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Journal of Dispensational Theology – April 2011

Contents

Editorial.....	5
Importance of a Literal Interpretation of Genesis 1—11.....	7
<i>Sean C. Grier</i>	
The Cultural Background of the Pentateuch in Defense of Mosaic Authorship.....	33
<i>Jacob Gaddala</i>	
New Testament Theology: The Synoptic Problem in the Gospels.....	41
<i>René A. López</i>	
The Inevitability of Fruitbearing: An Exegesis of John 15:6 – Part I.....	51
<i>John A. Tucker</i>	
The Soteriology of 2 Timothy 2:11-13 – Part II.....	71
<i>David S. Ermold</i>	
Book Reviews	
Coupland, Bryan R. <i>Growing a Wise Family</i>.....	93
Jones, Timothy Paul. <i>Perspectives on Family Ministry</i>.....	96
Lane, Tim and Paul Tripp. <i>Relationships, a Mess Worth Making</i>.....	98
MacArthur, John. <i>Slave</i>.....	93
Machen, J. Gresham. <i>Christianity and Liberalism</i>.....	95
Tripp, Paul David. <i>Broken-Down House</i>.....	94

EDITORIAL

God's Word is readily available to nourish believers "on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine" (1 Tim 4:6), but this may not always be the experience. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and translated into Greek between 300-200 BC. The Septuagint was used widely among Hellenistic Jews because many were beginning to lose their Hebrew language. The Greek translation also provided many non-Jews with the opportunity to read the Old Testament. The New Testament was written in the common Greek (Koine) of the day, which allowed its dissemination to spread rapidly throughout the first centuries of the church, yet its availability was scarce throughout much of the medieval period. It is possible to argue that the Word of God is becoming scarce in our time. People do not know the biblical teaching with regard to marriage and sexuality; therefore, families are being destroyed. There are mothers (and doctors who assist them) who ignore the sanctity of life to avoid personal inconvenience. The Word of God is discounted and mocked in much "scholarship"; consequently, our schools and institutions of higher learning are absent of moral values because there are minimal to no values taught. Many civic leaders do not know the teaching of the Word of God with regard to government and politics; therefore, public affairs and policies may be without any substantive purpose. The Word of God is scarce in the business and labor world; consequently, there is exploitation, greed, hatred, and wastefulness. Although the Word of God is abundantly available in our nation today, there is much evidence that it is becoming removed from contemporary life. The Word of God is readily available today as "a lamp to [our] feet and a light to [our] path" (Ps 119:105), yet many grope in darkness. If the Word of God is rejected persistently, God may withdraw its availability. The result would be spiritual starvation (cf. Amos 8:12). The Word of the Lord is a precious commodity that instructs us in a manner that preserves and protects us. Sean Grier's article communicates how a literal interpretation of Genesis 1–11 is essential to maintain the inerrancy and integrity of God's Word, and how this revelation enlightens the intense debate with regard to origins. Jacob Gaddala defended Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, which is a crucial matter for affirming the veracity of Scripture. The Synoptic problem was a concern for René López, and he has answered the doubts of those who may question the integrity of the biblical manuscripts and writers, and especially affirms the necessity of God's revelation to understand the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. John Tucker helps readers understand the doctrinal interpretation of fruitbearing in John 15, and David Ermold continued his series with regard to the soteriology of 2 Timothy 2. All the articles published in the April issue of the *Journal of Dispensational Theology* emphasize the priority of God's Word to guide the believer's thought and practice. The articles herein are provided to not only instruct, but also to affirm the precious commodity of Scripture.

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IMPORTANCE OF A LITERAL INTERPRETATION OF GENESIS 1—11

SEAN C. GRIER

There are numerous philosophies with regard to the origin of life, many of which attempt to incorporate a multitude of differing belief systems. What is interesting to note regarding these belief systems is that when they are reduced to their lowest common denominator, it becomes apparent that nearly all of these theories can be categorized into one of two opposing worldviews.¹ On one end of the philosophical spectrum is a worldview that begins with a humanistic or evolutionary standpoint; conversely, on the opposite end of the spectrum is a worldview that is based upon the affirmation of some form of deity, including the concept of a purposeful design. Even more specific, within this larger framework of *design* is a position that advocates a biblical worldview with regard to the creation of the universe and mankind. Unfortunately, even within this biblical approach there have been numerous attempts to symbolically interpret the Scriptures, with the goal of correlating the book of Genesis with modern secular evolutionary theories.

For this reason, a proper interpretation of the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis is of paramount importance to Christianity as a whole. The chief reason for this concern is because any misunderstanding of Genesis regarding creation, the fall of man, or the Flood, will ultimately result in the loss of the need for a Savior—Jesus Christ.² A systematic investigation into the actual text of Genesis 1—11 will reveal that, not only are symbolic approaches incorrect, but also, in truth, they are exceptionally damaging to nearly every major Christian doctrine as a whole—because the foundation of all Christian doctrine flows from the book of Genesis. This theme will be discussed later in detail; however, it is important to note that nearly every foundational

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¹ Randy L. Wysong, *The Creation-Evolution Controversy* (Midland, MI: Inquiry Press, 2003) 1-16.

² If Genesis 1—11 is not interpreted as true historical events, then a proper understanding of original sin is not possible; a result of this is that mankind's need for a redeemer is also diminished. Specifically, if the details of Genesis 1—3 are not historical fact, then the inerrancy of Scripture is also questionable, since the Scriptures clearly attest to the fact that death is a result of Adam's rebellion against God in the Garden of Eden. If this historical fact is removed then the need for the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ is also removed.

Christian doctrine finds its roots in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. More importantly, these chapters provide the historical reference point for the introduction of sin into the world, which answers the question as to why death is present on the earth.

A BATTLE OF WORLDVIEWS

As already stated, nearly all philosophies concerning origins can be categorized into one of two opposing worldviews. In order to properly understand this truth, one must first have a detailed understanding of the term *worldview*. The simplest way to define a worldview is by understanding that it is the foundational framework to which an individual voluntarily ascribes with regard to the nature of reality.³ In essence, this means that a worldview is the compilation of the underlying *assumptions* that an individual uses to interpret how they examine the world around them.⁴ A common misconception regarding this formation of a worldview, which is supported by many within the secular scientific community, is that an analysis of reality comes first (i.e. scientific investigation); and then, the natural result of that scientific investigation is what determines an individual's worldview (this would mean that *after* a scientist examines reality, *then* their worldview is developed). However, this is not an accurate representation of what actually occurs. In truth, every human being already has a predetermined worldview, and this worldview functions as the spectacles through which they interpret reality.⁵

Many Christians do not have a complete understanding with regard to the significance of their own worldview; therefore, they often ask the question, "Does it really matter what I believe?" The question can be answered in one of two distinct ways. *First*, if an individual is not a believer in Jesus Christ, and they ascribe to a secular and materialistic worldview—which includes many variances—then the answer to this question is irrelevant (this is because, according to secular humanism, what a person believes with regard to reality truly does not matter). The rationale for this conclusion is based upon the fact that those who view the universe in an entirely humanistic fashion are more likely to submit to a worldview that does not recognize absolute truth; rather, they conclude that all truth is relative. The major problem with such thinking is that it distorts the distinction between right and

³ Paul G. Hiebert, *Perspectives: On the World Christian Movement*, 3rd ed., eds. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999) 376.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Ken Ham et al., *War of the Worldviews*, ed. Gary Vaterlaus (Hebron, KY: Answers in Genesis, 2005) 147.

wrong. In contrast, those who confess to be followers of Jesus Christ should maintain a biblical worldview of reality. A natural projection of this biblical worldview is the fact that absolute truth is a reality—and this ultimate truth is embodied in the person of Jesus Christ (cf. John 14:6). Therefore, it is important for Christians to recognize the tremendous importance of what a person believes regarding the book of Genesis.

It is also extremely important to understand that the verifiable factual data is neutral in this battle (this means that the scientific data gathered through an observation of reality is totally unbiased in its presentation of information; rather, what is biased is the interpretation of that information). To provide an example, secular evolutionary biologists approach scientific data with their own predetermined worldview, and then this worldview serves as the *lens* through which they interpret the factual data they observe (this predetermined worldview does not allow for the reality of anything outside the material universe; consequently, this perspective cannot accept the reality of a transcendent God who exists outside His creation). Therefore, an evolutionary biologist observes the fossil record and comes to the conclusion that life on earth is a total accident, and more specifically, that modern man is the result of billions of years of slow transformations (that same evolutionary biologist will ignore the distinct *gaps* in the fossil record—the verifiable factual data—and he/she will place their faith in the belief that the missing links will eventually be discovered). Conversely, a creation scientist will approach the exact same scientific data (such as the fossil record) with the understanding that God created mankind and animals with clear distinctions, including the limitation of species to their own *kind* (cf. Gen 1:29). Accordingly, creation scientists draw an emphasis upon the supposed missing links that have yet to be found in the fossil record; this verifies the biblical text, which states that God limited animal life to its own *kind*. Therefore, this worldview provides the basis for interpreting the same scientific information from a different perspective.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPER INTERPRETATION

The issue of creation versus evolution is a topic that has been passionately debated for the past 150 years. Proponents of the so-called “theory of evolution” claim that this philosophy should be considered factual science. For this reason, they adamantly disseminate supporting propaganda throughout the world. In opposition, those who support the idea of a special creation declare that evolution is nothing more than a philosophy—at best a hypothesized guess—and argue that in truth it should be considered a

religious belief system unto itself.⁶ The rationale for this conclusion is grounded in the fact that it requires a good deal of *faith* to believe in the adaptations described by Darwinian evolution, on a mathematical scale that is incomprehensible to the human mind (this truth is based upon the conclusion of modern mathematicians, who have postulated that 1 in 10^{50} is a mathematical impossibility;⁷ however, the estimated chance of single protein molecule randomly forming in nature is 1 in 4×10^{191}).⁸ Far beyond this number, the chance of a single strand of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) randomly forming in nature is estimated to be 1 in $10^{40,000}$.⁹ The numbers are not comprehensible to the human mind; therefore, they require a drastic amount of *faith* to believe that they actually occurred randomly in nature.

Another reason that this topic is of the utmost significance is due to the implications placed upon society when an evolutionary belief system is supported. Most notably, the idea of Darwinian evolution supports the philosophy of racism.¹⁰ Many people are unaware of the actual title of Darwin's famous book, as the full original title itself promotes racism: *The Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the **Preservation of Favoured Races** in the Struggle for Life*.¹¹ The perspective of Darwin is at odds with revealed science, as biologically speaking, there is no scientific distinction of race between human beings.¹² Conversely, the genetic information for all human beings is present within the DNA molecule, regardless of the supposed *race*. Therefore, the Scriptures may be at odds with the conclusion proposed by Darwinian evolution; however, they completely support recent scientific findings (this biblical truth is confirmed in Acts 17:26, "And He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth"). Therefore, biblically speaking, every single human being is biologically related, as all humans trace their origins to the first man ever created—Adam (this is a

⁶ Ken Ham, *The Lie: Evolution* (Springfield, MO: Master Books, 2000) 31-37.

⁷ Probability expert Emile Borel wrote, "Events whose probabilities are extremely small never occur. . . . We may be led to set at 1 to the 50^{th} power the value of negligible probabilities on the cosmic scale" (*Probabilities and Life* [New York: Dover Publications, 1962] 28).

⁸ Charles B. Thaxton, Walter L. Bradley and Roger L. Olsen, *The Mystery of Life's Origin: Reassessing Current Theories* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1984) 80.

⁹ Fred Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe, *Evolution from Space* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984) 176.

¹⁰ Ken Ham, Carl Wieland, and Don Batten, *One Blood: The Biblical Answer to Racism* (Green Forest, AZ: Master Books, 2000) 51.

¹¹ Charles Darwin, *The Origin of the Species by Natural Selection, or the Preservation of the Favoured Races* (London: John Murray, 1859). Emphasis added.

¹² Ham et al., *One Blood*, 52.

solemn truth that Christians must recognize if they have any sincere aspirations of fulfilling the command given by Jesus to preach the gospel to the entire world, including all nations and all peoples (cf. Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15).

Additionally, this issue is of paramount importance due to the fact that the world is desperately seeking truth—truth which is only embodied in the person of Jesus Christ—who the Scriptures declare is the Creator of the universe (John 1:3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2). The venue of creation versus evolution is an area that many non-believers are interested; therefore, it can provide an excellent means for evangelism if Christians are thoroughly prepared to answer the many questions of the world (this is truly *why it matters* what one believes; a conclusion supported by the Apostle Peter’s command to Christians in his first epistle [3:15]: “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence”).

Another reason that a proper interpretation of Genesis 1–11 is important is due to the Apostle Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5, where he stated: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.” The noteworthy phrase from this verse is *in accordance with the Scriptures*. Since the Apostle Paul wrote that statement prior to the completion of the New Testament documents, it is apparent that the *Scriptures* he was referring must have been the Old Testament writings—including the book of Genesis. Additionally, Paul also declared, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Therefore, it is rational to infer that the Apostle Paul considered the book of Genesis to be “inspired by God;” more importantly, he considered it of paramount consequence to the message of Jesus Christ. In agreement with the conclusion of the Apostle Paul, Jesus himself affirmed the historicity of Genesis in Matthew 19:4 when he stated: “Have you not read that He who created *them* from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE. . . .” Furthermore, Jesus quoted from or alluded to both Genesis and other areas of the Old Testament on numerous occasions during His earthly ministry (Matt 8:11; 15:4; 24:15, 37-39; Mark 7:6-7; Luke 11:51; 16:29-30; John 3:14; 8:56-58). Christianity emphasizes the fact that Jesus Christ is God in human flesh; therefore, if Jesus considered Genesis to be a true historical document, then in a similar fashion, Christians today should also.

To refute this argument, some scholars claim that the book of Genesis is not a *unified* document;¹³ therefore, the assertion is made that Jesus was not referring to the entire book of Genesis when he made statements such as those previously listed. However, based upon literary forms, Francis Schaeffer made a contrary argument to such thinking.

We have seen that the literary form *these are the generations of* runs through the entire book of Genesis and makes it a complete unit. Therefore, to treat the book of Genesis as less than a literary unit, to divide Genesis into two halves and read the two halves differently, is totally arbitrary. . . . We have just spoken of the second literary form that emphasizes the same thing; namely, that throughout the whole book of Genesis, the factors not central to the main purpose of the book are dealt with first and quickly, and then the record returns to the central theme and treats it at length. . . . It could properly be said that these two factors make Genesis one of the most unified books in the Bible.¹⁴

Therefore, when the literary forms of the book of Genesis are properly understood, it can accurately be assessed that when Jesus referred to any part of Genesis, He was in essence implying that the entire book of Genesis (along with the entirety of the Old Testament) was the divine Word of God.

For all of the reasons previously listed, this topic is of the utmost importance to Christians, mainly because an improper understanding of the book of Genesis has detrimental effects on the remainder of Scripture. The rationale for this opinion is based upon the fact that nearly every single major Christian doctrine is derived from the book of Genesis. Consequently, this author will boldly proclaim that if the “theory of evolution” is correct, then all of the Scriptures, and Christianity as a whole, should be discarded. Many may feel that this is an extremist position; however, when the facts are analyzed, it becomes apparent that this is the only logical conclusion. The opening chapters of the book of Genesis provide the foundation for the Christian faith, and ultimately the redemption of mankind to God. In order for Christians to believe in Jesus Christ—the second Adam—then they are also required to believe in the literal first Adam. The most important point for Christians to realize is that if Genesis 1—11 is not literally true, then the entire gospel message is irrelevant, for if one removes the introduction of sin into the world, then there is no need for a Savior to redeem mankind.

¹³ Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Genesis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005) 49-53.

¹⁴ Francis Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 151.

Sin and Death

As previously discussed, every major Christian doctrine flows from a proper literal interpretation of the text of Genesis 1–11. Foundational elements of these chapters include their focus upon sin, death, and redemption. Furthermore, in order to fully understand the significance of this problem—sin and death—one must not only look to the Old Testament, but the New Testament also. The Old Testament provides the historical reference point to the exact moment when sin entered the world, with all of its ramifications. The New Testament elaborates on the theological implications of those actions described in Genesis. The book of Romans, in particular, provides the basis for the belief that death is the result of sin; therefore, prior to sin entering the world no living creature experienced death (cf. Rom 5:12). Skeptics claim that this teaching is flawed, due to the fact that plants would have been forced to die in order to be used as sustenance for the land animals as God had commanded (cf. Gen 1:29). However, while this is an interesting observation, it does not correlate with the Biblical teaching regarding exactly what is a *living being* (this is based upon the text of Genesis 9:4, which clearly teaches, “only you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood.” Therefore, since plants do not have “blood,” they must not be considered *living beings* from a biblical perspective.

Consequently, the biblical teaching regarding death stands in dire opposition to the teachings of the theory of evolution; as evolution requires billions of years of death, pain, and suffering to account for the various life forms found throughout the creation today. The importance of this truth cannot be overstated, for if death was already present on the earth prior to Adam sinning, which is required for evolution to be true, then there would be no need for a Savior. As already stated, Romans 5:12 clearly teaches that it was *the consequence* of Adam’s sin, which resulted in death, that there was a need for a second Adam—Jesus Christ. However, if evolution is correct, then death was occurring for millions of years *before* Adam had the capacity to sin in the Garden of Eden. Moreover, it should be noted that some scholars speculate that death was a “possibility” for Adam and Eve prior to the fall. John Walton argued that the purpose of the “Tree of Life” was not to provide immediate immortality; rather, he claimed that it was through the continual nourishment of the tree that Adam and Eve would have been presented with the capacity of maintaining immortality.¹⁵ A result of Walton’s theory is that

¹⁵ John Walton, *Genesis* (The NIV Application Commentary) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001) 183.

the other *living creatures* were experiencing death, because they were not provided with the nourishment from the Tree of Life. Walton's notion does not correlate with the traditional view,¹⁶ or the remainder of Scripture, especially Romans 5:12, which clearly implies that prior to Adam's sin no living thing experienced death. Regardless, Walton concurred that at a minimum, human beings did not die prior to Adam's sin; therefore, even if evolution were occurring within the animal kingdom, it would have been impossible for humanity to be the end result of the process.

A proper comprehension of these elements (sin, death, redemption) can only be attained when one has a correct understanding of the previously discussed foundational aspects of the creation. The most notable of these elements is the fact that the Apostle Paul described the creation as corrupted and in a constant state of decay as a direct result of Adam's sin (cf. Rom 8:20-23). The truth of Romans 8 coincides perfectly with the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which states that all matter in the universe is in a constant state of decay.¹⁷ Moreover, the most integral piece of information one must comprehend from the previously mentioned Scriptures—and on a scale of paramount importance—is that *death* is a result of *sin*; therefore, prior to sin entering the world there was no physical or spiritual death (this fact utterly demolishes any attempt to *symbolically* interpret Genesis or to incorporate it with the evolutionary theories, since evolutionary theories require death in order to proceed). Additionally, any attempt to interpret the book of Genesis in an allegorical fashion also removes the need for a Savior, due to the fact that sin must have literally entered the creation in order for death to reign.

The Sabbath

Another theologically significant element of the doctrine found in Genesis 1—11 is the fact that it provides the foundational basis for the observance of the Sabbath. Exodus 20:8-11 states clearly:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God; *in it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested

¹⁶ The traditional view of "death" affirmed by evangelicals is that no living creatures died prior to Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden, which would mean that the first "death" that occurred was when the Lord himself slaughtered animals to provide skins for Adam and Eve (cf. Gen 3:21).

¹⁷ John Hall, *History of Life* (Lynchburg, VA: Hall Publications, 1990) 78.

on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. [emphasis added]

What is interesting, and quite important to recognize, is the extreme nature of the command that was issued by the Lord. Not only did God command the Israelites not to work, he continued to state in his commands that *no one at all* who is associated with the Israelites is to work on the Sabbath (this demonstrates the obvious importance of the representation of the Sabbath day to the Lord). Additionally, this Scripture passage clearly reconfirms the idea that God created the universe (heaven and earth) in six days. While the Hebrew word for day—*yom*—will be discussed in detail later, it should be noted that advocates who support the idea that *yom* can be interpreted to convey the idea of *vast ages* must recognize that they are also forced to change the significance of these verses.

Additionally, this reference to the creation week is an ongoing theme found throughout the pages of the Bible. From an outside perspective, it would appear that God is being deceitful through his revealed Word, if, in fact, He used vast ages of time to create the universe. It is quite obvious that the Lord intends for His followers to understand that it took Him *only* six days to create the entire universe, which again is a demonstration of his awesome power and majesty. Only in accordance with this fact, is it possible to fully understand and acknowledge the significance of the Sabbath day. If the workweek of God was not six literal, twenty-four hour days, as it is for mankind, then this Sabbath day would not hold its same theological importance for mankind.¹⁸

Marriage

Yet another foundational doctrine that is clearly taught in the first 11 chapters of Genesis is the institution of marriage. Paul Scotchmer agreed with this conclusion regarding Genesis 2:4—3:24 when he stated: “The author directs particular attention to the meaning of work and marriage, the limits of human freedom, and the origins of sin, pain, suffering, death, and alienation.”¹⁹ The text of Genesis 2:18 states, “Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.’” It was for this reason that God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man (cf. Gen 2:21), and

¹⁸ Henry Morris, *History of Modern Creationism* (San Diego: Master Books, 1984).

¹⁹ Paul F. Scotchmer, “Lessons from Paradise on Work, Marriage, and Freedom: A Study of Genesis 2:4-3:24,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 28 (January 2004): 80-85. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed 15 November 2010).

took one of his ribs (literally a side of his flesh)²⁰ and created the woman. When Adam was presented with the woman he boldly stated: “The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man’ (2:23). Subsequently, Genesis continues to declare: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh” (2:24). Regarding this notion of *one flesh*, Scotchmer noted: “And their melding as ‘one flesh’—a term that refers to the entire marital bond—was even stronger than the blood ties with parents (2:24).”²¹

While many scholars have attempted to downplay the significance of these verses as they relate to the doctrine of marriage, they fail to recognize the impact these words would have had on those embedded in an Ancient Near Eastern culture (this is because in a patriarchal society, such as ancient Israel, leaving one’s parents was a serious matter). As some scholars have noted, it would involve the abandonment of one’s entire way of life.²² Therefore, the text strongly implies that this was a divine institution by God, demanding that a man leave his family and *cling* to his wife forever. The entire concept of Christian marriage is based upon the teachings of these verses in the opening chapters of Genesis. If these verses are proven to be false, and demonstrated merely to be a mythical story, then the entire doctrine of marriage must be reinterpreted.

Inerrancy of Scripture

Finally, and what is quite possibly the most significant theological implication of this study, is the determination of whether or not the Scriptures are the divine Word of God. Evangelical Christianity has historically supported the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture, to include the belief that the Word of God is infallible.²³ However, when Christians attempt to *symbolically* or *allegorically* interpret the book of Genesis, they are actually allowing the doctrine of inerrancy to be called into question by critics. One cannot merely choose when to advocate the doctrine of inerrancy and when to discard it. For instance, it is quite apparent from a reading of the first 3 chapters of Genesis that God intended to convey to His audience that He created the universe in six literal 24-hour periods. The attempt to deviate from this teaching violates

²⁰ Walton, *Genesis*, 177.

²¹ Scotchmer, “Lessons from Paradise,” 82.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ James M. Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986) 37-78.

the inerrancy of Scripture, and as such, supporters of alternate views regarding creation should be cautious. When Christians accept evolutionary ideas regarding origins, then they are ultimately rejecting the absolute authority of Genesis and the Scriptures as a whole.

With regard to inerrancy, one must also take into account the various statements made by Jesus Christ himself while on the earth. As already mentioned, Jesus boldly stated that Adam and Eve were present “from the beginning” of creation (cf. Matt 19:4). Christ’s statement is a direct reference to the creation event as described in the book of Genesis. Two facts are inherent from this statement. First, Jesus clearly felt that the book of Genesis was a historical and factual book that could be trusted. Additionally, Jesus also implied that Adam and Eve were present from the very first moments of creation (this teaching is presented with great obstacles when one attempts to interpret the days of creation as vast ages of time—as eons of time could have passed between the first and sixth days—which, in turn, would cause Jesus himself to be a liar and undermine the inerrancy of Scripture). Jesus’ statement must also be understood in light of His teaching regarding the remainder of the Scriptures written by Moses. In John 5:46-47, Jesus stated, “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” Jesus’ words are emphatic; He clearly implied that He was supporting the authenticity of the writings of Moses, and He was acknowledging that all other doctrine flowed from these writings.²⁴ Therefore, if the major theological teachings found in Genesis regarding the doctrine of creation cannot be taken literally then all other Christian doctrine begins to unravel.

FALSE VIEWS CONCERNING ORIGINS

The Theory of Evolution

When discussing the topic of evolution, it is important to note that when the generic term *evolution* is used within the scientific community it generally refers to a process known as *macroevolution*. The idea of macroevolution should not be confused with scientifically verifiable and observable changes, which is a process known as *microevolution*. Microevolution involves minor changes within an existing species, with no introduction of *new* genetic

²⁴ Ham, *The Lie*, 157.

information—also known as “adaptation.”²⁵ Conversely, macroevolution has never been observed by science, as scientists readily admit that it cannot be witnessed.²⁶ Scientists define macroevolution as “speciation and the origin of divisions of the taxonomic hierarchy above the species level, and the development of complex organs.”²⁷ The scientific definition means that belief in the idea of macroevolution is understood as a phenomenon that introduces new genetic information that has never been present into an existing species. Therefore, it is important from the outset to realize that when the term *evolution* is used within the scientific community, it generally always refers to macroevolution, even though it is a phenomenon that has never been observed in nature.

Although evolutionary principles were in existence prior to present day theories, Darwin is the one individual who publicized the belief system and provided a valid scientific hypothesis. Darwin speculated that observable microevolution provided the mechanism for advancement to the level of macroevolution.²⁸ More specifically, Darwinian evolution is the belief system that life on earth is a mere accident in the universe, and all living beings in existence have a common ancestor. According to Darwinian evolution this process has been occurring over the past several billion years, resulting in the various forms of life that are present on the earth today. As previously mentioned, one key component required for this process is death. Living creatures must live and die over countless generations in order to fulfill the necessary changes required to create new species. Scientifically speaking, a major hindrance to this hypothesis is the fact that the supposed phenomenon cannot be observed nor repeated. While this speculation does pose an interesting hypothesis, it should be noted that it is an educated guess.

Darwinian philosophy, in its truest form, dismisses any possibility of a supernatural being. Moreover, there are some proponents of evolutionary theories who propose that God (or a god) could have been responsible for the evolutionary process (this line of thinking is often regarded as *deistic evolution*, and is consistent with *progressive creationism*). Progressive creationism is entirely incompatible with the biblical revelation in Genesis, as the Scriptures clearly state that death is a result of sin and before sin there was no death. While a greater analysis of the scientific evidence will be presented later in more detail, it should be noted that when the data from

²⁵ David N. Reznick and Robert E. Ricklefs, “Darwin’s Bridge between Microevolution and Macroevolution,” *Nature* 457 (12 February 2009): 837-42.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

nature is properly analyzed, it completely supports the conclusion that the earth is not millions of years old, and that there was a catastrophic event that occurred sometime in the recent past (thousands, not millions of years ago).

Day-Age Theory

In addition to the secular belief system of evolution, there have also been numerous efforts to interpret the text of Genesis in a manner that attempts to merge the biblical doctrine of creation with the secular philosophies of modern geological science. One prominent view, which is accepted by some Christian theologians, is what is commonly regarded as the “day-age theory.”²⁹ The major element of this theory is based upon an imprecise interpretation of the usage of the Hebrew word *yom*, which is translated “day” in the first chapter of Genesis.³⁰ The day-age theory is derived from the fact that the Hebrew word *yom* has the possibility of conveying the idea of vast ages of time under certain circumstances in the Hebrew text.³¹ Although this is a viable option, it is a highly unlikely conclusion. While there are numerous problems with an interpretation of *vast ages of time*, what perhaps poses the most problematic objection is the fact that the Bible teaches that Adam lived from the sixth day through the seventh day, and then for 930 years (Gen 5:5). According to the “day-age theory” this would imply that Adam theoretically lived for millions of years (between the sixth and seventh days), which is both unbiblical and improbable.

What is certain regarding the Hebrew word *yom* is that it is used 410 times in the Old Testament outside Genesis in conjunction with a number, such as *day one*, and every single instance of this usage has a meaning of a literal 24-hour day.³² Additionally, *yom* is used 38 times in the Old Testament outside Genesis in conjunction with the phrase *evening and morning*, and every single instance of this usage also has a meaning of a literal 24-hour day.³³ Therefore, it is known with absolute certainty that the Hebrew word *yom* is used a combined total of 448 times outside Genesis 1 where it contains these two elements—and every single instance conveys the idea of a literal

²⁹ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 407.

³⁰ James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order*, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1996).

³¹ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 407.

³² Mark A. Van Bebber and Paul S. Taylor, *Creation and Time: A Report on the Progressive Creationist Book by Hugh Ross* (Gilbert, AZ: Eden Communications, 1996).

³³ Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance*.

24-hour day; it is with *both* of these elements that one finds *yom* used in Genesis 1.³⁴

Additionally, the Scriptures specifically state that God created the plant life on day three (cf. 1:11-13); however, He did not create the sun until day four (cf. 1:14-19). Therefore, if the days of creation were in fact *vast ages of time*, then the plant life would have been required to live for this extended period of time without sunlight (this seems highly unlikely, since sunlight is absolutely essential to maintain the process of photosynthesis for plant life). Conversely, there would be no problem whatsoever for the plant life to exist between days three and four of the creation week, if the days were only 24-hour periods. From this assertion, it seems apparent that from a scientific perspective, the days of creation must have been literal 24-hour periods.

Based upon these findings, it is inconceivable to believe that Moses—the author of Genesis—had any other meaning than a literal 24-hour period when he used the word *yom* in Genesis 1. James Barr concurred when he stated: “So far as I know, there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament in any world-class university who does not believe that the writer(s) of Gen. 1-11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience.”³⁵ In agreement, and based upon the context of the usage of *yom* in Genesis, John Walton argued, “With this latter issue before us [the determination of the author’s intended meaning of *yom*], it is extremely difficult to conclude that anything other than a twenty-four hour day was intended.”³⁶

Gap Theory

Another theory that was readily advanced at the turn of the century, though not as widely supported today, is what is commonly regarded as the “gap theory.” The gap theory could more appropriately be interpreted as a *re-creation theory*, as it affirms that there was an original and complete creation of the earth in Genesis 1:1 (which could have been billions of years ago), and then a re-creation that occurred in Genesis 1:2.³⁷ Advocates of this view believe that there was some form of a catastrophe that occurred between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, possibly the rebellion of Satan and his angels.³⁸

³⁴ Ham et al., *War of the Worldviews*, 98.

³⁵ James Barr, personal letter to David Watson, 23 April 1984.

³⁶ Walton, *Genesis*, 81.

³⁷ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 406.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Supporters claim that this disaster caused the earth to be left formless and void, and only recently (possibly six thousand years ago) God re-created the earth, which is the description of creation in Genesis 1:3-27. The “gap theory” was strongly supported near the turn of the twentieth century, for the simple fact that the theory of evolution was being heavily popularized and Christian theologians were attempting to co-join the two belief systems to prevent a total rejection of Christianity.³⁹

There are numerous problems presented when one attempts to interpret Genesis in a manner that supports the “gap theory.” All of the major objections already stated with regard to the “day-age theory” can also be used to reject the “gap theory.” Where the “gap theory” goes adamantly wrong is in its belief of a supposed *pre-Adamic* race. According to the “gap theory,” this imaginary race, which is believed to have existed before the creation of Adam, was completely destroyed in a catastrophic event that occurred on the earth prior to Genesis 1:2. An obvious result of such a disaster would be to find billions of dead things in the aftermath. Therefore, “gap theory” advocates claim that the fossil record presents strong evidence for their hypothesis, which is a plausible explanation; however, a belief system such as this still requires death to be present on the earth prior to Adam sinning in the garden. Additionally, this position causes the Bible to be corrupt, and God to be a liar (something that is impossible according to Numbers 23:19 and Hebrews 6:18). In Genesis 1:26, God stated that everything He had created was “very good.” If there had been a catastrophic event of disastrous proportions during the first moments of the creation, then it would be impossible for God to make this statement regarding His creation—that it was “very good.” Therefore, it is apparent that the “gap theory” cannot adequately correlate with the biblical description of creation.

Progressive Creationism

While there are numerous other views or theories that can be classified among the *biblical* approaches regarding origins, the majority of them share similarities with the two most notable, which are the day-age and gap theories. While the ideas concerning these beliefs are not wrong within themselves (such as God using long periods of time to create the universe), they do cause problems when they are correlated with the creation of mankind. The obvious reason that these false views were invented was so that

³⁹ The truth of this assertion is evident in the original edition of the *Scofield Study Bible*, as it advocated an acceptance of the Gap Theory.

Christianity could appear to be in harmony with modern secular evolutionary views—positions that many have come to believe is *true science*.⁴⁰ Both of the previously mentioned theories lead to what is regarded as “progressive creation” with regards to the formation of mankind.

The ultimate teaching regarding the idea of “progressive creation” is that God used both supernatural acts *and* a series of progressive evolutionary operations.⁴¹ Some scholars claim that God did not necessarily modify existing material, but rather, made entirely new creations that resembled the older life forms.⁴² It should be evident that such thinking would easily correspond to the ideas presented in the “day-age Theory.” Moreover, this belief of “progressive creationism” is flawed due to the fact that it supports the idea that the development of life occurred through the process of evolution. As already noted, there are a variety of problems presented when one attempts to mesh evolutionary theory and the biblical text, mainly because of the ultimate motivating force behind the process of evolution, which is death.⁴³

EVALUATING SCIENTIFIC DATA

The Law of Biogenesis

As mentioned previously, the battle between creation and evolution is not a matter of science versus religion; rather, it is a battle of worldviews that revolves around the interpretation of information. Therefore, it is very important that Christians have an understanding of exactly what scientific investigation has revealed, and what it has not. A good place to start evaluating the scientific data is with the information presented by the existence of life itself. However, in order to properly understand a discussion on biogenesis, one must first have a complete understanding of the scientific method. The scientific method involves a series of events, with the ultimate outcome being what is regarded as a *scientific law*. The first step of the scientific method involves observing a natural phenomenon in nature, and studying the event through a gathering of data.⁴⁴ As this data is repeatedly gathered, a scientist can formulate a *hypothesis*, which is a general idea

⁴⁰ Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997) 68-83.

⁴¹ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 505.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ham, *The Lie*, 147.

⁴⁴ Wysong, *Creation-Evolution Controversy*, 41.

explaining the rationale for the observed phenomena.⁴⁵ If data is gathered that does not support the hypothesis, then the existing hypothesis must be discarded and a new one developed.⁴⁶ If the hypothesis is proven correct, and after vast amounts of data have been gathered that repeatedly support the hypothesis, then it can eventually be elevated to a scientific theory.⁴⁷ Ultimately the theory can be elevated to a scientific law, *after* the theory has been repeatedly confirmed by scientific testing and never proven false.⁴⁸ A simple example of a scientific law is Newton’s “law of gravity.”

One scientific law in particular is what is commonly regarded as the “law of biogenesis,” which clearly states that *life only comes from other life*.⁴⁹ Therefore, the only absolute known method of obtaining life is from already pre-existing life. There has never been a recorded incident of any life *spontaneously* arising. In truth, the law of biogenesis was discovered through the attempt to determine whether or not life could be spontaneously generated.⁵⁰ The hypothesis of spontaneous generation was repeatedly tested, and every single instance proved that life only arose from other life.⁵¹ From this, the scientific method was properly utilized, and eventually the “law of biogenesis” was confirmed. The law in and of itself completely refutes the “theory of evolution,” which argues that life on earth spontaneously arose from non-living matter.

Fossil Record

One of the most intensely debated matters of evidence within scientific academia is the fossil record. Scientists from both sides of the debate viciously argue that the data provided by the fossil record supports their claims. Of this data, one interesting piece of information is the *circular* reasoning that is used to determine the dates of the different strata in the geological record.⁵² R. L. Wysong explained.

Let’s back up and walk through the reasoning used to arrive at the geological timetable. First, it is assumed that since life is here, life evolved. Then, if life evolved and all natural events are proceeding today essentially as they have

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.182.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 180.

⁵¹ Ibid. 182.

⁵² Ibid. 352-53.

throughout history (uniformity), then the deeper the strata in the earth, the older its age. It follows also that the older the strata, the more primitive (simple) assemblage of organisms should portray.

Assuming these 'truths,' fossils are gathered from around the world (no complete succession being found in any one place) and assembled in a progressive order from simple to complex on a chart. Time is then allotted to the various divisions of the geological chart on the assumption that the earth is billions of years old—it must be, of course, because evolution would take that long to occur. The fossils are spread in a reasonable (evolutionary) order throughout the assumed antiquity of life's mined on the basis of measuring strata thickness and radioactive elements.⁵³

From this, it is apparent that a large portion of the dating method utilized to determine the dates of the geological strata is based upon *assumption*. The major assumption is that evolution is a fact, and since it requires eons of time to come to fruition, then the fossils found within the layers of earth must correlate with that dating system. The circular reasoning is evident when the layers of earth are dated according to the fossils found in them, and the fossils are also dated according to the layer of earth in which they are discovered.

Even with the assumption that the geological column is truly billions of years old, another difficult truth that evolutionists must address is what is commonly termed the "Cambrian explosion,"⁵⁴ which is the name given to the Cambrian rocks found within the geological record, due to the massive amount of fossilized life forms found within them.⁵⁵ The fossils contained in this layer of earth include trilobites, brachiopods, worms, sponges, echinoderms, and vertebrates.⁵⁶ What is peculiar about these fossils is that the *Pre-Cambrian* rocks—those found below the Cambrian rocks—contain absolutely no possible ancestors to the variety of life found in the Cambrian rocks.⁵⁷ What scientists have discovered in the Pre-Cambrian rocks are additional multi-cellular organisms that bear no resemblance to the animal life found within the Cambrian rocks (this finding is in contradiction to the supposed hypothesis of evolutionary theory, which claims that the fossil record should reflect a common ancestor to the Cambrian life).⁵⁸ For this reason, geologists label this abundance of life as the "Cambrian explosion,"

⁵³ Ibid. 353.

⁵⁴ Kurt Wise, "One: Life's Unexpected Explosion – What Explains the Cambrian Explosion" [article online] (Answers in Genesis, 2009, accessed 20 April 2010) available from <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/am/v5/n1/life-explosion>.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

since they have no valid hypothesis as to why the fossils exist in such abundance with no known common ancestor (this factual data again coincides perfectly with the biblical account of creation, which claims that God spoke and animal life appeared in a fully developed state).

Finally, those who support Darwinian evolution must explain the major *gaps* that exist throughout the fossil record. If macroevolution actually occurred on a monumental scale—as evolutionists claim—then the fossil record should contain an abundance of *transitional* life forms representing these changes over time. What a detailed study of the fossil record does reveal is a distinct *lack* of transitional life forms.⁵⁹ If transitions between one species to another have truly been occurring over the past four billion years, as evolution claims, then there should be an abundance of transitional life forms (literally billions of examples) seen throughout the entire fossil record. When this subject is viewed from a logical perspective, and it is understood that the supposed transitional forms would have been forced to live and die for millions of years between species, then a natural conclusion is that there should literally be billions of transitional forms to discover in the geological record. For secular scientists to be unable to find *one single* verifiable transitional form clearly demonstrates that these transitions did not occur.

To support this conclusion, G. G. Simpson stated: “This regular absence of transitional forms is not confined to mammals, but is an almost universal phenomenon, as has long been noted by paleontologists.”⁶⁰ Additionally, the noted paleontologist Colin Patterson made the widely publicized statement: “I will lay it on the line—there is not one such fossil for which one could make a watertight argument.”⁶¹ Furthermore, Darwin himself stated: “Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely graduated organic chain; and this, perhaps, is the most obvious and serious objection which can be urged against my theory. The explanation lies, as I believe, in the extreme imperfection of the geological record. . . . He who rejects these views on the nature of the geological record will rightly reject my whole theory.”⁶² When Darwin made that statement he fully felt that the transitional life forms would be discovered through further investigation; however, after 150 years of

⁵⁹ Wysong, *Creation-Evolution Controversy*, 278-87.

⁶⁰ George Gaylord Simpson, *Tempo and Mode in Evolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944) 106.

⁶¹ Colin Patterson, personal communication; as documented in Luther Sunderland, *Darwin's Enigma* (El Cajon, CA: Master Books, 1988) 88-90.

⁶² Darwin, 293, 343.

detailed exploration, scientists have failed to produce a single transitional life form in the fossil record.⁶³

Radiocarbon Dating

Walt Brown has accurately stated the truth with regard to dating: “Radiocarbon ages less than 3,500 years old are probably accurate.”⁶⁴ The natural implication of this statement is that radiocarbon ages of more than 3,500 years are most likely *not* accurate. Obviously, this finding does not correlate with the vast amount of information that circulates throughout the scientific community. The rationale for this conclusion is based upon a proper understanding of the radiocarbon dating method. The radiocarbon dating system utilizes the decay rate of carbon atoms with fourteen atomic mass units (carbon-14).⁶⁵ The decay rate of these atoms is measured by *half-lives*, which is the period of time required for half of the element (in this case carbon-14) to decay. The half-life of C-14 is 5,730 years.⁶⁶ Therefore, every 5730 years half of an object’s existing carbon-14 will decay, leaving only half of the amount that was present prior to that 5730 year period.

Additionally, one must understand the method via which objects obtain carbon-14. Brown explained the process in detail.

Cosmic radiation striking the upper atmosphere converts about 21 pounds of nitrogen each year into radiocarbon (carbon-14). Most carbon-14 quickly combines with oxygen to form radioactive carbon dioxide, which then spreads throughout the atmosphere. Plants take in carbon dioxide, incorporating in their tissues both carbon-14 (unstable) and normal carbon-12 (stable) ***in the same proportion as they occur in the atmosphere***. Carbon-14 then moves up the various food chains to enter animal tissue—again, in about the same ratio carbon-14 has with carbon-12 in the atmosphere.⁶⁷

Considering this explanation, it is apparent that carbon-14 is consumed by animals and is subsequently incorporated into their bloodstream. Therefore, as Brown also noted, when animals die they cease taking in carbon-14,⁶⁸ it is from this point that the half-life process of decay takes effect.

⁶³ Wysong, *Creation-Evolution Controversy*, 281.

⁶⁴ Walt Brown, *In the Beginning: Compelling Evidence for Creation and the Flood*, 8th ed. (Phoenix: Center for Scientific Creation, 2008) 342.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

With regard to this half-life process of decay, it is important to note that many assumptions are made in order to attempt to determine the actual rate of decay of any radioactive substance.⁶⁹ Many of these assumptions are based upon the idea that the atmospheric ratio of carbon-14 to carbon-12 has not changed from the past to the present.⁷⁰ What is interesting regarding this ratio of carbon-14 to carbon-12 is that scientists *assume* that there should be equilibrium between the two, since they have been entering and exiting the earth's atmosphere for supposedly millions of years.⁷¹ However, Dr. Willard Libby, the founder of the carbon-14 dating method, discovered that the atmosphere does not appear to be in equilibrium between carbon-14 and carbon-12.⁷² In truth, he discovered that carbon-14 was forming faster than it was subsequently decaying.⁷³ Since Dr. Libby is a devout evolutionist who assumes that the earth is billions of years old, he concluded that his calculations must be in error, due to the fact that it would only take approximately 20,000 to 30,000 years to build a steady state of equilibrium in the earth's atmosphere.⁷⁴ Since this equilibrium has not been reached, the logical conclusion is that the earth is less than 30,000 years old.

The most intriguing aspect of carbon-14 dating is the fact that the half-life decay rate of carbon-14 (5730 years) results with an untestable amount of carbon-14 after approximately 100,000 years,⁷⁵ which is a conservative estimate and in truth is probably only about 80,000 years (this means that any object [i.e. a fossilized bone] that is found in nature that contains a measurable amount of carbon-14 [generally a large amount], then that object must be less than 100,000 years old).⁷⁶ The scientific information completely and utterly destroys the concept of dinosaurs living millions of years in the past, since if that were the case then there would be absolutely no testable carbon-14 left in their fossilized bones. Therefore, when properly analyzed, carbon-14 dating completely supports the idea of a young earth—most likely less than 30,000 years old.

⁶⁹ Wysong, *Creation-Evolution Controversy*, 147.

⁷⁰ Brown, *In the Beginning*, 342.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 344.

⁷² Willard Libby, *Radiocarbon Dating* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952) 4-9.

⁷³ Brown, *In the Beginning*, 344.

⁷⁴ Libby, *Radiocarbon Dating*, 8.

⁷⁵ Brown, *In the Beginning*, 343.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

THE TEACHING OF BIBLICAL CREATION

As one begins to read the first chapter of Genesis, it becomes immediately apparent that the Bible demands the assumption that God is the ultimate cause of the universe. When one approaches Genesis with a literal interpretation—which is the only possible way to correlate Genesis with the remainder of Scripture, then it becomes adamantly clear that the Bible teaches that the entire universe and everything in it was created by God in a period of six literal 24-hour days. The Bible does not provide any reason whatsoever to believe that this process of creation occurred millions of years ago, as modern evolutionary science implies; rather, as already stated, when the scientific evidence is properly analyzed then it appears that both science and the Bible support the conclusion that the universe was created less than 30,000 years ago. The “young earth” view, which holds that creation was a spontaneous event that occurred a short period of time in the past, is commonly termed *fiat creationism*.⁷⁷

While the exact scientific methods that God used to create the universe remain unknown to modern man, what is known is that God created everything *ex nihilo*, which literally means “out of nothing,” using no pre-existing materials.⁷⁸ It is also interesting to note that this teaching is in dire contradiction to virtually all other Ancient Near East writings concerning origins, as nearly all other religions of the Ancient Near East taught that their gods created mankind out of *existing* materials.⁷⁹ It is quite obvious that the author of Genesis—Moses—intended to draw a stark comparison between the God of Israel and all of the false gods of the Mesopotamia area. In and of itself, this fact can be seen as an important theological concept. As mentioned previously, the Bible teaches that this creation event occurred over a period of six literal 24-hour periods—resulting with a created universe that God called “very good” (cf. Gen 1:31). Upon the completion of these six days, the Bible states that God “rested” on the seventh day, providing the foundational background for the purpose of the Sabbath (cf. 2:2).

The idea of *creation out of nothing* is a theme that is repeatedly stressed throughout the Scriptures by numerous biblical authors as a demonstration of God’s awesome power and majesty (cf. Gen 1:1; Ps 33:6; Rom 4:17; Heb 11:3; 2 Pet 3:5). The New Testament, in particular, frequently refers to the creation event as a demonstration of the full deity of Jesus Christ

⁷⁷ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 503.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 394-95.

⁷⁹ Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, *Readings from the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002) 13-70.

(cf. John 1:1; Col 1:16; Heb 1:1-4; Rev 3:14). Additionally, it is quite obvious that Jesus himself felt that the creation story, as described in Genesis, must be a literal event, based on his own statement in Mark 10:6: “But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’” The Markan statement, made by Jesus, clearly implies that He believed that Adam and Eve were present *from the beginning* (this completely destroys any ideas of a *symbolic* interpretation of Genesis, such as a “gap theory” or “day-age theory.”⁸⁰ With regard to the creation event, it is imperative that Christians realize that the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ *is* the Creator; as such, He would have been present during the creation event—rendering Him the only person in history with the authority to speak on such matters (cf. John 1:1; Col 1:16; Heb 1:1-4). Additionally, Christians must realize that the very foundation of Christianity is the belief that Jesus Christ is who He claimed to be—God manifested in the flesh—and as such every word that proceeds from His mouth *must* be absolute truth.

Another area of great concern when discussing origins and theology is what the Bible says concerning the creation of mankind. The first and most notable aspect of the biblical teaching regarding mankind is the assertion in Genesis 1:26 that man was created “in the image of God.” As previously discussed, this reading of Genesis should not be taken symbolically; therefore, a literal interpretation implies that every human being inherently possesses this *likeness of God*. When this literal interpretation is rendered, then the idea that mankind was created in his current form (a fully developed and rationally thinking human being) becomes all the more apparent (in contrast a lower creature that had to evolve). The understanding of exactly what this *image* consists has been debated throughout the history of the church. While the precise substance of this image may never be fully understood on this side of eternity, what can be accurately deduced is that this image is inherently possessed individually within both sexes of the human race; additionally, it is possible that it can be most accurately observed to its fullest potential through the union of a man and a woman.⁸¹

It should also be noted that man was initially created *perfect* and *sinless*; however, as a result of Adam sinning in the Garden, mankind has been removed from this status and is now placed under a curse. The ultimate result of this curse is death. The apostle Paul clearly stated in Romans 5:12 that death entered the creation through the sin of Adam. Therefore, it must be

⁸⁰ Terry Mortenson, “Jesus, Evangelical Scholars, and the Age of the Earth,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 18 (Spring 2007): 69-98.

⁸¹ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 532.

understood that prior to Adam sinning, no living being would have suffered natural death (this curse, in essence, has caused the creation to be in a state of decay—continually on a downward spiral—groaning in pain until the time of consummation by Jesus Christ (cf. Rom 8:22). As already stated, this biblical teaching perfectly correlates with the second law of thermodynamics, which states that all matter in the universe is in a constant state of decay. It should also be noted that this biblical worldview regarding the status of creation is at diametrical odds with the teachings of the world (such as humanism/evolution), which state that mankind in particular is constantly getting *better* (a conclusion that is based upon secular humanistic philosophy).

CONCLUSION

Therefore, after analyzing all of the available evidence, it is easy to see that a proper understanding of the book of Genesis is of the utmost importance to all other Christian doctrines—since all Christian doctrine flows from Genesis 1—11. Consequently, when scholars attempt to interpret Genesis with anything other than a literal approach, all other Christian doctrine becomes susceptible to controversy. Although many have falsely believed that a battle rages between science and religion; in reality, the true battle is one of *worldviews*, which revolves around the interpretation of scientific information. When all of the available scientific data is analyzed from a neutral perspective, it becomes apparent that modern evolutionary hypotheses are not firmly grounded in verifiable scientific findings. In truth, modern scientific data completely supports the biblical teaching of a special creation.

The most notable aspect of this creation event described in Genesis is that God created the entire universe *ex nihilo*, and observance of this fact demonstrates His awesome power and majesty. As stated already, it is imperative that Christians have a correct interpretation of the book of Genesis, in order to have a proper understanding of sin, death, and redemption. The reason for this is based upon the fact that if death were present on the earth prior to Adam sinning (which is required in order for evolution to occur), then there would be no need for a Savior—a fact that destroys any interpretation other than *fiat creationism*. Moreover, it is only through a literal interpretation of Genesis that one is able to comprehend the significance of keeping the Sabbath day holy. Finally, in order to maintain the integrity of Scripture, and fully support an inerrant view of the Word of God, the Bible must always be in perfect harmony with itself, which is a great task can only be ascertained when one holds to a literal interpretation of the

foundational biblical book to all Christian Scripture—which is the book of Genesis.

The Cultural Background of the Pentateuch in Defense of Mosaic Authorship

Jacob Gaddala

Most Christians have been taught that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. However, outside the more conservative seminaries and churches, it is commonly held that Moses did not write these books, and that they are a compilation of works by numerous writers over an extended period of time. One author of an Old Testament survey wrote, "It would be foolish, for instance, to rationalize the burning bush, as though this vision were something that could have been seen with the objective eye of a camera."¹ Holders of this view reject the notion of supernatural revelation and regard much of the Pentateuch as folklore and Hebrew storytelling. Conversely, the conservative view holds to Mosaic authorship and regards the books as a literary unit (this does not mean that Moses did not use other documents to write his books). However, since other Old Testament authors affirm Mosaic authorship, as do numerous New Testament writers and the early church fathers, the veracity of the Bible as a whole begins to dissipate if Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch. In this context, this article limits to identify the cultural issues mentioned in the Pentateuch which cannot be explained by a late author and which in themselves defend the Mosaic authorship.

HISTORY OF THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS

Until the rise of deistic philosophy in the eighteenth century, the Christian church had always accepted the claims of the Pentateuch to be composed by the historic Moses of the fifteenth century BC. A few Jewish scholars, such as the pantheistic Spanish Jew, Benedict Spinoza, had suggested the possibility of later authorship of a least parts of the Torah, but these conjectures had been largely ignored by European scholarship, until the deistic movement created a more favorable attitude for historical skepticism and the rejection of the supernatural. In 1670, Spinoza had expressed the view in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* that the Pentateuch could hardly have been written by

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¹ Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966) 37.

Moses, since he is referenced in the third person nor could he have recorded his own death, as in Deuteronomy 34.²

French physician Jean Astruc developed the original Documentary Hypothesis in 1753, and it went through many different alterations until Karl Graf revised the initial hypothesis in the mid-nineteenth century. Julius Wellhausen then restated Graf's Documentary Hypothesis and brought it to prominence in European and American scholarly circles; consequently, it has become known to many as the Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis.³ Since the "Period of the Enlightenment," the Graf-Wellhausen explanation of the origin of the Pentateuch has challenged conservative theology. Liberal scholars teach that the Pentateuch was compiled from four original "source documents"—designated as J, E, D, and P. The four documents supposedly were written at different times by different authors, and eventually were compiled into the Pentateuch by a redactor (editor).

The J, or Jehovahist, document (usually known as the Yahwehist document) supposedly was written approximately 850 BC, and was characterized by its use of the divine name Yahweh. Elohim is the divine name that identifies the E, or Elohist, document, purportedly written approximately 750 BC. The D, or Deuteronomist, document contained most of the book of Deuteronomy and was supposed to have been written approximately 620 BC. The last section to be written was the P, or Priestly, document, which would have contained most of the priestly laws, and allegedly was written approximately 500 BC. The documents were then redacted (edited) into one work about 300 years later in 200 BC.⁴ The liberal manner of studying the biblical text in terms of sources used in its compilation is called source analysis or very broadly literary analysis.

CULTURAL ISSUES IN PENTATEUCH

Judging from the account of Moses' life given in the Pentateuch, there is every reason to believe that he could have written the book so closely linked with his name. The Tell el-Amarna tablets discovered in 1887 revealed a group of texts written in Akkadian cuneiform by rulers of Palestine and Syria and sent to Pharaoh from 1400-1370 BC. The Egyptian court was in contact with diverse

² William Henry Green, *The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978) 47.

³ Josh McDowell *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Nelson, 1999) 406.

⁴ Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976) 23.

people and cultures, a factor that would have broadened the education of princes like Moses. In an era when uneducated Semitic slaves were writing on the walls of Egyptian turquoise mines in Serabit el-Khadim, surely Moses was well able to read and write.⁵

COVENANTS AND TREATIES

The formats of the ancient treaties, particularly the Hittite treaties as a genre include: (1) introduction with regard to the speaker; (2) historical prologue; (3) stipulations; (4) statement with regard to the document; (5) divine witnesses; and, (6) curses and blessings. The elements do not all occur in every treaty, and certain elements appear to be characteristic of particular time periods, particular geographic locations or particular types of treaties. The Hittite family of treaties is characterized by the use of historical prologue to an extent not found elsewhere. The treaties from Syria and Assyria reveal a much greater emphasis on the curses that are used to enforce the treaty.⁶

In Exodus 20:1 and Deuteronomy 1:1-5, YHWH is identified as the Covenant's author and has a right to make certain demands. The historical prologue is readily recognizable in the biblical covenants. It is most limited in Exodus 20:2 but quite pronounced in Deuteronomy 1:6—3:29. Likewise in Exodus and Leviticus, stipulations comprise the Decalogue (the covenant code) and the ritual instruction in Leviticus 1—25. In the ancient treaties, generally gods are called to witness the agreement that is being made. Mendenhall indicated that there are also instances of the mountains, rivers, sea, heaven and the earth, the wind and the clouds all being called to witness.⁷ In Deuteronomy 31, the Lord instructed Moses to compose a song and teach it to the Israelites so that it may function as a witness. Moreover, in that chapter, the Book of the Law in addition to the heavens and the earth were identified as witness (31:26-28). Curses were a standard feature of treaties irrespective of time or location in the event of violation of the treaty. In Leviticus 26:1-13 and 14-33 the blessings and curses come. In Deuteronomy, the well-known blessings and curses are found in chapter 28. From these entire observations one can reach the conclusion that the biblical covenants (while they do not

⁵ Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974) 122-23.

⁶ John Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989) 101.

⁷ George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," in *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader* 3, ed. Edward F. Campbell Jr. and David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970) 35.

each use the Hittite format exactly) are closer to that format than they are to the formats found in any other period.

CUSTOMS EXISTING IN THE NATIONAL LIFE OF HEBREWS

The Mosaic legislation reveals examples of customs already existing in the national life of the Hebrews. The Sabbath is one of those pre-Mosaic institutions; it was enforced in but not originated by the Sinaitic revelation, for it was recognized as existing before the enunciation of the fourth commandment, as for example, in connection with the gathering of manna (Exod 16). The truth of this assertion is conformed by the fact that there are traces of it among the primeval nations. The Babylonians knew it as “a day of rest for heart.” Among the thousands of tablets found at the site of Nineveh—where they were deposited by Assurbanipal—the Sardanapalus of the Greeks, are the copies of Akkadian inscriptions of dating (according to George Smith) beyond 2000 BC, which testify to the observation of a sacred day, a seventh day of rest. Similar vestiges of a primeval Sabbath are found in the ancient literatures of India, China, and other lands.

The simple family life the patriarchal age is reflected in many of the elements of Mosaic legislation. The sanctity of marriage, the honoring of parents, the sacredness of human life, all coming from primeval times, and the characteristics of just social conditions as prevailed before the Egyptian bondage, are incorporated in the Hebrew enactments. The priestly character of the father or elder of the family (Exod 12:3, 22) and the marriage with a deceased brother’s widow (Gene 38:8) also reflect the social conditions of patriarchal times.

The idea of a family representative, the guardian of its honor and interests, is very conspicuous throughout Genesis. Moses utilized it and safeguarded it in his legislation (Numb 5:8). The right of sanctuary was a special provision against the abuse of the custom (Exod 21:13-14); and cities of refuge were designed for this same purpose (Numb 35:9-34). Rude methods of conveyancing, marking boundaries with stones (Deut 19:14), the loosing of a shoe as a trace of some primitive form of transference of property, are also instances of the influence of ancient manners and customs.⁸

Jacob’s shepherding career (Gen 31:38-40) fits well into the context of Ancient Near Eastern herding practice, in particular the old Babylonian period (early second millennium) (i.e. then of every 100 births, 80 went to the owner

⁸ William Spiers, *The Age and Authorship of Pentateuch* (Edinburgh: Morrison & Gibb, 1895) 85-87.

and 20 to the shepherd). Jacob's claim was in principle for less than the normal proportion. In Genesis 31:39, the verb "bore the loss" (of lost livestock) is a unique usage in the Hebrew Bible, but it corresponds closely in function to Old Babylonian expressions in herding contracts that differed considerably from those of much later periods. As the laws of Hammurabi state the owner of the flock was to bear the loss of stock slain by wild animals, Jacob explicitly claimed to have done better for Laban, bearing the losses through predators himself without claim on Laban (31:39).⁹

Joseph's appointment was accompanied by his being robed in fine linen, given a golden collar, and entrusted with a state seal, in addition to using a second chariot after the King (41:42-43). All this corresponds with both the Middle and New Kingdoms, and these procedures are authentically Egyptian.¹⁰ Regarding the burials of Jacob and Joseph, it is almost amusing to notice the growing acculturation to Egyptian ways of this west Semitic family. Jacob requested to be gathered with his fathers after death, and to be buried in the collective tomb of Abraham, Isaac, and their spouses (49:29-32). In this request, he conformed to dominant Middle Bronze Age custom, which remained influential for most of the subsequent two thousand years in Canaan, and throughout the Iron Age and into Greco-Roman times. Joseph, however, had to transport deceased Jacob from the Delta to Canaan. The traditional ancient Semitic solution in such circumstances was to allow the body to be rendered to bones, and then remove these to the final burial. Joseph, however, chose an Egyptian alternative: he had Jacob mummified in full Egyptian fashion (50:2-3) which was understandable in Egypt at any period but not normally in Canaan. With Joseph, things went further because he was put in a coffin in Egypt (50:26), admittedly with the hope that someday he too would be repatriated to Canaan. Jacob and Joseph, therefore, have undeniable Egyptian traits even in their postmortem activities.¹¹

When one examines the case of Exodus 3:21-22, 11:2, and 12:35-36, the Hebrews were to use the Egyptians' desire to be rid of their "pestilential" clients and their deity's plagues by asking parting gifts from them of silver, gold and clothing; almost a case of "we will give you anything to be rid of you." Buying of a deity's wrath (especially against health) is well enough known in thirteenth century. Draftsman Nebre promised a stela for his son's healing,

⁹ J. J. Finkelstein, "An Old Babylonian Herding Contract and Genesis 31:38 f.," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88 (January—March 1968): 30-36.

¹⁰ Donald B. Redford, *The Biblical Story of Joseph* (Leiden: Brill, 1970) 208-13.

¹¹ Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 351.

and (seeking forgiveness) the sculptor Qen asked people to offer beer to his angry goddess.¹² The point is that the Egyptians would pay Semitic foreigners to achieve their desires is the only point of contact here.

In Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8–9, there is notice of the consecration rituals lasting seven days for inaugurating, and appointing both Aaron as high priest and his remaining sons as ordinary priests. Without any degree of independent evidence, biblicists have historically relegated these rites to the post-exilic period, partly because they knew of no such rites in the Levant any earlier. However, with entirely new data from the thirteenth century Emar, this is no longer true. Elaborate rites are now evident that lasted nine days for the installation of the high priestess at Emar, which include anointing the new appointee with oil (in fact, twice for different aspects of rites). The use of anointing with oil and blood is found now in the Zukru festival at Emar.¹³

The action of Sarah in giving Hagar to Abraham, or of Rachel giving Bilhah to Jacob is explained by the provision of Hammurabi's code that the wife could present her husband with the concubine. Moreover, the law did not allow Sarah to sell her maid, and all she could do was to persuade her husband to dismiss his concubine. The adoption by Abraham of his house-steward, Eliezer, is another illustration of the Babylonian law. The law of adoption was unknown to Mosaic legislation, but it was prominent in the Babylonian code.

The fact that the history of patriarchs thus presupposes the code of Hammurabi and not that of Moses dismisses the entire Pentateuchal theory elaborated by the adherents of higher criticism. In the patriarchal age, Canaan was still part of the Babylonian Empire and the law of Babylonia was observed there. After the conquest of the country by the Israelites and the rise of the kingdom of David, Israelite law was alone obeyed. Had the history of the patriarchs been a fiction of the post-Davidic period, or compiled during that period from tradition and legend, the law presupposed in it would have been the Law of Moses and not that of Hammurabi.¹⁴

CONCLUSION

Having received training in the most advanced literate culture of the day in addition to having access to the Jewish oral tradition made Moses a

¹² Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Poetry of Ancient Egypt* (Jonsered: Astroms Forlag, 1999) 285-90.

¹³ Kitchen, *Reliability of the Old Testament*, 280.

¹⁴ Archibald Henry Sayce, *The "Higher Criticism" and the Verdict of the Monuments* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1915) 565-68.

remarkable and likely candidate for God to use in documenting the founding of the Jewish nation. There is a trend among scholars to view the Pentateuch as a literary unit again. The purpose of this article is to assert that even from cultural background, the Pentateuch cannot be ascribed to the compiler of a later date but only to Moses.

New Testament Theology: The Synoptic Problem in the Gospels

René A. López

For the majority of approximately 1700 to 1800 years, the Christian movement (whether Roman Catholic or Protestant) did not attempt to answer the similarities contained in Matthew, Mark and Luke.¹ It is common knowledge that the 1800s brought an increase of information (perhaps resulting from the Renaissance and the Enlightenment periods) in the area of archaeology, religious sects, and biblical criticism. All that arose during this century, however, was not negative; it is because of the many newly discovered facts in these areas that many theologians began to question—with a predominant humanistic and evolutionistic bias—how many of the similarities of the Gospels arose. In other words, these theologians sought to answer what Gospel came first (Matthew, Mark, Luke or perhaps other manuscripts), and who copied from whom? Many more questions of the like were asked that led many to doubt the integrity of the manuscripts, the writers, and the contents that convey the facts about the person and work of Jesus Christ.

From this author's pastoral and professorial perspective, there is danger for Bible students (that will later pastor churches if they do not become discouraged by such views promoted by the Synoptic problem theories) and the common lay person (that will cause him/her to question the integrity of the writers and biblical inspiration and inerrancy). Henceforth, one needs to ask and answer several questions. (1) What does the word "Gospel" mean? (2) Were the Gospels comprised in an evolutionistic way from the simplest to the most complex (i.e. Mark, another document called Q, or did other documents come first before Matthew)? (3) Were these writers such

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¹ The name Synoptic means "similar" or "same" (i.e. Matthew, Mark, and Luke contain similar material unlike John that contains 92% of different material than them). Hence, John's Gospel is not considered one of the "Synoptic Gospels." Of course, there are always the liberal zealots that regardless of the evidence (archaeological, historical, textual, philosophical, and logical) let their bias to renounce Jesus Christ and His work influence them not to accept the Gospels as they are. To understand some of those zealots intent on denying the prima facie evidence of Jesus Christ found in the Gospels, see René A. López, "Efforts to Disprove the Biblical Jesus," *Journal of Dispensational Theology* 12 (December 2008): 53-70.

plagiarists that they had to borrow from another to record their information where similar events appear? (4) Is there definite evidence for such documents like Q or others that are presented in universities as if they actually exist? (5) What role does the Holy Spirit have in all of this, since the Scripture asserts to be inspired of God and that men were moved to write by the Spirit of God (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:19-21)? (6) What are the positives and negatives to each of the views? All of these questions will be addressed in this article so that the reader will more clearly understand the issues involved and be able to make an informed decision regarding the integrity of the Bible with regard to discussing *the Synoptic problem in the Gospels*.

GOSPEL AS GENRE

To regard Gospels as “genre” was once debatable. However, today scholars acknowledge and classify this as a distinct type of literary genre that parallels Greco-Roman biographies, which present the ethos of a person by recounting the nature and manner of lifestyle. It seems normal that the New Testament writers would be influenced by and employ the common “literary conventions of their day.” In that regards, the four Gospels appear to have this in common with the ancient world. However, the Gospel genre seems to go beyond the Greco-Roman biographies to highlight the kerygmatic record of Jesus’ life as the Messiah with a profound theological motif written for the early Christians. In that regards, this genre is unique and different than those of the Greco-Roman period.²

The term Gospel translates the original Greek word εὐαγγέλιον meaning “good news.”³ As Jim Anderson noted: “The word comes to us through the Anglo-Saxon word that meant the story of God.”⁴ To describe the nature of this good news, some turn to 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 to explain it in terms of Christ’s redemption of mankind through His life, death and resurrection confirmed by many. While true, the gospel should not only be described in what Christ did for humanity, but also by the impact it has on mankind in the present and future. By dying, Christ paid humanity’s debt and died substitutionarily (this allows all who believe in Him to be justified before

² See L. W. Hurtado, “Gospel (Genre),” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992) 276-82.

³ Walter Bauer et al., *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 402.

⁴ Jim Anderson, *The Life of Christ: With a Sequential Biblical Commentary of the Four Gospels* (Omaha, NE: Anderson Evangelistic Enterprises, 1991).

God; cf. Rom 3:21—4:5). By rising from the dead, this proves God accepted Christ’s sacrifice (Rom 4:25), gives believers present power to live righteously (Rom 5:9-10; 6:1-13; 8:1-39; 10:9-13) and guarantees the believers’ future with God (1 Cor 15:50-54; 1 Thess 4:13—5:11). Therefore, the gospel is good news with regard to what Christ did for humanity that encompasses the believer’s total experience from the time of birth to a future life with God.

The Synoptic Problem

Upon reading the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke tell almost the same story of Jesus Christ but John differs. The chart below demonstrates similarities among the three and the divergence of the other.⁵

	Differences	Agreements	Explanation:
Matthew	42%	58%	“Mark has 678 verses. Only about 50 of those are unique to Mark. He shares 480 with both Matt and Luke, and another 120 with Matt only, and another 20 with Luke only. Thus Mark demonstrates differences only 7% while showing agreements 93% of the time.” John agrees only 8% with all three while disagreeing 92%.
Mark	7%	93%	
Luke	59%	41%	
John	92%	8%	

Consequently, Matthew, Mark and Luke are named Synoptic, which means *to view similarly*.⁶ The problem of the Synoptics becomes apparent since much of the information appears in all three of the Gospels but in numerous cases it varies. Therefore, the Synoptic problem was the name given to address this issue. To solve this issue, critical scholars suggest that the three Synoptic

⁵ The chart was adapted from James A. Borland, *A General Introduction to the New Testament*, rev. ed. (1986; Lynchburg, VA: University Book House, 1995) 198.

⁶ The term Synoptic is derived from the Greek term *synoptikos*, which means: “‘seeing the whole together, taking a comprehensive view.’ But as applied to the Gospels the word has come to mean *affording, presenting, or taking the same or a common view*” (Henry C. Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament* [1943; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989] 101).

authors shared a common source or sources to compile their accounts. No less than seven views are proposed.⁷

The common original (urevangelium) theory.⁸ First, late in the 1700s some taught Matthew perhaps wrote his first Gospel in Aramaic not Greek.⁹ Consequently, other Gospel authors drew from Matthew's Aramaic Gospel, including Matthew when he wrote his Gospel in Greek (this hypothesis cannot be supported literarily, because no Aramaic Gospel exists).

The numerous fragment theory. Second, another theory arose in the early 1800s that suggested pieces of fragments of Christ's life circulated that were the common source used by Synoptic writers.¹⁰ However, this does not explain how numerous fragments could lead to so many similarities in the synoptic Gospels. Moreover, no evidence exists for these fragments.

The mutual dependence theory. Third, "this theory holds that one Gospel was used by the others and thus accounts for the similarities. The problem comes when one tries to decide which of the Gospels was written first and which two borrowed from the original source."¹¹ Throughout the centuries, many have suggested the second Gospel author (Mark) drew its information from the first (Matthew), and the third relied upon both. Every imaginable order of arranging how the three Gospels arose was suggested (six possibilities exist; however, today this theory is not popular). Though many believe in the priority of Mark followed by Matthew, many conclude Luke developed his account by using both of these sources.

The two document theory. Fourth, the two document theory suggests Mark came first, then a second early document called Q (i.e. from a German word *Quelle* meaning "source") had more information with regard to

⁷ The following sources were used in explaining the synoptic problem: Robert H. Stein, "Synoptic Problem," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 784-92; and, Borland, *General Introduction*, 193-203. For a more in-depth analysis, see Robert H. Stein, *The Synoptic Problem: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987).

⁸ The titles of the seven theories explaining the synoptic phenomenon were adapted from Borland, *General Introduction*, 194.

⁹ G. E. Lessing (1776) and J. G. Eichhorn (1796) argued that Matthew's gospel was first written in Aramaic but later translated into Greek with its numerous revisions. See Stein, "Synoptic Problem," 785. "So Matthew composed the oracles in the Hebrew language and each person interpreted them as best he could" (Michael W. Holmes, ed. and trans., *The Apostolic Fathers* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1956; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989] 316).

¹⁰ "One explanation, originating with F. Schleiermacher (1817), suggested that the disciples had taken notes (memorabilia) of Jesus' words and deeds. These eventually were collected and arranged topically. From these collected memorabilia the Synoptic Gospels arose" (Stein, "Synoptic Problem," 195).

¹¹ Charles H Dyer, "Do the Synoptics Depend on Each Other?," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138 (July 1981): 235.

Christ's life.¹² It logically follows that Matthew and Luke copied from both of these sources, which account for the similarities. Over the years, this theory has become very popular, but it leaves many questions unanswered, such as James A. Borland noted: "(1) Can it be proven that Mark predated Matthew and Luke? (2) Would Matt and Luke have been such plagiarist, or dependent on Mark that they had to copy almost verbatim so much of Mark? (3) Why did Luke omit some large sections of Mark? (4) Why is there no record or copy of the supposed Q document? (5) What is to account for many differences between Matthew and Luke if they both used identical sources?"¹³ Another criticism aimed at the two document theory implies a close connection with an evolutionary mindset since this view came at a time (late 1800s) when evolution was fashionable. Henceforth, the Mark (16 chapters) and Q theory suggests a literary form of the simplest to the more complex order of Matthew (28 chapters) and Luke (24 chapters). However, because of the theory's inability to answer the questions already stated (especially #5), a man in 1924, named Burnett Streeter suggested a four document theory in studying the origins of the Gospels.

Streeter's four document theory. *Fifth*, upon noticing the inadequacy of the Mark-Q hypothesis, Streeter expanded upon it and originated a four document theory. Matthew and Luke, without having the Mark-Q documents, also used additional sources particularly to their own account. Therefore, Matthew used a source peculiar to his Gospel called *M* and Luke's supplement was called *L*. Consequently, *M* and *L* supplied the information that was not found in Mark-Q, which accounts for the unique information in Matthew and Luke. However, one cannot compile the accounts of sources *M*, *L*, and *Q* neatly because they overlap. Critical scholarship still holds to the Mark-Q priority. Nevertheless, the same objections posed in the two document theory holds true in the four document theory.

Form criticism. *Formgeschichte* (form history) known as form criticism holds a "many fragments" theory. The form history theory proposes that the Gospels evolved by combining, recombining materials, and editing distinct sources of early traditions with regard to Christ's life. Accounts forming these fragments are composed of numerous literary types or genres: (1) tales (miracles); (2) legends (of church saints); (3) birth accounts; (4) sayings; (5) myths (baptism, temptation, and transfiguration); (6) paradigms (short narratives); and, (7) passion stories (etc.). A major weakness of this view is that it assumes its premise without proving it, that is, no arguments are

¹² Ibid. 787-88.

¹³ Borland, *General Introduction*, 195.

presented that prove the forms are myth or legends (it simply assumes it). The mere *form* of a story does not prove the truth or falsity of its content. Henceforth, Borland concluded: "Truth can be conveyed in prose, poetry, or parable. Unhappily, many of the leading critics behind *formgeschichte* (Bultmann, for example), have had trouble believing that the New Testament could be trusted in what is said about Jesus."¹⁴

The oral tradition theory. The attempts of this theory are to explain the Synoptic phenomenon without literary dependence. Instead the similarities of the Gospels arose due to a common circulation of oral tradition. Perhaps this may explain the peculiarities in each of the Gospels and its verbal expressions arising from cultural traditions rendered.¹⁵ The theory has its shortcomings: besides not demanding that the Gospels be inspired of God, it does not carefully handle the evidence that argues for dependence.

The Synoptic Problem: Proposed Solution

While the Gospel authors can rely on sources (e.g. Luke 1:1-4), most of the previously stated explanations derive its emphasis from humanistic (contrary to a faith-base) explanations and does not adequately answer the Synoptic "problem." There are numerous reasons that answer this supposed problem in a better manner. *First*, Matthew and John were witnesses of Christ's life. Likewise, Mark's Gospel was believed to derive from Peter's account. Since Peter (and Mark in numerous occasions) was present throughout Jesus' three-and-a-half year ministry, this makes him a credible witness to be able to convey Christ's life to Mark.

Second, in case they forgot certain events, Jesus said the Holy Spirit would remind them later (John 14:26).¹⁶ Therefore, Matthew would not need

¹⁴ Ibid. 196.

¹⁵ Anderson noted how some explain the similarities in the Gospels by assuming "the gospel writers are often imagined with variations due to regional collections at the varying cities of Rome (for Mark), Antioch (for a common source), Jerusalem (for Matthew) and Caesarea (for Luke). Since Mark is considered basic by this humanistic approach, it is the gospel of Mark that is most often used as the primary means of structuring a harmony of the gospels" (*Life of Christ*, 31).

¹⁶ John 14:26 reads, ". . . ὑμᾶς διδάξει πάντα καὶ ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς πάντα ἃ εἶπον ὑμῖν ἐγώ." Here the plural "you" is used for the eleven (and perhaps Mark was also there, although he was not one of the eleven disciples remaining, since it is possible they may have eaten the Last Supper at his house; cf. Acts 12:12-13) to convey how the Spirit will equally bring to memory *all that Jesus taught throughout His ministry* (this seems to add significance to the fact that all of them were equally inspired and that the content of the inspiration was not only new revelation that the Spirit would give them but also that it was more about the events

to copy Mark since the Spirit equally inspired Matthew. Better than assuming, as many do, a Q document that does not exist, why not believe directly what the Scripture affirms as the basis for remembering the facts in order to record them? *Third*, Luke, conversely, compiled his account based upon sources, but not without the inspiration of the Spirit since all Scripture is inspired of God (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 2:20-21) regardless of the oral and literary sources used.

Fourth, God had each of the four Gospel writers compose their account with a unique purpose thus accounting for the numerous differences and similarities at the same time. Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience to present Jesus as their King-Messiah promised from the Old Testament (Matt 1:1-22; 2:14, 17, 23; 4:14; 5:18; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35, 21:4; 24:34; 26:54, 56; 27:9, 35). Mark presents Jesus as the suffering servant to the Roman audience who comes to provide unending peace (Mark 10:45). Luke wrote with a Greek audience in mind and presented Christ as the perfect “Son of Man” who comes to seek and to save (Luke 19:10). Finally, John wrote to all mankind to present Jesus as the Son of God who gives life to all who believe in Him and as also being God (John 20:28-31).

Ezekiel’s vision (1:10, 28) of the Lord’s promise to come and save His people may corroborate to the fourfold presentation of the Gospels.¹⁷ For example, the “lion” compares to the kingly aspect of Christ in Matthew since a lion conveys the idea of headship in the jungle, and Genesis 49:9 and Revelation 5:5 speak of Jesus as being “the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” The “ox” likeness compares to the servant aspect of Mark. Such a beast parallels the brute and unending work to perform the necessary task to save humanity. The “man,” whose likeness is human, compares to Luke’s presentation of the “Son of man” that comes to save. Finally, the “eagle” likeness compares to Jesus’ deity in John. Eagles symbolically depict deity (Ps 57:1; 61:4; 91:4; Isa 40:31), which clearly portrays Jesus as God who became man to deliver mankind. John’s vision in Revelation 4:6-7 seems to confirm the unison threat of God’s word when he saw a similar vision of four living creatures around God’s throne. Henceforth, the fourfold aspect of the Gospels fit the purposes God wanted to convey of Himself of how He would accomplish His perfect plan to save humanity.

that occurred while they walked with Jesus; hence, if taken at apparent significance, this answers much, if not all, of the synoptic controversy).

¹⁷ Borland, *General Introduction*, 201-02.

CONCLUSION

Understanding what the term "Gospel" means allows us to see that the disciples were using a common literary device of their day, but not without using unique features to highlight key elements of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, one does not have to accept the Gospels as being comprised in an evolutionistic manner from the simplest to the most complex (once one accepts that the Spirit was involved totally in the process). Henceforth, John 14:26 does not have to be interpreted as involving an evolutionistic concept. The Gospel writers were not plagiarists that borrowed from another to record their information since they were all equally promised to be inspired by the Spirit to document the life of Christ (John 14:26; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:19-21). Since no substantial evidence for such documents like *Q* or others exist, one encounters perils if accepting such tenuous pieces of evidence that are based upon a liberal bias (this is not to mention the many problems instead of solutions that such views create rather than solve). After answering all these questions, the reader can clearly understand the issues involved, be able to make an informed decision, and have assurance regarding the trustworthiness of the Bible when it comes to discussing *the Synoptic problem in the Gospels* and the integrity of the men who wrote them.

THE INEVITABILITY OF FRUITBEARING: An Exegesis of John 15:6 – Part I

John A. Tucker

Prior to any attempt to adequately ascertain the proper meaning of John 15:6, one must first address the issues involving the immediate context of the preceding verses. The issues of this single verse cannot be appropriately reconciled if this verse is interpreted in isolation, nor will this verse be reconciled biblically if one is burdened with their own presuppositional bias. One must, therefore, allow the context of the situation being addressed, first and foremost, speak for itself. Only then, should one allow the entrance of other pertinent passages to clarify, and perhaps amplify, what was said therein. Each verse of this context will be addressed individually.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CONTROVERSY

Charles R. Smith indicated that John 15:1-8 has been a site of significant conflict in the historical battlegrounds of doctrinal interpretation. He also noted, “Perhaps only the passage in Hebrews 6 has been the scene of more battles between Calvinistic and Arminian schools of interpretation concerning the matter of eternal security.”¹ However, not only has this passage provided much discordant discussion between these two schools of theology, it has also afforded a point of disagreement within Calvinism itself. It is the identification of the unfruitful branch in 15:2 and the non-abider in 15:6, in addition to their fates, that provides the crux for understanding the intent of the passage.

Arminians have generally taught that the unfruitful branches are true believers who have fallen into a state of unfruitfulness and therefore lose their justification before the Father. They believe that such believers now become unbelievers bound for hellfire. Calvinists generally describe the group of unfruitful branches as either: (1) true believers who have fallen into a state of unfruitfulness and are, as a result, sovereignly subject to some form of divine discipline not to include the loss of their salvation—it being eternal; or,

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¹ Charles R. Smith, “The Unfruitful Branches of John 15,” *Grace Journal* 9 (Spring 1968): 4.

(2) false believers who profess to know Christ, but their lives belie their actual profession of faith. The fate of such false believers is eternal damnation. The interpretative possibilities will be discussed further as the individual verses are addressed progressively in this article.

THE OCCASION AND BACKGROUND OF THE PARABLE

The Johannine parable is part of a series of passionate instructions given by the Lord on the final evening before His death. Perhaps on few occasions—possibly not on any other occasion—was so much significant revelation been given to these men. To the Lord, these last moments were of great significance since He was painfully privy to the events that would soon transpire and He knew the certain effect it would have on His beloved men. While interpreting this passage (in order to properly understand the issues), one must inject one's self into the urgency of the moment. The passage must not be read as a simple, casual, exercise in forensic exegesis and exposition, nor as a simple, historical recapitulation of events, but rather in an emphatic imposition of empathy.

The Intimacy and Urgency of Christ's Message

John 13 records the Lord's teaching to the disciples that humble service was the focus of His ministry and it was to be theirs also. In that chapter, the Lord was unambiguous that there would be occasional cleansing necessary for continued fellowship with Him (that is the clear and unmistakable meaning of 13:8-11). Although that passage's primary significance lies in the example of physical, humble service that the disciples must necessarily employ with one another (13:12-17), its subject matter addresses more than just the physical aspect of such a simple act of service in the washing of the feet. The Lord said, "and you are clean, but not all of you," and in so doing He elevated the physical significance of "clean" and "wash" beyond bodily hygiene into representing the organic union that is justification ("clean") and the practical communion that is fellowship ("wash"). The "bathing" of the entire individual (at justification) must be followed with the occasional "washing" (in sanctification) in order to maintain "part" (close, communal fellowship) with Christ. Christ told Peter that unless there was the "washing," he would have no "part" with Him. "Part" does not refer to the initial act of salvation that is justification but to the fellowship process of sanctification.

Obviously, the Lord did not tell Peter that he would lose his salvation if Peter did not humbly submit to the Lord's "washing," for the Gospel record

indicates (concerning the Lord) that He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, “You are not all clean” and “I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me’” (13:11; 18). The Lord, therefore, indeed testified with regard to Peter’s salvific state, and Judas’ lack thereof, and then focused on the ongoing process of occasional washing so that Peter should not be subject to the warning that prevents fellowship, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me” (13:8b).

In light of the spiritual significance of the “bathing” and “washing,” one might inquire, with a significant measure of curiosity, as to the nature and significance of Jesus’ footwashing of Judas—the son of perdition—who Satan entered that very same night. If the spiritual nature of Peter’s “washing” is equivalent to the required cleansing for fellowship in sanctification, how then, could any such be possibly reconciled with the same “washing” that the unregenerate Judas received that same night? The answer may be simple. The “washing” example *for Peter* was twofold, for, (1) it exemplified the humble service of his Lord and Master; and, (2) it spoke of Peter’s need for occasional washing for pure fellowship. It was, after all, Peter, and not Judas, who brazenly instructed the Lord in His footwashing procedures. Therefore, it was *to Peter* that the Lord explained the spiritual significance. Judas did not inquire such and therefore one cannot assume the same answer would be given to the son of perdition (that the same answer given to Peter would be given to Judas is a presupposition not supported in this context). The “washing” example for Judas was only singlefold for its exemplification was only of the Lord’s humble service. Were Judas to have feigned unwillingness, as did Peter, to have his feet washed by the Lord, there is no doubt that the Lord would have answered Judas’ proffered disinclination in a very *different* manner than that in which He answered Peter’s reluctance. Judas was an “unbathed” and “unclean” child of the devil, but Peter was both “bathed” and “washed,” and therefore a “clean” child of God. One cannot impose an Americanized, egalitarian propensity and assume the Lord treats everyone the same when He, in reality, responds to them individually. Judas would have indeed received a different answer from the Lord than did Peter.

The Lord then revealed that one of their number was a pretender—a pseudo-disciple— who would betray the Lord. The Lord also gave them a new commandment to love one another; a love not according to the love expected of the Old Covenant but a superior love representative of the same kind of humble, sacrificial attitude that He displayed all the days of His earthly life and in His death. He revealed to Peter his own impending, desperate act of denial. As a consequence of this newly presented, yet ominous, information

that He related to them, Jesus appealed to them to stop allowing their hearts to be troubled (present active imperative) due to the fact that, after all, they did already believe in both Him and God (14:1). What then, was there to fear?

As a consequence of the Lord's persistent admonition to obey and keep His commandments, He revealed to them that there would be One coming to assist in this difficult, virtually impossible, requirement. The disciples had no strength in themselves to be faithful and would, therefore, have to depend upon their close relationship with the Lord to provide the comfort and strength so desperately needed for the coming frantic days of near-term bewilderment and soon-to-develop, ongoing persecution. The relationship the disciples had with the Lord would soon take a new form, however, because the Lord was leaving soon; therefore, a Helper would come to comfort, remind and teach them in His stead.

Christ was spending His last moments on earth with the men He dearly loved (13:1). He knew what dire events would soon transpire and He was seeking to prevent as much damage as possible to their vulnerable senses. His desire to disclose all of these words of encouragement was significant. These men *must* do the things He asked if they were to survive the coming days of doubt and unbelief. They *must* resolve to remain with their Lord and not abandon His words to the four winds and themselves to a self-imposed doubting-Diaspora. Indeed, the Shepherd soon would be smitten and the sheep would be scattered, but not utterly. Indeed, these men would soon falter, stumble and run, but not to ruinous destruction. They *must* complete His mission and bear the fruit they were intended to bear (this portion of Scripture is intensely personal and it bears the fervent marks of urgency). Although, by extension, Christians share in many of its admonitions, the church must keep in mind when, why, and to whom the Lord spoke these original words. The article herein will now consider these preceding dramatic events at the beginning of John 15.

JOHN 15:1 ("I AM THE TRUE VINE,
AND MY FATHER IS THE VINEDRESSER.")

In John 14:31, the Lord directed the disciples to arise and leave their location in the Upper Room. Perhaps the departure was to stay a few steps ahead of the treacherous Judas so that he could not lead the armed mob to the Lord before the Lord had fully completed His parting dialogue with His beloved disciples. Such an idea would also be consistent with the fact that the Lord carefully kept the location of the Last Supper a mystery to all, until the day of Passover had come. It seems apparent that the Lord and His disciples left the

Upper Room at this time and began their determined trek to the Mount of Olives. It was during this movement toward the site of His betrayal that much of this discourse occurred. Most of what is called the “Upper Room Discourse” did not occur in the serene, uninterrupted confines of the Upper Room in any manner, but on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane. On the next day, the Lord would again trek through this city—the one from which He will one day rule the world—along a path now infamously known as the “Via Dolorosa,” the “way of sorrow.” Prior to that day, His path (His “way”) would inspire a much different quality and manner for it must be called the “Via Hortatus,” *the way of encouragement!*

Christ the True Vine

There are six commonly suggested reasons to answer why the Lord used the term, “the vine.”

- (1) some have suggested this term was prompted by the wine used at the Lord’s Supper, which they were attending, but this is unlikely since it has been noted already that they were most likely not in the Upper Room when this part of their discussion occurred
- (2) some have suggested that there might have been a vine that was easily observed from the windows of the Upper Room, but this idea may fail for the reason previously given
- (3) Jerome suggested the great golden vine, which hung on the wall of the Temple, was in their view as they coursed their way through the streets and onto the Temple Mount toward the Mount of Olives (during Passover season, the Temple was kept open at night because of the enormous crowds; therefore, this explanation may also be unlikely, though possible, since the large crowds in the busy Temple area would make such an important intimate conversation more difficult, but by his reasoning, apparently Jerome also considered this conversation to be on the way to the Mount of Olives and not in the Upper Room)
- (4) some have suggested that on their way to Gethsemane, a real vine was encountered, and although the context does not demand such an encounter, it was very possible
- (5) Lange and others have taught that this was the time of year for pruning-fires and perhaps such fires were visible on the slopes of the Mount of Olives or in the Kidron Valley reminding Jesus and His disciples of the worthless prunings being burned;² however, throughout the scope of this article, the reader should

² John Peter Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, The Gospel According to John*, trans. and ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960) 461.

observe that at this time of year, it was unlikely to see such activity in the vineyard or on the slopes

- (6) others refer to the frequent use in the Old Testament of the vine (and vineyard) with reference to Israel (since the Lord's instructions commonly referenced Old Testament passages, it would seem appropriate to believe this is what He had in mind; naturally, it is entirely possible that some external visible stimulus, such as a vine, was used as the object lesson as He updated the Old Testament figure with this New Testament truth)

The use of the "vine" in the Lord's discourse is, of course, noteworthy. Fruchtenbaum commented with regard to Jehovah's Vineyard.

The vine even more commonly symbolizes Israel than the fig tree. Isaiah 3:14–15 accuses Israel's leadership of spoiling God's vineyard (Israel) when they oppressed the people. Isaiah 5:1–7's elaboration on this theme begins with the Song of the Vineyard (5:1–2). It pictures a vineyard planted on excellent soil with day-long sunlight. The farmer did everything to make it produce. However, instead of yielding edible grapes (justice and righteousness), the nation produced wild sour grapes (oppression), for which it would suffer discipline. Later, Isaiah 27:2–6 depicts a brighter future for this vineyard. God will replant and carefully watch, so Israel will blossom, bud, and produce fruit for the entire world. In the future kingdom, Israel will bring justice and righteousness among the nations.³

There are those who would make significance of the differences between a vine and a vineyard, since Israel was called both in the Word. However, in these analogies, they are not different but interchangeable. Although in the Old Testament, it was common for the Lord to call His chosen people a "vineyard," what was specifically intended was that they were a "vine" because vineyards consist of vines. Such is the use of a figure of speech called "metonymy" where a closely associated word is substituted for another word.⁴

In this vineyard and vine case, that such a metonymous designation was intended is confirmed in the Hebrew parallelism. "For the *vineyard* of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant *plant*" (Isa 5:7a). The Lord called His people a "vineyard" and then in parallel, a vine "plant." The focus of the passage is that God's people are the vine. Jeremiah (2:21), Ezekiel (19:10) and Asaph (Ps 80:8) further corroborated this

³ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, "Israelology, Part 6 of 6," *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 6:3 (July 2000): 51.

⁴ For example, when one is invited to a dinner and views the cornucopian smorgasbord spread across the dinner table, it is not unusual for one to exclaim, "what a spread!" or, "what a table!" The point one is making concerns the prepared food and not the physical positioning of the bowls, plates, and table cloth (the "spread"), nor is one awestruck concerning the significance of the table's structure such as its woodgrain design or its stalwart dimension (the "table").

truth. Understanding this is notable when comparing Christ's statement with regard to His being the true vine with the Old Testament passages. As a complete entity, the nation of Israel was faithless and fruitless.

MacDonald wrote, "In the OT, the nation of Israel was depicted as a vine planted by Jehovah. But the nation proved unfaithful and unfruitful, so the Lord Jesus now presented *Himself* as the true vine, the perfect fulfillment of all the other types and shadows."⁵ Morris related the meaning of the figure quite well.

There seems little doubt that Jesus has in mind passages in the Old Testament which regard Israel as the vine (Ps. 80:8-16; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 15; 19:10; Hos. 10:1). Indeed in time the vine became a symbol of Israel, and it is found, for example, on coins of the Maccabees. Interestingly all the Old Testament passages which use this symbol appear to regard Israel as faithless or as the object of severe punishment. Jesus' description of Himself as the "true" vine is to be seen against this background. The passage is the Johannine counterpart of the Pauline view of the church as the body of Christ and of believers as "in" Christ. Both are ways of bringing out the vital connection that exists between Christ and His own."⁶

Johnson summarized this idea also.

First, the figure teaches that fruit, spiritual fruit in the reality, is not the product of human achievement. It comes from union with the divine Savior, the Christ, the Son of God. Second, the figure, as used by our Lord, is intended to remind Israel of their past failures by the Old Testament associations of the figure, as well as to indicate that He is the one faithful Israelite, the "true vine," ultimately the One to whom the promises of the covenants pertain. And, finally, in Paul's usage of the concept of "in Christ" is the full explanation of the meaning of the figure.⁷

Blum commented as follows:

This is the last of the seven great "I am" statements in John. . . . Israel was God's choice vine on which he lavished care and attention (Ps. 80:7; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; 6:9; Ezek. 15; 17:5-10; 19:10-14; Hosea 10:1; 14:8). He longed for fruit, but the vine (Israel) became degenerate and produced rotten fruit. Therefore Jesus, as "the true Vine," fulfills what God had intended for Israel.⁸

⁵ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, ed. Art Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995) 1549.

⁶ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (New International Commentary on the New Testament), rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 593.

⁷ Samuel Lewis Johnson, "Abiding in Christ," *Emmaus Journal* 4 (Winter 1995): 146.

⁸ Edwin A. Blum, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament*, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1983) 325.

Smith wrote accordingly.

A careful study of the passage clearly indicates that Jesus did have in mind the familiar Old Testament usage of the vine as a symbol of Israel. This symbol was well-known to all Jews. Everyone knew of the temple-vine already mentioned and they no doubt had been taught from childhood the significance of this symbol. The vine was the recognized emblem of the nation Israel just as the eagle is the recognized emblem of the United States. During the Maccabean period the figure of a vine was stamped on the coins of the Jewish nation.⁹

It is significant to also note that Isaiah complained that the vine, Israel, turned into a vineyard producing wild vines, and later, Jeremiah complained that this vine had turned into a degenerate plant of an alien vine. During Isaiah's ministry, Hosea further confirmed that Israel had become an empty vine. The disciples would have been acquainted with such metaphors and it was to them that Jesus offered Himself as the contrasting, true and genuine vine. William Barclay commented, "It is a curious fact that the symbol of the vine is never used in the Old Testament apart from the idea of degeneration."¹⁰ George R. Beasley-Murray wrote, "Further, Jesus is not said to be the trunk and believers the branches; rather he is the tree in which (better, in whom!) the branches are alive and productive. The figure accordingly is closely similar to that of Christ as the Body, in whom believers are limbs (so 1 Cor. 12.12, 'As the body is one . . . so also is the Christ')."¹¹

It is also noteworthy that according to Isaiah 27:2-6, Israel will at last produce the fruit that the Father had expected from His vine. However, it will be as a result of the New Covenant that guarantees the kind of righteous attitudes and corresponding behavior that only those who are recipients of the New Covenant in the millennium can deliver. The righteous obedience of the New Covenant is only due to the pervasive influence of the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives as those millennial Israeli believers truly and finally abide in their Messiah (Deut 30:1-10; Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:24-27). Individuals of Israel in the millennium will be fruitful in a manner similar to that of today's church individuals who enjoy the current, spiritual blessings of the New Covenant as each person abides in close fellowship with the Lord. However, in the millennium, the New Covenant will be completely

⁹ Smith, "Unfruitful Branches," 6.

¹⁰ William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956) 2:201.

¹¹ George R. Beasley-Murray, "John 13-17: The Community of True Life," *Review and Expositor* 85 (Summer 1988): 479.

and utterly fulfilled such that the measure of obedience and concomitant blessing will greatly exceed that of the church today.

John F. Walvoord wrote concerning the authenticity of Jesus' fruit-producing ability and the nature of His fruit.

In its New Testament usage, the word for vine (Gr., *ampelos*) is always associated with fruit bearing (Matt 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18; Jas 3:12). Christ is the true vine in contrast to that which would be false or not a true vine. The word for true (Gr., *alethine*) has the connotation of that which is ultimate, perfect, or infinite. It refers to that which not only bears the name or resemblance but corresponds in its real nature to that which it is called. Christ as the true vine is in contrast to Israel, which has proved to be a false vine which did not bear proper fruit for God (Judg 9:7–15; Ps 80:8; Isa 5:1–7; Ezek 15:2; Hos 10:1).¹²

Therefore, it should be clearly evident that the Lord made use of the Old Testament "vine" metaphor to draw attention to and accentuate the genuine nature of Himself and to assure the fruitfulness that was intended by the Father, as opposed to the degenerate, unfruitful nature of Israel which previously was not capable of fulfilling such intentions of the Father. The Father is the Vinedresser or the Husbandman, who seeks and promotes the fruitful nature of His Vine by appropriate horticultural practices applied to the branches of His Vine.

JOHN 15:2 ("EVERY BRANCH IN ME THAT DOES NOT
BEAR FRUIT HE TAKES AWAY; AND EVERY BRANCH THAT
BEARS FRUIT HE PRUNES, THAT IT MAY BEAR MORE FRUIT.")

One thing we must be careful not to do is to force the details of a parable further than is intended. If one forces the figure beyond reasonable bounds, one will develop a distorted explanation that may inadvertently contradict other portions of Scripture. Another thing one may attempt to do is cause a passage to say something that, although it may well be true, is not actually intended in *that particular* passage. One may know it to be true as the result of being informed of its truth in other passages, but it was not the intended subject of the passage being considered. Therefore, it is important to determine the primary purpose of a passage and remember the context, as Walvoord reminded his readers.

¹² John F. Walvoord, "The Present Work of Christ – Part IV: The Present Work of Christ in Heaven (Part 2), Christ as the True Vine in Relation to the Branches," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 121 (October–December 1964): 297.

In any attempt at exposition of this passage, it is necessary first to state clearly the purpose of the figure. The theme of the passage is indicated in the six-fold repetition of the word *fruit*. The major concept, therefore, is fruitfulness, such as normally would be expected of a branch properly related to the vine. Inasmuch as fruitfulness is in view, it is, therefore, an error to attempt to make this an illustration of salvation, condemnation or imputation, as these great doctrines are not in view. The central thought is that fruitfulness depends on the kind of branch.¹³

Parables, such as this one, were not intended to be as detailed and precise as engineered building plans. They were intended to convey and emphasize a primary theme rather than infuse the listener with a myriad of details that would be too difficult to categorize, synthesize, and comprehend. One may be properly motivated to rightly divide the Scriptures, but attempt to extract more information from the details of a passage than the Author actually intended. Many parable details are vivid and effective, and their primary intention is to emphasize a single point.¹⁴

Constituting Fruitfulness

A very basic question may be asked at this juncture, "What constitutes being fruitful?" William MacDonald indicated that this fruit is simply that which the Holy Spirit produces in the life of every believer (viz. Christlikeness);¹⁵ it is none other than the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Gal 5:22-23). The branch that bears fruit is the Christian who is growing more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Other verses in the New Testament also indicate that fruit is produced through a training process and such a process produces fruit characterized by righteousness (Heb 12:11). A life of righteousness *necessarily* exhibits the fruit of the Spirit because of its Christlike nature. Peter reminded believers of this principle in his Second Epistle. He also noted the fruitful nature of believers who abide in the Word of God and the barren nature of those believers who, due to carnal shortsightedness and blindness, continue to live in sinful habits. Peter noted that it is in the advancement of righteous thinking and living that fruitfulness abounds (2 Pet 1:3-9).

One must also be careful not to assume that since a passage may not exhaust every detail with regard to a given situation, it therefore, must

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ F. F. Bruce, "Parable," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 5 vols., ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) 4:593.

¹⁵ MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, 1894-95.

necessarily mean something else. For example, 15:2 indicates there are branches “in Me,” that is, in basic union with Christ, which are not being fruitful. Since it is known that believers will indeed be fruitful, because the Word clearly teaches that truth, therefore, some have assumed that these branches must be pseudo-branches or false disciples because it says of some branches that it “does not bear fruit.” However, this passage does not demand that presupposed “pseudo-disciple” meaning. Indeed, all know that believers will not produce fruit at all times because they can act fleshly in certain areas of their lives and in so doing they quench and grieve the Holy Spirit (i.e. unfruitful and unrighteous activity). Believers most certainly can perform such unproductive, sinful activities because the Apostle Paul warned them to avoid such conduct—a warning that would be superfluous indeed if believers were not capable of such unfruitful activity.

It is surely conceivable that these unfruitful branches were merely in an early, juvenile state of growth anticipating a future state of fruitfulness. Perhaps they were temporarily unfruitful, having yet been fruitful in the past, and now they soon would resume their fruitful activity as soon as the Vinedresser encouraged fruitbearing through some stimulating horticultural practices. One need not assume the worst: in that they have neither ever been fruitful or that they shall never be fruitful again in the future. All one knows for certain is that such branches “in Me” are *currently* in a state of unfruitfulness and the Father (Vinedresser) is going to do something to remedy that condition.

Encouragement Is the Essential Element

Please note that the purpose of this passage is *fruitfulness*, not *fruitlessness*. The Father (Vinedresser) wants fruitful branches and therefore He does whatever is necessary to produce fruit. Everyone fully agrees that the Father is certainly going to do something with regard to the currently unfruitful branch identified as being “in Me.” The controversy begins in defining the method by which the Father accomplishes His later stated goal of obtaining glory in the fruitbearing (15:8). When one finally realizes and then begins to focus upon the fact that the Father’s true intention is to obtain the very thing for which He saved the disciples—to produce fruit—then one will dismiss the foreign and illogical notion that the Father now intends to produce such fruit from a currently unfruitful, “in Me” branch by removing it from the vine. Such actions by the Father would remove forever the branches ability to rehabilitate, grow, and mature to produce fruit for the glory of the Father if it is lying in a piled and burning heap. He is not seeking to *remove* the vine’s

branch, thus precluding the possibility of future fruitfulness, but rather to *place it or re-position* it in a position of fruitfulness.

Additionally, it is important to remember that in the crucial time in the lives of both the Lord and His disciples, Christ spoke only one condemnation, and it was directed to Judas—the lost son of perdition (this was a time that required warnings of encouragement, not warnings of condemnation and chastisement). Some believe that John 15 contains two warnings of condemnation or severe chastisement and they are found in 15:2 and 15:6. Contrary to such assertions, this article endeavors to demonstrate that if the passages are appropriately viewed in their context, the first perceived warning in 15:2 is not a warning at all, but is instead, an actual encouraging promise. The second warning in 15:6—though often considered a warning of condemnation—is most likely simply a matter-of-fact point of horticultural information, though it could nonetheless retain a strong word of caution.

If there was ever a time when the Lord should be justified (humanly speaking) to vent His frustration on the disciple's patent pettiness and insensitivity to the Lord's imminent plight, it was now! The current time should have been an excellent opportunity to sharply rebuke their willful ignorance and selfishness. Philip made an exasperating request to see the Father in order to satisfy his curiosity and lack of faith, yet the Lord encouragingly promises greater works for him and the disciples and the promise of granting all their requests. It was near this time, in the face of the Lord's impending supreme self-sacrifice that there was a disputation concerning who would be the greatest in the Messiah's kingdom, yet the Lord did not sharply rebuke them but gently informed and selflessly promised their reward. Although Peter was to soon thereafter to deny Him and the others were to scatter like chaff, the Lord (with great restraint) avoided condescending language that stiffly rebuked them. Indeed, He encouraged Peter with a prophetic word that indicated he would not utterly fall into apostasy after his denial but would indeed return to the Lord and then be able to "strengthen your brethren."

There also appears to be ample biblical evidence that the Lord duly informed Peter of his impending denial not once but twice! The first time was given in the Upper Room to only Peter (Luke 22:31-34, cf. 22:39; John 13:36-38, cf. 14:31) as indicated by both the timing of the discussion and the fact that only Peter responded. The second time was apparently given to them all after they had left the Upper Room and were on their way to Gethsemane. At that time, Peter reaffirmed his steadfast loyalty and the others avowed theirs as well (Matt 26:30-35; Mark 14:26-31; John 16:32). Contrary to giving all the

disciples a much-deserved “piece of His mind,” the Lord instead gave them a much-desired “piece of His heart.” At this time, He only encouraged them as they made their way through the city to Gethsemane (i.e. this was to be a time of enlightened encouragement, not a time of calamitous condemnation).

Who Is “In Me?”

Verse two contains two primary phrases whose definition determines the interpretation of the balance of the parable. The two phrases are: (1) “in Me” and (2) “takes away.” Generally, there are four ways proffered in explaining the identity of the individuals in 15:2 who are “in Me,” yet are unfruitful.

- (1) the Arminian interpretation that these were once true believers who made a genuine profession of faith but later fell into sin and unfruitfulness, thereby losing their salvation
- (2) the interpretation that the branches “in Me” are unfruitful, and represent individuals who made a false profession of faith in Christ, and are therefore unable to bear the appropriate fruit (their true identity will be made manifest later in the arena of final judgment)¹⁶
- (3) the interpretation that these branches are true believers that have lapsed into a carnal state of unfruitfulness in their life and will, and as a result, they endure discipline and chastisement for their disobedience as long as they persist in such an unfruitful state (some, perhaps, may ultimately commit the sin unto death) (this belief would also entail the loss of reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ)¹⁷
- (4) the final general interpretation is that these unfruitful branches are genuine believers that simply need to be encouraged, which is an idea consistent with horticultural practices that the disciples would understand (R. K. Harrison indicated that the word translated, “takes away” [αἶρω] is best rendered “lifts up”;¹⁸ it is used this way in at least 9 of its 23 occurrences in the Gospel of John [5:8-12; 8:59; 10:18, 24; 11:41])

View One: Man is Greater than God

The first view explains that the individual was once “in Me,” that is, regenerate and saved but then fell into sinful activities, thereby relinquishing salvation. The first view ignores so much other biblical data that truly confers an everlasting quality to a regenerate person, that this view is dismissed without further discussion (John 4:14; 10:28; 18:9; Rom 8:35-39).

¹⁶ J. Carl Laney, “Abiding Is Believing: The Analogy of the Vine in John 15:1–6,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146 (January–March 1989): 59.

¹⁷ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948) 7:4.

¹⁸ R. K. Harrison, “Vine,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. gen. ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 4:986.

View Two: Tares among the Wheat

The second view explains that the unfruitful individual was unregenerate from beginning to end. Smith indicated the “in Me” merely refers to individuals who are in the kingdom in only a general way. He gave as an example of this kind of situation the future thousand-year reign, which (like the present physical form of the kingdom) will include a mixture of both true and false believers.¹⁹ In agreement with this view, Ryle wrote, “It cannot be shown that a branch in Me must mean a believer in Me. It means nothing more than a ‘professing member of my Church, a man joined to the company of my people, but not joined to me.’”²⁰ Dillow disagreed.

Often justification for this interpretation is found by going to the analogy of the vine in Isaiah (Isa. 5:1–7; cf. Jer. 5:10a; Rom. 11:16–24). Here there were branches who were not saved. However, this is irrelevant to John 15, for Isaiah wrote of a *covenant* people. All Jews (saved and unsaved) are in Israel, but not all professing Christians are in Christ! As will be demonstrated, it is unlikely that “in Me” can refer to an “Israel within Israel” (i.e., the truly saved within the professing company) in view of the consistent usage of “in Me” in John’s writings to refer to a true saving relationship.²¹

One simply cannot avoid the obvious context of this passage no matter how much presuppositional theology one brings to this text. It is important to remember that if one removes the obvious “text” from the context of the passage, then all that is left is a “con.” One must ever avoid being “conned” from the proper understanding of a passage by removing the text from the passage and juxtaposing it next to other external texts in a vain attempt of reconciliation. The obvious context herein is that the Lord was speaking to His regenerate disciples (the branches) with regard to bearing fruit. The obvious, most straightforward approach is to accept that the “in Him” indeed refers to those who have a vital relationship to the Lord.

Laney and others have given a different emphasis on where the phrase, “in Me,” should be placed, and in so doing, have changed the emphasis altogether. He argued that the phrase, “in Me,” can be either adverbial, which would describe the verb, “does not bear,” or adjectival, which would describe the noun, “branch.”²² If adverbial, it would be translated, “every branch not bearing fruit *in Me*,” which suggests there are

¹⁹ Smith, “Unfruitful Branches,” 10.

²⁰ J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.) 4:334.

²¹ Joseph C. Dillow, “Abiding is Remaining in Fellowship: Another Look at John 15:1-6,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147 (January 1990): 46.

²² Laney, “Abiding Is Believing,” 64.

two different ways in which the disciples could bear fruit: either “in Me” or not “in Me.” While this may be exegetically possible, it is horticulturally impossible that branches should produce fruit while not “in Me,” that is, in the vine.²³ Laney suggested that it is only the *process* of fruitbearing that the Lord had interest and not the *location* of the branches. However, it is suggested that the *location* of the branch is precisely the emphasis and such location is indeed crucial to the very *process* of fruitbearing. When branches are severed and located in a piled heap, they tend to produce very little fruit of any kind. It is only when branches are attached to the vine in a propitious manner, consistent with good viticultural practices, that the very process of fruitbearing begins. It is furthermore a most improbable rendering, when one recognizes that such an exegesis conflicts with 15:4, which expressly states that the branch must abide “in the vine,” that is, in Christ, in order to bear fruit. The kind of fruit that the Lord was thinking in this context is only that fruit which is produced by abiding “in Him” and this idea is clearly expressed in the second half of 15:4 where it states, “neither can you (bear fruit), unless you abide in Me.”

The Lord was not giving the disciples a choice of locations to bear fruit. Only branches whose location is described as abiding “in Him” produce the kind of fruit that Christ desires. According to the Lord, in this particular context, the branches that do not abide “in Him” produce *no fruit*, not just bad fruit. Verse five states this rather clearly: “for without Me, you can do *nothing*,” that is, one will not bear the fruit the Father is seeking from His Vine. Unregenerate fruit is not at all in view unless one appropriates theological field glasses and scans other unregenerate vineyards in far-flung distant fields looking for bad fruit. Laney’s adverbial idea is most likely employed to support the presupposition that these branches are false believers who produce fruit outside Christ, and, therefore, such branches must and will be removed.

The exegetes of this second view believe that “in Me” can mean a superficial relationship where one is not *actually* “in Him” but merely *professes* to be “in Him.” Others believe “in Me” to be purely relational, as in justification and its organic union to Christ. Two things are certain though. The first is that the Apostle John knew exactly what he meant by “in Me” and the second is that “in Me” does not mean “*not in Me*.” Although this may appear to some to be an oversimplification of the issue such a straightforward approach is necessary to unravel the truly basic understanding of what it is to

²³ Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 3rd ed., 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1893) 3:162.

be “in Me.” The text simply means exactly what it says—in Me—that is, in Christ. John wrote his gospel approximately AD 80-90 and he, no doubt, understood the previously written “in Christ” Pauline implications also residing in the phrase, “in Me.”

First John 5:20 indicates that Jesus Christ has indeed come and given an understanding to His church. The “understanding” is so that believers may relationally—not casually, not superficially, not generally—know God the Father (“Him who is true”). John then stated that believers are “in Him” (the Father) and “in His Son Jesus Christ.” John provided an equation that correlates “know Him who is true” and being “in Him” and “in His Son Jesus Christ” to “eternal life.” In this equation, John stated that the “true God” is the Father and eternal life is the portion of the preceding phrase that says “know Him” and “in Him” and “in His Son Jesus Christ.” Who is the true God? The answer is the “Him” or the Father of “His Son Jesus Christ.” What is eternal life? The answer is: “know Him” and “in Him” or “in His Son Jesus Christ.” John knew the significance of being “in Him” (i.e. it is not a superficial, casual relationship).

Another problem also arises when those who hold this second view attempt to make the “in Me” of 15:2 to mean a *false* profession in Christ and then in 15:4 make “abides in Me” to be the *true* profession in Christ. Can those who embrace this second view of what “in Me” means actually substantiate such an assertion? Suffice it to say that such cannot be true if one regards words at their usual and customary meaning and compare what John wrote in his epistles.

View Three: Saved, Sinning, and Smitten

The third view properly recognizes that the branch is “in Me” and therefore represents a regenerate believer in the Lord. It says this individual does not currently bear fruit because he is a carnal Christian who will not yield to the Lord and maintain a close, abiding fellowship and communion. The third view usually defines the phrase in 15:2—“He takes away”—to most likely refer to some kind of divine discipline. Such a divine discipline ranges from one being removed from a church fellowship due to a church disciplinary process all the way to the possibility of being removed by the “sin unto death.” Such a removal from the vine also includes the loss of reward at the Bema Seat of Christ. Although it differs from view two in that this view properly recognizes the “in Me” branches to be saved individuals instead of lost pseudo-disciples, it does agree with view two in the translation of ἀίρει to mean “He takes away.” Even though everything mentioned with regard to chastening and discipline is certainly true and is indeed attested by the Word of God, the real

question is whether or not discipline is the actual issue in 15:2. Is it possible that, although the fact of discipline for the believer is true, it is not properly meant in 15:2?

View Four: Saved and Encouraged

The fourth view, like the third, views the branch that is “in Me” to represent true believers. However, the fourth view differs in what occurs to the fruitless branch that is “in Me.” The fourth view of 15:2 maintains that the word translated “takes away” (ἀρᾶι) is best rendered “lifts up.” The fourth view, therefore, maintains consistently the predominate idea of the passage as fruitbearing. MacDonald said concerning this possible translation of being lifted up that “it would be the *positive ministry* of encouraging the fruitless branch by making it easier to get light and air, and hopefully, to bear fruit.”²⁴ Criswell’s *The Believer’s Study Bible* concurs.

The point of the allegory is that Jesus’ purpose in the believer’s life is to produce fruit (v. 5). Fruit is mentioned eight times in this chapter and a progression is seen: “fruit” (v. 2), “more fruit” (v. 2), and “much fruit” (vv. 5, 8). The center-column reading “lifts up” would support the idea that the vinedresser’s purpose is not to judge but to produce fruit, thereby rendering aid to a faltering vine.²⁵

Unfortunately, most exegetes depend on their analysis of 15:6 in understanding the nature of the burned branches in order to determine what 15:2 means with regard to the unfruitful branches that are “in Me.” They first determine what the fires of 15:6 seem to infer and then apply it to their explanation of 15:2. Instead, one should allow the overall tenor of the Upper Room discourse to permeate this passage while including key cultural practices that the disciples would understand. In this more preferred method of exegesis, one need only explain the events one verse at a time and in their proper order. When one studies a passage whose words can have legitimate alternate meanings, it is essential to recognize the context and meaning of the words. However, there are times when the inclusion of the knowledge of cultural practices assists the exegete in determining the legitimate course to take when explaining an ambiguous text. Jesus used analogies that were accurate and consistent with their normal use and understanding in the natural world, otherwise, no one could make sense of His comparisons. What Jesus described was exactly what was occurring in their midst. The second part

²⁴ MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary*, 1549.

²⁵ W. A. Criswell, *The Believer’s Study Bible* [CD-ROM] (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995).

of this article will attempt to understand what was occurring in the vineyard of Jesus' day and compare that to what Jesus related in this passage.

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

David S. Ermold

In this article, 2 Timothy 2:11-13 will be considered on its own accord, outside the influence of the development of its interpretation. Interaction with secondary sources will be limited to those supporting the view presented here. Comparing and contrasting the following view with the preceding views will be the topic of the next article.

BACKGROUND TO 2 TIMOTHY

Second Timothy is one of three Pauline epistles collectively known as the Pastoral Epistles. Carson and Moo explained the title by saying that the epistles “are directed to people with pastoral responsibility and with the task of appointing pastors.”¹ To this end, two are written to Timothy, and one is written to Titus. Second Timothy is the second canonical letter that Paul wrote to Timothy, and it is almost universally accepted that it was the last of the Pauline epistles to be composed, with a date around AD 64.²

The theme of this epistle can be summarized as *enduring to the end*.³ Enduring suffering is mentioned throughout the book (1:8, 12; 2:9, 12; 3:11-12), and, as Carson and Moo indicated: “[Paul] leaves Timothy no doubt that, while our salvation is a free gift from God, it is also demanding. In living out its implications, the believer is going to run into difficulties and will find that the God who sent his Son to die on the cross is always served at a cost.”⁴ In other

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¹ D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005) 554. For further research, including a defense of Pauline authorship, see pages 554-70. Gundry wrote that the designation is appropriate because the epistles “contain instructions concerning the administrative responsibilities of Timothy and Titus in churches” (Robert Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994] 409).

² Carson and Moo, *Introduction*, 578. Paul’s own death occurred around this time. It seems regardless of when people believe 2 Timothy was written; they almost always place it within a year of Paul’s death.

³ Carson and Moo noted, “The deep conviction of the writer that he was about to be put to death for holding the Christian faith (4:6-8) is to be kept in mind in all discussions of this letter” (ibid. 580).

⁴ Ibid. 581. While this statement is true, the present author would take issue with Carson and Moo’s reasoning. Indeed, this series is intended, in part, to demonstrate a better reasoning for this statement.

words, Paul was clear in this epistle that obtaining eternal life is through belief; however, Paul's focus here is more on the outworking of that belief in enduring suffering for the sake of the gospel.

Examination of the Context

Given the background and content of the epistle, it is clear that Paul was writing to his protégé and fellow slave, Timothy, with a view to Paul's imminent martyrdom. He was reflecting upon his faithful service, and encouraging Timothy, a believer, to persevere and mature in the faith despite the persecution and suffering he would endure. As such, the reader should expect the commands and exhortations in the epistle to be written to a believer, unless the context clearly communicates otherwise.

In the context, Paul wrote to Timothy in order that he may "not be ashamed of the testimony of [their] Lord or of [him] His prisoner, but join with [him] in suffering for the gospel" (1:8). Support for this thesis is the climax of Paul's discussion in the first chapter. Paul recalled Timothy's "sincere faith," therefore charging his disciple to "kindle afresh the gift of God" because "God has not given [them] a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (1:5-7). Subsequent to Paul's purpose statement in verse 8, he expounded on "the gospel" in verses 9-10, then added that it is "for this reason [that he] also suffer[s] these things" (1:12). Due to the fascinating unity of the book in regards to the reiteration of this theme, more examples will be given during the discussion of the passage.

The paragraph in which 2:11-13 is contained begins in verse 3 and extends through the end of the chapter in verse 26. There are three important things to note in the context. First, in these statements, Paul was concerned with "suffering hardship" (vv. 3, 9) and "being diligent" (v. 15), something which only a believer can do. An unbeliever should not be expected to suffer hardship or be diligent, as they have no basis for doing so. Second, Paul said that he himself endured all things (v. 10), using the same verb as in verse 12.

Third, the examples given in verses 3-6 address the rewards of faithful stewardship. The soldier, who is already enlisted, is looking to please their commanding officer. The athlete anticipates the reward of receiving the prize that comes with diligent training of their body, in addition to competing according to the rules. The farmer who works hard in their labors reaps the benefits when it comes time to harvest.⁵ The passage in verses 11-13 is

⁵ Keathley added, "[Paul] gives Timothy the example of the soldier, who works hard to please his master and the farmer, who works for the reward of the harvest, etc." (Hampton

expounding on these three themes, explaining in a different and more formal way what he had discussed to this point. If they were automatic and inevitable results of faith, Paul's encouragement to endure, and its reciprocal threat, would be devoid of meaning.

General Considerations

There are four general things to note concerning this passage. The first thing to note is the coupling present in the lines. Each of the statement's four lines begins with εἰ with a first person plural verb followed by a consequence or response. It is this structure of the coupling that leads to the second thing of note, which is the conditional nature of these statements. The statements are all first class conditional, as all four couplets employ an εἰ plus indicative verb in the protasis, the first of which is aorist, and the latter three are present.

Wallace listed three semantic possibilities for the meaning of conditional statements.⁶ The relationship used here is cause and effect.⁷ In this relationship, whatever a person does in the protasis is the cause of what occurs in the apodosis. For example, the result of someone dying with Christ is that they will live with Him. The result of someone enduring is that they will reign with Him. The second matter to consider concerning these conditional statements is the semantic force of the first class condition. Wallace explained the first class condition as "the assumption of truth for the sake of argument."⁸ While the first class condition does not necessarily mean the protasis is true in and of itself, the presence of πιστὸς ὁ λόγος before the statement seems to indicate that these couplets are not merely the assumption of truth, but truth in actuality.

Keathley IV, "If We Deny Him, He Also Will Deny Us" [article online] [accessed 9 April 2009] available from http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=2112.

⁶ Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 682-84. He mentioned (1) cause and effect, (2) evidence and inference, and (3) equivalence.

⁷ The relationship is the only one that could make sense in these constructions. First, concerning evidence and inference, Wallace indicated that an evidence-inference relationship is "often the opposite" of the cause-effect one (ibid. 683). For example, while *If we died with Him, we will also live with Him* conveys a cause and effect relationship, an evidence and inference relationship would have to be the converse: *If we live with Him, we [know] we died with Him*. Paul's focus, however, was upon the believer's current actions and what will occur as a result, not vice versa. Second, concerning equivalence, the protasis and apodosis would have to be equal in that they are happening simultaneously; however, a believer does not die and live with Christ simultaneously, nor do they suffer and reign simultaneously (these are best seen as cause and effect relationships).

⁸ Ibid. 690.

Third, it is not insignificant that Paul used the first person plural form of these verbs.⁹ He includes himself in these statements, allowing himself to be susceptible to every aspect of this creed. Even if one takes into account the first class conditions, which at the very least presents an assumption of truth, it would be improbable that Paul would have employed the first person plural form if he had not meant to include himself.¹⁰ Fourth, Keathley noted that the statement may be in chiasm structure.¹¹ In this case, the first and fourth couplets are referring to the same topic: eternal life. The second and third couplets, then, refer to eternal rewards. To Keathley, this has two major ramifications: (1) “To do as Hiebert does and include [the third and fourth couplets] as being more closely related than [the second and third couplets] is to misunderstand Paul’s logic and the logic of the Hebrew mind;” and, (2) a chiasm structure places the most important section in its center¹² (this would fit the context and, as it remains to be seen, the present exegesis of the passage).

Faithful Is the Saying

The phrase πιστὸς ὁ λόγος occurs five times in the New Testament, and that only in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim 1:15, 3:1, 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11; Tit 3:8). The location of the statements in these references, however, differs. Two of these are anaphoric, where the referent of the λόγος is what comes before the phrase (1 Tim 4:9; Titus 3:8). The other three, which includes the present passage in 2 Timothy, are kataphoric, where the referent of the λόγος is what comes after the phrase (1 Tim 1:15, 3:1; 2 Tim 2:11).

It seems that when the phrase occurs in 1 Timothy and Titus, it is referring to a statement that Paul composed himself; however, that may not be the case here in 2 Timothy. First, the inclusion of γάρ seems to indicate

⁹ Thomas Constable, “Notes on 2 Timothy” [article online] (accessed 9 April 2009) available from <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/2timothy.pdf>.

¹⁰ Exegetically, of the 300+ usages of εἰ followed by a verb in a first class conditional statement, εἰ followed by a first person plural verb only occurs nine times (Matt 23:30; Luke 22:49; 2 Cor 5:16; Gal 5:25; 1 Thess 4:14; 2 Tim 2:11-13 [4x]). Taking into account those nine times, seven of those were used by Paul to indicate a truth regarding a believer’s status. It is much more common to see εἰ τις followed by a verb (36x), which would easily establish a general rule if that were the point Paul was trying to make. It could be argued that since Paul merely quoted an outside source, he did not want to change the form of the statement; however, employing the words and revealing them as Scripture necessitates interpreting them normally.

¹¹ Keathley, “If We Deny Him” [online].

¹² Ibid.

that this is a fragment of an already existing piece of literature, whether it be a hymn, creed, or something yet else, as the γάρ has nothing to which to point reversely or explain.¹³ If this were merely Paul creating this statement for his purposes in 2 Timothy, there would have been no need for the γάρ.

Second, it is likely that this statement was already in existence due to its couplet form. Kelly noted: “[The] parallel structure and rhythmic character make it likely that they are an extract from a liturgical hymn, probably familiar to Timothy and the community; the last which breaks away from the pattern [ἀρνήσασθαι ἑαυτὸν οὐ δύναται], may be a gloss added by Paul himself.”¹⁴ In other words, the poetic and parallel nature of the couplets seems to indicate a formal statement that was already in existence. The other occurrences of πιστὸς ὁ λόγος seem to be pointing simply to a pithy statement Paul wrote.¹⁵ While the presence of the phrase does not make the referent any truer than other statements of Paul, it places a certain emphasis upon them that highlights the meaning within the context. Dibelius added: “One would do better, therefore, to understand the formula as an affirmation: when the Pastorals speak in coined expressions about salvation, they consistently combine this with an application to the present.”¹⁶

¹³ Dillow argued that γάρ points to verse 10 where Paul discussed obtaining salvation, and with it eternal glory. Joseph Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings* (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle, 1993) 427. While the present author would agree with Dillow’s interpretation of the passage, it seems as though the γάρ is already a part of the quote. The γάρ, therefore, may be connected to the ideas presented in verse 10, but it cannot be assumed that the γάρ is original with Paul and not the quote.

¹⁴ J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 179. Quinn and Wacker added: “It is possible that the *pistos logos* was based on an even more archaic (even Palestinian Aramaic) hymn, perhaps an oracle composed by a member of the prophetic order. This in turn could lie behind not only the Pauline teaching in Rom 6:8, but also a catechetical summary that originated in the Roman Church as it reflected on its own Pauline letter and explained the old Jewish Christian hymn (now translated into Greek)” (Jerome Quinn and William Wacker, “The First and Second Letters to Timothy” [Eerdman’s Critical Commentary] [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000] 649).

¹⁵ The contents of the faithful sayings are as follows: “Christ Jesus came into the world in order to deliver sinners” (1 Tim 1:15); “If anyone seeks to be an elder, he desires a good work” (3:1); “bodily discipline is of little profit, but godliness is of profit to all things, having the promise of life now and the one about to come” (4:8); “For we ourselves were once foolish . . . but when the kindness and good will of God our Savior appeared, He saved us through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit (whom He richly poured out upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior), not from the works of righteousness which we ourselves did, but according to His mercy; in order that being justified by His grace, we may be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Tit 3:3-7).

¹⁶ He continued, “In this context a remark is added to edify and to confirm: the word is true and does not deceive. Not all quotations in the Pastorals are marked in this way, by any

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

Regardless of how it is introduced and from where Paul borrowed it, the statement is now a purposeful part of Scripture that is particularly poignant in the context of 2 Timothy. Paul began the statement by writing that *if we died with [Him], we will also live with [Him]*. The verb for *died with [Him]* is the aorist active indicative first person plural form of συναποθνήσκω, while the verb for *will live with Him* is the future active indicative first person plural form of συζάω. Although there is no explicit pronoun serving as the direct object of these σύν-compound words, it seems warranted to supply one. In that case, the first instance of any pronoun in the passage is in verse 12 with κάκεῖνος. The closest antecedent for the pronoun, then, is Christ Jesus in verse 10.¹⁷

The first issue with this couplet, interpretively speaking, is what it means to die with Christ. There are several ways of understanding the meaning of συναποθνήσκω, which is only found three times in the New Testament (Mark 14:31; 2 Cor 7:3; 2 Tim 2:11). First, it is defined simply as “to die with,” with no indication of the method or meaning.¹⁸ Second, it is beneficial to garner the meaning of the uncompounded form, αποθνήσκω, which receives multiple classifications. Of the 110 usages in the New Testament, 107 mean “to cease to have vital functions, whether at an earthly or transcendental level.”¹⁹ For the purposes of this series, several options may be possible: (1) earthly death with Christ (Mark 14:31); (2) earthly death

means. Only a few pointed connections between tradition and present-day application are highlighted in this fashion, with the encouragement of the apostolic word” (Martin Dibelius, *The Pastoral Epistles* [Hermeneia] [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972] 29). For more research on the saying, see Raymond Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002] 41-44; George Knight, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968) 131-37; and, I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles* (New York: T. & T. Clark, 1999) 326-30.

¹⁷ Collins noted: “The prepositions suggest that the primary object of the Pastor’s reference is Christ Jesus: We are united with Christ Jesus in death and in life. Only secondarily is the Pastor writing about the community’s solidarity with one another in death and in future life. An element of Christian solidarity is never absent from the Christian idea of salvation. Christians are together in having died together with Christ in baptism and in awaiting that future life that will be given at the appearance of the Lord and that is rooted in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead” (Collins, *Timothy*, 227). See also Knight, *Sayings*, 116.

¹⁸ Walter Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 965. As Knight noted, “neither [of the other references] provides an adequate parallel” (*Sayings*, 117).

¹⁹ Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 111. The other three usages are classified as “be faced with death or realization of mortality.”

through martyrdom; (3) transcendental death through baptism; or, (4) transcendental death through belief. One definition of a transcendental death is the fourth option, the “mystical death with Christ.”²⁰

The third and final piece of information to consider is when the uncompounded ἀποθνῆσκω is used in conjunction with σύν (Rom 6:8; Col 2:20). While Colossians 2:20 also deals with the spiritual dying with Christ that a believer has, Romans 6:8 could serve as the most convincing evidence. While the standard Greek lexicon places the latter passage under option (4), it is important to view the context, as much more is said here in Romans 6 than is said in 2 Timothy 2. In Romans 6:1, Paul posited a rhetorical question, asking if a believer should continue in sin so that grace may abound. Continuing in verses 3-4, Paul discussed the identifying nature of being baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection, and how the believer should then walk in newness of life. In verses 5-7, he switched to Christ’s physical death and resurrection, and it is in that regard that the believer has died with Christ in verse 8.²¹ Therefore, Paul wrote in verses 9-14 that a believer should not let sin reign in their bodies because they have died with Christ, and that has set them free from sin and death.²² It seems that Paul’s use of ἀποθνῆσκω σύν here is in reference to the believer’s identifying with Christ’s death, which is by faith.²³

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Murray noted: “Now in verse 8 the reason why believers have died to sin is given expressly in terms of having died with Christ, and the verses which follow show why dying with Christ entails death to sin. It is not, however, the fact of having died with Christ that bears the emphasis in this instance but living together with him. Dying with Christ is assumed and the inference is drawn that we shall also live with him. Two features of this inference are worthy of note. (1) The certitude of faith in this result is indicated in ‘we believe.’ It is an article of faith, not conjecture, that the life of Jesus’ resurrection belongs to those who have been united with Christ in his death. (2) The future tense, ‘we shall live’ does not refer exclusively to the future resurrection state but, as found above, points to the certainty of participation in the resurrection life of Christ here and now” (John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965] 1:223).

²² Knight’s words in reference to Romans 6 are note worthy: “Death with Christ is death unto sin (verse 11) even as Christ died unto sin once (verse 10). It is the crucifixion of our old man, the doing away of the body of sin, our removal from the bondage of sin in our crucifixion with Christ (all in verse 6). It is in Christ’s death (verse 5) that we died with him. And because we have been united with Christ (verse 5) we have died with him in his death which wrought an inner death for our old man. And that union and death with Christ is described as being baptized into Christ Jesus. To die with Christ means to be so united with him that our inner sinful self is destroyed as a result of his death on the cross” (*Sayings*, 117-18).

²³ Scripture that uses ἀποθνῆσκω in this manner: Romans 6:8; 2 Corinthians 5:14; and, Colossians 2:20; 3:3. Wilkin called this a positional sense: “If we have believed in Christ for eternal life, then we have died with Him in a positional sense. By *positional* I mean that God views us as though we died with Jesus on the cross. While in our *experience* we did not die with

It is this concept in Romans 6:8 that is found in the first couplet of 2 Timothy 2:11. What makes the comparison more noteworthy is that both verses also use συζάω to convey the results of dying with Christ. The word is only used three times in the New Testament and it simply means “to live with.”²⁴ There are only a few options for the meaning of this word when seen in conjunction with ἀποθνήσκω. If συναποθνήσκω is physical, συζάω must be resurrection life, just as Christ had after his physical death. Even if συναποθνήσκω is transcendent in meaning, which is what is being proposed here, συζάω must be transcendent in kind, which would lead to resurrection, or eternal, life.

Therefore, this couplet conveys that if someone has *died with* Christ in that they identify with His death through faith in the past, they will certainly have eternal life and *will live with* Him for all eternity in the future.²⁵ Dying with Christ becomes the sole criterion for living with Him. Again, taking into account the first class conditional statement, and the manner in which this statement was introduced, it seems appropriate to consider this as an axiomatic truth. Moreover, taking into account the first person form of the verbs, it would seem to indicate that Paul included himself in the couplet.

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

The statement then turns to the next stage in the process of salvation. If the first couplet discussed a believer’s justification, the initial stage of salvation whereby a believing sinner is declared righteous, it can be said that the second couplet discusses sanctification, the process by which one is set apart to be more like Christ.²⁶ While the first class condition is still present in this couplet, the aspect of the first verb changes from the first couplet. Instead of having an aorist verb, which indicates a past action in the indicative mood, *endure* is a

Christ, God in His grace credits us with having been crucified with Christ” (Robert Wilkin, *The Road to Reward* [Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2003] 53).

²⁴ Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 954.

²⁵ McCoy rightly noted: “Of course every believer receives eternal life as a present, abiding possession at the moment of faith in Christ (‘He who believes in Me *has* eternal life [John 6:47]). But the actual manifestation of this life in Christ’s literal presence does not start until either physical death or the translation of the church (1 Thess 4:13-18; 1 Cor 15:51-52)” (Brad McCoy, “Secure Yet Scrutinized,” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 1 [1988]: 23).

²⁶ McCoy stated it differently: “The sinner who has trusted Christ has died with Him, and will also live with Him in the future. Verse 11 thus makes it absolutely clear that the future destination of believers is not in doubt. The issue of a believer’s living a life of enduring fidelity to his Lord, however, is very much in question” (ibid. 24).

present active indicative first person plural form of ὑπομένω. The emphasis here is the present choice to endure or not.²⁷ The word means “to maintain a belief or course of action in the face of opposition,”²⁸ and it is a strengthened form of the word μένω, which is often found in Johannine literature to convey the same idea (John 15:4ff; 1 John 2–4). Moreover, just like the first couplet, the second couplet is also in first person form, which seems to indicate that Paul included himself in this audience.

In his usage of ὑπομένω, Paul signified more than just initial faith, and that is seen in the meaning of the word. One cannot “maintain a belief” unless they first have the belief. Maintaining something is impossible unless it is already a current possession. Further, Paul again included himself in this option, as he continued to use the first person plural form of the verb. For Paul, enduring is a possible present course of action.

There is a future result to this enduring, namely, reigning with Christ.²⁹ The verb is a first person future active indicative from συμβασιλεύω, which is another σύν-compound word meaning “to reign jointly.”³⁰ While the third part of this series will address what all this entails, it is important to note several things at this time. The verb is different from the first couplet in that while *died with Him* signified an action in the past, *endure* is seen as an action that occurs in the present. If a believer endures, they are then promised to reign with Christ.³¹

²⁷ Collins remarked: “‘We endure’ is the only verb that does not use the prepositional prefix *syn* in the first stich. The implication may be that endurance is something that each member of the community must do” (Collins, *Timothy*, 227, fn. 32).

²⁸ Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1039. Of its seventeen usages, fifteen carry the same meaning presented here (Luke used it in Luke 2:43 and Acts 17:14 to mean *to stay behind*). Those fifteen uses are found as follows: Matthew 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13; Romans 12:12; 1 Corinthians 13:7; 2 Timothy 2:10, 12; Hebrews 12:2, 7; 10:32; 12:3; James 1:12; 5:11; and, 1 Peter 2:20 (2x).

²⁹ Indeed, as Knight noted: “The eschatological perspective of endurance is always in view” (*Sayings*, 120). He also cited Matthew 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; Hebrews 10:32-39; 12:2; and, James 1:12 as examples of how endurance is always connected into the future promise of blessing.

³⁰ Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 956. Βασιλεύω and συμβασιλεύω are used twenty-one and two times, respectively. Five times they refer to Christ (Luke 1:33; 1 Cor 15:25; Rev 11:15, 17; 19:6) and five times to believers (2 Tim 2:12; Rev 5:20; 20:4, 6; 22:5).

³¹ Benware stated it simply: “The incredible truth is that the believer can have a place close to the ruling King of kings in the coming kingdom if he faithfully labors for the Lord Jesus and endures in this life (Matt 25:14-22; Luke 19:15-19; 2 Tim 2:5, 11; Heb 3:14)” (Paul Benware, *The Believer’s Payday* [Chattanooga: AMG, 2002] 140).

Some see this idea as parallel to the first; in other words, dying and enduring are synonymous, as are living and joint rulership.³² The exegetical and logical problem with this view is that if there is but one prerequisite for living with Him, which is dying with Him, and the view assumes that living and reigning with Him are synonymous, it therefore adds another condition to living with Him, namely, enduring. The interpretation is based upon a belief that enduring is derived naturally from the work of the Holy Spirit that comes by faith.

A better interpretation of living with Him and reigning with Him, however, would keep the two future ideas distinct, thereby making ruling a privilege and reward of patiently enduring the trials of life. Benware summarized: "The reality is that our reigning with Christ depends on our faithful endurance as believers."³³ Reigning with Christ is not an automatic result of belief; it comes as a reward of enduring suffering and maturing in the faith. In the same manner, faithful endurance has no effect upon whether or not someone lives with Christ (that is solely based on whether or not a believer has died with Him).

If We Deny, He Will Deny Us

Soteriologically speaking, the question is then almost certainly raised: if someone has died with Him, what role does endurance or works have? What are the consequences of not enduring or producing works? What are the consequences of denying Christ? There are three primary schools of thought to this end.³⁴ One view sets forth that works and endurance are necessary to keep salvation, and that denial results in a loss of eternal life. A second perspective holds that "true" faith will always have some evidence of its existence in works, and that a denial is an indication that the person was never "genuinely" saved. Are these the only options available? An objective of this

³² Rudolf Bultmann, "ὑπομένω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-76) 1:587.

³³ Benware, *Payday*, 31. McCoy summarized similarly: "The Christian will definitely live with Christ in the future. However, *he may or may not* receive special commendation and reward from the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ" (McCoy, "Secure," 24, emphasis original). While Benware and McCoy spoke with regard to endurance in broad terms, Dillow seemed to identify suffering: "In order to become a joint heir with Christ, one of His metachoi, we must faithfully endure our sufferings to the end" (Dillow, *Reign*, 87). While this would fit the context of suffering in 2 Timothy, it seems as though this concept of endurance can be expanded to fit a broader category of enduring and growing in the faith.

³⁴ See the previous article for examples of these views.

article is to delineate a third option, one that seems to be much more viable given the flow of this passage, especially if theological frameworks are not imposed upon the text.

At this point, it is best to let context guide the reader through the next couplet. The key word in this phrase, *deny*, is the Greek word ἀρνέομαι; it occurs first as a present deponent indicative first person plural,³⁵ and occurs in the second half of the couplet in a future deponent indicative third person singular form. The standard Greek-English lexicon lists the usages here as meaning “to disclaim association with a person or event.”³⁶ It is important to note that Paul used the first plural form of the verb, which means he included himself in this warning.³⁷ The issue that then remains is of what is this denial?

Taking the line within its context, the closest antecedent of the denial is a denial of enduring, and by proxy, a denial of Christ.³⁸ The three preceding σύν-compound verbs require an implied object. The only other verb to this point, ὑπομένω, is an intransitive verb, which does not require a direct object.³⁹ Since (1) ἀρνέομαι does not require a direct object either,⁴⁰ (2) ὑπομένω and ἀρνέομαι are conveying parallel ideas, and (3) Paul continued to use the first person plural form of the verbs, it would seem that they are referring to two options that the justified believer encounters. It can be said to be a denial of Christ in as much as it would be a denial of endurance for Christ. Either way, the point Paul made is that this believer is not maturing the way they ought to be.

Denial is not limited to repudiating Christ and outright sin; Benware viewed it as a “settled, characteristic way of living life.”⁴¹ McCoy noted that it

³⁵ See footnote 20 of the previous article for the textual variant.

³⁶ Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 132.

³⁷ Dillow noted: “The Arminians are correct . . . in saying that it is possible for true Christians to deny Christ. This is further brought out in the next phrase when he asserts that it is possible for true Christians to be ‘faithless’” (*Reign*, 429).

³⁸ Benware wrote, “Our ‘denial’ is the opposite of our ‘enduring,’ and reigning is set in contrast with Christ’s denial. In other words, Christ’s ‘denial’ is not banishment of a person to hell but rather the denial of reigning with him in His kingdom” (*Payday*, 32).

³⁹ Marshall commented on this phenomenon: “The hypothetical form συνυπομένω does not exist. Nevertheless, the idea of sharing in Christ’s endurance may be faintly present in view of the surrounding context of σύν- verbs” (*Pastoral Epistles*, 740).

⁴⁰ Collins believed that the omission of a direct object is an example of zeugma, where “the omission may have been intended to ensure symmetry of the four stichs of the composition” (Collins, *Timothy*, 228, fn. 36).

⁴¹ He continued: “When we do not live obediently according to the dictates of Scripture, we are in essence not identifying with Christ, but are in fact denying Him. When the believer’s life is characterized by a lack of love, forgiveness, kindness; where words, attitudes, and behaviors are contrary to the Word of god, then you have an unvarnished denial of Christ.

“can involve simple refusal to shoulder one’s biblical responsibilities in any area. This is illustrated in 1 Tim 5:8, which warns that the believer who neglects to provide for his own family has in effect ‘denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.’”⁴² Some, however, see the denial as a permanent decision to deny Christ as Savior. Constable, who would agree with the other portions of this exegesis, wrote, “To deny Christ clearly does not mean to deny Him only once or twice but to deny Him permanently since the other three human conditions in the couplets are permanent.”⁴³ While the first couplet is shown to be a permanent situation by the aorist aspect, it can be argued that the second and third couplets are the ever-present choices for the believer, as demonstrated by the present aspect.

When someone identifies with the death of Christ through faith in the resurrection, they will live with Him. If they persist in faithful obedience, He will reward them accordingly. If they deny Christ and their calling to patiently endure, the statement makes clear that Christ will then deny them.⁴⁴ In context, that denial is the reward of future co-reigning. McCoy stated it in this manner:

Paul has . . . affirmed that those believers who faithfully endure in their Christian experience will receive special rewards and prerogatives in Christ’s Kingdom. In context then, the denial spoken of here has to do with the Lord’s denying the

Such a believer is refusing to abide in Christ and is refusing to identify with the kind of life required by the Lord. A lifestyle like that will not merit rulership alongside the King of kings” (Benware, *Payday*, 32). Knight summarizes *denial* thus: “Denial can thus take the form of forsaking or repudiating the Christian faith and its truth, particularly the truth concerning Jesus. In doing so one personally denies Christ (and the Father)” (*Sayings*, 124).

⁴² McCoy, “Secure,” 28. Benware posed it as a question: “What if a believer chooses not to ‘endure’ but, like many believers at Corinth, prefers to blend in with the world system and not be clearly identified with Christ?” (*Payday*, 32).

⁴³ Constable, “Notes” [online].

⁴⁴ While it has been assumed that the referent of *κακεῖνος* is Christ, Collins was hesitant to be so particular: “Those who deny that one in the present life will be denied by that same one in the life to come. ‘He,’ ‘that one’ is mysterious; his identity is not revealed. He is an enigmatic eschatological figure. The Pastor uses the related adjective *ekeinos* in reference to the eschaton (see 1:12, 18; 2:26; 3:9; 4:8), the day of the Lord. The Lord is expected to grant mercy (1:18) and confer a crown of righteousness on that day (4:8). It may be that 2:12 speaks enigmatically of “that one” rather than of the “Lord” because the Lord is Savior, a beneficent figure, whereas “that one” is a vindicator. Verse 13a is ironic. Instead of affirming that “that one” will cast aside his fidelity and sever his relationship with those who have not been loyal, the hymn concludes with a virtual confession of faith” (*Timothy*, 228). As a consequence of Paul’s use of *ἐκεῖνος*, Collins concluded that the final line is one of faithfulness in judgment, not one of faithfulness concerning eternal security of the unfaithful believer.

unfaithful believer the privilege of intimate, high-level interaction with Him in governing the millennial state.⁴⁵

The issue with regard to sanctification, then, is not whether or not someone has been justified, but whether or not he/she matured in their faith, and will be rewarded accordingly.

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

In the following, and final, couplet, the flow of thought is continued. The first couplet already demonstrates eternal security in that if someone died with Christ, they will live with Him. Again, the first class conditional statement demonstrates this. To be certain that he emphasized his point, Paul included this fourth couplet, which discusses what occurs to a believer who does not endure in the faith. If a believer denies Christ by not enduring, they are being unfaithful. The word *unfaithful* is the present active indicative first person plural of ἀπιστέω, which is defined as “to be unfaithful.”⁴⁶ It is being used to characterize the person that warrants the word ἀρνέομαι in the previous couplet. The choice of ἀπιστέω in contrast to πιστός μένω referring to Christ is noteworthy; it demonstrates that the idea is *unfaithful – faithful*, and not *unbelieving – believing* or *unbelieving – faithful*, which would make less sense.⁴⁷ To be sure, an unfaithful believer may reach the point where they are more than simply not enduring, but that they apostatize and no longer

⁴⁵ McCoy, “Secure,” 28. Two things are noteworthy with this quote. First, he continued by discussing 1 Corinthians 3:15, where Paul wrote with regard to a believer’s work being burned, yet the believer is still saved. Additionally, he cited Luke 19:20-27 in a footnote, where he commented: “The unfruitful/unfaithful servant is denied reward that other servants do receive. This servant is differentiated, however, from those who are not allowed to enter the Master’s kingdom at all” (ibid). Second, McCoy assumed a premillennial view of Christ’s second coming. The interpretation presented here may be more likely under a premillennial system, as it seems most commentators taking this view are premillennial. See also Benware, *Payday* and Dillow, *Reign*. Moreover, while a defense of premillennial theology is not feasible in this series, there are several resources that suffice. See Paul Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy* (Chicago: Moody, 2006); Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965); John Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983).

⁴⁶ Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 103. It is striking to note that this lexicon classified this verb under this definition, and not under their first definition, “to disbelieve, refuse to believe,” or their second, “to not believe in someone.”

⁴⁷ Dillow preferred using the third pair (*Reign*, 429). Ryrie seemed to agree: “Apparently a believer may come to the place of not believing, and yet God will not disown him, since He cannot disown Himself” (Charles Ryrie, *So Great Salvation* (Chicago: Moody, 1997) 130).

believe; even so, the contrast of ἀπιστέω and πιστός is too strong for the other two options to be viable.⁴⁸

Despite the believer's actions in being unfaithful, Christ, in contrast, remains faithful to His promise that those who *died with Him will live with Him*. Hodges wrote, "For [Christ] to renege on such promises would be nothing less than a denial of His own character and fidelity."⁴⁹ Believers are eternally secure even if they deny Him by not patiently suffering through this life. Even if the believer is faithless, Christ remains faithful to His promises, and this because He is unable to deny Himself. Not only did He promise that all who believe in Him will not be cast out (John 6:35-47), but the Holy Spirit baptizes the believer into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13). The latter being the case, for God to deny a believer eternal life would also be to deny Christ entrance.

First, notice that Paul included himself once again by placing ἀπιστέω in the first person plural present active indicative, just as he did every other verb in these first class conditional statements. Second, notice that Christ remains faithful to Himself not in denying others entrance into Heaven, but in being unable to deny Himself.⁵⁰ Paul used ἀρνέομαι here just as he did in the third couplet, serving to relate all these thoughts together. The believer can deny enduring, and Christ will deny the believer co-reigning; however, Christ will bring that believer into eternal life because He cannot deny them that honor any more than He could deny it for Himself.

A CRITIQUE OF THE HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Since this passage has had such a rich diversity of interpretations throughout the era of the church, it would seem insufficient to leave the discussion following the exegesis. The purpose for the remainder of this article is to briefly examine and critique the historical views presented in the previous article in light of the previous discussion of the passage.

⁴⁸ Marshall agreed: "The verb expresses acts of unfaithfulness, possibly even of apostasy, and is meant to serve as a warning to believers of a temptation to which they are exposed. It is not as strong as 'deny' and is more like 'if we fail to live up to our profession'" (*Epistles*, 741).

⁴⁹ Zane Hodges, *Absolutely Free* (Dallas: Rendicion Viva, 1989) 112.

⁵⁰ Some manuscripts place a γάρ before ἀρνήσασθαι ἑαυτὸν οὐ δύναται; however, the manuscript evidence for this reading is not persuasive. For inclusion of the γάρ, see ℵ* A^{vid} C D F G L P 048^{vid} 6 33 81 104 326 365 1175 1739 1881 *al*. The Majority Text is divided with regard to this reading; however, most of the texts do not include the γάρ, with ℵ² and Ψ. Either way, the statement is an explanation of why Christ remains faithful.

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

Historical views concerning the first couplet dealt addressed (1) martyrdom and baptism, in addition to (2) whether or not there is a present extension to eternal life.

Martyrdom

There are several arguments against a martyrdom view. First is the tense and person of the verb. Paul's use of the aorist indicative points to a past action.⁵¹ Additionally, Paul included himself in this first person plural verb; even if it was taken from a creedal statement or hymn, those reciting it could not have been dead, by the very requirement of life needed to speak. Second, Knight commented: "Dying with Christ is a strange way of referring to martyrdom."⁵² He then referenced Galatians 2:20, Romans 6:3ff, and Colossians 2:12 as examples of where dying with Christ refers to a believer's forensic position.

Third, the past action seen in that couplet is followed by present actions in the following two. If it was a statement meant to remind still-living believers of the results of martyrdom, it would be odd to then follow that couplet with options to persevere, endure, and mature, as someone who has already been martyred would not be able to do any of them.⁵³ Fourth, martyrdom is not seen in the context. As Knight noted: "The preceding context does not speak of a martyr's death at all. It does speak of suffering hardship and of bonds (verse 9) and of enduring all things (verse 10), but not death as such. It is a stress on enduring as such, and not on death as such, that is in Paul's purview."⁵⁴ While Paul may have realized by this point in his life that he would die as a martyr, it does not seem to fit the context of the passage, nor the book as a whole.

⁵¹ Knight agreed: "It seems most unlikely to speak of a martyr's death as a past action rather than as a present or future occurrence. But it is quite in keeping with the N.T. usage and the phenomenon itself to speak of the Christian's spiritual death with Christ as a past action" (*Sayings*, 117).

⁵² George Knight, *The General Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) 403.

⁵³ Knight, again wrote: "The chronological progression is shattered by a reference to a martyr's death. Thus, if a martyr's death was in view the first two lines should be in a different order. Enduring (or remaining) comes before death, not vice versa" (*ibid.* 117).

⁵⁴ He continued: "And it is this stress on 'enduring' that forms both the semantic and ideological bridge to the saying. The saying is quoted because one of its leading and early motifs is 'if we endure, we shall also reign with him.' Paul quotes the saying at the natural transition point in its original setting. In so doing he includes the saying in its unity as a compact whole. Therefore the other lines must not be artificially interpreted just to fit the context but must be viewed in their normal interrelationships to one another. The saying is quoted because it commends enduring and warns against its negative opposite, denial" (*ibid.* 116).

Baptism

The other main view of *died with Him* holds that it refers to baptism, pointing to the close connection in language with Romans 6:1-11. However, as was previously noted, there is a distinction between Paul's discussion of baptism in verses 3-4 and his discussion of the believer's identification with Christ's death in verses 5-7.⁵⁵ In other words, verses 3-4 demonstrate that the Romans were practicing the ordinance of baptism because they knew that it was an external symbol of the spiritual reality: the immersion of a person symbolizes Christ's death and their emersion symbolizes Christ's resurrection. From there, however, Paul discussed the internal ramifications of that spiritual reality in verses 5-7. In other words, what is different with the spiritual aspect of the believer because they died with Christ? Therefore, the reference to believer's baptism in verses 3-4 merely serves to highlight the unity. Likewise, in 2 Timothy 2, not only is baptism not mentioned contextually, but also to substitute the external symbol for the event which it portrays would seem to be unwarranted.

Eternal life

All the authors cited thus far are unanimous in their understanding of *will live with Him* as referring to eternal life. Although this will be further developed in the next article, it is worth noting here that while some regard this eternal life entirely in the future,⁵⁶ eternal life is a present possession also. To state otherwise would be to miss the close parallel with Romans 6, where the emphasis is upon the present effects of believing in Christ, which includes the present possession of eternal life.

⁵⁵ Several commentators make this distinction. Murray separated the passage in such a manner (see fn. 21 for a quote) (see John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965] 1:211-26). Morris indicated that the reference to baptism in verses 3-5 is merely an illustration of the spiritual reality that is at the heart of the discussion, and it is not meant to set the tone for the passage (Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988] 246). See also the discussions in James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (Dallas: Word, 1988) 321; Douglas Moo, *Romans 1-8* (Chicago: Moody, 1991) 395; and, Thomas Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 319. To be fair, not all make this distinction, wishing to equate *died with Christ* in verse 8 as a reference to baptism. See C. E. B. Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975) 1:312.

⁵⁶ See C. J. Ellicott, *The Pastoral Epistles of St. Paul* (London: Longman, 1864) and J. E. Huther, *Pastoral Epistles* (Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament) Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1893).

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

It seems that most commentators surveyed in the previous article would like to make this second couplet parallel and synonymous with the first.⁵⁷ In other words, *endure* is a natural extension of *died with Him*, and *will reign with Him* is a natural extension of *will live with Him*.

Enduring Synonymous with Dying

The exegesis of the passage presented in the previous article, however, precludes this as a possibility. Some, such as MacArthur, would explain this by saying that enduring is the natural and inevitable result of having a true saving 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.”⁵⁸ MacArthur’s conclusion is derived from a definition of *faith* that includes commitment, obedience, and/or submission to Christ’s Lordship at the moment of belief. On the contrary, it would seem best to see *faith* as simple belief that enables a believer to endure, but by no means is it made automatic, nor inevitable.

Within this passage, the aspect of the verbs used seems to indicate two distinct topics of the four protases, only the first has an aorist verb (συναπεθάνομεν). It is not merely coincidence that this one is distinct from the rest. While the first couplet discusses the past action that coincides with belief in Christ, the following two couplets address the present choice the believer encounters with regard to their belief.⁵⁹ However, even the fourth line, which begins with the present aspect ἀπιστοῦμεν, is still dealing with the ramifications of the second and third lines, while the main concern is assurance of eternal life. Therefore, it seems best to make eternal life based solely on belief, which occurs at the moment of justification. When works become involved, the discussion then turns to a different subject, whether that be sanctification, rewards, or the lack thereof.

⁵⁷ In general, see the discussion in conjunction with the beginning of this article (especially fn. 11) for Keathley’s argument for the presence of a chiasmatic structure.

⁵⁸ John MacArthur, *2 Timothy* (MacArthur New Testament Commentary) (Chicago: Moody, 1995) 64. To be sure, MacArthur and others would not then say that salvation is by faith and works, but that works will always follow a true saving faith.

⁵⁹ Keathley’s argument that the first and fourth lines discuss eternal life, while the second and third discuss rewards is true (see fn. 11).

Reigning Synonymous with Living

Those that take *died with Him* to be parallel with *endure* will then equate *will live with Him* as parallel to *will reign with Him*; however, not all who have eternal life will have the privilege of reigning. Only those who endure will have the privilege of reigning, and just as enduring is distinct from dying with Christ, so also is reigning from living with Him. A believer can live with Christ for all eternity and not experience the privilege of reigning with Him, as will be made evident in the third part of this series.

Reigning as a Current Privilege

Although it was seen that eternal life has a present component, this is not necessarily the case for the reigning aspect. In other words, reigning is entirely future. First, as it was demonstrated, the first and second couplets are discussing two different aspects of salvation: eternal life and rewards, respectively. As rewards are given at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom 14:10-12; 1 Cor 3:10-17; 2 Cor 5:10; 1 John 4:17), which has not yet occurred, reigning is currently unavailable to believers. Second, Christ is not reigning now as the Davidic King as He will be in the future.⁶⁰ In order for believers to reign with Christ, He must first be reigning physically on the earth during the Messianic Kingdom (Zech 14:9-21); it is at that time when believers will reign with Him.

Knight cited 1 Corinthians 4:8 as a third matter of criticism against those who say that reigning is a current privilege. Through sarcasm, Paul chastised those in Corinth who act as though they are already reigning. Paul, realizing that the time to reign has not yet come, said that he wished it were time to reign “so that we also will reign with you.” Knight commented, “Paul in his irony rules out any reference to a present reign.”⁶¹

If We Deny, He Will Deny Us

The third couplet is the sole negative one of the group, and most take it to refer to a professing believer’s ultimate denial of Christ, and Christ’s rightful, subsequent denial to allow that person into eternal life.

⁶⁰ See footnote 45 for sources that support this statement.

⁶¹ He continued: “The call to the Christian now is to serve and remain steadfast, not to reign” (Knight, *Sayings*, 122). He also believed that the verb’s future tense excludes a present reign; however, Knight himself realized the present aspect to συζήσομεν, so it would seem biased to exclude a present reign on verb tense alone.

The Denier is an Unbeliever

The assertion that a professing believer may ultimately deny Christ, however, was already demonstrated to be untenable. First, Paul included himself and Timothy—both believers—in the possibility of denying. Second, the denial is not solely of Christ, but of enduring for His sake. Since endurance has been demonstrated to have nothing to do with eternal life, but with rewards and reigning, only a believer can be in view here. The only view that survives those observations is the view that affirms that a denying believer then loses their eternal life through the act of denial.⁶² Although the fourth couplet will ultimately affirm eternal security despite unfaithfulness, other passages in Scripture also affirm this doctrine (John 6:35-40; 10:27-30; Rom 5:6-11; 8:28-39). Therefore, the denier must be a believer.

Christ Denies Eternal Life to the Denier

If the denier is a believer, and believers are eternally secure in their eternal life, this couplet cannot be addressing a denial of eternal life. As was already demonstrated, the fourth couplet once again removes any misconception, proving this to be so. Therefore, in the context of the second and third couplets, the denial is of reigning and rewards.

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

The final clause, which was demonstrated to be addressing eternal security, is taken by many to be a negative threat of punishment. In other words, Christ is remaining faithful to His promise to deny eternal life to unbelievers.

Unfaithful Is Less Severe than Denying

Mounce asserted that Paul wrote with regard to an intermediate option between enduring and denying in the fourth couplet, that of temporary faithlessness.⁶³ He then listed seven reasons why temporary faithfulness is addressed, in addition to support that Christ's faithfulness is a promise of eternal security. While the latter will be used as support for a refutation under the following heading, it is important to note where he would disagree with the exegesis presented already.

He wrote: "The tense shift from the future (line 3) to the present (line 4), especially as it parallels the present-tense ὑπομένομεν, 'endure' (line 2),

⁶² See footnote 13 of the previous article for sources that support this statement.

⁶³ William Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2000) 517-18. Knight also took this position (see *Sayings*, 126).

suggest a change in topic from line 3.”⁶⁴ Mounce attempted to prove that ἀρνησόμεθα and ἀπιστοῦμεν are distinct because they are in different tenses; however, the majority of extant manuscripts give evidence to the present form ἀρνούμεθα. Even if that were not the case, a mere change in tenses would not warrant a new subject. Mounce also concluded: “The change of verb from ἀρνείσθαι, ‘to deny,’ to ἀπιστεῖν, ‘to be faithless,’ suggests a change in topic.”⁶⁵ Mounce’s conclusion may be tenable if it were not for the relationship that can exist between these words. If they were completely unrelated, he may be able to make this claim; however, since ἀρνέομαι can serve as a subset of ἀπιστέω, it lessens the force of this argument. In other words, there are multiple ways that a believer can be unfaithful, and denying Christ and enduring for His sake is one way. Therefore, it is best to see *unfaithful* as a description of what it means to deny.

Ἄπιστέω Means “Unbelieving”

Dillow posited that ἀπιστέω is best rendered *unbelieving*.⁶⁶ As was stated already, however, the comparison between ἀπιστέω and πιστός in the fourth couplet is too conspicuous for Dillow’s conclusion to be the case. In whatever manner the one is translated, the other should follow. In other words, if Dillow desires to translate the former as *unbelieving*, he should continue with *Christ remains believing*. Additionally, it is curious that Dillow even desired to make that distinction, as *unbelieving* would be a subset of the larger idea of *unfaithful*, much like was discussed between *denying* and *unfaithful*.

Christ’s Faithfulness Is a Threat

Even though there is disagreement with Mounce concerning what it means to be unfaithful, he listed four viable reasons that Christ’s faithfulness is a promise to the believer, and not a threat to the unbeliever.

(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. . . . (4) The simple form μένει, “remains,” ties in with the promise of reigning for those who are enduring (v 12a). . . . (6) As a warning, line 4 would be highly repetitive of line 3.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Mounce, *Epistles*, 517.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Dillow, *Reign*, 429.

⁶⁷ He concluded: “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” (ibid. 517-18). Of course, while this series would agree that it is a promise of assurance, this promise extends to those who commit apostasy.

Additionally, one can take into account the chiasmatic structure of the saying, which would infer that this line is referring to eternal life with the first. Along those same lines, if He cannot deny Himself entrance into eternal life, and believers are a part of Him through the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit, He would be denying Himself entrance if He were to deny a believer, even if they are unfaithful by denying Him.

CONCLUSION

The present exegesis of this passage differs from the vast majority of interpreters throughout church history. While some expositors have correctly surmised meanings of individual couplets, few have posited an exegesis in the combination presented here. Since there is not one overwhelmingly popular view as a whole, it would seem fair for yet another view to wager a claim. In summary, this exegesis suggests the following: Paul taught that (1) identification with Christ's death through belief alone is the sole requisite for possessing eternal life; (2) the believer encounters a choice in their sanctification whether or not to live faithfully; (3) to endure produces blessing and rewards, and to fail to endure produces discipline and loss of rewards; and, (4) even if a believer does not endure, Christ remains faithful to Himself to ensure that the believer is brought into the eternal state. Throughout this article, exegetical attempts were made to demonstrate what Paul meant by including this faithful saying without the theological presuppositions that some interpreters read into the passage. Critiquing the views presented in the previous article was meant to demonstrate not only the viability of the conclusions herein, but also the untenable nature of the views presented in that article. In the third part of this series, the doctrinal implications and assertions within 2 Timothy will be considered.

BOOK REVIEWS

Growing a Wise Family, 100 Devotionals from the Book of Proverbs by Bryan R. Coupland. Debary, FL: Spring Glen Publishing, 2011. 261pp., paper, \$15.99.

Southern View Chapel (Springfield, IL) has recently been involved in a special emphasis upon the family. As the church leadership sought ways of helping and encouraging the parents within the congregation to raise their children for Christ, they were in search of some material to use for family instruction, yet did not want to use a catechism but struggled to discover other appropriate aids. As a consequence of that experience, Coupland's book found its way into the pastor's study and the search ended. The title is developed around 100 proverbs, each to be used in family instruction. Each proverb is explained and well illustrated by the author. At the end of each study, three well-chosen and age-appropriate discussion questions are provided. The author then offered suggested answers to each question. Coupland's writing is interesting, biblical, and creative. His book was easy to use and of real value. He wrote the book with ten- to thirteen-year-olds in mind, but the material can be easily adapted to younger or older children. For those looking for an aid to help teach their children the Word of God and engage them in things of the Lord, *Growing a Wise Family* would be an excellent choice.

Gary E. Gilley, senior pastor, Southern View Chapel

Slave by John MacArthur. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010. 240 pp., cloth, \$22.99.

For various reasons, English translations of the Bible (from the King James Version and the Geneva Bible that predated it), have mistranslated the Greek word *doulos*. *Doulos* means slave, yet virtually all English translations substitute "servant" even though there are at least six Greek words for servant and *doulos* is not one of them (pp. 15-16). The result of this mistranslation is a misunderstanding of the Christian's status before the Lord. Servants are hired, can quit, have certain rights, and can refuse to obey. Slaves are owned, have no rights, and quit or disobey only at their own peril.

MacArthur has done the church a great favor by reintroducing this truth to the people of God. If one does not know their spiritual identity, he/she will inevitably be confused in their Christian walk. Unfortunately, most believers have a misconception of what slavery meant when the New

Testament writers used the term. Thoughts are immediately reminiscent with regard to the slave trade of the British Empire and the American Colonial era, which had practically nothing to do with ancient slavery (pp. 16-17). MacArthur devoted much attention to correcting this misconception and detailing the nature of slavery in the first century; then, in one of the most beneficial sections of the book, he offered five parallels between biblical Christianity and first century slavery (pp. 44-53). Other extremely helpful topics addressed include first century concepts and biblical use of redemption (pp. 137-39), adoption (pp. 154-60), and citizenship (pp. 187-94). The final chapter suggests several helpful applications for correct understanding of the Christian's standing before the Lord as a slave.

Some may disagree but this reviewer thought MacArthur veered into a number of unnecessary tangents. He offered lengthy biographies of John Hus, George Müller, and John Newton as examples of those who understood they were slaves of Christ. He added discussion on the so-called "doctrines of grace" (pp. 131-36; 147-49; 172), removing any doubt that he accepts all five points of Calvinism (pp. 147-48). These tangents, while valuable in themselves and worthy of discussion, seemed unnecessary for the theme of the book. *Slaves* is a fine book, especially since the understanding of the believer's position as slaves of Christ has long been distorted by poor translations of *doulos* and an anemic understanding of one's identity as a Christian.

Gary E. Gilley, senior pastor, Southern View Chapel

Broken-Down House: Living Productively in a World Gone Bad by Paul David Tripp. Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2009. 223 pp., paper, \$12.99.

Ministry can be a very frustrating endeavor, especially when it is unclear where the ministry is heading. In one of his latest books, Paul David Tripp made the case that all biblical ministry is headed towards the restoration of fallen sinners and maybe even more than that.

Sin has ravaged the beautiful house that God created. This world bears only the faintest resemblance to what it was built to be. It sits slumped, disheveled, in pain, groaning for the restoration that can only be accomplished by the hands of him who built it in the first place. The Bible clearly tells us that the divine Builder cannot and will not leave his house in its present pitiful condition. He has instituted a plan of restoration, and he will not relent until everything about his house is made totally new again (10).

The remainder of Tripp's book discusses what this restoration process looks like (viz. Christians evangelizing non-Christians and ministering to one another). Indeed, both of the main sections in *Broken-Down House* carry this theme of ministry. Part One, entitled "Knowing," includes chapters encouraging the reader to "Know Where You Are," "Know Who You Are," "Rest in God's Sovereignty," and "Listen to Eternity." Part Two, entitled "Doing," includes chapters with the same kind of exhortation: "Pursue Community," "Be Determined to Love," "Minister Everywhere," and "Examine Your Legacy." Each chapter builds upon the previous, as the author explained that ministry is not just for ordained clergy, but for every believer in the church.

As for a positive criticism of this book, Tripp did a good job of encouraging the reader to look at the big-picture perspective of the Christian life. It is easy to want to quit serving others when no change is observed in their lives. It is tempting to want to quit evangelizing the lost when they reject the Gospel repeatedly. However, when it is realized that the Lord is the one who changes the hearts of sinners and that that change is in His timing and in His hands, the disappointments are lessened and the believer is encouraged to continue the fight of faith.

As for a negative criticism of this book, it is not clear what Tripp meant when he said that the Lord is in the process of restoring this broken-down house. Is the Lord restoring this broken-down house in preparation for a golden age that will come as a result of the work of the church? Or is the Lord restoring this broken-down house by drawing sinners to Himself in preparation of the day when the earth itself will be resurrected after the rapture and the millennial kingdom? In other words, does this book teach postmillennialism or premillennialism? Is the church helping to restore this broken-down house to prepare it for Jesus' return, or are believers just helping to restore broken-down sinners, or did the author mean something else when he wrote with regard to restoration? Although the book is encouraging in many respects, these questions are left unanswered.

Jeremy Cagle, *intern*, Southern View Chapel

Christianity and Liberalism by J. Gresham Machen. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1923; reprint, 2009. 158 pp., paper, \$15.00.

Machen's great classic, published in 1923 at the height of the battle between fundamentalists and liberals, has been reviewed far too many times to need much comment. However, with new forms of liberalism influencing the

evangelical community, *Christianity and Liberalism* is as relevant today as when it was written. Indeed there is an eerie sense of déjà vu as Machen identified the apostasies of old liberalism that have resurfaced in the new liberalism of the emergent church and other movements. A quick listing of some of these issues will demonstrate the similarities. Old liberalism taught:

1. A sentimental religion (p. xi); Christianity is life, not doctrine (pp. 17, 38-39).
2. That doctrines are unimportant (pp. 5-6, 16-24, 43, 47) and experience, not truth, is what matters (p. xiv). However, liberalism uses evangelical terminology which makes it all the more dangerous.
3. That tolerance is more important than truth (pp. 15, 40-45).
4. That one should not seek to know God but to feel Him (p. 47).
5. The fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man (pp. 51-55).
6. That sin is not a great problem (pp. 55-58).
7. Paganism (the enjoyment of life) as a substitute for Christianity (p. 56).
8. That the Bible is a musty record—authority rests in the individual and in pragmatism (pp. 60, 66-67).
9. That one is to follow the example of Jesus, not be concerned with His redeeming work (pp. 70, 82)
10. That the resurrection was not historical but amounts to Christ's influence through His believers (p. 92).
11. That the Christian doctrine of salvation is to be criticized because it is narrow and exclusive (p. 104), absurd (p. 106), and presents a cold, cruel, and unloving view of God (pp. 109-11).
12. Enslavement to law and works by minimizing grace (p. 121).
13. That the betterment of the earth is the church's agenda (pp. 125-34).

Machen ended his book with a call to defend the faith, eject false teachers from ministerial positions, separate from liberals if necessary, and serve in love and hope for God because He is still sovereign (pp. 146-52). Nevertheless, he admitted, "in the meanwhile our souls are tired" (p. 151). A quick read of this work published 90 years ago will remind believers of recent church history and prepare them for the battles ahead of them.

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

Perspectives on Family Ministry: 3 Views edited by Timothy Paul Jones. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009. 208pp., paper, \$19.99.

For decades throughout North America, the emphasis in youth ministry has been on numbers, excitement, and fun. However, more and more church leaders have come to recognize that such an emphasis does not develop disciples. Consequently, the current conversation centers on how one must structure ministries so that children grow to love and serve Christ. What many

are recognizing is that the missing ingredient in discipleship of children is the family. The church has often operated as if it was the primary means of spiritual development of youth and therefore parents must relinquish that role to youth pastors and leaders. However, Scripture is clear that the parents, and especially fathers, are the primary discipleship-makers of children. With this in mind, a number of approaches dedicated to returning to family-oriented spiritual development have emerged. The three most prominent of these are detailed and debated in this book. All three philosophies agree, “The primary training ground for discipleship and spiritual formation is the nuclear family rather than the local church” (pp. 38-39). Furthermore, each approach defined family ministry as “the process of intentionally and persistently realigning a congregation’s proclamation and practices so that parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as the persons primarily responsible for the discipleship of their children” (p. 40). However, each system maintains distinct perspectives on philosophical and methodological matters. The three approaches are identified as family integrated, family-based and family-equipping. All three agree on three basic assumptions: (1) God has called parents—and especially fathers—to take personal responsibility for the Christian formation of their children; (2) Scripture is the supreme and sufficient standard for how to do ministry; and, (3) the generations need one another.

Family-integrated ministry is explained by Paul Renfro, who pastors with Voddie Baucham at Grace Family Baptist Church (perhaps the best known family-integrated church). Quoting Baucham, readers learn:

The family-integrated movement is easily distinguishable in its insistence of integration as an ecclesiological principle. . . . Our church has no youth ministers, children’s ministers, or nursery. We do not divide families into component parts. We do not separate the mature women from the young teenage girls who need their guidance. We do not separate the toddler from his parents during worship. In fact, we don’t even do it in Bible study. We see the church as a family of families [pp. 55-56].

The family-integrated church is committed to three things: (1) age-integrated ministry; (2) evangelism and discipleship in and through the home; and, (3) biblical leadership (pp. 62-65). The family-based philosophy was represented by Brandon Shields who serves as minister to high school students at Highview Baptist Church, which has sites in both Kentucky and Indiana. Family-based maintains typical age-organized youth and children’s ministries but with an independent twist. “We are not suggesting a radical change in programming. What we are suggesting is a fresh mindset—parents and family are crucial to faith development in every area of a ministry’s program” (p. 98).

Shields defined some of the concern from recent studies pointing to church dropout rates of post-high school young people. He regarded many of these studies as poorly conducted and/or analyzed (pp. 101-06) and suggested the real problem is unhealthy age-organized models that have been in vogue for the last half-century (pp. 107-12). Family-based leaders believe Scripture does not mandate methods for churches to implement (as the family-integrated people do) but instead provides an absolute interpretive grid “by which every philosophy, teaching, leadership structure, ministry offered, and decision is judged” (p. 134).

The final approach is a middle position between the other two. Jay Strother, a minister at Brentwood Baptist Church in Brentwood, Tennessee articulated the family-equipping ministry. “Family-equipping churches retain some age-organized ministries but restructure the congregation to partner with parents at every level of ministry so that parents are acknowledged, equipped, and held accountable for the discipleship of their children” (p. 144). Family-equipping churches have carefully developed seven ministry strategies (pp. 151-54) based upon a “Deuteronomy 6:7 Ministry Plan” (p. 150).

As is typical of multi-view books, each perspective is followed by an evaluation and critique by the other authors, which is rebutted by the original author (this provides a profitable debate by those who best understand the arguments). Christians should welcome the return of emphasis on the family within the evangelical church. While the three perspectives on family ministry represented in this volume differ in detail, all are dedicated to creating churches that assist families in the discipleship making process. *Perspectives on Family Ministry: 3 Views* is a welcomed evaluation of church-based family ministries offered today. Although this reviewer was concerned by the apparently positive mentions of Mike Yaconelli (pp. 24, 34, 100), Mike King (p. 101) and Phylis Tickle (p. 184), who are all strongly mystical and emergent in their understanding of the Christian life, none of the authors seemed to follow a mysticism or emergent persuasion. Nevertheless, the discerning church leader may want to discern resources that their ministries might recommend.

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Relationships, a Mess Worth Making by Tim Lane & Paul Tripp. Greensboro: New Growth Press, 2006. 178pp., paper, \$17.99.

Relationships is vintage Paul Tripp. He (along with co-author Tim Lane) took the same principles that he most clearly articulated in his defining work

Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands and applied them more specifically in each of his other books. Whether the topic is marriage, midlife, parenting or relationships, the problems and solutions are the same. The aim of the book is stated in the first chapter: "This book will help you look through the shattered glass of our sin to see the glory of a Redeemer who is ever-present, always at work to rescue and change us" (p. 2).

Lane and Tripp attempted to accomplish their goal through a number of means. First, they addressed cherished misconceptions. For example, "The fatal flaw of human wisdom is that you can change your relationships without needing to change yourself" (p. 7). They reminded readers that relational pain has divine purpose, "God wants to bring us to the end of ourselves so that we would see our need for a relationship with Him as well as with others. Even painful things we experience in relationships are meant to remind us of our need for Him" (p. 8). Furthermore, "Holding grudges, becoming bitter, praying for vengeance, and gossiping are not methods that God honors. When you hold the perpetrator 'accountable' but not in a spirit of humility, patience, and compassion, you end up perverting the very justice you seek" (p. 39).

The central theme of the book, as in all Tripp's books, is the need to deal with the heart. Using Matthew 6:19-24 as the basis, the authors reminded readers that what is treasured controls the heart and what control the hearts controls behavior. Therefore, true and lasting change must come from changed hearts. These teachings, and many others, are both biblical and highly practical as one attempts to live relationships in ways that please God. However, there are three areas of concern.

1. The authors' covenantal theology leads to some confusing teachings and misuse of Scripture. For example, Lane and Tripp wrote, "whenever God's grace changes your heart and life, you are experiencing the kingdom coming to earth as it already is in heaven" (p. 171). Furthermore, "This means that your relationships are a place where the kingdom has come" (p. 172). Additionally, "The good things we experience are a mark of God's kingdom coming to our own lives" (p. 174). None of these statements teaches a proper understanding of the kingdom of God which will come when Christ the King returns to earth. This covenantal perspective also leads to misunderstanding of Old Testament Scripture. The authors (p. 158) used Ezekiel 36:26 to assure Christians that "our hearts of stone have been replaced by hearts of flesh," but in context the quote is in reference to the change coming to the nation of Israel at the coming of Christ and His kingdom. Additionally, and strangely, the authors used Exodus 33:15, where Moses pleaded for God's presence to lead Israel to the Canaan, as a promise to believers that God's presence is with them. Excellent New Testament passages could have taught the same truth (e.g. Rom 8:9, 1 Cor 6:19), why interpret an Old Testament narrative without regard for context and force it to teach something foreign to its obvious meaning?

2. The authors' repeated use of Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of the Scripture, *The Message*, was a concern. If counted correctly, approximately 15 quotes were taken from this source. The quotes used were not as unfaithful to the original meaning as many other sections of the paraphrase, but if the reader will compare the quotes with a good translation, liberties with the true meaning of the text will often be evident. Why are these men promoting what is arguably the worst and most damaging paraphrase of Scripture in recent years?
3. More troubling still was a quote, without any explanation, from Donald Miller's book *Blue Like Jazz* (p. 118). Miller is a leader in the emergent movement and *Blue Like Jazz* is one of the most popular misrepresentations of biblical living from the emergent camp.
4. Perhaps even more concerning, if the authors were understood correctly, was their convoluted teaching on the use of imagination (pp. 157-66). They relied upon their understanding of imagination not from Scripture. Moreover, they interpreted John 14:15-20 and attempted to force it unsuccessfully to prove their point (p. 161); their teaching on imagination is derived from Eugene Peterson (pp. 157, 164). It needs to be understood that Peterson is not only the author of *The Message* but also a leader in the mysticism taught by Richard Foster, in addition to an endorser of such perversions of the faith as *The Shack*. To quote men such as Donald Miller and Eugene Peterson, and to promote their teachings without a single word of warning or explanation leaves this reviewer bewildered. The Christian community has come to expect more from men like Tripp and Lane. They have given some of the most helpful and biblical material available today on Christian living. Consequently, this reviewer truly hopes that they are not considering mystical and emergent teachings that will not only undermine their ministries but also will do great harm to the body of Christ.

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