral and unintelligent than other Americans.”¹ A year later, Pew Research went on to note that such public division leaves a majority (65 percent) feeling self-reportedly “exhausted” when thinking about politics, and that the most frequent words employed by survey participants to describe politics were: divisive, corrupt, messy, chaos, and bad.² Lauren Swayne Barthold, philosopher of ethics at Emerson College, sees such oppositional orientation as grounded in fear, observing that “polarization occurs when fear of certain identity-based difference leads to avoidance, and avoidance leads to hostile stereotypes that result in ‘us-versus-them’ thinking.”³ Dutch ethicist Pieter Vos elaborates: “Driven by fears about losing what is regarded as valuable, one group begins to question the moral legitimacy of another group and even demonizes this group as the cause of imagined or real threats.”⁴ Vos explains that a reductive division of the world into the categories of “us” and “them” is the precursor to the more oppositional “us-vs-them.”⁵ That is, though we might be

1 “As Partisan Hostility Grows, Signs of Frustration With the Two-Party System,” Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C. (August 9, 2022).

2 “Americans’ Dismal Views of the Nation’s Politics,” Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C. (September 19, 2023).

3 Lauren Swayne Barthold, *Overcoming Polarization in the Public Sphere: Civic Dialogue* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 3.

4 Pieter H. Vos, “Introduction,” in *The Calling of the Church in Times of Polarization*, ed. Heleen E. Zorgdrager and Pieter H. Vos, vol. 46 of *Studies in Reformational Philosophy*, series ed. Eddy Van der Borgh, 1–21 (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 1.

5 Vos, “Introduction,” 4–5.

aware of and try to avoid us-vs-them thinking, we perhaps are missing the more fundamental task of addressing how we understand the distinction to begin with.

The division and polarization that is unfortunately so characteristic of our cultural and political landscapes in North America is perhaps nowhere more clearly seen than in the arena of discourse—both public and interpersonal. Many of us would like to think that we are more than willing to engage in healthy discussion, even with people who disagree with us. In spite of this sincerely held value, however, people often can find themselves devolving into those us-vs-them divisions and circling their wagons in camps of like-minded people.⁶

While such a state of affairs is regrettable in itself, of particular concern is the manner in which Christians navigate the problem. Hovering in the air of many Christian communities is an apparent conviction that the origins of incivility lie primarily within “the world,” where they understand people’s lives to be animated by a combination of ill will and agenda.⁷ By contrast, so the thinking seems to hold, they as the people of God are in general reliably motivated by Christlike charity and biblical truth. What’s more, Christians in recent years seem to have become more comfortable justifying an antagonistic stance on their part toward other viewpoints by claiming that those others have not shown basic respect for their own views. “Why should I respect their view—they don’t respect mine!” has been a response one can hear more and more in Christian circles.⁸ Rev. Dr. Clay Stauffer, of the Vanderbilt Project on Unity and American Democracy, observes: “Christianity has contributed to the polarization of our nation. Without a doubt,

6 On social media algorithms and their contribute to polarization, see: Ermelinda Rodillosso, “Filter Bubbles and the Unfeeling: How AI for Social Media Can Foster Extremism and Polarization,” *Philosophy and Technology* 37, no. 2 (June 2024): article 71, 1–21.

7 For the notion of the world (cosmos) as the natural realm that is antithetical to God, see H. Sasse, “*kósmos*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, abridged in one volume by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 459–465 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 464. Drawing from locations in the gospel of John, Sasse states “In such references the cosmos is as it were a collective person represented by its prince. Christ and the cosmos are thus opponents.... Salvation history is a struggle between Christ and the cosmos, or the evil one who rules it” (464). *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* observes: “‘the world’ can also refer to the subclass of indifferent and hostile people who reject God and his ways.” See: Carl Bridges, Jr., “world,” *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996).

8 Najib George Awad, of Hartford Seminary, observes: “Many Christian intellectuals and authors, from the earth’s four corners and from every background imaginable, relate that the Christian church [has] lost ground in the public life of the World.” He goes on to assert: “Christians, like any other religious people dealing with a challenge to their beliefs, tend to respond to changes toward the church ... by leaning toward self-victimization: the church is the victim of the world’s unjust persecuting and blame-shifting mentality that makes it often punish Christianity for evil for which it is not responsible.” Najib George Awad, “‘They Are in the World, but Not of the World’: Biblical and Contextual Reflections on Church, Alterity and Self-Otherizing,” Ch. 16 in *The Calling of the Church in Times of Polarization*, ed. Heleen E. Zorgdrager and Pieter H. Vos, vol. 46 of *Studies in Reformational Philosophy*, series ed. Eddy Van der Borgh, 325–43 (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 325, 326.

Christians have participated in the name calling, demonizing and divisive rhetoric that has divided our country. This has been true on both the right and the left.”⁹

The Problem of Matthew 5 for Christian Individuals and Communities

While the experiences prompting these attitudes and stances by Christians are real, it is hard not to notice a contrast between such responses and the vision of gospel charity so magisterially articulated by Christ in Matthew 5:

You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. . . . Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:38–45, NIV, 2011)

The problems raised by this text are complex, despite its beautiful clarity and dramatic call to not return evil for evil. We can notice immediately that, though oft-quoted, this is *not* the common narrative about living as Christians in the world today. A moment’s pause likely can call to mind salient examples of things that people of faith express outrage about, or rights and freedoms that they feel justified in standing up for specifically *as* people of faith. However, the language of the text seems to suggest an almost verbatim counternarrative to the “But they’re not being respectful to me or my faith!” justification for positioning ourselves apart from, or even in opposition to, those unlike us. *Should* we really be “turning the other cheek” when the world is antagonistic to Christian faith?¹⁰ We should note

9 Clay Stauffer, “When Polarization Hits the Pews,” *The Vanderbilt Project on Unity and American Democracy*, Vanderbilt University, February 22, 2021.

10 Melanie A. Howard considers how this text might be received by Christian immigrants, containing as it does “directives urging nonresistance to abuse and love of one’s enemies” (Melanie A. Howard, “Turning Cheeks at Checkpoints: Matthew 5:38–48 as a Text of Terror or Expression of Encouragement for Immigrant Audiences?” *Preaching in/and the Borderlands*, ed. J. Dwayne Howell and Charles L. Aaron Jr., 79–91 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2020), 80. Howard suggests that for some readers the text may be a “text of terror,” while for others “this text may suggest that if one’s identity is ultimately founded on the basis of a relationship to the divine, then human governments that threaten deportation may seem to pose less of a threat” (82, 89). Howard also engages possible rhetorical framings of Matthew 5, again in terms of modern immigrant audiences, in “Paradigm of Peace, Silly Satire, Text of Terror: Perspectives on Matthew 5:38–48 for Immigrant Populations,” *Soundings* 101, no. 2 (2018): 110–46.

that, clearly, we are not to read this text as invalidating social justice efforts or as suggesting that oppressors should be simply bowed to. The problems raised by this text are complex indeed.

Modern readers looking for a fresh engagement with this text might find help in Thomas Aquinas's collation of ancient commentary on the gospels, his *Catena aurea*, which shows that the overall sense of the text was taken to be in contrast with the human tendency to *over* retaliate for a harm. Hence, when the Old Testament law declares "an eye for an eye" (e.g., Exodus 21:23–25, Leviticus 24:20, Deuteronomy 19:21), the point was not so much to promote retributive violence as it was to prevent disproportionate responses based on rage. The law, Augustine says, was designed to *limit* acts of retribution, not to promote them: "[The Law] is not to encourage but to check rage, for it does not rekindle what was extinguished, but hinders the flames already kindled from further spread."¹¹ Similarly, Aquinas shows Pseudo-Chrysostom observing the practical wisdom of moderating even one's legal right to retribution: "Has your return blow at all restrained him from striking you again? It has rather roused him to another blow. For anger is not checked by meeting anger, but is only more irritated."¹²

These interpretations seem helpful to a point, and align with biblical calls to patience, self-control, and practical wisdom, but they do not yet fully explain the radical mandates of Matthew 5—i.e., seemingly to exact no justice at all.¹³ Augustine goes on to set the stage for upending the scales of justice altogether, though here still for the practical reason of avoiding excess: "That which the Law sought to do, namely, to put an end to unequal revenge, is more safely secured when there is no revenge at all."¹⁴ Jerome identifies escalation of harm explicitly as sin (and, interestingly, the predominant thing to be avoided), stating: "Thus our Lord by doing away all retaliation, cuts off the beginnings of sin. So the Law corrects faults, the Gospel removes their occasion."¹⁵ Augustine, ever pastoral, highlights the spiritual motive undergirding Christ's call to not return evil for evil, adding: "Whence the Lord judges that others' weakness should rather be borne with compassion, than that our own should be soothed by others' pain."¹⁶

11 Aquinas, *Catena aurea in Matthaeum*, 5.20. Ref.: Thomas Aquinas. *Catena aurea in Matthaeum*. Latin text based on the 1953 Marietti edition. Published, with English translation, as: *Catena aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels, Collected out of the Works of the Fathers: Vol. 1 St. Matthew Part I*, trans. John Henry Parker, J.G.F., J. Rivington, and Joseph Kenny (Oxford, 1841). Thomas's reference to Augustine from *contra Faustus* 19.25.

12 Aquinas, *Catena aurea Matt.* 5.20. Thomas does not provide a specific location for Pseudo-Chrysostom's reference.

13 On the presence of hyperbole in Matthew 5, see Charles Cruise, "A Methodology for Detecting and Mitigating Hyperbole in Matthew 5:38–42," *JETS* 6, no. 1 (2018): 83–103.

14 Aquinas, *Catena aurea Matt.* 5.20. Thomas's reference to Augustine from *contra Faustus* 19.25.

15 Aquinas, *Catena aurea Matt.* 5.20. Thomas does not provide a specific location for Jerome's reference.

16 Aquinas, *Catena aurea Matt.* 5.20. Thomas's reference to Augustine: *Sermo in monte* 1.20.

Better to be harmed oneself than to contribute to the human problem of escalating violence.¹⁷ Chrysostom, recognizing that Matthew 5 presents a veritable spiritual exercise in Christlikeness, sketches out the ascending steps specifically with regard to suffering offense:

Note through what steps we have now ascended hither, and how He has set us on the very pinnacle of virtue. The first step is, not to begin to do wrong to any, the second, that in avenging a wrong done to us we be content with retaliating equal; the third, to return nothing of what we have suffered; the fourth, to offer one's self to the endurance of evil, the fifth, to be ready to suffer even more evil than the oppressor desires to inflict; the sixth, not to hate him of whom we suffer such things; the seventh, to love him; the eighth, to do him good; the ninth, to pray for him. And because the command is great, the reward proposed is also great, namely to be made like unto God.¹⁸

These readings emphasize the spiritual significance of concrete, human interactions. Prompted by these readings, we can understand in Christ's words a serious call to be willing to be harmed rather than to do harm, and the promise that such a difficult vocation aligns us with the very heart and mind of God, making us his children indeed.¹⁹

By contrast, the problem of polarization for Christian communities seems to indicate a marked resistance in the modern mind, or at least desensitization, to this portion of Christ's Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1–7:29). In addition to the cultural, social, and moral difficulties this resistance contributes to, such comfortability with a polarizing orientation seems to have implications for a Christian community's spiritual identity and formation. This is sobering. What might be the reason that contemporary Christians are unable, or unwilling, to live according to the gospel mandates of Matthew 5?

17 On the theme of mimetic violence and its relation to Christ's redemptive mission, see the work of René Girard: *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), and *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, trans. M.B. DeBevoise, Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture, series ed. William A. Johnson (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2014).

18 Aquinas, *Catena aurea Matt.* 5.21. Thomas does not provide a specific location for Chrysostom's reference.

19 The Greek term used in verse 45 of John 17 is not "child" but "son" (*huios/viós*)—i.e., "that you may be sons of your Father in heaven." However, the focus of the idiom here is not on attaining the relationship (becoming a child of God), but rather on being the kind of person who shares the characteristics of God himself—a frequent meaning of the Semitic idiom "son of." See the entry for "son of" in Bruce K. Waltke and Michael Patrick O'Connor, *An introduction to biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 9.5.3.b. See also Eugene A. Nida and J.P. Louw, *Lexical Semantics of the Greek New Testament* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), 58.26.

Responses to Threatened Identity: Fear and Theological Loyalty

A number of scholars have engaged the issue of social polarization in varying parts of the world through the lens of threatened community identity. Considering cases of Christian communities struggling to relate to their own societal contexts, they point to the role of fear in cases of dramatic alienation—an intuition we saw earlier raised in the work of Barthold and Vos. Viktória Kóczian, in a study on the theological challenges at work in the European migration crisis, highlights the problem of Christians fearing for the safety of their identities as faith communities: “As societies and churches accept refugees and migrants, they struggle with fear partly related to the possibility of a cultural change and loss of identity as a consequence of the socio-cultural differences between the European population and the newcomers.”²⁰ Najib George Awad, addressing the “traumatic, polarized and dangerous” situation of the Syrian Christian church, notes the fear-based problem of what he calls “lethal alterity”—i.e., a toxic defense response to an antagonistic environment by which one negatively frames their identity in contradistinction to the others one is threatened by.²¹ Though we can hardly fault communities for employing “‘Not-Me’ dis-identification,” as he calls it, in such fraught circumstances, Awad cautions that such identity-through-alienation is ultimately self-destructive.²²

These cases illumine in dramatic fashion the dangers of the social polarization experienced by Christian communities in North America, by showing advanced cases of the same pathology. It is not to be imagined, however, that many people in Western churches would describe *themselves* as acting in fear. We might, however, address the impulse in terms of what we might call “theological loyalty.”²³ A person feels that their faith-based values and way of life are marginalized, even threatened, by society, and that “worldly” ways of life are given privileged footing. They may feel compelled to stand up for or defend the Christian perspective, emphasizing their distinctness and differentness from their surroundings. Certainly, scriptures such as Matthew 10:34 would seem to be strong support for such thinking: “I did not come to bring peace, but a sword” (NIV, 2011), and so on.²⁴ Further, such a person may double down on affirming and safeguarding the “rights” that, as a person of faith, they are entitled to. The impulse is

20 Viktória Kóczian, “Theology of Migration in the Discourse of the World Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary (2015–2019),” ch. 17 in *The Calling of the Church in Times of Polarization*, ed. Heleen E. Zorgdrager and Pieter H. Vos, vol. 46 of *Studies in Reformational Philosophy*, series ed. Eddy Van der Borgh, 344–66 (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 363–64.

21 Najib George Awad, “They Are *in* the World, but Not *of* the World,” 334–35.

22 Awad, “They Are *in* the World, but Not *of* the World,” 338.

23 Alternatively, “theological tribalism.” See Tremper Longman III, “Avoid Theological Tribalism: Read Broadly,” *Didaktikos* 4 (2020): 42.

24 See: N. Clayton Croy, “Sword Handling: The Early Christian Reception of Matthew 10:34,” *Journal of the Bible and Its Reception* 6, no. 1 (2019): 135–62.

understandable, but, with its clear connection to us-vs-them thinking, the questions become: Is it good? Is such a person justified in *not* applying Matthew 5 to a socially divisive situation, on theological grounds?

A Possible Corrective: John 17 as an Interpretive Lens for Modern Readers of Matthew 5

Awad's analysis of polarization in defense of a community's identity, and the lethal alterity that can result, puts before his reader a possible corrective for such thinking. He suggests an alternate reading of Christ's prayer for his disciples in John 17, where Christ speaks about their being "in the world" and at the same time "not of the world":

I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. (John 17:13–18, NIV, 2011)

Let us first consider Christ's prayer in its entirety, i.e., the whole of John chapter 17. We will then return to Awad's reading of what being in the world but not of it might entail, and what it might suggest for the problem of polarization in North America.

John chapter 17 forms the end of the "Last Supper/Farewell" discourse between Christ and the disciples, begun with the foot washing of chapter 13.²⁵ Just prior to this chapter, the discourse properly speaking ends with Christ's words: "I have told you these things so that you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart, I have overcome the world." (16:33). Christ then turns his attention toward heaven, and this chapter is a record of his prayer. The audience of his prayer is, clearly, both the heavenly Father and the disciples sitting around him—and generations of later believers, whom he mentions in his prayer. The prayer is theologically rich, and quite different in tone from the personal prayer of agony that Christ will utter in the coming hours in Gethsemane (we do not see this

25 The apparent "ending" of the event that occurs at 14:31 ("Come now; let us leave.") can be understood as indicative of an earlier framing of the narrative, in which the events of chapter 14 continue directly into the passion account. In this view, chapters 15 through 17 were added in by an editor at a later time. See, for example, J. Martin C. Scott "John," in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson, 1161–212 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 1198.

prayer in John, but Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Luke 22 record it).²⁶ Indeed, the prayer is an interesting case study of what prayer *is*. Much of it is of a declarative, or even expository, nature—affirming the nature of Christ’s relationship with the Father and articulating reasons for and effects of his earthly mission, particularly in terms of the disciples. We can notice a number of “so that” phrases illuminating just these sorts of explanations (e.g., vv. 2, 11, 13, 21, 22, 23, 26). He states what he has done and why. How interesting it is that he does this in the form of a prayer to the Father. Why might this be? What kind of a prayer is this?

We might understand the nature of Christ’s prayer as an extension, or an active demonstration, of a theme central throughout his ministry: Christ does what he does as obedience to the will of the Father. This is a theme that is particularly present in the Gospel of John.²⁷ In this prayer, we see Christ positioning himself as sent by the Father (e.g., vv. 3, 8, 17, 21, 23, 25), and as fully obedient to the mission the Father entrusted him with (vv. 4, 6, 8, 12, 14, 19, 26). We see him establishing his full unity with the Father (vv. 5, 11, 21, 22, 26), and that all that Christ has both comes from and is shared with the Father (vv. 7, 8, 10, 11, 24, 26). It may be that Christ is here, in his farewell address, taking the opportunity to emphasize in close detail what it means to be Son of God.

Given this reading of John 17 as Christ demonstrating to his disciples his own relationship with the Father, we might further read his prayer as an act of what medieval theologians called “manuduction”—i.e., Christ leading humanity “by the hand” to restored relationship with the Father.²⁸ The church has historically understood this ministry of Christ to humanity as an invitation into the very inner life of the Godhead—an invitation to share the love and joy that the Father, the

26 A basic outline of theological themes in John 17 could include: 1–5, Christ’s status as the eternal Son, and as sent by the Father; 6–8, Christ’s revelatory relation with the disciples, establishing them in communion with the Father; 9–12, Christ’s earthly relationship with the disciples drawing to a close, and how that will affect the disciples; 13–19, the coming transition to the disciples’ gospel mission in the world; 20–24, the unity of the Son and the Father, and the subsequent unity of believers in Christ, both with one another and with God; 25–26, the revelatory nature of Christ’s mission to the world, both during his earthly ministry and ongoing.

27 See, for example, John 4:34, John 6:38, John 12:49–50, John 14:31, and particularly John 5:19–20a, and 30: “Jesus gave them this answer: ‘Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.... By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.’” (NIV, 2011) A notable exception is the Gethsemane prayer, found in Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Luke 22, but not in John.

28 E.g., Thomas Aquinas, in *Summa theologiae* 2–2.82.3 ad 2 observes: “Yet such is the weakness of the human mind that it needs a guiding hand, not only to the knowledge, but also to the love of Divine things by means of certain sensible objects known to us. Chief among these is the humanity of Christ, according to the words of the Preface [Preface for Christmastide], ‘that through knowing God visibly, we may be caught up to the love of things invisible.’ Wherefore matters relating to Christ’s humanity are the chief incentive to devotion, leading us thither as a guiding hand.” (Ref: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Latin text based on the Leonine Edition, 1888–1906; English translation by Laurence Shapcote of the English Dominican Province.

Son, and the Spirit have together.²⁹ Christ's prayer in John 17 can be read as an act of this very introduction of his disciples into the intimate shared life of the Godhead (vv. 2, 6, 9, 11, 13, 14, 21–24, 26). In sum, on this reading John 17 can therefore be seen as providing for us both an illumining of and a generous introduction into the life of being a Christ-follower.

Returning to Awad's analysis of John 17, specifically verses 13–18, we start by observing that typically Christ's words are read as indicating a desire for his disciples that "though they are in the world, they would be not of the world." Awad's analysis reminds us, however, that the phrases, so often paired together, appear in separate verses (vv. 14, 16, and 18)—we should, therefore, exercise caution about how we articulate their relation. On Awad's reading, Christ's concern in the text can be better understood as "even though, as Christ followers, they are not naturally of the world, they should, *because* they are Christ followers, be actively and intentionally present in the world," just as Christ was.³⁰ Awad reads Christ's prayer as actually expressing concern on behalf of the world. Indeed, he claims, Christ worries *for* the world, with regard to the potential of harm *from* the disciples: "Jesus believes that mirroring his love to the world requires being *of* the world, not just being present *in* it: one must be willing to lay down one's religious alterity for the sake of the world, not to allow this alterity to place the world in polarity with God.... If the disciples would not do that, Jesus fears for the world from them."³¹

Using this analysis of John 17:13–18 as a lens for understanding the problem of polarization, Awad considers with concern the flawed manner in which Christians often view alienization as a predictable entailment, or even evidence, of faithful Christ-following. In reality, he claims, "[such] alterity is not an expression of loyalty to Christ, but a sign of polarizing Christ and the world upon belief in self-righteous, self-protectionist exteriority."³² In other words, accepting polarization—or, even worse: contributing to it—does *not* belong in the life of a Christ-follower.

By contrast, Christ's prayer in the whole of John 17 illumines the vocation of

29 E.g., Augustine, *De trinitate* 15.19.37; Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 3.23.2 and 1 and ad 3; John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.1.1; *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 12; John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, ch. 13.

Dutch philosopher Rudi te Velde characterizes this wonder: "At the centre of Christian faith stands the conviction that the inaccessible mystery of God has opened itself for us, that we somehow, through his incarnate Son, are called to share the divine life" (ref.: Rudi A. te Velde, "The Divine Person(s): Trinity, Person, and Analogous Naming," Ch. 26 in *The Oxford Handbook of The Trinity*, ed. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 359–70, at 360).

30 Awad, "They Are *in* the World, but Not *of* the World," 328–329. The suggested articulation of Christ's intent in John 17:14–18 is mine, based upon Awad's analysis.

31 Awad, "They Are *in* the World, but Not *of* the World," 330.

32 Awad, "They Are *in* the World, but Not *of* the World," 330–31.

the Christ-follower. Having been reconciled to God through Christ, we are called into the inner life of shared love among the Father, Son, and Spirit—and, as a result, also called into Christ’s mission into the world on behalf of divine love. Theologically, Christian tradition teaches us that taking up the incarnational mission of Christ, including embracing the risks to oneself from such an others-oriented way of life, is made possible by the divine gift of charity.³³ Charity, provided to us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, allows us to operate “as if it is natural and normal for us to know, feel, love, and act as God does.”³⁴ Charity dismantles alienation between us and God; by extension, it also dismantles alienation between us and the people in the world around us.

This vocation to a life of charity on behalf of the world, our study presses us to remember, entails being ready to suffer harm rather than inflict it. We return to the radical mandate of Matthew 5 to turn the other cheek, to go a second mile—which, in our times, can translate to checking personal outrage when we encounter being misunderstood, misrepresented, mistreated in social contexts, when our perspective as Christians is not given the basic respect we feel all persons deserve. It translates to resisting the modern tendency to identify “standing up for the gospel” with “standing up for our rights as people of faith,” especially understood in opposition to the world.³⁵ It is precisely because we *are* Christ-followers that we should be willing to resist taking up self-protective postures toward those who are antagonistic toward us—and even more to refuse initiating antagonism ourselves.³⁶ We often hear people insist that reasonable people *ought* to be able to absorb a certain amount of negativity, and to act in pro-social ways even when we disagree. This, as our times make abundantly clear, is a surprisingly difficult posture to maintain in practice. Christ’s prayer in John 17 provides the theological groundwork for Matthew 5’s vision of human life. It both calls and enables us to actually bring about the humanly impossible: being like Christ.

33 See, for example, the work of Thomas Aquinas on the divine gifts, which allow us to be moved by God, and which make us connatural with the divine. Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1–2, questions 68–70; 2–2, questions 23–27.

34 Thomas Ryan, “Revisiting Affective Knowing and Connaturality in Aquinas,” *Theological Studies* 66 (2005): 49–68, at 60. Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.1.5 ad 2; 1–2.27.2 ad 2.

Similarly, the Dominican theologian Jean-Pierre Torrell observes that to gain a vision of how we should act in the world, we should look at how God does. See: Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Vol. 2: Spiritual Master*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 73.

35 It is noteworthy that such a self-protective mindset seems to take the shape of its identity as a person of faith from the politically-generated freedom of religion, over and above the theologically-generated vocation to self-emptying.

36 We can think of the Apostle Paul’s declaration that “we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ” (1 Cor. 9:12, NIV, 2011). Harry P. Nasuti examines the rights that Paul willingly lays down, and connects these to the list in 2 Corinthians 6:3–4 where Paul articulates the things he would suffer rather than present an obstacle to the gospel. See: Harry P. Nasuti, “The Woes of the Prophets and the Rights of the Apostle: The Internal Dynamics of 1 Corinthians 9,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50 (1988): 246–64. See also Philipians 2:5–8.

We are now ready to go on to examine how, in concrete terms, such a way of life might respond to the modern problem of social polarization and public discourse.

Reimagined Discourse: An Alternative to the Harm of Us-vs-Them Polarization

In this section, we will frame a vision of Christ-following that directly responds to the problem of polarized discourse with which the paper opened. We take our starting point from the radical, difficult call to others-centered living articulated in Matthew 5, which we saw illumined and animated by Christ's prayer in John 17. We come to this section prepared to consider how a Christ-follower can participate in public discourse with a mindset of going a second mile, turning the other cheek, of being harmed rather than inflicting harm. We will consider what it means, in the technical terms of discourse, to be fully present *in* the world as Christ was. What follows is, first, a proposal for resisting polarization through reimagining the logic of how we act within human discourse. We will then go on to identify dispositions that operate in support of such a transformation of discourse by Christlike charity.

It seems to me that, in general, people understand how we talk about the world in terms of two main categories: fact and opinion. These are understood to be the two kinds of statements people can make when speaking about the world and what happens in it, and we are often encouraged to "think critically" by separating fact from opinion.³⁷

Difficulties emerge almost immediately as we consider this framing, especially insofar as fact and opinion are spoken of as the main, or even the only, two options. These are the two buckets that we separate statements into as we encounter them—something is either fact or opinion.³⁸ We often hear facts identified as data-driven, something that can be observed, measured, confirmed, proven, etc. Opinions are most generally identified simply as *not* fact. Paradigmatically, we think of facts in terms of science, and the scientific method, but we also use the term more informally to get at how well, or poorly, a person's view of the world is grounded in or reflects "reality." We could say that people understand facts as bits of reality, or at least grasps on reality, and opinions are essentially things that exist in, or are generated

37 See, for example, "Distinguishing Between Factual and Opinion Statements in the News," Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C. (June 18, 2018); "Critical Reading 1: Sorting Out Fact and Opinion," Communications Student Support Center, Valencia College, Orlando, Florida; "Critical Literacy III—Strategy: Fact versus opinion," Lori-beth Larson, Minnesota Libraries Publishing Project.

38 See, for a historical example of the long-standing cultural contradistinction of fact and opinion, this advice from a 1928 psychology column: "Seek always to distinguish between facts and opinions.... The good student will do well to cultivate the habit of trying to disentangle mere opinions from established facts. The capacity to do this is greatly needed in present-day life." See: Guy M. Whipple, "Fact vs. Opinion," *The Science News-Letter* 13, no. 374 (June 1928): 366.

from, a person's own thoughts. We are to be discouraged from expecting others to take seriously those things that make sense mainly in our own private universe.

On this framing, we can quickly see that if a person believes they are saying something of substance, which they are likely to associate with "fact," and someone disagrees with them, then the natural conclusion is that the other person must be either denying facts or explicitly operating in "opinion"—a form of thought typically valued so lowly as to be often paired with the adjective "*just* opinion."³⁹ A person knows *they* are basing their own perspective on fact (given those two options), so it must be that the other person is not. The first person might go so far as to say they respect the other's right to their own opinion, but in giving that technical respect they are clearly classifying the other's view as just that: opinion. Given the low estimation of opinion's worth and relevance, when we identify another person's view in this way we are implicitly giving ourselves permission to not have to take it seriously, to not be accountable to it as possible truth.⁴⁰ Finally, we should notice in the above scenario how neatly and uncomplicatedly we tend to associate our own perspectives with fact. This is a problem we will return to, but for now it is worth noting that we tend to overestimate the fact-basis of the things we hold to be true about the world, and, by consequence, underestimate the presence of such facts in the views of those who disagree with us.⁴¹

39 Galen Barry examines the problematic fact-vs-opinion distinction in terms of ethics, noting the problem of identifying moral claims as "just opinion." Barry suggests replacing the fact/opinion distinction with a distinction between "merely descriptive" claims and those that are "evaluative." See: Galen Barry, "Facts vs. Opinions: Helping Students Overcome the Distinction," *Teaching Philosophy* 45, no. 3 (September, 2022): 267–77, at 269.

40 Barry depicts the fact-vs-opinion distinction generally in terms of the logical-conceptual obstacle it presents to moral/philosophical debate (in the sense of productive discourse), but the subtext of his examination is an interpersonal disinterest, even division, that results. See: Barry, 274.

41 Michael Dimock, president of the Pew Research Center, observed in 2020: "while Americans put a good deal of faith in their own ability to recognize inaccurate or misleading information, they are less sure about others' ability to discern it." See: Michael Dimmock, "How Americans View Trust, Facts, and Democracy Today," *Pew Trust Magazine* (February 19, 2020): 1. Note the related psychological phenomenon of the Dunning-Kruger effect, by which individuals overestimate their ability, knowledge, skills, etc. See: David Dunning, "Chapter Five – The Dunning-Kruger Effect: On Being Ignorant of One's Own Ignorance," *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 44 (2011): 247–96. See also: David Dunning, Kerri Johnson, Joyce Ehrlinger, and Justin Kruger, "Why People Fail to Recognize Their Own Incompetence," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 12, no. 3 (2003): 83–87.

I'd like to suggest that this fact-vs-opinion framing is itself a part of the us-vs-them problem, and to offer an alternative. Instead of fact-vs-opinion, I'd like to suggest that the two categories of statements could be better identified as *fact* and *analysis*. In this framing, both kinds of statements would be understood as responding to some aspect of reality, and both are understood as capable, or even deserving, of being taken seriously.⁴² In this framing, the term opinion would be used mainly for those informal statements we make that we don't intend or expect to be viewed seriously, or don't offer support for—such as preferences, casual observations, lighthearted speculation, etc.

In my view, both fact and analysis are aiming to articulate truth about some evidence in the world around us. Facts are, in principle, those statements about the world that are able to be (and expected to be) essentially the same no matter who you ask.⁴³ Their stability, and transferability among multiple people, makes them of clear value in human thought and discourse. The qualities mentioned earlier—can be observed, confirmed, proven, etc.—in some ways miss the point. Those are how we *discover* facts; the truth of the matter with regard to fact would be just as true even if no one ever thought about it.⁴⁴ Examples of fact statements might include: the current composition of a government body, the boiling temperature of water, and the distance between point A and point B. In practical discourse, facts are the things that most people would feel are unreasonable to deny.⁴⁵ By contrast, statements of analysis add something *about* the evidence, some bit of interpretation, such that the truth of the matter will be different depending on who you ask. Notice that, in my proposed framing, analysis statements can be varying as to content but still be capable of meaningfully contributing true narratives about the world. Examples of analysis statements, corresponding to the above examples of fact, might address the cause of X conflict in Congress/Parliament and what should be done about it, what temperature of water is best for steeping different kinds of tea, and whether the distance between point A and point B is too great for Y purpose. Statements of analysis can be described as nuanced, responsive, “human” statements—we should *expect* such subjective statements in discourse,

42 Rita Astuti identifies taking people seriously as a basic impulse and fundamental task of ethnography and anthropology. See: Rita Astuti, “Taking People Seriously,” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 105–22.

43 This is not to suggest that common affirmation of a claim is identical with its truth value. Barry notes the error of conflating “a contentious claim” (i.e., one that people can disagree with) with “opinion.” See: Barry, 272. Rather, the point of this observation is that facts are understood not to “belong” to any specific perspective. See: Barry, 268.

44 Similarly, Barry notes that “whether a claim is true/false” is a very different matter from “whether the claim is testable/provable/justified.” See: Barry, 267–68.

45 Godulla, Seibert, and Klute provide an analysis of “denialism” in terms of a rejection of “fact-based consensus.” See: Alexander Godulla, Daniel Seibert, and Tim Klute, “What Is Denialism? An Examination and Classification of Definitional Approaches and Relevant Actors,” *Journalism and Media* 5 (2024): 135–47, at 135.

even value them.⁴⁶ Analysis statements aren't "failed" fact claims—they indicate that we are encountering human beings and their views of the world. Note that we can remove the "vs" in this framing—we can say "fact *and* analysis," as the two are not oppositional to each other, in the way that fact and opinion are often taken to be.

What does this framing do for us? What are the implications? First, I think there is benefit to admitting that fewer of our statements are simple facts than we would sometimes like to think.⁴⁷ Very little that we say is simple and straightforward enough to actually merit the label of "indisputable." As soon as a human being speaks about the world, there will be layers of analysis, layers of perspective, things that someone could reasonably disagree with. Along the same lines, I think there is benefit to recognizing that such analysis, even when in support of views we disagree strongly with, is on some level responding to reality. Of course, there are many times when we might be instrumental in clarifying or challenging someone's representation of how things stand in the world. But in many cases, perhaps more than we'd enjoy admitting, the other person's view is in reality not entire nonsense. On the contrary, to treat another person's view of the world as "unintelligible" is to be complicit in the problem of polarization, and to betray our calling as Christ-followers to be in and of the world.⁴⁸

The technical framing proposed in this section prompts us to encounter other people in a spirit of shared space and experience. The great gain of this framing is to cause us to see the people of the world as indeed our neighbors—another way that Christ views what it means to be in the world, as he makes clear in his parable of Luke 10:25–37. How, then, do we move from this technical reimagining of discourse to practical engagements with the people around us? How do we animate this logical framing with the spirit of Christlike charity? That is our final task, to which we now turn.

46 Charles Taylor observes: "Each one of us has his/her own way of realizing our humanity, and that it is important to find and live out one's own, as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed from outside, by society, or the previous generation or religious or political authority." See: Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2007), 475.

47 Barry points out that "while the fact-opinion distinction is *believed* to be mutually exclusive, it faces easy counterexamples." See: Barry, 270. That is, it is easy to find instances of claims we hold to be fact-based but which are not *pure* fact, i.e., without admixture of elements of personal perspective and belief.

48 "A *violent* response to something we don't understand ... sees such an object as flawed—if it is not understood, it must in some way be unintelligible, either in itself or in relation to the viewer (i.e., either irrational/nonrational, or radically 'other')." See: M. Giordano, "Gratitude in Thomas Aquinas: A Spiritual Exercise of Alignment with the Good," in *Gestures of Grace: Essays in Honour of Robert Sweetman*, ed. Joshua Lee Harris and Héctor A. Acero Ferrer, 40–67 (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2023), at 54.

Gilles Mongeau succinctly depicts such epistemological alienation in his observation that "what is opposed to friendship is not the enemy ... but the stranger." See: Gilles Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom: The Summa theologiae as Spiritual Pedagogy* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2015), 193.

The Final Piece: Dispositions That Animate Discourse with Charity

The question before us is: how would we proceed differently, given this framing of discourse as fact and analysis, rather than fact-vs-opinion? I'd like to propose three ways that we can apply this framing to concrete interactions with others—three dispositions toward others in the world that help us get a purchase on the calls in Matthew 5 to turn the other cheek, etc. and in John 17 to be present in and of the world precisely as Christ-followers.⁴⁹

Intellectual Charity

In discoursing with someone whose view is different, we might start by reminding ourselves that we are mainly encountering *analysis*. We don't hold their statements to the standard of fact—we are hearing what the person wants to say about the world. We should approach their discourse graciously because we too, of course, are engaged in the same analysis-based task of trying to make sense of the world. The Christ-follower is called to, with the help of the Holy Spirit, try to see the other person's view fairly. We should aim to be able to articulate their view in words they themselves might use, or at least agree with. Our aim should be that we could represent their view in such a way that they could respond with, "Yes, that *is* what I think." In terms of our vocation to counter polarization, this stance toward a conversation partner can be understood as "intellectual charity"—and we can recall that the gift of charity produces connectivity between people even quite dissimilar, and makes friendship possible where there is genuine alterity.⁵⁰ The disposition of intellectual charity can have the felicitous effect of helping people feel seen, heard, and respected on their own terms, which is an important first step in tearing down barriers and building bridges in their place.

Moral Imagination

Of course, sometimes such a charitable view of the other requires some stretching on our part first. Too often, when we encounter someone quite at odds with our own view, we are more than content to leave them there in their status of unfamiliar difference. We might stop ourselves short of wishing them ill, but we are willing to indulge our profound disinterest in their view of the world. Such a practice can all too easily short-circuit attempts to develop intellectual charity.

Therefore, we can understand the effect of charity in some cases as prompting

49 Levine reflects on the transformative nature of the call in the Sermon on the Mount: "The Sermon on the Mount resembles, in part, a theological pep talk. Good pep talks, or revivals, don't just make us feel better about ourselves. They inspire us not just to feel better but to do better: try harder, dig more deeply, find the resources needed for living the life to which God is calling us." (Levine, ix–xx).

50 (Ref.: n34) Thomas Ryan, "Revisiting Affective Knowing and Connaturality in Aquinas," *Theological Studies* 66 (2005): 49–68, at 60. Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.1.5 ad 2; 1–2.27.2 ad 2.

us (again, with the help of the Holy Spirit) to be basically *curious* about the other person and their view of the world. What exactly is it that they see? Can we stretch ourselves to charitably imagine *why* they might feel the way they do? Of key importance here is the assumption that they *are* in some way responding to reality, the reality of the world we share with them. This is precisely the act of intentionally making someone a neighbor (i.e., as per Luke 10:25–37). Even more charitably still, once we have worked to imagine the life of a person that might produce such a view of the world, we might press ourselves yet further to ask: can I envision it with them?⁵¹

This practice, this personal discipline, has the tremendous benefit of placing the two people within the same conversational space—they are not aliens calling to each other from different worlds and in different languages.⁵² They become, wonder of wonders, neighbors. We can call this disposition “moral imagination.”

Moral Humility

Finally, when we are engaging another’s view with our own, it’s a good idea to remember that in our analysis, we too are *building on* facts—we are not simply *stating* facts, nor do we own them exclusively.⁵³ We can hope to bring our hearer along with us as we sketch out the path of our logic, values, and priorities, but that invitation into our perspective will be all the more compelling if we remind ourselves that it is just that—our perspective, not revelation. This stance requires of us a great deal of what we might think of as “moral humility.” We are accustomed to thinking of truth as belonging properly to God, and by extension to his children. There is merit to that confidence, as it is indeed a distinctive ministry of the Holy Spirit to lead Christ-followers into all truth (ref.: John 16). There is, however, nothing special about Christians that makes them more likely to recognize and correctly

51 Andrew Pinsent describes the psychological phenomenon of “joint attention,” by which a person attends to something in the world around them specifically *with* another person—a phenomenon which makes the person’s experience of that thing qualitatively different. Pinsent compares this phenomenon with the effects of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, by which a person is made able to be moved by the things of God—and, by extension, to attend closely to the human beings that God cares for. See Andrew Pinsent, “The Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, edited by Brian Davies and Eleanore Stump, 475–88 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 478–79, and Andrew Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective in Aquinas’s Ethics: Virtues and Gifts*, Routledge Studies in Ethics and Moral Theory 17 (New York: Routledge, 2012), 34–35, 41–43.

52 David I. Smith and Barbara Carvell, discuss the specific example of learning a foreign language as a context for shared humanity, grounded in what they refer to as “xenophilic hospitality” (i.e., arising from “xenophilia,” love for the stranger).” See David I. Smith and Barbara Carvell, *The Gift of the Stranger: Faith, Hospitality, and Foreign Language Learning* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 86, and n. 24.

53 Barry reminds us that specific perspectives do not, properly speaking, own the facts that undergird their intellectual commitments: “Facts and opinions are just metaphysically different kinds of things: parts of the world belonging to nobody vs. representations of the world belonging to specific people.” See Barry, 268.

articulate facts. Nor is the power of insightful analysis exclusively the purview of Christians. A person “of the world” is just as capable and, all things being equal, likely to have a grasp of the relevant facts and to offer meaningful analysis as the child of God.⁵⁴ On occasion even more so. Our distinctive feature as Christians is *not* that we see things more correctly than others. It is that, as Christ-followers, we are bound to charitably view others and take their perspectives seriously, especially when we feel they are not doing the same for us. This is a tough pill to swallow, but the vocations of Matthew 5 and John 17 call us to embrace this challenge. The disposition of moral humility presses us to recognize that we are likely not as gracious and good as we think we are, and the people in the world around us are not necessarily unreasonable and agenda-laden just because their views differ from ours.

Conclusion: Faithfulness to Christ as Loyalty to Both Truth and Love

In this study, we have examined how the gospel mandates of Matthew 5 and John 17 can shape our understanding of the Christian’s role in public discourse, particularly with an eye for resisting the social polarization that is such a distressing feature of modern daily life. We have seen that it is paradigmatic of being a Christ-follower to embrace laying down one’s rights to be treated fairly, to be understood equally. We have seen that Christians are called to be less attentive to tallying up offenses against themselves than they are to ensuring they do not give offense to others—even, or perhaps especially, with regard to people “of the world.” We have seen that to be a Christ-follower carries with it a call to be genuinely in and of the world, to have our ways of being informed and marked by the charity and mission of Christ, and to open our hearts and minds to the people around us as neighbors—tasks that are aided by the dispositions of intellectual charity, moral imagination, and moral humility.

With these observations, we return to the issue of “theological loyalty”—the notion that we saw can, unfortunately and unnecessarily, function as an obstacle to the Christians taking seriously the mandates of Matthew 5 and John 17. Faithfulness to Christ need not, and even should not, entail alienating ourselves from the people of the world. Rather, we saw that the narratives of Matthew 5 and John 17 give Christians “permission,” counterintuitive as it may seem, to be less concerned about being distinguished from the people of the world than about establishing and nurturing connectedness with them.

54 A contrary view on this point asserts: “For atheism, talk of truth and goodness is nonsense. For the atheist, everything is permitted because, in the misery of solitude, no one is a ‘duty’—in Latin *munus*—for anyone.” See: Stanislaw Grygiel (Pontifical Lateran University, Rome), “Spiritual Discernment in a Secular Age,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 29, no. 1–2 (2017): 149–58, at 151.

What does this tell us about the shape and nature of faithfulness to Christ? It tells us that faithfulness to Christ and to his gospel means loyalty to love as much as it does loyalty to truth.⁵⁵ Loyalty to truth is sometimes easier to understand and to execute than loyalty to love. We can understand how to stand firm for a statement of belief. Less clear, sometimes, is understanding how to go about loving someone quite unlike us. This, however, is what Christ does, and what the presence and help of the Holy Spirit enables us to do as well. Indeed, Matthew 5 shows us that such a stance toward others is precisely how we fulfill our identity as children of God:

You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.... Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5: 43–45, 48, NIV, 2011)

55 For further reading on this theme, see Andreas J. Köstenberger, “We often demonize the opposition and rationalize our lack of love because those on the other side are, of course, the enemies and are undermining god’s truth and opposing his kingdom. Our defense of the truth, however, must never leave love behind. It is not an either-or dichotomy but a bond-and proposition. It is possible both to stand firmly for the truth of God’s Word and to have genuine love for those with whom we differ.” See: Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Excellence: The Character of God and the Pursuit of Scholarly Virtue* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 229.

Welcoming and Defending the Disabled Stranger: Hospitality as Personal Relationship and Public Action

James Gould
McHenry County College

Beth Gould Nolson
Independent Scholar

Abstract

Around the world, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities either live at home with family or in facilities staffed by professionals. Research indicates the hardships of family caregivers (who are often fatigued from looking after a dependent loved one) and the shortcomings of disability service systems (which are plagued by inadequate funding and persistent staff vacancies). We suggest two ways in which faith communities can support people with intellectual disabilities and their caregivers. We interpret the Micah (6:8) Mandate through the lens of hospitality to create two kinds of hospitality: kindness-hospitality and justice-hospitality. Churches can extend hospitality directly through personal relationships of care and indirectly through public and political action. We focus on intellectual disability, but our challenge also requires hospitality to people living with physical, sensory, psychiatric, and invisible disabilities. We reference Christian themes and address Christian communities, but our argument is relevant to other faith traditions as well. We discuss the United States and Canada, but our analysis applies to many international contexts.

Introduction

“Can anyone recommend a service of some kind that can stay overnight for a day or two to care for my son while I’m in the hospital? I need surgery, but I have nobody to stay with him.” This plea on a Facebook group for parents of adults

with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) is one of similar postings each month.¹

Christian faith is incarnational—it is lived in the world. Don Browning defines practical theology as “the reflective process which the Church pursues in its efforts to articulate the theological grounds of practical living in a variety of areas.”² It aims to deepen and align theological understandings and faith-based practices—personal and public. Of fundamental importance to practical theology is contributing to the flourishing of creation, life in all its fullness (John 10:10). Through social witness that speaks to issues affecting society-at-large, Kathleen Cahalan and Gordon Mikoski declare, “practical theologians are unapologetic change agents.”³

Christian ethics mandates concern for every person, particularly the most vulnerable (Lev 19:10–15; James 1:27). One group often left behind is people with IDD and their families. Our thesis is simple: the church—individual members, local parishes, and denominational bodies—must work for their flourishing through practices of personal and public hospitality. Our analysis proceeds in three steps. First, we outline *empirical information* about IDD, the social model of disability, and the challenges IDD poses to individuals, families, and social service systems. Second, we provide a *theological foundation* in an ethic of hospitality that reaches across difference to welcome and defend the stranger. From the “Micah (6:8) Mandate” we construct an interplay between kindness-hospitality (personal relationships that welcome) and justice-hospitality (public acts that defend). Third, we offer *practical application*, identifying a number of ways that churches can support individuals with IDD and their caregivers—directly through personal relationships of kindness and indirectly through public acts of justice.

We focus on IDD, but our challenge also requires hospitality to people living with other disabilities. We address Christian communities, but our argument is relevant to all faith traditions emphasizing compassion and justice. We focus on North America, but our analysis applies to many international contexts.⁴ We draw

1 In Illinois, where James Gould lives, Illinois Respite Coalition provides stipends of \$500—very little—so caregivers can pay for emergency respite care. In Ontario, where Beth Nolson lives, Community Living Toronto offers short-term respite care for disabled individuals living in the community with a parent or caregiver.

2 Don Browning, cited in Ray Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 23.

3 Kathleen Cahalan and Gordon Mikoski, “Introduction,” in *Opening the Field of Practical Theology*, ed. Kathleen Cahalan and Gordon Mikoski (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 6.

4 For information on Australasia see Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation of People with Disability, *A Brief Guide to the Final Report* (2023). For information on Finland see Jan Tøssebro et al., “Normalization Fifty Years Beyond—Current Trends in the Nordic Countries,” *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities* 9 (2012): 134–46. For information on the UK see Equality and Human Rights Commission, *Being Disabled in Britain* (2017).

on our experiences as dad of and aunt to an intellectually disabled young adult, David.

Empirical Information: The Challenges of Intellectual Disability

Christian ethics centers hospitality—welcoming and defending the stranger whose well-being is threatened or diminished. People affected by IDD are among the socially vulnerable. In order to apply God’s truth to human life, practical theology must be sociologically informed. We begin, then, with an overview of basic facts about IDD and the challenges that impact individuals, their families, and formal systems of care.

The Nature of Intellectual Disability

IDD is mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity. IDD begins in childhood, lasts lifelong, and encompasses a diverse set of conditions such as Autism and Down syndrome. Limited executive function (mental skills that manage thoughts, emotions, and actions) and adaptive behavior (cognitive skills that meet the demands of everyday living) are defining features of IDD. Individuals with deficits in these abilities need assistance with activities of daily life. IDD ranges from mild limitations requiring intermittent supports to profound impairments requiring pervasive supports.⁵ In the US, there are 8.4 million people with IDD—in Canada 686,000.⁶

David is intellectually disabled as the result of a prenatal brain injury. He is not literate, is nonverbal, cannot understand significant choices, and requires assistance with every aspect of daily life. He lives in a four-person group home and attends a day activity center operated by a private nonprofit agency that is government-funded. David is, of course, much more than his disability. He has numerous virtues (humor and empathy), talents (as a bicycle rider, food pantry volunteer, and Special Olympics athlete), and relationships (with family, disabled peers, professional staff, and nondisabled community members). He is loved into being by God, and there is great goodness in David despite his impairments.

5 This standard definition of IDD comes from American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, “Supports Intensity Scale” (2015); American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders—DSM-5* (2013); World Health Organization, *International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health—ICF* (2002). When we use the term “disabled people” in an unqualified way, we are referring to people with IDD.

6 Residential Information Systems Project, “People With IDD in the United States” (2020); Canadian Association for Community Living, “The Facts on Housing and Persons with Intellectual Disabilities” (n.d.).

The Causes of Disability Challenges

We assume without argument that IDD is detrimental to well-being.⁷ Its disadvantages are both naturally caused and socially constructed. The *medical model* is essentialist: disability resides inside individual body-minds. Disability is a biological condition—a lack of functioning disrupts typical activities. Given his cognitive limitations, David will never do certain things—read, write and count, tie shoes, or prepare meals independently. These disadvantages are unavoidable. The solution to naturally caused disadvantage is individual and therapeutic.

The *social model* of disability is constructivist: disability resides outside the person in unsupportive social environments. Disability is a social creation—individual attitudes and institutional practices hinder full participation in society. David needs full-time support, but the underfunding of wages causes staff vacancies, which, in turn, cause social isolation, absence of meaningful activities, and lack of skill development. These disadvantages are avoidable. The solution to socially constructed disadvantage is social and political.

The *interaction model* acknowledges the role of both biology and society in creating disability challenges. We emphasize the second—ableist social practices, negative public attitudes, and inequitable political decisions exclude people with IDD from community life and limit access to opportunities and supports. Many are disadvantaged because of social injustice, not simply biological malfunctions.

The Hardships of Family Caregivers

Adults with IDD often remain a family responsibility. In the US, 61 percent live in their family home, and 24 percent have caregivers aged sixty-plus; many live with parents until they can no longer provide care.⁸ In Canada, 13,000 disabled adults live with parents.⁹ Caregiving can create physical, psychological, practical, financial, and marital difficulties—especially for women, who provide most care.¹⁰ Par-

7 Some disabilities are *mere differences* that are neutral in their effect on flourishing. But other disabilities are *bad differences* that are detrimental to well-being. Some disabilities are bad not simply because of social arrangements but because of biological deficits that, by themselves, make a person worse off. James Gould defends this conclusion in “Christian Faith, Intellectual Disability, and the Mere Difference / Bad Difference Debate,” *Philosophy and Theology* 30 (2018): 447–77; “The Complicated but Plain Relationship of Intellectual Disability and Well-being,” *Canadian Journal of Bioethics* 3 (2020): 37–51; “Why Intellectual Disability is Not Mere Difference,” *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry* 19 (2022): 495–509.

8 Residential Information Systems Project, *Long-Term Supports and Services Recipients by Setting Type and Year* (2021); David Braddock et al., *The State of the States in Intellectual and Developmental Disability 2017* (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 2017).

9 Canadian Civil Society Parallel Report for Canada to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, “Meeting Canada’s Obligations to Affordable Housing and Supports for People with Disabilities to Live Independently in the Community” (February 27, 2017).

10 Dennis Hogan, *Family Consequences of Children’s Disabilities* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2012); The Arc, *Family and Individual Needs for Disability Supports: Community Report 2023* (2023). While family caregivers assume significant burdens, we must be careful

ents are fatigued and stressed from the time and energy involved in looking after their loved one. Individuals with IDD have personal needs, behavior difficulties, medical problems, and transportation challenges which create substantial demands. In the US, family caregivers experience financial hardship—and often high rates of poverty—because caregiving responsibilities hinder paid work and because they pay considerable out-of-pocket costs for services.¹¹ In Canada, too, the impact of caregiving, especially on mothers, includes fewer opportunities for employment and limited social networks. Many experience financial strain, emotional distress, and poor overall health. As they age, many parents have unsustainable care responsibilities.¹² Families that do not provide direct care typically oversee the service programs supporting their loved one. Many parents have low confidence in the quality of agency services and become weary advocating for better programs in a system that is inconsistent, complex, and unresponsive. Many have fears about long-term care of their adult child.¹³

Some families provide care because they choose to, but others do so because they must. Out-of-home options are limited—wait lists are long, and existing openings do not meet current demand. In the US, families with children have trouble finding afterschool and summer care, reliable home care, and respite programs. Families with adults have difficulty locating residential homes and day programs—700,000 are waiting for housing and employment supports. One-third of parent caregivers report that they are waiting for personal assistance, respite, housing, therapy, job coaching, and transportation—with an average wait time of more than five years.¹⁴ Family support accounts for 9 percent of public IDD funding, which only 15 percent of families receive.¹⁵ In Canada, too, shortcomings in the adult care system mean that many people cannot access the supports

when evaluating what IDD means for them. Parents and siblings of individuals with Down syndrome, for example, have positive assessments of living with them [Brian Skotko et al., “Having a Son or Daughter with Down Syndrome: Perspectives from Mothers and Fathers,” *American Journal of Medical Genetics, Part A* 155 (2011): 2335–47, and “Having a Brother or Sister with Down Syndrome: Perspectives from Siblings,” *American Journal of Medical Genetics, Part A* 155 (2011): 2348–59.

11 Marsha Seltzer et al., “Midlife and Aging Parents of Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: Impacts of Lifelong Parenting,” *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* 116 (2011): 479–99; The Arc, *Family and Individual Needs* 2023.

12 Canadian Association, “Facts on Housing,” Canadian Association for Community Living, “Inclusion of Canadians with Intellectual Disabilities: A National Report Card 2013” (2013); Inclusion Canada, “Position on Income Security for Families” (n.d.).

13 Julie Taylor et al., “Training Parents of Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder to Advocate for Adult Disability Services: Results from a Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial,” *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 47 (2017): 846–57; Jaimie Timmons et al., “Managing Service Delivery Systems and the Role of Parents During Their Children’s Transitions,” *Journal of Rehabilitation* 70 (2004): 19–26.

14 The Arc, *Family and Individual Needs* 2023; The Arc, *Family and Individual Needs for Disability Supports: Community Report* 2017 (2018).

15 Braddock, *State of the States* 2017.

they need, particularly residential options, at least not without significant delay. More than 100,000 lack affordable housing, and 433,300 have unmet home care needs for personal support, therapies, respite, and out-of-school programs. Over 40,000 are on wait lists due to unavailable community-based programs.¹⁶ Social services make a real difference in how well caregivers cope, but limited funding and agency openings leave many families without adequate supports to look after their dependent child.

The Shortcomings of Disability Service Systems

Legal mandates in both the US and Canada require that adults with IDD in community care live normalized lives that are as close as possible to that of non-disabled people.¹⁷ They should not be segregated in disability-specific settings but integrated within mainstream society; they should not receive standardized services that agencies already have in place but individualized supports that meet their personal needs. The reality, however, is that adults with IDD often experience narrowed lives in segregated and standardized programs.¹⁸

16 Canadian Association, “Facts on Housing,” Inclusion Canada, “Impact Report 2022–2023” (2023), 18; Inclusion Canada, “Institutionalization of People Labelled with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities in Long-Term Care” (n.d.), 2.

17 Historically, adults with IDD in North America lived with their families. By the mid-twentieth century, many were housed in large centers that regimented their lives and segregated them from the community. In the 1960s, integrated services began enabling them to live in mainstream society as active citizens. Advocates like Wolf Wolfensberger championed ‘normalization’—the lives of people with IDD should conform to the patterns of nondisabled peers. This requires integration (dispersed services throughout the community), individualization (person-centered services for small groups), and specialization (a range of services to meet varied needs). Laws—the Americans with Disabilities Act and Accessible Canada Act—give adults the right to choice in housing and daytime activities and to participate in community life.

18 We take the term “narrowed lives” from Simo Vehmas and Reeta Mietola, *Narrowed Lives* (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2021). James Gould has written extensively about injustices in US disability services: “Duty, Not Gratitude: The Ethics of Social Support for People with Intellectual Disabilities in the United States,” *Disability and Society* 36 (2020): 1240–60; “Living in Nowheresville: David Hume’s Equal Power Requirement, Political Entitlements and People with Intellectual Disabilities,” *Journal of Philosophy of Disability* 1 (2021): 145–73; “Beggars Can’t Be Choosers: The Rhetoric and Reality of Person-Centered Disability Services in the United States,” *Disability and Society* 39 (2023): 2303–24; “From Policy to Practice: Socio-Ecological Challenges in Implementing the HCBS Settings Rule,” *Journal of Disability Policy Studies* (2024); “A Philosophical Critique of United States Housing Policy for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities,” *Disability and Society* (2024): 1–20.

In the US, custodial, socially-isolated, system-centered, and non-individualized services are typical.¹⁹ Despite their integrated location, many day programs and group homes operate with institution-like practices and have difficulty providing quality supports that are personalized and integrated. Congregate, segregated day centers offer leisure activities but not skills training. The tasks performed in sheltered workshops are rote and mundane; there is little integrated employment or meaningful nonwork activities (such as volunteer jobs or recreation).²⁰ Most group homes operate by custodial models—staff spend time on direct care, not functional learning or quality-of-life activities. Housing is often understaffed, which limits customized support and community outings. Residents engage in solitary projects, especially on weekends; if they do leave home, they go as a group.²¹

In Canada, many adults with IDD are embedded in institutional customs that isolate them and do little to facilitate a good life. The conditions in group homes and day centers reflect the same problems that existed in larger institutions—a lack of individualized support, routinized daily life, deficient community inclusion, and little freedom or choice. People’s days are repetitive and dull, confined to disability-specific locations, determined by care routines rather than social interaction, with few meaningful experiences or skill development. Personalized planning exists for administrative purposes but plays little role in service delivery, which is organized for homogeneous groups and assumes limitations rather than potential for growth or individual interests.²² Physical inclusion in the community does not create social inclusion with voluntary friends or significant engagement in activities. Residents participate in some, but not all, daily living tasks within their homes.²³

In many countries there is a gap between lofty policy statements of normalization and the stunted lives of adults with IDD in the community care system. Their lives are narrowed, not primarily by natural impairments, but by social factors. Government budgets pay private agencies to operate residential and vocational

19 Carli Friedman, *There’s No Place Like Home* (Washington, DC: The Arc of the United States and The Council on Quality and Leadership, 2019); American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), *The Case for Inclusion 2024* (2024).

20 Doug Crandell, *Twenty-Two Cents an Hour* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022).

21 Friedman, *There’s No Place Like Home*; ANCOR, *Case for Inclusion 2024*.

22 Canadian Association, “Facts on Housing”; Natalie Spagnuolo, “Building Back Wards in a ‘Post’ Institutional Era: Hospital Confinement, Group Home Eviction and Ontario’s Treatment of People Labelled with Intellectual Disabilities,” *Disability Studies Quarterly* 36 (2016); Natalie Spagnuolo and Kory Earle, “Freeing Our People: Updates From the Long Road to Deinstitutionalization,” Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives (July 4, 2017).

23 Élise Milot et al., “Perspectives of Adults with Intellectual Disabilities and Key Individuals on Community Participation in Inclusive Settings: A Canadian Exploratory Study,” *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability* 46 (2021): 58–66; Jordan Varey, “The Inclusion of Adults with Intellectual Disabilities: A Study of Two Community Based Group Home Service Providers in Saskatchewan,” *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies* 3 (2014): 132.

services. But economic policies emphasizing small government and low taxes undermine these programs. In the US, there is a persistent shortage of direct support professionals. The workforce crisis stems from policies requiring community services, but without adequate funding to implement these mandates. Low wages, scant benefits, and lack of career opportunities create high staff turnover and vacancy rates. The COVID-19 pandemic and Great Resignation accelerated staff churn and program deterioration: 92 percent of agencies struggle to manage existing services and achieve quality standards; 63 percent have discontinued programs and discharged service-users; 55 percent are considering additional closures; 83 percent are refusing new referrals.²⁴ In Canada, too, underfunding and a lack of care workers affect service operations—some agencies cannot provide supports that fit individual needs. Staff earn lower wages than other service employees, causing low retention and high turnover at group homes and day centers.²⁵

In a systems perspective, the narrowed lives of adults with IDD are due to deficiencies in multiple social sectors—families, schools, workplaces, healthcare settings, religious institutions, the community-at-large, and political institutions. Many of the challenges they experience are socially caused and can be socially ameliorated.

Theological Foundation: An Ethic of Hospitality

In addition to being sociologically informed, practical theology must be theologically grounded. A key feature that characterizes God's people in both Hebrew and Christian Scripture is hospitality, which Letty Russell defines as "the practice of God's welcome by reaching across difference to participate in God's actions bringing justice and healing to our world."²⁶ This definition highlights several aspects. First, hospitality is a practice—a habitual, repeated activity at which someone is (or becomes) proficient. Second, hospitality offers welcome—receiving another gladly and with friendliness. Third, hospitality offers God's welcome—as God's representatives, we extend love generously and freely. Fourth, hospitality reaches across difference—embracing strangers, people who are unlike. Fifth, hospitality brings justice and healing—it creates fairness and equity between people, making them whole. Sixth, hospitality targets a world in crisis—assisting those in difficulty or trouble. We cannot care for the stranger without addressing their needs. Russell states that "God's hospitality as a partnership with humankind in

24 ANCOR, *The State of America's Direct Support Workforce Crisis 2022* (2022); National Core Indicators, *State of the Workforce 2022* (2022); President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities, *America's Direct Workforce Crisis* (2017).

25 Spagnuolo and Earle, "Freeing Our People;" Varey, "Inclusion of Adults," 124.

26 Letty Russell, *Just Hospitality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 19.

the ‘repair of the world’ becomes the mandate as we look for ways to work with one another to transform the world.’²⁷

The Basics of Biblical Hospitality

In ancient times, hospitality was a moral virtue—an ethical excellence permeating a person’s character. Hospitality was also a moral obligation—an ethical duty prescribing a person’s actions. Hospitality was always extended to strangers—people at the margins who were disconnected from key relationships or communities of support, making them vulnerable and in need of care.²⁸ Throughout Scripture, God is the host who welcomes and cares for the stranger. Israel is the stranger whom God rescued from slavery in Egypt, for whom God cared during the wilderness wanderings, eventually providing a homeland. Jesus embraced the stranger, those shunned by people with privilege—Samaritans (John 4:1–42), Gentiles (Matt 8:5–13), lepers (Matt 8:1–4), and outcasts (Matt 9:10–13).

God’s mandate to welcome the stranger in Hebrew Scripture is predicated on the fact that Israel was delivered from captivity and cared for by God (Lev 19:33–34; Deut 10:19). As God’s people, they are to reflect God’s welcoming nature by caring for what Nicholas Wolterstorff calls the “quartet of the vulnerable”—the widow, the orphan, the alien, and the poor.²⁹ Jesus continues God’s hospitality to the marginalized by extending welcome to those who were socially ostracized: tax collectors (Mark 2:15), the Samaritan woman (John 4:1–42), and people with disabilities (Mark 1:40–45; 5:25–34; 10:46–52). The early church practiced hospitality by welcoming those different from themselves into their homes for meals, worship, and fellowship (Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–35). The conversion of Cornelius occurred in the context of hospitality, opening the door for Gentile outsiders to be welcomed into the church (Acts 10:1–48). Mandates to be hospitable are sprinkled throughout Hebrew and Christian Scripture (Lev 19:9–10; Exod 22:21–23; Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2), and stories of hospitality provide examples which the faithful are to emulate.

Hospitality has several important aspects. First, it begins with God, who welcome to humans, the archetypal stranger. Second, hospitality is an outward practice in which God’s welcome is offered to strangers by God’s people. This welcome requires holistic care for physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs. Third, hospitality is a boundary-breaking activity. Welcoming those we know and are comfortable with is not biblical hospitality. True hospitality is a subversive act in which we reject the prevailing attitudes of suspicion and hostility to strangers and

27 Russell, *Just Hospitality*, 50.

28 Christine Pohl, *Making Room* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 87.

29 Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 75.

act with welcome instead. Fourth, the hospitality of Jesus reflects the in-breaking of God's reign—hospitality to strangers demonstrates inclusion in the kingdom for people on the margins. Fifth, Jesus's hospitality results in new community as strangers move from a place of disconnection to connection and find their place in God's family.³⁰ Sixth, hospitality arises from love. It requires that we see a stranger and respond with empathy and compassion, leading us to welcome them, even when it is not convenient or comfortable. Love undergirds God's hospitality toward us and is the foundation from which we welcome the other.

Hospitality and the Micah Mandate

While many texts could be chosen, the Micah Mandate—a highly regarded seminal text—is a useful template for identifying two particular aspects of hospitality. The historical context of Micah's prophecy is the late eighth century BCE, during the Assyrian period.³¹ The politics of the time—the rich becoming prosperous by exploiting the poor—shaped his message to the southern kingdom of Judah. The overall textual context of chapter 6 is the theme of judgment, salvation, and social critique. The immediate textual context of 6:8 is 6:1–7 (structured as a covenant lawsuit where God presents evidence and renders a verdict against God's people) and 6:9–16 (where God declares judgment on injustice).

In 6:1–5, God rehearses God's covenant faithfulness and self-giving love from exodus to promised land. God then accuses God's people of unfaithfulness—of violating their covenant obligations (in particular, basic duties to the poor). Dominique Gilliard identifies two evils: the merchants' personal corruption was sustained by institutional injustice.³² In 6:6–7, the people answer the charge of unfaithfulness—they will win God's favor through an escalating series of sacrifices. In 6:8, God states what God actually wants—not religious ritual but moral behavior. After delivering them from slavery, God gave Israel specific moral instructions, warning them not to forget what was done for them and to show generosity to others (Exod 22:21; Lev 25:23).³³ Martha Moore-Keish paraphrases God's demand: "Stop offering sacrifices to me and start offering sustenance to

30 Beth Gould Nolson, "From Disconnection to Connection: The Healing Potential of Household Hospitality to the Stranger," *Practical Theology* 17 (2024): 363–75.

31 The majority view is that *Micah* was not written by one author but has a history of composition and formation. Chapters 6–7 are most contested: some scholars think they are a northern text, written by an unknown prophet from the kingdom of Israel. It is also possible that Micah 6 is post-exilic (a retrospective interpretation), not pre-exilic (a prophetic forewarning). See Rainer Kessler, "Micah," in *Oxford Handbook of the Minor Prophets*, ed. Julia O'Brien, 461–71 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021) and Jan Joosten, "YHWH's Farewell to Northern Israel (Micah 6:1–8)," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 125 (2013): 448–62.

32 Dominique Gilliard, "Counteracting Our Privileged Readings of the Biblical Texts," *The Covenant Quarterly* 71 (2013): 50.

33 Gilliard, "Counteracting Privileged Readings," 53.

those who need it most.”³⁴ God reverses the people’s three wrong answers with three imperatives already revealed: to do (actions), to love (affections), and to walk (companionship).

Justice (*mispat*) has an extended meaning covering the entire content of *Torah*—in particular the instructions to look after the powerless so they are not victimized by the powerful.³⁵ Hans Wolff notes that doing justice means “putting into operation a just social order” for the orphan, widow, alien, and all who are oppressed.³⁶ Stephen Dempster agrees: “the word ‘justice’ often occurs together with ‘righteousness,’ and together they point to the practice of justice in society ... to helping those in need” and caring for those unable to care for themselves.³⁷ To do justice is “to be advocates for those whose rights are being denied or violated.”³⁸

Kindness (*hesed*) is a complex behavior that includes loyalty, faithfulness, kindness, love, generosity, mercy, and devotion.³⁹ Bruce Waltke comments: “the practice of *hesed* is closely related to *mispat*: both pertain to the deliverance of an oppressed, weaker party by the stronger party, but whereas *mispat* puts the emphasis on the action, *hesed* puts it on the attitude behind the action.”⁴⁰ Kindness is the disposition of heart that motivates deeds of justice. Practicing *hesed*, Dempster adds, “means being a person of loyalty and faithfulness ... who helps people particularly in their need.... *Hesed* is like justice, a relational term preeminently, but it is more than advocating rights and ensuring fairness and equity, it is more a mode of being where there is a fundamental connection with another person, who is often weaker.”⁴¹

Walking with God suggests a life in harmony with God’s purposes. The word translated “humbly” has semantic associations with wisdom—reflection, discernment, and prudence.⁴² To walk wisely with God, Dempster says, “is to accept God’s vision and values for life.”⁴³ It is “to engage in the things that God does.... This is clearly linked to God’s great desire for God’s people, that they imitate the divine nature and behavior”—the *mispat* and *hesed* which define God’s essence.⁴⁴ Knowing God’s acts of self-giving love, we must live lives of self-giving love.

34 Martha Moore-Keish, “‘Do Justice’: Micah 6:8,” *Journal for Preachers* 33 (2010): 21.

35 Bruce Waltke, *A Commentary on Micah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 391.

36 Hans Wolff, cited in Gilliard, “Counteracting Privileged Readings,” 52–53.

37 Stephen Dempster, “Micah,” in *ESV Expository Commentary, Vol VII: Daniel-Malachi*, ed. Iain Duguid et al. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 486.

38 Stephen Dempster, *Micah: The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 304.

39 Mark Gignilliat, *Micah: An International Theological Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 204.

40 Waltke, *Commentary on Micah*, 394.

41 Dempster, *Micah: The Two Horizons*, 304–305.

42 Waltke, *Commentary on Micah*, 394.

43 Dempster, “Micah,” 486.

44 Dempster, *Micah*, 306, slightly modified.

Juan Alfaro puts it well: God wants people to “listen to the heart of God and God’s desire for mercy and compassion for those in need.” God calls us “to walk with God, seeing things through God’s own eyes and behaving toward the poor in the same manner as God had done in their history.”⁴⁵ There is, Dempster observes, “an inextricable link between these three requirements. As one walks humbly with God, one begins to love kindness and then to practice justice.”⁴⁶

In 6:9–16, God reiterates the accusation (Israel’s social injustice violates the good that God requires) and imposes sentence (disaster through wasted harvests and armed invasion).

The Micah Mandate exists, Mark Gignilliat insists, as a “witness for the sake of future generations regarding the ... will of God for God’s people and the nations.”⁴⁷ As we consider welcome of the stranger through Micah’s mandate, we find two kinds of hospitality. *Kindness-hospitality* involves compassionate care of the stranger. It concerns interpersonal relationships, emotional connection, mutuality, and belonging. *Justice-hospitality* addresses the social and political systems that keep the stranger at a distance. It concerns public action beyond the interpersonal level to bring flourishing to those on the margins.

Micah’s declaration that God requires us to love kindness and do justice shares similarities with Carol Gilligan’s distinction between care and justice. An ethic of care, based on empathy and connection, creates attentive relationships that treat individuals in a personal way. An ethic of justice, based on logic and emotional detachment, appeals to impersonal principles showing concern for humanity in general.⁴⁸ Since both care and justice are important, we require binocular moral vision. We see things with the left eye that the right eye leaves out (and *vice versa*), and so we need both eyes to get a full picture. In the same way, we need both care and justice for full moral understanding and comprehensive action.

Kindness-Hospitality and Justice-Hospitality

Kindness-hospitality and justice-hospitality fit elegantly with socio-ecological theory. Urie Bronfenbrenner posits that life experience is shaped through complex interactions between individual persons and their social environments.⁴⁹ Stacy Simplican and colleagues’ socio-ecological framework, focused on IDD, has five levels.⁵⁰ The *individual* level consists of personal traits of the person: level of dis-

45 Juan Alfaro, *Micah: Justice and Loyalty* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 69, slightly modified.

46 Dempster, “Micah,” 486.

47 Gignilliat, *Micah*, 36, slightly modified.

48 Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

49 Urie Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

50 Stacy Simplican et al., “Defining Social Inclusion of People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: An Ecological Model of Social Networks and Community Participation,” *Research in Developmental Disabilities* 38 (2015): 18–29.

ability, mood, communication, friendliness, and self-motivation. The *interpersonal* level contains relationship networks: family members, paid staff, disabled peers, and nondisabled friends. The *organizational* level involves service agencies, law enforcement, healthcare providers, faith communities, and businesses. The *community* level incorporates residential arrangements, transportation systems, work, and leisure—as well as public attitudes to disabled people. The *social-political* level includes laws, histories of service delivery, state bureaucracies, and budget appropriations. These nested levels shape the lived experience of adults with IDD. A systems perspective suggests that hospitality to them involves comprehensive influence across multiple ecological levels. Kindness-hospitality occurs mostly at the interpersonal and community levels—justice-hospitality happens mainly at the organizational and social-political levels.

Two points are particularly important. First, a socio-ecological approach indicates that both types of hospitality are necessary. Kindness-hospitality alone is not enough: simply caring for people interpersonally does not address the systemic barriers they face in living a quality life. And justice-hospitality alone is not enough: simply standing at a distance and acting publicly on their behalf does not build the close friendships individuals need. As Hans Reinders points out, citizenship (including people in public institutions and spaces) does not provide friendship (being part of other people's lives)—nor does friendship bring about citizenship.⁵¹ Second, there is a natural movement between kindness-hospitality and justice-hospitality. Kindness-hospitality leads to justice-hospitality. Personal acquaintance with the needs of people with IDD and their caregivers motivates political action: proximity to them creates a deep awareness of their needs for personal friendships and public inclusion. Michelle Warren explains: “Proximity gets us so close to the pain of an issue that it radically changes our perspective and demands a deeper response. The longer we stay proximate, the more our perspective is shaped and the more we respond to what needs to be changed. Proximity is transformational.”⁵² And justice-hospitality leads to kindness-hospitality: political awareness of injustices people living with IDD experience creates a desire to learn more about them personally. There is two-way interaction, then, between kindness and justice—one cannot exist without the other.

Practical Application: Enacting Hospitality to People Affected by Intellectual Disability

Churches cannot fix the biologically caused challenges that people affected by IDD experience. But they can address socially caused disadvantages. In this section, we engage the research summarized above, leveraging problematic empirical

51 Hans Reinders, *Receiving the Gift of Friendship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

52 Michelle Warren, *The Power of Proximity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2017), 18.

findings to suggest positive solutions. With socio-ecological theory as our guide, we explore micro-level kindness-hospitality and macro-level justice-hospitality.

We begin with kindness-hospitality, which happens through personal relationships and directly meets the needs of people with IDD and their families for friendship, church inclusion, respite, financial assistance, and lifelong support.

Personal Hospitality

Personal hospitality happens through individual friendships. Adults with IDD experience social isolation; many of their activities are solitary and segregated. Up to half are chronically lonely because of negative social attitudes, lack of opportunities for friendship, and skill deficits associated with IDD.⁵³ Most have very few close relationships, and the majority of those are with disabled peers. They often have superficial friendships with housemates they live with (who are not chosen but assigned by agencies) and thin relationships with neighbors or nondisabled people they meet in mainstream society. Their social networks are small: formal contact is with paid professionals while informal contact is with family members. These are relationships of mandatory duty or natural support that focus on the disability, not voluntary friendships that focus on the person.⁵⁴

Adults with IDD long for friendship. Contact theory indicates that friendships are most likely to form when people participate in shared activities based on common interests over a period of time.⁵⁵ Faith communities can address the loneliness disabled people experience. But few receive calls or visits from members of the churches they attend, and few friendships form between disabled and nondisabled people. Participation at potlucks and attendance at social activities do not guarantee that acquaintance becomes friendship.⁵⁶

Church members should choose disabled adults as friends to meet for coffee, bowling, shopping, or a movie. People with IDD are often *known about* (by diagnostic labels that indicate challenges and deficits), but not *known personally* (by

53 Linda Gilmore and Monica Cuskelly, "Vulnerability to Loneliness in People with Intellectual Disability: An Explanatory Model," *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities* 11 (2014): 192–99; Sally Robinson and Jan Idle, "Loneliness and How to Counter It: People with Intellectual Disability Share Their Experiences and Ideas," *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability*, 48 (2022): 58–70.

54 Rachel Harrison et al., "Social Networks and People with Intellectual Disabilities: A Systematic Review," *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 34 (2021): 973–92; Aafke Kamstra et al., "Informal Social Networks of People with Profound Intellectual and Multiple Disabilities: Relationship with Age, Communicative Abilities and Current Living Arrangements," *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 28 (2015): 159–64.

55 Erik Carter et al., "Promoting Inclusion, Social Connections, and Learning Through Peer Support Arrangements," *Teaching Exceptional Children* 48 (2015): 9–18.

56 Erik Carter, "Research on Disability and Congregational Inclusion: What We Know and Where We Might Go," *Journal of Disability & Religion* 27 (2022): 190–91.

distinctive traits like kindness, humor, and gratitude).⁵⁷ To be a person is to have a story, and when stories remain silent, personhood is diminished. Church members must invest time getting to know adults with IDD as unique and complex individuals (perhaps using tools such as Life Maps).⁵⁸ Peer support networks like Circle of Friends and ministry programs like BeFrienders positively impact social inclusion of disabled individuals and friendships between them and nondisabled people.⁵⁹ The Active Mentoring Approach trains volunteers to join with and support disabled adults in community-based sports and arts activities.⁶⁰ Churches can use support programs to create neighborhood inclusion in leisure activity clubs and volunteer groups.⁶¹ Denominations can replicate Friendship House, a shared living arrangement where seminary students and disabled adults eat, pray, learn, and take part in recreation and social activities together.⁶² Parents, too, experience rejection or unwelcome sympathy; many are isolated by the demands of caregiving and the fact that other people cannot relate to their struggles. They also need personal friendships where they can name their struggles and receive encouragement and support.⁶³

Fear and unfamiliarity with people and families affected by IDD can make reaching out difficult. But hospitality propels us into relationships that at first take us out of our comfort zone, that challenge us to leave our center and move to the margins. We must go, Mary Jo Iozzio insists, “not just once or twice... but regularly. You have to show up reliably to be a friend and to be recognized by another as a friend.”⁶⁴

57 Erik Carter, “A Place of Belonging: Research at the Intersection of Faith and Disability,” *Review and Expositor* 113 (2016): 172–73.

58 Jane Clapton, *A Transformatory Ethic of Inclusion* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2009), 241; Dorothy Atkinson, “Narratives and People with Learning Disabilities,” in *Learning Disability: A Life Cycle Approach*, ed. Gordon Grant et al. (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2010), 7–18.

59 Sarah Pannone, “One Church’s Response to Welcoming All of God’s Children,” *Journal of Disability & Religion* 21 (2017): 257–79; Mary Schlieder et al., “An Investigation of “Circle of Friends” Peer-Mediated Intervention for Students with Autism,” *The Journal of Social Change* 6 (2015): 27–40; Angela Amado et al., “BeFrienders: Impact of a Social Ministry Program on Relationships for Individuals with Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities (I/DD),” *Religion, Disability & Health* 17 (2013): 1–26.

60 Milot et al., “Perspectives of Adults.”

61 Geraldine Boland et al., “Social Inclusion Through Making Neighborhood Connections: Experiences of Older Adults With Intellectual Disabilities of Local Volunteering and Leisure,” *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* (2024), 1–13.

62 Friendship House Holland, www.westernsem.edu.

63 Sheena Rolph et al., *Witnesses to Change* (Kidderminster: British Institute of Learning Disabilities, 2005).

64 Mary Jo Iozzio, *Disability Ethics and Preferential Justice* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2023), 73. Most denominations have Offices of Disability Inclusion. Parachurch organizations (like All Belong, Bethesda, Friendship Ministries, Joni and Friends, Key Ministry, Nathaniel’s Hope, Special Touch, and Young Life Capernaum) provide training tools for serving families affected by disability. An internet search will bring up dozens of entries on how churches can support families of children and adults with disabilities. For results of the National Organization on Disability’s Accessible Congregations Campaign see Angela Amado

Parish Hospitality

Parish hospitality happens through church-life accommodations within worship services, religious education classes, youth programs, fellowship events, and service projects.⁶⁵ People with IDD face many barriers to participation. They are much less likely to attend religious services than people without disabilities—about half attend regularly—and involvement in youth groups, Sunday School, and social gatherings is much less common.⁶⁶ The participation gap is worse for those with severe conditions, challenging behaviors, complex communication difficulties, and autism.⁶⁷ Many church leaders do not know how best to serve them. Harmful conceptualizations that hinder meaningful inclusion operate in Christian congregations—deficit-based mindsets emphasize the perceived shortcomings of disabled people, resulting in an impulse to fix them or their presumed tragic circumstances.⁶⁸

Carter asserts that “belonging is rooted in relationships. Having people in our lives who know us, like us, accept us, need us, miss us, and love us is at the heart of our well-being.” People experience belonging when they are present, invited, welcomed, noticed, known, accepted, supported, cared for, befriended, needed, and loved.⁶⁹ Chapelstreet Church in Geneva, Illinois provides Masterpiece, a set of programs for family members and individuals impacted by disability. Disabled children are included in typical Sunday School classrooms or in sensory-friendly spaces with developmentally appropriate activities. Disabled adults enjoy worship, social connection, and learning through M-Club. Buddy Break is a respite program for families, while moms and dads groups offer support.⁷⁰ Water Street Church in Guelph, Ontario, is part of Friendship Ministries Canada—a network that helps churches develop programs for people with IDD so they feel welcomed, grow in faith, and share their gifts. Participants sing, play instruments, do crafts, enjoy games, and learn about Jesus.⁷¹ Nick and Matt, both on the autism spectrum, participate in Junior Church activities. James and his wife Jenna host at their small parish.

et al., “Accessible Congregations Campaign: Follow-Up Survey of Impact on Individuals With Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (ID/DD),” *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 16 (2012): 394–419.

65 Carter, “Research on Disability and Congregational Inclusion.”

66 Debra Brucker et al., “Social Capital, Employment, and Labor Force Participation among Persons with Disabilities,” *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* 43 (2015): 17–31.

67 Carter, “Research on Disability and Congregational Inclusion,” 8–9.

68 A research meta-review by Gail McMahon-Panther and Juan Bornman (“Persons with Disabilities in the Christian Church: A Scoping Review on the Impact of Expressions of Compassion and Justice on their Inclusion and Participation,” *Journal of Disability & Religion* (2024): 1–28) demonstrates that people with disabilities face many barriers to participation across Christian denominations.

69 Carter, “A Place of Belonging.” This article contains questions that can help congregations operationalize each dimension of belonging.

70 Chapel Street Church, www.chapelstreet.church.

71 Water Street Church; Friendship Ministries Canada, www.friendshipministries.ca.

Inclusion in congregational planning must be intentional, not an afterthought. Churches must honor the “nothing about us without us” mantra of the disability rights movement: the voices of people with IDD and their families must be part of decisions about disability ministry practices. Seminary graduates receive little preparation for including people with IDD within congregational life or responding to spiritual questions resulting from disability experiences. Preaching and religious instruction that define disability as the result of sin, conflate intellect with faith, see the *imago Dei* in terms of ability, or think people with disabilities need special healing, promote outdated ableist perspectives.⁷² Churches must develop a distinctive theology of disability ministry, not simply copy the practices of special education and service agencies.⁷³ Individualized accommodations—personal assistance, behavior supports, and accessible communication—enable participation of youth with IDD. But most parents report that they are not provided; many change their place of worship because their child is not welcomed.⁷⁴ Children and adults with IDD should be mainstreamed into existing educational opportunities and fellowship events, not segregated in separate programs. Worship liturgies should be adapted in multisensory, interactive, and accessible ways that de-emphasize spoken words and emphasize touch, body movement, simple language, music and dance, dramatic readings, visual imagery, ritual actions, and nonverbal sounds.⁷⁵

Inclusion is about equality, not charity, since disabled people have gifts to share, not just needs for care. Presence (attendance at religious gatherings) cannot be equated with participation (involvement in program activities). Adults with IDD, Carter says, should be “volunteering as an usher or greeter, assisting with aspects of a worship service (e.g., reading Scripture, leading a prayer), joining the choir or worship team, visiting those who are sick or homebound, helping in the nursery or with the children’s program, assisting in community outreach programs, serving on a committee, praying with and for others.”⁷⁶ Hospitality moves congregations beyond ministry to disabled adults into ministry by them—it makes space for them to use their unique strengths to serve others.⁷⁷ Beth’s friend Jill sometimes reads Scripture in public worship, and David volunteers

72 Carter, “Research on Disability and Congregational Inclusion,” 23; “Place of Belonging,” 4.

73 Bethany Fox, *Disability and the Way of Jesus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2019), chapter 7.

74 Carter, “Research on Disability and Congregational Inclusion,” 10 and 16.

75 Brian Brock [*Disability: Living Into the Diversity of Christ’s Body* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021)] and Frances Mackenney-Jeffs [*Reconceptualizing Disability for the Contemporary Church* (London: SCM Press, 2021)] reimagine disability inclusion for the British church. Fox [*Disability and Way of Jesus*], Lamar Hardwick [*Disability and the Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2021)], Amy Kenny [*My Body is Not a Prayer Request* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2022)] and Erin Raffety [*From Inclusion to Justice* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2022)] reimagine disability inclusion in the American church.

76 Carter, “Place of Belonging,” 5.

77 Raffety, *From Inclusion to Justice*.

with James's parish at local food ministries. These gifts should be welcomed and developed, since through their talents, people with IDD enrich the lives of others and contribute to their congregations.

Practical Hospitality

Practical hospitality happens through what Marty Richards calls “caresharing”—an approach to caregiving where the well-being of everyone involved is nurtured.⁷⁸ Parents looking after children with IDD report higher-than-average rates of chronic stress, anxiety, and depression. They are at increased risk of marital disruption, family dysfunction, and adverse physical and mental health conditions. Resilient families adapt to caring for a disabled member; promoting resilience requires providing resources to help them meet everyday challenges.⁷⁹ Most families indicate that a support group, respite care, spiritual counseling, and financial support would be helpful. But in the US, only 10 percent of congregations offer some form of care. The vast majority of parents indicate that practical support is not available from their congregation.⁸⁰

Practical hospitality happens through *respite care*. Family members are often fatigued and stressed from the time and energy involved in looking after their dependent loved one. Since nonstop caregiving takes a physical and psychological toll, parents and siblings most need respite—regular breaks from their responsibilities, time to rest and recharge. But respite care is hard to find in the US; for Canadian families, it is also complicated to access respite supports that allow participation in community and employment.⁸¹ Churches can provide multiple forms of respite—but fewer than 10 percent do.⁸² In location, it can be in-home respite (in the disabled person's home or the host's home) or facility-based respite (in a church building or community facility). In length, it can be daytime, overnight, or weekend. Congregations must initiate respite since families will seldom ask for help.

Practical hospitality also happens through *financial assistance*. Parents of children with IDD struggle economically—mothers in particular experience tremendous financial burdens, job-related difficulties, loss of income, and unreimbursed

78 Marty Richards, *Caresharing* (Woodstock: Skylight Paths, 2009).

79 David McConnell and Amber Savage, “Stress and Resilience Among Families Caring for Children with Intellectual Disability: Expanding the Research Agenda,” *Current Developmental Disorders Report* 2 (2015): 100–109; Emily Auerbach et al., “Stress: Family Caregivers of Children with Disabilities” (Storrs: University of Connecticut Collaboratory on School and Child Health, November 2019).

80 Carter, “Research on Disability and Congregational Inclusion,” 14; “A Place of Belonging,” 175.

81 The Arc, *Family and Individual Needs 2023*; Canadian Association, “Inclusion of Canadians.”

82 Carter, “A Place of Belonging,” 176.

out-of-pocket expenses.⁸³ Families experience financial hardship because caregiving hinders employment and because they must pay for mobility devices, assistive technology, medical care, or respite services. Amy Kenny calls attention to these extra costs that society charges disabled people. Churches and individual members should ensure that no family bears this “disability tax” alone. They can pay for things like speech therapy, power chairs, and adaptive sports equipment.⁸⁴

Finally, practical hospitality happens through *circles-of-support* planning. Parents fear for the future of their child when they can no longer provide care or supervise out-of-home services. They worry that quality of care will diminish, that abuse or neglect might occur, that the person will not have friends and social activities, and that they will have to live somewhere they do not want to. Churches can assist parents by creating a circle of support that will step into this role when they no longer can. This network of people gets to know the individual with IDD, identifies the parents’ dreams for their child’s life, and creates a plan to oversee services and advocate for their future care. Churches might establish a formal micro-board charged with ensuring that the person with IDD continues to live as rich a life as possible. This circle of support reassures parents that services essential to their child’s welfare will be maintained when they can no longer provide care or oversight.⁸⁵

Churches can express kindness-hospitality directly in these personal and parish-based ways. Now we turn to justice-hospitality, which happens through public action that indirectly meets needs through service agency partnerships and political advocacy.

Public Hospitality

Public hospitality happens when God’s people reach out beyond themselves to promote the good of every person, especially the vulnerable. The church is *internally relational*—a community of people in friendship with one another. It practices life together—an intimate participation in each other’s lives, including bearing burdens (Gal 6:2). The church is also *externally relational*—commissioned to take God’s self-giving love into the world. Since Jesus acted on behalf of others, his mission of serving those in need must be its mission in social life (Gal 6:10). Love of neighbor requires public action. Executing justice takes three forms,

83 Devender Banda et al., “A Qualitative Study of Financial Concerns of Mothers of Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities,” *International Journal of Developmental Disabilities* 70 (2022): 857–64; Barbara Saunders et al., “Financial and Employment Impact of Intellectual Disability on Families of Children with Autism,” *Families, Systems, & Health* 33 (2015): 36–45.

84 Kenny, *My Body is Not a Prayer Request*, 63.

85 Carter, *Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities* (Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes, 2007), 130–133; Jennifer David et al., “Networks of Support: Micro-boards for Children with Intellectual Disability,” *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability* 49 (2024): 373–75.

Wolterstorff says: to not deprive people of basic human goods, to protect people from such deprivation, and to aid people when deprivation occurs.⁸⁶

Public hospitality happens through *organizational partnerships*. Service agencies deliver vocational programs and residential housing. In the US, Special Recreation Associations provide leisure activities and recreation experiences—Special Olympics hosts organized sports. In Canada, Recreation and Parks Associations offer a variety of *sport, recreation and arts programs*—*Special Olympics and Sport for Life* provide sports and exercise activities. Best Buddies International hosts volunteer programs helping people with IDD build friendships, find integrated employment, and live independently. Many Christian denominations operate day activity and housing services—most well-known is L’Arche Communities—but few congregations have partnerships with local service agencies.⁸⁷ Congregations should come alongside them. All can use financial support and volunteer help with service-user activities like cooking, gardening, craft-making, and sports coaching. Churches can adopt a group home—regularly providing dinner and interacting with residents. Faith communities can make financial grants to service agencies for assisting direct care staff, who are not well paid, with small-dollar loans for expenses like unexpected car repairs. Employee assistance like this increases retention and reduces staff turnover. Finally, adults with IDD who live in out-of-home settings fall outside the ordinary outreach efforts of congregations. Churches can help secular service agencies identify and meet the spiritual needs of their service-users.⁸⁸

Public hospitality also happens through *employment support*. Work is more than paid employment; it includes a range of activities such as caring (for others, home, natural environments), volunteering (community service), and artistic expression.⁸⁹ Meaningful work provides a sense of belonging, contribution, social status, purpose, identity, fulfillment, and income. Most adults with IDD, many of whom would like to work, are jobless. In the US, only 16 percent of people receiving public services are competitively employed. Most work part-time at repetitive manual jobs with low income and negligible benefits.⁹⁰ Only 12 percent are employed full-time/full-year; the majority perform rote jobs for subminimum wages in segregated workshops or exploitative community businesses like

86 Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 84.

87 Carter, “Research on Disability and Congregational Inclusion,” 24.

88 Carter “A Place of Belonging,” 171.

89 Maria Lyons, “Rethinking Work in Relation to Community Inclusion,” in *Community Care and Inclusion*, ed. Robin Jackson and Maria Lyons (Edinburgh: Floris, 2016), 166–80.

90 Dorothy Heirsteiner et al., “Working in the Community: The Status and Outcomes of People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Integrated employment-Update2-National Core Indicators Data Brief” (Cambridge: Human Services Research Institute, 2016); Jean Winsor et al., “State Data: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes” (Boston: University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion, 2017).

Goodwill Industries.⁹¹ In Canada, the employment rate for people with IDD is 26 percent—nearly all are paid minimum wage and few work full-time. Thousands remain in facility-based settings that promise, but rarely deliver, job training.⁹² More could enter ordinary jobs if given the chance; they can learn job skills and be productive with the right tasks and supports. Programs such as Discovering Personal Genius identify a person's strengths and interests, then determine how best to support them in a real job. Customized employment adapts the type of job or task demands to meet the needs of both employer and worker.⁹³ Many denominations operate hospitals, nursing homes, and schools—all of which could provide employment opportunities and job training. Local churches can hire individuals for janitorial or clerical tasks. Personal connections are a main way people find jobs—many church members own small businesses, work at large companies, or do charity volunteering. Putting Faith To Work helps congregations use their extensive social networks to connect disabled job-seekers to meaningful employment and volunteer opportunities.⁹⁴ Churches can also establish ride-share programs. Transportation is a significant issue for many people with IDD who do not drive or have trouble using public transportation.⁹⁵

Political Hospitality

Political hospitality happens through governmental advocacy. Three macrosystem factors in the US and Canada negatively impact adults with IDD. *Deficient funding* harms them. Underinvestment by federal and state/provincial governments, resulting in a lack of critical supports, has persisted for decades. Integrated and individualized programs increase financial costs to agencies, but reimbursements have not been raised to offset the additional expense. *Inadequate system capacity* harms adults with IDD. Because of long wait lists, many are awarded funding only to find that there are no group home or day center openings. Obtaining services, especially for individuals in rural areas and with complex needs, is often impossible. Things can be desperate for older adults needing emergency placement.⁹⁶ *Unstable staffing* harms service-users. Knowledgeable staff provide better care, while inexperienced staff compromise outcomes. Staff shortages have occurred for many years—mainly because agencies are not reimbursed enough to offer

91 Crandell, *Twenty-Two Cents*, 95–104.

92 Spagnuolo and Earle, “Freeing Our People.”

93 Crandell, *Twenty-Two Cents*, 136–41 and 170–73. Randy Lewis [*No Greatness Without Goodness* (Carol Stream: Tyndale, 2014)] explains how—inspired by a Christian senior vice president—Walgreens Retail Pharmacies employs a workforce that is 10 percent people with disabilities.

94 Putting Faith To Work, www.faithanddisability.org.

95 Carter, *Including People with Disabilities*, 132–33.

96 Residential Information, *Long-Term Supports*. Because of a lack of adequate funding and specialized staff, many Illinois agencies cannot serve people with IDD and intersectional needs—medical, behavioral and physical (Caitlin Crabb et al., “Community Capacity Report 6.2.2022,” Illinois Department of Human Services (June 2022)).

competitive wages—but are particularly acute now.⁹⁷ In the US and Canada, adults with IDD are disadvantaged by these political factors that negatively impact their welfare.

God's dream for human persons is *shalom*—well-being in every area of life. God's concern for the social-political order is found throughout Scripture. Israel's laws mandate special care for vulnerable members of the community (Lev 19:10–15). The prophets' criticism calls Israel to a politics of justice and an economics of equity (Isa 1:11–17). Mary the mother of Jesus describes God's social overturning where the high are cast down and the low lifted up (Luke 1:46–53). Jesus outlines his mission to meet human needs (Luke 4:18–19) and threatens judgment according to works of mercy to the vulnerable (Matt 25:31–46). Love of neighbor goes beyond charity to political action that addresses systems which cause disadvantage.

Government is ordained by God to protect the rights of individuals and care for those who cannot care for themselves. This includes people with IDD, many of whom require state-funded services. Christians should *vote* for politicians who support progressive legislation and generous funding for disability services.⁹⁸ During election season, they can find out from IDD organizations like The Arc of the United States and Inclusion Canada which candidates are disability friendly. Congregations and individuals should *advocate* for public policies and adequate funding to meet the needs of people with IDD, their families, and service agencies. Action alerts by disability organizations can be found online; these guides make it easy to contact government representatives. Churches can post information links on their websites and in their newsletters.

These are just a few of the many ways that faith communities can enact kindness-hospitality and justice-hospitality to individuals and families affected by IDD.

Conclusion

Calvary Lutheran Church of Woodale, Illinois, offers drop-off respite care events regularly on Saturday afternoons to families caring for someone with IDD. Trained volunteers provide lunch and structured programs while families get a break from their responsibilities in order to refresh their hearts and minds. One mom, Betsy, brings her daughter. Lisa enjoys the activities and attention she receives, especially from teens who talk with her and make her feel welcome.⁹⁹ Kingsway Baptist Church in Etobicoke, Ontario, also has a respite ministry. One Saturday evening

97 ANCOR, *State of America's Direct Support Workforce Crisis 2022*; National Core Indicators, *State of the Workforce 2022*.

98 James Gould, "Devouring David," *Reformed Journal Blog* (May 17, 2025), www.reformedjournal.com.

99 Calvary Lutheran Church, www.calvarywoodale.net.

a month, parents of children with IDD can drop all their kids off, go on a date, or have time to recharge. Parents are delighted: “I can’t remember when we were last out,” one says, “we can’t believe it’s free.”¹⁰⁰

Practical theology, James Woodward and Stephen Pattison state, “is concerned with actions, issues, and events that are of human significance in the contemporary world.”¹⁰¹ It emphasizes lived theology—constructive action based on religious conviction. The church’s ethical imperative, prophetic calling, and social witness is—in Dempster’s words—“doing *mispat* from a *hesed*-filled heart.”¹⁰² Faith communities must *welcome* people with IDD and their caregivers through personal relationship and *defend* them through public action. Despite biblical imperatives to love the neighbor, welcome the stranger, and recognize God’s image in everyone, empirical evidence indicates that churches are uneven in supporting people affected by IDD. The suggestions we have made can help congregations, in Carter’s words, shift from the *why* of inclusion to the *how* of inclusion.¹⁰³

As we noted earlier, there is a natural movement between kindness-hospitality and justice-hospitality. *Kindness-hospitality leads to justice-hospitality*. Personal acquaintance with the needs of disabled people and their caregivers (family and professional) motivates public action on their behalf. *And justice-hospitality leads to kindness-hospitality*. Awareness of social injustices that people and families affected by IDD experience creates a desire to learn more about them personally. These two kinds of hospitality constitute the hard hospitality of vigorous action, not the easy hospitality of casual concern.¹⁰⁴

In order to perform kindness-hospitality, Christians must have personal knowledge of individuals and families affected by IDD. In order to provide justice-hospitality, Christians must have social knowledge of disability systems and political institutions. Education, then, is necessary for effective hospitality. Churches need to educate about the challenges of IDD both within their congregations and through forums for the general public. Parishes can learn the needs in their communities by visiting service agencies and consulting with parent groups. In the US, they can take advantage of Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month and National Family Caregivers Month to host informational speakers and workshops. In Canada, churches can celebrate Community Living Month, National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, and National Caregiver Month.

100 Disability and Faith, “Touching Lives in Toronto: rEcess Respite at Kingsway Baptist” (n.d.).

101 James Woodward and Stephen Pattison, “An Introduction to Pastoral and Practical Theology,” in *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, ed. James Woodward and Stephen Pattison (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 7.

102 Dempster, *Micah*, 306.

103 Carter, “Place of Belonging,” 179.

104 Carter, *Including People with Disabilities*, 29.

Awareness toolkits and fact sheets are available from national and local disability organizations.

Without accurate information, Christians cannot live out hospitality. But while education is important, knowledge does not always move people to action. In addition to knowing about the needs of people with IDD, nondisabled people must become proximate to them, their family caregivers, and service systems. The church needs an enlarged imagination where hospitality is both personal and systemic. It must help change the culture by practicing kindness-hospitality (creating internally inclusive churches that meet individual needs) and by extending justice-hospitality (becoming externally collaborative churches that partner with social institutions). The welcome of Jesus must be expressed to adults with IDD, their families, and social care agencies, at all socio-ecological levels, so they experience normalized lives and share fully in the joy of community.

Jesus, Did You Know? Christ's Divine Omniscience and Human Ignorance Considered in Light of the Partitive Exegesis of Gregory Nazianzus

Stephen Swan
Tyndale Seminary

Abstract

Classical Christology has held that the two natures of Christ are united together in one person. Christ then possesses both divine and human attributes. This then creates a dilemma: how then does the God-man Jesus Christ experience ignorance as he seems to do in differing ways in Scripture? In various Gospel texts (Luke 2:40–52, Mark 13:32, Mark 5:30 in particular) Jesus is portrayed as growing in knowledge, admitting an unknown fact, and asking a question that he may not know the answer to. The texts cry out for a method of reading which allows for divine omniscience and human ignorance to be simultaneously affirmed. Gregory of Nazianzus' method of *partitive exegesis* gives us an historical example of such a method. I consider this exegetical method as a way not to complete resolution or comprehension of the inner psychology of Christ, but to hold in tension both divine omniscience and human ignorance.

Every Christmas, some tinny Muzak version of the song “Mary Did You Know” is piped over shopping mall speakers. Written in 1984 by Mark Lowry and first recorded in 1991, it has become the subject of countless memes and is notorious for provoking debate on social media as to its theological merits or whether it is even a good song.¹ The song ponders whether Mary, the mother of Jesus, knew about all the things her divine/human son would go on to do. Whatever the musical or lyrical merits, the question of what Mary did or did not know does not approach real theological profundity. Far more compelling is the question of her son's knowledge. What did Jesus know about himself, the world, and the future? And how, if we accept his divinity, ought we to read texts where Jesus seems to

1 I personally do not look forward to hearing this song each December.

lack knowledge? We must seek an exegetical method which can best accord with the full biblical account and creedal tradition.

Classically, it has been held that the two natures of Christ are in personal union within one person: a hypostatic union.² The one person of Christ possessing both divine and human attributes, he experiences all his divinity and all his humanity concurrently.³ But this ‘all’ creates a dilemma for exegesis: How are we to read instances where Christ appears to experience ignorance? Help will come through the *partitive exegesis* exemplified in the thinking of the fourth-century Cappadocian Father, Gregory of Nazianzus. His commitment to what would become the Chalcedonian view of Christ and yet his willingness to let the two natures “be themselves” provide an excellent model for how to engage with Christ’s apparent ignorance.⁴ Whether Gregory of Nazianzus can give us a comprehensive understanding of how divine omniscience and human ignorance can coexist within the inner psyche of the God-man is another matter. This coexistence may be beyond comprehension. However, Gregory can, and does, provide a model of how to read confounding texts. If we want to hold to the confession of Chalcedonian Christology, we do need to see how we can exegete without either disregarding the Gospel descriptions or tearing apart the ancient Christological consensus. What can Gregory’s partitive exegesis offer us? What can this patristic reading method actually do? It does not give complete resolution of *how* the two natures of Christ operate regarding his knowledge. Rather, it gives a method of reading by which we can preserve the mystery of the *who* of Christ. Even if we cannot fully comprehend, we are at least able to hold to a confession.

The juxtaposition of divine attributes with human ones produces many questions. For the purposes of this inquiry, the questions will revolve around the knowledge of Christ, or apparent lack thereof. How can he fail to know a piece of information? How can he seek knowledge by investigation? At several points he appears to do these things. Jesus as a youth is said to grow in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:40–52). He claims not to know the day or the hour of the climax of eschatological events (Mark 13:32). Amid a crowd, he is touched by a woman and then asks: “who touched my garments?” (Mark 5:30). This is a candidate for what could be called a genuine question, one seeking an actual answer to an unknown. These three representative texts are immediately relevant to the question of the lack of knowledge, the ignorance, of Christ. They cover different angles of apparent lack of knowledge: the need to grow in it, the admission of an unknown fact,

2 Thomas C. Oden, *Classic Christianity: A Systematic Theology* (New York: Harper One, 1992), 302.

3 Daniel J. Treier, *Lord Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2023), 199.

4 For a short introduction see Cody Glen Barnhart, “Exegetical Lessons from Gregory of Nazianzus,” The Center for Baptist Renewal, December 7, 2020. Accessed online February 5, 2024. I am indebted to this short blog post for introducing Gregory of Nazianzus as a model for partitive exegesis.

and the act of asking a question to gain knowledge of what is unknown. How can we read these three discrete texts, and others like them, when they seem to call into question the divine attributes of Christ?

It might be helpful here to make a short comment on the use of the word “ignorance.” This word will be used throughout, in reference to any lack in Christ’s knowledge, either of himself or of the world. Some have wondered whether it is the best word to use at all. John Duncan thought that “Christ was *nescient* but not *ignorant*.”⁵ This distinction was to avoid attaching any moral culpability to Christ. Donald MacLeod pointed out though, against Duncan, that *nescience* and *ignorance* are basically synonyms. So, following MacLeod, the term *ignorance* will be used throughout, though no moral failing is intended by its use.⁶

It will also be helpful to address what is meant by “knowledge” as epistemology is a vast and complex field. What the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, means by “knowledge,” or “to know,” covers a lot.⁷ What is intended by the term, in my usage, is the broad array of facts, skills, information, and perception that is available to a knowing agent. Knowledge comes to us through education, experience, general familiarity, and understanding attained by judging and reflecting upon sense experience.⁸ “Wisdom,” an expansive biblical category, is certainly not just knowing facts (Luke 2:40–52). While knowledge can mean cognitive awareness, it can also involve intuition and a sense of things, for example when Jesus “knew what was in man” (John 2:25). This kind of intuitive knowledge is distinguished from both reasoning and computation of empirical facts.⁹ Knowledge can even be tacit, that is, difficult to explain or transfer to another. Consider what it means to “know” how to ride a bike or how to breastfeed.¹⁰ When we speak of Jesus knowing, we may have in mind his hands knowing how to set a fishing net just as much as his memorization of an Isaiah scroll. Some knowledge is as much “in the hands” as it is “in the head.”¹¹ What the Bible means by “knowledge” also can include experience, personal relationship, and even covenantal

5 John Duncan, *Colloquia Peripatetica*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1879), 26. Emphasis added.

6 Donald MacLeod, *The Person of Christ* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1998), 168.

7 It can even be euphemistic of sexual relations, see Genesis 4:1, at least in some English translations.

8 E. D. Schmitz, “Knowledge, Experience, Ignorance,” In *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Volume 2*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976): 390.

9 G. H. Clark, “Knowledge” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 613.

10 See the fascinating project of Esther Meek, who applies Michael Polanyi’s theory of tacit knowledge to Christian faith and understanding. Esther Lightcap Meek, *Longing to Know* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2003). Esther Lightcap Meek, *Loving to Know: Covenantal Epistemology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011).

11 Even this distinction between “hand” knowledge and “head” knowledge should be called into question. Also, the distinction between these and “heart” knowledge. We may get what is intended by such distinctions but whether they actually are warranted is another.

obedience.¹² What is meant by “knowledge” is not less than intellectual cognition, but it is also a great deal more.

Divine Omniscience and Human Ignorance Considered

In the year 451, the Council of Chalcedon codified both the union of and the distinction between Christ’s two natures by pronouncing that they were without division or separation, and without confusion or change.¹³ The Son never ceases to possess divine attributes, but concurrently he remains, in his incarnation as a human being, the possessor of finitude and limitations.¹⁴ The lowliness of humanity is joined with the loftiness of divinity.¹⁵ The *communicatio idiomatum* articulates that the properties of each of the divine and human natures are predicated of the one person, Jesus Christ.¹⁶ This means that some things can be attributed to the divine nature, some to the human, but whatever ability, act, or experience has as its subject the one person of Christ.

Divine omniscience needs definition, and what follows will serve for what is meant by the term in this paper. Omniscience means that God knows everything there is to know. God has consciousness and knowledge of everything outside himself. His knowledge is exhaustive in all respects. Herman Bavinck writes that “Scripture nowhere even hints that anything could be unknown to him.... The notion that something should be unknown to him is dismissed as absurd. Would he who plants the ear not hear, and would he who forms the eye not see? (Ps 94:9).”¹⁷ How God knows all things is due to his very divinity, his knowledge is related to his very being. His self-knowledge is complete because in his being there is no becoming, no process, no development.¹⁸ He is completely himself within himself, and his knowledge has no grounding in anything outside of himself. He needs nothing to know everything. His aseity (complete self-existence) secures the utter independence of his knowledge.¹⁹ God’s knowledge relates to his existence as Creator, it is not dependent on anything received from the world. God’s knowledge is not passive, receiving new information or stimuli from the

12 See David Naugle, “What is Knowledge? Biblical/Hebraic Epistemology,” Summer Institute in Christian Scholarship, Dallas Baptist University, July 31, 2001. Seminar handout.

13 As per the Chalcedonian Definition.

14 Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 3: Sin and Salvation in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 256.

15 Hans Boersma, “The Chalcedonian Definition: Its Soteriological Implications,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 54 (1992): 59.

16 “Communication of attributes,” Treier, 199. And Bavinck, *Volume 3*, 308.

17 Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, vol. 2: God and Creation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 192.

18 Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, vol. 2*, 195.

19 Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, vol. 2*, 196.

Creation. Instead, it is active, and all things exist because of his thought.²⁰ He does not learn or gain knowledge. God is eternal and so does not experience any succession of events as a growing perception. “He knows everything by one eternal act.”²¹ In short, God knows everything because he is God, and he knows everything as God. This is what divine omniscience has been classically defined as.

Now, there are other ways some have conceived of God’s knowledge and other potential ways to read texts. Open Theism, and the related Process Theology, posit that the ignorance is not merely in the human but also in the divine nature.²² God himself has information or experience denied to him in this array of views. Any type of Open Theism or Process Theology eliminates the need to wrestle with Christ’s ignorance as a Christological issue at all, as it places the ignorance back into the realm of theology proper. There is no need to wrestle with apparent ignorance or growth of knowledge in Christ because the Divine Being is said to be in need of learning and growth. God can be said to be omniscient in Open Theism but in a highly qualified way. God can know all that there is presently to know, but because the future is indefinite, it is not included in this definition of omniscience.²³ Advocates of Open Theism appeal to certain biblical passages.²⁴ But critics of Open Theism point out that there are just as many countering texts which indicate God’s complete control over events and outcomes.²⁵ Paul Helm, for example, argues that there will always need to be some kind of prioritization of which texts control the reading.²⁶ In this inquiry, I consider it best to consider texts which depict God as changing, relenting, or being acted upon as controlled by those which depict his all-knowing or unchanging nature. Likewise, texts which portray God’s (not the human Christ’s) asking after knowledge are best viewed as literary anthropomorphisms and examples of divine accommodation.²⁷

Human ignorance hardly needs as much effort to describe as divine omniscience. We innately understand that there are many things we simply do not know. We don’t know the future, we don’t know a myriad of facts, we don’t know

20 Matthew Barrett, *None Greater: The Undomesticated Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 193.

21 Barrett, 194.

22 Open Theism generally involves the indeterminate nature of the future. Process Theology typically posits that God is temporally affected. The two schools of thought are not the same but are alike enough in the sense that they challenge classical conceptions of divine omniscience.

23 Edwin K. P. Chong, “On Jesus’ Eschatological Ignorance,” *Journal of Biblical Theology* 7, no. 2 (April–June 2024): 170.

24 Like Genesis 18 or Genesis 22:15–18, where God appears to alter his plans because of human choice or intervention. Or like 1 Samuel 15:10 where God appears to express regret.

25 Ferhat Yöney, “An Examination of the Biblical Evidence for Open Theism,” *Heythrop Journal* 61, no. 2 (2020): 256. For every 1 Samuel 15:11 there can be a 1 Samuel 15:29, where even in the same chapter God is said to repent and also not repent as such would go against his very nature.

26 Paul Helm, “An Augustinian-Calvinist Response,” in *Divine Foreknowledge Four Views*, ed. James K. Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001): 61–64.

27 For instance, Genesis 3:9 or Isaiah 6:8.

what is happening on the other side of the world, we don't even know ourselves. Regarding tacit knowledge, there are some of us who do not know how to master a fretboard with their fingers. Every human person begins as a baby and then must grow by learning things and gaining ability. We ask questions of all kinds, some of them rhetorical or pedagogical, but many seeking information. Jesus, as a true human being, does each of these. He grows, he admits he doesn't know something, he seeks information (Luke 2:40–52, Mark 13:32, Mark 5:30). Ignorance is a necessary implication of finitude. Human persons are very much finite. In fact, for a human being to be omniscient may even destroy that which is human in them.²⁸

The Dilemma Expanded

Jesus of Nazareth does at times seem to have supernatural knowledge. He sees Nathanael under the fig tree (John 1:48), something that could not normally be known. It is not difficult to imagine, though, how a human being could receive supernatural revelation. Other figures in Scripture receive revelation. If we assume Jesus's capacity for receiving such revelatory knowledge is far greater than others, it is still only a difference in degree and not in kind or principle.²⁹ Jesus sees within people, into their inner psyche even (John 2:25). There are many times where his knowledge is not mere cognition but is deeply intuitive. This again is not unimaginable. Just as an instance of supernatural knowledge is not omniscience, neither is telepathy. At any rate, it is not the presence of knowledge beyond human ability that causes the dilemma as much as the absence of divine knowledge in the Christ.

The incarnation was not a subtraction from divinity but the addition of humanity to it. It occurred not by "the conversion of divinity into flesh but by the assumption of humanity into God."³⁰ Gregory of Nazianzus, our soon to be conversation partner, gave his formulation in Oration 29:19: "what he was he continued to be; what he was not he took to himself."³¹ It is far and away easier to imagine how the God-man can *gain* ability, knowledge or power beyond limited human capability. More mind-bending is imagining how the possessor of the divine nature could appear to *be absent* an ability, knowledge, or power. Furthermore, when it comes to knowledge specifically, it becomes even harder to imagine than other divine abilities and powers. It is at least somewhat imaginable how Christ could withhold some act of power by restraint just as a parent holds back beating their child at a board game. Conceivably, an act of power can be withheld, but how does one

28 MacLeod, 197.

29 MacLeod, 166.

30 Oden, 268.

31 Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Press, 2002), 86.

not know something that they know? How does one choose not to know? How do we read this?

Nestorius (d. AD 451) accepted the full humanity of Jesus but not that the divine Word was born of the Virgin Mary.³² This caused his critics to object that he separates the two natures such that there was no essential union between them.³³ Acts of one of the two natures are not necessarily predicated to the one person. Christ then possesses not just two natures but is two persons, with whatever unity they have being dependent upon the moral agreement of two wills.³⁴ This could conceivably account for how Christ's divine omniscience and human ignorance could coexist but in a "dual-consciousness" model.³⁵ In Nestorianism, there can be no singular person of Christ.

Apollinarianism, unlike Nestorianism, affirms that there is one person in Christ, but the union is accomplished by the divine Word subsuming the human mind of Christ.³⁶ It denies that Christ has a reasonable human soul in either will or intellect.³⁷ None of Christ's perception, memory, intuition, or logic would be in any way human.³⁸ It is this Apollinarianism that Gregory of Nazianzus took aim against in his Letter to Cledonius.³⁹ Gregory writes:

Whoever has set his hope on a human being without mind is actually mindless himself and unworthy of being saved in his entirety. *The unassumed is the unhealed, but what is united with God is also being saved.*⁴⁰

It is worth noting that one of Gregory's most well-known statements (italicized) is, in context, about the human mind of Jesus and how it has direct bearing on salvation. Our minds need saving, and this cannot be done unless Christ has a mind as human as ours. An Apollinarian Christology also potentially makes Jesus a liar every time he expresses a lack of knowledge.

Kenotic theory, based largely on Philippians 2:5–8, posits that in the incarnation the divine Son emptied himself of "all or some of his properties down to the level of the human development attained and then gradually won them back in the

32 C. Fitzsimmons Allison, *The Cruelty of Heresy* (New York: Morehouse, 1994), 121.

33 Allison, 122. It is doubtful that Nestorius himself taught full Nestorianism and it is quite likely that he was more orthodox than he is sometimes remembered. Nevertheless, it is Nestorianism considered here, not its namesake.

34 Allison, 123.

35 Andrew Loke, "The Incarnation and Jesus' Apparent Limitation in Knowledge," *New Blackfriars* 94, no. 1053 (September 2013): 595.

36 Allison, 107.

37 MacLeod, 160.

38 MacLeod, 164.

39 Behr, 401.

40 Gregory, 158. Letter 101:5. Emphasis added.

way of development.”⁴¹ It was in fact due to the quandary of his human ignorance that Kenotic theory was first developed by Gottfried Thomasius and others.⁴²

But the *emptying* that Paul speaks of in Philippians 2:7 has more to do with the intended ethical example of Christ in 2:4 than the attributes and their activation or deactivation. Scott Oliphant writes, “it is not as though Christ emptied himself *of something* [divinity]; that is not Paul’s point. Paul’s point is that Christ emptied himself *by becoming something* that he was not previously, something that, by definition, required humility and, ultimately, humiliation (Phil 2:8).”⁴³ The incarnation thus remains an addition to the divine Son and not a subtraction of anything. Nestorianism, Apollinarianism, and Kenotic theory serve as examples of insufficient resolutions, creating more problems than they relieve.

Gregory of Nazianzus – The Theologian

In the summer of 380, Gregory of Nazianzus preached a series of orations, five of which (27–31) have become known as the *Theological Orations*. They, along with his *Letter 101: To Cledonius*, contain relevant insights to this discussion of how to interpret divine omniscience coexisting with human ignorance in Christ. Gregory lived and died before the Chalcedonian Definition of 451 asserted that the two natures of Christ are united unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, and inseparably. He is proto-Chalcedonian in that he anticipated and argued for what Chalcedon would later go on to define.⁴⁴ Some have suggested that Gregory believed in some sort of “mixing” or “blending” of the natures of Christ.⁴⁵ He does, after all, use this type of language. In Oration 29:19 for example, he writes, “Through the medium of mind he had dealings with the flesh, being made that God on earth, which is Man: Man and God, *blended*.”⁴⁶ He used the word surely, but he goes on to argue for the distinctness of the two natures. It is certain that whatever he meant by *blending* or *mixture*, he meant that divinity and humanity persisted in the union of Christ. Gregory’s view, according to Brendan Harris, was that the union is achieved by the interpenetration of the natures.⁴⁷ One can still distinguish between the ‘names’ of Christ which refer to his divinity or his humanity. This theological insight drove his exegetical method.

41 Bavinck, *Volume 3*, 263–64.

42 Treier, 202.

43 K. Scott Oliphant, “Most Moved Mediator,” *Themelios* 30, no. 1 (Autumn, 2004): 48.

44 C. A. Beeley, “The Early Christological Controversy: Apollinarius, Diodore, and Gregory Nazianzen,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 65, no. 4 (2011): 378.

45 Brendan A. Harris, “Gregory Nazianzen’s Christology of Mixture,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 73, Pt 2 (October 2022): 731.

46 Gregory, 86.

47 Harris, 775.

Gregory disliked novelty and innovation in theology.⁴⁸ Gregory also revered conciliar doctrine and the role of the church in formulation of creeds, seeing the consensus of councils as the Spirit's work.⁴⁹ His theological method was thus fairly restrained, remaining within the boundaries of Scripture and prior interpretive agreement. Gregory was interested in how the divine and human Christ may have tensions between his various attributes and roles. In Oration 29:20, he gives a long litany of seemingly opposing aspects of Christ.⁵⁰ He acknowledges the difficulty of this but encourages readers not to abandon the creed for the sake of faulty reason. The "frail organ of human understanding," he says, is no substitute for faith.⁵¹ But neither does he abandon reason rightly aligned with faith. With Gregory "there is no hint of belief on the basis of the unreasonable. But there is also no sense of giving reason full priority."⁵²

Gregory's Partitive Exegesis

In Oration 29, Gregory acknowledges there is a great gap between Christ's divine activities and the "even lowlier expressions used about him."⁵³ He even mentions specifically Christ's ignorance, his asking of questions, his progress, and his growing up.⁵⁴ He then assures us that it is "not a hard task to clear away the stumbling block that the literal text of Scripture contains" so long as any of our puzzlement is in good faith and not just "willful malice."⁵⁵ He then delivers the principle by which we might rightly read Scripture:

In sum, you must predicate the more sublime expressions of the Godhead, of the nature which transcends bodily experiences, and the lowlier ones of the compound, of him who because of you was emptied, became incarnate and (to use equally valid language) was "made man." The next he was exalted, in order that you might have done with the earthbound carnality of your opinions and might learn to be nobler, to ascend with the Godhead and linger on in things visible but rise up to spiritual realities, and that you might know what belongs to his nature and what to God's plan of salvation.⁵⁶

48 Wyatt Aaron Graham, "Gregory of Nazianzus: How the Church Formulates Doctrine," *Churchman* 130, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 47.

49 Graham, 50.

50 Gregory, 87–88.

51 Gregory, 88. Oration 29:21.

52 Frederick W. Norris, "Of Thorns and Roses: The Logic of Belief in Gregory Nazianzen," *Church History* 53, no. 4 (December 1984): 463.

53 Gregory, 85. Oration 29:18.

54 Gregory, 85.

55 Gregory, 86.

56 Gregory, 86. Oration 29:18.

This passage describes what has come to be called *partitive exegesis*. Not unique to Gregory, the term was coined by Lars Koen in reference to the Cyril of Alexandria's commentary on John's Gospel.⁵⁷ Augustine later defined it in *De Trinitate*.⁵⁸ Gregory's friend Basil of Caesarea argued for a partitive exegesis directly in reference to Mark 13:32.⁵⁹ Gregory of Nyssa examined Acts 2:36 in light of partitive exegesis to explain how God could "make" Jesus both Lord and Christ.⁶⁰ It is Gregory of Nazianzus, though, who in Oration 29:18 gave us the clearest fourth-century statement of it. John Behr summarizes it as this: "some things said of Christ pertain to his divine nature, while other things express what he has done for us in the unfolding plan of salvation."⁶¹ Following this principle, it is always important that we see what is said about Christ as God and as human, though distinct in their properties, are applied to the one, personal subject.⁶²

This is how such an exegetical method as Gregory's⁶³ explicitly avoids a Nestorian trajectory. Some predicates of Christ's divine nature could be listed as: eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful. Predicates of his humanity could be listed as: the son of Mary, a body with a rational soul, travelled in a boat on the Sea of Galilee.⁶⁴ What can be said to be true of one of the natures is nevertheless predicated to the one person of Christ. It is his divinity which makes him eternal, but we say that Christ, the one Person, is eternal. His human nature is the son of Mary, but it is true to say that the one Christ is the Son of Mary. It was this specifically that Nestorius tripped over and could not confess, that to be Mary's son could not be predicated to the one person of the Christ. Thus, she could not be properly called God-Bearer. Nestorianism flounders exegetically in three ways.⁶⁵ First, it lacks a single referent of Christological speech. Second, it fails to account for a genuine union of Christ's two natures. Third, it does not account for union of the incarnated actions of Christ.⁶⁶ A partitive exegesis like Gregory's explicitly avoids these Nestorian moves. Though some things Christ does can be said to

57 R. B. Jamieson and Tyler R. Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning: Christological and Trinitarian Rules for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022), 154.

58 Augustine, *the Trinity* 2.2, quoted in Jamieson and Wittman, 154.

59 Basil, *Epistle 236:1*, quoted in Behr, 292. An example of how Basil exegeted Mark 13:30–32 is included below in the section "Admitting an Unknown Fact—Mark 13:30–32."

60 Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 15:2, quoted in Behr, 437.

61 Behr, 349.

62 Behr, 350.

63 And Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea, and other patristic exegetes.

64 John Lamont, "The Nature of the Hypostatic Union," *Heythrop Journal* 47, no. 1 (2006): 16. These are Lamont's examples.

65 Once again granting that Nestorius himself may have been different than the Nestorianism refuted by his critics.

66 Glenn Butner, "The Need for Nicene Dogmatics," in *Classical Trinitarianism*, ed. Matthew Barrett (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2024): 710.

have extended from his divine nature, and some others could be said to extend from his humanity, there is only ever one “he.”⁶⁷

This is how Gregory held in tension the apparent divine action and attributes of Christ and those of his human nature. He began his next oration continuing directly from this point:

We have now established a general, and I believe, clear solution, satisfactory to people of sound sense – the solution, I mean, of allocating the more elevated, the more distinctly divine expressions of Scripture to the Godhead, the humbler and more human to the New Adam, God passible for our sake over against sin.⁶⁸

There it is: a solution offered to those of sound sense. Gregory goes on, in Oration 30, to immediately use this partitive exegesis with Proverbs 8:22, a text that occasioned Christological controversy in the fourth century.⁶⁹ Proverbs 8:22 was one of the most contentious verses in early Christological dispute. It could be read as undermining the doctrine of the pre-existence of God the Son, identified in Gregory’s day as the personification of Wisdom and the “me” referred to in the verse.⁷⁰ But Gregory’s exegesis can make sense of the human beginning of Christ alongside the divine pre-existence. The *creation* of Christ applies only to his humanity, while his eternal divinity is properly said to be *begotten*.⁷¹

A partitive exegesis always asks a biblical text about Christ this question: in what sense does this apply?⁷² The referent of a text is discerned to be which of the natures is in view. Thus, partitive exegesis both recognizes and maintains the distinction between Christ’s human and divine natures.⁷³ Some things written about Christ may be true only of his human nature while others are only true of his divine nature.⁷⁴ Partitive exegesis is very much a “two nature” exegesis and so is very much in line with the unconfused, unchangeable, indivisible, and inseparable principle of Chalcedon. Jesus can be viewed as a true human being with the appropriate properties, actions, passions, and even limitations. The personal unity of the two natures is maintained and so does not erect a Nestorian wall of separation between them. So, when we come across any text concerning Jesus, the question of partitive exegesis is always: “which dimension of Christ’s existence

67 Behr, 352.

68 Gregory, 93. Oration 30:1.

69 Mark DelCogliano, “Basil of Caesarea on Proverbs 8:22 and the Sources of Pro-Nicene Theology,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 59, no. 1 (April 2008): 183.

70 DelCogliano, 186.

71 Behr, 353.

72 Jamieson and Wittman, 155.

73 Jamieson and Wittman, 155.

74 Jamieson and Wittman, 155.

is the author talking about?”⁷⁵ This is not to say that Christ alternates between his divine nature and his human nature.⁷⁶ He is both concurrently. We always say that it is the one person of Christ who is the subject, but in some instances his divinity is in the foreground and sometimes his humanity is, at least in terms of how a given text presents him.

Bobby Jamieson and Tyler Wittman take this patristic approach and helpfully distill it into some exegetical principles which lead into these accompanying principles and rules:

Principle 6: One and the same Lord Jesus Christ, the only be-gotten Son of the Father, exists as one person in two natures, without confusion or change, without division or separation.

Rule 7: The eternal, divine Son is the sole subject of everything Jesus does and suffers. Christ is one person, one agent, one “who.” Therefore, in reading Scripture’s witness to Christ we must never divide Christ’s acts between two acting subjects, attributing some to the divine Son and others to the human Jesus as if there were two different people.

Rule 8: Since Christ is a single divine person who subsists in both a divine and a human nature, Scripture sometimes names him according to one nature and predicates of him what belongs to the other nature. Scripture ascribes divine prerogatives to the man Jesus, and human acts and sufferings to the divine Son. So read Scripture in a way that recognizes and reproduces this paradoxical grammar of Christological predication.⁷⁷

Rule 9: Scripture speaks of Christ in a twofold manner; some things are said of him as divine, and other things are said of him as human. Biblical reasoning discerns that Scripture speaks of the one Christ in two registers in order to contemplate the whole Christ. Therefore read Scripture in such a way that you discern the different registers in which Scripture speaks of Christ, yet without dividing him.⁷⁸

These exegetical rules are a bit of a balancing act. We can see how Chalcedonian

⁷⁵ Jamieson and Wittman, 163.

⁷⁶ See MacLeod, 189.

⁷⁷ Jamieson and Wittman, 126. Their principles and rules cover many patristic insights. But only the later ones directly address partitive exegesis of Christ in the Gospels, hence we begin far down the list with Principle 6.

⁷⁸ Jamieson and Wittman, 153.

commitments are upheld in Principle 6 and Nestorian nature-splitting is forestalled in Rule 7. Rule 8 encourages the exegete to maintain the paradoxical presentation of Christ. Rule 9 introduces the idea of different *registers* in which each nature of Christ can “be itself” without dividing his personal unity. Like two keys played at the same time on a piano, one note might be discerned foremost by the ear while the other still rings. These rules represent what Gregory could have come up with if he had been pressed into making exegetical rules for us. They do accurately distill what he argues for in Oration 29 and 30. They give us a grammar which we can apply to scriptural passages; a lens through which to look, so as not to distort a text in one direction or the other. Now, finally, we can turn to our three texts from above (Luke 2:40–52, Mark 13:32, and Mark 5:30), instances seemingly portraying the ignorance of Christ.

Gaining Knowledge as He Matures – Luke 2:40–52

At both the head and the tail of this passage there is reference to him growing and increasing in wisdom (v 40 and 52). This Lukan passage presumes Jesus’s growing in knowledge, but note that what is meant by “wisdom” need not mean mere cognitive information. The full biblical range of wisdom (existential, covenantal, character, and virtue) can be brought to bear in our reading of the text. Jesus’s increase of wisdom could involve self-awareness of his lordship and of his messianic identity. Herman Bavinck identifies different types of growth in Christ: in intellect, in faith, in moral development.⁷⁹ But it remains a conundrum as to how Jesus filled a previous lack with learning if he is divine and thus omniscient. Thomas Aquinas identified this as an objection to the doctrine of the incarnation in his *Summa Theologica*. The objection was expressly about whether Christ can have any acquired knowledge.⁸⁰ It is notable that Thomas dissented from the medieval majority opinion and saw Christ’s growth in knowledge as literal.⁸¹

A partitive exegesis allows us to see a true reality to his human growth. His childhood need not have been some illusion and his acquisition of knowledge (intellectual, moral, vocational self-awareness) is actual. Divinity cannot learn past omniscience, but Christ’s divinity is not in view here. The *register* being used here, to use Jamieson and Wittman’s term, is the human. Once again, Christ does not alternate between human and divine natures but in displaying him, a given text presents one of those natures as coming to the foreground. And so, we are to contemplate the union of Christ in light of this.

In his humanity, he grows and learns. A partitive exegesis, like one Gregory

79 Bavinck, *Volume 3*, 311–13.

80 Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 9, a. 4, trans. Benziger Brothers (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1948), 2077.

81 Kevin Madigan, “Did Jesus ‘Progress in Wisdom?’ Thomas Aquinas on Luke 2:52 in Ancient and High-Medieval Context,” *Traditio* 52 (1997): 180.

would use, allows us to avoid jettisoning that fact as Thomas's medieval contemporaries did, and allows us to respect what the text actually says. His divinity does not learn; his humanity does. But the one Christ is the subject of the action of Luke 2:40–52. Gregory himself pondered “how could Wisdom possibly need a teacher or be incapable of doing something without instruction?”⁸² Yet he acknowledged as real and actual “his progress, and growing up.”⁸³

Admitting an Unknown Fact – Mark 13:30–32

As part of longer eschatological discourse, Jesus says to his disciples that “concerning the day or the hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” Some commentators avoid the issue of Christ's ignorance by stating that it is not the main concern of the text. William Lane writes, “his purpose was not to define the limits of his theological knowledge, but to indicate that vigilance, not calculation, is required.”⁸⁴ We can grant Lane's point. But Jesus still admitted to not knowing a fact and just one unknown fact is enough to puncture omniscience. This text still compels us to question how Jesus could admit to an unknown. Gregory questioned it: “yet how can any fact be unknown to Wisdom, the worlds' maker, who perfects, transforms, and limits things created, who knows the things of God just as man's spirit knows the things in man?”⁸⁵

Various resolutions to this conundrum have been proposed. Basil of Caesarea thought the language did not imply an admission of ignorance at all. His *philological* solution took the text to be “But of that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, *if not (ei me)* the Father.” Basil then reasoned that Jesus was in effect saying: “If I were not one with the Father, even I would not know the time of my second coming.”⁸⁶ Jesus was then not expressing his ignorance of a fact but his dependence on the Father for his knowing of it. Augustine and Gregory of Tours dismissed Jesus's statement as a mere figure of speech, and so it caused no problem for them at all.⁸⁷ In Oration 30, Gregory of Nazianzus saw Mark 13:32 as the perfect place to apply the partitive exegesis he had articulated just prior in Oration 29.⁸⁸ “Surely everyone will see that if you separate the real from the apparent meaning of the passage it is saying that he does know as God, but that, as man, he does not ... we interpret this ignorance in the most truly

82 Gregory, 101. Oration 30:11.

83 Gregory, 85. Oration 29:18.

84 William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 482.

85 Gregory, 106. Oration 30:15.

86 Francis X. Gumerlock. “Mark 13:32 and Christ's Supposed Ignorance: Four Patristic Solutions,” *Trinity Journal* 28, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 206.

87 Gumerlock, 207.

88 Gumerlock, 210.

religious way by ascribing it not to the divine but the human.”⁸⁹ Gregory was not alone in seeing Mark 13:32 this way. His contemporary Athanasius agreed with him as did Gregory the Great and John of Damascus in the period following.⁹⁰ A partitive exegesis permits us to exegete the ignorance as human, specific to the incarnated Son.

Asking a Genuine Question – Mark 5:30

Anyone who has ever moderated a Q and A session knows that not all questions are seeking an answer. Jesus asked many questions and for many reasons. Most of them served some kind of pedagogical purpose, or to “pierce the minds and hearts of his listeners.”⁹¹ In the instance of Mark 5:30, where a woman reaches out and touches Jesus’s robe, he was prompted to ask, “who touched my garments?” This question does not appear to be for some rhetorical or pedagogical purpose. Some commentators dismiss out of hand that this question could be genuinely seeking an answer. J. A. Alexander called the possibility that Jesus asked what he didn’t know “absurd” and reads the question along the lines of “I know it, but I wish you to confess it, for your own sake, and as due to me by whom the cure has been effected.”⁹² C. S. Lewis referred to this specific question considering Christ’s human ignorance:

And if limitation, and therefore ignorance, was thus taken up, we ought to expect that the ignorance should at some time be actually displayed. It would be difficult, and, to me, even repellent, to suppose that Jesus never asked a genuine question, that is, a question to which He did not know the answer. That would make of his humanity something so unlike ours as scarcely to deserve the name. I find it easier to believe that when He said “Who touched me?” He really wanted to know.⁹³

Lewis was correct in that this question, out of those asked by Jesus in the Gospels, is likely the best candidate to be a genuine one. In fact, there is no reason to believe it is not, unless one is pre-committed to its impossibility.

Gregory of Nazianzus’ partitive exegesis allows us to see Jesus asking a question seeking an answer without doing damage to his own divine knowledge. As God, he did not need to ask. As a man, he was curious to fill a gap in knowledge.

⁸⁹ Gregory, 106. Oration 30:15.

⁹⁰ Gumerlock, 213.

⁹¹ Ferdinand Alexander, Zummy Anselmus Dami and Yanjumseby Yeverson Manafe. “Jesus’s Questions in the Gospel of Matthew: Promoting Critical Thinking Skills.” *Christian Education Journal* 18, no. 1 (April 2021): 93.

⁹² J. A. Alexander, *Mark, The Geneva Series of Commentaries* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1984), 130.

⁹³ C. S. Lewis, *The World’s Last Night* (San Francisco: Harper One, 2017), 107.

The person of Jesus may have had many gaps in his knowledge and may have asked any number of questions. The *register* of his human nature comes to the fore in this text. This is its most natural meaning. The two natures are present within the one person but are not in competition. This can allow us to acknowledge and confess the presence and reality of both natures of Christ within the one personal subject, even if we cannot imagine what the inner psychology would be like. Full comprehension may not be possible for us, but at least we have a reading method where the biblical text and creedal tradition are both upheld.

Conclusion

What can this method of reading actually give us? What does partitive exegesis do? Gregory of Nazianzus, with his partitive exegesis, did not give us complete understanding as to what it would have actually been like to experience both divine omniscience and human ignorance concurrently, as Christ did. It describes a reality that is hard for us to imagine. With partitive exegesis, mystery is not resolved but rather safeguarded. What it also does is preserve the conciliar Christology of the indivisible and unconfused dual natures of Christ. His divinity is not diminished. His humanness is not rendered unrecognizable by superhuman features. Is this preservation a retreat into mystery? A dodge? Theology does offer answers but not always ones that exhaust every mystery to arrive at comprehensibility. We can know enough to confess, not always to comprehend. Chalcedonian Christology is thus a matter for confession, even while it poses issues beyond comprehension.

Thomas Weinandy comments on the place of mystery in theology in his book *Does God Suffer?* He explores and defends divine impassibility, another hard to comprehend theological topic. Weinandy notes that at the heart of theological inquiry is faith that seeks understanding.⁹⁴ The expectations of this understanding ought not be conditioned on the expectation that we will solve every problem. He distinguishes, too, between problem and mystery. Problems aren't always solved, but mysteries can be apprehended, and in that apprehension is where the tensions of orthodoxy are guarded. He writes, "the true goal of theological inquiry is not the resolution of the theological *problems*, but the discernment of what the *mystery* of faith is."⁹⁵

Sometimes the best we can grasp for is not the resolution that brings the most understanding but one that does the least damage to what we can and do know. Jesus Christ is one person; he has two natures. His divine nature is omniscient; his human nature has appropriate limitations. The chameleon has two eyes that can look in two separate directions. One can read about this in a science book, and

94 Thomas Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 28. He is referring to Augustine of Canterbury's principle *fides quaerens intellectum*.

95 Weinandy, 31. Italics original to author.

it can be logically understood. But can one actually imagine what that would be like, processing two images in our own single-visioned brains? This analogy cannot even come close to the knowledge—cognitive, existential, intuitive, tacit—of the person of Christ. It is doubtful, too that we can accurately imagine the inner psychology of the God-man—the All-knowing who grew in knowledge, lacked a fact, and asked an honest question seeking an honest answer. We can ask the question “Jesus, did you know?” In the register of his divine nature he did know, while concurrently in the register of his humanity he could answer in the negative. With partitive exegesis, following Gregory, this can be true, “though it cannot be imagined.”⁹⁶ Where comprehensive understanding ends, worship can begin. We can have true understanding of Christ, as there are formulations which accurately describe his dual natures and their union. But it is uplifting and hopeful to have something which hovers above what can be completely grasped. Finally, we can let Gregory have the last word: “If you make incomprehensibility a ground for denying the fact, it is high time you ruled out as non-existent a good number of things you do not understand....”⁹⁷

96 Lewis, 106.

97 Gregory, 76. Oration 29:8.

Hellenization and Hubris in Early Jewish Christianity: an Exploration via ‘Faux Reviews’ of Two Fictitious, Modern Novels

Eugene E. Lemcio
Seattle Pacific University
The University of Washington

Abstract

The following experiment in genre-bending intends to achieve the integration of multiple and diverse goals. The typical review provides a vehicle for summarizing a work (in this case, a “Biblical Thriller”), evaluating it, and simultaneously (if inadvertently) providing an insight into the reviewer himself/herself. The two, atypical reviews that follow do the same. However, this time, each element is fictional—a work of imagination. The protagonist of the first “novel” under “review” proposes a radical (some would say ‘demented’) understanding of Mark’s Gospel to the faculty at a Christian university in Seattle, Washington. The protagonist of the second, a specialist in the Book of Revelation, experiences her own individual apocalypse in modern Ukraine. Although highly compressed, such multilayered storytelling enables readers to glimpse the work and world of biblical scholarship as adventure, both personal and professional—the stakes in each being very high.

A Guide for the (Potentially-) Perplexed

It was not exactly “a dark and stormy night” of an occasion, but the mystery was almost as palpable. Soon after Diane had gone to choir rehearsal, from out of the blue, several aspects of my personal experience, professional service, and Ukrainian heritage (three generations, removed) converged in a sharply focused moment—as did the genre-adoption-adaptation by which to integrate and express them. While not quite the equivalent of Athena’s emerging from Zeus’s head, fully grown and armed, it was close enough (by the time my wife had returned) to lay the foundation for many subsequent drafts.

The Literary Mode

The Faux Review

So far as I am aware, the name originates with me. The two examples included below are written by the fictive biblical scholar, Pantelejmon Ohienko; in journals that do not exist; of novels that have not been published—nor have they actually been written by an author named “Ruryk Rusyn.”

Dominant Themes

Hellenization

During thirty-six years of teaching and researching the New Testament at Seattle Pacific University (concentrating on the Gospels and the Book of Revelation), I came to realize that I had not—nor had many of my colleagues in the field—sufficiently taken into account the impacts of hellenization upon both Judaism and Christianity.¹

The first to be reviewed by Ohienko is *Mark My Words*. Rusyn tells the story of a Gospels specialist at a progressive Christian university who threatens his tenured position and economic livelihood by proposing that Mark was written last (rather than first) to restrain (if not eliminate) certain paganizing trends which the Evangelist saw manifested in the additions and expansions so characteristic of Matthew and Luke: Jesus’s genealogy, dual fatherhood, supernatural conception, mighty deeds and profound teaching, opposition leading to violent death, and resurrection appearances.

Hubris

I had come to realize over the years how profoundly the theme of hubris had concerned ancient sages, be they Hebrew-Jewish or Greco-Roman. Self-exaltation seemed to be the great offense—both against the divine world and also among individuals living in community: city, state, and empire. The drive for status, wealth, and power was the root of all the evils. On this matter, at least, Jerusalem and Athens belonged in the same neighborhood.

Rusyn also addresses this theme in his second novel, *The Apocalypse of Katya Kanyuka*. This time, it’s set in modern Ukraine—heir (with the entire Eastern Slavic world) to the profound impact of hellenistic civilization upon its religion, language, and culture. Each chapter begins with a passage from the Book of Revelation mirroring the experiences of the protagonist who must navigate struggles for power among vying politicians, oligarchs, and clergy—starting in Lviv: City “of Lions.” It’s here that she must also wrestle with emerging ethno-nationalism in the context of the country’s war with Russia.

1 My Profile, CV, and a select list of publications can be accessed on [Academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu).

The Task

In composing these “reviews” (operating within their built-in constraints), I had to generate an embryonic plot for each “novel”; at least sketch the outlines of compelling, three-dimensional characters; create an aura of mystery; up the dramatic ante; and critique that which “I” had written.

Antecedents

In the interests of full disclosure, I must add that, after reading my faux reviews, a colleague at the University of Washington² told me that they reminded her of similar works by the Polish writer Stanislaw Lem, about which I had been unaware. He acknowledged his contemporary, Jorge Luis Borges, and (before him) Rabelais as experimenters with versions of the genre.³

Finally, how much should be made of the fact that Stanislaw LEM had studied in LEMberg (the name of Lviv under the Austrians), where a certain Eugene LEMcio had lectured at his university in the mid-90s?

Journal for the Study of Gospel Relationships (JSGR): Book Reviews

Mark My Words. Ruryk Rusyn. Magnolia, WA: Deep & Wide Press, 2024. ISBN: 37223098199. Pp. 216. \$35.00.

With the appearance of this volume, the Publishers have launched a series of titles under the general rubric, “The Romance of Biblical Scholarship.” However, the Editors might just as well have named this one “Biblical Thrillers” or “Biblical Mysteries.”

Rusyn is himself a New Testament scholar who earned an Oxford DPhil at Christ Church. After tutoring undergraduates, both at the College and from across the University, he became a journalist, covering the Russo-Ukrainian war for several British news outlets from fetid, vermin-infested trenches in places like Adiyivka and Soledar. This breakout novel may well determine how many more will appear in the series.

His protagonist, Constantine Petrovych Lemko (“Kostya” to family, colleagues, and friends), is a mid-career professor of New Testament and Hellenistic Greek at Queen Anne University (QAU): a progressive Evangelical institution in Seattle that would rather be identified as Orthodox, Wesleyan, and Ecumenical.

As an undergraduate, Lemko double-majored in English Literature and Zoology. Not left-brained enough to specialize in the latter (preferring his lab

² Gordana Crnković, Professor and Chair, the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures.

³ Particularly Lem’s *A Perfect Vacuum* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971). The author does not provide bibliographic information for Borges or Rabelais.

drawings to be more aesthetically pleasing than accurate), he fulfilled his love of science by publishing poetry integrating it with religion. With a PhD in New Testament from Trinity College, Cambridge, he nevertheless found it difficult to find a teaching post in the mid-70s. A position at QAU was the only option open to him and his family of four. But it was a good fit.

With a monograph from Cambridge University Press, a coauthored volume with a Queen Anne colleague, three dozen publications, and an above-average reputation as a classroom teacher, Kostya was professionally set until retirement. On a few occasions, his published work (mainly on the Gospels and the Apocalypse) caused scholars to sit up and take notice. His forte was detecting issues that had fallen through the cracks or ones that had been insufficiently argued. Along the way, he blazed a couple of new trails and tried engaging scholars from Central and Eastern Europe, the regions from which his grandparents had immigrated before WWI.

However, one day—completely unsummoned—a line from his Sophomore Literature class by Algernon Charles Swinburne percolated up from his subconscious: “Thou hast conquered, O Pale Galilean; the world hath grown grey from thy breath.” Thus began an obsession with Emperor Flavius Claudius Julianus—a.k.a. “Julian the Apostate.” How could this nephew of Constantine the Great, raised a Christian in the palace at the imperial capital of Constantinople itself, later become a devotee of Neoplatonic philosophy and try returning the realm to worshipping the pagan gods just 40 years after the Council of Nicaea!? “Νενίκηκας Γαλιλαῖε” [“Vicisti, Galilae”] haunted Kostya ever since.

Refreshing himself in late, literary Koine and early-Byzantine Greek, Kostya began exploring the Emperor’s primary writings. Eventually, he stunned his colleagues with the completely new (and, to their minds, absurd) hypothesis about relationships among the Gospels. Mark’s was written last, not first. His aim, though a Greek-speaking Jewish Christian, was to prevent the fuller accounts of Jesus’s life from further severing their Jewish roots in becoming more hellenized. By supplying supernatural birth stories and resurrection appearances, Matthew and Luke were tending to imitate the 12-point pattern of pagan, Greco-Roman myths and heroic biographies.

In protest, Mark (who alone of the four uses the Greek term for “Gospel” at the opening of his narrative) insisted that the *euangelion* about (or proclaimed by) Jesus Christ did not begin before the world’s creation (so the Fourth Gospel); nor did it start with his conception by the Holy Spirit (so Matthew and Luke). Rather, it began with the Spirit-endowed adult, exclusively-human Jesus of Nazareth, whom God adopted as his Son—with all of the rights and privileges thereto—at the moment of his water baptism at the hands of John.

At first, Kostya’s colleagues were faintly amused. As they talked during lunch

or even in more formal settings (seminars and the like), there'd be plenty of opportunity to debunk his views, lest he embarrass himself and them by going public (either to the media or to other specialists). Was he just trying to introduce some "buzz" within the School of Theology or across campus, whose intellectual discourse had become rather sterile and stale? But nothing they said would make him budge. Then they began asking, "What if he were serious and—worse—correct? The development of early Christian thinking about Jesus would have to be revised radically. What would that do to their reputations and careers—not to mention their livelihoods?" And suddenly Kostya went from someone to be patronized to one who should be feared.

So as not to obscure his radical views with thickets of footnotes, Kostya confined his citations to that small cadre of reputable scholars who opposed the reigning view—or at least who urged openness to alternatives: the priority of Matthew (William Farmer) and even of the Fourth Gospel (John A. T. Robinson). And had not E. P. Sanders shown that the gospel tradition got both longer and shorter, both more and less specific, and more and less Semitic during oral transmission? The famous and erudite George Salmon, writing in the late 1890s, anticipated Kostya somewhat: suggesting that Mark had made available Peter's reminiscences for the other Evangelists to use; but he'd composed his own version later: after theirs. However, Kostya's proposed reason for his doing so would have scandalized Salmon.

Why would Mark have been preserved at all, then? Well, there was that traditional connection with Peter. His was the only one actually to contain the word "Gospel" in the body of the text (which the others did not use at all in similar fashion). So, church tradition tucked him in at second place—where he could do less damage and where the other Gospels might exercise a positive influence on him. Readers could freely harmonize the four accounts into one uncomplicated narrative (as happens especially at Christmas, when the two very different birth stories of Matthew and Luke are blended during holiday pageants and in popular imagination).

Of course, taking such a stance publicly would put the University in an awkward position. Though in no way fundamentalist, it had tried maintaining historic doctrinal commitments. But to have one of its own alleging that the Markan Jesus had not been supernaturally conceived nor been raised from the dead would be a bridge too far. The economic implications for the Lemko family were he to be fired were considerable. Professionally, he would be done for—unless the publicity would make him a darling among Liberal Christians, not to say agnostics and atheists. Family relations might strain to the breaking point. Some worried about Kostya's state of mind—and soul.

Rather than issue a spoiler alert and give the ending away, I would rather

conclude this review with some critical observations about the literary quality of this first-in-a-series novel.

It would not be easy to move from writing fictive poetry to fictive narrative. The challenges facing a new author would be considerable and not always forgivable.

Commendations

It's a clever move to make "Constantine" the namesake for our protagonist. And the title does double duty. It's refreshing to come upon a solid husband-wife relationship: open, frank, transparent communication lying at the heart of it. Thankfully, there is no graphic detailing of their romantic life. The tensions that do arise are to be expected in a situation where the prospects of losing a single family income (with all that it entails) and academic reputation loom large.

Ophelia is lovingly portrayed as "The Comptroller": the finances being under her watchful eye, each expenditure evaluated for necessity as well as delight. At tax time, her specialty, she dons a familiar uniform: long sleeves held up by rubber bands at the elbow, ponytail in a clip under headband fronted with an emerald visor.

Furthermore, Rusyn has avoided the cliché of describing Kostya's teenage children (Maksym and Yulia) as cell phone-addicted to the Internet, who roll their eyes at anything sensible or uncool that their parents utter or do. A solid bond of mutual love and respect helps the family navigate developmental changes—in both adults and children.

One is also treated to an inside look at academic life, both on and off campus. We get a view of the boredom, jealousies, frustrations, and sexual tension at academic / scholarly conferences. If anyone wonders what goes on at the meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature and American Academy of Religion, Rusyn gives us a glimpse at events that outsiders might regard as just another junket—this time for eggheads rather than politicians.

At a time when a resurgent fundamentalism intrudes itself into faith-based schools of higher learning, readers are introduced to a progressive, evangelical institution founded during an era of 19th century radical reform: championing the cause of women, the enslaved, exploited workers, and reviled immigrants. However, the ability of that legacy to cope with the sexual revolutions of the 20th and 21st centuries is sorely tested.

Progressive as QAU may be in some areas, the top-down administrative style—which sometimes exploits the appeal to service, self-sacrifice, modesty, and quietism—can be oppressive. Consequently, the activism that the faculty in general and theological faculty in particular are able to display while demonstrating loyalty can serve as a paradigm for other, like institutions.

Concerns

And yet, there are some drawbacks to Rusyn's otherwise inventive (if not ingenious) story. The pacing can get ponderous, especially when his academic characters (not always fully rounded) discuss the fine points of biblical criticism. Sometimes a didacticism takes over: more telling than showing. This threatens the promise of the work's being a "thriller." Then there's the related matter of proportion and sequencing: how much to say and where to say it. We are a long way from Dan Brown.

However, perhaps more serious is that an adult voice is lacking. For example, it seems that the Author has not had much intimate, male-female experience. The dialog between Kostya and a loyal, brilliant graduate student bent on seducing him is embarrassingly adolescent. Furthermore, he could have avoided this well-worn trope altogether by having her accuse him of plagiarizing one of her ideas and using that as leverage for advancement.

Finally, why would one want to write such a book? How much of this is autobiographical? Is it too cynical to suggest that it's Rusyn's method of proposing his own theory about Gospel relationships—that it's a less-risky way of putting it out there for consideration than doing the harder work of arguing a case in the usual, rigorous, scholarly manner?

Pantelejmon Ohienko, Seattle, WA

Journal for the Study of Early Christian Eschatology (JSECE): Book Reviews

The Apocalypse of Katya Kanyuka. Ruryk Rusyn. Magnolia, WA: Deep & Wide Press, 2025. Pp. 221. \$30.00.

This is the second installment in a series billed as "Spiritual" or "Biblical Thrillers"—the first of which (*Mark My Words*) I reviewed in the *Journal of Synoptic Gospel Relations*. According to the Publisher's marketing manager, "Sales were not too shabby. We were at least able to break even."

Rusyn again draws from the well of his Ukrainian heritage and experience, this time appropriating the name of his maternal grandmother, "Kateryna Kanyuka" for the heroine. The choice turns out to his advantage stylistically because he is able to avoid the annoying, frequent repetition of her given name and the corresponding feminine pronouns since she can also be "Kate," "Katey," "Kathy," as well as the more formal "Catherine."

The author also does readers the service of defining two terms, largely either misunderstood or unappreciated. In modern parlance, "Apocalypse" is almost always associated with a disaster of some sort (either human or natural). However, the Greek behind the English is the normal word for "unveiling" or "uncovering"

or “revelation.” So, while it’s common to speak of the Chornobyl (Ukrainian spelling) nuclear explosion in apocalyptic terms, it is less likely to hear someone asking, “What did that catastrophe reveal to us about Soviet (and human) disregard for the environment in their (our) attempts to get the most (and quick) commercial benefit at the lowest costs?”

The second word is “of.” The English (like the Greek) is supremely flexible and subtle. For example, it can function subjectively (= “by”) or objectively (= “about”). So, is the story revealing something about Katya; or is she herself the agent of revelation? Or both?

Before critically evaluating this second effort, an overview of plot and characters is in order. Each chapter begins with a quotation from the biblical Book of Revelation, whose ancient themes and images Rusyn sets in a contemporary context—that of modern Ukraine and (to a lesser extent), America and Britain.

Chapter one is titled “The Lion-Lamb of Lviv.” Founded in the 13th century by King Danylo Halytsky and named for his son (Lev) the city “of Lions” in western Ukraine (“Halychyna” in Ukrainian) has seen Empires come and go during the seven centuries since: Polish-Lithuanian, as “Lwow”; Austro-Hungarian, as “Lemberg”; and Russo-Soviet, as “Lvov.” Old Town is a veritable museum of architectural styles from the 1200s to the present day (Austrian and Polish predominating). The same Habsburgian architect had designed the opera houses in Vienna, Zagreb, Lviv, and Odesa (Ukrainian spelling). The City takes great pride in visualizing its namesake: lions in every pose and style are set in public squares, side streets, and boulevards. Organizations from athletic clubs to academic societies display them. Tourist shops abound with variations of that noble face and form on mugs, towels, hats, and all manner of bric-a-brac.

During renovation of the historic Leontopolis Hotel by a Canadian businesswoman of Ukrainian descent, trenchers expose a marble sculpture causing work to stop until archeologists can assess its significance, as required by law. It turns out that a single pedestal supports the image of a conjoined lion and lamb: his royal diadem and “her” crown of thorns (and certain other body parts) intertwining. Was the calloused paw meant to caress, or had its claws produced that ugly gash across the lamb’s throat? Did the lion’s stare and furrowed brow mean to intimidate or show concern for what was done? Regardless, the victim’s eyes returned the gaze with neither terror nor reproach.

Art critics assess the provenance *in situ*: no later than the end of the 16th century. In their judgment, this is the first instance in which the two figures—though appearing together in tapestries, illuminated manuscripts, and paintings—had actually ever touched (and certainly not in this intimate, ironic, paradoxical manner). Historians set about wanting to know more about its meaning and significance.

Politicians balk at this challenge to conventional notions of power, especially as the country is finally in a position to emerge from under the centuries-old dominance of Catholic Poland or Russia (whether under orthodox czars or atheist commissars). The manly roar of the king of beasts and jungle's lord was being muted, actually transmuted, by a bleating, bleeding sacrificial animal. While this might serve religion, it gives mixed signals to the populace about the nature and exercise of authority. But clergy have their misgivings as well, since their own status and role are largely dependent on secular power brokers (both political and commercial). And that image does not serve the ideal of a muscular Christianity being cultivated by the emerging class of political elites and industrial oligarchs. And what mindset and sect of the Church had commissioned this monstrosity in the first place?

More ominously, veterans of the SS Galicia Division—unashamed of their collaboration with Nazis—are not at all pleased to see the City's prominent symbol defanged and de-maned. They had served only in the interest of a distinct Ukrainian identity and freedom. Hitler had promised them a certain amount of autonomy within the Third Reich in exchange for their jointly opposing the USSR. However, these Ukrainian patriots continue insisting that they had been prepared to use their training, arms, and experience eventually to fight against both demonic powers. What was unforgivable to certain European and American minds was that, in so doing, they had delayed eventual victory. In fighting the Soviets (mainly drafted, fellow *Ukrainians*), they had fought the West's ally on the eastern front.

Consequently, all of the above have their own interest in eliminating or subduing the attention that will likely be given to this new discovery. And each would have to decide which measures should be taken to achieve his aims. Disruption, harassment, threats, and pursuit are not beneath them.

Chapter two is set across the Atlantic and across the American Continent. Catherine Kanyuka serves on the faculty of Queen Anne University (QAU) in Seattle, a member of the same department as Kostya Lemko (the protagonist in *Mark My Words*). Like him, she has caused a stir. However, this time, it comes from an uprising by fundamentalist female students belonging to a society called "The Guardians." Their various attempts to muzzle Katya (or at least get her to modify her "unorthodox" interpretation of the Apocalypse) culminate in setting fire to her office. Her sins: reading the Book of Revelation in the context of Greco-Roman culture in the Eastern Mediterranean—including their myths and symbols. It is not enough for them that her teacher credits St. John the Theologian (under divine inspiration, of course) with adapting and arranging differently what he had adopted according to his convictions about and experience of Jesus.

So as to quell the conservative parents of these students (who sometimes came from wealthy households), the Provost of QAU arranges for his troublesome

colleague to take an unscheduled sabbatical as far from the University as possible until the crisis can be quelled. Seizing the opportunity to visit the homeland of her grandparents for the first time, Kate briefly balks at being “handled” thus by a superior unabashedly making academic decisions based on political and financial considerations. Colleagues and distant family members in the land of her grandparents prepare to welcome her “home.”

In the chapters that follow, she encounters the stir caused in Lviv, her “port” of entry by train from Warsaw (reached from Seattle by the Polish Airline, LOT). Because the excavated sculpture “fleshes out” the double-image of Lion and Lamb in the Book of Revelation—among the subjects of her research and teaching—Katya becomes the target of various antagonists bent on blunting her effectiveness as a visiting expert, regardless of method or cost.

Commendations

Creating a Mood

1. Rusyn succeeds in recreating the atmosphere of mid-90s Ukraine. Political figures, once leaders of the Communist Party at various levels, have simply changed hats. The then-President Leonid Kuchma had just a few years before headed the country’s largest producer of ballistic missiles (aimed primarily at the US, Seattle one of its main targets). Unlike the government of post-War Germany, the nation hasn’t [yet?] put its Communist leaders on trial. In fact, there is resistance even for putting the Party on trial. The embossed Hammer and Sickle above Parliament’s entrance have yet to be replaced by the Trident.
2. Katya reminds Ukrainians, expressing gratitude to the new regime for granting their newly found freedoms, that it is the governed who grant governments the right to exercise certain powers on behalf of their citizens.
3. Russian still dominates conversations on Khreshchatyk, Kyiv’s main thoroughfare—gradually to be replaced by the state language to be used in all spheres. The Polish legacy in Lviv remains for a while, as evidenced by signage in both languages (Latin and Cyrillic alphabets). Both cities are well on their way to becoming major international capitals. Although western (and especially central European) leaders regard Ukraine primarily as a geo-political buffer zone between them and Russia, some Ukrainians take upon themselves the more challenging task (still unrealized) of demonstrating to the world how their language, history, and culture differ from that of their eastern nemesis.
4. Economic shock therapy (converting a controlled economy into some version of a capitalist one) produces a dramatic rise in crime—as witnessed by Kate when thieves rob passengers of a tram downtown in midday. Despite instances of daylight criminality, families can be seen walking securely late at night in

what Americans might regard as “spotty” neighborhoods.

And there are encouraging moments of enterprise at the most basic levels: city-dwellers selling products from their urban gardens; other urbanites selling fruits and vegetables (ugly but delicious) from their rural dachas; and tinkers lining thoroughfares with their home-made products. At the south end of Khreshchatyk Street, the famed Bessarabskij Rynok (covered market) teems with shoppers astounded at the quantity and variety of produce. To get there, they pass luxury automobiles parked outside of “Mafia”-controlled strip clubs, music assaulting the ear with its throbbing eroticism.

5. Leaving Lviv on a local train (*elektrychka*) to the Carpathian foothills for a visit with another branch of her family, Katya hears the most bloodcurdling squeals emanate from a burlap sack full of piglets loaded onto the mail coach. During the journey, a peddler paces her aisle with wares hanging from both linings of a floor-length overcoat: pins, needles, thimbles, buttons, multi-colored threads, combs, scissors, pens (both fountain and ballpoint), pencils, crayons, trinkets, etc. Following this entrepreneur, an earnest Jehovah’s Witness tries distributing copies of *The Watchtower*, its cover story leading with a dramatic prediction about the Last Days from the Dead Sea Scrolls—which particularly catches her attention.
6. Westerners, with their raised heads and open faces, can be spotted a mile away. Yet, even well-meaning North American members of the Diaspora are reminded that, though always welcome, they will forever be tourists in the Ukraine of their ancestors. Kate feels this reality keenly.
7. The impact of Greek language and culture (via Byzantium / Constantinople) is both deep and wide, especially evident in place names and personal names—suffixes in -pol or pil (from the Greek *polis* = “city”): Sebastopol, Simferopol, Mariupol, Ternopil, etc.: Kiril, Orest, Dmytro, Andrij, Alexander, Pantelejmon, Konstantin, Yevhen, Fedir (Fyodr in Russian), Anatoly, Mykola (Nikolai in Russian), Hryhorij, Varvara, Evdokia, Khrystyna, Yevhenia, Kateryna, Iryna, Sophia, etc.
8. Wherever one goes, well before Steve Jobs & Co. flooded the world with a tsunami of “Smart” phones, Ukrainians of every age are seen reading books and newspapers: on buses, trams, and the underground Metro; in parks, the edges of fountains, walking. The most obvious piece of furniture in Stalinist-era apartments (interiors somehow insulated against the odor of cat urine permanently suspended in the stairwells) are shelves lined with books (often with Soviet-era, censored western classics). Educated people are not ashamed of being regarded as “intellectuals” or as members of the “intelligentsia.” Poets are national heroes. Parents expect a new kind of learning to usher in the New

Ukraine. Throughout the week, people of all ages in street clothes flood theaters and opera houses, the government still subsidizing the arts. Universities and polytechnics are becoming centers of uncensored research and teaching. Professional journals, no longer beholden to Marxist-Leninist propaganda, are launched with great fanfare—as much social events as scholarly ones.

9. Places of worship teem with parishioners and visitors. Jews, who had suffered so much in this part of the Pale of Settlement, begin to thrive in numbers, culture, and commerce. Uman becomes the destination of worldwide pilgrimage, especially for Israelis. It's a stunning situation, given earlier pogroms and the intensity of the Holocaust in this region. At this point, Rusyn notes that the Greek *δολοκαύτωμα* means “whole burnt offering.” Muslim Tatars dominate the population of the Crimean peninsula. But simmering tensions between Orthodox and Greek Catholics (“Uniates”) sometimes break out into ugly, violent scenes. The latter accuse the former of control by the Russian Church. Ukrainian Orthodox charge the Uniates with political and religious treason: in 1596 accepting political allegiance to Poland-Lithuania and pledging loyalty to the Roman Pope. Protestants (largely Pentecostals and Baptists), though a tiny minority, begin their expansion into the largest Evangelical denomination in Europe—even though many congregations lose half of their numbers (plus pastoral and lay leaders) during the end of the Gorbachev-era. Mass emigrations to North America and elsewhere are said to be divinely inspired.
10. In private, with distant family, colleagues, and new acquaintances, Katya experiences the warmth and generosity of people who have little but somehow manage to bend tables with hospitality: ethnic cuisine appearing in several courses.

Cast of Characters

1. Many of these are finely “drawn” and contribute some comic relief. In “The Unbearable Lightness of Being—Myron,” the gifted son of Yaroslava and Andrij Yarosh, frustrates his primary school teachers with tales about playmates of colorful angels. He organizes mini-dramas about them with schoolmates. The parents, Greek Catholic Christians, have only recently been encouraged by their priest to study the Bible for themselves. So, when reading together the Woman-Dragon-Child myth in Revelation 12, Myron wants to stage a play based on the dynamics of the passage. In it, a magnificent, celestial woman is about to give birth to a son, whom a fearsome lizard wants to devour because he knows that the infant will grow to rule all nations—a role that the enemy wants for himself. So, Yaroslava agrees to perch herself on a balcony. Above

her, Andrij arranges a tackle and pulley so that the boy, sitting hidden between her feet, can then be hoisted to a landing above. His mother, a former actress at the nearby Zankovetsky Theater, secures a Japanese dragon costume that Uncle Maksym, a nearby neighbor, agrees to don as the primeval antagonist.

2. Yet, a more sinister version of this innocent play emerges in Kyiv. During an atmosphere of unbridled religious freedom, several sects are spawned. Among the most popular is the Black Brotherhood (“Chorne Bratstvo”). Leading the movement is Maryna Khrystova. Impregnated by her unemployed lover (a construction worker), she claims to be that glorious figure envisioned by St. John. Her unborn child, she asserts, is none other than God Incarnate—although, on other occasions, Maryna proclaims herself to be that divine embodiment. Kate’s encounter with this historical enrobing of a foundational myth is nothing less than a clash between two titanic, spiritual forces.
3. Katya’s adopting Mila, a disabled, middle-school girl from an orphanage (after some questionable bending of residual, bureaucratic communist regulation) provides an added emotional dimension to the childless heroine’s overly intellectualized self-understanding.

Maintaining a Pace

On the whole, the pace of this thriller is sustained throughout, unlike that of *Mark My Words*. (Rusyn would no doubt admit that he’s no Dan Brown.)

1. In the regional capital of Chernivtsij, Kate learns from her students at the National University about a mural painted in the onetime home of a Jewish artist who perished in the Holocaust. Shlomo Weitzman had rendered the eventually exalted figure of Daniel 7 in an unprecedented manner. He labeled the portrait, “Child of Dust”—the same expression that she had used to interpret the more common English expression, “son of man.” Her study of the Old Testament and Dead Sea Scrolls had convinced her that the Aramaic original depicts the personage in terms of frail, vulnerable humanity. It is to one in this condition that the Ancient of Days grants kingdom, glory, universal authority, and homage. In the New Testament, Jesus alone uses the designation exclusively of himself; and the author of Revelation envisions him as a magnificent (but grotesque) entity, a double-edged sword emerging from his mouth.

The genius of Weitzman’s work is that the figure’s face seems to suffer slow decrepitation with each horror experienced by humanity at the hands of fellow humans. No wonder that subsequent anti-Semitic owners had painted over and boarded up the offending image. Since the house was larger than average size, it originally served as an SS officer’s HQ towards the end of the War. A

victorious Soviet general made the place his base of operations.

With the premises abandoned, Katya's attempts at a late-night break-in to expose and recover the hidden panel are interrupted by a group of Mossad agents in balaklavas and armed with heavy weapons. The Yad Vashem Museum in Jerusalem had assigned them to recover this example of mid-twentieth-century Jewish heritage. Ignoring her protests against this looting of UKRAINIAN cultural legacy, they speed to the Romanian border in a darkened van, intent on escaping by a submarine lurking offshore in the Black Sea.

She joins the chase by commandeering a nearby tram whose operator evacuates the passengers under protest, grudgingly setting the rheostat to full throttle. For miles, highway and railway run parallel, sometimes crossing at points that result in near-disaster. The author enables us to smell acrid ozone generated by sparks escaping the friction between metal pantograph and overhead wire. Laws of physics and mechanics bend to near breaking point as the heavily steel-plated carriage lurches from side to side. When a Mossad sniper eliminates the motorman, Kate herself takes over. As the tram hurtles towards the defended and blockaded border control checkpoint, Rusyn treats us to one of the most graphic accounts of collision in slow motion ever narrated (at least in this reviewer's reading). One can only imagine what a movie director could do with this scene.

2. In taking the overnight train in their flight from Kyiv to Lviv, Kate and Mila are forced to share a compartment with two strangers, both men. Upper and lower bunks face each other. How the four negotiate sleeping arrangements and privacy provides a note of comic relief until one realizes that one of the men has been hired to assassinate mother and daughter.
3. In a chapter entitled, "The Dragon Pursued the Woman and Her Children," the pace and place of the action continue in the UK, both in Cambridge and Oxford. Unlikely to outrun local thugs hired by enemies in Ukraine, Mother and daughter try to outwit them. Taking to the River, they hijack a punt hired by protesting tourists from Ohio. The "muscle" is not aware that the bottom of the Cam changes: from slippery flagstone, to shifting sand, to unforgiving muck congealing tangled reeds. Without Kate's knowledge, acquired during her student days, they are unable to avoid the latter. Their poles, ending in a metal eagle's claw, stick to unforgiving natural sludge—leave punters and passengers stranded. Members of the University, sometimes to their own chagrin, also learned not to raise the pole too soon after passing under one of several bridges. "Townies" ensure that mother and daughter escape by grabbing the villains' only means of propulsion and navigation, leaving vessels adrift. As

they continue their itinerary to Seattle, Katya and Mila are also pursued to Oxford, where they barely avoid a kidnapping and being hurled from Magdalen College Tower.

Concerns

Pace

Rusyn's laudable efforts to produce a page-turner are threatened by two temptations, to which he sometimes yields (both being understandable, if not quite forgivable in a "thriller"): to lapse into travelog mode and to provide social, political, and religious commentary. It's a monumental task for anyone: the attempt to acquaint Westerners with this largely unknown land and its people, who begin to experience the first years of democracy and who at last have the opportunity to showcase their distinct and distinctive thousand-year history. Furthermore, by the time that Katya and Mila reach the UK, the action seems to be running out of steam and the crisis situations appear contrived—although not quite at the level of Hollywood's requirement for car chases or cliff-hanging scenes from the tops of high rises.

Voice

A few male authors have been able to write with a female mind, voice, and sensibilities. But Rusyn does not quite bring it off. Only name and pronoun are different. The result amounts to an exercise in narrative crossdressing.

Art as Character

Rusyn obviously wants art to be a main character of the story—a trope that writers have occasionally employed: cities, cathedrals, houses, institutions, etc. Fair enough. But some questions and observations immediately come to mind. Is he qualified to do so? There is no evidence of specialization in art history. Has he actually canvassed all of Christian art to support the audacious claim that lion and lamb have never previously touched nor been conjoined? Has he ever even dabbled in art himself?

The author might claim that evidence of the latter is the sculpture, portraiture, drama, and music about which he writes—creations that otherwise have no independent, objective, material existence. Rather, we are meant to regard *them* as such works in and of themselves: the discovery of the 16th c. Lion-Lamb (Lviv), the stolen portrait "Child of Dust" (Chernivtsi), Myron Yarosh's mini-home dramatization of the Woman-Child-Dragon myth (again, Lviv), and the heavy metal performance in Kyiv of Ancient Near Eastern cosmogony (the victory of Marduk over the dragon Tiamat and her brood) by the rock group "Babs Babylon & Her Watery Review." So, it is not art in some abstract sense that's a prominent

member of the *dramatis personae*. Rather, it's *Rusyn's* art that upstages the other players.

Despite these misgivings, I concede that, by and large, the author succeeds in showing that this art is not merely *imitating* life (as if it were keeping up—just barely). In his second volume, he shows art actually *driving* life.

Furthermore, by introducing passages from the Apocalypse at the head of each chapter, *Rusyn* does double duty. At one level, he acquaints readers with texts that are largely unknown or unfamiliar or poorly interpreted; at another, he draws our attention to the original *artistry* of the Seer—the *See*-er. His narrative is imagistic, iconic. “Picture this,” he says. In so doing, the author also exhorts us to “Look around! Listen up!”

A Final Word

It remains to be seen how many more “thrillers” of this kind will flow from *Ruryk Rusyn's* fountain pen (his chosen instrument). As a biblical scholar, his publications have centered on the Gospels and Revelation, the environment of these novels. Does he have plans to integrate other Scripture texts or themes with aspects of his profession and ethnic heritage? Is there an entirely different protagonist around whom to spin another tale—an aged librarian or a child (perhaps even *Mila*)? Will he be able to show and tell in a compelling, informative way? Might *Katya Kanyuka* herself be the heroine of another novel, say: *Publish AND Perish*?

Pantelejmon Ohienko, Seattle, WA

BOOK REVIEWS

Dustin G. Burlet. *Judgment and Salvation: A Rhetorical-Critical Reading of Noah's Flood in Genesis*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2022. Pp. 306. ISBN 978-1-6667-3672-4. \$40 (USD) paper.

Dustin G. Burlet's *Judgment and Salvation: A Rhetorical-Critical Reading of Noah's Flood in Genesis*, with foreword by August H. Konkel, is a revision of his 2019 dissertation "Cosmos to Chaos—Chaos to Covenant," from McMaster Divinity College, with August H. Konkel and Mark J. Boda as first and second reader, respectively, and Carol M. Kaminski as external reader. By examining the narrative of Genesis 6:5–9:17 through rhetorical criticism (rhetoric as persuasion), Burlet displays the intention of the Flood as predominantly redemptive, countering common assumptions of divine wrath and retribution. Through rhetorical analysis, Burlet's research demonstrates that despite the devastation of the deluge, the emphasis of the Flood narrative points toward 1) God's unwavering creational intention and 2) God's salvific goal to restore goodness and blessing to the earth through humanity. The book contains seven chapters.

Chapter 1 "The Genesis Flood Narrative: General Orientation" situates the Noahic Flood within its larger preceding literary context of Genesis 1:1–6:4. Burlett provides a general account of predominant scholarly views of the Flood, its cause, purpose, and effect. He begins by addressing the diachronic (source-critical) and synchronic (literary-critical) divide in scholarship, offering rhetorical criticism (rhetoric as persuasion) as a model which "fills in the void" between the two approaches. The setting of the Flood narrative contrasts God's creational intent of goodness and blessing for all with "all life" (כל בשר) in turn corrupting the earth (ארץ) with violence (חמס) (Gen 6:12–13). The cause for the "hydrologic disaster," therefore, is "moralistic" (2). Instead of God's image-bearers using their divinely appointed responsibility to extend divine flourishing and blessing throughout the earth, "all life" corrupted (שחת) God's creation through their intentions which had become "only evil all the time" (Gen 6:5). God, therefore, announces his consequent intention to destroy (שחת) all life (כל בשר) by covering the earth (ארץ) with water. In Genesis 1, God looked at the earth he made and "saw that it was good." Now, the LORD looked at the earth and "saw that the evil of humanity was great" for they corrupted creation through violence (Gen 6:5–12). God's response is grief (עצב) in his heart (Gen 6:6; see Gen 3:16, 17). But the

glimmer of hope immediately appears, for Noah found grace in God's eyes (Gen 6:8). The plan to preserve life ensues. Burlet addresses the questions surrounding the Flood narrative, particularly, how can the Flood as God's judgment correlate with an expression of God's salvation. He starts with the observation that the toledot unit of the Flood begins and ends with Noah (Gen 6:9–9:29) (2).

Chapter 2 "Methodology Rhetorical Criticism" describes Burlet's rhetorical-critical analysis approach. He notes James Muilenburg's presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature (December 18, 1968), which time stamps a move toward incorporating literary criticism, and specifically rhetorical criticism into the study of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament in order to discern the biblical text as a "unified whole" (31). Burlet provides the two major branches of rhetorical criticism as rhetoric as "the art of composition" and as "the art of persuasion" (32–36). Burlet explains his particular methodology as a modified form of George A. Kennedy's model of rhetorical criticism. The steps of Kennedy's approach are: 1) determining the rhetorical unit; 2) determining the rhetorical situation (the problem, audience, and circumstantial constraints); 3) determining the rhetorical species (or genre, which Burlet modifies for his study as "worldview formative rhetoric"); and 4) assessing the rhetorical strategy, which includes stylistics, plot structure, and composition; 5) determining the rhetorical effectiveness (36–82).

Burlet's rhetorical critical analysis of Genesis 6 through 9 are provided in chapters 3 through 6. In chapter 3, "The Corruption of Humanity — Hope and Covenant (Gen 6:5–8 // 9–22)," Burlet begins with Genesis 6:5–8 as "The Prelude to a Disaster" (84), continuing through 6:9–22 as the rising action of the toledot's narrative plot. In the prelude, Yahweh is the subject of each of the wayyiqtol (structural verbs), which emphasize his character and response to the evil and corruption of "all life." Yahweh "sees," "regrets," is "caused pain," and "does." Genesis 6:9a introduces the toledot unit, thus delineating the start of the new rhetorical unit, which focuses on "the life, lineage, and person of Noah" (Gen 6:9b–10) before returning to the description of humanity's depravity and the ruin of the earth and its creatures (87–89). Yahweh then speaks to Noah, telling the problem, the consequent solution, instructions, and covenant declaration (Gen 6:13–21). This section concludes with Noah's obedience (Gen 6:22). In-depth analysis demonstrates Burlet's modified Kennedy method in conversation with broad scholarly literature and other ANE flood accounts (86–124). While violence defiled God's good creation, requiring commensurate judgment, the emphasis turns to the salvific sparing of the life of Noah, his family, and representatives of creatures from the land and the air through Noah's obedience in building the ark and supplying it with food. Burlet notes a continuity between the destructiveness of the deluge and postdiluvian brutality, which are both met with God's compassion

and plan to prevent utter annihilation and a renewal of covenant relationships for a future enduring peace (125).

Chapter 4 “It Cometh! (Gen 7:1–24),” affirms the salvific nature of the ark and the divine intent to save life. The deluge comes with Yahweh personally closing the ark’s door for the inhabitants inside. The rain then falls for forty days and nights. The narrator does not withhold the extent of the devastation, which is complete as the life-breath of all outside the ark are extinguished. The next literary sub-unit is marked by divine speech, “then the LORD said to Noah” (Gen 7:1) and concludes with a string of wayyiqtol ending with the waters prevailing over the earth for one hundred and fifty days. Rhetorical analysis points to Yahweh’s protective directive to “Enter” the ark (7:1), Noah’s faithful obedience (7:5), the obedience of his family and the animals (7:6–12), repetition of the obedience of his family and the animals (7:13–16), and the ark safely rising over the flood (7:17–24). Although Genesis 7 details the ordeal, the sub-units point to the narrative’s emphasis on the security of Noah and those inside the ark. The significance of the number forty is noted for its association “with hardship, affliction, punishment, and judgment (Ezek 4:6; cf. Jonah 3:4 and Matt 4:2)” (142). Potential import of other numbers in the narrative and their occurrences outside of biblical literature add additional points of interest. Burlet points out the predominance of the word “all” (כָּל in the Hebrew) and implications for the universal scope and impact of the flood. God’s commitment to the “salvage operation” of the Flood and priority of preserving human and animal life emerges through numerous literary and rhetorical strategies (154).

Chapter 5 “After the Rain — The Flood Subsides (Gen 8:1–22),” is “the pivot point” in the Noahic Flood narrative. Genesis 8:1 is at the center of the entire narrative: “God remembered Noah” and all the animals in the ark and sent a wind to cause the waters to recede. In this unit, the waters abate and the new creation narrative begins. Burlet notes that the phrase “God remembered” does not mean “coming to mind” but rather recalls covenant language and Yahweh’s commitment to fulfill his earlier promise to Noah. God’s covenantal remembering initiates redemptive action (170). Although Burlet refrains from using the term “chiastic structure” in this section, he points out the progressive parallels moving backward and forward from Gen 8:1 (159–161). Rhetorical-critical methodology continues to show the emphasis upon salvation of human and animal life as the waters recede, and they move from inside the ark to dry ground. Burlet observes that although Noah sent out the raven and then the dove, he only exited the ark after Yahweh told him to, along with his family and all the animals (8:15–18). Analysis shows that “the vast majority of verses in this pericope (Gen 8:1–22), i.e., eighteen verses (roughly 82 percent) relate to a hope-filled, new creation (Gen 8:1–5, 10–22)” with roughly 18 percent “directly pertaining to judgment”

(187). Creation – UnCreation have been completed, and the narrative next moves toward ReCreation. Noah’s sacrifice and God’s promise mark the final sub-unit in this chapter (8:20–22).

Rhetorical analysis of Gen 9:1–17 in chapter 6 “The Covenant — Conditions and Assurances” confirms restoration of the creation blessing to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. However, there are new adjustments, responsibilities, and covenant commitments based upon God’s recognition and acceptance of humanity’s propensity toward evil coupled with his commitment to redemption. In the final unit of the Flood narrative, the presenting problem of “violence” (חַמָּס) in Genesis 6 is met with God assigning humanity “the privileged responsibility to mitigate blood-thirst through a special provision that empowers mortals to act for God—as his image—to the extent of even being able to take human life (Gen 9:1–7)” (189). The remaining passages that close out this unit contain Yahweh speaking blessings, expressing covenant commitment to his creation’s well-being, and giving the sign (bow) of his promise to all living (Gen 9:1–7, 9–11, 12–16). Burlet notes that “This is the third time humanity has been told to ‘multiply’ (רבה) by God (Gen 1:28; 8:17; 9:1) and the third time they have been ‘blessed’ (ברך) by him (Gen 1:28; 5:2; 9:1)” (200). This chapter underscores the findings of Burlet’s rhetorical analysis and circles back to the presenting evils precipitating the deluge, bringing a redemptive conclusion to the narrative sequence.

Chapter 7, “Conclusion,” summarizes the major findings of the research, clarifies comments concerning its distinctive contributions, and, lastly, makes suggestions for further study. The language of the Noahic Flood is helpfully analyzed, demonstrating that the covenant language with Noah and all life is a reaffirmation of God’s original commitment to creation and humanity. The covenant forms a bridge, re-establishing the original covenant blessing upon humanity and the kinship relationship broken by rebellion and sin. It also designates humans to mitigate on behalf of God to take action against violence, the very thing that precipitated the Flood (Gen 9:4–6).

Burlet provides a compelling analysis of the controversial biblical text of Noahic Flood, convincingly opening the door to read the narrative in light of God’s grief toward human evil, and his purpose for the Flood as redemptive and salvific rather than wrathful and retributive. In sum, Burlet’s exegetical and rhetorical-critical analysis in conversation with a significant breadth of scholarly work in biblical studies and ANE literature lends strong credibility to his research and the convincing nature of his conclusions regarding God’s commitment to his intentions of creation, and the salvific focus of the Noahic Flood narrative.

*Ingrid Faro
Northern Seminary*

Martin W. Mittelstadt and Caleb Howard Courtney, eds. *Canadian Pentecostal Reader: The First Generation of Pentecostal Voices in Canada (1907–1925)*. Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2021. Pp. xii + 507. ISBN 978-1-9533-5808-0. \$26.95 (USD) paper.

In the *Canadian Pentecostal Reader*, Mittelstadt and Courtney have collected and republished nearly every Canadian Pentecostal newsletter (prior to 1925) for the first time (1–2). By gathering these valuable primary sources, the editors aim to make them easily accessible, not, as they write, “in an attempt to ‘bring back the good old days’, but to understand better the way things were” (1). They explain that they have chosen 1925 as an end date because it marks the independence of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) from the Assemblies of God in the USA and the uniting of Pentecostal groups in Eastern and Western Canada (2). The republished newsletters have a consistent format and style, with only minor alterations, such as spelling corrections and consistent formatting for dates and Bible verses (3). This reader is an invaluable new resource for future research on Pentecostalism in Canada.

The volume includes almost every Pentecostal newsletter published in Canada between 1907 and 1925, except *The Pentecostal Testimony*, the main PAOC publication, which is already available online through the PAOC archives (2). The book is divided into eight chapters, and each chapter contains the available issues of a different newsletter (as an exception, the third chapter contains two different, but related newsletters). It also includes a comprehensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources related to Canadian Pentecostalism between 1907 and 1925 (see 493–507). Each chapter begins with a brief, theologically neutral introduction to the newsletter(s) to follow, which “allow[s] the resources to speak for themselves” (3). Each introduction also includes short biographies of the newsletters’ publishers and relevant historical context (“The People”), a summary of the newsletters’ contents and highlights interesting or important ideas (“The Publication”), a list of suggested further reading, and a small selection of related primary source excerpts and photos.

The book is mostly organized in geographical (and somewhat chronological) order. It begins with *The Promise* (1907–1910), published by Ellen and James Hebden. Ellen was likely the first person in Canada to experience the Pentecostal phenomenon of Spirit baptism with the sign of speaking in tongues (5). Next in the reader is *The Gospel of Sunshine* (1924), a later Toronto publication. The next section contains two Winnipeg newsletters, *The Apostolic Messenger* (1908) and *The Revival Broadcast* (1923) from the Argue family, prominent early Pentecostal leaders. The focus on Winnipeg continues with Oneness Pentecostal

leader Franklin J. Small's *Living Waters* (1918–1924). The geographical order is interrupted by *The Good Report* (1911–1912) from Ottawa leader R.E. McAlister. The last three sections include later publications from Saskatchewan (O.J. Lovik, *Saskatchewan Revival News*, 1924) and British Columbia (Margaret Peden and Ella Andrews, *The Good News Bulletin*, 1925; H.B. Taylor, *The Pyramid Temple Bulletin*, 1925).

The sources themselves provide several insights into early Canadian Pentecostalism. One of the most prominent themes is the fragmented development of theological distinctives over time, since the early days of the movement were “pre-denominational” (3). For example, Franklin J. Small's *Living Waters* allows the reader to enter the earliest days of the Oneness Pentecostal movement, during the tumultuous period as it separated itself from trinitarian Pentecostalism. A 1918 issue contains a letter supporting the formation of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (257–58), while an issue from 1920 boldly opposes trinitarianism (262–65). The PAOC had affirmed trinitarianism just a few months prior, in late 1919 (228). Women also feature prominently in these newsletters: *The Promise*, *The Revival Broadcast*, and *The Good News Bulletin* all highlight the leadership of women in early Pentecostal publishing. These themes are, of course, not unique to Canadian Pentecostalism, but gathering the Canadian primary source material together will help researchers discern any elements that are unique to the Canadian context.

The *Canadian Pentecostal Reader* is logically organized and easy to use. The chapter introductions are informative yet brief enough to keep the focus on the primary sources. Each newsletter is neatly formatted and beautifully reproduced, and the search function in the electronic format is effective for locating anything within the sources. The bibliography is an excellent starting point for further research on the publications themselves and on several related topics. These factors make this reader an excellent resource for students, teachers, and researchers alike.

One limitation in this otherwise excellent reader is the lack of an index. The editors have explained that the electronic format of the book is searchable and recommend using this search function in lieu of an index (4). However, it can be challenging to find accurate pagination in certain electronic book formats such as Kindle, and so a researcher may be required to cross-reference between both the electronic format (to search for a certain article or phrase) and the paper format (to record an accurate page number). An index would therefore be more effective for some users. Nevertheless, this is only a minor problem with an otherwise outstanding resource.

The *Canadian Pentecostal Reader* provides its users with easy access to early Canadian Pentecostal history and theology. It allows one to easily compare

ministry testimonies, measure changes in theological emphases over the years, and discover little-known figures from the early years of Pentecostalism in Canada. The newsletters in this reader provide insight into the unique circumstances of the early movement in Canada and will help determine to what extent one can speak of a particularly *Canadian* Pentecostalism. What remains now is to see what interesting discoveries will emerge from those who utilize this resource.

Kathleen Krynski
Wycliffe College, University of Toronto

Michelle Knight. *The Prophet's Anthem: The Song of Deborah and Barak in the Narrative of Judges*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2024. Pp. 206. ISBN 9781481321594. \$64.99 (USD) hardcover.

The song of Deborah and Barak in Judges 5 is a soaring and strong declaration of the wonders of YHWH's provision for the Israelite people, but what role does it play in the overall narrative? Is it simply a synoptic poetic recounting of Judges 4 or does it offer more to the Kishon narrative, or perhaps even the book of Judges as a whole? These questions have surrounded this poem's inclusion in the book of Judges. Michelle Knight in her book *The Prophet's Anthem*, seeks to answer these questions by highlighting the narrative role of the poem in both its immediate context of the Kishon narrative as well as in the broader context of the savior stories that make up the bulk of the book of Judges. Knight is an Associate Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

Knight begins her book with a brief introduction that traces the route of her book. In her first chapter, she tackles the groundwork by providing her own translation of Judges 5 and formal analysis, genre, and an interpretive summary. The results of this groundwork that will inform the rest of her study are summarized by Knight's insistence that calling Judges 5 "embedded poetry" is not enough. Instead, due to its prophetic role in the narrative by highlighting YHWH's active role in the conquest, she agrees with Serge Frolov that the genre is better to be understood as a "prophetic historical exemplum" (25).¹ Knight draws the conclusion that Judges 5 operates as a prophetic recounting of Judges 4 that highlights not only YHWH's salvific actions but also provides a divinely authorized assessment of the faithfulness of the people of Israel.

In chapter 2, Knight notes that one of the most troubling features of interpretation around Judges 4–5 is the tendency for scholars to treat the two chapters as synoptic from one another instead of as one literary unit. In response to this concern, Knight meticulously traces the plot features of Judges 4–5. By tracing

1 See Frolov, *Judges*, 366.

the plot of the two chapters, she concludes that Judges 5 supplements the narrative in Judges 4 by highlighting the theological and covenantal implications. In this chapter, she also traces the narrative characterizations of the Israelites, God, Jabin, Sisera, Deborah, Barak, and Jael. Knight summarizes that the characterization of the characters is not synoptic, but rather enhanced when we read the two chapters as one literary unit. By also drawing on the major themes of these chapters, Knight finally concludes by stating that Judges 4–5 in its plot mirrors the macroplot of all Judges by highlighting God’s faithfulness and Israel’s hesitancy to trust in him.

Chapters 3 and 4 then trace these themes in both the broad characterization of the characters in the entirety of Judges’ savior stories as well as the major plots and themes. What Knight notes is that Judges 5 acts as a transition from the first three savior stories to the last four. In the first three savior stories, there is little focus on the abilities of the Judges themselves and rather a focus on God’s ability to utilize them for his salvific purposes. Instead with Gideon, there is now a distinct shift in the narrative to focus on the people’s rejection of Yahweh and the growing desire for human leaders who are often imperfect and do not lead Israel to victory or peace.

In chapter 5 Knight provides a short conclusion based on the previous argument. She notes that Judges 5 operates as a hinge in the book of Judges. The people have seen YHWH’s providence and ability to use any tool for his mission of salvation, but the people’s hesitancy to follow YHWH will ultimately be their downfall as it is highlighted by Gideon’s narrative as the people highlight their preference for a human leader. This reading integrates Judges 5 seamlessly into the book of Judges. Knight then ends her work with a lengthy appendix that highlights her lexical and text-critical analysis of Judges 5. This is helpful for any reader wanting to dig deeper into her justifications and argumentation.

Knight should be commended on her ability to move Judges 5 from the sideline of Judges study and highlight how it integrates into the key narrative themes in a way that has not been previously recognized. Through her study, there is now a convincing argument for further research on both the role of integrated poetry in the biblical narrative and the role the Song of Deborah and Barak plays in the overall narrative of Judges. Her ability to interweave a close reading of a text and connect it to the broad theological themes of its literary context in a way that is not arbitrary, but provides insight both into the surrounding context and the text itself, should serve as a model in exegesis integrated with biblical theology done well.

The Prophet’s Anthem is a proud call to review the location of Judges 5 in its place among the savior stories of Judges. It is an accomplishment that should soon see wide usage and readership from students of the book of Judges. Although this

is too technical for a wide readership, as the book will require the reader to have familiarity with biblical Hebrew and the arguments around the book of Judges, this book will be immensely useful to anyone seeking to do serious scholarship on Judges or the role of integrated Hebrew poetry. I am eager to see how Knight's work will continue to push the conversation surrounding Judges as it will certainly continue to open new avenues for study.

Levi Moberg
New Covenant Academy

Mark A. Noll. *C.S. Lewis in America: Readings and Reception, 1935–1947*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2023. Pp. 156. ISBN 978-1-5140-0700-6. \$20.00 (USD) paper.

In the book *C.S. Lewis in America: Readings and Reception, 1935–1947*, American historian Mark Noll captures the thoughts of Roman Catholics and Protestants on the works of C.S. Lewis through the trying years of 1935–1947. Conveying the various audiences of thought, Noll seeks to demonstrate the historical contrasts between groups, while at the same time discovering the ways Lewis brought a freshly renewed imagination into the centers of Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions, during an era dominated by national crises—Great Depression and World War II. To shed light on the critical reception of C.S. Lewis in the era of World War II, Noll devotes a chapter to each group to gain deeper insight into both Lewis and America: Roman Catholics, secular and mainstream media, and Evangelicals.

To properly explore the area of reception history for Roman Catholics as Lewis's first readers, it must begin with an account of the church's state in the 1930s and 1940s. This account highlights the features Catholic authors received warmly in Lewis, and the influence later exerted on American evangelical protestants that were taking place in the American church. Recognizing the work of Thomas Merton and the union of Catholics and Protestants around defeating fascism, Noll asserts it was not until 1949 and the creation of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) that distrust between the two groups would resurface. Until that time, out of Lewis's ten works noticed by Catholics, five were positively or even enthusiastically noticed: *The Pilgrim's Regress*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *Perelandra*, *The Great Divorce*, and *The Abolition of Man*. Noll states that "although Catholic criticism was important for what is said about Lewis, for our purposes it was even more important for what it revealed about those who penned that criticism" (14).

In chapter 1, Noll asserts that Catholics appreciated Lewis's works with recognition for their literary energy, academic depth, creativity, and sincere Christianity.

The major critique, directly or indirectly, was simply how the works of Lewis neglected the importance of the church. However, Noll proclaims that the ability of Lewis to bridge the gap between Catholics on the emphasis of natural law served as a final approval of his works. C.S. Lewis created a seismograph that served as a foundation to spur a change beyond the church's wall: an absolute moral order that created or made evident the new tremors in society and the church. A response by Karen J. Johnson also brought to light the consideration of how race shaped religion in America, and thus shaped the racialized essence of the reviewer's lives, even if race was not a forefront thought.

Chapter 2 brings to the foreground a critique on the reception of Lewis in secular and mainstream media. Through the reviewers came the conclusion that effective Christian allegory to the American mind may not be an out-of-date remnant of the past and that literary science fiction is more than a hypothetical analysis of the future. Instead, Lewis writes as a layperson to laypersons, expressing works of literary and theological rigor with a humorous flair, which brought secular and mainstream readers into relatable circles. The increased media presence of Lewis in *Time* and by reviewers into laymen circles, preempted the increased imaginative ability of the public to relate with an academic and see Christianity in new creativity. A response by Kirk D. Farney further articulates Noll's view into a positive American response of Lewis's works. Not only were readers open to be challenged in personal conduct, commanding attention from both the body and soul; the editors of this period saw C.S. Lewis as one who placed old modern idioms into an understandable diet for religion-hungry readers (95). Lewis crossed denominational and theological circles to bring truths to a plethora of readers.

The final chapter brings the final approval of Protestant readers with the slow arrival of Evangelicals. The verdict from several Protestant establishment representatives said Lewis was brilliant, persuasive, inspired the imagination, and represented orthodox Christianity intelligently. Evangelicals, according to Noll, took longer to convince, when in 1943 the first review of Lewis's *The Case for Christianity* appeared in the *Moody Monthly*. The view toward Lewis would begin to change with Elisabeth Howard (Elliot), *The Christian Herald*, and the *Sunday School Times* further indicated the widespread hearing of Lewis was gaining within presentation, favorable even to nonfundamentalists. Elisabeth Elliot, the student from Wheaton College, would continue writing about Lewis, moving beyond the hagiography usually accorded within fundamentalist circles. C.S. Lewis's reputation among evangelicals, while it lagged Catholics and other media in engagement, still showed that change was in the air. Even with the change, Noll reminds readers that the 1940s have passed and the appreciation among the multitude of readers in the public sphere has changed, as the number of insistent

public voices has increased and become louder. A final response by Amy E. Black concludes that even in a pluralistic and secular society, the popularity and fullness of Lewis's work should inspire us.

This book prompts the practical and complex question: how does this book aid academic and laypeople throughout Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Evangelical circles within a pluralistic society? It must be said that for a brilliant scholar like C.S. Lewis, Mark Noll has provided a gift to the academic community for a deeper view into the acceptance of Lewis's works in America. The flow of the chapters with the responses between provides a smooth transition into the historical and theological thought. As such, I can easily recommend this work to those in higher education interested in further explanation of Lewis within American scholarship. Ultimately, Mark Noll has provided a purposeful resource, one that I hope will prompt further thought into the works of C.S. Lewis and conscious scholarship acceptance between differing traditions.

Jacob M. Padgett
Medfield, MA, USA

K. Scott Oliphint. *The Faithful Apologist: Rethinking the Role of Persuasion in Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2022. Pp. 224. ISBN 978-0-3105-9010-1. \$22.99 (USD) paper.

The world of apologetics and evangelism is (all too often) unnecessarily compartmentalized; effective persuasion is often considered 'malicious.' Evangelism is only given to the 'outgoing' while apologetics is reserved for the 'scholar.' Nevertheless, these are disciplines that every Christian ought to develop. Moreover, they ought to be applied together. Enter *The Faithful Apologist: Rethinking the Role of Persuasion in Apologetics*, written by K. Scott Oliphint.

In this accessible work, Oliphint lays out a united philosophy of apologetics and rhetoric (persuasion), making the case that "these two are at their biblical and theological best when they merge together" (xi). Oliphint offers this not as a rigid evangelistic pattern or methodology but rather "as a Bible study on persuasive apologetics. It is a biblical and theological introduction to a persuasive apologetic" (xiii).

Apart from a brief introduction and conclusion, *The Faithful Apologist* is separated into two parts: part one establishes the "Biblical Foundations of Apologetics and Persuasion," while part two establishes the "Parts and Principles of Apologetics and Persuasion." They each contain three chapters. Chapter 1, entitled "The Divine Persuader," argues that persuasion (as bridging the gap between people and God) is ultimately done by the Son (Jesus) through the institution of language, wherein he acts as Messenger, Word, and Image of the Father (10, 28). Chapter

2, “The Divine Persuader,” argues: “the goal of apologetics is to defend the honor and glory of the Lord, as we fight with and for Him, in the midst of this cosmic war,” (44) which “rages in the realm of the invisible” (53). Additionally, it demonstrates that the battle is God’s, it is already won, and that in his grace and providence God has chosen to use us (55, 57). “The Divine Sword” (chapter 3) argues that when we wield the Sword of the Spirit, i.e., the Word of God, faithfully, we can “be confident that the Lord’s Word will never fail; there is no possibility it will not accomplish His divine purposes” (92).

Chapter 4, “Ethos,” maintains a duality within the persuader: (1) the uniting aspect, which is the general nature of human beings in bearing the Image of God and having general revelation, and (2) the separating aspect, which is the Christian character, imitating Christ’s gentleness, fearing God as sovereign judge, and wielding the full Armor of God (113, 127).

Chapter 5, “Pathos,” enters into more pragmatic domains, analyzing the biblical models of Christ and Paul within their apologetic encounters (146, 162–3). It demonstrates how one must first understand, question, and only then bring another into one’s state of mind. Finally, chapter 6, entitled “Logos,” contains the more “traditional” apologetic material, as it deals with the very words of the interaction. To be clear, Oliphint argues: “the better we know the faith to which we are committed, the better we are able to explain it” (185). In other words, Oliphint states that a knowledge of the truth is of utmost importance for a proper apologetic and that as one grows in Christian maturity, one’s ability to do so increases (cf. 180).

While Oliphint does consider some traditional arguments (such as the argument from the First Cause for example), he argues that contextualization is the most important. That is, one must first understand and then show the impossibility of the false worldview with apt evidence.

To summarize, part one establishes the proper context for persuasive apologetics, while part two establishes the necessary components of a successful apologist, success being “not measured in the number of minds we change but in our faithfulness to God, the Divine Persuader and the Faithful Apologist” (back cover).

This work deserves high commendation. Oliphint lays out a framework firmly rooted in the Scriptures that significantly applies to the modern Church. One of modern evangelism’s greatest flaws, perhaps, is its focus on ‘conversion.’ This work makes it clear that the goal of evangelism and persuasive apologetics is the “glory of God, fulfilled via our obedience” (xiv, 44). Said otherwise, Christians ought to be great rhetoricians (that is, persuasive apologists) not so that more people can be saved, *per se*, but as an expression of our love for Christ. If success is defined any differently, then evangelists often become prone to go out with a corrupted mentality and are much more likely to be discouraged by seemingly ‘unsuccessful’ encounters.

I appreciate Oliphint's emphasis on the necessity of understanding others. He states:

The challenging aspect to this kind of argument is that it is not a "one size fits all" argument. It cannot be prepared beforehand in such a way that it will apply to every person in exactly the same way. While certain principles and processes can certainly be anticipated beforehand, it is usually best, in an argument like this, to talk with the person first, in order to see more exactly what the precise commitments are, and to ascertain what this person believes and maintains (194).

Incontrovertibly, not a few debates and controversies would likely be resolved if we took the time to 'seek first to understand, then to be understood.' As a sort of evidence-based presuppositionalist, Oliphint argues that the best form of argument is to demonstrate the inconsistencies in another's worldview, which he calls "a persuasive pinch" (192). This method eliminates the often-stark division between answering objections and preaching the gospel.

One of the most novel aspects of this book, perhaps, is its focus on apologetics as "spiritual warfare." To be clear, Oliphint cogently and judiciously maintains: "even though we engage the battle with other people who oppose our Savior and His reign, we should recognize that the battle rages in the realm of the invisible" (53).

This book leaves little to critique regarding purport, but there are, however, certain other nuisances. As a book accessible to a broad audience, there is little to help the readers orient themselves in the book. This is particularly significant as the book contains only six brief (!) chapters. There are also no indices or even a bibliography. While the purport is correct, it is sometimes difficult to understand the purpose of a given section in its relation to the whole. Furthermore, while the book provides an excellent framework for the pragmatic side of the discussion, it gives little direction on how one might delve deeper into the material. Would not an annotated "recommendations" section at each chapter end prove helpful for the uninitiated?

Moreover, some content is simply unnecessary. For example, in the section entitled "The Word of the Lord," Oliphint spends six pages (!) arguing the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament "word of the Lord" is the Word himself (the Son). Regardless of whether Oliphint is correct in this argument, the necessity of such to his argument is dubious, as he himself seems to acknowledge by his tentative conclusions: "[it] is *likely* the very same Word" (16, emphasis added) and "in a way that *may* point to the Lord Himself" (20, emphasis added).

Everything considered, however, *The Faithful Apologist: Rethinking the Role of Persuasion in Apologetics* by Scott K. Oliphint remains a solid introduction to

a persuasive apologetic. Its ability to explain a united philosophy of evangelism, apologetics, and rhetoric (persuasion) in a way accessible to most interested readers is (quite) impressive. This book will likely be used by any inquisitive student of apologetics and is most useful to the beginner. Heartily recommended!

Joel Lacroix

Millar College of the Bible

Andrew Remington Rillera. *Lamb of the Free: Recovering the Varied Sacrificial Understandings of Jesus's Death*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2024. Pp. 356. ISBN 978-1-6667-0304-7. \$39.00 (USD) paper.

Lamb of the Free offers a new paradigm by which to understand the meaning of Jesus's death and provides an instructive analysis of the sacrificial imagery and understandings surrounding the crucifixion. By examining the sacrificial practices within Judaism, Rillera seeks to gain knowledge and appreciation of the varied ways in which the Hebrew Scriptures would have contributed to the concept and practice of sacrifice via the Levitical system. He then offers an analysis on how these sacrificial understandings can be considered in the light of the crucifixion.

Rillera begins with an analysis of the Levitical sacrificial system and uses both positive and negative arguments to dispel the common misunderstandings of the practice. By investigating "what sacrifice is not," he argues that within the confines of Levitical Judaism there is no such thing as a "substitutionary death sacrifice" (10). He also notes that the hand-laying/scapegoating sacrificial rite is also inadequate to describe the circumstances that surround Jesus's death (10). He argues that because neither of these methodologies fit with the idea of how Jesus's death should be understood, they cannot lead to the crucifixion as being a sacrifice of atonement.

With an atoning sacrifice being ruled out, he then focuses on non-atoning sacrifices within the Levitical system, reemphasizing that the assumption that all sacrifices are atoning is a misconception (28). He notes that the purpose of the non-atoning sacrifice is to bring God closer to the people. Rillera uses the burnt offering sacrificial rite as an example of a practice that does not atone, but instead brings God to the metaphorical table where the people receive God's blessing. This rite is neither a saving event nor the catalyst of future salvation, but instead the celebration of a past saving event (39). These observations rule out the idea that Jesus's death can be understood as a part of a non-atoning sacrificial rite, because the end result of the sacrifice does not match the desired outcome.

Rillera next explores if Jesus's atonement can be situated within the Levitical ritual cosmology. He separates the ideas of ritual impurity from moral impurity, noting that ritual impurity, which is associated with objects and places, can be

“decontaminated” (69). Moral impurity however can never be “decontaminated” (69) because it is beyond the sacrificial system to achieve this result. Since Jesus’s sacrifice was to reclaim a moral purity for the people, before God, it cannot be placed within the ritual cosmology of the Levitical practice.

His last exploration of Levitical sacrificial understandings centres around atonement and the prophets of the Old Testament. Rillera notes that because sacrificial atonement can only decontaminate places and things, not people, (88) there is a break between what the system as stated by the prophets can accomplish and what the people desire it to accomplish (89). The prophetic atonement sacrificial system can bring about forgiveness, but it cannot bring about the moral purification that is needed and provided by Jesus’s death.

Having examined the Levitical system for a suitable description of how the death of Jesus can be understood and finding the ritual practice incomplete, Rillera moves to the New Testament (NT) to assess its understanding of the saving significance of Jesus’s death. He suggests that there is promise in considering Jesus’s death as a well-being sacrifice and a covenant inauguration sacrifice (150). Because Jesus operated within the Old Testament purity laws and was a source of contagious holiness for both ritual and moral purity, his sacrifice fits within the framework (150). This realignment of the sacrificial practice offers a participatory sacrifice in opposition to a substitutionary one (151). Rillera suggests that the concept of participation in Jesus’s sacrifice is illustrated in the Lord’s Supper, where participation brings about a cruciform life change for the participant who then partakes in Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection (151). The institution of the Lord’s Supper as the primary understanding of Jesus’s death allows his followers, partaking in the ritual, to become a collective living sacrifice, all while living out Jesus’s cruciform life.

Rillera argues that this conceptual change from atonement to participation makes sense because the idea of atonement theology is not part of the Gospel message (209). It is instead “a theological innovation based on prior ‘ingredients’ from the Gospels” (209). Based on Rillera’s re-evaluation, Jesus’s death no longer fits neatly into any sacrificial category. And because Jesus’s work fulfills the entirety of the Levitical sacrificial and purity systems, it is difficult to classify his salvific influence in traditional systematic ways. In order to find a suitable understanding, Rillera looks to the Epistle to the Hebrews, which offers a mode of practice by suggesting that the people are to become fellow priests with Jesus and suffer for his sake so that they may become part of a participatory sacrifice rather than a substitutive one.

Lastly, Rillera examines how Jesus’s death can be understood if it is not considered a sacrifice. He notes that what Christ did on the cross does not work as a sacrifice, because in bearing our sins he could not be an acceptable offering,

as sins are not offered on the altar (244). He instead proposes that Jesus's death was a pattern for discipleship, because he was treated unjustly and yet bore his burden well. In this action, Jesus is an exemplar for all the suffering righteous people (245). Rillera notes that this paradigm shift will affect the exegesis of the NT but suggests that, because sacrificial imagery is rare in the NT, the effect may be minimal.

Rillera concludes by suggesting that, in light of the analysis of Jesus's death, Christians should not comprehend the atonement as a substitutionary death but instead view it as a participatory action (282). By making the action of Christ's death participatory, it logically follows that the people are to be included in Jesus's life, work, death, and resurrection. This is a methodology that substitutionary death does not allow for.

Lamb of the Free is a valuable work of biblical theology. Rillera introduces new methodologies for examining the death of Jesus and how that death might affect Christians in their worldview and conception of their faith. This new paradigm for understanding Jesus's death does not do away with the classical and Anselmian theories of sacrificial atonement. It instead invites us to partake in the larger story of Jesus, one in which we are invited to become living sacrifices ourselves. This book is a good reference for soteriological study, both within and outside the biblical and constructive theology disciplines.

Gregory Paranuk
Huron University

Michael B. Shepherd. *An Introduction to the Making and Meaning of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2024. Pp. xiii + 209. ISBN 978-0-8028-8393-3. \$26.99 (USD) paper.

Written for undergraduate and seminary students, this new textbook by Michael B. Shepherd offers an orientation to two subjects typically handled separately: matters of text and canon on the one hand, and of hermeneutics and exegesis on the other. The author's expressed objective is to demonstrate "how comprehension of *the making of the Bible* informs interpretation of *the meaning of the Bible*" (ix, italics added). Overall, Shepherd skillfully showcases the potential value of treating these subjects in dialogue with each other and successfully delivers both a unique and compelling introduction to these areas of biblical studies.

The book opens with an introduction designed to disclose its undergirding hermeneutical framework by clarifying the author's views on the nature of Scripture, the terminology for and relationship between the Testaments, and the formation

and structure of the canon.¹ Following this, the book's first two chapters concentrate on the *making* of the Bible. Chapter 1 is devoted to helping readers become attuned to literary and compositional strategies built into biblical texts. Shepherd accomplishes this by defining a concept and then providing extensive textual examples, beginning with techniques occurring at the "microlevel" (from words, phrases, and clauses to paragraphs and chapters). Next are the compositional strategies present at the "macrolevel" (entire books and canonical divisions), which reflect the fact that biblical texts are composite works put together in a meaningful and strategic way by their authors. The last part of the chapter covers the essentials needed for grasping the function of the various literary genres and forms found across biblical compositions. In a crisp yet informative overview, readers are introduced to the basic features of narrative, poetry, genealogy, law, and epistles.

Chapter 2 addresses the history of the Bible's text, transmission, and translation. After a review of witnesses to the Hebrew text, Shepherd provides a fascinating and detailed treatment of the variant literary editions of books in the HB. Throughout, attention is drawn to the value of the different text traditions for both textual criticism and the early history of interpretation. Next comes a very short overview of the Greek texts of the NT, with quick mention made of only two (out of many) ancient versions of the NT. The chapter concludes by addressing modern translations, covering matters such as the history of English versions, translation philosophy, and the pros and cons of various types of translations.

The next two chapters explore how an understanding of the Bible's making informs its *meaning*. Surveying the entire Bible at the macrostructural level, Shepherd emphasizes how its compositions have been purposefully designed to communicate theological messages. Chapter 3 reviews the compositional strategy of the HB and is by far the book's longest chapter, spanning sixty-four pages. The discussion is divided into sections following the canonical units of the HB in its tripartite structure (i.e., *Torah–Nevi'im–Ketuvim* or "Tanak"), which Shepherd views as possessing hermeneutical significance (see 4–13). Each section typically covers the major compositional techniques and theological message(s) of both the unit as a whole and the books within that unit, as well as their relationship to other parts of the HB (i.e., "intertextuality").

Chapter 4 attends to the compositional strategy of the NT. Despite its similarly stated aim, this chapter differs noticeably from the preceding one. Here, Shepherd concentrates chiefly on the extensive intertextuality latent in the NT documents and their exegetical relationship to the fixed canon of the HB. While this unique and important aspect of the NT merits consideration, it is surprising that

1 Shepherd prefers the designation "Hebrew Bible" (HB) over "Old Testament" (see pp. 2–3), which I will therefore follow throughout this review.

Shepherd only occasionally highlights the matters of compositional strategy and structure that were pervasive in chapters 1 and 3. Texts are handled individually across three sections (Gospels and Acts, Pauline Epistles, General Epistles, and Revelation), with some enjoying heavy coverage and others receiving little or none; notably, there is no discussion of the NT's composition beyond the level of individual books.

The fifth and final chapter looks at the Bible holistically. It begins by describing the textual world of the Scriptures, defined as "the world as constructed by the biblical authors in the tapestry of their compositions and in the intricate web of intertextual relationships that exist among those compositions" (147). Readers are invited to embrace this textual world by faith, allowing it to explain, represent, and dictate reality. The rest of the chapter focuses on intertextual connections across and between books, which are "an essential part of the making of the Bible's textual world beyond the level of individual compositions" (153). With an eye toward how intertextuality contributes to developing a biblical theology, two examples are expounded at length—namely, the kingdom of God and divine-human covenants.

Given the nature of its subject matter—much of which will likely be new to students—this work is neither a simple nor an easy read. However, the content's complexity is mitigated by the author's clear and straightforward prose: Shepherd does not waste words and articulates ideas in an accessible manner, making material as understandable as possible for the beginner. Key concepts and sections are regularly summarized, and definitions found in the textbook's glossary also provide a useful (even if at times overly simplistic) aid for the novice student.

Throughout the work, Shepherd does an excellent job of selecting instructive and interesting textual examples, leaving readers with ample exegetical insights and hermeneutical tidbits. Also commendable is the honest and accurate account of the HB's textual and literary history (45–58). While unequivocally holding to a high view of Scripture (see 1–2), Shepherd does not shy away from evidence for textual plurality in antiquity or for the complex and lengthy compositional processes behind the final form of biblical books. In this way, he displays a solid grasp of recent scholarship on the textual traditions of the HB.²

The book's major weakness is its treatment of the NT. Despite its presentation of handling the whole Bible, coverage is weighted heavily in favor of the HB. This is palpable in the disparity of length and detail between analysis of the

2 However, the early section on the canon and structure of the HB (4–13) would have benefited from far more nuance. Unless otherwise attune to the academic discussion, readers will not gather from the presentation that this topic is actually one of considerable debate among scholars. Despite subscribing to a similar canonical approach, I recognize that some of Shepherd's generalizations are problematic—especially concerning the evidence cited in favor of the early attestation of a tripartite canon and the specific arrangement of books within the Tanak.

respective Testaments, as well as the imbalance of sources for textual examples. Given Shepherd's established expertise and publications on the HB and not the NT specifically, this is perhaps unsurprising. Yet such incongruence may raise questions about the legitimacy of applying his central thesis universally: perhaps the interconnectedness of the Bible's making and meaning is only a feature of the HB?

Beyond the unevenness in attention, this concern is further provoked by Shepherd's apparent incredulity toward the idea that the NT exhibits macrostructural compositional features of the same kind or degree as those found in the texts of the HB. This is revealed in chapter 4 by the lack of consideration given to the NT's composition at the levels of canon or sub-collection. More explicitly, Shepherd asserts early on that the NT *does not* possess features comparable to the HB's "canonical seams." Consequently, he expresses skepticism toward arguments for a deliberate or meaningful arrangement of the material in the NT canon (13–14). In these ways, Shepherd exposes either an unawareness of or rejection of growing streams of research in NT scholarship. This includes recent developments in the study of the NT canon and its sub-collections, with researchers identifying hermeneutical and theological significance behind the structure and message(s) of these corpora based on evidence from composition, compilation, and reception.³ Others have begun attending to features spanning the NT canon as a whole, while some have pursued presentations of the NT's theology according to its received shape.⁴ On another note, it is somewhat ironic that the same objections Shepherd raises against seeing significance in the structure of the NT could be—and indeed, frequently are—applied to the HB by critics of canonical approaches.

Additionally, there are cases where material on the NT reflects misinformation or oversimplification—particularly in the discussions on its text and canon (13, 58–60). Space precludes a thorough review of the issues, but a few warrant brief mention: (1) The recounting of the various arrangements of the NT canon requires further qualification and, at present, suffers from information that is potentially

3 For the state of research and further bibliography, see the recent volume by W. Edward Glenny and Darian R. Lockett, eds., *Canon Formation: Tracing the Role of Sub-Collections in the Biblical Canon* (London: T&T Clark, 2023), which includes essays on the whole canon and each sub-collection. Also deserving mention but published too late for inclusion in that volume: Jacob A. Rodriguez, *Combining Gospels in Early Christianity: The One, the Many, and the Fourfold*, WUNT 2/597 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023); Benjamin P. Laird, *The Pauline Corpus in Early Christianity: Its Formation, Publication, and Circulation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2022).

4 See, e.g., Tomas Bokedal, *Christ the Center: How the Rule of Faith, the Nomina Sacra, and Numerical Patterns Shape the Canon* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2023); Gregory Goswell, *Text and Paratext: Book Order, Title, and Division as Keys to Biblical Interpretation* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2022); David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Trobisch, *On the Origin of Christian Scripture: The Evolution of the New Testament Canon in the Second Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2023); Matthew Y. Emerson, *Christ and the New Creation: A Canonical Approach to the Theology of the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013).

misleading and/or anachronistic.⁵ (2) The complexity of the NT's textual situation is downplayed drastically; although distinct from and facing different issues than textual criticism of the HB, the topic is nonetheless extremely intricate in its own right.⁶ (3) A severe oversimplification occurs with the reiteration of a claim from a popular NT introduction about the percentage of the text that is completely stable across the manuscript tradition versus the tiny fraction that remains in question. (4) The handling of the three main NT text types does not reflect the latest scholarship in the field, which has nuanced this typology considerably and even rejected it at points.

Given its scope and attempt to bridge the gap between textual history and hermeneutics, this book cannot be expected to provide comprehensive coverage of either subject. For this reason, instructors may want to consider supplementing their courses with resources that deal more thoroughly with the field of hermeneutics or text and canon.⁷ That being said, it would be remiss to not conclude by reiterating my general appreciation for this work, which I recommend highly. Notwithstanding certain deficiencies, Michael Shepherd's *An Introduction to the Making and Meaning of the Bible* will serve as an excellent textbook for undergraduate or seminary students and could also be used with profit by pastors and leaders in an ecclesial context. Even the scholar will find much to glean from this erudite and insightful primer on the origins and interpretation of Scripture.

Matthew B. Quintana
McMaster Divinity College

Jeffrey M. Robinson. *Persuasive Apologetics: The Art of Handling Tough Questions Without Pushing People Away*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2023. Pp. 150. ISBN: 978-0825448300. \$35.14 (CDN) \$21.99 (USD) paper.

Apologetics, or the discipline of making a coherent defense of the Christian faith, is an increasingly relevant area of academic study as our society drifts from its Christo-centric foundation. Authored by Jeffrey M. Robinson, *Persuasive Apologetics: The Art of Handling Tough Questions Without Pushing People Away*, is a popular level guide to this important topic.

Aside from a fine foreword written by Thom S. Rainer and a brief introduction, the book spans six chapters in length. While it is unnecessary to cover the minute

5 On this topic, see especially Edmon L. Gallagher and John D. Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

6 A superb resource here is Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry, eds., *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019).

7 There are many solid introductions to the field of hermeneutics available. For text and canon, consider the excellent, recent work by John D. Meade and Peter J. Gurry, *Scribes and Scripture: The Amazing Story of How We Got the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022).

details of every chapter, a brief overview remains in order. In chapter 1, *Call of Duty (Not the Video Game)*, Robinson asserts that we are to engage in apologetics “because of the gospel’s eternal ramifications ... because it glorifies God” (24) and because it is “quite simply obeying God’s directive” (26). As the author lays out how Christianity alone is able to furnish the ability to understand the complexities of the world in which we live, drawing, in particular, on the noteworthy contributions of Francis Schaeffer (among other), Robinson maintains: “If the God of the Bible exists, then Christianity provides a helpful grasp not only of how the world came to be but also of the character of the one who brought it into existence” (27).

Chapter 2, “Loving People Well—Worldview Presuppositions,” notes well the place of presuppositions. Robinson explains: “If a worldview is the lens through which we see the world, then presuppositions are the granular data that forms the foundation.... Presuppositions are simply assumed” (40). Elsewhere, Robinson cheekily opines: “Nobody is as blind to biases as those who think they have none” (44). In this way, Robinson demonstrates some of the power of the presuppositional method. Much to the chagrin of most presuppositionalists, however, more work could be done in assuring readers that Scripture alone is the absolute standard by which we are able to see and understand reality, since human subjectivity is an extremely poor measure of discerning how to clear out the “intellectual cobwebs” (47).

In a similar way, while chapter 3, “Apologetics Tactics” is a reasonable discussion of various approaches to apologetics such as evidentialism, classical apologetics, reformed epistemology, presuppositionalism, etc., he fails to ground these methods within an overarching framework that starts with the authority of Scripture. One notes that Robinson argues for a kind of ‘eclecticism’ with which I take no issue.

In terms of practical application, chapter 4, “Undercutting Defeaters,” is easily the most helpful for Christians doing street-level evangelism and the like being, perhaps, worth the price of the book alone. To be clear, this chapter involves Robinson offering some typical objections to Christianity (e.g., Christianity is irrational; there are too many hypocrites in the church) and offers succinct, cogent answers to each example objection (108–112). The strongest part of this chapter is where it shows how Christ Himself not only answers objections but uses the momentum of His opponents against them (97, 98). Naturally, in a book this size, space will not permit a comprehensive rebuttal on every point, but the author does a good enough job in each case to give the reader a ‘feel’ for how to handle such objections.

Chapter 5, “The Historical Jesus and the Competition,” contrasts the historical Krishna (126), Buddha (127), Muhammad (129), and Jesus (130). Herein

Robinson does a good job of showing the objective and historical claims of Christianity in contrast to the relative indifference toward history shown by the “eastern mystery” religions, and the lack of supporting historical case for Islam (130). The historicity of Jesus is also well attested to, and the author correctly points out that the scales of skepticism are often tipped against Christianity, i.e., a hermeneutics of suspicion versus a hermeneutics of charity, since many (unbelieving) scholars are (relatively speaking) much more eager to accept as “truth” not a few persons and events that are attested to by much weaker evidence (131).

The concluding (sixth) chapter, “Jesus and Hope,” ends on a sound theological note. Robinson states: “If God exists, then all truth is ultimately his truth. Find common ground and start there. That’s what persuasive apologetics is all about. Leverage what you need to leverage and do what you can with what you have. However, the destination never changes. Repentance from sin and faith in Christ – to the glory of God – are the goal” (139). Amen (and amen!).

Textbook wise, there is much to commend here. Robinson is readable, accessible, and (overall) quite enjoyable. I appreciated his pastoral heart (and pedagogical sensitivities). It is also clear that Robinson loves the Scriptures. Many students will benefit from reading this work. Its brevity (and thorough but not exhaustive level of documentation) is also easy to appreciate.

That said, however, the greatest weakness of the book is that it fell short of offering the kind of greater apologetic confidence that Scripture can provide. Many people are coming of age at a time of great upheaval and turmoil where even basic truths of objective reality are being assaulted. It is my contention that this cultural milieu and society-wide confusion offer wonderful, unique opportunities for both epistemological certainty and a coherent worldview that can encompass all reality. The Triune God of Scripture alone furnishes this worldview, and Robinson’s *Persuasive Apologetics* would have been strengthened by leaning in more heavily to this concept.

At the risk of belaboring things, while Robinson clearly acknowledges the existence of presuppositions and the importance of a Christian worldview and while he certainly regards Scripture as his own personal authority, he fails (in my view at least) to fully connect the final and certain character of Scripture to the task of apologetics. In brief, Robinson inadequately shows Scripture’s authoritative nature over *all spheres and all disciplines*, including unbelievers themselves (cf. Prov 1:9; 9:10; Matt 28:18; 2 Cor 10:4–6). I found this extremely disappointing.

Despite these infelicities, there remains much to commend in this slim text. While I believe it would appeal to all forms of curious people, whether they have grown up in the Christian faith or not, its most likely audience will be Bible

College/Christian University and Seminary students alongside, one hopes, interested laypeople and Christian ministry leaders.

Matthew F. Plett
Millar College of the Bible

Miles V. Van Pelt. *Basics of Biblical Aramaic: Complete Grammar, Lexicon, and Annotated Text*. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2023. Pp. xv + 236. ISBN: 978-0-310-14112-8. \$70.29 (CDN) \$34.49 (USD) paper.

Less than 2% of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (HB/OT) is written in Aramaic. To be clear, this includes Genesis 31:47 (two words), Jeremiah 10:11, Daniel 2:4b–7:28, and Ezra 4:8–6:18; 7:12–26. Given that some Scriptures, such as Psalms 2:12 and Proverbs 31:2, for instance, are heavily debated within HB/OT scholarship, this amounts to about 269 verses *in toto*. While significantly less—both numerically and proportionally—than either of the other two biblical languages, namely Hebrew and Greek, this small portion of the HB/OT is roughly equivalent to the combined texts of Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Psalm 1. With respect to the New Testament (which in and of itself also contains a notable amount of Aramaic), this would be roughly equivalent to the book of Philemon and the Pastoral Epistles. Miles V. Van Pelt poignantly underscores the significance of these statistics, stating (xi): “Certainly none of us would want to be without the required skills to faithfully interpret these portions of the biblical text . . . Faithfulness in the littlest thing is no little thing (Luke 16:10a).”

Historically, when *Basics of Biblical Aramaic* was first published (Zondervan, 2011) there was something of a ‘poverty of choice’ concerning accessible resources. While Greenspahn (Society of Biblical Literature, 2007) and John’s brief grammar (Andrews University Press, 1972) were both widely used, the former was sometimes viewed with suspicion by the more ‘conservative’ audience while the latter was recognized as being somewhat ‘long in the tooth.’ In contrast, the 7th ed. of Rosenthal (Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006) continued to be widely respected as an ‘S Tier’ resource. Within this context, Van Pelt’s initial contribution, while not without its critiques, filled a not insignificant gap within confessional, evangelical scholarship.¹

Much has changed, though, in the last decade or so. For example, Andreas Schuele’s *An Introduction to Biblical Aramaic* (Louisville: Westminster John

¹ Compare the following notes and reviews written by Daniel R. Watson, *Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament* 1 (2012), 103–05; Hywel Clifford, *JSOT* 42.5 (2018), 259–60; and Andrew W. Litke (Academia.edu). For even more details, see ‘Daily Dose of Aramaic’ alongside the following (simply exquisite—bar none!) website: <https://truthonlybible.com/2018/09/29/resources-for-biblical-aramaic/> by Steven Anderson (Ph.D. Dallas Seminary). See too his superb interview with Scott Callahan (from DDA) @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFvpYff1bc>

Knox, 2012) is especially notable for its accessibility. In addition to its ease of entry, Schuele's fantastic appendices include non-biblical Aramaic texts—such as the Zakkur Inscription, Qumran fragments, and sayings from The Wisdom of Ahiqar. Other helpful additions, such as compilations of Persian and Greek loanwords, 'Idiomatic Expressions,' and a comparative Hebrew-Aramaic word list, make Schuele's grammar uniquely valuable—and, in my opinion, worth the price of the book alone!

Takamitsu Muraoka's *A Biblical Aramaic Reader: With an Outline Grammar*, 2nd revised ed. (Leuven: Peeters, 2020) has firmly established itself as being something of a modern Rosenthal with respect to reference purposes.² Scott N. Callaham's *Biblical Aramaic for Biblical Interpreters: A Parallel Hebrew-Aramaic Handbook* (Wilmore, KY: GlossaHouse, 2021) is unquestionably the best resource available for learning biblical Aramaic via the biblical Hebrew 'contrast/comparison' method.³ Additionally, Andrew E. Steinmann's *Fundamental Biblical Aramaic*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 2022) deserves special mention. Of course, Edward Cook's *Biblical Aramaic and Related Dialects: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022) has set a new standard for reference grammars.⁴ Meanwhile, Benjamin E. Noonan has given students (and scholars!) a particularly valuable resource with *Advances in the Study of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic: New Insights for Reading the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020).⁵ Finally, Holger Gzella's contributions—including *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (vol. 16 – Aramaic) and *Aramaic: A History of the First World Language* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021) remains *sui generis*.⁶ In short, we now face an embarrassment of riches and are "spoiled for choice" with resources.⁷

Given these developments, where does Van Pelt's second edition fit? Prior to elaborating on some of these matters (including the not insignificant but still relatively minor differences between the text's first and second editions), it remains prudent to give a general overview.

2 See Dustin G. Burlet, Review of Muraoka within *Canadian-American Theological Review* (forthcoming).

3 See Dustin G. Burlet, Review of Callaham within *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 29 (2024), 122–24.

4 See Dustin G. Burlet, Review of Cook within *Canadian-American Theological Review* 12 (2023), 97–102.

5 See Dustin G. Burlet, Review of Noonan within *Journal of Language, Culture, and Religion* 5 (2024), 81–84.

6 See Dustin G. Burlet, Review of Gzella within *Studies in Religion* 52 (2023) 625–26 alongside my Logos article "The Lexicon Landscape: A Critical Survey of Hebrew & Aramaic Dictionaries [and Resources]" (forthcoming).

7 John F. Evans *A Guide to Biblical Commentaries and Reference Works* 11th ed. (Zondervan, 2025), 528.

Aside from the basic front matter, i.e., preface, acknowledgments, abbreviations, introduction, and additional resources (more on this later) *Basics of Biblical Aramaic* (BBA) is comprised of 22 chapters with seven major sections: (1) Aramaic Phonological System, (2) Aramaic Nominal System, (3) Aramaic Verbal System: Peal, (4) Aramaic Verbal System: Derived Stems, (5) Charts and Paradigms, (6) Annotated Biblical Aramaic Text, and, finally, (7) an Aramaic-English Lexicon containing all of the biblical Aramaic words (derived from *HALOT*).

Those familiar with Gary Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt's exceptionally popular *Basics of Biblical Hebrew*, 3rd ed. (Zondervan, 2019) will recognize substantial overlap between the two. The most significant (but also most welcome!) update is the inclusion of red font to highlight key aspects of phonology, morphology, and syntax. This addition greatly enhances both teaching and learning while creating a much clearer correlation with the PowerPoint lectures employed within the *Basics of Biblical Aramaic Video Lectures* (also provided by Zondervan). This second edition is also a "higher quality printing than the first edition, with stronger, whiter pages."⁸ Some other refinements include (see p. x): the addition of an annotated list of important Aramaic resources that appeared since the first edition's publication (more on this later), certain small changes concerning nomenclature and the labelling of the verbal stems (see especially 78), the reordering of pronominal suffixes and personal pronouns (§8.2, 4; §9.2) in order to correspond with the presentation of the so-called 'Perfect' and 'Imperfect' conjugations in the categories of person, gender, and number, an improved correspondence between the definitions appearing in the lexicon and the vocabulary sections throughout the grammar. Lastly, all proper nouns in the grammar's exercise now appear in a gray font for ease of use (a fantastic touch!). One will also note how Van Pelt sometimes changed the word "literally" for "woodenly" in the Annotated Reading Section(s) with respect to translation (see, for instance, 191–92).

To critique, those familiar with the original edition of *Basics of Biblical Aramaic* will recognize both its strengths, namely its exceptional pedagogical sensitivity and its thorough, clear chrestomathy for effectively reading all the texts associated with biblical Aramaic, and its limitations, including the sheer number of chapters/exercises and certain linguistic insensitivities.

One also wonders why Van Pelt has overlooked Vogt's *Biblical Aramaic* (Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2011) and digital lexicons like the *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon*, or why he omits any references to commentaries. Even so, I am convinced that Van Pelt's work remains one of the most accessible resources for learning to read biblical Aramaic with fluency. As such, the second edition (with the new red ink and significantly higher quality printing) is a solid step forward

8 This wording comes from *Resources for Biblical Aramaic* by Steven Anderson from the following website: <https://truthonlybible.com/2018/09/29/resources-for-biblical-aramaic/>

(and an invaluable contribution to Aramaic studies *in toto*) even if it is not without some flaws.

Of course, no single tool/workbook is sufficient on its own. Students would benefit from consulting multiple grammars (and other reference works) and instructors will likely need to supplement Van Pelt with other resources to provide a more comprehensive, balanced approach.

Its primary users will likely be Bible College/Christian University and Seminary students.

Dustin G. Burlet
Millar College of the Bible

CANADIAN-AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

ISSN 1198-7804

www.cata-catr.com

PRINTED IN CANADA