

EDITORIAL

The first two articles in this issue were presented at *An Evening of Justice* at Grace Christian University in February 2019. The School of Human Services asked two members of the Biblical Studies faculty to present papers laying out a biblical foundation for social justice in anticipation of their *Celebration of Justice* conference in March. Jacob Rodgers considers aspects of justice in the Old Testament by tracing the Hebrew terms for justice and poverty in Hebrew. He then examines examples of justice in the Law, Wisdom and the Prophets. He focuses specifically on the eighth century B. C. Micah and Amos as examples of how the prophets interpreted the Law and called Israel to covenant faithfulness by demanding they do justice toward the poor and needy in their society.

In the second presentation from *An Evening of Justice*, Phillip J. Long examines one of the central texts for New Testament ethics, the Sermon on the Mount. Beginning with Jesus's description of his followers as "salt and light" he works his way through the eight beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12. Each of these well-known sayings look back to the Hebrew Bible and Long argues they are grounded in the eschatological expectation of a messianic kingdom in which God will act in history are reverse common Second Temple period expectations concerning who will be included in that coming Kingdom (and who will be excluded).

Scott Shaw begins his study of Christian unity by examining why the American Evangelical church is struggling to maintain its members. Younger people are searching for relevant answers and Christians are frequently divided on such hot button topics as abortion, politics, race relations and immigration. According to researchers like David Kinnaman, these issues tends to push younger Christians away from the organized church, fragmenting the Body of Christ. Shaw uses Jesus' prayer in John 17 to provide a context to guide Christians towards the practice of unity.

Pastor Mark Congrove contributes a historical study of Jonathan Edward's preaching. He examines the role the sermon played as a tool for sanctification in the ministry of the most influential and prolific pastor-theologians of the colonial period. Disciplines such as meditation, prayer, contemplation, self-examination had from his teenage days become the standard by which he measured his own spiritual health and it is evident that many of these "exercises" made their way into sermonic material that spanned a pastoral ministry of thirty-five years. As Congrove explains, modern pastors step into their pulpits to declare biblical truth and preach a gospel message, proclaim the doctrines of the faith, and give their congregations several points of application. But no amount of emotional appeal can substitute for the work of the spiritual exercises (practice) inherent in the means of grace that God has in mind for the sanctification of the believer.

As usual the journal concludes with several book reviews. I am happy to include several from Dr. Edward Wishart of Elyria, Ohio (with several more to come in the future). Many will recognize Ed from his ministry as a Pastoral Mentor for many years. As always, I am in the debt of Timothy Conklin for his careful editorial eye as he works over these articles and reviews, catching errors and generally improving the work of our contributors.

I want to continue to encourage pastors to share what they are doing in their teaching and pulpit ministry. Each issue of the JGT has included a few shorter articles on a particular text or a theological observation. For many readers, a short book review written from the perspective of a pastor or teacher in a local church is an important contribution and is always appreciated by others in the ministry.

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Phillip J. Long
plong@gracechristian.edu

JUSTICE FOR THE POOR: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE TORAH, WRITINGS, AND PROPHETS

JACOB RODGERS

Associate Professor of Biblical Studies

Grace Christian University

jrodgers@gracechristian.edu

INTRODUCTION

“There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land” (Deut 15:11). The concept of justice for the poor is squarely rooted in the covenantal relationship of YHWH and his people Israel. Two realities are presented by this text. First, inequality was a fact of life. Second, Israel was to be generous and compassionate in the face of that inequality. Social justice, as it is understood today, may have very different aims and goals than what we find in Scripture. Most notably, the modern social justice movement is concerned with the redistribution of wealth and opportunity in such a way that it addresses situations of inequity with the hope of realizing equity. The Old Testament however is rooted in the relationship of YHWH with his people Israel. Justice, as defined by the Old Testament, is not necessarily the quest for equity, but rather obedience to YHWH’s Law. This study will seek to demonstrate this by assessing the situation of poor in Israel through the legal, wisdom, and prophetic traditions. Justice finds its heart in the prescription of God’s Law in the Torah, it is idealized in the wisdom literature, but it is ultimately disregarded by Israel’s leaders in their quest for autonomy from YHWH, which inevitably invites prophetic critique. Hopefully, this study will also provide meaningful principles which can be applied to the modern dis-

cussion of social justice. In fact, the Old Testament's view of justice may have more in common with Taparelli d'Azeglio's original use of "social justice"¹ which may provide a means of unifying our modern concern for justice with our search for the heart of God for his creation.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

In order to begin this study, it is important to come to a consensus on the terms being used and how they were used in their original context. Of particular interest for this study are the terms justice and poverty.

Justice

The Old Testament primarily makes use of two terms for justice, *mišpāt* and *dîn*. "There is strong evidence that attests that originally the substantive *mišpāt* referred to the restoration of a situation or environment which promoted equality and harmony (*šālôm*) in a community."² *špt* and *dyn* even act as synonyms in select passages³ (1 Sam. 24:15; Jer. 5:28; 21:12; Isa 3:13-14; Prov. 31:9; Ps 7:8; 72:1-4).

Psalm 7 provides a clear example of the function of justice within the liturgical corpus. The Psalmist cries out to YHWH to look upon him in his distress and to decide his case accurately. The Psalmist is surrounded by his enemies who wish him violence (7:1-2). Likely, the context refers to David's flight from his enemies, be that his father-in-law, Saul, or his son, Absalom. During his political exile, he was forced to hide himself among his enemies and take refuge with societal outcasts. It is during one of these trying events in which this psalm likely takes place. David presents his case before YHWH and asks him to act as the righteous judge. He begs him to examine his life to see if there is any unconfessed sin, with the assumption YHWH will find no fault in David. In fact, if there is sin, he is willing to give himself over to proper judgment (7:3-5). However, the author is convinced in his heart his cause is just and YHWH, in his righteousness, will rise up in defense of his case and overthrow the pursuit of his enemies (7:6). Hence, the author is able to proclaim in vv. 8-9, "The LORD judges

¹Thomas Patrick Burke, "The Origins of Social Justice: Taparelli d'Azeglio." *Modern Age* (2010): 97–106.

²Temba L. J. Mafico, "Just, Justice," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 3:1128.

³Mafico, "Just, Justice," 3:1127.

(דַיִן, *dyn*) the peoples; judge me (שְׁפֹטֵנִי, *špt*), O LORD, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me. Oh, let the evil of the wicked come to an end, and may you establish the righteous—you who test the minds and hearts, O righteous God!” God is seen as the judge of the entire earth and his rule brings justice and equity to all of his creation. (Ps 99:1-4) Justice is found in YHWH as the divine guardian because it is within his nature and attributes to be such. (Ps. 97:2).⁴ Justice and righteousness are two concepts which go hand in hand and are often used in tandem or synonymously within the text (Amos 5:21-24; Gen 18:19; Micah 6:6-8).⁵ In order to stand in righteousness before the law meant justice would be swift and eventually the cause would be found in your favor. However, unrighteousness leads ultimately to destruction and death (Ps. 7:9, 12). The book of Job serves as a case study for this idea.

Job is declared as ‘upright in heart’ (Job 1:1), yet his story is one in which he is the object of death and destruction (1:6-2:10). The human solution to this dilemma, as articulated by Job’s wise friends, is found in the wisdom tradition of retribution theology which states one’s circumstances are ultimately a consequence of one’s righteousness, or lack thereof. Job’s friends are convinced his present trouble is a result of sin either he or his family has committed against the Lord. Yet, Job continues to plead his own case and asks for God’s justice to show him as guiltless. His righteousness will eventually prove his case. Yet, while waiting for his eventual vindication, Job questions the justice of God. Job contrasts the failure of God to act in his distress with the wonderful power in which he crafted the heavens (Job 3:4-10). If God is so great he can separate the light from the darkness and assign the heavenly host to mark the days, seasons, and years, then why did he allow such a great darkness to fall on his life? If indeed there is such a light, why is it so far away from Job? He sees the light, yet his life is one steeped in darkness and misery, so much so, the light itself becomes a reason for despair. This account is striking and depressing. Not only does Job seem to be calling God out, but also seems to advocate for his own death that he might be at rest. The play on the creation theme is evident.

- Light and Darkness- Gen 1:2-5; Job 3:4-5.

⁴Mafico, “Just, Justice,” 3:1128.

⁵Mafico, “Just, Justice,” 3:1128.

- Days, Months and Years- Gen. 1:14; Job 3:6-8.
- Leviathan- Gen 1:21; Job 3:8.
- Birth and Fruitfulness- Gen 1:28; Job 3:11-12,16.
- Rest and Death- Gen 2:1-3; Job 3:13,14,17-19,22,26.

As Job finishes his first speech and contemplates whatever benefit death might bring him over his present life of suffering, his friend Eliphaz joins the discussion with his own wisdom. This first speech is by far the most civil and gives Job the benefit of the doubt. Eliphaz begins by praising Job's wisdom and care for the poor. However, Eliphaz subtly turns this praise of Job's righteous actions towards the poor into a condemnation of Job himself. According to Eliphaz, the poor are poor because they have lived a life of folly and are under God's divine judgment, which follows suit with some wisdom traditions that will be addressed later. Just as Job cared for the poor and the feeble (those who have come under God's discipline), Eliphaz wonders why Job is surprised when he finds himself in a similar situation. If one is convinced one's character determines one's future, then obviously Job is under divine discipline. "Remember: who that was innocent ever punished? Or where were the upright cut off? As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same." (Job. 4:7-8) This is the undeniable fact of life for Eliphaz and his advice is Job accept his discipline and seek the Lord's will. "As for me, I would seek God, and to God I would commit my cause." (Job 5:8) He even tries to sweeten his argument by insisting this is the normal case for all mankind (Job. 4:17-19). There is no one who is blameless in the sight of the Lord and the punishment Job is receiving is not dire, but rather a blessing from God. "Behold, blessed is the one whom God reproves; therefore despise not the discipline of the Almighty. For he wounds, but he binds up; he shatters, but his hands heal." (Job 5:17-18) However, the audience, as well as Job, are aware of a reality in which Job's friends are ignorant to, Job is in fact blameless in this event.

The prologue clearly lays the responsibility for Job's suffering not in his unrighteousness which would deserve just punishment, but rather he is being tested because of the uprightness of his heart. Yet, Job is at a disadvantage, one not presented to the audience, in that, he does not understand why he is being tested. In Job's response to Bildad, the audience can sense

Job's growing frustration with his case before God. Job has to acknowledge his case is special because he has not had a fair trial. Normally, God would act as the mediator in a case between two claimants. However, in this case, Job is defender and God is the prosecutor, judge, and jury. Job is frustrated by the power of the God who removes mountains because, "if it is a contest of strength, behold, he is mighty!" (Job 9:19a) He is not comforted by the fact he is in the right because, "If it is a matter of justice, who can summon him?" (Job 9:19b) The Almighty God answers to no one, there is no one higher than God in the chain of command who can attest to God's own righteousness. "For he is not a man, as I am, that I might answer him, that we should come to trial together. There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both" (9:32-33). God is the final, and only, authority and he will prove Job's words to be false. Job is proved wrong in the end. God in fact is just, and he does care about Job's case, but he is not to be bullied or manipulated by man's idea of justice. He, in fact, is the final authority and the one who has the privilege of defining what justice is. Therefore, if God is the one who defines justice, then it will be evident in his actions and clearly observable in those whom he has called to enact justice.

Judges, those called to distribute God's justice, were meant to be those who showed no partiality, but rather those who properly demonstrated fairness in their court cases. (Lev. 19) However, this was not simply limited to the traditional judicial role in deciding civil cases, but another role of the judge was to be involved in the execution of God's justice on a military level. Military leaders would often appeal to God to demonstrate his justice to decide between disputes between nations as well. God himself was to decide the case of those whose cause was righteous. This assumption is clear in the story of Jephthah as he appeals to the Lord to act as judge between him and the Ammonite threat.⁶

Additionally, justice is concerned with the rights of those who are often considered to be without any claim to the rights of man. However, God endows them with rights they would otherwise be powerless to demand for themselves. "Ownership of land and property, freedom and security, constituted their inalienable human rights endowed upon them by

⁶Mafico, "Just, Justice," 3:1128.

God, their creator.”⁷ This group includes the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the stranger (Lev 19; Ps 10:17-18; 82:1-8; cf. 109:16). Mafico argues this establishment of inalienable rights for the poor demonstrates God’s concern for an egalitarian community in which inequity is eliminated through proper administration of the law.⁸ However, Mafico’s understanding of the rights afforded to the poor creating an egalitarian society within Israel may be more theoretically motivated than what is actually presented within the text. This leads to a discussion of poverty and its varied usage throughout the Old Testament.

Poverty

As mentioned earlier, the term poverty embraces many different forms of poverty and many different people who could be defined as poor, which may include the widow, orphan and the stranger, as well as, the landless poor, the beggarly poor, the landed poor, and others. Pleins identifies seven key Hebrew terms used to identify the poor, five of which are pertinent to this discussion. The five terms that will be addressed are the *’ebyôn* (the beggarly poor), *dal* (the poor peasant farmer), *maḥsôr* (the lazy poor), *rās̄* (the political and economic inferiors), and *’āni* (the oppressed by means of injustice).⁹

The Beggarly Poor: ’ebyôn

’ebyôn is used 17 times in the prophetic corpus to describe: 1) Homelessness or lack of physical resources (Isa 14:30; 25:4; Amos 8:4), 2) Hunger and thirst (Isa. 32:6-7 ; 41:7; Ezek. 16:49), 3) Mistreatment by the royal elite or other wicked parties (Isa. 29:19; Jer. 2:34; 20:13; Ezek. 18:12; 22:29; Amos 4:1), 4) Unfair handling of legal cases (Isa. 32:7; Jer. 5:28; 22:16; Amos 5:12), 5) Unjust economic practices (Amos 2:6; 8:6). Unexpectedly, Micah does not use *’ebyôn* or any other term for the poor, despite the fact that a large portion of Micah’s critique is focused on the issue of poverty. This detail may lend credence to the idea Micah came from a rural rather than royal background as suggested by Wolff.¹⁰

⁷Mafico, “Just, Justice,” 3:1128.

⁸Mafico, “Just, Justice,” 3:1129.

⁹J. David Pleins, “Poor, Poverty,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 5:402–14.

¹⁰Pleins, “Poor, Poverty,” 5:403.

In the writings, we see the term *ʿebyôn* used in various contexts throughout Psalms, Proverbs, and Job. In Psalms, *ʿebyôn* appears 23 times, most often in the Psalms of Lament. These poor are: 1) Those robbed by the wicked (35:19), 2) Those who suffer (107:41) under the attack of the wicked (23:17), 3) Those who lack nourishment (132:15). Proverbs uses the term only 4 times and is primarily found within Prov. 30-31. These represent the wisdom from sources that are otherwise unknown in the Hebrew Scripture, namely, the wisdom of Agur and Lemuel. *ʿebyôn* is always paired with *ʿānî*. In each of the uses the context implies that there are those who care for the poor and those who abuse the poor. The wise king is the one who takes up the case of the poor and the needy. Finally, *ʿebyôn* is used six times in the book of Job to describe the poor as victims of economic injustice (24:4) or murder (24:14). Pleins also argues due to Job's choice of terms for the poor (*ʿebyôn*, *dal*, *ʿānî*) and due the absence of other terms more distinctive to wisdom literature (*maḥsôṛ*; *miskēn*, *rās*) from the lips of Job, this gives Job a prophetic voice among the wisdom writings.¹¹

The Poor Peasant Farmer: dal

The *dal* represent an entirely different class of poor from the *ʿebyôn*. These poor are not poor because they lack the basic resources to care for themselves or because they lack the physical strength or ability, but these are the landed poor. In contrast to the *ʿebyôn*, the *dal* are those who have their own land and are either too small or have faced political, economic, or natural disasters that impact the yields of their harvest. They face 1) Unfair treatment in legal cases (Isa 10:2; 11:4), 2) Unfair grain taxes paid to large landowners (Amos 5:11),¹² 3) Abuses in the debt slavery system (Amos 8:6), 4) A lack of grazing land (Isa 14:30). Despite their economic oppression we find God is ultimately depicted as the protector of the *dal* in the prophetic literature (Isa. 25:4; Zeph. 3:12). “In the prophetic texts, therefore, the term *dal* depicts the politically and economically

¹¹Pleins, “Poor, Poverty,” 5:404.

¹²Possibly the author is reading too much into the text. Are these wealthy landowners or the bureaucratic elite?

marginalized elements of society.”¹³

The *dal* are also represented in the legal and ritual texts. Exodus 23:3 and Lev 19:15 both warn judges not to show partiality to either the rich or the poor in legal cases. The *dal* are expected to pay the census taxes alongside of the rich, but they are also allowed to bring offerings are less expensive than their more wealthy counterparts because of their economic situation. (Exod. 30:15; Lev. 14:21).¹⁴ It appears from this text Israel’s taxation utilized both ‘flat’ and ‘progressive’ forms of taxation. That being said, the ‘flat’ tax was used for government records, whereas the ‘progressive’ tax was used in the context of ritual sacrifices. The non-partial nature of the legal texts demonstrate not a lack of concern for the poor, but rather the purpose of impartial laws as the model of justice in a society prone to abuse these natural imbalances between the classes.

The favored term for the poor in the wisdom texts appears to be *dal*. In Proverbs this term is exclusively utilized in chapters 10-29. Overall, it appears as if this type of poverty is to be pitied as opposed to being condemned by the rich. In this case, poverty results from less than favorable circumstances, rather than a lack of wisdom. This type of poverty shatters the poor (10:15), it leaves no friends (19:4), and it may serve to teach the wise (28:11). Charity towards the *dal* is encouraged (19:17; 22:9; 29:9). As such, the rich should not take advantage of these poor or seek to profit from their poverty (14:31; 21:13; 22:16; 28:3, 8, 15).¹⁵ In Job, the critique of his friends is Job’s present suffering may be due to the fact he has mistreated the *dal* in their affliction and thus he is suffering in like fashion (5:16; 20:10, 19; 34:19). Job’s response is clear and unrepentant, he has taken care of the *dal* and that appears to be the bulk of his defense in chapter 31. He has looked after them as a father.¹⁶ As evidence of his honesty, he curses his own body if he has not taken care of these poor as he has stated; considering Job’s current condition, to have his shoulder drop out of place would be adding insult to injury at this point in the story

¹³Pleins, “Poor, Poverty,” 5:405.

¹⁴Pleins, “Poor, Poverty,” 5:405.

¹⁵Pleins, “Poor, Poverty,” 5:406.

¹⁶Pleins, “Poor, Poverty,” 5:406.

(31:21-22).

The *dal* are also mentioned in the literature of Israel's neighbor's, particularly Ugarit. In the *Epic of King Keret*, "King Keret is denounced by his son Yassib, who accuses his father of failing to execute the duties of the royal office, blaming this failure on his fathers' weakness and illness."¹⁷ Notably, Yassib blames this misfortune on the fact that Keret has not driven out the extortioners of the poor (*dl*). The *dl* in this context are joined together with the orphan (*ytm*) and the widow (*'almnt*) which are usually joined together within the biblical corpus as well when speaking of those who are disinherited (cf. Isa 10:2; Ps 82:3-4; Job 31:16-17).¹⁸

The Lazy Poor: maḥsôr

maḥsôr appears to be exclusively a wisdom term, although it does appear briefly in other forms of Hebrew literature, including the legal texts. That being said, it is used 13 times throughout the entire Hebrew Bible, eight of those occurrences in the book of Proverbs, with only one occurrence outside of Proverbs 10-29. This appears to be the wisdom tradition's favorite term for the poor who are poor because they deserve to be poor. For these, poverty comes as a result of their own laziness (6:11; 14:23; 21:5; 24:34). If it does not come from laziness then it is a result of excessive living and desiring the finer things in life without having the ability to pay for those goods (21:17). Yet, in the legal tradition, the community is still encouraged to lend money to the *maḥsôr* despite the fact the year of Jubilee is approaching. This is notably generous considering once the year of Jubilee arrives, these debts would be forgiven (Deut 15:8).¹⁹

Political and Economic Inferiority: rās

Pleins makes the case *rās* is the favored term used in wisdom literature to describe the one who is the economic or political inferior due to the perceived status of these poor as bums, beggars, or

¹⁷Pleins, "Poor, Poverty," 5:406.

¹⁸Pleins, "Poor, Poverty," 5:406.

¹⁹Pleins, "Poor, Poverty," 5:407.

lazy.²⁰ However, there is room for refinement in this definition. It is exactly this perception of the rich which makes these poor the *rāṣ*.²¹ However, it may not be the perception of the author of the wisdom literature. It may be more accurate to describe these poor as the despised poor. Namely because of their friendless position within society as mentioned by Pleins.²² Pleins notes Proverbs 13:23 describes disordered living, however Longman and Garrett argue this type of poverty is not a result of disordered living, but rather economic or social oppression due to the suppression of Sabbath laws.²³

The Injustice of Oppression: ‘āni

So far, the terms addressed have found their home in the wisdom tradition, however, ‘āni is a reference strangely absent from the wisdom literature, with the exception of its use by Job’s friends (who seem to represent the wisdom tradition in the book). However, *āni* appears 25 times throughout the prophetic corpus and describes: 1) economic Oppression (Isa 3:15; Ezek 18:12; cf. Deut 24:12; Ezek 22:29; Amos 8:4), 2) unjust treatment in legal decisions (Isa 10:2), 3) victimization through deception (Isa 32:7), 4) those robbed of their possessions (Isa 3:14). The prophetic tradition views this type of poverty the most preventable and reprehensible form of poverty. Ezekiel even reframes the destruction of Sodom as being due to their wicked practices particularly because they withheld food from the poor (Ezek. 16:49). In Isaiah, this term is often used to describe the oppression of the ‘people’ as a whole, particularly in regard to the

²⁰Pleins, “Poor, Poverty,” 5:407. Pleins argues this type of criticism does not find its home in the prophetic or legal texts, which see poverty as a result of structural economic oppression, but rather from the educational circles of the social elite.

²¹Interesting the word רָשׁ (poor) is similar phonetically to the רָשָׁע (a wicked person) which might indicate a semantic parallel between the means through which these poor become poor.

²²Pleins, “Poor, Poverty,” 5:407.

²³Tremper Longman III, *Proverbs*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 291; Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, The New American Commentary 14 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 140.

exilic community (cf. Isa 40-66).²⁴

Throughout the writings the term ʿāni appears 31 times throughout the book of Psalms, absent from the Proverbs, and briefly in the book of Job. In the Psalms, ʿāni refers to the poor as those who are: 1) Hounded and seized by the wicked and the strong (10:2, 9; 14:6; 35:10; 37:14; 106:16), 2) Plundered (12:6), 3) Homeless (25:16), 4) Murdered with bows and swords (37:14), 5) Suffering from physical pain (69:30).²⁵ In the speeches between Job and his friends the term ʿāni only shows up when Job is speaking to his friends and is never uttered from their lips. This may contribute to the idea the wisdom literature as a whole tends to avoid language of the poor relates to economic or social injustice at the hands of those who would be in power. Although there are clear restrictions in place regarding the treatment of these poor, they do not seem to acknowledge the reality of their oppression.²⁶

Finally, in the legal tradition it appears this term is used in similar fashion to the ʿebyôn and the *maḥsôr*. The legal texts are largely interested in fair economic practices towards the poor, especially regarding loans and interest. You are not to charge interest on a loan to the ʿāni and loans should still be granted even as the sabbatical year approaches when those loans will be forgiven (Exod 22; Deut 15; 24).²⁷

Conclusion

It appears from the usage of the vocabulary for the poor, the legal and prophetic traditions are those that are the most keen on addressing the economic and social injustice towards the poor. Pleins argues,

“Poverty is a decisive issue in the prophetic and legal traditions. It is in these traditions that we are brought face-to-face with the harsh living conditions of the poor; hunger and thirst, homelessness, economic exploitation, legal injustices, lack of sufficient farmland. All these form the web of poverty in ancient Israel. The prophets pro-

²⁴Pleins, “Poor, Poverty,” 5:408.

²⁵Pleins, “Poor, Poverty,” 5:409.

²⁶Pleins, “Poor, Poverty,” 5:410.

²⁷Pleins, “Poor, Poverty,” 5:410.

test what they see to be the oppression of the poor at the hands of the society's rulers, while the legal traditions offer some limited provisions to ease the burdens of those who suffer in this situation."²⁸

This leads to the next portion of this paper. Now that the terms for justice and poverty have been established in their usage throughout the Old Testament, it is fitting each tradition now speak more directly on the topic of proper justice for the poor. The legal text sets the precedent for the discussion of what a just society should look like through proper legislation. The wisdom tradition idealizes the proper use of wisdom in order to promote a wealthy and prosperous society in which the enforceable laws in the Torah are supplemented by unenforceable mores. Finally, the prophetic tradition critiques the failure of Israel to follow the enforceable laws of the Torah and the unenforceable mores of the wisdom literature.

EXAMPLES OF JUSTICE IN TORAH, WRITINGS, AND PROPHETS

The Enforceable Laws of Torah and the Unenforceable Mores of Wisdom

The function of Wisdom may have two distinct roles in the ancient worldview as depicted by many of the proverbs as well as evidence from Egyptian wisdom literature such as *Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage*, *Prophecy of the Lamb*, and *The Prophecies of Neferti*. These texts seem to suggest wisdom was closely associated with the role of prophecy, in that wisdom instructed the king on the dangers of an unjust society and the apparent social evil it might entail. As Wilson notes in "The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage,"

"A wise man named Ipuwer berates the king for permitting lawlessness and chaos in the land. After a long catalogue of social evils, Ipuwer describes the ideal society and exhorts the king to improve conditions. The social function of the text is not precisely clear, but it may have been used to instruct kings in the characteristics of good and bad government. Alternatively, the text may have been composed to praise and support a good king, whose prosperous reign was contrasted with the chaotic state of society under his predecessors."²⁹

²⁸Pleins, "Poor, Poverty," 5:413.

²⁹Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 125. Cf. Prov. 29:7, 14.

This evidence may suggest a more prophetic role in the idealistic language of Wisdom. It is not that wisdom ignores the plight of the poor, but rather seeks to improve it through impressing upon the king the benefits of a just society in which the poor are not crushed by the power structures of the day. As seen in the sentential literature of Proverbs 10-29, many of the proverbs point to the bountiful blessings given to those who seek wisdom as opposed to folly. However, it may be this advice is not given to the king only for his own benefit, but for those who have to live with him. Proverbs 13:22-23, “A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children, but the sinner’s wealth is laid up for the righteous. The fallow ground of the poor would yield much food, but it is swept away through injustice.” Despite the seeming discontinuity between these two proverbs, there is more in common than simple material satisfaction. Verse 22 implores the king to look towards the future as he ponders the riches he has acquired during his reign. The wise man does not squander his wealth but leaves it for his children. In the same way, the wise king notes when a field is left to lie fallow, the poor are able to harvest a crop from a field not their own. Garrison argues vv.22-25, “takes a balanced position; it neither dehumanizes the poor on the grounds that they are to blame for all their troubles nor absolves the individual of personal responsibility.”³⁰ This practice of allowing one’s fields to lie fallow is described in Exodus 23:10-11.

Stuart argues this practice of allowing fields to lie fallow, or uncultivated was not meant to be practiced nationwide, but rather intermittently and allow for individual farmers to rotate crops throughout the seven-year period so one field may remain fallow while the farmer’s other fields would be cultivated any given year. This process of cultivation had many advantages, but mainly advantages that benefited both the farmer and the poor in the community. The farmer would enjoy a rest from harvesting one of his fields, but also benefit by allowing his livestock to be able to forage the uncultivated lands. This process of allowing animals to graze on uncultivated soil allowed for the fields to grass over allowing nitrogen to infuse back into the soil as well as provide much needed fertilizer for the fields by

³⁰Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 140.

means of the livestock tending it. This process not only benefited the farmer, but also the poor in the land. This law allows for the poor³¹ to have access to food they would not otherwise be able to produce on their own, due the fact they do not own any of their own land. If Stuart is correct in assuming farmers throughout Israel would adopt this practice, then it would also support the idea there would not be a place in Israel where there was not a field that was not fallow, thus providing a constant source of food in the land of Israel, allowing for the fact the poor did not grow to a disproportionate number within the land.³²

Walton argues this was the responsibility of a wise and just king in the ancient Near East, to see that his people were taken care of and his kingdom models the order and stability of the cosmos.³³ In the prologue to Hammurabi's Code we see the king establishes these laws in order to fulfill the divine mandate for justice. "I made the land speak with justice (*mišaru*) and truth (*kittu*), and improved the welfare of the people."³⁴ In Israel, the king operates in a similar function as the divinely sponsored administrator of justice through wisdom. However, it is important that it is far more common, outside of the wisdom literature, to see the negative connotations of this administration of justice rather than wise and proper rule. The king, as well as the bureaucratic elite, are often judged for their lack of wisdom and failure to carry out righteousness through proper adherence to divine law.³⁵

Legal treatises within the Ancient Near East are often apodictic in which a protasis "If..." statement is followed by the succeeding apodosis "then..." The assumption of the legal tradition is

³¹The use of poor is interesting here. Note that in Proverbs 13:23 the poor who work the fallow field are the *rās* whereas the poor in Exodus 23:11 are the 'ebyôn. This may suggest *rās* is simply the wisdom author's term for the 'ebyôn.

³²Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus* (NAC 2; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 530–32.

³³John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Second Ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 283.

³⁴M. E. J. Richardson, *Hammurabi's Laws: Text, Translation and Glossary* (London: T&T Clark, 2000), 41.

³⁵Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 284.

“all things being equal” there would be no need for law and order because nature would be in a state of equilibrium. However, the presence of abnormalities to nature create disturbances to that natural state of equilibrium which must be remedied by laws. Thus, the protasis presents the abnormal situation in which a proceeding apodosis must be applied in order to return society to its intended state of equity.³⁶

If these laws do not necessarily function in merely a prescriptive role within society, but rather as exemplary in nature, then these laws are describe a model of a just society. “Today we think of justice as that which conforms to the law. For them justice was that which conformed to traditions reflected in the paradigms.”³⁷ Namely, these paradigms are found within the legal tradition of the community. This seems to be the case with Israelite religion and culture as well. The exemplary or ideal is often found in the wisdom instruction for the king of Israel. These wisdom ideals are translated into instruction or law and handed down to the people as a means of restoring equity and equilibrium to the community after a state of impurity or injustice has occurred. In Mari, we find this tendency of the King to attribute his wise rulership to the execution of justice as a means of fulfilling the divine mandate of the gods. “Now hear a single word of mine: If anyone cries out to you for judgment, saying, ‘I have been wronged,’ be there to decide his case; answer him fairly. This is what I desire from you.”³⁸

PROPHETIC CRITIQUE OF THE FAILURE OF WISDOM AND INSTRUCTION

Micah

In Micah 6:8 the same admonition is found from YHWH, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” This is likely a direct criticism of the actions of King Ahaz who had “even

³⁶Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 290.

³⁷Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 291.

³⁸Martti Nissinen, trans., “A.1968, 6-11,” in *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 21–22.

burned his son as an offering” (1 Kings 16:3).³⁹ Here is an example of the failure of the king as the divine administrator of justice. Instead of seeking the will of God, Ahaz seeks to manipulate the divine, in this case Molech, by means of sacrifice in order to find deliverance from his enemies. Micah points out the king is unable to manipulate or sway YHWH through means of exorbitant sacrifice (Micah 6:6-8). Rather, YHWH’s only request is that man uphold justice, mercy and kindness. These are the very things Ahaz had not done during his rule.

The prophetic message of Micah is one of God calling his people to the court and prodding them for an explanation of their actions. God calls heaven and earth as witness against his people and he lays out their failures before them. The indictment is one fueled by divine compassion and justice. Compassion for those afflicted by the nation and justice to be served against those who have broken the covenant God established with his people in order to govern safe, flourishing, and faithful communities. The repeated phrase “Hear!” is continually met with opposition by the religious and political elite of Israelite society. Instead of listening to the indictment of the LORD through his prophets, they tell the prophets “Do not preach—thus they preach—one should not preach of such things; disgrace will not overtake us.” (Mic 2:6) Instead, they look for a man who goes about and utters lies and speaks of the good times coming to the nation. “I will preach to you of wine and strong drink” (2:11). They preach peace when their bellies are full, yet declare war against those who do not provide food for them (3:5). These are the prophets they deserve! (2:11) Yet, there will come a day when these people will

“Cry to the LORD and he will not answer them; he will hide his face from them at that time because they have made their deeds evil... yet they lean on the LORD and say ‘Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us.’ Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.” (3:4, 11b-12)

It will not be like the days of old when YHWH heard the cry of his people in Egypt and remembered them. (Ex. 2:23-24) When he brought them

³⁹Kenneth L. Barker and D. Waylon Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, The New American Commentary v. 20 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 113.

up out of the land of Egypt and delivered them from the house of slavery. Instead, God remembers all of the actions he has done on behalf of his people and asks, “O my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me!” (Mic 6:3) He will remind them of the times in which he had rescued Israel from their trouble and from their failure. By the hand of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. From the hand of Balak and the lips of Balaam (Num 22). From their enemies as they conquered the land from Shittim to Gilgal. The LORD has always been there for his people. And what did he require of them, but to do justice (*špt*), love (*hesed*), and to walk humbly with their God (6:8). Instead, they would offer meaningless sacrifices ranging from the incredible to the incomprehensible. Did they think God would desire the blood of calves and rams over the safety of a foreigner? Did they think he would desire rivers of expensive oil instead of protecting the ancestral heritage of their neighbors and not using that wealth to bribe judges? Did they think God would desire the sacrifice of their firstborn, rather than providing for the orphan and the widow in their distress?

Judah was completely lost and upside down and it was entirely due to their misaligned priorities. They sought their own interests above those of God and their neighbors. They had taken the Law and turned it inside out and upside down to meet their own needs, when in reality all the LORD required was obedience before sacrifice. “He has told you, O man, what is good;” This phrase is parallel to Deut. 10:12-22.

Micah describes the plight of the poor in chapter 3. Although the prophetic rebuke is directed towards the leaders and rulers of the house of Israel, this serves as the rationale for their destruction. In reality, the prophetic rebuke is meant to serve as divine instruction for the nation of Judah as they appear to be walking down the same path as their sister nation.

“Hear, you heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel! Is it not for you to know justice? You who hate the good and love the evil, who tear the skin from off my people and their flesh from off their bones, who eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them, and break their bones in pieces and chop them up like meat in a pot, like flesh in a cauldron.” (Mic 3:3)

The hyperbolic language seeks to portray the plight of the poor at the hand of their oppressors who are namely the rulers of the nation. The king as YHWH’s divine representative has failed and the consequence for that failure will result in the eventual destruction of the nation. This language

is an echo of the critique of the prophet Amos, who had formerly warned Israel, the northern kingdom, of the very same consequences for the very same actions.

Amos

Amos prophesies during the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah sometime between 762-753 B.C. (Amos 1:1). He dates his ministry by a unique catastrophic event. He states his message comes two years before an earthquake strikes the region. Archaeologists researching at Hazor have found evidence of geological shifts occurring at the site dated to around 760.⁴⁰ Amos himself claims to be a ‘breeder of sheep’ and tender of sycamore figs (7:14) from the city of Tekoa, located in the southern kingdom just south of Bethlehem. The fact he is a breeder of sheep and a tender of fruit trees makes him stand out among the prophets of his time since he was raised a farmer and not as a professional prophet. A distinction he makes clear to the high priest Amaziah of Israel when he states, “I was no prophet, nor a prophet’s son, but I was a herdsman...” (7:14).

During the chaotic reign of Jehu, Israel lost territory to the Syrian general Hazael, who recently became king by murdering the former king Ben-Hadad. Israel lost the territory of the trans-Jordan and would not recover that land until Jehu’s grandson, Jeroboam II, recovered the region during his reign. Jeroboam II’s reign saw great prosperity and stability as he secured the borders of Israel from Lebo-hamath to the sea of the Arabah (2 Kings 14:25). However, Jeroboam II’s son, Zechariah, would not see a peaceful end, but be slain by Shallum in Ibleam.

Therefore, during the time of Amos, Israel is in a period of nationalistic fervor. Not only are they living in an unprecedented time of peace and security, but they have also dealt a mighty blow to their former oppressors. As a result, Amos’ list of nations that will suffer the mighty judgment of God seems to be a welcome prophecy. Syria will suffer for her crimes against Gilead (1:3). Both the houses of Ben-Hadad and Hazael have crumbled and have bent the knee to Israel’s power (1:4).⁴¹ The Philis-

⁴⁰J. Daniel Hays, *The Message of the Prophets: A Survey of the Prophetic and Apocalyptic Books of the Old Testament* (Tremper Longman III, ed.; 3rd edition; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010), 287.

⁴¹However, it is not Israel who deals the final blow, but rather Assyria who

tines will also pay for their crimes against the Israelites because they handed over their people as tribute to the kingdom of Edom (1:6-8). The Phoenician city of Tyre will burn as well for their collusion with the Philistines and for abandoning their covenant of brotherhood (1:9-10). Edom will be punished for their bloodthirsty attitude towards battle against their brothers (1:11-12). The Ammonites took advantage of the situation caused by Syria and raided the villages of Gilead to enlarge their territory and opened up pregnant women's bellies along the way (1:13-15). The Moabites received the worst punishment of all because they defiled the corpse of the Edomite king by burning his bones to lime. None of their princes will survive, none will have the pleasure of going into exile (2:1-3). The next group is unexpected, but equally worthy of Israel's ire. Judah will be judged for their lack of faithfulness to their covenant with YHWH (2:4-5). However good it sounds to see the downfall of your rival, it is worse when you realize the list does not stop with Judah. The final nation condemned to judgment is Israel herself. Her list of crimes are listed in detail, with no stone left unturned. The cries of ecstasy concerning the downfall of her enemies have now turned into a horrifying introspection.

In Amos 2:6-7, "they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals, those who trample aside the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted." Many assume this is talking about slavery when in fact it concerns the manner of the court system. In Deuteronomy 16:19 we read, "You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous." Again in Exodus 23:6-8, "You shall not pervert justice due to your poor in his lawsuit. Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked, and you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right." In the days of Amos, we find this had become common place. If you wanted to win a court case you may find better luck bribing the judge, than be found in the right. Or if you wanted to find someone guilty, you may just bribe someone to be an expert witness in your case. It is discouraging people were willing to lie for just about anything, whether silver or a pair of sandals. None stood up for righteousness, none stood up for those who

will exile them to Kir.

were innocent. Instead, everyone looked out for their own best interests.

Amos 2:7-9, describes a case in which one despicable event built upon the foundation of several other despicable events. Not only are a father and son enjoying the services of the same temple prostitute (which there is certainly not required by the law), they were committing their sin on top of garments taken in pledge. This is a clear reference to the command in Deuteronomy 24:12-13, “And if he is a poor man, you shall not sleep in his pledge. You shall restore to him the pledge as the sun sets, that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you. And it shall be righteousness for you before the Lord.” Meanwhile, while they are there in the temple, they are consuming wine they procured through fines (2:8)! Not only were they consuming wine procured by unjust fines against the poor, but they were forcing Nazarites to drink that wine (which in turn breaks their vows; cf. Num 6), and daring to tell the prophets not to prophesy (2:12).

The fact these men had collected fines here may also be connected to the taxes that exacted upon the poor in order to acquire their grain (Amos 5:11). Apparently, there was a bureaucratic class of elites living in Israel who managed the vast resources of the northern kingdom and acquired for themselves goods they had not worked for through the means of excessive taxation. “Hear this you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor and crush the needy, who say to your husbands, ‘Bring that we may drink!’” (Amos 4:1) They are fat and those who live at ease, they are those who lay on expensive beds and stretch themselves out upon their couches (Amos 6:4). They sing idle songs and eat expensive meats, the world is their oyster as they consume the finest wines and apply the finest oils on their skins. Yet, in the meantime, in order to sustain their lifestyle of extravagance, the poor are working out in the field and find themselves cheated in court by the very ones who are stealing their grain, wine, and oils.

While they commit the atrocities of injustice against the poor, they have the audacity to come into the temple and offer up sacrifice, observe feast days, and sing worship songs. They act as if there is nothing wrong, that the actions they take outside of their religious sphere of influence have no bearing on the way they treat their brothers and sisters in the fields. Thus, YHWH replies,

I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let Justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (5:21-24).

A MODEST APPLICATION OF OLD TESTAMENT JUSTICE FOR TODAY

To begin this discussion, it must be noted there are several discontinuities which arise when trying to bridge the gap between the historical context of justice in the Old Testament to how that might apply to the church or society today. Needless to say, it would be irresponsible and reprehensible to apply a one to one correlation and say we ought to stone the disobedient child (Deut 21:18-21), the Sabbath breaker (Exod 31:14), and the adulterer (Lev 20:10). One might as well ask the Lord to send a meteor shower to cover the surface of the earth to make our task easier. Not only are there practical considerations to take in mind, but there are also vastly different political differences between our context and the context of Israel. In America, the nation is able to elect representatives to legislate and rule on behalf of the people for a specified amount of time before the people decide to change the present elected leadership. In Israel, the people had little to no choice concerning who would represent them at the highest levels of government, nor did they have control over what laws or punishments might be handed down to them. A constitutional republic in the West has little in common with a theocratic monarchy in the Middle East. Not only are there practical considerations to take in mind, but also theological reasons why we may not wish to identify too much with the nation of Israel. Paul spends much time in the New Testament arguing for a distinction between what was the people of Israel and what Christ has revealed to Paul to be a new creation, the Body of Christ (Eph 2-3). However, there are el-

ements of Old Testament theology that contain principles consistent with YHWH's character apply not only to Israel, but to all mankind, particularly the church.

This task requires us to look at the Old Testament through a paradigmatic perspective unique from our own and in the process, inhabit the ethic of the text. Christopher J. H. Wright proposes a three-fold matrix through which we look at the ethical paradigm of the nation of Israel. Israel's ethical matrix is bounded by their understanding of God, their relationship as community, and their inheritance of the land. These constitute Wright's theological, social, and economic angles, respectively.⁴² According to Wright,

“The concept of paradigm includes the isolation and articulation of principles, but is not reducible to them alone. To regard Israel and the Old Testament as an ethical paradigm forces us constantly to go back to the hard given reality of the text of the Bible itself and imaginatively to live with Israel in their world (“inhabiting the text”), before returning to the equally hard given reality of our own world, to discover imaginatively how that paradigm challenges our ethical response there.”⁴³

Earlier it was mentioned the law represented the enforceable legislation the Israelites were commanded to obey by in order to be in right relationship with the law, whereas the wisdom tradition represented unenforceable mores demanded by the society in order to make sure these laws were fulfilled not just in according to the law, but according to the heart. This language comes from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s sermon entitled, *On Being a Good Neighbor*. In his sermon, Dr. King preaches on the ethics of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-27. The Good Samaritan demonstrates universal altruism, dangerous altruism, and excessive altruism throughout the story.⁴⁴ About excessive altruism he connects the actions of the Good Samaritan to Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick's enforceable and unenforceable obligation. King writes,

⁴²Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (2nd ed.; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2004), 17–20.

⁴³Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 71.

⁴⁴Martin Luther Jr. King, *Strength to Love* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 21–30.

“But unenforceable obligations are beyond the reach of the laws of society. They concern inner attitudes, genuine person-to-person reactions, and expressions of compassion that law books cannot regulate and jails cannot rectify. Such obligations are met by one’s commitment to an inner law, written on the heart. Man-made laws assure justice, but a higher law produces love. No code of conduct ever persuaded a father to love his children or a husband to show affection to his wife. The law court may force him to provide bread for the family, but it cannot make him provide the bread of love. A good father is obedient to the unenforceable.”⁴⁵

What King has demonstrated is the heart of the prophet Jeremiah. There will be no justice or peace for the nation of Israel until they circumcise their hearts and return to YHWH (Jer. 4:4). For Israel, they had the Law of the Lord and they had the wisdom of the sages, but they found ways to subvert the law to their own ends. The enforceable obligations meant nothing without a change of heart to motivate them to abide by unenforceable obligations. Jeremiah speaks of this heart change in 31:31-34. No longer will neighbor say to neighbor, “Know the Lord,” for they will all know the Lord. Jeremiah’s condemnation of Israel’s disobedience is always balanced by his hopeful optimism that YHWH has not abandoned his people to their folly. As a nation, America could create many laws that might curb the injustice against the underprivileged or underserved in society, but without a change of heart, a change of morality it will mean nothing.

The originator of the term social justice, Taparelli d’Azeglio, knew this well. Burke’s article on Taparelli describes his philosophy of societal justice as the right of the government to rule and distribute justice in a limited respect in the absence of catholic morality.⁴⁶ Taparelli writes,

“If economic science...wants to show us how, through the power of self-interest, wealth distributes itself between the proprietor, the capitalist, the worker, and the tax collector, it ought to show us that where Catholic charity reigns, the shares of the capitalist and the proprietor return to a large extent into the hands of the worker as a balm, leveling through generosity the inequalities of fortune.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵King, *Strength to Love*, 28.

⁴⁶Thomas Patrick Burke, “The Origins of Social Justice: Taparelli d’Azeglio,” *Modern Age* (2010): 97–106.

⁴⁷Burke, “The Origins of Social Justice: Taparelli d’Azeglio,” 105.

For Taparelli, the goal of the government was not to redress the inequalities present within life, but rather to protect the unprotected against those who could use force in order to coerce. However, outside of cases of injustice, in which the rights of one have been trampled by another, the inequalities present within life are to be addressed not by the state, but by the church. In Taparelli's philosophy, one finds the root of Old Testament justice. True justice is not found in mere adherence to the law, but rather the one must see beyond the law and meet the needs present in the life of another through the lens of the law. Take for example, the story of Ruth and Boaz.

Boaz is obligated by law to allow the poor to glean his field (Lev 23:22). This is exactly what Boaz does for the poor who live on his land (Ruth 2:1-7). However, Boaz is not obligated to allow the poor to glean behind his reapers, this is something he allows which goes above and beyond the law found in Leviticus. More than that, when Boaz sees the situation of Ruth and that she gathered not only for herself, but for her mother-in-law as well, he has compassion on her and commanded his men to allow her special provisions. Ruth was allowed to drink the water meant for the reapers (2:9), eat food with them at their own table (2:14), and collect whole sheaves of wheat the men left behind for her (2:15).

The kind of justice we see demonstrated by Boaz is not dependent upon the law written on stone, but rather a higher law written on the heart. This example is further developed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount and eventually becomes the model for Christian living. If the church is to embrace the task of social justice, we must first see we are called to be agents of change within our own lives and the lives of our communities. Inequality will not be reversed by laws, but by the attitude of the heart.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper has demonstrated the Old Testament provides the paradigmatic example of what God expects from a just society through an analysis of justice and poverty within the Torah, Writings, and the Prophets. God clearly provided for his people the blueprint for a just society through the legislation of the Torah as it regards proper treatment for the poor, the widow and the orphan. This instruction was codified in the wisdom tradition that moved beyond the enforceable obligation of the

law to the unenforceable obligation of morality and wisdom. However, ultimately Israel failed to abide in the law, because their hearts had turned away from YHWH. The moral failing of Israel was demonstrated in their lack of concern for the poor in their society and resulted in their exile from the land. However, the hope of the prophets is Israel would one day return to YHWH with their hearts in order that they might be able to fulfill the perfect law. In this way, they would be able to cultivate a just society through obedience to YHWH by taking upon themselves his own character. If the church wishes to address the ills of societal injustice today, then we too must find ourselves looking beyond what we are required to do and push forward to looking out for the good of our fellow brothers and sisters. “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil 2:3-4).

JESUS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: MATTHEW 5:1-12

PHILLIP J. LONG
PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL STUDIES
GRACE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
plong@gracechristian.edu

INTRODUCTION.

In the preface to the first edition of *Kingdom Ethics*, Glen Stassen and David Gushee express dismay at the lack of interest in the Sermon on the Mount for doing Christian ethics. The “way of Jesus’s discipleship is thinned down, marginalized or avoided” (xvi). For Stassen and Gushee, the “rock” on which Christian ethics is to be built is the teaching and practice of Jesus, and the Sermon on the Mount is the foundational text in the New Testament for Jesus’s teaching. If we hope to find social ethics in the teaching of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount is therefore the most likely place to start.

For example, in a recent article, African scholar Lazare Sebitereko Rukundwa argued Jesus’s “revolutionary speech on the mountain” makes Jesus “the spokesperson of and for the oppressed. He exposes their injustice and reclaims their socio-political and religious reintegration, not in Roman colonial structures, but more specifically in the pronounced kingdom of God.”¹

¹“In this context of the Gospel of Matthew, gives rise to a community of equality where all people, regardless of their origins, are treated with dignity and care.” Lazare Sebitereko Rukundwa and Andries G. Van Aarde. “Revisiting Justice in the First Four Beatitudes in Matthew (5:3-6) and the Story of the Canaanite Woman (Mt 15:21-28): A Postcolonial Reading.” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 61 (2005): 927–951, 928.

In this study, my focus is on the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes. In these well-known sayings Jesus describes his “ideal disciple.” For many Christians these sayings have been read as ideals to which the individual Christian can aspire. But Robert Guelich argued the Beatitudes are prophetic, perhaps alluding to the messianic text Isaiah 61.² This is an important observation in the light of the previous study on social ethics in the prophets. Since the prophets of the Hebrew Bible stood on the foundation of the Torah and called people back to covenant faithfulness, so too is Jesus as he functions as a classical prophet, sharpening the ethical demands of the Torah in a new social context, life under Roman rule. The beatitudes therefore look back to the ethics of the Hebrew Bible as developed in Second Temple Judaism, but they also look forward to what the ideal community of Jesus disciples looks like.

One additional fact argues in favor of the Sermon on the Mount as a source for Jesus’s social justice. Most New Testament scholars now recognized Matthew uses a Moses typology to connect Jesus to Israel’s original liberator, Moses, the one who brought Egypt out of the slavery. Liberation theology has read the Exodus as a model for social change, perhaps “Jesus as the new Moses” can guide the reading of Matthew’s Gospel in similar ways.

SALT AND LIGHT

As an introduction to social ethics in Jesus’s teaching, I want to skip ahead to Matthew 5:13-16. Although these are not the first words of the Sermon, Jesus does made two remarkable statements about the followers of Jesus and their relationship with the world. The true disciples of Jesus are the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world.” What does Jesus mean by these two metaphors? As is common in the teaching of Jesus, he is looking back to the Hebrew Bible and interpreting as a prophet by applying texts and metaphors to himself and his followers.

Scot McKnight suggests the exact nuance of “salt” is less important than the loss of saltiness.³ Whatever the use of salt Jesus as in mind, salt

²Robert Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* (Waco: Word, 1991).

³McKnight, *Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2013), 57; Davies and Allison list eleven possibilities, *Matthew 1-7* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 472-3.

is worthless if it is not salty! The verb μωραίνω sometimes has the nuance of “foolish” here the aorist passive refers to something which has become tasteless, or possibly “become insipid.”

Since salt is a preserving agent in the ancient world, the followers of Jesus will in some real way act as agents of preservation in their own (Jewish) cultural context. Jesus will draw a sharp contrast between his disciples and the hypocrites in the Sermon on the Mount. By the end of Matthew’s Gospel these hypocrites are identified as the Pharisees. Jesus intends his disciples to be the preserving influence in the world because the Pharisees have already lost their saltiness and are being cast out as worthless.

Jesus also describes his disciples as a light in a dark world. Jesus then offers two variations on this image. First, a city on a hill cannot be hidden. It can be seen from a distance and any light from that city will be seen clearly in the darkness. Second, when a lamp lit, it was normally placed on a stand or in a niche in the wall so the light can illuminate the whole room. It makes no sense to hide an oil lamp under a basket, the point of a lamp is to shine light in the darkness.

Jesus’s point here is that it is impossible for the Christ-follower to hide their light. Even if they could manage to hide their light, it makes no sense to do so since their entire purpose is “being a light.” There can be no hiddenness for the true followers of Jesus.⁴

If the “Salt of the Land” referred to the disciples as a preserving agent within Judaism (as opposed to the Pharisees), then “Light of the World” refers to the function of Israel as the light to the Gentiles. Jesus uses κόσμος rather than γῆ, so the whole world (Jew and Gentile) is in view rather than just the Land of Israel.

To follow Christ is to follow him publicly and openly. How can you be salt and light as a Christ-follower? By integrating the characteristics of the beatitudes into your life and allowing God to transform you into salt and light.

⁴Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7* (Hermenia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 210.

THE BEATITUDES (MATTHEW 5:3-12)

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (verse 3).

Poor (*ptōchos*, πτωχός) normally refers to economic poverty, and this particular word refers to the poorest person in a society, people who are dependent on others to survive. “Jesus is talking to people whose poverty has been imposed on them by social, political and religious circumstances in which the victims have no control.”⁵

Jesus is using poverty here to describe a spiritual state, they are “poor in spirit.” In Luke 6:20 the saying only refers to the poor. There are several options for explaining the difference. First, Jesus may have said something like Matthew 5:3 on many occasions, adding “in spirit” sometimes and other times omitting it. Second, Matthew may have added the phrase to clarify what kind of poverty Jesus had in mind, or Luke may have omitted it for his own theological reasons. Third, both Matthew and Luke are trying to tease out what Jesus said in Aramaic and translated the word *‘ānī* (ܐܢܝ or *‘ānāw*, ܐܢܐ) with a slightly different nuance of meaning.

McKnight argues the “poor in spirit” here should be understood in the context of the *‘ānī* (ܐܢܝ), the poor of Psalm 149:4, the Lord “adorns the humble with salvation.” But there are other texts which refer to the poor in the Hebrew Bible (Isaiah 49:13; 61:1-2; 66:2). The noun has the sense of wretchedly poor. In Psalm 149, this likely refers to the extreme poverty of the post-exilic community who still had not completed the task of rebuilding the temple and anticipated the coming of the Messiah to render justice. This is a fair analogy, but the LXX does not always translate the noun the *‘ānī* (ܐܢܝ) with πτωχός. Rukundwa concludes “the poor in spirit” are those living in “the light of hopelessness and despondency in the lives of those who were oppressed by the existing power structures.”⁶

The Qumran community described themselves as the poor. The noun *‘ānī* (ܐܢܝ) appears some 25 times in the Dead Sea Scrolls. For example, 1Q28b Col. v:22, when the Lord renews his covenant with the Qumran

⁵ Rukundwa, “Revisiting Justice in the First Four Beatitudes in Matthew (5:3-6),” 931.

⁶ Rukundwa, “Revisiting Justice in the First Four Beatitudes in Matthew (5:3-6),” 933.

community “to establish his kingdom forever,” the poor will be judged with justice and the “humble of the earth” will be judged with uprightness.

To bless the prince of the congregation, who [...] 21 [...] his [...] And he will renew the covenant of the [Com]munity for him, to establish the kingdom of his people for eve[r, **to judge the poor with justice,** 22 **to reproach the [hu]mble of the earth with upri[gh]tness,**] to walk in perfection before him on all the paths of [...] 23 to establish his covenant as holy [during] the anguish of those seeking [it. May] the Lord rai[se y]ou to an everlasting height, like a forti[fied] tower upon a raised rampart.

In contrast to what might be expected by the Jewish or Greco-Roman world, these utterly poor people will be the ones who receive the Kingdom of God. For a Jewish person, a righteous person expected to enter into the future kingdom of God. One way to determine whether a person was righteous was their material blessings. The one who kept the Law will be blessed, the one who does not will be cursed. In both cases, this is a material physical blessing. The wealthy might consider themselves righteous because they had been blessed by God.

There are two important passages later in Matthew which illustrate this beatitude. First, in Matthew 8:11-12 Jesus says many will come from the east and west to sit at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the subjects of the kingdom (ie. the self-reputed righteous) will be thrown outside where there is darkness, weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Second, in Matthew 22:1-14, the parable of the wedding banquet points out the ones who thought they ought to enter into the banquet (the coming kingdom) will be destroyed and not enter the kingdom they thought was theirs. Instead, the poor will be gathered up and enter into the banquet.

Jesus reverses this expectation in his daily practice by reaching out to the poor, the outsiders and people considered to be sinners by the righteous who expect to enter the kingdom. These are people who are on the fringes of Judaism and people who are marginalized by both the Jewish religious aristocracy and the Roman which as driven by the pursuit of honor and shame.

“*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*” (verse 4).

Like the poor in spirit in the first beatitude, those who mourn (πενθέω) can refer to those who are literally mourning a death. But the verb is used for any kind of sadness or grief. For example, 1 Corinthians 5:2, Paul suggests the church ought to be mourning over the sin of a member of their church (rather than having pride in their acceptance of the man who has been caught in sin). Warren Carter suggested mourning in this context refers to people longing for “justice and righteousness because they had been denied justice and they lived under the pressure of debts, taxes and landlessness.”⁷

This beatitude may allude to Isaiah 61:1-4, specifically verse 3.⁸ When the anointed one (messiah) comes, he will comfort all who mourn and will give them a “crown of beauty” instead of ashes (mourning), and an oil of joy instead of mourning. In the context of Isaiah 61, those who have returned from the exile live under oppression still, and are in a state of despair over the delay of the kingdom. When messiah comes, he will turn their state of despair into comfort and joy. If this beatitude is an allusion to Isaiah 61, then the saying is tied to Second Temple messianic hopes. The speaker Isaiah 61 is “anointed by the Lord to preach good news.”

For the original audience, then, “those who mourn” would be the Jewish people still living in the exile who were looking forward to the coming of the anointed one to restore Israel’s kingdom. John Nolland suggests “the state of ‘exilic’ suffering of Israel is evoked.”⁹ Instead of shame and disgrace, Israel will receive a double portion of their inheritance and have “everlasting joy” (61:7). In fact, the transformation of Israel’s mourning to joy is a regular metaphor for the eschatological age in the prophets. In the very next chapter of Isaiah, Zion is like a woman who has been left desolate and deserted after the loss of her husband and children. But God will turn her mourning to joy and happiness, “as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you” (Isaiah 62:5).

⁷Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Socio-political and Religious Reading* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000) 133.

⁸McKnight, *Sermon on the Mount*, 41.

⁹John Nolland, *Matthew* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 201.

As with the first beatitude, the Qumran community considered themselves to be living in a state of mourning. *The Thanksgiving Scroll* likely alludes to Isaiah 61 when it describes the role of the community “to proclaim to the poor the abundance of your compassion, 15 [...] ... from the spring [...] the bro]ken of spirit, and the mourning to everlasting joy” (1QH 23:14-15).

You have opened a spr[ing] to rebuke the path of the fashioned from clay, the guilt of the one born of 13 woman according to his deeds, to open the sp[rin]g of your truth to the creature whom you have supported with your power, 14 to [be,] according to your truth, a herald [...] of your goodness, to proclaim to the poor the abundance of your compassion, 15 [...] ... from the spring [...] the bro]ken of spirit, and the mourning to everlasting joy.¹⁰

The ones in this state of mourning will be comforted (future passive of παρακαλέω). Although there is a future-ness to this comfort (the end of the exile and return of Israel), Jesus immediately begins to comfort those who are mourning in Matthew 8-9. He heals a man with leprosy, a servant with paralysis, and frees the demon possessed from their bondage. In Matthew 9:23-24 he raises a young girl from the dead, literally turning the sound of mourning into rejoicing. In Matthew 14 he will satisfy those who are hungry by providing food in the wilderness.

For the original listeners, the true disciple of Jesus does not mourn because of the long oppressive exile, but looks forward to the time when God will comfort them in his kingdom. But this is not a simple hope for a future kingdom, Jesus is enacting the kingdom in his ministry by (literally) comforting those who are have physical and spiritual oppression. The true disciple of Jesus therefore reaches out to those who are suffering (regardless of the source of the suffering, poverty, oppression, substance abuse, people suffering because of their own sin), in order to comfort them in their mourning. This cannot be simply handing someone a gospel tract and praying for them (James 2:14-17).

¹⁰Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition (translations)*. (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 197-199.

“*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth*” (verse 5).

The meek (πραῦς, *praiús*) are those who are humble and gentle, “not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance” (BDAG), perhaps even “unassuming.” Ulrich Luz suggests meekness is “well-measured, regulated mastery of wrath.”¹¹

Meekness tends to be a negative trait in contemporary culture (think: a wimpy person), but in Greek ethical discussions meekness could be a positive character trait. An important component of meekness is “not seeking revenge.” In Zechariah 9:9, the king comes to Jerusalem in humility (πραῦς, *praiús* in the LXX, אָנִי, *ānī* in the Hebrew Bible), riding on a donkey. This is often associated with David returning to Jerusalem after Absalom’s rebellion, he is meek, but more importantly, he is not coming to seek revenge on those who rebelled against him. Alternatively, is Zechariah was thinking of Solomon’s anointing, he too rode a donkey into Jerusalem, then revenge is also in view since Solomon did not seek revenge on those who supported his brother for king (at least initially). In Matthew 11:29 Jesus describes himself as meek (although the ESV translates the word “gentle”) and lowly in heart.

In this beatitude, the meek are not seeking revenge in the world right now because they are looking to God to avenge them at some point in the future. Once again, there is an eschatological aspect to the beatitude; when God acts in history to establish a kingdom of peace, there will be no need for the followers of Jesus to seek revenge.

That the meek will inherit the earth, or perhaps better, “the land.” This is another hint of eschatology, in the future the meek will enter into the kingdom and possess the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The meek are the poor, the אָנִי are the main theme of Psalm 37. The meek are the blessed ones and inherit the land with delight and “abundant peace” (Pss 37:11, 22, 34). Psalm 37:11, “But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace” (Ps 37:11 ESV); “For those blessed by the LORD shall inherit the land, but those cursed by him shall be cut off.” (Ps 37:22);

But the meek do not capture the land and violently seize it. They (passively) inherit the land as a blessing from the Lord. This is important since

¹¹Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 236 note 68

there were some Jews in the Second Temple Period who would prefer to take the land by force. Eventually this will lead to the Zealot movement and First Jewish Revolt against Rome. Unlike the Zealots, the followers of Jesus will meekly resist until God himself gives them the kingdom. In the Hebrew Bible the children of Israel inherited the land promised to Abraham (Deut 4:1, the LXX has κληρονομέω), but here in the beatitude it is the meek disciple of Jesus who will enter into the land.

The inheritance of the land would have been particularly appealing for the original Jewish audience. Van Tilborg (1986:24), legal protection of the land was abolished or just ignored. Instead the land became “an object of trade.”¹²

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (verse 6).

Hungering and thirsting is a characteristic of the poor. In Luke Jesus refers to the literal hunger and thirst of those living in poverty. Similar to the first beatitude, scholars will often wrestle with the original form of the saying. The consensus opinion is Jesus referred to literal poor people who were hungry and Matthew expanded the saying to refer to spiritual hunger. In the Matthew form this saying adds “for righteousness,” perhaps thinking of passages such as Psalm 42:1, “as a deer pants for the water.” Thirsting appears frequently in Wisdom Literature for one who is pursuing righteousness.

It is important to define righteousness in the context of Second Temple period Judaism. Like each of the beatitudes, “hungering for righteousness” can be turned into some inner pursuit of holiness or seeking a state of being sinless. Scot McKnight rightly points out two nuances of righteousness in Greek. In some contexts the word refers to a righteous behavior, such as an act of righteousness. For a Jewish listener, to “pursue righteousness” would be covenant faithfulness, keeping the Law with very real, concrete actions.¹³ For example, in Acts 10 an angel commends the God-fearing Gentile Cornelius for his acts of righteousness. These acts include “gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God” (Acts 10:2).

¹²Sjef Van Tilborg, *The Sermon on the Mount as an Ideological Intervention* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1986), 24.

¹³McKnight, *Sermon on the Mount*, 43-44.

In the Second Temple book *Psalms of Solomon*, the one “who does righteousness stores up life for himself with the Lord” (*Ps.Sol* 9:5).

But in other contexts, especially in Romans and Galatians, righteousness refers to the state of the believer who is in Christ. Paul gives this word an additional theological meaning in the New Testament. In Galatians 3:6 Paul uses righteousness to describe the state of the believer: they have been declared righteous on the believer in Christ, making him righteous. This is the crux of salvation, moving the believer from death to life. And Paul is quite clear obedience to the Law is not why God declares a person righteous. Although it is very difficult to do the reader of the Sermon on the Mount needs to check their Pauline theology and try to head the words of Jesus in a Second Temple period Jewish context.

Alleviating hunger and thirst are also associated with the coming Kingdom of God (Isa 25:6-8). In the eschatological age God will invite all people to his mountain and serve them a grand meal of the best meats and finest wines. This eschatological banquet inaugurates an ideal period of peace and prosperity when even the final enemy Death is destroyed. As with the other beatitudes, this saying looks forward when God will enter history and establish a kingdom ruled by a righteous king, Jesus.

As in each of the beatitudes, the reason the hungry and thirsty are happy is they will be satisfied. The verb (χορτάζω) is used for being physically satisfied with food (as in the feeding of the 5000 in Matthew 15:33, “sated” or “bloated”¹⁴), but is sometimes used for spiritual satisfaction (Psalm 17:5).

What is Jesus talking about when he says his true disciples will hunger and thirst for righteousness? If Jesus’s original audience heard echoes of the Hebrew Bible, the acts of righteousness are meeting the needs of the literal hungry and thirsty. Looking ahead to the conclusion of the other “sermon on a mount,” Matthew 25:34-40 says the true disciples of Jesus will be taking care of those who are hungry and thirsty, caring for the lowest members of their society. Jesus’s point is the one who is hungry for righteousness” meets the needs of those who are hungry and thirsty.¹⁵

¹⁴McKnight, *Sermon on the Mount*, 44.

¹⁵It is almost certain James 2:14-17 alludes to this saying. If someone sees a brother who is hungry and does not feed them, then their faith is dead.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (verse 7).

Most people tend to think of mercy in terms of withholding punishment. In contemporary English one “begs for mercy” or “throws themselves on the mercy of the court.” The person who wants mercy is admitting their guilt and hoping a judge shows them mercy and withholds their full deserved full punishment.

But both the noun (ἐλεήμων) and verb (ἐλέεω) refers to being merciful to others: “being concerned about people in their need” (BDAG), primarily by giving to the poor. The word can have the nuance of compassionate or sympathetic, but in the Hebrew Bible it often refers to acts of compassion. Perhaps more than any of the other beatitudes in Matthew 5, acts of mercy come the closest to the modern expectations of social justice.

This is the Greek word often used to translate the Hebrew *hesed* in the Septuagint. *Hesed* is one of the key theological terms in the Hebrew Bible. It is steadfast love, loving kindness, even covenant loyalty. As such, it is one of the key characteristics of God in the Hebrew Bible. In Exodus 34:6 and Numbers 14:18 God is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love (*hesed*, LXX ἐλεήμων) and faithfulness.” God’s merciful character is the basis for many commands in the Law. For example, Exodus 22:6 the prohibition of taking a man’s cloak as a pledge is based on God’s merciful character. In Hosea 6:6 God wants “mercy, not sacrifice,” and in Micah 6:8 the prophet tells his readers that God requires his people to “love mercy.” In both of these cases doing mercy stands in contrast to making sacrifices and in both cases doing mercy involves care for those in need, the widow, orphan and alien. Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7, in both cases to contrast his ministry with the Pharisees and their concern for ritual purity and Sabbath traditions.

A major difference between contemporary usage of the word mercy and the Hebrew Bible is one *does* “an act of mercy.” In the LXX, Proverbs 28:22 contrasts the stingy man with a merciful (ἐλεήμων) person. In Acts 9:38 Dorcas is described as always doing good and helping the poor, in 10:4, Cornelius was praised for generously giving to the poor. Both of these are “acts of mercy.” “A stingy man hastens to be rich, yet does not realize that a merciful person will prevail over him” (LXX Proverbs 28:22).

The ones who are merciful to others will themselves be shown mercy. This ought not to be dumbed down to karma, a Christian form of “what goes around comes around.” The true disciple of Jesus reflects the character of God by being compassionate and merciful to those who have real needs because it is the nature of a true disciple to do so. To withhold mercy is to choose not to reflect the character of God to those who are in need.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (verse 8).

Although purity can refer to ritual cleanliness, Jesus refers to a person who is actually pure in their inner being. The adjective pure (καθαρός) is the word used frequently in the Septuagint to translate “clean” in the Law. For example, Numbers 8:7 refers to “waters of purification” or clean animals (Gen 7:2). A Jewish worshiper going up to the Temple would wash themselves in one of the many pools leading up to the Temple entrances. This was a ritual performed to symbolize purity and the person could be said to have “clean hands” the waters could not make the person actually pure.

In this case, the heart of the follower of Jesus is called clean. The heart is the center of a person in the ancient world so the one who is “pure in heart” (οἱ καθαροὶ τῆ καρδίᾳ) has been really been made pure. In Psalm 26:6-7, the worshiper says “I wash my hands in innocence and go around your altar, O LORD, proclaiming thanksgiving aloud, and telling all your wondrous deeds.” Similarly, 2 Timothy 2:22 uses the same phrase, those who call on the Lord from a “pure heart.”

What is a “pure heart”? In the immediate context of the Sermon on the Mount, the followers of Jesus are the ones who keep the Law as originally intended by God. In Matthew 5:21-26 the follower of Jesus not only avoids murder (one of the Ten Commandments), but also controls their anger and inner thoughts. In Matthew 5:27-30 they not only avoid adultery, but control their lustful thoughts. In both cases, the inner life of the true disciple of Jesus is pure, not simply their external actions. In Matthew 6 Jesus will draw a clear contrast between his disciples and the hypocrites, those who do their acts of worship in public to be seen by people (Matthew 6:1-18). The actions of hypocrites make them to be pure in heart, but in fact “are like whitewashed tombs” (Matt 23:27).

The result in the beatitude is remarkable: they will see God. Exodus 33:20 says no one can see the face of God. After God allows his glory to pass by Moses, God himself writes the Ten Commandments on two stone tablets and then announces he is the gracious and compassionate God (Exodus 34:5-7). Yet Moses himself cannot see God. In Isaiah 6 the prophet sees the throne room of God and glimpses only the train of God's robe. Yet he says "'Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (Isa 6:5).

Unlike Moses and Isaiah, the true disciple of Jesus will see God. It is possible Matthew intends for us to remember the sign of Emmanuel (Matt 1:23), Jesus is "God with us," but perhaps the force of the metaphor is judicial. In Psalm 11:7 "the Lord is righteous and loves righteous deeds, the upright shall behold his face." Remember righteousness is not a state of inner holiness, but real social justice (Matt 5:6). Therefore the person who acts justly will behold God's face is a metaphor for vindication before a judge. When Joseph interpreted the dream of the butler, he said the pharaoh would "lift up his head" and render justice (he would be restored to his position and the chief butler). In the context of a trial, for an ancient Near Eastern king to allow someone to look up is a sign the person has been found innocent.

Like the other beatitudes, there is an implication in Matthew 5:8 that the true disciple of Jesus will face persecution and a (future) vindication of the persecuted followers of Jesus. The ones who are pure in heart (the disciples) will look upon the face of God and be vindicated when the king renders justice. This may be eschatological; seeing God may refer to the future coming of the son of Man to render justice when he establishes his kingdom. But the person who is pure in heart is happy because they are in a state of "seeing God" now, they have received justice and vindication now. If I am right about seeing God as vindication before a judge, then the true follower of Jesus who is hungering and thirsting for righteousness/justice works to bring justice to those who do not have it in the present world.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (verse 9).

A peacemaker (εἰρηνοποιός) is one who helps to reconcile disagreements. Philo described God as the one who is the “giver of peace” using this word (*Spec. Leg.* 2.192). The coming kingdom of God will be a kingdom of peace. Isaiah 9:5-6 anticipates a time when the weapons of war will be destroyed because the Prince of Peace has begun his rule.

Isaiah 45:7 is the most likely intertext for this beatitude. God describes himself as the maker of peace, (עֲשֵׂה שָׁלוֹם, LXX ὁ ποιῶν εἰρήνην). This title appears at the end of the section which described Cyrus the Great at the “anointed one of God,” or *messiah*. According to Isaiah 47, Cyrus was chosen to subdue the nations, usher in a time of peace, end Judah’s exile, and allow them to return to Zion to worship God. The original return from exile did not come close to the prophecies of a time of peace and prosperity for all Israel. Texts like Daniel 9 imply the exile would be far longer than seventy years, it will continue for seventy times seven years.

Peace making is therefore not simply tolerance of difference so everyone can get along, but stepping in between two warring parties in order to reconcile the two.¹⁶ In Xenophon’s *History*, a diplomat describes his role as a peace maker: “For whenever there is war she [the state] chooses us as generals, and whenever she becomes desirous of tranquility she sends us out as peacemakers” (Xen., *Hell.* 6.3.4).

For some Jewish listeners, this may have been a reversal of expectations. The kingdom often begins with a slaughter of the enemies of Israel; the wedding supper of the lamb is the slaughter of Armageddon (Revelation 19:11-21, Ezekiel 38-39). The result of the destruction of all of the enemies of Israel is a kingdom of peace! The kingdom of God will be a kingdom of peace, but that peace will be the result of a violent uprising against Rome. The roots of the revolt against Rome in A.D. 66 were already present in Galilee in A.D. 30, so some may have wanted to use Jesus’s words as warrant to revolt; but to take up arms against Rome would not be “peace making.” According to France, “peacemaker of the world” was a royal epithet.¹⁷

¹⁶Turner, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic), 152-3.

¹⁷Dio Cassius, *History*, 72.15.5.

The ones who make peace will be called the “sons of God.” France calls attention to the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7:14, cf., Psalm 2). The kings in the line of David were called “sons of God” and the title was eventually expanded to include all of God’s faithful covenant people.¹⁸

The activity of peacemaking is another clear aspect of social justice to which the true disciple of Jesus is called. It does no good to apply this peacemaking to personal disputes between individuals over petty issues (what color carpet for the church). Where there is war, there is the need for a peacemaker. There are also bitter divisions in contemporary western culture, economic, racial, and social divisions which can fairly be described as a state of war. The disciples of Jesus are called to step into those situations as peacemakers, a role much of the church seems unable to fulfill.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (verse 10).

This is one of the more surprising reversals of conventional expectations in the beatitudes. Most people consider being persecuted for any reason to be a “blessing.” But in first Second Temple Judaism there was virtue in being persecuted for the essential boundary markers of Judaism.

The stories in the first part of Daniel are examples of Jewish people who face persecution and death because of their commitment to the Jewish God. In each episode Daniel and his companions refuse to obey a particular command of the king and in each case their life is threatened. In chapter 3 and 6 the men are more or less executed for their stand and are only preserved by divine action.

Fourth Maccabees is another example of a Second Temple Jewish text which praises those who lie out their commitment to their Jewish heritage. Seven brothers are willing to die rather than defile themselves with unclean food or to bow to the king. David deSilva suggested the book addressed a Jewish community which may face persecution as they have in the past, in order to encourage them to maintain their faithfulness to the Law in the face the dominant culture.¹⁹ 2 Baruch 52:5-6 has a similar saying, “And concerning the righteous ones, what will they do now? Enjoy yourselves in the suffering which you suffer now.” Suffering is preparation of the soul

¹⁸France, *Matthew*, 205.

¹⁹deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha*, 357.

for reward, “and make ready your souls for the reward which is preserved for you” (52:7).

Jesus is not talking about enduring generic bad times, but persecution “for the sake of righteousness.” As with Matthew 5:6, righteousness does not necessarily refer to spiritual discipline or personal holiness and piety, but rather concrete actions of justice such as care for the poor and helpless. Those who “inherit the kingdom” in Matthew 25:31-46 are the ones who cared for the hungry and thirsty, those who were naked or in prison. It is very easy to make this beatitude merely a blessing on those who are persecuted for performing some public act of piety such as praying in public.

Who would persecute someone for doing acts of justice for the poor and helpless? In the immediate context, the Pharisees will challenge Jesus for his ongoing actions towards the underclass in Galilee. He touches a leper to heal him (Matt 8:1-4), even though the leper was “unclean” and forbidden to worship at the Temple. He heals the servant a centurion’s servant (8:5-13). Even if the centurion was a God-fearing Gentile, he would not be permitted to enter the court of the men and worship at the Temple. Jesus eats with “tax collectors, prostitutes and other sinners” (Matt 8:9-13) and the Pharisees question Jesus’s non-observance of fasting traditions (Matt 8:14-17).

As with the first beatitude, those who are persecuted for righteousness sake will receive the kingdom of heaven. In fact, the grammar implies they already possess the kingdom when they do suffer.

Matthew 5:11-12 seems to be an extension on the eighth beatitude. The form changes to include the immediate audience, “blessed are you (μακάριοί ἐστε) when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.” In addition, France points out the two blessings in verses 11-12 are “forward looking” to a time when the disciples will face the same kinds of attacks Jesus endured. Jesus was reviled (ὀνειδίζω) in Mark 15:32; Paul alludes to Psalm 68:10 when he says Christ endured “reproaches” Romans 15:3. In addition to persecution, people will say “all sorts of evil things” about the disciples, the same kinds of false accusations Jesus faced.

A true disciple of Jesus who is hungering and thirsting for righteousness and is in fact doing concrete actions in order to meet the needs of the underclass of a society can expect to face real persecution for those actions.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE BEATITUDES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Kingdom of God

There is an eschatological promise in the beatitudes; namely a coming a time when the people of God will experience a reward for their oppression and perseverance.²⁰ These promises are all related to the hope for a restored kingdom for Israel in the future. Here is but one example of dozens of texts in the prophets with similar expectations. The conclusion to the first half of the book of Isaiah begins with series of prophetic “judgment on the nations.” Isaiah 34:2-4 describes an apocalyptic judgment on the nations: the Lord will utterly destroy them, they will wither like leaves on the vine. But in Isaiah 34:16-16 the Lord gathers his own people back to their inheritance and “they will possess it forever.” Feeble hands will be made strong, the eyes of the blind will be opened, the deaf will hear, the lame will leap, and the mute will speak (35:5-6). The way to Zion will be opened and the redeemed will travel this “way of holiness” in gladness and joy (35:9-10). The prophets regularly anticipate Israel’s liberation from her enemies but also a time of Edenic peace and prosperity.

Immediately following Jesus’s sermon, Matthew collects a series of stories which indicate the Kingdom of God is in some ways present in Jesus’ ministry. For example, the first story is the healing of a man with leprosy. Jesus makes him clean, the verb (καθαρίζω) is cognate to the noun used in Matthew 5:8, the “pure (καθαρός) in heart.” Although this man is made clean physically, he has “seen God” in Jesus. In Matthew 11:1-5 disciples of John the Baptist ask Jesus if he is the Messiah, and Jesus responds by pointing to the many miracles and healings which bear witness to a messianic outpouring of the Spirit of God. In 11:6 he concludes by pronouncing a blessing on those who do not stumble on account of him.

The kingdom is therefore present in the ministry of Jesus in a very real way. People are experiencing the presence of the king. These are a foretaste of the kingdom expected by prophets in the Hebrew Bible.

²⁰Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 42.

Although the kingdom is in many ways still future (from both the perspective of Jesus and the present church), there are some aspects of that kingdom immediately present in the ministry of Jesus. The followers of Jesus will not “bring in the kingdom” but they ought to be doing the “work of the kingdom” through real, concrete acts of righteousness, justice, and mercy; they ought to be comforting those who mourn, feeding those who are hungry, and obtaining justice for those who are being oppressed.

Reversal of Expectation

The beatitudes “present true human flourishing as entailing suffering as Jesus’s disciples await God’s coming kingdom that Jesus is inaugurating.”²¹ In each of the beatitudes there is a reversal of what the outside might think is the way to receive blessing from God. The obvious example is the blessing pronounced on those who suffer for the sake of Jesus.

Suffering is not usually something people rejoice in, so to say, “the way to flourish as a human is to suffer for the sake of Jesus” would have surprised, even shocked the Jewish listener who would see suffering as a sign of judgment for sin. A later Greco-Roman reader would also consider this a strange saying since the pursuit of honor in the Roman world left little room for suffering on account of a crucified criminal!

Redefining Happiness

The form of a beatitude implies the one who does part one of the saying will be happy because part two of the saying will make them happy. But as Scot McKnight observes, these sayings are not descriptions of happiness in the modern sense of the word. Just Google “how to be happy” and find hundreds of pages offering advice like “fifteen ways to be happy”: smile, meditate, spend time outside (on the warm day) or with friends, practice gratitude, etc. Although these are all very good things to consider, but they are not at all what the eight beatitudes describe as happiness. Modern happiness is focused on personal happiness, feeling good about one’s self. The eight beatitudes are all other-focused. Being a peacemaker is not about your personal happiness but rather reconciling others. One cannot “show mercy” without acting on behalf of others.

²¹Pennington, *Sermon on the Mount*, 153.

In addition, these beatitudes redefine happiness as future oriented. Even if this exact moment seems oppressive and difficult, the person truly seeking the will of God always has confidence the struggle is worth it because God is working in history to re-establish his order on the chaos of creation. If we focus our happiness on ourselves and this particular moment, then we will not find biblical happiness.

CONCLUSION

By way of a conclusion, I want to return to the beginning of this talk, the true disciples of Jesus are salt and light in the world. Can salt actually lose its saltiness? There are various interpretations of this saying, but I want to focus our attention to the fact salt that no longer functions properly is thrown out. It is no longer good for anything and is therefore treated as garbage.

This metaphor implies the follower of Jesus can become less effective, so they become “worthless.” Looking ahead to the end of the Sermon, Jesus says many will come to him on the Day of Judgment expecting to enter into the Kingdom of God, claiming to have prophesied and cast out demons in his name, but he will say to them “I never knew you” (Matt 7:21-23). Not everyone who appears to be a follower of Christ is actually a follower, just as not everyone in a church today has a real relationship with Jesus.

This saying is spoken directly to Jesus’s followers, the ones who are sitting at his feet and listening to his teaching. They are the ones who are a preserving agent designed to keep their culture from decaying into foolishness. It is perhaps not insignificant the word Jesus uses is also used by Paul in Romans 1:22, those who claimed to be wise had become fools when they worshiped idols. The follower of Jesus potentially can decay from a wise person (with their house built on the rock) into the foolish person (with their house built on the sand), as Jesus will conclude the sermon in Matthew 7:24-26.

This is not particularly comforting. Jesus says it is possible for his followers to become “worthless” and no longer of any value. But I do not want this to be only a personal challenge because Jesus is directly speaking to the twelve disciples as a group. This threat is still appropriate for the western American church. If we are not the preserving agent in our culture, does the church risk being thrown out into the street like garbage?

THAT THEY MIGHT BE ONE: MANAGING CHRISTIAN UNITY IN JOHN 17

SCOTT SHAW, PHD, D.MIN.
Professor of Human Services
Grace Christian University
sshaw@gracechristian.edu

ABSTRACT

In an age when the American Evangelical church is struggling to maintain members and younger people are searching for relevant answers, Christians are frequently divided on such “hot button” topics as abortion, politics, race relations and immigration (among other important issues), which tends to influence followers of Christ away from the church (Kinnaman & Lyons, 2016). Jesus’ prayer in John 17 builds upon the Great Commission (Matt 22:36-40) and provides a context to guide Christians towards the practice of unity. Polarity Management theory (Johnson, 1996) provides a useful tool to helping Christians work toward greater unity as a biblical imperative and as a witness to a disbelieving world. Christ affirms that unity will serve as an example to unbelievers, just as Christ and the Father are one (John17:21).

Keywords: John 17, one, unity, polarity management

PRESENT CONTEXT ON THE AMERICAN CHURCH

Pastor and author, Dr. Tony Evans says, “We have a call to demonstrate to a watching world the difference Christ makes when we integrate the spiritual and the social—the Gospel (of Christ) and justice” to a hurting world (Strom, 2013, p. 10). At the Fall 2018 “GRTS Talking Points” conference, Cornerstone University President Joe Stowell called John 17, “Christ’s unanswered prayer,” that believers could become “one” and live as a unified church in a fractured and broken world. The message of sal-

vation to an unbelieving world will necessarily involve the visible lives of Christ's followers, who first live by example before having the rapport to credibly share the Gospel as new creations (2 Cor. 5:17).

Current trends suggest many within the church are leaving organized faith communities altogether. David Kinnaman (2016) noted many young people who have grown up in the church are leaving because it is perceived as irrelevant, judgmental, hypocritical and homophobic. Sociologists Packard and Hope (2015) interviewed over 100 former church attenders (i.e. "dones") to understand why people were leaving the church. Responses highlighted several themes, including "pastors behaving badly;" churches being "focused so much on buildings and infrastructure they neglected the outside world; unwanted and distracting political stances; perceived persecution over issues of gender and sexuality; hypocrisy; and many, many stories of judgment" (Packard & Hope, 2015, p. 9). The call for those in ministry to balance right doctrine and orthodoxy with love, justice and compassion cannot be overstated.

Truth (small "t" or subjective truth) is individually influenced by one's peer group and the cultural norms that define what one *should* believe that make up a society's norms and mores. For many new converts, church culture seems strange. Many who espouse biblical Truth (capital "T") hold to unchanging scriptural principles that stand throughout time and apart from changing cultural norms. Many younger people who grew up with different values and social norms, and those still outside the church, are left questioning if church culture is an adequate reflection of truth. Many approach biblical truth and the opinions of those in the church as negotiable, questioning one of the primary "solas" or fundamental pillars of the Reformation (i.e. Sola Scriptura, Scripture alone or Truth). Perceived barriers to integrating into a faith community include differences in socioeconomic status and poverty, race relations, immigration, politics and other polarizing topics. The unbelieving may become frustrated and unconvinced that Christ is the answer, or at least that the fractured, disconnected church can lead to the answer.

Those in ministry should seek *real solutions* to *real problems*, not because we are saved by works, but because we are saved and serve a risen Savior. We reflect God's justice by promoting justice for our neighbor. Philip Yancey (2002) reminds us in his book, *Church: Why Bother?*, how

the early Christian Church broke down barriers as the first institution to bring together Jews and Gentiles, men and women, slaves and free.

CULTURAL DISCONNECT AND TRENDS

A recent Pew Research Center Report (2018) polled a growing group in America: “religious nones.” This group described themselves as “nothing in particular” when asked if they identified with a specific religious group. The vast majority defined themselves as “religious dones,” or those who had previously been actively part of a faith community, but left. Most who identified as “ex-Christians,” were under the age of 35. Pew asked a representative sample of these “religious dones” why they now rejected religious affiliation. According to the Pew report, most “religious dones” left because they questioned much religious teaching or didn’t like the stances churches take on social and political issues. About one-third of the “religious nones” did not like religious organizations, leaders, or felt religion was irrelevant to them. Packard and Hope (2015) acknowledged people have always left the church (i.e. for college), except now many are no longer returning to church, including when young adults get married and have children of their own. Their 18-month study with a sample of over 100 in-depth interviews concluded “de-churched” or “nones” were growing, especially among middle-age adults (average age 40), females (56%), and those who are predominantly Caucasian (Packard & Hope, 2015, p. 16). There were no differences in the declining attendance between mainline (i.e. more liberal) and more Evangelical (i.e. conservative theologically) churches (Packard & Hope, 2015).

For the American church’s part, there has been a potential identity crisis resulting from public credibility gaps (i.e. clergy sexual abuse) and taking a stand on the wrong side of history (i.e. opposing racial justice, or silence on key human rights abuses). Today’s Evangelical church has often been perceived as misaligned with political positions or parties that many have difficulty reconciling with faith issues (i.e. political party affiliation, immigration). In a 2013 Gallup poll, clergy ratings of honesty and ethical standards fell below 50%, the first time since this has been tracked (Packard & Hope, 2015, p. 25). These numbers have continued to fall as pastors are perceived as less trustworthy and ethical than before. Christian leaders can no longer assume congregants and the general public respect their authori-

ty on doctrine, let alone stances on social issues as may have once been the case historically. There are multiple books (i.e. *unChristian* by Kinnaman & Lyons, *Why Nobody Wants to Go to Church Anymore* and *Why Nobody Wants to Be Around Christians Anymore* by Group Publishing, *Generation Ex-Christian* by Dyck, and 2012 Pew Report “Nones’ on the Rise”) that support these conclusions. These resources should serve as a wake-up call to Christian leaders who strive to fulfill the Great Commission and foster healthy faith communities.

Packard and Hope (2015) also found many of the “dones” were actually those who were previously very involved in their congregations; however, felt the institutions were “stifling people’s ability to engage with each other and their communities” (p. 12). When the once most engaged (i.e. time, leadership, finances) within a congregation leave the church, this creates a significant void. Most who left the church found alternate means for reaching their community and social engagement needs and the organizational structure of church increasingly frustrating and resistant to change. Many who leave report feeling “dissatisfied with the structure, social message, and politics of the institutional church, and they’ve decided they and their spiritual lives are better off lived outside of organized religion” (Packard & Hope, 2015, p. 20). Several respondents felt the local church culture had become toxic and focused primarily on its own survival (i.e. money for programs, staff) and resistant to healthy growth or community engagement (i.e. serving the poor), thereby growing increasingly insular and inward-focused.

According to Frank Turek of CrossExamined.org (2019), 70-75% of Christian youth leave the church after high school. Turek (2019) lays much of the responsibility on Bible-teaching, Evangelical churches themselves, citing churches often have “good programs and solid theology,” yet fail to engage critically at the worldview level that truly addresses culture and real-world problems people care about. Turek (2019) noted that anti-intellectual tendencies since the 1920s have created a false hierarchy between those in ministry vocations (i.e. Pastor, Missionary) and everyone else (i.e. most of society). Having professional theological or ministry training was enough to be an expert on most subjects, and congregants trusted the authority of those in professional ministry positions. This anti-intellectualism among Evangelical Christians facilitated the secularization of the

public sphere, as the ‘brightest and best’ moved out of secular careers and built ministries around and for other Christians. Turek (2019) suggests the Evangelical church increasingly moved away from public discourse and grew increasingly insular, increasing the divide between *us* and *them*, or the side of righteousness and truth versus the misguided ungodly world. When this backdrop is contrasted with churches aligning with unpopular political positions and the perception of being increasingly ‘judgmental’ to the outside world, a ministry’s reputation is further tarnished when churches split, or clergy sexual abuse allegations are reported and highlighted in the local news.

Barna Research cites similar perceptions and changes across all generational cohorts, but the exodus is felt more acutely among young adults, who make up the next generation of leaders (Kinnaman, 2011). Christians must be willing to address real-world problems with the light of the Gospel in a way that can be received by a weary world that has lost trust (at least to some degree) in those who represent the faith. We need to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22). Faith requires transparent leadership and trust-building action like never before if churches are to fulfill the Great Commission and be above reproach.

MISSION AND PURPOSE FOR BELIEVERS

Matthew 22:36-40 (ESV) “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”³⁷ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.³⁸ This is the great and first commandment.³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Throughout history, God’s church has been the foundation of society, and provided leadership in education (i.e. forming universities and schools that were ministry-training schools) and in providing health-care (i.e. major health care systems in most cities have a theological or denominational affiliation). Loving “the other” is not always easy, yet it is necessary if we are to reflect the diversity and mission Christ has called us to. It is not always comfortable, but it is rewarding. Serving others is an essential behavior to being in Christ as a fellowship of believers.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “We are not simply to bandage the wounds

of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself” (Strom, 2018, p. 143). The Great Command calls us to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength (Mt. 22:37). The Great Commission compels us to “go and do likewise” as we lead and make disciples through love, mercy, compassion, and justice as we share the hope of the Gospel (Mt. 22:39). Our local communities should know Christians and local churches as those who reflect love, mercy, compassion and justice.

JOHN 17: CHRIST’S PRAYER

Jesus’ prayer to God the Father in John 17 has been called, “the greatest prayer ever prayed on earth and the greatest prayer recorded anywhere in Scripture” (Wiersbe, 1989, p. 367). Carson (1991) has called this prayer a ‘summary of the entire fourth Gospel,’ as both synopsis and theological reinforcement of personal intimacy within the triune Godhead (p. 551). The prayer also gives readers a window into which the Father’s will can be directly observed through Christ’s prayer.

Glory to the Father (v. 1)

Jesus lifted his head to heaven as was a typical Jewish posture of prayer (i.e. “Shema” or hear) and addressed his father as a child to a parent, demonstrating close familiarity between Christ and God the Father, affirming their unique relationship with one another (Tenney, 1981, p. 161). Jesus’ use of “Father” here reveals the heart of his relationship that is unique to him as Christ (Morris, 1995, p. 635). It was not simply the Son who knew the Father and revealed his will, but revealed the Father’s character himself, and Christ through this revelation as deity himself, uniquely qualified to make the Father’s will understood (Harris, 1992).

It is significant that with the crucifixion quickly approaching, Christ prays that God will glorify him (Morris, 1995, p. 635). From a human point of view the cross was a disgraceful way to die, but from Christ’s perspective it was his own glorification and immanent return to the Father. To glorify the Son is to glorify the Father. While the incarnation of Christ was a work unique to the Son, the will of the Father was made known by the Son’s obedience. The crucifixion of Jesus is a “cosmic turning point,” (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15), which highlights the relationship between Father

and Son as perfectly dynamic (Hoch, 1996).

The Father sent the Son who thereby revealed the Father in obedience and glorified the Father's name simultaneously with his own at the cross (John 12:28). The two are essentially and dynamically one in purpose and intent (John 10:10; 14:10). This has relevance as we consider the obedience in unity requested of believers as the prayer progresses. As the Father is glorified before His own creation, so faith in the Son is brought into the light, and also faith in the One who has sent the Son. It is faith in the Son who gives eternal life, which is the purpose of this giving of divine authority to the Son (Carson, 1991, p. 555). Carson (1991) notes, "this grant of universal authority to the Son is nothing less than the universal sovereignty of God, the universal kingdom of God, which is mediated exclusively through Christ once the cross, the resurrection and the exaltation have occurred" (p. 555).

That They May Know You (v. 3)

To know God is more than simply knowing *about* God. God made man in his image (Imago Dei) for fellowship and communion with himself, not that God needed man or lacked anything, but chose to make man for his own enjoyment and divine purposes (Webber, 1990, p. 10). Humanity must necessarily know the God of creation through Christ for the complete fulfillment of our being. God has revealed himself in Scripture, giving insight into his personality and nature, not exhaustively but truly. Here, Jesus affirms the singular nature of God as the only way to salvation through himself.

The Father revealed himself, through the Son to be the source, stay, and end of all creation, "Of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things" (Rom. 11:36). God also sustains us for his own purposes as he "gives life and breath and all things" (Acts 17:25) and remain dependent upon him through the constant exercise of his power (Heb. 1:3). Mankind exists solely by and for God, and godlessness is a denial of man's own very nature. One can only understand God through Christ and have an accurate perspective on sin and grace. As the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (Answer One) states, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever."

Jesus completed the work God the Father had given him (v. 4). In pur-

pose and intent, the work has already been completed and is finalized at the cross. Jesus continued to pray the glory known before his incarnation (v. 5) would be restored as before creation itself. Paul states in Romans 6:4 Christ was “raised from the dead through the glory of the Father.” This is a restoration of what was already before Christ’s early ministry, as he had prior and understood that his glorification would be accomplished at the cross. Jesus possessed full deity and was qualified to make the Father known to all humanity (Harris, 1992, p. 82).

The Disciples (v. 6)

Jesus spends a significant portion of his prayer for his disciples who learned from him and journeyed alongside his early ministry. They were now preparing to press on ahead without Christ’s physical presence after the crucifixion. Despite the indwelling Holy Spirit to come, the loss of his physical presence was a shock and traumatic life-changing event they would never forget. Jesus affirmed his grounds for praying on their behalf, “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word” (v. 6). They were chosen and belonged to God.

Jesus prayed that the Father would watch over them and protect them in the days ahead. Christ would no longer be physically present to guide them (Jn. 6:32, 10:29, 14:21, 15:1, 16:27, 1 Jn. 3:1). They would have the Holy Spirit as their counselor and encourager (Jn. 14:16, 26, 15:26, Acts 1:4, 2:33). It is here Christ commits them over to the care of the Father, yet had no doubts as to their final outcome. Christ acknowledged the Father would protect and watch over his disciples in perfect accord to accomplish his will.

The disciples keeping the Father’s word was equated to doing what is right (i.e. orthodoxy, praxis) and reflects the character of God. The disciples were first chosen by God, then entrusted to Christ, and now entrusted back to the Father to accomplish his will as Christ returned to the Father. This is stunning when one considers the humanity and immaturity of the disciples, evidenced throughout Christ’s early ministry. The disciples were in constant need of Christ’s redemptive work and ongoing discipleship. It is difficult to compare the perfect word of the Father with the sinful and selfish behaviors of the disciples throughout Jesus’ ministry. The answer in

part seems to lie in the disciples ‘not yet’ conforming wholly to the Word given by Jesus, as he was continuing to reveal the Father (albeit thus far incompletely). It was on their faith alone (and not their actions) they were set apart and justified in Christ. The disciples were slow to learn, but it seems “now” (v. 7) they were learning and internalizing what Christ was revealing to them (Morris, 1995). Christ specifically prays for his disciples as set apart from others in the world. They were still under his care, yet Christ was submitting them back to the Father to fulfill his will. This portion of Jesus’ prayer demonstrates God’s love for his disciples, and trust that they would reflect his will and character in the world (Morris, 1995). There seems to be a special relationship of love, faith, joy and peace between the disciples and the Triune God with the purpose of evangelizing the world and fulfilling the great commission (Mt. 22:39). The disciples were key agents in fulfilling the mission.

Jesus expands this thought and states He has been glorified *through* the disciples whom the Father had given him. While the disciples were lacking from a worldly standpoint, Christ was glorified by their faith in him. Now the Son was returning to the Father, and the disciples were a key part of the mission. Christ prayed to protect the disciples because they would remain in the world and be exposed to new dangers (17:14-15) following his crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection. The mission would continue and expand because of the cross and not be hampered or lessened during the disciples initial shock. They would proceed as “one” in unity, “that they may be one as we are one.” The plan was for their work to proceed in unity to demonstrate God’s plan to the world.

Jesus cites his protection of the disciples as a trust from the Father, and in providing for their safety according to God’s plan (v. 12). Only Judas was “doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled” (v. 12). God is at work in all things as he alone sustains, rules and achieves his own purposes. Attention seems to be drawn here also to Judas because the Father’s will was fulfilled through *all the disciples*, including Judas, so that Scripture could be fulfilled. John Calvin (Translated 1982) in *Treatises Against The Anabaptists and Against the Libertines* highlights the out-working of the Father’s perfect will with Judas’ own free-will and desire to bring about his own selfish purposes (Calvin, 1982, pp. 242-249). Even in tragedy, God’s will is fulfilled.

In John 17:13, Jesus prays for the encouragement of his disciples as he prepared for his own death and resurrection. The disciples' awareness that the Father had sent them, and approved of their work, and the promise of their witnessing the future glory was to bring them joy (Tenney, 1981, p. 164). The context in which this joy would be made manifest would grow continually challenging. The disciples would enter a world that hated them because of their affiliation with Christ (v. 14). Jesus stressed the giving of the Father's word, which the world had hated him for, and would do likewise with the disciples who followed Christ's example. The Word was God himself, and in direct opposition with the world that was preparing to kill the Messiah on a cross. Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, the disciples were slowly learning the things of God and witnessing greater opposition from the world. As they remained consistent with the message of Christ, the world would continue to hate them and provide increased opposition. It was only now they would be mature enough to be called "not of the world," set apart to do good works, and able to press forward without Christ physically present. It was in this context the disciples were to spread out and preach the Gospel as a unified band of Christ followers.

Jesus prayed the Father would protect them from the evil one (v. 15). Since the disciples were *not of the world* (v. 14), removing them *from the world* would seem logical; however, Christ prayed the opposite. Their place was specifically in the world, where they would be hated and still continue to do the work he had called them to accomplish. It would have been disastrous for the world had they been taken from it, especially for later believers and the coming church. Their coming ministry in the world was vital to spreading the message of Christ. Rather, Jesus prayed they would be protected from the evil one, making a direct reference to Satan (12:31, 14:30, 16:11; 1 John 2:13-14, 3:12, 5:18), while ministering in the public sphere. Jesus affirmed the power of Satan as the "prince of this world" (12:31) and prayed his disciples would be kept from him. They were to be *in Christ* (16:33; 1 Jn. 5:20) and engaged in culture, while spiritually *out of the world*, which was synonymous with the devil and his ways.

The disciples were to be holy and set apart, as Christ was holy and set apart from the world. Sanctification was to be in the truth, and they were to act accordingly (3:21). This truth would be affirmed and acted upon in

unity as being set apart in Christ to do the Father's work. The Father's protection gave the disciples perseverance to carry on the work of ministry ahead, and it was grace that enabled them to persevere in remaining spiritually set apart from the ways of the world (Oden, 1993, p. 123).

Jesus, in acknowledging the Father as sending him, prepared to sanctify himself so they may also be sanctified (vv. 18-19). Jesus set himself apart for the completion of the Father's will as he referenced his crucifixion. Christ's full dedication to the Father's will would be the standard for their sanctification through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. His death did for them what they could not do for themselves (John 3:16).

Those Who Will Believe, That They Might Be One (vv. 20-26)

Jesus' prayer transitioned from himself and his disciples to those who will benefit from the disciples' original witness and ministry to come (Morris, 1995). The future believers who would follow were to be active participants in the new faith community, which God had allowed them to partake intimately in. The believers were also to be set apart from the influence of Satan, as was the case with his disciples earlier. To be "in Christ" was to be in the will of the Father.

What Jesus prayed for these future believers was "that all of them may be one" (v. 21). He saw "those who will believe in me through their message," were the direct result of the disciples' ministry, and were intimately connected with Christ himself, just as the disciples who had been physically with him (Morris, 1995). Believers today who are in Christ have true unity with God the Father through the Holy Spirit and have a shared unity with believers who have come before.

The unity mentioned was not only a unity of love. This unity was grounded in adherence to the specific revelation of the Father mediated to the first disciples through the Son, the revelation they then passed on to others (v. 20). This oneness is unity of purpose shared between the Father and Son. The Son is in the Father, not only in dependence upon and obedience to him, but as present at creation (John 1:2-3) and in providing redemption and preservation of those the Father has given him (6:37-40; 17:6, v. 19). The Father and Son share perfect unity of purpose and intent, though have distinction in personality and work. The Word is 'with' God (John 1:1), the Son prays to his Father, the Father commissions and sends

while the Son obeys and carries out the work of the Father perfectly (Carson, 1991, p. 568). Believers were likewise individuals with unique personalities and gifts, yet were to remain one in purpose, love, action, and joint submission to the revelation received by the Father through Christ. In Christ, all things are possible (Matt. 19:26).

Summary and Theological Significance

At the beginning of the prayer, Christ prayed about his own glorification (vv. 1-5), proceeded to pray for his disciples (vv. 6-19), then the rest of the believers who would believe in Him (vv. 20-26) because of the testimony of the faithful (Morris, 1995, p. 634). Carson (1991, p. 551) notes a central highlight of this prayer being the anticipation of Christ being “lifted up” as the will of the Father, who was preparing to go back to the Father and share in the glory known before the incarnation.

Followers in Christ would share in the inheritance as referenced in John 17:20-23. The purpose of the believers’ unity in Christ leads the disbelieving world to understanding Christ has truly sent them and is doing a good work in their midst. As genuine love for one another is shared among Jesus’ disciples (13:34-35), this display of unity is so compelling their witness as to who Jesus is becomes explainable as the revealer whom the Father has sent (Carson, 1991, p. 568). The unity of believers is to be observable and is “the maintenance of a convincing testimony before the world” as reflecting the unity of the Trinity (Tenney, 1981, p. 167). As sovereign ruler of all he has created, the Father administers his plans by sending the Son and the Spirit to do the work set out in perfect unity of purpose and will. Believers join in Christ as they “take up their cross” (Luke 9:23) in following through obedience in faith. Then the world will know the Father has sent the Son and believers are joined with them in unity (John 17:23). Building unity takes work, yet is essential to the Gospel message.

MANAGING UNSOLVABLE PROBLEMS TOWARDS BUILDING UNITY

Jesus wishes for his believers to be unified in faith (v. 20). The Word (John 1:1) that would unite the disciples and apostles was contained in the Gospels and Epistles, and through belief, we all share in this Good News. The world will be drawn to belief that Jesus is the Christ when the church teaches the Gospel and lives in unity (v. 21). Jesus prayer “implicitly recognizes the disunity of human hearts” in our willingness to trust God as the ones who carry his message to a disbelieving world (ESV Systematic Study Bible, John 17:17-23). Demonstrating unity takes

work, and conflict often comes from several sources, not the least of which is the sinful human heart and the incomplete knowledge people bring into any conflict. This challenge will not be fully resolved in this lifetime; however, acknowledging conflict is both inevitable and unavoidable can help the church develop strategies for positively coping with conflict and growing through the process. Having strategies to build peace and consensus before conflict becomes unhealthy can make the difference in living out the unity of fellowship Christ calls his followers to.

BUT WHAT IF THERE IS NO SINGLE SOLUTION?

God's love is to be demonstrated within the community of believers (John 17), yet the modern church often falls short when debilitating conflict is not managed well (Wise, 1994). Sin can be a cause for disunity and is more easily identified and appropriately addressed in the church (i.e. stop engaging in sinful behavior). Some conflicts have no immediately identifiable cause and require greater effort to create growth and development. There are specific admonitions providing context to believers who might be experiencing interpersonal conflict (Matt. 18:15-20) and forgiveness is always appropriate in our dealings with one another (Matt. 18:21-35). Though often painful, working through conflicts that are a result of sinfulness are far simpler than those that do not have an immediate cause. Not all conflicts have a simple "solution," and while the outcomes (i.e. anger, resentment) can be sinful, many conflicts are not based on sinful behaviors or desires, but rather a confluence of well-meaning believers on different sides of an issue or cause. Experiencing conflict itself is not sinful or unhealthy, but the series of reactions in response to interpersonal conflict can have the potential to become sinful if the conflict cycle is handled in the spirit of discord or proud intent (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

Polarity management theory (Johnson, 1996) provides strategies for working through unsolvable problems or "polarities" that can inform and guide believers to more effectively live out the unity Christ asks of his followers (John 17:17-23). The polarity management framework asserts some paradoxical and ongoing problems do not respond well to linear problem-solving methods to managing conflict (i.e. win-lose). This approach invites participants of conflict to explore the range of strengths and weaknesses between various positions in a conflict, and examine the inter-relationship between the inherent dilemma of the system, seeking reconciliation and unity. Polarity management is also not simply compromising to come to a common solution, as this has the potential to minimize the strengths of either (or both) position, instead of celebrating the benefits of each position.

Polarity management has been described as one of the most useful models to

both understand and manage unsolvable and ongoing problems in church conflict (Phelps, 1999; Wise, 1994). Polarity management has been used successfully among church conflict consultants for over almost 30 years, and much has been written from the Alban Institute (absorbed into Duke Divinity School in 2014) publications, an organization dedicated to helping churches manage change, innovate, and resolve conflicts. Johnson (1996) calls “polarities” paradoxical conflicts linear problem-solving models often make worse, and subsequently perpetuate a greater, ongoing systemic problem.

A primary metaphor used to consider polarities is breathing, which includes both inhaling and exhaling to support health. If the *solution* to the problem of lack of oxygen is inhalation, then this solution will be short-lived. The inverse is also true. Inhalation and exhalation are both required to sustain life. Each previously tried ‘solution’ brings other significant problems that need correction (again) in the future. The negative shift from polarity to polarity provides a more dynamic and flexible conflict management model for dealing with systemic conflict and supporting Christian unity. Johnson (1996) has developed a polarity map (see below) that can be a useful visual aid to consider this dynamic in managing polarities. One polarity is managing the emotions of hope and fear. Each perspective hopes for the positive results of their own perspective and fears the results of the opposing view.

The stakes to managing conflict are high, as the unbelieving world is often turned away from the church and Christ’s saving grace when poorly managed conflict is observed. Church splits and pastoral staff shakeups cause congregations and the communities they serve to question the wisdom and leadership in a congregation. The ability to manage effectively interpersonal conflict will necessarily have a direct impact upon the church’s growth and spiritual health. Healthy families are at the core of healthy churches, and church conflict create distressing effects on all involved during prolonged, unresolved conflict.

A frequent church conflict concerns tradition bearing (one polarity) and the need to innovate to remain culturally sensitive (one polarity). History and tradition are important distinctives to many local churches, who have built a history and ‘done life’ together, often for generations of church life. There are many polarities that a critical reader could discern that involve many types of conflicts that often repeat in faith communities. Catechism and the teaching of Bible history emphasize proper doctrine as evidence of a healthy emphasis on a church’s uniqueness. However, if overemphasized to the exclusion of adaptation, the church can appear stifling and create a hindrance to attracting new members. Innovation is also essential

if the church is to monitor and understand current trends and culture and seek to maintain cultural intelligence and relevance in a rapidly-changing society. Seeker services are a direct response to this need for innovation in some churches, as a method to reach those who would not normally attend a typical Sunday morning service. An exclusive focus upon the present without affirming the traditions that have supported the church up to this point will leave many feeling that their purpose and common heritage have been minimized or unappreciated. Both tradition and innovation are important, and over-focusing on one pole at the expense of the other will create tension and hardships as people disengage and feel that something has been lost at the expense of the opposing pole. An example of a polarity map might allow participants to visualize what they hope to gain from their own position, while affirming the strengths of the opposing perspective. Acknowledging the risks or fears that come from moving too quickly to the other side without adequate attention to both polarities is important to ensure that the strengths of both perspectives are honored, as well as having an opportunity to see the limitation in over-focus on either pole (Johnson, 1996).

During conflict, participants can often lose objectivity and seek to promote their ‘solution’ to the perceived ‘problem’ at the expense of failing to see that overemphasis on either pole can lead to unintended consequences. This creates a temporary solution at best, and a pyrrhic victory at worst, as both sides of the conflict feel disenchanting, frustrated and angry that others are working against them. Once objectivity is lessened and negative emotions are heightened, the risk of sinful behaviors increases (i.e. pride, resentment). Unhealthy systems unfortunately get the worst of both poles as those attached to history see innovation as a threat and become more entrenched in their cause. There is also the temptation to view one’s perspective as the truth (capital “T”), with Christ on their side. The innovators also see the emphasis on history and the past as a threat to present effectiveness and future ministry, and can hold on to their position even stronger as the truth (also Capital “T”) in working even harder to promote their cause. This becomes a lose-lose proposition that can quickly lead to hurt feelings, church splits, and some leaving in discouragement to find a more appropriate congregation that closer aligns with their perspective. This is clearly not what was envisioned for working through relationships and being a visible representation of a unified Godhead, sharing the Good News to a fallen broken world. The following Polarity map illustrates both/and thinking around tradition and innovation in a more expanded format, using the Polarity Management process.

CONCLUSION

Healthy systems acknowledge that history and tradition is no more the ‘solution’ than innovation. Both are essential to healthy congregational life and living in unity. Healthy congregations will emphasize right doctrine, orthodoxy and biblical teaching, while also giving appropriate credit to those who have come before. Healthy congregations will also affirm the need to innovate and re-create themselves as a body of believers who are always evolving and growing as new members are integrated to the ministry. Healthy churches also celebrate the unique giftings of their members and seek to affirm their history and tradition while finding creative ways to engage and serve the local community. Healthy churches affirm the need to support healthy families and individuals who make up their congregations, and develop the spiritual, emotional, and even relationship skills of those within their ranks. Having understanding and affirming the importance of Jesus’ last prayer (John 17) and his praying “that they may be one” (v. 11) is an important reminder in how believers should approach one another when facing interpersonal conflict.

Healthy congregations can absorb respectful differences of opinion and diversity. In an era where politics and faith have been aligned with a certain faith perspective and become polarizing, the ability to engage Scripture deeply and create safe dialog is essential. In the public sphere, there are rarely instances where there is only one biblical perspective. Engaging critical thinking and discussion can lead to relationship-building and clarification on scriptural principles and ethical decision-making.

Packard and Hope (2015) suggested four themes that arose from their research on those who had left the church, giving insight to leaders who seek to live out the unity prayed for in John 17. First, they suggest that leaders invite participation (with limits) among congregants. For the body to be healthy and fully functional, everyone needs to be involved and have shared ownership (1 Cor. 12:12-27). There are obvious limits that healthy churches must enforce (i.e. background check youth workers); however, churches can do more to engage their people in meaningful activities that are rewarding (Packard & Hope, 2015). Second, churches must work to undermine bureaucracy and place timelines on some positions and committees. Term limits lessen pressure when committees do not go well, and also when they do and expectations to continue indefinitely lead to ineffectiveness or burnout over time. Rotating key positions can be a way

to build competence and skills in people who had not previously had such a role or position. “Bureaucracy leads to unhealthy concentrations of power” (p. 169). The third recommendation encourages “staff time and resources to knowing and supporting people rather than creating and maintaining programs” (p. 169). Healthy congregations must foster working relationships that are built on trust and celebrating people’s gifts. Creating programs can lead to an unhealthy “service-provider mentality” that is designed *for* congregants instead of *with* congregants. Many churches have programs that are underutilized and under populated despite good intentions. Many of the “dones” who left the church reported feeling not that churches asked too much of them, but that their gifts and abilities were underutilized. This should serve as a wake-up call to leaders who seek to engage their members, and not be afraid to ask more of congregants in applying their gifts at a more significant level. Churches do not need more programs, but rather engaged believers who are passionately participating in activities that support the mission of Christ. Fourth, churches should be deliberate about focusing outward in impacting their local communities (p. 169). Too often, congregants (especially the “done’s”) are those who recognize the need, yet believe the church is not doing enough to make a positive difference. Missions and outreach can also feel like something that is done *for* the community served instead of *with* the community. This reflects the polarity of attending to both internal structures, yet also being able to focus outward to engage deeply the community in a meaningful way. Engaging local communities and building meaningful relationships with those outside the church allows congregants to shape and also be shaped by the local community.

When believers approach conflict in a healthy manner and work towards greater unity, the “nones,” “dones” and others who question the trustworthiness and ethics of ministers and those in ministry will begin to reverse as a reflection of the God we serve. The church is the institution that will remain over time until Christ returns (Matt. 16:18-26); therefore, the risk of the church ‘dying’ in this present age is impossible. The greater risk seems that the church becomes increasingly perceived as irrelevant to the issues of today, and as more Christians leave to seek meaningful uses for their gifts and talents outside the church. The church has never been more relevant to the issues of today (and tomorrow).

Christians have all the reason to strive for healthy conflict management strategies and effectively strive to live in unity as one body of believers. Oneness in love remains a challenge for many congregations who unfortunately lack the ability to speak powerfully to an unbelieving world (Lucado, 1996). As Jesus prayed that believers would be one (John 17:20), he prayed specifically for his followers

to demonstrate love and unity as those set apart by his name, so that the world would believe and be saved. Jesus prayed that future believers would also submit themselves in humility to the mission of saving the lost, a task that is increasingly challenging amidst Christian disunity. Christ did not pray for their success, safety, or even their happiness. Jesus prayed for their unity – that they would truly live in love with one another as unified body of faithful believers.

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THE SERMON AS THE TOOL FOR CHANGED BEHAVIOR IN THE PULPIT MINISTRY OF JONATHAN EDWARDS

MARK J. CONGROVE

Pastor, Bethel Baptist Church

Adjunct Faculty Cornerstone University and

Grace Christian University

mcongrove@me.com

Abstract: On any given Sunday, pastors from all across the country will step into their pulpits to declare biblical truth. Under the guidance of Scripture, they will preach a gospel message, proclaim the doctrines of the faith, and give their congregations several points of application. To preach The Word is to declare the whole counsel of the texts of Scripture boldly and passionately. But no amount of emotional appeal, playing only upon the affections while leaving the will and behavior unaffected, can substitute for the work of the spiritual exercises (practice) inherent in the means of grace that God has in mind for the sanctification of the believer.

This essay seeks to address the role the sermon played as a tool for sanctification, specifically, its use by one of the most influential and prolific pastor-theologians of the colonial period. Jonathan Edwards came of age in the Puritan era, possessed a naturally keen intellect, blossomed under the tutelage of his father and later the fledgling Yale College, and eventually assumed the pastorate of possibly the foremost church in New England. Having adopted a rigid series of Spiritual disciplines from his youth, he later embedded them as opportunities for intentional practice into much of his sermonic material. Disciplines such as meditation, prayer, contemplation, self-examination had from his teenage days become the standard by which he measured his own spiritual health and it is evident that many of these “exercises” made their way into sermonic material that spanned a pastoral ministry of thirty-five years.

The essay will offer a brief history of the sermon template that Edwards inherited and later modified; the details that accompanied Edwards’ interest in the

Spiritual exercises; an examination of his use of extensive application sections and finally an evaluation of two sermons preached by Edwards over the course of his ministry.

In every age since man's fall from innocence, pastors, patriarchs, and priests have labored to help their constituency grapple with the challenges of daily living and the responsibilities associated with an intimate relationship with God. As Israel took shape, those entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining that relationship sought to instill the truth of God in their families and nation, and provided opportunities for practice which would keep God in his rightful place. And so, as the faithful scribe preached, the people responded with self-examination and contrition; as the prophets fasted and prayed, God blessed many of them with wisdom and insight. By the time Jesus came, the sermon had become the primary tool for the conveying the truth about God, his requirements for fellowship, and the blessings associated with following him. In Jesus the world heard the gospel of Good news and disciples were called to a yoke of intimate fellowship and spiritual maturation. The gospel was proclaimed, Jesus was crucified, the resurrection opened the grave, and "not many days" thereafter the Church was born.

With the church now established, its constituency needed training and truth. Therefore the sermon became the primary tool for conveying the gospel and bringing into the Kingdom a bounty of new followers. For followers who needed equipping, the gospel represented their marching orders, the Scriptures became their playbook, and the exercise outlined in the Epistles became the practice the church needed for the building of its spiritual and moral fiber.

This essay seeks to address the role the sermon played as a tool for sanctification; specifically, its use by pastor and theologian, Jonathan Edwards to promote the spiritual exercises (disciplines) he had come to incorporate into his own life. Disciplines such as meditation, prayer, contemplation, and self-examination had from his teenage days become the standard by which Edwards measured his spiritual health and it is evident that many of these "exercises" made their way into sermon material which spanned a ministry of thirty-five years. This essay will examine the sermon structure Edwards inherited and eventually modified; the details associated with that structure which accommodated Edwards' interest in the spiritual exercises; the use of extensive supplication sections; and finally a paragraph by paragraph examination of two sermons preached by Edwards over the course of his ministry.

In the seventeenth century, Puritan ministers who were charged with leading and training their congregations embraced the sermon as the normal means

for communicating the best fruits of their thought. Wilson Kinnach argues “the sermon in Edwards’ day was the height of its formal development and combined intellectual substance, artistic form, and popular currency in a distinctive amalgam rarely equaled by a single literary form in the subsequent history of American literature.”¹ The minister, as the master of the sermon, commanded the voice of authority that ruled over the Connecticut Valley before and during much of Edwards’ ministerial career. As such, he recognized Christianity’s need for teachers of men and women and furthermore, men called by God and sent by Christ to become the authority of God in their church’s lives. There was a certain aristocracy to the calling; the man who was born undistinguished become the vicar who is distinguished in his holy calling, and by virtue of this, worthy to be held in high esteem. By the time Edwards entered the ministry he had no doubt encountered one or more of the standard preaching primers of his day: *The Arte of Propheying*, by William Perkins, William Chappell’s *The Preacher*, Richard Bernard’s *The Faithful Shepherd*, or John Wilkins’ *Ecclesiastes*.² With this knowledge in hand and the mentoring of two prominent heroes in his world firmly embedded in his mind,³ Edwards entered the pulpit prepared to offer a needed gospel to the lost, and in like manner the necessary practice of holiness to his flock. Edwards saw his ministry as transformational—that of a chosen servant called by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit to rule over his people. He noted in the *Miscellanies* that the minister “is invested with a capacity and right to instruct, lead and judge his people; he has no pretension to civil authority, but in the all-important moral and spiritual realms he is, of all human beings, supremely authoritative.⁴ Furthermore, a minister is to teach people what to do, how to live, how to think, and how to exercise his life toward godliness. Edwards wrote:

Without doubt, ministers are to teach men what Christ would have them do, and to teach them who doth these things, and who doth them not, that is, who

¹Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: Volume 10, Sermons and Discourses 1720-1723* (W. Kinnach, ed.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 3.

²John Wilkins, *Ecclesiastes: Or a Discourse Concerning the Gift of Preaching, as it falls under the Rules of Art, The Sixth Impression, Corrected and Enlarged* (London, S.A. Gellibrand, 1675). Wilkins produced a visual representation of the three primary heads of “A Sermon: The Explication, the Confirmation, and the Application.”

³Edwards was widely influenced by his father Timothy Edwards, an effective preacher in his own right, and his maternal grandfather, the renowned Solomon Stoddard, who had commanded the authority of his congregation for years. Both men left their mark on the young Edwards. This was then enhanced by the writings of John Wilkins.

⁴Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Volume 13: The Miscellanies a-500*, (Thomas Schafer, ed.; (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 188.

are Christians and who are not, and the people are to hear them as much as this as in other things; and that so far forth as the people are obliged to hear what I teach them, so great is my pastoral, or ministerial or teaching power.⁵

Within this role as a congregation's local under-shepherd, Edwards sees his role as leader and teacher; one who is tasked with telling the congregation what they must do. It is not hard to imagine the authority to instruct and dictate behavior would by necessity come to include detailed points of application in both his lectures and sermons. And in fact, this was the case, both with specific groups within the church, such as youth, and with the congregation at large. The minister was to become both heat and light to his congregation. Edwards went on to say about a minister, "his heart must burn with the love of Christ, and fervent desires of the advancement of the kingdom and glory, that his instruction be clear and plain, accommodated to the capacity of his hearers, and teaching to convey light to their understanding.⁶ To be clear then, his instructions must be successfully born out in practice, and practice that is consistent and intentionally driven toward the glory of God.

In a sermon preached on the occasion of the ordination of Robert Abercromie in 1744, Edwards argued a minister so identified as a burning light that he must execute his work in a true spirit of piety and zealously. He continued by saying:

For he is a burning light; which implies that his spiritual heat and holy ardor is not for himself only, but is communicative and for the benefit of others... His fervent zeal, which has its foundations and spring in that holy and powerful flame of love to God and man, that is in his heart, appears in the fervency of his prayers to God, for his people; and in his earnestness, and power with which he preaches the word of God, declares to sinners their misery, and warns them to fly from the wrath to come, and reproveth and testifies against all ungodliness; and unfeigned earnestness and compassion, with which he invites the weary and heavy laden to their Savior; and the fervent love with which he counsels and comforts the saints: and the holy zeal, courage, and steadfastness, with which he maintains the exercise of discipline in the house of God.⁷

In Edwards's mind the minister must be willing and able to teach; the shining light exercises by the habit of teaching good doctrine and the application of that doctrine. Of interest to anyone in the ministerial profession is the definition of success as it pertains to the role he describes by the terms heat and light. Edwards suggests "this will be the way to promote true Christianity amongst his people, and

⁵Ibid, 222.

⁶Jonathan Edwards, "Sermon on John 5:35," *WJEO* 25 no.754 (1744) accessed April 23, 2017, www.edwards.yale.edu.

⁷Ibid.

to make them both wise and good, and cause religion to flourish among them in the purity and beauty of it.⁸ Edwards directed wise counsel to his young protégé by suggesting his success would be in proportion to his being conversant in the Scriptures, specifically his interest in seeking after the spiritual knowledge of Christ. Furthermore, by walking closely with God and spending the appropriate time in prayer, he would most successfully perform his duties. Reflecting on Edwards' ministry, Kimmach argues the ideal preacher is a "figure of commanding intellectual rigor and overwhelming rhetorical power; he strikes a blow for religion simultaneously in the heads and hearts of his auditors, though with an emphasis on the heart."⁹ According to Edwards, "he is both able to set forth the greatness of the future misery of the ungodly; insisting on not only the outward, but on the inward and spiritual duties of religion; being much in declaring the great provocation and danger of spiritual pride, and a self-righteous disposition; yet much insisting on the necessity and importance of inherent holiness, and the practice of piety..."¹⁰

It is therefore the sermon itself which becomes the vehicle for Edwards to address the challenges of life and death, godliness and temptation, all through the medium of the Scriptures. And all finding their solution in some capacity through the practice of exercises which Edwards has embedded into the text of the manuscript.

By the seventeenth century the Puritan sermon had evolved into a three-part structured format, consisting of the Explication, Confirmation, and Application; or what Edwards would later identify more loosely as the Text, Doctrine, and Application. A century before, John Wilkins had developed the tri-part outline and added an intricate series of sub-headings for each part, ultimately deriving both doctrinal and practical applications for the maximum impact of the sermon.¹¹ Additionally, with regard to the application, the doctrinal and practical categories were further divided by their use in reproof, exhortation, or as self-examination in the life of the listener. Edwards in time would relax the more formal structure of his early days, sometimes by abandoning the manuscript in favor of extemporaneous exhortation and counsel. Sometimes as a result of the new demands placed upon him in assuming the Northampton pulpit he added mnemonic cues to provide great ease in achieving eye contact with his audience. Specifically in Stockbridge, where his constituency lacked theological or academic background, he rendered

⁸Ibid.

⁹Jonathan Edwards, *Sermons and Discourses*, 27.

¹⁰Jonathan Edwards, "Sermon on John 5:35."

¹¹John Wilkins, *Ecclesiastes*, 6.

sermons that were little more than bare outlines of his subject. So, for example, a sermon drawn from 1 Corinthians 2:14 entitled “A Spiritual Understanding of Divine Things Denied to the Unregenerate” was delivered between 1723 and 1729 reflects the formal structure consistent with Edwards’ early work. Edwards first presents an introduction of the text and the matter at hand:

There is scarcely any similitude is made use of more frequently or is more insisted upon in the Scripture to set forth truth, religion, and the gospel by, than light. Thus God is compared to the luminary, for it is said he “is light, and in him is no darkness at all” [1 John1:5]...The Spiritual wisdom is the subject of this chapter, wherein the Apostle is declaring to us how far it excels the wisdom of this world, and it as it were disdains all those little superficial ornaments and trivial decorations with which the wise men of this world were wont to set off their wisdom... But the wisdom of God needs not be dressed up in such gay clothing. Such ornaments are vastly too mean for divine truth, which is most amiable in her own native beauty and genuine simplicity, and is as beautiful in a poor man or a babe, as in a prince, and as powerful in Paul’s weakness and fear and much trembling, as it would be in all the wisdom of the philosophers and eloquence of their greatest orators. For the power of divine light don’t depend of the eloquence of the speaker, but upon the demonstration of the spirit of God. ¹²

Here, Edwards sets the tone of the message that will follow by establishing the parameters of the discussion, even clarifying the spiritual principles. If Edwards’ work on the remaining parts of the sermon reflect a pedantic, exceedingly detailed examination, the initial narrative is well crafted, concise, and given to entice his listeners to continue on with him.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. What is the knowledge that the Apostle speaks of? The opposition of this knowledge to the “natural man”, by which must needs be understood the unregenerate, inasmuch as tis opposed to the spiritual man... How are they known and understood: that is, spiritually, because they are “spiritually discerned”¹³

Edwards then proceeds to the doctrine, where he will systematically examine the underlying doctrine of the passage. He says:

What knowledge of divine things may be obtained by natural men

Describe that spiritual knowledge of divine things, which natural and unregenerate men are destitute [of]

Why natural men cannot have this knowledge.

¹²Jonathan Edwards, *Sermons and Discourses 1723-29*, 70-71.

¹³Ibid, 71.

How those who have it, come by it.¹⁴

What follows is a detailed examination of the above headings, and after each heading, a deeper examination of each sub-heading and a brief review of his former point. Only after an extensive discussion of each of the above doctrinal headings, does Edwards now move to the Improvement, or the application. “Hence we learn the excellency of godliness. Knowledge by all men is counted an excellent [thing].”¹⁵ And then adds this more extended explanation,

Tis the godly that are the wisest, most seeing and understanding of mankind... Let us be moved by this doctrine to seek earnestly for other knowledge... [First] Let all prejudices against spiritual knowledge be cast away... [Second]: If you would with success seek divine and spiritual knowledge, get that knowledge of divine things that is with your power, even a doctrinal knowledge of the principles of the Christian religion... [Third]: If we would get that spiritual saving knowledge that is spoken of on our text, we must practice according to the knowledge that we have... [Fourth]: We must be much in reading the Scriptures, if we would get spiritual and saving knowledge... [Fifth]: If we would get spiritual and saving knowledge, we must receive all opportunities of hearing... [Sixth]: We must use ourselves to meditation. I don't say only that we must meditate, but that we must use ourselves to it.¹⁶

Such is the detail in text, doctrine, and practice Edwards pursues regularly in the sermons represented from the early years between 1720 and 1729. This is in stark contrast to the sermons preached during the Stockbridge years where the manuscript of the sermon reflects a minimal structure such as a partial outline from a sermon preached in April 1753 based on Joel 2:12, 13. What follows is an unpublished transcription of a sermon and bears the marks of a basic style that relies on Edwards' ability to speak extemporaneously as the Spirit led.

If men would obtain [the] mercy of God. They must mourn for sin. How they ought to mourn. Sin is sin. Great mourning.

Not only for a little while. Repentance signifies nothing, the mercy for sin in the heart.

Men, when they truly repent not only mourn, [but] are sorry for their sins. For-sake... but they turn from their sins.

Men, when they truly turn from sin, they turn to God.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid, 89.

¹⁶Ibid, 91-95.

If in true repent... with all their hearts.¹⁷

The reader should observe that there is no introduction of the text, no explanation as to the background of the passage, nor the parameters of the discussion. One is able to quickly realize the vast difference in every aspect of the sermon; from the lack of any scriptural foundation, of which scholars have argued was the most exceptional part of an Edwards sermon, to the absence of formal headings and a more limited application section.

Application: By this you may know whether you keep fast days right. By this you may know whether your sins are forgiven.¹⁸

As observed, the detailed explanation of the application so consistent with the sermon on 1 Corinthians 2:14, is missing from the preached text in Joel, which has been reduced to the bare thought, one which asks, “are you keeping the fast days correctly?” This may be accounted for in part because of Edward’s audience in Stockbridge. They were largely Indian populations, who were not conversant in more challenging theology and needed assistance with the basic tenets of the Christian faith, experience, and practice.

It was John Wilkins who suggested a strong and elaborate structure holds a great benefit for the listener, who “may understand and retain a sermon with greater ease and profit when they are before-hand acquainted with the general heads of matters that are discussed...”¹⁹ He suggested the application of the sermon represented the “life and soul of the sermon.”²⁰ Wilkins believed the application of the sermon spoke to the conscious and was reflected in one’s understanding of duty. And he believed the preacher should look for particular areas of weakness and direct his exhortation there. “The wise preacher will look for specific areas of input into the life of his hearers—addressing through exhortation, particular issues of weakness: with regard to prayer, or setting aside some solemn time for one more particular inquiry.”²¹ And finally, always considering the end goal, the perfection of one’s faith, one proceeds toward the goal of godliness and greater skill in the practice of the Christian faith. He (Wilkins) writes, “from whence it will follow that the hap-

¹⁷Jonathan Edwards, “Sermon on Joel 2:12-13,” *WJEO* 70, (1753). These later Stockbridge sermons, at the time of this writing, have not yet been published, cataloged, and assigned a number. They were made available by the gracious provision of the Director of the Center for Jonathan Edwards, Mr. Ken Minkema and are for research purposes only.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹John Wilkins, *Ecclesiastes*, 29.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid, 36,38.

piness of man must consist in that whereby these faculties are perfected, namely the favor of God, which can alone secure our well-being, both in this and the other world.”²² Wilkins concludes his treatise by saying, “The observation of these helps and directions, together with frequent diligent practice will, (as far as art can effect) quickly produce a good habit and by consequence, a facility.”²³

Edwards’ listeners, at least in the early years, were conditioned to take accurate notes, which would allow the congregant to retain more of the biblical truth and principles contained in the sermon, and therefore pursue the self-examination that followed from the reproof, correction, and application. Kimmach has provided a breakdown of the three main divisions, which for these purposes can be summarized as follows:

1. The *text* begins the sermon, invariably with the chosen Scripture passage upon which the structure of the sermon rests... In Explication, he is never pedantic, even on those rare occasions when he introduces Hebrew or Greek words to clarify definitions; he explains carefully, but does not belabor small points.
2. Following the Text is the *Doctrine*, a major part of most sermons, and structurally, often the most complex... In his inclination to formulate the entire doctrinal message of the sermon in a single statement of doctrine, Edwards was, it seems a little unusual for his day...
3. The *Application* (or improvement, or use) is the largest of the three main divisions of the sermon (except in the lecture variant), and in long sermons it may be several times as long as the text and doctrine together. It is usually marked by a significant alteration in tone and rhetoric and by a comparatively simple structure; for whereas the text and doctrine are concerned with theory, principle, and precept, the application is concerned with experience and practice. The application is directed to specific thoughts, attitudes, and actions of living human beings, and it gives specific advice on these attitudes and actions, in poignant language, in the light of the sermon’s doctrine.²⁴

What more might be said of these divisions? In the Explication, which refers to the process of analyzing and developing an idea or a principle in detail, Edwards opens the text, provides several numbered heads (sub-divisions), which he designates as observations or inferences, and then defines any terms necessary to the

²²Ibid, 121.

²³Ibid, 204.

²⁴Jonathan Edwards, *Sermons and Discourse, 1720-23*, 37, 39.

message and cites any additional Scripture references which support the premise of the message. In the “Doctrine”, which as stated is the largest section, Edwards begins with a single statement of doctrine and then employs several observations or propositions from this original statement, thereby maintaining a single theological focus throughout the sermon. Following the doctrinal statement and any propositions, Edwards takes up the development of the idea through observation, argument, and deeper inquiries. The Doctrinal section usually ends with its own reasons or proofs and each proposition may have its own “use” or “improvement”, or application, recognizing these earlier applications should not be confused with the third major division of the sermon. The presence of the “Application” usually brings a change in Edwards’ rhetoric or tone and by design a less complicated structure. It is in this section of the sermon Edwards normally inserted exercises, duties, and practices; all in the hope a greater sense of holiness might be achieved, a greater sense of God’s glory might be realized, and a greater burden of God’s regular presence might be realized. To this end, Edwards did not cheat his audience with one or two specifics. Kinnach notes;

The *application or Improvement* is generally structured by divisions into several Uses. Most of the time, the term “Use” is restricted to serving as the categorical name for main heads under the division of “Application” or “Improvement”, paralleling “Reasons” in the Doctrine. (The two division names, incidentally, are used interchangeably, though “Application” appears to be the favored term after the first few years of preaching). Thus, there is frequently a “Use of self-examination, or a Use of Consolation, and up to four or five such “specialized” uses, though the concluding “use” is most often the “The Use of Exhortation.” Each “Use” is subdivided by “Inquiries, Considerations, and plain numbered heads”, and a list of Considerations or Directions generally concludes the Use of Exhortation.²⁵

The larger head of Edwards’ pulpit work then was where the exercise of “Confession” was pursued, the exercise of “Meditation” was pressed, and the exercise of “Prayer” was presented as the norm for the Christian life.

As much as the modern preacher, Edwards sought to capture first the attention of his listeners, then their hearts, and finally, their will, where the attitudes and actions could be shaped by the irrefutability of his logic and the force of character, evident in his command of the Scriptures. To that end he applied himself to the improvement of his craft by the development of his use of imagery, of logic, and the sheer force of his delivery, drawn from his own scientific queries and powerful Scriptural images. His logic was in part, drawn from his extensive classical background which had been honed from his study of John Locke, and the power of a

²⁵Ibid, 39.

delivery. At first his delivery was constrained by the reading of his manuscript; only later did he find its sovereign power as he extemporaneously pounded home the reality of his doctrines. This was brilliantly displayed in the famous sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” in which it is said the congregants upon hearing their possible fate generated such a hysteria about their plight that Edwards was unable to finish the sermon.²⁶ After all, Edwards was a pastor and theologian. For many he was their pastor and he reminded them that he was called by God to be their leader and their teacher. He noted in the *Miscellanies*:

... Without doubt, ministers are to teach men what Christ would have them to do, and to teach them who doth these things and who doth them not, that is, who are Christians and who are not, and the people are to hear them as much in this as in other things and that so far forth as the people are obligated to hear what I teach them, so great is my pastoral, or ministerial, or teaching power... Thus, if I in a right manner am become the teacher of a people, so far as they ought to hear what I teach them, so much power I have. Thus, if they are obligated to hear me only because they themselves have chosen me to guide them, and therein declared that they thought me sufficiently instructed in the mind of Christ to teach them, and because I have the other requisites of being their teacher, then I have power as other ministers have in these days. But if it was plain to them that I was under the infallible guidance of Christ, then I should have more power. And if it was plain to all the world of Christians that I was under the infallible guidance of Christ, and that I was sent forth to teach the world the will of Christ, then I should have power in all the world: I should have power to teach them what they ought to do, and they would be obligated to hear me...²⁷

In fact, writer, speaker, and pastor Andy Stanley has offered a preaching format with some similarities to Edwards’ template which recognizes a less formal explication (text-introduction), a less complicated biblical thesis, but emphasizes practical applications. Stanley’s model includes the following mnemonic: Me-We-God-You-We.²⁸ The “Me” represents speaker’s initial connection with his audience, the “We” the collective direction the speakers desires to take his audience, the “God”, the content produced to fuel that direction, “You”, the specific points of application, and the final “We” which attempts to create a best-case scenario for what the speaker hopes to achieve. If no obstacles presently existed, what might a

²⁶George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards, A Life* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2003), 219-224. Marsden provides a more complete picture of the hysteria that was generated by this sermon and the inability of Edwards to finish the sermon by including the hope that was possible if the listeners would surrender their lives to Christ, who was willing and able to extend them mercy.

²⁷Jonathan Edwards, *The Miscellanies*, 222.

²⁸Andy Stanley and Lane Jones, *Communicating for Change* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2006), 119-130.

change in behavior as a result of this presentation look like? Stanley writes, “[we] is really about vision casting. It is a moment of inspiration. It is the point in the message where you paint a verbal picture of what could be and should be. In this final closing moment, you call upon your audience to imagine what the church, the communities, families, maybe the world would be like if Christians everywhere embraced your one idea.”²⁹ But while Stanley may encourage an action or a single activity, Edwards stresses intentional practice, specific practices that are born out of spiritual exercise and the mind working in tandem with the heart to resolve, all of which are after self-examination, meditation, or prayer, and the will has been exercised to act. Kimnach suggests “in effect the application is for Edwards a period of hypothetical experience for Edwards’s auditory, a time of living imaginatively through a “willing suspension of dis-belief”, a series of fictive experiences created and controlled by the preacher.³⁰ After preaching a sermon entitled, “The Way of Holiness” where he argues those who are not holy cannot be in the way to heaven,³¹ Edwards offers a trial by which his congregants can ascertain whether their life is consistent with God’s demands for a righteous life. He then adds:

If we would know whether we are holy or no, let us try ourselves by these five following things. First, meditate on the holiness of God, and see if you cannot see a conformity, a likeness in your mind. There is no likeness or comparison in degree—we speak not of that—but yet there is a likeness in nature between God and the soul of the believer. The holy soul, when it thinks and meditates upon God’s nature finds pleasure and delight, because there is an agreeableness in his new nature to the divine perfections... Fifth. Do you in a measure imitate the saints and angels in heaven? They spend their duration to the glory of God; they love him above all things, are delighted with the beauties of Jesus Christ, entirely love on another, and hate sin.³²

While it is readily admitted many of Edwards’ sermons were formulated to move the heart and mind toward the perfections of God or the redeeming interest of Christ, his sermon cache also includes sermons of great practical value, where after he has lain bare the sinner in “The Wicked Man’s Slavery to Sin, or Living to Christ and dying to Gain,” Edwards formulated concluding exhortations to address the practical needs of study, contemplation, meditation, or self-examination so no point of doctrine is left without a practical practice or point of application.

Having become acquainted with Edwards’s structure and his “borrowed” template, it seems reasonable to examine two of Edwards’s individual sermons with

²⁹Ibid, 129.

³⁰Jonathan Edwards, *Sermons and Discourses*, 1720-23, 39.

³¹Ibid, 476.

³²Ibid, 478.

greater scrutiny, especially as it relates to his use of exercise and practice within the third division of his sermon paradigm. The sermons will be evaluated by means of the following outline:

1. The text and date of the sermon if known
2. A brief description of the sermon themes
3. A brief outline of Edwards' text
4. Key propositions as they relate to the goals of the sermon
5. Identify, explanation, and ramifications of the Applications

SERMON TITLE: LIVING TO CHRIST
PHILIPPIANS 1:21 "FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST"³³

A Brief Description of the Sermon Themes

Living to Christ and dying to gain represents a paired series of sermons Edwards used on a Sabbath preaching, probably spread over the morning and evening services, and likely used on other occasions as he was directed. It was printed as a single literary unit and it is evident Edwards added an appendix of specific applications used in other preaching venues. For Edwards, his understanding of the nature of the Christian life had its origins in the death of Christ, its appropriation to man through grace and the daily crucifixion of the former life that takes place in the life of believers. Furthermore, as was true of Edwards is likewise the burden for many others in the pastoral ministry—a belief that many within the walls of churches have come to rest only in their initial sanctification and lack the motivation to “die daily” and pursue the disciplines of their new life in Christ.

Key Propositions and Development of the Sermon

Edwards begins by providing background for Paul's letter to the church at Philippi and by describing his situation under house arrest. He then states the underlying tenet of the Christian faith:

Christ lives and dwells in the heart of every believer; yea Christ is the very life of the Christian... He dwells in him as his life; as the vital heart and spirit seated in the heart is the life of the body, so Christ is spiritually the life of the soul, as vital heart and enlivening spirit seated therein...

³³Ibid, 567. This sermon was likely preached in his New York pastorate but uncertain because Edwards did not date his earliest sermons.

And as from the internal life of the body flow all the external vital actions, so from the indwelling of Christ, as the Spiritual life, it follows that the true Christian will live to Christ and will manifest the life of Christ in all his actions.³⁴

With that, Edwards launches into an outline of the doctrine and the propositions that flow out of such a detailed statement of belief.

A Statement of the Doctrine Involved: Everyone that is a true Christian lives to Christ.

Edwards offers an explanation as to the process by which believers live to Christ. He will pursue the details of the Christian life; specifically, the principles, actions, and aims that make the Christian life unique.

The Underlying Suppositions

Show what is prerequisite, or what necessarily precedes a living to Christ

From what true life to Christ arises, or from what principles this life springs

Describe what is meant by living to Christ³⁵

At this point, the bulk of his work will be to develop the proofs necessary to give support for his suppositions, namely,

Therefore, the true Christ, before he lives to Christ, dies unto sin.

The true Christian dies to the world of this sort of death, which is necessary in order to living to Christ.

He dies to himself.³⁶

According to Edwards, “It is the wicked man that loves his own death and chooses it before life, and runs himself like a fool into his own destruction and ruin, and into his own eternal misery.” He continues,

But by dying, to ourselves, we mean the mortifying of that false, inordinate, irregular mistaken self-love, whereby we seek to please only ourselves and none else, seek our own present pleasures without consideration of our future state. Now this strong inclination to please and pamper ourselves must die within us, and we must die to that: we must die to our lusts and our natural corruptions, mor-

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid, 568-69.

tification, and the deepest humility, and a mean and lowly thought of ourselves.³⁷

With this premise in place, Edwards will address the remaining heads, which are set into place by principle, the means by which a believer lives to Christ. He lives by the Spirit's control and enablement; he lives by the power and rule of the gospel, and he lives under the leadership of the author of his salvation. According to Edwards, [this one] "makes Jesus Christ the highest end of his actions, his principal aim and design... He aims his whole life at this as his great design, as his chief business."³⁸

With this doctrinal foundation in place, Edwards now arrives at an application. It should be noted the application moves from a general statement of principle to the specifics I have contended are so important to the success of the believer in achieving a life undertaken intentionally for Christ.

How vastly different is a living to Christ from that life which is commonly lived by the men of the world. How few are those of whom it may be said, for them to live is Christ... I may appeal to the observation of everyone who has his eyes open but a little while in this wicked world, how exceedingly far from the generality of men are from living to Christ; how lamentable it is to see how little, how very little there is of Christian life appearing in the world, how little of Christ is to be seen in the walk and actions of the generality of miserable mankind.³⁹

But what of the nature of those who are different on purpose, who have taken up the cross, taken on the yoke of Christ and have set their course toward a higher set of spiritual principles? At this point, one's mind might easily travel to Hebrews 11, where the writer delivers one success story after another. By faith, women offered up their dead... some were sawn in two, and so the writer continues. All of these men and women and many more, determined they would live in the shadow of the cross, all the while, exercising themselves in practices similar to or identical to what Edwards is advancing. What is present in the life of such a believer? It's the self-examination that guards the believer's heart and ensures he does not think more of himself than he ought. First then comes the self-examination. They must "examine themselves and try themselves."⁴⁰ Are they really in the faith? Does their life have any similarity to that of Christ—does it model itself after the principles of the Sermon on the Mount? "The best," Edwards notes, "if they examine themselves, will find deficiencies enough to make them blush."⁴¹ They must compare

³⁷Ibid, 569.

³⁸Ibid, 572.

³⁹Ibid, 573.

⁴⁰Ibid, 574

⁴¹Ibid

themselves with Christ and do it often.

And then Edwards drills down to specific behaviors consistent with the stated theme of living to Christ. Interestingly enough, the companion sermon in the same series from the same passage is entitled, “Dying to Gain,” but in the sermon presently before us, Edwards suggest his congregation must labor all the more intensely to promote the life of Christ in their own hearts. They must, “labor for the increase of grace and to abound in the exercise of it.”⁴² They are not to rest upon the reality of their salvation experience but are to press forward for a greater degree of holiness. Edwards notes, “but pray and strive for greater degrees of holiness, for greater and brighter discoveries of God’s glory, and the excellency and loveliness of Jesus Christ, and that your heart may be more filled with love to Jesus and with desires after him.”⁴³

This is not holiness for holiness’ sake; it is the practice of God’s grace that yields greater awakenings to the richness and expansiveness of God’s glory. In fact, the correct motivation for living changes everything. The motivation responsible for this change is the spiritual sight provided at conversion. “The godly man’s idea of God consists very much of these spiritual ideas, that are complicated of those simple ones which the natural man is destitute of. But as soon as ever he comes to have a disposition of his mind changed, and to feel some of those operations of the mind by the means of which he gets those simple ideas, then it is that he sees the beauty of them; so, he gets the sight of the Excellency of holiness of God.”⁴⁴ According to Edwards, this motivation drives spiritual knowledge forward. Edwards noted in the *Miscellanies*, “we cannot have the idea without the adapted disposition of mind, and the more suitable the disposition the more clear and intense the idea; but the more we practice, the more the disposition increased.”⁴⁵ It seems reasonable Edwards would argue for specific behaviors which build spiritual understanding and exercise grace. And so he does, hammering away at his congregation to be long in the practice of these exercises. This seems to be the strongest concentration of specific exhortations offered toward the goal of properly living to Christ.

The Application

Edwards begins by noting the importance of securing a Christian temper and a humble disposition, and then uses 1 Thessalonians 4:1 to support his argument. He then quotes the text “finally, then, brethren, we request and exhort you

⁴²Ibid, 575

⁴³Ibid

⁴⁴Jonathan Edwards, *The Miscellanies*, 287.

⁴⁵Ibid.

in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.” Next, he moves to 2 Peter 1:6-8 and quotes the passage. “... And in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are your and are increasing, they render you neither useless or unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Given the value of this passage to the issue of spiritual discipline in general and the exercise of grace that Edwards demands, it seems to be well placed for what he will now deliver.

Next, he notes the habits of the Apostle Paul who is presented as one who never rested in his achievement but pressed deeper in his pursuit of Christ, allowing his spiritual appetites to be only satisfied by the spiritual nourishment offered by an intimate relationship with his Savior. He then comes to the matter at hand. “For this end”, he says,

Be more prayerful, more frequent and more earnest in your approaches to the throne of grace; and besides your set times of prayer, let your heart be frequently lifted up to God when you are about your ordinary affairs.⁴⁶

When the exercises of God’s grace become the most ingrained in the life of the believer, our regular schedule of prayer conditions us mentally to look at the world, our life, and our schedules differently and prayer becomes the common practice, rather than the sporadic and a crisis driven plea many believers think of it, utilizing its “power” only when all other human efforts have failed.

And be more frequent and careful in reading the Holy Scripture. Endeavor to read them with understanding and particular applying of them to your own case.⁴⁷

There is “reading” and then there is reading; Edwards by virtue of the context of his comments, argues Bible reading should be consistent, intentional, and directed toward understanding. Frequency and intensity mark the practice of a believer who has ventured beyond mere casual reading and such a believer sees his reading as an exercise of grace designed for his growth and development. Edwards noted in the *Miscellanies*, “tis not the Scripture way of judging of truth of grace, to be determined principally by the method and steps of the first work, but by the exercise and fruits of grace in a holy life.”⁴⁸ “Be more frequent in your meditation upon God and Jesus, the wonderful love and grace of God and another world, and

⁴⁶Jonathan Edwards, *Sermons and Discourses, 1720-23*, 576.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Jonathan Edwards, *The Miscellanies*, 475.

the blessedness of heaven.”⁴⁹

Truly, meditation becomes Edwards; he practiced it and pursued its greater interest in his life and now presses it before the consciousness of his people. There is much to meditate upon; why not the supreme Sovereign of the universe—the One who has offered the sinner unmerited favor, the Author and Completer of their faith, the hope of an unending and unspotted eternity, and the blessedness of a future home. Edwards wants his hearers to counter the increasingly hostile and self-centered world they find all around them with the larger, deeper, and more unrestricted view of God’s glory and the wider view of the majesty of the grace of Christ.

And be more frequent in examining yourself, in searching and trying your hearts and your ways, to see if you have turned aside from the path of duty, and wherein, your life needs amendment.⁵⁰

Jonathan Edwards, over the course of his ministry and three decades of sermons, spent much rhetoric and many pages consumed with the value of self-examination. It was no surprise to him, nor should it be to one living in the present culture, just how easily an individual’s behavior can be surrendered to rationalizing an enticing belief system and the “logical” actions that flow out of it. So the admonition here is specific and directed to the whole life, which consists of the mind, which conceives the action and the body, which effectively carries it out. The potential danger is always present, that the believer has turned aside from his duty, the commitment inherent in his calling, and the direction of his new life in Christ. According to Edwards, the corrective is ever needful and so he crafts the word, “Amendment” which suggest a change or more specifically the addition of something that will greatly improve the present situation.

Be more frequent in your religious conversation; in speaking the things of a spiritual and eternal nature; let your tongue be oftener employed about the great things, which God has revealed in the Gospel.⁵¹

In a world largely lacking civility, one can appreciate a call for the exercise of conversation which has its interest in Christ; its view cast toward heaven, and its common pursuit consistent with the teachings and temper of Jesus Christ. While it is true Edwards will not develop extensive teaching surrounding a discipline of conversation, it is clear he was conscious of the power of words, the potential for hurt in excited language, and the danger of a legacy tainted by hateful speech. His

⁴⁹Jonathan Edwards, *Sermons and Discourses, 1720-23*, 576.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

own interaction with his parents over time suggests he struggled to consistently deal with them in a Christ-like manner.

Be more exact in your walk, more in acts of obedience. There is nothing that tends so much to increase grace as the exercise of it in good works.⁵²

Edwards often confuses his modern counterparts with language that straddles the line between the presence of freely offered grace and the necessity of works required to secure salvation. While the purpose of this essay is not to defend Edwards' understanding and presentation of salvation, it should be noted he sees the reality of salvation as resulting in behaviors reflecting a desire to delight in the "things of Christ" and exercises strengthen the sanctification now at work in that life. The specific practices of the now obedient believer are revealed as he finds himself breathing new and richer air as a result of his conversion.

Finally, Edwards sums up his discourse by reminding his congregation what is at stake in their sanctification and then offering them several immediate areas where they must remain effective.

Use all possible endeavors and improve all opportunities that God puts into your hands for promoting the kingdom and interests of Jesus Christ amongst men. Use all endeavors to be somehow or other instrumental of bringing souls to Jesus Christ. This is the work which Christ is carrying on in this world; let Christians be fellow-workers with him, let them all in their places carry on the same design. There is no man but what god gives the opportunity of doing considerable this way if he would seek opportunities and improve them. If every converted man and woman did what they could in this way there would be fewer souls go to hell than now do.⁵³

He then suggests much can be accomplished if Christians will live by the rules of the gospel; if they will recognize the utter sinfulness of sin and not neglect its potential for destruction in their lives; and if they as parents will take the proper leadership in bringing up their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, for it is within one's immediate family where the first and greatest potential for continued sanctification exists.

The second sermon to be examined will be a discourse from 1723-29 where Edwards again demonstrates a similar concern for his congregation and a similar interest in the exercises of grace as a potential for a more godly, consistent, and radiant Christian life.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid, 576-77.

SERMON TITLE: PROFITABLE HEARERS OF THE WORD
MATTHEW 13:23⁵⁴

A Brief Description of the Sermon Themes

Edwards sets the tone of this discourse by arguing the allegory presented in Matthew 13 represents an engaging style of instruction because it attracts the attention of its hearers by embedding spiritual truth in a narrative. Furthermore, Edwards suggests teaching such as this offers effective exercise in route to understanding. He notes,

Our understandings were given us to be used, and above all, to be exercised, in Divine things. Therefore, God teaches us in such a way that we should have some exercise of meditation and study. God gives us the gold, but he gives it to us in a mine that we might dig for it and get in a way of our own industry.⁵⁵

Truth, thus discovered, makes a greater impression, is more pleasing to the believer, and offers more success in the attainment of wisdom. Edwards then provides the themes that will occupy his attention.

1. The root which the seed of the world took is this ground. “He heareth the word, and understandeth it.” The hearing of the Word answered to the falling of the seed upon the ground, and the understanding it to it taking root in the ground.
2. The fruit is here. “Which also beareth fruit.” This is what none of the other sorts of ground did. The seed in the stony and thorny ground sprung up at first, as if it would be fruitful, but soon failed and no fruit followed.
3. The different degrees of fruitfulness. “Some an hundred, some sixty, some thirty.” It was all reckoned as good ground, that were thirtyfold, as well as that which produced sixty and an hundred.⁵⁶

A Statement of the Doctrine Involved

Edwards now proceeds to describe the doctrine he is interested in pursuing.

Doctrine 1: That which distinguishes the profitable hearers of God’s Word from all others, is that they understand it and bring forth fruit of it.

Doctrine 2: Men’s knowledge is the root and foundation of their fruitfulness.

⁵⁴This sermon was preached in the Northampton pulpit, 1728-29.

⁵⁵Jonathan Edwards, *Sermons and Discourses, 1723-29*, 247.

⁵⁶*Ibid*, 248.

Doctrine 3: There is a great difference in the degrees of grace and fruitfulness among the truly godly.⁵⁷

The Underlying Suppositions and Sermon Exposition

Edwards now painstakingly lays out his propositions for the first doctrinal head by suggesting an inherent weakness in the natural man's ability to understand the Word of God. Of some interest is within this section Edwards addresses the proposition the godly can be distinguished from all others because of their apprehension of the very particulars of the Christian life: the presence of the Word of God, the glory of God, the way of salvation, and so forth. What makes this sermon interesting is following the presentation of his second major proposition, Edwards inserts a section of application where he clarifies the principles he has previously advanced and argues his constituents take heed.

In a second major head Edwards introduces by inquiry the believer's necessity to bring forth internal fruit, which represents the inward exercises of grace, and by contrast external fruit, which Edwards identifies as good works. Of the inward exercises, he says:

There is a principle of spiritual life infused into the soul in conversion that exerts itself in holy acts and exercises... The Word of God makes those that understand it to be of holy dispositions and affections, to have holy desires and motives of the heart that are acceptable to God: the exercise of love to God and longing desires after him, the exercise of delight in Jesus Christ, the exercises of submission to the will of God, thankfulness for mercies, the exercise of a penitent spirit in mourning for sin and humbling himself before God for it, longing desires after holiness and after more communion with God, the exercise of faith, of dependence upon God and a fiducial committing ourselves to him, that inward worship and devotion that a pious soul often exercises.⁵⁸

While certainly all of these do not appear in the bulk of Edwards' message, it is noteworthy these ideas, even conceptually, are so prevalent, especially within the doctrinal sections of the discourse.

He continues his message by explaining and interpreting each doctrinal head and in each case offering tools (uses) for application. Edwards will not always embed such application with the doctrinal sections of a sermon but here, he offers it for a very practical reason. In the first place it aids in conversion. "The more clear and notional knowledge we have of the doctrines of religion; we shall be under so much the better advantages for conversion: for this is the way wherein God

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid, 258.

reveals spiritual knowledge. Otherwise, the Word of God would signify nothing.”⁵⁹ Furthermore, there is a need to understand the varying degrees of God’s grace and fruitfulness and the reasons behind this. Are they merely a matter of inherent righteousness sovereignly designed and proportioned or are they a result of the localized motivations of the believer? Edwards notes:

There is a great difference as to the good works that they do. Some do abundantly more for the glory of God in the world and promoting the kingdom and interest of Christ and the good of their fellow creature than others... Some Christians that have much love are abundantly more concerned for the interest of religion and for the honor of God and the good of souls than others... They are more studious how to promote them and more constant and laborious in it.⁶⁰

But according to Edwards, it is God who wisely distributes the exercises of grace and fruitfulness as he sees fit for the eternal purposes he has already put into place. But, what should the membership of the congregation do with this? First of all, Christians should live with a mind given over to growing in grace. There are numerous benefits to this, which include excellency and happiness in a larger measure. Beyond this, Edwards has much to say about the particulars for securing that happiness. He notes:

1. A lack of interest in growing closer to Christ suggests one might not be a Christian.
2. The presence of no desire for God or a demonstration of weak grace suggests one has less comfort in his life. [Edwards then injected], Grace is of a joyful nature; tis not only the beauty but the happiness of the soul. Tis the only true spring of comfort and only the mere exercise of grace naturally excites sweetness and pleasure in the mind... They that have much knowledge of God and acquaintance with him will have much comfort, for the sight of God’s glory and Excellency necessarily raises pleasure, and pleasure of the highest kind.
3. If one is weak in grace, he is more likely to fall into sin.
4. If one is strong in grace, he will be more likely to have a firm place at the time of his death.
5. If one is strong in grace during his life, he can expect more glory in eternity.⁶¹

Edwards closes his discourse with three directives worth remembering. He first tells them to begin their journey in the exercises of grace early. Time is a most im-

⁵⁹Ibid, 265.

⁶⁰Ibid, 268.

⁶¹Ibid, 273.

portant companion as one seeks to grow in the practice of grace. Second, he tells them they must be diligent in their self-examination. He injects “if you would be strong in grace and abundant fruitfulness, you must often be comparing your heart and life with the rule. There must be a continual watching over your own heart every now and then, examining and searching to see if you can’t find some wicked way in you.”⁶² Note the specifics here. “Try your heart: see if you can’t find some instances wherein it is unchristian and contrary to the rule of God’s Word... It should be done frequently. If it is done every day, it is not too often. We should be continually doing as David, “thinking on our ways, and turning our feet to God’s testimonies” (Psalm 119:59).⁶³ Third, they must fight against the sins that are most dangerous to them, which suggest all the more necessary is a program for regular exercise and a strengthening of the “inner man” for the practice of grace he now enjoys.

Finally, the believer must concern himself with growth and an increase of the graces that accomplish the purposes Edwards has earlier established. He identifies them generally here as “*foundational graces*” and says they must:

Be most intent upon increasing the foundation graces, such as the knowledge of God, the understanding of the Word, believing the truth of the Gospel, a realizing sense of a future state of rewards and punishments. Labor to get your heart all enflamed with love to God and abound by humility and a sense of your own unworthiness. These are the foundation graces, and as these are increased, all other graces will most certainly increase proportionately.⁶⁴

In other sermons he might tell his flock to contemplate the majesty or the worthiness of God, lose oneself in his prayer closet, or meditate upon the glory of Christ and his sufferings. But given his burden to find a way into his parishioner’s heart, he has provided yet another tool kit to carry on the spiritual work necessary to for them to progress in their sanctification.

Lastly, he says, “And all those things you must do with the utmost diligence and application of the mind. The work of the Christian is composed of running, and wrestling, and fighting, and those exercises with require the greatest labor.”⁶⁵

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this essay has been to examine the sermon model that Jonathan Edwards utilized and adapted for his own use over his thirty-five-year

⁶²Ibid, 276

⁶³Ibid, 276-77

⁶⁴Ibid, 277

⁶⁵Ibid

ministry, and then to analyze his actual sermons; sermons that integrated the doctrinal content he held dear and the exercises of grace he had found so useful in his own life. While his sermon canon varies in the degree with which he applied the exercises of grace, the above two sermons illustrate the exercises of grace, those particular practices modernity would identify as the Spiritual disciplines, were in fact consistent with what Edwards was presenting to his congregations regularly; specifically asking his youth to adhere to, and challenging his readers to embrace.

And finally, the sermon material from Edwards seems to suggest at least three applications of personal significance. First, the life of a believer desiring a closer relationship with Christ must be an intentional journey. There is nothing casual about Edwards' relationship with Christ, and therefore nothing casual or happenstance about what he desired for the church. In his mind, their pastor and their Bibles were clear and present signposts for the high and holy walk of sanctification designed for every redeemed believer in Jesus Christ.

Second, the life of a believer is a spiritual journey. It begins with the sovereign call of God and a necessary response from the individual. Nothing in Edwards' sermons suggest a self-centered existence as the norm for the believer, nothing suggests a believer should ever stop striving and perfecting his walk with Christ and nothing in Edwards's writing suggests the believer should ever cease thinking about heaven or the God and Savior who made it all possible and yet, even in his own life, he struggled with the extent and influence of his own pride, he struggled with the difficulties associated with bouts of melancholy, and he struggled with the rigors of fame and God's bigger purposes for his life.

Finally, the life of the believer is a strenuous journey. While Christ's yoke may be easy it is not without labor and sweat. This yoke, so understood, requires the courage to look regularly within, the time to look regularly Godward, and the patience to look longingly and regularly into the providence and greater plan of God, and always on bended knee. "You must press forward", Edwards said, "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling (Philippians 3:14), and in all you must go forth to God's strength."⁶⁶

"Oh, how curiously have I heard some men preach; and how carelessly have I seen them live."⁶⁷

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (William Brown, ed.; Carlisle: The Banner of Truth, 1997), 64.

BOOK REVIEWS

Walton, John H. *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd ed., Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academics, 2018. 325pp. Pb. \$30.

The Lost Word of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate (2009); and *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2-3 and the Human Origins Debate*. Walton has challenged, instructed, and given me a deeper understanding and insights into the Ancient World of which the Bible is a part. I commend to you the reading of these two books along with *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*.

The Bible is not an American, European, or Asian. It is an Ancient Near Eastern document, both in the OT (stronger so) and the NT. In theology there is a principle of interpretation known as historical-grammatical method. Simply stated, the interpretation of a text needs to be accurate as much as possible. Therefore, the starting point is to understand the historical setting in which the text was written (Ancient Near East, Egyptian, Babylonian, Mesopotamian, Israelite) and the time the text was produced (Egyptian dynasties, Assyrian Empire, etc.)

The other aspect of the historical-grammatical method is having some understanding of the language that the documents are written in, i.e., hieroglyphics, Akkadian, Greek, Latin, Spanish, German, and others. For the most part, language is culturally context. Sometimes it can be easy, and other times, difficult to translate the thoughts of one language into another. The literature of the Ancient Near East assists the interpretation of Scripture. Before the eighteenth century Egyptian and Mesopotamian documents were virtually unknown. More and more of these documents have been unearthed, translated, and analyzed and they now exceed over one million examples. Thus, we have more information to help us understand the Ancient Near East and the Old Testament as an Ancient Near Eastern Text (p. 3).

Walton's book unfolds the historical-grammatical method by assisting the reader to understand the relationship of the Ancient Near East writings to the biblical text, which gives us a greater understanding of the Bible. But Walton's book is challenging. It is a challenge to read such an academic work, and textbook. It challenges the western theological perspective, in that, he is writing about Ancient Near East conceptual writings. The book challenges the literal-interpretative process of Scripture because Ancient Near Eastern thinking is conceptual. All three books I mentioned are well-worth the challenges presented. They give needed clarity to my Old Testament understanding, and I have found a deeper commitment to the Near Eastern text known as the Bible. Walton will give evidence to the Old Testament being truly the Word of God, as compared to other Near Eastern texts written with their religious perspective.

Walton has a section entitled "Special Material" at the very beginning of the book. I commend the "Tables" and the "Comparative Explorations" (found throughout the book) to the reader. I commend Walton's appendix on the "Individual Gods" (Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and others). Some of these gods are mentioned in the Bible. The reader will receive some explanation about each god. I also commend the "Foreign Words Index" (pp. 347-348), and the "Ancient Literature Index" (pp. 355-357).

The book has five parts. In part 1 Walton introduces the reader to the need for comparative studies. In the second part, he surveys the literature of the Ancient Near East and describes the various genres found in Ancient Literature. In part three, Walton describes the religion of the Ancient world; the gods, rituals, and temples. In part four he deals with "cosmic geography" and how this way of thinking shapes Ancient Near Eastern people and the structured of their daily life. In the last section of the book Walton traces the worldview of ancient people. How did they understand their origin, roles, and history? How did they understand their present context of life? And, how did they understand their future and life after death?

Walton's work is challenging, enlightening, and evidences that YHWH is God. I highly recommend the reading of this volume.

Dr. G. Edward Wishart, D. Min.
A Pastoral Mentor to Those Who
Desire to Survive the Crucifixions of Life and Ministry
Elyria, OH

Moo, Douglas J. *Romans*. Second Edition. NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2018. clvi+1027 pp.; Hb.; \$80.00.

Douglas Moo's 1996 commentary on Romans quickly became a standard reference on Paul's longest and most important letter. Pauline studies have blossomed in the last twenty years since the first edition was published. Many important responses to the New Perspective on Paul were published, such as the two volume *Justification and Variegated Nomism* (Baker, 2004). Some of these nuanced and expanded Sanders others sought a return to the traditional view of Paul and Judaism. N. T. Wright's *Justification* generated various responses, culminating in Wright's massive *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Fortress, 2013) and a collection of essays in response to Wright, *God and the Faithfulness of Paul* (Fortress, 2017). Since these developments in Pauline Theology often center on key texts in the book of Romans, an update to Moo's NICNT commentary is welcome.

The introduction to the letter in this second edition is more or less the same, several paragraphs from the first edition have been omitted or re-worked and there are a few references to recent work on audience and purpose. For example, Moo has added a reference to Michael Gorman and Richard Longenecker as he describes the participationist view of Romans 5-8 (22). He adds a line at the end of his discussion of salvation history as the theme of Romans making it clear although it is an important conceptual scheme for Romans, "it cannot be called the theme of the letter," citing Douglas Campbell 2005 work on Paul's Gospel (25).

In the body of the commentary, Moo begins each section with a translation of the text with footnotes indicating textual issues. In the first edition the footnotes had their own numbering for each pericope, in the second edition the numbers continue the footnotes for a major section. For example, there are now 1291 footnotes for the section Romans 5:1-8:39.

After a brief introduction to the pericope, he proceeds verse-by-verse commenting on key features of the text. Since this is not a Greek text commentary, all Greek appears in transliteration in the body of the text, more nuanced details are covered in the footnotes. His comments on the text not simply exegetical since the book of Romans demands some theological reflection. For example, after dealing with the difficult phrase "faithfulness of Christ" in Romans 3:21, Moo deals with two potential objections his understanding of the phrase as an objective genitive, both from a theological perspective, specifically that his view may violate *sola fide* and

solus Christus. This attention to both exegetical detail and theological importance is well balanced in the commentary.

Moo has updated the footnotes in the second edition to include works written in the last twenty years. A comparison of the Index of Authors quickly shows the inclusion of major commentaries by Jewett, Longenecker, Schreiner, Wright and others. These are not simply appended to existing footnotes; often Moo interacts with these recent works in the body of the commentary. In addition, footnotes are streamlined by only including a shortened citation. Occasionally only a commentator's name is used without page number. Readers should refer to the greatly expanded bibliography in the new edition for details. The bibliography for the first edition of the commentary was twenty-five pages, the second has expanded to 156 pages of abbreviations and bibliography.

Some excurses have been expanded, others are added. For example, in the first edition after Romans 6:1-14 there was an excursus entitled "Paul's 'With Christ' Conception." In the second edition the title is "'With Christ' and 'In Christ'" and more than two pages have been added commenting on the 131 occurrences of "in Christ" in the Pauline letters, with references to recent literature. The excursus following Romans 1:16-17 on the righteousness of God has been re-worked and expanded; it now includes a section on righteousness language and Isaiah 40-66 and the section on the phrase "righteousness of God" now includes much more detail from Isaiah. Moo has also updated the essay with references to recent works on the righteousness of God by Mark Seifrid, N. T. Wright, and others. After the commentary on Romans 9-11, Moo has added about five pages on "Recent Assessments of Paul and Judaism."

Conclusion. Moo's commentary joins an already crowded field of recent major Romans commentaries, including Richard N. Longenecker's recent *New International Greek Text Commentary* (Eerdmans 2016) and Thomas R. Schreiner's second edition in the *Baker Exegetical New Testament Commentary* (Baker, 2018). This second edition is an upgrade to an already excellent commentary, one that should be on the shelf for anyone seriously studying the book of Romans.

Phillip J. Long, Ph.D.
Professor of Biblical Studies
Grace Christian University

deSilva, David A. *The Letter to the Galatians*. NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2018. lxxix+541 pp.; Hb.; \$55.00.

Over the past few years Eerdmans has been replacing older volumes of the New International Commentary on the New Testament. In the case of Galatians, deSilva's new commentary replaces Ronald Y. K. Fung's 1988 commentary, itself a replacement of Herman Ridderbos's 1953 work originally written in Dutch. Each generation of the commentary has grown, from Ridderbos's 238 pages to Fung's 342 pages, now deSilva's 541 pages (plus 76 pages of bibliography). The new NICNT volumes are also larger size volume (6x9 as opposed to 5x7, Ridderbos has a larger font than the other two). Ridderbos had a thirty-eight page introduction, a half page subject index and no bibliography; deSilva's introduction runs one hundred and eight pages, twenty-three pages of indices and fifty-one pages of bibliography.

What has happened in the study of Galatians since 1955 or 1988 to account for this kind of exponential growth in a commentary? First, Hans Deiter Betz commentary on Galatians was published in 1979. Betz was one of the first to analyze Galatians using ancient categories of rhetoric, arguing Galatians used judicial rhetoric and was an apologetic letter. Fung interacted with the rhetorical categories suggested by Betz and ultimately rejected the category of apologetic, deSilva presents a more nuanced interpretation of Paul's use of ancient rhetoric (ethos, pathos, logos, for example). In his introduction deSilva offers twenty-nine pages on Paul's rhetoric and letter writing in antiquity and another ten pages applying this material to the letter to the Galatians.

Second, New Perspective on Paul was still new when Fung wrote in 1988 so he does not address some of the more controversial New Perspective issues in any detail. Fung discusses the phrase "works of the Law" in a footnote to Galatians 2:16, deSilva has five pages with extensive footnotes. The same is true for *pistis Christou*, the "faith of Jesus" or "faith in Jesus." deSilva has a nine-page excursus on this sometimes technical issue interacting with Dunn's many articles on the issue as well as the response to Dunn. Fung simply notes the problem in a footnote.

Third, J. Louis Martyn's Anchor Bible commentary used the category of apocalyptic to interpret Galatians. Martyn wrote an article on apocalyptic antimonies in Galatians just prior to Fung's commentary, but it did not have much influence on the commentary.

Fourth, related to an “apocalyptic Paul,” there is far more attention in deSilva’s commentary on Paul’s imperial language. To give but one example, to use the language of peace in 1:3 is to use the language of imperial Rome. Augustus brought peace to the empire and Romans sacrificed on the “Altar of the Augustan Peace” and used coins which declared to all that the emperor was the personification of peace in the world (118). For Paul to talk of peace coming from another source, “Father God and Lord Jesus” implies global powers such as Rome are passing away. deSilva offers an excursus of nearly eight pages on the Imperial Cult and the Galatian believers.

With respect to the controversial issue of the destination and date of Galatians, deSilva favors a southern Galatian setting for the letter, although he recognizes the evidence is inconclusive on either side (29). He spends a considerable section of the introduction arguing for a southern Galatia destination based on the record of Paul’s missionary activity in the book of Acts. Commentaries on Galatians which take the book of Acts as a reliable witness to Paul’s missionary activity must deal with the problem of Paul’s visits to Jerusalem. Acts records Paul visiting Jerusalem three times, Galatians mentions only two. Of critical importance is the private meeting of Paul and the Jerusalem “pillars” (Galatians 2:1-10). The result of this meeting is a handshake agreement that Paul continue his mission to the Gentiles and (most importantly) the pillars agreed the Gentile Titus did not need to submit to circumcision. For many commentators, this meeting is what Luke records in Acts 15. DeSilva argues the private meeting in Galatians 2:1-10 is parallel to Acts 11:28-30, the famine visit (which he tentatively dates to A. D. 46-47). After Paul’s private meeting with the Jerusalem pillars Paul and Barnabas travel to South Galatia and establish a number of churches. After the return is the Antioch Incident (Galatians 2:11-14) and the visit of rival teachers to Paul’s churches in Galatia. Galatians was written after these events, either in A. D. 48 or 49, just prior to the meeting with the apostles in Acts 15. As deSilva says, “This is admittedly a tight schedule” (61) and it requires the book of Acts to be taken seriously as history. Those who reject Acts as accurate history may struggle to accept deSilva’s argument for an early date for Galatians, but it is compelling.

The introduction to the commentary includes a lengthy section on the rhetoric of letter writing in antiquity and Galatians as “persuasive communication” (61-106). DeSilva has contributed two commentaries which focused on rhetoric (*Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, [Eerdmans, 2000] and *Seeing Things John’s Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Rev-*

elation, WJKP, 2009). In this section of the introduction he traces Paul's argument through the letter.

The body of the commentary follows the pattern of the recent NICNT volumes. Each section begins a short orientation and translation of the text with numerous notes on textual variations and translation issues. The commentary moves from phrase to phrase with technical details and Greek grammatical comments in the footnotes. When Greek words appear in the main body of the commentary they are transliterated so readings without Greek training will be able to follow the argument. It is important to observe this is not a Greek text commentary so there are fewer notes dealing with syntactical issues than in Eerdmans's *New International Greek Text Commentary*. Most interaction with scholarship primarily appears in the footnotes, making for a readable commentary.

There are a number of extremely useful excurses in the body of the commentary. After his commentary on Galatians 1:11-17, deSilva includes a seven-page essay on Paul's encounter with the resurrected Jesus as a "paradigm shift." Before the Damascus Road, Paul would have considered Jesus as a failed messiah and in violation of the Torah (at least according to the Pharisaic interpretation of the Torah). The followers of Jesus declare Jesus as the Righteous One (Acts 3:14; 7:52) and a "prophet like Moses" (Acts 3:22-23, 7:37). If God raised Jesus from the dead, the he declared Jesus was the messianic heir to the throne of David. Paul reacted violently against the movement since the followers of Jesus proclaimed Jesus was indispensable for experiencing God's covenant blessings. After seeing the resurrected Jesus, Paul's center of authority shifted from Torah to Jesus (153). Since God was pouring his Spirit out into the Gentiles and reconciling Gentiles to himself, "it no longer made sense to Paul to try and make Jews out of the Gentiles" (156).

Conclusion. Despite his misgivings expressed in the preface, David deSilva's commentary on Galatians is a worthy successor to Fung's 1988 commentary and stands well alongside F. F. Bruce's classic *New International Greek Text* commentary. Students of Galatians should consider this commentary a standard work on one of Paul's most important letters. Although this is a professional, technical commentary, deSilva's text is very easy to read and will be of use for both pastor and scholar.

Phillip J. Long, Ph.D
Professor of Biblical Studies
Grace Christian University

Yarbrough, Robert W. *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*. PNTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2018. xxxvi+604 pp. Hb; \$50.

This new contribution to the Pillar New Testament Commentary series by Robert Yarbrough offers insightful exegesis of these three important but often overlooked letters. As he observes in his introduction, many readers approach the Pastoral Epistles for their detailed descriptions of church leaders. In fact, these letters do contain “valuable counsel not available elsewhere in the New Testament” (1). But the list of qualifications for elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are only one aspect of these letters.

The ninety-page introduction to the Letters to Timothy and Titus begins with eight theses on the heritage of the Pastoral Epistles (PE). These eight statements were drawn from Thomas Oden’s *Ministry through Word and Sacrament* (Crossroad, 1989) and adapted to the content of the PE. Although this section is only the first eleven pages of the commentary, Yarbrough clearly sets his agenda for the commentary: these letters are in

Any commentary on the PE must deal with the problem of authorship for 1-2 Timothy and Titus. As Yarbrough observes, according to the consensus opinion, the author and the audience are fictive. Paul did not write the letters and the situation in Ephesus described in 1 Timothy and on Crete in Titus reflects the late first or early second century (11). He points out that authorship issues overshadow the substance of the Pastoral Epistles (69). Unfortunately, this may be the case for Yarbrough’s commentary since he accepts Pauline authorship and does not think the situation in Ephesus or Crete is fictional.

Yarbrough follows Adolf Schlatter’s 1936 German commentary on the PE. Since this work was not translated into English it has been sadly ignored, but it does foreshadow what Yarbrough calls the “new look” on Paul’s authorship of these letters. This new look started with Luke Timothy Johnson’s acceptance of Pauline authorship in 1996. Yarbrough cites Johnson’s observation “that the expulsion of the Pastorals was the sacrifice required by intellectual self-respect if scholars were to claim critical integrity and still keep the Paul they wanted most—and needed.” (76). If one scans the Scripture index of a typical book on Pauline theology (Wright, Dunn, etc.), there are few if any references to the Pastoral Epistles.

The body of the commentary follows the pattern of other Pillar commentaries. After a short introduction to each pericope and the text of the NIV 2011, Yarbrough

moves through the section verse-by-verse, commenting on key vocabulary in order to illuminate the meaning of the text. He intends to follow the discourse flow in order to follow the argument Paul is making and to explain the unusual words Paul uses in these letters. All Greek appears in transliteration with minimal in-text citations to standard biblical studies tools (BDAG, MM, etc.) Detailed footnotes interact with other literature on the passage. The result is a very readable commentary which is focused on the text of the Bible.

One of the most controversial passages in these letters is 1 Timothy 2:9-14, Paul's instructions concerning women in worship, Yarbrough's commentary devotes about 25 pages to these verses. By comparison, Tom Schreiner devotes 62 pages to these verses in *Women in the Church* (Third edition, Crossway, 2016) and the book has about thirty pages of bibliography. Yarbrough does not consider this a "sudden interjection of prudery" (165). Instead, it is an integral part of Paul's instruction to Timothy on worship and church order.

By way of introduction to this problematic text, Yarbrough devotes a few pages surveying the three main approaches, critical feminist, Evangelical feminist (egalitarian view), and Evangelical traditionalist (complementarian view). The first and second view do not think this passage is limiting the role of women in ministry, although the first view does this by dismissing Paul's views as misogynist (although they are probably not Paul's views at all, they reflect the conditions of the much in a much later period). The second view wants to see the Bible as authoritative so Paul's command that a woman ought not to exercise authority over a woman is referring to some real situation in Ephesus and was not intended as command aimed at all women of all times. The third view also takes the Bible as authoritative and considers Paul's words as applicable to the present church and would therefore limit a woman's role in ministry (usually as a pastor who has authority over men). Yarbrough approaches 1 Timothy 2:11-15 with this complementarian view. But Yarbrough is quick to point out he does not intend to prevent the flourishing and ministry of women" (143). He cites with approval N. T. Wright's title for this section in his translation of 1 Timothy: "Women Must be Allowed to be Learners" (170).

With respect to the historical situation in Ephesus, there certainly was some particular reason for Paul to prohibit women from teaching. But Yarbrough argues 1 Timothy 2:12 is both distinctive to a particular situation and universal in scope (177). He rejects negative translations of *αὐθεντέω* (*authentēō*), such as the KJV "usurp authority," preferring the ESV's "exercise authority" (178). The study

of this particular word has generated many articles, Yarbrough follows recent research by Al Wolters and Denny Burk which argue the women in Ephesus were trying to gain an advantage over the men by teaching in a “dictatorial fashion” (180).

Conclusion. Like other volumes in the Pillar New Testament Commentary series, Robert Yarbrough has contributed a solid exegetical study of the Pastoral Epistles based on the English Bible which is also faithful to the Greek text. Yarbrough’s acceptance of Pauline authorship and his approach to the controversial 1 Timothy 2:11-15 may cause some scholars to dismiss this excellent commentary.

Phillip J. Long, Ph.D.
Professor of Biblical Studies
Grace Christian University

Paul, Ian. *Revelation*. Tyndale New Testament Commentary. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2018. 371 pp. Pb. \$25.00.

This new volume in the Tyndale New Testament Commentary series replaces the 1969 commentary by Leon Morris, originally published by Eerdmans. Ian Paul is described as “a freelance theologian” as well as an adjunct professor at Fuller Theological Seminary and associate minister at St Nicholas’ Church in Nottingham, England. These three roles are reflected in this commentary. Paul certainly pays attention to the exegetical and theological details of the text, but he is also interested in accurately communicating the book of Revelation in a pastoral context.

The fifty-six page introduction begins with the observation that Revelation has been an influential book on both culture and worship, but it is also one of the most neglected books of the New Testament. Outside of the first three chapters, few preach from the book of Revelation. For Paul, Revelation is an important book because it tests an exegete’s ability to read Scripture well. Perhaps the proof of this is the wide range of bad interpretations of Revelation over the long history of the church. But Revelation also has significant implications for how the Gospel interacts with culture.

Paul’s approach in the commentary is first to pay disciplined attention to the text. This close reading of what Revelation actually says is not always evident as commentators are often driven by theological assumptions. Second, Paul pays

attention to how John draws on the Old Testament and parallel texts in the New Testament. This is more than a search for allusions to the Old Testament in Revelation, since how John uses the Old Testament may tell us quite about his theological agenda. Third, Paul wants to understand how John's message would have been understood by the original audience. Again, this is often set aside by some commentators who are only interested in the eschatology of the book. This attention to the original historical and social context will inform the fourth element of Paul's approach, to make connections to the real world. How does Revelation preach in the contemporary world? In order to bridge the gap between the culture of first century Asia Minor and make appropriate applications to modern issues, the exegete hear the text as it was intended by the author in the first century.

With respect to other introductory details, Paul dates the book to the reign of Domitian, A.D. 85-95. Although this date certainly allows for the apostle John to be the author (the traditional view), the authority of book comes from what has been written rather than apostolic authorship. Paul does provide an argument that the Gospel of John and Revelation could be written by the same person, he admits the evidence is not conclusive.

Based on this date, Paul's introduction surveys the historical, social and economic context of late first century Asia Minor. This necessarily includes a short section on the pervasiveness of the imperial cult in the seven churches addressed in Revelation 2-3. Although he only has space for a short introduction to the issue, Paul emphasizes the importance of the imperial cult for understanding some of the imagery in the book. He also responds to recent discussions of the non-persecution of Christians during the reign of Domitian. Paul agrees there was no systemic, empire wide persecution of Christians, they nevertheless faces varying degrees of pressure, often economic, for their resistance to local gods and the imperial cult.

The introduction also includes a short section on the genre of Revelation. On the one hand, Revelation claims to be a vision, but on the other the book is constructed with extraordinary attention to details and remarkable subtly with respect to its allusions to the Hebrew Bible. Is the book "revelation or research"? For Paul, it is more important to attend carefully the text regardless of how John wrote the book. The book is apocalyptic, but it claims to be prophecy and it has some features of a letter. As such, the book makes claims about reality, even if those claims are made using complex metaphors.

Most commentaries on Revelation must deal with how the book relates to the future (or not). Paul offers short descriptions of idealist, futurist, historical and

preterist approaches along with four theological positions on the kingdom, premillennialism, amillennialism, postmillennialism, and dispensational premillennialism. Paul observes that although these eight possible positions are often presented as strategies for interpreting Revelation they are in fact conclusions about how the book should be interpreted. The interpreter brings their preterism or dispensationalism to Revelation rather than letting the book speak for itself. The book does speak to the Christians to whom it was addressed but it also has something to say about the future destiny of the world. In many ways the categories attempt to force Revelation into a theological slot which is not fully suited to the book. This blending of past, present and future is a healthy way to approach Revelation, although Paul does not always embrace the future aspects in the commentary.

The body of the commentary treats the English text (usually TNIV) in a verse-by-verse fashion. He divides each section into context, comment, and theology, although the first and last sections are usually just a short paragraph. When Paul deals with Greek or Hebrew words they appear in transliteration. Although this is certainly a scholarly commentary, in keeping with the style of the Tyndale series Paul does not often interact with other scholarship. This is refreshing since recent commentaries have become collections of views from other commentaries. Paul's comments are intended to illuminate the text of Revelation and enable a reader to make sense of some difficult problems.

Two examples will suffice to illustrate Paul's method. In commenting on the first four seals, the four horsemen, Paul rightly dismisses the possibility the white rider is Jesus and suggests it is an allusion to Apollo and refers to pagan religions. The next four horsemen clearly refer to war, famine and death, the conditions of Asia Minor in the late first century. He suggests a parallel to Jesus's teaching in the Olivet Discourse (using Matthew 24:5-29 and summarized in a simple chart, p. 148). The theological point John makes with this imagery is that the imperial myth of peace and prosperity is actually a myth. The Empire is full of chaos and suffering, only the sovereign God has power over this world. Certainly this is a message each generation of the church needs to embrace, no empire brings real peace and prosperity to this world. But Paul does not address any possible future hope in the first six seals despite the coming of the "great and terrible day of the Lord" in 6:16-17. Some scholars have suggested each of the seals, trumpets and bowls culminate in the return of Jesus. It is certainly possible understand the seals as pointing toward a future hope in the return of Jesus without embracing any complicated dispensational timeline drawn from Revelation 6.

With respect to the “number of the beast” in Revelation 13:16-18, Paul briefly explains the practice of Gematria and suggests the number refers to Nero Caesar in Hebrew. Both Nero Caesar and beast have a numerical value of 666 and identifying the number of the beast with Nero makes sense of some other elements of the chapter, such as the Nero Redivivus myth. Ultimately Revelation 13 is about human totalitarian rule which defies the sovereignty of God. The contemporary example for John is Nero and the Roman Empire, a message which will resonate in every generation of the church. Where Paul stops short is suggesting a future application of this defiant totalitarian rule to the ultimate enemy of God who will be defeated by God in the future.

Conclusion. Ian Paul’s commentary is an excellent guide to reading the text of Revelation. In keeping with the format of the Tyndale series, this is not an exhaustive commentary which delves into every nuance of the text. Compared to the commentaries by David Aune (WBC, now Zondervan, 1998; three volumes and 1600+ pages) or Greg Beale (NIGTC, Eerdmans, 1998, 800 pages), this book is a brief. But other than scholars, few people have time to wade through the depths of such massive commentaries. This short commentary in the Tyndale series is a joy to read, both pastors and laypeople will appreciate Paul’s lucid style.

Phillip J. Long, Ph.D
Professor of Biblical Studies
Grace Christian University

Osborne, Grant R. *Acts: Verse by Verse*. Osborne New Testament Commentaries; Bellingham, Wash.: Lexham Press, 2019. 545 pp.; Pb. \$19.99

The latest addition to the series of verse-by-verse commentaries by the late Grant Osborne is the Book of Acts. Lexham Press publishes this series simultaneously in both print and electronic Logos Library editions. Seven commentaries were published in 2017-18 (John, Romans, Galatians, Prison Epistles, Revelation), with volume on 1-2 Thessalonians and Luke coming soon.

In the nineteen page introduction to the commentary, Osborne states the book of Acts is a “historical narrative tracing how the Christ followers built ton their founder and became a worldwide force” (1). For Osborne, the book traces salvation history and the gospel-centered and Spirit-empowered mission of the church.

Peter and Paul are only successful because they are commissioned by Jesus and led by the Holy Spirit to bring the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Like many evangelicals who study Acts, Osborne is comfortable with Acts as both history and theology. He argues in favor of a traditional view authorship. Luke the companion of Paul (Colossians 4:14) is the author of the book, although he dates the book either before A. D. 62 or after Paul's death, A. D. 75-85. Osborne prefers the earlier date, but both are possible. Throughout the body of the commentary it is clear Osborne holds traditional views of the authorship of Paul's letters and the consensus view on most chronological problems. For example, commenting on Acts 19:21-22, he indicates "Paul was writing 1 Corinthians at this time" (349). He sides with the growing minority position by stating Galatians was written soon after Paul returned to Syrian Antioch, prior to the Jerusalem Council (269). Given the parameters of the commentary, he simply states his conviction without extensive argument.

In the first part of the commentary, Osborne uses the phrase "Christ follower" rather than Christian to describe the earliest community. He observes the church "has often been thought have originated at Pentecost, but that is not true. Pentecost is the launching of the church's mission to be the "witnesses" (1:8), but not the genesis of its formation. If that can be ascertained, it would have to come when Jesus chose the Twelve" (18). Osborne wants to highlight the continuity between Israel of the old Covenant and the "new Israel of the new Covenant." I understand what he is saying here, but it overlooks the fact the new Covenant was to be made with both the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

Even As Osborne recognizes in the same paragraph, the earliest Christ followers called themselves the Way (Acts 9:2), "considering itself the messianic sect within Judaism." There is more to the definition and nature of the church than Osborne can attempt in a very short introduction, but if he wants to reach back to the calling of the Apostles as a "genesis of the church" then the particularly Jewish nature of the church in the first twelve chapters of Acts will be diminished.

Like the other volumes in this series, the body of the commentary proceeds nearly verse-by-verse. Since Acts is much longer than other books Osborne has covered in the series so far, he is often forced to cover paragraphs rather than individual verses. This is really not a problem, although compared to some recent exegetical commentaries, this 543-page commentary seems brief. But this is not necessarily a bad thing since the goal of the commentary is to help a pastor, teacher, or interested layperson understand the main points of the text without going into

the minutia of the text.

Osborne occasionally comments on the Greek text, but all Greek appears in transliteration so all readers will be able to follow the argument. Footnotes appear rarely and deal with finer details. Since his goal is clear explanation of the text, Osborne does not interact with other commentaries or enter into arcane debates on early church history. For example, he does not deal with the possible anachronism of Paul's appointing Elders in Acts 14, simply noting that elders "followed Jewish practice for the most part" (265). He is able to deal with the Ephesian Riot in 19:23-20:1 in a few pages, without being overly distracted with a lengthy description of Artemis and her worship (Keener, in contrast, devotes more than seventy pages to the riot, including details on Artemis and her cult).

Conclusion. As with the other commentaries in this series, Osborne's Verse-by-Verse Commentary will serve pastors and teachers as they prepare sermons on the text of the Bible. Osborne certainly achieves his goal of helping pastors to "faithfully exposit the text in a sermon." Although scholars may find the brevity of the commentary frustrating, this commentary will be an excellent guide for anyone who desires to read John's Gospel with more insight and understanding.

Phillip J. Long, Ph.D.
Professor of Biblical Studies
Grace Christian University

Dunn, James D. G. *Jesus according to the New Testament*. Foreword by Rowan Williams. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2019. 211 pp. Pb; \$20.

Dunn observes in his postscript to his new book on Jesus that the impact Jesus initially made on his earliest followers continues to be felt today (p. 187). A study of Jesus cannot be simply a sequence of historical events or some ancient teachings with no significance for contemporary Christians. In fact, much of Dunn's work has focused on the memory of Jesus among his earliest followers. See, for example, his magisterial trilogy *Jesus Remembered* (2003), *Beginning from Jerusalem* (2009) and *Neither Jew nor Greek: A Contested Identity* (2016), his collection of essays on *The Oral Gospel Tradition* (2016) or his earlier collection, *Jesus, Paul, and the Gospels* (2011). This new book targets a broader audience. It is written in a more popular style and Dunn does include many footnotes.

The book begins with “Jesus according to Jesus.” For most non-scholars, this seems like the likely place to start, but as Dunn observes, there is some skepticism concerning how much of Jesus’s teaching actually appears in the Gospels (p. 25). Dunn lists a series of “lessons” and distinctive features of Jesus’s ministry as recalled by his earliest followers. Most of these are not at all controversial, such as the Love command, Jesus’s priority for the poor and his welcoming sinners and other outsiders (including gentiles, women and children). That Jesus was a teacher who spoke in parables is in all strands of the tradition, as well as his exorcising evil spirits. Dunn does not include Jesus’s healing ministry here, although it is closely related to his exorcisms. He also surveys some of Jesus’s titles which imply he understood himself to be the messiah, the one who was sent by God, the son of God and the son of Man.

Dunn surveys the nuances of the three Synoptic Gospels in chapter two and John in chapter three. Since the canonical Gospels were written at least thirty to forty years after Jesus, Dunn briefly explains his view of the oral traditions about Jesus which circulated in this time. For each Gospel he briefly sums up their distinctive contributions (Mark’s messianic secret, Matthew’s focus on Israel, Luke’s focus on Jesus’s mission to sinners, John’s entirely different approach to demonstrating Jesus as the Messiah).

In “Jesus according to Acts” Dunn begins by comparing the commissions of Peter and Paul which may express Luke’s conviction that the greater mission to the Gentiles was inspired by God (p. 77). It is the sermons in Acts which present the memory of Jesus, so Dunn examines these closely and makes note of the some disturbing absence of theology concerning the death of Jesus in the book. Luke presents the death of Jesus as fact, but it is not interpreted as it is in the Pauline letters.

Dunn includes two chapters on Jesus according to Paul, first focusing on the uniqueness of Paul’s Gospel as well as Paul’s own emphasis that his Gospel is not distinctive from the other apostles (with respect to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus). Much of these two chapters reviews Paul’s metaphors for salvation as well as Paul’s view of the future. For the details, Dunn’s *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Eerdmans, 2006) is an indispensable resource.

The book of Hebrews is perhaps the most distinctive book in the New Testament with respect to how it understands Jesus. It is the only book which focuses on Jesus as a high priest. Dunn thinks it is remarkable the book was included in the canon not only because of its anonymity, but also for this presentation of Jesus as a Jewish priest. He observes that in Judaism priestly ritual gave way to expounding the

word of God, but in Christianity the word was subordinated to the “revived priestly ritual” (155).

The contribution of James, Peter, John and Jude to the New Testament understanding of Jesus are combined into a single chapter. In fact, James has remarkably little to say about Jesus, at least directly. Dunn demonstrates James new the Jesus tradition, at least in its oral form, by drawing parallels between James and the Sermon on the Mount. So too for 1 Peter and 1 John (2-3 John are more or less ignored). Jude and 2 Peter are a troublesome pair of letters; Dunn asks “how much of Christianity would have been lost if Jude and 2 Peter had not been included in the canon?”

Finally, Dunn describes how the book of Revelation understands Jesus. This chapter is frustratingly brief considering how much Revelation says about Jesus. Dunn comments briefly on the initial vision of Jesus in chapter 1 and the letters to the seven churches before tracing the Lamb of God theme through the book. Much more could be said about how the end of the book presents Jesus as a conquering king who returns to restore God’s kingdom to the world.

Dunn hints this book could be extended into the early church (so, “Jesus according to Ignatius”), but also to any reader of the book (“Jesus according to Me”). Since everything we know about Jesus is due to the personal testimony of his followers, why not call on contemporary readers of the New Testament to continue to bear witness to the story of Jesus? This short book succeeds in laying a foundation for this contemporary reflection on Jesus.

Phillip J. Long, Ph.D.
Professor of Biblical Studies
Grace Christian University

Pitre, Brant. *The Case for Jesus: The Biblical and Historical Evidence for Christ*. New York: Image, 2016. 242pp. \$16.90 Pb.

Dr. Brant Pitre, a Distinguished Research Professor of Scripture at The Augustine Institute, received his Ph.D. in New Testament and ancient Judaism from the University of Notre Dame, Indiana. He teaches, writing, and giving lectures on the Bible and the Jewish roots of Christianity. Pitre’s book is 13 chapters answering one big question: Did Jesus of Nazareth claim to be God?

When Pitre was an undergraduate student at Louisiana State University, he re-

members being excited to enter an introductory course on the Bible. He would soon hear the words from the professor, “‘forget everything you thought you knew about who wrote the gospels.’ Although your English Bible says, ‘The Gospel according to “Matthew,” “Mark,” “Luke,” and “John”’ those titles were actually added much later. In fact, we don’t really know who wrote the Gospels. Nowadays, modern scholars agree that the Gospels were originally anonymous.”

Pitre was surprised by these words. He writes, “Christianity is a historical religion which claims that the God who made the universe actively became a man—a real human being who lived in a particular time in a particular place. As a result, searching for the historical truth about Jesus made sense to me. So, somewhat blindly, that’s what I set out to do.” And, he did an excellent research!

Pitre shares with the reader a brief look at his quest. He deals with scholars like Dr. Amy-Jill Levine (positive) of Vanderbilt, and Dr. Bart Ehrman (negative) an atheist. He also reiterates C. S. Lewis’ options about Jesus’s claims: He is either a liar (Jesus knew he wasn’t God, but said he was), a lunatic (Jesus thought he was God, but he wasn’t) or the Lord (Jesus was who he said he was, God come in the flesh). And, then he shares his discovery of a fourth option, Jesus is only a legend (the stories about Jesus in the Gospels in which he claims to be God are legends).

At the end of his studies at Vanderbilt, Pitre was left with this question: “Do I really even believe in Jesus anymore?” His quest continued on. He asked and answered: “Were the Gospels really anonymously authored?” He discovered there are no anonymous copies in existence, and will show the historical evidence to the reader.

From here Pitre will take two chapters looking at the clues: What clues are found in the Gospels manuscripts (internal evidence) and what clues from ancient Christian writers being closest to the time of Jesus himself (external evidence) exist, supporting the titles of the Gospels. His goal is to answer the question: “If the Gospels were not originally anonymous, then to whom does the internal and external evidence point?” He again will share with the reader the evidence from source documents.

He will help us understand the “genre” of the Gospels. He states, “Genre matters.” Are the Gospels folklore, ancient biographies, historical biographies, or verbatim transcripts? Genre matters because it is evidence for the reliability of the Gospels. His quest investigated the dating of the Gospels. Here the reader will discover some very interesting material. Pitre explains the three stages in the Formation of the Gospels; How the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 gives evidence

to the early dating of the Synoptic Gospels, and he will deal with the Synoptic problem, and the ending of the Acts of the Apostles.

In the chapter, “Jesus and the Jewish Messiah”, the reader continues the quest by looking at the Kingdom of God, Daniel’s Son of Man, and the Death of the Messiah. This chapter looks at Daniel’s prophecies about the Messiah.

In chapter 9 Pitre deals with the heart of the question: “Did Jesus of Nazareth claim to be God?” Do the Synoptic Gospels speak of Jesus as Divine? What does the stilling of the storm have to do with Jesus being God? What about his *ego eimi* statements? Chapters 10-12 also deal with the secret of Jesus’ Divinity. Was Jesus pre-existent? What does the crucifixion have to do with his Divinity? Why he was crucified? How do we explain his words: “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” Chapter 12 deals with the reality of the resurrection. Questions to be answered are: What the resurrection is not; What the resurrection is; Why does anyone believe in the resurrection of Jesus? Pitre lays out the historical flow of the resurrection appearances. He will discuss the implications of the Sign of Jonah and the Sign of the Son of Man to the historical reality of the resurrection and the Gospel witness.

However, it is the last chapter of the book that is amazing. What needs to be eliminated to make the Gospels anonymous? What needs to be eliminated to make Jesus’s claims of divinity false? Pitre says “Jesus understood his identity as a mystery needed to be revealed.”

This work is well worth the money, time and internalizing the case for Jesus. Pitre’s supplies us with more apologetic evidence to make real our faith.

Dr. G. Edward Wishart, D. Min.

A Pastoral Mentor to Those Who

Desire to Survive the Crucifixions of Life and Ministry

Elyria, OH

Johnston, Jeremiah J. *Unimaginable: What Our World Would Be Like Without Christianity*. Minneapolis, MN.: Bethany House Publishers, 2017. Hb 238pp. \$19.99.

Jeremiah J. Johnston has a Ph.D. from Middlesex University, United Kingdom and currently serves as president of Christian Thinkers Society. The goal of this book is to show “how the world without Christianity would be a dark place, Un-

imaginable guides you through the halls of history to see how Jesus' teachings dramatically changed our world and continue to be the most powerful force for good today." The book is divided into three parts: Part 1: The World before Christianity. Part 2: The World without Christianity. Part 3: The World with Christianity.

Part one describes the world before Christianity. There are five chapters devoted to this theme. Johnston discusses topics of civilization and religion, which came first; what was an ancient law, where did it come from? How did the ancients perceive pain and suffering, healing, superstition over science, as well as death and hell? Johnston exams the Greco-Roman gods who had no love for humans, thus humanity possessed an abundance of fear. Humanity struggled with right or wrong, and had an unhealthy fear of the dead, and how curses and spells functioned in daily life. It is in chapter three, that Johnston briefly deals with several Roman emperors (Julius Caesar, Octavian, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Vespasian) and all who brought fear of the gods upon the population. Johnston discusses the abundance of inequalities found in every walk of life: slave and free, wealthy and poor, male and female, Theist or Atheist. There Injustices abounded. Finally, Johnston takes us into Racism. Even though this section of the book is about the world before Christianity, he discusses George-Louis Leclers, David Hume, Voltaire, Immanuel Kant, Auguste Comte, Karl Vogt, Ludwig Buchner and their contributions to racism.

Part 2 (The World without Christianity) comprises six chapters. Johnston draws our attention to the depravity of man. He takes two chapters to deal with five men who still to this day, have impacted man's inhumanity to man. He writes, "These men could be regarded as the Big Five in terms of significantly moving the world away from a Judeo-Christian worldview, and by doing so, opening the door for the hell that would descend upon humanity in the 20th century." Who are the "Big Five"? Ludwig Feuerbach, Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud. Each of the Big Five impacted the Judeo-Christian worldview with paganism, racism, and the de-humanizing of humanity.

To sum up the next four chapters, Johnston writes about the legacy of the Big Five as seen in the disciples of these men, their rejection of God, and the New Atheists, and the man that is the culmination of the Big Five, Adolf Hitler became the incarnation of the Big Five, especially the incarnation of Nietzsche's "Superman." Johnston also examines other contemporaries of Hitler: Mussolini, Stalin, Mao Zedong, Ho Chi Minh, and more. All who have partaken of the fruit of the "Big Five," have given us the Cult of Death.

In the third part Johnston describes the world with Christianity in six chapters.

Chapter 12 is titled “Jesus’ Tour de Force: Good News for All People.” This title really gives the reader an idea about the remaining chapters of *Unimaginable*. With the darkness behind, now the light will shine. “The first descriptor that should permeate our minds when we think of Christianity should forever be a transformation. . . the Christian faith is the holistic transformation the Jesus factor unleashes in life. . . through restorative grace, forgiveness, and altogether new life,” states Johnston.

In these chapters, as he named persons who were anti Judeo-Christian faith, now, he names some blessings that God placed into this world: Abram, Abraham, Paul, Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Tacitus, Phoebe, Mary and Martha, Florence Nightingale, and many others. Johnston takes us on a journey where Christianity has changed issues such as slavery, racism, de-humanization; or has started new works in the name of Christ, such as educational institutions, medical advances, and so much more.

Jesus transforms lives, society and culture. He is the Good News, the New Hope, the New Life, the end to Slavery and Racism, the Freedom that women need, and the Healing in our lives. Yes, it is with the mind of Christ that even we who are reading this review, may need some healing from the effects of the anti-Judeo-Christian Worldview. This book is well researched, well documented, and Johnston understands the flow of history, and the Transformation that comes through the mind of Christ and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. This is a must read for all believers. Is God dying, Johnston asks? When you finish this book, you will know that God is not dying, because we are his transformative army spiritually fighting against the forces of evil.

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Elyria, OH

Duesing, Jason G. *Mere Hope: Life in an Age of Cynicism*. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2018. 172 pp. Hb. \$9.99.

Chapter 1, of *Mere Hope* opens with a partial quote from Romans 5:5a, “Hope does not put us to shame.” This is found in the English Standard Version. For the most part we are more familiar with something like unto this: “Hope maketh not ashamed” (KJV) or “Hope does not disappoint” (NASB, HGSB). I must admit,

The Message caught my eye and my mind: “In alert expectancy such as this, we’re never left feeling shortchanged.”

Duesing, in a various gracious, meaningful, and thoughtful process, does not leave us “feeling shortchanged.” He has accomplished the sentiment of Romans 15:13, “Now may the God of hope fill you with the joy and peace in believing, so you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (NASB); “Oh! May the God of green hope fill you up with joy, fill you up with peace, so that your believing lives, filled with the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit, will brim over with hope” (MSG).

Duesing leads us into a simpler but profound understanding of hope. Here is how he completed that task in *Mere Hope*. In the foreword to his book Duesing briefly discusses that we are living in an age of despair and cynicism. He implores us to remember the hope that the believer has within.

In Chapter 1, “Mere Hope Lives,” Duesing gives us a little historical lesson on why the “Phoenix serve as a fitting emblem for what he calls mere hope.” He shares about an age of cynicism we are now living in, and he draws upon *The Lord of the Rings* and its imagery of conflict, depravity, and joy, to establish “the certainty that hope still lives.” Duesing defines the word “Mere”, the word “Hope”, and then, “Mere Hope” as a combination. He introduces us to: “Look Down” at the foundation of our hope; “Look In” to discover the fountain of our hope; “Look Out” to discern the flourishing of our hope; and, “Look Up” to see the focus of our hope; followed by a final chapter on “Mere Hope” in an age of cynicism.

In chapter 2, “Look Down: Mere Hope’s Foundation,” Duesing takes the reader into a little of *The Lord of the Rings* to discover a connection to hope. In this chapter, the reader discovers the connection between hope and the doctrine of propitiation (“its impact is tsunamic”), incarnation (“a human had to be involved in the atonement for human sin”), and mediation (“the idea of Jesus as High Priest is connected to identification with humanity”). Here he introduces the reader to a concept called *eucaastrophe* (p. 25) which he develops fully later in the book.

In “Look In: Mere Hope’s Fountain” (chapter 3) Duesing argues that within resides ‘Christ Jesus our hope.’” The discussion continues that hope is within us because He lives. Duesing therefore touches upon the doctrine of regeneration for further understanding of our living hope, inheritance, salvation, suffering, and how they function in “enduring the onslaught of a cynical age.” He closes the chapter with statements by Jared C. Wilson from “Can I Tell You about My Friend Jesus.”

Next, the reader learns about cities of refuge in the age of cynicism and that God

is their refuge (Ch. 4, “Look Out: Mere Hope’s Flourishing.”) Duesing observes there are still those who proclaim hope to the lost, perilous, unstable, and darkened world. There is a gospel to be proclaimed. “Look Out” into the age of cynicism (see the need, proclaim) Christ has a message to be accomplished through us. Believers are challenged to personally “make it my ambition to preach the gospel” and the inherent hope found within to those without. Are we willing to reach the unreached in our neighborhoods, our cities, our states, our nations, and other countries? Are we willing to “Look Out” at the hurting, depressed, needy, and even cynics to share with them their need for the gospel of hope? “For in the darkness, peace is coming, and hope is flourishing.”

In Chapter 5, “Look Up: Mere Hope’s Focus,” Duesing argues “God was able to do what he had promised” (Rom 4:18-21). The challenge is: Do not allow an age of cynicism, the growing evangelical stoicism, the condition of losing heart, stop one from looking up to God to continue to fulfill his promises in our day. Do not allow a spirit of fear to hinder Christ in us, the hope of glory being shared wherever we are. Share hope in and through our joys and suffering. Refocus our minds and live out the gospel of grace and rest in God’s power. Christ Jesus abolished death, Christ Jesus brought life and immortality to light, and through the gospel “death died and life was illumined. Refocusing on the gospel defeats self-reliance, stoicism, Cynicism, and many other -isms. Duesing is calling us to remember “God is Able! Focus on Hope!”

In his final chapter, “Living Mere Hope” Duesing describes the *Catasterous Disastrophe* that defines our age of cynicism. But he also argues that out this age will come a *eucaastrophe*, a word coined by Duesing. After he defines what he means by this term, he points to the application: Remember, Pray, Sing, and Share. The last sentences of page 145 catch the spriit of this word: “The Birth of Christ is the *eucaastrophe* of Man’s history. The Resurrection is the *eucaastrophe* of the Incarnation. This story begins and ends in joy.” The last sentence of the book is “Until that day, we live with a new mere hope.”

I highly recommend the reading of *Mere Hope*. It is calling us to re-center our spirits and minds in an age of cynicism. “Be strong and let your heart take courage, All you who hope in the Lord” (Ps 31:24).

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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. A full article will be between 4000 and 6000 words including footnotes. Longer articles may also be considered. A “short note” on a text or topic will be between 1000 and 2000 words. Book reviews should be about 1000 words. Several books are available for review; contact the editor for more information.

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- All submissions ought to be double spaced and using Times New Roman, 12 point. For Greek and Hebrew, use a Unicode font (Times, for example). Transliteration of Greek or Hebrew is acceptable (use www.transliterate.com).
- Use footnotes rather than endnotes
- For other questions of style, consult the SBL Handbook of Style. The guide is available at the SBL site: http://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/SBLHSrevised2_09.pdf
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General Inquires may be made to the editor: Phillip J. Long, 1011 Aldon SW, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49509; plong@gracechristian.edu