

HISTORICAL THEOLOGY



SOUTHWESTERN
JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

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Editorial

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This issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* is devoted to the topic of “Historical Theology.” The benefits of studying history are many. It can be of tremendous assistance to us in the present day. For example, history helps us to understand and gain perspective on our current situation and thinking. It can answer questions like: “How did we get to where we are now?” “Where did that idea or line of thought originate?” “From what tradition did that opinion stem?” In other words, history provides us with fresh insights from past knowledge as we evaluate and make sense of our present. History also helps us learn not to repeat the mistakes of the past and enables us to see how people long ago met challenges and dealt with the crises, problems, and obstacles that came their way. History is especially valuable when studying theology because it gives us a look at the specific contexts in which theologies were created, developed, and defined. This describes historical theology.

This journal volume features seven insightful articles. Madison Grace, assistant professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, presents the first article, “Early English Baptists’ View of the Lord’s Supper,” in which he seeks to discern the earliest understanding of the Lord’s Supper for seventeenth-century English Baptists. Malcolm Yarnell, professor of Systematic Theology, director of the Oxford Study Program, and director of the Center for Theological Research at Southwestern, also contributes a paper entitled, “Christopher Blackwood: Exemplar of the Seventeenth-Century Particular Baptists,” in which he engages in historiography using Blackwood and his thought as a paradigmatic test case to evaluate the competing histories of seventeenth-century Baptists. Andrew Spencer, Ph.D. student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, provides an essay entitled, “Andrew Fuller and the Doctrine of Revelation,” in which he puts together Fuller’s doctrine of revelation from his available published works and shows its essentiality and relevance to his ministry. Steve Lemke, provost and professor of Philosophy and Ethics at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, furnishes an article called “History or Revisionist History?” in which he explores claims as to whether the overwhelming majority of Baptists were five-point Calvinists, and also whether Baptist confessions in the South were five-point Calvinist confessions until the twentieth century. Rodney Orr, associate professor of World

Missions and Intercultural Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, and Shane Angland, Th.M. student at Dallas Theological Seminary, contribute an essay called, "Easter Celebration in Seventh-Century Britain: Resolving Conflict within the Church," in which they discuss the Easter debates of the seventh century and other deliberations on ecclesiological authority, cultural understanding, and early church traditions concerning the date of the celebration of Easter. Eugene Merrill, distinguished professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, contributes an article, "The Lifespans of the EB-MB Patriarchs: A Hermeneutical and Historical Conundrum," in which he considers the lifespans of the Early Bronze-Middle Bronze era patriarchs and asks how the lifespans of biblical figures need to be understood in light of their extra-biblical contemporaries which, as recorded in their writings, are at odds with those in Scripture. Lastly, Matthew Emerson, currently assistant professor of Christian Ministries and Chair of Arts and Sciences at California Baptist University, contributes an essay entitled, "Does God Own a Death Star? The Destruction of the Cosmos in 2 Peter 3:1-13," in which he provides an interpretation of 2 Peter 3:1-13 that counters the popular assumption that teaches that the universe will be annihilated at Christ's return. This issue also contains for your perusal several book reviews and abstracts of recent doctoral dissertations completed at Southwestern.

This issue will be the last one for me as the editor of *SWJT*. The seminary has graciously entrusted to me other important responsibilities that will not permit me to continue overseeing the journal's production as well. Madison Grace will become the new editor of *SWJT* and will serve you well in this role. It has been my privilege to serve you.

We pray that the articles in this issue will help to equip you in your preparation for engagement in ministry. If you would like to have any of our faculty members or students speak in your church, please do not hesitate to contact us. We aim to serve the church and are more than happy to serve you. Further, if God has called you into his service, please consider allowing us the privilege of preparing you at Southwestern for a lifetime of ministry. God bless you.

Early English Baptists' View of the Lord's Supper

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The year 1609 for many students of Baptist history marks the beginning of the ecclesial movement. It was in this year that John Smyth and his congregation were baptized in Amsterdam thus distinguishing themselves from other English Separatists in the region. Over four hundred years have passed since this inaugural event, and it is obvious even to the casual observer that much has changed. The multi-million, multi-national conglomeration of Baptist people today is a far cry from those few former English-separatists who fled their homeland in order to express their freedom of conscience and right to religious liberty. The changes in society and in Baptist churches are stark when the two times are compared, but have only these externals changed? Has Baptist theology changed during this time period, and if so, to what extent?

A variety of topics could be addressed which relate to this question, but our interest concerns the Baptist theology and practice of the Lord's Supper. In particular, our aim is to discern what was the earliest understanding of the Lord's Supper for English Baptists in the seventeenth century. Such an inquiry allows us to see the commonalities and differences of the Lord's Supper between the differing factions of Baptists in the 1600s. Though it may be difficult to say there is a view of the Lord's Supper for Baptists of anytime, through the examination of Baptist thought found in confessions, catechisms, and treatises we should be able to see what different Baptist groups believed about the Lord's Supper. An analysis of this data will then be presented to show what it is that the earliest English Baptists believed about the Lord's Supper.

Baptist Sources of Thought on the Lord's Supper

From the beginnings of Baptist history Baptist congregations have been independent, autonomous, congregations that at best were moderately connectional. Hundreds of years after their inception this independence is hailed as a hallmark, but important as this factor may be ecclesiologically, it creates an ambiguity that makes codifying Baptist theology difficult. This is especially true for the seventeenth century as Baptists were originating, developing, and coming into their own. Therefore, in order to gain an understanding of the Lord's Supper for early Baptists a variety of sources must

be examined including confessions, catechisms, tracts, and treatises. These sources will be examined from early to late in the traditional English Baptist categories of General and Particular Baptists.¹

General Baptists

The tradition of the general Baptists begins with John Smyth and company in Amsterdam in 1609. This previously-Separatist congregation from Gainsborough had journeyed to Holland for the sake of religious liberty, but along the way journeyed into a Baptist theology wherein the congregation, led by Smyth, was baptized and the Baptist tradition begun.

One of the main works for which Smyth is known is a presentation of a debate he had with Richard Clyfton published under the title *The Character of the Beast*. This work clearly presents Smyth's new views on the church and particularly baptism. The ideas of baptism discussed have close connections to the other sacrament: the Lord's Supper. Throughout the work the Supper periodically shows up in relation to the functions of the church in order to buttress Smyth's position on believers' baptism. Here is an example:

Thirdly if baptism doth appertain to infants because Christ blesseth some particular infants, and because Christ saith the Kingdom of God doth appertain to such, then the Lord's supper also: for if you say, they are not capable of the Lord's supper in two respects: 1. for that they cannot eat it, 2. for that they cannot examine themselves: I answer they must have it as soon as they can eat it: and they cannot confess their sins and faith, and so cannot be baptized.²

However, shortly after this seminal event Smyth doubted that his se-baptism (self baptism) was adequate since he and his church did not seek baptism from a legitimately baptized congregation. With the existence of the Waterlander Mennonites in Amsterdam, a group that he believed had appropriate baptism, Smyth thought his congregation should seek membership with them. In the same year of his baptism Smyth writes a confession of faith, *Corde Credimus*, most likely to accompany his application to the Waterlander Mennonites.³ The document is a short statement of faith and

¹Separate treatment of these groups is a general practice of historians of this era. For example cf. B.R. White, *English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, rev. and exp. ed., A History of the English Baptists 1 (Carlisle: The Baptist Historical Society, 1996). However, recent studies have shown that these lines are not as definite as has been suggested. Cf. Stephen I. Wright, *The Early English Baptists, 1603-1649* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2006).

²John Smyth, *The Character of the Beast or the False Constitution of the Church*, in William Thomas Whitley, *The Works of John Smyth, Fellow of Christ's College, 1594-1598*, Vol. 2 (London: Cambridge University Press), 591.

³The original confession was written by Smyth in Latin: "Coenam Domini esse symbolum externum communionis Christi et fidelium ad invicem per fidem et charitatem." Whitley, *Works of John Smyth*, Vol. 2, 683. The English translation reprinted in William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge, VA: Judson, 1959), 99, is taken from

simply mentions the Lord's Supper: "15. That the Lord's Supper is the external sign of the communion of Christ, and of the faithful amongst themselves by faith and love."⁴

Not everyone in Smyth's congregation believed that the baptism that they received was suspect nor did they wish to seek membership with the Mennonites. Thomas Helwys and a few other members of the church separated from Smyth and his congregation and formed their own church. This group would eventually move back to England and establish the General Baptist tradition. As Smyth's congregation was applying for membership with the Waterlanders, Helwys was working against their application for membership. This tension resulted in Smyth's congregation agreeing to a work composed by Hans de Ries, *A Short Confession of Faith*, which was signed by Smyth along with forty-three others in 1610 and according to Lumpkin is "practically a reproduction of . . . Gerrits and de Ries of 1580."⁵

28. There are two sacraments appointed by Christ, in his holy church, the administration whereof he hath assigned to the ministry of teaching, namely, the Holy Baptism and the Holy Supper. These are outward visible handlings and tokens, setting before our eyes, on God's side, the inward spiritual handling which God, through Christ, by the cooperation of the Holy Ghost, setteth forth the justification in the penitent faithful soul; and which, on our behalf, witnesseth our religion, experience, faith, and obedience, through the obtaining of a good conscience to the service of God.

31. The Holy Supper, according to the institution of Christ, is to be administered to the baptized; as the Lord Jesus hath commanded that whatsoever he hath appointed should be taught to be observed.

32. The whole dealing in the outward visible supper, setteth before the eye, witnesseth and signifyeth, that Christ's body was broken upon the cross and his holy blood spilt for the remission of our sins. That the being glorified in his heavenly Being, is the alive-making bread, meat, and drink of our souls: it setteth before our eyes Christ's office and ministry in glory and majesty, by holding his spiritual supper, which the believing soul, feeding and . . . the soul with spiritual food: it teacheth us by the outward handling to mount upwards with the heart in holy prayer, to beg

Benjamin Evans, *The Early English Baptists*, vol. 1 (London: n.p., 1862), 253-54.

⁴Ibid., 101.

⁵Ibid., 102. This confession is quite similar to a 1580 confession by Gerrits and de Ries that became the *Waterlander Mennonite Confession*. See Lumpkin, "The Waterlander Confession," 41-66.

at Christ's hands the true signified food; and it admonisheth us of thankfulness to God, and of verity and love one with another.⁶

As alluded to above, tensions existed between the newly formed Smyth and Helwys congregations. In 1611, the Helwys congregation sought to distinguish themselves from the Mennonites in Amsterdam and wrote *A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam in Holland* as their confession. Of its importance Lumpkin says, "The confession shows considerable independence of thought and is rightly judged the first English Baptist Confession of Faith."⁷ Joe Early concurs with Lumpkin and adds that it "reveals the maturation of Helwys's stance in the wake of his definitive break from Smyth."⁸ On the Lord's Supper it simply states,

15. That the LORDS Supper is the outward manifestacion off the Spiritual communion betwene CHRIST and the faithful mutuallie. I. Cor. 10.16, 17. to declare his death vntil he come. I Cor. II.26.⁹

John Smyth was never able to see his congregation received into the Mennonite fellowship, though eventually they would officially be admitted. One final confession from Smyth's church helps highlight their position on the Supper. *Propositions and Conclusions concerning True Christian Religion*, 1612-1614 was written in the hope of gaining entrance into the Waterlander fellowship as well as separating Smyth and company from Helwys or even the Reformed tradition.¹⁰ It is an elaboration of the *Waterlander Confession* by Gerrit and de Ries and presents the most robust treatment of the Supper yet.

72. That in the outward supper which only baptized persons must partake, there is presented and figured before the eyes of the penitent and faithful, that spiritual supper, which Christ maketh of His flesh and blood: which is crucified and shed for the remission of sins (as the bread is broken and the wine poured forth), and which is eaten and drunken (as is the bread and wine bodily) only by those which are flesh, of His flesh, and bone of His bone:

⁶Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 109-10. The text above comes from Lumpkin's volume and can also be found in Evans, *Early English Baptists*, vol. 1, 245-52. The original confession's origins have been debated and perhaps the first few editions are lost, however, a larger 1618 version of the confession exists and has been translated into English in Cornelius J. Dyck, "A Short Confession of Faith by Hans de Ries," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 38 (1964): 5-19.

⁷Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 115.

⁸Joe Early, Jr., *The Life and Writings of Thomas Helwys*, English Baptist Texts (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 29.

⁹Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 120-21. See also, Early, *The Life and Writings of Thomas Helwys*, 71.

¹⁰See Lee, *John Smyth: Puritan, Separatist, Baptist, Mennonite* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 2003), 91. Also, Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 123-24.

in the communion of the same spirit (I Cor. xii. 13; Rev. iii. 20, compared with I Cor. xi. 23, 26; John vi. 53, 58).

73. That the outward baptism and supper do not confer, and convey grace and regeneration to the participants or communicants: but as the word preached, they serve only to support and stir up the repentance and faith of the communicants till Christ come, till the day dawn, and the day-star arise in their hearts (I Cor. xi. 26; 2 Peter i. 19; I Cor. I. 5-8).

74. That the sacraments have the same use that the word hath; that they are a visible word, and that they teach to the eye of them that understand as the word teacheth the ears of them that have ears to hear (Prov. x. 12), and therefore as the word pertaineth not to infants, no more do the sacraments.

75. That the preaching of the word, and the ministry of the sacraments, representeth the ministry of Christ in the spirit; who teacheth, baptiseth, and feedeth the regenerate, by the Holy Spirit inwardly and invisibly.¹¹

In the following years Helwys would lead his congregation back to London to establish the first Baptist churches on English soil and begin the General Baptist tradition. By the 1640s quite a few General Baptist churches were in London and from these churches many defenses of beliefs were printed, often pertaining to baptism or religious liberty. One such treatise was written by Edward Barber in 1642 that is an early argument for believers' baptism as immersion entitled *A Small Treatise of Baptisme or Dipping*. The main topic of concern in the treatise is baptism, but we do find the Lord's Supper mentioned in the argument. At one point Barber lists out a few reasons why "the Lord aimeth at [giving] this ordinance of dipping to the Apostles, and so to the Church."¹² Two of those reasons mention the Supper, and thus depict the idea of the connection of the Supper to baptism and to the church.

Sixly, if at any time any should aske us, who requireth us to walke in such a holy fellowship, and communion, wee are inabled to it by Christ, and so assured of Countenance in it, by the Lords Supper, for hee that saith he is in Christ, and hath fellowship with him, ought himself so to walke, even as he hath walked. John I.2.6.

Seventhly, That the person thus dipped, is first visibly sealed, to

¹¹Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 137-38.

¹²Edward Barber, *A Small Treatise of Baptisme, or, Dipping*. (n.p., 1642), 11. For a summary of his argument see White, *English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, 29.

the day of Redemption, Secondly, he hath truly a right to Communion, as being dipped into one body, whereof Christ is head, I Cor. 12.13. Thirdly, that hee is mortified, Rom. 6.4. crucified, dead and buried, and risen againe with Christ, Gal. 3.2.3,4,5.

In 1651 the first General Baptist confession of more than one church is written at an associational meeting in the Midlands. Lumpkin claims that the "Confession drew the churches closer together, giving them a greater sense of unity and strength."¹³ The confession is entitled *Thirty Congregations*, and on the Lord's Supper it states,

53. That Jesus Christ took Bread, and the juice of the Vine, and brake, and gave to his Disciples, to eat and drink with thanksgiving; which practise is left upon record as a memorial of his suffering, to continue in the Church until he come again; I Cor. II. 32, 24, 25, 26.¹⁴

The General Baptists were also aware of George Fox's movement throughout England and the effect it was having on their churches. In 1654 the General Baptist churches in London presented together a confession in the face of the Quaker movement entitled *The True Gospel-Faith Declared According to the Scriptures, 1654*. Its short articles give very little detail other than providing the fundamentals of the faith, the practice of the Lord's Supper being one of those. Article 16 states, "That they ought to meet together to break bread, Acts 20.7; Lk. 2.19."¹⁵

Throughout the seventeenth century suspicion was attached to the Baptists for fear that these "Anabaptists" would repeat the rebellious Münster episode on the continent one-hundred years previous. In order to quell these fears the General Baptists of London and beyond hurriedly put out a confession in 1660 entitled, *A Brief Confession or Declaration of Faith*, but better known as *The Standard Confession*. It was later adopted by the Assembly of General Baptists and "serv[ed] as a basis of union for over forty years and as a specific body of doctrine to which its people could hold in the dark years of persecution, . . ."¹⁶ On the Lord's Supper it simply confessed, "That it is the duty of such who are constituted aforesaid, to *continue steadfastly in Christs and the Apostles Doctrine, and assembling together, in fellowship, in breaking of Bread, and Prayer, Acts 2.42.*"¹⁷

Only a few years later a controversy arose for General Baptists in the Midlands. Two of the probable signers of *The Standard Confession*, Matthew Caffyn and Thomas Monck, had a disagreement over Christology. Caffyn

¹³Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 173.

¹⁴Ibid., 183.

¹⁵Ibid., 194.

¹⁶Ibid., 223.

¹⁷Ibid., 229. Italics original.

was teaching a melchiorite Christology in the churches that was not well received. In response to this issue, among others, *An Orthodox Creed* was written. Not only did it follow the form of the *Westminster Confession*, the *Savoy Confession*, and the *Second London Confession*, but it also included three ecumenical creeds, all of which showed the desire of its signers to align themselves with orthodox-Christian thought.¹⁸ Its discussion on the Lord's Supper is one of the strongest for the General Baptists.

XXVII. Article.

Of Baptism, and the Lord's-supper

Those two sacraments, viz. Baptism, and the Lord's-supper, are ordinances of positive, sovereign, and holy institution, appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ, the only lawgiver, to be continued in his church, to the end of the world; and to be administered by those only who are rightly qualified, and thereunto called, according to the command of Christ, in *Mat. 28.19*.¹⁹

XXXIII. Article.

Of the end and right Administration of the Lord's Supper.

The Supper of the Lord Jesus, was instituted by him the same Night wherein he was betrayed; To be observed in his Church, to the end of the World, for the perpetual Remembrance, and shewing forth the Sacrifice of himself in his Death; and for the Confirmation of the Faithful Believers in all the Benefits of his Death and Resurrection, and Spiritual Nourishment and growth in him; sealing unto them their continuance in the Covenant of Grace, and to be a Band and Pledg of Communion with him, and an Obligation of Obedience to Christ, both passively and actively, as also of our Communion and Union each with other, in the participation of this holy Sacrament. And the outward Elements of Bread and Wine, after they are set apart by the Hand of the Minister, from common Use, and Blessed, or Consecrated, by the Word of God and Prayer, the Bread being broken, and Wine poured forth, signifie to the Faithful, the Body and Blood of Christ, or holdeth forth Christ and him Crucified; and the Minister distributing the Bread and Wine to the Communicants, who are to take, or receive, both the Bread and Wine at the Hands of the Minister, applying it by Faith, with Thanksgiving to God the Father, for so great a Benefit; and no Unbaptized, Unbelieving, or open Prophane, or wicked Heretical Persons, ought

¹⁸W. Madison Grace II, "Transcriber's Preface to An Orthodox Creed: An Unabridged 17th Century General Baptist Confession," *Southwestern Journal of Theology [SWJT]* 48 (2006): 127-32.

¹⁹Thomas Monck, et al., "An Orthodox Creed: or, a Protestant Confession of Faith," *SWJT* 48 (2006): 161.

to be admitted to this Ordinance to prophane it.

Neither is that Popish Doctrine of Transubstantiation to be admitted of, nor Adoration of the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass, as they call it, together with their denying of the Cup to the Laity, and many more Idolatrous, and Superstitious Practices, decreed in the Popish Councils of *Lateran*, and *Trent*; In opposition to which, and such like Idolatry of *Rome*, many of our worthy and famous Ancients and renowned Protestants, lost their lives by Fire and Faggot in *England*, whose Spirits (we hope) are now in Heaven, as worthy Martyrs and Witnesses of Christ, in bearing a faithful Testimony to this holy Ordinance of their Lord and Master. Neither may we admit of Consubstantiation, it being not consonant to God's Word. Nor are little Infants, that cannot examine themselves, nor give Account of their Faith, nor understand what is signified by the outward signs of Bread and Wine, to be admitted to this Sacrament. Though St. *Austin* taught so from *John* 6.63. and many of the *Greek* Churches so believe and practise to this Day. And this holy Ordinance ought to be often celebrated among the Faithful, with Examination of themselves, (*viz.*) of their Faith, and Love, and Knowledg, of these holy and divine Mysteries, lest they eat and drink their own Damnation, for prophaning of God's holy Ordinance, as many (we fear) have done, and (yet) do at this Day; whose hard and blind Hearts the Lord in Mercy open, if it be his blessed Will.²⁰

Around the same time of the publication of *An Orthodox Creed* another General Baptist published what Garrett claims as "the first treatise written by a Baptist which can be reckoned as a systematic theology."²¹ The title of the work is *Christianismus Primitivius. or, The Ancient Christian Religion in Its Nature, Certainty, Excellency, and Beauty, (Internal and External) particularly Considered, Adderted, and Vindicated*. It is ordered into four books with the second consisting in two parts. Part II of Book II addresses the doctrine of the church where we will find his theological discussion on the Lord's Supper. The title of the chapter on the Supper is telling to how Grantham conceived of the nature of the Supper, "Of the Holy Table of the Lord, or the Lords Supper celebrated in Bread and Wine, for a perpetual Commemoration of the Death of Jesus Christ, till his second coming."²² From this we can deduce that the Supper entails the ideas of memorial and future hope. In the following nine sections Grantham outlines the major defenses for the Supper that

²⁰Ibid., 165-66.

²¹James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 2009), 42.

²²Thomas Grantham, *Christianisumus Primitivius* Book II, part II (London: n.p., 1678), 81.

he felt were needed at the time wherein he addresses beliefs on the Supper ranging from Catholics to enthusiasts.

In general Grantham understands the Supper to be an act of remembering, a “solemn Memorial” as he calls it.²³ The nature of the Supper is “to commemorate the great work of our Redemption by his death. . .”²⁴ In fact Grantham desires to have Christ exalted in the Supper and remembered as the one crucified and coming again. In understanding the Supper in this way Grantham claims it does a few things:

1. It provides against all future offerings *FOR SIN* . . .
2. This Ordinance representeth Christ as having really dyed for us, . . . not as our late *Enthusiasts* do speak, . .
3. This Ordinance sheweth, that the Blood of Christ shed for remission of sins, was really seen with moral eyes, contrary to that dangerous saying of the Quakers, . . .²⁵

Grantham also sees that the Supper itself teaches Christians about humility and love in relation to how they should consider and respond to the gospel. “Sure in this Ordinance we have as real an offer made of the Flesh and Blood of Christ for us to feed upon by faith, as in any other part of the Gospel of God.”²⁶ He also sees that the Supper teaches and is concerned with Christian unity.

And it is that Table, to which all Saints are to approach with such preparation as may render them fit for communion in that Mystical Body, the Church; which is also called Christ, because of that unity they have with him, and one another in him. . . Doubtless when our Saviour enjoyed all that sat with him, *to eat that bread and to drink All of that cup*, his design was therein to engage them in the Unity of himself and one another.²⁷

Grantham also saw the Lord’s Supper as being central to the idea of the church and the Christian faith. He claimed that it “establish[ed] Christians in the faith,” it provides assurance, and finds the fullness of Christ represented in his three-fold office of king (wherein a new law is made), priest (wherein the church commemorates His sacrifice), and prophet (wherein the Supper “foretells of the second coming”).²⁸ Such high a view Grantham has of the Supper in relation to establishing Christians in their faith that he claims,

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., 83.

²⁵Ibid., 85-86.

²⁶Ibid., 88.

²⁷Ibid., 89.

²⁸Ibid., 89-90.

No Ordinance (no not preaching of the Word) is of greater use to establish Gods People in the Faith than this, for here we see with the eye, and by it the Judgment is informed, as we hear with the ear, and so receive instruction.²⁹

As his argument continues, Grantham addresses how an individual is to participate in the ritual. "The worthy Receiver of the Lords Supper, does not only put away sin by the power of Christ, but he must approach nigh to God with the whole heart *in this* service."³⁰ In participating in the Supper this would require the correct discernment of what Christ accomplished, which would necessarily lead one to an acknowledgment that Christ was truly human, that the ritual was commemorative of Jesus' death and not another "Sacrifice propitiatory," and that in the Supper "the Body of Christ mystical is here to be discerned, as this is the evidence of that unity between the *Head* and the *Members*."³¹

The practice of celebrating the Supper is then taken up wherein Grantham argues that it be administered by a pastor. He provides a few reasons for this. First, the pastor is tasked with feeding the flock, the Supper is a church ordinance and therefore requires a church minister to administer it,³² and, finally, the Supper "is as Solemn an Service as any, and requires as great abilities to do it to edification, as other services pertaining to the work of the Ministry, and is ordained to feed and nourish the Faith of the Church of God."³³

Next he addresses the posture one should take before the Supper—sitting or kneeling. He sees the model in the Bible of the Last Supper as sitting and argues the church should do the same. He follows this with the question of frequency of practicing this ritual. He claims there is liberty in Scripture about the occurrence of the Supper but suggests a greater frequency akin to preaching and prayers. His concluding thoughts on this subject are helpful and highlight his greater theology of the Supper:

Nevertheless as the natural man will not long abstain from his bodily food if he can obtain it, so neither will the spiritual man neglect his Fathers Table, but delight to feed there, with those that call on the Name of the Lord out of a pure heart in that Solemnity.³⁴

He concludes the section on the Supper addressing the means of sepa-

²⁹Ibid., 90.

³⁰Ibid., 92. Italics Original.

³¹Ibid., 92-93. Italics Original.

³²Grantham so stresses this point that asserts any congregation that finds someone to administer the ordinance who is not the pastor should "first elect him their Pastor, . . . that he may be their lawful Minister." Ibid., 93.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., 95.

rating the bread—breaking or cutting—discussing if one should fast before the ordinance, and addresses the issues of the practices of the Lord’s Supper in Roman Catholicism, especially critiquing transubstantiation.

Grantham’s work, especially coming toward the end of the century, provides a good theological presentation on a General Baptist theology of the Supper. However, Grantham also writes on the specific order of the Lord’s Supper in his church. In his 1687 treatise *Hear the Church*, a piece “exhorting” Baptists in England to remain “steadfast,” Thomas Grantham presents the practice of the General Baptists’ observance of the Lord’s Supper.³⁵

THE Congregation being met together, and having spent part of the day Preaching, and Prayer, commonly towards the Evening, and ordinarily upon the Lords Day, the Table is decently prepared, and the Bread and Wine set upon it also in decent manner.

The Messenger³⁶ or Elder does excite the People to due Humility, and Reverence in their approaching to the Holy Table of the Lord, shewing the occasion and Authority by, and upon which it was Instituted for a perpetual Ministry in the Church of God. The great Use and Mystical signification of it, as Christ is evidently set forth in his Crucifixion, or bitter Death upon the Cross, as the alone Sacrifice, once offered for the Sins of Men, and that there is no more Offering for Sin, but the Offering up of Christ once for all.

Then he putteth them in mind of the qualifications, necessary on their part to the due Reception of that Divine Ordinance, without which they will come together for the worse, and not for the better.

Then *taking the Bread unto his hands*, he calleth upon God in the Mediation of Jesus Christ, for a Blessing upon the Bread, that it may be Sanctified for that holy use for which it was ordained by Christ, and that by Faith, all that are to partake of that Bread, thereby may feed upon the Body of Christ, *which is the true Bread, and by him live for ever.*

³⁵Thomas Grantham, *Hear the Church: or, an Appeal to the Mother of us All* (London: n.p., 1687).

³⁶A messenger was a third office for the General Baptists alongside the offices of pastor/elder and deacon. B.R. White states, “the word ‘messenger’ had a certain ambiguity about it when used in both the General and Particular Baptist writings and records. Often it quite clearly just means an elder or other church member sent to deliver a message or represent the congregation at some wider gathering. At other times . . . [it] clearly meant an evangelist sent to win converts and form a new congregation . . . it seems probable that the first generation of ‘messengers’ of this kind were those whose ministry had developed from their original work as evangelists.” *The English Baptists of the 17th Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1996), 31.

Then he breaketh the Bread, pronouncing the words of Christ, *This is my Body, &c.* willeth the People *to receive it in remembrance of Christ*, and as shewing forth the Death of Christ till he come the second time without sin to Salvation.

In like manner *he taketh the Cup*, after the People have received the Bread, and with Prayer suitable to that great Mystery, it being sanctified, he poureth out of the Wine, remembering the words of Christ, *This Cup is the New Testament in my Blood, &c.* partakes of it himself (as he did also of the Bread) and gives it to the Deacons to Communicate to all the Congregation, and they all drink of it.

Then some word of *Exhortation is given to the People* under the consideration of the unspeakable Mercy of God in the gift of his Son to dye for us, that we might live Eternally with him: all is concluded *with Prayers to the Lord* for all his blessings, in the most joyful manner that the Minister is able to express them, and then usually something is given to the Poor, as every mans heart maketh him willing, being no constrained thereunto, but as the love of Christ constraineth him.³⁷

Particular Baptists

The rise of the Particular Baptists came later than the General Baptists, beginning somewhere between 1633 and 1638, but by 1644 several Particular Baptist congregations existed in London. In that year leaders from these churches gathered to write out a confession of faith that is commonly called the *First London Confession*. It is an effort to present what this new ecclesial body believed against charges of heresy, which is especially seen in the confession's full title: *The Confession of Faith, of those Churches which are commonly (though falsly) called Anabaptists*. It is interesting that in this important first confession, and other works to follow, not much is mentioned of the Lord's Supper. Mentioning this absence E. P. Winter claims, "The earliest Confession of Faith of the Particular Baptists, . . . makes but the barest mention of the Lord's Supper. It was not a matter of discussion among the earlier Baptists."³⁸ The 1644 confession makes no mention at all of the Supper, a fact James Leo Garrett calls "strange silence,"³⁹ however in 1646 the confession is reprinted and a small amendment is added to the baptism article merely

³⁷Ibid., 28-30. Italics original. Such a presentation of the service of the Lord's Supper is absent in other works. E. P. Winter states, "Thomas Grantham appears to be the only General Baptist who gave his people teaching regarding their approach to and use of the Lord's Supper." E. P. Winter, "The Lord's Supper: Admission and Exclusion among Baptists of the Seventeenth Century," *The Baptist Quarterly [BaptistQ]* XVII, no. 6 (1958): 198.

³⁸Winter, "The Lord's Supper," 325.

³⁹Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 56.

stating, “and afterwards to partake of the Lord’s Supper.”⁴⁰

Although one does not find much on the Lord’s Supper in the 1646 edition, the appendix to the confession by Benjamin Cox speaks to the issue of admittance to the Supper in his twentieth article.

Though a beleevers right to the use of the Lords Supper doth immediatly flow from Jesus Christ apprehended and received by faith; yet in as much as all things ought to be done not onely decently, but also in order; I *Cor.* 14:40; and the Word holds forth this order, that disciples should be baptized, *Matth.* 28.19, *Acts* 2.38—and then be taught to observe all things (that is to say, all other things) that Christ commanded the Apostles, *Matth.* 28.20. and accordingly the Apostles first baptized disciples, and then admitted them to the use of the Supper; *Acts* 2.41.42. we therefore doe not admit any in the use of the Supper, nor communicate with any in the use of this ordinance, but disciples having once been Scripturally baptized, less we should have fellowship with them in their doing contrary to order.⁴¹

For Particular Baptists outside of London not much is mentioned of the Lord’s Supper until the adoption of the *Second London Confession* in 1689. That is not to say the Supper was not mentioned in their articles, but that it was not central to the arguments they were making. For instance, in the *Midland Confession* the Supper is mentioned in a list of items in which those baptized will partake: “fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers.”⁴² Likewise, in the *Somerset Confession* the Supper is listed as one of the “commandments” believers are to follow.⁴³

In an attempt to show moderate doctrinal uniformity the Particular Baptists decided to draw up a declaration of faith in 1677. This confession, known as the *Second London Confession*, was largely based upon the *Westminster Confession* and the *Savoy Confession*. Its treatment of the Lord’s Supper was far more elaborate than the 1644 confession as it was also broadened due possibly to its effort to express unity with Presbyterians and Independents. On the Supper it states,

⁴⁰Thomas Gunne, et al., *A Confession of Faith of Seven Congregations or Churches of Christ in London, which are commonly (though unjustly) called Anabaptists*, the second impression corrected and enlarged (London: n.p., 1646), article 39.

⁴¹Benjamin Cox, *An Appendix to a Confession of Faith, or a More Full Declaration of the Faith and Judgment of Baptized Believers* (London: n.p., 1646), 11.

⁴²Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 199.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 210.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Of Baptism and the Lords Supper.

- I. Baptism and the Lords Supper are ordinances of positive, and sovereign institution; appointed by the Lord Jesus the only Law-giver, to be continued in his Church to the end of the World.
2. These holy appointments are to be administered by those only, who are qualified and thereunto called according to the commission of Christ.

CHAP. XXX.

Of the Lords Supper.

- I. THE Supper of the Lord Jesus, was instituted by him, the same night wherein he was betrayed, to be observed in his Churches unto the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance, and shewing forth the sacrifice in his death confirmation of the faith of believers in all the benefits thereof, their spiritual nourishment, and growth in him, their further ingagement in, and to, all duties which they owe unto him; and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him, and with each other.
2. In this ordinance Christ is not offered up to his Father, nor any real sacrifice made at all, for remission of sin of the quick or dead; but only a memorial of that one offering up of himself, by himself, upon the crosse, once for all; and a spiritual oblation of all possible praise unto God for the same; so that the Popish sacrifice of the Mass (as they call it) is most abominable, injurious to Christs own only sacrifice, the alone propitiation for all the sins of the Elect.
3. The Lord Jesus hath in this Ordinance, appointed his Ministers to Pray, and bless the Elements of Bread and Wine, and thereby to set them apart from a common an holy use, and to take and break the Bread; to take the Cup, and (they communicating also themselves) to give both to the Communicants.
4. The denyal of the Cup to the people, worshipping the Elements, the lifting them up, or carrying them about for adoration, and reserving them for any pretended religious use, are all contrary to the nature of this Ordinance, and to the institution of Christ.
5. The outward Elements in this Ordinance, duely set apart to the uses ordained by Christ, have such relation to him crucified, as that truly, although in terms used figuratively, they are sometimes called by the name of the things they represent, to wit body and Blood of Christ; albeit in substance and nature, they still remain

truly, and only Bread, and Wine, as they were before.

6. That doctrine which maintains a change of the substance of Bread and Wine, into the substance of Christs body and blood (commonly called Transubstantiation) by consecration of a Priest, or by any other way, is repugnant not to Scripture alone, but even to common sense and reason; overthroweth the nature of the ordinance, and hath been and is the cause of manifold superstitions, yea, of gross Idolatries.

7. Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible Elements in this Ordinance, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally, and corporally, but spiritually receive, and feed upon Christ crucified & all the benefits of his death: the Body and Blood of *Christ*, being then not corporally, or carnally, but spiritually present to the faith of Believers, in that Ordinance, as the Elements themselves are to their outward senses.

8. All ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with *Christ*; so are they unworthy of the Lords Table; and cannot without great sin against him, whole they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto: yea whatsoever hall receive unworthily are guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord, eating and drinking judgment to themselves.⁴⁴

In the West of England Thomas Collier was a strong voice among the Particular Baptists, though his views on Calvinism would become more moderate over time. In 1691 he helped pen *A Short Confession or a Brief Narrative of Faith* that appears to be independent of previous confessional traditions and followed Collier's pattern of attempting "to speak for both Particular and General Baptists."⁴⁵ The article on the Lord's Supper states,

Chapter 13.—Of the Lord's Supper.

Concerning the supper of the Lord, we believe, 1. That it was instituted by him, the same night wherein he was betrayed, to be observed in his churches unto the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance of his dying love, in offering up himself upon the cross once for all. (Matthew 26:26, &c. Luke 22:19, 20.)

2. The materials to be made use of in this holy ordinance, are bread and wine, which figuratively do represent the body and blood of *Christ*. (Matthew 26:26, &c.)

⁴⁴Ibid., 290-93.

⁴⁵Ibid., 335.

3. That none ought to communicate in this holy ordinance but such as are orderly members of the church of *Christ*, made so by repentance, faith, and baptism, and then they have a lawful sight unto it; which holy ordinance ought to be duly observed and kept up in the orderly church of Christ, only for the ends for which it was appointed. (Acts 2:41, 42. 1 Corinthians 11:23, &c.)⁴⁶

Although confessions are a good source for a consensus of thought another source that proves helpful is a catechism commonly called *Keach's Catechism* later known as the *Baptist Catechism*. Around 1693 the Particular Baptist Assembly resolved that a catechism be prepared.⁴⁷ Its substance became the catechism for Baptists for the next two centuries. It was based upon a catechism published in 1689 after the *Second London Confession* and that version is here presented. Its teaching on the Supper is contained in six parts and is as follows:

Q. 95. What are the outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption?

A. The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption are His ordinances, especially the Word, Baptism, the Lord's Supper and Prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation. (Rom. 10:17; James 1:18; 1 Cor. 3:5; Acts 14:1; 2:41,42)

Q. 98. How do Baptism and the Lord's Supper become effectual means of salvation?

A. Baptism and the Lord's Supper become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them or in him that administers them, but only by the blessing of Christ and the working of His Spirit in them that by faith receive them. (1 Peter 3:21; 1 Cor. 3:6,7; 1 Cor. 12:13)

Q. 99. Wherein do Baptism and the Lord's Supper differ from the other ordinances of God?

A. Baptism and the Lord's Supper differ from the other ordinances of God in that they were specially instituted by Christ to represent and apply to believers the benefits of the new covenant by visible and outward signs. (Matt. 28:19; Acts 22:16; Matt. 26:26-28; Rom. 6:4)

Q. 105. What is the visible church?

A. The visible church is the organized society of professing believ-

⁴⁶Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists* (Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 2005), 225-26.

⁴⁷Tom J. Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts: The Study of Catechisms in Baptist Life*, Calvary Press Baptist Heritage Series (Amityville, NY: Calvary, 1998), 49.

ers, in all ages and places, wherein the Gospel is truly preached and the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper rightly administered. (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Acts 7:38; Eph. 4:11,12)

Q. 107. What is the Lord's Supper?

A. The Lord's Supper is a holy ordinance, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, His death is showed forth, and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporeal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of His body and blood, with all His benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace. (1 Cor. 11:23-26; 10:16)

Q. 108. What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper?

A. It is required of them that would worthily (that is, suitably) partake of the Lord's Supper, that they examine themselves, of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body; of their faith to feed upon Him; of their repentance, love, and new obedience: lest, coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves. (1 Cor. 11:27-31; 1 Cor. 5:8; 2 Cor. 13:5).⁴⁸

One final discussion on the Lord's Supper needs to be presented. As Coxe's appendix to the *First London Confession* stated in 1646, who is admitted to the Lord's Supper was a concern for the Particular Baptists. For many only those who were rightly baptized were permitted to partake of the Supper, though there were some dissenting voices. Although the *Second London Confession* does not reiterate Coxe's sentiment towards closed communion it remained an issue for Particular Baptists. This subject particularly became a matter of debate amongst the Baptists after John Bunyan published *A Confession of my Faith* whereby he argues that baptism should not keep one from communicating (partaking in the observance of the Supper) with true believers.⁴⁹ In response to this confession another pastor named Thomas Paul soon published a response with a foreward by William Kiffin entitled *Some Serious Reflections on that Part of Mr. Bunion's Confession of Faith*.⁵⁰ Bunyan quickly retorted with *Differences in Judgment about Water Baptism, No Bar to Communion*, thus settling his position in the debate.⁵¹

The heart of the issue was an understanding of the concepts of com-

⁴⁸Paul King Jewett, *The Baptist Catechism commonly called Keach's Catechism or A Brief Instructio in the Principles of the Christian Religion, newly rev. ed.* (Beverly Farms, MA: Gordon Divinity School, 1952).

⁴⁹See John Bunyan, *A Confession of My Faith, and a Reason of my Practice: or, With who, and who not, I can hold church-fellowship, or the communion of Saints* (London: n.p., 1672).

⁵⁰See Thomas Paul, *Some Serious Reflections on that Part of Mr. Bunion's Confession of Faith Touching Communion with Unbaptized Persons* (London: n.p., 1673).

⁵¹See John Bunyan, *Differences in Judgment about Water Baptism, No Bar to Communion: or, To Communicate with Saints, as Saints, Proved Lawful* (London: n.p., 1673).

munion and to what extent the church was involved in it. Bunyan's largest charges against his opponents were that they were "unchristianing" believers by adding believers' baptism by immersion as a prerequisite for the Lord's Supper. He further argued, "I am bold to hold communion with visible Saints as afore; because God hath communion with them; whose example in the case, we are streightly commanded to follow."⁵²

Years after Bunyan's death William Kiffin added his thoughts on the debate with *A Sober Discourse of Right to Church Communion* wherein he biblically and historically defended the cause of closed communion.⁵³ His approach to the subject was different than Bunyan's in that he based it upon a reading of Scripture rather than an appeal to unity in God. In his preface he claimed, "That no part of God's law, or worship, whether we respect the manner or form, or the matter and substance thereof, is to be altered without the express order and direction of GOD Himself; . . ."⁵⁴

The Early English Baptists' View of the Lord's Supper

Now that the sources on the Supper have been presented from both the General and Particular Baptists an analysis of them will help provide a common theology of the Lord's Supper of the English Baptists in their beginnings. Although quite a few documents discussing the Lord's Supper have been presented, though more could be produced, it is interesting that the discussion on the Lord's Supper was small, especially at the beginning of the century. Before synthesizing these sources it should be queried as to why many of the sources are limited in the discussion on the Supper.

First, perhaps there was not significant disagreement about the Supper within and without Baptist life.⁵⁵ Since the English Separatists were so close to the genesis of both sets of Baptists they no doubt had an influence on the view and practice of the Supper. It is conceivable that the Separatist practices of the Supper continued into Baptist life. Second, there could have been strong disagreement amongst the Baptists (as with the Bunyan/Kiffin debate) that led to little consensus on some aspects of the Supper. Third, the confessional works themselves were often apologetic in nature and a discussion on the Supper either detracted from the argument or was not a concern. For most of the century baptism is the main theological concern for the Baptists and it rightly took center stage in the debates. In fact, some of the discussions about the Supper presented were in relation to discussions on baptism. Finally, it might be that the Supper was not regularly observed, and therefore was not a distinguishing feature of Baptist worship. Although this is the least likely option given, at least an appearance of the Supper is in

⁵²Bunyan, *A Confession of My Faith*, 89.

⁵³See William Kiffin, *A Sober Discourse of Right to Church Communion*, The Baptist Distinctives Series 31 (Paris, AR: Baptist Standard Bearer, 2006).

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁵Cf. Winter, *The Lord's Supper*, 325.

the confessions.

All four of these reasons are plausible and perhaps, depending on circumstances, at least the first three are true to a limited degree. The fact remains, however, that there is not much data on the worship practices of the early Baptists as exist in Grantham's work *Hear the Church*, nor a theological understanding of the Supper beyond the *Second London Confession*, *An Orthodox Creed*, or *Christianismus Primitivius*. Like all growing religious groups the early Baptists were in progress.

In the second half of the century the Supper was treated more extensively. Externally we see that a theology of the Supper argued against other religious groups like Catholics or Enthusiasts especially in relation to broader ecclesiological ideas such as baptism. Internally, given the debate with Bunyan, the discussion on the Supper was concerned more with appropriate communicants in relation to baptism than with a theology of the Lord's Supper. It is clear from this evidence that believers' baptism is central to the theology of these early Baptists. From Smyth's confession in 1610 to Coxe's *Appendix* in 1646 to Kiffin's *Sober Discourse* in 1681, baptism was connected to and often operated as the fence set around the Supper.

In order to understand the view(s) of the Supper the commonalities of the sources need to be synthesized. One more confession will be provided and used as a guide for this process. In 1697 Benjamin Keach wrote *The Articles of the Faith of the Church of Christ, or Congregation meeting at Horsley-down*.⁵⁶ This confession will serve a summary model for two reasons. First, it encompasses much of the thinking of the Supper throughout the century. Second, it is very late in the century allowing it to summarize any development of the Supper.⁵⁷ On the Supper in article 24 it says:

We believe that the Holy Ordinance of the Lord's Supper, which he instituted the Night before he was betrayed, ought to be observed to the end of the World; and that it consisteth only in breaking of Bread, and drinking of Wine, in remembrance of Christ's Death; it being for our spiritual Nourishment, and Growth in Grace, and as farther Engagement in, and to all Duties we owe to Jesus Christ, and as a Pledg of his eternal Love to us, and as a Token of our Communion with him, and one with another. And that due Preparation and Examination is required of all that ought to partake thereof; and that it cannot be neglected by any approved and orderly Member without Sin.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Benjamin Keach, *The Articles of the Faith of the Church of Christ, or Congregation Meeting at Horsley-down* (London: n.p., 1697).

⁵⁷Since it is from a particular Baptist it is highly dependent on the *Second London Confession*.

⁵⁸Keach, *The Articles of the Faith*, 24-25.

First, there is the use of the word "ordinance" in distinction to the word "sacrament." Although much is made of the differences in the terms today there may not have been as much a difference in usage between the two in the seventeenth century. For instance, Smyth and his church use "sacrament" instead of "ordinance," but clearly do not have an *ex opere operato* connotation within the term. Also, in *Propositions and Conclusions* "the outward baptism and supper do not confer, and convey grace and regeneration to the participants or communicants." It is likely when "sacrament" is used it is in its sense of a "sign."

As development occurs the terminology changes from "sacrament" to "ordinance." This is seen in Keach above as well as in the *Second London Confession* and *An Orthodox Creed*. In comparison with the *Westminster Confession*, of which both of the previous confessions are based, the language changes to clarify the symbolic understanding of the Supper.⁵⁹ Other terminology that corresponds to the symbolic nature are "token" and "pledge," as found here in Keach as well as in *A Short Confession of Faith* and *An Orthodox Creed*.

As a symbol it is to be *observed*, that is it is an outward act. The language of outward and inward was not something new to begin with the seventeenth-century Baptists. The discussion of the ordinances in the reformation utilized this language as well. What is meant by the term is a further denial of any means of grace appropriated by the act itself. Smyth calls it an "external" act and defines it as an outward proclamation of what Christ did by setting it "before the eye." In the *Second London Confession* the elements are "outward" and are used "figuratively" and any benefit from them is inward. *An Orthodox Creed* says the elements "signifie to the Faithful the Body and Blood of Christ." *Keach's Catechism* in questions 95 and 99 state that this ordinance is "outward" and question 107 highlights that the act shows forth Christ's death. The elements serve as an outward proclamation of the gospel and, to some extent, are separated from the inward effects. This language is more in line with a Zwinglian understanding of the Supper, especially over against any view of real presence.

By taking the elements outwardly the participants do so in *remembrance* of Christ's death. The remembrance of Christ in the Supper is a central theme for the Baptists since they do not perceive of a corporeal communion with Christ. In fact in both *An Orthodox Creed* and the *Second London Confession* as well as in *Christianismus Primitivius* it is clearly presented that the Supper in no way is to be considered a real presence of Christ. For both General and Particular Baptists the Lord's Supper was not understood in terms of transubstantiation nor consubstantiation. This begs the question of whether these Baptists held only to a Zwinglian memorial view of the Supper, or if they were closer to the Reformed spiritual presence view. This question has been asked by E. P. Winter to which he concludes, "while it is

⁵⁹Winter notes "However, §1 was emended by the Baptists to exclude the words "sacrament," "seal," "pledge" and "sacrifice of himself," and in §5 "figuratively" was substituted for "sacramentally." Winter, "The Lord's Supper," 325.

well-nigh impossible to find any but 'Zwinglian' views among the General Baptists, both 'Calvinist' and 'Zwinglian' approaches are found amongst the Particular Baptists."⁶⁰

Interestingly, a common theme in these sources is the allusion to the inward benefit of these outward acts of remembrance. Here in Keach's confession the terminology is "spiritual Nourishment," a phrase seen in other sources above. It is commonly used in most of the sources alongside the terms "feed," "spiritual food," and "spiritual supper." This imagery of a meal is quite appropriate given that it is called a Supper and utilizes food. These imageries of feeding and nourishment, however, are not necessarily to be understood as a move of the Baptists to a view that is more than a memorial. Often this language is compared to the preaching of the Word or prayer, which also provides spiritual nourishment. The overall idea is that the Supper is a special ritual for Christians in the churches to come together and commemorate Christ in a special way that provides a spiritual benefit.

Keach's *Articles* above speak of the communion that the Supper creates. This also is a common theme in the sources presented. The Supper exists as a ritual of worship that not only creates a bond of communion between Christ and the one partaking but also a bond with the entirety of the congregation also partaking. This communion is an ecclesial communion that presents the unity of the body.

In practice, the Supper is to be administered by a Pastor, taken often, and not administered to any who are not of faith, and for many of these churches that means those that practice believers' baptism by immersion.

Conclusion

The Early English Baptists may not have had as much to say about the Lord's Supper in comparison to their work on the topic of baptism, but, as has been shown, they did have some significant things to say about it. Their understanding of the Supper showed some development, but that development was not so much a change of theology and practice as it was a codification or greater expression of what they believed about all of church life, inclusive of the Supper. In fact, we can see that the Lord's Supper was an important part of their worship and theology. Though it may be stated that a majority of these Baptists held to a memorial view of the Supper, a few were open to the spiritual presence view. However, we do not find them dividing over this issue as they would on who was to be invited to the table. Whatever they believed about the Supper they understood that it had significant meaning and value for any congregation of believers and should be practiced often for the sake of the church for it is the continual outward ritual that commemorates and proclaims Christ's death until He comes.

⁶⁰E. P. Winter, "Calvinist and Zwinglian Views of the Lord's Supper among the Baptists of the Seventeenth Century" *BaptistQ* XV (1954): 329.

*Christopher Blackwood:
Exemplar of the Seventeenth-Century
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The Need for a Historiographical Exemplar

If historiography is the discipline, not merely of chronicling but of evaluating various approaches to history,¹ Baptist historiography must be concerned with the methodological evaluation of competing models of Baptist history. Since the Enlightenment, historians have been granted some arbitrage over historical and scientific truth. Afterwards, historiography developed as a means of arbitrating the truth claims of the historians themselves. Similarly, Baptist history is a field of study replete with truth claims regarding not only denominational history, but also denominational identity. As a result, there is a critical need for a Baptist historiography that draws upon the best of academic historiography in order to evaluate the claims of Baptist historians.

This academic exercise takes on poignancy for the churchman as the historians' claims about historical sources have begun to shape the church's self-perception. Exactly who are the Baptists? What is it that characterizes the people known as Baptists? Does Scripture alone provide the key to their identity? Or, must we also rely upon history and the historians for an interpretation of the Baptist peoples, who are in turn extremely interested in the interpretation of Scripture? And if we must draw upon history, then whose historical interpretation is correct? Although Baptists are a people of the Book, they recognize they are an embodied people dwelling in a context of congregations that inhabit a history of theological interpretation. The question of Baptist identity, then, is bound with history, and history, if it is not to be taken naively, or presented dishonestly, must be evaluated by historiogra-

¹Historiography developed as historians discovered that history was "more than a chronicle." Historiography is concerned with the scientific evaluation of histories and the methodologies they employ: "in this field the primary object of study has always been the development of a more technical form of scholarship, the rise of a more scientific history, and the progress in the critical treatment of sources." A most useful aspect of historiography is that it produces better research students, because it calls for the examination of the historian's assumptions. Herbert Butterfield, *Man on his Past: The Study of the History of Historical Scholarship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 10, 15, 22-26.

phy. In other words, the arbitration of competing histories with their diverse claims for Baptist identity must have resort to the discipline of historiography.

Recognizing the urgent need for historiography, the following paper is not only an exercise in a particular history, the history of seventeenth-century Particular Baptists, it is also an exercise in historiography, the evaluation of competing histories of those Baptists. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, there are two historians of the seventeenth-century English Baptists that stand heads and shoulders above the field, due to the depth and the breadth of their scholarship in this area. One of those historians, Barry White, former Principal of Regent's Park College, is now retired. White's immense and life-long efforts in historical scholarship found their final display in the concise but paradigmatic *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*.² The other historian, Stephen Wright, is younger and less known, but his *The Early English Baptists, 1603-1649*, offers a challenge that may overturn the dominant denominational paradigm.³

White, along with other denominational historians, places a sharp distinction between the development of the General Baptists, on the one hand,⁴ and the development of the Particular Baptists, on the other hand.⁵ The General Baptist congregations are traced back to the position of universal atonement adopted by the early gathered, separated church of Gainsborough, which reinstated believers-only baptism while residing in Amsterdam. The Particular Baptist congregations are traced back to the position of atonement only for the elect, adopted amongst the gathered, separated, baptizing churches of London originally affiliated with the semi-separatist congregation led successively by pastors Henry Jacob, John Lothrop, and Henry Jessey [the so-called JIJ church]. Both congregational traditions are treated in a successionist manner, as if they were two separate developments: the one tracing its history to the strict rejection of Reformed theology and ecclesiology in 1609; the other tracing its history to a milder rejection, but a rejection nonetheless, of Reformed theology and ecclesiology in 1633 or 1638.

Wright, however, has challenged the established pattern. Through careful and exhaustive research, Wright traced the historical development of both the General and Particular Baptists. He concluded that the later denominational division should not be anachronistically ascribed to the earliest

²B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, A History of the English Baptists 1 (Didcot, Oxfordshire: The Baptist Historical Society, 1996).

³Stephen Wright, *The Early English Baptists, 1603-1649* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2006).

⁴A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (London: Baptist Union, 1947), ch. 2; White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, ch. 1; Roger Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage*, 2nd ed. (Didcot, Oxfordshire: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 2005), ch. 2.

⁵Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists*, ch. 3; White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, ch. 2; Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage*, ch. 6.

English Baptists. For instance, when it came to the beginning of immersionist baptism in England, it was a General Baptist, Edward Barber, who first accepted the Christian theory of baptism by immersion only, in June 1640. It was another General Baptist, Thomas Lambe, who may have been the first publicly known practitioner of immersion, having baptized converts in the Severn near Gloucester sometime between September 1641 and February 1642. It was not until January of 1642 that the Particular Baptists began to practice believers-only baptism by immersion,⁶ although John Spilsbury reached the preparatory but insufficiently Baptist theory⁷ of believers-only baptism perhaps by 1638.

Although Wright's reconstruction of Timothy (or John) Batte's involvement—an involvement that would make the Particular Baptists dependent upon the General Baptists for their baptism, at least ideologically, if one accepts the older paradigm⁸—will be challenged, there seems little doubt that the General Baptists and Particular Baptists arrived at the immersionist position concurrently, while in communication, even communion, with one another. Moreover, Wright demonstrates that the subsequent separation between the General Baptists and the Particular Baptists was neither clean nor immediate. There was vigorous and widespread ecclesial and theological interchange between the various churches, their members, and their leaders, for several years. The division began with the conservative political movements of the signatories of the 1644 confession, continued through the debates over Calvinism, and culminated with the alignment in London of some of those who became General Baptists with the Levellers and of many of those who became Particular Baptists with the Independents and the Cromwellian establishment. For political and theological reasons, then, the General Baptists divided from the Particular Baptists. Wright believes the realignment was substantially complete by the end of the crisis over the Leveller manifesto in 1649.⁹

Which paradigm, then, is proper: the clean separation typically presented by White and most historians of the seventeenth-century English Baptists, or the mutual beginnings, vigorous interchange, and eventual separation pictured by Stephen Wright? Although we do not have time to answer fully this historiographical query in the time given, we may perceive the lineaments of an answer, with the test case of an exemplar. The exemplar we have chosen is Christopher Blackwood, an early convert to Baptist views, who later aligned with the Particular Baptists, but retained some typically General Baptist positions.

Blackwood makes a good exemplar for seventeenth-century Baptist

⁶Wright, *The Early English Baptists*, ch. 3.

⁷*The Baptist Faith and Message* 2000, art. 7.

⁸Wright, *The Early English Baptists*, 85-89. Moreover, as Stephen Wright reminded me in subsequent comments upon this essay, Batte was himself a high Calvinist, even though he belonged at the time to a church later identified with the General Baptists.

⁹*Ibid.*, 223-27.

history and historiography, because of his conversion narrative, his substantial corpus, his wide travels amongst Baptists and other non-conformists, his interactions with the JIJ church and its children, his ecumenical relations, and his political movements. Theologically, Blackwood makes a good exemplar because of his understanding of the centrality of Christ and the cross, and of the important doctrines of conscience, church, and Calvinism. Christopher Blackwood, known by the establishment as “the oracle of the Anabaptists in Ireland,” is an exemplar for the historiography, history, and theology of seventeenth-century English Baptists.¹⁰

Baptist History through a Baptist Life

Birth and Education

Christopher Blackwood was born in 1605 in Yorkshire as the youngest son of William Blackwood.¹¹ He matriculated in 1621 at Pembroke College in Cambridge, receiving the BA degree in 1625. After being ordained a priest by the bishop of London in 1628, having apparently been granted the MA degree in the interim, he served as an interim vicar at Stockbury, in the north of Kent, for three months in 1631. He became curate at the parish church in Rye, in the east of Sussex, from 1632 to 1635, enjoying a pious and appreciated ministry amongst the Puritans. Interestingly, he subscribed in 1633, thus identifying himself, at least for a time, with the conformists.¹²

America, Land of Liberty?

However, Puritan clerics were tiring of the compulsion of conscience under Laudianism, which had encouraged, legislated, and prosecuted so that the English churches might become increasingly formal or Arminian in worship. The Calvinistic Puritans despaired of the persecution of Carolingian England, and many turned their hearts and bodies toward the hope of freedom in New England. Like many other Puritans—Hanserd Knollys, Thomas Patient, Thomas Harrison, and John Lothrop, for example—Christopher Blackwood migrated to New England. Lothrop, formerly pastor of the London semi-separatist congregation, established a church in Scituate, Massachusetts, in early 1635. On the first of November in 1640, however, Lothrop sold his home and lands in and around Scituate, Massachusetts, to Timothy Hatherly, in favor of a new settlement in Barnstable. Within a month of Lothrop’s sale of the property for £80, Hatherly sold the same property to Christopher Blackwood for £60. The loss to Hatherly may have accrued in part to Blackwood’s benefit, perhaps as a bonus for the new min-

¹⁰Thomas Harrison to Secretary Thurloe, 17 October 1655, cited in T. W. W. Smart, “Original Letters, Hitherto Unpublished, of the Rev. Christopher Blackwood, An Eminent Minister of the Seventeenth Century,” *The Baptist Magazine* 59 (1867): 371. [Hereinafter, “Original Letters.”]

¹¹He described himself as “being in the last moneth of my sixty-third year” in August 1669. “Original Letters,” 582.

¹²Anne Petter to Anne Jeake, 23 January 1632, cited in “Original Letters,” 375.

ister to take up the clerical office vacated by Lothrop.¹³

Unfortunately, the exuberant expectations of the Puritan millenarians were dashed to pieces during the antinomian crisis revolving around Anne Hutchison. The desire for “the sweet experimental breathings of a Christ within,” as Thomas Tillam put it, was stifled by the Massachusetts authorities’ rigorism and intolerance in the application of church discipline.¹⁴ The American Baptist John Clarke, in his *Ill Newes from New England*, described the situation thus: “That while old *England* is becoming new, *New-England* is become Old.”¹⁵ In other words, those who flocked to New England in search of toleration for their piety and nonconformity were met with the same persecution they hoped to leave behind in England. It has been noted that, in part as a result of the oppression, many New Englanders, often the educated clergy, returned to England, especially in the early 1640s, when London shed itself of royal tyranny.¹⁶ These intellectuals returned to the homeland in order to take prominent places in the universities, the churches, and the Parliamentary bureaucracy, especially the Army.¹⁷ Blackwood was in their number, having sold his Scituate property within one year of purchasing it.¹⁸

Conversion

The next time we hear of Blackwood, it is 1644 and he is residing in Staplehurst, Kent, where he was known as “one of the clergy,”¹⁹ affiliated in some way with the nearby parish of Cranbrook.²⁰ In that year, Francis Cornwell, a General Baptist leader and army chaplain, argued that infant baptism was “an Antichristian Innovation, a humane Tradition, and that it had neither precept, nor example, nor yet true deduction from the Word,”²¹ during a clerical gathering at the parish church in nearby Cranbrook. As a result of

¹³*Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England*, ed. David Pulsifier (Boston: William White, 1861), 1: 66-68.

¹⁴Cited in Andrew Delbanco, “Looking Homeward, Going Home: The Lure of England for the Founders of New England,” *The New England Quarterly* 59 (1986): 380.

¹⁵John Clarke, *Ill Newes from New England: Or a Narrative of New-Englands Persecution* (London, 1652), title-page.

¹⁶Robert Zaller, “The Figure of the Tyrant in English Revolutionary Thought,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 54 (1993): 585-610.

¹⁷William L. Sachse, “The Migration of New Englanders to England, 1640-1660,” *The American Historical Review* 53 (1948): 251-78.

¹⁸*Records of the Colony of New Plymouth*, 1: 81-82. Some biographers have assumed he sold the property in 1642, but that was when the deed was recorded. He signed the deed on 1 October 1641, having recuperated his £60.

¹⁹The account of the Original of the Church of Spilshill in Staplehurst, as collected by Daniel Medhurst, one of the Deacons of that Church,” partially transcribed by J.H. Wood, “Baptist Churches which Have Become Unitarian,” *The Baptist Magazine* 53 (1861): 768. The 1861 issue of this journal has a number of citations and vigorous discussion regarding the Medhurst account. Cf. 575-76, 714-15, 767-68.

²⁰Smart, “Original Letters,” 370.

²¹Christopher Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist, In his two last and strongest Garrisons; Of Compulsion of Conscience, and Infants Baptisme* ([n.p.], 1644), 2.

that event, both Richard Kingsnorth and Christopher Blackwood were won to Baptist views, and were subsequently baptized by the General Baptist Messenger, William Jeffrey. Kingsnorth and Blackwood became co-ministers of the fledgling congregation at Staplehurst, a church still in existence as an orthodox General Baptist church in the mid-nineteenth century. Thus, Blackwood was converted as a result of the preaching of a General Baptist chaplain, baptized by a General Baptist messenger, and became minister in a church affiliated with the General Baptists.²²

We possess two contemporary accounts of Blackwood's conversion in 1644 and his early ministry amongst the Baptists: Blackwood's relation in the preface of his first book, published in the same year as his conversion, and the minute-book of the Staplehurst Baptist congregation. Apparently, Cornwell's sermon was followed by a vigorous defense of believers' baptism by immersion as delivered by William Jeffrey. Blackwood agreed with the other clergy that each of them would examine the issue in their studies for a fortnight. Two weeks later, Blackwood turned the tables on his fellow clerics by presenting a treatise in which he now argued for believers' baptism by immersion and against infant baptism. One of the other clergy borrowed Blackwood's treatise for review and prayer, but after five weeks of inactivity, Blackwood retrieved the manuscript and published it under the title, *The Storming of Antichrist*.²³

On the basics of this narrative, the Blackwood and Staplehurst accounts largely agree; however, the Staplehurst account proceeds to the next event, while Blackwood falls silent. Although Blackwood and Kingsnorth ministered to the new congregation together, eventually they parted ways. The euphoria of their rediscovery of the proper interpretation of the commission of Christ was replaced by controversy over the extent of the atonement. Richard Kingsnorth defended "the doctrine of universal redemption in opposition to the doctrine of particular personal election," and the congregation sided with him, passing over Blackwood in order to ordain Kingsnorth as their elder.²⁴ Blackwood, who always seems to have held strict-Calvinist views, thus found himself a minority in the new Baptist congregation.

Proponent of Baptist and Free Church Principles

Rather than refuting universal atonement, Blackwood turned his energies outward to a defense of his new Baptist faith. *The Storming of Antichrist* prompted a number of opposing treatises by Anglicans and Presbyterians that wanted to defend both paedobaptism and religious intolerance. Among his literary interlocutors were Stephen Marshall, Thomas Blake, Thomas Cobbett, and Thomas Edwards. The interchange with Thomas Blake was the most extensive, for in *The Storming of Antichrist*, Blackwood had criticized Blake's 1644 *The Birth-Priviledge*. Blake responded in 1645 with *Infants*

²²Medhurst, "The account," 575-76.

²³Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, 2-3.

²⁴Medhurst, "The account," 768.

Baptisme, Freed from Antichristianisme, and Blackwood closed the debate with Blake in *Apostolicall Baptisme* in 1646. A summary of *The Storming of Antichrist* may be helpful here, especially since he began by defining his theological method.

First, paralleling the fundamental theological claims made by other Baptists and free churchmen throughout history, Blackwood argued that he must follow Christ's command regarding baptism. Being a thorough disciple of Jesus Christ was not going to be easy, because he fully recognized "that the Crosse of Christ was like to attend the confession of this tenent."²⁵ Second, paralleling the developmental theological claims made by other Baptists and free churchmen throughout history, Blackwood argued that he had received further light regarding the Lord's will. He was convinced of the correctness of his new faith, "being thereunto led by a cleere light."²⁶ He then debunked the three Vincentian arguments raised against believers' baptism, including the appeals to antiquity, consent, and universality.²⁷ So far, he focused upon issues of theological method.

However, he quickly turned to the two major crises facing his day and age: the errors of infant baptism and compulsion of conscience, both of which, he believed, had been established by the Antichrist. With regard to the compulsion of conscience, he presented thirty reasons why Christians should never be compelled, nor submit to compulsion. He then answered twenty-four objections to liberty of conscience. With regard to the second crisis, he believed that paedobaptism and religious intolerance were intimately bound with one another. He presented twelve arguments against infant baptism and answered twenty-six objections to believers-only baptism by immersion.

Defensor Libertatis

When exactly Blackwood departed from the Staplehurst congregation is not indicated. However, we do know that like the General Baptists, he advocated the six principles of Hebrews 6 as fundamental for Christianity. He also supported the practice of laying hands on new baptizands, a practice advanced by Cornwell and Jeffrey. The practice was just beginning in late 1644 and 1645, and continued to be a major issue amongst the General Baptists in the 1650s. Calvinistic Baptist leaders such as William Kiffin and Thomas Collier were firmly opposed to the practice,²⁸ but the stricter Calvinist Blackwood defended it at length as late as 1653, and never denied it later.²⁹ In other words, it is likely that Blackwood was still in communion with

²⁵Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, 3.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷For more on the theological method of the free churches and a further evaluation of the arguments of Vincent of Lérins, see my *The Formation of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007).

²⁸Wright, *The Early English Baptists*, 138-40; White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, 39.

²⁹Christopher Blackwood, *A Soul-searching Catechism, Wherein is opened and explained,*

the Staplehurst General Baptist congregation in 1645, when the practice of laying on of hands first became a matter of attention, and probably stayed in communion with the church until he departed Kent.

From 1646 to 1652, Blackwood's letters indicate that he resided in the nearby village of Marden, Kent. In March of 1646, he wrote a courageous letter to the mayor and jurors of Rye, where he had held the curacy before his American sojourn. Apparently, a poor but zealous Baptist preacher by the name of Nicolas Woodman, who had been baptized by William Kiffin in the icy winter of 1644, was arrested for praying in a gathering at a private home. Blackwood challenged the Rye magistrates on both legal and scriptural grounds for the arrest. How dare they "imprison any of ye saints of God for conscience?" Magistrates should be careful not to offend one of "these little ones that believe" in Jesus, for they will be vindicated by God. Woodman must worship God according to the spiritual light he has or he will violate his conscience, which is a grievous sin. And the magistrates must be careful not to commit the spiritual error of persecution. If there is a heresy, they should suppress it only by admonition. This was a brave challenge, for Blackwood was confronting the Presbyterians, who, ascendant in Parliament in 1646, sought to suppress lay preaching.³⁰ The year 1646 thus provides the first evidence that Blackwood was in contact with those who would later become known as the Particular Baptists.

For Blackwood, liberty of conscience, proper worship, and taking the cross after Christ are intimately related to one another. In the 1648 *A Treatise concerning Deniall of Christ*, he struck a Lutheran note, even an Anabaptist one: "he that hath not studied the Crosse of Christ, how notionall soever in his mind, and how glorious soever in his profession, is yet a stranger from the Lord, and hath not aright learned the mysteries of godlinesse."³¹ A person will either deny Christ or confess Christ. The one who confesses Christ is a true Christian, but must be ready to carry the cross. Confession includes confessing not only Christ, but the truth he taught. This truth is available in Scripture, which is described as "the Map of Divine Light."³² Quoting a tragically flawed Protestant martyr by the name of Francis Spira, Blackwood argued that this truth includes proper worship: "for as often as a Christian doth dissemble a known truth, so often as he approves of false worship by presenting himself at it, so oft he denies Christ."³³

In other words, one who violates the commands of Christ by following improper worship forsakes the cross, surrenders his liberty of conscience, and

Not onely the Six Fundamental Points set down Heb. 6.1. But also many other Questions of highest concernment in Christian Religion (London, 1653), 55-59.

³⁰Christopher Blackwood to the Mayor and Jurates of Rye, 11 March 1646, in "Original Letters," 435-38; Wright, *The Early English Baptists*, 161-62, 247.

³¹Christopher Blackwood, *A Treatise Concerning Deniall of Christ* (London, 1648), "To the Reader," A2.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., 11. Cf. Nathaniel Bacon, *A relation of the feareful estate of Francis Spira, in the year 1548* (London, 1638).

denies his Lord. He provides other tragic examples of such dissembling in the false confessions of Berengar and Thomas Cranmer regarding the Lord's Supper. Blackwood later described baptism as a fundamental (not secondary or tertiary) point of Christian worship, as defended in his exposition of the six principles of Hebrews 6.³⁴ In his treatise on denial, Blackwood answered the question as to whether one denies Christ if one affirms anything contrary to the fundamentals of the faith: "I wil in this difficult question leave others to their light; onely I say, to me, in my conscience, it would be a denial of Christ, which I am drawn so to think, because every child of wisdom is bound to justify wisdom, and to defend the rest of the Hearers from seducement in things that are fundamentally destructive."³⁵ If one will not defend the liberty of the truth, including the truth of proper worship, one denies Christ, and is thus open to being denied by Christ before the Father.

"The Oracle of the Anabaptists in Ireland"

Blackwood's willingness to enter the political lists alongside the Calvinistic Baptists centered in London was providential. At the end of a 1651 letter filled with religious, financial, and legal advice to a wealthy young relative, he noted that providence had offered him a "present opportunity." Soon after, he revealed that he had joined the Parliamentary Army under the leadership of Colonel Duckenfield, the governor of Chester.³⁶ His last letter from Marden was in August 1652,³⁷ and before June 1653, he resided in Ireland, his name appearing on an associational letter at that time.³⁸

The Rump Parliament in 1650 decreed the evangelization of Roman Catholic Ireland, and in 1654, preachers were promised £50 per annum for settling on the western isle.³⁹ Blackwood himself received £150 from the civil list in 1653-1654, a not insubstantial sum of government funds dedicated to the conversion of the Irish.⁴⁰ Although he was willing to receive civil pay for his ministry, paradoxically Blackwood remained a staunch defender of religious liberty and an unrelenting critic of the errors in other Protestant communions. When approached by Henry Cromwell, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and the Lord Protector's son, regarding the possibility of ecumenical services, Blackwood gave an unsatisfactory answer in Henry's eyes. Blackwood told the Lord Lieutenant that the Baptists would continue to hold

³⁴Blackwood, *A Soul-searching Catechism*, 42-54.

³⁵Blackwood, *A Treatise Concerning Deniall of Christ*, 15.

³⁶Christopher Blackwood to Frances Hartridge, 30 May 1651 and 11 June 1651, in "Original Letters," 439-40, 519-20.

³⁷Christopher Blackwood to Frances Jeake, 9 August 1652, in "Original Letters," 521.

³⁸"For the Churches of Christ in London," in *Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660*, Part 2. The West Country and Ireland, ed. B. R. White (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1973), 112-21.

³⁹Douglas Brown, "Christopher Blackwood: Portrait of a Seventeenth Century Baptist," *The Baptist Quarterly* 32 (1987): 31.

⁴⁰Richard L. Greaves, "Blackwood, Christopher," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004-2007) [hereinafter *ODNB*. Note that all *ODNB* articles cited were obtained through an online service in August 2007].

their own separate worship and that, although “most of them could sometimes join us,” they would not cease from criticizing the Paedobaptists for “not observing the order of the Apostles by baptism.”⁴¹ Afterward, Henry Cromwell complained about “the inconsiderable persons of the anabaptiste judgment,” and sought to undermine Lord Fleetwood on account of his being “too deeply engaged in a partial affection to the persons of the Anabaptists.”⁴² Blackwood only reinforced Henry’s anger by dedicating his massive commentary on Matthew to Lord Fleetwood, and a collection of treatises to Lady Fleetwood, who was also the Lord Protector’s daughter.⁴³ It is perhaps a serendipitous providence that in spite of Henry’s repeated complaints about the doubtful loyalty of the Irish Anabaptists, his own son saw fit to marry into the family of William Kiffin, the godfather of the London Anabaptists.⁴⁴

Blackwood manifested a tough-minded yet engaging ecumenism. He was not averse to learning from ministers and members of other Christian traditions. Indeed, his writings are filled with quotations from every major period of Christian history, and when he cites a patristic or continental source, he provides the translation from the Greek or Latin. His ease with history and the original languages is apparent, and fostered a high reputation amongst his peers.⁴⁵ Moreover, he recommended that readers of his Matthew commentary look to a number of Puritan and Reformed writers as a “guide” for the proper understanding of justification, including Peter Martyr Vermigli, Zacharias Ursinus, and William Ames.⁴⁶ Blackwood also recommended the writings of two conformists in the Church of England for the personal edification of a close associate.⁴⁷

Blackwood also refused to engage in the name-calling that higher churchmen like Thomas Blake, Daniel Featley, and Thomas Edwards favored.⁴⁸ Displaying an attitude unusually open-minded for 1646, he argued the three dissenting denominations could learn from one another. He wished that Christians would “condiscend to another.”

⁴¹Harrison to Thurloe, cited in “Original Letters,” 371.

⁴²Peter Gaunt, “Cromwell, Henry,” *ODNB*.

⁴³Christopher Blackwood, *Expositions and Sermons upon The Ten first Chapters of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, according to Matthew* (London, 1659), “The Epistle Dedicatory,” A3; idem, *Some Pious Treatises* (London, 1654), “To the Right Honorable Lady,” unpaginated.

⁴⁴Alfred W. Light, *Bunhill Fields: Written in Honour and to the Memory of the Many Saints of God whose Bodies Rest in this Old London Cemetery*, 2nd ed., 2 vols (1915; reprint, Stoke-on-Trent: Tentmaker Publications, 2003), 1:94–103.

⁴⁵Samuel Fisher, *Baby Baptism Meer Babism* (London, 1653), cited in “Original Letters,” 372.

⁴⁶Blackwood, *Expositions and Sermons upon [...] Matthew*, 830.

⁴⁷Christopher Blackwood to Samuel Jeake, 1 March 1669, in “Original Letters,” 581. Smart identifies the two as Ralph Brownrig, the Bishop of Exeter, and William Fenner, Rector of Rochford, Essex. *Ibid.*, 582.

⁴⁸He explicitly forgave Blake before responding to the latter’s offensive retort. Blackwood, *Apostolicall Baptism*, 1.

Let the *Presbyter*, and nicknamed *Independent*, or *Congregationall*, consent to the nicknamed *Anabaptist*; in exploding infant baptism: and let the *Independent*, whether the meer *Separate* or *Antipaedobaptist*, yeeld to the *Presbyter*, in giving more power to the Elders, to prevent tumults and breaches; (but let it be onely in the respective Congregations.) Let the *Presbyter* yeeld to the *Independent*, in changing the matter of Churches from mixt multitudes, to visible Saints; that the World and the Church may be severed: Without every of which, I am doubtfull of the Churches attainment to Scripture perfection in Reformation.⁴⁹

And yet, in spite of his friendly openness to learn, Blackwood never would compromise the light he gained with the truth of believers' baptism by immersion. This explains in part why Henry Cromwell reacted so harshly to him. Echoing the first English Baptist, Thomas Helwys, Blackwood was adamant that Paedobaptism was a "deceivableness of unrighteousness the mysterie of iniquitie hath a long time wrought."⁵⁰ Indeed, he repeated without criticism the harsh claims made by Cornwell above, and then added many of his own. The practice of baptizing babies is "point-blank against the Commission of Christ, Matth. 28."⁵¹ It brings to the churches a litany of doctrinal and moral "mischiefs":

1. It fills the Church with rotten members.
2. It confounds the world and the church together.
3. It causes reproach to christianity.
4. Wicked persons rest in the baptisme they had in their infancy without seeking after knowledge or grace.
5. It's a Nest-egge and groundwork for traditions.
6. It fills the conscience with scruples.
7. Infants Baptisme destroyes two of the principall marks of a particular church.
8. It makes the Preachers assertions of Baptisme and the peoples practicalls to jar with one another.
9. Infants Baptisme produces many absurdities.
10. Infants Baptisme is a foundation for the Arminians to maintain falling from grace.
11. Many by infants Baptisme are received into communion of Baptisme, who are excluded from the communion in the Lords Supper, whereas the communion in both is one and the same.⁵²

⁴⁹Blackwood, *Apostolicall Baptism*, "To the Godly Reader," A2^v.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid., 2.

⁵²Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, part 2, 15-19.

While residing in Ireland, Blackwood also exhibited leadership in the establishment of new churches, in fostering associationalism amongst British Baptists, and in publishing edifying works. One of his first activities in Ireland was to gather a Baptist church at Wexford, on the coast directly south of Dublin, as the 1653 associational letter indicates.⁵³ He then took a leading role in the church at Kilkenny, inland and southwest of Dublin, where he penned the first few chapters of his commentary on Matthew. Finally, he was called as the “*Overseer* of a Church of Christ in *Dublin*,” whence he completed his commentary on the first ten chapters of the Gospel of Matthew.⁵⁴ His ministry at Kilkenny began by June 1653 and his ministry in Dublin began by June 1656.

A second associational letter, this one sent by the Dublin church to the Welsh Baptists, has Blackwood listed second, after Thomas Patient.⁵⁵ Patient, as you will remember, was a signatory with Kiffin to the 1644 confession, served in Henry Ireton’s command, and played a role in the Particular Baptist rejection of both the Levellers and the Fifth Monarchists.⁵⁶ A third associational letter, sent in 1657, announced the Irish Calvinistic Baptists’ support for the Lord Protector during a political crisis.⁵⁷

Among the books published by Blackwood in his first Irish period were *A Soul-searching Catechism* (1653), *A Treatise Concerning Repentance* (1653), *Four Treatises* (1653), *Some Pious Treatises* (1654), and the commentary upon Matthew (1659). These writings are typically sermonic in style and characterized by an invitation to piety and faithfulness toward Christ.

Exile for Liberty of Conscience

The Baptists gained tremendous ground during the heady days of freedom that came with the fall of William Laud, the persecuting Archbishop of

⁵³“For the Churches of Christ in London,” 118, 120.

⁵⁴Blackwood, *Expositions and Sermons upon [...] Matthew*, “To the Reader,” unpaginated.

⁵⁵Patient, Blackwood, et al, 12 June 1656, transcribed in Joseph Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists: Including an Investigation of the History of Baptism in England from the Earliest Period to which it Can be Traced to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1811), 253-55. Greaves places Blackwood in Dublin by 17 October 1655. Greaves, “Blackwood, Christopher,” ODNB.

⁵⁶Patient signed the 1644 confession as a leader of Kiffin’s church. *The Confession of Faith, Of those Churches which are commonly (though falsely) called Anabaptists* (London, 1644), in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, ed. William L. Lumpkin (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1969), 156. In the late 1640s, Patient led with Kiffin in the Particular Baptist refutation of the Levellers, through publishing a Baptist declaration. Wright, *The Early English Baptists*, 174, 217. In 1661, Patient may have signed the declaration that separated the Particular Baptists from the Fifth Monarchists, under the name of “Thomas Penson.” There is no “Penson” mentioned as a Baptist, prominent or not, in any other source of which I am aware. *The Humble Apology Of some commonly called Anabaptists, In behalf of themselves and others of the same Judgement* (London, 1661), 14. Patient rejoined Kiffin’s church as the great man’s co-pastor and died in 1666. Richard L. Greaves, “Patient, Thomas,” ODNB.

⁵⁷B. R. White, “Blackwood, Christopher (1606-1670),” in *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Richard L. Greaves and Robert Zaller, 3 vols. (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982), 70.

Canterbury, who was impeached in 1640 and executed in 1645. James I famously quipped, “No Bishop, No King.” And when his son Charles I lost his favorite archbishop, it became the precursor to the loss of his realm, indeed of his head. As is well known, Baptists were identified with the Regicides, for during the Interregnum, the Baptists came into their strength. But with the Restoration of the Monarchy in May 1660, they entered a dark period. The General Baptists sought to defend themselves by issuing a confession of faith in March of that year.

The Particular Baptists, intimately intertwined with the Cromwellian establishment, at first wanted to meld quietly into the framework of the new situation. Unfortunately, the prevailing assumption was that religious dissent was an integral factor in the fostering of political revolt, and the Baptists had proved themselves religious dissenters extraordinaire. Since the debacle of Münster, any “Anabaptist,” continental or British, was considered a revolutionary in waiting. Richard Greaves says Blackwood’s life was threatened in Ireland soon after the Restoration of the Monarchy.⁵⁸ Perhaps seeking safety, Blackwood arrived in the midst of the London Baptists.

But the Fifth Monarchists made sure that Blackwood transitioned from the proverbial frying pan into the fire. The Fifth Monarchy insurrection led by Thomas Venner in early January 1661 was followed by the execution of John James, a Seventh Day Baptist, who held Fifth Monarchy views. Even before the execution of James, however, the Baptists were being accused of co-conspiracy with the apocalyptic Fifth Monarchists.⁵⁹

In rapid response mode, William Kiffin led a group of prominent Baptists, both General and Particular, to issue a denial that the Baptists were revolutionaries. Among the signatories were John (or Timothy) Batty, the General Baptist who was instrumental in the Particular Baptist adoption of immersion in 1642; Thomas Lambe, the popular pastor of the Bell Alley church of General Baptists; John Spilsbury, an early advocate of believers’ baptism among Particular Baptists; and, Christopher Blackwood. The document summarized the history of both peaceful and belligerent Anabaptists, and then demonstrated in detail how the English “Anabaptists” over the years issued statements that were socially conservative and submissive, “*not only for wrath, but for conscience sake,*” to the magistrate. They also denied, somewhat disingenuously, that Baptists were involved in the Fifth Monarchist movement: “the persons not being of our belief or practice about Baptism, but, to the best of our information, they were all (except one) assertors of Infant-Baptism, and never had communion with us in our assemblies.”⁶⁰

Providing themselves with tools against any more potential revolutionaries, the ascendant Episcopalians pushed through Parliament a series of Acts that trapped all dissenters in a legal vice. The Clarendon Code—with its Corporation Act (1661), Act of Uniformity (1662), first Conventicle Act

⁵⁸Greaves, “Blackwood, Christopher,” *ODNB*.

⁵⁹White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, 98-101.

⁶⁰*The Humble Apology*, 8, 14, 17. Italics in original.

(1664), and Five Mile Act (1665)—were a nightmare for many Baptists, both Particular and General, as well as Congregationalists and Presbyterians, not to mention the Quakers. The Church of England demonstrated that it yet possessed some competency for persecution further with the second Conventicle Act (1670) and the Test Act (1673).⁶¹ Moreover, the dissenters found themselves with a dilemma. If they supported the Declaration of Indulgence issued by Charles II in 1672, they might find themselves allied with the Roman Catholics. But no true Protestant could conceive of such, especially Blackwood, who considered Baptists the proponents of a “thorow Reformation.”⁶²

Rather than surrender the liberty of conscience he had enjoyed in the Interregnum, Blackwood decided to follow the trail blazed by earlier dissenters. The Netherlands had developed into a beacon of toleration during the sixteenth century, due to the brave claims of such intellectuals as Dirck Coornhert and to the inability of the strictly Reformed party to gain unrivalled sovereignty over state and church.⁶³ The Separatists, following Robert Browne in the late sixteenth century, and Francis Johnson and John Robinson at the turn of the century, established a presence in the merchant community in the Netherlands. Some Separatists, following John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, actually became Baptists after having fled to Amsterdam. Early seventeenth-century English Baptists, indeed, still looked to the Dutch Anabaptists for advice regarding ecclesiological issues. Perhaps knowing of these earlier movements and interchanges, Blackwood planned to go to Holland in order to preserve his prized liberty of conscience. He wrote Samuel Jeake in June 1661, “I am now on my journey for Holland, whereunto I have appointed the better part of my goods alreadye.”⁶⁴

In spite of the intentions expressed in this letter, Blackwood did not leave London for some six months. In September, he explained that he had not departed yet, “by reason of p[re]sent liberty of conscience,” which, however, he did not expect to last beyond the winter. Indeed, Blackwood was well aware of the moves being made against liberty of conscience in the English Parliament and in the Irish council.⁶⁵ With the adoption of the Corporation Act in December 1661, Blackwood knew that liberty of conscience in England, especially for such a prominent Baptist, was gone. In January 1662, from his new residence Blackwood described Holland in glowing terms, in spite of the drop in trade caused by the desolations of the Thirty Years War, as a place where “consciences [are] free without force or mulct.” He coun-

⁶¹Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists*, 95-96; White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, 100-11.

⁶²Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, titlepage.

⁶³Malcolm B. Yarnell III, “The Development of Religious Liberty: A Survey of its Progress and Challenges in Christian History,” *The Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry*, forthcoming.

⁶⁴“Original Letters,” 522.

⁶⁵Blackwood to Jeake, 14 June 1661, and Blackwood to Jeake, 26 June 1661, “Original Letters,” 521-22.

seled his brother-in-law to be careful not to sin against his own conscience by conforming to the worship of the Church of England: “but this I counsel you, do any thing rather than sin.”⁶⁶

Embracing the Cross in Ireland

Blackwood kept his contacts with the London Baptist community open. He had moved his assets to Holland through bills of exchange arranged by that wealthy merchant, William Kiffin.⁶⁷ In a sudden change of direction, however, he reappeared in London later in 1662, explaining that he was on his way back to Ireland. He did not leave Holland “out of any dislike to the country.” Rather, he was returning to Ireland because “I had some tye of conscience as I judged, obliging of me.” Blackwood does not clarify exactly what this bond of conscience was, but it was strong enough to overcome his concern about persecution. “I can look out for nothing but prison or other troubles, but God’s will be done!” Indeed, he recounted the arrest of two other Baptists as he wrote of his resolve.⁶⁸ In light of the loyalty to the local church that characterized the early Baptists, the bond that drew him back to Ireland may have been his church, for he specified Dublin.

Then again, the point of conscience may have regarded his children, for only his wife is mentioned as being in Holland with him. Moreover, the remainder of his life was dedicated to the education and provision of his children. In 1664, he apprenticed his son, Christopher, to Colonel Richard Lawrence, now a prominent merchant in Dublin;⁶⁹ noted that his son, Timothy, had set up shop in Dublin “in a privileged place;” and saw his son, Phineas, off to Boston.⁷⁰ (In 1669, Phineas moved to Virginia.⁷¹) And in his will, which was probated in September 1670, he provided money and goods for his wife, Mary, all three of his sons, and his granddaughter, Mary. His estate was worth £416 at his death, a substantial amount at the time. Although the persecution of the dissenters waxed and waned until the Toleration Act was passed in 1689, with the arrival of William of Orange as the new King of England, Blackwood’s personal life reached a level of prosperity and happiness he never expected during such dark years of persecution.

Blackwood interpreted life through the providences of God, which meant that God’s people might experience seasons of mercy and seasons of the cross. He lamented that his British “Sion is in travell,” but the Irish context was surprisingly stable and free. “All things hear are very still, and *God’s people have much liberty*, blessed be God!” But for his oppressed brothers and sisters in England, he cried out, “How long, Lord?” For some obscure eschatological reason, he believed that Zion would not be delivered for at

⁶⁶Blackwood to Jeake, 18 January 1662, “Original Letters,” 523-24.

⁶⁷Blackwood to Jeake, 4 May 1662, “Original Letters,” 524.

⁶⁸Blackwood to Jeake, 2 October 1662, “Original Letters,” 579.

⁶⁹Toby Barnard, “Lawrence, Richard,” *ODNB*.

⁷⁰Blackwood to Jeake, 28 March 1664, “Original Letters,” 580.

⁷¹Blackwood to Jeake, 1 March 1669, “Original Letters,” 581.

least another two centuries. In the meantime, the subjects of the kingdom of Christ are “exposed to the crosse.” And he counseled his loved ones, “Prepare for the crosse: if better come, count it all gaine.”⁷² Christopher Blackwood began his exemplary Baptist life with his eyes on the cross and his conscience clear, and ended it in the same way.

Theology According to a “Servant of Jesus Christ”⁷³

We have seen that the cross, as a manifestation of divine providence for the development of the Christian conscience, was central to Blackwood’s theological understanding. Perhaps it would be helpful to outline the major emphases of this leading seventeenth-century Baptist’s theology in a more systematic format. This shed some light on the theological emphases of the seventeenth-century Particular Baptists. If divine providence manifested in the cross of Christ were central to Blackwood’s theology, than it was worked out in his understandings of conscience, the church, and Calvinism.

On Conscience

The first part of the first treatise published by Blackwood was dedicated to liberty of conscience,⁷⁴ and the conscience was thereafter a prominent theme within his preaching and teaching. The conscience figured greatly in his ruminations on repentance, confession, and politics, as well as in his personal admonitions to friends and family. Blackwood is not alone in this, for conscience, especially liberty of conscience, was a frequent concern of the seventeenth-century Baptists, from Thomas Helwys forward. Blackwood, as an exemplary Baptist, was also an exemplary theologian of the conscience.

Systematically, Blackwood treated the conscience under hamartiology, anthropology, soteriology, and the Christian life. The conscience is one of the five faculties of the human soul, which are, in turn, “Understanding, Will, Conscience, Affections and Memory.”⁷⁵ The natural man possesses a conscience, but the “natural conscience” is corrupted. In the natural conscience reside “benumbedness and other defilements.”⁷⁶ The converted man also has a conscience, but unlike the natural man, he may not only think of divine truths but also apply them to his conscience and strive to keep his conscience pure.⁷⁷ The converted conscience assures the Christian of spiritual life not only by its urgency “to press the soul to its duty,” but also by making a man “do his duty towards God and Man” by reason of faith, love, and service toward God. The assurance of spiritual life also comes through conscience by letting a man know he is fully justified and by remaining busy within

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Blackwood typically identified himself on the title-pages of his publications as a “Servant of Jesus Christ” and, sometimes, “of His churches.”

⁷⁴Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, “The First Part,” 13–35.

⁷⁵Blackwood, *A Soul-searching Catechism*, 21.

⁷⁶Ibid., 14, 25.

⁷⁷Ibid., 21.

him.⁷⁸ In summary, assurance is provided by the fact that the conscience has changed “from benumbedness to tenderness.”⁷⁹ However, the motive for Christian obedience should not be assurance. Rather, “The command of Christ . . . is the bond of the conscience.”⁸⁰ In other words, the Lordship of Christ is the primary concern of the conscience.

Phenomenologically, the conscience is that faculty of the soul that is illumined by the Word and the Spirit of God. It is the receptacle of spiritual knowledge, because God speaks to the conscience through His Word and enlightens the conscience by His Spirit. The Christian conscience is so answerable to divine revelation that Blackwood lists it among the reasons that we believe the Scriptures are God’s Word.⁸¹ The connection thus established between God and man through the conscience allows him to place it frequently in a couplet with God: “the more warnings thou has against [sin], whether from God, Conscience or men, and yet dost commit it; the more heinous is thy sin.”⁸² He rejects the “sweet morsels” of sin, “so I can retain God and a good Conscience.”⁸³ A man should develop “an habit to leave any enjoyment, and undergo any suffering for Christ and a good conscience.”⁸⁴ “God and good Conscience call” for people to take up their crosses.⁸⁵ The reason why sin is greater when committed against conscience is because such sin is “deliberately committed against light.” Sin against conscience entails “a greater resistance of that light the Spirit kindles in us.”⁸⁶ A Christian man may commit such a sin, but “beating back the voice of Conscience” is “exceedingly seldom” in a “godly man.”⁸⁷

In other words, the Spirit by the Word brings light and truth to the human conscience. When the conscience receives such illumination, the human will may exercise faith in Christ, resulting in transformation.⁸⁸ This true faith forms a habit within the Christian toward confession of Christ, issuing forth in many brave acts of confession. The key to knowing whether one is a true Christian, or merely one of those persons who are “too good to go to hell, and yet not good enough to go to heaven,” is found in the habitual confession or habitual denial of Christ.⁸⁹ The key to understanding whether a person has properly responded to an illumined conscience occurs when he or she faces a cross in life. A “cross” is a traumatic event that presents the

⁷⁸Ibid., 23.

⁷⁹Ibid., 30.

⁸⁰Ibid., 24.

⁸¹Ibid., 79.

⁸²Ibid., 34.

⁸³Blackwood, *A Treatise Concerning Deniall of Christ*, 61.

⁸⁴Ibid., 17.

⁸⁵Ibid., 59.

⁸⁶Blackwood, *A Soul-searching Catechism*, 34-35.

⁸⁷Ibid., 36.

⁸⁸Cf. Blackwood, “The present Sweetnesse, and future Bitternesse of a delicious Sin,” in *Some Pious Treatises*, 35-46.

⁸⁹Blackwood, *A Treatise Concerning Deniall of Christ*, “To the Reader,” A2f.

opportunity either to suffer for confessing Christ or to avoid suffering by denying Christ. At the instance of a cross, the Christian will typically opt for confession, in spite of the potential suffering. Confession will lead to “the comforts of the Spirit, which taste as sweet to the conscience,” in spite of having “suffered for a good conscience.”⁹⁰

Denial of Christ will lead to the filling of “their consciences with horror.”⁹¹ Denial of Christ can occur by commission or omission, and by denying Christ or a fundamental truth about Him. Denial of Christ through denial of a fundamental Christian truth includes habitual participation in false worship, even when compelled to do so. The denial of Christ leads to “the tortures of a guilty conscience,” which are akin to “the tortures of hell hereafter.”⁹² Rather than deny Christ, one must be willing to endure grief “for the cause of God and Conscience.”⁹³ One should not worry about the loss of physical liberty, because God can give the persecuted confessor “liberty of Conscience” and “peace of Conscience.”⁹⁴ On the other hand, one may suffer “the wounding of their Conscience [through habitual] compliance to all abominations of false Doctrine and false Worship.”⁹⁵ Even after forming a habit of denying Christ, the fallen man still has conscience: “that worme of Conscience, which together with a fire that will never goe out, will gnaw upon the fearefull unto all eternity.”⁹⁶

The correlation between his high view of conscience and the confession of Christ explains why Blackwood was so opposed to any compulsion of conscience. Compulsion created a barrier between the natural conscience and further light: “It takes away possibility from coming to the light of any new truth.” Again, “for though your selfe were so full resolved, that you should never stand need nor see more light, yet how know you but your son, or daughter or father or mother, may see more light than yourself do.”⁹⁷ The persecutor cuts himself off from further illumination of God’s Word, and makes weak men “sin against their consciences.”⁹⁸ Alternatively, “clear light” brings confidence to a Christian man, but the one who allows his conscience to be compelled manifests his own condemnation. The coerced person who denies Christ does so because “his conscience steers by the compass of humane Laws which he is ready to follow what they set up, without ever looking whether it agree with the word.”⁹⁹ The battle for the conscience, which was key to the assurance of salvation, was only complicated by the state’s

⁹⁰Ibid., 45.

⁹¹Ibid., 46 [incorrectly numerated as 36].

⁹²Ibid., 53.

⁹³Ibid., 54.

⁹⁴Ibid., 57.

⁹⁵Ibid., 58.

⁹⁶Ibid., 62.

⁹⁷Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, “The First Part,” 16.

⁹⁸Ibid., 17.

⁹⁹Blackwood, *A Treatise Concerning the Deniall of Christ*, 19.

desire to compel worship in the “use of Ceremonies.”¹⁰⁰

The established church’s demand of conformity in worship was opposed by the Baptist cry for liberty of conscience. “Compulsion of conscience,” Blackwood passionately asserted, “overthrows Christian liberty.”¹⁰¹ The established church argued that indifferent matters should be left to the authority of the magistrate, but Blackwood said such arguments “keepe off conscience on the one side, and the crosse of Christ on the other.”¹⁰² Besides, Blackwood was convinced that differing interpretations of the Scripture could exist within the same nation. “Christian brethren, who differ in judgement in smaller matters, as the Presbyterian, Independent, and Anabaptist (though falsely so called) may each of them in point of conscience enjoy his own way, to worship God under one and the same State, in one and the same Kingdome, according to that which each of them thinketh to be truth.”¹⁰³

On the Church

Blackwood’s desires for the churches were “pure worship,” “the division of the assemblies,” “puritie in constitution of Religion,” and “Liberty of conscience.” The third desire was key to realizing the others and should be done “according to the Scripture.” Scripture mentions two sorts of churches: The first sort is “Catholick, comprehending all the elect or body of Christ, borne or unborne, which were purchased with Christs blood.” This church is universal “not in respect of ministeriall dispensation, but of mysticall union.” Thus, “the dream of a Catholick visible church” is ruled out of hand. The second sort of church in Scripture is the “Particular church or churches, which is no other then a company of Saints in profession, explicitly or implicitly consenting together, to worship God in the Word, Sacraments, and Prayer, and all other duties of Religion.” Churches are called by this name, because Christians “did meet to worship God.”¹⁰⁴

Blackwood discerned six “signes” of a church, “the three former necessary to the being; the three latter, to the well-being of a church.” The three signs comprising the *esse* of the church were: “The first is a right matter, *viz.* visible Saints.” In other words, the first mark of a church is regenerate church membership, which he credited the “Independants” for recovering. “The second Essentiall requisite to a constituted church is agreement, consent, or covenant, call it what you please.” This requisite is fulfilled by reference to Matthew 18: “We having it where two or three are gathered in Christs Name.” And the third essential mark of the particular church is “a

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 77-79.

¹⁰¹Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, “The First Part,” 19.

¹⁰²Blackwood, *A Treatise Concerning the Deniall of Christ*, 79.

¹⁰³Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, “The First Part,” 30. Blackwood himself evidenced a development in his views of religious toleration. He changed from denying liberty for those who doubt Scripture or even the existence of God to full liberty of conscience during his interchange with Thomas Blake. Cf. Thomas Edwards, *The third Part of Gangraena* (London, 1646), 98; Blackwood, *Apostolicall Baptism*, 82-83.

¹⁰⁴Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, “The Preface to the Reader,” 5-7, 11.

right dispensation of the word and Sacraments.”¹⁰⁵

He then outlined the remaining three marks of the church, “which though not essentially primarily, yet so necessary that I cannot see how a Church can subsist without them.” Fourth, there is, “Profession.” “As faith makes us members of the Catholick, so the profession hereof concurs to make us members of the visible Church.” Fifth, there is, “Ministry.” This mark of the church was *bene esse*, because if the church’s ministry fails, the church is soon ruined. Yet, although a church needs a ministry, it is not dependent upon a particular minister for its existence. The final mark of a church is “discipline or government.” Discipline is necessary for the welfare of the church, because even godly men need to have their “unmortified reliques” curbed.¹⁰⁶ The problem with infant baptism and the correlative garrison of Antichrist, compulsion of conscience, is that they ultimately undermine these marks of the church, especially regenerate membership.

Starting from the six basic principles of Hebrews 6, Blackwood considered three ordinances fundamental for the Christian church: baptism, the Lord’s supper, and the laying on of hands. Beginning with the ordinance of baptism, Blackwood turned systematically to the problem with the Paedobaptist conflation of the covenants. The “new Covenant,” which is correlative with the New Testament of Christ’s blood, is “the better Covenant, as being established upon better Promises, of which Christ was surety.”¹⁰⁷ Indeed, the “old Covenant is abolished and come to an end.”¹⁰⁸ The two “signs of the new Covenant” are baptism and the Lord’s supper. The “right subjects of baptism” are “Disciples or Scholars of Christ, that make profession with their whole hearts, and of their repentance from dead works, and of their right knowledge of the object of worship, that is, the Trinity, into whose Name they are baptized.”¹⁰⁹

In his catechism, Blackwood rehearsed a few of the major arguments against Paedobaptism. The baptism of infants is based on mere human tradition, less than affectionately referred to as “gross will-worship, condemned.” The appeal to circumcision is illegitimate, because Colossians 2 refers to the “Circumcision made without hands, by the Spirit of God,” not old covenant fleshly circumcision. “We must not make additions in worship from our conceited proportions.” Among the many problems that have resulted from the misinterpretation of Scripture and the addition of the human tradition of infant baptism is that it “confounds the world and the Church together.” In other words, Paedobaptism undermines the pure church ideal.¹¹⁰

As for the power of dispensing baptism, he assigned it to “Apostles” and “Evangelists or Gospel-preachers.” He considered the office of apostles

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 7-8.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 8-11.

¹⁰⁷Blackwood, *A Soul-searching Catechism*, 37.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 40.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 42.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 42-44, 47.

to be a standing one for the churches, but distinguished between those called immediately of Christ, who were also the “pen-men of Scripture,” and those sent by the churches, who preached those writings.¹¹¹ Like Thomas Helwys and John Spilsbury, Blackwood denied that a succession of officers was necessary for the dispensing of baptism. “Baptizedness in the dispenser is not essential to Baptisme.” Again, like Helwys, “ordinary Disciples may make Disciples, therefore they may baptize.”¹¹²

When he came to the discussion of laying on of hands, Blackwood acknowledged “a dark revelation of this in comparison of other Fundamentals.” However, “I shall acknowledge laying on of hands on baptized persons after baptisme, to be an Apostolicall institution, or an Ordinance of Jesus Christ.” The apostolic basis for the practice rested on Hebrews 6:2, Acts 8:14-17 and 19:6, and 2 Tim. 1:6. The laying on of hands conveys an “increase of the Spirit,” but not in a mechanical fashion.¹¹³ Relatively uncontroversial, Blackwood’s understanding of the Lord’s Supper was Calvinistic. The Lord is “present spiritually to the Faith of the receiver, to increase by his Spirit the Union & Communion of the soul with Christ.”¹¹⁴

Blackwood spelled out his understanding of church discipline in *Tractatus de Clavibus Ecclesiae*, an exposition of Matthew 16:19. The keys are given to the church to indicate God’s confirmation of the church’s censure. His rendition of the binding of sinners and loosing the repentant gave a leading role to the clergy. However, final authority for the keys resides in the church itself, not in the eldership.¹¹⁵ As elsewhere, he did not assign an *ex opere operato* authority to the use of this power. The church could commit an error in judgment, and, if so, heaven would not agree. He identified a threefold process in church discipline: private admonition, public admonition, and excommunication.¹¹⁶ He said the proper ends of the practice were for the good of the excommunicated person, “to bridle men that are wicked,” to prevent the church itself from being punished, to preserve the church’s reputation in the world, to deter others from sinning, and to bring the sinner into communion with God.¹¹⁷

The censures of excommunication and absolution must rest on proper grounds. Excommunication must be reserved for sin, private or notorious, ethical or doctrinal. Absolution must be administered after the sinner has repented, the church being careful to act neither too quickly nor too slowly, but for the sinner’s benefit.¹¹⁸ In “difficult & intricate cases,” the churches should turn to a “consociation of Churches” for consultation. Finally, the churches

¹¹¹Ibid., 49-50.

¹¹²Ibid., 52-53.

¹¹³Ibid., 54-57.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 61.

¹¹⁵Christopher Blackwood, *Tractatus de Clavibus Ecclesiae*, in *Some Pious Treatises*, 85, 95.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 85-87.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 89-90.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 90-91, 101-03.

should not practice the rigor of excluding themselves from civil communion with the disciplined person.¹¹⁹

Because of his comments to Henry Cromwell and close association with Thomas Patient as a fellow elder, Blackwood was likely a proponent of closed communion in the vein of William Kiffin as opposed to the open communion position of Henry Jessey and John Bunyan. In early 1652, Patient's church sent a letter to John Rogers' congregation in Dublin repudiating their open membership, open communion principles. Rogers responded by denouncing the Particular Baptists as "uncharitable *Formalists*." However, Patient won many to the Baptist cause, including two Irish governors, Daniel Axtell and Richard Lawrence. Close communion certainly did not keep the early Particular Baptists from experiencing growth. Indeed, it may have spurred it.¹²⁰

On Calvinism

It is problematic to explain exactly what Blackwood thought of Calvinism. This problem results from the methodological difference between seventeenth-century and twenty-first century procedures in Baptist theology. Many today measure one's level of fidelity to Calvinism by appeal to the five heads of doctrine defined by the Synod of Dort. Such a method of evaluation cannot be found in the life and writings of Christopher Blackwood and, I daresay, is rare amongst other seventeenth-century Particular Baptists. Blackwood was concerned more about measuring his theology against Scripture illumined by the Spirit than about measuring his theology against a synod hostile to the baptizing free churches. Blackwood was a very competent historian for his period, but he did not ascribe theological authority to history. Rather, he utilized "Narrations and Confirmations out of Antiquity," partly to demonstrate the longstanding status of his argument, "partly to delight thee by mingling profit and pleasure together," and partly to prevent his own theology from being superficially constructed.¹²¹

With this methodological problem in mind, the first of two things to note about Blackwood in relation to Calvinism is that he is primarily a pastoral theologian. His sermons emphasize the calling of sinners to repentance and believers to faithfulness. There is an invitational quality to his writings. *A Treatise Concerning Repentance* demonstrates this superbly. The treatise was written in an effort "to open the way of salvation," not by his own efforts alone, but with "the Lord assisting."¹²² Presaging Andrew Fuller's response to the hyper-Calvinists of the eighteenth century, Blackwood refers to conversion as a "duty comprehended in the text" of Scripture.¹²³ Moreover, the

¹¹⁹Ibid., 96-97.

¹²⁰Richard L. Greaves, "Patient, Thomas," *ODNB*.

¹²¹Blackwood, *A Treatise Concerning the Deniall of Christ*, "To the Reader," A2^v.

¹²²Blackwood, *A Treatise Concerning Repentance*, "To the Right Honorable Edmond Ludlow," unpaginated.

¹²³Ibid., 1. He also warned against the idea of frantically searching for a warrant for

preachers of God's Word must encourage one another "in doing duty," zealously desiring the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints:

How would it pity us, to see many Corn-fields that are ripe, and in danger of shattering, for want of hands to imbarn the corn! So, many have good beginnings of knowledge, but wanting able Teachers to perfect the work, they are in danger to be lost. What endeavours are enough, might a Preacher be instrumental in saving one soul! what then, where there are many souls, not onely of those that pretend to Christ, but also Jews and Heathens!¹²⁴

In his discussion of the grounds of repentance, he makes some statements that indicate an attenuated *ordo salutis*, in comparison to the high Calvinism of a Herman Bavinck. "Without repentance," Blackwood says, "there is no forgiveness. Repentance and remission of sins was to be preached together."¹²⁵ Christ himself is the ground of repentance, and He meets us in the ordinances of Christ. "Come and meet God in the Ordinances of Prayer, Fasting, Baptism, Supper, and therein God will come with a full hand, and bestow that which his free grace hath engaged him to do."¹²⁶ Yet, repentance and faith are not *ex opere operato* causes. "If we place our Repentance and our deliverance from sin or wrath, as a meritorious cause together with Christ, we make an idol thereof."¹²⁷ In another place, he queried whether "faith went before forgiveness." He answered, "We are not first washed, and then believe; but in Scripture-language we first believe, and afterwards are washed: hence we are said to be justified by faith."¹²⁸ As can be seen, Blackwood was not so interested in establishing a specific *ordo salutis* as he was in preserving the priority of grace in communion with Christ.

The second thing to note about Blackwood is that, from a systematic viewpoint, he was a more consistent Calvinist than the typical Particular Baptist, if we can identify such by their associational confessions. With regard to the head of election, Blackwood affirmed not only positive election, which the Particular Baptists likewise affirmed in both the First and Second London Confessions, but also negative reprobation. Blackwood's 1653 catechism queried, "*What are the parts of Predestination?*" The response was twofold: "Election, which is Gods appointing some to Salvation through Christ. . . . Reprobation; which is Gods appointing some, both Men and Angels to destruction." He went on to deny that sin was the cause of reprobation, and that God decreed sin.¹²⁹ He elsewhere affirmed both election and

faith. *Ibid.*, 20-21.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, 8.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 10.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, 11.

¹²⁸Blackwood, *A Soul-searching Catechism*, 17.

¹²⁹Blackwood, *A Soul-searching Catechism*, 6-7.

reprobation with regard to infants.¹³⁰ The Particular Baptists edited out the statements affirming reprobation in both their 1644 and 1689 confessions, as first defined in the 1596 *A True Confession* and the 1645 *Westminster Confession*, the respective primary sources of the leading Particular Baptist confessions.¹³¹ But Blackwood was not necessarily always a consistent Calvinist, even with regard to reprobation. *The Humble Apology*, which includes the signatures of Kiffin, Spilsbury, and Blackwood, identifies Luther's doctrine of consubstantiation, and Calvin's doctrine of absolute predestination and reprobation, as among "the errors and impieties of others," which should not "be imputed to us."¹³²

His view of the other Dortian heads seems similarly nuanced. On the one hand, he speaks of a human "resistance of the light the Spirit sets up in our hearts," and he calls on people not to "put off the pulses or knockings of the Spirit," for fear they may harden their hearts.¹³³ On the other hand, "yet ours being wrought on by him, doth co-operate: and as paper can make no resistance, no more can man's will. Not as if man's will had no principle of resistance in it self naturally, but because grace takes off this resistance."¹³⁴ On the one hand, he can call the will to respond now or face judgment. "Well, put off time by delay, as long as you please: when you come in sight of death, you cannot put off conscience. Consider, your sun is setting, your glass is running, your tide is ebbing, your journey shortning, your lamp consuming: O then, haste, haste, post-haste, by day and by night: hadst thou taken but one turn in hell, thou wouldst see the worth of the present seasons now flightest."¹³⁵ Again, we must "put ourselves under his Government and subject our wills to his will."¹³⁶ On the other hand, he is clear that there is no "natural freedom of Will." Freedom of will comes only to regenerate men. "The creatures cannot make themselves alive; but when they are made alive, they can move themselves. . . . Christ is not onely the *Author*, but also the *Finisher of our Faith*."¹³⁷

Ultimately, Blackwood was concerned to motivate Christians to proclaim their faith rather than to examine Dortian precepts. "He that changes his course, would have others to change with him: If a man change a prin-

¹³⁰Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, "The Second Part," 5.

¹³¹Cf. *A True Confession of the Faith, and Humble Acknowledgment of the Alegeance, which we hir Maiesties Subjects, falsely called Brownists, doo hould towards God* (1596), art. 3; *The Confession of Faith* (1644), art. 3. The 1644 confession replaced reprobation with preterition. Cf. *The Westminster Confession* (London, 1646), art. 3.3; *Confession of Faith Put forth by the Elders and Brethren Of many Congregations of Christians (baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Country* (London, 1677), art. 3.3. The 1677 confession similarly replaced reprobation with preterition. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 83, 157, 254.

¹³²*The Humble Apology*, 12.

¹³³Blackwood, *A Treatise Concerning Repentance*, 25.

¹³⁴Blackwood, "A Christians Groans Under the Body of Sin," in *Some Pious Treatises*, 47.

¹³⁵Blackwood, *A Treatise Concerning Repentance*, 40.

¹³⁶Blackwood, *A Soul-searching Catechism*, 18.

¹³⁷Blackwood, *A Treatise Concerning Repentance*, 39.

ciple or practice, he would have all the world to change with him. . . . [S]o, if thou be changed from a life of sin, thou wilt endeavour what in thee lies, that there may be the same change in others."¹³⁸ To that end, Blackwood preached vividly on both heaven and hell, and pressed the hearer to repent as "the proffers of grace" are given.

The present proffers of grace should be a great motive to stir us up to repentance. To day if yee will hear his voice. Seek the Lord while he will be found. Remember Now thy Creator. Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man will open unto me, I will come in to him: q.d. the present proffers of grace are to be taken.¹³⁹

And to end this conference paper on a note Andrew Fuller would appreciate, Blackwood cried out that the will must be called into action when "receiving Christ": "we look upon this offer as worthy of all acceptance."¹⁴⁰

Conclusion

Christopher Blackwood has served as an exemplar of the seventeenth-century Particular Baptists. First, his life, among others, demonstrates that the paradigmatic division between the General Baptists and the Particular Baptists is challengeable from a historiographical perspective. This is not only the case with regard to the first generation, but should also be noted with regard to the leading figure of the second generation of Particular Baptists, Benjamin Keach. Second, Blackwood's life serves as an exemplar to suggest major themes in Particular Baptist history, including the movement's birth and substantial growth; the defense of believers-only baptism by immersion; the central place of London yet wide appeal to the provinces, the other British kingdoms, and the American colonies; the early associational efforts; and the responses to political crises. Finally, Blackwood's life and works serve as an exemplar to suggest the central theme of the cross of Christ, and of three major themes in Particular Baptist theology, specifically conscience, the church, and Calvinism.

¹³⁸Ibid., 19.

¹³⁹His italics. Ibid., 30.

¹⁴⁰Blackwood, *A Soul-searching Catechism*, 19.

Andrew Fuller and the Doctrine of Revelation

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Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) was a Baptist pastor who lived in Western England during the eighteenth century. He was a faithful pastor for over forty years, but perhaps his most enduring contributions for Christ were his founding of the Baptist Missionary Society and his published theological works.¹ Fuller's published theological writings responded to perceived challenges from particular theological movements as he mainly addressed individuals he believed to be in error on a particular subject.² His only significant venture into writing a systematic theology was his *Letters on Systematic Divinity*, which was never completed.³ According to Fuller, having a consistent system was important, but the system must always be subject to Scripture.⁴ The doctrines of revelation, both general and special, appear to

¹Despite his lack of formal schooling and unlike many other evangelicals of his day, Fuller had a high view of learning and theological study. The general trend among evangelicals was to be active and evangelizing, sometimes to the point of ignoring learning. D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Boston, 1989), 12. Fuller was largely self-educated, having left school at an early age. His theological learning was largely gained during his early pastorate at Soham. Peter J. Morden, "Andrew Fuller: A Biographical Sketch," in *"At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word": Andrew Fuller as an Apologist*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin, Studies in Baptist History and Thought (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2004), 1-11. See also a brief, but helpful biography: Phil Roberts, "Andrew Fuller," in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: B&H, 2001), 34-51. Fuller's efforts in mobilizing Baptists for missions are celebrated in Ronald W. Thomson, *Heroes of the Baptist Church* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1948), 111-16. Fuller's Biblicism appears to be one of the reasons he was featured by Bush and Nettles in *Baptists and the Bible*, which was written to highlight the tradition and continuance of a high view of and reliance upon Scripture. Their work serves to highlight Fuller's doctrine of special revelation in a polemical manner, since the challenge during the conservative resurgence was largely over the degree to which the Southern Baptist Convention would be defined by faithfulness to the content and intent of Scripture. L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, revised and expanded ed. (Nashville: B&H, 1999), 91-100.

²For example see: Michael A. G. Haykin, "Andrew Fuller and the Sandemanian Controversy," in *"At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word,"* 229.

³Unlike many evangelicals in his day, Fuller did not eschew theological systems. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 58.

⁴*The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller: With a Memoir of His Life, By Andrew Gunton Fuller*; ed. Joseph Belcher vol. 1, *Letters on Systematic Divinity* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Sprinkle, 1988), 684-90. (All subsequent works contained in this three-volume set published by Sprinkle are listed in the following way: author's name, title of the individual work, a reference to *Complete Works*, volume number, and page number.) Andrew Fuller, *Sermons and Sketches*, in *Complete Works*, 1:164-68. Similarly, Fuller approves of creedal statements, but

have a particularly important place in Fuller's theology as three of the nine published *Letters on Systematic Divinity* relate to revelation. Though Fuller's full systematic work was never completed, it is possible, at least with some doctrines, to work through Fuller's pastoral and polemical writings to find the necessary elements of a well-developed theology.

This essay demonstrates the extensive development of Andrew Fuller's doctrine of revelation and its essentiality to his ministry. Fuller's explanations of general and special revelation are considered, as well as the role of those doctrines in his polemical and pastoral ministries. Like an archaeologist assembling the scattered shards of an old clay pot, this paper is an attempt to piece together Andrew Fuller's doctrine of revelation from his published works and show its relevance to his ministry.

General Revelation

Fuller's view on general revelation was consistent with a contemporary, evangelical understanding. General revelation is God's self-revelation to all humans through the created order.⁵ There are several critical elements in understanding a doctrine of general revelation: first, whether God's character is accurately revealed through the created order; second, whether humans can perceive God's character in the created order; third, what implications this perception has for the development of natural theology and accountability to God's moral law.

Fuller argues for general revelation before he argues for special revelation in his *Systematic Divinity* because, he wrote, "It would be improper, I conceive, to rest the being of God on Scripture testimony; seeing the whole weight of that testimony must depend upon the supposition that he is, and that the sacred Scriptures were written by holy men inspired by him."⁶ The ability, therefore, to recognize at least some characteristics of God through the created order was necessary.

The existence of general revelation was clearly foundational to Fuller's understanding of revelation.⁷ He wrote,

always under the subjection of Scripture. *Andrew Fuller, Essays, Letters, Etc. on Ecclesiastical Polity*, in *Complete Works*, 3:449-51. Fuller believed that having a consistent theological system was important, but he was also a "thoroughgoing Biblicist." Paul L. Brewster, *Andrew Fuller: Model Pastor-Theologian*, Studies in Baptist Life and Thought (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 45.

⁵Russell D. Moore, "Natural Revelation," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, et al. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 71. See also: Stanley J. Grenz, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, eds. David Guretzki and Cherith Fee Nordling (Downers Grove: IVP, 1999), 54-55; David W. Jones, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013), 207.

⁶Fuller, *Letters on Systematic Divinity*, in *Complete Works*, 1:695.

⁷In this, Fuller was typical among evangelicals of the day. Bebbington notes that evangelicals of the day saw a "law-governed universe around them. Order had been established by the Creator. . . . Natural theology was important. There were abundant evidences in the world of God's design." Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 57-60.

The evidence which is afforded of the being and perfections of God by the creation which surrounds us, and of which we ourselves are a part, is no more superseded by [special] revelation than the law is rendered void by faith. All things which proceed from God are in harmony with each other.⁸

Fuller held that both the observed order in creation as well as an internal witness provides an unmistakable knowledge of God.⁹ The internal message of general revelation is sufficiently manifested through “the desire . . . which every human being feels of having justice done to him from all other persons.”¹⁰ Thus the divine law was written on the hearts of men and the divine nature was revealed in the created order such that, according to Fuller, individuals who failed to accept the reality of God should have been reproved rather than reasoned with, because they have simply denied what was apparent in creation.¹¹

Fuller’s acceptance of the reality of general revelation was a necessary prerequisite for his belief that humans could rightly perceive something of the character of God through the created order. This, however, seemed to argue against the necessity for special revelation since God’s existence and character could be established apart from Scripture. Fuller anticipated this argument and quickly dispelled this conclusion. He wrote, “It is one thing for nature to afford so much light in matters of right and wrong, as to leave the sinner without excuse; and another to afford him any well-grounded hope of forgiveness. . . .”¹² Special revelation was necessary because humans have a constitutional opposition to truth, which was consistent with Fuller’s reformed understanding of total depravity.¹³ Special revelation was also necessary because of the effects of the fall blurring the presentation of God in creation. Fuller wrote, “[T]he light afforded by the works of nature and the continued goodness of God, . . . though sufficient to leave the world without excuse, does not express his *whole* will, nor convey what it does express so *advantageously* as by [special] revelation.”¹⁴ Fuller demonstrated that while

⁸Fuller, *Letters on Systematic Divinity*, in *Complete Works*, 1:696.

⁹Fuller himself enjoyed observation of nature, particularly as it reflected God’s character. In a somewhat hagiographic account of Fuller’s character that is included at the end of Morris’ *Memoirs of the Life and Writing of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, Morris writes that, “He [Fuller] was a disciple of nature, and loved the order established in her empire.” J. W. Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, ed. Rufus Babcock, 1st American, from the last London ed. (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1830), 308.

¹⁰Fuller, *The Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *Complete Works*, 2:18. Fuller’s argument here is notably consistent with many apologetic arguments about so-called natural law. For example: C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 3–8.

¹¹Fuller, *Letters on Systematic Divinity*, in *Complete Works*, 1:697.

¹²Fuller, *The Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *Complete Works*, 2:19.

¹³Fuller, *Dialogues and Letters between Crispus and Gaius*, in *Complete Works*, 2:662. Fuller also states this explicitly in Article I of his Confession of Faith, presented to the church in Kettering, reprinted in Brewster, *Andrew Fuller*, 181.

¹⁴Fuller, *The Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *Complete Works*, 2:20.

God's character was demonstrated in nature, humans were limited in their ability to perceive it, which brought into question what place natural theology had in Fuller's doctrine of general revelation.

Fuller held no hope that man could develop salvific knowledge of God from the observation of creation. He wrote,

Instead of returning to God and virtue, those nations which have possessed the highest degrees of [general revelation] have gone further and further into immorality. There is not a single example of a people, of their own accord, returning to the acknowledgment of the true God, or extricating themselves from the most irrational species of idolatry, or desisting from the most odious kinds of vice. Those nations where science diffused a more than ordinary lustre were as superstitious and as wicked as the barbarous, and in many instances exceeded them.¹⁵

So, for Fuller, the corrupt nature of humans due to the fall still allowed them to perceive some of the attributes of God and to understand sufficiently that had a duty to believe in him and otherwise would be condemned. However, the perversity of the human heart caused humans to reject a true understanding of God. Reliance on human reason that came through scientific observation alone tended to lead people farther away from God.¹⁶ In fact, Fuller held that natural theology was never designed to be sufficient for humans to have a right knowledge of God. He wrote, "Even in innocence man was governed by a revealed law. It does not appear that he was left to find out the character or will of his Creator by his reason, though reason, being under the influence of rectitude, would lead him, as he understood the mind of God, to love and obey it."¹⁷ For Fuller, there was sufficient information in the created order to reveal the Creator and to convict men of their sin, but natural theology was never intended to be sufficient for humans. Special

¹⁵Ibid., 2:19. Bebbington notes, "there was in the eighteenth century and long into the nineteenth no hint of a clash between Evangelical religion and science." Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 57. Against a twenty-first-century backdrop where there appears to be significant friction between conservative theology and scientific understandings, understanding this relative peace between natural science and revealed religion is important in understanding the Paine's accusations and Fuller's rebuttal. Bebbington's conclusions about a positive relationship between evangelicalism and the Enlightenment are largely confirmed in Michael A. G. Haykin, "Evangelicalism and the Enlightenment: A Reassessment," in *The Advent of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities*, eds. Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 37-60. Sell deals with Bebbington's thesis obliquely and presents a more muddled view of the impact of the Enlightenment and the relative acceptance of it among evangelicals. Alan P. F. Sell, *Enlightenment, Ecumenism, Evangel: Theological Themes and Thinkers 1550-2000*, Studies in Christian History and Thought (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2005) 70-110. It seems safest to conclude that Bebbington may have been overly strong in his generalization, but Fuller still appears to have been on the positive end of the spectrum in his acceptance of Enlightenment thought.

¹⁶Fuller, *Letters on Systematic Divinity*, in *Complete Works*, 1:692-93.

¹⁷Ibid., 1:697.

revelation was a part of God's plan from the very beginning.¹⁸

Fuller's position on general revelation was consistent with an orthodox, evangelical view. His doctrine of general revelation was a significant part of his overall theology, since discussion of the nature of general revelation was a large part of several controversies, mainly his interaction with Deism, but also in his engagement with Socinianism. For Fuller, general revelation was sufficient for conviction and condemnation, but not sufficient to provide a means of reconciliation to the Creator. Any insistence that human reason was able to assemble from the created order sufficient knowledge of God to provide a means of reconciliation to God was rejected by Fuller. For Fuller, general revelation is helpful but special revelation was necessary to restore man to God.

Special Revelation

Fuller's doctrine of Scripture is the most significant element of the broader doctrine of special revelation, since the other forms of special revelation are confirmed through Scripture and because it is the aspect of special revelation that Fuller wrote about most frequently. Special revelation is God's self-revelation through particular means to particular people for a particular purpose.¹⁹ A doctrine of Scripture as special revelation contains at least five essential elements: inspiration, inerrancy, authority, sufficiency and interpretation.²⁰

Fuller believed that special revelation, particularly through Scripture, was absolutely necessary because of the limits of human reason. According to Fuller, even before sin came into the world it was necessary for God to reveal his law by means beyond the created order.²¹ Fuller accepted that special revelation was not limited to Scripture. Before Moses wrote the Pentateuch, it was necessary for God to communicate specially to humans in order to empower faith. Fuller wrote that the salvation of some who did not know of Jesus is proof, "not of there being another way of acceptance with God than that which the gospel reveals, nor of its being possible without faith to please God; but that faith may exist while as yet there is not explicit revela-

¹⁸Fuller's understanding of the universe being governed by natural laws is consistent with other evangelicals of his day. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 58-59.

¹⁹David S. Dockery and David P. Nelson, "Special Revelation," in *A Theology for the Church*, eds. Daniel L. Akin, et al. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 118-20. See also Grenz, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 109; Jones, *Biblical Ethics*, 209.

²⁰Other aspects of a doctrine of special revelation could be discussed and are often discussed in theology textbooks. For the purposes of this paper, these five elements of a doctrine of special revelation show Fuller's position and form the major points of argumentation for Fuller during the controversies he addressed. Fuller himself outlines five different points that could have been addressed in his *Systematic Divinity*: truth, consistency, perfection, pungency, utility. Fuller, *Letters on Systematic Divinity*, in *Complete Works*, 1:699-702. The five elements chosen for this paper match more closely the aspects of a doctrine of Scripture addressed in contemporary systematic theology texts.

²¹*Ibid.*, 1:696-97.

tion of the Savior.”²² Though God could send “a ray of Divine revelation shot athwart the darkness of paganism into the minds of the Eastern magi, and [lead] them to worship the new-born Saviour,” still those that did not have any written revelation and even those that had only the Old Testament were considered by Fuller to be standing “on much lower ground than those under the New Testament.”²³ Therefore, Scripture was not the only means of special revelation, but it was the most important to Fuller.

Scripture was considered special revelation by Fuller because it was inspired by God. Fuller wrote, “It is certain that those who wrote the books which compose the Old and New Testaments profess to have been Divinely inspired.”²⁴ Fuller held that the inspiration of the writers was in different degrees. Authors of the history recorded in Scripture were preserved from error and faults in their writings while prophets were given the unique ability to communicate future events accurately.²⁵ Among the faults that Fuller believed to be absent from the Bible are affectation, vanity, a spirit of presumptuous speculation, or excitation of levity. Fuller wrote of the human authors, “As men, they were subject to human imperfections; if, therefore, they had not been influenced by Divine inspiration, blemishes of this kind must have appeared in their writings, as well as in those of other men.”²⁶ Still, according to Fuller, inspiration was not to be considered mere mechanical dictation.

Fuller found a place for both the divine and human author in the origination of Scripture. He wrote,

It is true that, having been communicated through human mediums, we may expect them, in a measure, to be humanized; the peculiar turn and talents of each writer will be visible, and this will give them the character of variety; but, amidst all this variety, a mind capable of discerning the Divine excellence will plainly perceive in them the finger of God.²⁷

The human authors were aware that they were inspired, but this did not lead to an absolute uniformity in style or tone.²⁸ It certainly did not prevent different perspectives being evidenced in the gospel narratives. Were it not for these statements from Fuller about the differing styles of the human authors, he might have been subject to a charge of mechanical dictation as he wrote, “The Old and New Testaments are dictated by one and the same Spirit.”²⁹ His remarks were intended to affirm the consistency between the testaments, but could easily be misread. However, Fuller was affirming the

²²Ibid., 1:698.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., 1:699.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Fuller, *The Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *Complete Works*, 2:71.

²⁷Ibid., 2:68.

²⁸Fuller, *Letters on Systematic Divinity*, in *Complete Works*, 1:699.

²⁹Ibid., 1:700.

verbal inspiration of Scripture. It is also clear that according to Fuller, plenary inspiration was also to be affirmed, for “the denial of the proper inspiration of the Scriptures, with the receiving of some part of them true, and the rejecting of other parts” demonstrated a lack of faith.³⁰

The inerrancy of Scripture was necessarily tied with his view of its inspiration. For Fuller, the Bible was inerrant because it was inspired. God would not have inspired men artistically and yet left them to communicate errors mixed with divine truth. Fuller’s view on the inerrancy of Scripture was affirmed explicitly in the confession of faith he presented to the church in Kettering prior to his call. He affirmed that more revelation beyond general revelation was required for salvation, writing, “And such a revelation I believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be, without excepting any one of its books, and a perfect rule of faith and practice.”³¹ The inerrancy of Scripture was a result of inspiration as it involved the Holy Spirit protecting each human author and “preserving him from error.”³² In his *Letters on Systematic Divinity*, Fuller claimed that Scripture must necessarily be without error if it was to be counted as God’s revelation, but he left it to the skeptics to prove that there are errors in Scripture rather than trying to absolutely prove its inerrancy.³³

Inspiration and inerrancy were significant to Fuller because salvation hung on the authority of Scripture.³⁴ For Fuller, the authority of Scripture was rooted in and flowed out of the supernatural qualities of Scripture. There was no Christianity, in the eyes of Fuller, apart from a thorough appreciation of the importance of Scripture. He wrote, “If we may judge of the nature of true piety by the examples of the prophets and holy men of old, we may conclude with certainty that an affectionate attachment to the Holy Scriptures, as the rule of faith and practice, enters deeply into the spirit of it.”³⁵ In line with the Reformers, Fuller found the final solution to any controversy in the pages of Scripture. He noted, “The sacred Scriptures contain the decisions of the Judge of all, both as things and characters, from which there is no appeal: nor is it fit there should be; seeing they are not only formed in wisdom, but perfectly accord with truth and equity.”³⁶

The authority of Scripture was limited to those things about which it speaks. Fuller wrote, “It is no dishonor to the Scriptures that they keep to their professed end.”³⁷ The professed end of Scripture was to speak of God

³⁰Fuller, *The Calvinist and Socinian Systems Examine and Compared as to Their Moral Tendency*, in *Complete Works*, 2:224.

³¹This is from Article II of Fuller’s confession of faith, reprinted in Brewster, *Andrew Fuller*, 182.

³²Fuller, *Letters on Systematic Divinity*, in *Complete Works*, 1:699.

³³*Ibid.*, 1:699-700.

³⁴See Fuller’s comments on the role of the Word of God in regeneration. Fuller, *Regeneration by the Word of God*, in *Complete Works*, 1:666.

³⁵Fuller, *Calvinist and Socinian Systems*, in *Complete Works*, 2:195.

³⁶Fuller, *Letters on Systematic Divinity*, in *Complete Works*, 1:702.

³⁷Fuller, *The Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *Complete Works*, 2:88.

and to lead men to salvation. Fuller noted that even in recounting the various histories that involved the plan of God, events that may have secondary causes were often reported as being done by the hand of God directly because the purpose of Scripture was to recount God's work in the world. Thus in 2 Kings 17:18, the people of Israel were scattered by God's hand, but this was done through various invading nations as recorded in 2 Kings 24:2-4.³⁸ The history recorded in Scripture was "that of the church or people of God: other nations [were] introduced only in an incidental manner."³⁹ This did not invalidate the authority of Scripture, but spoke to the purposes of Scripture.

The authority of Scripture was to be received "for all the purposes for which it professes to be written."⁴⁰ Fuller listed several purposes in the *System of Divinity*: bringing men to salvation, bringing joy to the redeemed, illuminating the mind, bringing men to worship, providing wisdom for living, keeping believers from evil.⁴¹ Fuller viewed Scripture as being both authoritative for these purposes and sufficient in its revelation for each intended purpose. Fuller wrote,

If the sacred writings be not received for the purposes for which they were professedly given, and for which they were actually appealed to by Christ and his apostles, they are in effect rejected; and those who pretend to embrace them for other purposes will themselves be found to have passed the boundaries of Christianity, and to be walking in the paths of infidelity.⁴²

It is evident that the inspiration and authority of Scripture were essential Christian doctrines by Fuller's calculus, as was the sufficiency of Scripture.

For Fuller, the Word of God was sufficient for its purpose, which was to bring men to the saving knowledge of God. Fuller wrote, "There is nothing in the sacred Scriptures to gratify idle curiosity; but much that commends itself to the conscience, and that interests the heart. They are a mirror into which he that seriously looks must, in a greater or less degree, see his own likeness, and discover what kind of character he is."⁴³ Scripture illuminated the sin in a man and pointed him toward Christ. On the other hand, though science and philosophy could educate men in many things, Fuller wrote, "When you have ascended to the height of human discovery, there are things, and things of infinite moment too, that are utterly beyond its reach."⁴⁴ That which God intended to reveal to man regarding salvation and godliness was revealed in Scripture.

³⁸Ibid., 2:70.

³⁹Fuller, *Letters on Systematic Divinity*, in *Complete Works*, 1:703.

⁴⁰Fuller, *Calvinist and Socinian Systems*, in *Complete Works*, 2:196. Original was italicized.

⁴¹Fuller, *Letters on Systematic Divinity*, in *Complete Works*, 1:702.

⁴²Fuller, *Calvinist and Socinian Systems*, in *Complete Works*, 2:231.

⁴³Fuller, *Letters on Systematic Divinity*, in *Complete Works*, 1:701.

⁴⁴Fuller, *The Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *Complete Works*, 2:88.

Though Fuller recognized that the Bible was not a text on science, it pointed humanity toward greater learning in the sciences. Fuller wrote, "And though their attention be mainly directed to things which pertain to the life to come, yet, by attending to their instructions, we are also fitted for the labours and sufferings of the present life."⁴⁵ Fuller went on to discuss how Scripture--contra Paine's accusations--encouraged Christians to engage in the study of all things.⁴⁶ Yet, at the same time, the Christian must know Scripture to know truth about God. In one sermon Fuller preached, "We may learn other things from other quarters; and things, too, that may subserve the knowledge of God; the knowledge of God itself must here be sought, for here only [in the Scriptures] it can be found."⁴⁷ Scripture was inspired, inerrant, authoritative and sufficient, but it still must be interpreted properly in order to gain its benefit.

For Fuller, the process of interpretation of Scripture was to begin with a right attitude in approaching the text and with prayer.⁴⁸ In his response to Thomas Paine, Fuller wrote, "Let us but come to the Scriptures in a proper spirit, and we shall know, of the doctrine whether it be of God; but if we approach them in caviling humour, we may expect not only to remain in ignorance, but to be hardened more and more in unbelief."⁴⁹ The proper attitude was one that sought to understand Scripture on the terms that it presented itself. For Fuller, the interpreter of Scripture either accepted Scripture as authoritative and inspired, or was required to reject Scripture altogether. The process of choosing certain parts of Scripture to consider as authoritative undermined its usefulness. In response to the selective authority of Scripture granted by the Socinians, Fuller wrote, "To be sure we may all go on, killing one Scripture testimony and stoning another, till, at length, it would become an easy thing to assert that there is not an instance in all the New Testament in which our opinions are confronted."⁵⁰ The interpretation of Scripture had to begin with Scripture on its own terms in order to be effective.

Interpretation of Scripture was also to be conducted in a manner that reflected the author's intent and not the mere words of the text,⁵¹ since in Fuller's doctrine of Scripture, applying a wooden reading to the text was not acceptable because one may follow the letter of the law and yet fail to do that

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶In those days prior to the Darwinian shift, which has caused a great deal of animus between many antagonistically atheistic scientists and fundamentalists seeking to defend a version of a revealed religion, there was a much greater harmony between adherents of science and revealed religion. In fact, during the Enlightenment phase there was active discourse and harmony between evangelicals and scientists. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 57-60.

⁴⁷Fuller, *Sermons and Sketches*, in *Complete Works*, 1:160-61.

⁴⁸The importance of prayer in the interpretation of Scripture is illustrated by Fuller's comments on the subject matter of sermons. Fuller, *Thoughts on Preaching*, in *Complete Works*, 1:714-15.

⁴⁹Fuller, *The Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *Complete Works*, 2:74.

⁵⁰Fuller, *Calvinist and Socinian Systems*, in *Complete Works*, 2:206.

⁵¹Fuller, *Thoughts on Preaching*, in *Complete Works*, 1:713.

which God actually commands. Scripture was to be interpreted in light of the context in which it was written, in order to determine the principle and then to apply that principle to the contemporary context.⁵² Fuller held that the Bible was pointed at internal conformity to God's moral law rather than external conformity, so finding the true meaning of Scripture was essential for determining doctrine as well as for preaching.⁵³ Therefore, interpretation of Scripture moved toward the principle that directed a behavior, not to the superficial practice.⁵⁴ The normative, rather than the regulative principle, was to drive interpretation. Thus, though voluntary societies were not mandated in Scripture, they could be formed for godly purposes.⁵⁵

Fuller believed in the perspicuity of Scripture. All believers were capable of reading the text and determining whether a doctrine is in error or not.⁵⁶ Yet, Fuller also believed that there could be some differences in interpretation of Scripture between believers without a need for division or strife.⁵⁷ For peace in the body of Christ, all five aspects of special revelation--inspiration, inerrancy, authority, sufficiency and interpretation--were significant as they were used for discipleship and apologetics.

Fuller's doctrine of special revelation, particularly of Scripture appears to be well-developed, though it must be pieced together from a number of sources. Fuller's doctrine of special revelation was built upon his understanding of general revelation. Both doctrines impacted the polemical ministry of Fuller significantly, as he dealt with challenges from within and without the body of Christ.

Revelation in Polemical Ministry

In every polemical work Fuller sought to engage the ideas of his opponent and compare them to Scripture.⁵⁸ The greatest compliment Fuller offered was that an argument was biblical. The most significant attack was when he said that an argument was unbiblical.⁵⁹ Fuller reserved his strongest

⁵²Fuller, *Strictures on Sandemanianism*, in *Twelve Letters to a Friend*, in *Complete Works*, 1:626-28.

⁵³Fuller, *Thoughts on Preaching*, in *Complete Works*, 1:712.

⁵⁴Fuller, *Strictures on Sandemanianism*, in *Complete Works*, 1:626-28.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 1:629-37.

⁵⁶Fuller, *Calvinist and Socinian Systems*, in *Complete Works*, 2:227.

⁵⁷Fuller, *Strictures on Sandemanianism*, in *Complete Works*, 1:637. In some ways, Fuller appears to be using a theological triage method similar to that outlined in Mohler's article: R. Albert Mohler, "The Pastor as Theologian," in *A Theology for the Church*, eds. Daniel L. Akin, et al. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 927-34.

⁵⁸Brewster, *Andrew Fuller*, 48. Alan Sell cautions twenty-first-century readers from reading a modern liberal denial of the nature of Scripture into the attacks on Scripture from the deists and others like the Socinians. Their denials of the full authority or full inspiration of Scripture still generally (though Paine may be an exception) held Scripture in a fairly high regard. Few of them would have actually said that Scripture is morally evil, as some liberals tend to do today. Sell, *Enlightenment, Ecumenism, Evangel*, 86-87.

⁵⁹One reason this was so important in Fuller's argumentation was that arguing biblically prevented the charge of bigotry, such as those that were levied against him by the

polemical language for individuals who either mangled the Bible through bad interpretation, as several of his opponents did, or attacked Scripture outright, as did Thomas Paine. Of Vidler, his universalist opponent, Fuller scathingly wrote, "Except in the productions of a certain maniac in our own country, I never recollect to have seen so much violence done to the word of God in so small a compass."⁶⁰ Likewise, Fuller's tone when responding to Paine was severe. He wrote, "We have evidence upon oath that 'religion was his [Paine's] favourite topic when intoxicated;' and, from the scurrility of the performance, it is not improbable that he was frequently in this situation while writing his 'Age of Reason.'"⁶¹ Fuller was much more amicable toward his controversial opponents whom he felt were faithfully engaging the text of Scripture, even if he thought they read it wrongly.⁶² Fuller's concern in polemics was to present Christ rightly through Scripture rather than to promote his own advantage, as demonstrated in his dealings with Deism, Socinianism and Sandemanianism.

There had been deists in England before Fuller's time, but they had mainly been suppressed by the state church.⁶³ In Fuller's day, the deists were

Socinians. Fuller argues, "If we be attached to principles on account of their being *ours*, or because *we* have adopted them, rather than because they appear to us to be taught in the holy Scriptures . . . we are subject to the charge of bigotry." Fuller, *Calvinist and Socinian Systems*, in *Complete Works*, 2:182-83. If an argument is consistent with Scripture, then the charge of bigotry cannot stand. This point is hugely important for contemporary Christians, particularly as the charge of bigotry is being levied for doctrinal positions that have never been questioned and which are clearly scriptural.

⁶⁰Fuller, *Letters to Mr. Vidler on Universal Salvation*, in *Complete Works*, 2:301.

⁶¹Fuller, *The Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *Complete Works*, 2:37.

⁶²In Fuller's debate with Sandemanianism, he is actually complimentary of his opponents' reliance on Scripture: Fuller, *Strictures on Sandemanianism*, in *Complete Works*, 1:623. There is no specific quote, but Fuller's tone of argumentation with Abraham Booth is much more kind than that with opponents of Scripture. Fuller was frustrated with Booth's method of arguing at times, but seemed genuinely to respect Booth's attempt to read Scripture. See the Fuller, *Six Letters to Dr. Ryland Respecting the Controversy with the Rev. A. Booth*, in *Complete Works*, 2:699-715. An illustration of this respect may be found in the somewhat comical scene during Fuller's fictional debates with characters representing Booth, Ryland, and himself. In this scene the characters are discussing the nature of Christ's substitution in salvation. James, who represents Fuller, has just declared that above all, the debaters each agree that Christ has made substitution and is worthy of worship. Then Fuller introduces a narrative comment stating, "James here paused, and wept; and both John [Ryland] and Peter [Booth] wept with him." Fuller, *Conversations between Peter, James, and John*, in *Complete Works*, 2:687. Clearly Fuller understood himself to be a brother in Christ with Booth, though they disagreed significantly and publically.

⁶³For a thorough introduction to the deistic movement in England preceding and during Fuller's time, see: James A. Herrick, *The Radical Rhetoric of the English Deists: The Discourse of Skepticism, 1680-1750*, Studies in Rhetoric/Communication (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1997); John Orr, *English Deism: Its Roots and Its Fruits* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1934); Sell, *Enlightenment, Ecumenism, Evangel*, 111-43. Orr's analysis is, perhaps, a bit dated, but is very helpful and thorough. Sell provides the most concise summary of Deism and discusses Fuller's interaction with Deism particularly. Herrick's volume tends to be a bit more focused on the argumentation of the Deists, but it is helpful in understanding the trend of the movement.

able to participate more fully in the public debate because their version of faith was protected under The Act of Toleration, just like the Dissenters.⁶⁴ Fuller thus deemed it important to engage in apologetics against Deism because of its vocal challenge to orthodoxy and the progress of the gospel. The most significant proponent of Deism in Fuller's day was the American revolutionary Thomas Paine. Paine published *The Age of Reason* in two installments in 1794-1795. The first part of Paine's treatise was written without access to Scripture, just prior to his arrest and imprisonment for his role in the French Revolution. Paine's goal in the first part of *The Age of Reason* was to defend Deism from the charges of atheism and also to attack revealed religions, particularly Christianity.⁶⁵ Once he was released from prison, because of the uproar and response caused by the first part of *The Age of Reason*, Paine published the second part, which was a more detailed assault on the Christian religion, particularly on the nature of Scripture.

Though Paine's rejection of Christianity focused on a rejection of special revelation, it also relied on an improper view of general revelation. Paine believed that human reason could reliably determine truth about the Creator through revelation. Paine wrote, "Our ideas, not only of the almightiness of the Creator, but of His wisdom and His beneficence, become enlarged in proportion as we contemplate the extent and the structure of the universe."⁶⁶ Paine recognized the order in the world and that consistency in a religious system was necessary. However, he also claimed that truth could be found in the "ever-existing word of God that we behold in His works."⁶⁷ Paine and Fuller agreed that the character of God was evident in the created order, and they both agreed that humans could perceive the nature of God in the created order. However, Paine held that the fall was a myth and the rational ability of humanity was in no way diminished through the noetic effects of sin.⁶⁸ In fact, Paine required that any revelation be directly accessible to all humans equally, which was his basis for accepting only general revelation as legitimate.⁶⁹ Like neo-orthodox theologians in a later time, Paine declared that revelation was by definition "something communicated *immediately* from God to man."⁷⁰ Thus Paine allowed for general revelation, viewing it

⁶⁴Herrick, *The Radical Rhetoric of the English Deists: The Discourse of Skepticism, 1680-1750*, 2. Emerson allows this more indirectly, but focuses on the caustic attitude of the Puritans as a cause for the rise of deism. Roger L. Emerson, "Heresy, the Social Order, and English Deism," *Church History* 37 (1968): 389-403.

⁶⁵A. J. Ayer, *Thomas Paine* (New York: Atheneum, 1988), 141. It is important to remember when dealing with Thomas Paine that he was not primarily an original thinker, but a popularizer. Therefore, while his writing is punchier than other more intellectually detached deistic writers, it tends to be a quick read, designed for the so-called common man to read.

⁶⁶Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason*, in *The Life and Works of Thomas Paine*, ed. William Van der Weyde, Patriots' ed., vol. VIII (New Rochelle, NY: Thomas Paine National Historical Association, 1925), 84.

⁶⁷Ibid., 86.

⁶⁸Ibid., 39.

⁶⁹Ibid., 12.

⁷⁰Ibid., 7.

as sufficient, but also as the total extent of God's self-revelation to humans. This view was instigated by a denial of the effects of sin in the world and an excessively positive view of human reason. Fuller's rebuttal of Deism would have been incomplete had his doctrine of general revelation not been so fully developed.

In addition to his exaltation of human reason and emphasis on general revelation, Paine also explicitly attacked Scripture with an attempt to show that the text of the Bible was immoral, textually unreliable, and full of inconsistencies.⁷¹ Fuller's polemical response to Paine in *The Gospel its Own Witness* provided a clear demonstration of Fuller's doctrine of special revelation and the importance of the doctrine in controversy. Paine's objective in *The Age of Reason* was to go "through the Bible, as a man would go through a wood with an axe on his shoulder and fell trees." Paine laid out the challenge that Fuller accepted: "Here they lie; and the priests if they can, may replant them. They may, perhaps stick them in the ground, but they will never make them grow."⁷² Though not exhaustively so, it appears that Fuller structured *The Gospel its Own Witness* to attack Paine's *The Age of Reason* point by point. In his response, Fuller sought to show that there was harmony in revelation, not just between the Old and New Testament, but also between general revelation and Scripture.⁷³ Fuller recounted numerous times that Scripture clearly spoke in unison with the historical record, with nature, and with itself, despite Paine's accusations. During his rebuttal of Paine, Fuller emphasized the fulfillment of prophecy in Scripture,⁷⁴ the resonance of Scripture with morality derived from the reason according to Enlightenment standards,⁷⁵ the internal consistency of Scripture,⁷⁶ the compatibility of scriptural doctrines

⁷¹Ibid., 100-01. Gregg Allison notes the nature of the debates about the inerrancy of Scripture during the time leading up to Fuller's ministry. Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 112-14. There were assaults on the nature of Scripture by theologians such as Hugo Grotius, German biblical critics, and a host of English Deists. Though Fuller responds in detail to Thomas Paine, the first part of *The Gospel its Own Witness* recounts the history of English Deism before it gets to the details of Paine's *Age of Reason*. Though many evangelicals took the authority of Scripture for granted, Mark Noll notes that a defense of scriptural authority was particularly important during the eighteenth-century rise of evangelicalism "since the weight of other ancient Christian authorities declined so rapidly for so many." Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003), 266. Fuller was a contemporary of Schleiermacher, though it is not apparent that the two had any contact, that fact gives some indication of the theological temperature of the day.

⁷²Ibid., 215.

⁷³Fuller, *The Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *Complete Works*, 2:18.

⁷⁴Ibid., 2:58-63.

⁷⁵Ibid., 2:63-68. This particular chapter demonstrates Fuller's approach, but it is much less helpful for contemporary apologetics because the morality assumed is culturally conditioned and really represents more of a Christian ethical schema than would be acceptable among atheists today. This was, however, particularly significant in Fuller's context since one of Paine's attacks on Scripture was that it promoted immorality. See, for example, Paine, *The Age of Reason*, 135-36.

⁷⁶Fuller, *The Gospel Its Own Witness*, in *Complete Works*, 2:68-74.

with reason,⁷⁷ and the compatibility of Scripture with natural revelation, particularly the magnitude of the creation.⁷⁸ Each one of these arguments dealt with a specific challenge against Scripture presented by Paine. Fuller's final goal was to show, "[Special] Revelation is the medium, and the only medium, by which, standing, as it were, 'on nature's Alps,' we discover things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and of which it never hath entered into the heart of man to conceive."⁷⁹ Fuller could not have so clearly and effectively confronted Paine's version of Deism without a well-developed doctrine of special revelation.

In writing against the Socinians, Fuller noted similarities between a deistic approach to revelation in general.⁸⁰ The Socinians had a similar approach to the condition of man that allowed them to value human reason as able to perceive truth in the created order that would supplant the authority of Scripture.⁸¹ The Socinians held sin to be human frailty rather than an offense against God and counted the fall of Adam as myth.⁸² Therefore, like Paine, Socinians did not think that human ability to perceive God in creation and the ability to reason from those perceptions to moral truth had been diminished. The Socinians of Fuller's day argued that humans had the ability to construct sufficient knowledge of God from the created order such that their worship, even when it related little to the Christian doctrine of salvation and neglected the true nature of Christ, was still acceptable to God.⁸³ Priestley, one of Fuller's main Socinian opponents, specifically taught that there was sufficient good in humans to demonstrate the virtue necessary to be acceptable to God.⁸⁴ Since general revelation was overly emphasized in Socinianism, and its worth for human knowledge of God exalted, it became a point of attack for Fuller. The goal in developing and presenting a doctrine of revelation was to emphasize the insufficiency of general revelation. Thus Fuller's attempt to ensure the need for special revelation, particularly Scripture, was made clear to his audiences.

⁷⁷Ibid., 2:74-84.

⁷⁸Ibid., 2:84-97.

⁷⁹Ibid., 2:97.

⁸⁰Fuller, *Calvinist and Socinian Systems*, in *Complete Works*, 2:224. Sell notes that Priestley considered it slanderous that Fuller intimates a connection between Priestley's reading of revelation and that of deists. Sell is substantially critical of Fuller's rebuttals both against the Deists and against the Socinians. Alan P. F. Sell, *Testimony and Tradition: Studies in Reformed and Dissenting Thought* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2005), 121.

⁸¹Of a Socinian attempt to explain away inspiration of the authors of Scripture, Fuller writes, "Not this is not only 'making the reason of the individual the sole umpire in matters of faith,' but virtually rendering [special] revelation unnecessary. If the reason of the individual is to sit supreme judge, and insist that every doctrine which [special] revelation proposes shall approve itself to its dictates or be rejected, the necessity of the latter might as well be totally denied." Fuller, *Calvinist and Socinian Systems*, in *Complete Works*, 2:224.

⁸²Ibid., 2:117.

⁸³Ibid., 2:162-64.

⁸⁴Fuller notes that Priestley makes claims to the contrary, but his argumentation refutes his statements. Ibid., 2:201-02.

Socinians sought to claim Scripture as an authority, in order to place themselves within the stream of traditional Christianity, but still they rejected certain teachings of Scripture.⁸⁵ The Socinians preached a selective fallibility of the Bible. That is, they taught that certain of the parts of the Bible are true and therefore authoritative, though parts must be ignored as full of human error. Priestley, Fuller's main opponent in the discussion of Socinianism, wrote:

The writers of the books of Scripture were *men*, and therefore *fallible*; but all that we have to do with them is in the character of *historians* and *witnesses* of what they heard and saw. . . . Like all other historians, they were liable to mistakes with respect to things of small moment, because they might not give sufficient attention to them; and with respect to their *reasoning*, we are fully at liberty to judge of it, as well as that of any other man, by a due consideration of the propositions they advance, and the arguments they allege. For it by no means follows, because a man has had communications with the Deity for certain purposes, and he may be depended upon with respect to his account of those communications, that he is in other respects more wise and knowing than other men.⁸⁶

Fuller rejected these assertions by Priestley, because, he wrote, "If the Scriptures profess to be Divinely inspired, and assume to be the infallible standard of faith and practice, we must either receive them as such, or, if we would be consistent, disown the writers as imposters."⁸⁷ The problem, as Fuller aptly observed, was that a selective acceptance of biblical content puts the reason of the individual into the position of ultimate authority over the Word.⁸⁸ If the individual human was the authority over Scripture, then there would be nothing left of the text but a shell of tradition.⁸⁹ Socinianism was more dangerous to a doctrine of special revelation than Deism, because the error was more subtle and thus more likely to trip a careless Christian into an egregious error. A carefully crafted doctrine of special revelation was even more important to Fuller's defense of orthodoxy against the challenges of Socinianism than it was to his defense against Deism.

In addition to Socinianism and Deism, Sandemanianism was another competing theology of Fuller's day that was generally harmful to a doctrine

⁸⁵By way of illustration, see: Wayne A. Grudem, *Countering the Claims of Evangelical Feminism* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2006), 282-84.

⁸⁶Joseph Priestley, *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever, Part II* (Birmingham, UK: Pearson and Rollason for J. Johnson, London, 1787), 36. Cited in Fuller, *Calvinist and Socinian Systems*, in *Complete Works*, 2:197.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 2:196.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 2:201.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 2:206.

of special revelation. Sandemanianism was characterized mainly by the belief that bare faith in the bare facts of the gospel was sufficient for salvation.⁹⁰ A characteristic of Sandemanianism, which perhaps contributed to the misreading of the nature of saving faith, was an overly wooden reading of Scripture.⁹¹ Fuller had a profound respect for the reliance of the Sandemanians on Scripture for authority, preferring the Sandemanian misinterpretation of Scripture to the Socinian denial of Scripture. Fuller commented, “Even in those things wherein they appear to me to misunderstand the Scriptures, there is a regard toward them which is worthy of imitation.”⁹² It was good to read and rely upon Scripture as the final authority for matters of life and practice, but Fuller recognized the potential error in bad hermeneutics.

On hermeneutics Fuller wrote, “To require express precept or example, or to adhere in all cases to the literal sense of those precepts which are given us, in things of a moral nature, would greatly mislead us.”⁹³ Failing to implement the principle of the Word would be nearly as dangerous as ignoring the Word entirely. Fuller spent several pages demonstrating ways that the regulative principle for worship and an excessively literal interpretation of Scrip-

⁹⁰Fuller, *Strictures on Sandemanianism*, in *Complete Works*, 1:566.

⁹¹There was a somewhat anti-metaphysical bent among evangelicals during the eighteenth-century as a reaction to the Enlightenment. Bebbington notes, “Aversion to imposing theoretical structure on scripture probably grew over time, culminating in Simeon’s dictum, ‘Be Bible Christians, not system Christians’. Systems were not only distant from the facts; they were also bound to generate difference of opinion.” Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 58. This appears to be related to the emphasis on the literal reading of Scripture, apart from system, by the Sandemanians, including their demand for absolute unanimity in interpretation of Scripture within a congregation. Fuller, *Strictures on Sandemanianism*, in *Complete Works*, 1:636-37. Additionally, in Scotland during the time of the rise of the relatively small Sandemanian sect (it never exceeded 1000 members), Thomas Reid’s Scottish Common-Sense philosophy was en vogue. Bebbington reports that in the eighteenth-century, evangelicals were involved in the new philosophies of the day, including acceptance of Reid’s philosophy, through the works of Thomas Chalmers and John Witherspoon. It seems possible, therefore, that the epistemology that Reid introduced may have made inroads into the Scottish evangelical movement known as the Sandemanians, thus leading them to look for a plain sense reading of Scripture at the expense of a more comprehensive, systematic reading of Scripture. Bebbington writes, “This realism, or common-sense view, allowed that certain basic axioms of thought are grasped intuitively. It enabled Evangelicals to express in a fresh way their belief in the accessibility of God.” Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 59. McGowan is much more skeptical about any positive influence from the Enlightenment philosophy, particularly Reid’s Scottish Realism, noting the Reid himself was not an evangelical, but rather a minister in the Church of Scotland who identified with the moderate party in the Kirk. A. T. B. McGowan, “Evangelicalism in Scotland from Knox to Cunningham,” in *The Advent of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities*, eds. Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 79-80. McGowan’s conclusions, however, do not eliminate the possibility that the Sandemanians could have been infected by the attitudes of Thomas Reid’s philosophy. There is a strong possibility that Glas or Sandeman may have come into contact with Scottish Common Sense Realism, particularly through the work of Thomas Chalmers. However, no clear link can be found and further pursuit of this is outside the scope of this paper.

⁹²Fuller, *Strictures on Sandemanianism*, in *Complete Works*, 1:623.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 1:624.

ture were damaging to the Christian life.⁹⁴ An overly literal hermeneutic was dangerous for Christian community, as well. Since the bare testimony of Scripture was to be accepted among Sandemanians, only one reading could ever be considered viable. Therefore, the Sandemanians required unanimity in all church decisions. If a decision was deemed scriptural by the majority, and a certain party in the church did not agree, then that party was deemed to be in opposition to Scripture. Fuller commented, “But who is to judge whether the reasons of the dissentients be Scriptural or not? The *majority*, no doubt, and an opposition to their opinion is an opposition to *the Word of God*.”⁹⁵ This meant that there were occasions when people were excluded from a Sandemanian congregation in order to enforce the unanimity within the unity of the local body. Fuller’s conflict with Sandemanianism illustrated how important his doctrine of Scripture was for evangelical renewal. The conflict between Fuller and the Sandemanians demonstrated that it was not merely overt attacks on Scripture that were considered dangerous, but that any misreading of Scripture must be corrected.

Fuller’s doctrine of revelation was essential to his polemical ministry. However, as was negatively illustrated in his polemical encounter with Sandemanianism, there were significant pastoral implications to the doctrine of revelation--particularly the doctrine of Scripture.

Revelation in Pastoral Ministry

Fuller demonstrated the centrality of Scripture in his role as a pastor, through his reliance on Scripture for preaching, teaching and devotional use.⁹⁶ When writing and speaking to young pastors, Fuller encouraged preaching a chapter-by-chapter exposition of the Bible. This, he argued, was vital because, “In going over a book, I have frequently been struck with surprise in meeting with texts which, as they had always occurred to me, I had understood in a sense utterly foreign from what manifestly appeared to be their meaning when viewed *in connexion with their context*.”⁹⁷ The pastor must study the Word in order to understand it before he can rightly expound it. Yet, the understanding of the Bible must come through a dependence upon God.⁹⁸ Despite the centrality of Scripture to Fuller’s preaching ministry, he saw the need to move beyond bare exposition into discourse on doctrines. Fuller wrote, “There is a great variety of *subjects*, both in doctrinal and practical religion, which require to be illustrated, established, and improved; which cannot be done in an exposition.”⁹⁹ This preached doctrine, though, had to begin in biblical exposition before it moved beyond it.

⁹⁴Ibid., 1:625-29.

⁹⁵Ibid., 1:637.

⁹⁶General revelation played little role in Fuller’s pastoral ministry except, perhaps, to provide a doctrinal grounding for the necessity of Scripture.

⁹⁷Fuller, *Thoughts on Preaching*, in *Complete Works*, 1:712.

⁹⁸Ibid., 1:713.

⁹⁹Ibid., 1:714.

Fuller's sermons demonstrated both the centrality of the Word to his ministry, as well as his facility with the whole of Scripture. Each of the sermons began with a central text, as was the custom of the day. Fuller then typically constructed his sermon based on the structure of the text. For example, in his 1809 sermon, "Jesus the True Messiah," Fuller had four main points, each of which was drawn from a key phrase in the text of Psalm 40:6-8. In this sermon, Fuller was preaching apologetically to Jews, seeking to prove Christ's messiahship. He did this by weaving together many texts and allusions from the Old Testament in order to call them to repentance in faith and give them confidence that the message of the Old Testament continued in the New.¹⁰⁰

In some sermons Fuller demonstrated what might be considered a historical-grammatical approach to the text. For example, in his sermon "The Gospel the Means of Universal Peace," Fuller used as his text Malachi 4:5-6. Instead of beginning directly with exposition, Fuller preceded the discussion of the text itself with an introduction to Malachi and then an explanation of some of the prophetic claims made by the text that were later fulfilled by John the Baptist. After this introduction of several pages, Fuller transitioned into a three-point exposition of the text of the verses themselves.¹⁰¹ Though only two examples from the many provided in his collected works, which form a small sample of his preaching ministry, these examples show that the text drove the message and not the reverse. They also demonstrate that Fuller sought to proclaim the apparent meaning of Scripture, and not an interpretation which he imposed on the text. Fuller's sermons relied on an authoritative and inspired text that provided a unified message for his preaching ministry.

Fuller also demonstrated the importance of Scripture in his ministry because he spent time and energy reconciling passages that appear to conflict. Harmonizing difficult passages was apparently a part of his ministry performed for the benefit of his readers. These harmonizations, detailed and helpful, served to equip men to deal with the deistic accusations, as well as other doctrinal controversies. In one case, Fuller harmonized John 5:40 and John 6:44, 45, 64, and 65. The apparent contradiction among these passages was that the first says that men *will not* come to Christ; the second says that men *cannot* come to Christ unless drawn by God. By way of explanation, Fuller unpacked the difference between natural and moral ability explaining that unless God enabled man through regeneration, he both cannot morally and will not naturally come to Christ.¹⁰² In this example, a system helped Fuller to interpret and demonstrate the unity of Scripture but the system was still subject to Scripture.

In another, much simpler, example, Fuller compared the content of Genesis 8:22 and 45:6. In the first, the pattern of harvest was promised for-

¹⁰⁰Fuller, *Sermons and Sketches*, in *Complete Works*, 1:210-20.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 1:253-66.

¹⁰²Fuller, *Apparent Contradictions*, in *Complete Works*, 1:667-69.

ever to continue. In the second, five years without harvest were promised. Fuller noted there is a difference between a general rule as in the first, and a specific judgment on a specific nation as in the second.¹⁰³ This example showed that even small details of apparent contradiction were significant to Fuller. More examples could be considered. However, the significance is not the actual resolution of the apparent conflicts, but rather the fact that Fuller spent the time carefully to resolve at least thirty different examples of apparent contradictions. Fuller understood that the authority of Scripture depended on its consistency. Therefore he sought to remove the difficulties caused by apparent contradictions in order to help people have “a perception of the particular beauty of God’s word, as well as a general persuasion of its harmony.”¹⁰⁴

Fuller demonstrated the importance of Scripture in the Christian life by his example and by his urging. In a response to a query from a believer, Fuller wrote urging a regular, scheduled time of Bible reading every morning that preceded prayer. In an early version of a “quiet time,” Fuller exhorted the reader to a reliance on Scripture alone rather than commentaries about Scripture. “If,” he wrote, “I read the Scriptures, and exercise my own mind on their meaning, only using the helps with which I am furnished when I particularly need them, such knowledge will avail me more than any other.”¹⁰⁵ Fuller also encouraged taking notes after reading for better retention.¹⁰⁶ Fuller encouraged pastors to read the Bible first to feed their souls and only after that to develop their expositional sermons.¹⁰⁷

The importance of personal Bible study for the individual was not primarily duty to God, but the sanctification that comes through continued, regular exposure to the Word. In a sermon directed to the dejected, Fuller’s concluding exhortation was to “Read the Holy Scriptures, pray to the Fountain of light for understanding, attend the preaching of the word; and all this not with the immediate view of determining what you are, but what Christ is.”¹⁰⁸ The Bible was vital for developing Christlikeness and was to be read habitually. As Fuller noted in an essay on progressive holiness, “The more we read the Holy Scriptures, the more we shall imbibe their spirit, and be formed by them as by a model. It is thus that the word of Christ dwells richly in us in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”¹⁰⁹ Scripture was central to the shaping of the individual Christian, but also for promoting the kingdom through public discourse.

¹⁰³Ibid., 1:672.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 1:667.

¹⁰⁵Fuller, *Answers to Queries*, in *Complete Works*, 1:788.

¹⁰⁶This process that Fuller recommends to the layman is very similar to the process of Bible study that he commends to the pastor preparing his sermon. Fuller, *Thoughts on Preaching*, in *Complete Works*, 1:714.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 1:713-14.

¹⁰⁸Fuller, *Sermons and Sketches*, in *Complete Works*, 1:236.

¹⁰⁹Fuller, *Miscellaneous Tracts, Essays, Letters & C.*, in *Complete Works*, 3:665.

Conclusion

The theological environment during Fuller's day was filled with overt and subversive challenges to revelation. Enlightenment rationalism in its variegated forms presented a robust challenge to faith, which caused some to question at least certain parts of Scripture, particularly the recorded miracles. When Scripture was denigrated, it became necessary to exalt human ability to distill knowledge about God from general revelation if belief in a deity was to be maintained. As a result of the various challenges, Fuller's work contained a carefully developed doctrine of general revelation that emphasized the need for special revelation. Fuller's work also contained a robust presentation of the doctrine of special revelation, particularly Scripture, designed to demonstrate the significance of Scripture for authentic Christian life. Still his approach was occasional making some assembly required to obtain a systemized picture of Fuller's doctrines.

The systematization of Fuller's doctrine of revelation is possible because, beyond his limited work in systematic theology, Fuller wrote extensively on the doctrine of revelation in his various sermons, letters, and polemical texts. Particularly through his interaction with Deism, Fuller demonstrated his doctrine of general revelation, though the controversy over Socinianism also played a role in unearthing Fuller's ideas about general revelation. Fuller's doctrine of general revelation was significant because it pointed toward the necessity of special revelation.

Through an examination of Fuller's doctrine of revelation, it seems clear that Fuller's doctrines of general and special revelation were both well-developed and essential to his ministry. The controversies that Fuller faced in his life served to sharpen him theologically, and this shows through in his careful explanation of the doctrine of revelation. Were Fuller less reliant on Scripture for his spiritual life and private ministry, his arguments would have little value to the contemporary reader, except as dated artifacts of a bygone era. Instead, Fuller's work was founded on the Word of God, which continues to stand the test of time.

History or Revisionist History? How Calvinistic Were the Overwhelming Majority of Baptists and Their Confessions in the South until the Twentieth Century?

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In the debate about Calvinism in the Southern Baptist Convention, at least the following two historical claims are frequently suggested by some Calvinistic Baptists: (1) that the overwhelming majority of Baptists were five-point Calvinists from the time before the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention until the early twentieth century (when it is asserted that some Southern Baptist leaders allegedly changed the course of the Convention in the early to mid-twentieth century); and (2) that the Baptist confessions before the 1963 *Baptist Faith and Message* were overwhelmingly five-point Calvinist confessions.

The purpose of this article is to assess the historical accuracy of these two claims.

Assessing Claim 1: Were Most Baptists Five-Point Calvinists until the Early or Mid-Twentieth Century?

Some Calvinistic thinkers have asserted that the overwhelming majority of Baptists in the South were Calvinists until the early twentieth century.¹ Were some early Baptists in America in the late 1700s and early 1800s

¹For example, Tom Ascol claims that the “traditional Baptist” view of soteriology voiced in “A Statement of the Traditional Southern Baptist Understanding of God’s Plan of Salvation” “*has only been ‘traditional’ since about 1963,*” when the 1963 *Baptist Faith and Message*, in Ascol’s opinion, represented a “doctrinal downgrade” from the dominance of high Calvinism before it. Ascol likewise asserts, “In his book, *By His Grace and For His Glory*, Tom Nettles has persuasively argued that *Calvinism was the theological consensus for the first 70 years of the SBC.* . . . So if we are going to take the complete history of the SBC into consideration, rather than an abridged version, this document would more accurately be called ‘A Statement of **Modern** Southern Baptist Understanding of God’s Plan of Salvation.’ *The understanding of salvation that was prevalent throughout the convention at its inception and for many decades afterward was nothing less than historic, evangelical Calvinism.*” Tom Ascol, “Response to ‘A Statement of the Traditional Southern Baptist Understanding of God’s Plan of Salvation,’” part 3 and part 5, Founders Ministries Blog, <http://blog.founders.org/2012/06/response-to-statement-of-traditional.html> (accessed 26 April 2014). Bold is Ascol’s; italics are mine.

Or, citing the more modest claim of Tom Nettles himself, “*This consensus in the Doctrines of Grace was perpetuated in Southern Baptist life through the second decade of the present [20th]*

five-point Calvinists? Yes, of course. Were some Baptist leaders, particularly the children of the wealthy aristocracy of the South, many of whom were educated at elite Ivy League type schools, Calvinistic in their own theology? Yes. But these answers might be misleading, and do not answer claim 1. The question is, “Were the overwhelming majority of Southern Baptists at the time of the founding of the SBC and the early decades of the SBC in the mid-to-later nineteenth century five-point Calvinists?” Reviewing the historical sources, the answer appears to be “No.”

What Counts as “Calvinism”?

Some Southern Baptists describe themselves as “Calvinists,” but that is not really correct, of course. No Baptist is, properly speaking, a “Calvinist,” because even Reformed-leaning Baptists deny many doctrines affirmed by actual Calvinists, such as infant baptism, ecclesiology, or the meaning and practice of the Lord’s Supper and baptism. Even the Calvinistic English Particular Baptists were clear in distinguishing themselves on key doctrines from fully Calvinist confessions.² Usually it is the Calvinist doctrines of God and salvation with which Calvinistic Baptists resonate. So for Baptists, it is not accurate to use the noun “Calvinist,” but rather the adjective “Calvinistic” to describe what sort of Baptist they are. It is not a question of being fully a “Calvinist,” but rather of how “Calvinistic” they are.

The most commonly used measuring stick of how “Calvinistic” a theologian or confession might be is the “five points” of Calvinism as defined in the Canons of Dort, often summarized in the acrostic of TULIP—Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, and Perseverance of the saints.³ Let us acknowledge several things that have been

*century. . . . This virtually unanimous belief disintegrated along the way.” Tom Nettles, *By His Grace and For His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Lake Charles: Cor Meum Tibi, 2002), 50, emphasis mine.*

Thomas Kidd, while acknowledging in a blog post that “from its origins, the Baptist movement was divided between ‘General’ and ‘Regular’ or ‘Particular’ Baptists over the issue of election,” asserts that “Calvinists have always been a major factor, but especially if you include the first two hundred and fifty years of the movement, *Calvinism arguably has been the dominant theology among English and American Baptists. . . . In America, Baptists who believed in a general atonement became a decided minority, especially after the Great Awakening of the mid-eighteenth century*, as Calvinistic Separate Baptists, emerging from the revivals, became the most dynamic segment of broader Baptist life.” Thomas Kidd, “‘Traditional Baptists’ and Calvinism,” *Patheos* blog, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/2012/06/traditional-baptists-and-calvinism/> (accessed 26 April 2014), emphasis mine.

²*The Philadelphia Confession* (1742) was modeled after the Particular Baptist *Second London Confession* (1689), which in turn followed the language of the Calvinist *Westminster Confession* (1646) rather closely at points. For a comparison of the Baptist distinctives affirmed in the *Philadelphia* and *Second London Confession* that differentiated these Particular Baptists from the Presbyterian/Congregationalist doctrines in the *Westminster Confession*, see Steve Lemke, “What Is a Baptist? Nine Marks that Separate Baptists and Presbyterians,” *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* 5, no. 2 (2008): 10-39.

³For a more detailed analysis of the five points of the TULIP, see Steve Lemke, “A More Detailed Analysis of the Five Points of Calvinism,” available at <http://baptistcenter.net/>

stated many times—namely, that:

- (a) Calvinism is more than the five points of the Synod of Dort;
- (b) in fact, the five points do not even nearly express fully Calvinist soteriology; and
- (c) the TULIP acrostic is a recent innovation which may not adequately or accurately describe these doctrines more fully expressed in the Canons of Dort.⁴

The following reasons explain why this functional (though incomplete) measuring stick for Calvinism is useful:

The five points are the minimal threshold for Calvinism. The simple answer is that it is the five points of the Synod of Dort by which Calvinism has been defined traditionally and historically, particularly among Baptists. The two key Calvinistic Baptist confessions affirmed by high Calvinists/Particular Baptists—the *Second London Confession* and the *Philadelphia Confession*—echo the affirmation of these five doctrines in the Canons of Dort and the *Westminster Confession*. As was noted earlier, many Calvinists have rightly asserted that there is more to Calvinism than the five points, and that affirming the five points does not make one fully Calvinist. The five points are focused on soteriology, but do not even encompass Calvinist covenant soteriology as a whole, much less the broader points of ecclesiology and the sacraments that are crucial to Calvinism proper. But note this: in making this argument, they are saying that Calvinism is more than these five points, not less. The five points are the floor of Reformed soteriology, not the ceiling.

Calvinists deny partial Calvinism (Calminianism). Furthermore, both Calvinists and Arminians have insisted that there is no Calminian middle ground between Calvinism and Arminianism; it is an “all or nothing” matter in which one must either be a five-point Calvinist or a five-point Arminian. For example, Calvinist theologian Michael Horton of Westminster Theological Seminary asserts, “There is no such thing as ‘Calminianism.’”⁵

papers/Lemke_Five_Points_Methodology.pdf.

⁴For example, see Kenneth J. Stewart, *Ten Myths about Calvinism: Recovering the Breadth of the Reformed Tradition* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011), 75-96; Richard A. Muller, “How Many Points?” *Calvin Theological Journal* 28 (1993): 425-33; James K. A. Smith, *Letters to a Young Calvinist* (Grand Rapids: BrazosPress, 2010), 59-64; and Michael Horton, *For Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 15, cf. 23, 25, 179-80.

⁵Michael Horton, “Preface” in *Against Calvinism*, by Roger Olson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 10. (By design, Horton authored *For Calvinism* as a companion book to Olson’s *Against Calvinism*). Arminian theologian Roger Olson dedicates an entire chapter in his earlier book *Arminian Theology* to debunking the “myth” that “a hybrid of Calvinism and Arminianism is possible.” Roger Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 61-77. I disagree with both Horton and Olson on this point, since the majority of Southern Baptists, America’s largest Protestant denomination, would be counted as Calminians, and, as I have argued elsewhere, this forced “either/or” alternative commits the logical error known as the fallacy of false alternatives. See Steve Lemke, “Using Logic in Theology: The Fallacy of False Alternatives,” *SBC Today*, <http://sbctoday.com/2011/06/03/using-logic-in-theology-the-fallacy-of-false-alternatives/> (accessed 26

Clearly then, one who does not affirm at least all five points is not properly considered a Calvinist.

“Particular redemption” is the key distinctive doctrine. The first of the five points that Baptists normally reject is precisely the doctrine that distinctively defined the Calvinistic Particular Baptists—limited atonement or particular redemption—that Christ died only for the elect. This four-point Calvinism of people who lean toward Calvinism but cannot affirm all five points is sometimes described as Amyraldianism, or in the Baptist tradition, followers of Andrew Fuller (as opposed to Richard Fuller from the Charleston tradition).⁶ But in Baptist history, this is specifically the point which divided Particular Baptists (whose very name is an affirmation of particular redemption) from General Baptists—whether Jesus died to atone for the sins of just a particular group (the elect), or if his atonement could apply to anyone in the general public who repented and trusted Christ as Savior. Therefore, it would be disingenuous to count as true Calvinistic Baptists those who reject the primary and distinctive belief of Calvinistic Particular Baptists, i.e., limited atonement, much less two or three other points of classical Calvinism. Applied to this issue of determining how Calvinistic the early Southern Baptists were, counting as classical Calvinists those who affirm just three or four points of the TULIP is simply not appropriate. They could just as well be counted as two or three-point Arminians. The truth is that many if not most of them were somewhere between Calvinism and Arminianism, and that is the point of this article.

Many five-point Calvinists reject four-point Calvinism. Furthermore, many significant five-point Calvinist thinkers express nothing but disdain for four-point Calvinism. One need not peruse long Calvinist websites, books by Calvinist authors, and Calvinist publishers before seeing this claim repeatedly. For example, it is asserted that “it is impossible to be a four-point Calvinist and remain consistent. The other points of the doctrines of grace cannot stand without it.”⁷ Four-point Calvinism is described

April 2014). The Baptist “Middle Way” between Calvinism and Arminianism is articulated in a statement entitled “Neither Calvinists Nor Arminians, But Baptists” by a group of Baptist theologians and ministers loosely associated with the book *Whosoever Will: A Biblical and Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism*, edited by David Allen and Steve Lemke (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010). The statement is available at http://www.baptistcenter.net/papers/Neither_Calvinists_Nor_Arminians_But_Baptists.pdf. Although LifeWay research has shown that the majority of Baptists are somewhere between Arminianism and Calvinism, the point being made here is that neither true Calvinists nor Arminians think that three or four points is sufficient, but that one must embrace all five points of their systems to count within their folds.

⁶Fuller’s views were articulated in Andrew Fuller, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation, or, The Duty of Sinners to Believe in Jesus Christ, in The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, ed. Joseph Belcher, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1845, rep. ed.), 2:328-92. Four-point Calvinism is sometimes also humorously denoted as “Christmas Calvinism,” i.e., “No-L.”

⁷In providing a negative answer to the question, “Is Four-Point Calvinism Possible?” John Hendryx opines, “In other words, to reject limited atonement is *to reject total depravity*

as failing the “test of biblical Calvinism” and thus presents a “partly distorted” gospel.⁸ R. C. Sproul equates four-point Calvinists with Arminians.⁹ Likewise, R. Scott Clark of Westminster Seminary asserts that “definite atonement or absolute (total) universalism” are the only two viable alternatives.¹⁰ B. B. Warfield raised questions whether the denial of limited atonement is a “good,” “acceptable,” or “tenable form of Calvinism,” and asserted that four-point Calvinism is a “logically inconsistent” and thus an “unstable” form of Calvinism.¹¹ Elsewhere, four-point Calvinists are described as being as in-

and unconditional election. The four-point Calvinists, therefore, do not really believe in election, but rather, that the natural man still has the moral ability to turn to God on his own without regenerating grace (as if faith was somehow a contribution on our part). Therefore, it is impossible to be a four-point Calvinist and remain consistent. The other points of the doctrines of grace cannot stand without it. In fact, all of the points stand or fall together since it is either God or man determines whether the atonement will be effectual.” John Hendryx, “Is It Possible to Deny Limited Atonement and Still Believe in Unconditional Election?” Monergism.com, <http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/four-point.html> (accessed 26 April 14), emphasis mine.

⁸In another post on Monergism under the category of “Bad Theology,” Hendryx further dismisses four-point Calvinism: “*So-called four-point Calvinism fails the test of biblical Calvinism because this view tends to see the TULIP as an abstraction rather than seeing it Christocentrically. The TULIP only works when we see Christ at its center. . . . Four-point Calvinism not only fails the test of Christocentricity but fails to acknowledge that the Trinity always works in harmony.* The Father elects a particular people for himself, Christ dies to secure their redemption and the Holy Spirit unites the same to Christ applying the benefits of Christ’s redemption to them. I believe that until Jesus Christ is seen as central to the TULIP then *four-pointers will continue to reject the christocentric nature of the Scripture and the gospel is partly distorted as a result.*” John Hendryx, “Four-Point Calvinism,” listed under “Bad Theology,” Monergism.com, <http://www.monergism.com/topics/bad-theology/four-point-calvinism> (accessed 26 April 2014), emphasis mine.

⁹In a quote cited on The Gospel Coalition’s website, Sproul asserts, “There are a host of folks who call themselves four-point Calvinist because they can’t swallow the doctrine of limited atonement. . . . *I think that a four-point Calvinist is an Arminian.* I say that for this reason: When I have talked to people who call themselves four-point Calvinists and have had the opportunity to discuss it with them, I have discovered that they were no-point Calvinists. They thought they believed in total depravity, in unconditional election, in irresistible grace, and in the perseverance of the saints, but they didn’t understand these points.” R. C. Sproul, *The Truth of the Cross* (Stanford, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2007), 140–42; cited at The Gospel Coalition, <http://thegospelcoalition.org/mobile/article/justintaylor/sproul-on-four-point-calvinism> (accessed 26 April 2014), emphasis mine.

¹⁰Warfield asserts: “Post-redemptionism . . . (although it is a recognizable form of Calvinism, because it gives real validity to the principle of particularism), is *not therefore necessarily a good form of Calvinism, an acceptable form of Calvinism, or even a tenable form of Calvinism.* For one thing, *it is a logically inconsistent form of Calvinism and therefore an unstable form of Calvinism.* For another and far more important thing, it turns away from the substitutive atonement, which is as precious to the Calvinist as is his particularism, and for the safeguarding of which, indeed, much of his zeal for particularism is due. I say, Post-redemptionism is *logically inconsistent Calvinism.*” B. B. Warfield, “Warfield on Four-Point Calvinism” listed under “*Bad Theology*” on Christian Reformed Ink Archives, <http://christianreformedink.wordpress.com/bad-theology/four-point-calvinism/warfield-on-four-point-calvinism> (accessed 26 April 2014), emphasis mine.

¹¹“If one accepts that Jesus died as a propitiatory substitute for all his people, *there are really only two alternatives, definite atonement or absolute (total) universalism.* Either he saved

consistent as “hymn-singing atheists.”¹² *Real* Calvinists, then, do not believe the same thing as mere three-point or four-point Calvinists, and in fact tend to equate them with being Arminian in theology. Therefore, in connection with this study, it would be merely grasping at tulips to count four-point Calvinists as legitimate Calvinists.

The Tributaries which Helped Shape Southern Baptist Life

Again, the question being addressed concerns what the *overwhelming majority* of Baptists believed after the Second Great Awakening, not what a few elite leaders believed. The two main threads of Baptists in the South have been identified as the Charleston tradition and the Sandy Creek tradition.¹³ These groups could hardly have been more different socially, economically, or by doctrine and practice. Those associated with the Charleston tradition tended to be

- (a) Calvinistic in theology,
- (b) urbane, wealthy, landed gentry,
- (c) slave owners who made passionate pro-slavery arguments, and
- (d) well-educated, some with Ivy League degrees. For example, the third president of the SBC was very wealthy, the largest slaveholder in South Carolina, and had an earned degree from Harvard.

In contrast, those in the Sandy Creek tradition, whose numbers swelled through the Second Great Awakening (usually dated the fifty-year period from 1790-1840), tended to be

- (a) mixed somewhere between Calvinism and Arminianism,
- (b) poor farmers and frontiersmen in rural areas across the South,
- (c) opposed to slavery (the Sandy Creek Association condemned slavery in 1835, a decade before the wealthy slaveowners of the Charleston tradition led in breaking away from northern Baptists primarily over the right for missionaries to be slave

everyone who ever lived, or he saved all those whom he loved.” R. Scott Clark, “Limited Atonement,” Westminster Seminary, <http://clark.wscal.edu/atonement.php> (accessed 26 April 2014), emphasis mine.

¹²“*Calvinism isn't a produce stand from which we can pick and choose which doctrines we wish to keep and pass over the rest in a sort of hermeneutical reprobation.* Calvinism is an interwoven system of theology which must be accepted or rejected as a whole. From the acceptance of one point, one is compelled by simple logic to the acceptance of all the rest. *You can't deny one without denying them all. The four-point Calvinist is as consistent as a psalm-singing atheist.*”¹⁴“The Inconsistency of Four-Point Calvinism,” Banner of Truth, <http://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2003/the-inconsistency-of-four-point-calvinism> (accessed 25 April 2014), emphasis mine.

¹³This distinction is usually attributed to church historian Walter Shurden. See Walter B. Shurden, *Not an Easy Journey: Transitions in Baptist Life* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2005), 201-10.

- owners, and a quarter of a century before the Civil War), and
 (d) undereducated and, in some cases, illiterate. The revivalistic Sandy Creek worship style was looked down upon by the urbane and straight-laced advocates of the Charleston tradition.

The evidence which follows details the testimony of early Baptist leaders and Baptist historians close in proximity to this period and with perspective on Baptist life in their own era in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The evidence will show that the rural Sandy Creek tradition Baptists, who comprised the majority of Baptists in the South as a whole, were *not* overwhelmingly five-point Calvinists in their soteriology. Most of them were neither fully Calvinists nor Arminians, but somewhere between those polar positions.

The Evidence:

(1791) John Leland (1754-1841), prominent early Virginia and Massachusetts Baptist leader and abolitionist who was influential in working with Jefferson and Madison to assure the inclusion of freedom of religion in the Bill of Rights:

I conclude that the *eternal purposes* of God and the *freedom of the human will* are both truths, and it is a matter of fact that the preaching that has been most blessed by God and most profitable to men is the **doctrine of sovereign grace in the salvation of souls, mixed with a little of what is called Arminianism.**¹⁴

(1813) David Benedict (1779-1874), Baptist pastor for many years in Pawtucket, RI, who then retired to his avocation of Baptist history, publishing seven books. The following citation describes the diversity of views in Virginia and Kentucky on the American western frontier. Benedict traced how the diverse theological perspectives in Virginia were transposed into Kentucky associations such as the South Kentucky Association, organized in 1785, settled primarily by Virginians moving west. (Just for historical perspective, when Benedict wrote this in 1813, Louisiana had become the only state with land west of the Mississippi River just one year previously after the Louisiana Purchase from France a decade earlier; Mississippi, Alabama, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan were still territories; and Florida was still a territory of Spain):

The Baptists in Virginia, at the time they began to send forth populous colonies of their brethren to the western country, were

¹⁴John Leland, "A Letter of Valediction on Leaving Virginia, 1791," in *The Writings of the Late Elder John Leland*, ed. Louise F. Green (New York: G. W. Wood, 1845), 172. Italics his, bold mine.

divided into *Regulars* and *Separates*, although the **Separates were much more numerous**. The *Regulars* were professedly, and some of them very highly Calvinistic; but the **Separates were far from being unanimous in their doctrinal sentiments**. A majority of them, however, were Calvinists, and of the rest, a part were much inclined to the Arminian side of the controversy; and some of the most distinguished among them, in opposing the high strains of Calvinism, which were incessantly, and in many instances dogmatically sounded by their orthodox brethren, **had gone nearly the full length of the doctrine of Arminius**. Others, with different modifications of the objectionable articles of both systems, were **endeavoring to pursue a middle course**. Such was the state of the Virginia Baptists, with regard to doctrine, at the period under consideration, and some of all those different classes were among the emigrants to the fertile regions of the west; but a majority of them were Separates in their native State. But the same people who had traveled together before their removal, so far as least as it respected their associational connection, pursued a different course when settled in Kentucky. The *Calvinistic Separates* united with the few *Regular Baptists* among them, and established the Elkhorn Association, which, at its commencement, adopted the Philadelphia Confession of Faith; while **those who inclined to the Arminian system, as well as those who adopted some of the Calvinistic creed in a qualified sense, united with the Association whose history we now have under consideration** [the South district]. Thus the names of the *Regular* and *Separate* were transported beyond the mountains, and two separate interests were established in the neighborhood of each other.¹⁵

(1832) **Jesse Mercer (1769-1841)**, leading pre-Civil War Georgia Baptist, first president of the Georgia Baptist Convention, four-time delegate to the Triennial Convention, founder of the Georgia *Christian Index*, and founder of Mercer University, which is now named in his honor:

¹⁵David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World*, 2 vols. (Cornhill: Manning and Loring, 1813), 2:237; cf. David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World* (New York: Lewis Colby and Company, 1848), 820-21, italics his, bold mine. There are minor variances between the 1813 and 1848 editions, such as that "Calvinistic" is spelled "Calvinistick" in the 1813 edition, and a few words are italicized in the 1848 edition. The 1848 text is followed here. The long history of tensions between Arminian and Calvinistic Baptists in Virginia are detailed in Robert Baylor Semple, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia* (Richmond: John O'Lynch, 1810); or the 1894 revised and extended edition of the same work, ed. G. W. Beale (Richmond: & Dickinson, 1894), available at <https://archive.org/details/historyofrisepro00semp>.

It seems to be taken for granted that all those venerable fathers, who founded the Baptist Denomination in this state [Georgia], were as stern Calvinistic preachers as are the opposers of the new plans. But this is altogether a mistake. Abraham Marshall [son of Daniel] was never considered a predestinarian preacher. Some of them were so—seemed to be set for the defense of the gospel. Of these, Silas Mercer and Jephtha Vining were the chief. To use his own figure; he used to say, “he was *short legged* and could not wade in such deep water.” He, with several others, was considered sound in the faith, though *low Calvinists*. Peter Smith and some others **were thought rather Arminian; some quite so.** . . . And here it may not be amiss to add, that the Baptists in the upper parts of South Carolina, in those days, comprehended mostly, it is believed, in the Bethel Association, were *general provisionists*. I think **most of their ministers preached what is now called General Atonement.**¹⁶

(1857) Francis Wayland (1796-1865), professor at Andover Theological Seminary, founder of Newton Theological Institution, president of Brown University, pastor of First Baptist Church in Boston and First Baptist Church of Providence, RI (the first Baptist church in America). A campaigner for anti-slavery causes and prison reform, Wayland College in Virginia (now Virginia Union University) for freed slaves was named in his honor. (Wayland Baptist University in Texas was named for a different Wayland).

The extent of the atonement has been and still is a matter of honest but not unkind difference. *Within the last fifty years a change has gradually taken place in the views of a large portion of our brethren.* At the commencement of that period Gill’s Divinity was a sort of standard, and Baptists imbibing his opinions were what may be called almost hyper-Calvinistic. **A change commenced upon the publication of the writings of Andrew Fuller,** especially his “Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation.”

It is difficult at the present day to conceive to what extent the doctrine of the limited atonement, and the views of election which accompanied it, were carried. I once knew a popular minister, who used to quote the passage, “God so loved the world,” etc., by inserting the word *elect* before world: “God so loved the *elect* world,” etc. I was, in the early part of my ministry, settled in a respectable town in Massachusetts. One of my members, a

¹⁶C. D. Mallary, *Memoirs of Elder Jesse Mercer* (New York: John Gray, 1844), 201-02; [also cited in James Donovan Mosteller, *A History of the Kiokee Baptist Church in Georgia* (Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers, 1952), 37]. Italics his, bold mine.

very worthy man, and the son of a Baptist minister, and reputed to be “very clear in the doctrines”—(this was the term applied to this form of belief)—had an interesting family wholly given up to worldliness. I wished to converse with them on the subject of personal religion, and mentioned to him my desire. He kindly but plainly told me that he did not wish any one to converse with his children on that subject. If they were elected, God would convert them in his own time; but if not, talking would do them no good, it would only make them hypocrites. He was, I believe, **the last pillar of Gillism then remaining in the church.**

In my last number I referred to **the change which had taken place, in the opinions of Baptists, on the subject of the Atonement.** The question mainly at issue was the *extent* of the gospel sacrifice; in other respects there has ever been, I believe, an entire harmony. It may be well to state briefly what I suppose to be the prevailing belief, in this doctrine, at present. In the northern and eastern States, it is generally held that the whole race became sinners in consequence of the sin of the first Adam; and that, on the other hand, the way of salvation was opened *for the whole race* by the obedience and death of the second Adam. Nevertheless, this alone renders the salvation of no one certain, for, so steeped are men in sin, that they all, with one consent, begin to make excuse, and universally refuse the offer of pardon. God, then, in infinite mercy, has elected some to everlasting life, and, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, renders the word effectual to their salvation and sanctification. In his offer of mercy he is perfectly honest and sincere, for the feast has been provided, and it is spread for **all.** This does not, however, interfere with his gracious purpose to save by his sovereign mercy such as he may choose. There is here sovereignty, but no partiality. There can be no partiality, for none have the semblance of a claim; and, **if any one perishes, it is not from the want of a full and free provision, but from his own wilful perverseness. Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.**¹⁷

(1890) Edward T. Hiscox (1814-1901), pastor of several Baptist churches in New England and New York, and publisher of a number of amazingly popular Baptist church manuals which amazingly sold over 100,000 copies in total, primarily between 1859-1894, and are still in publication today:

American Baptists are decidedly Calvinistic as to substance of

¹⁷Francis Wayland, *Notes on the Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches* (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman, and Co., 1857), 18, 19, 20. Italics his, bold mine.

doctrine, but *moderately so, being midway between the extremes of Arminianism and Antinomianism*. Though diversities of opinion may incline to either extreme, *the 'general atonement' view is for the most part held*, while the 'particular atonement' theory is maintained by not a few. *The freedom of the human will is declared, while the sovereignty of divine grace, and the absolute necessity of the Spirit's work in faith and salvation are maintained.*¹⁸

(1893) John A. Broadus (1827-1895), professor of preaching at Southern Seminary and a colleague of five-point Calvinist professor James P. Boyce. In Broadus' memoirs of Boyce, he quotes approvingly (and was perfectly qualified to challenge this claim if he thought it was inaccurate) the depiction of E. E. Folk (editor of the *Baptist Reflector*) about the theology of the new students at Southern Seminary whom Boyce taught in the post-Civil War 1800s:

"The young men were *generally rank Arminians when they came to the seminary*" until they encountered the "strong Calvinistic views" of Boyce.¹⁹

The important point about this quote is that the majority of the incoming students, based on how they had been disciplined in their local churches, were "rank Arminians." This provides strong evidence that the "rank and file Baptists" in the last half of the 1800s were far from being five-point Calvinists. Boyce was able to persuade many into being Calvinists, but these seminary educated ministers were a small minority of Southern Baptist pastors.

(1894) A. H. Newman (1852-1933), church historian on the founding faculty of Southwestern Seminary, as well as serving as a faculty member at Baylor University, Rochester Baptist Theological Seminary, McMaster University, Vanderbilt University, and the University of Chicago. Writing in 1894, Newman wrote the following summary of the impact of the Reformed tradition in Baptist life:

As regards the set of doctrines on which Augustine differed from his theological predecessors, and modern Calvinists from Arminians, *Baptists have always been divided*. The medieval evangelical sects were all, apparently, anti-Augustinian, and the Baptist parties of the sixteenth century followed in the footsteps of their medieval spiritual ancestors in this and other important particulars. Those Baptist parties of modern times whose histori-

¹⁸Edward T. Hiscox, *The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1890), 57, italics mine.

¹⁹E. E. Folk, cited in John A. Broadus, *Memoir of James Pedigru Boyce* (Louisville: Baptist Book Concern, 1893), 265, italics mine.

cal relations with the medieval evangelical parties and the antipe-dobaptist parties of the sixteenth century are most intimate have rejected the Calvinistic system; while those that owe their origin to English Puritanism, with Wiclifism and Lollardism behind it and with the deeply rooted Calvinism of the English Elizabethan age as its leading characteristic, have been noted for their staunch adherence to Calvinistic principles, not, of course, because of any supposed authority of Calvin or of the English Puritan leaders, but because they have seemed to them to be Scriptural. Calvinistic and Arminian Baptists have both had periods of extreme development, the former sometimes scarcely escaping fatalism and antinomianism, the latter sometimes falling into Socinian denial of the deity of Christ and Pelagian denial of original sin. *The great majority of the Baptists of today hold to what may be called moderate Calvinism, or Calvinism tempered with the evangelical anti-Augustinianism which came through the Moravian Brethren to Wesley and by him was brought to bear on all bodies of evangelical Christians.*²⁰

(1911) **Z. T. Cody (1858-1935)**, a Mercer University graduate, studied theology under James P. Boyce at Southern Seminary while earning the Master of Theology degree there, who later earned the Doctor of Divinity degree from Bowden College. He served as pastor of several prominent churches in the South, including First Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, and served as editor of South Carolina's *Baptist Courier* from 1911-1935. He is described as "a theologian of the first rank" by the *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*. In 1919, he was appointed by the Southern Baptist Convention to be on a five-member committee to write a historical document, a fraternal letter to Baptists around the world. The committee was comprised of Cody, J. B. Gambrell, E. Y. Mullins, L. R. Scarborough, and William Ellyson. The article cited below, published originally in the *Baptist Courier* on "Are Baptists Calvinists?" was so popular that it was reprinted in *Baptist World* magazine and in the book *Christian Union Relative to Baptist Churches*, edited by James M. Frost:

Are Baptists Calvinists? The answer to this question depends on what is meant by Calvinism. *If by it is meant all that Calvin himself taught and practiced a negative answer is the only possible one;* for Calvin believed in burning men for deadly heresy, in the union of church and state, in infant baptism and in a good many other things which have ever been rejected by all Baptists. But these things, while taught and practiced by the Genevan, are not now considered as essential to his system; and many feel that churches can reject them and still be called Calvinistic.

²⁰A. H. Newman, *A History of the Baptist Churches in the United States* (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1894), 5-6, italics mine.

The so-called “five points of Calvinism” are the essential doctrines of the system. Men have forgotten them now but they were once as familiar as the letters of the alphabet. They are, particular predestination, limited atonement, natural inability, irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints. *Now if this is the system that constitutes Calvinism it is again very certain that Baptists are not Calvinists.*

But it can be very confidently affirmed that there is now no Baptist church that holds or defends the five points of Calvinism. Some of the doctrines are repugnant to our people. Could there be found a minister in our communion who believes in the theory of a limited atonement? In answering our question, then, we would say that Baptists are not Calvinists; and while Calvinism is an honored name, yet to wear it would detract somewhat from a greater honor that properly belongs to Baptists.²¹

Weighing the Evidence. The evidence listed above is significant and compelling for the following reasons:

1. **Well-informed evaluators.** Each of the eight persons cited was a significant and trusted Baptist leader in the era under discussion, and were thus in an excellent position to make an informed judgment on this issue beyond their own church or personal beliefs. They provide us with their professional judgment of the status of Baptist life in the immediate past which they were positioned to observe personally. The original source material from these Baptist leaders from the past provides much stronger support than other recent works which cite secondary sources or anecdotal accounts. Were such anecdotal counterexamples to be presented, I do also have in hand literally dozens of additional anecdotal accounts of individuals, churches, and associations moving away from a five-point Calvinist perspective during this era. (Perhaps a collection of them can be listed in a forthcoming article). Although cumulatively these additional anecdotal accounts do help support the case against the dominance of five-point Calvinism in early Baptist life, I have resisted the temptation to provide anecdotal evidence in this article, opting instead for these more comprehensive regional and national evalua-

²¹Z. T. Cody, “Are Baptists Calvinists?” *Baptist Courier*, February 16, 1911; reprinted in *Baptist World*, April 12, 1911, and in *Christian Union Relative to Baptist Churches*, ed. James M. Frost (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1915), 32-35, italics mine. Since the book by Frost is most accessible to readers, these citations are taken from it, 32-33, 35. The Frost book is available at <https://ia600200.us.archive.org/22/items/christianunionre00edit/christianunionre00edit.pdf>.

tions by well-informed Baptist leaders of that era.

2. **Historical proximity of the evaluations.** The Baptist leaders listed have overlapping lives spanning from the mid-eighteenth century through the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Their published writings are spaced at intervals between 1791 and 1911, and all the authors lived at least forty years in the 1800s, giving them decades of time to observe Baptist life carefully. Their cumulative and overlapping experience in Baptist life over this two-century period provides a comprehensive and synoptic vision of Baptist life in this period.
3. **Professional judgment, not merely their own personal or localized perspective.** A crucial point is that each of the persons cited was not stating their own theological views or those of a church or small area, but assessing the theological posture of Baptists/Southern Baptists as a whole. This is a crucial distinction from some other works which have addressed this subject. Indeed, since some of these authors cited held to a more Calvinistic perspective in their own personal views, this lends even greater credence to their affirmation that Baptists in the South as a whole had much more mixed views on Calvinism than others have suggested.
4. **Meets the threshold of evidence required.** The threshold of evidence necessary to disprove the claim that the “overwhelming majority” of antebellum Baptists in the South were five-point Calvinists is rather low. The evidence need not show, for example, that (a) some Southern Baptists were not five-point Calvinists, or that (b) a few leading Southern Baptists were not five-point Calvinists, or that (c) some theologians or institutions affirmed five-point Calvinism. All that the evidence need show is that there were a substantial number of Baptists in the South who were not five-point Calvinists. The evidence does clearly meet and exceed that threshold of evidence.
5. **The overall perspective, not anecdotal accounts.** This evidence cannot be disconfirmed by merely citing counterevidence or anecdotal accounts of (a), (b), or (c) listed above, i.e., citing the theological stance of individual theologians, churches, or institutions. The only relevant counterevidence would be that which demonstrates that an “overwhelming majority” of Baptists in the South in the nineteenth century were five-point Calvinists. However, as noted earlier, even if such anecdotal evidence were to be presented, there are also dozens of anecdotal accounts in churches and associations across the South which support the conclusion that

Baptists in the South were not overwhelmingly five-point Calvinists. Combining these sets of anecdotes would only provide further support for the thesis being presented here: that nineteenth-century Baptists were not uniform but were rather diverse regarding some aspects of soteriology.

Conclusion Regarding Claim 1.

The historical evidence demonstrates not only that not all Baptists in the antebellum South were five-point Calvinists; but to the contrary, a broad mixture of Calvinist and Arminian perspectives was most characteristic in the churches. Based on this evidence from some of the most influential and well-informed Baptists of that era, the claim that five-point Calvinism was the dominant perspective at the time before and after the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention appears to be closer to a somewhat inaccurate revisionist history than an established historical fact. This Calvinianism becomes even more pronounced in the latter nineteenth century.

This conclusion that Baptists in the 1800s and 1900s held to a hybrid mixture of Calvinist and Arminian beliefs is confirmed by more recent historians as well.

Nathan Finn, associate professor of historical theology and Baptist studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. While asserting that early Southern Baptists were “broadly Calvinistic,” Finn concedes that in fact many of these Baptists were remarkably diverse, affirming neither all five points of Calvinism nor all five points of Arminianism, but a Baptist hybrid of these perspectives:

This does not mean Southern Baptists were uniformly Calvinist—if by Calvinist one means strict adherence to all ‘five points.’ For example, it is clear that the founding generation of Southern Baptists were debating the intent of the atonement, with some holding to more ‘limited/particular’ understandings and others holding to more ‘general/unlimited’ views. It is also clear, however, that there was minimal debate concerning the doctrines of election or perseverance.²²

Wayne Flynt, distinguished professor of history at Auburn University, winner of numerous book awards, and author of *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie*, which was printed to commemorate the 175th anniversary of the Alabama Baptist Convention, and was lauded in *Journal of Southern History* as “without question, the very best state or regional Baptist history ever published in the United States.” Flynt likewise points to the diversity of beliefs among Baptists of the South, and Alabama in particular:

²²Nathan Finn, “On the ‘Traditional Statement’: Some Friendly Reflections from a Calvinistic Southern Baptist,” *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* 10 (2013): 66-67, italics mine.

*No Biblical dispute shaped early Alabama Baptists so profoundly as Calvinism. . . . Although Baptists were Calvinists in the general sense of that term, they modified the doctrine. . . . If Charleston, South Carolina provides the clearest ancestry for Calvinism, Sandy Creek, North Carolina, lays firmest claim to the revival tradition. Ardent, charismatic, emotional, independent, Biblicist, the Sandy Creek tradition merged elements of both Calvinism and Arminianism.*²³

Albert W. Wardin, Jr., history professor emeritus of Belmont University, former president of the Baptist History and Heritage Society, and author of the Tennessee Baptist history. Wardin also describes this diversity among Tennessee Baptists in the 1850s, coinciding with the founding and early days of the Southern Baptist Convention:

In 1856 the *Baptist Watchman* maintained that *Separate Baptist influence had triumphed and most Missionary or United Baptists held to a general atonement.*

Wardin also notes on the same page,

In its adoption of a new constitution in 1844, the Concord church [Brentwood, TN] *eliminated references to election and effectual calling and instead declared, "That the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel."*²⁴

So, there appears to be an emerging consensus that although some of the Calvinistic doctrines of the Baptists of the North (primarily the Philadelphia Association) were shared through their emissaries (such as John Gano) in some areas of the South in the latter 1700s and first several decades of the 1800s, and resonated with the Charleston Association, the following statements are descriptive of Southern Baptist life in the first seventy-five years of the Southern Baptist Convention (1845-1920):

- (a) while affirmed by some churches and associations, five-point Calvinism was not dominant among most Baptist churches in the South after the Second Great Awakening,
- (b) actual churches and associations reflected a broader diversity than any one view, and
- (c) most characteristic was a distinctively Baptist hybrid mixture of Calvinism and Arminianism that fell short of an affirmation of either five-point Calvinism or five-point Arminianism.

²³Wayne Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 26-27, italics and underlining mine.

²⁴Albert W. Wardin, Jr., *Tennessee Baptists: A Comprehensive History, 1779-1999* (Nashville: Tennessee Baptist Convention, 1999), 148, italics mine.

Assessing Claim 2: Are Baptist Confessions Overwhelmingly Five-Point Calvinist Documents?

This section addresses the historical accuracy of the second claim, (b) that the Baptist confessions (particularly those affirmed in the South) were overwhelmingly five-point Calvinist confessions from the time of the founding of the SBC through the early to mid-twentieth century.²⁵

Frankly, this is a fairly easy claim to disprove. In fact, there are only a couple of five-point Calvinistic Baptist confessions in America that achieved any level of prominence, and neither of these were widely accepted by the time of the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention. The great majority of Southern Baptist confessions are somewhere between Arminianism and Calvinism. More strongly than this, the evidence will show that the confessions which were overwhelmingly affirmed by Southern Baptists were not the five-point Calvinist confessions, but in fact Southern Baptists intentionally chose the confessions which were clearly neither Calvinist nor Arminian (a position that some describe as Calminian)²⁶ over against the existing five-point Calvinistic Baptist confessions.

²⁵For example, the Spurgeon Baptist Association of Churches makes the following astounding assertion on its website: "It was not until the early twentieth century that Baptists in the south turned from the 1689 Confession to a form of the New Hampshire Confession of 1833." See "Confession of Faith," Spurgeon Baptist Association of Churches, http://sbaoc.org/page/statement_of_faith (accessed 26 April 2014).

Likewise, Tom Ascol has claimed that the soteriology voiced in "A Statement of the Traditional Southern Baptist Understanding of God's Plan of Salvation" "*has only been 'traditional' since about 1963*," when the 1963 *Baptist Faith and Message*, in Ascol's opinion, represented a "doctrinal downgrade" from the dominance of high Calvinism before it. Ascol, "Response to 'A Statement of the Traditional Southern Baptist Understanding of God's Plan of Salvation,'" part 3 and part 5.

Thomas Kidd has made the even bolder claim that "In America, Baptists who believed in a general atonement became a decided minority, especially after the Great Awakening of the mid-eighteenth century." Kidd, "Traditional Baptists' and Calvinism." This claim seems very difficult to support from the historical evidence. In fact, what stands out is the overwhelming rejection of Limited Atonement from the time of the founding of the SBC until now—in the widely affirmed *New Hampshire Confession* of 1833, in the Abstract of Principles of 1858, in the Articles of Religious Belief of 1918, and in all three versions of the *Baptist Faith and Message* (1925, 1963, and 2000) which follow the pattern of the *New Hampshire Confession*.

²⁶Personally, I do not prefer the term "Calminian." However, it is sometimes used to refer to the Baptist tradition within which I was reared, which some call "Traditional Baptists," and I prefer to call "majoritarian Baptists" (since by every objective measure, including LifeWay Research, it is the held by the overwhelming majority of Southern Baptists and has been for many years). The "Calminian Baptist" nomenclature is utilized here as a reference to the reality that most Southern Baptists since the inception of our convention are neither fully Calvinist nor Arminian, but a unique and distinct Baptist tradition that is somewhere between these two extremes. This perspective is articulated in the *New Hampshire Confession* and all three versions of the *Baptist Faith and Message*. Again, this Calminianism is also articulated in the "Neither Calvinists Nor Arminians, But Baptists" statement.

The Minority Report: Two Calvinistic Confessions

There are only two Baptist confessions in America that reflect five-point or high Calvinism—the *Philadelphia Confession* of 1742, which rather slavishly parroted the language of the *Second London Confession* of 1689, and the “Principles of Faith” of 1818, adopted briefly by the Sandy Creek Association, which they changed a few years later to a more “Calminian” Baptist confession. Both were early Baptist confessions before the full impact of the Second Great Awakening, and both were roundly ignored by the overwhelming number of Southern Baptists after the mid-1800s.

The *Philadelphia Confession* (1742) / The *Charleston Confession* (1700 and 1767).²⁷ The *Philadelphia Confession* was approved by the Calvinistic Philadelphia Association in 1742, with only minor editorial changes from the Particular Baptist *Second London Confession* of 1689. The *Second London Confession*, in turn, followed closely the wording of the *Westminster Confession* of 1647,²⁸ which was adopted by the Westminster Assembly in its attempt to calvinize the Church of England, though making changes in a few doctrines not affirmed by these Particular Baptists. The Charleston Association likewise adopted a confession with the same language as the *Second London Confession* in 1700 and reaffirmed this *Second London/Philadelphia Confession* in 1767. The alterations made by the *Second London Confession* from the truly Calvinist *Westminster Confession* reveal the significant theological and ecclesiological differences between even the strongly Calvinistic English Particular Baptists and true Calvinists—distinctives which seem to be overlooked or minimized sometimes by some contemporary neo-Calvinists.²⁹

The Philadelphia Association sought to gain wider acceptance of its doctrinal confession by sending persuasive representatives into the South such as John Gano to try to popularize it in the South, which was fairly successful. The *Philadelphia Confession* resonated particularly among those in the Charleston tradition. However, the Charleston Association was not dependent on the Philadelphia Association, because it adopted the *Second London Confession* in 1700 before the *Philadelphia Confession* was even written. However, the *Philadelphia Confession* was not adopted by the Convention as its confession in 1845, and was never widely adopted by associations, state conventions, or educational institutions. It was largely ignored by Southern Baptists after the mid-nineteenth century and remains something of an out-

²⁷The *Philadelphia Confession* of 1742 is available online in the Baptist Confessions section of the Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry at http://www.baptistcenter.net/confessions/Philadelphia_Confession_of_Faith_1742.pdf. The *Philadelphia Confession* (1742) was modeled after the *Second London Confession* (1689), which in turn followed the language of the *Westminster Confession* (1646) rather closely at points.

²⁸Philip Schaff, *Creeeds of Christendom*, 3 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1877), 3:600-73.

²⁹For a comparison of the Baptist distinctives affirmed in the Philadelphia and Second London confessions that differentiated these Particular Baptists from the Presbyterian/Congregationalist doctrines in the *Westminster Confession*, see Steve Lemke, “What Is a Baptist? Nine Marks that Separate Baptists and Presbyterians.”

lier in Southern Baptist experience for the last century and a half.

The [Sandy Creek] Principles of Faith of 1816.³⁰ The second but virtually unknown Calvinistic Baptist confession was the “Principles of Faith” of the Sandy Creek Association in 1816. This is an extremely brief outline of doctrine (ten principles enunciated in eleven sentences). Although the Principles reflect virtually no verbal reliance on the Philadelphia or Second London confessions, this brief doctrinal statement clearly affirmed five-point Calvinism. However, just 29 years later, toward the end of the Second Great Awakening in 1845, the Sandy Creek Association changed their doctrinal confession to be essentially the same as the *New Hampshire Confession*.³¹ This change of confessions reflects a clear and deliberate move away from the five-point high Calvinism that was pushed by Regular Baptists in the eighteenth century to a modified Calvinian Baptist view by the time of the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention.

However, Separate Baptists and Sandy Creek Baptists overall were reluctant to author doctrinal confessions. Let me suggest several contributing reasons for this phenomenon:

1. Separate and Sandy Creek Baptists opposed having creeds and confessions. Some of the early Baptists had seen how creeds had been used like clubs of religious oppression in Anglican England, Congregationalist New England, and Episcopalian Virginia. This creedal religion was precisely that from which the “Separate” Baptists wanted to separate themselves. As true representatives of the free church tradition, their leaning was toward soul freedom to interpret Scripture under the leadership of the Holy Spirit rather than dictums from popes or synods. So although they had strong doctrinal convictions, they were somewhat reluctant to form them into confessions because of their mindfulness of confessions sometimes coming to be enforced in a creedal way. When confessions were approved, there was often an “escape clause” that allowed for broad individual interpretation, not creedal force.

Numerous attempts were made to unify Separate and Regular Virginia Baptists. For example, in Robert Boyle C. Howell’s 1857 history of *The Early Baptists of Virginia* records that as early as 1769, “the Kettocton, a Regular, or

³⁰The Principles of Faith can be found in the Minutes of the Sandy Creek Association for October 26, 1816 in George W. Purefoy, *A History of the Sandy Creek Association, From Its Organization in A.D. 1758 to A.D. 1858* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1859), 104-05. A copy of this volume may be found at <https://archive.org/details/historyofsandycr01pure>.

³¹See the Minutes of the Sandy Creek Association for September 26, 1845 in Purefoy, *A History of Sandy Creek Association*, 197-216; the confession is also available online in the Baptist Confessions section of the Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry at http://www.baptistcenter.net/confessions/Declaration_Of_Faith_Sandy_Creek_Association_1845.pdf.

Calvinistic Association in Northern Virginia” communicated with “the Sandy Creek, or Separate, or Arminian Association” in Southern Virginia and North Carolina about a possible union.³² Howell also reports the successful attempt at union between the Regular and Separate Baptists in Virginia in 1787, citing James B. Semple’s seminal 1810 book, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia*. Semple records that the primary hindrance to union was the adoption of a confession. The Regular Baptists “complained that the Separates were not sufficiently explicit in their principles, having never published nor sanctioned a Confession of Faith.” The Separates countered that they believed that “a large majority” of beliefs of the Regular Baptists, but they “did not approve the practice of churches binding themselves too strictly by Confessions of Faith.” The Separates also had some among their leaders who may have been considered to lean “too much towards the Arminian system” if the Confession was enforced strictly, and did not want to lose them from the association because it “would be like tearing the limbs from the body.”³³

The Separate Baptists argued against the need for any confession at all, but in the interest of unification acceded to the Regular Baptist confession with the following important qualification: “To prevent the Confession of Faith from usurping a tyrannical power over the conscience, we do not mean (by giving it our approval) that every person shall be bound to the strict observance of everything therein contained, but only that it holds forth the essential truths of the gospel, and (shows) that the doctrine of salvation by Christ, through free and unmerited grace alone, ought to be believed by every Christian, and maintained by every minister of the gospel.”³⁴

2. Most leaders of the Separate Baptists and Sandy Creek tradition Baptists were simple biblicists, not the highly trained academicians of the Charleston tradition. The Separate and Sandy Creek Baptists preferred asserting the Bible as their

³²Robert Boyle C. Howell, *The Early Baptists of Virginia* (Philadelphia: The Bible and Publication Society, 1857), 45-46.

³³James B. Semple, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia* (Richmond: John O’Lynch, 1810), 73-75; or the 1894 revised and extended edition of the same work, ed. G. W. Beale (Richmond: & Dickinson, 1894), 99-101; Howell, *he Early Baptists of Virginia*, 48-50. The 1894 Beale revision of Semple rewords this hindrance as being that the Separates “kept within their communion many who were professed Arminians” (100).

³⁴Semple, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia*, 74; Semple *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia*, rev. ed., 100; Howell, *he Early Baptists of Virginia*, 49.

creed over any human statement of doctrine. They were more interested in asserting biblical truths than becoming systematic theologians. The Sandy Creek leaders were not educated in Ivy League type schools like many in the Charleston tradition. Furthermore, most of them were bi-vocational ministers and subsistence farmers, trappers, and hunters, and thus did not have the leisure time or interest to develop such statements (unlike some key Charleston tradition leaders, who were the Southern aristocracy with slaves to take care of their work and daily tasks around the home).

3. Unlike the Charleston tradition Regular Baptists, there were no confessions available to the Separate and Sandy Creek Baptists (until the *New Hampshire Confession* of 1833) which perfectly expressed their own doctrinal convictions, particularly after the Second Great Awakening. The only extant American Baptist confession was the *Philadelphia Confession*, and they were consistently resistant to approving it. They did come to affirm the *New Hampshire Confession* as an adequate expression of their faith by 1845.

One simply cannot read these historical accounts of early Baptist life and then say with a straight face that Baptists were univocally and overwhelmingly five-point Calvinists. There was considerable diversity within their ranks regarding Calvinist or Arminian doctrines. The point being made here, however, is that the Separate and Sandy Creek Baptists were disinclined toward confessions being utilized in creedal ways that superseded Scripture and individual conscience.

The Seminary Confessions – All Calvinian

No SBC seminary has ever affirmed a five-point Calvinist confession. Every SBC seminary confession is no more than three or four points, which is the very definition of Calvinian.

The Abstract of Principles of SBTS (1858).³⁵ What about the Abstract of Principles, the doctrinal confession utilized by Southern Baptist Theological Seminary before the first *Baptist Faith and Message* was written in 1925? Although the Abstract of Principles is sometimes described as a Calvinist confession, clearly this is a misnomer. No one claims that it affirms five-point Calvinism. It can be claimed to be Calvinistic only by comparison with majoritarian Baptist confessions over the last century-and-a-half which lean even further away from five-point Calvinism. What evidence can document this claim?

³⁵The Abstract of Principles is available online in the Baptist Confessions section of the Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry at http://www.baptistcenter.net/confessions/1858_Abstract_of_Principles.pdf.

1. The authors of the Abstract of Principles were very aware of the already existing *Philadelphia Confession* of 1742, and yet they chose not to utilize it. Obviously, were the *Philadelphia Confession* acceptable, there would have been no need for the Abstract to be written. One of the criteria the founding faculty of SBTS utilized in writing the Abstract was that it would not take a position about which there was division within the Convention.³⁶ In particular, the Abstract was written with sensitivity to the New Divinity theology of Timothy Dwight and the four-point Calvinism of Andrew Fuller.³⁷
2. In his authoritative history of SBTS, Greg Wills notes that although Basil Manly, Jr., the primary author of the Abstract's first drafts, was himself a five-point Calvinist, he was unable to persuade the other committee members to affirm the higher Calvinist document articulated in his early drafts. Wills describes the Abstract of Principles as affirming no more than four of the traditional five points of Calvinistic soteriology.³⁸
3. Dr. Al Mohler, President of SBTS, recently described the Abstract of Principles as being a three-point Calvinist document, not affirming limited atonement (particular redemption) or irresistible (enabling) grace.³⁹
4. Even if the Abstract of Principles had been a five-point Calvinistic confession, the SBC in general session never voted on or approved the Abstract of Principles as reflecting the convention's own doctrinal perspective. The Abstract was simply allowed to remain standing until it was superseded by

³⁶Greg Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (1859-2009)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 31.

³⁷Ibid., 38. Wills notes that the document went through numerous revisions as it was vetted by the SBTS faculty, a group of pastors, and a committee of Baptist educators. The majority rejected the affirmation of limited atonement (or particular redemption) in accord with the followers of Andrew Fuller. Revisions were also made to be sensitive to the views of the New Divinity of Timothy Dwight, held by prominent Southern Baptists such as William B. Johnson, who preferred the moral government view of the atonement over the penal substitution theory, and denied that Adam's sin was imputed to his posterity such that persons were punished for someone else's sin. In regard to the latter topic, a later revision rewrote the section on the "Fall of Man" with language that later was included (with one significant rewording) in the 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message*: "whereby his [Adam's] posterity inherit a nature corrupt and wholly opposed to God and His law, are under condemnation, and as soon as they are capable of moral action, become actual transgressors." (Ibid., 33-40). Note that it is a corrupt nature that is inherited, not inherited guilt.

³⁸Ibid., 38. Wills asserts that the Abstract of Principles does not affirm limited atonement.

³⁹James A. Smith, Sr., "Mohler: Southern Baptists need 'table manners' when discussing Calvinism," *Southern News*, November 15, 2013; <http://news.sbts.edu/2013/11/15/mohler-southern-baptists-need-table-manners-when-discussing-calvinism/> (accessed 26 April 2014).

the *Baptist Faith and Message* in 1925.⁴⁰ In fact, statements which follow regarding the popularity of the *New Hampshire Confession* make it clear that the Abstract of Principles was never widely accepted or utilized by Southern Baptists as a confession.⁴¹

5. Furthermore, high Calvinists find the Abstract of Principles to be a deficient expression of Calvinism. Not only did Calvin himself hold Baptists in low regard, and the Abstract fails to affirm all five points of traditional Calvinist soteriology, but James A. K. Smith singles out the Abstract as reflecting a deficient stream within Calvinism. According to Smith, the Abstract of Principles reflects the anemic Westminster stream, which was an “arid desert” within the Reformed tradition compared with the “nourishing oasis” of the stream flowing from the *Heidelberg Confession*.⁴²

[T]his Westminster stream diminishes the *catholicity* of the Reformed tradition, so the “Calvinism” that it articulates is just the sort of slimmed-down, extracted soteriology that can be basically detached and inserted across an array of denominations (and “non-denominations”).⁴³

Smith laments that the Abstract and other such deficient expressions of true Calvinism reject other key Calvinist doc-

⁴⁰The adoption of SBTS by SBC from Furman College by the SBC was a bit unusual in that it was not done in the open convention session business, but in auxiliary meetings called the “Education Convention” in 1857 and 1858. Thus neither the Abstract of Principles nor the adoption of Southern Seminary actually came to a full convention vote. See Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (1859–2009)*, 31–52, and *SBC Annuals* for 1857 and 1858.

⁴¹Tom Ascol cites Tom Nettles as asserting “that Calvinism was the theological consensus for the first 70 years of the SBC. The convention’s first official confession of faith [i.e., the Abstract of Principles], which was written to provide doctrinal boundaries for our first seminary, reflects this consensus.” See Tom Ascol, “Response to ‘A Statement of the Traditional Southern Baptist Understanding of God’s Plan of Salvation,’” part 3 and part 5, Founders Ministries Blog. There are several profound problems with this claim: (a) The Abstract of Principles was never formally approved by the SBC, so it would be quite an extrapolation to make the Abstract the consensus view of Southern Baptists as a whole; (b) as the SBTS sesquicentennial history and SBTS President Al Mohler make very clear, the Abstract of Principles is only a three or four-point Calvinist document, and therefore hardly counts as a strong Calvinist confession, and (c) as the following section will clearly demonstrate, the Abstract of Principles was an anomaly that was rarely adopted by any other Southern Baptist entities, conventions, or associations, and thus makes the claim that it reflects a consensus view rather hard to justify. It was the *New Hampshire Confession* that was clearly the consensus doctrinal statement for Southern Baptists from about 1845 until the writing of the first *Baptist Faith and Message* in 1925, which was itself largely based the *New Hampshire Confession*.

⁴²James K. A. Smith, *Letters to a Young Calvinist*, 55.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 61.

trines such as infant baptism and ecclesiology, and thus do not truly belong within the Reformed tradition.⁴⁴

The (Slightly Modified) *New Hampshire Confession* of SWBTS (1908).⁴⁵ B. H. Carroll had already affirmed the *New Hampshire Confession* in the Waco Baptist Association while serving as Pastor of First Baptist Church in Waco, Texas. At the founding of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1908, he made a slightly modified (changing just one word) *New Hampshire Confession* the doctrinal statement of SWBTS in 1908, just seventeen years before the first *Baptist Faith and Message* would be approved in 1925.⁴⁶

The Articles of Religious Belief of NOBTS (1918).⁴⁷ President Byron H. DeMent and original faculty member W. E. Denham of Baptist Bible Institute (later New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary) were charged with writing a doctrinal confession for the new seminary in 1917 (because the first *Baptist Faith and Message* was still eight years in the future). DeMent and Denham were graduates of SBTS, and DeMent was a former faculty member of SBTS, but they neither utilized the Abstract of Principles as a confession nor used its language in the new confession, nor the language of any other prior confession. DeMent and Denham wrote a uniquely new Baptist confession which has been affirmed by every NOBTS faculty member since its founding faculty. Applying the methodology of “A More

⁴⁴Ibid., 61-64.

⁴⁵*Minutes*, Board of Trustees of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, November 1908 (Fort Worth: Archives of the Roberts Library), 21-22, cited in Malcolm Yarnell, “Calvinism: Cause for Rejoicing, Cause for Concern,” in *Calvinism: A Southern Baptist Dialogue*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen and Brad J. Waggoner (Nashville: B&H, 2008), 82-83. The Southwestern Seminary faculty reaffirmed the *New Hampshire Confession* in 1921 when under the assault from J. Frank Norris. See also Robert A. Baker, *Tell the Generations Following: A History of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1908-1983* (Nashville: Broadman, 1983), 142-43.

⁴⁶*Minutes*, Southwestern Board of Trustees, November 1908; cited in Yarnell, “Calvinism: Cause for Rejoicing, Cause for Concern,” 82-83, and Baker, *Tell the Generations Following*, 142-43. Yarnell notes that the one word changed concerned ecclesiology, from “particular” church to “visible” church, to deny any possible unintended affirmation of the “invisible” church. Yarnell, “Calvinism: Cause for Rejoicing, Cause for Concern,” 82-83. Carroll provided a detailed analysis of the *New Hampshire Confession* in a lecture series with Calvin Goodspeed delivered between 1905 and 1909, and later published in the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 5, no. 2, 3, and 4 (1921); 6, no. 1, 2, 3, and 4 (1922); 7, no. 1, 2, 3, and 4 (1923); 8, no. 1 and 2 (1924); and the complete series is reprinted with minor revisions in *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 51 (2009): 134-256. Carroll might best be described as being in that Calvinian perspective of holding in an unresolved tension both Calvinistic views of depravity and election with Arminianistic views of human freedom and responsibility. Carroll leaves room for some mystery in this intersection of divine and human, affirming the statement in Article 7 on regeneration in the *New Hampshire Confession* that regeneration and spiritual life “is above our comprehension” (183).

⁴⁷The Articles of Religious Belief are available in the Baptist Confessions section of the Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry at http://www.baptistcenter.net/confessions/NOBTS_Articles_of_Religious_Belief.pdf.

Detailed Analysis of the Five Points of Calvinism,” the Articles of Religious Belief appear to affirm about 2.5 to 3.0 points of classical Calvinism.⁴⁸

The Majority Report: The “Calminian” Confessions

The New Hampshire Confession (1833). By far the most widely accepted and formative Southern Baptist confession from about the 1840s until today is the *New Hampshire Confession* of 1833. The *New Hampshire Confession* took significant steps away from the higher Calvinistic doctrine of the Second London/Philadelphia/Charleston confessions. Applying the methodology of “A More Detailed Analysis of the Five Points of Calvinism,” the *New Hampshire Confession* is about 3.25 or 3.5 points.

Malcolm Yarnell also notes the significant adjustments made in the New Hampshire Confession from earlier more Calvinistic confessions:

The New Hampshire Confession downplays most of the doctrines that the Synod of Dort and Second London Confession emphasized. There is no hint whatsoever of unconditional predestination, for the questions of particularity and reprobation are never addressed. Rather, New Hampshire immediately affirms that election is “perfectly consistent with the free agency of man,” then proceeds to teach the benefits of a biblical doctrine of election: it effectively elevates divine wisdom, promotes humility among men, encourages Christian proclamation, and provides assurance (9). The debate between general and particular atonement is left unaddressed: Christ simply “made atonement for our sins by his death” (4). There is a doctrine of corruption, but the Augustinian doctrine of original sin is muted: all are “now sinners, not by constraint but choice” (3). As for irresistible grace, it is replaced with a strong statement regarding the freeness of salvation: “Nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth except his own voluntary refusal to submit to the Lord” (6). Ultimately, the only soteriological distinctive of the Synod of Dort to be clearly confessed in the New Hampshire Confession, and in its Southern Baptist descendants, is final preservation (11).⁴⁹

⁴⁸“A More Detailed Analysis of the Five Points of Calvinism” is an attempt to provide a more accurate and precise analysis of how closely a theologian or confession align with the Canons of Dort. Each main head of doctrine of the Synod of Dort is broken into four component parts affirmed in that confession. The specific subpoint within the affirmations or denials of the Synod of Dort are noted for each of these subdoctrines. One-fourth of a point is given for each of these affirmations. This method allows one to affirm some but not all of each of these doctrines, and thus be more precise in what the theologian or confession actually affirms or denies.

⁴⁹Yarnell, “Calvinism: Cause for Rejoicing, Cause for Concern,” 81.

Likewise, Phillip Schaff, writing in the 1877 first edition of his *Creeds of Christendom*, describes the *New Hampshire Confession* as being in a “milder form” than previous American Baptist confessions, and as being “widely accepted by Baptists.”⁵⁰ Indeed, the *New Hampshire Confession* was approved not only by New Hampshire Baptists in 1833, but by the important Sandy Creek Association in North Carolina in 1845, moving away from their markedly more Reformed “Principles of Faith” that they had affirmed in 1817.

More importantly, every major Baptist church manual or book on Baptist beliefs from 1853 through 1913 (though they were clearly aware of the *Philadelphia Confession* and the Abstract of Principles) promulgated and recommended the *New Hampshire Confession* as the confession that best expressed the perspective of Baptists. These widely used church manuals and statements of Baptist beliefs which recommended the *New Hampshire Confession* included the following:

- J. Newton Brown, *Baptist Church Manual* (1853), which, amazingly for the time of its publication, sold over one million copies.⁵¹
- Dudley C. Haynes, *The Baptist Denomination, Its History, Doctrines, and Ordinances* (1857). Haynes defended his utilization of the *New Hampshire Confession* authored by J. Newton Brown in the following words: “We have finally decided to adopt that prepared by Rev. J. Newton Brown, D. D., Editorial Secretary of the American Baptist Publication Society. These articles of faith were prepared several years ago, and are now in very general use” (61-62).⁵²
- Edward Hiscox’s publications such as *The Baptist Church Manual* (1859), *The Baptist Directory: A Guide to the Doctrines and Practices of Baptist Churches* (1868, 1876) and *Standard Manual for Baptist Churches* (1890)⁵³
- J. A. Pendleton’s *Church Manual, Designed for Use by Baptist*

⁵⁰Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, 3:742. The confession is printed on pp. 742-48.

⁵¹J. Newton Brown, *Baptist Church Manual* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1853), 5-22.

⁵²Dudley C. Haynes, *The Baptist Denomination, Its History, Doctrines, and Ordinances; Its Polity, Persecutions, and Martyrs; Facts and Statistics of Its Missionary Institutions, Schools of Learning, Etc.; the Indebtedness of the World to Baptists, and Their Duty to the World* (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman, and Co., 1857), 62-74.

⁵³Edward Hiscox, *The Baptist Church Directory: A Guide to the Doctrines and Practices of Baptist Churches* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1859, 1888 rep. ed.), 154-76; *The Baptist Directory: A Guide to the Doctrines and Practices of Baptist Churches* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1876), 154-76; *Standard Manual for Baptist Churches* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publications Society, 1890), 58-76; *The New Directory for Baptist Churches* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1894, 16th printing 1941), 538-63. All of these variously renamed and repackaged publications by Hixson, with numerous reprintings, sold a total of over 100,000 copies, all of which recommended the *New Hampshire Confession*. It is still in publication today.

- *Churches* (1867)⁵⁴
- J. M. Frost, ed., *Baptist Why and Why Not* (1900)⁵⁵
- O. C. S. Wallace, *What Baptists Believe* (1913), which sold over 200,000 copies. Wallace said he recommended the *New Hampshire Confession* because “it is the formula of Christian truth most commonly used as a standard in Baptist churches throughout the country, to express what they believe according to the Scriptures.”⁵⁶ Wallace did include the Abstract of Principles in the appendix in the back of the book for “helpful comparison and study,” thus clearly presenting the *New Hampshire Confession* as the majority confession and the Abstract as a minority confession.
- Phillip Schaff, writing in the 1877 first edition of his *Creeds of Christendom*, describes the *New Hampshire Confession* as being in a “milder form” than previous American Baptist confessions, and as being “widely accepted by Baptists.”⁵⁷
- B. H. Carroll was a key figure in nineteenth-century Baptist life—pastor of the influential First Baptist Church of Waco, Texas, a key leader in the founding of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, a key player in the Whitsett controversy at Southern Seminary, and later the founder of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The Waco Baptist Association had adopted the *New Hampshire Confession* as its own in 1860, and Carroll later made it the doctrinal confession for Southwestern Seminary.

In the 1897 history of the Waco Baptist Association, B. H. Carroll affirmed the *New Hampshire Confession*, which had been approved in 1860 by the association, with these words:

The Articles of Faith are the most widely accepted compendium of Baptist principles known to me. They were adopted by Waco Association before Pendleton’s “Manual” was published and only one year after the publication of the first edition of Hiscox’s “Directory.” . . . If I were asked to suggest a needed declaration of Baptist principles, I would not go further than the Articles of Faith of the Waco Association. Of course these Articles are popularly known as the New Hampshire confession.⁵⁸

⁵⁴J. M. Pendleton, *Church Manual, Designed for Use by Baptist Churches* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1867), 44-61.

⁵⁵J. M. Frost, ed., *Baptist Why and Why Not* (Nashville: Sunday School Board, 1900).

⁵⁶O. C. S. Wallace, *What Baptists Believe* (Nashville: Sunday School Board, 1913), 4.

⁵⁷Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, 3:742. The confession is printed on 742-48.

⁵⁸B. H. Carroll, “Introduction,” in J. L. Walker and C. P. Lumpkin, *History of the Waco Baptist Association of Texas* (Waco: Byrne-Hill Publishing House, 1897), 5-6. Introducing the Waco Association’s variation of the *New Hampshire Confession* (18-22), the authors wrote,

The Baptist Faith and Message (1925, 1963, and 2000). The language of the *Baptist Faith and Message* was revised but not dramatically altered in its three versions, especially in the sections addressing soteriology. Applying “A More Detailed Analysis of the Five Points of Calvinism,” all three versions of the 1925 BF&M affirms about 2.0-2.25 points of the Synod of Dort. No one seriously claims these are Calvinistic confessions.

Conclusion regarding Claim 2

The evidence has demonstrated rather conclusively that the Baptist confessions (particularly those affirmed in the South) from the early-nineteenth century through the early twentieth century were NOT overwhelmingly five-point Calvinist confessions, but in fact reflected various degrees of compromise between Arminianism and Calvinism. Or, more accurately, these reflected a new distinctive perspective drawn from blending multiple theological streams that we know as “Southern Baptist.”

Just Who Are Southern Baptists?

What the evidence has shown is that Southern Baptists are an amalgam, a great river that is fed by many tributaries. Broadly speaking, the Calvinistic leanings of the Particular Baptists and the Arminianistic leanings of the General Baptists are important historical tributaries into American Baptist life. More particularly, the Charleston tradition and the Sandy Creek tradition are two of the most prominent tributaries which flow into the Southern Baptist current. What is most characteristic of Southern Baptist life as a whole is to be neither fully Calvinist nor Arminian, but a mixture of both perspectives which has formed into a Calvinian Baptist or traditional Baptist position which has found broad expression in Southern Baptist life from before its founding in 1845 to the present day. Southern Baptists as a whole have never affirmed a five-point Calvinist confession nor a five-point Arminian confession. There have been times that one perspective or another garnered greater attention and popularity to swing one way or another for a decade or so (and we are currently in such a time), but in the end the anchor has always held within this Southern Baptist majoritarian consensus. And I imagine that it will for years to come.

“There is no more complete uninspired compendium of Baptist faith to be found in all literature” (18).

Easter Celebration in Seventh-Century Britain: Resolving Conflict within the Church

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In AD 664 a debate over the question of the correct Easter computus occurred in the abbey of Whitby, Northumbria. Both sides of the debate had presented their arguments and rebuttals. On one side was the Irish bishop of Northumbria, Colman. Opposing him was the stalwart figure of Wilfrid, an English priest and an up-and-coming figure in English ecclesiastical circles. Finally king Oswiu, who was presiding over this council, wryly smiled and asked the assembled clerics, “Who is greater in the kingdom of heaven, Columba or the Apostle Peter?”¹ The answer was a resounding vote of confidence in Petrine supremacy. Wilfrid won the day and Colman departed from Northumbria, eventually returning to Ireland. On the surface the so-called “Synod of Whitby” appears as a simple clash between Irish and English bishops over an obscure point of tradition, the calculation for the date of Easter. In reality Whitby was much more complex and to reduce it to a simple conflict between supposed Celtic and Roman churches does not do justice to the historical data. The English church was still very much in her infancy when Colman abdicated from Northumbria and missionaries on both sides of the debate were affected by its outcome. The underlying issues of tradition, authority and culture all played a role in the early evangelization of England and the Easter debates of the seventh century. The purpose of this article is to show that the discussion at Whitby was just the culmination of other discussions on the ecclesiology authority, cultural understanding and the early church traditions concerning a seemingly innocuous event like the date of Easter celebration.

The earliest Christian celebration of Easter (Pascha) coincided with the Jewish Passover. Melito of Sardis understood the Christian Pascha to coincide with Passover, i.e. it was always celebrated on the fourteenth day of the lunar month Nisan no matter what day of the week that was.² This was the common practice among Christians in Asia Minor and later came

¹“The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus,” in *Anglo-Saxon Saints and Heroes*, translated by Clinton Albertson, S.J. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1967), 105.

²Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha: with the Fragments of Melito and Other Material Related to the Quartodecimans*, translated, introduced and annotated by Alistair Stewart-Skyes (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), 23-25.

to be known as Quartodecimanism, from *luna quarta decima* (the fourteenth moon). Another tradition that developed was always to celebrate Easter on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the equinox, thereby separating the Christian Pascha from the Jewish Passover.³ Polycarp of Smyrna was reported by Eusebius to have visited Rome in order to try and reconcile two different Easter methods. While both sides failed to achieve an agreement on a single agreeable method, both Pope Anicetus and Polycarp ensured that the issue did not become a matter of dogma and both sides maintained full communion. However, as the second century ended Rome took a stronger position on the issue, and Pope Victor I declared Quartodecimanism and the churches of Asia Minor heretical. Many in the western church, including Irenaeus, disagreed with this dogmatic position and chided Victor for his divisive stance. By the fourth century the council of Nicaea (325) had once again declared the condemnation of Quartodecimanism.⁴

The differences that emerged between the Celtic and Roman dates for Easter were primarily over two technical issues: 1) the date of the equinox and 2) the terminal limits for Easter. As early as the fifth century the early Irish church calculated Easter on the basis that the equinox occurred on March 25 and Easter could occur within the limits of lunar 14-20.⁵ Scholars refer to this Easter calendar today as Celtic-84, since it operated on an 84-year cycle. At Whitby, Wilfrid was arguing for the use of the Dionysian method that calculated Easter from an equinox of March 21 within the limits of lunar 15-21.

Several points need to be made in relation to these differences between Ireland and Rome concerning Easter. Firstly, Celtic-84 was not a Celtic invention. Though widely used in the Celtic speaking areas of Christendom (Britain, Ireland etc.), it was actually derived from Gaul. It was likely the work of Sulpicius Severus (c. 363-425), whose writings were very influential in the early Irish church.⁶ This is hardly surprising considering the huge influence Gaul had in both the early British church and in the first evangelistic missions to pagan Ireland. Ireland's first bishop, Palladius, was from Gaul and Saint Patrick referred warmly to the Gallic church in his *Confessio*.⁷ It is likely that Gaul had adopted the computus of Severus (Celtic-84) at the

³James F Kenney, *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland: Ecclesiastical: an Introduction and Guide (records of Civilization; Sources and Studies)*, Reprint ed. (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1966), 212.

⁴Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiae*, 5.23-25.

⁵Daniel McCarthy, "On the Arrival of the Latercus in Ireland," in *The Easter Controversy of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Its Manuscripts, Texts, and Tables: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on the Science of Computus, Galway, 18-20 July 2008*, eds. Immo Warntjes and Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 75.

⁶David A. E. Pelteret, "The Issue of Apostolic Authority at the Synod of Whitby," in *The Easter Controversy of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* eds. Warntjes, and Ó Cróinín, 157.

⁷Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, "Who was Palladius, 'First bishop of the Irish?'" *Peritia* 14 (2000): 205-37.

council of Arles (314), which was attended by several British bishops. This same council mandated that all Christians should celebrate Easter on the same day.⁸ While the early Irish and British churches continued to maintain this older system inherited from Gaul, by 541 Gaul had abandoned Celtic-84 in favor of a different system developed by Victorius of Aquitaine.⁹

A second important point relating to these differences between Ireland and Rome is that it was in no way a unique issue to the Celtic church. The problems in producing a single workable Easter computus for the entire church were immense. No system was without its flaws and there were numerous times when Milan, Spain, Gaul and North Africa all celebrated Easter on different days. Sometimes Rome used the Alexandrian date and at other times Alexandria used the Roman date!¹⁰ Many times the choice of date was a political statement, as in 501 when during the Acacian schism Pope Symmachus kept Easter in Rome on March 25, when almost the entirety of Christendom celebrated it on April 22.¹¹ The point to remember is that Ireland was not unique in celebrating Easter on a different day to Rome; Spain, for example, did so likewise for much of the sixth century.¹² The Easter debate at Whitby does not demonstrate any support for an independent Celtic church, such a concept is without historical support and utterly alien to the early Irish conceptual framework.¹³ Rather it was part of a wider continental problem in producing a workable Easter computus that was scripturally and mathematically consistent.

The first signs of a conflict between the Irish and continental Easter dates were seen with the mission of Columbanus to Gaul in 591.¹⁴ Columbanus and the monks under his leadership had arrived in Gaul as *Peregrini pro Christo*. Merovingian patronage enabled him to establish several monasteries in Gaul. The issue concerning the date for Easter arose when the Columban houses insisted on following the Celtic-84 system while the Gallic church at this time was using the Victorian system. Columbanus' writings reveal a man of unresolved tension. He longs for unity and repeatedly writes of the dangers of division in the church. Yet at the same time he insisted on the superiority of his own native tradition and dismissed the Victorian tables in

⁸Richard Abels, "The Council of Whitby: A Study in Early Anglo-Saxon Politics," *Journal of British Studies* 23.1 (1983): 4. Liam de Paor, *St. Patrick's World* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 53-56.

⁹Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, "New Heresy for Old: Pelagianism in Ireland and the Irish Papal Letter of 640," *Speculum* 60 (1985): 508.

¹⁰Leofranc Holford-Stevens, "Church Politics and the Computus: From Milan to the Ends of the Earth," in *The Easter Controversy of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Warntjes, and Ó Cróinín, 6-7.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 11-12.

¹²Kathleen Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society* (New York: ACLS History E-Book Project, 2001), 103.

¹³T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 91-92.

¹⁴Donald Bullough, "The Career of Columbanus," in *Columbanus: Studies on the Latin Writings*, ed. Michael Lapidge (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997), 10.

a letter to Pope Gregory as contradicting Scripture, and worthy of mockery rather than respect.¹⁵ In an effort to counter attack the bishops of Gaul he wrote several times to Rome in the hope of securing papal support for the Irish Easter date. The papacy remained silent and would not give a verdict on the matter. When papal support seemed unlikely Columbanus wrote again to Rome and to the bishops of Gaul in which he sought to at least secure the freedom for both traditions to live side by side. To the Gallic bishops he wrote, "Let Gaul, I beg, contain us side by side, whom the kingdom of heaven shall contain, if our deserts are good; for we have one kingdom promised and one hope of our calling in Christ, with whom we shall reign together."¹⁶ To the Pope he wrote reminding him of the example of diverse Easter traditions enabled to co-exist in the time of Pope Anicetus and Polycarp. However, having alienated the local Gallic bishops over the Easter question and the Burgundian king Theuderic II over the issue of the king's concubines, Columbanus was forced to leave Burgundy.

The controversy between Columbanus and the Gallic church was a foreshadowing of a similar conflict at Whitby. Columbanus had angered his political and theological opponents by refusing to submit to the tradition of the wider church. The survival and great benefit of the Columban monastic settlements in Europe was largely due to the abandoning of Celtic-84 by Columbanus' successors. By 627 the Columban monasteries at Luxeuil and Bobbio had adopted the Roman Easter date and continued their work of missions and theological training in Europe to great success.

The arrival of the Gregorian mission to England in 597 meant that the issue of Easter computus was now not only an issue for the Irish on the continent but now also in Britain. Gregory the Great had instructed Augustine (the bishop in charge of the mission) to be open to diversity of church practice. In Gregory's estimation whatever local ecclesiastical tradition was best suited to the needs of the fledging English church should be employed.¹⁷ As a whole Gregory was quite open to liturgical diversity even in matters like baptism.¹⁸ Gregory had initially called for the destruction of pagan English shrines and temples (*Epistle XI.66*) but later changed his instructions to allow for their conversion for use as churches.¹⁹ Gregory's sensitivity to Eng-

¹⁵Columbanus informed Gregory that "Victorius has not been accepted by our teachers, by the former scholars of Ireland, by the mathematicians most skilled in reckoning chronology, but has earned ridicule or indulgence rather than authority." G. S. Murdoch Walker, ed. *Sancti Columbani Opera (Scriptores Latini Hiberniae)* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1957), 7

¹⁶Walker, *Sancti Columbani Opera*, 17.

¹⁷Bede, HE 1.27.

¹⁸Caitlin Corning, *The Celtic and Roman Traditions: Conflict and Consensus in the Early Medieval Church* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 74.

¹⁹Gregory the Great, "Selected Epistles of Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome (Books IX-XIV)," trans. James Barmby, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, Volume XIII: Gregory the Great (Part II), Ephraim Syrus, Aphrahat*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1898), 85.

lish cultural conditions was not replicated in other areas of Christendom. In the case of resurgent paganism in the southern Italian church Gregory insisted in both the use of force and the destruction of all pagan shrines.²⁰ Gregorian policy was quite different in cases of pioneering missions to pagan lands rather than in areas already Christianized. The two greatest challenges to the Gregorian mission to England would prove to be the ongoing political conflict between the British and the English kingdoms and the intense conservatism of the Irish and British churches in matters of liturgy.²¹ Both of these factors would influence the Easter debate in Britain.

Augustine's failure to win the support of the British church in his mission was largely due to the ongoing wars between the British Christians and the pagan Anglo-Saxons. The British likely viewed a submission to Augustine as a submission to English power.²² Gregory had noted the British refusal to evangelize their English neighbors and remarked that the British bishops were in need of correction. For their part the British church's differences over Easter dating were part of the larger political issue concerning Anglo-Saxon expansion in Britain.²³ The Irish churches were also opposed to the Roman date for Easter that was being presented by Augustine and his successor Laurence, but largely for reasons of liturgical conservatism. In 610 an Irish Bishop named Dagan had refused to eat with Laurence or any of the Roman mission in England due to the Easter dating issue. Dagan's actions were akin to declaring Laurence heretical. In response Laurence wrote a letter to the Irish church wherein he urged the Irish to join them in the unity of the church and adopt the universal tradition of the church regarding Easter.²⁴ Easter was still very much a matter of orthodoxy for the Irish, since competing Easter systems claimed biblical support the issue was linked to the twisting of the Scriptures by opposing sides.

In 628 Pope Honorius wrote a letter to the Irish wherein he urged them to adopt the Roman Easter date for the sake of ecclesiastical unity.²⁵ Bede does not give the exact contents of the letter but we do know from the *Greater Chronicle* that Honorius had condemned supposed Quartodecimanism among the Irish.²⁶ This was an error on the part of Honorius, and Bede may have deliberately chosen not to include this erroneous accusation of

²⁰Robert McCulloch, "Gregorian Adaptation in the Augustinian Mission to England," *Missiology: An International Review* 6.3 (1978): 330-33.

²¹Douglas Dales, *Light to the Isles: Mission and Theology in Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Britain* (Cambridge, England: James Clarke & Co, 2010), 81, 85.

²²Corning, *The Celtic and Roman Traditions*, 78.

²³Gregory the Great, "Register of the Epistles of Saint Gregory the Great," trans. James Barmby, in vol. 12b, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, Volume XII: Leo the Great, Gregory the Great*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1895), 205.

²⁴Bede, HE 2.4.

²⁵Bede, HE 2.19.

²⁶Corning, *The Celtic and Roman Traditions*, 83. Bede was also likely not going to publish the fact that Honorius was advocating the Victorian table rather than the Dionysian.

Quartodecimanism against the Irish since he himself explicitly stated that the Irish were not Quartodecimanism.²⁷ Honorius' letter is the first time that the papacy linked the Celtic-84 computus with heresy. The response of the Irish church to Honorius's letter was to call a synod at Mag Léne in 630 where the majority of the assembled bishops and scholars agreed to adopt the new Roman Easter dating system. There was some dissention, however, mainly from Iona, and so a delegation was sent from Ireland to Rome to establish what was the universal custom of the church. They returned and confirmed the celebration of Easter according to the new system. For most of the Irish church this confirmed them in their decision to abandon the old Celtic-84 system in favor of the universal custom of the church. The churches in the north of Ireland and Iona held out, with the abbot of Iona Ségéne accusing those Irish who adopted the Victorian Easter of heresy.²⁸ In response an Irish bishop from the south of Ireland, Cummian, wrote a letter to Iona to urge them to reconsider their schismatic stance.

Cummian's letter is a strong response to the accusations of heresy from Iona. He first sets out to demonstrate the compatibility of the Victorian Easter to Scripture, then he marshals a litany of Patristic support in favor of his view. Lastly he calls on Iona to beware of the destruction that pride brings. He is alarmed that Iona and some of the churches in the north of Ireland can proudly resist the calls to ecclesiastical unity and instead insist, "Rome errs, Jerusalem errs, Alexandria errs, Antioch errs, the whole world errs; the Irish and British alone know what is right."²⁹ The issue for the majority of the Irish bishops was not simply what did Rome say, rather they were seeking a truly ecumenical answer to their quest for the correct Easter date. The Irish delegation sent to Rome had met with Hebrews, Greeks, Latins and Egyptians in order to establish the universal custom of the church. For Cummian it was simply pride that would prevent any Irish ecclesiastical leader from yielding to the universal celebration of Easter. Who after all were the Irish, asked Cummian, but a "pimple on the face of the earth!"³⁰ Iona in his view was hiding behind those revered Irish saints who had kept the old Celtic-84 system.³¹ To Cummian there was a stark difference between those Irish saints who in the past followed simply what had been handed down to them without knowing anything different in contrast to Iona who was dividing the Irish church simply because of their pride.³²

²⁷Bede, HE, 3.4.

²⁸Cummian, *Cummian's letter 'De controversia Paschali' together with a related Irish compustical tract 'De rationae computanti'* eds. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín and Maura Walsh (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies; Studies and texts, lxxxvi, 1988), 75.

²⁹Ibid., 81.

³⁰Ibid., 75.

³¹Cummian wrote, "Our elders, however, whom you hold as a cloak doe your rejection, kept simply and faithfully, without blame of any contradiction or animosity, that which they knew to be best in their day, and prescribed for their posterity thus, according to the apostle, test everything, hold fast to what is good, abstain from every form of evil." Ibid., 75.

³²Bede presents a similar argument in HE 3.3.

Cummian's letter is of the utmost importance in order to understand Whitby in its proper context. By the 630s the Irish church had largely accepted the call to unity over the Easter question. Bishops like Cummian had attempted to demonstrate that the new Easter dating system was orthodox because it was scripturally consistent and universally accepted. Iona and some of the churches in the north of Ireland were still holding out, but their position can hardly be claimed to represent the views of the Irish church in general. Iona was quickly becoming isolated from both Ireland and Rome.

Around the same time as Cummian's letter Iona sent bishop Aidan to the English kingdom of Northumbria. His mission to Northumbria was a resounding success and Bede would later hold it up as his idealized picture of a spiritually vibrant church.³³ This is remarkable since Bede was well aware that Aidan still held to Iona's position on Easter. The Northumbrian church did not try to resolve the question of Easter during Aidan's tenure as bishop. His successors, however, were faced with opposition to their Easter tradition from two quarters; namely those Irish who had adopted the Roman date and the English bishops who sought to bring Northumbria into unity with the catholic tradition. Bede records how the most zealous advocate for the Roman Easter date in Northumbria was an Irish man called Ronan.³⁴ The disputes between Ronan and the Aidan's successor Finan were heated but achieved no consensus. Ronan had received his monastic training in Gaul, most probably in a Columban monastery that had already adopted the Roman Easter date.³⁵ When Finan died in 651 Colman, in whose episcopacy the synod of Whitby was called in 664, succeeded him as bishop of Lindisfarne.

The Irish mission from Iona to Northumbria was greatly assisted by the close relationship Iona had with king Oswald. His war to win the kingdom of Northumbria was supported by Iona's great founder, Columba.³⁶ Political alliance had offered Iona an open door for their mission to Northumbria and in many ways its successes in the time of Aidan were greatly helped by the support of the king. But as Whitby was to demonstrate, politics were to prove a double-edged sword for Iona's mission in Northumbria. The synod of Whitby was not a true ecclesiastical synod of the English church; the Archbishop of Canterbury was not present, for example. King Oswiu had summoned the synod and he alone would give the synod's verdict. In light of these criteria it is doubtful that Colman would have regarded Whitby as an ecclesiastical synod at all. In the Irish tradition kings did not have the authority to give a binding verdict on an ecclesiastical matter.³⁷ In reality Whitby was much more a matter of political expediency than doctrinal debate. Oswiu was keenly aware that his son, Alhfrith, had adopted the Roman

³³Bede, HE 3.26.

³⁴Bede, HE 3.25.

³⁵Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 125.

³⁶Bede, HE 3.1-2.

³⁷Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 281, 318-19.

date and had removed Irish monks from monasteries in his territory and handed them over the English priest Wilfrid.³⁸ Such an action was clearly a challenge to his authority as king. As it turns out Oswiu was right to be concerned about Alhfrith who was later to lead a revolt against his father.³⁹ His son who was allying himself with the pro-Roman party was attempting to outmaneuver him. Oswiu had been content to allow both the Irish and the Roman Easter dates to run concurrently in his kingdom. This meant that when the two systems had different dates for Easter some of his subjects would be fasting during Lent while others would be feasting at Easter.⁴⁰ This extraordinarily confused liturgical conflict was allowed to continue from the time of Aidan, who died in 651. Thus the real impetus for Oswiu's synod was less likely his concern for liturgical unity, though this is how Bede presents the situation, and more likely prompted by political expediency.⁴¹ Oswiu was going to abandon Iona for the sake of his kingdom.

In 664 the opposing sides made their arguments at Whitby, Colman on behalf of the tradition he had received from Iona and Wilfrid who claimed to represent to tradition of the universal church. Both sides stressed the apostolicity of their traditions, Colman cited the Apostle John as being in favor of his position, while Wilfrid claimed Peter and Paul. Both arguments were spurious; in reality no apostle had supported either camp's Easter computus. Still both sides wanted to bolster their claims with apostolic sanctity. Wilfrid also claimed that the Council of Nicaea in 325 supported his Easter dating system (which was the Dionysian); again this was erroneous as Nicaea had not adopted any specific computus.⁴² Wilfrid's argument was at times hostile and somewhat demeaning to the Irish whom he dismissed as stupid. Colman's allusion to Polycarp during the debate may have been a plea for toleration of both Easter traditions, since this was how Columbanus had employed it in 604.⁴³ In any case the argument climaxed with Wilfrid's reminder of the power of binding and loosing given to Peter. Importantly, Colman did not deny Petrine authority, and neither had Columbanus before him. According to Stephanus, Oswiu declared his verdict with a smile; Northumbria would officially adopt the Roman date.⁴⁴ Colman was never likely to have accepted the Roman Easter date at Whitby. From his perspective Whitby was not an ecclesiastical council, Oswiu did not have authority to regulate Colman's Easter observance. Furthermore, Colman was still under the authority of his Abbot in Iona, Cummeneus Albus, who was still resistant to change on the Easter question. Colman was forced to abdicate and return to Iona. His fellow Irish sympathizers and about thirty English monks who supported

³⁸Bede, HE 3.25.

³⁹Bede, HE, 3.14.

⁴⁰Bede, HE 3.25.

⁴¹Abels, "The Council of Whitby," 5.

⁴²Faith Wallis, *Bede: The Reckoning of Time: Texts Translated for Historians*, vol. 29 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), xxxviii.

⁴³Pelteret, "The Issue of Apostolic Authority at the Synod of Whitby," 162.

⁴⁴"The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus," 105.

Iona's position followed his exodus from Northumbria.⁴⁵

The result of Whitby was a big loss for the Northumbrian church. The Easter debate had impacted the mission in northern England in several ways. Iona's role, which had established a flourishing Christian community in Northumbria, was now over.⁴⁶ However, it is certainly a mistake to conclude that Irish influence in the English church as a whole was now at an end. Colman's immediate successor as bishop of Lindisfarne was an Irish bishop called Tuda. Tuda was from the Irish tradition that had adopted the Roman date for Easter.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Ireland and her monastic schools continued to offer theological education to English students even after Whitby.⁴⁸ Irish schools formed a theological training ground for many English missionaries to the Germanic peoples of Europe.⁴⁹ But Iona's contribution of gifted bishops to the young Northumbria church was never to be seen again. The departure of the thirty or so English monks after Whitby was a further blow to the development of an indigenous trained clergy. The Gregorian mission had heavily stressed the importance of raising up the native English to serve in the English church. Though Wilfrid claimed to be an ally to the mission of Gregory, his actions at Whitby on behalf of Rome were truly anti-Gregorian.⁵⁰ The Northumbrian church may have been won over to the Roman Easter, but it was a divided church that in later years sorely lacked suitable theologically trained clergy.⁵¹ Iona's refusal to move beyond her own tradition had left her isolated.

Wilfrid's attitude towards the Irish in general did not help matters and only divided the Northumbrian church further. Following Whitby he went to Gaul to receive his episcopal ordination. His biographer Stephanus recalls (or invents) Wilfrid's speech to the Gallic bishops where he accuses the Irish of being Quartodecimans.⁵² Wilfrid would later boast that he had rooted out the poisonous weeds of Irish doctrine at Whitby.⁵³ Other leading figures in

⁴⁵Bede, HE 4.4. These English monks later formed a monastery in Mayo, Ireland.

⁴⁶T. M. Charles-Edwards, "Beyond Empire II: Christianities of the Celtic Peoples," in *Early Medieval Christianities, c. 600--c. 1100* eds. Thomas F. X. Noble and Julia M. H. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 92.

⁴⁷Bede, HE 3.26.

⁴⁸Bede, HE 3.27.

⁴⁹Bede, HE 5.9-10. Margaret W. Peppercene, "Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*: A New Perspective," *Celtica* 4 (1958): 259-60.

⁵⁰"The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus," 143.

⁵¹Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People, with Bede's Letter to Egbert and Cuthbert's Letter on the Death of Bede*, translated by Leo Sherley-Price, revised by R. E. Latham, translation of the minor works, new introduction and notes by David Hugh Farmer (London: Penguin, 1990), 343-45.

⁵²"The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus," 106. Even if untrue of the Irish the name Quartodeciman was always a "handy stick with which to beat the Celtic dog." Charles Plummer, *Baedae Opera*, vol. 2 (London: OUP, 1896), 114, cited in Ó Cróinín, "New Heresy for Old," 507.

⁵³"The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus," 143. Some of Wilfrid's supporters accused Bede of heresy on the basis of his chronology of the incarnation, a charge that greatly upset Bede and which he vigorously denied. Wallis, *Bede: The Reckoning of Time*, 405-15.

the English at this time also began to make disparaging remarks concerning the Irish in general. The archbishop of Canterbury, Theodore, peevishly dismissed the Irish as ignorant and deceptive.⁵⁴ Aldhelm discouraged English students from traveling to Ireland for theological training, claiming the Irish schools were too worldly and philosophical, and that English schools could offer a better standard of education.⁵⁵ Aldhelm betrays a cultural superiority, which may have been borne out of the prolonged Easter debate with the Irish. Such statements completely ignored the important contribution of the Irish to the evangelization and education of the English church.⁵⁶ It is also in stark contrast to Bede who frequently praised the Irish and their contribution to English Christianity.⁵⁷

The wake of Whitby saw a growing number of powerful voices in the English church that were dismissive of the Irish or worse accused them of heresy. Iona and her refusal to accept the decision of the southern Irish at Mag Léne had resulted in her defeat at Whitby. By 703 Iona's intractability was evident even against her own abbot, Adomnán, a man noted for his theological and moral excellence.⁵⁸ Adomnán was persuaded of the orthodoxy of the Roman Easter date and convinced many both in Britain and northern Ireland to adopt it. He failed, however, with his own monks at Iona who still held out.⁵⁹ Remarkably, it was an English monk who had trained in Ireland, a man called Egbert, who finally convinced Iona to change her tradition in 716. Egbert was a man who loved and respected the Irish and won them over by his words and deeds. Bede, with evident delight, recounts how Egbert, an Englishman, was used to bring the Irish at Iona, who had first shared the Gospel with the English, back into fellowship.⁶⁰

It seems, however, that from Bede's perspective the role of Iona and her missionaries was sorely missed in the north of England. Bede's summary of the state of the church when Colman abdicated was that of a church that had benefitted greatly from the Irish. Bede praises the Irish bishops for their

⁵⁴Jane Stevenson, *The 'Laterculus Malalianus' and the School of Archbishop Theodore* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), 10.

⁵⁵Aldhelm, *The Prose Works*, translated by Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren, (Totowa, NJ: D.S. Brewer, 1979), 154-55, 162-63.

⁵⁶According to James Campbell, "the debt of the early English church to Ireland is incalculable." James Campbell, "The debt of the early English Church to Ireland" in *Ireland Und Die Christenheit: Bibelstudien Und Mission = Ireland and Christendom: the Bible and the Missions*, eds. Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), 346.

⁵⁷Bede, HE 3.3, 3.13, 3.25, 3.27, 5.9, etc.

⁵⁸Bede called him "a wise and worthy man, excellently grounded in knowledge of the Scriptures." Bede, HE 5.15. The obedience to an Abbot was paramount in early Irish monasteries except in cases where the Abbot was teaching something false from the Scriptures, which it appears the monks of Iona considered Adomnán to be doing. Joseph F. Kelly, "Traditio Partrum in Early Christian Ireland" in *Tradition and the Rule of Faith in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Joseph T. Lienhard, S.J.*, eds., Ronnie J. Rombs and Alexander Y. Hwang (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 257.

⁵⁹Bede, HE 5.15.

⁶⁰Bede, HE 5.22.

integrity of life, their refusal to gather wealth for themselves, and their excellent pastoral care of their English flock. It may indeed be a highly idealized picture presented by Bede but the point remains that in Bede's opinion the Irish had succeeded in establishing a thriving Christian community, his only objection was their later refusal to pursue liturgical unity with the Roman mission.⁶¹ When one compares this idealized picture of Northumbria under the care of Iona to the state of the English church in Bede's own day the differences are startling. Bede laments that the Northumbrian church has bishops that care little for the spiritual well being of their flocks and pursue wealth and comfort instead. Monasteries in Northumbria are described as dens of vice and luxury, and the laity are largely ignorant of even the basics of Christian doctrine.⁶² Bede recalled the bishops that came from Iona as men that lived and taught true doctrine and that the English flocked to the monasteries to be taught the word during the days of the Irish bishops.⁶³ While Bede was staunchly a supporter of the Roman Easter tradition, it does seem as though he lamented the loss of Iona's influence to the Northumbrian church.⁶⁴ The Easter debate had in many ways undermined the goal and purpose of the Gregorian mission in Northumbria. Key players on both sides of the Easter debate had undermined Gregory's aspiration that "difference of customs in holy church does not destroy the unity of faith."⁶⁵

⁶¹J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: a Historical Commentary* (Oxford: OUP, 1988), 130.

⁶²*Bede's Letter to Egbert*, translated by David Hugh Farmer, 341, 343-4.

⁶³Bede, HE 3.26.

⁶⁴Dales, *Light to the Isles*, 102.

⁶⁵This was what Gregory wrote to Archbishop Leander of Seville in Spain (d. 601). Quoted in Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland, 400-1200* (London: Longman Group UK, 1995), 151.

The Lifespans of the EB–MB Patriarchs: A Hermeneutical and Historical Conundrum¹

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A Personal Note

No greater joy and satisfaction can a teacher accrue than to witness the successful accomplishments of his students and to benefit from them. Such is the case with my relationship with Professor Helmuth Pehlke. Many years ago he sat in my classes and eventually I had the privilege of working with him through the rigorous process of writing a doctoral dissertation on the exegesis, interpretation, and theological import of Genesis 49. Even then we formed a solid bond of personal friendship which has only grown and become more precious as the years have passed and our paths have gone their separate ways. Therefore, when I was asked to participate in a *Festschrift* in honor of Helmuth, I was the one who was honored by the request. Therefore, I dedicate this essay to my dear student and colleague.

Introduction

One of the most intractable problems in the Hebrew Scriptures among many others has to do with the lifespans of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the three together embracing the period from ca. 2150–1860 BC, the Early Bronze–Middle Bronze era in terms of archaeological description.² Taking the data seriously (and why not, for now at least?), Abraham’s lifespan was from 2166 BC to 1991, Isaac’s from 2066–1886, and Jacob’s from 2006–1859. Again, in archaeological terms, Abraham flourished in the late EB IV period on into the late MB I. Isaac survived on into the MB IIA era, and Jacob’s life extended into the MB II B. This is important in that interpretation of biblical texts must take into account the historical and cultural milieu in which

¹This article is adapted from the author’s essay in *HERR, was ist der Mensch, dass du dich seiner annimmst? Beiträge zum biblischen Menschenbild*, eds. Tina Arnold, Walter Hilbrands, Heiko Wenzel (Witten, Germany: SCM Brockhaus, 2013), 115–26.

²These dates derive from the data of the Masoretic texts, specifically from Genesis 12:4; 16:16; 17:1, 17; 21:5; 23:1; 25:7; 35:28; 47:9, 28; 50:22. For the bases of these dates and biblical chronology in general, see Eugene H. Merrill, “Chronology,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, eds. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 113–22. The EB IV–MB IIA period in the Middle East is dated by most scholars at ca. 2300–1800 BC. Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000–586 B. C. E.* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), vii.

they claim to be set.

The aforementioned conundrum is this: How must the lifespans of biblical figures be understood in light of those of their extra-biblical contemporaries which, as recorded in their own writings, are considerably at odds with those of the Bible? Can they be taken literally? Must or may they be manipulated in order to bring coherence to them? Do they have symbolical, mystical, kabbalistic, or other coded meaning that permits the texts as written to have meaning other than what appears on the surface of the text? This essay attempts to deal with these and related issues. It is important up front to know that the writer holds to a “high” view of Scripture, including the inerrancy of the original texts. However, this does not solve the difficulty we are addressing but only compounds it because the cynical or skeptical critic can simply write “error” or “text corruption” or “mythical language” or something else over it and be done with the matter. The present essay cannot resort to such easy “solutions” either way just because of its conviction regarding the supernatural character of the Bible that necessitates that its historical data be taken seriously as the Word of God; it must also take into account the questions and viewpoints raised by sincere and devout readers of Scripture who offer different and even contradictory ways of approaching the issue.

The Text-Critical Evidence

Preliminary attention must turn first to the genealogies of Genesis 5:1-32 and 11:10-32 where variations from the MT are most abundant and which set the stage for consideration of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.³ Table 1 sets forth the data for Genesis 5.

Table 1
Genealogy of the Origin of Humankind (Genesis 5:1-32)⁴

| Reference | Name | Age at Birth of 1st Son | Total Years of Life |
|-----------|------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Gen 5:1-5 | Adam | 130 | 930 |
| Gen 5:6-8 | Seth | 105 | 912 |

³The genealogy of Gen 5 has the purpose of tracing the history of humanity in general whereas Gen 11:10-32 focuses on the Noah>Abraham connection. It is included here for purposes of comparison of numbers. See Table 2.

⁴The late Semitics and theology scholar and my mentor, Dr. Timothy Lin, suggested to me in an interview in 1960 the following translation and interpretation of the names of the pre-Flood patriarchs: אָדָם (“earthly man”), תַּשׁ (“substitute”), אָנֹכִי (“incurable man”), קַיִן (“lamentable”), מִתְּלַלְלָא (“praise God”), דָּרָד (“he will descend”), הַנְּחִי (“instructing”), מִתְּשַׁלַּח (“to send one who will die”), דָּקָד (“a conqueror”), and נַח (“rest” or “resting place”). His translation is: “Mankind was substituted by a mortal man with a lamentable result. Praise God, the gracious God came down, dedicated himself to teach man, to send away death, and to send forth man to conquer in order to bring rest.” One may, of course, quibble about something like this but it does suggest that personal names themselves may be bearers of messages.

| Reference | Name | Age at Birth of 1st Son | Total Years of Life |
|-------------|------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Gen 5:9-11 | Enosh | 90 | 905 |
| Gen 5:12-14 | Kenan | 70 | 910 |
| Gen 5:15-17 | Mahalalel | 65 | 895 |
| Gen 5:18-20 | Jared | 162 | 962 |
| Gen 5:21-24 | Enoch | 65 | 365 |
| Gen 5:25-27 | Methusaleh | 187 | 969 |
| Gen 5:28-31 | Lamech | 182 | 777 |
| Gen 5:32 | Noah | 500 | 950 (Gen 9:29) |

Table 2
Genealogy of the Post-Flood Biblical Patriarchs (Genesis 11:10-32)

| Reference | Masoretic Text (MT) | Septuagint (LXX) | Samaritan Pentateuch (SP) |
|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| Gen 11:10-13 Arpachshad | 35+403 yrs* | 135+430 | 135+303 |
| (Cainan) | missing; cf. Lk 3:36 | Kainan | missing |
| Gen 11:13-15 Shelah | 30+403 | 130+403 | 130+403 |
| Gen 11:14-17 Eber | 34+430 | 134+370 | 134+270 |
| Gen 11:16-19 Peleg | 30+209 | 130+209 | 130+109 |
| Gen 11:18-21 Reu | 32+207 | 132+209 | 132+107 |
| Gen 11:20-23 Serug | 30+200 | 130+200 | 130+100 |
| Gen 11:22-25 Nahor | 29+119 | 79+129 | 79+69 |
| Gen 11:24-26 | 70+205 | 70+205 | 70+145 |

*The first figure in each case is the age of the patriarch when he fathered his first son and the second figure is the number of years he lived in all.

Comparisons between Tables 1 and 2:

1. Counting Seth and Abraham (Table 2), 10 generations followed the flood; Adam through Noah (Table 1) totals 10 generations prior to the Flood.
2. The average age of siring the first son is, respectively, 155 and 29; the average age at death is, respectively, 821 and 217, a reduction by 85%.
3. The same effect is noted in the reigning years in the secular Sumerian King List (Table 7), 72%.
4. In both cases, the Flood and its aftermath marked the line of demarcation between the extreme longevity of the earlier

era as compared to the much less (but still extraordinary) lifespans of human beings in later eras.

Several observations can be made regarding the data displayed in Table 1:

1. The age at the time of siring a son is generally greater in LXX than in MT, always by exactly 100 years except for Nahor and Terah, where the surplus is 50 years for Nahor and with agreement amongst the sources for Terah.
2. SP agrees exactly with LXX in this respect, not surprising in light of SP's heavy dependence on LXX.
3. The total years according to MT is 2176, with an average of 272 years; the figures for LXX are 2525 and 315; and for SP 1506 and 188. By comparison, the three great patriarchs lived for a total of 502 years, averaging 167, a noticeable reduction from the average of the Gen 11 lists.⁵
4. LXX is longer than MT by 349 in total years of life (2225 v. 2176), the major exceptions being in the cases of Eber and Nahor.
5. SP differs from the other two sources in its tendency to reduce the numbers of the lifespans, several times by 100 (Arpachshad [MT], Eber, Peleg, Reu, and Serug), once by 160 years (Eber [MT]), once by 60 (Terah), once by 127 (Arpachshad [LXX]), and twice by 50 (Nahor in both MT and LXX). On the other hand, LXX exceeds both MT and SP in one instance, namely, Nahor, where the figure is 10 greater than MT and 60 greater than SP. Conclusion thus far: No good reason exists to scuttle MT in favor of the two major versions. First, SP is heavily dependent on LXX in general, and is on balance closer to LXX than MT in our case. Both versions understandably had difficulties with the great ages of the patriarchs who had preceded even them by 1500-2000 years. Quite possibly, they (like we) observed the actuarial realities of their day and found it difficult to square their life expectancies with the biblical record. Thus, they reduced the figures, at least in some examples, thereby providing some relief to their perplexity.⁶

The principal passages in which the lifespans of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are in view are, respectively, Genesis 25:7; 35:28; and 47:28. The great manuscripts and versions agree with MT that Abraham lived to be 175, Isaac 180, and Jacob 147. Obviously one cannot attribute these numbers to

⁵The patriarchs' average lifespans are 39% less than MT; 47% less than LXX; and only 13% less than SP.

⁶For explanations for these reductions vis-à-vis MT, see Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco: Word, 1987), 250-51.

text corruption or idiosyncratic interpolations or the like. They are fixed and grounded as far as text criticism is concerned.

Evidence from the Ancient Near East

Granted that the three great patriarchs lived between 2200 and 1800 BC, it is important that their age lengths be compared to those of the contemporary world where such information exists. It is necessary to focus on only the two great civilizations that formed the cultural environment in which they lived, namely, Mesopotamia and Egypt. Abraham, of course, was the only one of the three to have dwelt in Mesopotamia except for Jacob's 20-year stay in Haran, in Upper Mesopotamia (Gen 29:4; 31:38). Abraham later visited Egypt and Jacob lived there the last 17 years of his life. Moreover, Moses, the author of our narratives, was intimately familiar with life expectancies in Egypt and doubtless on the broader horizon as well. More specifically, Abraham was a citizen of the ancient Sumerian city of Ur in the period known as Ur III (ca. 2100-1975 BC).⁷ Isaac, though never having lived in Egypt, was nonetheless submerged in the traditions of that great Empire in the eras designated Dynasty XI (ca. 2040-1991) and XII (or Middle Kingdom, 1991-1783).⁸ As for Jacob, he too lived for at least 17 years in the land of Egypt, all in Dynasty XII.

Chronological data are almost non-existent for the longevity of the masses in the ancient Near East so recourse must be made to the respective royalties of Mesopotamia and Egypt where the data in any case are almost always limited to the length of the reigns of the kings and not of their ages as a whole. The following tables list the kings of both empires in the years contemporary with those of the three great patriarchs.

Table 3
The Reign-Lengths of the Rulers of the Ur III Dynasty
(Ca. 2100-1950 BC)

| | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Utuhegal | 7 years | Amar-Sin | 9 years |
| Shu-Sin | 11 years | Ur-Nammu | 18 years |
| Shulgi | 48 years | Ibbi-Sin | 23 years |

Table 4 (Canon of Turin)
The Reign-Lengths of the Relevant Pharaohs of Dynasties 11 and 12
(Ca. 2010-1730 BC)

| | | | |
|--------------------------|----------|--------------|----------|
| Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II | 50 years | Ammenemes II | 34 years |
| Ammenemes I | 29 years | Sesostris II | 19 years |

⁷Amélie Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East c. 3000-330 B. C.*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 1995), 56-73.

⁸Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 161-73.

| | | | |
|-------------|----------|---------------|----------|
| Sesostris I | 43 years | Sesostris III | 35 years |
|-------------|----------|---------------|----------|

Quite clearly, the lifespans of these royal contemporaries of the patriarchs at best were on the average no more than 25% of those of the patriarchs. Nor does this change much in the several centuries of documentable king-lists prior to the periods of the patriarchs as the following lists attest.

Table 5
Mesopotamian Kings Immediately Prior to Abraham

| | | | |
|----------------------------|----------|----------------------------------|----------|
| S a r g o n (2340-2284) | 56 years | S h a r k a l i s - h a r r i | 25 years |
| Rimush | 9 years | Elulu | 7 years |
| Manishtushu | 15 years | Dudu | 21 years |
| Naram-Sin | 37 years | Shu-dural | 15 years |

Table 6⁹
Egyptian Pharaohs Immediately Prior to Abraham
(Ca. 2117-1991 BC)

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|----------|
| Inyotef II | 48 years | S a n k h a r e Mentuhotpe | 50 years |
| Inyotef III | 7 years | Nebtowyre Mantuhotpe IV | 6 years |
| Nebhebetre Mentuhotpe II | 50 years | | |

Table 7
The Sumerian King List¹⁰
A. Before the Great Flood¹¹

| | | | |
|--------|--------------|--------|--------|
| Alulim | 28,800 years | Dumuzi | 36,000 |
|--------|--------------|--------|--------|

⁹The ideal life expectancy in Egypt was 110 years, exactly the same as Joseph's (Gen 50:22). See Geraldine Pinch, "Private Life in Ancient Egypt," *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Vol. 1, ed. Jack M. Sasson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995), 380. The expectation in Mesopotamia was similar to that in Egypt. A man who lived till 90 was said to have reached "extreme old age," and it was thought that the gods had allotted man 120 years at most. Marten Stol, "Private Life in Ancient Mesopotamia," Sasson, *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, 487.

¹⁰The *editio princeps* is Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List*. AS 11 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939), especially 71-77. Table 7 greatly adumbrates the text by listing only the kings' names and their length of reign. For a more recent edition, see ANET², 265-66.

¹¹The first two kings listed were from the city-state of Eridu, considered in Sumerian mythology to be the first place in the world to be occupied; the next three were kings of

| | | | |
|--------------|--------|--------------|---------|
| Alalgar | 36,000 | Ensipazianna | 28,000 |
| Enmenluanna | 21,000 | Enmenduranna | 21,000 |
| Enmengalanna | 28,800 | Ubartutu | 18,6000 |

The total of the reigns is 241,200 years with an average of the eight kings of 30,150 years.

B. After the Great Flood¹²

| | | | |
|------------------|-------------|--------------|----|
| Ga . . . ur | 1,200 years | | |
| XXX | 960 | Mesannepada | 80 |
| Palakinatim | 900 | Meskiagnanna | 36 |
| Na(i)ngishlishma | xxx | Elulu | 25 |
| Bahina | 840 | Balulu | 36 |

The first four kings after the flood (a lacuna exists for Ningishlishma's years) and the last five are listed here with a total for the first four of 4740 years and an average of 975. The last four reigned a total of 177 years with an average of 44.25 years. By comparison, the three great patriarchs lived for a total of 502 years with an average lifespan of 167. One should consider, of course, that reigning years and longevity are quite different matters but the differences between the Sumerian lifespans and those of the patriarchs would still be heavily weighted in favor of the patriarchs. The fact that Sargon of Agade, who succeeded the last five Sumerian kings, reigned for 56 years underscores the problematic lifespans of the patriarchs who lived 200 years later.¹³ The Turin Canon provides the lengths of reigns for a minority of the kings, but the most years are attributed to Pepi II (90) of Dynasty VI and Nebhepetre (51) of Dynasty XI. The rest are either lost or are 30 years or lower.

What, then, can account for the apparently inflated figures of the longevity of the patriarchs compared to kings' reigns hundreds of years before Abraham? The tables of those ancient texts of Mesopotamia include names of pre-Deluge and post-Deluge kings whose reigns far exceed the lifespans of the patriarchs. However, the data of corresponding Egyptian lists of pharaohs, such as those of Karnak, Abydos, and Sakkara and the Turin Canon, contain figures that are much below those of the patriarchs.¹⁴ Either way, then, the puzzle of the ages of the patriarchs is helped little or none by the

Badtibira; the sixth was from Larak; the seventh from Sippar; and the last from Shuruppak.

¹²Because of the great number of kings, only the first five and last five before Sargon are listed.

¹³These are the kings of the important city-state of Uruk only. See Table 4 above where the average reigns of the first eight kings of Akkad is 23 years! Furthermore, the reigns of the kings of Guti, which overthrew Akkad in the very days of Abraham, were very brief; the first five of them reigned for a total of 27 years and an average of 5.2.

¹⁴See COS, 1: 69-73.

available ancient Near Eastern literature. This leads to a number of suggested solutions across the broad spectrum of biblical scholarship.

1. Scholars who understand the Old Testament to be folklore or legend, at least in the patriarchal period, dismiss the large numbers as pure fantasy or creative imagination and therefore have no problem and thus no solution that they hold as historically valid.¹⁵
1. Those who find some kernel of historicity in the early texts assume the numbers to be exaggerations of the true figures.¹⁶
2. Those who claim adherence to at least a moderately conservative position apply to the numbers a literary or genre solution. They propose that the accounts, though basically historical, employ literary devices such as hyperbole to demonstrate the greatness of God and his people.¹⁷
3. Those who suppose that the biblical genealogies were “borrowed” from earlier secular prototypes such as the Sumerian King List (or vice-versa) but were divested of their polytheism in favor of Israel’s monotheistic God, Yahweh.¹⁸
4. Those who engage in Kabbalism¹⁹ or some other form of numerology or who resort to a factoring of the numbers in the genealogy and are therefore obliged to view the numbers as a coding system that has to be “cracked” in order for the true figures to emerge.²⁰

¹⁵Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis*, 30. With regard to the genealogy of Cain, Gunkel writes, “The legend originally existed as an independent narrative in which a few imaginative figures appear.”

¹⁶K. A. Kitchen, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 359: “[The patriarchs’] life spans and birth dates are high; a minimal chronology would allow for possible inflation of these figures in tradition, while keeping the overall profile.”

¹⁷Claus Westermann, *Genesis I-II*. Trans. John J. Scullian (Minneapolis: Augsburg: 1984), 354: “The genealogy sets in motion and puts into the length and breadth of human history the power of the blessing which God bestowed on his people.”

¹⁸Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*. OTL, 1961, 66-71; for a summary of this view and a rebuttal to the ANE>Israel sequence, see John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 127-31.

¹⁹The term refers to a system of mystical hermeneutics in Medieval Judaism that, among other things, assigned numerical values to the Hebrew letters of a word or even series of words. See Frank Talmage, “Apples of Gold: The Inner Meaning of Sacred Texts in Medieval Judaism,” in Arthur Green, ed. *Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 328-29, 337-40; Daniel C. Matt, “The Mystic and the *Mizwot*,” Green, *Jewish Spirituality*, 372-89.

²⁰Umberto Cassuto, *Commentary on Genesis I* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1989), 249-72. “A detailed study of the chronology of the entire Book of Genesis makes it apparent that all the numbers of years listed therein . . . can be grouped under two heads: (a) multiples of five, that is, numbers divisible by five, whose last digit is 5 or 0; (b) multiples of five with the addition of seven. . . . It clearly follows that the chronology of the Book of Genesis as a whole is also founded on the dual principle of the sexagesimal system and the addition of seven” (259). An interesting example of yielding a symmetrical sum by factoring the ages stated in the texts has been offered by Nahum Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Schocken,

The Present Approach

Presuppositions. The loaded term “presupposition” already predisposes most scholars to the supposition that one who uses it has made up his mind before he begins his investigation into any given matter of interest. In fact, as it turns out, nearly every scientific enterprise engages in presuppositionism. The investigator must suppose the reality of his own existence, his environment, his cognitive faculties, and the nature of the issue at hand. Otherwise, it is a foolish delusion that makes impossible the exercise of empiricism and creative thinking. For example, one presupposes that certain physical laws are true because it is in the nature of observation, experience, and basic common sense that they exist and work. Even when observation and experience fail, certain results presuppose actions and causes that exist outside the sensory world. No one has yet seen the fundamental elements of the Higgs Boson but nuclear physicists who deny or even doubt its existence would soon find themselves outside the laboratory looking in. The so-called “God particle” is a given in the world of physical science, a presupposition as it were.

The same is true in the humanities, particularly in the study of history, and most especially in the study of biblical history as recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures. Does one not violate the standards of even-handedness and acceptable norms of historiography to believe that what these ancient texts have to say about the reality of the times they purport to describe ought not *prima facie* be given the benefit of the doubt as to their credibility? The fact that they are religious or theological in nature has nothing to do with the fundamental issue of their believability, or certainly should not. They should, of course, be subject to rigorous literary and cultural/historical scrutiny in terms of their intent, motivation, and use of literary and genre forms in an attempt to discover in them any oddities, inconcinnities, or other departures from what one would ordinarily expect. This is clearly true in the case of the great ages of the patriarchs.

1970), 84. He notes that $5 \times 5 \times 7 = 175$ (Abraham); $6 \times 6 \times 5 = 180$ (Isaac); $7 \times 7 \times 3 = 147$ (Jacob). The pattern thus is 5, 6, 7; 5, 6, 7; 7, 5, 3. Is this kind of numerical puzzle something devised by the author of the texts or is it merely coincidental? The answer is most obvious. But why resort to this device and what does it reveal about the actual ages of the patriarchs? Sarna does demonstrate convincingly that the text evinces symmetry and symbolism, and especially in the area of numbers: “Abraham lived seventy-five years in the home of his father and seventy-five years in the lifetime of his son. He was one hundred years of age at the birth of Isaac and lived one hundred years in Canaan. Jacob lived seventeen years with Joseph in Canaan and a like number with him in Egypt. Joseph’s one hundred and ten years happen to coincide with the ideal Egyptian life span, while the one hundred and twenty years of Moses correspond to the maximum term of life imposed on the human race” (84). While all this is manifestly true, it has nothing to do with the actual figures embedded in the text. That certain numbers in the Old Testament (e.g. 1, 3, 7, 10, 12, 40) have symbolical significance is nearly universally accepted. See E. W. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture: Its Supernatural Design and Spiritual Significance*, 4th ed. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, Ltd., 1921); John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968); Robert D. Johnston, *Numbers in the Bible: God’s Unique Design in Biblical Numbers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1990); C. J. Labuschagne *Numerical Secrets of the Bible* (North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 2000).

Methodology. The complexity of the problem, and perhaps its solution, most likely lies in comparing texts to texts of the same kind to see where they best match. That is, there is nothing to be gained by comparing the biblical genealogical lists with those of Mesopotamia that reflect either much greater or much shorter lifespans or, more accurately, lengths of reign.²¹ However, they should be included here to underscore lack of correspondence between them and the Genesis facts and figures. The Mesopotamian data for the Sumerian kings who reigned after the Deluge until the rise of the Akkadian Empire (ca. 2350 BC) are found in Table 6 B. The pre-Flood rulers are listed here in Table 8 side-by-side with the pre-Flood patriarchs of Hebrew tradition.

Table 9
The Pre-Flood Sumerian Kings and Biblical Patriarchs

| Biblical Reference | Patriarchs | Lifespans | Sumerian Kings | Royal Tenure |
|--------------------|------------|------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Gen 5:1-5 | Adam | 930 | Alulim | 28,8000 |
| Gen 5:6-8 | Seth | 912 | Alalgar | 36,000 |
| Gen 5:9-11 | Enosh | 905 | Enmenluanna | 43,200 |
| Gen 5:12-14 | Kenan | 910 | Enmengalana | 28,800 |
| Gen 5:15-17 | Mahalalel | 895 | Dumuzi | 36,600 |
| Gen 5:18-20 | Jared | 962 | Ensipazianna | 28,800 |
| Gen 5:21-24 | Enoch | 365* | Enmenduranna | 21,000 |
| Gen 5:25-27 | Methusaleh | 969 | Ubartutu | 18,600 |
| Gen 5:28-31 | Lamech | | | |
| Gen 5:32 | Noah | | | |
| | | Total Years | | Total Years |
| | | 8575 | | 241,000 |
| | | Average Lifespan | | Average Reign-Years |
| | | 857.5 | | 30,125 |

*Enoch's life was "cut short" by his assumption to heaven.

Three observations readily come to mind: (1) The reigns of the Sumerian kings are many times longer than the lifespans of the biblical patri-

²¹Egyptian king lists of the Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Periods (Dynasties I-XI) are of limited value at this point because they either provide no chronological figures (the Karnak, Abydos, and Sakkara Lists) or they are fragmentary (Turin Canon). The years that are attested to in the Turin Canon are as follows: Dynasty XI (49, 8, 51, and 12 years with a recorded total of 143 years for seven kings; Dynasty XII (45, 10, 19, 30, 40, 27, 14, and 8 years with a total 213 years for eight kings). Dynasty XI thus averaged reign-lengths of 20.4 years and Dynasty XII 26.6 years. These are obviously far short of the average age of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (167 years!) who were contemporary with these two dynasties.

archs; (2) the numbers of individuals in each list are the same were Noah and Enoch to be left out of the count; and (3) in both cases, the lengths of life far exceed those of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In fact, the average age of the pre-Flood patriarchs would be over five times as long as the average of these three. As for the Sumerian kings, their reigns would average 180 times as much as the lifespans of the biblical characters.

Careful scrutiny of the available king lists and other royal inscriptions of the EB-MB period of the biblical patriarchs yields only one that presents comparable sets of figures, namely, the Sumerian King List and its record of the rulers of the Uruk Dynasty in its latter years (ca. 2700 BC?)²² The following table shows these correspondences.

Table 10
The Post-Flood Dynasty of Uruk

| Name | Years of Reign | Comments |
|----------------|----------------|---|
| Keskiaggasher | 324 | Reigned at Eanna, a part of Uruk |
| Enmekar | 420 | (Re)builder of Uruk |
| Lugalbanda | 1,200 | Designated as a god |
| Dumuzi | 100 | Designated as a god (later known in Babyon as Tammuz) |
| Gilgamesh | 126 | A leading figure in the "Gilgamesh Epic," the flood narrative |
| Urnungal | 30 | |
| Utulkallama | 15 | |
| Laba[h. . .]ir | 9 | |
| Ennundara-anna | 8 | |
| Mes(?)khe | 36 | |
| Melamanna | 6 | |
| Lugalkitum | 36 | |

The most relevant names in comparison to the longevity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are the two most problematic, namely, Dumuzi and Gilgamesh, both of whom are sometimes (as here) labeled as demi-gods or at least not "normal" human beings. Dumuzi ("son of life") was the hero of the Sumerian epic "The Descent of Inanna" which was better known in the Babylonian version as "The Descent of Ishtar."²³ In both cases, Dumuzi/Tammuz was in the netherworld and was rescued by the goddess Inanna/Ishtar. Gilgamesh, of course, was the seeker of the secret of immortality who found the answer in Ziusudra/Utnapishtim (=biblical Noah), the survivor of the Great Flood.²⁴ Whether Dumuzi and Gilgamesh were human or divine does not

²²Thus CAD I/2, pp. 110-11, 998.

²³For these epics, see ANET, 52-57, 106-09. See also COS 1:381-84.

²⁴ANET, "The Epic of Gilgamesh," Tablet XI, 93-97; COS 1:458-60. Especially

affect the argument being made here regarding the lengths of their tenure.²⁵

If the ages of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob best fit the reigning periods of this part of the Sumerian King List, then they must be dated as early as 2700 BC, 550 years before Abraham's birth according to the Old Testament evidence. This, of course, renders moot the whole project of Old Testament chronology.²⁶

Conclusions

Of all the options available to students of the Old Testament narratives who take them seriously as the Word of God—revealed, inspired, and inerrant—the one elaborated in this essay is proposed as the most acceptable, the one that best comports with the literary, historical, hermeneutical, and theological evidence of the text. That is, the narratives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are true and literal accounts of their lives and times and the figures employed relative to their life-spans should likewise be taken at face value.

The arguments for this position are as follows:

1. No text or version evidence exists for any reading of the age figures but that of the Masoretic Text.
2. Neither the Old Testament nor the New provides any other figures or any attempt to argue for a symbolic or numerical interpretation (Rom 4:19). Abraham and Sarah are viewed as miracle parents because of their ability to bear a son (Acts 7:5; Heb 11:11).
3. A basic rule of interpretation is to understand a text literally unless and until there are compelling reasons to do otherwise. Such a compulsion is demonstrably not the case with the Genesis narratives. First of all, factoring or reconfiguring the numbers to fit a given scheme is a classic, unnecessary, and wrong-headed example of *petitio princeps*. For instance, on what grounds can a serious scholar find in the figure 480, which speaks of the period between the exodus and Solomon's laying of the Temple foundations (1 Kgs 6:1), a multiple of 40x12 in which 40 really means 25, a more realistic length of a generation? Why should 12 also not be broken down, perhaps as 2x6 or 3x4? Or in the case of the patriarchs one might consider the formula mentioned earlier: 175 for Abraham works

significant is the edition by Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965).

²⁵No doubt remains as to the historical identity of Gilgamesh. See CAH I/2, 211. For abundant attestation to his historicity, see Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List*, 88-89, n. 128.

²⁶The reason for this is that all subsequent events of Old Testament history must be moved back accordingly if the chronological data there are to be taken seriously at all. Thus, for example, the Egyptian sojourn would take place ca. 2426-1996, the conquest of Canaan by Joshua in 1956, and the reign of David from 1556 to 1516. No one is prepared to undertake this kind of historical revisionism.

out to $5 \times 5 \times 7$, 180 for Isaac is perhaps $6 \times 6 \times 5$, and Jacob's 147 is $7 \times 7 \times 3$. Having found this structure, the question is, so what? What does this say about the actual ages and chronologies of the biblical characters?

4. The figures given for the tenures of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are problematic only in the sense they do not conform to modern expectations and realities of lifespans nor do they seem to match those of the various individuals in ancient Near Eastern texts contemporary with the patriarchs that have been examined. Interestingly enough, the ages of non-Hebrews or non-Israelites are rarely given in the Old Testament, thus making inner-biblical comparisons impossible. Nonetheless, clues do exist here and there that suggest something about the ages of patriarchal persons that give others pause. The following examples may be indicative of this.
 - In Gen 12:11 Abraham calls his aged wife Sarah a “pretty woman” (אִשָּׁה יְפֵת־מַרְאֵה), an evaluation repeated of Isaac's wife Rebekah when he was nearly 80 years old and she surely not much less (Gen 26:7). It is inconceivable that either Pharaoh or Abimelech would be attracted to Sarah if her appearance were that of an old woman. Very likely, Abraham and Sarah aged more gradually than normal so that an 80-year old, for example, might appear to be no more than 40.
 - When Abraham was told by Yahweh that he would sire a son at 100 years of age by Sarah who was then 90, he was astounded at the thought and could only laugh at the very idea (Gen 17:17) as did Sarah when she heard the news later (Gen 18:12). Their reaction was understandable: They were both well beyond the years when they could expect to bear a child (Gen 18:11-12). The narrator observes that “Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the years of childbearing. So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, ‘After I am worn out²⁷ and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?’” The reaction speaks for itself. Both are indeed very old, well past the time to have offspring.
 - Sarah was 76 when Ishmael was born (Gen 16:16; cf. 17:17) and several years more than that when Abraham dealt with the Philistines and his wife again became a sexual attraction (Gen 20:2).
 - Finally, at 90 years of age, Sarah bore Isaac (Gen 21:1-5). All this was absolutely unexpected and remarkable, suggesting

²⁷The term here (בָּלֵתָ) means fundamentally “non-existent” (HALOT, 136). Here Sarah is saying that she may as well be dead as to expect to conceive at her age. And she adds that she no longer has a sex drive (הָיָה). Cf. HALOT, 793.

that their great age at the time of child birth was nothing short of miraculous, well out of keeping with the norm.

- The final example is Pharaoh's interrogation of Jacob when the latter appeared in the royal palace (Gen 47:7-9). The king has put two and two together by then and seems amazed that Jacob could be as old as he thought he must be given his lines of progeny. "How old are you?" he brazenly inquired. "The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty. My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers." However, he lived for 17 more years, dying at 147 (Gen 47:28). To think of himself as young at 130 is possible only if his ancestors lived much longer, which was, in fact, the case.
- Comparisons of the various passages in Genesis to which reference has been made leads to the ambivalence of "real age" and "apparent age." The narratives imply that Sarah must have looked young and sexually attractive, but in fact she was too old to bear children.

The conclusion is that in instances where age is a factor, the narrator and characters in the stories seem puzzled at the longevity of the patriarchs as compared to what was normal to them. Only if the ages are to be taken at face value can one account for these reactions of amazement and disbelief. But the question yet remains, why would God grant such long lives to the founders of the nation? A reasonable and theologically sound and sensible answer, we propose, is precisely the fact that they were the founders of the chosen people yet to come, and they were allowed to display in concrete form what the Lord meant when he promised the nation that it too would enjoy length of days and prosperity unlike any of the other peoples of the earth would could ever know apart from him. This promise is embedded in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:2; 13:15; 17:8; Exod 20:12; Deut 4:40; Jer 35:7) but it pertained also to individual lives. Faithfulness to Yahweh would result in the kind of longevity enjoyed by the fathers of the nation (Deut 6:2; 11:9; 17:20; 22:7; 30:20; Psa 91:16; 21:4; 102:27; Prov 4:10; 9:11; 10:27; Zech 8:4).

Speaking of the millennial age yet to come, Isaiah predicted that "Never again will there be in it [the new Jerusalem] an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed" (Isa 65:20). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob foreshadowed what will be the norm when the debilitating and aging effects of sin and the Fall are forever eradicated. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

Does God Own a Death Star? The Destruction of the Cosmos in 2 Peter 3:1-13

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Introduction

In the film *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*, the evil Empire's Darth Vader and General Tarkin destroy Princess Leia's home planet of Alderaan using their newly developed weapon of mass destruction: the Death Star. The Death Star is capable of obliterating entire planets, turning them into space dust in one fell laser-beam swoop, and this is exactly what happens to Alderaan. Interestingly, some interpreters of Scripture see a similar annihilation taking place in 2 Peter 3:1-13, where Peter says that when Christ returns the "heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved" (v. 10). Some commentators take this to mean that God will obliterate the entire physical creation, much like the Death Star annihilates planets. Of course this is not an exact parallel—Vader and the Empire do not go on to create a new Alderaan, but God will create, in this interpretation, a "new heavens and new earth" (v. 11; Rev 21:1). Nevertheless, these scholars do claim that the present creation is completely and utterly destroyed, after which God will create a new heavens and new earth, presumably once again *ex nihilo*. Evidence for this view is primarily twofold: the images of burning, melting, dissolving, and passing away are all interpreted as annihilation, and the term "new" is interpreted as "completely distinct from the old."

This article will argue that the total annihilation interpretation of 2 Peter 3:1-13 does not accurately reflect Peter's intention in this passage or, tangentially, John's view of the new heavens and new earth in Revelation 21-22. Four main exegetical and theological observations will demonstrate that God does not own a Death Star, so to speak, and will not obliterate the cosmos, or physical creation, at Christ's return. First, the meaning of "pass away" in the New Testament never indicates annihilation, and in fact is used to speak of events that have already taken place. Second, the metaphor of fire in the New Testament and especially in Peter's epistles is typically used in reference to refining or eternal judgment, not annihilation. Third, the comparison to Noah's flood is instructive about what it means for the earth to be destroyed. Finally, to interpret 2 Peter 3:1-13 as teaching that God obliterates the entire creation does not align with the biblical teaching that God

created his world good and has begun to redeem it. After a brief examination of several annihilationist interpretations of 2 Peter 3:1-13, each of these four arguments will be discussed in detail.

The Supposed Annihilation of Creation in 2 Peter 3:1-13

Although some have argued that the annihilation position is one found now only in “hyperdispensationalism” and is perhaps waning in broader evangelicalism,¹ there are still a number of contemporary scholars and clergy from a wide range of doctrinal backgrounds who hold to the complete obliteration of the cosmos based on 2 Peter 3. From John MacArthur comes the following:

With the culmination of the final phase of the day of the Lord, **the heavens will pass away with a roar** - a universal upheaval that Jesus Himself predicted in the Olivet Discourse: ‘Heaven and earth will pass away’ (Matt. 24:35). **Heavens** refers to the visible, physical universe of interstellar and intergalactic space. Like Christ, Peter foresaw the disintegration of the entire universe in an instant ‘uncreation,’ not by any naturalistic scenario, but solely by God’s omnipotent intervention.

The term **roar** (*rhoizedon*) . . . connotes the whizzing, crackling sounds that objects emit as fire consumes them. On that future day, the noise from the disintegrating atoms of the universe will be deafening, unlike anything mortals have ever heard before.

. . . The word **elements** (*stoicheia*) . . . [w]hen used in reference to the physical world, . . . describes the basic atomic components of the universe.

The **intense heat** will be so powerful that **the earth and its works will be burned up**. God’s power will consume everything

¹This seems to be Gale Heide’s assumption. Gale Z. Heide, “What is New About the New Heaven and New Earth? A Theology of Creation From Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40 (1997): 40. Although I arrived at my conclusions about this passage independent from Heide, after reading his article it is apparent that many of our arguments are similar regarding how to understand 2 Pet 3:1-13. This article seeks to expand on and further Heide’s points, especially in regards to the meaning of the terms “pass away” and “elements,” as well as to the place of a theology of creation in understanding this passage. Additionally, Heide’s article, while still relevant, was published almost two decades ago. Given the continued assumption of the annihilationist position in current scholarship, and especially among conservative evangelicals, it seems appropriate to once again provide a rebuttal to that argument. Finally, Heide’s argument relies heavily on distinguishing 2 Pet 3 as an apocalyptic passage in terms of genre, while this article seeks to provide a more biblical theological approach to understanding Peter’s use of conflagration, fire, and flood language.

in the material realm—the entire physical earth—with its civilizations, ecosystems, and natural resources - and the surrounding celestial universe. Yet even in the midst of that mind-boggling destruction, the Lord will protect his sheep (emphasis original).²

The message here is clear: nothing will be left of the current physical creation after the sweeping judgment of the Day of the Lord. On the opposite end of the theological spectrum, Barbara Rossing argues that Peter's view of the end of the world in 2 Peter 3:1-13 is at odds with the rest of the New Testament's teaching on the fate of the created world, and is the only NT text containing the "idea of a fiery eschatological conflagration that consumes the entire planet. . . . Other biblical texts use the image of a refiner's fire or the fire of purification. But no other New Testament text speaks of a total world-destroying fire."³ She goes so far as to suggest that clergy ought to avoid teaching 2 Peter 3 because its views are so far from the rest of the New Testament, and specifically from John's view in Revelation 21-22.⁴ And although Carsten Thiede does not argue that Peter disagrees with the rest of the NT writers, he does contrast Peter's supposed annihilationist view to early church theologians Irenaeus and Origen, who take the transformational view.⁵ Additionally, David VanDrunen, in articulating a "two kingdoms" approach to the church's relationship to culture, argues that this present world will be completely destroyed at Christ's second coming, and that the only point of continuity between this world and the new creation (e.g. Rom. 8:21) will be believers' bodies.⁶

In addition to these more academic approaches to the interpretation of this passage, a number of clergy have understood annihilation to be Peter's referent here. Take, for instance, Jerry Falwell's statement, "The earth will go up in dissolution from severe heat. The environmentalists will be really shook up, then, because God is going to blow it all away, and bring down new heavens and new earth."⁷ Mark Driscoll recently reportedly quipped at a Catalyst conference, "I know who made the environment. He's coming back, and he's

²John MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, MacArthur NT Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 2005), 124-25.

³Barbara Rossing, "Hastening the Day When the Earth Will Burn: Global Warming, 2 Peter, and the Book of Revelation," in *The Bible in the Public Square: Reading the Signs of the End Times*, eds., Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, Ellen Bradshaw Aitken, and Jonathan A. Draper (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 30. See also her shorter article version of this essay, "Hastening the Day' When the Earth Will Burn? Global Warming, Revelation and 2 Peter 3 (Advent 2, Year B)," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 35 (2008): 363-73.

⁴*Ibid.*, 32-33.

⁵Carsten Peter Thiede, "A Pagan Reader of 2 Peter: Cosmic Conflagration in 2 Peter 3 and the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26 (1986): 79-86.

⁶David VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 64-67, 81.

⁷Jerry Falwell, "The Myth of Global Warming" (sermon, Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, VA, February 25, 2007), as quoted in Barbara Rossing, "Hastening the Day," 29.

going to burn it all up. So yes, I drive an SUV.”⁸ Driscoll has since stated that he was “just joking,”⁹ but nevertheless the statement appears to sum up what many Christians believe about the fate of the created order at Jesus’ return.

A body of scholarship from earlier in the twentieth century also supports these interpretations of 2 Peter 3 and its view of the end of the world. While MacArthur relies on the terms “roar,” “heavens,” and “burned up” for his interpretation and Rossing opts for an obliterating rather than transforming understanding of fire, Larry Overstreet argues that Peter’s use of the phrase “pass away” clearly refers to the heavens and the earth being annihilated. Indeed, according to Overstreet, “when God causes this catastrophic event, the destruction will be complete and total.” In other words, nothing—not an atom—will be left.¹⁰ Additionally, from a text critical and grammatical perspective, some scholars have taken εὑρεθήσεται¹¹ to mean annihilation.¹² Finally, commentators such as Jerome Neyrey appear to argue for the annihilationist position,¹³ while others leave open the possibility for

⁸Mark Driscoll as quoted by Jonathan Merritt, “Is Mark Driscoll This Generation’s Pat Robertson?” Religion News Service, <http://jonathanmerritt.religionnews.com/2013/05/13/is-mark-driscoll-this-generations-pat-robertson/> (accessed: 23 May 2013).

⁹Mark Driscoll, “Catalyst, Comedy, and Critics,” PastorMark.tv, <http://pastormark.tv/2013/05/15/catalyst-comedy-and-critics> (accessed: 23 May 2013). Notice in this post that Driscoll does not clarify if he believes the earth will be annihilated, only that he does care for the environment because God made it. This is of course not a wrong reason for environmental care, but it does not clarify Driscoll’s statement above concerning God’s supposed obliteration of the world at his return.

¹⁰R. Larry Overstreet, “A Study of 2 Peter 3:10-13,” *Bibliotheca Sacra [BibSac]* 137 (1980): 365.

¹¹For the text-critical issues involved with this reading, see Frederick W. Danker, “II Peter 3:10 and Psalm of Solomon 17:10,” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche [ZNW]* 53 (1962): 82; Hellmut Lenhard, “Ein Beitrag Zur Übersetzung von II Ptr 3:10d,” *ZNW* 52 (1961): 128; and idem, “Noch Einmal Zu 2 Petr 3:10d,” *ZNW* 69 (1978): 136. Both Wenham and Wolters’ important articles on the text critical issues will be discussed below.

¹²J. W. Roberts, “A Note on the Meaning of II Peter 3:10d,” *Restoration Quarterly* 6 (1962): 32-33.

¹³Jerome H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible, vol. 37C (Doubleday: New York, 1964; reprint, 1993), 243. Neyrey’s specific argument is that “elements” refers to the fundamental components of the world in the ancient understanding of the cosmos (earth, water, air, and fire), which necessarily includes the physical earth. For other commentators and exegetes who take the annihilationist position, see, for example, William R. Baker, “The Future of the Cosmos in the Eschatology of 2 Peter: A Study of the Meaning and Background of 2 Peter 3:7-13” (M.A. Thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1976), 140-44, 160; Danny Petrillo, “The Conceptual Background to the ‘New Heavens and New Earth’ in 2 Pet. 3:13” (M.A. Thesis, Harding Graduate School of Religion, 1981), 50, 69; and perhaps the most influential, Charles Ryrie, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1959), 288. While particularly in the commentaries there has been a shift towards the transformationalist view in the last 20-30 years, one can see that there is a substantial amount of scholarship supporting the annihilationist view from the mid-twentieth century, and interpreters like MacArthur and Rossing above are still promulgating it. Additionally, contemporary commentators like Schreiner (see n. 10), while seemingly leaning toward a transformationalist view, leave open the possibility that the passage speaks of the annihilation of the cosmos.

either an annihilationist or transformationalist interpretation.¹⁴

Even though the annihilationist view may still hold sway in some scholarly and pastoral circles, and especially in conservative evangelicalism, and even though it may have some support in previous scholarship, it does not seem to be the best reading of 2 Peter 3:1-13 for at least the following reasons.¹⁵ Peter does not use the phrase “pass away” to denote annihilation; Peter uses the fire imagery to speak of refinement, not annihilation; Peter uses the flood comparison to speak of purification, not annihilation; and Peter writes within a canonical framework that includes a theology of God’s good creation and his promised redemption of it. The remainder of this article will discuss each of these arguments in detail in order to demonstrate that Peter does not view the end of the world as annihilation and re-creation *ex nihilo*, but purification and transformation of the current cosmos leading to the new heavens and new earth.

Arguments Against the Annihilationist Interpretation

The Meaning of “Pass Away”

One of the most important phrases in this passage is found in 2 Peter 3:10, where Peter says that, “the heavens will *pass away* with a roar.” The exact meaning of this phrase is complicated, and the ambiguity of it is not immediately clarified by looking at its use elsewhere in the NT. Although a two-word phrase in English, the wording in Greek is a single verb, *παρελεύσονται*. This verb in its different conjugations can be found twenty-one times in the NT, and is used in at least seven different ways. First, it can be used to speak of walking, going, or coming, as in Matthew 8:28; 14:15; Mark 6:48; 14:35; Luke 12:37; 17:7; 18:37; Acts 16:8. Similarly, it can also

¹⁴E.g. Schreiner, who explicitly states, “It is difficult to know if Peter thought of the purification and renovation of this world by fire or if he had in mind the complete destruction of this present world and the creation of a new one.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* NAC, vol. 37; ed., Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 377, 385. He is admittedly more open about his transformationalist leanings in his NT theology tome, saying “Some think that [Peter] predicts the annihilation of the present world and the creation of a completely new world (e.g. Overstreet 1980: 362-65). It seems more likely, although certainty is impossible, that God will purify the old world by fire and create out of the same elements a new world (Wolters 1987).” Idem, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 825 n. 61. For the more ambivalent stance taken in Schreiner’s commentary, see also Michael Green, *2 Peter & Jude*, 2nd ed., Tyndale New Testament Commentary, ed. Leon Morris (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 142-44; Robert Harvey and Philip H. Towner, *2 Peter and Jude*, InterVarsityPress New Testament Commentary, ed. Grant Osborne (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009), 120-21; and PHEME PERKINS, *First and Second Peter, James, and Jude*. Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1995), 188-94. Like Schreiner, neither Harvey and Towner, nor Green, nor Perkins seems to take a position on the matter, and Perkins does not even mention the options at all.

¹⁵Again, as noted in footnote 1, I am not here attempting to provide any new exegetical insights. Rather, I want to revisit a position that is still popular among conservative evangelicals today with the intent of compiling and re-arguing older insights in order to persuade those who still hold to an annihilationist understanding.

refer to time passing, as in Acts 27:9 and 1 Peter 4:3. Third, in Luke it is used to speak of neglecting or disobeying a command (Luke 11:42; 15:29), and in James 1:10 it is used fourthly to speak of the mortality of human beings. Jesus also uses it to ask for God to “let this cup pass from me” (Matt 26:39, 42), and Paul uses it to refer to our new nature in Christ, as the old has passed away, in 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Finally, a number of times in the NT this verb is used to refer to the fate of heaven and earth. Other than 2 Peter 3:10, it is used in that sense exclusively in the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus uses it in Matthew 5:18 when he says, “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass away from the Law until all is accomplished.”¹⁶ A parallel saying is found in Luke 16:17. The other six uses in the Synoptics are found in the parallel passages of Matthew 24:34-35; Mark 13:30-31; and Luke 21:32-33, each of which recount Jesus’ apocalyptic discourse that he gives immediately prior to the Passion narrative. Jesus says in these passages, “this generation will not pass away until these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”

The first aspect of these uses that should grab our attention in the context of understanding Peter’s use of the phrase is that it is not at all clear that any of them refer to the annihilation, obliteration, or total destruction of anything. In fact, other than the uses by the synoptic evangelists and Paul, typically this phrase does not refer to destruction at all. And even in the case of the use by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul, it is still not clear that “pass away” means anything like annihilation. Second, and relatedly, it seems clear that at least in Paul’s use in 2 Corinthians 5:17 that “pass away” does not mean annihilation.¹⁷ There “the old” has passed away and the new has come, but we still “wait eagerly . . . for the redemption of our bodies” (Rom 8:23), for our final glorification and freedom from sin (1 John 3:2).

One might argue that the uses in the Synoptics are unrelated to Paul’s use, but even here it is ambiguous at best that Jesus means anything like annihilation or destruction by the phrase. In fact, given Mark’s clear connections between the Olivet Discourse and the passion narrative, it appears that at least Mark interprets Jesus’ apocalyptic prophecies, including the reference to heaven and earth passing away, as referring to his death and resurrection.¹⁸ This would mean that in at least Mark, the phrase “pass away” refers to the destruction of the old order at Jesus’ death and resurrection—and clearly heaven and earth were not obliterated or annihilated at that point.

¹⁶Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

¹⁷Heide, “What’s New about the New Heaven and the New Earth?,” 44.

¹⁸Peter Bolt, *The Cross From a Distance: Atonement in Mark’s Gospel*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology*, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 85-115. See also N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, *Christian Origins and the Question of God 2* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 321-68, for the argument that both Matthew 24 and Mark 13 refer to Jesus’ impending passion, resurrection, ascension, and the destruction of the Temple in AD 70.

Given the ambiguity at best of “pass away” as referring to annihilation, the suggestion here is that at this point we ought to be cautious about using it to support an annihilationist interpretation of this passage. This caution is made more important by Peter’s use of other imagery, parallels, and phrasing in 2 Peter 3:1-13.

Refining Fire

In addition to “pass away,” another important image in Peter’s explanation of Christ’s return is that of destruction by fire. In 2 Peter 3:7, 10, and 12, Peter uses imagery of the world burning and being dissolved. There are a number of questions related to what this imagery means, including the referent for Peter’s term “elements” (στοιχεῖα) and the text-critical issue of the verb in 3:10. For the former, although some scholars take “elements” to mean the basic atomic building blocks of the universe,¹⁹ in which case Peter would certainly be referring to annihilation,²⁰ the more likely option and the more accepted view in scholarship is that Peter is referring to the heavenly bodies, namely the sun, moon, and the stars.²¹ An important point for this interpretation is the fact that Peter appears to be quoting Isaiah 34:4, which refers to the dissolution of the stars, not atomic or elemental building blocks.²² This view also comports with Revelation 21:23, which states that in the new heavens and new earth there will be “no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the lamb.”²³ Most importantly, perhaps, is the fact that Peter seems to state in his Pentecost sermon that the cosmic disruption of the elements has already happened. In Acts 2:17-21 Peter quotes Joel 2:28-32 as being fulfilled at Pentecost, and part of Joel’s prophecy includes these words: “And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day” (Acts 2:19-20; cf. Joel 2:30-31). Again, Peter quotes this as being fulfilled at Pentecost, when the Spirit of God is poured out on all flesh (Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28). Cosmic disruption

¹⁹E.g. MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, 124. In the ancient world it would not be atoms but the four elements: earth, water, wind, and fire.

²⁰Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, Pillar New Testament Commentary, ed., D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 284.

²¹Ibid., 286.

²²Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*. Word Biblical Commentary [WBC] 50, eds., David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 316. Bauckham also notes that the interpretation of “elements” referring to the heavenly bodies is supported by Theophilus, Justin, Polycrates, Eusebius, and Tatian. Ibid. For the Isa 34:4 reference, see also Harvey and Towner, *2 Peter and Jude*, 120; and Simon J. Kistemaker, *James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude*, NT Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1995), 336.

²³Note that Rev 21:23 does not say there is no sun or moon, but that there is no need of it. Caution is needed in discussing each of these texts, whether in 2 Pet or Rev or in the OT, as they all contain apocalyptic imagery. So the statement that no sun or moon was needed should not necessarily be taken too concretely. The same can be said of the statement that the sea “was no more” in the new heavens and new earth in Rev 21:2.

and destruction has already occurred at Pentecost and also at Jesus' crucifixion.²⁴ In neither of these places did it entail the complete annihilation of the universe. The same is true of Noah's flood, to which Peter compares Christ's judgment at the second coming and which will be discussed below.

Another important question in regards to the interpretation of the fire imagery in 2 Peter 3 is the text-critical and exegetical issue of how to read the verb in 3:10. While the KJV has κατακαήσονται, "to burn up," it appears that the more appropriate reading is εὑρεθήσονται.²⁵ The question is what the latter means in the context of Peter's argument. While the root means "to find," it is hard to see how this makes sense on a cursory reading of 2 Peter 3:10. Even with this exegetical difficulty, Bauckham²⁶ and Wolters have offered compelling solutions, interpreting the verse to mean "the earth and the works done on it will be found out" or exposed (so ESV). Wolters offers the OT background of Malachi 3:2-4 for support,²⁷ noting that fire is used in the OT and in Malachi particularly to expose the works done by humankind on the earth. David Wenham adds to the probability of this reading by noting Jesus' similar language in the Gospels.²⁸ There does not appear to be much support for this verb indicating anything like annihilation.

Wolters' discussion of Malachi 3:2-4 also directs the reader of 2 Peter 3 to the author's purpose in using fire imagery. Is it used, as some argue, to describe the world's annihilation, or is it used to denote transformation? Scholars today are increasingly arguing for the latter interpretation, primarily due to the OT background of the passage. Additionally, Peter and Paul both refer to fire as refining (1 Pet 1:5-9; 2 Cor 3:10-15), and in Paul's case he is speaking of the fire of judgment that reveals the character of works done on the earth.²⁹ This sounds remarkably similar to Peter's use in 2 Peter 3:10. More importantly, it seems to make sense of the works on the earth being exposed (v. 10) and the distinction between the pre-destruction cosmos, full of false teaching and sin, and the new heavens and new earth, "in which righteousness dwells" (v. 13). The point of the fire is to judge evildoers and purify the cosmos, not to annihilate everything. Further, regarding this "new" heavens and earth, the word Peter uses here, and the one John uses in Revelation 21:1, is καινός, not νεός. The former tends to denote newness in terms of

²⁴E.g. darkness occurring between the sixth and the ninth hour as a representation of the sun, moon, and stars darkening (Matt 24:29 and 27:45; Mark 13:24-25 and 15:33).

²⁵See n. 11.

²⁶Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 318-21.

²⁷Al Wolters, "Worldview and Textual Criticism in 2 Peter 3:10," *Westminster Theological Journal* 49 (1987): 409. Wolters also notes Peter's use of 1 εὑρεθῆ in 1 Pet. 1:7, where it is again referring to a "purifying fire" in an "eschatological context." *Ibid.*, 410.

²⁸David Wenham, "Being 'Found' on the Last Day: New Light on 2 Peter 3.10 and 2 Corinthians 5.3," *New Testament Studies* 33 (1987): 477-79.

²⁹Craig Blaising refers to this as the "metallurgical meaning" of "exposed" in 3:10, and also refers to the OT background and NT usage listed here as support. Craig Blaising, "The Day of the Lord Will Come: An Exposition of 2 Peter 3:1-18," *BibSac* 169 (2012): 396-97.

transformation or renewal,³⁰ not newness in terms of complete distinction, as with the latter.³¹ This is also justified by the OT background of Isaiah 65:17-25, where the new creation is described. The word “new” in Hebrew “can mean ‘new in time’ (which fits with re-creation) or ‘new in quality’ (which fits with transformation).” Further, “There is no explicit reference in the oracle or its surrounding context to the unmaking of the present creation.”³² Thus, the significant words, phrases, and images regarding fire in 2 Peter 3:7, 10, and 12—the fire imagery itself, “elements,” “exposed,” and “new”—do not appear to speak about annihilation but instead refinement, judgment, purification, and, ultimately, transformation and renewal.

Noah's Flood

Perhaps the most important aspect of 2 Peter 3 in terms of understanding the consequences of the fire judgment is Peter's comparison of fire and flood in 3:5-7. The primary purpose of Peter's comparison between Noah's flood in Genesis 6-9 and the coming cosmic conflagration of which he speaks is to counter the false teachers that say Jesus' second coming will not happen and that the world will continue on as it always has.³³ The flood demonstrates that God has both disrupted the created order and judged false teachers before now and that he will do so again. But Peter does not just compare the fact of judgment; he also compares the means and the purpose. Just as God once destroyed *and cleansed* the world by water, so he will soon destroy it *and cleanse it* by fire. Of course there may be a sense of typological intensification here,³⁴ especially since the flood was not the final judgment at

³⁰Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 280. Hoekema also cites Rom 8:21, 1 Cor 15:35-49, and the cosmic victory of Christ over Satan as support for the transformationalist view. *Ibid.*, 280-81.

³¹This is contra the stoic view that the world is continually destroyed through fire and re-created. For a description of this view see, e.g., Edward Adams, “Does Awaiting ‘New Heavens and a New Earth’ (2 Pet 3.13) Mean Abandoning the Environment?” *The Expository Times [ExpTim]* 121 (2010): 171; idem, *The Stars Will Fall From Heaven: Cosmic Catastrophe in the New Testament and its World*, Library of New Testament Studies (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 215. As Adams notes in the article, he does not subscribe to the stoic view, but nevertheless believes it is perhaps in the background of Peter's thought here. The biblical view, and Peter's, however, is much more beholden to Jewish apocalyptic thought and linear in its understanding. As Gene Green states, in Scripture and in Peter's view, “there are three worlds: the past, the present, and the future. God is the one who creates, sustains, judges, and then re-creates without any suggestion that the process is anything other than linear.” There is, in other words, no evidence of the stoic cyclical understanding influencing Peter's thoughts. Green, *Jude & 2 Peter*, 323. See also Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 300-301; Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 378; and Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 530.

³²Adams, “Does Awaiting ‘New Heavens and a New Earth’ (2 Pet 3.13) Mean Abandoning the Environment?,” 169.

³³Sam Meier notes not only the conceptual parallels but also the semantic and syntactical similarities in how Peter describes Noah's flood and the coming cosmic conflagration. Sam Meier, “2 Peter 3:3-7 - An Early Jewish and Christian Response to Eschatological Skepticism,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 32.2 (1988): 255.

³⁴E.g. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 377.

Christ's return, as the fire judgment is. But intensification does not necessitate annihilation. In fact, Peter compares the coming fire judgment so closely to the flood judgment that it seems to rule out the possibility of annihilation completely.

On a *prima facie* level, we may simply ask if the earth and all that was in it was obliterated by the flood, and the answer is of course no. What was created in Genesis 1 still survives after the flood, albeit perhaps radically altered in regards to geography.³⁵ Furthermore, in the Genesis narrative, Moses presents the flood as an act of de-creation and re-creation. Noah is saved from judgment through the ark, but as the waters flood the earth they are called "formless and void" like the waters in Genesis 1:2. After Noah is placed back on "dry land," he is issued incredibly similar commands to the ones Adam and Eve receive in Genesis 1:28 and 2:7, namely to "be fruitful and multiply" and "cultivate and keep" the land.³⁶ Noah is presented as a new Adam, and the land on which he is placed has been de-created and re-created. It was placed under the formless and void waters only to have God once again separate them and place his image bearer on dry land.

When reading 2 Peter 3:1-13, one ought to take this restorational orientation of the Noahic flood seriously. Yes, God destroys the world, but he also then restores it. Further, in his destruction of it he clearly does not annihilate it, but instead purges the sinful and rebellious world order and those who walk in it from the earth.³⁷ This of course may have radical effects on the physical creation, but nowhere is annihilation mentioned as the final fate of the world. Instead, the world is purged of evil and purified to be the place where God dwells with his people.³⁸ This is the language Peter uses for the coming cosmic conflagration as well—judgment, refinement, and renewal.³⁹ The difference is in the means and the scope—fire instead of water, final instead of temporal judgment—but the purpose and effect are the same. And while the final judgment is of course intensified, as it includes the whole scope of creation and all of those who oppose God for all time, this intensifi-

³⁵Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 299; and Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 271.

³⁶Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary 1, eds., David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 192-96, 204-08.

³⁷Douglas Harink notes that, "Throughout the scriptures, water and fire are the manifest signs and instruments of the Spirit's purifying arrival." Douglas Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible, ed., R. R. Reno (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009), 178. Or, as David Wilkinson puts it, "The function of fire was to consume the wicked, not destroy the world. Indeed, in Jewish eschatology in the post-biblical period such judgment with fire was seen to have a parallel with the flood." David Wilkinson, *The Message of Creation: Encountering the Lord of the Universe*, *The Bible Speaks Today*, ed. Derek Tidball (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002), 249. See also Heide, "What's New About the New Heaven and the New Earth?," 51, 53-54.

³⁸Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 287.

³⁹Notice Peter's use of the verb ἀπόλετο ("was destroyed") in reference to the flood (3:6) and its nominal form ἀπόλειας ("destruction") in reference to the fire judgment (3:7). The destructions are the same. Wolters, "Worldview and Textual Criticism in 2 Peter 3:10," 408.

creation is in terms of scope and not effect on the material creation. It is *creatio ex vetere*, not *creatio ex nihilo*.⁴⁰

God's Good Creation⁴¹

A biblical-theological argument against the annihilationist view comes not only from 2 Peter 3 but from the biblical storyline and a biblical theology of creation. God creates everything "good" in Genesis 1 (vv. 3, 9, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31), and "blesses" both the living creatures in his creation and his image bearers, human beings (vv. 22, 28). This ought to give us pause when speaking of the final fate of the material creation. God can of course do what he wants, but God's delight in his creation should cause cautious readings when it comes to texts like 2 Peter 3.

Continuing in the biblical storyline,⁴² creation is included in both the fall and redemption. When God judges Adam, Eve, and the serpent after the fall, he curses the ground because of Adam's sin (Gen 3:17). As God embarks on his redemption project, he includes the entire scope of the curse and the effects of the fall in his covenant promises. The promises to Abraham of land, people, rulers, and blessing echo what was lost in Genesis 1 and 2,⁴³ and as we saw above the Noahic flood and covenant includes restorational language. The tabernacle and Temple in both the Mosaic and Davidic covenants clearly contain references to a renewal of creation.⁴⁴ In the NT, Jesus' healings and exorcisms restore not only the spiritual but the physical as well; they are connected to the created order. Preminent in Jesus' work of restoring creation is his resurrection; the physical body of the Christ is renewed, a picture of future renewal at his second coming. Jesus is not gnostic; he is not seeking release from his corporeality, but instead renews his materiality in his resurrection. This is a prophetic vision of the future of believers' bodies (1 Cor 15:35-49), and as the firstfruits of the new creation believers also give hope to the creation itself for its redemption from the effects of sin (Rom

⁴⁰Edward Adams, "Does Awaiting 'New Heavens and a New Earth' (2 Pet 3.13) Mean Abandoning the Environment?," 173.

⁴¹Much of this section is reliant upon Matthew Y. Emerson, "Victory, Atonement, Restoration, and Response: The Shape of the New Testament Canon and the Holistic Gospel Message." *Southeastern Theological Review* 3 (2012): 177-94.

⁴²For an overview of the biblical narrative, see, for instance, T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008); G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 29-186 and esp. 129-60; Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 13-86; Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), e.g., 62-65; N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009; reprint, London: SPCK, 2005), 114, 119-22, 130-53.

⁴³James Hamilton, "The Seed of Woman and the Blessing of Abraham," *Tyndale Bulletin* 58 (2007): 253-73.

⁴⁴G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004) and Andrea Spatafora, *From the "Temple of God" to God as the Temple: A Biblical Theological Study of the Temple in the Book of Revelation*, *Tesi Gregoriana Serie Teologia* 27 (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1997).

8:21). Jesus thus not only creates and sustains “all things” but also redeems “all things” (Col 1:15-20).⁴⁵ Finally, the consummation of God’s redemptive project in Christ is the new creation of Revelation 21-22, a new heavens and new earth that includes cultural and material qualities that mirror the old creation. The difference is that the effects and source of sin have been purged in Revelation 20:7-15. Thus, God cares for and redeems his “good” creation through the work of his Son. For God to annihilate the material world, even in order to create again *ex nihilo*, seems contrary to his creative and redemptive purposes for the cosmos.⁴⁶

Conclusion

Ethical Situation and Implications

The reader of 2 Peter 3 should not overlook the context of Peter’s talk of destruction. Second Peter 3:10 is situated within a larger argument, an argument in which Peter exhorts his readers to “holiness and godliness” (v. 11), eschatological hope for the new creation “in which righteousness dwells” (v. 13), diligence and peace (v. 14), and doctrinal fidelity and wisdom (vv. 15-17). This discussion of the destruction of the cosmos is, in other words, a highly ethical matter for Peter. Eschatology is a thoroughly ethical doctrine in the New Testament and that is no exception here. Because the Lord will return in judgment, where even the heavenly bodies burn as his holy fire sifts through the wheat and the tares of both people and their works, his people, his body, ought to be pursuing Christlikeness.

Part of pursuing Christlikeness includes our conduct, and for our purposes here especially how we treat God’s creation. I do not wish to overstate here the implications of one’s interpretation of this passage for creation care, but neither do I wish to pass over them. All Christians can recognize together that God’s creation is good and that, therefore, we ought to exercise our God-given dominion over it properly. “Dominion” does not equal a license for wanton destruction by humans. But in an annihilationist interpretation, are we perhaps more prone to a kind of fatalism regarding the environment? “Well it’s all going to burn anyway” may be a crass colloquialism that doesn’t accurately reflect an annihilationist’s treatment of creation in real life, but certainly a belief that God will radically destroy everything that currently exists and re-create at Christ’s return changes the way one treats the current material creation. I do not here wish to argue for specific practices regarding environmental care that fall into one interpretive category or the other, nor do I wish to bind believers’ consciences on practical matters like recycling or

⁴⁵“All things” here clearly refers to the entire creation, both in terms of creation and sustainment and also redemption. It seems unlikely that Paul would use the same term twice in the span of five verses in different ways.

⁴⁶Heide, “What’s New About the New Heaven and the New Earth?,” 40; Ruth Ann Reese, *2 Peter and Jude*, Two Horizons Commentary, eds., Joel Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 218.

even deforestation. Nevertheless, it is clear that this passage and its interpretation thus have important implications for our conduct, and especially for our ethics of creation care, and so that is yet another reason to take our interpretation of 2 Peter 3 with utmost seriousness.

Final Thoughts

God does not own a Death Star. Or at least, if he does, he is not going to use it on the *cosmos* at Christ's return. Second Peter 3:1-13, while certainly containing language that indicates a radical judgment of the present evil age and the purging of the effects of sin, does not teach that God will annihilate the universe at the end of time. Instead, Peter uses the language of "pass away," fire imagery, and the comparison to Noah's flood to teach his readers that God will purify the heavens and the earth, his "good" creation, from the effects and source of sin and thereby transform it into the "new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells" (2 Pet 3:13). Believers can therefore look forward to the day when God brings the restored new heavens down to the restored new earth, dwelling with his people in a Garden-City-Temple, the culmination of the biblical storyline. As Gene Green states in his commentary on 2 Peter, "In spite of the destructive forces of the divine judgment (3:7, 10-12), the Christian hope is the renovation of creation and not its annihilation. As the ancient world destroyed by the flood (2:5; 3:6) gave way to the present order, so also the present world will suffer divine judgment (3:7), but in turn God will usher in the new creation."⁴⁷

⁴⁷Gene L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, eds., Robert H. Stein and Robert L. Yarbrough (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 334.

Book Reviews

Biblical Studies

***Invitation to the Psalms: A Reader's Guide for Discovery and Engagement.* By Rolf A. Jacobson and Karl N. Jacobson. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013. 192 pages. Paperback, \$17.99.**

Brothers Rolf and Karl Jacobson guide the inexperienced student through the beautiful terrain of the Psalter with their work, *Invitation to the Psalms*. They make it decidedly clear that a reader must move from simply reading Scripture to experiencing it (1). This conviction of experiencing Scripture affects the organization and content of their book. For example, they pack examples from Psalms throughout the short book, while omitting lengthy discussion of parallelism and detailed footnotes. The outline of the book intentionally builds from the bottom-up by introducing poetry (chapter 1), genres (chapters 2-3), the voice of the psalmist (chapter 4), metaphors in Psalms (chapter 5), and the theology of Psalms (chapter 6). Noting the Jacobsons' metaphor for themselves as tour guides, the following review will place their contribution in the domain of a guided tour.

Chapter 1 presents the argument that a reader must understand the *logic of communication*. Here, the *communication* is Hebrew poetry; the *logic* is parallelism. The Jacobsons, therefore, guide the tour group through different Psalms to discover parallelism within lines (i.e., cola), between lines, between verses (i.e., unit two or more lines), between entire sections, and between psalms. The guides stop the tour group to mention the classic labels of parallelism, noting the difficulty with the third, somewhat catchall category—synthetic parallelism. From there, they let the tour group sift the dirt and test the group's analytical and creative skills by asking the group to fill out the second line that is parallel to the first example line. This type of exercise continually reinforces the Jacobsons' objective to help students learn to experience, not label, the poetry of the Bible. The necessity of labeling, however, causes them to introduce important vocabulary for poetic analysis—echoing and extending. The Jacobsons often claim that parallelism contains *both* echoing and extending, thus guarding the interpreter from an erroneous either/or dichotomy.

Chapters 2 and 3 introduce the student to the genres of Psalms. The tour guides now show the details of form and content to the tour group so that the tourists can competently return to landscape at a later time and walk through the region unguided, as it were. First, the Jacobsons highlight the distinct forms of the Psalms, especially prayers of help (i.e., laments), hymns of praise, psalms of trust, and songs of thanksgiving. The guides give the tour group a brief breakdown of each main section of a form along with lists of psalms that fit the category. The guides then show how they categorize Psalms according to content. Here, the guides list royal, enthronement, wisdom, creation, historical, Zion, imprecatory, penitential, and liturgical as categories. The guides do not oversell the objectivity of content genre analysis to their tour group; rather, they often highlight how subjective—though important—the analysis is. Throughout both chapters, the Jacobsons underscore the continuity of material that the tour group is currently learning (e.g., prayers for help

connect to songs of thanksgiving; royal connect to enthronement psalms).

Chapter 4 gives the guides the opportunity to discuss the history of the landscape, allowing the tour to imagine what might have happened prior to their viewing of the scenery. The Jacobsons find the persona and life situation highly important for interpretation. Upon discovery of the former, the tour group finds an important entry into the room of experience of the Psalms. Searching for the latter, the tour group finds the situations of help in a time of need and temple setting. The guides call for the group to use imagination when thinking about the history of the landscape. For the guides, this imaginative process is the underlying tool that one must use to interpret poetry correctly.

Chapters 5 and 6 stress important linguistic and theological features that occur throughout the poetic panorama of Psalms. Using common and important metaphors, such as shepherd and rock, the guides help the tour group think more precisely about images. Later, the guides take the tour into an art gallery away from the vast landscape. Once in the gallery they tell the tour to study the framed theological mosaic of Psalms. Unashamedly, the guides express that they intentionally picked out the frame and each theological piece of the mosaic. The overall theme of their mosaic is *hesed*. The guides then show how the themed mosaic appropriately takes pieces from each form genre (see chapter 2) to construct their theological art. Finally, they mention four holistic theological themes present in the landscape: God as committed to all creation, willing to be challenged, working through others, and active in the world.

The Jacobsons' sophisticated yet down-to-earth literary tour can garner detailed praise as well as scholarly debate over genre group and terminology. Rather than voicing ways in which one may agree or disagree with the authors, attention will focus on the purpose and intended audience of *Invitation to the Psalms*. In short, the Jacobsons hope to invite readers to read and experience the Psalms by acquainting them with the Psalter. Their target reader is the inexperienced student who has little Hebrew competency (2-3). Do they succeed? The answer is unequivocally yes! This success may be seen in several ways. First, the language that the Jacobsons choose is simple and clear (e.g., lines, verses, echoing and extending), rather than convoluted. Second, the constant active learning activities throughout the book (e.g., writing one's own parallel line and creating metaphors) help the student comprehend. Third, the breakout boxes (e.g., "covering" the Psalms) and the use of shapes (e.g., circles and triangles to explain genre) truly inculcate the undeveloped student. Fourth and broadly, the Jacobsons keep the entire work light-hearted and accessible for their target audience. Fifth, the choice and explanation of metaphor help the student understand important and often neglected imagery.

While there are many impressive aspects to the Jacobsons' work, there are a few areas, however minor, that should receive some constructive comments; each of the following comments connects to the purpose and intended audience of the book. First, the excursus on superscriptions should have some footnotes with helpful resources on this important and debated topic. Second, the Jacobsons, perhaps, should have balanced the attention given to persona and life setting with current discussions on how editing and canon might affect interpretation. Third, the discussion of theology seems to force (unnecessarily?) a *Mitte* of sorts with *hesed*. Searching for an underlying theological assumption behind the Psalter does not seem to benefit the inexperienced student; in fact, the search could be misleading. The Jacobsons could have shown various theological currents that run throughout the Psalter instead of

giving a large amount of space to abstracting *hesed*. The Jacobsons, however, were quite forthright about why they selected certain psalms and what they hoped the reader would understand after their theological presentation. Much of the theological discussion in chapter six is located in Rolf's delightful essay in *Soundings in the Theology of the Psalms*. Irrespective of debates about an underlying theological assumption of the Psalter, chapter six is quite thought provoking. Despite these criticisms, this book is a wonderful contribution to introductory studies of Psalms. In sum, the literary guides serve the tour well because their communication is helpful and accessible for the tour group to *discover* and *engage* the Psalms.

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***Coping with Change: Ecclesiastes.* By Walter Kaiser. Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2013. 197 pages. Paperback, \$11.54.**

This volume is an updated version of Kaiser's 1978 publication. Though Kaiser has added his own translation and updated some of the references along with the bibliography, much of the commentary remains unchanged from its earlier edition. But, while some of his illustrations and references remain dated (cf. 56), the work demonstrates a timelessness and appeal that make it a worthwhile read for pastors, teachers, and others looking for a helpful assessment of "the relationship between Christ and culture" (13).

The introduction covers the unity, authorship, date, and purpose of the book of Ecclesiastes. Kaiser begins by challenging the prevailing interpretation of *hebel*, arguing for the translation "transitoriness" instead of "vanity," following Daniel Fredericks and others (cf. 24, 57-59). Kaiser argues that this translation better renders the Hebrew which he literally translates as "vapor, breath, mist, or smoke." Understanding *hebel* to convey temporariness rather than futility removes some of the allegations of cynicism on the part of the author, is consistent with James' description of life a vapor (James 4:13-15), and also allows for the connotation of things we are simply unable to understand (59).

In this section, the author makes a strong case for Solomonic authorship based on the language, descriptions, text, linguistic features, and ideas presented in the book (36-42). In addition, he presents a fourfold division of the book forming component parts of an overall argument that finally comes to a conclusion in 12:13-14. According to Kaiser's arrangement, each section ends with its own conclusion, before the final resolution is given. The remaining chapters of the commentary follow Kaiser's proposed fourfold division of the book.

Throughout the work, Kaiser demonstrates how Solomon addressed issues of his day that still resonant with contemporary readers. These issues include: wealth, work, wisdom, mystery, pleasure, death and mortality, justice, fear of the Lord, worship, government, enjoyment of life as a gift from God, retribution, joy, and suffering. The positive things of life are only passing pleasures unless they are understood to be gifts from God (87). The difficulties of life must be nuanced by the fear of the Lord (46, 102); the providence of God (94); and trust in the Him (118-119), His plan for His creation (120, et al), and the confidence that even suffering has purpose, though those purposes may remain a mystery for mankind (151-52).

In the end, the ultimate test of our faith, in good times and in bad, is the decisive action of remembering our creator and reflecting on who he is and what he

has done for us (180). Kaiser sees Solomon's conclusion as explaining how tragic it would be for one to finish his or her life and never have understood the key to living. The key is that this life is temporary, but God has a larger purpose. His purpose gives meaning to our existence and hope for our eternity. This, Solomon concludes, should cause us to "Fear God and keep His commands."

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***David Remembered: Kingship and National Identity in Ancient Israel.* By Joseph Blenkinsopp. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013. 231 pages. Paperback, \$26.00.**

Joseph Blenkinsopp is John A. O'Brien Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at the University of Notre Dame. He is the author of numerous valuable books and articles. Blenkinsopp's aim is "to trace one strand in the social and political life of the people of Israel from the sixth century B.C.E. to the early second century of the common era" (1). The strand he wishes to trace is the monarchy of David, and its influence. One might put this work in the vein of Old Testament theology in the sense that Blenkinsopp works to describe an ideology present in Israelite history. With a broad aim, the first weakness of this book might be its relatively short length. He acknowledges that it spans several sub-disciplines (Persian, Achaemenid and Hellenistic periods for example).

To begin, he encourages the reader to consider "the David legend," which he considers to be a literary work of art, "not necessarily fictional but rather allowing for a basic historical substratum" (5). Blenkinsopp is not so much interested in the historicity of "the Davidic legend" as he is in the political developments which grew out of the ideological acceptance of it. Chapter 1 details the way in which the Deuteronomist and the Chronicler evaluate later leaders in terms of the Davidic ideal. He suggests understanding 2 Kings 25:27-30 as a latter addition which saw hope for the restoration of the Davidic line in Jehoiachin's release. Chapter 2 suggests that Saul's line of Benjaminites were always in contention with David's descendents. Blenkinsopp suggests that in the climate of Babylonian and Persian rule, there was hope for a return of Saul's line to power. He even suggests that Gedeliah's appoint as (possibly) client-king gave them a concrete basis for their hope. Chapter 3 mainly argues for Gedeliah's credibility to be appointed as client-king. Blenkinsopp argues that Gedeliah and the Benjaminites in general were in opposition to the group that sought to take on Babylon, and instead Gedeliah sought peace with the Imperialists. In chapter 4, Blenkinsopp suggests that Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 40-55) argues that "Cyrus, as Yahweh's agent, will take over the succession to the now defunct Davidic dynasty" (65-66). He admits that doing so may have caused Deutero-Isaiah to be rejected. But, he also argues that Cyrus was considered the successor, or next King of Babylon, because he was favored by Marduk—another example of theological approval. In the same way, Deutero-Isaiah sees Yahweh favoring Cyrus, that is, if Cyrus re-establishes worship of Yahweh in Jerusalem. Much of the rest of the book relies on the minor prophets for historical reconstruction. He casts Zerubbabel as a part of the nationalist-dynastic resistance to empire movement in Syria-Palestine during the Persian empire, based upon his understanding of Zechariah's imagery (chapter 5). In chapter 6, Blenkinsopp argues that because of the way Chronicles and Psalms present David as a musician, the psalms work as evidence to show an increased importance on temple and priests during the Persian and Hellenistic

periods. Blenkinsopp argues that Isaiah 11:1-9 is an exilic song which shows that the new Davidic ruler will not be identified by heroic deeds, but wisdom and governance (137). Then, he considers the victim of violence, in what he calls Tritto-Zechariah, was of the Davidic line, and will be mourned as Josiah was mourned because the lineage's rule has ended. So, in chapters 7 and 8 he points out that during the late Persian period there were conflicting views about the Davidic dynasty. Chapter nine discusses resistance to Rome, which he says validates Max Weber's theory. In this section he incorporates textual evidence from the Psalms of Solomon, Sibylline Oracles, Josephus' works, and Qumran, in order to show that Jewish people still expected a new Davidic ruler. Then Blenkinsopp points out that the NT presents Jesus as that new Davidic ruler, in the sense of the Isaianic wise governor.

This book is a good example of creative thinking, and tracing an idea across several different time periods. Having said that, it seems that Blenkinsopp was right that he has attempted too much, because he is only able to devote one chapter to the Roman empire. This work is an example of ideological criticism. At times he disagrees with established positions in order to fit his over-arching idea (see his interpretation of Isaiah 11:1-9 on page 136 where he disagrees with Duhm, Wildberger, and Beuken). Readers of this journal might feel that he forces texts to fit his ideology, and dislike how he holds to several late-date authorship positions. It is comforting that Blenkinsopp traces textual themes to reinforce his political discussion. However, he spends so much time in the text of Zechariah that one could forget he is making a political argument. Furthermore, the political discussion would probably be served by incorporating more physical evidence into his argument. To utilize another ideological argument, he considers mainly the textual evidence of a few powerful groups which may or may not have represented the Israelite people at large. All things considered, this work can be cautiously recommended as a representation of a work which traces biblical themes and political ideology.

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***Secret Scriptures Revealed: A New Introduction to the Christian Apocrypha.* By Tony Burke. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2013. 170 pages. Paperback, \$18.00.**

Many contenders for what ultimately became the Christian New Testament were gospels, histories, epistles, and apocalyptic writings. The traditional and conservative view is that God inspired the twenty-seven writings that now comprise the New Testament (2 Tim 3:16-17), guided the slow process of determining their canonicity, and had his hand upon the transmission process, but he did not inspire any the other writings, such as the New Testament Apocrypha.

However, a number of modern scholars believe the New Testament Apocrypha were not deemed canonical for arbitrary and subjective reasons. In this camp is Tony Burke, an associate professor of Religious Studies at York University in Toronto. He has studied these writings for many years and believes they give helpful insight to "our knowledge of Christian thought and history" (6). *Secret Scriptures* is an introduction to these writings that is aimed at the layperson (4), and Burke accomplishes this task with a book that is easy for the non-specialist to understand.

This is a well-written book. It is a somewhat brief but informative primer on the Christian Apocrypha that defines terms clearly, gives a good description of these writings, and tells their stories in an interesting narrative fashion. Rather than giving

a long list of writings and descriptions, Burke focuses a chapter on: (1) Jesus' life, (2) his passion and resurrection, and (3) the early church, and the narratives contain the heart of many stories from noncanonical sources. Burke shows the broad range of extant texts for each apocryphal writing—from only a few to several hundred copies. He also mentions when sections of text are missing from available copies. At the end of each section is a small but helpful group of "Sources and Studies" so the reader can do further research if desired.

Burke places himself somewhere in between those whom he calls the "conservative apologists" (evangelical Christian scholars, such as Darrell Bock, Dan Wallace, and Ben Witherington) and "their enemies" (such as Bart Ehrman, Elaine Pagels, and John Dominic Crossan). He attempts to clear up the "misinformation"; however, he undoubtedly is on the latter side (130-31). He astutely observes that conservative scholars tend to respond to the claims of liberal scholars, but liberal scholars usually ignore conservative scholars (131). At least Burke belies this trend by responding to some conservative claims (131-48), even though his replies are unsatisfactory to this reviewer. For instance, in responding to the warning that reading the Christian Apocrypha could harm one's faith, Burke states if a person has a high view of Scripture then that faith *ought* to be harmed, and as a professor he takes joy in seeing "many students experience crises of faith" who end up feeling "cheated, misled, manipulated" by their conservative pastors and congregations back home (146-47). So, rather than disproving the point of those he calls "conservative apologists," Burke helps illustrate their point of the damage that studying the Apocrypha can do.

Burke's bias toward these noncanonical writings is evident in the book's title: they are "secret *Scriptures*." According to Burke, at least some of the writings are just as much Scripture as the present New Testament canon. He believes they should be read side-by-side and given equal value with the New Testament (141, 148, 151). He repeatedly reminds the reader that the leaders of the church tried to suppress these writings (e.g., 45, 128, 150). Burke posits the postmodern claim that everything is relative and "history is written by the winners" (16-19, 144-46). In other words, he agrees with Walter Bauer's claim (and more recently the belief of Bart Ehrman and others) that modern Christianity is not the best or truest version of Christianity—it is just the version that happened to win (18-19).¹ Consequently, what is considered "orthodox" or "heretical" today could just as easily have been reversed had another strain of Christianity won, such as Gnostic Christianity (20-22).

Although Burke admits that archeological finds have largely disproven the Bauer Thesis, he still claims one cannot trust "orthodox" Christianity today over any "heresy" from the last 2,000 years (19, 22, 145-46). Here are four brief responses. First, Burke ignores the role of the Holy Spirit in inspiring Scripture (2 Pet 1:21), for Burke treats the New Testament writings and the noncanonical writings as simply products of people alone. Second, he has a low view of Scripture (148-49), but a high view of Scripture gives one a better perspective on the differences and inadequacies in the New Testament Apocrypha. Third, he disregards the Holy Spirit's illumination of God's Word—guiding the church in truth (John 16:13)—from the early church through today. Fourth, he overlooks the fact that orthodox Christianity fits nicely with the Old Testament, and a heresy such as Gnosticism simply does not fit.

Despite his flawed understanding of the importance of the New Testament

¹See Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

Apocrypha, Burke has written a helpful, instructive, and easily understandable guide to these texts. As a good companion to this text, Burke has an informative blog full of articles and sources at www.tonyburk.ca/apocryphicity.

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***Seven Events that Shaped the New Testament World.* By Warren Carter. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013. xxi + 162 pages. Paperback, \$21.99.**

Warren Carter is currently professor of New Testament at Brite Divinity School. This work provides a stimulating format for an introduction to the historical, social, and religious background of the NT. Carter arranges the book around seven “events” (some are actually processes) that significantly shaped the ancient world in which the church began and grew. These events are (1) the death of Alexander the Great, (2) the translation of the Septuagint, (3) the rededication of the Jerusalem temple in 164 BC, (4) the Roman occupation of Judea, (5) the crucifixion of Jesus, (6) the writing of the NT texts, and (7) the “closing” of the NT canon. Carter uses each event as a launch pad for discussing historical, social, or religious factors that shaped the NT world.

Chapter 1 explains Alexander’s legacy as the spread of Hellenistic culture, which was a two-way road (8). The division of his kingdom was important, as was his example of manliness, which became a model for later Roman leaders (17-18). In chapter 2, Carter focuses on Jew-Gentile relations and how these two ethnicities were brought closer together through cultural assimilation in the process of the translation of the Septuagint (27-34). He also emphasizes the importance of the Septuagint for the NT writers and the early church, who he repeatedly says read the LXX with “Jesus-glasses” (35-41). In retelling the story of the Maccabees in chapter 3, he argues that Judaism exhibited varied responses to foreign oppression (50-55). First Maccabees prefers Jews to take up arms; Second Maccabees prefers pietistic martyrdom; Daniel advocates waiting for an eschatological deliverance from God. In explaining the significance of this event, he lays out the basic tenets of E. P. Sanders’ thesis of covenantal nomism and follows by expounding the New Perspective on Paul (56-64).

In chapter 4, Carter explains the various political dynasties that are relevant for the NT. Two responses to these oppressive dynasties were to await a Messianic deliverer, or to rebel and fight for freedom (74-79). So also in the NT the writers espoused different and contradictory (82) attitudes toward the Empire (80-85). In chapter five, Carter emphasizes it was only slaves, criminals, and seditious rebels who were crucified (89-94). He suggests Jesus was crucified because of his kingdom proclamation, his confrontation with Jewish leaders allied with Rome, and eschatological threats against the Empire (94-100). The crucifixion is interpreted variously in the NT (Rom 3:25; 1 Cor 1:23; Gal 3:13; Gospel of Matthew). In chapter 6, Carter first accepts only the seven undisputed Pauline letters (108-11). He dates the rest of the NT documents late (117-32). In chapter 7, he argues that the canon was open-ended until it was basically closed at the Council of Carthage in AD 397 (133-49). Thus, “the church produced the canon” (133).

Carter’s writing style is engaging and the organization of the book is helpful. The beginning student can easily remember these seven events and use them as pegs on which to hang NT background information. The work is meant to be

used as a textbook for beginning NT students. Thus, disagreements will be on the level of details. Some of these disagreements will be determined by confessional lines. For example, some professors will not utilize a textbook for beginning NT students that denies Pauline authorship to six of his letters, emphasizes diversity and contradictions within the NT, distinguishes sharply between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of his letters (13), suggests universal salvation (44), negatively critiques the NT writings (108, 122), dates prophecies *ex eventu* (125), and states that the NT is sometimes ethically backwards and can be ignored (156). The fact that many of these positions are explained in an isolated discussion box with no connection at all to the topic at hand will put off some readers even more (13, 44).

Some disagreements will fall more along the lines of debatable details. Carter lays out Sanders' thesis and the NPP, but he only asserts it. He does not mention any challenges to these positions (62-64). It also seems to be a forced implication of the Roman occupation of Judea, so why it is included there is a bit confusing. Moreover, in places Carter assumes one interpretation of a passage while ignoring the traditional interpretation, with the result that his interpretation of Galatians 3:13 flatly contradicts Galatians 3:10 (103), and his interpretation of Galatians 3:28 leads him to assert Paul contradicts himself (158). Carter either neglects or does not believe in Jesus' post-resurrection ministry, since he says the apostles had to work out the significance of Christ's death on their own (100). He also strangely denies the "already" to Paul's eschatology (119). Lastly, his statements are often one sided. For example, he says the Gospels address the "specific situations and needs of their communities of Jesus-believers" (124), that they "are not eyewitness accounts of Jesus' ministry" (126), and that they are written after AD 70 because they foretell the destruction of Jerusalem (125). These positions ignore recent scholarship that emphasizes a wide intended audience for the Gospels, their eyewitness nature, and the apocalyptic language rather than historical language used to describe the destruction of Jerusalem, which suggests the authenticity of the prophecy from Jesus.

Thus, while some disagreements will stem from confessional differences, some perspectives in this work may be challenged on the basis of recent research and discussions. The idea of the book is in itself insightful and creative. Whether one adopts such a textbook will depend on one's own agreements or disagreements with Carter's positions.

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***The Oral Gospel Tradition.* By James D. G. Dunn. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2013. 400 pages. Paperback, \$45.00.**

A prolific scholar on Jesus Research and Pauline studies, James D. G. (Jimmy) Dunn, Lightfoot Professor of Divinity Emeritus at the University of Durham in England, provides a thought-provoking series of essays in *The Oral Gospel Tradition*. Although most of the articles are responses to critics of his book *Jesus Remembered* or are articles that further clarify his opinions on the oral transmission of the gospel message, three articles are included that predate that book—going back to 1977.

Since these articles are from scholarly journals or books, they are aimed at the scholar or upper-level student in Gospel studies. There are few definitions given of terms, nor is there much translation of Greek or German citations. These articles are meant to further scholarly understanding on the origins of the Gospels, and Dunn

does a masterful job in doing so.

Dunn is an engaging writer. He presents helpful analogies, such as in illustrating the default settings that all scholars have. It is like a word processor with a default setting of a certain font type and size (41-43). He says most scholars approach the Synoptic Problem (the challenge of explaining both the differences and similarities in Matthew, Mark, and Luke) from a default setting of a *literary* culture perspective rather than from an *oral* culture perspective (44-51, 122).

Dunn champions the oral approach. This is his major contribution, and he repeatedly echoes the refrain that first-century AD Palestine was an oral culture (50-51, 53-57, 83) which had a “lively and diverse oral tradition” (122, see also 74, 82, 135-36, 165, 214). Along with this emphasis on the oral tradition, Dunn proposes an oral, non-fixed Q source (an alleged non-extant source for Matthew and Luke) for the Gospels (82). This idea is certainly more appealing than the typical scholarly understanding of the speculated Q as a fixed-form written source. However, some of his examples of differing oral accounts are unconvincing if one believes the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew and the Sermon on the Plain in Luke were two different sermons given in different settings (see 83-89). Similarly, Jesus taught The Lord’s Prayer in Matthew and Luke at different places and different times, but Dunn’s comparison works only if the two accounts are of the same event (95). His other examples are stronger (90-107). Interestingly, Dunn’s proposal of an oral, fluid Q may be just a step away from dispensing with Q altogether.²

To explain the similar-yet-different nature of some parallel Gospel passages, Dunn believes the Evangelists were familiar with different oral traditions that were similar to each other but different in some details (109-11, 126). However, the proposal would be stronger if it took into account the eyewitness testimony of the Evangelists: Matthew and John used their personal remembrances. Dunn claims Matthew used Mark as a source but omitted key phrases and themes (115), but it would be interesting to compare the evidence with how it would differ if Mark used Matthew as a source.

In part 2, Dunn’s essays answer some key critics of *Jesus Remembered*. These responses are quite helpful, because Dunn sounds less radical in his clarifications than in the first-half of the book or in *Jesus Remembered*. However, the term “fictionalizing events,” that refers to all oral remembrances of Jesus, is troubling (200-02). Dunn’s main point of emphasis is that all oral or written testimony or memory involves some interpretation. However, it is common to assert facts about other ancient people (such as, the Roman general Titus destroyed the Temple in AD 70), but unfortunately when it comes to Jesus, many theologians are hesitant to use the word “historical fact”—including Dunn.

Here are some positive emphases in the book: (1) Dunn accepts John’s Gospel as reliable material (176, 188-89), (2) he rightly affirms an oral culture in Jesus’ day (as Richard Bauckham well demonstrates in his book³), (3) and he effectively shows the weakness of the criterion of dissimilarity (39)—the misguided belief that a true teaching of Jesus will be different from what both Second Temple Judaism and what the early church taught. The main strength of this compendium of articles is that it is a one-stop collection of scholarly articles that help explain and clarify Dunn’s unique position on the oral transmission of the gospel message. His position is not different

²See Mark Goodacre, *The Case Against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* (London: T&T Clark, 2002). Dunn does disagree with Goodacre’s position (76-78).

³Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008).

enough to be called a new perspective on Jesus (see 202-03),⁴ but it is a welcome addition to the scholarly debate.

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Interpreting the General Letters: An Exegetical Handbook.* By Herbert W. Bateman IV. Edited by John D. Harvey. *Handbooks for New Testament Exegesis. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2013. 315 pages. Paperback, \$29.99.

Herbert W. Bateman IV, professor of New Testament and research administrator for the Cyber-Center for Biblical Studies, provides a systematic process for the analysis and communication of the General Epistles (henceforth, GE). Bateman is eminently-competent to address the relevant issues of and steps involved in interpreting these letters since he has written a monograph devoted to Hebrews (*Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5-13*, American University Studies, vol. 193 [New York: Peter Lang, 1997]). As his latest title suggests, Bateman intends “to shape the way people think and go about studying and communicating eight books of the New Testament: Hebrews, James, the Petrine letters, the Johannine letters, and Jude” (13).

In keeping with his apparent thesis, the volume seems to divide into two logically interrelated parts. Chapters 1-3 concern introductory matters related to genre, background, and theology while chapters 4-7 offer the specific steps involved for interpreting and conveying the GE. The final chapter is a supplementary review of sources related to each interpretive step. Chapter 1, entitled “The Genre of the General Epistles,” commences with a discussion of the component parts of a letter (e.g., an opening, a body, and a closing, 20-23). The chapter compares examples of Greco-Roman letters and those letters drawn from the Oxyrhynchus Papyri with that of the GE. Bateman, for example, elucidates various types of non-canonical correspondence and categorizes some of the GE as follows: Hebrews and James reflect mainly advisory or parenetic letters; and Jude predominantly exemplifies a vituperative or maligning letter (48).

Chapter 2 covers the background of the GE, and underscores the interrelations between Judeans and Romans, and the interactions with a pre-Christian culture markedly distinct from the present-day. His historical background chronologically spans the dynasties of Alexander the Great, the Julio-Claudians of Rome, and the Hasmonean dynasty of Judea. His historical survey draws regularly on the Jewish literature of the Second Temple period (e.g., Josephus, 1-2 Maccabees, 4Q416, etc.). For example, the letter of Jude seems best understood, according to Bateman, against the backdrop of the Jewish insurrection in AD 66 since the theological theme of divine rebellion is apparent (45-46). Thus, Bateman rejects the commonly held “presence of false teachers within the church” view of Jude (cf. Gene L. Green, *Jude & 2 Peter*, BECNT, [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008], 18). Instead, he argues for Jewish Zealots who have infiltrated the church and are attempting to incite some believers to join the national revolt against Rome (84-86).

In chapter 3, “The Theology of the General Letters,” Bateman intends to present a biblical theology for the GE by examining the divine author’s predominant theologies and their contribution to the canon overall (90). He links OT unilateral

⁴This was the title of an earlier book by Dunn on the same subject as the present volume: James D. G. Dunn, *A New Perspective on Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005).

covenant promises with the NT fulfillment of those promises through the person of Jesus, who inaugurates the divine kingdom-redemption program alluded to in the OT (e.g. the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants).

Chapters 4-6 each delineate three steps in the interpretive process; thus, Bateman suggests nine steps *en toto* for the proper biblical interpretation of the GE. Chapter 4, for example, covers the process in which to initiate a translation, to identify interpretive issues, and to isolate major textual problems. Chapters 5-6 center on the significance of the structural outline in which Bateman identifies and distinguishes mainline (independent clauses) from subordinate information (dependent clauses), and the process for communicating the central idea of the given passage.

Finally, Chapter 7 delineates the process involved in traversing from exegesis to exposition. Chapter 8 encompasses a select bibliography of key sources for each of the nine interpretive steps delineated in chapters 4-6. The volume concludes with a glossary of terms.

Bateman's composition offers several notable fortes. First, each chapter commences with an introductory paragraph in which Bateman clearly lays out the course of the subsequent discussion, and he closes each chapter with a beneficial summary of contents chart. Second, numerous charts, and sidebars in each chapter serve as comparative, summary signposts that direct the reader. Third, Bateman's discussion of first-century letter-writing practices such as the use of the amanuensis, his literary comparison of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri and the GE, and cognizance of the Second Temple and Greco-Roman background's import for a proper interpretive framework sheds broad light on the interpreter's task. Fourth, he offers a fresh reconstruction of the events in Jude in which Jewish Zealots are determined to have infiltrated the Christian community addressed, and are influencing some to join the cause against Rome in the mid-60s. Finally, he carefully delineates and underscores the central value of the structural outline, or what Clinton E. Arnold similarly labels "clausal phrasing," for exegesis.⁵

On the other hand, Bateman's handbook discloses a few minor shortcomings. Although advocates of progressive dispensationalism will likely welcome this tome, his interpretive lens may go unappreciated among non-dispensational interpreters, especially his emphasis on a divine kingdom-redemption program. Put simply, despite Bateman's appeal to the non-dispensational scholar Vern Poythress for acknowledging how the various covenants occur within dispensations (115, note 51), others such as preterist scholar N. T. Wright may find troubling the conclusions reached through such a reading (102, note 26). After all, there seems to be a difference between recognition of the covenants as occurring within specified eras or *dispensations*, and Bateman's method of progressive *dispensationalism*. For Bateman, the "already" aspect of the covenant promises find their inauguration and partial fulfillment in the person of Jesus and through the church age, with the "not yet" consummation of those promises occurs to Gentile believers, but especially ethnic Israel during the millennium (113-16). The question is whether a dispensational-eschatological reading is evident or even necessary to apprehend the theology of the GE as Bateman methodologically assumes.

Another shortcoming concerns whether present-day students of burgeoning online-theological-degree programs without requisite biblical languages will discover this tome beyond their capabilities, notwithstanding Bateman's attempts to

⁵Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 2010).

simplify the process. In other words, his composition seems intended predominantly for those readers with a good foundation in the biblical languages, not *people* in general (cf. preface, 13 italics for emphasis). If Kregel considers issuing a second edition, a simple change in the preface would clarify the intended audience, pastors, teachers, and theological students.

Nonetheless, in reflection of the series design overall, Bateman seems more precisely to target the serious pastor and theologically-educated student with at least a rudimentary comprehension of the biblical languages (cp. the intended audience of the companion OT series volume, *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook*).⁶ The beleaguered pastor in need of a refresher in exegesis will benefit from the plethora of examples for proper biblical interpretation, and in a readily accessible handbook format. This format also allows the interpreter to manageably assimilate, develop, and apply each interpretive step. Whether for quick review of the interpretative process or of the socio-historical framework, this book is a welcome guide by a competent scholar and skilled practitioner. Thus, every pastor and theological student who desires to hone his exegetical skills through regular practice should acquire this reliable sourcebook.

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***Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East.* By Kenneth A. Kitchen and Paul J.N. Lawrence. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013. lxxiv + 1641 pages. Hardcover, \$460.00.**

This is a monumental and magisterial work that has been in process for nearly three decades. While results have been published by Kitchen throughout the years, we now have the complete data published. This three-volume work collects and synthesizes laws, treaties, and covenants of the Ancient Near East.

The work is divided into three volumes. Volume 1 contains the texts and raw data. Volume 2 is the commentary on the texts, indices, and chromograms (colored charts to compare the various components of the law codes). Volume 3 contains a historical discussion and summary. It is purposefully designed to present the levels of analysis. Each volume contains 1086, 268, and 288 pages respectively.

The three volumes do not replace major *principle ediceps* of various collections of texts. The authors are up front and admit that this work does not supersede earlier translations of the ancient texts. The purpose is to collate this genre of literature throughout a 3000 year history. The goal of the authors is to provide an edition that allows scholars and researchers to compare this body of literature while also viewing the history and evolution of the varied formats through the centuries. First, the authors have defined fifteen possible components that they present under thirteen numeric headings (e.g. title and preamble are different components but are listed under the same numeric heading). These components are: title/preamble, prologue (historical or other), stipulations or laws, deposit of the document, periodic reading of document to parties, witnesses, blessings, curses, oath(s), solemn ceremony, epilogue, additional items, sanctions, and a historical report.

Volume 1 consists of the primary data of the work. Over 125 texts have been collated and analyzed. Each text provides introductory material such as bibliograph-

⁶Mark D. Futato and David M. Howard Jr., *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook*, Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 13.

ical references, sources, and general descriptions of the type of text (e.g. monument, location). This is followed by a transliterated text with the English translation on the opposing page. These texts are divided into subsets that correspond with the various components. At the end of each text is a “textual key to the color-chart (chromogram)” in volume three. This textual key is a table illustrating the structure of the texts and the order of the components.

Volume 2 is designed as an aide to volume 1. It contains the historical context, notes, and commentary to volume 1. While readers might question this separation, once you start using the work, it becomes clear that this was the best way to present the data as well as use the sources. A reader can have the texts open in volume 1, while having the aides open in volume 2. Volume 2 consists of three parts. The first part contains notes to the texts such as historical, geographical and/or philological commentary to the texts. The second part contains an index of topics and major notes. This includes various indices covering topics (e.g. alphabetical listing of all topics found in the laws and stipulations sections, index of deities as witnesses), statistical lists (e.g. price of slaves, fines, etc.), related notes on terminology for treaties, laws and covenants, and finally maps. The last part of volume 2 contain the chromograms. These chromograms are unique to this study and probably are the most valuable asset to assist scholars in research. These chromograms are color charts designed to facilitate the comparison of the order, content, and format of the various components of the texts. This part requires a learning curve for the reader, but once a working knowledge is acquired of the various color codes, a reader is quickly able to be able to discern the similarities and differences of the types of laws, treaties, and covenants between geographical areas over time.

Volume 3, according to the authors, offers a “synthesis of the history, development and interrelations of the subject” (xx). It provides a metanarrative from the third millennium to the early-Roman period of the laws, treaties, and covenants found throughout the Ancient Near East. Most historians and biblical scholars will likely refer to this volume.

Unique to this work is that the biblical text is interspersed among the ANE texts. This is purposeful to place the laws, treaties, and covenants found in the Old Testament within their historical context. This resource is long overdue and we are fortunate that Kitchen was able to finish this *magnus opus*. Unfortunately, the price will limit its location in personal libraries, but it should be a reference resource in every research library. Old Testament scholars and students, especially those who study the Pentateuch and ANE backgrounds, will find these volumes to be extremely useful references.

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***History of New Testament Research, Volume Three: From C.H. Dodd to Hans Dieter Betz.* By William Baird. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013. 775 pages. Hardcover, \$70.00.**

This monumental work by William Baird is truly a masterpiece and serves as the culmination of thirty years of careful study. *History of New Testament Research: From C.H. Dodd to Hans Dieter Betz* is the third volume to Baird’s trilogy, which Baird originally intended to fit into one volume (1). Baird’s efforts are bound to leave NT scholars’ mouths gaping at the amount of work and skill exerted to produce this

volume.

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1, "The Renaissance of New Testament Criticism," contains three chapters. Chapter 1, "The Zenith of Enlightenment Criticism," follows the work of Taylor, Cadbury, Manson, and Dodd. Baird begins with biographical details informing the reader of early influences on each scholar. While Dodd gets the lengthiest treatment (35-52), Baird traces other major contributions that shaped mid-twentieth-century NT scholarship. Chapter 2, "The New Biblical Theology," examines Barth and Bultmann. Baird focuses on Barth's dialectical theology and dogmatics calling him "the most important theologian of the twentieth century" (64). Baird largely follows Barth's interaction with the historical critical method which Barth implements as the first step in exegesis but also "attacks the critical establishment for its pretentious objectivity" (84). Baird elaborates on Bultmann's demythologizing, NT exegesis, and NT theology. Baird praises Bultmann, not for the details of his work, but for his "overarching synthesis." Chapter 3, "The Bultmann School," focuses on the work of those influenced by Bultmann. While Bultmann intended only to stimulate dialogue, he instead founded a school. Baird then considers the influence of Käsemann, Bornkamm, and Robinson. These pupils of Bultmann were not clones but rather students influenced by Bultmann but ultimately they deviated in a variety of ways. Baird notes that Käsemann and Bornkamm maintain an accord with Bultmann's historical critical method. In fact, Käsemann goes beyond Bultmann with his radical criticism and Bornkamm with his reduction criticism (179). They differ in their refusal to conform to Bultmann's anthropology or existentialism. James M. Robinson represents Bultmann's voice in America and the push for existential readings.

Part 2 begins with the Nag Hammadi codices (NHC), the Dead Sea Scrolls, new archeological discoveries, and new advancements in textual criticism (chapter 4). Baird seeks to show the influence of the NHC through its insights on Hellenistic background and different versions of early Christianity (196-211). Baird also shows the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls for NT research. He examines the perpetual influence of archeology and textual criticism on NT studies. In chapter 5, Baird looks at recent studies on Judaism. He considers scholars such as Joachim Jeremias, Matthew Black, W. D. Davies, E. P. Sanders, and Martin Hengel. Chapter 6 follows the developments in historical criticism. Baird shows that historical criticism is an active method still used by a vast number of scholars. Baird shows that redaction criticism has become a popular method of the nineteenth century yet often appearing with different names. Chapter 7, "Confessional Research: Roman Catholic Scholarship," looks at the work of Rudolf Schnackenburg, Raymond E. Brown, and John P. Meier. In chapter 8, "The Development of Scholarly Societies," Baird considers major societies such as the Society of Biblical Literature, The Catholic Biblical Association, and *Studiorum Novi Societas*. Baird shows the significance of each society arguing that, "The formation and growth of scholarly societies is a major feature of NT research in the twentieth century" (466).

Part 3, "Theological and Synthesizing Movements," contains significant omissions as Baird traces the NT scholarship of the latter half of the twentieth century. While key scholars are omitted, Baird manages to cover substantial ground. In Chapter 9, "Theological and Hermeneutical developments," Baird looks at Oscar Culmann, John Knox, Paul S. Minear, and F.F. Bruce. Chapter 10, "Critical, Exegetical, and Theological Accomplishments: Europe," focuses on C.K. Barrett, James D.G. Dunn, and Birger Gerhardsson. Chapter 11, "Critical, Exegetical, and Theo-

logical Accomplishments: North America,” follows Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, J. Louis Matyn, Leander Keck, Victor P. Furnish, and Hanz Dieter Betz. Baird’s selection of scholars here will inevitably be praised by some and bemoaned by others.

This volume will serve as an indispensable tool for NT scholars. Baird is excellent at finding theological medians and weighing the value of each NT theologian. Baird provides fair treatment of the historical critical method and even admits that the method has sustained his faith and deepened his devotion to the New Testament (4). The chapters are well organized and easy for readers to follow. Headings distinguish all new information covered. The pitfall of tracing the history of a field of study is omissions. Those most critical of Baird will likely find issue with his organization of the vast material or his choice of key figures to highlight in this history. The absence of notable female scholars, Nils A. Dahl, Krister Stendahl, N. T. Wright, and others serve as a weakness. Many of the criticisms against this volume should be aimed at the publisher not the author. For example, the endnotes make it difficult to keep up with Baird’s quotes which was a style adopted by Fortress Press (3). With the amount of information covered, a more elaborate table of contents would have been extremely helpful. The half-page of contents is insufficient to convey the manifold treasures within.

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Theological Studies

***Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy.* Edited by J. Merrick and Stephen M. Garrett. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013. 288 pages. Paperback, \$19.99.**

Reading this book will be interesting for those who are already familiar with the relevant theological issues related to the question of inerrancy. The book is replete with alert interactions and amusing subtle quips.

The editors correctly assert that a critical issue in the discussion of inerrancy is the relationship between form and content (316). This is certainly born out in the interactions in the book. It is also revealed in the book itself. The editors framed the conversation through the organization of the book and what they asked the author’s to address. The book follows a “perspectival arrangement.” Following this structure, the editor’s weren’t only concerned with different views of inerrancy, but how various perspectives of the past, present, and international contexts may have affected the author’s understanding of inerrancy. The editors believed that this approach emphasized “converging and diverging” viewpoints (312).

It will be left to the reader to determine the effectiveness of the arrangement and its helpfulness for this discussion. Though, despite the claim that this approach would allow the authors “to express their position without trying to fit within some prescribed label” (312), it does seem that the decision on the arrangement of the book was made after the articles were completed (24), indicating that the author’s may not have fully understood the “perspectival arrangement” as they were composing their particular chapters.

The editors further asked the author’s to “develop their position in light of the following: (1) God and his relationship to his creatures, (2) the doctrine of inspiration, (3) the nature of Scripture, and (4) the nature of truth. [They] also asked authors to consider the [Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy’s (CSBI)] historical contribution when developing their position” (317). A final task assigned to

the authors was the examination of three texts which were considered “potential challenge[s] to inerrancy” (22), based on their perspective. Contributors were to examine the historical accuracy of Joshua 6, particularly in light of archeological evidence of the events described; the two accounts by Luke of Paul’s conversion in Acts 9:7 and 22:9, especially focusing on the nuances of the details of what the Apostle’s traveling companions “heard” and “saw;” and the question of the complete destruction of the Canaanites in Deuteronomy 20 in light of Jesus’ instructions to love one’s enemies in Matthew 5.

The introduction of the book outlines some of the history of the discussion of inerrancy, framing the discussion around the “Gundry-Geisler controversy.” It outlines the instructions given to the authors and briefly explains the perspectival approach of the editors (though this is much more fully explained in the concluding chapter by the editors). Missing in the introduction is a summary of the various positions by the author’s on inerrancy. Such a discussion would have added clarity to the book. As such, anyone unfamiliar with the positions held by the contributor’s will begin the book playing “catch-up” as the chapters begin.

The five contributors to the book all address the issues effectively, though it is not entirely clear that they represent five distinct views on inerrancy. Al Mohler presents what the editors describe as the “classic doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy,” maintaining (with the CSBI) that Scripture is of “infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches” (36). He consistently maintains that inerrancy is critical to evangelicalism. He supports his position using Scripture, tradition, and the function of the Bible. His view is criticized as simplistic (59), unyielding (69), failing to take into consideration the genre of the text (74), and too closely tied to the CSBI (80-81).

Peter Enns, in his article, presents the most serious attack against biblical inerrancy. Enns spends much of his article taking issue with the CSBI. It is not entirely clear what Enns’ position is on inerrancy, as Vanhoozer points out (135). Rather, Enns contends that the term inerrancy has “run its course” (115), and instead of presenting a position on inerrancy, rather argues what inerrancy does, which he suggests leads one towards “schizophrenia” (114). In the strongest critique of Enns, Mohler states that Enns has presented a “very consistent and clear rejection of any claim that the Bible is inerrant” (117), and “has moved far outside of any recognizable evangelical model of biblical inspiration or authority” (123).

Michael Bird’s view is that “the American inerrancy tradition is not an essential facet of the faith” (146). He contends, for example, in the story of Jesus’ healing of the blind man near Jericho that “the details are incidental and are open to rearrangement by the storyteller” (149). One might wonder if he would allow that same looseness of detail with the resurrection. A legitimate question that one might have with Bird’s position is his assumption that because those outside of the “American inerrancy tradition” are not familiar with the word, “inerrancy” that it must follow that they do not believe that the Bible is inerrant. Vanhoozer makes a similar point in his response (190).

Vanhoozer presents a clear view in support of biblical inerrancy. Though the ways that Vanhoozer and Mohler handle the specific texts in question are different, his view, as Enns proposes, seems very similar to that presented by Mohler (243). The strongest point of clarification Vanhoozer makes as he describes “well-versed inerrancy” is his insistence on the accurate understanding of the genre of the specific biblical text, a point on which Mohler would seem to agree (cf. 240). If readers are

not familiar with a previous exchange between Vanhoozer and John R. Franke, they will feel left out of the conversation reading Franke's response to Vanhoozer's article. Most of his response is not related to issues Vanhoozer presented in his article, but is rather a continuation of a previous exchange the two of them had in another forum and functions here as an "and another thing" that is only mildly related to the topic and article at hand.

The final view presented in the book is by John R. Franke. Rather than defend inerrancy, Franke, instead attempts to redefine it. He purports that inerrancy "is a technical theological term that serves to preserve the dynamic plurality contained in the texts of Scripture" (276), which, he suggests "frustrates attempts to establish a single universal theology" (278). Franke views the truth presented in Scripture "not in absolute terms but rather in terms of temporal witness in the midst of particular circumstances [which will] produce an open and flexible theology" (279). His handling of the passages assigned for each writer to address reveal his position that the details of the text itself don't matter so much as the message that the text intends to communicate (cf. 280ff). He concludes that "the ultimate truths and inerrancy of the Bible are finally contained not in the particular narratives and teachings of individual texts. . . [and that] even our allegiance to the Bible can draw us away from God's intentions when we read it in a static and absolutist fashion" (287). The reader is left with the feeling that one should not worry so much about what the Bible says, but rather just believe in God. Though, one might legitimately counter, if his Word is not reliable, how can we know that our understanding of God can be?

Overall, this volume raises some very relevant questions for any serious Bible student to consider, such as: What is the nature of truth? What is the relationship between the various genres of Scripture and the fact that God speaks? How does the affirmation of inerrancy affect the historical accuracy of the events described in the Bible? Where are the appropriate lines in the discussion between Scripture and science? Or, to say it another way, if Scripture and science seem to contradict, to which does one default?

In the end, the editors concede that the task assigned to the contributors "may in fact have been too robust to address in the limited space of this edited volume" (323). But, at a minimum, the book raises some pertinent issues and continues the conversation.

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***Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel.* By Kate Bowler. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. 337 pages. Hardcover, \$34.95.**

Kate Bowler's first book, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* is an adaptation of her Ph.D. dissertation from Duke University. Unlike many published dissertations, Bowler's book has been made to be very readable and engaging while still maintaining its exacting detail and rigorous citation. Bowler's purpose in writing this book is "to show how millions of American Christians came to see money, health, and good fortune as divine" (7). She fulfills this purpose well.

Bowler constructs her volume with five chapters in addition to an introduction, conclusion and two appendices. In the first chapter, she begins by describing the origins of the gospel that has been expressed by American prosperity preachers. She finds the origin of the twentieth-century prosperity gospel in the New Thought

movement of the nineteenth century, demonstrating the heritage of a uniquely American interpretation of the gospel. In chapter 2, Bowler details the descriptions of faith that is said to be the fuel for the blessings gleaned by adherents of the prosperity gospel. For adherents of the prosperity gospel, "Faith was only faith because it *worked*" (79, italics original). The third chapter explains the perceived relationship between the believers' faith and resultant wealth, "Faith operated as a perfect law, and any irregularities meant that the believer did not play by the rules" (92). Chapter 4 explains a second key feature of the prosperity gospel, namely health. Believers ought to be healthy at all times: sickness is a result of a lack of faith. In some cases, as Bowler explains, denial of real sickness in the name of faith resulted in premature death in prosperity believers (140). The fifth chapter describes the theme of victory in the American prosperity gospel. Jesus' victory on the cross is said to have provided a means for victory in the lives of believers. Thus, "no circumstance could stop followers from living in total victory here on earth" (179). In addition to the content in the body of the text, Bowler also provides two information-rich appendices. The first appendix is a detailed list of the largest prosperity churches and their key statistics. The second appendix explains Bowler's methodology for identifying churches and preachers as part of the prosperity gospel movement.

The key strength of *Blessed* is that it is exceptionally well-researched and cited. Bowler provides over six hundred citations of several hundred sources in addition to her extensive personal accounts of experiences with the prosperity movement. She attended many prosperity gospel conferences and services, even making a trip to the Middle East with Benny Hinn. There is no question that Bowler did her homework and has sufficient support for her claims. In addition to the quality of research, a second strength is that Bowler writes with theological detachment. She is careful to present the claims of the prosperity gospel fairly without selecting only the most embarrassing quotes. She also provides illustrations of many errors in the theology of the prosperity teachers, though she does so without labelling them as error. There is little doubt that Bowler has presented a fair picture of the prosperity movement. A third strength of this book is the careful method that Bowler has developed for defining the prosperity gospel movement. The methodology explained in Appendix B is both balanced and accurate, and it provides a basis for developing and applying a necessary label apart from personal opinion. As evangelical scholars seek to categorize prosperity teachers appropriately without merely calling names, Bowler's appendix will provide helpful guidance.

Along with its several strengths, there are also some important weaknesses. First, Bowler's theological detachment sometimes prevents her from offering necessary theological criticism. Early on, Bowler declares, "The Gospel is good news. Just how good is for readers and the faithful to decide" (10). Though this book is extremely informative, Bowler's detachment could allow this book to be read in affirmation of a dangerous perversion of biblical teachings on faith, wealth, and health. Contributing to this weakness, Bowler ignores the careful theological critique of the prosperity gospel, published in 2010 by David W. Jones and Russell S. Woodbridge.⁷ Bowler's book repeats many of the themes that Jones and Woodbridge highlight, but, despite the mere thirty miles between their academic institutions, Bowler does not mention their important text among the hundreds of sources she cites. A second weakness of this text is that it fails to rightly emphasize the negative economic

⁷David W. Jones and Russell S. Woodbridge, *Health, Wealth & Happiness: Has the Prosperity Gospel Overshadowed the Gospel of Christ?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010).

consequences of the prosperity gospel, as many of the adherents were led into bankruptcy by “naming and claiming” large houses with expensive mortgages just before the housing market sharply declined several years ago. Additionally, while Bowler mentions some victims of prosperity teaching who have died as a result of a refusal of medical care, these examples are largely glossed over in the text.

Overall, this very readable book is a valuable contribution to the scholarly discussion on prosperity theology. *Blessed* is the best history of the development of the prosperity gospel written to date. It is an important addition to the library of pastors or scholars who regularly encounter the prosperity gospel in their ministry.

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***Does God Desire All to be Saved?* By John Piper. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013. 62 pages. Paperback, \$9.99.**

One of the joyous discoveries of church history is that authors used several delivery methods to communicate ideas and doctrinal discussions. One of the means available in that day, albeit less popular in our own, is the writing of doctrinal tracts. These brief booklets are often filled with wisdom and insight, yet lacking in the heft normally associated with theology and church history. *Does God Desire All to be Saved?* is a modern tract in the same line as the historical doctrinal tracts.

In his new little book, John Piper defends the theological understanding of the two wills of God. In doing so, he defends the Reformed understanding of unconditional election from the critiques that it fails to account for passages such as 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9, Ezekiel 18:23, and Matthew 23:37. In various ways, these four passages all speak explicitly to God’s concern for “all,” and that he does not delight in the death of the wicked.

Further, he sets out to “show that unconditional election . . . does not contradict biblical expressions of God’s compassion for all people and does not rule out sincere offers of salvation to all who are lost among the peoples of the world” (13). Piper sees no contradiction between the doctrine of unconditional election and the full and free gospel offer to the lost world.

Piper has always been at his best when, in addition to his Bible, he clings to Jonathan Edwards’ writings. This little book—not much more than a tract—is a helpful exegetical defense of Edwards’ own, “Concerning the Decrees in General, and Election in Particular.” Those who find agreement with Piper on this issue will find no major breakthroughs in the discussion, but a helpful distillation of the discussion. Critics of unconditional election will find a genuine defense—free of unhelpful polemics and rhetoric—that succinctly captures the essence of the position.

Piper spent the overwhelming majority of his work on his first goal—to show that God’s willing that all would come to salvation is not in biblical-contradiction with the reality that only those chosen by God from before creation will be saved. However, his second goal—to show that unconditional election does not place the free gospel offer in contradiction to God’s will—is an extremely short endeavor. He devotes less than two pages to this aim.

Piper’s failure to define what he means by “free and full gospel offer” is the point which should attract the greatest critique. He writes, “we now offer him and all that he has achieved for his elect to everyone on earth. Christ invites everyone to come. And everyone who comes is saved. Everyone who receives Christ has been

chosen from the foundation of the world and is an heir of an infinite inheritance” (54). Many critics of unconditional election have argued that those holding fast to such doctrine must present a truncated gospel—void of God’s love to each specific sinner. Another brief chapter detailing exactly what Piper envisions to be a “full gospel offer” would provide greater clarification on one of the more contentious concerns of those in disagreement.

Overall, this is a very helpful little book—perhaps too little—that presents the Reformed doctrine of individual election.

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Historical Studies

***Reading the Apostolic Fathers.* 2nd ed. By Clayton N. Jefford. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012. 224 pages. Paperback, \$27.40.**

Jefford’s “quick and simple” introduction “does not assume that the reader has any particular knowledge of early church history or any broad background in biblical studies or ancient Christian literature” (xiii). This handbook is a revision and expansion of his 1996 survey of the Apostolic Fathers (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996). This second edition adds an entirely new chapter on the Papiian fragments (chapter four), although there seems to be some inconsistent dating of Papias’ work (cf. xxi with 63, 65, and 66). Other revisions include the widening of the possible dates of the composition of *1 Clement* (103) and an earlier shifting of the probable dates of the *Didache* (23). The discussion of the *Epistle of Barnabas* now adds Syria as a possible provenance, while retaining Egypt as “most likely” (1). Jefford now believes that the author of the *Epistle of Barnabas* probably came from a Jewish background (6), while the previous edition maintained that “in all likelihood” the author “did not come from a strongly Jewish background” (16). While the *Epistle to Diognetus* had formerly been labeled an “early Christian letter constructed from two separate letters,” its genre is now categorized as an “early Christian apology likely constructed from an apology and a homily” (165). And the conclusion that the author of the *Epistle to Diognetus* was “perhaps Clement of Alexandria” has been added to the relevant chapter summary (165).

Jefford’s primer provides a keen bird’s-eye view of the Apostolic Fathers. The main chapters address the Apostolic Fathers one-by-one, with each chapter being divided into four major sections: Answers (“a brief summary of information about the relevant text”), Questions (“an exploration of those details that make each text unique”), Contents (“an outline and summary of what can be found in the text”), and Related Literature (“a brief list of relevant studies”). A numbering system correlates the answers found in the initial chapter summaries with the corresponding in-depth investigations found later. Each chapter concludes with a helpful synopsis of the specific Apostolic Father’s argument, a condensed version of the contents of their respective work(s). Unlike the first edition, the end-of-chapter bibliographies now include foreign language titles.

Jefford’s volume exhibits numerous strengths. He guides initiates into the fullness of relevant scholarship, including text-critical, historical, theological, liturgical, and socio-rhetorical studies. He masterfully surveys differing scholarly views concerning authorship, dating, provenance, audience, and occasion. His well-versed discussions summarize the major options in debated topics, interacting with the ma-

for arguments for each alternative view. The book contains valuable diagrams, tables, and maps. Another practical mechanism is the highlighting of important, new, or difficult words in boldface font. The back of the volume contains a corresponding glossary (179-88). In this second edition, the date of Hadrian's death has been corrected (from 118 to 138), and a new entry on "millennialism" has been appropriately added. An index of ancient literature cited nicely rounds out the volume (188-96).

One fascinating thread that weaves its way through the volume concerns the imminence of the *parousia* of Christ. "For the most part," states the introductory chapter, "the early second-century church had come to accept that any such return had been delayed" (xxiv; cf. 114). Yet later chapters refer to "the rapidly approaching end of time and the resulting urgency" in the *Epistle of Barnabas* (12), "the expected return of Christ" in Ignatius (49), and *2 Clement's* being "consumed by the realization that God's judgment is at hand" (132). A few other theological issues may also be worthy of further clarification. Page 70 notes that Papias was followed in his millennialism by Irenaeus, while page 64 implies that Irenaeus was not especially disposed toward Papias' chiliasm. Even though page 93 claims that the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* "does not hold any special interest with respect to the development of early Christian theology," Polycarp's final prayer (at least in the extant text) may be of interest in the study of nascent Trinitarianism.

In a rare oversight, page 118 overlooks Hebrews among the documents known to the author of *1 Clement* (contrast 115). And Jefford's statement that Polycarp's *Philippians* broadly uses New Testament letters "especially from Paul" (73) could be modified with an additional "and especially 1 Peter as well" (cf. 82; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.14.9). The inceptive discussion of genres represented in the Apostolic Fathers (xx) could include the special case of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, which merges facets of a martyr act with epistolary accoutrements (cf. 87, 89). Jefford claims that Polycarp "was never secured to a post" (99), although the *Martyrdom* may imply that he was tied to the stake (rather than nailed). The same page claims that Polycarp "was martyred seven days before a great Sabbath" (99), although the *Martyrdom* places the execution on "the great Sabbath" itself.

Jefford's stated purpose was "to be clear and concise, easy to read, intelligible, and suitable for review in short periods of time" (xiii). He has more than attained this admirable goal of composing a succinct primer. His book succeeds as both a student introduction and a reference tool. Through his expert and highly recommended survey, may the tribe of Apostolic Fathers readers increase. And may a generation of future scholars be drawn to the *Opera Patrum Apostolicorum*, following in the worthy steps of Jefford.

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***The One Christ: St. Augustine's Theology of Deification.* By David Vincent Meconi, SJ. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013. 280 pages. Hardcover, \$ 64.95.**

Not a few scholars have produced insightful articles on Augustine's doctrine of deification. However, Meconi's *The One Christ* is the first book which is thoroughly dedicated to the North African bishop's understanding of deification and recognizes the doctrine of deification as "the one constant theological principle" in Augustine's theology, not as an element of his soteriology or anthropology (xvi). Refuting

Mausbach and others who argue for Augustine's isolation from the theological world of the Eastern Church and for his ignorance of the idea of deification, Meconi claims deification is "a central doctrine in the overall thought of St. Augustine of Hippo" (xii). Without a proper understanding of the importance of deification in Augustine's theology, his readers might fail to grasp how other Christian doctrines are related to salvation.

In contrast to many scholars that emphasize the soteriological element of deification in Augustine, Meconi begins his discussion with the bishop's understanding of creation. Since creation is the work of the triune God, it reflects the interrelationship of the three Persons in the one Godhead. As the Son eternally adheres to the Father in his love, so creation that came from the Son should imitate the Son's adherence to the Father for its continual reception of life. The continual existence of creation also depends on the Spirit who allows it to participate in the divine "immutability and permanence" that the Father and the Son share with each other (13). Therefore, the voluntary participation of humans in the divine life was a cosmological expectation prior to a soteriological goal. Deification was God's original plan for his creation of human beings. That Adam and Eve were condemned was not because they desired to be gods but because they attempted to be gods in their nature without their obedient participation in God. The more we sin, the more we become unlike God (74). In *Sermon 23B*, Augustine again wants to make sure that deification does not mean either the loss of one's own nature in its process. As Christ did not cease being God in his incarnation, man does not cease being human in his deification. The personal distinction within the unity of the Godhead also shows that deification, union between God and creation, should not mean the loss of the otherness either of God or of creation.

Meconi notices that Augustine's deification is recapitulative as is Irenaeus' deification. When explaining the purpose of the incarnation, Augustine repeated Irenaeus' phrase exactly—God became man so that man can become God. Christ as the second Adam came to restore human beings to their original destiny of becoming gods. Augustine's recapitulative deification was his theological means to refute the Manichaean separation between the Creator and the Savior (100). Interestingly, Meconi also observes that Augustine's controversy with Pelagianism affected the way he presents deification. In opposition to the Pelagians' realized deification that considered Christians as already perfect like Christ, Augustine intentionally avoided mentioning 2 Peter 1:4 and had to emphasize the sovereign grace of God rather than human cooperation and "predestination rather than participation," although continually speaking of deification during his controversy with Pelagianism (132). Refuting Patricia Wilson-Kastner and Daniel Keating who do not see the meaningful role of the Holy Spirit in deification, Meconi rightly reminds his readers of the Holy Spirit's role as the personal bond between the Father and the Son in the immanent life of the Trinity and between the church and God in the economic life of the Trinity. As the eternally personal glue between the lover and the beloved one, the Spirit leads Christians to the unity of the divine Persons in the Trinity.

Some might detect one seemingly inconsistent argument in Augustine's doctrine of deification. On one hand, the bishop always tried to preserve a qualitative difference between the union between Christians and Christ and the union between humanity and divinity in Christ. Since "the entire fullness of divinity" is only found in Christ, and the incarnation of God cannot be "inimitable," Christ alone will remain the only begotten Son of God by nature (201). For Augustine, participation

means not only that the participant “shares in the attributes of the other,” but also that “the participant never becomes identical with or absorbed into the one in whom it participates” (51). On the other hand, Augustine also argues that deified Christians are “other Christs (*alter Christus*)” as if there is no ontological differentiation between Christians and Christ (202). However, what the bishop means by “other Christs” is only in the sense of “the *totus Christus* (the whole Christ),” in other words, Christ with his church (202, 206).

This reviewer appreciates Meconi’s efforts to understand Augustine’s doctrine of deification in light of his overall theology. This book will be a great resource for anyone who wants to study Augustine’s doctrine of deification.

Dongsun Cho

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***The Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology: A Comparison Between Seventeenth-Century Particular Baptist and Paedobaptist Federalism.* By Pascal Denault. Vestavia Hills, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2013. 188 pages. Paperback, \$29.99.**

While Reformed Puritanism was initially sustained by unified views on God’s election, a break arose within the movement concerning baptism. Pascal Denault seizes on this difference and clarifies it in relation to covenantal language in hopes of providing a historical foundation for modern, Reformed Baptists. Utilizing two seventeenth-century Baptist confessions and various writings of Paedobaptist and Baptist theologians, Denault affirms that while many similarities existed between the two parties, ultimately their distinct views on the covenant of grace proved too substantial for reconciliation.

In chapter 1, Denault notes that the Paedobaptist understanding of the covenant of grace, one covenant under two unique administrations spanning the Old and New Testaments, forced them to affirm that the testaments were not antithetical (31). Thus, the “curse of the law” terminology, understood by Paedobaptists as a reference to the covenant of works, was recognized by Baptists as a reference to the covenant of works and the old covenant (32). Due to the New Testament distinction between law and grace, the Paedobaptist affirmation of one covenant of grace seemed unsound to Baptists. Paedobaptists not only drew a distinction between the substance and administration of the covenant of grace, but also drew a distinction within the administration of the covenant into an external administration and an internal substance, accounting for their insistence on the “mixed nature of the church” (51). Consequently, Paedobaptists made circumcision and baptism analogous, allowing for the retention of a “natural posterity” (46–47).

To support this mixed nature, Paedobaptists were forced to separate salvation from the covenant (88). Denault criticizes the contradictory Paedobaptist viewpoint by noting “the Paedobaptists did not purport to be in the Covenant of Grace as the natural descendants of Abraham, but as his spiritual descendants; however they practiced a spiritual ordinance on the basis of natural generation” (87). Denault rightly affirms that this led Paedobaptists to transfer salvific benefits to the non-elect (96–97).

Contrary to this, Baptists argued that both the administration and the substance of the covenant of grace changed with the declaration of the new covenant. However, since the Baptist covenantal position retained a presence of the covenant

of grace in the Old Testament, they were inclined to use the term progressive to denote both the possibility of old covenant salvation and the necessity of Christ's sacrifice (61). The language of waiting for the "full discovery" in the *Second London Confession of 1689* affirms this view (61).

Next, Denault denotes the problems inherent within the Paedobaptist view of the Sinaitic covenant as a covenant of works. By denying the Sinaitic covenant as a covenant of works, Paedobaptists opposed the biblical references that affirmed a conditional covenant. Thus, Paedobaptists attributed unconditionality to the Abrahamic covenant and conditionality to the Sinaitic covenant (111). While both parties recognized a dualism within the promises in the Abrahamic covenant, Paedobaptists understood these promises as existent under the covenant of grace. On the other hand, Baptists understood the dualism as existent under two covenants, leading some to affirm the issuance of two divine covenants, Genesis 12 and Genesis 17 for Abraham's spiritual and natural posterity, respectively (121). Denault critiques the Paedobaptist solution to the relationship between the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants by noting their tendency to "amalgamate" the spiritual blessings with the physical covenant issued for Abraham's natural posterity through circumcision (125).

In chapter 4, Denault focuses on the Paedobaptist insistence of the new covenant as new, despite their covenantal views. By accepting the certainty of new covenant blessings for believers, specifically its eternity, Denault notes that under Paedobaptist covenantal theology, this covenant suddenly becomes temporary.

Considering the surge of New Calvinism within evangelicalism and the appeal of Presbyterian ecclesiology and polity among Reformed Baptists, Denault's work on the historicity of Particular Baptists and Paedobaptists is timely for two reasons.

First, while Denault's selection of seven Paedobaptist and nine Particular Baptist theologians might elicit criticism, his intent to highlight theologians who authored works arguing for either view on covenant theology is clear. Thus, one should not question Denault's inclusion of John Owen into a Baptist framework, despite his life-long affection for Paedobaptism.

Second, Denault's reliance on primary sources guarantees an accurate representation of the historical debate. Ultimately, Denault's insistence on historical context generally protects him from offering a Whiggish interpretation, a common historical critique.

However, Denault's work possesses weaknesses that should have been addressed. First, Denault makes an unfortunate reference to Dispensationalism, a nineteenth-century theological system. Since Denault elsewhere remains loyal to the seventeenth century, his reference to a movement that lacked any importance to the seventeenth century is unnecessary, leading one to interpret Denault's remark as a personal conflict against Dispensationalism.

Second, when discussing the relationship between God and the old covenant, Denault notes, "to be the people of God, under the Old Covenant, was conditional on the obedience of the people" (108). This assertion, coupled with Denault's later affirmation regarding old covenant members lacking spiritual blessings leads one to question Denault's theology concerning the spiritual condition of old covenant members. While Denault's theology allows the blessings of the new covenant to be reinstated into the old covenant, his terminology disregards the importance of faith.

Third, a contradiction arises when comparing Denault's introduction with

his conclusion. Initially, Denault stresses the uniqueness between Paedobaptist and Baptist covenantal theology by affirming their baptismal distinction as a “stem” from their covenantal difference (5). Yet, in Denault’s conclusion, he credits Paedobaptists with creating “an artificial construction developed to justify an end: Paedobaptism” (155). Thus, if baptism was established and Paedobaptist covenantal theology developed afterwards, then Denault contradicted his earlier statement, “baptism is not, therefore, the point of origin of differences” (5). Overall, Denault’s work is scholarly and is a valuable starting point for seventeenth-century covenantal theology.

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Studies in Ethics and Philosophy

***An Introduction to Biblical Ethics.* David W. Jones. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013. xi+226 pages. Paperback, \$24.99.**

This is David Jones’ sixth book in the field of Christian ethics. Before this he has written on ethical issues such as marriage and family, usury, and the prosperity gospel. Much like his previous works, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* makes a solid contribution to the field. Jones is an Associate Professor of Christian Ethics at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary who writes from an evangelical perspective with a theological approach to ethics. The purpose of *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* is to provide a foundational overview of a bibliocentric, theologically conservative Christian ethic.

Jones’ approach is consistent with the best biblical ethics texts: he focuses on the development of an ethical system instead of casuistically assessing a list of contemporary concerns. Instead of attempting to merely exegete a handful of passages from the Bible in order to immediately apply them to ethical issues, Jones lays a foundation for ethics based on an authoritative, inerrant Bible. He shows how the moral law, as exemplified by the Decalogue, is foundational for Christian ethics, which, when combined with his three-part ethical schema, allows the reader to successfully interpret and apply Scripture to ethical issues. Like John Frame, Jones argues for three aspects that should be considered in ethical decisions, though Jones uses the categories of *conduct*, *character* and *goals* instead of Frame’s tri-perspectival terminology. In many ways, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* represents the best aspects of Frame’s *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, but in about a quarter of the length.⁸

This book consists of nine chapters, each chapter contributing to the discussion of the role of Scripture in Christian ethics. The first five chapters are foundational in nature; the final four chapters consist of an exposition of the Decalogue in relation to Christian ethics. In chapter 1, Jones begins by laying groundwork for ethics in general and briefly explaining different approaches to ethics. Jones begins with a working definition, “Biblical ethics is the study and applications of the morals prescribed in God’s Word that pertain to the kind of conduct, character, and goals required of one who professes to be in a redemptive relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ” (6). He uses this definition as a backbone for the first five chapters, explaining the clauses and terms in turn. The second chapter offers an overview of the nature of revelation, explaining how both general and special revelation play a role

⁸John Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008).

in ethics, but arguing for the primacy and sufficiency of Scripture for moral decision making. Chapter three argues for the unity of the canon, supporting the usefulness of both the Old and New Testaments as sources for Christian moral norms. In this discussion, Jones provides a concise introduction to the various positions on continuity of Scripture and the reformed understanding of the tri-partite division of the Old Testament law. The fourth chapter explains the coherency of Scripture, making a case for a non-conflicting absolutist approach to moral theology. Concluding the foundational section, in chapter 5, Jones explains how the moral law, particularly as framed in the Decalogue, can be used for making ethical decisions when it is applied through Jones' three part ethical schema.

The sixth through eighth chapters are an introduction to the Decalogue as a paradigm for Christian ethics, reflecting Jones' understanding that the Ten Commandments summarize the nature of God's moral law and are an expression of God's own character. In chapter 6, Jones provides a background for the delivery of the Decalogue, its varied ordering in different traditions, and the context of the Ten Commandments found in its prologue (i.e., Ex 20:2). Chapter 7 gives an overview of the various topics that are addressed from the moral law recorded in the first four commandments, which tend to be focused on the human-divine relationship. The eighth chapter explains the implications of the last six commandments of the Decalogue, which emphasis morality in human-human relationships. The book concludes with a brief chapter tying the themes together and emphasizing the importance of biblical ethics for faithful Christians.

Jones is successful in his attempt to produce an effective and interesting introduction to the discipline of biblical ethics. The book assumes the reader does not have a background in moral theology or philosophical approaches to ethics, but begins the explanation at the ground floor. Each chapter has a brief outline summary and the book includes a glossary with essential theological and ethical terms. Jones' lucid writing style combined with the glossary and chapter summaries make this book a good option for collegiate ethics courses or use in the local church. Additionally, while many other introductory-ethics texts emphasize a topical approach to Christian ethics, Jones provides an ethical methodology which can be applied beyond particular case studies, which often become dated and irrelevant. This makes *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* a text that should be helpful for years to come.

While the provision of a methodology is very helpful and will add to the longevity of the text, this book would have been better for the addition of a few more examples of the application of the ethical schema; there are too few specific examples in the text. Taken as a whole, this lacuna seems to be the most significant weakness of an otherwise excellent text.

An Introduction to Biblical Ethics is a well-written contribution to the field of Christian ethics, and an invaluable resource for those interested in biblical ethics. The book's accessibility, biblical faithfulness, and structure make it an excellent introductory text at a graduate or undergraduate level and a helpful addition to the library of a pastor or scholar.

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***The Christian Homemaker's Handbook.* Edited by Pat Ennis and Dorothy Kelley Patterson. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013. 544 pages. Paperback, \$25.00.**

What influences have helped to define the twenty-first-century woman? How would a handbook, designed to equip women for the responsibilities of motherhood and managing a home, be received in today's society? In 2009, the "Perceptions of Homemaking Study" was distributed internationally as a survey designed to gauge the twenty-first-century woman's knowledge and ability to carry out successfully the skills pertaining to the management of the home.

While the survey was met with an enthusiastic response, the results also revealed a concern from women thirty-five years and older that women younger than themselves were not receiving the knowledge and skills needed for managing a home that the former generation had acquired. According to Titus 2:3-5, older women play a critical role in passing down these practical skills of homemaking to the next generation of women through their example and personal instruction. Editor Pat Ennis states, "Only when the younger and older women partner together to fulfill this biblical mandate will the Christian home be recovered" (35).

The scriptural basis for God's unique design for women is also being taught less and less in evangelical circles, she explained. Ennis states that in teaching a character-based home economics class, she has found new students to be "increasingly unaware of God's special instructions to women" (29). Likewise, co-editor Dorothy Patterson sadly acknowledges how society has suffered "from the advancement of feminism into the heart of the family" (22).

While the feminist movement at its onset observed true injustices against women, Candi Finch quotes Carolyn McCulley stating, "Its interpretation of how to solve these problems is incorrect because feminists abandon God and his plan for humanity" (38). The need for a resource for the next generation of women that is both biblically based and practical became the inspiration for *The Christian Homemaker's Handbook*.

This release from Crossway is a collaborative effort featuring twenty-two authors and forty chapters that provide both a biblical foundation and practical instruction on skills related to managing a home. Before fully utilizing the practical aspects of the book, authors address in the second part of the handbook God's view of the sanctity of life. Through passages like Deuteronomy 6:7-8, authors explain the important role God gives parents to teach their children how to love and follow him. Patterson states, "Rearing the next generation is an awesome task . . . motherhood should encompass a lifetime investment" (87). Additional topics addressed in this section reinforce the great value God places on every human life.

Part three of the handbook is devoted to foundational principles for parenting. Twenty-first-century women often struggle with a perceived expectation that they must do it all, the writers conclude. They feel pressure to balance a professional job with raising children, participate in community service, manage their home and make it to the local gym. Without time to rest or play the demands of life can leave women feeling overwhelmed and unfulfilled. In order to benefit fully from the practical instruction featured in this resource, it is important for women first to evaluate attitudes, priorities and influences that shape their current priorities and practices against the priorities and values of God's Word. Patterson states, "In the quest to be all you are meant to be, you must not forget who you are meant to be and what you are meant to do!" (178).

“The Practical Aspects of Establishing a Home” are addressed in part four beginning with a chapter on life management skills. Rhonda Kelley encourages women to “focus on knowing God” first and to “invest energy in work that has eternal benefits” (269–70). She also provides a helpful suggestion for maintaining balance. Kelley and her husband have identified six life areas: spiritual, mental, physical, family, financial and social. They set specific goals for each and annually establish and reevaluate their priorities concerning these goals. The next chapter in this section entitled, “Nest Building 101: Setting Up a Household,” emphasizes the importance of having a biblical framework for the purpose of the home. Aspects of safety, furnishing a home, organizing important documents and stocking a pantry are also mentioned. Other practical topics regarding establishing a home covered in subsequent chapters include: relocating a household, smart cleaning routines, working from home, home decorating and money management.

The Christian Homemaker's Handbook devotes two chapters, written by Mary K. Mohler, to the home as an evangelistic and discipleship tool entitled, “Biblical Hospitality” and “Making Your Kitchen a Springboard for Ministry.” Mohler describes hospitality as a selfless way to care for others, allowing them to get to know you beyond a surface level and “abandoning the sinful tendency to be self-absorbed” (390). The neighborhood, the context in which a woman lives, is a natural mission field. Practicing biblical hospitality and deepening friendships in the context of your home provides natural opportunities to share your faith and personal testimony of knowing Christ.

While women today may recognize the value of investing their time and resources in the pursuit of making a home, many still struggle practically to live out this role. This is due in part to factors like individual personality, lack of positive role models and even challenging issues faced in parenting. Each woman is a product of God's unique design. Her personality, strengths, weakness, skills and abilities impact her approach to homemaking. As a tool, the handbook includes insights and practical tips in a wide range of areas related to homemaking, proving an opportunity to equip women in an area in which they do not feel particularly strong.

As a resource for pastors and women's ministry leaders, *The Christian Homemaker's Handbook* can be utilized to encourage and equip women to live out their God-designed purpose. For use in a small group setting, each chapter ends with suggestions for putting the principles into practice. In a discipleship context, this resource is an excellent tool for equipping more mature women in their mentorship of younger women. Without adequate examples and positive reinforcement in society the twenty-first-century Christian woman is in great need of the practical instruction gained from *The Christian Homemaker's Handbook*, and it will serve as a treasured guide for women of all ages for years to come.

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Wellspring Church in Stoneham, MA⁹

***What Is the Meaning of Sex?* By Denny Burk. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013. 262 pages. Paperback, \$17.99.**

The culture is engulfed with the talk of sex and sexuality. Even within Christian circles, many books and sermons have taken on the topic of sex to encourage

⁹The original version of this review appeared in the Southern Baptist *TEXAN* (www.texanonline.net/archives/4567). Adapted version is used here with permission.

believers to move beyond the taboo and embrace a more holistic perspective on this very personal topic. Unfortunately, there have been some Christian resources in recent years that have sounded more like the culture and less like the Bible when it comes to sex. Thankfully, Denny Burk's contribution in *What Is the Meaning of Sex?* is a welcome relief that brings the focus back to Scripture.

Answering the question of the title is the primary task of the book. Burk does not set out to write a comprehensive guide to all issues related to sex. Instead, he wants to point out what God designed sex to be. In answering his own question, Burk writes, "The short answer is this: sex exists for the glory of God. Consequently, all sexual morality must be measured by the ability to achieve that purpose" (12).

This work makes no apologies for driving its readers back to the text of Scripture in order to make sense of the meaning of sex. Burk starts with a helpful look at 1 Corinthians 6 and its implications for the Christian understanding of sex and the body. As a follow-up to that chapter, Burk also spends a chapter dealing with hermeneutics. In an otherwise very accessible work, this chapter could have the tendency to bog down readers who are not aware of the intricacies of hermeneutical method. Burk attempts to make the discussion easier to understand, but the non-specialist may find it confusing.

Burk then moves to discussions more familiar to those interested in the topic. He addresses matters of marriage, conjugal union, family planning, gender, sexuality, and singleness in the remaining chapters of the book. Within each of these chapters, he picks up significant cultural issues and shows his readers how the Bible addresses them. For example, in the chapter on marriage, Burk provides seven descriptors of marriage (covenantal, sexual, procreative, heterosexual, monogamous, nonincestuous, and symbolic) that directly address some of the concerns regarding same-sex marriage and polygamy. As the culture moves in the direction of affirming these alternative relationships, Burk's work is helpful in countering those arguments.

The two most interesting chapters are those addressing gender and sexuality. The chapter on gender finds its genesis in an encounter Burk first references in the introduction. While speaking at a conference on sexuality, the author received a question about people born with intersex conditions. This drove him to consider whether such conditions undermine the classical understanding of gender as male and female and complementarianism. After considering a number of different conditions and noting the development of the medical community's responses to these conditions, Burk concludes, "Scripture defines what's normative for us, not any anomaly that we find in fallen creation. The phenomenon of intersex should call forth our compassion and our love for our neighbors who carry in their persons a painful reminder of the groaning creation. It should not call forth from us a revision of the binary ideal of Scripture. That binary ideal is the matrix from which a binary ideal of gender roles emerges as well" (180-81).

Burk's chapter on sexuality is also a helpful resource for dealing with challenges related to homosexuality. In this chapter, he focuses on the New Testament texts, especially Romans 1:26-27, and engages those who have veered from the traditional view that homosexuality is sinful. In a world that is swiftly moving toward the acceptance of homosexuality, this chapter is another useful guide on how to engage the church and culture.

Readers will benefit from Burk's careful treatment of the subject of sex. One need not be a trained theologian or ethicist to glean useful insights from the book. As a result, Christians can approach *What Is the Meaning of Sex?* with an assurance

that Burk will lead them to the text of Scripture to find out what God wants them to know about sex.

Evan Lenow
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Theology and Sexuality.* By Susannah Cornwall. London: SCM Press, 2013. viii + 195 pages. Paperback, \$45.00.**

There is no shortage of texts dealing with Christianity and sexuality today. Several decades ago, writing a book about the intersection of theology and sexuality would have drawn sharp criticism; however, today such work is becoming more commonplace across the spectrum of Christian traditions. In her latest work, Susannah Cornwall adds to her contributions in the field by surveying what Christian theology has said about sex, gender, and sexuality. Cornwall currently serves as post-doctoral research associate at the Lincoln Theological Institute at the University of Manchester. She has previously written on the topics of queer theology and intersex conditions.

It is difficult to characterize a book when the author acknowledges, "This book hasn't set out to give definitive answers to questions about whether these expressions of sexuality are right or wrong" (161). Rather than attempting to build a theologically consistent sexual ethic, Cornwall desires to raise questions about traditional Christian responses to sexual issues and leave her readers to formulate answers on their own. However, the one consistent element to her questions and discussion is an attempt to undermine traditionally held sexual mores.

Cornwall begins by setting forth definitions and a brief survey of the influences on Christian views of sexuality. She makes clear from the beginning that sex, gender, and sexuality are three distinct terms. Sex refers to the biology of an individual, gender denotes an individual's identity as a man, woman, or something else, and sexuality can be used to refer to both sexual orientation and how one interacts with the world (1-2). These definitions are important to how Cornwall uses the terms throughout her book. She also provides a look at the idea of essentialist and constructivist views of sexuality. She provides critique of both, which is interesting in light of later conclusions drawn in the book.

Much of the rest of the book is focused on specific issues related to sex, gender, and sexuality. Cornwall devotes chapters to various expressions of sexuality (homosexuality, transgender, intersex, etc.), celibacy and virginity, marriage, sex outside marriage, and same-sex relationships. In each case, she interacts with evangelical, Catholic, and mainline Protestant thought. She also tends to lead her readers away from accepting any sexual norms that have historically been promoted within Christian theology. For example, she endorses a distinction between "premarital" and "preceremonial" sex (102-05). Preceremonial sex takes place before the wedding ceremony but after there is some level of commitment on the part of the couple. It is unclear what level of commitment is necessary to move from one category to the next, but it is evident that the effect is to make sex before marriage less taboo.

Perhaps the most extreme example of undermining traditional sexual ethics is how Cornwall handles the issue of prostitution. While not giving it her wholesale endorsement, the research she provides consistently points her readers to look beyond the stigma of prostitution and consider how it could be a legitimate expression of human sexuality (112-16). She concludes the section on prostitution by asking

the questions, “Would it be possible to construct a theological argument in favour of prostitution? What theological resources could you draw upon in constructing such an argument?” The author provides no questions directing her readers to consider the other side of the question.

At the heart of her argument is a desire to see a different Christian perspective on sexuality. She summarizes her concluding chapter by stating, “In the Conclusion, I’ll go on to suggest that all Christian thinking about sex and sexuality must happen in the context of the broader Christian story, and especially the conviction that a new and just age is coming and has already begun” (144). In her words, this new and just age is “sexchatological” in nature. Although she rarely draws conclusions on sexual norms that should be expected of Christians, she channels all her evaluation through an ethic of love, in essence adopting the situation ethics of Joseph Fletcher. This approach is not uncommon to contemporary works on sexual ethics that seek to change the landscape of Christian thought on sexuality.

At the end of the day, Cornwall’s book is insightful regarding the direction of scholarship on sexuality and theology. Evangelicals will often find it disconcerting as she moves away from Scripture and toward a more progressive acceptance of all sexual expression.

Evan Lenow
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Poverty of Nations.* By Wayne Grudem and Barry Asmus. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013. 398 pages. Paperback, \$23.97.**

While economic issues have always been at the forefront of politics, philosophy, and theology, these issues have become more prevalent since the onset of the Great Recession in 2008. Many are now asking what correct economic policy should look like not just for the US but also for the world, especially those nations mired in poverty. In their latest book, Wayne Grudem and Barry Asmus attempt to assert a sustainable solution that nations may use to lift almost all residents out of poverty (25). They further contend that such a solution is grounded in a Christian worldview.

According to the authors, the goal of this solution is for a nation to produce more goods and services so that there will be more wealth available to people. This goal requires a nation to examine its laws, cultural values, and traditions to see if they support such an endeavor (45-48). Such production involves creating more objects of value rather than redistributing wealth or printing more money (52-54). As they argue in chapter 2, nations must avoid the wrong goals which do not lead to prosperity: depending on donations, redistribution, depleting natural resource rather than diversifying, or by blaming factors and entities external to the nation. These goals will not lead to prosperity.

This conclusion leads to the central question of chapter 3. What kind of economy best motivates people to bring about more goods and services? There are many systems that will not work: hunter-gatherer, subsistence farming, slavery, feudalism, mercantilism, socialism/communism, and the welfare state. The authors contend that all of these systems take away the worker’s incentive or ability to produce. Without production of goods and services, these systems cannot lead to prosperity. The authors contend that a free-market system where individuals control the means of production and determine production and consumption through free, individual choices without government control or compulsion is the only economic

system that produces prosperity (131-32).

The free market is a complex system that makes complex products that spontaneously emerges from the free choices of many individuals since no one person can have enough information to decide how the market should operate and produce (140-41, 163-64). Such a system requires the rule of law, property rights, sound currency, and low taxation in order to incentivize people to work and to prosper. This system also requires a system of government that protects against corruption and tyranny, provides protection for citizens from crime and war, upholds individual rights, and promotes national welfare through education, strong biblical families, and religious freedom (223-58). The free market also involves moral virtues, such as responsibility, integrity, and cooperation; however, it does not make people perfectly virtuous. It does tend to discourage as well as punish immoral behavior (187-88). The establishment of such a market will require change in cultural traditions that impede economic growth, which includes a nation's beliefs about God, human nature, morality, the family, the earth, as well as economic and political issues (309-68). Only then can a nation and its people be lifted out of poverty and sustain prosperity.

Grudem and Asmus have done an incredible job of boiling down economic jargon and presenting it in an easy to understand matter. At the same time, they do not skimp on analysis. They present a breadth of penetrating analysis and argument to support their contention that the free market is the correct solution. On the other hand, the theological aspect of the book is not as pronounced. While theological insights are scattered throughout the book, it is not until the final chapter that any grand theological argument is presented. More attention is given to economics than to theology.

Grudem and Asmus go astray in two other areas as well. First, the authors argue that the Bible supports a federally-controlled social safety net (77-79). However, the authors' arguments do not support such a conclusion. The Scripture passages used to support such a safety net do not necessarily imply the authors' claims. They only imply that rulers are to do good for their people, which can be accomplished in a variety of ways. The authors stretch Scripture to support their argument. Further, they immediately undermine their claim in the next paragraphs by stating that Scripture and the free market deny government the right to redistribute wealth by force. A federal social safety net, however, requires the government to forcibly redistribute wealth through taxation. The authors cannot have it both ways.

Second, the authors explicitly state their support for a currency backed by gold. This type of currency is in opposition to a fiat currency which has value based on the good faith of the nation. Such a currency can be easily debased or lost (156). Gold, however, is itself a fiat currency. It only has value as long as people believe it has value. Many cultures, like the Incas, never valued it as currency. Further, gold is a limited resource, and it cannot be consumed. A day may come when gold is no longer desired or able to be found. While gold can help stabilize a currency, it should not be an economic crutch.

Overall, Grudem and Asmus do an excellent job at presenting a sustainable solution to world poverty that is also biblically based. While this book is not the complete word on the issue, it is certainly a starting point for both governments and churches in their mission to serve a struggling world.

Graham Floyd
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***Come Let Us Reason: New Essays in Christian Apologetics.* Edited by Paul Copan and William Lane Craig. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013. 336 pages. Paperback, \$24.99.**

Come Let Us Reason exemplifies a substantive-yet-simple approach to popular-level apologetics. While this is a text on apologetics, it is also a book on the Christian worldview. The authors engage with contemporary issues and demonstrate the superiority and comprehensive nature of Christian thought. The defense, then, is both positive and negative. Positive in supplying reasons for believing Christianity and negative in criticizing other views. As the title suggests, the authors come with the assumption that all of biblical thinking is undergirded by reasonable and comprehensive thinking—which the authors demonstrate throughout the book through logical analysis.

By way of summary, the book is divided in five sections. First, the book covers apologetics, culture and the kingdom of God. In it, there are two very practical chapters concerning the move from *apologia* to evangelism and practical helps for women to develop an apologetic mind. Additionally, Moreland carefully delineates the relationship between kinds of postmodernism and an pluralism. Second, the book addresses the God question. Herein, the authors cover an argument for God, the problem of doubt, and an enemy of Theism—naturalistic atheism. Part 3 addresses the matter of the historical Jesus and the reliability of the New Testament. Issues covered include authorship and recent criticisms of the Gospel portrayal of Jesus. In part 4, the authors address the relationship of Israel to other religions. This is clearly important to Christian thought because Christianity finds its origins in Israel with Judaism, thus the ethical tensions that emerge there create potential problems for Christians. Finally, the last section puts forward important and fresh criticisms of both Islam and Hinduism—two religions that are gaining a greater hearing.

Four characteristic attributes describe the whole of *Come Let Us Reason*. It is at once analytic, comprehensive, edgy, and academically sophisticated. This in itself is impressive and unique to this volume in contrast to others.

While all the chapters are analytic in nature, there are two that stand out as exemplifying the virtues of an analytic approach (i.e. an analytic philosophy method characteristically logical, clear, precise and detailed). Both Moreland and Craig, display the virtues of an analytic approach. Moreland moves systematically from metaphysics to ontology, epistemology, and finally to ethics/aesthetics. Moreland argues that a consistent postmodernism leads to pluralism, yet not vice versa. Helpfully, Moreland displays such care with parsing out the relations between the views making this chapter clear and persuasive to the reader. While typically the lay person in the pews would struggle with the variety of disciplines at play he will find this essay strikingly clear and will come away with the belief that this likely is true. Craig, in a similar fashion, works through ten contemporary objections to the Kalam Cosmological argument for God's existence (an argument he is famous in defending). The lay person, with a cup of coffee in hand, will follow Craig's reasoning with clarity and comprehension. Additionally, the seasoned apologist will gain something from this essay.

Second, *Come Let Us Reason* bears the attribute of comprehensiveness; the whole touches on the variety of interrelated core issues within Christian theism and many of the essays themselves are potent with application in that they are carefully situated in Christian thought like a web of interlocking beliefs. Robert Stewart's essay

stands out on this front. Stewart puts forward an important critique of naturalism by addressing it as a whole in light of various parts. This type of argument is in contrast to many arguments that move from parts to whole (e.g., arguments for God, the resurrection etc.). I suspect this sort of argument may have more currency in popular culture in that it displays the inner logic of a belief system. Other apologetic texts would be wise to develop these sorts of arguments similar to Stewarts.

Next, the reader should note the edgy nature of the book. By edgy I mean to convey the notion that the book is cutting-edge and pushes the boundaries of present thinking. Most notable examples include Foreman's critique of a recent documentary called *Zeitgeist* and Flannagan's response to the genocidal objections to Christian theism. Foreman's argument is useful in showing the fallacious reasoning of a documentary that attempts to discredit Christian revelation. He shows that the line of reasoning is not new nor is it a very good argument against Scripture. Flannagan offers a somewhat novel response to the genocidal arguments by attending more carefully to a canonical reading of specific Old Testament passages.

Finally, the book is academically-sophisticated. This may surprise the reader given the book is written in a non-technical fashion, but almost all of the essays carry the discussion forward in important ways. Michael H. Edens puts forward a potentially-devastating argument against the Qur'an (i.e. Islamic revelation). Edens argues that the Qur'an is built upon the Christian Scriptures and is an extension of the Christian Scriptures, yet the Qur'an also claims that Christian Scriptures have been corrupted thus we have a problem of incoherence. Edens attends to the Qur'an texts themselves to demonstrate this incoherence and persuasively shows that this argument deserves further attention from scholars.

Most distinguishing about *Come Let Us Reason* is the simplicity of the arguments communicated. This is the strength of the book. While the seasoned apologist will gain much from reading it he/she may find the book too simple, but this is not a weakness of the book given its aims. Both lay readers and students of apologetics will profit from a reflective reading of the book. As such, this book becomes an ideal text for Sunday school apologetics and as a supplementary text in an undergraduate apologetics course.

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Studies in Preaching and Pastoral Ministry

***Straining at the Oars: Case Studies in Pastoral Leadership.* By H. Dana Fearon III. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013. 118 pages. Paperback, \$18.00.**

Dana Fearon is the Pastor emeritus of the Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville, NJ and also served as guest lecturer at Princeton Theological Seminary. His experience in ministry and the classroom are soon evident in the brief, but helpful volume on case studies in pastoral ministry. The book targets seminary students considering their first ministry position in a local church and the transition that occurs from seminary to full-time ministry.

The book addresses twenty case studies intending to represent "episodes in ministry that pastors might encounter" (xv). The title of the book depicts the struggle that many young ministers face as they begin their ministries. The realities of inexperience meet the frustrations of every day ministry and new pastors discover that the sterile environment of a seminary classroom doesn't always answer every question

they will face or prepare them for every job they will assume in the church.

But this is not another book taking cheap shots at the seminary for unrealistically expecting that three years of training will be sufficient to cover every conceivable issue a pastor will face in a lifetime of ministry. Instead, Fearon affirms the great value of and need for seminary training, but concedes that many of the lessons pastors learn about ministry will only be learned while doing ministry (vii).

Readers will enjoy the easy-to-read writing style and young pastors will appreciate the timely and cogent advice throughout. All ministers will appreciate the wisdom revealed or learned through real-life experiences of the author. The issues addressed include: when theological explanations are not enough (3), the importance of prayer (chapters 2 and 3), leading through the potential conflict of people misplaced in leadership positions in the church (chapter 5), conflict management (chapter 12), and community affairs. Fearon also alerts potential ministers to the (sometimes unglamorous) realities of pastoral responsibilities by describing a typical pastor's day (28-29), honestly assesses who we are and who we are not in ministry (31), deals with practical issues like baptism and marriage (chapter 13), and emphasizes the importance of missions and ministry (chapter 14).

One of the most helpful chapters dispels the old myth once taught in academia (as this reviewer can attest from his own experience in seminary) that pastors should not have personal friendships in the church. Fearon explains the effective and intentional friendships of Paul and Jesus and differentiates between healthy friendships and unhealthy cronyism (chapter eight).

Readers outside the Presbyterian tradition will not agree with or even relate to every issue Fearon presents. But, though one may not support paedobaptism (chapters 1 and 13), most will relate to the lessons these chapters teach on the importance of ministering to people and the opportunities for reaching parents through their children. While those outside the Presbyterian system will not relate to working with a session (19), all will relate to the similar issue of working with deacon or other leadership bodies in the church. While many pastors will not relate to wearing a collar in ministry (42), we can relate to the role of the minister representing the church in the community. While many will not agree with his support of female pastors (101), all pastors can benefit from his timely advice to all ministers throughout.

Fearon continues the conversation of ministry preparation. He has demonstrated how pastors lead with faith and wisdom through the myriad of issues that confront them. But, this is not just a book about working hard for Jesus. The book begins and ends with the reminder that the answer to tempests in ministry is not simply straining harder at the oars; it is trusting by faith that the Lord who called us is always sufficient to calm the storm.

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**Abstracts of Recently Completed Dissertations
in the School of Theology at Southwestern Baptist
Theological Seminary**

“The Role of the Audience in the Preaching Event: A Discussion Between Expository Preaching and the New Homiletic.” By Jeffery C. Campbell. Supervised by David L. Allen.

Preachers have access to numerous preaching books in any respectable theological library. These books cover the theology and methodology of preaching and define the role of the preacher in the pulpit. There is often discussion of voice characteristics, sermon mechanics, and even personal dress. What many of these books fail to do is discuss the role the audience plays in the preaching event.

The audience participates through nonverbal and verbal interactions with the preacher. They hear, see, and feel what the preacher says and does; but what part do they play? Are they there to assimilate and implement information? Are they there to experience something transcendent? At what level are they supposed to participate? What should be their “take-away” from the sermon?

This dissertation evaluates the role of the audience in the preaching event by comparing and contrasting two prominent preaching philosophies: expository preaching and the New Homiletic. By investigating these two prominent philosophies, which are in many ways diametrically opposed, there is opportunity to evaluate theology and methodology in relation to each philosophy as a whole and in relation to the audience in particular. The goal is to uncover the best aspects of both expository preaching and the New Homiletic and synthesize them into a preaching philosophy that has a biblical understanding of the role of the audience in the preaching event.

While expository preaching and the New Homiletic share some commonalities, they also have many differences. Their primary conflicts arise from differences in theology. The most significant conflict is found in their differing views of Scripture. Because they have differing views of Scripture, they have differing views of authority. Because their views of authority and Scripture differ, their theologies and methodologies develop in different directions.

The role of the audience is an important point of conversation for expository preaching and the New Homiletic as both seek to communicate effectively. By using commonalities as points of contact, the conversation between these two philosophies of preaching can continue.

“The Influence of William James on E. Y. Mullins and the Changing Nature of Pastoral Ministry Instruction at Southern Seminary in the Early Twentieth Century.” By Kevin Michael Crouch. Supervised by Waylan Owens.

This dissertation argues that pastoral ministry instruction at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS) changed substantially in the early twentieth century, and that a primary reason for this change was William James’s influence on SBTS President Edgar Young (E. Y.) Mullins. Scriptural content and methodology lessened as pragmatic and psychological considerations took center stage under Mullins. Chapter 1 gives the thesis, background information, and chapter overviews. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the pastoral ministry instruction at SBTS from 1859–99, including curricular structure, professors, content, and methodology. Chapter 3 follows the same format as chapter 2, covering the years 1899–1928. Chapter 4 provides a review of William James’s influence on E. Y. Mullins, especially as it relates to pastoral ministry instruction. Chapter 5 provides evidence to substantiate the claim that James’s influence on Mullins led to the pastoral ministry instruction changes identified in chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 6 summarizes the dissertation, provides suggestions for future research, and describes the relevance of the work for contemporary Southern Baptists.

“Truth and History in Justin’s *Dialogue*.” By Michael David Economidis. Supervised by Jason K. Lee.

The purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate that Justin Martyr used the historicity of OT events and the historical accuracy of OT narratives to support his argument in the *Dialogue with Trypho* that Jesus Christ embodies true philosophy and that the OT is its record.

The dissertation analyzes Justin’s treatment of theophanies, typologies, prophecy fulfillment, and pagan mythology in the *Dialogue* in the context of his criticism of pagan philosophy. The philosophers had failed to address the most important of philosophical questions, those dealing with God. Justin argued that the OT, particularly OT narratives, addressed the questions, and he distinguished those narratives from pagan mythology.

While Trypho agreed as to the events’ historicity and as to the narratives’ historical accuracy, he disagreed with Justin as to Jesus’ relationship either to the OT or true philosophy. Whereas Justin believed that Jesus explained God and, in cooperation with the Spirit, realized God’s presence and providence both in history and Scripture, thereby answering philosophy’s theological questions, Trypho and the Jewish teachers believed that the OT answered those questions with its focus on the unity of God and the importance of the Law.

The dissertation reaches five main conclusions concerning Justin’s use of OT history. First, Justin explicitly describes OT narrative as accurate historical testimony. Both he and Trypho depended on the OT to supply facts concerning God’s actions and existence. Second, Justin drew his theological

conclusions from the events, not from the text itself. Third, Justin believed that the Holy Spirit really manifested Christ in the events as well as in Scripture such that Christ was truly present and active in each. Fourth, Justin distinguished between prophecy in act and prophecy in word. Each required a historical fulfillment. Fifth, Justin believed that OT narrative differed from pagan myths in that myths are fictional and therefore could never truly participate in or manifest the Logos, Christ.

“Body Ethic.” By John D. Ferrer. Supervised by Bob Bernard.

This study attempts to construct a metaethical framework, consistent with Christianity, for addressing ethical issues concerning the human body.¹ This framing is “Christian” in the sense that key teachings from the historic Christian faith are proposed showing how Christianity can inform the metaphysical, anthropological, biological, and ethical dimensions within the concept of “body ethics.”

The thesis of this study is that a broadly biblical Christian perspective can provide a helpful and compelling introduction into the vast field of body ethics by way of five navigational tools, enumerated as the main five chapters of this dissertation.

Each of these navigational tools guides through a potential challenge to body ethics by using solutions consistent with historic Christianity. The first topic regards God and the nature and identification of beauty (chapter 1), and the challenge answered is that of moral relativism (chapter 2). The third topic is that of aesthetic relativism. The second topic regards the nature of ethical grounding in that of human nature (chapters 3 and 4), and the challenge answered is that of nominalism (and its variants) wherein human nature is unbounded and potentially meaningless. Bringing all of these together is chapter five, proposing a divinely instilled, objective, physiological reference point for body ethics. There the challenge answered is that of impracticality; theology and theory find a practical referential point of application with a “normative physical form.” In short, the topical divisions are: (1) Who is God; (2) These elements together synergize into an objective Christian realist address of What is good; (3) What is man; and (4) What is God’s good for man?

These elements together synergize into an objective Christian realist address of body ethics. More elements could be considered, but these topics suffice in showing that historic Christianity offers a robust framework for addressing body ethics.

¹Metaethics as a concept popularized by G.E. Moore in *Principia Ethica* is the study of the “prior-matters” of ethics, roughly paralleling for ethics what metaphysics is for physics; see George E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1903; reprint New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2005), throughout. The term “metaethics” is used here as a catch-all term for an ethical query which is not specifically normative ethics, nor practical ethics, but which deals in prolegomena for these.

“A Way that Seems Right to Woman: A Critical Analysis of the Role of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza in the Development of Reformist Feminist Theology.” By Candice Celene Finch. Supervised by Gerardo A. Alfaro.

This dissertation argues that Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s life and work have been instrumental in the formation and development of the field of reformist feminist theology. Her ideas concerning structures of oppression and hermeneutical methods have provided a model for later feminist theologians of how to practice theology from a feminist perspective.

Chapter 1 introduces the thesis and research approach of this dissertation and offers a primer on feminist methodology. In addition, this chapter classifies Schüssler Fiorenza’s own theological approach within the context of contemporary manifestations of feminist approaches to theology.

Chapter 2 explores several pivotal influences on Schüssler Fiorenza’s life and theological development thereby providing background material for the particular theological emphases investigated in chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 3 builds upon the biographical elements in chapter 2 and examines the significant setbacks and achievements in Schüssler Fiorenza’s educational journey and academic career. This chapter identifies the key events that have enabled Schüssler Fiorenza to help to establish feminist theological studies as a new field of study.

Chapter 4 shifts the focus from Schüssler Fiorenza’s biography to her theology. This chapter centers on her treatment of patriarchy/kyriarchy and its influence over the family, the church, and the theological academy and helps to identify how Schüssler Fiorenza’s analysis is a new path in theology that has emerged under the guise of feminist theological reflection.

Chapter 5 codifies Schüssler Fiorenza’s reimagining of the discipline of hermeneutics in order to show how she has provided a pattern for future feminist scholars of how to “do theology” from a critical feminist perspective.

Chapter 6 concludes the project by summarizing the influence of Schüssler Fiorenza’s life and work on the discipline of feminist theology as well as offering four critiques of her work from an evangelical perspective.

“A Theology of Worship in the Writings and Practice of John Smyth: A Seventeenth-Century Study.” By Christa Sue Friel. Supervised by Jason K. Lee.

John Smyth does not present a systematic theology of worship in his writings. This dissertation argues, however, that one may construct Smyth’s theology of worship by examining his writings on worship and the worship practices of his Amsterdam church. This study claims to do such theological construction, as well as to delineate his particular liturgical hermeneutic. Smyth’s views on worship combine a commitment to the Puritan regulative principle of worship with a typological interpretation of Scripture.

Chapter 1 introduces the subject and methodology of this study, noting its contribution to current discussions on the construction of theologies of worship and the field of liturgical hermeneutics.

Chapter 2 provides liturgical-historical context for Smyth's theological thought: sixteenth and seventeenth-century England; the Anglican-Puritan controversy; the Puritans' application of the regulative principle of worship within this controversy; and ensuing Separatist writings on worship and their respective worship practices.

Chapter 3 furnishes a terse account of Smyth's life, including a few details that have previously gone undiscovered. The biography highlights his theological changes in order to provide the necessary context for his ecclesiological reflection.

Chapters 4-6 examine Smyth's Puritan, Separatist, and Baptist writings in order to delineate his views on worship. Each work is examined for Smyth's ecclesiology proper, followed by his exposition of worship, then principles of worship ascertained from his exposition. Additionally, these chapters will demonstrate the ways in which his application of typology and his commitment to the Puritan regulative principle of worship shaped his views on worship.

Chapter 7 argues that Smyth's worship embodies his theology. Thus, the one extant description of his congregation's worship in Amsterdam is investigated as a reflection of his theology in practice. The dissertation concludes with a final synthesis of Smyth's theology of worship.

“Angelic Assumption of the Body in Thomas Aquinas and Scripture.” By John Richard Gilhooly. Supervised by John B. Howell, III.

This dissertation argues that Thomas Aquinas' doctrine of the angelic assumption of the body properly locates angelic nature in the hierarchy of reality based on the biblical criteria for a metaphysical account of the angels. Chapter 1 explains why angelology is viable philosophically and necessary theologically. Chapter 2 surveys the biblical data on angels to develop the foundational criteria for a philosophical discussion about the angelic nature. In particular, the analysis focuses on a gap in the biblical witness on the angels that a metaphysical account of their nature should be able to explain. On the one hand, angels are spiritual (non-bodied) creatures. On the other hand, they often appear embodied in such a way that they are indistinguishable from ordinary human beings. Chapter 3 explains Thomas Aquinas' account of angelic nature *per se* and during the assumption of a body. In particular, his account is shown not only to comport with the biblical criteria but to make a fitting and useful synthesis of them. Chapter 4 argues that angelology can provide an independent reason to favor one account of anthropology over another. The purpose of this simple argument is to demonstrate how angelological reflections can provide fresh Christian approaches to contemporary problems in theology and philosophy.

“A Critical Analysis of Moïse Amyraut’s Atonement Theory Based on a New and Critical Translation of *A Brief Treatise on Predestination*.” By Matthew Scott Harding. Supervised by Kevin D. Kennedy.

This dissertation argues that the term Covenantal Redemption best describes Moïse Amyraut’s understanding of the atonement since he distinctively narrows his explanation of Christ’s universal atonement through covenantal language. Therefore, rather than further employ the ambiguous label Hypothetical Universalism as an unintended, anachronistic designation for all seventeenth-century proponents of universal grace, this dissertation proposes a more substantive moniker which designates more clearly the intricate nuances of Amyraut’s covenantal methodology and distinguishes his unique contribution to Reformed theological development in the seventeenth century and beyond. Further, through a modern English, critical translation of Amyraut’s treatise, this dissertation also demonstrates where Amyraut introduces his nascent covenantal methodology within the *Brief Treatise* (1634). Chapter 1 introduces the thesis and relevancy of the argument. Chapter 2 presents the historical setting for the treatise and controversy. Chapter 3 presents the textual history of the two editions of the *Brief Treatise*. Chapter 4 presents Amyraut’s covenantal methodology and argues for Covenantal Redemption. Chapter 5 is the translator’s preface and Chapter 6 is the modern English translation of the treatise.

“Entrusted with Tradition: A Socio-Historical Study of Entrustment Language and the Metaphor of Management in the Pastoral Letters.” By Donald Hun Kim. Supervised by Terry L. Wilder.

This dissertation argues that the entrustment language in the Pastoral Letters stems from ideas of management found in the ancient world, by constructing a social history to identify the semantic range of management within Greco-Roman society. The field of meaning is drawn from ancient literature, including the thirteen letters traditionally attributed to Paul as author.

Chapter 1 introduces the problem, the thesis, the scope of the study, and an overview of source history. The method of social history utilized in this dissertation is also explained.

Chapter 2 looks at the titles which Paul uses to identify himself in his letters before God and his churches—titles that not only establish his own authority but also his subservient position through the commission given to proclaim the gospel message.

Chapter 3 explores the οἰκονομία language in Paul’s letters that further embodies entrustment language. Even with its wide range of interpretations, the word οἰκονομία means household management at its semantic core. God entrusts this household management to Paul over the church and the gospel ministry.

Chapter 4 examines the legal language of inheritance in *fideicommissum* and the weight of entrustment in agreements of guardianship and trust. The

use of trust in handling inheritance is critically aligned with Paul's expressions of faith and his handling of the gospel message.

Chapter 5 is a study of deposit language as found in the Pastorals and the ancient world. The varied types of deposits consistently reveal nuanced aspects of contracts, relationships, and transactions which reinforce the thrust of entrustment in Paul's writings.

Chapter 6 is a summary of the conclusions drawn from this study. The entrustment language of Paul's writings traces its source to God's authority and faithfulness as revealed in the gospel story and the proclamation of the gospel message.

“Martin Luther’s Messianic Rationale for Christ as the *Sensus Literalis* of Scripture in his Prefaces to the Bible.” By William McLean Marsh. Supervised by Jason K. Lee.

This dissertation seeks to demonstrate that Luther believes Christ to be the *sensus literalis* of Scripture on the basis of the Bible's messianic promise. This claim asserts that Luther's scriptural exegesis of the Bible's "letter" is responsible for his designation of Christ as its literal sense.

Chapter 1 introduces the scholarship on Luther as a biblical interpreter and reviews various assessments of his "Christocentric" perspective on the Bible. The main criticism leveled against Luther to which this study seeks to respond is that of "Christianization."

Chapter 2 contends for the preface-genre as a literary practice within the Medieval and Reformation periods where holistic statements of one's hermeneutic and biblical theology are commonly expressed. Next, the chapter embarks upon an in-depth analysis of Luther's prefaces to the *Deutsch Bibel* in order to manifest the Reformer's unified vision of Christ as Scripture's *sensus literalis* because of the Bible's preoccupation with the promise and fulfillment of the messianic hope.

Chapter 3 explores central components of the hermeneutical implications of chapter two's examination of the Bible-prefaces that play a fundamental role for Luther in the establishment of Christ as the literal sense of Scripture. These three key aspects of his biblical interpretation are the Messiah in the OT, authorial intention, and the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.

Chapter 4 features an excursus on the treatise, *On the Last Words of David* (1543). The goal of this chapter is to investigate a non-preface writing from Luther's corpus that shares similar intentions of prescribing and demonstrating his approach to reading the Bible with the conviction that Christ is its *sensus literalis* based upon Scripture's witness to the Messiah in its "letter." This analysis seeks to evaluate the significance of the three "hermeneutical implications" (chapter three) derived from the prefaces to the Bible (chapter two) for Luther's "Christological" interpretation of the OT in *On the Last Words of David* with the aim of discerning a core hermeneutic in Luther's approach to Scripture.

Chapter 5 summarizes the conclusions derived from this study and suggests prospects for further research directly related to Luther's hermeneutic and biblical theology.

“An Examination of Selected Uses of the Psalms of David in John and Acts in Light of Traditional Typology.” By Donald Lee Schmidt Jr. Supervised by Paul M. Hoskins.

This dissertation argues that prophetic David typology best explains the application of the Psalms quotations to the specific events of Jesus' passion, resurrection, and exaltation in select passages in John and Acts. Collectively, Jesus (John 13:18/Ps 41:9; 15:25/Ps 69:4), John (John 19:24/Ps 22:18; 19:28/Ps 69:21), and Peter (Acts 1:20/Pss 69:25; 109:8; 2:25-28/Ps 16:8-11; 2:34-35/Ps 110:1; 4:25-26/Ps 2:1-2) show that OT Psalms texts relating events about David in their original contexts provide prophetic patterns, which predict corresponding but climactic NT realities fulfilled in Jesus and the events of his passion. As the one who fulfills the prophetic David typology, John and Luke each present portraits of Jesus as the promised Davidic King, the New and Greater David.

Chapter 1 introduces the thesis, surveys the relevant background literature, and explains the methodology for accomplishing the chapter goals.

Chapter 2 clarifies the traditional, prophetic view of typology over against the modern analogical view. This chapter also delineates the common principles used in the exegetical analysis of possible cases of NT typology.

Chapter 3 discusses some of the important biblical and historical evidences that support understanding biblical typology according to a prophetic sense.

Chapter 4 examines four passages in the FG where John appropriates quotations from the Psalms of David in fulfillment formulae to provide the OT rationale for the specific events of Jesus' suffering and death. Analysis of these NT passages indicates that prophetic David typology accounts most accurately for the way John understands the Psalms in connection to Jesus.

Chapter 5 examines four passages in Acts where Luke appropriates quotations from the Psalms of David to provide the OT rationale for the specific events of Jesus' suffering, resurrection, and exaltation. Analysis of these NT passages indicates that prophetic David typology accounts most accurately for the way Luke uses the Psalms in connection to Jesus.

Chapter 6 summarizes the main points of chapters 1-5 and highlights the implications of this current project.

“Multi-Site Churches and their Undergirding Ecclesiology: Questioning its Baptist Identity and Biblical Validity.” By Patrick G. Willis. Supervised by Jason G. Duesing.

This dissertation will argue that a multi-site ecclesiology is outside the ecclesiological inheritance from early American Baptists and fails crucial tests of biblical prescription or precedent for its existence. The first chapter

explores the current disagreement over the multi-site church. Then, a brief recollection of the multi-site church taxonomy described by The Multi-Site Church Revolution was recounted. Finally, the methodology and an outline for the entirety of this dissertation are described.

The second chapter surveys the early American Baptist landscape for ecclesially compatible ancestors for the multi-site movement. The Baptist traditions and histories surrounding the Philadelphia, Charleston, and Sandy Creek Baptist Associations provide the grounds for this search. Each of these traditions seems to show promise for historical precedent for the multi-site movement.

Chapter 3 transitions into the realm of biblical validity for the multi-site movement. One of the foundational arguments surrounding the multi-site church movement centers upon the New Testament word for church (ἐκκλησία). In this section, it is argued that the word's lexical and etymological meaning must be considered in understanding the nature of the church and must be admissible as evidence in the discussion surrounding the multi-site church's biblical validity. This chapter also examines a key New Testament text in the relevant debate—Acts 9:31. This text is shown not to deliver the ecclesiological freight reported of it by the advocates of multi-site.

The issue of congregationalism, both biblically and historically, vis-à-vis the multi-site church is at the center of the next chapter. Chapter 4 argues that the multi-site church's undergirding ecclesiology represents a new reality—neocongregationalism. This development is an attempt to misapply the term congregational to something that is non-congregational. Chapter 4 also argues that church membership has been understood to provide the unification factor for a single church and that the multi-site's undergirding ecclesiology does not allow for this.

The last chapter provides a conclusion to the dissertation—including two predictions for the future discussion surrounding the multi-site church. A list of developments to accompany these two predictions is given. Finally, this chapter describes a list of areas for future research.

Abstracts of Recently Completed Dissertations in the School of Evangelism and Missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

“A Historical, Biblical Evaluation of the Comity Agreement and Its Implication for South Korean Churches’ Comity Strategy for North Korea.” By Incheol Mun. Supervised by John Michael Morris.

South Korean churches are on the verge of interdenominational cooperation for the reestablishment of churches in North Korea. With the anticipation of South Korean churches' official accessibility to the North, the necessity of unity among South Korean churches has been voiced. Any evangelistic endeavors by South Korean churches directed to the North that includes excessive division, competition, and duplication will likely deter effec-

tive evangelization of North Korea. For this reason, South Korean churches are suggesting unity for the sake of the effective evangelism of North Korea. Furthermore, South Korean churches desire to employ convergent negotiations between evangelical and ecumenical churches in the spirit of global convergence among evangelicals, the World Council of Churches (WCC), and the Vatican. In this regard, South Korean churches have a similar context that historical global consultations on comity have experienced. South Korean churches have experienced a confrontational paradigm conflict/convergence between evangelicalism and ecumenism, which developed from historical comity consultations.

In the meantime, South Korean churches have questioned the potential effectiveness of developing one church body in North Korea to help eliminate confusion between South Korean churches and the people of North Korea. However, this scheme is being debated. This dissertation demonstrates that South Korean churches would benefit from the historical lessons of comity by not repeating errors that the ecumenical movement brought through its pursuit of visible church unity, while sacrificing the essence of the Gospel. The writer further attempts to reveal the experience of evangelicals and their admission to ecumenical movements, and how preserving the essence of the Gospel has not been possible when attempting to create visible unity with ecumenical institutions. This dissertation argues that the attempts of visible unity among various institutions of Christendom and their compromise of biblical doctrines led to a view of the church and her unity that is antithetical to the biblical model. From this perspective, this dissertation will suggest that interdenominational cooperation among South Korean churches for the purpose of the reestablishment of churches in the North needs to be assisted by understanding the historical/biblical implications of comity.

This dissertation will present strategies for maintaining historical/biblical justifications, and it attempts to prove that attaining one church body in North Korea is a strategy with no historical/biblical support. The only feasible strategy is the implementation of a method of cooperation, both historically and biblically supported, for the reestablishment of North Korean churches by adopting a comity agreement for a limited timeframe with geographic specificity, but without theological compromise or denominational unification.

**Abstracts of Recently Completed Dissertations in the School
of Church and Family Ministries at Southwestern Baptist
Theological Seminary**

“The Professionalization of Pastoral Care within the Southern Baptist Convention: Gaines Dobbins and the Psychology of Religion.” By Tommy Dale Johnson, Jr. Supervised by Frank Catanzaro.

The business efficiency model was utilized in 1920 by Gaines Dobbins at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary to formulate a distinct ecclesiol-

ogy. As the organization and structure of the church altered to meet modern demands, the role of the pastorate became more complex. Due to rapid industrialization in America, the laity required continued specialization and as a result the expectations of the pastorate were altered. Following the efficiency model, the duties of the pastor were specialized and additional staff was required to meet the burdens of the new efficient structure.

In addition to his work in organizational ecclesiology, Dobbins was responsible for restructuring the department of religious education at Southern Seminary. Discontent with the traditional methods of instruction in theological education, he sought to implement theories and methodologies from modern educationalists. George A. Coe, John Dewey, Edward Thorndike, and others provided Dobbins with a psychological model for religious education. This psychologized educational methodology incorporated a person-centered approach that promoted stimulation for growth and learning.

Religious educators utilized the psychology of religion as an empirical measure of the soul, human nature, and human behavior. The social sciences seemed to grant Dobbins, as a practitioner, academic respectability within the realm of theological education. Both the professionalization that resulted from Dobbins' efficiency standards and a working theory of human nature derived from psychological models, were synthesized into a specialized system of pastoral care. The means by which pastors became specialized in their duty of pastoral care was clinical training. Dobbins followed the new shape of pastoral theology in America, adopting Clinical Pastoral Education as the model for pastoral training. As a result, clinical pastoral training became an integral part of the curriculum at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for over sixty years.

“A Study of Secondary School Type, Gender, and Parental Influence as Variables Relating to Spiritual Doubt Among Christian College Students.” By Lorri Ann SeGraves. Supervised by Chris Shirley.

The problem of this study was to determine the differences in spiritual doubt scores across secondary school type (public, Christian, or homeschool) and gender among Christian college students in selected Texas Baptist Student Ministries (BSM).

The Religious Doubt Scale was used to test randomly chosen cluster samples at six universities in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex, which have ongoing Baptist Student Ministry (BSM) groups. Three additional short-answer questions were also utilized to gather information for the qualitative element. The quantitative data was processed using SPSS 21 with a 2-Way ANOVA test for the secondary school type and gender variables. The qualitative data was processed by hand for the parental influence variable. Quantitative and qualitative data were then jointly considered to provide a more complete picture of the reality of spiritual doubt in the lives of Christian college students.

The Spiritual Doubt Scale revealed no significant difference between

spiritual doubt scores of students who attend BSM activities based on gender or high school type. Qualitative data revealed that students who had the lowest levels of spiritual doubt perceive their parents as those who are Christians, who intentionally apply Scripture, and who actively work through doubts with their children, whereas students who possessed the highest levels of spiritual doubt perceive their parents as those who may or may not be professing Christians, who seldom use the Scripture in their daily lives, and who defer questions of faith to professional clergy or others with more experience.

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