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Editorial

In times of crisis we are brought to pay special attention to Scripture. This edition of the Bulletin includes two papers from the 2013 Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference on the Doctrine of Scripture. We plan to publish papers from the 2015 and 2017 conferences in upcoming editions. These are supplied by the Rutherford Centre of Reformed Theology, whose director Andrew McGowan has kindly co-operated with us along with the contributors so that their papers can be published here.

Covid-19 has spread suffering and death throughout the world this year. What observations might we make as evangelical Christians at the present time? We see reality being revealed, and hope more contagious than the virus.

First, *the hellish character of the virus*. C. S. Lewis comments, 'In Scripture Satan is specially associated with disease in Job, in Luke 13:16, 1 Corinthians 5:5 and (probably) in 1 Timothy 1:20.'[1]

The virus has unleashed a catalogue of ill effects – sickness, death, isolation, unemployment, debt and distress. Members of families have been unable to visit one another, even in the last moments of life; people unable to physically console one another at funerals, schools closed and churches unable to meet physically together. Domestic violence and abuse is reported to have increased considerably. Concerns regarding mental health have been further exacerbated. Even if a cure is found soon, the effects of the virus will be felt for many years to come.

Second, *we have a greater adversary, the devil*. Large-scale disasters are often described today as being of 'biblical proportion'. The Bible is a familiar source of stories about disaster: the flood, the plagues, the siege, famine, disease and death. Yet it does not identify the afflictions of 'flesh and blood' as our chief enemy:

> Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:11-12).

Third, *a threat with the same power as the coronavirus is already underlying*. While faced with the virus's aggressive threat to life, we can take notice of the Scripture that says, 'death spread to all men because all

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[1] C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, C. S. Lewis Signature Classics Edition (London: Collins, 2012), p. 87 fn. 1.

sinned' (Rom. 5:12). We must take action against the virus, but we must not overlook what the Bible is saying to us – that which issues in death is already within, namely the sin that is within us. As Jesus said, it is not what goes into a person that makes him unclean, but what comes out of a person that makes him unclean.

Fourth, *our Lord is greater than our adversary outside of us and within us*. We can identify three truths of God that are especially relevant.

GOD'S *SOVEREIGNTY*

God is an ever-present help in times of trouble. He is greater than the evil of the coronavirus and the adversary whose malice exceeds it. Jesus declared, 'I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' On the cross he destroyed the works of the devil. In Scripture outbreaks of evil are regularly followed by outbreaks of revival. The fall was followed by the promise, slavery followed by freedom, the exile followed by repatriation, the cross followed by resurrection, martyrdom followed by the growth of the church. Many churches speak of new-found interest from their communities. Seldom has the media had such a healthy focus upon Easter as it did this year. In March Google Play and App Store recorded 2 million more downloads of its most popular English Version of the Bible than in the same month last year while Eden online bookstore reported a 55% increase in sales of physical Bibles in April.[2]

God is also greater than the enemy of sin that lies within. 'The wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom. 6:23). Thus for Christians, while the power that leads to death is within – sin which leads to death – Christ overcomes it by his Spirit within. 'The law of the Spirit of life has set you free from the law of sin and death' (Rom. 8:2).

GOD'S *IMMUTABILITY*

J. I. Packer understands how many Christians feel a 'spatial distance' reading the Bible, between us and the original characters. At the same time, in crisis, scripture leaps off the page:

> The crucial point is surely this. The sense of remoteness is an illusion that springs from seeking the link between our situation and that of the various

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[2] Sebastian Shehadi and Miriam Partington, 'How coronavirus is leading a religious revival', *The New Statesman*, 27 April 2020, <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/religion/2020/04/how-coronavirus-leading-religious-revival>, accessed 20 May 2020.

Bible characters in the wrong place. It is true that in terms of space, time, and culture, they, and the historical epoch to which they belong to, are a very long way away from us. But the link between them and us is not found at that level.

The link is God himself. For the God with whom they had to do is the same God with whom we have to do. We could sharpen the point by saying, exactly the same God; for God does not change in the least particular. Thus it appears that the truth on which we must dwell in order to dispel this feeling that there is an in unbridgeable gulf between the position of men and women in Bible times and our own, is the truth of God's *immutability*.[3]

The same God who was sovereign over the flood, the plagues, the exile, and every moment of biblical history is sovereign today. He is the same God, yesterday, today and forever. Consequently, Jesus his Son, the immutable yet incarnate Word, is our hope today. 'He is the same, yesterday, today and forever' (Heb. 13:8). Therefore the victory he won in biblical times, 'to destroy the works of the devil' (1 John 3:8) is the victory found in him today. And his redemption for our sins is as effectual today as it was on the day he accomplished it.

GOD'S *PROMISE*

Society is asking 'what will be the new norm?' It's a question we also have for our churches. We anticipate church services restarting in buildings: Who will be there? What will we return to? What will be the same, what different? Will we be the same? Will it be what we hope?

The Bible teaches us times of refreshment follow repentance; and warns of future tests. That is always true of the church this side of glory, and may be so following the current crisis. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart didn't peak at the last plague, but afterwards, when Israel fled and approached the Red Sea. There he tried to destroy them.

Before coronavirus the temperature was rising against the professing church in the west for its stance on moral issues such as marriage, sexual morality and gender identity. Contrary views were persistently advocated by some influential media outlets. The coronavirus has, for a time, completely rewritten the agenda and switched the focus. The church has been allowed to speak. It may be the eye of the storm. After Daniel's friends were allowed to speak Nebuchadnezzar turned the furnace temperature up seven times. When Jesus spoke, no charge would stick against him, so false witnesses were found instead and he was nailed to a tree. Israel

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[3]   J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2013), pp. 84-85. Italics original.

walked free, so did Daniel's friends, and so did Jesus. 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all' (Ps. 34:19).

Whatever is ahead for the church, whether hardship, or a period of relative ease, God's promises are of special significance so long as we do not harden our hearts when we hear his word: 'Behold I am with you always, to the end of the age'; 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' This is the great hope for the Christian which God also offers in the gospel to the world. Confronted by mortality, our hope is in the sovereign, immutable God of promise.

John Ferguson and Mike Parker

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David Smith's paper was presented at the Neopolis conference in Glasgow on 12th October 2019.

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ENGAGING SCRIPTURE IN A POSTMODERN MILIEU

Fergus Macdonald

This article begins by summarising some key features of the postmodern milieu in which most westerners live today. It goes on to review in outline an empirical research programme, entitled a Psalm Journey, which I undertook between 2003 and 2004 in Edinburgh among a group of students with an interest in contemporary spirituality.[1] Next the article reviews Colin Greene and Martin Robinson's book *Metavista: Bible, Church and Mission in an Age of Imagination* which explores the hermeneutical issues involved in engaging with Scripture in postmodernity.[2] The final part of the article summarises the advantages of a meditative-intuitive engagement with psalmic texts as illustrated by the Psalm Journey[3]

MODERNITY AND POSTMODERNITY

It is commonplace today to hear it said that western culture has moved, or is in process of moving, out of modernity into postmodernity. Modernity has a range of manifestations, but is generally understood to be the worldview emerging from the eighteenth century Enlightenment (a project which was based on instrumental reason, the autonomy of the individual, and the idea of progress). Modernity assumes the existence of objective truth, which it regards as universal and discoverable by empirical enquiry. It doubts whether truth can be revealed by religion. Modernity expresses itself socially in industrialisation, bureaucratisation and secularisation.

Postmodernity, on the other hand, is seen both as a reaction against the rationalism and foundationalism of modernity and as a consequence

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[1] My respondents defined spirituality as a longing of the human spirit for connection beyond the immediate; the personal pursuit of meaning or place and enlightenment.

[2] C. Greene and M. Robinson, *Metavista: Bible, Church and Mission in an Age of Imagination, Faith in an Emerging Culture* (Milton Keynes: Authentic Media, 2008).

[3] The understanding of Scripture engagement assumed in my research was as follows: 'Scripture engagement is interacting with the biblical text in ways that provide sufficient opportunity for the text to speak for itself. By means of this interaction readers and hearers learn to inhabit the narrative of the text and to respond to the unique claim it makes on their lives.'

of it, for which reason it is sometimes labelled 'late modernity.' It rejects the realist ontology and epistemology of modernity and considers the world to be a construct of culture and language. Postmodernity focuses on difference, considers the universal perspective of modernity to be an illusion, and is suspicious of truth claims made by science, philosophy and religion. It suspects all metanarratives, or master stories, and denies the possibility of human knowledge achieving certainty.[4] The Cartesian aphorism: 'I think, therefore I am' is replaced by the Derridean maxim: 'I don't know; I must believe.' Postmodernity creates space for faith, but not for assurance. An additional feature of postmodernity is historical scepticism. According to Hayden White, a postmodern historian, all historical accounts are 'verbal fictions.'[5] Furthermore, postmodernity privileges Freud's desiring libido over Descartes' thinking ego by giving preference to the sensuous over the cognitive.[6]

It is important to recognise that the widespread use of the term 'postmodernity' does not mean that modernity is obsolete. Modernity is still very much alive today as the force behind both technological advances and economic globalisation, which are such prominent drivers of early twenty-first century life. But in, with and under modernity, postmodernity is the condition of the history in which contemporary westerners participate. So today our society is both modern and postmodern. We find ourselves living 'in parentheses' between both worldviews.[7]

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4   C. Butler, *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), p. 2.

5   Butler, *Introduction*, p. 33; R. Appignesi and C. Garratt, *Introducing Postmodernism* (Icon Books: Cambridge, 1999), p. 152.

6   'Postmodern lifestyles that are highly attuned to consumerism give preference to the body over the mind, the id over the ego, the image over the word, the sensuous over the cognitive, the aesthetic over the rational, the symbolic and iconic over the utilitarian and practical' (Greene and Robinson, p. 31)

7   The phrase 'the condition of history' is taken from Kevin Vanhoozer who, in turn, derives it from the title of Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984 and Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984). Vanhoozer clarifies his understanding of the phrase by saying 'postmodernity is not a specifiable moment on the timetable of history but a mood.' The phrase 'in parentheses' is also taken from Vanhoozer who borrows it from Steven Best and Douglas Kellner's *Postmodern Turn* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984 and Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984). Best and Kellner amplify the expression by describing it as 'an interregnum period in which the competing regimes are engaged in an intense struggle for dominance' (p. 32). K. J. Vanhoozer, 'Theology and the condition of postmo-

My task in this article is to explore how, living in these parentheses, we might engage with the Bible in ways that are meaningful in early twenty-first century western society. At first sight, this task is formidable. How can the churches promote the Bible to a generation that is distrustful of all truth claims, that suspects all master stories as being instruments of the powerful to oppress the weak, and that assumes all historical narratives to be 'verbal fictions'? How can Bible agencies and other organisations produce helps and design programmes that will encourage postmodern nomads to explore God's Word and the claims it makes upon us?

PSALM JOURNEY

I sought to address such questions in my doctoral research undertaken at the University of Edinburgh's School of Divinity between 2002 and 2007, in which I carried out an empirical programme of Scripture engagement using selected biblical psalms with a group of international students, most of whom were engaged in postgraduate studies in the University covering a wide range of disciplines, and all of whom were privately exploring contemporary spirituality. After conducting a pilot project among over sixty students, I invited twelve respondents to undertake a month-long 'Psalm Journey.' Only a small minority of my respondents were regularly active in church life. A majority had a nominal Christian background, while some belonged to other faiths: Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, and Ba'hai. The research was undertaken on the premise that respondents would allow the psalmic texts to speak for themselves. The 'helps' provided were minimal, briefly supplying historical, cultural and linguistic information that set the psalms in their original milieu. These 'helps' strictly adhered to 'no [doctrinal] note or comment,' a phrase which has been described as 'the Bible Society Movement's Fundamental Principle.'[8] The 'helps' consisted of a 'Minimal Hermeneutic' which I prepared for each of the six psalms, providing short annotations along with some open questions to serve as 'prompts' to meditation. The Minimal Hermeneutic eschewed any attempt to explain the meaning of the text. Its length corresponded to

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dernity: a report on knowledge (of God)', in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, ed. by K. J. Vanhoozer (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), p. 9.

[8] David G. Burke, 'Text and Context: The Relevance and Viability of the Bible Society Movement's Fundamental Principle – "Without Doctrinal Note or Comment" – Past, Present and Future', *United Bible Societies Bulletin*, 194/195 (2002), p. 299.

the length of the psalm it related to, but was never more than two pages of A4. One of the Minimal Hermeneutics is found in Appendix 1.[9]

All the respondents regularly engaged with Scripture by meditating for at least ten minutes daily on the text of a complete specified psalm over a seven-day period. The exercise continued for a further two weeks with the focus each week being on a different psalm. Respondents kept a journal and at the end of each week they participated as a group in a *lectio divina* process during which they shared the fruits of their personal reflection over the previous seven days. A second group of respondents undertook a similar four-week programme interacting with a different group of psalms. An outline of the group meditative process followed in the Psalm Journey is found in Appendix 2. In all, six psalms were covered.[10] At the end of the exercise all respondents were interviewed one-to-one and encouraged to share frankly their interaction with the psalmic texts. Having given this brief outline of the Psalm Journey, I now wish to shift focus temporarily from the empirical to the epistemological, by exploring Greene and Robinson's claim that a specific hermeneutical pre-understanding is necessary in order to engage with Scripture appropriately and effectively today.

METAVISTA

Greene and Robinson lean heavily on postliberalism (or narrative theology) in their preferred mode of engaging with the text of Scripture in a postmodern milieu. I have selected their book because it envisions cultural engagement with the Scripture narrative as dynamically enhancing the mission of the church and radically changing the societal imagination of the wider community.

I find much to commend in this book. First, it recognises that the Bible is narrative-shaped, and that its non-narrative texts—whether legal codes, wisdom literature, liturgical poetry, prophetic oracles, dominical

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[9] Generally the Minimal Hermeneutics were appreciated by respondents. In his follow-up interview one respondent said: 'I really enjoyed the "Minimal Hermeneutic." I did like having that much structure because, you know, when you first read the psalms, you can seem a bit lost in the text and not really know how to. At the same time, that's about all the structure I want. Anything more than that I sort of hesitate and shy away from.'

[10] These were Psalms 22, 30, 55, 73, 74, 126 respectively selected on the basis that they resonate with the dominant life values identified by my respondents: a desire to resolve pain; placing a high value on experience; being well thought of; engaging with ambiguity; suspicion of religious institutions; having a good time.

parables or apostolic letters—emerge from the overarching narrative and, therefore, are integral to it. Such recognition is, I believe, fundamental to engaging creatively with Scripture, which too often is popularly assumed to be primarily a book of theological ideas. An acknowledgement that the Bible's genus is narrative enables us to take advantage of those studies in narrative criticism revealing the art of biblical storytellers to enhance greatly our understanding of the biblical text.[11]

A second reason for applauding this book is its strong commendation of imaginative indwelling of the text of Scripture and its prioritising of this over analytical, inductive approaches that all too easily tempt us to become masters rather than servants of the text. Entering the biblical story is, indeed, key to creative engagement with it.[12] A third reason for welcoming *Metavista* is its affirmation that narrative is central to human identity formation. The authors recognise that making *storied sense* of our experienced world is a distinguishing feature of humans. This storied sense results in us readily resonating with narrative texts as catalysts in the process of meaning making.

A fourth reason for welcoming this book is its strong emphasis on the role of Holy Scripture in shaping the life-world of the people of God. For it is as the church discovers its vitality in, and lives its life out of, the text of Scripture, that it fosters a discursive Christianity with potential to impact national life. This leads to my fifth reason for commending Greene and Robinson's work: They recognise that the Bible must engage creatively with the culture of the reader if it is to gain recognition as public truth.[13] In this regard, the book helpfully offers an extensive review of trends and issues highlighted in contemporary cultural studies.

The authors explain that the signifier in the title—'Metavista'—was chosen to avoid 'the supposedly legitimating foundations of a metanarrative or a hurriedly revamped metaphysic,' and because it speaks 'from a relatively unclaimed space or "clearing" (to use Heidegger's suggestive

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[11] R. Parry 'Narrative Criticism' in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation*, ed. by K. J. Vanhoozer (London: SPCK, 2005), pp. 528-31.

[12] According to Nicholas Wolterstorff we inhabit the world of the biblical narrative when 'the story that most decisively shapes our lives must be the biblical story.' Nicholas Wolterstorff 'Living within a Text', in *Faith and Narrative*, ed. by K. Yandell (Oxford: OUP, 2001), p. 212.

[13] '[I]n order for a particular faith to exercise discursive power, some aspect of its basic narrative of salvation and redemption needs to have penetrated crucial areas of contemporary culture, be that the books and magazines people read, the television and movies they watch, or the lifestyle innovations they adopt and value.' Greene and Robinson, p. xvi.

phrase)'.[14] The authors claim that in the midst of today's accelerating cultural change and constant transition, it is possible to discern 'the indistinct but nevertheless emerging culture of the post-postmodern' which they refer to as 'the new "metavista" culture of innovation and imagination'. They go on: 'This newly emerging cultural space is a truly global phenomenon because it is not simply or even mainly a philosophical or an ideas project. Metavista is also an economic and socio-political reality that is forming into a new narrative of liberation.'[15] It's possible that this new narrative can effect dramatic change from the bottom up: 'We now live in a time when the previous divisions between faith and reason, fact and value, private and public, high and low culture, science and religion – distinctions loved by modernity – no longer apply. The collapse of these previous distinctions has made us all heirs of a new age of imagination, indeed, an age where the possibilities of reimagining our own story opens up exciting possibilities for those who were previously categorized as the marginalized and the dispossessed.'[16]

In this Metavista, the church is called to live adventurously at the intersection of three different and at times competing narratives. These are: (1) the creational two-testament narrative unity and diversity which the Bible recounts; (2) the narrative of historical Christianity within which each and every individual church should stand; (3) the wider cultural narratives which a truly global world makes freely available to us.[17] The authors are convinced that to do this, the church will be required to move beyond the hermeneutical stances adopted by liberalism and evangelicalism both of which they claim have made dangerous liaisons with modernity:

> Living in this kind of comprehensive narrative, creatively improvising on the original script, and at the same time revisiting the socio-political ramifications of the whole story renders the old Christendom divisions between liberals and evangelicals not only superfluous but more than a little self-serving. To a certain extent the new theological movements, like radical orthodoxy, postliberalism, some of the new Catholic and Reformed theological repositionings, and those reappropriating the theology of Karl Barth in a postmodern context, have all left that outmoded dichotomy behind.[18]

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14 Greene and Robinson, p. xxix.
15 Greene and Robinson, p. 21.
16 Greene and Robinson, p. 44.
17 Greene and Robinson, p. 225.
18 Greene and Robinson, p. 234.

The liberal-evangelical standoff is considered obsolete and is summarily dismissed by the authors as the 'last theological vestige of Christendom.'[19]

The postliberal turn underlying the book creates a strong focus on Scripture as literary narrative, and on the need for readers, hearers, and viewers to become involved in the task of meaning-making by participating in the world of the biblical narrative and reconfiguring it according to their own imaginative reality.[20] Greene and Robinson opt for four main biblical stories or 'subplots'—Creation, Israel, Jesus the Christ, and the Church—all of which, they allege, are *unfinished* stories that are accordingly retold and redrafted through the others, and consequently invite our participation at every stage of the journey.[21] The truth and meaning of the overall narrative of Scripture, we are told, does not depend on its conformity to a particular historical state of affairs, or to any specific doctrinal formulation. Rather, the question of truth and meaning is an intratextual issue. Truth and meaning are found in the reformulation (*perichoresis* or mutual indwelling) of each story in the other and the recapitulation of the same plot density in each.

While freely acknowledging that there is much to learn from *Metavista*, there are, however, certain aspects of the book that raise questions as to its overall usefulness as a resource for contemporary Scripture engagement. Specifically, I have four reservations which I will pose in the form of questions.

RESERVATIONS

First, might the approach advocated in *Metavista* dumb down the authority of the biblical text by privileging interpretation? This question prompts a multitude of related questions: Is the text Scripture only when reconfigured and read in a certain way? What are the standards of interpretation?[22] The authors recognise that engaging with the Scripture narrative by reconfiguring it to our own imaginative reality inevitably

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[19] Greene and Robinson, p. 70.

[20] Greene and Robinson, p. 114.

[21] Greene and Robinson, p. 118. The authors regard the Fall from a state of perfection, as 'an over-literal interpretation of what is neither cosmology nor biology, but a story' (p. 120). 'An over-individualistic concentration on the Fall as a second story instead of an episode within the first story results in a stunted engagement with the biblical text which almost inevitably leads to an interpretation that individual salvation was the whole purpose of God's creative act' (p. 122).

[22] Cf. K. J. Vanhoozer, *Is there a meaning in this text? The Bible, the reader, and the morality of literary knowledge* (Leicester: IVP, 1998).

creates tension in Christian communities between the commonality of the text and the diversity of interpretation. However, they deem such diversity to be appropriate because the text of Scripture itself contains various voices.[23] For the authors, it seems to be the consensual reading of the community that takes precedence. The inference I take from this is that the interpretation of the community and its tradition tend to exercise a higher authoritative role in the church than does the text of Scripture itself. The distinction in the Reformed tradition between the 'supreme standard' of the church (i.e. Scripture) and its 'subordinate standards' (i.e. the church's confession and catechisms) appears to be elided into a single churchly authority.[24]

Second, does the focus on finding meaning in our interaction with the biblical narrative rather than in the narrative itself, prejudice the factuality of events featured in the biblical story? The section of the book entitled 'Reconfiguring the story' suggests the answer may be positive. For it reflects narrative theology's insistence that the relation of the biblical narrative to history, is irrelevant to our engaging with the text. N. T. Wright's model of engaging with Scripture as a five-act drama[25] is criticised because it 'remains fundamentally a historical project and not a literary narrative description of a multidimensional story.'[26] Apparently narrative can be indwelt while history cannot:

> [T]he church lives in the traces, the still reverberating resonances, the dramatic configurations, of the story of Creation, the Fall, Israel and Jesus, but we can no longer personally or collectively indwell those worlds because they are assigned to the vicissitudes of history. This is the fundamental difference between history and narrative. Narrative allows the contemporary reader to indwell the whole story, because each episode of the story is recapitulated, expropriated and reconfigured in the event of the reading and in the collision of the narrative with the context of the reader.[27]

In my view such a sharp distinction between historical narrative and literary narrative demands greater justification than Greene and Robinson offer. The biblical narratives undoubtedly differ significantly from modern historical writing, but there is strong internal evidence in biblical texts of claims to be historiographic. A plain reading of passages like

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23   Greene and Robinson, p. 217.
24   There is surprisingly little discussion in the book about biblical authority.
25   N. T. Wright, 'How can the bible be authoritative?', in *Vox Evangelica*, 21 (1991), p. 18.
26   Greene and Robinson, pp. 110-111.
27   Greene and Robinson, p. 111.

Luke 1:1-4 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 surely would understand them to be alluding to factual events in time-space reality.[28]

Third, is the world of the Bible understood as being continuous with our world? The answer in *Metavista* seems to be both 'yes and no' as is suggested by a supportive quotation from Amos Wilder:

> If we ask a prestigious body of modern critics about the relation of the story-world to the real world, they will reply that it is a false question. For one thing the story goes its own way and takes us with it; the storyteller is inventing, not copying…. Our language-worlds are the only worlds we know.[29]

If in fact both these worlds are cultural linguistic constructs, then Wilder is correct. But if we reject a postliberal stance and adopt a realist ontology and epistemology the question is valid and the answer must be 'Yes'—i.e. the world of the Bible *is* continuous with our world. The Wilder quotation highlights that narrative theology has its limits for those who believe that realities exist outside the human mind.

Fourth, does the kind of cultural Scripture engagement advocated in *Metavista* compromise the capacity of Scripture to critique culture holistically? *Metavista* is, in many ways, a commendable attempt to engage postmodern culture by demonstrating that many of the features of postmodernity resonate with the message of Scripture. The book also convincingly demonstrates that biblical values challenge many aspects of modernity. However, the overall cultural appraisal is less than even-handed. The weaknesses of modernity are highlighted while its strengths tend to be overlooked. On the other hand, the reverse is the case in the book's analysis of postmodernity. There is a lapse of equilibrium here. For all cultures exhibit to a greater or lesser extent dissonance as well as resonance with biblical values. To curtail the Bible's critical faculty surely compromises the counter-cultural dynamic of any engagement between the Bible and culture.

In light of these four questions I wonder how helpful at grassroots level Greene and Robinson's commendable desire to facilitate postmodern cultural Scripture engagement will be. The cultural engagement on offer tends to be rather blinkered in apparently forgetting that features of human sin as well as features of divine grace are evident in postmodernity as well as in modernity. Furthermore, *Metavista* appears to be in danger of foreclosing for readers any free decision concerning the nature of Holy Scripture. Greene and Robinson take evangelicals and liberals to task for

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[28]   It is surprising that the authors make only passing reference to historiography.

[29]   A. Wilder, 'Story and Story-World', *Interpretation*, 37 (1983), pp. 353-64.

imposing on others their own pre-understanding, yet they themselves may have unwittingly fallen into a similar trap by imposing their own pre-understanding on the biblical text.

MEDITATIVE ENGAGEMENT

At this point I will leave *Metavista* and return to Psalm Journey. The Psalm Journey differs from the Metavista project in two respects. First it was an empirical study, and, second, it sought to facilitate an intuitive interaction with Scripture. Its theoretical structure sought to curtail third-party hermeneutical intrusion by offering only minimal guidance to participants.[30] The text of each psalm was set before respondents and they were invited to meditate on it, to interact imaginatively with it, and to discover the extent to which it might authenticate itself in their experience as a religious classic.[31]

An open, meditative engagement with Scripture was encouraged in the hope that it would enable postmodern readers to overcome both their suspicion of the Bible as a metanarrative and their wariness of being told what to believe, thereby enabling them to approach the biblical text with a measure of confidence and ease. The ancient meditative process of *lectio divina* was adopted.[32] Traditionally *lectio divina* has been practised in Christian small group meditation with a focus on prayer and communion with God, and involves at least four steps.[33] These steps can be adapted, as they were in the Psalm Journey, to facilitate a conversation with a biblical text by any group of people desiring to develop their spirituality. By creating time and space for biblical words and images to catch the imagination, *lectio divina* enables us 'to *hear* and *feel* the text as well as see it'.[34]

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[30] An example of this guidance is found in Appendix 1.

[31] For the concept of religious classics see David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1981), pp. 248-49. Following Gadamer, Tracy regards texts like the Bible as 'religious classics' which are self-authenticating.

[32] *Lectio divina* is 'spiritual (lit. divine) reading'.

[33] In the first step participants listen for a word or a phrase that demands attention. Second, they ruminate on that word or phrase, allowing it to interact with their thoughts, hopes, memories and desires. Third, they converse with God in prayers of consecration and/or petition. Fourth, they rest in the presence of God, who has used his word as a means of inviting them to accept his transforming embrace. Luke Dysinger, 'Accepting the Embrace of God: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina'; www.valyermo.com/Id-art.html, accessed: 16 September 2005.

[34] E. R. Wendland, *Analyzing the Psalms*, 2nd edn. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2002), p. 205. Cf. A. Berlin's observation that a Hebrew poem con-

Meditative reading ensures that both brain hemispheres are involved in interacting with the text.[35] It has the additional advantage of reaching the parts that analytical reading cannot.[36] Plain descriptive speech and rational argument are regarded by psychologists as inadequate to evoke right brain activity which is a vital function of human personality. Traditionally the practice of *lectio divina* has been coherent because in patristic and medieval times the symbols in the biblical text were understood within 'a stable tradition of interpretation established on other grounds'.[37] Antony Thiselton—following Ricoeur—argues that practitioners of *lectio divina* who are outside or on the margins of given interpretive traditions—as were most of my Psalm Journey respondents—can be saved from succumbing to self-deception and promoting self-interest by adopting a hermeneutic of suspicion with regard to their own readings.[38]

A further advantage of meditative reading is that its openness is particularly helpful when engaging audiences which may be endued with a healthy postmodern fear of being manipulated by authority figures, be they preachers or commentators.[39] Not only does meditative reading help us allay postmodern suspicions, it also resonates with some postmodern approaches to literature. For example, Thiselton points out that the prac-

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veys thought through 'a special structuring of language that calls attention to the "how" of the message as well as to the "what"'. ('Introduction to Hebrew Poetry', in *New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. IV, ed. by L. E. Kock (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996), p. 302).

[35] In popular psychology left brain functions are regarded as analytical and logical and find expression in the attempts of many respondents to go behind the text seeking its authorial intention. Right brain functions are taken to be holistic rather than analytical and intuitive rather than logical (*Left Brain, Right Brain*, rev. ed. by S. P. Springer and G. Deutsch (New York, NY: W. H. Freeman, 1985)). When one respondent indicated she would have liked 'to know far more about exactly what was going on and who was attacking who' her left brain was at work. But when she says that, while listening to a sung version of Psalm 73, the repetitive plaintive call of verse 1-22 'is washed aside by this one line "I remain with you continually,"' it is her right brain that is dominant. (The line 'I remain with you continually' is not from the NRSV, but *Sing Psalms: New Metrical Version of the Book of Psalms*, Edinburgh: Free Church of Scotland, 2003).

[36] Inner experience can be interpreted only indirectly by diagnostic methods (A. C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), p. 359).

[37] Thiselton, p. 578.

[38] Thiselton, pp. 575-82.

[39] J. R. Middleton and B. J. Walsh, *Truth is Stranger than it used to be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (London: SPCK, 1995), pp. 69-79.

tice of *lectio divina* in medieval monastic life 'allows gentle contemplation to move amidst a kaleidoscope of ever-changing biblical imagery in a way which almost anticipates the post-modernist notion of textual play'.[40]

Most of the Psalm Journey participants were very sympathetic to the values of postmodernism, yet all of them were prepared to engage with the psalms as 'classic texts'. Furthermore, their meditative reading of these texts encouraged them to enter imaginatively the narrative of each psalm, exploring the world within the text before attempting to contextualise the psalm in their own experience.[41] Here the strong metaphors of Hebrew poetry proved to be a real asset.[42] Of the twenty-eight words or phrases identified in the psalm texts by respondents as having impacted them, eighteen (i.e. almost two-thirds) are figurative language.[43] Respondents' focus on metaphorical and symbolic terms in the psalms made it easier

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[40] Thiselton, p. 142. The openness of my audience to a meditative approach validates the traditional practice of Bible Societies to refrain from advocating doctrinal interpretations when providing notes and comments. For Psalm Journey respondents the attractiveness of the traditional practice is that it opens up the text for readers rather that telling them what it means or demands.

[41] I am using the term imagination in the holistic sense Vanhoozer gives it: 'The imagination is not merely the faculty of fantasy—the ability to see things not there—but rather a means of seeing what is there (e.g. the meaning of the whole) that senses alone are unable to observe (and that the propositional alone is unable to state).' 'The Voice and the Actor: A Dramatic Proposal about the Ministry and Minstrelsy of Theology', in *Evangelical Futures: a Conversation on Theological Methods*, ed. by J. G. Stackhouse (Leicester: IVP, 2000), p. 84.

[42] It is not uncommon for 'metaphor' to be used as a general category for figurative language as well as a particular figure of speech. See G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Duckworth, London, 1980), pp 131-83; A. L. Warren-Rothlin, 'Body Idioms and the Psalms', in *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*, ed. by P. S. Johnston and D. G. Firth (Leicester: Apollos, 2005), p. 200. Hence the term covers simile and hyperbole. Anthropomorphism is also included: 'When the Bible talks about God, it must speak by necessity, metaphorically' (Berlin, *op cit*, p. 312). According to R. Alter, the Bible's figurative language should be seen in the context of literary genre and literary symbolism. Pronounced reliance on figurative language is one of the formal resources of Hebrew poetry, along with parallelism and hyperbole (R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), pp. 160-1).

[43] Parallelism, the predominant feature of Hebrew poetry, was identified by Robert Lowth in 1753, and is defined as 'the repetition of similar or related semantic content or grammatical structure in adjacent lines and verses' (Berlin, *op cit,* p. 304).

for them to find themselves in the texts. Such verbal imagery underlines the universal appeal of the psalms.[44] In particular it helps to 'encourage listeners (or readers) to mentally conceive and emotionally experience for themselves a particular situation or event by supplying them with a vivid picture or even an entire scene into which they can enter by way of their imagination'.[45] One Psalm Journey respondent tells how meditating on Psalm 126 helped her to contemplate something she previously had thought impossible: 'You dream about it. All tell you it's impossible. Then it happens.' This respondent was not alone. Others also frequently referred to the new perspective gained from their meditation, confirming Alter's observation that Hebrew poetry is 'a particular way of imagining the world'.[46] The Psalm Journey evidence demonstrates that metaphors by catching the imagination, enable readers and listeners to engage with the text intuitively as well as logically.[47]

Such imaginative meditation on the psalms prompted Psalm Journey participants to ask questions of the text. The female respondent who wrote 'I wanted to know far more about exactly what was going on and who was attacking whom,' was in Ricoeur's terms, seeking to explore the world behind the text. In addition, respondents allowed the texts to question them, illustrating the 'critical correlation' that David Tracy envisages taking place between readers and classic texts, resulting in 'a critical dialogue between the implicit questions and explicit answers of the Christian classics and the explicit questions and implicit answers of contemporary cultural experiences and practices'.[48] The Psalm Journey suggests that

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44   Cf J. Goldingay, *Praying the Psalms* (Bramcote: Grove, 1993), p. 14.
45   E. R. Wendland, 'A Literary Approach to Biblical Text Analysis' in *Bible Translation: Frames of Reference*, ed. by T. Wilt (Manchester: St Jerome Press, 2003), p. 218.
46   Alter, *Biblical Poetry*, p. 151.
47   'The biblical texts are concerned not only to teach truth by means of logical propositions, but to display the truth to the whole person with a veritable arsenal of imaginative communicative strategies' ('Biblical Literature and Literary Criticism,' a presentation by Kevin J. Vanhoozer to The National Bible Society of Scotland, 1990). Cf. W. Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989), p. 3; W. Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms* (Winona, MN: St Mary's Press, 1982), pp. 23-31, who contends that Hebrew poetic metaphor, in marked contrast with the positivistic language of 'our prose-flattened world,' stimulates us to give full play to our imagination.
48   D. Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1975), pp. 43-63.

rumination and induction can complement one another in engaging with the Bible.

The Psalm Journey also demonstrated the extraordinary potential of the Bible to provide a perspective for its readers to view and respond to contemporary events. Most respondents were comfortable reflecting on what they had seen, heard or read on the news media while meditating on the psalms.[49] They acknowledged that meditation on the psalms provided a window on the world. The war in Iraq, tensions in Zimbabwe, the perceived unfairness of Danish immigration policy, suffering experienced in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, setting fire to places of worship, and economic exploitation by big business, all feature in the group transcripts and personal journals. The concern about contemporary issues was also focused on powerful politicians of the time, like George W Bush, Tony Blair, Ariel Sharon and Saddam Hussein. One respondent wrote in his journal: 'Words [in Psalm 74] have been jumping out at me, I have been finding parallels to events the BBC or *The Guardian* tell me about daily.'[50]

Finally, during the Psalm Journey respondents found meditative reading playing a creative role in their self-formation. They testified to the therapeutic value of psalmic *lectio divina* in coping with work stress, depression, and reliving the devastation inflicted by a broken relationship. Unsurprisingly, respondents reacted negatively to the vengeance of the poet in Psalm 55. On the other hand, three of them wondered whether the imprecatory prayer of Psalm 74:11, asking God to destroy those who had so ruthlessly desecrated the Jerusalem temple, may be more therapeutic than vindictive.[51]

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[49] '[T]he poetry of the lament psalms has power to reshape our world'. W. L. Holladay, *The Psalms Through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), p. 293.

[50] Two days later in his journal and with reference to hostilities in Israel-Palestine, he asks: 'When will we all agree to love?' He recognises that action on his part was called for. The picture of 'enemies occupying a people's holy place and making a once holy sanctuary unholy' makes him aware that he needs to get involved in his synagogue's Monday meetings and have a say in how synagogue funds are disbursed internationally.

[51] Brueggemann and Goldingay contend that the psalms of vengeance can help to reduce and even eliminate, human rage and retaliation. They suggest that victims can be set free from the power of the deep-seated hate that victimisation often incites, by reflecting on a psalm of vengeance and then reciting it as a prayer through which, in effect, they hand over their anger and hatred to God and leave it there. Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms*, pp. 57-68; Goldingay, *Praying the Psalms*, p. 15.

CONCLUSION

In general the Psalm Journey research has demonstrated that, in a post-modern milieu, effective Scripture engagement is not dependent on foreclosing readers' understanding of the nature of Scripture. Rather, the experience of my respondents—although small and non-randomly selected—validates an open, meditative, and naive reading of the biblical psalms as being beneficial. This benefit was facilitated by the following factors:

- A 'hermeneutic of *imagination*' effectively complemented the 'hermeneutic of interrogation' that tends to prevail in current inductive approaches to biblical texts.

- Readers, by engaging in a critical *correlation* with the biblical text—asking it questions and listening to the questions the text is putting to them—entered into a meaningful and inventive conversation with the text.

- Meditative Scripture engagement facilitated *contextualisation* of the text in relation to issues arising in the public square as well as those affecting the private sphere, fulfilling Calvin's metaphor of the Scriptures as spectacles.

- The strong metaphors of psalmic poetry were a major resource in facilitating the *self-formation* of respondents.

For these reasons, psalms from the Israelite Iron Age read, recited and heard, offer postmodern seekers an alternative, *samizdat* spirituality that opens a way to bring protest as well as praise, complaint as well as thanksgiving, ambiguity as well as confidence, into the sanctuary of God. These four features of the Psalm Journey call to our attention a robust spirituality many churches to all intents and purposes have abandoned.[52] It may be that a new generation of seekers living at, or beyond, the edge of our religious institutions will restore to the 21st century mainstream this ancient form of spirituality.

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[52] R. Davidson, *Courage to Doubt: Exploring an Old Testament Theme* (London: SCM, 1983), pp. 1-17; W. Brueggemann, *The Psalms in the Life of Faith*, ed. by P. D. Miller (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), pp. 67-69.

APPENDIX 1

Minimal Hermeneutic: Psalm 126

Inter-textual Readings: 2 Kings 25 (the exile); Ezra 1 (the return).

<u>Cues</u>

Class of Psalm: *A Song of Ascents*: The Songs of Ascent (Pss 120-134) appear to be designed for pilgrims travelling to the three annual festivals observed in Jerusalem in which ancient Jews celebrated their faith.

the LORD (v. 1): 'LORD' translates the special word the ancient Israelites had for God.

restored the fortunes (v. 1): a reference to the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylonia in 538 BCE. The half-century-long exile was an intensely traumatic experience for the Jews.

Zion (v. 1): the place name of the temple mount in Jerusalem. The first temple, built by King Solomon in the 10th century BCE, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BCE, when the elite of the nation was taken by their captors into exile. A second temple was built by the returning exiles in 520. The site is presently occupied by the Islamic Al-Aqsa mosque and its shrine, the Dome of the Rock.

and we rejoiced (v. 3b): This is the central sentence in the psalm. Verbs preceding it are rendered in the past tense; those coming after it, in the present or future tense.

watercourses in the Negeb (v. 4b): the seasonal flash floods that make the dry wadis of the south of Israel run with water.

those who sow in tears (v. 5): the post-exilic period was a time of hardship. Attempts by the returned exiles to re-build city and temple were opposed by locals (Nehemiah 4); in addition, they suffered from drought (Haggai 1:6-11; 2:16-19) and locusts (Joel 1:1-2:27).

<u>Prompts</u>

- The repetition of 'fortunes' (v. 1) in v. 4 has prompted the following comment: 'What the pilgrims remember about the past they pray for in the present. […] They need ever-recurring rhythms of renewal that come like the seasonal freshets that make the dry watercourses of the Negeb run with water.'[53] Be open to the text of this ancient song renewing your soul!

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[53]   James L. Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), p. 400.

- Allow the images of this song—dreams and streams, sowing and reaping—to run in your imagination and see where they lead!

- Try to understand the joy of the returning exiles by reflecting on times in your life when you 'were like those who dreamed' (vv. 1-2).

- 'Those who sow in tears' (v. 5). Some of the frustrations of sowing may be appreciated by reading Jesus' Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-15). Reflect on the devastating impact in the developing world of failed harvests and unfair trade agreements.

- '[They] shall come home with shouts of joy' (v. 6). 'Joy builds on the past and borrows from the future'[54]. In your imagination attempt to borrow from your future! When you do this what do you see?

APPENDIX 2

The Lectio Divina Process adapted for The Psalm Journey

1. Prepare

   - Sit in silence with your eyes closed, let your body relax.

2. Listen to the Psalm.

   - As the psalm is read twice, listen for the word or phrase that strikes you.
   - During the moments of silence that follow the second reading, repeat the phrase softly (or silently) to yourself.
   - The leader will say 'Let us share our word or phrases.' When it is your turn in the circle, speak your phrase aloud. Say only this word or phrase with no comments or elaboration.
   - You may say 'I pass' if you wish, at any point in this process.

3. Ask yourself 'How is my life impacted by this word?'

   - The psalm will now be read by a different person.
   - Consider how the word or phrase connects to your life. Sometimes this will be an idea or a thought; at other times it will be an image or some other impression.
   - You will have two or three minutes for this meditation.

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[54] Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*, 2nd edn (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books), p. 99.

- The leader will say, 'Let us share our reflections' and you will share in one or two sentences the connection between your phrase and your life.
- Again, do not elaborate, explain, or justify what you sensed.

4. Ask yourself 'Which of the resources provided helped the text to impact my life?'

   - You will have one or two minutes to reflect.
   - The leader will invite you to identify one of the resources and to describe in one or two sentences how it helped.
   - You may say 'I pass' if you wish.

5. Ask yourself 'Did the text of the psalm provide for you a window on the world?'

   - You will have two or three minutes to reflect.
   - The leader will invite you to highlight one news item of the past week which you've reflected on in the light of the psalm.
   - You may say 'I pass' if you wish.

6. Ask yourself 'Which extract from my journal do I wish to share with the group?'

   - You will have two or three minutes to reflect
   - The leader will invite you to read an extract of your choosing.
   - You may say 'I pass' if you wish.

7. Ask yourself 'Am I being invited to respond?'

   - The psalm will now be read for a third time (by yet another person).
   - Consider whether you are being invited to respond in some way in the next few days: 'Am I being encouraged to do something?'
   - You will have two or three minutes of silence for meditation.
   - The leader will say, 'Let us share our responses.'
   - When it is your turn, share in one or two sentences, without elaboration, the invitation you are being given.

8. Conclude

   - Sit in silence with your eyes closed reflecting on the psalm and your interaction with it, and committing yourself to do what the psalm has invited you to do.

The Sufficiency of Scripture

Timothy Ward

One of the most well-known biblical texts that informs the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture is found in 2 Peter 1:21, where it is said that OT prophecy 'never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.' And that's not all: 2 Peter also contains the significant reference to Paul's letters as 'Scripture' (3:16).

In this paper I intend to go a little further into this epistle than just these two isolated texts, in order to make a case that the letter as a whole should be regarded as making an important contribution to the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture. I'll begin with a straightforward descriptive outline of the theme of 'word and Scripture' as it runs strongly and repeatedly through the letter. Then I will offer some analysis of how that theme functions with regard to both the content and purpose of the letter, particularly in relation to scriptural sufficiency. And I will conclude with some doctrinal reflections on sufficiency, building on this exegetical basis. In particular I want to relate these to Herman Bavinck's exposition of the sufficiency of Scripture in volume 1 of his *Reformed Dogmatics*.

Central in all this will be a recognition of the purpose for which 2 Peter was written. At the beginning of chapter 3 Peter states explicitly the overarching purpose of this and also of his previous letter, which the majority of scholars take to be our 1 Peter. He says: 'Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles' (2 Pet. 3:1-2). In saying this, Peter is reinforcing by repetition a similar statement of intent from chapter 1:

> So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things. (1:12-15)

Calvin comments on the first of these purpose statements, from chapter 3, thus: 'By these words he intimates that we have enough in the writings of the prophets, and in the gospel, to stir us up, provided we be as diligent as

it behoves us, in meditating on them.'[1] There is *enough*, says Calvin, in the prophets and the gospel, to stir us up—that is, to stir up believers to hold fast to the beliefs, virtues and behaviours which the letter urges on them. I am taking that as a historical precedent for homing in on what 2 Peter says about the sufficiency of Scripture.

A short aside on authorship at this point: in this paper I am taking the apostle Peter to be the author of 2 Peter. Of course this letter's authorship is among the most disputed of any of the NT epistles, but its composition by Peter still has its able defenders, such as Tom Schreiner in his commentary.[2] Someone who rejects Petrine authorship will need to judge for themselves the extent to which the arguments I present in this paper on the basis of the letter's content still hold true if in fact the letter was written after the apostle's death.

Before starting out on the first section, though, a comment on my rationale for this paper is in order. There are many who think that the evangelical Protestant doctrine of Scripture has historically been somewhat impoverished and distorted theologically because in their view it has been constructed too much in the abstract, and this in two related ways. First, it has not been sufficiently related to and shaped by the whole Trinitarian economy of revelation and salvation. Second, it has not been sufficiently related to and shaped by the gospel of Christ himself. These two criticisms were made, for example, respectively by Colin Gunton and Francis Watson, of a set of essays by evangelicals on the nature of Scripture[3]—and I think (saying this as the author of one of those essays) with some justification.[4]

I would add a third and related problem of impoverishment and distortion within the historic evangelical doctrine of Scripture. Especially in its more popular formulations (although not exclusively there), it has not been sufficiently shaped by a close reading of the many biblical passages which give expression to it. This is of course, to say the least, profoundly ironic. I take it that, as with any biblical doctrine, our doctrinal formula-

1 John Calvin, *Commentary on 2 Peter*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), p. 413.
2 Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing, 2003), pp. 255-76.
3 Colin Gunton, 'Trinity and Trustworthiness', and Francis Watson, 'An Evangelical Response', in *The Trustworthiness of God: Perspectives on the Nature of Scripture*, ed. by Paul Helm & Carl Trueman (Leicester: Apollos, 2002), respectively pp. 275-84 & 285-89.
4 My own *Words of Life: Scripture as the living and active word of God* (Nottingham: IVP, 2009) outlines a doctrine of Scripture in a form that attempts to pay some attention to criticisms such as Gunton's and Watson's.

tion needs to take its shape and contours, its polemical and applicational edge, and its relatedness to other topics of doctrine, from the way in which all those elements are presented in Scripture itself. I have a memory of reading somewhere a comment by Geoffrey Wainwright, to the effect that what is needed is less abstract musing and debating about the doctrine of Scripture and more responsible exegesis of what Scripture says of itself. Even if my memory is faulty and Wainwright has never written such a thing, I think the point is a good one, and it is why I am offering this little bit of theological exegesis leading to doctrinal reflection, on the basis of one small part of Scripture.

Indeed, this third kind of distortion within the evangelical doctrine is bound up with the previous two. When the authors of Scripture have something to say about the nature of Scripture, their point is very often in the service of some more wide-ranging and fundamental statement about the character and actions of the triune God and the shape of faithful Christian discipleship. A doctrine of Scripture consciously shaped by careful exegesis of longer sections of Scripture therefore stands a better chance of being rightly theological and christological. I trust that this will become evident, as we now look more closely at 2 Peter, starting with a straightforward description.

I. WORD AND SCRIPTURE IN 2 PETER: DESCRIPTION

The letter is topped and tailed with significant references to 'knowledge' and 'grace'. Chapter 1, verse 2 says: 'Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord'; and the closing verse, 3:18, is: 'But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' This grace and knowledge are closely intertwined in the opening verses of what I will argue is functionally the letter's central section, 1:3-11. As the letter unfolds, it turns out that this section is setting out in tightly packed form the fundamental message to which Peter is urging the letter's recipients to hold fast; later he will refer back to it as 'the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles' (3:2). Grace is initially expounded as the divine power which 'has given us everything we need for a godly life', and this power is given to believers in and through their *knowledge* of God (1:3). The subsequent verse, v. 4, says more about this knowledge: through God's glory and goodness 'he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature'. The meaning of that very Hellenistic notion of 'participation in the divine nature' has been much debated. The reference in the second half of verse 4 to an escape from the corruption of sin, along with the moral exhortations in verses 5-8, provides an

immediate context which points strongly to the participation in view here being a sharing in God's moral excellence rather than any additional form of divinisation.

In the wider context of the letter, God's 'promises' in verse 4 will turn out to refer to the future coming again of Christ as saviour and judge. For now, the point to notice is the close parallel drawn between the function of God's *power* and his *promises*: both are said to be means by which God gives what is needed for godly living in the new age, in imitation of his own holiness. Moreover, the move in verses 3 and 4 from knowledge of Christ to divine promises suggests that it is through his promises that our knowledge of him comes.

In the second half of chapter 1, Peter expresses for the first time his purpose in all this, and then sets out the basis of his authority for saying these things. In verses 12-15 he says that he knows that he will soon die, and that he will make every effort to ensure that his readers will always be able to remember these things after his death. 'These things' is presumably the content of verses 3-11. 'Reminding' and 'remembering' are central themes in this letter. As the church moves into the post-apostolic era and finds, as this letter will make explicit, that false teaching arises even from within its own ranks, the fundamental defence strategy against that danger which the apostle will bequeath is a body of teaching and exhortation, as summarised in verses 3-11, to be kept constantly in memory.

Commentators puzzle a little over the future tense at the beginning of verse 15: 'I *will make every effort* to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.' What could Peter mean by that, in light of his imminent death? From the mouth and pen of an apostle with only a short time to live it is certainly a powerful piece of rhetoric. In addition, it may be that a robustly canonical interpretation of the verse sees in it something that is in line with while probably also exceeding Peter's conscious intention—namely, that for future generations of Christians, beyond the immediate post-apostolic generation, a constant calling to mind of the gospel that is summarised in 1:3-4 and preached in 1:5-11 will be sufficient defence against the temptations of false gospels and godless living.

In the subsequent verses, 1:16-21, Peter sets out his authoritative basis for asserting the certainty of the future parousia, which is what he is about to do in the face of false teachers who deny it. In successive sections he says that in two different ways *God has spoken* about the parousia. First, God spoke at the Transfiguration. Peter speaks (1:16) of himself and two of the other apostles as 'eye-witnesses of his majesty'. However what he wants to emphasise most strongly about what they witnessed is what they heard rather than saw (1:18). His choice of words stresses the divinity of

the speaker: 'the voice came to him [*sc.* Christ] from the Majestic Glory' (1:17). Richard Bauckham has argued, I think rightly, that Peter (in fact, according to Bauckham, the post-apostolic writer presenting himself as Peter in a transparent fiction) introduces the Transfiguration at this point not as a revelation of Jesus' divinity but as a forward-looking vision of the kingly Son of Man who will return one day as God's appointed eschatological judge.[5] In light of what follows in this letter, that is surely right. The apostles witnessed first-hand the Father's affirmation of Jesus' eschatological role, and so were not myth-making when they taught the future coming of Christ in glory.

Second, God has spoken in OT prophecy. The 'prophetic word' or 'message' of 1:19 may well refer to the whole of the OT, in light of Jewish usage which extended the term 'prophecy' beyond what we customarily think of as the strictly prophetic books. Verses 20-21 are of course one of the commonly offered proof-texts for divine inspiration of Scripture, that is, for the ultimate divine origin of Scripture. What is important to note here for our purposes is that Peter expresses this fact in order to give a second instance of an entirely reliable statement about the future coming of Christ. It is entirely reliable because the will which produced it was God's, not man's.

Peter makes a remarkable statement about the present function of these divine promises in Scripture, and in so doing gives the letter's first clear reference to the parousia, in verse 19: 'and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.' This most likely alludes to a poetic description in the book of Numbers of the Messiah as a star who 'will come out of Jacob' (Num. 24:17). Peter says of the OT message of the coming of the Messiah that it is a light that shines in the present darkness until (elaborating on the metaphor of light) the future eschatological age dawns in the coming again of Christ (v. 19). On that day the lamp of Scripture will no longer be needed because the light himself will have come in the dawning of his eternal day. Scripture is therefore necessary (to stray into a related attribute of Scripture), but only for a limited period within salvation history. When the glory of God gives light to the heavenly city and the Lamb is its lamp, to use the language of Revelation 21:23, such that neither the sun nor moon are needed to shine, then presumably the light shed by Scripture is no longer needed, just as the street-lights turn off when the sun rises.

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[5]   Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 50 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), pp. 216-22.

In the long and graphic descriptions of the false teachers in chapter 2, Peter makes particular mention of their 'destructive heresies' (2:1) and 'false words' (ESV) or 'fabricated stories' (NIV 2011), (2:3). These falsehoods are set in explicit contrast to what Peter has described as the apostles' truthful and reliable testimony of Christ.

The beginning of chapter 3 recapitulates, as we have already seen, the explicit purpose of the letter: that the recipients should arm themselves against being led astray either into false teaching that denies the return of Christ or into godless living that calls down God's judgment, and that they should do so by a constant, deliberate recall both of what the OT foretold of Christ and of what Christ has said in and through the apostles' teaching.

Chapter 3 continues by pointing out the short-sightedness of those who deny the return of Christ in light of God's past dealings with his creation. Peter speaks (v. 5) of creation taking place 'by God's word', referring especially to the establishing of order in the physical realm out of watery chaos. It is likely that God's word is there again in verse 6 (as in ESV and *contra* NIV 2011), with both the water and word from the end of verse 5 referred to in the opening words of verse 6: δι' ὧν. However that may be, God's word is indisputably there again in verse 7, where the argument is this: in view of God's past creative and judging interventions by his word, at creation and in the flood, it is only a fool who imagines that God's word is not now at work 'keeping' or 'reserving' the creation and humanity for a future definitive, purifying judgment and re-creation. This overarching context puts the right perspective on the Lord's *promise*, referred to again in 3:9, alluding right back to 1:4. It is this context of God's past work by his word that the false teachers are said deliberately to forget (3:5).

Peter is now heading to the close of the letter. He will end with two imperatives which encapsulate his concern throughout: be on your guard not to be carried away by error and so lose your secure position, and grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (3:17-18a). Just before he gets there, he acknowledges that his recipients have seen letters from Paul which say similar things to his own teaching about the parousia (3:15b-16). In so doing he famously puts Paul's letters in the same category as τὰς λοιπὰς γραφὰς. This is not yet evidence of a complete NT canon, but is certainly an indication of (some of) Paul's letters being regarded without controversy as Scripture by whatever period one wishes to date 2 Peter in (an issue which I will not get into here!). Crucially Peter adds that Paul wrote, as the NIV 2011 puts it, 'with the wisdom that God gave him' (3:15). That translation confidently but probably rightly interprets what is a passive form in the Greek—literally, 'according to the wisdom given to him'—as a divine passive, with God as the implied giver

of the wisdom by which Paul wrote his letters. On the previous occasions in this letter when Peter has referred to Scripture he was at pains to point out that its true origin was not human but divine. He has done just that with the OT prophets as carried along by the Holy Spirit, with the apostles' first-hand testimony to the Father's voice at the Transfiguration, and with the command of Christ through the apostles. (Incidentally, in these three instances from 2 Peter we have in each case a reference to a different person of the Trinity: the Spirit in the OT prophets, the Father at the Transfiguration and Christ through the apostles.) It is likely, therefore, that this pattern continues when Peter refers at the end here to Paul's letters. This suggests that Paul's writing 'according to divine wisdom' is a further phrase by which Scripture's divine origin is expressed in this letter. Scripture has more than one way of articulating what we term the doctrine of inspiration.

Thus far the description of the theme of word and Scripture in 2 Peter; now some analysis.

II. WORD AND SCRIPTURE IN 2 PETER: ANALYSIS

I have five analytical observations to make about this word/Scripture theme in 2 Peter.

1) God's power is strongly correlated with his speech.

Verses 3 and 4 of chapter 1 function, I suggest, in parallel. According to verse 3, God's power has given believers everything they need for life and godliness, and many interpreters take this to be a hendiadys for 'godly living'. The moral excellence of the life to which believers have been called by God is referred to again at the end of the verse, if (with RSV and ESV) we translate the final phrase of verse 3 as saying that God called believers 'to' rather than 'by' 'his own glory and excellence'. Some contextual evidence for that as a likely correct translation may be found in the fact that this glory and excellence of God function in the following section more as the nature of the goal towards which believers have been called by God, rather than as the instrument by which they are called.

Verse 4 is then noticeably parallel in structure. In both verses something is said to be given by which believers may be godly. Thus in verse 4 participation in the divine nature, which presumably starts already in the present to the extent that the fruit of the Spirit shows itself in the life of the believer, matches the divine glory and excellence or goodness to which we are called. And the sufficiency of the divine power which in verse 3 is said to be given for godly living is similarly matched with the 'very great and precious promises' which have also been given in order that believers may

live godly lives. It is not that the divine power given in verse 3 is reduced to mere words, and of course it is best taken as Peter's way of referring to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit by virtue of the believer's union with Christ by faith. However the giving of that divine power is very intimately intertwined with the giving of God's promises, to the extent that in both power and promises everything has been given that the believer needs in order to live out subjectively his objective rescue from the corruption of sin.

This is of course a common theme in the NT, and Peter expresses here what is found, for example, in different language in John 15:3-8. There Jesus is recorded as saying:

> You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me *as I also remain in you*. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.
>
> I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and *I in you*, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me *and my words remain in you*, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (italics added)

One common feature of Jesus' discourses in John's Gospel is the repetition of a theme from different perspectives and in different words; commentators often think that such linguistic variation is primarily for stylistic reasons. In this passage there seems to be no good reason for thinking that language of Christ's *words* remaining in the believer refers to anything substantively different from language of Christ *himself* remaining in them.

2) God's speech is strongly correlated with what is given us in Scripture.
I suggest that this is evident in another parallel within the letter, in chapter 3. Here we find, in the structure of the chapter as a whole, a functional parallel drawn between, on the one hand, the divine word which Peter stresses was at work in creation and the flood, and on the other the wisdom given by God to Paul that he expressed in his scriptural letters. The 'scoffers' of chapter 3 are deriding any notion that Christ will return as the glorious judge and saviour. Precisely in so doing, says Peter, they are ironically making themselves liable for the very eschatological judgment that they deny will occur. He describes their fatal error in very specific and noteworthy terms: they deliberately forget (or overlook, 3:5), he says, that in the past, in creation and the flood, God has acted cataclysmically by means of water and most particularly by means of word. These past

undeniable actions by means of his *word* give solid grounds for regarding God's existing *promise* of Christ's return as trustworthy. God has always acted in a manner that is faithful to his word and by means of his word, and so he ought to be trusted to do so in the future, in accordance with his promises about the powerful coming again of Christ.

Then later in chapter 3 it is this very promise and God's merciful reasons for delaying the parousia which Paul is said to have written about. Peter adds pointedly that anyone who distorts the Scriptures authored by Paul or by anyone else is, by that very act, putting themselves in line for eschatological judgment. This is the same judgment that the parousia-deniers whom Peter refers to were facing, and for the same reasons. To distort the wisdom given by God to Paul and expressed in his letters seems to be set up here as parallel to the scoffers' twisting of the two great actions which God performed by his word in the past; both are acts of ignorant opposition to God's word, and both will have the same dreadful eschatological outcome.

When we read chapter 3 as a coherent whole in this way, I suggest that it then becomes evident that the apparent aside on Paul's letters, coming just before the final exhortatory summary, can be explained as in fact a rather important climax. It lays bare for the immediate post-apostolic generation, and indeed for all subsequent generations, that the error of the scoffers of Peter's day can sadly be perpetuated in the future, and that one fundamental form that that error will take is the distortion of God's word, the Scriptures. Such distortion of God's word is sufficient for God's condemnation—because, as we have seen, in God's power and in his promises, and in the apostolic message summarised by 1:3-11, can be found everything a believer needs in order to hold firm in faith and life to the end.

3) Peter's own letter begins to occupy the same role as other Scriptures.

I am suggesting here that, although Peter does not argue explicitly for the divine origin of his own words, he speaks about the function and content of the letter in terms which put it significantly on the same level as those utterances which he does refer to as divine speech. He ascribes, as we have seen, a clearly divine origin to three kinds of material: OT prophecy, and perhaps also by extension the whole of the OT, which he says has its origins in God's will and not in human will; Paul's letters, whose content comes from the wisdom that God gave to Paul; and the command of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, which he gave to the recipients of Peter's letter through those whom he calls 'your apostles' (3:2), who presumably are the particular apostles of whom they were most aware and with whose teaching they had had most direct contact. All three of these—OT proph-

ecy, Paul's letters, apostolic teaching— are instances of divine speech expressed through human agency in a manner that does not extinguish but takes hold of every aspect of the humanity of the writers, save for sin, which is how the evangelical doctrine of inspiration has most commonly spoken of God's words coming through human means. As we have seen, denying or twisting the content of these things is sufficient for bringing God's final condemnation on oneself. Therefore being careful to recall the content of these things and to put them into increasing practice is sufficient for what Peter calls variously making one's calling and election sure, never falling, being welcomed richly into Christ's eternal kingdom (1:10-11), being found spotless, blameless and at peace with him in a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness (3:13-14), and ultimately not falling away from one's secure position (3:17).

Through the letter Peter makes clear that the same eternal outcome is at stake with the reception of his words among the letter's recipients. Recall of and obedience to the apostolic message that he sets out in summary form in 1:3-11 is what is needed to avoid falling into acceptance of the dangerous heresies and destructive lifestyles of his opponents. It is needed if the believers are to confirm their standing with the Lord by growing in grace and knowledge of Christ, thereby giving glory to him both now and on the day of his return. That same section, 1:3-11, seems to function also as a summary of what he calls in chapter 3 'the command given by our Lord and Saviour' (3:2). Moreover, the eye-witness testimony Peter gives in this letter to the Transfiguration, in which he records the Father's implicit assertion of Christ's future eschatological role, becomes another expression of God's promise by which believers may come to participate in the divine nature. In other words, at least part of what Peter writes in this letter is implicitly taken up *within the letter itself* into the category of divine promise. According to Peter, to overlook what this letter says puts one at the same risk of divine judgment incurred by not paying attention to the light which has been shone into the darkness by the OT, and the same risk incurred by twisting the Scriptures—and for the same reasons, too, because it distorts and denies what God has given in his promise.

I need to be clear that these observations have only a limited scope. No claim is being made about Peter's awareness or otherwise of himself as an author of Scripture, and we are still a long way from a full NT canon. But I suggest that what I have pointed to is some evidence in this small text within Scripture of the author's understanding of both the content and purpose of his text as naturally scriptural. What later became the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture arises appropriately out of the role and function which biblical authors articulated in their texts for their texts.

The fourth observation builds on these first three, now being explicit about sufficiency.

4) There is a 'sufficiency' evident within 2 Peter, and it is this: deliberate recall of and obedience to the content of the letter is sufficient for the avoidance of false teaching regarding Christ's future coming in power, and of godless living associated with such teaching.

There are two aspects to this. First of all, recall of and obedience to *this material* is sufficient for that purpose. Peter does not think that he is teaching or commanding these believers about any matters that they are not already aware of: 'I will always remind you of these things even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have' (1:12). Nor is it the case that the letter expresses the sum total of the truth of Christ and the gospel that its recipients know. There is of course a great deal taught elsewhere in the NT that is not made explicit in such a short letter. However for Peter it seems that the content he sets out in 1:3-11 functions as a serviceable summary of what a persevering believer knows and is practising in life.

This perhaps gives some insight into the nature of the distorting of Paul's letters and other Scriptures perpetrated to their own destruction by those whom Peter labels 'ignorant and unstable' (3:16). He has previously said that there are some things in Paul's letters that are hard to understand. On this, Bauckham comments that the reference to 'ignorant' people suggests that these things are hard to understand especially if not interpreted in light of the rest of Pauline and wider apostolic teaching.[6]

The sufficiency of 2 Peter in this regard, then, is found in the fact that it contains an abbreviated but serviceable reminder and summary of what believers who have heard and responded to the apostolic gospel already know, and which itself contains all they need in order to keep them from a certain kind of false teaching and godless living.

Second, *recall of and obedience to* the content of this letter is sufficient for the avoidance of such heresy and godlessness. As Peter anticipates his own death, which will be a key moment in the shift from the apostolic to the post-apostolic era, this letter has something of the character of a 'last will and testament'—the words which a dying man wants to see live on after he is gone. What Peter urges on his audience is not the search for anything new, not the expectation of any previously unknown revelation, nor the reception of any divine empowerment previously withheld. Instead it is a believing and living entirely within the limits of the divine word already delivered and the divine power already given. He regards his

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6   Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 331.

letter as sufficient, alongside God's communication through the OT, the apostolic witness, and Christ's command through the apostles, because the giving of the revelation and power which Christians will need for the future is now complete. The root of the great mistake of the false teachers, according to Peter, is not some insensitivity to any brand new thing that God may say or give, but their forgetfulness of what he has already said and done.

Theologically this sufficiency is strongly related to and consequent upon the completeness of God's work both of revelation and of salvation in Christ. (There will be more to say about this shortly when we come to relate this material from 2 Peter to Bavinck's account of the sufficiency of Scripture.) According to 2 Peter there is no excuse for missing the fact that Christ will come again in great power, because even though in his first coming his glory was mostly veiled, it was not entirely hidden. At the Transfiguration, with its background of the earlier OT texts that speak of a cataclysmic messianic coming, the one who will one day come has already been made known and identified. What the church is to do now between the two comings is characterised by Peter primarily as *waiting*; indeed that concept is stated three times in as many verses in chapter 3 (3:12-14). The revelation of the fact of coming judgment is complete; so too is the revelation of the identity of the one who is to come.

Moreover the letter contains an allusion to the completeness of the work of salvation in Christ, since the Lord is said to be at work now not in moving on to some further stage in salvation history but in patiently delaying the parousia so that mercifully more people might repent and find salvation (3:9). Thus theologically within 2 Peter the sufficiency of a number of fundamental teachings guard the believers from heresy and godlessness is all of a piece—the sufficiency of divine power for godly living already given, of the proven trustworthiness of divine promises of Christ's coming in power which have already been given, of the identification of Christ as the one appointed by the Father as eschatological judge, of the Scriptures already authored, and of Peter's own letter, too. The completeness of revelation already given and salvation already achieved is the ground of the sufficiency of the Scriptures which speak of these things and which promise their consummation in Christ at his coming in power.

5) More simply, *the aim of everything that Peter says or implies in 2 Peter about God's word and Scripture is supremely pastoral.*
He is explicit about why he is writing, and the reason is to urge believers to do everything necessary in order to keep themselves from errors about God's actions in the future and from being enticed by those from within the Christian community who encourage godless living. All that he says

from 1:12 through to the end of the letter serves ultimately to drive home to his audience the reason why they need to stick to the message summarised and preached to them in the central section, 1:3-11.

It is crucial to keep this purpose in view when developing any aspect of the doctrine of Scripture. Of course the doctrine has epistemological functions. However the work to which Peter puts his description of various forms of God's word is the urging of Christians to do what is needed to preserve themselves in wholesome thinking and living. It is always legitimate for evangelical theology to articulate its doctrine of Scripture in any particular time and place in a form which explicitly counters the specific nature of the attack it happens to be facing. Yet it will always be detrimental to the health of evangelical theology when this apologetic purpose comes to diminish an articulation of the doctrine of Scripture which makes explicit that the doctrine is needed by believers if they are to be equipped to believe and live rightly in situations where false teaching emerges within the church community.

This is already heading in a doctrinal direction, so let's now move there.

III. DOCTRINAL REFLECTIONS

I said at the beginning that there will be a focus in this section on Herman Bavinck. Firstly, why Bavinck? Of course in a short paper to refer to just one theologian gives a helpfully limited focus. In addition, I find Bavinck's account of the doctrine of Scripture to be hugely satisfying both theologically and pastorally. One commendation on the dust-jacket of the English translation of his *Reformed Dogmatics* says that the work 'remains after a century the supreme achievement of its kind.' In the following four observations I will note some of the central aspects of Bavinck's account of the sufficiency of Scripture,[7] in relation to some of the themes that we have seen emerging in 2 Peter.

1) Bavinck says that the doctrine of Scripture's attributes in general 'has developed completely as a result of the [Reformation's] struggle with Roman Catholicism and Anabaptism.'[8] Indeed it was within what was said about these attributes, rather than in any aspect of Scripture's inspiration and authority, that the distinctiveness of Reformation theology was to be found over against Roman theology. Bavinck identifies four distinct attributes of Scripture: authority, necessity, sufficiency and perspicuity.

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[7]   Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Volume 1: *Prolegomena*, ed. by John Bolt, trans. by John Vriend (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 2003), pp. 481-94.

[8]   Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, p. 452.

Even the attributes within this short list, he notes, are not all commensurate, since authority 'is given with inspiration itself'[9], and the remaining three, necessity, sufficiency and perspicuity, 'do not all flow from inspiration in the same sense.'[10] This means that (and these are more my words than Bavinck's) the attributes that really have polemical teeth in the context of the Reformation are the 'big three' of necessity, sufficiency and clarity.

It is crucial to keep this context of historical struggle in view. The attributes of Scripture are properly defined at least as much by what they deny as what they assert. In particular they deny two false notions. First, they deny that there is any divine revelation outside of Scripture which the church requires for faithful belief and practice. Second, they deny that Scripture requires ultimate validation from the work of the Holy Spirit in and through any individual or body of people. It is not often expressed this way, but it is instructive to note that this disagreement at the time of the Reformation is fundamentally a disagreement over the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit—namely, where is the authoritative speech of God through the Holy Spirit to be found? Is it in the Roman Catholic teaching office and ultimately in the Pope? is it in the 'charismatic' individual? or is it in Scripture itself? From this perspective, therefore, it is clear that these attributes flow from a Protestant understanding of the present action of the Holy Spirit and so in this sense are an outworking of good pneumatology. At a popular level especially, too many descriptions of these attributes set 'word' against 'Spirit', as well as against 'tradition', in ways that obscure the real issues.

Very specifically, within the context of the Reformation, the scriptural attributes were asserted as the proper justification for reform: God had spoken and continued to speak through Scripture in such a way that on that basis alone one could know that the church of the time was in need of reformation, and also know what kind of reformation was needed. Moreover through that word God could stir up his faithful people for action. And if the Pope disagreed then so much the worse for him.

This particular context which gave rise to the doctrine of Scripture's attributes fits well with the pastoral context into which Peter interjected his second letter. He was similarly calling believers to remain faithful to a body of teaching and a preached message in order for the church to be steered safely away from false teaching and godlessness that had emerged from within its own ranks. The doctrine of Scripture's attributes is always distorted when it is expounded without a clear eye on this kind of context

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[9]   Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, p. 455.
[10]   Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, p. 455.

and this kind of practical aim. What then occurs is that the attributes are expounded somewhat in the abstract.

Thus under the heading of its sufficiency, Scripture can be expected to yield a satisfactory answer to every question which one might want to ask of every topic it is thought to touch on. The doctrine of sufficiency gives no warrant for attempting to tie up ends that Scripture leaves loose, for achieving certainty where Scripture only hints or draws a veil, or for looking for systematic clarity on issues that Scripture encompasses but does not expand on. A respect for the pastoral context of the doctrine, and its roots in the explicit aims of texts such as 2 Peter, ought to warn against defining 'sufficiency' in ways that go beyond the claims that Scripture makes for itself and then requiring Scripture to match up to a notion imposed upon it from elsewhere.

Similarly, under the heading of its clarity (if I may be permitted to wander into that neighbouring attribute), it can be expected that every passage of Scripture will easily yield some significant meaning to every individual or every small group, or indeed every preacher, who gives it a little attention. However the doctrine of clarity does not give us warrant for thinking that every passage of Scripture speaks transparently to every reader; much popular application of the doctrine of clarity owes more to the cultural assumptions of educated and rampantly individualistic Westerners than it does to anything that can be found in Scripture or in the teaching of the Reformation. As Peter says of Paul, some things in Scripture *are* hard to understand, and, as we have suggested that he implies, without a knowledge of the apostolic gospel and the OT we may end up distorting them in our ignorance. What *is* sufficiently and clearly given us in Scripture is (at the risk of repetition) a comprehensive account of the actions of God in Christ and the effects of those actions on all who are united to Christ by faith, as given in 2 Peter 1:3-4, along with exhortations for the right living out of such spiritual realities (1:5-11), and urgent reminders to keep these things constantly in view. And all this with no less of an aim, but also no more of an aim, of preserving the church from heresy and godless immorality. Thus we need to keep Scripture's sufficiency carefully within the pastoral bounds which Scripture sets out for it, and, as Bavinck reminds us, the Reformation doctrine is the prime example of that.

2) Of the sufficiency of Scripture, Bavinck says: 'Nor does this attribute imply that Scripture contains all the practices, ceremonies, rules, and regulations that the church needs for its organization but only that it completely contains "the articles of faith" (*articuli fidei*), "the matters neces-

sary to salvation.'"[11] This is sometimes known as the 'material' sufficiency of Scripture, and it has significant historical pedigree. Augustine wrote: 'among the things that are plainly laid down in Scripture are to be found all matters that concern faith and the manner and life – to wit, hope and love'.[12] Similar, from the sixteenth century, is the First Helvetic Confession: 'Biblical Scripture […] alone deals with everything that serves the true knowledge, honour and love of God, as well as true piety and the making of a godly, honest and blessed life.' The Second Helvetic Confession of 1566 goes a step further by adding an additional topic on which Scripture is declared to speak sufficiently: 'the reformation and government of churches'.

The fuller statement in the Westminster Confession of Faith sets out with greater clarity the way in which this latter topic can be said to be related to the sufficiency of Scripture:

> The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless we acknowledge […] that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.[13]

The most common historical understanding, put simply, is that Scripture is the total and sufficient rule of faith and morals. Other topics, such as church government and worship, are ruled sufficiently by the Word, but not entirely legislated by the Word, such that they come within the orbit of biblical sufficiency in a qualified sense.

'A sufficient rule of faith and morals' is an excellent summary of what 2 Peter claims itself to be. Indeed, the NT epistles which do speak more directly on questions of church government and organisation, in particular the Pastoral Epistles, still retain within that a focus on those two topics, with their emphasis on the necessary qualifications of faith and morality for those to be appointed as elders and deacons. In fact the Pastorals have more to say about elders' and deacons' personal morality and life-style in a range of areas than they do about their faith—something which is not

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[11] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, p. 488.
[12] Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* 2.9, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 2, ed. by Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956).
[13] Westminster Confession of Faith, 1.6.

always given appropriate weight in the discernment and appointment of church leaders and officers.

3) Bavinck locates the roots of the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture in a very early move in the life of the church. As the church became further removed from the time of the apostles, he says, 'The relative independence of tradition alongside Scripture also disappeared. The streams of Scripture and tradition flowed into a single channel. And soon after the death of the apostles and their contemporaries, it became impossible to prove a thing to be of apostolic origin except by an appeal to the apostolic writings.'[14] This issue was at the heart of the Reformation's dispute with Rome. Like Rome, the Reformation made a distinction between an unwritten and a written word, but whereas Rome 'assumes their existence side by side […] the Reformation views this distinction as referring to the same word of God that first existed for a time in unwritten form and was subsequently recorded.'[15] The Council of Trent set its face firmly against this, stating that 'saving truths and rules of conduct'[16] are 'contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions.'[17]

Bavinck's image of the stream of 'tradition' flowing into a single channel with Scripture, with the unwritten being set down and taken up into the written, has strong links, I suggest, with the way in which Peter's own writing in 2 Peter both makes reference to other texts as Scripture and also comes to function as Scripture. This is not made explicit in the letter, of course, and there is no need to stumble into the intentional fallacy of imagining that we can infer anything about the apostle's awareness of the status of his own writing. However I am arguing here that there is within 2 Peter some indication of the way in which the teaching of an apostle merged into and became part of the stream of Scripture.

Something further about tradition can be said here. Bavinck defends the continuation of 'a good, true, and glorious tradition.'[18] He defines it in this way:

> To the mind of the Reformation, Scripture was an organic[19] principle from which the entire tradition, living on in preaching, confession, liturgy, worship, theology, devotional literature, etc., arises and is nurtured. It is a pure

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[14] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, p. 485.

[15] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, p. 488.

[16] Council of Trent, Session 4, First Decree.

[17] Council of Trent, Session 4, First Decree.

[18] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, p. 494.

[19] 'Organic' is one of Bavinck's favourite terms to describe the content and character of good doctrines of Scripture and especially of inspiration.

spring of living water from which all the currents and channels of religious life are fed and maintained. Such tradition is grounded in Scripture itself.[20]

He describes the function of such tradition in these terms: 'It is the method by which the Holy Spirit causes the truth of Scripture to pass into the consciousness and life of the church.'[21] Its scriptural basis is found in the promise in John chapter 16 that the Holy Spirit would guide the church into the truth (John 16:12-15). In 2 Peter I would suggest that we have seen another biblical seed of this understanding of tradition. It is in Peter's desire at the end of his life to leave a legacy that consists entirely of an exhortation to believers to keep recalling the truth that has already been delivered and in which they are already established, and to continue to live by the divine power already bestowed.

4) A feature of Bavinck's doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture is the solid basis he gives for it in the completeness of God's work in Christ, with regard to both revelation and salvation. Of revelation both in Christ and in Scripture, he says:

> The Holy Spirit no longer reveals any new doctrines but takes everything from Christ (John 16:14). In Christ God's revelation has been completed. In the same way the message of salvation is completely contained in Scripture. It constitutes a single whole; it itself conveys the impression of an organism that has reached its full growth. It ends where it begins. It is a circle that returns into itself. It begins with the creation of heaven and earth and ends with the re-creation of heaven and earth.[22]

Bavinck relates this completeness of revelation in Christ and consequently in Scripture quite directly to the completeness of the work of salvation. The section quoted above continues:

> The canon of the OT and NT was not closed until all new initiatives of redemptive history were present. In this dispensation the Holy Spirit has no other task than to apply the work of Christ and similarly to explain the word of Christ. *To neither does he add anything new*. The work of Christ does not need to be supplemented by the good works of believers, and the word of Christ does not need to be supplemented by the tradition of the church.[23]

I suspect that at this point a noteworthy contrast can be drawn between Bavinck and his contemporary B. B. Warfield. (In fact they were very con-

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[20] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, p. 493.
[21] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, p. 494.
[22] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, p. 491.
[23] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, pp. 491-92 (italics added).

temporary: the American was three years older than the Dutchman, and they died within five months of each other in 1921.) Bavinck's doctrine places a much stronger explicit emphasis on its derivation from christology and pneumatology than Warfield tends to in his writings. For example, Bavinck also draws an analogy between the human authorship of Scripture and the human nature of Christ.[24] Indeed the title of a short study by Richard Gaffin of Bavinck on Scripture, alongside Kuyper, characterises his doctrine as 'God's Word *in servant form*'.[25]

One can only speculate on the extent to which the history of the doctrine of Scripture and controversies surrounding it in the English-speaking Reformed world in the twentieth century would have been different if Bavinck's doctrine had been translated sooner and proved to rank in influence alongside Warfield's.

However that may be, a reading of 2 Peter at least suggests that the emphases of Bavinck's doctrine are more obviously shaped by the nature of the NT's own view of itself at this key point than the emphases that emerge in Warfield's writings. For we have seen that the letter contains significant material to inform and shape a doctrine of Scripture, and especially scriptural sufficiency, beyond the well-known text on OT prophets being carried along by the Holy Spirit. Peter is provoked to present this material by the 'false words' and godless living of some who deny the future coming of Christ as judge. All that he says of Scripture serves to call his letter's recipients back to a solid expectation of the coming again in glory of the one whom they already know, and in whose truth they are already established.

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[24] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, p. 435.

[25] Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *God's Word in Servant-Form: Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck on the Doctrine of Scripture* (Jackson, MS: Reformed Academic Press, 2008).

LAMENT FOR THE CITY:
THE QUEST FOR A CREDIBLE FAITH
IN AN URBAN WORLD

DAVID SMITH

I want to attempt to do two things in this discussion: first, to reflect on the significance of the global spread of urban culture and its impact on the human family, both at the societal level and in relation to individual consciousness and identity; and second, to ask how the faith of the Bible and its appropriation and practice within the Christian community might have credibility within the context of an urban world, or what has been called 'the endless city'? In particular, I will ask critical questions regarding forms of spirituality, liturgy and music which suppress or ignore the painful realities of a broken urban world, while maintaining the practice of 'endless praise' by which the harsh realities of urban life and death are evaded. As my title indicates, the underlying concern here is with the search for an articulation of faith which might be credible in the specific context of the urban world, and a corresponding conviction that this must include the recovery of the lost practice of the prayer of lament.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE 'ENDLESS CITY'

The phrase 'endless city' comes from the title of a major reference work which reported on 'The Urban Age Project' of the London School of Economics. This had involved extended research in which the phenomenon of the contemporary urban world was explored in great depth. Leading scholars from a wide range of disciplines wrestled with the implications of the fact that 75% of the global population are likely to be urban dwellers by the year 2050. But in addition, even the minority remaining outside the physical space of the city will be profoundly influenced by urban *culture* which is increasingly dominant everywhere.[1] The geographers Edward Soja and Miguel Kanai concluded that, although city regions occupy only a small part of the earth's surface, 'they concentrate well over a billion residents' and account for a vast share of 'the world's built environment, economic wealth, cultural creativity and political power'. The continent

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[1]   *The Endless City*, ed. by Ricky Burdett and Deyan Sudjic (London: Phaidon Press, n.d.) This ground-breaking volume was followed up by *Living in the Endless City*, ed. by Ricky Burdett and Deyan Sudjic (London: Phaidon Press, n.d.).

of Africa, which came late to the urbanising process, is now the most rapidly urbanising region on the planet, while the eruption of cities in China represents 'the largest scale of urbanization and the most rapid rural-to-urban transition in human history'. Soja and Kanai conclude that we are witnessing a shift in 'the world's urban centre of gravity' from the previous industrial cities in the northern hemisphere to the exploding megacities across the global south. Consequently, 'it can be said that the earth's entire surface is urbanized to some degree' since the 'major features of urbanism as a way of life – from the play of market forces and the effect of administrative regulations, to popular cultural practices and practical geopolitics – are becoming ubiquitous'. To a degree not seen before, 'no one on earth is outside the sphere of influence of urban industrial capitalism'.[2]

The crucial question, which has been asked since urban settlements first appeared on earth, but became urgent with the rise of the industrial conurbations, concerns the meaning of the city. Throughout the past two hundred years this question has preoccupied scholars, artists, poets, musicians and film makers, and it has been of particular concern to sociologists. David Clarke observes that when people were streaming into cities like Glasgow in the nineteenth century many writers 'expressed astonishment, perplexity and often a pronounced concern over the developing conditions of modern urban life'. He describes how the industrial city appeared to many people to result in nothing less 'than a fundamental and unnatural mutation of the human species'.[3] Urban life and the values which accompanied it resulted in social fragmentation, a spirit of competition in the quest for wealth and security, and a growing sense of isolation and loneliness for many people. This fundamental concern with the meaning of the city was memorably expressed by T. S. Eliot:

> When the Stranger says: "What is the meaning of this city?"
> Do you huddle close together because you love each other?
> What will you answer? "We all dwell together
> To make money from each other"? or "This is a community".[4]

However, if the industrial revolution gave birth to a new era of urbanisation in which the city came 'to provide the economic, cultural and politi-

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2   Edward Soja and Miguel Kanai, 'The Urbanization of the World', in *The Endless City*, ed. by Burdett and Sudjic, p. 62.

3   David C. Clarke, *The Consumer Society and the Postmodern City* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 78-9.

4   T.S. Eliot, 'Choruses From the Rock', in *Selected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p. 106.

cal framework of the whole society', the contemporary shift in the world's urban centre of gravity signals another paradigm shift in which quite new urban forms have emerged and announce their arrival with skylines suggesting that the question of the *meaning* of the city is now being answered in the language of postmodernity and globalisation.[5] It is possible to read the changing meaning of a city through its skyline, observing the most prominent buildings and what they tell us about the location and exercise of power at any particular time. An obvious example would be the cathedral which, prior to the industrial age, dominated many European cities, signalling the power of the church and the location of the sacred. In the nineteenth century urban planners and architects reshaped the industrial city to reflect the shifts in power which resulted from modernity, so that town halls, railway stations and factories arose, often borrowing architectural styles from an earlier age to signal that the city was being reshaped and given new meanings. What makes the present urban age different from all that has gone before is the appearance of a veritable forest of symbols on urban skylines, thrusting ever higher into the heavens and, once again, indicating a new shift of power. In particular, what has come to be called the *iconic building* is the means by which a global elite write their meanings across urban horizons throughout the world.

The rise of the 'Iconic Building' is now the distinguishing feature of architecture and urban development throughout the world. Everywhere, from Lagos to Colombo, and from Shanghai to Karachi, urban skylines increasingly reflect the global dominance of a particular view of the world and of the meaning of human existence within it. Charles Jencks has described how the emergence of the iconic building is the consequence of a specific historical and cultural context, namely, the loss of a unifying faith and the rise of a consumerist ideology which insists that human life *does consist in the abundance of things that are purchased and possessed*. The proliferation of ever taller, more spectacular buildings, he writes, is driven 'by social forces, the demand for instant fame and economic growth', and 'when a global culture has no unifying faith, the iconic building will continue to prosper, perhaps even increase in volume'.[6] Jencks describes the relationship between the image of the postmodern city and consumer capitalism as follows:

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5   The quotation in this sentence is from Krishnan Kumar, *Prophecy and Progress: The Sociology of Industrial and Post-Industrial Society* (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 68.
6   Charles Jencks, *The Iconic Building: The Power of an Enigma* (London: Francis Lincoln, 2005), p. 7.

> Now every new corporate headquarters seeks to be an icon, has to have a nickname that sums it up, a one-liner, a bullet point that journalists love to hate, love to spice up their workaday prose – "erotic gherkin", or "shard", or "crystal beacon."[7]

He cites the example of London, where a skyline previously dominated by Christopher Wren's masterpiece of St. Paul's Cathedral is directly challenged by the skyscrapers which have appeared in the City, both north and south of the Thames, transforming the image and meaning of the capital. Describing Norman Foster's Swiss Re building (popularly called the 'Gherkin') Jencks writes:

> As its skycourts spiral on the diagonal heavenward, this rocket inspires a kind of cosmic awe that makes Christianity look a bit like yesterday's faith… Who wants to be an earthbound Dean of St. Paul's, a John Donne writing poetry for the few, when you can be an upward-busting trader heading for the mile-high club.[8]

This amounts to an acknowledgement that the profusion of ever higher and more spectacular buildings is the consequence of a particular world-view in which money has come to shape human values and aspirations. Jenck's language suggests that we are witnessing developments that are *religious* in character, which is of course precisely what Jesus recognised when he warned that money may become an *idol* demanding the worship that belongs to God alone! Jencks says that the 'triumph of shopping' confronts us with a situation in which 'the commercialization of culture' is accompanied by a loss of belief, and that this context 'generates the iconic building, just as Christianity generated the cathedrals'.[9]

What is abundantly clear from the work of Jencks and other scholars is that the emerging cities of the twenty first century are being shaped in a way which suggests that their answer to the Stranger's question as to their *meaning* is unambiguous: *we all dwell together to make money from each other*. However, there is a growing body of evidence that the individual, social and ecological consequences of this ideology are extremely serious and in the long run are likely to prove catastrophic. As Leslie Sklair observes, 'The culture ideology of consumerism relentlessly promotes the view that the true meaning of life is to be found in our possessions', and in

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[7] Ibid, p. 13.

[8] Ibid, pp. 13-14. The celebration of Gordon Gekkoe over John Donne tells us all we need to know about the tragedy that is reflected in these developments, yet completely ignored or played down by Jencks.

[9] Ibid, p. 47.

a globalising world 'iconic architecture promotes an insatiable desire for the fruits of consumer culture'.[10]

The fact that so many of the buildings which now dot urban land-scapes rise ever higher into the sky suggests the contemporary relevance of the biblical description of the city and tower of Babel, erected with the specific aim of making 'a name for ourselves' (Gen.11:4). Elsewhere the Hebrew prophets associate 'every lofty tower' with the hubris of human beings (Isaiah 2:15-17) and, in a text which can sound extremely ominous in the light of actual events in recent history, Jeremiah anticipates the destruction and collapse of the towers which had been celebrated as the glory of the city of Babylon (Jeremiah 50:14). Stephen Graham has noticed how terminology which refers to height, or what he calls 'the vertical scale', has become embedded within our language in metaphors 'which describe hierarchies of power and worth in society', so that 'lowness' describes 'deceit, weakness, vulgarity or immorality'. Meantime, the class structure of British society is reflected in the language of height, so that words like 'upper', 'lower' and 'under' signify peoples' location on a verti-cal scale, while visual representations of the world itself depict the global south as being 'down under' so that the traditional cultures and peoples of Latin America, Africa and Asia were often viewed as uncivilized because they existed 'in the lower parts of the dominant visual schemes used to depict the world's geography'.[11]

When seen in this light the proliferation of iconic buildings of ever-increasing height can be understood not only as the expression of a par-ticular worldview, but as the claim to power and status of the owners and builders, including the planners and architects who translate such ambi-tions into concrete reality. As Graham says,

> In designing headquarters of large companies, architects sought the symbolic powers of height, splendour and a memorable silhouette as a means of gen-erating maximum commercial and cultural impact. […] Above all, the new towers were symbols of the aggressive, centripetal pull of capitalist urbanism, and of the growth of corporate headquarters organised to remotely control

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[10]   Leslie Sklair, *The Icon Project: Architecture, Cities, and Capitalist Globaliza-tion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 3. He goes on to say, 'These buildings convey the message that the true meaning of life is in consumerism, the fuel that drives the global capitalist machine and provides the profits for those who own and control the transnational corporations', p. 5.

[11]   Stephen Graham, *Vertical: The City from Satellites to Bunkers* (London: Verso, 2016), pp. 17-19.

disparate and widely spread sites of manufacturing, marketing and distribution.[12]

This then is the world of the 'endless city'. It is a context within which it is more than ever important that Christians insist on asking the old questions:

- What is the *meaning of the postmodern city?*

- What and who is it for?

- What vision of human society and well-being shapes the city and its distribution of power, opportunity and resources?

- How does the city enable human beings to flourish, rather than accumulate possessions or find themselves on the margins, excluded from even the possibility of sharing the urban prosperity so ostentatiously displayed by those who must be 'looked up to'?

The plain fact is that the image of success and power which iconic buildings are designed to promote conceals the reality that the endless city is profoundly and disturbingly divided. In 2011 the UN Habitat organisation reported that the numbers of slum dwellers was continuing to grow and is expected to reach the staggering figure of 889 million by 2020. Many of these people in cities like Lagos, Mumbai and Buenos Aires literally live in the shadow of the buildings we have described, but at ground level they face hunger as the relentless rise in food prices, combined with consistently low incomes, create a situation in which 'the urban poor cannot afford to purchase adequate amounts and types of food'.[13] Saskia Sassen has described how increasing numbers of people not only exist on the margins of social and economic life in the endless city, *but are actually expelled from it in that they are eliminated from official statistics as the economy is redefined to exclude the poor and unemployed.*

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[12]   Ibid, p. 152.

[13]   UN-Habitat, *State of the World's Cities 2010/2011: Bridging the Urban Divide* (London: Earthscan, 2008). See David Smith, *Seeking a City with Foundations: Theology for an Urban World*, 2nd edn (Carlisle: Langham Literature, 2019), pp. 14-19 for an extended discussion of these issues.

> Such a redefinition makes "the economy" presentable […]. The reality at ground level is more akin to an economic version of ethnic cleansing in which elements considered troublesome are dealt with simply by eliminating them.[14]

The inability of the builders of the endless city to provide an answer to the Stranger's question as to its meaning, has inevitably resulted in the creation of cities which are sites for the stimulation of the endless desire for material things, and for experiences which distract mind and heart from the awareness of the reality of the meaninglessness of existence in the postmodern metropolis. The result is an inevitable increase in grave psychological, social and ecological crises. David Harvey describes 'the clear and imminent dangers of out-of-control environmental degradations and ecological transformations' as at the centre of a global urban problem which, he says, is not only a material but also a *spiritual and moral question* of changing the human sense of nature, as well as the material relation to it'. Harvey goes on to acknowledge that there is no 'purely technological fix' to this problem, since it requires 'significant lifestyle changes', including the challenging and reversal of 'the socially constructed and historically specific law of endless capital accumulation'.[15] Which brings us to the quest for a credible faith in the urban world we have attempted to describe.

WORLD CHRISTIANITY AND THE ENDLESS CITY

We have heard urbanist scholars describing a shift in the 'world's urban centre of gravity' as vast numbers of people across the Global South swell the megacities which continue to expand in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It is significant that this same phrase has been used in relation to the transformation of Christianity and the paradigm change by which it has become a truly world religion. As long ago as 1984 Andrew Walls was speaking of a 'dramatic shift' in the 'centre of gravity' of the Christian movement. The era during which it had been almost entirely a European and North American phenomenon was giving way to a new phase in which 'it is a faith distributed throughout the world, is specially characteristic of the southern continents and appears to be receding only among people of European origin'.[16] Walls went on to say,

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[14] Saskia Sassen, *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (Cambridge, MA.: Belnap Press of Harvard University, 2014), p. 36.

[15] David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2013), pp. 127-8. Italics added.

[16] Andrew Walls, 'Christianity', in *A Handbook of Living Religions*, ed. by John Hinnells (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), pp. 69-70.

> Christianity is now much more diverse in its forms and manifestations, its geographical spread and its cultural variety than at any previous time in its history. The only safe prediction appears to be that its southern populations in Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific, which provide its present centres of significance, hold the key to its future.[17]

The overlap of these two major shifts, the rise of the 'endless city' on the one hand, and the emergence of world Christianity with its new heartlands in precisely the expanding urban conglomerations across the southern continents on the other, is pregnant with significance and potential for the future of both Christianity and the city. The crucial issue, of course, is what shape this global Christian movement will take and specifically, how it might respond to the urban context which currently provides fertile soil for its extraordinary growth?[18]

It is obviously beyond the scope of this discussion to speculate on the answer to this question in any detail. However, I wish to briefly explore two aspects of the biblical tradition which may be of crucial importance to the future of Christianity in the urban world. We have seen how the multiplication of iconic buildings reflects and propagates a particular ideology and stimulates the quest for 'upward mobility' and for the financial and social rewards that accompany it. Movies and TV dramas frequently depict corporate executives in luxury offices looking down on the city from a great height, and career advancement is measured 'by physical ascent up to be "on top of the pile"'.[19] In such a world the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the 'downward mobility' of God himself, accepting not only the limitations of human flesh and blood, but descending to the horrific and disgraceful death of the Cross, could hardly be more radically counter-cultural. Paul's exhortation to the Philippians to 'do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit', a moral imperative which parallels

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17   Ibid, p. 73.
18   Fernando Segovia draws upon the work of Andrew Walls and concludes that we are witnessing a shift from 'territorial Christendom to global Christianity – away from its Western base, where it undergoes decline in the face of the forces of modernity, toward the non-Western world, where it witnesses incredible growth'. He describes the numerical figures concerning Christian growth in the Global South as 'astounding' and says that this shift 'has only just begun'. Where it leads world Christianity in the future 'will not be fully grasped until a century or two from now', but 'the past dominance of the West in the formulation and direction of Christianity will gradually but inexorably yield to a much more decentered and diversified formation'. *Interpreting Beyond Borders*, ed. by Fernando Segovia (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 20-2.
19   Graham, *Vertical*, p. 151.

David Harvey's recognition of the need for 'significant lifestyle changes', is inseparable from the gift of a new way of thinking, an *attitude* like that of Jesus Christ, who 'did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself *nothing…*' (Phil. 2:3-7).

I suggest that we have scarcely begun to appreciate the revolutionary character of this message in which, to use the striking words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 'God allows himself to be edged out of the world and onto the cross', so that it is 'not by his omnipotence that Christ helps us but by his weakness and suffering'.[20] Perhaps it is impossible for those of us who have long been embedded within the capitalist structures of the modern world to fully grasp the transformative power of the event of the incarnation of God; to grasp it, that is, not merely as a doctrine to be believed, but as a new life to be lived in the fellowship of the redeemed and transformed human family of which it is the foundation. By contrast, millions of Christians in the new heartlands of this faith, living in the margins of the endless city and frequently struggling on the edge of life and death, have a perspective from which they *can* recognise the radical newness of the Gospel and its promise of a world of justice and peace.

Writing about the current transformation of Christianity, Lamin Sanneh says that if we are to understand the significance of the changing face of the church today, 'we must forget our modern rationalism, our proud confidence in reason and science, our restless search after wealth and power and after an earthly kingdom' and enter 'sympathetically into the mood of populations disillusioned with old assurances'. The new Christians in the heartlands of the faith across the Global South stand 'between the shipwreck of the old order and the tarnished fruits of self-rule of the new, finding all the dreams of a worldly utopia shattered by betrayal, war, vanity, anarchy, poverty, epidemics, and endemic hostility'. In Africa, India China and Latin America, as during the industrial revolution in nineteenth century Britain, masses of people suffering the

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[20] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: Fontana, 1959), p. 122. Timothy Gorringe, writing about the crisis of Christianity in Europe, says that the Gospel has at its heart a 'radical perception about power, violence and weakness' so that, when reflecting on the Cross, Paul asserts that the weakness of God is stronger than human understandings of power (1 Cor. 1:25). Gorringe concludes that this provides a new way of reading history: 'contrary to appearances, history does not belong to the big battalions, to the generals, the torturers, the merchant bankers, the big shots. […] The Gospel celebrates the power of the poor in history. It claims that God's Spirit is to be found in their joys and celebrations and stories'. 'After Christianity?', in *Christianity for the Twenty First Century*, ed. by Philip Essler (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), pp. 265-7.

dislocations caused by the move to the city 'are inspired and comforted by the narratives of ancient scripture, and throw themselves 'upon the mercy and goodness of God and upon one another's charity'.[21]

What is taking place today, almost entirely beneath the radar of Western-based news agencies, is a renewal of the Christian tradition as significant numbers of poor and marginalised people are discovering in the humble and poor Christ the motivation to challenge the corruption and injustice of the world, and are given a hope which inspires them to work for its transformation. As the World Council of Churches' important statement 'Together Towards Life' says,

> People on the margins have agency and can often see, what from the centre, is out of view. People on the margins, living in vulnerable positions, often know what exclusionary forces are threatening their survival and can best discern the urgency of their struggles; people in positions of privilege *have much to learn from the daily struggles of people living in marginal conditions*.[22]

LAMENT FOR THE ENDLESS CITY

We turn to the second theme which I suggest will be vital in shaping an emergent world Christianity. If the *incarnation* of God in the man Christ Jesus is the foundation of the new community which offers the world an alternative way of being a human family, it is crucial that the face of God upon which we are privileged to gaze in Christ is frequently tear-stained, reflecting *the divine lament at the brokenness and recalcitrance of the world*. The prophet Isaiah anticipated that Messiah would be 'a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering', and we find Jesus in the gospels uttering an 'urban lament' over the city of Jerusalem. His tears are caused not simply by what the city had become, *but by what it might have been had it responded to his invitation to receive the reign of God*.[23] This dual emphasis, the *lament* over the existing urban reality and the possibility that the

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21 Lamin Sanneh, 'The Current Transformation of Christianity', in *The Changing Face of Christianity: Africa, The West, and the World*, ed. by Sanneh and Carpenter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 222.

22 'Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes', in *Ecumenical Visions for the 21st Century : A Reader for Theological Education*, ed. by Melisande Lorke and Dietrich Werner (Geneva: WCC, 2013), p. 196. This book is an invaluable resource and itself reflects the changing paradigm of Christian identity and mission.

23 Luke describes a weeping Christ who laments the failure of those who exercised religious and political power in Jerusalem to recognise the possibilities of urban transformation: 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what

city could be transformed into a sphere of righteousness, love and *shalom* is characteristic of the Bible as a whole.

Although the tradition of the prayer of lament is a fundamental aspect of the worship and spirituality of biblical Israel, it plays little part in modern, Western Christianity where, as one contemporary song says, the believer's approach to God is one of 'endless praise'.[24] This loss of lament is difficult to explain, especially since it occurred during a century in which the continent of Europe experienced the violence of war and destruction on an unprecedented scale. More than thirty-six million Europeans died between 1939 and 1945 from war-related causes, many of these were casualties resulting from aerial bombardments which targeted densely populated urban areas. That is to say that *cities became the prime targets for destruction*, with the result that few towns on the continent of Europe of any size 'survived the war unscathed'.[25] Tony Judt describes the bombing of Rotterdam, Coventry and London, but concludes that 'the greatest material damage was done by the unprecedented bombing campaign of the Western allies in 1944 and 1945, and the relentless advance of the Red Army from Stalingrad to Prague'. The deliberate destruction of cities resulted in a new word being added to the sociological dictionary: *urbicide* signifies the terrible fate of entire urban populations and their familiar habitats, often full of historical and cultural memories stretching back centuries, as aerial fire-bombing turned them into a mass of smoking ruins.

The horrors of destruction and death visited on Europe in the twentieth century accelerated an already existing crisis of faith throughout the continent in a manner that is analogous to the situation faced by the Jewish people in 583 BC when the Babylonian army laid waste to the city of Jerusalem. That historic tragedy gave rise to the urban lament which we know as the book of Lamentations. Kathleen O'Connor comments movingly on this neglected Old Testament poetry:

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brings you peace [*shalom*] – but now it is hidden from your eyes'. Luke 19:41-42.

[24] Claus Westermann comments that in the Hebrew Bible 'from beginning to end, the "call of distress", the "cry out of the depths", *is an inevitable part of what happened between God and man*'. There is not 'a single line' in the Old Testament '*which would forbid lamentation*' or express the idea that 'it had no place in a healthy and good relationship with God'. *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), p. 261. Italics added.

[25] Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London: Vintage Books, 2010), p. 16. See also Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (London: Vintage Books, 2011).

> For survivors of civil wars, destroyed cities, and genocides, for refugees, and for those who subsist in famine and destitute poverty, the poetry mirrors reality with frightening exactitude. [...] Yet even in the prosperous United States there are normal human losses to lament, deaths, disappointments, and hidden depression with which to contend. There are broken marriages, catastrophic illnesses, and violence among our children, hatred between groups, and debilitating poverty exacerbated by wealth all around. Behind the wealth and power of the United States hide a despair and a violent culture of denial that drains our humanity. For our sake and for the sake of the world over which we try callously to preside, *these things demand lamentation*.[26]

However, if the prayer of lament has virtually disappeared from the worship and spirituality of Christianity in the Western world, this is emphatically not the case in the new heartlands of the faith across the Global South. In the slums of the burgeoning cities of Africa, the *favelas* of Latin America, and in the ruins of cities destroyed by typhoons, earthquakes or tsunamis in Asia, the ancient questions of the psalmists, 'Why?' and 'How long?', are frequently directed to God.[27] But in addition, the fierce protests of the psalms of lament against the abuse of power and the oppression of the poor provide millions of Christians in the endless city with a language with which to express before God their anger at the injustice and corruption which causes endemic poverty, and is related to the eruption of the violence of war and the horrors of genocide.[28]

Emmanuel Katangole has recorded striking examples of contemporary African laments emerging from the seemingly unending tragedy

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[26] Kathleen O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World* (New York: Orbis Books, 2002), p. 5. Italics added.

[27] See for example, Federico Villanueva's commentary on the book of Lamentations, dedicated to the victims of Typhoon Yolanda/Haiyan, which devastated the city of Tacloban in the Philippines. He writes: 'Lamentations' emphasis on tears, lament, uncertainty, mourning and suffering resonates with our experience in Asia today. These are the main themes of many theologies that are being produced here'. *Lamentations: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary* (Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2016), p. 29.

[28] The greatest tragedy of all may be that which has been played out in the Congo and then spilled over to embroil the whole of central and east Africa. Adam Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (London: Pan Books, 2012) is the starting point for the study of this tragic story. See also, Jason Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011) and Gerard Prunier, *Africa's World War: Congo, The Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

of the Congo and he comments that, far from a being a form of passive acquiescence in suffering, they have become the foundation for a social and political engagement which reconstitutes 'the very nature and meaning of politics'. Writing of African Christians who have expressed the pain and confusion of their own people in profoundly moving poems and songs of lament, he says,

> Their advocacy and initiatives reflect the shape of the new world, which now breaks forth within the shell of the old world as both a radical critique of and an alternative to the politics of military alliances and economic greed. The faith activists understand themselves as both the agents and fruits of that new world.[29]

In other words, lament enables sufferers to articulate with integrity and honesty the depths of their pain and trauma, while at the same time creating a portal through which new and surprising hope emerges and brings into focus the vision of a transformed urban world.

The question we are left with in light of this study concerns the relationship between the two overlapping shifts in the contemporary world; one in which the urban centre of gravity has moved south to the megacities of the majority world, the other by which Christianity is undergoing a paradigm shift resulting from its penetration of non-Western cultures and the relocation if its centre of gravity in the southern continents, especially among millions of people living in the margins of the Endless City. It is impossible to exaggerate the extent of the crises which confront the world as the result of the consumerist ideology which currently drives the process of urbanisation, but the question we are bound to ask is whether world Christianity has emerged for just such a time as this? Theologians beyond the West can be heard speaking of 'the collapse of Euro-American (Western) dominance in Christian theology' and looking toward a future in which 'a truly catholic Christianity' will honour 'unity-in-diversity in both church and theology'.[30]

Finally, for those of us who seek faithfully to follow Christ within the Western world, the challenge is to recognise the call to discipleship in the margins of a secular culture where we may be able to relearn some fundamental aspects of the way of Jesus Christ which we lost as the lure of the

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[29] Emmanuel Katangole, *Born From Lament: The Theology and Politics of Hope in Africa* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), pp. 264-5.

[30] These are the words of the Filipino theologians T. D. Gener and L. Bautista in 'Theological Method' in William Dyrness and Veli-Matti Karkkainen [eds], *Global Dictionary of Theology* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), p. 890.

dominant consumerist ideology sapped our spiritual energy and threatened the authenticity of our faith. Will we find the wisdom and humility to learn from Christ's 'little ones', from brothers and sisters who know the reality of pain and suffering, and whose faith is expressed in passionate prayers of lament and protest at the disorder of the world? Can we overcome our complacence and join the prayers of the saints in all the ages that God's will 'might be done on earth, as in heaven', so transforming the Endless City from the nihilism and materialism that leads it to toward death, with the vision of the New Jerusalem where no iconic temple is to be found, and the nations walk together in the light of God and find healing from the tree of life? The path toward that end must involve relearning the place of lament in worship and spirituality, and this may be the most important lesson which rich Christians can learn from the suffering church in the Majority World. Scott Ellington concludes his excellent study of the prayers of lament with these words:

> Though the prayer of lament remains a resource for all who experience a suffering that diminishes fullness of life, the vocation of lament is first and foremost the province of the foreigner, the widow, the deformed, and the destitute. The practice of this vocation challenges the hegemony of the Western church. The loss of the practice of lament in materialistic, wealthy cultures has signalled a shift away from a western, upper-middle class, male control on the proclamation and interpretation of the gospel. Increasingly it is the "nobodies" of Western society and the long-silenced voices of the remainder of the world that challenge a Church that finds no place for lament.[31]

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[31]   Scott Ellington, *Risking Truth: Reshaping the World through Prayers of Lament* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2008), p. 191.

William Cunningham and Missionary Baptism

J. CAMERON FRASER

Kenneth J. (Ken) Stewart's *In Search of Ancient Roots* includes a provocative chapter on 'Early Church Baptism in the Hands of Evangelical Protestants.' It is based on the independent research of Everett F. Ferguson and the late David F. Wright (1937-2008) into the practice of baptism in the early church. Ferguson is an emeritus professor of Abilene Christian University (Texas). He has 'long been associated with the Christian Churches, one distinctive tenet of which is that forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit is tied to the administration of baptism – that is, baptism upon profession.'[1] It might be fair to say that he would have been predisposed to draw conclusions consistent with his own doctrinal beliefs. Wright, on the other hand, presents a different picture. He grew up in the Anglican communion and was for several years an elder in the paedobaptist Church of Scotland, while teaching in the Church History department of New College, University of Edinburgh. He took the unusual position that paedobaptism was doctrinally defensible but historically questionable. As Stewart notes, 'It may be fairly said that Wright wrote as one *not* motivated to see the baptism of infants uprooted and removed but reformed and practiced on a principled basis in a setting in which indiscriminant (*sic*) infant baptism was and is rife.'[2]

Among several points Stewart makes summarizing the research of both Wright and Ferguson are the following:

- Infants suffering from life-threatening conditions probably provided the occasion that made baptism seem appropriate for the very young. (However, implicit in this practice was a notion that most Protestant Christians do not endorse: the absolute necessity of the reception of this sacrament for salvation)....

- Under all normal circumstances, early Christian baptism followed extensive catechetical training ensuring that the baptismal questions were answered by instructed persons. As it was practiced and

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1   Kenneth J. Stewart, 'Early Church Baptism in the Hands of Evangelical Protestants', in *In Search of Ancient Roots* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press), p. 128. Italics in original.

2   Ibid.

spread, infant baptism employed the same questions as previously, yet directed these questions to parents or sponsors of the infants.[3]

Stewart next summarizes some traditional arguments for infant baptism, admitting to 'a sense of chagrin that standard authors writing to advocate infant baptism have found so little to discourage them in the meagreness of such historical materials.'[4] There seem to be three possible responses: '**Disregard the problem of patchy historical evidence**. To date this seems to be the prevailing (though not exclusive) response from the conservative Protestant community that still upholds infant baptism…. **Abandon infant baptism altogether…. Modify infant baptism**.' Under this last point, which Stewart favours, there are three possibilities:

- *Make it an option for the children of those who request it.* 'This is the line taken by the highly regarded A.N.S. (Tony) Lane in the recent volume *Baptism: Three Views*.'[5] There is arguably supporting evidence for this in the early church. Lane also references a group of Baptist churches in seventeenth century England 'which began to accept either practice, and the church at Bedford, now named after Bunyan, has maintained this approach down to the present day.'[6] There are also modern denominations that at least in theory, if not in practice, take this view.

- *Defend infant baptism on grounds that hitherto have not been used* (an unlikely prospect).

- *Defend the baptism of infants by a renewed attention to the household baptisms of Acts 16 and 1 Corinthians 1:16.* Here Stewart references the work of the German scholar Joachim Jeremias in *The Origins of Infant Baptism* (1962).[7]

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[3] Ibid., p. 131. Cf. Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), pp. 355-57; David F. Wright, *What Has Infant Baptism Done to Baptism?* (Carlisle UK: Paternoster, 2005), chaps. 1 & 2.

[4] Stewart, 'Early Church Baptism', p. 133.

[5] Anthony. N.S. Lane, 'The Dual Practice View', in David F. Wright, ed., *Baptism: Three Views* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009), pp. 139-71.

[6] Ibid., p. 165. Cf. Meic Pearse, *The Great Restoration: The Religious Radicals of the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), pp. 212-13.

[7] Stewart, 'Early Church Baptism', p. 135ff. Cf. Joachim Jeremias, *The Origins of Infant Baptism*, trans. David Cairns (London: SCM Press, 1962). This is 'a further study' in reply to Kurt Aland's *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* Trans. G.K. Beasley-Murray (London: SCM Press, 1961). Jeremias's first work

In drawing his argument to a close, Stewart challenges his fellow paedo-baptists with the question, 'What would it require of us to see infant baptism occupy this more modest place in our churches today?' The answer is 'We would need to commit ourselves to reversing the proportions of those baptized in infancy (the vast majority in today's paedobaptist churches) and those baptized out of the world (the clear minority today). Does not the very frequency with which infant baptism is practiced in our churches practically obscure our failure to evangelize and baptize from the world?'[8] The position here advocated is sometimes called *missionary baptism*.[9]

Stewart goes on to quote with approval the nineteenth-century Scottish theologian James Bannerman who wrote:

> The true type of Baptism, from examining which we are to draw our notions as to its nature and efficacy, is to be drawn from the adult Baptisms in the early days of Christianity and not in the only Baptism now commonly performed in the professing church, the Baptism of infants… Both among the enemies and friends of infant baptism the neglect of this distinction has been the occasion of numberless errors in regard to the import and effects of the sacrament. It is abundantly obvious that adult Baptism is the rule and infant Baptism the exceptional case…[10]

Bannerman was by no means alone among Scottish theologians in taking this position. Another (among several) was 'Scotland's greatest theologian,'[11] William Cunningham (1805-1861), who was successively Professor of Theology, Professor of Ecclesiastical History, and Principal of New College, Edinburgh. Cunningham nowhere uses the term *missionary baptism*, but he does point out that missionaries generally experi-

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on the subject was *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*, trans. Dorothy M. Barton (London: SCM Press, 1971).

[8] Stewart, 'Early Church Baptism', p. 139.

[9] See e.g. David F. Wright, 'Recovering Baptism for a New Age of Mission' in Donald Lewis and Alister McGrath, eds., *Doing Theology for the People of God. Studies in Honor of J I Packer* (Downers Grove and Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), pp. 51-66.

[10] James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, 2 vols. (1869; repr. London: Banner of Truth 1960), 2:108-9. Quoted in Stewart, Ibid., pp. 139-40.

[11] The title of 'Scotland's greatest theologian' is given to Cunningham by Donald Macleod, principal emeritus of what is now the Edinburgh Theological Seminary (formerly the Free Church College). (See 'Scotland's Greatest Theologian' in *The Monthly Record of the Free Church of Scotland*, March 1990, pp. 51-53. Cf. Iain D. Campbell & Malcolm Maclean, eds., *The People's Theologian: Writings in Honour of Donald Macleod* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2011), p. 65.

ence more adult baptisms than those in more established churches that practice infant baptism.[12] In the nature of the case, this is missionary baptism. (The baptism of new believers is not necessarily synonymous with *adult baptism*, but Cunningham consistently speaks of adults and so will this article in expounding his views.)

CUNNINGHAM'S DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM

As Michael W. Honeycutt observes in 'William Cunningham and the Doctrine of the Sacraments,' Cunningham's approach to church history (or perhaps more accurately, historical theology) was to 'hold past theological discussions up to the "lamp of divine truth" to determine the extent to which they concurred with the "unerring standard of the Word of God."'[13] Thus, Cunningham was unashamedly polemical in his approach. This becomes apparent in his study of the sacraments, where much of his polemic is directed against the Roman Catholic doctrine and that of the Tractarians (or Oxford Movement) of his day. However, there is much of abiding relevance in Cunningham's approach to the subject, precisely because his principal concern was as Honeycutt describes it.

Volume II, Chapter XXII of Cunningham's *Historical Theology* is on 'The Sacramental Principle.' It moves from a discussion of sacramental grace in general to baptismal regeneration, to infant baptism in particular. In the first section, Cunningham notes that:

> The essential idea of (the) Popish and Tractarian doctrine of the sacraments is this: that God has established an invariable connection between these external ordinances, and the communication of Himself, - the possession by men of spiritual blessings, pardon and holiness; with this further notion, which naturally arises from it, that He has endowed these outward ordinances with some sort of power or capacity of conveying or conferring the blessings with which they are respectively connected.[14]

This leads to a study of baptismal regeneration, understood as the idea that water baptism has an intrinsic power *ex opere operato* to effect justi-

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[12] William Cunningham, 'Zwingli and the Doctrine of the Sacraments', in *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1866), p. 246. Originally published in *the British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, October 1860.

[13] Michael W Honeycutt, 'William Cunningham and the Doctrine of the Sacraments', in *The People's Theologian*, p. 110.

[14] William Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, Vol II, second edition (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1864), p. 124.

fication and regeneration.[15] In contrast to this, 'Protestants in general… regard the sacraments as signs and seals of the covenant of grace, signifying and representing in themselves, as symbols appointed by God, Christ and his benefits…operating beneficially only in those in whom faith already exists.'[16]

In other words, both baptism as the sacrament of initiation into the covenant of grace and the Lord's Supper as the sacrament of spiritual nurture presuppose the existence of faith in those who receive them. If this is the case, then how is one to understand the practice of infant baptism, when the infant is psychologically and developmentally incapable of a previous reception of Christ and his benefits by faith? It is to this and related questions that Cunningham devotes the remainder of the chapter.

Cunningham held that the New Testament model is adult baptism and that infant baptism, defensible in its own right on biblical grounds, is a modification of adult baptism. He also argued that the Westminster divines who gave us the Confession of Faith with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms had adult baptism in mind when they formulated their definitions of the sacraments in general and baptism in particular. He writes:

> If we were in the habit of witnessing adult baptism, and if we formed our primary and full conceptions of the import and effects of the ordinance from the baptism of adults, the one sacrament would be as easily understood, and as definitely apprehended, as the other; and we would have no difficulty in seeing how the general definition of the sacraments in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms applied equally to both. But as this general definition of the sacraments, and the corresponding general description given of the objects and effects of baptism, *do not apply fully and without some modification* to the

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[15] More recent ecumenical discussions of *ex opere operato* ('from the work worked') suggest that it means only that the sacraments derive their power from Christ's work rather than from humans. This is reflected in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which states that the sacraments are effective 'by virtue of the saving work of Christ, accomplished once for all…independently of the personal holiness of the minister. Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them" (New York: Image Books, published by Doubleday, 1995, para. 1128). However, the Council of Trent, to which Cunningham was responding, stated in Session VII, Canon VIII, 'If anyone saith that by the said sacraments of the New Law grace is not conferred through the act performed but that faith alone in the divine promise suffices for the obtaining of divine grace: let him be anathema' (http://www.thecounciloftrent.com/ch7.htm). Accessed July 22, 2019. In the Roman Catholic understanding, regeneration and justification can be lost by mortal sin.

[16] Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, Vol II, p. 134.

form in which we usually see baptism administered, men commonly, instead of considering distinctly what are the necessary modifications of it, and what are the grounds on which these modifications rest, leave the whole subject in a very obscure and confused condition in their minds.[17]

In a wide-ranging essay on 'Zwingli and the Sacraments', Cunningham credits Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531) with having thrown off 'the huge mass of extravagant absurdity and unintelligible mysticism, which from a very early period had been gathering round the subject of the sacraments, and which had reached its full height in the authorized doctrine of the Church of Rome.'[18] According to Cunningham, 'The Reformed confessions and Protestant divines, in general, have agreed very much in the definition or description of the sacraments, though there is a considerable diversity in the clearness and distinctness with which their doctrine is unfolded.'[19] Zwingli's views were a reaction to Rome's, but other Reformers reacted against Zwingli with phrases that 'approximate somewhat in phraseology to the Roman position.'[20]

Coming more particularly to the subject of baptism, Cunningham first quotes the Westminster Shorter Catechism's general definition of a sacrament as 'a holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.'[21] He then notes that 'It is of fundamental importance to remember, that the Catechism does apply this whole description of a sacrament to baptism, and to realize what this involves.'[22] The Catechism's definition of baptism is 'Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, our partaking of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's.'[23] Cunningham observes:

> Now the only ground for alleging that this teaches baptismal regeneration, must be the notion, that it applies in point of fact to all who have been baptized, and that all who have received the outward ordinance of baptism are warranted to adopt this language and apply it to themselves. But the true principle of interpretation is, that this description of baptism fully and in all

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[17] Ibid., p. 145. Italics in original.
[18] Cunningham, 'Zwingli', p. 228.
[19] Ibid., pp. 239-40.
[20] Ibid., p. 240.
[21] Ibid., p. 242. Cf. Shorter Catechism Q & A 92.
[22] Cunningham, 'Zwingli', pp. 242-43.
[23] Shorter Catechism, Q & A 94.

its extent applies only to those who are possessed of the necessary qualifications or preparations for baptism and are able to ascertain this.… Much evidently depends on the use and application of the pronoun *our* here.…The *our*, of course, suggests a *we*…and the question is, Who are the *we*?…[24]

This question, Cunningham says, 'is similar to that which is often suggested in the interpretation of the apostolic epistles, where the use of the words *we*, *us* and *our*, raises the question, Who are the *we*...?'[25] The answer lies in taking the entire context into account. When this is applied to the Westminster standards, it becomes clear that the sacraments are for the benefit of believers. Understanding this brings clarity to the issue and it becomes apparent that the statement that 'Baptism signifies and seals our ingrafting into Christ etc.' must refer to 'THOSE OF US who have been ingrafted into Christ by faith.' This 'removes all appearance of the Catechism teaching baptismal regeneration.'[26]

> This mode of contemplating the ordinance of baptism is so different from what we are accustomed to, that we are apt to be startled when it is presented to us and find it somewhat difficult to enter into. It tends greatly to introduce obscurity and confusion into our whole conceptions on the subject of baptism, that we see it ordinarily administered to infants, and very seldom to adults….
>
> Adult baptism, then, exhibits the original and fundamental idea of the ordinance, as it is usually brought before us, and as it is directly and formally spoken about in the New Testament.[27]

This is not to say that for Cunningham there is no biblical warrant for infant baptism. In his *Historical Theology*, he summarizes the evidence in typical paedobaptist fashion: noting the continuity and expansion of God's gracious dealings with children from the old covenant into the new, the federal holiness of the children of believing parents (1 Cor. 7:14), and the history of how the apostles carried out the Great Commission which favours the conclusion, 'that they admitted the children of believers along with their parents, and because of their relation to their parents, into the communion of the church by baptism.'[28]

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[24] Cunningham, 'Zwingli', p. 243.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., p. 244.

[27] Ibid., pp. 245-46.

[28] Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, Vol. II, p. 149. Curiously, Cunningham makes no mention of the circumcision-baptism analogy of Col. 2:11-12 etc. that lies at the heart of the covenant-continuity argument that, since Zwingli, has become a staple of the Reformed position. Reformed Baptists who sub-

Cunningham observes that:

> Men have often striven hard in their speculations to lay down something precise and definite, in the way of general principle or standard, as to the bearing and effect of baptism in relation to the great blessings of justification and regeneration in the case of infants individually. But Scripture really affords no adequate materials for doing this; for we have no warrant for asserting even in regards to infants, to whom it is God's purpose to give at some time justification and regeneration, that He uniformly or ordinarily gives it to them before or at their baptism. The discomfort of this state of uncertainty, the difficulty of laying down any definite doctrine upon this subject, has often led men to adopt one or other of two opposite extremes, which have the appearance of greater simplicity and definiteness—that is, either to deny the lawfulness of infant baptism altogether, or to embrace the doctrine of baptismal regeneration and to represent all baptized infants, or at least all the baptized infants of believing parents, as receiving these great blessings in and with the external ordinance, or as certainly and infallibly to receive them at some future time. But this is manifestly unreasonable.[29]

Cunningham does not go into any great detail regarding the arguments for and against infant baptism. He believed that the line of argument he alluded to 'though in some measure inferential', was sufficient *in cumulo* to establish the conclusion 'that the children of believing parents are to be baptized.'[30] He does, however, seek to counter those who hold that 'it is inconsistent with the nature of baptism, as set before us in Scripture, that it should be administered to any, except upon the ground of a previous possession of faith by the person receiving it.'[31]

According to Cunningham, justification and regeneration (the washing away of guilt, and the washing away of depravity), and these alone, are 'the spiritual blessings which the washing with water in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, directly signifies and represents. Faith does not stand in the same relation to baptism as these blessings do, and for this obvious and conclusive reason, that it is not directly and

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scribe to the 1689 London Confession of Faith accept this analogy as valid, but apply it, not to those who have been born physically, but to those who have been born again as Abraham's spiritual seed. See e.g. Paul K. Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 92; David Kingdon, *Children of Abraham* (Hayward Heath, Sussex: Carey Publications, 1973), p. 6.

[29] Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, Vol II, pp. 150-151.
[30] Ibid., p. 149.
[31] Ibid., p. 151.

expressly signified or represented in the external ordinance itself, as they are.'[32]

Faith, says Cunningham, is the ordinary means by which those capable of it receive the blessings of justification and regeneration.

> It is universally admitted that infants, though incapable of faith, are capable of salvation, and are actually saved; and they cannot be saved unless they by justified and regenerated. And since it is thus certain that infants actually receive the very blessings which baptism signifies and represents, without the presence of the faith which is necessary to the possession of these blessings in adults…there can be no serious difficulty in the idea of their admissibility to the outward sign and seal of these blessings, without a previous profession of faith.[33]

Baptism, it should be said, also represents union with Christ and the Baptism of the Spirit, or more properly, the benefits of justification and regeneration that result from union with Christ and the Baptism of the Spirit. Cunningham consistently mentions only justification and regeneration, in that order, stating that they must both be received by faith in the case of adults. This is curious for a Reformed theologian, since Reformed theology generally teaches that regeneration precedes both faith and justification. It could be that Cunningham is using *regeneration* in the broader sense Calvin did to represent the entire process of spiritual renewal.

Returning to the earlier discussion of 'Zwingli and the Doctrine of the Sacraments', Cunningham continues to develop his argument by examining statements in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger Catechism. He also references numerous Reformed authorities whom he claims to be in general agreement with him. He observes that those who 'have not attended to and estimated aright this topic of the peculiar and subordinate place held by the subject of infant baptism are very apt to run into one or other of two extremes.' These are that of 'lowering the true sacramental principle, as brought out in the general definition of a sacrament, and as exhibited fully in the case of adult baptism and the Lord's Supper, to the level of what suits the special case of infant baptism' or that of 'raising the explanation propounded of the bearing and effect of infant baptism, up to a measure of clearness and fulness which really attaches only to adult baptism and the Lord's Supper.'[34]

Cunningham was insistent that no sharp distinction should be made between the qualifications for baptism and the Lord's Supper. In this, he

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[32] Ibid., p. 152.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Cunningham, 'Zwingli', p. 253.

was opposing a view common in the Scottish Highlands and championed by its most noted minister John Kennedy, that saw infant baptism as no more than a 'door' into the visible church. (A similar position was expressed in the 'Half-Way Covenant' in New England in the seventeenth century). A distinction was made between an *uncontradicted* profession (sufficient for securing baptism for one's children) and an *accredited* profession (evidence of regeneration required for admission to the Lord's Table). The practical effect of this was that a further distinction was made between members in full communion and those who were merely baptised adherents. As Kennedy noted (and defended), 'The result of carrying this view into practice is well known; the numbers of members in full communion is comparatively small, and parents who have never communicated, receive baptism for their children.'[35]

This debate was not central to Cunningham's view of baptism, but it is mentioned here because, in coming to sum up his argument, one of the points he makes is that baptism should only be administered to believers and their children, and those who receive baptism for their children should also be qualified to sit at the Lord's Table. This is the second of three points. The first is that 'Scripture, while furnishing sufficient materials to establish the lawfulness and obligation of infant baptism, does not give us much direct information concerning it,' and therefore 'men should be particularly careful to abstain from deductions, probabilities or conjectures, beyond what Scripture clearly sanctions.' The third point is that 'while believers are warranted to improve the baptism of their children…neither parents not children should regard the fact that they have been baptized, as affording of itself even the slightest presumption that they have been regenerated' without 'the appropriate proofs of an actual renovation of the moral nature, exhibited in each case individually; and that, until such proof appear, every one, whether baptized or not, should be treated and dealt with in all respects as if he were unregenerate, and still needed to be born again of the word of God through the belief of the truth.'[36]

SUPPORT FOR CUNNINGHAM

As noted, Cunningham cites several sources he claims to be in agreement with him. For instance, he quotes Martin Vitringa[37] at some length to the

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[35] John Kennedy, *The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire* (Edinburgh: Norman Macleod, the Mound, 1897), p. 125.

[36] Cunningham, 'Zwingli', pp. 290-91.

[37] Martin Vitringa was a nephew of the elder Campegius Vitringa (1643-1723) and a cousin of the younger Campegius Vitringa (1693-1731). Martin Vit-

effect that 'the sacraments have been instituted only for those who have received the grace of God.'[38] Vitringa 'gives extracts from eight to ten of the confessions of the Reformed period, and from above fifty of the most eminent divines of that and the succeeding century.' The names of forty-nine (not 'above fifty') divines are then listed, to which Cunningham adds 'in short, all the greatest divines of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.'[39]

It is questionable whether all of the authorities cited by Cunningham would have agreed with him on the narrower point that adult baptism is the primary mode both biblically and confessionally. However, on the specific argument that the Westminster divines had adult baptism in mind when formulating their definition of the sacrament, Cunning-ham offers the names of fellow-Scots Samuel Rutherford (1600-61) in his *Due Right of Presbyteries* and George Gillespie (1613-48) in *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*. Rutherford and Gillespie are both quoted at length and Cunningham offers the opinion that 'Rutherford and Gillespie are, liter-ally and without any exception, just the two very highest authorities that could be brought to bear upon a question of this kind, at once from their learning and ability as theologians, and from the place they held and the influence they exerted in the actual preparation of the documents under consideration.'[40]

Cunningham continues, 'We think it of some importance to show, that these views of the sacramental principle, or of the doctrines of the sacraments, which though so clearly and fully set forth in the Westmin-ster standards, have been so much lost sight of amongst us, were openly maintained by the leading divines of the Church of Scotland during last century.'[41] The names of Principal (James) Hadow (1667-1747) and Thomas Boston (1678-1732), 'the heads of two different schools of theol-ogy in Scotland in the early part of last century,'[42] are offered as in agree-ment on the point in question. Then there is a quotation from Dr. John

ringa edited the sixth edition of one of his uncle's works, *Doctrina Christianae Religionis* and it was published from 1761-76. See William Omre, *Bibliotheca Biblica: A Select List of Books of Sacred Literature with Notices Biographical, Critical and Bibliographical* (Edinburgh: Adam Black and London: Longman, Hurst, Reese, More, Brown and Green, 1824), p. 450. Martin Vitringa's exact dates could not be found.

38 Cunningham, 'Zwingli', pp. 264-65.

39 Ibid., p. 266.

40 Ibid., p. 279.

41 Ibid., p. 281.

42 Ibid., pp. 281-82.

Erskine (1721-1803), 'probably the greatest divine in the Church of Scotland in the latter part of last century.'[43]

The various divines Cunningham quotes or refers to all lived before his time. His contemporary James Bannerman (1807-68), who was one of two editors of Cunningham's posthumously published works, also expressed himself much to the same effect, as quoted earlier. One who lived later into the 20th century was another noted Scottish theologian John Macleod (1872-1948), one-time principal of the Free Church College, Edinburgh (1929-43). Towards the end of his *Scottish Theology* (a series of lectures delivered at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia), he deals with developments subsequent to Cunningham's time and notes how the High Church party in the Church of Scotland advocated baptismal regeneration and 'sought to make out that the Reformed standards teach a doctrine of baptismal grace which issues in the actual regeneration of the baptised through the sacrament as an instrument.'[44] In response, Macleod states that they did this 'oblivious of the two-fold fact that the statements of those standards deal primarily with what baptism is in the normal instance of its administration, that is, in the case of believers who are baptised on their own profession; and that the baptism of children as members of Christian households, though thoroughly warranted on its own grounds, is not the normal and regulative example of the administration of the sacrament.'[45] Whether directly or not, there could be no clearer evidence of the continuing influence of the position advocated by Cunningham.

CRITICISMS OF CUNNINGHAM

Although Cunningham could point to fellow-Scots in the past as supporting his view, also agreed to by his contemporary Bannerman, and John Macleod represented the same view in the early part of the twentieth century, another noted twentieth century Scot, John Murray (1898-1975), disagreed. Murray does not speculate as to what was in the minds of the Westminster divines when they formulated their multiple definitions of baptism, but in a footnote in his *Christian Baptism*, he notes, 'William Cunningham and James Bannerman…maintained that a line of discrimination must be drawn…between the baptism of infants and the baptism of adults.…It may be quite correct to say with Cunningham that adult baptism is "*that* from which mainly and principally we should form our

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[43]   Ibid., p. 283.
[44]   John Macleod, *Scottish Theology in relation to Church History* (Edinburgh: Knox Press and Banner of Truth reprint 1974), p. 303.
[45]   Ibid., pp. 303-4.

conception of what baptism is and means and was intended to accomplish." But when Cunningham says that "it is adult baptism alone which embodies and brings out the full idea of the ordinance"…there does not appear to be good warrant for such discrimination.[46]

Murray makes his own view clear when he states positively that 'Baptism has one import, and it bears that same import whether it is dispensed to adults or infants.[47] It should be administered, however, not on the basis of any assumptions about the spiritual state of the child, but simply because it is a divinely mandated ordinance. 'Short of that we may not stop. Beyond that we may not go.' At the same time, Murray goes on to state that 'Baptized infants are to be received as children of God and treated accordingly.'[48] Elsewhere, Murray commends Cunningham for 'ably and cogently'[49] opposing the idea that 'there is such a thing in the New Testament as dual confession, one entitling to baptism and another, of a higher order, entitling to communicant membership.'[50]

If Murray's criticisms of Cunningham are modified by his concession that it 'may be quite correct' to say that our conception of what baptism signifies is derived from the New Testament model of adult baptism, there are no such concessions in Robert (Bob) Letham's trenchant critique in the context of a review of *The People's Theologian: Writings in Honour of Donald Macleod*. This book contains a number of essays on different subjects and Letham touches on them all, but a disproportionate amount of space is devoted to Michael W. Honeycutt's contribution on 'William Cunningham and the Doctrine of the Sacraments.' Letham charges Cunningham's baptismal theology with being hardly distinguishable from a credobaptist one. Cunningham was, in Letham's view 'wrong; totally, monumentally wrong'. In making his case, Letham continues:

> It is true that Cunningham did not have access to the full minutes of the Assembly, which have only recently been transcribed….

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[46] John Murray, *Christian Baptism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), p. 85, n. 45. Italics in original. For a view opposite to that of Cunningham, see the Church of Scotland's 1958 *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism*, which claims that for the Scottish Reformers 'baptism by its very nature as the sacrament of our first entrance into God's household was essentially relevant for children but therefore equally adaptable to adults, who can only enter into the kingdom of God as little children.'

[47] Murray, *Christian Baptism*, p. 86.

[48] Ibid., pp. 55-56.

[49] Ibid., p. 80, n. 42.

[50] Ibid., p. 80.

> There were a range of discussions on baptism at the Assembly, more fully-recorded by the scribe than most other matters. These covered both the theology and practice of baptism. In each case, the baptism of *infants* was in view. There is no evidence that the divines considered this in isolation from the baptism of adult converts….
>
> Moreover, the *Directory for the Publick Worship of God* refers to 'the child to be baptised'. The words of instruction before baptism speak of the reasons why 'the seed and posterity of the faithful, born within the church' have interest in the covenant and the right to its seal…[51]

Scarcely less severe is the critique of the late David F. Wright. From 1984 until his death, Wright wrote a number of essays on baptism, twenty-seven of which, in 2007, were published together in *Infant Baptism in Historical Perspective: Collected Studies*. Wright wrote an introduction to this book on 'The Strange History of Infant Baptism, Not Least in Scotland.' Coming to William Cunningham and his essay on 'Zwingli and the Doctrine of the Sacraments', Wright finds it to abound in 'insightful one-sidedness…driven by the bogeyman of baptismal regeneration.'[52] Wright independently came to the view, based on historical research into early church sources, as well as the 'increasingly widespread' consensus among New Testament scholars[53] that believers' baptism was the New Testament norm and so found Cunningham's analysis on that point 'sound in its fundamental instinct', but failing 'to recognize that it indicts most Protestant theology from the reformers on and that the genius of the Westminster divines was indeed to start with the baptism of believers but not leave

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[51] Robert Letham, http://www.affinity.org.uk/foundations-issues/issue-61-article-8---book-review---the-peoples-theologian-writings-in-honour-of-donald-macleod. Accessed 9 October, 2019. Letham also says that Cunningham's 'summary of the Protestant doctrine of the sacraments is amazing for its inaccuracy' (email October 9, 2019).

[52] David F. Wright, 'Introduction: The Strange History of Infant Baptism, Not Least in Scotland', in *Infant Baptism in Historical Perspective: Collected Studies* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), p. xxxvi.

[53] Wright, 'The Origins of Infant Baptism-Child Believers' Baptism?', in *Infant Baptism*, p. 5. Wright also discusses the 1982 report of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches in which representatives of various traditions from Baptists to Roman Catholics agreed that, 'While the possibility that infant baptism was also practiced in the apostolic age cannot be excluded, baptism upon personal profession of faith is the most clearly attested pattern in the New Testament documents.' Quoted by Wright in 'Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (the "Lima Report"): An Evangelical Assessment', in *Infant Baptism*, p. 312.

infant baptism out in unilluminated darkness.'[54] Cunningham's interpretation of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms was 'bizarre'. He did not 'set out to work with scripture' and was 'no more than selective in his engagement with the actual Westminster documents.'[55]

Wright is only slightly less critical of Bannerman, whom he finds to be 'more balanced and rounded' than Cunningham. He does consider Cunningham and Bannerman to have been right insofar as believers' baptism 'is in an appropriate sense the norm of Christian baptism. They were ahead of their time, but they spoiled their case by exaggeration, and by bifurcating the baptismal waters like the Red Sea at the exodus.'[56] Wright says that he now understands 'with fresh clarity' how 'evangelical circles in my adoptive land which still set such store by the Westminster Confession come to profess such a base estimate of baptism.'[57]

If William Cunningham did not have access to the minutes of the Westminster Assembly, David Wright did. It is on this basis that he delivered a public lecture on 'Baptism at the Westminster Assembly', at a conference commemorating the Westminster Assembly.[58] Among other things, such as public versus private baptisms, the debate over dipping (immersion as an alternative to sprinkling), and the meaning of federal holiness in 1 Corinthians 7:14, Wright argues that the Westminster divines intended the documents they produced to teach baptismal regeneration, and this is what was meant by the Confession of Faith's calling baptism 'the instrument and occasion of regeneration by the Spirit, of the remission of sins, of ingrafting into Christ (cf. 28:1).'[59] This is a position Cunningham would have vigorously opposed. He believed it to be a 'most extraordinary blunder' to hold that the early Protestant confessions, both during the Reformation and in the seventeenth century taught baptismal regeneration.[60]

Wright acknowledges that the Confession of Faith offers a 'variety of qualifications' to the assertion that 'the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost' (28:6). Efficacy 'is not tied to the moment of administration (28:6), grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed to baptism that no person can be regenerated or saved without it (28:5) or that all baptized are undoubtedly regenerated (28:5).' Regeneration 'is not automatically enjoyed by all recipients: it

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54   Wright. 'Introduction', p. xxxvii.
55   Ibid., p. xxxvi.
56   Ibid., p. xl.
57   Ibid., pp. x-xl.
58   Published in *Infant Baptism*, pp. 238-256.
59   Wright, 'Baptism at the Westminster Assembly', p. 244.
60   Cunningham, 'Zwingli', p. 241.

contains "a promise of benefit to worthy receivers" (27:3), who from one point of view are "those who actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents" (28:4) and from another "such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time (28:6)"[61]

By taking all the above qualifications into account, Wright appears to be using *baptismal regeneration* differently from Cunningham, in a theological rather than temporal sense. At the same time, while highly critical of Cunningham's interpretation of the Westminster standards and of the doctrine of baptism in general, he does agree with Cunningham (although for different reasons) that believers' (although not necessarily adult) baptism was the biblical and Christian norm.

TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

It does appear that Cunningham may have been reading his own understanding back into the Westminster standards, but does that make him wrong in light of 'the lamp of divine truth'? Letham finds Cunningham's position not to differ much from a credobaptist approach. Wright finds it bizarre. Murray concedes that Cunningham may be right to see adult or believers' baptism as the biblical model, but faults him for making a distinction between the meaning of adult and infant baptism. So where does this leave us?

Clearly, Cunningham was opposed to any suggestion of baptismal regeneration, which he understood in terms of water baptism having an intrinsic power to effect justification and regeneration. Wright, however, defined baptismal regeneration differently, with several qualifications, and insisted that this is what the Westminster divines meant by describing baptism as 'as the instrument and occasion of regeneration by the Spirit, of the remission of sins, of ingrafting into Christ' (WCF 28:1). However, the point surely is as Tony Lane and others (with slight variations) point out: repentance, faith, baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit all belong together in the New Testament understanding of receiving salvation. Thus, those passages that appear to give to the act of baptism a redemptive or regenerating significance are to be understood in the context of the whole. The various other elements are present as well.[62]

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[61] Wright, 'Baptism at the Westminster Assembly', pp. 244-45.
[62] Lane, 'Dual-Practice View', p. 144. Cf. G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), pp. 263-305; James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1970), p. 91; Robert H. Stein, 'Baptism in Luke-Acts', in Thomas R. Schreiner & Shawn D. Wright,

This suggests believers' baptism being the biblical norm, as Cunningham maintains and Wright also recognises.

Cunningham refers consistently to *adult* rather than *believers'* baptism. Believers' baptism in established churches need not be of adults only, but the concept of missionary baptism implies that it is of adult heads of families who then bring their families into the church with them as a believing family. Whether or not infants were present in the household baptisms of the New Testament is not the issue so much as on what basis members of the household were baptised—their own profession or that of the head of the household. What then of children growing up in Christian families, which is the norm in both Baptist and paedobaptist churches today? That is another study for another time.

Meanwhile, Cunningham's view (and that of others cited in support) represents an honourable position in Scottish theology and qualifies for what Ken Stewart urges as 'this more modest place' for infant baptism.

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eds. *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2006), pp. 35-66. See also James J. Cassidy, 'Calvin on Baptism: Baptismal Regeneration or the *Duplex Loquiende Modus*?' in Tipton and Waddington, *Resurrection and Redemption, Theology in Service of the Church: Essays in Honor of Richard B. Gaffin Jr* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), pp. 534-554, for a helpful discussion of the distinction between the sign (*signa*) and the thing signified (*res*) in Calvin.

A RESPONSE TO ANDY STANLEY'S *IRRESISTIBLE*

Daniel Wiley

In the fall of 2018, Andy Stanley, prolific author and speaker and founder of the Atlanta-based North Point Ministries, released his highly anticipated work *Irresistible: Reclaiming the New that Jesus Unleashed for the World*.[1] The text attempts to address a major issue facing the Christian faith at the present time. Numerous modern Americans, and especially millennials, have either rejected the gospel message or abandoned their once-held Christian faith because they have found the Bible, and especially the Old Testament, incompatible with a secular worldview. In response to these concerns, Stanley argues that it is unreasonable to reject Christianity because of any perceived conflict between Christianity and modernistic sensibilities. This is because, according to Stanley, the foundation of the Christian faith does not rest upon the Bible or one's ability to defend the Scripture. Instead, the foundation of the Christian faith is the historic fact of the resurrection of Christ. Furthermore, a defence of the Old Covenant and its historic and ethical difficulties is unnecessary today because of the inauguration of the New Covenant and the establishment of Jesus' new commandment as the Christian's governing ethic. Unfortunately, according to Stanley, many believers feel that they must 'mix and match' Old Covenant standards with New Covenant ethics, yet this synthesis only creates awkward contradictions and discourages modern men and women from accepting the gospel message. Ultimately, believers must make the historicity of the resurrection and Jesus' New Commandment as the centre of the Christian witness and practice if they desire to reach unbelievers in today's culture.

Irresistible is the product of the development in Stanley's apologetic method in response to the New Atheism.[2] Its most notable pre-*Irresistible* manifestations include Stanley's three-part sermon series 'Aftermath' preached in April 2018,[3] his three-part sermon series 'Who Needs Christmas' preached in December 2016,[4] and his sermon 'The Bible Told Me So'

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1   Andy Stanley, *Irresistible: Reclaiming the New that Jesus Unleashed for the World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018).
2   Stanley, *Irresistible*, pp. 275, 314.
3   To view, see Stanley, 'Aftermath', *Northpoint Ministries*, April 2018 <http://northpointministries.org/messages/aftermath> [accessed April 16, 2020].
4   Stanley, 'Who Needs Christmas?', *Rightnow Media*, December 2016 <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/364910> [accessed April 16, 2020].

preached in August 2016.[5] Stanley's proposition for believers to 'unhitch' themselves from the Old Testament, language used in both his 'Aftermath' series and *Irresistible*,[6] put Stanley's work in the spotlight. These messages and *Irresistible* itself received extensive push-back from critics, including responses from Albert Moher and John Piper.[7] Since the release of *Irresistible*, Stanley has responded to his critics, including on Dallas Theological Seminary's 'Table Podcast'[8] but also in other media outlets, including *Relevant Magazine*,[9] *Christianity Today*,[10] and *A Greater Story*

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[5]   Stanley, 'The Bible Told Me So', *Your Move with Andy Stanley*, April 2016 <https://yourmove.is/videos/part-3-•-the-bible-told-me-so/> [accessed April 16, 2020]. All three series are available through YouTube.

[6]   See, for example, Stanley, *Irresistible*, pp. 72, 158.

[7]   Albert Mohler, 'Getting "Unhitched" from the Old Testament? Andy Stanley Aims at Heresy', *Albert Mohler*, August 10, 2018 <https://albertmohler.com/2018/08/10/getting-unhitched-old-testament-andy-stanley-aims-heresy/> [accessed March 6, 2019]; 'The Bible Tells Me So: Biblical Authority Denied…Again', *Albert Mohler*, September 26, 2016 <https://albertmohler.com/2016/09/26/bible-tells-biblical-authority-denied/> [accessed March 19, 2019]; John Piper, 'Open Bibles, Open Hearts: A Response to Andy Stanley', *Desiring God*, October 15, 2016 <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/open-bibles-burning-hearts> [accessed March 19, 2019]; See also Andreas J. Kostenberger, 'Editorial', *JETS* 62.1 (2019), 1-4; Stoyan Zaimov, 'Theologians Warn Andy Stanley's Message to "Unhitch" Old Testament is Heresy', *The Christian Post*, May 15, 2018 <https://www.christianpost.com/news/theologians-warn-andy-stanleys-message-to-unhitch-old-testament-is-heresy.html> [accessed April 8, 2019].

[8]   Andy Stanley, Mark L. Bailey, Mark M. Yarborough, and Darrell L. Bock, 'The Relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament', *The Table Podcast*, Filmed October 16, 2018 <https://voice.dts.edu/tablepodcast/old-testament-new-testament-relationship/> [accessed October 16, 2018]; Kate Shellnut, 'Megachurch pastor ignites debate after suggesting that Christianity doesn't hinge on Jesus' birth', December 24, 2016 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/12/24/megachurch-pastor-ignites-debate-after-suggesting-christianity-doesnt-hinge-on-jesus-birth/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.9f5ddda156b3> [accessed March 19, 2019].

[9]   Andre Henry, 'Why Andy Stanley Thinks His Sermon Critics Should be more Curious', *Relevant Magazine*, May 15, 2018 <https://relevantmagazine.com/god/andy-stanley-thinks-sermon-critics-curious/> [accessed February 2, 2019].

[10]   Stanley, 'Andy Stanley: Jesus Ended the Old Covenant Once and for All: A Brief Response to Robert Foster on my book, "Irresistible"', *Christianity Today*, October 19, 2018 <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/october-web-only/andy-stanley-irresistible-response-to-foster.html> [accessed February 2, 2019].

with Sam Collier.[11] Most recently, Stanley debated Pastor Jeff Durbin of Apologia Church (Mesa, Arizona) on *Unbelievable?* with Justin Brierley.[12]

Regardless of the criticism towards Stanley's apologetic method, the urgency presented in *Irresistible* is credible and relevant. Its release comes at a time in which secularism is rapidly growing in the West. Such growth has emboldened secularists to attack the authority of the word of God and shapes the worldview of the next generation that, consequently, make evangelism in the United States difficult. In this regard, *Irresistible* clearly identifies a major issue facing the church today. With that said, is Stanley's resurrection-priority apologetic methodology the best way to reach those within modern secular culture?

I am encouraged by Stanley's desire to reach the lost. Furthermore, there is certainly nothing unbiblical about modifying one's approach to preaching the gospel based upon the context. However, there are two significant problems with Stanley's apologetic method: (1) The relationship between the Old Testament and the gospel message is made undeniably explicit in the New Testament; and (2) The continuity between the Old and New Testaments makes the Old Testament essential for the doctrine and practice of the church.

THE RESURRECTION AS THE FOUNDATION OF THE FAITH

The first theological issue addressed in *Irresistible* is the resurrection as the foundation of the faith. While evangelical Christians have assumed the Scriptures to be the foundation of the faith, Stanley is not convinced that this assumption is correct or effective when witnessing to those in the modern age. According to Stanley, this generation is best defined as 'post-Christian', a generation in which 'the majority have been exposed to Christianity (in our case, for generations) but are opting for a different worldview'.[13] The Christian faith is believed to be unscientific and ethically suspect. Stanley writes, 'They've concluded Christianity is ill-suited for the undeniable realities, both scientific and sociological, of the world

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[11] See Sam Collier, 'Andy Stanley Shares About Clarity, Controversy and Irresistible Faith', *Orange Leaders*, February 4, 2019 < http://orangeblogs.org/orangeleaders/2019/02/04/clarity-controversy-irresistible-faith> [accessed March 3, 2019].

[12] 'Unbelievable? Should we unhitch Christianity from the Old Testament? Andy Stanley vs Jeff Durbin' *Unbelievable?*, June 1, 2019 <https://www.premierchristianradio.com/Shows/Saturday/Unbelievable/Episodes/Unbelievable-Should-we-unhitch-Christianity-from-the-Old-Testament-Andy-Stanley-vs-Jeff-Durbin> [accessed November 9, 2019].

[13] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 269.

in which they find themselves'.[14] For those in a post-Christian culture, an authoritative and inerrant Bible is problematic and is frequently the target of ridicule from secular humanists, and particularly the New Atheists. This is no small matter for Stanley, who understands the implications of an errant Bible. He boldly asks, 'If the earth wasn't created in six days, why should anyone believe Jesus rose after three?'[15] While Stanley argues that the Bible can be historically verifiable in a 'controlled environment', it is 'not defensible in culture where seconds count and emotions run high'.[16] The problem, according to Stanley, is that believers try to defend the Bible from such attacks. He laments,

> When scientific claims and archaeological discoveries threaten to undermine the credibility of the Old Testament, Christians often feel compelled to either rise up and defend the Bible or look the other way lest they see something that undermines their faith. Both responses are unnecessary and harmful. Both responses feed a false narrative regarding our faith.[17]

What, then, is the correct narrative? According to Stanley, the believer's faith does not rest upon a 'historically, archaeologically, scientifically accurate book',[18] but rather rests 'securely on a single unprecedented event – the resurrection'.[19] In fact, the resurrection is so foundational to the faith that even if key Old Testament events never actually happened (e.g., a global flood, the exodus), 'it does nothing to undermine the credibility of our new covenant faith'.[20] This, according to Stanley, is the belief championed by the first-generation church. He argues, 'The first converts to Christianity did not believe Jesus rose from the dead because they read about it. There was nothing to read. They believed he rose from the dead because eyewitnesses told them about it'.[21] He concludes, 'The foundation of our faith is not an inspired book but the events that inspired the book',[22] and thus, 'Anyone who lost faith in Jesus because they lost faith in the historical and archaeological credibility of the Old Testament lost faith unnecessarily'.[23] Stanley is convinced that his resurrection-first,

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[14] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 268.
[15] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 265.
[16] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 314. See also p. 305.
[17] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 290.
[18] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 290. See also pp. 271, 306.
[19] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 321.
[20] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 306.
[21] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 294.
[22] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 315.
[23] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 290.

Bible-second apologetic method is both more effective in reaching those in a post-Christian culture who do not presuppose the authority of the Bible and helpful for those struggling in their faith.[24] Citing 1 Peter 3:15, Stanley argues, 'Every generation of believers must be prepared to explain their decision to follow Jesus *in* their generation *to* their generation out of concern *for* their generation'.[25] At the same time, Stanley is convinced that, once an individual becomes a believer, he or she will become interested in the Scriptures.[26]

Of course Stanley is correct in asserting the importance of the historicity of the resurrection to the gospel message. This has always been the case. It's significance as a fact is attested in 1 Corinthians 15:12-20 and by the Apostles' Creed. Many recent works have been written defending the historicity of the resurrection, and such defences lend support for the truthfulness of the faith.[27] Furthermore, one can agree in part with Stanley that the historical verifiability of the Old Testament is not necessarily essential to the proclamation of the gospel message. Many gospel presentations make little to no reference to the Old Testament (e.g., the so-called 'Romans Road'). In addition, the Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy acknowledges that a belief in inerrancy is not essential to salvation.[28] However, there are several serious difficulties with Stanley's insistence that the foundation of the faith is the resurrection and not Scripture.

STANLEY'S FALSE DILEMMA

The first problem with Stanley's thesis is his creation of a false dichotomy. He argues that the Apostles decided to follow Jesus because of Jesus and not the Jewish Scriptures, as if the decision to follow Jesus because of the

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[24] See Stanley, *Irresistible*, pp. 275-276.

[25] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 264.

[26] See Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 276.

[27] See, for example, Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2004); Lee Strobel, *The Case for the Resurrection: A First-Century Investigative Reporter Probes History's Pivotal Event* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010); N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God,* Christian Origins and the Question of God, Vol. 3 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); William Lane Craig, *The Son Rises: The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2017).

[28] Article XIX of the Chicago Statement reads, 'We deny that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences, both to the individual and the church' (Norman Geisler, *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), p. 497).

resurrection somehow diminishes the importance of the Jewish Scriptures as foundational to the faith. Of course the Apostles followed Jesus because of Jesus! If Jesus was not who he claimed to be, and especially if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then the Apostles wouldn't have any reason to believe that he was the promised Messiah. That the Apostles believed in Jesus because they witnessed the Resurrection says nothing regarding the foundation of the Christian faith.

ESTABLISHING THE CREDIBILITY OF THE RESURRECTION

A second major difficulty in Stanley's argumentation is the close relationship between the Old Testament predictions of Jesus' resurrection and the historicity and witness of the resurrection event as revealed in the New Testament. Jesus himself established this link twice. First, he argued to the disciples on the road to Emmaus that the prophets clearly predicted the suffering and resurrection of the Christ (Luke 24:25-27). Second, just prior to the ascension, he argued that his listeners were witnesses of the fulfilment of the law, prophets, and psalms concerning the resurrection of Christ (vv. 44-48). Peter also made the link between the Old Testament and the witness of the resurrection in his Pentecost sermon. Citing Psalm 16:8-11, he proclaimed that his listeners were witnesses of the Messiah's resurrection spoken through David's prophetic words (Acts 2:23-32). Likewise, Paul linked the resurrection with both its Scriptural prediction and its historic witness (1 Cor. 15:1-19). Clearly, Christ and the Apostles were not agnostic about the importance of the Old Testament and its relationship to the resurrection. Instead, they proclaimed that men and women witnessed the resurrection and its historicity and significance was anchored in Old Testament promises.

PREACHING TO THE GENTILES

Stanley is aware of these passages and their use by his critics to critique his method. In response, he argues,

> In a post-Christian context, our faith actually does better without old covenant support. This was not the case in the first century. And therein lies part of the confusion. The apostles appropriately leveraged the Old Testament to make their case to their Jewish brothers and sisters. But they typically did not leverage the Jewish Scriptures to make their case to the Gentile world.[29]

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[29]   Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 278.

To prove his argument, Stanley turns to Paul's witness to the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers at Mars Hill (Acts 17:22-34). Noting that Paul never cited the Old Testament in his preaching, Stanley concludes,

> When preaching to non-Jewish audiences, audiences who did not view the Jewish Scriptures as authoritative, both Peter and Paul leveraged the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. They put the spotlight where the spotlight needed to be – on Jesus and the resurrection.[30]

While it is true that Paul did not directly cite the Old Testament in his defence of the gospel message before the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, there are several problems with this argument.

First, it is fallacious to argue that Paul was not concerned with linking the Old Testament with the resurrection because he did not directly cite the Old Testament in preaching to these Gentiles. In fact, Paul did summarize the Genesis account of creation and referenced Adam (cf. v. 26), a point Stanley admits himself,[31] so it can hardly be argued that Paul was not concerned with the events recorded in the Old Testament. While it is true that Paul does not directly cite the Old Testament at Mars Hill, the speech is firmly based upon biblical revelation.[32] Paul's reasons for his avoidance of citing the Old Testament was likely due to the lack of familiarity the philosophers would have concerning the Old Testament.[33] Based upon the text of Acts 17 alone, Stanley can hardly make the claim that Paul's lack of Old Testament citation justifies his apologetic.

Second, Stanley's resurrection-first apologetics actually hurts the argument of *Irresistible*. Stanley is convinced that preaching the resurrection apart from establishing the truthfulness of the Old Testament is the key to reaching religious 'nones' and the de-churched, yet it was Paul's reference of the resurrection that ended the conversation at Mars Hill (v. 32). Apparently, while some of the pagans believed Paul's message (v. 34), other pagans were offended at or at least indifferent to the very thought of a resurrection. Ironically, the response of the philosophers is the exact opposite of what Stanley would have his readers to believe regarding the preaching of the historical fact of the resurrection.

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[30] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 313.

[31] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 312.

[32] F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), p. 335.

[33] See Richard N. Longnecker, 'Acts', in *Luke-Acts*, Expositor's Bible Commentary, revised ed., ed. Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), p. 983.

This brings Stanley's thesis to a serious difficulty. The resurrection clearly identifies the resurrection as a historically verifiable miracle (cf. 1 Cor. 15:4-9). However, readers of Matthew's Gospel are told that 'some were doubtful' even after witnessing the miracle of the risen Lord (Matt. 28:17). This response and that of the pagan philosophers should not surprise any student of Scripture. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that the gospel message, including the resurrection, is 'foolishness to those who are perishing' (1 Cor. 1:18).[34] It is odd that Stanley would insist that the Christian faith does not rest upon the verifiability of Old Testament events and miracles while implying that the miracle of the resurrection is less susceptible to criticism. Those who reject the possibility of miracles *a priori* because of the demands of their worldview (e.g., the New Atheists and their followers) will, all things being equal, just as swiftly reject the resurrection as they would a six-day creation, a global flood, and other miraculous events recorded in the Old Testament. Stanley points to the witnesses of the resurrection as proof of the resurrection,[35] but key Old Testament events also claimed to have witnesses, for example, the exodus (e.g., Ex. 19:1-8; Deut. 1:19; Josh. 24:22), and Jesus and the authors of the New Testament assumed the exodus to be historically true (e.g., John. 3:14-17; 6:32; Acts 7:20-44; Rom. 9:15; 1 Cor. 10:1-6; 2 Cor. 3:7-18; Heb. 3:15-19; 12:18-25; Jude 5). What makes the exodus less believable than the resurrection? The existence and growth of the church alone does not give the historicity of the resurrection an edge over the historicity of the exodus, since the existence of the Jewish people in the land of Palestine could just as easily prove the exodus as the existence and growth of the church in the 1st century could prove the resurrection. In all of this, one is eerily reminded of Abraham's words to Lazarus: 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead' (Lk. 16:31). For Jesus, the Old Testament Scripture was as reliable as the fact of his resurrection.

THE CONTINUITY OF SCRIPTURE

The second theological issue addressed in *Irresistible* is the continuity of Scripture. Stanley is convinced that the Old Testament frequently becomes a dividing line in evangelism and discipleship. He argues, 'What de-converts find impossible to continue believing eventually intersects with something *in* the Bible or something *about* the Bible. And when it's

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[34] All Scripture is taken from the New American Standard Version.
[35] For example, see Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 298.

something in the Bible, the Old Testament is usually the culprit'.[36] Unfortunately, believers feel as though they must defend the integrity of the Old Testament, a defence that often includes the 'mixing and matching' of Old Testament and New Testament ethics.[37] However, according to Stanley, the careless mixing and matching of old and new covenant values and imperatives is an 'Achilles' heel for our post-reformation, sola scriptura version of faith'[38] and 'makes the current version of our faith unnecessarily resistible'.[39] Instead, believers must recognize the implications of the inauguration of the New Covenant, which was the total replacement of the Old Covenant and the 'significance of Jesus' new commandment – a single command that was to serve as the overarching ethic for his new movement'.[40]

To defend his conclusion, Stanley presents three arguments: (1) The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) abolished the Mosaic Covenant as the rule of faith and practice for the believer; (2) Jesus, Paul, and John base their ethical systems upon Jesus' New Commandment and not the Mosaic Covenant; and (3) The blending of Old and New Covenant ethics leads to gross doctrinal error.

ACTS 15 AND THE OLD COVENANT

The decision made at the Jerusalem Council is a central motif to the argument of *Irresistible*. Stanley writes, 'The decision of the Jerusalem Council should have been the final nail in the mix-and-match coffin. From that point forward, the law of Moses was no longer the point of reference for how Gentile believers were to conduct their lives'.[41] Instead, the four imperatives commanded by the council (Acts 15:20) were given to facilitate peace and harmony between Jewish and Gentile believers.[42] Stanley's famous quote, 'The brother of Jesus said we shouldn't do anything that makes it unnecessarily difficult for people who are turning to God',[43] highlights the significance of this decision. For Stanley, the decision of the Jerusalem Council demonstrates that, like the first century church did for the Gentiles coming to faith, the twenty-first century church should not make it difficult for unbelievers to come to faith by removing the Old

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[36] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 278. See also p. 157.
[37] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 110.
[38] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 104.
[39] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 95.
[40] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 71.
[41] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 131.
[42] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 127.
[43] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 124.

Testament as central to the faith and practice of the believer. However, there are two difficulties with using Acts 15 to defend Stanley's thesis.

First, Stanley makes the mistake of conflating the Mosaic Law with the Jewish Scriptures, or Old Testament. He writes, 'The Council's letter signaled a permanent break with the Jewish Scriptures as the foundation for orthopraxy',[44] and then one page later, 'The decision of the Jerusalem Council should have been the final nail in the mix-and-match coffin. From that point forward, the law of Moses was no longer the point of reference for how Gentile believers were to conduct their lives'.[45] Later, Stanley writes, 'Just accept the fact that everything in Exodus through Malachi, while fascinating, is not binding. It is not your covenant'.[46] While the entire Old Testament is sometimes called 'the law',[47] and while the Mosaic Covenant is central in Old Testament thought,[48] it is wrong to conflate the Mosaic Covenant with the Old Testament. The Mosaic Covenant was a conditional covenant given uniquely to the nation of Israel at Sinai following the exodus (Ex. 19:1-6) and is distinguished from what came before it (Deut. 5:1-3). Furthermore, the New Testament also distinguishes the 'Law', or Mosaic Covenant, from the rest of the Old Testament (e.g., Luke 22:44, in which Jesus identifies the 'threefold' classification of the Old Testament, i.e. Law, Prophets, and Psalms; and Matt. 22:40, in which Jesus identifies the 'twofold' classification of the Old Testament, i.e. Law and Prophets). While believers are not under the Old Covenant (cf. Rom. 6:14; 10:4; Gal. 3:15-4:7) but rather the Law of Christ (Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14; 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:20-21), it is incorrect to associate the Mosaic Covenant with the Old Testament, as if the abolition of the Mosaic Covenant removes the doctrinal and practical importance of the Old Testament to the life of the believer.[49]

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[44] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 130.

[45] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 131.

[46] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 159.

[47] For example, see John 10:34, in which the Psalms are identified as 'law'.

[48] The centrality of the Mosaic Covenant to Old Testament thought is seen in multiple ways, including the importance of the Mosaic Covenant to Israel's kings (cf. Deut. 17:18-20) and the prophets' frequent use of the Mosaic Covenant as the standard by which Israel was judged (e.g., Dan. 9:11, 13).

[49] Stanley draws the same conclusion, and makes the same mistake, in his exegesis of Hebrews 8 (*Irresistible*, pp. 151-153). While the Mosaic Covenant is not the rule of practice for the believer, it is wrong to conclude that the Old Testament is obsolete because the Mosaic Covenant is obsolete. Furthermore, as will be documented below, even the author of Hebrews drew from the Old Testament to establish his ethics.

Second, Stanley does not effectively defend his position. It is worth noting that Stanley's interpretation runs contrary to most commentaries, which understand the source of the Jerusalem Council's decision to either be Leviticus 17-18 and its rules for Gentiles living under the Jewish state, or the Noahide laws of Genesis 9.[50] Of course, this does not make his position wrong, but it does create greater urgency for Stanley to defend his view, and it is unfortunate that he only interacts with scholars who hold to the former view. Regardless, even his arguments against the Leviticus interpretation are not convincing. His first argument contests the similarity between the decision of the Jerusalem Council's first, third, and fourth principles and Leviticus 17-18 based upon the fact that the latter contained a penalty for disobedience, but 'James did not include a penalty clause' in his decree.[51] However, as will be argued more fully below, the New Testament writers frequently borrowed ethical and moral principles from the Mosaic Covenant without including penalties for disobedience. His second argument concerns the second principle, the prohibition from sexual immorality. Here, Stanley contests that the definition of sexual immortality could not have derived from Leviticus 17-18 because the Gentiles would not have known Leviticus 17-18. Instead, Paul's ethic was derived from the character of Jesus, and not Levitical law.[52] However, critiques concerning the source of Paul's ethics aside (again, more will be said on this below), the same argument could be applied to Stanley's point: Why would Paul use Jesus as an example to Gentiles who had never heard of Jesus (e.g., Eph. 4:31-32; 5:1-3, 25; Phil. 2:3-5)?

Third, the use of Acts 15 undermines Stanley's insistence that the Old Testament does not contribute to Christian practice (or that the Bible is not foundational to the faith for that matter). In Acts 15:16-17, James quotes Amos 9:11-12 using the 'as it is written' formula (Acts 15:15), thereby proclaiming the authority of Amos.[53] James recognized the text as a divinely revealed revelation which had authority to resolve the problem faced by the early church regarding the application of the Mosaic Law. Just as the Old Testament is essential in establishing the credibility of the resurrection, so the Old Testament is essential in establishing the New

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[50] For a survey of the various views on the Jerusalem Council, see Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), pp. 2260-2269.

[51] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 127.

[52] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 129, cf. pp. 203, 209, 214, 216.

[53] O. Palmer Robertson, 'Hermeneutics of Continuity', in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1988), p. 102.

Covenant. An 'unhitched' Old Testament would hardly be an acceptable standard by which to settle the matter in Jerusalem.

THE NEW COMMANDMENT AND THE OLD COVENANT

New Covenant ethics is another major motif of *Irresistible*. Stanley devotes an entire section of his work (section 3) to this theme. For Stanley, New Covenant ethics are based upon Christ and his new command for believers to love one another (cf. Jn. 13:34), not the Old Covenant. Referencing the Old Covenant, Stanley argues, 'Jesus issued his new commandment as a *replacement* for everything in the existing list',[54] and concludes, 'The imperatives we find scattered throughout the New Testament are simply applications of Jesus' new covenant command'.[55] To defend his argument, Stanley appeals to Jesus' 'reinterpretation' of Leviticus 19:18 in the Parable of the Good Samaritan,[56] Paul frequently appealed to Christ and his example, and not the Old Covenant, as the standard for Christian living (e.g., Eph. 4:31-32; 5:1-3, 25; Phil. 2:3-5),[57] and John's teachings on love in his epistles (esp. 1 John 4:8) which, according to Stanley, 'redefined God for his readers and, ultimately, the world'.[58]

Stanley is correct in insisting the centrality of love as part of a Christian ethic, a truth taught by both Jesus and John. Furthermore, Paul's frequent appealed to Christ as the standard for Christian ethics. However, Stanley's solution to 'unhitch' the Old Testament from the believer's life and practice because of the secular critique of Scripture does not take seriously enough the continuity of Scripture and the historical debate concerning such continuity. While a full evaluation of this debate is impossible here,[59] several items are worthy of note.

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[54]   Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 196.

[55]   Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 200.

[56]   Stanley, *Irresistible*, pp. 180-191.

[57]   Stanley, *Irresistible*, pp. 203, 209, 214, 216.

[58]   Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 222.

[59]   For a good survey of the key issues concerning the continuity of Scripture, see Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde, eds., *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008); G. K. Beale, ed., *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994); G., K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007); E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2003); Feinberg, ed., *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*; Richard B. Hayes, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale Press, 1989); Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco: Baylor Press, 2016); Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.,

First, Stanley misinterprets Jesus' use of Leviticus 19:18 in his Parable of the Good Samaritan to imply a strict discontinuity between the Testaments. Stanley rightly argues that the commands to love God and neighbour summarized the application of the Law.[60] However, seeking to explain the meaning of Leviticus 19:18, Stanley argues, 'Loving neighbor was code for loving other Jews'.[61] Stanley further suggests that the lawyer may have asked the question 'who is my neighbour?' in order to get Jesus to instruct his followers to love their enemies, which would mean non-Jews. This would cause the crowd to turn on Jesus because, presumably, such a command would offend the Jews because loving one's neighbour could not possibly mean anything else but fellow Jews.[62] Regardless, Stanley argues that Jesus took the opportunity 'to deconstruct and reconstruct audiences' concept of neighbor' to include Gentiles throughout the world.[63] However, it is incorrect to argue that the love for one's neighbour only extended to fellow Israelites under the Mosaic Covenant. In Leviticus 19:34, the Law requires the people of Israel to treat foreigners as they would a fellow Jew born among the people.[64] In fact, the importance of treating foreigners well is a consistent theme in the Old Testament and stood as a reminder to Israel of her time as foreigners in the land of Egypt (Ex. 23:9; cf. Deut. 10:18; 24:17-19; Ezek. 47:22-23).[65] Of course, the extent of this love for neighbour was debated amongst the Jews in Jesus' day, with a tendency to lean towards a more restricted meaning of 'neighbour',[66] likely due to the struggle of the Jewish people to love others

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    The Uses of the Old Testament in the New (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985); Stanley E. Porter, *Sacred Tradition in the NT: Tracing Old Testament Themes in the Gospels and Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016).

[60] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 184. Paul draws the same conclusion in Romans 13:9.

[61] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 185.

[62] See Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 187.

[63] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 187.

[64] R. K. Harrison, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1980), pp. 202-203. Leviticus 19:34 uses a nearly similar Hebrew construction, כָּמוֹךְ ○ לוֹ וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ כָּמוֹךְ, as Leviticus 19:18, וְאָהַבְתָּ

[65] Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 134.

[66] David E. Garland, *Luke*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), pp. 439-440. There is evidence that the Pharisees and Essenes did not even include all Jews among their 'neighbours'. I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978), p. 444; Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, New American Commentary, Vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), p. 316.

while living under Roman occupation. However, regardless of this debate, it is incorrect to argue that the Mosaic Covenant only extended grace to the Jewish people and that Jesus radically changed this ethic. Based upon the meaning of Leviticus 19, it is better to argue that Jesus was bringing out the full intention of the law through his use of the Parable of the Good Samaritan.[67]

Second, Stanley incorrectly argues that Paul's ethics were based upon Jesus alone. While Pauline ethics frequently point to the example of Christ, Paul's works also include two of the most important texts relating to the continuity of Scripture. The most recognizable of these is 2 Timothy 3:16, which distinctly identifies the entirety of the Old Testament as 'inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness'. While the New Testament was beginning to become recognized as Scripture (cf. 1 Tim. 5:18; Luke 10:7; 2 Pet. 3:15-16), Paul's primary object in 2 Timothy 3 is the Old Testament Scriptures.[68] ἱερὰ γράμματα, 'holy Scriptures', was used by Greek-speaking Jews to identify the Old Testament.[69] Furthermore, the Old Testament Scriptures were the writings Timothy could have known from childhood. According to Paul, the use of Scripture is for both doctrinal formulation and correcting improper behaviour.[70] Of particular interest is the last clause, πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ, which is clearly a reference to the training of righteous behaviour.[71] As Towner concludes, 'The OT is equally effective for the task of imparting to believers an ethical framework for the observable dimension of life in community and society'.[72]

Stanley's response to 2 Timothy 3:16 is that Paul's use of the Old Testament is by way of 'illustration'. Stanley writes,

> We should pay attention to how Paul used the Jewish Scriptures to teach, rebuke, correct, and train. Illustrations are scattered throughout his letters

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[67] John Hartley, *Leviticus*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 4 (Dallas: Words Books, 1992), p. 325.

[68] Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), p. 792.

[69] George W. Knight, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992), p. 443.

[70] William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), p. 570.

[71] I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1999), pp. 795-796.

[72] Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, p. 592.

and his teachings as documented in the book of Acts…Paul never sets his application ball on an old covenant tee. When it came to how believers are to live, he was quick to point to Jesus as the standard.[73]

Nevertheless, a study of Paul's letters indicates that this is clearly not the case. Perhaps the best example is found in Ephesians 6:1-3 and Paul's command for children to obey their parents. The command is drawn directly from Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16 and established as a New Covenant principle. For Paul, honouring one's father and mother would result in well-being and long life during the church age just as it did for Israel under the Old Covenant (Paul removes the clause 'which the Lord God gives you' because the land of Israel is not in view for the New Testament principle).[74] However, if Stanley's narrative is correct and no continuity exists, then why would Paul cite Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16 in support of children obeying their parents? Ironically, Stanley argues that the command to honour one's parents under the Old Covenant was self-centred. Citing Exodus 20:12, he writes, 'Honoring Mom and Dad under the old arrangements wasn't really for the benefit of Mom and Dad. It was about the security and prosperity of the kids. This is the nature, force, and tone of the old covenant'.[75] Clearly, Stanley's conclusions are not consistent in this area.

Romans 15:4 is another significant passage relating to the continuity of Scripture. Here, Paul argues that 'whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction'. Since Paul cites Psalm 69:9 here, it is clear that he had the Old Testament in mind. The word διδασκαλία, 'instruction', is used in many places in the New Testament, and particularly in the Pastorals, to reference the importance of doctrine and teaching for the life of the church (e.g., 1 Tim. 1:10; 4:13, 16; 5:17; 6:3; 2 Tim. 3:16; 4:13; Tit. 1:9; 2:1, 7, 10).[76]

Like 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Stanley also addresses Romans 15:4. He argues that Paul's use of the word 'instruction' means that the Old Testament is

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[73]   Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 168.

[74]   Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), p. 793.

[75]   Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 235. The statement is also ironic based upon the way Jesus cited the Fifth Commandment in Matthew 15:3. While Jesus' primary concern was the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and scribes, he seemed to have the parents' interests in mind here more so than Stanley assumes.

[76]   Note also the references in Eph. 4:14; Col. 2:22. While both references are to unsound doctrine, the importance of sound doctrine is implied in the statements and their contexts.

good for 'inspiration' but not 'application'.[77] At best, in Stanley's estimation, the Old Testament encourages the believer to persevere by observing God's story of redemption.[78] Of course, it is true that Romans 15:4 has the purpose of providing encouragement for the very reason Stanley gives.[79] However, Stanley's narrow definition of Paul's understanding of the applicability of Old Testament is incorrect. Paul's citation of Psalm 69:9 using the 'as it is written' formula in Romans 15:3 establishes the authority of Psalm 69:9 and provides the foundation for Paul's ethic in verses 1-2. In other words, Jesus' example of pleasing others is based upon the authority of Psalm 69:9. If Paul based his ethic upon Jesus' example, then why did Paul bother to cite Psalm 69:9? Commentators also frequently point to Romans 4:23-25 as an example of what Paul meant when he said that all Scripture is written 'for our instruction'.[80] Here, Paul notes that the words written regarding God's crediting Abraham with righteousness was 'for our sake also, to whom it will be credited' (v. 24). Paul's use of Genesis 15:6 to prove the continuity of the necessity of faith also proves that, while Genesis was written *to* a different audience in history, it was written *for* all believers for all time. This gives a clear example of the continuity of the Old Testament text and its direct relevance for the believer today.[81] Lastly, the careful reader will recognize the irony of Stanley's application of the Old Testament. Earlier, it was stated that Stanley argued that even if key Old Testament events never actually happened, 'it does nothing to undermine the credibility of our new covenant faith'. However, if that conclusion is true, then how could the Old Testament encourage suffering believers in the present? As an example, consider James's use of the perseverance of Job and the prophets to establish an ethical prohibition against complaining (Jas. 5:9-11). James identifies those who have endured, by implication the prophets and Job, 'blessed' (v.11), but can people who never existed and never experienced suffering be 'blessed'? Furthermore,

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77   Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 167.

78   Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 167.

79   See, for example, Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistles to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 869-870.

80   Charles E. B. Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 2000), p. 734; Robert Jewett, *Romans*. Hermeneia: A Critical & Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), p. 880.

81   It is interesting that Stanley leaves out Genesis in his definition of the Old Testament/Covenant documented above, and especially considering that the Genesis creation account is one of the issues sceptics have with the Old Testament. How would Stanley's apologetic handle this difficulty?

if their experience truly did not take place in time, then how is their perseverance and reward encouraging for those in the 'present'? While a fictional story can be inspiring, James parallels the experience of his readers, 'who have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings', with the 'endurance' of Job and the prophets (v.11). The consistency of God's workings in the past and 'present' to inspire James' readers only works if God's workings in the past actually happened. Therefore, it is difficult to argue that Job's experience, if untrue or uncertain, could encourage the readers whose experience was real. Stanley's insistence that sceptics do not have to worry about validating the Old Testament because it doesn't matter if the events recorded in the Old Testament happened, while at the same time arguing that believers are encouraged by the same events, is inconsistent.

In addition to these texts, Paul also cites or alludes to the Old Testament to establish an ethical principle. For example, Paul's prohibition on vengeance in Romans 12:19-20 is taken directly from Deuteronomy 32:35. 1 Corinthians 9:9 and its use of Deuteronomy 25:4 to support the financial support of pastors is another prime example.[82] Other New Testament authors frequently draw ethical principles from the Old Testament. Perhaps the most obvious example is found in 1 Peter 1:15-16. Here, Peter directly cites Leviticus 11:44-45 with the 'as is written' formula and bases Christian ethics upon the holiness of God, a principle first defined by the Old Covenant. Many other examples could be cited.[83] Stanley further argues that Paul 'did not attempt to harmonize God's behavior in the Hebrew Scriptures with the tone and teachings of Jesus'.[84] However, Paul did appeal to the Lord's 'behaviour' in the Old Testament as a warning for the church (e.g., 1 Cor. 10:1-12), as do the other New Testament authors (2 Pet. 2:4-11; Jude 5-7; cf. Heb. 12:5-6).

Third, Stanley overstates his case regarding Johannine ethics. Commenting on 1 John 4:8, Stanley argues that '*God is love* is a uniquely Christian idea' whereas 'For Jews, God was holy. Separate. Unapproachable'.[85] This dichotomy Stanley brings out in his discussion of John is representative of the dichotomy he makes elsewhere between the activity of God

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[82] See also 1 Timothy 5:18.

[83] Other examples in which an Apostle defines ethical conduct based upon an Old Covenant or Testament principle using the 'as is written' formula or equivalent include Rom. 12:8-9 w/ Lev. 19:18; Rom. 14:10-11 w/ Isa. 45:23; 2 Cor. 6:1-4 w/ Isa. 49:8; 6:14-18 w/ 8:13-15 w/ Ex. 16:18; Heb. 13:5-6 w/ Deut. 31:6 and Ps. 118:6; Jas. 4:6-7 w/ Ps. 138:6 and Prov. 3:34; 1 Pet. 3:8-12 w/ Ps. 34:12-16; 1 Pet. 5:5 w/ Prov. 3:34. While the context of the Old Testament passage is different, the Apostles do not use these passages as 'illustrations'.

[84] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 162.

[85] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 223.

in the Old and New Testaments. For example, Stanley insists that every pagan god during the Old Testament period was a 'human rights violator' and because of this environment God had to 'play by the rules of the day'.[86] Under the Old Covenant, God was so angry at sin that he drowned all the Egyptians, and self-righteous people use the actions and attitudes of God in the Old Testament to justify their self-righteousness.[87]

While Stanley is correct in pointing out John's emphasis upon the love of God, these conclusions do not accurately represent God in either Testament. God's love in the Old Testament is clearly emphasized through the biblical concept of (e.g., Gen. 19:19; 32:10; Ex. 15:13; 20:6; 34:6; Num. 14:18; Deut. 7:9; Ruth 2:20; 1 Kgs. 8:23; 1 Chr. 16:34, 41; 2 Chr. 7:3, 6; Ez. 3:11; Ps. 25:6; 33:5; 69:16; 86:15; 100:5; 106:1; Jer. 9:24; Lam. 3:22; Mic. 7:18), and witnessed in historical examples such as God's mercy upon Nineveh (cf. Jn. 4:11) and his refusal to take pleasure in the death of the wicked (cf. Ezek. 33:11). God's wrath is displayed throughout the New Testament (cf. Jn. 3:36; Rom. 1:18; 2 Thess. 1:5-9; Jude 14-15; Rev. 19). One also wonders why God would not 'play by the rules' of Jesus' day, which was filled with the ethics of Greek and Roman paganism. However, more concerningly, Stanley's comments come dangerously close to a Marcionite view of the Old Testament. While Stanley himself might not believe this, 'seekers' who read *Irresistible* with presuppositions against the Old Testament will likely interpret Stanley's comments in this manner.

Before proceeding to the final section of this paper, it must be said that the above arguments are not so naïve as to assert that the continuity of Scripture is a simple matter. The applicability of the Old Covenant is a very challenging area of biblical studies which the church has wrestled with for two millennia.[88] However, Stanley's 'unhitching' believers from the Old Testament and restricting the use of the Old Testament to 'illustrations' in response to secular criticism is not consistent with the practice of Jesus or the Apostles.

CONSEQUENCES OF MIXING AND MATCHING

Stanley also appeals to what he identifies as the consequences of mixing and matching the Old and New Covenants. Stanley argues that the early church justified anti-Semitism by reinterpreting the Old Testament

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[86] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 163.
[87] Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 251.
[88] For a survey of approaches to the Mosaic Covenant in church history, see Peter T. Vogt, *Interpreting the Pentateuch: An Exegetical Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), pp. 32-48.

through their own Christological constructs,[89] as well as the Crusades by applying Old Testament commands.[90]According to Stanley, William Tyndale was executed because the Roman Catholic authorities relied on the Old Covenant as the standard for his punishment.[91] He even gives an example from his own ministry in which a modern white couple opposed their daughter's marriage to a black man because of Moses' marriage to a Midianite.[92] On a 'lighter' note, Stanley argues that bad church experiences, including self-righteousness, legalism and the prosperity gospel, come from such mixing and matching.[93] Stanley's words are conclusive: 'Whenever the church opts to mix old with new, bad things happen. People get hurt'.[94]

Stanley is absolutely correct in his insistence that some Christians have butchered the interpretation of the Old Testament by ignoring its historical context, and Stanley's argument serves as a reminder of the importance of proper biblical interpretation. For example, the couple's opposition of their daughter's marriage is clearly a misinterpretation of the implications of Moses's marriage (cf. Num. 12). However, the misinterpretation of the Mosaic Covenant or the Old Testament as a whole says nothing about what the Mosaic Covenant states on any given issue or its applicability to the believer today. Furthermore, as has been demonstrated above, the New Testament frequently appealed to the Old Testament in its establishment of ethics, and yet never endorsed self-righteousness or the other examples given by Stanley. These errors are satisfactorily resolved within mainstream evangelical applications of the Old Testament and thus do not justify Stanley's departure from such an interpretation.

CONCLUSION

This response should give clear evidence that *Irresistible* is not able to defend its thesis. The early church distinctly and clearly linked the resurrection with the Old Testament. An abandonment of the Old Testament destroys the very foundation of the significance of the resurrection. Furthermore, Stanley's understanding of the continuity and discontinuity of Scripture is overly simplistic. While the application of the Old Testament is a challenging work, Stanley's apologetic is not consistent with the use of the Old Testament by the New Testament. While I applaud Stanley's

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[89]   Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 156.
[90]   Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 88.
[91]   Stanley, *Irresistible*, pp. 77-79.
[92]   Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 148.
[93]   Stanley, *Irresistible*, pp. 94-95.
[94]   Stanley, *Irresistible*, p. 78. See also p. 158.

desire to reach the next generation with the gospel, I cannot accept his method to accomplish this task.

If anything good can come from *Irresistible*, it is that it clearly reveals the urgency of the days and times in which we live. With culture pressing in on the church, a response is truly needed. However, a correct response to the rise of secular humanism and the appearance of a post-Christian society should be to increase our desire to teach men and women the word of God and how to defend the faith, not abandon either Testament.

Men and Women in Christ: Fresh Light from the Biblical Texts. By Andrew
Bartlett. London: IVP, 2019. ISBN: 9781783599172 (9781783599189
eBook). 464pp. £24.99 (£19.99 eBook).

In the contemporary evangelical world, one's view on the role of women
in marriage and church has become something of a shibboleth, dividing
those who confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ into seemingly irrecon-
cilable camps of 'complementarians' on the one hand and 'egalitarians'
on the other. Andrew Bartlett's work has the stated intention of moving
beyond these polarising categories by re-engaging with the biblical mate-
rial and critically examining the arguments from both sides. Importantly,
he does not identify himself with either camp and is critical of both where
he believes their views do not fit with Scripture.

Bartlett's background as a lawyer and international arbitrator (with
a theology degree) makes him uniquely placed both to evaluate complex
arguments that depend upon interpretation of ancient texts and to seek
the reconciliation and mutual understanding of warring parties. This
he does with an irenic spirit and a level of rigour that makes this a slow
read. It is not a book that should be skimmed quickly, though many will
no doubt rush to his extremely helpful summary conclusions at the end
of each chapter. These summaries are designed to drive readers into the
detail even (and especially) if they instinctively disagree with any of his
conclusions.

After an initial chapter framing the debates and outlining his own
approach, Bartlett then deals with the major biblical texts on this issue.
He moves first of all through passages addressing male and female roles in
marriage before turning to the most controversial texts on women's roles
in the church. Accordingly, he starts with 1 Corinthians 7—a text he says
complementarians have neglected—and which, he argues, demonstrates
the equal authority of husband and wife in marriage and the Christian
call of mutual submission. This leads him to Colossians 3 and Ephesians
5, and a thorough discussion of submission and headship. He rejects the
claim that 'head' means authority, arguing instead for 'source', but also
defends Paul's vision of the beauty of differentiation within marriage and
'men going first' in a sacrificial love that demonstrates saviourhood. This
leads him to an examination of Genesis 1–3 and the claim that authorita-
tive male headship can be read from it only if it is read into it. One of the
themes argued in these opening chapters is that unilateral male authority
is a culturally derived idea and that Scripture treats women with a dignity
and respect that is counter-cultural—then and now.

He then addresses 1 Peter 3 and Peter's theme of humility and mutual submission in all relationships before proceeding to the challenge of 1 Corinthians 11 and how to understand Paul's statements about veils, hair and gender. Bartlett is exhaustive in his examination of every argument and counter-argument generated by this text. What he does not do, however, is enter the more recent controversy surrounding the alleged grounding of gender roles within subordination in the Trinity. Recognising that this is an argument about which there is much disagreement even among complementarians, and arguing that in any case the text is not about the doctrine of the Trinity, he moves on quickly. This is the one area of the book I would have liked to have seen him address more thoroughly.

From there he moves on to the issue of 'silent women' in 1 Corinthians 14 and devotes a whole chapter to detailed text-critical analysis of the disputed verses 34–35, arguing that they are not original—a conclusion he accepts will not be palatable to all and which he acknowledges he himself did not find palatable. However, he argues that this is where the evidence leads, and otherwise we are left with an unresolved contradiction between 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 and what Paul affirms elsewhere in 1 Corinthians about women speaking in public. From here, he arrives at what is possibly the most difficult text of all; the apparent prohibition on female teaching in 1 Timothy 2. He gives 3 full chapters to an exhaustive unpacking of this text and the interpretive issues surrounding it and provides a model of careful, contextually-sensitive exegesis that resolves the inconsistencies of both complementarian and egalitarian understandings of this text. After one chapter on female leaders in the bible generally and another on the question of female elders in 1 Timothy 3, he concludes with a final chapter that aims to summarise his findings then draw both sides closer together by reframing the debate away from polarised camps.

Each argument and the texts he examines should be engaged with meticulously, open Bible (preferably open Greek New Testament) at hand. Such engagement pays rich dividends. I learned much from Bartlett's careful, painstaking exegesis and relentless forensic dissection of both egalitarian and complementarian arguments. His work is a masterclass in patient, humble engagement with authoritative texts together with a willingness to ask difficult questions and never settle for anything other than rigorously worked out answers. I was inspired by Bartlett's approach to Scripture as well as challenged in some of my own assumptions and came away much better informed about the background to these contemporary debates.

Any reader coming to this book from either 'camp' with humility and a willingness to engage Scripture afresh and have their (perhaps cherished) presuppositions challenged, will be rewarded richly. That, of

course, requires setting aside the sorts of prejudices that would character-ise egalitarians on the one hand as liberals who don't take the Bible seri-ously and complementarians on the other as misogynistic proof-texters. Bartlett argues that these mis-characterisations must be abandoned.

However, I feel that this book ought to come with a warning—it *will* challenge cherished presuppositions. I have carefully evaluated Bartlett's exegesis and argumentation and I find it broadly to be rigorous and con-vincing. If my evaluation is correct, there are important practical implica-tions for marriage and church life. Some readers may disagree with these implications, but the challenge is to engage with Bartlett's exegesis and argumentation, evaluating fairly each point of analysis. This book is such a serious and weighty work, that it cannot be dismissed out of hand. This is not the work of ideologically motivated partisan scholarship.

In short, this is a book that, if it is read honestly and humbly, must pro-duce change—in both 'camps'. Bartlett's conclusions may prove unpalata-ble for many on both sides who may not like the challenge to change either their views on marriage or the roles of women in the church. It remains to be seen whether we evangelicals will have the courage to change our prac-tices in line with sound biblical argument, especially when those practices have become defining sociological boundary markers and social capital measures. My fear is that, in the contemporary British evangelical world, tribal belonging (membership of the Inner Ring, if you will) is so bound up with perceived orthodoxy on this issue, that for many it will simply be too sociologically costly to re-examine their commitments in light of Scripture. However, that is precisely what we must do. For those who describe themselves as evangelical, our commitment to the authority and infallibility of Scripture must be evidenced in our willingness to allow Scripture rather than membership of any particular group to shape our thinking. A book such as this, on such a controversial topic, written with such rigour and thoroughness invites us to humble engagement in order to listen afresh to what the Bible says.

My hope in writing this review is that it will encourage deep interac-tion with Bartlett's work for the sake of the unity and witness of the body of Christ. It is brilliant piece of work and deserves to be read widely.

Mark Stirling, Chalmers Institute, St Andrews

Narrative Discipleship: Portraits of Women in the Gospel of Mark. By Jef-fery W. Aernie. Eugene, OR: Pickwick publications, 2018. ISBN 978-1-5326-4421-4. xii + 141pp. £17.00.

As the title suggests, the bedrock point in this helpful and readable work is that the good news presented in Mark's Gospel is intended to bring

about discipleship. By way of interaction with other recent work on New Testament narrative and his own engagement with text, Aernie shows that accounts featuring women are not incidental but are aptly selected to that end. It is as a consequence of his basic thesis that he defends the assertion that an essential characteristic of the community of disciples growing from Jesus ministry is that it is constituted of both women and men who model to one another insights about what it means to be His followers.

There have been shifting attitudes to narrative in Scripture informing biblical studies since the 80s, if not a little earlier. Prior to this, under the strong influence of historical critical schools (concerned with such things as sources and the redaction process), or in expository preaching contexts (due to focus on narrowly defined Christological concerns), narrative tended to be treated as decorative material. Today, partly through insights emerging in the study of the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament around plot developments (e.g. R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), '*Leitwort*' (Buber, 1936 German original, 'Leitwort Style in Pentateuchal Narrative', (in M. Buber & E. Rosenznweig, *Scripture and Translation*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), repetition and correspondence (Muilenburg, 'Form Criticism and Beyond' *JBL* 88, 1969, pp. 1-18 influencing Brueggemann, Trible, etc.), interpreters of New Testament are expanding and re-evaluating assumptions about the nature and reach of the message brought by Jesus of Nazareth. Aernie's little book is a very accessible way to explore implications. His work is lithe: it moves easily, without wasteful words, setting up core issues succinctly even as it introduces us to the key thinkers that have informed his reflection. I did, nevertheless, have to go to the web to find out how to pronounce aretegenic ('virtue-forming'), the key word around which his argument is built.

The book is divided into two parts. The first two chapters set out the relationship between biblical narrative and discipleship. They provide a helpful overview of contemporary insights on narrative exegesis. Chapters three to six then look at particular events within Mark's gospel, exploring how they contribute to the gospel's intent to stimulate embodied virtue.

Referencing Tannehill, and especially drawing strongly on Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, Aernie sets out observations to tease away traditional assumptions which have masked the relationship between Christology and discipleship. Taking the eight women he identifies as exemplars he draws attention to the way they contribute to the theological progression of the Gospel:

- Simon's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-31) and the woman suffering from chronic bleeding (Mark 5:25-34)—restored discipleship

- The Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30)—spoken discipleship

- The poor widow (Mark 12:41-44) and the woman who anoints Jesus (Mark 14:3-9)—active discipleship

- The named women of the passion narrative (Mark 15-16)—cruciform discipleship

To reflect Aernie's language, his exegetical strategy is to pay attention to not only the 'dialogical trees' which make up each scene, but also to 'the narrative forest' as well, as he takes up France's insight that 'the import of narrative is dependent not only on the sum of its parts but also on its place within the larger context of the Gospel' (R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, NIGTC, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002, p. 296). Aernie's own conclusion is that the discourses featuring women emphasise particular characteristics of Markan discipleship: restored life, kingdom speech, sacrificial action, and cruciformity. He makes a strong case for his assertion that they are not the sum total of Mark's portrait of discipleship but are essential to it.

Clearly the work is a useful contribution to students of the Gospels, whether academicians or pastors and teachers. It provides a well-informed pause for those who still skim past characters to find material that validates a position or teaching point, without grappling with original authorial intentions behind selection and sequencing of material. It makes a quiet contribution to those wanting to freshly engage the role of women characters within the Bible. As a reader with particular interests in appropriate interpretative approaches for exploring the interface between Bible and the Qur'an, and the functions of women characters within them, the book has proved a most timely resource through which to get updated.

Carol M. Walker, All Nations Christian College

Learning Biblical Hebrew: Reading for Comprehension —An Introductory Grammar. By Karl V. Kutz and Rebekah L. Josberger. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-68359-084-2. xxviii + 471pp. £32.99.

Learning Biblical Hebrew Workbook: A Graded Reader with Exercises. By Karl V. Kutz and Rebekah L. Josberger. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019. ISBN: 978-1-68359-244-0. x + 365pp. £20.58.

Over the last two decades, Kutz and Josberger have built a Hebrew program at Multnomah University. Their grammar is the product of years of teaching. This is illustrated by its various mnemonic devices, warnings against over-emphasising a grammatical element, and explaining elements encountered in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., remnants of the Qal Passive). The grammar seeks to be an introductory grammar assuming the student is an absolute beginner while at the same time trying to give details that are usually reserved for reference grammars. Thus, it seeks to be easily assessable while also trying to achieve great grammatical detail.

The strengths of the textbook include its attention to the vocalisation of ancient Hebrew and elements that effect vocalisation (e.g., historic vowels and how they lengthen and reduce which was the focus of Kutz's MA thesis). After discussing phonology and the rules governing consonantal and vowel changes, they introduce only four forms of each derived stem (i.e., *qatal* 3ms, infinitive construct, infinitive absolute, and participle) since the student's knowledge allows them to reconstruct the remaining forms. They illustrate that changes in the phonology and morphology of Hebrew can usually be cross-linguistically explained. The footnotes alert the student to exceptions to various rules or supplement the grammatical interpretation.

The workbook re-enforces the student's understanding of Hebrew morphology and phonology. It presents texts from portions of Genesis and the entire text of Ruth, Jonah, and Esther, glossing words that students have not yet learnt. There are no English to Hebrew exercises, which would have helped the student internalise vowel changes in different nominal and verbal forms. The workbook includes vocabulary lists and a glossary for the readings. The readings generally focus on understanding a lexeme or grammatical form in its narrative context. Their contextual reading approach contrasts with reading random sentences from the Hebrew Bible as in Practico and Van Pelt's workbook.

There are a few weaknesses regarding the grammar. It is wordy in contrast to Seow's grammar, for example, which is both detailed and concise. It retains outdated terminology (e.g., *waw* consecutive vs *wayyiqtol* and *weqatal*). Its explanations often lack support (e.g., *'nh* I 'to answer' was

originally '*ny* while '*nh* II 'to be humbled' was originally '*nw* on p. 307, without referring to cognate evidence in Ugaritic ['*ny*] or Arabic ['*nw*], see *HALOT* 851-853). Its characterisation can be confusing. For example, they describe the II-*w/y* verbs as either 'short' and 'long' (p. 346), by which they mean they either have the *w* or *y* present in the form (long) or not (short). Short or long highlights neither the vowel quality, nor the short *yiqtol*/jussive form (which creates confusion when mentioning them on p. 349). Their focus on mnemonic devices can result in phonologically questionable explanations (e.g., the consonant *h* is a vowel letter making the 'a' vowel in Hebrew because the 'h' sound appears at the end of the 'a' vowel in English words such as 'mocha' on pp. 11, 22-23).

The biggest issue is that the grammar seeks to be both an introductory grammar and a reference grammar. It subsequently becomes difficult to distinguish when a grammatical explanation is based on historical Hebrew grammar or when it simply makes the concept easier for the beginning student to understand. For example, the grammar states that the infinitive construct is the form on which the *yiqtol* is based (pp. 217, 233). While this approach makes it easy for the beginning student (i.e., just add the prefix to the infinitive construct to form the *yiqtol*), it is not based upon the historical development of the morphology of the Hebrew verb (i.e., the infinitive construct is not the base form of the *yiqtol*). This problem is indicative of many explanations in this grammar. The grammatical explanations leave the student wondering whether the explanation is a descriptive or accommodative one. The general approach of presenting material without support leaves the student in the dark as to the answer in a specific situation.

These weaknesses do not substantially diminish the effectiveness of this teaching grammar. It may mean, however, that students working independently will need to supplement the grammatical explanations.

In sum, there are several things to commend this grammar. It focuses on understanding morphological changes which allows the student to adjust to unexpected forms. Its linguistic, phonological, and morphological descriptions will be of benefit to the beginning student. This grammar is similar to Seow's grammar in its emphasis on historical Hebrew and proto-Semitic forms. The workbook allows the student to read the text of the Hebrew Bible instead of hypothetical sentences. The grammar by Kutz and Josberger has already been successful and it will serve more students in this format.

*Note the authors have created a website to supplement their grammar (https://lexhampress.com/learning-biblical-hebrew).

Josiah D. Peeler, University of Edinburgh

How the Bible Is Written. By Gary A. Rendsburg. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2019. ISBN: 978-1-68307-197-6. xv + 640 pp. £46.99.

In this volume, Gary A. Rendsburg consolidates a life-time of work. Rendsburg's purpose is to alert the readers of the Hebrew Bible to the literary and linguistic brilliance of the ancient Hebrew authors. He argues that the literary ability of the authors is often ignored because people are looking for other things (e.g. theological and moral teachings) or they are reading the texts in translation. Rendsburg does not discount the theological aspects of the Hebrew Bible, but he believes that the literary ability of the authors should be highlighted.

Rendsburg illustrates that the Hebrew authors knew their language well and employed sophisticated techniques in constructing these texts. Instead of emending oddities in the Hebrew text, he assumes that every textual element is significant and demonstrates its eloquence and substance by masterfully navigating the linguistic and literary issues therein. Rendsburg's close readings will be beneficial to all students of the Hebrew Bible.

Rendsburg aspires to make this book accessible to everyone, but a knowledge of Hebrew greatly increases its usefulness. For example, Rendsburg states that 'To truly know the Bible is to know this material' (p. 10). By this material, Rendsburg means ancient Hebrew phonology, the Masoretic vowel and accent system, and comparative Semitics in order to more properly understand cognates and hapax (i.e., a word appearing only once in the Old Testament).

Rendsburg focuses particularly on repetition with variation and alliteration across the texts of the Old Testament. He notes that authors use rare words to create sound plays and alliteration, for example in Psalm 55:9 (pp. 78-81). A repetitive pattern may be broken because of a sound or word play in its context. For example, YHWH tells Moses to speak (*dibber* 'to speak') to Pharaoh in Exodus 9:1. Another verb of speech (*'amar* 'to say') is contextually expected (see Ex. 7:16, 26; 8:16; 9:13). The context, however, mentions a 'plague' (*deber* 'plague, pestilence') in Exodus 9:3 and 15 and a 'thing' (*dabar* 'word, thing, matter') in Exodus 9:4, 5, and 6. In other words, the verb *dibber* 'to speak' may be specifically employed because it phonologically connects with the two nouns, *deber* 'plague' and *dabar* 'thing,' which appear in the same pericope (pp. 106-107).

Other literary devices used by the Hebrew authors include portraying the confusion of their characters. For example, Reuben uses the verb *bo'* (to come, enter) after the interrogative *'anah* (where) in Gen 37:30. Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, *'anah* (where) always appears with the verb *hlk* (to go, leave). Reuben's words, 'And I, where [*'anah*] can I come

(*bo'*)?' make little sense. This odd collocation proves Reuben's confusion (pp. 139-140). In addition, biblical texts utilise wordplays of various kinds including a bilingual pun in Exodus 16:15 (pp. 373-374), a 'cipher' which signals reading Proverbs 1:10 with 1:15 (pp. 380-381), and a play on the name Jezebel in 2 Kings 9:37 (pp. 402-404).

Biblical authors characterise the foreignness of a story or an individual by colouring a text with different vocabulary or morphology (e.g. Aramaic features in Gen. 29-31, pp. 505-510). This is called 'style-switching'. The prophets employ 'addressee-switching', where an oracle against a nation uses elements from the addressee's language. For example, the syntax of *zeh ha'am* 'this people' in Isaiah 23:13 is akin to Phoenician and Aramaic. This contrasts Hebrew *ha'am hazeh* 'this people' in Isaiah 6:10 (pp. 520-521). The form of the text follows its content. For example, Elijah, by identically repeating his unwavering devotion to YHWH at Mount Horeb, shows his steadfastness to YHWH in contrast to others in Israel in 1 Kings 19:10 and 14 (pp. 543-544).

The literary observations of Rendsburg lead him to challenge the Documentary Hypothesis and various textual emendations. It is hard to imagine, according to Rendsburg, that the texts in the Pentateuch (e.g. the Jacob story, pp. 479-482) only achieve their present form through much manipulation and scribal manoeuvring. These texts are literarily linked in a way that suggests they circulated as a unit. Similarly, Rendsburg notes that some textual emendations are suspect because they display a lack of literary awareness on the part of the critic. Often the suggestions of a textual critic elucidate an incongruity between his/her understanding and the literary aspects within the text but do not reveal an incongruity on the part of the text (p. 203n24).

This book will accomplish its goal of alerting readers to the many literary aspects of the Old Testament. Additionally, Rendsburg illustrates that attending to the literary elements of the text aids exegesis, theological interpretation (e.g. Pharaoh's heart in Exod. 7-10, pp. 47-53, 540-541), and textual criticism. The close reading of an array of passages in the Old Testament will profit anyone teaching and reading the Old Testament. Rendsburg's concluding comments on Genesis 29 (pp. 568-592), exemplifies the benefit of his approach.

Josiah D. Peeler, University of Edinburgh

Paul's Theology in Context: Creation, Incarnation, Covenant and Kingdom. By James P. Ware. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7678-2. xiv + 270pp. £23.99.

I confess to coming to this book with a mixture of apprehension and scepticism: is there much of Pauline theology that still hasn't been explored after such recent monumental tomes as N.T Wright's *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (SPCK, 2013)? I came away from reading it pleasantly surprised, stimulated and impressed. James Ware, professor of religion at the University of Evansville, sets out to provide a basic 'map' to Paul's theology for non-specialists, clergy, students and laypeople, laying out both the content of the Gospel to Gentile hearers (the fulfilment of Israel's hopes and Scriptures in Jesus) and how it would have been heard in the ancient Gentile world. Though the themes he develops are familiar, there is a refreshing crispness to the way he summarises issues. There is also an unusual but helpful emphasis on how Paul can be heard in today's religious pluralist setting through his comparing Paul's Gospel with ancient Buddhist and Hindu thought. He argues that Paul's perspective on the Gospel is vital precisely because Paul was unique among the Apostles in encountering *the ascended* and glorified Lord. Ware chooses to map Paul's exposition of the gospel under four 'key pillars': Creation, Incarnation, Covenant and Kingdom, all intertwined and interrelated. (They make an interesting contrast with N.T. Wright's familiar big themes of re-imagining monotheism, election and eschatology through the lens of the Messiah.)

Ware begins by emphasising that foundational to Paul's theology was the concept of one, transcendent creator God; a conviction that took the ancient pagan world by surprise, not least, by bringing with it a 'cosmic optimism' through the emphasis of creation's original goodness. Equally foundational is the concept of a fallen creation, but, with unexpected freshness, he argues that the 'Fall' is good news in the sense that it provided an 'astonishingly different answer' (p. 24) to the meaning of evil, sorrow, sickness and death in a pagan world where evil is seen as an eternal and unchangeable. For Paul's gospel the cosmos is 'a good world spoilt' not a world 'flawed by necessity' (p. 26). This leads him to an excellent summary of the Old Testament 'streams of expectation' of a Messiah (a coming ultimate Davidic king and the mysterious coming of Yahweh himself) and how the incarnation fulfils these two seemingly irreconcilable hopes. His subsequent emphasis on the uniqueness of the Incarnation among world religions is insightful. He sees the incarnation as the 'epicentre of Paul's theology', allowing our participatory union with God in Christ through faith.

Ware's third pillar, the Covenant, allows him to explore such issues as Paul and the law, the 'new perspective', the covenant and the cross, and justification within the covenant. I found his exposition on 'the righteousness of God' particularly clear and nuanced, seeing it as both his nature and gift, 'God's own salvation-creating righteousness that makes human beings righteous' (p. 129) and justification as 'both covenantal and participatory' (p. 136). His final pillar is the Kingdom and here he offers an interesting chapter on 'Easter in the ancient world' stressing that only in Christ is there hope of a *bodily* resurrection. The main part of the book ends with (somewhat slim) expositions of Paul's understanding of the 'new life' and 'new law' of the Gospel.

Two overall observations on the book. First, James Ware is to be commended on the creative way he turns familiar territory into an exciting journey. He really is both a good cartographer and a stimulating explorer – and an excellent wordsmith to boot. Here is a typical summary statement, 'Paul's "good news" did not offer palliatives or coping mechanisms for a world tinged with grey, but offered the promise of a pitch-dark world made shining and luminous once again' (p. 35). Second, though he states in his introduction that his book 'by no means claims to offer a complete treatment of Pauline theology', there are some massive and puzzling gaps. In his description of Paul's understanding of new life in Christ, for example, there is virtually no mention of the Spirit, nor of our eschatological hope. Even more surprising (particularly for a book aimed primarily to serve working pastors) is the worryingly scant references to the ecclesial and missional context in which Paul works through his theology. That said, it is a book I will keep turning to for its incisive appreciation of how good and new was the Gospel of Christ that Paul proclaimed.

Andrew Rollinson, Selkirk

The History of Scottish Theology: vol. 1 Celtic Origins to Reformed Orthodoxy; vol. 2 The Early Enlightenment to the Late Victorian Era; vol. 3 The Long Twentieth Century. Edited by David Fergusson and Mark W. Elliot. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. ISBN: 978-0-19-875933-1 (vol. 1); 978-0-19-875934-8 (vol. 2); 978-0-19-875935-5 (vol. 3). 1208pp total. £285 (£95 each).

These three volumes on the history of Scottish theology represent a major undertaking and we are very much in the debt of David Fergusson and Mark Elliott for bringing it to completion. It is, without doubt, the most significant compendium on Scottish theology which has ever been produced. It covers a period of around 1500 years, runs to over 1200 pages and includes essays by 75 authors. The project is almost overwhelming

in its scope and detail and will be a valued reference work. It is, however, important to distinguish two differences between this project and a dictionary or theological encyclopaedia. First, rather than focussing on the biographies of individual theologians, the emphasis is on published works and their impact. As the editors say in their introduction, 'We have resisted the temptation to work with a "great men" approach to the subject by concentrating on contexts, themes and texts'. Second, the contributions are much longer than in a typical dictionary of theology. Each essay runs to between 10 and 20 pages, depending on the range of material covered and each one has a couple of pages of bibliography at the end to guide the reader to further study. The essays are written by a wide spectrum of authors, from very experienced and much published scholars to fairly recent doctoral students writing on their specialist subjects. There is also, in the first two volumes at least (we shall return to the third volume later), a good range of theological perspectives represented. Naturally there is a degree of overlap and repetition, unavoidable in a publication of this kind (the Baillie brothers, for example, appear in a number of essays) but overall these volumes represent an intellectual feast for students, scholars, ministers and anyone with a serious interest in Scottish theology.

As well as theology *per* se, all three volumes give space to philosophy and its impact on Scottish theology. For example, in volume one we have an essay by Giovanni Gellera on 'Sixteenth Century Philosophy and Theology after John Mair'. In volume two, we have essays on 'Philosophy and Theology in the Mid-Eighteenth Century' by Thomas Ahnert and on David Hume by David Fergusson. Then in volume three, we have Adam Hood on 'From Idealism to Personalism: Caird, Oman, and Macmurray'.

The first volume: 'Celtic Origins to Reformed Orthodoxy' demonstrates the range of the essays commissioned by the editors. We have essays which deal with individual theologians like Richard of St Victor, Duns Scotus, John Knox and Andrew Melville but we also have essays on 'Liturgical Theology before 1600', on 'Political and Ecclesial Theology in the Sixteenth Century', on 'Spiritual Theology' and on 'The Bible in Sixteenth-Century Scotland'. When we come to seventeenth century theology, we have essays on Federal Theology, on the 'covenant idea', on Reformed Scholasticism and on the theology of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Particularly interesting to this reviewer were essays on the 'Aberdeen Doctors' by Aaron Denlinger and on 'Early Modern French and Dutch Connections' by James Eglinton.

The second volume: 'The Early Enlightenment to the Late Victorian Era' is also a treasure trove of information and comment. In the early part of the volume, we have a thoughtful essay by Donald Macleod on 'The Significance of the Westminster Confession' and an interesting essay by Jon-

athan Yeager looking at the relationship between the revivalist theology of Jonathan Edwards and the theological interpretation of the eighteenth century revivals in Scotland, which were stimulated by the preaching of George Whitfield among others. Stewart Brown provides a typically masterful and enlightening overview of 'Moderate Theology and Preaching c.1750-1800' and Anne MacLeod Hill provides a truly fascinating essay on 'Reformed Theology in Gaelic Women's Poetry and Song'. Earlier published volumes on Scottish theology said little or nothing about Catholic theology but here we have two articles: 'The Influence of the Scots Colleges in Paris, Rome, and Spain' by Tom McInally and 'Catholic Thought in the late Eighteenth Century: George Hay and John Geddes' by Raymond McCluskey. We also have essays on such diverse subjects as 'Theology, Slavery, and Abolition 1756-1848', 'Scottish Literature in a Time of Change' and 'Extra-Terrestrials and the Heavens in Nineteenth-Century Theology'!

The third volume: 'The Long Twentieth Century' again provides a wide range of essays. As well as the expected essays on James Denney and P. T. Forsyth, John and Donald Baillie, T. F. Torrance, Ronald Gregor Smith and on the influence of Karl Barth in Scotland, we have some less anticipated themes. For example, a most interesting essay on the Gifford Lectures, one on the publisher T & T Clark (under the title of 'The Dissemination of Scottish Theology') as well as essays on 'Theology and Art in Scotland', on social theology and on Scottish national identity. There are also chapters on Catholic theology and on Episcopalian theology. It is clear throughout the three volumes that the choice of author for each subject area must have been difficult for the editors and the resultant essays might very well have been different had others been chosen. The best example of this is Ian Bradley's 'The Revival of Celtic Christianity'. Had this been written by his regular sparring partner Donald Meek, it would have been very different, although Bradley does try to present Meek's position.

Having greatly enjoyed these volumes, as well as learning a huge amount, it might seem churlish to finish with criticism but, in comparison to the theological breadth of the first two volumes (both in terms of writers and content), volume three was disappointing. One could easily read volume three and come away with the impression that there was no vibrant conservative evangelical theology in Scotland during the second half of the twentieth century. In volume two, John McIntosh has an excellent article on 'Eighteenth-Century Evangelicalism' but there is nothing similar for the twentieth century. All the way through volume three, I was waiting for an assessment of evangelical theology but it did not come. When I came to the final essay in the volume, 'Reformed Theology in the

Later Twentieth Century', I thought that perhaps at last evangelical theology might get a mention. Instead, we went back over old ground, already covered in several earlier essays, by looking at the conflict between the Barthian theology in Edinburgh (T. F. Torrance) and the existentialist theology in Glasgow (Ronald Gregor Smith *et al*) with John McIntyre portrayed as the middle ground!

In dealing with this lacuna, there are several general comments worth making, before looking particularly at two of the essays.

First, why do the 'diaspora' articles on Canada and Australasia focus almost exclusively on the 'uniting' churches in those countries and their theologians, while ignoring the 'continuing' churches, which remained committed to an evangelical and reformed perspective? Also, why is there no 'diaspora' article on the USA? This would have allowed for some assessment of the Scottish theologian Professor John Murray, who spent his academic career at Princeton and then at Westminster Theological Seminary. It could surely be argued that his teaching and writing influenced as many people (or more) than some of those mentioned in the other diaspora essays, not least many in Scotland.

Second, although there are essays which deal in some detail with Donald Mackinnon and P. T. Forsyth, who spent large parts of their career in England, there is nothing about the Scottish theologians and biblical scholars in both Scotland and England who helped to create institutions like Inter Varsity Press and Tyndale House. Through their teaching, publications, conferences etc., their work enabled evangelical theological students to maintain high academic standards while not letting go of their evangelical position. This list would include J. H. S. Burleigh, G. T. Thomson, Donald MacLean, Francis Davidson, Daniel Lamont, F. F. Bruce, Andrew Walls and J. G. S. S. Thomson. There followed another generation which included J. D. Douglas, Howard Marshall, David Wright, Geoffrey Grogan, Tom Noble and others. The argument is not that these writers made a significant contribution to Scottish theology per se but rather that they existed alongside the Barthians in Aberdeen and Edinburgh, the existentialists in Glasgow and the process theologians like Shaw in St Andrews. That is to say, there was a group of traditional evangelical scholars who continued to follow a more confessional paradigm, who perhaps deserved a mention, lest it be thought that Scotland in its entirety was working out various strands of Swiss and Germanic theology!

Third, it is good to see essays on Episcopalian and Roman Catholic theology in the twentieth century but why is there nothing on the work of Baptists, Methodists and the Charismatic/Pentecostal movement? In volume two, David Bebbington has a good essay on 'Dissenting Theology

from the 1720s to the 1840s' but there is nothing similar for the twentieth century. At the very least, surely Tom Smail should have been mentioned? His writing, especially on the Trinity, his leadership within the charismatic movement (giving it some theological substance), his organisation of the Fountain Trust and his involvement in ecumenical dialogue justifies some mention. I am aware that there was a reluctance to deal with theologians who were still living but William Storrar, John Riches, Stuart Chalmers and others received some coverage.

The lack of any serious attention to evangelical theology is highlighted by two essays in particular. Sandy Forsyth, writing about 'The Theology and Practice of Mission in Mid-Twentieth Century Scotland' deals with Tom Allan, the Tell Scotland movement and the Billy Graham crusades of the 1950s but Allan's vision of parish-based mission led by the laity is deemed to have failed. Also, he slavishly follows Peter Bisset in noting that the decline in membership of the Church of Scotland began after the Billy Graham crusades, with an underlying implication that these two facts were linked in some way. This mantra has long been part of the 'received wisdom' in the Church of Scotland but needs to be re-assessed. Is it not arrogant to suggest that the sole test of the value of the Graham crusades is the declining membership of the Church of Scotland thereafter? Ten years after a World War, were there not many other factors influencing church membership in Scotland? A more positive assessment of the Graham campaigns might involve consideration of the very large number of ministers, missionaries and other Christian workers (from many denominations) who were converted during those campaigns and thereafter gave lifetimes of service. Forsyth, having dealt with the evangelicals, goes on to applaud the work done by the Iona Community, the Gorbals Group and modern ecumenism but says nothing about the evangelical renewal in the Church of Scotland fostered by William Still, James Philip, Eric Alexander and the Crieff Ministers' Fellowship (over 400 ministers in its heyday). Was not this evangelical movement the precise working out of Tom Allan's vision of vibrant evangelical congregations, whose members came together for the ministry of the Word and prayer and who were then expected to reach out to those around them with the Gospel? Nor does Forsyth touch on the mission and evangelism carried out by Scripture Union, Inter Varsity Fellowship (later UCCF) and others. As an assessment of mission and evangelism in twentieth century Scotland, Forsyth's essay is surely found wanting.

The other essay worth mentioning is that of Lesley Orr: 'Late Twentieth-Century Controversies in Sexual Ethics'. This essay provides an entirely one-sided, feminist view of the changing social, sexual and moral views within the Church of Scotland and within society more broadly.

Apart from a quotation from Norman Shanks to the effect that 'there were signs of an orchestrated campaign' carried out by the Crieff Fellowship and Rutherford House, there is no suggestion that there even existed a principled opposition to proposed changes to the Church's moral and theological position, particularly relating to homosexuality, for good biblical and theological reasons. An academic essay in a volume of this kind surely demands a more balanced representation of the different sides in the controversy and a fair exposition of their views. Her bibliography reflects this one-sidedness. For example, having discussed the 'Motherhood of God' debate, one would at least have expected to see mention of the publication by Professor David Wright of New College on the subject.

Perhaps in a future edition of this *History of Scottish Theology*, we might have an essay on 'Evangelicalism in Twentieth Century Scottish Theology' and a more balanced approach from some of the contributors.

Despite these criticisms of volume three, however, this *History of Scottish Theology* is to be commended and will repay careful study. It is a little expensive for the average private buyer at £95 per volume but it will inevitably become a standard work on its subject and therefore available in all good theological libraries.

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Stumbling Towards Zion: Recovering the Biblical Tradition of Lament in the era of World Christianity. By David W. Smith. Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-78368-777-0. 166pp. £10.99; Kindle £5.39.

However and whenever we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, and whatever further outbreaks await us, this book is most powerful and timely. David Smith, a statesman of the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society, takes readers on a poignant and moving journey through both scripture and the experience and insights of the global church to show the key place of 'lament' in spiritual understanding and apologetic. Beginning with his personal journey as he sat with his wife dying in front of him, he reflects on his own loss and life-shaping encounters with global brothers and sisters, engaging with their godly responses to the realities they and we are facing.

After a heartfelt appeal to recover the 'Lost Biblical Tradition' of lament, he takes us through 'The Testimony of biblical Israel' to find the same themes embedded in 'the Testimony of the Jesus Movement' and 'The witness of Paul.' He then considers how to be 'Speaking of God' given that questions asked by key players in Scripture are '*not* arising from unbelief; on the contrary [… they're] asked from within a theistic

faith at the point where the believer's most cherished convictions become the source of an insoluble dilemma' (p. 75). Finally, 'Biblical Lament and the Future for World Christianity' urges us to see justification and the compassion of God as something much more than individual comfort. Appendices on 'Paul's Missionary Theology' and 'A Global chorus Singing New Songs' add extra insights.

As we've been discovering, scripture leaps off the page in crises. Walter Brueggemann observed: 'texts that *linger* when written down and preserved as Scripture… *explode* at a later date when a particular set of life circumstances causes them to come alive with new power and relevance' (p. 3). This short but tightly-packed book will give you pause for reflection on almost every page, footnotes included. The only thing missing is a biblical index.

The book will tear emotions and stretch assumptions. As he wrote, Smith was finding lament a stranger in church, leaving a loyal churchman unchurched at a key time. The cheery appeal to shrug off life's difficulties and lift our spirits in God's presence left him feeling disconnected and forlorn as he plunged into a long wilderness experience. 'I was utterly incapable of songs of praise and knew only a kind of emotional paralysis which drained life of joy and threatened the loss of meaning' (p. 23).

The biblical stream of lament proved his friend, and in his isolation it grew into a forceful river of perspective and spiritual reality. Yet 'the neglect of the traditions of lament by Christians in the Western world is not replicated across the Majority World, where millions of members of the body of Christ live in circumstances which can mean these very traditions *are crucial to spiritual survival in an unjust and cruel world.*' (p. 7, his italics).

The result? Questions arise about what we call 'worship', and we realise our focus has narrowed, our horizons have shrunk, and our witness is skewed by 'our own presuppositions […] the values of our culture […] the norms of our group' (p. 61f), in stark contrast to the realities world Christians cannot miss. Asian theologian Kazoh Kitamori's 'Theology of the Pain of God' echoes Bonhoeffer's 'Only a suffering God can help' (pp. 17, 81). Smith reflects at length on Alan Lewis's 'Between Cross and Resurrection' as a sharp description of where we are. Now 'Christianity has become a *non-Western religion*' (p. 88), with biblical lament a prominent feature of worship and prayer, it's the West's turn to learn to live out 'Easter Sunday' hope in a 'holy Saturday' context.

Once we emerge from fear of the hidden virus, we may go back to where we were, something we consider to be 'normal'. After an international climate jubilee, global lockdown, united efforts to counter and

defeat Corona, and the global focus on doing only the important things, we may just come out different.

And we may come out with a greater appreciation of the balance of scripture, as we mourn the loss of too many loved ones and very likely much of our lifestyles. How our churches will change remains to be seen. This majestic book will be a sure and stimulating guide to lament, our rediscovered global friend, complementing praise to enable our churches to be 'spheres of truth' (p. 110) and offer genuine hope – 'Credible Testimony in a Broken World' (p. 118).

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