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EDITORIAL

With this issue, the *Journal of Grace Theology* enters its second year of publication. We have reached our minimum goal for subscribers, although we hope to continue to expand this base in the future. There are a number subscriptions from Bible College and Seminary libraries and I have personally have had several contacts from people asking about the *Journal*.

I have been asked how people might participate in the *Journal*. First, please subscribe and/or renew your subscriptions. The subscription price covers most of the cost of printing and mailing; without sufficient subscriptions it would be impossible to produce the *Journal*. Second, you may give a special gift to the GGF to help defray the cost of publication. The first issue was supported by a generous gift, for which we are extremely thankful. Third, contribute an article. The last pages of this issue gives some details on what sorts of articles are appropriate for the *Journal*. I am personally encouraged when people tell me they are working on an article, short note or book review (even more so when I receive their finished work!)

This issue begins with “A Brief Introduction to The New Perspective on Paul.” Phillip J. Long offers a short introduction to an extremely complicated topic which has been controversial in Pauline studies in the evangelical world for the last two decades. This is primarily due to the popularity of the work of N. T. Wright and the sometimes fiery responses he generates. Given the amount of material published both for and against ideas associated with the New Perspective, it is important Mid-Acts Dispensationalists understand the issues since we have something to contribute to this ongoing discussion.

Dale S. DeWitt’s article on Leadership Ministry Gifts in the Church is a short section from his larger book on ecclesiology. DeWitt surveys the terminology used for leaders in the New Testament (evangelists, pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons) and compares them to charisma-lists in the Pauline letters. Based on this evidence, he argues leadership gifts are gifts of the Holy Spirit. This article is not limited to the obvious terms for leaders in the New Testament, DeWitt surveys the wide variety of terms Paul uses to describe church leadership.

Executive Director of Grace Missions International Jeremy Clark asks “Does the New Testament Provide a Model for Strategic Ministry Planning?” How to apply the book of Acts to contemporary models of ministry is a widely discussed issue in recent literature on church growth. Clark examines both Acts and Romans in order to argue Paul is a model for strategic ministry planning.

Matthew H. Loverin contributes a challenging article suggesting Christological as starting point for evangelicals who think about the difficult ethical issues facing the twenty-first century church (“Responsibility, Obedience, and Moral Order: Toward a Christological Starting Point for Christian Ethics.”) After examining several recent Protestant ethicists, Loverin argues for an ethic centered on obedience to Christ.

Scott D. Shaw offers a psychologist’s view of “Philippians 4:8 and the Brain.” Since Paul encourages his readers to “think on these things,” Shaw examines several approaches to how the brain functions from a neuroscience perspective and reads Philippians 4:8 with this background in mind.

Pastor Jim Shemaria offers some insight on preaching on the difficult text in Ephesians 5:22, “wives submit to your husbands.” By examining Roman household structure, Shemaria places the command into the culture of Roman Ephesus and makes several suggestions to help the pastor teach this important passage.

Pastor James R. Gray offers a short note on Acts 1:6-7, asking “did the apostles miss the point” when they asked about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel? Gray thinks the apostles were right in their understanding of what the restoration was, but they may not have expected the rejection of the kingdom in Acts.

John Caprari examines Paul’s missionary journeys in Acts in order to trace Paul’s missionary method. His main question in the article is whether Paul’s method was “strategic or spontaneous.” John is a senior Pastoral major at Grace Bible College and wrote this paper as a part of a seminar class on the Book of Acts. Since his goal is to do ministry in Africa, this article is very practical.

As always, the *Journal* concludes with a series of book reviews on topics of interest to pastors and teachers. If you are interested in contributing a book review to the *Journal*, please contact the editor. A book review is a good way to share something you have found valuable with other pastors and writing the review may encourage you to think more deeply about the topic.

Once again, thank you for your support during this first year of publication, I look forward to our future discussions in the *Journal of Grace Theology*.

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A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO
THE NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PAUL

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INTRODUCTION

It is hard to imagine a recent book on Paul's theology which does not address the so-called New Perspective on Paul (NPP). Since Ed Sanders published *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*¹, a landslide of books have been published developing and modifying his ideas. James Dunn wrote an important Pauline theology² developing his understanding of Paul as well as two major works on Jesus³ and Acts.⁴ The 2010 meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society was almost entirely devoted to a discussion of the New Perspective, especially as expressed in the writings of N. T. Wright.⁵ I heard many papers at this meeting decrying the New Perspective on Paul as an attack on the assured results of the Reformation. In fact, one paper concluded with a lengthy quote of the Westminster Confession, as if that somehow proved the point being argued. On the other hand, there were also many papers from devotees of N. T. Wright so enamored of the man they failed to critique his ideas fairly. In addition to books arguing for a more traditional view of Paul, several recent works have sought to go beyond the New Perspective.⁶

¹Ed Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

²James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998).

³James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003).

⁴James D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008).

⁵N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997); *Paul: A Fresh Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2009).

⁶Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective* (Grand Rapids,

Usually these sorts of scholarly arguments are confined to the Academy. Several factors have dragged the New Perspective out of the university or seminary classroom and into the popular media. First, the growing popularity of N. T. Wright over the last few years has brought these ideas to the public's attention. Wright has attempted to communicate at the popular level both in print and in his many speaking engagements every year. Second, since Wright is perceived as a representative of the NPP, he has come under fire from advocates of the traditional view of Paul's theology. This too has taken place in popular media rather than academic debates. For example, John Piper wrote a popular book seeking to correct Wright and defend the traditional view of justification by faith.⁷ Wright responded with a book intended for laymen, *Justification*.⁸ Third, the recent phenomenon of "the blog" has propelled otherwise arcane theological debates into the public eye. Bloggers do not have the same level of accountability as a major publisher and are far more likely to describe Wright as an arch-heretic bent on destroying Reformation churches. When this sort of thinking is picked up by blog readers, it rapidly grows to conspiracy theory levels.

The New Perspective on Paul is not a dangerous idea which will destroy the heart of Christianity, although it does force a reconsideration of some of the assumptions of the Protestant Reformation. But this is far from turning Protestants back into Catholics. As Wright frequently says, all he is trying to do is to continue the Reformation by being faithful to Scripture and accurately describing Paul's theology. Of course, that is what advocates of the traditional view of Paul are claiming as well.

I find the reactions to Sanders, Dunn and Wright somewhat bewildering, mostly because I do not work within a context of a Protestant Reformed denomination. I have always resonated with a more Calvinist view of salvation, but I am not bound by a commitment to a confession nor do I have a strong affinity for Luther or Calvin. Since the tradition in which I fellowship "moved beyond the reformation" in eschatology and ecclesiology, I wholeheartedly agree with Wright when he claims there is nothing wrong with "reforming the Reformation." Luther and Calvin would want the dis-

Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007); Douglas Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009). Douglas Moo reviewed this book, "Review Article: The Deliverance Of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification In Paul By Douglas A. Campbell," *JETS* 53 (2010): 143–50

⁷John Piper, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2007).

⁸N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2009).

cussion of Pauline theology to continue and make use of all of the evidence available today. In fact, I think there much in the New Perspective on Paul resonates with Mid-Acts Dispensationalism, although some elements will challenge Dispensational thinkers to continue to clarify their understanding of Paul.

I will admit this article is a brief overview. Each of the topics covered in this article could be a developed into chapter of a book. My goal in this article is to provide a brief orientation to the New Perspective on Paul so students and pastors can read books from or about the New Perspective with proper context.

1. WHAT WAS THE OLD PERSPECTIVE?

Before examining the challenge of the New Perspective on Paul, it is important to have some understanding of what the traditional view on Paul is. At the foundation of Sanders' critique of the standard view of Paul is the claim Luther read Paul through the lens of his own struggle with sin and his battle with the Pelagian or semi-Pelagian Roman Catholic Church which claimed one could earn merit before God by performing good deeds. Sanders wants scholars to return to the sources and examine what Second Temple Judaism really believed without using the lens Luther imposes on these sources.⁹ Modern scholars have a great deal more literature illustrating first century Jewish theology available to them than Luther and Calvin did. The Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, were unknown until the mid-twentieth century and are still only just being used to shed light on the Second Temple period and Pauline theology.

Much of what is written on the traditional view is more or less Systematic Theology with respect to method. This is not necessarily negative, but Luther and Calvin did not "do biblical theology" quite the same way it is done today. They simply were unable to examine the historical and cultural background to Pauline literature in the way a modern scholar can. While the Reformers did return to the text of Scripture, they did so in order to serve a developing theological Reformation and often became embroiled in political issues caused by the Reformation.

In his book on the New Perspective on Paul, Stephen Westerholm provides a seven-point summary of what he calls the "Lutheran" Paul.¹⁰ He

⁹Second Temple Judaism refers to post-exilic and intertestamental history and literature. While this period 538 B.C. to A. D. 135, most of the literature of the period dates to about 200 B.C. through the end of the first century A. D.

¹⁰Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and his Critics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 88-97.

arrives at these points after examining the Pauline Theology of Augustine, Luther, Calvin and Wesley. I am summarizing his points here and offer some commentary. First, human nature was created good, but has become corrupted by sin and is unable to please the Creator. This entails the idea that all who are in Adam are also in his sin. Romans 5 clearly indicates Adam's sin is somehow imputed to his descendants so all humans have a sinful nature which separates them from a holy God. Second, humans must therefore be "justified by divine grace" through faith, apart from works. This is the cornerstone of the Reformation: since humans do not merit salvation, they can only be saved by a sovereign act of a gracious God. Third, this justification by faith leaves humans with nothing to boast before God. Ephesians 2:8-9 demonstrates Paul's view that no person could stand before God as their judge and claim to have done anything to merit salvation, either before or after they were justified. Fourth, even though humans are justified by God's grace, they are still expected to do good works. There is an unfortunate misunderstanding by some theologians in the Reformed tradition think after justification, a believer may "sin all they want." It is clear from Paul's letters he expects believers to behave in a certain way. Romans 6:1 addresses this clearly: "should we sin that grace may about?" Paul answer is certainly not, it makes no sense for those who are in Christ to continue to sin. But he never threatens his readers with a loss of salvation. Fifth, the Law was given to awaken the awareness of sin in humans. The role of the Jewish law is the burden of Galatians. Paul argues in Galatians that the believer is not required to keep the Law since it only functioned as a guide until God acted decisively in Jesus. Sixth, sin is still a reality in the life of the believer. Westerholm comments there is a difference in the way Wesley or Luther deal with the problem of sin, but nevertheless they both recognize humans still sin even after they are justified before God. Last, divine grace may or may not be irresistible. Again, this varies between Luther/Calvin and Wesley, although both are within the "Reformation tradition." For some, the very act of expressing faith may constitute a "work" which can be seen as a human contribution to salvation.

For the most part, the first five points in this list are the core of the Gospel. I have strong opinions on the last two points and there is considerable divergence in various streams of the Reformation. These theological points, when properly defined, are a solid theological response to the growing influence of Pelagianism in the Roman Catholic Church in the sixteenth century. Each of the first five points can be supported with ample texts in the Pauline letters.

The challenge of the New Perspective is to start with the text in the proper historical climate. Is it possible this outline of systematic theology is not what Paul intended at all? At the heart of the problem is the traditional view of Judaism as a religion of works.

2. JUDAISM AS A RELIGION OF GRACE

There are a few ideas and texts on which the New Perspective differs from the traditional view. First and foremost is the nature of Judaism in the first century. From the traditional perspective, Judaism was a legalistic religion which *required* works for salvation. This was often stated but rarely proven. Perhaps because of an undercurrent of anti-Semitism, but more often than not it was simply out of ignorance of what Jews actually believed in the Second Temple period.

Sanders turned this assumption on its head—Judaism was in fact a religion centered on God’s grace, as demonstrated in his election of Israel as his people and his gracious gift of the covenant. Of critical importance is the election of Israel as God’s people and the covenant he made with them. The first century Jewish philosopher Philo states: “Yet out of the whole human race He chose as of special merit and judged worthy of pre-eminence over all, those who are in a true sense men, and called them to the service of Himself, the perennial fountain of things excellent” (*Spec. Laws* 1.303). Similar statements of Israel’s election are common in nearly all the literature of the second temple. Equally common are statements about the covenant God sought to initiate with the people he had chosen. Sanders cites Pseudo-Philo: “I will give my light to the world and illumine their dwelling places and establish my covenant with the sons of men and glorify my people above all the nations” (*Bibl. Antiq.* 11.1f).¹¹

Israel’s election is confirmed by God’s gift of the Law and his requirement of obedience to the Law. Everything we have learned about Judaism so far has been predicated on God giving the law to Israel and requiring his people to obey it. Because Israel is chosen and given the responsibility of obedience, she is liable for both rewards and punishment. Israel experiences both God’s justice and mercy through the Law (Josephus, *Antiq.* 1.14; 3.321, 4.286).

¹¹Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 264. Pseudo-Philo is a retelling of biblical stories originally written in Hebrew probably in the late first century A.D. The book claims to be written by Philo of Alexandria, but this is unlikely as Philo wrote in Greek, not Hebrew. At several points in the text Pseudo-Philo contradicts Philo. The importance of the book for New Testament studies is in giving us an idea of how Jews of the first century may have understood their own history, although this is rather limited since the texts “expanded” by Pseudo-Philo are not discussed by the New Testament authors.

Perhaps the most controversial point in Sanders' review of common Jewish theology is that Judaism was a religion of grace. Christians often describe Judaism as a works-salvation in contrast to Paul's salvation by grace alone. But as Sanders argues, everything in Second Temple Judaism seems to point to the grace of God in this life. Whatever one has, whatever one is, it is only by the grace of God. People did not do the various "works of righteousness" such as reciting the *shema*, prayer, wearing *tefillin*, etc. in order to receive grace, but rather as a response to God's grace already given to them.

To summarize this point for Sanders: Election is what "gets them in the covenant" and obedience is what "keeps them in." There are a number of mechanisms used to deal with disobedience, but all of them are expressions of God's grace. There is nothing Israel did to merit this election and Israel is given every help possible by God's grace to assist them in the "keeping in" element.

3. DID PAUL CONVERT TO CHRISTIANITY?¹²

Critics of the traditional view often observe Paul's experience on the road to Damascus is described in terms of the conversion of Augustine or Luther. Both men found their experience parallel to Paul's and meditated deeply on what God did in their lives to release them from the weight of their guilt. This traditional view of Paul's conversion is that he underwent a spiritual a psychological conversion. If Romans 7:7-25 deals with Paul's apparent struggle with sin prior to his conversion, then there is evidence for a deep spiritual and psychological reversal in Paul's conversion. Paul is traditionally described as a Pharisee struggling with sin and guilt from his inability to keep the Law. Paul is the "wretched man" (Rom 7:24) who is constantly "kicking against the goads" (Acts 26:14) and resisting the Holy Spirit. His conversion releases him from the weight of the guilt of his sin; he experiences justification by faith and converts from legalism of Judaism to the freedom of Christianity.

The New Perspective on Paul calls this traditional view into question. James Dunn has built on the work of Krister Stendhal to argue Paul did not experience a conversion from one religion to another. Rather, Paul re-

¹²There is a huge bibliography of essays and monographs on this issue; the critical articles include: J. D. G. Dunn, "'A Light to the Gentiles' or 'The End of the Law'? The Significance of the Damascus Road Christophany for Paul" in Dunn, Paul, Jesus, and the Law, 89-107. See also Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982); After Kim was critiqued by Dunn and others, he responded in a number of articles collected in *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002).

ceived a call of God that is quite parallel with the prophetic calls of the Hebrew Bible, especially that of Jeremiah. The Damascus Road experience as a theophany, not unlike what Isaiah experienced in Isaiah 6. Paul experienced the glory of God and was called to a prophetic ministry as the light to the Gentiles. Paul never left Judaism, Stendahl argued, he remained a faithful Jew who was fulfilling his prophetic calling. Dunn points out that Paul stayed “zealous,” but instead of zealous for the Law he became zealous as the “light to the Gentiles.”¹³ This view of Paul’s conversion is that he does not “establish a new religion” but rather a new understanding of the Jewish Law. His gospel is a new interpretation of the Hebrew Bible and Judaism. Paul may not have changed even parties within Judaism: he went from a Pharisee who did not believe Jesus was the messiah to a Pharisee who did believe Jesus was the messiah.

The problem with this new view of Paul’s experience on the road to Damascus is that it does not do justice to the radicalness of Paul’s Gospel! To reject circumcision, even for Gentile converts, is not a minor re-interpretation of the Jewish Law. Gentile salvation apart from the Law is a radical change unanticipated in the prophets. The reaction of the Jews in Acts demonstrates this point. Whenever Paul announces God has called the Gentiles to be saved without circumcision, the Jews riot and attempt to kill Paul.

Philippians 3:7-8 make it clear that Paul is not just moving to another party within Judaism, but rather that he is rejecting his Pharisaic roots completely. He is breaking with his past way of life and his past theology. While there are many points of comparison between Paul’s theology and Judaism, there are significant radical breaks with the Judaism of the first century. While it is possible Paul thought he was staying within Judaism, his contemporaries disagreed. This probably included a few Christians Jews who disagreed with his view of the Law for Gentiles.

But it is also problematic to think Paul is converting “from Judaism to Christianity.” Paul seems rather clear in Galatians he was called by God to be the apostle to the Gentiles in a way quite distinct from the apostles in Jerusalem. Paul stresses his independence clearly in Galatians. He never joins the Jerusalem church, nor does he receive his commission from them, but he is called by God to do a different task than the Twelve, he is the apostle to the Gentiles. Despite the expansion of the apostolic witness to Hellenistic Jews and God-Fearers, the Twelve do not do ministry outside

¹³Dunn, “Paul’s Conversion,” 90.

of the house of Israel in the book of Acts. Galatians 1-2 seems to be saying there was a tacit agreement between Paul and Peter marking the “boundaries” of their ministerial territory. Paul will go to the Gentiles and Peter to the Jews.

The New Perspective is right to question the way Paul’s conversion is described in popular preaching, and it is right to see Paul’s experience on the road to Damascus in terms of a prophetic call. Perhaps it is better describe the Damascus Road experience as both a conversion and a call. But to think of the categories “conversion” and “call” in modern Christian categories is a mistake, Paul’s experience in Acts 9 is quite unique in salvation history.

4. WORKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND BOUNDARY MARKERS

Two factors are important for understanding the phrase “works of righteousness” in the Second Temple period. First, by the second century B.C., Jews were becoming increasingly Hellenistic. Some turned their back on distinctive Jewish practices such as circumcision and food traditions. There is a great deal of literature produced by various Jewish writers during this period presenting Judaism as an ancient and rational religion. But this was not evangelistic literature written with the intention of converting pagans to Judaism. For the most part, these books are aimed at the Jews considering drifting further into the Greek world. A text like the *Letter of Aristeas*, for example, wants to keep young men from leaving their ancestral faith altogether by offering rational explanations for some of the more arcane Jewish practices. For this reason characters from the Hebrew Bible like Phineas, Levi and Simeon became popular. These were men who fought against assimilation with the Canaanites with violence.

A second factor in the development of Second Temple period Judaism was the failure of Deuteronomic Theology. The Law promises if someone kept the covenant, then blessings from God would follow. The ultimate blessing for Jerusalem in the Hebrew Bible is that it would truly become the center of the world and Gentiles would flock to Mount Zion to worship the God of the Israel. If the Jews are keeping the law properly, why is their role is shrinking on the world stage?

One reaction is to drop the cultural boundary markers, or downplay them considerably. There are examples of Jews who were completely Greco-Roman, such as Philo’s nephew, Tiberius Julius Alexander (Josephus, *Antiq.* 20.100). The opposite reaction is to increase the commitment to these markers, to do the Law as it was meant to be done in the first

place. The few who do so will be “saved” (i.e., the Qumran community and the author of *4 Ezra*). On the other hand, to survive the exile, some Jews re-emphasized their religious traditions as embodied in the Torah. John Collins emphasized the following four key elements: Monotheism, Revelation, Election, and Covenant. Monotheism and Revelation are not good boundary markers (you have a God who reveals himself to you, so does everyone else). All of the literature of this period clearly accepts as foundational the *shema*, “God is One,” and the Torah is God’s revelation.

Election and covenant can be boundary markers. It was important for Jews to define who was “in” and who is “out” of the covenant. Most of the literature of this period concerns question. In 1 Maccabees the clear boundaries are Sabbath, circumcision and dietary laws. In *Jubilees*, *1 Enoch* and Qumran literature proper calendar is included as a boundary marker. In *Sirach* a life of wisdom marks out the elect. E. P. Sanders’ conception of Second Temple period Judaism under the rubric of “Covenantal Nomism” is an application of these last two emphases. Election is what gets one into the Covenant, if you are Israel then you are “in.” What maintains Israel’s relationship with God is the performance of the boundary markers: circumcision, Sabbath and food laws.

How does this impact Pauline theology? When Paul says “works of righteous,” the New Perspective on Paul hears “boundary markers,” not Torah. The traditional view would hear “The Whole Law.” Dunn uses Gal 3:10-14 as a “test case.”¹⁴ A traditional reading of this text would understand the statement “everyone under the Law is under a curse” in the light of the book of Deuteronomy and the curses and blessings. Not so, says Dunn, the “works of the Law” here ought to be read in the context of Galatians, circumcision and food traditions. These are the “boundary markers” of Second Temple period Judaism. Rather than a polemic against the whole Law, the New Perspective sees Paul is claiming those who are “in Christ” cannot take on the boundary markers of Judaism.

¹⁴“Works of the Law” and the ‘Curse of the Law,’” pages in 215-36, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*.

5. WORKS OF THE LAW¹⁵

While Sanders' work on Judaism is foundation for the New Perspective on Paul, he built on the foundation laid by W. D. Davies¹⁶ and others who argued that Second Temple Judaism was not a legalistic "works for salvation" religion. Second Temple Judaism was a religion based on the gracious love of God. As Protestant Systematic Theology created doctrine, scholars read that doctrine into the Pauline letters. Sanders argued post-Reformation studies on Paul failed to understand Second Temple period Judaism properly. The only way to correct this mis-reading was to return to the sources and study how Judaism understood itself.

Yet texts like Rom 4:4-5 and Eph 2:8-9 sound as though there were some people who did good works in order to obtain salvation rather than "just believing." Sanders pointed out that Jews never believed anyone could obtain salvation or achieve righteousness by keeping the law or doing "good works." James Dunn says the traditional view of Paul has confused "achieving righteousness" and "maintaining righteousness." The traditional view of Paul understands the phrase "works of the Law" as the things the Law makes obligatory and when Paul uses the phrase, he means Torah. Torah is what is required of God's covenant people. As Lev 18:5 says, "Anyone who keeps these commands will live by them."

But in Second Temple period Judaism, the Law eventually began to reinforce Israel's privilege before God. What separated Israel from the nations were the Works of the Law, not the whole Torah, but the boundary markers for Judaism. Avoiding idolatry was the supreme Work of the Law, but circumcision, Sabbath, food laws and laws of cleanliness were all critically important for defining who was a Jew and who was not. The struggle of the Jews prior to the Maccabean revolt shows how important these boundary markers were. In 1 Mac 1:60-63 women who allowed their children to be circumcised were put to death by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Many Jews "chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die" (1 Macc 1:63). The boundary markers

¹⁵Sanders has several books which are foundation for the New Perspective. Of primary importance is his *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. Sanders also edited two volumes of essays on Paul: *Jewish and Christian Self Definition Volume 1 & 2* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980, 1981). In addition, his *Paul, The Law and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) and *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE - 66 CE* (Philadelphia: Trinity, 1992) are excellent introductions to the state of what Sanders calls "common Judaism" of the Second Temple period.

¹⁶W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1948); the fourth edition with a new introduction by Davies, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980).

were not minor differences in the practice of Judaism, they were the very things Many Jews would chose to die over. In short, the boundary markers defined Israel's uniqueness as God's people.

One of the most important piece of evidence for the New Perspective is a recently published Dead Sea Scroll fragment, 4QMMT.¹⁷ This text comes from the early days of the Qumran community and seems to use the phrase "Works of the Law" to describe a list of twenty practices setting the community apart from the rest of Judaism. For many New Perspective writers, this document proves at least some Jews used the phrase Works of the Law for distinctive practices which defined Jews. As Dunn says, "The Works of the Law are what distinguish Jew from Gentile."¹⁸

6. JUSTIFICATION¹⁹

Justification is one issue which has invigorated critics of the New Perspective to new heights of rhetorical which would make Luther himself proud. For example, Louis DeBoer of the Trinity Foundation asks "Are Evangelicals so enthralled by Bishops and Brits that they are blind to the realities of the situation?"²⁰ N. T. Wright has been at the forefront of this discussion of Paul's view of justification by faith. His *Justification* answer John Piper's pre-emptive strike on Wright's views.

First, some perspective. When Sanders published *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, one of his major burdens was to show that the traditional (Lutheran) view of Paul was a distortion. Luther read Paul and the Pharisees in the light of his own struggle against Rome. Sanders amassed the evidence which showed Judaism was a religion of grace and was not proto-Pelegian. Jews in the first century did not think they earned their salvation, rather they were "right with God" because they were the elect of God.

The problem with Sanders's work is he destroyed the assumptions of a stream of theology without providing any real replacement for it. His

¹⁷Lawrence H. Schiffman, "The New Halakhic Letter (4QMMT) and the Origins of the Dead Sea Sect," *Biblical Archaeologist* 53 (1990): 64-73. The letter is preserved in six fragments and appears to describe the beginnings of the Qumran community as they separated from the Temple aristocracy. Schiffman says "It has long been theorized that this is how the Qumran sect originated. Some disaffected Zadokites separated themselves from their brethren in Jerusalem and formed the sect" (69).

¹⁸Dunn, *Pauline Theology*, 363,

¹⁹In addition to Wright and Piper, see by James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, *Justification: Five Views* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2011). This book offers perspectives from traditional (Michael Horton) and progressive reformed (Michael Bird), New Perspective (James Dunn), Orthodox (Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen) and Roman Catholic (Gerald O'Collins and Oliver Rafferty).

²⁰<http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=237>. Later in the same article, DeBoer states "Wright fabricates his theology."

goal was not to create a new “theology of Paul” but to correct a misunderstanding of Paul. It was James Dunn and N. T. Wright who built on the foundation Sanders laid and attempted to describe a Pauline Theology which attempts to read Paul in the world of Second Temple period Judaism. Both have contributed major texts on Pauline theology and in many cases present Paul’s theology in a very clear (and often traditional) way. Dunn’s chapter on Justification in his *Pauline Theology* should be required reading for anyone who wants to study Paul.²¹ N. T. Wright’s *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* is a magisterial presentation of Paul’s theology.²² However, Wright’s *Justification* takes priority because it has brought the discussion of the New Perspective’s view of justification to the general public.

Wright is clear about his method. In *Justification* he proposes to study the vocabulary of justification in the context of the first century.²³ This is more difficult than it appears because of the massive theological weight various streams of Reformation systematic theology has placed on the word. He does not want to create a new term, rather, he wants to define justification using a historical-grammatical method. Briefly put, for Wright, justification is a statement about the status of the believer. When one is “justified” in a legal sense (with a Second Temple period context) they are given the status of “in the right” for a particular legal situation. It does not matter if they are really “in the right.” the judge has found in their favor and they obtain that status before the court.

Wright states the word “justification” does not mean “declare righteous” nor does the term mean the person is actually righteous with respect to their character.²⁴ The real problem for Wright is the “imputation of righteousness” as theological extension of justification. Reformed streams of theology says God “imputes Christ’s righteousness” to the believer. In the same way, Adam’s sin is counted against all those “in Adam,” all those “in Christ” have Christ’s righteousness counted for them. Wright finds no evidence for the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the believer. Wright says this is a theological construct built on the foundation of Reformation theology and not on the text of the Bible. Imputation may be a true doctrine, but it is not necessarily biblical.

²¹Dunn, *Pauline Theology*, 334-389.

²²N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013). At more than 1700 pages, this is one of the most comprehensive volumes on Paul written in recent years. Wright published a companion volume of his collected essays from various sources, adding another 640 pages to the project!

²³Wright, *Justification*, 90.

²⁴Wright, *Justification*, 91.

In summary, Wright believes that justification is a statement about the status of the person who has been vindicated in God's court.²⁵ The term cannot be used to describe the whole of the salvation process, it is but one metaphor of many which Paul uses to describe salvation. Wright wants to avoid making "justification" equivalent to "being saved." James Dunn makes this point as well. There are many metaphors for salvation in Paul, although Dunn highlights justification by faith, participation in Christ, and the gift of the Spirit as the primary statements of Paul's view of salvation.²⁶

The New Perspective claims the Protestant Reformation elevated the legal metaphor found in some of Paul's writings to the status of primary metaphor and then used that metaphor to describe the whole of Paul's salvation theology. The New Perspective attempts to temper this by using the language of justification more biblically. In no way do the New Perspective writers deny justification by faith, despite claims of their opponents.

7. RESPONSE TO THE NEW PERSPECTIVE

The literature on the New Perspective on Paul is vast, to say the least. There are volumes supporting and extending Sanders' work, there are others critiquing his work. Some are aimed at N. T. Wright as a particularly popular proponent of the New Perspective, others championing the classic Reformation view with a zeal worthy of Elijah.

Among the most valuable responses is the collected essays in Carson, O'Brien, and Seifrid.²⁷ This material covers the same material as Sanders (and even more). Each chapter takes a section of the literature and evaluates Sanders' "covenantal nomism" in the light of Second Temple Jewish texts. In most cases, there is something which could be used as support for Sanders' view of Second Temple period Judaism, but the evidence is far from uniform. Some Jewish writers may have thought of election and boundary markers as Sanders described, but others did not. The situation is far more varied than Sanders allowed for in his Paul and Palestinian Judaism.

Mark Seifrid has been a strong voice in favor of a more or less traditional view of Paul. His *Christ, Our Righteousness*²⁸ is a brief treatment

²⁵Wright, *Justification*, 92.

²⁶Dunn, *Pauline Theology*, 328-33.

²⁷*Justification and Variegated Nomism: Volume 1 – The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2001); *Volume 2: The Paradoxes of Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2004).

²⁸*Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification*. (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 2000).

of the topic but among the very best. Seyoon Kim engages James Dunn in his *Paul and the New Perspective*.²⁹ Stephen Westerholm's *Perspectives New and Old on Paul*³⁰ surveys Augustine, Luther, Calvin and Wesley as well as the "Lutheran" interpreters of Paul in the twentieth century before turning to Paul's view of the Law and Justification in the final third of the book. This historical approach seems backwards to me, but it really does "work" in practice. Francis Watson recently revised his *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles* in order to break through the false dichotomy between the Traditional "Lutheran" view and the New Perspective.³¹ In many ways, Watson's work draws the best from both views of Paul and attempts to build a biblical theology of Paul.

While studies challenging Sander's position are not unique, they are almost always from the Calvinist side of the Reformation and are intent on defending the reformation view of justification by faith in Paul. Vanlandingham has charted a new course since he approaches Sanders from a decidedly Arminian view of salvation and the last judgment.³² For Vanlandingham, Sanders is guilty of the very sins of which he accused scholarship in his *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* – he reads the Reformation view of grace and works back into the literature of the Second Temple period and finds a robust view of election. Vanlandingham contends Jewish literature of this period uniformly describe the final judgment as a judgment by works, including the Apostle Paul.

Paul Rainbow wrote a biblical, theological and historical reassessment of the classic Reformation reading of Paul's teaching on Justification.³³ In their zeal for *sola fide*, Rainbow argues the Reformers have obscured obedience as a required element of the Pauline doctrine of justification. By sharply separating justification and sanctification in the slogan *sola fide*, the Reformers not only violate the rule of Scripture, but therefore have no real antidote for antinomianism nor any encouragement for Christian obedience. Rainbow therefore argues for a "round view" of justification which emphasizes the dynamic tension present in Paul's theology. Rain-

²⁹*Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002).

³⁰*Perspectives New and Old on Paul* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004).

³¹*Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007).

³²Chris Vanlandingham, *Judgment and Justification in Early Judaism and the Apostle Paul*. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006).

³³Paul A. Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation: The Role of Christian Obedience in Justification*. (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005). This book has been reprinted by Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2012.

bow therefore advocates a form of synergism, a twofold justification which attempts to balance justification by faith apart from “works of law” with a future justification by “good works” when the believer stands at the final judgment. This double-justification is analogous to the two-stage kingdom of God: we are already justified, yet we are not yet justified.³⁴

8. DISPENSATIONAL THEOLOGY AND THE NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PAUL

Since Dispensational Theology is often accused of being overly Pauline, does the New Perspective on Paul help Dispensationalism? Is this the way through the classic Dispensationalism versus Covenant theology? I think Dispensationalism and the New Perspective can be closely allied for several reasons. First, Dispensationalism has always had a strong view of progressive revelation which lends itself to a narrative of salvation history. Scripture is the unfolding story of redemption. God is working through a series of “steps” or stages to redeem creation from the effects of sin. Wright has particularly emphasized “story” as a way of understanding Jesus and Paul, often using the analogy of a five act play. His oft-cited worldview questions are important, Paul is answering the question “what time is it?” Dispensationalism highlights the fact Paul is describing the current age as distinct from the last.

Second, Dispensationalism has never been particularly anti-Semitic and has always emphasized the Jewishness of the writers of the New Testament. This is may be a result of Dispensationalism’s late development as a system of thought. Early Dispensationalists were not particularly committed to the dogmatic theology of the Reformation. That the New Perspective says Jesus, Paul, Peter and James reflect Second Temple period Judaism is nothing shocking to a Dispensationalist! I think there is a great deal more to be learned by studying Paul and Jesus in the light of our growing understanding of the Second Temple period.

Third, Dispensationalism has always emphasized Paul as the central to the present age. He is the “founder of the church” and his letters are usually emphasized over other writers in the New Testament. Paul claims his revelation is unique, and Dispensationalists frequently develop this claim to mean Paul is the only one to whom God revealed his plan for the current age (Eph 3:1-6, for example). The New Perspective also emphasizes the radicalness of Paul’s message in the context of Second Temple period Judaism. For all of his connections to Judaism, Paul teaches some rather

³⁴Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation*, 224-5.

radical doctrine within any form of Judaism of the first century.

Fourth, with respect to the Justification debate, Dispensationalists have been a bit confused. On the one hand, Dispensationalism developed out of the Reformed tradition, continuing the Reformation in terms of Ecclesiology and Eschatology. Dispensationalism is a kind of sub-species of Covenant Theology whether either side wants to admit it or not. As such Dispensationalist have an interest in the soteriology of the Reformers, but the anti-denominationalism usually prevents Dispensational thinkers from fully embracing the creeds and confessions. I think the New Perspective is correct to describe justification as one of the many metaphors of salvation. In fact, it seems to me the division between justification and sanctification in Systematic Theology missed the simple fact Paul used the same language for both the beginning of our salvation and our on-going experience of salvation.

CONCLUSION

On the surface, this New Perspective seems like a great advance in Pauline studies, based on a careful reading of the available Second Temple period literature. Most of this literature was simply not available before 1950, and really unused until Sanders in the 1970's. For example, the Dead Sea Scrolls have only been readily available to scholars for 35 years; Pauline scholars prior to the 1980's did not have access to this wealth of materials. New translations of the Pseudepigrapha, the Mishnah and other Jewish writings open huge areas of comparative studies. Why not include all of this in the database of material which can illuminate Paul?

The real problem is Sanders claimed Lutheran interpreters of Paul got Paul wrong. Paul was read through the lens of Luther's struggle against the "works-for-salvation" Catholic Church. If this is true, then does this mean "Justification by faith" might not be exactly what Luther claimed? Here is the problem with some New Perspective thinking. It appears to open the door to return to salvation by works. However, I do not think this is necessary and I cannot find anything in Wright and Dunn implying they are in favor of works-for-salvation. The New Perspective revived the discussion of Paul's theology and encouraged a return to the biblical sources as the foundation for our theology and ought not be feared or avoided in our continuing quest to understand the writings of the Apostle Paul.

LEADERSHIP MINISTRY GIFTS IN THE CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

The thesis of this article is that leadership gifts are gifts of the Holy Spirit; they arise and are practiced only in the living fellowship of body life. Outside actual practice in church fellowships they may function as “talents.” In origin and practice the gifts are not permanent institutional offices or powers conferred by a governing body. They are discerned by actual practice by the body and the body’s already recognized leaders, and by the individual’s sense of possession and function confirmed by others. They are rather “charisms” or “charismas,” gifts given by the Holy Spirit for ministry to the larger body of believers gathered for worship, instruction and fellowship. The subject of this article is further delimited by the list of leadership gifts in Eph 4:11 and parallels elsewhere in the epistles. In scope, this article is limited to leadership ministry gifts of a permanent nature in the church, the terminology for leadership, and the functions of leadership discernable in the terms. Accordingly, the quest here is for the leadership terms in the New Testament epistles since they define or characterize the functions produced by the Spirit in the church. Since even in this Ephesians list two of the six have passed away, the basic remaining four are discussed. Which gifts have “passed away” is not, however the argument here; what remains in the church is the focus.

EVANGELISTS

The gift of evangelist appears only in the gift-list in Eph 4:11, where it is placed after apostles and prophets; this is the main reason for a discussion

of evangelist here. Its placement in Eph 4:11 suggests a relatively high importance; but the suggestion is not met with equal attention to the gift elsewhere in the New Testament, as measured by a high frequency of usage or scenes of evangelists at work—independently, that is, of apostles. The term occurs only two other times in the New Testament, once for Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:8) and once for Timothy (2 Tim 4:5). Despite low frequency of use, these few texts show that this gift was recognized in, but also beyond its presence in the apostles. More evangelists were probably active than the New Testament speaks of under the term, since the apostles were evangelists from the beginning and the term here is plural along with the other gifts.¹ The appearance of “evangelists” apart from apostles suggests that the gift was moving beyond its original attachment to apostles.

In Eph 4:7-11 *charisma* is not used for the gifts listed; but this is not a material difference since the basic concepts of gift-giving and a list of several specific gifts are present here as in other gift-list texts which do use *charisma*. Instead, *domata* (gifts) appears (4:8) as the gift term for six gifts in the text: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. This list shows that “evangelist” was no more an office than elder, but a *charisma* function among early Christians. Philip appears to have been itinerant; Timothy worked in a settled situation at Ephesus. The *euaggelistas* is apparently named for the work of preaching the gospel (*euaggelion*), and probably pictures the winning of converts to Christ. Despite its limited use, *euaggelistas* is to be viewed in the modern church as a gift of importance all out of proportion to its infrequent New Testament use; it appears to have emerged from its original association with apostles. Recognition and encouragement of this gift is vital to the cutting edge of growth and gain for the church in every age. There is no sustained connection between prophets and evangelists in the New Testament. The two gifts join only here and in the family of Philip—an evangelist whose daughters prophesied (Acts 21:8-9); thus the connection with prophecy in Philip’s family may be coincidental, i.e., not a case of a pattern of combined gifts. There is a connection in actual function and activity between apostles and evangelists, and this may be the reason why evangelists do not receive more attention in the New Testament, i.e., the gift was first concentrated in the apostles as public preachers of the gospel, and at the beginning only fell for the time being to a few others.

¹G. Friedrich, “εὐαγγελιστής,” *TDNT* 2:736-737.

PASTORS, TEACHERS, ELDERS, DEACONS

The thesis is the same as stated above: elders and deacons arise from the same empowerment of Christ and the Spirit as the gifts of apostle and prophet. Paul's lists of Spirit-gifts show them all flowing in the same *charisma* stream. Locating a starting point for the pastor-teacher-elder-deacon gifts that does not improperly skew the conclusion is a major problem which the following discussion does not presume to decisively overcome, except that the procedure seeks the whole available information by a search for all leader terms, especially elders.

Leadership terms appear in a variety of ways. (1) Acts favors the use of *presbuteros*—17x including several times for Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, but mostly for Christian church elders, Jewish or Gentile. Luke's use of "elders" for Christian leaders may reflect gradual standardization of this terminology by the 80s, the probable decade of Acts' publication. This development was not yet reached by Paul as shown by his extremely limited use of the term. He does not use it at all in the earliest epistles (Galatians, 1-2 Thessalonians) even though by the time of Galatians he had appointed elders in the south Galatian churches (Acts 14:23), and only three times for church leaders elsewhere—all in the Pastoral Epistles.² The scene of Acts 20 shows one group of leaders for which three leadership terms are used in the same speech: elders, overseers ("bishops") and pastors. These remarks call attention to another issue, i.e., the probability of some kind of gradual *usage development* for "elder." (2) Paul avoids "elder," preferring instead a variety of leadership terms other than elder—at least fifteen in all for church leaders under functional terms, and perhaps as many as about twenty. The terms are scattered through the epistles. They sometimes appear in pairs or triplets. In such texts they may be in parallel or synonymous relation to each other; a second or third term may define the preceding one; some are repeated from one epistle to another; or they may occur in random fashion. (3) Still other Pauline passages contain lists of ministry gifts for the whole church, but include obvious leadership gifts. Five such passages are spread through 1 Corinthians, Romans and Ephesians; all al-

²The sense of "later" for the Pastoral Epistles is not that of the traditional dating of the Pastorals, i.e., between (1 Timothy, Titus) and during (2 Timothy) the last of two alleged Roman imprisonments, very late and beyond the scope of Acts 28. What is meant by "later" is before Romans, but after the Thessalonian, Galatian and 1 Corinthian letters, and during a probable journey all the way to Crete and then north along the west shore of Greece as far north as Dalmatia and Illyricum—the area of today's northwestern Balkan States. A journey in this period is well known; my proposal sees it as launched from and ending at Ephesus during Paul's third mission tour, and far more extensive than a quick trip from Ephesus to Corinth and back.

lude to leadership gifts with some overlap and coordination of leader-terms with the passages and terms of points (1) and (2) above. The use of certain leadership terms in the charisma-list passages supports the larger point of this essay since these *charisma*-lists contain the broadest view of both the *charisma* idea and several specific leader terms.

FINDING THE TERMS FOR ELDER

In seeking a Pauline picture of who are elders and what they do, we are met with a methodology issue—how to find the defining passages. It seems simple: find the “elder” texts and adopt what they say. However, it is likely that many more terms than “elder” itself are used; hence a larger view necessarily emerges for reasons that will become apparent. Elders are referred to by well over a dozen terms, perhaps by as many as fifteen or twenty beside the term “elder” itself. Several occur in Paul’s lists of gifts, showing that eldering is a gift of the Spirit. To the three texts using “elder” in Paul (1 Tim 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5) maybe add ten (10) “elder” texts in the central chapters of Acts (11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18), although these are Luke’s, not Paul’s. The remaining seven (7) in Acts refer to elders of Israel, not the church. Further questions arise: why should the search be limited to the study of “elder” alone? Why is *presbuteros* (elder) so scarce in the Pauline epistles? And why are there no elder *function* lists like the elder *qualification* lists of the Pastoral Epistles? In Paul’s speech of Acts 20 *presbuteros*/elder, *episcopos*/overseer/bishop and *poiman*/pastor/shepherd overlap in that all three terms are applied to the same people (Acts 20:17, 28 [2]). In another text, two elder terms apply to the same people (Titus 1:5, 7, elder and overseer/bishop only). These passages are rightly taken to indicate that no varied offices are denoted since all three terms refer to the same people without distinction or qualification. Judged by their meanings, the three terms of Acts 20 encourage another kind of distinction between elders and bishops than the Catholic-Anglican-Methodist one (with variations): the basic term is “elder,” while the other two terms describe elder *functions*,³ i.e., “overseer” and “pastor/shepherd.” By this reckoning we have not one, but three terms for church elders in the two passages using the three and two terms for the same persons in their respective passages (Acts 20; Titus 1).

If these two passages suggest elder *functions* for some terms, then the question arises about other possible functional terms that also denote elders

³The distinction between *titles* or *offices* and *functions* was already noted by F. J. A. Hort in his classic work, *The Christian Ecclesia* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1897), 157-61.

as well as further functions or aspects of their work. Expanding the search for elder terms leads to another text (1 Tim 5:17) where *presbuteros*/elder is defined functionally by *three more terms* beyond “elder”: *prohistemi*/rule, take care of; *kopiao*/labor “in word” (NIV “preaching”); and *didaskalia*/teaching. Thus the accumulated terms now number six (6)—*presbuteros* plus five functional terms expressed in noun participles or common verbal nouns. But if there are more leadership terms not directly linked to “elder” by the contextual presence of “elder” itself as above, but overlapping with the other terms gathered above, or otherwise appearing in clear references to leadership people in congregations, then there may be more such terms.

In fact, as many as another six (6) functional terms and possibly even more appear. 1 Thess 5:12 has three terms: *kopiao*/labor; *prohistemi*/lead; care for; and *noutheteo*/admonish/warn. “Labor” and “lead” are the same as in 1 Tim 5:17, where they are definitions of “elder/*presbuteros*”; but “admonish (*noutheteo*)” is new. In 1 Tim 4:5 *paraklasis*/urging/comforting/exhorting is a ministry function of Timothy and seems akin in thought to *noutheteo*. Hebrews 13:7, 17 add *hageomai*/govern, which is new, followed (13:7) by “who spoke the word” as in 1 Tim 5:17 after *kopiao*/labor “in the word,” and *agrupneo*/watchers (over you), which is new; the terms denote leaders since the congregation(s?) is urged to submit to them. We now have a total of ten (10) elder terms (not counting repeated words) found in interlocking, overlapping or even synonymous relationships, including with “elder” itself.

Beside the above terms, eight (8) more functional terms also overlap, interchange, or are joined with the previously identified ten (10): *kubernasis* may be synonymous with *prohistemi*; it means piloting (a ship), managing, guiding or steering, although it could more suitably relate to other terms (1 Cor 12:28); *sunergeo*/work together (1 Cor 16:15), which is attracted by the already mentioned *kopiao* to make a word-trio with *diakoneo*/minister for others who minister/*diakoneo* (1 Cor 16:15-16) at Corinth with Stephanus. (The *diakon-* word-group is usually associated with “deacon,” but also has the broader general meaning of “ministry” as shown by Paul’s use several times for his mission.) The term *apodidomi*/dispense, give out, followed by “the word” (Heb 13:17) overlaps in concept and function with pastor-teacher; *epimeleomai*/care for, is a further definition of *prohistemi* rule/care for in 1 Timothy 3:4 (2x), which in turn is a further functional definition of “overseer” (1 Tim 3:1). Overlaps and extensions (further definition) are well-illustrated in 1 Tim 3:1-4 as in 5:17 (cf. 1 Cor 16:16; Heb 13:7, 17; 1 Thes 5:12). *Sophos* (wise man) and *diakrino* (act as a

judge, 1 Cor 6:4) are also probable elder terms or functions; but lacking overlap connections with any other elder terms in the passage, they could be disputed. Finally, there is another term for teaching (*katacheo*, Gal 6:6; 1 Cor 14:19, meaning teach, instruct). The new terms here beside those identified above totaling eight (8), bringing the gross number of functional elder terms to eighteen (18).

Why Paul multiples elder-function terms while using “elder” itself so sparingly—at least in the earlier epistles—is an open question. He offers no list of elder *functions* like the lists of *qualifications* in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The eighteen (18) functional terms describe what elders do or the manner of their work, and thus together are the equivalent of such a function-list when viewed together. The remarkable variety of terms for elder-leadership in Pauline churches shows that elder activity had several functional descriptions even when synonyms are recognized. On any reckoning the terms clearly fall into overlapped groupings since the meanings of several, when synonyms are considered, are among the aggregate of terms. A summary of elder functions will be offered below, but more needs to be said about elders than just further study of the functional terms alone: the meaning of qualification terms, service-term limits or suspension, appointment, support, and gender issues need more study, discussion and implementation. But before summarizing the basic elder functions, some details of the gift lists warrant discussion.⁴

THE LANGUAGE OF CHARISMA-LIST PASSAGES

To achieve the clearest and fullest Pauline perspective on leadership as *charisma*, it seems useful to discuss the introductory language of the Spirit or Christ’s gift-giving in passages where teachers, leaders, pastors and deacons appear. At the base line the same *charisma* language appears for teachers, leaders, pastors and deacons as is used for apostles and prophets and many other gifts. This is true despite the fact that the texts on these functions might be understood to show the establishment of an office—more, that is, than do those texts that list the primal gifts of apostle and prophet. A possible tendency toward office may also seem encouraged by the parallel fact that far more is said about the moral qualifications for these functions than is the case with the gifts of apostles and prophets. But

⁴This essay’s recognition of functional elder terms coordinates well with the treatment of elder functions by A. Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Colorado Springs: Lewis and Roth, 1995). Strauch’s study is a valuable expansion on details of this essay. It is unfortunate, however, that Strauch slips into office-thinking due to insufficient attention to the larger *charisma* over-structure for the elder terms.

do these appearances really support office versus charisma?

Paul uses a more or less fixed vocabulary in his *charisma*-gift introductions—regularly repeated words and phrases detailing the larger *charisma* framework. In such passages the power and principle of the gift-lists is grace (*charis*) in the sense of unmerited, beneficial power. For the resulting personal and public appearance of the gifts Paul uses “gift (*charisma*)”; for their source and conferral he uses “given” (*didomi*) and assumes the “divine passive” (God, Christ or Spirit as agent) with the persistent passive voice (“given”) of the verb for giving (usually a participle of *didomi*/give). Sometimes the agency of the Holy Spirit (*pneuma*) in imparting and operating the gifts is stated. The net effect is to attribute the rise of ministry gifts to the work of God or Christ or the Holy Spirit. In these passages Paul is thinking not of establishing offices of ministry, but of the Spirit at work in the church-body inducing functional gifts for meeting congregational needs. No awakening mechanisms are given; rather, people apparently come forward to meet needs, and their gifts are recognized as they practice them. The matter is left to the Spirit in the actual life of the church-body, i.e., the Spirit induces leadership and other gifts as the body meets and needs become known and serviced; apparently this is the only “how” of recognition.

Under this set of concepts the lists of specific leadership gifts include apostles, prophets, evangelists, elders/pastors/overseers, teachers and deacons. Other gifts following in various lists show much variety. The only differentiation in the passages is the first-second-third of 1 Cor 12:28. In fact, Paul goes on to say the “greatest gifts” are none of these, but rather faith, hope and love, and that these gifts are to be especially sought (1 Cor 14:1). This statement alone implies that one of the “mechanisms” of gift-realization is “seeking” gifts once they are known to exist by appearing in servicing congregational needs. By this reckoning, the substantial egalitarianism of the body of Christ is maintained and the appropriate humility of leaders and people is encouraged as all submit to and benefit from the gifts working in the whole.

Five passages contain appropriate combinations of descriptive terms in gift lists: (in likely chronological order) 1 Cor 12:4-11; 12:28; 12:29; Eph 4:11; Rom 12:6-8.⁵ 1 Tim 4:14 is not a *charisma* list, but uses the same

⁵Ephesians and 1 Timothy are placed in this order assuming the view that the Prison Epistles and Pastoral Epistles in reality belong to the three-year Ephesian period of Acts 19-20, and therefore coordinate in time with 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians and Romans, although it is not possible to be more precise with exact chronological order among this group of third missionary tour epistles. There is nothing consequential riding on this placement for the discussion of this portion of the essay, since I am

formulaic terminology of divine gift-bestowal for one unnamed gift.

The basic concept is grace (*charis*, *charisma*)—a quality of God’s interactions with man in redemption. It often means “unmerited favor” when Paul is thinking about salvation without human works, and with human unworthiness in mind. In these contexts it is a “legal” or “judicial” concept describing forgiveness of sins without works by God the Judge. In other passages grace is a *power* notion—the unmerited power of God graciously entering human life to effect salvation from sin and empower toward good. This is the sense in a passage like 1 Corinthians 15:10: “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me.”⁶ The power sense is also that of the passages listed above, where *charis* or *charisma* occur to denote ministry gifts (Eph 4:7, 11; Rom 12:6-8). But when Paul lists the specific gifts, he usually prefers *charisma* (1 Cor 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31; Rom 12:6; 1 Tim 4:14). In one case *dōma* (gift) is substituted for *charis/charisma* (Eph 4:7), partly because it occurs in the Old Testament quotation used to undergird gift distribution by the risen Christ (Eph 4:7-8). When the verb is either in the active or passive voice it is often followed by the object in dative or accusative: “to each one” (1 Cor 12:7-8; Eph 4:7, 11; 1 Tim 4:14; Rom 12:6). Mentions of the Holy Spirit as agent are profuse in 1 Corinthians 12 (vv. 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11). Christ is the giver in Ephesians 4:7-11, and the human mediation of eldership is noted in 1 Tim 4:14 showing that mediation may include human persons along with the Spirit or Christ. Bestowal of gifts in the church is a manifold work of the sovereign Holy Spirit and has little to do with human *initiative*, management or offices, although both desire and human mediation are part of the process.

COORDINATING THE MAJOR ELDER TERMS

Considering that synonyms and overlaps occur among functional terms for elders, it seems appropriate to distinguish between major and minor elder terms. While it may appear arbitrary to do so, it also seems necessary

not seeking to make any points of theological substance about “progressive revelation” or some other such argument based on this sequence of epistles. In other words, no part of this essay’s thesis rests on it; some forms of Grace Fellowship argumentation on other theological issues is involved. See the discussion in Essay X, Appendix A for the Prison Epistles, and Appendix B for the Pastoral Epistles.

⁶*BAGD*, 878, under meaning 4: “exceptional effects produced by divine grace . . . powers and capabilities . . . hardly to be differentiated from *dunamis* (power).”

as a way to bring order into the discussion and avoid the novel idea that twenty functional terms can be converted mechanically into twenty elder functions. Accordingly, the goal of this portion of the essay is to discover the functional priorities for elders in the New Testament situation so that the emphasis of the apostolic thinking on leadership functions becomes clear and convertible into a useful set of elder responsibilities and activities. An implication of this consideration is that varied ways of ordering the terms and concepts might be attempted, considering their overlaps. This discussion should go on and ought to result in greater clarity and usefulness. But there appears to be no other such attempt to grasp the functions of elders by a complete assemblage of the many terms, it seems permissible to proceed in this manner in the interests of a thorough understanding of the New Testament Christian elder.⁷ An example of what at least seems to be a difference between major and minor terms would be the relative difference in specificity between, say, *prohistemi* (lead) or *prohistamai* (care for), and *kopiaio* (work hard). It seems easy to see a difference in specificity between caring for the needs of church members on one hand, and working hard (*kopiaio*) which is vague; *kopiaio* seems rather more a term for the manner of carrying out other clear elder functions. With these thoughts in mind we may proceed to the substance of the discussion.

Protestant church order and organization manuals repeatedly make the point that elder, pastor and overseer/bishop are used interchangeably of the same persons or groups of church leaders, often as an alternative to the Catholic and Anglican elevation of bishops as a separate office from elder, for which there is no clear New Testament authority. There is also common agreement that this point issues from the use of all three terms by Paul for the same group of leaders addressed in Acts 20, and in the interchangeable use of the terms for elders and overseers in Titus 1:5-7. The three gift-functions are not divisible or separable, but are themselves terms for one group of leaders who are generically called “elders”; of these three primary terms, one is the generic name (elder), while the other two are basic but not the only functions. In reality, then, when any of these terms or other synonyms and related language occur in lists of charisms, there is reason to believe they too belong to the gift-powers spread through the church by the Holy Spirit, and are not merely appointed, perpetual offices. This is due to the way the terms are interchanged and varied in the texts viewed as a whole; the discussion following will show how this is the case.

⁷Although Strauch alludes to and discusses most of the functional terms, he does not assemble them as I am attempting to do here; cf. *Biblical Eldership*, 161-80, for his fullest treatment of the terms.

Five (5) primary repeated terms can be identified for major church leaders and functionaries at the local or regional church level; other terms noted above complement, expand or extend, or (potentially) add new meanings. The most widely used⁸ is *elder/presbuteros* (though not by Paul) along with its related word-group including *presbuterion* (a group, council or body of elders with local oversight responsibilities), *presbutes* (old man, ambassador), *presbutis* (old woman), and *presbeuo* (be or work as an ambassador or envoy).⁹ This remark, however, can only be made because of the quantity of uses in Acts. While age is nowhere a specified criterion for eldership, the qualifications lists do suggest an appreciable range and quantity of experience in several aspects of life; the lists also seem to generally value the principle of church and community respect. A closely related term is teacher (*didaskalos*), occurring 7x in Acts, and 9x in the epistles; not all uses in Acts' refer to church teachers. The word-group for teacher includes *didaskalia*/teaching and *didasko*/teach, used for church teachers in Acts and epistles apart from Jesus or apostles, occurs about 11x.¹⁰ Another set of terms, less used than the *presbuteros* group,¹¹ is the word-group for overseer including *episcopos* (overseer, guardian, superintendent, "bishop"), *episcopeo* (take care of, oversee, care for), and *episcopa* (divine visitation, position of overseer).¹² A notably overlooked term, *prohistemi*/lead/govern, and its relative *prohistamai*/care for,¹³ is used parallel to and as a substitute for elder or leader, and as a functional description for elders.¹⁴ The root occurs only as a noun or participle or infinitive, appearing 6x in elder connections in Paul's letters—more frequently than "elder" in Paul,

⁸*Presbuteros* alone occurs about 21x in Acts and epistles for Christian church elders. That it is the most widely used can only be said because of its high frequency in Acts which was written after Paul's death, not because Paul himself uses it frequently.

⁹This basic lexical information is from *BAGD*, 699-700. The Greek, and the Jewish use of this terminology for the leader of Israel in the first and second temple periods, is gathered by G. Bornkamm, "πρόσβυς," *TDNT* 6:651-682.

¹⁰*BAGD*, 191.

¹¹*Episcopos* occurs alone c 5x only in Acts and epistles. By including *episkopeo* and *episcopo*, 5 more total uses are added, amounting to 10x for the word group.

¹²*BAGD*, 298-9; the entry sometimes uses the term "office" for the meaning comment. The term is not used herein to avoid confusion. The use of "office" is not substantial to the meanings identified. See also H. Beyer, "ἐπισκέπτομαι," *TDNT* 2:599-621.

¹³So Louw and Nida, *A Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, (New York: American Bible Society, 1988), 1:459, 465, suggest that the actual verbal form is (at least in some cases) *prohistamai*/take care of, care for. Cf. LS, 1482-3, where they find this care-giving meaning under *prohistami* without appeal to *prohistamai*, howbeit with a passive rather than active sense.

¹⁴*BAGD*, 707. B. Reiche, "προϊστημι," *TDNT* 6:700-703, also reports these and several other meanings; he too thinks the most important and relevant meanings are those expressing care or caring.

though not in Acts. Its senses include preside, lead, conduct, direct, govern, protect, care for, the last meaning being carried more fully by *prohistamai*.

In Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint/LXX) the related masculine noun is entirely a term of political governing and denotes an official or governor. The word's close association with elders in the New Testament merits careful attention, especially because it occurs as a participle in the gift list of Rom 12:8, although near the end of the list. A fifth major term is *pastor/poimen* (shepherd, sheep-herder) with its related verb (*poimaino*, herd, tend a flock, shepherd). The term is nearly short-suited in Acts and epistles compared to its wide and standard use in the apostolic fathers and throughout Christian history: the noun occurs only 2x, while the verb occurs 4x in Acts as an activity of church leaders. As noted above, the largest scope would be to consider all leadership gift terms from the several types of passages identified previously. However, since the argument here is that elder leadership functions are charisms of the Holy Spirit and not all terms have equal value for defining functions, it seems satisfactory to begin with the use of *these* terms in *charisma* lists and then expand the discussion to other leadership terms which are clearly or at least appear to be related. The less central terms will be discussed further below.

PRIMARY ELDER TERMS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE GIFT LISTS

Terms for leaders occur in the gift lists with bewildering variations in order of appearance and consistency, and even in their presence or absence from the lists. Several terms occur in gift-lists, but others do not. This should not deter a study like this from attempting a synthesis, even though unevenness in use of the terms requires cautious conclusions. On the whole, the noted variation in terminology suggests a broad mixture of basic and other functional terms for elders in the early churches. This variety and interchangeability makes it impossible to limit one's thinking about elder leadership to one word group like *presbuteros*. The interface of terms outlined above and discussed in some detail below is like the relation of interlocking pieces of a jigsaw puzzle: one needs all the pieces to see the whole picture. For example, persons Luke usually calls "elders," are referred to by Paul with several terms. It might seem unwarranted to say that "elder" is the cover word for four or more other leader terms; but interlacing and overlapping of the terms does point in that direction. In some cases, it may have been only a matter of time before certain functional leaders, called at first by terms like "*laborers among you*," "*those who lead you*," or "*those who instruct you* (all in 1 Thes 5:12)," came to be called

“elders.” One can see this happening with a term like “*those who lead you (prohistami)*,” since in 1 Timothy 5:17 it is interchanged as a functional synonym with *elders/presbuteroi*. So the terms need to be surveyed, even though with something short of absolute exhaustiveness and precise sifting of every possible detail, to see how these variations actually describe the work of elders. The following are the major leader terms and synonyms in relation to the *charisma* gift lists.

Elder. Presbuteros is not found in the *charisma*/gift lists, but in 1 Timothy 5:17 it is notably important because the gift is divided into its ruling/caring function (*prohistemi*) and its teaching/instructing function (*didaskalia*). While “elder” does not itself occur in a gift list, its functional synonym *prohistami* does (Rom 12:8). *Presbuteros* is also significant in Titus 1:5 where it is interchanged with *episcopos* (1:5, 7) in a striking interchangeability. *Presbuteros* is the basic leader-term and *episcopos* one of the ways to describe its activity. Peter (1 Pet 5:1) uses *presbuteros* in plural, but includes a reference to himself as a “fellow-elder.” Here too, “elder” is followed by another functional term for elder, i.e., “shepherd/pastor,” expressed in a verb (*poimaino*). But in the next verse, Peter follows again with a second use of the *episcopos*-group, this time the verb (*episcopeo*). This suggests in parallel to Titus 1:5-7 that *presbuteros* was gradually becoming the base term with the other parallel nouns and verbals as functional descriptions for aspects of their work. These interchanges and functionalisms illustrate the flexibility of the terms. James’ use of “elders” in 5:14 is mainly about certain elder practices, using *presbuteros* in plural as often elsewhere.

The group term *presbuterion* (group of elders) is used in 1 Timothy 4:14 of a group who laid their hands on Timothy at his ordination. The more frequent use of plural *presbuteros* in Acts shows how normally elders are viewed as a body in which final authority rests. It would have been unusual for Greeks or Jews to think of an individual, isolated elder with final authority, since elders usually appear in groups.

Paul’s reserve in using *presbuteros* is all the more striking since Acts uses it with regularity (17x covering Jewish and Christian elders). Its infrequency in Paul could be a peculiarity of the local conditions Paul addresses as at Corinth where only very limited leadership terms appear (16:16: *diakonia*, minister; *sunergeo*, fellow-workers; and *kopiao*, labor), and at Thessalonica where leadership terms are also limited (1 Thes 5:12: *kopiontas*, laborers; *proistamenous*, leaders/elders; *nouthetountas*, admonishers). In none of the Corinthian or Thessalonian letters is *presbuteros* used.

Does this mean Paul wished to steer clear in certain situations of any use of *presbuteros* out of caution—perhaps about too much likeness of Gentile churches to Jewish synagogues, at least in the early period? Or did he avoid *presbuteros* simply out of preference for more functional terms like *prohistemi* or *poiman*? Or, again, was he merely being cautious about heavily weighted honorific connotations, especially in a place like Corinth where there was already a division over social status of members? However these questions may be answered, three *functional* elder terms noted above are found in gift lists, making it clear that this leadership *charisma* was thought of as a work of the Holy Spirit; the three terms appearing in gift lists are pastor (*poiman*), teacher (*didaskalos*) and leader (*prohistemi*).

Having noted that the texts consider prophecy the revelatory gift, there is nonetheless overlap between prophecy and teaching just as between apostle and prophet. While it would be satisfying to be able to note a clean discreteness between each leadership gift, such a clean distinction is doubtful at best. Just as E. Ellis has shown how prophecy and teaching overlap, so the overlap of eldership and teaching will emerge in the ensuing discussion.¹⁵ Generally, then, the New Testament use of leader-terms and gifts disturbs any attempt to argue for categorical distinctions between each of the leadership functions by terms alone.

Teacher. “Teacher” is more frequent in Paul’s gift lists than “pastor,” occurring in the two lists of 1 Corinthians 12:28, 29 respectively, and in Ephesians 4:11. This frequency may reflect the urgency of grounding congregations in essential apostolic doctrinal and moral teaching; or it may involve actual early threats to doctrinal soundness which is viewed with great urgency in the Pastoral Epistles as an elder concern. In all three passages it occurs after prophets (1 Cor 12:28: apostles, prophets, teachers; 1 Cor 12:29: apostles, prophets, teachers; Eph 4:11 apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers). In Romans 12:7 “teaching” is listed third after prophecy and deaconing—again in a *charisma* gift-list. It is unlikely that “teacher” is precisely equivalent to “pastor,” but there is certainly a substantial overlap and coordination as Ephesians 4:11 shows (“pastor-teachers”). The link of teaching with elders is clear in 1 Timothy 5:17 (“elders . . . who labor in preaching and teaching . . .”) and Ephesians 4:11 (“pastor-teachers”). In Greek traditions, “teacher” is equal to “schoolmaster,” or “choirmaster.” For Greeks, teacher/teaching was an entirely intellectual and rational function of school or choir instructors in which “teacher” re-

¹⁵Ellis, Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity, 129-44.

fers to one who instructs in specific technical skills like reading, fighting or music, and usually for pay. In contrast, Jewish teachers of Paul's time were rather Scripture instructors and expounders of its meaning as well as of the derived wisdom and knowledge of the ways of God with man.¹⁶ In the New Testament, "teacher" seems to be used mainly for those leaders who expounded Old Testament Scriptures, coordinated the Old Testament with apostolic oral traditions about Jesus (which eventually became the gospels and epistles), and explained the apostolic-prophetic teaching in the churches.

Jesus is called "teacher" in the Jewish sense; instances in Paul reflect the same Jewish usage. The Jewish sense is visible in the Pastoral Epistles, where "teaching (*didaskalia*)" is thought of as "sound doctrine." Teachers are church leaders gifted by the Spirit who explain the doctrine of Christianity and moral life of believers. An echo of the Greek idea may be seen in Paul's use of the term since teacher and teaching seem to refer to a rational explanation of Scripture and the apostolic traditions. While "teaching" is a *charisma*, there are few signs that their words were revealed teaching in the sense that prophecy is direct revelation; still, this is the case when the gifts of apostle or prophet combine with teacher as, for example in Acts 13:1-3 where a specific (prophetic) revelation by the Holy Spirit is noted. References to *didaskalia*/teaching in the Pastoral Epistles (14x; but only 4x elsewhere in Paul) suggest exposition of Scripture and apostolic oral tradition; 2 Timothy 3:16: "*Scripture is inspired by God and profitable . . .*"; Romans 15:4: whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction (*didaskalia*); 1 Timothy 6:3 (cf 2 Thes 2:15): moral teaching of Paul and Jesus (cf 1 Tim 1:10); 1 Timothy 4:3-6: Paul's teaching about eating with thanksgiving; 1 Timothy 1:10: moral instruction with a list of evils to be avoided. Teaching sometimes takes the form of exhorting and encouraging (1 Tim 4:13; 1 Tim 6:2; Titus 1:9).

These texts suggest the work of teachers was explaining Scriptural or apostolic material, especially moral and doctrinal teaching. The Pastoral Epistles' warnings about false doctrine/teaching point to the same. The two uses of *katacheo* in Paul (Gal 6:6; 1 Cor 14:19) do not appear to add any further insight to what was available from the *didask-* group, although the verb's meanings tip to the rational side: "report, give information, instruct" (BAGD); *katacheo* became the regular term for instruction of converts in the second century and beyond. Even though the work of teachers and

¹⁶K. Rengstorf, "διδάσκαλος," TDNT 2:148-57.

teaching elders was substantially a reasoned exposition of doctrine and morals or ethics from Scriptural and apostolic oral traditions, it was nonetheless a special divine *charisma* in local churches or groups of churches. *Katacheo* in Galatians 6:6 may suggest very limited elder functions about the time of Acts 14; only “teaching” is referred to in Galatians. *Katacheo* in 1 Corinthians 14:19 exemplifies the rational character of its activity: five words with the mind (*vous*) are better than many words with the “tongue.”

Episcopos. *Episcopos* (overseer) instead of *presbuteros* (elder) is paired with deacons in Philippians 1:1 with no clues on function except its common meaning of “overseer.” In 1 Timothy 3:1, however, “overseer” is the object of human seeking/desiring (*orego*, aspire to, strive from desire, stretch oneself, BAGD). Paul’s expression in 1 Tim 3:1 is capable of the inference that *episcopos* might be an office to be sought after all. On the other hand, it does not have to be seen this way, but merely as visibly existing in some gifted people and therefore admired, honored and desired by others. Despite this possibility, nothing here requires an inference about a permanent office separate from, emerging from, and higher than elder bishop). In the only other instance of *episcopos* in the epistles (Titus 1:7), the term is used alone except for the list of moral and spiritual qualifications that follows. The qualifications are substantially the same in Titus 1 and 1 Tim 3:1-7. Conzelmann’s suggestion, that the singular of *episcopos* might be a hint toward *multiple elders* under the leadership of a *single* bishop, seems overdrawn and too much guided by later church tradition. Actually, Paul uses the plural *episcopoi* in Philippians 1:1 as does Luke in Acts 20:28 (Paul’s speech)—a use which does not favor Conzelmann’s suggestion. No patterned or intended distinction between plurals and singulars seems visible, unless one wishes to infer it from the two singulars for “overseer” in 1 Tim 3:2 and Titus 1:7; such an inference seems both uncertain and unnecessary, however, especially considering the likelihood that Paul is using the singular generically as a rhetorical substitute for the plural. Oversight of a congregation demands that a leader keep his eye open to the whole congregation and its life.

Leader. The case of *prohistami* is more complicated. (1) The surest place to start is 1 Tim 5:17-18 where *prohistami* occurs as an adjectival participle modifying *presbuteos*—a “ruling” elder. The modifier seems to refer to one function of an elder—to rule, direct, govern, care for¹⁷—or perhaps a special class of elders who work the ruling-caring aspect of eldership; it

¹⁷G. Knight, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1992), 231.

is also modified by *kalos*—those who do it well, suggesting some practice eldership poorly or ineffectively. The sequel in 5:19-20 follows the implication that some bad elders had arisen and were objects of accusation by congregation members; only with two or three witnesses may such accusations be considered. (2) Other elders “labor in . . . teaching (5:17b).” Thus two elder functions appear. Since *prohistami* describes one function of elders, it would seem correct to recognize *prohistami* as an elder term when used alone (Rom 12:8), just as it would be to recognize “teacher/teaching” and “overseer” as an elder function. (3) 1 Thessalonians 5:12, “those who govern (*prohistami*),” also uses a participle form of the verb, now as a noun substituting for *presbuteros*, but still thinking of a body of elders who govern the congregation(s). Here too, it is puzzling that Paul does not use *presbuteros* straightforwardly. One wonders if he was avoiding it for one of the special reasons suggested above. (4) Three uses of *prohistami* in 1 Tim 3 refer to both overseers (*episcopos*) and deacons in a functional sense. But the function of overseers here is leading (caring for, leading, governing) their own homes, else they cannot “care for (*epimelasetai*, care for) the church of God (3:4b)” —an obvious elder-function term in context. *Prohistami* is defined by substituting a specific care-giving synonym, “care for” (BAGD) which is not the case when used in 5:12 for deacons, thus differentiating the two gifts. In using a synonym for *prohistami*, the direction is toward “caring for,” not the stronger “rule” or “govern.” It is tempting to think that “caring for” is the more dominant meaning of *prohistami* elsewhere as well—an implication that would nudge the meaning toward the helpful, redeeming-in-love aspect of leadership and away from the power/ruling sense.¹⁸ (5) From these uses, it is a small step to Romans 12:8 where *prohistami* (participle) occurs in a *charisma* list along with *prophecy*, *deaconing*, *teaching*, *encouraging*, *giving* and *mercying*. It falls next to last in this list—before “showing mercy.” Despite the speculation above about the meaning of the order of gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:28, 29, the placement of *prohistami* near the end of the list is probably no more significant than placing prophecy far down a gift list in 1 Corinthians 12:10 (with five gifts ahead of it), and then second in 12:28, 29 and Ephesians 4:11. However this may be, it is certainly a term for eldering in Romans 12:6. The Romans gift list is no exception to Paul’s unexplained avoidance of *presbuteros* in Thessalonians, Galatians and Corinthians. Hence,

¹⁸This is also the direction of B. Reiche’s study of *prohistami* in his *TDNT* (6:700-703) article where he notes that governing and caring are to be coordinated rather than opposed. This would yield the sense, “caring governance.”

eldering, whether described with its basic term (elder) or with a functional substitute, is a Spirit *charisma* arising out of the giving of God, and not from any notion of a predetermined perpetual office, which, if one opts for this sense, can nonetheless be filled by a gifted person.

Pastor. “Pastor” is fourth in the order of gifts in Ephesians 4:11, but does not appear in the three lists of 1 Corinthians 12 or that of Romans 12. Apparently Corinth as yet had no elder-pastors, and the leadership for the moment was limited to people called prophets and deacons (the latter with unclear sense). A functional deacon ministry appears to have been done by the “house of Stephanus (16:15)”; but the text may be speaking in a very general way rather than of deaconing in a more limited monetary or sustenance-distribution sense. There was some leadership “ministry” at Corinth, but there is not enough here to tell us much about it. With the appearance of “pastor” in the gift-list of Eph 4:11, there is solid ground for our thesis: apostles, prophets, evangelists, *pastors* (*poiman*) and teachers are gifts, not perpetual offices. The terms pastor and teacher are joined by “and” with a definite article only before “pastors,” but not repeated before “teachers,” indicating that Paul thought of them as a unified function, even if not exactly identical.

LESS FREQUENT OR GENERAL FUNCTIONAL LEADERSHIP TERMS

Several terms with elder-like functions appear in more or less isolated texts. These terms depict leader functions even if “elder” is not directly mentioned; some, but not all of the same terms are used in the gift lists while others are associated with elders in the Jewish cultural context; within the range of Jewish connotations is the connection of elders with *judging* and *wisdom*.¹⁹ This enlarged sketch of connotations and social associations opens a window to recognizing the use of such terms as wise man and judge for elder functions.

The most striking and obvious passage is 1 Cor 6:3-5—striking because it deals with a particular case in the Corinthian church and because Paul pleadingly asks whether there is not even one man—let alone several—sufficiently *wise* among them to *judge* the situation; he expects the church to be its own judiciary rather than taking the case to a civil court where it does not belong. This expectation, however, does not exclude an elder body in another church for referral; but the chief interest is in the local church as its own judiciary. The prohibition is on adjudication in a *civil*

¹⁹G. Bornkamm, “πρόεδρος,” *TDNT* 6:657-661, esp. 660.

court. *Wisdom to judge* was certainly within the realm of elder functions in Judaism in Paul's time;²⁰ he expects the Corinthians to find a man of wisdom and justice among them to deal with the case. There is no mention of an elder in the text, but the functions are urged. In a way, this should not be surprising since Paul may not as yet have appointed elders in this church, perhaps for one of the reasons suggested above. The implication is that elder-judges should arise within the local congregations through the work of the Spirit, whether apostolically appointed or not.

Among other terms for congregational leadership, the most frequent is "labor" as in "those who labor among you (*kopiontes* [present participle of *kopioo*])." Its close association with *presbuteros* (1 Tim 5:17) and *prohistami* (1 Thes 5:12), and its repetition to denote a group of leaders distinguished from congregations—in one case by a named individual (Stephanus in 1 Cor 16:15-16)—indicates its importance, despite lack of functional clarity. The verb means "work hard, toil, strive, struggle," and sometimes "become weary, tired." Paul knows that leadership of congregations is arduous and wearisome when done in practicing the multiple functions of elders. Beyond this generalized meaning, however, it is not a particularly telling term for leadership if judged by whether it furnishes a clear functional picture.

The earliest use of *kopioo* is in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 where it is followed by a form of *prohistami* (lead, care for)—the elder term of Romans 12:8 and 1 Timothy 5:17 discussed above. The two terms are joined by "and (*kai*)" without a repeated definite article, suggesting that *prohistami* is a further, perhaps clearer description of *kopioo*. In Romans 16:6, 12 *kopioo* occurs 3x referring to the labors of four women (Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa and Persis) in the Roman churches. In 1 Corinthians 16:16 *kopioo* and *sunergeo* (work together) refer to Stephanas, the "firstfruit" of Asia to whom the Corinthian church owes subjection along with other workers and "laborers" among them. This thought suggests elder-leadership even though "elder" is not used. Finally, the appearance of *kopiao* in 1 Timothy 5:17 meaning "those who labor" as elders (both *presbuteroi* and *proestotes* [perfect participle of *prohistami*] used with it) of the Ephesian churches shows its importance. This elder-function use in direct overlap with two other elder terms is suggestive for the elder-connection of *kopioo*. Elders and leaders *labor in the word* and in teaching (1 Thes 5:12). What form of "the word" he has in mind is not clear, but we may rightly think of the Old

²⁰*Ibid.*

Testament, and the apostolic preaching and teaching traditions. The meanings of *kopiaio* suggest something of a vocation and its labors; no reference to compensation is visible in connection with these terms, although compensation issues are discussed by Paul in other contexts. Still, this concept of elder work refers to its cost in time and energy.

There are other terms in leader-versus-congregation contexts. Closely related to *kopioo* is the term *sunergos* and the related verb, *sunergeo*. These words also denote work, but connote work as purposeful; they suggest productivity and human gain for both agent and beneficiary. Still another term with “the word” as direct object is *apodosontes*—those who “give out” or “give account” of the word (Heb 13:17). Since this term includes teaching “the word,” it also appears to refer to elders, even though “elder” does not occur in Hebrews 13:17 either. 1 Timothy 5:17 recognizes this as another term of elder teaching activity. Also denoting the ruling and governing side of elder activity is *hageomai* meaning “govern,” “manage,” or “rule” as in its use for Roman provincial governors. The verb *hageomai* (govern, rule) is used twice in Hebrews (13:7, 17) and overlaps with the ruling sense of *prohistami* (rule, take care of, care for).

On the caring side are three more terms which move the practice of eldering toward the loving, helping and supporting work of elders; they are close in sense to *episkopos*. The three, each used once for leaders, are *noutheteo* (1 Thes 5:12 [with *prohistami*]: admonish, warn, instruct), *agrupneo* [Heb 13:17]: keep watch, guard, take care of/for) and *epimeleomai* (1 Tim 3:4: take care of). Another term related to this group is *paraklasis* (comfort, exhortation, urging, encouragement, admonishing); it occurs in the gift list at Roman 12:8 with its verb; cf 1 Tim 4:13; 6:2). These three elder-caring terms describe a mollifying and comforting side of elder ministry. This language too seems to describe elder-ministry, even if one cannot strictly prove the terms are interchangeable with other elder terms.

Some older European treatments of church “offices” and leadership make the “power” of the church the primary description of its nature as does the classical Presbyterian ecclesiologist, James Bannerman.²¹ Bannerman’s title itself conveys how firmly he thinks of the church as a power structure—a kind of government within civil government, to which he also devotes much space in the first of his two volumes on the church. The

²¹Bannerman, *The Church, passim*. The full title of the two-volume work includes the “Powers, Ordinances, Discipline and Government of the Christian Church.” He repeatedly speaks of its divinely ordained power and its nature as a “visible kingdom,” in which Christ “is personally present,” as its Ruler and Originator, and the giver of its ordinances, laws and authority (208-9); this kind of description is repeated often and in many sections of the work.

present essay on leadership and charisma points rather to a charisma-driven leadership of the church in which its ministry balances Spirit-guided elder *rule* with Spirit-guided elder *care*, each with its own array of synonym-functions. The New Testament picture seems closest to the Presbyterian style of eldership, but it is not strong on Bannerman's power connotations. In this kind of church administration, a body of elders emerging within local churches ministers in each local church. Their larger activities include meetings with regional elders to discuss theological and practical issues affecting any larger fellowship of churches.

DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT PROVIDE A MODEL FOR STRATEGIC MINISTRY PLANNING?

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INTRODUCTION

Does the practice of strategic planning in ministry—setting measurable goals and providing incremental steps for achieving those goals—“quench the Spirit” (1 Thess 5:18)¹ who leads the “sons of God” (Rom 8:14)? In other words, is the believer usurping the role of God’s Spirit when engaged in strategic planning? When Christians set ministry goals several days, months or even years into the future, does this violate a biblical injunction when they say “today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there” not knowing what “will happen tomorrow” (James 4:13-14)? If strategic planning is a product of a non-biblical worldview, then how much, if any, and what aspects of it should the Christian integrate into his or her praxis individually or corporately whether through the local church or a parachurch organization? Should we tend towards the example of Justin Martyr who sought and claimed points of commonality between the pagan philosophies and worldviews of his day and Christianity in an attempt to bridge the gulf between the world and the Christian faith? Or, do we adopt the attitude of Tertullian who quipped, “What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?”²

The reality is the Christian need not choose between the approaches

¹Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references in this article are taken from the New King James Version.

²Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 1 (New York, N.Y.: HarperCollins, 1984), 53-55.

of Justin Martyr and Tertullian when it comes to the question of strategic ministry planning. It is both biblical and modeled explicitly in the New Testament. The writings and the ministry of the Apostle Paul both exemplify and are instructive of strategic planning.

ACTS AND PAULINE MISSION

The Book of Acts provides a record of specific events and ministries in the life of Paul which describe his tactics and methodology relative to his ultimate desire: "...that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). These historical accounts of Paul's ministry are didactic relative to the practice of ministry not the least of which is how they provide insight, direction, and guidance for practical cross-cultural ministry.³ Just as the Book of Acts provides valuable details and depictions of Paul as the practitioner, the Book of Romans gives insight into Paul the strategic planner.

Insofar as his interactions with the Jewish and Gentile cultures are concerned Paul declared: "just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved" (1 Cor 10:33). In the next verse, Paul exhorts the Corinthians believers to, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Cor 11:1). If Paul encourages believers to imitate him in the context of saving the lost, then would it not be appropriate to imitate Paul as he strategically planned to reach as many as he could with the gospel?

ROMANS AND PAULINE MISSION

Romans 15 is key to understanding Paul's approach to strategic planning. His mission statement at this point in his ministry is contained in the following statement: "And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation" (Rom 15:20).⁴ Paul wrote this epistle to the Romans on his third missionary journey probably while in Corinth.⁵ By the end of this trip Paul

³The following verses are examples of cultural conflicts recorded in the Book of Acts after the Apostle Paul began his ministry: Acts 15:1, 16:21, 21:21, 28:17.

⁴While Paul made it his aim to preach the gospel where Christ had not been named, he also revisited areas where he had already made converts in order to strengthen the believers (e.g. Acts 14:22-23) and sent others such as Timothy and Titus to order established churches or to teach believers who might be led away by false doctrines (e.g. Titus 1:5, 1 Tim 1:3). Paul's model for missions includes evangelism, church planting, church edification, and remembering those in need (e.g. Gal 2:10, Rom 15:25-31).

⁵D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand

had revisited many of the churches which he had already planted.⁶ Now he was looking forward to fulfilling his mission, but bluntly states regarding it that, “For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you” (Rom 15:22). Summing up his progress in the part of the Mediterranean where he had ministered during his three missionary journeys he makes the assessment that he “now no longer” had “a place in these parts” (Rom 15:23).

At this point in his letter to the Romans, he sets two measurable goals aligned with his mission statement. He tells the believers in Rome he is traveling to Spain but will first come to Rome “to be helped on my way there by you” (Rom 15:24). The ultimate goal was to preach the gospel in Spain, but the intermediate goal to assist him in achieving his longer-term strategy was to have the church at Rome help him on his way to Spain. In this one verse we see Paul not only as a big-picture strategist, but also as a tactician devising intermediate goals to aid him in accomplishing his endgame. Just a cursory look at a map of the “known” world in the first century reveals that Paul could have traveled to a number of different regions of the Roman Empire and beyond in order to “to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named.” Nevertheless, he chose Spain.

If strategic planning involves setting measurable goals and providing incremental steps for achieving those goals, then it would seem at the onset Christians are at a disadvantage compared to the Apostle Paul. The Christian would want to plan in such a way that the strategy and endgame would bring honor to God and be something He desires. To Paul was revealed the mystery of the Body of Christ, “hidden from ages and generations.”⁷ Furthermore, regarding the gospel he preached Paul declares: “For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:12). Speaking of “visions and revelations of the Lord” (2 Cor 12:1), Paul recounts “how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Corinthians 12:4). Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles, was given the dispensation of the Grace of God (Eph 3:1-2). If anyone would have been able to claim special revelation from God regarding his future ministry plans, it would have been Paul. Did Paul receive such revelation

Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1992), 241-242.

⁶For example, Acts 20:1-6 lists cities and regions Paul visited where churches had already been established. Acts 20:17-38 records Paul’s final face-to-face interaction with the elders of the church at Ephesus where he had already ministered (cf. Acts 19).

⁷Col 1:26, cf. Eph 3:1-9

indicating Spain should be his goal? When a Christian today sets goals designed to accomplish the Lord's work on earth is it necessary to first receive specific, divine revelation? An examination of Paul's approach to reaching Spain as recorded in the Book of Romans will answer these questions.

The tenor of Rom 15:24 demonstrates Paul's desire, but uncertainty of both traveling to Spain and visiting Rome along the way. The particles translated "when" (ὡς ἄν) at the beginning of the verse do not express condition, but are followed by the verb translated "I journey" (πορεύομαι) in the subjunctive mood.⁸ His journey is part of his plans, but he expresses doubt or uncertainty as to whether or not he would realize the trip. He continues stating he *hopes* to see them and concludes this verse with "if first *I may enjoy* your company for a while." The verb translated "I may enjoy" (ἐμπλησθῶ) is also in the subjunctive mood as required by the particle translated "if" (ἐάν). Simply put, Paul did not know if he would enjoy the company of these believers in Rome. A similar construction expressing doubt or uncertainty of future plans using ὡς ἄν is found in Phil 2:23 where Paul writes, "Therefore *I hope* to send him at once, *as soon as I see* how it goes with me." In this verse Paul would like to send Timothy but wanted to see first how circumstances would transpire.

Towards the end of Rom 15 Paul reiterates his goal to reach Spain (Rom 15:28) and pleads with the believers in Rome to pray with him and for him. He asks them to pray that he "may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe," that his "service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints," that he may come to them "with joy by the will of God," and that he "may be refreshed together with" them (Rom 15:30-32). Paul prayed and asked others to pray that it would be *God's will* to come to Rome to be refreshed together with the Roman believers to whom he was writing. He wanted God to remove the obstacles which would have prevented him from making the journey to Rome, then on to Spain. Paul did not know whether it was God's will to travel to Rome, but he wanted it to be as he sought "to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named."

In the opening chapter of the Book of Romans, Paul writes:

For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the

⁸The particles ὡς ἄν followed by a verb in the subjunctive mood are found in the New Testament on three occasions (cf. Rom 15:24, 1 Cor 11:34, Phil 2:23). A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 974.

will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. (Rom 1:9-13)

This passage provides several parallels with Paul's request for prayer in Rom 15:30-32. Not only was his plan to visit the Romans when he wrote this letter, but he had actually planned to visit them on previous occasions, "but was hindered." In other words, his prior attempts to carry out this plan were never realized. Regardless, he desired to forge ahead with another attempt at visiting the believers at Rome. Verse 10 is instructive as it relates to whether or not Paul had special revelation when plotting his strategy of reaching Spain through Rome. He was praying that he "may find a way in the will of God to come to" Rome to visit the recipients of this letter. He did not know what the future held for him, but called upon God to make this endeavor a reality. Though Paul does not elaborate on the hindrances which prevented him from visiting in times past, in Rom 15:31 he requests prayer so he "may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe."

Nine other times throughout his letters, Paul uses the verb *ῥύομαι* which is translated "I may be delivered" here in Rom 15:31. In Rom 11:26 he uses the participle form of this word to refer to Jesus Christ as "the Deliverer" out of Zion. Of the other eight usages three times he refers to how the Lord delivered him from the sentence of death imposed by human adversaries. To Timothy, Paul reflects upon the "persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me" (2 Tim 3:11). Later in the same letter to Timothy he writes how he "was delivered out of the mouth of the lion" (2 Tim 4:18). Earlier in his ministry, speaking of his trouble in Asia he writes to the believers at Corinth saying, "Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves," but God delivered them "from so great a death," as the Corinthians helped "together in prayer for" them (2 Cor 1:8-11). Paul was well acquainted with the sentence of death and was also well aware that the Lord who "*delivered* us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col 1:13) could deliver him providing a way in His will to come to Rome.

Paul believed he could have been put to death by his human adversaries which, to put it mildly, would have "hindered" his goal not only to reach

Spain, but to see the Roman believers as well. Paul did not know whether he would be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea. Also, since he was praying and asking others to pray this journey would be the will of God, he did not know if his strategic plan to reach Spain through Rome was in fact going to be a reality.

This is a point worth reiterating. Paul's mission was "to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named." He designed a strategy to fulfill this mission, in part, by sharing the gospel in Spain. At least one intermediate step or goal of this strategic plan would be to visit the believers in Rome. Not only would he be helped on his way by them (Rom 15:24), but he would establish them by imparting to them a spiritual gift (Rom 1:11), be mutually encouraged (Rom 1:12) and bear fruit among them (Rom 1:13). As he prepared to implement this plan, not only did he pray (Rom 1:10), but he asked the Romans would also pray that his plan would be the will of God and that he would be delivered from those who wished to do him harm (Rom 15:30-32). The reality is Paul's actual plan might have been much grander and contained far more details than what is found in the Book of Romans. Nonetheless, after Paul posits his plan, he prays it would be God's will to bring it to fulfillment.

PAUL AND SPAIN

Did Paul reach Spain? For the purpose of analyzing the scriptural validity of strategic ministry planning, this is not particularly relevant any more than the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego or Daniel's deliverance from the mouths of lions would be relevant to the question of doing what is right before God. Paul did not know if his plan would succeed, but he set goals and strategically planned anyway. Paul seems to concede to Timothy that his life is near the end during his imprisonment in Rome (2 Tim 4:6-7).

Eusebius records that Peter and Paul were both executed in Rome under the reign of Nero (*H.E.* 2.25)⁹ which would be before 68 A.D.¹⁰ Both of these lines of evidence would indicate Paul would not have reached nor had time to reach Spain before his execution.¹¹ John Calvin agrees with the conclusion the third-century writer Origen knew nothing of a journey by Paul to Spain. Calvin also argues text of Rom 15:24 does not require that the mere

⁹Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, (London: Penguin, 1989) 62.

¹⁰Gonzalez, 36

¹¹Gonzalez, 27

intent to travel to Spain would have resulted in a successful trip.¹²

However, Clement¹³ reports the following regarding Paul's ministry and martyrdom: "having taught righteousness unto the whole world and having reached the farthest bounds of the West; and when he had borne his testimony before the rulers, so he departed from the world and went unto the holy place, having been found a notable pattern of patient endurance" (1 Clement 5:7). Was "the farthest bounds of the West" Spain or Portugal? In addition to 1 Clement, there are other writings from early second century Christendom and later which assume Paul successfully journeyed to Spain.¹⁴

When considering the length of the trip Paul methodically planned to travel to Jerusalem, back across the Mediterranean to Rome and then on to Spain, it is interesting to juxtapose this plan with what James writes:

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. (James 4:13-14)

Did Paul violate the spirit of this passage or was he given a special dispensation to make plans months and even years into the future not knowing "what will happen tomorrow?" James continues and says in v. 15, "Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.'" In essence Paul was saying just this. He recognized that for His plan to come to fruition, it had to be the Lord's will. Thus he prayed and asked others to pray it would be so.

However, to think about the Lord's will *only* in terms of what He causes or allows to happen or not happen would be to minimize God's moral attributes. Surely God is "the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End... who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev 1:8). While He is the Almighty, He is also righteous: "For the LORD is righ-

¹²John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (Edinburg: Calvin Translation Society, 1849) 533. Calvin argues against the proposition Paul went to Spain on the basis of Romans 15:24 stating, "From this passage is drawn a weak argument respecting his going to Spain. It does not indeed immediately follow that he performed this journey, because he intended it: for he speaks only of hope, in which he, as other faithful me, might have been sometimes frustrated." It is worth noting that a theologian with Calvinistic theological tendencies would view this not as a prophecy to be fulfilled, but as a goal for which Paul was merely striving to complete.

¹³Likely written between 95-97 A.D., Michael Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1999), 23-24.

¹⁴For a significant list of patristic writings mentioning Paul's journey to Spain refer to Harry W. Tajra, *The Martyrdom of St. Paul*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 108-114.

teous, He loves righteousness, His countenance beholds the upright” (Ps 11:7). God possesses both amoral and moral attributes.¹⁵ James ends this section concerning future plans stating, “But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:16-17). He concludes with a very general and broad admonition to his readers to do the good they know to do. In fact, is this not also the Lord’s will, to do righteousness?

Consider the following verses containing exhortations from the New Testament concerning the will of God:

- Being a living sacrifice, renewing your mind so as not to conform to the world (Rom 12:1-2)
- Giving of oneself and resources to the work of other believers (2 Cor 8:3-5)
- Redeeming the time, being sober (Eph 5:16-18)
- Obeying masters with sincerity (Eph 6:5-6)
- Being mature and complete in one’s faith (Col 4:12)
- Abstaining from sexual immorality (1 Thess 4:3)
- Giving thanks in everything (1 Thess 5:18)
- Doing every good work (Heb 13:21)
- Doing good in order to silence foolish men (1 Pet 2:15)
- Suffering when doing good (1 Pet 3:17)
- Refraining from living by the lusts of the flesh (1 Pet 4:2)
- Committing to doing good (1 Pet 4:19)
- Not abiding in the lusts of the world (1 John 2:17)

In James 4:15 is found the phrase “if the Lord wills (θελήσῃ),” where “Lord” is the subject of the verb (θέλω). In each of the passages listed above, the noun cognate (θέλημα) of the verb (θέλω) is employed which is translated “will.” A summation of these verses indicates that for the believer, the Lord’s will is simply living in righteousness for which the scripture gives ample instruction so “that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:17). Thus God’s will is for the believer not only to be equipped, but to do those good works which scripture demands. While a believer cannot control or even know, apart from special revelation, what the Lord will do, the believer can act in accordance with God’s will by doing those good works which bring Him

¹⁵Charles F. Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Grace Bible College, 1994), 138-44.

honor.

The question then is this, was Paul's plan to edify and be edified by the believers in Rome and then travel to Spain "to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named" contrary to God's righteous will? No. Paul was free to choose this strategy because it aligned with God's righteous character which "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4). While there would have been freedom to choose the region to evangelize, there would not have been freedom to reject as true or even attempt to thwart God's desire to bring salvation to all men.

In this same Book of James is found the encouragement to pray for wisdom: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind" (James 1:5-6). The difficulty is not in praying for wisdom, but identifying wisdom which comes from God. James does not leave the reader wondering what wisdom looks like:

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (James 3:13-18)

Wisdom, in this context, is not necessarily specially revealed knowledge, but is wisdom which proves itself as compatible with and true when compared and contrasted with God's righteous character. James provides a list of those qualities both positive and negative which would guide the reader to discern between earthly wisdom and heavenly wisdom. Godly wisdom is that which produces the fruit of righteousness. Was it any more righteous for Paul to strategically plan to preach to those in Spain versus those in Britannia or Persia? No, because it is never the wrong time to do the right thing—in this case, his plan to evangelize Spain. In analyzing the wisdom of journeying to Spain to preach the gospel to the unreached, there is nothing in this plan which would be contrary to James's vivid description of divine wisdom.

In conclusion, believers, churches, and parachurch organizations have

a model for strategic ministry planning demonstrated through the Apostle Paul. He had a mission, goals, and a strategic plan to realize his goals and mission. For the believer who desires to plan strategically, he or she ought to ask: What is the mission? What is (are) the goal(s) to realize this mission? What intermediate steps could be taken to accomplish the goals? In considering the answers to these questions, one should analyze each step of the process in light of godly wisdom to ensure they are in accord with God's righteousness. When this test is satisfied, the believer should pray and enlist others to pray that the completion of the plan would be God's will.

Nevertheless, obstacles will manifest themselves hindering even righteous plans and goals. Whether these obstacles are Satan (1 Thess 2:18) or other hindrances (Rom 1:13), once again it is good to imitate Paul as he imitates Christ: "But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel" (Philippians 1:12). For Paul, hindrances may be obstacles to fulfilling his plans, but they were also opportunities to further the gospel. On the other hand, God Himself may close doors (Acts 16:7) or open new, unexpected ones (Col 4:3). In this case, He "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph 3:20).

RESPONSIBILITY, OBEDIENCE, AND MORAL ORDER:
TOWARD A CHRISTOLOGICAL STARTING POINT FOR
CHRISTIAN ETHICS

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most difficult questions Evangelical ethicists face is the methodological question of how to approach their subject matter. Should they prioritize a biblical-theology approach, in which the text of Scripture itself takes priority and fundamentally and directly frames the ethic,¹ or ought they to take a more traditional approach from the standpoint of moral theory and philosophical ethics?² The first approach tends to signal a desire to formulate a particularistic kind of Christian community that bears witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ by articulating (and hopefully living) an ethic that is totally distinct from the surrounding culture. The second approach has the advantage of being able to bridge the gaps between distinctively Christian outlook and secular moral theory that operates out of fundamentally different religious and philosophical assumptions. In this sense the second approach is apologetic in nature, finding a common ground with philosophical ethics through shared assumptions and rational argument. However, although ethical systems appear to offer us a great deal in terms of specifying and clarifying the circumstances, kinds, meaning of human action, they are not very helpful when it comes to specifying what the good actually *is*.

¹Examples of this might include Christopher J.H. Wright's *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (IVP Academic, 2011) or Stassen & Gushee *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (IVP Academic, 2003).

²Here the best example of an Evangelical approach would be Scott Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics* (3rd ed; Zondervan, 2009).

In this article, I will suggest that Karl Barth's Christologically-determined notion of obedience is helpful in addressing the related difficulties of where to start and how to proceed in our development of ethics. However, Barth's view of obedience only makes sense when it is seen in relation to the larger ethical context that provides shape and order to our ethical deliberations and judgments about the good. For Barth the good is something God has revealed, and problems are bound to arise whenever ethical systems tend to substitute a human *construal* of the good for the good itself.³ This does not necessarily mean that all ethical systems are bankrupt. Instead, every ethical system raises the question of whether human beings will adhere to the good that is revealed in Christ, or rather to some construal of the good that is ultimately an idol of human self-justification. What is needed here, then, is some larger point of reference that values ethical systems for the shape and variety that is really theirs (along with their different ways of making judgments about particular human actions), but which can itself be understood as *informing* our more traditional (and biblical) ways of thinking about ethics from the kind of Christological standpoint that Barth would say is essential to a theological conception of ethics. In many respects, obedience is a term that does precisely this.

In view of all this, what is needed is a larger ethical context in which to talk about the place of obedience in Barth's theological ethics, a context which is determined by that obedience and also provides for a way for ethical systems to be theologically meaningful, as opposed to self-referential, in all their dimensions. But simply saying that Jesus Christ is the ground and fulfillment of obedient human action is not enough; even if we fully agree that what Barth says about the centrality of Jesus Christ is true, this center would only make sense in the context of a wider periphery. In what follows, then, I want to highlight two twentieth-century Protestant ethics, those of H. Richard Niebuhr and Oliver O'Donovan, to contrast their development of the themes of responsibility and obedience as they relate to the larger context which, according to Barth, is required for a properly Christological conception of the good. Niebuhr's account, as we will see, represents a way of doing Christian ethics in precisely the way Barth thinks it should *not* be done, while O'Donovan represents an ethics that recognizes the obedience of Jesus Christ and the significance of his person and work for the wider creation and for the ethical task. My reading of O'Donovan, however, should also give us a clearer indication of a

³Karl Barth. *Church Dogmatics* III/4 (Trans. Bromiley; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961) 10.

‘Christological structure of obedience’ in Barth’s thought which, I believe, will also offer us a blueprint of the larger context in which the ethical event occurs, i.e., a Christological structure of the moral order and perhaps even of the good itself.

RESPONSIBILITY AND OBEDIENCE IN H. RICHARD NIEBUHR’S
THE RESPONSIBLE SELF

H. Richard Niebuhr’s classic text, *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy* develops the theme of responsibility in a way quite different from Barth’s notion of obedience, and although Niebuhr had set about a task quite different from Barth’s own, we may gain a clearer picture of Barth’s view of obedience by contrasting it with the view of his American contemporary.⁴ In the bulk of the text, Niebuhr develops his well-known, threefold typology of responsibility: man as maker (teleological ethics), man as citizen (deontological ethics), and man in response (Niebuhr’s ‘third’ ethic). He concludes his analysis with a dictum that concisely summarizes his Christian ethic of responsibility: “God is acting in all actions upon you. So respond to all actions upon you as to respond to God’s action’.⁵ For Niebuhr it is certainly the case that human beings exist in a relationship of responsibility toward God as creator and redeemer, and both Barth and Niebuhr share the view that Christ is in some respect the center of this relationship of responsibility. In a representative passage, Niebuhr puts it like this:

The responsible self we see in Christ and which we believe is being elicited in all our is a universally and eternally responsive I, answering in universal society and in time without end, in all actions upon it, to the action of the One who heals all our diseases, forgives all our iniquities, saves our lives from destruction, and crowns us with everlasting mercy. The action we see in such life is obedient to law, but goes beyond all laws; it is form-giving but even more form-receiving; it is fitting action. It is action fitted into the universal, eternal, life giving action by the One. It is infinitely responsible in an infinite universe to the hidden yet manifest principle of its being and its salvation.⁶

A number of themes here are reminiscent of Barth, and some are perhaps even influenced by Barth’s thinking. Christ here is the center of human responsibility, and in some way this centrality is universally signifi-

⁴H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy*. Library of Theological Ethics. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 46.

⁵Ibid., 126.

⁶Ibid., 144-45.

cant for the rest of humanity (although not for the universe per se, i.e., the ‘cosmos’ in way that the Apostle Paul, Maximus the Confessor and Hans Urs von Balthasar would think of ‘universality’). Niebuhr does seem to see Christ as the focal point of creation and redemption, and his action occurs in a context of addressee, of ‘form-receiving’, action that is appropriate to its God-ordered context. Because it is both ‘fitting’ and ‘responsible’, it is action that participates in God by virtue of its response to God’s act in initiating relationship. Niebuhr’s ethic, like Barth’s, is ultimately a theo-centric ethic.

Although at first glance this might appear to be a view of responsibility not entirely unlike Barth’s own, pointed differences begin to emerge upon closer inspection. The appendix to *The Responsible Self*, made up of selections from Niebuhr’s Earl Lectures, carry the theme of responsibility forward in a more explicitly Christian context, supposedly beyond what can be said in the context of ‘Christian moral philosophy’. Here Niebuhr suggests that ‘responsibility’ is in fact the third great Western symbol of the moral life, following after the teleological and deontological metaphors for ethical thought.⁷ The differences between Barth and Niebuhr begin to coalesce in the latter’s depiction of the Christian life as one of the distinctive ‘ways’ or ‘styles’ of human existence: “Christianity represents a qualification of human practical existence, or at least of Western moral life, rather than a new and wholly different way of living.”⁸ This view of the Christian moral life is not altogether unlike that of Schleiermacher, not only in view of the religious experience as one of ‘absolute dependence’, but as regards the whole description of the Christian life and the task of Christian theology or, for our purposes, Christian ethics. “As an apologist,” Barth says, “[Schleiermacher] is not a Christian theologian but a moral philosopher and philosopher of religion. He suspends to that extent his attitude toward Christianity, and his judgment of the truth or even absoluteness of

⁷Although there does not seem to be any reason, to me at least, to disagree with Niebuhr on this point, it does take one by surprise that responsibility might be a thought of as a new idea on the scene of human moral consciousness, or that this third great metaphor somehow makes the other two less culturally persistent and influential. If Niebuhr is correct on this score, then the cultural implications of this shift have yet to play themselves out in clearly identifiable ways.

It is worth noting that Niebuhr’s thinking about progress and development, even in categories as broad as fundamental cultural symbols for the moral life, reflects his reliance on the socio/theological method of Ernst Troeltsch. Barth puts his finger on this kind of historicist impulse, i.e., standing outside history in order to describe and critique it), notion that the result of such a method is usually a conformity of the Church to whatever society it happens to find itself a part. He also sees at least an indirect connection between Troeltsch and Schleiermacher in this respect. Cf. *CD IV/1*, 383f.

⁸Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self*, 150.

the Christian religion.”⁹ Similarly, Niebuhr will neither defend nor recommend the Christian life as a ‘form’ or ‘style’ of human life that is any better, or more in correlation with the truth, than any other. Christian ethics, therefore, has nothing in particular to recommend it other than its special grasp of the one concept that Niebuhr finds so central, i.e., responsibility. Nowhere is this more apparent than in his adoption of the language of the ‘symbolic form’ for the person of Jesus Christ.¹⁰

For Niebuhr, the Christian does not apprehend Jesus Christ himself, but rather his ‘symbolic form’, which is transmitted through other cultural symbols, especially language. So then, “Jesus Christ is a symbolic form with the aid of which men tell each other what life and death, God and man are like; but even more he is a form which they employ as an a priori, an image, a scheme or pattern in the mind which gives form and meaning to their experience.”¹¹ Although such language may be thought to reduce quite quickly to Jesus Christ as ‘merely a symbol’ of Christian experience, Niebuhr hastens to affirm the reality for which the symbol is representative: “Symbol and reality participate in each other.”¹² Thus for Niebuhr, it is not so much that there is no historical reality behind the symbolic form ‘Jesus Christ’, or that the Christian does not have a personal, religious connection to God in Jesus Christ, but rather that we must keep in mind that all such historical realities and religious connections must be recognized as symbolically-mediated. Although they ‘participate in each other,’ we must not confuse the symbol for the reality.¹³ Niebuhr’s chief criticism of Christocentric approaches such as Barth’s is that they overlook the mediatorial role of symbols in their appropriation of Christology. He gives the example of Barth’s deployment of biblical—though not specifically Christian—

⁹Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, 430.

¹⁰Here Niebuhr is following Ernst Cassirer’s neo-Kantian school of symbolic forms. This connection is notable in that as a student of Herman Cohen’s Cassirer represents a kind of neo-Kantian bridge between German Idealism and Analytic philosophy (which might, at the end of the day, be one of the best ways of describing Niebuhr’s overall approach to moral philosophy).

¹¹Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self*, 154. Again, this language is again strongly reflective of Niebuhr’s reliance on Schleiermacher’s psychological categories of human religious experience.

¹²*Ibid.*, 155. This holds true both for Jesus’ concrete ethical command, “Inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these my brethren you have done it unto me,” and for the identity of Jesus Christ as both historical figure and religious symbol.

¹³Here we can again observe Cassirer’s influence on Niebuhr’s thinking in terms of its reliance on Kantian categories. For Kant, Christ is the ‘archetype of humanity’, and humanity must cling to him in ‘faithful imitation’. Similarly, Kant links ‘receptivity’ with the idea of grace when speaking of conversion, atonement, and redemption (Cf. *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 90ff.). Niebuhr’s view of Christ and ‘universal responsibility’ is thus not all that far afield from Kant’s own, at least in terms of its moral significance.

moral ‘symbols’ such as commandment, law, obedience, and permission in order to make sense of the one fundamental symbol of Jesus Christ. For Niebuhr however, this pattern is problematic because it entails a notion of ‘obedience’ that belongs to the ‘man as citizen’ paradigm (deontology) and not a fully-fledged notion of ‘universal responsibility’ that ‘interprets every particular event as included in universal action.’¹⁴ From Niebuhr’s perspective then, a particularly *theological* doctrine of obedience cannot speak to what he calls an ‘ethos of citizenship in a universal society’, and because of this it isolates both the Christian individual and Christian ethics from the wider human community. Responsibility, on the other hand, does not need to be a specifically Christian concept, and can be universalized across religious, political and cultural boundaries; this is in part what makes Niebuhr’s text a such classic of twentieth century Christian moral philosophy: in Jesus Christ we find an ultimate basis for a universal human ethic of responsibility.

By contrast, for Barth the obedience of Jesus Christ is the condition of the possibility of all other human obedience: his good action grounds and guarantees their own. For Niebuhr, to say that Jesus Christ is the ‘archetype of responsibility’ is to say, simply, that Jesus is the moral exemplar and guide to the universally human moral consciousness; he provides an ‘embodiment’ of the universal good without his being ‘constitutive’ of that good. In addition, one does not need to be a Christian to be ‘responsible’ to God, to others, or to circumstances. The difference here is that for the philosophical, ‘theistic’ morality that Niebuhr wants to present in *The Responsible Self*, Jesus Christ is not fundamentally or ontologically determinative of the good in the way that he is for Barth. Instead, Jesus Christ discloses (i.e., symbolically mediates) in the entirety of his life a form of moral existence that is ontologically independent of his life. For Barth on

¹⁴Ibid., 167. Not insignificantly, Niebuhr is aware that this dynamic also leads to a division between Christian ethics and moral philosophy, a division we tracked carefully in Chapter One.

We might ask at this point whether it is even possible to have a morality of obedience, duty and citizenship (deontology), or even ‘ends’ (teleology) without some notion of responsibility playing a key role in the understanding of that morality. Can Niebuhr legitimately present responsibility as a ‘third’ moral category that obviates the very language of which it is a natural entailment? Perhaps he is simply speaking culturally and in terms of a historical survey of moral language and its use. But it seems to me that although ‘responsibility’ is indeed a broad and fruitful category for ethics, it cannot be the sole, or even the ‘central’ symbol, because the term is always ramified: ‘responsibility to what?’ ‘Responsibility how?’ The same could be said of obedience, but only if obedience were construed in the way Niebuhr suggests. If, rather, obedience itself were construed relationally, then the need for ‘responsibility’ as a new central category for ethics would be sharply reduced, if not eliminated, because it would be included and entailed by ‘obedience’ in a way similar to deontological, teleological and even virtue ethics.

the other hand, the obedience of Jesus Christ is ontologically constitutive, as ‘the good’ becomes a real human good. This at least should give us some fundamental indication that Barth’s notion of the task of theological ethics itself has a particularly *Christological* structure that centers upon the obedience of Jesus Christ to the will of his Father.

As an illustration of what I mean by this, we may turn to a brief examination of the theme of obedience in Barth’s Münster lectures of 1928-29.¹⁵ Here, and in the broadest possible terms, Barth thinks of the good itself in terms of obedience.¹⁶ This equation of obedience and the good puts helps to put the category of obedience in its proper Christological context and locates the event of the incarnation as the ultimate expression of the relationship between God and humanity. Following George Hunsinger, we ought to think of this event in terms of Barth’s actualism, which “emphasizes the sovereign activity of God in patterns of love and freedom—not only in God’s self-relationship, but also in relationship to others.”¹⁷ It is the engagement of God with the creature gives the encounter its ‘concrete’ character as a ‘claim’ on human obedience.¹⁸ Thus in his depiction of the ethical event of encounter, Barth sets up a context for theological ethics in which the center of moral agency lies *outside* the self and in which the moral self is determined by something external to it.¹⁹ This is a way of thinking about the good, moral selfhood, conscience, freedom and autonomy that is quite far removed from the concerns of modern moral philosophy.

¹⁵Karl Barth, *Ethics*, (Trans. Bromiley; New York: Seabury 1981).

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 45. Barth’s arrival at this equation is only later spelled in CD II/2, where he says, “The good of human action consists in the fact that it is determined by the divine command” (547). Barth has a specific line of reasoning that allows him to arrive at this conclusion. First, God is good and is therefore the source of all good. If human action is good, it must be action that is done ‘in God’ in some substantive sense. Second, ‘obedience’ is the posture of a hearer, someone who is addressed by God’s command; as a hearer, I myself do not determine the good but instead encounter it and in that encounter find myself determined by it. Third, obedience in this sense must be understood as the enactment of God’s covenant relationship with humanity; human action is both obedient and good when it is done through “confrontation and fellowship” with Jesus Christ.

¹⁷See Hunsinger, *How To Read Karl Barth*, 30.

¹⁸Cf. Webster, *Barth’s Moral Theology*, 50. Webster notes that Barth’s description of the ethical event of encounter parallels that of Heidegger, but that Barth de-emphasizes Heidegger’s world-transcending moral consciousness in *Being and Time* in favor of “the notion of the axiomatic commanding presence of God...a picture of moral awareness in which...the good is identified not with posited value but with divine action”.

¹⁹Cf. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard University, 1992) 1-8. Taylor discusses the importance of an ‘internal frame of reference’ to our ontologically-construed moral frame of reference for modern thought. As Webster and others have pointed out, the way Barth locates this frame of reference entirely outside and in a way so as to determine the internality of the self distinctively and radically anti-modern. This only goes to show that Barth’s description of the activity of conscience is far removed from the concerns of modern moral philosophy.

By locating the good *outside* the moral self, and within a larger framework of covenant and creation, i.e., of encounter with God, Barth's ethic takes on a more universal and even cosmic dimension than the modern isolation of the self could ever hope to entail. For Barth, the incarnation is a concretization of God's action in love and freedom. "It is the inconceivable grace of God that he takes humanity to himself, that in the fellow-humanity of Jesus the free choice of the divine will is revealed and exercised as love for humanity."²⁰ In this way, Barth and Niebuhr represent fundamentally different theological conceptions of how to think about Jesus Christ, his obedience, and the responsibility human beings derive from it.

CREATION AS MORAL ORDER AND ORDERED GOOD IN
O'DONOVAN'S RESURRECTION AND MORAL ORDER

Like Niebuhr's *The Responsible Self*, Oliver O'Donovan's *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline of Evangelical Ethics* is by no means a sustained interaction with Barth, but in many ways represents one of the few attempts in Christian ethics to move beyond Barth while taking his critique of philosophical ethics seriously. O'Donovan's work helps to clarify Barth's position, sets it in a more robustly evangelical light, grounds it more in the terms with which Western theological ethicists are familiar, and offers Barth's ethic some measure of deliverance from criticisms that it is overly particularistic. The basis for the similarity between Barth's and O'Donovan's positions is that for both thinkers the obedience of Jesus Christ occurs in the context of creation and covenant, and in this sense it fulfills both creaturely action and covenant (or Christian) action. The chief criticism that O'Donovan has of Barth is that he makes the modern mistake of confusing ontology and epistemology in ethics, failing to distinguish between the ontological terms of created order and new creation, and between natural knowledge and revelation, which are their respective epistemological counterparts. The subtle but crucial difference between O'Donovan and Barth is that for O'Donovan created order is vindicated in Christ but it is not teleologically ordered to covenant as it is for Barth. Creation does realize its eschatological fulfillment in Christ for O'Donovan, but the good itself consists in conformity to created order, of which Christians will have both an elevated epistemological grasp and in which they have a fuller, eschatological participation. In Barth on the other hand, the internal goodness of creation consists in its ordering toward its *telos* in

20 CD III/2, 224.

Jesus Christ, in whom alone it can realize its intended meaning.

O'Donovan argues that for both for Christians and for non-Christians alike, the moral order may be objectively known. At the same time, because his is an evangelical ethic, he thinks that Christians *do* have an elevated epistemological view of that created order; they see it as it really is. O'Donovan says,

The order of things God has made is there. It is objective, and mankind has a place within it. Christian ethics, therefore, has an objective reference because it is concerned with man's life in accordance with this order. The summons to live in it is addressed to all mankind. Thus Christian moral judgments in principle address every man...the way the universe is determines how man ought to behave himself in it.²¹

Whereas O'Donovan wants to locate the objective reference point for Christian ethics in the created order, Barth would locate the objectivity of the moral reference point in Jesus Christ who, as the one who enacts the covenant, is in himself the fulfillment of the internal basis and goal of the created order (and humanity in particular). Thus for Barth it is not creation but Christ who forms the 'objective reference point' for the goodness of human action.²² Beyond any potential disagreement though, O'Donovan's thought here represents a clarification of what it means in Barth's thought for creation to be determined in Christ: "In the sphere of revelation, we will conclude, and only there, can we see the natural order as it really is and overcome the epistemological barriers to an ethic that conforms to nature."²³ For both Barth and O'Donovan, Christians see the world as it really is, and Christian ethics provides instruction and direction for human

²¹O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 17. It is perhaps worth pointing out that even O'Donovan struggles to maintain a consistent vantage of evangelical particularism, which for the most part is consistent throughout the rest of the text. Could not the selection cited above have the word 'Jewish' substituted for 'Christian' with no substantive difference in theological meaning? Though I don't think O'Donovan has actually made this mistake here, this is one reason Barth believes that one cannot talk about creation in any respect apart from covenant and retain a distinctive identity for theological ethics.

²²Cf. *CD II/2*, 568, 577. "Obedience to God always means that we become and are continually obedient to Jesus...What is required of us is that our action should be brought into conformity with his action." Although this might seem like a major disagreement between Barth and O'Donovan, at the end of the day I believe it does not amount to all that much, as O'Donovan from the beginning claims to do his work on the basis of Christian faith in the resurrection (this is what makes his ethic 'Evangelical' in the broad sense), and we have already seen from Barth that creation has already been determined by the finished work of Christ. But regardless of whether one begins with an understanding of created order in light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (i.e., O'Donovan's epistemological elevation of Christian ethics via revelation) or a deeply ontological and even cosmic conception of the fulfillment of all of created order in the incarnation (Barth), Jesus Christ remains at the center of both ways of thinking about ethics.

²³O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 19-20.

action to correspond to nature as it was meant to be.

In O'Donovan's thinking, the incarnation, atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ allow for human beings to regain their proper place and role with respect to creation, that which was lost in the fall of Adam. Creation itself is not yet renewed in all of its ontological dimensions, although human beings do in a limited sense participate in and are representative of 'new creation'.²⁴ Despite the limited scope of the new creation that is inaugurated in the cross, revelation allows those who are in Christ to apprehend truly the moral order already present in the original creation and the corresponding moral field that opens before the possibilities of human action. For O'Donovan, this means that Christian freedom "allows man to make moral responses creatively...as a moral agent he is involved in deciding what a situation is and demands in light of the moral order. As a moral agent in history he has to interpret new situations, plumbing their meanings and declaring them by his decision".²⁵ All of this makes sense in a theologically-construed ethic, especially when we bring O'Donovan's statement into conversation with Barth's post-Chalcedonian framework for thinking about the good. Barth would agree with O'Donovan that human beings do not declare and determine the good itself, but rather persons in Christ declare and 'plumb' the depths and the meaning of created order *from the standpoint and in anticipation of new creation*. They both have knowledge of and participate in the created order by virtue of their obedience to the command of God in Jesus Christ, and in relation to him, their action freely conforms to his action, which in turn conforms perfectly to the kind of goodness that God always had in mind for humanity's relationship to created order and the moral field. Similarly in O'Donovan, morality is humanity's participation in created order, while *Christian* morality is its "glad response to the deed of God which has restored, proved, and fulfilled that order, making man free to conform to it".²⁶

For O'Donovan as well as Barth, knowledge of the new creation in Christ reveals the shape of the moral order as God always intended it to be, and thus opens up for human action the possibility of the obedient fulfillment of and correspondence to the good. This does not mean that human action which occurs apart from knowledge of or participation in Christ cannot conform to the moral order. On the contrary, to the degree that it does conform to the moral order (which itself can only be consid-

²⁴Cf. 2 Co. 5:17-21.

²⁵O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 24.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 76.

ered in Christ), Barth would call such action both ‘good’ in the general sense, and ‘Christian’ in a strict sense, by which I mean human speech and action that is aware of its truly human vocation of bearing witness to the goodness of God in Jesus Christ. In Barth’s view, non-Christians are just as capable of good action—that is, action that conforms to the truth of the moral order in Christ—as Christians are capable of non-Christian action, i.e., disobedience. The difference between them, according to Barth, is a matter of witness; because they do not respond to God in the ‘obedience of faith’, they remain unaware that their good action actually refers away from themselves and toward Jesus Christ, who is constitutive of the good from a human standpoint. For now, it is worth noting that in revelation Christians indeed have a particular knowledge of the good and its structures in creation and moral order that non-Christians do not; for Barth this occurs through *Weisung*, the direction offered to the Christian by the Holy Spirit.²⁷ Similarly, O’Donovan defines ‘wisdom’ as the knowledge of the created order and says, “the exercise of knowledge is tied up with the faithful performance of man’s task in the world, and that his knowing will stand or fall with his worship of God and his obedience to the moral law”.²⁸ For such knowledge to be consistent and true, of course, it must correspond to created order and human action in Christ.

This perspective allows for an evangelical posture of openness both to the human sciences and to philosophical ethics, though such can never be fully appropriated or finally considered apart from their determination in Christ. In this light, we can see that Barth’s rejection of philosophical ethics in *Church Dogmatics* II/2 reflects more a methodological commitment to the priority of the dogmatic task than a blanket rejection of philosophical ethics. Concerning this issue, O’Donovan comments:

It was once fashionable for Protestant theologians to introduce any remarks about ethics with a kind of war-whoop, declaring that the concerns of Christian ethics had ‘nothing to do with moral philosophy’. The

²⁷This is of course not a new idea. From Paul to Augustine to Aquinas, there is a long Christian ethical tradition of ‘newness of life’ in Christ; this may mean regeneration, illumination by the Holy Spirit, the Christian virtues of faith hope and love, or even the significantly more sophisticated medieval notion of infused virtue which elevates human action to allow its correspondence to eternal as opposed to temporal good (Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I-II 62.1. It is perhaps worth noting that this basically evangelical idea is in deep tension with Barth’s larger view that all of humanity is reconciled to God in Christ, participate in the redemptive goodness of creation by virtue of that reconciliation, and has its action already determined by Jesus Christ’s action. This tension, together with Barth’s view of Scripture, is what brings evangelicals into their greatest disagreement with Barth. I do think, however, that bringing Barth into conversation O’Donovan mitigates some of the tension with regard to sanctification.

²⁸O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 81.

result of such bravado was not a genuine contest between philosophical and theological conceptions of the right and the good (which could only have been helpful), but a confirmation of the idea that in its own formal sphere philosophical ethics was autonomous. At best it meant a theological abandonment of the field, at worst a covert admission of untheological categories of thought into the very heart of theological discourse itself.²⁹

This statement may be seen as both an affirmation and a criticism of Barth's view. It is an affirmation because of the fact that Barth does not rule out the task of philosophical ethics *per se*, but rather the enterprise of Christian moral philosophy, which attempts to describe moral order and moral action in a way that is detached from its fundamental Christological determination, like Niebuhr's attempt in *The Responsible Self*. Barth's rejection of philosophical ethics must be seen in terms of its rejection *from the standpoint of* the task of Christian theology and theological ethics. At the same time, O'Donovan's statement also represents a critique of Barth's view, to the extent that although Barth often engages philosophical conceptions of the right and the good in his theological ethics, he does not employ their concepts in such a way as to allow them to inform, in a concrete way, moral judgments about particular issues.³⁰ We may see *Resurrection and Moral Order* as a corrective to Barth in this respect, though we ought to recognize that Barth simply did not see such engagement as part of his task as a dogmatic theologian.

Taken together, Barth, Niebuhr and O'Donovan give us a rather interesting survey of twentieth century Protestant ethics across a relatively wide spectrum: in all three thinkers, ethics occurs as the description of a certain kind of *situatedness*. This is noted by John Webster, who says that Barth offers us "an account of human freedom as 'situated' by the history of the covenant between the triune God and his human partners. That history simply *is*, anterior to all human choosing; it is a condition in which we find ourselves, and not something which we bring about through an act of

²⁹Ibid., 182.

³⁰O'Donovan's later work demonstrates his mastery of the skill of bringing specifically Christian conceptions of the right and the good into conversation with terms and categories of philosophical ethics, and applying both to a whole range of difficult contemporary moral problems (church & state, just war, nuclear deterrence, bioethics and just recently, homosexuality in the Anglican Communion). In this sense, O'Donovan's ethic represents a step beyond Barth in terms of a Christian reconfiguration of philosophical ethics within the larger scope of created and redeemed moral order, and the subsequent engagement of theological ethics with moral problems. Barth does something like this in *Church Dogmatics* III/4, but O'Donovan is certainly the more rigorous (and theologically consistent) of the two, ethically speaking.

will".³¹ In *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation*, Webster persuasively describes the *Church Dogmatics* as a 'moral ontology', i.e., an extensive account of the situation in which human agents act. In Barth's thought, he says, the problems of ethics tend to be reductive to an adequate description of the moral space in which they occur. This observation squares with the kind of approach we have observed in O'Donovan, that is, an understanding of Christian ethics as a description of moral space that is fundamentally determined by "the ontological inclusivity of the human reality of Jesus Christ which grounds (rather than displaces) all other realities".³² For Protestant theological ethics after Barth, the task has become one not of ascribing and weighing the goodness of moral action, but rather the description of this situation in which we find ourselves, the context in which moral action takes place, the features of human action that make it correspond properly to its (creative *and* redemptive) context. In moral deliberation, "we attempt to fit our action to the conditions in which we have to act".³³ Because created reality has been Christologically determined in Barth's understanding, this means that moral or 'good' action will always correspond to moral order as reflected in the covenant of God with human beings. This also means that mean moral deliberation in any significant sense will occur in view of our reflection upon the created order *as God intended it to be* and as it is in light of Jesus Christ.³⁴ We can see from all this that both the theological description of the context of human action and the ethical description of the relative correspondence of human action to created and redeemed moral order rely on Jesus Christ as the determinative condition in which and on the basis of which all human action takes place.³⁵

³¹Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology*, 123.

³²Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation*, 54.

³³O'Donovan, 96.

³⁴It does not seem to me that Barth rejects the notion of created order *per se*, or the notion that God's will expressed in that created order is an expression of his eternal will, because that order one that anticipates its fulfillment in the covenant. Similarly, it is unreasonable to say that Barth's attack upon natural theology (as an epistemological way of reasoning one's way to God) is necessarily an attack upon the idea of created order, or upon any version of natural law that understands God's moral will as expressed in that order. This is provided, of course, that created order is situated in its proper creative and covenantal context, which is precisely what Emil Brunner, for example, failed to do and so invited Barth's 'No!'. This also means, I think, that Barth does not reject Thomas Aquinas outright, but rather the Thomism of the nineteenth and twentieth century with which he was more familiar and understood as compromising the revelation of God's grace in nature. In defense of Barth's theological method, we may observe that Thomas does not provide an 'apologetic' in the *Summa*, but rather situates his *De Deo Uno* within its larger Trinitarian, redemptive and sacramental context; to read the *Summa* any other way is to miss the point.

³⁵Cf. Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation*, 61. Webster observes exactly this when he says that the most significant of Barth decisions in his doctrine of creation is his "insistence on the priority

CONCLUSION: HUMAN ACTION DETERMINED IN CHRIST

All of this leaves us with at least one major question still unanswered: what is the difference between the moral action of Christians and that of non-Christians? Theologically speaking, if both creation and covenant are already determined by Jesus Christ in an ultimate sense such that all human action corresponds to his action, what practical difference does it make to differentiate between creative and redemptive moral order? Even more pointedly, does a Christological basis for theological ethics and its corresponding description of creation and covenant lead to the ultimate undoing of its own meaningfulness? How does a theological ethic keep from collapsing creative and redemptive orders into one creative and redemptive moral space that is occupied jointly by people who make ethical decisions and articulate moral commitments on the basis of radically different perceptions of this reality? According to H. Richard Niebuhr, we can think of the concept of ‘responsibility’ in a universal human context, apart from any serious theological consideration of the person and work of Christ and how it might determine human action. O’Donovan on the other hand represents a Christian ethic that is fully grounded in Christology and also embraces the created order with what we might call a ‘transformationist’ impulse.³⁶ That is, it seeks to engage and Christianize the moral order in all respects: the moral order, the moral field, wisdom, the moral law, ethical casuistry, and moral codes, right down to concrete everyday moral decision and ethical commitments.

As we have seen over and over again, the answer to this question, for Barth at least, is the category of obedience: that is, action that puts human beings in proper relation to God by virtue of its correspondence to the action of God in Jesus Christ. For Barth and O’Donovan, both Christians and non-Christians are capable of obedient and therefore good action, for the latter by virtue of their participation in a created order that is in the process of being redeemed, and for the former through the direction of the Holy Spirit in faith and obedience. Both thinkers offer us a Christian ethic that rejects the liberal Protestant collapse of the orders of creation and redemption, and is grounded in Christology in such a way as to embrace creation.

of participation in the humanity of Christ for a definition of human nature and action.” We have already seen this to be the case in Barth’s understanding of authentic humanity, now we can see that authentic humanity set within the larger context within which human action occurs, as well as the fact that that context, i.e., created order and its history, is itself Christologically determined.

³⁶Ironically, this is the stance taken by Niebuhr in his other most widely-read text, *Christ and Culture*. Niebuhr famously gives arguments for and against four tropes in his typology, but gives only arguments *pro* for the fifth, ‘Christ transforming culture’.

For Barth, though, creation is fundamentally determined by covenant and is ordered toward redemptive fulfillment in Christ in such a way that it does not have an independent basis or goodness of its own. O'Donovan, therefore, represents a correction of Barth in terms of specifying the difference between saying, in an epistemological sense, that Christians *understand* Jesus Christ to be both the creator and the basis of their knowledge of creation, and saying that Jesus Christ is the only *ontological* basis for the goodness of creation.³⁷

For Barth, God's revelation in Jesus Christ is the *concretissimum*, the most concrete of realities, and so the covenant gives to created order a reality that it could otherwise only anticipate. It also gives reality to human existence, by confirming the goodness of the created order and the goodness of humanity as God's creature and covenant partners. The incarnation and atonement of Jesus Christ, moreover, is the ground and fulfillment of obedient human action, and therefore restores humanity to a reconciled relationship with God, such that every human action is determined, claimed, and judged in view of the fully obedient humanity of Jesus Christ.³⁸ Any obedient action, therefore, can be thought of as 'Christian action' because it corresponds to the goodness of the moral order as expressed in Jesus Christ, irrespective of whether the person doing that action has responded in faith to the gospel; their authentic humanity is already determined in Christ. In this light, both a distinctively Christological starting point for ethics, and a thoroughgoing Christological method in developing Christian ethics may be seen as plausible, following Barth's and O'Donovan's depictions of obedience and responsibility, beyond strictly biblical or philosophical approaches to ethics.

³⁷It is still important for us to remember that Barth is following the Christian exposition of a rather strong biblical theme when he says this. In an *an/enhypostatic* Christology, it really does become theologically possible to say that as the incarnate Word Jesus Christ created the heavens and the earth (Jo. 1:3; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2-3). The same passages which emphasize the pre-existence and deity of the Son/Word also emphasize his continual role in sustaining and preserving all things. Thus it is not Gnostic to say that creation has its ontological basis in the person and work of the Jesus Christ, although this standpoint may lead to what many would consider an undesirable range and scope for theological ethics.

³⁸Cf. Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation*, 61. Webster was perhaps the first to recognize that the most significant of Barth's decisions in the doctrine of creation is "an insistence on the priority of participation in the humanity of Christ for a definition of human nature and action".

PHILIPPIANS 4:8 AND THE BRAIN

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INTRODUCTION

As Paul was writing his letter to the church in Philippi, he undoubtedly had little foreknowledge of the profundity of his words as viewed through the perspective of modern neuroscience. Paul's encouragement to the church was both to be understood (cognitive/affective) and lived out in daily practice (behavioral). This article will present a very brief highlight of some of the scientific brain research that adds perspective to Paul's admonition in Phil 4:8. The theme of encouragement and "thinking on these things" contains spiritual guidance that has additional practical value in light of developments in neuroplasticity and modern neuroscience.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The letter to the Philippians builds upon Paul's teaching of observing and increasing the value of our daily habits, especially concerning our mental (cognitive & emotional) habits and daily routines (1:25-26; 3:12-16; 3:14). Living daily with "joy in the faith" (1:25) is a volitional charge to actively shape behavior in light of Christ's sacrificial gift to his followers. As the letter draws to a close, Paul's charge to approach life (i.e. choices, circumstances) with an attitude of prayer, supplication, and humility will result in the peace of God and "hearts and... minds in Christ Jesus" (4:7). This instruction for volitional shaping of our daily habits (esp. attitude) is consistent with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount teaching (Matt 6) and is a recurring theme throughout both Old and New Testament Scripture (i.e. Proverbs, James). In essence, daily habits form the foundation of our character, both inward and outward.

Paul's encouragement continues by instructing believers to "think about

these things,” namely “whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, or worthy of praise” (4:8). Kent (1978, 152) has aptly described this passage as, “a veritable charter for Christian thought.” As believers monitor their thinking, the integration of inward behavior and outward behavior become increasingly consistent and parallel processes. Paul instructs believers to *apply* (i.e. live out) these thoughts and “practice these things,” and the God of peace will be present in believer’s life (4:9). The presence of the “God of peace” in the believer’s life should be understood as God’s direct influence and mindful presence; however, peace in this context can also infer a mental state free of internal strife, and is an inherent characteristic of believers (Feinberg, 1984). As followers of Christ make thinking about the things of God a consistent habit, they become free (or at least freer) from internal conflicts (i.e. guilt, shame). The book of Proverbs (among many other Old and New Testament sections) describes the embracing of wisdom as this very struggle and challenge, to live in consistent awareness of God’s presence by thinking and choosing wisdom over folly or sinful attitudes and behaviors. The clear goal is closer alignment with God’s values and our own values, attitudes and daily behaviors. This behavioral pattern also sets in motion the promised spiritual growth and closer relationship with Christ that has both cognitive and behavioral consequences (Phil 4:9).

WORLDVIEW, CHRISTIANITY AND PSYCHOLOGY

Biblical worldview requires reconciling theology and our faith with science, including but not limited to medicine, psychology, sociology, and neuroscience in an ethical manner to make informed, value-based judgments. In seeking an integrated and informed worldview, Christians should eagerly strive for consistent theology and informed science. DeWitt (2002) in discussing worldview notes, “A theology unable, unwilling, disinterested in or even disdaining to articulate a worldview, will tilt toward reductionism, sectarianism, or pessimism with tendencies to disappointment, narrowness, and failure.” (365). Expanding upon DeWitt’s observation, our theological development should humbly assess those areas of science and psychology that can inform the Christian toward a balanced, critical (not pessimist), articulate worldview.

When it comes to the brain and the discipline of psychology in particular, the modern Christian evangelical tradition has historically struggled to determine what can or should be accepted and what should be rejected as opposed to the things of Christ. Rightly, much of historical psychology (i.e.

Freud, Skinner) proposed ideas and methods that clearly conflicted with a historical biblical worldview. To make matters worse, many within modern psychology have been outspoken proponents of secular humanist ideas and atheistic ideals in seeking to be accepted as truly “scientific” and respected among their peers in the sciences. This open rejection of Christianity by many in mainstream psychology caused many pastors and evangelical Christians to vocally reject psychology in return.

In the 1970’s, popular psychology wrestled with the issue of “integration” (reconciling theology and psychology), arguably not always an easy task. Early books, such as at Jay Adams’ (1970) *Competent to Counsel*, effectively created a schism within the church, between those who felt they must “choose” either Scripture or “the world” (i.e. psychology, medicine, science) and others who felt (i.e. Larry Crabb, James Dobson) that Scripture and psychology could live together in dynamic tension. Adams’ (1970) treatise on pastoral “biblical counseling” (Nouthetic) in lieu of professional, or psychological counseling has had significant repercussions within the Western evangelical church ever since. Thus began the ‘biblical counseling’ movement, which despite some valuable theological and practical applications, unfortunately also adapted many reductionist viewpoints. Pastors John MacArthur and Wayne Mack (1994, 10-12) have called “Christian Psychology an “oxymoron,” and secular psychology a “pseudo-science,” already highlighting the inherent mistrust in psychology, subsequently steering Christians away from professional clinical treatment. Hindson & Eyrich (1997) argued further that to “embrace psychology” was to (at least partially) reject the sufficiency of Christ. The argument went that to be whole (i.e. mentally, emotionally, and spiritually), we need Christ alone. When we “need” something else (i.e. psychology), then we assume that we need “Christ + psychology,” or “Christ + something else.” Obviously, this creates a serious theological problem if we accept this reductionist view as a necessary outcome to “wholeness,” thereby denying the *solas* upon which the Reformation was based (i.e. Christ alone, faith alone, Scripture alone). Essentially, titles within the field of biblical counseling, such as *Psychoheresy: The Psychological Seduction of Christianity* (Bobgan & Bobgan, 1987) and *Why Christians Can’t Trust Psychology* (Bulkley, 1993) have embraced a reductionist perspective and encouraged many within the evangelical church to question, reject, or at least remain ambivalent to (or unaware of) modern psychology and neuroscience developments.

The focus on psychology seems relevant to the degree that psycholo-

gy (theoretically, historically) is heavily value-laden (MacArthur & Mack, 1994); therefore, Christians rightly need to assess what areas of psychology (or any of the sciences such as medicine, sociology, anthropology, etc.) should be embraced or rejected by thoughtful Christians seeking an informed worldview. The importance of ethical thinking is also essential to making informed decisions. The reductionist “sufficiency of Scripture *versus* psychology” is simply a non-starter for most, especially psychological science and modern evidence-based practices. This simplistic and reductionist argument (i.e. “Christ versus psychology”) would have few proponents in the other allied sciences, such as medicine or dentistry (i.e. “I will not see a dentist, *because* that would deny the sufficiency of Christ”). Christ *is* sufficient *and* God has given us many technological advances that can benefit the Christian (including dentistry, medicine and even psychology). David Noebel rightly advises, “Just because so many lies flourish in the realm of modern psychology does not mean Christians should abandon it. Instead, Christians must bring God’s truth to a deceived discipline” (Noebel, 1994; cited in Anderson, Zuehlke & Kuehlke, 2000). Christians are advised to embrace a balanced worldview that is both theologically informed, and also open to the best of modern science that God has allowed us to discover.

Evaluating culture, science or theology, Christians should embrace the authority of Scripture as our ultimate guide. Brueggemann (2001) cites six elements of biblical interpretation that guide the student of biblical authority: inerrancy, interpretation, imagination, ideology, inspiration, and importance. Assuming each of these elements, Christians can reconcile an articulate, cogent theological understanding in tandem with advances in the modern sciences.

Modern science is beginning to understand the physiological impact of our thinking patterns on the physical brain, which in many ways supports the wisdom proffered in Scripture. Rather than avoidance, ethical conflicts between an informed theological perspective and the evidence-based, research available in the modern scientific perspective should invigorate the development of both theology and psychological science.

NEUROSCIENCE AND HABITS

The relevance of modern psychology and neuroscience to Christians is not only spiritual but physiological. Christians have much to be excited about when applying Philippians 4:8 and the habits of thinking about the things of Christ through the lens of modern neuroscience. When Eric

Kandel won the Nobel Prize (2000) for demonstrating that the brain is “plastic” well into later adulthood and physically changes as new learning occurs, increasing research on neuroplasticity followed (Doidge, 2015). The immediate takeaway was that brains change physically through habitual thought patterns in ways that can be measured in brain scans, including functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and positron emission tomography (PET) scans among other diagnostic tests (Goleman, 2013). This plasticity or malleability of the brain to adapt physically, even into late adulthood has been a relatively recent insight. Previous developmental psychological understanding assumed that brains developed rapidly through adolescence and then began the eventual decline (Santrock, 2012). The common comparison was like wet concrete that quickly hardens when pouring a sidewalk, so too the brain was highly plastic until late adolescence. Essentially, it was believed that brains stopped growing as adolescents matured into adulthood, while the rest of the body would grow new cells throughout the lifespan (i.e. blood, skin, hair). The brain was simply locked in its own developmental stage until age-related decline took over. Modern science has accepted that this previous understanding of the brain was limited (Goleman, 2013; Levitin, 2014).

At present, stroke patients are “relearning” to regain their sight, many who are paralyzed are beginning to learn to walk, and others are regaining lost functions by remapping different parts of the brain to take on new (or rather previously lost) functions (Doidge, 2015). Recent clinical applications of neuroplasticity have also looked at slowing the progression of multiple sclerosis (MS) and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), and in some cases regain functioning and reduce symptoms associated with the progression of the disease (Doidge, 2015). In some cases, patients using neuroplastic clinical approaches have relearned to walk and regain lost functions using behavioral (habitual) neuroplastic training. Clinical advances have also been applied to chronic pain patients who have learned to live pain-free without medications and regain lost physical abilities, even after several pain syndromes have severely limited flexibility and mobility. As pain and disease restricts the abilities (i.e. mobility, use of limbs, balance), the brain “learns” not to use these parts of the body; this becomes an unfortunate feedback loop. The inverse also applies to brain retraining (relearning) to overcome lost abilities as new “neuronal pathways fire together.” These positive changes can be observed through changes in habits and objectively through brain scans that have shown areas of the brain corresponding to the changes in ability and functioning.

Habits often begin as thoughtful decisions that require a great deal of focus and effort, and pass through the prefrontal cortex (command center of the thinking brain), situated above the eyes behind our forehead. As habits become “automatic,” and less deliberate effort is required to follow through with the behavior. Once established, there is little cognitive “thought” to engage the behavior (i.e. “Should I wash with soap this time?” is automatic and does not require contemplation). The same is true of most of our daily habits that we rarely think about, such as putting toothpaste on the toothbrush, bathroom hygiene, or putting on our seatbelt when we get in the car. We do not think, we simply “do.”

The mantra in neuroplasticity is “neurons that fire together, wire together,” or stated another way, when we continually “think about these things” (Phil 4:8), we consistently create neural pathways that reinforce these thinking patterns. Habits formed are easier to maintain once the neural pathways have developed and reinforce the feedback loop. This applies to all behavior, whether students are developing more effective study skills, habitually snacking between meals, or choosing TV over exercise (Duhigg, 2014). The same applies to positive, spiritual disciplines and habits. Foster (1978) highlighted the inward “discipline” or repetitive habits of meditation, prayer, fasting, and study to emphasize the importance daily habitual patterns for spiritual growth. By repeating thoughts, emotional states and behavioral patterns, we generate new habits that become automatic. This has significant value for Christians who are seeking to become more Christ-like in their thoughts, attitudes/emotions and behavior. As new Christ-affirming thoughts are repeated, neurogenesis leads to these thoughts becoming automatic in the brain.

Perhaps this is especially significant when considering the challenge of addictive behaviors (i.e. alcohol, drugs, pornography), and learning or attempting to change thinking and habits. Developing new habits free of addiction takes active and volitional work, because the previous habits become automatic and do not require as much conscious thought. Many who struggle with addictive behaviors admit that a single choice became an encompassing behavioral pattern that required less and less “conscious choice.” The automaticity of thinking and behavior becomes automatic, good and bad alike. All behavior (including our thoughts) changes the brain in ways that reinforce and support our habits. To change habits and patterns, a refocusing and deliberate application of will becomes necessary. Neuroplastic changes in the brain helps to understand the long-term protective benefits of healthy, Christ-centered habits versus sinful habits,

especially if one's goal is to live more in alignment with a biblical worldview.

A significant challenge becomes finding the inherent reward in choosing new or healthier habits (Duhigg, 2012). Little motivation is necessary to find reason to eat a chocolate chip cookie or succulent lemon bar, especially if one is already hungry. It is a rare child who begs to eat the broccoli and rejects dessert. Willpower and motivation become increasingly necessary to avoid such things, if for no other reason than choosing the spinach salad over the ice cream is especially challenging and requires its own reward. The motivation must be meaningful if change is to be permanent. Intrinsic motivation is required to build and reinforce new habits where immediate extrinsic motivation is lacking. As one mindfully considers weight loss, avoiding diabetes or some other personal outcome for eating the spinach instead of the cheesecake, the motivation required for such changes alters behavior and continues to build momentum.

Most people acknowledge that brushing one's teeth is essential for good oral hygiene; however, this is difficult at first until the habit becomes second nature (just ask any parent of a young child). Once automatic, the new behavioral routine requires little effort. If the goal is to follow Christ and avoid temptations, then the subsequent reward must be present, either intrinsic (i.e. "I want to serve Christ," "I feel guilty when I engage in this behavior," "I *want* to avoid sinful temptations") or extrinsic (i.e. "I am afraid of getting caught," "what would my friends think?"). The motivation to change behavior must be volitionally embraced until the neuroplastic changes in the brain catch up to help make the new change automatic and less of a conscious decision. Once new behavioral patterns become automatic, less motivation is required to where we experience less and less temptation.

Technological increases in information likewise have caused many to live distracted and lacking focus in daily living and have significant neuroplastic implications. The conscious brain is able to process information at approximately 120 bits per second, meaning that every potential stimulus requires deliberate (or unintended) attention and focus (Levitin, 2014). With every text message, phone call, Facebook update or distraction, the conscious mind is redirected with whatever new stimulus is vying for attention. The hormonal reward is also unfortunately reinforcing the release of dopamine that craves the distraction for focused thought. This negative behavioral feedback loop creates a chronic problem of attention and executive function for many (Goleman, 2013; Levitin, 2014). Where

the mind goes, the brain follows. Perhaps more than ever, Foster's (1978) recommendation for prayerful solitude and meditation are as important today as at any time to help our brains avoid the distractions that provide a neurochemical reward, but are negatively changing our physiology. The significance on contemplative prayer and solitude on brain health cannot be overstated. Paul's admonition to "think on these things" (Phil 4:8) is a direct focusing of attention on spiritual values in direct contrast to "automatic" distractions.

Hormones and neurotransmitters also reinforce neuroplastic development by shaping and reinforcing specific behavioral patterns (Pert, 1999). Just as hormones signal that we are hungry, thirsty or tired, emotions (subjective experiences) also have a physiological counterpart that reinforces over time. Someone who is chronically happy or unhappy often becomes more of the same, until they are joyful and resilient to daily stressors or irritable and unbearable to others. The neurological process of neuroplasticity and hormonal reinforcement supports the "putting on/putting off" the things of Christ in contrast with the sinful habits of the world (Eph 4) by building upon previous neural pathways to reinforce behavioral habits. Like the distractions that keep us from consistently embracing a mindful spiritual daily walk (i.e. prayer, meditation, devotional reading), the instant hormonal/neurotransmitter "reward" following distractions must be willingly overcome as new habits are established. Likewise, the motivation for creating mindful spiritual practices find reward in embracing Paul's admonition in Phil 4:8, while distractions lessen their associated neurochemical reward. Mental discipline remains essential as this passage is lived out in daily practice. This process is supported physiologically in the brain, which makes "putting on" the things of Christ easier over time and helps believers think about the things of Christ and therefore put them into practice (4:8-9).

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The implications of neuroplasticity and neuroscience that influence behavior are significant for modern Christians. Christians should not avoid modern advances in scientific neuropsychology. However, critical thinking and embracing a biblical worldview implies due diligence to Scripture and biblical truth while intelligently evaluating science and modern advances. Instead of retreating or becoming reductionist in perspective, Christians must actively pursue ethical and moral standards when conflicts arise and seek Godly wisdom and discernment (Noebel, 1994). When modern neuro-

science is considered, the support for purposefully guiding one's thoughts and behavior into alignment begins a snowball effect that reinforces more of the good and makes rejecting the bad that much more automatic and requires less extrinsic motivation (Goleman, 2013; Pert, 1999). The habit-forming process of Philippians 4 and purposeful "thinking on these things" begins to reinforce neuronal pathways in the brain to align with the things of Christ. Like a muscle that grows with physical exercise, the brain changes as we develop habits and automatic behaviors that grow in accord with our patterns, especially our thoughts and emotions (Levitin, 2014). Unfortunately, negative, sinful habits physically alter the brain in ways that encourage those habits to become automatic, so that *choice* and conscious thought are no longer required. The brain constructs neural pathways that build upon these physiological changes to synergize habit formation. The good news is that the same process helps in building God-honoring habits that seek to build spiritual disciplines and practices that serve in the sanctification process for the believer.

When considering Paul's encouraging letter to the Philippians, by thinking on the things of Christ, new habits replace old habits, thereby making spiritual growth initially deliberate and then automatic. By challenging the Philippian church to "rejoice" (4:4), they were constructing neural pathways that built upon their gratitude as a redeemed and blessed people of God. By rejecting anxiety and seeking to trust in God through "prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" (4:4-5), they were likewise altering their automatic cognitive-behavioral responses through neuroplasticity and supportive physiological changes in the brain. Spiritually, sanctification becomes at first deliberate, then automatic by providing additional traction to making God-honoring choices based on consistent habits. The God of peace being present is both spiritual and physiological as old (sinful) habits are replaced with new (Christ-honoring) habits.

One might ask how to break bad habits and change behavior to "put off" the things of the world? Perhaps the answer is more direct than expected, yet fully supported by modern neuroscience and our understanding of neuroplasticity. "Think about these things" (Phil 4:8) and "practice these things" (4:9) has practical as well as spiritual implications for the follower of Christ. Begin the habit and not only will the peace of God be with you, but the Spirit's indwelling presence (1 Cor 3:16) and our own neurological physiology will support and reinforce the growth.

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THE ROMAN HOUSEHOLD AND THE PROBLEM OF
SUBMISSION PREACHING EPHESIANS 5

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INTRODUCTION: FINDING THE FOREST

One of the primary challenges of the preacher is to present words that were written over two millennia ago in a way that is both faithful to their original context and meaningful to modern culture. While modern believers share membership in the Body of Christ with the original audience of Paul's letters, the worlds by which they interpreted those letters are drastically different. In some ways, this can be overlooked, but on occasion one comes across a passage that presents a considerable challenge to the preacher. One such unit, which this paper will deal with, is Paul's teachings on the roles within the Christian household found in Ephesians 5 - specifically that of the relationship between the Christian husband and wife. This passage has been a flash point in the discussion of the cultural relevance of the Bible, as, over the last century, Western Culture has moved in a direction that often seems opposed to Paul's instruction for wives' submission (*hupotasso*) to their husbands (Eph. 5:22). From the Suffragettes of the early twentieth century to the Feminist movement that gained popularity in the mid-sixties, we have found ourselves in a world where (at least outside of the Evangelical Church) Paul's words may demean the role of women to that of a servant of their husband. Just as strongly as some evangelicals may reject this and push for a culturally shaped egalitarian reading of Paul's instruction, there are those who hold strongly to complementary view¹ - claiming that to shift ones implementation of this teaching would

¹The understanding that the marriage roles have strongly defined roles with little crossover is often referred to as "complementarianism." Those who hold this view are opposed to reading anything other than hierarchy and male headship into the passage at hand. See the entry on "Family," in Leland

be to surrender God's timeless truth to the changing cultural winds. Thus, with lines so sharply drawn, any approach to teach, explore and implement this section of Ephesians 5 often is immediately consumed by this debate. There is much to be said in defense of this conversation as the pastor and scholar should be proactive in seeking Paul's inspired intent, not only for the Ephesians, but for all future readers and listeners of this teaching. However, perhaps this was not the immediate intent of Paul. Is it possible, that in our excitement to establish the one, timeless and true cultural mandate on submission within the marriage we have missed a broader point? Perhaps, with such focus on the proverbial "tress" of the submission/authority debate we may miss the "forest" that Paul is communicating.

DEALING WITH THE PRESSURE POINT

Much of the stress upon reading and preaching the passage stems from the strong choice of language from Paul. However, as nearly all who have worked through this passage have noted, the call for a wife's submission is directly countered by Paul's statement that a husband is to love his wife in a manner that reflects the sacrificial love of Christ. Yet, for many preachers, the challenge remains. Paul's words here are strong and may not be popular within the current cultural therefore leaving those who hold to a strict implementation of this passage to be labeled fundamentalist and accused of damming the flow of modern civil rights or relegated to the fringe of relevance. Despite this, any preacher who aspires to be a faithful Berean, must not avoid potentially controversial sections. Though a particular portion of Scripture may not smoothly conform to the culture, it should not affect a preacher's willingness to allow these passages to speak to them and their congregation. However, it is also a critical duty of the preacher, especially those who are committed to a normal hermeneutic, to do the necessary and often challenging work of placing these passages within their original cultural and religious context - a task that greatly impacts interpretation of these passages. To this end, properly understanding the Greco-Roman world of the 1st century will directly affect how one reads, teaches and implements the words of Eph 5:22-24.

THE WORLD OF *PATERFAMILIAS*

Arguably the most significant factor to properly reading Paul's instruction on family relationships is the Greek concept of *paterfamilias*² or "head of the household." This concept shaped Greco Roman life during the centuries leading up to and following the writings of Scripture, so it is imperative for the preacher grasp this central cultural-unit, The *paterfamilias*, (always the oldest male within a household) was assigned the role not simply of father, but as the source of ultimate authority over his entire household. This included (but was not limited to) authority over his spouse, children, servants, finances and property. This caused all household decisions to first be filtered through the *paterfamilias* who was ultimately held responsible for the actions (good or bad) of all members of his household. It was then the duty of all members within the particular household to, without question, submit to the will of the *paterfamilias*. Ultimately, their opinion on matters was of little substance unless that head of the house was willing to entertain it (but this was fully dependent of the demeanor of the father). He had no cultural or legal obligation to relinquish authority. In the eyes of Roman law, the role of *paterfamilias* was not simply on an advisory level. Instead his decisions were seen within the eyes of the law to be both supreme and judicial. This is most notable in power of life and death that he held over the members of his household: legally, the *paterfamilias* had authority to carry out the execution of his children. While the implementation of this seemed to be infrequent, especially in Paul's day,³ its inclusion in the law serves to illustrate the absolute authority which was afforded to the father within the Greco-Roman world. On a macro-scale, the Roman government was itself considered to be a family that was ruled by the ultimate *paterfamilias*, the Emperor⁴. This comparison was helpful for members of the community to understand their expected roles - both within their own household as well as within the "world family" that made up the Roman Empire.

As noted above, the status of household head was not something that needed to be earned. Within the family unit the role of *paterfamilias* was simply given on basis of gender and age (the oldest male within a house-

²C. C. Kroeger, "Head," page 376 in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, eds. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1993)

³C. S. Keener, "Family and Household," page 357 *Dictionary of New Testament Backgrounds*, (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1993).

⁴D. A. deSilva, "Ruler Cult," page 1028 in *Dictionary of New Testament Backgrounds*, (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1993).

hold). Because of this both the title and the authority was not removed except in two circumstances: the death of the father or loss of Roman citizenship⁵. This meant that, depending on the length of life, the authority of the father often extended beyond the adolescence of his offspring, as adult children were still considered to be a part of their father's household. However, once a son married, he would assume the role of *paterfamilias* of his own family which resulted in a considerable change of the family dynamics. This transition of role and authority was not reserved for male children, but for daughters as well - at least at certain points in history. During the era of the early Roman Republic (509 BC-27 BC) this was customary, as brides would undergo a similar "shift in allegiance" as part of the marriage covenant.⁶ As long as a woman lived with her parents, she was "property" of her father⁷ but upon marriage, a woman would begin to recognize her husband as her new *paterfamilias*.

However, as with many cultural practices, this changed with time. By the time of Paul, the Roman Republic had given way to the early Roman Empire (27 BC-AD 476), which saw various changes in social practice. By the date that Paul wrote Ephesians, it was becoming normative for a woman to remain a dependent of her father and his household rather than the household of her husband. This rendered her as a legal subject of her father and ultimately responsible to aid in the success of *his* household, rather than that of her husband (and her own!). Obviously this arrangement resulted in major implications on the marriage relationship. For example, if the father of the bride willed, he could initiate a divorce of his daughter and her husband.⁸

TO THE TEXT

With this understanding, we can now approach the text at hand equipped to read it with the perspective of Paul's original audience. While the entirety of this *household code* section (5:21-6:9) falls under the command to "Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ" (v. 21), Paul's first specific focus is the role of the wife. He writes "submit yourselves to your own

⁵Keener, "Family and Household," 357.

⁶Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2002), 741.

⁷For more on the difference of *manus* and *sine manus*, see Hoehner, 741. This was a term often associated with household servants and their relationship to the head of the household. This was an appropriate title, as a daughter shared much with her father's servants in regards to authority and submission

⁸Hoehner, 741

husband” (v. 22) and supports this statement with the claim that her role in relationship to her husband (as the head of her household) is analogous of Church’s submission to Christ (as the head of the church’s “household,” v. 23). It is tempting to blunt this teaching by softening the word at the center. But to do this would be to take several liberties with the text. Louw & Nida places this verb “submit” under the domain of “Control, Rule” and defines it as “to bring something under the firm control of someone” (L&N 36.18). Significantly, this is the same word used by Paul in Philippians to express the power that enables Christ to control all of creation and initiate the resurrection of the believers (Phil 3:21). Again, we see this word used in Acts to speak of the quieting and controlling of the rioting crowd in Ephesus (Acts 19:35). *Hypotasso* is not a matter of suggestions, respect or even obedience—but it carries with it a sense of power and authority.

While it is not the focus of the paper, a word should be said about the section immediately following 5:21-24. In 5:25-30, Paul in no uncertain terms calls for the other party in the marriage covenant—the husband—to value and sacrifice for his wife. Using the example of Christ as the ultimate picture of commitment and love, Paul commands husbands to treat their wives in this same manner. On its own, this is compelling challenge would have had a unique impact of Paul’s audience. The Ephesian Christians were steeped in the world of *paterfamilias* which enabled the husband to make decisions based on what was good for him alone. While most did in fact consider the ramification of their decisions on family members, this was not necessarily expected. Paul speaks directly to that mindset when he calls husbands to “love their wives as their own bodies” (v. 28). If even a hint of doubt remained concerning Paul’s intent to teach a countercultural and paradigm shifting way to understand marriage, he proceeds to “seal the deal” with the next verse in this unit.

BACK TO THE START

Without introduction or citation, Paul quotes from Genesis 2:24 with only minor changes from its LXX translation.⁹ The original context of this well-known verse immediately follows the account of the creation of woman from the bone of man. In one of the final lines before the Fall Narrative in Gen 3, the text describes the relationship of the husband and wife should now supersede any relationship that had existed between the bridegroom and his parents or the bride and her parents. The verb *kataleipo* means

⁹Hoehner, 771

“to leave” or “forsake” (LSJ) and is used in multiple places in the LXX, including Naomi’s challenge for Ruth to depart from her and to return to her own people (Ruth 1:16). This is a verb with strong overtones of both movement and separation.

The inclusion of this passage was obviously important to Paul. Instead of skimming over this verse, as often happens when presenting this unit, it should be seen as an integral part of his message to the Ephesians. Paul begins this section by stating that the wife should submit herself to her husband, thus establishing the relationship as one of highest priority. Nearing his conclusion, Paul inserts a quote from the LXX which reminds his readers that this ordering was the intent of the marriage covenant from its conception. This bracketing places the “submission” passage firmly with the context of relationship prioritizing.

With this in mind, perhaps instead of solely focusing on Paul’s use of the strong language of submission, one should primarily read 5:22-33 as a call for the reclaiming of the marriage relationship to the place of supreme importance that God intended when he established it. For Paul’s audience, it was becoming normative for a wife to value the success, desires and authority of her father over those of her husband. By doing so, she was in direct opposition with the Genesis imperative rendering the marriage covenant, which was to be prioritized, as a secondary relationship. For Paul, when the way of God comes into conflict with the way of culture (which happens quite often in his teachings!), God’s way always wins. This is the case in this passage and therefore establishes the challenge of Ephesians 5. Paul’s message of following God’s marriage paradigm means living in contrast to the flow of culture. Paul writes of prioritizing but to ensure his message is heard use the strong and controversial (both then and now!) language of submission.

TAKING IT TO THE PULPIT

When the context and content of this section meets, the preacher can approach it with confidence. The language of submission should not be softened in this passage, as Paul is affirming the headship of a husband who is viewing his wife with the same sort of elevating love and sacrifice that Christ had for the church. When this happens, there is a unique movement of mutual submission, sacrifice and love that defines a Biblical marriage. But before any of this can take place, it is critical, and perhaps this is the central message of Paul here, that both bride and the groom begin to view their marriage as the primary human-relationship in their life.

How can this be emphasized when this passage is taught from the pulpit? While time should be spent on the specifics of what this mutual submission and love looks like, the preacher should make sure to give appropriate attention to Paul's message of relationship prioritizing. As those with much more experience in marital counseling than this author will affirm, some of the first hints of brokenness within a marriage can be seen when either member begins to look towards the needs of others (whether it be themselves, friends or family) rather than the needs of their spouse. Western culture constantly promotes tension between a spouse and their in-laws as the norm in popular media, and to be fair, the tension may exist. Problems arise when a husband cares too much about the desires of his parents, as his wife begins to feel as if their marriage is of less importance. In the same way, when a wife seems to respect the advice of her parents over that of her husband, the value of her marriage is diminished.

While we may not find ourselves within the same context of *paterfamilias* that permeated the Greco-Roman world, the dangers remain for the marriage relationship to be less-than prioritized. Paul is clear that this was not the intention of God and therefore should be actively avoided. With language of submission and sacrifice as well as an intentionally placed quote from the Hebrew Bible, Paul uses this unit of Eph 5 to make such a statement. Preachers would do well to apply this to their own marriages as well as faithfully and compellingly communicate this truth to their congregations.

SHORT NOTE:
ACTS 1:6-7: DID THE APOSTLES MISS THE POINT?

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At the end of a 40 day seminar on the Kingdom of God taught by the Lord Jesus to his Apostles comes an important question. Some indicate that the apostles completely misunderstood the concept of the kingdom.¹ However, the question of the disciples was natural—“Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” The disciples had every reason to see the two connected since two themes—the kingdom (1:3) and the Spirit (1:4-5)—are inseparable linked in the teaching of Jesus during this seminar period. “This time” (1:6) connects back to verse 5, “not many days from now.” These were reasonable men and the context confirms the reasonableness of the question. Notice the following:

- The prophets had foretold of the kingdom, and Jesus had declared it “at hand.” It is clear that the 40-day seminar was about the Kingdom of God as predicted in the Old Testament (1:3).
- The kingdom is the central theme of Luke’s teaching in the Gospel of Luke (4:43; 6:20; 8:1, 10; 9:2,11; 11:20; 17:20-21; 18:16-17; 24-25; 21:31; 22:16).

There can be little doubt that Jesus confirmed that the Kingdom was still to come. There is no evidence that Jesus told them that Israel would not be

¹For example I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* (TNTC; Downers Grove Ill.: Inter-Varsity, 2008), 64. He says they failed to “realize that Jesus had transformed the Jewish hope of the kingdom by purging it of its nationalistic political elements.”

restored, and the Messiah Kingdom was no longer an option. To hold that they misunderstood is unrealistic and challenges the capacity of the apostles to comprehend, as well as, the teaching ability of Jesus.

The question indicates that Jesus did not teach that the Kingdom of God was simply a spiritual kingdom; rather it is the earthly Messianic Kingdom.² The implication is clear that they expected a restoration of Israel to the Messianic Kingdom. It is clear that the ministry of the Holy Spirit would give opportunity to Israel to repent and receive the kingdom.

The question arises from the reference to the “promise of the Father” which was the coming of the Holy Spirit in relationship to the Messiah Kingdom. Keener points that during the forty day seminar Jesus taught on the subjects of the Holy Spirit (1:4-5) and the kingdom (1:3) showing “these two themes as inseparable linked.”³ The Father had promised that in the end time He would restore Israel to a place of blessing (Jer 16:15; 23:8; 31:27-34; Ezek 34—37; Isa 2:2-4; 49:6; Amos 9:11-15; Zech 12:8-10). The restoration of the nation through a renewed Israel and the return of its fortunes would be marked by the activity of the Holy Spirit. There are two key passages concerning the link: Zech 12:10: “I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on me whom they have pierced....” The Spirit of grace is the spirit of YHWH which by grace empowers Israel to repent, resulting in the restoration of the kingdom (Zech 13). The context centers on the thoughts of the Messianic Kingdom. That was their expectation. This eschatological view of the work of the Holy Spirit is reinforced by the second key passage—Joel 2:28-29, which Peter at Pentecost identified in Acts 2:16-21 as proof that the events that were beginning to take place.

The word *restore* (ἀποκαθίστημι) has the meaning the restoration of dominion, to reinstate or reestablish.⁴ Interestingly, the word in the LXX is a technical term referring to God’s restoring Israel politically (Pss 16:5; Jer. 15:19; 16:15; 23:8; 24:6; Ezek 16:55; 17:23; Hos 2:3; 11:11).⁵ It is an eschatological term. Their hope was to see the kingdom restored to them as the prophets predicted and envisioned (Isa 2:2; 46:6; Jer 16:15; 31:27-

²John A. McLean, “Did Jesus Correct the Disciples’ View of the Kingdom?” *BibSac* 151 (1994): 218. McLean says, “The fact that Jesus did not correct the disciples’ view of the kingdom suggests the correctness of their perception of it.”

³Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2012), 1:682.

⁴R. J. Knowling, *Acts Of The Apostles*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1983), 56.

⁵Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts*, 11 (www.SonicLight.com)

37). The basis and foundation of their hope is the Davidic Covenant which promised that the Son of David would set up an everlasting kingdom (2 Sam 7:16). Jesus was the righteous branch (Jer 23:5-6) who was to rule and reign.

The answer of Jesus to this question was neither yes nor no. He simply says, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority” (Acts 1:7). The answer is just that they are not to know the time, that knowledge is under the sovereignty of God—for the restoration “the Father fixed by His own authority” (1:7). God the Father fixes the times and the seasons. God the Father alone knows the time of the Kingdom (cf. Mark 13:32). The time is inaccessible to their knowledge. Mark 13:32 indicates that even He as the Son did not know the day or the hour of His coming to set up the kingdom. Jesus is not rejecting the concept of the restoration of Israel. He is confirming the truth of national restoration, but not the time of the fulfillment. The words of Jesus are compatible with the disciples’ view that the kingdom would be restored to Israel as promised in the Old Testament. There is no indication of a rejection of the concept of the Kingdom as presented in the Old Testament in this statement. He only declines to give the timing of its fulfillment. He does not state the reason other than the wisdom and authority of the Father. The answer leaves room for the equal possibility of the Kingdom coming in the foreseeable future, or in the distant future. It is an open-ended answer. It is not a rejection of the Messianic Kingdom being imminent, nor is it an endorsement that it will be postponed. The reason that it was postponed is Israel’s lack of response to the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the salvation he offered (Acts 13:46; 18:6; 28-28). What could have been will be when Israel is restored. The apostles did not miss the point.

PAUL'S MINISTRY VISION: STRATEGIC OR SPONTANEOUS?

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INTRODUCTION

Many have asked “Did Paul have a strategy or deliberate plans in his attempt to grow the body of Christ, or did the early Christian movement expand spontaneously?” I believe the answer is an emphatic yes to the former. In the book of Acts, Luke shows Paul’s *ministry vision* was *intentionally and strategically planned* while also being *empowered* by the Spirit to fulfill his *God-given mission*. This concise statement communicates the Apostle Paul’s missionary method. The content of this statement will be further explored in this paper. However, before beginning it is important to define the *italicized* words above.

Paul’s *ministry vision* refers to the big picture. One convincing definition of vision by the authors of *Re: VISION* is: “a clear, exciting picture of God’s future for your ministry as you believe it can be and must be.”¹ Paul’s vision was to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth through preaching the gospel, planting churches, and developing leaders who would do the exact same thing. This definition of vision is clear and concise and definitely resonates with God’s deepest desires. And it is something Paul thought could, and more importantly, should happen. He was not satisfied in ministering where a foundation had already been laid. His *ministry vision* was that the whole world would hear and know the gospel. All of his missionary journeys and ministry initiatives fell into this framework. The decisions he made flowed from his ministry vision.

For Paul, such a lofty aspiration could only be accomplished *intentionally and strategically planned*. In other words, Paul did not just walk

¹Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold, *Re:VISION: The Key to Transforming Your Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2014), 154.

around preaching the gospel in hopes that one day the whole world would know it and believe it. From his very beginnings he intentionally reached out to particular groups of people, in particular places, with a particular style of communication, with a particular team. He was intentional in everything he did. All of this intentionality shows his many strategic plans to carry out his ministry vision. What really reveals his strategically plans is the emphasis in his missionary journeys on urban outreach. It was not by accident that he went to the cities he went to.

Paul's ministry vision, intentional and strategic plans, his mission (which will be explained next), and the success of all of his ministry endeavors were only possible because he was *empowered* by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit was enabled Paul to be a bold witness and the Spirit strengthened, encouraged and guided Paul and his decision making. It was because of the guiding of the Spirit that Paul established his strategic plans. The Holy Spirit is central to the spread of the gospel in the early Christian movement. As Keener writes "the Spirit not only is intimately connected with their mission but is the author."² I would agree, yes, the Spirit is ultimately in charge. And at the same time, you cannot just sit around until you hear from the Spirit to make a move. It is our responsibility to be closely in sync with the desires of God and the leading of the Spirit (*empowered* by the Spirit) while we cast our ministry vision and strategically plan for the future.

All of these things are key contributions to how Paul fulfilled his *God-given mission*. God-given should be quite self-explanatory. God literally gave Paul his mission. And anyone can clearly read that in Acts. Paul's mission was simply to be a light to the Gentiles. Yes, he did spend a lot of time in Jewish synagogues, but that will be discussed later. His reason of existence was to glorify God through being a light to the Gentiles. It was his God-given mission.

By now one should know the answer to the question proposed in the title of this paper: Was the way in which Paul did ministry strategic or spontaneous? In essence, everything following will defend my position: Paul's *ministry vision* was *intentionally and strategically planned* while also being *empowered* by the Spirit to fulfill his *God-given mission*. While approaching different areas of Paul's ministry through the lens in which I understand it to be, I will look at both sides of the argument.

²Craig Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 2:1994.

INTENTIONAL DIVINE DESIGN

The Apostle Paul was clearly an organized person. This is true even before acknowledging Christ as Lord and being indwelled with the supernatural power of the Spirit. This first section has more to do with how God made Paul. I will argue Paul was wired in a certain way so that he could carry out his ministry vision.

There are many differences from when we first meet Paul in the Bible and when we read the last words that he wrote. He has a different name (Acts 8:1), he is a well-trained Pharisee³ and he is a persecutor of Christians. Yet there are many similarities from pre-Christian Paul and when we first read the words he wrote. For example, he is zealous, passionate and determined. He is organized and intentional in the things he does. Let us examine two passages to illustrate Paul's God-given wiring. The first is pre-Christian Paul and the second is Christian Paul:

But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. (Acts 9:1-2 ESV)

Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while. (Acts 19:21-22 ESV)

Paul did not rely on his reputation to achieve the things he desired. In the first passage he went and got letters from the high priest, giving him ultimate permission to do the things he wanted. The second passage is just one of many allusions to Paul's organization and strategic way of thinking during his missionary journeys. This passage is strategy-rich: Paul is obedient to the Spirit, he went to Jerusalem in order to reach Rome, and Rome to reach Spain.⁴ In addition, he developed leaders who would be eventually sent out from Paul.

³Paul was trained as a Pharisee under a well-respected and well-known member of the Sanhedrin. "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today" (Acts 22:3 ESV).

⁴Romans 15:24

Paul thought about and planned for the future. He did not just “go with the flow.” He did not just sit around and wait for God to open doors. He was in an active pursuit to fulfill his ministry vision. He was intentionally organized and future oriented.

INTENTIONAL URBAN OUTREACH

It is clear throughout Acts that Paul was intentional about where he preached the gospel and planted churches. He developed leaders to do the same thing. He didn't wander aimlessly and spontaneously. In Luke's narrative, the vast majority of the places Luke chooses to tell us about are significant urban locations. They are not villages in the middle of nowhere. They are important and strategic locations. I believe this was not by accident. Keener sums it up in writing “Paul and Silas ‘pass through the small towns and hurry to the biggest,’ Chrysostom observes, ‘since the word was to flow to nearby cities as from a source.’”⁵ It is evident Paul targeted cities, particularly significant ones such as Roman colonies and other strategic sites.⁶

People who flock to cities are typically more open to change. Cities are usually more progressive and set the tone for the society and the communities that surround it. Therefore, cities were a natural place for people with a different message to go. It is likely to be a place where a new way of thinking might be received better. There are too many cities in Acts to be comprehensive, but it is important examine a few to support this claim.

Antioch (Syria). Early in his ministry, Antioch is Paul's base of operations (Acts 15:22-36). The church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas out by the Holy Spirit and this is the location he intentionally returned to after his first and second journeys. By the first century A.D. the city was third in size behind Rome and Alexandria in the Roman Empire.⁷ Located on the great commercial road from Asia to the Mediterranean and possesses many natural sources which contributed to its wealth.⁸ The city had an estimated Jewish population between twenty-five thousand and sixty-five thousand.⁹ Not only this, “Paul could have reached several cities in Northern Syria

⁵Keener, *Acts*, 1:590.

⁶Roman colonies such as Troas, Philippi, and Corinth. Important and strategic sites such as Thessalonica, Athens, Ephesus. See Keener, *Acts*, 1:589.

⁷Craig A. Evans, and Stanley E. Porter, *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 34.

⁸Ibid., 35.

⁹Ibid., 35. Statistic from Josephus, *J.W.* 7.3.3 §43. Jews in Antioch also enjoyed many rights and privileges.

with the gospel. Traveling in a northerly direction, he would have reached Platanoi and Alexandria; in a northeasterly direction were Imma, Gindros, Kyrrhos and Nikopolis, and in an easterly direction Litarba and Beroia".¹⁰

Corinth. Corinth is well-known to many Christians from 1-3 Corinthians. The city was a strategic place for Paul to spend time to carry out his ministry vision. Corinth was an international crossroads¹¹ of commerce and travel¹² and one of the largest and more important commercial cities in the Roman Empire.¹³ It was a very wealthy city and was one of the four permanent sites for the modern-day equivalent Olympics.¹⁴ In addition, there was a significant Jewish community in Corinth.

Ephesus. As the capital of the province of Asia during Paul's time, Ephesus was an important city. Paul spent a significant amount of time in this city, at least two years and some change (Acts 19:8-10). Ephesus was had a very rich history¹⁵ and was one of the largest and most important cities in the Empire (exceeding 200,000¹⁶). The city was economically prosperous, in part due to the temple of Artemis.¹⁷

Tarsus. Tarsus had a large Jewish population,¹⁸ and was strategically located ten miles north of the Mediterranean Sea. For this reason it was an important center for commerce.¹⁹ Tarsus was the most significant city in its region after Antioch.²⁰ Tarsus citizens were students of philosophy, liberal arts, and any kind of learning.²¹ All of these factors contribute to the strategic location of preaching and evangelizing in this city. And there is no doubt that Paul spent some time here following his conversion (Acts

¹⁰Eckhard Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004), 1:1052.

¹¹Corinth, being placed southwest of the Corinthian Gulf and also northwest of the Saronic Gulf, had two harbors on these gulfs making this city an important place for trade.

¹²Evans and Porter, *DNTB*, 228.

¹³*Ibid.*, 228.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 228. The Pan-Hellenic Games (like modern day Olympics) undoubtedly played a huge role in the enormous wealth of this city. And also is interesting to think about this as a venue for evangelism for Paul.

¹⁵See Schnabel, *ECM*, 2:1206-07; information on the history of the city of Ephesus regarding its origin (founded by son of king Kodros of Athens) and further Roman rule.

¹⁶Schnabel, *ECM*, 1:1210.

¹⁷See Schnabel, *ECM*, 1:1211 for details on temple of Artemis' contribution towards economic prosperity.

¹⁸Clinton E. Arnold, "Acts," in the *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 2:299.

¹⁹Arnold, "Acts," 2:299

²⁰Schnabel, *ECM*, 1058.

²¹"Tarsus," *ABD* 6:344. The level of learning in this city became so great that it surpassed both Athens and Alexandria in education in schools.

11:25). Even more important, this is Paul's home city. He has citizenship in this city. He probably has family, friends, and relatives in this city. It just made sense for Paul to go to Tarsus to begin his new life in Christ.²²

For Paul, urban outreach was not only intentional but it was essential. He understood that for a movement to have major impact, it had to start in the cities. Does this mean that Paul believed that smaller cities and villages were unimportant? Certainly not! Schnabel answers this objection by saying "Passages such as Acts 13:48-49 show that Paul's missionary work was not limited to cities but also reached into the cities' territory, the people living in villages."²³ Luke writes "word of the Lord spread through the region." The Greek word translated region (χώρα) is also translated district, region, land, fields, and place (BAGD). Luke is referring to the villages and the smaller cities. The places that many people leave to go to the large cities. Paul understood that the χώρας of the world would be reached through the cities. He knew that the πόλις (city) would radiate the gospel throughout the χώρας. He knew that multiplication began in the metropolis.

INTENTIONAL PREACHING POINTS

It is important to reflect on the many Christian works Paul began. He had a strong desire to win as many people as possible (1 Cor 9:19). In Romans Paul declares his inner yearning for the gospel's proclamation: "I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation" (Rom 15:20). Paul set this framework in which he would preach the gospel, and he did just that. Although there weren't many places where Christ had already been proclaimed, he certainly fulfilled this internal passion. He had a "commitment to pioneer evangelism, to pursue his mission only in virgin territory."²⁴ Can you imagine entering a city with absolutely no Christians with a culture that worships pagan gods? Where and how do you even begin telling people about Jesus? Paul's answer is the synagogue.

Luke reports frequently the first thing Paul did when he arrived in a new city was go to the Jewish synagogue. But if Paul supposed to be the light to the Gentiles why is he going to the Jewish gathering place?

There are some who understand Paul to believe theologically that the

²²Schnabel, *ECM*, 1058.

²³Schnabel, *ECM*, 1:1300.

²⁴James D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 544.

gospel was meant to be proclaimed among Jews before Gentiles.²⁵ They believe Paul's custom was to go to the Jewish synagogue because he had a theological understanding that the gospel must be heard by the Jews, and then upon rejection, the Gentiles.²⁶ For example, John Stek understands Paul's custom of going to the Jewish synagogue as a theological rather than strategic:

Although Luke's plain intent is to show how the gospel of Jesus Christ was carried from Jerusalem, the center of Judaism, to Rome, the center of the Gentile world, he records of Paul's ministry in the Roman capital only his customary initial ministry to the Jews (Acts 28:17 ff.). In Acts too, therefore, the theme is clear, the gospel is "to the Jew first."²⁷

Stek an example of scholars who interprets Paul's going to the synagogues upon arrival as theological significant. But there is good support for this practice as Paul's strategic method rather than a theological decision. It is true Jesus was Jewish and it is correct his ministry dealt with Israel. It is even accurate that the early part of Acts was about Jewish response to the gospel. However, by the middle of Acts God is starting to do something a different. Because Israel as a nation rejected the gospel, God was turning to the Gentiles.²⁸ Does this mean salvation for Jewish people was no longer important to Paul? Absolutely not. As he says himself, "For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race" (Rom 9:3). Does God's turning to Gentiles make them more important than Jews? Certainly not. Again, Paul writes, "This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph 3:6). The gospel continues to be proclaimed among the Jews. Paul makes a trip to Jerusalem in Acts 15 to talk with the Jewish Christian leaders of the church in Jerusalem. Jews are not cut off from the good news of Jesus Christ. With that being said, Paul has been given a mission: to be a light to the Gentiles.

Paul went to the synagogues first because he thought it would be the best way to carry out his mission. These gathering places were mostly filled with Jews. However, it was common for there to be a couple of God-fear-

²⁵"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile." (Rom 1:16 ESV)

²⁶"We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles." (Acts 13:46 ESV)

²⁷John H. Stek, "To the Jew First," *Calvin Theological Journal* 7 (1972): 17.

²⁸See Romans 11:25. God is ushering in a new time where Gentiles are of main focus.

ing Gentiles who would congregate with the Jews. Dunn writes, “for it was in the synagogues that he would find those Gentiles who were already most open and amenable to his message.”²⁹ Perhaps his motive is “because the synagogue services were attended not only by Jews but also by proselytes and God-fearers who had Gentile relatives and friends.”³⁰ These Gentiles possibly had an understanding of Scriptures and would even possibly recognize Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah. It should be noted Judaism is not an attractive religion for most Gentiles, but the God-fearing Gentiles were open-minded. They heard the teaching of the one true God and it resonated with them. They were already willing enough to give up the things that they grew up with for a strange religion only Jews practiced. For the most part, Jews and Gentiles did not have a positive relationship. There was a great deal of animosity between them. The fact these Gentiles were attending a Jewish synagogue showed they were willing to accept teaching from Jews. The Gentiles that he would have been preaching to had less of a prejudice against him.

It is for these reasons and many others as well that brings me to the conclusion Paul understood: “The nearest and surest road to the Gentiles led directly through the synagogue.”³¹ His strategical method of going to the synagogue first is indeed a theological expression. However, it was not because he had to preach the gospel to Jews before the Gentiles.

The synagogue a good place to reach Gentiles, but he could also persuade some Jews while he was there. The Body of Christ is not just made up of Gentiles. And it isn't just made up of Jews. Paul's initial outreach in a city would lead into church plants, usually house churches (will cover this later), that made up the local church in that area of the world and often represented the Universal Church, including both Jews and Gentiles. Paul accomplished his mission and vision through strategic preaching points. He intentionally “proclaimed the word of God in Jewish synagogues” (Acts 13:5). He purposefully went “as usual” to the Jewish synagogue (Acts 14:1). When the synagogue became hostile, he found another place to continue the work of proclaiming the gospel of the grace of God to both Gentiles and Jews (Acts 19:8-10). Paul, a Jewish Christian missionary, was strategic in declaring the good news in places where his fellow countrymen would be gathering and where Gentiles could also be found. And when there was no synagogue in a city, he tried to find where Jews met (Acts

²⁹Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, 2:560.

³⁰Schnabel, *ECM* 1:304-305.

³¹Johannes Weiss, *Earliest Christianity* (New York: Harper, 1959), 211.

16:13). Discovering the best and easiest place to share the gospel with the people who might be the most receptive is central to Paul's ministry vision and should be to ours today as well.

INTENTIONAL COMMUNICATION

“The past two and a half decades have witnessed an explosion of interest from around the globe in the theory, the process, and the problems associated with the contextualization of the gospel.”³² It is true there has been a recent push on emphasizing the contextualization of the gospel. In essence, contextualizing the gospel means adjusting the method in which the message of the gospel is made known in a particular culture or context. Although the term “contextualizing the gospel” is recent, the idea is not new. The mission God gave to Paul was extremely difficult. God was asking the Jewish Paul to preach to the Gentiles and tell them the God of Israel (who chose them as His special people) was now offering salvation to Jews and Gentiles on equal basis. God asked Paul to tell them there is no distinction between the Jew and Gentile because of blood of the Jewish Messiah and God. For the most part, Gentiles already despised Jews and thought their beliefs were bizarre and superstitious.³³ Paul had to cross cultural boundaries in order to fulfill his mission. This required him to be intentional in who he communicated the gospel to and how he communicated it to them. The following of this section will display how Paul did a superb job at contextualizing the gospel.

Paul understands who he is. He knows his background, his origin, where he grew up and the significance of who his teachers. It is surprising how deliberate he was from the time he put his faith in Christ. Luke tells us Paul “at once” began to preach in synagogues. In Acts 9 Luke says “he talked and debated with the Hellenistic Jews” (Acts 9:29). First, Paul goes to the Hellenistic Jews. “Hellenism refers to the multiform interactions of Greek civilization with the cultures of innumerable indigenous populations in the Eastern Mediterranean basin and the ancient Near East.”³⁴ To be a Hellenistic Jew means to be a Jew who has adopted the Greek language and some aspects of Greek culture. Keener suggests why Paul may have

³²Dean Flemming, “Contextualizing the Gospel in Athens: Paul’s Areopagus Address as a Paradigm for Missionary Communication.” *Missiology* 30 (2002): 199.

³³See Feldman and Reinhold, *Jewish Life and Thought among Greeks and Romans* to see a variety of sources commenting on what Gentiles thought of Jews, specifically their culture and customs.

³⁴Evans and Porter, *DNTB*, 477.

gone to the Hellenistic Jews and why Luke found it worthy to add that in his narrative:

Jerusalem Hellenists were, if anything, probably more zealous for the traditions than many other Jerusalemites were; that they had left their homelands to settle in Jerusalem shows “that they were not average Jews”. (On the identity of the “Hellenists,” see discussion at Acts 6:1.) That Paul was their former ally and probably a member of their synagogue (6:9-10) made the situation all the more desperate; whereas one should seek to honor one’s hometown by one’s behavior, Paul had embarrassed his associates.³⁵

First, Keener clarifies some of the confusion behind how these Jews identify themselves. They are not Jews from Jerusalem who have adopted Greek culture because they prefer it over their own. They are born in a Greek city, not Jerusalem. However, their desire to pursue and honor their Jewish roots is demonstrated by coming and dwelling in Jerusalem. Second, the apostle Paul can relate to the Hellenistic Jews himself. He was a Jew born in the Greek city of Tarsus. He left his homeland and became a Pharisee, trained under Gamaliel. He knew Greek and understood that culture. Third, Keener points out that Paul had a similar background as the Hellenistic Jews and was familiar with the specific people he sought to reach. It is possible he worshiped at the same synagogue as some of these Hellenistic Jews. The fact Paul goes to these people shows that he was trying to clear some of the confusion he may have caused them with his conversion.

It is clear Paul was intentional with regards his target audience for the Gospel. Paul wanted to reach the ends of the earth with the gospel, but this certainly does not mean he needed to personally preach the gospel to every person. Part of his vision was to develop leaders so they could continue his mission. He focused his time and energy on the people who provided the best opportunity for this goal.

The method of contextualizing the gospel is vital. We often put the emphasis on “what” is communicated. However, it is also important to acknowledge the “how,” the means Paul used to communicate the “what” more effectively. A key passage illustrating Paul’s strategy in this area is 1 Corinthians 9:19-23:

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law

³⁵Keener, *Acts*, 2:1691.

(though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people that by all means I might save some. ²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. (1 Cor. 9:19-23 ESV).

Sills sums up this: “Paul establishes the purpose and the limits of contextualization. The purpose of the adjustments is ‘I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some’ (1 Cor 9:22). He reveals the limits when he says, ‘I do it all for the sake of the gospel’ (1 Cor 9:23).”³⁶ Contextualization does not mean to do unbiblical things in order to win people over. For example, Paul is not advocating someone become a drunk to win drunkards.

The third element of Paul's contextualization of the gospel has to do with the things he actually preached. Paul is quite possibly one of the best examples with respect to this process. Contextualizing the gospel should not be for overseas missionaries alone. Sills writes, “Missionary contextualization seeks to utilize components of local culture that are not religiously charged, thus enabling nationals to understand Christianity and the gospel and avoid the impression that it is a foreign religion for outsiders.”³⁷ He is right in pointing out the absolute necessity in doing this in across-cultural context. However, there are principles of contextualizing the gospel, found in this quote, which everyone should apply in their ministry, no matter where they are.

There are two specific examples in the book of Acts demonstrating Paul's contextualization. First, in Acts 13:16-41 Paul's synagogue sermon in Antioch demonstrates his method when preaching to fellow Jews. Paul finishes his sermon proclaiming Jesus Christ as the only way to find forgiveness of sins. He tells them they are supposed believe in him for forgiveness of sins. This focus on Christ does not seem to be unique to his audience at all. This is because contextualization does not change the main message of the Gospel. What Paul does is adapt is what leads up to his presentation of the good news of the grace of God. With his Jewish audience in mind, he preaches a sermon focusing on their Jewish origin. He preaches a historical background study on the nation of Israel! He quotes prophets

³⁶Robert L. Plummer, and John Mark Terry, eds, *Paul's Missionary Methods: In His Time and Ours* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2012), 207.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 207.

from the Hebrew Bible and his sermon was wholly and completely Jewish. If he were to preach the same sermon to a Gentile in an evangelistic effort, it would be a complete failure. Bock reflects on Paul's sermon saying "The key to everything offered here is Jesus. There is a change in the pronoun from "to us" (v.33) to "to you" (here and in v.34) to press the point that the offer is being made to those who have yet to respond... The history is "for us," but the offer is "to you" because Paul's audience still stands outside the blessing."³⁸ In the same way, the offer is "to them" and the message is particularly "for them".

Second, in the very well-known speech in the city of Athens at the meeting of the Areopagus, Paul begins this sermon saying "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious" (Acts 17:22). The first thing he does is acknowledge who he is speaking to and an attribute of theirs which will impact the way in which he contextualizes the gospel. Before he explains to his audience about what they need to do to receive eternal salvation, he earns credibility by discussing his tour of their city and acknowledging the gods they worship. The way he introduces the gospel is through an altar found in their city marked "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD." This is a clear case of contextualization.

Witherington suggests Paul's usage of language was intentional. "The speech is very carefully crafted with considerable alliteration, assonance, and paronomasia... the opening address in v. 22, "men, Athenians," has been thought peculiar if Paul was addressing the Areopagus; however, it was a rhetorical convention to begin speeches in Athens³⁹ in this fashion."⁴⁰

Paul contextualized the gospel. He was intentional who he *preached* to, in order to maximize his potential impact. He was intentional in how he *proclaimed* the gospel, in order to win over the credibility of his hearers. And he was intentional in what the content of his message was, giving his hearers the best opportunity to respond to the gospel.

INTENTIONAL MINISTRY TEAM

It is also important to recognize Paul was intentional about who he chose to come alongside him on his missionary journeys. There are three particular instances in the book of Acts that support this point: 1) Paul's leaving behind of John Mark, 2) Paul's choosing of Silas, 3) Paul's choos-

³⁸Darrell Bock, *Acts* (BENTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007), 458.

³⁹Aristotle, *Pan. Or.* 1.

⁴⁰Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 520.

ing of Timothy.

In Acts 15 Paul and Baranabas split ways over a conflict about John Mark. Their schism had everything to do with the mistake John Mark had made in their last missionary journey: deserting them midway through. "Barnabas acts in character; he had also shown Paul himself similar kindness (9:27; 11:22-25), making Paul's refusal (15:38) appear more ironic."⁴¹ Barnabas chooses compassion and forgiveness, whether Mark was his relative or not. Paul, on the other hand, has enough concern about Mark to leave him behind. Keener looks at this from the perspective of Paul: "The charge of desertion was a serious one . . . and much was at stake on this journey. The mission to reach unevangelized Gentiles took precedence over the formation of missionaries whose commitment might be in doubt."⁴² In other words, Paul's desire to reach those with the gospel who have never been reached on this journey was more important than developing a leader for future impact. He didn't want to have any kind of restriction or hindrance, which is how he potentially considered John Mark.

After the decision to split ways with Barnabas and to not take John Mark with him on the next missionary journey, he had to find a new missionary partner. Paul chose Silas as his next coworker. "Silas and Judas Barsabbas were 'leading men among the brethren' chosen to represent the Jerusalem church. . . ."⁴³ There were plenty of impressive men Paul could have chosen. But "Silas was, like Paul, a Roman citizen (vv. 37-38)."⁴⁴ This is significant because of the advantages and privileges that came along with possessing Roman citizenship. The fact that Silas, along with Paul, could use this to his advantage when found in a disadvantageous circumstance with the Roman Empire, is probably appealing to Paul.⁴⁵ He was intentional in his choosing of Silas.

The third example is Timothy. Like Silas, Timothy was well-respected with a good reputation among the believers of Lystra and Iconium (Acts 16:2). Timothy had a Jewish mother and a Greek father. But as Keener suggests "this might be seen by some as an advantage in reaching Gentiles, his ambiguous status would please neither Greeks nor Jews."⁴⁶ While un-

⁴¹Keener, *Acts*, 3:2301

⁴²Keener, *Acts*, 3:2302

⁴³Allen C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1987), 949.

⁴⁴Myers, *EBD*, 949.

⁴⁵See Acts 16:37ff for an example of this happening. Paul and Silas purposefully conceal Roman citizenship to reveal later at the most opportune and advantageous time.

⁴⁶Keener, *Acts*, 3:2311.

derstanding why Keener might say this, there are some serious issues with it as well. It is true that Paul had Timothy circumcised because without that he would potentially be a stumbling block to Jews coming to saving knowledge of Christ. This does support his suggestion of “ambiguity.” But Keener himself thinks Paul’s missionary journey is not for the purpose of training. Paul’s mission is to unreached Gentiles. Why else would Paul add a third member to his team if it was not going to help him reach the Gentiles more effectively? I believe it was an intentional and strategic move by Paul to leave behind John Mark and to partner with Silas and Timothy.

INTENTIONAL CHURCH PLANTING

Sam Vinton asks “Is Strategy Biblical?” in the context of church planting inferring that 1) church planting is essential to Church multiplication and 2) that Paul’s method of evangelism and church planting was strategic. He sums up this section of his work with this statement:

“Yes, strategizing for the multiplication of churches is biblical. If it was important for Moses to send men to spy out the land before entering Canaan (Num. 13:1); if it was important for Nehemiah to do careful research and planning before undertaking the restoration of Jerusalem (Neh. 2:4-18); and if Jesus spoke of the necessity of taking inventory and gathering facts before building a tower or going to war (Luke 14:28-32); shouldn’t the work of winning people to Christ and planting local congregations demand from us even greater planning? We believe it should.”⁴⁷

Vinton makes a very logical point, “The point has well been made that if Paul had no plan, the Holy Spirit could not have changed it. In Acts 16:6-10, Paul is kept from preaching in the province of Asia and not allowed to enter Bithynia.”⁴⁸ In addition, “the fact that Paul could speak to the Corinthians about his desire to preach the Gospel ‘in the regions beyond you’ (2 Cor 10:16) shows that he had a plan.”⁴⁹ Likewise, Van Rheenen says “I get the impression that when kingdom business is the topic of discussion, “strategy” itself is considered “unspiritual” at best and taboo at worst, a useless relic of the Church Growth era.”⁵⁰ He goes on to state his opinion,

⁴⁷Samuel R. Vinton, Jr., “A Seven-Year Church-Planting Strategy for the Communaute Des Eglises de Grace Au Zaire,” (Unpublished D,Min diss.; Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1985), 22.

⁴⁸Vinton, “A Seven-Year Church Planting Strategy”, 20.

⁴⁹Vinton, “A Seven-Year Church Planting Strategy”, 21.

⁵⁰Gailyn Van Rheenen, and Anthony Parker. *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 13. Van Rheenen has a D.Miss from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and is the founder and Executive Director of Mission Alive (a church planting organization).

“But I beg to differ. Paul, imitating Jesus, was deliberate, careful, visionary, and yes, strategic... A significant part of the approach was to establish churches that would multiply until the Lord's return.”⁵¹

With the understanding that church planting is not only biblical, but it must be done with strategy, there are a few other important issues to cover on this topic. The first is: what makes a church plant a church plant? Before answering this question, a misconception must be confronted. The local church is NOT limited to the United States. Throughout my own journey of discovering God's calling for my life, I've come to learn many believers, even pastors, unconsciously believe this to be true. I have been asked “how do you feel about the local church?” or “the local church needs lots of help as well!” They say things like this in response to my desire to serve in a foreign mission field. They are assuming the local church is restricted to the America.

The reality is the local church is everywhere. Many local churches make up Universal Church. Craig Ott touches on this issue when he defines the local church in his book *Global Church Planting*: “A local church is a fellowship of believers in Jesus Christ committed to gathering regularly for biblical purposes under a recognized spiritual leadership.”⁵² His definition of church planting is: “initiating reproducing fellowships that reflect the kingdom of God in the world.”⁵³

What makes a church plant a “church plant”? We often think a church requires a building, a certain amount of people, programs happening all week, a head pastor who preaches the Word week in and week out. But this was not the case during the early Christian movement. The way in which Christianity began was a “house-to-house expansion of the early church.”⁵⁴ There were many reasons for meetings to take place at a house including, but not limited to: convenience, necessity, inconspicuous, privacy, etc. Therefore, “the early believers met in houses *not by default alone* (i.e., there was nowhere else to meet) but deliberately...”⁵⁵

One scholar describes the early commission of the church as “Acts 13-28: To the End of the Earth (in a House).”⁵⁶ This is a great way to de-

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Craig Ott, and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker, 2011), 291.

⁵³Van Rhee, *Missions*, 324.

⁵⁴David W. J. Gill, and Conrad Gempf, *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: Graeco-Roman Setting* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994), 2:120.

⁵⁵Ibid., 121.

⁵⁶Ibid., 152

scribe the way in which the early Christ-followers created gospel-centered churches. It was not done through mega-churches, but rather in a home. Throughout the book of Acts there are multiple examples of ordinary people hearing the gospel, putting their faith in Jesus Christ, and opening up their own home for a “fellowship of believers in Jesus Christ.” This includes Aquila and Priscilla,⁵⁷ Phoebe,⁵⁸ and Lydia.⁵⁹ The house church was essential to growth during the early Christian movement. A church plant does not require a special building and a certain amount of people and programs happening all week long. A church plant is a fellowship of believers who meet in the name of Jesus Christ and it does not matter where. It does not matter how many. It matters that they are gathering, they are maturing through the study of the Word, and there is some kind of recognized leadership.

Another element of Paul’s intentional church planting strategy was nurturing. He was not in the business of planting churches and hoping they lasted. It is possible to accuse Paul of this since Luke describes him leaving locations quickly to go on to the next. However, “Paul’s quick departure was often prompted by persecution, not by plan.”⁶⁰ There are instances in which Paul spent extended periods of time in a city, edifying and nurturing the church (Corinth and Ephesus). There were several methods continuously Paul used to nurture, equip, and train the church even when he was not physically present: 1) he wrote letters to the church(es) of a particular area, 2) he briefly visited churches, 3) he sent co-workers to churches.

If nurturing the local church “is the process of bringing individual Christians and the Christian community as a whole to maturity”⁶¹ then Paul’s writing letters reflects an ideal example of nurturing a church one

⁵⁷This was a Jewish couple, expelled from Rome who eventually became co-workers with Paul. Romans 16:3-5 shows that they opened up their home for a church to meet. 1 Corinthians 16:19 also displays that in the province of Asia they opened up their house for a church to meet. They probably had a church in Ephesus.

⁵⁸See *Ibid.*, 184. “The praise of Paul and his ‘recommendation’ of Phoebe have some striking similarities with a Greek inscription from Corinth dated to 43 A.D. The inscription is dedicated to a Roman woman, Junia Theodora... she aided many Lycians by extending to them hospitality and receiving them into her house... Like Junia, Phoebe, was praised for her generosity as well as service. The fact that she had the economic status which enabled home ownership probably reflects her ability to manage affairs in the church”.

⁵⁹Acts 16:14-15 says that God opened up her heart to become a believer and immediately persuaded Paul and his companions to stay at her house. Although there is no definite reference to a church meeting there Gill & Gempf write, “Luke’s allusion to Lydia’s house as a place where Paul enjoyed hospitality may very well indicate that this place was known as a meeting place for the believers and that it served an important role in the establishment of a Christian community in Philippi” (186).

⁶⁰Ott, *Global Church Planting*, 398.

⁶¹Van Rheenen, *Missions*, 332.

planted themselves. A brief survey of Paul's letters will show his desire to encourage the church, to confront problems in the church, to inform them of Christian doctrine and practice, and to encourage them do continue to grow. "The amount of space Paul devoted to ethical instruction in his letters is testimony to the importance he placed on the moral aspect of the Christian life."⁶² Paul used this method of writing back to his churches, the local churches, what they needed to be doing. In his absence, he still found a way to nurture them. He still found a way to provide opportunity for growth and maturity.

The second element in Paul's intentional church planting method was visiting churches. He knew by going to these churches he would be able to provide encouragement and nurture as well as confronting conflict when necessary. There are a variety of passages to support this claim. After Paul preached the gospel at Derbe, he returned to "Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith" (Acts 14:21-22). Furthermore, at the beginning of second journey, Paul suggested "Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing" (Acts 15:36). After Paul spent some time in Iconium prior to the third journey, "Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples" (Acts 18:23). And finally, "as they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers" (Acts 16:4-5). These passages demonstrate Paul visit and revisited his churches and this method was effective.

Third, Paul sent co-workers whom he trained and developed himself to the churches he planted. There are many examples of Paul doing this in the Epistles later in Acts. This is most likely a result of Paul's ministry being more established, more churches have been planted, more "missionaries" have been trained to be sent. For example,

In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

²¹After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also." ²²He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer. (Acts 19:20-22)

⁶²John Polhill, *Paul & His Letters*, (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 125.

Another example of Paul sending his co-workers to churches, and to plant churches, can be seen through his letters to Timothy as well as Titus. Paul did not merely send those he had traveled with and trained, but he also trained and developed leaders in the churches themselves.

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Some might argue anything that is strategically focused is not spiritually focused. If there is an emphasis on strategy, there is no room for the Holy Spirit to do His work. This fear is far from the truth. An advocate of this view would be one of the classic texts on Paul's mission strategy, Roland Allen. In his book *Spontaneous Expansion* Allen argues "spontaneous expression on the part of both individuals and of Churches is the key to expansion, and that the restriction of it, from fear of its uncontrollable character, though natural, is disastrous."⁶³ He goes on to describe his missions strategy, or perhaps better described as a lack of strategy:

This then is what I mean by spontaneous expansion. I mean the expansion which follows the unexhorted and unorganized activity of individual members of the Church explaining to others the Gospel which they have found for themselves; I mean the expansion which follows the irresistible attraction of the Christian Church for men who see its ordered life, and are drawn to it by desire to discover the secret of a life which they instinctively desire to share; I mean also the expansion of the Church by the addition of new Churches.⁶⁴

Allen also writes that "it is quite impossible to maintain that St. Paul deliberately planned his journeys beforehand, selected certain strategic points at which to establish his Churches and then actually carried out his designs."⁶⁵ Allen believes in order to maximize potential impact, you must allow for the Holy Spirit to do its work. I do not believe this means strategy must be completely eliminated, and I do not think intentional methods should be avoided.

Strategy and the power of the Holy Spirit must be intimately intertwined. They were both important and vital to Paul's ministry vision. Ott encapsulates this point precisely, "nothing could be clearer from Luke's second volume, the book of Acts, than the centrality of the enabling and

⁶³Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (London: SCM Press, 1956), 8.

⁶⁴Ibid., 10.

⁶⁵Allen, 15.

empowering work of the Holy Spirit in the spread of the gospel and establishment of churches.”⁶⁶

And hopefully every minister would agree with this statement about the role of the Spirit. What is interesting are some of the things Ott notes in regards to where the Spirit is present, “strengthening and comforting the churches (Acts 9:31) guidance in decision making (Acts 16:6-10) calling and sending missionaries (Acts 13:2-4)”⁶⁷ These are all things that have been acknowledged in this paper as intentional strategical works of Paul. Schnabel is correct, “Paul relies for the ‘success’ of his missionary work not on the powers of rhetorical strategies and techniques, and certainly not on social or psychological factors. He relies on the power of God.”⁶⁸ However, Paul provided something for the Holy Spirit to powerfully work through and he allowed the power of the Holy Spirit to move in his strategic planning and intentions.

There should also be something said about the commissioning of the Spirit. God, himself, was *intentional* in choosing Paul to carry out this work: to be a light to the Gentiles.

Why didn't God just send Peter or James or John or any of the other disciples he just spent three years training and developing? It makes sense they would be viable candidates to take this position. But God had other plans. In his sovereignty and foreknowledge he knew those Jewish men would not be able to handle the specific calling as light to the Gentiles. God prepared and chose Paul. There are many factors hinting at the intentionality of God when he chose of Paul: he was a visionary, strategic planner, passionate and zealous, Jewish, a Roman citizen, and he grew up in a Hellenistic culture. Overall, Paul was the perfect choice. God could have used anyone but it seems clear that God chose Paul for these reasons.

CONCLUSION

In the book of Acts Luke shows Paul's ministry vision was intentionally and strategically planned. Paul himself was empowered by the Spirit to fulfill his God-given mission. Paul was as far from spontaneous, so did he allow room for the Holy Spirit to work? Of course he did! Was he obedient to the Holy Spirit when his plans were not in accordance with the will of God? Absolutely. Did Paul recognize that his methods needed to change or be developed? I'm sure he did. The point is, he was strategic. Schnabel

⁶⁶Ott, *Global Church Planting*, 331.

⁶⁷Ibid., 334.

⁶⁸Schnabel, *Paul's Missionary Methods*, 371.

says “there is no question, however, that Paul deliberately planned missionary initiatives, sometimes years ahead of their realization, but always remained open to divine guidance and the exigencies of historical circumstances: he prays, he acts as a result of dream-visions, and he realizes that not all plans can be carried out.”⁶⁹

Yet missionaries in the twenty-first century should not copy exactly what Paul did. For example, it is obviously not the best idea for every missionary to go to the synagogue first. It is also not the best idea for every missionary to pursue church planting or to take up the role of one of Paul’s co-laborers. Despite the differences, I firmly believe Paul’s ministry vision is a viable method for a missions for the twenty-first century. Some will be called to be a Timothy. Some will be called to be a Lydia. And some will be called to be a Paul. I mean by this, putting into practice the principles described in this article.

If you have been created with a particular divine design, and if you are intentional and carry out these principles, you will have a major impact on the church in the twenty-first century. I firmly believe the pattern of Paul’s ministry can be and should be followed.

⁶⁹Schnabel, *ECM*, 1481.

BOOK REVIEWS

Duane A. Garrett, *A Commentary On Exodus*. Kregel Exegetical Library; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Academic, 2014, 741 pp; Hb; \$39.99.

Duane A. Garrett is a Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Theology, a former Pastor and missionary. He is well versed in the Old Testament and has produced a worthwhile commentary on Exodus. It fills a gap in the lack of recent commentaries on Exodus. It will be a welcome addition to your library. It is reader-friendly, yet scholarly in its approach. I would classify it as a practical scholarly work for pastor and student.

Garrett opens with an introduction that is extended more than many other commentaries (130 pages). In this, he deals with the major issues that scholars normally deal with, but in a much more approachable way. He is not afraid to criticize scholarly efforts that do little good for the overall understanding of Exodus, such as source criticism which he argues has doubtful value. On the Hebrew text, he points out it is a remarkably clean, straightforward text. He places high value on accurate translation and provides his own translation of the text. Garrett points out that some understanding of the history of Egypt, the land, setting for the Exodus is essential. He therefore, gives extensive time and space to help the reader understand the importance of Egypt to both the ancient world and its influence upon the text (where Egyptian words have made it into the text).

Key to understanding the history of the Exodus is the date of the event. There has been much debate on the subject. This is a major portion of the introduction (48 pages). In covering the date and its major views, which Garrett breaks down in the late date, the early date, the very early date, and the very late date. In examining the date, he makes clear in spite of recent developments and movement to make this a fictitious event; he declares “The exodus of Israel from Egypt is historical and occurred as described in the book of Exodus” (46). He thereby confirms his conservative stance. There can be little question that scholars gravitate toward two major dates—the early date (around 1447 BC) and the late date (around 1250

BC). Garrett deals with each side fairly, and in light of important factors as they relate to the date (i.e. biblical date, *hapiru*, the store cities, Ramses, Conquest Archaeology, Jericho, Hyksos, the price for slaves, etc.).

Garrett warns about trying to come up with a date for the Exodus based strictly on the computation of years (see his comments on page 91). After discussing the two main views, he turns to look at other possibilities. He points out that based on biblical and archaeological evidence it is possible to argue a very early date (1550 BC) or the very late date (1150 BC). Garrett does not give either date much consideration, pointing out their serious problems. He then moves on to deal with the reality of the Exodus, and issues of locations. He points out that the student needs to be careful of being too definitive. He states: “I do not think it is wise or right to suppose that we can correct what seems to be a deficiency in the Bible and fix a date for the exodus, describe fully the historical setting, or name the pharaoh of the exodus. At the same time, I see nothing that causes me to distrust the biblical account” (103).

Next, the introduction gives an outlined structure of the book of Exodus. He deals with the message of the book in terms of theology, pointing out that in some respects it provides the foundation for the theology of the Old Testament. The Exodus is the foundation of their identity as a nation and the people of God. Garrett sees the narrative in three major movement: the Exodus, the journey to Sinai and the giving of the Law (Sinai covenant), and the sin of idolatry and its aftermath, including the building of the Tent of Meeting. He ends his introduction focusing on the God of Israel—YHWH and the man of God has leading the exodus—Moses. He briefly shows Egypt as a symbol of worldly power, and Israel as the people of God. Overall, it is one of the finest introductions I have read on Exodus and adds value to the work.

In his commentary, Garrett breaks the text into 7 sections:

- Part 1: Until Moses, 1:1-2:10. This acts as the prologue to the book of Exodus. It also confronts us with a major theological motif of the people of God facing persecution in this world.
- Part 2: An Unlikely Savior, 2:11-7:7. This follows the life of Moses from his youth, call, and coming face to face with Pharaoh.
- Part 3: The Twelve Miracles of the Exodus, 7:8-15:21. This includes the “ten” plagues, and the hardening of the heart of Pharaoh and the crossing of the Red Sea. He has twelve miracles in chart form (271). He also deals with the commissions of Moses and Aaron in this section.

- Part 4: The Journey to God, 15:22-19:25. This is an account of the journey from the Red Sea to Mt. Sinai. He sees the journey as a series of seven stages, each presenting a problem with a crisis of faith, with the seventh breaking the pattern and maintaining it is a symbol of entering God's rest.
- Part 5: The Sinai Covenant, 20:1-24:11. He maintains this is the governing document concerning the relationship between God and his people.
- Part 6: The Worship of God, 24:12-31:18. It centers upon the Tent of Meeting, "*the shrine that is at the center of Israel's worship of YHWH*" (p. 547).
- Part 7: Sin and Restoration 32:1-40:38. It deals with the Golden Calf and its aftermath. He also shows the importance of Moses' intervention in the preservation of the nation.

Each division opens with the author's translation, assigning the technicalities to the footnotes. The structure of the passage under consideration, followed by commentary and theological points. Many include excurses on specific points in the text. For example, the first part has an excursus comparing the Sargon Story and the Story of Moses. The commentary has an appendix on the Songs in Exodus. He suggests the book contains a number of previously unrecognized songs or poems in the text; breaking new ground for our consideration.

Garrett's work is a stark contrast to the more critical works of recent years. It is faithful to the text, evangelical in approach, and its content are both understandable and interesting. Garrett has done a great service in this stimulating work. It will make a real contribution to your library and the study of Exodus.

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Maricopa AZ

Martin, Ralph P. *2 Corinthians*. Second Edition. Word Biblical Commentary 40; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2014. 751 pp. Hb; \$54.99.

This is the first revised commentary I have used in the Word Biblical Commentary since Zondervan took over the series a few years ago. There are a few cosmetic changes that make a great deal of sense. First, the introductory pages now use Arabic numerals rather than Roman numerals. It was always frustrating in the old WBC series to cite pages by Roman numeral: citing page *xxviii* looks clumsy. Second, all of the excurses in the commentary are printed on gray pages making them easy to find. I noticed that some of the original excurses are not identified as such in this new addition. Rather, they are simply “notes” on particular issues. It appears the note is only a few pages and an excursus is several pages long. It appears the original commentary excurses are now called notes.

One unfortunate change to the series is that Zondervan has printed the hardback edition of this book without a slip jacket. This simple cosmetic change likely saved the publisher money and made the book less expensive to the consumer, but I personally have never liked the look of printed boards on a hardback book. In addition, the paper is not as high-quality as the earlier Word editions. However, these criticisms are simply a reflection of the cost of printing a book today. (I was told by a Zondervan insider that all WBC commentaries will be reprinted this way.)

Martin has revised the text of the commentary in order to correct what he calls a “few slips” and to update abbreviations (BDAG for Bauer’s third edition) and to improve the reading of the text. Since it took him 10 years to write the original commentary, Martin explains he is “not inclined to meddle with the text.” As a result, there is not much new in the actual commentary.

Instead of updating the main text of the commentary, Martin includes several new excurses written by colleagues. First, Carl N. Toney contributes a 13-page excursus on the “Composition of Second Corinthians (1985-2007).” Like all sections in the WBC, this begins with a lengthy bibliography including works written before 1985. He compares several partition theories and discusses where the text breaks in 2:14 through 7:4. He concludes by supporting the view of the commentary, arguing chapters 1-9 were written as a distinct letter prior to chapters 10-13 and that “the reduction of these chapters points to the importance of reading them in their final form” (63).

Toney contributes a second lengthy excursus on “Rhetorical Studies of

2 Corinthians.” Rhetorical studies of Paul’s epistles have multiplied since 1985, so this excursus brings the commentary up-to-date in this area. Toney begins by discussing providing a brief overview of rhetorical studies in general and offers several comments on the theological value of rhetorical analysis.

A third new excursus in this commentary is on the “Social Setting of 2 Corinthians” by Mark W. Linder. As with rhetorical studies, cross-disciplinary studies using social science have been applied to Paul’s letters with great profit since the original commentary was published. Linder sites specifically Bruce Winters, *After Paul left Corinth*, Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* and Gerd Theissen, *Social Setting*. Perhaps even more influential on Pauline studies is Danker’s 1989 commentary on 2 Corinthians and his work on The Collection.

Martin contributes another excursus on the “Opponents of Paul in 2 Corinthians.” This essay was published in the Earl Ellis Festschrift in 1987. It is reprinted here as an update to the commentary, although it is nearly as old as the original commentary. Martin surveys the common suggestions that Paul’s opponents were “Judaizers” or “Hellenists.” He points out that Paul is respectful of the “highest apostles” in 11:5, but he “fiercely lambasted” the false apostles as Satan’s agents (113). Paul’s gospel embodies a “theology of the Cross” while these false-apostles preach a “theology of Glory.” Since Paul suffers greatly, is physically weak and an ineffective miracle worker, his opponents ridicule him and dismiss his Gospel.

The commentary now includes an essay Martin originally published in the Festschrift for G. R. Beasley-Murray, “The Spirit in 2 Corinthians in the light of the ‘Fellowship of the Holy Spirit’: 2 Corinthians 13:14.” Martin updates the original excursus on “Theology and Mission of 2 Corinthians” with an essay originally published in *Gospel to the Nations* (IVP 2000).

Carl Toney writes an excursus on the resurrection into Corinthian’s in the context of 2 Corinthians 5. After surveying 1 Cor 15 and 2 Cor 5, Toney summarizes several approaches to the resurrection found in the commentaries. He concludes the two passage are discussing the same kind of resurrection and Paul’s language does emphasize a “physical, somatic resurrection” (254-5). While 1 Cor 15 describes the resurrection as a transformation at the Parousia, 2 Cor 5 discusses the resurrection in the light of present suffering and the possibility of death.

As an introduction to chapters 8-9 there is a brief note on the Pauline Collection which is more or less the same as the original commentary. But the older excursus is supplemented by a short note from D. J. Downs up-

dating the discussion with material from 1985 through 2000. Downs maintains Martin's view that the Pauline collection was intended to address "a real material need among the Saints in Jerusalem." But the collection also likely served other needs as well such as "a tangible expression of the mutual relationship shared by Jews and Gentiles" (424).

Conclusion. I am pleased the venerable *Word Biblical Commentary* is being updated. Some of the volumes are in need of replacement; most are in need of the sort of updating demonstrated in Martin's 2 Corinthians. The cosmetic changes are acceptable, especially if these changes keep the cost of printing lower.

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Beale, G. K. with David H. Campbell. *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2014. 576 pp. Pb; \$35

Greg Beale's commentary on Revelation in the New International Greek Text Commentary series was published in 1999. At more than 1300 pages, the book was ponderous to say the least. A paperback version of this commentary was released in 2013, but at \$78 retail the volume is still priced out of the range of most pastors and Bible teachers. Hardback copies of the commentary are available on Amazon for well over \$100. By reducing the size (and price) of the commentary by more than half, Beale contributes a commentary most Bible will find valuable for understanding this very difficult New Testament book.

What is different in this shorter commentary? First, there are some obvious cosmetic changes that save a great deal of space. He has removed direct references to the Greek text, although his exegesis is based on the Greek Bible. When Greek or Hebrew appears in the commentary, it is in transliteration. Often the larger commentary would use a smaller font to deal with a meticulous detail of the Greek text, these sections are wholly removed from the shorter commentary.

Second, Beale has removed footnotes to secondary literature. This makes for a very readable commentary, although more advanced readers will want to know the source of some assertions. Beale says in the preface his "longer commentary serves as one big footnote to this shorter commentary" (viii).

Third, Beale has also removed various excurses in the larger commen-

tary which focused on details of the text that are not necessary in this shorter commentary, including all his sections on Jewish interpretations of Old Testament passages used in Revelation. For example in the larger commentary he has a section on the Jewish legal background of Satan has an accuser in Revelation 12:10. This is omitted in the shorter commentary, since it is a detailed examination of Second Temple Literature and goes beyond the scope of the shorter commentary.

Fourth, the original commentary had a 177-page introduction; the shorter commentary has only 34 pages. Many of the main issues covered in the original commentary are simply inappropriate for this shorter, handier commentary. For example, the original commentary had a long section on the plan in the structure of John's apocalypse. Beale compared various views of how the seals, trumpets and bowls are structured. The original commentary had a section on the use of the Old Testament in the Apocalypse. Since writing his commentary he has contributed several other works on the topic, but this shorter commentary reduces this complicated discussion to just a few pages with no reference to other ways of approaching the topic. Once again this is simply a result of shrinking the commentaries size and making it more useful for a pastor or a teacher. There are quite a few other monographs available on the topic of the Old Testament in Revelation (by Beale and others), this commentary can only sketch the issues involved.

Fifth, this shorter commentary includes more than sixty "Suggestions for Reflection" to help readers better grasp the relevance of Revelation to their lives and our world today. These are all new paragraphs which focus on application, or perhaps they can be considered "preaching tips." Applying the book of Revelation is always very difficult, so Beale's comments are welcome. Commenting on in the fourth trumpet in Rev 8:6-12, Beale draws an application on the purpose of disasters within the plan of God (179). There are obviously some places in Revelation which are easier to apply than others, such as the seven churches.

Something that stays the same in this short commentary is Beale's approach to the book. In his introduction he offers a very short summaries of the classic positions on Revelation (Preterism, Historicism, and Futurism), but ultimately finds a "Redemptive-Historical-Idealist view" the most useful. This is not to say he rejects all futurist application of the book, but he wants to separate his work on Revelation from the sort of populist "Left Behind" style presentations of Revelation. He is not a futurist, and he certainly not a dispensationalist. He makes it very clear in his comments

on Rev 20 that the millennium is inaugurated during the Church Age as the church limits Satan's power and deceased Christians begin to reign in heaven. Yet there is a future rebellion after which a final judgment will occur "at the end of world history" (458).

Conclusion. I have used Beale's larger commentary for years and find it highly valuable because of his interest in the use of the Old Testament in Revelation. David Aune's 1200+ page, three volume work in the Word Commentary series was completed just prior to Beale's NIGTC and is every bit as valuable, although for different reasons. It is hard for me to overstate the value of recognizing the way John crafts the Old Testament into a new apocalyptic prophecy, Beale is a master at explaining how John has used his sources in order to communicate the story of the Old Testament to a new generation. This shorter commentary on Revelation is a welcome contribution to the ongoing study of the book of Revelation.

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McDowell, Sean and John Stonestreet. *Same-Sex Marriage: A Thoughtful Approach to God's Design for Marriage*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2014. 176 pages, pb. \$9.99.

As much as we do not want to think about same-sex marriage, much less talk about it, we must. If we do not talk to the young people in our lives about same-sex marriage, they will hear about it from someone else, and someone else may not tell them the truth. McDowell and Stonestreet's book, *Same-Sex Marriage: A Thoughtful Approach to God's Design for Marriage* provides critical truths from God's word regarding God's design for marriage, historical background for the same-sex marriage movement, and positive steps Christians can take to intelligently discuss same-sex marriage from a Christian perspective, with gentleness and respect.

The authors propose the average Christian is ill-equipped to articulate the basic Biblical truths about marriage. "Christians are left speechless when they hear someone claim that Abraham's and Solomon's polygamy is proof there is no 'biblical ideal' of marriage . . . or that David and Jonathan were more than 'just friends'" (29). Christians must "know what the Bible says about something as important to the human experience as marriage and sexuality" (29).

McDowell and Stonestreet indicate too many Christians fall back on

swapping proof texts when confronted with this topic, which is then met with the logical fallacy of *ad hominem*, where the argument moves into attacking the character and motivations of the Christian rather than dealing with the argument (61). The authors point out when Christians argue for marriage being defined as the union of one man and one woman, they are accused of discriminating against homosexual couples. McDowell and Stonestreet stress the importance of differentiating between arbitrary discrimination and the essential qualification for particular rights (26). Just as a dad would not attend a support group for Mothers of Preschoolers, and a college student would not qualify for the senior price coffee at McDonalds, the essential qualifications for marriage as God designed it require one man and one woman to be united. The authors argue that marriage is an institution created by God for unique and particular purposes.

The authors also respond to the question, “So what if I don’t believe in God.” McDowell and Stonestreet argue that the purposes of marriage are evident even if God’s existence is denied. They emphasize that just as Martin Luther King Jr.’s works are read to inform those thinking about civil disobedience, readers recognize Jesus as one of the greatest ethical teachers of all time and his word should inform those who think about marriage (28).

However, McDowell and Stonestreet do stress they begin their defense of marriage from a biblical perspective because they are Christians. They believe Christians are the primary audience who will be reading the book. They stress the importance of Christians understanding the history of the same-sex marriage movement. Christians must understand the same-sex marriage movement did not occur in a vacuum. The authors cite no-fault divorce laws and the culture-wide spike in cohabitation as cultivating fertile ground for same-sex marriage (60). They identify the shift from humanity being primarily metaphysical creatures to primarily sexual creatures having resulted in a culture that no longer understands that sex and procreation belong to marriage (68). Consequently, same-sex marriage has not caused the change in how we view marriage and family, but same-sex marriage is a result of the shift in how we view marriage and family. “Same-sex marriage is a fruit, not the root” (86).

The book addresses why Christians need to be involved in the discussion of same-sex marriage. Christians cannot hang the topic up on a hook behind the door and pretend it is not there. Same-sex marriage is a part of our culture and because we have been called to this world at this time, we must talk about it. “To not offer any guidance on same-sex marriage to

the next generation is a dereliction of duty” (85). Christians need to expect conversations about marriage and be ready to discuss the topic with gentleness and respect. (1 Peter 3:16).

McDowell and Stonestreet stress the importance of starting to have conversations among ourselves now so that we “are ready to give an answer for the hope that is in us.” (1 Peter 3:15). Christians need to make sure that our brothers and sisters in Christ are given the opportunity to articulate what they feel without being judged. The authors emphasize that it is not the church’s job to make same-sex marriage look bad, but to make marriage, as God designed it, seen as the good it is (101). “We must spend more energy getting our own houses in order than we do trying to correct those outside the church” (101).

The authors remind us that if we chose to defend the gospel and marriage the way God designed it, we must be ready for the persecution that may come. No matter how articulate we are or how gentle and respectful we are, the probability is we will be slandered after we defend our position.

I highly recommend reading this book a few pages at a time in order to comprehend what the authors are saying and contemplate what it means for the reader.

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Pettit, Paul and R. Todd Mangum. *Blessed Are the Balanced: A Seminarian’s Guide to Following Jesus in the Academy*. Grand Rapids, Mich. Kregel, 2014. 137 pp. Pb; \$14.99.

Pettit and Mangum’s *Blessed Are the Balanced* is a book intended for those either going into or currently in seminary. However, I found nearly all of the lessons and ideas expounded upon to be applicable to a much broader spectrum than just that. The premise of the book is laid out clearly. Enter, the teeter-totter. On one side is growth in Christ; that is, more and more closely living out his calling for us as believers as we grow in relationship with him. On the other side is learning more about God; that is, understanding better how Scripture talks about God and, more broadly, life. Pettit and Mangum maintain that those going through seminary (and all believers) must aim to maintain a balance of this teeter-totter. Our “heart” and our “head” must work side by side, neither being the weaker link.

For Pettit and Mangum, the problem is “But how can this teeter totter

between Christian maturity and a seminary education be mastered? Can one really possess both a mind able to defend the faith and a heart passionately beating for Christ?" (19). Among Christian "academics," it is no secret that Bible study can become an all-but-entirely lifeless pursuit in many different ways. At Grace Bible College where I have attended for the last (almost) four years, there is an ongoing joke that, by the time you leave, the Bible often becomes just another textbook. For pastors, the Bible becomes something just to study in order to find our next sermon material, not for our own personal sustenance and growth. For apologists, the Bible becomes just the sword by which we vanquish our intellectual opponents, whether they be our brother or not.

For whatever the reason we might be guilty of doing this, the Bible is not meant to be studied for the sake of pomp, used to obtain the victory of an argument, or even, on the other side of the spectrum, worshiped as a deity in itself. The Bible points to our Creator God, and that is where it derives its sweetness. That is how it supplies understanding which can come from nowhere else. That is how it lightens our steps and shows us where to go.

The solution is to realize "Scripture is designed by God to reveal His character, and to incite an attraction to that character, so that we, as students of His Word, come to love and embrace Him as a person" (113). There is no magic "secret to success" when it comes to much, let alone spiritual or godly matters. However, we do have the witness of many who have gone before us and the Scriptures themselves to show us a good idea of how to achieve this balance that Pettit and Mangum advocate. Though a downfall of this book is that they repetitively bog down the reader with the seemingly endless ways academics and vocational ministries wear one down, they do discuss several different avenues by which to pursue balance.

The first is spiritual disciplines. "We should employ spiritual disciplines because Jesus and His earliest followers practiced them" (64). Pettit and Mangum offer a number of specific disciplines and how they relate to those in the predicament of unbalance, but I will highlight just a few. Friendship is a discipline that might not at first sound like one, but is key. When we are engaging in true friendship, we have a close and personal relationship with someone who can discuss with us things that matter, who can be a listening ear for festering notions inside us, offering feedback and encouragement. This requires deliberateness as friendship, if allowed, can remain above the water and not become deep and meaningful. Prayer is an obvious, but oft-neglected discipline. How ought we stay connected with

the Father if we don't speak with him? Solitude is a discipline that must receive more attention in the Church today. "Jesus often went alone up to the mountainside to communicate with God the Father. Should we do any less?" (74). If the rigor and buzz of academia is strangling the lifeblood out of you, perhaps it is time to withdraw, even for an hour at a time sometimes, to regain proper perspective.

The second avenue by which to pursue balance is humble service. Though service could be lumped into the same previous category, spiritual disciplines, Pettit and Mangum separate the two, and I believe justly so. Service is a broad and important area deserving of a more full discussion. If the lifelessness that comes from too much emphasis on academics comes from a loss of deep, passionate love for God, then service is something that can reawaken that love. "Our love for God has to be what underpins our love for people" (110). As we serve people, submitting to them, we are taking part in what Jesus did throughout his ministry, not just stewing in our own thoughts about his ministry. This cultivates growth in him.

Finally, Pettit and Mangum discuss Calvin's proposition that we not only engage in a search for knowledge of God but "also that we engage in a vigorous search for 'double-knowledge'—knowing about God, and also knowing oneself" (132). We mustn't succumb to becoming a result of our studies, but instead, must become a subject of our studies. In other words, as we study, write, teach, and preach, we can continually reinforce and fortify our mantras, pet-theologies and preferences to living in general. Though this can be healthy to a point, it can quickly become very unhealthy. Therefore, we must reflect and dig inwardly to see and understand how we ourselves are wired, in what areas perhaps we think need some direction. Perhaps there are habits or traits we have harbored which people have told us are not the best ways of doing or thinking about things, but off we have shrugged them. Let's revisit those areas. Let's pray to God about how he would have us move. Despite first appearances, it could very well be the most humble thing for us to do to re-evaluate ourselves.

Conclusion. "The grace of God calls us not to perfection but to effectiveness" (137). If there is anything that was not the goal of this review, and, I'm sure, this book, it is to impose on anyone more assignments, rules, or generally things at which to falter. Indeed, experience has taught me that if anything has the tendency to pull one away from healthy relationship with Christ, it is feeling inadequate to be in that relationship. As we seek to find that balance between growth in Christ and learning about God, let us not distress over it.

Chambers, Andy. *Exemplary Life: A Theology of Church Life in Acts*. Nashville: B&H, 2012. 292pp. Pb; \$29.99

Andy Chambers is senior vice president for Student Development and professor of Bible at Missouri Baptist University in St. Louis. This study of Luke's summary narratives is clearly evangelical. Chambers approaches Acts from the perspective of Christian faith and offers this study as a way of applying the book of Acts to contemporary church life.

In the opening chapter of this monograph, Chambers describes how we "lost Luke's theology of the church life" as a result of an over-emphasis on historical critical method. He is concerned here with the view Luke created fictional situations to present his view of how the church developed. The long shadow of F. C. Baur has prevented scholars from seeing Luke's intention to describe the ideal life of the church in the summary narratives in Acts. Literary criticism and narrative theology has corrected this to a certain extent since these methods are focused on Luke's rhetorical strategies as an author. Chambers will therefore make qualified use of contemporary narrative criticism, although he thinks Luke had specific intentions as the author of the text.

In his second chapter he describe summarization as a rhetorical feature of Acts. The first four of the features of summary narratives are found in a variety of Greco-Roman literature and Acts tends to include similar information. First, the summary narratives tell about church life as opposed to describing them dramatically. Second, summary narratives are unfocused general statements about church life. Third, narrative time accelerates in the summary narratives. Fourth, summary narratives depict an ongoing way of life in the Jerusalem church. One way that Luke describes this ongoing state is switching from an aorist to an imperfect verb in the summary statements. Chambers argues the change in sound of been inflicted verb would be picked up by an oral culture hearing the text read publicly.

In addition to these for standard features, Chambers notices a number of other items found in the Book of Acts. For example, since these statements are brief transitional summaries, they make only general references to time. Luke's summaries usually follow chiasmic ABA pattern and make frequent use of repetition. In addition, the summary statements tend to be culturally neutral. By this Chambers means they are not tied to Jewish practice.

His final and perhaps more controversial observation is that Luke only emphasizes the positive aspects of the Jerusalem congregation in summary narratives. Chambers does not think Luke downplays controversy or division in the early church in the narrative portions of his book, but he does omit this material in the summary statements. It is hard to imagine why Luke would include negative items in a summary statement intended to be an example to later church readers for how to “do church.”

Having clearly described Luke’s summarization strategy, chapters 3-5 of *Exemplary Life* carefully study each of the three summary narratives in the book of Acts. These summaries, Chambers argues, are Luke’s description of the “exemplary life” of the early church. A chapter is devoted to each summary narrative (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35; 5:12-16) in order to develop a long list of commitments made by the earliest believers. For example, it is well-known the believers in Acts 2:42-47 were committed to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, to breaking bread together, and to prayer. But Chambers argues there were other defining features as well, such as fear of the Lord, signs and wonders, sharing in each other’s lives and possessions, daily fellowship (which included the practice of the Lord’s Supper). One important characteristic of the early Jerusalem church was caring for the needs of the community as well as whole city of Jerusalem.

Having created an impressive list of features of the ideal community from the three summary narratives, Chambers then examines four texts in which Luke describes Gentile communities. The goal is to demonstrate these Gentile communities share the same kind of features as the ideal, exemplary community found in the summary narratives. What he is looking for are “enriching echoes” of these summaries in the Samaritan mission (8:1-15 9:31), Antioch (11:19-30, 13:1-3), Ephesus (19-20), and Troas (20:7-12). Presumably these were chosen because the most clearly demonstrate the point Chambers wants to make, the ideal of Jerusalem was replicated in the Gentile churches.

Two minor critiques comes to mind here. First, the Samaritans are not exactly Gentiles, nor are the exactly Jews. A Christian community in Samaria may be implied by 9:31, but I am not sure 8:1-25 can be fairly described as the establishment of Gentile churches in the Pauline sense. Second, Chambers omits Thessalonica and Corinth, even though there are certainly Gentile churches established in both locations. This may simply be a matter of limiting the study to make the material manageable, or perhaps because these two particular Gentile communities would yield negative data not helpful for the ultimate thesis of the book. There is simply not

much to work with for Thessalonica, but Luke devotes a nearly as much attention to Corinth as he does Ephesus, and far more than Troas. (To be fair, he frequently cites Acts 18 in his final chapter.)

In chapter 7 Chambers sums up his findings in order to demonstrate Luke offered the Jerusalem Community as an ideal for the later, primarily Gentile church to follow. This is the reason the summary statements are culturally neutral, lacking specific reference to the Jewish boundary markers. The boundary markers were undoubtedly practiced by the Jerusalem community, but since they were no longer relevant to the Gentile churches reading Acts, Luke has omitted them from the summaries.

He begins with a long list of some 24 items found in the summary narratives and they uses these to create a biblical theology of “Church Life in Acts.” In the explanation following his list, Chambers shows how these items turn up one or more of the later Gentile churches, indicating Luke’s intention to encourage later readers follow the model of the earliest church. For the most part, this chapter lists non-controversial topics which ought to characterize any healthy church

However, some of the “exemplary features” are not necessarily found in the later texts, even if they are important features of Church Life. Chambers says “an exemplary church deliberately assimilates new believers,” citing the summary narrative in Acts 2:42 (147). But the later texts he cites in Acts do not necessarily support this point. Acts 11:26 only implies ongoing training and discipleship and 13:21 simply notes the proconsul Sergius Paulus believed and was astonished at the teaching of the Lord, but this is far from assimilated into a community committed to the Apostles’ teaching, fellowship, prayer and breaking of bread. Of the verses listed, only 20:18-20 (Paul’s speech to the Ephesian elders) clearly describes a community like Acts 2:42. Ultimately I think this extremely long list of characteristics of an exemplary church could have been more efficient, combining similar points in order to avoid this kind of problem.

Conclusion. Chambers has done what he set out to achieve. The summary narratives in the early part of Acts do indeed seem to be general enough to provide an example for later churches looking for a model for how to live as Christians. While I am less convinced the later reports in Gentile churches are true echoes of these summaries, in general Chambers makes an excellent argument that Luke’s intention was to provide a model of an ideal church for later generations to emulate. What is more, this point is quite preachable in an evangelical context. It is always difficult to know who to apply the book of Acts, especially the activities of the earliest

church. Chambers does not want to apply the specifics, only the general example found in the summary statements. In the end, Chambers would say, this was Luke's purpose for including such summaries.

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EDITORIAL POLICY

Following the lead of the original Grace Journal of Theology, the present Journal is intended to stimulate constructive thought, awareness, devotion and practice in matters of ministry, biblical, theological and dispensational studies. The Journal will publish articles and reviews of merit with preference of acceptance given to credentialed and experienced writers. Articles are to be well researched, documented and relevant to the objectives of the Journal. Publication decisions will be made based on the consensus of the editorial committee.

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- A full article will be between 4000 and 6000 words including footnotes.
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