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Theological Foundations for Counseling Addicted Believers

Jim Berg¹

The prevailing secular wisdom regarding addiction teaches that addiction arises from a disease. Addiction recovery practitioners Pax and Chris Prentiss state that ever since the American Medical Association (AMA) declared alcoholism a disease in 1956, “the existing primary paradigm regarding alcoholism and addiction is not only that they are diseases, but they are incurable.”² Both the Scriptures and many secular researchers and practitioners in the field of addiction challenge this prevailing view.

Secular authors who have abandoned the disease model declare that the roots of addiction reside in the choices people make when life appears too overwhelming for their current level of coping skills. Stanton Peele teaches that “people become addicted to experiences that protect them from life challenges they can’t deal with.”³ Neuroscientist Marc Lewis argues that “medicalization and the disease model have outlived their usefulness” and that only by realigning his life towards “personally derived, future-oriented goals” can an addict leave behind his dependencies on substances and experiences.⁴ Researcher and professor of psychiatry Arnold M. Ludwig declares that “the alcoholic’s worst enemy is not the bottle or bad luck but his own mind.”⁵ Such counter-cultural voices echo truth the Word of God already clearly proclaimed, but the Scriptures go much deeper.

While all addictions have physical effects, the greatest pull towards addiction springs from the sinful human heart, not the human body. Biblical counselors believe that an addicted believer fights a spiritual war. Edward T. Welch declares that “addictions are ultimately a disorder of worship. Will we worship ourselves and our own desires, or will we worship the true God?”⁶ Mark E. Shaw, a certified biblical counselor and Master’s Level Addictions Professional (MLAP), also grounds addiction in the human heart.⁷

This article examines three passages of Scripture that lay a strong biblical foundation for approaching addictions. Many other Scripture passages inform a biblical view of life-dominating sins,

¹ Dr. Jim Berg is professor of Biblical Counseling at BJU Seminary. This article has been adapted from “Chapter Two: Theological Foundations for Counseling Addicted Believers” in the author’s DMin writing project, “Equipping Lay Volunteers for a Local Church Addiction Recovery Discipleship Program” (Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017). The project culminated in a video-recorded, seven-hour training module entitled “Helping Others Overcome Addiction,” available at www.Udemy.com.

² *The Alcoholism and Addiction Cure* (Los Angeles: Power, 2007), 13.

³ *Addiction Proof Your Child* (New York: Three Rivers, 2007), 11.

⁴ *The Biology of Desire: Why Addiction is Not a Disease* (New York: Public Affairs, 2015), 211.

⁵ *Understanding the Alcoholic’s Mind* (New York: Oxford, 1988), 12.

⁶ *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2001), xvi.

⁷ *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2008), xi.

but the following are crucial for understanding why biblical counselors reject the disease model of addiction and how the counselor charts the way forward to freedom from sin's slavery.

Romans 6:15–23: A New Master

Introduction

In Romans 6 Paul provides important truths for helping believers make lasting and biblical change. In Romans 5 Paul teaches that believers no longer live in the realm of the law but in the realm of grace.⁸ In chapter 6 he raises and answers two subsequent questions from his critics. After Paul addresses in 6:1–14 the first question: “Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?” (v. 1), he raises in 6:15 the second of those questions: “Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?” (ESV). Paul shows the fallacy of his critics’ second question by arguing in 6:16–23 that at conversion believers change masters. Living under a new master affects choices and outcomes.⁹ Paul’s rebuttal to this second question has foundational implications and applications for working with addicts enslaved to the master of their lusts.¹⁰

Biblical Exegesis

Second Question and Emphatic Answer (6:15)

Leon Morris and Thomas R. Schreiner disagree about the importance of the verb tenses used in 6:15 in contrast to the tense of Paul’s first question in 6:1. Morris states that the aorist tense of ἁμαρτήσωμεν (“sin”) describes willing acts of sin in contrast to the present tense of ἐπιμένωμεν (“continue”) in 6:1, which “points to a continuing attitude.”¹¹ Schreiner disagrees, stating that the “aorist in verse 15 is constative and refers to sinning in general.”¹² Regardless, Paul’s emphatic response of μὴ γένοιτο—translated “by no means!”—declares that sin and grace are incompatible.

Responding Question and Implication (6:16)

Paul argues in 6:1–14 that believers must not continue in sin because of their death with Christ, but in 6:16 he argues from the slave and master metaphor. First, he reminds his audience that “whatever is the power to which you yield yourselves as slaves to obey it, you are the slaves of that

⁸ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 351–352.

⁹ F. F. Bruce, *Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1985), 144.

¹⁰ Shaw, 48, 139.

¹¹ *The Epistle to the Romans*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 260.

¹² *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 329.

power which you obey.”¹³ Paul repeats variants of “obey” (ὕπακοήν, ὑπακούετε, and ὑπακοῆς) to reinforce the slave-master imagery and “to counter a false libertinism.”¹⁴ Second, Paul sets forth only two possible masters for the believer: sin or God. The Roman believers could present themselves as either slaves of sin (personified) or slaves of obedience (to God), with two divergent outcomes. Commentators disagree, however, about whether Paul uses the term δικαιοσύνην (“righteousness”) here to refer to right living, to initial justification, or to an eschatological end.

Though “death” most likely refers to eternal death, Moo rejects the idea that righteousness refers to a similar “eschatological verdict” since Paul does not usually use the term in this manner. He proposes that the word more likely refers to “‘moral’ righteousness, conduct pleasing to God.”¹⁵ F. F. Bruce, however, sees righteousness as “justification.”¹⁶ James Dunn calls for a blended position that does not force the word into any “particular dogmatic scheme.”¹⁷ Paul presents his readers with the choices and their consequences: Choosing sin as their master brings ultimate death; choosing to obey God brings righteousness.

Declaration of the New Position (6:17–18)

Paul thanks God because the Roman believers had responded ἐκ καρδίας (“from the heart”) to the demands of the gospel. “From the heart” demonstrates a willing submission to the new master and removes any thought of cruelty in Paul’s slave imagery.¹⁸ Scholars disagree, however, on the exact sense of τύπον διδαχῆς (“standard of teaching”). Colin G. Kruse sees Paul’s phraseology as unique and as a direct reference to the gospel.¹⁹ Bruce expands the phrase’s content further to also include “the body of teaching which Paul elsewhere calls the ‘tradition’ or ‘the traditions.’”²⁰ Cranfield states that τύπον also includes submission of the believer to the molding process of the teaching.²¹ Paul demands that these Roman believers give wholehearted obedience to God and his ways.

The passive voice of παραδίδωμι (“committed”) along with the active voice of ὑπακούσατε (“obedient”) encompass both divine and human actions. Thus, Dunn comments, “The image is of

¹³ C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 322.

¹⁴ Moo, 399.

¹⁵ Ibid., 400.

¹⁶ Bruce, 145.

¹⁷ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1998), 342.

¹⁸ James Moffatt, “The Interpretation of Romans 6:17–18,” *JBL* 48 (1929), 235.

¹⁹ *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 281.

²⁰ *Romans*, 145.

²¹ *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 324.

the rebellious slave whose desire to serve another master results in his being transferred to that master.”²² Paul pictures in verses 16 and 17 the transfer of a slave to a new master.

Exhortation (6:19–22)

Paul admits that his analogy of slavery may at first seem “inadequate, unworthy and misleading as a way of speaking about a believer’s relation to δικαιοσύνη.”²³ He does not, however, apologize for the analogy since he continues to use it throughout the rest of the chapter.²⁴ Dunn comments that “weakness of the flesh” speaks not of a moral condition but of the limitations of human frailty and fallenness.²⁵ Paul employs the slave imagery to help readers overcome weaknesses in understanding.

By means of the aorist tenses of παρεστήσατε (“presented”) in verse 19, Paul contrasts the wholeheartedness that previously characterized service to sin with the wholeheartedness that must now characterize service to righteousness.²⁶ God himself enables this wholeheartedness, as the aorist passive tenses of ἐλευθερωθέντες (“have been set free”) and δουλωθέντες (“have become slaves”) indicate.²⁷ By contrast, unbelievers remain “deaf to God’s righteous demands and incapable of responding to them even were they to hear and respect them.”²⁸ They operate “free from righteousness” (6:20) and without divine enablement to do right.

“But now” (6:22) establishes the current situation of believers in contrast to the “for when” of their pre-conversion past in verses 20 and 21. The contrast looms so great that Bruce remarks, “Those who have been justified are now being sanctified; those who have no experience of present sanctification have no reason to suppose they have been justified.”²⁹ The phrases “slaves of sin” and “free from righteousness” parallel “free from sin” and “slaves of God.” “Fruit” bringing “shame” contrasts to “fruit” bringing “sanctification” in the same way that “death” contrasts to “eternal life.”³⁰ Paul calls believers “slaves of God” (6:22), thereby clarifying the full sense of the previous phrases: slaves “of obedience” (6:16), of “that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (6:17), and “of righteousness” (6:18, 19, 20).

²² *Romans* 1–8, 344.

²³ Cranfield, 325.

²⁴ Moo, 404.

²⁵ *Romans* 1–8, 345.

²⁶ Morris, 265.

²⁷ Dunn, 348.

²⁸ Moo, 406.

²⁹ *Romans*, 146.

³⁰ Moo, 407.

Summary (6:23)

The apostle closes chapter 6 with a bold reminder of the eternal consequences of temporal choices. Though *ὀψώνια* (“wages”) typically delineated payments to soldiers, the term had “broadened beyond that to denote, ‘salary, wages, allowance’ in general.”³¹ Morris clarifies, however, that “eternal life is not a reward for services rendered.”³² Since God can owe no man anything, God grants the believer a gift—eternal life. By contrast, serving sin yields a payoff of eternal death.

Theological Implications

Living Under Grace Means Obeying a New Master (6:15–17)

Paul, by employing the slavery imagery and offering only two options, implies that no third alternative of man’s independence and autonomy exists.³³ Man must disavow himself of the idea that he can serve both Christ and sin simply because he does not live under the law. Kruse comments, “The idea that a believer can continue in sin because [he is] not under the law is tantamount to offering oneself as a slave to sin.”³⁴ Wholehearted obedience to the gospel transfers the believer out of the rule of sin and into the realm of a new master, with no third option and no neutral position (6:17).

Wholehearted obedience to God initiates the new relationship, and wholehearted obedience to God must characterize the new relationship (6:17). The analogy of slavery appropriately depicts that relationship because it expresses “the total belongingness, total obligation and total accountability which characterize the life under grace, with a vigour and vividness which no other image seems to equal.”³⁵ To Paul, “life under grace is still a life of obedience.”³⁶ To reinforce his point, Paul strategically uses variants of the word “obey” (6:16, 17) to answer his critics, who believed his teaching could inspire antinomianism. Ultimately, Paul insists that everyone obeys someone.

Living Under the Old Master Produces Predictable Results (6:19–22)

Believers under grace have entered a new relationship with new privileges and responsibilities. Moo comments that “in order to underscore further the seriousness of the choice between these masters, Paul specifies the consequences of the respective ‘slaveries’: death and righteousness.”³⁷ Paul contrasts life under the two masters by listing contrasting characteristics of a slave serving each of the two masters.

³¹ Cranfield, 349.

³² *Romans*, 267.

³³ Cranfield, 321.

³⁴ *Romans*, 281.

³⁵ Cranfield, 321.

³⁶ Kruse, 280.

³⁷ Moo, 399.

Paul presents four characteristics of those who serve the master of sin. First, before salvation the Roman believers had given themselves over to impurity accompanied by an increasing lawlessness (6:19). They lived only for their lusts.³⁸ Second, in their pre-Christian state Roman believers experienced no restraining influence of righteousness (6:20). Morris remarks, “They saw no compulsion to do what was right.”³⁹ Third, during their life under sin, their evil evoked no shame (6:21)—a distinctive mark of the unbeliever, for “to be ashamed of one’s past evil ways is a vital element in sanctification.”⁴⁰ Finally, they would face the final judgment of God—eternal death (6:21).⁴¹ The consequences of serving sin range from bondage to damnation.

Living Under the New Master Produces Predictable Results (6:18–23)

Paul describes the new master as righteousness personified (6:18). He advocates not a righteousness achieved through the law but a righteousness granted through conversion and lived out as the character of the new life. Righteousness lived out under the new master leads to true holiness (6:22)—something not possible under the law.

Righteousness, too, has several characteristics. First, under the new master believers can experience freedom from sin’s bondage (18). Kruse points out, “This is a paradoxical statement—set free to become slaves!”⁴² Here Paul gives another reminder that everyone serves someone. Second, believers will reap the benefit of increasing sanctification (19, 22). Schreiner sees in these verses not a final state but the process of becoming holy, since increasing holiness stands in opposition to the process of increasing lawlessness.⁴³ Paul expects true believers to grow continually in Christlikeness under the new master—the end of which is “eternal life” (22–23).

In addition to listing the consequences of life under each master, Paul hints at the “already, but not now” paradox of the Christian experience in verses 15–23.⁴⁴ In verse 23 he focuses on the “not now” but, nonetheless, inevitable consequences of life choices. Paul makes his final appeal to those who say that grace permits antinomianism.⁴⁵ People who serve sin will receive the wages for their service—eternal death. In contrast, people who belong to Christ and serve God with their members receive the gift of eternal life.

³⁸ Morris, 265.

³⁹ Ibid., 265.

⁴⁰ Cranfield, 328.

⁴¹ Kruse, 285.

⁴² Ibid., 282.

⁴³ *Romans*, 338.

⁴⁴ Dunn, 335.

⁴⁵ Schreiner, 340–341.

Application

Paul's teaching in Romans 6 relates directly to ministering to believers enslaved to life-dominating sins. This chapter of Scripture counters prevailing myths regarding addiction, which the general population and many within the Church believe. According to the truths Paul presents in Romans 6, Christians cannot view addiction as a disease or permanent.

Based upon the work of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection on behalf of the believer, Paul destroys any argument that sin should passively reign in the believer's life. Instead, Paul presents a choice. He states, "For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification" (Rom 6:19, ESV). Paul further teaches in 6:16 that choices to sin reveal the ruling master in a person's life: "You are slaves of the one whom you obey" (ESV).

Contemporary slogans in recovery circles promote the myth, "Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic."⁴⁶ Throughout Romans 6 Paul presents the believer with contrasting choices. The believer does not have to continue in sin. The apostle makes the case in 6:17 that the believers in the church at Rome "who were once slaves of sin [had] become obedient from the heart" and had "become slaves of righteousness." Since living in sin must not characterize someone who belongs to Christ, God not only intends for the believer to enjoy freedom but also commands that the believer not continue in sin.⁴⁷ *Addiction arises, therefore, not from a disease but from "voluntary slavery" to the wrong master.*⁴⁸

James 1:1–8: Tested Faith

Introduction

Mishandled trials and indulged lusts often precede addiction, and counselors have to address such trials and lusts with the enslaved believer.⁴⁹ In addition, ministering to enslaved believers generates many trials for the counselor as well since he must respond biblically to the challenges of helping a fellow believer to conquer his life-dominating sins. In chapter one of his epistle, James provides the necessary instruction for both the enslaved believer and the counselor to face trials and resist temptation biblically. *Addictions reveal that the believer has continually turned away from God during a trial and/or temptation.*

⁴⁶ Ludwig, 4.

⁴⁷ Shaw, 26–29.

⁴⁸ Welch, 46.

⁴⁹ Ludwig, 12.

Biblical Exegesis

The Responsibilities and Results of Tested Faith (1:1–4)

James writes to suffering people whom he calls in verse 1 the *diaspora*—the “twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (Jas 1:1, KJV). Kurt A. Richardson interprets “twelve tribes” metaphorically to mean “all the people of God” in Christ, including believing Gentiles.⁵⁰ Simon J. Kistemaker disagrees and argues, “We have no indication that [James] specifically refers to Gentile Christians anywhere in the epistle.”⁵¹ Peter H. Davids believes that “the most natural way of reading this phrase is as an address to the true Israel (i.e. Jewish Christians) outside of Palestine (i.e. probably in Syria and Asia Minor).”⁵² Additionally, Richardson finds in the term *diaspora* echoes of the exile judgments, which God sent upon OT Israel because of their infidelity to him. Richardson points to James’s admonition in 4:4 as evidence that at least some of the currently dispersed Jews were likewise estranged from God.⁵³

The displacement of these Jews produced “trials . . . of various kinds” (πειρασμοῖς . . . ποικίλοις). Richardson,⁵⁴ Davids,⁵⁵ and Douglas J. Moo⁵⁶ all see persecution and oppression as key components in such trials. Moo interprets πειρασμοῖς (“trials”) as referring to external trials of persecution and hardship in verse 3, whereas he acknowledges that the term encompasses both external trials and internal temptations in verses 13–15.⁵⁷ James’s opening of his epistle with an exhortation for his audience to face trials in a particular way implies (1) that these dispersed saints faced painful opposition and hardship—which prompt inward challenges to sin—and (2) that James intended that his epistle help oppressed believers wisely handle trials.⁵⁸

James begins his discussion of trials with an exhortation in verse 2 to “count it all joy.” Moo indicates that πᾶσαν χαρὰν (“all joy”) “suggests intensity (complete and unalloyed joy)” rooted in an expectation of a present-world wholeness that a right response to trials produces.⁵⁹ Davids ties this present joy to the “eschatological joy of those expecting the intervention of God in the end of

⁵⁰ James, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 54.

⁵¹ *Exposition of the Epistle of James and the Epistles of John*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 29.

⁵² *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 64.

⁵³ James, 56.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 60.

⁵⁵ James, 67.

⁵⁶ *The Letter of James*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 50, 53.

⁵⁷ James, 53–54.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 52–54.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 53–54.

the age.”⁶⁰ Davids draws further attention to James’s future focus by noting that in 1:12 and 5:7–8 he continues the theme of the long view.⁶¹ A right response to trials, therefore, produces both present and anticipated future joys.

In verse 3 James admonishes these suffering believers to consider their trials beneficial because they know (γινώσκοντες) that the testing of their faith develops endurance. The meaning of ὑπομονή (“steadfastness”) follows its etymology quite closely: “remain under.”⁶² Moo comments that “the picture is of a person successfully carrying a heavy load for a long time.”⁶³ James admonishes his audience to embrace and pursue the virtue of endurance.

In verse 4 James states that endured trials produce maturity (τέλειοι) and completion (ὀλόκληροι).⁶⁴ The phrase τέλειοι καὶ ὀλόκληροι “implies a gradual process of adding virtue upon virtue until one is ‘not lacking anything.’”⁶⁵ Davids agrees that in this verse Paul emphasizes that God’s goal for the believer in the midst of trials consists of integrity and wholeness of Christian character.⁶⁶

The Necessity of Wisdom and Single-Minded Faith to Face Trials Well (1:5–8)

James states in verse 5 that the believer must have wisdom from God to have the right perspective about the trial.⁶⁷ To those who ask, God gives wisdom (ἀπλῶς) “generously” (ESV) or “liberally” (KJV). James B. Adamson argues that “freely” renders the word better.⁶⁸ Moo builds a case from the OT, apocryphal wisdom literature, and the teachings of Jesus that ἀπλῶς implies “single intent.” Believers who ask for wisdom with a singleness of intent to obey God will find that God responds with a single intent to make sure the sincere believer receives what he seeks.⁶⁹

According to verse 5 the believer must ask God for wisdom. James further admonishes in verse 6 that the tested believer must ask “in faith and with no doubting.” The compound term διακρινόμενος (“doubting”) describes a person who wavers between two thoughts or vacillates between two options.⁷⁰ Richardson describes the doubter as someone unsure about “what kind of

⁶⁰ James, 68.

⁶¹ James, 66.

⁶² James, 55

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Kistemaker, 35.

⁶⁵ James, 63.

⁶⁶ Davids, 69.

⁶⁷ Kistemaker, 38.

⁶⁸ *The Epistle of James*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 56.

⁶⁹ James, 60.

⁷⁰ Kistemaker, 41.

God the believer serves.”⁷¹ Adamson, however, says the word “describes a mind distracted by lusts and temptations.”⁷² Verse 6 illustrates the internal war that rages within the man by likening the results of his doubts to the turbulent sea.

James continues the double-minded theme into verse 7. He speaks with disapproval of the doubter, calling him ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος (“that person”).⁷³ James also calls him διψυχος (“double-souled”).⁷⁴ The double-minded man never commits himself to one position or another.⁷⁵ This man’s rejection of God and God’s wisdom disqualifies him to receive anything from God during his trial.⁷⁶ James warns in verse 8 that the wavering man remains “unstable in all his ways,” accentuating the fact that his doubts and missteps characterize his tumultuous life and are not mere occasional events.⁷⁷

Theological Implications

God’s Disposition toward the Believer Undergoing Trials

James does not present a doctrine of God as thoroughly as Paul, since James approaches his subject matter as “a practical pastor” and not a “theological genius.”⁷⁸ In these first several verses, however, James does teach two things about God that believers experiencing trials must know. First, in verse 5 James invites the pressured believer to “ask God” for wisdom, implying that God remains the only source of wisdom.⁷⁹ Second, James reveals something of God’s disposition toward his children in trouble. He assures believers that God willingly gives wisdom since he gives “without hesitation or mental reservation” and does not “criticize” the believer who asks for God’s perspective of his trial and how to respond to it.⁸⁰ God’s willingness “to impart wisdom to anyone who asks humbly” breeds hope in believers facing hard times.⁸¹

⁷¹ James, 66.

⁷² James, 60.

⁷³ Moo, James, 62.

⁷⁴ Ibid..

⁷⁵ David P. Nystrom, James, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 53.

⁷⁶ Davids, 75.

⁷⁷ Moo, James, 63.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 27.

⁷⁹ Kistemaker, 37.

⁸⁰ Davids, 73.

⁸¹ Kistemaker, 38.

God's Intentions for the Believer Undergoing Trials

In the opening verses of his epistle, James teaches that the believer's encounter with trials can work to benefit the believer. God intends that trials, rightly understood through wisdom, will produce endurance. Endurance subsequently becomes the means to the ultimate end of increasing maturity and integrity.⁸² Believers who see trials through God's eyes and therefore know the end of God's refining process can experience joy now and anticipate an even greater joy in the future.⁸³

Man's Responsibilities when Undergoing Trials

Believers wishing to experience God's intended end of greater Christlikeness in the midst of trials must respond to them with God-dependence—the essence of faith. Adamson summarizes the believer's responsibility as the “simple act of coming to Jesus with some need in complete confidence that He can and will deal with it.”⁸⁴ The believer must turn to God for help and then must respond in obedience. James qualifies, however, that the petitioner must not come to God double-minded. Rather, he must come with a single mind to flourish in the trial and must avoid distraction “by lusts and temptations.”⁸⁵ He cannot pray to God for wisdom in one moment yet in the next moment turn his back on God and indulge his lusts.⁸⁶

Applications

Addictions often begin with a wrongly handled trial and/or a temptation.⁸⁷ James 1:2–8 teaches several important principles that apply to working with enslaved believers.⁸⁸ Biblical counselors cannot teach them such truths just once, however. The triggers of an enslaved believer's temptations set off deeply entrenched, almost automatic sin patterns that lead him back into his old ways. People counseling enslaved believers must commit themselves to providing much repetition and much accountability to encourage endurance. Shaw reminds enslaved believers that “God views self-control and discipline as skills that can be developed and improved over time because of His power working in you.”⁸⁹ The disciple-maker must help establish new patterns of thinking, loving, and acting, as James later discusses in 1:21–25.

⁸² Nystrom, 49–50.

⁸³ Richardson, 58.

⁸⁴ *James*, 57.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁸⁶ Kistemaker, 40.

⁸⁷ Peele, 11.

⁸⁸ Shaw, 93.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 200.

In addition, people counseling enslaved believers must see that their ministry to them generates trials for the counselor's own spiritual life. Paul David Tripp acknowledges that "God sends people my way, not only so that they will change, but so that I will too."⁹⁰ The counselor must develop the same forward-looking anticipation of joy and the same endurance and resulting Christlikeness that he desires for his counselee.

Both the Enslaved Believer and the Counselor Need Wisdom

Both the believer struggling with a life-dominating sin and the counselor must heed James's call to see all of life from God's perspective. Therefore, both must continually beg God for wisdom with the single-minded eye of faith that looks to God for answers and provisions for the journey. James forcefully warns that the double-minded man—whether enslaved believer or counselor—will receive nothing from the Lord. Jay E. Adams observes that "too many counseling failures are the result of the lack of discipline in the life of a counselor."⁹¹ Working with enslaved believers proves as much of a "testing of . . . faith" for the counselor as overcoming a life-dominating sin for his enslaved counselee.

Both the Enslaved Believer and the Counselor Need Endurance

A believer habituated to sin has willingly and repeatedly disobeyed God to find immediate pleasure. The pleasure consists of either a sensual gratification—a counterfeit joy—or the relief from some sort of suffering—a counterfeit peace. James teaches that the believer, indeed, can experience joy, but his joy will be the internal gratification of knowing he pleased God with his choices.

James's use of the word "endurance" means that the desired result of spiritual flourishing in the trial will come in time—not immediately. The believer must repent of and surrender his demand to have what he wants now. Moo compares the internal strengthening of the believer's heart during trials to the physical strengthening of a person's muscles when he repeatedly exercises himself against some form of resistance.⁹² Since an enslaved believer battling his sin will face the temptation to indulge countless times a day, he must also repent and surrender countless times a day. God will strengthen him in the process over time. Again, the same admonitions apply to the counselor, who must surrender his desires to have results on his timetable as well. Both the enslaved believer and the counselor must learn to endure patiently.

⁹⁰ *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 146.

⁹¹ *Ready to Restore: The Layman's Guide to Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 39.

⁹² *James*, 55.

James 1:12–15: Two Ways of Handling Trials and Temptations

Introduction

James teaches at the beginning of his epistle that God-dependent faith and wisdom constitute the means for enduring a trial (1:2–4). He returns to that theme in verse 12 by reintroducing variations of the terms “trial,” “persevere,” and “test.”⁹³ His summary of his previous discussion (verse 12) provides the introduction to the verses 13–15.⁹⁴ In verses 14–15 James provides “one of the most penetrating discussions of the nature of temptation in the whole Bible.”⁹⁵ Biblical counselors must know the principles of this discussion well in order to work effectively with those who often struggle with overwhelming temptations.

Exegesis

The Blessedness of Trials Rightly Handled (1:12)

Nystrom comments that James uses *μακάριος* (“blessed”) in the tradition of the OT prophets and the wisdom teachings, which imply both present blessedness and future fulfillment.⁹⁶ The reward includes a promised “crown of life.” Nystrom states that *ζωῆς* (“life”) points to the present experience of a “life lived in the will of God” with its resulting joys, as well as the culmination of eternal life.⁹⁷

God grants the crown to those who show themselves approved and “accepted” (*δόκιμος*) because they passed the test by remaining faithful to God throughout the trial.⁹⁸ They remained faithful because they loved God. Richardson comments that “obedience through love is the nature of right relationship with God.”⁹⁹ The winner’s crown (*στέφανος*) belongs to those who pass the test because devotion to God motivates their endurance.

The Answer to Blaming God for Temptations (1:13)

James warns that believers must not blame God for temptation. Commentators debate the meaning of “God cannot be tempted with evil.” Davids prefers “God ought not to be tested by evil persons,” as Israel tested God in the wilderness.¹⁰⁰ Moo disagrees, however, and commends the

⁹³ Moo, *James*, 69.

⁹⁴ Kistemaker, 46.

⁹⁵ Richardson, 78.

⁹⁶ *James*, 71.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁹⁸ Kistemaker, 47.

⁹⁹ *James*, 76.

¹⁰⁰ *James*, 82.

traditional view that nothing evil resides within God to make him susceptible to evil.¹⁰¹ Richardson embraces the traditional interpretation as well and takes James's statement as the basis of James's conclusion that since no evil exists within God and since God cannot be moved by evil, he certainly would not induce any man to evil.¹⁰² In contrast to the idea that God originates evil, in verses 14–15 James places the responsibility for temptation upon the person who chooses to yield to his sinful lusts.

*The Tragic Result of Trials Wrongly Handled (1:14–15)*¹⁰³

James explains that the path of disintegration begins when a man's own desires lure and entice him to sin. Though ἐπιθυμία (“desires”) can prove morally neutral or evil, James uses it here in the latter sense of “any human longing for what God has prohibited.”¹⁰⁴ Nystrom explains that a “personal desire born of self-interest” creates the inborn sinful vulnerability to the enticements of evil.¹⁰⁵

While Adamson acknowledges that both present passive participles of ἐξελκω (“lured”) and δελεάζω (“enticed”) may allude to a fishing metaphor,¹⁰⁶ he asserts that James uses the first in a sense not used elsewhere in Scripture to mean “attracted,” perhaps alluding to OT imagery of a harlot's seduction.¹⁰⁷ Davids argues for mixed metaphors of fishing—“enticed by a hook and drawn out”—and hunting—“attracted to a trap by delicious bait.”¹⁰⁸ Moo explains that the combination of words represent, rather, a “dead” metaphor for fishing that had so lost its precision that even though James reverses the normal actions of fishing (“enticed” then “drawn away”), the audience understood their message of entrapment.¹⁰⁹

James describes in verse 15 the path and the result of that entrapment. Davids presents a contrasting chain of actions of two different paths: ἐπιθυμία-ἁμαρτία-θάνατος (lust—sin—death) as opposed to πειρασμός-δόκιμος (by ὑπομονή)-ζωή” (trial—approved by endurance—life).¹¹⁰ The apostle draws the imagery of the destructive path from the concept of pregnancy (συλλαβοῦσα). Adamson comments that “the grammar behind ‘having conceived gives birth’ recalls the Hebrew construction rendered ‘she conceived and bore’ (Gen. 4:1, etc.).”¹¹¹ When the enticed man's will mates

¹⁰¹ James, 73.

¹⁰² James, 79.

¹⁰³ For how these principles are utilized in a simplified counseling model for working with enslaved believers, see Jim Berg, *Help! I'm Addicted*, Lifeline Mini-books (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd, 2020).

¹⁰⁴ Moo, James, 74.

¹⁰⁵ James, 73.

¹⁰⁶ James, 71.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 72.

¹⁰⁸ James, 84.

¹⁰⁹ James, 75.

¹¹⁰ James, 85.

¹¹¹ James, 73.

with his desires, the union produces a sin. Furthermore, Nystrom notes that “sin, when mature, is a fixed habit” and finally produces death.¹¹²

Theological Implications

God Desires the Tempted Person to Endure the Trial So That God Can Reward Him

James outlines a pathway to increased maturity through the trial in verses 1–8 and expands upon that pathway even further in verses 21–25. These detailed explanations for victory along with God’s promise of reward for enduring trials until their end (verse 12) all testify that God desires the successful endurance of trials and temptations for his people. Adams remarks that “God looks to the outcome, what the trial is designed to do.”¹¹³ God sets before the believer the promise of a victor’s crown for faithful endurance motivated by love for him (verse 12).

The Path to Destruction is Both Predictable and Preventable

James, in contrast to those who would blame God for temptation, places “the responsibility for temptation and sin squarely on the shoulders of each human being.”¹¹⁴ James in his first chapter sets forth a series of contrasts: “double-mindedness and single-mindedness; complete in sin and complete in spiritual maturity; doubt and faith; death and true life.”¹¹⁵ These contrasting approaches to trials and the end results testify that God offers the believer choices and that such choices have predictable but preventable ends.

Application

Biblical counselors must keep in mind that an enslaved believer’s choice to endure the trial or resist the temptation out of love for God while single-heartedly begging God for wisdom will produce in that believer endurance and, ultimately, a maturing character (1:2–5). A tempted and deceived believer choosing to indulge his lusts will remain enslaved to sin and eventually will self-destruct (1:14–15). The themes of James 1 must become the common themes of those working with believers overcome by life-dominating sins and stubborn habits.

Summary

These foundational passages in Romans 6 and James 1 provide a basic understanding of God’s perspective for the believer’s struggle with his sin. Romans 6 undergirds the first principle that *addiction arises not from a disease but from slavery to the wrong master*. Enslaved believers must not think of themselves

¹¹² James, 75.

¹¹³ Jay E. Adams, *A Thirst for Wholeness* (Stanley, NC: Timeless Texts, 1997), 19–20.

¹¹⁴ Moo, James, 75.

¹¹⁵ Nystrom, 74.

as sentenced to a lifetime of bondage. They, like the Romans Paul addressed, must “become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which [they] were committed” (6:17, ESV). Instead of living as “slaves of sin” (6:20), they can become “slaves of God” (6:22).

James contrasts for the believer two ways of living and two resulting ends. The believer can “be lured and enticed by his own desires” (1:14) with its result of “death” when the sin becomes “fully grown” (1:15). On the other hand, the tempted believer can wisely endure the trial and temptation with a single-minded heart of faith (1:5–6). The result for him will end in the promised “crown of life” because his obedience in the trial showed his love for God rather than for his own pleasures (1:12). Thus, James teaches a second principle that applies to enslaved believers: *Addiction reveals that the believer has continually turned away from God during a trial and/or temptation.* Biblical counselors must teach enslaved believers that they must turn towards God in repentance and dependence in order to find the wisdom and strength they must have to persevere and stand approved before God (1:12).

Bruising, Crushing, or Striking: The Translation of שׁוּךְ and the Promise of Victory in Genesis 3:15

Jonathan M. Cheek¹

Scholars throughout the past century have engaged in debate regarding the meaning and significance of Genesis 3:15 and particularly the identity of the offspring of the woman.² One element of the verse that has received somewhat less attention is the meaning of the Hebrew word שׁוּךְ, often translated “bruise.” The primary purpose of this paper is to determine how שׁוּךְ should be understood in Genesis 3:15 and to determine what exactly the serpent and the woman’s offspring will do to one another. In arriving at this understanding of 3:15, three concerns will be addressed. The first concern is the English translation of the Hebrew term שׁוּךְ. The second matter is whether Genesis 3:15 expects either the serpent or the woman’s offspring to be the victor in their conflict. The third concern is more specific, and it relates to whether Romans 16:20 is alluding to Genesis 3:15, though Paul uses συντρίβω, which means “to crush,” instead of τηρέω, which means “to keep/guard,” as the LXX does. If Genesis 3:15 is indeed “the foundation of the Old Testament”³ and “the chief promise of the new covenant itself,”⁴ then it is critical to understand this part of the verse correctly.

This study is necessary because of the continuing confusion regarding the term “bruise” in Genesis 3:15 and the lack of thorough treatment of the term in the scholarly literature. In modern English, the verb “to bruise” means “to injure by a blow which discolours the skin but does not lacerate it or break any bones; to cause to develop bruising.”⁵ C. John Collins, however, uses “bruise” as his default translation of שׁוּךְ, without discussing any alternative options.⁶ He then argues that Romans 16:20 cannot refer to Genesis 3:15, since the latter “speaks of ‘wounding’ or ‘bruising’ rather than ‘crushing.’”⁷ Collins, though, does believe that Genesis 3:15 represents “a promise that God will

¹ Jonathan Cheek completed his PhD in Theology from BJU Seminary in 2019. His dissertation was entitled “Genesis 3:15 as the Root of a Biblical Theology of the Church and the World: The Commencement, Continuation, and Culmination of the Enmity Between the Seeds.”

² See Jonathan M. Cheek, “Recent Developments in the Interpretation of the Seed of the Woman in Genesis 3:15,” *JETS* 64/2 (2021): 215–36.

³ John Owen, “The Beauty and Strength of Zion,” in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. Thomas Russell (Edinburgh: Johnstone & Hunter, 1850), 16:396.

⁴ Idem, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1967), 95.

⁵ *OED*, s.v. “bruise, v.,” accessed March 30, 2021, <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/23908?rskey=53inAA&result=2&isAdvanced=false>.

⁶ *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006), 153–56.

⁷ Ibid., 158. Similarly, Derek R. Brown presents several arguments against the idea that Romans 16:20 alludes to Genesis 3:15. One is that Paul “employs the more violent συντρίβω (‘to crush’ or ‘to break’)” instead of τηρέω (LXX) or a word translating the Hebrew שׁוּךְ, which Brown glosses as “to bruise.” “‘The God of Peace Will Shortly Crush Satan Under Your Feet’: Paul’s Eschatological Reminder in Romans 16:20a,” *Neotestamentica* 44/1 (2010): 6. See also Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2015), 242–43.

act for the benefit of mankind by defeating the serpent.”⁸ It is difficult to understand how “bruising” would refer to the defeat of the serpent if “bruising” refers to a non-deadly blow, as modern English usage of the term suggests. Other scholars continue to use the word “bruise” in relation to 3:15 in spite of their confidence in the promise that this “bruising” accomplishes the defeat of the serpent.⁹

Other scholars assume “crush” is the best translation of שׁוּף, particularly in relation to the woman’s offspring’s action toward the head of the serpent.¹⁰ The same Hebrew term, though, is used to refer to the action of both the woman’s offspring and the action of the serpent. It is difficult, however, to understand how a serpent would crush a person’s heel. Some scholars resolve the difficulty by assigning different senses to the two uses of שׁוּף. For example, Victor P. Hamilton cites “bruise” and “crush” as the options for translating שׁוּף. He opts for translating שׁוּף as “crush” in both uses in 3:15, understanding the crushing of the woman’s offspring’s heel as “a temporary and healable injury” and the crushing of the serpent’s head as “a fatal injury.”¹¹

It is necessary, then, to examine the use of שׁוּף in the OT to discern the sense of the word. Because the OT uses the word שׁוּף only four times (2x in Gn 3:15; Jb 9:17; Ps 139:11) and the lexical and etymological evidence for the meaning of שׁוּף outside of the OT is disputed and almost entirely unhelpful, some scholars believe it is impossible to understand the actual sense of the word.¹² This paper, however, will argue that it is possible to examine the use of שׁוּף in each of its OT contexts and come to a reasonably certain idea of its meaning. The result of this study will not necessarily result in

⁸ Collins, 157.

⁹ For example, see Meredith Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 144–46, and T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 105. James M. Hamilton Jr., cites “bruise” and “cover” as the possible glosses for שׁוּף, though he does argue that it refers to the “crushing” of the skull of the serpent. “The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15,” *SBJT* 10 (June 2006): 34. Allen P. Ross assumes that the use of שׁוּף in Psalm 139:11 refers to “bruising,” presumably because he believes it means “bruise” elsewhere. *A Commentary on the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2016), 3:813n13.

¹⁰ Some scholars use “crush” in relation to Genesis 3:15 with no discussion of the meaning of שׁוּף. For example, see Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006), 509; John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006), 224; James M. Hamilton Jr., *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 76–77; Kevin S. Chen, *The Messianic Vision of the Pentateuch* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2019), 53–55; Andrew David Naselli, *The Serpent and the Serpent Slayer* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 69–103.

¹¹ *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 44. However, Hamilton had previously argued that “crush” was not an appropriate translation, preferring “strike at.” *Genesis 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 197–98. William F. Cook III and Chuck Lawless take a similar view, referring to Christ “crushing the serpent’s head after Satan bruised his heel.” *Spiritual Warfare in the Storyline of Scripture: A Biblical, Theological, and Practical Approach* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019), 12. Similarly, Walter C. Kaiser Jr., argues that the difference “between crushing the head and bruising the heel is the difference between a mortal blow to the skull and a slight injury to the victor.” *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 41n8. William D. Reyburn and Euan McGregor Fry recommend using “crush” for the action to the head and “bite” for the action to the heel. *A Handbook on Genesis*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: UBS, 1998), 92.

¹² For example, John Skinner says of the word שׁוּף in 3:15, “A perfectly satisfactory interpretation cannot be given.” *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, ICC, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1930), 80. Similarly, Gerhard von Rad concludes, “Philologically the verb *šup* cannot be explained satisfactorily.” *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks (Philadelphia, Westminster, 1961), 90.

a unique translation of שׁוֹף; instead it will provide a thorough argument for ruling out inadequate translations of שׁוֹף and for choosing the best translation of שׁוֹף. The paper will then discuss the ramifications of this translation for biblical theology.

English Translations of שׁוֹף

English Bible versions translate שׁוֹף in a variety of ways in each of its instances. Table 1 displays some of this variety.

Table 1. Translation of שׁוֹף in the OT

Reference	ESV	LXX	Other English Versions
Gen. 3:15 (1)	“He shall <i>bruise</i> your head.”	τηρέω (“to keep, guard, watch”)	“breake” (Geneva) “bruise” (AV, NASB, ESV) “attack” (NET) “strike” (HCSB, NRSV) “crush” (NIV)
Gen. 3:15 (2)	“You shall <i>bruise</i> his heel.”	τηρέω (“to keep, guard, watch”)	“bruise” (Geneva, AV, NASB, ESV) “attack” (NET) “strike” (NIV, NRSV, HCSB)
Job 9:17	“He <i>crushes</i> me with a tempest and multiplies my wounds without cause.”	ἐκτρίβω (“to ruin, destroy”)	“destroyeth” (Geneva) “bruise” (NASB) “crush” (NIV, NRSV, NET, ESV) “break” (AV) “batter” (HCSB)
Ps. 139:11	“Surely the darkness shall <i>cover</i> me, and the light around me be night.”	καταπατέω (“to trample underfoot”)	“hide” (Geneva, NIV, HCSB) “cover” (AV, NRSV, NET, ESV) “overwhelm” (NASB)

In general, English versions tend to use the same term for both uses of שׁוֹף in Genesis 3:15. Table 2 displays how different versions translate שׁוֹף in each use in the OT.

Table 2. Translation of שׁוֹף in English Versions

	Gen. 3:15 (1)	Gen. 3:15 (2)	Job 9:17	Ps. 139:11
Geneva	breake	bruise	destroyeth	hide
AV	bruise	bruise	breaketh	cover
ASV	bruise	bruise	breaketh	overwhelm
RSV	bruise	bruise	crushes	cover
NASB	bruise	bruise	bruises	overwhelm
NIV	crush	strike	crush	hide
NKJV	bruise	strike	crushes	fall on
NRSV	strike	strike	crushes	cover
NLT	strike	strike	crushes	hide
ESV	bruise	bruise	crushes	cover
NET	attack	attack	crushes	cover
HCSB	strike	strike	batter	hide

Among English versions, “bruise” is the most common translation in Genesis 3:15, with five of the listed versions using “bruise” in both instances. The NKJV uses “bruise” in the first instance only, and the Geneva Bible uses “bruise” in the second instance only. A total of three versions use different terms for the uses in 3:15 (Geneva, NIV, NCV). The more recent versions (NRSV, NLT, NET, HCSB) seem to be moving away from “bruise,” with the ESV as the notable exception. Recent versions are tending toward “strike,” but scholarly literature has not provided a strong defense of this translation.

Categories of Meaning

A review of these English versions reveals that the words used to translate שׁוּף fall into two categories of verbs. The first category includes verbs expressing the action of an attack without implying a corresponding result of the attack. These words include “strike,” “attack,” and possibly “batter.” For example, if a report says that the army “attacked” its enemy, or if the President ordered the Air Force to “strike” the enemy, the result of the action is unknown without more information being provided. The air strike may have missed the target or may have struck the target with insufficient corresponding results—but the Air Force still made a strike. Additionally, if a boxer strikes a person in the face—and the strike does hit its target—the result of the strike is still unknown. Was the strike strong enough to cause damage? Was the boxer knocked out? With these terms, the result of the blow is indefinite.

The second category includes verbs that express an action and an associated definite result. These words include “crush,” “destroy,” and probably “bruise” and “overwhelm.” For example, if a report says that the army “crushed” its enemy or that the Air Force “destroyed” its target, the result is clear. Therefore, the translation of שׁוּף in Genesis 3:15 does affect whether the reader understands the attack from each party to be successful. If an interpreter chooses a word such as “crush” or “destroy,” it is difficult to argue that he should use a weaker word for the action of the seed of the serpent than for the seed of the woman. However, the NIV indicates that the seed of the woman “crushes” the serpent (implying a definite result) whereas the seed of the serpent merely “strikes” the seed of the woman (implying an unknown result or a result of lesser severity). This translation seems difficult to support.

The Use of “Bruise”

The use of “bruise” to translate שׁוּף reflects an outdated understanding of “bruise.” According to the *OED*, to “bruise” originally meant “to injure, batter, or crush (a person, animal, body part, etc.) with a heavy weight or blow.”¹³ The *OED* also indicates that the sense of bruise meaning “to break, to smash, to destroy or damage by breaking or smashing” is obsolete.¹⁴ In modern usage, though, to bruise someone means specifically “to injure by a blow which discolours the skin but does not lacerate

¹³ “Bruise, v.”

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

it or break any bones.”¹⁵ It is likely that by using “bruise” in 3:15 the AV translators were conveying the (now) obsolete meaning of the word, which would be translated more suitably as “crush,” “smash,” or “destroy” in modern English. Modern English versions that use “bruise” are likely replicating the use of “bruise” in the AV, but the use of “bruise” in modern English does not convey the same meaning that “bruise” originally conveyed in the AV. If a translator ignored the uses of “bruise” in the earliest English versions, it is impossible to believe that modern English translators would even consider “bruise” as a possible translation of this word.

In addition to the obsolescence of “bruise” in the sense expected in Genesis 3:15, “bruise” is inadequate in describing the serpent’s action toward the offspring of the woman, as “crush” or “smash” would be as well. John Skinner acknowledged this nearly one hundred years ago: “We may speak of a serpent *striking* a man (as in Lat. *feriri a serpent*), but hardly of *bruising*.”¹⁶ Similarly, it is difficult to think of a serpent “crushing” or “smashing” a person’s heel. When a person thinks of a snake attack, he most likely thinks of fangs and poison rather than a bruise—a blow that causes temporary discoloration of skin. Additionally, the offspring of the woman “bruising” the serpent’s head would seem to do little good, since it implies a mere injury. To kill a serpent, one must do more than merely injure the serpent’s head. Therefore, “bruise” is an inappropriate English translation for שׁוּף.

The Translation of שׁוּף in the LXX

The translation of שׁוּף in the LXX presents additional challenges. In Psalm 139:11 the LXX uses καταπατέω (“to trample underfoot/tread upon”) to translate שׁוּף. It is odd to think of darkness trampling upon a person. The LXX uses καταπατέω thirty-eight times to translate a variety of Hebrew words. Most instances of καταπατέω occur in contexts describing hostile and destructive action against an object. Most often (9x), καταπατέω translates רָמַס, which refers to trampling upon or crushing (e.g., Is 41:25; Dn 8:10). An interesting use of καταπατέω in the LXX is in Psalm 90:13, in which a serpent will be “trampled underfoot.” The remaining uses of καταπατέω translate twenty-one different Hebrew words.

In Job 9:17 the LXX uses ἐκτρίβω, which BDAG glosses as “to cause removal by irritation, ear out, drive out” or “to obliterate (as by rubbing), ruin, destroy.”¹⁷ Other lexicons also supply the idea of “rubbing out.”¹⁸ The LXX uses ἐκτρίβω forty times, translating twenty-five different Hebrew verbs, often in contexts conveying the idea of something being hidden or annihilated (e.g., Gn 34:30; Ex 9:15; Jo 7:9).¹⁹

¹⁵ Ibid. Similarly, as a noun, a bruise refers to “a surface injury in which the skin or flesh is not broken, usually when struck by a blunt instrument.” Reyburn and Fry, 92.

¹⁶ *Genesis*, 80.

¹⁷ BDAG, s.v. “ἐκτρίβω.”

¹⁸ “Rub out. . . . rub constantly, wear out.” LSJ, s.v. “ἐκτρίβω.”

¹⁹ The LXX uses ἐκτρίβω to translate the following Hebrew verbs: שָׂמַד (6x), כָּרַת (4x), כָּחַד (4x), שָׁחַת (3x), כָּלָה (2x), as well as various other verbs one time each.

For both instances of שׁוּר in Genesis 3:15, the LXX uses τηρέω (“to keep/watch”). This rendering seems quite inconsistent with the other translations of שׁוּר in the LXX. It is possible to see some correspondence between καταπατέω and ἐκτρίβω, and it would be much more natural to see either ἐκτρίβω or καταπατέω for at least one use of שׁוּר in Genesis 3:15 instead of τηρέω. Perhaps “treading on” something and “rubbing an object in order to remove it” are overlapping concepts. How these terms would overlap with τηρέω is not clear. Perhaps τηρέω reflects the idea of “watching” or “guarding” against an attack; therefore, because of their mutual enmity both sides would be forced to watch for or guard against an attack by the other.²⁰ Though this is not impossible, the LXX remains enigmatic in using τηρέω in Genesis 3:15 as well as καταπατέω in Psalm 139:11.

The Use of שׁוּר in the OT

This section will examine the use of שׁוּר in each of its four occurrences in the OT. Some scholars argue that the two uses of שׁוּר in 3:15 actually derive from different Hebrew terms or that the Hebrew term שׁוּר derives from a cognate שאף.²¹ Such attempts seem subjective and without a strong linguistic basis. Recent scholars agree almost unanimously that יְשׁוּפֶּךָ and תְּשׁוּפֶנּוּ in 3:15 both derive from שׁוּר.²² Gordon J. Wenham correctly concludes that in relation to שׁוּר in 3:15, the “etymology makes little difference to the understanding of the passage.”²³ Since the usage of a word, rather than its etymology, determines the meaning of the word, this paper will examine the way the OT uses שׁוּר in each instance in the OT.

²⁰ DCH lists “spy (on), watch” as a possible gloss for שׁוּר, which would provide a rationale for the use of τηρέω in 3:15. However, no evidence is given for this reading outside of these three OT texts. Instead DCH seems to be offering a possible interpretation of Psalm 139:11, suggesting “even in the darkness he watches me” or “the darkness watches me.” S.v. “שׁוּר.”

²¹ Hermann Gunkel argues that שאף is likely the original word instead of שׁוּר due to *scriptio defectiva*. The use of שאף, then would convey a “dual meaning” of “to snap” or “to trample.” *Genesis*, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Macon, GA: Mercer UP, 1997), 20. KBL suggests that two different Hebrew terms are in view in Genesis 3:15, arguing that the first use (יְשׁוּפֶּךָ) is from שׁוּר but that the second use (תְּשׁוּפֶנּוּ) stems from שאף (“to snap at” or “to snatch”). U. Cassuto argues that the words likely derive from different senses of the same Hebrew root words (שׁוּר as a cognate of שאף), the first having the sense “to trample” (cf. Am 2:7) and the second meaning “to crave, desire.” *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), 1:161. Claus Westermann argues that both instances in 3:15 use a wordplay on the same Hebrew word (שׁוּר). The first use of שׁוּר in 3:15 is equivalent to the Akkadian šāpu (“crush”), whereas the second use of שׁוּר in 3:15 is ‘a by-form of שאף’ (“snap at”). *Genesis 1–11*, CC (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1984), 260. Walter Wifall follows Westermann in this conclusion. “Gen 3:15—A Protevangelium?” *CBQ* 36 (1974): 364. Other scholars appear to allow for the possibility of this view. For example, see Marten H. Woudstra, “Recent Translations of Genesis 3:15,” *CTJ* 6/2 (1971): 201, and Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 1996), 245n203. Victor P. Hamilton notes that the Vulgate renders the first as *conterero* (“to crush, bruise”) and the second as *insidior* (“to lie in wait”), leading some older interpreters to believe that the latter reflects the Hebrew שאף instead of שׁוּר. *Genesis 1–17*, 197.

²² Hamilton rejects the connection with שאף as well as šāpu. *Genesis 1–17*, 197n13, 198. Other scholars reject the idea that שאף is in view. See Cornelius Van Dam, “שׁוּר,” *NIDOTTE*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 4:67; John H. Walton, *Genesis*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 226; Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 94; Tremper Longman III, *Genesis*, *The Story of God Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 66.

²³ *Genesis 1–15*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1987), 80.

שׁוּף in Genesis 3:15

Genesis 3:15 uses the verb שׁוּף two times, referring to the reciprocal actions of the offspring of the woman and of the serpent. Lexicons suggest “bruise,”²⁴ “snap at, snatch,”²⁵ “crush,”²⁶ and “spy (on)”²⁷ as possible translations of שׁוּף in 3:15.²⁸ The immediate context does not necessarily specify the nature of the action. Three factors from the context, though, shed some light on the meaning of שׁוּף. First, this statement is part of the divine curse on the serpent, representing the final word of divine judgment on the serpent. It would be reasonable to expect that the statement of punishment on the serpent would conclude with the defeat of the serpent. The use of שׁוּף here, then, likely describes how the serpent will meet his end.

The second contextual factor to discuss is the term “enmity.” The beginning of 3:15 speaks of “enmity” that God has appointed between the woman and the serpent and between the woman’s offspring and the serpent’s offspring. The verb שׁוּף represents the outworking of the enmity. The verb “enmity” (אִיבָה) is related to the Hebrew word “enemy” (אֵיב). The word “enmity” (אִיבָה), in particular, conveys an intense hatred that often results in murder. Numbers 35:21–22 differentiates between murder committed with אִיבָה or without אִיבָה. Murdering with אִיבָה is associated with shoving someone “out of hatred” and “lying in wait” for someone (Nm 35:20–21). The Philistines display אִיבָה toward Israel with vengeance and “malice of soul” in their effort to destroy Israel (Ez 25:15). Edom displays אִיבָה toward Israel in giving “over the people to the power of the sword at the time of their calamity” (Ez 35:5). Thus, in each use אִיבָה “signifies hostile intent, of such severity that it can lead to murder.”²⁹

The final factor is the location of the שׁוּף action. Ronning notes that the meaning of the verb “may be based not on the verb itself, but on the subject of the verb and the part of the body that is struck.”³⁰ One factor that receives less attention than it should in recent literature is the double accusative constructions used with שׁוּף in Genesis 3:15. English translations typically translate 3:15 with each instance of “your” appearing to be a possessive pronoun relating to the accusatives “head” (“your head”) and “heel” (“your heel”). The Hebrew construction, though, attaches “you” as a pronominal suffix to the verb שׁוּף in each instance. The result is two double accusative constructions: “He will bruise you [in reference to] the head, and you will bruise him [in reference to] the heel.” In this construction, “the second accusative sometimes more closely determines the nearer object by

²⁴ BDB, s.v. “שׁוּף”; HALOT, s.v. “שׁוּף.” It seems noteworthy that DCH does not list “bruise” as an option. S.v. “שׁוּף.”

²⁵ HALOT, s.v. “שׁוּף”; Van Dam, 4:66.

²⁶ Van Dam, 4:67; DCH, s.v. “שׁוּף.”

²⁷ DCH, s.v. “שׁוּף.”

²⁸ Van Dam cites a later usage of שׁוּף relating to “rubbing with incense and ointment” and also to “crushing and stamping under foot” (4:67). See also DCH, s.v. “שׁוּף.”

²⁹ John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Genesis: Volume 1: Genesis 1:1–25:18* (Darlington, England: Evangelical, 2003), 128.

³⁰ John L. Ronning, “The Curse on the Serpent (Genesis 3:15) in Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics,” (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1997), 112.

indicating the part of members specifically affected by the action.”³¹ The first accusative, then, is the more general object (“you”), and the second accusative denotes the “members specifically affected by the action.”³² The “head” and “heel” are accusatives “whereby the place of the action is more distinctly marked out.”³³

Therefore, the enmity of the serpent toward the woman’s offspring will cause him to perform a שׁוּף action to the heel of the woman’s offspring out of enmity with the intent of killing him. The only rational assumption for the action of the serpent is that the serpent would “bite” the heel of the woman’s offspring. A serpent would be unable to act on a person’s heel in any other way. The woman’s offspring, on the other hand, will perform a שׁוּף action to the head of the serpent. Based on the double accusative construction, a word like “crush” or “attack” might seem a bit odd here: “He will crush/attack you on the head” compared to “He will strike you on the head.” The latter seems to be the better choice here. Therefore, the two sides will act forcefully against each other’s respective head and heel out of enmity with the intent of killing each other. What is not necessarily clear from the context are the precise nature of the mutual attacks and the success and subsequent result of the attacks. These topics will be addressed below.

שׁוּף in Job 9:17

The next use of שׁוּף is in Job 9:17, which says, “For he crushes [שׁוּף] me with a tempest and multiplies my wounds without cause” (ESV). William David Reyburn argues that the English term “crushes . . . may imply total physical destruction,”³⁴ but total destruction is not in view in Job 9:17. Reyburn instead suggests, “He blows against me with a storm” or “He makes a storm strike me down.”³⁵ The idea, then, is that an “attack” or a “strike” from a dangerous and hostile storm is in view but not necessarily a “crushing”—and certainly not a mere discoloration of the skin (“bruising”). The synonymous parallelism in the verse indicates that the general idea of “crushing with a tempest” is similar to the general idea of “multiplying wounds without cause.” Perhaps the multiplication of wounds indicates that the action of the tempest is a repeated action. In this case, “batter” might be the best translation, and it may fit more vividly in the context of Job’s ongoing suffering. The action of the tempest, though, consists in moving against the object with violent force.

³¹ E. Kautzsch, ed. *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, trans. A. E. Cowley, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), sec. 117l. Gesenius cites Genesis 3:15 and other noteworthy examples of this construction such as Psalm 3:8, which says, “For you strike all my enemies on the cheek,” and 2 Samuel 3:27, which says, “He struck him in the stomach.”

³² Ibid.

³³ E. W. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament*, trans. Theod. Meyer and James Martin (1872; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1956), 1:26.

³⁴ *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: UBS, 1992), 188. David J. A. Clines agrees: “It is somewhat inappropriate to speak of a tempest ‘crushing’ someone.” *Job 1–20*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1989), 234.

³⁵ *Job*, 188.

שׁוֹף in Psalm 139:11

The final use of שׁוֹף is in Psalm 139:11, which says, “Surely the darkness shall cover [שׁוֹף] me.” This is likely the most difficult of the uses of שׁוֹף, resulting in a significant diversity of glosses in English versions.³⁶ The use of שׁוֹף in Psalm 139:11 differs from Job 9:17 and Genesis 3:15 in that there is no explicit sign of hostility in the action of the verb against the object in the context of Psalm 139:11. In Job and Genesis, שׁוֹף seems to require a hostile or violent action of the subject toward the object, but this is not the case in Psalm 139:11. This indicates that שׁוֹף may not inherently carry a sense of hostility or violence but that it can be adapted to a context in which the action is hostile.

In the context of the psalm, the psalmist is presenting hypothetical ways he could be hidden from the divine presence—“If I ascend to heaven,” “If I make my bed in Sheol” (v. 8), if I “dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea” (v. 9). Then verse 11 says that if the darkness should שׁוֹף the psalmist, “even the darkness is not dark to you . . . for darkness is as light with you” (v. 12). The point of the statement is that darkness cannot hide the psalmist from God’s presence. On this level, a simple translation of “hide” (NIV) or “cover” (ESV) conveys the idea of שׁוֹף.

Does שׁוֹף, though, convey a nuanced sense that the typical words for “hide” or “cover” (כָּפַר, בָּחַד, כָּסָה, סָתַר) do not convey? For example, כָּסָה is used 151 times in the OT (17x in the Psalms) in a variety of ways: covering with a blanket to prevent people from being seen (Gn 9:23; Jgs 4:18), covering one’s face to prevent recognition (Gn 38:15), water covering people (Ps 105:11), or a shade covering a mountain (Ps 79:11; cf. Ex 24:15). Additionally, סָתַר (“to hide/cover”) occurs eighty-one times in the OT (23x in the Psalms), often referring to hiding one’s face (e.g., Dt 31:17-18; Ps 13:2; 69:17). Either of these two commonly used Hebrew terms would seem like ideal terms for simply stating that darkness is covering a person to prevent the person from being seen. Why choose the much more obscure שׁוֹף, which nowhere else refers to “covering/hiding” or in any sense in relation to darkness? Perhaps the choice of שׁוֹף conveys the idea that this is not a mere “covering” as with a blanket or “covering” as rain water covers the ground. Perhaps the psalmist chooses שׁוֹף because it conveys a greater intensity than other verbs.

In this case, the psalmist, with vivid poetic language, is describing the darkness as overwhelming, overtaking, pressing around—perhaps oppressing—him.³⁷ The picture may be that of darkness approaching or of the unstoppable alteration from daytime to darkness at night. Darkness

³⁶ Some scholars argue that the reading of שׁוֹף in Psalm 139:11 is not the original word. For example, Leslie C. Allen says that the etymology of the word in Psalm 139:11 is “most uncertain.” *Psalms 101–150*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 251. See also Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*, TOTC (Downers Grove: IVP, 1975), 501; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 291; and Kaiser, 41n8. No manuscript evidence, however, exists against the reading of שׁוֹף. Therefore, the reading of שׁוֹף in Psalm 139:11 is the most likely reading of the text. For support, see Van Dam, 4:67; Daniel J. Estes, *Psalms 73–150*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 2019), 555; Ross, 3:813n14; Victor Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 44.

³⁷ “Darkness” may sometimes take on symbolic value beyond a reference to a mere absence of light. See James D. Price, “חֹשֶׁךְ,” in *NIDOTTE*, 2:312. Estes presents the possibility that “darkness in these verses is a metonymy for his evil enemies who work under the cover of darkness (cf. vv. 19–22)” (555). This seems unlikely, though, in light of the consistent use of literal contrasts in 139:7–12 between heaven and Sheol (v. 8), east and west (v. 9), and darkness and light (v. 11).

does not “cover” light as a blanket covers a body. It invades, overtakes, or overwhelms the light and moves with irrepressible intensity to overcome the light of day. In Psalm 139:11 שׁוֹף may represent the aggressive movement of immaterial but irrepressible darkness that covers and surrounds a person. Van Dam notes that Psalm 139:11 presents “the image of darkness so thick that it can crush and overwhelm.”³⁸ In this sense, “overwhelm” or “envelop” may be the most effective translation, though “cover” does convey the basic idea in English.³⁹

A Proposed English Translation of שׁוֹף in Genesis 3:15

Because of the limited usage of שׁוֹף in the OT, it is prudent to avoid dogmatism in defense of one particular English translation of the verb. In translating שׁוֹף, a key point is to differentiate between translation and interpretation. In Genesis 3:15, the translations of שׁוֹף with terms such as “strike,” “bruise,” and “attack” are less interpretive because they do not describe the specific actions of either party and do not imply a result in the conflict. This usage seems to be in line with Job 9:17, which does not appear to imply a corresponding result of the attack. Job is being “battered” by a tempest, but the reader does not know what kind of ultimate harm this tempest is causing. Lexical data on שׁוֹף is insufficient to understand whether the destruction or death of the object is in view. In each use in the OT, שׁוֹף seems to represent one entity moving with force against another. It seems best, then, to translate שׁוֹף with “strike” in Genesis 3:15.

Though “crush” does not effectively represent the double accusative construction, using “crush” to translate שׁוֹף may be an acceptable interpretive option that accurately describes what happens when a person decisively strikes a snake’s head. To “crush” a head must imply the defeat of that enemy; to “crush” a heel, however, would not necessarily imply defeat, in spite of the harm that it causes to part of a person’s body. “Crush” is an inappropriate term for what a serpent could do to a person’s heel. If “crush” is used for the first instance of שׁוֹף, a different word must be used to reflect the serpent’s attack. An alternative interpretive option would understand the offspring of the woman as “crushing” the serpent’s head, while the serpent would “bite” the heel of the offspring of the woman.⁴⁰ This option would seem to fit well if one assumes that the bite would have the same basic

³⁸ Van Dam, 4:67.

³⁹ “Overwhelm” makes good sense here; “crush,” however, does not seem to be an accurate description of the action of darkness. See also A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 908. Oddly, Ross suggests that “bruise” is the idea here, partially based on the idea that bruising darkens a person: “The idea of the oppression expressed in the bruising would darken him with wounds” (3:813-14). Ross continues, “While the idea of bruising someone is difficult, in a poetic composition it is not that difficult. The ‘darkness’ may be a figure referring to what happens in the darkness (so a metonymy of subject); and perhaps bruising has the added connotation of darkening him as well” (3:825). Ross’s view seems to be forcing “bruise” on the text under the incorrect assumption that “bruise” is the correct gloss for שׁוֹף in its other texts.

⁴⁰ Derek Kidner believes that two different translations should be used here, translating the first as “bruise” and the second as “snap at.” *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1967), 1:75n29. However, Victor Hamilton argues, “In order to maintain the duplication of the Hebrew verb, whatever English equivalent one decides on must be used twice.” *Genesis 1–17*, 198. Carl F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch acknowledge that the same word is used for the actions of both parties “to show that on both sides the intention is to destroy the opponent.” *The First Book*

effect as the “crushing”—the death of the opponent. This type of interpretive option, speaking of the crushing of the serpent, necessitates the idea that the verse speaks of the final destruction of the serpent. However, if שׁוּף is used to refer to the death-blow to the serpent, does שׁוּף not also imply a death-blow to the woman’s offspring? The remainder of this paper will address this question.

A Promise of Victory?

The final question that remains is whether Genesis 3:15 provides a promise of victory for the offspring of the woman. To some degree, the translation of שׁוּף depends on whether one’s translation philosophy allows for a more interpretive translation such as “crush.” If the translator uses “crush” in one or both instances in 3:15, then the death of the serpent is certainly in view, but the death of the woman’s offspring may or may not be in view. If the translator uses “strike” or “attack,” then שׁוּף does not necessarily indicate victory for either side. In this case, the two entities will merely exchange blows in the outworking of their enmity toward one another.⁴¹ Several considerations must be taken into account when determining the solution to this question.

Arguments Against a Promise of Victory

Scholars have presented several arguments in support of the idea that a victory is not expected for either side in Genesis 3:15. John Walton believes that the use of the same verb for both parties indicates that a victory for one side or the other is not in view: “The verse is depicting a continual, unresolved conflict between humans and the representatives of evil.”⁴² Second, it may be noteworthy that both instances of שׁוּף in 3:15 are imperfect, which could reflect an iterative sense, conveying the idea that these are repeated attacks.⁴³ If the verbs truly are iterative and the attacks are repeated, then

of Moses (Genesis), trans. James Martin, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (1866–91; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 1:62–63.

⁴¹ Michael Maher argues, “There is no suggestion that one party in the struggle will emerge victorious. To say that victory for humanity is implied in the fact that a human being will crush the head of the serpent while the latter will only wound the heel of the other, seems to be going beyond the meaning of the text.” *Genesis* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1982), 46.

⁴² *Genesis*, 226. Walton also explains, “If this is accurate, the verse affirms that the struggle has just begun and will continue unabated. . . . Savoring success, the influence of evil will continue to try to make headway into human existence. Thus, the battle lines are formed and the warfare begins” (233). Contra Walton, Alexander agrees that שׁוּף carries “the same sense in both clauses” but that the victory of the seed of the woman is still in view. “Messianic Ideology in the Book of Genesis,” in *The Lord’s Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1995), 29–32, specifically 30n38.

⁴³ See Alexander, “Messianic Ideology,” 30, and Wenham, 80. According to Ronald J. Williams, “the iterative imperfect describes an action as one that is done repeatedly, customarily, habitually, or characteristically.” *Williams’ Hebrew Syntax*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 70. Though the iterative sense is certainly possible grammatically in 3:15, it is by no means the only possible use of the imperfect verb here. The interpreter should exercise caution in depending too heavily on the iterative sense to identify the nature of the conflict in the verse.

it is difficult to argue semantically that a victor is expected.⁴⁴ Third, the logical arrangement of the strike on the serpent's head prior to the strike against the heel in the verse may seem to imply that the former is not a final, conclusive blow.⁴⁵ The reader might have expected the blow to the serpent's head to be mentioned last if this does indeed refer to the final defeat of the serpent. Fourth, OT readers would almost certainly understand a snake bite to be fatal.⁴⁶ Since both parties, then, are issuing (potentially) fatal blows to each other, no victor is in view.

A fifth argument against a promise of victory is Westermann's form-critical argument that victory is not promised for either side because the verse is in the form of a "pronouncement of punishment," which does not allow for the inclusion of a promise of hope. Westermann argues that "it is not possible that such a form has either promise or prophecy as its primary or even as its secondary meaning."⁴⁷ Three primary considerations refute his argument. First, Westermann never precisely defines this form or explains *why* it is not possible for the curse to include a promise or prophecy.⁴⁸ Second, since this is a curse on the serpent, as Westermann admits, it must speak of the defeat of the serpent, which would undoubtedly benefit the humans.⁴⁹ Third, even if Westermann's form-critical point is granted, it would be logical to say that there can be no promise of hope for the object of the curse, the serpent. It would not necessarily follow, however, that there could be no

⁴⁴ Alexander argues that the verb is iterative but still affirms the victory of the woman's offspring: "The forces of evil, as symbolized by the serpent, will only be defeated after a lengthy conflict between the 'seed of the woman' and the 'seed of the serpent.'" "Messianic Ideology," 31.

⁴⁵ Skinner summarizes: "No victory is promised to either party, but only perpetual warfare between them: the order of the clauses making it specially hard to suppose that the victory of man was contemplated" (81).

⁴⁶ Walton comments: "While it is true that a strike to the head would appear more devastating than a strike to the heel, a serpent's strike to the heel is another matter altogether. While not all snakes were poisonous, the threat provided by some, in the haste to protect oneself, attaches itself to all snakes. Of thirty-six species of snake known to the area, the viper (*vipera palaestinae*) is the only poisonous snake in northern and central Israel. But a poisonous snake is the most aggressive, so an attack by any snake was viewed as a potentially mortal blow" (226).

⁴⁷ Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 260. H. D. Preuss also makes this argument. "Zara," *TDOT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 4:150. James Barr agrees, referring to Westermann's argument as a "crushing rebuttal of all such suggestions." *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 140n28.

⁴⁸ Westermann elsewhere identifies and explains a specific form of "judgment-speech to individuals" but does not directly identify Genesis 3:15 with this form (the focus of the work is the Prophets). *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, trans. Hugh Clayton White (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967). In Westermann's examples, this form is almost always in a narrative context and directed to the king (138). In his discussion, though, Westermann uses examples that do provide an element of hope, but Westermann's discussion of each passage concludes without addressing the element of hope. The first example he gives (139–40), Nathan's pronouncement of judgment on David (2 Sm 12:7–14), provides hope for David: "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die" (12:13). The next example (140) is God's pronouncement against Shebna (Isa. 22:15–25), in which the judgment on Shebna is directly followed by a statement of hope: "I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah. . . . And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David" (Is 22:20–22). Westermann's further examples function similarly, unintentionally demonstrating that a word of judgment often concludes with a word of hope, though Westermann fails to address the word of hope in each case (142–68).

⁴⁹ Collins says, "This is in fact a promise that God will act for the benefit of mankind by defeating the serpent" (157).

promise of hope for the ones whom the cursed one harmed, the humans.⁵⁰ Regarding Westermann's arguments, Ronning aptly concludes: "The question is whether the scientific findings of form critics should be allowed to nullify common sense."⁵¹

Arguments Supporting a Promise of Victory

Other scholars argue that Genesis 3:15 does give an expectation of victory for the offspring of the woman over the serpent. A critical question here is whether both parties are delivering death blows or whether only one of the parties delivers a death blow. Though the context of Genesis 3 does not clearly answer this question, in the light of fuller biblical revelation, victory for the offspring of the woman is in view.⁵² If the serpent's strike is not a death blow, then the offspring of the woman is certainly seen as the victor. If the serpent's strike is a death blow, then it is certainly possible that 3:15 anticipates, in the light of later biblical revelation, the victory of the woman's offspring over the serpent through his own death.

Some argue that the action of the offspring of the woman against the serpent is more severe because it is an action against the head of the serpent, and the action of the serpent is less severe because it is merely an attack on the heel, a "temporary and healable injury."⁵³ Kaiser comments, "The contrast between crushing the head and crushing or bruising the heel is the difference between a mortal blow to the skull and a slight injury to the victor."⁵⁴ It should be obvious that a strike to the heel, though harmful, would not necessarily cause death—unless, of course, it is a poisonous snake bite. As a corollary to this argument, numerous other OT references indicate that striking the head refers to a deadly blow resulting in defeat, whereas the Bible does not speak of "the striking of the heel" in this way.⁵⁵

On the other hand, it seems quite possible that the original readers of the Pentateuch would have expected the bite of the serpent to be venomous and likely fatal. Michael Rydelnik argues that "in the case of this animal, the Hebrew generally uses it to speak of a venomous and lethal snake."⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Westermann's example of judgment on David, though, demonstrates that a pronouncement of punishment may include a word of hope for the one being judged. *Basic Forms*, 139–40.

⁵¹ "The Curse on the Serpent," 114. He adds, "If Westermann's view were true, Balak should not have cared whether Balaam blessed or cursed Israel, but he said, 'come and curse these people . . . perhaps then I will be able to defeat them.' (Nm 22:6). It seems that Balak was not aware of this strict form-critical limit on the implied meaning of curses, for he thought that a curse on his enemies might help him prevail over them."

⁵² See Alexander, "Messianic Ideology," 32.

⁵³ Victor Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 44. Many scholars argue that the victor is the one who strikes the more severe blow—the blow to the head. Mathews argues, "The location of the blow distinguishes the severity and success of the attack" (245). See also Hengstenberg, 26; Kidner, *Genesis*, 75; Wenham, 80; John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, Library of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 107; Waltke and Fredricks, 93; Longman, 66; Andrew T. Abernethy and Gregory Goswell, *God's Messiah in the Old Testament: Expectations of a Coming King* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic), 13.

⁵⁴ Kaiser, 41n8.

⁵⁵ See James Hamilton, "The Skull Crushing Seed," 33–38, and Chen, 53–54.

⁵⁶ *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic?* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 141.

Chen notes that “the broader context of the Pentateuch suggests that the reader is supposed to understand the seed of the woman as suffering a poisonous snakebite, even a fatal one.”⁵⁷ Numbers 21:4–6 may support this argument, since it speaks of “serpents” (נָחָשׁ is used in both Gn 3 and Nm 21), who “bit the people so that many people of Israel died” (Nm 21:6). Other passages in the Pentateuch speak of “the poison of serpents and the cruel venom of asps” (Dt 32:33) and the “venom of things that crawl in the dust” (32:24). Additionally, Job 20:16 refers to “the poison of cobras” and says that “the tongue of a viper will kill him.”⁵⁸

Another biblical-theological argument supports the idea that a death-blow is in view. Several interpreters understand the Cain-Abel narrative as an initial outworking of the enmity of Genesis 3:15.⁵⁹ Because Cain murders Abel, “we need not wonder anymore, then, if the serpent’s bite is poisonous, if his attack against the man, is, or may be, fatal. The death of the woman’s seed shows that it obviously can be.”⁶⁰

If the serpent’s bite causes the death of the offspring of the woman and if that offspring is the Messiah, then the work of the serpent in effecting the death of the Messiah is likely in view. It is the death (and resurrection) of the Messiah, though, that effects the final defeat of the serpent.⁶¹ From a canonical view, it is appropriate to understand that the serpent really does *kill* the Messiah; the death of the Messiah, however, is what actually accomplishes the *defeat* of the serpent (Hb 2:14; 1 Jn 3:8). Though this understanding may make Genesis 3:15 itself “anticlimactic”⁶² when isolated in its original context, the rest of Scripture unfolds the full significance of this battle. Therefore, “the ancient conflict between Eve and the serpent will be brought to a climactic end in this way through a self-sacrificing hero, the Messiah.”⁶³

⁵⁷ *Messianic Vision*, 54.

⁵⁸ Chen also notes other OT passages that refer to poisonous snakebites (Jb 20:16; Ps 58:4; 140:3; Prv 23:32), though it is unclear whether they should be understood to be fatal (54–55).

⁵⁹ Ronning, 144–78; Alexander, “Messianic Ideology,” 24; Todd Patterson, “The Righteousness and Survival of the Seed: The Role of Plot in the Exegesis and Theology of Genesis” (PhD diss., Trinity International University, 2012), 154–67; Abernethy and Goswell, 13.

⁶⁰ Ronning, 173.

⁶¹ Kline argues that the bruising of Messiah’s heel relates to the death of the Messiah; the serpent’s strike, therefore, is a death blow (146–48). Hebrews 2:14–15 refers to the death of Christ, which occurred “that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.” Rydelnik argues that this verse represents “an apparent midrash on Gen 3:15” (141). Also, Chen says, “The seed of the woman will not merely be injured by the serpent but will be killed by him. In other words, Genesis 3:15, when understood in the broader compositional context of the Pentateuch, predicts that the seed’s victory will come at the cost of his own suffering and death” (55). See also D. A. Carson, *The God Who Is There: Finding Your Place in God’s Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 37; and Naselli, 41.

⁶² Chen, 55.

⁶³ *Ibid.* It is at this point that the reader must consider the divine authorship of Scripture as a significant factor. See Vern S. Poythress, “Divine Meaning of Scripture,” *WTJ* 48 (1986): 241–279. If the divine author knows what his plan is from the foundation of the world, what prevents him from pronouncing this plan at the beginning, however cryptic it may initially sound? The statement that an individual descendant of the woman would come to do battle with the serpent is not cryptic at all in 3:15. Further revelation, though, demonstrates how this defeat of the serpent is accomplished—through the death of the individual offspring of the woman.

At the very least, the reader should expect a victory of the offspring of the woman over the serpent in Genesis 3:15 simply because this is a curse on the serpent. It makes sense that the curse on the serpent would include a pronouncement of his defeat. Alexander argues that if 3:15 expects no victory over the serpent, then it represents an additional punishment on the humans as well as the serpent. It would seem fitting for the punishment of the serpent to include his ultimate defeat at the hand of the woman's seed. Alexander concludes: "Given the serpent's role as the instigator of the rebellion against God, it is surely unlikely that it received a lesser punishment than that imposed upon the human couple."⁶⁴ Therefore, in light of arguments from the immediate context of Genesis 3 and from biblical theology, it is best to understand Genesis 3:15 as a promise of the victory of the offspring of the woman over the serpent.

The Allusion to Genesis 3:15 in Romans 16:20

Most interpreters acknowledge an allusion to Genesis 3:15 in Romans 16:20, although the language of Paul's promise is not the same as the language in Genesis 3:15.⁶⁵ Some scholars have argued that the difference between "bruise" and "crush" indicates that Paul is not alluding to Genesis 3:15. For example, Collins argues that one difference between Genesis 3:15 and Romans 16:20 is that Genesis 3:15 "speaks of 'wounding' or 'bruising' rather than 'crushing.'"⁶⁶ Also, Brown presents several arguments against the idea that Genesis 3:15 alludes to Romans 16:20. One of his arguments is that Paul "employs the more violent *συντρίβω* ('to crush' or 'to break') instead of *τηρέω* (LXX) or a word translating the Hebrew *שׁוּף*, which Brown glosses as "to bruise."⁶⁷ Though the works of Collins and Brown are otherwise well-researched, these arguments are based on an inadequate understanding of *שׁוּף*. Since the English word "bruise" is not a valid modern translation for *שׁוּף* in Genesis 3:15, the arguments presented by Collins and Brown against an allusion here based on the incongruity of "crush" in Romans 16:20 and "bruise" in Genesis 3:15 fall short. In relation to Romans 16:20, Paul does not quote the LXX, likely because the LXX translates *שׁוּף* inadequately (*τηρέω*). It

⁶⁴ "Messianic Ideology," 30.

⁶⁵ Michael J. Thate comments, "It is rather difficult to deny the thematic parallel despite the lexical and linguistic difficulties." "Paul at the Ball: *Ecclesia Victor* and the Cosmic Defeat of Personified Evil in Romans 16:20," in *Paul's World*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 152. The majority of recent commentators support an allusion to Genesis 3:15 here. For example, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1993), 746–47; Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 994–95; Colin G. Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 581; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 779. Douglas J. Moo, however, expresses some doubt about a connection to Genesis 3:15, since "the language of Paul's promise is not that close to that of Gen. 3:15." *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 932n40. Additionally, Frank Thielman argues that "Paul's language is more directly indebted to Psalms 8:6 and 110:1 . . . a combination early Christians often used to describe Christ's victory over God's enemies." *Romans*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 740. Against Thielman, Schreiner argues that "Psalm 110:1 itself alludes to Gen. 3:15," which again grounds Genesis 3:15 as the basis for Romans 16:20 (779).

⁶⁶ *Genesis 1–4*, 158. Collins later refers to 3:15 as "the promise of a specific human who will do battle with the evil power that spoke through the serpent, and at cost to himself will defeat the enemy" (176). It is difficult to believe that merely "bruising" or "wounding" would cause the defeat of this enemy.

⁶⁷ "The God of Peace," 6.

is worth considering, then, whether Paul is providing his own translation of the Hebrew text of Genesis 3:15 in order to state what God will do to the serpent through the church: “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.”⁶⁸ If this is the case, then Paul understands the “crushing” of Satan to be the intended outcome of the striking of the serpent’s head in Genesis 3:15. This also supports the idea that from a canonical perspective, it is appropriate to understand the verb שׁוּף as a “crushing” blow.

Summary

Based on this study, the most appropriate English translation of Genesis 3:15 is likely to be the English word “strike.” Though “crush” may convey the added sense of enmity, it is more interpretive than שׁוּף itself seems to allow, and it does not account well for the double accusative construction in the verse. However, a victorious strike against the serpent would likely crush the serpent’s head. Therefore, it is legitimate to speak of the “crushing” of the serpent’s head. Furthermore, “bruise” is an English word that should no longer be used in discussions related to Genesis 3:15. “Bruise” may have been an appropriate translation in the past, but modern English no longer understands the term “bruise” in the same way. Based on theological and canonical considerations, the nature of this “strike” is likely to be a death-blow for both parties, though the serpent will ultimately suffer defeat at the hands (or feet) of the offspring of the woman, who will be victorious in striking and crushing the serpent’s head.

⁶⁸ Sydney H. T. Page notes, “Though Paul’s language is quite different from the Septuagint version of Genesis 3:15, his allusion may be based on the Hebrew text.” *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan & Demons* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 198.

The Futurist Interpretation of Revelation: Intertextual Evidence from the Prologue

Brian Collins¹

Interpreting the book of Revelation is daunting to many people because of the various interpretations on offer. Evaluating these interpretations can be simplified by grouping them into broad interpretative approaches so that certain interpretations can be evaluated together rather than individually. For instance, the historicist approach, which sees Revelation as symbolically unfolding church history from the first century to the return of Christ, predominated throughout much of church history. Current interpreters of Revelation find the historicist approach misguided. Assuming that this is a correct judgment, the interpreter need not trouble himself over whether the second seal represents the triumph of Christ during his temptation in the wilderness,² the militarily-enforced *Pax Romana*,³ or conditions in the Roman empire until the time of Trajan.⁴

Current interpreters of Revelation are divided between preterists who understand Revelation to refer to events that happened in the first generation of Christians,⁵ idealists who take the book to be referring primarily to the unseen realities that Christians must reckon with in the time between Christ's comings,⁶ and futurists who understand the bulk of the book (Rv 4–22) to be focused on the events of Christ's Second Coming and the eternal state that follows.⁷ This paper argues that the

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² Oecumenius, "Commentary on the Apocalypse," in *Greek Commentaries on Revelation*, Ancient Christian Texts, ed. Thomas Oden, trans. William C. Weinrich (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011), 28–29.

³ George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 100; Ian Boxall, *The Revelation of Saint John*, BNTC (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006), 110; Gordon D. Fee, *Revelation*, New Covenant Commentary (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011), 94.

⁴ Thomas Goodwin, "An Exposition of Revelation," in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin* (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1861), 3:35–36; Jonathan Edwards, *Apocalyptic Writings*, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, ed. Stephen J. Stein (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 5:164.

⁵ This definition focuses on evangelical adherents to this view. See Peter J. Leithart, *Revelation*, ITC (New York: T&T Clark, 2018), 26–27.

⁶ Here following Beale's "modified" idealism. G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 48–49.

⁷ Interpreters now often claim that they take an "eclectic" approach that combines the best of the preterist, idealist, and futurist approaches. Beale, 48; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 21–22; Brian J. Tabb, *All Things New: Revelation as Canonical Capstone*, NSBT (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2019), 10–11; Buist M. Fanning, *Revelation*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 38–40. However, one approach invariably dominates the others (as is explicitly acknowledged by Beale and Osborne).

allusions to the OT in the prologue to Revelation (Rv 1:1–8) point readers to interpreting Revelation according to the futurist approach.⁸

“Things That Must Take Place” (Rv 1:1)

The words *the things that must soon take place* (ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει) (Rv 1:1) are an allusion to Daniel 2:28–29 and 45 in the Greek translation: The Lord “made known to King Nebuchadnezzar *things that must take place at the end of days* [ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν], and he who reveals mysteries showed to you things that are *necessary to take place* [ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι] (Dn 2:28–29, LES).⁹

Daniel 2 concerns Nebuchadnezzar’s vision of a statue made of various metals, representing a series of kingdoms (2:32–38). The first kingdom is Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian kingdom (2:38). The following kingdoms represented are Persia, Greece, and Rome.¹⁰ The stone that crushed the statue represented the Messiah and his kingdom (2:44).¹¹ The question at hand is whether Nebuchadnezzar’s

⁸ The claim is not that every allusion that follows *proves* futurism. Nor is the futurist orientation of each allusion equally strong. Taken together, however, these allusions are pointing in one direction. In addition, a futurist can affirm that events in the first century were typological precursors of the final day of the Lord and that the kinds of challenges and conflicts that mark the ultimate day of the Lord recur, in less extreme forms, throughout church history. Thus the futurist can apply the book in a way similar to preterists and idealists. The distinctive futurist claim is that Revelation is primarily about the ultimate Day of the Lord.

⁹ Ladd, 21; Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1–7* (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 53; J. Ramsey Michaels, *Revelation*, IVPNTC (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 47; Beale, 137, 153; Osborne, 54; Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation of John* (London: SPCK, 2005), 27; Boxall, 24; Leithart, 71; Fanning, 74–75.

¹⁰ This is the view found in the Talmud and “among medieval Jewish commentators.” Robert A. Anderson, *Signs and Wonders: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, ITC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 22. It is also the dominant view among Christian interpreters. Hippolytus, *Commentary on Daniel and ‘Chronicon,’* ed. and trans. T. C. Schmidt. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2017) 78; Jerome, *Jerome’s Commentary on Daniel*, trans. Gleason Archer Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958), 30; John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*, trans. Thomas Myers (1852; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1:162; Edward J. Young, *Daniel* (1949; reprint, Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1972), 74–75; Robert D. Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days* (Chicago: Moody, 1954), 111–14; Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 68; Gleason L. Archer Jr., “Daniel,” in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 7:46–47; Stephen R. Miller *Daniel*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 1999), 94–96; Andrew E. Steinmann, *Daniel*, CC (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2008), 147–51; James M. Hamilton Jr., *With the Clouds of Heaven: The Book of Daniel in Biblical Theology*, NSBT (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015), 86. Critical scholars favor the sequence Babylon, Media, Persia, Greece. John J. Collins, *Daniel: With an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature*, FOTL (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 198), 52; idem., *Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 166. This sequence is not tenable. Collins concedes a critical weakness, namely that “Media never ruled over the Jews” (52). Steinmann levels four compelling arguments against the critical view (147–51). First, the messianic kingdom was not established while Greece ruled but while Rome ruled over Israel. Second, Media never conquered Babylon; a Persian empire that had already incorporated Media conquered Babylon. Third, Daniel 8 represents Media and Persia (symbolized by two horns) as part of a single empire (symbolized by the ram). Fourth, the four heads of the third beast in Daniel 7 (corresponding to the third part of the statue in chapter 2) correlates with the four horns on the goat representing Greece in chapter 8. Thus, the bronze part of the statue and the third beast represent Greece. To these arguments Tanner adds the observation that the book itself indicates that Babylon was conquered by the Medes and Persians (as a single entity) (Dn 5:28; 6:8). J. Paul Tanner, *Daniel*, EEC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 198.

¹¹ Joe M. Sprinkle, *Daniel*, EBTC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 400–402. Sprinkle gives the following lines of argument for seeing both the Messiah and his kingdom represented in the stone. (1) In both Daniel 2 and 7 the text shifts back and forth between king and kingdom referents. (2) Daniel 7’s equivalent to the stone is the Son of Man. (3) The stone imagery is developed in the NT as messianic (Mt 21:42; Mk 12:10; Lk 20:17–18; Rom 9:32–33; Acts 4:11; 1 Pt

vision culminated in the establishment of the kingdom of God at the first advent or whether it culminated in the coming of the kingdom of God in eschatological judgment.

Some interpreters think this allusion indicates that John's visions refer to events that began in John's own time.¹² Four reasons support this view. (1) The iron mixed with clay refers to the Roman Empire, possibly as it entered a period of decay.¹³ (2) The stone cut without hands refers to the virgin birth and the establishment of the messianic kingdom during the first advent, when Rome ruled the world.¹⁴ The stone becoming a mountain pictures the kingdom of Christ gradually growing during the inter-advent period.¹⁵ (3) John replaced Daniel's "at the end of days" with "soon," indicating that "[w]hat Daniel expected to occur in the far-off 'latter days' . . . John expects to begin in his own generation."¹⁶ (4) Revelation 1:6, 9, 13–15 speak of the kingdom as already present.

This view, however, suffers from several weaknesses. First, it is likely that the iron mixed with clay symbolizes a situation subsequent to the Roman Empire, which is symbolized by the legs of iron.¹⁷ Distinguishing between the legs of iron (Rome) and the ten toes of iron mixed with clay (future entities) goes back to Hippolytus, the earliest extant commentator on Daniel.¹⁸ The basic correctness of this ancient interpretation is confirmed by the parallel with the ten horns on the fourth beast in Daniel 7:24–27. These horns relate to the fourth beast (= the legs of iron = Rome) but represent a distinct eschatological stage of his activity (see below).¹⁹ Thus, the stone's impact on the statue must represent a period subsequent to the dissolution of Rome.

Second, the stone destroyed not only the feet but all the previous parts of the image as well. The utter destruction of the image symbolized the complete replacement of human kingdoms with the messianic kingdom (cf. Dn 2:35, 44).²⁰ This vision is about the kingdom of this world becoming the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah (Rv 11:15). As Greidanus observes,

2:6–8). (4) That NT usage is rooted in the OT (Ps 118:22; Is 8:14–15; cf. Is 51:1). Perhaps it is also worth noting that eschatological Zion is pictured as a great mountain in Isaiah 2:2 and Micah 4:1. Paul R. House, *Daniel*, TOTC (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2018), 70.

¹² Beale, 137, 153; Leithart, 71; possibly implied in Thomas R. Schreiner, "Revelation," in *Hebrews—Revelation*, ESVEC (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 549–50.

¹³ Steinmann, 137.

¹⁴ Ibid., 140–41.

¹⁵ Young, 79; Steinmann, 136.

¹⁶ Beale, 137, 153; cf. Leithart, 71. Note that Beale as an idealist sees the events of Revelation beginning in John's day and continuing through the inter-advent period, while Leithart, as a preterist, sees the events of Revelation as occurring in the first century when "the end of the imperial order of late antiquity" comes about.

¹⁷ Held even by Steinmann, who holds to a first-century appearance of the stone. Steinmann, 137.

¹⁸ *Daniel*, 78; cf. idem, "Treatise on Christ and Antichrist," in *Fathers of the Third Century: Hippolytus, Cyprian, Novation*, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1886), 186. Hippolytus specifies that the ten toes refer to "democracies . . . which are destined to come."

¹⁹ Young and Steinmann, for instance, reject the connection of the ten toes with the ten kings parallel to them in Daniel 7:24–27 on the grounds that Daniel 2:41 does not specify the toes to be ten in number. Young, 77–78; Steinmann, 137–38. Surely this is pedantic. Worse, it fails to allow acknowledged parallel passages to interpret one another. Miller, 97.

²⁰ Miller, 101; Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012) 76n51.

The context in Daniel 2 makes clear that “at the end of days” refers to the end of human history when human kingdoms will be replaced by the kingdom of God (v. 44). Cf. the same phrase in Hebrew in 10:14 in the context of the final vision with its double resurrection (12:2, 13) and the fullness of God’s kingdom (12:3).²¹

Third, though Scripture speaks of the kingdom coming in connection with the first advent (Mt 28:18; Acts 2:30–36; Eph 1:20–23; Col 1:13), this does not exhaust the Bible’s teaching about the coming of the kingdom (Mt 25:31; Acts 3:20–21).²² Psalm 110 provides a paradigm for understanding the two stages of the kingdom’s coming. At present the kingdom is coming in salvation, and Christ reigns in the midst of his enemies (Ps 110:1–2). In the future, the kingdom will come in judgment, and Christ will scatter kings in the day of his wrath (Ps 110:5–6). The destruction of “every rule and every authority and power” comes at “the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father” (1 Cor 15:24).

Fourth, though the gradual growth of the kingdom of God in the inter-advent period is a biblical idea (Mt 13:31–33), the concept of gradual growth seems to be read into Daniel 2:35 rather than out of it. Fifth, Daniel 7 confirms the eschatological reading of Daniel 2. The same four kingdoms found in Daniel 2 reappear in Daniel 7, symbolized as beasts (cf. 7:17, 23). The fourth beast, “terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong,” is linked to the legs of iron.²³ Both are in the fourth position, and iron describes the statue’s legs and the beast’s teeth.²⁴ The feet of iron and clay correspond to ten horns (indicating ten kings, 7:24).²⁵ In both cases, something related to but distinct from Rome is symbolized. E. J. Young notes,

Although, in order to indicate the essential unity of the fourth kingdom, the horns appear upon the head of the beast, it is obvious that these horns represent a later phase of the beast’s existence. After the characterization given in vs. 23, with its emphasis upon the conquering power of the beast (as in vs. 7), it is stated (vs. 24) that ten horns shall come *out of* this kingdom. This accords with the mention of the horns in vs. 7 *after* the description of the crushing power of the beast. . . . While the period of the ten horns is in existence, there *arises among* these kingdoms another, which uproots three and holds sway.²⁶

²¹ *Preaching Christ*, 76n51; also Hippolytus, *Daniel*, 78; Johann Gerhard, *Annotations on the Revelation of St. John the Theologian*, trans. Paul A. Rydecki (Malone, TX: Repristination, 2015), 112; Wood, 72–73.

²² Craig Blaising, “The Kingdom That Comes with Jesus: Premillennialism and the Harmony of Scripture,” *SBJT* 14/1(2010): 4; cf. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Sin and Salvation in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 247–48.

²³ Hippolytus, *Daniel*, 138 [4.8.2; 4.8.7]; Jerome, 75–76; Young, 146; Wood, 186; Archer, 87; Miller, 201; Steinmann, 347; Tanner, 411–12.

²⁴ Miller, 201n34; Steinmann, 347; Tanner, 411.

²⁵ Whether the numbers ten and three represent specific enumerations or not is a matter of debate. Some insist on a specific enumeration, noting that three seems to be a specific, rather than symbolic, number. Tanner, 456. Miller entertains this possibility, but he also notes, “If the number *ten* represents completeness, then *three* would signify *some* kings.” Miller, 213–14. It seems best not to be dogmatic on this point.

²⁶ *Daniel*, 148–149.

Young, along with interpreters from the church fathers onward, identifies the little horn with the Antichrist (7:8, 20, 24).²⁷ He concludes, “Thus, in one remarkable picture, the entire course of history is given from the appearance of the historical Roman Empire until the end of human government.”²⁸ Steinmann similarly says, “It seems that the vision given Daniel in 7:9–14, which is interpreted in 7:15–28, pictures in one scene the entire sweep of salvation history that includes Christ’s first advent, the church age, and Christ’s second advent.”²⁹ Notably, even these commentators who denied an eschatological referent to the feet of the statue in Daniel 2 see an eschatological referent to the little horn of Daniel 7.³⁰ When the little horn arises, it not only wars against the saints, but it “prevailed over them” (7:21). Young recognizes that this “directs our attention to the culmination of opposition to the people of God.”³¹

When that final opposition is overcome, the Son of Man’s kingdom is truly universal: “all peoples, nations, and languages” (7:14). It is also eternal: “his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed” (7:14).³² The bestial rule brought about by the twisting of the commission of Adam to rule will be set right by the last Adam, enabling the reign of a new humanity over the earth.³³

This phrase, “must . . . take place,” occurs three times at key junctures in the book: in 1:1, the opening verse; in 4:1, which is the beginning of the core section of the book; and in 22:6, the first

²⁷ Young, 150; cf. Hippolytus, *Daniel*, 136–37 (4.5.3; 4.7.1); Jerome, 77; Wood, 188; Miller, 202–3; Steinmann, 348–49; Tanner, 413.

²⁸ *Daniel*, 150.

²⁹ Steinmann, 329–30.

³⁰ Young understands the ten horns to represent kingdoms that emerged from Rome and bridge the time between ancient Rome and the rise of the little horn. *Daniel*, 149. However, Archer is certainly correct to note that the ten horns (which are ten kings; 7:24) must all be contemporaneous “since six remain in subservience to the aggressive little horn, after he has destroyed the other three.” “Daniel,” 87. Certainly the three subdued by the little horn must have been contemporaneous with each other. Tanner, 455. Revelation 17:12, drawing on this passage, also seems to indicate the Antichrist and these kings are contemporaneous. Miller, 213; Tanner, 455.

³¹ *Daniel*, 158.

³² Young argues that this “kingdom *cannot* be millennial, since it is clearly described as everlasting.” *Daniel*, 157. Miller responds by pointing readers to Robert Saucy’s comments about the transitional nature of the millennial kingdom: “The millennium is only the final transition phase leading to the eternal state.” Thus, “the messianic kingdom is merged with the final eschatological picture of the new heaven and earth.” Miller, 211; Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 288; cf. Tanner, 464.

³³ The Son of Man restores rightful human rule for eternity to “the saints of the Most High” (7:18). Some claim that these “holy ones” are angels. Collins, 312–19. The word can be used of angels (Dt 33:2; Ps 89:5; Dn 4:13; 4:17; 4:23; 8:13; Zec 14:5), but it can also be used of Israel (Ex 19:6; Dt 7:6; 26:19; Ps 16: 3; 34:10). See Tanner, 447n779. Several considerations favor a reference to God’s people here. First, verse 21 speaks of the horn prevailing in warfare over the holy ones. Since the horn is the king of an earthly kingdom, it is unlikely that the holy ones are angels. Steinmann, 370; Tanner, 447n779. This observation is strengthened by the link between Daniel 7:25 (“they [the holy ones] shall be given into his [the little horn’s] hand for a time, times, and half a time”) and Daniel 12:7 (“it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished”). Steinmann, 370. But the decisive objection is made by Steinmann: “The heirs of God’s kingdom are always God’s people.” (369; cf. Tanner, 449). This assertion is rooted in Genesis 1:28. God gave man dominion over the earth. The Son of Man, the true man, will restore that rule to redeemed mankind.

verse of the epilogue.³⁴ By drawing on Daniel 2 at these key junctures, John is able to signal to his readers where his visions fit in the eschatological scheme given to Daniel and expanded upon by Jesus. Specifically, John is signaling that his visions will be about the consummation of the kingdom as Jesus returns to judge the world in the ultimate Day of the Lord.

The Significance of “Soon” (Rv 1:1)

John’s statement that Revelation concerns events that “must soon take place” is a key piece of evidence for preterist or idealist interpreters. Preterists argue that “soon” indicates that the book is about events in John’s own day. This word should not be trimmed or reinterpreted; rather, it should be read in a straightforward manner and in light of many other “predictions of an imminent catastrophe” found in the NT.³⁵ For idealists, “soon” indicates that at least some of these events began to be fulfilled in John’s own day, even if others await the consummation.³⁶ G. K. Beale finds confirmation of this reading in Revelation 1:3, which says, “For the time is near.” He notes that in Mark 1:15, “Jesus uses this phrase to describe not merely the nearness of his ministry and of the kingdom, but the actual inauguration of them.”³⁷ Even apart from the Mark reference, idealist interpreters hold that this view is substantiated by the fact that the last days have been inaugurated even while believers await the consummation.³⁸

The fact that the last days have begun, however, does not necessarily mean that the visions of Revelation are primarily about the first century or the entire period between the two comings of Christ. Doubtless, the Day of the Lord judgment that culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 foreshadowed the ultimate Day of the Lord, and certainly valid applications from the book of Revelation can be made to the tribulations and victories of the church throughout the inter-advent period. However, Revelation 1:1, 3 are paralleled in 22:6–7, 10, 12, 20. The ambiguous expressions “soon take place” and “the time is near” are clarified by the words of Jesus in 22:7, 12, 20: “I am coming soon.” A reference to the *inauguration* of the last days would be more compelling if the immediate context (cf. 1:7) and parallels in the epilogue (22:6–7, 10, 12) were not so tightly tied to the Second Coming.³⁹

³⁴ Thomas, 54.

³⁵ Leithart, 70–71.

³⁶ Andrew of Caesarea, “Commentary on the Apocalypse,” in *Latin Commentaries on Revelation*, Ancient Christian Texts, ed. and trans. William C. Weinrich (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011), 114; Gerhard, 11; Beale, 153; Smalley, 40; Schreiner, 549–50.

³⁷ *Revelation*, 153.

³⁸ Schreiner, 549–50.

³⁹ The phrase “has come near” does not mean “is present” in Mark 1:15. Though the signs of the kingdom were present in Jesus’s ministry, he was not enthroned until the resurrection/ascension (Acts 2:32–36; 5:30–31; Eph 1:20–23). See Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 249, 251; Patrick Schreiner, *The Ascension of Christ* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 75.

Other passages, even in the OT, speak of the Second Coming or its accompanying events as coming “soon,” “near,” or “at hand.”⁴⁰ Though some of these passages may be speaking about nearness from the perspective of those who experience the fulfillment of the prophecy (Is 13:6),⁴¹ others most likely speak of the nearness of the eschatological Day of the Lord from God’s perspective. Deuteronomy 32:25 likely refers to eschatological judgment coming “swiftly,”⁴² in which case the swiftness must be reckoned from God’s point of view. Obadiah prophesied that the eschatological Day of the Lord was “near upon all the nations” (15).⁴³ Again, this nearness probably refers to God’s perspective (Ps 90:4).⁴⁴ Zephaniah prophesied that the great eschatological Day of the Lord was “near, near and hastening fast” (1:14, cf. 1:7).⁴⁵ O. Palmer Robertson notes that this idea of the nearness of the Day of the Lord is picked up by the NT.⁴⁶

Jesus said, in an eschatological parable, “[God] will give justice to them speedily [ἐν τάχει].” (Lk 18:7–8). Bock notes that though Luke recognizes that there is “a concern about the return’s delay,” he can still affirm the speedy return to give justice.⁴⁷ Marshall observes, “To the elect it may seem to be a long time until he answers, but afterwards they will realise that it was in fact short.”⁴⁸

Paul, referring to the Day of the Lord,⁴⁹ wrote of “salvation” being “nearer” and “the day” being “at hand” (Rom 13:11–12). Later in Romans, Paul wrote, “The God of peace will soon [ἐν τάχει] crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (Rom 16:20). Cranfield observes, “That the promise refers to the eschatological consummation, and not to some special divine deliverance in the course of their lives, seems to us virtually certain.”⁵⁰ Cranfield holds that verse 20

⁴⁰ R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920), 6; Ladd, 22; Osborne, 55; Schreiner, 549–50; Fanning, 75.

⁴¹ Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–18*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 419.

⁴² Jonathan Edwards, *The “Blank Bible,”* The Works of Jonathan Edwards (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 24:390–10; cf. Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 764.

⁴³ Though the Book of Obadiah is focused on the judgment of Edom, this verse, encompassing as it does all the nations, is eschatological in scope. Paul Raabe, *Obadiah*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 191; Irvin A. Busenitz, *Commentary on Joel and Obadiah*, MC (Great Britain: Mentor, 2003), 270; Daniel I. Block, *Obadiah*, ZECOT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 81; Max Rogland, “Obadiah,” in *Daniel-Malachi*, ESVEC (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 383.

⁴⁴ Rogland, 383.

⁴⁵ J. Alec Motyer, “Zephaniah,” in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker 1998), 922.

⁴⁶ O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 281.

⁴⁷ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1453. He does note that this may be partially explained by the inaugurated last days.

⁴⁸ Marshall, 676; cf. Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Luke*, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 1922), 414; Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 1992), 446.

⁴⁹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 820–22; cf. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 165–167, 169; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, 2nd ed., BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 677–78.

⁵⁰ C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 803.

speaks of eschatological victory without reference to the opponents of 16:17–19.⁵¹ Schreiner grants a connection to the false teachers mentioned in 16:17–19, but he believes the victory over those opponents is eschatological.⁵² Murray and Moo teach that the ultimate victory is eschatological, though they think there may be realizations of the victory throughout the history of the church.⁵³ Jewett thinks that since the enemies will be crushed under the church of Rome's feet, rather than Christ's, a temporal victory is in view.⁵⁴ The last view is unlikely since believers participate in eschatological judgment (2 Tm 2:12; 1 Cor 6:1–3).⁵⁵

Paul told the Corinthians that “the appointed time has grown very short” because “the present form of this world is passing away” (1 Cor 7:29, 31). With the Day of the Lord the present form of this world will be replaced by life in the new creation.⁵⁶ Christians now live in the last days expecting the coming of Christ.⁵⁷ Likewise, Paul told the Philippians, “The Lord is at hand” (4:5). It is best to understand this in reference to the temporal nearness of the coming of the Lord.⁵⁸

The same pattern is found in the General Epistles. The Book of Hebrews speaks about “the Day drawing near” (10:25). Philip Edgcumbe Hughes observes, “When spoken of in this absolute manner, ‘the Day’ can mean only the last day, that ultimate eschatological day, which is the day of reckoning and judgment, known as the Day of the Lord.”⁵⁹ James said, “For the coming of the Lord is at hand. . . . The Judge is standing at the door” (5:8–9). McCartney notes, “Three other NT authors use this verb (ἐγγίζω, *engizō*) to speak of the day of judgment or the arrival of the Lord (Rom. 10 13:12; Heb. 10:25; 1 Pet. 4:7).”⁶⁰ This is likely James's meaning as well. First Peter 4:7 reads, “The end of all

⁵¹ *Romans*, 803.

⁵² *Romans*, 799.

⁵³ Murray, *Romans*, 237; Moo, *Romans*, 933.

⁵⁴ Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009): 995.

⁵⁵ See Colin G. Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 581n19.

⁵⁶ Gregor J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, CC (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2000), 257.

⁵⁷ See especially Lockwood, 255–56, and Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, TOTC (London: Inter-Varsity, 2018), 156.; cf. Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 344.

⁵⁸ Peter T. O'Brien, *Philippians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 489; Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 408; Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 198; G. Waler Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 289.

⁵⁹ Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 416; cf. Harold W. Attridge, *Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 291; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1991), 290; George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 346; Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews*, AYB (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008) 446; Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 371; Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 481; Dennis E. Johnson, “Hebrews,” in *Hebrews-Revelation*, ESVEC (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 147, 150.

⁶⁰ Dan G. McCartney, *James*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 241. Scot McKnight argues that the term “at hand” cannot simply refer to the imminence of the Second Coming. He claims it must be “understood as referring to something about to happen,” namely the judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70. *The Letter of James*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011) 411–12. However, this requires McKnight to conclude (406–7) that the Olivet Discourse should be read in a preterist manner and that Paul, in allusions to the Olivet Discourse, understood Parousia differently from Jesus (and James). Not only is it theologically problematic for Paul to understand the Olivet Discourse differently from Jesus and

things is at hand.” Thus, the next major event of redemptive history is the Second Coming.⁶¹ Though some have argued that this is a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, Sam Storms observes, “It seems strange to speak of it as ‘the end of all things.’” In addition, he questions the relevance of the destruction of Jerusalem as a motivating factor for Christians living in Asia Minor.⁶²

This survey of passages indicates that the “soon” and “near” language can refer to the final Day of the Lord.⁶³ This is confirmed by the fact that the context (Rv 1:7) and parallels with the epilogue (22:6, 7, 10, 12, 20) clearly indicate that the events of the Second Coming are coming soon.

“He Who Is to Come” (Rv 1:4)

The Father is described as “he who is and who was and who comes.”⁶⁴ “He who is” is an allusion to God’s revelation of his name to Moses: “I am The One Who Is” (Ex 3:14, NET).⁶⁵ He “who was” points to God’s eternality (Is 41:4; 44:6; 48:12).⁶⁶ He “who comes” refers to the eschatological arrival of YHWH.⁶⁷ Since the remainder of John’s designation of the source of grace and peace refers to the Spirit and to the Son, this title refers to the Father. Interestingly, verse 7 identifies Jesus as the one who “is coming with the clouds.” In the epilogue, which parallels the prologue in many ways, Jesus says, “I am coming soon” (Rv 22:12; cf. 22:16). According to Tabb, the coming of the Son “will bring to pass the promised eschatological coming of Yahweh.”⁶⁸ However, Daniel 7:22 (cf. 7:9–10) indicates that the coming of the Father brings about the coming of the Son.

Understanding the location of the thrones among which “the Ancient of Days took his seat” (7:9) is vital for understanding the coming of the Father. Goldingay gives three compelling reasons for an earthly location for these thrones:

A number of descriptions of God on his throne of fire surrounded by numerous attendants locate the scene in the heavens: see 1 Kgs 22:19–22; Ps 82; 1 En. 14:18–22; 40:1; 60:1–2; 71; 91:15–16; Rev 4–5. Where it is specifically a matter of God judging, however, the scene is normally on earth: see Jer 49:38;

James, but it is also unlikely that James is warning Christian Jews in the dispersion about their being judged by the Lord in the AD 70 judgment on Jerusalem (McKnight, 67–68). More likely is the view that Christians are in the last days and that the return of Christ is imminent; the Judge could pass through the doors at any moment.

⁶¹ John Lille, *Lectures on the First and Second Epistles of Peter* (New York: Scribner, 1868), 274–75; Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter*, TNTC (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988), 180; D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Winona Lake, IN: BBH, 1992), 269; Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 2003), 210; Sam Storms, “1 Peter,” in *Hebrews–Revelation*, ESVEC (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 347; cf. Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 293–94.

⁶² “1 Peter,” 347.

⁶³ The above survey intentionally drew liberally from non-futurist and often amillennial interpreters to indicate that the survey itself was not biased toward this outcome.

⁶⁴ Translation from Leithart, 87.

⁶⁵ G. K. Beale and Sean McDonough, “Revelation,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 1089; Tabb, 31.

⁶⁶ Beale, *Revelation*, 187.

⁶⁷ Tabb, 33.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

Joel 3 [4]:1–2, 12; Zech 14:1–5; Pss 50; 96:10–13; 1 En. 1:3–9; 25:3; 90:20–27. In Dan 7 Daniel has been watching a scene on earth, and the account gives no indication that the scene has changed. Rather, the opening phrase of v. 9 implies a continuity of perspective: Daniel continues to look in the direction he had been looking. Setting up the thrones suggests an earthly location (in the heavens they are already set up), as does the later talk of the one advanced in years coming (v. 22).⁶⁹

The scene is one of judgment (7:10), and that judgment falls specifically on the little horn and the fourth beast in a judgment of fire (7:11). The idea that the coming of the Father in judgment brings about the coming of the Son is confirmed in Psalm 110:1 and Psalm 2:8–9. In Psalm 110 YHWH makes the Messiah's enemies his footstool, and in Psalm 2 the Father and the Son are active in together subduing the nations. It may also be significant that in the new creation both the Father and the Son are mentioned as dwelling on earth (Rv 21:22; 22:3). Thus, both the Father and the Son "come" to earth by the end of the book (and by the end of the age).

Since the Father in his omnipresence is already here, the coming of the Father (unlike the bodily coming of Jesus) is not spatial. Thus, his coming in judgment to facilitate the coming of the Son in judgment points readers toward a futurist interpretation of this passage.

"The Seven Spirits Who Are before His Throne" (Rv 1:4)

The "seven spirits who are before [the Father's] throne" has been understood from the earliest interpreters to refer to the Holy Spirit and to allude to Isaiah 11:2 with its sevenfold listing of the gifts of the Spirit.⁷⁰ In Isaiah 11, the Spirit rests upon a shoot from the stump of Jesse, a reference to the Davidic Messiah.⁷¹ By resting upon the Messiah, the Spirit becomes the "source" of the characteristics

⁶⁹ John Goldingay, *Daniel*, rev. ed., WBC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019) 361.

⁷⁰ Victorinus of Petovium, "Commentary on the Apocalypse," in *Latin Commentaries on Revelation*, Ancient Christian Texts, trans. William C. Weinrich (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011), 1 (1.1); Apringius of Beja, "Explanation of the Revelation by the Most Learned Man, Apringius, Bishop of the Church at Pax," in *Latin Commentaries on Revelation*, 24; Beale, 189; Osborne, 61; Tabb, 69–70. Some object to this potential allusion because in the Hebrew only six characteristics are listed, in distinction from the seven listed in the LXX. Thomas, 68. However, if "Spirit of YHWH" is included in the count, then the Hebrew as well would include a sevenfold designation of the Spirit. Another view, also going back to early interpreters, is that the seven spirits are seven angels. Oecumenius, 4; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 47–48. However, this would break the Trinitarian pattern that is present in these verses. It may be that the angelic interpretation was a way to avoid the idea that there are actually seven spirits in the Godhead rather than one Holy Spirit. Leithart addresses this objection: "We must not conclude that the Father is a triple personality simply because he is given this triple name, and the Spirit is not seven Persons." The seven refers to the Spirit's work, not to his Person. Leithart, 89.

⁷¹ Motyer argues, "The reference to Jesse indicates that the shoot is not just another king in David's line but rather another David. In the books of Kings, successive kings were assessed by comparison with their father David' (e.g. 2 Ki. 18:3) but no king is called 'David' or 'son of Jesse'. Among the kings, David alone was 'the son of Jesse' (e.g. 1 Sa. 20:27–33; 1 Ki. 12:16), and the unexpected reference to Jesse here has tremendous force: when Jesse produces a shoot it must be David." J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 121. Richard Bauckham calls this "probably the most popular text of Davidic messianism in early Judaism." "The Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah 10:34," in *The Jewish World around the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 193. See also John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah* (1852; reprint, Bellingham, WA: Logos, 2010), 1:372; Young, *Isaiah*, 380; Herbert Wolf, *Interpreting Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 103.

the Messiah needs to fulfill his messianic task.⁷² The coming of the Spirit to rest upon the Messiah happened at his baptism (Jn 1:32; cf. Mt 3:16; Mk 1:10; Lk 3:22).

However, the following verses in Isaiah 11 do not focus on the ministry of Jesus during his first advent. They focus on his coming with judgment: “He shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked” (11:4). This passage seems to be picked up by Paul with reference to the killing of Antichrist “with the breath of his mouth” at “the appearance of his coming” (2 Thes 2:8).⁷³ The “rod of his mouth” has resonances with the “sharp sword” that comes from the Messiah’s mouth at his return (Rv 19:15).⁷⁴

The effect the Messiah’s righteous judgment will be a reversal of the effects of the Fall and a restoration of creation.⁷⁵ Older interpreters rejected as a “judaizing” view the idea that the passage truly predicts a change in the animal world such that carnivorous animals will become friendly with prey animals.⁷⁶ These older amillennialists were uncomfortable with including in redemption the restoration of all creation. This discomfort is no longer shared by current amillennialists. E. J. Young notes, “Isaiah has placed great stress upon the animals themselves, and this very fact shows that it is impossible to carry through in detail a figurative interpretation.”⁷⁷ He further notes, drawing on Hengstenberg, that Genesis 1:30 gave to the animals only plants to eat. Isaiah 11 is thus prophesying the restoration of creation.⁷⁸ This is precisely what we would expect in light of passages preceding predictions that redemption will encompass the animal world (Lv 26:6; Hos 2:18; Am 9:13–14; cf. Is

⁷² Young, 381–82; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 279; Motyer, *Isaiah*, 122; Edward E. Hindson, “Isaiah 11:1–16: The Reign of the Righteous Messianic King,” in *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy*, ed. Michael Rydelink and Edwin Blum (Chicago: Moody, 2019), 849.

⁷³ William De Burgh, *The Messianic Prophecies of Isaiah*, (Dublin: Hodges, Smith, and Co., 1863), 91; Oswalt, 281. E. J. Young also references 2 Thessalonians 2:8, noting, “At the great last day of judgment, the voice of God will speak and the wicked will perish everlastingly” (385). See also G. K. Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, IVPNTC (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 221–22; Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *1–2 Thessalonians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 534.

⁷⁴ De Burgh, 92; Oswalt 281; Motyer, *Isaiah*, 123. John Calvin and Matthew Poole both connect the imagery in this verse to the preaching of the gospel by which, in Poole’s words, “he subdued the world to himself, and will destroy his enemies.” Calvin, 379; Matthew Poole, *Annotations upon the Holy Bible* (New York: Robert Carter, 1853), 2:354. However, understanding the sword and the breath to be the preaching of the gospel fits uncomfortably with the emphasis on judgment in both Isaiah 11 and in the New Testament allusions back to Isaiah 11:4.

⁷⁵ De Burgh, 94–95.

⁷⁶ Joseph A. Alexander, *Commentary on Isaiah* (1867; repr., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1992), 1:253; cf. Poole, 2:354.

⁷⁷ *Isaiah*, 390.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 390–91. J. Alec Motyer and Geoffrey Grogan also cite Gn 1:29–30, and Motyer speaks of “Eden restored.” Motyer, *Isaiah*, 124; Geoffrey W. Grogan. “Isaiah,” in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 6:545. On this passage as prophesying a restoration of creation, see also Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, trans. James Martin, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (1866–91; reprint, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 7:184; Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, NSBT (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007), 66. Oswalt misses the allusion to Genesis 1:29–30 and thus erroneously concludes that the passage must be figurative because “the lion’s carnivorousness is fundamental to what a lion is” (283). Oswalt also thinks a figurative interpretation is more likely because he does not wish to constrain the “they” in 11:9 to animals alone (284). However, since a human is mentioned in v. 8, humans are naturally included within the “they” of 11:9. Williamson notes, “The inclusion of human characters in the passage is a telling argument against any such [allegorical] approach.” H. G. M. Williamson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 1–27*, ICC (New York: T&T Clark, 2018), 2:657.

35:1, 6; 30:26; 31:19; 60:20; 65:17; 66:22; Ez 34:25).⁷⁹ Such an interpretation is confirmed by later Scripture (Zec 14:6–8; Rom 8:20–21; 1 Cor 15:25–28; Heb 2:5–9).⁸⁰ Young observes that “this condition will not be realized until the earth is covered with the knowledge of the Lord, and that condition will only obtain in the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.”⁸¹

The futurist thrust to Isaiah 11:3–9 places a futurist thrust on this title of the Spirit. The futurist understanding of this title is strengthened given its reappearance in Revelation 4:5 in connection with the “flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder” that emanate from the throne. This theophanic imagery recurs throughout the central section of the book and climaxes with the pouring out of the seventh bowl and the fall of Babylon the great (16:18–21).⁸²

“The Faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the Dead, and the Ruler of Kings on Earth” (Rv 1:5)

John’s threefold description of Jesus, “faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth,” alludes to Psalm 89:27, 37 [88:28, 38, LXX].⁸³ In Psalm 89:38 the moon is the “faithful witness” testifying that the Davidic covenant will be as enduring as the moon.⁸⁴ John applies the title to Christ as the one who will fulfill what the moon testified to.⁸⁵ The phrases “firstborn from the dead” and “ruler of kings on earth” allude to Psalm 89:27. Psalm 89 is an affirmation of the enduring Davidic covenant in the face of circumstances that make it appear as though God would fail to keep the covenant. The cry, “How long” (Ps 89:46), is not a cry of despair but of hope. At some point in the future, YHWH will no longer hide himself; he will display his steadfast love for David.

⁷⁹ Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 2007), 268–269. Edward Adams, *The Stars Will Fall from Heaven: Cosmic Catastrophe in the New Testament and Its World*, Library of New Testament Studies (New York: T&T Clark 2007), 34. Leviticus 26:3–12 describe the eschatological blessings Israel would have enjoyed for obedience to the Mosaic covenant. Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 2000), 315; Richard S. Hess, “Leviticus,” in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 1:813. Hosea 2:18 picks up on the Leviticus 26 passage and envisions a future realization of these blessings in the new covenant. Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 1997), 87; Peter J. Gentry & Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 530. The other passages noted above all seem to be eschatological passages as well.

⁸⁰ De Burgh, 95; Grogan, 6:545; Adams, 34.

⁸¹ *Isaiah*, 391; cf. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 125. Young does qualify this statement by saying this is true of the passage “in its fullness.” He is willing to also grant the figurative interpretation, in which “peace is introduced into the hearts of men,” as a valid understanding of the passage for the present time. However, given the “creation regained” understanding of the passage, the figurative reading lacks exegetical warrant.

⁸² One might object to the claimed futurist thrust of this title for the Spirit by noting that the actual anointing of Jesus by the Spirit took place at the beginning of Jesus’s earthly ministry. However, this is mitigated by the fact that John the Baptist alluded to Isaiah 10:34–11:4 in a statement concerning the eschatological judgment that the Messiah would bring (Mt 3:10–12; Lk 3:9, 15–17). When John speaks of a baptism by fire, he is referring the fire of judgment. Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, ed. Raymond O. Zorn., trans., H. de Jongste (Philadelphia: P&R, 1962), 29–30; George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed., ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 34–35. On John the Baptist’s allusion to Isaiah 10:34, see Bauckham, 200–204.

⁸³ Thomas, 69; Beale, *Revelation*, 190; Osborne, 62.

⁸⁴ John Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, BCOTWP (Grand Rapids: Baker 2007), 683–84; Geoffrey Grogan *Psalms*, THOTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 156.

⁸⁵ One might wonder if Psalm 89 is really being alluded to here, but this is one of the few places in the LXX where this phrase occurs (elsewhere only Prv 14:5, 25; Is 8:2; Jer 49:5).

The psalmist calls on God to remember with confidence that he will establish his rule on earth through a Davidic king.⁸⁶ One might think that this prayer was answered with the resurrection, ascension, and session of Christ as the Davidic king (Acts 2:33–36; Ps 110:1). But Psalm 89 looked forward to the destruction of the Davidic king’s enemies (89:23) and to his rule over the kings of the earth (89:27). At present Jesus reigns as the Davidic king in the midst of his enemies (Ps 110:2); in the future he will “shatter kings on the day of his wrath” (Ps 110:5). The hope of Psalm 89 thus remains future for the Christian today.⁸⁷

The middle title, “firstborn from the dead,” is a clear allusion to Colossians 1:18, “He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.” Here, “firstborn” probably indicates both the Son’s preeminence and the fact that he was the first to rise from the dead (cf. 1 Cor 15:20). As Moo observes, “The resurrection of Christ initiates [the] end-time resurrection; his resurrection guarantees and, indeed, stimulates the resurrection of all who follow (1 Cor 15:20; cf. Acts 26:23; Mt 27:52–53).”⁸⁸ There is a purpose that the resurrection is driving towards: “that in everything he might be preeminent.” Though this could be understood as a present preeminence, Moo argues that the future is in view:

However, while it is no doubt true that Christ, through his resurrection, has been installed as lord over all, it is also true that he has yet to manifest that Lordship over fallen and rebellious creation. We do “not yet” see all things placed under his feet (1 Cor. 15:25–28; Heb. 2:8; cf. Phil. 2:11). We therefore suggest that the clause here is a true purpose clause, expressing God’s intention of ultimately bringing all of creation under his rule through Christ.⁸⁹

Thus, these titles of Christ, as with the titles of the Father and the Holy Spirit, are looking forward to the future arrival and triumph of the Davidic Messiah’s rule over the earth. Given this focus, readers should anticipate the book to be about the Messiah’s coming to triumph over his enemies and to establish his rule on the earth.

“A Kingdom, Priests” (Rv 1:6)

Verse 6, by noting that Jesus made his people “a kingdom, priests to his God and Father,” alludes to Exodus 19:5–6, where God first laid out the basic conditions and blessings of the Mosaic covenant.⁹⁰ By identifying Israel as a kingdom of priests, God identified Israel as a “royal company

⁸⁶ Gordon J. Wenham, *The Psalter Reclaimed: Praying and Praising with the Psalms* (Wheaton: Crossway 2013), 51.

⁸⁷ Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms: 42–89*, KEL (Grand Rapids: Kregel 2013), 829.

⁸⁸ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 2008), 129.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 130.

⁹⁰ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC (Nashville: B&H 2006), 422; Duane A. Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, KEL (Grand Rapids: Kregel 2014), 459; T. Desmond Alexander, *Exodus*, AOTC (Downers Grove: InterVarsity 2017), 370; Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 14.

consisting of priests.”⁹¹ Exodus 19:5–6 itself alludes back to Genesis 1:26–28, which reveals that “God intended humanity as a whole to rule as his vice regents over all other creatures [= kings] and to enjoy intimate fellowship with God himself [= priests].”⁹² Notably, Israel was called to this mission in the promised land because Adam had failed to rule in submission to God’s greater rule but rebelled against God. Like Adam, Israel failed to meet the condition of its covenant: “Obey my voice and keep my covenant.” Thus, in the New Covenant Jews and Gentiles are brought together in the church to be “a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Pt 2:9).⁹³

Though there is an inaugurated aspect to both the kingly and priestly offices that the Christian possesses in Christ, a consummated aspect of both these offices remains to be realized. Thomas Manton observed that Christians, with regard to their kingly office, await the day when they will “tread Satan under [their] feet.” Furthermore, the day is future when Christians will be “sitting upon thrones with Christ at his coming, judging the world and angels themselves: Matt 19:28..., Luke 22:29, 30, ... Ps 49:14, ... 1 Cor. 6:2, ... Luke 12:32, ... 2 Tim. 2:12.”⁹⁴ Manton further argued that the Christian priesthood has a future aspect to it. Though Christians do presently “offer up a sacrifice of praise to God” (Heb 13:15), to fully enter into their priesthood Christians must be sanctified and enter fully into God’s presence where they will offer eternal praise (Rv 7:14–16).⁹⁵ Revelation 5:10 specifies that this will be a future reign and a future priestly ministry that will take place on the earth. For premillennialists, this future priestly reign is fulfilled when the resurrected saints “will be priests of God and of Christ” who “will reign with him for a thousand years” (Rv 20:6). However, interpreters of whatever millennial viewpoint can hold that the dominion God intended for mankind at creation will be fulfilled in the eternal state (Rv 22:5).

⁹¹ John A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspective on a Image of Israel in Exodus 19.6*, JSOTSupp 395 (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 75; cf. Alexander, 378, who notes that in the phrase “kingdom of Og,” Og is the king; thus a “kingdom of priests” identifies the priests as the kings.

⁹² Alexander, 368.

⁹³ Beale concludes that the combination of Exodus 19:6, 1 Peter 2:9, and Revelation 1:6 indicates that the Church is now the new Israel. *Revelation*, 193–94. It is better, especially in light of 1 Peter 2:9, to see an Israel typology at work. OT Israel was the people of God in the era of redemptive history governed by the Mosaic Covenant. The Church is the new covenant people of God. The fact that both function as the people of God accounts for the continuity. W. E. Glenny, “The Israelite Imagery of 1 Peter 2,” in *Israel, Dispensationalism, and the Church: The Search for Definition*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 180, 183; Saucy, 205–6; cf. Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?* (Nashville, B&H, 2010), 147–50. However, there is an advance from the type to the reality in that the Church by union with the Messiah and the indwelling of the Spirit is in a much fuller way a royal priesthood. Glenny, 182–183. Israel failed at its mission to be a kingdom of priests, but the Church will carry forward this priestly mission. See Schreiner. *1 Peter*, 114–116. On this reading, it can be said that OT Israel’s function as the people of God is replaced by the Church as the NT people of God. But the *nation* of Israel as an entity to whom promises were made does not disappear with the genesis of the Church. Believing Israelites are joined with believing Gentiles in this new people called the Church. To identify the Church as Israel is thus a category confusion. Israelites and people from every other ethnicity are united in Christ so that they become one new man (Eph 2:15). But this union does not make Gentiles Jews or deprive Jews of their Israelite identity. This is clear from Romans 11, where the natural branches that are broken off or grafted back retain their Israelite identity (Rom 11:17–24).

⁹⁴ Thomas Manton, *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton* (London: James Nisbet, 1874), 19:95.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 91, 95–96, 98.

“Glory and Dominion Forever and Ever” (Rv 1:6)

The phrase “glory and dominion forever and ever” may allude to Daniel 7:14 in the Hebrew: “And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom. . . . His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away.”⁹⁶ This statement comes as part of Daniel’s vision of the Son of Man coming to receive his kingdom. When this takes place is a matter of debate, but the next section will argue that it occurs at the Second Coming.

“Coming with the Clouds” (Rv 1:7)

The declaration of verse 7, that Jesus comes with clouds and that those who pierced him will see him and mourn, alludes to Daniel 7:13 and Zechariah 12:10.⁹⁷ Daniel 7 pictures a world ruled by ferocious beasts. Human rule in rebellion to God’s greater rule is bestial.⁹⁸ In contrast to the beasts, one like a Son of Man will come to rule in submission to God. By the title Son of Man, humanity is indicated, but by coming with the clouds of heaven, this person is shown to be a divine figure (Ex 13:21; 16:10; 19:9, 16; Lv 16:2; Dt 1:33; 1 Kgs 8:10–11; Pss 18:10–12; 68:4; 97:2; 104:3; Is 19:1; Jer 4:13).⁹⁹ This passage, rightly understood, heralded a future ruler over all the earth who would be both God and man and, as man, would rule the earth as Adam was intended to in the first place.¹⁰⁰ In doing so, he will restore redeemed humanity to the rightful exercise of dominion over the earth (Dn 7:27). John’s doxology thus looks to the reversal of the Fall and the restoration of the creation blessing (Gn 1:28) when Christ returns to set up his kingdom.

Beale proposes that Daniel 7:13 may refer to “the whole course of the church age,” including, but not limited to the Second Coming.¹⁰¹ In support of this thesis, Beale follows R. T. France’s interpretation of the Olivet Discourse in suggesting that “Dan. 7:13 in Mark 13:26 and 14:62 refers not to the final coming of Christ, but to the Son of man’s coming in judgment of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.”¹⁰²

⁹⁶ The LXX does not reflect the Hebrew text at this point.

⁹⁷ Thomas, 76; Beale, *Revelation*, 196; Osborne, 68.

⁹⁸ Hamilton, 90.

⁹⁹ Jonathan Edwards, *Notes on Scripture*, The Works of Jonathan Edwards (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 15:235; Miller, 210; Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 187; Hamilton, 149–50; Tanner, 441.

¹⁰⁰ Hamilton, 91; Brandon D. Crowe, *The Last Adam* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 40. The NT clearly identifies the “one like a son of man” with Christ through allusions to this very passage (Mt 24:30 || Mk 13:26; Mt 26:64; Mk 8:38; Mk 14:62 || Lk 21:27; Rv 1:7). This view reaches back to the earliest interpreters and is defended by conservative interpreters up through the present. Hippolytus, *Daniel*, 141; Paul L. Maier, ed., *Eusebius: The Church History* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 26–27 (1.2); Jerome, 80; Edwards, *Notes*, 235; Bavinck, 248–49; B. B. Warfield, “The Divine Messiah in the Old Testament,” in *The Works of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield* (1932; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 3:42; Archer, 91; Steinmann, 357–58. N. T. Wright argues for a corporate interpretation of the Son of Man. *The New Testament and the People of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God (London: SPCK, 1992) 291–319. For a response to this view, see Tanner, 421n724; 435; Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 392n15.

¹⁰¹ Beale, *Revelation*, 197–98.

¹⁰² Ibid., 197–98. Unlike France, Beale suggests that “the final parousia could be in mind” as well.

France's position is that Matthew 24:4–35 || Mark 13:5–31 is entirely focused on the disciples' questions regarding the destruction of the Temple. The topic does not shift to the Second Coming of Christ until Matthew 24:36 || Mark 13:32. Thus the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds is not the return of Christ but his heavenly enthronement.¹⁰³ France argues that the cosmic language of Matthew 25:29 || Mark 13:24–26 (cf. Lk 21:27) is OT language for “far-reaching political change.” Further, Daniel 7, in its original context, is about the enthronement of the Messiah in heaven, not his return to earth.¹⁰⁴ What is seen is not the Son of Man literally returning in the clouds but the effects of his enthronement: “The destruction of the temple (expressed in the strongly ‘visual’ imagery of vv. 24b–25) and the gathering of the international people of God (v. 27).”¹⁰⁵

The difficulties of this view are manifold. Acts 1:11 indicates that the return in the clouds will be visible, as does the reference to “glory” (Mt 24:30; cf. Mk 13:26) and the imagery of lightning (Mt 24:27).¹⁰⁶ Finally interpreters should not minimize the extent of Jesus's eschatological victory:

Readings like France's truncate Jesus's eschatology, which brings the reign of heaven to earth (Mt. 6:10) and renews the world (Mt. 19:28). If all this has already occurred, one wonders at the underwhelming denouement of the glorious future promised by the biblical prophets, John, and Jesus himself.¹⁰⁷

In light of these considerations, it is best to understand Matthew 24:30 || Mark 13:26 || Luke 21:27 as referring to the Second Coming of Christ.¹⁰⁸

France also argues that Matthew 26:64 || Mark 14:62 clearly locates the timing of the Daniel 7:13 events within the generation living during Jesus's earthly ministry.¹⁰⁹ But Davies and Allison decisively reject the claim that in these verses (or in Daniel 7) the Son's coming on the clouds is his ascension to heaven:

There has been some discussion whether the image in our text is of the Son of man going to God—an ascension and enthronement—or coming to earth from God—the parousia. In support of the former one might observe that elsewhere in the NT Ps 110:1 is used to depict Jesus' enthronement at

¹⁰³ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 498, 500–1; idem., *The Gospel of Matthew*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2007), 293–24.

¹⁰⁴ France, *Mark*, 500–1, 534; cf. France, *Matthew*, 396, 923.

¹⁰⁵ France, *Mark*, 535.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 807–9.

¹⁰⁷ David L. Turner, *Matthew*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 584.

¹⁰⁸ John A. Broadus, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, ACNT (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1886), 490; C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, CGTC (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 406; D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 9:567–68; Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 1992), 362–63; D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Gospel of Mark* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1994), 381–82; Bock, 1686; Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 740; W. D. Davies and Dale Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, ICC (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 361–62; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 983; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 202; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 585–86.

¹⁰⁹ R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (Vancouver, B.C.: Regent College Press), 1998), 140–42; 23 5.

his ascension. Moreover, Dan 7:13 says that the one like a son of man ‘came to’ the Ancient of Days, and Matthew’s redactional ἀπ’ ἄρτι might be thought a pointer to the immediate future, which could therefore be Jesus’ exaltation but not his parousia. On the other hand, Daniel 7 is a theophany which issues in the earthly rule of the one like a son of man (v. 14); and v. 22 speaks of the Ancient of Days coming (to earth) for judgement. Further, in Mk 14:62=Mt 26:64 sitting is mentioned before coming, which means that the coming must be to earth, for ‘Jesus patently cannot come to God either at the same time as, or shortly after, he is already sitting at his side’. But the decisive point, at least at the level of Matthew’s understanding, is that everywhere else in our Gospel the coming of the Son of man refers to the parousia; and in 19:28 and 25:31 the sitting on a throne belongs not to the Son of man’s present reign but the eschatological future.¹¹⁰

The question then becomes how to make sense of the “from now on” in Matthew 26:64. On France’s view the *terminus ad quo* for the “now” in “from now on” is AD 70. However, “from now on” does not admit a delay of several decades. It is better to understand Jesus as saying that from that point forward “they would not see him as he now stands before them but only in his capacity as undisputed King Messiah and sovereign Judge.”¹¹¹ There is an already/not yet aspect to this passage, but that is because in these verses the allusion to Daniel 7:13 is paired with an allusion to Psalm 110:1. In the Olivet Discourse and Revelation 1:7 the Daniel 7:13 allusion is paired with an allusion to Zechariah 12:10. That combination focuses on the not yet. In addition, it is worth noting that the seating of Christ precedes his coming in the clouds in this passage.

Thus, NT usage points to a Second Coming referent to Daniel 7:13–14. Certain contextual factors in Daniel 7 also make it more likely that an exclusively eschatological coming is in view. Daniel’s perspective in this vision is earthly (7:2). As already noted, there are compelling reasons to believe that the thrones set up in verse 9 refer to a court of judgment that has been set up on earth.¹¹² Furthermore, the multiple thrones probably refer not only to the enthronement of the Messiah at the right hand of YHWH (cf. Ps 110:1; Mt 26:64) but also to the enthronement of the saints to rule with him (Dn 7:18, 21, 27; Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30; 22:5).¹¹³ Verses 21–22 state that the boastful horn “made war with the saints and prevailed over them until the Ancient of Days came.” The language of coming implies an earthly location. The fact that war is made on the saints until the Ancient of Days comes (to earth) implies that the timing is eschatological.¹¹⁴ As Longman notes, “The battle will continue until the final day.”¹¹⁵ The eschatological culmination of this vision is also made clear by the fact that destruction of the bestial kingdom is decisive and gives way to the everlasting messianic kingdom (Dn

¹¹⁰ Davies and Allison, 531.

¹¹¹ Carson, 555; cf. Davies and Allison, 530–31; Luz, 430.

¹¹² Otto Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, LC (Bellingham, WA: Logos, 2008), 154; Layton MacDonald Talbert, “The Theonomic Postmillennialism of Christian Reconstruction: A Contrast with Traditional Postmillennialism and a Premillennial Assessment” (PhD diss., Bob Jones University, 1992), 164n75; Goldingay, *Daniel*, 361.

¹¹³ Steinmann, 350–51.

¹¹⁴ Davies and Allison, 531; Tanner, 442.

¹¹⁵ Longman, 198; cf. 189–90; cf. Young, *Daniel*, 158, 159.

7:26–27).¹¹⁶ Thus, when the Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days, he is coming from heaven to earth.¹¹⁷ Daniel’s vision of the Son of Man coming with the clouds is a vision of the Second Coming.¹¹⁸ The allusion to Daniel 7 is therefore another indication that John intends for Revelation to be read in a futurist interpretive framework.¹¹⁹

“Every Eye Will See Him” (Rv 1:7)

Further evidence that the Daniel 7:13 allusion refers to the future consummation of Christ’s reign is found in the fact that John pairs it with an allusion to Zechariah 12:10, a passage that refers to the Second Coming.

Anthony Petterson, however, argues that the “day” Zechariah 12 repeatedly refers to is, first of all, the day of the “crucifixion of the Messiah Jesus.” This is when the kingdom came. Only secondarily does the day refer to the Second Coming. Petterson takes this dual reference to indicate that “the ‘day’ also becomes the period of time in between.”¹²⁰ In Petterson’s reading, which he acknowledges to be “a little speculative,” the nations gathering to attack Jerusalem refers to the nations

¹¹⁶ Archer, 48.

¹¹⁷ Talbert, 164n75.

¹¹⁸ Justin Martyr, “Dialogue,” 192–93 (ch. 31); Hippolytus, “Antichrist,” 213 (§44); Theodoret of Cyr, “Commentary on Daniel,” 7.13–14, in Kenneth Stevenson and Michael Gluerup, eds. *Ezekiel, Daniel*, ACCS (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008), 236–37; Eusebius, “Church History,” 1.2 in Maier, 26–27; Archer, 90; Miller, 207; Steinmann, 359–60; Tanner, 442.

¹¹⁹ Jonathan Edwards proposed that “came with the clouds of heaven” was “equally applicable to both [the Son’s] ascension into heaven, when he went to receive his kingdom and to be invested with his royal dominion and glory, and his last coming at the day of judgment, which is called his ‘coming in his kingdom.’” Edwards, *Notes*, 236. In support of this view, Edwards noted that the angel told the disciples that Jesus would return “in like manner” to his ascension (Acts 1:11). Edwards claimed that “like manner” included more than the Son’s ascending and returning with clouds. In both the ascension and return angels accompany Jesus. Edwards also suggested that saints who rose from the dead immediately after Jesus’s resurrection (Mt 27:52–53) ascended with Jesus. Thus, saints accompany Jesus on both his ascension and return. Edwards, *Notes*, 236.

Edwards was right to note the similarities between Daniel 7 and the ascension. It is true that when the Son ascended in the clouds, he was enthroned at the right hand of YHWH (Ps 110:1 with Acts 2: 34–35; Ps 2:6–7 with Acts 13:33–34). Greidanus, 221–22; Hamilton, 148–49; cf. Tanner, 442. Stephen’s vision of the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God possibly “reflects a combination of Psalm 110 and Daniel 7” (Acts 7:55–56). Steinmann, 359. Daniel 7 as a whole has numerous links with both Psalms 2 and 110. The beastly kingdoms of Daniel 7 correspond to the raging nations in Psalm 2. In all three passages the Son of Man is enthroned over the kings of earth, and the kings who oppose the Son are crushed. In Daniel 7 and Psalm 2 there is blessing for those who follow the Son (Ps 2:12; Dn 7:18, 22, 27). Steinmann, 360; cf. Hamilton, 148–49. Steinmann, however, also notes a major difference between these two Psalms and Daniel 7: in Daniel “the Messiah is not pictured as ruling until after the beasts are shorn of their power, whereas in these two psalms, the Messiah’s reign begins the process of defeating the nations.” Steinmann, 360; cf. Tanner, 442–43. The harmonies and divergences of these passages point to the already-not yet nature of the kingdom. Psalms 2 and 110 include both the already (Ps 2:1–7; 110:1–4) and the not yet (Ps 2:6, 8–12; 110:5–7). Daniel 7:8–14, 20–27 is about the not yet, but some of its imagery can be applied to the enthronement of Christ after his resurrection and ascension (cf. Acts 1:9).

¹²⁰ Anthony R. Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, AOTC, ed. David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015), 267. For a similar interpretation of Zechariah 9, see G. K. Beale, “The Millennium in Revelation 20:1–10: An Amillennial Perspective,” *CTR NS* 11/1 (Fall 2013): 61–62.

gathering against Christ in Jerusalem at the crucifixion (Ps 2; Acts 4:27).¹²¹ In confirmation of this reading, Petterson observes that “Matthew reports many of the apocalyptic signs as taking place at the crucifixion (Matt. 27:45, 51–55).”¹²² The pouring out of God’s Spirit leading to the repentance of the inhabitants of Jerusalem occurred at Pentecost (Acts 2:32–37).¹²³ Petterson also affirms that “the NT also connects the ‘day’ with Jesus’ return, when all the nations will mourn the one who was pierced (e.g., Rev. 1:7).”¹²⁴

Petterson contrasts his interpretation with a dispensational understanding of the passage, but a futurist interpretation of Zechariah 12 is not a dispensational innovation. Justin Martyr, in his First Apology, connects this passage with Christ “coming in glory,”¹²⁵ and Hippolytus also interpreted this passage as referring to the Second Coming.¹²⁶ Augustine appeals to John’s quotation of this passage (Jn 19:37) to establish that Christ will return bodily.¹²⁷ Thus the futurist interpretation of the passage has a long pedigree.¹²⁸

The strongest arguments for Petterson’s view include the fact that Acts 2 applies Joel’s eschatological gift of the Spirit to Pentecost and the fact that Zechariah 13:1 speaks of a fountain “opened” “on that day,” which could be taken to refer to the shedding of Christ’s blood on the cross.

But Petterson’s argument does not withstand scrutiny. While the event of Pentecost did involve a restoration of a remnant of Israel,¹²⁹ it was not an instance of the consummation events Zechariah predicted. Zechariah describes the whole land mourning as it had at the death of Josiah (12:11–14). In addition, Zechariah predicted the elimination of idolatry and false prophecy “on that day” (13:2–3). Furthermore, the destruction of the nations “on that day” (12:9) points not to the crucifixion but to the return in judgment as the time for these events.¹³⁰ In fact, the repeated use of the phrase “on that day” points to the eschatological timing of these events. Though the phrase can be used to indicate historical judgments, Eric and Carol Myers observe that after the exile, “‘on that day’ and similar phrases tend to have an eschatological character. They announce the final disaster and accompanying deliverance that will come to all the world in temporary existence but as the ultimate

¹²¹ Petterson, 268.

¹²² Petterson, 268.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Justin Martyr, “The First Apology,” in *The Writings of Saint Justin Martyr*, The Fathers of the Church, ed. Hermigild Dressler, trans. Thomas B. Falls (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1948), 89 (ch. 52).

¹²⁶ Alberto Ferreiro, ed. *The Twelve Prophets*, ACCS (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 273, citing “On the End of the World,” 40.

¹²⁷ Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John 11–27*, Fathers of the Church, ed. Thomas P. Halton, et al., trans. John W. Rettig (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 192 (21.3).

¹²⁸ Petterson’s view, however, is also not unprecedented. See Martin Luther, *Lectures on the Minor Prophets III*, Luther’s Works (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1973), 20:139–42; Poole, 2:1013.

¹²⁹ Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke’s Account of God’s Unfolding Plan*, NSBT (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011), 109–10.

¹³⁰ Petterson is correct to connect Zechariah 12 with Psalm 2. Psalm 2, however, deals with both the inauguration and consummation of the kingdom. The nations are judged at the consummation, not at the inauguration.

resolution to the world's problems.”¹³¹ The allusion to Zechariah 12:10 thus also points the reader toward a reading of Revelation which focuses on the Second Coming of Christ.

Conclusion

The Apostle John begins the book of Revelation with a cluster of OT allusions which together focus on the coming of the Messiah in a Day of the Lord to judge the nations and to establish his kingdom on earth to be ruled by redeemed mankind. This focus within the prologue serves as a signpost to readers for how they should approach the remainder of the book. Though not every allusion, on its own, decisively points to a futurist reading, when they are considered together, the futurist orientation of the prologue is clear.

¹³¹ Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14*, AB (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1998), 316.

A Comparison of 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians as a Means of Gaining Insight into Church Ministry in a Particular Historical and Spiritual Moment

Brian Hand¹

The similarity between certain books of the NT is well known, while the resemblance between others receives less attention. For instance, the Gospels provide four independent but corroborating testimonies to the life of Christ. Three of these show such strong correlation in terms of the events recorded, the order of those events, and even some of the exact wording used by the authors that we give them a special name, *Synoptics*, to reflect that relationship. Ephesians and Colossians exhibit sufficient parallelism that unbelieving critics dispute Paul's authorship of one or the other (or both).² The Pastoral Epistles share a focus on the minister's character and conduct in caring for the church. And Jesus' Olivet Discourse overlaps the eschatology sections in the Thessalonian letters and the book of Revelation.

Because doctrinal concerns take precedence over smaller matters of literary form, we might be forgiven for overlooking some of the less obvious parallels and contrasts that exist among other NT books. But where a consideration of literary form helps the reader understand and express doctrine, it has genuine theological value and warrants our attention. Although commentaries have effectively addressed the background, history, and text of the Corinthian and Thessalonian letters independently,³ the literary relationship between 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians remains relatively unexplored.⁴ An examination of geopolitical features, theological overlap, and textual features of these two books provides evidence for several fascinating comparisons that reflect the state of the churches at Corinth and Thessalonica. In a particular historical moment (the period in which Paul wrote 1

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² Several conservative works on NT introduction document the critical attacks and respond effectively to them. See for instance D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 485–86, 520; Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009), 583.

³ See, for instance, the commentary literature devoted to the short Thessalonian letters. Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 3–8; Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 1–74; D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, NAC (Nashville: B & H, 1995), 21–44; Gary S. Shogren, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 17–37; and Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 3–63.

⁴ For example, even the voluminous commentary by Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *1–2 Thessalonians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), does not observe the series of parallels and contrasts with the Corinthian correspondence developed in this paper. Shogren explores the intertextuality of the Olivet Discourse and the Thessalonian letters, but he does not address the comparison/contrast of 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians (30–37).

Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians), the contrasts between the two letters highlight the different character of the churches at Thessalonica and Corinth, and they generate a greater awareness of specific practical applications of the 1 Thessalonians in the church today.⁵ Corinth, of course, would later repent of its partisanship and support of immoral conduct—as 2 Corinthians aptly describes. And Thessalonica would later fail to separate from disobedient members—as 2 Thessalonians indicates.

To test this thesis (that the several contrasts between 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians provide insight into church ministry in a particular historical and spiritual moment), the reader should first identify the similarities between the two cities. A list of similarities accomplishes a key objective. It provides a control in the experiment. *Something* about the cities must remain relatively fixed and similar in order to make any effective contrast between them. The observer should avoid the “comparing-apples-to-oranges fallacy,” which makes any apparent contrasts more *ad hoc* than real. For example, one could obviously contrast an automobile and an amoeba, but such a contrast would offer little useful information since the two are wholly unrelated to each other in any meaningful way.

Moreover, where elements of strong parallelism exist, the contrasts between the two objects being compared stand out more decisively. Because valid comparison is necessary to establish valid contrast, this paper presents both the comparisons and the contrasts side-by-side under topical headings rather than laying out the case for comparison in one location and for contrast in another. The reader should find that this method retains a sense of continuity between the two letters while highlighting their discontinuity.

The Geopolitical Features of Corinth and Thessalonica

Corinth and Thessalonica lie about 190 miles apart as the crow flies and 350 miles by road.⁶ The first point of similarity between the two is that they served respectively as the capital cities of the Roman provinces of Achaea and Macedonia.⁷ Both Corinth and Thessalonica were the seats of government for senatorial provinces, organized as separate districts when Achaea was split from Macedonia under the Augustan Settlement that created the Roman Empire in 27 B.C.⁸ Both cities were essentially Greek, although the Corinthians prided themselves on their superiority to the

⁵ The thesis for this paper stems from research the author has been completing for a forthcoming commentary on the Thessalonian Epistles in the New Testament Exposition Commentary series.

⁶ As a point of historical curiosity, Philippi, from which Paul had recently come to Thessalonica, is about 100 miles from Thessalonica. This detail leads to an estimate that Paul must have spent some months in Thessalonica for the church at Philippi to have sent multiple gifts for Paul's support. James Moffatt, “The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians” in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 4:3.

⁷ One of the best concise works on the historical, cultural, and geographic backgrounds of this area in relation to the NT remains W. J. Coneybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1856). Because of its nearly unparalleled value in terms of a background to Paul, this work has been reprinted many times and remains in print today.

⁸ Estimates of the exact date of Achaea's separation from Macedonia range from 28–22 B.C., but it is well established that the impetus behind the final separation and reorganization was the Augustan Settlement.

Macedonians in terms of their ethnic purity, wealth, culture, and history.⁹ Macedonia was a frontier region abutting Dacia and Thracia—barbaric by the standards of the ancient city-states of Athens, Sparta, and Corinth. Alexander may have come from Macedonia, but culture came from Achaia. Hodge observes, “The supremacy enjoyed by one Grecian State after another, had at last fallen to the lot of Corinth. It became the chief city of Greece, not only in authority, but in wealth, magnificence, literature, the arts, and in luxury.”¹⁰ Pride and overconfidence appear to have been problems persisting in the Corinthian church stemming from its culture (e.g., 1 Cor 1:18–31; 5:6).¹¹

Paul recognized it would be impossible to evangelize every town and village directly; so he instituted a strategy of proclaiming the gospel in the commercial and cultural centers of each region.¹² From these key cities, the gospel would quickly spread or “sound forth” (1 Thes 1:8) through the smaller towns of each region. Thus, it is not incidental that Paul spent more time in Thessalonica (at least three weeks, more probably 3–6 months, Acts 17:2)¹³ and Corinth (1.5 years, Acts 18:11) than in the smaller nearby cities of Neapolis, Philippi (“some days,” Acts 16:12), Amphipolis and Apollonia (“passed through,” Acts 17:1), Berea (unspecified duration), and even Athens (unspecified duration).

Paul wrote these initial letters to the churches at Thessalonica and Corinth within five or six years of each other.¹⁴ And in an interesting twist of providence, Paul wrote the Thessalonian letters from Corinth (cf. 1 Thes 3:1, 6 with Acts 17:15 and 18:5), and he wrote 2 Corinthians from somewhere in Macedonia (2 Cor 2:13), possibly Philippi or Thessalonica.¹⁵ This fact does not, of course, require that Paul referred to his previous Macedonian correspondence when writing either of the Corinthian Epistles.

⁹ See for instance Sarah A. James, “The Last of the Corinthians? Society and Settlement from 146 to 44 BCE,” in Steven J. Friesen, Sarah James, and Daniel N. Schowalter, eds., *Corinth in Contrast: Studies in Inequality*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 155, ed. M. M. Mitchell and D. P. Moessner (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 17–37.

¹⁰ Charles Hodge, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, GSC (1857; reprint, Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1994), vii.

¹¹ The history of Corinth stretches much further into antiquity. Some pottery discovered in ruins at Corinth pre-date the Bronze Age. Thessalonica was much younger—being founded in 315 B.C. by Cassander of Macedon.

¹² See Robert L. Plummer and John Mark Terry, eds., *Paul's Missionary Methods: In His Time and Ours* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012). R. C. H. Lenski observes, “First Thessalonians 1:8 shows the wisdom of Paul's choice of Thessalonica. It was to serve as a strategic center from which the gospel should be spread in all directions. . . . When Paul passed by other cities such as the two named above, this only meant that they, too, would soon be reached.” *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon* (1937; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 211.

¹³ Leon Morris argues for the shorter duration of approximately one month in *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 3–4. D. Edmond Hiebert offers evidence for a much longer stay including (1) the multiple offerings received from Philippi during Paul's stay in Thessalonica (Phil 4:16), (2) Paul's supporting his ministry through physical work (1 Thes 2:9; 2 Thes 3:8), and (3) the clear attention given to Gentile believers at Thessalonica (1 Thes 1:9), which must have happened *after* Paul's expulsion from the synagogue. *The Thessalonian Epistles: A Call to Readiness* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 16–17.

¹⁴ Commentators generally estimate that the Thessalonian correspondence came in the early 50s (ca. 50–51), and the letters to Corinth came in the mid 50s (ca. 55–57).

¹⁵ See the reconstructions of the relevant Pauline chronology in Köstenberger, Kellum, and Quarles, 441–42, 462–76, and Carson and Moo, 420–25, 542–44.

Thessalonica and Corinth lay along the same north-south secondary road that intersected the Via Egnatia. They also both lay on the sea. According to Acts 17:14–18:1, Paul went from Thessalonica to Berea to Athens before going to Corinth either by boat or land. Many coastal towns in the Roman Empire lacked viable ports either because of the shallowness of the nearby continental shelf or because of the silting up of river deltas,¹⁶ but in the case of Corinth and Thessalonica, both cities had significant ports. Corinth is situated on the four-mile-wide isthmus that connects the mainland with Achaia; so it had two ports. The nearer, western port was Lechaëum, and the farther, eastern port was Cenchrea. The tyrant Periander appears to have connected these ports with the *δίολκος*, a paved path that allowed ships to be carried overland to avoid traveling around the southern Peloponnese. This ability to transit goods safely from the Adriatic to the Aegean across the isthmus, avoiding the treacherous waters and storms of the southern coast of Achaia, brought immense wealth to Corinth. The port of Thessalonica lay on the Thermaic Gulf, a deep-water arm of the Aegean Sea that remains one of Greece's largest ports even today. In fact, the harbor at Thessalonica is so important that it is still today one of the largest commercial ports in the entire Aegean basin. Although it was “young” in comparison to the great Greek city states of the past, Thessalonica rose rapidly to prominence through its commercial trade.¹⁷

Corinth and Thessalonica shared a common language, commercial significance, prestige, and political role in the Roman world of the first century. Both rank among the larger cities in the Roman Empire.¹⁸ These cultural similarities cause their theological and ethical distinctives to stand out in higher relief in the letters of Paul.

As senatorial provinces, Corinth and Thessalonica shared a Roman political climate, and in each city the Jews tried to instigate the legal authorities to act against the Christian messengers. But the outcomes in the two cities differed. In Thessalonica, the accusations that the Jews lodged against Paul produced a legal decision that was hostile to the apostles (Acts 17:5–9). The politarchs were sufficiently troubled that they required Jason to post a bond against potential insurrection, and the Christians had to smuggle Paul out of the city under cover of darkness (Acts 17:10). However, similar accusations by the Jews met with a tepid reception in Corinth (Acts 18:12–17). Gallio rejected the Jewish claim that there was any provable criminal intent or conduct on the part of the apostles. He

¹⁶ See the unfortunate situation of Ephesus. The ancient city is now approximately six miles from the sea—the Cayster River having deposited so much silt at its mouth for the past 2,000 years. Harold W. Hoehner, “Ephesians” in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, ed. Philip W. Comfort (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2008), 16:16.

¹⁷ J. B. Lightfoot observes that Thessalonica was “the key to the whole of Macedonia,” and “it narrowly escaped being made the capital of the world” (although this later comment treats the period after the division of the Roman Empire into East and West. *Biblical Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1893), 254–55. Lightfoot’s observation pertains to the fact that while other cities fell into cultural and economic decline, Thessalonica continued to grow in importance for hundreds of years.

¹⁸ Information on major Roman cities varies widely from historian to historian, but several put both Corinth and Thessalonica among the top twenty largest cities. Neither city ranked nearly as high as Rome, Alexandria, Ephesus, or Antioch, however. Michael W. Holmes notes that Thessalonica “was the largest and most important city in Macedonia.” *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 18. Robert L. Thomas estimates its population at 200,000 in the first century. “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 11:229.

correctly surmised that pettiness lay at the heart of the Jewish accusations and drove the accusers out of his court. Thus, in Thessalonica, Paul “was ripped away from the church by persecution,” while in Corinth, Paul’s ministry opportunity was preserved and at least temporarily protected by the state.¹⁹ Geopolitical features thus tie Corinth and Thessalonica together as key centers of commerce and government.

The Theological and Practical Overlap of 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians

Almost all of Paul’s letters address eschatology in some fashion. For instance, Romans 2:5 warns, “But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed,”²⁰ and 2:16 reiterates this judgment, “On that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.” Romans 8:18–23 addresses the future restoration of creation when believers receive their glorified bodies. Scattered references urge believers to live in light of the appearing of Christ (1 Tm 6:14; 2 Tm 4:1, 8). But Paul emphasizes eschatology at greatest length and depth in the Corinthian and Thessalonian letters.²¹ Table 1 illustrates the frequency with which these eschatological themes appear.

Table 1. Eschatology in the Corinthian and Thessalonian Letters

	1 Cor	2 Cor	1 Thes	2 Thes
Judgment of human works	3:13–15	5:10		1:6–9
Return of Christ	4:5		1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:16	1:7, 10; 2:1, 8
Day of Christ/Day of the Lord	5:5	1:14	5:2–11	2:2
Resurrection of the body	6:14; 15:12–58	5:1–2	4:13–16	
Destruction of the world	7:31			
Expectation of perfect state	13:10			
Reign of Christ	15:24–28			
Defeat of death	15:26, 54–55	5:4		
Transformation of the body	15:46–54			
Deliverance from wrath			1:10; 5:9	
Rapture of living saints			4:15–17	2:1
Tribulation: man of sin, apostasy				2:3–12

¹⁹ Mike Stallard, *The Books of First and Second Thessalonians: Looking for Christ’s Return*, TFCBCS (Chattanooga: AMG, 2009), 4. See also Moffatt, who observes, “From no church did Paul tear himself with such evident reluctance. . . . The Macedonian churches may almost be termed Paul’s favourites. . . . At Thessalonica the exemplary character of the Christians, their rapid growth, their exceptional opportunities, and their widespread reputation moved him to a pardonable pride” (4–5).

²⁰ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

²¹ Even critical commentaries point to the focused eschatology in these books, though they tend to represent it as an emerging apocalypticism in the early church. David A. Sánchez, “The Apocalyptic Legacy of Early Christianity,” in *The Letters and Legacy of Paul: Fortress Commentary on the Bible Study Edition*, ed. Margaret Aymer, et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 68.

Something in the experiences of these two churches made an extensive treatment of eschatology important for them in Paul's eyes.²² While the modern reader cannot confidently recreate the rationale behind this focused treatment of end times, he can observe the similarities between these letters and recognize the literary parallels. These letters also demonstrate that eschatology is not the domain of technical scholars or of mature Christians. There are certain core facts about God's plan for the future that he intends even young believers in a variety of cultural circumstances to understand.

First Corinthians (5:1–13; 6:13–7:11) and 1 Thessalonians (4:1–8) provide the longest Pauline discourses on the sexual conduct within the church. Because the first-century world was as sex-saturated and deviant as the modern era, Paul often listed sexual sins in the middle of vice lists covering numerous other topics (e.g., Gal 5:19–21; Eph 5:3–4; Col 3:5), but he did not develop detailed spiritual responses to these sins except in letters to Corinth and Thessalonica. This fact exposes the first crucial point of ethical contrast between 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians. At the particular historical moment in which Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, the church at Corinth prided itself on its permissive sexual attitudes to such an extent that Paul had to address the church sternly.²³ He urged, “Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?” (1 Cor 5:6). But he issued merely general sexual instruction and warning to the church at Thessalonica that would be equally relevant to every congregation (past and present) as a reminder of proper conduct. Corinth earned rebuke. Thessalonica needed advice. The members of these churches may have had the same tendencies of the flesh, but they treated those tendencies in entirely different ways. At least in the area of their *attitudes* toward sexual propriety, Corinth and Thessalonica exhibit ethical contrast.

Conflict plagued both of these churches, but their respective responses to friction with others constitutes a second ethical contrast between 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians. Whereas the church at Thessalonica experienced external conflict with its surrounding culture,²⁴ the church at Corinth suffered mostly internal conflict at the hands of other believers.²⁵ The sectarian spirit (1 Cor 1) and lawsuits in the church (ch. 6) stand out as the most obvious instances of division, but their participation in meals involving meat offered to idols (chs. 8–9) and the abuse of poorer members at the Lord's Supper (ch. 11) indicate the practical consequences of the same attitudes of selfishness and division. So while the churches shared some experiences, Paul also differentiated those experiences.²⁶ At the

²² This eschatological focus leads John Byron to conclude, “If these letters could be boiled down to one main theme, it is the ongoing need for the Thessalonians to put their hope in God.” *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, SGBC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 9.

²³ “As serious as the immorality itself was the church's tolerance of it. Probably because of their philosophical orientation and their love of human wisdom they rationalized the immoral behavior of their fellow believers.” John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians*, MNTC (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 122.

²⁴ Todd D. Still, *Conflict at Thessalonica: A Pauline Church and Its Neighbours*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 183 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999). See also Holmes, 21, which focuses on this external pressure as one of the primary occasions for Paul's writing of 1 Thessalonians.

²⁵ Virtually every commentary on the Corinthian epistles documents this conflict simply because the biblical text draws attention to it so frequently. See, e.g., Hodge, xix–xxiv, and MacArthur, ix.

²⁶ John MacArthur believes that the combination of Jewish/Gentile opposition applied to both Thessalonica and Corinth, and he links 1 Thessalonians with 2 Corinthians in this regard. If some of the opposition that Paul experienced

historical moment in which it received the first letter from Paul, Thessalonica's response to conflict was faithfulness; it needed the courage and resolve to endure the opposition of outsiders (1 Thes 2:14–16).²⁷ Corinth's response to conflict was partisanship; it needed to resolve the petty, selfish controversies of its own insiders.

In the Corinthian (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1) and Thessalonian (1 Thes 1:1; 2 Thes 1:1) correspondence, Paul links the names of others with his own as participants in sending the letters.²⁸ Since this feature also occurs in Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, and Philemon 1, it cannot be construed as a tight link between Corinth and Thessalonica alone; however, the Thessalonian and Corinthian letters share with only Galatians the address “to the church of the X.” Lightfoot observes that little more can be made of this information than to date these books among Paul's earliest letters.²⁹ The introductory structure may be purely coincidental in this case. A brief look at the theological and practical overlap between the Corinthian and Thessalonian correspondence has shown that they share certain similarities in topic while also exhibiting key contrasts on those same topics.

The Text and Argument of 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians

Although Paul wrote two personal, pastoral letters to Timothy, Corinth and Thessalonica are the only two *churches* to receive multiple letters from Paul. By itself, this represents merely a historical curiosity. When combined with the evidence of the geographical, theological, and textual similarities apparent in the letters, it seems to indicate that Paul viewed these Roman provincial capitals as having a distinctly important role in the evangelization of the West. Textual analysis provides the strongest contrast between 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians. And that contrast provides insight into church ministry in a particular historical and spiritual moment of a congregation.

Comparative vocabulary studies are notoriously difficult because of the numerous factors that contribute to an author's choice of vocabulary. These factors include genre, topic, purpose, audience, proximity in time to other writings by the same author, and employment of scribes. Critics have often pointed out the significant vocabulary differences between the Pastoral Epistles and Paul's other writings.³⁰ The statistics in relation to these books are uncontested; however, the conclusions that unbelieving critics draw from these statistics reflect merely their opinions rather than fact. On the other hand, vocabulary comparisons *can* show similarities in theme or emphasis, particularly when an author produced enough extant writings to draw statistically significant conclusions. For the sake of

in 2 Corinthians was truly external to the church, then the similarities among these letters increases. *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, MNTC (Chicago: Moody, 2002), 33.

²⁷ See the historical reconstruction and summary by John F. Walvoord and Mark Hitchcock, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, JWPC, ed. Philip E. Rawley (Chicago: Moody, 2012), 13.

²⁸ In fact, Dan Olinger notes that “with its sister epistle, I Thessalonians, [II Thessalonians] is the only epistle with no descriptive information about its senders.” “A Theology of II Thessalonians,” *Biblical Viewpoint* 39/1 (April 2005): 41.

²⁹ See J. B. Lightfoot, *Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul*, J. B. Lightfoot's Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul, 4-vol. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 7.

³⁰ See Carson and Moo, 555, who cite the critical case and then refute it. For instance, 306 words occur in the Pastorals but not elsewhere in Paul.

clarity in statistical analysis, it is helpful to know that 1 Corinthians has 6830 words, which comprise 4.94% of the total NT, while 1 Thessalonians has 1481 words, which comprise 1.07% of the NT. An analysis of the following words and phrases demonstrates a high degree of similarity between the initial letters to Thessalonica and Corinth while simultaneously exhibiting the striking contrasts between the attitudes, character, and conduct of these two churches at the time period in which each church received its first letter.

“You Know”

The NT uses forms of the word *οἶδα* 318 times. However, the second person plural form, *you know* (*οἴδατε*), occurs only sixty-three times. First Corinthians and the Thessalonian letters utilize this form much more frequently than statistically expected (12x [19%] and 11x [17%] respectively). Ten of the twelve instances of “you know” in 1 Corinthians include the word *not* to form a strong rhetorical question, “Don’t you know?” Why is this fact so important? When Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, the Corinthian church prided itself on its sophistication, spiritual maturity, and wisdom. But Paul had to remind this church that human wisdom and philosophy are utterly unable to apprehend spiritual truth (1 Cor 2:1–16). This purportedly well-informed and theologically shrewd congregation fell so far short of sound spiritual conduct that Paul needed to say:³¹

Don’t you know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? (3:16)

Don’t you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? (5:6)

Don’t you know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incapable to discern trivial cases? (6:2)

Don’t you know that we will judge angels? (6:3)

Don’t you know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? (6:9)

Don’t you know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? (6:15)

Don’t you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, whom you have from God? (6:19)

Don’t you know that those who work in the temple service get their food from the temple? (9:13)

Don’t you know that all the runners run in a race, but only one receives the prize? (9:24)

The Corinthian church boasted of its superiority, but the believers there were acting in a spiritually immature fashion. They *ought* to have known the answer to every issue that Paul raised. And because wisdom always applies information practically to life, their knowledge should have translated into disciplined, ethical conduct. Instead, they needed significant and sometimes stern correction.³²

³¹ In order to emphasize the grammatical parallelism *within* each book and the contrast *between* the Corinthian and Thessalonian correspondence, the translations provided here are the author’s own.

³² Lawrence O. Richards and Gary J. Bredfeldt observe, “It’s in the sense of ‘response made’ that the Bible often uses the word *know*. In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul asks five times, ‘Do you not know . . .?’ In each case he asks this about concepts they had heard from him and that were familiar. He asks because their lives were out of harmony with the truth

Paul spoke with a different tone to the Thessalonians. His phrasing tends toward words of reminder rather than rebuke:³³

For you yourselves know, brothers, our coming to you has not been in vain. (1 Thes 2:1)

But having suffered before and having been mistreated at Philippi, just as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God. (1 Thes 2:2)

For we never came with a word of flattery, just as you know. (1 Thes 2:5)

For just as you know how, like a father with his own children, exhorting each one of you and encouraging you. (1 Thes 2:11–12)

For you yourselves know that we are set for this. (1 Thes 3:3)

For you know what commands we gave to you through the Lord Jesus. (1 Thes 4:2)

For you yourselves know certainly that the day of the Lord is coming like a thief in the night. (1 Thes 5:2)

And you know what is restraining him now in order that he may be revealed in his own time. (2 Thes 2:6)

For you yourselves know how it is necessary to imitate us, because we were not idle among you. (2 Thes 3:7)

In each case Paul assumed that the Thessalonian believers were either already acting upon spiritual understanding that they possessed or needed minimal course correction to refine their conduct.³⁴ For the most part, Paul simply reminded the Thessalonian church to continue on the path of mature Christian development that it was already taking. The contrast between the two churches is striking. The purportedly mature and wise believers revealed that they were actually immature. The limping and weak believers revealed that they were mature or at least making appropriate progress toward maturity.³⁵ In this specific historical moment in each church's history, Thessalonica appears to have been the opposite of Corinth in terms of practical spiritual application.

they had heard. In the biblical sense they did not know these truths for they were not living them.” *Creative Bible Teaching*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1998), 126.

³³ Randy Leedy observes that in 1 Thessalonians 1:5–2:12 alone, Paul “six times uses language such as ‘ye know,’ ‘ye remember,’ and ‘ye are witnesses,’ and twice more he calls upon God as witness. The impression is inescapable that Paul is countering false information by reiterating the truth.” “A Window into Paul’s Church Planting Heart,” *Biblical Viewpoint* 38/1 (April 2004): 5.

³⁴ F. F. Bruce notes, “From these references [in the letters to Rome and Corinth] we gather that his relations with [the Thessalonians] were outstandingly happy. He commends them for their steadfastness in faith and witness even under severe persecution and for their consistently generous giving.” *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, WBC (1982; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), xxvii.

³⁵ Even Paul’s lead-in to the more difficult discussion of sexual purity shows how he “doubles up with his terminology of encouragement to get the attention of his readers.” Stephen J. Hankins, “Sexual Purity in Relation to Sanctification,” *Biblical Viewpoint* 38/1 (April 2004): 18.

“Now Concerning”

First Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians are the only letters of Paul to use the expression *now concerning* (περὶ δέ; 6x and 2x respectively) to introduce important topics and transitions (1 Cor 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12; 1 Thes 4:9; 5:1). Including the observations that four to six years separated these letters and that Romans was written in between them makes such a similarity highly unusual. “Now concerning” does not appear in Paul’s earlier or later letters in spite of the fact that each of his other letters exhibits transitions between topics. Although an author’s use of distinctive vocabulary changes with topic, an author’s use of particles, conjunctions, and structure tends to be less flexible. So it is unusual that Paul would use περὶ δέ only in these letters. Paul likely had access to his autographal manuscripts; so it seems possible that he reread or remembered his earlier letter to Thessalonica when writing 1 Corinthians. If so, he may have made use of similar phrasing based on his previous writing. This raises a point of valuable comparison. Paul’s use of similar phrasing relates these two churches to each other at least in terms of syntactical expression. Table 2 provides the full list of these transitions in Paul.

Table 2. περὶ δέ in Paul

1 Cor 7:1 Περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐγράψατε, καλὸν ἀνθρώπῳ γυναικὸς μὴ ἄπτεσθαι.	Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.”
1 Cor 7:25 Περὶ δὲ τῶν παρθένων ἐπιταγὴν κυρίου οὐκ ἔχω.	Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord.
1 Cor 8:1 Περὶ δὲ τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων, οἶδαμεν ὅτι πάντες γινώσκιν ἔχομεν.	Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.”
1 Cor 12:1 Περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν, ἀδελφοί, οὐ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν.	Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.
1 Cor 16:1 Περὶ δὲ τῆς λογείας τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους.	Now concerning the collection for the saints.
1 Cor 16:12 Περὶ δὲ Ἀπολλῷ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ.	Now concerning our brother Apollos.
1 Thes 4:9 Περὶ δὲ τῆς φιλαδελφίας οὐ χρειαν ἔχετε γράφειν ὑμῖν.	Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you.
1 Thes 5:1 Περὶ δὲ τῶν χρόνων καὶ τῶν καιρῶν, ἀδελφοί, οὐ χρειαν ἔχετε ὑμῖν γράφεσθαι.	Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you.

“Faith, Hope, and Love”

Although these core theological virtues appear sprinkled throughout Paul’s writings, only 1 Corinthians (13:13) and 1 Thessalonians (1:3, 5:8) present the full Pauline triad of faith, love, and hope side by side (πίστις, ἐλπίς, ἀγάπη). Table 3 shows where Paul cites at least two of these virtues together. Two out of the three virtues appear together fairly commonly, but reference to all three occurs only in letters to Corinth and Thessalonica.

Table 3. Combined Citations of Faith, Hope, and Love in Paul

	Faith	Hope	Love
1 Cor 13:13; 1 Thes 1:3; 5:8	•	•	•
Rom 5:2; 2 Cor 10:15; Gal 5:5; Col 1:23	•	•	
Rom 5:5		•	•
1 Cor 13:2; 2 Cor 8:7; Gal 5:6, 22; Eph 1:15; 3:17; Col. 1:4; 1 Thes 3:6; 2 Thes 1:3; 1 Tm 1:5, 14; 2:15; 4:12; 6:11; 2 Tm 1:13; 2:22; 3:10; Ti 2:2	•		•

In the letter to Corinth, Paul holds up love as something that the Corinthians must aspire to—having exhibited a series of internal church deficiencies in this regard—but in the letter to Thessalonica, Paul represents the believers as proficient in these virtues and merely needing to continue and to strengthen the good that they were already practicing. The church at Corinth was so pervasively full of strife and selfishness that Paul needed to depict love as the principal virtue that must undergird all other Christian conduct. Even the exercise of dramatic spiritual gifts held no value apart from love. Corinth needed rebuke and transformation. Thessalonica needed praise and reinforcement. Thus, at the moment of Paul’s writing of these initial letters, one church is conceptually the antithesis of the other in terms of this practical Christian virtue.

“Brothers”

Paul refers to believers as brothers (ἀδελφοί) frequently throughout his epistles, but several letters stand out in their high rate of usage of this term. Galatians and Philippians join 1 Corinthians and the two Thessalonian Epistles in emphasizing the brotherly status of believers. In Corinth, brothers were at war with each other over their spiritual mascots and rhetoricians (1 Cor 1:10–13). They fought each other through lawsuits (1 Cor 6:1–11), and they selfishly abused each other in the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:17–22). On the other hand, the Thessalonian brothers exhibited unity in suffering (1 Thes 2:14), in faith (1 Thes 3:7), in conduct (1 Thes 4:1, 10; 5:4), and in knowledge (1 Thes 5:1). Paul says to the Corinthians, “You are brothers. Act like it,” while he says to the Thessalonians, “You are acting like brothers. Good job. Keep it up.” The contrast between the two is striking, and it supports the observation that in this brief “snapshot” in history, Corinth and Thessalonica were opposites in terms of virtue.

“Burden”

In the NT only 2 Corinthians 2:5, 1 Thessalonians 2:9, and 2 Thessalonians 3:8 use the Greek word ἐπιβαρέω for *burdening* or *laying a burden on* in reference to payment for services. As Paul traveled from city to city throughout the Roman world, he often received support from the churches (e.g., Phil 4:16–18). In fact, 1 Timothy insists that spiritual leaders be paid for their ministry (5:17–18). But when Paul established his bases of ministry operation in Corinth and Thessalonica, he explicitly refused payment for ministry activities (1 Cor 9:12, 15; 2 Cor 11:7–9; 12:13–14; 1 Thes 2:7–9; 2 Thes 3:8–9). Instead, he worked with his own hands to pay for his support. At one point Paul defended his *right* to receive payment from the church at Corinth while refusing to accept such a payment (1 Cor 9:6–11, 13–14). At least as far as Paul’s written record indicates, he refused pay for his ministry activities *only*

in these provincial capital cities of Thessalonica and Corinth. This establishes a strong connection between these two cities, which makes the points of contrast between them clearer. This shared characteristic also demonstrates that Paul's insistent contrast of the two churches did not stem from some sort of antipathy toward the Corinthian believers but from their conduct at the time he wrote to the church. He was not exercising partiality or emotional favoritism when he encouraged Thessalonica but rebuked Corinth. For his part, his attitudes and ministry patterns were the same in both cities. Therefore, the difference in tone between these letters derived from the responsiveness of the churches to doctrine and its practical application.

“Imitators”

Out of all of Paul's epistles, only the epistles to Corinth (4:16; 11:1) and Thessalonica (1 Thes 1:6; 2:14) use the noun *imitators* (μιμηταὶ) more than once. In both of its instances, 1 Corinthians commands the believers to imitate Paul. In both of its instances, 1 Thessalonians indicates the believers are *already* imitating the apostles, the Lord, and fellow believers. This difference reflects the contrasting conduct of the churches at that time. Apparently, the sophisticated Corinthians were less eager to follow the apostle than their Macedonian counterparts were. The Corinthians needed to start following their divinely appointed leaders, while the Thessalonians needed to continue a process they had already begun.

“Endure”

The verb *στέγω* occurs only four times in the NT (1 Cor 9:12; 13:7; 1 Thes 3:1, 5). Paul typically chooses different words (such as *ὑπομονή*) to express his common theme of endurance; however, his letters to Corinth and Thessalonica use *στέγω*. Such small vocabulary selections could be coincidental, but it could indicate that Paul reread his letters to Thessalonica in preparation for writing to Corinth.

“Coworker”

Although Paul uses the concept of coworkers (*συνεργός*) frequently (e.g., Rom 16:3, 9, 21; Phil 2:25; 4:3; Col 4:11; Phlm 1, 24), only 1 Corinthians 3:9 and 1 Thessalonians 3:2 refer to a *human* as “God's coworker.” In every other reference to coworkers, Paul relates Christian leaders to each other as coworkers. Once again, the Corinthian and Thessalonian correspondence share a precise point of similarity that sharpens the previously noted contrasts between the two.

“Those Who Sleep”

Normally *κοιμάομαι*, a common term for sleep, refers to human physical tiredness and the need to rest; however, Paul uses “sleep” euphemistically to refer to departed believers only in 1 Corinthians (7:39; 11:30; 15:6, 18, 20, 51) and 1 Thessalonians (4:13, 14, 15). Had Paul addressed the resurrection only in these two epistles, the force of this argument might be blunted somewhat. But

resurrection (ἀνάστασις) plays a role in Romans, Philippians, and 2 Timothy without Paul's resorting to this euphemism of sleep.

“Have Nothing to Do with”

The verb *συναναμίγνυμι* appears exclusively in 1 Corinthians 5:9, 11, and 2 Thessalonians 3:14. While the inclusion of 2 Thessalonians in this instance casts a wider net in research than the thesis requires, it provides important historical information that informs our view of these churches. In each instance, Paul requires that the church exhibit a specific attitude toward disobedient brothers. While 1 Corinthians spotlights immorality as the reason for the withdrawal of Christian fellowship, it also lists other sins including greed, idolatry, abusive speech, drunkenness, and theft. Second Thessalonians indicates that general disobedience to any apostolic command is warrant for the church's disciplinary action. Given the pervasive focus of the Pastoral Epistles on a withdrawal from false teachers, the reader might expect Paul to use *συναναμίγνυμι* in at least a few instances, but he reserves its use for Corinth and Thessalonica. Note, however, that by the time Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians he needed to draw attention to the failure of the Thessalonian believers in the area of separation. Thus, the attitudes and conduct of the churches were not static. Corinth could repent, and Thessalonica could fall. A church is never so fixed in its current spiritual state that it cannot later be sanctified or fail.

Additional Connections

A few other terms appear occasionally elsewhere in Paul's writings but are rare enough that the overlap between the Corinthian and Thessalonian correspondence is possible. For example, *properly* (εὐσχημόνως) and its cognates appear in Paul once in Romans, four times in 1 Corinthians (7:35; 12:23–24; 14:40), and once in 1 Thessalonians (4:12). Because it is simply an adverb, this usage is inadequate to establish any conclusion, but it may corroborate the comparison developed in the more evident connections. Paul's expression *we do not want you to be uninformed*—as an introduction to a new doctrine that readers are unfamiliar with or have forgotten—occurs only in Romans (1:13; 11:25), 1 Corinthians (10:1; 12:1), 2 Corinthians (1:8) and 1 Thessalonians (4:13). And the theme of labor, generally, finds emphasis in these letters. For instance, *μóχθος* occurs exclusively in 2 Corinthians 11:27, 1 Thessalonians 2:9, and 2 Thessalonians 3:8. And though *κόπος* occurs eighteen times in the NT, the Corinthian letters have six and the Thessalonian letters have four of these instances. Such a disproportionately high grouping stresses the fact that both the Corinthian and Thessalonian correspondence deal extensively with apostolic ministry labor.

The similarities in theme and vocabulary indicate that Corinth and Thessalonica share some important characteristics, while the disparities in tone and the stern rebuke leveled at Corinth—in the very same areas in which Thessalonica excels—highlights the contrast between these cities at the time that they received their initial letters from Paul.

Two final thematic connections complete a comparison and contrast of Corinth and Thessalonica. Because of its inclusion of 2 Corinthians in the contrast, however, it does not advance

the thesis directly. The first thematic connection involves the mechanism by which the apostles took comfort from the coming of a colleague. Table 4 compares the two key texts.

Table 4. Comfort in Corinth and Thessalonica

2 Corinthians 7:6–7	1 Thessalonians 3:6–8
But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the <i>coming</i> of <i>Titus</i> , and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was <i>comforted by you</i> , as he told us of your <i>longing</i> , your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more.	But now that <i>Timothy</i> has <i>come</i> to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and <i>long</i> to see us, as we long to see you—for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been <i>comforted about you</i> through your faith. For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord.

Note how closely these passages align. Both express the return of an apostolic messenger (Titus/Timothy). Both use the expression *comforted by/about you*, which translates the same words in the Greek text (παρακαλέω + ἐπί + ὑμεῖς). Both express the “longing” of the converts using the same Greek root (ἐπιποθ-). This root occurs eleven times in Paul’s writings, but these are the only two instances in which the desire is directed back towards Paul from his converts. This phrasing highlights something similar about the two churches.³⁶

Second, Paul describes his manner of coming to both Corinth and Thessalonica as lacking rhetorical manipulation (1 Cor 2:1–3; 1 Thes 2:4–6).³⁷ Rather, his ministry operated through the Spirit and power, which appear side by side in both of these letters (1 Cor 2:4; 1 Thes 1:5).³⁸ This explicit rejection of rhetoric in favor of the Spirit does not recur in Paul’s other letters.

Conclusion

Many physical, political, and commercial ties connect Thessalonica and Corinth; however, at the distinct historical moment in which Paul wrote the first letters to these churches, the Thessalonian

³⁶ Had the exact expression been commonplace in the language so that any attempt to indicate relief at the arrival of a messenger would have utilized these words, the force of the argument would be blunted. But Paul routinely had messengers coming and going between the churches and himself. And the wording of these instances throughout the NT indicates that there was no set pattern of phrasing that required Paul to phrase his statements to Corinth and Thessalonica in exactly this fashion.

This argument thus appeals to the concept of necessity in language. If a writer has only one available expression at his disposal, the reuse of that expression does not indicate a deliberate comparison or contrast. However, if a language admits many similar expressions and a given author demonstrates his own widespread use of those varied expressions, then a close similarity in wording in two instances has a greater probability of being intentional.

³⁷ Although a number of commentators attempt the analysis of both the Corinthian and Thessalonian letters in terms of ancient rhetoric and claim that the identification of rhetorical form is crucial to understanding Paul’s point, G. K. Beale disagrees. “While it is likely true that Paul’s attempts to persuade his readers about what he was writing reflected some very general cultural patterns of oral persuasion, it is unlikely that the apostle utilized the classical Greek or Roman rules of rhetoric. . . . Likewise, the patterns and kinds of ancient epistolography lend some understanding to Paul’s letters but by no means provide the interpretive key to them.” Beale points to 1 Corinthians 1:20–2:16 and 2 Corinthians 10:10–11 as evidence, and he could have added Paul’s claims in 1 Thessalonians as well. *1–2 Thessalonians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2003), 23–24.

³⁸ Gregory H. Harris explores this emphasis on the Word of God in contrast to the words of man. “The Word of God or the Word of Man? 1 Thessalonians 2:13,” *MSJ* 26/2 (Fall 2015): 185–95.

church seems to be the practical opposite of Corinth. The record of these two churches of approximately the same age in similar cities is strikingly dissimilar. The first letter to Corinth exhibits the Corinthians' prejudice, carnality, immorality, selfishness, immaturity, and pride. The first letter to Thessalonica shows the Thessalonians' faith, obedience, love, and relative spiritual maturity.

Up to this point, the analysis attempted in this article has proven to be mostly academic. It establishes the scope of Paul's wording that has formed the basis for our comparison/contrast, but it does not offer much of value for spiritual nourishment. But I suggest that exactly this kind of comparison and contrast of the letters to Thessalonica and Corinth allows the Christian reader to grasp the distinctive contribution that 1 Thessalonians makes to doctrine and practice. Grant Osborne observes candidly, "The Letters to the Thessalonians are often considered to be among the less important of Paul's Letters."³⁹ First Thessalonians does not offer the theological "punch" or depth of books like Romans and Galatians. It does not address detailed practical issues like 1 Corinthians or even the latter half of Ephesians. So readers can skip over 1 Thessalonians without understanding its purpose. The reader who understands its distinctive contribution gains greater appreciation for its value, and a recognition of its contrast with 1 Corinthians helps us highlight that distinctive contribution. First Corinthians holds heightened value in times of moral trouble, disobedience, church anarchy, and church conflict, but 1 Thessalonians exhibits its value during times of obedience and devotion.⁴⁰ When believers are walking in the Spirit, the Adversary does everything in his power to make them fret, doubt, and fall. At such times of faithfulness, God's people do not need the stinging rebuke that is appropriate for disobedient servants. They need the encouragement to press on in the faith. They need the comfort that God sees and knows their situation, and they need the hope that Christ is coming again.

It is precisely because these first letters to Corinth and to Thessalonica possess the qualities of similarity and difference, most of which stem simply from the situations that occasioned the respective books, that they convey their distinctive messages so effectively. By recognizing the contours of these two churches, the reader gains a greater appreciation of the work of God in varied human circumstances. Instead of running the Pauline letters together in a fashion that obliterates the uniqueness of each, and instead of relegating small books like the Thessalonian Epistles to the back corner of New Testament studies, we might instead marvel at the wisdom and kindness of a God who addresses His people both when they are carnal, needing censure, and when they are spiritual, needing comfort.

First Corinthians might preach, "In light of the gospel, unlearn and replace worldly conduct," but 1 Thessalonians proclaims, "In light of the coming of Christ, remember and reinforce core truths of the gospel."⁴¹ The spiritual growth and obedience of the Thessalonian believers contrasts with the

³⁹ Grant R. Osborne, *1 & 2 Thessalonians: Verse by Verse*, ONTC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2018), ix.

⁴⁰ Holmes concurs with this claim, arguing that both halves of 1 Thessalonians have encouragement and strengthening as their themes (22). Dan Olinger cites as the theme of 1 Thessalonians, "Building on a godly foundation." "Introduction to I Thessalonians," *Biblical Viewpoint* 38/1 (April 2004): 1.

⁴¹ Proposed themes for Thessalonians differ, of course, by author. For example, "the letter was essentially a reassurance or reconfirmation of believers whose hope had been vanquished," and "the situation underlying 1 Thessalonians was essentially one of distress, fear and insecurity." Colin R. Nicholl, *From Hope to Despair in Thessalonica*:

immaturity and disobedience of the Corinthians; the comfort and encouragement for the Thessalonians stand opposite the stern rebuke of the Corinthians; and—though embedded in the same wicked and pagan surrounding culture—the church at Thessalonica proves to be something of an antithesis to Corinth at the particular spiritual-historical moment in which Paul wrote his first letters to each church.

By comparing 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians, we gain insight into effective church ministry as applied to the life of the church at a particular point in time. Specifically, Paul shows that an effective minister may preach to the needs of the people without resorting to the type of accommodation that compromises the message—that adapting one’s preaching to the contours of life in the church does not necessarily equal a “seeker-sensitive” approach, which gives people what they *want* to hear rather than what they *need* to hear. The pastor whose church members are struggling to separate from sinful cultural practices needs to preach exactly the kind of warnings that 1 Corinthians provides. And the shepherd whose members are walking with the Lord needs to give exactly the encouragement to persevere and continue growing that 1 Thessalonians offers.

Situating 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 126, ed. Richard Bauckham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 184. Nicholl seems to have overstated the case. While there definitely were serious threats that Paul was addressing, the assumption that the Thessalonians’ “hope had been vanquished” overreaches the evidence. Nicholl claims that these believers were “lacking a resurrection hope for their deceased” (ibid.), but this misconstrues the point of Paul’s argument in chapter 4. Paul commends the hope of these believers in 1 Thessalonians 1:3, and he specifically *contrasts* the Thessalonians with “the rest who have no hope” (4:13). Yes, the church had sorrow, but this sorrow had not risen to the level of despair as Nicholl argues. The church *knew* its dead would rise again in the end of time. What they grieved was the impression that their dead would not enter Christ’s earthly kingdom. Paul corrects this misunderstanding by explaining the process of Christ’s coming to raise the people of God first, before the kingdom.

A Review of the Historical Arguments in *The Making of Biblical Womanhood*

Timothy E. Miller¹

Not many books related to biblical studies sell thousands of copies in the first few weeks. Beth Allison Barr's book has. As of this review, it is in its fourth printing, and there seems to be little slow of the momentum. What has motivated such interest? The title of the book reveals the culturally relevant argument: *The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became Gospel Truth*.²

Beth Allison Barr (PhD, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) is a history professor at Baylor University and specializes in the study of church history, particularly women's history and the medieval church. Barr's work seeks to provide a unique perspective on the egalitarian/complementarian (E/C) debate. Indeed, Scot McKnight endorsed the book, noting that "Barr's careful historical examples drawn especially from medieval history hold together a brilliant, thunderous narrative that untells the complementarian narrative."

Barr has a history in complementarian circles. It was because of the E/C debate that her husband lost his job as youth pastor of a Southern Baptist church (2). She changed her views over many years (as the book details), and it appears her husband later embraced egalitarianism as well. Together, they pressed the issue within the church. Rather than changing the doctrinal position of the church, the pastors chose to terminate Jeb Barr from his position. This decision deeply affected Allison Barr, who references it throughout the book.³

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² (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2021). Barr does not define terms in the book, apparently assuming that readers will understand what she means by terms such as egalitarianism, complementarianism, evangelical, and biblical womanhood. The following definitions will be used in this review, and they will be assumed to be the meaning Barr has in mind.

Egalitarianism is the view that men and women are not only ontologically equal but entirely equal in social standing. Accordingly, there is mutual submission in marriage, and there are no roles in the church that are reserved only for men.

Complementarianism is the view that though men and women are ontologically equal, God established distinct roles in the church and home for men and women.

Evangelicalism is best described by David W. Bebbington (*Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, [London and New York: Routledge, 1989], 2–17), who suggests a four-fold definition. Evangelicals are people who are characterized by activism (active evangelism), conversionism (the necessity of the new birth), biblicism (the Bible is the foundation for life and practice), and crucicentrism (the sacrifice of Christ is theologically central).

Biblical womanhood is the most difficult term to define. In Barr's book it appears to be the idea that women should be homemakers, subordinate to their husbands, and primarily learners in the church. It is often accompanied with an emphasis on women learning domestic skills (cooking, baking, sewing, etc.).

³ From the limited material Barr presents in the book, it appears Barr and her husband should have resigned and left in peace. I know the doctrinal code of my seminary, and if I found that I could no longer ascribe to that theological system, I would find it my duty to resign.

Though Barr mentions other experiences that inspired the writing of this book (e.g., sexual trauma [200–05] and over-the-top teaching on gender roles [76, 105]) it is clear that the experience of rejection from her church was a primary catalyst.⁴ The infusion of personal experience throughout indicates that the C/E issue is not merely academic. Barr has felt great hurt by what she perceived as the church's rejection of her gifts and the limitations the church placed on her and other women. Further, she is convinced that complementarianism leads to abuse.⁵ For these reasons, she describes herself as an “activist” for the cause of egalitarianism (1).

Barr recognizes the role that experience played in tipping her over the edge against complementarianism, yet she maintains that “what brought me to this edge was not experience; it was historical evidence. It was historical evidence that showed me how biblical womanhood was constructed—brick by brick, century by century” (9–10).

It is this historical argument I want to consider in this review. Of course, many evangelicals will want to know her position on various biblical texts. Because her focus is on the historical argument, Barr spends minimal time on the exegesis of texts, mostly mentioning that they are misunderstood when applied in a complementarian way, though not adequately demonstrating that fact.⁶ This review article focuses on the historical perspective, since that is her focus.

⁴ “I have told you how my husband was fired after questioning the role of women in our church. I have let you glimpse the pain and trauma that that experience caused my family. I have told you how it pushed me to stop being silent, to speak the historical truth about complementarianism” (201).

⁵ In her words, “Hierarchy gives birth to patriarchy, and patriarchy gives birth to the abuse of both sex and power” (207).

⁶ The second chapter of her book is designed to address the exegetical side of things. She begins with a recognition that her students hate Paul because it is primarily his words—the “texts of terror” (e.g., 1 Cor 11 and 1 Tm 2)—that are used to limit the role of women in the church. She then suggests that Paul has been read wrong, with evangelicals reading *into* Paul cultural assumptions of male superiority. She asks, “What if, instead of a ‘plain and natural’ reading, our interpretation of Paul—and subsequent exclusion of women from leadership roles—results from succumbing to the attitudes and patterns of thinking around us?” (41).

She makes the argument that Paul's original readers would have been drawn, not to the statements of wifely submission, but to the fact that women were addressed (49). Accordingly, these codes are actually “resistance narratives” to the way Rome thought of women (and slaves). Ephesians 5:21 should be read in connection to both husbands and wives, who are to submit to one another. Further, Paul used all types of feminine imagery, which suggests that he disagreed with the Roman view that the female body was weak (51). In all, Paul's view of women was different than that displayed in some Roman sources and suggests that Paul believed differently than the patriarchal Romans. Indeed, by the household codes, “Paul was showing us how the Christian gospel sets even the Roman household free” (55).

To put Barr's argument in its strongest form, she seems to be arguing that just as slavery was not outrightly condemned by Paul but was undermined, so too is patriarchy. This form of argument is powerful, for it is clear that though Paul commanded the submission of slaves, he was not in favor of the slavery system. Yet this is precisely where the divergence from gender issues rests. Whereas Paul made some clearly negative comments concerning slavery (1 Tm 1:9–10; Philm 16), he did not do so for submission in marriage. In fact, Paul grounds the submission of the wife in the creative act of God in 1 Timothy 2, a passage Barr—quite surprisingly—does not directly address.

In relation to Paul's teaching on women being silent, Barr presents “how a better understanding of Roman history can change how we interpret this passage” (57). This history includes the story of how Rome and its military dealings led to the deaths of many men and subsequent riches to many surviving women. After the war ended, Rome attempted to rein in the wealth of these women through a new set of codes, the Oppian Law. Many writers of the day (including Livy) gave speeches, some of them recorded in writing, that were critical of independent women. In light of this history, Barr suggests that Paul in the “silence passage” is doing the same thing he does elsewhere in 1 Corinthians (e.g., chs. 11 and 14), “refuting bad practices by quoting those bad practices and then correcting them” (60). The problem with this

Barr's historical argument has three separate branches. First, she presents a *continuity argument*. This argument suggests that there have been women in leadership positions and women who have preached throughout church history. Such history has been whitewashed to remove the marks of their influence but, observed carefully, such marks are still present. On the basis of such historical precedence, evangelicals and their limitations on women are out of step with church history.

Second, Barr makes a *cultural argument*. This argument suggests that throughout history people inside the church have embraced the subordination of women because of cultural forces outside the church. Accordingly, complementarianism has joined forces with a dominant and pervasive cultural movement that subordinates women and upholds the primacy of men. Patriarchy is not derived from Scripture; it is imposed on Scripture.

Barr's third and final historical argument is a *collusion argument*. Here she argues that historical evidence shows that men have modified Bible translations, reintroduced heresy, and created doctrines (inerrancy) in order to keep women subordinate.

Before addressing Barr's arguments, a preliminary question should be asked. What place should historical evidence have in an evangelical consideration of the E/C debate? Imagine that there were massive evidence that women were in leadership positions and were preaching throughout church history. Would that indicate the need for evangelicals to embrace egalitarianism? The clear answer is no, because for evangelicals the teaching of Scripture is central.⁷ However, if such evidence were found, it may motivate evangelicals to reconfirm their exegesis.

interpretation is twofold. First, in the other cases where Paul is quoting the Corinthians, there are obvious clues or at least indications. D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12–14* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 55. Here, there are none other than the tension some commentators experience reading it. Second, if Paul were responding to the Corinthians' fallacious reasoning, one would have expected an extended discussion, and Paul's short comments are not sufficient. Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 720.

Paul's list of ten women in Romans 16 (62–69) was particularly influential for Barr. She argues that in light of these many women in partnership with Paul, he could not have held to views now associated with complementarianism. This is especially the case since he mentions Phoebe, a deacon, and Junia, an apostle. In response, Phoebe could have been a deaconess, or even simply a servant, as that is what the word (διδάκονος) means. The debate over Junia is well known. Three responses are in order. First, the name is likely masculine (Esther Yue L. Ng, "Was Junia(s) in Rom 16:7 a Female Apostle? And So What?," *JETS* 63/3 [2020], 517–33). Second, the term *apostle* means "sent one" and need not refer to an official title. Third, the designation *well known among the apostles* could refer to one's position among the apostles, but more likely refers to being known by the apostles.

Barr addressed Genesis 3:16 as well, centering her argument on the poorly translated Latin Vulgate rendering: "To the woman also he said: I will multiply thy sorrows, and thy conceptions: in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee" (Douay-Rheims). On this reading, It appears that male headship is a result of the fall, whereas almost every English version, following the Hebrew, rightly notes that the woman's "desire will be for the man" and the man will, due to sin, sometimes abuse his authority. The NET translates the passage well: "You will want to control your husband, but he will dominate you."

Barr is to be commended for not simply skipping over an exegetical analysis. She wanted to write a book that centered on history, and she could have simply claimed that the exegetical side was outside of her area of expertise. A book written about evangelicals that does not address the text would be an odd book indeed. Despite my commendation, however, Barr's exegetical presentation fails to persuade.

⁷ Historically, evangelicals have had Scripture at the center of their identity. Bebbington noted that evangelicals have historically centered their beliefs on the Scripture, believing that "all spiritual truth is to be found in its pages" (12).

Further, imagine that clear evidence were given that evangelical Christians think in categories similar to those championed in patriarchal cultures. Should such evidence cause evangelicals to embrace egalitarianism? The clear answer is no, for alignment with the broader culture neither confirms nor denies the legitimacy of Christian belief. Nevertheless, there have been times where culture has wrongly influenced the way that Scripture is viewed (e.g., Christian support for chattel slavery). Everyone approaches Scripture with a lens, and that lens can distort. Accordingly, when cultural pressures are evident, it is even more important to reconfirm one's exegesis.

The key question is this: Does Barr present the sort of historical evidence that compels evangelicals to look once more at their exegesis? It is my contention that she has not. To substantiate my claim, I will address each of her three historical arguments, starting with the continuity argument, moving to the cultural argument, and concluding with the collusion argument.

The Continuity Argument: Women throughout Church History

Barr, following Elaine Lawless, claims that “women have been preaching in the Christian tradition from the earliest historical moments” (89). The reason evangelicals do not accept women preaching and leading is that they have forgotten the past: “By forgetting our past, especially women who don’t fit into the narrative that some evangelicals tell, we have made it easier to accept the ‘truth’ of biblical womanhood. We don’t remember anything different” (181).

The following list aims to be exhaustive, highlighting each woman Barr mentions throughout the book. The purpose of listing them is to examine whether Barr has presented enough evidence for us to affirm her conclusion that women have been preaching and leading throughout church history. After examining each of her examples, some conclusions will be drawn.

- Margery Kempe, a fifteenth-century woman, was known for “her extravagant worship style, which included disrupting services with crying and sobbing, together with her tendency to debate theology with clergy and even preach to local people” (73). Barr suggests that her example shows that the “conventional wisdom” that a woman could not preach was wrong (73).⁸
- Barr claims, with the following attending proof, that “medieval churches, sermons, and devotional literature overflowed with valiant women from the early years of Christianity. Women who defied male authority, claiming their right to preach and teach, converting hundreds, even thousands, to Christianity” (76). Barr claims that such women “remembered by medieval Christianity undermined modern biblical womanhood” (84).
 - Saint Paula (347–404) “abandoned her children for the higher purpose of following God’s call on her life” (79). She worked with Jerome to translate the Vulgate, and Jerome wrote a biography of her, noting that she “‘held her eyes to heaven . . . ignoring her children and putting her trust in God. . . . In that rejoicing, her courage coveted

⁸ As Barr notes, Kempe herself distinguishes between “speaking for God” and “preaching” (73). She maintained that she did the former and not the latter. Accordingly, it is hard to see how Kempe’s example challenges the view that the medieval church did not allow women preachers or leaders.

the love of her children as the greatest of its kind, yet she left them all for the love of God” (quoted by Barr, 79).

- Margaret of Antioch (fourth century) desired to remain a virgin and was tortured because she refused the advances of a Roman governor. After being tortured, she was swallowed by a dragon, which she was able to destroy with the sign of the cross. Though she was beheaded, thousands were saved as a result of her example (79–80).
- Mary, the sister of Martha, was the “apostle to the apostles” and a “missionary of Christ, affirmed by Peter.” Barr notes that “she preached openly, performed miracles that paralleled those of the other apostles, and converted a new land to the Christian faith” (82).
- Martha, the sister of Mary, encountered a dragon eating a man. She sprinkled holy water on it and gave the sign of the cross, allowing her to bind the beast. She performed other miracles, and preached (83).
- Clotilda, a Burgundian princess, convinced her husband to believe the gospel (88).
- Genovefa, who did miracles and was a patron of the first bishop of Paris, refused to submit to church authorities. Instead, as one historian wrote, she took the “place of a man” as bishop. (87)
- Brigit of Kildare was ordained as a bishop by the error of a bishop who mistakenly read the episcopal orders at her consecration (88).⁹
- Hildegard of Bingen preached throughout Germany in four separate tours from 1158 to 1170.
- “Carolyn Muessig argues that Catherine of Siena was a preacher, achieving ‘the conversion of the listeners and the spiritual refreshment of both the audience and the preacher herself’” (97).
- Katherine Zell, wife of the reformer Matthew Zell, stated that she should be judged “not according to the standards of a woman, but according to the standards of one whom God has filled with the Holy Spirit” (115).
- Argula von Grumbach, an early defender of Lutheranism, noted that her writings were not “woman’s chit-chat, but the word of God” (115). When confronted on her teaching, she responded, “I am not unfamiliar with Paul’s words that women should be silent in church, but when I see that no man will or can speak, I am driven by the word of God when he said, ‘He who confesses me on earth, him will I confess, and he who denies me, him will I deny’” (115–16).
- Anne Askew, who was aligned with the English reformation and became a martyr for the reformation, when confronted by Paul’s command that women remain silent, responded that she was not preaching, for that occurred in a formal setting behind a pulpit. When asked further about her speaking, she recorded her response to the bishop: “I answered him, that I knew Paul’s meaning so well as he, which is, 1 Cor. xiv. that a woman ought

⁹ Barr recognizes that the stories written of this woman and the previous one are hagiographic in nature.

not to speak in the congregation by the way of teaching. And then I asked him, how many women he had seen go into the pulpit and preach? He said he had never seen any. Then I said, he ought to find no fault in poor women, unless they had offended against the law” (116).

- Mrs. Lewis Ball, who went by her husband’s name to indicate his agreement to her ministry, was invited to preach evangelistic services at a Southern Baptist Church in Elm Mott, Texas, from 1934 to 1938. Barr states unequivocally, “In 1934, no one at this Southern Baptist church had a problem with Mrs. Lewis Ball preaching” (175).
- Sarah Crosby, a contemporary of John Wesley, was accepted by him as one who had an “extraordinary call” (177).
- Mary J. Small became an ordained elder in the African Methodist Episcopal church in 1898 (180).
- Texas Baptist Ella Eugene Whitfield, a missionary for the Woman’s Convention Auxiliary National Baptist Convention in 1911, “preached” almost five hundred sermons and visited over one thousand homes and churches (180).¹⁰
- Brekus’ book on female preaching in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America¹¹ provides an appendix with a list of 123 women who “preached and exhorted” in American churches (169–70).

Barr suggests that the multiplicity of examples cited throughout her book amounts to evidence that women were preaching and in church leadership throughout the history of the church. While various critiques could be made of the list above (e.g., the historical accuracy of her claims,¹² the hagiographic nature of some of her examples, the unique historic circumstances of the women in her list¹³), two primary ones will be addressed here.

¹⁰ The source material concerning Ella notes that she was a matron of a school and was engaged in missionary work. It is not clear what this work entailed, nor to whom she proclaimed her messages. Samuel William Bacote, ed., *Who’s Who Among the Colored Baptists of the United States* (Kansas City, MO: Franklin Hudson, 1919), 1:101–103.

¹¹ Catherine A. Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740–1845*, Gender and American Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

¹² Kevin DeYoung’s recent review highlights many of the historical inaccuracies presented in Barr’s list. “The Making of Biblical Womanhood: A Review,” *Themelios* 46/2 (April 2021): 402–412. The present review will simply take her claims at face value, showing that even if everything presented here is entirely factual, her case would not be made.

¹³ One of the major evidences used by Barr is the book by Brekus (see note 11 above). Yet Brekus admits that the larger, established churches did not allow women preachers. Instead, “a small number of new, dissenting sects” did so, and these new congregations were characterized as “anti-authoritarian, anti-intellectual, and often visionary.” Catherine A. Brekus, “Female Preaching in Early Nineteenth-Century America,” in *Women and the Church*, ed. Robert B. Kruschwitz, Christian Reflection: A Series in Faith and Ethics (Waco, TX: The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, 2009), 22. Even within these groups, Brekus notes, one major reason for female leaders was the lack of male leaders. When the denominations became more established, the role for women diminished. Further, while these women defended their actions by referencing Scripture’s women, they “found it difficult to imagine that God wanted them to be the full equals of men,” “they denied that they wanted to subvert male authority in either the home or the church,” and “most did not believe that the Bible sanctioned women’s political, legal, or economic equality to men” (25).

First, if there were evidence that women have been preaching and leading throughout church history, it is surprising that she gives so few examples. Overall, the vast timeframe she covers reveals little evidence of her claims.¹⁴ Barr protects her argument from this kind of claim by noting that women have been intentionally excluded from church history: “Women’s stories throughout history have been covered up, neglected, or retold to recast women as less significant than they really were” (84). It is assumed that this is the reason the number of women is so low and their influence so small. Barr sees a conspiracy here, for it was “male clergy who undermined the evidence” (87). Even the evidence that remains is being mistreated, says Barr: “Despite the significant role women play in church history, and despite clear historical evidence of women exercising leadership . . . popular, modern church history texts present a masculine narrative of church history that minimizes female leadership” (98).

As with any theory that proposes history has been intentionally rewritten, it is impossible to respond persuasively. Any evidence to the contrary is construed as evidence in favor. Of course, there is likely evidence that women’s roles were intentionally minimized in some specific case (though Barr never mentions any), but for this broader claim to be true, there had to be a commitment of male clergy across various ages and locales to commit such a significant act. Is it not more likely that the role that women played in preaching and leading in the church has always been a minor note in church history?

A second problem with Barr’s evidence is that she makes no distinction between women testifying and women preaching. Her examples evidence that such a distinction has historically been recognized, for Anne Askew distinguished between words uttered publicly and those given authoritatively from the pulpit. Anne did the former, but she knew of no one who did the latter. Such a lack of a distinction seriously muddies the water, for it is not clear whether the women Barr references saw themselves as preaching or merely testifying to the truth of Christianity. Complementarians debate this distinction and how best to draw the line. Without making such a distinction at all, Barr loses much of the force of her argument.

In sum, Barr’s evidence falls short of presenting a case for the claim that “women have been preaching in the Christian tradition from the earliest historical moments.” To establish a historical trend would require significantly more evidence and would require a firm distinction between preaching and testifying.

Cultural Argument: The Church Embraced Cultural Patriarchy

Barr’s second historical argument for an egalitarian view of women in ministry concerns the trends of society. She believes that patriarchalism derives from society and is imported into Scripture. In fact, “a gender hierarchy in which women rank under men can be found in almost every era and among every people group” (20). Though the way patriarchalism evidences itself constantly morphs,

¹⁴ This is a problem elsewhere in the book, where very small sample sizes are used to draw exceptionally wide conclusions. For example, she notes that she examined 120 late medieval English sermon manuscripts concerning how they used Pauline texts. On the basis of this small sample size, she makes the following claim: “Women as exemplars of faith became much more important to the medieval religious agenda than women as exemplars of submission and domesticity” (119).

it is always present. In a modification of the words of Jemar Tisby, “Patriarchalism never goes away. It just adapts” (186). The church takes such adaptations and applies them to arguments for the subordination of women.

Barr makes some helpful arguments here, showing that the church can often take the thoughts of society and justify its own actions on that basis. For example, Barr highlights the “cult of domesticity,” a system of beliefs deriving from the industrial revolution, which suggested that women were more pious (and therefore ought to teach children piety), more pure (and therefore needed to be protected), more subservient (because they lacked mental and emotional skills, resulting in the need to be led), and more domestic (and therefore should not work outside the home and should focus on domestic skills) than men (164–65).

The greatest strength of Barr’s historical analysis is evident here. She rightly notes that not all “cult of domesticity” beliefs are based on Scripture. Many were developed on the basis of external forces such as the separation of work from the home and scientific claims about female distinctiveness (164). As complementarians, we must affirm that our conclusions are grounded in Scripture, not the tide of culture. Barr’s work may be a call for some to clarify in their own thinking what is truly biblical from what is merely cultural.

Nevertheless, Barr assumes that if there are ideas similar to the “cult of domesticity” in the church, then women’s subordination must be based on those cultural views. A more realistic view is to see that such “cult of domesticity” ideas have infiltrated some forms of complementarian views of women, but not all. Indeed, biblical complementarianism needs none of the attributes of the “cult of domesticity” to establish the distinction between the roles of men and women in the church.

In reality, the weight of Barr’s arguments depends on the idea that Scripture does not teach complementarity. If, in fact, the Scriptures teach complementarianism, then one may likely find cultural reasons used as *secondary justification* for the position of Scripture, but they do not *ground* the position of Scripture. This is where Barr gets off course. She continues to focus on the secondary justifications, whereas evangelicals ground their position in the text.

It is within this broader historical argument that a tension exists throughout the book: Barr claims that complementarians hold to their position because of the patriarchal pressure of outside culture. Yet Western culture over the last number of decades has moved towards egalitarian ideals. If her thesis were correct that evangelicals follow culture, we would have expected most evangelicals to have shifted towards egalitarianism.¹⁵

The ultimate reason evangelicals have largely not embraced egalitarianism¹⁶ is that the biblical position is not based on culture at all. Once more, Barr underestimates the centrality of the exegetical

¹⁵ One of her chief complaints against the ESV is that it was written “to fight against liberal feminism and secular culture challenging the Word of God” (132). It is not clear how this coexists with the following statement: “The evangelical church fears that recognizing women’s leadership will mean bowing to cultural peer pressure. But what if the church is bowing to cultural peer pressure by denying women’s leadership? What if, instead of a ‘plain and natural’ reading, our interpretation of Paul—and subsequent exclusion of women from leadership roles—results from succumbing to the attitudes and patterns of thinking around us?” (41).

¹⁶ Certainly, an embrace of egalitarian principles has taken place in some quarters of evangelicalism. Significantly, these would be the regions of evangelicalism where the inerrancy and authority of Scripture are more open to question.

arguments. She claims that it is “impossible to maintain consistent arguments for women’s subordination because, rather than stemming from God’s commands, these arguments stem from the changing circumstances of history. New reasons have to be found to justify keeping women out of leadership” (186). However, the church’s justification for male leadership in the church has been consistent from its inception—Scripture forbids female leadership in the church. Evangelical churches are actually moving against the cultural moment, and they do so for the same reason they once went with the culture; namely, they stand aside the stream of culture, grounded on the rock of revelation.

Collusion Argument: Keeping Women Subordinate through Versions and Theology

The final argument Barr makes against the evangelical complementarian viewpoint concerns male efforts to keep women subordinate. Beyond what she views as the intentional whitewashing of women’s roles in church history, Barr highlights two additional ways complementarians have kept women in subordination. In her words, “Two significant (but related) shifts happened within evangelical theology that helped seal biblical womanhood as gospel truth: the championing of inerrancy and the revival of Arianism” (187). To these she adds one more: men have modified Bible translations to keep women in subjection.

Those who understand the history of evangelicalism will be surprised by Barr’s first argument. She claims, “Inerrancy wasn’t important by itself in the late twentieth century; it became important because it provided a way to push women out of the pulpit” (191). On Barr’s reading, inerrancy was created to be a tool used to subjugate women, yet the doctrine was not created in the twentieth century at all. True, the ancient doctrine of the full trustworthiness of the text was clarified and formalized as a doctrine of inerrancy in the twentieth century. Evangelicals found it necessary in response to the liberalism that was quickly gaining prominence within Protestant churches.¹⁷

Barr shows little evidence of understanding why evangelicals hold to inerrancy. Theological conservatives hold to inerrancy because of the nature of God, the one who communicated Scripture. Since he is truth, his word is truth. Barr also confuses inerrancy with a literal, historical, and grammatical interpretation of Scripture. She says that “[inerrancy] teachings buttressed male authority by diminishing female authority—transforming a literal reading of Paul’s verses about women into immutable truth” (189). She goes on, “The concept of inerrancy made it increasingly difficult to argue against a ‘plain and literal’ interpretation of ‘women be silent’ and ‘women shall not teach.’ The line between believing the Bible and believing a ‘plain and literal’ interpretation of the Bible blurred” (190).

In the environment where the Bible had to be taken literally, “inerrancy introduced the ultimate justification for patriarchy—abandoning a plain and literal interpretation of Pauline texts about women would hurl Christians off the cliff of biblical orthodoxy” (190). Ultimately, Barr’s

¹⁷ D. A. Carson edited a volume of essays entitled *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016). One of its central themes is the trustworthiness and inerrancy of the text. The first section on the history of the doctrine (both before it was called inerrancy and afterward; 43–320) does not appear to discuss women, egalitarianism, or complementarianism. More specifically, Bradley N. Seeman’s article, “The ‘Old Princetonians’ on Biblical Authority,” shows that the reason for the clarified statement and defense of inerrancy was the growing skepticism of German liberalism (195–237).

problem appears not to be inerrancy itself but the interpretive method that inerrancy almost inevitably invites. Read charitably, Barr is not arguing that Paul was wrong and that evangelicals need to ignore his teaching on women. Instead, she is arguing that Paul should not be simplistically read without a contextual lens. A “plain and literal” reading is an uninformed reading.

The problem here is the same we have encountered before, namely, what do the Scriptures teach? Does the cultural setting of Paul’s epistles indicate that Barr is right? Certainly, her exegetical section has not established that. Overall, the claim that inerrancy was established in order to keep women in subjection is a shockingly baseless claim, especially by a credentialed historian.

Barr’s second example of the intentional subordination of women by evangelicals concerns the doctrine of the Trinity. Barr claims that evangelicals have resurrected Arianism by claiming that Jesus is eternally subordinate to the Father. Indeed, “evangelicals resurrected Arianism for the same reason that evangelicals turned to inerrancy: if Jesus is eternally subordinate to God the Father, women’s subordination becomes much easier to justify” (195–96).

It is not my intention to defend the claim that the Son is eternally subordinate to the Father. Some evangelicals have done so (e.g., Wayne Grudem and Bruce Ware), and I would not call them heretics. It would certainly be historically inaccurate to call them Arians. And though Barr claims that such a belief is clearly outside the bounds of orthodoxy, no clear council decision ever spoke directly to *this* issue.

In the end, the controversy need not concern the discussion of complementarianism. If the subordination of the Son is merely economic and not ontological, the same complementarian argument can be made.¹⁸ There is no need to appeal to the eternal relations of the Godhead. Indeed, complementarians do not need such an argument, which at best serves as an analogy.

A final way Barr believes evangelicals have sought to continue the subordination of women concerns Bible versions. Her attention is centered on the ESV, which she notes was “a direct response to the gender-inclusive language debate. It was born to secure readings of Scripture that preserved male headship. It was born to fight against liberal feminism and secular culture challenging the Word of God” (132). One chief example is the translation of Romans 16: “Most people who attend complementarian churches don’t realize that the ESV translation of Junia as ‘well known to the apostles’ instead of ‘prominent among the apostles’ was a deliberate move to keep women out of leadership (Romans 16:7)” (69).

Even before the ESV, however, the subordinating influence of translations was present. For example, the KJV chose to describe Phoebe as a “servant” rather than a deaconess and to translate the instructions to “deaconesses” as instructions to the wives of deacons (148).¹⁹ In sum, “because

¹⁸ The argument would go this way: Though the Son is ontologically equal to the Father, it was determined that he would serve in a subordinate role for a limited time. In the same way, though women are ontologically equal with men (being made in the image of God), when a woman marries she enters into a subordinate role for a limited time (until eternity or the death of her husband).

¹⁹ Further, Barr argues that the KJV and the English versions that follow it are often guilty of “flattening” the roles of women by translating different words (i.e., those referring to concubines or slaves) as “wife.” This was done to make the English version match “English sensibilities” (149). Indeed, the insertion of “marriage,” a word that has no direct equivalent in Hebrew or Greek, throughout English Bibles was designed to present marriage as the “ideal state decreed by

women were written out of the early English Bible, modern evangelicals have more easily written women out of church leadership” (150).

Barr is right to say that “all biblical translations are shaped by human hands” (129–30). The best translations seek to minimize this influence by staying as close to the original language as they can while still bringing over the original meaning. This is not always possible, and each translation committee has to decide how best to handle difficult cases. What should be avoided, however, is the intentional modification of the text according to one’s preconceived bias. Ironically, Barr advocates the very thing of which she accuses the ESV.

Of course, some of the passages are simply difficult translational issues. Should Phoebe be a “servant” or a “deaconess”? The word for deacon (διάκονος) is the word for servant. Similarly, debate has surrounded 1 Timothy 3, and it is not clear whether Paul is speaking of deaconesses or the deacons’ wives.²⁰ Finally, whether Junia is “well known to the apostles” or “prominent among the apostles” is a legitimate translation issue, depending on the meaning of Paul’s phrase. Some versions maintain the ambiguity by translating “outstanding among the apostles” (NASB, NIV). When the ambiguity cannot remain (as in the former two examples), the translation inevitably reflects the understanding of the translators. Of course, this is a double-edged sword. Whether Phoebe is a “servant” or a “deaconess” reflects the translator’s view of the entire biblical text.

Barr’s strongest arguments in this section concern the flattening of the roles of women and the flattening of relationships to the husband-wife relationship (146).²¹ In some of these cases the translators were not carefully bringing to the surface the meaning of the text, but rather they contextualized it for their own age. There is irony here, however, for this is the very problem the TNIV faced. It sought to “modernize” the text for a perceived age where “man” and “mankind” could no longer serve as general words covering both sexes.²² Of course, it was not clear then that such an age had come, and the way that the TNIV went about it ended up obscuring other important details of the text (e.g., number and person).²³

God” (148), Barr argues. She further adds that “early modern biblical scholars found that marriage was puzzlingly absent from the Old Testament (the Hebrew Bible), especially for an institution thought to be championed by God” (149). She gives no justification for this claim. But it should be noted that the absence of a specific word does not indicate the absence of an idea.

²⁰ See Yarbrough’s balanced approach, which provides powerful arguments for both sides. Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 209–12.

²¹ Barr notes “that the primary word for woman in the Old Testament was complex, applying to both an adult woman and a woman ‘belonging’ to a man—as a wife, a concubine, a wife within a polygamous relationship, and even a slave. Although certainly aware of these complexities, translators of the English Bible simplified matters by reducing the Hebrew word to two English words: woman (used 259 times in the KJV) and wife (used 312 times in the KJV). Hence Rebekah became Isaac’s ‘wife,’ and Laban’s daughters, Rachel and Leah, became Jacob’s ‘wives.’ Even the raped woman in Deuteronomy 21 became a ‘wife’” (149).

²² Barr, following Hilda Smith, calls this “false universal language” whereby “early modern English pretended to include women through male generic words (like the universal ‘man’) but excluded women by gendering examples, metaphors, and experiences in masculine ways” (146).

²³ Barr’s criticism of Poythress shows that she does not fully understand his critique of the TNIV. The example she cites has Poythress criticizing the change in number (TNIV “human beings” compared to “mankind”). Poythress writes, “The change to a plural obscures the unity of the human race.” Vern S. Poythress, “Small Changes in Meaning Can

Ironically, in light of her criticism of the ESV, Barr suggests that modern versions should modify the text in favor of egalitarian principles. Consider her assessment of 1 Timothy 3:1–13. She rightly notes that the text includes only one general pronoun, “whoever” (τις, v. 1), while modern English versions include the male pronoun throughout. She admits that there is a male referent in the midst of the text (“one-woman-man,” v. 2), yet she maintains that supplying male pronouns is an example of a “relentless and dominant narrative of male bias” in translation (147–48).²⁴ The problem with her assessment is that it is nearly impossible to translate the text into English without gendered pronouns.

In Greek, the original pronoun was indefinite because it was stressing the general nature of the statement: “This is a faithful saying, ‘whoever desires the office of overseer desires a good work.’” After this pronoun, it was not necessary to supply another pronoun in Greek, which can often operate with only verbs (because verbs include the subject). Since English does not do this, a pronoun has to be supplied. And since the instructions indicate that the person must be a “one-woman-man,” then it is fairly clear that the rest of the instructions should be taken in reference to men. Indeed, even the TNIV used masculine pronouns here. To make the passage genderless would not only make for horrendous English, but it would also obscure the text.

Barr is right to highlight the effect that versions can have on the way Christians view matters of theology. Nevertheless, she falls short of demonstrating that there has been an intentional move among translators to keep women in subjection.

Conclusion

Barr’s work is designed to be a historically based egalitarian attack on complementarianism. Nevertheless, her three arguments are unpersuasive. First, the historical examples of women preaching and in leadership are far too few to provide evidence for her bombastic claim that women have been preaching and leading since Christ’s resurrection. Second, the claim that evangelicals are merely following cultural patriarchy fails to work in a modern Western society, and it fails to adequately take the exegetical case into account. Third, Barr’s assertion that men have intentionally excluded women by the modification of theology (whether inerrancy or Trinitarianism) or by the translation of Scripture are ungrounded claims that show a lack of understanding of the history of theology, the decisions of church councils, and the complexities of Bible translation.

Stepping aside from the formal arguments made in the book, it appears that there is a deeper reason Barr rejects complementarianism. Throughout the book, Barr continues to return to emotionally charged stories of how she believes complementarianism has hurt either her family or other women. One gets the impression that the ultimate reason Barr is against complementarianism is that she believes it is not good. And if it is not good, then it cannot be right.

Matter: The Unacceptability of the TNIV,” *JBMW* 10/2 (2005): 28. Barr critiques him as though he has a problem with the lack of “man” in the name. In reality, Poythress is concerned with the change in number. A translation like “humankind” (139–41) would have resolved his complaint.

²⁴ Here Barr is quoting Lucy Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture’s Vision for Women: Fresh Perspectives on Disputed Texts* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2019), 139.

This argument, though unstated, is likely the most compelling reason the book has gained traction. Accordingly, complementarians need to take *this* argument seriously. How then should complementarians respond? Simply put, by living the truth faithfully. Some of Barr's examples expose the darker side of "complementarianism";²⁵ we must expose the brighter side. Whenever one of God's truths is critiqued, the greatest response is to live out that truth, allowing the truth to justify itself.

In this case, Barr believes that complementarianism produces a hierarchy that leads to abuse and stifles women's fruitfulness. On the scriptural view, however, men and women are productive to the extent that they embrace God's structure of creation. The best way forward, then, is for complementarians to embrace God's commands faithfully, demonstrating that the hierarchy God has established is both good *and* right.

²⁵ Complementarianism is placed here in quotation marks because the abuses of a system should not be considered a part of the system. In other words, abuse of women is not a part of the biblically structured system God has endorsed. Indeed, abuses of that system are a part of the fall (Gn 3:16).

Bringing Many Sons to Glory: The Theological Intersection of Sonship and Resurrection in Redemption and Christology—Part 2

Andrew T. Minnick¹

This article set out in its first part to investigate in what sense resurrection imparts sonship (Lk 20:36; Rom 8:23), especially for Christ (Acts 13:33; Col 1:18; Rv 1:5). Previous authors such as David Garner have differentiated Christ's preincarnate sonship from a messianic sonship that was imparted by resurrection. The distinction, however, has been maintained by viewing only the preincarnate sonship as ontological and speaking of Christ's resurrection acquisition as a "functional" sonship, entering a new "relationship," taking on a "role," or being "appointed" to or "adopted" into sonship.

This forensic, functional view can be traced to the almost universally held traditional idea that *υιοθεσία* speaks of a legal, forensic "adoption" (i.e., alluding to a first-century cultural practice of adoption) in contradistinction to natural begetting into ontological sonship. Upon that forensic view of *υιοθεσία* is built a faulty theological methodology posing as biblical theology—specifically the notion that Paul is by *υιοθεσία* establishing a model of legal entrance into God's family that is distinct from the birth model in other NT authors, principally John. Theology of sonship has consequently been bifurcated. A theology of a legal, forensic "adoption" sonship is built from Paul's four *υιοθεσία* passages (Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5), and it is held distinct from Scripture's "broader concept of sonship."

Because Paul closely connects *υιοθεσία* to resurrection in Romans 8:23, most literature that addresses our research question—the theological intersection of sonship and resurrection—are studies of the meaning and theological significance of *υιοθεσία*. And because our resurrection is dependent upon Christ's (Rom 6:4–5; 1 Cor 15:21–22; Col 3:1), any NT statements about the impartation of sonship to Christ by resurrection (such as Rom 1:4) are explained as being his "adoption" into "functional sonship."

In other words, previous studies of the intersection of sonship and resurrection have started in the NT with this bifurcation of sonship into legal and ontological and then have gone back to the OT to find the background of Paul's alleged adoption-by-resurrection theology. Although this methodology is called biblical theology, this bifurcation is essentially a systematic-theological

¹ Andrew Minnick is the Director of Academics and Enrollment at BJU Seminary and adjunct faculty for BJU School of Religion. This article (including [part 1 in JBTW 1/2](#) and part 3, slated to appear in *JBTW 2/2*) summarizes his dissertation: "Bringing Many Sons to Glory: A Biblical-Theological Investigation of the Intersection of Sonship and Resurrection and Its Implications for Filial Christology, Including the Christological Significance of the Πρωτότοκος Title" (PhD diss., BJU Seminary, 2020). Limited space precludes most of the material in the dissertation, principally (1) additional exegesis to further substantiate the positions/conclusions set forth, and (2) interaction with and refutation of alternative positions. Both the curious and the skeptical reader are invited to read the dissertation in full. Additionally, this second part of the article assumes prior reading of [part 1](#) from the previous issue of *JBTW*.

conclusion about the sonship motif in Scripture in that it drives the interpretation of both the OT and Paul's *υιοθεσία* passages.

On both points, the results yielded by the methodology are questionable. Regarding the OT, there is only one OT sonship motif, not one for the adoption theology and one for the broader theology of sonship. Further, the first part of this article found that this single OT sonship motif stresses the image of God as the theological link between sonship and bodily life, revealing that sonship is a matter of ontology and nature, not merely of legal status. Regarding Paul's *υιοθεσία* passages, the first part of this article found that Romans 8 uses *υιοθεσία* to speak not of a legal adoption practice but of a two-stage ontological transformation into the image of God, the nature of God's sons.

Thus, part 1 of the article found that emphasis on the legal, forensic aspects of sonship has displaced attention on the image of God as the ontological nature of God's sons, the restoration of which is completed by resurrection. However, returning attention to the image of God as the theological link between sonship and resurrection allows us to account for the ontological birth-by-resurrection Christology in the NT (Acts 13:33; Col 1:18; Rv 1:5). Further, because the image of God is a Scripture-wide concept, it becomes the theological link that integrates *υιοθεσία* into the Scripture-wide motif of sonship. It thereby allows for a study of the intersection of resurrection with that entire Scripture-wide motif of sonship, not just with the four *υιοθεσία* passages in Paul (and their connections to the OT).

In short, returning focus to the ontological nature of sonship both necessitates and allows for an improved biblical-theological methodology. We no longer start with *υιοθεσία* as designating a legal adoptive sense of sonship, go outside of Scripture in search of the cultural practice of *υιοθεσία* from which to derive this theology of legal adoption into God's family, and then read that legal theology back into the NT *υιοθεσία* passages and hold it distinct from the broader theology of sonship in Scripture. Instead, we can start in the OT and trace the single motif of sonship through Scripture without imposing a systematic-theological bifurcation into the motifs of "adoption" and the "broader theology of sonship." This article employs this improved biblical-theological method, tracing from the OT through the NT the intersection of that single motif of sonship with resurrection, and thus in tandem with the progressive revelation of Scripture, progressively synthesizing a systematic theology of the intersection. The result is not merely an alleged Pauline theology of resurrection's forensic intersection with sonship (or even Paul's alleged forensic theology plus an OT background) but rather a Scripture-wide understanding of the intersection.

Employing this new methodology in the first part of the article revealed the ontological nature of sonship and thus made possible a full understanding of its intersection with resurrection, which can be summarized in five points:

- (1) The image of God is the nature that God gives to his sons: a father gives his nature to his children, and God gave the communicable attributes of his nature to his son Adam.
- (2) Because the image of God is holistic, the body is a part of that filial nature.

- (3) The linchpin of the image of God is the possession of life, the union of the two parts—material and immaterial—of the holistic image animated by the Spirit of God.
- (4) Restoring the filial nature, therefore, is a two-stage process, the two stages of life in the Spirit: regeneration/sanctification restores the immaterial part of the filial nature (culminating at entrance into God’s presence following death), and resurrection restores its material part. In Romans 8 *υιοθεσία* is a comprehensive term that subsumes this two-event process of ontological restoration.
- (5) Because he was fully human, Christ’s human nature included the material part of the image of God, which was restored to undying human filial nature by resurrection as the prototype for our restoration. This prototypical-begetting-by-resurrection Christology is encapsulated in the NT term *πρωτότοκος* (“firstborn”)—Christ was the first human being to be begotten into God’s family by resurrection.

Further, this methodology actually freed the *υιοθεσία* passages to say what they say against the backdrop of the OT, rather than constraining them within a theology derived from a first-century adoption practice. Thus freed, Romans 8 uses *υιοθεσία* not for a model of entrance into God’s family that is distinct from the models of non-Pauline scriptural authors. Rather, Paul was found to use the term for its bare lexical meaning—“to make a son”—and is retooling it to encompass all of Scripture’s single sonship motif, comprising the events of regeneration and resurrection.

As the next step in testing this new methodology, this second part of the article will now examine the remainder of the *υιοθεσία* passages (Rom 9:4; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5) and will find that they completely agree with our understanding of *υιοθεσία* in Romans 8. Further, this second part of the article will look at other Pauline passages (Rom 1:3–4; Col 1:15–20) from which objections to its thesis are often raised. It will be apparent that the Christology explicit in Acts 13, Romans 8, and 1 Corinthians 15—(1) Christ’s resurrection was a literal begetting into ontological Adamic sonship, and (2) Paul encapsulates that resurrection-begetting Christology in the literal meaning (“firstborn”) of the *πρωτότοκος* title—actually underlies Paul’s teaching in these two controverted passages. The third part of this article (slated to appear in the spring 2022 issue of *JBTW*) will carry the investigation of the research question and the testing of this new methodology into the other NT authors and find that they advance the same begetting-by-resurrection Christology that has been found in Paul.

Galatians 4

To a church under the siege of an alternative gospel of salvation by observance of the Mosaic law (1:6–9; 2:5), Paul lays out two options in Galatians 3—receiving the curse of the law by the works of the law or receiving the blessing of Abraham by faith in the promise. In 3:26–29 Paul argues that (1) this blessing of Abraham is shared by all who have faith in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, and that (2) for both groups, the blessing comprises a filial relationship to God, which comes with possession of the Spirit of God (v. 14; cf. 4:6).

In 4:1–11 Paul further explains how Jews and Gentiles both come into this sonship, using the illustration of characters in an ancient household.² Paul has just argued that the mature son represents those who by faith in Christ have received sonship of God (3:26) and so are heirs of the promise (3:29; cf. 4:7). On the one hand, Paul contrasts this mature son with an immature son (4:1–5) who is no different from a slave in that he yet has no inheritance and is under the custody of guardians. Several considerations indicate that the immature son is OT Israel under the Mosaic law. First, OT Israel's bondage to the tutorship of the law (3:23–25) is the same bondage as that of the immature son “under guardians and managers” (4:2), “under the elemental things of the world” (4:3), and “under the Law” (4:5).³ Second, those under OT Israel's law were freed from that bondage (3:23) by coming to faith in Christ (3:25), the exercise of which brings sonship (3:26). Accordingly, “but” in 4:4 introduces the incarnation and earthly work of Christ as the watershed event that brought an end to this era of immature sonship under the law (4:5).

On the other hand, in 4:7–8 when Paul describes the group/situation being contrasted with mature sonship, he uses descriptions that cannot refer to OT Israel under the law but that do speak of the pre-conversion pagan state of the Gentile Galatians: “did not know God” and “slaves to those which by nature are no gods” (4:8).⁴ The solution is to recognize that Paul is contrasting mature sonship with both groups. Before Christ, OT Israel under the law (the “we” in 4:1–3) were *νήπιοι*, the immature sons, and the Gentiles (the “you” in 4:7–8) were *δοῦλοι*, the slaves.⁵ For both groups (thus “our” used for the first time in 4:6b), it is Christ who brings mature sonship (4:4–5).⁶

The coming of Christ is the watershed between the OT era of Israel's national filial status stymied under the Mosaic law and the NT era of the full sonship of *υἰοθεσία* for individual Jews and

² *Λέγω* (“I say,” 4:1) amounts to the meaning “in other words” and shows that Paul regarded 4:1–11 to be another explanation of the same truth he has been laying out in Galatians 3.

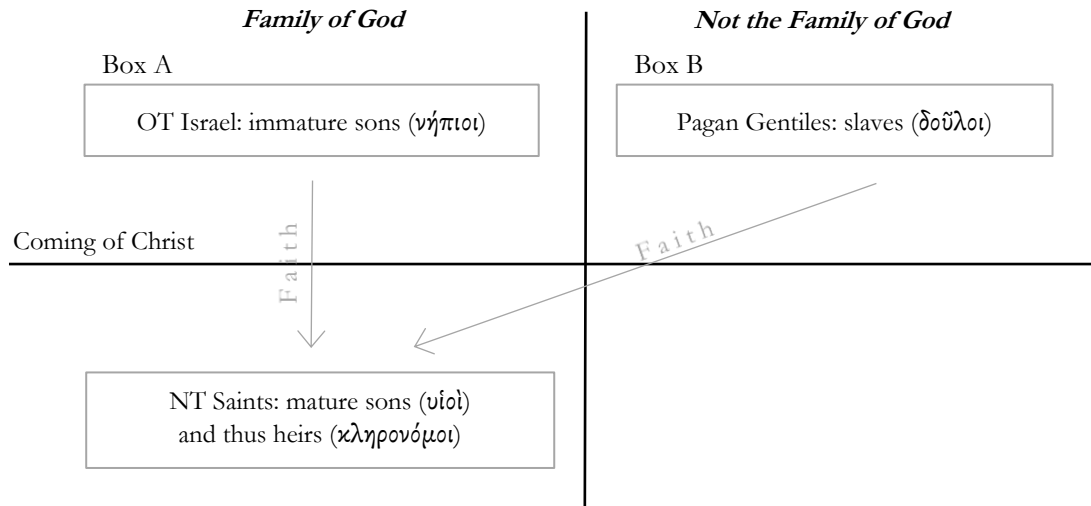
³ “So also we” (Gal. 4:3) directly links these three designations to the immature son (4:1–2), and the three are linked to one another by the repeated preposition “under.” The explicit designation “the Law” in v. 5 shows that these three designations are referring to the Mosaic law, which OT Israel was “under.” That *τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου* refers to the law is further confirmed by Paul's use of the identical phrase in Colossians 2:8, 20 for a seducing philosophy that at the very least included the Judaizers' teaching (e.g., circumcision in v. 11 and OT law regulations in v. 16). Mark Minnick explains Paul's meaning in *τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου*: “The law was the elemental part of God's instruction.” “In Bondage Until the Fullness of Time” (Sermon, Mount Calvary Baptist Church, Greenville, SC, June 8, 2003). Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. www.Lockman.org

⁴ “Here [v. 8] Paul addresses his Gentile converts more particularly.” F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 201.

⁵ Although Paul's distinction through v. 11 between Jews represented by the immature son and “we” and the Gentiles represented by the slaves and “you” is not widely attested to in the literature, John Barclay appears to recognize it, though not as strictly as observed here. “Paul, the Gift and the Battle Over Gentile Circumcision: Revisiting the Logic of Galatians,” *Australian Biblical Review* 58 (2010): 36–56. The distinction and the explanation below of how a Gentile could “turn back” to the Mosaic law is the position of Mark Minnick, “Turning Back from Knowing God” (Sermon, Mount Calvary Baptist Church, Greenville, SC, July 20, 2003).

⁶ Note the same distinction of “you” and “we” in 3:23–29, where Paul's point is that both groups come to true sonship of God. This sonship grows from Israel's OT experience and is Israel's true sonship of Abraham (realized in Christ), but both Gentiles and Jews share in it by faith.

Gentiles on the basis of personal faith in Christ.⁷ The following diagram summarizes the discussion thus far.



On the basis of the Gentile believers' sonship as evidenced by possession of the Spirit (4:6), Paul warns them in 4:7–11 not to heed the Judaizers and "turn" (v. 9) to Box A in the diagram. The ground upon which he makes this warning is found in 4:1—the immature child (Box A) is no better off than the slave (Box B). Gentiles who turn to the Mosaic law are no better off than those who return to their pre-Christ pagan state, for both are turning back from *υἰοθεσία* in Christ.⁸

Tracing Paul's argument reveals that his use of *υἰοθεσία* is completely consistent with the discoveries made previously in this study. Israel's national relationship to God in the OT era was filial, albeit immature sonship under the Mosaic law. However, *υἰοθεσία* speaks of the full sonship that came in Christ by redemption and thus is a reality of the age of the Spirit (4:4–5). Three considerations argue that as in Romans 8 Paul is not importing a secular cultural practice of adoption to teach a new event of *how* God makes us sons. Rather, Paul chose to use *υἰοθεσία* for its bare lexical meaning—"to make

⁷ It is critical to note that the "coming of age" in this passage is the transition from the OT to the NT era, not something that happens in the *ordo salutis* of individual conversion, as is held by Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1976), 3:242–43, and Frank Elbe Jr., "The Christian's Filial Relationship to God" (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1957), 47–54.

⁸ It is in this sense that Paul can speak of Gentiles being "enslaved *all over again*" (4:9, emphasis added) by observance of Jewish festivals (4:10) and "turning *back*" (4:9a, emphasis added) to *τὰ στοιχεῖα* (4:9b, argued above to be a reference to the Mosaic law). If they turn from Christ to the Mosaic law, they are returning to the pre-Christ era, which for a Gentile is as damning as turning back to their pre-Christ pagan state. Paul addresses this warning to Gentiles because of the helpful distinction between Jews and Gentiles pointed out by Mark Minnick based on Acts 21:20 and Paul's subsequent actions in v. 26. During the "transition period" of Acts (during which time Paul wrote Galatians), a Jew could observe the Mosaic law (cf. 1 Cor. 9:20), provided he did it not to "enhance his standing before God," but to show "his ongoing devotion to God" or "not to be any stumbling block to his other Jewish people." In Galatians 4, however, Paul is condemning a Gentile beginning to observe the law for the purpose of "improving his relationship to God." "Turning Back from Knowing God."

a son”—but he retools it from designating the event of a legal adoption to instead speak of the ontological reality of entrance into God’s family.⁹

In the first place, the cultural practice—coming-of-age ceremony—which Paul *does* employ as a metaphor is not the secular referent of the *υιοθεσία* term. A coming-of-age ceremony did exist in first-century cultures.¹⁰ But Scott showed that *υιοθεσία* was used in secular society for the act of bringing a son into the family.¹¹ Second, with regard to the cultural practice which *υιοθεσία* *did* designate in Paul’s day—adopting a son into the family from the outside—Paul is not importing that practice as a monolithic metaphor of legal adoption into God’s family, for in the same use *υιοθεσία* (v. 5) comprises both immature OT Israelites coming into mature sonship by faith in Christ (4:1–5) and also Gentiles’ entering the family of God from the outside for the first time (vv. 6–8). Evidently Paul is using *υιοθεσία* for the basic meaning it denoted—“to make a son,” not for the cultural practice that it designated—legal adoption. In the case of the Gentiles, the basic meaning of *υιοθεσία* is sufficient—entering into sonship from outside the family. In the case of the Jews, the meaning is slightly morphed to include the idea of coming into that sonship from a state of immature sonship, and here the cultural practice of coming of age is imported. *Υιοθεσία* does not import this cultural practice, but rather Paul must morph the meaning of *υιοθεσία* to accommodate it. It is evident that in the only *υιοθεσία* passage that utilizes the details of a cultural practice as a metaphor, Paul is not using the term *υιοθεσία* to import a cultural practice to teach his (as distinct from John’s) conception of *how* believers enter the family of God at conversion.

In fact, third, as in Romans 8 the passage simply does not give any details about the *event* by which the Galatians *entered* the family of God, the event designated by *υιοθεσία*. The only cultural practice overtly alluded to in Galatians 4, the coming-of-age ceremony, pictures the transition from the OT to the NT eras, not the personal event of coming into sonship at conversion. And nothing else in the passage teaches *how* we enter the family at conversion. Rather, completely parallel to

⁹ Failure to recognize that Paul is retooling the term has led to a profusion in the literature of suggestions of exact laws and secular practices to which Paul is allegedly alluding here. Timothy George admits, “It is difficult to reconstruct the precise legal background of the scenario Paul had in mind [in Galatians 4:1–2].” *Galatians*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 293. Douglas Moo observes that no legal background exactly matches what Paul does in Galatians 4:1–2. Rather, Paul “has allowed his statement of the illustration to be affected by his intended application.” *Galatians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 259. This recognition frees the passage to say what it says rather than being forced into the strictures of a first-century cultural practice.

¹⁰ For example, John MacArthur speaks of the Roman *toga virilis*, the Jewish *bar mitzvah*, and the Greek *apaturia*. *Galatians*, MNTC (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), 104.

¹¹ James Scott found interchangeable use of *υιοθεσία* with synonyms denoting the adoption process, and so it is the “means by which believers enter into divine sonship.” *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of ΥΙΟΘΕΣΙΑ in the Pauline Corpus*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 2 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992), xiii–xiv, 55. In all his research for the dissertation, the author of this article does not recall encountering a single work that understands *υιοθεσία* to be speaking of the coming of age of a child already in the family rather than the act of bringing someone into the family from the outside. Thus, commentaries that speak of a secular coming-of-age ceremony when discussing Galatians 4:1–2 switch to speaking of bringing a son into the family when discussing v. 5. For example, MacArthur, 104, 109; George, 293, 305; and Bruce, 192, 197–98.

Romans 8, Paul talks about the resultant state of sonship and assumes that the readers know the theology of the event of entrance into that sonship that he designates with the term *υιοθεσία*.¹²

First, this resultant state of sonship brought by *υιοθεσία* is present (“you are sons,” v. 6; cf. Rom 8:15) and is the basis (ὅτι) for God sending the Spirit to testify that we now are *υιοί* (the neuter gender of *κρᾶζον* shows it is the Spirit crying). Second, this possession of sonship (Gal. 4:7) is therefore guaranteed by possession of the Spirit (v. 6; cf. 3:14; Rom 8:15). Third, *υιοθεσία* comes to those who have entered into Christ by faith (Gal 3:23–29; cf. Rom 8:1). Fourth, coming to possess the Spirit touches off within the believer the battle of sanctification between the Spirit and the flesh (Gal 5:16–26; cf. Rom 8:12–13). Fifth, present *υιοθεσία* gives the rights/guarantee of future inheritance (Gal 4:7; cf. Rom 8:17), which is specified in Romans 8 to be the resurrection of the outer man as the full installment of *υιοθεσία* (vv. 18–23). Sixth, *υιοθεσία* is contrasted with slavery as the sons’ pre-*υιοθεσία* state (Gal 4:8; Rom 8:15).

In conclusion, in Galatians 4:5–7 as in Romans 8:15, *υιοθεσία* is designating the Spirit’s imparting of life and sonship in the inner man in the event of regeneration (cf. Tit 3:15).¹³ Present *υιοθεσία* is an ontological transformation wrought by the Spirit, not a mere legal declaration. Paul is using *υιοθεσία* for its lexical meaning “to bring into the family and make a son,” not for its reference to a cultural event to thereby teach *how* God makes us sons and add an event of “adoption” to our theology of entrance into his family. Paul instead assumes that the readers know how God makes those with faith in Christ to be sons, and he uses *υιοθεσία* as a general term by which to call that knowledge to mind.

Romans 9

Romans 8 was found to make *υιοθεσία* the encapsulating designation for our filial salvation in Christ in the age of the Spirit (elucidated in Rom 1–8), but then in Romans 9:4 Paul says that *υιοθεσία* was a national possession of Israel. On the one hand, the proximity of the two uses indicates continuity between their respective theological designations, which fits with Galatians 4’s teaching that our NT sonship in Christ grows out of Israel’s OT immature sonship.¹⁴ On the other hand, however, there is

¹² Scott makes this point, though he still uses the “adoption” terminology: “[Paul] never explains what he means by the term [*υιοθεσία*]. The apostle evidently assumes that his readers would know what was meant by *the* adoption as sons of God.” James Scott, “Adoption, Sonship,” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 16, original emphasis. Scott goes on to argue that the concept of sonship in *υιοθεσία* springs from the OT, particularly the Davidic promise of 2 Samuel 7:14.

¹³ “Here in Gal 4:5 (cf. also Rom 8:15) adoption [*υιοθεσία*] refers to the present status of sonship accorded to all believers who through the new birth have become heirs with Christ of the Abrahamic promise.” George, 305.

¹⁴ Actually, if our *υιοθεσία* and Israel’s *υιοθεσία* are entirely unrelated, pointing out that complete absence of continuity would have sufficed to answer the question of Romans 9–10—will God perform his promised salvation for us (Rom 1–8) since he apparently failed to perform his promised salvation for Israel in the OT (see 9:6)?

discontinuity between υιοθεσία in Romans 8 and 9 because Israelites need “salvation” (10:1), which would include the υιοθεσία of Romans 8.¹⁵

Further, Paul’s point in Galatians 3–4 was that υιοθεσία came to Israel through the incarnation and work of Christ, and individual Jews can enter into υιοθεσία by personal faith in Christ, not by national identity. Yet in Romans 9 Paul regards υιοθεσία to be one of the national possessions of Israel.

These observations confirm that Paul uses υιοθεσία much more broadly than as a technical term for an event in the *ordo salutis*. He utilizes the term because it means “to make a son,” for that general idea is the common ground between the specific theological referents of υιοθεσία in Romans 8 and 9 and Galatians 4. The specifics of that sonship and the way in which God gives the sonship are determined by the context. Thus, use of the term in Romans 9 reinforces that Paul does not use the term to import a cultural practice and thereby teach a theology of legal entrance into God’s family as distinct from ontological birth.

Romans 1:3–4

The themes discovered to this point in the study of the intersection of sonship and resurrection in the OT and in Paul are readily apparent from even a surface reading of Romans 1:1–4—royal Davidic lineage, sonship, life by resurrection, and the life-giving ministry of the Spirit. There is, however, still much debate about what “declared the Son of God with power” is teaching happened to Christ by resurrection. Some see merely an impartation of power that vindicated Christ’s pre-resurrection claim to be the Son of God.¹⁶ Proponents of this position advance three exegetical arguments. First, some say that *ὁρίζω* means merely “declared” (as translated in the KJV, NKJV, NASB, ESV, etc.). Second, “with power” modifies “Son” adjectivally rather than *ὁρίζω* adverbially, and so the resurrection was the appointment of the Son to a position of power, not a powerful appointment to sonship.¹⁷ Third, “according to the flesh” (v. 3) designates the incarnation as a period of weakness and hidden sonship that necessitated this vindication/declaration of his sonship by restoration/appointment to power.¹⁸

This position and its three arguments, however, address Romans 1:3–4 in isolation from the context of the book of Romans and more broadly from Paul’s Christology, which itself must be

¹⁵ David Garner helpfully points out that there is a covenantal development from Romans 8 to Romans 9. “Adoption in Christ” (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 2002), 80–87. He sees “continuity” and “progression” between sonship in the two chapters, but not absolute “identity” (84).

¹⁶ Trevor Burke lays out this contrast of positions. *Adopted into God’s Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor*, NSBT (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006), 104–07, and *The Message of Sonship: At Home in God’s Household*, BST: Bible Themes Series (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011), 114–18.

¹⁷ For example, Murray Harris, *From Grave to Glory: Resurrection in the New Testament Including a Response to Norman L. Geisler* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 168. See also Murray Harris, *Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 74, and F. F. Bruce, “Christ and Spirit in Paul,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 59 (1977): 265.

¹⁸ For example, Francis Durrwell, *The Resurrection: A Biblical Study*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1960), 125–26, and Eldon Woodcock, “The Significance of the Resurrection of Christ in the Writings of Paul” (PhD diss., Duke University, 1967), chapter 2.

understood against the full backdrop of the OT messianic expectation. The “gospel” (v. 1) that 1:1–4 is introducing in seed form is the gospel that Paul will then unpack over the next eight chapters, culminating in Romans 8 in the work of the Spirit to restore our body by conforming it to Christ’s by resurrection, thus begetting us into Adamic sonship (Rom 8:17–23, 29–30; see discussion in the first part of this article). That resurrection work is the pinnacle of our salvation, for it is the end goal of predestination (vv. 29–30). And it is because Christ is the *πρωτότοκος* in v. 29—the first to be begotten by resurrection into full Adamic sonship—that Paul in Romans 1:1–4 grounds his summary statement of the gospel in Christ’s resurrection, specifically in his reception of sonship by resurrection.¹⁹ Further, Paul twice explicitly sets this broader OT messianic expectation of restored Adamic sonship as the backdrop for his discussion of the gospel in 1:1–4. First, the “gospel” (v. 1) “concerning His Son” (v. 3) was “promised beforehand through His prophets” (v. 2). And second, Christ’s Davidic lineage in v. 3 is the foundation of the controversial statement in v. 4.

But beyond contextual arguments, exegesis of the passage itself corroborates the sonship-by-resurrection Christology found in Romans 8. Paul makes the grammatical parallel of v. 3 with v. 4 so overt that it is the logical starting point of exegesis:

³ περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ
 τοῦ γενομένου
 ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ
 κατὰ σάρκα,
⁴ τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ
 ἐν δυνάμει
 κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιοσύνης
 ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν

It is because of this overt parallel that verse 4 is typically interpreted by way of contrast with v. 3: “according to the flesh” (v. 3) is alleged to be speaking of his pre-resurrection state as being weak, apparently only a man from David’s line, as the counterpoint to “in power” (v. 4) speaking of the resurrection restoring power to Christ and thereby unveiling that he had been the Son of God all along.²⁰

Κατὰ Σάρκα (“According to the Flesh”)

Because it is Christ who is under discussion, “flesh” cannot refer to the unredeemable part of man that rebels against God (e.g., 8:4–5). However, in 2:28 Paul uses the term of the human body, and then he three times in Romans (4:1; 9:3, 5) uses the exact phrase (*κατὰ σάρκα*) derivatively for the

¹⁹ Scott argues for a connection between Christ becoming the Son of God here and our *υἰοθεσία* in Romans 8 and traces a history of this interpretation back to the church fathers. *Adoption as Sons of God*, 221–23. Allen Mawhinney connects *ὀρίζω* in Romans 1:4 with *προορίζω* in Romans 8:29 and concludes, “Our sonship is dependent upon his Sonship.” “*Υἰοθεσία* in the Pauline Epistles: Its Background, Use and Implications” (PhD diss., Baylor University, 1982), 152–53.

²⁰ For example, Richard Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul’s Soteriology*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1987), 100–13; Burke, *Adopted into God’s Family*, 103–04; Durrwell, 125; Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 48–49; Harris, *Raised Immortal*, 74.

general concept of human ancestry. In 1:3 Paul is saying, “Pertaining to his human ancestry, he was from the descendants of David.”²¹ Frank Matera summarizes that v. 3 presents Christ as “the promised royal Messiah of David’s line.”²² Far from emphasizing the weakness of the incarnation, in v. 3 Paul is turning the reader’s attention to the eschatological power and dominion of the Davidic line.²³

Further, based on the prepositions, *κατὰ σάρκα* is parallel not to “in power” (*ἐν δυνάμει*) in v. 4 but to “according to the Spirit of holiness” (*κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης*). Although *πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης* occurs only here in the NT, Robert Pyne points out that it is an “exact rendering of the Hebrew phrase *רוח הקדש*, which came to be understood as a designation of the Holy Spirit.”²⁴ As demonstrated in the first part of this article, for Paul the age of resurrection, the age of the OT messianic expectation, is the age of the life-giving Spirit. In conclusion, Paul is saying that Christ’s being of the royal line of David was owing to his human ancestry (“according to the flesh”), and his resurrection was owing to the work of God’s Spirit (“according to the Spirit”).

Περὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ Αὐτοῦ (“Concerning His Son”)

Although verse 3 was true before Christ’s resurrection while verse 4 speaks of things not true of Christ until his resurrection, it is becoming evident that emphasis upon a contrast (between not having sonship and having sonship or between not having power and having power) is misplaced. Further pointing in that direction, “His Son” (v. 3) is the main topic under discussion throughout the single unit comprising verses 3 and 4, and the two participles (*τοῦ γενομένου*, “who was born”; and *τοῦ ὀρισθέντος*, “who was declared”) are both attributive to *υἱοῦ* (v. 3) and so unfold two parallel halves of the explanation of what it means for Christ to be the Son of God.²⁵

Verse 3 is not cataloging a pre-resurrection deficiency in Christ that is the clue to understanding what Christ received by resurrection in verse 4. Rather, against the backdrop of the OT and Romans 8, these participles are giving two necessary elements of Christ’s coming to be “His Son” (v. 3): because Israel’s kings (specifically the Davidic dynasty) were the attempt to reclaim Adamic sonship, his sonship was (1) “according to the flesh”—his human ancestry was Davidic, which qualified him to reclaim Adamic sonship—and his sonship was (2) “according to the Spirit”—on the

²¹ Scott notes authors who connect “according to the flesh” to later occurrences in Romans, specifically to Romans 9:5. He also notes authors who connect “descendant of David” in Romans 1:3 to 2 Samuel 7:12. He writes, “*Κατὰ σάρκα* is used here simply as part of a genealogical description of the Son who has the messianic qualification of 2 Sam. 7:12.” *Adoption as Sons of God*, 238–39.

²² *God’s Saving Grace: A Pauline Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 54.

²³ B. B. Warfield recognizes that the “majesty” of the Davidic lineage precludes interpreting the passage as a contrast between power in verse 4 and weakness in verse 3. *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philadelphia: P&R, 1950), 81.

²⁴ “The Resurrection as Restoration: A Thematic Study in Paul’s Theology” (ThD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1990), 42–43. Pyne lists occurrences of the phrase referring to the Holy Spirit in the OT (Ps 51:11; Is 63:10–11) and intertestamental literature. Pyne’s observation fits with Paul’s explicit grounding of the Christology of this passage in the OT. Gaffin (103–04) agrees with Pyne.

²⁵ Someone could object that “Son” is merely one of Paul’s typical designations for Christ and thus carries no special significance here. However, Paul speaks of sonship of God only two other times before Romans 8 (1:9; 5:10). The dual usage of *υἱός* in both 1:3 and 1:4 is therefore a significant emphasis upon the filial relationship. Again, this filial focus is the seed form of the Christology he will develop in Romans 8.

basis of that human ancestry, the Spirit did effect his resurrection and beget him into Adamic sonship.²⁶

Ὁρίζω (“Declared”)

Each of the other four times the verb ὀρίζω is used of Christ in the NT, it speaks of appointment to an event or role in his redemptive career: to betrayal and capture (Lk 22:22), to capture and crucifixion (Acts 2:23), to be Judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42), and to be Judge of the world (Acts 17:31). The remaining three NT occurrences speak likewise of other things being determined or appointed: determination to send a contribution to the brethren in Judea (Acts 11:29), appointment of mankind’s times and boundaries of habitation (Acts 17:26), and appointment of a day for repentance (Heb 4:7).

Consequently, the view that ὀρίζω means “declared” is largely obsolete, found for example in Charles Hodge’s commentary on Romans.²⁷ Even Macleod and Burke, two of the staunchest modern antagonists of the idea of Christ’s resurrection imparting sonship, argue for “appointed” rather than “declared.”²⁸

Ἐν Δυνάμει (“with Power”)

With both sides basically agreeing on the meaning of ὀρίζω, the watershed of the debate has moved to the question of whether ἐν δυνάμει modifies υἱοῦ adjectivally (i.e., the Son was appointed to power) or ὀρίζω adverbially (i.e., Christ was powerfully appointed to be the Son).²⁹ Other occurrences of ἐν δύνاميς in the NT are sometimes adverbial (Col 1:29) and sometimes adjectival (Mk

²⁶ Durrwell is a classic example of misplaced emphasis on contrast between verses 3 and 4 (125). But Scott observes, “The second attributive participial clause does not, as most scholars assume, stand in antithetical parallelism to the first, but rather in climactic parallelism. For the second clause echoes the first in terms of formal structure, but adds to it an element which carries forward the sense to its culmination: the son of David was ‘appointed Son of God in power.’” *Adoption as Sons of God*, 239–40.

²⁷ *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Alfred Martien, 1873), 26–27. Although Hodge admits that ὀρίζω lexically denotes more than mere declaration (he lists three meanings, all of which denote more), he nevertheless proceeds to explain that theological ramifications force him to understand the term in Romans 1:4 “declaratively, or in reference to the knowledge of men.”

²⁸ Burke, *Adopted into God’s Family*, 104–05; Burke, *The Message of Sonship*, 117; Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ*, Contours of Christian Theology (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 92. Macleod points out that Christ had already been “declared” to be the Son of God many times before his resurrection, such as at his baptism and transfiguration (92). Though not as part of the discussion of the meaning of ὀρίζω, he also points out that resurrection would not have been viewed as a “proof of divine sonship or even of messiahship” in Paul’s day, and it would not have been sufficient to have “removed the scandal of the cross” (91). See also Gaffin, 65–66; cf. 104–05, 117–19. Recognizing that the word means “appointed,” Pyne writes, “The idea is not that Jesus was shown to be the Son of God through the resurrection, but that He was made the Son of God at that time” (38).

²⁹ Burke sees this question and the meaning of ὀρίζω as the “two key exegetical issues that take us to the heart of the matter concerning Jesus’ sonship.” *Adopted into God’s Family*, 104. Macleod likewise takes up these two issues as the keys to interpreting Romans 1:4 (92). See Macleod, *The Person of Christ*, 92, Burke, *Adopted into God’s Family*, 104, and Pyne, 41–42, for statements espousing the adjectival function to avoid the idea that the resurrection was an appointment to sonship.

9:1; cf. Mt 24:30; 26:64; Mk 13:26; Lk 21:26; 22:69). Further, the word itself (δύναμις) is connected to resurrection in both ways: it was a powerful act of God (Mt 22:29; Mk 12:24; 1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 13:4; Eph 1:19–20) and an impartation of power (Mt 26:64; 28:18).

Actually, however, the question of the function of “with power” is not commensurate with the question of impartation of sonship. To say that the adjectival function precludes impartation of sonship is a false dichotomy because sonship is a powerful position.³⁰ For the same reason, requiring that only one concept—sonship or power—be affected by the verb (ὀρίζω) is likewise a false dichotomy. And actually, in addition to the above contextual considerations—Paul’s overt citation of the OT messianic expectation (vv. 2–3) and the connection to Romans 8—and textual considerations, additional elements of the passage teach that both are affected by the verb.

On the one hand, he was appointed to sonship. First, mere appointment to power would have been communicated more effectively by the simpler construction: “concerning His Son [v. 3] . . . who was given power [v. 4].” Υἱοῦ θεοῦ (v. 4) is redundant with τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ (v. 3) and thus superfluous, unless of course it is integral to what Paul is communicating. Second, ὀρισθέντος (“appointed”) takes an object of a position or an office (i.e., “Son”). A verb with the force of “give” or “bestow” would have fit better with an object of a possession (i.e., “power”). Third, while the grammatical construction does not preclude “with power” being affected by the verb (ὀρίζω), the primary effect does fall on “Son” as the object complement of the predicate of ὀρίζω.³¹ This case is made inadvertently by interpreters who deny appointment to sonship: they speak of “appointment” to power, but when they attempt to flesh out the Christology of the passage, they cannot avoid ὀρίζω’s speaking in some sense of an effect of the resurrection upon Christ’s sonship, and so they lapse into the untenable position of defining ὀρίζω as “declared” or “vindicated.”³² In short, interpretation of the passage is not a question of appointment to sonship or appointment to power but is rather a question of appointment to sonship only or to sonship with power.

On the other hand, however, several considerations do support an appointment to power. First, the adverbial use of “with power” would be tangential to Paul’s Christological statement and would not warrant the prominent place given by its awkward insertion into Paul’s otherwise neat chiasm, for what else could the resurrection have been but a powerful act? Second, however, tracing the connection between resurrection and δύναμις through the NT reveals Christology worthy of this prominent place in Paul’s statement. Every NT reference (except the somewhat cryptic reference to the power of resurrection in Phil 3:10) to the impartation of δύναμις by resurrection speaks of one of two specific kinds of power. First, resurrection imparts the power of messianic filial rule (Mt 26:64, alluding to Ps 110 and Dn 7). Significantly, it was to a question of his role as the messianic Son of

³⁰ Though the sentence in Mark 9:1 is not constructed identically to the sentence here, Mark’s use of ἐν δυνάμει with a noun (“kingdom”) that inherently is a thing of power would parallel Paul’s use here (i.e., “Son of God” is a position that is inherently powerful).

³¹ The object complement construction assumes a pronominal object of the verb and an infinitive linking verb: “appointed [him to be] Son of God with power.”

³² For example, Brendan Byrne, *Sons of God—Seed of Abraham: A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul Against the Jewish Background*, *Analecta Biblica: Investigations Scientifcae in Res Biblicas* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979), 205–06.

God that Christ was responding (Mt 26:63; cf. Mt 24:30; 13:26; Lk 21:26; 22:69; Acts 2:29–36). Second, resurrection imparts the power of immortal life in the body (1 Cor 15:43; Heb 7:16). Sons of God enjoy the filial power of Adamic rule and of immortal life in their bodies by conformity to Christ by the work of the Spirit (Rom 8:17–30). Thus, in order to be their prototype (vv. 29–30), Christ came from the line of David (v. 3) that he might receive sonship and both senses of its accompanying power from the Holy Spirit by resurrection (v. 4).³³

Garner's explanation of Romans 1:3–4—that Christ's resurrection was an “adoption” into “functional” sonship—does not exhaust the full import of Romans 1:1–4 within its context.³⁴ Paul's Christology here is completely in keeping with that found in Romans 8: resurrection was a literal begetting that imparted the ontology/nature of Adamic sonship to Christ, which is the material part of the Adamic image of God, and the epitome of which is the “power” of life in the body.

Colossians 1:15–20

Paul's hymn (Col 1:15–20) introduces the major Christological themes that form the backbone of the epistle's response to a heretical infiltration into the Colossian church (2:4; 2:8). Richard Melick summarizes the heresy: “The soteriological heresy failed to appreciate the central place of Jesus. Rather, its advocates accepted a supernatural hierarchy other than the Trinity and gave themselves to scrupulous and legalistic requirements which they assumed commended them to God.”³⁵ Against this heresy, Paul mobilizes rich Christology in two main sections of the book, 1:15–19 and 2:8–15. It will be evident in the study of the hymn that reclamation of Adamic sonship by resurrection is the theological framework within which Paul's mind formulated its Christology.

Several considerations show that “Son” (v. 13) was not a random choice from Paul's repertoire of possible designations for Christ but rather is establishing Christ's sonship as the theme of the hymn. Following Paul's opening prayer, “his beloved Son” (v. 13) launches the Christological emphasis of the book, and the attributive ἀγάπης (“beloved”) together with the possessive αὐτοῦ (“his”) show the intentionality of the filial reference. Every one of the fourteen pronouns in the hymn point back to υἱοῦ (v. 13) as their antecedent. Further, sonship is an emphasis in vv. 1–20 for there are no other filial designations elsewhere in Colossians. Against the supernatural authorities of the Colossian heresy, the central concept of the hymn's Son-of-God Christology is his filial reign: “the kingdom of His beloved Son” (v. 13).

The hymn's structure can be laid out as follows, with colored text and highlighting to show patterns in terminology and structure, especially the parallels between the two stanzas of the hymn.

³³ Scott sees this prototype idea in the plural νεκρῶν (also used of Christ in Acts 13:30; Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:12, 20; Eph 1:20; Col 2:12; cf. Rv 1:5): “Rom. 1:4 implies that the Son's resurrection is prototypical of the future resurrection of the dead (ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν).” *Adoption as Sons of God*, 244. See also David Garner, *Sons in the Son: The Riches and Reach of Adoption in Christ* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2016), 279–80.

³⁴ *Sons in the Son*, 194–96.

³⁵ *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1991), 181.

¹⁵ ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου,
 πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως,
¹⁶ ὅτι (1) ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα
 ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,
 τὰ ὀρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα,
 εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες
 εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι·
 τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται·
¹⁷ (2) καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων
 (3) καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν,
¹⁸ (4) καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας·

ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή,
 πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν,
 ἵνα γένηται ἐν παῖσιν αὐτὸς πρῶτευν,

¹⁹ ὅτι (1) ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι
²⁰ (2) καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν,
 εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ,
 [δι' αὐτοῦ] εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς
 εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

Because each stanza contains *πρωτότοκος*, each is said to catalog his “preeminence” (the alleged meaning of the title) in a specific realm—preeminent in creation by virtue of his creative act (vv. 15–17) and preeminent in the new creation by virtue of his resurrection (vv. 18–20).³⁶ Attributing the *πρωτότοκος* status to his creation in the first stanza appears to discredit the thesis of this study—that *πρωτότοκος* encapsulates a birth-by-resurrection Christology.³⁷

In support of this understanding, because the first line of v. 18 speaks of the Church (new creation), it is typically treated as the first line of the second stanza.³⁸ The structure of the hymn above, however, makes evident that this line is actually the last line of the first stanza, the last of the four clauses subordinated under *ὅτι* (v. 16), and that the next line in v. 18 parallels v. 15 and so begins the second stanza.³⁹ Recognizing that the Church is in the first stanza removes the emphasis upon creation

³⁶ Robert Reymond divides the hymn into Jesus’ lordship over the “Natural Creation” in vv. 15–17 and over the “Spiritual Creation” in vv. 18–20. *Jesus, Divine Messiah: The New Testament Witness* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1990), 244. See also Robert Peterson, *Salvation Accomplished by the Son: The Work of Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 132–33, 147–49; G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 314–16, 443–49; N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, vol. 3 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 239.

³⁷ For example, Wilhelm Michaelis, “Πρωτότοκος, Πρωτοτοκεῖα,” *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 6:879. Pyne sees in *πρωτότοκος* in v. 15 merely the function of preeminence possessed before the incarnation and restored by resurrection in v. 18, not the ontology of human sonship imparted for the first time in the incarnation and culminated by resurrection (8, 46–48).

³⁸ For example, see Beale, 315, 443.

³⁹ This understanding was proposed as early as 1913 by Eduard Norden. *Agnostos Theos, Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte Religiöser Rede* (Berlin: Verlag B. G. Teubner, 1913), 252. Ernst Käsemann agrees. “A Primitive Christian Baptismal Liturgy,” *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM, 1964), 150.

versus new creation as the organizing principle of the hymn, relegating discussion of these concepts to their grammatically appointed subsidiary place, i.e., subordinated under *ὅτι* (vv. 16, 19).

Instead, the *πρωτότοκος* clauses stand forth as the hymn's organizing principle. Accordingly, of the fourteen pronoun references back to "Son" (v. 13) noted above, the relative pronouns *ὅς* (vv. 15, 18) are the tightest reference, and the *πρωτότοκος* clauses emerge as the major branches of Paul's Christology of the "Son" (v. 13).⁴⁰ Further, *πρωτότοκος* is the only theological term common to both relative pronoun clauses and the only Christological title or term common to both stanzas. And the title's theme of preeminence (*πρω-*) coalesces in the common purpose clause for both stanzas: *ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων* (v. 18c, "so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything").

The prominence of *υἱοῦ* (v. 13) together with the *πρωτότοκος* title as the hymn's central theme would seem to suggest that Paul is here using the title with the same literal meaning as in Romans 8: that Jesus was made *υἱοῦ* (v. 13) by being the first to be begotten into God's family (*πρωτότοκος*, vv. 15, 18). Our thesis here is therefore that the title is encapsulating Paul's Christology discovered in Acts 13, Romans 1, Romans 8, and 1 Corinthians 15—the impartation of ontological Adamic sonship to Christ by the literal, biological begetting of his resurrection as the prototype for the culmination of our sonship by resurrection. The outermost/main clauses of the hymn (yellow highlighting above) lay out the major themes of the hymn's *πρωτότοκος* Christology by setting the title in conjunction with four concepts—from the dead, Image of the invisible God, *ἀρχή*, and of All Creation—examination of which confirms our thesis.

Πρωτότοκος from the Dead

Πρωτότοκος here designates someone first in rank because he was the first to enter the group, or more precisely, to leave the group designated by the plural *νεκρῶν* ("the dead ones"). It was by resurrection, therefore, that Jesus became *πρωτότοκος*. Because Paul uses the term *πρωτότοκος* only three times in two passages (here and Romans 8), and because in both passages it was resurrection that made Jesus *πρωτότοκος*, it is implausible that Paul would use the term literally in Romans 8:29 to encapsulate the rich Christology of begetting into Adamic sonship and then use it here metaphorically merely to designate only preeminence.

Further, to say that the meaning of the *πρωτότοκος* title is merely "preeminence" is to say that the *πρωτο-* ("first") part of the noun is literal while the *-τοκος* ("born") part is not: i.e., the group is non-familial. That meaning, however, is sufficient to teach no greater relationship of our resurrection to that of Christ's than that we are both coincidentally in the group of the resurrected ones (Christ being first and thus preeminent in the group). In other words, in a non-familial group temporal preeminence is non-organic: entrance of the first member does not ensure additional entrances of additional members. In Colossians, however, Paul is teaching that our resurrection is organically

⁴⁰ Relative pronouns are so named because, of all the types of pronouns, they relate two clauses most closely.

dependent upon that of Christ.⁴¹ This teaching can be captured only by a literal, familial meaning of *πρωτότοκος*, for Paul has been found to teach that in God's family we are made sons by union with Christ, thereby sharing in his sonship.⁴²

Πρωτότοκος, Image of the Invisible God

It is highly unlikely that Paul would use a theologically technical term such as *πρωτότοκος* as the central theme of a hymn but give it two disparate meanings—the technical meaning, encapsulating so much Christology in verse 18, and less than the technical meaning (i.e., merely preeminence), communicating none of that Christology in verse 15. It is therefore of little surprise that Paul opens the hymn in verse 15 with the image-of-God concept as the theological framework within which the remainder of the hymn is to be read and the *πρωτότοκος* concept is to be understood.

Three observations advance the study. First, because it is the “*ἀοράτου* [invisible] God” of which Christ is said to be the image, this image of God concept pertains at least in part to Christ's body (cf. 1:18b–20, 22; 2:9) and it pertains therefore to the era of the incarnation and the human nature of Christ (cf. Jn 1:18; 12:45; 14:8–9; 2 Cor 4:4). Second, the only other reference to the image of God in the epistle (3:10) is the Adamic image of God.⁴³ Third, in v. 15 *πρωτότοκος* stands in apposition to “image,” equating the two. Thus, for Christ to be materially the Adamic image of God is to be the *πρωτότοκος* (v. 15), which he became by the material transformation of resurrection (v. 18).⁴⁴ It is evident that Paul's teaching in Romans 8 and 1 Corinthians 15 is the theological framework within which he formulated this Christological hymn: by resurrection Christ entered into Adamic sonship and thus the material part of the restored filial nature of the Adamic image of God.

Πρωτότοκος, the *Ἀρχή*

The first part of this article found that in the OT the image of God and sonship coalesce in a common purpose—dominion over the creation—and the topic of Paul's hymn (to which *πρωτότοκος* connects back via the *ὅς* relative pronouns in vv. 15, 18) is the Son's rule over his kingdom (v. 13). It

⁴¹ For example, Paul teaches that we were “raised up with Christ” (3:1), and so our “life is hidden with Christ in God” (3:3) until the time when “Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory” (3:4; cf. 1:27). Robert Saucy points out that one of the aspects of the head-body analogy (1:18; 2:19) is Christ's being the source of resurrection life for the church. *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 29–32. See also Paul's teaching in Ephesians 2:5 and 1 Corinthians 15:20–21.

⁴² Note that in 1:12, Paul says that the Father “qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints.” The event that qualifies someone to share in an inheritance is their entrance into the family of the parent who owns the inheritance. Note that the inheritance is “in Light” (v. 12), making the transfer from “the domain of darkness” into “the kingdom of His beloved Son” (v. 13) the means by which we entered the family and thus share in the inheritance (v. 12). Romans 8:17 and Galatians 4:1–7 also speak of our sharing in Christ's sonship and therefore in his inheritance.

⁴³ Beale notes authors in early Judaism who speak of Adam as the image of the invisible God, and he also points to *εἰκὼν θεοῦ* in 1 Corinthians 11:7, which is a clear reference to the Adamic image of God (444).

⁴⁴ Durrwell correctly recognizes that the image of God was something borne more fully by Christ after the resurrection, but he incorrectly concludes that Paul is talking about the “conclusion” of the “divinization” (rather than about the reclamation of Adamic humanity) of Christ. He sees in the resurrection a restoration of Christ's “divine traits” that had been “blurred by the humiliation he had chosen to undergo” (128).

is in this vein that in verse 18 Paul makes ἀρχή appositive to πρωτότοκος: to be πρωτότοκος is to be the ἀρχή, a term that speaks of either a “beginning” or of a “ruler.” Both meanings have been found already in the hymn: the πρωτότοκος is the preeminent one because he was the first to rise.⁴⁵ As with εἰκόν in verse 15, the apposition of πρωτότοκος to ἀρχή shows that it was by resurrection that he became ἀρχή. Given the emphasis on the Adamic image of God and Adamic sonship noted above, it would seem that the dominion given to the πρωτότοκος by resurrection is the dominion which Adam lost (Gn 3:17–19).

The passage confirms this hypothesis by arguing that the reconciliation of all things (v. 20a) came by Christ’s resurrection. “For all the fullness to dwell in Him” (v. 19) and “to reconcile all things” (v. 20) are speaking of the resurrection (v. 18b), for they are exegetical to “was pleased” (v. 19a), which was the reason (ὅτι, v. 19a) that the Father wanted him to be preeminent in all things (v. 18b), which was the purpose (ἵνα, v. 18b) of his resurrection (v. 18a).⁴⁶ Although believers are the party most expressly reconciled to God by the resurrection (vv. 21–22; v. 22 is the only other occurrence of ἀποκαταλλάσσω [“reconciled”] in Colossians; cf. 2 Cor 5:19–20), in v. 20 Paul further defines the “all things” that are reconciled by resurrection as including the creation (cf. v. 16). Paul is referencing creation’s rebellion against Adam’s rule as God’s representative in Genesis 3:17–19, culminating in Adam’s death (v. 19b), which was found to be his ultimate failure to rule. Resurrection has therefore been found to be the ultimate restoration of that Adamic rule (cf. Rom 8:20–23).⁴⁷ Further, the “peace” that comes through Christ’s cross work (Col 1:20) reflects the OT word **שָׁלוֹם**, which became a summary cosmic term for everything being made right in the eschatological age that would be ushered in by the eternally ruling messianic Son from David’s line reclaiming Adamic dominion (Is 9:6–7; 54:13; Jer 33:9).⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Note the use of ἀρχή in the sense of “ruler” in verse 16 and in 2:10, 15. Also, one of Saucy’s aspects of Christ’s relationship to the church portrayed in the head-body analogy in 1:18a is the “sovereign leadership” of the head (28–29). Fredrick Danker recognizes that the two meanings of “beginning” and “ruler” are not totally disparate because he defines the “ruler” as “an authority figure who initiates activity or process.” “*Ἀρχή*,” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 138. Gaffin sees both meanings in ἀρχή here (38–39), as does W. R. G. Loader “The Apocalyptic Model of Sonship: Its Origin and Development in New Testament Tradition,” *JBL* 97/4 (1978): 548.

⁴⁶ Three additional points of exegesis confirm this understanding. First, note the emphasis on Christ’s body in the parallel statement in 2:9 and the emphasis on resurrection realities in 2:10 and following. Second, the aorist tense of εἰρηνοποιήσας (“having made peace”) makes the cross antecedent to “to reconcile” (v. 20). Third, the theme of the universal sphere of his being first (ἐν πᾶσιν, “in all things,” v. 18c) as a result of resurrection (v. 18b) flows through the passage to the universal sphere of the reconciliation (τὰ πάντα, “all things,” v. 20).

⁴⁷ Note that throughout the epistle, dominion is something that he received by resurrection and subsequent ascension (2:9–10, 12–15; 3:1).

⁴⁸ Note that reconciliation coming δι’ αὐτοῦ (“through Him”) renders εἰς αὐτόν (“to Himself”) apparently superfluous (v. 20a). It would seem that the former is Christ while the latter is the Father, speaking of Adamic viceregency under God as Paul does in 1 Corinthians 15:24–28.

Πρωτότοκος of All Creation

Christ's reclaimed Adamic sonship and the Adamic image of God qualify him to be the ἀρχή, the preeminent Adamic ruler of the reconciled creation, another blessing in which we too share. Now the phrase “πρωτότοκος of all creation” (v. 15b) takes us deeper into the πρωτότοκος's relationship to the creation. The question of Christ's relationship to the creation in this phrase is the question of the genitive use of πάσης κτίσεως (“of all creation,” v. 15).⁴⁹ In its original, literal meaning (“firstborn”), πρωτότοκος would have assumed the subsequent phrase “of the children [in the family],” a partitive genitive. Most interpreters reject the idea of a partitive genitive here because Paul would be saying that Christ is a part of the creation.⁵⁰ However, the last line of v. 18 gives the purpose of the two πρωτότοκος clauses (vv. 15 and 18b), and the “all things” would seem to be the same “all things” as in v. 20a, which is the creation (v. 20b). Also, the teaching of the immediately preceding clause in v. 15 is that Jesus is the εἰκὼν of the invisible God, discovered above to be speaking of his incarnate reclamation of the Adamic image of God, specifically its material part. Thus, “πρωτότοκος of all creation” is indeed a partitive genitive. To be sure, the second Person of the Trinity is eternal, infinitely predating the temporal creation. In the incarnation, however, he became part of the creation (Jn 1:14), and the resurrection raised Christ to be the pinnacle of the creation, the ruling human Son of God possessing the human image of God, the position vacated by Adam at the fall.⁵¹ Christ's being begotten first in the family of God by resurrection is what makes him the first in rank of the creation, for the NT family of God is a reclamation of Adam's original rank of filial ruler over the rest of the creation. Further, all aspects of the new creation (including cosmic restoration of the material creation) flow from his begetting by resurrection.⁵²

Most interpreters object to the thesis of this article (begetting-by-resurrection Christology) because ὅτι makes the creative act of the Son of God (v. 16) the cause of his status as πρωτότοκος (v. 15). They conclude that (1) the creation in v. 15 is the creation of Genesis 1; (2) thus, πρωτότοκος is a status that Jesus held from before the incarnation; (3) πρωτότοκος is bifurcated from the resurrection and so does not carry its literal meaning but rather means merely “preeminence” over creation; and (4) the genitive “of all creation” is not partitive but rather communicates subordination *under* Christ.⁵³

⁴⁹ The other seven occurrences of πρωτότοκος in Scripture are of no help here, for of the two genitives of which πρωτότοκος is the head noun, the use of neither would fit here since in neither is the genitive a group of which the πρωτότοκος is a member (in Lk 2:7, “firstborn of her” (literally translated) would be a subjective genitive; and in Rv 1:5, “firstborn of the dead [ones]” would be a genitive of separation).

⁵⁰ Macleod, 57; cf. Philip Hughes, *The True Image: The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 36–40.

⁵¹ Beale notes that the similar construction speaking of Christ as ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως (“the Beginning[/ruler] of the creation,” Rev. 3:14) is a genitive of the whole (343).

⁵² Peterson, 143–50.

⁵³ David Garner states the first three and implies the last. “The First and Last Son: Christology and Sonship in Pauline Soteriology,” *Resurrection and Eschatology: Theology in Service of the Church: Essays in Honor of Richard B. Gaffin Jr.*, ed. Lane G. Tipton and Jeffrey C. Waddington (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2008), 258–59. See also “Adoption in Christ,” 164; Gaffin, 36–39. Beale recognizes that “image of the invisible God” is the Adamic image of God reclaimed in the incarnation (444–45), but he also holds that the image pertains to his pre-incarnate status “because the remainder of Col. 1:15–17 indicates that Christ's existence at the beginning of the first creation is in mind” (446; cf. 338–39). Throughout the discussion (444–

As noted above, they often divide the hymn up into two stanzas: the first creation in vv. 15–17 and the new creation in vv. 18–20.

Several considerations, however, show that the following clauses subordinated under *ὅτι* (vv. 16–18a) are actually unfolding the rich Christology of the *new* creation discovered above and the *πρωτότοκος*’s resurrection role as its pinnacle and source. In other words, both stanzas of the hymn are about the *new* creation. First, it has been found that every other element of v. 15 is speaking of realities that Christ received by resurrection. Second, all four clauses of verses 16–18a are subordinated in parallel under the *ὅτι*, and the last clause speaks of the *πρωτότοκος* as the head of the church (v. 18a), which was not born until Pentecost.⁵⁴ Third, although Paul uses *κτίζω* (“created,” v. 16) of the Genesis 1 creation (Rom 1:25; 1 Cor 11:9; 1 Tm 4:3), three times in Ephesians (the sister epistle to Colossians) he uses it of the new creation of the Church (Eph 2:10, 15; 4:24; thus, 3:9 is probably also the new creation) that comes by resurrection with Christ (Eph 2:1–6). Likewise, Paul uses *κτίσις* (“creation,” v. 15) not only of the first creation (Rom 1:20, 25; 8:19–22, 39) but also of the new creation (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). Fourth, the remainder of Colossians does not sustain any emphasis on the first creation (the only mention outside the hymn, 1:23, is devoid of relevance to this discussion); instead, Paul bases the book’s argument to remain faithful to Christ on aspects and implications of resurrection and the new creation (2:9–15; 3:1–4).

In conclusion, Paul regarded Christ’s resurrection and subsequent forming of the church to be a “new creation,” and both stanzas are speaking about this new creation. Christ is the *πρωτότοκος* because he is the pinnacle of the new creation, for that new creation comes through his resurrection.⁵⁵ First, he restores the race of reigning image-bearing sons by union with himself, and second, this restoration will one day spill over from the church to become a cosmic restoration of the creation itself (cf. Rom 8:18–23).⁵⁶

Ephesians 1

The Christology discovered in the Colossian hymn also underlies Paul’s teaching in his sister epistle of Ephesians. Christ’s rule (1:20c–23) restored following his resurrection (v. 20) is Adamic, for verse 22a quotes Psalm 8:6. Further, this rule is over the new creation (“the one to come,” Eph 1:21),

49), he toggles back and forth between seeing incarnation or pre-incarnation in verse 15, depending on whether he is taking verse 15 in isolation from or in connection with verse 16.

⁵⁴ Note that verse 16 is all one unit, for it is bound together by the inclusio reference to the creation of all things (beginning and end of v. 16). The four lines under *ὅτι* are therefore parallel, the final three joined to the preceding one by *καί*. Several considerations argue that the church did not exist until Pentecost: the tense of Matthew 16:18 is future; Ephesians 2:15 calls the church a “new man”; Ephesians 2 speaks of Gentiles and Jews being brought together into a third, new entity rather than one group joining the other; 1 Corinthians 10:32 speaks of three distinct groups; and in Colossians 1:18, the church is Christ’s body, and 1 Corinthians 12:13 says that Spirit baptism is the means by which believers are placed into the body, yet Spirit baptism was still future in Acts 1:5.

⁵⁵ This status makes him the one before and over all the new creation (v. 17a), the unifying and sustaining force of the new creation (v. 17b), and the head of the body (v. 18a).

⁵⁶ See Beale, 343, 44; John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 181; Mark Johnston, *Child of a King: What Joining God’s Family Really Means* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 1997), 75–76.

is from the Father's right hand (v. 20; cf. Col 3:1), and is over "rule and authority and power and dominion" (v. 21; all these terms except "power" are found in Col 1:16). His rule includes headship over his body the Church as "the fullness" (vv. 22b–23)—all concepts in the Colossian hymn—indicating that he gives life to the race of reigning sons, which means they share in his reclaimed Adamic sonship and dominion. Further, it was discovered in the first part of this article from 1 Corinthians 15:28b that the Father being "all in all" (Eph 1:23) comes by the resurrected Adamic Son reigning in viceregency under the Father as Adam was intended (1 Cor 15:21–28a).

The purpose of Paul's rehearsing this resurrection Christology is assurance that what the Father gave to Christ in verses 20–23 is "in accordance with" (v. 19b) the three descriptions of the eschatological salvation that he will give to believers (vv. 18–19a).⁵⁷ The first two—"the hope of His calling" (v. 18b) and "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (v. 18c)—are summary statements of the theme of predestination/calling to sonship that has run through the doxology to the Trinity in verses 3–14.⁵⁸ In the section on the Father (vv. 3–6a), he "predestined" us to *υιοθεσία* which is "through Jesus Christ" (vv. 4–5). Accordingly, both the section on the Son (vv. 6b–12) and the section on the Spirit (vv. 13–14) culminate with this filial theme of predestination to "inheritance": in verses 10–11, it is "in [Christ]" that we have the "inheritance" to which we were "predestinated according to His [the Father's] purpose"; and in verses 13–14 the "Holy Spirit of promise" "sealed" us in that he is the "pledge" of the "inheritance."⁵⁹ Accordingly, in the summary statement in verse 18, "glory," a term discovered previously to be used by Paul to speak of the resurrection's restoration of life and dominion, is the "inheritance," for it is the "hope of His calling" to sonship.

The third description of our eschatological salvation—"the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (v. 19a)—is the event of resurrection by which the sons will inherit the glory, for Paul is speaking of the power of resurrection (vv. 19b–20a), and which gave their prototype restored Adamic dominion (vv. 20c–23) over the current and new creation (v. 21). Because Christ is our head (v. 23), we his body will share in his resurrection, and thereby we will receive everything to which we have been predestined—sonship and all that the sons of God subsequently inherit, including participation in Christ's reclaimed Adamic dominion.

Conclusion

The consideration of these passages has confirmed the conclusions made in the first part of this article concerning Paul's understanding of the Christological intersection of sonship and resurrection. The other *υιοθεσία* passages (Rom 9:4; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5) have been found to corroborate our understanding of *υιοθεσία* in Romans 8. Romans 1:3–4 does no damage to and actually confirms

⁵⁷ *Ἐκ νεκρῶν* (v. 20) also communicates this prototypical idea.

⁵⁸ Note the overt structure of the doxology: each section ends with the refrain "to the praise of His glory" or "to the praise of the glory of His grace" and focuses on a member of the Trinity: Father (vv. 3–6a), Son (vv. 6b–12), and Spirit (vv. 13–14).

⁵⁹ The Spirit's promissory role was noted above in Romans 8: our present possession of the Spirit and of the sonship and inner life that he brings (vv. 10, 14–16) guarantees that one day he will also give us full sonship and bodily life (vv. 11, 17–23), to which we have been predestined (vv. 29–30).

Paul's teaching elsewhere that the resurrection was a literal begetting into ontological Adamic sonship. Colossians 1:15–20 directly corroborates the ontological nature of that sonship. *Πρωτότοκος* was found to encapsulate that begetting-by-resurrection Christology, even in the controversial statements of Colossians 1:15–16. Further, the discovery from 1 Corinthians 15 in the first part of this article was confirmed—that Christ's Adamic sonship pertains to his incarnation and thus to his human nature, including its material part. And finally, a new discovery was made—that the renewal of all things that flows from the resurrection of the *πρωτότοκος* is a new creation. The third part of this article (slated to appear in the spring 2022 issue of *JBTW*) will carry the investigation of the intersection of sonship and resurrection into the other NT authors and find that they advance the same begetting-by-resurrection Christology that has been found in Paul.

Book Reviews

Bare, Daniel. *Black Fundamentalists: Conservative Christianity and Racial Identity in the Segregation Era*. New York: New York University Press, 2021. 233 pp. + 25 pp. (back matter)

In 1927 Mrs. W. T. Larimer, Assistant Secretary of the Board of National Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the USA, addressed an audience at the Winona Lake Bible Conference on the need to support the rights of African Americans and even more to join with black churches in joint endeavors to promote Christian harmony.¹ What is so intriguing about this address is how rare it was for white fundamentalist audiences to hear anything about such topics. Fundamentalism focused on theological issues—the “fundamentals” for which they were named—but fundamentalist speakers also discussed social and political issues such as immigration, evolution, and international conflict. Issues of race, however, were far from common topics. Even rarer was mention of fellow black believers with shared theological convictions.

Two books in recent years have examined the relationship of African Americans to fundamentalism in the first half of the twentieth century. In her book *Doctrine and Race*, Mary Beth Swetnam Matthews discusses the interactions of fundamentalists with the black community and how white fundamentalists viewed issues of concern to African Americans. However, she stresses social and cultural issues to the point that identifying a “black fundamentalism” in the book is really impossible—whatever sympathies may have existed—and she treats the two groups as essentially separate.² Daniel Bare in *Black Fundamentalism* takes a different tack in putting forth a black fundamentalist identity, which shows both similarities to and differences from the mainstream of the movement.

Bare suggests that observers have ignored black fundamentalism in part because they tend to see the movement as institutional rather than theological. African Americans were rarely part of fundamentalist institutions. Also black religious conservatives were not so sympathetic to the separatist tendencies that often characterized fundamentalism. Rather, racial pressures encouraged African American Christians of all theological views to maintain institutional unity in the face of racial discrimination. However, Bare sees a doctrinal kinship between white and black defenders of the fundamentals. He does not reject approaches to fundamentalism that emphasize its social, political, and cultural aspects, but he wants to include a perspective that also discusses doctrinal issues and attitudes.

For his theological framework, Bare uses the traditional concern of fundamentalists for “the five fundamentals.” He recognizes the disputed nature of the list of the five doctrines, which varies with different sources, and he includes a lengthy and helpful footnote on the whole concept. After

¹ Mrs. W. T. Larimer, “They of Another Color,” *Winona Echoes* (Winona Lake: Victor M. Hatfield), 147–57.

² *Doctrine and Race: African American Evangelicals and Fundamentalism Between the Wars*, Religion and American Culture (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2017).

due consideration, Bare decides on the following list for his analysis: “biblical inspiration and inerrancy, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the substitutionary atonement, and the physical resurrection and literal second coming of Christ.” His list is a fair distillation, although one might argue the last point could easily be divided to make six.

Using this structure the author identifies black religious leaders who not only defended these fundamentals but also labeled themselves as fundamentalists. Articles and addresses in African American publications defended the essentials of Christianity and rejected any form of modernism that questioned the fundamentals. Indeed, some argued that only by adhering to the essentials of Christianity could the United States solve its racial problems—an interesting slant on the argument of white fundamentalists that only by maintaining the fundamentals of the faith could America preserve its allegedly Christian civilization.

In addition to scrutinizing individual black advocates of fundamentalism, Bare also records the unique story of the American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville (now American Baptist College). This school was a joint effort between the Southern Baptist and National Baptist Conventions. Unlike most other educational efforts by white Christians to help black churches, the ABTS had a racially integrated board and faculty, while others (such as Carver Bible Institute and Southern Bible Institute) began with almost exclusively white leadership. The seminary enjoyed some success, but its history also revealed tensions that showed even the best-intentioned white Christian outreaches to black Christians suffered from contemporary racial attitudes.

Complicating the story was conflict within the black community over such defenses of orthodoxy. Black critics regarded fundamentalism as an obstacle to racial progress and saw African American defenders of the faith as advancing ideas more harmful than helpful to racial progress.

Bare focuses mostly on black fundamentalism and not so much on how white fundamentalists viewed racial issues. In this respect Matthews’s book reveals more of white attitudes, although the evidence she cites tends to be that which is discreditable to fundamentalists.³ (Interestingly, both Bare and Mathews use the very negative example of Texas fundamentalist J. Frank Norris, who always seems to be a ready source of anecdotes showing fundamentalism in a poor light.) Bare, however, devotes much more attention to the African American conservatives whose stories he argues have been ignored.

Black Fundamentalism is an excellent historical study, but perhaps there is something beyond just history that we can take away from this book. In an article outlining “images” that writers have used to describe the black church in American history, Leon McBeth includes “the Joseph Image” of author Carter Woodson. The idea is that as Joseph was sold into slavery but became the instrument of deliverance for his family, so the black church—untouched by the racist attitudes prevalent in the American culture and even in American churches—could provide a testimony to a purer form of Christianity to the white churches in the United States. We need not press the analogy to recognize that there are facets of the Joseph image that fundamentalists and their heirs might consider. Bare’s

³ For a good (if brief) discussion of fundamentalism and racial issues see Douglas Carl Abrams, *Old-Time Religion Embracing Modernist Culture: American Fundamentalism Between the Wars* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2017), 139–47.

book suggests white fundamentalists have missed some vital cultural issues involving race and have overlooked allies who are already fighting against liberalism.⁴

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⁴ Leon McBeth, “Images of the Black Church in America,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 16 (1981): 21–22.

Blackwell, Ben C., John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston, eds. *Reading Revelation in Context: John's Apocalypse and Second Temple Judaism*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019. 182pp. + 22pp. (back matter)

Reading Revelation in Context is an accessible resource for reading Revelation in light of second temple literature, especially those pieces considered to be apocalyptic. Each chapter of the book links a chapter of Revelation with an extra-biblical source that supposedly illuminates it. Each chapter follows the same basic pattern: the extra-biblical source is introduced and the material relevant to interpreting Revelation is described, Revelation material illuminated by the source is discussed, “additional ancient texts” which also may shed light on a given chapter of Revelation are listed, and a bibliography is provided (which includes a listing of translations of the key extrabiblical source discussed).

Chapter 1 compares the Parables of Enoch (1 Enoch 37–71) with Revelation 1. Benjamin Reynolds establishes that both John and the Parables of Enoch bring together Daniel’s Son of Man language with other Old Testament messianic texts. Reynolds does not claim that John drew on 1 Enoch.

In chapter 2, Mark Mathews observes that 1 Enoch 103:5–8 makes a connection between sinners and wealth and that the churches that received critique in Revelation 2–3 were also noted for their wealth. The connections seem a bit tenuous.

David A. deSilva observes that *The Testament of Levi* presents a journey to heaven in which various ranks of angels are seen before God’s throne, which is placed in a temple setting. In light of this, deSilva suggests that the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders, and the seven spirits represent differing orders of angels serving in God’s temple. However, the seven spirits in chapter 4 should be interpreted in light of Revelation 1:4, which is a Trinitarian context.

In Chapter 4, Dana Harris finds it notable that 4 Ezra and Revelation 5 both include messianic lion imagery (Rev. 5:5; 4 Ezra 12:31–36). In both cases there is an allusion back to Genesis 49. Several times Harris explains the parallel as reflecting a shared interpretive tradition, which is likely. Once Harris seems to suggest Revelation’s dependence on 4 Ezra, but this is unlikely if 4 Ezra was written in AD 100 as Harris suggests.

Chapter 5 discusses 2 Maccabees and Revelation 6, martyrdom being important to both. However, Ian Paul ends up highlighting differences more than similarities.

In chapter 6 Ronald Herms observes that the Psalms of Solomon include a passage that speaks of God marking people for either salvation or judgment (15:4–9). Herms identifies Genesis 4:15; Ezekiel 9:4–6; and Habakkuk 1:12 as the biblical background for this idea. Though Herms thinks that the Old Testament background stands behind Revelation 7 and 14, he thinks the Psalms of Solomon show how this theme of marking worked itself out in another post-OT text that was concerned with the suffering of God’s people.

Jason Matson thinks the Testament of Adam indicates that the silence in Revelation 8 is to allow the prayers of the martyrs to be heard. However, the Testament of Adam in its final form was likely composed several centuries after Revelation and does not reveal the reason for the silence. Matson provides that reason from unspecified Jewish traditions.

Ian Boxall identifies two main parallels between the Animal Apocalypse (1 Enoch 85–90) and Revelation 9: (1) fallen angels depicted as fallen stars and (2) animals that war against God's people. The first symbol is not unique to 1 Enoch, as Boxall notes. The second contains some significant differences (also noted by Boxall). First, the animals in 1 Enoch are normal whereas the ones in Revelation are composite. Second, the animals in 1 Enoch represent human nations whereas in Revelation they represent demons.

Chapter 9 adduces parallels regarding angels in Jubilees and Revelation 10. The difficulty with Goodrich's proposed connections is that in every case the parallels between Revelation and the OT are much clearer and stronger than the connections with Jubilees.

In chapter 10 Garrick Allen proposes that 4 Ezra 13 and Revelation 11 share some significant parallels, which he represents in a chart. However, the parallels are clearer in the chart than in the text. In the body of the article, Garrick acknowledged some of these discontinuities. In fact, the body of the article seems to focus on the dissimilarities. In the end it is not clear what 4 Ezra 13 contributes to the understanding of Revelation 11.

Archie Wright suggests parallels between Revelation 12 and an extrabiblical account of Satan's fall in the Life of Adam and Eve 12:1–17. He thinks these parallels suggest Revelation's dependence on this source. However, the parallels cited fall short of demonstrating dependence, for all of the parallel elements also appear in canonical Scripture. What is more, Revelation 12 is likely portraying eschatological events rather than primeval ones.

Jamie Davies appeals to 4 Ezra 11–12 to argue for a preterist reading of Revelation 13. Though 4 Ezra 11–12 links Daniel's fourth beast to first-century Rome, it also is about the Messiah's advent at the end of days. This makes a preterist reading of 4 Ezra a modern perspective rather than the perspective of the author.

In chapter 13 Ben Blackwell notes that the Damascus Document makes a clear division between the righteous and the wicked and that it involves the "overlapping" actions of God, angels, and humans. However, these are very broad themes which appear in earlier Scripture.

In chapter 14 Benjamin Wold relates the septets of plagues in Revelation to the Qumran document, Words of the Luminaries. He focuses on how this work was shaped by Leviticus 26 and its presentation of judgment in a septet. Wold is not claiming that John was dependent upon the Words of the Luminaries. He observes that seeing the passages that the author of the Qumran document relied on can make us sensitive to the range of passages drawn on by John.

In chapter 15, Edith Humphrey draws on the fact that Revelation 17 makes use of a symbolic woman to make a connection with the writing, Joseph and Aseneth, in which Aseneth symbolizes repentance. Humphrey recognizes that the two women represent opposites (repentance for Aseneth, rebellion for the whore of Babylon). Humphrey does not claim any dependence of Revelation upon Joseph and Aseneth. It also seems that Aseneth symbolizes repentance differently than the whore of Babylon symbolizes rebellion. Aseneth is a character in a novella type story who symbolizes repentance (or would it be better to say *exemplifies* repentance) by her actions within the story. The whore of Babylon is pure symbol all the way through.

In her chapter on Revelation 18, Cynthia Long Westfall notes that 1 Enoch 91:1–105:2 critiques “power,” “wealth,” “extravagance,” “luxury,” “consumerism,” and the leveraging of these for “oppression” and “injustice.” It also predicts eschatological judgment on the wicked. The question remains whether the Epistle of Enoch is simply reflecting its biblical milieu or whether it adds something unique to the interpretation of Revelation 18.

Michael Gorman observes that Psalm 17 from the Psalms of Solomon draws on the same Old Testament texts that Revelation 19 draws on (Pss. 2; 110; Isa. 11). He notes that there is debate over whether Psalm 17 presents a nonviolent Messiah. While he acknowledges that debate as still ongoing, he argues (unpersuasively in my view) that Revelation 19 presents a nonviolent Messiah.

In chapter 18, Elizabeth Shively draws parallels between 1 Enoch 10 and Revelation 20. She claims that both passages involve angels who bind fallen angels within the earth for a period of time before those fallen angels are judged by fire. She concludes that 1 Enoch and Revelation are drawing from a common tradition. This was an instance in which the parallels seem real, rather than contrived.

In chapter 19 Jonathan Moo compares the account of the New Jerusalem to 4 Ezra. He observes that “[i]t is unlikely that either author knew of each other’s book,” but he finds the comparison worthwhile since the two books were written around the same time and share both “genre” and “a number of motifs and ideas.”

Sarah Underwood Dixon adduces a parallel between the Apocalypse of Zephaniah 6.11–12 and Revelation 19:10; 22:8–9. In both passages the person receiving an apocalyptic vision falls before an angel and is rebuked by the angel and told to worship only God. Dixon notes that similar scenes occur in Ascension of Isaiah 7.21–22 and Tobit 12:16–22. She does not claim any dependence between these texts.

Reading Revelation in Context provides an interesting introduction to a segment of Second Temple literature. However, it fails to demonstrate the importance of this literature for understanding Revelation. Presuming that the authors chose the best companion texts, the lack of a strong connection between many of the texts and Revelation was notable. The most convincing parallels were due to the texts drawing on the same Old Testament material as Revelation. This reinforces what is plain from the numerous allusions to the Old Testament in Revelation: the most important source for rightly reading Revelation is antecedent Scripture.

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Biblical Worldview Lead Specialist | BJU Press

Kim, Brittany, and Charlie Trimm. *Understanding Old Testament Theology: Mapping the Terrain of Recent Approaches*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020. 162pp. + 15pp. (back matter)

The intense specialization of biblical scholarship makes it difficult to keep up with research and trends even in one's own field. This was already the case when I did doctoral work in OT theology in the 1990s. At that time I received significant help from the analysis of the discipline in Gerhard Hasel's *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991). While Hasel's work continues to serve as a foundational resource, it has not been updated to reflect the scholarship of the last three decades. To fill this void, Brittany Kim (Northeastern Seminary and North Park Theological Seminary) and Charlie Trimm (Talbot School of Theology, Biola University) have collaborated to write *Understanding Old Testament Theology: Mapping the Terrain of Recent Approaches*.

In their introduction Kim and Trimm discuss "the promise and problems" in current study of the theology of the OT (1–4). They identify six "flash points" that reflect the diversity of the discipline:

1. The degree of unity in the OT, including the question of a central theme that ties together the OT books
2. The connection between the OT and the NT
3. The significance of the individual interpreter's context
4. Whether OT theology should be descriptive or prescriptive
5. Questions concerning the relationship between historical study and theological study as well as other methodological concerns
6. How an OT theology should be structured

The authors acknowledge the confusion that can result from scholarly disagreement over such weighty questions, but they take up the challenge. "We seek to address this problem by offering a guide through the maze of publications in the field and giving you a taste of the rich banquet that Old Testament theology spreads for those who accept its invitation" (4).

Kim and Trimm foreground a different image, however: mapping terrain. OT theology is like a mountainous wilderness, and the mountain peaks represent various approaches to the discipline. Specifically, current scholarship reflects three broad approaches or orientations: history, theme, and context. These three approaches form the three parts of the book. Further, each approach divides into subcategories—the paths leading to a peak—and each subcategory is the subject of one chapter.

Part 1 discusses the historical approach: a focus on the development of Israel's faith over time. Chapter 1 deals with "Old Testament Theology Grounded in Biblical (Hi)story," where "(hi)story" conveys the dual idea of the history itself and the narrative recounting the history. Here scholars concentrate on how the OT itself describes the progression of Israel's theology. This differs from the subject of chapter 2: "Historical-Critical Old Testament Theology." Writers in this vein question or reject the biblical presentation and reconstruct Israel's theological development following various theories of composition.

Part 2 focuses on the thematic approach. “Multiplex Thematic Old Testament Theology” (chapter 3) describes theologies oriented to a variety of themes such as worship or the character of God or divine blessing. By contrast, “Old Testament Theology Focused around [on?] a Central Theme” (chapter 4) seeks the famous *Mitte* that unifies the OT and ultimately the whole Bible. Candidates include covenant (e.g., William J. Dumbrell), the kingdom of God (e.g., Stephen G. Dempster), the divine presence (e.g., J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays), and the mission of God (e.g., Christopher J. H. Wright).

Part 3 is the most diverse, explaining approaches that highlight one kind of context or another for OT theology. In “Canonical Old Testament Theology” (chapter 5), the entire Christian canon provides the context. By contrast, “Jewish Biblical Theology” (chapter 6) analyzes the teaching of the Hebrew Bible from streams within contemporary Judaism, including those shaped theologically by the experience of the Holocaust. The final contextual approach is “Postmodern Old Testament Theology” (chapter 7). This rubric naturally encompasses a wide-ranging assortment of subjectively and socially oriented methodologies and conclusions.

Kim and Trimm’s conclusion summarizes the various approaches to OT theology. Then follows an overview of OT theology sources not dealt with under the main headings of the book, which points the reader to an online annotated bibliography for additional material. The authors continue by sharing some reflections on the future of OT theology. They close the book by encouraging the reader to keep exploring the field, providing a list of questions to guide study. An appendix provides a chart that synthesizes the key points of the approaches to OT theology.

The back cover is not exaggerating when it claims that “*Understanding Old Testament Theology* provides the only summary introduction of its kind to the field of Old Testament theology.” Kim and Trimm have expertly condensed an immense amount of scholarship into this thin volume. Though they acknowledge that their categorization is not airtight (10), their classification provides sound analysis that helps make sense of the bewildering array of OT theologies available today.

Clear and consistent organization characterizes *Understanding Old Testament Theology*. Each chapter follows the same structure. At the beginning Kim and Trimm provide a concise definition of the kind of OT theology to be discussed. This definition identifies common features as well as points of tension, and these elements echo relevant “flash points” from the book’s introduction. For example,

Canonical Old Testament theologies focus on the final canonical form of the biblical text, interpret texts in light of their broader Old Testament context, read the Old Testament as Christian Scripture, and see Old Testament theology as prescriptive. Points of tension among proponents of this approach include which canon is followed, the significance of the history of interpretation, and the role of historical-critical methods. (92)

Following the definition, the authors give a bibliography of a half-dozen or so texts that will be covered as key representatives of the theology at hand. For the chapter on canonical OT theology, the bibliography includes authors such as Brevard S. Childs, Paul R. House, and Charles H. H. Scobie (92). The bulk of the chapter then explains and illustrates the common features and points of tension

introduced in the definition. Each chapter ends by considering the Book of Exodus as a brief case study of how scholars of the selected persuasion actually do OT theology. The repeated combination of explanation and illustration keeps the discussion from being unhelpfully vague.

Insofar as Kim and Trimm aim at description not prescription, I find little to quarrel with. I wonder, however, about the small amount of evaluation they do provide. Their main complaint about the contemporary discipline of OT theology? The field is dominated by white males (154–56). While this concern is not entirely unworthy, I can think of more urgent problems in OT theology.

In particular, many of the theologians Kim and Trimm discuss have an unorthodox bibliology. Whether following a historical-critical, postmodern, or other direction, these scholars reject the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture and consequently diminish its authority. Given that *Understanding Old Testament Theology* is published by an evangelical publisher (Zondervan) and that Kim and Trimm earned their PhDs at an evangelical institution (Wheaton College), one may be able to assume that the authors hold a high view of Scripture. This is not an explicit emphasis in the book, however. Instead, the following represents the flavor of Kim and Trimm's approach:

Since every attempt to capture the theology of the Old Testament is partial and constrained by the perspective of the interpreter, we look forward to seeing further contributions to the field by a wide variety of scholars—female and male, Western and majority world—using each of the approaches we have outlined and possibly some new ones. While we as readers will not always agree with the assumptions and conclusions of scholars working in the field, each Old Testament theology has something to teach us if we are open to listening.

This does not strike me as a model of careful discernment.

Nonetheless, *Understanding Old Testament Theology* provides a wealth of information useful in an academic setting. The question is determining the level of instruction for which the book is most appropriate. In an introductory OT theology course, my own approach is to provide a brief survey of the discipline but focus on getting the students to interact with the text of the OT itself. *Understanding Old Testament Theology* would be distracting and even overwhelming in a setting like this. But for an intermediate or advanced level, the book would serve as a convenient and comprehensive guide to late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century scholarship in the field.

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Wilson, Jared C. *Gospel-Driven Ministry: An Introduction to the Calling and Work of a Pastor*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021. 234 pp.

Gospel-Driven Ministry: An Introduction to the Calling and Work of a Pastor, by Jared C. Wilson, enters a strong field of modern works that provide a means of training and mentoring the next generation of pastors. Wilson is employed as assistant professor of pastoral ministry at Spurgeon College and author in residence at Midwestern Baptist Seminary. Having served in pastoral ministry previously, he currently directs the Pastoral Training Center (PTC) at his local church, Liberty Baptist Church, in Liberty, Missouri.⁵ *Gospel-Driven Ministry* coordinates in design and follows closely on the heels of his previous book, *Gospel-Driven Church* (2019), which proved helpful in promoting a “Gospel-Driven” philosophy of ministry—a biblical, convictional alternative to the attractional-church mindset of a large segment of Evangelicalism.

Wilson wrote *Gospel-Driven Ministry* to “show the ways in which those given the stewardship of [gospel ministry]—pastors of local churches—must meditate on it, proclaim it, and adorn it with their lives (and their deaths)” (7). A ministry that is Gospel-centered will, according to Wilson, be “given the strength and joy to carry out this momentous task” (7).

Wilson begins with a chapter on “The Pastor,” where he lays out the modern dilemma: “Ministers today are expected to be gifted public speakers and catalytic leaders, yet very little else. The CEO model of ministry dominates” (9). He describes and decries the consumeristic mindset of many churches regarding their pastoral expectations. Wilson spends the remainder of chapter one presenting a biblical description of a pastor’s role, work, qualifications, calling and commissioning. In an era of high-profile pastoral failures, he rightly emphasizes the need for a personal calling matched by a qualified life.

Wilson’s work is particularly notable for rooting the qualifications of a pastor in the affirmation of a local church. He writes, “The pastoral office is undeniably connected to a local congregation . . . the role of pastor is inextricably connected to a particular people for whom and to whom the pastor is covenantally responsible. Only a church . . . grants that person the title ‘Pastor’—a seminary degree or an ordination certificate alone does not” (23). He concludes poignantly: “someone who wants to serve over a church should be a product of a church” (24). This is sage advice in the context of the parachurch locus of most ministerial training.

His next chapter on “The Power” focuses on the necessity of the pastor to believe in and make use of the transformative power of the gospel in ministry. Especially helpful is his encouragement to pastors to find their ministry identity in faithful gospel work. This will protect pastors both from “seeking to be impressive” and from feelings of failure if one “never sees tremendous growth” (40).

In chapter three, “Worshiping,” Wilson opines that “Disordered worship is the major disease threatening every local church,” leading to tangential problems like politics in the church, an

⁵ The PTC is an eighteen-month cohort-based process in which participants will collaborate in discussions on assigned readings, undergo group and individual coaching, and receive on-the-ground ministry experience. See <https://www.lbcliberty.org/ptc>.

imbalanced social gospel emphasis, and biblical illiteracy (45–46). The solution offered is three-fold: adoration [personal] study, prayerful preparation, and exultational exposition, where one preaches with passion that is formed through study and prayer.

Chapters four and five are focused on the work of preaching itself. Preaching, Wilson states, is more than “informational download” (58). Preaching is “proclamation that exults in exposing God’s glory in Christ . . . all martialed toward the only power to change” (59–61). With an alliterative preacher’s outline in mind, the author instructs that sermons must be contextual, convictional, clear, compassionate, and cross-centered (61–66). Wilson does an excellent job of linking preaching to pastoring, taking issue with multisite or online/video sermons. He writes that the preacher who focuses more on preaching than shepherding and who is “less and less involved with his congregation, is actually undermining the task to which he is trying to devote more time” (67). Faithful shepherds preach, knowing their people and their context, while expositing the Word with empathy. Following this charge is a very helpful survey of reasons an expositional ministry is best for the long-term health of a church. Chapter five focuses on presenting a practical method for sermon preparation, including some thoughtful reasons for manuscripting one’s sermons.

Amid his instruction on preaching, Wilson gives some helpful cautions regarding sermon illustrations. He says, “You shouldn’t trust your illustration to do what only God’s Word can do” (94). While many books on homiletics give much attention to illustration, *Gospel-Driven Ministry* keeps illustrations in their proper place. Also included in chapter five are instructions on preaching at weddings, funerals and during the ordinances. Wilson provides both practical advice and cautions in these special preaching situations.

Chapter six provides a solid survey of the nature, heart, practice, and principles of pastoral care and pastoral counseling. Particularly helpful are his encouragements to “validate feelings without affirming assumptions” so that people have a safe place to express themselves while you pastorally bring the Word to bear on their circumstances, giving the Spirit time to work (134–135). In an age where much counseling has become professionalized, Wilson encourages pastors that, even when referring people to outside counselors, that counsel becomes “a complement to—not a replacement for—your pastoral care” (136).

In the next chapter on “Leading,” the author provides what seems like a “catch-all” of leadership principles. This chapter is best used in context with personal conversations with pastoral trainees, while sharing one’s own ministry experience. In reading this chapter, one feels like Wilson may have wanted to write an entire book on leadership but is instead trying to distill several principles into one chapter. In summary, the pastor must keep in mind the connection between one’s “leadership skills” and “pastoral sensibilities” (143).

“Fighting (And Making Peace)” brings the reader into the realm of pastoral conflict. The author helpfully identifies the spheres of conflict—that conflict is not primarily between pastors and their flock. While some conflict is between the pastor and an individual, all conflict includes the activity of Satan and our own sinful flesh. Often conflict involves “wolves” who are primarily concerned to destroy unity in a local church through sowing discord or false doctrine. Wilson encourages pastors to make use of biblical church discipline to protect the church as a whole (171). God can use hostility

and conflict for His good purposes, being mindful that “the Lord, in his wisdom, has stewarded this situation to you . . . not to prove your greatness, but to prove his” (179).

The final two chapters on “Living” and “Dying” provide advice for long-term ministry fruitfulness. Self-care is urged. Through prayerful dependence, “establishing rhythms for healthy ministry” (195 ff.), and actively avoiding burnout by prioritizing rest and setting margins, pastors can trust that “normal ministry will produce fruit” (211). On considering death, Wilson quotes C. S. Lewis’ popular phrase “Die before you die. There is no chance after.” Wilson aptly quips that “the truth is, there are a million little deaths to die along the road to the big one” (217).

Negative criticisms of the book are relatively few. While the reader may desire more depth in each section, one should not expect *Gospel-Driven Ministry* to go beyond its purpose. It is not intended to replace the classics of Bridges, Spurgeon, and Baxter. It is a good modern introductory complement to these. Wilson is not always clear on hermeneutical principles—occasionally applying OT teaching to the NT church context. For instance, he describes the call to pastoral ministry as “no less supernatural” than the direct-revelatory calls of those in the OT and NT. He also describes the calling to ministry as “still a miracle” (17). This can be confusing for those simply burdened for ministry and “desiring the office of an overseer” (1 Tm 3:1) who may not have experienced anything supernatural. He also roots some of his argument for a plurality of elders too firmly in the Exodus 18 account of Moses’ needing to delegate leadership duties (21–22). One is left desiring more positive illustrations. Most of his ministry illustrations reflect conversations or circumstances that went awry, rather than those that went well. These are relatively minor critiques considering the whole work, however.

Positively, Wilson’s writing style is engaging, with a mixture of scriptural teaching and personal illustrations throughout each chapter. His conclusion “On the Readiness to Pastor” is purposefully gospel centered. New pastors should expect this work to provide some structure and form to preparation, but overall, the greatest need is to know the people one is called to pastor (224) and to experience the power of the gospel personally (226). Wilson is clearly committed to the sufficiency of a biblical model of pastoral ministry. Refreshingly, there isn’t much in the book that makes one want to be a follower of Wilson himself. Rather, the reader is driven to be a faithful gospel minister.

Gospel-Driven Ministry provides an accessible, readable introduction to pastoral ministry. It is a valuable option for introductory pastoral theology classes. It particularly seems useful for the kind of context in which Wilson is involved, where an experienced pastor reads through the chapter with prospective pastoral candidates, while discussing one’s own experience. Closing each chapter are “For Reflection” and “For Further Study:” sections. Wilson has provided a very helpful addition to practical theology training.

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