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Editor, *JODT*

8053 Blvd. 26, Suite I

North Richland Hills, TX 76180

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EDITORIAL

The Bible is an exceptional and unique document. It was written during a period of approximately 1500 years (forty to sixty generations). The first books of the Old Testament were written approximately 1425 BC, and the last book of the New Testament was written in AD 95. There are more than forty authors who composed the sixty-six books of Scripture. Not only were the authors separated from one another by hundreds of miles and years, but were quite diverse in their occupations. The writers of Scripture include a lawgiver, military general, shepherd, king, cupbearer, priest, prophet, prime minister, tax collector, fishermen, doctor, and rabbi. The heroes of the Bible are presented with all their faults and weaknesses. Scripture is written in several literary genres, such as historical narrative, legal literature, wisdom literature, poetry, prophetic, gospels, parables, and epistles. The Bible was written on three different continents (Africa, Asia, and Europe) and in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek). Scripture was written during various circumstances, such as in the wilderness, during a military campaign, a dungeon, in captivity, during travel, in a Roman prison, and in exile; it was composed during times of peace, war, and exile. Nevertheless, all the authors of Scripture wrote with agreement and continuity from Genesis to Revelation. The Old Testament is not complete without the New Testament, and the New Testament is impossible to understand without the Old Testament. The two Testaments provide a harmonious account of God's holiness and love toward His creation, His choosing of the nation of Israel as a covenant people (and the creation of the church as a separate entity), and His redemption of depraved humanity through the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Although men wrote the books of Scripture, it claims to be the very Word of God. The Old Testament uses the frequent expressions, "the word of the LORD" or "thus say the LORD." The authority of Scripture is attested in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:20-21. Understanding the authority of Scripture is directly related to hermeneutics because it will influence the translator to exercise care to render the biblical text accurately in the translation and it will influence the interpreter to exercise care to understand and communicate the authorial intent with integrity. Peter Youmans has witnessed the results of allegorical interpretation in his hometown and in the Middle East, and demonstrated how allegoricism hinders one from "rightly dividing the Word of God." Other questions addressed in this issue include: What is the bad news and good news for the nation of Israel in Matthew's Gospel? Who authored the Book of Hebrews? Was the Garden of Eden created as a place of testing? How should 2 Timothy affect both soteriology and eschatology? The thought provoking articles, in addition to the subsequent reviews, will surely be an enjoyable read.

Ron J. Bigalke, M.Apol., M.Div., M.T.S., Ph.D.
editor@tyndale.edu

**THE HERMENEUTICAL METHOD OF ORIGEN:
THE INFLUENCES UPON HIM AND
THE VIEW OF INSPIRATION HE DEVELOPED**

Peter J. Youmans

When the name Origen is mentioned, the concept of allegorical interpretation is immediately brought into one's consciousness. "The fact that Origen divided the interpretation of Scripture into three senses is almost as well known as the fact that Caesar divided Gaul into three parts."¹ While scholars still argue with regard to the specifics of his view, Origen is well recognized as the person who popularized allegory within the realms of Christianity. In spite of his popularity and influence, he was not recognized as a church father because his position "drifted beyond the bounds of orthodoxy."²

Origen did not live in vacuity nor did he invent allegorical interpretation. Allegoricism was used long before the time of Christ. Origen was an individual, who stressed allegory to the point of minimizing or ignoring the literal, who came to the conclusion that he should—based upon Matthew 19:12—literally castrate "himself in order to instruct his female students without fear of scandal."³ It seems inconceivable that a man who is known for his rationalism could be also enthralled with mysticism. Simply reading his material will lead one to discover "fantastic allegory—simply incredible exegesis—appears in the midst of biblically-grounded, textually sensitive, historically perceptive exposition."⁴ Individuals, in addition to religious and philosophical groups had a profound impact upon him. Not only did others impact him, but also the use of mystical, allegorical interpretation affected his theological views, which has continued to influence hermeneutical theories, theological

* Peter J. Youmans, D.Min., pastor, Davidson Baptist Church, Hazard, Kentucky; professor of ministry and Ph.D. student, Piedmont Baptist Graduate School, Winston Salem, North Carolina

¹ R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002) 235.

² Christopher A. Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers* (Madison, WI: InterVarsity Press, 2002) 21.

³ Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 803.

⁴ Charles J. Scalise, "Allegorical Flights of Fancy: The Problem of Origen's Exegesis," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 32 (1987): 69.

positions, in addition to philosophy until this present day.⁵ Whether one admires or despises his theology, Origen is not a man whose impact can be ignored.

Often it has been convenient to either dismiss him or to take a simplistic view that completely misses these vital truths from church history. The purpose of this article is to examine those individuals and groups that actually helped develop his hermeneutical system and theology in the area of the Scriptures. It will then examine the specifics of his view on Scripture, specifically those issues that resulted in what might be called heresy or heterodoxy. The article will conclude with a cursory look at his hermeneutical impact upon theology.

THE INFLUENCES UPON ORIGEN'S THEOLOGY AND HERMENEUTICS

The people and groups that had an influence upon Origen were many and profound. It would be erroneous to assume that his beliefs are a monolithic representation of any one group. Each helped to refine and reinforce his convictions in the area of Scripture.

Greek Philosophy

Some have mistakenly suggested that Origen was raised as a pagan. His father was actually a martyr for the cause of Christ when Origen was young. Although he was not a pagan, this does not mean that Greek philosophers did not influence him; they probably influenced him more than the other groups combined. Platonic philosophy was particularly powerful with its teaching that reality laid behind what was actually seen with the human eye. Being an idealist, there was a disregard for the temporal and material as insignificant. The material (literal/historical) was unimportant in comparison to what was to be gained by the mystical (spiritual).

The philosophy of the Stoics was profound and cannot be disregarded. "Finding many lines in Homer which seemed to them unworthy, undignified, morally reprehensible, and even positively blasphemous, the Stoic Allegorists . . . set themselves to explain away all such passages as containing myths, sacred enigmas, and adorable mysteries."⁶ They used allegorical interpretation to ignore the embarrassing passages found

⁵ Countless books and journal articles are written about the man every year, in addition to new translations of his works. An overview of these are given in the following: Henri Crouzel, "The Literature of Origen: 1970-1988," *Theological Studies* 49 (1988): 499-516.

⁶ Frederic W Farrar, *History of Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1961) 136.

within their own inspired writings,⁷ which provide the actual basis for his allegorical interpretation. The other influences merely strengthen his commitment and stretch the boundaries of interpretation.⁸ The areas of influence were multifaceted and so profound that many scholars consider him more a philosopher than a theologian.

Alexandria was renowned as a place where culture and education was held as a premium. Greek philosophy held sway for centuries. “For the Alexandrian, the combination of Platonism and Stoicism formed a framework for interpreting the Scriptures.”⁹ Origen himself was “deeply influence by Greek or Hellenistic philosophy.”¹⁰ It was because of this influence, rather than the Bible being the basis for his religious beliefs, that Origen was “consciously endeavouring to reconcile the text of the Bible with contemporary philosophy and was under the necessity of finding in the Bible by some means or other his philosophical speculations.”¹¹

The influence of Greek philosophy was more than ingrained into the very being of Origen. He also had a desire to make the Bible palatable to Greeks. “In order to attract them, he applied to the Bible their own method with respect to their ancient poets and mysteries.”¹² His allegory was a necessary part of that plan. Truly, Greek Philosophy was the controlling influence in his life, rather than the Scriptures.

Jewish Hermeneutics

To assume that Origen invented or even significantly developed the use of allegory for the interpretation of the Scriptures is incorrect. Much of what he learned in this area was from his mentor, Clement of Alexandrian, but neither did he develop it. The use of allegory and the Bible predates Origen by hundreds of years. The Jews used this type of interpretation since at least 300 BC.

It was the Jewish scholar Philo who became known for popularizing it. “Having learnt from these (i.e. the Greek philosophers) the figurative interpretation used of the mystery religions of the Greek, he applied it to

⁷ Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 39.

⁸ “The theory established by Platonic and Stoic thought enables Origen to turn from a literal to a non literal treatment. . . .” Bruce Corley, Steve Lock, and Grant Lovejoy, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996) 66.

⁹ *Ibid.* 62.

¹⁰ Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 361.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 362.

¹² Henri De Lubac, *History and Spirit: The Understanding of Scripture According to Origen* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007) 17.

the Jewish Scriptures.”¹³He furthered the development of allegory with regards to the Scriptures. Interestingly, these developments occurred in the city of Alexandria, the same place where centuries later Origen would begin his studies. By the time he was teaching, the Jewish scholarship had no longer emphasized allegory and its golden age was long past, but its influence upon Origen was unmistakable.

Gnosticism

While the Gnostics were adversaries to Origen, they influenced him. The influence was not only because of their use of allegory, but also as a reaction against their false teaching. One of the mistakes many people make concerning Gnosticism is that they assume that all of the teachers believed alike. They were actually much more diversified than how they are represented.

Marcion is considered by many as a Gnostic, who had at the very least Gnostic tendencies. He, however, was vehemently opposed to allegory. He was also an open critic of the God of the Old Testament. The stories of brutal murders, which were approved by God and His apparent harshness was unacceptable to Marcion. Origen’s solution “was that the passage which scandalized the Marcionites must not be taken literally.”¹⁴The stories had to be unhistorical and must be allegorized. As can be noted from earlier comments, this is exactly what the Greeks did with difficult passages in their “inspired” texts. The attacks by Marcion solidified Origen’s use of allegory; it became the simple solution to all difficulties encountered by him in the Scriptures.

Marcionites were not the only Gnostics. Many other teachers were considered part of this group and most were ardent supporters of allegorical interpretation. Heracleon was a Gnostic commentator with many common traits to Origen and “it is likely that Origen learnt something from his technique.”¹⁵ He quoted Heracleon often within his commentaries. What is truly amazing is that while Origen openly opposed much of what the Gnostics taught, many of the doctrinal positions that he developed were quite similar. It is unlikely that this was mere coincidence.

Montanism

Just as the development of his allegory was partially a reaction to Marcion, the same can be said concerning the Montanist. Montanism was quite

¹³ Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 55.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 139.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 146.

strong in its chiliastic belief. It was an advocate of literal interpretation, but took the passages to the extreme, beyond the legitimate bounds of literal interpretation. They emphasized the physical/sensual aspect of the future kingdom. They also emphasized prophecy as being that of “religious ecstasy,”¹⁶ which was an affront to Origen’s sensibilities and he could only accept it when taken spiritually.¹⁷ He therefore rejected a “sensual kingdom” and with it any concept of a literal kingdom, which of course required him to reject the Jewish view of a messianic kingdom. The answer to this would be to allegorize any passages that refer to a future kingdom, which, of course, would affect his view, not only of a kingdom specifically, but of eternity in general.

Other Influences

There were, of course many influences. These need not be discussed in full for the purpose of this article, but merely mentioned. His mentor, Clement of Alexandria, was a scholar in his own right and had espoused the allegorical interpretation in his teaching. His guidance in the young man Origen cannot be dismissed, but his actual teaching is not significantly different from that of Greek and Jewish interpreters.

As was noted, ancient Jewish scholars had developed the allegorical interpretation to fit within the confines of Scripture, which was not the only area of influence. Origen seems to have had personal contact with many contemporary Jewish scholars. His writings often reflect an agreement to their teaching or a reaction to it. His knowledge of the Hebrews, as limited as it may have been, would have been due to them. His famous *Hexapla* displays that he had access to their writings and translations of the Old Testament.

ORIGEN’S VIEW OF SCRIPTURE

Each of these groups helped form Origen into the man he became. What he did with the views, philosophy, and doctrine that he had gleaned from each of these became uniquely part of his teaching, which continues to influence Christianity until today. It is his view of the Scriptures that are intrinsically tied to his hermeneutical system that must be examined. Often his view of Scripture affected how he dealt with a passage of Scripture. At other times his hermeneutical system caused him to have erroneous beliefs. It became

¹⁶ Ibid. 196.

¹⁷ Mal Couch, *An Introduction to Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2000) 274.

the easy way to address difficult passages rather than deal with them in a careful and orderly manner.

Origen's View of Inspiration

Origen can accurately be considered one that believed in the verbal inspiration of Scripture, and he defended his position with fervor. One must, however, be careful when making this statement, for one may cause others to assume that Origen believed in "verbal/plenary inspiration." As will be demonstrated, Origen certainly did not affirm that belief. "Did Origen, the most influential Biblical scholar in the early centuries of the Church, believe in the "inerrancy" of Scripture? Yes. Does this mean that he may be cited as evidence in support of the thesis that "the Church throughout its history has always held to the inerrancy of the literal sense of the text"? No."¹⁸ The following areas clearly reveal that his view of inspiration was less than orthodox. One might even note that he had definite leanings toward what would become (hundreds of years later) neoorthodoxy.

The Historicity of Scripture

One immediately becomes aware that Origen had a different concept of inspiration when he dealt with various difficult passages. Origen "was sensitive to the difficulties of the text."¹⁹ It is because of these difficulties that Origen felt no responsibility to defend the historical accuracy of much of the Scriptures. Instead he could very quickly abandon the historicity of a passage; it was his most common solution to the problems he perceived in the text.²⁰ Origen's approach was not just a defense mechanism when confronted by the opposition of the Marcionites; rather, it was an intrinsic part of his interpretive philosophy. "The wise interpreter is to move from the events to find the hidden principles."²¹

Origen, noting the differences between the synoptic account of the cleansing of the Temple and the account of John assumes that the latter was in error. Origen believed that these differences occurred often in the Gospels and could not be reconciled.²² Therefore, the solution was to reject

¹⁸ Michael W. Holmes, "Origen and the Inerrancy of Scripture," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 24 (September 1981): 221.

¹⁹ Corley, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 168.

²⁰ Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 260.

²¹ William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, Robert L. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993) 39.

²² Holmes, "Origen and the Inerrancy of Scripture," 228.

the historical accuracy of the Gospels, with the record of John seeming to be rejected the most often.

The first three chapters of the Book of Genesis were rejected or at least doubted as historical. The same was true with regard to the tower of Babel, which he claimed was only a “form of history.”²³ Often the basis of questioning a passage was due to the miraculous, but that was not always the perceived difficulty. While not specifically rejected, Origen seemed to be hesitant about the possibility of miracles. “The chief value of a miracle is not that it happened but the truth symbolized by it, which is to be gained by allegory.”²⁴ Miracles were not really a problem to him, since he was looking for the deeper spiritual truth behind the story.

Passages that appeared offensive were also rejected. The concept of passages where God seemed brutal and violent has been mentioned already. “Origen denied the historicity of certain passages which, *in his opinion*, would be dishonoring to God” (italics added).²⁵ The story of the Son of God using a donkey and its colt for Palm Sunday was a contemptible idea that was even more ridiculous by the inclusion of the disciples and people casting items on the roadway.²⁶ The concept of offensiveness was not limited to the person of God, but also heroes of the Bible. “Often it was inconceivable to Origen that a saint of God would ever do anything wrong. If we take the story literally, not only is David charged with incontinence but also with cruelty and inhumanity for he dared to do against Uriah a deed which is inconsistent with the character of one who is even of moderately good behavior.”²⁷ As we have seen several different situations warranted a rejection of the historical in Origen’s opinion.

The result of the denial of the historicity of events had a direct impact on Origen’s view of Christology. He minimized the incarnation of Christ, seeing little difference between it and the Christophanies of the Old Testament;²⁸ it also caused him to see little importance in the literal, historical events of Christ’s life. He is quoted as saying concerning Jesus earthly ministry, “What has this history to do with me?”²⁹ “As a result of his view of God and the inspiration of Scriptures, Origen sees in the gospels a complex interweaving of historical narrative and truths accessible to the

²³ Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 266.

²⁴ Ibid. 222.

²⁵ Moisés Silva, *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 59.

²⁶ Hanson, *Allegory and Event*. 268

²⁷ Ibid. 262.

²⁸ Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 202.

²⁹ Origen, *Lectures on Jeremiah*, I.2, as quoted in Hanson *Allegory and Event*, 276.

human spirit.”³⁰ He went so far as to question the historical accuracy of the physical ascension of Christ.³¹

Plenary Inspiration

Origen’s heterodox view of the Scriptures was not limited to the issue of historicity. While all of the scripture was inspired (according to Origen’s viewpoint), it was not *equally inspired*. His viewpoint had nothing to do with the belief that one portion of Scripture having more practical applications for today than another portion of Scripture. “All biblical texts, according to Origen, have a spiritual sense, but not all have a literal sense as well.”³² Such a perspective is consistent with his threefold sense of interpretation. While there were three senses, all of them were not in every text.

He did not believe that the inspiration of the Old Testament was made clear until after the time of Christ.³³ He compared the Old and New Testament (allegorically of course) to the miracle of Christ turning the water into wine. The Old Testament was “watery” while the New Testament was “wine.”³⁴ Directly related to the issue of inspiration is the fact that even within the Old Testament, Origen would advocate degrees of revelation. His approach would be based upon whether the writer clearly used types and figures,³⁵ which was entirely consistent with his allegorical viewpoint. If a writer made it easier to develop the allegories that was evidence of a greater degree of revelation. One cannot escape the fact that this is highly subjective and puts the authority within the hands of the interpreter and not in the Scriptures themselves.

Errors and Inerrancy of Scripture

The above heading appears to be a complete contradiction, but Origen embraced both concepts. Due to his view of inspiration, he firmly held to inerrancy. At the same time he could identify mistakes, fictional elements, and stylistic weaknesses within the Bible without it causing inner turmoil.³⁶ He believed that this was not in just a few places, but actually

³⁰ Corley et al., *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 66.

³¹ Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 222.

³² Walter C. Kaiser and Moisés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 219.

³³ David W. Bercot, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998) 603.

³⁴ Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 212.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 211.

³⁶ Holmes, “Origen and the Inerrancy of Scripture,” 221.

quite numerous. He believed that the glory of the Scriptures was hidden in a “cheap and contemptible style”³⁷ (this is beyond the previously mentioned issues).

Origen’s view of inspiration went beyond the original manuscripts. It actually even went beyond the original languages of the Old Testament. Further in this article, the possible reason for this will be examined. Origen believed that the Septuagint was also inspired of God.³⁸ He held to this, in light of the fact that there are passages within the Septuagint that clearly contradict all extant Hebrew manuscripts. It is wrong to assume that he was making these decisions as a textual critic. While being well versed with variants due to his *Hexapla*, this decision was made as an interpreter of the Word. Origen actually used these variants to expand and develop his allegorical interpretation. He would actually expound upon the two variants, giving the spiritual interpretation of each.³⁹

Origen also was a critic of the style of the writers of the Scripture. In several places he suggested that the writer could have used better style or derided their abilities. He stated, “That the New Testament was not written in the best of Greek, but says it is unimportant, because the revelation consists not in the words but in the things revealed.”⁴⁰ Paul was viewed as being unskillful in writing; therefore, he was susceptible to making mistakes.⁴¹ Paul, however, fared much better than John, who was called an “amateur in the word.”⁴² Origen’s statements are hardly complements to the men who were inspired by God to write His Word.

Perhaps one of the most disconcerting beliefs of Origen has to do with the person of God and the whole concept of revelation; it is a natural corollary of his earlier stated positions. If one is committed to the inspiration of Scripture and states that there are various mistakes, then it follows that God, upon occasion may purposely within the Scriptures, deceive man. Origen regarded this as especially true within the “watery” Old Testament. “God may have deliberately deceived people in the old Testament *for their own good*” (italics added).⁴³ He offered some very poor examples such as when Jeremiah said, “O Lord thou hast deceived me and I was deceived” (Jer 20:7). He also included the prophecy of the destruction

³⁷ Ibid. 223.

³⁸ “He believed in the inspiration of the Septuagint and saw hidden mysteries in its solecisms and errors” (Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, 189).

³⁹ Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 175.

⁴⁰ Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, 190.

⁴¹ Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 212.

⁴² Ibid. 260.

⁴³ Ibid. 228.

of Nineveh by Jonah. He provided a philosophical reason, comparing the deception of a parent to his child with God deceiving man.

Origen's assertions struck at the very core of the nature of God who cannot lie (Tit 1:2); it is also clearly an attribute given by God to the antichrist (2 John 1:7). To suggest that God purposely deceives reduces Him to a sinful creature and contradicts His own word. It also places a serious strain upon the Bible. If one understands the Bible as revelation, he cannot suggest that portions are not revelation, but deception. God has not given it to humanity to clarify truth but to confuse readers concerning some aspect of truth. One tremendous difficulty this concept presents is the subjective manner in which one must determine deception from truth. Who is able to decipher which passages are revelation and which are lies or deceptions? Having a certainty and foundation for preaching and living based upon the Word of God is quickly eliminated.

Analogical Inspiration

Based upon these errors, one might wonder how and to what degree Origen could hold to the inspiration of Scripture. His view would not actually be a literal interpretation. It was what scholars call an "analogical inspiration." By this they mean that Origen held that the spiritual meaning was inspired and therefore inerrant. The literal was full of flaws, but the allegorical was perfect and flawless. Indeed, every word is inspired, separate from the context. Once again this places the power within the hands of the interpreter. It also explains that meaning in a passage can come in direct contradiction to the literal meaning of the text.

THE WEAKNESSES OF ORIGEN'S UNDERSTANDING

Many of the previously mentioned beliefs that Origen espoused were due to intrinsic errors and weaknesses in his own understanding. Rather than being corrected by others, they were accepted and with it, his whole interpretive system. There are several flaws that appear after careful examination.

Poor Skills in Hebrew

To suggest that Origen did not have adequate skill in the area of the Hebrew language seems ridiculous at the very least. He was a man that developed the *Hexapla* and wrote often about the language. He also drew from the Jewish scholars, both from the ancient past and his

contemporaries. Examining the information eighteen hundred years after the fact would seem foolish.

There is evidence, however, which implies that while he knew the language he was not at all fluent in it. His poor skills in Hebrews caused a number of problems when it came to interpreting the Old Testament. It should be noted that the mere compiling of the literature for the *Hexapla* did not require anything but the most basic understanding and reading of the words. Comprehension was not of utmost importance since this work actually provides no support that he had a grasp of Hebrew.

When it came to the interpretation of specific passages he often based his views upon faulty etymologies.⁴⁴ In another portion he misidentified a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which may seem trivial, but it was not just a writing error. He was developing an interpretive point based upon this mistake. In other words, it had been looked at more than once and was still mistaken.⁴⁵

The types of mistakes mentioned here bring into light another issue, namely that it would definitely influence his allegorical interpretation. Origen was “not sufficiently acquainted with the laws of Hebrew parallelism to prevent him from drawing mystical inferences from synonyms and repetitions.”⁴⁶ As this is just one aspect of literature, one should not be surprised to see him take these sections and find deep mystical meanings, but it does help explain the next problem that will be examined and why he desired so much mystical and allegory. He was unable to properly “divide the Word” for himself when it came to the Hebrew.

An Incorrect View of Sensus Literalis

When he was not simply ignoring the literal interpretation, Origen was continually referencing it in negative terms. Those who held the view were regarded as uneducated. Origen viewed the spiritual interpretation as the basis of the literal and not vice versa. Much of this was due to the fact that he had “an overly narrow understanding of *sensus literalis* of Scripture.”⁴⁷ Scalise’s assessment is the consensus of those who have examined his life and interpretive theory, which is because “his view of *sensus literalis* . . . drives him to abandon too quickly the grammatical and historical sense of

⁴⁴ Ibid. 170.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 171. He mistook the “Kap” (כ, or ך if final) for a “Heth” (ח), which are entirely different in appearance.

⁴⁶ Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, 198.

⁴⁷ Scalise, “Allegorical Flights of Fancy,” 71.

the text.”⁴⁸ By this it is meant that he took literally those things that were clearly figurative. There is a connection here with the parallelism of the Hebrew poetry. Origen had no grasp of either of these two literary devices and yet they are often found together in the same passages, which caused Origen to be in error to an even greater degree in this area of Scripture.

As a consequence of the narrow view that he used, even his literal view was in error; it was more of a caricature than an accurate representation of the literal interpretation, which caused him to be oversensitive to the problems of the passage. He saw problems where there were none and then had to dismiss them with allegory.

Origen’s Attitude toward Literal Interpreters

Throughout his writings the literal interpretation and interpreters are derided, which was a culmination of all of the issues mentioned previously. The derision led him to view the literal view as one that led to “moral and intellectual aberrations.”⁴⁹ It appears to have resulted in pride concerning the superiority. Those who were committed to literal interpretation were constantly regarded as unlearned and simple.

The literal interpretation was not just ignored by Origen. He usually “overwhelms it with criticism. More often he declares it to be absurd; it is inconsistent with other passages of Scripture; it is unworthy of God.”⁵⁰ While all Scripture had an allegorical meaning, many passages have no literal meaning. He even went so far as to demand that the literal sense be destroyed so that the spiritual sense could be emphasized.⁵¹

Origen’s pride is clearly exhibited when talking to the unlearned (those who use literal interpretation) and the educated (those who use allegory). He would admit that the unlearned could be saved, but he believed “that the intellectual will far outstrip the uneducated believer in his spiritual progress, and . . . outstrip him in this world, permanently.”⁵² Besides having some elements of Gnosticism, this comment and others make it clear that he believed people like himself had a clear spiritual advantage over common people who took God’s Word literally.

⁴⁸ Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, 87.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 194

⁵⁰ Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 241.

⁵¹ Ibid. 245.

⁵² Ibid. 214.

CONCLUSION

To say “Origen’s allegorical approach would shape Christian interpretation for more than a millennium” may seem like an overstatement.⁵³ Actually it is actually an understatement of the impact he made. While most interpreters would not wholeheartedly agree with his entire system, it has amazed this author to see the various ways his belief system has been assimilated into a variety of different theological groups and systems. Those who do not even recognize his name feel his impact.

His teaching on the subordination of Christ was the precursor to Arianism.⁵⁴ His disregard of the historical has nuances of neoorthodoxy. His belief in universalism was radical, even by today’s standards. His teaching on the pre-existence of the soul⁵⁵ is central to some cults, including Mormonism. Some within Christianity embrace his view of reincarnation today.⁵⁶ His attempt to “demythologize” the Old Testament was centuries before Bultmann.⁵⁷ He desired to allow the Bible to accommodate the current beliefs of science, which is as contemporary as theistic evolution and the reinterpretation of Genesis 1—3. His use of the methods of interpretation, which had been developed by the ancient Jewish scholars, has now been popularized by individuals such as Robert Gundry in his commentary on the Book of Matthew.⁵⁸ His specific view of God’s foreknowledge is remarkably consistent with the recent aberrant belief that is called “open theism.”⁵⁹ Many other heterodox views of Origen are now commonly held by various groups within Christianity. Throughout the centuries, countless hermeneutical systems have been a modification of his work.

Based upon Origen’s theory of interpretation, Augustine advanced allegory so that it ensured the demise of ancient premillennialism, which had dominated the church from the time of Christ.⁶⁰ Allegory’s greatest achievement was the amillennial view which still holds sway in much of the church. Many very good scholars still revert to allegory when it comes to prophetic passages.

The areas of theology on which Origen has had a negative impact are legion. It seems rather insignificant that he was condemned as a heretic in

⁵³ Klein et al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 40.

⁵⁴ Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 803.

⁵⁵ Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 216.

⁵⁶ Bercot, *Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, 552.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 366.

⁵⁸ Silva, *Foundation of Contemporary Interpretation*, 59.

⁵⁹ Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 227.

⁶⁰ Couch, *Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics*, 100.

553⁶¹ because his influence did not cease. Due to his rejection of literal interpretation and the acceptance of allegory, Origen allowed almost any inventive interpretation conceived. Without objective restraints nothing was censured, as long as it did not contradict the “rule of faith.”⁶² His influence was entirely due to the fact that pagan Greek philosophy influenced him. Origen’s goal was that Christianity would have an influence upon Greek culture, but in the long term Greek (pagan) culture has continued to have a powerful affect upon the doctrines of Christianity. The lesson of history should be a constant reminder of the dangerous outcomes that occur when one compromises and when one strays from truth.

⁶¹ Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 803.

⁶² Stanley Cornman, “The Development of Third-Century Hermeneutical Views in Relation to Eschatological Systems,” *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 30 (September 1987): 284.

**TAKEN AND GIVEN:
THE ISRAELITISH JUDGMENT AND RESTORATION
TAUGHT IN MATTHEW 21:43**

Timothy L. Decker

No person truly favors a bad news/good news situation. The bad news is just that – bad; whereas the good news is the bit of information that brings a glimmer of hope to an otherwise bleak situation. What is worse, often the good news does not offset the bad news. However, these situations are simply a part of life. While good news might be desired, bad news is the unavoidable consequence usually brought by the decisions that were made. Such is the case in Matthew 21:43 when Jesus pronounced some bad news/good news, “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing the fruit of it.” Jesus was straightforward with the facts in assigning the audience with a major bad news/good news situation that would affect many throughout numerous years. What may not be so visible is *what* the bad news actually was and to *who* was the bad news pronounced. Even more alarming is that the good news in Jesus’ pronouncement is also obscure. *Who* are the ones to receive the good news and *how* are they eligible to receive it (the *what* from the bad news)?

Sadly, this verse makes for doctrinal and exegetical inconsistencies among many scholars and theologians. For example, some dispensational writers argue that the “people” in Matthew 21:43 refers to Gentiles or even the body of Christ church to which the kingdom of God is given.¹ Aside from the obvious problem of blurring the church with the messianic kingdom of Israel, if the kingdom of God was given to the Gentiles or the church (which is largely comprised of Gentiles), then Matthew 21:43 would

* Timothy L. Decker, M.A., pastor, New Hope Baptist Church, Beaufort, North Carolina; and, Ph.D. student, Piedmont Baptist Graduate School, Winston Salem, North Carolina

¹ J. Dwight Pentecost offered this possibility in *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958) 465-66. Ryrie said this in the note for Matthew 21:43 of his *Study Bible*. Stanley D. Toussaint offered one interpretation for the church in his commentary, *Behold The King: A Study of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1980), 251; another interpretation for the Gentiles was given in an article entitled, “The Kingdom and Matthew’s Gospel,” in *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*, eds. Stanley D. Toussaint and Charles H. Dyer (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986) 33. Walvoord understood “people” to be merely a general view of those who come to faith in Christ (see *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1974; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998] 162-63).

teach replacement theology! Consider the words of Buswell, a covenant premillennialist, concerning Matthew 21:43: “These words are generally understood as a prediction of the change of outward administration from the church of Israel to the church as organized from the day of Pentecost onward.”² In his commentary on Matthew, Hagner said of the verse, “This setting aside of the privilege of Israel as the unique people of God in favor of another people, namely, the church, is of course nothing short of revolutionary.”³

At the same time, some covenanters will inconsistently use this verse as a proof text for their theological ideas about Israel and the church. They regularly argue that Jesus’ offering of the kingdom of God was not Davidic or Israelitish in nature, all the while maintaining that the kingdom of God was transferred from an Israelite only message to a broader ethnic message of salvation based on Matthew 21:43. Berkhof, for example, said of the kingdom of God: “The fundamental idea of the Kingdom in Scripture is *not* that of a restored theocratic kingdom of God in Christ – which is essentially *a kingdom of Israel* – , as the Premillenarians claim”⁴ (italics added). Yet later, after rejecting the Israelitish theme involved in the kingdom of God, Berkhof stated, “It is very doubtful, however, whether Scripture warrants the expectation that Israel will finally be re-established as a nation, and will as a nation turn to the Lord. . . . Does the New Testament justify the expectation of a future restoration and conversion of Israel as a nation? . . . He [Jesus] informs the wicked *Jews that the Kingdom will be taken from them* and given to a nation bringing for the fruits thereof, Matt. 21:43”⁵ (italics added). One moment Berkhof argued that the kingdom of God was *not* a kingdom related to Israel as premillennialists affirm, yet later Berkhof used Matthew 21:43 to argue that Israel’s kingdom of God will be taken from them and leave them without a hope of a future restoration.

To gain a consistent understanding of this short verse of Scripture, many components must be understood. Firstly is the meaning of *the kingdom of God* as used in Matthew 21:43. Some sub-points to be addressed are the meaning of the kingdom of God in Jesus’ presentation of it being at hand, the kingdom of God and the Matthaen phrase kingdom of heaven (lit. “of the heavens”), and Matthew’s kingly and kingdom

² J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962) 1:420.

³ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14—28* (Word Biblical Commentary) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995) 623.

⁴ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1958) 568.

⁵ *Ibid.* 699.

emphasis. The second component needed for a proper understanding of Matthew 21:43 is the context leading to and following this verse. Chapter 21 is rich in messianic and kingdom theology. One can hardly understand all that is occurring in 21:43 if it is isolated from its preceding and subsequent context. The third component is an exegetical study of the verse itself to determine the identity of “you” (ὁμῶν, *humōn*) and “people” (ἔθνει, *ethnei*) in addition to the significance behind the future passive verbs “will be taken” (ἀρθήσεται, *arthēsetai*) and “will be given” (δοθήσεται, *dothēsetai*). With these three components in mind, the goal in this article will be to address each component and propose a preferred interpretation that has the advantage of consistency contextually, theologically, and ultimately Scripturally.

COMPONENT 1) THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND MATTHEW

Time or space will not allow for a comprehensive evaluation of the kingdom of God (not to mention the fact that many writers have already addressed this issue at length).⁶ What will be proposed is a short presentation of this author’s view of the kingdom of God in the Gospel accounts. In order to understand the kingdom of God, one must look to the Old Testament first. The examination of the Old Testament is primarily because a clear definition of the kingdom of God is not made in the New Testament. One would infer from this that since the kingdom of God was presented and offered, but not defined in the New Testament, the hearers (Jews) already understood the meaning of the kingdom of God based upon previous revelation found in the Old Testament.

However, therein lay the problem due to the fact that the Old Testament presents a duality of God’s kingdom.⁷ The duality can be recognized through evaluating the concepts of *time*, *scope*, and *administration* as they are related to the kingdom in the Old Testament.⁸ The first conceptual duality is *time* and presents God’s kingdom as already present yet also another kingdom to be future.⁹ The duality of time is

⁶ For an outstanding work on the kingdom of God, see Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1959).

⁷ The duality is mostly addressed by referring to two aspects of one kingdom of God or better two separate kingdoms altogether, which is mainly a difference without a distinction because there are *two* either way.

⁸ Renald Showers, *There Really Is a Difference: A Comparison of Covenant and Dispensational Theology* (Bellmawr, NJ: Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1990) 157-60.

⁹ The *time* duality is to be distinguished from the progressive dispensational and covenant premillennial (Laddian) view of an already/not yet kingdom. The main difference is that the Old Testament presents one kingdom as present and another kingdom as future

either contradictory or implies two different kingdoms (or at least 2 aspects of the same kingdom). Psalm 10:16 and Jeremiah 10:10 present God as an everlasting King or a King forever and ever. Psalm 29:10 and 45:6 speak of God's enthronement and reign as forever. Psalm 145:13 and Daniel 4:34 mention God's kingdom and dominion as everlasting and throughout all generations.

Daniel 2:44, however, prophecies that God will establish a kingdom in the future. The eschatological kingdom must have a definite beginning, as opposed to eternal or throughout all generations, if it is not in the present of the time of Daniel's writing. Daniel 7:13-14 speaks of a Son of Man coming to establish a kingdom over the earth in the future. The kingdom will be everlasting into the future, yet it has a definite beginning in the future. Zechariah 14:4-9 speaks of a future day, which is culminated in verse 9 with the Lord being King over the earth. The culmination too would have the same implication as Daniel 2 & 7 since it is prophesied to take place in the future. Therefore, there is a kingdom presented in the Old Testament as eternal and another as future but everlasting.

Another concept that presents a duality of the kingdom is that of *scope*. Many passages speak of God being the King over everything, over all, over heaven, over earth, over all nations, etc. (1 Chron 29:11-12; 2 Chron 20:6; Ps 22:28; 47:2, 6-8; 48:2; 59:13; 103:19; Isa 24:23). In other words, this concept of the kingdom of God in the Old Testament speaks to God's sovereignty over all His creation. However, there are other passages that seem less about God's absolute sovereignty and more about His purely political, earthly reign (Zech 14:4-9). Other passages seem to restrict a reign from one specific locale – Jerusalem/Mt. Zion (Ps 2:6ff; 48:2), and even other passages speak of a reign limited to a political, earthly reign just not stated directly as God (Dan 7:13-14). Consequently, a duality in God's kingdom is observed in the Old Testament.

The last conceptual duality is *administration*. As has already been mentioned, a large number of passages speak of God as King (1 Chron 29:11; Ps 5:2; 10:16; 22:28; 24:7-10; 29:10; 44:4; 45:6; 47:2, 6-8; 59:13; 68:24; 74:12; 84:3; 88:2-3; 89:18; 95:3; 98:6; 99:4; 103:19; 145:1, 11-13; 149:2; Isa 24:23; Jer 10:10; Dan 4:34; 37; Zech 14:9). However, other passages speak of a human mediator as King over the earth (Ps 2; Dan 7:13-14), which is consistent with the Davidic Covenant passages that would include a human mediator reigning on behalf of God over a strictly earthly, political kingdom.

whereas progressive dispensationalism and Laddian covenant premillennialism present the same kingdom as *both* present *and* future.

Therefore, from these three Old Testament concepts of God's kingdom, the Jews would have that understanding in mind when hearing a message with regard to the kingdom of God. Scripture refers to an eternal kingdom with no beginning and end, in addition to a kingdom yet to be established in the future. There is a kingdom that spans over all of creation in addition to a kingdom that is restricted over the nations of the earth and centered from Jerusalem. There is a kingdom that is ruled directly by God in addition to a kingdom that has a human King (though that human could very well be the God-Man Himself; i.e. Zech 14:9). Such a teaching leads naturally to what McClain called the "Eternal Kingdom" and the "Mediatorial Kingdom."¹⁰ The eternal kingdom is obviously named as such because it is eternal in time, its scope covers all that is created, and the One who rules is Himself eternal. The mediatorial kingdom is so called because in time it is yet future, its scope is restricted to a political, earthly kingdom, and the ruler is a human acting as a mediator between humans and God.

From that data, the Jews would have associated the mediatorial kingdom with the message of John the Baptizer (Matt 3:2), Jesus (4:17), the Twelve (10:7), and the seventy (Luke 10:1-17). The association is mainly because the message of the kingdom of God was given a temporal marker "at hand." Such a pronouncement would immediately exclude the eternal kingdom of God since the idea of being at hand is at the very least not yet established. The kingdom message was also restricted to Jews (cf. Matt 10:5-7; Luke 4:43-44; John 1:11). The message of "repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand" was only given to a Jewish audience. While there are a few times when a Gentile would be caught in the middle of the Jewish/Messianic mission of Jesus (cf. Matt 15:21-28; Luke 7:1-10), Israel was still the focus of the attention and controversy, which would also associate Jesus' message of the kingdom of God with the messianic nature of the mediatorial kingdom. Moreover, the King that was presented was fully man (though He was fully God also). He represented the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant (Matt 1:1; Luke 1:32-33) and would act as the mediator between God and man (cf. 1 Tim 2:5). The representation would clearly be associated with the mediatorial nature of the kingdom in the Old Testament. Therefore, the three concepts of God's kingdom in the Old Testament (time, scope, and administration) are repeated in the Gospel accounts, which would limit the New Testament understanding of the kingdom of God to be a Davidic/Messianic/Israelitish kingdom throughout the Gospels. The only possibility for the kingdom of God not to have that emphasis would be if 1) Jesus corrected the Jews concept of the kingdom or 2) He changed His concept throughout His teaching. However, this is not

¹⁰ See, for instance, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*.

observed in the Gospel records. The result is that “the kingdom of God” in Matthew 21:43 refers to the Messianic/Davidic/Israelitish kingdom; it has Old Testament roots as the mediatorial kingdom promised for the future, which then leads to other relevant issues that are also important to the proper interpretation of Matthew 21:43. The issues are Matthew’s emphasis on the kingdom message in addition to his use of the phrase “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of Heaven,” or literally “kingdom of the heavens.”

Many older Dispensationalists like Chafer,¹¹ Scofield,¹² Walvoord,¹³ and Ryrie¹⁴ saw a distinction between the kingdom of God (a salvific kingdom for all believers in all dispensations) and the kingdom of heaven (the Davidic kingdom). But this is becoming a less popular view in the arena of modern academic Dispensationalism.¹⁵ Regarding such a distinction, Fruchtenbaum wrote, “Covenant Theology has had a field day with this and have rightly challenged the validity of this distinction.”¹⁶ Toussaint summarized the situation in Matthew well when he wrote, “Every time the term *kingdom* is used theologically in Matthew it refers to the same thing, the kingdom yet to come on this earth inaugurated and governed by the Messiah.”¹⁷

There is good evidence to see the two terms as synonymous. Firstly, the two terms are used interchangeably among Matthew and the other Synoptics.¹⁸ Some arguing against this contend that Matthew might have a broader view in mind when using “kingdom of Heaven,” whereas Mark and Luke were thinking of only the saved for “kingdom of God.”¹⁹ However, the emphasis upon repentance related to the kingdom message in all three of the Synoptics is not different whether “of God” or “of Heaven” is used.

¹¹ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1948) 4:26-27, 5:315-17.

¹² C. I. Scofield, ed., *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1917) 1003.

¹³ John F. Walvoord, “Biblical Kingdoms Compared and Contrasted,” in *Critical Issues in Dispensationalism*, gen. eds. Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994) 77-79.

¹⁴ Charles C. Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* (Dubuque, IA: ECS Ministries, 2005) 82-83.

¹⁵ For a few examples, see Showers, *There Really Is a Difference*, 156-67; Mal Couch, gen. ed., *An Introduction to Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2000) 291-99; and, Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989) 352-53.

¹⁶ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1989) 381.

¹⁷ Toussaint, “The Kingdom and Matthew’s Gospel,” 19-20.

¹⁸ For a good listing, see Couch, *Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics*, 296-97.

¹⁹ Walvoord, “Biblical Kingdoms,” 78-79.

Matthew 3:2 and 4:17 recorded John the Baptizer and Jesus' kingdom gospel as "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" whereas Mark 1:15 similarly recorded, "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." Since repentance is related to both "of God" and "of heaven," it seems best to understand them as interchangeable. Another portion that would not make a distinction between saved only and saved with the unsaved is Matthew 5:3 ("Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven") and Luke 6:20 ("Blessed *are* you *who are* poor, for yours is the kingdom of God").

Matthew also used the two terms interchangeably in his own Gospel. On four occasions, at least,²⁰ he himself used the phrase "kingdom of God." One of those occasions (viz. Matt 19:23-24), the two terms are used in the same context and in a synonymous manner: "And Jesus said to His disciples, 'Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'" Clearly, Jesus repeated the sentiment of a rich man for emphasis. However, there would be nothing gained but confusion if Jesus meant a distinction in the two terms and still applied them to the same situation without so much as an explanation.

Couch argued from a Jewish vantage point with second Temple literature: "Orthodox Judaism has always seen the 'kingdom of God' and the 'kingdom of heaven' as messianic. Strong evidence derived from using historic hermeneutics supports this view."²¹ Couch quoted Avi-Yonah and Baras who said, "[In Daniel] world history in the course of five centuries passes before us as links in a single chain whose sole purpose is to bring to an end the dominion of the predatory beasts [the four great Gentile empires] and to establish the world dominion of God, an everlasting kingdom – 'to perfect the world under the kingdom of God' – a kingdom of Heaven upon earth."²²

Some might argue that since Matthew used both terms that he meant for a distinction in the terms. Fruchtenbaum and Walvoord, however, suggested that the reason Matthew used "of heaven" was for the Jewish nature of the gospel account, "a Hebraism."²³ Since many Jews even today

²⁰ The fifth possible occasion of Matthew's use of "kingdom of God" is a textual variant in 6:33.

²¹ Couch, *Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics*, 294.

²² Michael Avi-Yonah and Zvi Baras, eds., *The World History of the Jewish People: Society and Religion in the Second Temple Period Jewish History* (Jerusalem: Massada, 1977) 158, as quoted in Couch, *Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics*, 294.

²³ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 381; John F. Walvoord, *The Church in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964) 24-27.

avoid spelling “God” and write “G-d,” it would seem that not much has changed in two thousand years. Jews are not the only ones to do this. It is common speech in American culture to use the phrase “*heaven help us*” or something to that effect. In this case, this would be a similar substitution of “God” with “heaven.”

However, this author feels that the Matthaen phrase kingdom of Heaven goes deeper than a simple Hebraism. After all, why would Matthew depart from custom occasionally and use “of God”? It would be just as offensive to his Jewish audience to use “of God” occasionally than if he did all throughout his Gospel. Taking a closer glance, a literal rendering of the Greek phrase ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν would be “the kingdom of the heavens.” While it is granted that the plural of οὐρανός can refer to the third heaven and the Hebrew word for heaven is usually rendered שָׁמַיִם (a dual not a plural), that is not the case exclusively in Matthew.²⁴ Matthew very well could have used “of the heavens” in relation to the clouds and sky.

With this in mind, it seems that Matthew may have been making reference to the Book of Daniel. Daniel was a large contributor to Israel’s messianic kingdom theology. There is much insight to be gained in Daniel concerning a messianic kingdom for Israel. Therefore, it would make sense that Matthew would reference this resource of “kingdomology.” It seems most likely that the phrase “kingdom of the heavens” bears its roots primarily from Daniel 7:13 because this phrase is very messianic in nature. Christ used that passage on various occasions when He spoke of His second coming (Matt 24:30; 26:64). What is interesting is the reference of clouds and the sky. The content of Daniel 7 speaks of the kingdom actually coming from the sky, which might indicate why Matthew chose to use the term “kingdom of the heavens.” He was referring to Daniel 7:13 as the source of this messianic kingdom coming from the sky, or heavens.

McClain cited Daniel 2:44 (“in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom”) from which the term “kingdom of the heaven”

²⁴ In most cases where a *singular* of οὐρανός is used in Matthew, it is definitely in reference to the third heaven. For example, see Matthew 5:18 (“until heaven and earth pass away”), 6:10 (“on earth as it is in heaven”), 6:20 (“store up for yourselves treasures in heaven”), 11:23 (“Capernaum will not be exalted to heaven”), 11:25 (“Father, Lord of heaven and earth”), 14:19 (“looking up toward heaven,” “a sign from heaven”), 18:18 (“bound in heaven . . . loosed in heaven”), 21:25 (“from heaven or from men . . . from heaven”), 22:30 (“like angels in heaven”, 23:22 “swears by heaven”, 24:35 “heaven and earth”, 28:2 “descended from heaven”), and 28:18 (“in heaven and on earth”). The only time Matthew did not use a singular of οὐρανός as a reference to the third heaven was when it was used in relation to birds as a reference to the skies or simply speaking of the atmospheric heaven (6:26; 8:20; 13:32; 16:2, 3; 24:29, 30; 26:64).

could be referencing. “Since this divine kingdom comes from ‘heaven’ to destroy and supplant kingdoms existing on earth, it is apparent that we have here a clear correspondence of ideas between Daniel’s prophecy and Matthew’s terminology.”²⁵ McClain concluded, “the phrase ‘kingdom of heaven’ does not refer to a kingdom *located* in heaven as opposed to the earth, but rather to the coming to earth of a kingdom which is heavenly as to its origin and character.”²⁶ Exegetically speaking, that would make τῶν οὐρανῶν a genitive of source²⁷ referencing the source from which this kingdom will come: from the God of heaven and through the clouds of the sky. All of that is to say that the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are in fact synonymous terms referring to the Davidic/Messianic/Israelitish kingdom that Jesus offered at His first coming. Therefore, in examining Matthew 21:43 and Jesus’ reference to the kingdom of God, it is understood that He was speaking of the same kingdom message that He has always been preaching: the one for Israel and at hand.

COMPONENT 2) THE ARGUMENT OF MATTHEW AND THE CONTEXT FOR 21:43

Matthew, the Jewish gospel account, gives a historical record of Jesus while making significant theological points – the primary point being that Jesus is the Messiah and Davidic King offering the Davidic kingdom to Israel. An outline of chapters 1—12 gives much understanding to the flow of thought and the argument of Matthew concerning Christ as the King of the Jews. In chapter 1, Matthew gave the *legal* right of Jesus Christ to the throne of David through a messianic genealogy. Matthew emphasized this with his references to Jesus as “the Son of David” (1:1), which is also emphasized through the fact that Jesus’ lineage to David is through King Solomon to Joseph (His assumed father giving Him all legal rights to the throne). Chapter 2 gives the *worship* through the adoration of the King. The magi came to worship the King of the Jews who they recognized would one day reign over the entire world. Chapter 3 is Christ’s *anointed* right to be the King through the story of the baptismal anointing of the King for the position (cf. Acts 10:38). Chapter 4 shows Jesus’ *moral* right to be the King. Only a perfectly impeccable man could reign perfectly.

Chapters 5—7, known as the Sermon on the Mount, describe the *judicial* right of the King. It is there that the King established laws and principles concerning the kingdom, which was desperately needed to

²⁵ McClain, *Greatness of the Kingdom*, 279.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 280.

²⁷ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 109-10.

escape the Pharisaical legalism governing the land. Chapters 8—10 are the *testimonial* right where a description is made of the King's credentials needed to sit on the throne. The miracles listed in those chapters were recorded for identification of authority. Chapters 11 and 12 begin the rejection of the King. After all that Christ had done and showed them, the Jews still rejected Him. Matthew gave ten persuasive chapters of why Christ was the rightful King of the Jews, and yet He was still rejected. The sad truth of His rejection makes John 1:11 one of the most grievous passages in all of Scripture: "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him." Finally, in chapter 13 of Matthew, one finds the kingdom which was offered to Israel being postponed due to rejection. In Walvoord's concise but powerful commentary on Matthew, he indicated (as do many others) a similar outline through chapters 1—13.²⁸ The rejection of the kingdom in chapter 13 seems to be the turning point in the Gospel record. Walvoord simply called chapters 14—23 "The Continued Ministry of the Rejected King."²⁹

Chapter 16 marks a crucial dispensational teaching and transition in the ministry of Jesus. After the first prophecy of the church in 18:21, there is a newly emphasized teaching to the disciples that focuses on the gospel message of His death and resurrection. Chapter 17 emphasizes the return of the King through the transfiguration, which alone implies that the kingdom has been postponed since the King is to come again. Chapters 18—20 are well known passages of discourse.

Matthew 21:1-11 is the story of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. His entry was accompanied with miracles, fulfilled prophecies, and clear messianic/Davidic King implications. Although some Jewish cities and the religious leaders of Jerusalem had rejected Him, the people shouted and proclaimed a triumphant cry of praise to the Davidic King. The main problem was that they only wanted Him to be their King on their terms in order to fulfill their desires. Jesus required it to be on His terms (e.g. John 6:14-15). The statement in Matthew 23:39 after the final Jewish rejection indicates this truth: "For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

After the entry into Jerusalem came the cleansing of the Temple in 21:12-13, which got the attention of many; so much so that Jesus confirmed His messianic nature by healing the blind and lame (21:14). The chief priests found the celebration and healing offensive and perhaps even blasphemous, and asked Jesus if He realized the people's words and the implication of the words (21:15-16a). Jesus gave a quick yet biblical reply

²⁸ Walvoord, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 3-5

²⁹ *Ibid.* 6, 109.

and left Jerusalem (21:16b-17). The next day on the return to Jerusalem, Jesus taught His disciples with regard to faith and producing fruit (21:18-22). He entered the Temple as He did the previous day only this time to teach the people with His words and not with His actions. It is at this point that His authority was again called into question by the religious leaders (21:23). Instead of answering their question directly, Jesus responded by posing a question to them. The question concerning John the Baptizer's source of authority put the religious leaders in a quandary. Deciding to take the path of least resistance, they plead ignorance. Jesus then explained that He would not give an answer either (21:24-27). The exchange is vital to understand the rejection coming later in 21:43. With the religious leaders questioning Jesus and giving Him no answer to His question, the leaders were publicly admitting their rejection of Jesus as Messianic King. Jesus' lack of answer also shows His divine rejection of them, which then leads into three parables that deal with the rejection of the Messiah.

The first parable in 21:28-32 deals mainly with the rejection of the pious religious leaders in Jerusalem in contrast to the sinner acknowledging and believing the message of Jesus. Jesus presented a compelling story of two sons working in their father's vineyard. The first son in the parable is one who is disrespectful to his father's command but is later remorseful and obedient. The second son is dishonest in his acknowledgement of his father's command and remains unrepentant. The religious leaders admitted that the first son did the will of his father because he was remorseful (21:31). However, the religious leaders represent the second son. They were the most likely of the Jews to recognize and accept the Messiah, yet they totally rejected Him. Since there was no lack of remorse on the part of the leaders, this parable teaches the leaders' rejection of Jesus, which also implies the just and divine rejection of Jesus upon the leaders.

The next parable in 21:33-39 is even more significant and revealing. The parable of the landowner and the rented vineyard takes familiar roots from Isaiah 5.³⁰ The connection is such that the chief priests were sure to make. The parable presented a landowner renting his vineyard to vine-growers. When the landowner was ready to take his portion of the vineyard, he sent slaves to retrieve his share. The evil vine-growers killed all the slaves sent. The landowner sent another group of slaves larger than before but alas with the same result. Therefore, the landowner sent his son assuming that the authority, dignity, and respect of the landowner would be found in his son as a proxy. However, the vine-growers, *after*

³⁰ See David L. Turner, "Matthew 21:43 and the Future of Israel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159 (January—March 2002): 48-50.

recognizing the son (21:38, “this is the heir”), killed him also. The parable ended with Jesus questioning the religious leaders as to what the landowner should do to the vine-growers when he returns. The response is almost comical in that the leaders are unknowingly speaking about themselves as “wretches” and recommending that the landowner remove the evil vine-growers from the vineyard only to replace them with good vine-growers. Consequently, there was again rejection on the part of the religious leaders resulting in divine rejection on the part of Jesus.

Verse 42 solidifies that Jesus represented the son of the landowner in that He is “the stone which the builders rejected.” The irony here is that the religious leaders recognized and even recommended the actions that God should bring upon them. In answering the question to the parable, they employed swift justice, which is very reminiscent of David’s proclamation to kill the sheep thief after Nathan had told the story of injustice (2 Sam 12:1-7). David declared that the thief should be shown no mercy, die, and make restitution for the stolen lamb fourfold. David unknowingly pronounced judgment upon himself. Likewise the leaders reveal their own rejection of Jesus in their judgment on the evil vine-growers, prescribe the proper response that the landowner should give against the evil vine-growers, and recommend that the landowner supply the vineyard with good vine-growers.

The message of evil men rejecting the Messiah resulting in divine rejection on the part of God flows very logically into 21:43. Furthermore, it is also helpful to understand whom Jesus was addressing when he asked His questions, told His parables, and pronounced His judgments. Matthew 21:23 begins this Temple scene by speaking of “the chief priests and the elders of the people” asking Jesus a question. From that point there is only mention of “they began reasoning among themselves” in verse 25 and “they said” in verses 27, 31, and 41. The context indicates that the only ones in the exchange between Jesus are the “chief priest and elders of the people,” which is later confirmed in verse 45 where the chief priests and the Pharisees understood that Jesus was referring everything to them specifically – from the parables (the second son and the evil vine-growers) to the divine pronouncement of rejection in 21:43. Matthew 22:1-14 is another parable of rejection on the part of wicked men followed by divine rejection. The third parable was the culminating event that led the Pharisees to plot a trap for Jesus (22:15). Moreover, each time those associated with the parables of divine rejection are the chief priests, elders of the people, and the Pharisees, which only makes it all too clear as to the recipients of the divine rejection in 21:43.

COMPONENT 3) AN EXEGESIS OF 21:43

There are primarily three issues in Matthew 21:43 that are either problematic in interpretation or render insightful significance to the meaning of the text: 1) the identification of “you” (ὁμῶν) from whom the kingdom of God was taken; 2) the two future passive verbs (ἀρθήσεται . . . δοθήσεται); and, 3) the identification of “people” (ἔθνει) to whom the kingdom of God will be given. In many translations the verse often begins with “therefore,” which is somewhat unfortunate.³¹ Although “therefore” does draw the reader to the preceding context,³² it does not indicate that what was being said in verse 43 was said because of or for the purpose of the preceding context (which is exactly what is indicated with διὰ τοῦτο at the beginning of 21:43). It seems that the pronouncement was being made because of what occurred in the preceding context. In this case, the context is with regard to the rejection of the chief priests, elders, and Pharisees. The pronouncement was also made because the religious leaders unknowingly pronounced their own judgment (21:41) to which God simply concurred and accomplished.

The Identity of Ὑμῶν

By simply following the context and based on 21:45, it seems fairly evident that the identification of “you” (ὁμῶν) is understood to be the religious leaders to whom Jesus had been dialoguing. There is no indication that the exchange between Jesus and the religious elite has shifted. One must assume that if Jesus had been talking and asking questions to the chief priests, elders, and Pharisees, then in direct discourse a second person plural pronoun would refer to those whom Jesus had been conversing – namely the chief priests, elders, and Pharisees.

However, what seems to be so obvious is somewhat obscure amongst many scholars. Some could argue that Jesus was speaking beyond those in the conversation and to all who are listening in the Temple or even those simply present and worshiping. Some might go further and say that He was speaking generally with regard to all Israel. For instance, Toussaint said of the ὁμῶν in 21:43, “The privilege for entrance into the kingdom would be taken from *Israel* and given to another nation” (italics added).³³ While this

³¹ Such popular translations consist of the ASV, ESV, KJV, NASB, NIV, NKJV, and RV.

³² The old adage applies, “If you see a ‘therefore,’ look in retrospect to see what it is there for!”

³³ Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 250.

might be a consistent theological theme of Israel's rejection (especially in the Book of Matthew), the context does not indicate something as broad as Israel, which is a common Scofield interpretation.³⁴

Such an interpretation seems difficult in light of verse 45, "When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them." Some could conceivably continue to argue that "them" in verse 45 refers generally to Israel to which the Pharisees were simply a part. However, the antecedent of "them" is only the Pharisees and chief priests; therefore, grammatically that argument is unlikely. Furthermore, the identity of "you" (ὁμῶν) in 21:43 would be the same as "you" (ὁμῶν) to whom Jesus was speaking in 21:43. Undoubtedly, λέγω ὁμῶν ("I say to you") is directly linked with διὰ τοῦτο ("for this reason"), and the διὰ τοῦτο refers to the preceding context which only involved the religious leaders and that would mean ὁμῶν refers to the religious leaders to whom Jesus was addressing. Since ὁμῶν refers to the religious leaders, it would be difficult to see ὁμῶν as referring to anyone else besides the chief priests, elders, and Pharisees.

McClain offered a good perspective to the identity of ὁμῶν by stating, "When our Lord said the kingdom would be taken away 'from you,' He was speaking to the 'chief priests and the elders' (Matt. 21:23), in whom civil and religious authority was vested. . . . Therefore, the correct sense of the passage must be found in the historical situation: The nation as represented by its then existing rulers had rejected the King; therefore, the kingdom is taken from *them*."³⁵ So perhaps it is not a mistake to include all Israel in this pronouncement of divine rejection from Jesus upon the religious leaders of Israel; it would be consistent with the theme of Matthew 23:13 ("But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in"). A later pronouncement of divine rejection of the entire nation of Israel was made based on the capital city's rejection (Matt 23:37-38). Whichever the case, whether Israel is seen through its represented leaders or simply ὁμῶν refers only to the religious leaders only in 21:43, the point is that the kingdom of God was taken from them, and determining this will help to clarify the identity of ἔθνει.

³⁴ Scofield Reference Bible, 1029.

³⁵ McClain, *Greatness of the Kingdom*, 296.

The Two Passive Verbs

The two passive verbs are what constitute the bad news/good news situation in this verse. One verb tells the bad news that the kingdom “will be taken.” The other verb states the good news that the kingdom “will be given.” The primary significance of the two verbs is that they are “divine passives,”³⁶ which corresponds to the divine rejection that has been seen repeatedly in the context of this passage. It was Jesus Christ speaking as the divine One pronouncing a judgment upon someone and blessing upon someone else. The fact that the taking and giving of the kingdom is certain to occur is seen in the future tense of the verbs ἀρθήσεται and δοθήσεται. Moreover, it is also certain because it is fulfilled by God Himself, which is the emphasis based upon the passive voice verbs. The significance is that this follows the same pattern as seen in the parables – namely divine rejection, judgment, and ultimately blessing. So far then, it can be understood that the kingdom of God (which here means the Davidic kingdom) “will be taken away from you” is in reference to the religious leaders of that day and ultimately Israel as being represented by their leaders. The religious leaders had rejected Jesus as the messianic King of Israel and rejected entrance into that Davidic kingdom. As Jesus told one of their religious leaders previously, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God... unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:3, 5). The divine rejection from Jesus to the religious leaders was simply righteous justice on the part of the God-man. He guaranteed that there would be rejection but also a blessing. The blessing is said to be a giving of the kingdom of God to “a people producing the fruit of it.” Therefore, the last issue to address is determining the identification of “people” (ἔθνει).

Who Are the ἔθνει?

There are really only three widely held views for the identification of ἔθνει. The popular covenantal view is that “people” refers to the church, which has all the indications for replacement theology. A second view identifies “people” as Gentiles, which is very similar to replacement theology since the church is largely comprised of Gentiles, not to mention that during the church age, “God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name” (Acts 15:14). The commission of the church is to take the gospel unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Paul

³⁶ Hagner, *Matthew 14—28*, 623.

was an apostle to the Gentiles (Rom 11:13; 1 Tim 2:7). Needless to say that there is not much difference between these two views. They both, either directly or indirectly, imply that the kingdom of God *for Israel* was taken from them by way of the rejection of their religious leaders and given to the church or the Gentiles. The third view understands “people” as Israel still. Considering the audience, this would not have been confusing for those listening (Jews and Jewish proselytes) in the Temple to understand Jesus speaking of a future Jewish generation receiving the kingdom of God. Indeed, that is literal New Covenant fulfillment.

What is remarkable is how many dispensationalists have taken a non-Israel interpretation. In his commentary, Toussaint took the view that ἔθνευι is a reference to the church.³⁷ Later in an article for *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*, he altered his view saying, “So the kingdom was taken from Israel and the blessings of that kingdom given to Gentiles.”³⁸ At the very least, this demonstrates the close similarities of the church or Gentile views as being the “people” of 21:43. Walvoord stated of Matthew 21:43 in no specific terms that “this should not be construed as a turning away from Israel to the Gentiles but rather a turning to *any people* who would bring forth the fruits of real faith”³⁹ (italics added). Ryrie, like Toussaint, altered his view also. It is unclear which view is the newer of the two,⁴⁰ yet the two differing views still remain in print. The first view is that of seeing ἔθνευι as referring to Israel. “In its strict *interpretation* it refers to the nation Israel when she shall turn to the Lord and be saved before entering the millennial kingdom.”⁴¹ However, in his *Study Bible* notes on Matthew 21:43, he explained that the kingdom was “taken from the Jews and given to the church, which is composed largely of Gentiles (1 Peter 2:9).”⁴²

Glasscock vied for a different view altogether. He explained of 21:43, “The scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, elders, and priests had rejected God and attempted to establish their own glory. Jesus now came to tear the kingdom away from them and give it to others. The disciples of Christ would now carry out the work of God.”⁴³ Glasscock’s view almost seems to

³⁷ Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 251.

³⁸ Toussaint, “The Kingdom and Matthew’s Gospel,” 33.

³⁹ Walvoord, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 162.

⁴⁰ Since *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* was first published in 1953 before Ryrie’s *Study Bible* (first in 1986 and then later in 1995), it is likely that the later publishing of *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* in 2005 was simply copied and unedited.

⁴¹ Ryrie, *Basis of the Premillennial Faith*, 61.

⁴² *Ryrie Study Bible*, NASB (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995) 1554.

⁴³ Ed Glasscock, *The Moody Gospel Commentary: Matthew* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997) 423.

imply that Matthew 21:43 teaches a passing of leadership or kingdom authority.⁴⁴ The role of leading the people of God has been taken from the chief priests, elders, and Pharisees and given into the hands of the disciples, which is a view similar to that of taking “people” as church with the exception that “people” would refer to the leaders and representatives of the church just as the religious leaders were the leaders and representatives of Israel.

Many dispensationalists advocating a church or Gentile view for “people” will argue that since there are clear teachings elsewhere in Scripture against replacement theology, that Jesus was not teaching it in Matthew 21:43 but simply implying a direct future for the Gentiles in accordance with God’s eschatological plan. The danger of that view is that Jesus did not imply a restoration of Israel until later that day to a much wider audience of religious leaders, the Temple crowd, and His disciples (23:1). The indication of restoration is found in 23:39, which assumes the Jews will one day in the future say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” If the Gentiles or the church were the “people” to whom the kingdom will be given, and Jesus did not mention a restoration for the Jews until much later in that exchange, then the Jews listening could very well be left with one of two conclusions: God is finished with Israel and working with the Gentiles, or at the very least be confused about the rejection and restoration of Israel.

Though some dispensationalists and virtually all amillennialists argue for the kingdom to be given to either the church or Gentiles, there are good reasons why dispensationalists should avoid such an interpretation. Those taking ἔθνη as the church have two major problems. The first is that Jesus would be teaching replacement theology during one portion of his exchange with the religious leaders and contradicting that claim later in Matthew 23:39 to the leaders, crowd, and disciples. Furthermore, regardless of the later exchange, the words themselves used in 21:43 imply an exchange or replacement. If one were to allow for Gentiles or even the church to receive what was for Israel (in this case the Davidic kingdom and all its blessings), then that sounds eerily similar to the teachings of replacement theology. The only avoidance for such a teaching is for another replacement from the Gentiles or church to Israel.⁴⁵ However, if

⁴⁴ See also, Turner, “Matthew 21:43 and the Future of Israel,” 59-60 concerning “kingdom authority.” Turner offered a very similar interpretation to that of Glasscock.

⁴⁵ The Romans 11 olive tree does speak with regard to grafting in unnatural branches (11:17) and re-grafting the natural branches (11:24). However, such an equation should not be made with the prior interpretation. Especially since Paul regarded the olive tree figure as a “mystery” in Romans 11:25.

one replacement is difficult for a dispensationalist to accept, one would think that two replacements would be blatant heresy!

As a side note, many older dispensational views saw the kingdom of God as “referring to the sphere of reality rather than a mere profession of faith”⁴⁶ and “the sphere of true faith in God.”⁴⁷ The likely meaning of kingdom of God in Matthew has already been addressed. As Toussaint said, “The term *kingdom of God* in Matthew always refers to the future millennial kingdom on earth.”⁴⁸ However, it is interesting to note that many of the older dispensationalists like Scofield, Ryrie, and Walvoord held a non-Israelite interpretation for “people” in 21:43 in addition to holding a deficient view of the kingdom of God as simply being “the sphere of truth faith in God.” According to their view, are the readers of Scripture to imply from this that since the kingdom of God was taken from Israel and given to the Gentiles or even the church, that Gentiles were unable beforehand to receive the kingdom or enter the sphere of true faith in God? Therefore, a deficient view of the kingdom of God being salvific only (not Davidic/millennial) in addition to a non-Israel restoration in 21:43 will lead to very non-dispensational conclusions.

The second major problem with interpreting ἔθνει as the church is that those advocating this view argue that the church is a nation, which would correspond to a meaning of ἔθνος.⁴⁹ Toussaint argued, “Not only does the church inherit the kingdom with Israel, but the church is also called a nation (1 Peter 2:9-10; Romans 10:19). The logical conclusion is, therefore, that the church is the nation to whom the kingdom is given in Matthew 21:43.”⁵⁰ What is astonishing is that Fruchtenbaum looked at the same text and said the complete opposite. Of the identification of ἔθνει in 21:43, he wrote, “To insist it is the Church is impossible if for no other reason than the fact that the Church is not a nation.”⁵¹ Even more amazing is that Fruchtenbaum argued that the church is not a nation with the same passage that Toussaint used to prove that the church in fact is a nation! “The ‘nation’ of this verse [Matt 21:43] would be identified by Boettner as the Church; but if the Church is the ‘nation,’ then it contradicts Paul’s statement in Romans 10:19 that God would provoke the Jews with a ‘no-

⁴⁶ Walvoord, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 162.

⁴⁷ Ryrie, *Basis of the Premillennial Faith*, 61.

⁴⁸ Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 250.

⁴⁹ Walter Bauer, Frederick William Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 276.

⁵⁰ Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 251.

⁵¹ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 405.

nation,' and the Church is just that: a no-nation, an entity comprised of individuals of all nationalities."⁵²

Obviously to argue that the church is a nation based on Romans 10:19 so as to prove that the church is the "nation/people" in Matthew 21:43 is to use the unclear to interpret the unclear. Romans 10:19 says, "But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? First Moses says, 'I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation, by a nation without understanding will I anger you.'" Needless to say, the general point that Paul was making by way of application in using Deuteronomy 32:21 was that God was going to make Israel jealous. However specifically, did Paul apply "that which is not a nation" or "by a nation" to the church? The use of Scripture interpreting Scripture has its flaws when one seeks to use an unclear passage to interpret another unclear passage.

Toussaint also offered 1 Peter 2:9-10 to prove that the church is a nation. However, this passage does not equate the church to a nation. Indeed, ἐκκλησία is never used in Peter's epistles. He only called his readers "a holy nation" which is a quote from Exodus 19:6 specifically of Israel. To say that the entire church is called "a holy nation" based on 1 Peter 2:9 is to go beyond the scope of audience that Peter was addressing. Peter addressed his first epistle to those "aliens" in Gentile countries or literally to those in the *Diaspora* (1 Pet 1:1). Fruchtenbaum explained, "Peter ([1 Pet] 1:1) states that he is writing to the *sojourners of the Dispersion*. In other words, Peter is writing to Jews living outside the land."⁵³ Peter also instructed his audience to "keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles" as if to indicate that his readers were not Gentiles (1 Pet 2:12). First Peter 2:9 can hardly be used to prove that the church is a nation and is the ἔθνη to whom receives the kingdom of God in Matthew 21:43.

As for the interpretation which takes ἔθνη as Gentiles, there are major concerns with this view also for this would reduce the Jewish/Davidic nature of the kingdom of God. If such a thing were taken from the nation of Israel by way of its representatives and given to the Gentiles, then this hardly sounds like the Davidic kingdom prophesied in Daniel 2 and 7. Not to mention the fact that if the Gentiles were given the kingdom of God, the progressive dispensationalist would have every reason to speak of an "already" form of the kingdom. After all, if the kingdom of God has been given to Gentiles, and God is making a people from the Gentiles for His name during this present age (cf. Acts 15:14), then the idea of an already kingdom only seems to be logical.

⁵² Ibid. 60.

⁵³ Ibid. 187.

There is also a contextual problem with seeing ἔθνει as Gentiles. The word ἔθνος does not have to be limited to an ethnic group. It can simply be used to designate one group of people from another. In the case of the parables, the distinction between one group of people from another is not an ethnic distinction but an ethical distinction.⁵⁴ The distinction is clearly the case in the parable of the father and two sons since repentance and remorse are involved. As for the parable of the landowner and his vineyard, if the Gentiles were in view (an ethnic purpose), then the parables would have taught and emphasized that the landowner did *not* rent the land to other vine-growers but he used the land with an entirely different purpose altogether like raising cattle or sheep, which would make more of an ethnic point than an ethical one. However, the ethical point was made and emphasized. The landowner afterwards rented the land to *good* vine-growers as opposed to the wicked vine-growers of the beginning. He did not remove the vineyard and begin anew with another enterprise. If this logic is applied to 21:43, then Jesus was making an ethical point, which is seen further by the characterization of the ἔθνει as being “a people producing the fruit of it.” Therefore, Jesus was not emphasizing that an ethnic change was occurring from Israel to Gentiles, only an ethical change from unrighteous to righteous. Such logic would lend its way to only one view for the identification of ἔθνει, that is, Israel. Since Jesus was not making a change in the ethnic group to whom the kingdom of God is being given but only an ethical change, the first ethnic group of Israel being represented by its leaders would remain the same for the ethnicity of the second group. Again, the only difference between the first group and second group is the ethical moral value of righteousness.

Moreover, this view of identifying the “people” to whom Jesus will be giving the kingdom as Israel is consistent with His later teaching in Matthew 23:39. There are two certainties implied in 23:39: 1) that Jesus is returning; and, 2) His return will not occur “until” (ἕως) you (the Jews in this case according to the listening audience and context) accept Jesus as Messiah on His terms according to His provisions. If Jesus’ return is predicated on the confession of Israel, then the implication is that Israel has a future role. Such an interpretation also makes His teaching consistent throughout the rest of Scripture, which does not teach Israel being replaced by either the church or Gentiles.

Lexically, ἔθνος must not be understood as a term for Gentile nations only, but it is used on various occasions in reference to Israel!⁵⁵ “Here the

⁵⁴ Turner, “Matthew 21:43 and the Future of Israel,” 58.

⁵⁵ See Turner, “Matthew 21:43 and the Future of Israel,” 58-59 for a good but brief look at the words ἔθνος and יִשְׂרָאֵל when referred to Israel.

Greek noun *ethnos* must not be pressed to mean *Gentile*, for the same term is often used by John and Paul in referring to the nation of Israel (John 11:51; Acts 24:17). And according to the uniform testimony of Scripture, the covenants and rights of this people are irrevocable (Jer. 33:24-26; Rom. 9:3-5).⁵⁶ Other clear instances of ἔθνος referring to or including Israel are Luke 7:5, 23:2, 24:47, John 11:48, 50, 52, 18:35, Acts 10:22, 24:2, 10, 26:4, and 28:19. Since a future time element is involved (based on the two future indicative verbs) in the taking and giving of the kingdom of God, it can be understood that an Israelite “nation” would refer to a future Israelite generation. The future Israelite generation is called “all Israel” in Romans 11:26, and at some time in the future they “will be saved” (another future passive verb; cf. Amos 9:13-15 and Zech 13:8-9).

CONCLUSION

The bad news/good news statement by Christ is really not so bad after all. Yes, the Jews did reject their Messiah and ultimately the Messiah divinely rejected them by not establishing the Davidic kingdom during His first advent. However, there is still the good news that one day the kingdom of God will be given to the “nation/people” Israel. While they are only temporarily set aside presently, Jesus guaranteed their future blessing in the millennial kingdom in Matthew 21:43! There is another bad news/good news situation for this passage, which is that many dispensationalists have adopted an amillennial teaching, but the good news is that not all see it that way. With the rise of different movements like progressive dispensationalism, the weaknesses and inconsistencies of normative dispensationalism are being refined and honed. Matthew 21:43 is a prime example where refinement among dispensationalists needs to occur. The view that the kingdom of God was taken from Israel by way of their religious leaders and given to a future nation/generation of Israel is the most consistent view of Matthew 21:43 in regards to the plain teachings of Scripture in addition to consistent dispensational thought. Since dispensationalism boasts of employing a *consistent*, literal hermeneutic, it is appropriate that consistency be the rule and practice.

⁵⁶ McClain, *Greatness of the Kingdom*, 296.

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE AUTHORSHIP OF HEBREWS FROM AN EVANGELICAL PERSPECTIVE OF CHURCH HISTORY

Brian H. Wagner

The attempt to answer the question “Who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews?” affords a platform for dealing with a few important issues that face every Christian. Most Christians, of course, rely on secondary authorities like pastors, scholars, or tradition (i.e. pastors and scholars from long ago) to provide the confidence that each biblical book actually belongs in the present corpus of Scripture. However, as any Christian who begins to study further the background of “How the church got the Bible,” or more importantly, “Why is the Bible the Christian’s chief authority,” they ultimately stumble across the difficulties of authorship and of historical acceptance for each biblical book. Addressing these issues coherently and in a satisfactory manner will affect how authoritative the believer will feel the Bible is to him, and on what basis he feels that authority rests.

The Epistle to the Hebrews gives a unique number of issues that have left many, if not most, unable or unwilling to achieve a dogmatic or even definitive conclusion about its authorship. After their attempts, many commentators use a favorite ancient quote to help condone their not making a final choice. The quotation comes from the supposed words of the third century scholar, Origen, preserved by the fourth century historian, Eusebius: “But who wrote the epistle, in truth, God knows.”¹ However, is this quote truly the final word on the matter?

There were scholars and pastors prior to Eusebius that gave witness that they knew who wrote the Book of Hebrews. Is it not this kind of evidence that is usually marshaled to help prove the authorships of the other New Testament books that did not include their author’s name within, such as all four Gospels and the Book of Acts? The Roman Catholic religion used such evidence from witnesses before their time to make their own definitive statements as to the identity of the apostolic writings that should be recognized by them as Holy Scripture. However, why did they eventually choose Paul over Barnabas or Luke, though both of these later

* *Brian H. Wagner, M.Div., Th.M., instructor of church history and theology, Virginia Baptist College, Fredericksburg, Virginia; and, Ph.D. student, Piedmont Baptist Graduate School, Winston Salem, North Carolina*

¹ Eusebius Pamphilus, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Christian Frederick Cruse (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1955) 247.

two would have resolved the issue much better than Paul does as the author of Hebrews? Moreover, between Luke and Barnabas, the evidence is strong enough, according to the following research, to regard Hebrews as a book written by Barnabas.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

How one responds to the views of the scholars and historians of the early centuries of Christianity says much concerning how authoritative one will consider those views. Certainly, "God knows" who wrote Hebrews and that is not doubted. Origen's supposed quote, however, does not say that "only" God knows (though this word "only" has found its way into many commentaries). Moreover, even Eusebius' reliability in representing Origen's view can be called into question. For in all the extant works of Origen still available for study today, Origen clearly attributed his Hebrews' quotes to the Apostle Paul. One such clear example among a dozen similar is taken from Origen's *De Principiis*.

Let us now ascertain how those statements which we have advanced are supported by the authority of Holy Scripture. The Apostle Paul says, that the only-begotten Son is the "image of the invisible God," and "the first-born of every creature." (Colossians 1:15) And when writing to the Hebrews, he says of Him that He is "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person." (Hebrews 1:3)²

It is obvious from the above quote that Origen was convinced of the Pauline authorship of Hebrews, and of the Epistle's divine inspiration, when he wrote *De Principiis*. Why Eusebius ignored the overwhelming evidence of Origen's support for Pauline authorship of Hebrews, and why a contrary statement, supposedly by Origen, was chosen by Eusebius are questions not easily answered.

What Origen represents is the Alexandrian view of Pauline authorship for Hebrews, a view that was taught by Clement of Alexandria a generation before (ca. AD 195). Clement's *Stromata* confirms this as follows:

For Paul too, in the Epistles, plainly does not disparage philosophy. . . . Wherefore also, writing to the Hebrews, who were declining again from faith to the law, he says, "Have ye not need again of one to teach you which are the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat?" (Heb. 5:12)³

² Origen, *De Principiis* 1.2, in "Early Church Fathers: Ante/Nicene/Post," 37 vols. (Hawthorn, IA: Parsons Technology, 1998) vol. 4.

³ Clement, *Stromata* 6.8, in *ibid.* vol. 2.

Eusebius, however, gave added information from a work he attributed to Clement that is also unavailable today outside Eusebius's own reference.

And he [Clement] says that the Epistle to the Hebrews is Paul's, and was written to the Hebrews in the Hebrew language; but that Luke, having carefully translated it, gave it to the Greeks, and hence the same coloring in the expression is discoverable in this Epistle and the Acts; and that the name "Paul an Apostle" was very properly not pre-fixed, for, he says, that writing to the Hebrews, who were prejudiced against him and suspected, he with great wisdom did not repel them in the beginning by putting down his name.⁴

Eusebius' statement then preserves the earliest reference to authorship, if he is accurate, and it includes an explanation of why Paul would have left his name off the original, and why the Greek text of Hebrews is so dissimilar and more polished than what is found in all Paul's Epistles. Eusebius, himself, held to this view of a Pauline Hebrew original, but ascribed the final Greek version to Clement of Rome who reportedly lived in the time of the Apostles.⁵

Eusebius made no mention of the other very important witness of Hebrews' authorship that came from the three centuries, which preceded his. He was very aware of Tertullian, the theologian of Carthage (ca. AD 205), and his writings. Nevertheless, since Tertullian wrote in Latin instead of the native language of Eusebius, which was Greek, Eusebius may not have been aware of all that Tertullian wrote. He may especially have been unaware of Tertullian's later writings, when Tertullian was in opposition to the developing hierarchal abuses of the church leadership in Rome, abuses that Eusebius naively ignored. It was in one of these writings, "On Modesty," that Tertullian wrote,

For there is extant withal an Epistle to the Hebrews under the name of Barnabas. . . . And, of course, the Epistle of Barnabas is more generally received among the Churches than that apocryphal "Shepherd" of adulterers. Warning, accordingly, the disciples to omit all first principles, and strive rather after perfection, and not lay again the foundations of repentance from the works of the dead, he says: "For

⁴ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 233ff.

⁵ "In which [Clement to the Corinthians], after giving many sentiments taken from the Epistle to the Hebrews, and also, literally quoting the words, he most clearly shows that this work is by no means a late production. Whence, it is probable that this was also numbered with the other writings of the apostles. For as Paul had addressed the Hebrews in the language of his country; some say that the evangelist Luke, others that Clement, translated the epistle. Which also appears more like the truth, as the epistle of Clement and that to the Hebrews, preserve the same features of style and phraseology, and because the sentiments in both these works are not very different" (ibid. 124).

impossible it is that they who have once been illuminated, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have participated in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the word of God and found it sweet, when they shall—their age already setting—have fallen away, should be again recalled unto repentance, crucifying again for themselves the Son of God, and dishonouring Him.” (Cf. Hebrews 6:1, 4-6) “For the earth which hath drunk the rain often descending upon it, and hath borne grass apt for them on whose account it is tilled withal, attaineth God’s blessing; but if it bring forth thorns, it is reprobate, and nighest to cursing, whose end is (doomed) unto utter burning.” (Hebrews 6:7, 8.) He who learnt this *from* apostles, and taught it *with* apostles, never knew of any “second repentance” promised by apostles to the adulterer and fornicator.⁶

Tertullian thus had in his possession or at least knew about a manuscript, presumably in Greek, that was recognized as being addressed to the Hebrews and was inscribed on the document as being authored by Barnabas. He even entitled it the Epistle of Barnabas.⁷ It is important to note that he did not identify Barnabas as an Apostle, which will be discussed more fully later, but it is more significant that he introduced his readers to this epistle as having full apostolic authority. Furthermore, Tertullian did not give the least hint of any familiarity with the Alexandrian view of the Pauline authorship for Hebrews, which is similar to the same ignorance that those Eastern scholars had of Tertullian’s confident view that Hebrews was authored by Barnabas.

Undoubtedly, the isolation of these two pre-Nicene views was a direct result of the frequent persecutions and associated destruction of Christian literature initiated by various Roman Emperors during the first three centuries, starting with Nero. It is equally disappointing that any chance of preserving more of the documentation from these centuries was lost when the Roman Catholic religion co-opted the same imperial initiative against writings (and writers) that they deemed adverse to their view. It is easy to demonstrate that they have preserved only writings that supported their hierarchal rule and sacramental gospel. Any opposing views, especially more evangelical ones, have only providentially come forward to the present in spite of any Roman Catholic intention.

Though the authorship of Hebrews is not an evangelical issue, the predominant Roman Catholic view of Pauline authorship follows the Alexandrian tradition, instead of following Tertullian, the first major evangelical reformer in church history. Jerome, a premiere Roman Catholic father at the dawn of the fifth century, did however regard the issue of Hebrews’ authorship as worthy for discussion.

⁶ Tertullian, *On Modesty* 20, “Early Church Fathers,” vol. 4.

⁷ Not to be confused with the apocryphal epistle of the same title, of which Tertullian reported nothing.

The epistle which is called the Epistle to the Hebrews is not considered his, [i.e. Paul's] on account of its difference from the others in style and language, but it is reckoned, either according to Tertullian to be the work of Barnabas, or according to others, to be by Luke the Evangelist or Clement afterwards bishop of the church at Rome. . . .⁸

In *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Carson and Moo also noted that the premiere Roman Catholic theologian from the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas, “affirms that Luke translated the epistle into excellent Greek.”⁹ They also summarized the views of the main Reformers and the subsequent Roman Catholic reaction to them as follows:

Calvin (on 13:23) argued for Clement of Rome or Luke as the author; Luther proposed (for the first time, so far as we know) Apollos. The (Roman Catholic) Council of Trent responded by insisting there are fourteen Pauline epistles—though few Catholic scholars would espouse that view today.¹⁰

However, just because the Roman Catholic religion is or is not “insisting” on any certain view concerning this issue, evangelicals should not be caused to consider Roman authority as primary in deciding such issues. Evangelicals should agree with the catholic tradition that any New Testament book must have been composed by an Apostle, or at least composed under direct apostolic authority.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE

If any portion of New Testament Scripture could have been given by divine inspiration through any other person than a first century Apostle or prophet (or at least under their direct supervision), how can the canon of God’s written Word be viewed as closed? Was not the faith “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3)? Did not the revelation for this new dispensation of grace come only through God’s holy Apostles and prophets (Eph 3:2-5)? Is not the apostolic and prophetic foundation of the church completely laid (2:20) and to be judged by the final authority that it received in its written form (1 Cor 4:6; 2 Tim 3:16-17; cf. Acts 17:11)?

Paul’s apostleship and the authorship of his thirteen epistles were not seriously doubted during the first centuries. True, during his own lifetime,

⁸ Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 5, in “The Early Church Fathers Series in WinHelp Format” (accessed 12 November 2006) available from <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/7084>.

⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Preface to the Epistle to the Hebrews*, as quoted by Ceslas Spicq, *L’Épître aux Hébreux*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gabalda, 1953) 1:198, in D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) 601.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

he had to establish the validity of his apostleship since he was, as he said, “one born out of due time” (1 Cor 15:8). However, God had verified his apostleship (2 Cor 12:12). Peter demonstrated that Paul’s epistles were to be recognized as Scripture (2 Pet 3:18). However, Paul made it a habit in all his epistles to begin with his name in the greeting, and, as he said in 2 Thessalonians 2:17, make his ending salutation “with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write.” Therefore, that he authored Hebrews anonymously (the supposed Alexandrian tradition) would be a reverse of this habit, which the Holy Spirit had included in the inspiration process of Paul’s epistles. Add to this the almost full agreement among scholarship that the Hellenistic Greek style of Hebrews finds no compatibility with Paul’s style elsewhere, and one can conclude Paul was not the author of the Epistle of Hebrews.

Luke has the credentials for authorship of Hebrews because of his two other contributions to the New Testament Scriptures (i.e. the Gospel and the Book of Acts). Paul identified Luke’s Gospel specifically as Scripture when he quoted from it in 1 Timothy 5:18, which shows that he recognized Luke’s revelatory authority. However, one may ask if this truly proves that Luke had apostolic or prophetic credentials? If the Alexandrian tradition is correct, Luke was only a translator for Paul’s original Epistle to the Hebrews and would thus derive his apostolic authority from being only a companion of Paul.¹¹ He would not be required to have his own,¹² which would make Paul the author or authorizer of over half the New Testament.

Although this may be theoretically possible, it is not probable that Luke would hesitate to record Paul’s name as a part of Hebrews, which he was presumably translating, as Paul’s name would have undoubtedly been a part of it (as mentioned previously). It is also highly unlikely, though Luke was possibly an Apostle in his own right, and surely able to write in the Hellenistic style that Hebrews exhibits, that God called Luke to such a

¹¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.5, “Early Church Fathers,” vol. 1.

¹² A. T. Robertson listed traditions that support Luke’s apostolic authority, which he himself rejected, but should perhaps be given a second consideration. “The late legend that Luke was one of the Seventy sent out by Jesus (Epiphanius, *Haer.*, ii.51, 11) is pure conjecture, as is the story that Luke was one of the Greeks who came to Philip for an introduction to Jesus (Jn 12 20 f), or the companion of Cleopas in the walk to Emmaus (Lk 24 13). The clear implication of Lk 1 2 is that Luke himself was not an eyewitness of the ministry of Jesus” (“Luke, The Evangelist,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939) 3:1936. However, the “legend” may be traced to, at least, to the mid-third century (AD 250), which should not be considered too “late.” Luke’s name is Greek, but he could have been a Hellenized Jew (cf. Timothy). Moreover, as meticulous a reporter as Luke was, why did he not record the name of the other disciple on the Emmaus Road? Additionally, Luke 1:2 does not exclude Luke as an eyewitness for the “among us” of verse one shows that he was one.

ministry of exhortation that the Book of Hebrews exhibits. His Gospel and Book of Acts are historical contributions. Nowhere in the Scriptural record is Luke known as a preacher, but the Book of Hebrews is definitely a sermon. Luke was not the author of Hebrews. One brief word is necessary concerning the suggestion that Apollos was the author of Hebrews. Donald Guthrie stated,

Of more modern guesses, Apollos has had the most supporters, mainly on the supposition that as an Alexandrian he would have been familiar with the ways of thought of his fellow Alexandrian, Philo, which are supposed to be reflected in the epistle. This view, which was first proposed by Martin Luther, has been strongly supported by those wishing to retain some Pauline connection with the epistle.¹³

The fact remains that the evidence from Alexandria was certain concerning a Pauline authorship. There was no hint in Alexandria pointing to Apollos, who was their native son from apostolic times. Apollos was definitely not an Apostle (i.e. he had not seen the risen Lord; 1 Cor 9:1). His influence on the early church may have been important, and his ability to produce a comparable, but uninspired, work may be believable (cf. Acts 18:24), but without apostolic authority he could not have written Hebrews. Apollos, or any other first century preacher, who was not an Apostle or prophet, could not have authored Hebrews.

CONCLUSION

Barnabas was well known at the dawn of the church age as both a prophet (Acts 13:1) and an Apostle (14:14). With these main credentials, Barnabas became a recipient of direct revelation concerning the New Covenant. He thus could be chosen by the Holy Spirit to commit that revelation to an inspired written Text. The apostolic standing for Barnabas was confirmed by the same early tradition that had also listed Luke as one of the seventy apostles (Luke 10:1ff).¹⁴

The list from tradition mentions Barnabas as having been the “bishop of Milan.” If this tradition is correct, it fits well with the evidence that the

¹³ Donald Guthrie, *Hebrews* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 21.

¹⁴ Hippolytus, *On the Seventy Apostles*, “Early Church Fathers,” vol. 5. Eusebius was unaware of this list by Hippolytus, yet he recorded knowing (through Clement of Alexandria) an even earlier tradition of Barnabas as one of the seventy. He wrote, “But the same writer [Clement] . . . relates also the following . . . ‘The Lord after his resurrection imparted knowledge to James the Just and to John and Peter, and they imparted it to the rest of the apostles, and the rest of the apostles to the seventy, of whom Barnabas was one’” (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.1.4).

Epistle to the Hebrews was sent to a group of believers in Italy (Heb 13:24) to which the author had ministered previously (13:19). Though Barnabas may not have taken the post as a bishop until after writing the Epistle of Hebrews, he demonstrated pastoral leadership in this blend of instruction and admonition and even some praise (6:9-10; 10:32-34) throughout this sermonic letter.

Barnabas is also best suited to write to this audience of professing Hebrew Christians living outside Judea, because of his own character and background. Acts 4:36 introduces him as “Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus.” He was a Levite, well suited to present the theme of Hebrews (i.e. the superiority of Christ’s priesthood, New Covenant, and everlasting sacrifice over the Jewish Levitical system in which he was trained). He also was a Hellenistic Jew, like his audience, probably well able to write in the Hellenistic style of the Book of Hebrews. Guthrie noted,

Because of the generally assumed Hellenism of the Epistle it is an important question whether or not a man whose known connections were with Jerusalem and Cyprus would have sufficiently imbibed the Greek outlook to produce an Epistle with Alexandrian colouring. Apart from the fact that the Alexandrian background has probably been over-stressed . . . it is not improbable that some Hellenistic speculation of the Philonic type had penetrated Cyprus.¹⁵

The fact that “Barnabas” was his “apostolic” nickname, meaning Son of Encouragement, also lends support to accepting him as Hebrews’ author. Barnabas was always encouraging those with fledgling faith or doubts. He had encouraged the other Apostles when they were ready to reject the new convert Paul (Acts 9:26-27). He was sent to encourage the fledgling growth of the first “mixed” Jew-Gentile church in Antioch (11:19f). When he wrote Hebrews, he called it a “word of encouragement” to a community of professing Jewish Christians who needed exhortation not to leave the church to return to Judaism. Barnabas used the first person plural pronoun (“we”) often, not as a means of identifying himself as part of an apostolic band as Paul or John often did in their Epistles. He identified himself with his readers, even in their weakness (cf. Heb 2:1, 3; 3:6, 14; 10:26).

However, there is one such instance of identification with the recipients of the letter that causes many scholars to discount that any Apostle could have written the Epistle to the Hebrews. In 2:3, almost all translations read like the New King James Version concerning the salvation

¹⁵ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1970) 691

“which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*. . .” Like Lenski, many of these scholars think that because of this “neither the writer nor his readers heard the Lord himself, but got their hearing from those who did hear the Lord at first hand.”¹⁶ A closer examination of the original affords more evidence that in his association with his readers in this context, Barnabas did not disassociate himself from his fellow apostles.

It may not be prudent to go against almost all English translations of this passage, but an alternative based on word order and sentence structure may be helpful. “How shall we escape, having neglected so great salvation, which a beginning has received—being spoken through the Lord by those who heard *Him*? For us it was confirmed with God’s bearing joint-witness both by signs and wonders. . . .” The two main verbs, “shall . . . escape” and “was confirmed” can easily help form two sentences. The three consecutive prepositional phrases, “through the Lord,” “by those who heard,” and “for us” need to be divided between these two main thoughts. “By those who heard” goes better with “being spoken through the Lord” for that is the concluding point of this section. In other words, God had spoken “through [διὰ] angels” (2:2) “by the prophets” (1:1), but now is speaking “through [διὰ] the Lord by [ὕπό]¹⁷ those who heard *Him*.” Barnabas, in coming alongside his readers to emphasize how they have a confirmed gospel, is certainly deemphasizing his apostleship, but not denying it.

All this evidence helps confirm that Barnabas was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Even though Roman Catholicism remained uncertain through its first couple centuries, it left Barnabas as a choice as evidenced by Jerome. Tertullian’s witness is vital. The Epistle had been delivered to Italy on Tertullian’s side of the then known Christian world. It is natural to think that information of Hebrews’ author would survive better closer to its point of original dissemination. A change could easily have occurred in the verbal testimony concerning the authorship of this unsigned epistle by the time copies of it reached the distant Alexandria. Therefore, since there is such a strong evangelical witness by Tertullian that second century copies of Hebrews had Barnabas’ name attached, it can be decisively stated that the Apostle Barnabas was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

¹⁶ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of James* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966) 68.

¹⁷ The construction of ὑπό with the genitive almost always follows the verbal thought. See ὑπό and διὰ used in combination in Matthew 1:22 and 24:9. See also the example of ὑπό used after and in association with a form of λαλέω (i.e. “to speak”).

EDEN, THE PLACE OF TESTING

G. Robert Graf

The Garden in Eden is the locus of a story that has impacted mankind since the earliest days. The literary narrative includes enough vividness and detail to encourage allegoricism. Often, the garden is regarded as a type of the Mosaic tabernacle, or the image of the heavenly tabernacle from which it took its form.¹ It might even be a pattern for Jerusalem.² One scholar compared the Garden of Eden to the Garden of Gethsemane.³ Another scholar regarded it as a literary setting for metaphor, declaring, “while the story focuses on the actions of two individuals, as metaphor it represents changes that took place in the psyche as it evolved over generations in the *pro-homo sapiens* period”⁴ The story itself has even been deconstructed.⁵

For modern scholars, the links of Eden to the tabernacle permit them to posit authorship by someone (perhaps someone other than Moses) who was familiar with the tabernacle, so that the description of the Garden in Eden and the story connected with it could be construed as an etiology of, or apology for, the tabernacle by someone who was interested in the cult.⁶

* G. Robert Graf, Ph.D., Bible teacher, Lewisville Bible Church, Lewisville, Texas

¹ For example, Wenham wrote, “this description of ‘the garden in Eden in the east’ is symbolic of a place where God dwells. Indeed, there are many other features of the garden that suggest it is seen as an archetypal sanctuary, prefiguring the later tabernacle and temples” (*Genesis 1–15* [Word Biblical Commentary], eds. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and John D. Watts [Waco, TX: Word, 1987] 61). A decade later, John H. Sailhamer cited two main parallels: (a) that the garden and tabernacle were meeting places with God; and, (b) God would expel them from the garden/land if they were disobedient (see *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account* [Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 1996] 69). William J. Dumbrell understood Eden to be a sanctuary (“Genesis 2:1-17: A Foreshadowing of the New Creation,” in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002], 57-61).

² Lawrence E. Stager, “Jerusalem as Eden,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 26 (May/June 2000): 38-47.

³ Scott Bader-Saye contrasted the fear Adam felt which caused him to hide, with the fear Jesus felt which led to faithfulness. See “Fear in the Garden: The State of Emergency and the Politics of Blessing,” *Ex Auditu* 24 (2008): 1.

⁴ Shubert Spero, “Paradise Lost or Outgrown?” *Tradition* 41 (Summer 2008): 257.

⁵ Dmitri M. Slivniak, “The Garden of Double Messages: Deconstructing Hierarchical Oppositions in the Garden Story,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 27 (June 2003): 439-60. He provided a useful summary of interpretive options on page 440.

⁶ For example, the priestly writer “P,” but see Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 53-54.

In this article, the rich tapestry of the Eden narrative will not be ruffled. The article will only stitch a layer of meaning that has not been added previously. It will be suggested that the Garden was created as a place of testing or tempting for Adam, as in contrast, Jesus later would be tested in the wilderness. A principal thrust of this article is an explanation of how Satan became Prince (*archon*) of this world, a title assigned to him by Jesus (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), but having validity since the time of Genesis 3. Such an interpretation is subject to the criticism of Bovell.

It can be said that both the literary and theological treatments of Genesis 2–3 are subject to at least one profound criticism: any reader, with enough training, will be capable of their own symbolic manipulations and systematic impositions. What is to stop another from trying their hand at it and coming up with variant interpretations? How is one to be sure that her imposition of order is not simply an expression of her own theological ambitions (as perhaps Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus was)? When can it be said that a particular imposition is unwarranted or artificial?⁷

Bovell claimed that biblical theology is cyclical, and that determining initial points for various cycles is problematical.⁸ However, the story of Adam’s temptation is indeed an initial point for several themes, one of which is the advent of evil in the world. As a prelude, certain questions will be posed whose answers will indicate that the Garden was not man’s home, but rather a special place for a special task. These questions will not be dealt with exhaustively; rather, a simple answer will be offered that conforms to the idea that the Garden was a place of testing. Therefore, the proposal of the Garden in Eden as a place of testing does not become an exclusive interpretation, but a supplemental one. The questions will be: *first*, why was the garden formed?; *second*, why did the earth need subjugation (Gen 1:28)?; *third*, why was Eve formed? Finally, correspondences between the temptation of Adam and the temptation of Christ will be proposed. Before the questions begin, however, it is wise to state explicitly that in this article, answers to questions from chapter 1 will often be found in chapters 2 and 3, and *vice versa*. A short explanation follows.

⁷ The parenthetical remark was a footnote in the original. Carlos R. Bovell, “Historical ‘Retrojection’ and the Prospect of a Pan-Biblical Theology,” *Expository Times* 115 (September 2004): 398.

⁸ *Ibid.*

THE NARRATIVE OF GENESIS 1—3

The Mosaic authorship of Genesis 1—3 has been a subject of critical discussion for well over a century; it has been argued that an author known as “J” wrote Genesis 2 and 3 (ca. 850 BC), while a priestly author known as “P” wrote Genesis 1 (ca. 450 BC).⁹ The question of authorship does not seem as important as the question of inspiration, and inspiration seems to be more congruent with the idea of a single author. In this article, a single author is assumed, and the links between the story in Genesis 3 and the New Testament Gospels seem to show that a single Author inspired all the writings considered.

Firstly, Genesis 1 and 2 will be regarded as a single literary piece; the first chapter is a summary, a “majestic opening,”¹⁰ and the second chapter gives details that prepare the reader for chapter 3. In chapter 2 there is a more extensive reprisal of how mankind was formed, having both theological content and a polemical thrust.¹¹ There is also an explanation of how a plurality of humans came to be, an explanation of the “male and female” of chapter 1.

Chapter 2 begins with a pastoral scene, perhaps the ideal, mentioning plants of the field and herbs of the field, and noting the absence of humans to “serve the ground.” The verb will occur again in Genesis 2:15. The human task envisioned here is congruent with the creation statement in Genesis 1:28, without the idea of subjugation. Chapter 2 also includes the first mention of the Garden, separate from the rest of creation. The separation is governed by the prepositional phrase “in Eden” (Gen 2:8), and highlighted by a different noun phrase for the animals to be named therein, living things of the *field* (2:19), in contrast to cattle, living things of the *earth*, and creatures that move on the earth, from Genesis 1:24-25.

Preliminary Questions**Why Was the Garden Created?**

The entire creation was described as “very good” (Gen 1:31). The remark came after the woman had been formed (1:27), and she had been formed in the Garden (2:22), so the assignation of the adjectival phrase “very good” includes the garden and the entire creation outside it. Therefore,

⁹ Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, *Handbook of Historical Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001) 69. See also, Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, xxv–xlv *et passim*.

¹⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 5.

¹¹ The polemical thrust is a refutation of the myth of the slain god Kingu, whose blood was used in the creation of Mesopotamian humans.

when the man and woman were expelled from the Garden, they went into a portion of creation that is very good. In the midst of this very good creation, God planted a garden. The planting must be part of day 4, 5, or 6, before the creation of woman in 1:27. There is no common reason to plant this Garden, since the entire creation is very good, so if it is planted, it must be for a special reason. Possibly it was planted as a place of testing on day 6. If one interprets Genesis 2 on its own, without considering Genesis 1, it may appear that the Garden was planted as a home for humanity, but that is clearly not the case, since humanity was charged to be fruitful and fill the earth. The garden must have been designed as a special place within man's future home, the entire earth. Probably it had a special function in addition to being a special place.

Why Did the Earth Need Subjugation (Gen 1:28)?

The verb *kābash*, translated “subdue” in English versions of the creation history, usually takes a personal object. Subjugation is envisioned in Numbers 32:21-22; when Israel defeated the enemies of the Lord, the land (*eretz*) was subdued (*kābash* in the *niphal*). The vision is reprised in Numbers 32:29, and the fulfillment of the vision is recorded in Joshua 18:1 and again in 1 Chronicles 22:18, both in the *niphal*. David subdued the peoples (*goiim*) in 2 Samuel 8:11 (a *piel* form). There is a *hiphil* used in Jeremiah 34:11, when freed slaves were subdued again into slavery. The verb in the *qal* is attested when the army of Israel was chided by the Lord for attempting to subdue the people of Judah into slavery (2 Chron 28:10); poverty caused the people to subdue their children into slavery (Neh 5:1-5); Haman allegedly tried to subdue the queen (Esth 7:8); freed slaves were subdued again into slavery (Jer 34:16); God will subdue the iniquity of His people (Mic 7:19); and finally, the sons of Zion will subdue the enemy with sling stones (Zech 9:15).

The overwhelming sense of the verb *kābash*, even when used with *eretz* as its object, is to subdue, defeat, or subjugate persons.¹² The land is

¹² From the NET Bible notes on Genesis 1:28: “Elsewhere the Hebrew verb translated ‘subdue’ means ‘to enslave’ (2 Chr 28:10; Neh 5:5; Jer 34:11, 16), ‘to conquer,’ (Num 32:22, 29; Josh 18:1; 2 Sam 8:11; 1 Chr 22:18; Zech 9:13; and probably Mic 7:19), and ‘to assault sexually’ (Esth 7:8). None of these nuances adequately meets the demands of this context, for humankind is not viewed as having an adversarial relationship with the world. The general meaning of the verb appears to be ‘to bring under one’s control for one’s advantage.’ In Gen 1:28 one might paraphrase it as follows: ‘harness its potential and use its resources for your benefit.’ In an ancient Israelite context this would suggest cultivating its fields, mining its mineral riches, using its trees for construction, and domesticating its animals” (*italics added*). Such reticence to ascribe a personal object to the verb in this case is unwarranted. There is a person to be subjugated, that person is Satan, and that subjugation is the task of the man and his wife.

subdued when the persons who control it are defeated. However, in Genesis 1:28 the only persons who were in existence at the time of creation besides the Godhead and the male and female humans were the angels.¹³ This suggests that angels are the source of evil, in control of or attempting to control the earth, and that angels are the “enemies of God” that require subjugation.¹⁴ Lloyd wrote, “A closer examination of the early chapters of Genesis contradicts the initial impression that all is harmonious and happy before the human Fall. The command to ‘subdue’ the earth suggests opposition, the snake is clearly antipathetic to the commands of God, and Eden is only a garden—not the whole Creation.” Lloyd argued for angelic intervention as one explanation of the Fall.

The third suggested candidate for the event(s) which vitiated the creative process is the Fall of the angels. C. S. Lewis,⁴⁵ E. L. Mascall,⁴⁶ Dom Illtyd Trethowan,⁴⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar,⁴⁸ Alvin Plantinga,⁴⁹ and Stephen Davis⁵⁰ all take seriously the biblical language of angels and demons, and argue that, if there is substance to such language, and if there has been a moral revolt within the spiritual dimension of the created order, then ‘it seems reasonable to suppose that defection and rebellion in the angelic realm will drastically disorder the material world, and that, while its development will not be entirely frustrated, it will be grievously hampered and distorted’.⁵¹ Within this view, death, disease, division, and predation are seen as symptoms of this distortion, consequences of the angelic Fall rather than part of the good order of creation. Creation is thus already fallen before ever human beings evolve—there are already aspects of creation which need to be subdued (Gen. I. 28), there is already created reality (the serpent) which works against the divine purpose, and the apparently harmonious environment into which God places humanity (Eden) is only a garden, not the whole of creation. So when human beings emerge, they are given the task of healing that which has already fallen, of subduing that which is already distorting and disfiguring the good creation of God.⁵² Humanity, however, did not respond to that vocation, but joined in the rebellion and exacerbated the divisions. Thus to blame the angelic Fall for the origin of natural evil is not to evade all responsibility for its continuing occurrence. Nor is it to leave all hope in merely human hands. For there has been One who did not join in the rebellion, who accepted the human vocation and who therefore exercised that redemptive dominion over creation to which humanity had always been called. Thus victims of natural evil were healed, death was undone, and nature’s destructiveness defused. So the nature and healing miracles of Christ are both glimpses back to the forfeited potentialities of faithful humanity in the creation purposes of God, and glimpses forward to the future restoration and renewal of heaven and earth.¹⁵

¹³ It could be argued that Moses and his audience did not know of angels at this time, and that the concept had not been fully developed. However, the Holy Spirit knew, and this was a revelation to Moses. Moses may not have understood the full meaning of this.

¹⁴ See, for example, Michael Lloyd, “Are Animals Fallen?” in *Animals on the Agenda: Questions about Animals for Theology and Ethics*, eds. A. Linzey and D. Yamamoto (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998) 157-58.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 158-59.

⁴⁵ *The Problem of Pain*, Geoffrey Bless 1940.

⁴⁶ *Christian Theology and Natural Science*, Longmans, Green & Co. 1956.

⁴⁷ *An Essay in Christian Philosophy*, Longmans, Green & Co. 1954.

⁴⁸ *Theo-Drama*, vol. iii, *Dramatis Personae*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press 1992, IV, pp. 466-501; and vol. iv, *The Action*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press 1994, D, pp. 137-201.

⁴⁹ *God, Freedom and Evil*, New York: Harper & Row 1974.

⁵⁰ Free Will and Evil', *Encountering Evil* ed. Davis.

⁵¹ Mascal, *Christian Theology*, p. 36.

⁵² Thus C. S. Lewis wonders 'whether man, at his first coming into the world, had not already a redemptive function to perform. . . . It may have been one of man's functions to restore peace to the animal world, and if he had not joined the enemy he might have succeeded in doing so to an extent now hardly imaginable' (*The Problem of Pain*, p. 124)

Thus possibly Satan was enraged when God decided to give humans dominion over the earth. God's decision was the critical issue for rebellion, and that angelic rebellion had to be subdued.

Why was Eve Formed?

The pronominal verb suffix in Genesis 1:26 refers to a plural subject (let *them* rule), so more than one human is envisioned. The idea is that a plurality of humans will have charge of the earth, which seems to be the momentum for Satan's opposition. The humans should be tested, and the testing should involve not just a single man, but humans in whatever community God envisions. It is possible that God could create man after man after man, as He most likely did for the angels, each one *sui generis*, but God decided instead that, since it is not good for man to be alone, and there should be more, God will create an *ēzer kenegdû*, a suitable companion.¹⁶ God thereby created the minimal number of humans that can fulfill the charge to "be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth . . ." (Gen 1:28). God first brought to Adam representatives of the animal world, living creatures of the field, over whom he should have dominion. Adam realized quickly that no partner was possible from that side; in the context, it is unnecessary for Adam to view every created animal. The viewing is more likely a simple and spare lesson. Someone closer to his own status is necessary. He was delighted when he realized that God intended for humans to fill the earth by reproduction.

¹⁶ The idea of God creating several men may have been in Schatz's mind. See Elihu A. Schatz, "Sons of Elokim as used in Genesis," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 36 (April—June 2008) 125-26.

The Temptation of Adam

As rulers of the animals and subjugators of the earth, the man and his wife had a ministry to perform. To make the parameters of his ministry clearer, God gave Adam a test. The prelude to the test is found in Genesis 2:15. There are several verbs in this verse, and although they have been often translated to conform to Genesis 2:8, such conformation may not have been in the author's mind. The first verb is *lākach*. Scanning the outer reaches of its semantic field, one may note the nuance, "to summon."¹⁷ The second verb is *nūach* in the *hiphil*, which is a verb that can have the sense of "to leave."¹⁸ The nuance is particularly appropriate in the context: God created man and said all was good; now He summoned him in the Garden, warned him of a coming test, left him, and said, "It is not good for man to be alone." Then, He created a helper for him.

The content of the test was that the man and the woman were placed in the Garden of God, to "serve it" and "keep" it. The verb *ābad* has the primary meaning "to serve." In this context, the nuance could be, "act as God's regent and do well for the earth." The verb *shāmar* has the meanings "keep," "observe" (as feasts, or to obey commandments), "protect," and their synonyms. In the present context, it is difficult to envision what Adam was to protect the Garden from, nor what there could be for him to observe or obey. The simplest meaning seems to be that Adam was to "keep" it, that is, not to lose it.¹⁹

The Garden was a place of struggle for authority over the earth. The man had the authority and the control over the earth, but this authority would be challenged. The man's task was to "keep" his authority over the earth, and not to lose it. In a contrasting manner, when Christ was tempted, the wilderness was also a place of struggle for authority over the earth, but there Satan had the authority. Where had he received that authority? Satan received it when Adam failed to keep his authority in the Garden, failed to

¹⁷ The standard reference for biblical Hebrew listed Numbers 33:11, Judges 11:5, and 1 Samuel 16:11 as examples (Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* [Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1906; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005] 543).

¹⁸ *Brown-Driver-Briggs* provided Genesis 42:33 and Numbers 32:15 as examples (*ibid.* 628-29).

¹⁹ The problem of gender disagreement between the feminine pronominal suffixes and the masculine *gēn* is difficult due to the lack of close feminine antecedents. What was it that Adam was actually supposed to serve and keep? Sailhamer suggested Adam was supposed to "observe Torah," but that antecedent does not appear anywhere (see *Genesis Unbound*, 76). The earth (*eretz*) and the ground (*adamah*) are feminine, but distant. Perhaps they would have been closer to verse 15 if the parenthetical insertion in verses 11-14 were a later editorial addition.

withstand the temptation. From that point onward, Satan was the strong man, and Earth was his house, as Matthew 12:29 attests. Under Satan's stewardship, paradise became desert, the garden became a wilderness.

What follows is a series of typological linkages between Adam and Jesus Christ, assuming angelic (satanic) sin before Adam's sin. Several of the links are contrasts rather than equivalents.

- 1) When Adam was created in God's image (Gen 1:28), he was the champion, the putative subjugator, and God included him in the assessment, "It was very good" (1:31). When Jesus began His ministry, the Voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased" (Matt 3:17). Temptations follow both assessments.
- 2) The man and woman were charged to subdue the earth (Gen 1:28). Even though there was angelic rebellion, and there would be a struggle for control of Earth, there was a champion charged with subduing it, which is why the creation could be regarded as "very good." Once the world became Satan's domain, Jesus was sent to break into the strong man's house and plunder it (Matt 12:29), and to undo the devil's works (1 John 3:8). As with Adam, before Jesus could begin His ministry, He had to be tested.
 Jesus was also sent for reconciliation (Col 1:20). The man and woman were charged to subdue the angelic distortion of creation (that is, to retain the dominion over it which some angels desired to usurp), while Jesus was sent to judge Satan and reconcile or return the entire world to God (1 Cor 15:24-28).
- 3) Adam was put into the Garden by God (Gen 2:8, 15).²⁰ Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness (Matt 4:1). While this link seems like a contrast instead of a correspondence, one must remember that the Garden was planted by God as a special place in a very good creation, while the wilderness was a portion of what this very good creation had become under the authority of Satan.
- 4) Adam's first temptation involved eating, as did the first temptation of Jesus.
- 5) Adam was charged to keep the garden (Gen 2:15), but lost it by failing the first temptation (3:6). Jesus was offered the world again

²⁰ Dumbrell noted, "man was formed outside the garden, abstracted from the world at large, and then placed within the garden" ("Genesis 2:1-17," 55). He further stated, "Adam's role in Eden was to extend the contours of the garden to the whole world, since this is the transition that finally occurs in Revelation 22" (p. 62). Adam's role is partially congruent with the task of Jesus, but the garden was already in a very good creation.

(Matt 4:8-10), but withstood that temptation in addition to the other two.

- 6) Through Adam's failure, mortality came to all men (Gen 2:17). Through Christ's success, all who trust in Him are made alive (Rom 5:17). Again, this is antithetic parallelism rather than synonymous parallelism. It is specified by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:22.

CONCLUSION

The Garden of Eden, or the garden in Eden, was a place of testing for the ruler(s) of earth. Their initial charge to rule over the animal creation had been augmented to include subjugation of the earth. The subjugation possibly involved a struggle with Satan for authority over creation. The woman was man's partner in mission, chosen after the animals were deemed unsuitable by Adam as rulers, since they were to be subject to human dominion. The mission was the subjugation of the earth, in order to have the legal right to rule. In this scenario, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil became a real test of mission.²¹ Adam was charged to keep the garden, and lost it by acceding to the first temptation, to eat from the tree. This failure provided Satan with the authority he sought, the authority he paraded before Christ in the Gospel narratives of the later temptation in the wilderness. When Adam ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he became aware that there was (and now is) opposition to God, the blot on the goodness of creation was real and present, and authority had been hanging in the balance. Adam knew that the authority he should have struggled to keep had now become Satan's; good and evil had been in a test.

²¹ One rabbi noted that neither the serpent nor Eve referred to "the tree" as "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." "Said R. Pinchas ben Yair: Before Adam partook of this tree, it was called simply 'tree,' just like all other trees. But as soon as he partook of it, thereby transgressing the decree of the Holy One blessed be he, it was called the tree 'of the knowledge of good and evil'" (Nehama Leibowitz, *Studies in Bereshit [Genesis]: In the Context of Ancient and Modern Jewish Bible Commentary*, trans. Aryeh Newman, 4th rev. ed. [Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1981] 23).

THE SOTERIOLOGY OF 2 TIMOTHY 2:11-13 – PART I

David S. Ermold

Throughout history, many creeds have been formulated in order that doctrinal truths may be stated succinctly (e.g. the Apostles' Creed or the parallel Trinitarian creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople). Although it is debated whether Paul's quotation of an outside source in 2 Timothy 2:11-13 was a creed or a hymn, or perhaps his own thoughts,¹ the issue still remains: a proper understanding of this creed-like statement could establish a doctrine of soteriology that could then be set as a standard for churches today. The passage reads:

¹¹ πιστὸς ὁ λόγος·
εἰ γὰρ συναπεθάνομεν, καὶ συζήσομεν·
¹² εἰ ὑπομένομεν, καὶ συμβασιλεύσομεν·
εἰ ἄρνησόμεθα, κἀκεῖνος ἀρνήσεται ἡμᾶς·
¹³ εἰ ἀπιστοῦμεν, ἐκεῖνος πιστὸς μένει,
ἀρνήσασθαι γὰρ ἑαυτὸν οὐ δύναται.

The verses may be translated as follows:

¹¹ *Faithful is the saying:*
For if we died with [Him], we will also live with [Him],
¹² *If we endure, we will also reign with [Him],*
If we deny, He also will deny us,
¹³ *If we are unfaithful, He remains faithful,*
*He is unable to deny Himself.*²

* David S. Ermold, Th.M. student, Capital Bible Seminary, Lanham, Maryland

¹ For proponents of the former, see Martin Dibelius, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972) 109; James D. G. Dunn, "The First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus," *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000) 843; George Knight, *The General Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) 400-01; Walter Lock, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 1895) 96; William Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000) 501; and, Jerome Quinn and William Wacker, "The First and Second Letters to Timothy," *Eerdman's Critical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 651. For proponents of the latter, including ones who at least raise the possibility, see Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (New York: Doubleday, 2001) 376; J. J. van Oosterzee, *The Two Epistles of Paul to Timothy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960) 95; and, Philip Towner, "The Letters to Timothy and Titus," *New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) 507.

² All translations are the author's unless otherwise noted.

RELEVANCE OF STUDY

It is the contention of this article that 2 Timothy 2:11-13 holds several keys to understanding not only soteriology but even eschatology. Some of these doctrines have been lost or unexplored throughout the centuries of church history for a variety of reasons. Some of these doctrines, such as *reign with Him*, have been diluted or largely ignored. If doctrines can be established and defended using not only the immediate context, but also the whole of the epistle and perhaps the New Testament, this may not only formulate doctrine, but practice also.

Some schools of thought do not hold that identifying with Jesus' death through belief alone is all that is needed for eternal life. They are content to make baptism or endurance part of a commitment in order to achieve eternal life. Other theologians do not hold that a true believer could ever deny Jesus. Or, if a believer were to deny Jesus, they would inevitably lose their eternal life. Such ones would deny a doctrine of eternal security, perhaps even using the final two clauses to support such a conclusion.

Taken in its immediate context, however, in addition to the context of 2 Timothy as a whole, the quotation in 2:11-13 serves as a summary of major soteriological doctrines – with special emphasis on the substitutionary death of Christ, sanctification, rewards, and eternal security. Although this is but one passage in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit has included it in Scripture, perhaps with some special emphasis due to the way it was introduced. Therefore, understanding these verses in their context may illumine the doctrines of soteriology and eschatology.

METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

The study will begin with a survey of historical views, beginning with the church fathers and ending with modern commentators. The purpose of this is to understand how various people or groups have interpreted this passage throughout church history. Following that, an exegetical study of the verses will be performed, which will serve as the basis of any theological work to come, in addition to the foundation for a critique of the historical views. Once the exegesis is complete, there will be a section detailing the doctrines that are found within the passage, seeing if the exegesis stands in comparison to other Scripture. Finally, it will be shown that the statement in 2 Timothy 2 actually serves as a summary of doctrines being taught and addressed in the whole of 2 Timothy, whether through explicit teaching or through the use of case studies.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF 2 TIMOTHY 2:11-13

It would be beneficial to know the history of the interpretation of this passage before the passage and its doctrinal ramifications are considered anew in this study. Even if the views being considered are not correct, the exercise may illumine some past interpretive issues and problems. While not every view that has ever been espoused can be presented here, it is the goal of this article to address the main interpretive perspectives of the past two millennia. The church fathers will be regarded for their antiquity and proximity to the period of the New Testament. Two particular systems, Historical Arminianism and Historical Calvinism, will be presented, for they represent fundamental soteriological systems. The Arminian position will be considered for its contributions to the doctrine of conditional security, the Calvinist position for its view on perseverance.

The Church Fathers

Due to their temporal proximity with the writing of 2 Timothy and the church tradition of the day, the church fathers not only add some verification to the Pauline nature of 2 Timothy, but may also give some insight onto the theological ramifications of this passage.

Polycarp (ca. 69-ca.155)

It is in this Apostolic Father that the verbiage of 2 Timothy is first seen outside the biblical canon. In a chapter devoted to qualifications of deacons, Polycarp wrote,

Knowing, then, that “God is not mocked,” we ought to walk worthy of his commandment and glory. If we please him in this present world, we shall receive also the future world, according as he has promised to us that he will raise us again from the dead, and that if we live worthily of him, “we shall also reign together with him,” provided only we believe.³

Whether Polycarp was quoting Paul or, as the case may be, Paul’s source, it is here in the early second century that there is a quotation of the material. It is found in a context much like the one in 2 Timothy 2, giving reasons and exhortations to persevere in times of persecution.

Tertullian (ca. 160-ca. 220)

³ Polycarp, “Philippians,” in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 10 vols. (reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 1:34.

The next time this passage appears in an extant writing is in Tertullian of the early third century. In chapter 13, he began by recounting the radical transformation of Paul from persecutor of the church to persecuted for the church.⁴ Afterwards, Tertullian gave multiple Pauline references demonstrating the persecution that Paul endured, mainly from Romans 8, 2 Corinthians, and 2 Timothy. Tertullian seemed to have martyrdom in mind: “[When Paul speaks of dying with Christ,] you see what he decides the bliss of martyrdom to be, in honour of which he is providing a festival of mutual joy.”⁵ Before he quoted the entirety of 2 Timothy 2:11-13 in *Scorpiace*, Tertullian addressed the admonition that Paul gave Timothy towards endurance.

Origen (ca. 185-254)

Unlike Tertullian, Origen had a view of 2 Timothy 2:11 that understood *died with Him* not as the believer’s martyrdom, but as their forensic position.⁶ In demonstrating the necessity of not only the cross, but the burial also, Origen cited Romans 6:10 and Philippians 3:10, in addition to 2 Timothy 2:11, to demonstrate the positional nature of the believer’s death with Christ.

Cyprian (d. 258)

While Tertullian was finishing his earthly ministry, Cyprian was beginning his. In a work dedicated to martyrdom, he wrote concerning Christ’s exhortation not only “with words, but with deeds also,” in that “after all wrongs and contumelies, [He] suffered also, and was crucified, that He might teach us to suffer and to die by His example, that there might be no excuse for a man not to suffer for Him, since He suffered for us.”⁷ Following that, Cyprian quoted Matthew 10:28, 32-33, 2 Timothy 2:11-12, and 1 John 2:23, demonstrating that the New Testament authors recorded this same sentiment.

Ambrose (ca. 338-97)

Ambrose did not exegete the passage for its own worth, but rather cited it for support that the Holy Spirit is equal with God. He posited that if the believer will reign with Christ “through the Spirit, how do we refuse to

⁴ Tertullian, “Scorpiace,” in *ibid.* 3:646.

⁵ *Ibid.* 3:647.

⁶ Origen, “Against Celsus,” in *ibid.* 4:459.

⁷ Cyprian, “On the Exhortation to Martyrdom,” in *ibid.* 5:499.

admit that the Spirit himself is glorified together with Christ?”⁸ And elsewhere: “What is more foolish than for any one to deny that the Holy Spirit reigns together with Christ, when the Apostle says that even we shall reign together with Christ in the kingdom of Christ? But we by adoption, he by power; we by grace, he by nature.”⁹ Numerous times in the writings of the church fathers, 2 Timothy 2:11-13 was referenced for support of a doctrine concerning theology proper, particularly that of God’s attribute of faithfulness and immutability.¹⁰ Here, however, is the only time where pneumatology is considered.

John Chrysostom (ca. 347-407)

Perhaps the most in-depth look at the thoughts of the early church in 2 Timothy 2:11-13 comes from the pen of Chrysostom. He followed much of what came before him in that he believed that *died with Him* referred not only to “the Laver,” but also to the suffering that leads to martyrdom.¹¹ Chrysostom, much like most modern commentators, saw a close parallel to the first two lines, virtually equating *died with Him* with *endure*: “It is not enough to die once, but there was a need of much patient endurance.”¹² In other words, endurance is as much a part of eternal life as is dying with Christ. It is impossible for one to have eternal life without enduring.¹³ Concerning the last line, Chrysostom held that God’s faithfulness was not only a perfection of His, but also a resistance to being “injured.”

If we believe not that he rose again, he is not injured by it. He is faithful and unshaken, whether we say so or not. If then he is not at all injured by our denying him, it is for nothing else than for our benefit that he desires our confession. For he abideth the same, whether we deny him or not.¹⁴

Chrysostom’s interpretation places the benefits of salvation solely upon the believer.

⁸ Ambrose, “Of the Holy Spirit,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, second series, 14 vols. (reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954) 10:125.

⁹ Ibid. 10:157.

¹⁰ On the unchanging nature of God, see Augustine, “On the Creed,” in *ibid.*, first series, 3:369; Augustine, “On the Gospel of St. John,” in *ibid.* 7:294; Chrysostom, “Homilies on St. John,” in *ibid.* 14:135; Theodoret, “Letters” in *ibid.* 3:312; and, Athanasius, “Four Discourses Against the Arians,” in *ibid.*, second series, 4:353.

¹¹ Chrysostom, “Homilies on Timothy,” in *ibid.*, first series, 13:492.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ “For as we endure His dying now, and choose whilst living to die for His sake: so also will he choose, when we are dead, to beget us then unto life. For if we from life come into death, he also will from death lead us by the hand into life” (Chrysostom, “Homilies on Second Corinthians,” in *ibid.* 12:322).

¹⁴ Chrysostom, “Timothy,” 13:492.

Assessment

The evidence available shows that the church fathers did not portray a complete representation of what the early church held, and certainly not a unified understanding. It was not until the Reformation and Post-Reformation eras that theologians would begin to develop systematic statements of the passage.

The Historical Arminian Position

The term Historical Arminian is used here with specific reference to their doctrine of conditional security. Conditional security is the term used to describe that doctrine which teaches that a justified person may lose their status by departing from the faith. Arminius wrote: "A true believer can either totally or finally fall away from the faith, and perish."¹⁵ While Arminius himself never published an exegesis of this passage, others who teach this doctrine have.

Richard Charles Henry Lenski

Lutheran scholar R. C. H. Lenski gave one of the most thorough treatments of the Historical Arminian position that can be found. For that reason, he serves as a prime candidate to give a general overview of the view. He began by looking at the four clauses generally. He noted that Paul wrote using a "condition – conclusion" formula, stating that "as sure as is the one, so sure is the other. All these are conditions of reality."¹⁶ They are all statements to which a believer can be held accountable.

After explaining why *died with Him* cannot be a reference to physical death, Lenski wrote that the death in view is the one "which occurs by baptism by contrition and repentance."¹⁷ He pointed to Romans 6:4ff, explaining that while Christ died physically, a believer dies to sin because

¹⁵ James Arminius, "The Declaration of Sentiments," in *The Writings of Arminius*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1956) 3:254. Elsewhere, he wrote: "The opinion which denies 'that true believers and regenerate persons are either capable of falling away or actually do fall away from the faith totally and finally,' was never, from the very times of the apostles down to the present day, accounted by the church as a catholic doctrine. Neither has that which affirms the contrary ever been reckoned as a heretical opinion; nay, that which affirms it possible for believers to fall away from the faith, has always had more supporters in the church of Christ, than that which denies its possibility or its actually occurring" ("Certain Articles," in *The Writings of Arminius*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1956) 1:502-03.

¹⁶ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1946) 793.

¹⁷ Ibid.

they have faith in Christ's work. He concluded: "Because the one death caused the other, because the latter rests on the former, σύν combines them: we died together with Him."¹⁸ According to Lenski, there is no question that Paul and Timothy fall under this category.

Dying with Him is only the first step, however, and living with Him being the final. The next two clauses discuss what happens in the meantime. Although Paul did not use a σύν-compound word with ὑπομένω, Lenski believed that is implied because of all the compound words surrounding it. He added: "[Christ's] death and His enduring were expiatory, *for us*, ours are only confessional, *together with Him*."¹⁹ As the believer aligns himself with Christ, and by so doing endures, their endurance is with Him, and not on their own accord.

Lenski noted the paradoxical nature of these first two couplets; after all, how can someone die in order to live? How can they be exalted to reign by being humbled in enduring? He noted as follows:

There we shall reign as royalties with no one above us save Christ, and we are actually associated with Him: sitting with Him in His throne as He sits in His Fathers (Rev 3:21; 20:4, 6). Here belong all those passages that speak of the crown such as 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet 5:4; Rev 2:10. Human imagination fails to visualize the exaltation.²⁰

According to Lenski, the doctrine of reigning with Christ is something that is biblical and important. He mentioned the passages where crowns are mentioned, in addition to some other passages that concern ruling with Christ.

It is important to note that he believed that someone cannot live with Christ unless they are also reigning with Him. The evidence for this being his understanding becomes obvious in his discussion of the next clause; in it, Lenski posited that the denial that Paul cited is a denial of Christ.²¹ The particular denial is a permanent one, and although believers may have temporary lapses of faith, they should be repented of, just as Peter did. Let the believer beware, though: "The condition still visualizes reality and is not changed to potentiality . . . even though Paul refers to Timothy and to

¹⁸ Ibid. 794.

¹⁹ Ibid. (emphasis original).

²⁰ He continued, "Say 'reign' or 'crown' like this, and the chiliast has no trouble in conjuring up his millennium despite all Scripture to the contrary notwithstanding" (ibid. 794-95).

²¹ "The English needs the pronoun [after the verb]" (ibid. 795), which is his same argument for the entire passage, whether it is a σύν-compound verb or not.

himself. The future tense is in place because both are now nobly confessing.”²²

According to Lenski, there is the distinct possibility that a believer can deny Christ, and that denial will lead to Christ denying them entrance into eternal life: “Only one who has confessed can turn about and deny. He who by denial now cuts himself off from Christ and so faces Him on the last day must not expect that Christ will be equally false and will then confess where He ought to deny.”²³ The ultimate retribution for denying Christ is a loss of eternal life. While a believer may be unfaithful for a time, they must ultimately repent and return from their unfaithfulness, or else they are in jeopardy of losing the eternal life they once had.

Lenski held that the fourth clause is a general statement, as evidenced by the use of the present tense.²⁴ In other words, generally speaking, no matter what humans may do, or no matter what circumstances may abound, God always remains faithful to Himself and His promises, whether they may be a promise or a threat. While believers may go back and forth

²² Ibid. It should also be noted that there is a textual variation here. While the future, ἀρνησόμεθα, is evidenced by \aleph^* A C Ψ 048 33 1175 1739, in addition to some other manuscripts and the entirety of the Latin translations, the present form ἀρνησόμεθα is evidenced by \aleph^2 D 1739 1881 and the MT. The position of this author is to accept the latter, although ultimately, the denial can be present or future and it still has the same result, as will be discussed. Most would not take this reading, of whom Johnson serves as an example: “Nestle-Aland contains the future tense because it is clearly the harder reading. It interrupts the sequence, since the protasis of the other three conditional sentences is in either the aorist or the present tense. Scribes would therefore be tempted to ‘correct’ the future to the present tense for the sake of consistency” (Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* [New York: Doubleday, 2001] 376). Marshall also noted: “The use of εἰ with fut. indic. is quite rare” (I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles* [New York: T. & T. Clark, 1999] 740). Although this is not convincing evidence on its own (the construction also occurs in Matt 26:33; Mark 14:29; Luke 11:8; 1 Pet 2:20), it does show that it is not a common occurrence. In general, for all textual matters, the author will be primarily following Zane Hodges and Arthur Farstad, *The Greek New Testament according to the Majority Text*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), although reference will also be made to Eberhard Nestle and Kurt Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993). While a defense of the Majority Text is beyond the scope of this thesis, see Maurice Robinson and William Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (Southborough, MA: Chilton Book Publishing, 2005) 533-86; and, Hodges and Farstad, *Greek New Testament*, ix-xiii for an introduction to Majority Text theory, in addition to a bibliography of more resources on the matter.

²³ Lenski, *Timothy*, 795. Quinn and Wacker also supported this view: “Here again Jesus’ repudiation of a personal relationship with or knowledge of a onetime believer who had repudiated him makes it quite clear that it is a reciprocal religious (faith) relationship that is being described and that that relationship is breakable” (Quinn and Wacker, “Timothy,” 652).

²⁴ Lenski, *Timothy*, 795-96.

between being faithful and unfaithful on a whim, Christ will not do the same. They want Him to “deny all His warning threats, give them and thus Himself the lie, and let these His deniers enter heaven as do His faithful believers.”²⁵ Of course, this lies at the very heart of the Historical Arminian position. A lack of endurance and faithfulness means a denial of entrance into eternal life.

The Historical Calvinist Position

Just as with the Historical Arminian view, the Historical Calvinist view is found in many forms and doctrines, the most critical and popular of which will be discussed here. The term Historical Calvinist is used here with specific reference to their doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Berkhof defined perseverance of the saints as “they whom God has regenerated and effectually called to a state of grace, can neither totally nor finally fall away from that state, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end and be eternally saved.”²⁶

John Calvin

Perhaps there is no better place to start the discussion on the Historical Calvinist position than with Calvin himself. On the first clause, he wrote, “we shall not be partakers of the life and glory of Christ, unless we have previously died and been humbled with Him.”²⁷ Here, Calvin made clear that it is through Christ’s death that the believer receives life. He quoted Romans 8:29, where Paul wrote with regard to those who were predestined so that they would be conformed to the image of the Son. It is interesting to note that Calvin referred to these people as “all the elect.”²⁸ To Calvin, when one believes in Christ for eternal life, they are not only

²⁵ Ibid. 796.

²⁶ As to what *persevere therein* involves, Berkhof continued: “They who have once been regenerated and effectually called by God to a state of grace, can never completely fall from that state and thus fail to attain to eternal salvation, though they may sometimes be overcome by evil and fall in sin. It is maintained that the life of regeneration and the habits that develop out of it in the way of sanctification can never entirely disappear. It is, strictly speaking, not man but God who perseveres. Perseverance may be defined as *that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit in the believer, by which the work of divine grace that is begun in the heart, is continued and brought to completion*. It is because God never forsakes His work that believers continue to stand to the very end” (Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941] 545-46 [emphasis original]).

²⁷ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 217.

²⁸ Ibid.

identifying with His death on the cross for the satisfaction of their sins, but also evidencing the fact that they have been predestined to that position.

Since the believer has died vicariously with Christ and will subsequently live with Him, they should be so emboldened so as to “suffer with Him, in order that [they] may be partakers of His glory.”²⁹ The statement here is as close as Calvin came to discussing the second clause. He pointed to 2 Corinthians 4:10, where Paul recounted the extreme persecution that he experienced, and concluded that just as the believer identified with Christ in His death, not only will they receive life in the future, but that they should live their life now as Christ lived His, with view to their own deaths.³⁰

Calvin explained the third clause by writing that “their base denial of Christ proceeds not only from weakness, but from unbelief; because it is in consequence of being blinded by the allurements of the world, that they do not at all perceive the life which is in the kingdom of God.”³¹ Here, Calvin argued that if someone is not enduring or suffering, it is because they never truly believed. It is from passages such as this that Calvinism defends its doctrine of perseverance. Those that hold to this doctrine state that once someone believes, they will never fully and completely depart from the faith.

On the fourth and final clause, Calvin understood the meaning to be that those who do not believe in Christ do not affect God’s perfection of faithfulness, and just as the unbelievers are “in the habit of changing their hue” on a whim, God is not like that.³² The clause then becomes more of a statement on theology proper, and not soteriology. In other words, despite the unbelieving nature of any man, who changes their mind on a whim, God is not like that. He is faithful to Himself because of who He is.

²⁹ Ibid. 218.

³⁰ In his commentary on 2 Corinthians, Calvin wrote: “For [Paul] employs the expression – *the mortification of Jesus Christ* [while Calvin translated from the Latin *mortificationem Iesu Christi*, the Greek reads τὴν νέκρωσιν τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ (the death of the Lord Jesus)] – to denote everything that rendered him contemptible in the eyes of the world, with the view of preparing Him for participating in a blessed resurrection. . . . The end, however, must also be kept in view, that we *suffer with him*, that we may be *glorified together with him*. (Rom. viii. 17). . . . [Mortification] often means self-denial, when we renounce the lusts of the flesh, and are renewed unto obedience to God. Here, however, it means the afflictions by which we are stirred up to meditate on the termination of the present life. . . . Both make us conformed to Christ, the one directly, the other indirectly, so to speak” (John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, 2 vols. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981] 2:204-05). Thus it is seen more fully what Calvin means by *died with Him*.

³¹ Calvin, *Timothy*, 218.

³² Ibid. 219.

John MacArthur

MacArthur represented another representation of Calvinism with his view of Lordship Salvation. Not only does MacArthur hold to the doctrine of perseverance of the saints, but he believes that it results from a view of faith that includes commitment and obedience, which is evidenced by his interpretation of 2 Timothy 2:11-13. Indeed, with the first clause, while he said that Paul may have been thinking with regard to Romans 6:4, it is more likely referring to martyrdom. In explaining his position, he commented: "If someone has sacrificed his life for Christ . . . that martyrdom gives evidence that he had spiritual life in Him and will live with Him throughout eternity."³³ In a position such as Lordship Salvation, much emphasis is placed upon the testing which guarantees one has true faith, and it is shown in this unique approach to 2 Timothy 2:11.

The same interpretive approach continues with the second clause. Those who endure are those who have been persecuted without facing a martyr's death. In so doing, they are securing their place as co-rulers in the eternal kingdom. Conversely, MacArthur added: "Those who do *not* endure give equally certain evidence that they do not belong to Christ and will *not* reign with Him."³⁴ Although he saw works as a necessary and inevitable indicator of saving faith, MacArthur insisted that it is only by faith that one has eternal life.³⁵

In spite of this, he placed such a striking emphasis on works as a result of faith when he discussed the third clause.

It looks at some confrontation that makes the cost of confessing Christ very high and thereby tests one's true faith. A person who fails to endure and hold onto his confession of Christ will deny Him, because he never belonged to Christ at all. Those who remain faithful to the truth they profess give evidence of belonging to God.³⁶

³³ John MacArthur, *2 Timothy* (Chicago: Moody, 1995) 63.

³⁴ MacArthur continued: "Only if Christ is Lord of a life, can He present that life before His Father 'holy and blameless and beyond reproach.' The only life that can endure is an obedient life. A life that will not serve Him will never reign with Him" (ibid. 64) (emphasis original).

³⁵ MacArthur remarked, "To endure, or persevere, with Christ does not protect salvation, which is eternally secured when a person trusts in Him as Savior and Lord. We can no more ensure salvation by our own efforts or power than we first gained it by our own efforts or power" (ibid. 64).

³⁶ Ibid. MacArthur was silent on the use of the first person plural forms of the verbs in this passage. The first-class conditional statements then move from the realm of possibility, where they convey a possible course of action, to the realm of experiment, where they convey a sense of "If *A* happens, then *B* happens, because *C* never took place." For instance, "If someone denies Christ, then Christ will deny them, because they were never a recipient of eternal life."

It is this emphasis that sets MacArthur and Lordship Salvation apart, worthy of special attention, which is not to say that he does not believe a believer can be temporarily unfaithful. Using Peter as an example, MacArthur demonstrated that Peter's confession and repentance proves that he was "truly justified, though obviously not fully sanctified."³⁷ Concerning the final clause, MacArthur believes that *unfaithful* is better rendered *faithless*, and that it means a "lack of saving faith, not merely weak or unreliable faith."³⁸ Therefore, the conclusion is not a word of promise, but of stern warning. Christ is remaining faithful to His promise to condemn unbelievers.

Assessment

The Historical Calvinist position focuses mainly on the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, as the evidence has shown. Calvin and his followers hold to this in a more general way, while MacArthur holds to perseverance because of his position on saving faith.

Other Historical Positions

Before the passage is treated afresh, it would be beneficial to conclude this first article in the series by taking into account different views presented throughout history.

If We Died with [Him], We Will Also Live with [Him]

Three views have been posited as to the meaning of the first half of this clause. *First*, there are those who hold that *died with Him* refers to a martyr's death, which was most prevalent in the early church, seen in the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian.³⁹ *Second*, there are some who hold that *died with Him* refers to baptism, although for the most part, it is symbolizing a mystical union. Walter Lock, among many others, understood the connection with Romans 6:8 as suggesting "that the primary reference is to baptism."⁴⁰ *Third*, there are some who hold that

³⁷ Ibid. 65.

³⁸ MacArthur continued, "The unsaved ultimately deny Christ, because they never had faith in Him for salvation" (ibid. 66).

³⁹ See also William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957) 257; and, MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, 63.

⁴⁰ Lock, *Pastoral Epistles*, 96. See also A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 132; Arland Hultgren, *2 Timothy* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1984) 122; Johnson, *Timothy*, 376; Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus* (Nashville:

died with Him refers to the mystical union that stems from belief. Just as Origen first posited, so also George Knight agreed.

Death with Christ is death to sin (Rom 6:11), even as Christ died to sin once (v. 10). . . . It is in Christ's death (v. 5) that Christians have died with him. And because they have been united with Christ (v. 5) they have died with him in his death, which brought . . . justification from sin. With this death comes the concomitant life.⁴¹

While baptism does symbolize the act of dying with Christ, the proponents of this view do not believe that *died with Christ* pictures the symbol, but the mystical event itself.

The second half of the clause receives considerably less attention, as most everybody agrees that it refers to eternal life. The question then becomes whether or not eternal life is a present possession or merely an eschatological hope. If anything is said to this end, it is to highlight the present possession of the eternal life. Knight, considering the context of Romans 6, postulated that this is the "whole thrust, which is concerned with the *present* effect of union with Christ in a Christian's life."⁴² Even Towner, who understood the eschatological hope as being "probably uppermost in mind," added that "this accent need not exclude the implicit understanding that present Christian living is 'union with Christ' in his death and resurrection."⁴³

If We Endure, We Will Also Reign with [Him]

Most authors, such as Arminians and Calvinists, see the second clause as a natural extension of the first. To them, enduring is invariably part of having eternal life, as was seen with the Historical Calvinist position. Towner noted: "Endurance in affliction is to be a normal way of life for the believer, just as it hints that afflictions will also be normal."⁴⁴

In addition, the notion of reigning with Christ is seen as synonymous of living with Him; and, much like *live with Him*, *reign with Him* receives a

Broadman, 1992) 209; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 516; Towner, "Letters to Timothy and Titus," 509; and, Quinn and Wacker, "First and Second Letters," 651.

⁴¹ Knight, *General Epistles*, 403. See also Calvin, *Epistles*, 217; Dunn, "First and Second Letters, 843; Ralph Earle, "2 Timothy," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) 401; Gordon Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984) 199; J. Glenn Gould, *2 Timothy*, (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1965) 641; and, van Oosterzee, *Two Epistles of Paul to Timothy*, 95.

⁴² Knight, *General Epistles*, 404 (emphasis original).

⁴³ Towner, "Letters to Timothy and Titus," 509. Commentators who remark on this passage tend to share this view, see also Lea, *Timothy*, 210.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 510.

disproportionately small discussion.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, there are two degrees of thought, and they are probably influenced by one's eschatology. For instance, Quinn and Wacker saw an inaugurated aspect to this reigning: "Like the 'co-living' of the previous stich, the 'co-reigning' of this line is certainly inchoate in this life (above all in the 'reign' of virtue), but its consummation belongs ultimately in another order, where God rules in the fullest sense."⁴⁶

While some, such as Quinn and Wacker, saw the reigning as a current privilege,⁴⁷ most others, as Towner noted, see the ruling as an utterly eschatological phenomenon: "The time frame, which is clearly future and eschatological, confirms the future emphasis of the promise of life above."⁴⁸ Of the resources used for this study, only one pointed to the potentiality of this reigning as occurring in a millennial rule.⁴⁹

If We Deny, He Will Deny Us

With the exception of Lenski, all the writers to this point believe that the one denying Christ is merely a professing believer, one who never possessed eternal life at all. Lenski posited that the denier was once a believer, but one that loses eternal life due to their denial. Besides Lenski, modern commentator William Mounce also held that this statement is "directed toward a Christian and not a mixed audience."⁵⁰ It is not known whether or not Mounce affirmed that a believer could lose their salvation, as he did not discuss it in those terms. Nevertheless, he did state that this refers to "apostasy in its fullest sense."⁵¹ Marshall agreed: "The second pair

⁴⁵ For example, Kelly's thought is summarized in one sentence: "The line crystallizes the primitive Christian hope that, when Christ returns in glory to reign (1 Cor. xv. 24 f.), the saints who have endured will sit on thrones like kings alongside him (Rev. i. 6; iii. 21; v. 10; xx. 4)" (J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981] 180).

⁴⁶ Quinn and Wacker, "First and Second Letters," 651.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Curiously, he also wrote: "With this phrase, the teaching deliberately introduces the idea that future eschatological blessing (however that might be conceptualized) is dependent to some degree on the quality of present human response in history. . . . [It is] measured by endurance as a prerequisite to obtaining the promise" (Towner, "Letters to Timothy and Titus," 511). Although he would ultimately disagree with the soteriological conclusions of this series, this notion of a future reigning will be expounded in greater detail in the study to come.

⁴⁹ It is worthwhile to note, however, that they add in the footnote: "This statement is not intended to advocate a specific millennial viewpoint. The truth of the statement does not depend on the definition of *millennium* accepted by the reader" (Lea, *Timothy*, 210).

⁵⁰ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 517.

⁵¹ Ibid.

of statements explores the consequences of unwillingness to die with Christ and to endure hardship with him and for his sake.”⁵² In contrast to the views held by Lenski and Mounce, Knight sided with the majority: “The professing Christian will deny the one he claims to have died with and to now live with.”⁵³ According to these theologians, the denial brought about is one that proves the person never believed. It is complete and final.⁵⁴

Commentators, such as MacArthur, will turn to Matthew 10:33 to demonstrate that Jesus taught this very idea: “And whoever will deny me before men, I also will deny him before my Father in Heaven.”⁵⁵ Towner viewed the punishment of such a denial as being eschatological, and he summarized: “Disowning Christ, whether as desertion caused by fear of suffering for the faith or as apostasy, carries fearful eternal consequences.”⁵⁶ Elsewhere, he wrote: “Rejection by Christ means exclusion from eternal life.”⁵⁷ To this end, all the views surveyed thus far would retain that eschatological view, as opposed to a temporal view of punishment.

If We Are Unfaithful, He Remains Faithful, for He Is Unable to Deny Himself

There are two questions that commentators have attempted to answer regarding this final clause: What does it mean to be unfaithful? To what does Christ remain faithful due to His inability to deny Himself? The entirety of the passage culminates with the answers to these questions. Mounce was correct when he posited, “the basic question of this line is

⁵² Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 740.

⁵³ Knight, *General Epistles*, 405. In another work, he also stated: “The denial on Jesus’ part is the denial of an abiding relationship to Him which is the same denial that they have made. It is a repudiation of them who have repudiated him. In the pregnant use of the word ‘know’ in Scripture, Jesus will profess concerning them that he never knew them (see Mt. 7:23). A final complete disavowal of Christ in this life means that Christ will finally and completely disavow those in the life to come.” Yet, he is quick to point out: “The statement in the saying that we are now considering does not mean that Christ is not faithful to his promise to us, nor does it mean that our fall into a denial even as grave as Peter’s is unforgivable or that it from that time henceforth forever and ever seals our doom. The denial in view in the saying which calls forth Christ’s denial is not like that of Peter’s who later sought forgiveness but rather is a situation of hardness and permanence” (*The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Epistles* [Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968] 126).

⁵⁴ Knight continued, “The finality of [Christ’s] denial of those who have denied him will be as permanent and decisive as theirs has been of him, and will thus not be as in Peter’s case, where forgiveness was sought and received” (Knight, *General Epistles*, 406).

⁵⁵ MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, 65.

⁵⁶ Towner, “Letters to Timothy and Titus,” 512. For similar argumentation, see also Lea, *Timothy*, 211.

⁵⁷ Philip Towner, *1-2 Timothy and Titus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994) 180.

whether it is a warning, like line 3, or a promise, like lines 1 and 2.”⁵⁸ Those that take it to be a warning see *unfaithful* as parallel with *deny*, which would mean that God is faithful in judging unbelievers. Those that take it to be a promise see *unfaithful* in contrast to *deny*, the latter being a stronger word for utter apostasy, which would mean that God remains faithful in ensuring that true believers have eternal life.⁵⁹ Mounce understood it as a promise.

Having described the two extremes of present-day endurance and future apostasy, the saying pulls back to an intermediate position – present-day faithlessness – and describes what happens in this situation. . . . If it does not cover the common occurrence of temporary faithlessness, then it has omitted a large part of the Christian experience.⁶⁰

Those that hold to the “promise” view of the final clause see God’s faithfulness to Himself as being part of the doctrine of eternal security. Dibelius affirmed that it “cannot refer to God’s insistence upon formal recompense; such an interpretation contradicts the usage of the terms. Rather it is the thought of God’s faithfulness to the covenant.”⁶¹ It seems that the crux of this argument rests upon the difference between *deny* and *unfaithful*.

Van Oosterzee, along the same thought of Lenski and Calvin, viewed the fourth clause as a threat, not a promise. In this view, God is faithful to His promises that the unfaithful and unbelieving will receive their due punishment. “Fancy not, if thou art unfaithful, that the Lord’s punishment will fail. He is just as faithful in His threatenings as in His promises.”⁶² He

⁵⁸ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 517.

⁵⁹ Mark Bailey, “A Theology of Paul’s Pastoral Epistles,” in *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1994) 351.

⁶⁰ He listed the following reasons: “(1) If line 4 is a warning, it is awkward language. (2) Discussion of God’s faithfulness to believers usually leads into the benefits enjoyed by believers, not into punishment. (3) The tense shift from the future (line 3) to the present (line 4), especially as it parallels the present-tense ὑπομένομεν, ‘endure’ (line 2), suggest a change in topic from line 3. (4) The simple form μένει, “remains,” ties in with the promise of reigning for those who are enduring (v 12a). (5) The change of verb from ἀρνείσθαι, ‘to deny,’ to ἀπιστεῖν, ‘to be faithless,’ suggests a change in topic. (6) As a warning, line 4 would be highly repetitive of line 3. (7) It appears that the hymn is trying to deal with the different responses to conversion (line 1). . . . For these reasons, most see line 4 as a promise of assurance to believers who have failed to endure (line 2) but not to the point of apostasy” (Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 517-18). His reasoning will be evaluated at a future point in this series.

⁶¹ Dibelius, *Pastoral Epistles*, 109. See also, Knight, *General Epistles*, 407; Lock, *Pastoral Epistles*, 96; and, Quinn and Wacker, “First and Second Letters,” 652.

⁶² Van Oosterzee, *Epistles*, 95.

agreed with Lenski that it is the believer who is in danger of losing their eternal life. Calvin, however, would merely state that God is faithful to whatever recompense is due a person.⁶³

Towner offered a third, less widely held, view. He posited that the fourth clause has less to do with individual soteriology, and more to do with God's faithfulness to a struggling and infiltrated church. "Even if there are false teachers and false believers in the church, God will not fail to preserve his people; that is, whatever happens to the church and its leadership, God will remain faithful to his covenant."⁶⁴

CONCLUSION

Now that a survey has been taken of both past and present theologians, it would be best to reexamine the text so as to offer fresh exegetical insights. The purpose for this is not to invent new doctrines in soteriology, but to refine views already in place with the hope of gaining better understanding into Paul's original intent, especially within the context of 2 Timothy itself. Therefore, in the second part of this series, 2 Timothy 2:11-13 will be considered on its own accord, outside the influence of the development of its interpretation.

⁶³ Matthew Henry also affirmed the view herein. "He is faithful to his threatenings, faithful to his promises. . . . If we deny him, out of fear, or shame, or for the sake of some temporal advantage, he will deny and disown us, and will not deny himself, but will continue faithful to his word when he threatens as well as when he promises" (*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 6 vols. (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1900) 5:839. See also, Raymond Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002) 228.

⁶⁴ Towner, "Letters to Timothy and Titus," 514.

PERIODICAL REVIEW

“Dispensational Christian Zionism: A Strange but Acceptable Aberration or a Deviant Heresy?” by Philip A. F. Church. *Westminster Theological Journal* 71 (Fall 2009): 375-98.

Philip A. F. Church addressed the task of determining if those who strongly support Israel on theological grounds are heretics or simply believers in a strange but acceptable aberrant theology (p. 376). He eventually reached the conclusion that those whom he called dispensational Christian Zionists are neither; instead they are an “unacceptable diversity” and “erroneous in theology” and need to be confronted and engaged (p. 397). In this article, Church specifically ignored those whom he called covenantal Christian Zionists, explaining in a footnote that covenantal Zionism is concerned with evangelizing Israel and together being a blessing to the world for Christ (p. 379). From his thesis, and his later arguments, it is obvious that the real focus of his article is on what he considers the poor hermeneutics of dispensationalism and the perceived lack of political sensitivity to the issues of justice facing the Palestinian people in Israel today. He attempted to make an aggressively persuasive case based on his own hermeneutical philosophy, albeit shaped further by his political views of justice for the Palestinian people, but the methods Church used are neither edifying nor entirely in line with the revealed word of God.

Church’s issues with the dispensational hermeneutic approach seem to rest in what he considers the “utterly simplistic” methodology employed by dispensational theologians who assume that language is a code used for communication (p. 383). He cited the works of Umberto Eco as a secular philosopher who successfully critiques such an approach (ibid.). Church also found fault in a system he claimed excludes the presuppositions of the reader from the interpretive process (ibid.). Clearly this is a view based on his appreciation for a worldly hermeneutical philosophy rather than an attempt to understand what God intended to communicate through His human authors. To dismiss the dispensational hermeneutic methodology as overly simplistic is to ignore the repeated instructions in the Bible concerning its own interpretation (cf. Col 2:8; 2 Tim 2:14-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21; etc). Furthermore, it seems as though Church would allow the world to interpret God for the Body of Christ.

Church also placed great emphasis on organized ecclesiastical authorities and assumed that the present physical church has the right to denounce something as heretical, and not simply to recognize what God has already condemned (p. 395). Church’s approach seems strange for one

who was writing for a journal that respects and even revels in the tradition of one repeatedly called a heretic by the organized ecclesia of his own time. By this measure Luther (and the rest of the Reformers, including Calvin) would be deemed heretics and not to be engaged in discussion. By Church's rule, a Christian would be required not to fellowship with the heretics, nor their followers.

In addition to these grave deficiencies, Church also misrepresented dispensational beliefs. The most obvious example of this is when he claimed that dispensationalism teaches a secret rapture of believers (p. 378), which is a fabrication that is often repeated and constantly refuted by dispensationalists and clearly unworthy of a scholarly article. He further claimed that dispensationalists privilege Revelation 20:1-6 in their eschatological systems (p. 377). Church's claim is true in the same way all Christians privilege a reading of Romans 3:27-28 over James 2:14-26; because the principle in interpretation is always to use the clear statement to aid in understanding the unclear. In another separate instance, he expressed shock at the idea that people will enter alive into the new kingdom in non-resurrected bodies after passing through the "Sheep and Goats" judgment (p. 391), which seems like a logical conclusion of the biblical text in Matthew based on a literal reading, which Church himself agreed will lead to a dispensational view of the Bible (p. 383).

Church's article is an excellent example of what the Reformers, who were so rightly celebrated by the *Westminster Theological Journal*, were fighting so strongly opposing, that is, the ideology that an established ecclesiastical body, with its own worldly traditions, can determine the appropriate interpretation of a text without reference to the interpretational instructions within the Bible itself. Let the world interpret their own way, but let the body of Christ learn what God plainly was trying to teach through His written words.

Cliff Allcorn, pastor, Grace Church

BOOK REVIEWS

Expository Listening: A Handbook for Hearing and Doing God's Word by Ken Ramey. The Woodlands, TX: Kress, 2010. 127 pp., paper, \$10.99.

Expository Listening is a new book by Ken Ramey. Ken Ramey is the pastor of Lakeside Bible Church in Montgomery, Texas, and a graduate of The Master's Seminary. One of the hardest things to do is to listen, and one of the hardest things for church-goers to do is listen to sermons. Ramey sought to help believers in that endeavor. The back cover reads:

Expository Listening is your handbook on biblical listening. It is designed to equip you not only to understand what true, biblical preaching sounds like, but also how to receive it, and ultimately, what to do about it. You need to know how to look for the Word of God, to love the Word of God, and to live the Word of God. In this way, God and His Word will be honored and glorified through your life.

James 1:22 states, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." Ramey's work was designed to help its readers to follow both of these commands from the Apostle James. In order to help, *Expository Listening* is divided into six chapters: Biblical Audiology: A Theology of Listening; Hearing with Your Heart; Harrowing (Preparing) Your Heart to Hear; The Itching Ear Epidemic; The Discerning Listener; and, Practice What You Hear. Early in this work, the author noted, "Almost every book of the Bible contains some reference to hearing and obeying God's Word" (p. 10). The authors of Scripture obviously thought that listening was very important. With just a few exceptions, every one of them addressed this priority.

According to the book, the authors of Scripture said that God has spoken to men and He commands men to obey what He has said. Secondly, they said that all fail to listen to God and obey Him, and therefore deserve to be punished for disobedience. Thirdly, they said that God grants the ability to listen to Him and obey Him by His Holy Spirit, who is received through faith in Jesus Christ. Fourth, the authors said that God promises to bless both now and for all eternity if one will listen to Him and obey Him. Concerning this last point, Ramey wrote,

Listening to and obeying God is the key to experiencing abundant life now and spending eternity with Him in heaven. Not listening to and obeying Him results in having to live a life without His help and hope and then being separated from Him forever in Hell (p. 21).

Expository Listening is highly recommended by this reviewer; it is a great reminder for pastors that, when they preach the Bible, they are preaching

the very words of God and there is a great responsibility that comes with that task. Pastors are not to seek an audience by being culturally “relevant.” They are to proclaim to others what God has said in His Word and to make that proclamation as clear as possible. *Expository Listening* is also a great book for the man in the pew. A major portion of the average Christian’s life is spent listening, and this book is a great reminder that how one listens will determine the quality of his Christian life here on the earth and the quality of it in eternity.

Jeremy Cagle, pastor, Middletown Bible Church

Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream by David Platt. Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2010. 230pp., paper, \$14.99.

Radical has been a *New York Times* bestseller and is reminiscent of Francis Chan’s *Crazy Love* in its call for radical lifestyle changes, especially in material ways, and in spreading a two-tiered gospel of reconciliation with God and caring for the poor. *Radical* is appreciated more because it is less condemnatory, legalistic, and guilt-driven. Additionally, the true gospel is better explained and emphasized (pp. 30-36; 143-60). Indeed, Platt clearly remarked, “People’s greatest need in the world is Christ. To meet people’s temporary needs apart from serving their eternal spiritual need misses the point of holistic biblical giving” (p. 195).

The author was correct to call God’s people to examine their materialism and take appropriate biblical steps to prioritize their finances to maximize the spreading of the gospel (pp. 127-28, 194-96). Platt was also correct that Jesus’ “megastrategy” was to make disciples (pp. 90-106); a fancy building, cool music, and great entertainment cannot accomplish that task, only the Word can. The reader also will respect Platt’s vulnerability as he readily admitted that he has more questions than answers and seeks balance. Nevertheless, the work is contradictory.

- He condemned the American dream throughout the book (pp. 2, 7, 26-26, 48-50, 115, 119) and then concluded with an admission that every facet of the American dream is not negative (p. 214).
- He elevated, and gave examples of people giving all their wealth to the poor (pp. 13-17), then called for simply placing a limit on one’s lifestyle to be able to give more (pp. 127-28, 194-96).
- He complained of rich American churches, yet he pastors one of the richest in the country (pp. 15-19).

- He touted the story of a couple randomly giving their possessions (p. 131) and then called for informed giving so that efforts are not wasted by giving to those who will misuse it (pp. 195-96).

Of greater concern is Platt's propagation of a two-tiered gospel composed of the true gospel of redemption and the social gospel. Actually the social gospel of feeding the hungry and giving to the poor is the primary focus of the book and accounts for its popularity (pp. 13-17, 19-21, 76-82, 108-40). He wrote, "As we meet needs on earth, we are proclaiming a gospel that transforms lives for eternity" (p. 135). The author did not advocate the social agenda as opposed to true evangelism, but he did say that caring for the poor is evidence of salvation (p. 110): "rich people who neglect the poor are not the people of God" (p. 115).

However, when one examines the New Testament, one finds that while Christians are to be loving and generous to all people, they are never told to attempt to remedy the consequences of the sin of unbelieving humanity through social action. Instead they are instructed to meet the needs of brothers and sisters in Christ, something Platt admitted in a footnote (p. 225). Indeed, the church is never commissioned to rectify injustices by dealing with the symptoms of sins but to "radically" uproot sin itself through the gospel. Conservative Christianity has always given careful attention to social needs. Wherever the gospel has been proclaimed, hospitals have been built, orphanages established, the hungry fed, the uneducated taught, and the desperate helped. However, today evangelism is losing its way in the maze of the social agenda as more and more time and resources are being given to alleviating physical suffering rather than uprooting the cause through the gospel.

Platt supported his social agenda primarily through the misunderstanding of two passages in the Gospels. He contorted the story of Lazarus and the rich man into a condemnation of the rich man because he lacked generosity (p. 114). Emphasized to its logical conclusion this would mean he was judged and sent to hell because he was stingy, not because he was a sinner. Then, of course, there is Platt's interpretation of the story of the rich young ruler, a favorite of those who support his position (pp. 13, 116-24). What Platt and others miss is that the ruler was not a believer being challenged to radical discipleship. Jesus was speaking in the context of salvation and what the ruler lacks for eternal life. The ruler's problem was not his wealth as such, but that he had chosen to worship his wealth rather than God. Neither passage of Scripture supports Platt's point.

In balance, *Radical* offers a needed assessment concerning materialism and discipleship and that has value. However, as the title itself implies, this is not a book that handles balance well. As the author admitted, it raises

more questions than answers. Moreover, due to its over emphasis and confusion concerning the social gospel, it is recommended only with caution.

Gary E. Gilley, *senior pastor, Southern View Chapel*

Spiritual Maturity: The Road to Wonderland by Bruce Baker. Larkspur, CO: Grace Acres Press, 2009. 357 pp., paper, \$19.95.

Bruce Baker has served as a pastor, and recently accepted a position at Grace School of Theology in Houston, Texas. He has served as an adjunct professor at Calvary Bible College and Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. Baker is currently pursuing a Ph.D. at Baptist Bible Seminary in Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania. *Spiritual Maturity* is a component of his Ph.D. studies. The work, however, was not written solely for academics, but also for the average reader.

Bruce noted his influence by “Lewis Sperry Chafer’s view of sanctification in general,” and how his arguments have been “largely recreated” (p. 13). Chafer’s *He That Is Spiritual* has been a primary text for spiritual maturity, but its 1918 publication date means it can be ineffectual for contemporary believers who lack the general Bible knowledge that Chafer was able to assume. A debt of gratitude was also expressed to Dwight Pentecost for understanding Sabbath-rest, and to Charles Ryrie for soteriological understanding. The position of the author is “firmly within the traditional dispensational system of theology” (ibid.). Throughout the work, Bruce used compelling quotations (without allegorizing) and the creative line art from Lewis Carroll’s classic nineteenth century work, *Alice in Wonderland*. The imagery was used to illustrate the exposition of biblical texts with regard to how Christians are to mature in their relationship with Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. The life of the fictional character, Christine Terril, is interwoven throughout the text as representative of the questions that the reader has likely experienced. The use of these introductions to each chapter is helpful and provocative.

The first chapter begins with the author recounting his frustration in the attempt to locate “a good book on Christian growth” in several “Christian” bookstores (italics original). His experience is sadly comical and relatable (pp. 10-12). “The sorrow engendered in [the] last bookstore has since been transformed into a fixed determination to provide, to those who will hear, what the Bible has to say about becoming mature” (p. 13). Baker used “the idea of a road trip to explain what the Bible says about our journey to maturity” (p. 28). With gratitude from this reviewer, Baker noted, “the road to maturity is not optional for the believer” and “striving

for anything less is simple disobedience” (ibid.). Baker did not affirm the doctrine of sinless perfection, but readily accepted the possibility “to become mature” (cf. Phil 3:12-15). The concept of absolute truth is essential for a mature Christian life; therefore, chapter 4 is a defense of this concept.

Chapter 5 asked the question, “Where Are You?” Baker believed that all humanity can be categorized by one of three descriptions. According to 1 Corinthians 2:14, the first category is the “natural” man. The second category is the “carnal” man (cf. 1 Cor 3:1). The third category is the “spiritual” man (1 Cor 2:15). It is unfortunate that the author translated *σαρκίνοις* (*sarkinois*) as “carnal” when he noted the literal translation as “men of flesh” (pp. 56, 76-77). While this reviewer understands that certain terminology, which is so prevalent in common Christian vocabulary, may be difficult to change, it is nevertheless beneficial with regard to 1 Corinthians 3:1 since *σαρκίνοις* is slightly different from the two words—*σαρκικοί* (*sarkikoi*)—translated “carnal” in 3:3. The difference is albeit subtle, but significant nevertheless.

“Men of flesh” could be translated more precisely as “mere human” or “worldling,” which the Corinthians in a sense indeed were as a consequence of their humanity, but in another sense was due more to the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. “Men of flesh” indicates human limitations without the Holy Spirit. The point of the text is that to be a “mere human” or “worldling” is not exactly the same as being “carnal” because this latter form of the word implies sin due to the believer’s lack of spiritual growth. Therefore, it may not be justifiable to state that Paul intended to regard all “infants in Christ” as worldly. They were weak like “worldlings,” but they were growing spiritually nevertheless. If “infants in Christ” are called “carnal,” the implication is that “carnality” or “worldliness” is a normal category for some Christians, and such language allows the possibility for creating a classification of Christians who are never expected to grow or demonstrate any evidence whatsoever of regenerative faith. Therefore, if one assumes that an individual can be a believer without any visible evidence, which is probably more than Baker would mean, then one creates a subclass of Christian who makes a profession of faith without evidence of faith whatsoever. It is not correct to state a believer ought to grow, yet if the “believer” has faith in Christ and never grows that such an individual is truly regenerate. The danger in this teaching is a careless attitude toward Christianity, and may encourage certain individuals to think they need not aspire to the rigors and sufferings of discipleship. When one fails to grow spiritually, it is indeed sin (as Baker noted), but worldliness is a temporary condition into which one lapses. Worldliness is spiritual childishness, that is, reverting to the natural man’s behavior and thinking. The Holy Spirit will not allow such a

condition to continue indefinitely (cf. Heb 12:4-13). Therefore, the second category of humanity that the author used throughout his work is regrettable and “a bit confusing” (p. 56).

The Chaferian view of sanctification is similar to the Keswickian “victorious life” with regard to spiritual maturity beginning as a permanent surrender to Christ subsequent to conversion. Ryrie classified the ongoing tension between the sin nature and new nature as “counteraction.” Therefore, the believer is responsible for spiritual maturity by yielding to the Holy Spirit. The Chaferian view of sanctification also taught that the believer is “carnal” prior to this permanent dedication, which would mean that immaturity could continue indefinitely for some. While the emphasis upon human responsibility is commendable in this view, the divine work must also be given equal importance. The concern of this reviewer is introducing a subclass of Christians called “carnal.” One can appreciate Baker’s intent to motivate the “carnal” to spiritual maturity, which he did throughout the beginning and end of his work, but also remain convinced that the “carnal” classification actually undermines his intended goal for writing. To be “fleshly” is a temporary lapse from godly obedience, of which true believers will repent (2 Cor 7:11). Scripture does not teach that one may be “carnal” indefinitely, or that it is a natural state for the new believer. Indeed, all believers—young and old in spiritual age—are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and demonstrate “spiritual” behavior (1 Cor 2:11-16); although, some may be inconsistent initially, as were the Corinthians.

Baker defined the carnal man as distinguished by “*his limited ability to receive (and subsequently to put into practice) God’s revealed truth*” (p. 77, italics original). Chapters 5—7 (pp. 54-87) are primarily focused upon explaining the identity of a “carnal” believer. Baker noted that some would object to his “equating carnality with spiritual maturity” and more will disagree “that every believer begins his new life in Christ as carnal” (p. 77). Baker was correct to note that the “men of flesh” in 1 Corinthians were “clearly in a state of sin” (p. 78). Their sin prevented them from receiving “solid food” (1 Cor 3:2), not being “mere infants in Christ.” To understand the reference to the Corinthians as those to whom Paul could not address as “spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ” would mean that being an infant is necessarily also to be worldly. Therefore, an infant is worldly but cannot be blamed since it is merely a necessary phase. Paul spoke to the Corinthians as though they were infants and worldlings, but the reality is that they were simply worldly (unable to progress in receiving solid food), but for a reason different than their previous infancy.

The “spiritual jabberwocky,” which is the title for chapter 6, was introduced at the appropriate moment because it forms the basis for the

author's understanding of Sabbath-rest. Baker believes "rest . . . is given as a gift from God" (p. 142). Furthermore, "spiritual maturity and the Sabbath-rest are related." The distinction between the two is "the Sabbath-rest appears to be permanent" (p. 147). "When a believer has entered the Sabbath-rest, he has become mature to the point that he will remain mature" (p. 148). The categories herein are unwarranted since this would mean that the natural man is changed to the carnal man, who is then changed to the spiritual man. The transformation from the natural man to the spiritual man is certainly biblical, but there is not any indication that one is transformed from the carnal to the spiritual, nor can this reviewer find a legitimate classification that a believer is spiritually mature and then mature "to the point that he will remain mature." If maturity is defined as spiritual, then a believer will be "fleshly" or "spiritual" depending upon whether one is filled with the Holy Spirit and walking in dependence upon the Lord. *Spiritual Maturity* is an enjoyable read, with the exception (of this reviewer) for the "carnal man" (pp. 54-87) and "Sabbath-rest" chapters (pp. 90-111, 132-49). In the opinion of this reviewer, these sections could have been excluded and an excellent work would have remained.

Chapter 10 began with the classic dialogue between the Cheshire Cat and Alice. In response to her question with regard to how she "ought to walk," the Cat responded, "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to." Baker's primary emphasis was that there is direction and purpose to the Christian life, which is greatly appreciated and commended. Christians do not wander aimlessly throughout this world only to arrive eventually in heaven.

Spiritual Maturity contains twenty-one chapters that address the specifics with regard to the title of the book. Prefacing each chapter with quotations from *Alice in Wonderland* and intermingling the story of Christine was brilliant. The illustrations were both comical and engaging. The discussion questions provided at the end of each chapter are appropriate and stimulating. Baker exhorted his readers with regard to the ineffectiveness of the flesh to defeat sin. Commendation is given to Baker for prioritizing the biblical truth that believers are to "run in such a way, as not without aim" (1 Cor 9:26) (pp. 120-29). *Spiritual Maturity* is recommended for exhorting Christians to understand that spiritual growth (i.e. discipleship) is not optional, and the only means for spiritual maturity is "the power of God expressed through the indwelling Holy Spirit!" (p. 305).

Ron J. Bigalke, Georgia state director, Capitol Commission

Who Made God? by Edgar Andrews. Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2009. 304 pp., cloth, \$17.95.

In recent times the so-called “new atheists,” most notable Richard Dawkins, have launched an aggressive attack on the existence of God in general and the God of the Bible in particular. In books such as Dawkins’ *The God Delusion*, the “new atheists” have taken their agenda to the masses with a popular writing style that is both winsome and distortive. Structuring their arguments in scientific concepts outside the realm of most people’s expertise, they have been able to agitate the faith of many and make their conclusions appear indisputable. It is within this context that *Who Made God?* is wholeheartedly welcomed. Edgar Andrews is himself a highly regarded scientist, often serving as an expert witness in court cases in Great Britain, the United States, and Canada, and even had the opportunity of formal debate with Richard Dawkins. He is a man who understands science and is not deceived by high-sounding arguments that seem to prove far more than they can. Additionally, Andrews is a strongly committed evangelical who believes that the creation account as found in Genesis is historically true. In this book, he desired to demonstrate why one does not have to be intimidated by the “new atheists.”

Who Made God? is not an uninteresting, esoteric tome beyond the comprehension of the average person. Indeed, Andrews wrote this book for laypeople who are not part of the scientific community. He attempted to bring difficult scientific theories, hypotheses, and debates to the level of understanding for those who do not spend their lives studying these matters. Andrews did a marvelous job in accomplishing his goal. He wrote with wit, humor, intelligence, knowledge, and commitment both in the study of creation and to the Lord of creation. Andrews did, however, challenge his readers as he explained everything from quantum theory to DNA, from string theory to time, and from the human mind to the existence of morality. Nevertheless, he was able to explain these things, and much more, while remaining faithful both to good scientific investigation and proper biblical interpretation. Furthermore, he demolished evolutionary theory’s two major pillars: natural selection and random mutations (pp. 216-46). At this point, it is most helpful to realize that the author is a well-recognized scientist who has spent his entire life examining these issues and yet saw no credibility in the explanations of evolution.

The final two chapters were particularly impressive since they related many of the facts and provided an application. For example, he indicated, “to the evolutionists the mind is merely a by-product of electrical activity in the brain,” and cited atheist Bertrand Russell who declared: “[all man’s]

hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms” (pp. 251-52). The atheist perspective, of course, presents mankind as little more than electrical impulses and chemical reactions, not much different from machines. How then can such creatures have purpose or ideas of morality? Andrews stated, “If evolutionary biology is a soft science, the evolutionary psychology [based on evolutionary theory and invented by those who reject God] is its flabby underbelly” (p. 253). His statement was written well, and worth much more consideration by the Christian community that gravitates toward psychology as the solution to mankind’s problems. Andrews believes that man is much more than a machine, “Man is the only species that possesses a mind. A mind rides on the physical organ we call the brain” (p. 247).

Some will take exception with Andrews’s allowance for an old universe (p. 106), and some form of the big bang (pp. 94-106), although only as the scientific version of an *ex nihilo* creation. He insisted on an historical understanding of the Bible’s creation narrative and (which this reviewer understands from personal correspondence with the author) based his views not on any extra-biblical considerations but on an exegesis of Genesis 1 proposed by conservative Hebrew scholar E. J. Young, formerly of Westminster Theological Seminary. The stated exceptions are side notes in the book and do not diminish the overall contribution. The study of *Who Made God?* is highly recommended to all who are interested in current debates that focus upon creation and the existence of God.

Gary E. Gilley, senior pastor, Southern View Chapel

The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide, exp. ed. by Wulfert de Greef. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008. 270 pp., cloth, \$39.95.

Whether one is a Calvinist, an Arminian, neither, or something in between, there is no denying the importance of John Calvin in church history and his influence upon theology. One reason for these things is that Calvin was one of the most prolific writers—secular or sacred—in all history. Aside from his magnum opus, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin wrote commentaries on almost every book of the Bible, sermons, letters, and numerous polemical and apologetic works. It is because of their volume and diversity that exploring Calvin’s writings can be quite daunting. To make this task easier and more profitable, readers are once again indebted to Wulfert de Greef’s *The Writings of John Calvin*, now available in an expanded edition. Like the first edition, this is a translation of a work that originally appeared in Dutch (1989, 2006). The translator is Lyle D. Bierma of Calvin Theological Seminary. According to the author’s new preface, he

“incorporated what has been published since 1989” that relates to Calvin’s writings in addition to information with regard to new editions and translations of Calvin’s works.

For those not familiar with the life of Calvin, de Greef began with a detailed overview (63 pages) of Calvin’s life. The remaining nine chapters are organized by topic (e.g. Calvin and the Bible; Debating with Roman Catholics; the Institutes; etc.). Everything that Calvin ever wrote is discussed, including forewords he wrote to books by other authors. There are numerous footnotes that leave nothing unaddressed with regard to his writings. Additional features of the book include a survey of primary sources, a selected bibliography of secondary literature, a chronological index of Calvin’s writings, and an index. Although primarily a reference book, de Greef’s work is eminently readable from cover to cover because of the fascinating insights it provides into Reformation church history. *The Writings of John Calvin* is not only an introductory guide; it is an essential guide to any study of Calvin, his works, and the Reformation itself.

Laurence M. Vance, author, publisher, Vance Publications

Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God by Voddie Baucham Jr. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007. 224 pp., cloth, \$19.99.

Baucham is well known among Christians as a strong advocate for the family, homeschooling, and the family-integrated approach to church life. He is a Southern Baptist who by age 34 had served on numerous church staffs but now leads two organizations that he has founded to promote his views: Vision Forum Ministries and The National Center for Family-Integrated Churches. Baucham’s overall emphasis on family is welcomed and refreshing. In a world, including a Christian culture that is maddened by success, sports, money, and endless activity, it is good to be encouraged to evaluate what is important in life.

When one examines Scripture, he may discover that the Lord is not particularly interested in what motivates most people. Translated into the family structure this means that God does not place a premium on Christian parents raising children to be sports-stars, achieving the American-dream, or embracing a worldview of the society. The Lord places a premium instead upon raising disciples that will ultimately make a godly impact on their world. In order to live God’s priorities, Christian parents need to rethink their frantic endeavors to raise “successful” children and instead focus upon raising godly children. In order to do this, parents and

especially fathers, need to take seriously their mandate from the Lord to disciple their own children. One of the ways to accomplish this is through family worship. Baucham recommended three key factors in family worship: the Bible, prayer, and singing (p. 141). Concerning Scripture, he believes the family should read through the Bible together, perhaps in the morning, and teaching biblical theology, possibly through the use of a catechism in the evening (pp. 119, 136-37). Such daily practice is seen as ideal, but even periodic times of family worship would be beneficial.

The fear of this reviewer is that commitment to family worship of this type has been lost in the midst of the busyness of modern living. In the desire to raise well-adjusted, happy, and successful children parents too often have neglected their most important priority, as far as family is concerned, and that is spiritual wellbeing. Many Christian parents have delegated the discipleship of their children to the church but, according to latest statistics, 70-88% of “Christian” teens will abandon the church within two years of high school. More important is the clear command in Scripture that fathers are to “bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4).

While in complete agreement with Baucham’s emphasis, there are some areas of concern, most of which involves his overemphasis on certain issues. The first issue is the title itself. While the family is of high priority for the Christian, it cannot—it must not—be the priority of faith. Only Christ can occupy that position, and when one substitutes anything for Christ, even the family, he heads in a tangent that may for a time appear correct but is not. Next is what some have called pattern/practice theology (i.e. “if they did it that way in the Bible, one must do the same today”), which is simply not sustainable. One must ever distinguish that which is prescriptive in Scripture from that which is descriptive. Another way of saying this is that “narrative is not normative.” Baucham understands this but still bases much of what he teaches on narrative rather than direct biblical instruction. The family-integrated church is a case in point. In the New Testament families worshipped together (at least one assumes) so must the church do so today? While this is an acceptable form of modern public worship today, it is not derived from a direct mandate in Scripture. New Testament believers also met in homes, so is this mandated also? Furthermore, if the New Testament church followed the practices of the synagogue, which they surely did at first, then men and women sat separately and the children sat with the women. Where does one stop if first century, non-mandated practices must be followed to be biblical?

As would be expected, Baucham raised homeschooling to a level which almost becomes a test of fellowship. Large families are overemphasized also (pp. 171, 204). Yes, children are a blessing from the Lord (Ps 127) but

nowhere in Scripture is one commanded to have as many children as possible. It seems that only a minority of godly people in Bible times had large families and the biblical texts used to support the imperative for large families are Genesis 1:28 and 9:1, 7. However, these commands were given to particular people (Adam and Noah) at times when the earth was unpopulated. They are never repeated as commands for believers today. Certainly large families are a good option for many and may honor the Lord but they should not be seen as a biblical command or a test of godliness. As a practical note, Christians live in different times. In the biblical era, large families were often needed to work the farm and survive in a primitive society. Families were often self-sufficient as a unit. Personally, this reviewer commends those today who want many children, but does not want to have to be financially responsible for those children. Tax dollars should not go to supplement the health insurance or college education of those who choose to have numerous children but cannot support them. If such parents can support their own children then multiple children is a live option. If they cannot they should not presume on society to financially raise them.

Other issues that are troublesome include: no clear plan on discipling children who do not have Christian parents, quoting with favor emergent leader Mike Yaconelli (pp. 177-81), although with some disclaimer, and recommending emerging pastor Dan Kimball's *The Emerging Church* (p. 222). Baucham also spoke much on the dangers of secular humanism, rather than postmodernism, as being the dominant worldview today (this seems about twenty years behind the time), and recommended the strongly Catholic-promoting movie "The Passion of the Christ."

Due to Bauchman's excessive pronouncements and elevating his convictions to biblical mandates, the book can seem arrogant and judgmental. However, even with the previously mentioned caveats, this reviewer believes that *Family Driven Faith* provides a vital reminder of the importance of the family as a means of discipleship. Baucham goes beyond what this reviewer believes the Bible teaches with regard to the role of the church in the life of children, but is absolutely correct in his emphasis that parents (especially fathers) should disciple their own children.

Gary E. Gilley, senior pastor, Southern View Chapel

Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged by Barry E. Horner. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2007. 400 pp, cloth, \$19.99.

In the opinion of this reviewer, there have been four developments (two in evangelical theology and two in the wider arena of the geo-political discussion of the present nation of Israel) that have impacted the biblical-theological question of the nature and role of the nation of Israel. These developments have relegated the question to a secondary matter and then to a forgone conclusion, namely that that nation has been “superseded” or “replaced” by the church. *First*, there has been a long, gradual but inexorable diminishment of dispensationalism as a viable scholarly (if persistently popular) option. Dispensationalism is just *not* regarded by the elites of evangelical scholarship as a seriously theological, biblically sophisticated, or hermeneutically viable system (see the comments Bruce K. Walke made several years ago in his response in the volume *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*). *Second*, more recently has been the rise of the so-called “young, restless and reformed” preachers—that is, (relatively) young, very popular preachers that espouse a robust Calvinistic soteriology and place little or no emphasis on matters of eschatology. Indeed, these men (as many of their Reformed heroes had before them) assume that one must accept all Reformed Theology as a whole, and that includes the long-standing Reformed position on Israel (i.e. the nation has been superseded by the church). In addition to the wider (and frankly more socially and politically left-leaning) elements of evangelicalism there has been a trend to identify with the oppressed and marginalized peoples of the world (the alleged victims of economic colonialism and capitalist rapacity) and that includes the so-called Palestinians in their alleged oppression by the current nation of Israel. As some conservative evangelicals have made a biblical-theological justification for that tiny nation’s right to *ha’aretz* so these left-leaning evangelical advocates of the oppressed have sought to undermine *any* biblical-theological justification for *any* entity called “Israel” to *ever* possess the land of Palestine. *Finally*, there has been a resurgence (perhaps it was always there but hidden) of the age old anti-Semitism, the detestation of the Jews, notably promoted these days by the advocates of Islam and enabled by their politically-correct (unwitting?) allies (defending against a presumed prejudice against Muslims) and their open allies (such as the Rev. Jeremiah Wright). In summary, those who understand Scripture to promise the nation of Israel a distinct identity, a future blessing, and an earthly kingdom find that they are theologically marginalized by evangelical scholarship and they are accused of promoting a theology that gives religious impetus to injustice and oppression.

If there is even some truth to these opinions, it must be said that Horner has written a book that is very much against such notions. His recent work demonstrates a very high level of scholarship (it is very well

researched and employs sophisticated arguments) and the work deals effectively (devastatingly) with those who, in the guise of advocating for the oppressed, actually promote an immoral “anti-Judaism.”

Horner’s book is wide-ranging. He began with a history of what he called “anti-Judaism” (which he traced to Augustine for its biblical-theological origins; he used the term “anti-Judaism” to avoid the emotional term “anti-Semitism”). “Anti-Judaism” has had “profound consequences” (p. 13) and has led to “shameful results concerning the treatment of the Jews” (p. 8). “Anti-Judaism” can be seen in the early church—which benignly if incorrectly, read the “church” into the Old Testament (p. 18)—and throughout Western history—with notorious instances of “anti-Judaism” such as Chrysostom (p. 21) and Luther (p. 27)—and ultimately in the Holocaust (p. 34). The underlying theme that made this immoral attitude possible was “replacement theology,” the teaching that the church has superseded the Jews as the people of God’s favor (see the summary quote from author Melanie Phillips on pp. 35-36).

In chapters four and five (pp. 37-104), Horner demonstrated that “anti-Judaism” is current in scholarly (evangelical) works in both the United States and the United Kingdom. These chapters expose and answer the deficiencies of some of the current expressions “theological anti-Judaism.” One notable example is *An Open Letter to Evangelicals and Other Interested Parties*, signed by a venerable list of Reformed theologians. Horner’s analysis and response to this *Open Letter* (pp. 66-82) is devastating—he exposed its tone as “anti-Judaic,” condescending and an exercise in reprising the same “Augustinian heritage” that is nothing less than “a denial of individual, national, and territorial Judaism” based on nothing more than “explicit theological supersessionism” (p. 67). The problem, simply stated is, this Augustinian doctrine of “supersessionism of national Israel by the Christian church has resulted in the vilification of the Jewish people over the centuries” (p. 149).

Chapter five contains an overview of the history of Zionism; while the information here is interesting and (marginally) supports the thesis of the book it is too short to give a satisfactory look at this movement in its several iterations and seems to interrupt the flow of Horner’s argument. In chapters six and seven, Horner returned to an historical and a contemporary analysis of the question of hermeneutics. With notable exceptions, such as Horatius Bonar, Horner chronicled the influence of Augustine’s amillennialism through the Reformers, and Reformed theology in general and through key theologians (Luther, Fairbairn, Bavinck, Vos, Ladd) in particular. In each case, the hermeneutical principle was the same—“to examine the OT through the controlling lens of the NT” (p. 179).

Specifically, they used a “Christocentric hermeneutic,” that is, a reading of the Old Testament (by way of typology or spiritualizing) that saw Christ (in His first coming work) as the fulfillment of all promises to the nation by being the alternate or replacement (for the failed, unfaithful) nation of Israel. In a summary, Horner’s analysis exposes this hermeneutic as “misguided” (pp. 192-202).

The final five chapters (eight through twelve) contain Horner’s positive presentation. He explained how the “materiality” (temporal and physical aspects) of the promises to the nation of Israel can be taken at face value and yet be seen as “spiritual fulfillments.” He dealt forthrightly with the question of the “the land” and demonstrated that not only does the Old Testament clearly make physical land promises (pp. 226-27) but that the New Testament does not abrogate, or spiritualize those promises (pp. 228-36). His discussion of the land promises and various theologians who address the question essentially answers the question, “Why does the New Testament seem less interested in the land?” Horner’s answer is basically the “land promise” (*just as a physical reality*) was understood as a “heavenly reality / spiritual fulfillment.” In other words, the New Testament authors (for instance, in Heb 11:10) were not making a dichotomy between earth and heaven but expected the “heavenly fulfillment” *in* the very physical fulfillment (cf. p. 250). Horner’s analysis of several New Testament passages, centered on Romans 11, that indicate God’s continued interest in and a future for the nation of Israel is less compelling than other parts of the work; however, this may be due to his trying to address too much. (for instance, the reader is encouraged to locate the work of S. Lewis Johnson Jr. on Galatians 6:16). In the final chapters, Horner depicted the nation of Israel today as “God’s Beloved Enemy,” and as the object (if the church will only see her as the apostles did) of “Prodigal Gentile’s Love.” In summary, the Jews should be the objects of loving evangelism not “anti-Judaic” scorn. The book is recommended; it is a much-needed response to some of the prevailing attitudes in certain evangelical circles—attitudes that are sadly “anti-Judaic.” Furthermore, it is a welcomed addition to the scholarly literature invalidating “replacement theology” by compelling historical and hermeneutical arguments.

Kevin D. Zuber, professor of theology, Moody Bible Institute