The *Journal of Dispensational Theology* is published three times per year by the *Society of Dispensational Theology* in cooperation with *Tyndale Theological Seminary* as a means for conservative evangelical scholarship from a normative dispensational perspective.

Manuscripts and communications can be emailed to editor@tyndale.edu. Contributors are expected to conform their manuscript to submission guidelines (available through the Seminary website: tyndale.edu).

Books for review should be sent to:
Editor, *JODT*
6800 Manhattan Blvd. #200
Fort Worth, TX 76120

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Subscription rates:
U.S. Non-Tyndale Student - $25 per year
Foreign Non-Tyndale Student - $35 per year (includes Canada and Mexico)
Single copy rate - $7
All subscriptions payable in United States currency.

Journal of Dispensational Theology – March 2008

Contents

ORIGIN OF THE CONSTELLATIONS AT BABEL[*]

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Why do diverse cultures have similar constellations? Is there a Gospel in the stars? If the biblical account of the dispersion from Babel were true, peoples from Babel would communicate common ideas that might survive today in the cultures they founded after the dispersion. From a biblical point of view, therefore, any common denominator among diverse modern cultures is a possible indication that all peoples really did once live at a single place identified in the Bible as Babel.[1] However, in today's secular culture, nothing is supposed to point back to the true history of the Bible, especially to the creation, the Flood, or the dispersion from Babel.[2] Indications from science and history that the Bible might be accurate are vigorously denied, particularly for the events in Genesis chapters 1—11.[3] Consequently, it is claimed, "Different cultures do not have more or less the same constellations, beyond what is expected from the few most striking star groups like the Big Dipper and Orion." Or, it may be admitted that most cultures recognize more or less the same constellations, followed by the claim: "They do today, dominated by Western culture, but did not in the past."[4]

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[*] *The crucial assistance of Mr. Michael Clater, head librarian at Clearwater Christian College, in locating original versions of the old documents cited herein is gratefully acknowledged.*

[1] A common denominator among many cultures past and present is the prevalence of legends concerning creation, the Flood, and dispersion from Babel itself. See Jonathan Henry, "Legends of the Creation, Flood and Babel" [article online] (Creation Concepts, 2005) available from http://creationconcepts.org/resources/ LEGENDS.pdf; and Jonathan Henry, "More Legends of the Creation, Flood and Babel" [article online] (Creation Concepts, 2006) available from http://creationconcepts.org/ resources/STORIES.pdf.

[2] See Ron J. Bigalke Jr., comp. ed., *The Genesis Factor: Myths and Realities* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008).

[3] Eugene H. Merrill, "Genesis 1—11 as Literal History," in ibid., 75-92.

[4] These statements were made to the author in correspondence, from a missionary in Taiwan, and from an amateur astronomer in the United States. They were objecting to a statement in Jonathan F. Henry, *The Astronomy Book* (Green Forest, AR:

Though no two cultures share constellations identical in every detail, nevertheless there are deep and basic similarities that have attracted the attention of secular researchers who do not give any credence to Genesis 1—11. Emphasizing the differences cannot erase the similarities, and these similarities are too wide-ranging to be the result of coincidence alone. The truth is that the constellations are due to Nimrod, were common knowledge at Babel, and have since been preserved amongst the world's cultures.[56] Such a conclusion has implications for dispensational theology. Some have claimed that the constellations were a kind of primeval revelation before God gave His written word to mankind, so there is a "gospel in the stars." If this were true, there is introduced into the pre-Mosaic dispensations a mode of revelation present in nature that went beyond the general revelation mentioned in Romans 1:20. However, the Bible specifies that even in the pre-Mosaic dispensations, God gave special revelation to man through chosen prophets and preachers (Gen 5:21-24; Jude 14-15), and since the close of the apostolic age, only through His written Word. Were the pre-Mosaic dispensations unique in that God somehow communicated with man

Master Books, 1999), 24-25, which reads, "most cultures recognize more or less the same constellations."

[5] There has long been the idea that God defined the constellations as a pre-biblical revelation, a so-called "gospel in the stars." See the section "Is the Gospel in the Stars?"

[6] Besides the "gospel in the stars" idea, other "Christian myths" to avoid include: (1) the computer that jammed when it "found" Joshua's long day (computers are only machines; how could it "know" when to jam?); see "Have NASA computers Really Proven Joshua's 'Long Day'?" [article online] (Christian Answers Network, 1997) available from http://christiananswers.net/q-aig/aig-a001.html; Robert C. Newman, "Joshua's Long Day and the NASA Computers: Is the Story True?" [article online] (Reasons to Believe, 1997) available from http://reasons.org/resources/apologetics/joshualongday.shtml; (2) the Soviet drilling project terminated when the operators heard the screams of demons in hell (a story untraceable to its ultimate source but assisted by a letter from a Norwegian school teacher who admitted that he "fabricated;" see Rich Buhler, "Scientists Discover Hell in Siberia," *Christianity Today* 30 (16 July 1990): 29; *Biblical Archeology Review* recounted this story with gentle irony: see "Not Frozen Over—Hell Found Under Siberia: Screams Scare Scientists," *Biblical Archeology Review* 26 (November-December 1990): 6; and, (3) Darwin's deathbed conversion (a posthumous story due to his wife; see Wilbert H. Rusch, John W. Klotz, and Emmett L. Williams, eds., *Did Charles Darwin Become a Christian?* (Norcross, GA: Creation Research Society, 1988), 1-38. Further discussion of these "Christian myths" is outside the scope of this article.

specially through the stars? The conclusion of this article is that He did not.

ORIGIN OF THE CONSTELLATIONS

Using the spread of Western culture to account for the cross-cultural similarity of constellations overlooks the existence of similarities in *ancient* constellations. As will be evident, similarities in ancient constellations are a difficulty for conventional views of the past. Conversely, similarities among ancient constellations do not mean that ancient cultures had *identical* constellations. Biblical creationists have recognized these similarities as being connected with the dispersion from Babel.[7] Even more, the existence of any similarity whatsoever is damaging to the belief that isolated groups of primitive peoples evolved in different localities. Indeed, the constellations have no objective existence. The patterns that will be called constellations are in the minds of the beholders. The stars comprising them, with few exceptions, do not even lie on the same plane in space. The stars that seem to be situated on the surface of the "celestial sphere" are actually at various distances from humanity.[8]

      With the thousands of stars visible to the naked eye, the probability of independently evolving cultures arriving at the same constellations *by chance alone* is remote. There is no evolutionary approach that explains how different cultures, supposedly developing in

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[7] Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record* (San Diego: Institute for Creation Research, 1976), 278.

[8] "The stars of a constellation have no connection one with another apart from the fact that they happen to lie in approximately similar directions as seen from earth. A constellation is therefore an arbitrary or conventional grouping of stars. Indeed, the Chinese, for example, divided the sky up into groups different from those familiar to us." Michael W. Ovenden, "The Origin of Constellations," *The Philosophical Journal* 3 (July 1966): 1. An exception is the three stars in Orion's belt. Orion's belt has the three bright stars zeta Orionis (Alnitak), epsilon Orionis (Alnilam), and delta Orionis (Mintaka). These three stars are at the same distance from earth (1,500 light-years), so they lie in the very plane in which they appear to be situated. Perhaps that is why, in Job 38:31, God asked Job, "Canst thou . . . loose the bands of Orion?" These three stars are also remarkably similar in other ways (the same size, about twenty times larger than the sun; and similar surface temperatures, about 50,000 degrees Celsius or somewhat higher). The Pleiades, also mentioned in Job 38:31, are "a true physical group" as opposed to "a chance alignment" Arthur R. Upgren, *Night Has A Thousand Eyes: A Naked-Eye Guide to the Sky, Its Science, and Lore* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 58.

separate parts of the world, managed to *imagine* the same or similar star patterns in the sky. Conversely, the existence of even a few identical constellations suggests that all of mankind was once congregated at one point from which all ethnic groups dispersed. Since the Bible describes such a dispersion scenario, at least some of the constellation similarities among ancient cultures represented shared ideas originating before mankind dispersed. While some post-dispersion borrowing may have occurred among adjacent cultures, borrowing cannot account for the existence of similarities between ancient Old and New World cultures now separated by the ocean. Even secular authorities place the origin of constellations at a time consistent with the biblical date for Babel, as indicated by astronomer and historian of science James Jeans.

> The earth wobbles as it rotates . . . so that the portion of the sky which can be seen from any portion of the earth's surface is continually changing; that part in which the constellations bear ancient names is the part which could be seen from about latitude 40° N., in about the year 2750 B.C., and this is thought to suggest that these constellations were grouped and named by the Babylonians of some such date. They are practically identical with our present-day constellations of the northern sky.[9]

The biblical date for Babel is about 2400 BC,[10] comparable with the 2750 date that Jeans cited. Jeans' assessment was not new. In 1913, one writer noted that, "[According to Maunder] there was a tradition that Taurus was the original leader in the zodiac; the equinox, therefore, was probably in Taurus when the constellations of the zodiac were formed, and this was the case between 4000 and 1700 B.C."[11] Maunder himself claimed "the [celestial] sphere was mapped out in North latitude 40° and about 2800 years B.C."[12]

   Astronomer Michael Ovenden later confirmed a similar date of origin for the constellations. He "found the mean of the different dates from the various constellations to be 2800 B.C. ± 300 years . . . There

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[9] James Jeans, *The Story of Physical Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 8.

[10] Jonathan Henry, "What Is the Age of the Universe?" [article online] (Creation Concepts, 2001) available from http://www.creationconcepts.org/resources/AGE.pdf.

[11] M. A. Evershed, "The Origin of the Constellations," *Observatory* 36 (April 1913): 179.

[12] E. Walter Maunder, "The Zodiac Explained," *Observatory* 21 (December 1898): 441.

can . . . be no doubt that the constellations are, individually, oriented symmetrically with respect to the celestial poles of about 2800 B.C."[13] More recently, astronomer William K. Hartmann concluded that the constellations *as we know them* date from sometime between 2600 ± 800 BC: "Many constellations may be Minoan . . . handed down to us from around 2600 B.C., with still earlier elements incorporated into them. We should not assume that 'it all started with the Greeks'."[14]

Much of the range of dates, especially the lower end, is consistent with a tight biblical chronology without "gaps" which places the dispersion from Babel around 2300 BC. Furthermore, Hartmann was not saying that the constellations began with the Minoans, but that they continued the use of "earlier elements." This blending of "earlier elements" into new cultural frameworks explains the modifications which became the differences now commonly taken as proof that the constellations were not shared among the early (post-Babel) cultures.[15]

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[13] Ovenden, "Origin of Constellations," 6.

[14] William K. Hartmann, *Astronomy* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1991), 15.

[15] Evershed, "Origin of the Constellations," 181, for example, suggested that the Assyrians imposed major modifications on the original constellations: "Is it not possible that in the golden age of Assyrian astronomy, which began in the 8th century B.C., many traditional forms were gathered together, and the whole sphere definitely mapped out; while at the same time, in the new calendar which was introduced under Nabonassar, the first month for the first time connected with the invisible group of Aries, in which the Sun was known to be, instead of with the group Taurus which appeared after his [the sun's] setting in the west?" However, the Assyrians cannot be considered the originators of the constellations, even though this has been claimed. "I have found 172 useful constraints for Eudoxus' lore [leading to the following conclusion]. . . . (1) All lore reported by Eudoxus were based on observations from the year 1130 ± 80 BC and at a latitude of 36.0 ± 0.9 degrees north. (2) My derived date and latitude correspond only to the peak of the Assyrian culture. (3) The typical accuracy of the lore is 4-8 degrees even though 1 degree accuracy is easy to be gotten by primitive methods. (4) About half the rise/set pairs [of recorded star positions] recorded in the Mesopotamian MUL.APIN tablets are also given in Eudoxus' lore. (5) The MUL.APIN tablets have been independently determined to be based on observations from roughly 1000 BC at a latitude of 36 degrees north . . . I conclude that both Eudoxus' lore and MUL.APIN were derived from the same old Assyrian observations" (B. E Schaefer, "The Latitude and Epoch for the Origin of the Astronomical Lore of Eudoxus," *Bulletin of the American Astronomical Society* 35 (American Astronomical Society Meeting, December, 2003, accessed 8 July 2004) available from http://adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2003AAS...203.3501S. The low accuracy Schaefer perceived for the latitude that the lore implies also entails a low accuracy in the *time* inferred from the lore. Having focused on the MUL.APIN tablets as supplying the time frame for the lore, Schaefer inferred the latitude necessary from the lore to give him the time frame he expected, then concluded that the time frame matched the time of

Therefore, the common belief that the constellations—as known today—originated with the Greeks cannot be true.

> [The Greek naturalist] Hipparchus was not the originator of the constellations. He had before him the description of the sky known as 'The Sphere of Eudoxus' (Eudoxus of Cnidos, *c*. 403-350 B.C.), and a poetic description of the sphere of Eudoxus given by Aratus (*c*. 315-250 B.C.) in the work known as the *Phaenomenon*. If [2800 BC for] the date of the constellations is correct, then Aratus and Hipparchus lie about half-way between us and the constellation-makers, and Hipparchus will be trying to fit what he sees with descriptions in the sphere of Eudoxus that are really appropriate to a situation 2500 years before his time.[16]

Maunder likewise observed, " . . . the correspondence between the Greek and Indian planispheres [sky maps] shows that one of them was copied from the other, or both from the same original model."[17]

CONSTELLATION SIMILARITIES ARE NOT COINCIDENCE

A number of historians have asserted that the very earliest cultures, those one would recognize as early post-dispersion peoples, did indeed employ the same constellations. Differences developed, but similarities remained, as historian Kenneth Brecher noted.

> The Babylonians identify [Sirius] as part of a constellation which they describe as a bow and arrow. The Chinese independently described a bow and arrow in the sky, but they used different stars for their construction. For them, Sirius is part of the image at which the arrow is shooting; and curiously, the image at which that arrow is shooting is a dog. In Western tradition, Sirius is part of the constellation Canis Major, the Big Dog. It is remarkable that the same images—dogs, bows and arrows—occur in the cosmographies of different cultures; after all, if you look at the sky, you see only points of light

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Assyria's cultural dominance. His conclusion that the MUL.APIN tablets and Eudoxus derive from the same source is true, except that the ultimate source dates from c. 2800 BC (a date which should be revised downward by several centuries), so could not have been Assyria. Nor could the Romans via Ptolemy have given us the constellations: " . . . Ptolemy's catalogue bears witness to a constellation scheme that originated and *had received its completion* before his day." E. Walter Maunder, "The Origin of the Constellations," *Observatory* 36 (April 1913): 330.

[16] Ovenden, "Origin of Constellations," 8.

[17] Maunder, "Zodiac Explained," 439.

on a dark field. . . . [This can be taken] as an indication that the astronomical myths of China and Mesopotamia derive from a common origin.[18]

Historians Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend have also noted that the Orion motif is "common to the spheres of Mesopotamia, Egypt and China." Furthermore, "there is strong circumstantial evidence of this bow and arrow in Mexico also: the bow of the Chichimeca, the Dog-people."[19] Orion with modifications was also recognized in ancient Iran and India,[20] but modification is what one would expect for diffusing legends. Orion was also familiar to the ancient Norwegians,[21] and old Norse rock art depicted Orion.[22]

The Pleiades were another constellation known worldwide in ancient times, even among Australian aborigines. "In Aboriginal mythology there are many stories of the Pleiades: they are given female attributes and are known as seven sisters. In this there is a pronounced similarity to legends from all over the world."[23] However, the Pleiades' renown is not due to their prominence in the heavens: "Those stars are apparently only six," with the seventh so dim at times as to be unseen, "yet all the world over, among civilized and savage races, in Europe, in India, China, Japan, America, and Africa, this diminutive group is not merely regarded as seven stars, but what is still more surprising, as '*The*

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[18] Kenneth Brecher, "Sirius Enigmas," in *Astronomy of the Ancients*, eds. K. Brecher and Michael Feirtag (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979), 91.

[19] Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, *Hamlet's Mill* (Boston: Gambit, 1969), 216.

[20] Ibid., 358.

[21] Richard Hinckley Allen, *Star Names: Their Lore and Meaning* (New York: Dover, 1963). Originally published as *Star-Names and Their Meanings* (New York: G. E. Stechert, 1899), 313.

[22] M. Schoemfeld, "Prehistoric Astronomy: A Zodiac from Bohusian Province, Norway," *Scientific American* 3 (1921): 301-03. See also William R. Corliss, ed., *Ancient Man: A Handbook of Puzzling Artifacts* (Glen Arm, MD: Sourcebook Project, 1978), 557-59.

[23] J. E. Aitchison, "The Pleiades in Aboriginal Mythology," *SIS Workshop* 5 (September 1983), in Ian Tresman, ed., *Catastrophism!: Man, Myth and Mayhem in Ancient History and the Sciences* [CD-ROM]. Derby, United Kingdom: Knowledge Computing, 2004. The Nazca Indians of Peru recognized the Pleiades. Evan Hadingham, *Lines to the Mountain Gods* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 1988), 104.

Seven Stars,' though the far brighter seven stars of the Great Bear might seem to deserve the title."[24]

The Great Bear was also known worldwide in antiquity. "The star group in Ursa Major was seen as a bear in Europe, Asia, North America, and even ancient Egypt, where there are no bears . . . the bear identification may go all the way back to ice-age Euro-Asia, from where it spread."[25] Significantly, "ice-age Euro-Asia" would have been the location of Babel, and would have existed at the time indicated by biblical chronology for Babel.

As mentioned earlier, Maunder estimated that the latitude of the constellation makers was 40° north. A more recent investigation placed the latitude slightly farther south, at approximately 30° to 38° north.[26] The latitude of Babylon, 32½° north, is within this range.[27] A significant fact about the constellations is that the oldest ones fill only the northern sky and are absent in an empty zone surrounding the south celestial pole.[28] This is consistent with the existence of Babel in the northern hemisphere,[29] together with the fact that dispersing cultures did not reach the extremities of the southern hemisphere until relatively recently.

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[24] R. G. Haliburton, "Primitive Traditions as to the Pleiades," *Nature* 25 (1 December 1881): 100.

[25] Hartmann, *Astronomy*, 14.

[26] " . . . [I]f we take the date to be 2800 B.C. ± 300 years, the observers' latitude becomes 34° ± 4° . . . [conversely, a statistical analysis of star positions inferred from various statements in Aratus yields an estimate for the date and latitude of] 2600 B.C. ± 800 years, 36°N ± 1½°'" (Ovenden, "Origin of Constellations," 11-12).

[27] Anton Pannekoek, *A History of Astronomy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961; reprint, Mineola, NY: Dover, 1989), 74.

[28] Hartmann, *Astronomy*, 14; Owen Gingerich, "On the Origin of the Zodiac," *Sky & Telescope* 67 (March 1984): 218.

[29] Evershed, "Origin of the Constellations," 181. In contradiction, however, Ovenden, "Origin of Constellations," 15, asserted, "There are four main contenders for the title of constellation-makers. The credit is often given to the Babylonians, but their seafaring would have been in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, too far south for the latitude of the constellation makers [but Babel slightly south of Baghdad was at about 32° north, close to Ovendens' estimated latitude range for these people]. The Egyptians sailed in the Mediterranean, but much of their seafaring also would have been in more southern waters. The Phoenicians were great traders, with a great centre at Byblus, latitude about 34° (consistent with our determined latitude). . . . But I would like to put forward the claims of the Minoans, based on Crete, who were out in the Mediterranean in strength by the beginning of the third millennium B.C." Hartmann's reservation about naming the Minoans as the constellation-makers has been mentioned. Further, Ovenden's proposals have a chronological problem. The chronologies of his four

ARE THE CONSTELLATIONS REMEMBRANCE
OF NOAH'S FLOOD?

There is a view that God mapped out the constellations as a kind of primeval revelation before man had the Bible.[30] An even older view of the constellations is that they were a device of Nimrod at Babel to lead mankind away from God, or at least they reflect the corrupted mythologies that mankind fell into at Babel and afterward.[31] In between these extreme views is a middle view that constellations are corrupted memories of significant events happening early in history.

   The most traumatic such event was the global Flood of Noah, and one of the most expansive constellations is

> the large constellation of Arago the Ship, often shown in early representations [of the constellations] as though atop a mountain. Coming from the ship is the Centaur, a man-animal, sacrificing a Beast upon the Altar. We see, too, the Water-snake (Hydra) with a Raven (Corvus) eating its flesh. There can be no

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candidates—and of other ancient chronologies coupled to conventional Egyptian chronology—are too long by as much as a millennium. See Jonathan Henry, "Appendix A: The Sothic Cycle and Egyptian Chronology" in "Fallacies of Radiometric Dating" [article online] (Creation Concepts, 2007) available from http://www.creationconcepts.org/resources/DATING-2.pdf). Once the chronologies are scaled downward, as they ought to be (by shrinking the Egyptian chronology appropriately, and by subtracting the years of the non-existent "dark ages" from the Minoan and Greek chronologies), these cultures date not from c. 2500 BC, but from closer to 1500 BC (a date roughly a millennium too young to match the date of the constellation-makers).

 [30] See the section, "Is the Gospel in the Stars?"

 [31] Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons: or the Papal Worship Proved to Be the Worship of Nimrod and His Wife* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1959), 13. Ralph Woodrow, in *Babylon Mystery Religion* (Palm Springs, CA: Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association, 1966), once advocated Hislop's ideas. However, in *The Babylonian Connection?* (Palm Springs, CA: Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association, 1997), 23-28, Woodrow claimed some of Hislop's conclusions to be undocumented speculation. However, one should not reject Hislop's assertion that nearly *all* cultural practices began at Babel and accept the opposite claim that virtually *nothing* began at Babel (Woodrow, *Babylonian* [1997], 24). Indeed, *History Begins at Sumer* is the title of a book by historian Samuel Noah Kramer (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1959). Sumer was the biblical Shinar (Gen 11:1), the location of Babel, and the center of the first civilization after the Flood. Kramer asserted that many cultural practices and patterns did indeed first appear in the Sumer of 2800 BC (*History Begins at Sumer*, 29).

doubt that here we have, in imagination pictured in the sky, a version of the story of Noah and the Flood. The picture is complete with the Milky Way seeming to rise as smoke from the Altar.

Consider the following quotation, with which we are all familiar: 'And Noah built an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl and offered burnt offerings at the altar. . . . And God said, "This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you for perpetual generations. I do set my bow in a cloud, and it shall be a token of a covenant between me and the Earth".' The bow of Sagittarius is fixed pointing to one of the most obvious rifts, or clouds, in the Milky Way. Of course, this association of the Southern constellations with the flood story that occurs in Genesis, and in the Babylonian Book of Gilgamesh, is no new insight, for when the stars left vacant by changing the course of Eridanus [due to precession] were later given a name, Columba the Dove was chosen [i.e. the "Dove" motif was preserved even as the star patterns in the heavens changed over the centuries because of precession]. . . .

Did the constellations inspire the myth [of the Flood] or did the myth inspire the constellations? I am sure that the latter was the case. Indeed, what better aid to memory of the pattern of the stars by uneducated sailors could there be than to associate the star-patterns with the stories known to the sailors from their childhood, as a pictorial mnemonic.[32]

Arago is not the only stellar reminder of the Flood, for "from the Lake Eyre region [Australia] there is a myth that links [the Pleiades, known as the Seven Sisters] with a flood. . . ."[33] In this myth, "the ancestor figure who tried to capture one of them was prevented by a great flood."[34] By association with the Flood, the Pleiades became associated with the giving of rain, even though the aborigines were not farmers and therefore had no practical reason to monitor rainfall.

[Primitive peoples] have commonly timed the various operations of the agricultural year by observation of [the Pleiades'] heliacal rising or setting. . . . [G]reat attention has been paid to the Pleiades by savages in the southern hemisphere who do not till the ground. . . . Now amongst the rudest of savages known to us are the Australian aborigines, none of whom in their native state ever practised agriculture. [Yet they] sing and dance to gain the favour of the Pleiades . . . the constellation worshipped . . . as the giver of rain [Part 5, *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*, 1]. . . .[35]

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[32] Ovenden, "Origin of Constellations," 16-17.

[33] Aitchison, "Pleiades in Aboriginal Mythology."

[34] Jennifer Isaacs, ed., *Australian Dreaming* (Sydney, Australia: Aboriginal Arts Board and Lansdowne Press, 1980), 152.

[35] James G. Frazier, *The Golden Bough* (London: Macmillan, 1920; reprint, New York: St. Martin's, 1966), 307.

There is also a Jewish legend that links the Pleiades with the Flood. "The upper waters rushed
through the space left when God removed two stars out of the constellation Pleiades."[36] How the Pleiades became connected with the Flood is not known. Nevertheless, the Pleiades are another component of legends worldwide that testify to the reality of Noah's Flood.

IS THE GOSPEL IN THE STARS?

The gospel-in-the-stars concept is the idea that God originally defined the constellations as a primeval revelation preceding the giving of the written Word. The constellations were intended to tell the Gospel story, but eventually the meaning of the constellations was corrupted into astrology; now we have God's revelation in His Word, a "more sure word of prophecy" (2 Pet 1:19).

Though God made the stars (Gen 1:16), and though the Bible mentions various constellations and groups of stars called "asterisms" (e.g. the Pleiades [Table 1][37]), the Bible nowhere claims that God designed the constellations for a revelatory purpose. Biblical references to constellations merely assert that God, not pagan deities, controls the stars in the constellations. Biblical references to constellations are therefore a rebuttal of ancient and modern astrology, not proof of a "gospel in the stars."

Table 1. Constellations and Asterisms in the Bible	
Job 9:9	"[God] maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south [Scorpio?]"
Job 26:13	". . . [God's] hand hath formed the crooked serpent [Serpens]"
Job 38:31-32	"Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth [the Zodiac] in his season? Or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons [Bootes and Coma Berenices?]?"
2 Kgs 23:5	"constellations" (NASV), same as Mazzaroth
Isa 13:10	"constellations"
Isa 27:1	". . . that crooked serpent," an allusion to Serpens
Amos 5:8	"the seven stars," an allusion to the Seven Sisters; and Orion

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[36] Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, trans. Henrietta Szold (1909; reprint, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968), 162.

[37] Allen, *Star Names*, 554.

God indeed has a name for each star: "He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names" (Ps 147:4). Isaiah 40:26 links God's ability to create and name each star with His ability to control them: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names of the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth." Isaiah 40:26 is a strong assertion that God controls the heavens, which means that God, not the heavens, controls our lives. This assertion remains relevant today, for astrology was and still is a common belief. In antiquity,

> . . . astrology was based on the doctrine that the outer spheres of the universe influenced the inner. . . . This conception coloured all departments of thought and embedded itself deeply in speech. 'The scheme was conceived under an evil star', 'His fortune is in the ascendant', 'The seventh heaven of delight', 'He has gone to a higher sphere', 'The British sphere of influence', 'Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades' (Job XXXViii. 31), 'He has the influenza' are such cases.[38]

Modern belief in the constellations as Gospel revelation began with the publication of *Mazzaroth: or, the Constellations* (first part) by Frances Rolleston.[39] Rolleston cited "proof texts" without context but in so doing made an argument that became popular. Rolleston's assertion was that "the signs [in the zodiac] were intended to symbolize prophecy, as recorded in the Holy Scriptures" (first part, 7).[40]

Subsequent books teaching a Gospel in the stars can be traced to Rolleston's *Mazzaroth.* For example, Joseph R. Seiss in *The Gospel in the Stars* acknowledged: "[F]rom [Rolleston's] tables and references the writer of these Lectures was helped to some of his best information."[41] E. W. Bullinger, in *The Witness of the Stars*, likewise described his debt to Rolleston: "Some years ago it was my privilege to enjoy the acquaintance of Miss Frances Rolleston, of Keswick, and to carry on a correspondence with her with respect to her work, *Mazzaroth: or, the*

[38] Charles Singer, *A Short History of Scientific Ideas to 1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 215.

[39] Frances Rolleston, *Mazzoroth; or, the Constellations* (London: Rivingtons, 1862; reprint, 1882) [online] available from http://philologos.org/%5F%5Feb%2Dmazzaroth.

[40] Rolleston, *Mazzoroth*.

[41] Joseph R. Seiss, *The Gospel in the Stars* (Phildelphia: E. Claxton, 1882; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1972), 6.

Constellations. She was the first to create an interest in this important subject."[42] Kenneth C. Fleming, in *God's Voice in the Stars*, cited Rolleston, Seiss, and Bullinger in a conceptual lineage spanning more than a century,[43] as did Henry M. Morris[44] and Ruth Beechick.[45]

Christians gravitated to Rolleston's argument because it seemed to lend historical veracity to the early chapters of Genesis. Similarities among the constellations, however, provide intriguing evidence of biblical history without the need of resorting to Rolleston's "Gospel in the stars" idea. Indeed, Rolleston and Seiss advanced the claim of this present article, that constellations of diverse cultures show basic similarities, implying that humanity once lived at a single site. Rolleston, for example, noted "the Egyptian and Chaldean signs were the same as everywhere else, but differently named" (second part, 7).[46]

Seiss maintained that he came to the "Gospel in the stars" concept by encountering skeptical polemical works attempting "to throw contempt on Christianity as a mere accommodation of certain old mythic ideas common to all primitive peoples," but rather than doubting Christianity, Seiss began noticing the "striking correspondence between [the ancient myths] and the subsequent Scriptural story of Christ and salvation."[47] The skeptics had exploited the cultural similarities among the constellations as evidence that Christian beliefs were merely primitive archetypes. With input from Rolleston, Seiss in response interpreted these archetypes as evidence that the stars carried an ancient Gospel message visible to all.

However, the remembrance, in legendary form, of *historical* events such as the Flood also accounts for these so-called "archetypes." Images of these "archetypes" were indeed imposed on star patterns, which is the claim of this article. Therefore, the similarities in constellations reflect the reality of historical events affecting all mankind rather than a supposed prophecy in the stars.

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[42] E. W. Bullinger, *The Witness of the Stars* (London: Lamp Press, 1954), iii.

[43] Kenneth C. Fleming, *God's Voice in the Stars* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1981), 143.

[44] Henry M. Morris, *Many Infallible Proofs* (San Diego: Creation-Life, 1974), 343.

[45] Ruth Beechick, *Adam and His Kin* (Pollock Pines, CA: Arrow Press, 1990), 50-53, 172, 175.

[46] Rolleston, *Mazzoroth*.

[47] Seiss, *Gospel in the Stars*, 6.

Was there ever a need for a Gospel in the stars? A careful reading of the Bible suggests not, for even among the ante-diluvians Enoch (Gen5:21-24) "prophesied . . . saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints" (Jude 14-15). And long before this, Genesis 3:15—the so-called "proto-evangelium"—records that God, speaking to Adam and Eve, had prophesied the coming of His Son to earth.

"Gospel in the stars" advocates also infer from star names that the stars *individually* must have been primeval revelation. Some of the brightest stars, for example, have names reminiscent of biblical themes[48] (see Table 2). However, the Bible nowhere reveals the name that God has given to each star, so there is no guarantee that the traditional star names preserve elements of divine nomenclature. Mankind's ancient awareness of special revelation as mentioned in Genesis 3:15 and Jude 14-15, along with mankind's memories of ancient historical "archetypes," however, explains the similarity between star names and biblical themes.

Furthermore, the primeval meaning of many star names is uncertain at best; "'etymology has full play with a word which has not traveled beyond astronomical language'—a statement . . . applicable to very many . . . star names."[49] By stretching uncertain meanings, the appearance of agreement can be produced between the supposed ancient meanings and biblical themes. Additionally, the errors in Fleming's list of star brightness order, noted at the bottom of Table 2, do not add credibility to the supposed "revelatory" significance he attributed to each star name.

Table 2. Names of the 24 Brightest Stars According to Fleming[1]

Star	Bayer Nomenclature	Meaning of Traditional Name[1]	Bible Theme[1]	Ref.[2]
1. Sirius	α Canis Majoris	Prince	Isa 9:6	122
2. Canopus	α Carinae	Possession of Him Who Comes	Isa 60:4-9 68	
3. Rigil Kent[3]	α Centauri	The Heretofore and Hereafter	Rev 1:8	152
4. Vega[4]	α Lyrae	He Shall Be Exalted	Isa 52:13	285
5. Capella	α Aurigae	She Goat	Ezek 37:22-24	86
6. Arcturus	α Bootis	He Comes	Ps 96:13	99
7. Rigel	β Orionis	The Foot That Crushes	Gen 3:15	312
8. Procyon	α Canis Minoris	The Redeemer	Isa 59:19-20	134
9. Achernar	α Eridani	After Part of the River (of Fire)	Nah 1:5-6	217
10. Altair[5]	α Aquilae	The Wounded	Ps 38:2, 10	60
11. Hadar[6]	β Centauri	unknown		154

[48] Fleming, *God's Voice*, 21-22.
[49] Allen, *Star Names*, 313.

12. Acrux[7]	α Crux	unknown		191
13. Betelgeuse	α Orionis	Coming of the Branch	Isa 4:2, Mic 3:1-2	311
14. Aldebaran[8]	α Tauri	The Governor	Ps 22:28, Zech 9:7	233
15. Pollux[9]	β Geminorum	He Who Comes to Suffer	Ps 22	233
16. Spica	α Virginis	The Branch	Zech 3:8; 6:12	466
17. Antares	α Scorpii	Wounding	Isa 53:5, Zech 13:6	365
18. Fomulhaut	α Piscis Austrinus	Mouth of the Fish		345
19. Deneb	α Cygni	The Judge	Ps 9:8	259
20. Regulus[10]	α Leo	Treading Underfoot	Isa 63:3, Gen 3:15	256
21. Mimosa[11]	β Crux	unknown		
22. Castor[12]	α Geminorum	Ruler, Judge	Deut 18:15	230
23. Alioth	ε Ursa Majoris	Goat, Sin Offering	Lev 16:15, 27	440
24. Bellatrix	γ Orionis	Swiftly Destroyed	Ezek 28:18	313

References for Table 2. [1] Fleming, *God's Voice*, 21-22. [2] Pages cited in Allen, *Star Names*. [3] Fleming, *God's Voice*, 21; Rigil Kentaurus is Toliman. [4] Vega and Capella are actually 5th and 6th; Arcturus is 4th (Christine Kornberg, "The Brightest Stars" [article online] (Munich Astro Archive, 9 November 1998, accessed 3 March 2008) available from http://www.maa.mhn.de/StarDate/bright_stars.html. [5] Altair is actually 12th, after Betelgeuse and Hadar (Kornberg, "Brightest Stars" [online]). [6] Fleming, *God's Voice*, 21; Hadar is Agena. [7] Acrux is actually 24th (Kornberg, "Brightest Stars" [online]). [8] Aldebaran, 14th, is actually preceded by HD 213468 (ibid), not listed by Fleming, *God's Voice*. [9] Pollux, Spica and Anteres are actually 17th, 15th, and 16th respectively (Kornberg, "Brightest Stars" [online]). [10] Regulus is actually 21st and Mimosa is 20th (ibid). [11] Fleming, *God's Voice*, 22; Mimosa is B-Crux. [12] Castor is actually 25th, Alioth 33rd, and Bellatrix 28th (Kornberg, "Brightest Stars" [online]).

CONCLUSIONS

The cultures of today emanated from a single point that the Bible identifies as Babel. Constellation similarities are an evidence of this fact. The question has been asked, "[I]s there not a good deal of evidence to show that the constellations grew up gradually in Babylonia, and approximated more and more nearly to those we know as time approached the age of Greek astronomy?"[50] The answer is a resounding Yes! This conclusion falsifies the claim that the constellations were a kind of primeval Gospel revelation. It strengthens the realization that God in all dispensations has given special revelation to mankind though His chosen prophets and His written Word, this last being the exclusive source of special revelation since the close of the apostolic age.

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[50] Evershed, "Origin of the Constellations," 181.

INERRANCY OR DISCREPANCY
BETWEEN PARALLEL ACCOUNTS
IN JUDGES 4:17-22 AND 5:24-27?

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A careful study of the prose account of Judges 4:17-22 compared to the poetic account of 5:24-27 reveals apparent discrepancies. At a glimpse, one can see that the poetic description of Sisera's death by Jael lacks some elements mentioned in the prose. On the other hand, the poetic account in 5:24-27 adds various things not found in the prose account of 4:17-22. Some have suggested discrepancies exist between these accounts.[1] Is that correct, or is it a matter of understanding how prose and poetic accounts function? Discrepancies in the passages, of course, undermine the inerrancy of Scripture, besides causing believers to question the accuracy of other areas of the Bible.

The objective of this article is to answer the question: "Why are there distinctions between the accounts of Judges 4:17-22 and 5:24-27?" Hence one may ask, "Are there discrepancies in the text or can distinctions in both parallel accounts be justified while maintaining the inerrancy of the Scriptures?"

First, it will be best to contrast both accounts in order to show omissions, additions and differences in style. Then a comparison of the contents and defining features between prose and poetry will be considered. Finally a proposal will be suggested in keeping with the rules of poetry while honoring the integrity of Scripture.

CONTRASTS BETWEEN JUDGES 4:17-22 AND 5:24-27

v 17 However, Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between Jabin king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.

v 24 "Most blessed among woman is The wife of Heber the Kenite; Blessed is she among women in tents.

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[1] Baruch Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History*, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Harper & Row, 1988; reprint, University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 81, wrote, "The hypothesis that the prose relies on SDeb also accounts for the discrepancies arising over Sisera's assassination."

v 18 And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; do not fear." And when he had turned aside with her into the tent, she covered him with a blanket.

v 19 Then he said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty." So she opened a jug of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him.

v 20 And he said to her, "Stand at the door of the tent, and if any man comes and inquires of you, and says, 'Is there any man here?' you shall say, 'No.'"

v 21 Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went down into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died.

v 22 And then, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said to him, "Come, I will show you the man whom you seek." And when he went into her tent, there lay Sisera, dead with the peg in his temple.

v 25 He asked for water, she gave milk; She brought out cream in a lordly bowl.

v 26 She stretched her hand to the tent peg, Her right hand to the workmen's hammer; She pounded she pierced his head, She split and struck through his temple.

v 27 At her feet he sank, he fell, he lay still; At her feet he sank, he lay still; At her feet he sank, he fell; Where he sank, there he fell dead.

    The following summarization identifies what is included and excluded in both accounts.

4:17-22 Prose Account	5:24-27 Poetic Account
v 17	**v 24**
(1) How Sisera fled (on foot)	Excluded
(2) From where does Jael come (the wife of Heber the Kenite)	Included
(3) The political relationship of peace between Jael and the king of Canaan	Excluded
(4) Excluded	Jael called most blessed among women
v 18	**v 25**
(5) Jael went out to meet Sisera	Excluded
(6) Jael convinced Sisera to stay	Excluded

(7) Jael comforted Sisera by covering him with a blanket	Excluded
(8) Ask for water	Included
v 19	
(9) Sisera gives reason for asking (thirst)	Excluded
(10) Jael provided milk	Included
(11) Excluded	Emphasis on the kind of milk (cream) and bowl (lordly)
(12) Refers to opening the jug of milk	Excluded
v 20	**v 26**
(13) Sisera asked Jael to guard the tent	Excluded
(14) Instructions in case someone comes	Excluded
v 21	
(15) The tools Jael used to kill Sisera	Included
(16) The way Jael killed Sisera	Included—with the term "head" being added
(17) Excluded	Emphasizes the progressive repeated action how Jael killed Sisera
(18) What and where the weapon (tent peg) ended as a result of Jael's action	Included-but excludes where the weapon ended (the ground)
(19) Where Sisera was (sound asleep) when Jael killed him	Excluded—but says Sisera fell
	v 27
(20) The result of Jael's blow killed Sisera	Included—with repeated emphasis
v 22	
(21) Jael shows Barak Sisera's death	Excluded

A mere glimpse at both accounts demonstrates how the prose contains much more content than the poetic account. Indeed, there are twenty-one elements within the prose, which are compared to the poetic, for noting the additions and omissions of both accounts.

COMPARING AND CONSIDERING THE CONTENTS

Obviously, prose narrative is much more detailed than the poetic account that abridges and simplifies the narrative account. However, the poetic

account does well in highlighting Jael's craftiness by adding more information through the common poetic device of repetition.[2]

Usually when a writer describes a historical event it will be much more thorough than a poetic account in a song describing the event. For example, Exodus 14:1-31 describes in prose narrative Yahweh's victory over Pharaoh's army when crossing the Rea Sea. Compared to Moses and Israel's poetic song of the event in the following sequel of 15:1-18, much more details appear in the prose. Therefore, *no discrepancies exist* that later editors corrected as some might suggest.[3]

Perhaps similar to many Psalms, the "Song of Deborah" (SDeb) is a poem that first "consisted of a description of the battle in secular ballad or epic style, to which were later added the parts in psalm style so that the poem could be used in a cultic setting."[4] However, as Globe concluded, this may not be valid: "This explanation of the genesis of the poem rests on the assumption that a mixture of 'secular' and 'sacred' styles is a valid criterion for detecting the work of different authors writing at different times. . . . [T]his assumption is not valid for several of the Near Eastern peoples that lived before and during the period of the Judges. Israel itself had undeniably absorbed the 'mixed' style at least as early as the reign of David, to judge by the historiographical methods of 1 and 2 Samuel."[5] Immediately after Israel's triumphant battle over the Canaanites, this "thanksgiving hymn of military victory" was sung as would be expected in a "society where poetry was oral rather than a written art."[6] Therefore, since poetry was meant to be heard rather than read or written, various elements peculiar to poetry must of necessity be distinct from prose. Though prose was also typically heard, not just read unlike poetry, prose was not sung. Therein lies the difference that answers the distinctions of both accounts.

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[2] Repetition in poetic narratival accounts is typical in Ancient Near Eastern texts, see John Soden, "Prose and Poetry Compared: Judges 4 and 5 in Their Ancient Near Eastern Context" (Ph.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1989), 25-74.

[3] Peter C. Craigie, "The Song of Deborah and the Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88 (September 1969): 254, fn. 7; Halpern, *First Historians*, 78, 81.

[4] Alexander Globe, "The Literary Structure and Unity of the Song of Deborah," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93 (December 1974): 493.

[5] Ibid., 493-94.

[6] Ibid., 495.

Most poems were usually short and simple for dramatic effect.[7] For example, 1 Samuel 18:7 is composed of two cola. Moses and Israel's triumphant song in Exodus 15:1-18 is half the size of Deborah's song, and David's lament over both Jonathan and Saul in 2 Samuel 1:17-27 follows the same brief pattern. However, even if the SDeb is by contrast longer and more complex, its structure may be divided into three parts:

> (1) a thanksgiving introductory hymn (vv 2-11a),
> (2) the gathering of the Israelite tribes (vv 11b-18)
> (3) and the battle and aftereffects (vv 19-31).[8]

If such divisions are maintained, the brevity and simplicity[9] of each part common to this type of genre[10] (that was heard not read) must stand. Hence upon comparing the prose of Judges 4:17-22 to the poetic account of 5:24-27, one will normally expect to find a more simplistic form in structure and content. In other words, there will be in poetic genre less content than normally found in prose narratives that by nature are meant to describe historical accounts in succession. Not surprisingly the contrast reveals this very structure.

COMMON FEATURES IN POETRY COMPARED TO PROSE

A common feature in poetic language is parallelism and/or overlaid repetition.[11] Hence 5:25-27 adds phrases to further describe the previous

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[7] Craigie, "Song of Deborah and Tukulti-Ninurta," 263-64. Craigie demonstrated how this also worked in Ancient Near Eastern Ugaritic poetic battle accounts. He wrote, "The short line—or thought unit—creates drama and tension in a way that would be impossible with longer or more complex lines." See also, Peter C. Craigie, "Deborah and Anat: A Study of Poetic Imagery (Judges 5)," *Zeitschrift für die Altestamentliche Wissenschaft* 1978 (1978): 374-75.

[8] Globe, "Literary Structure," 495.

[9] Craigie, "Song of Deborah and Tukulti-Ninurta," 263, also noted this simplicity: "In the Song of Deborah, one of the most striking stylistic features is the use of very short staccatotype lines in the description of dramatic events. . . . Since the division of lines in the poem is a somewhat arbitrary procedure, we may put it another way by saying that the units of thought and description become very short and simple. . . ."

[10] Ibid., 254. Craigie wrote, "The unity of the song, in spite of its structure from small sketches, is largely one of the atmosphere created by the individual sketches."

[11] Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1991), 138.

one or repeats them, but changing a word or two in the process. For example, in verse 25 Jael gave Sisera milk, then immediately the kind of milk (a description missing in the prose) was defined to be "cream." However, no discrepancy exists here since, "The skins of animals were frequently used to store liquids, particularly milk, which could then be easily churned to produce curds. That this was the drink offered to Sisera is shown in the second half of 5:25 where 'butter' (AV, RV) is best rendered as 'curds' (RSV)."[12] Therefore, using the word "milk" in the prose refers to the same product further described in the poetic account more specifically as "cream;" the reason for this is that the very nature of poetry is to elaborate more, which is why it employs numerous verbs (more than nouns) to provide a vivid portrayal.[13]

Furthermore in the poem there is nothing of Sisera's coming and Jael's gesture of apparent concern. Chisholm, in describing the poem's device (including repetitions of synonyms, verbs, and the poem's unique focus of Sisera's death), concluded:

> The poem mentions nothing of Jael's tucking Sisera into bed; instead it focuses on the deadly deed. The narrative account uses only one verb to describe the murder stroke (see 4:21); the poem employs four synonyms, emphasizing the deadly force of the blow and forcing us to replay it in our minds. The narrative, while describing how the peg went through his skull into the ground, notes simply that he died (4:21-22); the poem uses seven infinite verbal forms (בָּרַע and נָפַל appear three times each, and שָׁכַב once) to emphasize the efficiency and finality of the deed. It also repeats the location of his death ('at her feet,' lit. 'between her legs') to set up ironic connection with verses 28-30 . . . and concludes with a resounding passive form, 'dead' (שָׁדוּד 'violently destroyed, devastated').[14]

Clearly, the author used a figure of speech called "Epibole" (i.e. overlaid repetition).[15] This means, "The figure is so named, because the same

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[12] Arthur E. Cundall and Leon Morris, *Judges & Ruth: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. D. J. Wiseman, 24 vols. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1968), 7:89.

[13] James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 85.

[14] Robert B. Chisholm Jr., "Judges Commentary," unpublished class notes for OT1005 Exegesis in the Prophets (Dallas Theological Seminary, Fall 2003), 129.

[15] Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, The New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 6:241, wrote, "Verse 27 offers one of the most impressive examples of staircase parallelism in the Old Testament."

sentence or phrase is *cast upon* or *laid upon* (like layers or courses of bricks) several successive paragraphs."[16] Such an example occurs in 5:26-27.

> She stretched her hand to the tent peg [*yāḏâh layyāṯēḏ tišlaḥnâ*]
>> Her right hand to the workmen's hammer [*wîmînâh lᵉhalmûṯ ᶜᵃmēlîm*]
> She pounded Sisera, [*wᵉhālᵉmâ sîsrāʾ*]
>> she pierced his head, [*māḥᵃqâ rōʾšô*]
>>> She split and struck through his temple. [*ûmāḥᵃṣâ wᵉḥālᵉpâ raqqāṯô*]
> At her feet he sank, he fell, he lay still; [*bên raglêhā kāraᶜ nāpal šāḵāḇ*]
>> At her feet he sank, he fell; [*bên raglêhā kāraᶜ nāpāl*]
>>> Where he sank, there he fell dead. [*baʾᵃšer kāraᶜ šām nāpal šāḏûḏ*][17]

It is because poetic language uses figures of speech, the account in 5:24-27 should not be read literally. This is precisely Craigie's point: "The supposed discrepancies mentioned in many commentaries [here] are based on an overliteral interpretation of poetic passage."[18] Some have even suggested "we have no right to approach heroic poetry as if it were a record of fact. Its materials are largely historical, but its arrangement and adaptation of them are not."[19]

Nevertheless, there are no apparent reasons to disregard the SDeb as a factual event, unless one finds a "discrepancy in the mechanics of the murder" in 4:21 compared to 5:27.[20] The prose uses the verb *nirdām*, "fast asleep." In other words, he was sleeping before Jael killed him. However, the poetic account uses the *nāpal*, "fell," which may imply "a collapse"[21] as a result of Jael's fatal blow. All the other elements missing in the poetic account mentioned in the prose really pose no problem due to the fact that one is looking at a different type of genre (as explained

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[16] E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech used in the Bible* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1898; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968), 346. Italics are in the original.

[17] Ibid. Although Bullinger only referred to verse 27 as describing Epibole figure of speech, the latter part of verse 26 follows the same pattern. Therefore, it should be qualified as thus.

[18] Craigie, "Song of Deborah and Tukulti-Ninurta," 254, fn. 7.

[19] Michael David Coogan, "A Structural and Literary Analysis of the Song of Deborah," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40 (1978): 143.

[20] Halpern, *First Historians*, 81-83.

[21] Ibid., 83.

previously). Hence, Arthur E. Cundall correctly analyzed the differences in the prose and poetic account regarding the repetition of verbs and concluded: "The repetition in the poetical account, together with the uncertainty in translating several of the verbs in this description, account for most of the differences between this and the prose account."[22] Therefore, the problem between the prose and poetry is really more apparent than real when one deciphers the issues involved.

Both terms *nāpal* ("to fall") and *kāraʿ* (to bow down") appear together in Psalm 20:8, *kārᵉʿû wᵉnāpālû* ("bowed down and fallen") where God gives the victory to the king.[23] Psalm 20:8 helps disclose both terms because they are synonymously parallel to each other (in verse 8a *nāpal*, and *kāraʿ*). Furthermore, such a parallel—in addition to the following contrasting parallel phrase—also helps illuminate both terms even more since it employs the opposite meaning: *qamnû wanniṯʿôḏāḏ* ("But we have risen and stand upright"). Therefore, as the king's enemies "have bowed down and fallen" Israel will "rise and stand upright." The enemies die as the Israelites live. These are two concluding results of the battle. The term *nāpal* in Judges 5:27 as in Psalm 20:8 should really be understood as "dead" instead of "fallen." Therefore, *nāpal* "does not mean he fell as a result of Jael's blow. This 'is poetic license for 'fallen'" that should be understood as "lying dead on the floor."[24] Hence Lindsey concluded, "The vivid picture of Sisera's death (5:26-27) was not intended to narrate the steps of the physical action, but to describe metaphorically and in slow motion, so to speak, the fall of a leader."[25] It has also been recognized that the root word for *nāpal* was commonly used to describe what occurred to defeated warriors (cf. Lev 26:8; 1 Sam 18:25).[26] Consequently, the poet's main intent was to communicate the warrior's literal defeat by using the term *nāpal*, in a figurative manner[27] conveying death.

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[22] Cundall and Morris, *Judges & Ruth*, 100.

[23] Psalm 20:8 appear as verse 9 in the Hebrew Masoretic Text.

[24] Block, *Judges*, 241, fn. 444.

[25] Duane F. Lindsey, "Judges," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty, Old Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton: Victor, 1983), 390.

[26] J. Clinton McCann, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, ed. James Luther Mays (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2002), 57.

[27] George Bush, *Notes on Judges* (New York: Newman & Ivison, 1852; reprint, Minneapolis, MN: James & Klock Publishing, 1976), 75, acknowledged, "The

CONCLUSION

Careful study of the prose account of Judges 4:17-22 compared to the poetic account of 5:24-27 reveals *no* discrepancies since the texts are dealing with different genres that serve their unique purposes. Furthermore, the poetic description of Sisera's death by Jael lacks some elements mentioned in the prose because it is meant to be short in order to create a more forceful imagery. Consequently, the visual effect caused by repeating *nāpal* ("to fall") and *kāraᶜ* (to bow down") three times forms a staircase effect of "gradual motion of collapsing; but again, the poem communicates at more than a pictorial level."[28] Since he desires to create a vivid portrayal, it is no wonder a poet loves to employ *verbs* instead of *nouns* in a poetic account. Consequently, James Barr explained, "So language, that abounds in verbs, which present a vivid expression and picture of their objects, is a poetical language. The more too it has power of forming its nouns into verbs, the more poetical it is. The noun always exhibits objects only as lifeless things, the verb gives the action, and awakens feelings, for it is itself as it were animated with a living spirit."[29]

A matter of understanding the way prose and poetic accounts work will indeed help one interpret the distinctions found between Judges 4:17-22 and 5:24-27. Therefore, believers can fully trust Scripture and approach it with confidence knowing that nothing will prevent God from communicating His will to man.

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several kindred words appear to be merely a poetic amplification of the circumstances of his death."

[28] McCann, *Interpretation*, 57.

[29] Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language*, 85.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY — PART I

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The purpose of this article is to present an introduction to the doctrine of the Trinity in addition to an exegesis of a specific passage that provides key facts that must be considered in any systematic treatment of the Trinity. The first part of this article will include the definition and importance of the doctrine, the early historical development of the doctrine, and important theological concepts relating to this doctrine. The second part will undertake an exegetical analysis of a key Scripture passage on the Trinity (John 15:26-27) in order to understand its contribution to this important doctrine.

INTRODUCTION TO TRINITARIANISM

The doctrine of the Trinity (or the Triunity) of God is a unique teaching of the Christian faith, and it is a concept that is sometimes difficult for thinking individuals to understand.

> In the doctrine of the Trinity, we encounter one of the truly distinctive doctrines of Christianity. Among the religions of the world, the Christian faith is unique in making the claim that God is one and yet there are three who are God. In so doing, it presents what seems on the surface to be a self-contradictory doctrine. Furthermore, this doctrine is not overtly or explicitly stated in Scripture. Nevertheless, devout minds have been led to it as they sought to do justice to the witness of Scripture.[1]

It is also true that the doctrine of the Trinity is not a product of deductive logic or philosophical reasoning. The mind of man would have never conceived of such a doctrine. "It is important to realize that the doctrine of the Trinity has not been given to the Church by speculative thought. It is not an *a priori* concept, nor in any sense derived from pure reason. This doctrine has come from the data of historical revelation. In the process of history God has revealed Himself as one God, subsisting in three Persons."[2]

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[1] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 321.
[2] J. Oliver Buswell, "Trinity," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, 5 vols. gen. ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964), 5:871.

One of the things that must be admitted initially is that an absolute understanding of the Trinity is beyond the ability of the finite mind to comprehend completely.

> No man can fully explain the Trinity, though in every age scholars have propounded theories and advanced hypotheses to explore this mysterious Biblical teaching. But despite the worthy efforts of these scholars, the Trinity is still largely incomprehensible to the mind of man. Perhaps the chief reason for this is that the Trinity is a-logical, or beyond logic. It, therefore, cannot be made subject to human reason or logic. Because of this, opponents of the doctrine argue that the idea of the Trinity must be rejected as untenable. Such thinking, however, makes man's corrupted human reason the sole criterion for determining the truth of divine revelation.[3]

Scripture itself provides foundational elements for reasoning about complex doctrines such as the Trinity. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:8-9). Perfect understanding of many of the truths of God is beyond the capability of the human mind. Kenneth Boa aptly remarked, "since the Bible is an infinite revelation, it often brings the reader beyond the limit of his intelligence."[4] Similarly, Erickson reminded the church that even in the glorified state, when believers will have eternal fellowship with God, they would not be able to entirely understand everything about Him.

> The Trinity is incomprehensible. We cannot fully understand the mystery of the Trinity. When someday we see God, we shall see him as he is, and understand him better than we do now. Yet even then we will not totally comprehend him. Because he is the unlimited God and we are limited in our capacity to know and understand, he will always exceed our knowledge and understanding.[5]

God is the infinite Creator; humanity is, and always will be, His finite creatures. Since this is true, what should be an approach when reasoning about the doctrine of the Trinity? The following passage of Scripture reminds believers that even though many of the truths of God are beyond complete comprehension, they are given to believers in His

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[3] Walter Martin, *Essential Christianity* (Santa Anna: Vision House, 1975), 21.
[4] Kenneth Boa, *Unraveling the Big Questions about God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 12.
[5] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 338.

revealed Word; therefore, it is entirely necessary to work to understand everything which is capable of comprehending: "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever" (Deut 29:29). Believers must be good stewards of God's revelation, as those who watch their life and doctrine closely (1 Tim 4:16) and who correctly handle the Word of Truth (2 Tim 2:15). When examining what the Bible teaches concerning God, it becomes evident that Scripture presupposes the existence of God and goes beyond that fundamental assumption to explain something about *how* He exists. Lightner provided a good summary of this point.

> Holy Scripture presents God existing not only as a holy Person but also as existing in holy Trinity. The doctrine is exclusively the subject of special divine revelation in the Bible. God's revelation in nature and in humanity do not contribute to our understanding of the Trinity. Much of the written revelation of God involves mystery, yet the Trinity is no doubt the greatest mystery of all revealed truth. Though often least understood of all doctrines of the orthodox Christian faith, the doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most basic of all areas of theology. Augustine, the church father, stated well the importance of this doctrine when he wrote, "In no other subject is error more dangerous or inquiry more laborious, or discovery of truth more profitable."[6]

It is clear that believers must carefully study and define the doctrine of the Trinity, in holding to what the Scriptures reveal about the Triune God. To do otherwise would result in heresy, involving serious errors of thinking with disastrous consequences for life in this present age in addition to the age to come. For instance, Chafer and Walvoord wrote: "The many indications in both the Old and New Testaments that God exists or subsists as a triune being have made the doctrine of the Trinity a central fact of all orthodox creeds from the early church until modern times. Any departure from this is considered a departure from scriptural truth. Although the word trinity does not occur in the Bible, the facts of scriptural revelation permit no other explanation."[7] The next important task is to define the doctrine of the Trinity clearly based upon the teaching of the Scriptures, which is the topic of the following section.

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[6] Robert P. Lightner, *The God of the Bible and Other Gods* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 90.

[7] Lewis Sperry Chafer and John F. Walvoord, *Major Bible Themes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 40.

GENERAL DEFINITION OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

The material or data for composing a definition of the Trinity comes from the pages of the Old and New Testaments, although the New Testament contains the most specific information from which a definition of the doctrine of the Trinity can be derived. "Though *trinity* is a second-century term found nowhere in the Bible, and the Scriptures present no finished trinitarian statement, the NT does contain most of the building materials for later doctrine. . . . The NT presents events, claims, practices, and problems from which church fathers crystallized the doctrine in succeeding centuries."[8] Lightner provided a concise overview of the biblical data regarding the Trinity, in addition to an outline of the dangers to be avoided in constructing a definition.

> Taking all that Scripture has to say regarding the one and only true God and the three Persons of the Godhead, we find that the stress is upon unity and diversity in unity. The Bible speaks about three Persons in a similar way. Scripture ascribes deity, personality, and individuality to each. And yet the Bible also reveals that there is but one God. The ancients expressed it well when they spoke about one essence, or substance, in God who existed in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These are two key truths that believers should recognize and as much as possible harmonize. The danger has always been to either fall into tri-theism—namely, a belief in three Gods—or to view the Son and Holy Spirit as being less than God. Those same dangers still exist today. Also, there is an additional error that must be avoided in our understanding of the Trinity. We must not assume that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are merely names or varied modes of existence for the one true God. . . . When theologians say that God is one and that He exists in three Persons, they must be careful not to imply that each member loses His individual identity. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit remain real, individual, and true Persons, even though they are one in divine essence. . . . To sum up the biblical view, which avoids both of these dangers, Christians worship one God who exists in three Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the blessed Trinity is a reminder of the supernaturalness of biblical Christianity. The doctrine defies rationalization, yet it provides for the believer the answer to the unity and diversity in the world all around us.[9]

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[8] Cornelius Plantinga Jr., "Trinity," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols., gen. ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:914.
[9] Lightner, *God of the Bible*, 90-91.

TERMS USED IN DISCUSSING THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

Certain key terms permeate the discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity, and they are often used both in philosophical and theological manners. It is important to have good working definitions of terms when discussing a complex doctrine like the Trinity, and so the following definitions are proposed. They were taken from the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language,*[10] except as otherwise noted.

> *Trinity*: "The union of three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) in one Godhead, or the threefold personality of the one Divine Being."
> *Trinitarianism*: "The belief in, or doctrine of, the Trinity."
> *Essence*: "The inward nature, true substance, or constitution of anything."
> *Substance*: "The essential part or essence of a thing."
> *Hypostasis*: "The underlying or essential part of anything as distinguished from its attributes; the substance, essence, or essential principle."
> *Person*: "A self-conscious or rational being. In theology, any of the three hypostases in the Trinity, namely the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

>> *Person* is, however, an imperfect expression of the truth inasmuch as the term denotes to us a separate rational and moral individual. But in the being of God there are not three individuals, but three personal self-distinctions within the one divine essence. Then again, personality in man implies independence of will, actions and feelings leading to behavior peculiar to the person. This cannot be thought of in connection with the Trinity. Each Person is self-conscious and self-directing, yet never acting independently or in opposition. . . . Diversity manifests itself in Persons, in characteristics, and in operations.[11]

> *Subsistence*: "The process of substance assuming individualization, or the quality of having timeless or abstract existence."
> *Ontological Trinity*: "The ontological Trinity focuses on the personal operations of the Persons or the *opera ad intra* (works within),

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[10] Jess Stein, ed., *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Random House, 1966).

[11] James D. Douglas, ed., *The New Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 1300.

or personal properties by which the Persons are distinguished. It has to do with generation (filiation or begetting) and procession which attempts to indicate a logical order within the Trinity but does not imply in any way inequality, priority of time, or degrees of dignity. Generation and procession occur within the divine Being and carry with them no thought of subordination of essence. Thus, viewed ontologically, it may be said of the Persons of the Trinity: (1) The Father begets the Son and is He from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds, though the Father is neither begotten nor does He proceed. (2) The Son is begotten and is He from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds, but He neither begets nor proceeds. (3) The Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, but He neither begets nor is He the One from whom any proceed."[12]

Economical Trinity: "The concept of the economical Trinity concerns administration, management, actions of the Persons, or the *opera ad extra* (works outside, that is on the creation and its creatures). For the Father this includes the works of electing (1 Peter 1:2), loving the world (John 3:16), and giving good gifts (James 1:17). For the Son it emphasizes His suffering (Mark 8:31), redeeming (1 Peter 1:18), and upholding all things (Heb. 1:3). For the Spirit it focuses on His particular works of regenerating (Titus 3:5), energizing (Acts 1:8), and sanctifying (Gal. 5:22-23)."[13]

CONSTRUCTING A DEFINITION OF THE TRINITY

Many definitions or statements of the doctrine of the Trinity have been constructed. The following example is from the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, which defined the Trinity in these words: "In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding: the Son is eternally begotten of the Father: the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son."[14] This brief definition is rather cryptic because it relied heavily on several technical theological terms which are not in common use, including *generation* and *procession*. A clearer definition was given by Chafer and Walvoord.

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[12] Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton: Victor, 1987), 54.
[13] Ibid., 55.
[14] *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian, 1958), 27.

> While the doctrine of the Trinity is a central fact of Christian faith, it is also beyond human comprehension and has no parallel in human experience. It is best defined as holding that, while God is one, He exists as three persons. These persons are equal, have the same attributes, and are equally worthy of adoration, worship, and faith. Yet the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead makes clear that they are not three separate gods, like three separate human beings such as Peter, James, and John. Accordingly, the true Christian faith is not tritheism, a belief in three Gods. On the other hand, the Trinity must not be explained as three modes of existence, that is, one God manifesting Himself in three ways. The Trinity is essential to the being of God and is more than a form of divine revelation.[15]

This definition avoids the use of technical terms and it attempts to avoid the hazards on either side of the concept of the Trinity, that is, the tension between the oneness and the threeness of God. Ryrie did an excellent task of clarifying the problems inherent in defining the Trinity and he not only provided a good example definition, but also an explanation of each part of this definition, in addition to a Scriptural illustration of the concept of the Trinity.

> A definition of the Trinity is not easy to construct. Some are done by stating several propositions. Others err on the side either of oneness or threeness. One of the best is Warfield's: There is one only and true God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three coeternal and coequal Persons, the same in substance but distinct in subsistence (B. B. Warfield, *Trinity*, The International Bible Encyclopaedia, James Orr, ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1930], 5:3012). . . . Positively, the definition clearly asserts both oneness and threeness and is careful to maintain the equality and eternality of the Three. Even if the word *person* is not the best, it does guard against modalism, and, of course, the phrase "the same in substance" (or perhaps better, essence) protects against tritheism. The whole undivided essence of God belongs equally to each of the three Persons. John 10:30: "I and the Father are One," beautifully states this balance between the diversity of the Persons and the unity of the essence. "I and the Father" clearly distinguishes two Persons, and the verb, "We are," is also plural. But, said the Lord, "We are One," and *One* is neuter; that is, one in nature or essence, but not one Person (which would require the masculine form). Thus the Lord distinguishes Himself from the Father and yet claimed unity and equality with the Father.[16]

As Ryrie stated, a concise definition of the Trinity is not easy to construct, but it is possible and it is important to develop a clear

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[15] Chafer and Walvoord, *Bible Themes*, 40.

[16] Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 53-54.

Scriptural statement of the doctrine of the Trinity, as the following section will demonstrate.

IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

A correct understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity is extremely important for thinking about God and conduct toward Him. Erickson provided an explanation of the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity in the believer's relationship with God.

> The doctrine of the Trinity is crucial to Christianity. It is concerned with who God is, what he is like, how he works, and how he is to be approached. Moreover, the question of the deity of Jesus Christ, which has historically been a point of great tension, is very much wrapped up with one's understanding of the Trinity. The position we take on the Trinity will have profound bearing on our Christology. The position we take on the Trinity will also answer several questions of a practical nature. Whom are we to worship—Father only, Son, Holy Spirit, or the Triune God? To whom are we to pray? Is the work of each to be considered in isolation from the work of the others, or may we think of the atoning death of Jesus as somehow the work of the Father as well? Should the Son be thought of as the Father's equal in essence, or should he be relegated to a somewhat lesser status?[17]

The doctrine of the Trinity also helps in understanding that God is a deity of communion, fellowship, and community. Even before He created any other being there was communion, fellowship, and community occurring between the Persons of the Godhead. Therefore, the doctrine of the Trinity is important because it is the basis or pattern for all true relationship and fellowship in the created world. This is true because it is an expression of the very nature of God, which has its outworking in all of His creatures.

> The implications of the doctrine are vitally important not only for theology but for Christian experience and life. As to the Godhead, it reveals that God is the truly living One. It removes Him from any conception of stagnation or mere passivity. God in Trinity is fullness of life, living in eternal relationships, and in never-ceasing fellowship. The fellowship that constitutes the Trinity is the basis of fellowship within the human family, within the home, within society, and more especially within the Church, where the Holy Spirit is the Agent and Medium of fellowship.[18]

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[17] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 322.
[18] Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, 1300.

Another reason that the doctrine of the Trinity is important is because one's beliefs concerning the Trinity have implications for many other doctrines in many other fields of theology. Ryrie provided several examples of how trinitarian beliefs impact other theological concepts.

> The richness of the concept of the Trinity overflows into several areas of theology. The doctrine of redemption is an obvious example, for all Persons of the Godhead are involved in that great work (John 3:6, 16; Rev. 13:8). The doctrine of revelation serves as another example, the Son and Spirit both being involved in communicating God's truth (John 1:18; 16:13). Fellowship and love within the Godhead is only possible in a trinitarian concept of God, and that fellowship is akin to the believer's fellowship with Christ (14:17). . . . Prayer is practiced in a trinitarian way. Though we may address any Person of the Trinity, ordinarily, according to the biblical precedent, we address the Father in the name of Christ as the Spirit directs us (John 14:14; Eph. 1:6; 2:18; 6:18).[19]

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF TRINITARIANISM

The controversies concerning the Trinity during the early centuries of the church resulted in the emergence of systematic theology. The theological struggles of the early church produced the doctrine of the Trinity as it is essentially known today. Therefore, it is very important to understand the early history of the doctrine, because all of the crucial issues and ideas about the relations within the Godhead were formulated during those first centuries of the church's existence.

> For the first two or three centuries after the death of the apostles Christian literature was mostly of a devotional nature . . . given to encouraging believers in their faith and stimulating their growth in Christ. Actually it was not until doctrinal error and heresy arose that the need for theological formulations was seen. Systematic theology arose and developed in response to deviations and departures from the plain statements of Scripture. . . . At first there were few attempts to harmonize portions of Scripture that appeared to be in conflict. A striking exception was in the trinitarian controversy (170-325), when the need for theological specifics and formulations was forced upon the fathers.[20]

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[19] Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 59.

[20] Robert P. Lightner, *Handbook of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995), 36.

The earliest Christian writings emphasized the unity of God, and only gradually did church leaders feel called to write a defense of the faith to the culture of their day. In defending Christianity, they expressed themselves using the philosophical terms and concepts that were common to that culture, and this sometimes resulted in a distortion or misrepresentation of the orthodox doctrine. Lightner expressed the situation aptly.

> The literature of this early period gives overwhelming evidence of belief in one God (monotheism), as opposed to the heathen belief in many gods (polytheism). . . . In the second century writers placed special emphasis on defending the Christian faith against the inroads of Judaism, Gnosticism, and heathenism in general. Some outstanding men among them were Aristides, Justin Martyr, Tatian, and Athenagoras. . . . They presented a philosophical concept of Christ not at all in harmony with the teaching of the New Testament. To them the Logos, or Word, of John 1:1 was not the eternally existing person of God the Son. They insisted rather than the Logos existed eternally in God only as divine reason, not as a person.[21]

Berkhof also described the inconsistency and confusion in the early church regarding the doctrine of the Trinity.

> The early Church Fathers had no clear conception of the Trinity. Some of them conceived of the Logos as impersonal reason, become personal at the time of creation, while others regarded Him as personal and co-eternal with the Father, sharing the divine essence, and yet ascribed to Him a certain subordination to the Father. The Holy Spirit occupied no important place in their discussions at all. They spoke of Him primarily in connection with the work of redemption as applied to the hearts and lives of believers. Some considered Him to be subordinate, not only to the Father, but also to the Son.[22]

As the church fathers expanded and revised their views on the relationship and works of the persons of the Godhead, they developed concepts and terms that could be used to describe more adequately the Triune God. "The anti-Gnostic fathers believed in one God who was not only the Creator but also the Redeemer. The law was given by him, and so was the gospel. This God was one in essence but three in subsistence. Two of the most outstanding anti-Gnostic fathers were Irenaeus (ca. 130-

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[21] Ibid., 37, 66.

[22] Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1937), 83.

202) and Tertullian (ca. 160-220). The latter was the first to write of the tripersonality of God and to use the term *trinity* with reference to God."[23]

Erickson stated that Hippolytus and Tertullian were the first to develop an "economic" view of the Trinity. "There was little attempt to explore the eternal relations among the three; rather, there was a concentration on the ways in which the Triad were manifested in creation and redemption."[24]   One of the first dilemmas involved maintaining the sole rule and authority of God while also holding to a belief in the deity of Jesus Christ. Several different methods of reconciling these truths were proposed, and the ongoing struggle that was occurring in the church at that time was clearly portrayed by Lightner.

> The doctrine of Christ the Logos as a separate, fully divine person distinct from the Father and the Spirit was viewed as endangering the unity of God by some. On the other hand, viewing the Logos as in some sense subordinate to the Father compromised his deity. The attempt was made to maintain the sole government of God and at the same time retain belief in the full deity of Christ. Two different schools of thought arose to which Tertullian applied the name monarchianism. Dynamic monarchianism was concerned primarily with stressing God's unity and oneness; Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch, was its most noted representative. Modalistic monarchianism was more influential; it laid more stress on the christological side of the issue, though the unity of God was still a point of interest. The three persons of the Godhead were conceived as three different modes of existence in which God manifested himself. Sabellius was the chief spokesman for modalistic monarchianism. . . . He said that in the Father, God revealed himself as Creator, in the Son as Redeemer, and in the Spirit as Sanctifier. Father, Son, and Spirit were therefore not three distinct persons but roles played by one person. . . . Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were simply different modes of revelation or manifestations of the one true God. It is usually acknowledged that Sabellianism was the first major false teaching relating to the Godhead that gained a large following in the church.[25]

The earliest struggle regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, then, involved the place or role of Christ in the Godhead. Walvoord stated, "Historically, the trinitarian doctrine turns largely on the question of whether the Son of God is eternal, whether He has the attribute of personality and the very nature of God. The problems of the doctrine of

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[23] Lightner, *Evangelical Theology*, 38.
[24] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 332.
[25] Lightner, *Evangelical Theology*, 40-41, 103.

the Trinity largely arise in the studies of Christ in His incarnate state."[26] He also declared, "It is safe to say that no attack on the doctrine of the Trinity can be made without attacking the person of Christ. It is also true that no attack on the person of Christ can be made without attacking the doctrine of the Trinity, as they stand and fall together."[27] Lightner outlined this time in church history, including the Arian heresy and the formulation of the orthodox position.

> At this time the church was searching for a conception of Christ that would maintain 1) his true and full humanity, 2) his absolute deity, 3) the union of deity and humanity in one person, and 4) the necessary distinction between his deity and humanity in his person. All the christological controversies from the earliest centuries to the present stem from a failure to include all of these truths in regard to Christ. Arianism was an attempt to explain the person of Christ. Arius, a presbyter in Alexandria, taught that Christ was not eternal but the first and highest creature of God, superior to man but not equal with God. . . .
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> He believed Christ was of another substance from the Father. The Logos had a beginning at a point in time, having been created out of nothing before the world came into being. Athanasius, archdeacon of Alexandria, opposed Arius and Arianism. He championed the unity of God and insisted on the basis of Scripture that the Son was of the same divine essence as the Father. In 325 the Council of Nicaea convened to settle the dispute. . . . The final statement regarding the Father and the Son was: "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, begotten not made, being of one substance [homoousios] with the Father."[28]

Some degree of resolution was achieved at the Council of Nicaea concerning the place of Christ in the Godhead. The next major area of controversy arose concerning the place of the Holy Spirit. Lightner described the struggles and disputes in the church concerning the Holy Spirit, which were similar to those surrounding the issue of Christ's place in the Godhead.

> Soon after the Nicene Council, the Macedonian sect arose, named after Macedonius, who believed the Holy Spirit was a creature and thus not God. He was opposed by defenders of the Spirit's deity. . . . They defended the Spirit as fully God by appealing to the attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence assigned to him in Scripture. . . . In 381 the second council

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[26] John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 32.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Lightner, *Evangelical Theology*, 103, 41.

that met at Constantinople added to the Nicene Council's brief reference to the Holy Spirit. The enlargement referred to the Spirit as "the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father, who, with the Father and Son together, is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. . . ." The Council of Constantinople did not state that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Son but said that he proceeded from the Father. The matter of the procession of the Spirit was an attempt to describe the Spirit's precise relation to the other persons in the Godhead. That the Holy Spirit was fully divine was settled by the Constantinopolitan Creed, but a clearer statement regarding his relation to the Father was still lacking. The Western branch of the church added the filioque ("and the Son") phrase at the Synod of Toledo (589) to the Constantinopolitan statement. Thus the West stated that it believed the Spirit of God proceeded from, and therefore was identical to, the Father and the Son in essence.[29]

As Lightner has stated, the "procession" of the Holy Spirit was proposed as a way of defining the Spirit's relationship to the Father and the Son, within the sometimes obscure realm of the Ontological Trinity. Since this area is somewhat unclear and open to multiple interpretations, the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit was one of the factors that resulted in the so-called "Great Schism" between the Western Church and the Eastern Church. It was the doctrinal statement of the Western Church, however, that was affirmed as the orthodox statement of the Trinity from that point forward in history.

> In his *De Trinitate* Augustine spoke for the Western branch of the church. He stressed the unity of essence and, at the same time, the trinity of persons. Each person, he said, possesses the entire essence. Other Latin theologians, such as Roscelinus and Gilbert of Poiters, erred either on the side of God's unity or of his tripersonality. In his *Institutes* Calvin discussed the doctrine of the Trinity at some length. In essence he defended the view set forth at Nicaea and held by the early church.[30]

Throughout church history to the present day there have been many erroneous statements of the Trinity and many heretical views, but it is essentially the Nicene statement of the doctrine of the Trinity that stands even today as the orthodox statement concerning the Godhead.

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[29] Ibid., 103-04.
[30] Ibid., 41-42.

THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS OF TRINITARIANISM

There are several essential concepts which must be maintained in any orthodox statement of the doctrine of the Trinity. If one or more of these elements is missing or stated erroneously, then the resulting formulation could not be considered an orthodox statement of the Trinity.

The Unity of the Godhead

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament are clear that God is One, rather than many. It is a fact that monotheism is the foundation of the Hebrew-Christian tradition. Any orthodox statement of the doctrine of the Trinity must acknowledge the unity of the Godhead.

The Distinction of Three Members within the Godhead

It is especially clear in the New Testament that God exists as three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Any orthodox statement of the doctrine of the Trinity must acknowledge that there are three distinct subsistences within the Godhead.

The Personality or Personhood of Each of the Three Members of the Godhead

It must be acknowledged that each member of the Godhead possesses the essential qualities of personality. Lightner defined and explained these elements.

> The intellect, the emotions, and the will are the three basic elements of personality. As a self-conscious being, God possesses intellect (the ability to think rationally) and emotion (the ability to respond with feelings). . . . As a self-conscious being, God possesses will (the ability to act volitionally). . . . The Bible abounds with evidence that God possesses the constituent elements of personality; therefore, we can say on biblical ground that He is a Person, and not a force, or an "it," or even the "ground of being."[31]

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[31] Lightner, *God of the Bible*, 87.

Any orthodox statement of the doctrine of the Trinity must acknowledge that each member of the Godhead has the characteristics of personality or personhood.

The Deity of Each of the Three Persons of the Godhead

It must be affirmed that the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. Erickson stated this point in writing: "Each is qualitatively the same. The Son is divine in the same way and to the same extent as is the Father, and this is true of the Holy Spirit as well."[32] Any orthodox statement of the doctrine of the Trinity must acknowledge the deity of each of the persons of the Godhead.

The Threeness and the Oneness of God Do Not Constitute a Logical Contradiction

The finite human mind often perceives a logical contradiction in the simultaneous oneness and threeness of God. Erickson, however, stated that even the laws of logic allow for this concept.

> Although the orthodox interpretation of the Trinity seems contradictory (God is one and yet three), the contradiction is not real, but only apparent. A contradiction exists if something is A and not-A at the same time and in the same respect. Modalism attempted to deal with the apparent contradiction by stating that the three modes or manifestations of God are not simultaneous; at any given time, only one is being revealed. Orthodoxy, however, insists that God is three persons at every moment of time. Maintaining his unity as well, orthodoxy deals with the problem by suggesting that the way in which God is three is in some respect different from the way in which he is one.[33]

Any orthodox statement of the doctrine of the Trinity must acknowledge that it is possible for God to be One and yet Three at the same time.

The Members of the Godhead are Eternal

Not only is each member of the Godhead fully divine, but each member has always existed. Erickson stated this point as follows:

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[32] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 337.
[33] Ibid.

> There have always been three, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and all of them have always been divine. One or more of them did not come into being at some point in time, or at some point become divine. There has never been any alteration in the nature of the Triune God. He is and will be what he has always been.[34]

Any orthodox statement of the doctrine of the Trinity must acknowledge that each person of the Godhead has always existed as a member of the divine Trinity.

The Existence of Functional Subordination Within the Godhead

There are many Scriptural examples where all three persons of the Godhead defer to one another. Gruenler illustrated these relationships.

> All three persons of the Triune Community are deferring to one another: the Holy Spirit to the Son, the Son to the Father, the Father to the Son's request, and Father and Son to the Spirit in honoring him as witness and truth bearer, making the circle of divine accessibility and hospitality complete. Jesus' promise that the divine Trinity is graciously at the disposal of the believing community describes both the inner relationships that denote the essential love and deference of the persons of the Trinity to one another, and the external relationship of the Triune Community to the disciples.[35]

The three persons of the Godhead also subordinate themselves to each other to accomplish the purpose of their will, as described by Erickson.

> The function of one member of the Trinity may for a time be subordinate to one or both of the other members, but that does not mean he is in any way inferior in essence. Each of the three persons of the Trinity has had, for a period of time, a particular function unique to himself. This is to be understood as a temporary role for the purpose of accomplishing a given end, not a change in his status or essence. . . . The Son did not become less than the Father during his earthly incarnation, but he did subordinate himself functionally to the Father's will. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is now subordinated to the ministry of the Son (see John 14-16) as well as to the will of the Father, but this does not imply that he is less than they are.[36]

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[34] Ibid., 337-38.

[35] Royce G. Gruenler, *The Trinity in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 113-14.

[36] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 338.

Any orthodox statement of the doctrine of the Trinity must acknowledge the existence of functional subordination within the Godhead.

PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

Before analyzing a specific Scripture passage to determine its implications for the Trinity, it is important to understand the principles of interpretation that must be followed when constructing a doctrine of systematic theology. Lightner commented, "Evangelical Christians believe in the doctrine of the triune God because of the teaching of Scripture as a whole and not because of one particular passage of Scripture."[37] No theological doctrine should be based on a single passage of Scripture in isolation from the whole counsel of God. McQuilkin remarked, "It will not do to determine the meaning of a passage independent of the rest of Scripture. . . . To study only one element of a revealed truth in a single passage may lead to a distortion of that truth. Inconsistencies, omissions, and wrong emphases may go undetected."[38] He also stated: "A good theologian is one who has taken into account all revealed truth about God and has related each part to a consistent whole. . . . A specific doctrine or theme must be related to all other teaching that might affect that particular doctrine. In this way, the various areas of doctrine are combined into what might be called a *systematic* theology."[39]

As previously stated, the Scriptures do not contain an explicit trinitarian statement but instead provides many isolated foundational concepts for formulating the doctrine of the Trinity. The process of building a theological system was clearly described by Ramm.

> A theological system is to be built up exegetically brick by brick. Hence the theology is no better than the exegesis that underlies it. The task of the systematic theologian is to commence with these bricks ascertained through exegesis, and build the temple of his theological system. . . . Every sentence has implications. . . . All the important references will be treated exegetically. Then the individual references will be used to forge the unified Biblical

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[37] Lightner, *God of the Bible*, 90.

[38] Robertson McQuilkin, *Understanding and Applying the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 209, 219.

[39] Ibid., 220, 230, 232.

doctrine of the subject matter. . . . The theologian must use his texts in view of their context, and in view of their place in the Scriptures.[40]

Erickson explained that the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity is a task that will put the methods and discipline of systematic theology to the test. "Since the Trinity is not explicitly taught in Scripture, we will have to put together complementary themes, draw inferences from biblical teachings, and decide on a particular type of conceptual vehicle to express our understanding. . . . Thus formulating a position on the Trinity is a genuine exercise in *systematic* theology."[41] In the second part of this article, John 15:26-27 will be analyzed to determine which of the essential elements of the doctrine of the Trinity are supported by this passage of Scripture.

CONCLUSION

The first part of this article concerning the doctrine of the Trinity has identified the difficulties involved in thinking through this issue, and it has presented many of the terms which have been developed throughout church history as aids in the process of defining and describing the Trinity. It is important to be mindful of each of the theological concepts that are taught in the Scriptures, which must all be reconciled into a coherent doctrine: 1) the unity of the members of the Godhead; 2) the distinctiveness of the three members of the Godhead; 3) the fact that such unity and separateness do not constitute a logical contradiction; 4) the absolute deity, eternality, and personhood of each member of the Godhead; and, 5) the fact that there are relationships within the Godhead involving functional subordination among the members. A correct conception of the doctrine of the Trinity is extremely important for understanding the nature of God. Furthermore, beliefs concerning the Trinity will have important implications for many other areas of theology. The second part of this article will focus upon an exegetical analysis of a passage of Scripture which provides greater understanding of the relationship between the members of the Trinity.

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[40] Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970), 169, 170, 172, 178.

[41] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 322.

PRETERISM AND ANTIQUITY:
Was Preterism a View of the Early Church?

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If the preterist view is correct that most, if not all, of the Book of Revelation was fulfilled in the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem, there should be substantial evidence in the views of the early church to support this interpretation. Addressing the subject of "The Historical Basis of Preterism," theonomists Greg Bahnsen and Kenneth Gentry attempted to demonstrate a "Nascent Preterism in Antiquity." Indeed, Bahnsen and Gentry claimed that preterism has a vast history in antiquity. This article will examine the evidences advanced by Bahnsen and Gentry to determine if preterism indeed was a view of the early church.

THE CLAIM OF EUSEBIUS

The first evidence provided for such a claim was Eusebius. If true, this claim (among the others referenced) would be the most substantial (because of his historical research); therefore, the majority of this article will consider the preterist claim regarding Eusebius. Bahnsen and Gentry wrote, "Eusebius . . . details the woes that befell Jerusalem in A.D. 70, mostly by reference to Josephus. . . . He then cites Matthew 24:19-21 as his lead-in reference and later refers to Luke 21:20, 23, 24!"[1] Prior to the rise of preterism in the nineties, J. Oliver Buswell had already devoted a section to the "distorted emphasis" of preterism.

> Since the time of Eusebius . . . there have been those who have thought that Christ's prophecy of the abomination of desolation was somehow fulfilled when Titus destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and that the words referring to "Jerusalem surrounded with armies" are just another way of saying "the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place." It can be shown, however, that nothing which took place at the fall of Jerusalem fulfilled the prophecy of Christ in regard to "the abomination of desolation" spoken of by

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[1] Greg L. Bahnsen and Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., *House Divided: The Break-Up of Dispensational Theology* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), 277-78.

Daniel. Attention has been called to the fact that Eusebius, in his *Canons*, lists Luke's reference to Jerusalem surrounded with armies as a verse peculiar to Luke, not parallel to anything in Matthew or Mark. Nevertheless, Eusebius' *Church History* is a chief source for the erroneous identification.

The case for the theory that the prediction of Christ as to the abomination of desolation was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem is well summarized in Schaff's *Church History*, Vol. 1, pp. 390-404. Schaff draws almost entirely from Eusebius' *Church History*, Book III, Chapters V-VIII and from Josephus' *Jewish Wars*, Books V and VI. Eusebius, in turn, is dependent almost entirely upon Josephus. The removal of Christians to Pella in Perea before the fall of Jerusalem is cited as the fulfillment of the command to flee at the sign of the abomination of desolation (Matthew 24:15 ff.; Mark 13:14 ff.).[2]

Philip Schaff wrote, "Eusebius puts the flight to Pella before the war (πρὸ του' πυλέμου), or four years before the destruction of Jerusalem" (1.VI.39).[3] It is assumed that Schaff's comments concerning the "Effects of the Destruction of Jerusalem on the Christian Church" were based upon Eusebius' use of the phrase πρὸ του' πυλέμου.

The whole body, however, of the church at Jerusalem, having been commanded by a divine revelation, given to men of approved piety there before the war [πρὸ του' πυλέμου], removed from the city, and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan, called Pella. Here, those that believed in Christ, having removed from Jerusalem, as if holy men had entirely abandoned the royal city itself, and the whole land of Judea; the divine justice, for their crimes against Christ and his apostles, finally overtook them, totally destroying the whole generation of those evildoers from the earth [Book III, Chapter V].[4]

Buswell commented, "One of our a-millennial friends . . . points out that the comma after, "before the war," shows that the warning, not the flight, took place before the war. Thus, this friend argues, the flight *may* have taken place after the abomination of desolation."[5] Schaff's understanding of πρὸ τοῦ πυλέμου would have been consistent with the subsequent statement of Eusebius in the previous quote. In other words, Eusebius

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[2] J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962; reprint, 10th printing, 1976), 2:401-02.

[3] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1858; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 1:402.

[4] Eusebius Pamphilus, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Christian Frederick Cruse (reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 86.

[5] Buswell, *Systematic Theology*, 2:402.

stated, "the divine justice" was after "those that believed in Christ [were] removed from Jerusalem."

> Yet it may be proper to mention, also, what things occurred that show the benignity of that all-gracious Providence that had deferred their destruction for forty years after their crimes against Christ. During which time the greater part of the apostle and disciples, James himself, the first bishop there, usually called the brother of our Lord, still surviving, and still remaining in Jerusalem, continued the strongest bulwark of the place (Book III, Chapter VII).[6]

According to Eusebius, the church at Jerusalem departed to an area "beyond the Jordan, called Pella" before the destruction of the Temple occurred in AD 70. It is possible, as Buswell concurred, that the departure from Jerusalem could have occured when the church witnessed the beginning stage of the siege of Jerusalem by Titus and his armies. However, there is no historical account that would substantiate the fact that the departure to Pella was due to any understanding that the abomination of desolation (Matt 24:15) had just occurred and the subsequent reaction was to flee the city according to Matthew 24:16-21. The departure of the church to Pella does correlate well with Luke 21:20-23, but there is no basis to allow correlation with Matthew 24:15 or Mark 13:14. The abomination of desolation prophesied in Daniel 9:27 cannot be equated with the events that occurred in the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem.

Daniel prophesied that after Messiah is crucified, the Romans, that is, *the people of the prince who is to come*, would destroy Jerusalem and the second Temple. The *prince who is to come* is the eschatological Antichrist. However, the destruction of Jerusalem would occur due to the national rejection of the Messiah (Matt 24:1-2; Luke 19:41-44). The prophecy does not end with the AD 70 destruction; rather, *its end* will come *with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolation are determined.* In other words, the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and his armies in the first century was not the final destruction of the holy city. The reference to *the end* extends the prophecy to the seventieth week. A time interval, the dispensation of the church, will occur between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks.

The interval in the current dispensation of the church of the fulfillment of the messianic program for Israel is derived from the Greek

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[6] Eusebius, *History*, 94.

verb *apotelō* meaning "to complete" or "to be perfected." Randall Price explained, "The *apotelesmatic* interpretation recognizes in Old Testament texts that present the messianic program as a single event, a near and far historical fulfillment is intended, separated by an indeterminate period of time." It is this period of time that is known as an "intercalation" or a "gap;" however, the term "prophetic postponement" is more preferable. Since the Old Testament prophets did not have the current dispensation as a great parenthesis revealed to them, God would reveal the mystery of the church in the New Testament. Postponement is an intercalation (gap) in fulfillment, concluding that the delay is only temporary, and hence prophetic since there is a purposeful and preordained work in the divine program. God implied a parenthesis in His messianic program in the Old Testament with references of Israel's hardening (Isa 6:9-13; Zech 7:11-12) and judicial exile (Deut 4:27-30; 28:36-37, 49-50, 64-68); however, this postponement in the divine program was not fully revealed until the New Testament (John 12:37-40; Acts 28:25-28; Rom 11:25-26).[7]

It can be said that a false covenant, the same covenant prophesied by the prophet Isaiah (28:14-22), is made with Israel by the Antichrist. The seventieth week is the false covenant that lasts for one week of years;[8] that is, a period of seven years commonly understood as the tribulation, or time of God's wrath. The passage also teaches that the tribulation is divided by the abomination of desolation into two three and one half year periods (cf. 2 Thess 2:3-4).

According to the eschatological chronology of Daniel 9 and 2 Thessalonians 2, the tribulation will follow the rapture of the church, which is yet future and will terminate the present prophetic postponement of the church age between the sixth-ninth and seventieth weeks. Shortly after the rapture, the tribulation will begin with the signing of the false covenant between Israel and the Antichrist. It is this event that will inaugurate the final events of Daniel 9:24-27.

The nature of the tribulation will focus upon Israel. Jeremiah 30:7 refers to the tribulation period as a time of *Jacob's distress*. During this period, God will prepare Israel for restoration and conversion (Deut

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[7] Randall Price, "Prophetic Postponement in Daniel 9:24-27," in *Progressive Dispensationalism: An Analysis of the Movement and Defense of Traditional Dispensationalism*, gen. ed. Ron J. Bigalke Jr. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), 218-9.

[8] The Hebrew word for week is *shābuʿîm* which means a unit of seven.

4:29-30; Jer 30:3-11; Zech 12:10). God will also judge an unbelieving world during this time for its sins against Him (Isa 13:9; 24:19-20; Rev 4—19). All nations and communities will be affected by this judgment. However, for those who trust in the Messiah there will be salvation. This time of wrath will also result in worldwide evangelization and mass conversions (Matt 24:14; Rev 7:1-17). The tribulation will end with the return of Christ to this earth. He will descend upon the Mount of Olives, cross the Kidron Valley, and enter the Eastern Gate (Zech 14:4; cf. Matt 24—25). Clearly, there is not a single event that occurred at the destruction of Jerusalem which can be said to fulfill Daniel's description and Christ's reference of Daniel in Matthew 24:15.

Eusebius wrote, " . . . when finally, the abomination of desolation, according to the prophetic declaration, stood in the very temple of God, so celebrated of old, but which now was approaching its total downfal [sic] and final destruction by fire; all this, I say, any one that wishes may see accurately stated in the history written by Josephus" [Book III, Chapter V].[9] Schaff quoted Eusebius for his information and Eusebius based his history upon the accounts of Josephus' *The Wars of the Jews*. In *The Wars of the Jews* 6.4.1—5.4, not once did Josephus record any abomination of desolation in the Jewish Temple prior to it being destroyed.[10] After the Temple was destroyed, Josephus recorded,

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[9] Eusebius, *History*, 86.

[10] Tim LaHaye wrote, "History records that our Lord's words were fulfilled *to the letter* in AD 70. In that year the Roman army under the command of Titus destroyed the city of Jerusalem. Fires raged through the city and in the temple area itself. After the flames burned themselves out, the soldiers saw that large amounts of gold had melted and flowed into crevices of the blocks of the temple. In order to recover the precious metal, the Romans had to take the buildings apart, stone by stone. And so Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled literally; not one stone was left upon another [Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Are We Living in the End Times?* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1999), 31]. Responding to the statement, Gary DeMar wrote, "This is a remarkable admission. This is exactly what preterists claim" [Gary DeMar, "Dispensationalism: Being 'Left Behind,'" [article online] (Modern Reformation Society, accessed 6 August 2002) available from http://www.preteristarchive.com/ PartialPreterism/demar-gary_dd_ 05.html]. Certainly, both preterists and futurists agree that Matthew 24:1-2 was fulfilled in the first century. There is, however, no basis for arguing that the remaining prophecies were also fulfilled in the first century. According to the historical record, the chronology of events in AD 70 does not correlate with the chronology of Mathew 24:3 and onward.

And now the Romans, upon the flight of the seditious into the city, and upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings round about it, brought their ensigns to the temple, and set them over against its eastern gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus imperator, with the greatest acclamations of joy [6.6.1].[11]

Schaff also documented the preceding quote from Josephus. Within a quotation, he wrote, "Thus was fulfilled the prophecy concerning the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place."[12] A casual reading of Schaff's *History of the Christian Church* would seem to indicate that Josephus wrote the preceding sentence, but since the sentence cannot be found in Josephus' section on the destruction of Jerusalem, it is obvious that the sentence is the conclusion of Schaff. He referenced "Daniel 9:27; Matt. 24:15; comp. Luke 21:20"[13] as being fulfilled in the destruction.

Eusebius was correct in referencing Luke 19:42-44 and 21:23-24 (Book 3, Chapter 7)[14] and Schaff was correct in referencing Luke 21:20 as fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem. However, Eusebius was incorrect when referencing Matthew 24:19-21 and Schaff also when referencing Daniel 9:27 and Matthew 24:15. The reason why both historians are wrong in quoting the Daniel and Matthean passages is that Josephus recorded the Roman sacrifices (desolation) as occurring after the fire destroyed the city and the Temple.

Furthermore, as Buswell mentioned, there was no opportunity for the Jews to escape the city as Jesus commanded in Matthew 24:15-21. Josephus recorded that Titus had a wall constructed which encompassed the entire city of Jerusalem " . . . to guard against the Jews' coming out. . . . So all hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews, together with their liberty of going out of the city" (5.12.1, 3).[15] It was due to the wall encompassing the city, preventing any escape, which constituted a famine that consumed the Jews (5.12.1-4).[16] Titus did not enter the city

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[11] Flavius Josephus, "The Wars of the Jews" in *The Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 743.

[12] Schaff, *History*, 1:398.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Eusebius, *History*, 93.

[15] Josephus, "Wars," 722-24.

[16] Referencing Josephus, Eusebius (Book III, Chapter VI) also mentioned the famine that consumed the Jews because of the inability to escape from the midst of the city.

of Jerusalem until after the construction of his wall and the famine consumed the Jews. Therefore, it would be impossible to heed the commands of Jesus to flee the city because of witnessing the abomination of desolation spoken in Matthew 24:15. It should be mentioned again that any sacrilege on the part of the Romans was after the city and Temple were destroyed.

Buswell provided the reasons why much of the events of Matthew 24 do not correlate with a date of AD 70. *First*, "There was no possibility that anybody could flee from Jerusalem." *Second*, "Titus does not in any way resemble what Daniel said of the Prince of the Covenant." *Third*, "There was no covenant with Titus or Vespatian or anybody else remotely resembling the covenant of Daniel 9:27. *Fourth*, "The event which Schaff calls the abomination of desolation did not occur in the midst of any recognizable seven year period. There was nothing three and one half years before or after which in any way corresponds to Daniel's prediction." *Fifth*, "There was no resurrection of the dead (Daniel 12:2). The Son of Man did not appear in the clouds of heaven (Matthew 24:30) nor gather His elect with the sound of a trumpet (Matthew 24:31)." *Sixth*, "The sacrifices were not stopped by Titus but by the Jews themselves."[17] Schaff demonstrated that the ceasing of the sacrifices was not the result of Titus. He wrote, "The daily sacrifices ceased July 17th, because the hands were all needed for defence" but the Temple "was burned on the tenth of August, A.D. 70, the same day of the year on which . . . the first temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar."[18]

Preterists are akin to interpreting the eagles in Matthew 24:28 as symbolic of the Roman armies. In this view, Jesus was prophesying of the Roman armies, with their ensigns bearing the eagle, coming to destroy Jerusalem. In other words, the Jews would understand the mere presence of the Roman armies surrounding Jerusalem with banners of eagles on them as the fulfillment of the abomination of desolation. Buswell commented on the problem with such an interpretation as follows: "But Roman ensigns, eagles and idolatrous objects worshipped by the Roman soldiers were common in the time of Christ and Paul."[19] As an editorial footnote to Josephus' *The War of the Jews* 6.6.1, Whiston

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[17] Buswell, 2:403-04.
[18] Schaff, *History*, 397-98.
[19] Buswell, *Systematic Theology*, 2:404.

quoted Tertullian similarly: " . . . and Tertullian truly says in his Apologetic, 16.162, that the entire religion of the Roman camp almost consisted in worshipping the ensigns, in swearing by the ensigns, and in preferring the ensigns before all the [other] gods."[20]

Josephus' *The Antiquities of the Jews* (16.3.1) attributed the presence of the Roman eagle banners in Jerusalem with Pilate. He wrote,

> But now Pilate . . . introduced Caesar's effigies, which were upon the ensigns, and brought them into the city; whereas our law forbids us the very making of images; on which account the former procurators were wont to make their entry into the city with such ensigns as had not those ornaments. Pilate was the first who brought those images to Jerusalem; and set them up there; which was done without the knowledge of the people. . . .
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> . . . Pilate was deeply affected with their firm resolution to keep their laws inviolable, and presently commanded the images to be carried back from Jerusalem to Cesarea.[21]

In Luke's Gospel there is the record on the cruelty of Pilate toward the Jews. *Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices* (Luke 13:1). Jesus did not agree that Pilate's victims *were* greater *sinners than all* other *Galileans* (13:2). Indeed, His response to them was: *" . . . no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish* (13:3). It is likely that when Jesus spoke these words He was thinking of the judgment that would fall upon all the unrepentant in the destruction of the city by the Romans in AD 70. Buswell commented, "Alford commenting on Acts 21:31,32 suggests that a Roman guard was stationed in the tower of Antonia, overlooking the temple area. It may be supposed that they usually refrained from displaying their ensigns."[22] Therefore, Jesus was well aware of the ensigns that Pilate had brought into Jerusalem. If the Jews were to understand the fulfillment of the abomination of desolation as the presence of the Roman ensigns in the city then the fulfillment of Matthew 24:15 would have been prior to AD 70 when Jesus was speaking to the them.[23]

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[20] Footnote *a* in Josephus, "Wars," 743.
[21] Josephus, "The Antiquities of the Jews," in *Works of Josephus*, 479-80.
[22] Buswell, *Systematic Theology*, 2:404.
[23] Ibid., 2:401-04.

THE CLAIM OF THE *CLEMENTINE HOMILIES*

Thinking they have proven their case regarding Eusebius as affirming a nascent preterism (which they have not), Bahnsen and Gentry added, "Another ancient document that makes reference to the destruction of the temple based on Matthew 24:2-34 is the *Clementine Homilies*."[24] Clementine actually wrote:

> Accordingly, therefore, prophesying concerning the temple, He said: 'See ye these buildings? Verily I say to you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another which shall not be taken away; and this generation shall not pass until the destruction begin. For they shall come, and shall sit here, and besiege it, and shall slay your children here.'[Matthew 24:2, 34; Luke 19:43, 44] And in like manner He spoke in plain words the things that were straightway to happen, which we can now see with our eyes, in order that the accomplishment might be among those to whom the word was spoken.[25]

Clementine did reference Matthew 24:2 and 24:34 but he did not provide *any* commentary that could be said to affirm a nascent preterism. Indeed, he provided no commentary on the surrounding verses, such as 24:27-31. Clementine referred to the AD 70 destruction of the Temple as fulfillment of Jesus' words in 24:2, but all views affirm this to be the case whether preterist, historicist, or futurist. Clementine's quote is not evidence of nascent preterism in antiquity. Furthermore, the editors of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* gave attention to "the loose method of Scripture citation characteristic of Clementine literature." Regarding Clementine's loose quotation of Scripture, they added, "Sometimes the meaning is perverted."[26]

THE CLAIM OF CYPRIAN

Bahnsen and Gentry also cited Cyprian, of whom they wrote, "we have clear reference to Matthew 24 as referring to Jerusalem's A.D. 70 fall."[27]

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[24] Bahnsen and Gentry, *House Divided*, 278.

[25] *The Clementine Homilies*, III.XV, in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10 vols. (1886; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 8:241.

[26] Footnote 3 in ibid., 8:215.

[27] Bahnsen and Gentry, *House Divided*, 278.

Bahnsen and Gentry referred to two statements by Cyprian: (1) "That the Jews should lose Jerusalem, and should leave the land which they had received;" and, (2) "That Christ should be the house and temple of God, and that the old temple should cease, and the new one should begin."[28] The first statement cited Matthew 23:37-38 and the second statement cited 24:2. Neither reference is support for preterism. Similar to the Clementine reference, both citations refer to the destruction of the Jewish Temple in A. 70 which preterists, historicists, and futurists all agree regarding the time of fulfillment. Neither Clementine nor Cyprian referred to the Olivet Discourse in its entirety as having been fulfilled in the first century.

Prior to the former statements, Cyprian wrote, "And when He [Jesus] was interrogated by His disciples concerning the sign of His coming, and of the consummation of the world, He answered and said. . . ."[29] Cyprian then cited all of Matthew 24:4-31, which means he considered these verses to be written about "the consummation of the world."

THE CLAIM OF CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

Bahnsen and Gentry cited Clement of Alexandria additionally as holding "a distinctly preteristic interpretation of Daniel 9."[30] The following quote is from Clement's *Stromata*.

> The half of the week Nero held sway, and in the holy city of Jerusalem placed the abomination; and in the half of the week he was taken away, and Otho, and Galba, and Vitellius. And Vespasian rose to the supreme power, and destroyed Jerusalem, and desolated the holy place.[31]

Clement simply stated a view of continual fulfillment concerning the seventy weeks prophecy of Daniel. J. Barton Payne produced a table in his *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* that demonstrates various interpretations of Daniel 9:24-27.[32] Payne's work illustrates that scholars

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[28] *The Treatises of Cyprian*, XII.I.5, 15, in ibid., 5:510-11.
[29] Ibid., XI.II, in ibid., 5:502-03.
[30] Bahnsen and Gentry, *House Divided*, 278-79.
[31] Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata, or Miscellanies*, I.XXI, in ibid., 2:329.
[32] J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (1973; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 384-85.

throughout the centuries have interpreted some aspects of Daniel 9 as being fulfilled in the past. Simply because someone in the history of the church believes aspects of Daniel 9 is a past event does not make him a preterist. It appears that Bahnsen and Gentry would consider everyone a preterist if they believe in a past fulfillment of prophecy. All Christians (whether preterist, historicist, or futurist) hold to a past fulfillment of *some* prophecies, but that does not mean they are preterists, like Bahnsen and Gentry.

THE CLAIM OF ARETHAS

Bahnsen and Gentry's last attempt to find a preterist source in antiquity was Arethas, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, and Andreas, an earlier archbishop of Cappadocia. In *Before Jerusalem Fell*, Gentry admitted that Andreas argued for dating the book of Revelation during the reign of Domitian.[33] Bahnsen and Gentry made the audacious claim that Andreas wrote in his commentary on Revelation, "'There are not wanting those [apparently Arethas] who apply this passage to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by Titus.'"[34] Bahnsen and Gentry gave the appearance that the preceding quote is an actual quote from Andreas' comments on Revelation 6:12, but the quotation could not be found anywhere in Andreas' commentary. In this instance, one is inclined to wonder if Bahnsen and Gentry read someone's thoughts on Andreas and carelessly quoted the statement as the actual words of Andreas (or, at worse, are they purposely deceiving their readers).

The second quote Bahnsen and Gentry attribute to Andreas ("'these things are referred by some to those sufferings which were inflicted by the Romans upon the Jews'") is a genuine commentary on Revelation 7:1. The dates for the commentaries of Andreas and Arethas are not clear since there is no direct information available, but the majority of dates for their writings were toward the close of the fifth century or early sixth century.

Andreas was known for blending the views of leading theologians. It was not uncommon for him to add his own views, which

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[33] Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation* (Atlanta: American Vision, 1998), 106-07.

[34] Bahnsen and Gentry, *House Divided*, 279.

included historicist and allegorical interpretations. Concerning the two bishops, Adventist scholar LeRoy Froom remarked,

> In his [Arethas] commentary on the Apocalypse, which is mostly a compilation, he follows Andreas in the main. He considers the Apocalypse to be a revelation from the world beyond, and finds in each prominent word the possibility of reference to both past and future history.[35]

CONCLUSION

Bahnsen and Gentry desire their readers to believe "many ancient fathers were preterists regarding Daniel's Seventy Weeks, the first portion of Christ's Olivet Discourse, and/or Revelation. . . ."[36] The statement has proven to be false. Andreas and Arethas appear to be the earliest forms of a mild preterism. However, even if Bahnsen and Gentry's statement were correct, it still would not prove the validity of preterism (which it is certain they would agree) for the heart of the issue is what "saith the Scriptures."

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[35] Leroy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 4 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1950), 1:572.
[36] Bahnsen and Gentry, *House Divided*, 283.

Book Reviews

***Dispensationalism Tomorrow & Beyond*,** by gen. ed. Christopher Cone. Forth Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2008. 508 pp., paperback, $29.00.

This theological collection in honor of Dr. Charles C. Ryrie was written by biblical scholars who hold essentially to the same basic view of dispensationalism for which he is noted. In their chapters, they address subjects related directly or indirectly to that system of theology. They exhibit a confirmed commitment to the authority, original languages, power, sufficiency, and correct interpretation of the Scriptures. Their work reflects careful exegesis of pertinent biblical passages and significant interaction with writings of scholars who disagree with the dispensational view of the Bible. Readers will be introduced to subjects not normally addressed by dispensational authors: "Is Dispensationalism Hurting American Political Policies in the Middle East?" (Stallard), "The Church & Social Responsibility" (Bigalke), and "The Kingdom of Emergent Theology" (Gilley).

Renald E. Showers, ***Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry***

***Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ (NAC Studies in Bible & Theology)*,** eds. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2007. Xix + 364 pp., cloth, $19.99.

The editors of this work have thoroughly demonstrated that baptism is not a minor theological doctrine, as "those who practiced believer's baptism during the Reformation" were persecuted (p. 1). The forward by Timothy George recounts the story of Adoniram and Ann Judson, who were "baptized as infants" and raised in "godly Congregationalist families." However, prior to beginning their lifetime of missionary service in India, "the Judsons devoted themselves to prayer and intensive Bible study" during their lengthy ocean voyage. The result of studying the Scriptures was their conviction that baptism "was intended for believers only." Once they reached India, they requested baptism by immersion "in keeping with their newfound convictions" (p. xv). The editors and contributing authors concur with the Judsons' conviction. As baptism is "regularly connected in scripture with belief and salvation"

and "the initiation rite into the Christian church," it is not "a minor issue" (p. 1). The chapters address baptism in the New Testament and the Patristic writings. The theology of Meredith Kline "on suzerainty, circumcision, and baptism is analyzed. Baptism among the Anabaptists, paedobaptists, and Stone-Campbell movement is assessed. The relationship of baptism between the covenants is also addressed, as is the practicality of baptism in the local church (e.g. method and timing). An author, subject, and Scripture index is included. "Baptism is important precisely because it is tied to the gospel, to the saving work that Christ accomplished in his death and resurrection" (p. 1). For that reason alone, this challenging work is strongly recommended. Readers will find biblical, historical, theological, and practical clarity regarding believer's baptism.

Ron J. Bigalke Jr., *Eternal Ministries*

Charts on the Book of Revelation: Literary, Historical, and Theological Perspectives, by Mark Wilson. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007. 134 pp., paperback, $21.99.

This book of charts (actually more of an Excel workbook) was initially developed during the doctoral research of the author at the University of South Africa in 1996 (thesis: "A Pie in a Very Bleak Sky? Analysis and Appropriation of the Promise Sayings in the Seven Letters to the Churches in Revelation 2–3"). In the preface (p. 9), the author confessed that he envisioned this publication to differ from other chart books, which have usually been "from a dispensational and futurist perspective." The preface is enlightening to discern the author's own theological persuasion. Wilson reminisced about "new methods of reading the text [which] have opened fresh perspectives for examining Revelation. Literary readings particularly have examined the complex intertextuality and intratextuality of the book." While the author did not advocate a specific eschatology, the charts seem most consistent with eclecticism and idealism (and would be helpful in communicating those views). Distinctive of these charts "is that the material in Revelation is primary and thus usually listed first, with Old Testament and extrabiblical literature secondary." Arranging the charts in this order reinforces "the hermeneutical principle that any context must be interpreted through the primary text of Revelation." Commentary and

sources consulted, in addition to a bibliography, are provided. Without using the consulted commentaries and other sources for each of the 79 charts, it would be difficult to benefit from these visualizations.

Ron J. Bigalke Jr., *Eternal Ministries*

Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament, edited by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007. Xxviii + 1239 pp., cloth, $54.99.

Beale is Kenneth T. Wessner chair of biblical studies and professor of New Testament at Wheaton. Carson is research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Some of the other seventeen contributors include: Craig Blomberg (Matt), Andreas Köstenberger (John), I. Howard Marshall (Acts), and Moisés Silva (Gal; Phil). The work is well summarized by a statement on the back cover: "An Exploration of Old Testament Quotations, Allusions, and Echoes Occurring from Matthew to Revelation." The inevitable question is, what constitutes an "allusion" or "echo"? The editors' desire was to not include allusions that were too subtle.

In the introduction, the editors explained what this reference work is not. "Nowhere does this volume survey contemporary debates over the use of the OT in the NT. The many subdisciplines that contribute to this enterprise have not been canvassed. For example, we do not systematically compare non-Christian Jewish exegetical methods with the exegetical methods on display in the NT. We do not review the ongoing debate between (a) those who argue that the NT writers usually respect the entire context of the OT texts they cite or to which they allude and (b) those who argue that the NT writers engage in a kind of 'prooftexting' that takes OT passages out of their contexts so as to 'prove' conclusions that belong to the commitments of NT Christians but not to the antecedent Scriptures they cite. We have not summarized the extraordinarily complex developments in the field of typology . . . " (p. xxiii).

The contributors were guided by six questions (pp. xxiv, xxv). (1) What is the New Testament context of the citation or allusion? (2) What is the Old Testament context from which the quotation or allusion is drawn? (3) How is the Old Testament quotation or source referenced in the literature of Second Temple Judaism or (more broadly yet) of early

Judaism? (4) What textual factors must be borne in mind as one seeks to understand a particular use of the Old Testament? (5) What is the nature of the connection as the New Testament writer understood it? (6) To what theological use did the New Testament writer put the Old Testament quotation or allusion? Not all of the chapters are identical to each other. Some follow the six questions while others combine the information into one coherent passage. A few summarize a portion of the text before going into details. All have lengthy bibliographies that direct the reader to more books and articles for further study. Dispensationalists will be disappointed by such sentences as: "NT writers happily apply to the church, that is, to the new covenant people of God, many texts that originally referred to the Israelites, the old covenant people of God" (p. xxvi). As it is unique and helpful, all students of the Bible should obtain this reference work.

Charles Ray, *Tyndale Theological Seminary*

Commentary and Reference Survey, by John Glynn. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007. 380 pp., paperback, $24.99.

Glynn is a freelance academic proofreader and writer living in Massachusetts. The subtitle to this book reads, "A Comprehensive Guide to Biblical and Theological Resources." First published in 1994, it has now been updated for 2007. It evaluates commentaries and much more. The commentaries are listed in a book-by-book fashion. The book sections are further divided into technical/semi-technical exposition. Oftentimes a section entitled "Special Studies" was included. The following information is given for each commentary: author, title, publisher, date, and whether the work is considered evangelical/conservative/liberal/moderate/critical. The author listed the commentaries alphabetically with the better ones in bold print. Usually other information is minimal. As previously noted, it assesses much more than just commentaries. Topics include introductions, background sources, surveys, theologies, language helps, exegesis and hermeneutics, Ancient Near East history, and software. This work is a necessity for those looking to enhance their personal library.

Charles Ray, *Tyndale Theological Seminary*

Creation and the Courts: Eighty Years of Conflict in the Courtroom and in the Classroom, by Norman Geisler. Wheaton: Crossway, 2007. 400 pp., paperback, $22.00.

Creation and the Courts condenses a very complex and convoluted topic into relatively few pages. Geisler's main focus was the pivotal Arkansas trial of 1981, in which he was an expert witness defending the teaching of creation in the classroom. With a doctorate in philosophy, and teaching experience as a professor of philosophy at Dallas Theological Seminary for many years, Geisler is well qualified to address the treatment of religion in the American court system. Geisler explained the importance of the first creation/evolution court case in America, the famous Scopes "Monkey trial" of 1925 held in Dayton, Tennessee. He demonstrated how the Scopes trial has influenced virtually all subsequent court cases dealing with origins.

Scopes revolved around Tennessee's anti-evolution Butler Act which made teaching evolution illegal in the public schools of the state. High school teacher John Scopes was supposed to have taught evolution, and the prosecution for the state charged him with breaking the law. The Scopes case was the most publicized event in which the fledgling American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) had been involved until that time, however. The ACLU tried to turn the trial into a test of the legality of the Butler Act. The ACLU's lead defense attorney Clarence Darrow maneuvered to put the state's co-counsel William Jennings Bryan on the witness stand to interrogate him about his belief in the Bible. Darrow manipulated Bryan into appearing to have no defense for his creationist beliefs, but even so, John Scopes was convicted. Scopes' conviction was overturned on appeal, but the Butler Act was nevertheless upheld. The humanists, therefore, viewed Scopes as unfinished business.

In the Arkansas trial, the Supreme Court ruled that a balanced treatment of both creation and evolution in public schools is unconstitutional. Geisler demonstrated that the ACLU viewed the Arkansas trial as completing what the ACLU had begun in Scopes. He also provided the reader a short course in constitutional law, especially First Amendment law. In the years between Scopes (1925) and the Arkansas trial (1981), the Supreme Court had broadened its powers, enabling it to rule on religious instruction in the public schools of the states. The Court could not do this in 1925, for the Constitution—as viewed by the Framers—placed constraints only on the federal

government, not on the states. Each state could therefore establish its own norms for religious instruction in its public schools, and the ACLU in 1925 faced an uphill battle of fighting anti-evolution laws in each state individually. This began to change with the Everson case in 1947, in which the Supreme Court declared a "wall of separation" to exist between church and state. There is no such wall between church and state in the Constitution. Geisler explained that in establishing this extra-Constitutional "wall," the Supreme Court utilized the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to broaden the First Amendment to apply to the states in addition to the federal government. With Everson as precedent, the Court in 1962 and 1963 declared required prayer and Bible reading in public schools to be unconstitutional. Finally, in 1968 in Epperson, the Court ceased the last state anti-evolution law in Arkansas, making it illegal to block the teaching of evolution in public schools of any state. (Tennessee's Butler Act had been repealed by the state legislature in 1967.)

The 1981 Arkansas case relied on these previous rulings as precedents to justify its outcome. Geisler critiqued the role of precedents, stare decisis, as problematic in a culture hat is departing from biblical principles. Stare decisis has a venerable origin in the common law tradition, but is a tool for a compounding of errors in the hands of those who reject the Bible. Subsequent cases, such as the 2005 Dover decision that made the teaching of intelligent design unconstitutional in public schools, relied on the 1981 Arkansas case as precedent.

Perhaps the most alarming aspect of *Creation and the Courts* is the slow but inexorable cultural shift one sees being accomplished in these origins cases. Under the guise of seeking to do what is right (i.e. what is "constitutional"), judges have made it progressively harder to keep any mention of God in the public schools. One sees here an illustration of Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Certainly there is ultimate spiritual death for some of the millions of school children who are prevented from hearing any alternatives to evolution.

Reading the entirety of *Creation and the Courts* leaves one with a profound sense of the need for genuine Christian education. Geisler made this plea, and indeed, is now associated with Southern Evangelical Seminary in North Carolina where he and others are leading efforts to train Christians in advanced worldview thinking. Geisler realizes that Christian education with chapel and prayer—adhered to an otherwise

secular curriculum—is not really Christian education whatsoever. It goes without saying that Christians need to quit pretending that the public schools are the same relatively innocuous venues in which they were raised. Geisler especially called for Christians to begin taking an interest in First Amendment law, even getting the legal training to practice First Amendment law, though "there is not much money in it." Consequently, this volume is a call for serious Christian commitment to the Bible and its teachings, and a willingness to sacrifice materially.

The case for evolution becomes weaker with time as new discoveries affirm creation repeatedly. However, even in Scopes, the humanist case for nullifying the Butler Act was nonexistent, for John Scopes was not a science or biology teacher. He had to coach students into testifying that he had even taught evolution. The entire case against Scopes was arranged by the ACLU in New York as a device for overturning the Butler Act. After the trial, Scopes not only retained his teaching position but also was offered a renewal of his contract and was offered funding to return to college to further his education. Therefore, the image portrayed in "Inherit the Wind" of bigoted Christians nearly lynching Scopes is totally false. Nevertheless, the "Inherit the Wind" image is what most people believe the Scopes trial to have been. This image of Bible believing Christians as ignorant bigots has eased the way for public acceptance of Supreme Court rulings blocking the teaching of creation in public schools. It would have been good if Geisler had at least briefly mentioned these points, but on the other hand, he wrote *Creation and the Courts* primarily to address the legal and philosophical issues of the origins cases, not their historical context.

Despite Geisler's years of experience at Dallas Theological Seminary, once a stronghold of dispensationalism, he mentioned nothing about the dispensational context in which these origins cases have occurred. In the present church age, local churches are to be "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim 2:15), and this truth is to be propagated freely and without compulsion, which is opposite the Augustinian tenet of "[compelling] them to come in." Neither Geisler nor any other creationist to this reviewer's knowledge has addressed how a required teaching or learning of creation in public schools differs from the spiritual compulsion dispensationalists abhor. Nonetheless, this is an issue that needs to be given careful thought and articulation, since the humanist community certainly sees such requirements as a "compulsion."

A more serious shortcoming is Geisler's claim that origins views such as creation and evolution are science, not religion. Creationist attorney Wendell Byrd echoed this same claim in the Arkansas trial. Aside from the fact that the beginning of the cosmos (no matter how it happened) is unobservable and therefore falls into the category of faith, there is the connection between faith and one's view of origins which the Bible makes explicit in Hebrews 11:1-3. Furthermore, humanists have long claimed that all reality is actually "science," and that religion is a phantasm (helpful perhaps to some in personal hardship), but worse than useless for guiding public policy. As Darrow claimed at the Scopes trial, religion is the stuff of flat-earthers and of the Inquisitors, who burned "humanist" heretics like Bruno at the stake.

Indeed, Geisler's (and Byrd's) claim that even origins views must be "science" would appear to play into the hands of evolutionists who claim that all reality is science anyway. In the long-term battle to gain a hearing for creation, creationists do not win by avoiding biblical definitions for the beliefs they cherish. Even the 2005 Dover case ruled that creationist views are religion. Rather than viewing this decision as a setback, creationists need to return to first things, which in this context means that the Constitution as originally framed was never intended to eliminate discussion of religion from public discourse. Indeed, Geisler faults the intelligent design movement for trying to gain acceptance by avoiding the mention of God as Creator. Even though the Intelligent Design theorists have good intentions, is not this avoidance of God the very outcome of the origins cases that creationists decry?

At times, Geisler is wordy and repeats himself from chapter to chapter, giving the appearance of chapters dictated at separate times and never carefully edited into a closely woven whole. These caveats aside, however, *Creation and the Courts* is the best single source this reviews has seen for understanding the history and process of origins cases in the courts of the United States. It is well worth reading (several times) and is highly recommended.

Jonathan F. Henry, *Clearwater Christian College*

Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics, by Walter Kaiser and Moisés Silva. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007. 350 pp., cloth, $34.99.

First published in 1994, this revised and expanded edition has four new chapters (The role of biblical theology in interpretation; how to deal with contemporary questions not directly addressed in the Bible; the New Testament's use of the Old Testament; and, the role of history in interpretation). Kaiser is the Colman M. Mockler distinguished professor of Old Testament and president emeritus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (South Hamilton, MA). Silva has taught biblical studies at Westmont College, Westminster Seminary, and Gordon-Conwell.

The work is divided into four major sections, and each chapter within the sections begins with a synopsis. "The Search for Meaning: Initial Directions" (the first section) covers some preliminary issues such as the use of language, biblical theology, and meaning. The authors wrote, "It has been argued . . . that if we do not know how to apply a command of Scripture to our lives, then we cannot really claim to know what that passage means. To reject the distinction between meaning and application seems an extreme position, but there is no doubt a measure of truth in it. . . . Certainly, when most Christians read the Bible they want to know what to do with what they read. We may also consider that the extent to which the Bible affects our lives is at least a measure of how much we have understood it" (p. 24). The second major section is entitled "Understanding the Text." It deals with various genres and how to determine their meaning (poetry, prophecy, etc.). The next major division ("Responding to the Text: Meaning and Application") has to do with the devotional, cultural, and theological use of the Bible. The last division is designated as "The Search for Meaning: Further Challenges." One interesting chapter there is called "The Case for Calvinistic Hermeneutics." This is not so much a how-to book as it is the philosophy of hermeneutics. The authors admitted they sometimes disagree with each other but they both hold to the authority of Scripture and the primacy of authorial meaning (p. 9). Helpfully the book has a brief glossary, annotated bibliography, three indices, and subheadings within the chapters.

Charles Ray, *Tyndale Theological Seminary*

Interpreting the Historical Books, by Robert Chisholm. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006. 231 pp., paperback, $19.99.

As the title suggests, this work discusses the books Joshua through Esther. It is subtitled "An Exegetical Handbook," and is the first volume in the Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis series, which will be followed with five additional works. Chisholm is chair of the Old Testament department and professor of Old Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary.

This resource is divided into six major sections: (1) What is Narrative Literature?; (2) Primary Themes of the Historical Books; (3) Preparing for Interpretation; (4) Interpreting Narrative Texts; (5) Proclaiming Narrative Texts; and, (6) From Text to Application. The first section addresses basic literary terms such as setting, characterization, and plot. The second division is more specific in that it discusses the themes and overall purpose of each of the twelve biblical books. The historical and chronological backgrounds are the topics of the third section. The two main issues discussed in the fourth major division include the use of the diachronic method and the synchronic method. The fifth section addresses homiletics, and the sixth stresses application. The latter provides two examples (2 Kgs 2:23-25; Ruth 1). A short glossary was incorporated and the words of the glossary are emboldened throughout the book. A basic knowledge of Hebrew would be preferred. This is not a commentary, yet it is a good resource for examining the Old Testament from a literary point of view.

Charles Ray, *Tyndale Theological Seminary*

Reinventing Jesus: How Contemporary Skeptics Miss the Real Jesus and Mislead Popular Culture, by Ed Komoszewski, James Sawyer, and Daniel Wallace. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006. 347 pp., paperback, $16.99.

Many books have been published in response to the Jesus Seminar and to The Da Vinci Code. This one crates a nice balance between being too superficial and too technical (perhaps it could be regarded as semi-technical). It explains scholarly jargon (source criticism, redaction criticism, etc.) in a simple but thorough enough way. The book is divided into five major sections for a total of eighteen chapters. The format of

each section is guided by one of the following questions: How do we know the gospel writers got the story right?; How do we know the documents were copied faithfully?; How do we know if the right documents were included in the Bible?; What do the early documents say about Jesus?; and, How do we know Christianity wasn't "plagiarized from other religions"? (p. 17). As a result, the work answers these questions by discussing everything from manuscripts to the canon, and from textual criticism to ancient forgeries. The authors responded to the first question by presenting good reasons for the delay of the writing of the Gospels and the reliability of oral tradition. The second query was answered by explaining the method of textual criticism and the trustworthiness of the manuscripts. The range of the canon and ancient forgeries were examined in section three. Section four defended the divinity of Jesus by looking both inside and outside the New Testament. The final question focused on supposed parallels between Christianity and other religions. Each layperson should be told that this book is worth the money.

Charles Ray, *Tyndale Theological Seminary*

The Promise and the Blessing: A Historical Survey of the Old and New Testaments, by Michael A. Harbin. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 2005. 681 pp., cloth, $49.99.

As the subtitle reveals, this single work surveys the entire Bible historically. Although this work was written primarily for teaching Old and New Testament surveys in the classroom, it will benefit all readers who desire to understand the Bible better. The introduction describes the basic methods of biblical interpretation, and addresses the value and limitations of archaeology for understanding biblical history. The first part is a survey of the Old Testament (chs. 1—16). The chapters are arranged chronologically rather than canonically which is helpful for understanding the course of Israel's history and the relationship between the Testaments. The poetry and wisdom literature is arranged authorially in the time of David and Solomon (cf. ch. 12); since Job is thought to have "lived at about the same time or shortly after the time of Abraham" (p. 115), his book is arranged after Genesis. The prophetical books are interspersed in the times of the divided kingdom.

The section part begins the survey of the New Testament. Non-canonical works are first addressed, followed by explanation of the Jewish, Greek, and Roman worlds that served as historical background to the life of Christ (ch. 17). The first half of chapter 18 addresses the origins of the Synoptic Gospels. Harbin noted, "In critical study of the Gospels, it is important to remember that Q is purely hypothetical" (p. 378). The latter half of chapter 18 and the following chapter chronicle the life and death of Jesus the Messiah. Chapters 20-26 survey the life of the early church, and the life and letters of the Apostle Paul. Chapter 27 includes the General and Pastoral Letters ("The End of the Apostolic Age"); the final chapter surveys the Johannine writings.

The greatest challenge the author encountered was the "the question of what to include . . . not want[ing] to lost sight of the big picture by getting bogged down in details, but the details give the flavor and flow of the overall work." Essentially, the author has provided a dispensational survey (on a popular level), as reflected in his student's response of understanding "how it [the Old and New Testaments] all fits together" and suddenly made sense. Harbin wrote the book "on two different levels" for his readers: (1) to understand the general development of Scripture; and, (2) to provide supplemental material in sidebars and in notes at the end of the book that explain the content in greater detail (p. 23). The maps and photographs are exceptional, full-color photos. Each chapter begins with an overview and study goals, which is concluded with review questions. There are charts interspersed throughout the survey, and the work is concluded with a glossary, bibliography, and exhaustive index. One regrettable aspect of the book is the glib, colloquial titles ("Noah Falls off the Wagon" [p. 83], "Kissin' Cousins" [p. 108], "Making a Nation Out of a Mob" [ch. 7], "Just a-Lookin' for a Home" [ch. 8], "The Roller-Coaster South" [ch. 14], etc.), which differ significantly from the solemn vocabulary of earlier biblical surveys. It is primarily because Harbin's text was "designed for Old and New Testament survey classes" (back cover) that it would be disadvantageous if teachers and students did not interact with the notes (pp. 609-51). *The Promise and the Blessing* is highly recommended for undergraduate Bible survey courses.

Ron J. Bigalke Jr., *Eternal Ministries*

Jon Courson's Application Commentary, New Testament, by Jon Courson. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003. 1801 pp., cloth, $39.99.

Courson was the founding pastor of Applegate Christian Fellowship church in southern Oregon, joined Chuck Smith (who wrote the forward), in 2002, at Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, and with declining membership returned to Applegate in 2006. As evident from the title, this commentary is not expositional or exegetical; rather it is a verse-by-verse, devotional commentary of the New Testament, combined with practical topical studies. The commentary is a compilation of "one hundred seventy-nine topical studies/sermons." It reads as a novel, and is said to be "as informative as any Bible commentary." Although the publisher distinguishes this commentary as "a scholarly work," it is certainly "a true labor of love" (front flap). Theological persuasions are evident throughout: baptism in the Spirit as empowerment (pp. 610, 614-21), foreknowledge as merely knowing in advance, as opposed to God's favorable predetermination toward certain people, even before they existed (p. 942), sovereign election (pp. 950-54), tongues speaking as a prayer language (p. 1080), gap theory (p. 1236), eight dispensations (pp. 1239-40), pretribulationism (pp. 1342-43), and premillennialism (pp. 1781-84). The author should be commended for his desire to make Scripture applicable. As "a true labor of love," it would be difficult to critique this work. The concern, therefore, is with the application of the text. While it is true that some commentaries lack "life and inspiration" (forward), biblical interpretation must precede biblical application. Many of the Scripture verses in the *Application Commentary* were applied in a manner plausible according to the sentence, but unrelated to the intended meaning as identified by the larger context (e.g. Matt 10:1-6, pp. 72-73; John 6:35-48, p. 485; 10:9-18, pp. 522-23). The proper interpretation of Scripture must be the controlling factor in determining God's desired application so that there is no source substituted or elevated beyond the authority of Scripture. Only Scripture itself can answer authoritatively concerning doctrine and practice (any other source will result in heterodoxy and heteropraxy). In striving for application (again a goal to be commended), the author has separated this task from exegesis, which is evident from applications that are not valid according to the larger context. There is much doctrine, convictions, and application in this volume to be commended; however, due to the frequent non-contextual application, this would not be a commentary to recommend for someone

seeking to understand the Bible, and therefore, determine the response God desires. *Jon Courson's Application Commentary* is a challenge though to all communicators of God's Word to not regard the exegetical task as complete without determining application.

Ron J. Bigalke Jr., *Eternal Ministries*