Journal of Biblical Theology & Worldview

Volume 3, Number 2
BJU Seminary
Spring 2023

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Journal of Biblical Theology & Worldview

published by
BJU Seminary

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Joy to Naomi, Obed Is Born: A Literary and Theological Analysis of Naomi's Story

By Esdras O. Borges[1]

The Book of Ruth[2] presents Ruth as a woman of outstanding character. The Moabitess' loyalty to her mother-in-law is remarkable, and she fulfills an important role in redemptive history. She is, after all, the great-grandmother of King David. She is not, however, the central character of the book. As shown below, Ruth's story is embedded in Naomi's story of trial and reversal. The parallels at the beginning and end of Ruth underscore the theme of reversal. For example, death renders Naomi *empty*, and Obed's birth causes her to be *full*. There is yet a more subtle reversal that is often overlooked by most analyses of Ruth. In the beginning of the story, Naomi is *distressed* (or "bitter"), but at the end, she is *joyful*. Studying the Book of Ruth from two angles supports this point. The following analysis seeks to demonstrate that the literary structure of Ruth and its intertextual connections advance this often-overlooked subtheme of joy.

The commentary literature on Ruth is vast. Edward Campbell's commentary offers good insight into the literary and linguistic features of Ruth.[3] Campbell sees Naomi sympathetically and at times hints at the book's subtheme of joy. Likewise, Loader offers a sympathetic perspective on Naomi and proposes a comparison of parallels between Naomi and Job.[4] Justin Jackson pens an excellent article on biblical theology and the story of Ruth in the Christological "trajectory" of the OT. He does not, however, examine the thematic connections of famine and infertility to the Pentateuch and other OT sections, nor does he explore the theme of joy as it relates to Naomi and the biblical narrative.[5] For a philological commentary, Joüon provides unparalleled insights into the language of the book, including thoroughly detailed data on each word in the book.[6] Stephen Bertman[7] and A. Boyd Luter and Richard O. Rigsby[8] examine the structural design of Ruth, providing a helpful guide for outlining

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[1] Esdras O. Borges is a Greek instructor at Bob Jones University and is pursuing a PhD in Theological Studies at BJU Seminary.

[2] The Book of Ruth includes the themes of God's *providence, kindness (ḥesed),* and *the Davidic seed.* Peter H. W. Lau and Gregory Goswell, *Unceasing Kindness: A Biblical Theology of Ruth,* NSBT (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2016). In addition to these, it is worth noting the motifs of *suffering* (inflicted by *famine* and *death)* and *reversal.* Suffering relates to Naomi's crisis, whereas reversal brings the plot to a resolution. This paper focuses on reversal and gives special attention to a reversal in the emotional tone of the story.

[3] Edward F. Campbell Jr., *Ruth: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, vol. 7, AYB (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008).

[4] J. A. Loader, "Job's Sister: Undermining an Unnatural Religiosity," *Old Testament Essays* 6, no. 3, (1993): 312–29.

[5] "The One Who Returned: A Retrospective and Prospective Reading of Ruth," *JETS* 63, no. 3 (September 2020): 435–54.

[6] Paul Joüon, *Ruth: Commentaire Philologique et Exégétique* (Rome: Institut Biblique Pontifical, 1924).

[7] "Symmetrical Design in the Book of Ruth," *JBL* 84, no. 2 (June 1965): 165–68.

[8] "An Adjusted Symmetrical Structuring of Ruth," *JETS* 39, no. 1 (Mar 1996): 15–28.

the book.[9] In his article, "Ruth and the Covenant Heir: Reading Ruth in Light of Isaac's Famine and Sojourn," Joshua Jensen offers valuable observations on the intertextuality between the narratives of Ruth and Isaac, but he does not address significant parallels between the birth accounts of Isaac and Obed.[10] Despite the abundant number of commentaries on Ruth, no work focuses on the book's subtheme of joy, centering the discussion on Naomi and Obed as her son.

The first task is to analyze the book's structure. Its symmetrical nature and its profuse number of pairs provide valuable insight on the themes of the book. Evidence for chiasms exists on the micro and macro levels. The second step is to move beyond the structural evidence into a study of intertextual connections.[11] This article addresses two types of intertextual connections—retrospective and prospective. Then it makes some observations about God's provision and the themes of seed and joy.

Structure

Naomi is the central character in the narrative. The book's exposition, crisis, and resolution support this point. The following plot overview provides the context needed for evaluating Ruth's structure.

The book's opening clause[12] specifies the time frame of the narrative (1:1).[13] The second clause—"and there was a famine in the land" (וַיְהִי רָעָב בָּאָרֶץ)—establishes the story's setting and Naomi's initial problem. Although the book mentions famine (רָעָב) only once (1:1), it is an important background element that initiates the subsequent chain of events—Elimelech's family's move to Moab (1:2),[14] the death of all males of the family (1:3–4), and a seemingly hopeless return to Bethlehem[15] after its recovery from the famine (1:6ff).[16] Death brings about Naomi's fundamental problem. Having been

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[9] Bertman, 165–68.

[10] "Ruth and the Covenant Heir: Reading Ruth in Light of Isaac's Famine and Sojourn," *JBTW* 3, no. 1 (Fall 2022): 41–60.

[11] The word *intertextual* will be used in the sense of "inner-biblical interrelationships," as Lau and Goswell prefer to call it. No intent is made to engage in free intertextuality that regards canonical and extra-canonical books on the same level. *Unceasing Kindness*, 66.

[12] וַיְהִי בִּימֵי שְׁפֹּט הַשֹּׁפְטִים ("Now it came about in the days of the judging of the judges").

[13] Lau and Goswell comment, "The mention of this historical period is probably meant to recall the period in general." *Unceasing Kindness*, 78.

[14] At its worst, famine could be caused by a military siege leading to an intense sort of despair—a people so hopeless that they would sink to family cannibalism (2 Kgs 6:26–29; Jer 19:9; Lam 4:10; Ezek 5:10; cf. Deut 28:53). At its best, famine would uproot families and potentially cause them to lose land inherited from their ancestors, as they went in search of greener pastures. Elimelech's decision to sojourn in search of more favorable conditions is understandable. Campbell, 59.

[15] It is ironic that Elimelech's family would leave Bethlehem ("house of bread") because there was no bread. Daniel I. Block comments on this irony, adding that "they also sought hospitality in the land of those who had earlier hired Balaam the prophet to curse the Israelites (Deut 23:3–5[2–4])." *Ruth: A Discourse Analysis of the Hebrew Bible,* ZECOT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 66.

[16] The text reads, "She [Naomi] had heard in the land of Moab that the Lord had visited his people in giving them food" (1:6b). The clause לָתֵת לָהֶם לָחֶם ("giving them bread") is alliterated and has a beautiful assonance. See Robert Alter

married for, likely, ten years (cf. 1:4), her sons die leaving no offspring. There is no heir to inherit Elimelech's wealth, carry forward his name, and provide for Naomi in her old age (cf. Gen 15:2–4; 25:5; Deut 25:5–6). Death is at the heart of Naomi's distress and represents the crisis of the plot.[17] In a sense, infertility can be viewed as another type of famine—the famine of family legacy.[18] A series of reversals unfolds as the story progresses toward its dénouement, bringing a satisfying resolution to Naomi's circumstances.

Narrative Frame

The macrostructure of Ruth follows a chiastic structure. Bertman[19] proposes a chiastic outline for Ruth's structure. Luter and Rigsby fine-tune Bertman's outline.[20] Luter and Rigsby rightly place Ruth 4:18–22 outside the narrative, calling it "epilogue." They also identify the center of the story (layer D) that highlights God's blessing via Boaz. I revise this outline by making two modifications (see column 3 of Table 1). First, my outline shortens Luter and Rigsby's layer A (1:1–5), naming it "exposition" (1:1–2). Second, it maintains all the material most relevant to Naomi's story in layers A and A'. In this chiastic structure, most of layer A has a parallel in layer A'—including the emotional tone of the passage. In other words, the story moves from Naomi's suffering and distress to her blessing and joy.

Table 1. Chiastic Structure of Ruth

Bertman	Luter and Rigsby	Borges
A (1:1–5)[21]	A (1:1–5)	Exposition (1:1–2)
B (1:6–22)	B (1:6–22)	A (1:3–22)
C (2:1–23)	C (2:1–23)	B (2:1–23)
	D (2:18–23; 3:1–5)	**C (2:18–23; 3:1–5)**
C' (3:1–18)	C' (3:1–18)	B' (3:1–18)
B' (4:1–17)	B' (4:1–12) A' (4:13–17)	A' (4:1–17)
A' (4:18–22)	Epilogue (4:18–22)	Epilogue (4:18–22)

What to make of the middle layers? This outline shows that there are two stories, a "Ruth story" (layers B and B') that is embedded in "Naomi's story" (layers A and A'). The two central characters of the middle layers are Ruth and Boaz. Embedded in Naomi's story, Ruth's story gains prominence, but only for a while until the narrator refocuses on Naomi. Ruth's story portrays Ruth and Boaz as

and Frank Kermode, *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 322.

[17] Block, 42.

[18] Reg Grant, "Literary Structure in the Book of Ruth," *BSac* 148, no. 592 (October 1991): 428.

[19] Bertman, 165–68.

[20] Luter and Rigsby, 15–28.

[21] Bertman's model sees 1:1–5 as an account of Naomi's family history. On this basis, the model displays verses 1–5 as parallel to the Epilogue. This seems farfetched, however. "Symmetrical Design in the Book of Ruth," 167.

conduits of God's kindness toward Naomi; they are the means through which God provides for her.[22] Table 2 expands this chiastic arrangement, providing a summary of each layer's content.

Table 2. Macrostructure of Ruth

Outline	Summary
Exposition (1:1–2)	Famine; sojourning/Moab; family
Act I (Layer A)	
Introduction: Crisis (1:3–5)	Death; marriage; death
Scene 1 (1:6–18)	Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem; Orpah (Ruth's foil) returns to her household
Scene 2 (1:19–21)	Townswomen; Naomi names herself Mara; bitter acknowledgement of negative providence (God is the antagonist)
Conclusion (1:22)	Restatement of the widows' return; it was the beginning of the barley harvest
Act II (Layer B)	
Introduction (2:1)	Mention of Boaz
Scene 1 (2:2–18)	Naomi gives Ruth permission to go to the field; Ruth goes to Boaz's field; Boaz asks for Ruth's identity; Boaz is kind and generous; Ruth returns to Naomi
Scene 2 (2:19–22)	Naomi advises Ruth to act
Conclusion (2:23)	Ruth stays with Boaz's maids and lives with Naomi
	Center (2:19–23; 3:1–5)
Act III (Layer B')	
Scene 1 (3:1–5)	Mention of Boaz; Naomi advises Ruth to go to Boaz's threshing floor
Scene 2 (3:6–15)	Ruth goes to Boaz's threshing floor; Boaz is kind and generous; Ruth returns to Naomi
Scene 3 (3:16–18)	Naomi advises Ruth to wait
Act IV (Layer A')	
Scene 1 (4:1–12)	Boaz and the close redeemer in Bethlehem; close redeemer (Boaz's foil) refuses to redeem. Townswomen; marriage; birth
Scene 2 (4:13–17)	Women give joyful praise (God is the hero); Obed represents Naomi's restorer of life and a sustainer; Ruth is better than seven sons
Falling action	Obed is cared for and named
Epilogue (4:18–22)	Genealogy from Perez to David

[22] The close redeemer whom Boaz addresses as **פְּלֹנִי אַלְמֹנִי** serves as Boaz's foil. The narrator is deliberate in making his name anonymous. The meaning of this rhyming designation is somewhat obscure. Some English versions render it as "my friend" (NIV, NASB, NRSV, JB) or "So-and-so" (NJPS). What is the reason for this anonymity? Berlin believes that the author's wording simply reflects an author's desire to "keep the story 'more story-like.'" See Robert D. Holmstedt, *Ruth: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text*, Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 183. Block's assessment, however, seems more reasonable. He connects this anonymity to the witnesses' blessing to Boaz, which would have been the nameless redeemer's blessing: that his name would become famous in Bethlehem (4:11). The irony is that the close redeemer's attempts to preserve his name rendered him nameless, while Boaz's kindness in raising a name for the widow was rewarded. *Ruth,* 206–207; cf. Campbell, 141.

Outer Layers

Luter and Rigsby provide a helpful comparison of A (1:3–22) and A' (4:1–17).[23] Table 3 summarizes their insight and is expanded in the following paragraphs.

Table 3. Elements of Parallelism in Layer A and A'

	Layer A	Layer A'
1	Contextual mood: death of family males	Contextual mood: birth of a new son[24]
2	Loss of all hope through husbands' deaths[25]	Regaining of hope through marriage[26]
3	Widows left barren (no sons born in ten years)[27]	Reversal of barrenness
4	Ruth distantly related: once married to now-deceased son	Ruth closely related through Boaz: next-of-kin to Naomi[28]
5	Naomi's emotional response: explicit in her words ("call me Mara")	Naomi's emotional response: implied in joy of neighbors
6	3 Characters: Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth[29]	3 Characters: Ruth, the close redeemer, Boaz

[23] "An Adjusted Symmetrical Structuring of Ruth," 19.

[24] The wording, "and YHWH gave conception to her" (וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה לָהּ הֵרָיוֹן), deliberately emphasizes God's hand in Ruth's conception. This point reinforces a change in the theological focus in the narrative. Whereas Naomi first recognizes God's negative providence, here the author balances her perspective by underscoring God's positive providence.

[25] No potential for help is mentioned; these deaths represent the loss of all hope. Block notes that this loss of hope is twofold: "The hope that Moab represented for Elimelech and his family was dashed, and ultimately the hope for Israel's royal line was jeopardized, when first the head of this household and then Naomi's two sons died, leaving only three surviving widows." *Ruth,* 69.

[26] Cf. verses 4:14, בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִשְׁבִּית לָךְ גֹּאֵל הַיּוֹם (lit. "Blessed is YHWH who has not let a redeemer be lacking to you today"), and 4:15, וְהָיָה לָךְ לְמֵשִׁיב נֶפֶשׁ וּלְכַלְכֵּל אֶת־שֵׂיבָתֵךְ (lit. "he will be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age"). The women's words to Naomi underscore and celebrate that God has given her a redeemer who would provide both security in her old age and restoration of life. While at first Naomi was hopeless due to her old age, barrenness, and widowed state, she is now hopeful in the company of her legal son, Obed. The hiphil participle מֵשִׁיב ("a restorer"), from שׁוּב ("to return"), should remind the reader of the theme of return in chapter 1, especially the fact that Naomi returns to Bethlehem empty-handed (that is, childless).

[27] Regarding God's blessing and provision, the three widows are left barren. Once having had two sons, Naomi is now childless and too old to conceive children.

[28] As the women finish their speech, they refer to Ruth as Naomi's daughter-in-law followed by two modifying clauses—אֲשֶׁר־אֲהֵבַתֶךְ יְלָדַתּוּ ("who loves you") and אֲשֶׁר־הִיא טוֹבָה לָךְ מִשִּׁבְעָה בָנִים ("who is better to you than seven sons"). This twofold description of Ruth contrasts with how she is depicted in chapter 1 and throughout most of the book, where she is known as Naomi's daughter-in-law or as a Moabitess. She becomes more closely related to Naomi again through her marriage to Naomi's next-of-kin. That Ruth is better to Naomi than seven sons should remind the reader of Naomi's words at her entrance into the city—"YHWH has brought me back empty" (1:20). This was not entirely true, since Ruth—"who is better . . . than seven sons" (4:15)—was standing next to her mother-in-law. Amid her embittered state, Naomi was blind to God's kindness to her, channeled through Ruth's loyal love. This human tendency of blindness to God's good gifts in the midst of grief is a common problem, often occurring because one fixates on life's problems rather than blessings.

[29] There are two dialogues in this section. In the first dialogue, Naomi addresses both Ruth and Orpah, proposing that they both return to their household. Although they initially reject it, Orpah eventually acquiesces to the proposal (1:14). Then Naomi proceeds with a new attempt to convince Ruth to follow Orpah's example, but Naomi loses the argument, and it is Naomi who acquiesces to Ruth's counter proposal (1:18). Thus, Ruth's foil acts in conformity with Naomi's desire. Likewise, it is possible that Boaz's foil, the close redeemer, also acts in conformity with Boaz's will by rejecting his proposal (4:6). Verse 4:5—what Rowley calls the "master-stroke" (Campbell, 158)—might be evidence for this reading, if it is understood that Boaz's mention of the Israelite customs is intended to discourage the close redeemer

	Layer A	Layer A'
7	Specified time frame: beginning of harvest	Specified time frame: near end of harvest
8	Townswomen's response: "stirring" of joy at Naomi's return	Townswomen's response: blessing on Naomi for her son
9	Naomi's attitude: bitter, rebukes neighbors	Naomi's attitude: joyful, joined by chorus of praise from women

Since items 8 and 9 in Table 3 directly relate to the emotional tone of their respective scenes, a few observations are indispensable. In layer A, the storyteller records the townswomen's emotions in response to Naomi and Ruth's return to Bethlehem (1:9). While the entire city is mentioned in the first clause, it is the voice of the women that is rhetorically highlighted in the second clause. The "entire city was stirred" (וַתֵּהֹם כָּל־הָעִיר עֲלֵיהֶן)—this was a joyful event. The expression וַתֵּהֹם echoes its usage in the context of joy elsewhere (1 Sam 4:5; 1 Kgs 1:45).[30] The joyful welcome clashes with Naomi's internal emotions. Her emotional response brings the scene to a climax when she speaks of God's negative providence and, with a pun, changes her name from Naomi ("pleasantness" or "sweet") into Mara ("bitter").[31] In layer A', the city and the women respond to the events, with the city playing the part of a legal witness and the women serving as a support group (4:11–12, 15–17; cf. 1:19). In addition, the witnesses assert that YHWH is the one who gives Boaz offspring (4:12). This response represents a positive shift in attitude toward God (cf. 1:21).

In layer A, Naomi's words (1:20–21) focus on God as an antagonist, since his sovereign hand is behind all her suffering.[32] The initial excitement of the women contrasts harshly with Naomi's bitter grief (1:19–21). But in layer A', the women return to the scene with a chorus of joyful praise to YHWH. This time, however, Naomi does not rebuke them for their excitement and blessing. Naomi's non-verbal response brings her final interaction with the townswomen to resolution (4:14–15). Her acquiescence, then, shows her embracing of joy in God's provision (see Table 4).

Table 4. Naomi's Positive Response Implied through Rhetorical Means

Dialogues	Sections of Dialogue	Text
Resolved Simple Dialogue 1	Initial Utterance:	Praising YHWH: בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִשְׁבִּית לָךְ גֹּאֵל הַיּוֹם "Blessed is YHWH who has not let a redeemer be lacking to you today." Blessing Obed: וְיִקָּרֵא שְׁמוֹ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל "May his name become famous in Israel." Remark: וְהָיָה לָךְ לְמֵשִׁיב נֶפֶשׁ וּלְכַלְכֵּל אֶת־שֵׂיבָתֵךְ "He will be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age." Elaboration: כִּי כַלָּתֵךְ אֲשֶׁר־אֲהֵבַתֶךְ יְלָדַתּוּ אֲשֶׁר־הִיא טוֹבָה לָךְ מִשִּׁבְעָה בָּנִים

from redeeming Naomi's property and Ruth. Similarly, Holmstedt believes Boaz's words are intentionally ambiguous in order to produce the realized outcome. See Campbell, 158; Holmstedt, 192.

[30] Nifal of הום, "to be in an uproar." The Syriac Peshitta translation adds "they rejoiced," inferring the idea of joy from the context. Joüon, 43.

[31] Luter and Rigsby, 20.

[32] Campbell, 83.

Dialogues	Sections of Dialogue	Text
		"For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him."
	Resolving Utterance:	Non-Verbal Response: וַתִּקַּח נָעֳמִי אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד וַתְּשִׁתֵהוּ בְחֵיקָהּ וַתְּהִי־לוֹ לְאֹמֶנֶת "Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap and became his nurse."
Continuing Action:		The women name the child and say:
Unresolved Simple Dialogue 2	Initial Utterance:	Exclamation: יֶלֶד־בֵּן לְנָעֳמִי "A son has been born to Naomi!"
	Resolving Utterance:	None
Narrator's Closing Comments:		וַתִּקְרֶאנָה שְׁמוֹ עוֹבֵד הוּא אֲבִי־יִשַׁי אֲבִי דָוִד "So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David."

The narrator omits Naomi's words and quickly closes the scene with a series of *wayyiqtol* verbs.[33] Naomi's actions of *taking* the child, *laying* him on her lap, and *nursing* him express her tenderness and satisfaction as she finally holds her son. At last the women say, "A son has been born to Naomi!" After this exclamation and the two closing statements, the curtain drops and the story ends. The closing scene unmistakably rings overtones of joy. Although analyses of Ruth have not identified joy as one of the book's subthemes, some commentators have noted this joyful ending.[34] For example, Campbell perceptively hints at this when he writes, "The mood of the vignette which brings the Ruth story to a close is one of joy and happiness. All the words belong to the women, the same chorus which had met Naomi upon her return to Bethlehem from Moab; then they could only hear Naomi out, but here, under new circumstances, they bless."[35]

In addition, Campbell notes how Naomi evolves throughout the story.[36] Not only does she mature emotionally, but she also gradually progresses from "passivity" to "activity."[37] Campbell adds, "The final spoken words in the book come from the women celebrating Naomi's joy as she holds the lad who replaces her own sons to her bosom: 'A son is born to Naomi!'"[38] According to Campbell, the last scene is about the restoration of Naomi's joy.

[33] The *wayyiqtol* is the primary verb form that advances the plot.

[34] Loader comments on this joyful scene, saying, "The significance of the chorus words is that they highlight and interpret the change of bitterness into happiness in a remarkable way: on the one hand we learn that this has come about by human initiative, but divine providence has also somehow been involved. On the other hand, the words contribute nothing to a solution of the underlying problem which left them dumbfounded in chapter 1. The women speak joyfully, but not a word about the sorrow and bitterness of earlier. If not involved in a 'conspiracy of silence,' they are all as quiet about the question brought into Bethlehem by Naomi as they were when she returned." "Job's Sister," 323.

[35] Campbell, 168.

[36] Ibid., 32.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

Observations

The structure of Ruth supports the fact that there is a pair of correlated emotions in the outer layers. These emotions relate to each other by means of contrast. Also, since Obed's birth is the decisive factor that reverses Naomi's fortune, the women's joyful praise surrounding his birth must be directly connected with the theme of reversal. Furthermore, it must be noted that there are at least two clues indicating that Naomi's redeemer—as far as the narrative goes—is Obed, not Boaz. First, the women's chorus explicitly indicates that Obed is the גֹּאֵל whom YHWH had given to Naomi (4:14–15). Second, the structure of the book likely reinforces this point. The chiastic structure seems to indicate that two individual stories are fused in the book—the story of Ruth (layers B, and B'), and that of Naomi (layers A and A').[39] These stories are deeply intertwined and cannot be easily separated.[40] But in a sense, both Boaz and Obed are different redeemers to different characters in the story.[41] Obed is clearly Naomi's redeemer, and Boaz is primarily Ruth's redeemer. Whereas it is possible that both redeemers anticipate Christ in different ways, the discussion on intertextual connections to Naomi's story will focus on Obed as a גֹּאֵל. This study demonstrates that the birth of Obed points prospectively to Jesus' birth—an event that was received with an outburst of joy.

Intertextual Connections

The above underscores overtones of joy in the plot Ruth. Paying special attention to the subtheme of joy, the following demonstrates that Naomi's story echoes previous stories of barren women and points forward to Mary's supernatural conception of the Messiah.[42] These stories are strung together throughout the redemptive metanarrative, forming a "theological harmony."[43]

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[39] This is a thesis that, to my knowledge, has not been argued yet. Athalya Brenner might give some direction toward establishing this point. Although I disagree with Brenner's presuppositions and conclusions, she finds several parallels between Naomi's and Ruth's individual stories. For example, with regard to their marital status, Naomi was an "elder widow, bereaved mother, in exile," and Ruth was a "young and childless widow, in her own homeland." Also, they were both foreigners at some point in their lives. Furthermore, they were both destitute and vulnerable. Moreover, they both had a satisfactory resolution of their problem that took place through a series of reversals. Coming from a source-criticism perspective, Brenner sees these parallels as evidence for two different oral traditions that were later compiled into one single book. While I disregard this conclusion, I suspect that these parallels might orient an analysis of each individual story. Perhaps more parallels—such as both widows having a redeemer—can be established. *A Feminist Companion to Ruth* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 70–84.

[40] Layton Talbert pointed out in a conversation that each character has an individual story that is intertwined with the other, and the two together comprise the whole book. Thus, the book can be read from each character's perspective.

[41] For a discussion on both redeemers in Ruth, see Lau and Goswell, 117–119.

[42] The idea of connecting Naomi's story retrospectively and prospectively to other stories comes from Justin Jackson's article, where he examines the partial fulfillment of God's Pentateuchal promises and anticipation of the Messiah in Ruth. Jackson calls this retrospective and prospective outlook of Ruth "typological trajectory." "The One Who Returned," 435–54.

[43] Ibid., 435.

Birth Narratives

Obed's birth represents both God's provision for Naomi individually and his faithfulness to his promises to Israel. In his providence toward Naomi, God preserved the lineage through which King David and the Messiah would later come (4:18–22).[44] Thus, Ruth's birth account is conceptually linked with birth narratives of other significant OT figures such as the patriarchs. While there are similarities between Obed's birth account and previous narratives, the parallels are not rigid.

Table 5. Obed's Birth Narrative[45]

I. Birth report and reaction of women (13–15)
  A. Birth Report (13)
    i. Setting: Boaz marries Ruth and has intercourse with her (13a)
    ii. Birth report proper (13b)
  B. The women's reactions: praising YHWH for the child (14–15)
    i. Speech formula (14a)
    ii. Speech (14b–15)
      1. Praise of YHWH (14b)
      2. Hopes for the child (15)

II. Naomi nurses the child and reaction of neighboring women (16–17)
  A. Naomi nurses the child (16)
  B. The neighboring women's reactions (17)
    i. Speech of neighboring women (17a)
    ii. Naming and significance of the child (17b)

Block and Finlay note that Obed's birth story differs in a few points from a typical birth narrative which includes four main elements:

1. A barren woman longing for a son
2. A divine announcement of a conception of a son who would take on a special role in redemptive history
3. The son's conception and birth
4. The son's naming[46]

First, in Obed's birth story there is no indication that there was a divine announcement. Secondly, there is a surprising twist in the conclusion of Obed's birth account. The Bethlehemite women identify Naomi—not Ruth—as his mother. This identification indicates that this is Naomi-and-Obed's birth narrative. Moreover, while in birth narratives the child is typically named at the announcement of conception, Obed is only named after his birth (4:13 and 4:17). Concerning this unusual naming, Finlay points out that in no other instance in the OT does a group of people—such as the townswomen—name a child. Furthermore, unlike Isaac's case, Obed's name is not circumstantially

[44] Block, 231.

[45] Timothy D. Finlay, *The Birth Report Genre in the Hebrew Bible* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 210.

[46] Block, 231–232.

derived, but community given. Finally, in Obed's story, no one character dominates the scene and the only ones to speak are the women (4:14, 17).

Despite the differences above, there is unity in the midst of tension, forming a "theological harmony."[47] Echoes and allusions do not always require a strict correspondence between the source and target passages; in fact, most allusions lack strict correspondence. In Finlay's words, one should not forget that "each individual narrative is driven by its own plot and characterization" and therefore allows some levels of freedom in alluding back to the source text.[48] Jackson adds, "Biblical theology, properly engaged, requires an appropriate tension between unity and diversity."[49] In other words, the birth narratives of Obed and others have conceptual unity and general similarities, while allowing for diversity in the more minute details.

Retrospective Analysis

While the witnesses and elders bless Boaz, they allude to the matriarchs Rachel and Leah who "built the house of Israel" (4:11; cf. Gen 29:25–30). They also allude to Genesis 38, saying, "May your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the LORD will give you by this young woman" (Ruth 4:12). Several works examine these allusions and their intertextual connections to the book of Ruth. More subtle intertextual connections, however, deserve a careful treatment. The following discussion, although not comprehensive, examines echoes of barren-women stories such as Sarah's and Hannah's.

Sarah

Rabbinic scholarship is often unsympathetic toward Sarah. Some rabbinical writings describe Sarah's infertility as some sort of punishment.[50] Other Medieval writings view Sarah in a negative light due to her cruelty to Hagar.[51] Similarly, Naomi has not had the most sympathetic readership. Negative perceptions aside, they both share in the improbable way that YHWH provides them with a child.

Unlike Obed's birth story, Isaac's birth fits Block's outline of typical birth narratives. Table 6 summarizes relevant information about the broader context for Isaac's birth account.

[47] Jackson, 435.

[48] For Finlay's critique of Fisch's structuralist approach in analyzing parallels between Genesis 19, Genesis 38 and Ruth 4, see *The Birth Report Genre in the Hebrew*, 217.

[49] Jackson, 435.

[50] Adele Reinhartz and Miriam Walfish, "Conflict and Coexistence in Jewish Interpretation," in *Sarah, Hagar, and Their Children: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives,* ed. Phyllis Trible and Letty M. Russell (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 108.

[51] Ibid., 113–15.

Table 6: Isaac's Birth Narrative

Birth Narrative Pattern[52]	Genesis	Sarah[53] and Isaac
1. A barren woman longing for a son	11:30	"Sarai was barren; she had no child."
	16:1	"Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children."
	16:1–3	[Sarai gives Hagar to Abram; he listens to her and marries the slave.]
2. A divine announcement of the conception of a son who would take on a special role in redemptive history[54]	17:15–16	"Then God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall be* her name. I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother of* nations; kings of peoples will come from her.'"
	17:19	"Sarah your wife will bear you a son."
3. The son's conception and birth	21:1–2	"Then the Lord took note of Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised. So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him."
	21:6–8	[Sarah's joyful laughter].
4. The son's naming	17:21	"You shall call his name Isaac."
	21:3	"Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac."

Key themes from Isaac's birth narrative are echoed in Naomi's story. First, Sarah's infertility brought her grief. This is evidenced by Haggar's animosity toward Sarah (Gen 16:5).[55] Ishmael adds to Sarah's distress when he mocks her (Gen 21:9–10). Second, in the opening of his covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:1), God identifies himself as אֵל שַׁדַּי—the "Almighty God" who is capable of keeping his past and future promises to Abraham. Naomi refers to God with the same title (Ruth 1:20).[56] The אֵל שַׁדַּי that both Sarah and Naomi experience is, as Jackson defines, the "God who can overcome any hindrance in order to keep his promises, including overcoming Sarai's barrenness."[57]

Thirdly, Naomi's change of her own name parallels the divine change of Sarah's name (from "Sarai" to "Sarah," Gen 17:15). A more salient parallel relates to their age, as the Genesis accounts make several references to Sarah's being old and barren (e.g., Gen 17:17; 21:5). This repetition in Genesis rhetorically emphasizes the point that, humanly speaking, Sarah was hopeless. Likewise, Naomi's words to her daughters-in-law echo these references and connect Naomi with Sarah (Ruth 1:11–13). Furthermore, Isaac's birth account underscores God's promises to Abraham and Sarah in several instances (e.g., Gen 18:10; 21:1–8). The theme of promise, especially pertaining to Abraham's offspring and God's covenant, is also paralleled in Naomi's story in the sense that her offspring intersects with the royal and Messianic lineage. Moreover, Isaac's birth account shows that God has

[52] Adapted from Block, 231.

[53] For the sake of clarity, "Sarah" and "Abraham" will designate these characters even when the relevant verse precedes their name change.

[54] While Obed's birth introduces some variation in the form, in essence it still contains all four elements with exception of the first half of the second one ("divine announcement").

[55] וָאֵקַל בְּעֵינֶיהָ (lit. "I grow small in her eyes").

[56] This title for God is predominantly used in Genesis and Job (e.g., Gen 17:1; 28:3; Job 5:17; 6:4, 14).

[57] "The One Who Returned," 448.

control over Sarah's womb as well as any woman's womb.[58] Obed's birth account also explicitly references God's sovereignty over the womb (Ruth 4:13).

Finally, it is remarkable that Isaac's birth account also hints at the theme of joy. The references to laughter highlight joy as a theme in the story. First, both Abraham and Sarah laugh (צחק) at God's promise of a child (Gen 17:17; 18:12). This sarcasm reveals doubt (18:10–15). Sarah's laughter (18:11–12) is sandwiched between God's assurance and reassurance of his promise to them (18:13–14). Second, a more significant development of this theme takes place in the birth and naming of Isaac (21:1–8). In this passage, the first verse records God's fulfillment of his promise, and the second verse explicitly records Isaac's conception and birth. Then Abraham names his son according to the command he received from God (Gen 17:19, 21). The name that Isaac received was circumstantial—Isaac (יִצְחָק) means "laughter." Following that, Isaac is circumcised (21:4). Finally, in Sarah's following words, the text explicitly explains the significance of Isaac's name with a pun:[59]

צְחֹק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹהִים כָּל־הַשֹּׁמֵעַ יִצְחַק־לִי׃	Gen 21:6	"God has made *laughter* for me; *everyone who hears* will *laugh* with me."

In this declaration, Sarah alludes to Isaac (whose name means "laughter") and to Ishmael's mockery (whose name is etymologically related to שָׁמַע ["to hear"]).[60] The choice of the *yiqtol* verb form יִצְחַק is likely intentional as it approximates the verb's pronunciation to Isaac's name. Not only does this joyful exclamation highlight Sarah's reversal from barrenness to motherhood, but it also reflects an emotional reversal. The afflicting mockery and shame that had plagued her whole life are now turned into joyful laughter.

It seems, then, that Isaac's name choice has a twofold function. First, it is intended to remind Abraham that his doubts were unfounded and his faith in God vindicated.[61] Second, the name is meant to bring joy to Sarah by reminding her of God's provision for her. She further expresses her joy in the following verse, saying, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age" (Gen 21:7). Interestingly, Naomi's nursing of Obed (Ruth 4:16) and the words of the neighboring women to Naomi ("A son has been born to Naomi!" in v. 17) recall this scene. The narrative frame of Sarah's barrenness compares with Naomi's as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Comparison: Sarah and Naomi

Sarah		**Naomi**
Barren, old, wife of an old man	Situation	Barren, old, widowed
Mocked, ashamed	Emotion	Afflicted, hopeless
Doubtful (sarcastic)	Religiosity	Confused
Supernatural conception	Provision	Creative conception (via Ruth)
Motherhood, joy, faith	Reversal	**Motherhood, joy, hope**

[58] In Genesis 20:18, Abraham and Sarah's interaction with Abimelech makes this explicit.

[59] Isaiah makes a typological reference to Sarah's barrenness as he prophesies the reversal of Israel's misfortunes (Isa 51:3).

[60] K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 267.

[61] Ibid.

In sum, the evidence above establishes an intertextual connection between Sarah's and Naomi's reversals. It is striking that they both hint at a theme of joy. In both stories, the reversal of bareness is followed by a joyful response.

Hannah

Hannah's story also has significant intertextual connections with Sarah's and Naomi's story. It is remarkable that the birth of Samuel is received with a magnificent hymn of joyful praise to YHWH. This hymn, as is frequently the case with OT narratives, is full of links and parallels that point retrospectively and prospectively to key parts of redemptive history.[62] Table 8 displays some noteworthy points of comparison between Hannah and Naomi.

Table 8. Comparison: Hannah and Naomi

Hannah		**Naomi**
Barren, provoked, humiliated, misunderstood	Situation	Barren, old, widowed
Distressed (מָרַת נָפֶשׁ)	Emotion	Afflicted, Hopeless
Devoted	Religiosity	Confused
Providential conception	Provision	Creative conception (via Ruth)
Motherhood, joy	**Reversal**	**Motherhood, joy, hope**

The story begins with Hannah—the "graced one"—and her family (1 Sam 1:1–28). Verse 2 is full of tension: Elkanah has two wives, and infertile Hannah is in desperate need of *grace*. Verse 3 begins with a *weqatal* verb introducing a block of verses that provide some important background information and set the tone for the narrative. Every year Elkanah's family would *go up* (*weqatal* וְעָלָה) to the temple to worship, and he would *give* (*weqatal* וְנָתַן) his wife Peninnah her portions. Verse 5 contrasts Peninnah and Hannah by using a different construction—disjunctive *waw* + indirect object + *yiqtol* verb. "But to Hannah he would give a double portion" (וּלְחַנָּה יִתֵּן מָנָה אַחַת אַפַּיִם). The reason for Elkanah's generosity is that he loved Hannah, but the Lord had closed her womb (1:5–6).[63]

The scene is set for Hannah's crisis. Verse 6 adds that Hannah's rival Peninnah would provoke her (*weqatal* וְכִעֲסַתָּה). The *weqatal* here stresses the habituality of this provocation. In verse 6 this verb is a *piel* meaning "to irritate." In verse 7, the same verb in the *hiphil* intensifies Peninnah's action; that is, she "provokes Hannah to anger." Hannah's situation is one of deep distress.

Peninnah's provocation goes on year after year, causing Hannah to grow in her distress. Hannah's weeping and fasting (1 Sam 1:10) is emotionally stirring. Moreover, when she prays to YHWH, the text describes her as "bitter of soul" (מָרַת נָפֶשׁ) and having bitter tears.[64] Evidently, Hannah's emotions and the language in her story parallel Naomi's initial emotional state.

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[62] Examples of passages linked to this hymn include Exod 15:1–21; Deut 32; Judg 5; 1 Sam 2:1–10; 2 Sam 22; Dan 2:20–23. Lau and Goswell, 67.

[63] This also highlights God's sovereignty over the womb.

[64] A similar construction is used in Job (3:20; 7:11; 10:1; 21:25).

Regarding her religiosity, she models a life of devotion to YHWH as she pours out her suffering and confused soul before God (1 Sam 1:11). Her prayer expresses her strong desire to have a child and to be free from her distress (#1 in Table 6). Along with her prayer, Hannah vows to give her future child to YHWH (1 Sam 1:11). On this point, Hannah's story diverges from the standard birth narrative form in a subtle way (#2 in Table 6). Instead of including a divine announcement of Hannah's conception and stating her son's special role, it is Hannah who seeks God and assigns her future son a special role. In contrast, Obed's role is unveiled only as redemptive history progresses, although it is hinted at in the epilogue of Ruth.[65] Regarding God's involvement, in both Hannah's and Naomi's case, God does not speak directly to the barren women. Nonetheless, Hannah receives assurance from Eli that God would attend to her request (1:17).

After Hannah's prayer, a series of nine *wayyiqtol* verbs quickly moves the plot to a satisfying resolution (1 Sam 1:19–20). Here, the child's naming takes place together with the child's birth. Samuel's name, like Isaac's, is circumstantially given: "God heard" (her prayer). As in Obed's and Isaac's accounts, Samuel was received into the world with a joyful celebration (2:1–10).

Prospective Considerations

Mary's Magnificat has remarkable links with Hannah's praise (Luke 1:46–56).[66] These two joyful praises intersect by means of various themes: joy, salvation, God's sanctity, pride, the greatness of God, the strength of God's arm, God's throne, a reversal of expectations, a contrast between the powerful and the weak, and wealth and poverty. The parallels between the births of Jesus and Samuel go beyond these songs of praise. In fact, all these barren-women narratives are woven into the grand story and advance God's purpose in bringing salvation to the world. Using the same model from Tables 7 and 8, Table 9 compares Mary with Naomi, demonstrating how these four histories come together.

Table 9. Comparison: Mary and Naomi

Mary		Naomi
Virgin, young, betrothed	Situation	Barren, old, widowed
Perplexed[67]	Emotion	Afflicted, hopeless
Devoted	Religiosity	Confused
Miraculous conception	Provision	Creative conception (via Ruth)
Motherhood, joyful	**Reversal**	**Motherhood, joyful, hopeful**

The comparison of the stories above, although not comprehensive, shows how Naomi's story in the Book of Ruth is an intermediary link between preceding stories and the birth of the Messiah. These stories demonstrate God's provision of a child who eventually became an important character in

[65] While exercising his role, Samuel anointed David, Obed's grandson, to be king.

[66] For a comparison between Hannah's praise and Mary's Magnificat, see Cristina Buffa, "The Magnificat and the Song of Hannah: Comparing Social Conditions," *Revue des Sciences Religieuses,* 92 no. 3 (2018), 377–92.

[67] Mary was "perplexed" (διαταράσσω, Luke 1:29) and "afraid" (μὴ φοβοῦ, Μαριάμ, v. 30).

redemptive history. Each of these birth stories includes a scene of joyful celebration; likewise, at the birth of Jesus there is an outburst of joy. Preceding Jesus' birth, the Magnificat opens with Mary's words, "My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior!" (Luke 1:46). Following Jesus' birth, an angelic chorus praises God, saying, "Glory to God in the highest" (2:14). The thematic connection of joy across these narratives supports the proposed thesis that the Book of Ruth contains a subtheme of joy. In fact, the birth of Obed, Naomi's redeemer, prospectively anticipates the birth of the Messiah.

Conclusion

This article has argued that Naomi's reversal extends beyond her circumstances; it represents a reversal of her emotion as she experiences God's negative and positive providence. While much of Naomi's readership has been negative toward her, this article proposes a sympathetic reading of her story. Naomi is an evolving character who initially is deeply confused and distressed due to her suffering. Her complaint about God's hand in Ruth 1 does not necessarily indicate bitterness toward God. Instead, she recognizes God's sovereign hand in the events of her life. This is to be human and to "take God seriously."[68] Much like the Psalmists, Job, and many saints throughout history, Naomi wrestles with the problem of theodicy.[69] While Naomi suffers (Ruth 1), the narrator and the women stay silent. But as the story unfolds, the women's joyful shout stands as a witness that Naomi's questions have been answered—"A son has been born to Naomi!" (Ruth 4). Yes, God cares for his suffering people, and he cares for Naomi. While looking at the particulars of Naomi's life, this article also calls the reader to consider a bigger picture. That is, in providing for Naomi, God continues to bless Abraham's seed through whom the Messiah would finally come. He has come and redeemed his people. "Joy to the world, the Lord is come!"

[68] Campbell, 83.

[69] See ibid for a discussion of Naomi's employment of judicial metaphorical language.

Evaluating Progressive Covenantalism's Approach to the Application of the Mosaic Law

by Ken Casillas[1]

The 2012 publication of *Kingdom through Covenant* formally launched progressive covenantalism (PC) as a system for analyzing the redemptive plan of God and the storyline of Scripture.[2] PC's *via media* made a splash in the world of biblical theology and generated a plethora of reviews from across the theological spectrum. The negative reactions were largely predictable. In the realm of ecclesiology, for instance, covenant theologians pushed back on PC's arguments for credobaptism. And in terms of eschatology, dispensationalists could not accept PC's denial of a land for national Israel.[3]

Another concern that has been noted but not substantially developed is PC's understanding of the role of the Mosaic law in the Christian life. Given that PC rejects the traditional tripartite division of the law, it is not surprising that some covenant theologians suspect an antinomian drift in PC.[4] Progressive covenantalists have not ignored such challenges. The 2016 book *Progressive Covenantalism* included several essays related to the Christian use of the Mosaic law,[5] including a chapter on PC and ethics by Stephen Wellum.[6] In 2017 Wellum spoke on a podcast episode entitled "Is Progressive Covenantalism Antinomian?" He affirmed that PC upholds God's moral law and said that progressive covenantalists needed to do more work to flesh out their system's approach to using the OT law for ethics.[7] One example of this effort is a 2018 doctoral dissertation Wellum chaired regarding PC and

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[2] Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012).

[3] Though now a bit dated, Wade Loring Kuhlewind's work remains a helpful entrée into the critiques of PC: "'I Will Plant Them in This Land': An Analysis and Critique of Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum's *Kingdom through Covenant* with Special Attention to the Progressive Covenantal Land-Promise View" (PhD diss., Bob Jones University, 2018).

[4] See, for example, Michael S. Borg, review of *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants,* by Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *PRJ* 5, no. 1 (2013): 259–62. Compare Samuel Renihan, "*Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants,* A Review Article," *JIRBS* 1 (2014): 153–76.

[5] Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker, eds., *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenant Theologies* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016).

[6] "Progressive Covenantalism and the Doing of Ethics," in ibid., 215–33. This material was incorporated into the second edition of PC's main text. See *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants,* 2nd ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 782–98. Benjamin L. Merkle also rehearsed the material in *Discontinuity to Continuity: A Survey of Dispensational & Covenantal Theologies* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 123–27.

[7] "Is Progressive Covenantalism Antinomian?—An Interview with Dr. Stephen Wellum," Conversations from the Porch episode 42; accessed July 15, 2022, https://biblethumpingwingnut.com/2017/02/13/cftp-episode-42-progressive-covenantalism-antinomian-interview-dr-stephen-wellum/. Compare the Books at a Glance "Interview with Stephen Wellum, co-editor of *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies*—Part 2";

homosexuality.[8] Interestingly, that same year progressive covenantalist Thomas Schreiner found himself in an awkward situation. Pastor Andy Stanley used a statement of Schreiner about the Mosaic law to bolster the idea that the church should "unhitch" from the OT.[9] Schreiner responded that his statement had been taken out of context.[10] That appears correct, but the incident again drew attention to the question of how PC approaches the role of the Mosaic law today.

Concern over PC's approach handling of the law has arisen even from the dispensational camp. Acknowledging that critics have often accused his own system of antinomianism, dispensationalist Mark Snoeberger has recently written:

> The progressive covenantal view of law is much more attractive [than the traditional covenantal view] to the dispensationalist, but differences remain—differences that (if this may be said without unfair censure) render the progressive covenantalist more vulnerable to the charge of antinomianism than the dispensationalist is. This is because the progressive covenantalist, with his penchant for suppressing primary authorial intentions in favor of Christological ones, risks the suppression of transcendent elements that remain imbedded in the Mosaic law. It seems to me, at times, that the arrival of Christ so thoroughly shuts down law in the progressive covenantal model that all continuing pedagogical value of Moses for "us on, whom the end of the ages has come" (1 Cor 10:11) is jeopardized. The progressive covenantalist correctly observes that the Mosaic law is given not merely to point men to Christ (if at all) but to serve as a custodian for fallen man in the absence of a more comprehensive solution. But the arrival of that more comprehensive solution (Christ) does not cancel all pedagogical value of Moses for the present day. Indeed, Moses continues to offer us a window into God's immutable nature and the kinds of civility that stabilize fallen society in every era. It is for this reason that Paul finds *in Moses* vivid ethical instruction for the NT saint about immorality, idolatry, testing God, complaining, and so forth (vv. 6–10). Paul preaches Christ, to be sure, as the only source of *redemption,* but he also preaches civility, morality, and restraint for all persons in God's image as we live out our citizenship in God's *other government*—the civil sphere. And far be it from us to abandon this part of God's message in our OT homiletics.[11]

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accessed July 18, 2022, https://www.booksataglance.com/author-interviews/interview-stephen-wellum-co-editor-progressive-covenantalism-charting-course-dispensational-covenantal-theologies-part-2/.

[8] Brian Winton Powell, "Gay Christian? A Progressive Covenantal Response to David Gushee, James Brownson, and Matthew Vines" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018).

[9] "Jesus Ended the Old Covenant Once and for All"; accessed January 18, 2023, https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/october-web-only/andy-stanley-irresistible-response-to-foster.html.

[10] "The Old Covenant Is Over. The Old Testament Is Authoritative."; accessed January 18, 2023, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/old-covenant-response-andy-stanley/.

[11] Mark E. Snoeberger, "A Traditional Dispensational Response," in *Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies: Four Views on the Continuity of Scripture,* ed. Brent E. Parker and Richard J. Lucas (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2022), 245–46. Throughout the present article all emphasis in quotations from sources is original.

The issues raised above call for fuller assessment of PC's understanding of the current role of the Mosaic law. In this article I move in that direction by briefly summarizing and evaluating key writings of four authors in the PC camp. Two of these develop a framework for the PC approach to the law: Thomas Schreiner and Stephen Wellum. The other two propose more specific methodologies for applying the law: James Todd and Jason DeRouchie. In an effort to represent their views accurately, a number of direct quotations are provided. Given space constraints, the discussion will not go into depth on progressive-covenantal exegesis of individual biblical texts. Rather, the focus will be on the core ideas in PC's theology and practice of the contemporary application of the Mosaic law.

Thomas Schreiner

Thomas Schreiner's research on the law significantly predates the publication of *Kingdom through Covenant* and is too extensive to examine comprehensively here.[12] His work focuses on the doctrine of justification and the New Perspective on Paul but also addresses broader issues regarding the Christian's relationship to the Mosaic law. Schreiner's question-answer book on the law provides handy access to his views and serves as an ideal starting point for studying the PC approach.[13]

Summary

Schreiner takes pains to explain that Christians are not "under the law." Based especially on Galatians 3–4, he understands that Pauline phrase as a redemptive-historical reference to "the time period when the Mosaic covenant was operative" (73). Since Israel could not keep the law, this era was tantamount to living under the dominion of sin (Rom 6:14–15) (74–75). Gentiles were never technically under the law, yet unsaved Gentiles are "still considered to be in the realm of law" (80). This is because Romans 2:12–16 and a few other texts indicate that Gentiles intuitively know God's expectations for their lives. In any case, the Mosaic Covenant was a temporary administration (2 Cor 3; Gal 3:15–18) (67–69).[14] It was abolished because it was fulfilled by Christ: the law reached its goal in him (Rom 10:4) (69). Thus, Christians are not under the Mosaic Covenant. "The laws are not authoritative as stipulations of the old covenant since that covenant has passed away" (67).

Furthermore, "strictly speaking, the [Reformed] idea that believers are under the third use of the law [the law as a rule of life] is mistaken, for we have seen that the entire law is abolished for believers" (99). Likewise, the Reformed distinctions of moral, civil, and ceremonial laws are not exegetically airtight (90). More importantly, "Paul argues that the entirety of the law has been set aside now that Christ has come. To say that the 'moral' elements of the law continue to be authoritative blunts the

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[12] See especially Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993).

[13] Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law,* 40 Questions Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2010).

[14] A doctoral dissertation chaired by Schreiner developed at length the limitations of the Mosaic Covenant. It was by Jason C. Meyer, who also became associated with PC. The work was published as *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology,* NACSBT (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009). Compare idem, "The Mosaic Law, Theological Systems, and the Glory of Christ," in *Progressive Covenantalism,* 69–99.

truth that the entire Mosaic covenant is no longer in force for believers" (90).[15] Along these lines, Schreiner discusses some specific laws but gives special attention to the Sabbath (209–17). Since the Sabbath was the sign of the Mosaic Covenant, it is not in force today. Paul teaches as much in Romans 14:5 and Colossians 2:16–17. The creational Sabbath does not establish a weekly Sabbath for all ages but foreshadows "the eschatological rest of the people of God (Heb. 4:1–10)" (214). Additionally, Scripture does not present the Lord's Day as the Sabbath.

Despite his emphasis on the discontinuity between the Testaments, Schreiner sees an ongoing role for the OT law in the Christian life. He explains that in the first century it was sometimes advisable to follow Mosaic laws voluntarily for the purpose of evangelizing Jews (1 Cor 9:20) (75) or maintaining fellowship with Jewish believers (Acts 15) (181–84). More significantly, Schreiner says that the idea of the third use of the law "is not entirely wrong" since some of Paul's many exhortations "are from the Old Testament law, and surely they function as a standard for the lives of believers today." What makes them authoritative is not that they are in the Mosaic law but that "they represent God's character. Even though the Old Testament is not literally binding upon believers, we see the principles and patterns and moral norms that still apply to us today since the Old Testament is the word of God" (99). Because the law teaches such moral norms, even the moral-civil-ceremonial "distinction has some usefulness" (93). Here Schreiner agrees with Dorsey that the Mosaic law "continues to be 'binding . . . in a revelatory and pedagogical sense'" (94).[16]

This includes creation ordinances that are embedded in the law, though identifying these ordinances is not always a simple matter. Since the Sabbath issue is a major point of contention between covenant theology and progressive covenantalism, it was appropriate that in *Progressive Covenantalism* Schreiner expanded on his arguments concerning the Sabbath. There he gives four reasons for *not* considering the Sabbath a creation ordinance. (1) God did not require the patriarchs to observe the Sabbath. (2) The appearance of an element in the creation account does not automatically make it a creation ordinance. For example, God does not require all human beings to be farmers like Adam. (3) Identifying a creation ordinance involves canonical confirmation. For instance, homosexuality is proscribed throughout the canon, and this confirms the conclusion that male-female marriage is a creation ordinance (Gen 2:24). However, the progress of the canon indicates that the Sabbath is not mandatory in the present era. (4) Exodus 20:8–11 appeals to the creation account only as an analogy for Mosaic Sabbath observance, not as a grounding rationale.[17]

Returning to Schreiner's *40 Questions* book, his ethic foregrounds not the law of Moses but "the law of Christ" mentioned in Galatians 6:2 and 1 Corinthians 9:21. He defines this contextually as "the law of love," especially as exemplified by the life of Christ (103). Yet Schreiner also upholds Paul's teaching that love is the fulfillment of the law (Rom 13:8–10; Gal 5:13–14). Schreiner explains that while obeying commandments does not exhaust the meaning of love, "love fulfills the moral norms that reflect the character of God. . . . Moral norms stipulate the nature of love, clarifying what is

[15] This was the statement quoted by Andy Stanley in the blogpost cited in footnote 9 above.

[16] Citing David A. Dorsey, "The Law of Moses and the Christian: A Compromise," *JETS* 34, no. 3 (1991): 325.

[17] Thomas R. Schreiner, "Good-bye and Hello: The Sabbath Command for New Covenant Believers," in *Progressive Covenantalism,* 168–70.

righteous and what is unrighteous" (106). Thus, the moral norms taught by the Mosaic law are included in the law of Christ (103–4). These moral norms deserve to be preached today (227–30). Schreiner even sees a pattern for Christian experience in the complex statements the psalmist makes about the law in Psalm 119. "God's commands by the work of his Spirit cast believers onto the grace of God, and God uses the commands in conjunction with his Spirit to strengthen believers so that they rely upon God's grace to please him" (87).

Evaluation

In assessing Schreiner's approach to the Mosaic law, one could quibble with his discussions of the Sabbath. A traditional covenant theologian would, of course, want to maintain the tripartite division of the law and would argue for the normativity of the Sabbath. Yet even apart from the input of theological systems, Schreiner's arguments concerning the Sabbath are not equally weighty. For instance, the argument that God did not require the patriarchs to observe the Sabbath is an argument from silence that may or may not be convincing. As with the Sabbath, we have no record that God had instituted a distinction between clean and unclean animals prior to the Mosaic Covenant. Nevertheless, God assumes such distinctions in his commands to Noah (Gen 7:2, 8; cf. 8:20).

On the whole, however, Schreiner maintains the fine balance needed between the continuity and discontinuity of the Testaments. He emphasizes that Christians are not under the OT law, but he believes the law teaches ethical standards that continue into the church age. Schreiner might have avoided Andy Stanley's misrepresentation by further nuancing some of his statements. Yet a careful reading of Schreiner's entire work exonerates him from concerns of antinomianism. In fact, in 2013 dispensationalist William Combs commended Schreiner's *40 Questions* book as "probably" one of the two "most helpful" works on the issue of the Mosaic law.[18] Combs agrees with Schreiner on Dorsey's formulation: the law remains binding on the believer "in a revelatory and pedagogical sense."[19] Likewise, dispensationalist Myron Houghton argued against contemporary Sabbath observance in ways that parallel Schreiner's approach.[20]

Perhaps because of the broad scope of his work, what Schreiner lacks is detail regarding the contemporary application of the Mosaic law. In addition to discussing the Sabbath, he does have a chapter arguing that the tithe is not a requirement or standard for giving today (219–21). These negative examples are helpful enough, but the reader is left wishing for more positive examples as well as guidelines for deriving moral norms from the Mosaic law. One has to look to other progressive-covenantal authors for this kind of material.

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[18] William W. Combs, "Paul, the Law, and Dispensationalism," *DBSJ* 18 (2013): 21–22.

[19] Ibid., 38.

[20] *Law and Grace* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist, 2011), 171–75.

Stephen Wellum

Stephen Wellum has not written on the Mosaic law as much as Schreiner. Yet his primer on ethics mirrors Schreiner's approach and provides useful categories for understanding the progressive-covenantal theology of the law.[21]

Summary

In his introduction Wellum points out that PC would agree with many of covenant theology's conclusions about what God requires today. The two systems differ, however, in *how* they arrive at those conclusions (216). Wellum then lays out five steps PC follows as it "seeks to determine what the moral law is and thus establish the biblical norm for doing ethics," and these become the way PC avoids the charge of antinomianism (216).

First, "all Scripture is authoritative and thus provides the norm for Christian ethics" (216).[22] Here Wellum appeals to 2 Timothy 3:15–17, which highlights the authority of the OT as God's Word. "Although Christians are not 'under the law' as a *covenant,* it still functions *as Scripture* and demands our complete obedience" (217). Scripture reveals the character and will of God, which form "the objective standard of morality" (217). Nevertheless, understanding Scripture and its application requires noting the covenantal location of any passage. This process shows that certain divine requirements, e.g., circumcision, do not carry over from one covenant to another. Consequently, Wellum makes a distinction "between biblical morality and Christian ethics" (217).

Second, before expanding on this distinction, Wellum makes a negative point: "The tripartite distinction of the Mosaic law is *not* the means for determining what is morally binding for Christians today" (218). Three factors lead to this conclusion. (1) "Scripture views the old covenant as a unit or package, and it does not appeal to the tripartite distinction as *the* means by which the continuity and discontinuity of moral law is established for Christians today" (218). While the Bible does sometimes distinguish types of laws (e.g., Matt 23:23), it still upholds the unity of the entire law covenant (e.g., Gal 5:3; Jas 2:8–13). (2) "Scripture teaches that the entire law covenant was temporary in God's plan, serving a number of purposes, but ultimately pointing forward to its fulfillment, *telos,* and terminus in Christ (Rom 10:4; Gal 3:15–4:7; Heb 7:11–12)" (219). (3) Since Christ has come, "the NT teaches that Christians are no longer 'under the law' as a covenant, and thus it no longer functions as a 'direct authority' for us (e.g., Rom 6:14–15; 1 Cor 9:20–21; Gal 4:4–5; 5:13–18)" (220). Here Wellum emphasizes Paul's distinction between the Mosaic law and the law of Christ (1 Cor 9:20–21). The law of Christ includes the moral norms expressed in the Mosaic law. Likewise, the Mosaic law is a tool God uses to instruct us in wise living. But that does not mean the Mosaic law as such is our authority. This seems to be why the NT speaks of Christians "fulfilling" the law rather than "doing" or "keeping" it.

Wellum's third step gets to the heart of PC: "Viewing all Scripture through the lens of Christ and the New Covenant determines what is morally binding upon Christians today" (222). The OT laws

[21] "Progressive Covenantalism and the Doing of Ethics," in *Progressive Covenantalism,* 215–33.

[22] I have slightly reformatted Wellum's five points from the header style in which they appear.

about sacrifice provide an illustration. Since Christ has fulfilled the animal sacrifices, we no longer offer such sacrifices, but they still teach truths that apply to our lives. Something similar holds for all the laws: "No part of the law is applied to us without first placing it in its covenantal location (immediate and epochal context), and then asking how the entire covenant is fulfilled in Christ (canonical context)" (222). Through Christ the New Covenant has both *replaced* the Old Covenant and *fulfilled* it. Matthew 5:17–20 comes to the fore here. "Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets in that they point forward to him, and Jesus is the one who brings them to their intended end. The Law *and* the Prophets, then, have a *prophetic* function as they foreshadow and predict the coming of Christ" (224). But additionally, as seen in the antitheses of Matthew 5:21–48, "in his *teaching* Jesus *fulfills* the law not simply by extending, annulling, or merely intensifying it but by demonstrating 'the direction in which it [OT law] points.' In so doing, Jesus views himself as 'the eschatological goal of the OT, and thereby its sole authoritative interpreter, the one through whom alone the OT finds its valid continuity and significance'" (224–25).[23] Correspondingly, Christ's followers look to their Lord's work and teaching to determine how to apply OT laws in the present age. Here we should avoid two extremes. (1) We should reject the assumption that a law is in force unless the NT explicitly modifies or abrogates it. This assumption echoes the *a priori* tripartite view and ignores covenantal progression. (2) We should also reject the assumption that an OT law is *not* in force unless the NT repeats it. For instance, the OT prohibitions of bestiality (Exod 22:19; Lev 18:23; 20:16) and cursing the deaf (Lev 19:14) stand, even though they are not mentioned in the NT.

Wellum's fourth step provides some guidance for discerning moral norms. "The *doing* of ethics requires a careful unpacking of the Bible's story line and categories" (226). This involves "both the Bible's progressive unfolding of the covenants *and* the larger biblical-theological framework of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation" (226). Here the concept of creational norms comes into focus. Wellum returns to the example of bestiality. The consistency between the law's prohibition and the qualitative creational distinction between humans and animals (Gen 2:18–25) strengthens the case against bestiality. Ethical matters are not settled simply by noting Sinaitic requirements (227):

> In order to discern God's moral will, we need first to begin in creation, then think through how sin has distorted God's order, walk through the covenants, and discover how God's redemptive promise will restore and transform the created order—a reality that has now been realized in Christ. At every stage in redemptive history, the covenants reflect God's moral demands, thus explaining why we expect *and* find a continuity of moral demand across the canon."

Elsewhere Wellum puts it this way: "Differences exist between the old and new covenants in the detailed stipulations but not in the content of righteousness."[24]

Wellum's fifth step clarifies his approach by analyzing several specific laws: "Consider some illustrations of doing ethics from a 'whole Bible' and under the new covenant" ("Ethics," 228). The

[23] Here Wellum is citing D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *EBC,* ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 8:144.

[24] *Kingdom through Covenant,* 2nd ed., 395.

first illustration concerns sexual matters. Like Schreiner, Wellum maintains the OT's prohibition of homosexuality because homosexuality is a violation of the creational norm of heterosexual marriage. But what about the fact that God allowed polygamy in earlier stages of redemptive history? The creational norm of monogamy and the revelation of the Christ-church relationship in marital terms together argue that polygamy is not tolerable in the New Covenant era. Thus, in some cases the NT standard is actually higher than the OT's. This includes the NT's more developed teaching on love. Wellum also touches on a few of the more challenging OT laws (231):

> In regard to such demands as not sowing two seeds in a field, not eating unclean foods, the need to circumcise our male children, or the treatment of blood disorders, etc., we do not directly obey these commands as covenantal obligation. However, *as Scripture,* the law covenant is for our instruction. As we apply these commands, we must think through whether old covenant commands are tied to creation, whether they are tied solely to the old era, and how they are fulfilled in the NT. By following this procedure, we learn how to apply all of Scripture to us in Christ.

We should follow this approach even with the Decalogue. For instance, Paul's quotation of the fifth commandment in Ephesians 6:2 helps us see that the requirement to honor one's parents holds today. Yet verse 3 expands the promise of long life in Canaan to cover the whole earth, "thus giving further confirmation that the law covenant is applied to us today in and through Christ and his glorious new covenant work" (233).

Evaluation

In evaluating Wellum's approach, one could focus on particulars. For example, "fulfill" in Matthew 5:17 is a significant crux, and commentators have suggested other interpretations besides the one Wellum prefers.[25] Additionally, the brevity of Wellum's illustrations leaves questions in the reader's mind. For instance, regarding the Mosaic food laws he writes (231),

> Even though they no longer apply to us directly, they are instructive for us. In thinking through why God gave them in the OT *and* how they are fulfilled in Christ, we discover that their primary purpose was to separate God's people from the nations and to instruct them about their need for

[25] For example, John Nolland writes, "'Fulfil' must be taken in a manner that allows it to be an appropriate counterpart to 'annul'. The chosen sense must also illuminate what is coming in 5:21–48: it is clear that Matthew is not simply reaffirming the status quo. Jesus is functioning in the role of teacher throughout this sermon (see 5:2 and the form of the material content of the sermon); so 'to fulfil' must focus primarily on what Jesus offers as a teacher. If this framework of constraints has been rightly constructed, then many of the proposed senses of 'fulfil' can be dismissed: to add to the Law; to replace the old Law with a new one which transcends it; to replace the Law with the spirit of love; to confirm the validity of the Law; to live out (perfectly) the requirements of the Law; to empower others to live out the Law's demands; to fulfil the prophetic content of the Law and the Prophets. . . . The fulfilment language represents a claim that Jesus' programmatic commitment, far from undercutting the role of the Law and the Prophets, is to enable God's people to live out the Law more effectively." *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text,* NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 218, 219. Compare David L. Turner, *Matthew,* BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 162–63, and Richard E. Averbeck, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of the Church: Reading the Torah in the Light of Christ* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2022), 225–54.

> internal heart transformation (Mark 7:1–23; Acts 10–11). Although these purposes have ended in Christ, we as new covenant believers are still instructed by them. In fact, the Jerusalem Council had to resolve the theological and practical implications of these issues; otherwise the entire gospel was at stake (Acts 10–11; 15; Rom 14:1–15:13; Gal 1:6–10).

These comments are useful as far as they go, but one still wonders precisely how the food laws instruct us today. If their purpose has been accomplished, what lessons do they continue to teach?

While such details matter, the bigger picture of Wellum's approach deserves primary consideration. He ends his discussion where he began: "Most Christians, regardless of their commitment to covenant or dispensational theology, will arrive at similar conclusions. But, as noted above, where the important difference lies is in *how* we get there" (233). This difference is clear when one compares PC with covenant theology's moral-civil-ceremonial scheme. I find Wellum's arguments against that scheme to be compelling.[26] But comparisons between PC and other theological systems become fuzzy. One reason is that, as reflected in his footnotes, Wellum's major arguments rely heavily on scholars who do not, to my knowledge, subscribe to PC as a theological system—specifically Douglas Moo,[27] Brian Rosner,[28] and Michael Hill.[29] This raises the question as to how distinctive the progressive-covenantal approach to the law actually is.

The matter only becomes fuzzier when one considers dispensational statements about the law. For Combs, Moo—one of Wellum's main sources—is the other "most helpful" author in this field besides Schreiner. In fact, Combs says that Moo's "modified Lutheran" approach "is in agreement with the traditional dispensational view of the Law" and is slightly preferable to Strickland's explicitly

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[26] In my monograph *The Law and the Christian* I wrote the following (21–22): "I question their [Reformed theologians'] division of the law into moral, ceremonial, and civil categories. The Bible does make some commandments more important than others (e.g., Matt. 22:37–40) and also subordinates certain matters of worship to more fundamental moral/spiritual concerns (e.g., Mic. 6:6–8; Matt. 23:23). But it also emphasizes that the Mosaic law is an indivisible unity (e.g., Gal. 5:3; James 2:10–11).

"Although the three proposed categories are reasonable, the Bible does not make these rigid distinctions, nor does it make such distinctions the basis for determining application. Here again, contemporary Reformed writers have critiqued their own tradition and have issued helpful correctives [citing Knox Chamblin, Vern Poythress, and John Frame]. In fact, I once heard a Reformed Old Testament scholar [Bruce Waltke] argue that even the Ten Commandments cannot be equated exactly with 'moral law,' or else Christians would need to observe the Sabbath on Saturday instead of Sunday."

[27] See especially Douglas J. Moo, "The Law of Christ As the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel,* ed. Wayne G. Strickland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 319–76, as well as Moo's responses to the other views expounded in this volume. Moo has said that New Covenant Theology is "close to the right" perspective on the continuity and discontinuity of the Testaments. Foreword to Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant, 2002), xiv. Moo similarly thinks PC is "on the right track." Nevertheless, he rebuts some of Gentry and Wellum's argumentation. In fact, Moo says, "I am not so sure that 'covenant' is *the* structuring element of the biblical story, although the authors make a good case for it." "Kingdom through Covenant: A Review by Douglas Moo; accessed January 18, 2023, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/kingdom-covenant-douglas-moo/.

[28] See Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God,* NSBT (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013).

[29] See Michael Hill, *The How and Why of Love: An Introduction to Evangelical Ethics* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias, 2012).

dispensational view.[30] One can identify additional common ground between PC and dispensationalism. Houghton harmonizes Paul's negative and positive statements about the law by distinguishing between "the law itself and the righteous standard of the law. . . . Spirit-controlled believers are free from the law of sin and death, but exhibit the righteous requirement of the law in their lives.[31] Chou writes that the Mosaic laws "are actually *applications and demonstrations of transcendent theological realities, ones established at creation.* . . . While we may not be under the law itself, we are still under what the law pointed to: the character of God and what he established at creation."[32] Such comments from dispensationalists convey the essence of what Wellum says about how the Christian should approach the law. Admittedly, some dispensationalists will not agree with Wellum that the church is under the New Covenant.[33] More will argue that PC's focus on "redemptive history" is too narrow to embrace the fulness of Scripture and the plan of God. From what I can gather, however, these issues have little or no practical impact on the question of the application of the OT laws today.[34] Wellum strives to avoid antinomianism, and he does so in a way that overlaps considerably with dispensationalism.

James Todd

James Todd is not a leading scholar in the PC camp. Yet he states that his book *Sinai and the Saints* "has strong affinities with two recently proposed theological systems: (1) New Covenant Theology and (2) Progressive Covenantalism."[35] This book deserves attention since it is written for laypeople and shows how someone influenced by PC fleshes out the relationship of the Mosaic law to the Christian life.

Summary

Todd's introduction expresses special concern for apologetics and evangelism. Christians lose credibility before the world when it appears that we are arbitrarily picking and choosing which Mosaic laws apply today and which do not. After chapter 1 defines key terms such as *Torah,* chapter 2 surveys the various views concerning the Christian and the law. Here Todd highlights common ground among the views. "First, proponents of all the views affirm that the old covenant laws do not serve as the basis for a person's salvation. . . . Second, each view has some adherents who derive principles from the old covenant laws in order to apply them to modern believers. . . . A third area of common ground

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[30] "Paul, the Law, and Dispensationalism," 22. Compare Wayne G. Strickland, "The Inauguration of the Law of Christ with the Gospel of Christ: A Dispensationalist View," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel,* 229–79, as well as Strickland's responses to the other views expounded in this volume.

[31] *Law and Grace,* 119–20.

[32] Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Kregel), 216–17.

[33] See Mike Stallard, ed., *Dispensational Understanding of the New Covenant* (Arlington Heights, IL: Regular Baptist, 2012).

[34] See Snoeberger, 163–79.

[35] James M. Todd III, *Sinai and the Saints: Reading Old Covenant Laws for the New Covenant Community* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017), 224n11, Kindle.

among the different views is the affirmation that the old covenant laws reflect God's character" (31–32). Todd then focuses on the core difference among the views: "which old covenant laws modern Christians are under" (32). He speaks of "moral law Christians" (largely covenant theology), "Ten Commandments Christians" (the popular spun-down version of moral-law Christianity), and "No-Old-Law Christians." The third group divides into subgroups that emphasize discontinuity: basically dispensationalism and Lutheranism. Todd's own position represents a third subgroup within the "No-Old-Law" category (43):

> I affirm that the old covenant was a temporary covenant God made with the nation of Israel for the purpose of setting them apart and using them to bless the other nations as his "kingdom of priests" (Ex 19:6). If Israel obeyed Yahweh's commands, he would bless them and use them as his instrument to bless the nations. Unfortunately, Israel repeatedly broke their covenant with Yahweh. Therefore, the old covenant highlighted Israel's sinfulness and led to a greater display of God's wrath against them. Israel's sin and God's corresponding judgment demonstrated to the Israelites (and us, as later readers) that the old covenant could not produce righteousness in Israel and that God would have to do a greater work to produce this required righteousness in his people. This greater work came in the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who fulfilled and thereby ended the old covenant and inaugurated the new covenant, a covenant that the authors of the Hebrew Bible foretold on numerous occasions. Christ's followers therefore are not under the old covenant laws but under the law of Christ. Although there is some overlap between the ethical requirements of both laws, the motivation and ability to obey differ significantly between the law of Christ and the old covenant. Under the new covenant, God transforms his people's hearts, blesses them unconditionally, and empowers them to live holy lives through his Spirit.

Succeeding chapters unpack Todd's approach. Chapter 3 overviews the Pentateuch, and then chapters 4 and 5 detail the Pentateuch's treatment of the Mosaic law. Todd shows how the law was given to a single nation in a specific historical setting in a unique covenant with God aiming at a particular purpose. But he especially demonstrates how the Pentateuch's storyline establishes the inability of Israel to keep the law and thus points to a future divine solution. This theme is tied in with NT statements about the "condemning" role of the law in God's redemptive plan (e.g., Rom 4:15).

In chapter 6 Todd goes on to deal with the Ten Commandments. The following statements summarize his bottom line (94–95):

> Since Yahweh's covenant with Israel serves as the historical anchor for these commandments, any argument for a broader application of these commandments must establish that Yahweh intended the Ten Commandments for a wider audience. Even though the New Testament authors do quote some of the commandments . . . we can demonstrate that one command did not extend to all nations. More specifically, Paul identifies one commandment that has no authority over Christians: the Sabbath.

In dealing with the Sabbath, Todd's arguments are similar to those of Schreiner, whom he footnotes. Todd gives some frank warnings to "Ten Commandments Christians." "The first potential way Christians can bring harm to the message of the gospel is through their hypocrisy regarding the Sabbath," that is claiming to live by the Decalogue but not observing the Sabbath the way the Decalogue requires (104). "The second potential way Christians can harm the witness of the church in the world is through modeling bad biblical interpretation," that is, a willy-nilly approach (104). "The third potential way Christians can damage the church's witness is by modeling a lack of love toward other believers," that is, by violating the teaching of Romans 14 as it relates to the Sabbath (105). On the Ten Commandments more broadly, Todd points out nuances in how the NT writers cite nine of the ten, nuances that should keep readers from viewing the Decalogue as an immediate authority over Christians. He concludes: "Paul's use does not mean Christians are under the jurisdiction of the Ten Commandments; however, some of them provide a good example of proper behavior under the new covenant" (107).

Interestingly, Todd's seventh chapter is entitled "Does This Mean I Can Do Whatever I Want?" His short answer to the problem of antinomianism is that "the law . . . of Moses is not the guide for the Christian; the guide for the Christian is the law of Christ" (109). He defines the essence of the law of Christ (1 Cor 9:20–21; Gal 6:2) as love for God and neighbor (Mark 12:28–34; Gal 5:14). And love for neighbor is specifically patterned after the self-sacrificing example of Christ (John 15:12–13). It is especially directed toward the community of believers but has an evangelistic impact on unbelievers (John 13:34–35). "One could obey all ten of the Ten Commandments and never come close to the sacrificial love demanded in the law of Christ. In this sense, the law of Christ requires a higher commitment and a greater sacrifice than the Ten Commandments" (112). From the law of Christ, Todd moves to natural law, and here one gets a better picture of how he views the Mosaic law (116):

> When the ethical demands of the new covenant overlap with those of the old covenant, Christians should not conclude that we are still under the old covenant; rather, we should attribute the overlap to both covenants reflecting God's universal standards of right and wrong. In other words, some of the old covenant laws are expressions of God's universal moral law, but the old covenant laws themselves are not the moral law given to all people for all time. In particular, the Ten Commandments have a high degree of overlap with God's natural law, yet they are not identical. The old covenant laws that reflect God's universal natural law are historical and covenantal expressions of God's natural law.

Todd concludes chapter 7 by presenting contrasts between the old and new covenants, highlighting the sanctifying role of the Spirit as a provision of the new covenant.

Chapter 8 answers the question, "Why Should We Read the Laws?" Here Todd urges believers to study and apply the Mosaic laws, and then illustrates how to do so. His case studies take the form of analyses of OT themes such as the tabernacle, the sacrificial system, holiness, and kingship. These are related to NT developments, leading to general applications to the Christian life. For example, the tabernacle legislation helps the church understand its role as God's dwelling place and encourages believers toward holiness. In terms of the use of the Mosaic law for contemporary ethics, Todd

recommends this: "We need to derive principles from larger sections of laws or larger themes in the laws, and we must ground these principles in the work of Christ and his fulfillment of the Old Covenant. We should be very cautious about trying to derive a principle from every old covenant law. Such an approach can become extremely subjective and miss the big picture of the Pentateuch's message" (142). In chapter 9 Todd returns to the storyline of the Pentateuch and sets forth how it anticipates God's future work of "heart change, a coming king, and Israel's return to the land" (153). He then traces these themes through the Prophets and into the NT. Then Todd's conclusion deals with the Jerusalem Council as a way of reinforcing his argument that the Mosaic Covenant is not the Christian's authority.

Todd's appendices give key insight into his views. In the first one he makes a brief biblical and natural-law case against homosexuality. Yet he also says, "I urge modern Christians not to use Leviticus 18 or 20 in modern discussions over homosexuality" (191). The reason is that these chapters contain other Old Covenant laws that Christians do not follow, and the inconsistencies create confusion. The second appendix deals with the second commandment. Todd argues that this command's prohibition of images of false gods is rooted in the uniqueness of Yahweh and therefore expresses a timeless divine requirement. However, OT theophanies and anthropomorphisms and especially the incarnation argue that visual images of Christ or even God the Father are permissible in the New Covenant age—not as objects of worship but as aids in worship. Todd's final appendix responds to a couple of anticipated challenges to his position. The psalmist's love for the law (Pss 19, 119) is consistent with Paul's teaching that the law is good (Rom 7:12) but does not indicate that Christians should try to live under the jurisdiction of the Mosaic Covenant. Nor does Matthew 5:17–20. According to Todd, this text teaches "that the entire Hebrew Bible finds its ultimate meaning in the Messiah" (203). This includes Jesus' teaching that some specific laws are brought to an end (e.g., Matt 15:11; Mark 7:19) and the NT's broader teaching that Jesus' work brings an end to the Mosaic Covenant as a whole.

Evaluation

Though only barely apparent in the summary above, Todd's book brings together an impressive amount of biblical theology and presents it in an engaging style. While he focuses more on the OT data, his position largely parallels that of Schreiner and Wellum. It also parallels what dispensationalists have written. For instance, dispensationalist Paul Hartog's definition of "the law of Christ" sounds like it could have been written by Todd: "the self-giving and burden-bearing 'love of neighbor' as taught by Christ, as exemplified by Christ (chiefly in his Gospel sacrifice), as empowered by the Spirit of Christ, and as communally observed within the Body of Christ."[36]

Three specifics of Todd's approach raise concern. First, while he speaks of Israel's ministry to bless the nations, Todd does not draw attention to an aspect of that ministry revealed in passages such as Deuteronomy 4:5–8. In anticipating that Israel's obedience would attract other nations to the wisdom and righteousness of Israel's laws, this text implies that those laws revealed divine norms for

[36] "The 'Law of Christ' in Pauline Theology and New Testament Ethics," *DBSJ* 26 (2021), 82.

those nations. Dispensationalists such as Eugene Merrill highlight this point.[37] Israel's role as an ethical model to the nations is even acknowledged in *Kingdom through Covenant.*[38] Its absence in Todd's work is a significant lacuna that tends to lessen the universal relevance of Israel's laws.

Second, while Todd's drive for consistency and objectivity is commendable, I believe he goes too far when he tells us not to look for a timeless principle in each Mosaic law. If his point is that a particular law does not necessarily teach a principle that is distinct from principles taught by the other laws, there can be no objection. The laws overlap in their ethical significance. Additionally, identifying the specific reason for some laws is notoriously difficult. In fact, dispensationalist Rolland McCune has written,

> Certain expressions of the Mosaic code do, in fact, appear to be arbitrary, for example, the separation laws which delineated clean and unclean animals, which prohibited plowing with an ox and a donkey hitched to the same implement, and which forbade sowing mixed seed (Lev 20:24–26; Deut 14:1–20; 22:9–11). These prohibitions do not seem to be intrinsically moral, not least since they are not binding today, even while they were, at that time, expressions of God's holy will. Other examples could be given (e.g., the Sabbath).[39]

Nevertheless, "arbitrary" laws can still teach ethical principles. Some items prohibited by the separation laws may have had pagan associations in the ANE context. Yet even if there was nothing inherently or associationally wrong with a particular prohibited item, each separation law evidently functioned as an object lesson on the importance of Israel's spiritual and moral purity.[40] Todd's viewpoint seems likely to minimize this kind of observation. Thankfully, at least in a footnote he encourages readers wanting a more thoroughgoing approach to consider Christopher Wright's paradigmatic approach to the Mosaic law (224n9).[41]

Third, though one can appreciate Todd's sensitivity about the difficulties of using Leviticus 18 and 20 to deal with the homosexuality issue, his approach is problematically restrictive. Brian Powell's dissertation tackles contemporary debates and presents a comprehensive biblical theology of homosexuality from a progressive-covenantal standpoint.[42] He upholds in detail the teaching of Leviticus 18 and 20 as part of the consistent biblical argument against homosexuality and answers the

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[37] Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy,* NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 116–17.

[38] *Kingdom through Covenant,* 2nd ed, 364.

[39] *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity, Volume 2: The Doctrines of Man, Sin, Christ, and the Holy Spirit* (Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 46. Interestingly, for support McCune cites Reformed theologian Francis Turretin's distinction between "moral" and "positive" laws. See *Institutes of Elenctic Theology,* trans. George Giger, ed. James T. Dennison Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1992), 2:2.

[40] On the food laws, see Robert D. Bell, *The Theological Messages of the Old Testament Books* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2010), 49–65; Rhett Powell Dodson, "Discerning Truths of Holiness: The Theology and Message of Leviticus 11–15" (PhD diss., Bob Jones University, 1998). On the mixture laws, compare Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy,* NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 289–90; Merrill, 300–301; Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy,* NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 242.

[41] See Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2004).

[42] "Gay Christian?"

objections raised against these passages. Whether or not the reader finds all of Powell's interpretations convincing,[43] he shows that PC need not avoid difficult passages in using Mosaic laws for ethics. While Todd aims at avoiding confusion, his dismissiveness toward Leviticus 18 and 20 may well confuse the laypeople he is trying to help. More seriously, it has the effect of undermining the authority of Scripture. In light of this and the other points I have made about *Sinai and the Saints,* Todd's approach illustrates how a PC-type approach has the potential for the kind of problem Snoeberger warned about.

Jason DeRouchie

Jason DeRouchie has written on various elements of PC.[44] In his widely acclaimed textbook on OT interpretation, the chapter on practical theology discusses the Mosaic law. Though briefer than Todd's work, it is more programmatic, developing a method for analyzing each of the OT laws from a progressive-covenantal perspective.[45]

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[43] See especially his handling of the prohibition of sexual intercourse during menstruation (Lev 18:19; 20:18). "Gay Christian?," 214–15, 226–29. Powell argues that this prohibition was a temporary law regarding cleanness/uncleanness that was fulfilled by Christ (Mark 1:40–45; 5:25–34; 7:1–23). He also points out that in discussing permissible abstentions from marital sex Paul does not mention abstaining due to menstruation (1 Cor 7:5). Thus, while the entire canon shows that the other sex acts listed in Leviticus 18 and 20 remain prohibited, intercourse during menstruation is permissible today. Though they may use different arguments, conservative commentators typically arrive at the same conclusion as Powell. One exception is Roy E. Gane. This is not surprising given that he is a Seventh Day Adventist. Nevertheless, his arguments remain thought-provoking:

"The penalty for deliberate violation of the ban on sex with a woman during her period is a grave one: divinely administered 'cutting off,' with no ritual remedy available (Lev. 20:18; cf. 18:19, 29). This absolute nature of the prohibition indicates that its applicability does not depend on the ritual system and continues after it has passed away. Reinforcing this conclusion, Leviticus 18 and 20 place the ban on sex with a menstruant among moral laws (cf. Ezek. 18:5–6; 22:10).

"It is true that ceremonial law provided a remedy for physical ritual impurity incurred through *inadvertent* violation of the prohibition (15:24). Now that the ritual system is gone, there is no ceremonial impact or need for such a remedy. However, this does not negate a timeless moral aspect that forbids a man from *deliberately* having intercourse with a menstruating woman, knowing that this is her condition.

"Perhaps a moral rationale for the prohibition can be found in 20:18, which describes a woman with any genital flow as *dawah* ('faint,' i.e., in a state of malaise; see also 12:2; cf. Lam. 1:13; 5:17). If so, this is a women's rights issue: The law protects 'the woman from unwanted advances by her husband during her period of weakness (R. Gane).'" *The NIV Application Commentary: Leviticus, Numbers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 324–25, citing Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, AB 3A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1755. See further, Roy E. Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 358–61.

Gane's position may be further supported by Leviticus 18:24–30. Here Yahweh looks back on the actions prohibited throughout the chapter—including sexual intercourse during menstruation—and says that he is judging the Canaanites for doing "all these" actions (v. 24; cf. 20:23). Thus, "all" the prohibitions applied to non-Israelites. With this in mind, one could argue that Paul did not mention menstruation as a reason for abstention from marital sex (1 Cor 7:5) because he was taking for granted the OT's prohibition.

[44] See, for example, Jason S. DeRouchie, "Father of a Multitude of Nations: New Covenant Ecclesiology in OT Perspective," in *Progressive Covenantalism,* 7–38; Jason S. DeRouchie, Oren R. Martin, and Andrew David Naselli, *40 Questions About Biblical Theology,* 40 Questions Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020).

[45] Jason S. DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2017), 415–95.

Summary

DeRouchie argues for a "redemptive-historical" "principlizing-paradigmatic" approach to the application of the Mosaic law (432n14, 434n16, 435n17). He begins by presenting three principles that guide him in handling the law. He does not provide detailed exegesis to establish these principles but summarizes relevant biblical texts and footnotes sources for further development.[46] DeRouchie's first principle is that "Christians are part of the new covenant, not the old" (427).[47] As a result, "the Mosaic law is no longer the direct and immediate guide or judge of the conduct of God's people" (428).

Second, "Christ fulfills the Mosaic law, and we appropriate it only through his fulfillment" (428). Here DeRouchie understands Christ's fulfillment of the law (Matt 5:17) as "the 'eschatological actualization' of all that the Old Testament predicted, whether through direct or typological prophecy or through the overarching salvation-historical trajectory" (428). One implication is that "all the commanding parts of the Mosaic law are still instructive for his [Jesus'] followers, but *only when read in the light of his law-fulfillment"* (429). When read in this way, the OT laws are included in the "law of Christ" (1 Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2) and instruct us as Scripture (2 Tim 3:16) (430–32). Exactly how does Christ's law-fulfillment affect the application of the law? In short, "it depends." Echoing Wellum,[48] DeRouchie visualizes his approach with an analogy: Christ and his work function like a *lens* that refracts individual laws in different directions. DeRouchie presents four such directions: the coming of Christ may (1) maintain, (2) transform, (3) extend, or (4) annul a particular law (430–31). "We must assess every law on its own terms in order to properly discern how it applies today" (431).

This leads to DeRouchie's third principle: "The Old Testament law portrays the character of God, anticipates Christ, and clarifies the makeup of love and wise living" (433). Here DeRouchie affirms that "through Jesus, 'every detail' of the Mosaic law matters for Christians" (433). Likewise, citing passages such as Deuteronomy 4:5–8, DeRouchie asserts that "even within ancient Israel, the familial, social, economic, and political structures as revealed in the Old Testament bore a testimonial purpose and were intended to provide a contextual paradigm of the values God desires for all peoples and in all times" (434). In this regard, DeRouchie gives three reasons against compartmentalizing the law into moral, civil, and ceremonial categories. (1) "The Bible never differentiates laws in this way but treats the law as a singular entity" (437). (2) "All the laws express moral principles, and most of the so-called moral laws contain temporally or culturally bound elements" (438). (3) "We are to gain benefit from *all* the Old Testament, not just the moral portions" (439).

Building on his three principles, DeRouchie recommends three steps for applying each OT law. First, "establish the original revealed meaning and application of the law" (440). This involves identifying (1) the type of law (i.e., its content type: criminal, civil, family, etc.), (2) the original meaning and significance of the law, and (3) the original purpose of the law (440–41). Second, "determine the theological significance of the law" (441). This involves identifying (1) what the law teaches about

[46] For a sample of his more detailed exegetical work in relation to the Mosaic law, see Jason S. DeRouchie, "The Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12: A Redemptive-Historical Reassessment," *Themelios* 45, no. 1 (2020): 240–59.

[47] I have slightly reformatted various statements of DeRouchie from the header style in which they appear.

[48] "Ethics," 222; cf. 224–25.

God and his ways, (2) how Christ's law-fulfillment affects the law, and (3) stating the love principle behind the law (441–42). The first step (interpretation) and the second step (theological analysis) lead to the third step (application): "Summarize the lasting significance of the law for today" (442).

DeRouchie goes on to illustrate his steps with four case studies. Each one represents one of the ways that Christ's law-fulfillment may affect the ongoing relevance of a particular law. DeRouchie provides considerable detail for each case study, but his basic conclusions are as follows. (1) Christ's coming *extends* the requirement of roof parapets (Deut 22:8) to all areas of home construction (443–44). (2) Christ's law-fulfillment *maintains* the prohibition of cross-dressing (Deut 22:5) (444–49).[49] (3) Christ *transforms* the Sabbath (Deut 5:12) into an already-not-yet eschatological rest for God's people (449–53). (4) Christ *annuls* the Mosaic food laws (Lev 20:25–26), and his doing so moves us to celebrate his triumphant work (453–59). Indeed, "*bacon is victory food!*" (459).

Evaluation

DeRouchie not only steers clear of antinomianism but also displays a contagious fervency for glorifying God through Christ-reliant, Spirit-empowered obedience and holiness. He emphatically upholds the pedagogical role of the OT as Christian Scripture and, unlike James Todd, he believes that in some way each Mosaic law teaches timeless divine morality. DeRouchie draws on a host of scholars from a variety of traditions. In fact, he includes Combs' dispensational view in a list of redemptive-historical approaches similar to his own (432n14). DeRouchie goes beyond other writers in the PC stream in detailing and illustrating specific ways in which Christ's coming relates to individual laws. This greatly helps to concretize PC's sometimes vague statements about viewing the law through Christ. DeRouchie's analysis of select laws genuinely advances the conversation, and his discussion is rich with insights.

On the other hand, DeRouchie's fourfold categorization may raise more problems than it solves. He leaves the reader wondering *how* one can determine whether a particular Mosaic law has been maintained, extended, transformed, or annulled in Christ. Furthermore, upon close inspection these four categories become blurry. For instance, the parapet-building law is in the "extends" category specifically in connection with Jesus' teaching on the image of God in man and love for neighbor. Undoubtedly, the motivation and power to love are radically deepened by Jesus' teaching and example. I fail to see, however, how this is actually "extending" the parapet law. The Mosaic law was paradigmatic from the outset, and Yahweh expected the Israelites to apply to new situations the principle or pattern expressed in particular laws.[50] Thus, the parapet law should have been "extended" even under the Mosaic Covenant. Additionally, the "extends" and "maintains" categories overlap. Though DeRouchie deals with the cross-dressing prohibition under the "maintains" category, he

[49] Here the discussion is condensed from Jason S. DeRouchie, "Confronting the Transgender Storm: New Covenant Reflections on Deuteronomy 22:5," *JBMW* 21, no. 1 (2016): 58–69.

[50] This is a foundational concept throughout Wright's *Old Testament Ethics,* which DeRouchie relies on considerably. See also Douglas K. Stuart, "Preaching from the Law," in *Preaching the Old Testament,* ed. Scott M. Gibson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 95–111, and Joshua A. Berman, *Inconsistency in the Torah: Ancient Literary Convention and the Limits of Source Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 107–17.

focuses on the underlying principle of gender differences and "extends" this as he applies Deuteronomy 22:5 to the contemporary arena of "gender identity."

DeRouchie's other examples also raise questions. One could argue that the "transformation" of the Sabbath includes a kind of "annulment" in that Christians are not required to observe a Sabbath on the seventh day of each week. Furthermore, DeRouchie sees the following "love principle" in the Sabbath law: "*Loving God and neighbor requires carrying out the 6+1 pattern of life as a witness to the kingdom hope of ultimate rest"* (451). What exactly the 6+1 pattern requires of Christians today is not entirely clear from the remainder of DeRouchie's discussion. But he does argue that the Sabbath law teaches us to show compassion to the marginalized and to get sufficient physical rest (451–52). This sounds like the law is being "maintained" or "extended" as well as "transformed." So evidently the "lens" of Christ can bend a law in more than one direction? Finally, even though Christ has "annulled" the food laws and their resulting ethnic separation, do these laws not continue to teach the importance of discernment and separation from the values and customs of the unregenerate world ("extends" category)?[51] Such questions about the fluidity of DeRouchie's fourfold categorization are reminiscent of his own critique of the traditional threefold categorization of the Mosaic law.

Conclusion

Despite any differences of emphasis and nuance, progressive covenantalists share a common perspective on the role of the Mosaic law in the Christian life. Jason Meyer provides a helpful summary:

> I propose that one should begin with Christ and not with the individual Mosaic commands. The coming of Christ has caused a paradigm shift that calls for recalibrating all former commands in the light of His centrality. This approach recognizes that the law of Moses in its entirety has come to an end in the sense that the believer does not start by asking, "What did the law teach?" The believer begins at the point where his Christian life began: Christ. The believer found new life in Christ and so now comes to Christ to find out how to live out his new life.[52]

Start with Christ. There is something about that spirit that should resonate with all Christians, regardless of their theological systems.

The rub is explaining what precisely this entails regarding the ongoing role of the Mosaic law. Here PC has yielded much worthy reflection. At the same time, some potential problems have surfaced. As Snoeberger and others have worried, PC—or at least approaches like it—*may* end up minimizing the role of Mosaic legislation for ethics. The present study has detected this tendency in James Todd's book. Nevertheless, the study has also found that such a tendency is *not* representative of PC proper.

Snoeberger suggested that PC may suppress the ongoing pedagogical value of the Mosaic law specifically because of the system's Christological focus. Ironically, however, the Christological focus

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[51] See the first two sources cited in note 40 above.

[52] *The End of the Law,* 283.

becomes the very tool PC uses to determine precisely how a particular Mosaic law relates to the present age. Some of PC's conclusions in this regard are confusing and/or unconvincing. Nevertheless, as seen especially in DeRouchie's discussion, PC has shown a keen interest in identifying and applying the ethical truths taught by the OT laws. Toward this end, one hopes that progressive covenantalists will further refine their approach as they continue to meditate on the Torah of Yahweh.[53]

[53] I thank Fred Zaspel for reviewing this article and providing valuable input.

The Covenant of Grace: A Critique of the Concept in Stephen Myers's *God to Us: Covenant Theology in Scripture*[1]

by Brian C. Collins[2]

Covenant theologians have recently produced several works explaining and defending covenant theology. In 2020 scholars connected to Reformed Theological Seminary produced a multi-authored work, *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives*.[3] In the same year Richard Belcher Jr., also of Reformed Theological Seminary, produced *The Fulfillment of the Promises of God: An Explanation of Covenant Theology*.[4] In 2021 Stephen Myers of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary published *God to Us: Covenant Theology in Scripture*.[5]

Each of these books has its own strengths, but of these recent contributions, Myers is the most exegetically grounded and the most devotional.[6] Myers's book makes the best recent exegetical and theological argument for covenant theology, and this paper will critique his argument for an overarching covenant of grace, of which the post-Fall biblical covenants are administrations.[7]

Genesis 3:15, the Noahic Covenant, and Inauguration of the Covenant of Grace

Stephen Myers argues for a unified covenant of grace on the grounds that God has a unified goal (dwelling with his people), that this goal is realized for individuals in a unified way (by faith in God's gospel promises), and that throughout redemptive history there has been one unified people of God.

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[1] Thanks are due to Renton Rathbun, whose response to an earlier draft of this paper led to some significant revisions, and to Stephen Myers, who graciously reviewed this paper and corrected some errors in my understanding of his positions.

[2] Brian C. Collins (PhD, Theology) is biblical worldview lead specialist at BJU Press. He has contributed to Mark L. Ward Jr., et al., *Biblical Worldview: Creation, Fall, Redemption* (Grenville, SC: BJU Press, 2016), the *Lexham Survey of Theology,* ed. Brannon Ellis and Mark Ward (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2018), and the *Lexham Context Commentary,* ed. Douglas Mangum and Steven Runge (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020). Brian serves as an elder at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, SC.

[3] Guy Prentiss Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, and John R. Muether, eds., *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020).

[4] Richard P. Belcher Jr., *The Fulfillment of the Promises of God: An Explanation of Covenant Theology* (Fearn, GB: Mentor, 2020). The chapters on the covenant of works and the Davidic Covenant are the same as Belcher's contribution to *Covenant Theology*.

[5] Stephen G. Myers, *God to Us: Covenant Theology in Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2021).

[6] Though *Covenant Theology* had several exegetically focused essays, these essays tended to not to be as focused in their argumentation as Myers's. The exegesis was not always relevant to an argument for covenant theology.

[7] I affirm an Adamic Covenant, which I understand to have been a covenant of works. Further, once the analogical nature of all language as applied to the Persons of the Trinity is recognized, the label *covenant* is appropriate to describe Scripture texts that indicate some kind of eternal arrangement in which the Father sends the Son with purposes that the Son fulfills through the empowerment of the Spirit. Convincing arguments for these covenants are found in the works cited above. Thus, this critique of covenant theology focuses on the arguments for an overarching covenant of grace.

However, progressive dispensationalists and progressive covenantalists affirm all three of these truths while not holding to a unified covenant of grace. Adherents of these views think that the covenant of grace concept flattens out the biblical covenants so that important distinctions among them are minimized or denied.[8] Thus it is important to turn to Myers's exegetical case for the covenant of grace.

Myers appeals to the phrase וַהֲקִמֹתִי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי ("But I will establish my covenant") in Genesis 6:18, arguing that הֵקִים בְּרִית is never used for making a new covenant.[9] It indicates "perpetuating a previously existing covenant."[10] Although Genesis 6:18 contains the first occurrence of the term *covenant* in the Bible, he argues that this construction demonstrates that the Noahic Covenant cannot have been the first covenant made.

Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum (both progressive covenantalists) have provided the most detailed argumentation for this understanding of הֵקִים בְּרִית, and they claim that Genesis 6:18 refers to the perpetuation of the creation covenant. Myers responds that the creation covenant was a covenant of works violated by Adam. Since the Noahic Covenant is "the establishment of an altogether different covenant, on different terms, with different requirements" from the original works covenant, it cannot be perpetuating the covenant of works.[11] Therefore, Myers concludes, it must be perpetuating the covenant of grace, which was "first announced" in Genesis 3:15:[12]

> Prior to God's covenantal interaction with Noah, there was a previously existing covenant that was concerned with the salvation of God's people and that was of such a character that it could be meaningfully renewed with subsequent generations of human beings. This previously existing, redemptive, transhistoric covenant was the covenant of grace.[13]

Myers is correct that the Adamic Covenant was a works covenant, and he is therefore correct to conclude that the Noahic Covenant, which is not a works covenant, cannot be identified as the same covenant.[14] However Myers's proposal has its own difficulties.

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[8] Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 22–23; Stephen J. Wellum, "A Progressive Covenantalism Response," in *Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies: Four Views on the Continuity of Scripture,* ed. Brent E. Parker and Richard J. Lucas (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2022), 208–10.

[9] Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright ©2016 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

[10] Myers, 106, 131; cf. Miles V. Van Pelt, "The Noahic Covenant of the Covenant of Grace," in *Covenant Theology,* 119.

[11] Myers, 107. Wellum does not deny a works element to the covenant with Adam. He simply does not want to reduce the covenant to a covenant of works since there are important aspects of this covenant that are carried forward in redemptive history. This concern is valid, but it is met by seeing those elements reappear in redemptive covenants.

[12] Myers, 107; cf. Van Pelt, 120. Myers, in distinction from some covenant theologians, clarifies, "To be certain, the covenant of grace does not begin in Genesis 3:15, but in these words God first speaks to humanity of His eternal purpose" (120). For Myers the covenant of grace "includes both the eternal, intra-Trinitarian counsel of peace and the outworking of that counsel in history" (96).

[13] Ibid., 107.

[14] See Charles Lee Irons, "*Hēqîm Bĕrît* in Gen 6:18: Make or Confirm a Covenant?," unpublished paper (3 February 2018), 5.

First, it is likely that הֵקִים בְּרִית can refer to the initial making of a covenant.[15] As Victor Hamilton observes, the word קום in the Hiphil "means literally 'to make stand, to erect.'" Hamilton concludes, "God 'erects' a covenant with Noah."[16] Indeed, קום in the Hiphil conveys several senses. It can refer to confirming an existing covenant (Lev 26:9), to fulfilling an existing covenant (Gen 17:7, 19, 21), or (when negated) to failing to fulfill an existing covenant (Jer 34:18). Arguably, it can also refer to the making of a covenant (Gen 6:18; 9:9, 11, 17; Exod 6:4; Ezek 16:60, 62). This variation of senses should not be surprising since קום has a wide semantic range.

In Exodus 6:4 God uses קום to refer to making a covenant with the patriarchs. Gentry and Wellum argue that God is referring to his action during the exodus to fulfill the land promise part of the Abrahamic Covenant.[17] Thus God was establishing the Abrahamic Covenant during the time of the exile. But קום occurs here as a non-initial perfect, indicating past tense (as the translations uniformly recognize). This verse could refer to the *making* of the Abrahamic Covenant rather than to its fulfillment.[18]

Ezekiel 16:59–63 is another instance in which הֵקִים בְּרִית refers to the making of a covenant. Gentry and Wellum initially granted that this passage was an exception to their rule.[19] They have since revised their view, however. They now argue that the two covenants in view are the Abrahamic Covenant (indicated with red lettering) and the Mosaic Covenant (indicated with blue lettering):[20]

> [59] For thus says the Lord GOD: I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant, [60] yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish [הֲקִמוֹתִי] for you an everlasting covenant. [61] Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you take your sisters, both your elder and your younger, and I give them to you as daughters, but not on account of the covenant with you. [62] I will establish [הֲקִימוֹתִי] my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, [63] that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I atone for you for all that you have done, declares the Lord GOD.

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[15] H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1950), 1:275; Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1:1–11:26,* NAC (Nashville, B&H, 1996), 367.

[16] Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 316.

[17] Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant,* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 159. Gentry later adjusts his argument, "Note that covenant is in the singular. If ***hēqîm bĕrît*** means to 'make a covenant,' then how was one covenant made with three people at three different times? But if ***hēqîm bĕrît*** means to affirm a promise or keep an obligation, then I can see how the one covenant was established not only with Abraham, but also with Isaac and Jacob. In the narrative of Genesis, God appeared to each of the three patriarchs and verbally affirmed or repeated the one covenant to them." Peter J. Gentry and Jason T. Parry, "hēqîm bĕrît in Gen 6:18—Make or Confirm a Covenant? A Response to Charles Lee Irons," unpublished paper (2018), 7. This is a stronger argument than the one originally made, and it could account for why the more ambiguous term was used. However, the covenant was originally cut with Abraham and that sense may not be entirely absent when YHWH says that he established his covenant with Abraham.

[18] See Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 98.

[19] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 475–76.

[20] Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *God's Kingdom through God's Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 219–20.

However, Ezekiel 16 is about Jerusalem in particular rather than about the nation Israel generally. The covenant made with Jerusalem in its youth, which covenant she broke, is likely the covenant in which YHWH chose Jerusalem as his own dwelling place and the seat of the Davidic ruler (cf. Ps 132:13–17).[21] The covenant that YHWH will make in the future is the New Covenant (the emphasis on knowing YHWH is an important part of the New Covenant), a covenant which includes the restoration of the city of Jerusalem (Jer 31:38–40; 32:36–41). The Abrahamic Covenant has no promise regarding the restoration of Jerusalem. Since the New Covenant, a covenant still in Ezekiel's future, is the one that YHWH will establish, הֵקִים בְּרִית here refers to the making of a covenant rather than to the confirmation of an existing covenant.[22]

The claim that הֵקִים בְּרִית is sometimes used to indicate the making of a covenant is consistent with the semantic range of קום in the Hipil. There are other passages in which the word carries the meaning of "set up," "make," or "found" something (Josh 4:9; 2 Sam 3:10; 1 Kgs 7:21; Ps 78:5; Amos 9:11).

One additional problem exists for those seeking to argue for the covenant of grace from the occurrence of הֵקִים בְּרִית in Genesis 6:18. If the expression refers to the continuation of the existing covenant of grace, made initially in Genesis 3:15, does the statement כָּרַת יְהוָה אֶת־אַבְרָם בְּרִית ("YHWH cut a covenant with Abraham," Gen 15:18) mean that the Abrahamic Covenant is a new covenant, distinct from the covenant of grace? Progressive covenantalists could affirm this, but no covenant theologian who adheres to an overarching covenant of grace would affirm that position. Nonetheless, the logic of the argument from הֵקִים בְּרִית in Genesis 6:18 seems to entail it.

It is worth nothing that Myers's formulation is superior to those who would argue that a covenant of grace is *cut* or *established* in Genesis 3:15. A covenant is the ratification of obligations and promises made between at least two parties with sanctions and a solemn oath of commitment.[23] In Genesis 3:15

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[21] Douglas Stuart, *Ezekiel*, The Preacher's Commentary (Nashville: Nelson, 1989), 135; Ralph H. Alexander, "Ezekiel," in *EBCRev,* ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 722.

[22] Irons comments, "These two occurrences could be taken in the 'confirm' sense, but it seems more likely that they are actually looking ahead to the new covenant that God 'will establish' with Israel in the future" (9).

[23] This definition was formulated by surveying the instances in Scripture in which a covenant is made and by surveying the following resources. M. Weinfeld, "בְּרִית *bᵉrith," Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament,* ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 2:256, 264; E. Kutsch, "בְּרִית *bᵉrît* obligation," *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament,* ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 1:258–60; D. F. Estes, "Covenant (OT)," in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,* rev. ed., ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 1:790; J. B. Payne, "Covenant (In the Old Testament)," *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible,* ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 1:1001; P. R. Williamson, "Covenant," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology,* ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 420; P. R. Williamson, "Covenant," *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch,* ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 139; Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 3:203; John Murray, *The Covenant of Grace* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1953), 31; William Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1977), 113; O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), 4, 11; W. J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* (Nashville: Nelson, 1984), 15, 20; Thomas Edward McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 61, 63; Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 2–4; Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 475; Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose,* NSBT (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007), 43; Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church,* Foundations of Evangelical Theology

God pronounced a judgment on Satan, and this judgment entailed a righteous seed of the woman who would bring about the judgment. But this implied promise does not have all the elements of a covenant. Geerhardus Vos conceded that "the formal conclusion of a covenant is lacking," noting that the idea of a covenant among humans needed to develop first.[24] Myers escapes this difficulty by arguing that the covenant of grace is "announced" in Genesis 3:15. Recall that for Myers, the covenant of grace is both "the intra-Trinitarian counsel of peace and the outworking of that counsel in history."[25]

However, while Myers's formulation resolves the problem of Genesis 3:15 not being the formation of a covenant, it seems to create another problem. The biblical covenants are made with different parties from the parties of the covenant of redemption (=counsel of peace). The Noahic Covenant was made with all flesh. The Abrahamic Covenant was made with Abraham and his seed. The Mosaic Covenant was made with the nation Israel. The Davidic Covenant was made with David and his seed. How then can these various covenants be administrations of a covenant made between the three members of the Trinity? The covenant partners are different. Perhaps Myers would argue that these administrations of the covenant of grace are themselves distinct covenants. But in that case, what is the difference between distinct covenants working out a unified plan of God established in the covenant of redemption and the distinct covenants being considered part of an overarching covenant of grace? One difference could be that Myers's model requires more continuity between the covenants, but this paper will argue that an overemphasis on continuity creates a problem with the biblical data.

Furthermore, the inclusion of the non-elect in several of the biblical covenants creates difficulties. Myers understands the participants of the covenant of grace to be the Father, Christ (with all the elect in him), and the Spirit. But the Noahic Covenant was made between God and all of Noah's seed (elect and non-elect) and with every living creature (Gen 9:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17). It seems odd for administrations of the covenant of grace to have covenant partners that differ from those of the covenant of grace. Myers addresses this problem later in the book, noting that even though the covenant of grace "includes only the specific number of the elect given to the Son in the counsel of peace . . . in its administration it affects far more men and women."[26] Thus,

> [t]he Noahic administration of the covenant of grace affected Ham as well as Shem. The Abrahamic administration of the covenant of grace affected Ishmael as well as Isaac, Esau as well

(Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 64; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant,* 132, 141, 152; Samuel Renihan, *The Mystery of Christ, His Covenant, and His Kingdom* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders, 2020), 40–41, 55; Belcher, 18–19; Myers, 3–4.

[24] Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. and trans. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2012–2016), 2:124. Vos thinks a covenant is presupposed, but this falls short of an exegetical argument for a covenant of grace being established in Genesis 3:15.

[25] Myers, 96. Myers is clear that all three members of the Trinity, not just the Father and the Son, have covenanted together in the covenant of redemption: "In that eternal covenant, the Father freely chose specific individuals out of the mass of sinful humanity and covenanted to give them to the Son in order to redeem them as His own children. The Son freely covenanted to purchase those elect individuals through His active and passive obedience. . . . The Holy Spirit covenanted to apply the redemption purchased by the Son to the elect, to gather them and refine them, and to preserve them until the consummation of the age" (78).

[26] Ibid., 285.

> as Jacob. Both faithful Samuel and rebellious Saul came under the auspices of the Mosaic administration of the covenant of grace. Both upright Josiah and wicked Manasseh were covered by the umbrella of the Davidic administration of the covenant of grace.[27]

This response, however, does not really resolve the difficulty. First, the word "affected" is vague. Does "affected" mean "members of" or something less? If the former, why is the membership of a covenant administration different from the membership of the covenant? This leads to a second concern: what is the exegetical basis for reading distinct biblical covenants as administrations of a covenant of grace? At this point the formulation seems to have outstripped the exegesis.

Myers surpassed other recent covenant theologians in seeking to ground the covenant of grace in theologically rich exegetical argumentation. Nonetheless, the preceding paragraphs have sought to demonstrate that the exegetical arguments for an overarching covenant of grace fall short. This lack of biblical warrant is the most significant reason for rejecting the covenant of grace construct.

The Abrahamic Covenant

The overarching covenant of grace construct also tends toward an overemphasis on continuity between the biblical covenants at the expense of their distinctiveness. Some covenant theologians recognize the exegetical difficulties present in this emphasis on continuity, and they distinguish between the Abrahamic and New Covenants and the Mosaic Covenant, with the former two being covenants of promise and the latter being a law covenant. Meredith Kline and Michael Horton are representative of this tradition.[28] Myers, however, objects: "Standing at the center of Kline's covenant theology, the distinction between law covenant and promise covenant is also the point at which Kline must be critiqued. Through his distinction, Kline obscures the unity of God's covenantal purposes."[29]

Myers, by contrast, argues, "In every divine covenant there is both law and promise,"[30] and he appeals to the Abrahamic Covenant as one in which the distinction between law and promise covenants will not hold:

> In this complex texture of the Abrahamic covenant, the supposed distinction between law covenants and promise covenants continues to break down. If a stark division has to be made between these two covenant types, and each historical covenant has to be placed in one of the two categories—either having practically nothing to do with command and obedience, or being based

[27] Myers, 285.

[28] Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 16–18; idem, *Kingdom Prologue,* 5; Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Salvation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 14–15, 17–18; idem, *Justification*, New Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 2:76.

[29] Myers, 47.

[30] Ibid.

> almost entirely on command and obedience—the Abrahamic covenant is left without any satisfactory category.[31]

Myers argues that the Abrahamic Covenant was instituted in Genesis 12 and then further elaborated in Genesis 15 and 17. On this reading, God began the Abrahamic Covenant by issuing commands to Abram while also graciously giving to him promises that he would certainly bring to pass.

First, the distinction between works/bilateral/conditional covenants and promise/unilateral/unconditional covenants needs to be clarified. Those who distinguish these two kinds of covenants do not claim that promise covenants have "practically nothing to do with command and obedience" but explicitly state the contrary. Jonathan Lunde, for example, maintains the distinction between "the 'royal grant' or 'unconditional' covenant" and "a 'conditional' or 'bilateral' covenant." But Lunde also says, "That is not to say that there are no demands placed on people in a grant covenant. Such are always present."[32] Nor does Lunde deny that God's choosing of the covenant partner is always unconditional: "[T]he covenants are always grounded and established in the context of God's *prior grace* toward the people entering the covenant, even in the case of the conditional variety."[33] The terms *conditional* and *unconditional* relate not to the selection of the covenant partner or to the presence of stipulations. Rather, *conditional* and *unconditional* identify whether the fulfillment of the covenant depends upon the promises of God alone or upon obedience to the covenant stipulations. The distinction between the two is whether the fulfillment of the covenant blessings hangs on the human partner's obedience to the covenant conditions (a law covenant) or whether the blessings are unilaterally guaranteed by God (a promise covenant).[34]

Second, God cut the covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15, not in Genesis 12. Genesis 15:18 indicates that YHWH cut the covenant with Abraham "on that day."[35] Jeremiah 34:18–20 explains that in cutting a covenant, an animal or animals is cut in two and the covenanted parties pass through the pieces to testify that YHWH can do to them what was done to the animals if they violate the covenant.[36] John Scott Redd observes, "It is evident that [YHWH alone passing through the cut animals] emphasizes the unconditionality of the covenant."[37] In fact, Myers himself observes, "God

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[31] Myers, 159.

[32] Jonathan Lunde, *Following Jesus, the Servant King: A Biblical Theology of Covenant Discipleship,* Biblical Theology for Life (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 39. See also Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993)*,* 132–34; Saucy, 41; Michael Horton, "Covenant Theology," in *Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies,* 44.

[33] Lunde, 40.

[34] "Again, we must be cautious to say that these two legal foundations, law and promise, do not exclude the presence of laws or promises in the one or the other in an absolute sense. Their mutual exclusivity has reference only to the basis for enjoyment of blessings. So, in a covenant of works, when obedience has been rendered, blessings promised are enjoyed. Conversely, in a covenant of grace, after promises have been received, laws are introduced. In the first case, the promise must be earned while in the second case the law delivered does not subvert the promise already given." Renihan, 48.

[35] Mathews, 2:176; Horton, *Covenant and Salvation*, 16; idem, *Justification*, 2:77; Belcher, 65.

[36] Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 80; Horton, *Covenant and Salvation*, 16; Belcher, 64; Myers, 175.

[37] John Scott Redd, "The Abrahamic Covenant," in *Covenant Theology,* 140.

Himself walks the aisle of self-malediction. In doing so, God declares that either He will keep His covenant promises or He Himself will die. The fulfillment of the covenant, then, rests entirely on God, and He guarantees that His promises will be fulfilled."[38] Myers's statement is a perfect description of an unconditional covenant.

The Mosaic Covenant

The Mosaic Covenant provides a significant challenge to the covenant-of-grace construct. This is evident in the numerous proposals from covenant theologians regarding how to relate the Mosaic Covenant to the covenant of grace. Some propose that the Mosaic Covenant is a mixed covenant (a covenant of both works and grace), others that it is a subservient covenant (a works covenant subservient to the covenant of grace), and still others argue that it is only an administration of the covenant of grace and in no ways a works covenant.[39] Some non-covenant theologians, especially Lutherans, hold that the Mosaic Covenant is a covenant of works that promised salvation upon obedience (which condition no human except Christ could fulfill).[40]

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[38] Myers, 176.

[39] Mark Jones, "The 'Old' Covenant," in *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates Within Seventeenth-Century British Puritanism,* ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Mark Jones (Oakville, CT: Vandenboeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 187–88, citing *Vindiciase legis*, 222, summarizing the taxonomy of Anthony Burgess. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church's "Report on the Committee to Study Republication" (2016) follows the same taxonomy, which they credit to John Ball, Anthony Burgess, Francis Roberts, and Francis Turretin. The proponents of the various views in brackets below were culled from the report.

"View 1: The Mosaic covenant is in substance a covenant of works, promising eternal life and/or salvation upon condition of perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience [held by Johann Gerhard (and other Lutherans), Amandus Polanus, John Preston].

"View 2: The Mosaic covenant is in substance a mixed covenant, containing elements of both a covenant of works and a covenant of grace [possibly held by George Walker, a member of the Westminster Assembly].

"View 3: The Mosaic covenant in substance is a subservient covenant, promising temporal life in Canaan upon condition of perfect obedience to the moral, ceremonial, and judicial laws [held by John Cameron, Moises Amyraut, Samuel Bolton, Thomas Goodwin].

"View 4: The Mosaic covenant is in substance a covenant of grace, although uniquely administered in a manner appropriate to the situation of God's people at that time [the majority of the Reformed; 'arguably affirmed in WCF']."

"Report of the Committee to Study Republication: Presented to the Eighty-third (2016) General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church"; accessed 7 March 2023, http://opc.org/GA/republication.html. The study committee wrongly placed John Owen under view 1 when he, in fact, belongs under view 3. See Samuel D. Renihan, *From Shadow to Substance: The Federal Theology of the English Particular Baptists (1642-1704)* (Oxford, UK: Regent's Park College, 2018), 204–7. The men who were elected to this committee are Messrs. Bryan D. Estelle, Benjamin W. Swinburnson (Secretary), Lane G. Tipton, A. Craig Troxel (Chairman), and Chad V. Van Dixhoorn.

[40] See view 1 in the previous note. Lutheran theologian Martin Chemnitz articulates this view: "Does the Law not have promises of eternal life? Christ certainly affirms that it does in Luke 10:28 and Matt. 19:17. Does God, then, deceive and mock men with the promises of the Law? Far be it from Him! For He is God, who cannot lie (Titus 1:2). And there remains what Paul says in Rom. 3:4: 'Let God be true though every man be false.' Why, then, is an unregenerate man not justified by the works of the Law? Paul answers: 'Because by the Law is the knowledge of sin,' that is, the Law causes it that by such obedience as the unregenerate can render through their natural powers it can by no means be satisfied, but such doers it accuses of sin before the judgment of God, because, even though they do certain works of the Law, yet they do them imperfectly and corruptly; and besides, they are in many and weighty matters transgressors of the Law.

"Nevertheless, the Law has, indeed, the promise of life, however, under the condition not of any and every kind of fulfillment but of a perfect and complete one, from the whole heart, the whole mind, so that the flesh in no way lusts

Myers denies that the Mosaic Covenant is in any way a covenant of works. First, Myers highlights elements of continuity between the Mosaic Covenant and other covenants: the Mosaic Covenant advanced the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant,[41] was graciously given to continue God's plan of redemption,[42] clarified commandments previously given,[43] advanced the seed, land, and universal blessing promises,[44] and, in the sacrificial system, taught the seriousness of sin and the need for atonement.[45] Those who deny the covenant of grace construct need not deny any of these points and could argue that none of them necessitates that the Mosaic Covenant be a part of an overarching covenant of grace.

Second, Myers deals with the NT's negative statements about the Mosaic Covenant. Myers argues that these arise not from any "defect" in the covenant but are responses to a "regression" back to the Mosaic Covenant after the progression forward to the New Covenant. He says that the same critique would have been made of someone under the Mosaic Covenant who insisted on adhering only to the Abrahamic Covenant.[46]

But the NT is not only concerned about covenant regression in its negative statements about the Mosaic Covenant: "For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second" (Heb 8:7). This is a statement that recognizes the need for a different kind of covenant. Paul in 2 Corinthians 3 also argues that a different kind of covenant needed to replace the Mosaic Covenant. Myers addresses this passage, noting "that distinction is not a distinction between the old covenant as monstrous and the new covenant as good. Rather, the distinction is between the old covenant as glorious and the new covenant as possessing a glory that splinters all bounds."[47] But Paul's argument turns on something different: he specifies that the old covenant was an external law that ministered death and condemnation. The New Covenant is more glorious because in the New Covenant the Spirit gives life and writes the law on the heart. In other words, the Mosaic Covenant required conformity to a law inscribed on stone, while the New Covenant provided the Spirit who transformed hearts of stone into obedient and tender hearts of flesh.[48]

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against it. Concerning doers like that Paul says in Rom. 2:13: 'Not the hearers but the doers of the Law will be justified before God'; again: 'he who does these things shall live by them.' Now when someone does certain works of the Law, no matter how he does them, but is in others a transgressor of the Law, the Law does not declare him righteous before God to life eternal but pronounces him guilty and cursed. Because 'he who does not continue in all the things which are written in the book of the Law shall be cursed.' And 'whoever keeps the whole Law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.'" *Examination of the Council of Trent*, trans. Fred Kramer (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1971), 8.1.3.2 (1:480–81).

[41] Myers, 186–87.

[42] Ibid., 187–89.

[43] Ibid., 189–91.

[44] Ibid., 191–93.

[45] Ibid., 199–200.

[46] Ibid., 209.

[47] Ibid., 210. Few of Myers's interlocutors would affirm that the Mosaic Covenant was "monstrous" even as they argue for a greater contrast between the glory of the Mosaic and the New Covenants.

[48] Garland argues that Paul "wants to contrast the giving of the law that was engraved on stones (Exod 24:12; 31:18; 32:15–16; 34:1; Deut 9:19) with the promise of the new covenant that will be inscribed on hearts" (Ezek 11:9; 36:26; Jer 31:33). David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians,* NAC (Nashville: B&H, 1999), 159–60. Charles Hodge says the letter kills because

Myers also deals with NT quotations of Leviticus 18:5, "You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the Lord." If this is a promise of eternal life on condition of obedience, then the Mosaic Covenant is a works covenant, and several NT texts seem to understand the verse in that way (Luke 10:28; Gal 3:12; Rom 10:5). Myers proposes a different understanding: the role of works in sanctification is not applicable to the economy of justification. Thus, there is a "righteousness that is of the law" (Rom 10:5) for the believer who is indwelt by the Spirit. According to Myers that is the righteousness of sanctification, not that of justification.[49]

This is a fascinating argument, but it is difficult to sustain when the text is examined in both its original and NT contexts. Leviticus 18:5 in its original context is a soteriological promise.[50] First, Israel was redeemed from Egypt typologically, but many Israelites were still in need of redemption unto

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of the following reasons. (1) "The law demands perfect obedience. . . . As no man renders this perfect obedience, the law condemns him." (2) "It produces the knowledge or consciousness of sin, and of course of guilt, that is of just exposure to the wrath of God." (3) "By presenting the perfect standard of duty, which cannot be seen without awakening the sense of obligation to be conformed to it, while it imparts no disposition or power to obey, it exasperates the soul and thus again it brings forth fruit unto death." By contrast, the Spirit gives life as follows. "1. By revealing a righteousness adequate to our justification, and thus delivering us from the sentence of death. 2. By producing the assurance of God's love and the hope of his glory in the place of a dread of wrath. 3. By becoming, though the agency of the Holy Spirit, an inward principle or power transforming us into the image of God; instead of a mere outward command." *A Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians* (1857, 1859; reprint, Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1974), 432, 434. Hodge recognizes that Paul is contrasting the Mosaic and the New Covenants, but he also wishes to maintain the covenant-of-grace construct (430). Nonetheless, Hodge recognizes "the fact that the apostle often speaks of the Mosaic law as a covenant of works; that is, presenting the promise of life on the condition of perfect obedience. He represents it as saying, Do this and live; as requiring works and not faith, as the condition of acceptance. Rom. 10, 5-10. Gal. 3, 10-12." To square this circle Hodge argues that "the Mosaic economy was designed to accomplish different objects, and is therefore presented in Scripture under different aspects. What, therefore, is true of it under one aspect, is not true under another." Thus Hodge concludes, "The law of Moses was, in the first place, a re-enactment of the covenant of works. . . . The covenant of works . . . is nothing more than the promise of life suspended upon the condition of perfect obedience." Hodge then quotes Luke 10:26–28 in which Jesus affirmed that the law promised eternal life to those who kept the law. In addition to being a covenant of works with regard to eternal life, Hodge notes, "The Mosaic economy was also a national covenant; that is, it presented national promises on the condition of national obedience." But, thirdly, Hodge argues there is another aspect to the Mosaic Covenant: "It presented in its priesthood and sacrifices, as types of the office and work of Christ, the gratuitous method of salvation through a Redeemer. This necessarily supposes that faith and not works was the condition of salvation." Hodge, 433–34. Several things are important to note here. (1) Interpreters must account for the law aspect of the Mosaic Covenant, thus distinguishing it in kind from some of the other covenants. (2) The law aspect of the Mosaic Covenant creates tensions for those who must fit it into an overarching covenant of grace. (3) Hodge's solution of considering the law under different aspects does a good job of reckoning with all of the data, but it does not answer the question of the nature of the Mosaic Covenant. Is it a covenant of works in which obedience to the law is the condition of eternal life? Hodge rightly answers in the affirmative to this question. Note, however, that when he highlights the gracious aspect of the Mosaic Covenant, he is highlighting types that point forward to the New Covenant. There are, to be sure, gracious elements to the Mosaic Covenant. It was gracious of God to reveal the gospel of the New Covenant in the OT types. It was gracious of God to reveal his holy law to Israel and to give the nation righteous laws to guide its conduct. But the Mosaic Covenant was not a covenant *of* grace because it promised eternal life on the condition of obedience to the law. The gospel it proclaimed rested on another, future covenant.

[49] Myers, 218–28.

[50] See especially Jason S. DeRouchie, "The Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12: A Redemptive-Historical Reassessment," *Themelios* 45, no. 2 (Aug 2020): 247–49; cf. Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, *Leviticus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007), 332. Myers acknowledges that Jewish interpreters understood the life in Leviticus 18:5 to be eternal life, but he dismisses this as a later development (221n39).

eternal life. Second, the Pentateuch both set out salvation by obedience to the law and told Israel that no one would actually be saved in this way (Deut 30). Jesus spoke in the same way in response to the lawyer's question about how to inherit eternal life, citing Leviticus 18:5 in Luke 10:28. Jesus' usage should be determinative. Third, Paul argues in Galatians and Romans that in the Torah God laid out two possible ways of attaining eternal life: either obey the Mosaic law entirely and perfectly or look forward to the New Covenant's gracious provision of salvation (see especially Gal 3:10–14). The Mosaic Covenant clearly stated that the first path would be impossible for sinners. Finally, Myers rightly recognizes that in the allegory of Galatians 4 Paul is contrasting a covenant of works with a covenant of grace. Note, however, that Paul identifies the covenant of works as "Mount Sinai," the Mosaic Covenant. It simply will not do to say, as Myers does, that "Mount Sinai" refers to "the legalistic abuse of God's law by the Jewish leaders of Paul's day."[51] The point of the allegory is to contrast two types of covenants.

In conclusion, the OT covenants differ in nature. Some are promise covenants, and the Mosaic Covenant was a works covenant. If the Mosaic Covenant was a works covenant, it could not be an administration of the covenant of grace.[52] In identifying the Mosaic Covenant as a works covenant, I do not deny but affirm that God graciously gave it to forward his plan of redemption. I further affirm that it pointed the way to salvation in Christ through the New Covenant. Nonetheless, as a works covenant, the Mosaic Covenant cannot be viewed as an administration of an overarching covenant of grace.

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[51] Myers, 224n49.

[52] I believe Myers would affirm this sentence, which is why I think he works hard to demonstrate that the Mosaic Covenant is in no way a works covenant. However, as acknowledged above, there are covenant theologians who do emphasize the works element of the Mosaic Covenant. Michael Horton is probably the most prominent contemporary representative of this approach. Horton agrees that the Mosaic Covenant is an administration of the covenant of grace. "Covenant Theology," 44. However, he also argues that there are "clear echoes of the original covenant [of works] in the Sinai covenant" (45). In particular he notes, "'Do this and you shall live' is the formula in both covenants" (45, citing Lev 18:5; Deut 4:1; 5:33; 6:24–25; 8:1; 30:15–18; Neh 9:29; Ezek 18:19; 20:11–21). Horton also observes, "The character of this covenant could not be more vividly portrayed: Israel had made the oath, and it was sealed by Moses' act of dashing the blood on the people, with the ominous warning that this act implied. *The Sinai covenant itself then, is a law-covenant.* The land is given to Israel, but for the purpose of fulfilling its covenantal vocation. Remaining in the land is therefore conditional on Israel's personal performance of the stipulations that the people swore at Sinai. This did not mean that individual Israelites themselves were defined in their relationship to God by law alone rather than by promise, but that the national covenant that Israel made with God was an oath made by the people as a nation, accepting responsibility for their side of the agreement. The conditional language is evident throughout the Torah: 'If you do this, you will live; if you fail to do this, you will die' (Lev. 18:5; Deut. 4:1; 5:33; 6:24–25; 8:1; 30:15–18; Neh. 9:29; Ezek. 18:19; 20:11–21; etc.)" (14–15; cf. idem, *Justification*, 2:68, 76. Horton finds NT support for seeing the Mosaic Covenant as a kind of covenant of works. Notably, throughout Galatians Paul contrasts the Mosaic Covenant, "with its ceremonial and civil legislation for life in Canaan," from the Abrahamic Covenant, "the covenant of promise." Idem, *Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 37–38. To be clear, Horton is not arguing that the Mosaic Covenant is simply a republication of the Adamic Covenant; he is not arguing that obedience to the Mosaic Covenant could bring eternal life (44). The Mosaic Covenant is a "*national* covenant" that requires "*relative* fidelity" so that the people may "*remain in the typological land*" (*Introducing Covenant Theology*, 38). In my view, Horton does a better job of accounting for the works elements of the Mosaic Covenant. However, in an attempt to keep the Mosaic Covenant an administration of the covenant of grace, he makes the works and the promises typological, and this is difficult to square with the NT of Leviticus 18:5.

The Davidic Covenant

With the Davidic Covenant, Myers once again seeks to demonstrate that the biblical covenants stand in continuity with one another as administrations of a unified covenant of grace. He notes several links between the Davidic and the Mosaic Covenants. First, though no Israelite kings had been anointed yet, Deuteronomy 17 laid down the law for Israel's kings. Second, the Davidic Covenant required faithfulness to the Mosaic law (1 Kgs 2:3–4).[53]

Myers claims that the Davidic and Mosaic Covenants are part of the same covenant. But, as established above, the Mosaic Covenant is a conditional covenant. The Davidic Covenant, by contrast, is unconditional. As Myers himself notes, though disobedience brings chastening for individual disobedient kings, the covenant blessings of the Davidic Covenant will infallibly be brought about.[54] This stands in contrast to the Mosaic Covenant. Israel came under the covenant curses of the Mosaic Covenant, and a New Covenant was the solution to this problem (Deut 30:6; Jer 31:31–34). The fact that the Mosaic Covenant governed the Davidic kings until the coming of Christ does not necessarily entail that the two are different administrations of the same covenant.

The New Covenant

Because Myers sees the Mosaic Covenant and the New Covenant as administrations of an overarching covenant of grace, he must maintain continuity between these covenants while also taking into account the biblical language that contrasts them. This is a tall order since, as Myers notes, "Initially Jeremiah's words can appear to place a very sharp division between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant."[55]

Continuity and Discontinuity

In comparing the Mosaic Covenant and the New Covenant, Myers identifies the following elements of continuity:

1. The New Covenant is made with "the house of Israel" and "the house of Judah," which are established by the Abrahamic Covenant and "given further shape" by the Mosaic and Davidic Covenants.[56]
2. In the New Covenant the law is written on the heart. Myers asserts, "Very clearly, here God is referring to the law given in the Mosaic covenant."[57]
3. The goal of the New Covenant is the same as the goal of the previous covenants: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer 31:33).[58]

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[53] Myers, 232–33.

[54] Ibid., 236; cf. Belcher, 102.

[55] Myers, 245.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid., 246.

4. The blessings of the New Covenant as described in Ezekiel 37:24–28 are the fulfillment of the promises of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants.[59]

Items 1, 3, and 4 could be affirmed even by those who do not affirm an overarching covenant of grace. Dispensationalists, for instance, would heartily approve the first point even as they deny an overarching covenant of grace.[60] Items 3 and 4 make the same point from different passages: the New Covenant fulfills the promises of previous covenants. This is affirmed by progressive covenantalists: "As one biblical covenant leads to the next, revealing who the triune, covenant God is and his plan for creation, ultimately all the covenants find their fulfilment, terminus and *telos* in the new covenant (see Jer. 31:29-34; cf. Luke 22:20; 2 Corinthians 3; Hebrews 9, 10)."[61] Progressive dispensationalists would also affirm this point: "The new covenant will be given precisely to bring the Abrahamic covenant to fulfillment," and "the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant will take place in a king who embodies the new covenant promise of a new heart and an immortal life."[62]

Item 2 seems to gloss over some potential discontinuity. The law written on the heart in the New Covenant does not include circumcision, dietary laws, the sacrificial system, or civil penalties for disobedience. Likely Myers was referring to what is often called the "moral law." The question remains: why are Christians under the moral aspects of the Mosaic Covenant and not under other laws of the Mosaic Covenant? The best answer is that Christians are not under the Mosaic Covenant but are instead under the New Covenant. The law written on the heart in the New Covenant is not the Mosaic law but rather the law that is universally true for all people in all times and places.[63]

Given his emphasis on continuity, Myers must also explain why the New Covenant is called "new," and he does this by first emphasizing continuity in the way the "new" language is interpreted. He argues that the Hebrew word translated "new" has "a wide range of meaning" and that "the new

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[59] Myers, 246–47.

[60] For instance, Carl Hoch highlights Ephesian 2:11–16's teaching that the Gentiles were alienated from the covenants (plural) of promise but that now, through Christ's cross work the covenant promises are now extended to Gentile believers who together with Jewish believers form one new man in Christ. Carl B. Hoch Jr., "The New Man of Ephesians 2," in *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 109, 113, 125.

[61] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant,* 644. Elsewhere Wellum clarifies, "progressive covenantalism does not deny the theological concept of 'the covenant of grace' if one merely means 'the one plan of God.' However, it contends that covenant theology too quickly subsumes the biblical *covenants* under the larger category of 'the covenant of grace,' which results in a failure to account for both the *continuity* of God's plan over time and significant covenantal *differences*, especially in the new covenant." "Progressive Covenantalism," 82.

[62] Blaising and Bock, 158, 170.

[63] It is not correct to read the categories of moral, ceremonial, and civil back into the biblical text as though they were categories held by the biblical authors. For instance, it would be wrong to say that Jesus was speaking specifically of the moral law (in distinction from the civil and ceremonial law) in Matthew 5:17. Likewise, it is incorrect to say that Christ fulfilled the ceremonial law, made the civil law obsolete by establishing a multinational church, and allowed the moral law of the Mosaic Covenant to remain in force. This approach misses the transition from the Mosaic to the New Covenant. The Mosaic Covenant as a whole was fulfilled such that Christians are not under the Mosaic law but are under the New Covenant. See D. A. Carson, "The Tripartite Division of the Law: A Review of Philip Ross, *The Finger of God*," in *From Creation to New Creation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013), 223–36. Nonetheless, there is a heuristic value in the traditional tripartite distinction as a way of indicating that certain laws in the Mosaic code are universal, that others are applications of the universal law to particular circumstances, and that others are ceremonies that point to Christ.

covenant is new in the sense that each wave of new fruit [that grows on a given tree] is new."[64] Myers further argues that the Greek word used to refer to the New Covenant in the NT is not the word for "brand new" but the word for "a new iteration of something previous."[65]

These points established, Myers describes what factors make the New Covenant new. (1) The law before the New Covenant was "something external, written on tablets of stone." In the New Covenant, the law will be written on the heart.[66] (2) The Holy Spirit will be poured out to enable obedience.[67] (3) The sacrificial system has been fulfilled by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.[68]

After establishing these three elements of "newness," Myers immediately qualifies them to further emphasize continuity between the Mosaic and New Covenants. First, Myers observes that there is an already/not yet aspect to the promise of the law written on the heart. Thus, the Christian life "is a life still marked by sin in many ways."[69] Second, the Spirit was active in the Old Testament as well as the New. Myers, at one point, seems to reduce the difference between the OT and the NT ministry of the Spirit to the claim that in the NT "the Spirit's work was more clearly understood (2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 3:16) and His power more clearly felt (Acts 5:1–11; Rev. 1:10) by God's people."[70] Finally, Myers observes that the OT saints were saved by the cross work of Christ.[71] Thus, even Myers's discussion of the newness of the New Covenant focuses on continuity.

Myers is correct that the New Covenant is new because it is internal rather than external, because the Spirit is poured out to enable obedience, and because it is founded on the sacrifice of Christ. None of these statements need to be relativized. The benefits of the New Covenant were not benefits offered by the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Heb 8:6–7). Individuals in the OT could, by faith, experience some of the benefits of the New Covenant proleptically (cf. Deut 30:11–14; Rom 10:6–9). In addition, while the Spirt was active in the OT, and while he played an essential role in regenerating OT saints, the Spirit did not indwell OT believers as he now indwells members of the New Covenant.[72] Thus, there are substantive differences in the benefits that Old and New Testament saints experience.

The substantive differences between the New Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant ("not like the covenant that I made with their fathers") call into question the claim that "new" in the label "new covenant" simply refers to "a new iteration of something previous." Contrary to Myers, the Hebrew word חָדָשׁ can refer to something that is "brand new,"[73] and the contrast ("not like the [Mosaic] covenant") points to something new in kind rather than a mere "new iteration of something previous."

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[64] Myers, 247–48.

[65] Ibid., 248.

[66] Ibid., 250.

[67] Ibid., 251.

[68] Ibid., 253.

[69] Ibid., 252.

[70] Ibid., 254.

[71] Ibid., 253.

[72] This is a substantial claim that is beyond the scope of this paper to defend. For exegetical support, see James M. Hamilton, *God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments* (Nashville, B&H, 2006).

[73] Deut 22:8; 32:17; Josh 9:13; Judg 15:13; 1 Sam 6:7.

Regarding καινός, the word used in the NT, BDAG lists New Covenant passages under the following sense: **"pert. to that which is recent in contrast to someth. old,** *new* . . . in the sense that what is old has become obsolete, and should be replaced by that which is new."[74] It is best to take seriously the Bible's contrast between the Mosaic and New Covenants and to see the New Covenant as a truly new covenant, rather than a renewal of a previous covenant.

The Problem of Exile

Myers sees the exile as a potential threat to his version of covenant theology: "To state the matter strongly, the exile can appear to be the strongest argument for rejecting the suggestion that there is one, eternal covenant of grace, for in that exile God seems to take away the embodiment of His promises only to begin afresh later with Jesus Christ."[75] Myers is concerned that the exile of Israel, especially as it is expounded in Hosea 1, could be read as an "annulment" of the Old Covenant, thus creating the need for an entirely new covenant.[76] Significantly, God declared Israel "not my people" in Hosea 1, which seems to be an "undoing" of the covenant with Israel. Myers asks, "Does the exile represent a revocation of, or alteration in, the covenant of grace, as Israel goes from being 'My people' to being 'not My people'?" He answers, "Quite simply, the answer to the last question is no."[77]

Myers reasons that since the exile was a reversal of the land promise, the Abrahamic Covenant (which promised the land) was the covenant Hosea had in view in 1:9. However, since the validity of the Abrahamic Covenant is immediately affirmed in Hosea 1:10, God could not be revoking his covenant.[78]

Myers further claims that in 1:9 God was declaring the Northern Kingdom as not his people, in distinction from Judah, which was his people (cf. 1:7). He qualifies this by noting that there were Israelites in the Northern Kingdom who were God's people and people in the Southern Kingdom who were not.[79] Thus, Myers refines the message of Hosea 1:9: "God is making clear that 'national Israel' is not shorthand for 'the people of God.' National Israel can be scattered to the winds and God's covenant with His people remain untouched."[80] In fact, rather than seeing the exile negatively, Myers argues that it was a step forward toward the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles.

There are cogent arguments against Myers's interpretation of Hosea 1. First, exile is one of the sanctions of the Mosaic Covenant (Lev 26:33–39; Deut 28:37, 64–65). Thus, the Mosaic Covenant, not the Abrahamic, is the covenant in view in Hosea 1:9.

Second, the name of Hosea's daughter, "No Mercy," alludes to Exodus 33:19 and 34:7, where God showed mercy toward Israel and established the Mosaic Covenant with them despite their

[74] BDAG, s.v., καινός, sense 3b.

[75] Myers, 237.

[76] Ibid., 255.

[77] Ibid., 256.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid., 256–58.

[80] Ibid., 258.

rebellion in the golden calf incident. The name of Hosea's second son, "Not My People," and his statement, "And I am not I AM to you,"[81] is also a reversal of the Mosaic Covenant's promises (Exod 6:7; Lev 26:12; Deut 27:9).

Third, in breaking the Mosaic Covenant, Israel made itself like the Gentiles: not God's people. However, Hosea 1:10 contrasts the broken Mosaic Covenant with the future hope that Israel (and the Gentiles) has via the Abrahamic Covenant (1:10 alludes to Genesis 22:17).

Fourth, while Myers is correct that in Hosea 1:7 the Lord distinguishes between Israel and Judah, in the end the judgment of exile will fall on both kingdoms, and both will be restored under the rule of the Messiah (1:11). The point in 1:7 is simply that God will have mercy on Judah for a while longer.

Read rightly, Hosea 1 presents the Mosaic Covenant as a bilateral covenant that Israel violated such that it came under the covenant curses. The Abrahamic Covenant, by contrast, is presented as a unilateral covenant which provides hope for restoration.

Hebrews 9 and the Unity of the Covenant of Grace

Myers argues that Hebrews 9 teaches the unity of the covenant of grace. He sees here an affirmation that the sacrifices of the OT were effective because the blood of Christ shed in the New Covenant was in "organic connection" to them. Indeed, he thinks that the covenant spoken of in 9:20 is the covenant of grace that encompasses all the other covenants.[82] However, the covenant mentioned in Hebrews 9:20 is clearly the Mosaic Covenant (Hebrews is here quoting Exodus 24:8). The whole passage draws comparisons and contrasts between two different covenants.

An Over-Realized New Covenant?

Baptists argue that the New Covenant teaches that all the members of that covenant will be regenerate. This presses certain Baptists, if they make use of covenant of grace terminology, to identify the New Covenant as the covenant of grace.[83] Those who adhere to the covenant theology of the Westminster standards, on the other hand, seek to qualify the promises of the New Covenant in the present era.

Myers is nuanced regarding membership in the covenant of grace. He states, "The covenant of grace includes only the specific number of the elect given to the Son in the counsel of peace, but in

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[81] For justification for this translation, see J. Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 99–100; Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah,* WBC (Nashville: Nelson, 1987), 33.

[82] Myers, 260–62.

[83] "The Baptists believed that before the arrival of the New Covenant, the Covenant of Grace was not formally given, but only announced and promised (revealed). This distinction is fundamental to the federalism of the 1689 [Confession] . . . . The Baptists believed that no covenant preceding the New Covenant was the Covenant of Grace. Before the arrival of the New Covenant, the Covenant of Grace was at the stage of promise. . . . This distinction (revealed/concluded) summarized the difference between the Covenant of Grace in the Old Testament and the Covenant of Grace in the New Testament. In the Old, it was revealed, in the New, it was concluded." Pascal Denault, *The Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology: A Comparison Between Seventeenth Century Particular Baptists and Paedobaptist Federalism* (Solid Ground Christian Books, 2013), 62–64.

its administration it affects far more men and women."[84] On the other hand, membership in the visible church "consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children" (WCF 25.2).[85] Thus the external administration of the covenant of grace in the visible church will have a membership that is broader than the internal reality of the covenant of grace. Myers finds justification for this understanding in the preceding covenants:

> The Noahic administration of the covenant of grace affected Ham as well as Shem. The Abrahamic administration of the covenant of grace affected Ishmael as well as Isaac, Esau as well as Jacob. Both faithful Samuel and rebellious Saul came under the auspices of the Mosaic administration of the covenant of grace. Both upright Josiah and wicked Manasseh were covered by the umbrella of the Davidic administration of the covenant of grace.[86]

This argument faces its own difficulties, however. Ham was truly a member of the Noahic Covenant. Samuel and Saul were both members of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. Josiah and Manasseh were both members of the Davidic Covenant. In other words, the New Covenant stands in distinction from these earlier covenants by its insistence on regenerate covenant membership.

Myers finds further exegetical support for the mixed nature of the external administration of the New Covenant by pointing to the inclusion of Judas at the Last Supper and to various NT passages that indicate the presence of false professors within the church (Acts 20:29; Col 2:1–10; 1 Tim 1:3–7; 2 Tim 4:10; Heb 6:4–6; 1 John 2:18–19; 2 John).[87] However, it does not follow that the presence of false professors in the church argues for intentionally permitting a mixed membership in the external administration of the New Covenant. When church members manifest that they are not regenerate, they are disciplined out of the church.

Myers acknowledges the importance of church discipline,[88] but he argues that several passages explicitly speak to the "intergenerational implications" of the New Covenant and the reality that the New Covenant "affected, at least in some way, not only believers, but also their children" (Isa 59:21; Jer 32:38–39; Ezek 37:25).[89] The context of these passages must be taken into account when evaluating Myers's claim. Jeremiah 32:39 is a millennial promise. The Israelites referred to in Jeremiah 32:39 are gathered back not simply from Babylon or Persia but from "all the countries," and they are made to "dwell in safety." Furthermore, they will be given "one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever." Thus, the children would be Israelite children born during the reign of Christ after his return, and this verse would refer to all Israel being saved. Likewise, Ezekiel 37:15–28 refers to a time when Israel and Judah are reunited in the land under the Davidic King. The children referred to are those who multiply in the land during this period. Once again, this is a reference to the future salvation of

[84] Myers, 285.

[85] Ibid., 288.

[86] Ibid., 285.

[87] Ibid., 286.

[88] Ibid., 287.

[89] Ibid., 299–300.

the nation Israel. Notably, Isaiah 59:20–21 is one of the passages Paul quotes in Romans 11 as support for the claim, "All Israel will be saved." In other words, these children are themselves all regenerate.

Significantly, the nature of the New Covenant itself lies at the foundation of the church discipline passages. The New Covenant is distinguished from the Mosaic Covenant in three relevant ways: God's law is written on the hearts of New Covenant members, all who are in the New Covenant know YHWH, and New Covenant members have their sins forgiven (Jer 31:31–34). Everyone in the New Covenant will have new hearts and will be indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Ezek 36:26–27). In other words, everyone in the New Covenant will be regenerated (cf. John 3:5). Thus, when someone professing to be part of the New Covenant community, the Church, gives evidence of being unregenerate, that person is removed from the New Covenant community.

Conclusion

The debate over the covenant of grace might seem pedantic,[90] but it does have real implications for church life. Myers's final chapter focuses on the practical entailments of his covenant theology, which includes a defense of paedobaptism and the inclusion of the children of believers within the New Covenant. Not all advocates of infant baptism hold to this version of covenant theology (Lutherans do not), and not all Baptists reject this version of covenant theology. Nonetheless, a covenant theology that emphasizes continuity between the biblical covenants is more likely to see baptism as the New Covenant equivalent of circumcision and thus have covenant children included in baptism.

Even apart from immediate applicatory relevance, there is also value in rightly understanding the major structures of God's plan of redemption and how they unfold. This paper has argued against an overarching covenant of grace of which the biblical covenants are administrations. It has argued that the phrase הֵקִים בְּרִית is not *always* used for establishing an *existing* covenant. Therefore, the use of this phrase in Genesis 6:18 cannot be used as evidence for a covenant of grace prior to the Noahic Covenant. The covenant-of-grace concept also leads covenant theologians to emphasize continuity between the covenants at the expense of the distinctiveness that the biblical texts give to them. Most notably, the covenant of grace undermines the distinction between the Noahic, Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants as the covenants of promise and the Mosaic Covenant (along with the Adamic) as a covenant of works. Likewise, it undermines the distinction between the Mosaic Covenant as a covenant including both the regenerate and unregenerate and the New Covenant as a covenant promising regeneration for all its members.

[90] One of the strengths of Myers's book is a consistent devotional emphasis throughout. Myers, far from being pedantic, is continually moving the reader from theology to worship.

George Whitefield and the Rise of American Evangelism

by Mark Sidwell[1]

Christians sometimes think of "worldview" in terms of how Christianity applies to cultural issues in such areas as economics or the fine arts. But a true biblical worldview must be centered on understanding what Scripture both teaches and emphasizes. For example, however one views the "cultural mandate" that many Christians espouse, it is more important for the believer to fulfil the "gospel mandate" stressed in the NT. Part of this gospel mandate is evangelism. In that regard, this article is the first in a series on noted evangelists in American history—their work, methodology, and philosophy—a series that is intended to deepen understanding of the successes and failures, strengths and weaknesses, of historic American evangelism.[2]

American evangelism originated in the British Isles. The first Protestant evangelization in North America was conducted by Puritans from England who attempted to spread the gospel among Indians in New England. Likewise, the pattern for American evangelism originated in Britain with the pioneer evangelist George Whitefield. This "Grand Itinerant" and "Great Awakener" not only preached up and down the eastern seaboard of the colonies with notable effect, but in doing so he also unwittingly set a precedent for other evangelists to follow. However they may have differed from Whitefield in methodology or theology, Charles Finney, D. L. Moody, Billy Sunday, Billy Graham, and other American evangelists owe a debt to this English preacher, their forerunner in evangelism.[3]

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[2] I would like to thank Kenneth Lawson and John Matzko for reading this article and providing helpful comments and suggestions.

[3] The starting point for studying George Whitefield is his own writings. Preeminent are his journals, the best edition of which is *George Whitefield's Journals* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1960). His letters, numerous shorter writings, and sermons are gathered in *The Works Of The Reverend George Whitefield,* ed. John Gillies (London: Printed for Edward and Charles Dilly and Messrs. Kincaid and Bell, at Edinburgh, 1771–72); volume 1 of the *Works* has been reprinted as *Letters of George Whitefield for the Period 1734–1742* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976), and this edition is particularly useful for the modern appendices (483–570) that provide annotations to the letters and the text of additional letters by Whitefield. Biographies of Whitefield divide into the devotional and the scholarly. The outstanding example of the first category is Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth-Century Revival* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1970, 1980); it is a model of what a dedicated author can accomplish in a devotional biography. Among the scholarly biographies, two useful if somewhat critical studies are Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), and Frank Lambert, *"Pedlar in Divinity": George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737–1770* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). However, uniting the qualities of the devotional and scholarly approaches is Thomas Kidd, *George Whitefield: America's Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), likely the best modern biography.

Early Years

Whitefield was born in Gloucester, England, on December 16, 1714. He liked to say he was born in an inn, a tavern called the "Bell Inn" that his family operated. His father died before he was two, and his mother's second marriage was unhappy, ending in divorce. Nevertheless, she nourished great hopes for George, sending him to school, when he was not forced by financial circumstances to work in the inn, "drawing wine for drunkards," as he put it.[4]

The main source for Whitefield's early years is an autobiographical account later published in his *Journals*. He recounted his days before conversion through his later understanding of human depravity, stressing the sinfulness or at least worthlessness of most of his pursuits. Whitefield loved acting and recitation and showed considerable skill at public speaking at school. Although he attended church and was even moved at times by passages of Scripture, he never developed sustained interest in spiritual matters. Still "I was always fond of being a clergyman," he wrote, and "used frequently to imitate the ministers reading prayers, etc. Part of the money I used to steal from my parent I gave to the poor."[5] His first real interest in religion began in 1730 when he received communion for the first time at age sixteen.

His circumstances changed dramatically when his mother discovered that her son might be able to attend Oxford University. Since he was of lower social class than most Oxford students and limited financially, Whitefield went to the university in 1732 as a servitor, one who paid his way by serving the whims of wealthier students. At the university Whitefield made life-changing acquaintances. He was invited to become part of the "Holy Club," an informal band of students led by John and Charles Wesley. Scoffers labelled them *Methodists* "because they lived by rule and method."[6] They were a serious and devout group who, at this point in their spiritual development, sought peace with God through rigorous self-discipline, regular periods of prayer and reading Scripture, and performing works of charity. Young Whitefield threw himself into these activities with as much zeal as any member of the Holy Club.

Whitefield practiced these "methods" so rigorously that both his schoolwork and his health suffered, but they did not bring the peace he sought. Relief finally came through a shattering crisis. After a seven-week period of conviction over his sin, Whitefield said he became unbearably thirsty and was reminded of Christ's words "I thirst" when His "sufferings were near an end." Whitefield wrote, "I cast myself down on the bed, crying out, 'I thirst! I thirst!' Soon after this, I found and felt in myself that I was delivered from the burden that had so heavily oppressed me. The spirit of mourning was taken from me, and I knew what it was truly to rejoice in God my Saviour."[7] George Whitefield had experienced the new birth, and it was to become his theme for the rest of his life.

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[4] *Journals,* 41.

[5] Ibid., 38.

[6] Ibid., 46 note.

[7] Ibid., 58.

Launching a Career

In 1736 Whitefield graduated from Oxford and was ordained a deacon in the Church of England, the entry level for clergy in the established church. By the time he graduated, John and Charles Wesley had gone to the colony of Georgia, where they hoped to minister to the settlers and become missionaries to the Indians. Whitefield also felt the attraction of Georgia and made plans to travel to the colony, although he encountered delays in sailing that stretched into several months.

Meanwhile, he began preaching in England with remarkable effect. As Whitefield put it, "I began to grow a little popular."[8] Preaching in his hometown of Gloucester and then mainly in London and Bristol, Whitefield soon saw huge crowds filling the churches in which he spoke. A major breakthrough in his ministry came in 1739, after his first visit to America. He met Howell Harris, a powerful preacher in Wales who had taken the controversial step of preaching outdoors. Harris's reasons were practical. Lacking ordination, he was denied access to the churches, and furthermore he found he could address crowds larger than most churches could hold if he spoke outdoors. Because Whitefield faced opposition from more conservative clergy, and also drew large crowds, Harris encouraged him to follow suit.

In eighteenth-century Britain, preaching outdoors was at best controversial and disreputable. A proper ministry belonged inside a church building. Furthermore, if one did not have permission from a local Anglican clergyman or bishop, preaching outdoors violated church order. Whitefield hesitated, then committed himself. On February 17, 1739, at Kingswood, near Bristol, he spoke outdoors to some 200 Welsh coal miners. "Blessed be God that I have now broken the ice!" he wrote in his journal. "I believe I was never more acceptable to my Master than when I was standing to teach those hearers in the open fields."[9] In a short while, outdoor preaching became a mark of Whitefield's ministry. Preaching near Bristol a little over a month later, Whitefield said, "I preached in the fields, which put me in mind of our Lord's saying, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in.'"[10] A week later he declared, "I always find I have most power when I speak in the open air."[11]

America and the Great Awakening

Whitefield finally sailed to America in the spring of 1738. He spent only four months in North America on this first visit, primarily in Georgia. "America is not so horrid a place as it is represented to be," Whitefield wrote to a friend.[12] His work in Georgia was basically that of a parish minister to the settlement in Savannah. "I visit from house to house, catechise, read prayers twice and expound the two second lessons every day; read to a houseful of people three times a week; expound the two lessons at five in the morning, read prayers and preach twice, and expound the catechism to servants,

[8] *Journals,* 81.

[9] Ibid., 216.

[10] Ibid., 240.

[11] Ibid., 245.

[12] George Whitefield to Mr. H., 10 June 1738, in *Works,* 1:44.

&c, at seven in the evening every Sunday."[13] He claimed to enjoy the challenge: "*America,* infant *Georgia,* is an excellent soil for christianity [*sic*]; you cannot live there without taking up a daily cross."[14]

The Great Tour

As a result of his work in Savannah, Whitefield was burdened by the needs of orphans whose parents had died while trying to settle the New World. Whitefield therefore led a successful effort to establish an orphanage in Georgia, which he then oversaw. A major goal of his preaching tours, both in America and Britain, was to solicit funds for this work. During his second visit to North America in 1740, he launched a tour of the colonies to speak on behalf of the orphanage. That effort blossomed in an unexpected manner. Whitefield's journey became known as "the Great Tour," an amazing trek through British North America in which he preached to impressive throngs.

Dallimore breaks this tour into three periods: a spring tour to Philadelphia and New York (April 2–June 5); a summer tour to Charleston (July 2–25); and a fall tour to New England, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston (August 18–December 14).[15] Toward the end of the first stage, Whitefield said that in thirty-three days he had "travelled some hundreds of miles, and preached fifty-eight times in the provinces of *New-Jersey, New-York,* and *Pensylvania* [*sic*]." Crowds swelled into the thousands. In Philadelphia the audience was estimated at 20,000.[16] In the last stage, over the course of seventy-five days, he preached 175 times (not including small informal meetings) and traveled over 800 miles.[17]

Both Whitefield and some of his hearers left dramatic descriptions of these meetings. In Nottingham, Delaware, Whitefield said that "thousands cried out, so that they almost drowned my voice. . . . Some fainted; and when they had got a little strength, they would hear and faint again."[18] In Newport, Rhode Island, Whitefield went to a private house, but when the people discovered he was there they crowded in and surrounded the outside. Whitefield stood on the threshold and preached on the text, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."[19] During a sermon at Basking Ridge in New Jersey, Whitefield reported, "A little boy, about eight years of age, wept as though his heart would break." Someone placed the boy in the wagon from which Whitefield was preaching, "which so affected me," he said, "that I broke from my discourse, and told the people that, since old professors were not concerned, God, out of an infant's mouth, was perfecting praise; and the little boy should preach to them." He said, "As I was going away, I asked the little boy what he cried for? He answered, his sins. I then asked what he wanted? He answered,

[13] George Whitefield to Mr. H., 10 June 1738, in *Works,* 1:44.

[14] George Whitefield to Mr. ——, 16 November 1738, in ibid., 1:45.

[15] Dallimore, 1:465.

[16] George Whitefield to Mr. G—— L——, 22 May 1740, in *Works,* 1:179.

[17] *Journals,* 499.

[18] Ibid., 425.

[19] Ibid., 455.

Christ."[20] It is little wonder that in the midst of these events, Whitefield wrote in a letter, "All things go on well in *America*—nay, better than I dare ask, or could think."[21]

Whitefield's preaching created a stir in America's largest cities. He observed that Boston, a major economic center and busy port of trade with a population of perhaps 17,000,[22] "has the form of religion kept up, but has lost much of its power." He allowed that Boston was "very remarkable for . . . the external observance of the Sabbath" but feared that many Bostonians rested in "a head-knowledge."[23] Nevertheless, Whitefield preached there with great effect. A firsthand observer reported, "Though he preached every day, the houses were exceedingly crowded; but when he preached in the Common, a vaster number attended: and almost every evening the house where he lodged was thronged to hear his prayers and counsels."[24]

The size of the crowds astonished colonials. At three meetings in the New York City area, Whitefield estimated the audiences at 5,000, 7,000, and 8,000—numbers which, even if exaggerated, represented an unheard-of size for almost any kind of gathering at that time.[25] There were dangers in such numbers. On September 22 a crowd awaiting Whitefield in Boston's New South Church panicked at the sound of a breaking board. People began pushing to get out for fear the overcrowded church was collapsing. Whitefield, who entered the meeting house during the panic, reported that "some threw themselves out of the windows, others threw themselves out of the gallery, and others trampled upon one another; so that five were actually killed, and others dangerously wounded." He led the crowd out of the building into the common where he preached in the rain.[26]

Whitefield's visit to Philadelphia was among his most notable. Here Whitefield attracted the notice of printer Benjamin Franklin. The Philadelphian called the crowds that heard Whitefield "enormous," and their response bemused Franklin by "how much they admir'd and respected him, notwithstanding his common Abuse of them, by assuring them they were naturally *half Beasts and half Devils."*[27] Franklin said that Whitefield transformed the city. "It was wonderful to see the Change soon made in the Manners of our Inhabitants; from being thoughtless or indifferent about Religion, it seem'd as if all the World were growing Religious; so that one could not walk thro' the Town in an Evening without Hearing Psalms sung in different Families of every Street."[28]

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[20] *Journals,* 487.

[21] George Whitefield to Madam C——, 27 April 1740, in *Works,* 1:166.

[22] Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 85.

[23] *Journals,* 473.

[24] Mr. Prince, "Accounts of the Revival of Religion in Boston," *Christian History,* 26 January 1745, 381.

[25] *Journals,* 415, 417. Dallimore, 1:295–96, discusses the estimates that Whitefield and his supporters gave of the number of his hearers and suggests that the estimates should probably be halved, which nonetheless makes for sizable crowds.

[26] *Journals,* 461. See also Dallimore 1:531.

[27] *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin,* ed. Leonard W. Labaree (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 175.

[28] Ibid., 175–76.

Friendship with Franklin

The English evangelist and the Philadelphia printer formed a remarkable friendship.[29] Franklin's initial relations were purely commercial: Whitefield's writings sold well, so Franklin printed them.[30] But Franklin grew to admire Whitefield, saying that he "never had the least Suspicion of his Integrity, but am to this day decidedly of Opinion that he was in all his Conduct, a perfectly *honest Man.* And methinks my Testimony in his Favour ought to have the more Weight, as we had no religious Connection. He us'd indeed sometimes to pray for my Conversion, but never had the Satisfaction of believing that his Prayers were heard."[31]

Franklin preserved several anecdotes about Whitefield's effectiveness. Franklin, for example, disagreed with the plan for Whitefield's orphanage, believing it wiser to bring the orphans to Philadelphia than to haul building materials to Georgia.[32] "I thereupon refus'd to contribute," he said. Shortly thereafter, he attended one of Whitefield's meetings, resolved not to give any money to the project. "I had in my Pocket a handful of Copper Money, three or four silver Dollars, and five Pistoles in Gold," Franklin recalled. "As he proceeded I began to soften, and concluded to give the Coppers. Another Stroke of his Oratory made me asham'd of that, and determin'd me to give the Silver; and he finish'd so admirably, that I empty'd my Pocket wholly into the Collector's Dish, Gold and all." An acquaintance of Franklin, Thomas Hopkinson, had come to the meeting likewise resolved to give nothing and had taken the precaution of bringing no money with him. The sermon so moved Hopkinson, however, that he tried to borrow money from a nearby Quaker friend who was, Franklin said, "perhaps the only Man in the Company" unaffected by Whitefield, and who said, *"At any other time, Friend Hopkinson, I would lend to thee freely; but not now; for thee seems to be out of thy right Senses."* [33]

Whitefield maintained ties to Franklin for the rest of his life, often urging conversion on him. After hearing of Franklin's experiments with electricity, Whitefield wrote to him, "As you have made a pretty considerable progress in the mysteries of electricity, I would now humbly recommend to your diligent unprejudiced pursuit and study the mystery of the new-birth. It is a most important, interesting study. . . . You will excuse this freedom. I must have *aliquid Christi* [something of Christ] in all my letters."[34]

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[29] David T. Morgan, "A Most Unlikely Friendship: Benjamin Franklin and George Whitefield," *Historian* 47 (1985): 208–18, provides a very good survey of the relationship of Whitefield and Franklin, reviewing all the correspondence and documents relating to the two men. For more detail, see Randy Petersen, *The Printer and the Preacher: Ben Franklin, George Whitefield, and the Surprising Friendship that Invented America* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015).

[30] The friendship that developed, however, did not keep Franklin from printing works hostile to Whitefield. See, e.g., George Gillespy, *Remarks Upon Mr. George Whitefield, Proving Him a Man Under Delusion* (Philadelphia: B. Franklin, 1744); Early American Imprints, First Series, microfiche #5405.

[31] *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin,* 178. Franklin once wrote to Whitefield, "Your frequently repeated Wishes and Prayers for my Eternal as well as temporal Happiness are very obliging." Benjamin Franklin to George Whitefield, 19 June 1764, *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin,* Leonard W. Labaree, et al., ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959-), 11:231.

[32] Dallimore, 1:453, gives reasons why Whitefield built the orphanage in Georgia despite the difficulties and the objections of supporters such as Franklin.

[33] *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin,* 177–78.

[34] George Whitefield to Benjamin Franklin, 17 August 1752, in *Works,* 2:440. Franklin's papers contain several other notable interchanges between the two men. Franklin once wrote to Whitefield during the French and Indian War

An Account from Connecticut

One of the most famous accounts of the Great Tour came from a Connecticut farmer, Nathan Cole. Having heard of Whitefield's progress through the Middle Colonies and New England, Cole eagerly received word that Whitefield was to preach in nearby Middletown. "I was in my field at work," he wrote. "I dropped my tool that I had in my hand and ran home to my wife, telling her to make ready quickly to go and hear Mr. Whitefield preach at Middletown, then ran to my pasture for my horse with all my might, fearing that I should be too late."

They dashed the twelve miles, riding double on horseback. When the horse became fatigued, Cole would get down to spell the horse and run until he was breathless, then remount. When they neared the road that went from Hartford to Middletown, Cole reported, "I saw before me a cloud of fog arising. I first thought it came from the great river, but as I came nearer the road I heard a noise of horses' feet coming down the road, and this cloud was a cloud of dust made by the horses' feet." A "steady stream of horses and their riders" jammed the road, the horses "all of a lather and foam with sweat, their breath rolling out of their nostrils every jump." The Coles edged into this stream of humanity and rushed along with it for three miles.

Cole said 3,000 to 4,000 people had assembled at the meeting house where Whitefield was to speak. As Cole and his wife arrived, he said, "I turned and looked towards the Great River and saw the ferry boats running swift backward and forward bringing over loads of people, and the oars rowed nimble and quick. Everything, men, horses, and boats seemed to be struggling for life. The land and banks over the river looked black with people and horses." When Whitefield stepped forward to speak, "he looked almost angelical; a young, slim, slender youth before some thousands of people with a bold undaunted countenance . . . as if he was clothed with authority from the Great God, and a sweet solemn solemnity sat upon his brow." After hearing the evangelist preach, Cole said, "By God's blessing, my old foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me."[35] After scenes such as these, it is little wonder that Whitefield wrote to the governor of Massachusetts later that year, "Surely our Lord intends to set *America* in a flame."[36]

Criticism

Whitefield's success created its own dangers. His popularity in America caused Whitefield to "think it would be best for me to withdraw. But then I consider, that He, who delivered *Daniel* out of

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speculating how they could found a colony on Ohio River that might "greatly facilitate the Introduction of pure Religion among the Heathen" by showing the Indians "a better Sample of Christians than they commonly see in our Indian traders." Benjamin Franklin to George Whitefield, 2 July 1756, *Papers of Benjamin Franklin,* 6:468–69. In what was apparently their last exchange of correspondence, Franklin speculated that perhaps "our particular little affairs" are beneath the notice of the God who administers the universe. "It is, however," Franklin wrote, "an uncomfortable thought, and I leave it." Whitefield scribbled on the letter, "*Uncomfortable* indeed! and, blessed be God, *unscriptural,* for we are fully assured that 'the Lord reigneth,' and we are directed to cast *all* our own care on him, because he careth for us." Benjamin Franklin to George Whitefield, [Before 2 September 1769], *Papers of Benjamin Franklin,* 16:192.

[35] This version of Cole's account is quoted from *Journals,* 561–62, which modernizes the spelling and punctuation.

[36] George Whitefield to Jonathan Belcher, 9 November 1740, in *Works,* 1:220.

the den of lions, and the three children out of the fiery furnace, is able and willing to deliver me also out of the fiery furnace of popularity and applause,"[37] a disclaimer that reveals the potentially intoxicating nature of his acclaim.

Yet the acclaim was far from universal. Some within the Church of England opposed Whitefield as a rabble-rouser. In Charleston, South Carolina, the Anglican commissary denied Whitefield permission to take the Lord's Supper at a Sunday service.[38] In Britain Whitefield was the target of physical violence. He recalled that at Exeter "a drunken man threw at me three great stones. One of them cut my head deeply, and was like to knock me off the table."[39] Likewise, while field preaching at Balton, "a woman attempted twice to stab the person that was putting up a stand for me to preach on."[40] Whitefield and his followers "were often pelted with eggs, dirt."[41] Although there were apparently few physical attacks on Whitefield in North America, he was attacked in a constant flow of critical pamphlets.[42] Some criticisms were petty. "We think that the Practice of *singing Hymns* in the *publick roads . . . a Piece of Weakness and enthusastical Ostentation,*" complained the authors of one pamphlet.[43] Anglican clergy challenged his "disorderly" habit of preaching on weekdays, not just Sundays.[44]

Other charges were more substantial. Opponents accused Whitefield of "enthusiasm," not eagerness or excitement, but in the older sense of that word, that is, claiming to receive impressions, leadings, and even revelations from God. One critic alleged that Whitefield claimed "Extraordinary Communications from God," special "assistances" of the Holy Spirit in preaching, and "Special Directions from God."[45] Others criticized him for playing on the emotions of his hearers.[46]

Still others attacked him for the violation of church order. They particularly criticized his practice of itinerancy, saying Whitefield's itinerant preaching transgressed church parish boundaries. Furthermore, they argued that Whitefield had no scriptural authority for such a ministry, that ministers

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[37] George Whitefield to "My dear Sister in Christ," 10 November 1739, in *Works,* 1:69.

[38] George Whitefield to John Rowland?, 11 July 1740, in ibid., 1:197. The commissary was the representative of the Bishop of London, who oversaw the Anglican church in the colonies.

[39] George Whitefield to Lady H——n, 4 September 1749, in ibid., 2:278.

[40] George Whitefield to Lady H——n, 16 June 1750, in ibid., 2:357.

[41] George Whitefield to Mr. L——, 15 May 1742, in ibid., 1:388.

[42] One widely distributed polemic was *The Querists, Or, An Extract Of Sundry Passages Taken Out Of Mr. Whitefield's Printed Sermons,* (Boston: Thomas Fleet, 1740); Early American Imprints, First Series, microfiche #4587.

[43] The Sentiments and Resolution of an Association of Ministers . . . Concerning the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield (Boston: T. Fleet, 1745), 8; Early American Imprints, First Series, microfiche #5668.

[44] *Journals,* 452.

[45] "Observations Upon The Conduct and Behaviour of a Certain Sect, Usually Distinguished by the Name of Methodists," in George Whitefield, *An Answer To The First And Second Part Of An Anonymous Pamphlet* (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1744), 13–16; Early American Imprints, First Series, microfiche #5515.

[46] One defender answered the charges of both enthusiasm and emotionalism: "In Opposition to *Enthusiasm,* he preaches a close Adherence to the Scriptures, the Necessity of trying all Impressions by them, and of rejecting whatever is not agreeable to them, as Delusions." As for manipulating emotions, he said Whitefield "*first* applies himself to the *Understandings* of his *Hearers,* & then to the *Affections.*" Untitled Notice in *Christian History,* 15 December 1744, 336.

were to settle with and attend to a single congregation.[47] Critics likewise disparaged Whitefield's attacks on ministers who questioned the revival, often to the point of implying they were unconverted. They regretted how Whitefield's ministry and the Great Awakening in general had introduced divisions and "separations" among the churches between pro- and anti-revival forces. Furthermore, because Whitefield constantly collected funds for his orphanage in Georgia, cynics questioned whether he was not simply lining his own pockets.

Some charges were mere innuendo, but others had some basis. Even a group of supporters who wanted Whitefield to return to Connecticut to preach expressed the hope to Whitefield that he would "not be free in personal Reflections to wound the Characters of others who have been generally well accepted among Christians for Piety" and that he would not take up offerings for the orphanage lest hearers think "you were pursuing a private, worldly Interest of your own."[48] Whitefield usually defended himself against charges of greed and gain. At other times he appeared to excuse some problems as in the mere nature of things: "But you know, in this mixed state of things, wild-fire will necessarily blend itself with the pure fire that comes from God's altar."[49]

At other times Whitefield admitted he was wrong. When he spoke with four Boston ministers who feared more of the "separations" that resulted from his previous ministry there, Whitefield told them, "I was sorry if anything I wrote had been a means of promoting separations for I was of no separating principles, but came to New England to preach the Gospel of peace to all that were willing to hear . . . and promote charity and love among all."[50] Sometimes Whitefield blamed youthful inexperience. "Some unguarded expressions, in the heat of less experienced youth, I certainly did drop. I was much too precipitate in hearkening to, and publishing private informations, and thereby *Peter*-like cut too many ears off."[51] On other occasions he admitted being "too rash and hasty in giving characters, both of places and persons. Being fond of scripture language, I have often used a style too apostolical, and at the same time I have been too bitter in my zeal." He recognized why some could have detected "enthusiasm" in his ministry in that he "frequently wrote and spoke in my own spirit, when I thought I was writing and speaking by the assistance of the spirit of God. I have likewise too much made inward impressions my rule of acting." The evangelist admitted ruefully, "By these things I have given some wrong touches to God's ark, and hurt the blessed cause I would defend, and also stirred up needless opposition."[52]

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[47] Opponents of Whitefield's itinerancy rejected his appeal to parallels with Paul and charged instead that his methods promoted discord and division. Nathaniel Stone, et al., *The Declaration of Ministers in Barnstable County, Relating to the Late Practice of Itinerant Preaching* (Boston: Rogers and Rowle, 1745); Early American Imprints, First Series, microfiche #5534.

[48] Invitations to the Reverend Mr. Whitefield, from the Eastern Conscociation of the County of Fairfield (Boston: Kneeland and Green, 1745), 5; Early American Imprints, First Series, microfiche #5591.

[49] George Whitefield to Mr. ——, 18 January 1745, in *Works,* 2:73.

[50] *Journals,* 529.

[51] George Whitefield to Mrs. ——, 19 February 1745, in *Works,* 2:76.

[52] George Whitefield to the Rev. Mr. S——, 24 June 1748, in ibid., 2:144.

A Dramatic Career

Whitefield's spectacular tour of the American colonies in 1740 may have been a highlight of his career, but it was only one milestone in a remarkable life. In 1741, closely following the triumph of the Great Tour, Whitefield entered a serious controversy with his friend John Wesley. They had shared much spiritually since their Oxford days, and Whitefield had helped introduce Wesley to the idea of outdoor preaching. Both men had seen tremendous results from their work. Wesley, however, was Arminian in theology, and Whitefield was strongly Calvinistic.[53] In 1739 Wesley preached the sermon "Free Grace" attacking the doctrine of predestination, publishing it shortly after Whitefield left for North America.[54] The following year Whitefield replied with an open letter from Georgia.[55] Although the conflict did not completely sever relations between them, the two men grew more distant, and their respective followers widened the division farther.

While in America, Whitefield had preached in the church of Jonathan Edwards at Northampton, Massachusetts, and had stayed in Edwards' home. The warm home life of Edwards' family impressed Whitefield and "caused me to renew those prayers, which, for some months, I have put up to God, that He would be pleased to send me a daughter of Abraham to be my wife."[56] Back in England, he married Elizabeth James, a widow from Abergavenny, South Wales, on November 14, 1741. Unfortunately, this marriage did not become the haven of spiritual warmth and fellowship he had observed in the Edwards' home. His constant absences created tension, and his wife could not keep up with her energetic, active husband. The Whitefields had one child, who died in infancy. His wife remained mostly in the shadows until her death in 1768.

Meanwhile, Whitefield's ministry continued to expand. He preached across England, made a total of fourteen trips to Scotland, where he saw marked revivals, and crossed the ocean to America five more times between 1744 and 1770. He also found a patron in Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, an evangelical noblewoman who committed her fortune to further gospel work. She appointed Whitefield and other evangelical preachers as her personal chaplains, which was her privilege as a member of the nobility, and thereby underwrote their evangelistic work. This system eventually led to the formation of the Huntingdon Connexion of Calvinistic Methodists as a Dissenting (non-Anglican) body.

Even success had its challenges. Whitefield once described a typical experience at Moorfields, a site in London for a kind of carnival of music, puppet shows, wild animals, and other entertainment. Arriving at six o'clock in the morning, he estimated that there were 10,000 people there, later swelling to perhaps 20,000 or 30,000. "Not for me," he said, "but for satan's instruments to amuse them." Whitefield began preaching on the text, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so shall the

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[53] Iain Murray traces the division in part to the theological background of the two men. Wesley came from a tradition of high Anglicanism, in which Arminianism was strong. Whitefield, on the other hand, was a reader of Puritan theologians. See Murray's "Prefatory Note" in *Journals,* 564–65. See also Kenneth Lawson, "Who Founded Methodism? Wesley's Dependence on Whitefield," *Reformation & Revival Journal* 4, no. 3 (1995): 39–57.

[54] "Free Grace," in *The Works of John Wesley,* vol. 3, *Sermons III, 71-114,* ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon, 1986), 542–63.

[55] For the full text of the letter, see *Journals,* 569–88.

[56] Ibid., 476–77.

son of man be lifted up." As crowds began to drift to him from the attractions, he switched texts to "Great is *Diana of the Ephesians,*" anticipating that the entertainers would try to break up his meeting. "I was honoured with having a few stones, dirt, rotten eggs, and pieces of dead cats thrown at me," but the crowd reacted so well on the whole that he announced he would come back at six o'clock that evening. After his return his opponents made as much noise as they could to drown him out. They brought in "a recruiting sergeant" with a drum, for whom Whitefield simply told the crowd to make way, then began to speak again once the sergeant had passed through. One man unsuccessfully tried several times to strike Whitefield with a whip. "I think I continued in praying preaching and singing, (for the noise was too great at times to preach) about three hours," he reported.[57]

Although none of Whitefield's later trips to North America matched the impact of the Great Tour of 1740, he still preached effectively in his last five excursions into the colonies. He viewed North America as a land of evangelistic opportunity. He referred to "hunting after poor lost sinners" in North Carolina, which he called "these ungospelized wilds."[58] He reported that there were "thousands and thousands in *America* who as to spiritual things know not their right hand from their left; and who are ready to hear the gospel from my mouth."[59]

As he had in Britain, Whitefield continued to minister among the lower—even outcast—classes. In the British Isles, revivalists had preached to groups such as coal miners, who were scorned by the respectable. In America Whitefield and others continued this pattern, notably by preaching to slaves and free blacks.[60] From the beginning of his work in America, Whitefield was, as he put it, "touched with a Fellow-feeling of the Miseries of the poor Negroes." He charged slave owners with treating their dogs better than their slaves and of keeping the slaves "ignorant of Christianity."[61] He asked if slave owners thought their children "are any way better by nature than the poor Negroes."[62] The Great Awakening sparked the first real surge in conversions among African Americans and helped give the black church in America a strong evangelical and revivalistic character. Phillis Wheatley, a former slave and America's first notable African-American poet, memorialized Whitefield after his death, portraying the evangelist as saying,

"Take him, ye *Africans,* he longs for you,
Impartial Savior is his title due:

[57] George Whitefield to Mr. L——, 11 May 1742, in *Works,* 1:384-86. Eventually, Moorfields became a site of regular ministry as his supporters later built "Whitefield's Tabernacle" there, one of several structures named after him, in which he preached regularly. The area was also a center of John Wesley's ministry, being the site of the Foundry, Wesley's original London chapel. After Whitefield's death Wesley built what became known as Wesley's Chapel, near the site of the Foundry about a block from the Whitefield Tabernacle.

[58] George Whitefield to the Reverend Mr. L——, 11 October 1747, in ibid., 2:136.

[59] George Whitefield to Mr. H—— H——, 30 May 1747, in ibid., 2:103.

[60] Dallimore, 1:495–509, gives a good overview of Whitefield's work among African Americans.

[61] George Whitefield, "Letter III: To the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South-Carolina," in *Three Letters from the Reverend Mr. G. Whitefield* (Philadelphia: B. Franklin, 1740), 13; Early American Imprints, First Series, microfiche #4651.

[62] Ibid., 15. Likewise, he said elsewhere "that negro children, if early brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, would make as great proficiency as any white people's children." *Journals,* 379.

Wash'd in the fountain of redeeming blood,
You shall be sons, and kings, and priests to God."[63]

Yet Whitefield did not condemn slavery itself. In fact, because Georgia originally prohibited slavery, Whitefield actually supported efforts to introduce it in order to make the colony financially profitable. In a letter to a friend and supporter who opposed slavery, Whitefield defended his position by citing the OT examples of Abraham's slaves and of the Gibeonites who fell under Israel's yoke. Christians should seize the opportunity of slavery, he said, and "diligently improve the present opportunity for [the slaves'] instruction."[64] Some of his supporters disagreed and continued to agitate against slavery.[65]

John Marrant, a free black of Charleston, attended a Whitefield meeting with plans to interrupt it by blowing a horn. As he put the horn to his lips, however, Marrant said that Whitefield "looking round, as I thought, directly upon me, and pointing with his finger, he uttered these words, 'Prepare to meet thy God O Israel.'" Marrant said he was "struck to the ground, and lay both speechless and senseless near half an hour." When he awoke, he could still hear Whitefield speaking, "every word . . . like a parcel of swords thrust in to me." After the service Whitefield came to him and said, "Jesus Christ has got thee at last." Marrant was converted a few days later. After his conversion he preached among the Cherokee and became a pastor and church planter in Nova Scotia and Boston.[66]

Whitefield also preached to the upper classes, including the students at Harvard and Yale Colleges. After preaching to them messages critical in tone, Whitefield heard of a spiritual moving among them. He wrote to them, "What great things may we not now expect to see in *New England,* since it has pleased God to work so remarkably among the sons of the prophets?" Nonetheless, he warned them, "Learning without piety, will only make you more capable of promoting the kingdom of satan." He hoped that they studied "not to get a parish, nor to be polite preachers, but to be great saints."[67]

Whitefield once exclaimed, "May I die preaching!"[68] Although he did not die in the pulpit, he did preach to the end of his life. In September 1770 Whitefield was in New England, during his seventh tour of North America. On September 29 he preached in Exeter, New Hampshire, at noon to a large crowd, then made his way to the home of the Presbyterian minister in Newburyport, Massachusetts. He planned to go to bed after supper and rest, but a large crowd gathered outside the house asking to

[63] Phillis Wheatley, "On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield," in *Complete Writings,* ed. Vincent Carretta (New York: Penguin), 16.

[64] George Whitefield to Mr. B——, 22 March 1751, in *Works,* 2:404–5.

[65] A good example of the anti-slavery position among Whitefield's supporters was the Bryan family, to whom Whitefield addressed this letter. They vainly sought the elimination or at least amelioration of slavery in Georgia. For a discussion of their struggles, see Alan Gallay, "Planters and Slaves in the Great Awakening," in *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord,* ed. John B. Boles (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 19–36.

[66] John Marrant, "A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant," in *Black Atlantic Writers of the Eighteenth Century,* ed. Adam Potkay and Sandra Burr (New York: St. Martin's, 1995), 78–79. See also Sidwell, *Free Indeed,* 15–23.

[67] George Whitefield to "the Students, &c. under convictions at the colleges of Cambridge and New-haven,—in New England and Connecticut," n.d. (c. 1741), in *Works,* 1:296.

[68] George Whitefield to Dr. S——, 9 June 1752, in ibid., 2:432.

hear him. Whitefield therefore stood on the landing and preached to them until his candle burned down. That night he suffered a severe asthma attack and died on September 30. Only fifty-six years old, he was buried beneath the pulpit of the Presbyterian church in Newburyport.

Theology

George Whitefield preached doctrine but did so with such fervor and drama that his listeners, whatever else they may have said about him, never called his sermons dry. One may characterize Whitefield's theology as evangelical Calvinism. He combined the tradition of the Reformed branch of the Reformation typified by John Calvin with an emphasis on the new birth. In fact, he preached across denominational lines because he saw all the different denominations as representing the doctrines of the Protestant Reformation, at least as he understood them. His focus on evangelical conversion deeply shaped his theology, including his beliefs about evangelism, experimental religion, the office of an evangelist, and the importance of interdenominational cooperation in spreading the gospel.

Calvinism and "Methodism"

Whitefield's staunch Calvinism led to conflict with the Arminian John Wesley. Whitefield claimed never to have read Calvin and that his doctrine came "from Christ and his apostles; I was taught them of God."[69] Whitefield did, however, acknowledge his debt to "the *good old Puritans,*" especially New England Puritans.[70] He considered Calvinistic teaching simply "the doctrines of the Reformation." Other systems of theology "leave freewill in man, and make him, in part at least, a Saviour to himself."[71]

For some, Whitefield's embrace of both Calvinism and evangelism made no sense. Wesley made the common charge against Whitefield's position that the doctrine of election cut the nerve of evangelism. The elect would be saved no matter what happened, and the reprobate would likewise be lost. Whitefield retorted, "O dear Sir, what kind of reasoning, or rather sophistry is this! Hath not God, who hath appointed salvation for a certain number, appointed also the preaching of the word, as a means to bring them to it? . . . And if so, how is preaching needless to them that are elected; when the gospel is designed by God himself, to be the power of God unto their eternal salvation? And since we know not who are elect, and who reprobate, we are to preach promiscuously to all."[72] He told Wesley "*Honoured Sir,* let us offer salvation freely to all by the blood of Jesus; and whatever light God has communicated to us, let us freely communicate to others."[73]

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[69] George Whitefield to John Wesley, 25 August 1740, in *Works,* 1:205.

[70] George Whitefield to William Cooper, 26 February 1741, in ibid., 1:255.

[71] George Whitefield to Rev. Mr. P——, 10 November 1739, in ibid., 1:89.

[72] *Journals,* 575. He also wrote, "I believe Christ's redemption will be applied to all that shall believe. Who these are, we know not, and therefore we are to give a general offer and invitation; convinced of this, that every man's damnation is of himself, and every man's salvation all of God." George Whitefield to Mr. B——, 29 June 1750, in ibid., 2:363.

[73] George Whitefield to John Wesley, 26 March 1740, in ibid., 1:156.

In his commitment to Calvinism, Whitefield tried to maintain charity, although at times his moderation sounded a bit condescending: "Though I am a strenuous defender of the righteousness of Christ, and utterly detest *Arminian* principles, yet I know that God gave me the Holy Ghost, before I was clear in either as to head-knowledge: and therefore . . . I am the more moderate to people who are not clear, supposing I see the divine image stamped upon their hearts."[74] To a fellow Calvinist, he said, "The doctrines of election, and of final perseverance, I hold as well as you.—But then, they are not to be contended for with heat and passion. Such a proceeding will only prejudice the cause you would defend."[75] He reminded Wesley of the heated clash between Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli during the Reformation, especially Luther's antipathy towards Zwingli despite the fact that Zwingli "in all probability equally loved the Lord Jesus." He cautioned, "Let this, dear Sir, be a caution to us, I hope it will to me."[76]

Despite the conflict between Whitefield and Wesley, both men were called "Methodists," even if Whitefield and the Huntingdon Connexion were called "*Calvinistic* Methodists." Both Whitefield and Wesley shared a "Methodistic" form of piety, a similar view of how the Christian life should be lived.[77] They agreed on the experience of a vital relationship with Christ, beginning with the new birth, as the central Christian experience, and in this they contrasted with the predominant view in the Church of England, where receiving the sacraments and learning the catechism were central. For Whitefield and Wesley, baptism, communion, and catechism were important but were subordinate to—and ultimately worthless without—the new birth. Methodists of all stripes also emphasized Spirit-anointed worship and preaching. One could not simply assume the Holy Spirit's work whenever the Word was preached and the sacraments celebrated, but one must actively seek the Spirit's special blessing on every activity through prayer.[78] Methodistic piety stressed the centrality of experienced conversion and rejected the assumption that those who had been baptized and brought up in the church were converted. Furthermore, Whitefield and Wesley also viewed holy living as a necessary result of conversion. Whitefield thus spoke of the need "to direct a careless unthinking world into a *holy Method* of dying unto themselves, and living unto God! This is the only Methodism I desire to know."[79]

Experimental Religion

As this Methodistic brand of piety indicates, Whitefield emphasized "experimental" (i.e., experienced) religion. When Whitefield read an epitaph the printer Benjamin Franklin had composed

[74] George Whitefield to John Willison, 7 July 1742, in *Works,* 1:406.

[75] George Whitefield to J—— L——, 26 August 1740, in ibid., 1:206.

[76] George Whitefield to John Wesley, 26 March 1740, in ibid., 1:156.

[77] For a discussion of these two strands from the Calvinistic perspective, see Michael A. Milton, "Why I Am a Calvinistic Methodist (and Why I Am Still a Presbyterian)," *Christian Observer,* August 1999, 22–24.

[78] It is interesting to note that after eating with some Quakers in 1739, a group known for their stress on leading of the "Inner Light," Whitefield said he disagreed with their rejection of the sacraments and tithes, "But I think their notions about walking and being led by the Spirit are right and good." *Journals,* 237.

[79] Ibid., 32. He also wrote, "Formerly, if a person was serious, or preached Christ, he was termed a *Puritan,* now he is a Methodist." George Whitefield to Mr. —— H——, 18 December 1748, in *Works,* 2:213.

for himself in which Franklin expressed the hope that his body would someday "Appear once More In a New and More Elegant Edition Revised and Corrected By the Author," he wrote to Franklin, "Believe on Jesus, and get a *feeling possession of God in your heart,* and you cannot possibly be disappointed of your expected second edition."[80] So strong was this emphasis on feeling and experience that Whitefield sometimes had to clarify what he meant. He wrote to the Bishop of Gloucester over his alleged use of the phrase "*sensible* operations of the Holy Ghost." "I know not that we use the word *sensible*." Whitefield explained, "but, if we do, we do not mean that God's Spirit manifests itself to our *senses,* but that it may be perceived by the soul, as really as any sensible impression made upon the body."[81]

At the heart of this experience—the very commencement, in fact—was the doctrine of the new birth. In an often-repeated story (probably apocryphal), someone asked Whitefield why he preached so often on the text "Ye must be born again" (John 3:3). "Because," Whitefield replied, "ye must be born again." True or not, the incident accurately illustrates the burden of Whitefield's message.[82] One of his earliest published works was a sermon *On the Nature and Necessity of Our Regeneration or New Birth in Jesus Christ.* Whitefield saw this doctrine as a key truth that united all Christians. He mentioned, for example, meeting "an Anabaptist teacher" and concluded after speaking with him, "By what I could find out he was a spiritual man. . . . we both agreed in this, that unless a man be born again, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."[83]

Office of an Evangelist

In words echoing those of John Wesley, Whitefield once wrote, "The whole world is now my parish. Wheresoever my master calls me, I am ready to go and preach his everlasting gospel."[84] This vision of the world as his "parish," his assigned field of duty, led Whitefield to preach outdoors and to travel extensively. During his second trip to America, he resigned from his parish position in Savannah. "A parish and the Orphan House together are too much for me; besides, God seems to shew me it is my duty to evangelise, and not to fix in any particular place."[85] The following year he wrote, "My business seems to be, to evangelize, to be a Presbyter at large."[86]

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[80] George Whitefield to Benjamin Franklin, 17 January 1755, *Papers of Benjamin Franklin,* 5:475–76 (emphasis added).

[81] George Whitefield to the Bishop of Gloucester, 9 July 1739, in *Letters of George Whitefield for the Period 1734–1742,* 500.

[82] The story is repeated without documentation, e.g., in F. W. Boreham, *A Casket of Cameos* (London: Epworth, 1924), 57. However, the same story is related of John Wesley, also without documentation, in Edward S. Ninde, *George Whitefield: Prophet and Preacher* (New York: Abingdon, 1924), 94.

[83] *Journals,* 115.

[84] George Whitefield to Risdan Darracott, 10 November 1739, in *Works,* 1:105. The Banner of Truth annotations to *Letters of George Whitefield for the Period 1734–1742,* 527–28, discuss the use of the "world is parish" phrase by Wesley and Whitefield. The earliest documented use of the phrase is by Wesley, who included it in a letter he incorporated into a journal entry for June 11, 1739: "I look upon *all the world as my parish.*" *The Works of John Wesley,* vol. 19, *Journals and Diaries II (1738-43),* ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Hertzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 67.

[85] *Journals,* 488. The entry is dated November 6, 1740.

[86] George Whitefield to Ebenezer Erskine, 16 May 1741, in *Works,* 1:262.

Easily uttered, these words were nonetheless controversial. Sometimes Whitefield seemed to think the justification for his ministry self-evident. When one minister asked him by what authority he preached, charging that Whitefield's meetings were not properly authorized, the evangelist said he "afterwards went and shewed him my authority, by preaching on these words: 'Go ye to all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.'"[87] At other times, he could not shrug off the challenge so easily. His work for the Savannah orphans' home gave him some license for itinerancy, as well as least tacit approval from officials such as the Bishop of London.[88] Moreover, he developed a biblical rationale. When the faculty of Harvard challenged him about the legitimacy of itinerant preaching, Whitefield replied in a pamphlet. Using the words of their complaint, he wrote, "Indeed, *Gentlemen,* I do [admit being an evangelist] if by an Evangelist you mean what the Scripture I presume, means, *viz.* one who hath no particular Charge of his own, but goes about from Country to Country, or from Town to Town, in any Country, and stands ready to preach to any Congregation that shall call him to it."[89]

Interdenominationalism

For Whitefield, the gospel transcended all churchly and denominational labels. Generally, he tried to be open to everyone who would work with him. Indeed, Whitefield said that he told Ralph Erskine "that if the Pope himself would lend me his pulpit, I would gladly proclaim the righteousness of Jesus Christ therein."[90]

Nevertheless, Whitefield had been ordained a clergyman in the Church of England, with which he maintained an awkward relationship. He wrote in his journal, "I am, and profess myself, a member of the Church of England. I have received no prohibition from any of the Bishops; and having had no fault found by them with my life or doctrine."[91] In fact, he saw himself as more loyal to the Church of England than the ministers who opposed him. "I keep close to her Articles and Homilies, which, if my opposers did, we should not have so many dissenters from her."[92] He expressed concern over the departure of a fellow Anglican minister from the church, calling it "a needless separation." "For

[87] George Whitefield to Mr. S——, 6 November 1743, in *Works,* 2:43.

[88] See, e.g., *Journals,* 89–90, 259, 400. The approval of the Bishop of London was especially important in North America, which was under the bishop's jurisdiction.

[89] George Whitefield, *A Letter to the Rev. the President, and Professors, Tutors, and Hebrew Instructor of Harvard-College in Cambridge* (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1745), 16; Early American Imprints, First Series, microfiche #5712. Whitefield was responding to Edward Wigglesworth, *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield: By Way of Reply to His Answer to the College Testimony Against Him and His Conduct* (Boston: T. Fleet, 1745), 47; Early American Imprints, First Series, microfiche #5715. Wigglesworth later responded by arguing that evangelists were a special office of the apostolic age whose duty was to supplement and support the work of the apostles. Wigglesworth actually granted Whitefield's argument for a special office of evangelist but limited it to being an extraordinary office of the first century. See Edward Wigglesworth, *Some Distinguishing Characters of the Extraordinary and Ordinary Ministers of the Church of Christ* (Boston: Thomas Fleet, 1759); Early American Imprints, First Series, microfiche #7338.

[90] George Whitefield to Thomas Noble, 8 August 1741, in *Works,* 1:308.

[91] *Journals,* 249.

[92] *Journals,* 250.

my own part," Whitefield said, "I can see no reason for my leaving the Church, however I am treated by the corrupt members and ministers of it." He said he judged the Church of England "not from the practice of its members, but its primitive and public constitutions; and so long as I think the Articles of the Church of England are agreeable to Scripture, I am resolved to preach them up without either bigotry or party zeal. For I love all who love the Lord Jesus."[93] When charged with criticizing fellow Anglican clergy, he protested, "Were I to convert Papists, my business would be to shew that they were misguided by their priests; and if I want to convince Church of England Protestants, I must prove that the generality of their teachers do not preach or live up to the truth as it is in Jesus."[94]

Some of Whitefield's interdenominationalism was perhaps pragmatic. Because he found support among the Dissenting churches and because Anglicans often opposed him, Whitefield naturally cooperated with Dissenters. His trips to North America seem to have expanded his fellowship with non-Anglicans and his use of non-Anglican buildings because the Dissenters welcomed him more readily. Yet theological concerns moved him as well. In his view of the church, he acknowledged that all who had experienced the new birth were one in Christ. "As for my own part, (though I profess myself a minister of the church of *England*) I am of a *catholic spirit;* and if I see a man who loves the Lord Jesus in sincerity, I am not very solicitous to what outward communion he belongs."[95] Commenting on the diversity of denominations among soldiers he met on board a ship, Whitefield said, "What a pity it is, Christ's seamless coat should be rent in pieces on account of things in themselves purely indifferent!"[96] Unity in Christ trumped all labels. "I wish all names among the saints of God were swallowed up in that one of *Christian.*—I long for professors to leave off placing religion in saying, 'I am a Churchman,' 'I am a Dissenter.' My language to such is, 'Are you of Christ? If so, I love you with all my heart.'"[97]

Methodology and Philosophy

George Whitefield was a pioneer for modern evangelists in making evangelism his vocation. He also brought energy and urgency to evangelistic work. J. C. Ryle credited Whitefield with setting an "aggressive" pattern in evangelism: "He was the first to see that Christ's ministers must do the work

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[93] *Journals,* 256.

[94] Ibid., 345–46. To cite an example of such criticism, he said in 1740 in Philadelphia that he heard the Anglican commissary speak with "false doctrines and many fundamental errors," which included "faith to be only an assent to the truths of the Gospel," "the doctrine of an imputed righteousness had done much harm," and "that we were to be justified by works at the last day." Ibid., 409–10. In 1740 he told two Dissenting clergy near Charleston, South Carolina, "I advised the people, since the Gospel was not preached in the church, to go and hear it in the meeting-houses." Ibid., 444.

[95] George Whitefield to Ralph Erskine, 16 January 1740, in *Works,* 1:140.

[96] *Journals,* 138. Likewise, in North America in 1739 he exclaimed, "Oh, that the partition-wall were broken down, and we all with one heart and one mind could glorify our common Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!" Ibid., 347.

[97] George Whitefield to [none], 10 November 1739, in *Works,* 1:115. He also wrote, "Those who are not solidly established in the love of God, will fall too much in love with the outward form of their particular church, be it what it will. But as the love of God gets the ascendancy, the more they will be like him and his holy angels, and consequently rejoice when souls are brought to Jesus, whatever instruments may be made use of for the purpose." George Whitefield to John Bray?, 27 May 1742, in *Works,* 1:392.

of fishermen. They must not wait for souls to come to them, but must go after souls, and 'compel them to come in.'"[98] His approach was to address individuals en masse in special meetings, as opposed to the usual channels of regular church services or forming small groups, as Wesley did with Methodist class meetings.[99]

Flexibility

As mentioned before, Whitefield pioneered in the British Isles the idea of preaching in the open air when churches were closed to him or when crowds were too large for church buildings to accommodate. In America he continued this pattern, and outdoor preaching became the norm rather than the exception. Although opposition necessitated this approach to some extent, Whitefield also saw advantages to his system. For one, it made his interdenominational approach easier to apply,[100] and he believed outdoor preaching was more popular in America than Britain. In fact, he said he found field preaching *more* popular in America than preaching in churches.[101]

At various times in his career, Whitefield preached from the top of a wall, from a table, in a tent, in a barn, and many times from a wagon.[102] Even when preaching in church buildings, Whitefield often had to improvise. At Randwick near Gloucester, England, for example, the congregation was so large they had to take out the church window behind the pulpit so that people could hear Whitefield speak.[103] One tool that proved invaluable to him was a collapsible field pulpit, a portable stand which elevated him above the crowds enough to be seen and heard. He started using the field pulpit as early as 1742 in England and preached from it perhaps 2,000 sermons in the course of his career.[104]

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[98] J. C. Ryle, *Christian Leaders of the Eighteenth Century* (1885; reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1978), 48.

[99] Richard B. Steele, "John Wesley's Synthesis of the Revival Practices of Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Nicholas von Zinzendorf," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 30 (1995), 154–72, suggests different models of evangelism in the Great Awakening: Jonathan Edwards with a community-based approach; Whitefield with his stress on reaching individuals through his preaching ministry; Nicholas von Zinzendorf, who used a small group approach; and John Wesley, who blended all of these.

[100] "When I come to *New England* I shall endeavour to recommend an universal charity amongst all the true members of Christ's mystical body. Perhaps therefore, the fields may be the most unexceptionable place to preach in." George Whitefield to Benjamin Colman, 24 January 1740, in *Works,* 1:142.

[101] "The inhabitants were very solicitous for me to preach in another place besides the church; for it is quite different here from what it is in England. There, the generality of people think a sermon cannot be preached well without; here, they do not like it so well if delivered within the church walls." *Journals,* 343.

[102] See ibid., 297 (wall); George Whitefield to John Wesley, 3 April 1739, in *Letters of George Whitefield for the Period 1734–1742,* 495 (table); *Journals,* 364 (tent), 443 (barn), 353, 486 (wagon).

[103] Ibid., 296.

[104] Library of Congress, "Religion and the Founding of the American Republic"; accessed 7 July 2022, http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel02.html. One of Whitefield's portable field pulpits is on display today at the Old South Presbyterian Church in Newburyport, Massachusetts.

Delivery

"I love those that thunder out the word," Whitefield once declared. "The christian [*sic*] world is in a deep sleep. Nothing but a loud voice can awaken them out of it."[105] The power and purity of his voice enabled Whitefield to address huge throngs in the days before amplification. Benjamin Franklin said he "had a loud and clear Voice, and articulated his Words and Sentences so perfectly that he might be heard and understood at a great Distance." Once while listening to Whitefield speak "from the Top of the Court House steps" in Philadelphia, Franklin felt "Curiosity to learn how far he could be heard." Franklin began to walk away from the meeting until he reached a point where he could no longer discern the evangelist's words. Then he calculated the area and concluded that 30,000 people crowded together could hear him at one time. "This reconcil'd me," wrote Franklin, "to the Newspaper Accounts of his having preach'd to 25000 People in the Fields."[106]

Yet more than volume marked his preaching. The impressiveness of his manner and delivery led his admirers to extravagant praise, such as that of Josiah Smith, who said, "So methinks (if you will forgive the figure) Saint *Paul* would *look* and *speak* in a Pulpit."[107] Benjamin Franklin wrote that Whitefield's delivery "was so improv'd by the frequent Repetitions, that every Accent, every Emphasis, every Modulation of Voice, was so perfectly well turn'd and well plac'd, that without being interested in the Subject one could not help being pleas'd with the Discourse, a Pleasure of much the same kind with that receiv'd from an excellent Piece of Musick."[108] A contemporary described his "clear and musical voice," and said, "Every *Accent* of his Voice, every *Motion* of his body, *speaks,* and both are natural and unaffected. If his Delivery is the Product of Art, 'tis certainly the Perfection of it, for it is entirely concealed. He has a great Mastery of Words, but studies much *Plainness of Speech.*"[109]

In fact, a modern biographer of Whitefield, historian Harry Stout, roused controversy when he called Whitefield a "divine dramatist." Noting the evangelist's early interest in acting and the stage, he suggested that Whitefield honed his artistry to make his sermons a dramatic performance. Stout did not imply that Whitefield was insincere, just that he played to an audience's love of drama to hold their interest.[110]

Organization

One talent that George Whitefield did not possess, especially in contrast to John Wesley, was a talent for organization. Wesley gathered the converts from his ministry into class meetings (much like

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[105] George Whitefield to "Rev. and Dear Sir," 10 November 1739, in *Works,* 1:73.

[106] *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin,* 179.

[107] Josiah Smith, *The Character, Preaching, &c. of the Reverend Mr. Geo. Whitefield* (Boston: Rogers for Edwards and Foster, 1740), 12; Early American Imprints, First Series, microfiche #4601.

[108] *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin,* 180.

[109] Benjamin Colman and William Cooper, "Accounts of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield," *Christian History,* 12 January 1745, 361–62.

[110] On the controversy over Stout's presentation of Whitefield, see the following: David White's review of Stout's *The Divine Dramatist* in *Banner of Truth*, March 1994, 29, and Stout's reply to the review along with editor Iain Murray's rejoinder, "Reviewers Reviewed," *Banner of Truth,* March 1995, 7–11.

small groups in modern churches) and appointed leaders in a carefully structured body. By the time of Wesley's death, his branch of Methodism had ceased to be simply a popular movement but had become a denomination separate from the Church of England. Whitefield, on the other hand, worked with groups such as the Huntingdon Connexion of Calvinistic Methodists but left the task organizing to others. Furthermore, much of Whitefield's ministry was among diverse groups that funneled the converts into their own churches. His preaching tours followed a pattern he developed by habit and practice, but he never created well-oiled evangelistic teams like those of later evangelists such as Moody and Sunday.

Whitefield adapted to circumstances as the situation demanded. His work was often done on the fly, incorporated into other necessary duties. "I find much service might be done to religion on journeys, if we had but courage to show ourselves Christians in all places. Others sing songs in public houses, why should not we sing psalms? And when we give the servants money, why may we not with that give them a little book, and some good advice? I know by experience it is very beneficial."[111] Whitefield's dealings with inquirers were somewhat ad hoc. When he was preaching, people would pass him "bills," that is, notes, in which the person described his spiritual concern and asked for prayer or even an interview.[112] After preaching at the fair at Moorfields, Whitefield said he left "with my pockets full of notes from persons brought under concern."[113] In Charleston, Whitefield said that as he was going to dine at a friend's house after a service, someone handed him a note that read, "Remember me in your prayers, for Christ's sake, Who died for me a sinner. I appeal to you for help in the way to salvation. Pray fail me not; I beseech you to pray for my soul; and the Lord bless you, and grant you may win many souls to God by your preaching."[114] At other times inquirers approached Whitefield directly. After Whitefield preached in Neshaminy, New Jersey, in 1740, someone approached him and said, "You have brought me under deep convictions; what shall I do to be saved?" Whitefield said that he replied with "the Apostle's answer," "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."[115]

Printing and Publicizing

One area in which Whitefield did demonstrate organizational ability was in his shrewd use of publishing. In London he read *Christian History,* a pro-revival paper from New England, that illustrated how publishing could spread the word even across oceans.[116] As early as 1739 in Philadelphia he wrote

[111] *Journals,* 208.

[112] Ibid., 316–17; see Dallimore, 1:379. On his second foray into Moorfields, Whitefield mentioned how several children sat around the pulpit and handed him notes that people passed forward even "though they were often pelted with eggs, dirt." George Whitefield to Mr. L——, 15 May 1742, in *Works,* 1:388.

[113] George Whitefield to Mr. L——, 11 May 1742, in ibid., 1:386.

[114] *Journals,* 385.

[115] Ibid., 411.

[116] George Whitefield to the Countess of Huntingdon, 14 November 1748, in *Works,* 2:201. Susan O'Brien, "A Transatlantic Community of Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical Network, 1735–1755," *American*

in his journal, "One of the printers has told me he has taken above two hundred subscriptions for printing my *Sermons* and *Journals.* Another printer told me he might have sold a thousand *Sermons,* if he had them."[117] Frank Lambert noted Whitefield's use of new commercial techniques to publicize his revivals and viewed him as a forerunner of consumer culture.[118] Whitefield's goal was not personal publicity. Publishing extended his ministry far more than he could ever do in person,[119] and advertising was simply a tool in the Lord's work.

Whitefield also became aware of potential sources of trouble in publishing. At first, he contrasted North America with Britain: "I believe the work will go on better here than in *England.* We are more united in our principles, and do not print one against another."[120] He soon found that America was no different. Benjamin Franklin noted that Whitefield's "Writing and Printing from time to time gave great Advantage to his Enemies" because the works contained "Unguarded Expression and even erroneous Opinions." Franklin commented, "I am of Opinion, if he had never written any thing he would have left behind him a much more numerous and important Sect. And his Reputation might in that case have been still growing."[121] Franklin notwithstanding, Whitefield's publications along with newspaper accounts of his work spread his fame far more than he could have done otherwise.

Conclusion

There remains something inexplicable about the ministry of George Whitefield. Even when one admits his skillful publicizing or his matchless vocal skills and dramatic verve, there is a phenomenal aspect to his career. He lacked the organization of later evangelists, yet spoke to thousands on both sides of the Atlantic and saw countless conversions. It is little wonder that his supporters credited his success to the blessing of God, for the results seemed so remarkable. In setting the pattern for American evangelism, Whitefield also set a high standard, not just in numbers won but in the cultural impact he exercised on the future of religion in America.

Yet Whitefield did not intend to launch a revolution in religion. He simply wanted to proclaim the new birth that he himself had experienced. The dramatic results flowed from his straightforward desire

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Historical Review 91 (1986): 811–32, discusses how transatlantic communication and interaction help explain the publicizing of the Great Awakening and promoted cross-fertilization of British and North American revivalism.

[117] *Journals,* 360.

[118] See Frank Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity: George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737–1770*. Compare idem, "'Pedlar in Divinity': George Whitefield and the Great Awakening, 1737–1745," *Journal of American History* 77 (1990): 812–37, and idem, "The Great Awakening as Artifact: George Whitefield and the Construction of Intercolonial Revival, 1739–1745," *Church History* 60 (1991): 223–46. One should note that Lambert is not claiming advertising as the explanation of Whitefield's success but rather as the way in which he publicized his work.

[119] He once told the Countess of Huntingdon, "I conversed with three or four, that have been awakened by the reading of some of my printed sermons." George Whitefield to Countess of Huntingdon, 24 February 1749, in *Works,* 2:239.

[120] George Whitefield to William Seward, 19 May 1740, in ibid., 1:170.

[121] *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin,* 180. For views both pro and con of Whitefield in the colonial American newspapers, see "The Great Awakening and George Whitefield, 1739–1743," chapter 8 of David Copeland, *Debating the Issues in Colonial Newspapers: Primary Documents of Events of the Period* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2000), 94–108.

to be a "fisher for souls." That was his work as an evangelist, as those around him recognized. Once as he was speaking with a woman who was seriously ill, she expressed her desire to go be with Christ. Whitefield then expressed that as his desire too, but she said to him, "No, you must stay longer, and bring home some more souls to Christ."[122] That is what Whitefield too saw as his burden.

[122] *Journals,* 494.

Tabb, Brian J., and Andrew M. King, eds. *Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament.* Counterpoints: Bible & Theology. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2022. 290pp. + 10pp. (front matter) + 20pp. (back matter).

What the OT says or anticipates about Christ has always been a key question in the Church's struggle over the continuity and discontinuity of the Testaments. This issue rose to prominence in postapostolic debates over allegorical versus literal interpretation, and it has come into focus again in contemporary discussions of "Christ-centered" hermeneutics and preaching. Whereas books on the subject tend to defend one approach, *Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament* allows scholars to express their individual perspectives and interact over disagreements. The presentation of each view follows the same major headings: (1) the nature of Scripture, especially the concept of authorial intent; (2) interpretive steps for the reader of Scripture; and (3) case studies, specifically Genesis 22, Proverbs 8, and Isaiah 42. After an author lays out his approach, the others give their responses, and then the author issues a rejoinder. The editors also provide a brief introduction and conclusion to the book.

John Goldingay, senior professor of OT and David Allan Hubbard Professor Emeritus of OT at Fuller Theological Seminary, expounds the "First Testament Approach." Calling the OT "the First Testament" so as not to imply it is outdated, he wants the message of the OT to stand on its own right and not be neglected because of a search for Christ. Goldingay holds that the text of the OT does not mention Christ and does not encourage readers to think of him specifically. Rather, the OT "simply invites them to relate to God" (22). Yes, Jesus is the climax of the biblical story, and OT material can help us understand him. But that does not mean that OT passages are about Christ or even point to him. Upholding Goldingay's view is an absolute equation of the human authors' meaning and the divine author's meaning (23) as well as a sharp distinction between the meaning and the significance (application) of Scripture (24). When NT authors connect OT passages with Christ, they are drawing out significance, not meaning. Similarly, Goldingay presents typology as *a posteriori* reflection rather than authorially intended symbolism. "The sanctuary, the priesthood, the sacrifices, or the servant's suffering do not point forward to Jesus" (31). Thus, Goldingay's interpretive steps and case studies connect OT passages to Christ only in the sense of after-the-fact light that may be thrown on Jesus (36).

As the narrowest approach in *Five Views,* Goldingay's understanding seems unlikely to win the day. Damaging to his presentation is his tendency to overgeneralize and overstate. "God doesn't really predict things. What God does is promise and threaten things" (33). "The First Testament's significance is to help us see what his messiahship means, not to prove anything" (35). Occasionally these kinds of statements call into question the inerrancy of Scripture. "Jesus's comment about hardness of hearts implies that later parts need to be corrected by earlier parts" (29). "Sometimes the New Testament uses a First Testament text in a way that ignores its inherent meaning" (37). I agree with Jason DeRouchie (56–62) that Goldingay misreads original OT contexts (e.g., Gen 22) and contradicts NT treatments of OT passages (e.g., Luke 24:27). To his credit, at least Goldingay acknowledges in his rejoinder, "I overstated the point about it being impossible to prove from the First Testament that Jesus is the Messiah" (69; cf. Acts 28:23).

Tremper Longman III, professor emeritus of biblical studies at Westmont College, argues for the "Christotelic Approach." Christ is the goal (*telos*) of the OT, and what this means becomes clearer after his resurrection. Christian readers should read an OT text twice (74). The first reading looks for the OT's "discrete voice," bracketing out any related NT information and focusing only on how the text addressed its original audience. The second reading studies the text in the light of the revelation provided by the NT. This second stage leads to *sensus plenior,* the fuller divine meaning that the original writers would find surprising though legitimate (81–82). Longman views this as an "intuitive, Spirit-led reading" that cannot be boiled down to interpretive steps. But he does encourage readers to look for "key words, common themes, or similar patterns of plot (the stuff of typology)" (88). Thus, for instance, in Proverbs 8 Woman Wisdom represents all the virtues of wisdom that flow from a right relationship with Yahweh. Though the NT does not *identify* Woman Wisdom with Jesus, it does *associate* the two in that Christ is the fullest manifestation of divine wisdom (95, citing Col 2:3).

Some OT passages clearly connect with Christ in a teleological sense, and Longman's approach to Proverbs 8 provides one compelling example. Other parts of his discussion are not so persuasive, however, such as his claim that the Servant in Isaiah 42:1–4 is Israel rather than Christ. Longman also creates confusion when he uses the terms *Christological, Christotelic, and Christocentric* interchangeably (85). One also wonders whether it is possible, let alone advisable, to do a first reading of the OT without thinking of relevant NT considerations. Similarly, the category of *sensus plenior* introduces much more hermeneutical complexity and uncertainty than Longman indicates. The reader is left frustrated with how little guidance he provides for figuring out whether a possible connection to Christ is a divinely intended deeper meaning or the product of an overly active imagination.

Havilah Dharamraj, head of the department of biblical studies at South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies in Bangalore, India, expresses the "Reception-Centered, Intertextual Approach." This approach centers on the "Common Reader," someone influenced by the "public meaning" of Scripture. That is, from his/her personal and ecclesiastical experience, the individual already has some sense of connections between the OT and Christ. As the Common Reader studies the Bible, he/she pairs an OT text (T1) with a seemingly parallel NT text (T2) and puts the two in a "conversation" that results in a kind of third text (T3) (128–29). The link between the two "intertexts" is a "dominant theme" or "icon" in the OT passage that has a "resonance" with a NT passage about Christ (131–32). So, for example, Isaac's willingness to be sacrificed by Abraham (Gen 22) reminds the Common Reader of the self-humbling of Christ in Philippians 2. Juxtaposing these two passages leads to a greater love for and imitation of Christ.

Dharamraj's view represents a moderate reader-response hermeneutic. While she does not dismiss entirely the intent of the human author of a text, she significantly minimizes the role of that intent. Unsurprisingly, then, the discovery of Christological resonances becomes a rather subjective enterprise. Since Dharamraj upholds orthodox doctrine as a guardrail for interpretation, the conclusions of her Common Reader will probably not end up being heretical. Often, however, they will be unconvincing exegetically. For example, Genesis 22 says nothing concerning Isaac's attitude about being sacrificed. Instead, the passage focuses on the trial of Abraham's faith, a theme that Dharamraj passes over. She also explicitly bypasses the question of the identity of the Servant in Isaiah

42 (145n48), sets aside the clear use of this passage in Matthew 12, and instead opts for a presumed parallel in Revelation 19 (145–46). It seems that the Common Reader has effectively taken the place of the authors/Author of Scripture.

Jason S. DeRouchie, research professor of OT and biblical theology at Midwestern Theological Seminary, develops the "Redemptive-Historical, Christocentric Approach." He strongly contends that, as the climax of salvation history, Christ is central to the interpretation of Scripture. Jesus serves as the lens for understanding completely what the OT means. Thus, post-resurrection believers are in a better interpretive position than even the OT's authors. Specifically, DeRouchie urges us to "interpret Scripture along three distinct but overlapping contexts": the "close context" (C1), the "continuing context" (C2—how a text is informed by and adds to antecedent revelation), and the "complete context" (C3) of the entire canon (187). The results of such study are multifaceted. A passage may relate to Christ in one or more of at least seven ways: (1) "direct messianic predictions," (2) "salvation-historical story and related trajectories," (3) "similarities and contrasts of the old and new ages, creations, and covenants," (4) "typology," (5) "Yahweh's identity and activity," (6) "ethical ideals of Old Testament law and wisdom," and (7) "using the Old Testament to instruct or guide others in the law of love" (188–91).

I found DeRouchie's chapter to be the most practically helpful part of *Five Views*. His clear explanations of the three contexts and the seven ways provide the interpreter with useful tools for discerning how OT passages relate to Christ. Additionally, DeRouchie's exegesis—more detailed than the other writers' exegesis—effectively demonstrates how he fleshes out his approach. This does not mean that his exegesis is always persuasive. For example, since burnt offerings are typically associated with substitution and since Scripture does not mention sin in Isaac that demanded his immediate killing, in Genesis 22 "God likely sets Isaac forth as a vicarious sacrifice standing in for the sinner Abraham or a broader community" (194). That is a bit of a stretch. But at least DeRouchie words such views tentatively, using "likely," "may," and "suggests" with some frequency. In any case, what is compelling about DeRouchie's chapter is that he does not squeeze every OT passage into a single hermeneutical mold but presents various possibilities for how a text may connect to Jesus.

Craig A. Carter, research professor of theology at Tyndale University, sets forth the "Premodern Approach." Carter takes aim at the naturalistic bent of historical criticism, especially its rejection of NT Christological readings of the OT as eisegetical. He also opines that the grammatical-historical method is a conservative version of the historical-critical method and lends itself to the problems of that method. The premodern approach to interpretation is preferable, especially because it gave rise to Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy. This is more of a spiritual discipline than an exegetical method. It values the intent of the human author but concentrates on the intent of the divine author as the essence of the "literal sense" of Scripture. Rather than claiming objectivity, the premodern approach reflects faith in Jesus seeking understanding of him through the text. This entails four interpretive principles. First, Scripture is united around the central theme of Jesus Christ. Second, the foundation of interpretation is the literal sense. *Sensus plenior* is possible, but it must meet two criteria: "(1) it cannot contradict the literal sense, and (2) it must be related to it in some logical manner" (252). This leads to the third principle: the literal sense may include "the spiritual sense." The latter includes

three categories (253–54): the allegorical sense (truth about Christ), the moral sense, and the anagogical sense or eschatology. The fourth principle provides the hermeneutical control on these layers of meaning: Christological orthodoxy.

Carter does well to highlight the divine intent of Scripture, but he fails to demonstrate that this intent requires the methodology and conclusions he espouses. Goldingay is right that Carter's assessment of grammatical-historical exegetes is unfair, as though they are not concerned about the spiritual dimensions of the text (266–67). Or as Dharamraj puts it, Carter has unnecessarily polarized the modern and premodern (280). Carter's case studies are a mixed bag. He holds to the literal meaning of Genesis 22 as focused on the test of Abraham's faith but remains open to the idea that Isaac carrying the wood is a type of Christ carrying the cross. He also argues that Proverbs 8:22 teaches the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son. Despite Carter's protestations (292), it remains hard to avoid the impression that such interpretations are imported from the NT rather than being the intent of the author of the OT text, human or divine. I am still a little shocked that a twenty-first century scholar encourages the medieval theory of multiple levels of meaning, but such has become common among those who, like Carter, operate within the contemporary trend known as Theological Interpretation of Scripture (TIS).

Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament provides a meaty discussion of a major topic of interest to biblical scholars and preachers alike. I did go away wishing for more detailed discussion about what certain NT passages teach and do *not* teach about the topic, specifically Luke 24:25–27, 44–47, John 5:39, and 1 Peter 1:10–12. I also wondered what considerations guided the selection of the five authors. Essays by Michael P. V. Barrett, Abner Chou, Christopher J. H. Wright, or Sidney Greidanus would likely have been more profitable than some of the chapters included. I was surprised that Greidanus—a towering figure in the field—does not even show up in the list of authors cited. Nevertheless, *Five Views* presents a worthy summary of the spectrum of current approaches to the relationship of the OT to Christ: premodern (Carter), modern (Goldingay and Longman), postmodern (Dharamraj), and what could be considered a hybrid of premodern and modern emphases (DeRouchie).

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Hamilton, James M. Jr. *Typology—Understanding the Bible's Promise-Shaped Patterns: How Old Testament Expectations Are Fulfilled in Christ.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2022. 360pp. + 72pp. (back matter).

Many have attempted to define or explain typology, and countless debates have centered on whether or not some interpreter's typological interpretation is valid. Other writers ask if the only legitimate "type" is one that the Bible specifically identifies as such. In *Typology,* Hamilton presents an excellent guide for how the Bible itself exemplifies typological interpretation.

Foundational for Hamilton's discussion of typology is his discussion of micro-level indicators for determining authorial intent (chapter 1). Hamilton begins by giving several examples in which biblical authors demonstrate awareness of earlier texts of Scripture by using the same words, concepts, and events. In doing this, they indicate that their intent is to repeat the same pattern that had been established in the earlier text. The promises of God, therefore, "shaped the way the biblical authors perceived, understood, and wrote" so that when the biblical authors see events occur in line with earlier promises, they intentionally "communicate the types" in these promise-shaped patterns (4). Moses sets the example for subsequent biblical authors to follow, since "their worldview has been shaped by his words" (5). For Hamilton, typological interpretation consists of reading an account in light of similar earlier (or later) accounts. Thus, "the study of typology amounts to active reflection on one passage in light of others" (8).

The Book of Genesis plays a foundational role in Hamilton's methodology. Genesis is "profoundly self-referential" (6) and exemplifies Moses' methodology. Hamilton helpfully identifies Genesis 3:15 as a "pattern-shaping promise" (6), which serves as "the plot conflict that informs the whole of the biblical narrative" (9). In relation to "typology," Hamilton stresses the importance of understanding the intention of the human author of the text and using grammatical-historical interpretation. Two critical elements in typology are "historical correspondence between events, persons, and institutions" and "the consequent escalation in significance that accrues to recurring patterns" (19). The reader detects historical correspondence in the repetition of significant terms, quotations of phrases or lines, sequences of events, and salvation-historical import. When authors repeat such key elements, the readers' "sense of the importance of those patterns increases" (25). Rather than a creative human way of adding a foreign, spiritualized meaning to the text, typological interpretation recognizes God-ordained patterns set forth by the human authors (26). Additionally, typological interpretation is normative, and modern-day believers, though not infallible, should seek to interpret typologically following the pattern used by the biblical writers (25–28).

The rest of the book seeks to demonstrate how the biblical authors' use of earlier Scripture highlights the importance of these promise-shaped patterns. Hamilton does not merely show how certain key themes, such as prophet, priest, and king, are developed in Scripture. Numerous other authors have done that. Rather, he shows how Scripture uses key terms and phrases from earlier scriptural authors to demonstrate the ongoing and increasing significance of such themes. Additionally, he shows how the original writers of Scripture (primarily Moses) expected future typological fulfillments by exemplifying the usage of such patterns in their own material.

Chapter 2 addresses Adam's role as a type for whom Noah, the patriarchs, Israel, David, and ultimately Christ serve as the fulfilment (as "new Adams"). As such, Moses sets the example for understanding Adam as a type, and later biblical writers follow the example. Moses presents clear links between the flood/new creation/Noah's "fall" (Gen 9) and the original creation and Adam's fall (Gen 1–3). The Davidic promises are linked to the Abrahamic promises, which provide the direct answer to the curses of Genesis 3:14–19.

Chapter 3 discusses the typological function of priests, beginning with Adam's priestly role in the garden and assuming that creation should be understood as a cosmic temple. Melchizedek and, subsequently, the nation of Israel serve in a priest-king role to administer the knowledge of God to the nations.

In chapter 4, Hamilton seeks to demonstrate that certain OT figures are prophets and that "Moses intended his audience to connect them to one another." Hamilton identifies nine key prophets in this chapter: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Elisha, and Isaiah, as well as Jesus. The discussions of Moses' prophetic role, as well as that of Elijah and Elisha, are sound and helpful. Some concerns arise in Hamilton's discussion of Adam, Noah, and Isaac in this chapter. These will be addressed below.

Chapter 5 discusses the typological role of kings, focusing on the kingship of Adam, Abraham, and David. The key elements each of these kings perpetuate are Adamic dominion, sonship, and keeping and naming. Hamilton points to Abraham's conquest of the kings as key support for his role as a king. Hamilton draws numerous connections between the accounts of Abraham in Genesis 14, Gideon in Judges 6–8, and David in 1 Samuel 30, all of which also connect to Psalm 110. The frequent repetition of key terms and the similarity in sequence of events in these chapters seem to demonstrate an intentional pattern.

Chapter 6 points out the pattern of rejection followed by exaltation as it emphasizes the type of the righteous sufferer, a theme that originates in the seed promise of Genesis 3:15. This theme is prominent throughout Genesis, as well as in Moses, David, and Isaiah's Suffering Servant. Hamilton argues that David "understood his own suffering as an installation in the pattern of those who had preceded him, chiefly Joseph and Moses" (180), and David presents his own experiences in this way in the Psalms (e.g., Pss 2, 6, 16, 22, 31, 35, 69). Finally, numerous terms and phrases in Isaiah 52–53 reflect their previous use in the accounts of the patriarchs, Joseph, and David. These patterns are fulfilled in Jesus, who expects his followers to see such patterns as well (Luke 24:25).

Part 2 of the book discusses two key typological events: creation and exodus. In chapter 7 Hamilton discusses God's creation of Eden as a temple and demonstrates how it becomes the pattern for the OT tabernacle and temple, ultimately fulfilled in Christ, the church, and the New Creation.

Chapter 8 demonstrates that Moses noticed key exodus motifs in the narratives of Abraham and Jacob, records the exodus event, and then indicates that this pattern will recur in the future. Later biblical authors demonstrate that "they have learned from Moses that the exodus is both an interpretive schema and a predictive paradigm" (256). The exodus pattern is also prominent in Joshua, the Gospels, Paul, and Revelation.

Part 3 of the book addresses two institutions that portray typological patterns in Scripture: Leviticult and Marriage.[1] This chapter, therefore, discusses the institutions established for tabernacle and temple worship. These chapters succeed in demonstrating the importance of typology in relation to these themes in Scripture; they do not, however, seem to fit in the category of promise-shaped patterns as the earlier chapters do. Though these chapters provide interesting content, they do not appear to be directly pertinent to the argument of the book.

Hamilton's concluding chapter discusses "macro-level indicators for determining authorial intent." This chapter addresses the use of chiasm in the Book of Genesis. Hamilton's demonstration of the chiastic structure of Genesis is impressive and convincing. The chapter successfully argues Hamilton's point that Moses intended to use key patterns, and he incorporated these patterns intentionally with his chiastic structure.

One of the concerns that arises in a book on typology is the danger of seeing too many connections where they were not originally intended, a kind of parallelomania. Hamilton provides mostly strong support for his typological connections. However, his argument in chapter 4—that Moses intends his audience to understand Adam, Noah, and Isaac, in particular, in his trajectory of OT prophets—rests on questionable ground.

First, Hamilton identifies Adam as a prototypical prophet. Adam receives the message from God about the trees in the Garden (Gen 2:16–17), and Adam communicates that message to Eve (3:2–3). In support of this identification of Adam as prophet, Hamilton references Genesis 20:7, in which God is speaking to Abimelech and identifies Abraham as a prophet, and God tells Abimelech, "You shall surely die," a phrase which occurs only two places in Genesis (2:17 and 20:7). Therefore, this "naturally prompts readers to think of its first instance when they encounter the second." This point of contact indicates that both Adam and Abraham should be "understood in prophetic terms" (96). However, Adam's merely receiving a message from Yahweh and communicating it to Eve are not enough of a basis to firmly establish Adam as a prophet. If this simple definition were sufficient, Abimelech could also be identified as a prophet, since he receives a similar direct warning from God and communicates it.

Second, Hamilton identifies Noah as a prophet. Hamilton demonstrates numerous legitimate and fascinating intertextual connections between Noah and Moses (111–15). Though these examples may show typological development between Noah and Moses, they do not relate to their roles as prophets.

Third, Hamilton includes Isaac in the Adam-Abraham-Isaac prophetic trajectory. In Isaac's sister-fib account, Abimelech says, "Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death" (Gen 26:11), which reminds the reader of the earlier warnings in 2:17 and 20:7. In this case, "Isaac is presented as an installment in the pattern of Abraham, his father" (96). Hamilton argues that Psalm 105:12–15 supports this claim because it refers to God warning foreign kings during the sojournings of the patriarchs: "Do my prophets no harm." Hamilton shows numerous connections between the Abraham and Isaac accounts (97–105) and points to parallels in the birth accounts of Isaac and Samuel, who is also a prophet. Though many of these connections are helpful and accurate, they do

[1] Hamilton explains that "a happy typo produced the form 'Leviticult,'" which refers to the "Levitical cult" (29).

not prove that Moses intends for us to see Isaac as a prophet. Later revelation, however, does seem to identify Isaac as a prophet (Ps 105). Hamilton cannot necessarily be proven wrong on this point; however, the evidence is lacking for his argument to be proven correct.

A final (and minor) complaint is that Hamilton seems a bit too attached to chiasm, exhibiting a kind of chiasmomania. He attempts to arrange each chapter in a chiastic structure, but he does not do this in some chapters, opting for a mere "outline" in chapters 3 and 8. (Those who care about parallelism will observe with disappointment that chapters 3 and 8 are not on corresponding levels with Hamilton's overall chiasm of the book on page 30.) The big-picture chiasm of the book makes good sense, but the chiasm within the chapters seems a bit forced at times. For example, the arrangement of chapter 4 is in a chiasm surrounding nine different prophets, beginning at Adam and ending with Jesus. Another example is the suggested chiastic structure for Abraham's victory over the Canaanite kings (166).

Overall, Hamilton has provided Bible students with an outstanding resource demonstrating the key role of typology in biblical interpretation. I find three primary benefits for the reader:

1. *Typology* provides numerous biblical insights. In a book so full of biblical examples and dealing with so many biblical texts, the reader should not expect to agree with every single example Hamilton gives. The overall approach of the book is excellent, though, and Hamilton presented many helpful connections I had not noticed before. This will be a book I continue to reference in future study.
2. It strengthens faith and confidence in the unity of Scripture. Hamilton's constant focus on the words of Scripture and the way that later Scripture uses those same words and phrases strongly demonstrates the unity of Scripture.
3. It clarifies typology. Instead of being a dangerous path where the accusation of eisegesis is looming around every corner, typological interpretation is exemplified by Scripture and, as Hamilton argues, should be normative for interpreters today as we actively "reflect on one passage in light of the others."

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Shenvi, Neil. *Why Believe?: A Reasoned Approach to Christianity.* Wheaton: Crossway, 2022. 254pp. + 18pp. (back matter).

Does the Church need another book on Christian apologetics by a credentialed academician? Neil Shenvi is a graduate of Princeton University and the University of California, Berkeley, where he earned a PhD in theoretical chemistry. Formerly a professor at both Yale and Duke Universities, Shenvi has published more than thirty scientific papers on electronic structure theory, nonadiabatic dynamics, electron transfer, quantum computing, and high-dimensional model representation.

Despite the author's impressive resume, *Why Believe?: A Reasoned Approach to Christianity* is an engaging, accessible introduction to Christian apologetics. In a world where many apologetic texts purport to be written for "both the scholar and the laymen" and fail to engage either, Shenvi will likely appeal to both. In his introduction, Shenvi relates his curiosity over discovering his "quantum physics professor, a renowned cosmologist," sang in the choir at his local church. The church's pastor had a PhD from Cambridge. In fact, Shenvi's introduction to the church came from a fellow student, Shenvi's future wife, a freshman who received the highest grade in her organic chemistry class. Shenvi was surprised to discover "Christianity was not dry, archaic, boring, and irrelevant; it offered a compelling assessment of my own most pressing problems" (17).

Shenvi skillfully navigates the complexities of presenting Christianity as intellectually satisfactory, while nevertheless emphasizing the cross as a stumbling block to the Jew and folly to the Greek. Whereas many apologetic texts are content to argue for God's existence or the plausibility of the resurrection but stop short of articulating the gospel, Shenvi includes three substantial chapters explaining the gospel of grace to a world full of sinners. Whereas many contemporary apologists seem almost embarrassed by the topic of human sinfulness, Shenvi unashamedly articulates Christianity's unique emphasis: "Of all the major world religions, only Christianity insists that we are radically morally corrupt people who are consequently alienated from a perfectly good God." Further, "Only Christianity insists that what we primarily need is not moral improvement but rescue" (176).

After a brief introduction, Shenvi introduces his readers to the person of Jesus Christ—focusing initially on C. S. Lewis' famous "liar, lunatic or Lord" trilemma. Shenvi acknowledges that Lewis' writings made a significant contribution toward his own conversion (15). The validity of the trilemma depends on the historical reliability of the Gospels, a subject the Shenvi capably defends by emphasizing the reliability of manuscript transmission as well as corroboration from non-Christian writers, geography, archeology, Jewish culture, and onomastics (the study of the etymology of proper names). The frequency of proper names in the Gospels and Acts corresponds with historical evidence for name frequency drawn from ossuaries from the NT world.

In the following chapter on the historicity of the resurrection, Shenvi builds his case on four main facts: the death and burial of Jesus, the empty tomb, the belief of the apostles, and the conversion of Paul. Although his historical case is a bit slim, Shenvi identifies major scholars and salient features in the contemporary debate. Shenvi argues that a naturalistic denial of the resurrection is rooted in philosophical assumptions rather than scientific methodology. "There is no scientific experiment which demonstrates that nature is all that exists" (75). The advent of quantum mechanics has also

proscribed attempts to rule out supernatural explanations as violations of laws of nature. Any argument against the resurrection based on the inherent improbability of a miracle presumes to understand God's intentions and therefore raises the question of God's existence, a subject Shenvi turns to in the next two chapters.

In a chapter on general revelation, Shenvi argues for the knowability of God through nature—emphasizing especially mathematics and fine-tuning. He begins with a discussion of faith and insists, "The Bible never assumes or contends that faith and evidence are mutually exclusive" (82). One evidence concerns the "miraculous" concurrence between the mathematical structure of the universe and the human mind's capacity for perceiving that same structure. Further, the capacity of the human mind to express and communicate what it has discovered through mathematics is equally "miraculous." Evolutionary psychologists, including Noam Chomsky, admit "[there is] essentially no explanation of how and why our linguistic computations and representations evolved" (87). Physicists are likewise forced to admit that the impression of design, expressed through "fine-tuning," is equally difficult to explain in the absence of God. Shenvi argues that attempts to undermine design arguments through appeals to multiverses are not based on observation but are intentional attacks on the existence of God. According to cosmologist Bernard Carr, "If there is only one universe . . . you might have to have a fine-tuner. If you don't want God, you'd better have a multiverse" (102).

In a second chapter on general revelation, Shenvi emphasizes the knowability of God through the moral law. In a tacit acknowledgement of Hume's guillotine, Shenvi states, "Physical facts describe the universe as it is, but moral duties prescribe the way we humans ought to behave" (113). If moral norms are part of the inventory of the universe, on what basis do they exist? Shenvi considers atheist and naturalistic answers and finds them inadequate. He then turns to what he calls the "transcendental moral argument for God's existence" (131), arguing that there are specific (moral) truths humans are morally obligated to seek. However, a moral obligation to seek truth cannot exist if God does not exist.

After arguing for God's existence, Shenvi considers three major objections to God's existence: the problem of evil, evolution, and the hiddenness of God. The problem of evil, Shenvi suggests, is actually a larger problem for atheism than Christianity. "To assert the world is full of evil is to admit that there are, after all, objective moral facts about the pervasiveness of evil in the world" (148). Shenvi briefly explores both the "free-will theodicy" and the "soul-building" theodicy. The latter theodicy suggests that good virtues like patience, courage, forgiveness, and self-sacrifice seem hard to achieve in a world with no evil. Why should we assume, Shenvi asks, "that God's primary role in the universe is to maximize our temporal comfort and enjoyment?" (152). Further, the interconnectedness of events inextricably links good and evil. For example, the death of a child often provokes the birth of another child.

Whatever the solution, the biblical doctrine of eternity mitigates the problem of evil by providing a place of eternal bliss to offset temporary suffering. Added to the doctrine of eternity is the biblical insistence on the incarnation of God. God enters our world of suffering, experiences it himself, and resurrects to permanently defeat evil.

A second objection to God's existence concerns the modern evolutionary worldview, which denies the need for a creator on the assumption of universal common descent. Shenvi does not take a position on young-earth creationism, old-earth creationism, intelligent design, or theistic evolution. Instead, he argues against atheistic evolutionism, insisting that random mutation and natural selection cannot account for the biodiversity of the planet. Random mutation, Shenvi, argues, is not an adaptive response to an evolving environment and consequently cannot drive beneficial evolutionary development. Further, Shenvi insists that macroevolutionary change through random mutation is essentially non-scientific since it would occur so slowly as to be generally unobservable.

A third objection is the hiddenness of God. If God exists, why has he not made himself known? Shenvi's answer is that perhaps God is not so hidden as we suppose, but human sinfulness prevents us from seeing his goodness. The problem is ours, not God's. Admittedly, God could provide greater evidence of his existence, but on what basis should we assume that sinners who loathe God actually want more evidence?

Having presented a case for Christianity, Shenvi devotes three chapters to the gospel. He emphasizes the uniqueness of Christianity (as contrasted with Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism), the reality of human sin, and the necessity and gift of salvation.

The development of Shenvi's argument through his book mirrors his own journey into Christianity. As a student at Princeton, he had taken a course on the historical origins of Christianity known as the "faith buster." The course drew upon the work of critical scholars like Bart Ehrman, Elaine Pagels, and the Jesus Seminar. At the conclusion of the course, Shenvi became a disciple of Jesus Christ. Yet he acknowledges his faith was not the outcome of a "careful intellectual argument" (174). Rather, he recognized that people dismissed Christianity only because they presupposed that people's experiences of Christianity were inherently false. Why not grant that people's experiences might be true? Further, among all the world religions, Christianity is unique in its insistence on the radical moral corruption of all people. People's experiences of Christianity involve a deep personal awareness of their sinful condition and their need for a Savior. Why should such testimonies be dismissed out of hand when in fact the evidence for human sinfulness is universal?

Does the Church need another book on Christian apologetics by a credentialed academician? Certainly, but only when he's willing—like Shenvi—to acknowledge human sinfulness and articulate the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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Aniol, Scott. *Changed from Glory into Glory: The Liturgical Story of the Christian Faith.* Peterborough, Ontario: Joshua, 2022. 302pp. + 3pp. (front matter) + 44pp. (back matter).

Scott Aniol invites his reader to join him on a unique survey of church history: a history of Christian liturgy. This journey, ambitious in scope, begins in the Garden of Eden, travels through the Scripture to the current age, and concludes with thoughts on how to worship God in the present day.

In his introduction and first chapter, Aniol identifies two common errors regarding how we worship. The first is that we simply do not give worship sufficient thought at all. Here he echoes Tozer: the careless nature of our corporate worship has debased our view of God. Although we commonly assume one's faith shapes one's liturgy, the reverse is also true. As the phrase *lex orandi, lex credendi* states ("the law of prayer, the law of belief"), our liturgy shapes our faith. The second error is that our understanding of worship has been molded by forces about which we remain largely unaware. Aniol offers this historical survey as an antidote against such ignorance.

In his second through fourth chapters, Aniol surveys the history of worship through the OT. Beginning in the garden, he argues that Adam and Eve's primary purpose was to be priests before a sovereign God, a God to whom they owed worship and obedience. The various covenants in the OT all testify to God's intent to restore access to him so that his people can once again worship him properly.

Although he treats a wide range of Israel's liturgy, Aniol shows special interest in Scripture's material on poetry and music. In his chapter on "The Golden Age of Hebrew Worship," Aniol gives special attention to various poetic devices in the Psalms, followed by an exposition of Psalm 96 to show how God views singing as central to the shaping power of liturgy.

> But the second reason we sing, which is highlighted when we respond to something that has not yet taken place, is that singing forms us. In other words, when we sing in response to something that has not yet happened, we are in a sense acting out that future reality, and, in so doing, we are formed by it. . . . Good songs don't just express things like joy, praise, thanksgiving, and adoration, they also recount the reasons for those responses, because by also singing the reasons, we are further formed by them as we experience them over and over through the art. (52)

Aniol likewise shows particular interest in the sharp contrast between true worship and pagan idolatry in the OT. Christians have long viewed pagan concepts of God as devolved from the knowledge of the true God; Aniol makes the case that pagan worship is similarly fallen from true worship. And just as true worship helps to shape one's understanding of the true God, so fallen worship reinforces fallen and pagan concepts of God. Part 1 leaves the reader with a key point that Aniol develops for our contemporary scene: God demands that there be a distinction between the forms used for pagan worship and those used for true worship.

In part 2 (chapters 5–7), Aniol traces the development of worship through the NT. Aniol argues that Christ fulfilled not only the OT law but also OT worship—thus establishing the basis for the elements that constitute NT worship. These elements include contributions from the OT (e.g.

Scripture reading, prayer, singing, giving) and elements from Christ's own commands (e.g., baptism and the Lord's Supper).

Aniol concludes his journey through a scriptural history of liturgy with a chapter dedicated to an exposition of Hebrews 12. Aniol argues that there remains a strong continuity between OT and NT worship: "The change of worship between the testaments is not in its essence; the change occurs in the external forms and experience of worship alone" (112–113). But the physical nature of worship (exhibited in the OT) is not permanently removed: "the admonition for corporate worship in Hebrews is rooted in a hope that one day worship as a spiritual reality will become a physical one" (113).

In part 3, Aniol analyzes worship from Catholic Christianity through the dawn of the Reformation. Acknowledging the tentative nature of our knowledge of early Christian liturgy, he nonetheless draws from sources such as the *Didache* and Justin Martyr's *Apology* to construct a basic liturgy of the early church. The development of the various liturgical forms (particularly the annual calendar, as well as a belief that the sacraments were a mysterious activity) began in the early church but grew as Christianity spread and gained dominance over the Roman Empire.

At the close of part 3, Aniol relates two errors in worship that the Reformation would later address: the issue of *ex opere operato* and sacerdotalism. *Ex opere operato* elevated the importance of the act of worship (apart from one's personal devotion or affections), and sacerdotalism resulted in a separate and dominant priestly class (whose task was to perform the worship, sometimes without the participation of the laity at all).

In part 4, Aniol traces how the Reformers sought to preserve the good in liturgy while casting off various heretical doctrines and practices, particularly in the practice of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Emphasizing the priesthood of the believer, the Reformers produced a great number of hymns intended for congregational singing. For the practice of the ordinances and matters of corporate worship, the great struggle was over the *adiaphora:* "those [liturgical practices] that were neither commanded not forbidden" (183). The desire to practice doctrinally pure worship was a driving force during this period, but without any controlling authority, groups tended to splinter along both regional and doctrinal lines. Nevertheless, the differing liturgical forms shared a commitment to the authority of Scriptures and a desire to worship in light of who God is and what he had revealed about himself.

In part 5, Aniol argues that new, dominant mindsets emerged from the Enlightenment, forcing the church to contend with errors beyond those within its own heritage. New philosophies exchanged faith for reason. New political systems allowed individuals increased opportunities to exercise person rights and freedoms. Popular culture increasingly appealed to and validated humanity's baser appetites. Liturgical forms tended to follow one of two general trends: a conservative philosophy that sought to maintain and build on the Reformation heritage and a progressive philosophy that was more responsive to cultural trends and to the particular goals of a church.

In part 6, Aniol urges the Church to return to a more scripturally based liturgy, particularly one that draws its forms from its own scriptural heritage. Contemporary worship, Aniol argues, has roots in philosophies and cultural practices foreign to Scripture, leaving it ill-equipped to fulfill God's purpose of liturgy (the worship of God and the making of disciples).

The conclusions to each section are a particularly helpful component of *Glory into Glory*. These summaries make it possible to use the book as a regular resource. If the reader desires to do further research in the middle (e.g., part 4), a quick review of the conclusion of the prior chapter provides an excellent means of catching up with the flow of Aniol's argument.

In his first appendix ("Planning a Gospel-Shaped Worship Service"), Aniol offers his reader an encore of three examples of services that incorporate his philosophy of worship and some of the great hymns received from our Christian heritage. He outlines each example using elements of his proposed "skeleton," within which he provides specific samples: hymn titles, Scripture readings, and even the placement of the sermon within the steps. By giving these concrete examples, Aniol offers the worship leader a clear vision of how to adopt a simple yet flexible method for helping worshipers understand more about what they are doing as they participate throughout the service.

Throughout *Glory into Glory,* Aniol demonstrates vast knowledge of Scripture, ecclesiastical and philosophical history, and varying philosophies of worship. In addition, he regularly provides concrete examples of the consequences of certain choices in worship—making the connection between one's philosophy of worship and one's actual liturgical practices.

A particular strength of *Glory into Glory* is Aniol's exposition of the story of worship through the Old and New Testaments. Some readers may give early pause at Aniol's interpretation of *'avad* and *shamar* in Genesis 2:15 (in chapter 1), but his argument hardly rests on whether these words refer to man's tending of the Garden or to his worship and obedience. (That God created man to worship and obey is hardly a matter of dispute.) Aniol's narrative history of worship—from the Garden to the post-exilic period—in the opening chapter is an especially worthwhile resource.

More importantly, Aniol deals with true worship's counterfeit: idolatry. Evidence of God's hatred of idolatry—not just in the abstract, but in specific forms—begins early in Israel's history and continues past the exile into the NT. Although he does not intend to produce anything close to a "biblical theology of idolatry," Aniol provides a far more scripturally robust treatment on idolatry than Bob Kauflin does in his 2008 work, *Worship Matters*. Nevertheless, Aniol could do more to draw in some of the NT material, particularly with Paul's condemnations against those who would attempt to embrace the worship of the one true God and the worship of idols (1 Cor 10:19–22; 2 Cor 6:12–18). In addition, Aniol does not emphasize a key perspective on idolatry in Scripture: idols are more than humanly created counterfeits; they manifest the work of Satan and his demons (Deut 32:15–17; 1 Cor 10:19–20; 1 John 5:18–21). However much we may view current differences in worship as stemming from a difference in *theological and philosophical worldviews,* differences in worship in the Old and New Testaments were often a matter of *competing spiritual kingdoms*.

At the end of part 2, Aniol's exposition of Hebrews 12 (chapter 7) plays a critical role in summarizing the biblical material in parts 1 and 2. The chapter could easily stand alone as a separate and valuable resource regarding the relationship between worship and doctrine for the early Jewish Christians. Aniol interprets the warnings in Hebrews to be an expression of "the author's concern that his reader not reject Christian worship in favor of that of Judaism. The point is clear: those who refuse to worship Christ will find judgment, but those [who] do worship him will receive forgiveness and life everlasting" (111). However, there remains a strong continuity between the OT and NT worship:

"The change of worship between the testaments is not in its essence; the change occurs in the external forms and experience of worship alone" (112–13).

In recounting the history of liturgy since the early church, Aniol's material is thorough but accessible. Nevertheless, this section does not always clearly prove how deviations in worship shaped deviations in doctrine, nor that the restoration of worship shaped the restoration of proper doctrine. Of course, it is often more than sufficient to trace the concurrent changes in worship and doctrine (for good or ill) within the various eras. Attempting to prove that one caused the other might be futile. However, it seems that Aniol could give more attention to known (or plausible) causal connections whereby the *lex orandi* shaped the *lex credenda.* His conclusions at the end of the sections do provide a helpful review of how the material is relevant to his thesis, but it is easy to get caught up in the story itself and forget the reason that Aniol is telling the story.

One limitation of *Glory into Glory* is its scope. In most of the historical chapters after chapter 8, Aniol traces the liturgy of *European and American* Christianity. The limitation is natural and somewhat necessary. After all, if we are to investigate the interchange between liturgy and doctrine, the available documentation about Christian doctrine and practice in the West dwarfs similar resources from Asia and Africa. Nevertheless, Christians were worshipping around the world for the same duration of history, and a future edition of the book could be enhanced with an appendix dealing with a similar history.

Another notable feature of his work is that Aniol is particularly interested in the use of music in Christian worship, although he demonstrates a breadth of knowledge across many aspects of liturgy. Nevertheless, some elements could be easily expanded without making the book very much longer. One addition could reference worship and architecture. Since corporate worship often occurs in an established and regular location, some reference to architecture and its relationship to liturgy would be interesting (particularly in light of Western Christianity's long history of building places of worship in order to have a particular effect on the worshippers). Aniol alludes to such effects but without much development.

Any lengthy treatment of worship must invariably deal with the topic of the worshipper's emotional state when offering worship. God condemns those for whom worship is merely perfunctory. Likewise, worship that aims for a particular emotional response on the part of man is focused in the wrong direction. Aniol hardly shies away from this issue, providing both a biblical basis for the "heart response" that liturgy provides (51) and discussion of how various people through history (e.g., Jonathan Edwards, Charles Wesley) responded either to a lack of emotion in worship or to emotional excess.

Despite some occasional stylistic issues (e.g., grammar and sentence length), Aniol writes in a clear and direct manner with a flow of thought that is easy to follow. The index will pose some challenges for the reader: the initial printing appears to have many page number errors. However, the book follows a historical order, so a basic knowledge of church history is generally sufficient to find names and events (and for those who need a quick refresher, Appendix 3 supplies a helpful timeline).

Aniol largely delivers on his promise, both in the historical survey he provides and in demonstrating the integral relationship between worship and doctrine. *Changed from Glory into Glory*

unfolds an accessible account of how we got to where we are and provides a roadmap for how worship leaders can borrow the best from our Christian heritage as we fulfill our greatest duty and joy: worshipping God, not as a means of getting his attention or creating an experience for ourselves, but as a means of expressing our gratitude for what he has already done on our behalf.

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Mathis, David. *Workers for Your Joy: The Call of Christ on Christian Leaders.* Wheaton: Crossway, 2022. 260pp. + 80pp. (back matter).

Many books on pastoral shepherding emerge each calendar year. Puritan reprints are golden and timeless. Well-known pastors today contribute helpful options as well. But every once in a while an exceptional and refreshing volume is released that quickly presses down a deep footprint within the vast landscape of pastoral literature. It is my opinion that David Mathis' *Workers for Your Joy* is Exhibit A for 2022.[1] As a pastor himself, entering his fifth decade of life, he brings to this book a shepherd's DNA, a professor's burden, a fine-tuned pen, and the smell of sheep.[2] His close proximity to and relationship with Dr. John Piper for twenty years also reveals itself from cover to cover. In his own words, "John Piper . . . has been to me pastor, father, teacher, and friend. I quote John a lot in this book. His influence . . . is hidden, if not conspicuous, on just about every page" (263).

David grew up during the 80s and 90s in Spartanburg, SC, and graduated from Furman University. He continued his education at The Bethlehem Institute (now Bethlehem College and Seminary) and Reformed Theological Seminary. He moved to Minneapolis in 2003 to serve in the college ministry of Bethlehem Baptist Church, and he has remained in the Twin Cities since then as a professor at BCS, executive editor of desiringGod.org, and pastor at Cities Church. His burden for accessible theology, practical discipleship, and the health of the local church are demonstrated in his previous three books: *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines, The Christmas We Didn't Expect,* and *How to Stay Christian in Seminary*. His many articles at desiringGod.org and chapter contributions to other solid books reveal these passions as well.

Mathis states his goal for *Workers for Your Joy* on page 16: "Christian leadership exists for the joy of the church. Such a vision may turn some of our churches upside down, first for the pastors and then for the people. That's the vision I hope to impart, and linger in, in this book." While he faithfully takes aim at the NT office of elder/pastor/overseer as well as the local congregation, he is also careful to discuss the nuances of vocational and non-vocational occupants of the NT office (161n2). Throughout the book he graciously reiterates his conviction for a plurality of elders for each congregation (e.g., 25n2; 269–81). He is constantly aware that future/potential elders are reading this book as well, not just current elders.

I appreciate Mathis' organization of his book which, he observes, seems to correspond with the "mysterious power of three" (18). His focus is on the fifteen elder qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, arranged under three axes:

1. Humbled (chs. 1–4): The man before his God (i.e., his devotional life).
2. Whole (chs. 5–9): The man before those who know him best (i.e., his private life).

[1] It is interesting to note that The Gospel Coalition awarded *Workers for Your Joy* the Award of Distinction for Ministry Books in 2022. "The Gospel Coalition 2022 Book Awards," December 5, 2022; accessed 27 December 2022, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/tgc-book-awards-2022.

[2] Mathis explains on pages 35–36 that the terms *pastor*, *elder*, and *overseer* are interchangeable, referring to the same NT office. Although he seems to default to the term *elder*, I am taking the freedom in this review to employ all three terms as well as the word *shepherd* to refer to the same office.

3. Honorable (chs. 10–15): The man before the watching church and world (i.e., his public life).[3]

Before he launches into the three book sections, he writes an introduction which, in my view, can serve as a stand-alone introduction to the ministry of shepherding.

Section 1 focuses on the pastor's devotional life. Chapter 1 specifically addresses his call to the NT office. Mathis helpfully takes the reader through the internal desire, the external affirmation, and the reality of opportunity. He is firm that, until a local church extends the opportunity of a pastoral call, the individual is not yet fully called. Until that point in time, the author prefers the phrasing "sense of calling" (50). He concludes this chapter with a natural discussion of appointing and disciplining pastors. Chapter 2 focuses on the importance of a pastor's not being a new believer, due primarily to the pull of pride entering the NT office as well as the pride that can surface over time once in the office. Mathis offers two questions for the current and aspiring pastor: (1) Does he think with sober judgment? and (2) Does he count others more significant than himself? (69–70). In chapter 3, Mathis does a commendable job focusing on the qualification "able to teach." Not only does he explain why this qualification is highlighted for pastors (73), but he also demonstrates seven reasons why it is central in the local church (76–79). I also find his discussion regarding the nature of "able to teach" to be compelling as he differentiates it from mere "possibility." He calls the ability to preach a skill, not something marginal or negotiable (81). Helpful also are his discussions on 1 Timothy 5:17 as well as the debate about any distinction between teaching and ruling elders (85–89). Chapter 4 addresses the need for pastors to be clear-headed (i.e., sober-minded). I found his trajectory of this topic engaging as he takes much time to discuss generational challenges between older and younger pastors.

Section 2 focuses on the pastor's private life. Mathis rightly insists that a pastor's personal integrity and character never clock out. Elders "are whole, which means that for those with eyes to see, such men are even more impressive in everyday life than they are behind the pulpit" (110). As a biblical counselor, I was impressed with Mathis' discussion on self-control in chapter 5. He reaches for Dr. Ed Welch and the *Journal of Biblical Counseling* to frame his thoughts on progressive sanctification (e.g., "Turn from . . . turn to"; 115–18).[4] Mathis also provides a positive discussion of how pastoral "power" is demonstrated in the local church context (119–25). Chapter 6 focuses on the elder's personal purity and marital fidelity. I especially appreciated the words of scriptural (Hebrews 3–4) and practical hope he shares with men engaged in the battle for purity in our internet age (131–36). Mathis lays out his personal understanding and pastoral guardrails regarding alcohol in chapter 7. The reader may not personally land where the author does in interpretation or practice, but Mathis provides, nonetheless, a helpful chapter to work through as this topic has gained saturation in the evangelical landscape. Chapter 8 addresses the danger of materialism. Especially noteworthy in this chapter is the succinct yet thorough discussion of pastoral compensation (159–62). Mathis argues wisely for his personal ratio recommendation of paid and non-paid elders (161n2). Chapter 9 is titled "The Tragedy of Distracted

[3] He groups the fifteen pastoral qualifications under these three sections based on theme, not Pauline order. He explains his reasoning for this on page 18.

[4] Including several of the key progressive sanctification passages (e.g., Eph 4:20–24, Col 3, Rom 6–8, Jas 1:21–25, etc.) at least parenthetically in this section would strengthen Mathis' "turn from . . . turn to" language in this chapter. He does, however, use many of these passages elsewhere.

Dads." This chapter surveys the entire domestic footprint of the pastor—both as husband and father.[5] Mathis graciously covers the issue of the salvation of the pastor's children and concludes: "So, the issue at hand is not the eternal state of the child's soul, but the nature of the elder's fathering" (171). Next, he provides a helpful rubric for understanding the husband's headship over his wife (172–78).

Section 3 focuses on the pastor's public life. In chapter 10 Mathis deals with the umbrella qualification of "above reproach." He observes, "There is no requirement for particular achievements in formal education, world-class intellect or oratory, or manifest giftedness above the common man. Rather, these qualifications are the sort of traits we want in every Christian in time. What we're looking for in our pastor-elders, in essence, is normal, healthy, model Christianity" (187). Chapter 11 focuses on being respectable. While I expected Mathis to emphasize the pastor's actions and words (which he does), I was surprised and refreshed with his third focus—what a pastor wears (202–3). Mathis approaches the qualification of hospitality in chapter 12, arguing the necessity of being strategic toward both believers and unbelievers. He also explains hospitality's vital contribution to church planting and discipleship. Chapter 13 presents Jesus as the perfect example of gentleness—the ultimate model for every pastor. "When we admire his gentleness—and he is its paragon—we do not celebrate that he is weak. Rather, as feeble sheep, we enjoy that not only is our Shepherd infinitely strong, but he is all the more admirable because he knows how to wield his power in ways that give life to, rather than suffocate, his beloved" (227). Chapter 14—"How Do Pastors Pick Their Fights?"—rightfully lands on James 3:13–18 as well as 2 Timothy 2:24–26. Mathis' four-question process on whether or not to engage in conflict is gold (235–36). Chapter 15 reminds pastors that we must have strategic and tactical engagement with unbelievers. Mathis concludes this chapter with this challenge: "Outsiders matter to us because such were all of us. But we have been brought in. And good pastors know, firsthand, that Christ loves to make us frail, former outsiders his means for bringing in more, and for leading his church with such hearts and dreams and prayers" (248).

Just when the reader thinks the book is over with the pastoral qualifications, Mathis continues to provide outstanding material. He issues a "Commission" (249–64) which lists five ways that true Christian leaders are different from today's mere celebrities. He provides five helpful appendices: Appendix 1—"Who Are the Deacons?"; Appendix 2—"A Word for Leaders" (regarding plurality and team dynamics); Appendix 3—"What Is Anointing Oil?" (regarding James 5:14–15); Appendix 4—"What Is the Laying on of Hands?" (regarding commission to ministry); and Appendix 5—"How Old Should Elders Be?" The reader may not agree with all his conclusions, but I believe that most will appreciate Mathis' labor in the Word and the resulting recommendations. Finally, he provides a study guide covering every chapter (over twenty pages long). The questions are robust, not simplistic. Used privately or in small groups, it would yield vulnerable accountability and concrete application. It is one of the best study guides in this regard that I have found in a pastoral-theology resource.

As a pastor for nearly thirty years, my personal preference is to read the writings of men who have put more decades into pastoral ministry than I have. I have benefited much from the writings of

[5] I think it would have served Mathis well to reference key authors from the biblical counseling world in this chapter on the family as he did with Ed Welch and Dave Harvey in chapter 5. Admittedly, this is a preference of mine, but I believe it would have further endeared this excellent book even more to that reading audience.

Charles Spurgeon, R. Kent Hughes, John MacArthur, and others. But I am gladly shelving *Workers for Your Joy* next to these other writers in my library's pastoral-theology section. David Mathis has been shepherding for fifteen years at the time of this writing, but any pastor knows that fifteen years of pastoral ministry should yield much practical wisdom and prudence. It has for Mathis. His book is worthy of attention and praise. He is careful with the text of Scripture, constantly referencing excellent scholars throughout (e.g., Don Carson, Gregg Allison, G. K. Beale, Jim Hamilton, George Knight, Bill Mounce, Douglas Moo).

I recommend this book as a reference for teaching through Paul's pastoral qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. I recommend it as a refresher for any pastor, paid or unpaid. I recommend it as a relay, a curriculum to help seasoned pastors point young and/or potential pastors toward ministry expectations. I recommend it for rejoicing—Mathis' stated goal of joy for this book.

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Parker, Brent E., and Richard J. Lucas, eds. *Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies: Four Views on the Continuity of Scripture.* Spectrum Multiview Book Series. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2022. 256pp. + 10pp. (back matter).

Books devoted to comparing major hermeneutical systems have a long and mixed history. John Feinberg's edited collection of essays (*Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments,* 1988) was the first major comparative collection of interactions between covenantal and dispensational theologians on an array of hermeneutical issues dividing the two systems. Robert Lightner (*The Last Days Handbook,* 1990, rev. 1997) and Renald Showers (*There Really is a Difference: A Comparison of Covenant and Dispensational Theology,* 1990) represent dispensational theologians who have offered comparative analyses. The complicating of the field by the emergence of recent "progressive" positions has necessitated a reevaluation of major views. Benjamin Merkle offered an informative but somewhat less-than-evenhanded comparison of the four primary hermeneutical thought streams in *Discontinuity to Continuity: A Survey of Dispensational & Covenantal Theologie*s (2020; see my review in *JBTW* 1, no. 1 [Fall 2020]).

The best way to handle a comparison of multiple views and avoid the slippery slope of subjectivity that often bedevils a single-author analysis is to let a living representative of each perspective express his own view in his own words; then permit each representative the opportunity to respond to the views of their colleagues. That is what Parker and Lucas have done. The respective representatives are Michael Horton for covenant theology (CT), Stephen Wellum for progressive covenantalism (PC), Darrell Bock for progressive dispensationalism (PD), and Mark Snoeberger for dispensational theology (DT). These essays are followed by a response from each writer critiquing the alternatives.

In a thirty-three-page introduction Parker and Lucas, both PCs, overview all four positions and highlight points of contact and contrast between the views. The introduction provides a concise survey of each position and touches briefly on a handful of other views that lack sufficient following or definition to include as major contenders (Reformed Baptist covenant theology, new covenant theology, theonomy, and promise theology or epangelicalism). Regarding the origin of the PC label, they note, "While the name of this position may suggest that PC is a nuanced form of covenant theology in a manner similar to how *progressive* dispensationalism is to dispensationalism, this would be an incorrect inference." Rather, "*progressive* seeks to underscore the unfolding nature of God's revelation over time" they explain (24). It is true that PC has less in common with CT than PD does with DT; the modifier *progressive* in PD, however, does not signal a merely nuanced form of DT any more than it identifies PC as a nuanced form of CT. For clarity on this point, the editors need look no further than Bock's own essay in this volume: PD traces "how the covenants of promise have advanced or progressed in their fulfillment"; consequently, "the term *progressive* as [PD] uses it highlights this linked advance in continuity" (115).[1]

[1] Bock's explanation dates back at least as far as the 1990s: "The term 'progressive' is solely intended to describe how this view highlights the progressive movement of God's plan from one dispensation to the next. The name says nothing about where or how other dispensational views stand." "Hermeneutics of Progressive Dispensationalism," in *Three Central*

Michael Horton strikes a traditional CT posture, seeing CT as "the architectural design or framework of Scripture itself" (36). "Prior to the fall . . . Adam was . . . on trial" under a covenant of works based on obedience to law—a trial which, of course, Adam ultimately failed (40–41). God confronted and remedied that failure by establishing "one unfolding covenant of grace stretching from Genesis 3:15 to Revelation 22:21" (35). All of the major covenants since the fall (Abrahamic, Sinaitic, Davidic, and New) are "different administration[s] of the one covenant of grace" (46). But "behind these covenants lies the eternal covenant of redemption" (35) as the theological ground for that covenant of grace. "The church does not supersede Israel" because "the church has always existed since Adam and Eve" (71). No surprises here. Horton spends a good deal of space anchoring various aspects of CT in the writings of historical theologians (from Irenaeus to Zwingli to the Westminster Confession to Witsius to Cocceius to Mastricht), explaining why the Sinaitic Covenant is not an extension of the covenant of works, and addressing modern Reformed aberrations along the way (Barth, the "Calvin vs. the Calvinists" thesis, Norman Shepherd and the Federal Vision view).

Stephen Wellum reminds his readers that when it comes to the issues being debated in this book, "we agree on more than we disagree." Nevertheless, "significant disagreements remain that require resolution" (75). The biblical "covenants are the backbone to Scripture's entire storyline." While PC "does not deny the theological concept of 'the covenant of grace' if one merely means 'the one plan of God,'" Wellum critiques CT's consolidation of "the biblical covenants under the larger category of the 'covenant of grace'" in a way that fails to differentiate "significant covenantal differences" (75, 82). Moreover, PC differs from CT by insisting that "Jesus' new covenant people are different from Israel"; that's why, according to Wellum, "circumcision and baptism do not signify the same realities" (76). Wellum rightly underscores the essentially presuppositional nature of all theological systems (77). Interestingly, however, I suspect that few of any of the opposing viewpoints would dispute his four hermeneutical presuppositions as he has stated them (77–81); Bock, at least, acknowledges as much (124). The disagreements arise from the details of how those hermeneutical principles are applied on the basis of even deeper presuppositional assumptions. One of Wellum's recurring emphases is that all the covenants "culminate in Christ" or are "fulfilled in Christ" or "reach their *telos*" in Christ (78, 79, 86, 87, 90). Few if any would argue with that assertion as it stands, but it requires further definition: does that mean all the covenantal provisions are realized and fulfilled as of Christ's *first* coming? Yes, according to Wellum (104, 109). Wellum holds to a future conversion of ethnic Israel but no restoration (110), and he vigorously denies that he employs "typological interpretation" or either excludes or replaces Israel (215–16).

Darrell Bock also opens his essay with the reminder that "this is an in-house, family discussion within evangelicalism" and that "what we hold in common is in many ways far more important" than what divides us in this debate (112). One of the key distinctives of PD can be expressed in an important conjunction of conjunctions: *both/and*. Whereas "some questions previously had been treated in an either-or manner by [CT and DT], progressives saw some cases to be a both/and proposition" (114).

Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views, ed. Herbert W. Bateman IV (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 99.

The kingdom, for instance is not a "now or not yet" proposition but "now and not yet . . . inaugurated but not yet consummated" (114). A key distinction between PD and PC "is whether ethnic Israel as a nation had a future role in God's program. Here is where [PCs and PDs] part company." PD "argues for fulfillment in Christ and equality among the nations in blessing without removing the role for national territorial Israel in the consummation so emphasized in the OT. . . . Gentile blessing does not mean *national, territorial Israelite exclusion"* (115). Why, PD asks, must it be either one *or* the other, when a both/and approach allows the fullest, most natural, most literal fulfillment of all the promises as uttered by God and understood and expected by Israel? "What [PD] contends is not that this global dimension is to be denied or rejected but that, in the 'expansion,' what is gained does not shed what was originally promised" (118). Similarly, all the covenant promises coalesce and find their fulfillment in Christ, but why only and entirely in conjunction with his first coming?

Snoeberger opens his chapter with a seven-page historical justification of DT ("born as an ecclesiological movement deeply committed to (1) a careful reading and harmonization of the whole Scriptures, and (2) the doctrine of the spirituality of the church," 151–52), followed by eleven pages on "originalist interpretation" ("an originalist interpretation is axiomatic to the successful use of language," 154), and sixteen pages on the kingdom as the governing center of the Bible's storyline. He rejects "typological interpretation" (159), denies that the Abrahamic Covenant has been fulfilled or (contra PD) even "partially" fulfilled (170), and holds that the New Covenant has no relationship to the Church though he acknowledges DT represents a variety of views on that issue (176).

In the response sections, Horton sees the DT penchant for literal fulfillment as a form of question-begging (184), opposes identifying a "unifying theological center" of Scripture (186), and thinks that "the real center of dispensationalism is the nation of Israel rather than Jesus Christ, the true Israel" (189). He is more appreciative of aspects of Bock's PD but focuses his critique specifically on the issue of Israel's restoration. Horton (unlike Wellum) at least engages with some of the key Lukan passages Bock raises as NT evidence that Israel's restoration is still on the covenantal table (Acts 1:6–7, Luke 13:34–35), though neither Horton nor Wellum respond to Bock's argument from Luke 21:20–24 or Acts 3:18–21. Regarding PC, Horton suggests that its strength (continuity) is also its key weakness in that it tends to "run the covenants together" (196).

Wellum acknowledges much that PC and CT agree on; his criticism of CT is twofold: (1) CT superimposes its own theological grid atop the biblical covenants, in many respects conflating them and altering their specificity and intent; and (2) CT fails to account for the church's *newness* as a regenerate people in contrast to Israel" (203, emphasis original). Wellum spends half his space developing that critique of CT; the other half treats PD and DT combined. His most cutting critiques are leveled at Snoeberger who, he says, evidences little understanding of the alternative positions, is guilty of numerous "reductionisms and distortions," gives "the impression that few in church history have understood Scripture except dispensationalists," implies that "we needed dispensationalism to 'save' the day so that the church could finally read the Scripture properly!" (210–11), and complains, "I do not recognize my view in Snoeberger's description, and Bock is not much better" (215). Wellum seems to be unaware, however, that he comes across just as imperious and condescending as he accuses Snoeberger of being. His dispensational interlocutors "fail to grasp how God's unified plan

unfolds through the covenants" (211); and in response to Bock's view he inveighs authoritatively that "this is *not* how the covenants progress and are fulfilled in Scripture, how inaugurated eschatology works, and especially what the church is as God's new creation people" (213, emphasis original). He complains about one of Bock's critiques by saying, "What he really means is that I disagree with his view of national Israel!" (216). Yet Wellum's own critique that "the dispensational covenantal plotline is out of sync with the Bible's" because it "does not consistently start in creation and culminate in Christ and his church" (213) amounts to the same thing—what he really means is that they simply disagree with Wellum's view of the Bible's covenantal storyline. Wellum seems to misunderstand PD as much as he claims to be misunderstood by it—a point Bock addresses (231–32).

Bock notes a major sticking point with both CT and PC: their insistence on an Adamic Covenant, and freighting it as crucial to any right reading of the Bible's storyline (223, 226). To Wellum's defense of typology and explanation of NT priority (once we get to the NT, "we now know what the OT was predicting," 202), Bock counters, "If I have to wait until later revelation truly to understand former revelation, then the original context and meaning become largely irrelevant" (228). It would have been helpful if Bock had directly addressed Horton's denial of supersessionism (71), rather than simply maintaining the criticism (221, 225).

Snoeberger rejects as improbable Wellum's "christological/typological method unprecedented in any other known human literature" but acknowledges that PCs "do not spiritualize OT prophecies or replace their original referents with new ones" (243–44). Nevertheless, PC's "transformation of the OT into a vast complex of foreshadowings, pictures, types, and other semi-predictive devices, the original intentions of which fall away as they are fulfilled in Christ is . . . hermeneutically peculiar" (244). Likewise (though less extreme), PD's "complementary hermeneutic" in which "the promises and covenants of the OT obtain progressively more robust referents" is also problematic; while "Bock does not neglect original meaning," he nevertheless permits those original intentions "to expand beyond the conscious intention of the original authors" (247). Formal covenants simply do not admit the addition of new referents (248). Finally, DT opposes "the penetration of Christ's eschatological kingdom and even the new covenant into the present age" (248–49).

Parker and Lucas wrap up the exchange of views by identifying three core issues at stake in the discussion: (1) hermeneutics (including the Bible's framework and Testamental priority), (2) the covenants (including their identity, nature, and fulfillment) and, as a consequence of these differences, (3) conclusions regarding ecclesiology and eschatology. The differences in each of these three areas are helpfully and concisely summarized in three successive comparative charts.

Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies is the best overview of the eschatological-ecclesiological positions currently available, precisely because the editors permit representatives of the theological positions to speak for themselves. It is unfortunate that the tone is not a tad more elevated in places, but the debate is a vigorous one with far-reaching hermeneutical implications on the level of both individual texts and biblical metanarrative. Let the conversation continue.

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