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## EDITORIAL

Humanity needs communication from God with regard to who He is and what He requires. The thousands of disorganized and organized religions that exist worldwide today is evidence that humanity is confused and ignorant with regard to God's revelation. Although it is not necessarily a search for the true God (Rom 3:11), humanity's religious and philosophical pursuits indicate the emptiness in life that occurs due to the absence of God, as a consequence of disobedience and unbelief. All humanity recognizes the necessity for authority in life because there is a fundamental human need to function according to one's truth perception. As opposed to *sola Scriptura*, other sources of authority may include, for example: church traditions, human reason, individuals, occult practices/superstitions, religious groups, and theological persuasions (some of which may be valid and others obviously not, but even those with validity must never contradict, subjugate, or substitute biblical revelation). God's Word is, of course, the ultimate authority for everything necessary to salvation (cf. 2 Pet 1:3), and because Scripture alone contains such truth, it must necessarily communicate it with perspicuity so as to be comprehensible to all humanity. Indeed, the Bible is sufficiently perspicuous in this regard for any person who will receive Scripture for the authority that it is (cf. Ps 119:105, 130; 2 Pet 3:16). The perspicuity of Scripture does not obviate the need for hermeneutics but does makes understanding possible. There are certainly those who regard biblical truth as abstruse, yet this does not result from obscurity in Scripture; rather, obfuscation is the consequence of one's own spiritual blindness or lack of understanding by those who do not strive for the omniperfect clarity of the truth. Sadly, there are some who become so preoccupied with thoughts contrary to Scripture that they prevent understanding it, such as those who equate the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement with "a form of divine child abuse." Gary Gilley's article aptly responded to such unbiblical notions, and clarified why Christ died. Brian Wagner's article specifically addressed the conditional perspicuity of Scripture. In the final part of his article, John Tucker demonstrated how understanding viticulture at the time of Christ clarifies the Lord's words with regard to fruitbearing (John 15:1-6). David Ermold affirmed Scripture as perspicuous, and concluded his series based upon the conviction that 2 Timothy 2:11-13 "is no exception." The publisher of the *Journal of Dispensational Theology* hopes the articles and book reviews herein supplements the Bible's perspicuity.

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## THE SIGNIFANCE OF CHRIST'S CROSSWORK: Challenges and Responses to Why Christ Died

Gary E. Gilley

When Steve Chalke and Brian McLaren accused evangelicals who believed in the substitutionary death of Christ of embracing a form of divine child abuse,<sup>1</sup> Christians everywhere reacted. Having sung with passion for years that great line penned by Charles Wesley, "Amazing love, how can it be that Thou my God shouldst die for me," Christians could not believe that they were being accused of promoting child abuse by men who claimed to be at least on the fringes of the evangelical community. What McLaren and Chalk did was suddenly cause all to see the long-standing debate by theologians with regard to the meaning of the cross. Almost no one in Christian assemblies doubts the historicity of the crucifixion, but *why Christ died* has long been contested. Of late, due to the rising popularity of everything from the Emergent Church<sup>2</sup> to the Ancient-Future Faith movement<sup>3</sup> to the New Perspective on Paul,<sup>4</sup> the significance of Christ's crosswork (often called the atonement) has been questioned. In particular, what has often been called "penal substitution," which is that the Son "suffer[ed] instead of us

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<sup>1</sup> See Brian McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003) 102ff; and, Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003) 182.

<sup>2</sup> The name "emerging church" is in reference to a local congregation that is emerging from the more traditional ecclesiology into a postmodern expression. What it will actually become is still a speculative matter, but its adherents regard it as a postmodern church for a postmodern culture.

<sup>3</sup> The Ancient Future Faith movement believes that the purest expression of Christianity was found in the ancient period of church history (100-600), and it is to this era that Christians must return.

<sup>4</sup> The background for the New Perspective on Paul appears to be various searches for the "historic Jesus" resulting from the influence of Albert Schweitzer in the early twentieth century. Phil Johnson has described advocates of this form of theology as "suggesting that the apostle Paul has been seriously misunderstood, at least since the time of Augustine and the Pelagian controversy, but even more since the time of Luther and the Protestant Reformation. They claim first-century Judaism has also been misinterpreted and misconstrued by New Testament scholars for hundreds and hundreds of years, and therefore the church's understanding of what Paul was teaching in Romans and Galatians has been seriously flawed at least since the time of Augustine" ("A Defense of the Old Perspective on Paul: What Did St. Paul *Really* Say." Sermon at the London Reformed Baptist Seminary, Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, 10 January 2004).

the death, punishment and curse due to fallen humanity as the penalty for sin," has come under intense attack.<sup>5</sup> It is the purpose of this article to identify the various views held by Christians with regard to the atonement, analyze briefly the three major theories, and then develop a biblical defense for penal substitution as the central meaning and purpose behind the cross.

#### ATONEMENT THEORIES

There are several major models of the atonement that have been held by assorted Christian groups at various times, and continue to hold influence in some groups today. Early in this article, it is important to mention that while this author does not believe that any of these explain the primary purpose of the cross—a position reserved for penal substitution—some of the views have a measure of biblical support and, when not forced to the place of preeminence, enhance one's understanding of the atonement.

##### ***The Example (or Moral Influence) Theory***

There is no doubt that this is the most widely affirmed view among traditional liberals and emergents (modern liberals). The idea is that the death of Christ serves as the perfect example of love. Christians, therefore, are to emulate Christ's love. Harry Emerson Fosdick, one of the most recognized popularizers of this theory among liberals in the first half of the twentieth century, famously decried those who taught penal substitution as promoters of a "slaughter house religion."

##### ***Christus Victor Theory***

*Christus Victor*, or Christ the Victor, "argues that humanity's main problem is that we are trapped and oppressed by spiritual forces beyond our control. Christ's death, then, is seen as a ransom that frees us from captivity. His death and resurrection defeats the evil spiritual forces."<sup>6</sup> The *Christus Victor* view has become very popular among many today, especially those in the Ancient-Future Faith movement, and those who regard the New Perspective on Paul seriously.

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<sup>5</sup> Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions* (Wheaton: Crossway Books: 2007) 21.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Dever, "Nothing But the Blood" [article online] (*Christianity Today*, May 2006, accessed 30 January 2011) available from <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/may/9.29.html>.

**Ransom Theory**

The Ransom Theory understanding is a subset of *Christus Victor* with the addition that “at the cross, God handed Jesus over to Satan in exchange for the souls of humans held captive to Satan. Satan believed he could hold Jesus in death, but the resurrection proved him wrong as Jesus triumphed over Satan.”<sup>7</sup>

**Powerful Weakness Theory**

Well-known emergent leader, Brian McLaren, articulated this interpretation, which corresponds well with his worldview. The lead character in his fictional trilogy

sees Jesus becoming vulnerable on the cross and accepting suffering from everyone, Jew and Roman, and not visiting suffering on everyone in some sort of revenge. It puts on display God’s loving heart which wants forgiveness, not vengeance. . . . God rejects the violence, dominance, and oppression which have so gripped the world from the time of Cain and Abel until today’s news headlines. The call of the cross is for mankind not to make the Kingdom come about through coercion but “to welcome it through self sacrifice and vulnerability.”<sup>8</sup>

**Healing Theory**

Popular among certain parts of Pentecostalism and integral to the prosperity gospel (Word of Faith movement) is the idea that not only did Christ’s death provide for salvation from sin but also physical healing is available in the atonement by request in this present life. Ultimately, it is true that because of Christ’s death the redeemed will be given glorified bodies free from all illness and suffering; however, those affirming the Healing Theory insist that such health and wellbeing are obtainable in this present life.

**Satisfaction Theory**

The satisfaction view is similar to penal substitution except that it understands Christ’s death as a compensation for the honor of a holy God

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<sup>7</sup> Michael J. Vlach, “Penal Substitution in Church History,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 20 (Fall 2009) 201.

<sup>8</sup> Trevor P. Craigen, “Emergent Soteriology: the Dark Side,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 17 (Fall 2006): 185. Also see, McLaren, *The Story*, 105-06.

wounded by sin. The Son's death satisfied that offense to God's honor. Penal substitution, conversely, sees the problem as God's law in which "sin is primarily a violation of God's law, thus Christ's death pays the penalty for sins that God's holiness requires."<sup>9</sup>

### ***Penal Substitution***

Mark Dever explained, "our main problem is God's righteous wrath against us for our sinfulness, which puts us in danger of eternal punishment. . . . Christ's perfect sacrifice for our sins is necessary to satisfy God's righteousness. Christ's death bore a divine penalty that we deserved. By taking our penalty upon Himself, God satisfied His own correct and good wrath against us."<sup>10</sup>

## ANALYSIS OF THE THEORIES

Prior to examining penal substitution in detail, some careful attention needs to be given to two of the theories: Moral Example and *Christus Victor*, which is necessary due to the popularity of these two views and because they have both supplanted penal substitution in some theological areas of influence.

### ***Moral Example***

One should gladly admit that Christ's death serves as the greatest example of self-sacrificing love the world has ever seen. Additionally, the New Testament points to this selfless act and instructs believers to live in like manner (Phil 2:5-8). However, the question needs to be asked in what sense Christ's death was a demonstration of love? If Christ died randomly, without purpose, the cross is not an example of love whatsoever. If this author were to step in front of a car for no reason he would not have displayed love but foolishness. By contrast, if he were to step in front of a car to save a person's life, his death would be an example of self-sacrificing love. Likewise, for Christ's death to be an exhibition of love it would necessitate that He die accomplishing something of great value for others. The something, Scripture reveals, is paying the penalty for sin as told in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He sent his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." No one denies that Jesus' crucifixion was a marvelous example of love, but it is so

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<sup>9</sup> Vlach, "Penal Substitution," 203.

<sup>10</sup> Dever, "Nothing But the Blood" [online].

because Christ's death had as its object and purpose the securing of salvation. The crucifixion was motivated by love but it was far more than a mere demonstration of how one is to love another.

Ignoring this simple reasoning, and scriptural teaching, a large segment of Christendom has limited the crosswork by asserting that Christ merely set an example of love for others to follow. Peter Abelard, who lived from 1079 to 1142 and was among the first to clearly articulate this view, taught that

The work of Christ chiefly consists of demonstrating to the world the amazing depth of God's love for sinful humanity. The atonement was directed primarily at humanity, not God. There is nothing inherent in God that must be appeased before he is willing to forgive sinful humanity. . . . Through the incarnation and death of Jesus Christ, the love of God shines like a beacon, beckoning humanity to come and fellowship.<sup>11</sup>

The church later condemned Abelard's view and he was excommunicated, but his theory, in one form or another, has continued. Most prominently, this interpretation was revived and updated in the modern liberal movement originating in the eighteenth century. The recognized fathers of so-called modernism were Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Albrecht Ritschl (1822-89). These men, and their followers, sought to accommodate the teachings of Christianity to the worldview of those living in the time of the Enlightenment. The idea of a sacrifice for sin seemed barbaric and unsophisticated to the civilized mind, but that Jesus would offer the perfect example of love for others to emulate was acceptable with many.

It does not appear that Schleiermacher and Ritschl actually intended at first to circumvent the more conservative understandings of the Bible; they sought to update doctrine to make it more palatable to modern thinkers. However, once the foundations of biblical truth were undermined other doctrines began to replace this neglect until not much was left of the Christian faith. One of the fundamental doctrines to suffer was that of the cross. Liberals could not easily deny that Jesus historically died on the cross (although some have done so today) but they could reframe the purpose of the cross. Man's great need was not redemption, not salvation from sin, not rescue from the wrath of God, but love. Humanity needs to love one another or else we will destroy the world and everything in it. But what does love look like? Christ came to show mankind. While the biblically informed Christian would regard this theory

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<sup>11</sup> Paul R. Eddy and James Beilby, "The Atonement: An Introduction," in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, eds. idem (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006) 19.

as incomplete, a Hindu such as Mahatma Gandhi would have no problem with this kind of sacrifice. He said, "His death on the cross was a great example to the world, but that there was anything like a mysterious or miraculous virtue in it, my heart could not accept."<sup>12</sup>

One of the real problems with the Moral Example theory is that it does not regard sin seriously and therefore sees no remedy, nor need for one, for guilt and judgment. Historian Tony Lane wrote concerning a main proponent of this interpretation.

Schleiermacher's concept of the work of Jesus Christ is too low, because of his inadequate view of human sinfulness – he has very little to say about guilt before God, for instance. Jesus Christ came not to atone for sin but to be our teacher, to set us an example. His work is essentially to arouse in us the consciousness of God . . . the work of Jesus Christ as perceived by Schleiermacher, makes his resurrection, ascension into heaven and second coming superfluous.<sup>13</sup>

It is no wonder that H. Richard Niebuhr famously described liberal theology as "a God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministration of a Christ without a cross."<sup>14</sup> Liberalism eventually permeated all the major denominations and ultimately defined most of them. As a result, liberal denominations today are on the decline as people have increasingly recognized that they have nothing more to offer than other benevolent organizations and social agencies.

However, in the twenty-first century a new form of liberalism has arisen that has received the interest of many. The new form is often called the Emergent movement (with leaders such as Brian McLaren, Tony Jones and Doug Pagitt). Essentially the Emergent movement affirms the same doctrines that old (traditional) liberalism did, except that they are restating their message for a postmodern generation rather than a philosophical modern one. For example, where the Enlightenment proclaimed that truth could be found not in revelation but in the self—in reason and in the scientific method—postmodernity can offer little more than uncertainty. Absolute, universal truth, the postmodern claims, is a myth. Those within Christendom who have imbibed postmodern thinking might not totally dismiss the concept of truth but they have embraced uncertainty. Truth may exist but there is no way that one can be certain

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<sup>12</sup> As quoted by Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, *Death by Love* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008) 20.

<sup>13</sup> Tony Lane, *A Concise History of Christian Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006) 240.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

what it is. Furthermore, if one did there would be no means of communicating it to others. When this mindset is transferred to the atonement, one is delivered a diluted and contradictory message. The great accomplishments of the atonement (as found in Scripture) are banished, for they offend the sensibilities of twenty-first century people. Nevertheless, while believers can be certain that Christ did not die to satisfy the wrath of God or to defeat evil forces (so one is told), we can be certain that the cross gives believers a powerful example of love. How the emergents, who deny certainty, can be so certain of this is not clear.

There is enough truth in what the liberals and emergents were/are saying to be confusing to some. Love is certainly the chief of the virtues; it is an attribute of God, and it was a motivation behind the incarnation and the cross (John 3:16). However, while Christ came motivated by His great love, He came to provide more than an example of love. The real problem facing the human race is alienation from a holy God who is righteously wrathful toward sinners. There was no remedy to this condition found within man or the world around him. The only solution rested in God, but God could not simply love man to Himself and ignore his sins. God had to provide a means of deliverance that was consistent with His own holy nature and which satisfied His wrath toward sin and sinners; this necessitated the sacrificial death of Christ, which will be addressed momentarily.

### ***Christus Victor***

Considering the *Christus Victor* model, one finds that it has become very popular today in some theological realms. Robert Webber, father of the Ancient-Future Faith movement, attempted to establish that this was the primary interpretation of the atonement for the first millennium of church history<sup>15</sup> (this assertion will be refuted in the section affirming penal substitution). The *Christus Victor* view, in its present form, results from a book by that name written by Gustaf Aulen in 1930. Aulen sought to offer an opposing view to the traditional understanding that Christ died to satisfy God's justice and to make humanity acceptable to Him. However, he wanted to move beyond the theory that Christ died to change one's attitude toward God and provide one with an example of pure love. Aulen regarded Christ's death as a means by which the Lord battled with and conquered the evil forces of this world, principally Satan and his demons.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004) 43-44.

<sup>16</sup> Tony Lane, *Concise History*, 279-81.

*Christus Victor* has much to commend it, most important of which is that it has biblical support. One of the most consistent teachings in the Scriptures is that the Lamb of God came to set humanity free from all the corrupting, polluting, destructive, and enslaving powers that reign over mankind (Col 1:13-14) (which includes sin, death and Satan). Only the power of Christ through the cross can liberate one from such enemies, and the Scriptures provide ample evidence that this is one of the reasons Christ died.

Biblical support for *Christus Victor* includes Colossians 2:15, "When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities; He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him." However, the means by which Christ triumphed over these spiritual powers was by dying in the sinner's place and taking the sinner's penalty upon Himself. Verse 14 reads, "Having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." Therefore, without denying Christ's victory over satanic forces at the cross, penal substitution remains central. Were it not for Jesus taking humanity's sins upon Himself and paying the sinner's penalty, no victory would have been realized. Hebrews 2:14-15 is also an important biblical support for this theory, "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives." First John 3:8 is also helpful, "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil." Without question, in the atonement, Christ won a great victory over the forces of evil.

Unfortunately, some take this interpretation too far. Robert Webber is one of those. His explanation of *Christus Victor* is as follows:

- At the cross the power of Satan was dethroned. Christ's death exposed Satan's lies so that people can be set free from his illusions.
- At the consummation, Satan's influence over the powers will be destroyed.
- Between the resurrection and the consummation, Satan's powers have been limited.
- Creation ultimately will be reconciled to God.
- As for now, the kingdom of God, God's rule over all things, is manifested.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Webber, *Ancient-Future*, 50-55.

As presently understood by men such as Webber, Satan still has power over this world but it is greatly limited. Therefore, according to this theory, the kingdom of God is here now which leads to some very practical applications. Webber wrote,

Faith in Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate ruler over all of life, can break the twisting of political, economic, social, and moral structures into **secular salvation**. Because those structures that promise secular salvation are disarmed, they can no longer exercise ultimate power in our lives. The powers have been dethroned by the power of the cross [emphasis added].<sup>18</sup>

Why *Christus Victor* has gained popularity among emerging adherents and others who see the gospel as including a social element is obvious. If the cross is designed to presently correct social, political, and economic structures then the mission of the church is to right the injustices in the world. One need not wait for the King to come to establish His kingdom because it is here. The believer's job is to administer His kingdom now in preparation for the final stage of the kingdom coming to earth (such an understanding of the atonement radically transforms the overall purpose of God's people from that of the Great Commission to the Cultural Mandate of "fixing" the planet). As Brian McLaren stated,

Jesus came to launch an insurgency to overthrow that occupying regime [a reference to aggression and injustice throughout the planet]. Its goal is to resist the occupation, liberate the planet, and retain and restore humanity to its original vocation and potential. This renewed humanity can return to its role as caretakers of creation and one another so the planet and all it contains can be restored to the healthy and fruitful harmony that God desires.<sup>19</sup>

Before an examination of penal substitution is given, this author believes it is in order to state that he believes a mistake is often made when theologians attempt to force one to choose between the three main interpretations of the atonement. The truth is all three have biblical support and help explain the multifaceted beauty of Christ's great crosswork. John R. W. Stott expressed this truth well when he wrote,

In fact all three of the major explanations of the death of Christ contain biblical truth and can to some extent be harmonized, especially if we observe that the chief difference between them is that in each God's work in Christ is directed toward a different person. In the "objective" view God satisfies himself, in the "subjective" he inspires us, and in the "classic" he overcomes the devil. Thus

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 51.

<sup>19</sup> Brian McLaren, *Everything Must Change* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007) 129.

Jesus Christ is successively the Savior, the Teacher and the Victor, because we ourselves are guilty, apathetic and in bondage.<sup>20</sup>

While Stott is correct, nevertheless, the penal substitution of Christ is central, both in Scripture and in relationship to the believer's salvation. In the remainder of this article, the attempt will be made to support this statement and give a thorough explanation of penal substitution as found in Scripture.

### ***Penal Substitution***

As previously stated, this author believes the central teaching of Scripture in regard to Christ's crosswork is best defined as the Penal Substitutionary Atonement. It is this view of the atonement that is facing resistance from many who would be happy to embrace the cross as a moral example of love or a victory over the forces of evil. Nevertheless, the Bible teaches that while Christ's death was a great example and resulted in the defeat of evil forces, more importantly His death was necessary in order that one's sins might be forgiven and for the believer to be reconciled to God.

#### DEFINITIONS AND CHALLENGES

Wayne Grudem provided this helpful definition: "Christ's death was 'penal' in that he bore a penalty when he died. His death was also a 'substitution' in that he was a substitute for us when he died. This has been the orthodox understanding of the atonement held by evangelical theologians, in contrast to other views that attempt to explain the atonement apart from the idea of the wrath of God or payment for the penalty for sin."<sup>21</sup> Millard Erickson wrote plainly, "The idea that Christ's death is a sacrifice offered in payment of the penalty for our sins [*sic*]. It is accepted by the Father as satisfaction in place of the penalty due to us."<sup>22</sup> Erickson further refined the doctrine, "By offering himself as a sacrifice, by substituting himself for us, actually bearing the punishment that should have been ours, Jesus appeased the Father and effected a reconciliation between God and Man."<sup>23</sup>

A helpful article written by Mark Dever explains that Penal Substitutionary Atonement has come under attack in modern times for a

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<sup>20</sup> John R. W Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006) 226.

<sup>21</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 579.

<sup>22</sup> As cited by Richard Mayhue, "The Scriptural Necessity of Christ's Penal Substitution," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 20 (Fall 2009): 140.

<sup>23</sup> As cited by Vlach, "Penal Substitution," 200-01.

number of supposed reasons such as: (1) it is a medieval doctrine not found in Scripture; (2) it is irrelevant and does not make sense to modern cultures because it glorifies abusive behavior; (3) it is too individualistic, focusing on individual guilt and forgiveness while ignoring the bigger issues of social justice; and, (4) it is too violent, requiring of God a violence for redemption that He would condemn in humans.<sup>24</sup> The final criticism of Penal Substitutionary Atonement has received much attention of late because of some blunt and shocking statements from a few claiming credentials in evangelicalism. For example, Joel B. Green and Mark D. Barker recently wrote *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross* in which they rejected any notion of divine wrath besides that of allowing people to go their own way. “The Scriptures as a whole provide no ground for a portrait of an angry God needing to be appeased in atoning sacrifice,” they said. Penal Substitutionary Atonement, therefore, is rejected as ridiculous, and as apparent proof Green and Barker cited a boy in Sunday school who said, “Jesus I like, but the Father seems pretty mean. . . . Why is God so angry?”<sup>25</sup> In a similar manner, Brian McLaren placed the following words in the mouth of the main character in his fictional works, “If God wants to forgive us, why doesn’t he just do it? How does punishing an innocent person make things better? That just sounds like one more injustice in the cosmic equation. It sounds like divine child abuse. You know?”<sup>26</sup>

#### OLD TESTAMENT SUPPORT FOR PENAL SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT

While Penal Substitutionary Atonement of Christ comes into focus in the New Testament Scriptures, the Old Testament clearly points to this truth through at least four means.

- The Passover at the time of the Exodus provided a glorious picture of what would ultimately be fulfilled in Christ (Exod 12:3-13). Just as a lamb would be killed and its blood applied to the entry way of Jewish homes in order that the inhabitants of those homes would be spared physically, so the Lamb of God would shed His blood so that we would be spared spiritually and given eternal life.

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<sup>24</sup> Dever, “Nothing But the Blood” [online].

<sup>25</sup> As cited by David Wells, *Above all Earthly Pow’rs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 219.

<sup>26</sup> McLaren, *The Story*, 102.

- On the Jewish Day of Atonement, the lives of two goats would be substituted for the sins of the people. One goat was sacrificed and slain on the altar; the other, the scapegoat, would symbolically remove the sins of the people as it was released into the wilderness (Lev 16). Christ, therefore, would not only die for one's sins but also remove those sins.
- The direct prophecy of Isaiah foretold the fact of Christ dying for sinners—in the sinner's place—and is stated nine times (Isa 53:4-6, 8, 11-12).
- Finally, Penal Substitutionary Atonement is clearly depicted in the whole sacrificial system in which animals were sacrificed as substitutes for men and women who deserved death because of sin.

#### NEW TESTAMENT SUPPORT FOR PENAL SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT

While the Old Testament sacrificial system provided marvelous shadows and symbols of the work of Christ, they were incapable of covering man's sin, for it was "impossible for the blood of bull and goats to take away sin" (Heb 10:1-4). True atonement would necessitate a greater sacrifice, a more acceptable substitute than anything known previously. It would take the substitutionary death of the Son of God to fully expiate sin. While the sins of Old Testament saints were truly removed and forgiven prior to the Cross, such was made possible only on the basis of what would ultimately occur at the Cross. All the Old Testament ceremonies pointed to the One who could provide salvation by meeting the righteous demands of a holy God. Animals could not meet those demands, nor could man do anything to satisfy God's justice—only the Son could do so. At this point, the reader should now consider what the New Testament actually teaches.

#### ***As Substitute***

Consideration of the New Testament teaching will begin by surveying some references that speak with regard to Christ dying as the sinner's substitute. Second Corinthians 5:21 is a primary text: "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Some have termed this "The Great Exchange" as the Sinless One took sin upon Himself and gave believers the righteousness of God. The implication is that this spiritual transaction is made possible only through

the sacrifice of Christ. First Peter 2:24 adds detail, “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.” Christ then became sin on behalf of the sinner (i.e. in the sinner’s place) at the Cross, for it is there that He bore sin in His body. He did so to free humanity from sin and to bring righteousness, but the believer’s healing was made possible only because of His wounds.

First Peter 3:18 reiterates the same thought by proclaiming, “For Christ died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God. . . .” In Roman 5:8, Paul wrote, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Christ death was “for us.” His death accomplished what nothing else could. Jesus Himself spoke of penal substitution when He stated that He came “to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). John the Baptist declared Jesus “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). One of the best hymn writers, Horatius Bonar (1808-89) expressed it well.

‘Twas I that shed the sacred blood;  
I nailed him to the tree;  
I crucified the Christ of God;  
I joined the mockery.

Of all that shouting multitude  
I feel that I am one;  
And in that din of voices rude  
I recognize my own.

Around the cross the throng I see,  
Mocking the Sufferer’s groan;  
Yet still my voice it seems to be,  
As if I mocked alone.<sup>27</sup>

### ***Propitiation***

While the *Christus Victor* and moral influence views of the atonement have biblical validity, neither adequately explains the Godward side of the atonement issues. Christ’s death to set believers free from the bondage of sin, death, and Satan, and His death to provide for believers an example of perfect love, explains important facets of Christ’s death. However, neither of these views, or any others except Penal Substitutionary Atonement,

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<sup>27</sup> “‘Twas I That Shed the Sacred Blood,” as cited in Stott, *Cross of Christ*, 63.

address why the death of Christ was necessary from the perspective of God Himself. Scripture, nevertheless, teaches that God is righteously angry at sin and therefore His wrath and judgment is being, and will eternally be, outpoured on sinners who have not had their sins cleansed and forgiven. At issue is the fact that God is just in His judgment of sinners and, being holy, God cannot ignore sin and accept sinners as they are. Something must occur that satisfies the righteous anger of God, and that something is termed propitiation in the Scriptures. At the Cross, Christ took upon Himself the righteous wrath of God that sinners deserve in order that He might appease the anger of God against sin and sinners.

Propitiation is foreign to the minds of modern people and often confused with pagan concepts. Pagans—both of biblical times and today—regard propitiation as an act of man to keep vengeful and mean spirited deities from bothering them. The pagan deities are often regarded as anything but holy. As a matter of fact, they are viewed as super sinners who care only for themselves. To keep them happy, or to secure their favor, pagans will sacrifice something of great value to them personally. The Hollywood picture of tossing a virgin into a volcano to please the gods, and thus obtain victory in battle, or to produce rain is one that comes readily to the mind of many.

To speak of the true God as needing this pagan kind of sacrifice is offensive to God and perplexing. Therefore, it is important to understand that biblical propitiation differs in at least two ways. In pagan sacrifice man is doing something to please the gods; in Christ's sacrifice, God has done something to satisfy His own righteousness. In pagan propitiation, an evil and spiteful deity demands that his unholy appetites be met, while in Christ's death the holiness of God is at stake. At issue with God is how can He, who is infinitely holy, accept people who are deeply corrupt and sinful? Something must occur to enable God to be Holy, and at the same time be accepting of sinners. At Christ's death, the holy nature of God was satisfied in order that He could receive sinners redeemed by the blood of Christ.

Still propitiation is difficult to accept for many, which might explain why many modern English translations have replaced "propitiation" with such terms as "expiation" or "atoning sacrifice," even though the proper translation for the Greek word *hilasmos* is unquestionably "propitiation." Rightly understood, however, the concept of propitiation gives the salvation process the fullness it deserves. Considering a few terms will be helpful.

**Expiation**

Expiation is an ornate term that means that God has removed sin; they have been removed from the believer. Such removal of sin was made possible only through the substitutionary death of Christ. Isaiah 53:12 prophesied that the Messiah would bear the sins of many. Christ “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself . . . having been offered once to bear the sins of many” (Heb 9:26, 28), and He has “released us from our sins by His blood” (Rev 1:5b). Expiation is directed at sin, propitiation is directed at God’s holiness. Expiation purges from sin; propitiation satisfies God’s just anger toward the sinner.

**Propitiation**

J. I Packer wrote, “It is a sacrifice that averts wrath through expiating sin, and canceling guilt.”<sup>28</sup> Through propitiation, the divine wrath is averted from the sinner and placed on Christ. Thomas Schreiner stated the issue well: “Modern people tend to ask, ‘How can God send anyone to hell?’ Paul asks a completely different question because he thinks theocentrically and not anthropocentrically. He asks how can God refrain from punishing people immediately and fully.”<sup>29</sup>

**Reconciliation**

David Clotfelter provided a very useful distinction. “If expiation is the removal of our guilt, and propitiation the removal of God’s wrath, reconciliation is the consequent renewal of relationship between God and us. Because we are no longer regarded as guilty and are no longer objects of wrath, there is now no barrier to hinder us from coming to God and experiencing peace with him. . . . The death of Jesus has opened the way for God to embrace those from whom He was previously estranged by their sin.”<sup>30</sup>

**Redemption**

“Propitiation focuses on the wrath of God which was placated by the cross; redemption on the plight of sinners from which they were ransomed by the cross.”<sup>31</sup> James White made this distinction: “Redemption contemplates our bondage and is the provision of grace to release us from that bondage.

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<sup>28</sup> J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973) 141.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, “Penal Substitution View,” in *Nature of the Atonement*, 88.

<sup>30</sup> Dave Clotfelter, *Sinners in the Hands of a Good God, Reconciling Divine Judgment and Mercy* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2004) 196.

<sup>31</sup> Stott, *Cross of Christ*, 173.

Propitiation contemplates our liability to the wrath of God and is the provision of grace whereby we may be freed from that wrath."<sup>32</sup>

### **Justification**

John R. W. Stott correctly explained, "Justification will take us into the court of law. For justification is the opposite of condemnation (e.g. Rom 5:18; 8:34) and both are verdicts of a judge who pronounces the accused either guilty or not guilty. . . . Forgiveness remits our debts and cancels our liability to punishment; justification bestows on us a righteous standing before God."<sup>33</sup>

### ***Other New Testament Scriptures Examined***

Romans 3:21-26 is one of the key passages addressing the atonement issues. In the excellent book *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, the authors offered an interpretation which is faithful to the context and thought process that Paul intended for his readers.

All people are sinners, whether Jew or Gentile, but all may be justified through faith in Jesus. For God, who in the past had left his people's sin unpunished, has now demonstrated his justice by punishing their sin in Christ. He was set forth as . . . a propitiation, (v. 25) turning aside God's wrath by suffering it himself in the place of his people.<sup>34</sup>

In the flow of Paul's argument in Romans, he used most of the first three chapters to demonstrate the condemnation that mankind is under because of sin. Perhaps the key verse has been 1:18 wherein one finds that God's wrath is outpoured against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. As Paul brought the first section of his great epistle to a conclusion, he demonstrated the hopeless condition of sinful humanity by communicating that even the Law of God was unable to purify from sin, for the Law was only able to reveal sin and thereby condemn and hold mankind accountable before a holy God (3:19-20). It would take something even greater than the Law to satisfy the wrath of God against sin and redeem sinners from its power. It would take something that could allow God to both justify unworthy sinners and at the same time maintain the justice and holiness of God (v. 26). Only the sacrifice of the Son of God could do both. Christ died in the sinner's stead, taking upon Himself the full wrath of

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<sup>32</sup> James White, *The God Who Justifies*, (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2001) 195.

<sup>33</sup> Stott, *Cross of Christ*, 179-80.

<sup>34</sup> Jeffery et al., *Pierced for Our Transgression*, 80.

God that sinners deserved. God's sentence against sin was fully completed on Christ so that sinners might be redeemed. Proclaiming the doctrine of penal substitution, verses 24-25b read, "Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. . . ."

Thomas Schreiner argued that Galatians 3:10-14 is remarkably similar to the teaching in Romans. In verse ten, Paul wrote, "For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse." "How can such a curse be removed?" Schreiner asked? "Not by Christ's good example. Not merely by Christ defeating demonic powers. Not merely by God healing our damaged souls. Galatians 3:13 answers the question posed: 'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us – for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.' The curse we deserved was borne by Christ.'"<sup>35</sup> Galatians 1:4 reads, "Who [speaking of Christ] gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age. . . ." Christ voluntarily died for the sins of humanity in order to rescue sinners. Nothing but the great sacrifice could set sinners free.

In Hebrews 2:17, one find this affirmations of Penal Substitutionary Atonement, "He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." Christ's high priestly ministry directly targets the need for sins to be propitiated. Under the Old Testament system, the Jewish high priest would sacrifice animals to atone for the sins of people and temporarily appease the wrath of God against those sins. However, final removal of those sins, in addition to those of the New Testament believer, would await the perfect sacrifice at the cross. The difference was not so much in the methodology used as it was in the sacrifice itself. The weakness in the Mosaic system was that the animals sacrificed were not capable of removing sin (Heb 10:1-4). A final, once-for-all, holy sacrifice was needed to pay for sins.

The apostle John, while not dealing as intently or directly with the doctrine of substitution, was not hesitant to speak regarding propitiation. In 1 John 2:2, he wrote, "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for those of the whole world." Again, in 4:10 we read, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

There are three more passages worthy of note. Titus 2:14 reads, "Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, jealous for good deeds." Ephesians 2:13 teaches, "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were

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<sup>35</sup> Schreiner, "Penal Substitution," 89.

far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." There are few texts as clear on the subject than Isaiah 53:4-6, "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried. . . . But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."

#### CONCLUSION

While there is helpful truth to be found in some of the other atonement theories, especially *Christus Victor* and Moral Example, the central theme of redemptive theology as found in Scripture is that salvation could be made possible only through a perfect sacrifice that could not only redeem sinners from sin and declare them justified (righteous) but could also satisfy God's holy wrath against sin. While many substitutes have been suggested, such as one's own merit by keeping the Law or through the death of animals under the prescribed Old Testament sacrificial system, none of these would suffice. Paul, who confessed to trying these other means, gloried in the fact that because of Christ his righteousness was not "of my own, derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (Phil 3:9).





**“THE FATHER’S CLEAR TESTIMONY” (JOHN 5:37-47):  
Christ’s Teaching of the Conditional Perspicuity of Scripture**

**Brian H. Wagner**

Every follower of Jesus Christ reads the Lord’s words and endeavors to understand and obey them. However, each believer must humbly and honestly admit that his/her understanding too often remains incomplete and his/her obedience becomes sometimes a misapplication of what has been read.<sup>1</sup> Even the disciples who saw and audibly heard Christ had difficulty. They should have been able to receive a fuller understanding of His meaning from sharing a common language with Him, hearing the inflections of His voice, and seeing the display of His countenance as He spoke. However even they once said in frustration: “This is a hard saying, who can understand it” (John 6:60)?<sup>2</sup> Was the problem with Christ’s choice of words or with the hearer’s (and now the reader’s) ability? Are Christ’s words clear enough to produce the level of understanding and the desired response that He wishes for all those who may seek to know and obey those words?

Jesus dealt with this issue of the perspicuity of the Scriptures after a confrontation He had resulting from His healing of the impotent man by the Pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath. The circumstance is found recorded in the fifth chapter of John’s Gospel. The Apostle’s preservation of Jesus’ concluding words in a dialog of self-defense after this altercation (i.e. John 5:37-47) constitute a very important passage<sup>3</sup> in support of the doctrine of Scriptures’ conditional clarity. Christ teaches in this narrative, that Scriptures, as originally given, are clear enough for even the unbeliever who will seek to know them, but they will remain unclear to those who do

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<sup>1</sup> The exegetical methods enumerated in John D. Grassmick’s *Principles and Practices of Greek Exegesis*, (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1974), 64-181, were basically followed for the structure and content of this article. See appendix A for a condensation of Grassmick’s method.

<sup>2</sup> All quotations from Scripture were taken from the *New King James Version* (Atlanta: Thomas Nelson, 1992), unless from a personal translation of the text which will be enclosed in brackets.

<sup>3</sup> See appendix B for an interlinear translation of this passage using primarily the United Bible Societies’ text, 4<sup>th</sup> edition.

not seek the glory of God or do not trust any other Scriptures that they already understand.

John 5:37-47 is exegeted in the subsequent passage. The Johannine passage concludes the third discourse by the Lord and followed the performance of His third sign, which was one of the signs<sup>4</sup> that John choose for his gospel with the purpose of leading his readers to a saving faith in the Son of God (20:30-31). The entire discourse can be outlined as follows:

I.	The Cooperation of the Father with His Son in their Work	5:19-30
A.	Itemized	5:19-23
1.	The Revelation of Great Works	5:20
2.	The Resurrection of the Dead	5:21
3.	The Judgment of Mankind	5:22-23
B.	Applied to those Present	5:24
C.	Urged upon those Present	5:25-27
D.	Finished in the Final Resurrection	5:28-29
	[repetition of the truth in main point from v. 19]	5:30
II.	The Confirmation of the Father to His Son in Scripture	5:31-47
A.	From Someone other than Jesus Himself	5:31-32
B.	Not from the True Testimony of John The Baptist	5:33-35
1.	His Testimony is Not Needed	5:34
2.	However His Testimony Was Efficient	5:34-35
C.	In Agreement with the Testimony of Christ's Works	5:36
D.	From the Father Himself	5:37-47
1.	The Benefits of this Testimony Have Been Missed	5:37-38
2.	The Exhortation to Search this Testimony Harder	5:39-40
3.	The Impediments to Receiving this Testimony	5:41-44
4.	The Superior Authority of this Testimony	5:45-47

It is this last section (point d, vv. 5:37-47), which is explored further, using the exegetical methods listed in appendix A. The controlling purpose of this paragraph from John's gospel as indicated in the outline, is the revelation of the truth that Scripture is God the Father's premiere and perspicacious testimony to His Son (miss that truth and one misses the benefits of that testimony). The testimony requires diligent searching, unhindered by the other impediments, to result in the recognition of its salvific nature.

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<sup>4</sup> *Believers Study Bible*, ed. W. A. Criswell (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1975) (Electronic Edition STEP Files, Parsons Technology, Inc., 1998) introduction.

## TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The apparatus in the United Bible Societies' Text<sup>5</sup> and the one in the Majority Text<sup>6</sup> were consulted for determining any variants in the manuscript tradition found for this passage. The United Bible Societies' Text committee only noted one variant as significant (i.e. the possible addition or omission of θεοῦ in verse 44). The committee included it in their text, but gave it a "B" rating (i.e. "the text is almost certain.")<sup>7</sup> Concerning this variant, the United Bible Societies' Text committee member, Bruce Metzger, said:

Although early and important witnesses (P<sup>66</sup>, 75 B W al) omit θεοῦ, it seems to be required in the context. The absence of the word can be accounted for through transcriptional oversight; the letters ΘΥ (the customary contraction for θεοῦ) were accidentally omitted from ΤΟΥΜΟΝΥΘΥΟΥ.<sup>8</sup> The Majority Text, edited by Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad concurs with this reading without question, not even mentioning it in their apparatus.

The word θεοῦ in verse 44 is part of a prepositional phrase: "from the only God." A survey of the New Testament finds that the adjective μόνος is never substantively with reference to God (i.e. "the only one"), but always in construction with θεός (e.g. John 17:3, τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεόν, "the only true God"; Rom 16:27, μόνῳ σοφῷ θεῷ, "to the only wise God;" and, 1 Tim 1:17 and Jude 1:25, μόνῳ θεῷ, "to the only God").<sup>9</sup> The weight of the evidence is therefore overwhelming, both internally and externally, that θεοῦ is original to John 5:44.

The Majority Text, however, notes six other points of variation within the text tradition of John 5:37-47, all of which were not mentioned in the apparatus of the United Bible Societies' Text.

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<sup>5</sup> *The Greek New Testament*, eds. Barbara Alan, Kurt Alan, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce Metzger (Nordlingen, Germany: United Bible Societies, 2006) 333 (noted as "UBS Text" in article and any subsequent footnotes).

<sup>6</sup> *The Greek New Testament*, eds. Zane C. Hodges and Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982) 307-08 (noted as "Majority Text" in this article and any subsequent footnotes).

<sup>7</sup> UBS Text, 3\*.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Nordlingen, Germany: United Bible Societies, 2006) 180.

<sup>9</sup> The Majority Text preserves the text tradition of μόνῳ σοφῷ θεῷ, for both 1 Timothy 1:17 and Jude 1:25.

1. Substitute Synonym: *αὐτὸς* rather than *ἐκεῖνος* in verse 37
2. Word Order: *ἀκηκόατε πῶποτε* rather than *πῶποτε ἀκηκόατε* in verse 37
3. Word Order: *μένοντα ἐν ὑμῖν* rather than *ἐν ὑμῖν μένοντα* in verse 38
4. Spelling: *ἐρευνᾶτε* rather than *ἐραυνᾶτε* in verse 39
5. Word Change: *ἀλλήλων* rather than *ἀνθρώπων* in verse 44
6. Word Order: *γὰρ ἐμοῦ* rather than *ἐμοῦ γὰρ* in verse 46

All of these are not significant, since they cause only slight variation in emphasis, (#1, #2, #3, #5, #6). Furthermore, the Majority Text is in agreement with the United Bible Societies' Text with regard to #5 and #6. The spelling difference in #4 causes no change in meaning (i.e. "to search"). A. T. Robertson believed that *ἐραυνᾶτε* is the correct spelling "as the papyri show rather than *ereunate*, the old form (from *ereuna*, search) as in 7:52."<sup>10</sup>

It is not within the scope of this article to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of how both text traditions weigh the manuscript evidence. It is worth noting that this writer is confused as to how a few manuscripts, not available for translation for a millennium, associated with an ecclesiastical tradition that used an allegorical hermeneutic, and in a part of the world where Greek was not the primary tongue are esteemed so highly by the United Bible Societies' Text committee. It seems they receive too much weight just because those texts are the oldest. It would appear more reasonable to weight heavily the manuscript evidence from that part of the world where Greek was the *lingua franca*, and where a literal hermeneutic was more honored, and which reflects a belief that God was not hiding His word for centuries but preserving it openly for the masses.

#### STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

Though John D. Grassmick's procedural principles for diagramming Greek sentences<sup>11</sup> are in-depth and no doubt helpful, this writer believes similar positive exegetical insights can be gleaned from a passage with less concentrated effort. Grassmick's diagramming is based exclusively on the grammatical structure of the text. Peter Cotterell and Max Turner provided a more logical method of diagramming a text by noting the "various types

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<sup>10</sup> The difference in spelling, however, is consistently maintained between the two text traditions (i.e. Majority Text and UBS Text) throughout the New Testament in each other instance of *ἐρευνᾶω*: John 7:52, Romans 8:27, 1 Corinthians 2:10, 1 Peter 1:11, and Revelation 2:23.

<sup>11</sup> Grassmick, *Principles and Practices*, 81-138.

of kernel relationship.”<sup>12</sup> Cotterell and Turner’s method focused, therefore, upon the relationship of meaning between nuclear sentences and within each nuclear sentence.<sup>13</sup>

John 5:37-47 appears to have four dominant nuclear sentences.<sup>14</sup> The four sentences are: (1) ὁ . . . πατήρ ἐκεῖνος μεμαρτύρηκεν περὶ ἐμοῦ (“the Father Himself . . . has testified of me”); (2) ἐραυνᾶτε τὰς γραφάς (“search the Scriptures”); (3) ἀλλὰ ἔγνωκα ὑμᾶς (“but I know you”); and, (4) ἔστιν ὁ κατηγορῶν ὑμῶν Μωϋσῆς (“there is one who accuses you, Moses”). The first nuclear sentence serves as the thesis statement for the entire second part of Christ’s discourse (5:31-47); it is followed by a supportive compound sentence containing three contrasting clarifications to the thesis, in other words, the Father has testified, but they missed it, having neither (1) “heard His voice,” (2) “seen His form,” or (3) “have His word abiding” within (5:37-38). A final fourth phrase in this compound sentence illuminates the reason why Christ’s hearers missed the Father’s testimony (i.e. they had chosen not to trust the one who was integrally related to that testimony).

Most translations in addition to the United Bible Societies’ Text and Majority Text editions divide this second sentence into two parts. However, as the Greek text demonstrates and as R. C. H. Lenski noted, “οὔτε . . . οὔτε . . . καὶ οὐ, ‘neither . . . nor . . . and not,’ go together and form one statement.”<sup>15</sup> It is also this writer’s suggestion that the last ὅτι clause provides rationale for all three negative evaluations just stated. If Christ’s opponents had eyes, ears, and a heart of faith towards Him, they would have seen and heard the Father, Himself, and had His words dwelling within. As Jesus confirmed elsewhere, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father,” (14:9) and “The word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s” (14:24).

The second nuclear sentence is in the form of a command: “search the Scriptures.” Connected with, and following it, are also three grounds or reasons upon which the Lord based His exhortation. As Lenski also recognized, “the three following clauses: ὅτι . . . καὶ . . . καὶ (v. 40) . . .

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<sup>12</sup> Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989) 215. It was this method of diagramming the structure of the text that was used in this article.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 218. Grassmick also was concerned with such relationships and used the better known terminology of “sentences,” “independent clauses,” and “dependent clauses.” See appendix A, main point C.

<sup>14</sup> See appendix C for the full logical outline of the Greek Text of this passage.

<sup>15</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1943)

therefore must not be divided, or joined only in loose fashion.”<sup>16</sup> Many translations interpret the final clause as adverse to the other two, translating καὶ as “yet” or “but,” and regarding it as a concluding rebuke rather than a supporting reason. However, it appears the difference of opinion comes in the decision whether Jesus was presenting mainly a rebuke in this second nuclear sentence or an appeal. Much of one’s choice in this will depend upon if ἐραυνᾶτε (“search”) is taken as an imperative or as an indicative.

The third nuclear sentence is introduced by an orientation clause, in other words, “I do not receive honor from men” (v. 41). However, it is the contrasting clause which follows, in other words, “But I know you” (v. 42), that forms the central thought to which Jesus added four items of supporting evidence, two items each as reasons in relationship to a certain result. Jesus basically said

I know you do not have the love of God, and I know you are unable to trust Me. You do not have that love because you do not receive Me but you will receive other false leaders instead. And you are not able to trust Me until you stop receiving honor from each other and begin seeking what honors God.

Again, a question arises as to the motive behind Jesus words. Is this just more condemnatory rebuke, with Jesus just identifying the crowd’s basic rejection of Him, or was Christ’s rebuke offered as motivation towards introspection at what lies behind that rejection? The second conclusion is supported later in this article.

The final nuclear sentence in this paragraph is stated directly but first introduced indirectly by a thought provoking, seemingly inappropriate orientation exhortation: “Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father” (v. 45). In response to this implied accusation, His hearers would have wondered why Christ imagined that they would think such a thing. They were not even entertaining the idea that God is His Father, let alone that God would value any of Christ’s indictments of them. Jesus wanted to get them to imagine (δοκέω) the truth of the nuclear statement, a truth equally incredible to their minds at present, in other words, “There is one who accuses you, Moses” (v. 45). To this statement John added two supporting statements of argumentation, each given in a means: result fashion, but both contrasted against one another, in other words, εἰ γὰρ ἐπιστεύετε, “for if you believed,” (v. 46) and εἰ δὲ . . . οὐ πιστεύετε, “but if you do not believe,” (v. 47). To the first statement, Christ added a rewording of His thesis. As opposed to stating again that His Father testified of Him in

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 414

Scripture, He restated that truth with the words, “for he (Moses) wrote about me” (v. 46).

#### GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS<sup>17</sup>

Only the more significant grammatical discoveries made in this text will be acknowledged. They are the ones not easily recognized in the current translation being considered (i.e. the New King James Version). They are the words that effect emphasis and meaning considerably.

#### **Verse 37**<sup>18</sup>

“Has testified” (*μεμαρτύρηκεν*) is a perfect active indicative verb; the perfect tense contrasting with the present tense, *μαρτυρεῖ*, of verse 36 regarding the current testimony of Christ’s own works.<sup>19</sup> The Father’s testimony to His Son started sometime in the past, presumably before Christ’s incarnation. The works of Christ are not that testimony, but that testimony is the Scriptures, written in the past but still testifying in the present (v. 39).

“At any time” (*πώποτε*) is a compound word that is only used six times in the New Testament, five times by John (1:18; 5:37; 6:35; 8:33; 1 John 4:12). Spiros Zodhiates indicated this word always follows a negative particle, “meaning - not yet ever, never.”<sup>20</sup> It is possible that Jesus said this because He knew that none of those in this current antagonistic crowd had been at His baptism when the voice of His Father was heard publicly (Matt 3:17). However, more likely, in keeping with the reason for which He was

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<sup>17</sup> Words and phrases from the New King James Version discussed in this part are indicated in bold in appendix B.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996). Wallace’s grammar was primarily used in reference to grammatical issues in this passage affecting its exegesis. In this first verse, Wallace felt the demonstrative pronoun (*ἐκεῖνος*) should be regarded as an example of a pleonastic use (i.e. “the pronoun resumes the subject now separated from the verb by the participial construction. . . . In such cases, the pronoun is usually best left untranslated” (329-30). However, if this pronoun were removed from this verse, the subject, *πατήρ*, would immediately precede the main verb. Therefore, it is better to understand this pronoun as written (originally spoken by Christ) as a construction for emphasis, and as correctly translated by the New King James (viz. “the Father Himself”).

<sup>19</sup> A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 6 vols. (Nashville: Broadman, 1932) (Electronic Edition STEP Files, Parsons Technology, Inc., 1997) v. 5, “John and Hebrews.”

<sup>20</sup> *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, ed. Spiros Zodhiates (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993) (Electronic Edition STEP Files, Quickverse, 2005) G4455.

sent (i.e. to make the Father known, 8:19), Jesus here said, “You have *not yet* heard the Father’s voice” (i.e. “because you have not really heard my voice with a trusting heart”).

### **Verse 38**

There is no need to take the conjunction “but” (καί) with a disjunctive meaning. As previously mentioned, this καί introduces a third clause in a series of three which clarify how Christ’s audience missed the Father’s testimony, because they did not trust in the one the Father sent (i.e. Christ Himself). “You” (ὁμεῖς) is a personal pronoun in the nominative for emphasis: “**you**<sup>21</sup> do not believe.”

### **Verse 39**

The form of the verb, “search” (ἐραυνᾶτε) is either imperative or indicative and hence has invited much speculation among commentators as to which fits the context. Albert Barnes listed, “Cyril, Erasmus, Beza, Bengel, Kuinoel, Tholuck, DeWette, and others [who] give it as in the indicative: Chrysostom, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Wetstein, Stier, Alford, and others regard it as in the imperative, or as a command.”<sup>22</sup> Many today, like Barnes, believe “it is impossible to determine which is the true interpretation. . . . and it is proper to use the passage in either signification.”<sup>23</sup> During the theological analysis of this passage, it will be argued that the imperative fits better the teaching of Christ here. “You” (ὁμεῖς) is a personal pronoun in the nominative for emphasis: “**you** think.”

### **Verse 40**

There is not any need (see v. 38 comments) to take the conjunction here, “but” (καί), with a disjunctive meaning. As already mentioned, this καί introduces a third clause in a series as another reason for Christ’s command to search the Scriptures (i.e. “You are not willing to come to Me

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<sup>21</sup> The recommendation of this writer is that current English translations should demonstrate this emphasis in some manner, perhaps with bold print, underlining, or both. Using the reflexive pronoun may be suitable (e.g. you, *yourself*), though it should probably be thus italicized since it does not reflect an exact translation of the original word.

<sup>22</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes Notes on the New Testament* (1832-72) (Electronic Edition STEP Files, Parsons Technology, Inc., 1999).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

that you may have life, therefore, search the Scriptures which will help bring about a change to your negative disposition”).

**Verse 42**

As in many other contexts in the New Testament, the genitive construction (“of God,” τοῦ θεοῦ) causes the question whether it is to be understood as a subjective genitive (God’s love) or an objective genitive (love for God). Wallace believes it is possible that this is an example of the objective genitive, but he is equally receptive to the relatively modern designation of “plenary genitive (i.e. that here “the genitive is both subjective and objective”).<sup>24</sup> He wrote, “In most cases, the subjective produces the objective notion.”<sup>25</sup> In this Wallace is correct, for when it comes to the love of God, John Himself confirmed this idea when he said, “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

The crowd, which Jesus was addressing, did not yet have the Father’s love dwelling in them, which love would then enable them to have a genuine love for return to Him. Furthermore, the immediate context concerns their not seeking “the honor that comes from the only God” (v. 44), which is another thought paralleling the subjective genitive idea. Although Wallace is correct that this is an example of intentional ambiguity, this writer disagrees that its purpose is to provide for a double meaning.<sup>26</sup> The issue of ambiguity in contrast to perspicuity, which Christ was also discussing in His dialog here, is developed further in this article.

**Verse 43**

“I” (ἐγώ) is a personal pronoun in the nominative for emphasis: “**I** do not receive honor from men.”

**Verse 44**

“You” (ὁμεῖς) is a personal pronoun in the nominative for emphasis: “How can **you** believe.” The use of the participle, “who receive” (λαμβάνοντες), is adverbial, revealing a conditional relationship with πῶς δύνασθε (i.e. “how are you able. . . if you are receiving”). The New King James Version takes this word as a simple adjectival participle (i.e. “who receive honor”), but those translators have not only disregarded the fact that this participle is

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<sup>24</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 116-21

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 119

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 120, n. 134.

anarthrous (without a definite article, a usual indication of an adverbial participle), but they must be assuming that Jesus would not give any help to his audience to answer His soul searching question: “How can you believe?”

#### **Verse 45**

“I” (ἐγώ) is a personal pronoun in the nominative for emphasis: “that **I** will accuse you.” “You” (ὁμοῖς) is a personal pronoun in the nominative for emphasis: “in whom **you** trust.”

#### **Verse 46**

The demonstrative pronoun, “he” (ἐκεῖνος), is used in the place of the personal pronoun αὐτός, a very common substitution in Christ’s dialogs, recorded by John. Moreover, being in the nominative case here, it could be stated for emphasis: “**he** wrote about me.” Another option would be to keep the sense of the demonstrative (i.e. “that one wrote about me” or “that man wrote about me”).

### LEXICAL ANALYSIS<sup>27</sup>

“**Believe**” (πιστεύω) is integral to John’s Gospel, appearing over ninety times in various grammatical forms. In our context of ten verses it appears six times (v. 38, v. 44, v. 46 two times, and v. 47 two times). It is proposed here that the translation should be “trust” rather than “believe” when its object is in the dative, as it is in five of the six instances in this paragraph. The sixth instance is the infinitive form, πιστεῦσαι (v. 44), which is used in complementary fashion with the main verb, δύνασθε. It has no object at all but should also be translated “to trust” in agreement with the other occasions of πιστεύω which surround it.

The construction of πιστεύω with a dative object seems similar to when this verb is followed by εἰς (i.e. “believe on”), which John used 35 times in his gospel. John used the construction with a dative object seventeen times, which is the type of faith that brings salvation. Charles C. Bing concurred with this grammatical observation.

The construction of *pisteuō* with the dative is also clearly used for salvation, as in 5:24. Jesus said, “whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me

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<sup>27</sup> Words for the Greek Text discussed in this section are indicated in bold italics in appendix B.

has eternal life.” The similarity of *believe* with the dative and *believe in* is seen in 6:29–30 and 8:30–31. It is exegetically impossible to separate their meanings in those passages. To *believe* Christ is to *believe in* Him, and vice versa. Thus the slightly less certain construction is clarified by John’s favorite term for saving faith, *believe in*.<sup>28</sup>

Likewise, in John 5:37–47, Christ was discussing belief that would bring salvation to His hearers if they would remove the impediments from their hearts and accept the Father’s clear testimony to His Son in the Scriptures.

“**Will**” (θέλω) is only being noted because of the important improvement the New King James Version has made in translation of it. Confusion with the simple future tense in English is prevalent in the older King James Version. In significant passages in that version, the meaning of θέλω (“to will, wish, desire, implying active volition and purpose”)<sup>29</sup> lies hidden behind what appears to the causal reader as a prediction of reality (cf. seven examples just from Matthew gospel in 8:3; 9:13; 12:7; 15:32; 20:14; 20:15; 21:29). Though the King James Version’s translation of θέλω in John’s gospel is not as obfuscating to its meaning in most contexts, there are two significant ones that are worth noting (7:17, “If any man will do his will, he shall know the doctrine”; 8:44, “. . . and the lusts of your father ye will do”).

In the current context of John being examined the New King James Version has improved upon its predecessor by conveying the continuous action of the present tense verb in its translation: “you are not willing to come to me” rather than “ye will not come to me.” Similar improvements in translation were also made by the New King James Version in the other contexts previously mentioned where θέλω is found. Clarity of translation is vital to clarity of interpretation, affecting the doctrine of Scripture’s perspicuity as it affects the reading of the Bible by the common man and woman.

The final word, “**trust**” (ἐλπίζω), is noted because it too requires a different translation from that given to it in the New King James Version. As previously discussed, “trust” is the more suitable translation for πιστεύω in those cases where it has a dative object. Although ἐλπίζω is used in the New Testament in construction similar to πιστεύω (i.e. with a dative object or with the preposition εἰς), and though there is an obvious semantic and theological overlap between the two ideas (cf. Rom 4:18; 8:24; Heb 11:1), it

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<sup>28</sup> Charles C. Bing, “The Condition for Salvation in John’s Gospel,” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 9 (Spring 1996): 29.

<sup>29</sup> *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*. G2309

is equally observable that ἐλπίζω is distinctly related to confidence only with regard to the future.

The word “hope” remains the best translation for such a thought, and is, of course, strengthened when in construct (i.e. “hope in” or “hope upon”), as in the present passage: εἰς ὃν ὑμεῖς ἠλπίκατε (“in whom you have placed your hope”). The perfect tense in the text denotes a present condition begun in the past. Using the word “hope” in translation here in verse 45 will demonstrate the significant difference between the audience’s misplaced “hope” in Moses and their lack in “trusting” Him and His words as in verses 46 and 47.

#### HISTORICAL/CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Besides the historical setting itself of this dialog by Christ in relation to time and place mentioned in the introduction to this article, there is a prediction made by Christ here that inspires a search for correlation with any historical example since the time Jesus spoke those words. The prediction is found in verse 43: ἐὰν ἄλλος ἔλθῃ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τῷ ἰδίῳ, ἐκεῖνον λήμψεσθε, “if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.” Though this is just a third class conditional statement (ἐὰν with the subjunctive in the protasis), it receives the force of a prediction because the future tense that is being used in the apodosis. If someone fulfills the condition of coming in His own name, the crowd will follow that false messiah. Jesus made this conditional prediction much more certain during the week of His passion, in His Olivet Discourse. “For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect” (Matt 24:24).

Concerning the fulfillment of Jesus’ prediction in John 5:43, John Gill wrote:

... as thousands of them did receive Barchocab, the false Christ, who rose up some years after in Adrian's time; and even some of their greatest Rabbins, as particularly the famous R. Akiba, who was his armour bearer: and it is easy to observe, that though they were so backward to receive, and so much prejudiced against the true Messiah, they were always forward enough to embrace a false one: and indeed to follow any, that set up himself for a temporal deliverer of them; as the instances of Theudas, and Judas of Galilee, with others, show; see Ac 5:36. And the true reason why they rejected Christ was, because he did not appear in outward pomp and glory, nor set up a temporal kingdom, or give out that he would deliver them from the Roman yoke.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> John Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* (Broken Arrow, OK: Brandon Staggs) (Electronic Edition, SwordSearcher, v. 5.2.1.1).

Gill correctly understood this as a general prediction with many historical fulfillments by the Jewish nation, and Lenski agreed with him.

The words of Jesus are a prophecy concerning all the false Messiahs and other false leaders that would come in the future. To generalize and to refer to any man who is out only for his interest is to lose the contrast between ἐγὼ and ἄλλος, between the acts of coming, and between the two ὀνόματι. While the statement is not that broad, neither is it so narrow as to refer only to one person, say to the antichrist (older exegetes), or to Simon Barkochba, whom Rabbi Akiba termed “the star of Jacob” (Num. 24:17). . . . Bengel notes that up to his time sixty-four such messiahs had come, including, of course the notable Barkochba. Since then more religious deceivers have been added, and the end is not yet. II Thes. 2:11, 12.<sup>31</sup>

#### THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

The greatest theological contribution of this Johannine paragraph is to bibliography; it is a premiere text for the evangelical community for a number of reasons. The first reason is because it is the direct teaching, historically preserved, from Jesus of Nazareth, Himself. Any of His teaching about Scripture becomes the foundation for a Christian’s own correct view of Scripture, both the Old and the New Testaments. Upon this foundation, all that is taught in those Testaments should thus be held as divinely authoritative if one wishes to be called a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Second, it is in this remembrance of Christ’s words by an apostle and eyewitness, as recorded here in John 5:37-47, that Jesus specifically reveals that Scripture is the Father’s testimony (vv. 37-39). He also specifically revealed that it is important to search the Scripture to affect one’s will and everlasting destiny (vv. 39-40) and that the Scripture has a sufficient perspicuity even for the unbeliever. Furthermore, in these words, Jesus revealed his view that there is equal authority of God’s written revelation to His own oral teaching as the Son of God (vv. 46-47). *Third*, against all modern higher criticism proposed to the contrary, Jesus here affirmed the authorship of the Pentateuch by Moses.<sup>32</sup>

Germane to understanding what Jesus taught concerning Scripture in this context is how it also relates to soteriology. A choice must be made whether to regard this entire passage only as a rebuke of condemnation or

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<sup>31</sup> Lenski, 421-422

<sup>32</sup> Of course, modern higher criticism has shifted its attack from the Pentateuch to Johannine authorship, more directly attacking the authenticity of Christ’s words (e.g. the Jesus Seminar [westarinstitute.org] and *The Anchor Bible’s* article by Robert Kysar. The scope of this article is not to rebut such irrational approaches to historical investigation, which would necessitate rejecting as inauthentic all lesser attested historical quotations of famous men (e.g. Julius Caesar).

to see it as an impassioned plea to the unbeliever to trust the Father's testimony with regard to His Son, their Savior. Making this choice between rebuke and plea may be somewhat theologically related to one's view of the Messiah's ministry to Israel, His people, at this juncture in His life. However, at this early point in His public ministry, before the second Passover (cf. 6:4), it is hard not to lean toward seeing His ministry as still one of calling His people to repentance (Matt 4:17; Mark 1:15).

Some exegetical choices previously discussed support this second view. Taking ἐραυνᾶτε in verse 39 as an imperative rather than an indicative makes it central to the plea of the Lord to His unbelieving hearers. It also lends a more hopeful nuance to the three phrases that follow it: (1) "in them you think you have eternal life," in other words, "you are already on the right track searching the Scriptures for the answers to life eternal;" (2) "these are they which testify of Me," in other words, "your further search will prove the Scripture truly is My Father's testimony about Me;" and, (3) "you are not willing to come to Me," meaning, "searching the Scriptures, discovering the Father's testimony, will change your will, giving you a desire to come to me for everlasting life."

A second exegetical choice (i.e. the conditional use of the participle λαμβάνοντες in v. 44), also influences this presentation of Christ, supporting it as an affectionate plea rather than just an unfeeling rebuke. John MacArthur concurred with more of the second view and pointed to this verse as confirming evidence that unbelievers are unable to believe. He said, "Through illumination of the Word, the Holy Spirit provides His saints the capacity to discern divine truth (see Ps. 119:18), which the spiritually dead are unable to comprehend (see John 5:37-39)."<sup>33</sup> However, if this participle is introducing conditions as answers to the prior question, "How can you believe," then the answers provided in the negative (i.e. "[you] receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God") were Christ's way of giving inference to the positive. They will become able to believe, if they stop pursuing self-glory and start pursuing God's. Therefore, He was saying that their inability is conditioned by their prior choices. Their inability is not related to a false nuance, which many have added to the biblical concept of unbelievers being spiritually dead.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians: Godly Solutions for Church Problems* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2001) (MacArthur Bible Studies 19, Electronic Edition, Libronix) 1 Corinthians 2:14.

<sup>34</sup> The primary meaning of death in Scripture is separation, not inability. A human spirit prior to regeneration is very much active and able to respond to divine initiative. Jesus obviously was appealing to that will in this context.

Even the concluding lines of Christ's message can only be taken as projecting a hopeful possibility for change from disbelief and rejection, to trust and acceptance. "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" (vv. 46-47). Though the first line, "For if you believed" ( γὰρ ἐπιστεύετε), is a second class condition, assuming unreality (i.e. "I know you do not believe"), Christ was only using this conditional language as a means to inspire a change from that unreality. The second line, "But if you do not believe," is stated as a first class condition, assuming reality. Although the protasis is stated in the negative, the use of the future tense in the apodosis, which also is in the form of a rhetorical question, was Christ's way of implying, "I want you to believe my words in the future. All you have to do is stop having distrust in Moses' writings which will lead you to then trust My words."

#### CONCLUSION (EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS)

The clarity of Scripture is therefore conditional to the unbeliever. Impediments must first be removed before trust in God's Word is possible (v. 44). The unbeliever is able to and must heed Christ's rebuke to stop seeking man's approval and to start seeking God's. He must heed Christ's exhortation to search the Scriptures, in which he will find God's testimony to His Son. It is evidently clear enough of a testimony for an unbeliever to find, or Christ would have not commanded such a search to be done. He pointed to no other witness from the Father for their search. Paul Enns said:

Jesus reminded the unbelieving Jews that the Scriptures bore witness of Him (John 5:39). Jesus was affirming that the Scriptures are propositional truth, revealing the light of God through Him. The present tense indicates the revelation in Scripture continues. Jesus further reminded His audience that Moses wrote of Him and they ought to have believed Moses' writings about Christ (John 5:45-47). Still later, Jesus declared that the "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). These statements are important to note. In His debate with unbelievers Jesus was resting His case upon the integrity and authority of the written revelation—the Scriptures.<sup>35</sup>

Christ would not have rested His case upon the Scriptures, as He often did throughout His ministry if they were not clear enough, perspicacious enough, for any seeker in them to see the testimony of God to His Son and to His salvation.

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<sup>35</sup> Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989) (Electronic edition STEP Files, Parsons Technology, Inc., 1997).

## APPENDIX A

An exegetical method from John D. Grassmick's "Intensive Study" section, as adapted and abbreviated from *Principles and Practice of Greek Exegesis*, 64-181 [writer's own additions placed in brackets]

- A. **Observational Analysis:** overview of the paragraph
  1. Translate the paragraph from the Greek using a lexicon and/or grammar
  2. Place the paragraph in its context
  3. Determine the literary genre
  5. State a provisional controlling purpose for the paragraph
- B. **Textual Analysis** 8. Practice of New Testament textual criticism
  - b. Determine the number of variants
  - c. Apply external evidence (the date and spread of textual evidence)
  - d. Apply internal evidence (the coherence with context)
  - e. State and support the preferred reading
- C. **Structural Analysis** 4. b. Procedural principles for diagramming Greek sentences
  - 1.) Identify the independent clause or clauses of [each] sentence
  - 2.) Analyze the syntactical relationships within the independent clauses
  - 5.) Identify the dependent clause or clauses of [each] sentence
  - 6.) Determine the relationship of the dependent clause(s) to the independent clause substantival, adjectival, or adverbial
  - [8.) Analyze the logical relationships between sentences]
- D. **Grammatical Analysis:** Solve [any] grammatical problems
  1. Factors in grammatical analysis
    - a. Identify key tenses and moods of certain verbs
    - b. Identify key cases for certain nouns and adjectives
    - c. Identify special uses of any participles or infinitives
    - d. Identify significant particles or prepositions
    - e. Identify unique pronoun and their antecedents
    - f. Note significant changes in word order for emphasis
    - g. Note mentions of passage in any standard Greek grammar available
  2. Fruits of grammatical analysis
    - c. Prepare an outline reflecting structure, syntax, unity, and thought progression
- E. **Lexical Analysis:** Solve any lexical problems [Do word studies important to context]
  1. Determine the possible meanings of the word [see p. 167]

- A. Note any etymological significance
- B. List New Testament usage [if sparse list, use C. Septuagint, D. Koine, and E. Classical]
2. Determine the specific meaning of the word in [the passage being studied]
- F. **Historical/Conceptual Analysis:** Solve any historical problems
- G. **Theological Analysis:** Solve any theological problems  
What does the passage teach about Scriptures, God, Christ, Man, Salvation, etc.?
- H. **Exegetical Analysis:** Solve any exegetical problems
  1. Meditate on the Passage
  2. Ask interpretative questions [based upon possible choices discovered in analyses]
  3. Provide interpretative answers [based upon weight of evidence in analyses]
  5. State the “final” controlling purpose and meaning of the passage
  7. Validate the interpretations chosen [through comparison with commentaries]

## APPENDIX B

## Interlinear Translation: John 5:37-47

bolded word – translation discussed in “grammatical analysis” section  
 bolded/italicized word – words discussed in “lexical analysis” section

<sup>37</sup> και ὁ πέμψας με πατήρ ἐκεῖνος μεμαρτύρηκεν περὶ ἐμοῦ. οὔτε  
 And the Father who sent me, Himself **has testified** about me. Neither

φωνὴν αὐτοῦ πώποτε ἀκηκόατε οὔτε εἶδος αὐτοῦ ἑώρακατε,  
 His voice **at any time** have you heard nor His image have you seen,

<sup>38</sup> και τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔχετε ἐν ὑμῖν μένοντα, ὅτι  
**and** His Word you are not having in you abiding, because

ὃν ἀπέστειλεν ἐκεῖνος, τούτῳ ὑμεῖς οὐ **πιστεύετε**.  
 the one whom that one sent, this one **you** [yourselves] are not trusting.

<sup>39</sup> ἐραυνᾶτε τὰς γραφὰς ὅτι ὑμεῖς δοκεῖτε ἐν αὐταῖς  
**Search** the Scriptures, because **you** [yourselves] think [that] by them

ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἔχειν καὶ ἐκεῖναί εἰσιν αἱ μαρτυροῦσαι περὶ ἐμοῦ.  
 life eternal [you are] having: and those are the testimonies about me:

<sup>40</sup> και οὐ θέλετε ἐλθεῖν πρὸς με ἵνα ζωὴν ἔχητε.  
**and** you are not wanting to come to me so that life you should have.

<sup>41</sup> Δόξαν παρὰ ἀνθρώπων οὐ λαμβά,  
 Honor from men I am not receiving,

<sup>42</sup> ἀλλὰ ἔγνωκα ὑμᾶς ὅτι τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔχετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς.  
 But I have known you, that the love **of God** you do not have in yourselves.

<sup>43</sup> ἐγὼ ἐλήλυθα τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ πατρὸς μου, καὶ  
**I** [myself] have come in the name of my Father, and

οὐ λαμβάνετε με· ἐὰν ἄλλος ἔλθῃ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τῷ ἰδίῳ,  
 you are not receiving me: If another should come in his own name,

ἐκεῖνον λήμψεσθε.  
that man you will receive.

<sup>44</sup> πῶς δύνασθε ὑμεῖς **πιστεῦσαι** δόξαν παρὰ ἀλλήλων  
How are **you** [yourselves] able to trust [if] honor from one another

λαμβάνοντες, τὴν δόξαν τὴν παρὰ τοῦ μόνοι θεοῦ  
[**you are**] **receiving**, and the honor which [is] from the only God

ζητεῖτε;  
you are not seeking?

<sup>45</sup> μὴ δοκεῖτε ὅτι κατηγορήσω ὑμῶν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα.  
Do not start thinking that **I** [myself] will accuse you to the Father:

ἐστὶν κατηγορῶν ὑμῶν Μωϋσῆς, εἰς ὃν ὑμεῖς **ἠλπίκατε**.  
there is one accusing you – Moses, in whom **you** [yourselves] have hoped.

<sup>46</sup> εἰ γὰρ **ἐπιστεύετε** Μωϋσεῖ, **ἐπιστεύετε** ἐμοί  
For if you were trusting Moses, you would trust me:

περὶ γὰρ ἐμοῦ ἐκεῖνος ἔγραψεν.  
for concerning me **that man** wrote.

<sup>47</sup> εἰ δὲ τοῖς ἐκείνου γράμμασιν **πιστεύετε**,  
But since the things written by that man you are not trusting

πῶς τοῖς ἐμοῖς ῥήμασιν **πιστεύσετε**;  
how my own spoken words will you trust?

## APPENDIX C

### Logical Outline of Text - John 5:37-47

(logical flow in bold)

1. **καὶ ὁ πέμψας με πατὴρ ἐκεῖνος μεμαρτύρηκεν περὶ ἐμοῦ.**
  - A. οὔτε φωνὴν αὐτοῦ πώποτε ἀκηκόατε
  - B. οὔτε εἶδος αὐτοῦ ἐωράκατε
  - C. **καὶ τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔχετε ἐν ὑμῖν μένοντα**  
A,B,C (1). ὅτι ὃν ἀπέστειλεν ἐκεῖνος, **τούτῳ ὑμεῖς οὐ πιστεύετε.**
  
2. **ἐραυνᾶτε τὰς γραφάς, ὅτι**
  - A. ὑμεῖς δοκεῖτε ἐν αὐταῖς ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἔχειν·
  - B. **καὶ ἐκεῖναί εἰσιν αἱ μαρτυροῦσαι περὶ ἐμοῦ·**
  - C. **καὶ οὐ θέλετε ἐλθεῖν πρὸς με ἵνα ζωὴν ἔχητε.**
  
3. Δόξαν παρὰ ἀνθρώπων οὐ λαμβάνω, **ἀλλὰ ἔγνωκα ὑμᾶς**
  - A. ὅτι **τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔχετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς.**  
(1). ἐγὼ ἐλήλυθα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ πατρὸς μου, **καὶ οὐ λαμβάνετε με·**  
(2). ἐὰν ἄλλος ἐλθῇ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τῷ ἰδίῳ, **ἐκεῖνον λήμψεσθε.**
  - B. **πῶς δύνασθε ὑμεῖς πιστεῦσαι**  
(1). **δόξαν παρὰ ἀλλήλων λαμβάνοντες,**  
(2). **καὶ τὴν δόξαν τὴν παρὰ τοῦ μόνου θεοῦ οὐ ζητεῖτε;**
  
4. μὴ δοκεῖτε A. [but δοκεῖτε B.]
  - A. ὅτι ἐγὼ κατηγορήσω ὑμῶν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα·
  - B. **ἔστιν ὁ κατηγορῶν ὑμῶν Μωϋσῆς, εἰς ὃν ὑμεῖς ἠλπίκατε.**  
(1). **εἰ γὰρ ἐπιστεύετε Μωϋσεῖ, ἐπιστεύετε ἀν ἐμοί·** περὶ γὰρ ἐμοῦ ἐκεῖνος ἔγραψεν.  
(2). εἰ δὲ τοῖς ἐκείνου γράμμασιν οὐ πιστεύετε, πῶς τοῖς ἐμοῖς ῥήμασιν πιστεύσετε;





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

John A. Tucker

Gary W. Derickson researched the horticultural practices of the time of Christ in a productive attempt to truly understand John 15:1-6 without having to rely upon preconceived, systematic theological positions to explain what was occurring. He aptly noted that most Bible students today do not have an agricultural background and even fewer have formal agricultural training,<sup>1</sup> which may place them at a disadvantage to potentially misunderstand the horticultural significance of the Lord's analogies because of their distance from such activities, unlike the Lord's disciples who lived in such an agrarian culture. Derickson holds both Bachelor's and Master's degrees in horticulture from Texas A & M University where he taught grape-pruning as a teaching assistant. His own personal insight and his research into the viticulture at the time of Christ will assist us in placing these practices and the Lord's words in their proper context. The author of this article also holds Bachelor and Master's degrees in agriculture from the University of Florida, and he fully concurs with the plant physiological processes explained by Derickson.

In order to understand the horticultural practices at the time of Christ, we are also assisted by a Roman author and natural philosopher, Pliny (the Elder). Pliny lived between AD 23-79 during which time he compiled an extensive encyclopedia entitled *Natural History* that comprised some of the knowledge of his time. Pliny's work included much discussion about the horticultural practices of caring for grapevines since they were a very important part of their diet.

### VITICULTURE AT THE TIME OF CHRIST

Grapes were allowed to grow along the ground, where their clusters were propped to prevent them from being ruined, or they were elevated onto poles or trellises.<sup>2</sup> The trellising of vines assisted in maximizing the

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<sup>1</sup> Gary W. Derickson, "Viticulture and John 15:1-6," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (January-March 1996): 35.

<sup>2</sup> Ralph Gower, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987) 105-06.

exposure to the sun for maximal fruit production and for minimal exposure to the damp ground with its disease-producing effects upon both leaves and fruit. It also assisted in increasing the flow of air through the branches and fruit clusters to minimize moisture retention all over the surface of the plant itself, further discouraging the promulgation of disease on plant tissue.<sup>3</sup> The pruning of the plants occurred at two primary times of the year: the spring and fall. Spring pruning removed succulent water sprouts (shoots) from the fruiting branches, and it removed dead and diseased wood from any place on the vine. It also removed adventitious succulent sprouts (suckers) from the trunk of the vine. The spring pruning excised succulent material primarily composed of water, and such did not lend itself well to burning, being void of woody brush. The spring pruning *did not* remove the branches that were unfruitful because these were needed to grow and mature to be of sufficient girth and strength to produce fruit the following year.

At the end of the growing season and after the harvest in the fall, the vines were severely pruned and all leaves were removed to induce dormancy in preparation for surviving the winter period. The severe pruning in the fall produced a significant amount of excised woody material that would readily burn. Such wood was of no fruit-bearing value because it existed at a time of the year that made it useless since it could no longer bear fruit. It could no longer bear fruit because winter was imminent and dormancy must be induced. The wood of the vine was not inherently unfruitful or “evil;” it simply existed at a time in which it could not be productive. The only recourse for it then, since it was useless, was to be excised from the vine and be gathered and burned. Pliny also described such branches as “useless” since they could not bear fruit any longer, the fruiting season having ended. These woody branches, which were cast off, now only provided the potential of propagation by cuttings.<sup>4</sup> He called such prunings at the end of the season, “brush-wood,” a term which will be significant when we discuss John 15:6.

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<sup>3</sup> Pliny wrote, “This is better for wine, as the vine so grown does not overshadow itself and is ripened by constant sunshine, and is more exposed to currents of air and so gets rid of dew more quickly, and also is easier for trimming and for harrowing the soil and all operations; and above all it sheds its blossoms in a more beneficial manner” (*Natural History* [The Loeb Classical Library] [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947-63] 17.35).

<sup>4</sup> Concerning propagation practices, Pliny wrote, “Vines give more numerous kinds of shoots for planting. The first point is that none of these are used for planting except useless growths lopped off for brush-wood, whereas any branch that bore fruit last time is pruned away” (ibid).

The *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, dated c. AD 280, also assists us in understanding this process when it described an actual legal contract for vineyard management. It stated that the beginning of the management process began with the “pruning (?), transport of leaves and throwing them outside the mud-walls” (*Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, “No. 1631, a contract for labour in a vineyard”).<sup>5</sup> The pruning did not occur in the spring, but in the fall of the year. It corresponded to the pruning that occurred after the harvest was completed in the fall. The fall cultural practice was followed by “planting as many vine-stems as are necessary, digging, hoeing round the vines and surrounding them with trenches.”<sup>6</sup> The practice referred to the asexual reproduction practice of the planting of cuttings taken from the late season, pre-dormancy pruning process. The cuttings would take root during the dormant period.

The vineyard management contract then proceeded with the growing season responsibilities “for the remaining operations after those mentioned above, consisting of breaking up the ground, picking off shoots, keeping the vines well tended, disposition of them, removal (?) of shoots, needful thinnings of foliage.”<sup>7</sup> The growing season activities did not include the removal of branches. The “picking off shoots,” the “removal of shoots,” and the “needful thinnings of foliage” describe the removal of suckers and water sprouts—not, as Pliny termed it, the “brush-wood.” The procedures were performed on the fruiting branches and were designed to encourage fruit production and discourage unnecessary vegetative growth produced at the expense of the preferred fruit production. The leafy growth rate of a vine must be carefully maintained for if allowed to grow too quickly, it will reduce flowering and fruiting. If allowed to grow too slowly, it will not have sufficient leaf material to intercept the sun’s photosynthetic rays, which stimulate flowering and subsequent fruit production.

One additional practice of great interest was also observed; it involves the practice of maintaining non-fruiting branches on the vine. Some young first-year branches were carefully maintained in order to provide additional fruiting branches for the following year, which is a normal maturation process. Therefore, in the spring when the vine is undergoing its less-intense pruning—consisting of primarily removing succulent vegetative growth—non-fruit bearing branches are allowed to remain so they can mature over the growing season into a fruiting branch in the future. Such branches are appropriately *encouraged* by the

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<sup>5</sup> B. P. Grenfell, “The Present Position of Papyrology,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 6 (January 1921): 145.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

vinedresser and *not removed* by the vinedresser. Derickson indicated that this procedure has not changed since the first century.

Many commentators discuss only one pruning and incorrectly assume that all non-fruit bearing branches are removed and burned at that time. We have demonstrated from both historical and current cultural practices that such is not the case and only serves to confuse the biblical record and our understanding of the Lord's intended message. The spring pruning actually encouraged the maturation of non-fruit bearing branches so they could bear fruit the following year. The fall pruning excised all of the leafy vegetation and much of the "brush-wood" (as Pliny termed it), and it was then in the fall of the year that the significant burning occurred to eliminate the woody branches as they prepared the vine for the winter dormant period. Again, Pliny referred to these excised branches as "useless" since they could no longer bear fruit.

TO LIFT UP AND PRUNE:

Αίρει and Καθαίρει

As a consequence of a misguided understanding of the viticultural practices of the day (and this author believes, a certain systematic theological predisposition), many have determined that αίρει must mean "remove or take away," as in judgment, contrary to the viticulturally precise "lift up," as in stimulation and encouragement. Verse two uses both Greek words αίρει and καθαίρει and the King James Version, in addition to virtually all other versions, translates them, "takes away" and "prunes," or similar, respectively. Is it possible that virtually every single translator has misunderstood this passage and rendered it inappropriately? While fully understanding the potential arrogance of this position, this author believes the facts appear to answer this question in the most humble "affirmative." The situation only reemphasizes the acute importance in accurately recognizing the context and culture in translating words that can have different connotations. Arthur W. Pink also noted this problem.

Again a difficulty has been needlessly created here by the English rendering of the Greek verb. "Airo" is frequently translated in the A.V. "lifted up." For example: "And they lifted up their voices" (Luke 17.13, so also in Acts 4.24). "And Jesus lifted up his eyes" (John 11.41). "Lifted up his hand" (Rev. 10.5), etc. In none of these places could the verb be rendered "taken away." Therefore, we are satisfied that it would be more accurate and more in

accord with “the analogy of faith” to translate, “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he *lifteth up*”—from trailing on the ground.<sup>8</sup>

Καθαίρω (translated “prunes”) is an attested viticultural term in the literal sense and it carries the idea of clearing, cleaning, and pruning;<sup>9</sup> it also has the figurative sense of spiritual cleansing which is evident in the Lord’s use of it in its substantival adjective form in verse three (viz. καθαροί), where it is translated “clean.” Jesus would use this attested viticultural term in a manner consistent with its normal use and meaning. Since verse two’s καθαίρει (present active indicative, third person singular) is the proper viticultural term for removing the adventitious shoots and suckers from a fruiting branch, it should be understood and interpreted in that manner. Similarly, the use of αἶρει in this same viticultural context should be understood in a viticultural manner. It is most likely that Christ was using it to describe a common practice the disciples would know and interpret correctly. The two Greek verbs described two different activities that were done simultaneously in the vineyard in the springtime. Jesus was not combining two different Greek words in one sentence to describe the same viticultural activity, that is, the removal of both non-fruiting branches (αἶρει, “takes away”) and the removal of suckers (καθαίρει, “prunes”). He was not combining two incongruent activities in one sentence, which occurred in two separate seasons, one in the spring and one in the fall of the year. Instead, He was speaking of activities that were occurring *even then* in their vineyards, such as spring training and spring trimming, at the very time in which He was speaking to the disciples.

Most exegetes have understood verse two to be the description of an activity where the vinedresser picks off and “prunes” the shoots and suckers, and then removes or “takes away” the non-fruiting branches. However, as we have observed, that contradicts the extant evidence given by Pliny with regard to the actual desirable practice of the retention of non-fruiting branches in the spring for the purpose of encouraging their growth throughout the growing season. Would it not be more consistent with reality to acknowledge that the Lord was simply describing what was being done currently in the vineyards during the same season that they were speaking? Is the Lord really going to now introduce the disciples to a new, revolutionary horticultural practice they had never known? During

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<sup>8</sup> Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975) 808.

<sup>9</sup> Walter Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 488.

the Lord's urgent desire to impart understanding and encouragement to these soon-beleaguered loved ones, did He now pause to teach them some novel viticultural innovation? We should doubt it. At that season, vinedressers were tying certain non-fruiting branches to their poles or trellises to encourage their vegetative growth, whereas, from the fruiting branches they were pinching off and pruning excessive vegetative growth—doing both at the same time. To view αἰρεῖ (translated “takes away”) as a judgment or some type of disciplinary action actually challenges the actual practice of their day. It does not conform to reality and the disciples would not have made such an incongruous conclusion.

Verse two does not figuratively contrast the disciples with other people who had falsely professed their belief in Christ, as some would suppose. It also does not contrast the disciples with other true disciples who refuse to bear fruit and need to be removed in the form of some disciplinary judgment, as others would suppose. It rather describes some who are in Him, yet are not yet able to bear fruit until they further mature by maintaining a close communion by abiding in Him. These people are encouraged and stimulated when the Father “lifts (them) up” to allow them to mature further. Verse two also describes others who are in Him and are bearing fruit because they are maintaining a close communion by abiding in Him. These people, like the disciples, are not perfect but they are moving forward in their determination to follow Christ. There is no hint whatsoever of the threat of discipline to either group of individuals. The next verse will demonstrate that the disciples themselves are “clean,” that is, they are being pruned of shoots and suckers, and are therefore at the initiation of the fruit-bearing process.

JOHN 15:3 (“YOU ARE ALREADY CLEAN  
BECAUSE OF THE WORD WHICH I HAVE SPOKEN TO YOU.”)

The Lord reaffirmed the reality of their redeemed status, as He had previously done in the 13:10 passage, by reminding that they were “clean.” The affirmation reveals that they were part of the fruit-bearing process because they received His words and responded to them in belief and obedience. Of course, one must already be redeemed to continue in the fruit-bearing process; therefore, this term involves the idea of being justified and its continued process into sanctification. Joseph C. Dillow and William MacDonald stated respectively:

The disciples had already been “pruned” (they were “clean”—the same Greek word καθαρεύω) through Jesus’ word spoken to them. The disciples were now given instruction on how they, not those to whom they would

minister, could continue to bear fruit. They could continue to bear fruit if they remained in fellowship with Him (i.e., if they were abiding in Him).<sup>10</sup>

The cleansing agent is the word of the Lord. The disciples had originally been cleansed by the word at the time of their conversion. Just as the Savior had been talking to them, His Word had had a purifying effect on their lives. Thus, this verse may refer to justification *and* sanctification.<sup>11</sup>

JOHN 15:4 (“ABIDE IN ME, AND I IN YOU. AS THE BRANCH CANNOT BEAR FRUIT OF ITSELF, UNLESS IT ABIDES IN THE VINE, NEITHER CAN YOU, UNLESS YOU ABIDE IN ME.”)

Indeed, the Lord did reaffirm the justified status of His disciples in verse three but they had arrived, without realization, at a crucial junction in their walk with Him. There is a very real, very decisive conflict that was about to engulf them without so much as their permission; it was about to catapult them into a pronounced state of fear and despair. The conflict would begin with the outrageous arrest, unjust conviction and horrific crucifixion of their Master. Now, more than ever, was the time for them to remain, to abide, to closely align themselves with the teachings—the “words”—of Christ. The very “words” that cleaned them in justification would transform their minds into abiding, remaining, and adhering steadfastly to their Lord. In the very act of abiding in the Lord, the disciples would exhibit righteousness—that is, Christ-likeness—because they would be agreeing with the Father that whatever He does is *right*—including the sacrificing of His Son for wretched sinners and the “postponing” of their long-awaited Messianic kingdom. Indeed, they would not only accept and agree with the Father’s choices but they would, in fact, love and adore both Him and His decisions. There would be no place for complaints emanating from thankless hearts for they could trust the hand of the Almighty—if only they should abide in Him. There would not be room in their hearts for even the mere acquiescence to His sovereignty; as if, they were only fatalistically resigned to the fact that they had no power or choice in the matter. Indeed, if only they should abide in Christ—in Christ’s words, in Christ’s love for His Father, and the Father’s wisdom—the disciples would truly welcome and love these things which the Father would bring into their lives, for they would love Christ and His Father! George R. Beasley-Murray wrote:

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<sup>10</sup> Joseph C. Dillow, “Abiding Is Remaining in Fellowship: Another Look at John 15:1-6,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147 (January 1990): 53.

<sup>11</sup> William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Art Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995) 1549.

The meaning of “remaining” in Jesus is spelled out in verses 7–10. It is to let *his words* remain in us, i.e., to heed them and to live by them (v. 7; cf. Rev. 1:3). It is to live *in the love of Jesus* (v. 9), i.e., to be ever conscious of that love, rejoice in it, depend on it, and do nothing to grieve it. It is to live *in obedience* to the Lover (v. 10), since that shows the genuineness of our own responsive love. When we so live, he honors us by calling us his “friends” (v. 15). Abraham and Moses were called friends of God, for God showed Abraham what he intended to do (Gen. 18:17), and he spoke with Moses face to face (Exod. 33:11); so Jesus made known to his disciples all that he heard from the Father (v. 15). The result of such living association with Jesus is fruit bearing. As a vine is grown solely for its fruit (it is useless for anything else, as Ezekiel recognized, 15:1–6), so disciples are called to be productive. . . . But the ultimate product of fruit bearing is love (v. 17); that is the fruit that most delights the Lord.<sup>12</sup>

When these disciples began to abide in Christ’s words, when they began to obey His words, when they began to abide in His love because they obeyed His words, the result would be the presence of joy in their lives. Unless you love the Father’s right to do whatever He wills in your life, there will never be joy. Samuel Lewis Johnson reported that one of the results of abiding is to have complete joy.

The old saints used to say, “The comforts of the Spirit at their lowest, are far superior to the joys of the world at their highest pitch. When saints are mourning, their inward peace is still superior to that of worldlings, when their mirth and revelry overflow all bounds. Lord, I had rather take the worst from thee than the best from thine enemy.” Joy belongs to the saints alone.<sup>13</sup>

The preposition, ἐν, as in “abide *in* Me,” is normally used to “designate a close personal relation.”<sup>14</sup> The word also depicts a “marker of close, personal association—‘in, one with, in union with, joined closely to.’”<sup>15</sup> Consequently, it would be reasonable to maintain that to abide “in Me” means to remain in a state of close, personal association. The abiding involves and describes a relationship that—to borrow an appropriate horticultural term—has been carefully *cultivated* to be all-the-more productive after the initial organic union of justification is in place. The

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<sup>12</sup> George R. Beasley-Murray, “John 13–17: The Community of True Life,” *Review and Expositor* 85 (Summer 1988): 479.

<sup>13</sup> Samuel Lewis Johnson, “Abiding in Christ,” *Emmaus Journal* 4 (Winter 1995): 151.

<sup>14</sup> Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 4c, 327.

<sup>15</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2 vols. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989) 1:89.119.

fact is, to be “in Him” begins with the organic union of salvation and it, of necessity, extends into ongoing, intimate fellowship, and communion that is abiding. To be “in Him” necessitates salvation but the addition of the word “abide” before the prepositional phrase, “in Him,” qualifies how deep such a relationship will progress.

There is a passage in John 6:56 that refers to abiding in relation to one who “eats My flesh and drinks My blood.” However, “eating and drinking” is not the same as “abiding.” Eating and drinking Christ’s flesh and blood refers to the act of belief whereas “abides in Me” is the concomitant result of the original union. Our organic union at belief was intended to produce our ongoing abiding in Him. However, at the risk of stimulating an accusation of “stating the obvious,” there must *first* be the organic union before the close fellowship grows from it. “Abiding in Me” is only the beginning of a fellowship that intends the same communion that existed in Eden.

The Lord commanded His disciples with an aorist active imperative (μείνατε), which indicated that they were not at that time yet abiding in Him. They were at this decisive point in their walk with Him where they were ready to demonstrate their fruitbearing. They had grown and matured and were now ready to bear fruit, with the potential for more fruit and even much fruit. To appreciate the full tone of His command it could be translated, “You all *start* or *begin* abiding in Me,” which indicated they had not yet begun to fulfill this essential task in fruitbearing. If the Lord had wanted to command them to continue abiding, He would have employed the present active imperative, which could have been translated, “You all *continue* abiding in Me.” However, the Lord used the aorist active imperative form to emphasize the *initiation* of their abiding and enduring with Him, or to employ a colloquial expression, their “hanging in there” with Him.

The choice in the Greek verb tense is noteworthy because it indicates that “abiding in Me” is not the grammatical equivalence to being “in Me,” as the second view previously discussed contends. In the thirteenth chapter’s example of the foot-washing and in John 15:3, we observe that the Lord already affirmed the justified status of the eleven disciples. If “abide in Me” were the same as being justified, then why did the Lord employ the aorist active imperative, which commanded the disciples to *start doing* something that they were *already* doing—that is, to start remaining in a justified state? Why should a believer be commanded to become a believer when he is already a believer? If “abide in Me” was equivalent to salvation, we could substitute “being saved” every time we use the term, “abide in Me.” Let us try that approach in verse four using

the literal aorist active tense. “Abide in Me” would translate like this: “You all start being saved and I will start being your Savior.” However, the disciples were already justified by the Lord’s own admission! If the Lord employed the present active imperative, He would be commanding the already-acknowledged-to-be-justified disciples to continue “being justified.” Would it not be equally absurd to command justified believers to continue being justified? The answer is “of course.” The fact is that these men were already justified but they needed to remain steadfast to their Lord, to abide in Him, if they were to be fruitful. Lewis Sperry Chafer and Joseph C. Dillow wrote the following respectively.

The word μένω, which is translated *abide*, is used about 120 times in the New Testament. Other English terms used to translate this word are equally significant—‘remain, continue, tarry, endure’ (Matt 10:11; Luke 19:5; Acts 9:43; 27:31; 1 Cor 13:13; 2 Tim 2:13). The Apostle John employs this verb sixty-four times, and in his writings the Authorized Version translators have rendered the word *abide* twenty-one times. The meaning of this Greek term is thus clearly indicated as that which remains, dwells, continues, tarries or endures; it is what abides in the position in which it is placed. In reference to spiritual reality the word *abide* indicates a constancy in relation to Christ. It is also true that Christ referred to His own abiding in the believer (cf. John 15:5), which relationship could never fail since it depends only on His faithfulness. . . . Communion depends upon agreement, and agreement requires complete subjection of one to his superior: thus it is imperative that the commandments of the one shall be kept by the other. Christ said that by keeping His Father’s commandments He abode in His love. There was, of course, no attempt on Christ’s part to preserve a union with His Father. That had been unbroken and unbreakable from all eternity; but, on the human side, He did maintain communion by doing the Father’s will.<sup>16</sup>

In the Gospel of John μένω always means “to remain, to stay, to reside, to continue, to endure” (e.g., 1:32, 38–39 ; 2:12 ).<sup>17</sup> For this reason the New International Version translates the word “remain.” In 15:4 Jesus told His disciples, “Abide in Me,” that is, “Remain in Me.” What does it mean “to remain”? When the Lord said, “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides [remains] in Me” (6:56), He meant that such an individual continues in close relationship to Him. Eating His flesh and drinking His blood seem to refer to the initial act of appropriating Christ by faith with the resultant gift of regeneration (6:50–51, 54, 58). When a person believes in Christ, he comes into a close relationship with Christ. The richness of that fellowship is determined by the believer’s obedience (15:10). However, even though he has believed in Christ, and presently remains in fellowship, he might at some time in the future not continue in that fellowship. Hence the command to stay in fellowship is given. When Jesus said that the person who believes in

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<sup>16</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, “Editorials,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 107 (January 1950): 1-2.

<sup>17</sup> John used μένω frequently; 66 of 118 times it occurs in the New Testament (40 in John, 23 in 1 John, and 3 in 2 John).

Him remains in fellowship with Him, He was speaking a general maxim. He knew some Christians would not continue their fellowship. . . . To “remain in Him” a Christian must keep Christ’s commandments. Only if believers love one another does the love of God remain in them (1 John 4:12). For the love of God to remain in them, it must have been in them to begin with. As elsewhere in John’s writings, “remain” never signifies the initial event of saving faith in Christ but the enduring relationship of walking in fellowship with Him. The word “remain” implies staying in a position already obtained, not entering for the first time. If a nonbeliever should ask, “What must I do to be saved,” it would be wrong to answer, “Remain in Christ.” The *believer* remains in Christ (i.e., remains in fellowship with Him) by keeping His commandments.”<sup>18</sup>

It is apparent that believers can exist apart from “remaining” or “abiding” with Christ. If not, how else can one explain passages concerning the grieving and quenching of the Holy Spirit? If believers always remain and abide with Christ, what is the point of disciplinary restoration (church discipline) if there is no need to restore? Why were the epistles replete with admonitions to obey and prohibitions to ungodly thinking and its progeny (viz. ungodly conduct)? It is because believers do choose not to remain and, in that condition, are useless for fruitbearing for they will not exhibit Christ-likeness and cannot glorify the Father.

JOHN 15:5 (“I AM THE VINE, YOU ARE THE BRANCHES.  
HE WHO ABIDES IN ME, AND I IN HIM, BEARS MUCH FRUIT;  
FOR WITHOUT ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING.”)

Please note that John F. Walvoord marked a branch that is not bearing fruit as “useless” for anything else. A branch either fulfills its proper function or it is useless.

The passage emphasizes degrees of fruitfulness which are stated as (1) fruit, (2) more fruit, and (3) much fruit. Attending fruitfulness is the wonderful joy of serving the Lord as indicated in John 15:11, “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.” The joy of the Christian is in sharp contrast to the pleasure of the world. True Christian joy is the by-product of fruitfulness and is wrought in the heart by the Spirit who produced His own fruit of love, joy, and peace. It is most significant that the branches of the vine are useless for anything other than bearing fruit (Ezek 15:2-5). The character of branches of the vine makes it impossible to use them for building. They are of no use as firewood, and their beauty as branches is negligible. Only in fruitfulness can a branch related to the vine fulfill its divine purpose and function. . . . The result of

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<sup>18</sup> Joseph C. Dillow, “Abiding Is Remaining,” 49-51.

abiding in Christ as symbolized in the vine and the branches has been summarized in the triad, “fruit perpetual; joy celestial; prayer effectual.”<sup>19</sup>

Walvoord’s point has been made earlier and its noteworthiness will come to fruition later. Robert Dean commented:

The vine discourse emphasizes the believer’s fruit production. Abiding is the necessary and only condition for fruit production and glorifying God. Galatians 5 makes walking by means of the Spirit the only and necessary condition for fruit production. Walking by means of the Spirit and abiding in Christ are equivalent. If abiding were believing, then so is walking by the Spirit. Nothing could be more absurd! Both refer to the believer’s post-salvation life, revealing his progressive sanctification. . . . Most commentators view abiding in John 15 as believing. Both Reformed Theology and Lordship Salvation share an often unrealized presupposition that the vine of John 15 is like the Old Testament vine comprised of believer and unbeliever alike.<sup>20</sup>

“Abiding in Christ,” “walking in the Spirit,” “Spirit-filled,” and “allowing the word of Christ to dwell in you richly,” are all phrases that denote the same thing: remaining determined to be obediently Christ-minded. The Christian’s life is not a perfect walk, but it is a walk that determines to resolve any differences with Christ’s expectations in a manner that pleases Him. He does not reveal *everything* to which He objects in our lives all at the same time. He does not reveal *all* that He wants believers to learn all at the same time. Learning to obey is a lifelong task; it began the day we were saved *by grace alone* and it continues *by His grace alone*. Christians are completely dependent upon Him *for both*. W. E. Vine wrote:

A distinction is necessary between the subject of the life of the believer as being inseparable from Christ from the day on which he receives Him by faith, and the relation of the believer to Him in the matter of spiritual fruit-bearing. As to the former the Lord made the imperishable life of the believer clear in chapter ten, in declaring that His sheep could never perish. What He is now showing is that no believer can bring forth fruit from his own resources or by his own initiative. As the apostle Paul says, “I labored . . . yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” “We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves.” “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> 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): 300.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Dean, Jr., “Abiding in Christ: A Dispensational Theology of the Spiritual Life (Part 1 of 3),” *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal*, Chafer Theological Seminary 7 (January 2001): 49-50.

William MacDonald wrote:

Christ Himself is the vine; believers are vine branches. It is not a question of the branch living its life for the Vine, but simply of letting the life of the Vine flow out through the branches. Sometimes we pray, “Lord, help me to live my life for You.” It would be better to pray, “Lord Jesus, live out Your life through me.” Without Christ, we can do nothing. A vine branch has one great purpose—to bear fruit. It is useless for making furniture or for building homes. It does not even make good firewood. But it *is* good for fruit bearing—as long as it abides in the vine.<sup>22</sup>

William MacDonald also noted the “useless” nature of branches that do not allow the life of the vine to flow through them as reflected by fruitbearing. The believer who does not allow the life of Christ to be displayed in his/her own life is equally useless for fruitbearing. He/she may not be completely useless altogether (even a bad example is still an example and even a clock disconnected from its power source is right twice a day) but he/she is quite useless for the purpose of fruitbearing.

JOHN 15:6 (“IF ANYONE DOES NOT ABIDE IN ME, HE IS CAST OUT AS A BRANCH AND IS WITHERED; AND THEY GATHER THEM AND THROW THEM INTO THE FIRE, AND THEY ARE BURNED.”)

On the surface and from our 21<sup>st</sup> century advantage point in God’s revelation to man, this verse seems to express eternal punishment to some exegetes, temporary disciplinary punishment in this life to other exegetes, and even mortal disciplinary punishment (the “sin unto death”) to still other exegetes. The final analysis usually depends upon which side of systematic theology—reformed or dispensational—one affirms. Typically, reformed theology proposes that the individual is a lost person: a false professor, a false believer. The outcome for such is rejection and the eternal flame of hellfire. Nevertheless, the intended listeners, which were the disciples, and the overall tenor of encouragement rather than condemnation in both the greater context of John 13—17 (the Upper Room Discourse) and in this smaller context (John 15:1-8) appear to question that view.

Typically, dispensational theology proposes that the rejection and the flames possibly indicate several things. Some believe it all to represent various forms of divine discipline on disobedient believers ranging from earthly chastening, to church discipline, to the “sin unto death.” Some

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<sup>21</sup> W. E. Vine, *Collected Writings of W. E. Vine* [CD-ROM], (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997).

<sup>22</sup> MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary*, 1550.

believe this passage teaches that the Lord disciplines wayward, uncooperative believers with the scorn of men, because the passage states “they gather them and throw them into the fire.” The “they” are men who scorn the hypocritical believer who now possesses a marred testimony. William MacDonald wrote:

But through carelessness and prayerlessness this believer gets out of touch with the Lord. As a result, he commits some sin, and his testimony is ruined. Through failure to abide in Christ, he is thrown out as a branch—not by Christ, but by other people. The branches are gathered and thrown into the fire, and they are burned. It is not God who does it, but people. What does this mean? It means that people scoff at this backslidden Christian. They drag his name in the mud. They throw his testimony as a Christian into the fire. This is well illustrated in the life of David. He was a true believer, but he became careless toward the Lord and committed the sins of adultery and murder. He caused the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. Even today, atheists ridicule the name of David (and of David’s God). They cast him, as it were, into the fire.<sup>23</sup>

Lewis Sperry Chafer agreed. He wrote, “Being broken off from communion, they are withered in spiritual power. The judgment which falls immediately upon them is not from God, however, but from their fellow men (cf. 2 Sam 12:14).”<sup>24</sup> Joseph C. Dillow commented, “The believer who does not remain in fellowship because of disobedience is cast out in judgment and withers spiritually, and faces severe divine discipline in time and loss of reward at the judgment seat of Christ.”<sup>25</sup> Robert Dean stated:

The non-abiding branches, which are removed, could refer to the burning with fire at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:15). However, not every mention of burning refers to the Lake of Fire or the Judgment Seat of Christ. The burning of the useless vine branches probably illustrates divine discipline for believers who fail to advance and sustain fellowship in Christ.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, as one attempts to partition this passage, is it really exegetically appropriate to say that one can hereby actually identify these individuals are who are performing the “casting, gathering, throwing, and burning?” While, what William MacDonald, Lewis Sperry Chafer, Joseph C. Dillow and Robert Dean, all wrote is indeed generally true of Christian life, the question before the reader is what exactly was Christ’s immediate and intended message to His disciples that night?

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Chafer, “Editorials,” 4.

<sup>25</sup> Dillow, “Abiding Is Remaining,” 53-54.

<sup>26</sup> Dean, “Abiding in Christ,” 48-49.

As opposed to “scoffers” who scorn carnal Christians, would it not be more appropriate to understand that the one who will “cast out” is the vinedresser and that the ones who “gather, throw, and burn” the branches are those who work for him? Is this also not a more accurate presentation of viticultural reality? Therefore, if this is the case, how should one propose an analogy for the disciples’ spiritual understanding, since after all, the Lord was not simply recounting horticultural practices, was He? The beginning of the analogy indicated that God the Father was the vinedresser; it does not identify who His instruments are who work in His vineyard. During the course of biblically recorded history, He has employed non-elect angels (lying spirits), Satan, lost kings, and lost prophets in addition to a host of redeemed individuals and elect angels to work His bidding. Is it really possible to narrowly identify who is doing this work in John 15:6? One should rather think not, but if their identification is essential, and it is not, it would be usual and customary to understand them as being servants of the vinedresser. Such an understanding would more closely indicate that it is angels and believers who are doing His work. Indeed, however, this author does not believe the details herein are sufficient to accurately identify the individuals working in the vineyard with any level of specificity or confidence.

Might it also be possible that judgment is not actually the intended application? Must one always assume that there is a judgment present every time there is smoke and flame? John F. Walvoord aptly noted, “It apparently was not the intent of the passage to develop at length the precise relationship of the unfruitful branches. In John 15.6 the appeal is made to human customs rather than to divine activity in this regard.”<sup>27</sup> At the end of the season, in order to prepare the vine for dormancy and because the fruiting season has ended, all leafy material and most of the branches are removed (this is the normal human custom). That the Lord had progressed in the life of the vine from the spring season, with its lifting up and pruning, to the fall season, with its severe pruning, may also be observed by His use of different terms. The terms used for these useless excised branches are that they were “cast” (ἐβλήθη) and “thrown” (βάλλουσιν) out. The two verbs come from the same root Greek word, βάλλω. The terminology is not the same as being “pruned” (καθαίρει) or “cleansed” (καθαροί) which stems instead from the adjective, καθαρός, which means “clean or pure.”<sup>28</sup> Believers who do not abide in Christ are just as useless for fruitbearing as these end-of-season branches that are

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<sup>27</sup> Walvoord, “Present Work of Christ,” 298-99.

<sup>28</sup> H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 850.

piled in a heap and burned. Please note that the same terminology, “thrown” is also used in the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* to describe the destiny of the end-of-season excised branches, which brings us to a point raised at the beginning of this paper. Too often, exegetes attempt to determine the identity of the verse two branches and whether or not “He takes away” or “He lifts up” is the appropriate translation based on how they view the fires of verse six. Nevertheless, verses two and six concern practices performed at *different* times of the year and the disciples would understand that. Verse six cannot be used first and foremost to inform and determine the meaning of verse two. Verse two should be understood in its proper viticultural context and then verse six will be understood in its proper context. Verse six is not the spring pruning employed to encourage immature growth by lifting them up.

The prunings of the spring are too small and succulent to produce a burning pile. There would be insufficient time to produce any suckers and shoots with a woody stem. It was reported that a two-foot long sucker would wither away to practically nothing in the spring.<sup>29</sup> Derickson described the late-season pruning.

Rather than warning of discipline or judgment, verse 6 illustrates uselessness in light of dormant-season pruning. Within the vine-and-branch analogy, the best illustration of the uselessness resulting from a failure to abide could come only from the postharvest pruning. Everything pruned in early spring was either growing from a branch (sprigs and suckers), the branch not being removed, or from an undesired location on the trunk. Only at the end of the season would “branches” be removed, piled up, and burned. In fact Jesus may have chosen to allude to postharvest cultural practices specifically because He did not want His disciples mistakenly to link fruitfulness or fruitlessness to divine discipline. Rather, He wanted them to see the importance of abiding. In a vineyard anything not attached to the vine is useless and discarded. A part of the discarding process at the end of the productive season is the burning of dry materials. The burning need not describe judgment; it is simply one step in the process being described. It is what happens to pruned materials. Their uselessness, not their destruction, is being emphasized.<sup>30</sup>

As has been indicated previously, the excised branches are not evil. They simply cannot perform their function as fruitbearers during the winter so they are removed and burned. As fruitbearers they are useless. They will be cut off, thrown out, gathered, and burned. The action is a matter-of-fact presentation by the Lord to the reality of end-of-the-season

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<sup>29</sup> Derickson, “Viticulture and John 15:1-6,” 51.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

practices. In the exact same way that those end-of-the-season branches were useless to the vinedresser for fruitbearing, any disciple who did not remain steadfast to the words of Christ, was also useless for fruitbearing. While it is true that the Lord gave a detailed and accurate presentation of what was actually occurring to the branches at the end of the season, He did not explicitly do so concerning the exact fate of the individuals of whom those excised and burned branches represented. The Lord was vague concerning the exact methods that wayward, uncooperative believers were affected, because Christ was not herein specifically teaching judgment; it was not His emphasis. He was primarily trying to teach them that anything attempted apart from Him was as useless as a branch that could not bear fruit any longer. His intent was to encourage and stimulate these men to remain, to abide, to “hang in there.”

Is it possible that there is an implication of discipline here? The answer is “of course;” that is, no doubt, why so many commentators spend so much time trying to explain such, yet, as an exegete, one must be completely honest and state that the given information does not expressly or explicitly support judgment. One must import revelation from later sources, such as the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, to support the implied understanding of this passage. Would the disciples have understood the Lord to hereby mean judgment or rather would they have understood the Lord’s intention was to indicate the useless fruitbearing position of end-of-the-season branches lying in a burning heap? Was He trying to encourage them to “hang in there” or vigorously warn them of impending discipline? The issue that is being addressed is that it may not be exegetically honest to confer one’s current and enlightened understanding of the Judgment Seat of Christ upon the listening ears and attentive minds of the disciples that night. Perhaps another way to look at this passage is to paraphrase it as follows:

If anyone will not abide, remain, or adhere steadfastly to Me, he will be just as useless as the end-of-season branches that are cut off, withered, gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. They are useless to me for fruit-bearing and he who will not abide in Me is also useless for fruit-bearing.

JOHN 15:8 (“BY THIS MY FATHER IS GLORIFIED,  
THAT YOU BEAR MUCH FRUIT; SO YOU WILL BE MY DISCIPLES.”)

Please note the progression of activities that occurs in this passage in the fifteenth chapter.

In Me not bearing fruit: He lifts up.  
 In Me and bearing fruit:  
 He promotes more fruit-bearing by pruning.  
 Promotion or cleansing is done by the Word.  
 Abide, remain, and endure to produce much fruit.  
 Abide and continue obeying to pray effectively.  
 Abide and bear much fruit to glorify the Father.  
 Abide and bear much fruit to prove you are His disciples.  
 Obey His words and you will abide in His love.  
 Abide to have enduring and fulfilling joy.

Eventually, when this passage is studied, it engenders one question in particular, “do all Christians produce fruit?” Can a true believer ever exist that has never, ever borne fruit? Charles R. Smith broached this subject.

Another problem that has sometimes been urged against this interpretation is that it requires that all true believers will produce fruit. It is objected that the Scriptures clearly teach that it is possible for Christians to be carnal, out of fellowship, and walking in darkness. That such a condition is possible is admitted by all, but this is not the same as saying that such a Christian does not, never has, or never will produce fruit. In fact, it must be insisted, on the basis of Scripture that all who are truly saved do produce fruit. ... Can a believer conceive of a Christian who has never experienced the love, joy, or peace, that the Holy Spirit produces? If such fruit has never been produced, then it may be affirmed that the Holy Spirit is not resident in such a person. This present generation of Christians (c. 1968) has emphasized the doctrine of carnality while de-emphasizing the doctrine that a true faith must produce fruit. Earlier generations of Christians were more insistent upon this latter point as well as the first. Only a generation ago Dr. Ironside spoke emphatically upon this point. . . .

[W]hen you are born again, you love to follow Jesus, and if you do not, you are not a Christian. Take that home. Examine your own foundations a bit. . . . It makes a tremendous difference what you do. If you do not behave yourself, it shows that you are not a real Christian. I know that a real Christian may fail, but the difference can be seen in Peter and Judas. Peter failed, and failed terribly, but he was genuine, and one look from Jesus sent him out weeping bitterly; his heart was broken to think that he had so dishonored his Lord. But Judas companied with the Lord almost three-and-a-half years, and was a devil all the time; he was a thief, and was seeking his own interest. He was even made the treasurer of the company, and he held the bag, but we read, “He bare away what was put therein” (John 12:6), as this has been literally translated. At last remorse overtook him, not genuine repentance, and what was the result? He went and hanged himself. He was

never a child of God. There is a great difference, you see, between a Christian and a false professor.<sup>31</sup>

The only proof that a person is a real Christian is the “fruit” produced in his life. “By their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt 7:20).<sup>32</sup>

The inevitability of being fruitful is emphasized very early in the Scriptures. Indeed, one of the basic principles of creation, stated in Genesis 1:11, is that everything bears fruit according to its kind (cf. Prov 12:12; Jer 17:7-10; Matt 3:10; 7:17-20; 13:23; Luke 8:15; Rom 7:4; Eph 2:10). Whether the Lord intended to warn the disciples with fire, concerning the chastening hand of His Father upon the one who does not abide and bear fruit in verse six, it may be justly debated. However, given the attention-getting terminology of “and they are burned,” if this is intended to describe judgment, it leaves no room for any gradation of the levels of discipline. In this illustration, judgment apparently is either total fiery annihilation for the non-abider or no judgment at all for the abider—there is no gradation in between, which is an awkward manner to describe chastening for the believer.

The imagery later expressed by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 was not recorded when the Lord spoke these words of encouragement in the Upper Room Discourse to the disciples. If these verse six burned branches represented some kind of divine judgment, the only recent “flame” of reference the disciples would really have is the everlasting hellfire that their Lord referenced quite frequently, in fact, only two days previous.<sup>33</sup> Such fiery imagery was irrelevant for the disciples unless it was meant to simply express the extent and completion of the normal, cyclical, seasonal practice associated with useless end-of-the-season branches. Nothing expresses how useless a branch will be to fruitbearing than it being reduced to ashes. In such an analogy, the disciples would keenly appreciate the need to remain steadfast with Christ and His teachings, yet not be concerned that they would experience the hellfire that their Lord had taught so frequently. It is exegetically more propitious to only interpret verse six as a straightforward rendering of what actually occurs in the post-harvest vineyard where excised branches are recognized to be incapable of fruitbearing and are considered useless. The non-abiding believer is equally useless for fruitbearing. The Johannine

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<sup>31</sup> H. A. Ironside, *The Eternal Security of the Believer* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1934) 18.

<sup>32</sup> Charles R. Smith, “The Unfruitful Branches of John 15,” *Grace Journal* 9 (Spring 1968): 13-15.

<sup>33</sup> One possible exception may be in the difficult passage of Mark 9:49, although the immediate repeated context concerns only hellfire.

passage teaches the vanity and uselessness of a person who does not abide. However, make no mistake that should any believer remain in a useless position, there will be chastening and judgment on that individual. Other relevant passages can now be introduced, at this point, to make that certain disciplinary event clearly known to those being taught concerning encouragement by this text.

The writer of Hebrews, however, *was* preeminently clear with regard to the place of discipline and chastening in the life of the believer. He exhorted and encouraged the reader to appreciate the discipline and chastening of the Lord because the Lord chastens and scourges—not some—but every son that He receives. In case the reader of Hebrews did not notice the fact that such activities are completely pervasive among God’s children without exception, the author repeated it in another manner. He asked the rhetorical question, “For what son is there whom a father does not chasten?” which then demands the answer, “None!” He even went further to demonstrate this by teaching the opposite side of this discussion. First, he wrote with regard to sons, but then, to avoid any possible misunderstanding with regard to what he said, he stated that if you are not chastened, you are not a son at all—just an illegitimate bastard. However, chastening and the training process produced one thing according to the writer of Hebrews: the peaceable *fruit* of righteousness, which is holy living. One thing is certain: chastening and training produce fruit not non-fruit!

#### CONCLUSION

What then are believers to now do? What is our duty to the saints? Believers today, as was essential for the Lord’s disciples, must endure, remain steadfast, and patiently abide in Christ (cf. Acts 14:21-22). Today is a perilous time when objective truth is unappreciated and viewed as virtually unknowable. As the Lord did for His disciples on the night in which He was betrayed, Christians must do no less. We must encourage and exhort each other to continue in the faith for in doing so, we abide in Him and our souls are strengthened.





## THE SOTERIOLOGY OF 2 TIMOTHY 2:11-13 – PART III

Davey S. Ermold

In this final article, 2 Timothy 2:11-13 will be considered with regard to its doctrinal implications, specifically answering how this passage corresponds into the systematic studies of soteriology and eschatology. As a consequence of the compact, creedal nature of the statement, it is likely that it is succinctly stating biblical doctrine. For that reason, and on the basis of the prior exegesis and critique of other historical views, discussion on the doctrines present in these couplets seems warranted.<sup>1</sup>

### SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT

The first doctrine, found in συναπεθάνομεν, deals with Christ's satisfactory death on the cross, appropriated by belief. Theologically, this is referred to as the substitutionary atonement. In his introduction to the topic, Erickson commented and posed a question: "We observed that Christ died for our sake or on our behalf. But is it proper to speak of his death as substitutionary, that is, did he actually die in our place?"<sup>2</sup> It seems as though Scripture answers this positively.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, substitutionary atonement can be defined as the work of Christ whereby through His death a believing sinner also dies to sin and spiritual death,<sup>4</sup> which is the foundation from which the believer grows in the faith. If salvation is considered a process in as much as it is bound and measured by time, believing in Christ's work constitutes the first step,

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that because of the amount of evangelical systematic theologies readily available today, the doctrines of the substitutionary atonement, eternal life, eternal security, and the believer's identification with Christ will receive less treatment here than the others. In those cases, references will be made to specific sections in those systematic theologies where the reader can find more information.

<sup>2</sup> Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 830.

<sup>3</sup> Paul stated in 2 Corinthians 5:21: God "made the One not knowing sin [to be] sin for [ὑπὲρ] us, in order that we ourselves would be the righteousness of God in Him;" and, in Galatians 3:13: "Christ, becoming a curse for [ὑπὲρ] us, redeemed us from the curse of the law." See also Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; Hebrews 9:28; and, 1 Peter 2:24.

<sup>4</sup> See also Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941) 373-83; Lewis Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 7 vols. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary, 1948) 3:55-76; Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, 4 vols. (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2004) 3:230-35 (where he listed twelve evidences for the substitutionary atonement); and, Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 574-81.

namely, justification, whereby a believing sinner is declared righteous.<sup>5</sup> It is at this point, as 2 Timothy 2 makes clear, that a believer has eternal life.

#### ETERNAL LIFE

Eternal life, which is seen in 2 Timothy 2 through συζήσομεν, is the present possession of believers whereby they will enjoy never ending physical and spiritual life on the new heavens and new earth.<sup>6</sup> The term ζωὴ αἰώνιος occurs forty times in the New Testament,<sup>7</sup> most notably in the Gospel of John, where it occurs seventeen times.

Several things can be noted here. *First*, the sole condition for eternal life is identification with Christ's substitutionary death on the cross; more specifically, without any action by endurance, maturation, or works on the part of the believer.<sup>8</sup> As seen in the exegesis and as will be seen in the following sections, the issue of endurance is a completely distinct and separate idea than that of dying with Christ and the subsequent eternal life.

*Second*, eternal life is first and foremost set in the future, as evidenced by the future tense in the indicative. Nevertheless, and *third*, it is also a present possession that a believer owns. Harris noted: "These two aspects of eternal life, present and future, are closely associated in John 5:21-30. . . . Whoever believes has eternal life in the present and will not face condemnatory judgment, but has already crossed over from death to life (v. 24)."<sup>9</sup> *Fourth*, it cannot be lost, an idea that will be expounded upon in the upcoming section on eternal security.

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<sup>5</sup> For more discussion on justification, see Berkhof, *Theology*, 510-23; Erickson, *Theology*, 968-74; and, Geisler, *Theology*, 3:235-37.

<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed analysis, see W. Hall Harris, "A Theology of John's Writings," in *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, eds. Roy B. Zuck and Darrell L. Bock (Chicago: Moody, 1994) 230-34.

<sup>7</sup> (Matt 19:16; 19:29; 25:46; Mark 10:17, 30; Luke 10:25; 18:18, 30; John 3:15, 16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24, 39; 6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68; 10:28; 12:25, 50; 17:2, 3; Acts 13:46, 48; Rom 2:7; 5:21; 6:22, 23; Gal 6:8; 1 Tim 1:16; 6:12; Tit 1:2; 3:7; 1 John 3:15; 5:11, 20; Jude 21).

<sup>8</sup> Take a statement such as Erickson's: "Saving faith requires correct belief regarding the nature of God and what he has done. Correct belief is insufficient, however. There must also be active commitment of oneself to God" (Erickson, *Theology*, 959). While a statement such as this is popular, especially among Reformed theologians, it seems to add more requirements to gaining eternal life than what Paul said here in 2 Timothy. As stated previously, it seems best to see *faith* as merely believing, and it is that which affects justification. The thesis for this series of articles is to demonstrate that when active commitment and works become involved, the conversation must turn necessarily to another topic such as sanctification, rewards, or lack thereof.

<sup>9</sup> The idea of a present possession is a purely Johannine thought. Harris continued: "In writing of eternal life as a future blessing in the age to come, John is in agreement with

## ENDURANCE/DENIAL

The question that then arises is: Once a believer receives eternal life, what is the result of that salvation in their lives? In the second couplet, ὑπομένομεν is translated *we endure*. Endurance in the context of 2 Timothy is remaining steadfast in the midst of persecution and trials, and was Paul's encouragement to Timothy to do so. To expand this to a broader theological definition, endurance is the act of maturing and growing in the faith, which is evidenced outwardly by the willingness to undergo tests.<sup>10</sup> Endurance can also be considered to be an aspect of sanctification, which Geisler defined as the "continual process in the present by which God is *making* us righteous."<sup>11</sup>

Knight noted that there always seems to be a connection between endurance and eschatology. At the very least, the "eschatological perspective of endurance is always in view," and "the expectation at the end of endurance is that of the end time situation."<sup>12</sup> If this is the case, it should make sense that endurance, sanctification, maturation, perseverance, or whatever it is that one wishes to label it, has an eschatological reward to it. Sanctification, however, is not a necessary and automatic result of justification, as was seen in part two of this series.

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the Synoptic Gospels. The emphasis on eternal life as a present reality experienced by the believer differs from the Synoptics and is a unique contribution of John. These two are not disparate and contradictory; rather the future aspects of eternal life are a continuation of that aspect of eternal life experienced in the present" (Harris, "Theology," 231).

<sup>10</sup> The tests can include a great number of things, including persecution and death for the sake of Christ. It may be most generically stated that a test is "an outward circumstance that presents a believer with difficulties, pain, and unpleasantness" (Paul Benware, *The Believer's Payday* [Chattanooga: AMG, 2002] 121).

<sup>11</sup> Geisler, *Theology*, 3:237 (emphasis original). See also Berkhof, *Theology*, 527-44; and, Erickson, *Theology*, 980-86.

<sup>12</sup> Knight continued: "Jesus endured the cross 'for the joy that was set before him' and 'has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God' (Heb. 12:2). Those who endure unto the end, the same shall be saved (Mt. 10:22, 24:13; Mk. 13:13). Believers endured joyfully the spoiling of their possessions, 'knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one' (Heb. 10:32). The Christians of Hebrews are encouraged to patience 'that, having done the will of God, you may receive the promise' (Heb. 10:36). And that is seen not only in the 'saving of the soul' (Heb. 10:39), but also in the eschatological coming of God (Heb. 10:37). Likewise the man who truly endures temptation 'shall receive the crown of life' (James 1:12), for endurance is a proof of love to God and this crown is promised to all them that love the Lord" (George Knight, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters* [Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968] 120-21).

## REIGNING/LOSS OF REIGNING

In comparison to the information available on the three aforementioned doctrines, discussions on what it means to reign with Christ (συμβασιλεύσομεν) have been virtually, if not utterly, silent. Indeed, from the entirety of his systematic theology, Erickson devoted one paragraph to this phenomenon.<sup>13</sup> To be sure, Scripture says less on this topic than it does other areas; however, it is not utterly silent. Therefore, it would be behoove the believer to be aware of what the Bible teaches concerning the privilege and extent of reigning with Christ.

***The Privilege of Reigning with Christ***<sup>14</sup>

In the previous article, exegesis demonstrated that while eternal life is solely dependant upon identifying with Christ's death, reigning with Him is dependant upon faithfulness and endurance in this life. Not all believers will share in this privilege. Benware mentioned two kinds of inheritance: "The Scriptures speak of two future inheritances: one because we are children of God and one because we are *faithful* children of God"<sup>15</sup> (this is not solely a New Testament concept, however). Considering the Old Testament, Dillow noted: "The Israelite became an heir by birth, but due to disobedience he could forfeit the firstborn privilege. It was necessary that he obey if he would obtain what was promised."<sup>16</sup>

The first inheritance, then, is one that comes from believing in Christ's death and resurrection; it is the one referenced in the first and last

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<sup>13</sup> Erickson, *Theology*, 967. Also see Geisler, who simply stated in one place: "Christ's disciples will reign with Him, each being rewarded according to his works" (*Theology*, 4:562). He also remarked: "Reigning is a part of a believer's reward, and he has already received eternal life, whether he is rewarded or not" (ibid. 3:330). Berkhof, *Theology*, does not even mention it.

<sup>14</sup> In addition to the following discussion, see also Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2004) 215-35.

<sup>15</sup> Benware continued: "The first inheritance is the future aspect of our salvation and is the guaranteed inheritance of all believers. The second inheritance is based on merit and may or may not be received by the believer. A believer can, therefore, possess the first inheritance but not possess the second one" (Benware, *Payday*, 22 [emphasis original]). This author is deeply indebted to Paul Benware for not only the content of this section, but also for introducing him to this concept during his undergraduate studies.

<sup>16</sup> Dillow continued: "We are therefore alerted to the fact that the inheritance is not something which comes automatically to all who are sons but only to those sons who are obedient. The inheritance was something in addition to salvation and was not equated with it. It was obtained by victorious perseverance and obedient faith" (Joseph Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings* [Hayesville, NC: Schoettle, 1993] 58-59). Dillow's entire discussion on *inheritance* can be found on pages 43-92.

couplets in this statement. The inheritance as a child of God is that of which Paul wrote in Galatians 3:29: “And if you are of Christ, then you are the seed of Abraham and heirs according to the promise.” Moreover, in the next chapter: “Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, also an heir of God through Christ” (Gal 4:7). Passages such as this, which present inheritance as a guarantee, are ones that refer to the first inheritance.<sup>17</sup>

The second inheritance is one that can be lost due to unfaithfulness or sin, which results in a lack of rewards. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10,<sup>18</sup> Galatians 5:21, Ephesians 5:5, and Colossians 3:22-23, Paul wrote regarding believers caught in sins who will lose their inheritance (and the first three explicitly discuss not inheriting the kingdom of God).<sup>19</sup>

Romans 8:16-17 is a passage where both inheritances are contrasted: “The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, then heirs—on the one hand, heirs of God; but on the other hand, co-heirs of Christ, if indeed we suffer with [Him] in order that we also may be glorified [with Him].”<sup>20</sup> Keeping this idea in mind, Paul’s discussion in 2 Timothy 2 may become clearer. The eternal life of the first and fourth lines are certain, the privilege of reigning with Christ is conditional based upon how the believer lives his/her life here on earth.

### ***The Extent of Reigning with Christ***

To what extent will believers from the church age reign? The New Testament speaks of several groups who will reign in the future. *First*, as demonstrated, the statement in 2 Timothy 2 promises the privilege of

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<sup>17</sup> The same thing can be said with regard to the different uses of *salvation* (σωτηρία and σώζω) also. If a passage speaks of a salvation that cannot be lost, it is probably in a context similar to this first inheritance. On the contrary, if a passage speaks of salvation that can be lost or unsure, it is speaking of the second, conditional, inheritance.

<sup>18</sup> Not all writers who would agree with the basic premise of this thesis would agree that 1 Corinthians 6 serves as an example of a lost inheritance. See René Lopez, “Does the Vice List in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Describe Believers or Unbelievers?” [article online] (accessed 7 April 2009) available from [http://www.scriptureunlocked.com/pdfs/ViceList1Cor6-9\\_10.pdf](http://www.scriptureunlocked.com/pdfs/ViceList1Cor6-9_10.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> The belief of this author is that the *kingdom of God* in these passages refer to the Messianic Kingdom prophesied in Revelation 20 and most of the Old Testament prophets. Consequently, the view presented here fits best within a premillennial, if not solely a dispensational premillennial, view. In an amillennial scheme, this point becomes moot as there is no future kingdom as such in which a believer can reign. For a more thorough defense of this second inheritance, see Benware, *Payday*, 33-40.

<sup>20</sup> See Zane Hodges, *The Gospel under Siege*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Dallas: Redención Viva, 1992) 127-41 for a discussion on this passage, in addition to 2 Timothy 2:12; Luke 19:11-27; and, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

reigning with Christ to those believers from the Church who have been faithful. The only indication the New Testament gives as to the timing of this reign is the kingdom, which is being equated here with the future millennial reign of Christ.

*Second*, in Revelation 20:4-6, the New Testament notes that believers who died during Daniel's seventieth week will also reign.<sup>21</sup> Here, however, John commented that their reign will be for the thousand years (τὰ χίλια ἔτη). While no such temporal information was given for the reign of faithful believers, it seems that both groups are reigning with Christ during that time. In the case of the believers from Daniel's seventieth week, they exemplify 2 Timothy 2:12 in that they endured to the point of martyrdom.

The *third* matter to consider is the mention of reigning in Revelation 22:5b, which at this point is the eternal state: "And they will reign for ever and ever." Dillow noted: "Will these differences [of rewards] remain [for all eternity]? The answer seems to be yes. However, the biblical picture of the eternal state is of full joy for all who are there."<sup>22</sup> Since there is no indication that all will be ruling at this point, and in light of New Testament teaching, including 2 Timothy 2 and Revelation 20, it seems best to conclude that only those who were given the privilege to reign will be reigning for all eternity. All others will "merely" be citizens of the eternal state.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Just as was the case with the Messianic Kingdom, defense of the premillennial view of Daniel's seventieth week is beyond the scope of this thesis. For further reading, see Paul Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy* (Chicago: Moody, 2006) 293-320; and, Alva McClain, *Daniel's Prophecy of the 70 Weeks* (Winona Lake, IL: BMH Books, 1969).

<sup>22</sup> Dillow continued, quoting Revelation 22:3-5; 21:4, then: "It seems that on the authority of these and similar verses, when combined with the passages which stress differing rewards, we may confidently affirm that in eternity everyone's cup will be full, but the cups will be of different sizes. No one will enter eternity future with regret or mourning or pain... While the faithful Christian will enjoy richer relationship and privilege with His King throughout eternity than the unfaithful, the predominate feeling for all will be joy and gratitude" (Dillow, *Reign*, 599).

<sup>23</sup> Benware made an argument from the use of δοῦλος in Revelation 22:3. In a section entitled "Are All Christians Bond Slaves?," he noted: "In one sense, 'yes,' all believers are bond slaves. The truth of *redemption* makes it abundantly clear that all believers have been purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ... This is the positional status of all believers... However, a 'no' is part of the answer. Not all believers fit the New Testament profile of an authentic bond slave. In the New Testament, a true and genuine bond slave has submitted himself to the will of his master and makes no claim of personal rights... There is an important narrow sense to the word 'bond slave.' A true believer may be a good one or an evil one. In the practical sense, a bad bond slave is no bond slave at all. A purchased believer who does not submit his will to the Master is no bond servant at all. And this is the issue that directly intersects with the rewards at the judgment seat of Christ" (Benware, *Payday*, 172-73 [emphasis original]; see also the entire discussion on pp. 169-75).

**Luke 19:11-28**

The parable of the minas in Luke 19 serves as an excellent illustration of this concept. In this parable, Jesus told the story of a nobleman who travels to a far country in order to receive the official authority to rule. Two groups of characters then emerge. The first group consists of ten of the nobleman's slaves, to whom he gives ten minas each, with a charge to do business with them. The second group consists of citizens of the country who did not want the nobleman to rule.

After returning, having received the authority to rule, the nobleman called his slaves together. In judging their performance with his minas, he rewards them with rulership of cities in the kingdom in direct proportion to their work with the minas. When the third slave approached, having buried his mina and having no increase in profit, his mina is taken and given to the one who was put in charge of ten cities. It is striking to note that the third slave is still considered a slave, yet a worthless one, and he is still contrasted with the citizens of the kingdom who would be slain for rejecting their rightful ruler.

In interpreting this parable, it can be said that Jesus is the nobleman who had to ascend to heaven in order to receive the official authority to rule over the earth as the physical descendent of David. While He is there, He has entrusted His work to His slaves, in other words, every believer. When Christ returns, He will reward believers in accordance with what they have done with what He has given them, which is in stark contrast to the citizens, the unbelievers, who will be slain at Christ's second coming. Even the believer who will have nothing to show for his one "mina" will be called a slave and not be killed, being granted entrance into the kingdom.<sup>24</sup>

## ETERNAL SECURITY

With the apodosis of the final couplet (ἐκεῖνος πιστὸς μένει) comes a return to commonplace soteriological issues. Eternal security is that work of God whereby a believer will not and cannot lose their eternal life.<sup>25</sup> Geisler

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<sup>24</sup> See Benware, *Payday*, 161-68 for a fuller treatment of the doctrine of loss of rewards, in addition to Paul Benware, *Luke* (Chicago: Moody, 1985) 121-23; and, Zane Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2007) 63-72 for a treatment of the parable in Luke 19.

<sup>25</sup> See Geisler, *Theology*, 3:300-46 for an extensive treatment of this doctrine; however, let the reader beware of his equation of eternal security with perseverance of the saints. Also see Erickson, *Theology*, 996-1000, although again, he used eternal security and perseverance interchangeably. Berkhof commented with the same mindset, even mentioning the misunderstandings that are present: "The doctrine of perseverance requires

identified 2 Timothy 2:12 as a “theological basis for eternal security” when he commented: “This is a particularly poignant text in support of eternal security, for it directly addresses the Arminian challenge by declaring that even if our belief falters, the Lord’s faithfulness will not. We can no more lose our salvation than God can cease being God.”<sup>26</sup>

#### THE BELIEVER’S IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST

Speaking theologically, Paul said that believers are eternally secure because of their identification with Christ. In biblical terms, Christ remains faithful to His promise because He cannot deny Himself (ἀρνήσασθαι ἑαυτὸν οὐ δύναται). There are two particular ways that a believer is inextricably linked with Christ.

*First*, the believer has died with Christ, which is especially striking given that this phrase is in the 2 Timothy 2 passage. It is because a believer has identified with Christ’s death through belief that Christ’s righteousness has been imputed to that believer. Berkhof noted: “In His atoning work Christ paid the price to purchase the sinner’s pardon and acceptance. His righteousness constitutes the perfect ground for the justification of the sinner, and it is impossible that one who is justified by the payment of such a perfect and efficacious price should again fall under condemnation.”<sup>27</sup>

*Second*, the believer has been baptized into the church, the body of Christ, by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13). The Holy Spirit’s ministry of baptism can be defined as the act of the Holy Spirit that places believers

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careful statement, especially in view of the fact that the term ‘perseverance of the saints’ is liable to misunderstanding. It should be noted first of all that the doctrine [of eternal security/perseverance of the saints] is not merely to the effect that the elect will certainly be saved in the end, though Augustine has given it that form, but teaches very specifically that they who have once been regenerated and effectually called by God to a state of grace, can never completely fall from that state and thus fail to attain to eternal salvation, though they may sometimes be overcome by evil and fall in sin. It is maintained that the life of regeneration and the habits that develop out of it in the way of sanctification can never entirely disappear.” In other words, it is “that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit in the believer, by which the work of divine grace that is begun in the heart, is continued and brought to completion” (Berkhof, *Theology*, 546). It would seem best, however, to consider this a theological merger, and that there is a biblical distinction between the two. For an in-depth defense of the merging of the two, see Grudem, *Theology*, 788-807.

<sup>26</sup> Geisler, *Theology*, 315. See passages such as John 6:35-47; 10:27-30; Romans 8:31-39; and, 1 Peter 1:3-5; in addition to Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1999) 381-84; and, idem, *So Great Salvation* (Chicago: Moody, 1997) 126-32.

<sup>27</sup> Berkhof, *Theology*, 547.

into union with Christ and other believers.<sup>28</sup> It is, as Berkhof stated, the mystical union:

They who are united to Christ by faith become partakers of His Spirit, and thus become one body with Him. . . . They share in the life of Christ, and because He lives they live also. It is impossible that they should again be removed from the body. . . . The union is permanent, since it originates in a permanent and unchangeable cause, the free and eternal love of God.<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, it can be said that when Paul wrote regarding Christ not being able to deny Himself, he was referring to the idea that Christ cannot deny a believer entrance into heaven due to the believer's close union with Him. To deny a believer would be to deny Himself. Paul's statement does not exist within an interpretive void. To be sure, every Scripture is perspicuous in its own context, and this is no exception; however, this chapter attempted to demonstrate that the doctrines set forth in the previous article are not particular or inapt when taking the whole of the New Testament into account. It can be seen that 2 Timothy 2:11-13 deals with a wide range of soteriological issues from every step of the salvation process: the atonement, justification, eternal life, sanctification (and lack thereof), rewards (and lack thereof), eternal security, and the believer's position in Christ.

#### THE DOCTRINES DEMONSTRATED THROUGHOUT 2 TIMOTHY

So far, this series has traced the historical development of interpretation of 2 Timothy 2:11-13, offered its own exegesis and subsequent critique of those doctrines, and expounded upon the soteriological doctrines contained in the statement. The final issue that remains, then, is if these doctrines hold true in the context of 2 Timothy as a whole. As 2:11-13 acts as a cornerstone to Paul's argument for the book, it should be no surprise if Paul's other illustrations and case studies in the letter are in line with it.

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<sup>28</sup> Benware noted: "The Holy Spirit places the believer into the universal church, the 'body of Christ' by a spiritual baptism. By this means all true Christians are brought into organic union with Christ; a union that is essential for holy living. This ministry of the Holy Spirit automatically takes place at regeneration" ("The Work of the Holy Spirit Today," in *The Fundamentals for the Twenty-First Century*, gen. ed. Mal Couch [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999] 316).

<sup>29</sup> Berkhof, *Theology*, 547. For an in-depth look at the doctrine, see Chafer, *Theology*, 6:138-61.

### ***Substitutionary Atonement***

Since this epistle is an encouragement to Timothy to endure suffering and hardship, any mention of Christ's substitutionary atonement or how it is applied occurs in passing. Paul wrote in 1:10 that "our Savior Jesus Christ on the one hand abolished death, but on the other hand brought life and immortality to light through the gospel [τὸ εὐαγγέλιον]," which is seen in the preceding verses as "[God,] who saved and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before eternity" (v. 9). In verse 12, God is the object of belief: "For I know in Whom I have believed. . . ." Later in the epistle, Paul regarded salvation as "through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (3:15), the One who is "risen from the dead . . . according to my gospel [τὸ εὐαγγέλιον]" (2:8).<sup>30</sup>

### ***Eternal Life***

Paul wrote in 1:9 that a believer's salvation and calling is not contingent upon anything they can do: "[God,] who saved and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace." Furthermore, as was already seen, verse 10 discusses the "life" and "immortality" (ἡ ἀφθαρσία) brought through the gospel.<sup>31</sup> Later in that paragraph, Paul stated that he not only knew in Whom he has believed, but that he was confident that God will "make good" on His promise of eternal life: "For I know in Whom I have believed and I have been convinced that He is able to keep my deposit [ἡ παραθήκη] until that day" (1:12).<sup>32</sup>

In 2 Timothy 2, Paul placed the results of belief in eternity: "For this reason I endure all things on account of the called, so that they also

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<sup>30</sup> Elsewhere Paul wrote about "belief," indicating that it is what sets someone apart unto eternal life (1:5; 2:18; 4:7).

<sup>31</sup> There are eight usages of ἀφθαρσία and all are Pauline (Rom 2:7; 1 Cor 15:42, 50, 53, 54; Eph 6:24; 2 Tim 2:10; Titus 2:7); it means "the state of not being subject to decay/dissolution/interruption" (W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000] 155). The passages in Romans and 1 Corinthians address the eternal resurrection body that the believer will possess, and it would seem as though it is used in that sense here in 2 Timothy also.

<sup>32</sup> Παραθήκη is only used three times in the New Testament, all of which are in the Pauline Epistles (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:12, 14). Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 764 defined it as "property entrusted to another." In 1 Timothy 6:20 and 2 Timothy 2:14, Paul instructed Timothy to "guard the thing entrusted" to him. In 1 Timothy 2:12, however, it was Paul that gave God *his* "thing to be entrusted," as indicated with the possessive pronoun μου. As that makes for awkward English, it is translated in the thesis as *deposit*.

may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (v. 10). Finally, in the conclusion of the epistle, Paul recounted the hardships that he endured for Christ’s sake, adding: “And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and He will deliver [me] into His heavenly kingdom” (4:18).

### **Endurance**

The exegesis presented in the previous article demonstrated that a better interpretation of *will live with* and *will reign with* keeps the two future ideas distinct, thereby making reigning a privilege and reward of patiently enduring the trials of life (this also seems to be supported by Paul’s argument of the book). Indeed, Paul gave Timothy no less than thirty commands in this short letter.<sup>33</sup> It seems to follow, then, that part of enduring is accomplishing these commands, and that they are not an inevitable outworking of faith.

### **Three Examples of Enduring**

In 2 Timothy 2, in the immediate context of verses 11-13, Paul gave three examples of the rewarding of faithfulness. The *first* is of a soldier who, while in active service, does not “entangle himself in the affairs of life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier” (v. 4). What is also interesting is that, as a “good soldier of Christ Jesus,” Paul mentioned that the believer did not enlist himself, but was enlisted by Christ Jesus, which seems to indicate that the initial introduction into service was a passive idea, not requiring much on the part of the soldier (v. 3).

The *second* illustration is that of an athlete who “does not receive the prize unless he competes in accordance with the rules” (v. 5). Cheating does not make them less of an athlete, it simply disqualifies them from winning the prize, which, in athletics, is not guaranteed of all athletes, anyway. *Third*, Paul stated that the “diligent farmer ought to receive the first fruits” of his harvest (v. 6). The crops are the benefit of the hard work

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<sup>33</sup> “Remember again” (1:6); “Do not be ashamed” (1:8); “Join with me” (1:8); “Retain the standard of sound words” (1:13); “Keep the thing entrusted” (1:14); “Be strong” (2:1); “Entrust these things” (2:2); “Suffer hardship” (2:3); “Consider” (2:7); “Remember Jesus Christ” (2:8); “Remind them” (2:14); “Solemnly charge them” (2:14); “Be diligent” (2:15); “Avoid worldly, empty chatter” (2:16); “Flee youthful lusts” (2:22); “Pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace” (2:22); “Refuse speculations” (2:23); “Realize this” (3:1); “Avoid such men” (3:5); “Continue” (3:14); “Become convinced” (3:14); “Preach the Word” (4:2); “Be ready” (4:2); “Reprove” (4:2); “Rebuke” (4:2); “Exhort” (4:2); “Be sober” (5:5); “Endure hardship” (5:5); “Do the work of an evangelist” (5:5); and, “Fulfill your ministry” (5:5)

that was invested in them. In contrast, a lazy farmer is still considered farmer. He just does not receive all that can, and should, be entitled to him. Likewise, the believer who works hard becomes the first to be rewarded for his good work.

### **Paul Endures**

Paul himself experienced the process of enduring. He wrote, “I suffer hardship . . . I endure [ὑπομένω] all things” (2:9-10). Paul used ὑπομένω, which he would use again in verse 12, to describe his current state. Paul also expressed his personal hope in 2 Timothy 4: “I have fought the good fight, I have completed the course, I have kept the faith. In the future, the crown of righteousness is in store for me” (vv. 7-8). Paul, having patiently endured in his life, had a reward coming to him. It is not the reward of eternal life, but the reward that comes with being faithful in that gospel. Everyone who is looking for Christ’s appearing will be receiving the crown also. If crowns were given to all believers, then only those who are looking for Christ’s appearing could be granted assurance of their salvation.

### **Paul Charges Timothy to Endure**

A verse that captures the theme of 2 Timothy, in addition to the context of 2:11-13, is 2:15: “Be diligent [the aorist imperative σπούδασον] to present yourself approved to God [as] an unashamed worker.” Here is the crux of the matter: Paul not only believed that Timothy had eternal life, he was sure of it (1:5).<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, it was essential for Timothy to endure and persevere, not to prove to himself and others that he was indeed a believer, but so that he would stand before God approved by Him and unashamed as to how he lived his life. As was noted in the exegesis in the previous article, the issue of endurance and works has nothing to do with the matter of eternal life. The result of *being diligent*, then, is being able to stand before Christ at the Judgment Seat unashamed, and consequently being given the opportunity to rule with Christ.

Continuing his examples, Paul wrote with regard to honorable and dishonorable vessels in 2:20-21: “Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from these things, He will be a vessel for [εἰς] honor, sanctified and useful to the Master.” Conversely, when believers do not cleanse themselves from the dishonorable, they are not being sanctified, and they are not useful to

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<sup>34</sup> Paul uses the same word to describe his certainty of Timothy’s belief as he did to describe the certainty of God keeping his deposit safe (1:12): πέπεισμαι. Not only does this speak to the certainty of Timothy’s belief in light of commands to endure, but it also seems to indicate that assurance (both introspective and what is noticeable to other believers) is not merely subjective.

the Master. In Paul's mind, there is a choice for the believer whether or not to endure, be diligent, and to cleanse oneself.

In 4:5, Paul called on Timothy to "endure hardship" (κακοπαθέω). It is the same word Paul used in 2:9 to describe his current status.<sup>35</sup> While it is a different word than ὑπομένω, which is used elsewhere in the letter, the thrust behind it is the same: maturing in and living one's faith so as to be a useful vessel of the Master. Paul stated unequivocally that this involves persecution (3:12).

### **Personal Case Studies**

In this deeply personal letter from Paul to his protégé Timothy, the former discussed several specific examples of people who were enduring, in addition to some that were not. The first two examples of a mature faith are Timothy's own mother and grandmother, Eunice and Lois (1:5). The third mentioned is Onesiphorus, who not only helped the church in Ephesus, but encouraged Paul during his Roman imprisonment (1:16-18). In his conclusion in 2 Timothy 4, Paul mentioned several people by name, some positively and others negatively. Those who Paul mentioned favorably with regard to enduring for the sake of the ministry were Crescens (v. 10), Titus (v. 10), Luke, Mark (v. 11), and Tychicus (v. 11).

### **Reigning**

Other than the crown of righteousness mentioned in 4:8, Paul did not discuss reigning and rewards. Crowns are one of the rewards that come with being a faithful believer.<sup>36</sup> Benware noted: "It should be emphasized that the 'crown' is not looking at the positional standing of the believer in Christ but rather focuses on what comes to a believer because of meritorious work."<sup>37</sup> There are four different crowns referenced by the New Testament authors (1 Thess 2:19; 2 Tim 4:8; Jas 1:12; 1 Pet 5:4), and

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<sup>35</sup> The only other mention in the New Testament is in James 5:13.

<sup>36</sup> There are two words for *crown* in the New Testament: *διάδημα* and *στέφανος*. The former is used three times (Rev 12:3; 13:1; 19:12), and it is used specifically with an emphasis on inherent royalty. Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 943 defined the latter: "a wreath made of foliage or designed to resemble foliage and worn by one of high status or held in high regard." It is this latter crown that is given as a reward in competitions, and it is this word that is used to describe the crowns given to the faithful believer.

<sup>37</sup> Benware, *Payday*, 120. See pages 117-30 for a fuller discussion, in addition to Dillow, *Reign*, 574-83.

all are gained by doing something beyond believing in the atoning sacrifice of Christ.<sup>38</sup>

### **Denial**

Denial takes on several forms in 2 Timothy, yet the word ἀρνέομαι only occurs in one other verse (3:5), and not in reference to a believer. Nevertheless, Paul mentioned several individuals by name that fit the description of denial and unfaithfulness as presented in 2:11-13.

### **The Denials of Phygelus and Hermogenes**

In 1:15, Paul wrote: “You know this, that everyone in Asia turned away from [ἀποστρέφω] me, of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.”<sup>39</sup> Paul did not say what exactly these men did; however, several things are known. *First*, at this point in his ministry, Paul was under intense persecution, and being found in relation to Paul would result in the same. *Second*, he sometimes entered cities where no believer would come to his defense (cf. 4:16), and this may be what occurred in Asia also. *Third*, Paul contrasted these men with Onesiphorus, who comforted Paul and came to his aid (vv. 16-18). Therefore, the most that can be said is that Phygelus and Hermogenes, along with those in Asia, deserted Paul. It seems difficult to believe that Paul would be disappointed if unbelievers did not come to his aid; rather, it seems more appropriate that he recounted that fellow believers did not come to his defense.

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<sup>38</sup> In order listed, winning souls to Christ earns the crown of exultation, loving the Lord’s appearing earns the crown of righteousness, persevering through tests earns the crown of life, and successfully shepherding the flock earns the crown of glory.

<sup>39</sup> Although ἀποστρέφω is used nine times in the New Testament, only three other passages are informative with regard to what this word means in a context such as this: 2 Timothy 4:4; Titus 1:14; and, Hebrews 12:25. In 2 Timothy 4:4, Paul wrote: “And . . . they will turn away [ἀποστρέφω] [their] ears from the truth.” In the context, Paul told Timothy about people whom he was to shepherd, reprove, rebuke, and exhort. It seems as though Timothy would only be discipling these people if they were believers. Therefore, believers are departing from sound doctrine in order to pursue their own desires. Next, in Titus 1:13-14, Paul wrote: “This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them severely, so that they may be sound in the faith, not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who are turning away from [ἀποστρέφω] the truth.” Paul encouraged Titus to confront believers because they were drifting from sound doctrine. Finally, Hebrews 12:25: “For if those who refuse the one who warned them upon the earth did not escape, must less we who are turning away from [ἀποστρέφω] the One from heaven.” Hebrews 12:25, also, is referring to believers who turn from Christ. Taking into account these usages, especially considering that two of them are found in the Pauline Epistles, it would seem that Paul can use this verb in referring to believers.

### The Denials of Hymenaeus and Philetus

In 2 Timothy 2, Paul mentioned the actions of Hymenaeus and Philetus: “Of whom are Hymenaeus and Philetus, such ones departing [ἀστοχέω] from the truth, saying the resurrection has already come, and they upset the faith of some” (vv. 17-18).<sup>40</sup> Paul followed this with a quote from Numbers 16:5: “The Lord knows [ἐγνώ] those who are His.” The quotation is from the narrative of Korah’s rebellion, where Moses and Aaron were confronted with displeased Israelites in the wilderness.

Korah said to Moses and Aaron: “You have gone far enough, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD” (Numb 16:3, NASB). Moses, falling on his face, replied: “Tomorrow morning the LORD will show [עָרָא] who is His, and who is holy, and will bring him near to Himself; even the one whom He will choose, He will bring near to Himself” (v. 5, NASB).<sup>41</sup> Dillow noted: “[Paul] is not saying that the Lord knows those who are truly regenerate in contrast to those who are not, implying that Hymenaeus was not regenerate. . . . The incident is instructive.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> As with ἀποστρέφω, ἀστοχέω is not used much in the New Testament. Indeed, it is only used three times, all in the Pauline Epistles (1 Tim 1:6; 6:21; 2 Tim 2:18). Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 146 defined it as “to go astray by departing from moral or spiritual standards.” In 1 Timothy 1:6, it refers to men who have departed from the goals of instruction Paul mentioned in verse 5 in order to be teachers of the Law. In 1 Timothy 6:21, Paul warned Timothy to avoid Gnosticism, which drew some from the faith. Once again, it seems as though Paul used this term to describe a believer’s jettison from the faith.

<sup>41</sup> Although the Hebrew עָרָא means *to know* in the Qal, it seems to take on a different meaning here in the Hiphil. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006) 395 defined the word in the Hiphil as *to make known, declare*. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (New York: Brill, 1995) 392 agreed, offering the following definitions of the Hiphil: *to let someone know something, to make known, to inform, to inform someone, to teach to*. All the major translations render the word *show*; however, the translators of the Septuagint, knowing the definition of the word in the Qal, translated it literally as γινώσκω, and this is what Paul quoted. There is no way to reflect a Hiphil use in Greek without using a different verb altogether.

<sup>42</sup> Dillow continued to write, demonstrating the regenerate nature of Korah and his followers: “So Korah gathered many of the leaders of Israel against Moses. These leaders who joined him in the rebellion are called ‘leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown’ (16:2). They are defined in Num. 1:16 as the distinguished or illustrious. They were renowned for the wisdom of the age and therefore called upon for consultation in matters of importance pertaining to the tribes. They seem to consist of a national council, or diet, of a representative character. They led the nation in the offering of sacrifices (Num. 7), were set apart for the work of the tabernacle (Num. 8), and observed the Passover (Num. 9). These men are evidently the regenerate leaders of the nation!” (Dillow, *Reign*, 335-36).

In other words, Moses recounted in Numbers a challenge to his leadership, and that God would make known who His chosen leaders were. Paul quoted this with the intent of showing an Old Testament passage where God clearly demonstrated who His teachers were. Just as Moses was remarking how God will demonstrate who is doing His work and are the leaders, so did Paul. Hymenaeus and Philetus, then, were members of the believing community, but they were not the leaders or teachers of God's church that they claimed to be, as demonstrated by their gross errors in doctrine.

### **The Denial of Demas**

In his closing remarks, Paul mentioned two other specific people who deserted him. He wrote in 4:10: "Demas deserted [ἐγκαταλείπω] me, loving the present age." Paul also used this word in verse 16 to describe how "everyone deserted [ἐγκαταλείπω]" him at his first defense. In this second passage, Paul expressed his disappointment in the believers who could have come to his defense. It seems to make sense, as why would Paul expect unbelievers to come to his aid? Likewise, why would Paul keep counsel such as Demas, if he were an unbeliever? These, then, become examples of believers who were not enduring suffering and hardship for Christ, but were being unfaithful in their calling.<sup>43</sup>

### **Loss of Reigning**

Other than the consequences of denial mentioned in the immediately preceding section, Paul did not discuss the loss of reigning and rewards.

### **Eternal Security**

Paul did not explicitly speak with regard to eternal security in the letter; however, it is strongly implied through what Paul said in 1:12: "For I know in Whom I have believed and I have been convinced that He is able to keep my deposit until that day." Paul realized that when he believed in Christ while traveling on the Damascus Road, the apostle had effectively

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<sup>43</sup> See *ibid.* 338-39 for more examples of denial from the Pauline Epistles; however, it should be noted that this author disagrees with Dillow's treatment of the "knowledge of truth." While he mentioned Titus 1:1 as supporting his view, he did not mention that the phrase ἐπίγνωσις ἀλήθειας only occurs four times, all in the Pauline Epistles: 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Timothy 2:25; 3:7; and, Titus 1:1. Paul stated in 1 Timothy 2:4: "[God,] who desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of truth." Both σωθῆναι and ἐλθεῖν are infinitives referring to θέλει, which links them together as one idea.

“entrusted” his life to Christ. Paul was convinced that God would keep that deposit safe through that day of resurrection unto eternal life.

### ***The Believer's Identification with Christ***

Finally, there is one place, other than 2:11-13, that speaks of the believer's identification with Christ. In 1:14, Paul wrote: “Guard the treasure which has been entrusted through the Holy Spirit who dwells [ἐνοικέω] in us.” The language of that verse is similar to what Paul used in 1 Corinthians 3:16: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells [οἰκέω] in you?” It is because the Spirit permanently indwells the believer, and baptizes them into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-13), that God is unable to deny a believer entrance into heaven, despite any level of unfaithfulness.

In this letter to Timothy, Paul gave final instructions to one of his sons of the faith. Throughout it, he gave Timothy specific instructions and encouragement to endure hardship and suffering while maturing in the faith and shepherding others in their sanctification process. The quotation in 2:11-13 does not exist in a contextual void. On the contrary, Paul reiterated these ideas constantly throughout the letter, giving specific examples and case studies demonstrating the ideas and doctrines set forth in those three verses.

### CONCLUSION

The purpose of this series was to take a passage with important soteriological overtones, apply exegesis, and formulate the biblical theology of salvation that was presented in that passage. It seems that every biblical passage has been interpreted and reinterpreted countless times since the days of its composition. The resources available to the student today are virtually inexhaustible: commentaries, articles, books, encyclopedias, and other various translated works of authors from the past two thousand years of church history. More often than not, these works build upon what came before them, reiterating in newer language what has been assumed true all along. Occasionally, however, authors will allow systematic theology to govern their exegesis instead of developing a biblical theology that comes from an exegetical study of that passage in its context. Second Timothy 2:11-13 is one such passage, and it is for this reason that this thesis employed the methodology that it did.

Historical views that have developed ever since the Church Fathers were researched and presented so as to ascertain how this passage has been interpreted throughout church history. In light of all that has been

written, it seems as though this passage never received ample treatment, except for the work of George Knight. Most authors did not expound at all upon the difference between *died with* and *endure*, or *will live with* and *will reign with*, let alone present an introductory theology of reigning. For this reason, this series set forth a new exegesis of the passage in the previous article that attempted to show contextually, and in light of the Greek, what doctrines 2:11-13 sets forth. The exegesis was then used to critique and evaluate the historical views, supplementing them where they were correct, demonstrating how they were wrong if they were.

The final article of this series addressed the soteriological and eschatological doctrines presented in the passage. The beginning of this article summarized the doctrines of the substitutionary atonement, eternal life, endurance/denial, eternal security, and the believer's identification with Christ, in addition to offering a beginning study into the biblical theology of reigning with Christ. In the latter portion of this article, 2 Timothy as a whole was examined to see if those doctrines were reiterated within the letter. Furthermore, as endurance and denial was a major theme of Paul's writing, encouragement to faithfulness, in addition to examples of unfaithfulness abounded.

### ***Final Considerations***

It can be concluded, then, that 2 Timothy 2:11-13 does indeed form a compact doctrine of soteriology. Regardless of its origins, it was clearly meant to be a pithy statement that summarizes and teaches soteriological and eschatological principles. The first couplet demonstrates that when someone believes in Christ's atoning sacrifice on the Christ, he/she is imparted with eternal life and then will spend all of eternity with Him. According to this passage, the issue then becomes a decision of faithfulness or unfaithfulness in accomplishing the calling that God has given. After his conversion on the Damascus Road, Paul proved himself to be faithful to that calling, and when he wrote to Timothy, his son of the faith, he exhorted him to be just as faithful. The faithfulness, or endurance as the passage puts it, results in the reward and privilege of reigning with Christ in the future. The rewards will be given at the Judgment Seat of Christ and are in effect starting in the Messianic Kingdom throughout all eternity.

Not all believers will be faithful to their calling. Some may drift for a time only to return. Others fall so hard that they never return to faithfulness. All the while, both groups are labeled believers in the New Testament. Their punishment and chastisement is not in the loss of eternal life, but a loss of fellowship and blessing in this life, and rewards and

rulership in the one to come. It can be said with certainty that those unfaithful believers will continue to have eternal life because of what the fourth couplet sets forth. When Paul wrote concerning a believer being faithless, he used a broad term that can have various subsets, including denial to endure for Christ's sake. When a believer is faithless, whichever category they fall into, Christ remains faithful to His promise of eternal life, because He remains faithful to Himself, and the believer will always be identified with Christ in that manner.

Endurance and the subsequent rewards are not necessary to indicate a true saving faith, nor are they an inevitable part of the believer's experience. It requires diligent effort, and Paul demonstrated in 2 Timothy that some believers succeed while others do not. Eternal life is solely based upon Christ's work on the cross; that is where that judgment was, and that is where it stays. Blessing and rewards, however, are a result of how the believer responds to that free gift of grace that God has given.



## BOOK REVIEWS

***Discovering the Mystery of the Unity of God: A Theological Study on the Plurality and Tri-unity of God in the Hebrew Scriptures*** by John B. Metzger. San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 2010. 905 pp., cloth, \$49.95.

In the view of some Christians today, the Old Testament is not as relevant to the Christian life as the New Testament is. As the thinking goes, the Old Testament contains some interesting stories about God and the Israelites and it contains some wonderful prophecies about the coming Messiah but it does not give much information about God as the New Testament does. Particularly, it does not tell much about the relationship of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; it does not explain the Trinity. However, in the words of the author of *Discovering the Mystery of the Unity of God*, "God did not present Messiah in a vacuum" (309).

John B. Metzger is a graduate of Washington Bible College and Lancaster Bible College. He has served as a pastor and director of the Indian Bible Institute. He has also worked with Child Evangelism Fellowship and currently serves with Ariel Ministries. Metzger gave his reasons for writing this book in the following paragraph:

Why is there a need for another book on the Trinity? There are so many books already published on that subject, so why do we need another one? The purpose of this book is twofold: first, all other books written today are written from a New Testament perspective; this one will be written from an Old Testament perspective exclusively. Secondly, in addressing the subject of the Trinity (tri-unity) we will interact with the Jewish belief that God is an absolute one and not a tri-unity. This book will show Christian and Jewish people alike that God did reveal Himself to mankind as a tri-unity, more accurately as a plural unity of one [p. xxiii].

*Discovering the Mystery of the Unity of God* was written to explain the Trinity to a Jewish and Christian audience from an Old Testament perspective and the book achieves its goal. From discussing the Old Testament names for God to looking at theophanies in the Pentateuch to discussing all the implications for the Shema and the deity of the Messiah, Metzger examined his topic thoroughly.

The author's chapter on the Angel of the Lord (ch. 4) provides a good example of this thoroughness. The Angel of the Lord is considered by some scholars to be a messenger from the Lord who is highly esteemed but not divine. Metzger, however, proved otherwise. The Angel of the Lord is no less than the Second Person of the Trinity in His pre-incarnate form. In His conversation with Gideon in Judges 6, the Angel is called the Lord Himself (vv. 12, 14). In Genesis 16, as He was speaking with Hagar, Moses

called Him the Lord (vv. 7-13). In Joshua 5, the Heavenly Messenger was worshipped by Joshua and the Angel did not protest the worship (vv. 13-14).

The Being could be none other than the Son of God before He took on human form. The Angel of the Lord is never mentioned again after Jesus Christ lived on the earth, proving that Jesus and the Angel are one and the same. Also, if He was worshipped and called "Lord," then by process of elimination, He must be the second member of the Trinity. The Father is the member who sends the Son and the Spirit is a member who never appears in bodily form. The only One who would physically appear to men must be the pre-incarnate Christ (105-06).

All of this discussion about the Angel and, indeed, every facet of this book was written to prove that God is a plural unity of One, and that this plural oneness is nothing new to the New Testament. It was revealed in the Old Testament long before the New Testament was ever inspired.

This book validates the [Old Testament], that it did not need additional New Covenant revelation to substantiate the plurality or tri-unity of God. It is the intent of this book to go one step further, demonstrating that the plurality and/or tri-unity of God was revealed but not as fully developed as it is in the New Covenant. Would Abraham, Moses, and David, to name a few see the tri-unity and understand it? Probably not. Would they have understood the plural unity of God? Yes! [pp. 20-21].

In regards to criticism for this work, if John Metzger desired to reach a broad audience, he would have to shorten his book. An abridged version might be helpful. With 900 pages, 19 chapters, 8 appendixes, and 1,925 footnotes, the common reader would be overwhelmed with this material. He would also be uninterested by the title. *Discovering the Mystery of the Unity of God* does not provoke much curiosity at the local bookstore, although it does summarize the general idea of the book. In summary, this is a good work on the subject of the Trinity in the Old Testament but it would be helpful to shorten it to appeal to a larger audience.

**Jeremy Cagle, *intern*, Southern View Chapel**

***Free Grace Soteriology*** by Daniel R. Anderson. Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2010. 384 pp., cloth, \$24.08.

While everyone within conservative evangelicalism agrees that salvation comes as a gift of God's grace and is received by faith alone, there is much disagreement concerning the content and results of saving faith. On one side, there are the "Lordship" salvationists who insist that saving faith

includes repentance from sin and obedience resulting in spiritual fruit, which verifies regeneration. On the other side are those who espouse “Free Grace” soteriology. The defenders of “Free Grace” are concerned that the Lordshippers have, in their zeal to assure authentic faith, gone too far and added works to faith. Free Grace leaders define faith as belief, trust, and appropriation. However, repentance usually is either not part of the salvation process or is defined as changing one’s mind about who Jesus Christ is. Fruit is not inevitable and some true Christians never evidence any sign of regeneration while others may completely apostatize and yet still be part of the family of God. Between these two opposing views lies any number of positions. David Anderson, adjunct professor for Dallas Theological Seminary and president of Grace School of Theology, sought in this book to define “Free Grace” theology, especially its unique views concerning the doctrine of salvation. While he did not always agree with those in his own system (e.g. p. 23) it would appear that *Free Grace Soteriology* represents a mainstream view of the Free Grace position. The book is drawn from seminary course lecture notes and this is evident at times making for some redundancy and mismatch of writing styles. There are two appendices that are reprints of previous articles, one dealing with Augustine’s move from premillennialism to amillennialism, and the other with Greek influence on early Christian theological development.

*Free Grace Soteriology* addresses much theology so only a few of Anderson’s core positions will be mentioned.

- James 2:14-26 is a battleground for those in this particular debate, and Anderson’s interpretation differs even from some on his side. He believes that faith in this text is saving faith and James was therefore speaking of Christians. Dead faith is still saving faith, but it describes the Christian who has lost his fervor for Christ. Works will bring such faith back to life (pp. 22-37, 174-77).
- In 1 Corinthians 2, the “natural man” is a Christian who is living as an unbeliever (pp. 50-52).
- Anderson agreed that no one is able to come to Christ unless the Father draws him (John 6:44) but he was adamant that the Lord does not drag the unbeliever “kicking and screaming” into the kingdom (pp. 54-55).
- Theologically, Anderson is a trichotomist (p. 37), a progressive dispensationalist (pp. 85-89), a four-point Calvinist who rejects limited atonement (p. 92), and reduces perseverance to eternal security (p. 323).

- He traced the Roman Catholic understanding of “justification” (“to make righteous”) to Augustine who did not understand Greek (p. 106).
- Anderson saw repentance as “an internal resolve to turn from one’s sins” and as important for both unbelievers and believers (pp. 138-39). However, it is not a condition for coming to Christ (p. 128).
- He accepted Hodge’s definition of faith as being trust and appropriation but not commitment (pp. 170-74).
- The author strongly, and often, opposed the doctrine of perseverance. Anderson believes this doctrine results from Augustine’s misunderstanding of Matthew 24:13 and has led to the inability for many to have assurance of salvation (pp. 204, 212, 241, 321).
- Anderson did not deny that good works should follow regeneration but, unlike some of his fellow Free Gracers, understood good works as a secondary evidence, not the primary evidence (which is faith) of salvation (pp. 213-18, 242-43).
- He rejected all forms of baptismal regeneration and traced the history of the doctrine (pp. 222-31).
- He rejected regeneration as coming prior to faith and gave a good summary of the differences between reformed and dispensational theologians regarding this issue (pp. 231-40).
- Anderson took a “soft” determinism view on the sovereignty of God (pp. 291-94).
- The author distinguished reception of eternal life, which is by faith, from the possession of eternal life which is by works (pp. 136-41). Anderson interpreted much of Scripture based upon this perspective. For example, he apparently viewed the people of Israel, even during utter rebellion and idolatry, as being in relationship with God but not in fellowship. Therefore, they needed repentance, not for salvation but to be restored to fellowship (pp. 146-56). He divided the Gospel of John into a similar pattern seeing disciples who had relationship but not fellowship with Christ, as distinguished from disciples who had both (pp. 177-83). Jesus’ friends are those who obey; His children are those who believe (pp. 181-83). Therefore, passages which reference actions that cause one to not “inherit the kingdom” are

concerned with reward not salvation (pp. 195-98). Perhaps it is this issue that is the most debated when addressing these doctrines. The question is whether it is possible for a true believer to live entirely without fellowship with God, in complete and prolonged rebellion and sin, and yet be born again.

Overall *Free Grace Soteriology* offers a comprehensive and helpful understanding of the Free Grace position. It eliminates the “straw men,” clarifies what is really being said, and provides scriptural base for this view. Whether the reader agrees with what has been presented is a totally different matter, but at least a clear defense of Free Grace was given and that is most helpful.

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

***Politics—According to the Bible*** by Wayne Grudem. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010. 619 pp., cloth, \$35.

*Politics—According to the Bible* by Wayne Grudem applies the teachings of Scripture to key political issues and argues for Christian involvement. The author made no attempt to find a middle-ground position that appeals to all, but allowed his hermeneutic to drive his conclusions. Grudem’s work heavily favors the Republican platform.

The book is divided into three parts: basic principles, specific applications, and concluding observations. The first part supports Grudem’s thesis of significant Christian influence, outlines the role of government, touches upon a Christian worldview, and examines the power of the judiciary. What is the purpose of civil government? Does the Bible support democracy? Should believers only vote for Christian candidates? Grudem’s answers are thought-provoking, most notably, his discussion of ultimate power in a nation (pp. 124-50).

However, not all of part one is adequate as Grudem only had four pages of biblical support for his position of significant influence (pp. 58-61). Developing an ecclesiological construct for Christian influence certainly would have helped. It was not clear how societal influence fits within the church’s mandate to evangelize the world. Are the two separate, though possibly related, commands? Is one an expansion or application of the other? Does the church have a cultural mandate? Though having an extensive background in systematics, surprisingly, Grudem left these questions unanswered.

The second part of *Politics* skillfully addresses over 50 political issues. From the sanctity of life and marriage to economics, the

environment, national defense and foreign policy, Grudem addressed the spectrum quite well. The level of research and critical thought is astonishing in a work so broad and varied. One may wonder if the Bible speaks to many of these issues, but Grudem successfully examined the depths of God's Word to demonstrate that it does. As opposed to presenting a few verses on a preconceived position, he truly wrestled with each issue in the light of Scripture.

The final part of the book discusses media bias, evaluates the positions of Republicans and Democrats and wisely ends with the hope of spiritual revival. At the outset of *Politics*, Grudem stated: "I wrote this book because I was convinced that God intended the Bible to give guidance to every area of life—including how governments should function!" (p. 13). Undoubtedly, Grudem achieved this goal. One may disagree with certain positions or Grudem's thoughts on political activism. Regardless, *Politics* challenges the reader to think biblically with regard to contemporary political issues. This reviewer is not aware of any book that does this so thoroughly and is convinced that it is a resource every pastor should own.

**Shaun Lewis, Illinois state director, Capitol Commission**

***The Glory Due His Name: What God Says about Worship*** by Gary Reimers. Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2009. 100 pp., paper, \$9.95.

*The Glory Due His Name* by Gary Reimers is a welcome addition to the Bob Jones University Seminary "Biblical Discernment for Difficult Issues" series. Gary Reimers is the senior pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, and a professor of theology at Bob Jones University Seminary. Reimers teaches worship theology to both undergraduate ministerial students and in the seminary, has spoken on the subject in pastors' meetings around the country, and has made the subject the focus of personal study for many years, well-equipping him to write on this important topic.

Running throughout this short volume is an overarching theme that worship is about God, for God, and determined by God. The refreshingly God-centered, Scripture-rooted emphasis is a much-needed one in worship discussions. Reimers began, then, by looking to Scripture to determine "true worship's essence and elements" (ch. 1, pp. 4ff). He started by describing what he considers "the essence of right worship," in which he sought to "present the key principles that form the heart of true worship" (p. 5).

His first principle is that “right worship must focus on the right person,” a principle he developed from Psalm 135:1–6. He concluded, “Worship is an event where God should be the center of attention and the guest of honor. To accomplish the goal, churches should be designing their worship services with the focus on Him” (p. 5). His second principle is that “Right worship must accomplish the right purpose,” and that purpose, according to Psalm 96:7–8, is that worship “is the process of declaring, by whatever means God ordains, that the Lord is full of glory” (pp. 7–8). Reimers bemoaned that fact that for many people, worship is about what they can “get out of the service.” Instead, Reimers argued that one should be asking, “Did *God* get anything out of your worship today?” (p. 9, emphasis original). He explained, “churches may actually be contributing” to the thinking that worship is all about the people by how they establish their services, stages, and terminology (p. 9). Instead, churches should do whatever they can to demonstrate that God is the primary “audience” of worship (p. 10).

Reimers’ third principle, developed from John 4:23–24, is that “Right worship must conform to the right pattern” (p. 10). The “right pattern” in Reimers’ view is “worship in spirit and truth” (p. 12). “Spirit” indicates that “worship must occur with [an individual worshiper’s] inner spirit” (p. 12). “Truth” indicates that we must allow God’s Word to regulate our worship (ibid). Reimers did not use the term, “regulative principle of worship” at this juncture, but the idea that our worship must be governed by Scripture characterizes most of what he wrote throughout the book. (“The so-called ‘regulative principle’ of worship, the concept that worship must follow the guidelines that God has established, is inherently biblical” [p. 98].) Reimers then progressed to a discussion of “the elements of right worship” (pp. 14ff). While he seemed to have some familiarity with the regulative principle of worship, Reimers did not use the term, “elements” in the traditional regulative principle of worship way. Instead, what he regarded as “five distant elements that constitute true worship” are really five categories within which worship elements may be placed.

Reimers’ first category is preparation. He helpfully encouraged families to plan and prepare for worship prior to Sunday morning, and encouraged pastors to give their people opportunity to prepare before the actual worship service begins (pp. 15–21). His second category is praise (pp. 21ff). Within this category, Reimers primarily categorized the music elements of the worship service. He encouraged believers to sing with understanding and inward joy and thankfulness. He noted the acceptability of music prepared by skilled musicians, but insisted, “the biblical emphasis, however, focuses primarily on congregational singing as the heart of this element of worship” (p. 23).

His third category is prayer (pp. 27ff). He used the Lord's Prayer and other passages as models for how one should pray in worship, and encouraged a deliberate corporate orientation for prayers in a worship service. His fourth category is what Reimers called "presentation" (pp. 36ff). Here he was writing specifically about giving an offering. He argued that Old Testament tithing presents a pattern for New Testament practice, distinguished "offerings" from "tithes" as an unspecified amount given with regularity, and suggested that the biblically-mandated element of an offering must be present in every worship service. Reimers' final category is preaching (pp. 43ff). He presented helpful arguments to demonstrate that whenever the Word is preached, truth must be presented, and opportunity for response (from every Christian) must be provided.

The title of Reimers' second chapter (pp. 52ff) may perhaps be a bit misleading. "Multi-Generational Impact: Worship Style and Your Family" at first glance gives the impression that the chapter will be discussing family worship. On the contrary, however, this chapter warns about the far-reaching negative impacts of worshiping in an unbiblical manner, even upon one's children and grandchildren. The discussion centers primarily on the Second Commandment (Exod 20:4-5), a commandment that targets specifically worshiping the true God in the wrong way (p. 53). Drawing from the two corollaries to this commandment at the end of verse 5, Reimers demonstrated how God has promised to punish worship "unto the third and fourth generation" of those that worship him wrongly, and he has promised to bless them that worship him as he desires. He devoted a considerable amount of time defending the view that God indeed does punish the children and grandchildren of those who worship wrongly, a topic that was the subject of his doctoral dissertation ("The Significance of the Visitation of the Sins of Fathers on Children for the Doctrine of Imputation" [unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Bob Jones University, 1984]). He used several biblical examples to illustrate each of these promises, and insisted that this one warning should cause the believer to think very carefully with regard to how he/she worships.

In chapter three (pp. 70ff), Reimers discussed the "Dangers of Deviant Worship." Looking to Scriptural examples again, Reimers demonstrated that God hates "Worship Based on Imagination" (Exod 32:4-6) (pp. 71ff), "Worship Based on Innovation" (Lev 10:1-3) (pp. 74ff), "Worship Like the World" (Deut 12:29-32) (pp. 77ff), "Worship Marketed for Convenience" (1 Kgs 12:26-31) (pp. 81ff), "Ritual Worship" (Gen 4:1-16) (p. 88ff), "Token Worship" (1 Sam 15:1-23) (pp. 90ff), "Reluctant Worship" (Mal 1:6-14) (pp. 93ff), and "Pretentious Worship" (Matt 15:8-

9) (pp. 95ff). In each of these cases, Reimers provided helpful modern day examples and advice for how to avoid them.

Reimers concluded with a summary chapter (pp. 98ff) in which he challenged the reader: “Nothing is more important than worship, either now or in eternity.” In *The Glory Due His Name*, Gary Reimers provided a brief, readable, informative guide for biblical worship that would be helpful for a pastor, student, or average Christian.

**Scott Aniol, executive director, Religious Affections Ministries**

***Worship in Song, a Biblical Approach to Music and Worship*** by Scott Aniol. Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2009. 281 pp., paper, \$17.99.

Scott Aniol, who serves as the executive director of Religious Affections Ministries, wrote this book for two reasons: *first*, to distinguish between secular music, which might be appropriate for everyday use, and sacred music, especially in the context of the church gathered; *second*, “newer generations are increasingly rejecting conventional arguments for a conservative music philosophy.” Aniol believes it is time for another voice (p. viii).

Aniol’s volume is divided into three sections, the first wisely devoted to laying the foundation. Here strong support for biblical sufficiency is given (see p. 1) and a definition of worship was sought. Aniol ultimately defined worship as “a spiritual response to God as a result of understanding biblical truth about God” (p. 30). The two responses that are essential are affection and action (p. 33), which leads to one of the most helpful insights in the book (viz. the difference between passions and affections). Drawing heavily on the writings of Jonathan Edwards, Aniol regarded passions as being surface level feelings that are merely physical or chemical responses to some sort of stimuli. Such passions are involuntary, immediate and fleeting. Affections, on the other hand, are deeper, more lasting, more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul; they are a volitional response to acknowledged truth (pp. 52-53, 197). Sacred music should not be used to arouse our passions but to deepen and express our affections. Aniol claimed that part of our corporate worship in song today is due to the infiltration of the secular culture, via the Enlightenment, into the minds and lives of God’s people (pp. 68-72). Prior to the Enlightenment, a strictly secular culture did not exist in the Western world, but now it is difficult to avoid its influence, which is especially true of worship music. If Christians spend all week listening to “bad” music, it is difficult to appreciate good music when used in worship (p. 57).

Section two is devoted to understanding the proper use of music. Aniol said that believers praise what they love and value (pp. 104-05); therefore, sacred music should be about the beauty of God (pp. 101-03). Here the reader is offered qualities for good music (pp. 132-33) and the means for evaluating good music (pp. 140-43). The final section dealt with music in assembled worship. Aniol defined congregational worship “as a unified chorus of spiritual responses toward God expressed publicly to God, as a result of understanding biblical truth about God” (p. 155). Congregational worship was distinguished from private worship simply because it is a corporate activity (p. 203). For this reason, individualistic music is not appropriate nor is personal preference paramount. Sacred music should be one of the tools used by the church to help mature believers (p. 161). With this in mind, Aniol believes that one of the primary purposes of sacred music is to mature the emotions of believers (pp. 163-71).

Chapters 12-15 make a case for congregational worship music being: God-oriented, doctrine-oriented, affection-oriented, and congregation-oriented. The kinds of music that do and do not accomplish these purposes are found in these chapters as well as in the last two; it is at this point that some will choose to differ with Aniol. Even among those who agree on all the principles he developed, some will perhaps disagree on the particulars. However, Aniol presented a fair, biblical, and thought-provoking case for a conservative approach to sacred music. Of the books read on worship as related to music, this reviewer believes *Worship in Song* to be the best, which does not mean he agrees with everything presented (although he does with most), but Aniol gave an intellectual, scripturally-laced argument that is well worth serious study by those interested in congregational worship.

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