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***Journal of Dispensational Theology*** – December 2012

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## EDITORIAL

Why is that Christmas is one of the most important and eagerly anticipated holidays of Western societies? Certainly there are those who enjoy singing the traditional Christmas carols during this time of year. Carols such as *I'll Be Home for Christmas*, *Jingle Bells*, and *White Christmas* appeal to one's sense and memories. Others such as *Away in a Manger*, *First Noel*, *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*, and *Silent Night* praise the One for whom the holiday is named. Certainly, most readers know that *Christmas* is a compound word composed of "Christ" (literally, the Anointed One or Messiah) and "Mass" (i.e. holy-day), and so the word itself lets us know that *it is the day on which believers celebrate the birth of God's Anointed One, Jesus the Messiah (the Christ)*.

The birth of Jesus of Nazareth was an historical event anticipated for more than 4,000 years (see Gen 3:15). How is it, though, that a mere man could accomplish such a tremendous task? Indeed, a mere man is incapable of completing this work. Romans 3:23 declares, *all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*. Therefore, if Jesus were a mere man, then He too would be born a sinner. Was the baby Jesus born to the virgin Mary in the town of Bethlehem nearly 2,000 years ago a mere man? According to the Bible, this Jesus of Nazareth was more than a mere man. Indeed, He was very man, but He was also God of very God (i.e. true God of true God). When He assumed human flesh and a human nature, he did not become any less God, nor was He any less than true God. The good news is that God decreed a plan which would allow His Son to become fully man, yet still be free from both the sin nature of humanity and the sinful actions and thoughts which all members of Adam's family possess and perform. Adam passed his sin to all humanity, through his seed, thus God would have His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be born of the *seed of the woman*. Mary became the mother of Jesus before she consummated her marriage to Joseph. By a miraculous work, the Holy Spirit, caused the conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary without the normal procreative act of a man and woman.

Consequently, Jesus became a true man—but without sin—while always being true God. He would be able to accomplish the plan of redemption! He would be able to experience manhood completely while accomplishing His work of redeeming a multitude of people from the control of Satan, and from the destructive consequences of sin and rebellion against the Lord God and Creator. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Child, who as a Man, gave His life so by grace through faith in His work alone, one may live with Him in the fullness of His glory for eternity! What a wonderful message to seize our thoughts during this Christmas season!! We trust that the articles in this issue, which explain the royal psalms, Christian leadership, and the miraculous gifts—in addition to the helpful book reviews for discernment and enrichment—will stimulate your thinking during this blessed time of the year and into 2013 (and the years thereafter).

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## A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF THE ROYAL PSALMS

**Bruce A. Baker**

The *crux interpretum* of a biblical theology of the royal psalms is the problem of definition. Is there such a thing as a royal psalm, and if so, what are its characteristics? Hasel was quite correct when he noted that

there is inevitably a subjective element in all historical research worthy of the name. . . . The historian will always be guided in his work by a principle of selection, which is certainly a subjective enterprise, and by a goal which gives perspective to his work, a goal that is equally subjective."<sup>1</sup>

The subjective is readily seen in such works as Westermann's *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*.<sup>2</sup> By limiting himself to these two categories, he gave only a cursory response to the royal psalms, noting (without evidence) that they are concerned with the "'re-presentation' of history."<sup>3</sup> The German words translated "re-presentation" express the ideas of "presenting to the mind" and of "actualizing or making relevant to the present."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is unacceptable for prophetic revelation about the Messianic King in this schema. Westermann's principle of selection and pre-understanding of the nature of the royal psalms is a textbook example of the subjective element taken to extreme.

### DEFINITION AND METHODOLOGY

While it may be impossible to remove the subjective element completely, any serious attempt toward establishing a biblical theology of the royal psalms must take concrete steps designed to mitigate its deleterious effects. Therefore, a well-defined set of guidelines must be

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<sup>1</sup> Gerhard F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 48.

<sup>2</sup> Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 245.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 214, trans note.

sought to provide as much objectivity as possible. Such guidelines, however, are more difficult to ascertain regarding the royal psalms than for other genres within the Psalter. For unlike more common genres, like praise or lament, there seems to be no common structure to the royal psalms.<sup>5</sup> Anderson, for example, found two different forms in Psalm 89 (89:1-37 as hymn, and 89:38-51 as lament) even though he classified its overall message as a royal psalm.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, their identification must be based upon subject matter and theme instead of organization or literary patterns. Bellinger argued,

The psalms of lament and praise are literary types in the strict sense, but the royal psalms are not. Our list of these psalms includes a variety of literary forms. The common characteristic that holds the category together is the king; the psalms relate to different settings in the life of the Jerusalem king. Because the king held a distinctive and prominent position in the life of the worshiping community, and because this group of psalms makes its own contribution to our

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<sup>5</sup> One should note that Leupold insisted that too much has been made of form and structure of the various genres within the Psalter. The goal of placing the individual psalm in “its proper pigeonhole” does not constitute the last word on the nature of that psalm. He reasoned as follows: “It is frequently being overlooked that the pattern or type involved is not so much a matter of traditional form as it is a purely natural procedure that is bound to be followed whether the types involved are clearly in the mind of the writer or not. There is a kind of natural logic about some of these procedures. When a man is in trouble and gives poetic vent to his emotions in a literary production or, for that matter, in a free outburst of prayer, it may well happen that without any reflection or without being conscious of any pattern he describes his situation in detail to the Lord. After this a lament might quite naturally follow, laying bare his inmost feelings and bitter pain. Such a lament might be repeated or dwelt on at greater length, depending on the extremity of the situation in which the man is involved. Then quite naturally could follow petitions for relief from the great distress. This prayer might be long or short as the feelings of the moment dictate. There could then follow more lament, if the prayer had failed to raise the petitioner above the level of his distress. Or there might follow a note of restored confidence and even a word of thanksgiving for the comfort and help received from the Lord. No one would deny that the sequence of parts in such a psalm could be arranged in almost any order. One and the same man might be praying in one fashion this year and in quite another fashion three years hence. In other words, the rigidity of pattern has been stressed too much” (H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* [Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1959] 11).

<sup>6</sup> Bernhard W. Anderson, *Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak for Us Today*, rev. and expanded ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983) 241.



understanding of a variety of themes and concerns in the Psalter, it makes sense to treat these texts separately. So while 'royal psalm' is not actually a literary type, there is justification for including it in our treatment of the various classes of psalms.<sup>7</sup>

While there have been previous attempts to classify the psalms,<sup>8</sup> Leupold noted that after the publication of Gunkel's work in 1933,<sup>9</sup> commentators have, for the most part, followed his classification pattern.<sup>10</sup> As part of his general classification of the psalms,<sup>11</sup> Gunkel listed ten psalms (with the possible addition of Psalm 89) as royal psalms: 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, and 144.<sup>12</sup> Bullock noted that this list has become "rather standard"<sup>13</sup> while Futato noted that "a fairly strong consensus" affirms Gunkel's list.<sup>14</sup>

While there may indeed be a "strong consensus," this in no way implies uniformity. Bullock, rejecting form criticism as a valid investigative tool, preferred to emphasize "messianic psalms" instead of the more restrictive category of "royal psalms." Still, he acknowledged that the "messianic psalms" may be divided into two types: (1) those dealing with the king and his rule (2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 61, 72, 89, 110, 132, 144); and, (2) those that treat the man and his life generally (8, 16, 22, 35, 40, 41, 55, 69,

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<sup>7</sup> W. H. Bellinger, *Psalms: Reading and Studying the Book of Praises* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990) 106-07.

<sup>8</sup> "In his *Summarien* Luther listed five classes of psalms as being outstanding. There were in his opinion first of all those psalms that were prophecies about the Christ; then there were doctrinal psalms; then psalms of comfort; then also prayer psalms; and lastly psalms of thanksgiving. Almost every writer that commented on the psalms after him had his own particular pattern of classification" (Leupold, *Psalms*, 10).

<sup>9</sup> Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Einleitung in Die Psalmen*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1966).

<sup>10</sup> Leupold, *Psalms*, 10.

<sup>11</sup> "As Gunkel sees it, there are seven classes to be observed. They are 1) hymns, 2) enthronement of Yahweh psalms, 3) national laments, 4) royal psalms, 5) laments of the individual, 6) psalms of individual thanksgiving, 7) lesser categories. In this last class are to be found six subheads: a) words of blessing and cursing, b) pilgrimage songs, c) hymns of victory, d) hymns of thanksgiving, e) the legend, f) the law" (ibid. 10).

<sup>12</sup> C. Hassell Bullock, *Encountering the Book of Psalms: A Literary and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001) 178.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Mark David Futato and David M. Howard, *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007) 181.

102, 109);<sup>15</sup> it is the first of these two divisions—namely the king and his rule—that are generally seen as the subject of the royal psalms.

Even though Gunkel's list is the result of his adherence to form criticism, a careful examination using objective criteria will show that this list is not without merit. Stated another way, one does not have to accept the tenants of form criticism to accept the results of Gunkel's work, at least in this area. As has been stated, the most common theme mentioned for the royal psalms is the king and his rule. While this is certainly descriptive of the psalms in question, a more exacting and objective criteria for identifying the royal psalms may be found in the Psalter itself.

Psalm 2 has the most important position in the Psalter as the first royal psalm in the collection, and as one of the most quoted psalms in the New Testament.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, it has been suggested that Psalm 1 and 2 were intentionally placed at the beginning of the Psalter as introductory psalms that dealt with two central tenants that constituted the core of Israel's belief system.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, since Psalm 2 is the first of its type and is placed

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<sup>15</sup> C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books: Revised and Expanded* (Chicago: Moody, 1988) 137. The careful observer will note that his first list is identical to Gunkel's with the exception of the addition of 61 and the omission of 101. Bullock noted that, of the latter category, every psalm is applied to Christ in the New Testament excepting 55. Bullock contended that these very human psalms find their "ultimate extensions and resolutions" in Christ. "David's cry of abandonment in Psalm 22:1 was used in its Aramaic form by our Lord on the cross (Matt 27:46), and the author of Hebrews applied 22:22 to Christ (Heb 2:12). Psalm 16 centers upon the importance of finding one's true identity in God. Peter quoted verse 8-11 in his Pentecost sermon to say that David's personal affirmation was fulfilled absolutely in Christ's resurrection (Acts 2:24-32). Our Lord Himself used Psalm 41:9 in reference to Judas' betrayal of Him (John 13:18), although the real situation was that the psalmist had experienced some illness because of his sin (v. 4). There was a definite sense in which the human dilemma described in these psalms could not exhaust their meaning, and was, in fact, only a relative fulfillment. The absolute satisfaction of the terms of the psalm was effected only in and by Jesus Christ" (ibid. 139). In contrast, only Psalms 2, 18, 45, and 110 are directly quoted in the New Testament, although there are numerous allusions to them (ibid. 137).

<sup>16</sup> Willem A. VanGemeren, "Psalms," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary with the New International Version of the Holy Bible*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991) 65.

<sup>17</sup> Anderson, *Out of the Depths*, 22. "These two themes—the revelation of God's will in the Torah and the hope for the coming of the Messiah to inaugurate God's kingdom—constituted the two cardinal beliefs of the Jewish people at the time the Psalter was given its final form" (ibid. 22-23). While their placement at the beginning of the Psalter may or may not have been for introductory purposes,

in such a prominent position within the Psalter, it seems reasonable to conclude that the general theme of the royal psalms would be conspicuous within it. A careful examination shows this to indeed be the case.

The activity in Psalm 2 revolves around three major actors and a chorus.<sup>18</sup> The major actors are the kings of the earth (or more generally the “nations”), the LORD, and his “anointed one.” The chorus consists of those who are allied with the king. While the identity of the first two major actors is relatively obvious, one must engage in further study to determine the identity of the third major actor: the “anointed one” (מְשִׁיחַ). To aid the investigation, it is helpful to note that the LORD also calls the anointed one (מְשִׁיחַ), “my king” (מֶלֶכִי, v. 6) and “my son” (בְּנִי, v. 7) within the same psalm. While these three titles (anointed one, king, and son) appear to be synonymous in Psalm 2, the king and the son have more than one referent elsewhere.

For example, Psalm 18:50 equates these three terms— the “king” (מֶלֶךְ), the LORD’s “anointed One” (מְשִׁיחַ) and “David and his seed forever” (לְדָוִד וּלְזַרְעוֹ עַד-עוֹלָם)—as synonymous; it is the mention of David’s offspring that shows a dual referent. On the one hand, the “anointed one” is David.<sup>19</sup> Conversely, this “anointing” extends to the royal line of David forever, which, of course, is in keeping with God’s covenant with David as stipulated in 2 Samuel 7:12–16. Solomon is clearly the referent of the pronoun in 7:13 (“He is the one who will build a house for my name. . . .”; cf. 1 Kgs 9:1-9). However, it is the “greater son of David” that is in view in 7:16 (“And your house and your kingdom shall endure before me forever; your

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the paring of these psalms is almost certainly not accidental. Leupold noted, “similar situations or contrasting situations often lead to putting two psalms side by side. Quite frequently similar words and phrases that occur in two psalms seem to have led to placing them side by side whatever their character may have otherwise been. This similar use of words and phrases strikes us as having been one of the most common factors in determining the placing of two psalms side by side” (Leupold, *Psalms*, 4). Therefore, in these two psalms, the parallels are quite remarkable. The blessed man does not stand (עָמַד) in the way of the wicked (1:1) but the kings of the earth “take their stand” (יָתִיצְבוּ) against the LORD (2:2). Both the righteous and the wicked are muttering their thoughts (הִגִּיהוּ), only the content of their musing is different (1:2; 2:1). Likewise, both psalms end with the LORD making a judgment concerning the righteous and the wicked, with either blessing or destruction as a result (1:5-6; 2:11-12).

<sup>18</sup> The use of the word “chorus” recalls ancient Greek tragedies where a group of performers commented on the main action, typically speaking and moving together.

<sup>19</sup> One should note that at his death, David was specifically called the “anointed of the God of Jacob” (2 Sam 23:1).

throne shall be established forever;” cf. Luke 1:32-33). Therefore, references to David or any of his offspring, including the future rule of “David’s Son yet David’s Lord,”<sup>20</sup> may be referenced as the “king, or the “anointed one.”

In the same way, Psalm 2 makes clear that the king is God’s son by adoption (v. 7). Once again, this idea recalls the Davidic Covenant. In 2 Samuel 7:14, God stated, “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to me.” A vital matter to notice is that this divine adoption is descriptive of the entire Davidic line.<sup>21</sup> The previously quoted verse clearly refers to Solomon.<sup>22</sup> However, in Psalm 89, David—who was anointed with holy oil (בְּשֶׁמֶן קִדְשֵׁי מִשְׁחָתָיו, v. 20)—is also adopted as a son, and not only a son, but also the firstborn (. . . נְהוֹאֲרֵ-אֲנִי בְּכֹר אֶתְּ . . . , v. 27)! In the same way, Jesus, the ultimate fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant, is called a son by the apostle Paul (Acts 13:33) as he quoted Psalm 2:7.

Those allied with the king should be viewed as a chorus supporting the actions of the LORD and his king. They are described as either being the beneficiaries of the king’s goodness and protection, or as praising the king for what he has done; moreover, their actual activity is limited and often merely implied with the first person plural pronoun. The function of this chorus seems to be limited to highlighting the uprightness and strength of the king. Therefore, while they are present in each psalm under investigation, they are usually found to be the recipient of the actions of others, rather than initiators of actions themselves. In Psalm 2, this character group is described in the last verse as “all who take refuge in him” (כָּל־יְחֹסֵי בּוֹ).

Therefore, the objective criteria to pursue in this study may be found in the search for some mention of the LORD, the nations, and some combination of David, the king, the son, or the anointed one, and those allied with him. A quick note to add here is that vocabulary alone is not sufficient to identify all the psalms with the appropriate theme. Just because a word is used in a psalm does not mean that the theme of the psalm is consistent with all other uses of the word. At the same time, the ideas expressed in these words may be communicated without employing the actual vocabulary being sought. Context, in addition to the mere

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<sup>20</sup> Taken from the hymn *Stricken, Smitten and Afflicted* by Thomas Kelly.

<sup>21</sup> The concept of adoption as sons of an entire group of people is not without theological antecedent. The entire nation of Israel was identified as the firstborn son of God (יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכֹרִי בְּנִי, Exos 4:22). In the same way, the adoption of Israel serves as a precedent for the adoption of the church (cf. Rom 9:4; 8:23).

<sup>22</sup> “[W]hen he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men” (2 Sam 7:14, NIV).

vocabulary employed in a particular psalm, is an essential element in discovering its theme. Most concepts may be descriptive with a multitude of different words. For example, Psalm 2:1 speaks of the nations (גוֹיִם) as a primary actor. The actor, however, is also described as the people (לְאֻמִּים vs 1), the kings of the earth (מְלֻכֵי-אֲרֶץ vs 2), and the ones who rule (רוֹזְנִים). Therefore, a simple vocabulary search for the word “nations” (גוֹיִם) is not sufficient.

Similarly, ordinary words may be used to express extraordinary concepts. Psalm 2:4 references “He who sits in the heavens” (יֹשֵׁב בַּשָּׁמַיִם). The word “sits” is an accurate translation of an ordinary word, but when used in the context of the LORD sitting in the heavens, it is just as correct to speak of him as “enthroned” (as does the NIV). Nevertheless, one should expect some uniformity of description when the theme remains the same.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, when all three of these actors appear in a particular psalm, it seems safe to classify this psalm as a “royal psalm” after the pattern set in Psalm 2. The mention of the previously discussed chorus will add credence to such a classification. When Gunkel’s list is examined with this criteria in mind—that is, the presence of these three major actors along with the minor character group, regardless of the specific vocabulary—one finds his list remarkably accurate. The following is an examination of each psalm in Gunkel’s list to see which of these characters are mentioned, if any.

## INVESTIGATION

### ***Psalm 2***

Since this psalm was used as the prototype for classification purposes, it is not surprising that this psalm lists all four participants. In fact, the author recorded a dialog between the three major characters listed. “Let us tear off their bonds (נִגְתָּקָה אֶת-מוֹסְרוֹתֵימוֹ) and fling from us their ropes” (נִשְׁלִיכָה) (מִמֶּנּוּ עֲבַתֵּימוֹ) cry the nations. Therefore, do the “kings of the earth” (מְלֻכֵי-אֲרֶץ) take their stand and the rulers (רוֹזְנִים) take council with one another against the “LORD and his anointed one” (עַל-יְהוָה וְעַל-מְשִׁיחוֹ).

The one who “sits in the heavens” laughs (יִשְׁחָק) and scoffs at them (יִלְעַג-לָמוֹ) for this outrageous claim. His angry retort is that he has installed “my king” on Zion (וְאֶנִּי נָסַכְתִּי מַלְכִּי עַל-צִיּוֹן). (When the king speaks, he speaks

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<sup>23</sup> If several strangers on a street corner witnessed an auto accident and were subsequently questioned by the police, it would be unusual indeed if there were no common elements or words to their eyewitness accounts.

only the LORD's words.<sup>24</sup> He calls him "My Son" (בְּנִי) and speaks of his plans for the violent repression of the rebellion of the nations. With a "scepter of iron" (בְּשֵׁבֶט בַּרְזֶל), he will "shatter them like pottery" (כַּבְּלֵי יוֹצֵר תִּנְפְּצֵם). The concept of warfare by the LORD against the world will be a major theme of these psalms.

Interestingly, there are two possible destinies for the nations. The destinies are dependent, not upon their relationship with the LORD directly, but indirectly through their relationship with the Son. Verse twelve speaks regarding wrath against his enemies and blessing for those who take refuge in him. Here is found the chorus: it is those who "Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling" (עֲבָדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה בִּירָאָה וּגִילוּ בְרַעְדָּה). Therefore, the reader sees in this psalm the LORD, his anointed one, the nations as enemies of them both, and those from the nations that serve the Son and are blessed in their refuge.

### ***Psalm 18***

In this psalm, David called himself the "servant of the LORD" (לְעַבְדְּ יְהוָה) and exhausted the majority of his time giving thanks for the LORD's deliverance from his enemies (אֹיְבֵי). The "enemies" were deadly ("the ropes of death surrounded me"—אִפְפוּנֵי חַבְלֵי־מוֹת) and their actions are described as "torrents of wickedness" (נַחְלֵי בְלִיעַל). David's enemies hated him (שִׂנְאֵי) and waited until the "day of [his] calamity" (בְּיוֹם־אִידֵי) so that they were too strong for him (כִּי־אֲמָצוּ מִמֶּנִּי).

While David called himself the "servant of the LORD," the LORD calls him "his king," (מֶלֶכִּי) and "His anointed" (מְשִׁיחוֹ). The two titles belong to "David and his seed forever" (לְדָוִד וּלְזֶרְעוֹ עַד־עוֹלָם). The attack upon the anointed king caused the LORD to rush to battle. While most of the terms used to describe the LORD's salvation are associated with creation (lightning, darkness, clouds, hailstones, wind, many waters, and so forth), some are borrowed from the arena of warfare. For example, the LORD sent "arrows" (חֲצִצִּי) so that the enemy was "scattered" (יִפְּצֵם) and "thrown into confusion," or "routed" (יִהַמֵּם).

Not only is warfare terms used to describe the LORD's actions, they are also used of the enablement He gives to His anointed king. The LORD "trains his hands for war" (מִלְמַד יָדָיו לַמִּלְחָמָה) and "his arms can bend a bow of bronze" (הֵן זְרוּעוֹתַי־נִחְתָּה קֶשֶׁת־נְחָשׁ). He gives him the "shield of salvation"

<sup>24</sup> See this same pattern in John 8:26, 28; 12:49.

<sup>25</sup> Verse 1, as in the Hebrew Masoretic Text.

(מִגָּן יִשְׁעֶךָ) and “girds him for battle” (וַתִּצְוֶנִי חֵיִל לְמִלְחָמָה). Therefore, David pursues (אֶרְדֹּף) and overtakes (אֲשִׁיג) his enemies, and destroys (אֲצַמֵּית) them. As a result of this violent confrontation, David was delivered from the “strife of the people” (מִרִיבֵי עַם) and was placed as the head of the nations.

The chorus is again seen as the beneficiary of the LORD’s goodness. Described as an “afflicted people” (עַם־עֲנִי), they join in the praise of God with the king by proclaiming, “Who is a rock besides our God?” (וּמִי צוּר זֹלָתִי) (note the use of the first person plural). Consequently, the king is able to give thanks to God “among the nations” (סִיּוּב).<sup>26</sup> As in the previous psalm, all four characters—the LORD, the king, the nations, and the king’s willing subjects—are present. Likewise, one of the main ideas expressed is the suppression of the peoples so that the anointed king may be installed as “head of the nations” (רֹאשׁ גּוֹיִם).

### **Psalm 20**

Here as well, all four characters are present. In verses 1-4, the LORD is the subject of each sentence. Verse five records a shift from the third person singular pronoun to the second person singular. The new referent is identified in verse 6 as “the LORD’s anointed” (יְהוָה מְשִׁיחוֹ), and in verse 9 as “the king” (הַמֶּלֶךְ). Interestingly, there is an intercession on behalf of the king by his subjects in this verse. There are two short prayers in this verse, both dealing with deliverance from an unstated enemy. The first prayer requests salvation for the king, the second requests salvation for the people who follow the king—identified with the first person plural pronoun “us” (יַעֲנֵנוּ). The concept here recalls Psalm 2:12, where a blessing is pronounced upon those who take refuge in the Son (אֲשֶׁר־יִבְחָשׁוּ בִּי).

The third major actor is not explicitly mentioned by any of the names one might expect (such as enemies, nations, rulers, peoples, etc.), but is unmistakably present nevertheless. The prayer to the LORD is offered when the king is “in the day of distress” (בְּיוֹם צָרָה). There will be singing when God grants the king “victory”<sup>27</sup> (יְשׁוּעָתֶךָ) and banners (such as are carried in battle to identify the various tribes) will be erected (נִדְגָּל). The question that these statements raise is with regard to whom is the king

<sup>26</sup> Paul quoted this verse in Romans 15:9 to emphasize his teaching that the Gentiles may also glorify God because of his mercy.

<sup>27</sup> The word for “victory” could also be translated “salvation,” but the question then becomes salvation from what? The only choice is salvation from his enemies.

granted victory? The answer is found in verse seven: it is those who boast in their military might instead of the LORD (הָ בָרַכְבּ וְאֵלֶּהָ בְּסוּסֵימָלָה); thus, it is important to note that, once again, the concept of military defeat of the king's enemies is prominent. The enemies have either been subjugated (in that they have bowed down: כָּרְעוּ) or they have been killed in battle (they have fallen: נָפְלוּ). Therefore, as previously, the LORD, his king, his subjects, and their enemies are mentioned, in addition to the idea of military conquest over the enemies.

### **Psalm 21**

One of the more difficult aspects of Psalm 21 is determining who is the subject in certain portions. In verses 1-6, the address is to the LORD with the king referenced in the third person. In this section, all the actions of the LORD are for the benefit of the king. In fact, the blessings bestowed upon the king indicate that the recipient of these blessings is not David and his decedents, but the greater son of David himself, Jesus Christ. For example, he is given "length of days forever and ever" (אֲרֶךְ יָמִים עוֹלָם וָעֶד) and he is "blessed forever" (בְּרִכּוֹת לְעֶד).

Verse seven acts as a hinge in the psalm where both the LORD and the king are referenced in the third person. Understanding that when the subject of a sentence is a pronoun then the referent to the pronoun is the subject of the preceding clause, verses 8-12 shifts the direct address to the king himself. Therefore, the second half of this psalm recounts what the king was able to accomplish due to the LORD's enablement. Once again there is evidence that the king is none other than the Lord Jesus due to the nature and extent of his judgment. The king will find "all [his] enemies" (כָּל־אֹיְבָדָי). At the "time of his appearing" (לְעֵת פָּגִיעָיו), "he will swallow them up in his wrath" (יְהוּה בְּאַפּוֹ יִבְלַעֵם), and a "fire will devour them" (אֵשׁ תִּשְׂתֶּה). The language foreshadows later revelation concerning the second coming.

The behavior of the enemies is consistent with what has been described in the previous psalms. They "hate" (שִׂנְאִים) the king, "intend evil" (תִּשְׁבּוּ מִזְמֵה) against him, and "purposed evil devices" (בְּלִי־יִכְלֹוּ . . .). They will "not be able" (מִתְרַיֵּד תְּבוּגַן עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם) to accomplish their wicked schemes, however, because of the violent military intervention of the king who "aims [his] bowstrings at their faces".

The subjects of the king close the psalm with a vow of praise. Again, they are bystanders observing the action of the main three actors. Once again in the psalm, one finds the theme of the violent overthrow of those who oppose the LORD and His anointed. The theme keeps re-appearing because of the nature of the enemies and the nature of the LORD and His



anointed one. The nations will not yield, so the LORD destroys them through overwhelming force.

### **Psalm 45**

When read in a plain and ordinary way, Psalm 45 not only fits the criteria previously stated but also makes an important statement about the nature of the anointed king. The king is none other than God himself, which is easily shown by reading the divine commentary provided in Hebrews 1:8-9. However, there is no reason to leave the immediate context of the psalm to illustrate this truth.

While these verses are composed for the king (v. 1), the title of the psalm makes it clear that it is didactic in nature and intended for public worship. The phrase “of” or “to the Sons of Korah” (לְבָנֵי־קֹרַח) leaves it unclear as to whether they were the composers or performers of this song. Nevertheless, their prominent position in the Psalter,<sup>28</sup> their responsibilities in the house of God (1 Chron 9:19), as well as their readiness to lead in public worship (2 Chron 20:19) demands this song is taken as part of the worship liturgy. Similarly, the descriptive title מִשְׁכִּיל (instruction) identifies this as a song designed for contemplation.

As one begins the investigation, one jarring difference distinguishes this psalm from the others. Psalm 45 alone among the collection does not use God’s covenant-keeping name יהוה, but instead uses אֱלֹהִים. There is no question, of course, that these two names are synonymous with regard to their referent. However, there does seem to be a different emphasis given to each one. While doing a complete study of these two names is beyond the scope of this study, one can hazard a guess as to the unique change in names for this psalm.

Psalm 45 is sometimes called a “marriage” psalm because of the instructions to the bride of the king given in verses 10-15.<sup>29</sup> While it is true that a royal wedding is being discussed in this song, the larger subject seems to be the character of the king himself. Consequently, it is because he is “more beautiful than the sons of man” (יְפִיפִיתָ מִבְּנֵי אָדָם) that she is to forget her people and her father’s house (שָׁכַחְתִּי עַמִּי וּבֵית אָבִי). In fact, the king is identified at once as God himself yet a person distinct from God.

The apparent paradox is found in verses 5 and 6, and these two verses have been troublesome to many commentators. Taken at face value,

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<sup>28</sup> Eleven psalms—42, 44–49, 84, 85, 87, and 88—are attributed to them.

<sup>29</sup> One should note that the subject changes in the last two verses of the psalm due to the change from the feminine to the masculine pronouns employed.

the throne of God (אֱלֹהִים taken as a vocative) is the subject of verse 6, where the insignias of royalty (throne, scepter, kingdom) are prominent. The throne could just as easily have been the king's, as the statements made about this throne are made elsewhere about the anointed one. Verse 7 continues talking about the same person (אֱלֹהִים) by using the second person masculine pronoun for the subject of the sentence. What makes this troublesome to some is that God (אֱלֹהִים), who is the subject of the sentence, is described as a separate person in the second clause. Inserting the vocative of verse 6 into verse 7 illustrates the construction.

Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom. You [O God] have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of joy above your companions.

The fact that some commentators find this difficult is not traceable to any unusual Hebrew construction, but to what can only be called an anti-prophetic bias towards the psalms in general. Broyles' exception to the very plain statements of the text is typical.

The phrase "Your throne, O God," is problematic because it appears to address the human king as divine. . . . While kings of Egypt and early Mesopotamia may have claimed divinity, the OT is elsewhere most explicit that this was not the case for Yahweh's appointed king. The closest the OT gets is in the language of Yahweh's "begetting" the royal "son," but this is simply a metaphor (see on 2:7 and 110:3).<sup>30</sup>

However, this explanation ignores the possibility that this composition could be primarily prophetic in nature. Additionally, any other translation other than the one already proposed distorts the Hebrew text. Kidner's understanding is much preferred.

The RSV, NEB, and RP (but not JB nor Gelineau) have sidestepped the plain sense of verse 6 (which is confirmed by the ancient versions and by the New Testament) by reducing the words "Thy throne, O God" to something less startling. But the Hebrew resists any softening here, and it is the New Testament, not the new versions, which does it justice when it uses it to prove the superiority of God's Son to the very angels (Heb 1:8f). Adding to this, verse 7 distinguishes between *God, your God*, and the king who has been addressed as "God" in verse 6. This paradox is consistent with the incarnation, but mystifying in

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<sup>30</sup> Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999) 207.

any other context. It is an example of Old Testament language bursting its banks, to demand a more than human fulfillment (as did Ps. 110:1, according to our Lord).<sup>31</sup>

The most natural reading, therefore, makes אֱלֹהִים both God and king, while maintaining God as a separate person who establishes the king. While it would be difficult to establish a fully detailed trinitarian theology from the royal psalms, it is instructive to note that another name for the king is son. Therefore, when understood prophetically, it is easy to see the identification of the LORD and His anointed one.

As previously, the enemies present themselves and God (or possibly the king, as it is difficult to tell the referent of the “mighty one” [גִּבּוֹר] who establishes his military superiority over them. He straps on his sword (חֲגוּר־חַרְבֶּךָ עַל־יָרֵךְ) and with sharp arrows (חֲצִידֶךָ שְׁנוּנִים) the heart of the enemies are pierced (בְּלֵב אוֹיְבֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ) so that the peoples fall beneath him (עַמִּים תַּחְתֶּיךָ יִפְּלוּ . . .). The enemies that remain are subjugated to him so that they seek his favor. The “daughter of Tyre” presents a gift (וּבִת־צַר (בְּמִנְחָה), and the richest men seek the king’s face (פְּנֵיךָ יְחַלּוּ עֲשִׂירֵי עָם). In this case, the “daughter of Tyre” most likely represents the population of a city and not an individual.<sup>32</sup> Tyre was considered one of, if not *the*, leading city of commerce during the time of David and Solomon. The many good that could be found in her markets, as well as her trading partners, are listed in detail in Ezekiel 27; it was natural, therefore, for those of David’s day to refer to Tyre as a symbol for wealth and commerce in the world. The construction that places the “daughter of Tyre” epexegetically with “the richest men” adds support for this understanding. The prophetic nature of this psalm also supports this interpretation, for Isaiah 23:17-18<sup>33</sup> predicts that Tyre’s wealth will go to the LORD’s people, mentioning specifically “fine clothing” such as the bride is wearing here. Finally, if the “daughter of Tyre” were a part of the king’s loyal subjects, this would be the only place

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<sup>31</sup> J. A. Alexander, *The Psalms* (n.p.: 1850; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.) 203-04.

<sup>32</sup> The “daughter of Zion” in Psalm 9:14 is another instance of the population of a city being referenced as a daughter.

<sup>33</sup> “And it will come about at the end of seventy years that the LORD will visit Tyre. Then she will go back to her harlot’s wages, and will play the harlot with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth. And her gain and her harlot’s wages will be set apart to the LORD; it will not be stored up or hoarded, but her gain will become sufficient food and choice attire for those who dwell in the presence of the LORD” (Isa 23:17-18, NASB).

in the royal psalms where those allied with the LORD and His anointed one perform an action other than prayer or praise.

As in the other psalms examined, the chorus—that is, those loyal to the king—is also present. While there are others mentioned—the virgin attendants and the bride’s companions—it is the bride who receives the most attention. Interestingly, the bride has her origins from among the nations, but has been selected by the king to be his bride. She is commanded to “forget her people and her father’s house” (שָׁכַחַי עַמִּי וּבֵית אָבִי, אֲבִיךָ) and instead bow down (הִשְׁתַּחֲוֶי-לוֹ) to her Lord (אֲדֹנֶיךָ). While most of the other royal psalms are alluding to the Davidic Covenant, this recalls the Abrahamic Covenant as recorded in Genesis 12:1. The fact that the bride comes from among the nations, rather than from Israel, makes it difficult for those familiar with the New Testament to ignore what appears to be a foreshadowing of the king’s relationship with the Gentile nations. While it goes too far to call this a prediction of the church, it does seem to be consistent with other Old Testament texts (such as Amos 9:11-12) that predict a relationship between the future king in his kingdom and the Gentile nations. The reader should also note that the bride and her companions do not initiate any actions. The bride is led (תּוֹבֵל) to the king. Her royal wedding garments seem to be a gift from him as well (this lack of action is consistent with all the previous psalms).

### **Psalm 72**

All the characters indicative of a royal psalm are present within the first four verses of this prayer by Solomon. The prayer is directed to God (אֱלֹהִים) later identified as יהוה אֱלֹהִים in v. 18) on behalf of the king. He asked for the ability to reign righteously (requesting God’s “judgments” [מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ] and “righteousness” [צְדָקָתְךָ] so that he may “vindicate the afflicted of the people” [יִשְׁפֹּט עַנְיֵי-עַם] and “save the sons of the needy” (יִזְוִישִׁיעַ לְבָנֵי אֶבֶר).

Later in the psalm, those loyal to the king are described as “the needy” (אֶבְיֹן) who “have no helper” (אֵין-עֹזֵר לוֹ). However, it is not merely economic justice that is being offered. The king rescues their lives from oppression and violence (מִתּוֹד וּמִחַמָּס) because “their blood is precious in his eyes” (יִיקַר דָּמָם בְּעֵינָיו); it should be noted that the reason the needy are afflicted is not because of inequities in the Law, but because of the actions of the enemy who is called the “oppressor” (עוֹשֵׂק). As a result of their deliverance, they are to pray for him continually and bless him all day long (יִתְפַּלֵּל בְּעֶדוֹ תָּמִיד כָּל-הַיּוֹם יְבָרְכֵהוּ . . .). Again, prayer and thanksgiving seem to be the only actions attributed to the chorus—those loyal to the king.

While the previous psalms have all touched on this theme, in Psalm 72 the major idea seems to be the worldwide rule of the king. The prayer is that he would reign “from sea to sea” (יָרֵד מִיַּם עַד-יָם) unto the “end of the earth” (עַד-אַפְסֵי-אֲרֶץ). The universal reign will have the following characteristics: (1) prosperity: even on the tops of mountains there will be grain (יְהִי פֶסֶת-בָּר בְּאֲרָץ בְּרֹאשׁ הַרִים); (2) health: the population center will “flourish like vegetation of the earth” (יִצְיָצוּ מֵעִיר כְּעֵשֶׂב הָאָרֶץ); (3) it will be eternal: as long as the sun and moon endure (עַם-שָׁמֶשׁ וְלִפְנֵי יְרֵחַ דּוֹר דּוֹרִים); and, (4) it will be characterized by an “abundance of peace” (רַב שָׁלוֹם). While it is the king who rules this kingdom, it is important to note that Psalm 72 is a prayer to God that this kingdom might be established. He is the one who grants these blessings to the king since he is the one “who alone works wonders” (דוֹעֶשֶׂה נִפְלְאוֹת לְבַד).

### **Psalm 89**

While the previous psalm emphasized the worldwide rule of the king, this psalm addresses the eternal nature of the covenant with David and his offspring (this theme is clearly seen in the opening verses). The word “forever” (עוֹלָם) is used three times in the first four verses and the phrase “to all generations” (לְדוֹר וָדוֹר) is used twice. Consequently, it is not surprising that the first thirty-seven verses discuss the everlasting nature of the Davidic covenant, quoting the stipulations of the covenant directly.

The reader should note that three of the four actors are mentioned in this introductory section. The author is Ethan the Ezrahite. For this study it matters not the history or identity of this person. What is important is that it is a person not the king, yet loyal to the king. He sang of the LORD’s great love (תִּסְדֵּי יְהוָה) and faithfulness (אֱמוּנָתְךָ), both terms repeated in the second verse. The way these characteristics of the LORD are displayed is in the covenant that He made with David—who is called “my chosen one” (בְּתִירִי) and “my servant” (עַבְדִּי)—and his offspring (זֶרְעֶךָ) forever. Conspicuous by its absence is any mention of the nations or the enemy in the introduction.

The importance of the everlasting nature of the covenant is seen in verses 38-45, for the actual circumstances surrounding the composition of this psalm point to a different conclusion; it is in this section that the enemy is prominent. Surprisingly, however, the majority of the actions described in this stanza are not to the adversaries, but to the LORD. For example,

- You have spurned and rejected  
(וְאַתָּה זָנַחְתָּ וַתִּמְאַס) v. 38).
- You have been full of anger with Your anointed  
(הִתְעַבְרַתְּ עִם־מְשִׁיחֶךָ v. 38).
- You have abhorred the covenant of Your servant  
(וְנִאֲרַתָּה בְרִית עַבְדְּךָ v. 39).
- You have profaned his crown in the land  
(חָלַלְתָּ לְאַרְצְךָ נִזְרוֹ v. 39).
- You have broken down all the walls  
(פָּרַצְתָּ כָּל־גְּדֵרֹתָיו v. 40).
- You have brought our fortresses to ruin  
(מָתָּ מִבְּצֻרֵינוּ מִחֻתָּהוּשׁ v. 40).
- You have exalted the right hand of his adversaries  
(הִרְיִמְתָּ יְמִין אֲדֻרָיו v. 42).
- You have caused all of his enemies to rejoice  
(הִשְׂמַחְתָּ כָּל־אֹיְבָיו v. 42).
- You have caused to return the edge of his sword  
(רָתַעְשִׁיב צוּר חֲרָבוֹא v. 43).
- You have not caused him to stand in battle  
(וְלֹא הִקְיַמְתּוֹ בַּמִּלְחָמָה v. 43).
- You have put an end to his purity  
(הִשְׁבַּתְּ מִטְהָרוֹ v. 44).
- You have cast his throne to the ground  
(כִּסְאוֹ לְאַרְצְךָ מִגֵּרְתָּהּ v. 44).
- You have shortened the days of his youth  
(הִקְצַרְתָּ יְמֵי עֲלוֹמָיו v. 45).
- You have covered him with shame  
(הִעֲטִיתָ עָלָיו בּוֹשֵׁה v. 45).

As a consequence of these direct actions of the LORD, all who pass on the road plunder the king (שָׁסְהוּ כָּל־עַבְרֵי דָרֶךְ), and he has become a reproach to his neighbors (הָיָה חֲרָפָה לְשֹׂכְנָיו). Therefore, it would seem that the LORD has broken His covenant with the offspring of David.

One may be certain that the breaking of the covenant is *not* the case, which is the main idea of this psalm. Not only is the introduction a reiteration of the eternity of the covenant, but also verses 30-33 are an amplification of 2 Samuel 7:14. In 2 Samuel 7:14, the LORD includes, as a stipulation of the covenant, the promise to reprove (הַכְחִיתִי) with the rod of men and the wounds of the sons of men (בְּשִׁבְטֵי אַנְשִׁים וּבַגְּעֵי בְנֵי אָדָם) the one in the Davidic line who commits iniquity (בְּהַעֲוֹתוֹ).

In the introduction of the psalm, it is the tension between the promise of eternal love and faithfulness and the actions of the LORD on behalf of the king's enemies that makes poignant the cry in verse 46, "How long, O LORD? Will you hide yourself forever?" (ה יהוה תסתֵר לְנֶצְחֵד־מְ). While it remains unclear whether the personal masculine pronoun in verse 47 and following is referencing Ethan the Ezrahite or the king, what is clear is that the ones loyal to the king are included in the petitions. "Remember O Lord, the reproach of your servants" (זָכֹר אֱדֹנָי תְּרַפֶּת עֲבָדֶיךָ), pleaded the author.

Moreover, it is also interesting to note that, while the king remains under the chastening of the LORD, he is still referenced as "your anointed one" (מְשִׁיחֶךָ). Therefore, one may note the curious position of the enemies taunting the footsteps of "your" anointed one (תְּרַפּוּ עַקְבוֹת מְשִׁיחֶךָ). While this was certainly true of the king under the reproach of the LORD due to his transgression of the Law, it also seems to foreshadow the greater son of David in His first advent.

Psalm 89, therefore, clearly meets the qualifications set forth as a royal psalm. All four characters are present, and they respond in a predictable fashion. The LORD is true to the Davidic covenant, even in the stipulations of discipline with the wounds of men. The king is in the line of David and still considered the anointed one even when enduring discipline. The enemies attack the LORD's anointed one and taunt his footsteps. Those loyal to the king cry to the LORD for deliverance.

### ***Psalm 101***

Identifying the four characters in this psalm is slightly more difficult than in some of the others. A careful examination of the text, however, reveals the presence of each one. The presence of the LORD (יהוה) is quickly seen as David makes His lovingkindness and justice (תְּסִדֵּר־יִמְשֶׁפֶּט) the object of his praise. The actions that are promised involve "the city of the LORD" (עִיר־יהוה).

The character of the king is expressed in several ways. First, David is listed as the author (this in and of itself is not conclusive due to the tenuous nature of the superscriptions in the psalms<sup>34</sup>). Nevertheless, when one considers the nature of his promised deeds, it becomes clear that the author is acting in a royal capacity, for only a king could accomplish such things. For the first several verses, David spoke regarding his own personal

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<sup>34</sup> Although this author believes them to be accurate unless convincing evidence is presented to the contrary.

holiness. Beginning with verse five, however, he took the seat of a judge, administering the lovingkindness and justice referenced in verse one.

For example, his lovingkindness is demonstrated by choosing the one whose walk is blameless (תָּמִים) to minister (יִשְׁרְתֵנִי) before him. His eyes are on the faithful of the land (עֵינַי בְּנֹאֲמְנֵי־אֶרֶץ), so that they may dwell with him (לְשִׁבְתָּ עִמָּדִי). Here the reader finds the presence of the chorus. As previously, they are the passive recipients of the king's goodness. No action is attributed to them.

In contrast, the king's justice is expressed toward another major actor in the royal psalms: "all the wicked of the land" (כָּל־רִשְׁעֵי־אֶרֶץ). The justice takes the form of capital punishment (lit. to cut them off לְהַכְרִית), which is clearly a prerogative that belongs to the king alone. While this is behavior expected of a righteous king, what is interesting is the extent to which justice is administered. Justice is not limited to those who have committed open and obvious crimes, but extends to those "who slander their friend in secret" (מִלּוֹשְׁנֵי בַסֵּתֶר רֵעֵהוּ . . .). While it could be that this secret crime become public, it seems more consistent with the actual wording that this crime is indeed a secret one. Additionally, this is not normally considered a capital crime. Therefore, it seems possible that David wrote the words of the ultimate king to come. When one considers the absolute nature of his promised character and compares that with his confessions of his own sin (Pss. 37 and 51 come to mind), this possibility becomes more likely.

### ***Psalm 110***

Psalm 110 is distinct from the other royal psalms in several respects. First, the authorship is an important issue that must be settled before one can honestly approach the psalm. Second, there are significant translation issues that must be faced. Third, the king is also called a priest, a distinction unknown in the other psalms. Fourth, the chorus could be seen as performing an action, although this is not at all certain.

Concerning the authorship, the New Testament witness concerning the author and character of Psalm 110 should be taken seriously (this in no way implies that one should allow the New Testament to reinterpret the Old Testament). The Old Testament should be allowed to speak on its own, yet there are a number of places where the New Testament explicitly states certain truths about this psalm, and this witness should be taken as authoritative.

Modern critics have tended to regard this psalm as an enthronement oracle for either David or one in his line, written in the



fashion of the enthronement oracles of the surrounding pagan nations by some unknown cultic official. For example, M. J. Paul informed readers: “the majority of the exegetes regard the speaker in the psalm as a cultic prophet, or an unknown priest addressing the king. Only a small minority believes David to be the author.”<sup>35</sup> Paul’s view has no support other than mere conjecture, and more importantly, as Kidner so eloquently noted, “Our Lord and the apostles, it is understood, were denied this insight.”<sup>36</sup>

Based upon the Lord’s own authority, one knows Psalm 110’s messianic quality (Luke 20:41), its Davidic authorship (Luke 20:42), and its rightful place in the canon (Matt 22:43). Twice, the Lord used the phrase “David himself” to describe the speaker (Mark 12:36-37). Additionally, what is a superscription in the English translations (A Psalm of David) is the first line of the psalm in the Masoretic Text (לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר).

Understanding David as the author answers another important question. Is the king in question an idealized portrait of what the human king should be or is he someone who is yet to come that is more than a mere man? Alexander answered these questions with the following unequivocal assertion: “The repeated, explicit, and emphatic application of this psalm, in the New Testament, to Jesus Christ, is so far from being arbitrary or at variance with the obvious import of the psalm itself, that any other application is ridiculous.”<sup>37</sup>

While such confidence might be jarring to modern sensibilities, Alexander’s conviction is not unfounded. The portrait painted by the psalmist is of such extraordinary stature that only the Messiah can fully meet the qualifications set forth. He is a king who is completely identified with the LORD; it is the king’s scepter (v. 2), yet it is the LORD who wields it from Zion (מִטֵּה עֵזֶךָ יִשְׁלַח יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן). At some point in the future, the Lord (אֲדֹנָי), a title used in the psalm for the king, will shatter all other kings in the day of his anger (מִתְחַץ בְּיוֹם-אַפּוֹ מִלְּבָיִם). He will judge among the nations (בְּגוֹיִם-דִּין), filling them with dead bodies (מִלֵּא גְוִיּוֹת). The actions assigned to the king in verses 5-7 are merely an expansion of what the LORD promised to do for the king in verse 1: make his enemies a footstool for his feet (הָדֵם לְרַגְלֶיךָ עַד-אַשְׁתֵּי אֲבִיבֶיךָ). Again, the idea expressed is of both the LORD

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<sup>35</sup> M. J. Paul, “The Order of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4 and Heb 7:3),” *Westminster Theological Journal* 49 (Spring 1987): 195.

<sup>36</sup> Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150: A Commentary on Books lii-V of the Psalms* (London: InterVarsity, 1975) 392.

<sup>37</sup> Alexander, *Psalms*, 456.

and the king working together toward the same end. In the meantime, he is invited to sit at the right hand of God<sup>38</sup> while waiting that day.

Not only is he a king, but also God appointed him as a priest (v. 4). However, his priesthood is unique in that it lasts forever and is after the order of Melchizedek and not after the Levitical line of the high priest Aaron (אַתָּה־כֹּהֵן לְעוֹלָם עַל־דַּבְּרֹתַי מִלְּכִי־צֶדֶק). Clearly, no one in history has met the qualifications for the king or the priest described here, let alone both. Only the Messiah, true God and true man, satisfies the description of the person David called, “My Lord.”

Some have contended that this is a description of David in his role as king and priest. Allen, for example, contended that this psalm describes a “divinely appointed successor to the dynastic line of Jebusite priest-kings,” even though he admitted that in practice there was very little use of this honor in a cultic capacity.<sup>39</sup> However, this explanation must be utterly rejected for it is almost inconceivable that God would maintain a dynastic line of priest-kings in a nation that he commanded be utterly destroyed because of the way their sins had polluted the land (Deut 20:17; Lev 18:24).

Merrill, in contrast, adopted a more conservative approach in his defense of David as the priest-king described in Psalm 110.

Being of the order of Melchizedek was also the basis of David’s role as royal priest and of his selection of Jerusalem as the site of the ark and tabernacle. He understood that just as Melchizedek had been king of Salem, so he, as successor to Melchizedek, must reign from Jerusalem. And just as Melchizedek was priest of God Most High, so he, as successor to Melchizedek in an order that was superior to that of Aaron, could exercise the holy privilege of priesthood before Yahweh. Thus on theological grounds, David could establish Jerusalem as cult center as well as political capital. . . .<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> “To be at the right side is to be identified as being in the special place of honor (1 Kings 2:19; Ps 45:9). Thus the full participation of the risen Christ in God’s honor and glory is emphasized by his being at God’s right hand (Acts 2:33–34; Heb 1:3)” (Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longmann III, gen. eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998] 728).

<sup>39</sup> “From his Jebusite predecessors he inherited the title of priest to Yahweh the Most High God, as sacred mediator between God and his people” (Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, eds. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker [Waco: Word, 1983] 86-87).

<sup>40</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996) 265-66.

Nevertheless, this explanation must also be rejected. Merrill based his entire case upon the role that David played in establishing Jerusalem as the center for worship, his leading the procession that carried the Ark while dressed in a linen ephod, and the absence of any mention of a priest during the following sacrifices. Such slight evidence cannot carry the weight of such a substantial assertion. Additionally, any person other than the Messiah who is assigned the role of “my Lord” in Psalm 110 must be placed there through a generous selection of hyperbole. What is one to do with such phrases as “sit at my (God’s) right hand” or “crushing the rulers of the whole earth” if someone other than the Messiah is meant? If one takes Psalm 110 in its most straightforward and natural sense, without resorting to hyperbole or conjecture, it becomes clear that the Messiah alone is the one being described. Therefore, when Jesus used these words to confound His critics in Luke 20 and Peter used them to point to the deity of Christ in Acts 2, both were using the psalm in its most obvious sense.<sup>41</sup>

Little needs to be said about the presence of the enemies. They are clearly seen throughout the psalm and meet the fate afforded to them in the other psalms; it is the role of the chorus that requires additional attention. Verse 3 is the only verse that mentions those loyal to the king. The translation problems associated with this verse, however, makes it difficult to ascertain exactly what is being said about them.

The New International Version translates the beginning of verse 3 (עַמְּךָ נִדְבָת בַּיּוֹם הַלְלוֹךְ) as, “Your troops will be willing on your day of battle.” While this rendering might capture the broader sense of the phrase, strictly speaking it fails as “translation” in that it completely ignores the Hebrew grammar. The word translated “willing” (נִדְבָת) is a feminine plural substantive, not an adjective that modifies the masculine singular noun “your people” (עַמְּךָ). Instead, the plural noun is better translated “free-will offerings,” since this is its common usage in the Mosaic Law and the Psalms.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> “It is plain that there can be no lower reference of the Psalm to David or any other Jewish monarch. It is a prediction, and a prediction of the Christ as the true King, as the everlasting Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Nor is there anything to startle us in such a conclusion, unless we are prepared to deny altogether the possibility of a revelation of the future” (John James Stewart Perowne, *Commentary on the Psalms* [London: G. Bell and Sons, 1878-79; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1989] 296).

<sup>42</sup> For its usage in the Law, see Exodus 25:2; 35:29; 36:3; and, Leviticus 22:23. The word is also used in Psalm 54:6.

If one provides a correlative verb,<sup>43</sup> the text would read, “your people offer free-will offerings.” While this is a possible rendering, the more common substantive verb<sup>44</sup> is to be preferred. Therefore, the text would read, “your people are free-will offerings.” Moreover, the fact that the reflexive<sup>45</sup> use of the concept of free-will offerings is demonstrated in both the Old and New Testaments<sup>46</sup> give credence to this interpretation.

The next phrase “in the day of your strength” (בַּיּוֹם תִּילָךְ) seems to be an obvious reverence to the time described in verse 5 as “the day of his anger” (בַּיּוֹם אִפְּוֹ). Therefore, at some point during this military engagement, those that are loyal to the king offer themselves as free-will offerings to be used as he determines. What is not stated, however, is whether this offering occurs at the beginning of the conflict, in the midst of the conflict, or after the engagement has finished. The lack of detail makes the expositor’s job more difficult, for knowing the timing of the offering would go a great way in determining the task to which they offer themselves. Since this information, however, is not given, other clues must be sought.

The next phrase, “in the majesty (or ornaments) of holiness” (בְּהַדְרֵי־קִדְשׁ), seems to be the key. In order to understand this phrase, two questions must be answered. First, does this phrase modify the first half of the verse or the second? In other words, are the people in “the ornaments of holiness,” or is it the king that possesses the “majesty of holiness”? Second, should one take הַדְרֵי in a spiritual sense (majesty or glory), or in a physical sense (ornaments or decorations)? The way one answers the second question determines how one answers the first.

Searching the Scriptures for precedents is, in this case at least, unfruitful. The phrase is found, in addition to the passage under investigation, in Psalm 29:2; 1 Chronicles 16:29; and 2 Chronicles 20:21. In each case, the New International Version translates the phrase “the splendor of his holiness.” Only in Psalm 110:3 does the New International

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<sup>43</sup> A correlative verb in this case is a verb that would show causation by the subject.

<sup>44</sup> The substantive verb expresses existence, such as the singular “is,” the plural “are,” or the infinitive “to be.”

<sup>45</sup> The reflexive use identifies the subject and the direct object as having an identical referent.

<sup>46</sup> A reflexive use of the same verbal root can be found in 2 Chronicles 29:14, 17, and with reference to military duties in Judges 5:2, 9 and 2 Chronicles 17:16. The concept of presenting oneself as a free-will offering is also found in Romans 12:1 and Philippians 2:17. The idea of giving oneself to the Lord is also found in 2 Corinthians 8:5.

deviate from this pattern, by translating the phrase “in holy array.” Still, even with this variation, the phrase is consistently used to describe God himself. In contrast, the New American Standard Bible routinely translated this phrase as “in holy array,” or “in holy attire.” Adding to this confusion is the fact that the New American Standard consistently uses this phrase to describe those who worship the LORD, except in this passage, where they punctuate the sentence so that this phrase is modifying the second clause. Clearly the definition of this phrase and the one being modified by it remain in doubt.

If the phrase *דְּשִׁבְהַדְרֵי־יְיָ* is best translated as “the splendor of his holiness,” so that it describes the character of the king, then those loyal to the king appear to be offering themselves as willing combatants in the military campaign being waged. Of all the royal psalms, this would be the first and only instance of potential activity on their part other than prayer or praise; with this being said, even though they offer themselves as willing soldiers, there is no evidence that these troops are actually deployed in combat (nor is there any need for their assistance because it is the LORD who is crushing the rulers of this earth and who amasses the dead). Therefore, this interpretation is consistent with the rest of the psalms under study.

If, on the other hand, the phrase *הַדְרֵי־קִדְשׁ* is best translated “in holy attire” and modifies those who are loyal to the king, then it seems best to take this as a reference to sacerdotal garments, with those wearing them performing the function of priests. The garments of the priest are specifically called “garments of holiness” (*בְּגָדֵי־קִדְשׁ*) in Leviticus 16:4. The interpretation here would indicate that, when the ultimate king (Jesus Christ) is installed at the beginning of the kingdom, those loyal to Him—who will be primarily from the nation of Israel—will finally be serving the purpose for which God called them. They will indeed be a “kingdom of priests” (*מַמְלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים*, Exod 19:6). While this function is broader in scope than has been seen formerly in that it would include leading organized worship, it is still consistent with the limited activities previously assigned: prayer and praise. In either case, it remains clear that the role of those loyal to the king is limited to worship. No activity is required on their part to bring justice to this world or to suppress those who remain in violent opposition to the LORD and His anointed one.

### ***Psalm 132***

Psalm 132 easily divides into two stanzas. The first (vv. 1-9) recalls David’s zeal for finding a dwelling place for the Ark of God. The second (vv. 10-18)

is the prayer of one in the Davidic line requesting the LORD God not to forget the promises He made to David and to his house.

Stanza one mentions three of the four actors common to the royal psalms. The LORD and David are prominent in these verses as David brings the ark to “your resting place” (מְנוּחָתְךָ) in Jerusalem. Those loyal to the king—referenced as “your priests” (כֹּהֲנֵיךָ) and “your pious ones” (חֲסִידֶיךָ)—rejoice in this action. The irony inherent in the Davidic Covenant is evident in stanza two. While David was seeking a resting place for the LORD, the LORD, in turn, establishes a place for David’s offspring to “sit” (יֵשְׁבוּ . . .) “forever and ever” (עַד־עַד).

As has been seen in previous psalms, there is an identification between the LORD and His anointed one in stanza two. The LORD states that He will place one of David’s offspring on his (David’s) throne forever and ever (vv. 11-12). However, at the same time, the LORD also stated that He will sit at his resting place forever and ever “because I have desired it” (כִּי אֲוֹתִיהָ, v. 14). The “resting” is not merely an habitation, however, because the LORD takes upon himself an active role in the wellbeing of the people. He will bless Zion with abundant provisions (צִידָהּ בְּרֵךְ אֲבָרָךְ) and will satisfy the needy with bread (אֲבִיוֹנִיהָ אֲשַׁבֵּיעַ לֶחֶם). Nevertheless, the LORD causes a “horn for David” (אֲצַמִּית קֶרֶן לְדָוִד) and for him will cause to flourish a crown (אֲצַמִּית קֶרֶן לְדָוִד).

Only in the last verse does one see a reference to “his enemies” (אֹיְבָיו); the fact that this mention is so brief seems to be significant. If one did not know that the last verse of the psalm was written, the entire song could be read without noticing any significant loss. In other words, one could cut verse 18 from the psalm and have no clue that it was missing, which seems to indicate that a mention of “enemies” is a necessary component to this type of psalm. If this is true, then understanding and acknowledging the existence of enemies to the LORD and His anointed one is crucial to understanding the world as it currently exists and what will be necessary for the LORD to establish the reign of David’s offspring.

### **Psalm 144**

Psalm 144 is somewhat unique in that the first two-thirds of it are quotes from other psalms. Stated another way, the only new material is found in verses 12-15, and with this being said, these quotations were arranged in a particular order so that the author could express his intended meaning, so they should not merely be dismissed. Part of the editorial decision-making was the acrostic form (dividing v. 13 into two parts) that the author chose.

David began this psalm with a note of praise to “the LORD my rock” (הוה צורי). He then continued with praise, adding descriptor after descriptor in his attempt to enumerate what God did for him. He “trained my hands for battle” (המלמד ידי לקרב) and “my fingers for war” (אצבעותי למלחמה). He is “my lovingkindness and my fortress” (חסדי ומצודתי), “my stronghold and the one who delivers me” (משגבי ומפילטי), and “my shield and the one in whom I take refuge” (מגני ובו חסיתי). He is the “one who subdues peoples under me” (הרודד עמי תחת). Knowing these things to be true of the LORD caused David to see himself and all mankind as they really are: “like a breath” (להבל דמה) or “a passing shadow” (כצל עובר); it is because God is who He is and man is what he is that David confidently called upon Him to rescue him from “the hands of the son’s foreigners” (בני נכר). In other word, David realized his own helplessness in the presence of danger as well as the impotence of all mankind to stand opposed to God.

Three of the four characters have been mentioned in the quoted section of this psalm. David is the author and thus the one who uttered the praise. He is also mentioned by name in verse 10. The LORD is the main actor, who is described in His personality and as the object of David’s petitions. The enemies of David are described as ones whose mouths speak vanity (פיהם דבר־שוא) and whose right hands deceive (ימין שקר vs 8). The new material describes the blessings that come upon those “whose God is the LORD” (העם שיהוה אלהיו). The promise of healthy children (v. 12), abundant food (vv. 13-14), and domestic tranquility (v. 14) belong to those who follow Him; it is important to notice that the people are the recipients of these blessings even though no actions are ascribed to them other than trust in the LORD.

### ***Evaluating Gunkel’s List***

The brief review here seems to have established the validity of Gunkel’s classification. What is important to note, however, is that higher critical methods and assumptions are not necessary to arrive at this conclusion. A simple reading of the texts in question in a normal, everyday, socially designated manner is sufficient to verify the shared characteristics of the collection.

The shared characteristics are important because they exclude as well as include. Stated another way, the three major actors and the chorus being present in every psalm under consideration provides workable boundaries to help establish what may be considered a royal psalm. For example, each of the psalms in Bullock’s list of messianic psalms which speak of the man and his life generally (8, 16, 22, 35, 40, 41, 55, 69, 102,

109)<sup>47</sup> fail to meet these qualifications. While there is little doubt that these are indeed messianic psalms, in most cases, they portray the coming one in His suffering rather than in His glory as King.

One possible addition to Gunkel's list may be Psalm 61 as it does meet many of the qualifications previously mentioned. There is a prayer rising to God (אֱלֹהִים, v. 1) for protection against the enemy (אֹיֵב, v. 3). The king (v. 6) is said to dwell in the presence of God forever (יָשֵׁב עִוְלָם לְפָנָי) (יְרֵאֵי שִׁמְךָ). There is even mention of those who fear your name (אֱלֹהִים vs7).

Despite these qualifications, the psalm does not quite rise to the level of the other psalms in this study. God (אֱלֹהִים) is addressed, but the LORD (יהוה) is not (this is not automatically disqualifying as this is also true of Ps 45). In Psalm 45, there is an exegetical explanation for the change in address, which is lacking in Psalm 61. Additionally, while there is the promise of the king dwelling in the presence of God forever, there is no mention of God actually placing him on the throne, which would make this psalm unusual in this category. Finally, the chorus is there but is not there. The first person singular pronoun is used to the exclusion of the first person plural pronoun. Much like Mrs. Grundy,<sup>48</sup> the chorus is mentioned, but remains off-stage and mute. While these differences may seem minor, in the list assembled by Gunkel the characters act with a uniformity that is not replicated here. Therefore, one must conclude that Psalm 61 should not be classified as a royal psalm.

#### THEOLOGICAL AND PRACTICAL INFERENCES

The consistency with which the royal psalms recount the relationship between the four characters enables the interpreter to deduce several theological and practical truths.

##### ***The Nature of the World's Governments***

The fact that the mention of enemies is a requisite for inclusion in this classification is evidence that evil exists and often prospers, which should surprise no one. What makes teaching of the royal psalms unique is that

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<sup>47</sup> Bullock, *Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books*, 137.

<sup>48</sup> Mrs. Grundy is a fictional character from the play *Speed the Plough* (1798) by Thomas Morton. In the play, Mrs. Grundy is often referenced, but never seen. Her main role is to show the tyranny of conventional propriety, as one of the lead characters—Dame Ashfield—is heard asking, “What will Mrs. Grundy think?” or “What will Mrs. Grundy say?” at every turn of events.



this evil is specifically applied to the governments of this world. God established the governments that exist (Rom 13:1-5), yet they are continuously taking their stand together against the LORD and His anointed one (Ps 2:2). As a result, those loyal to the Davidic king should recognize that, while they owe obedience to government in its role as a minister of God, the government they serve is in open rebellion and hostility towards their true sovereign. Therefore, patriotic nationalism is inappropriate in the worship of God. The people that follow the LORD and His anointed one must often endure the oppression of the lawless because of the wickedness of the world system and its governments.

### ***The Perpetuity of the Davidic Covenant***

When the LORD established His covenant with David, the LORD God made provisions for punishing the wickedness of the human heart that would manifest itself within the royal line. Nevertheless, the Davidic Covenant is a perpetual covenant that will establish one of David's sons upon the throne of Israel and even the entire world forever. Psalm 89 makes clear that no transgression perpetrated by the Davidic dynasty would be enough to abrogate the covenant.

### ***The Re-establishment of the Kingdom***

The kingdom is consistently portrayed in the royal psalms as a single unit, not a series of parts. When the ultimate king is placed upon the throne, his kingdom is the natural extension of the covenant that God "cut" with David and his offspring. Therefore, there are not two kingdoms, but one. The re-establishment of the kingdom will not be an event that is entirely new, but will be a rebuilding of what has already been. The royal psalms make clear that there will be certain changes that will occur. Nevertheless, those changes are what should be expected when the king reigns in perfect righteousness.

Since this king will reign in perfect righteousness, he will be the champion of the oppressed. Those loyal to the king will ultimately receive the vindication and blessings of his reign, even though they were forced to endure the oppressor's aggression for a time. The re-establishment of the kingdom will only be accomplished by the power of the LORD and not by human effort. Those loyal to the king perform no actions that help establish the king's reign. Instead, it is through violent, devastating, and overwhelming military conquest that the LORD subjugates the governments of this world (which remain consistent in their rebellion

against the LORD and His anointed one) so that the kingdom may be inaugurated. Until this military campaign is completed, the king remains a king in waiting (Ps 110:1).

### ***The Nature of the Ultimate King***

Even though the right to reign flows through the generations of David's offspring, it remains clear that one special king will appear. He will be different than the ones that preceded him. David himself calls this son "Lord" (Ps 110:1). His rule will encompass the whole earth and will continue forever and ever. Amazingly, these psalms teach that the LORD and His anointed one are the same, yet distinct (Ps 45:6-7). He is God himself and yet serves God in some mysterious way that foreshadows the teachings of the New Testament but is left unexplained in these songs.

### CONCLUSION

Ultimately, of course, these psalms speak to the future reign of the Lord Jesus. They teach of His divine nature, His human descent, His perfect righteousness, and the extent of His rule. The royal songs provide hope to the oppressed by reminding them of a future day when the LORD overthrows the wicked governments of this world, establishes His king on the throne, and outpours His blessings on the earth. Understanding and applying their teachings enables those currently loyal to the King to live in a world hostile to Him by looking to the future when all the LORD's promises to David are fulfilled.





## THE PRIORITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IN DEVELOPING A CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF LEADERSHIP

**Brian H. Wagner**

A proper biblical philosophy of leadership appropriate for today must have a dispensational perspective. All scripture is profitable. The Old Testament proffers many helpful principles and examples of leadership, but it is the New Testament that only has, along with its own principles and examples, the many divine commands of leadership that should be heeded today.<sup>1</sup> Jesus said to His apostles, the cofounders of His church, that they were to teach future Christian disciples “to observe whatever” He gave as commands to them (Matt 28:20).<sup>2</sup> The commands of Christ concerning leadership must take priority in any philosophy of biblical leadership for this dispensation of the church. Some of these commands are found within the New Testament Gospels when Christ began training the apostles to be future church leaders. Many more are located in the New Testament Epistles, where Christ—by the Holy Spirit—revealed through the apostles even more instructions for leadership of His church.

In this article the following definition serves as a summation of a biblical philosophy of leadership: *Christian leadership is the reproducing of humble servanthood in the lives of others by a leader’s own following of Christ, being connected to the eldership of His local church, and utilizing primarily a ministry of the word and prayer.* The definition is decidedly Christian and positive. Granted, the verbal idea “to lead” can have negative nuances (e.g. “She led him around by the nose”), and it even has such in the Bible (e.g. “and [they] led him away to be crucified,” Matt 27:31). Nevertheless, the term *leadership* is almost universally regarded as a

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<sup>1</sup> One may argue that Old Testament commands found outside the Mosaic Law (e.g. in the wisdom literature of the Old Testament) have some obligatory validity, but carefulness is required that such a position does not provide support for a call to a New Testament believer’s obedience to any command found within the Mosaic Law or found in the interpretation of that Law by the Old Testament prophets.

<sup>2</sup> All quotations from Scripture are taken from the *New King James Version* (Atlanta: Thomas Nelson, 1992).

positive expression, thus, it would be better to preserve or redeem this term's positive connotations and only to use terms such as coercion, manipulation, deception, force, and oppression when describing negative influences that bring one to fulfill another's objective (i.e. negative leadership).

Moreover, if truly positive, this term must then be described biblically, for it is only in agreement with God's special revelation that true discernment of real value can be made for any activity of mankind. Even if the term itself is not found in Scripture, leadership will have its meaning found against the background of biblical command and example as previously mentioned, and that setting is found especially in the commands and example of Christ and His apostles; it is related to their leadership and to the fulfilling of their main objective for this age (i.e. the building of the church). A survey of the major New Testament words for leadership, and the major passages where Christ and His apostles taught with regard to leadership, reveal these primary commands and examples that support a biblical philosophy of leadership.

#### A SURVEY OF MAJOR NEW TESTAMENT WORDS FOR LEADERS

The major New Testament words for leaders can be divided into two groupings: (1) one of general, secular words for leaders; and, (2) one of special, ecclesiastical words. The first grouping includes the adjective *prōtos*, and the participial forms of *hēgeomai* and *proistēmi*. The second grouping includes the nouns *presbyteros*, *episkopos*, *didaskolos*, and *diakonos*. Other New Testament words have been omitted because they are either: 1) used exclusively for secular positions of leadership (e.g. king and captain); 2) are used less frequently (e.g. pastor and evangelist); or, 3) are related dispensationally to the first century foundation era of the church (e.g. apostles and prophets).<sup>3</sup> A more thorough study would also include the various verbs related to these words already listed, either as cognates or found connected in common usage.

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<sup>3</sup> Reasonable biblical argument can be made that the terms apostle and prophet can still be used today in a secondary sense (i.e. not as foundational gifted men who received direct revelation from God, as at the dawn of the church age, but more in accordance with the modern call to be a missionary church planter or a polemicist or revivalist within the body of Christ).

***Prōtos***<sup>4</sup>

The word *prōtos* is an adjective, also a contracted superlative, occurring 100 times in the New Testament and usually translated as “first.” The word primarily conveys the meaning of first in time, place, or rank of persons (or things); it appears in five different contexts in the Synoptic Gospels with relation to leadership. Matthew uniquely included it at the beginning of his listing of Christ’s apostles: “Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter” (Matt 10:2). Even though Peter’s prominence among the apostles in the early church is beyond question (according to the biblical record), Matthew could have meant nothing more in the use of *prōtos* in the previously cited verse than a reference to the order in which he mentioned these apostles.<sup>5</sup>

All three Synoptic Gospels record the incidences where Christ used a proverbial and eschatological promise: “So the last shall be first, and the first last” (Matt 20:16; cf. 19:30; Mark 10:31; Luke 13:30). The implication of this proverb seems clear enough (i.e. those without rank in this life because of their choice to follow Christ will have notable rank in the Messianic age to come). Gaebelein said of this adage by Christ: “It seems preferable, therefore, to take the proverb as a way of setting forth God’s grace over against *all* notions that the rich, powerful, great, and prominent will continue so in the kingdom. Those who approach God in childlike trust (vv. 13-15) will be received and advanced in the kingdom beyond those who, from the world’s perspective, enjoy prominence now.”<sup>6</sup>

Luke was fond to use *prōtos* in its more generic meaning of leadership or prominence within society. Within those Lukan contexts, it is always translated “chief” (i.e. “chief of the people,” Luke 19:47; “chief men of the city,” Acts 13:50; “chief women,” 17:4; “chief of the Jews,” 25:2, 28:17; and, “chief man of the island,” 28:7). The reader should notice that Luke did not use the adjective even once for Christian leadership in the Book of Acts (“chief men” in 15:22 for Judas and Silas is from a different word). Christ did use *prōtos* when laying before His disciples His primary definition of the leadership to which He desired them to fully ascribe. He said, “And whosoever will be chief [*prōtos*] among you, let him be your

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<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted all lexical information for New Testament words are derived from *Thayer’s Greek Definitions*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Electronic Edition STEP Files, Parsons Technology, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the New Testament* (Electronic Edition STEP Files, Parson’s Technology, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> Frank E. Gaebelein, gen. ed., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, New Testament* (Electronic Edition STEP Files, 1998).

servant” (Matt 20:27; cf. Mark 9:35; 10:44). Servanthood, thus, is integral to biblical leadership.

### ***Hēgeomai***

*Hēgeomai* is a deponent verb, “a (presumed) strengthened form”<sup>7</sup> of *agō* meaning, “to lead.” However, the meaning of *hēgeomai* appears influenced by the middle voice of its form (i.e. to lead oneself, especially in one’s own thinking). Consequently, the predominant translation of *hēgeomai* in the New Testament is “count” (8x), “consider (3x),” or “esteem (3x).” However, in its use as a participle it comes to denote “one who is esteemed highly” or “counted important.” The word occurs 27 times in the New Testament; one third of which, in the form of a participle, do carry the nuance of leadership.

*Hēgeomai* is translated “ruler” in Matthew 2:6 and “governor” in Acts 7:10, referring to Christ and Joseph respectively in their positions of civil authority, as messianic King and Pharaoh’s prime minister. However, the remaining seven occurrences of *hēgeomai* as a participle are connected to the New Testament church. The apostle Paul was presumptuously honored, as the Greek god Hermes, because he was the “chief speaker” (Acts 14:12). Judas (surnamed Barsabbas) and Silas were sent with Paul and Barnabas as representatives of the Jerusalem council because they were “chief men among the brethren” (Acts 15:22). In the Epistle to the Hebrews, *hēgeomai* was used exclusively for spiritual leadership three times in the concluding chapter (13:7, 17, 24).<sup>8</sup> However, the New King James Version translation of *hēgeomai* in these three verses—“them which have the rule over”—may be considered an unfortunate retention of the old King James Version preference for an authoritarian Anglican nuance when translating the ecclesiastical leadership passages of the New Testament.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> James Strong, *Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Electronic Edition STEP Files, QuickVerse, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> In a previous article, this author argued that Barnabas was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (“Another Look at the Authorship of Hebrews from an Evangelical Perspective of Church History,” *Journal of Dispensational Theology* 14 (December 2010): 45-53.

<sup>9</sup> *Hēgeomai* has more to do with esteem than it does with dominance. There is no preposition corresponding for “over” in “rule over” in the original text of the three verses in Hebrews 13. Furthermore, New Testament Greek has a very good word for the meaning “to rule” (*archō*) that could have been used. Indeed, it



Luke chose *hēgeomai* instead of *prōtos* to represent Christ's word for leadership in the Lord's discourse to His disciples, similar to the one in Matthew and Mark previously mentioned, albeit in a completely different setting. Luke recorded that, in the Upper Room during the Last Supper, Christ repeated His injunction to His apostles for servant-leadership, which He had given to them perhaps just a week previous. He said again, with similar words:

The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' But not so *among* you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and **he who governs** [*ho hēgoumenos*] as he who serves. For who *is* greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? *Is* it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves (Luke 22:25-27, emphasis added).

Once again, a too authoritarian tone for *hēgeomai* may be assumed by the translation "governs." Furthermore, even if this tone is retained, the context clearly reiterates Christ's philosophy of servant-leadership as obligatory to His apostles, and such philosophy would undermine the normal sense of "governing."

### ***Proistēmi***

Although *proistēmi* is only used eight times in the New Testament (and exclusively by Paul), it is an important word to consider within the framework of the New Testament philosophy of leadership. The root idea of the verb is to place or to stand [*histēmi*] before [*pro*], thus to preside over a group as a leader; it receives this meaning especially when formed as a participle which agrees to the meaning of its cognate noun, *prostates*. Of the noun form, Zodhiates said, "It meant not only a leader, ruler, or director (Sept.: 1 Chr 27:31; 29:6; 2 Chr 8:10), but was also used by Plutarch for the Lat. *patronus*, a patron, a defender of a lower person. The word denoted those in Athens who were the patrons, i.e., took care of strangers."<sup>10</sup>

The importance of the participial form of *proistēmi* is seen in four ways. *First*, it is one of the spiritual gifts listed in Romans 12 (i.e. "he who

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is in contrast to *archō* that Christ elaborated the kind of servant leadership that He expects from His disciples (Mark 10:42).

<sup>10</sup> Spiro Zodhiates, gen. ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Electronic Edition STEP Files, QuickVerse, 2005).

leads,” 12:8). *Second*, it is used by Paul in his only description of leadership in one of his earliest epistles (i.e. 1 Thess, where he said, “And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you [*proistamenous*] in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem [from *hēgeomai*, see previous discussion] them very highly in love for their work’s sake,” 5:12-13). *Third*, it is found three times in relation to the family management qualities required of bishops and deacons in a local church: “for if a man does not know how to rule [*prostēnai*] his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?” (1 Tim 3:5; cf. 3:4, 12). *Fourth*, it is mentioned in conjunction with and as the defining aspect of those who are elders in the local church (i.e. “the elders who rule well,” 1 Tim 5:17).

The contention of this writer (once again) is that in using the word “rule,” the New King James Version retained from its predecessor (the King James Version) a more authoritarian sense for *proistēmi* than the etymology and contextual usage of the word demands. One can rightly assume that centuries of unbiblical state church influence led to an altering of the definition of these words for church leadership based more on authoritarian sacramental position than upon Scriptural character and biblical preaching. One should observe that the noun form of *proistēmi* (*prostates*) appears only once in the New Testament (Rom 16:2) and that as a description of the woman, Phoebe, “a servant (*diakonos*) of the church of Cenchræ” (16:1). Since the noun is not emphasizing authoritarian leadership, the participle most likely is not either. Moreover, 1 Timothy 3:5 used *proistēmi* in comparison with the phrase, “take care of” (from *epimeleomai*), a word only used elsewhere in the New Testament in the story of the Good Samaritan, who “took care” of the Jewish man attacked by robbers (Luke 10:34-35). The emphasis once again indicated by *proistēmi* is like the previous words discussed; it is servant-leadership.

### ***Presbyteros, Episkopos, Didaskolos, and Diakonos***

Four words are the New Testament terms of leadership that are specifically related to the building of the church—the body of Christ—, which is the main divine focus for this present age (Matt 16:18). Each of these words are not developed in this article like those more general New Testament words for leadership (as previously discussed), because these ecclesiastical words have received much more attention and exposition by other reliable evangelical scholars. Therefore, it is just helpful to share some specific observations with regard to each of these four words.

The word *presbyteros* (always translated “elders,” 16x in leadership contexts) is the common term for local church leadership. However,

surprisingly, *diakonos* (translated 12x as “minister,” 3x as “deacon,” and 1x as “servant”) is equally as common though not used as frequently for denoting a local church position of leadership. There are also four other important references from the Gospels, which use *diakonos*, all of which relate to Christ’s preparation of His apostles for leadership and are found in connection with *prōtos*. The four references are all translated by the word “servant” (e.g. “but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant,” Matt 20:26; cf. 23:11; Mark 9:35; 10:43).

Another observation is that *presbyteros* relates to the same local church position as *episkopos*. Liftin related both of these words to *proistemi* and *hegemenoī*.

The term **overseer** (*episkopos*), sometimes translated “bishop,” is only one of several words used in the New Testament to describe church leaders. “Elders” (*presbyteroi*) is by far the most common. Other terms such as “rulers” (*proistamenoī*, Rom. 12:8; 1 Thes. 5:12), “leaders” (*hēgoumenoīs*, Heb. 13:17) and “pastors” (*poimenas*, Eph. 4:11; cf. also Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2) are also used. Though each of these terms may describe a different facet of leadership, they all seem to be used interchangeably in the New Testament to designate the same office.<sup>11</sup>

The unbiblical development of a metropolitan bishopric (i.e. one bishop per city or region over a number of local congregations and their elders) is not evidenced until the second century, and was not institutionalized until the establishment of Roman Catholicism in the fourth. Barnes indicated this development in his discussion of Philippians 1:1, wherein Paul addressed “bishops” (plural) in that one metropolitan church<sup>12</sup> (see further discussion with regard to plurality of leadership in subsequent comments).

A further observation is that the authority of the leadership that is to be associated with these terms is not based on the position itself but on the divine revelation, which those leaders communicated by their preaching and teaching. The elders, or overseers, of the local church are to be “able to teach” (1 Tim 3:2), “holding fast the faithful word as [they have] been taught, that [they] may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and

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<sup>11</sup> A. Duane Liftin, “1 Timothy,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary of the New Testament*, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Electronic Edition STEP Files, Parsons Technology, 1997).

<sup>12</sup> Albert Barnes, “Philippians,” in *Notes on the New Testament* (Electronic Edition STEP Files, QuickVerse, 2007). Although the word church is not found in the Book of Philippians, the believers in that city were still being addressed as a unified group.

convict those who contradict” (Tit 1:9).<sup>13</sup> Their authority was in the sound doctrine they ministered, not in having a titled position.

Furthermore, it is the term *diakonos* (i.e. *servanthood*) that was used by Paul to describe his leadership ministry of God’s word, in addition to describing the leadership of Timothy and others (Eph 3:7; Col 1:23; cf. 1 Thess 3:2; Col 1:7). Moreover, both Stephen and Philip began as deacons—with the primary task of physical service in the local church at Jerusalem—before they were better known for their service of preaching the gospel (Acts 6—8; cf. 1 Tim 3:13).

The word *didaskolos*, of course, is translated “teacher” and is called a spiritual gift to the church (Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28); it is uniquely identified as the term for the leaders—together with the “prophets”—who were in the first church started among the Gentiles in Antioch (Acts 13:1). The Apostle Paul clearly established that the Word of God is the final authority above all human position in 1 Corinthians 4:6 where he wrote, “Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.” A biblical leader is a servant of the Word of God.

Finally, it is observed that *presbuteros*, *episkopos*, *didaskolos*, and *diakonos* are predominantly, and almost exclusively, used in a plural form. Plurality of leadership, which means working together as a team of leaders, within a given local region (cf. Tit 1:5) is the only reasonable conclusion to be made by this observation. Unsound hermeneutics have to be used to find certain passages to prove a human headship (i.e. first among equals), or a senior pastor scheme for local church leadership. The overwhelming example in Acts and the Epistles is for corporate decision-making, both by leadership as a group and including the congregation (cf. Acts 6, 15, 20). There are even commands which obviously indicate plurality of leadership. James told a sick believer to call for the “elders” of the church (Jas 5:14). Believers were told to submit to “those” who lead them (Heb 13:17). Moreover, the biblical example is that Jesus sent His apostles by twos. The Apostle Paul always chose to have “fellow workers” (Rom 16:21; 2 Cor 8:23). Paul and Barnabas had “elders” appointed in each church (Acts 14:23). Paul told Titus to have “elders” appointed in each city of Crete. Additionally, plurality of leadership aids in maintaining the biblical philosophy of servant leadership under the headship of Christ.

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<sup>13</sup> See also 1 Thessalonians 5:12 and Hebrews 13:6, where *proistēmi* and *hēgeomai* were used in connection with the ministry of God’s Word.

## TWO MAJOR NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES FOR LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

First Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are the premiere New Testament passages where one finds the qualifications for leadership that God desires for those who oversee the ministry of His Word in all His local flocks scattered throughout the world. Though some leadership gifts are evidently given for the benefit of the whole body of Christ, which is the church universal from God's heavenly perspective (Eph 4:11), it would be thoroughly inconsistent with New Testament teaching for any believer *not* to be either a part of, or submissive to, the oversight leadership of a local church. Such an understanding makes the appointing of men who bear these qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 of vital importance.

The two passages, however, have not escaped the attention of many who have written concerning leadership from a New Testament perspective. The intention of this article is to develop two other passages considered by this writer as almost equally as important but usually overlooked: Matthew 23:1-32 and Acts 20:17-38. First, a brief comment on the overall emphasis of the qualifications for leadership detailed in 1 Timothy and Titus is appropriate. The listings of those qualifications indicate men of proven, godly character, able to teach sound doctrine, having developed a testimony as good husbands and fathers. MacArthur summarized the list given by Titus as follows:

Paul mentions the divinely revealed, nonnegotiable qualifications for pastors (or elders or overseers). These church leaders are to have unblemished public reputations (v. 6a) and must qualify in four specific areas: sexual morality (v. 6b), family leadership (v. 6c), general character (vv. 7-8), and teaching skill (v. 9). A man who is not qualified in all of those ways is not permitted to be an elder.<sup>14</sup>

**MATTHEW 23:1-32**

Any satisfying philosophy of biblical leadership for the twenty-first century must focus upon Christ's teaching concerning leadership to His apostles while He was still with them. One unique Gospel passage, which delimits significant principles of leadership that the Lord was giving as instruction to His apostles, is found in Matthew 23. Among the words of rebuke of the hypocritical style of leadership demonstrated by the scribes and Pharisees, the disciples were given a thorough analysis of harmful leadership that

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<sup>14</sup> John MacArthur Jr., *MacArthur's New Testament Commentary: Titus* (Electronic Edition STEP Files, Parsons Technology, 1997).

they were not to emulate. Avoidance of that style would reveal much in aiding these foundation leaders of Christ's church in maintaining the humble, servant style leadership, which was the manner of leadership the Lord commanded for them to inculcate into their lives.

Before expositing this harmful leadership style from this passage, it is expedient to answer some anticipated questions by indicating some dispensational ramifications of this passage.

Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers (Matt 23:1-4).

The passage cannot be associated with the millennial age, for there will not be a seat of Moses in that messianic kingdom when the disciples themselves will rule with Christ on twelve thrones of their own (cf. Matt 19:28). At the time that He was speaking, Jesus recognized that the Law of Moses was still in effect and that the scribes and Pharisees were currently the main teachers of it. After His passion and the beginning of the church age at Pentecost, less than two months away, the Old Covenant, including any obligation to its laws, would begin vanishing (cf. Heb 8:13), being replaced by the revelation and the commands that Christ was giving for the church dispensation.

His disciples' obligation to "whatever they tell you" (i.e. from the Mosaic Law) would end with the destruction of the Temple, which had been the necessary focal point for all old covenant practice. However, Christ's new command to "do not do according to their [the Pharisees'] works" would continue for generations to come; for in that simple prepositional phrase, "according to" (Gk. *kata*), the Lord was requiring all His future disciples to test their leadership style against this past bad example of religious leadership, and that testing requirement continues for Christian leaders today (cf. Matt 28:20).

Matthew 23:1-32 provides the student of God's Word with an easy outline, starting with an introductory overview of the hypocritical leadership of the scribes and Pharisees (i.e. they quote what the Bible says, but then disobey it, and they add burdensome rules to the Bible, and then offer no help to remove such burdens). The rest of the passage can be divided into two main sections, separated by a positive declaration of Christ's primary theme for spiritual leadership. The first main section contains **THREE OBVIOUS SIGNS OF HARMFUL LEADERSHIP:**

- 1) garments based upon positions of religious leadership (v. 5);
- 2) seats based upon positions of religious leadership (v. 6); and,
- 3) greetings based upon positions of religious leadership (vv. 7-8).

The second section contains EIGHT NOT SO OBVIOUS TRAITS OF HARMFUL LEADERSHIP:

- 1) blocking the only entrance to everlasting life (v. 13);
- 2) impressing (oppressing) the weak for gain (v. 14);
- 3) indulging in travel with no results (v. 15);
- 4) inflating their authority to the detriment of God's (vv. 16-22);
- 5) majoring upon the minors in good things (vv. 23-24);
- 6) correcting ceremonial weaknesses only (vv. 25-26);
- 7) maintaining a persona of saintliness (vv. 27-28); and,
- 8) building edifices in honor of men (vv. 29-32).

The primary theme of Jesus for leadership is humble servanthood (cf. vv. 11-12).

### **THREE OBVIOUS SIGNS OF HARMFUL LEADERSHIP**

The three obvious signs of harmful leadership demonstrated by the Pharisees are still obvious today among some religious leadership in Christendom. Jesus undoubtedly chose such obvious signs to aid less discerning pilgrims to identify harmful leadership. Jesus said, "But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues" (Matt 23:5-6).

Many Christians can discern the emphasis upon clerical garb and seating protocol used by Roman Catholics and sacramental Protestants in their various ceremonies, which are in direct parallel, and in opposition, to this reproof by Christ. The papal crown and papal throne of Roman Catholicism must be the most obvious examples of such signs of harmful leadership. However, are there any such parallels in fundamental evangelical circles? Would people being led in fundamental churches ever find their elders/pastors using formal clothing and platform furniture as way to highlight their position? Is this reproof applicable to the ever-

enlarged borders on hoods and lengthened sleeves on robes worn by Christian leaders to demonstrate each higher theological degree they attain? Jesus also spoke of another obvious sign of harmful leadership:

. . . greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ (Matt 23:7-10).

The last sign has perhaps the most direct application to religious leadership today, especially within Roman Catholicism where the greeting "Father" is not only used but also defended by its clergy. The most effective "biblical" arguments rallied as support for such greetings are based upon Luke 16:24 and Acts 7:2. However, such arguments miss the point of these passages entirely, for the public address of "Father" in those contexts has more to do with social position and civil authority than any religious leadership position. Moreover, a historical example of what someone said as a greeting cannot negate a clear biblical command from the Lord concerning greetings for religious leaders. Does the use of "pastor" or "Doctor" as a greeting for someone in the ministry of God's Word not also fall under this same reproof? Indeed, "Doctor" is just a transliteration of the Latin word "*doctor*" which means "teacher" (cf. v. 7). Barnes said of this specific application (i.e. the use of "Doctor"):

. . . and so far as I can see, the spirit of the Saviour's command is violated by the reception of such a title, as it would have been by their being called Rabbi. It is a literary distinction. It does not appropriately pertain to office. It makes a distinction among ministers. It tends to engender pride, and a sense of superiority in those who obtain it, and envy and a sense of inferiority in those who do not; and the whole spirit and tendency of it is contrary to the "simplicity that is in Christ."<sup>15</sup>

Jesus next transitioned from addressing His disciples to addressing directly the scribes and Pharisees, who must certainly have been present in the crowd. Prior to indicating eight not so obvious traits of their harmful leadership, He pauses to put emphasis upon His primary theme of godly leadership (i.e. humble servanthood).

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<sup>15</sup> Albert Barnes, "Matthew," in *Notes on the New Testament* (Electronic Edition STEP Files, QuickVerse, 2007).



But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted (Matt 23:11-12).

All of the three obvious signs and eight not so obvious traits of harmful leadership are evidences of a man who has difficulty in humbling himself and serving others.

### **EIGHT NOT SO OBVIOUS TRAITS OF HARMFUL LEADERSHIP**

The eight traits of harmful leadership are all introduced each time with Christ's words: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." Each rebuke that follows such a preface is relatively brief. All eight are given in fairly rapid succession so that all eight woes were heard in not much more than three minutes. However, they require much more in-depth meditation and study than time will allow in this presentation if one is to glean more fully all the appropriate applications which exist for today's spiritual leadership. Nevertheless, some initial observations to consider will be given.

Jesus' first woe had to do with the trait of blocking the only entrance that exists into the kingdom of heaven (v. 13): "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in *yourselves*, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in." The scribes and Pharisees heeded such practice by their endeavor to lead people to reject the baptism of repentance initiated in the ministry of John the Baptist, and to reject Jesus as their Messiah. They offered instead a false object of faith (i.e. obedience to the Law of Moses and to their own traditions). Today, Catholicism and Protestantism wrongly offer infant "baptism" as an object for faith unto salvation. Moreover, in some fundamental circles, sometimes the "sinner's prayer" is substituted for the true object of saving faith, which is to be only Christ Himself and His redemptive work.

Jesus next delineated the second trait of harmful leadership, that is, the impressing (or rather oppressing) of the weak for financial gain, when He said (v. 14): "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation." Roman Catholicism requires payment for "masses" offered as prayers for the deliverance of dead loved ones from the pains of purgatory. One can easily imagine how widows who had wayward husbands would spend much for such masses. However, even non-Catholic widows, who may have inherited considerable wealth, and who have been made vulnerable by grief and the loss of male

leadership, can also become easy prey to unscrupulous, greedy leadership found in fundamental circles. Spiritual charlatans can parade themselves as concerned counselors of how these inherited funds can be “better” employed in the service of God, which really means how these funds can be incorporated into that leader’s lavish lifestyle; it is only a false or shallow opportunity to help finance “divine service” that is actually being offered to these widows.

A third trait is found in the following words (v. 15): “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.” Christ rebuked indulgence in travel with little or no results to demonstrate for it or for the kingdom of God. Their willingness to leave the comforts of home may have portrayed a certain zeal for evangelism, but they were just offering these new foreign converts only an allegiance to old man-made religious formulations. How many of the current expensive short-term mission trips in modern times provide little or no lasting results, not to mention the fruitless extravagances of modern Christian “tours” and “cruises”? Such funding may most times be better spent on the training and support of dedicated national pastors and evangelists.

Christ’s fourth trait of harmful leadership is described in the words of His longest rebuke of the scribes and Pharisees. In verses 16-22, the Lord exposed how these religious leaders were inflating their own religious authority by offering a false tradition to which their Jewish brethren were to feel obligated. Jesus used just one of their traditions as an example (i.e. the tradition of swearing by the gold of the Temple or the gift of the altar). Much can be shown on how this specific tradition, which probably also was developed from a love of money, was promoted by the scribes and Pharisees in contradiction to the law of God. However, it is the elevating of any tradition into an obligation that results also in elevating the personal authoritative control of the leader who calls for that obligation. Today, there are church leaders who obligate others to particular applications of biblical principles, even though those applications were not given as specific commands in Scripture. Such obligation transfers the focus from the Bible’s authority over the individual to that of the leader who is making the application, which is as if the leader is saying, “The Bible should have had this as a specific command, so I am going to help God by adding this as an obligation for holy living.”

Next, the Lord Jesus indicated, how that, religious leaders of His day were majoring on the minors and minoring on the majors. He provided a vivid picture of such practice with the following words (v. 24): “Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel.” The minor things they

were emphasizing were good things, but it was in the overemphasis of these good things to the neglect of more important things that the harmful trait of leadership is revealed. Today, tithing is once again being overemphasized (sometimes it seems, in fundamental settings) to the under-emphasis of justice, mercy, and faith. People receive from their leaders what should be the priority in their own lives by the stress that their leaders make of something through teaching and by example. Consequently, those priorities must be tested against what the Scripture itself makes priority for New Testament faith and practice.

The sixth harmful trait seems to relate to the ceremonial cleansing of cups and dishes, which the scribes and Pharisees used as acts of worship. However, it had not escaped the Lord's divine discernment that the motivation for these activities was once again (v. 25) "extortion and self-indulgence." Many church leaders throughout the centuries, and still today, place importance upon the forms of worship, either to the neglect of any true spiritual content, or to disguise hidden, worldly motivations such as pleasure and popularity. The form becomes the focus, and real communion with the risen Lord is often missed. There can be no worship without form, but there can be no acceptable worship without an acceptable motivation for it.

Using a similar comparison as just mentioned, Jesus indicated in the seventh woe that the scribes' and Pharisees' outward persona of saintliness is not matched by hearts of saintliness, but by lawlessness instead. Instead of the illustration of ceremonial cups, the Lord made reference to the common site of whitewashed tombs for His illustration of hypocrisy in this context. Assumed in Jesus' rebuke is the harmful leadership trait of hiding personal weakness and failure by giving the impression of total sanctification. Once again, undiscerning followers may develop an unhealthy dependence upon such leaders because of the sinlessness these leaders try to project. How many have had their faith destroyed when (v. 27) "the dead men's bones" (e.g. hidden immoral habits) of such hypocritical leaders are finally exposed.

The final harmful leadership trait discussed by Christ is perhaps the least obvious. Why is it so harmful that these Pharisees (v. 29) should "build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous"? How does this activity of supposed honor to the prophets prove that they would have joined their forefathers in murdering those prophets? Through further meditation concerning the lives and teachings of God's Old Testament prophets it becomes evident that these men of God would not want their tombs made into the focal points for societal and religious honor. To truly honor the prophet would be to hear, understand,

and obey the divine revelation that they proclaimed. The evidence that the scribes and Pharisees did not believe the prophets' message is evidenced not only in their concentration upon building edifices to honor men, but also in their rejection of Christ to whom many of the Old Testament prophecies pointed. Building structures for the glory of godly men who have passed from this life and now stand in the presence of the Savior can also distract Christian leaders. The godly men in heaven have no desire for such structures to be named for them. To truly honor them would be to honor their current wishes and to give such glory to God alone.

In review, one may discern that Jesus taught His disciples how to be good Christian leaders by identifying the harmful leadership style of the scribes and Pharisees. The primary theme of the disciples' leadership style was to be humble servanthood. The primary application of Christ's message to them was to avoid acting like the Pharisees. He gave three obvious signs of harmful leadership and eight not so obvious traits of harmful leadership. Some other appropriate applications for today's Christian leaders can be derived from this passage by asking the following questions.

- 1) Do I seek to have my leadership in ministry affirmed by the garments I wear, the public staging I require, and greetings of honor I want?
- 2) Do I waste large amounts of God's money for unnecessary ministry travel or superfluous building programs, much of which was entrusted to me by those swayed by my spiritual persona, resulting in very little everlasting results for the glory of God?
- 3) Do I endeavor to consolidate my hold on leadership by creating obligations not commanded in Scripture, or by over-emphasizing a few good things, not of priority, or by elevating my own style of worship?

Any biblical philosophy of leadership must include the principles derived from Matthew 23.

### ***ACTS 20:17-38***

Furthermore, any biblical philosophy of leadership for today must include what the apostle Paul taught about leadership and what he modeled in his own leadership. God chose him to lead at the beginning of the church age. Paul knew that he was setting a standard for leadership for the ages to

come. He even emphasized, on at least six different occasions, the divine command to follow his leadership example.

- 1) “Therefore I urge you, imitate me” (1 Cor 4:16).
- 2) “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor 11:1).
- 3) “Brethren, join in following my example” (Phil 3:17).
- 4) “The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do” (Phil 4:9).
- 5) Through Timothy: “Be an example to the believers” (1 Tim 4:12).
- 6) Through Titus: “Showing yourself to be a pattern” (Titus 2:7).

Acts 20, especially, contains a delineation of this standard of leadership modeled by the apostle Paul. According to the previous Scriptures, Ephesus was where Paul spent his most intensive and successful efforts in training disciples for service. He met with the primary leaders who resulted from that effort (i.e. the elders of Ephesus). Within the first few phrases of his farewell message, Paul gave to them the crucial theme of his speech on which he wished for them to concentrate as they listen. He said, “You know . . . in what manner I always lived among you.”

At the outset of his speech, it may have been natural for them to recall the things which are recorded by Luke a few paragraphs earlier in Acts 18:19—20:1. Things that these elders may have initially remembered could have included Paul’s

- reasoning with Jews in the synagogue (18:19);
- baptizing former disciples of John the Baptist (19:1-5);
- training disciples in the School of Tyrannus (19:9);
- outreaching to the whole province of Asia (19:10);
- performing unusual miracles (19:11); and,
- avoiding public persecution (19:30-31; 20:1).

As opposed to reminding these leaders of those things, Paul purposefully chose to elicit their attention to the subject of humble servanthood, which is the primary theme of the challenge he would give, using himself as the main illustration. He recalled for them his “serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to [him] by the plotting of the Jews; how [he] kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to [them], and taught [them] publicly and from house to house” (vv. 19-20). Moreover, from this introduction there can be hints

deduced with regard to the main aspects of his humble servanthood. The servanthood aspects are further developed in the rest of his talk:

- 1) having a transparent character;
- 2) using practical methods;
- 3) giving a comprehensive message; and,
- 4) providing a true release of authority.

The first aspect of Paul's leadership style was his transparent character. Paul's transparent character was evident in six different ways, listed in three couplets in following, with associated text references added.

- Selflessness and Compassion
  - (v. 19) "with all humility"
  - (v. 19) "with many tears" (cf. v. 31)
- Resolve and Focus
  - (v. 24) "none of these things move me"
  - (v. 24) "that I may finish my race with joy"
- Contentment and Lack of Inhibition
  - (v. 33) "I have coveted no one's . . . gold or apparel"
  - (v. 37) "fell on Paul's neck and kissed him"

All these are reminders to these elders of Paul's transparent character, of which they were well aware and of which they were being now instructed to reflect themselves.

The second aspect of Paul's leadership style was his use of practical, common sense methods in three main areas of ministry (i.e. the Word, work, and worship).

- Teaching the Word Anywhere and Anytime
  - (v. 20) "publicly and from house to house"
  - (v. 31) "warning everyone night and day"
- Working for Support and Benevolence
  - (v. 34) "these hands have provided for my necessities"
  - (v. 35) "that you must support the weak"
- Kneeling in Worship and Praying with Everyone
  - (v. 36) "he knelt down"
  - (v. 36) "prayed with them all"

The third aspect of Paul's leadership style relates to the example he gave in his teaching of God's Word, which was his primary ministry, and

included gospel preaching, kingdom preaching, and whole counsel of God teaching.

- (v. 21) “testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (*gospel preaching*)
- (v. 25) “and indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more” (*preaching concerning the sovereignty of God and the dedication of one’s life to it*)
- (v. 27) “for I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God” (*expository preaching, which is the teaching of all of the sound doctrine of God’s Word, whether from the Old Testament or the recently received divine revelation to the apostles*)

The fourth and final aspect of Paul’s leadership style that he exemplified to the elders of Ephesus dealt with the releasing of them from under his leadership authority. He reminded them of his own uncertain future. He affirmed to them their own divine call to take his place in leadership. Moreover, he formally released them to their ultimate authority (i.e. God’s Word).

- Reminding Them with regard to the Future’s Uncertainty: His, but by Implication Theirs Too
  - (v. 22) “And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there”
- Affirming to Them their Divine Call to Leadership by the Holy Spirit
  - (v. 28) “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood”
- Releasing Them to the Ultimate Authority of God’s Word
  - (v. 32) “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified”

Acts 20 is not just a historical passage of interest on how ecclesiastical leadership behaved itself in the first century; rather, this is a primary passage, giving the apostolic tradition of the leadership style that is appropriate for church leaders of every century and of today. Acts 20 is made primary because of all the divine commands concerning Paul's example, which are found in the Epistles; it was seen that the theme of Paul's leadership style was humble servanthood. The main components of Paul's humble service were his transparent character, his practical methods, his comprehensive message, and his true release of authoritative control over the work he had started.

What remains for leaders of today, who read this passage, is to ask themselves four basic questions?

1. How transparent am I with my emotions and motives before my followers?
2. Am I willing to teach anytime, anywhere, and anybody?
3. Do I have a confident grasp of what the whole counsel of God is?
4. Can I release the oversight of the ministry to others when the time comes?

Any biblical philosophy of leadership for today must have some focus upon Paul's teaching and example of leadership.

#### SOME MORE SPECIFIC APPLICATIONS FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

From the words and significant passages just digested, some more practical wisdom can be applied to the modern situation. First, if God's main objective in bringing glory to Himself during this age is being manifested through the church (Eph 3:10), then the attention on human leadership for this age should also be primarily placed upon the church. Though other God ordained, or permitted, responsibilities of leadership still exist (e.g. in government, family, or employment), all believing leaders in those other spheres of life should consistently be associated to, and submissive under, God ordained leadership in His church. The connection should not be a merely casual relationship, as demonstrated by an inactive membership or an occasional visit to a "home" church, or by attending various places of worship, but it must be by an active commitment to regular worship and service in a local congregation, and the seeking of godly counsel from the local elders who lead that congregation where each of these other leaders in society live and work.



The president of the nation, the CEO of a corporation, the professional coach of a sports team, or even the director of a parachurch ministry, should all intentionally and publicly align themselves with the God ordained leadership of a local church and then follow that leadership's teaching and counsel (it is especially in relation to parachurch ministries that this becomes very important because such an organization, which was established to *assist* local churches, may easily start to compete with them for their members' time, energy, finances, and loyalty, thereby diverting those members from having a consistent involvement within the testimony of their own local church and community. Christian colleges and seminaries, denominational bureaucracies, and large evangelistic or socially compassionate ministries, with their own leadership structures, easily fall outside the biblical philosophy for ministry when their leaders have little or no accountability to any of the local church leadership that God has ordained for them.

Second, within the local church, a pursuit towards shared leadership should be undertaken if none at present exists. Ideally, local churches should start under the guidance of two or more men, who are called and biblically qualified, so that from the beginning, the congregation has as its model before them the biblical priority of plural leadership. Diotrephes style leadership (3 John 9), which loves singular preeminent control, has been in existence since the time of the apostles, and has had a long established corresponding example in Roman Catholicism and historic Protestantism. Unfortunately, even within baptistic congregations there can be a dictatorship, and not servant leadership, as is too often the main style of pastoral management. Many who have had such unilateral headship in one man have watched as potential young leaders are forced elsewhere, sometimes permanently discouraged from serving Christ, or they are sent only to mimic the same authoritarian approach (i.e. leadership based on position, like the Pharisees, and not based under the headship of the Word). Too often this "Diotrephes" dies, or is disgraced and removed, and then the group is left in a state too spiritually immature to find the spiritually strong and biblically qualified leadership they need.

The practical outworking of plurality within the local church is not based on parity in salary, but based upon the avoidance of public greetings, such as "Doctor" or "Pastor" and upon the sharing of public teaching times. Consequently, it is consistent with the analogy of faith that when Christ gave a plurality of gifted men to His body (i.e. the church universal which is unseen, and organized from His perspective alone), then the local expression of that body is also to be led by gifted men in an organized manner. If one accepts that all five gifted ministries of Ephesians 4:11 are

still available for today in some manner (see fn. 3), a strong local church would be characterized by having at least five elders/overseers, who each have one of those gifted ministries to help fully equip the local body of Christ for the work of ministry (*diakonia*) (4:12).

In other words, each local church would have one church planter (apostle), to lead the planting of other congregations nearby or abroad. The local church would have one polemicist (prophet) who would regularly preach revival and warnings concerning contemporary spiritual threats. The local church would have one evangelist, who would train and lead the believers in soul winning efforts. The local church would have one pastor, who would probably take the majority of counseling responsibilities, and it would have one teacher, who would aid in keeping the testimony doctrinally sound and help train future elders. Together these leaders would share the pulpit ministry; together they would reflect the unity of believers as a model for the rest of the congregation. Together they would better endure the attacks, which will come from without and within (cf. Acts 20:29-30), than any one of them could endure alone; it is abundantly obvious today that a congregation led by only one man, who has only one of these gifts, always suffers to some degree from missing the emphases of the other four.

Third and finally, since the basic quality of biblical leadership is humble service, and since it is a characteristic of harmful leadership to seek self-exaltation (Matt 23:5-12), ministries and buildings should not be named for founders of ministry organizations or for prominent leaders in the body of Christ. Even postmortem, it would be dishonoring to the wishes of the humble servant of Christ, who, being now truly awake in the presence of his Lord in heaven, would want all earthly honor to go to Christ. Such naming of edifices and ministries also sets before spiritually immature leaders the wrong pursuit for human recognition, as the Apostle Paul rightly reminded the church.

For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. . . . For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends (2 Cor 10:12, 18).

## **CONCLUSION**

Christ promised that He would build His church (Matt 16:18). He then called, trained, and sent forth with His revelation, His apostles and prophets to be the foundation of that church (Eph 2:20). The apostles and

prophets were to teach and model Christ's instructions of leadership for the leaders that would succeed them, who were then to model and teach the same for each successive generation to come (cf. Matt 28:20; 2 Tim 2:2) until Christ would return for His church, when the last of her number had been added (cf. Rom 11:25).

Today the world, and especially the body of Christ, still has those clear guidelines within the New Testament to help them recognize whom Christ is using to build His church (i.e. recognizing who His leaders are for this generation). The prominent words for church leadership and the prominent passages concerning church leadership are not oblique or esoteric, but clearly present a philosophy of leadership that is (humble servanthood at its foundation), which ministers the Word of God in relationship with other gifted leaders within the local church framework. The Lord Jesus Christ indelibly impressed this kind of servant leadership upon the minds of His foundational leaders. Before His passion, resurrection, ascension, and inauguration of the church, it is written that

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded. . . . So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for *so* I am. If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. **For I have given you an example**, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. **If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them** (John 13:4-17, emphasis added).



## ON THE FUTILITY OF ACCEPTING THE CHARISMATIC SIGN GIFTS FOR CURRENT USE

Cliff Allcorn

“For the world . . . tries as far as it is able to cast away all knowledge of God, and by every means to corrupt the worship of him” (*Institutes* I.III.3).<sup>1</sup> Sadly, John Calvin was completely correct in his interpretation of the world; it is even sadder that believers today also corrupt their own worship because they have neglected the true knowledge of God found only in Scripture by accepting their own experiences as eternal truth. Biblical Christianity teaches that only Scripture alone can give a completely accurate and undeniable picture of God, whereas human experiences, even the true revelation one deduces from nature, are simply unable to have the Bible’s level of authority. However, there is one movement in Christianity that teaches a set of practices as truthful worship based solely upon their own experiences. The movement is comprised of those who affirm that all the gifts of the Spirit are currently active and given on a regular basis to the church; it is called the charismatic movement.<sup>2</sup> Charismatics believe that they can trust their fallen senses despite the fact that

We are tainted with this sin from our birth, from our conception, while we are formed, while we are warmed in the womb, as the word is. Natural corruption is not contracted only by imitation, nor becomes it habitual by custom or repetition of acts, but it is rooted in the soul before the subject be capable either of imitation or acting.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960) 1:46

<sup>2</sup> Charismatics, Pentecostals, and members of the “Third Wave” are regarded as one group for the purposes of this article.

<sup>3</sup> The statement with regard to total depravity is from David Clarkson, *The Practical Works of David Clarkson*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1864-65) 1:5. However, this doctrine is taught throughout all Scripture, but most directly for this purpose, see Romans 3:10-18.

By virtue of their claim of validity based upon experience,<sup>4</sup> charismatics cannot now claim to affirm the ideal of *sola Scriptura* because they have replaced the teachings of Scripture with their own sinful and subjective beliefs. The similar type groups believe that the “sign gifts”<sup>5</sup> remain an active part of the modern church, and should be accepted as a normative worship practice. The groups have various titles, but all of them defend (by experience alone) the practice of gifts that were intended only for the foundational period of this present dispensation. The article herein will assert that any experiential defense of the modern use of the sign gifts in the church is not acceptable when one understands that there are noetic effects of sin. Furthermore, this article will argue that the Scriptures plainly teach that the sign gifts were intended to end when the Scriptures were completed, because the church would have reached a level of maturity where the gifts of infancy were no longer needed. Finally, one will discern that the required level of subjectivity inherent in the defense of these gifts equates to a basic rejection of the primacy of Scripture. One must always remember that God’s purposes are always according to His perfect and unfolding plan. God intended that His message is able to be authenticated, and that His body would have a means to confirm the truth (signs and miracles) only until the day when His church had a mature and complete guide to the mind and heart of God (Scripture). Hundreds of years prior to the attempt to recognize the continuation of the sign gifts as an issue, one writer said that they were “related unto the *then* present state of the church.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> There has been a movement among Charismatic groups to claim that they are not just contending for the usage of these gifts upon experience. They are able to claim this due to the current trends in evangelical Christianity’s use of the Bible. Poor hermeneutical practices allow for the reinterpretation of key passages and ideas in a manner that favors the charismatic groups. Several of these claims will be addressed in this article; however, for a more complete examination of the hermeneutic principles that are allowing greater acceptance for the teaching of the sign gifts, see Robert L. Thomas, “The Hermeneutics of Noncessationism,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 14 (Fall 2003): 287-310.

<sup>5</sup> Throughout this article, “sign gifts” refers to the belief that prophecy, miracles, and tongues are still active and normative for the church. The teaching of those who assert that the gifts are *necessary evidence* of salvation will not be addressed because that teaching is clearly outside the bounds of real Christianity. Only the teaching of those who are within the bounds of biblical Christianity will be addressed, in an attempt to demonstrate how they are replacing what the Bible teaches regarding the gifts with what their sin nature demands they experience.

<sup>6</sup> John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold, 24 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1862) 3:21 (emphasis added).

## THE TRANSITION INTO THIS DISPENSATION

The teaching that there was a transition period in history between the old covenant and the new is a standard principle among Christians. Whether it is the belief that the change was simply a turning in emphasis from the physical to a “spiritual” Israel, or for those who know that the transition was a time when “a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in” (Rom 11:25, ESV), there is broad consensus that there was a transition period after the resurrection of Christ to some sort of new world economy. Marking this time of transition was a new office in the administration of God’s program here on earth: the Apostle; it is generally established among the more biblical forms of Christianity that the apostolic office was a limited affair, whose constraints were known and recognized.<sup>7</sup> The apostles needed to have their credibility confirmed to an unbelieving world, so that their message would be seen to be from God (this is parallel to the tests that were supposed to be given to the prophets of the previous dispensation); it was for reason of confirmation that the Lord introduced the sign gifts, which were the verification of the apostle’s (and the New Testament prophet’s) message (Acts 14:3; 19:11; Rom 15:18-19; etc.). The sign gifts also fulfilled some outstanding prophecies made to Israel, so Israel would understand the judgment upon them (cf. Rom 9–11).

Scripture discusses this transition in several places, but one clear text is in the Book of Ephesians, which was written to a Gentile assembly on the coast of modern Turkey. Paul told these Gentiles: “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Eph 2:19-20).

A part of the change in God’s economy is that Gentiles are no longer outside God’s program as they once were, but now they can be citizens of the very household of God, and that household is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. There really is no more clear way of saying that the apostolic and prophetic offices were a part of the laying down the beginning foundation of the church than this. As Martyn Lloyd-Jones said:

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<sup>7</sup> Obviously, the doctrines of Roman Catholicism are beyond the realm of biblical Christianity, that is, specifically their view that the apostolic office could be transferred and now remains in the form of the Pope. There is no biblical basis for such belief, and it is founded on the same sort of non-biblical authority that those that promote the modern use of the sign gifts accept.

The apostles and prophets, then, are the foundation which clearly suggests that they are ***not to be repeated***, but that they were special men at the origin of the Christian Church. Surely it is not difficult to understand this when you come to think of it. These were the men who were there to teach and to preach and to instruct the Christian people ***before the New Testament canon came into being***, before the Gospels and epistles were written [emphasis added].<sup>8</sup>

In the same way that God had Moses lay the foundation for the nation of Israel, He used the apostles and the New Testament prophets to lay a foundation for the church. Moreover, in the same way that God established Moses' authority through signs and miracles, He confirmed the authority of the apostles and New Testament prophets. The truth of this assertion is verified by the most attacked of all the apostles in his *Second Letter to the Corinthians*. Responding to an attack upon his authority, Paul said, "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works" (2 Cor 12:12). God confirms His messages with signs that make it very clear who the true sender of the message really is.

In response, Satan tries to deceive people by means of his own counterfeit miracles about which the church is specifically told to be wary (Mark 13:22; 2 Thess 2:9-11; Rev 13:13-14; 16:14; 19:20); it is clear that Satan is willing to use things that seem to be gifts from God to confuse and lead astray believers from the truth of Scripture. Satan also wants to distort any gift God actually gives for his own purposes. Therefore, even the active gifts need to be carefully used for God's glory. Believers must never use God's gifts for Satan's purposes, or one's own fleshly desires. Christians must be careful to use and maintain God's gifts as God commanded in Scripture because "the best of God's gifts may be abused by the lusts of men, and the purest water may be tainted by the earthen vessels whereinto it is poured."<sup>9</sup> The church can never be lured into trusting her wits for guidance, as the church too has been plunged into sin by Adam's fall.

Consequently, it would seem that the burden of proof for the continuation or use of these gifts would remain directly on the side of those who argue that they continue. In this proof, they must prove it from Scripture alone and ***not*** by experience, because the Bible plainly teaches in the verses last referenced that Satan can and does successfully deceive

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<sup>8</sup> David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1997) 269.

<sup>9</sup> Owen, *Works*, 3:16.



believers if they rely upon their fallen experiences rather than the pure teaching of the Scriptures. Scripture alone is the heart of the matter regarding the continuation or cessation of the sign gifts, that is, whether one trusts God's true and preserved words (Scripture) or relies upon one's own fallen mind and senses.

#### NOETIC EFFECT OF SIN'S IMPACT ON HUMAN PERCEPTION

The next issue to address is the question of how is it that the sign gifts (i.e. the things specifically designed by God as a confirmation of His chosen messengers) could become something Satan successfully uses to deceive believers. The success of this deceit is a direct result of the noetic effects of sin. Paul commanded believers to beware of the dangers that still exist in one's mind (even subsequent to salvation).

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity (Eph 4:17-19).

Paul warned the church about this because the believer's senses and faculties are not instantly sanctified at the moment of salvation, as some might naively believe. Christians must struggle to renew their mind, and are commanded here to do so (as well as in Romans 12:2). Both of those passages address the believer's service to God in some way; in Romans, it is the positive aspect by testing what is good, acceptable, and perfect (or mature: τέλειον<sup>10</sup>); however, in Ephesians 4, the command is that believers do not give themselves to sensuality and practice impurity.

The word in Ephesians 4 translated "sensuality" is ἀσέλγεια; this word was also used by Peter to describe the activities of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Pet 2:7). The drifting from morality that is described in the same manner as is what those evil cities were engaged, happens to believers if they become alienated (estranged) due to their own ignorance. What could be a better description of a group of people who have been fooled by allowing their own experiences to become the norm for service to God? When trusting human experiences, which believers

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<sup>10</sup> The Greek term will be important later in this article, wherein it will be argued that either "complete" or "mature" would be a better translation than "perfect."

have been repeatedly told will be influenced by Satan, is there any way to escape this fate, even if one's supposed service is to the Most Holy God? One is forced to agree with Calvin when he said:

... so long as they allow themselves to live according to their natural disposition, they can only wander, and fall, and stumble in their purposes and actions. Hence it appears in what estimation and value false worship must appear in the sight of God, when it proceeds from the gulf of vanity and the maze of ignorance.<sup>11</sup>

Paul also related this idea that believers are fooled by their own sinful experiences to a false understanding of the spiritual gifts.<sup>12</sup> He did this at the very beginning of the most extended discussion of these gifts in Scripture. In that passage, Paul said, "You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led" (1 Cor 12:2). By means of looking at how Paul presented this truth, a very clear and direct statement that the thoughts and beliefs of one's former life can and do survive to plague one's service to the Lord, and can trouble even the use of the sacred gifts that God has given. Of particular interest is the construction of the original language in the last segment of the verse: ὡς ἂν ἤγεσθε ἀπαγόμενοι (1 Cor 12:2b).

The main verb of this clause is an imperfect passive indicative form of ἄγω and it has as its subject the present passive participle ἀπαγόμενοι. The verbal combined verbal construction indicates a strong emphasis upon the continuing action in the past that may or may not matter at a later time, depending upon the context (and from the context, it clearly seems that it mattered to Paul). Since both constructions have an element of continuing activity that is semantically encoded into them, Paul said that it was a sinful habit that was having a consequence to that very moment and until it

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<sup>11</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1854; reprint, Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2010) 290-91.

<sup>12</sup> The notion here is especially applicable to all those who rely overly much on mere human testimonies. Reliance on testimony as evidence rather than turning to the Bible is a direct result of abandoning Paul's warning in First Corinthians 12, and this abandonment directly leads to accepting the evidences supporting charismatic theology and then from that theology this problem spreads to the church's worship practice. The overvaluing of testimonials is a direct result of passively accepting the current defense of the continuing presence of the sign gifts. Even those who do not believe in the continuation of these gifts have been negatively influenced.

is recognized, such influence will continue.<sup>13</sup> In the words of one commentator, this phrase says that the believers in Corinth “were and continue to be led”<sup>14</sup> by the spirits behind the idols. The indictment is harsh for an assembly of believers seeking to follow the Lord’s will in using their specific God-granted gifts. Unfortunately this strong warning about the influence of prior sin upon the believer’s mind has gone virtually unheeded by today’s church. As Calvin said, “Let us learn from this passage how great is the blindness of the human mind, when it is without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, inasmuch as it stands in amazement at *dumb idols*, and cannot rise higher in searching after God; nay more, it is *led* by Satan as if it were a brute.”<sup>15</sup>

Since the early twentieth century, the same sort of false spirits has led many believers astray like brutes, as were the Corinthians. They have put their faith into emotional displays of signs and wonders, just as the Corinthian assembly did. The reason for this occurrence is the modern cultural heritage that was inherited by the church; it is true that the culture no longer uses specific objects as idols; instead, by deciding to worship individual emotional experiences, it has moved to objects of worship far more seductive than some false god carved by human hands, and this new form of idolatry has been like a poison to the Christian church. In the same way that the sin of physical idolatry poisoned the ability of the Corinthians to perceive the real spiritual benefits offered by the gifts of God, the worship of emotions has poisoned the modern churches’ senses. They were and are being misled by the spirits behind their own idols when they abuse the spiritual gifting of God. They accept being deceived rather than looking to Scripture alone for guidance in all matters, and this sort of emotionalism has necessitated their attempt to reinterpret key passages

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<sup>13</sup> Stanley E. Porter wrote, “If a participle occurs before the finite verb on which it depends (or another verb which forms the governing or head term of the construction), the participle tends to refer to antecedent (preceding) action. If a participle occurs after the finite (or other) verb on which it depends, it tends to refer to concurrent (simultaneous) or subsequent (following) action. This is only a generalization, but one which holds in a surprisingly large proportion of instances where temporal reference is at issue, and which includes usage of especially the aorist and present participles, as well as the perfect participle” (*Idioms of the Greek New Testament* [Sheffield: JSOT, 1999] 188).

<sup>14</sup> Robert James Utley, *Paul’s Letters to a Troubled Church: I and II Corinthians* (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2002) 140.

<sup>15</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1848; reprint, Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2010) 396.

about these gifts in a way that says that the sign gifts have not necessarily ceased.

### SCRIPTURE'S TEACHING THAT THE SIGN GIFTS HAVE CEASED TO FUNCTION

The key passage in this discussion is 1 Corinthians 13:8-12; nevertheless, these much debated verses clearly teach that there would be a future time when the sign gifts will cease to function.

Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known (1 Cor 13:8-12).

At the time of the writing of 1 Corinthians (ca. 55 AD), the cessation of the sign gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge was still in the future. In all three cases, the verb is set in the future tense (using the phrasing suggested by Constantine Campbell, these verbs semantically refer to a future event and therefore the verbs are *not* changeable by context.)<sup>16</sup> Paul said in a clear manner that sometime after 55 AD (the writing of the book of 1 Corinthians) the sign gifts would cease. The statement would lead Paul's readers to ask when and how far into the future would they cease? Could that point still be in the future today? The passage states that it will happen "when the perfect comes." Therefore, the questions posed can be answered by a definition of the words translated as "the perfect" to see if it came already.

When examining the materials and the context of the whole passage, one finds that the words translated as "the perfect" are τὸ τέλειον, which would be better translated as "the complete" or "the mature." The

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<sup>16</sup> Constantine R. Campbell, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008) 22, 39. The vital thing to notice about these verbs is that encoded into them is a future event from *the time of the writing of the sentence*. Paul, as the chosen revealer of this truth, wrote that the gifts *will* cease, and done so in a way that no context could easily change. Therefore, a specific time when those gifts would cease was determined by God, and revealed by means of Scripture's testimony.

potential translations given here are a part of the standard definition given in the most widely used Greek lexicons.<sup>17</sup> More importantly, it does seem to be more consistent with Paul's use of the term in his body of literature. Paul used the term (τέλειος) two other times in 1 Corinthians, and six more times in his portions of the New Testament. In the other two times in 1 Corinthians (2:6 and 14:20), the idea of "meeting the highest standard"<sup>18</sup> is nowhere to be found. In both of those instances, the best translation would be "mature." Mature is seen as completing the journey with Christ to a point of being able to understand revealed mysteries (2:6) and mature in one's thinking about doing evil (14:20). Of the other six times, the only one that is not obviously better translated as "mature" is Romans 12:2. However, even the context of the Romans passage seems to more reflect the idea of maturity than something "meeting the highest standard."

The issues leading to potential misunderstanding of Paul's intended meaning in the translation of the Romans passage begin with the command at the beginning of the verse, "Do not be conformed" (Rom 12:2a). In the original, the grammar here seems to capture more of the idea of stopping an activity in progress and not something that is given as just a principle for continuing growth.<sup>19</sup> While it is true that the present tense does not necessarily mean an action then in progress, even the most radical of those holding to the idea that the present tense form is more about aspect than it is about time must acknowledge that the present tense *could* refer to the time of the present rather than just a portrayal of the aspect of the action, if context demands it. In this case, the word that begins that phrase in the original text is the Greek word (καὶ), linking the command following to the words in the previous verse, which no one could deny refers to present time activity. Consequently, this command is contextually a present time issue, and the tenses are not merely used to

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<sup>17</sup> Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 995-96; Henry George Liddell, *A Lexicon Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1996) 797; Gerhard Delling, "τέλος," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 8:49-56.

<sup>18</sup> The definition herein is the first that one would deduce from a cursory reading of "the perfect."

<sup>19</sup> Clearly, this would *also* be a timeless principle taught in Scripture, but it is not presented that way in Romans 12.

demonstrate an aspectual perspective on the command being discussed.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the reader of Romans is commanded to stop being conformed to the world's way of thinking and turn their minds toward *showing* what the will of God is.

The teaching about showing the will of God is given in the latter portion of Romans 12:2, “that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” The English here sounds like the “good and acceptable and perfect” are simply there for the purpose of describing the will of God rather than how one's life reflects God's glory to the world. However, this is clearly not the case; it is God's will that the renewing of the believer's minds leads to the position of doing things that show the world what the will of God actually is, and not merely leave a description of His will. The idea is based on the term “to discern,” which is the English Standard Version's translation of the present infinitive τὸ δοκιμάζειν, which has as a part of its definition the idea of proving something.<sup>21</sup> The phrase “good and acceptable and perfect” is then best understood as an appositional clause clarifying what is being proven and is not a description of God's will. Since this is not a reference to the moral character of God Himself, then the idea of maturity is far preferable than English ideas of perfection for this phrase. Believers can understand

. . . the purpose for which we must put on a new mind,—that bidding adieu to our own counsels and desires, and those of all men, we may be attentive to the only will of God, the knowledge of which is true wisdom. But if the renovation of our mind is necessary, in order that we may prove what is the will of God, it is hence evident how opposed it [our natural mind] is to God.<sup>22</sup>

If one examines what Paul urged believers to do in the Romans passage, one discerns immediately that Paul told believers to change the way their minds work so that they can reflect proof of what God's will actually is for people in this world. He wants believers to press forward, that is, avoiding mere human ways of thinking. The believers' perseverance gives the

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<sup>20</sup> The author of this article is not asserting that such an aspect is not relevant here because this command does also have semantically encoded into it all the nuances of the imperfective aspect (the normal aspect of the present tense form); one cannot remove the semantics of a word by simple context alone (see Campbell, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek*, 22, 72.)

<sup>21</sup> Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 255.

<sup>22</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. John Owen (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1849; Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2010) 454.

reason for saying the will of God is for them to be mature and by doing so to reflect His glory; then that same glory reflects upon God.

Paul then said in Romans 12:3 that he himself was encouraged to abandon the childishness of his own former life. The English idea of perfection would not be what the original readers would have understood in Romans 12:1-3. In the context of this passage, the original reader's idea of this word (τέλειος) would be a description of an individual "in the stages of learning—beginning, advance[d], and maturity,"<sup>23</sup> who achieved a point

. . . beyond which there is no further advance in excellence or quality in its genus, which lacks nothing of its own excellence. In this sense the word is not primarily ethical; it is purely formal and may ref. to a physician, a flautist, an informer, or a thief. . . .<sup>24</sup>

Again this word seems to have more of an idea of completion in an object, or even completion of growth in a person (maturity) rather than some idea of being without flaw. The command of Romans 12:2 then is for believers to seek knowledge of the completely mature will of God.<sup>25</sup>

From all of this one can understand that Paul's normal usage of the word τέλειος is that of growth to a certain level of completion with regard to knowledge about the will of God. The word is best translated as "mature" in people, and something else when not in a human. The usage in 1 Corinthians 13:10 is most likely some object, since it is a neuter construction; therefore, the word "the complete thing" would be the best translation. Of course, it is true that the neuter expression can refer to non-objects (like the Holy Spirit as used several times by John) or to a grouping of ideas (like the kingdom). Therefore, again, one must examine the context of the passage to understand what Paul said.

Paul began to make himself clearer in 1 Corinthians 12:11-13 about why "the complete thing" will replace the partial, and did so by way of an analogy concerning growing to maturity. At the end of verse 10 and into 11, Paul told believers that the partial thing<sup>26</sup> is like the earliest stage of growth, as the church would have been when they only had a few people who could give the truth of God in an authoritative way. In the words of one commentator, the revelatory gifts being referenced in this passage are

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<sup>23</sup> Delling, "τέλος," 8:68.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 8:76-77.

<sup>26</sup> The word in the text is a neuter form of μέρος, or a partial thing.

. . . partial or imperfect, and therefore suited only to an imperfect state of existence. The revelations granted to the prophets imparted mere glimpses of the mysteries of God; when those mysteries stand disclosed in the full light of heaven, what need then of those glimpses?<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, when the complete revelation of God comes, the Christian will have gone from childhood to maturity and so will be able to speak, think, and reason as an adult. Moreover, it is plain that the further one examines the passage that this is not about becoming without flaw, but that the whole of the text is about maturing in the things in which one reasons and thinks. Verse 12 continues the analogy by saying that (in AD 55) people could only see in a mirror dimly, but when the complete object comes they will be able to see clearly, as though face-to-face.

Not all would agree with this interpretation because many people take the first portion of verse 12 to refer to the coming of the Lord Jesus and so for them “the complete thing” must be the realization of God’s plan in the coming of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom. To adopt this view, virtually all of these interpreters recognize that the first part of the phrase is a clear metaphor and all understand that it speaks of the lack of clarity that existed at the time of Paul’s writing. The “dim reflection” existed because there was no way to get God’s words without directly speaking to (or receiving a letter from) one of the apostles or New Testament prophets. In essence it was an incomplete or immature time for the church. However, when looking closely at this interpretation one must ask, “Why would Paul become literal half way through a metaphor?” Would it not be far more natural to complete the metaphor than to shift to a different style of speech half way through the text, and offer confusion to the readers? Taken as a continuation of the metaphor then being used, the “face to face” would be better interpreted as a more complete revelation of God than previously existed. One scholar described it as follows:

Taken as a metaphor, “face to face” simply means that, whenever “the perfect” comes, believers will see or perceive clearly, fully, and distinctly what previously they had seen only partially, indistinctly, and unclearly.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1857; Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2009) 272.

<sup>28</sup> R. Bruce Compton, “1 Corinthians 13:8–13 and the Cessation of Miraculous Gifts,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 9 (Fall 2004): 135.



A completed canon of the New Testament for individual believers to reference would be exactly what is described by the “face to face” metaphor of Paul. The author here does understand that many today would argue that reading is not equal to the idea of “face to face” surety, but that is only because believers do not have Christ’s view of Scripture nor His understanding of the limits of human perception. Modern culture tells one that personal experience gives more sure knowledge than does simply reading about something. However, that is clearly not the way that Jesus understood it.

In the third Gospel, after the resurrection, Luke wrote regarding a small group of Jesus’ disciples walking down the Road to Emmaus. As the two were walking, a mysterious person appeared on the road traveling the same way. The readers of the Gospel are informed immediately that it was Jesus, and there is a momentary expectation that He would simply appear to them, face to face, as a confirmation of the resurrection. However, He did not do what many today would consider the normal and more powerful thing; after all, in modern culture “seeing is believing.” However, not so for Jesus, because He is well aware of how *easy* it is to fool one’s senses. Jesus wanted something more certain than fallible human perception as a conformation of His resurrection, so He took these two men to the Scriptures. Luke described Jesus saying to His disciples:

“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:25b-27).

Jesus showed them from Scripture, even though He was present personally and easily could have confirmed His resurrection by sight. The Lukan account reflects a general teaching of Scripture concerning how humans are so sinfully inclined that they cannot ever say that any principle of truth can be verified by mere human perception, because they always distort what they perceive to conform to their own rebellious natures. In several places, but most notably in Romans 1, Scripture teaches that human sin causes, or even forces, people to ignore what the truth one encounters is.

The text of Romans 1:18-23 tells believers that men suppress the truth that they receive through their senses, because they should know about God from nature, and exchanged the truth for a lie. In human sinfulness, men corrupt every truth that comes by their own senses, and so need a guide to the truth that is complete. The fallen minds of humanity are too often willing partners in the world’s (and its god Satan’s) attempts to

direct thinking from God's program and toward his (Satan's) program. One must never deceive self into thinking that his/her limited perceptions can be accurate guides in one's relationship with God because one's very limited and fallen faculties are completely unable to do so (as said by Calvin).

Indeed, man's mind, because of its dullness, cannot hold to the right path, but wanders through various errors and stumbles repeatedly, as if it were groping in darkness, until it strays away and finally disappears. Thus it betrays how incapable it is of seeking and finding truth [*Institutes* II.II.12].<sup>29</sup>

Part of the inspiration for Calvin to write this statement was the last word of Romans 1:18, which is κατεχόντων. The Greek word is a dramatic presentation of people who are continuously engaged in holding down or suppressing the truth. The word provides an internal view of the process occurring; it is not a snapshot or summary of an event, but instead the participle form presents the action as in process and takes the reader close to what is occurring. Consequently, Paul gave a close view of the continual suppression or holding down of the truth. Moreover, Paul also made clear that this is done by means of one's own unrighteousness. Clearly this is a severe indictment of any human's ability to perceive anything on his/her own, and should be instructive with regard to one's own personal witness as being completely unreliable. Nevertheless, this does provoke a question as to how is it then that the Scripture is not distorted considering this truth of the human condition. How is it that one can affirm that Scripture, which was written by men, does not simply become yet another venue for the suppression of the truth?

#### REJECTION OF *SOLA SCRIPTURA* AND ACCEPTING THE SIGN GIFTS

The purpose of this article is not to provide a detailed presentation of the theme of *Sola Scriptura*, so only the portion of the teaching most relevant to this discussion will be examined. With regard to mankind's sin and the text of Scripture, there is one verse that clearly teaches that no human was ever the originator of the material written in the text. Peter wrote that no prophecy of Scripture is a product of one's own interpretation (2 Pet 1:20). The Petrine verse is one with which many pastors are very familiar, and has often been applied to support one's ideal of looking for the author's intent when looking at passages of Scripture. When looking closely at this

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<sup>29</sup> Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:271.

verse one needs to understand that this is not the primary meaning of this text. If one looks to verse 16, one sees the claim by Peter to be an eyewitness of the transfiguration where the Father declared that Jesus was His Son. At this point, it seems like a claim that Scripture is merely a product of one's own eyewitness and would fall under the curse described in Romans 1. However, then in verse 19, Peter told his readers that they do not have to rely only upon their own limited and fallen perceptions, but they have something better; believers have the Scripture more fully confirmed (or more valid) than mere human perceptions can attest. Subsequently, the reader may note verse 20, which says that no prophecy of Scripture begins with one's own interpretation (or explanation). The controlling verb of this passage is a form of γίνομαι.

The Greek verb has a strong connotation of being born or beginning; this makes more sense when one applies it to its context and says that the human authors of Scripture did not have to rely upon their own perceptions alone for what they wrote. The human author's experiences did affect what they wrote, but it should never be believed that what they witnessed was the final and authoritative basis of Scripture because the thoughts and ideas were not born from fallible human experience but from the flawless mind of God. Verse 21 then tells believers how this was accomplished; the human authors were "carried along" by the Holy Spirit (i.e. superintendence of the writing). The Holy Spirit watched and moved the writers to write as they did; it is also clear that they knew that this was happening. The last point is important to consider because some today base their views concerning acceptance of the sign gifts on the idea that the authors of Scripture did not know that they were writing Scripture. A good example of this is Daniel Wallace, author of the fine *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*. When writing on the grammar of 1 Corinthians 13:10, Wallace stated:

Although there can be no objection to the τέλειον referring to the completion of the canon *grammatically* (for the adj. would naturally be neuter if it referred to a thing, even if the inferred noun were feminine, such as γραφή), it is difficult to see such a notion in this passage, for this view presupposes that (1) both Paul and the Corinthians knew that he was writing scripture, and (2) the apostle foresaw the completion of the NT before the Lord's return.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 295.

Wallace said that the view stated earlier in this article is grammatically acceptable, but he rejected it for two reasons: (1) the view presupposes that the apostles knew that they were writing Scripture; and, (2) at one point, writing Scripture would cease. The first point is easily refuted by simply looking a little later in 2 Peter to chapter 3 verses 15-16 where Peter plainly said that Paul was writing Scripture.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, it seems clear that they did know that Scripture was being written and that it was just as authoritative as were the Hebrew Scriptures. Paul also certainly knew that he and the other apostles were mortal, which would mean that at one point the revelatory process would end by necessity. Therefore, both of the charges against what Wallace himself claimed to be grammatically acceptable can be easily understood and explained, so why are they important enough to include in his excellent grammar?

Comprehending Wallace's rejection is something that one must understand to truly understand how one's own noetic sin can work to override the fairly clear teaching of Scripture. Mark A. Snoeberger said,

Unfortunately, not all arguments that are objectively convincing prove subjectively persuasive, particularly when the only ground of persuasion acceptable to some subjects is experiential in nature. This is a problem that by its very nature no journal article can overcome.<sup>32</sup>

Wallace's issue with the teaching of this passage did not come from a disagreement in interpretation of Scripture (in fact, according to his writing in a book about the Holy Spirit he is a cessationist<sup>33</sup>). Instead his views of this passage (and others) are derived from a sense of failure for what he believes is his disregard for the work of the third person of the Trinity.<sup>34</sup> However, what Wallace failed to see is that his willingness to concede opinion on this issue tells the world that a denial of *sola Scriptura* is acceptable in Protestant Christianity.

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<sup>31</sup> See also, 1 Timothy 5:18 where Paul quoted Deuteronomy and Luke calling them together Scripture, or Paul's encouragement to the Thessalonians to hold to what he had personally taught them, including what he had written; it is clear from many references that Paul would be against following human traditions, so these must be his inspired teachings and his inspired letters as authoritative Scripture.

<sup>32</sup> Mark A. Snoeberger, "Tongues—Are They for Today?," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 14 (Fall 2009): 4. The prayer of this author is that this article will help some overcome their subjective rejection of the sign gifts ending.

<sup>33</sup> Daniel B. Wallace and M. James Sawyer, *Who's Afraid of the Holy Spirit?* (Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2005) 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

Early in his *Who's Afraid of the Holy Spirit?*, Wallace recounted a horrible event that has caused this writer to pray for his family even as this article is being written. Wallace's son was diagnosed with a particularly deadly form of cancer.<sup>35</sup> The results of the struggle in his family to overcome this disease caused him to see that he was over-intellectualizing his faith and has responded by a greater acceptance of the charismatic position. The statements in his *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* were made a mere four years after this horrible event, and it is natural that they would bear its marks.<sup>36</sup> Wallace's family struggle (and its influence on his grammar book) demonstrates that this is an issue involving more than just the text for many people. In every emotional struggle, there is always temptation to deviate from the text of Scripture, and this is what Wallace meant when he said, "Through the experience of my son's cancer, I came to grips with the inadequacy of the Bible alone to handle life's crises."<sup>37</sup> The temptation arises from one's basic fallen human mind that does not understand that God's written Word is sufficient to answer all issues in life. Despite his writing of a fine grammar, what Wallace said seems to be a rejection of the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*.

The unintended rejection presupposes that the Scriptures are inadequate to answer basic questions about life on earth because Wallace overlooked the idea that knowledge of God is necessary to truly know oneself. Calvin stated,

In the first place, no one can look upon himself without immediately turning his thoughts to the contemplation of God, in whom he "lives and moves" [Acts 17:28]. For, quite clearly, the mighty gifts with which we are endowed are hardly from ourselves; indeed, our very being is nothing but subsistence in the one God [*Institutes* I.I.1].<sup>38</sup>

One cannot truly know anything about one's self without considering one's place in creation. Trying to understand one's self without looking to God first always leads to worldly thinking and a beginning of the rejection of Scripture. When humanity understands their being in the light of God's Word, they immediately discern that they are flawed by sin and are slaves

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<sup>35</sup> The author's understanding is that he is still alive, and has survived the cancer, but the pain it caused must have had a terrible impact on the whole family.

<sup>36</sup> The present statement is not meant to imply in any way the Wallace would retract these statements; indeed, he explained them several years later in his *Who's Afraid of the Holy Spirit?*

<sup>37</sup> Wallace and Sawyer, *Who's Afraid of the Holy Spirit?*, 1.

<sup>38</sup> Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:35.

to sin, even in the depth of their own minds. The mental (or noetic) slavery leads one to reject the idea that “[t]he completed Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments . . . are an adequate revelation for all of life, for every one of God’s people . . . until Jesus comes.”<sup>39</sup>

Having a message that is complete and useful for answering all questions concerning the nature of God (and therefore sufficient to answer all questions that arise in life), the Lord gave (in the final writing of Scripture) a direct statement that no further information would be coming until Jesus actually returns. In the *Revelation of John* (the final book of Scripture in canonical order as well as chronological) the Apostle stated, “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book” (22:18-19).

The passage is very important in any discussion of the canon of Scripture, and no less so in a discussion of the continuation of the gifts that form part of the foundation of Christ’s bride. The text clearly states that no one is allowed to lay any extra information on the canon that God declared to be complete, which is evident in the word translated as “add” (ἐπιθή) in the English Standard Version. The word presents the condition that someone would lay upon the Scripture new information that is not already there. The word presents the action of adding information in a summary presentation (not calling attention to whatever the process is for the addition of information, just that they are doing it).<sup>40</sup>

If anyone claims to have knowledge that supposedly comes from God, it must be added to or laid upon Scripture, as that is the only repository of all the information necessary for a right relationship with God. Further information must necessarily be useful for a right relationship for all believers, unless one claims that God wants a better relationship with some believers and one that is less complete with others, which is an

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<sup>39</sup> Richard B. Gaffin Jr. and R. Fowler White, “Eclipsing the Canon?: The Spirit, the Word, and ‘Revelations of a Third Kind,’” in *Whatever Happened to the Reformation?*, eds. Gary L. W. Johnson and R. Fowler White (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001) 133.

<sup>40</sup> The use here is the semantic value of the aorist tense: “The aorist tense-form occurs in contexts where the user of Greek wishes to depict an action as a complete and undifferentiated process” (Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 35.) Consequently, this verse is condemning any and all additions in a summary manner, and done without much information on the details of the process (Campbell, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek*, 34, 86).

unsupportable position that denies God's full joy in every believer; it further suggests that God hides information from those whom He has redeemed and forgiven and strongly suggests a hierarchy of believers, very similar to the Roman Catholic view of their clergy (it is exactly parallel to chaining Bibles closed so that not everyone is allowed to see God's words).

### CONCLUSION, AND WHY THIS MATTERS

The reader has seen that there is a progress in the revelation of God to mankind, and one of the milestones is the completion of the canon of Scripture. Paul predicted that the completion of the object would signal the maturity of the church to a point where further revelation would no longer be necessary; so the sign gifts that gave further authentication to the real messengers of God would end as well as any continuation of any revelation. The time of transition from Old Covenant to New would end and mankind would then have a sufficient guide to the mind and heart of their Creator. Any who claim further revelation are by definition adding to the truth God gave, and doing a severe disservice to those who God has entrusted to them.

Why does this matter? Why should one care about what others are doing in their ministry? The answer is that it matters because these groups are a distraction from the truth of the gospel, and they give the world a great amount of ammunition to attack God's Word. The world reasons that if these groups who call themselves "Christians" do not take the Bible seriously, why should they? All one must do is watch late night cable to see that there are many who are mere thieves that claim to be prophets of God. The church has allowed the wolves to speak for the sheep, and it is time for those who truly hold to *sola Scriptura* to state that these gifts have ceased. Such teaching may result in lack of popularity, and may cause some to temporarily leave such teachers, but did not the exact same thing happen in Corinth to the Apostle Paul? Furthermore, did not the same sort of thing happen to our Lord when He confronted those who claimed to teach God's truth and did not? However, they were both correct in what they said and did, and thus believers today should have the same kind of courage.





## BOOK REVIEWS

***Christ's Prophetic Plans: A Futuristic Premillennial Primer*** edited by John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue. Chicago: Moody, 2012. 220 pp., paper, \$19.99.

MacArthur and Mayhue were helped in this work by contributions from three other members of The Master's Seminary (Michael Vlach, Matthew Waymeyer, and Nathan Busenitz). Together they wrote an unyielding understanding and defense of premillennialism, with MacArthur articulating the thesis of the book on the first page.

This *primer* (basic, introductory book) intends to provide a clear and convincing biblical explanation for the interpretive approach to Scripture that results in a knowable *futuristic* view of Christ's *millennial* reign on earth, the certain validity of God's promises to future Israel, and the crucial differences between Israel (as a people and a nation) and the NT church.

The authors were not only presenting a case for premillennialism in general but also for dispensational premillennialism in particular. MacArthur wrote that dispensationalism results from three things: (1) interpreting Scripture normally; (2) understanding Old Testament restoration promises to Israel, as well as the Book of Revelation, as future; and, (3) distinguishing decisively between Israel and the church (p. 10). However, it was Vlach who explained the dispensational case—forcefully and clearly—in chapters two and three (both of which can be found in his booklet *Dispensationalism*, which provides a more complete treatment of the subject). Vlach is correct that the main difference between dispensationalists and nondispensationalists is their hermeneutical approach to Scripture (see p. 23). Vlach expanded upon previous definitions of dispensationalism, including Ryrie's famous *sine qua non*, by offering six essential beliefs (pp. 24-35). Later, Vlach adequately refuted five common myths that covenantalists have promoted with regard to dispensationalism (pp. 42-54).

Waymeyer wrote a helpful chapter exegeting Revelation 20 (chapter 6 in this work), which is the defining text of Scripture for much of eschatological disagreement. He offered four proofs that Revelation 20 presents futuristic premillennialism: (1) the timing of Satan's binding; (2) the nature of the first resurrection; (3) the duration of the millennium; and, (4) the chronology of John's vision (pp. 123-38) (for a more thorough

treatment of Revelation 20, see Waymeyer's *Revelation 20 and the Millennial Debate*).

Busenitz provided a historical perspective in his chapter, "Did the Early Church Believe in a Literal Millennial Kingdom?" (which the author asserted in the positive). Busenitz also detailed the early development of amillennialism as a consequence of the increased acceptance of an allegorical method of hermeneutics (pp. 185-92). MacArthur added chapters explaining how Calvinism leads to futuristic premillennialism (ch. 7) and demonstrating that the New Testament teaches the same (ch. 8). The latter chapter is most enlightening, demonstrating how the New Testament references Israel as an ethnic people everytime Israel is mentioned (i.e. Israel is never confused with the church).

Richard Mayhue added the introduction and a good chapter on the pretribulation rapture (ch. 4). He also wrote this reviewer's favorite chapter in the book, "Why Futuristic Premillennialism" (ch. 3), in which he devised a framework that leads to a futuristic premillennial understanding of eschatology. The framework was developed in the form of eight examples of evidence to support his and the other authors' positions (pp. 62-84).

The book is true to its subtitle, *A Futuristic Premillennial Primer*, but it is much more. As a clear and persuasive treatment of dispensational premillennialism, the work is readable and insightful. Any serious student of the Word will find this volume of substance and value.

– Gary E. Gilley

***Deuteronomy: Loving Obedience to a Loving God*** by Ajith Fernando. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2012. 765 pp., cloth, \$44.99.

Fernando's work is the latest title in the Preaching the Word Series (ed. R. Kent Hughes). The author is the teaching director for Youth for Christ in Sri Lanka. The 63 chapters are followed by three indices ("Scripture," "General," and a unique and helpful "Sermon Illustrations" directory gleaned from the pages of the commentary; it also contains a modest bibliography. The preface is entitled "Why I Am Excited about Deuteronomy." He wrote, "Around twenty years ago, while walking along the beach and praying, I told God that one day I would like to write a comprehensive theology of the Christian life, especially focusing on how to move people on to holiness. I think this book is God's answer to that

prayer” (p. 21). The commentary does not have the entire text of Deuteronomy printed, but it is nevertheless frequently quoted.

The author later stated, “[H]ow can we remain faithful to God? How can we avoid compromise when the lure of the society around us is so powerful? And how can we help our children and the people we lead to be faithful? Deuteronomy tells us how Moses tackled these challenges. . . . Therefore I have approached every passage of Deuteronomy as having significance to Christians today” (p. 22). Fernando succeeded, as very frequently he gave an application of the passage, or (at least) the principle to be gleaned.

He exhausted 90 pages discussing the Ten Commandments. Reading his comments in that section of the book was refreshing and motivating. In specifics, he contended the Sabbath is to somehow be observed. Everyone needs a “day off,” that is, a day to relax from regular activities. Conversely, he cautioned about becoming legalistic in this area (pp. 187-89). Concerning the sixth commandment, Fernando believes the last word should be “murder” instead of “kill” because the commandment does not forbid war or the death penalty (pp. 207-08).

Scattered throughout the work are caveats addressing different issues. One asks, “Should Christians Tithe?,” with the answer being that 10% is not binding today but it is a good place to start (pp. 400-01). No comment is made on the “strong drink” of 14:26. Pages 408-16 list five principles of giving, which are derived from Deuteronomy 15:1-11.

- 1) We Are in Solidarity with Our Brothers and Sisters (vv. 2-3).
- 2) We Are Urgently Commanded to Help the Poor (vv. 4-5, 9).
- 3) God Will Bless Those Who Help the Poor (vv. 6, 10).
- 4) What We Have Is from God (vv. 7, 14).
- 5) We Must Be Generous (vv. 7-11).

Some miscellaneous items conveyed by Fernando include: Deuteronomy 18 does refer to Jesus (pp. 465-67); God’s commands for war were once-in-time battles and they do not justify ethnic cleansing (p. 285-86); Matthew 5:38-39 (personal revenge) does not contradict Deuteronomy 19:21 (life for life, eye for eye, etc.); the Bible is pro-life (Deut 21:8-9) (pp. 497-98); gender roles must be kept distinct (pp. 508-09); the divorce laws of Deuteronomy 24 were for the protection of the woman (pp. 544-45); Deuteronomy 24:16 does not mean a person is responsible for another’s sin (i.e. personal responsibility is the point); curses are from God not by a person, such as a witch (pp. 585-87).

The author's explanation on levirate marriage is very helpful and supplemented with examples. Fernando was clear that Deuteronomy 28:1-14 does not support the prosperity gospel. However, he said virtually nothing about the land promise of Deuteronomy 30. In general, Fernando has provided a fine work; it is a non-technical commentary very useful for the pastor or Bible teacher.

– Charles Ray

***The Explicit Gospel*** by Matt Chandler with Jared Wilson. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012. 237 pp., cloth, \$17.99.

The “gospel” is a topic of popular discussion in evangelicalism today yet Matt Chandler is concerned, and rightly so, that Christians are not always using the word to mean the same thing (p. 13). Chandler wanted to improve the definition under the heading “The Explicit Gospel;” however, he seemed to use the term in, at least, two ways. First, he feared that too many churchgoers have assumed they understand the good news but have never been taught explicitly what the gospel entails; they have confused the true gospel with “Christian Moralistic Therapeutic Deism” (pp. 13, 203). Such people need a clear, “explicit” presentation of the good news. The first usage leads to the second use of the “explicit” gospel, that is, with regard to the “full gospel” (p. 111) (not to be confused with the full gospel of Pentecostalism). The full gospel has two dimensions, the first of which the author called “the gospel on the ground,” and the second he termed “the gospel in the air.” The book is then divided into three parts, the first devoted to the gospel on the ground, the second to the gospel in the air, and the third to implications and applications.

In the first section, the “gospel on the ground” is described as what evangelicals traditionally have understood the gospel to mean—the gospel of redemption involving God, man (sin), Christ, and response. Chandler's understanding of this dimension of the gospel is biblical and helpful. Despite a couple of crude remarks (pp. 28, 41), he richly directed the reader to a God-centered approach to the Lord, the Bible, and a godly life instead of a man-centered one (pp. 32-35). For instance, one must be careful not to worship God's good gifts but the Giver Himself (p. 36). Chandler emphasized the horribleness of sin, man's depravity, and God's wrath (pp. 40-51), and demonstrated that the law can diagnose one's sin problem but not cure it; only the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ can appease God's wrath, atone for one's sins, and make one right in the

presence of a Holy God. However, this good news demands the response of faith (pp. 84-85). Chandler was clear that the preaching of the gospel “on the ground” will not always awaken hearts—more often it hardens hearts (pp. 63-82) and thus ministries will be judged by God based upon faithfulness as opposed to numbers (pp. 72-77). Chandler exposed the modern mistake of some who avoid presenting the explicit gospel, choosing rather to just “hang out” and live incarnationally. He stated, “We are never, ever, ever going to make Christianity so cool that everybody wants it. That is a fool’s errand” (p. 80). Amen! The gospel must be verbally presented or people will never understand the message (pp. 80-82).

Chandler’s gospel “on the ground” is the theological, biblical gospel of redemption that—through the power of the Holy Spirit—saves people’s souls, and brings forgiveness and reconciliation. Chandler did well in this section; nevertheless, this reviewer does disagree passionately, however, with regard to one inappropriate remark revealing a non-cessationist understanding of revelation: “He [God] speaks to us in dreams and in visions and in words of knowledge—but in no way that runs contrary to Scripture” (p. 30). The remark is the view accepted by many Christians today, including Chandler’s neo-Calvinist friends, but this reviewer believes is not supported by Scripture.

The second part of the book addressed what Chandler called the “gospel in the air,” which means that the full gospel includes cosmic restoration (pp. 16-17). Biblically, the author based his understanding that renewal of the universe is part of the good news (almost exclusively on Romans 8:22-23 and Revelation 21:5), with some support from 2 Corinthians 5:17-20. Although he devoted 83 pages and four chapters, this reviewer believes Chandler mostly circled the subject rather than concisely explained what he meant and how this works. He largely left the reader right where he started: in the air.

One may readily discern that Chandler believes the church should engage the culture, have a social agenda, and work with the Lord to restore the cosmos. However, the author never truly interacted with Scripture to prove that this is either part of the gospel or a biblically mandated mission of the church. Unlike others who affirm this view, Chandler did not discuss the so-called cultural mandate, examine the Old Testament example of Israel, or address Matthew 25 (nor did he attempt to exegete the Book of Acts or the Epistles concerning the “explicit” commission given the church); rather Chandler adopted broad assumptions, offered truncated and non-contextual Scriptures, and confused the Lord’s present ministry with His eternal ministry. Some specific examples are as follows:

- Chandler believes correctly that the Lord is the Creator of a perfect universe that has been cursed due to the fall of man, but he teaches that because of the cross-work of Christ, the Lord is now presently in the process of reversing the curse (p. 137), which was the “gospel of the kingdom” that Jesus preached. Moreover, the earthly miracles of Jesus were not signs of His identity as the Son of God and Messiah, as the Gospels clearly state (John 20:30-31), but a revelation that “God, through Jesus, is making all things new, that He is restoring what once was unbroken” (p. 107). Chandler thus intermingled the purpose of Christ’s first coming with that of His second (see pp. 137-38).
- Without doubt, Jesus made provision through His life, death, and resurrection, to accomplish cosmic restoration; however, Chandler regarded that renewal as already in process, which can lead to a present ministry in which Christians can and should be part of restoration of the creation (the gospel “in the air”): “This is why a whole gospel must be explicitly about the restoration of God’s image bearers and also about the restoration of the entire theater of His glory, the entire cosmos” (p. 111). He called this work, as many others do, “missional” (p. 144).
- Chandler regarded the missional mandate in the Great Commission as that which “joins us to God’s mission to restore all things” (p. 145). He based this missional posture of the church on the fact that the New Testament calls believers to the “ministry of reconciliation” in 2 Corinthians 5:17-20. What he missed in this text is that the word “world” is not speaking of the cosmos, as is evidenced by Paul defining the world as “people” in the context. Believers have not been given the ministry of renewing the universe but of calling people to reconciliation to God; this fact radically undermines Chandler’s gospel “in the air” and exposes it as unbiblical.
- Chandler understands that if the gospel includes working with God now to restore the cosmos, then the cosmos—by necessity—must continue into eternity. He then expended

much effort to assure the reader that the present heaven and earth will not be destroyed—as Peter stated rather forcefully (2 Pet 3:5-13)—but simply renewed (pp. 160-65). If the present heavens and earth are replaced by a new heavens and earth (cf. Rev 20:11), then Chandler’s second gospel emphasis loses most of its emphasis. What Chandler failed to understand is that cosmic restoration will come in the form of a new creation, solely an act of God at some distinct point in the future. The Lord is not currently in the process of restoring the cosmos through His people.

Chandler very badly mangled Scripture by describing the earthly millennial kingdom and by offering such features as a picture of eternal life on earth (pp. 158-65). He ignored that in the very Old Testament passages he used to describe eternal life that people will be having children (Isa 65:23) and will still die (65:20). While he is correct that in eternity the believer’s home will be on the new earth, his description of life on the new earth is taken mostly from Scriptures that describe the millennial kingdom, not eternal life. Consistent with his confused hermeneutics, he was dependent upon N. T. Wright to interpret the New Jerusalem coming to earth in Revelation 21:1 as being the church, not a literal eternal city (p. 170).

- Concerning creation, while he rejected macroevolution (pp. 97-99), Chandler described himself as a “historic creationist” (pp. 95-101) who understands a gap between Genesis 1:2 and 1:3. In that gap, from the “beginning” until the Lord initiates the seven days of creation could lie billions of years. As his “good friend Mark Driscoll puts it . . . ‘the age of the earth is simply not stated in the Bible’” (p. 100).

Chandler clearly believes social responsibility is a feature of the gospel (“gospel in the air”) but he sought balance. He rightly recognized that the social gospel adopted by past generations of evangelicals led to liberalism (pp. 175, 192-93). Those churches, which get invested in the social agenda, become indistinguishable from the world (pp. 190-91), are under authority of the culture instead of Scripture (p. 194), and are tempted to mitigate the gospel “on the grounds” to make it more palatable to the world (pp. 194-96). He wrote, “If we lose evangelism, we may as well be the Peace Corps”

(p. 198). Chandler, however, believes the church is commanded by God to care for the world's poor (p. 199), mocks social ministry targeting believers only (p. 149), and believes the gospel "on the ground" leads to the gospel "in the air," which (in turn) begins to solve the systemic issues that keep people in poverty (p. 151). He teaches that social ministries bring praise to God but they must be coupled with evangelism and discipleship (pp. 150-51). The missional engagement of the world is part of the two-dimension gospel (pp. 181-88).

Chandler is promoting the same message popularized by Francis Chan (*Crazy Love*), David Platt (*Radical*), J. R. W. Stott and many others. The message is that the "full gospel" has two dimensions: one doctrinal leading to individual, personal salvation and the other social, leading to cosmic restoration. Chandler adopted a more balanced approach than either Chan or Platt, but, nevertheless, his gospel "in the air" lacks biblical support and takes the church in a direction never mandated or authorized by God. The book has many successful portions, but its social agenda is too prevalent to recommend.

– Gary E. Gilley

***Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship With God*** by Dallas Willard. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012. 304 pp., paper, \$11.49.

*Hearing God* was previously published by Regal (1984), then by Harper (1993), and finally InterVarsity (1999) under the title *In Search of Guidance*. The updated and expanded edition is published under the *Formatio* wing of InterVarsity Press, which offers numerous books promoting spiritual formation and "Christian" mysticism. The essential notion of both spiritual formation and mysticism is that God speaks in addition to the pages of Scripture. For this reason, *Hearing God* is an important book, written by one of the premiere leaders within the movement. Moreover, the fact that Willard merely updated the same message he delivered nearly 30 years ago shows that the spiritual formation movement has not changed its basic teachings. One may ask, "What are they?" In essence, the answer is that one can live "the kind of life where hearing God is not an uncommon occurrence" (p. 12) because "hearing God is but one dimension of a richly interactive relationship and obtaining guidance is but one facet of hearing God" (p. 13). In other words,



the maturing Christian should expect to hear the voice of God, independent from Scripture, on a regular basis and that voice will reveal God's individual, specific will for his/her life. Such individual communication from the Lord, one is told, is absolutely essential because without it there can be no personal walk with God (pp. 26, 31, 67). Moreover, it is those who hear from God today who will redefine "Christian spirituality for our time" (p. 15).

Willard's premise leads to a very practical problem, which is, however, one that he addressed throughout the book in many ways. The problem is: how does one know that he/she has really heard from God? Could one not be confusing his/her own thoughts, or even implanted thoughts from Satan (pp. 235-37), with the voice of God? The notion herein is even more problematic because Willard believes that while God can speak audibly or use dreams and visions, normally His voice will come as a "still small voice" heard only within one's own heart and mind. Indeed, so vital is this "still small voice" that the author devoted his lengthiest chapter to exploring what it means (ch. 5: pp. 114-53). However, in all of his discussion on the topic, it never seems to occur to Willard that the original "still small voice" to Elijah (1 Kgs 19:12-18) was, in fact, an audible voice, not an inward impression or thought.

Since Willard believes that God normally speaks to believers through an inner, inaudible, subjective voice (p. 130) and that it is possible that God speaks and one may not know it (pp. 118-20), how can one be certain when God is speaking to the church? In answer, Willard boldly informed his readers that one could only learn the voice of God through experience (pp. 9, 19, 21, 63, 143). He clearly stated, "The only answer to the question, how do we know whether this is from God? is *By experience*" (p. 218, emphasis in original). The author used the word "experience" more than 130 times, and equivalents hundreds of time more. The mechanics of learning the voice of God is detailed on pages 217-51, but ultimately it may all be reduced to experience. Furthermore, until one has the experience it will apparently be necessary for those who have themselves supposedly heard from God to guide novices. Without such help, one may not be able to detect the voice of God (p. 221). Never mind that the Scriptures never tells believers how, nor supplies techniques, to know when God is speaking, nor does the Bible ever tell the church that she needs to learn the voice of God (this is all pure fabrication on Willard's part). As a matter of fact, every time God speaks in Scripture it is through an audible voice—never through an inner voice, impressions, or feelings—and that includes Elijah's still small voice. Willard advocated a form of communication from God never found in the pages of Scripture; he then

elevated this inner voice to the very essence of one's relationship with God. He attempted to prove this not only through his own experience but also by the examples of others such as Ken Taylor, George Fox, Teresa of Avila, St. Francis, Henri Nouwen, and many others (see pp. 23-27). Willard attempted to intimidate his readers as well by telling them that God's communication in this way to early Christians was a normal experience (pp. 70, 119) (which it was not), that if Christians are not hearing from God it may be that we are at variance with Him (p. 90), and that the Bible and the church are inadequate for developing a personal relationship with God (pp. 140, 186).

Willard teaches many theological errors as well. For example, as might be expected, the author has a diminished view of Scripture. He believes the Bible is God's inspired written word given to "provide us with a general understanding of God to inspire and cultivate a corresponding faith" (p. 87). However, if one desires to discern what God is saying to His church personally believers must go beyond the Bible (p. 218). Furthermore, Willard warned the church with regard to what he called "Bible deism," which is the view that God communicates to believers today through Scripture alone (p. 142). As a matter of fact, the Bible may prove a deadly snare: "We can even destroy ourselves by Bible study; specifically, by the study of Paul's epistles" (p. 187). Furthermore, even if the Bible is inerrant in the original texts it "does not guarantee sane and sound, much less error-free, interpretations" (p. 185). Willard clearly has a postmodern understanding of Scripture (i.e. it can never be rightly understood without God's present day communications) (p. 185). In conjunction with this view of Scripture is the idea (wrongly deduced from Luke 17:7-10) that an obsession to obey God "may be the very thing that rules out being the kind of person that He calls us to be" (p. 14). Willard teaches a number of other deviate ideas including:

- God plans His life around believers (p. 47).
- Christians become the royal priesthood of God when they have learned to hear from God (pp. 69-71).
- Similarly, the church becomes the temple of God through the same means (p. 76).
- Moreover, one does not start the Christian life as the slave of God, but become His slave in time through a maturing process (p. 77).
- Based on Colossians 1:19-29, the author believes the resolution of the world's problems, although finalized at Christ's return, begins now (p. 75).

- The gospel is not reconciliation to God by faith but “The good news that the kingdom rule of God is available to humankind here and now” (p. 202, cf. pp. 203-04).

In order to learn to hear the subjective voice of God, Willard recommended the use of *lectio divina*, which is customized for this imaginative endeavor. As a result, a co-writer provided six *lectio* exercises to herald the way (pp. 48-51, 104-05, 132-33, 165-66, 208-09, 247-50). The ultimate goal in all of this is to have the mind of Christ (pp. 71-72) which means to Willard that “we understand what God is doing so well that we often know exactly what God is thinking and intending to do” (p. 71).

The danger of Willard’s imaginative teachings on hearing from God through an inner voice can hardly be exaggerated; rather than directing people to the inspired authoritative Scriptures for God’s Word today, Willard directed individuals toward the subjective, unreliable self. The result is a people who believe they have heard from God even as they deviate from the Word of God itself.

– Gary E. Gilley

***The Rapture and Beyond*** by John C. Whitcomb. Waxhaw, North Carolina: Kainos Books, 2012. 175 pp., paper, \$13.00.

Whitcomb addressed three eschatology matters in this book. In the first part, he addressed the destiny of the church including the rapture, rewards for believers, and the distinctions between Israel and the church. In the second part, he explained the tribulation and the second coming, while the final section is devoted to the millennium.

The book is uneven, with a number of chapters being rather simplistic in nature, as the author stated resolute views without corresponding argumentation. However, several other chapters carefully develop important positions with well thoughtout support. The more resolute chapters are those previously published in other books or journals and revised for this volume, which include:

- Chapter five which deals with Daniel’s seventy-weeks and shows why “weeks” must mean years leading to fulfillment of this prophecy, in particular the 70<sup>th</sup> week, during the tribulation period.

- Chapter seven which discusses the identity of the two witnesses of Revelation 11.
- Chapters ten and eleven which address two of the most difficult problems for the dispensational understanding of the Millennium: the physical Temple as detailed in Ezekiel 40—48 and animal sacrifices during the kingdom age found in the same passage of Scripture. Concerning the sacrifices, Whitcomb convincingly differed from many dispensationalists in denying that the sacrifices during the millennium will be memorial in nature. According to Whitcomb, they function purely as means of temporal cleansing and forgiveness in light of the return of Israel's theocratic system and Christ's physical presence and glory on earth. "Within that structure, national/theocratic transgressions would receive national/theocratic forgiveness when appropriate sacrifices were offered to God through legitimate priests at the tabernacle/temple altar" (p. 150). Sacrifices have never had anything to do with salvation, but are "'efficacious' and 'expiatory' only in terms of the strict provision for ceremonial (and thus temporal) forgiveness within the theocracy of Israel" (p. 151).

For those interested in a good discussion of these types of issues, *The Rapture and Beyond* will be of value, providing interesting insight on a number of debated eschatological matters.

– Gary E. Gilley

***You, Your Family and the Internet: What Every Christian in the Digital Age Ought to Know*** by David Clark. Leominster, UK: Day One Publications, 2012. 108 pp., paper, \$11.00.

David Clark, who has exhausted over 30 years working with computer technologies and, at least, that long as a Christian leader, has sought to provide a readable and practical Internet guide for believers. He stated, "I have sought to identify key Internet technologies, explain them, explore how they affect our lives, and draw out biblical principles that can be applied to how we deal with others, our churches and our families" (p. 13).

Clark regards the social and economic changes created by the Internet as comparable to that of the Industrial Revolution (pp. 17-18), which is remarkable given that most people have only used the Internet for approximately 10 years (p. 27). As with most important inventions, the Internet has much potential for good and evil. Much of Clark's book warns of the dangers accompanying the Internet such as addiction, pornography, gambling, gaming, and personal information being shared to the detriment of the user. The author noted that the most successful technology tends to cater to human self-centeredness (pp. 22, 33-34), something that deserves careful consideration by every Christian. Clark, however, did more than warn of these dangers; at the end of most chapters, he offered practical principles and advice to protect oneself.

Dangers aside, the Internet is a marvelous tool for good. Abundant information on any topic can be found at incredible speed. Communication, even across continents, is virtually unlimited and opportunities for the spread of the gospel and sound biblical teaching have never been better. Clark closed his book with a challenge to make the best of such opportunities. Overall, Clark has accomplished exactly what he sought to do—provide a practical guide for the proper use of Internet technology. At a little over 100 pages, this is an excellent primer to better understand and use the Internet.

– Gary E. Gilley

***And Then They Prayed: Moments in American History Impacted by Prayer*** by Barry Loudermilk. Campbell, CA: FastPencil, 2011. 184 pp., paper/cloth, \$19.99/\$24.99.

Georgia state Senator Barry Loudermilk “is a nationally published author, businessmen, private pilot, Air Force veteran, inspirational speaker, historian and Constitutional scholar” (back cover). More importantly, Senator Loudermilk is a Christian gentleman, husband, and father. Loudermilk became known nationally with a series of articles that he wrote in response to the 2011 terrorist attack of New York and Washington D.C. The articles were certainly patriotic, yet also articulated the Christian foundations of the United States.

Loudermilk continued to write and speak with regard to America's foundation and the beliefs and philosophies of the Founding Fathers. The more that he researched, Senator Loudermilk noted significant moments in history wherein challenges threatened the future of the nation. In response

to those challenges, national heroes called “upon a powerful weapon that changes the course of events” (back cover). The weapon of course is the power of prayer.

*And Then They Prayed* recounts thirteen incredible events in American history that were altered or influenced through the power of prayer. The stories include moments in the life of Benjamin Franklin (ch. 1), General George Washington (chs. 2, 8), Private William Tannahill (ch. 3), Lieutenant Colonel “Jimmy” Doolittle (ch. 4), General George Patton (ch. 5), Crew of Apollo 8 (ch. 6), Private Desmond Doss (ch. 7), Reverend John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg (ch. 9), General Dwight D. Eisenhower (ch. 10), Corporal Jacob DeShazer (ch. 11), General Lew Wallace (ch. 12), and Captain Nathan Hale (ch. 13). Each chapter begins with a relevant Scripture citation, and is concluded with references for the historical account.

Divine intervention in the course of human history is unmistakable throughout this work. As nations continue to experience threatening challenges, Senator Loudermilk sought to encourage God’s people to recollect the Lord’s mighty Hand of providence in response to the prayers of those men who had “unwavering dedication to God and Country” (p. xiv). Throughout the work and even in the inscription to this reviewer, Senator Loudermilk passionately conveys the need to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17). *And Then They Prayed* is an enchanting and inspiring read.

– Ron J. Bigalke

***Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Christian Perspective*** by Siang-Yang Tan. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. 494 pp., cloth, \$39.99.

From an anti-integration of psychology and theology viewpoint, this book is quite an assortment; it has many good features but its basic assumption is wrong. The author assumed psychology is valid. Instead of discussing how much, if any, psychology can be “mixed” with Christianity, it begins with psychology and seeks to determine how much of the Bible can be included. Tan did acknowledge Jay Adams and nouthetic counseling, but believes that method is not sufficient. He wrote (p. 336),

*[D]irective, or nouthetic, counseling is an important part of Christian counseling, but the style or approach taken in Christian counseling and therapy should be flexible. Nouthetic counseling that is directive and*

involves caring confrontation to bring about client change in a biblical way, as developed by Adams (1970, 1973), is an important part but not the whole of Christian counseling [emphasis in original].

In other words, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are not enough to address people's problems in living (contra 2 Pet 1:3). Tan's book needs a glossary. Tan uses many psychological terms but did not define them well, making reading difficult at times. Several troublesome sentences in the book could be identified but three will have to suffice for now. On page 326, the author stated that those affirming an anti-integration philosophy are usually "biblically militant and conservative Christians." Moreover, one should consider the following words from page 361.

A more recent review of empirically supported religious and spiritual therapies in general concluded that Christian accommodative cognitive therapy for depression and twelve-step facilitation for alcoholism were efficacious and Muslim psychotherapy for depression as well as for anxiety was efficacious when used with medication. The following were deemed possibly efficacious treatments: Christian devotional meditation for anxiety, Taoist cognitive therapy for anxiety, Christian accommodative group treatment for unforgiveness, spiritual group treatment for unforgiveness, Christian accommodative group cognitive-behavioral therapy for marital discord, and Christian lay counseling for general psychological problems. Spiritual group therapy for eating disorders when combined with existing inpatient treatment and Buddhist accommodative cognitive therapy for anger in a prison setting were also deemed possibly efficacious. . . .

Finally, on page 364, one reads: "The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth who will teach us and guide us into all truth (John 14:26; 16:13), including psychotheological truth." Tan never defined "psychotheological."

As previously mentioned, this book does have some helpful features. The reference section (i.e. bibliography) is 71 pages long! The work also comes equipped with an appendix on the effectiveness of psychotherapy, a name Index, and a subject index. Tan's work would have some usefulness as a textbook too; it goes into some detail about various theories such as psychoanalytic, Adlerian, Jungian, and six others. For each theory, he presented a fictional transcript between a counselor and a client in order to get the idea as to how that theory works. The last five sections of those chapters include a critique of each theory (strengths and weaknesses), a biblical perspective, a research update, a section Tan labeled future directions, and a section on supplemental reading.

The book is well-written (for the most part), thorough, actually has Bible verses in it, and recognizes the darkness of the heart (Jer 17:9). Two chapters (3, 17) address legal and ethical matters. Despite these significant problems and disagreements, this reviewer does suggest it be used in counseling courses because it evaluates several theories (which is helpful to the student), and because the other portions of the work do a decent job of describing what Christians do not believe.

– Charles Ray

***In All Things: The Life and Ministry of Charles H. Stevens*** by William P. Thompson. Greenville, South Carolina: Truth Publishers, 2011. 373 pp., cloth, \$14.00.

Biographies are typically written about Christians who are famous. What is more unusual is a biography of a hard-working and visionary pastor who is not well known. Such is the biography of Charles H. Stevens (1892-1982), *In All Things*. Charles Stevens was a Baptist pastor and founder of Piedmont Bible College (now Piedmont International University). A dispensational premillennialist, his pastoral ministry spanned World War II and the rise of theological liberalism. The author gave one reason for the biography: “Dr. Charles Hadley Stevens was a faithful and loyal servant of the Lord whose life and accomplishments need recounting-however imperfectly it is done” (p. ix).

William P. Thompson (M.A. in history and M.L.S.) is well qualified as the author. He knew Charles Stevens from his childhood (p. x). Thompson was a faculty member during Dr. Steven’s presidency of Piedmont Bible College, and a professor of history at Piedmont for 44 years (back cover).

The book is organized chronologically around events in Charles Stevens’ life: his upbringing, education, marriage, ministries, founding of Piedmont Bible College, and final years. There are also chapters on his personality, theological stance, and relationship with Southern Baptists. The historical context of the times and quotes from Stevens are woven into the account. Pictures are included.

One important influence in Stevens’ early life noted in the book was his Primitive Baptist upbringing (p. 2). Another is that hard work was a family value and a financial necessity. For example, at six years old, Stevens had to stop first grade to work in a textile mill for two years because of family needs (pp. 5-7). The author commented: “This was an experience



that deeply influenced him for life and shaped his views on the virtues of hard work” (p. 5).

Stevens’ education at Wake Forest College in North Carolina (graduated 1917) had a negative impact on his faith. Influenced by evolution and higher critical views of the Bible while at Wake Forest, Stevens accepted theistic evolution and had troubling doubts about the inerrancy of the Bible for over a decade (pp. 21-24).

Stevens earned a Th.M. from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and pursued his doctorate there. Stevens’ intent for his doctoral dissertation was “to demonstrate that only radicals and fanatics held to the premillennial view” (p. 32). However, after two years of studying Scripture, Stevens’ came to affirm the premillennial view that he attempted to refute (p. 33). Since postmillennialism was the Seminary’s position, Stevens left, his “doctoral degree having slipped from his grasp” (p. 33). Much later, Bob Jones University gave Stevens an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree (p. 221).

The author shared that Stevens “stated that he had long struggled with two terrible fears. One was a fear of being buried alive, and the other was being married to the wrong woman” (p. 34). Stevens was spared from this last fear in 1926 when he married Grace Weaver, whom he called “God’s greatest earthly gift” (pp. 35, 49-50). They had 4 children.

In 1925, Stevens became the pastor at Salem Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, a ministry that lasted over 40 years (pp. ix, 57). Salem was a large church (1300+ members in 1946), and attendance grew throughout Stevens’ leadership (pp. 176, 245). Among Stevens’ many ministries and accomplishments that are described in the book, a Bible and prophetic conference ministry and Jewish missions were prominent (pp. 88-90, 128-31, 209-10, 248-53). The author noted: “Dr. Stevens was a visionary” (p. 135). For example, his establishment of a Christian elementary school was innovative at the time (p. 186). Stevens’ ministry disappointments are also recorded (pp. 85, 135-37, 176-81, 184-85).

In the 1930’s, Stevens’ conviction of biblical inerrancy was restored (pp. 59-63). During this same time, studying the Bible led Stevens to understand the dispensational distinctions between Israel and the church (ibid). The distinction became for him the means to rightly dividing Scripture (p. 320). Rejection of theistic evolution is implied by Stevens’ belief in inerrancy, although he accepted the prevailing Gap Theory to accommodate geological ages (p. 62).

Stevens’ founded Piedmont Bible Institute in 1945 (later Piedmont Bible College) (p. 151). He continued as pastor at Salem Church, while president of Piedmont. Stevens explained that his rationale for starting

Piedmont was a response to the liberalism in the form of modernism “seeping” from schools “like death-damp upon the land,” and so a school “true to the faith’ was needed (p. 154). The book traces the school’s development (pp. 147-70). The author also recounted the turmoil around Stevens’ retirement as president (pp. 267-75).

The book portrays Stevens’ personality by his qualities and also his actions, such as ways he showed concern for people (pp. 225-45). Next, it is explained that Stevens identified himself as a Southern Baptist, but the denomination’s eschatology, tolerance of liberalism, and other issues led to a strained relationship that eventually ended (pp. 279-314).

Theologically, Stevens was a four-point Calvinist (he rejected limited atonement) and a fundamentalist who believed in literal interpretation (pp. 331-45). Dispensational premillennialism “remained forever the foundation for his preaching and teaching” (p. 321). Stevens held to congregational authority in church government (p. 326), taught tithing (pp. 328-31), and believed in a two-phase beginning of the church, based on John 20 and Acts 2 (pp. 325-26). The “Four E’s” were a trademark of his teaching: exegesis, evangelism, ecclesiology, and eschatology (pp. 345-47).

Stevens preached his last message at Salem Church at age 80 (p. 360). After his retirement, Stevens remained active in ministry until his health declined (pp. 361-63). Charles Stevens died in 1982.

Overall, this is a well written, vivid, and challenging biography. While some will disagree with aspects of Stevens’ theology, this does not diminish the book’s merit. Charles Stevens’ ministry is relevant especially to pastors and seminary leaders, but any Christian can learn from this exceptional book.

– Patricia Serak

***Rose Guide to End-Times Prophecy*** by Timothy Paul Jones, David Gundersen, and Benjamin Galan. Torrence, CA: Rose Publishing, 2011. 363 pp., paper, \$19.99.

Timothy Paul Jones, a professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, is the main author of this beautiful and helpful volume. The book is literally filled with colorful diagrams, charts and pictures that enhance its readability and makes a difficult subject a joy to read. Jones wrote in a gracious tone, often humorously and with clarity; it is the authors’ goal not to argue but to produce a “deeper recognition of the

majesty and sovereignty of Jesus in all of life – including the end of time” (p. 6). The belief of this reviewer is that he successfully achieved his goal.

The purpose of the book was to carefully devise the major evangelical positions on eschatology. To this end, Jones provided four eschatological views (amillennial, postmillennial, dispensational premillennial, and historical premillennial), three theological systems (dispensationalism, covenantalism and new covenantalism), and four hermeneutical methods (futurist, preterist, idealist, and historicist). He also examined various understandings of hermeneutical systems and the impact they have on eschatological views. Jones did all this and more without indicating his own views and without any emphatic criticisms. At the same time, he obviously knows his subjects and is able to accurately describe what each school of thought believes, which enables the reader to have a side-by-side comparison of all these things in one volume for handy reference. Better indexes would have been helpful; the work does have a topical index but lacks one for Scripture or one for the charts and diagrams. The reader will either have to create one's own indexes or take educated guesses where to find what is being sought.

Jones (referencing Albert Mohler) understands three levels of theological issues: essential doctrines, doctrines over which disagreements will cause separation, and nonessential doctrines about which Christians should disagree amiably. Jones would place eschatology in this third category (p. 37). To that end, while the author carefully showed distinctions between the various positions, he masterfully identified the areas of agreement and positive contributions of each view.

Along with the issues already mentioned, Jones also addressed the biblical covenants, the kingdom, the Books of Daniel and Revelation, the Messiah, the Olivet Discourse, Jesus' triumph over Satan, Satan, the Antichrist, the tribulation, the millennium, the rapture, and much more.

For the student seeking a reliable and accurate reference source, which explains the major understandings of eschatology affirmed by evangelicals, *Rose Guide to End-Times Prophecy* is excellent. The learned reader might disagree with the author with regard to minor details, but overall each position is handled fairly, clearly, and with grace. For both personal and classroom work, this reviewer highly recommends this work by Timothy Jones.

– Gary E. Gilley