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## Editorial

This issue is devoted to a potpourri of articles contributed by a various people from different educational institutions.

W. Creighton Marlowe, professor of Old Testament at the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit in Leuven, Belgium, provides an article in which he maintains that meditation in the Psalms is objectively based on written, divine revelation; and, therefore, comes closer to what we would call Bible study and reflection.

Nathan Finn, instructor of Church History at SEBTS, furnishes an essay in which he argues that Robert Hall, Sr. played a crucial role in promoting evangelical sentiments within the Northamptonshire Baptist Association in the late eighteenth century.

Doug Kutilek, adjunct professor at MBTS' Wichita, Kansas extension site contributes an article in which he does an inductive study of the use of *monogenēs* in the New Testament. He argues that the term is one that completely excludes any notion of "begetting" or "begotten" with regard to Jesus and instead conveys the meaning of "unique" and "dear" when referring to the Son of God.

Chris Carr, a doctoral student at MBTS who serves as a strategy coordinator in Ufa, Russia with the International Mission Board, provides interviews with and significant insights from three leaders in global missions: Kevin Greeson, David Garrison, and Eckhard Schnabel.

Finally, Radu Gheorghiiță, associate professor of New Testament at MBTS, contributes a sermon titled, "An Epistle to Remember," in which he imagines what it might be like to have been Tertius, Paul's secretary in the letter to the Romans.

What a privilege to continue serving you as editor of this journal for one more issue. If you would like to have a faculty member of Midwestern Seminary speak in your church, please do not hesitate to contact us. God bless!

Terry L. Wilder, Editor

## **Meditation in the Psalms**

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### **Abstract**

*Meditation, even in evangelical circles, is often thought of in a manner not too far removed from what is practiced in Eastern religions, whereby the practitioner empties his or her mind and enters a subjective realm of waiting on insight from the Spirit or spiritual world. This article, through a study of the Hebrew words most often translated as “meditation” or “meditate,” demonstrates that biblical meditation is nothing of the sort, especially as contextually considered in the book of Psalms. Meditation in the Psalms is objectively based on written, divine revelation; and, therefore, comes closer to what we would call Bible study and reflection. In short, “meditate” is a misleading translation in light of its current, English usage. Helpful appendices comparing four major English versions are included.*

### **Introduction**

The English word “meditate” is thought to derive from the Latin *meditari*—a stem of *meditari*, from the root *med-* which is the basis for a number of words having to do with thought or care: e.g., Greek μεδεσθαί (“to think about” or “to care for”) and Latin *mederi* (“to cure”). The Latin uses are thought to have associations with ancient Greek μέλετον (< μελετή; “care, study, exercise”) from which the Latin term was supposedly derived.<sup>1</sup>

The way in which we use the word “meditation” today may or may not have any similarity with the meaning of Hebrew and Greek words in the Bible, which we sometimes translate “meditate.” Note that if you compare English versions they will not all use “meditate” to render the same verses or terms. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter *OED*) the history of the usage of “meditate” in English involves four meanings, the first two of which are rare today: (1) to consider, study, ponder, reflect upon; (2) to plan, conceive, or design mentally; (3) to entertain as an opinion, or think; and (4) to exercise the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. various standard and collegiate English dictionaries.

mental faculties in thought or contemplation, especially religious.<sup>2</sup> This latter is what people today first think of and usually signify when the term “meditate” is employed. “Meditation” is defined in the *OED* as “serious and sustained reflection or mental contemplation on a subject or series of subjects.”<sup>3</sup> The *Webster’s Ninth Collegiate Dictionary* explains “meditation” as “a discourse intended to express the author’s reflections or to guide others in contemplation.”<sup>4</sup> But is that what the biblical writers meant when they used the terms we translate as “meditate” (if indeed that is an appropriate translation)?

The concept of biblical meditation is mostly an Old Testament idea and seems to be more a Jewish than Christian practice. Only two New Testament passages include terminology that may be rendered “meditate.” In the RSV all but four occurrences of words for “meditate” or “meditation” are in the Psalms, as might be expected. As proper exegesis demands we must look at these various contexts to determine what kind of activity is suggested by the words we translate as “meditation” or “meditate.” It may be that different kinds of meditation are described. Or it may be that “meditate” is an inadequate substitute for these Greek and Hebrew words, used only because we have no better match in current English. The OT and NT contexts, not contemporary usage, are the clue to what these words indicate. One of the great dangers of Bible study in a translation rather than the original languages is that the student is tempted to infuse the ancient vocabulary of the source language with modern meanings of the receptor language, which may have nothing to do with the intended meaning of the biblical authors and the Spirit who guided them in using their own language as it was understood when they wrote to their contemporaries.

### **Investigation of Meditation in the Psalms**

In the OT five Hebrew words are sometimes translated “meditate” or “meditation”: (1) שׁוּב, 15x; (2) הִתְהַלֵּךְ, 10x; and three other terms, but only one time each; (3) אָמַר; (4) בִּקֶּרֶךְ; and (5) דַּמְדַּם.<sup>5</sup> For these latter three few versions use “meditate,” so these need not be considered for the purposes of this essay.

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<sup>2</sup> *Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, The*. Vol. I: A-O (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 1759.

<sup>3</sup> *OED*, 1759.

<sup>4</sup> *Webster’s Ninth Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1983), 738.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the various standard, academic Hebrew lexica and concordances.

### *The Use of הָגָה for Meditation*

Hebrew הָגָה is used of human or animal speech sounds or sounds in nature, as well as for ideas like plot, imagine, or make music. This has led some commentators to make the silly assumption that biblical meditation, therefore, involves private reading with a murmur or undertone. As will be seen, however, it does involve reading and reciting.<sup>6</sup> There are only three passages in the OT where this verb is translated “meditate” or “meditates” by all four of the major English versions consulted for this study: the KJV, NRSV, NASB, and NIV; and only one passage where the rendering “meditation” is agreed upon for the nominal counterpart.

NIV has “meditate(s)” for הָגָה four times in the OT: Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2; 77:12; and 143:5. NRSV has it five times: Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2; 38:12; 63:6; and 77:12. KJV has it six times but not the same six: Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2; 63:6; 77:12; 143:5; and Isa. 33:18. NASB has it for the same six as the KJV. NIV has “meditation” for הָגָה one time in the OT: Psalm 19:14. NRSV has it two times: Psalm 19:14 and 49:3. KJV has it three times: Psalm 5:1; 19:14; and 49:3. NASB has it the same two as NRSV. So the four verses shared by all of these are: Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2; 19:14; and 77:12. These are the most important, then, for our immediate attention.

*Psalm 1:2.* In Psalm 1:2 the action “meditate on the law of the LORD” is synthetically or synonymously paired poetically with “delight in the law of the LORD.” This meditation is further described as taking place “day and night” or continually—not non-stop but daily and regularly and habitually. Its character is also seen as similar to or growing out of an attitude of “delight”; which is the rendering given to this attitude by all four of the versions consulted. Notice again that this practice is focused on the spoken word of God. Instead of following the unfortunate and wicked advice of pagan religion (vv. 1, 4-6), the righteous (vv. 1, 5-6) are fortunate (v. 1, “happy” is a poor translation) and find correct counsel in the law of Yahweh (v. 2). This guidance does not float into the righteous people’s minds while they “wait on the Lord” so to speak but while they are diligently and delightfully engaged in prolonged and purposeful investigation of verbal revelation.

*Psalm 19:14.* In Psalm 19:14 the noun form of הָגָה “meditation” is coupled with “words.” “Words of my mouth” is repeated or amplified by “meditation of my heart.” This seems to be typical Semitic restatement

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<sup>6</sup> For what it’s worth, the ancient Semitic cognate term in Ugaritic means “to count” or “reckon.”

and, therefore, should be treated as synonymous. In Hebrew thought the “heart” is not the seat of emotions or feelings as in our Western culture. The heart could be connected to the thought process. So to “meditate in the heart” should not be seen as something very different than thinking or reflecting on an issue. And here as often this is related to “words of the mouth,” which is the verbalization of cognition. These are two sides of the same coin. Thoughts are silent words. Words are written or spoken thoughts. And these thoughts are based on words revealed by God (vv. 7-13). Again this  $\text{הִגִּיד}$  is grounded in the “law of the LORD” (v. 7). God’s servant is warned or advised or counseled regarding error by them (vv. 11-12). Apart from God’s word less noble advisors will influence God’s servants and they will not know how to live blamelessly or acceptably (v. 13). So in v. 14 this “meditation” or the servant’s thoughts (silent or spoken) cannot be truthful or acceptable to God, the Rock and Redeemer, unless controlled and conditioned by the objective and authoritative verbal record of Scripture. True “meditation” or  $\text{הִגִּיד}$  (ever how you translate it) is not a matter of receiving thoughts or ideas or developing opinions which are inspired by exposure to the Bible but a matter of reviewing and repeating the truths clearly and directly taught by the Bible. New ideas are not the goal; just obedience to the old ideas.

*Psalm 77.* Three verses in Psalm 77 have words that various versions render as “meditate” in one or more of the instances. However, only v. 12 has the Hebrew verb  $\text{הִגִּיד}$ . In the other verses there is more disagreement among the translations, where other than “meditate” concepts like “complain” [KJV], “commune” [KJV], “sigh” [NASB], and “think” or “muse” [NIV] appear. Of the four versions consulted only the NRSV uses “meditate” in both vv. 3 and 6. The KJV and NIV use it in neither and NASB uses it only in v. 6. All of these as noted use it in v. 12. This verse is an obvious example of synonymous parallelism. The verb  $\text{הִגִּיד}$  “meditate” is paired with the other principal Hebrew word rendered “meditate,” which is the same one used in vv. 3 and 6:  $\text{פָּשַׁע}$ . The KJV renders this parallel term as “talk”; NRSV and NASB as “muse”; and NIV as “consider.” Since it also can be translated “meditate” (and is in the OT more times than  $\text{הִגִּיד}$ ), the translators could have used “meditate” for it in the second line and paired it with other similar concepts in the first line; consequently rendering  $\text{הִגִּיד}$  as  $\text{פָּשַׁע}$  has been rendered. Here these terms are meant as synonyms, and an astute Bible teacher will not make the mistake of thinking that the use of different parallel terms by the Hebrew poet signifies he means something different by “meditating on works” than “musing on deeds.” Many probably chose “muse” here because it alliterates with “meditate.”

“Works” parallels and thus is synonymous with “deeds”—two ways of saying the same thing. And what is this “one thing” the poet intends to communicate? He pledges to give thought to matters which are past events, acts which are objective realities. He will not wait for a subjective insight; he will recall and recite what God has done. This is predicated in v. 11: “I will call to mind the deeds of Yahweh // I will remember his past wonders.” The current usage and connotations of “meditation” or “meditate” make them inappropriate substitutes for Hebrew  $\text{הִגַּד}$ . The verses leading up to vv. 11 and 12 in this psalm also indicate the writer’s sense when he uses  $\text{הִגַּד}$  and  $\text{בָּשַׂח}$ : “I cry aloud” (v. 1); “I seek” (v. 2); “I think” (v. 3); “I consider” (v. 5); “I remember” (v. 5); “I search” (v. 6); and “I say” (v. 10). You will notice that most of these concepts are ones used to translate  $\text{הִגַּד}$  and  $\text{בָּשַׂח}$  when they are not rendered as “meditate.” In Psalm 4:4 the usual Hebrew word for “say” ( $\text{אָמַר}$ ) is translated as “meditate” by NASB. In Psalm 27:4 a Hebrew word for “seek” or “inquire” ( $\text{בִּקַּח}$ ) is translated “meditate” by the NASB. Again the notions of thinking and speaking about God’s revelation are what color  $\text{הִגַּד}$ .

In a few cases three of these four major versions consulted render  $\text{הִגַּד}$  as “meditate” or “meditation”: Psalm 63:6; 143:5; and 49:3. In two of these three instances the NIV is the “rebel” rendition, using “think” or “utterance.” In the third case the NRSV uses “think.” These passages are also worth consideration (or should I say “meditation”?).

*Psalm 63:6.* Here the NIV has “think” rather than the “meditate” employed by KJV, NASB, and NRSV. Compare this with the NRSV, where the parallel term to  $\text{הִגַּד}$  (“meditate”),  $\text{זָכַר}$ , is translated “think.” The NIV keeps the usual “remember” for this twin term in the synonymous parallelism of this verse. The NASB and KJV are the same: “remember // meditate.” So translators are comfortable with “think” for either of the parallel terms here:  $\text{זָכַר} // \text{הִגַּד}$ . And again thinking and speaking are interrelated in connection with  $\text{הִגַּד}$  or “meditation” in the OT. In the bookend verses to v. 6 (vv. 5 and 7) the psalmist sings God’s praise.

*Psalm 143:5.* In this verse  $\text{הִגַּד}$  has a similar context as Psalm 77. In a time of trouble the psalmist finds refuge and comfort in reflecting on God’s past activities; i.e., how he revealed himself in history. Verse 5 is a rare OT poetic line composed of three, rather than the normal two, parallel members. Since it is synonymous parallelism, we have three words used as synonyms; two words are paired with  $\text{הִגַּד}$ : one is the

same as in Psalm 77, פִּשׁ, and the other is זָכַר, the usual word for “remember.” In this context הִגִּד has to do with remembering and whatever פִּשׁ means. Since it is often rendered “meditate” we have to figure out what other meanings it conveys to understand biblical “meditation” (if we are going to use that term). When פִּשׁ is not rendered “meditate” in passages where some other versions do so, it is given notions like “sigh, talk, or speak.” The NRSV renders הִגִּד “think” and פִּשׁ “meditate” in Psalm 143:5. For the latter the NIV has “consider” and both the KJV and NASB have “muse.” The fact that in v. 7 the psalmist cries out to God “answer me quickly!” and begins in v. 1 with “hear my prayer” indicates that the verbs of verse 5 suggest verbalizations of prayer. “I stretch out my hands” in v. 6 pictures the posture for prayer in the OT and the ancient Near East cultures. The KJV even renders פִּשׁ as “prayer” in Job 15:4. It cannot be escaped that הִגִּד or “meditation” in this context, as in others, is clearly characterized by the silent or audible reciting of God’s attributes as revealed in his word or his world.

*Psalm 49:3.* This verse has the noun “meditation” for הִגִּד rather than the verbal form. Instead of “meditation” the NIV goes with “utterance.” This is significant since the parallel lines here are similar to the coupled phrases of Psalm 19:14, where “meditation of the heart” (which means the mind) is tied to verbal expression, which in turn extends from God’s revelation in the world (19:1-6) and through his word (19:7-11). Likewise in Psalm 49 the “meditation of the heart” which leads to understanding is parallel and synonymous with the psalmist’s mouth speaking wisdom. This verse (49:3) is pivotal to vv. 1-2, where the psalmist makes proclamation to the nations, and v. 4, in which the psalmist grounds his utterance of wisdom on the objectivity of a sapient saying or proverb.

### *The Use of פִּשׁ for Meditation*

The other main Hebrew word translated “meditate” or “meditation” is פִּשׁ. This is a difficult term for translation for there are two Hebrew roots with similar spellings;<sup>7</sup> and which is intended in each context is hard to determine absolutely: פִּשׁ (to converse; speak; lament; meditate

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Koehler, L. and W. Baumgartner, eds., *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. English translation in 5 vols., vol. 3: פִּשׁ (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996); s.v. פִּשׁ.

with thanks or praise; taunt) or פִּי'שׁ (praise; lament; worry; talk). The noun based on this latter term is sometimes translated (correctly?) “thoughtful contemplation” or “meditation.” According to A. R. P. Diamond:

Fluctuating between the act of speaking and thinking, [פִּי'שׁ] takes on more specific connotations in contextual usage. . . . In the Psalms, the vb. is used by the psalmist primarily in a transitive sense (11x), for reflection on the saving deeds of Yahweh on behalf of Israel, and secondarily in an intransitive sense (2x), to speak of the psalmist’s act of complaint or lamentation (55:17 [18]; 77:3 [4]; cf. Job 7:11; see below on the nom.). Specific context determines whether the focus is on thought (77:6 [7]) or speech (105:2). In either case, the action in view ranges from dramatic action depicted within the psalm to the psalm itself and its recitation in cultic worship. This mental/verbal reflection on Yahweh’s saving deeds identifies the psalmist as a deserving suppliant for divine aid (143:5), provides the basis for comfort and encouragement in context of suffering (77:12 [13]), and gives the motive for and substance of communal praise of Israel’s God (105:2; 145:5). Within the context of Israel’s ritual psalmody, [פִּי'שׁ] constitutes one of the vbs. of worship.<sup>8</sup>

There are (besides Gen. 24:63, which is highly questionable) fifteen passages where פִּי'שׁ is translated “meditate” or “meditation” by at least one of the four major English versions consulted for this investigation. In eight of these all four versions render this Hebrew root as “meditate” or “meditation.” In two other cases only the KJV has something else. In two cases the verb is rendered as a noun and vice versa by one or more of these versions. In two other instances this root is parallel to הִגִּד, which is translated “meditate” or “meditation,” except in one passage where NRSV gives “meditate” for פִּי'שׁ and “think” for הִגִּד. All this means that twelve different passages are important for understanding פִּי'שׁ as “meditation” and what that implies if that English term is to be retained in modern versions.

The KJV has “meditate” or “meditation” for פִּי'שׁ eight times in the OT: Psalm 104:34; and 119:15, 23, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148. The NRSV has these ideas in fourteen verses: Job 15:4; Psalm 77:3, 6; 104:34; 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148; 143:5; and 145:5. The NASB has these in twelve verses: Job 15:4; Psalm 77:6; 104:34; 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148; and 145:5. The NIV has these in ten verses: Psalm 104:34;

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<sup>8</sup> פִּי'שׁ by A. R. Pete Diamond in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Willem A. VanGemeren, gen. ed., vol. 3 (United Kingdom: Paternoster Press, 1996), 1234. Hereafter cited as *NIDOTTE*.

119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148; and 145:5. The eight verses shared by all are: Psalm 104:34; and 119:15, 23, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148. To these four should be added for reasons stated above: Psalm 77:12; 119:27; 143:5; and 145:5.

*Psalm 77:12.* All four versions render הִגֵּד as “meditate” but פִּשׁוּ is its semantic and synonymous parallel term. What was said above in regard to the meaning of “meditation” for הִגֵּד in this verse is applicable here as well for פִּשׁוּ.

*Psalm 104:34.* “Meditation” is used in this verse by all four of the versions consulted. It is coupled with the activity of rejoicing. The immediately previous verse (33) speaks of the psalmist singing praise. Much of the psalm deals with God’s revelation of himself in the world through his mighty works. Here “meditation” (פִּשׁוּ) is like הִגֵּד in being connected with notions of the verbal and public proclamation of known truth about God’s ways and wisdom.

*Psalm 119.* This psalm contains the most references to “meditation” in any one place in Scripture. All the versions consulted agree on “meditation” or “meditate” for 7 verses in this psalm, and three agree on an additional verse (27). So, eight verses may be examined: 15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 97, 99, and 148.

**119:15.** This verse is a synonymous parallelism which pairs פִּשׁוּ and מִבְּרַח. The KJV reads “meditate // have respect”; the NRSV reads “meditate // fix my eyes”; the NASB reads “meditate // regard”; and the NIV reads “meditate // consider.” The object of this activity is God’s “precepts // ways.” It is interesting that God’s spoken revelation is made parallel with his revelatory acts in history. The line between words and deeds, or character and conduct, is blurred. What God decrees he must act in accordance with. Belief and behavior are always inseparable in the Bible. This is why James said, “Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith” (2:18; NRSV).<sup>9</sup> Not that works earn God’s favor but that true internal faith is always discernable in external ways. Jesus said by their influence on others you determine which people are not genuinely rooted in Christ (cf. Matt 7:15-16). Jesus also said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (Jn 14:15). We say “actions speak louder than words.” If words and deeds do not match, we call people hypocrites (as Jesus did; cf. Matt 7:5). The NIV renders פִּשׁוּ as “devotion” in Job 15:4. One OT psalmist

<sup>9</sup> Unless otherwise indicated all Bible verses quoted are from the NRSV.

said “I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you” (Ps 119:11). Deeds are the proof of words. The two are the opposite sides of the same coin. Jesus is the “Word of God made flesh.” No stronger illustration or example could be devised of the mutual relationship between our Lord’s law and life. In older times verbal contracts were binding and accepted. Today we have drifted so far away from an expectation that people will do what they say that such contracts are unthinkable, even among Christians. I once heard the chairman of an elder board say to the congregation, “my problem is that I am very suspicious of you.” At any rate in this passage the concept of concentrated consideration is synonymous with “meditation.” The context is about God’s written revelation. Surrounding verses speak of delighting in, rejoicing in, and not neglecting God’s objective decrees, statutes, ordinances, and laws. Whatever “meditation” is it involves an intense focus on what has been said and recorded as Scripture, not on what might be imagined as possibly in line with what is being read. The Christian meditates on what the Bible says. Meditation is not just whatever drifts into the mind as one reflects after one reads a Bible verse or passage. Biblical meditation seems to be the actual rehearsal of, not reflection on, Scripture. In this way  $\text{נָּוֶן}$  and  $\text{נָּוֶן}$  are similar to worship or praise. As the *NIDOTTE* was cited earlier: “Within the context of Israel’s ritual psalmody,  $\text{נָּוֶן}$  constitutes one of the vbs. of worship.”<sup>10</sup> In the OT, worship or praise is the verbal and public *proclamation* of God’s conduct and character. What is proclaimed is what has been revealed; not personal opinion based on imagination.

**119:23.** This bicolon parallels “meditate” and “plot.” But these are not synonymous. The psalmist’s enemies plot against him so he responds by “meditating” on God’s statutes. He does not focus on any more or less than what God has already said and has been recorded as Scripture.

**119:27.** Here the psalmist parallels “understand” as synonymous with “meditate.” The NRSV, NASB, and NIV have “meditate” for  $\text{נָּוֶן}$  but KJV has “talk.” The object of the understanding is God’s precepts while the synonymous object of meditation is God’s works. The word of God is one of his wondrous works. We do not need more revelation. We have all we need and more than we can handle as it is. Biblical meditation has to do with understanding what we already have as Scripture. This involves exegesis. Whatever is not of faith is sin; and whatever is not of exegesis is eisegesis, mere human opinion that may put words in God’s mouth he never intended to say or imply. This is why James warns against many being teachers (Jas 3:1). One of the great problems in the

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<sup>10</sup> Diamond, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 1234. Cf. n. 6 above.

church today is the surplus of those who try to speak determinatively and decisively about God's word and will. It is a serious challenge to get to the point where we say no more and no less than the Bible clearly says. Even a "master of theology" degree is no guarantee that you have mastered Scripture. At best the most educated of us all still has a lot about the Bible to learn. Many verses are still mysteries. Remember we will give an account for every idle word. We might even say that a misinterpretation is not just idle but idolatry. The KJV here may have hit it on the head with "talk" rather than "meditate." Teachers must speak what they understand in order to be teachers. What you do is what you are. Doctors heal or they are not doctors. Evangelists lead people to Christ or they are not evangelists. And teachers must teach. One of the purposes of understanding God's word is to then communicate it effectively. Preparation must precede presentation. This first and indispensable step is "meditation" or "study." Afterwards one is ready to talk about what has been learned. Yet what is learned is better understanding of God's revelation; so such "meditation" is not about getting new thoughts but a better grasp on existing thoughts, given by God in Scripture.

**119:48.** Verse 48 likewise parallels as synonymous actions "meditate" and "revere." The object of these verbs is "commandments" (v. 48a) or "statutes" (v. 48b). Reverence for God's commandments means obeying them and knowing or understanding them, not necessarily some other believer's advice based on them, simply because that person is a good speaker or writer. Do you spend more time in books about that Bible than the Bible itself? If you learn how to "divide the word of truth" adequately then you need little more than the Bible and those tools that aid exegesis. The purpose of the rigors of seminary study involving the original languages is so you are no longer overly dependent on secondary sources but the primary source of the ancient text itself. Your theology then becomes not what someone tells you it should be based on their thoughts, but what you actually understand the text to say. Of course you need the input of the community of faith; but only when you master the primary text can you effectively evaluate what others are saying about the Bible. This is when Eccl. 1:18 becomes a painful reality.<sup>11</sup> You begin to be aware of so many errors in popular Bible teaching that you would rather be blissfully ignorant.

**119:78.** Verse 78 has no term parallel with "meditate." But again the objective object of this enterprise is God's "precepts." Read them; understand them; live them. Meditation in this regard is the equivalent of

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<sup>11</sup> "For in much wisdom is much vexation, and those who increase knowledge increase sorrow."

Bible study, the process of gaining understanding of the text, not mentally and imaginatively elaborating on the text.

**119:97-99.** In 119:97 and 99 some versions have “meditate” and others “meditation.” 119:97 speaks of meditation on God’s law as an outflow of love for his word. Law and grace are not opposites in the OT. The Israelites had God’s law because of his love and gracious decision to reveal his will to them in spoken and written form. Their love for God was expressed through thankfulness for and obedience to this deposit of inspired information. The Hebrews did not earn salvation through keeping the law any more than we do. Abraham “trusted in God and he was reckoned as righteous.” Keeping the law was how righteousness was demonstrated rather than deserved. It sounds strange to us who talk so much of how we love God’s grace and how we have moved from law to grace, to hear the psalmist exclaim “Oh, how I love your law!” Doesn’t the letter of the Law kill and the Spirit give life? Yes, but that is not the same as saying the law is essentially negative and needs to be abandoned. While the NT believer is not called to serve the legal system that God gave to the Hebrew nation for their unique historical calling, the Christian is expected to live according to a code of conduct that reflects the life and teachings of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. We too should love to live in the manner for which we were created and called, because it pleases the one who saved us and sanctifies us and graced us with an objective record of holy thoughts and themes. This “law” of v. 97 is called “commandment” in vv. 96 and 98 and decrees in v. 95 and 99. As a result of having this gracious gift from God, the psalmist experiences a number of practical outcomes: he is (1) given life (v. 93), (2) rescued from a life apart from law, (v. 94), (3) comforted in the midst of persecution (v. 95), (4) placed in a broad place yet one that has boundaries (v. 96), (5) wiser than his enemies, his teachers, and people older than he (vv. 98-100), and (6) kept from evil (v. 101). By God’s grace we have a clear set of guidelines, which are good and true, to help us explain and experience godliness. The psalmist says he “meditates” on God’s word all day long. He was not unemployed or a monk, so what he means is not that he hypothesizes about it endlessly but that he thinks about the content of the law continually. It informs everything he says and does.

**119:148.** Verse 148 also has no parallel term for “meditate.” However v. 147 is a parallel verse, where “put my hope in” is a substitute. The object of these verbs is “promise” and “words,” respectively. The psalmist says he rises early and in the night for the purpose of being reminded of what God’s word promises him because he is in trouble (v. 149). So once again “meditation” is not a mental exercise of clearing the mind so a spiritual thought can be heard from the distance

of inner space; but a purposeful procedure of reviewing the Scripture in order to recall its truths as they apply to an immediate problem. The psalmist is not looking for “something new” but only for “something old,” the unchanging word of God giving certainty in the midst of chaos. If the meaning of a passage could change with circumstances related to the reader’s response, then there would be no permanent promise to give hope. Consequently the psalmist says in v. 147: “I put my hope in your words.” Biblical meditation is reading and believing the old words of the Bible and the old Bible that is the word of God, not silently hearing new spiritual thoughts that come from some inner place or peace.

*Psalm 143:5.* פִּשׁ here is parallel with הִגִּד, which is translated “meditate” by the KJV, NASB, and NIV but “think” by the NRSV, which is the only one to give “meditate” for פִּשׁ. The others give “muse” or “consider.” What has been said regarding הִגִּד in this verse earlier is still appropriate as regards the presence of פִּשׁ.

*Psalm 145:5.* Finally in Psalm 145:5 פִּשׁ for the second time is rendered “meditate” by all of the versions consulted but KJV, which uses “speak.” Here what is “meditated” is God’s majestic works. That this is about the verbal and audible and public proclamation of his character and conduct is seen in the surrounding verses. Note the entire immediate context (Psalm 145:3-7, emphasis added):

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be *praised*;  
his greatness is unsearchable.  
One generation shall *laud* your works to another,  
and shall *declare* your mighty acts.  
On the glorious splendor of your majesty,  
and on your wondrous works, I will *meditate*.  
The might of your awesome deeds shall be *proclaimed*,  
and I will *declare* your greatness.  
They shall *celebrate* the fame of your abundant goodness,  
and shall *sing aloud* of your righteousness.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, what is biblical meditation? It is anything but silent and subjective. It is the understanding and utterance of what a passage of Scripture teaches. It is the recital, rehearsal, or repetition of what is recorded as God’s written and revealed word. It is the studied reading of a text of the Bible. It is concentration on what the Bible says in the context of communication. It is exegetical preparation and truthful

presentation. In short, it is Bible study, which demands dedicated and daily, informed and inspired, interpretive thinking and re-thinking about Scripture. The current use of “meditate” or “meditation” in English makes it an inappropriate or incorrect translation of הַגָּה or שׁיחַ in the Hebrew Psalms.

## APPENDIX I

### “Meditate(s)” in Four English Versions (X = “MEDITATE/S”)

TEXT	KJV	NRSV	NASB	NIV
Gen. 24:63 שׁוּחַ	X	“walk”	X	X
Josh. 1:8 הַגָּה	X	X	X	X
Psa. 1:2 הַגָּה	X	X	X	X
Psa. 4:4 אָמַר	“commune”	“ponder”	X	“search”
Psa. 27:4 בִּקֵּר	“inquire”	“inquire”	X	“seek”
Psa. 38:12 הַגָּה	“imagine”	X	“devise”	“plot”
Psa. 48:9 דַּמָּה	“thought”	“ponder”	“thought”	X
Psa. 63:6 הַגָּה	X	X	X	“think”
Psa. 77:3 שׁיחַ	“complained”	X	“sigh”	“mused”
Psa. 77:6 שׁיחַ	“commune”	X	X	“mused”
Psa. 77:12 הַגָּה	X	X	X	X
// שׁיחַ	“talk”	“muse”	“muse”	“consider”
Psa. 119:15 שׁיחַ	X	X	X	X
Psa. 119:23 שׁיחַ	X	X	X	X
Psa. 119:27 שׁיחַ	“talk”	X	X	X
Psa. 119:48 שׁיחַ	X	X	X	X
Psa. 119:78 שׁיחַ	X	X	X	X
Psa. 119:97 שׁיחַ	“meditation”	“meditation”	“meditation”	X

Psa. 119:99 שׁיח	“meditation”	“meditation”	“meditation”	X
Psa. 119:148 שׁיח	X	X	X	X
Psa. 143:5 הגה	X	“think”	X	X
// שׁיח	“muse”	“meditate”	“muse”	“consider”
Psa. 145:5 שׁיח	“speak”	X	X	X
Isa. 33:18 הגה	X	“muse”	X	“ponder”
Mark 13:11*	“premeditate”	“worry”	“be anxious”	“worry”
Luke 21:14	X	“prepare”	“prepare”	“worry”
1 Tim. 4:15	X	“practice”	“take pains”	“be diligent”

\*KJV adds extra line not in others (“take no thought . . . neither premeditate”)

## APPENDIX II

### “Meditation” in Four English Versions (X = “MEDITATION”)

TEXT	KJV	NRSV	NASB	NIV
Job 15:4 שׁיח	“prayer”	X	X	“devotion”
Psa. 5:1 הגה	X	“sighing”	“groaning”	“sighing”
Psa. 19:14 הגה	X	X	X	X
Psa. 49:3 הגה	X	X	X	“utterance”
Psa. 104:34 שׁיח	X	X	X	X
Psa. 119:97 שׁיח	X	X	X	“meditate”
Psa. 119:99 שׁיח	X	X	X	“meditate”

## APPENDIX III

**The Earliest and Current Meanings  
of Selected English Words Compared**

<b>ENGLISH WORD</b>	<b>EARLIEST USAGE (root or old English)</b>	<b>TRANSITION-AL USAGE (early or middle English)</b>	<b>CURRENT USAGE (modern English)</b>
bless	to cause blood to flow	invoke divine favor through sacrifice	consecrate; sanctify
bread	piece; fragment	piece of baked food	food; baked flour or meal
cannibal	native of Canibe	Carribeans (believed to eat people)	eater of human flesh
chapel	cloak	building housing relic of a cloak	worship building or room
fornication	furnace (heating)	arching (architecture); prostitution	immoral sexual behavior
glamour	writing; literature	grammar (called "glomery")	enchantment; wonder
God	Deity who enjoys blood sacrifice	that which is poured forth; the sacrifice itself	the Deity (himself)
goodbye	"God be wi' you"	"God buy, my lord!"	so-long; farewell
gossip	sponsor at a baptism	friend; idle talk	rumor-mongering
man	one [or, mind]	human being; person	male person; human being
martyr	witness; testimony	false witness who is punished	one who suffers for a cause
meat	measure	portion of something to eat; food	food; edible flesh
person	through sound; mask	one wearing a mask	individual
Sabbath	rest; seven; lunar taboo	seventh day or day of rest	weekly day of worship

sad	satisfied; filled up	solid (full); or weary (from too much)	serious; unhappy
salary	salt money	wages for white-collar worker	wages for anyone
sandwich	Earl of Sandwich	food of noblemen between bread	in-between; food on bread
serpent	creep or crawl	creeping thing; reptile	snake
silly	happy; prosperous	good; innocent; simple	lacking judgment; foolish
sinister	on the left side	ominous; auspicious	evil
street	something spread out	bed; mattress; framework; road	road in a city
test	pot	pot used to test content of coins	measure of achievement
tithe	a 10th part	a 10th of produce donated to church	10th of income to church
worship	value (monetary)	importance; worthiness; reputation	veneration of the sacred

## **Robert Hall's Contributions to Evangelical Renewal in the Northamptonshire Baptist Association**

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### **Abstract**

*This essay argues that Robert Hall, Sr. played a crucial role in promoting evangelical sentiments within the Northamptonshire Baptist Association in the late eighteenth century. Hall's influence upon the association is evidenced by his public preaching, published works, and personal encouragement of his younger colleagues. The evangelicalism of the Northamptonshire churches became increasingly pronounced in the closing years of the eighteenth century, resulting in a widespread prayer movement, the publication of several evangelical treatises, and most significantly, the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792.*

### **Introduction**

Historians of eighteenth-century English Protestantism often speak of a declension of evangelical religion among the British Particular Baptists. The source of this spiritual lethargy is often attributed to High Calvinism, or more popularly, hyper-Calvinism.<sup>12</sup> High Calvinists claim that the non-elect are unable to exercise saving faith because the latter are under no obligation to believe in Christ. Hence, High Calvinists rejected the "free offer of the gospel," or the explicit demand that non-Christians believe in Christ.<sup>13</sup> Though the extent of hyper-Calvinism's influence is

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<sup>12</sup> For two recent textbooks that adopt this understanding of eighteenth-century Particular Baptists, see H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: Broadman, 1987), 178–83; Bill J. Leonard, *Baptist Ways: A History* (Valley Forge: Judson, 2003), 98–103.

<sup>13</sup> For a scholarly definition of High Calvinism, see Peter J. Morden, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth Century Particular Baptist Life*, *Studies in Baptist History and Thought*, vol. 8 (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Paternoster, 2003), 12; Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and For His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life*

presently undergoing a scholarly reassessment, historians agree that the last quarter of the eighteenth century marked the commencement of a new era for the British Particular Baptists.<sup>14</sup> An evangelical revival commenced within the Northamptonshire Baptist Association, eventually spreading throughout Particular Baptist life.<sup>15</sup> This renewal is typically described as centering on the work of two young Northamptonshire ministers, Kettering pastor and theologian Andrew Fuller, and the famous pastor/cobbler and pioneer missionary William Carey.<sup>16</sup> As significant as their respective ministries were, Fuller and Carey were not alone even in the Northamptonshire Association in advocating an evangelical Calvinism that reconciled God's sovereign election with the biblical command to press the claims of Christ upon all men.

Several men played a role in the evangelical awakening in the Northamptonshire Association, including other young pastors like John Sutcliff, John Ryland, Jr., Samuel Pearce, and Robert Hall, Jr. The latter's father, Robert Hall, Sr., was in many ways a spiritual father and elder mentor to these young evangelicals.<sup>17</sup> Robert Hall was a strong advocate of evangelical Calvinism, particularly of the type associated

(Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986; reprint, Lake Charles, LA: Cor Meum Tibi, 2002), 385–91. G. F. Nuttall notes that the term "High Calvinism" is more useful than "hyper-Calvinism" because it was the phrase used during the period in question, and because it is "less prejudiced and question-begging" than hyper-Calvinism. See G. F. Nuttall, "Northamptonshire and *The Modern Question: A Turning Point in Eighteenth Century Dissent*," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 16, no. 1 (April 1965): 101.

<sup>14</sup> Many historians now argue that High Calvinism was not universal among Particular Baptists prior to the 1770s, but that at least some Particular Baptists were evangelical in their convictions. See Roger Hayden, "Evangelical Calvinism among Eighteenth-Century British Baptists: with Particular Reference to Bernard Foskett, Hugh and Caleb Evans and the Bristol Baptist Academy, 1690–1791" (Ph.D. diss., University of Keele, 1991), iv–v; Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the 18th Century, A History of the English Baptists*, vol. 2 (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1986), 115.

<sup>15</sup> The results of this revival were significant; according to John Ryland, Jr. the Northamptonshire Association alone grew from eight churches in 1767 to thirty-one churches in 1815. See John Ryland, Jr., *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, illustrated, in the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, Late Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society, from its Commencement, in 1792* (Charlestown, UK: Printed by Samuel Etheridge, 1818), 3. By 1835, forty eight different churches had been included in the association's membership at one time or another. See T. S. H. Elwyn, *The Northamptonshire Baptist Association* (London: Carey Kingsgate, 1964), 27–28.

<sup>16</sup> For the best scholarly introduction to Fuller, see Morden, *Offering Christ to the World*. For a thoroughly-researched popular introduction to Carey, see Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Birmingham: New Hope, 1991).

<sup>17</sup> For the purpose of this essay, Hall, Sr. will be denoted simply as "Hall," whereas Hall, Jr. will be specifically designated as such.

with New England pastor and theologian/advocate of revival, Jonathan Edwards. By virtue of his status as an elder statesman among a group of like-minded evangelicals, Hall was in a position to exercise considerable influence upon the ministers in his region. Though never as famous as Fuller or Carey, this essay argues that Robert Hall, Sr. played a crucial role in promoting evangelical sentiments within the Northamptonshire Baptist Association in the late eighteenth century. Hall's influence upon the association is evidenced by his public preaching, published works, and personal encouragement of his younger colleagues. The evangelicalism of the Northamptonshire churches became increasingly pronounced in the closing years of the eighteenth century, resulting in a widespread prayer movement, the publication of several evangelical treatises, and most significantly, the formation of the BMS in 1792.<sup>18</sup> Most Particular Baptists embraced evangelical Calvinism within a generation.

### **The Particular Baptists and the Status of Evangelical Religion, 1725–1779**

As noted above, historians often paint a picture of eighteenth-century Particular Baptists as hopelessly captive to the deadening influence of High Calvinism. Much of the blame for this High Calvinism is laid at the feet of the influential London pastor/theologian John Gill, whom H. Leon McBeth calls the “Leading Hyper-Calvinist” of this period.<sup>19</sup> While historians differ as to the extent of Gill's adherence to hyper-Calvinism, there is little doubt that Gill was associated with notable High Calvinists, commended their works to other Particular Baptists, and was at least reluctant to press Christ upon non-Christians.<sup>20</sup> In eighteenth century

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<sup>18</sup> For a thorough treatment of the founding and early years of the BMS, see Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792–1992* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 1–35. The year 1792 is often marked as the beginning of the so-called “modern missions movement,” but not all historians agree that the Particular Baptists were original in their missionary efforts. See Morden, *Offering Christ to the World*, 129; William H. Brackney, “The Baptist Missionary Society in Proper Context: Some Reflections on the Larger Voluntary Religious Tradition,” *Baptist Quarterly* 34, no. 8 (October 1992): 364. William Carey himself was keenly aware that he was in continuity with a movement that had already commenced, even entitling the second chapter of his *Enquiry* “a short Review of former Undertakings for the Conversion of the Heathen.” See William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, ed. John L. Prestlove (Leicester, UK: Anne Ireland, 1792; reprint, Dallas: Criswell Publications, 1988), 9–24.

<sup>19</sup> McBeth, *Baptist Heritage*, 176. McBeth is echoing the assessment of Robert Torbet, who referred to Gill as the “ablest exponent” of hyper-Calvinism. See Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, 3d ed. (Valley Forge: Judson, 2000), 68.

<sup>20</sup> For a collection of essays illustrating the scholarly debate over Gill's alleged hyper-Calvinism, see Michael A. G. Haykin, ed. *The Life and Thought of John Gill*

English religion, the “modern question” among dissenting Protestants was whether or not the non-elect were bound by duty to repent of their sins, something they were considered incapable of doing due to their reprobate status.<sup>21</sup> Those influenced by Gill and more explicit High Calvinists answered the modern question with a resounding “no.” Early nineteenth-century Baptist Historian Joseph Ivimey refers to this approach as the “*non-invitation, non-application*” scheme of preaching.<sup>22</sup> Opposition to the free offer of the gospel was especially widespread among the Particular Baptist churches in the greater London area.

More recent studies have argued that while the theological climate among eighteenth-century Particular Baptists was indeed marked by High Calvinism, this is only part of the story. Roger Hayden has shown there was widespread commitment to the evangelical Calvinism of the Second London Confession (1677/89), particularly among those ministers associated with Bristol Baptist Academy who lived mostly in the West country of England.<sup>23</sup> William Brackney agrees that “against the backdrop in the mid-eighteenth century of lifeless, doctrinaire Calvinism, Unitarianism, Arianism, and anti-trinitarian thought, coupled with dry intellectual communication, the leaders at Bristol stressed an evangelical form of Calvinism.”<sup>24</sup> This was a full fifty years before the BMS was established. It seems clear a theology amenable to revival was already simmering in some places at least a generation before Hall and others promoted evangelicalism in the Northamptonshire Association.

One of the major reasons the Bristol Academy Calvinists avoided the error of High Calvinism is because of the college leadership’s affinity for Jonathan Edwards, arguably the leading contemporary theologian of evangelical awakening. While pastoring the Congregational church in Northampton, MA, Edwards and his church periodically experienced awakening during the 1730s and 1740s.<sup>25</sup> Out of this first-hand

(1697–1771): *A Tercentennial Appreciation*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought, vol. 77 (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997). Gerald Priest, who argues Gill was a hyper-Calvinist, gives a helpful summary of the various scholars and their positions. See Gerald L. Priest, “Andrew Fuller’s Response to the ‘Modern Question’—A Reappraisal of *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 6 (Fall 2001): 49, n. 13.

<sup>21</sup> For a description of how different Particular Baptists answered the Modern Question, see Nuttall, “Northamptonshire and *The Modern Question*,” 101–23.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Ivimey, *A History of the Baptists*, vol. III (London: Printed for B. J. Holdsworth, 1823), 267.

<sup>23</sup> Hayden, “Evangelical Calvinism,” iv–v.

<sup>24</sup> William H. Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2004), 168–69.

<sup>25</sup> For a brief description of Edwards’s view of the relationship between pastoral ministry and revival, see Helen P. Westra, “Divinity’s Design: Edwards and the History of the Work of Revival,” in *Edwards in Our Time: Jonathan Edwards and the Shaping of*

experience, Edwards wrote many treatises related to evangelical revival, most of which were widely circulated in the British Isles. According to George Marsden, "Edwards viewed himself as part of an international Reformed evangelical movement that saw awakenings as God's greatest works in the current age."<sup>26</sup> By the 1740s Edwards's writings were popular with the students and faculty at Bristol.<sup>27</sup>

The influence of Edwardsean Calvinism helped pave the way for the evangelical awakening among the Particular Baptists, gradually toppling High Calvinism from its place of privilege. This began in earnest when several ministers in the Northamptonshire Association became burdened for evangelism and eventually foreign mission, in no small part because they appropriated Edwardsean theology. One of the earliest Northamptonshire pastors to apply Edwards's theology to the Particular Baptist context was Robert Hall, Sr.

### **Robert Hall, Sr. and the Northamptonshire Association, 1753–1776**

Robert Hall, Sr. was born in 1728 to an Anglican father and Presbyterian mother.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps because of his religious upbringing, Hall struggled with his own sinfulness from at least the age of twelve. He wrestled for years with his salvation, thinking on many occasions that he was too great a sinner to be saved. At one point, Hall even contemplated taking his own life. While reading Galatians 4:4–5, Hall realized that Christ had both kept the law and died for those who transgressed the law. Christ's mission was to save sinners, and Hall knew he was a sinner. This understanding of the gospel occurred in 1748 and resulted in Hall's conversion; he was about age twenty at the time. Hall initially followed his mother's religious sentiments by joining a Presbyterian church, but by 1752 Hall was involved in a religious dispute with whom he termed the "Anabaptists" over the doctrine of immersion. Much to Hall's chagrin, his brother Christopher had recently become a Baptist, and in his efforts to refute Baptist beliefs Hall himself embraced Baptist convictions. In 1752, he was immersed and joined a Baptist church in Hexham, Durham. Soon Hall felt called to vocational ministry and in

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*American Religion*, eds. Sang Hyun Lee and Allen C. Guelzo (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 136–40.

<sup>26</sup> George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 201.

<sup>27</sup> Hayden, "Evangelical Calvinism," 341.

<sup>28</sup> The biographical information in this paragraph is taken from John Rippon, "The Rev. Mr. Robert Hall," in *The Baptist Annual Register for 1790, 1791, 1792, and part of 1793* (London: Sold by Mr. Rippon, 1793): 226–40; Michael A. G. Haykin, "Robert Hall, Sr. (1728–1791)," *The British Particular Baptists, 1638–1910*, vol. 1 (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 1998), 203–10.

1753 he became the pastor of the Baptist church in Arnsby, Leicestershire, where he spent his entire pastoral ministry.

The Arnsby church was small, and funds were often insufficient for Hall's family of sixteen.<sup>29</sup> Though impoverished, the Halls frequently received monetary gifts at the most opportune times. When the noted Anglican evangelical John Newton sent Hall £10, the latter responded, "This is the Lord's doing and marvellous in my eyes. Oh to be found worthy of favours."<sup>30</sup> Despite its meager financial resources, the Arnsby congregation was nevertheless influential. According to Michael Haykin, "Arnsby had been one of the founding churches of the Northamptonshire Association and Hall had been active in its affairs right from the initial meeting which had been held in 1764."<sup>31</sup> Rippon adds that Hall himself was "instrumental" in the forming of the association.<sup>32</sup> In his history of the Northamptonshire Association, T. S. H. Elwyn refers to Hall as "the outstanding personality" among the founding ministers.<sup>33</sup>

As a leader in the Northamptonshire Association, Hall was noted for his theological acumen. He drafted five circular letters for the association. In 1768 Hall wrote a circular letter against "conditional salvation," in which he opposed a form of works salvation, which he defined as those "dispositions or acts required of the creature, as conditions *entitling* to salvation."<sup>34</sup> Hall's most notable circular letter was a 1776 defense of the doctrine of the Trinity against the Unitarian minister Joseph Priestly. Hall presented a clear articulation of Trinitarian doctrine, clearly written from a heart of pastoral concern. He closed the letter with an admonition to reverence both Christ and the Holy Spirit as God.

It is the bounden duty of every saint to honour the Son, even as he honors the Father. Consider your obligations to Christ as his purchase. Ye are

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<sup>29</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends, and His Times* (Durham, UK: Evangelical Press, 1994), 125.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Hall Warren, *The Hall Family* (Bristol, UK: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1910), 17; cited in *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Rippon, "The Rev. Mr. Robert Hall," 233. At its founding, the Northamptonshire Association was more than a county-wide network, including churches from Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, and Buckinghamshire. The primary reason for associating was apparently fraternal relations between like-minded ministers. T. S. H. Elwyn indicates that the founders of the association envisioned little more than "annual meeting for mutual encouragement, and spiritual uplift." See Elwyn, *The Northamptonshire Baptist Association*, 11.

<sup>33</sup> Elwyn, *The Northamptonshire Baptist Association*, 29.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Hall, Sr., "Conditional Salvation," in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Robert Hall*, ed. J. W. Morris (London: W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, 1828), 293. Emphasis is in the original.

not your own, but bought with a price . . . Your obligations to the Lord the Spirit are great. Look to him to create in you a clear heart, and renew a right spirit within you.<sup>35</sup>

The popularity of Hall's letter is evidenced by the need for a second edition to be printed later in 1776.<sup>36</sup> At the request of John Ryland, Jr., the second edition included an appendix entitled, "Some Thoughts on the Causes of Salvation and Damnation," written in answer to the teachings of one Mr. Fletcher of Madely.<sup>37</sup>

Hall was not only an able theologian, but also a noted preacher. Before Andrew Fuller was called as pastor of the Kettering church, Hall occasionally filled the pulpit there. J. W. Morris claims Hall's "preaching, conversation and advice, [*sic*] excited no ordinary degree of interest."<sup>38</sup> Hall's fellow pastors also appreciated his pulpit gifts; he was invited to preach a sermon before the Northamptonshire Association in 1779. That sermon, later widely circulated in print form, was the most tangible contribution Hall made to the evangelical renewal movement in the Northamptonshire Association.

### ***Help to Zion's Travellers and the Spread of Evangelical Calvinism, 1779–1791***

The last quarter of the eighteenth century marks a turning point in British Baptist history. Joseph Ivimey describes 1779 as "the commencement of a new era in the history of the denomination."<sup>39</sup> Modern historian L. G. Champion agrees, noting that "a renewed theology led to a rediscovery of mission and the creation of organisations for the fulfillment of mission."<sup>40</sup> As with the Bristol faculty and alumni, the source of this renewed theology was the writings of Jonathan Edwards, which Michael Watts notes "led to religious revival among the Particular Baptists in Northamptonshire, England and set in train the dispersion of the

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<sup>35</sup> Robert Hall, Sr., "Doctrine of the Trinity Stated: in a circular letter from the Baptist ministers and messengers, assembled at Olney, Bucks, May 28, 29, 1776," 2d ed., in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Robert Hall*, ed. J. W. Morris (London: W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, 1828), 345–46.

<sup>36</sup> Haykin, "Robert Hall, Sr. (1728–1791)," 206.

<sup>37</sup> Rippon, "The Rev. Mr. Robert Hall," 233.

<sup>38</sup> J. W. Morris, *Biographical Recollections of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M.* (London: George Whightman, 1833), 29.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Ivimey, *A History of the Baptists*, vol. IV (London: Printed for B. J. Holdsworth, 1830), 41.

<sup>40</sup> L. G. Champion, "Evangelical Calvinism and the Structures of Baptist Church Life," *Baptist Quarterly* 28, no. 5 (January 1980): 197.

principles of English Dissent to the four corners of the world.”<sup>41</sup> This awakening changed the face of English Particular Baptists. Haykin claims that, “During the final three decades of the century, the Baptists became a dynamic force in England and Wales, outward-looking and seeking to recruit new members for their congregations . . . a religious force to be reckoned with in the affairs of the nation.”<sup>42</sup> Most of the scholarly discussion of this period has understandably focused on Andrew Fuller and William Carey. But these were only the two most notable of a larger group of men who helped lead the Northamptonshire Association—and eventually most Particular Baptists—into a period of evangelical renewal and missionary zeal.

It is notable that Ivimey dates the beginning of the revival to 1779 rather than 1785 or 1792, when Fuller and Carey wrote their respective treatises.<sup>43</sup> The seeds for renewal were actually planted before 1779. The Edwardsean theology popular at Bristol Baptist Academy has already been discussed at length. In 1868, Abraham Booth, a London pastor who had recently left the General Baptists to become a Particular Baptist, wrote *The Reign of Grace*, wherein he advocated evangelical Calvinism.<sup>44</sup> Among other things, Booth argued against the High Calvinist belief that sinners needed a pre-assurance of their election—or warrant—to have any hope of salvation, claiming that such a belief actually denigrated God’s free grace.<sup>45</sup> O. C. Robison argues *The Reign of Grace* “was probably the first book of its nature to enjoy a wide circulation among Baptists in all parts of the country.”<sup>46</sup> There were even evangelical sentiments present within the Northamptonshire Association. In 1770, John Martin penned a circular letter devoted to the doctrine of election. Martin concluded the letter with an evangelical application of the doctrine.

Every soul that comes to Christ, to be saved from hell and sin by him, is to be encouraged; and it is our duty to show them that election is no bar

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<sup>41</sup> Michael Watts, *The Dissenters from the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 461. See also Roger Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage*, 2d ed. (Didcot, Oxfordshire, UK: Baptist Union, 2005), 119–24.

<sup>42</sup> Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 33.

<sup>43</sup> Andrew Fuller, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (Northampton: T. Dicey, 1785); Carey, *Enquiry*. A photo reproduction of the former is in the author’s possession.

<sup>44</sup> Some scholars debate the extent of Booth’s evangelicalism. William Brackney indicates that, although Booth advocated evangelical Calvinism, his version was of a stricter variety than Hall and other evangelicals. See Brackney, *Genetic History*, 119.

<sup>45</sup> Abraham Booth, *The Reign of Grace from its Rise to its Consummation* (Leeds, UK: Printed by Griffith Wright, 1768; reprint, Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1839), 106.

<sup>46</sup> Olin C. Robison, “The Particular Baptists in England, 1760–1820,” (Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, 1963), 52.

in their way . . . The coming soul need not fear that he is not elected, for none but such will be willing to come, submit to Christ: he need not fear being cast out, for his coming is in consequence of God's drawing love, though at present he may not observe it.<sup>47</sup>

It is clear that many Particular Baptists were not only embracing evangelical Calvinism, but some were even advocating it in print.

By the late 1770s, Robert Hall, Sr. had also come to evangelical convictions. It was during this period that John Ryland, Jr. lent Hall two sermons by the American John Smalley, which elaborated on Edwards's doctrine of the will. Ryland claimed that the sermons provided irrefutable evidence that Calvinism is consistent with the free offer of the gospel.<sup>48</sup> Though Hall was initially a committed High Calvinist, by 1779 he had definitively embraced evangelical Calvinism.<sup>49</sup> That year he preached a sermon at a meeting of the Northamptonshire Association on the various stumbling blocks in the life of a Christian. His text was taken from Isaiah 57:14, "And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people" (KJV). At the urging of Fuller, John Sutcliff, and John Ryland, Jr., Hall expanded the sermon and published it in 1781 under the title *Help to Zion's Travellers*.<sup>50</sup> Raymond Brown notes, "Hall's book secured a unique place in the gradually-evolving history of the late eighteenth-century missionary movement."<sup>51</sup> Hall's publishing of the sermon, at the request of the younger Northamptonshire pastors, showed that evangelical Calvinism was taking hold in the association. Significantly, O. C. Robison notes, "The first edition of the book listed four hundred and sixty eight subscribers, many of whom were not Baptist"<sup>52</sup> Within fifteen years the association was in the midst of a full-fledged awakening, one result of which was a concerted effort to engage in foreign mission.

Michael Haykin describes *Help to Zion's Travellers* as "a vigorous attack on High Calvinism."<sup>53</sup> Ivimey agrees, claiming "the principles of

<sup>47</sup> "Northamptonshire Association Circular Letter from Kettering, 1770," 7; cited in Robison, "The Particular Baptists," 57. Robison observes that Martin later moved to London and opposed Andrew Fuller's evangelicalism. See *Ibid*.

<sup>48</sup> Watts, *The Dissenters*, 459.

<sup>49</sup> If the timeline provided by Tom Nettles is accurate, then Hall embraced evangelicalism sometime between 1776, when John Ryland, Jr. introduced Hall to Edwards and other evangelicals, and 1779, when the Isaiah 57:14 sermon was preached. See Tom Nettles, *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity: Volume One, Beginnings in Britain* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2005), 264.

<sup>50</sup> Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 148.

<sup>51</sup> Brown, *English Baptists*, 116.

<sup>52</sup> Robison, "The Particular Baptists," 58.

<sup>53</sup> Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 147.

this admirable little work were those of modern Calvinism in opposition to the system of high or hyper-Calvinism which had so generally prevailed in our churches.”<sup>54</sup> It is important to note that for Ivimey, himself influenced by the subsequent evangelical awakening, “modern” Calvinism is synonymous with evangelical Calvinism. Raymond Brown argues that “Hall knew that the high Calvinist preoccupation with election, reprobation and predestination had created deep uncertainties in the minds of sensitive people as to their ability to respond to the gospel of Christ.”<sup>55</sup> Hall’s particular enunciation of evangelical Calvinism was influenced by Jonathan Edwards, especially his work *Freedom of the Will*, which made a distinction between a person’s moral ability and natural ability to respond to faith in Christ.<sup>56</sup> According to John Ryland, Jr., “[Hall] called no man upon earth master, in respect to his religious sentiments, but he took a peculiar delight in the writings of President Edwards.”<sup>57</sup> Hall was so fond of *Freedom of the Will* he is responsible for first introducing Andrew Fuller to the work.<sup>58</sup> Significantly, Edwardsean theology also figured prominently in Fuller’s *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*.<sup>59</sup>

Hall’s reason for expanding his Isaiah 57:14 sermon into book form was to remove various stumbling blocks to Christian growth. *Help to Zion’s Travellers* was divided into three parts, “Doctrinal Difficulties,” “Experimental Difficulties,” and “Practical Difficulties.” In the first section, Hall defended the orthodox view of the deity of Christ. He also argued for a Calvinistic understanding of human sinfulness, divine election, regeneration, union with Christ, adoption in Christ, and particular redemption. Hall’s theology was decidedly Calvinistic, and it is clear his purpose was not to undermine those doctrines associated with Reformed theology.<sup>60</sup> In fact, to this point at least, most High Calvinists

<sup>54</sup> Ivimey, *History of the Baptists*, vol. IV, 41.

<sup>55</sup> Brown, *English Baptists*, 116.

<sup>56</sup> Morden, *Offering Christ to the World*, 45.

<sup>57</sup> This quote is taken from Ryland’s preface to the second edition of *Help to Zion’s Travellers*. See Robert Hall, Sr., *Help to Zion’s Travellers: Being an Attempt to Remove Various Stumbling Blocks out of the Way, Relating to Doctrinal, Experimental and Practical Religion* (Bristol, UK: Printed by William Pine, 1781; reprint, Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1851), 8.

<sup>58</sup> Ernest F. Clipsham, “Andrew Fuller and Fullerism (I),” *Baptist Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (July 1963): 109; Morden, *Offering Christ to the World*, 43.

<sup>59</sup> For the influence of *Freedom of the Will* on Andrew Fuller, see Morden, *Offering Christ to the World*, 45–51;

<sup>60</sup> Hall’s commitment to Calvinism was reiterated in his 1788 circular letter, in which he advocated the traditional understanding on definite atonement. See Robert Hall, Sr., “Divinity of Christ and the Efficacy of His Atonement,” in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Robert Hall*, ed. J. W. Morris (London: W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, 1828), 413–20.

would have agreed with Hall's book. Robert Hall, Jr., in his preface to later editions of *Help to Zion's Travellers*, reinforced this interpretation of his father's work, pointing readers to where the true "innovations" in the work lie.

The sentiments of my honored father were decidedly Calvinistic. His object, however, in the following treatise, was not so much to recommend that system in general, as to disengage it from certain excrescences, which he considered as weakening its evidence and impairing its beauty.<sup>61</sup>

According to Hall, Jr. his father's work was not about redefining Calvinism, but rather rescuing the system from those whom he believed had perverted it.

Hall broke with High Calvinism in the second section of his work. In a chapter entitled, "The sinner's warrant to apply to Christ," Hall agreed with Abraham Booth that, at least humanly speaking, there is nothing that prevents the grossest sinner from receiving Christ except his own sinful refusal to believe. A sinner does not need to believe that God has elected him to salvation before he can believe. On the contrary, by believing in Christ the sinner proves to be among the elect. Though only the elect will choose to believe, the call to repent is issued to "whosoever will."<sup>62</sup> Hall was rejecting High Calvinist arguments against offering the gospel to all people. High Calvinists claimed the non-elect are under no obligation to do the very thing which they are unable to do—repent of their sins and trust in Christ for their salvation. Hall argued that the human call to repent is universal, even if the divine call to believe is given only to the elect.

In the third section, Hall further challenged High Calvinist reticence toward evangelism by providing a theological justification for the universal preaching of the gospel. Specifically, Hall followed Jonathan Edwards by making a distinction between man's natural ability versus his moral ability to believe in Christ. Hall's position can be summarized as thus: the reason it is not inconsistent for God to decree that salvation is only for the elect and simultaneously command that the gospel be preached to all men is because every man has the natural ability to believe the gospel. It is not natural ability that prevents the non-elect from believing, but rather man's moral ability. To the non-elect, the gospel is morally repugnant, and hence rejected. But to the elect, the gospel is the very words of life, and thus embraced. All men are called upon to believe, because in one sense, all are able, but only the elect will

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<sup>61</sup> Hall Sr., *Help to Zion's Travellers*, 16.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 124–25.

believe, because in another sense, they are the only ones who can.<sup>63</sup> The Christian's duty is to present the truth to all people, trusting God to save whom he will. Hall also argued strongly against Antinomianism, often a byproduct of hyper-Calvinism.

Antinomianism teaches a believer neither to fear God nor to regard man; for, according to it, he cannot be guilty of offending the one nor of injuring the other, for as there is no law, cruelty is not prohibited, nor kindness required; but truth and treachery, profanity and piety, love and hatred, are equally agreeable in believers.<sup>64</sup>

According to Hall, Antinomianism destroys any meaningful basis for Christian ethics and should be rejected.

What made *Help to Zion's Travellers* such an important book was not its defense of Calvinist doctrine, but rather its criticism of High Calvinist theology and practice. In Hall's mind, election and evangelism, divine sovereignty and human responsibility, were not mutually exclusive concepts. God has chosen, and all are commanded to believe. A Christian's responsibility is not to prognosticate about who is chosen, but to share the gospel with all men so that the elect might believe. As Michael Haykin notes, "Hall clearly intends that the preaching of the gospel should not be restricted in any way, but that every man everywhere and in every condition be exhorted to repent and believe on Christ for salvation."<sup>65</sup> Brackney claims "The elder Robert Hall was a major catalyst for softening the deterministic outlook of English Baptists in the eighteenth century."<sup>66</sup> Though eclipsed by the later works of Fuller and Carey, *Help to Zion's Travellers* was the first book written by a Northamptonshire Association pastor that advocated evangelical Calvinism, and was a major indication that evangelicalism was taking hold in the association.

### Hall's Influence on the Emerging Generation

Though Robert Hall, Sr. died before the BMS was established in 1792, he played a crucial role in its founding through the influence he had upon many of the younger ministers in the Northamptonshire Association. O. C. Robison argues Hall's "great contribution was as much in his personality as in his writings, for he was held in high esteem by the rising generation of young men who were to spread from the Midlands

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 219–30.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>65</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, "The Elder Robert Hall and His *Help to Zion's Travellers*: 1," *The Banner of Truth* 343 (April 1992): 19.

<sup>66</sup> Brackney, *Genetic History*, 119.

throughout the country as Baptist leaders.”<sup>67</sup> One of these younger ministers was Andrew Fuller. Raymond Brown observes that “the links between the two men were close and strong.”<sup>68</sup> When Andrew Fuller was ordained in 1775, Hall was one of the ministers who participated in the service.<sup>69</sup> As mentioned above, it was also Hall who first introduced Fuller to Jonathan Edwards’s *Freedom of the Will* when the younger pastor was struggling with his own High Calvinism and moving toward the evangelical position. Though there is no evidence that *Help to Zion’s Travellers* itself was particularly instrumental in shaping Fuller’s own evangelical Calvinism, Morden notes that Fuller does refer to the book in the first edition of *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*.<sup>70</sup> Though Hall’s writings may not have greatly influenced Fuller, his advice did; Hall strongly encouraged Fuller to publish *Gospel Worthy*.<sup>71</sup>

A second younger minister whom Hall mentored was John Sutcliff. The latter was already predisposed to evangelical Calvinism before he met Hall, having studied at Bristol Baptist Academy in the 1770s. Obviously influenced by Edwardsean theology, Sutcliffe preached a sermon for the Northamptonshire Association in 1784 in which he encouraged the ministers present to hold prayer meetings in their churches in the hopes of fostering revival. That same year Sutcliff also published an English edition of Edwards’s *An Humble Attempt to Promote the Agreement and Union of God’s People Throughout the World in Extraordinary Prayer for a Revival of Religion*.<sup>72</sup> The result was a widespread evangelical prayer movement among the churches of the Northamptonshire Association. Hall encouraged Sutcliff in his efforts and thought highly enough of the younger minister that he once claimed that “Brother Sutcliff is a safe man; you never need fear that he will say or do an improper thing.”<sup>73</sup>

A third younger minister influenced by Hall, not surprisingly, was his son, Robert Hall, Jr. The younger Robert Hall became a leader among the Particular Baptists, especially in the early years of the nineteenth century. He came by his evangelicalism naturally, having sat under his

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<sup>67</sup> Robison, “Particular Baptists,” 59.

<sup>68</sup> Brown, *English Baptists*, 116.

<sup>69</sup> Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 138.

<sup>70</sup> Morden, *Offering Christ to the World*, 45. Some scholars argue for a more direct link between Hall’s book and *Gospel Worthy*. Tom Nettles argues that Hall’s “organization of Edwards’s thought appears to have had an impact on Fuller’s treatment.” See Nettles, *The Baptists*, 262.

<sup>71</sup> Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 147.

<sup>72</sup> Hayden, “Evangelical Calvinism,” 343.

<sup>73</sup> Andrew Fuller, “Principle and Prospects of a Servant of Christ,” in *The Works of Andrew Fuller*, vol. 1, ed. Joseph Belcher (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1845; reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle), 353.

father's teaching. He was also a remarkably intelligent child, having already read Edwards's *Freedom of the Will* and *Religious Affections* by the time he was nine years old.<sup>74</sup> Hall, Jr. served as longtime pastor of the Harvey Lane church in Leicester, a church once pastored by William Carey, with whom Hall shared an enthusiastic zeal for mission.<sup>75</sup> The younger Hall was also a notable preacher in his own right. Thomas McKibbens notes that when Hall, Jr. was pastoring in Cambridge, so many students were attending his services that the university's officials considered passing a rule to prevent students from worshiping at Hall's church.<sup>76</sup> Hall, Jr. is probably best remembered for his opposition to the slave trade and his theological controversy with Joseph Kinghorn over the relationship between baptism and the Lord's Supper.<sup>77</sup> The son recognized the mental acumen of his famous father, remembering that "He appeared to the greatest advantage upon subjects where the faculties of most men fail them; for the natural element of his mind was greatness."<sup>78</sup> Hall, Jr. also spoke fondly of his father's piety, noting in his preface to the second edition of *Help to Zion's Travellers*, "I shall ever esteem it one of the greatest favors an indulgent Providence has conferred upon me, to have possessed such a father, whom in all the essential features of character it will be my humble ambition to imitate, though conscious it must ever be—Haid passibus aequis."<sup>79</sup>

Perhaps most significantly, at least so far as the Particular Baptist missionary movement is concerned, Robert Hall, Sr. was influential in the ministry of William Carey. When he was struggling to arrive at his own evangelical convictions, Carey, like his friend Andrew Fuller, found a mentor in Hall. Clearly drawn to Hall's preaching, Carey would often

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<sup>74</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, "Hearing the Word: Robert Hall's Reflections on How Best to Profit Spiritually from Preaching," *Reformation and Revival* 9, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 137.

<sup>75</sup> George J. Griffin, "Robert Hall's Contribution to Early Baptist Missions," *Baptist History and Heritage* 3, no. 1 (January 1968): 5.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas McKibbens, "Disseminating Biblical Doctrine through Preaching," *Baptist History and Heritage* 19, no. 3 (July 1984): 47.

<sup>77</sup> For Hall's position on the slave trade, see Timothy Whelan, "Robert Hall and the Bristol Slave-Trade Debate of 1787–1788," *Baptist Quarterly* 38, no. 5 (January 2000): 212–24. In the ordinances debate, Hall advocated open communion whereas Kinghorn endorsed strict communion. See Robert Hall, Jr., *On Terms of Communion: with a Particular View to the Case of the Baptists and Paedobaptists* (Manlius, NY: Kellogg & Clark, 1817); Joseph Kinghorn, *Baptism, A Term of Communion at the Lord's Supper; A Defense of "Baptism a Term of Communion," in Answer to the Rev. Robert Hall's Reply* (Norwich, UK: Bacon, Kinnerbrook; Wilkin and Youngman, 1820).

<sup>78</sup> Olinthus Gregory, "A Brief Memoir of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M.," in *The Works of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M.*, vol. III, eds. Olinthus Gregory and Joseph Belcher (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1844), 3.

<sup>79</sup> Hall Sr., *Help to Zion's Travellers*, 23. The Latin phrase at the end of the quote is translated "at a slower pace."

walk twenty miles to listen to Hall preach at Arnsby.<sup>80</sup> But more than Hall's evangelical sermons, *Help to Zion's Travellers* proved especially instrumental in the development of Carey's own evangelical Calvinism. Peter Morden claims that Hall's book "was probably the most important extra-biblical work that Carey read."<sup>81</sup> In his preface to later editions of *Help to Zion's Travellers*, John Ryland, Jr. said of Carey, "here that excellent man, who is now laboring in India, with such indefatigable zeal for the salvation of the heathen, first found his own system of divinity."<sup>82</sup> In his later years Carey himself praised Hall's book.

Mr. Skinner one day made me a present of Mr. Hall's *Help to Zion's Travellers*; in which I found all that arranged and illustrated which I had been so long picking up by scraps. I do not remember ever to have read any book with such raptures as I did that. If it was poison, as some then said, it was so sweet to me that I drank it greedily to the bottom of the cup; and I rejoice to say, that those doctrines are the choice of my heart to this day.<sup>83</sup>

Robert Hall, Sr. may not have lived to see the Particular Baptists enter into foreign mission, but his evangelical influence was clearly visible in the lives of the younger ministers he encouraged, including William Carey himself.

### Conclusion

English Particular Baptists found themselves at a theological crossroads in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Many had drunk deeply of the High Calvinism so prevalent in the environs around London. Those who looked to John Gill for their theological convictions embraced Gill's hesitancy to call upon sinners to repent, and in many instances embraced a thoroughgoing hyper-Calvinism. This theology was opposed to mission and evangelism, as evidenced by John Ryland, Sr.'s allegedly labeling of Carey as an "enthusiast" in response to the latter's call for foreign mission work at the 1785 Northamptonshire Association's ministers'

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<sup>80</sup> Brown, *English Baptists*, 116. In commenting on Hall's influence on Carey and Fuller, Peter Naylor observes, "The good that came from [Hall's] country church in Leicestershire is incalculable." See Peter Naylor, *Picking Up a Pin for the Lord: English Particular Baptists from 1688 to the Early Nineteenth Century* (London: Grace, 1992), 212.

<sup>81</sup> Morden, *Offering Christ to the World*, 130.

<sup>82</sup> Hall, Sr., *Help to Zion's Travellers*, 10.

<sup>83</sup> Quoted in Eustace Carey, *Memoir of William Carey, D.D.* (Boston: Gould, Kendall and Lincoln, 1836), 11.

fraternal.<sup>84</sup> But another group of Particular Baptists, initially those with ties to Bristol Baptist Academy and later those who ministered in the Northamptonshire Association, adopted the evangelical Calvinism of Jonathan Edwards and argued for a Reformed theology that was compatible with foreign mission and intentional evangelism. Though the younger pastors in the Northamptonshire Association, and especially Fuller and Carey, receive most of the credit for igniting the evangelical awakening of Particular Baptist life, these younger leaders were influenced by earlier evangelicals, not the least of whom was Robert Hall, Sr.

Though virtually unknown to modern historians, Robert Hall, Sr. made a significant contribution to the evangelical awakening in the Northamptonshire Association. Through various avenues of influence, Hall encouraged a generation of younger Calvinists to embrace evangelistic fervor and evangelical piety. As this evangelicalism spread through the Northamptonshire Association, the result was spiritual renewal and the advent of a missionary movement among the Particular Baptists. Though Hall did not live to see the culmination of this renewal movement, he played a part in its ultimate fruition. In his preaching ministry, Hall encouraged his colleagues to avoid an extreme view of Calvinism that tended to dampen enthusiasm for evangelism. In his writing ministry, Hall published the first book-length attack on hyper-Calvinism from within the Northamptonshire Association. In his ministry of encouragement, Hall urged Fuller to publish *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation. Help to Zion's Traveller's* so influenced Carey, it could be argued that Carey's own *Enquiry* was simply the application of Hall's evangelical Calvinism to the question of foreign mission. In conclusion, though Robert Hall, Sr. was not the most important figure associated with the revival of the English Particular Baptists, and though he was not the first Particular Baptist to embrace evangelical Calvinism, there is little doubt that Hall was an influential presence within the Northamptonshire Association who tirelessly promoted the evangelical convictions that ultimately spread to most Particular Baptists in the years following 1792.

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<sup>84</sup> George, *Faithful Witness*, 53. According to tradition, Ryland is supposed to have told Carey that "when God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it without consulting you or me." Whether or not Ryland actually rebuked Carey is debated by scholars. See Nettles, *The Baptists*, 291–92; Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 194.

## **An Inductive Study of the Use of *Monogenēs* in the New Testament**

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### **Abstract**

*This article, an inductive study of the use of monogenēs in the New Testament, argues that the term is one that completely excludes any notion of “begetting” or “begotten” with regard to Jesus and instead conveys the meaning of “unique” and “dear” when referring to the Son of God.*

### **Introduction**

Greek lexicons and dictionaries of the New Testament are at their most basic nothing other than the systematic classification of word usage. The “authority” of such lexicons (though rarely considered by most users) is dependent on the knowledge, judgment, accuracy, and precision of the lexicographer. With sufficient effort and training, the individual student can personally construct his own systematic classification of word usage, and thereby provide a “check” on standard lexical pronouncements. This is done (properly) by locating all uses in the New Testament of a given word, examining closely each contextual usage, comparing these with usage outside the literary corpus under investigation, then classifying usages in a systematic fashion. Some attention to etymology (important for word history though having no necessary connection to word meaning) as well as synonyms and antonyms are also of value.

### ***Monogenēs* in the New Testament**

It is the purpose of this paper to make such an inductive study of the use of the adjective *monogenēs* in the New Testament. This word is found nine times in the New Testament: Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; Hebrews 11:17; I John 4:9.

From this simple listing, it is first of all evident that the word is conspicuously absent from the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, and though used by Luke in his Gospel, it does not occur in Acts; neither, Paul, Peter, James or Jude ever employs the word, and though John

makes more frequent use of the word than all other New Testament authors combined, it is absent from the Apocalypse. Some explanation for the absence of *monogenēs* in the Synoptic Gospels with reference to Jesus, and in Paul's writings will be offered.

Luke 7:12<sup>85</sup>

This verse may be literally translated as: "And when he drew near to the gate of the city, and behold, a dead [man] was being carried out, a *monogenēs* in relation to his mother, and she [was] a widow, and many people of the city [were] with her."<sup>86</sup>

Jesus is here (in an account unique to Luke) dealing with the son of a widowed woman in the village of Nain. The context is sufficiently clear that *monogenēs* is used to describe the special relationship this man had with his mother, a widowed woman who apparently is destitute of other family.

Luke 8:42 (for sake of context, we quote also v. 41):

"And behold, [there was] a man who was named Jairus, and he was ruler of the synagogue. And he, having fallen at the feet of Jesus, was exhorting him to enter into his house, because he had a *monogenēs* daughter about twelve years [old], and she was dying."

As with the previous use, here *monogenēs* is used to describe the relationship of a child to a parent. The parallel verses in Matthew (9:18) and Mark (5:22, 23) do not include *monogenēs* nor do they use any potentially synonymous terms which might illuminate its usage in Luke.

Luke 9:38

"And behold, a man from the crowd called out, saying, 'Teacher, I am begging you to look at my son, because he is *monogenēs* to me.'"

As with the two other examples in Luke, the relationship of a parent and child is at the center of the usage of *monogenēs*. And, as in the previous example, the parallel passages in Matthew (17:14, 15) and Mark (9:17) lack *monogenēs* or any other descriptive adjective applied to the boy.

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<sup>85</sup> All quotations from the Greek New Testament are from *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, edited by Zane Hodges, and Arthur L. Farstad.

<sup>86</sup> All English translations of Bible quotations are my own. Words in brackets have been supplied *ad sensum* though having no corresponding word in the Greek original.

John 1:14, 18

“And the word became flesh and sojournd us and we saw his glory, glory as of a *monogenous* beside a father, full of grace and truth. . . . No one has ever seen God. The *monogenēs* Son,<sup>87</sup> who is in the bosom of the Father, that one explained [him].”

Here, as in all of John’s five uses of *monogenēs*, the person so described is the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ. Here, the relationship of Father and Son is expressly spelled out, though clearly not the ordinary human relationship between parent and child, as in Luke’s three usages.

John 3:16, 18

“For God loved the world this way that he gave his *monogenē* Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. . . . The one who believes in him is not judged, but the one who does not believe in him already has been judged, because he has not believed in the name of the *monogenous* Son of God.”

Picking up on the usage of *monogenēs* as found in chapter 1, John repeats it here with reference to the relationship of the First and Second Persons of the Trinity.

1 John 4:9

“In this appeared the love of in us, that God has sent his *monogenē* Son into the world so that we may live through him.”

Consistent with his four other uses John employs *monogenēs* solely as an ascriptive term for Christ, and uses it in a context in which the Father-Son relationship is explicit.

Hebrews 11:17, 18

“In faith, Abraham, when he was tested offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up the *monogenē* [he] to whom it was said that, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called.’”

As with all other New Testament usages, here *monogenēs* is descriptive of a personal relationship, in this case that of father and son, and in common with all references outside the writings of John, it relates

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<sup>87</sup> The variant reading *theos* is strongly supported by early witnesses to the text, including manuscripts p66, p75, Aleph\*, B, and C\* as well as the Coptic (Boharic) and Syriac (Peshitta) versions, along with a significant number of early patristic quotes, numerous later manuscripts and some other versions. If genuine, it constitutes an important additional “proof-text” of the Deity of the Logos, i.e., Christ. See Barbara Aland *et al.*, eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 314.

to a biological relationship of parent and child. However, here it is notable that Isaac was *not* the only son that Abraham had fathered (“begotten”), that is, contrary to the common English version’s translation, Isaac was *not* Abraham’s “only-begotten son,” in as much as Abraham had an older son named Ishmael, thirteen years Isaac’s senior. On this basis, one suspects that there is something decidedly erroneous in the use, here at least, of “only begotten” as the English translation of *monogenēs*.

### Etymology of *Monogenēs*

But sorting this out, what sense, what meaning should be ascribed to *monogenēs* in the New Testament? First, we will consider the etymology of the word, not as a sure-fire guide to meaning, but as a starting place in tracing the development of the word.

The translation of *monogenēs* by “only-begotten” in the KJV and other English versions in six of the nine New Testament occurrences (all except those in Luke) would suggest a presumed etymology from *monos* “only” and *gennaō* “to beget, father, procreate.” This presumed etymology is certainly erroneous. The lexicographers are united in this. Moulton and Milligan state that “*monogenēs* is literally ‘one of a kind,’ ‘only,’ ‘unique’ (*unicus*), not ‘only begotten,’ which would be *monogennētos* (*unigenitus*).”<sup>88</sup> Thayer gives as the roots of the word *monos* and *genos* the latter word meaning “kind, sort, class”),<sup>89</sup> as does Abbott-Smith.<sup>90</sup>

“Only-begotten,” then, as the English translation of *monogenēs* is apparently based on the word’s supposed etymology. It is a mistake to base the understanding of a word’s meaning on its etymology (rather than its usage), *especially so if you have the wrong etymology*, as is the case of the translation “only-begotten”! This is not what *monogenēs* means, either in etymology or usage.

### Ancient Versions

Next a check of ancient Bible translations will be helpful. How bilingual near-contemporaries of the New Testament understood words is likely to be a valuable guide to the meaning of such words. Consultation of multiple diverse versions will serve as a cross-check on interpretation and understanding. If unrelated versions in unrelated languages agree on

<sup>88</sup> *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, 416-17.

<sup>89</sup> *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: American Book Company, 1889), 417.

<sup>90</sup> *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (3rd ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937), 296.

the meaning of a word, the likelihood of that being the correct understanding is strengthened. First, the Latin versions will be considered, then the Syriac.

### Latin Versions

In the Old Latin, there was apparently a uniform rendering of *monogenēs* by *unicus*<sup>91</sup> which means, “only, sole; singular, unparalleled, unique”<sup>92</sup> and from which, most obviously, comes our English word “unique.” The Old Latin part of manuscript D (Codex Bezae) has *unicus* (in various cases) for *monogenēs* at Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; and John 3:16, 18 (it is defective in the Old Latin part at John 1:14, 18; I John 4:9). The manuscript never contained the book of Hebrews.<sup>93</sup> The meaning “unique” fits nicely in every New Testament example: the son of the widow of Nain was her *only/unique* son. So, too, of the daughter of Jairus: she was his only child. Likewise with the man in Luke 9; his son was without siblings, in short, unique. With reference to Isaac, while we recognize that Isaac was *not* Abraham’s only son, his relationship to Abraham was nevertheless unique, since Isaac alone was born “according to promise,” that is, in fulfillment of a Divine promise. It seems that in all these cases, the very uniqueness of the relationship of parent and child would also carry a strong measure of endearment, preciousness, and love. *Unicus* carries no hint of the notion of begetting or fathering. Even the references to Christ fit nicely with the meaning *unique*. While there are many “sons of God,” he is the Son of God in a unique sense, that of eternal relationship, not as with us a relationship established in time on the basis of grace through faith. So even here, following the lead of the Old Latin versions of the NT, *unique* seems entirely appropriate and adequate as a translation of *monogenēs*.

However, in the revised Latin version of Jerome, commonly called the Vulgate, while the translation of *monogenēs* by *unicus* in Luke is left unchanged, in every case where the term is applied to Christ, as well as the singular reference to Isaac, the translation is altered to *unigenitus*,<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> See B. F. Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 169; James Hastings, ed., *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), II: 281; reprint of 1908 Charles Scribner’s Sons edition.

<sup>92</sup> Cassell’s *Latin Dictionary*, 599.

<sup>93</sup> See Scrivener, ed., *Bezae Codex Cantabrigiensis*.

<sup>94</sup> See Bonifatius Fischer, *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, editio minor (Editio tertia emendate; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1984) in the passages noted previously. It is also notable that the Latin version of the so-called “Apostles’ Creed” (which pre-dates Jerome) translates the Greek *monogenēs* by *unicus*, while the somewhat later Nicene Creed translates *monogenēs* by *unigenitus*, just like the Vulgate. See Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom* (3rd ed.; 3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), II: 45, 57.

literally “only-begotten.” It was from this translation in the Latin Vulgate that this sense and meaning imputed to *monogenēs* into the Reformation vernacular versions of Europe passed (*eingeborenen* in German, *unigenito* in Spanish, *only begotten* in English, etc.). What motivated Jerome to make this revision? Dale Moody informs us that Jerome was influenced in his thinking by attendance at a series of lectures by Gregory of Nazianzus, in which he discussed the eternal relationship of the Persons of the Trinity, speaking of God the Father as the begetter (*gennetor*) and God the Son as the one begotten (*gennema*).<sup>95</sup> This led to or was based on the presumed etymology of *monogenēs* as from *gennaō* instead of the correct *genos*. Jerome’s substitution of *unigenitus* for the Old Latin’s *unicus* in six of the nine New Testament occurrences (all those which refer to Christ, and the one reference to Isaac—because he is a “type” of Christ?), was based on theological considerations, which in turn seem founded on etymological speculations, speculations which happened to be entirely false and misleading. As a result, Jerome’s revision introduced into the New Testament a much less accurate, in fact, positively misleading and erroneous translation. The influence of the Vulgate on Western vernacular translations preserved and propagated the error.

### The Peshitta Syriac

Turning to the Peshitta Syriac version of the New Testament, we find that in all occurrences of *monogenēs* in Luke, John and 1 John, the Syriac has *yichidaia*’;<sup>96</sup> in Hebrews 11:17, the related word *yichida*’ is employed, both adjectives from the same root, *yehd*, having the basic idea of singleness, aloneness.<sup>97</sup> As with the Old Latin, the Syriac version found no sufficient grounds for translating *monogenēs* in any way connecting it with the idea of procreating, fathering, or begetting, nor did it draw a distinction between the use of the word with reference to Christ

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<sup>95</sup> “Only begotten,” in *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (5 vols.; ed., George A. Buttrick; New York: Abingdon Press, 1962.), 3: 604. This article is in my estimation exactly on target in all details, except for its failure to note the aspect of endearment in *monogenēs* when used of personal relationships, and his failure to note that both *agapētos* and *idios* are synonyms of *monogenēs*.

<sup>96</sup> Of necessity, Roman script is substituted here for the Syriac.

<sup>97</sup> See J. Payne Smith, ed., *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), 191. Under the influence of the Vulgate, this lexicon gives among the meanings of these two words “only-begotten,” an idea wholly alien to the Syriac root or the word’s usage, as a comparison with usage in Jewish Aramaic—a sister dialect of the same language—abundantly proves; Marcus Jastrow, compiler, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Brooklyn: P. Shalom, 1967), 574.

on the one hand, and with reference to ordinary human children on the other.

### Greek Old Testament Translations

It is important to take a look at the broader usage of *monogenēs* outside the New Testament, including the Septuagint, the Apocrypha, and early Christian writers. *Monogenēs* is found a number of times in the pre-Christian Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint, along with the second century A.D. Jewish Greek versions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, as the most common translation of the Hebrew adjective *yachid*. It is so used in the LXX at Judges 11:34 of Jephthah's only daughter (a usage identical with all three Lucan usages), and is employed in the LXX in Psalm 22:20 and 35:17 where *yachid* is used in parallel with "my soul"—resultant meaning being "my life" or some such idea. In Psalm 25:16, *yachid* / *monogenēs* are adjectival, meaning "alone." Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion have *monogenēs* at Proverbs 4:3, of a mother's only son (LXX has *agapōmenos*, literally, "one who is loved"); likewise Aquila and Symmachus have *monogenēs* at Jeremiah 6:26 of an only son.<sup>98</sup> There, as well as in Amos 8:10 and Zechariah 12:10, the LXX translates *yachid* by *agapētos* ("dear," "beloved"). Genesis 22, where *yachid* is used three times of Isaac (vv. 2, 12, 16), is a most notable case. In all three instances, the LXX has *agapētos*, while Aquila translated the first occurrence and Symmachus the second by *monogenēs*.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, Josephus describes Isaac, with reference to this passage, as Abraham's *monogenēs*,<sup>100</sup> as did the writer of Hebrews, in spite of his dependence on the LXX. Philo wrote of Isaac as *agapētos kai monos* (literally, "dear and only").<sup>101</sup>

It seems evident from this text and their common interchange as Greek translations of *yachid* that *agapētos* and *monogenēs* are close synonyms. This would explain why *monogenēs* is absent as a term for Christ in the Synoptic Gospels, who use *agapētos* of Christ (and only of Christ) nine times: Matthew 3:17; 12:18;<sup>102</sup> 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; 12:6; Luke 3:22; 9:35; 20:13. This instead of *monogenēs* was, perhaps, their chosen translation of an ostensibly original (Aramaic) *yichidaia*' spoken

<sup>98</sup> Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint*, (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983 reprint.), II: 933.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* What they had in the other occurrences, or what Theodotion had was undiscovered by me.

<sup>100</sup> *Jewish Antiquities*, I, 222.

<sup>101</sup> *On Abraham*, XXXII, 168.

<sup>102</sup> Quoting Isaiah 42:1, where the LXX has *eklektos* ("chosen"). On this see the following note.

by God the Father at the baptism of Jesus and on the Mount (or, if spoken in Hebrew, *yachid*), and by Jesus in parables about himself.<sup>103</sup>

### Apocrypha

In the Apocrypha, *monogenēs* is employed in five passages (Tobit 3:15; 6:10 [ms. A, not Aleph or B]; 6:14 [ms. Aleph; A and B have *monos*]; 8:17; and Baruch 4:16 [mss. A and R; Aleph and B have *monos*]), all used of the only child of parents, as in Judges 11:34, and Luke 7, 8, and 9. Since the Greek of these passages is a translation of unknown and unavailable Aramaic (or Hebrew) texts, it is impossible to know with certainty what the original word(s) was.

### Apostolic Fathers

In the Apostolic fathers, Clement of Rome (and later Origen, Cyril and others) employs *monogenēs* to describe the Phoenix, a bird reported to live 500 years—a unique bird, in a class by itself.<sup>104</sup> The usage here is strictly in the literal sense of the word—“unique, one of a kind”—with no thought of endearment or preciousness as commonly found in New Testament and Greek Old Testament usages. At the very least, it reveals with certainty that *monogenēs* has nothing *per se* to do with “begetting.”

### Translating *Monogenēs* into English

What then is the best way to translate *monogenēs* into English? “Only-begotten” is clearly unacceptable, because it is based on a false etymology and misunderstanding of the word. Taken literally, the English word suggests derivation, creation, origination of Christ, a view

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<sup>103</sup> Two additional probable synonyms of *monogenēs* are *idios* (“one’s own”) and *eklektos*. In Matthew 12:18, Isaiah 42:1 is quoted. For the LXX’s *eklektos* (used of Christ again in John 6:69, in many early manuscripts), Matthew reads *agapētos*. Paul uses *idios* of Christ (though never either *monogenēs* or *agapētos*) in Romans 8:32 (with “son” expressed), and almost certainly also in his sermon in Acts 20:28, “which he purchased with the blood of his own *idios* [son].” On this interpretation of the Acts passage, see F. F. Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles. The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (2nd ed.; London: Tyndale Press, 1952), 380-81; Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), 480-81. Irenaeus, in his treatise “Against Heresies,” has a tantalizing statement, “For Abraham . . . delivered up as a sacrifice to God his *only-begotten* and *beloved* son, in order that God also might be pleased to offer up for all his seed His *own beloved* and *only-begotten* Son, as a sacrifice for our redemption” (emphasis added) (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, I: 467). It might prove very instructive to know just exactly what the Greek is for the italicized words in the above quote.

<sup>104</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers* (5 vols.; 2nd ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989 reprint), part 1; 2: 87.

which is doctrinally heretical and clearly in contradiction to the teaching of the Bible.

“Only” has long been used in at least some of the New Testament passages, especially those in Luke, and in some versions, it is used in the rest of the passages as well, even with reference to Christ. This rendering has the advantage of at least not being misleading, though it falls short in that it fails to convey the sense of preciousness, endearment, love which are inherent in *monogenēs* when used of inter-personal relationships. The paraphrase “one and only” employed by the New International Version in all the John, I John and Hebrews references (the latter being especially inexplicable contextually) fails on the same score.

Perhaps in the Luke passages, where the idea of preciousness is inherent in the context, the translation by “only” is adequate. For the other passages, in order to bring out all aspects of the word, I would suggest as the translation a sort of double rendering, namely “unique, dear” as in “We saw his glory, glory as of the unique, dear son of the father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14b); “God loved the world this way: he gave his unique, dear son so that whoever believes in him will not perish, but will have eternal life” (John 3:16). Perhaps this sounds a bit stilted, but it is at least accurate and brings out all facets of the word’s meaning in those contexts.

### Theological Implications

Understanding *monogenēs* in its proper sense—one that completely excludes any notion of “begetting” or “begotten”—has strong theological implications for the doctrine of Christ. It renders moot the whole heated theological debate of the third and fourth centuries concerning the so-called “eternal generation of the Son,” a term which always left me with the uncomfortable feeling that if we accepted such terminology at face value, we were admitting *de facto* that Christ was a created being and not God. It also makes the Nicene Creed’s affirmation that Christ was “begotten but not made” (*gennēthenta, ou poiēthenta*) so much verbal nonsense.<sup>105</sup> Likewise, proposed translations of *monogenēs* such as that noted in BAGD, namely “begotten of the only one” are exposed as wholly ludicrous and unfounded.<sup>106</sup> Christ is the unique Son of God; that is, in the sense in which he is the Son of God, he has no brothers.

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<sup>105</sup> For a frank and pointed analysis of the understanding of *monogenēs* adopted here as it applies to the Nicene Creed, see J. O. Buswell, Jr., *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), I: 110-112.

<sup>106</sup> BAGD, 527.

## **Mission Insights from Global Missions Leaders: Kevin Greeson, David Garrison, and Eckhard Schnabel**

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### **Abstract**

*This article provides interviews with and significant insights from three leaders in global missions: Kevin Greeson, David Garrison, and Eckhard Schnabel.*

### **Mission Insights from Kevin Greeson**

Kevin Greeson serves as an International Mission Board (IMB) field missionary as well as serving as a Strategy Associate in the South Asia region of the IMB. In his initial comments, he mentioned that he is answering the questions from his context of serving among Muslim peoples. He is the author of *The Camel*.<sup>107</sup>

1. What do you see as the key theological issues and their implications for missions today?

In missions to Muslims, the key theological issues center on “contextualization.” For example, the use of “Allah” by missionaries and evangelists is a major point of contention. One claim is that Christians should not use the word “Allah” in reference to the God of the Bible. They say, “The God of the Bible is *not* the Allah of the Qur’an.” Missionaries and evangelists who use “Allah” make the claim, “We know that the Allah of the Qur’an is not the same as the God of the Bible.” We spend time and effort in redefining “Allah” to Muslims. It is a missiological principle to look inside a culture for a word that can be used for God instead of introducing them to a foreign word. In addition, Arabic Bibles have translated “God” as “Allah.”

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<sup>107</sup> You can read the book *The Camel* (WIGTake Resources, 2007) if you are interested in the things being learned about how Muslims are coming to faith in Christ.

In hundreds of interviews of Muslims who have become Christians, I have discovered that when they use the word “Allah” for God, they understand Allah as the God of the Bible.

There are many other contextualized issues that missionaries are using that cause divisions among missionaries and among professors of theological schools. Those missionaries who use contextualization in their evangelism and do not move into excesses in contextualization are finding the best results.

2. What do you see to be the greatest challenge for a missional church today?

Boldness, the lack of boldness, is the greatest challenge for missions today. Are we going to understand that the gospel needs to be heard by everyone at least once before they die, and are we willing to take the risk to get that out there to them? Also, the lack of vision is a challenge. Can a Southern Baptist church, a church in the USA, have a vision and understand that they can be involved in starting a church planting movement on the other side of the world? Most churches, of course, do not have that type of vision, though we *have* seen a few who have caught the vision that they *can* do that.

Regarding typical churches out here on the mission field—the greatest challenge for them basically is the same thing. While it takes *us* years to connect with people of another culture, these “near-cultural believers” might have it easier, so that a Bengali Muslim who becomes a believer can catch and win someone in a Pakistani Muslim context much faster and easier and not bring on as much baggage as a Western American believer. Getting them to catch that vision, getting them to think outside the box so that they can send missionaries from Bangladesh over to Pakistan has been the challenge. It is the greatest challenge we have with “B2J” (back-to-Jerusalem)—getting these Chinese who are experiencing church planting movements, getting that exported into other countries, it is a challenge. It is just lack of creativity on how to get into another country.

3. What is working in missions today? What are we doing correctly?

A key strategy that is working well among missionaries who work with Muslims is the strategy of transplanting near-culture Christians into neighboring harvest fields. Muslims have been trained to resist Western influences. When a Muslim-background believer is transplanted from one area into a new area, typically a movement will break out in the new area.

#### 4. What is not working, what needs to be changed, and why?

How we use “outside” money into starting a movement, a foothold—we are not doing this very well. Some people say money is like “black cancer.” I have heard nationals over here say, “Money does funny things to the people.” But I do know that it is not a sin, it is not wrong to use money to bring the gospel from the outside of the culture to get into the culture. It is just a question of how to do it, and this has been a very big challenge. It is more about what *not* to do with money than it is what *to* do with money, because we do not have any problems spending money wildly on projects and on access; in other words, how do we use money *wisely*. I am not one who says “do not use it at all.” That just does not sound right and it does not honor people who are giving sacrificially in the USA for use out in the field here. They *want* us to use that money; they *want* us to buy Bibles; to purchase materials, to send missionaries further into these cultures, these communities. So it is a thing that needs a lot of work—the use of outside money.

The hardest thing out here is starting a church planting movement in cities. The gospel flows out in these rural communities, but even in south Asia we are not seeing urban centers take the gospel like that. We do not have people who are writing books and giving us insights and clues on how to reach the cities.

### **Mission Insights from David Garrison**

David Garrison serves as an IMB field missionary as well as being the regional leader for the South Asia region of the International Mission Board. He previously served as interim regional leader for South Asia starting on September 2001, and then became the new regional leader six months later in 2002. He is the author of *Church Planting Movements: How God Is Redeeming a Lost World* (WIGTake Resources, 2003).

#### 1. What do you see as the key theological issues and their implications for missions today?

I have listed five things. The first one is simply the “population explosion.” How do we reach a world of more than six billion people which in fifty years will have nine billion people? How do we reach a world where the population growth rate is just exploding rapidly and every generation has to be reached anew? That is a theological question and issue.

Second, the Muslim world—the world of Islam. For fifteen or sixteen centuries we have not engaged Muslims effectively from an evangelical standpoint. We have engaged them militarily for about 1500 years, and not even done that very effectively, and we are back in that old pattern of

engaging them militarily. But the theological challenge is how to engage them effectively evangelistically.

Third, post-Christian secularism, especially as you go around Europe, and I think that is one of the big theological issues we are facing today and will continue to face in the future.

Fourth, non-literate peoples. Evangelical Protestants are a people of the Book. What do we do when the vast majority of the remaining non-Christian and unreached people groups of the world are predominantly oral, non-literate peoples? How do you get the Book to non-readers? It is not a new problem; it has always been an issue and remains one today, one with which we as Protestants have to grapple.

Fifth,—and this may seem a little controversial—around the world, major religions, including our own faith of Christianity, as we are bumping into each other more and more, there is a tendency to respond to each other with preconceived, ideological reactions. We see that in fundamentalist Islam, in some strands of orthodox Hinduism and orthodox Judaism, and in some sectors of the so-called Christian world. We are not boldly, openly, actively engaging lost people with the gospel or other cultures with the gospel, but instead, we are concocting reactions and ideological caricatures in many cases of others, rather than boldly, aggressively, winsomely engaging them with the good news of Jesus Christ. I see that as a tremendous challenge in our world today. There is a tendency to cocoon and chunk rocks at others rather than boldly going to them and just loving and proclaiming Jesus to them. Those are my five key theological issues.

## 2. What do you see to be the greatest challenge for a missional church today?

It is incredible to be a missional church today. We can do things today that were not possible for 2000 years. I have listed a couple of challenges, and I do not claim to make these authoritative or comprehensive. The first one in mind is being *effective* and actually discipling the nations, in other words, people groups at home (in the USA) and around the world. It is one thing to have the kind of church that is a lighthouse and invites people to come in, and when they come in they have to come on *our* terms and grapple with *our* gospel message the way we want to hear it and present it. It is another thing to be effective in crossing cultural boundaries and effectively communicating the gospel, winning converts, and discipling them. It is a challenge for missionaries and a challenge the church is now facing. It is a challenge in which she has not shown great success.

Another challenge is mobilizing, equipping, and unleashing the laity into the harvest fields. All the resources to reach the world to fulfill the

Great Commission are sitting in our pews today or on our church rolls. We must mobilize them, and what is more, we have really got to equip these guys and bring them into their role of learning to be effective fishers of men. Then we need to launch them and to unleash them and say, “Just as Jesus chose laymen and spent three years investing himself into them, making them fishers of men,” we must do the same with our laity and unleash them into the harvest fields of the world and this Great Commission can be fulfilled.

### 3. What is working in missions today? What are we doing correctly?

Churches are more actively participating in the Great Commission, though it does not mean they are actually succeeding. Ralph Winter recently wrote an article in which he states that it is ludicrous to expect local USA churches to take on the least unevangelized people groups (tough nuts to crack) and in their spare time finish the unfinished task. In a way we must listen to what he [God] is saying—it’s not going to happen just because churches are awake and mobilized. They need to become students of what God is doing around the world. Churches, the laity, the church leaders, the whole community need to join this great game of “Lord, how can you use us? What are you doing? How can we be transformed into useful instruments for you?” So then the question shifts over to “What is working anywhere in the world?”

There are a lot of things that are happening. We have documented church planting movements (CPMs). I just talked to some guys in the research department (IMB) last week, and they said there are now 140 people groups on their CPM watch list. These are people groups that have been identified; they are rapidly multiplying. They are not necessarily full-blown CPMs, but they are moving that way. Missionaries around the world are looking at that; they are studying that and asking, “How is God at work, and how can we join him in that?” I think churches need to be doing the same thing and ask, “How is God at work in the harvest fields around the world? What is he doing, and how can we participate in that?” And to the extent they join in what God is doing, I think there is no limit to what they can do. The very fact that they are awake; they are capable; they are able to travel in a small world and afford to do things does not in any way equate with effectiveness. So I have listed CPMs in the same context—lay-led house church multiplication is working to rapidly sweep across many people groups.

Another area that is very exciting that I think churches can be involved in (and a few churches *are* getting involved in) is some encouraging breakthroughs in Muslim evangelism. For the first time in 1500 years, a lot of people are starting to say, “We need to walk in Muslim shoes a little bit and understand the world through their eyes, to

get in their skin and see why we have been so ineffective for so long.” What we are beginning to find is as we do begin to speak their language and understand their worldview, we begin to build bridges of understanding to them, so that many of them are starting to cross over those bridges now and are coming to faith in Jesus Christ. We have seen literally tens of thousands across South Asia come to faith in Christ and it is because we are stepping over the line to understand and build bridges that they can cross back over to Christ. Churches can do that too and it does not automatically happen—it takes a *commitment* to do it.

#### 4. What is not working, what needs to be changed, and why?

This is a kind of paradoxical answer, because on one hand what is working is also not working: outsourcing the Great Commission to a small band of highly educated professionals. On the one hand, when guys get highly educated and they get focused on the Great Commission, they do get better at it. They become more effective. But thinking of the entire Christian community of believers, thinking that there are enough of those guys (i.e. full-time professionals) to do it all, to get the job done, that is not working. So in a way our success is our failure. It is right to say that this is a very serious, all-consuming pursuit that merits people being professional full-time missionaries and fully ministers and servants of Christ. But on the other hand, unless we find ways to expand that harvest force, so that they are giving more of their time to learning, to upgrading, to expanding their involvement and capabilities in fulfillment of the Great Commission, there is not any hope of us keeping up with this population explosion. For even as we train people at Midwestern, Southwestern, or Southeastern Seminary or all these schools, it is great to do that, but they have got to be *trainers of trainers*. When they come to the field they have got to be thinking not just, “What can I do?” but rather, “How can I multiply myself and what I have learned—my vision, my passion, my skills?—How can I multiply that exponentially in my national partners?” Only as we become that grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies and then produces a harvest a hundred, a thousand fold, only when that happens, are we going to get out of this “professionalism” in which we think, “Unless you are really professional and highly trained, you really are not likely to get anything done.”

We do not ever want to get in a position of criticizing excellence and quality and criticizing learning and training. I have my Ph.D. and my M.Div., and those things are great, but they are worth absolutely nothing when it comes to “Am I any more saved than anybody else?” and the bottom line is we need to take everything we have learned and find ways to create lay empowerment, lay education, and lay training, and drive that out to every sector of the Christian community.

We should not be afraid to look *anywhere* to learn what God is doing. It is his work, and it is his world.

### Missions Insights from Eckhard Schnabel

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1. What do you see as the key theological issues and their implications for missions today?

I think nothing has really changed since the time of Paul or Augustine, the time of Luther or Calvin, or of Whitefield and Wesley, or even Billy Graham. The key question always seems to have been the nature of the gospel, the centrality of Jesus Christ. I think we in the West are taking this for granted. I have been asked by the university to write a popular book about Paul's missionary methods, so it basically means taking chapter twenty-eight from my big book (i.e., *Early Christian Mission*) and write it up in a more popular form. I am doing a few new things also. I have been reading church growth literature. There is a ton of very helpful material, especially when cultural anthropologists like Paul Hiebert focus upon what culture means and so forth; they all seem to take for granted that everyone knows what the gospel is that is being preached by missionaries, and probably in some context they can. But even if one looks simply at the index (of such books), sometimes Jesus Christ is not mentioned at all, even if he is mentioned in the book itself. Really, it is the centrality of the cross and what that means, not only in terms of our confession of faith or our dogmatics. What does this really mean for doing church for example, doing missions, we see really there are immediate ramifications, so just to give one example: after I wrote my big book on mission, I wrote in German a commentary on 1 Corinthians. What I wrote was obviously not new. I was really impressed how Paul, especially in 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5, highlights the fact that the gospel is really incomprehensible. If the gospel is defined as the news of the crucified Savior, it says for Jews it is a stumbling block and for Greeks it is nonsense . . . none of them had the necessary hermeneutical, intellectual, or traditional parameters that would make the gospel message he preached as easily understandable. Then he goes on to say, that is the context of the argument, that to look for methods, for rhetorical strategies that make the gospel more easily believable is really

a contradiction to the gospel itself. We might darken the gospel or even put it under a bushel, as Jesus said in a different context. The context of Corinthians is that there were Christians in the church who evaluated their former and present missionaries and pastors and preachers on the basis of the stipulations of Greco-Roman rhetoric. Paul says you cannot really wax eloquently about a crucified person, because it is painful, it is shocking, and that the death of a Jew on the cross to boot should contribute salvation for the world—I mean Greeks can only laugh at this. So Paul says the cause for faith—it is not any method, any rhetorical strategy, but the power of God. He does provide the power of the Holy Spirit, which of course is not signs and wonders, because that is what the Jews want of course, but he can give it to them.

I think Paul makes it very clear. He makes a direct correlation between the content of what he preached and the method of how he preached. Of course, I am not an expert on evaluating the mega-church movement here in the USA, and there are certainly a lot of good things going on (many say this is more social and cultural at the moment; it may already be on the way out again; emerging churches may be becoming more popular). And of course the church growth movement of the 1960s and 1970s is not what it was in terms of influence. I think one can learn a lot of positive things from all of these suggestions. We should not fool ourselves that in the end it is *methods* that bring people to faith in Christ; this is something only the power of the Holy Spirit can do. In the West of course, we have this “can do” spirit. We think, especially if you get a mega-church involved, and then academics, well then, we can devise a strategy that gets us from point A to point B. And then projections are being made how much the church should be growing. And usually these things have been completely devoid of theology. And we miss that point, that even in the midst of our strategizing (which we *should* be doing), God is at work. I think this is really key—the centrality of Christ. There has been a slew of new books, mainly in the systematic area, which say “to preach the wrath of God and that on the cross God’s justice was set aside as Jesus dies a substitutionary death”—that this is “Reformation preaching,” and “people do not understand that today”—many of my colleagues say that the doctrine of the atonement, where the cross is central, seems to be increasingly coming under attack, which is not a new thing at all obviously. That was one of the attacks of classical liberalism in the nineteenth century.

We have to remind ourselves what is really, truly central. Paul preaches differently to Jews and to Gentiles, but he always preaches about Christ crucified, he never changes that. And that cannot be contextualized, that is a problem which Paul knows. As a missionary he knows he must and he also knows he can rely on the power of God

which accompanies the preaching. I think I would say for the church this is really a key issue. Of course many have said for a long time the whole issue of the uniqueness of the gospel, the uniqueness of the God we believe in, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, that only through his death is there salvation—in the age of our post-modernity, this obviously is always a very key emphasis (e.g., in Acts 17 before the members of the Areopagus). In the evangelical church itself the centrality of the cross is not questioned and this seems to be increasingly a problem, even if only seemingly people take it for granted. I do not know which churches you attend when you are back in the USA, but I hear it from students and I have been in the worship services with “contemporary worship” (so-called), where there is hardly anything about the cross or suffering. I even have been in *Easter* services where there the resurrection of Christ was not a subject of any of the material offered to be sung by the congregation, just the usual praise songs. Coupled with that—relying on God and his power of the cross and his word—students tell me, and I have experienced it, that his word is not even read publicly in worship. You get a program (i.e., bulletin) in the church and on the program you have all sorts of things but no line that says “Scripture reading,” no line for “prayer”—it is left to those actively involved on the *platform* to do this. I think this is very troubling. How can we say we rely on God’s power and on the gospel if we do not even read the word of God? It becomes questionable what Christians will do at home. And if we do not have sustained prayer in our worship services and sustained Scripture reading (not so many quotations and Powerpoints), then why should ordinary Christians read Scripture at home?

I had a conversation with a pastor who proactively defended *not* having Scripture reading in worship, but he had no problem with having a *dance* on the platform. That communicates to people that Scripture reading is something they can no longer take. Of course, we need to be seeker-sensitive but when we are controlled by what the “market” wants, then I think it has turned into a key theological issue about the authority of Scripture and this is coupled of course with the authority of the gospel itself.

2. What do you see to be the greatest challenge for a missional church today?

We are so concerned with contextualization because we want to be somewhat attractive to people (which is an acceptable idea) so that perhaps we miss the fact that the gospel *challenges* culture. Perhaps you have seen the book by Dean Fleming, *Contextualization in the New Testament* (InterVarsity Press, 2005)? He talks about areas where the gospel challenges culture, but of course when you look at the title, you

have so much of church moving *into* the culture and so many Christians moving *out* of the culture.

In 1 Corinthians Paul writes to people who have not been Christians very long, people who are still caught up in the value systems and customs of their old pagan past. This is why they are so enamored with rhetorical strategies. This is why some have no qualms dragging others before a court of law. This is why some still go to prostitutes. This is why some males were wearing a head covering to signal their higher social status. This is why some seem to question the resurrection, because the Greeks did not believe in the resurrection of the body, only in some nebulous immortality of the soul. So the problem in Corinth was not theological, as many have assumed for a very long time on some over-realized eschatology. There were many relatively recent converts who had not fully realized how the gospel changes the way they think, or *should* change the way they think, and *should* change the way they act. In chapters eight through ten, some still claimed they had the right to attend banquets in pagan temples. In chapter eleven some had no problem having a communal meal and yet they are rich and have a lot of food and good food, and in the same house church there are poor Christians—they come hungry, they go home hungry. And there is evidence that people in contemporary culture do exactly the same. The church *changes* who we are and what we think. A missional church needs to emphasize this as well. Sometimes I wonder what the problem in the Laodicean church really was. We read that they thought they were rich—rich in what sense? Unfortunately the text does not tell us. Probably not rich theologically, otherwise they would not have been criticized. Maybe it was a rich church with a lot of money; maybe it was the first church with a church choir because music was something like a professional thing in the first century. Some things looked rich from the outside, but Jesus was not even there. I think this is what a missional church needs to watch—as we move into the culture to win people for Christ that we do not lose our Christian identity, so that we do not become *like* the society in which we want to win people for the gospel. That of course creates tensions obviously and that is sometimes difficult. There are no easy answers that can be given. Now in many areas there is no question—Christians cannot go to prostitutes; Christians cannot go to pagan temples. But when it concerns methods, for example, one may ask why Christians should not employ rhetoric in evangelistic sermons—but this is what Paul rejects as he says that the nature of the gospel simply does not allow that. So we have the question, “What can a church do?”

In some mega-churches it seems everything is so focused on the senior pastor as the star; they establish satellite churches; they do not have preachers there, but they pipe the sermon there through closed-

circuit television, and I think it is a contradiction of the gospel—then you do not have churches, you have religious clubs watching video. There needs to be a personal witness, a person there so things *can* be verified. And it expresses the notion that it is only the *person* who has the power to be attractive, rather than the notion that it is the gospel *itself* that attracts people. One really needs to look at every facet of what a church is doing constantly and ask the question: “What is the effect of the gospel and the consequences of the gospel?” There are some churches that are too timid; they seem to do what they have done for 200 years; of course that is not correct either. On the other hand, the desire to always have the latest gadgets, that is not necessarily the answer also.

### 3. What is working in missions today? What are we doing correctly?

You have people who are faithful ministers of the word in every sense and who love the people. I think there are two very key ingredients: preaching the gospel faithfully, and loving people and being willing to sacrifice for them. If one looks only at numbers, one could say that cults are working. Numbers by themselves do not prove anything. We not only need to look at what has “worked” in churches for the last ten years, but also we need to look at all of church history, or maybe the missionary movement the past 200 years. I think where you have faithful preaching of the gospel with mistakes thrown in (we all make mistakes), but where people loved the locals, loved unbelievers, and sacrificed even their lives for them sometimes, I think this is something God has honored. I think it is not a question of methods at all. I do not think you can really explain the church growth in China; most of the pastors were in prison; there were no missionaries, no seminaries, no think tanks, no methods or strategies, but faithful believers who suffered like everyone else when life was difficult, and who were willing to talk about the gospel when they were asked, and God used that to give the church growth.

### 4. What is not working, what needs to be changed, and why?

It would depend on individual situations. I am glad for everyone who has come to faith because of the mega-church movement, and surely there are people who have been coming to faith. But then smaller churches in the area after awhile seem to be getting people who were attending a mega-church and they come and say, “Well we need *teaching*, which we really did not get.” The mega-church movement fails to know that as people sit in large gatherings the individual can hide themselves, and emphasizing “small groups” does not always work. I think the problem is that Christians are tied way too much to their culture. I sometimes say that if our garbage cans are as full as those of our neighbors, then

something is wrong; then we are wasteful; then we are not really living as God's people.

It's really living close to the cross that helps us individually and within the church to motivate us to preach the gospel effectively. Short-term mission trips can be very helpful, but when we are thinking of reaching the world we need permanent people. We do not want short-term pastors, because usually a pastor needs maybe even a few years to be more fully effective in a location and that is even more true for people who move to other areas where the gospel has not really taken root. It is good for young people to experience something new, but maybe as I often say, they should not call it (i.e., short-term mission trips) "missions" but maybe "sanctification experience for exotic places."

What does not work is superficial preaching, also probably relying on technology, because people have better professional entertainment on television anyway, or they go to a concert. I think the church needs to focus on what we really know and what we have to do: study the gospel and teach it and get people really excited about the truths of the gospel, and then I think you can motivate our folk.

## **An Epistle to Remember**

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### **Abstract**

*This article is a sermon that was given in a chapel service at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in which the preacher imagines what it might be like to have been Tertius, Paul's secretary in the letter to the Romans.*

Eight hours straight! Both yesterday and today! Oh, my hand is killing me—fast pace, complex argumentation, yet, very interesting content. It is not easy to be an amanuensis in days like these, and if the apostle has more of these long epistles in mind, I might think of asking for a pay raise. These are not very profitable times for our Scribes' Guild. Yet, to work for the apostle is really priceless. What could compare with such a unique privilege as seeing the apostle in his theological workshop?

I have never seen him go through such a range of emotions in one epistle; such a concentration of mind and soul, such depth and breadth of theological reflection, such balance between theological expression and down-to-earth principles for living. After all it was a letter for the church of God in Rome, the capital of the world.

I wished you could have seen his righteous anger when he talked about the way the Gentiles rejected the knowledge of God; they, who have known something about God, just turned away from him and darkened their minds and hearts; or his annoyance with his people, the Jews, who, while having the Scriptures and all the other privileges of being the elect people of God, nonetheless were no better than pagans. I wished you could have seen his glowing face when he dictated the part about God reconciling the sinner, through faith in Christ. I wished you could have seen his puzzled face when he talked about his dilemma of living in the flesh under the influence of sin but with a mind that loves the Law of God, and how God's Spirit sides with us in fulfilling the demands of that Law. I wished you could have seen his tears when he reflected on the greatest mystery of all, the hardening of his people, the Jewish people, who, although being the very people of God, rejected Jesus and did not acknowledge him as their Messiah. I wish you could

have seen his transformed countenance when he slowly glided from his deep theological argument about the future of Israel and the nations, into one of the most thrilling doxologies of all times,

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

It all started in Corinth when he told me of his plans to visit the church in Rome. "Tertius, my son," he said one day, "we have work to do. I have finally made plans to visit Rome, and before I go there I want to send an epistle to the saints in that city; and I have to do it right now."

"Oh, no, Paul, not today," I said; "You know that the Isthmian athletic games have just started; these are the most important two weeks of the year here in Corinth; we cannot do that work now; not for a fortnight; you know how much I longed to go and watch them at the stadium; it's the first time I am in Corinth during the games and who knows where I will be in two years from now. I even have an extra ticket, if you were interested . . . Could we, please, postpone the letter for a while?"

Those who know the apostle could easily guess that I did not have my way. I backed off just in time, or else he would have started to warn me about "making the most of our time," during these "evil days," and about the perils of "loving this world more than the gospel," or the like. I could not talk him out of his plan, especially since this time, unlike all his previous attempts, it seemed to me that he was confident that he will eventually get to Rome.

So I tried to turn this disappointment about not being able to see the games and put some positive spin in it. Actually, when he first mentioned his plans to visit Rome, I thought to myself, "Finally the old man has come to his senses. He goes to Rome in order to take care of some of his outstanding problems." You now, the apostle does have a few shortcomings, which he might be able to correct with a trip to Rome. Quite between you and me he is not the most, what should I say, handsome man. There are several handicaps, which are a huge disadvantage to his preaching and mission. I am not talking here about the fact that he is very short of stature; unlike the other famous Benjaminite, our king Saul, whose name he actually borrowed. Neither am I referring to his unusual bowlegged-ness. These features, as undesirable as they might be among today's men, would be tolerable if it were not for his facial outlook: a fairly unpleasant countenance, a prominent baldness, and those scary, bushy, united eyebrows. And as for

the nose, well, I don't think you've seen a bigger or a more crooked one. And then you have the eyes with that constant discharge. It is quite unpleasant.

But there is yet another problem, which to me seems to be more serious still: his rhetorical style. He is alright when he preaches, you know, but still he does not fare well when compared to the rhetoricians of Rome. Yes, he is quite learned and fluent in several languages; yes, he knows the Scriptures very well, but when it comes to public speaking he is no Cicero. A little bit of improvement in this area would do him no harm. So I told to myself, he finally decided to go to Rome and use this opportunity to go to the world's best schools for public speaking; he could also go to the best eye doctors that our world has seen; he might even consider checking out a few cosmeticians if his purse is large enough.

But as I was contemplating the benefits that a trip to Rome might have for the apostle, I realized that none of these concerns were on his mind. He wanted to go to Rome not for what Rome could offer him, but for what he could offer to Rome. He was on his way to the capital of the world not to benefit from it, but to have it benefit from him. At first I thought he must have been joking if he thought that he had something that Rome did not. What could he, a Jew from Tarsus, have that Rome lacked? What did he know that the citizens of Rome did not? I have to say that when you looked at it carefully, it bordered arrogance at best or lunacy at worst; what did he mean that Rome needed to hear him?

But then he started to dictate the epistle and while still on the first rows I realized that he was probably right. While Rome indeed did not need anything that Paul himself had or could give, Rome did need to hear the message that was entrusted by God to him, the gospel, the good news of salvation that must be heralded to all the nations under the sun, even to Rome. I have never heard in my life such a thorough, clear presentation of that gospel. I wish I had about four hours to give you the unabridged version of his epistle; but since I only have a limited space a summary might be the next best thing.

He started with a nut-shell presentation of this good news that he preaches, which is just as much the gospel of God, the one who is the ultimate originator and source of this gospel, as it is the gospel of Christ, of the one who has accomplished it. This gospel, he said, has been foretold in the Scriptures all along. This is where his unmatched mastery of the Hebrew Scriptures helped him so much. He wanted to make sure that no one would ever think that this gospel is his own invention, or even the invention of the apostles. No, God has promised it and proclaimed in the Scriptures, through the work of his holy prophets.

This gospel centers in one individual, that unique person of Jesus. The apostle was quite anxious to communicate that this Jesus was both the son of David and the son of God. I guess, for the skeptics in the audience, it would not be very difficult to demonstrate that Jesus was a descendent of king David. All they would have to do is to go to the temple in Jerusalem and check out the genealogies, which are carefully kept there. However, it would certainly be more difficult to prove that Jesus was God's Son. How could one prove that? That's where Paul brought in the ultimate proof of Jesus' divine and messianic identity: his resurrection from the dead. You see, for Paul, the resurrection of Jesus was the most unambiguous declaration and attestation of his divinity. That humble, ordinary grandson of David, Jesus of Nazareth, was no other than the Son of God in power, the one who has been given full authority over the world, over history and over creation.

The most distinctive aspect of this gospel, however, is not in any of these truths, important as they may be.

The Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes for in the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith . . .

The gospel is not simply a message that people need to hear or to know. It is not just another piece of information to be filed away, alongside scores of competing claims of the other "Messiahs" of our day. Not at all. The gospel is more than a message; it is a message that triggers God's saving action for those who hear it and believe it. It is a message that just as much declares God's saving act in Christ, as it sets it in motion for the benefit of those who hear it and believe it. It is a message that not only talks about God's power and God's righteousness for the salvation of the one who believes, but also activates God's power and God's righteousness to be fully effective in saving the sinners who believe in Jesus.

Just think for a while on how magnificent this thought is. The gospel is the power of God for salvation. The same language that the Scriptures of the old covenant used to speak of God's saving power is now descriptive of God who saves within the perimeter of the new covenant. David, our beloved psalm writer, most certainly would have agreed with Paul; when you contemplate God's salvation, either that of his old people Israel from Egypt, or that of the countless suffering righteous ones throughout our history, the first attribute of God singled out by the Scriptures is God's power.

As I was putting on paper these words, however, I started wondering why the apostle was so keen to link the gospel with the power of God.

Why power? Why this attribute of God and not another one? Why not link the gospel to God's love, or his holiness, or his omniscience? Why did Paul choose power as the first attribute of God to be explicitly singled out in connection with the gospel? I think that the answer to my query was soon given as the apostle developed his argument. It became quite evident when he expounded on his understanding of "sin," that awful reality of human condition. When he talked of sin, of its power, of its universality, and of its consequences, it was clear why he had to highlight God's power. It was evident that nothing less than the power of an omnipotent God could help the offspring of Adam and Eve in their confrontation with this malevolent force.

And when you think about it, he was right. Take any of the sins from the long list of vices and you will see that those trapped in any particular sin are no better off than a slave to that sin. You can plead with an alcoholic as long as you want to try and stop his love for drinking. You can give him all the scientific evidence that drinking is not good for one's health; you can provide all the statistics in the world of ruined lives and families sacrificed on the altar of that "just one more drink," but that would not help him a bit, would it? He will probably agree with you, but that in itself would still not give him the power to escape the dominance of alcohol in his life, to enable him to free himself from alcohol's grip. The truth is that he has become a slave to the god of alcohol. This is in fact the very concept that Paul used, slavery to sin, which is applicable to any sin that creeps into our lives, be it wickedness, or greed, or envy, or murder, or strife, or deceit, or malice, and so on. And here is the most evident truth of them all: man cannot save himself; man does not have the power to free himself, to extract himself from the controlling power and dominance of sin. We are slaves to sin; it is our master, and nothing in us can help us achieve independence from it or to escape its dominance. It is more powerful than the mightiest of men; it is shrewder than the wisest of men; it is subtler than the most vigilant of men. That is precisely why we need God's power, for nothing less than the power of an omnipotent God can offer remedy for our condition; nothing else can save us from the tyranny of this malevolent despot.

But God's power, while having the pride of place in the panoply of God's attributes, as far as the gospel was concerned, was in Paul's thought immediately followed by God's righteousness, a second attribute of God explicitly linked with the gospel ". . . for in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed . . ."

I have to say at first it wasn't very clear to me in what way I should understand this phrase, "the righteousness of God." Was the apostle referring strictly to a descriptive attribute of God, such as God as being righteous? Or was he referring more to an act of God, something that

God does on behalf of the sinner who believes, the act of declaring, or maybe even more, the act of making the sinner righteous? While I wasn't completely certain about this aspect when he was dictating this part, the more I think about it now, the more confident I am that he was referring to the latter and not the former. Yes, God's righteousness as one of God's attributes is important, in fact it is the very foundation for the truth which the apostle wanted to highlight. But what seems to be foremost on the apostle's mind was that act of God, the act of declaring the sinner who believes to be righteous, to be free of guilt, to stand no longer indicted or condemned before God's righteous tribunal.

But how could that happen? How could a just God do that? How could a righteous God declare a sinner not guilty? Wouldn't such a scenario make a mockery of God's justice? It would certainly be the case even in a human court, let alone in a divine court.

Well I did not have to wait long for Paul to address this very dilemma. And while his answer was fairly long, I can only give you now the gist of his complex argument. It all centered on the act of redemption that came by the death of Christ Jesus. When Jesus died, he died as a sacrifice of atonement. Through that sacrifice, he became the new "mercy seat," the place where God in his righteousness both punishes sin, because of his justice, but gives mercy to the believer, because of his loving-kindness. You see, Christ on the cross met the rigor of God's justice. The wrath of a righteous God, offended and insulted by all the sins of humanity, fell on him; he paid the price for our guilt, in order that God could, at the same time, remain righteous, and yet justify the sinner, declare the one who believes in Christ guilt-free.

This is the dual inner mechanism of the gospel which saves: God's power and God's righteousness. What a fascinating pair of divine attributes. Well, I have to say that it does make a lot of sense. Just think for a moment that mankind would have to deal with a God in whom these two attributes, power and righteousness, would not be perfectly balanced. Suppose that you would have an all-powerful God who is not perfectly righteous. He would be a rather capricious God, wouldn't he?—a God who always modifies his standard of good and bad, always adjusting it according to his latest interests, never dependable, never reliable. Who would want to have to deal with such a whimsical God? Such a God would look more like a Roman Caesar, all powerful, but, oh, so selectively and inconsistently righteous. Or suppose that you would have a perfectly righteous God, a perfect anchor in the moral universe, but who is not all-powerful, who is unable to enforce his righteousness in his universe. That God would be no different than all the gods in the pantheon—perfectly righteous yet impotent in enforcing their standard of righteousness in the human affairs. No, the God of the Scriptures, the

God of Paul's gospel, is a perfect combination of judicial and executive ideals.

The gospel then, in the understanding of the apostle, is a message, but not one that simply conveys information; it is a message that triggers the saving act of an all-powerful and all-righteous God on behalf of all who believe. And yes, before I forget, this faith, this belief, is an aspect of utter importance. It was quite clear for the apostle that even an all-powerful and an all-righteous God would not force his salvation, his pardon on the sinner. His offer of a free salvation in Christ, requires an answer. That answer is faith: faith that is awakened by the hearing of the gospel, but faith that has to be exercised from first to last, from the very incipient stages of the Christian life to the very end of it. As in the old oracle of the prophet Habakkuk, "the righteous shall live by faith." Faith is a response to the most generous offer ever given to mankind, the offer of a gospel written in blood, an offer made by an all powerful and all righteous loving God, an offer that would be enormously and eternally regretted if rejected.

Tertius (a.k.a. Radu Gheorghiiță)

Well, now that we read what Tertius might have remembered from writing Paul's most famous epistle, I wonder what Paul himself would have written about the gospel if he were asked to contribute an article to the *Midwestern Journal of Theology*. Let me suggest a few possibilities.

1. I am certain that he would not have altered the gospel he preached; as in the beginning of his ministry to its very end, the gospel remained the invariable message of Paul's apostleship.

2. Moreover, he would have not lost an opportunity to test us, the believers, to see how well we have understood this message and how well we apply it. He would probe to find if perhaps there might be among his readers those who walk on the path of self-sufficiency and self-righteousness, those who might still believe that they are good enough for heaven, that they deserve or merit the salvation, that while Christ had to die for most, they themselves were in no need of that sacrifice. I am sure that Paul would have wasted no time in addressing the issue and making them aware of the awful danger of such a position. For indeed, if salvation could be won by our merits, Christ has died in vain.

3. He would have also probed to see whether some among us, while believing that justification is an act of God by faith, think that sanctification is an act of our own doing. To them he would have asked the question, "Having started well by faith, now you want to complete your Christian journey by your own power? How foolish!" he would

have said. For indeed, if sanctification could be attained by our own efforts, the Spirit had been given to us in vain.

4. He would have also talked to those who believe that if we are saved by faith and not by works, we are consequently saved apart from works. "Works do not matter whatsoever," they would say. To them who rely too easily on a momentous decision to accept Christ, he would remind them that accepting Christ as Savior makes sense only in as much as it results in following Christ as Lord. For indeed, if this was not the case, we have been crucified with Christ in vain.

5. He would have also talked to those who, deep down inside, think that they are too sinful for such an act of love and forgiveness, to those that think that they are too far gone for the grace of God to reach them. He would probably try tenderly to persuade them that God would not have given his Son if he had entertained any doubts that he could reach even the most rebel heart, that he could forgive even the grossest sin, or that he could heal even the most broken life. Indeed, God's love is not limited. But if you believe that his love is limited, if you believe, either because of down-heartedness, or, worse still, because of arrogance, that God's love and sacrifice are not for you, you will in vain both live and die eternally.

6. And right before he departed he would have reminded us all, one more time, that "the one who is righteous by faith shall live by faith."

## Book Reviews

*Miracles: Everything That Is or Was or Is to Come Is a Miracle.* By Olen R. Brown. Charleston, South Carolina: BookSurge Publishing, 2007, paperback, 322 pp., \$ 18.95

In *Miracles: Everything that Is or Was or Is to Come Is a Miracle*, Olen Brown, Ph.D. in Microbiology from the University of Oklahoma, contends with a dragon that has two-heads, *synscretism* (sin-SIGH-cruh-tizm) and the use of science to reject God. *Synscretism*, modeled after the word syncretism, is the author's neologism for the practice of adding worship of science to the worship of God. Brown maintains this phenomenon is a failing of modern Christianity. The second "head" of the dragon is the use of science to reject God, a failing of modern science. As might be expected by Dr. Brown's academic credentials and his Christian testimony (pp. 1-2), the author enters the fray as a champion of orthodox science and orthodox Christian faith, the latter evident in his choosing to draw his scripture citations from the King James Version of the Bible. The reader encounters both facets of the author's mind—logical, rational thought and life-filling commitment to God—on almost every page as the author contends for truth (logical, scientific, biblical), faith, and salvation. Miracles are the arena for the battle for science and faith because in Dr. Brown's view they are a key to integration of scientific and biblical truth. Thus, instead of being a problem, they represent a way to use mind and spirit. Brown focuses on miracles, too, because, as the work's subtitle indicates, the author sees miracles everywhere. Creation is a miracle, so, too, is salvation through Christ Jesus. Unfortunately, this wide span reveals that indeed the book is really two books.

The first book, chapters 1-5, deals with a broad range of subjects. After the apologetic comments of chapter one, the second chapter refers to creation but deals, too, with Jesus' miraculous deeds as well as everyday miracles. Chapter 3 focuses on the miracle of Christian faith and presents a brief taxonomy of twelve kinds of faith, e.g., active faith, intelligent faith, scientific faith. Chapter 4 seems to depart from discussion of the miraculous in order to deal with the existence of good and evil. Logically, then, a chapter on "Free Will and Miraculous Salvation" follows (chapter 5). These first chapters may encourage the already-convinced Christian, arguing that miracles represent a continuum from the physical world to the theological, but they seem to offer little to the physical scientist already convinced that miracles do not exist. The second portion of the book then attempts to redress this difficulty.

Chapters 6-11 give the author room to demonstrate his knowledge and to celebrate the amazing work of God. Early on Dr. Brown expressed his conviction that the basic physical world miracle is that the world (or universe or reality) exists. His point is that regardless of how much time (the "hero" in evolutionary schemes) is allowed to work, the expected, even logical result of random or undirected development would be non-existence, not the ordered, knowable world about us. "The fact that anything exists is evidence of a

fundamental miracle” (p. 9). Again, the most probable state of the universe that arises by chance is nothing at all. Siding with an active, purposeful, sovereign God, Professor Brown is able to show the amazing results of God’s original and on-going miracles.

The specifics of chapters 6-11 begin with an argument for creation and a setting aside of the “Big Bang” theory (chapter 6). Chapter 7 is given entirely to the subject of oxygen. While dealing with the subject of oxygen, however, Olen Brown makes a number of positive ad hominem contributions as he shares information about the spiritual perspectives and religious sensitivities of such persons as John Priestly, the apt-named discoverer of oxygen, and Antoine Lavoisier who significantly furthered the discipline of chemistry. Chapter 8 deals with energy and the sub-atomic world which produces it. Brown looks at the mundane leaf in chapter 9, dealing with photosynthesis. The two concluding chapters look at miracles in the microcosm (chapter 10) and miracles in the macrocosm (chapter 11). Both deal with human life, looking at such subjects as DNA, antibiotics, and blood chemistry. Oddly enough, Brown’s treatment of these subjects, and others considered too much for the average reader, does not send the reader fleeing to mind-numbing television, but to thanksgiving and praise.

Dr. Brown has performed a significant service to Christians who feel intimidated by authors who summon weighty technical details to bury believers. His writing is clear, well-sourced, and invites the reader to think along with him. *Miracles* is not without its faults, however.

The most glaring fault from this reviewer’s perspective is a minor one having to do with form. The book is filled with boldly-printed, widely spaced quotations. These quotations can distract the reader and often they interrupt the author’s explanations. Some of the quotations are helpful, opening new doors to those desiring to go forward on a given point. Some seem to add little to the author’s argument. Moreover, on occasion, the quotations become the tail that wags the dog; continuity of argument is lost as the author reports matters having to do with the individual quoted. (Examples include comments on Einstein’s quote on p. 3, the pp. 79f. paragraphs on Bertrand Russell’s stance, and a discussion of Isaac Asimov on pp. 135f.) Brown has helped by giving the sources of the quotations in an Appendix. (This is in addition to reference notes at the end of each chapter.) The Appendix often gives much more than standard bibliographic data, too, making the notes informative and helpful.

The author’s argument is difficult to follow in the first chapters of the work,. This seems to result from trying to address both the Christian who wants help with miracles and the non-Christian scientist who wants to reject miracles. While this difficulty eases some later, the book still has faults. For instance, what is the purpose of attempting to create an equation to quantify the relation between a perceived miracle and faith? Even if the reader should understand the point of this exercise, it contributes little to the thrust of the work. Further, when Brown attempts to use word-count statistics to make a point (“evil is the 123rd most frequently used word in the bible [*sic*]” p.105) he fails to recognize the difficulty of making such an argument from an English translation. Perhaps a good editor could have helped the author avoid such missteps. Still, the work is thought-provoking and provides ammunition for those who want to undercut the

contemporary Christians' worship of science and to return science to its descriptive and interpretive roles.

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*Charts on the Book of Revelation: Literary, Historical, and Theological Perspectives.* By Mark Wilson. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2007, 134 pp. US\$: 21.99 paperback, ISBN978-0-8254-3939-1.

The reader will encounter in Mark Wilson's book a different approach to charting the book of Revelation than the ultra familiar, ever up-dated, end-times sketches proposed by various representatives of the dispensationalist schools of interpretation. Given the complexities of the book of Revelation, the author of these charts contends that the project is intended to reveal the "complex intertextuality and intratextuality of the book . . . with new levels awaiting discovery on each reading" (p. 9). The charts have organically grown out of Dr. Wilson's doctoral research on the seven churches of Rev 2-3, which culminated with the publication of his commentary on "Revelation" in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

The book comprises a collection of 79 charts arranged in no particular order or grouping, yet spanning an impressive spectrum of topics and interests, balancing the literary, historical and theological perspectives on the book of Revelation. Some of the charts are expected in this type of collection, especially the charts dealing with the issues of authorship, date, historical and geographical background of Revelation. Others, however, are quite surprising and ingenious, displaying the attention to details with which their author read John's Apocalypse. For example, chart 20 traces the "Five Senses in Revelation," chart 21 lists the "Minerals, Gems and Other Commodities in Revelation," chart 24 explores the "Symbolism of Colors and Numbers in Revelation," and there are many others that illuminate the unusual world of this unique book of the NT canon.

While a complete list of the charts cannot be supplied here, the following samples will help in getting the feel for this important pedagogical aid. One subgroup deals with the thematic parallels between Revelation and various other canonical or extracanonical writings. The very useful chart 9 listing the allusions and verbal parallels in the Old Testament and extra-biblical literature belongs here, but is not as extensive, one might add, as the one compiled by C. A. Evans in *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies* (Hendrickson, 2005). Another subgroup is formed by the charts exploring various aspects of the content of Revelation, such as chart 28 "Angels and Demons in Revelation," chart 37 "Wars and Battles in Revelation," chart 50 "Time Periods of Persecution," and so on.

Even though the overall impression might be that everything worth charting in Revelation has been covered by the author, this reviewer would have found helpful a chart with the grammatical solecisms and with the linguistic idiosyncrasies which abound in Revelation. Similarly, a chart, or maybe several,

presenting in parallel columns the interpretation of key passages by different schools of interpretation would have been very useful. For the completeness of the collection and, not least, because some readers might expect it, a chart of the temporal line proposed by various dispensational schools of interpretation also would have been a welcome addition.

However, one caveat remains in spite of the overall positive contribution that this book will likely make toward understanding John's Apocalypse. One of the book's major strengths, the visual approach to Revelation, can also become quite detrimental, if the examination of the charts would replace the student's direct reading of the book of Revelation. It should be remembered that the greatest impact of the book is to be achieved by being exposed to the text of the book, preferably in a congregational setting that included the reading of the prophetic message in the hearing of the believers (Rev 1:3). While it is usually true that a picture is worth a thousand words, when it comes to John's Revelation, at least as its author intended it, the roles of pictures/charts and words might need to be reversed.

Radu Gheorghiuță

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Church Administration: Creating Efficiency for Effective Ministry.* By Robert Welch. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005, 384 pp, \$34.99.

*Church Administration* has quickly become the standard administration text for a new generation of seminary students. In this book, Robert Welch blends twenty years of military leadership to his role as Dean of the School of Educational Ministries at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary to bring to life a subject that is often perceived as "duty" not "ministry." To achieve the goal of the subtitle, *Creating Efficiency for Effective Ministry*, Welch has filled the pages of *Church Administration* with solid scriptural foundations, applicable anecdotes, and practical helps for a myriad of administrative tasks. Churches would do well to have a copy available for committees and ministry leaders. For the pastor or church leader, *Church Administration* will likely become a welcome and oft referred to addition to their personal library.

Reasons to buy and read *Church Administration* are many. Although most of the issues addressed by Welch are timeless, the book is contemporary enough for pastors and churches regardless of their age. Welch has drawn upon the wisdom gained through years of experience and extensive reading and research. He includes sources ranging from Author Flake to Rick Warren, thus demonstrating a clear understanding of the variety and types of churches.

The practical helps and suggestions cover the spectrum of administrative issues, from job descriptions to administering programs of evangelism. The reader can turn to almost any page and find gems of relevance.

The content will be a benefit to church plants and established churches alike. Church planters will benefit from the chapters covering organization and documents, such as constitutions and by-laws, while established churches will benefit from the sections on risk management and personnel. Of use to many

churches are the extensive sections detailing the development of church policy manuals, business meetings and implementing a planning process.

Students enrolled in Midwestern Seminary's Education Administration class were the first to use *Church Administration* as a required text. In the course of their studies, students were required to write a review. Twenty four of twenty-six reviews noted the "reference" quality of this text. Comments included:

"... one of a handful of textbooks that I will read after I graduate from seminary."

"I didn't know how much I didn't know. I will refer to this book often."

"The things in this book would have prevented me from making several mistakes that have caused problems in my church."

"(Welch) will be within reach of my desk from now on."

"Once I was past the first couple of chapters, the book was a goldmine of practical information. I actually look forward to my next business meeting."

"I wish I would have had this book last year. I will refer to it often in my work as a youth pastor, and someday, as pastor."

Shortcomings, although few, should be mentioned. At times the book goes into too much detail. For example, the "housekeeping survey needs projection summary" uses a formula that breaks down tasks, such as cleaning the "Kitchen/fellowship hall," down to 16.03 hours per week. The formulas are helpful, but I found the table for determining how much time it would take to buff or spray buff a floor using 175-RPM machine, 300-RPM machine, 1000-RPM machine and 2000-RPM machines to be overkill. The short section on the use of PDAs and other electronic devices will become dated.

The index, although useful, is slightly limited for what would otherwise serve as a comprehensive resource. Many of the tables used by the author are printed in what appears to be a size 6 font, making the text a challenge to read for people like myself who find the text of "large print" Bibles far too small.

The reality of ministry is that most pastors and staff spend more time doing administration tasks than any other aspect of ministry. *Church Administration* is a book that can help ministers become more effective in their administrative tasks, thus freeing them up for other ministerial activities.

Rodney A. Harrison

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Invitation to Biblical Hebrew: A Beginning Grammar* by Russell T. Fuller and Kyoungwon Choi. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2006, xx + 364 pp. \$49.99

*Invitation to Biblical Hebrew: A Beginning Grammar Workbook* by Russell T. Fuller and Kyoungwon Choi. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2006, xiv + 335 pp. \$29.99

Russell T. Fuller is associate professor of Old Testament Interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Kyoungwon Choi is currently a Ph.D. student in Old Testament at The Southern Baptist Seminary. Both Fuller and

Choi have studied with Dr. Isaac Jerusalem at Hebrew Union College and are beholden to him with respect to many of their methods and principles.

For many years the choice of textbooks for teaching biblical Hebrew was limited. However, in the last two or three decades there has been a relative deluge of new introductory grammars. *Invitation to Biblical Hebrew* is one such offering. The book is organized around five main sections with ten appendices at the end. The first section (chs. 1-6) introduces the alphabet, dagesh, gutturals, shewa and the rules of proto-Hebrew. The remaining four sections are classified as morphological principles with a section on particles (7-9), nouns and adjectives (10-16), strong verbs (17-28), and weak verbs (29-38). Morphology is emphasized throughout the book under the stated principle that learning Hebrew should be a two-year process, with syntactical principles being relegated to the second year. The goal of the book is to make biblical Hebrew a usable tool for those going into ministry. The authors recognize that without a solid foundation Hebrew will quickly fall into disuse.

Chapter six at the end of the initial section on phonological principles presents the foundation of the book's pedagogy. In particular, chapter six introduces the rules of Proto-Hebrew and the five rules of syllables in biblical Hebrew and how these relate. Choi and Fuller argue that mastering these rules will enable the student to understand Hebrew. The assumption is that the historical development of the language is the key to understanding and retaining the knowledge of biblical Hebrew. Ideally, perceiving the behavior of certain vowels and consonants will reduce the amount of memorization involved in learning the language by making the linguistic patterns intuitive for the student.

Overall, *Invitation to Biblical Hebrew* has much to recommend it. The layout is pleasing both in terms of individual pages and the structure of the whole book. The organization and treatment of grammar and especially of the weak verbs is logical and clear. Where reference is made to previous lessons or rules, a specific reference is given so that the student can go back and refresh his or her memory. Each major section is introduced with an overview; this element is extremely helpful and provides a map of the pedagogical progress for the student. Additionally, there are a number of places where Fuller and Choi bring together two concepts so that the relationship is apparent. For example, the connection between the perfect verb forms and the independent personal pronouns is helpful for memorization and comprehension.

Within Fuller and Choi's handling of the verbal system, the sections on the vav-consecutive and volitives deserve special mention. The authors explain the vav-consecutive, a relatively complex grammatical and syntactical feature of Hebrew, in such a way that the beginning student should be able to assimilate it. At the same time, the explanation does not create a contradictory basis for future learning in comparative Semitics, a weakness of many beginning grammars with respect to the vav-consecutive. It is also refreshing to see the volitives introduced at the same time as the imperfect forms. Even if these forms are not mastered initially, clearly demonstrating their relationship to the imperfect aspect is sound.

As with any grammar, *Invitation to Biblical Hebrew* has some weaknesses. Despite the intentions of the authors to avoid grammatically technical jargon within the explanations, there are numerous points at which the material is

linguistically opaque in its instruction. To be fair, it is almost impossible to explain biblical Hebrew without technical terminology unless the teacher expects the student to relearn certain labels down the road.

There are a number of places in the grammar that would end up being difficult and perhaps incomprehensible for the beginning student. For example, in chapters 17-19, several of the grammatical concepts of the verbal system are introduced in a very short space. Participles and infinitives are introduced in one chapter, which would be overwhelming for most beginning students. Likewise, the explanation of the suffixes to verbs is fairly complicated and difficult to follow at points. Another issue is the fact that in chapter 21, Isaac Jerusalemi's colorized system of understanding the vowel patterns of verbal forms is introduced. While this system is tremendously helpful, the book does not actually utilize colors in any of the chapters themselves. For some reason, colors are provided only in the book's appendices. Similarly, Jerusalemi's system of "boxes" is partially utilized with little to no satisfactory explanation of the system itself.

The exercises in the book are themselves rather complex for the beginning student. The requirement for the student to master English to Hebrew instruction is commendable. However, the exercises tend to focus on numerous concepts instead of focusing on the mastery of one or two. That being said, many of the above weaknesses are compensated by the DVD set and the purchase of the corresponding workbook. The DVD provides actual lectures by Russell Fuller which will help the student who may become lost with the book alone. The lectures would benefit by utilizing PowerPoint or other technological features which are widely available. In the lectures, Fuller alternates between cursive and block script when he writes on the board, which is potentially confusing for the beginning student. The workbook provides more traditional exercises and the means to check one's work and to measure comprehension.

As a student of Isaac Jerusalemi myself, I was eager to see this book and to consider adopting it for my own Hebrew instruction. For this reason I was surprised when, after careful examination, I realized that the book was too complex for the beginning student. Knowing how Jerusalemi's method had helped me, and reflecting on the seemingly overly complex nature of the book, I came to the conclusion that the target audience is the source of the problem. Isaac Jerusalemi's method and teaching has been geared toward those who have had biblical Hebrew before but have failed to master it. His method builds on a foundation rather than starting from the *aleph bet*. Herein is the greatest weakness of Fuller's and Choi's grammar. The authors are attempting to provide the foundation of biblical Hebrew and a modified Isaac Jerusalemi method all at once. While this does vastly reduce the amount of rote memorization required by the student, the gain is offset by a requirement for mastery of an increased amount of theory and concepts of the morphological and phonological behavior of biblical Hebrew.

Only slightly less problematic is the decision to relegate the study of syntax to a second year and different (forthcoming) book. While the authors' reasons for doing so are reasonable, it is not realistic. Fuller and Choi's *Invitation* leaves a significant gap in training for a college or seminary curriculum which only allow for one year of introductory Hebrew. Nevertheless, I would warmly

recommend the book for those wishing to refresh their biblical Hebrew. Given plenty of time and self-discipline, the combined resources of the book, workbook and DVDs would provide a good starting point for a student who wished to learn biblical Hebrew on his or her own.

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Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundations of Christian Higher Education.* By David S. Dockery and Gregory Alan Thornbury. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2002, pp. 446, \$19.99.

It has been twenty years since Allan Bloom wrote his best-seller *The Closing of the American Mind*, a perceptive and sobering critique of higher education in America. According to Bloom, the modern university is in a state of crisis, unable (and perhaps in some cases even unwilling) to help students make sense of the fragmented, and seemingly unrelated and irrelevant knowledge they receive during the course of their studies. As a result, argues Bloom, year after year these universities graduate polite but passionless, self-centered people who may have acquired a specialization, but who are unable to answer life's bigger questions such as, What is true?, What is good?, What is the purpose of life?, and How am I to live?

Having served in campus ministry at several secular universities for over ten years, I have found Bloom's observations to be on the mark, but find his solution (a return to the Great Books of western civilization) to be deeply unsatisfying. *Shaping a Christian Worldview* is a collection of essays written by the faculty and administration of Union University, which offers a compelling Christian way forward to the higher education crisis, one that implicitly affirms what early Christians theologians asserted—"we believe in order to understand." *Shaping a Christian Worldview* is an unabashed claim that Christian faith belongs in the academy. But it goes even further than that; these essays argue that a Christian worldview is essential to bring coherence to our fragmented knowledge and to provide guidance for right and meaningful living.

The book is divided into two major sections. Part One, "Building a Foundation", which consists of five chapters, explores the nature of the Christian worldview. More specifically this section sets out to answer the following questions: What are the fundamentals of the Christian worldview? What is the authoritative structure of a Christian worldview? Who are those who have successfully articulated a Christian worldview in the past and what can we learn from them? And, why have Christian universities in the past lost their Christian orientation? While this first section is not an exhaustive treatment of the subject, those new to the conversation will likely find these chapters helpful for getting up to speed. Part Two, "Applying a Christian Worldview", makes up the bulk of the book (thirteen chapters), and is concerned with relating the Christian worldview to the natural and social sciences, business, the arts, education, the media, and health care. These essays offer a fascinating look at how particular Christian professionals understand their faith in relation to their

fields of study—an aspect which is often lacking in other Christian worldview books.

There is one steady feature of this volume that merits recognition. The collection has highlighted the fact that worldviews are inevitable and serve as the foundation for how we make sense of knowledge. Scientist, entrepreneurs, health care workers, artists, whether they are aware of it or not, approach their specialty with particular assumptions that influence how they interpret knowledge and how they make moral decisions. *Shaping a Christian Worldview* puts Christian assumptions on the table for all to see while also arguing for their validity. In a related manner, *Shaping a Christian Worldview* also points out that being a Christian or going to a Christian college does *not* guarantee that we have a *Christian* worldview. Given this reality, Union University has taken up the call to be intentional about how they shape their students, in the hope that they develop a Christian way of understanding the world and their place in it.

There was one notable omission in the collection of essays—politics. This volume would have been enhanced by a deeper reflection on how the Christian worldview informs our views regarding politics and the use (and abuse) of power—a theme very important to many New Testament writers.

There are likely several different groups that will benefit from this book. New university professors who want to reflect upon their particular discipline and its place within the larger whole of a Christian university will no doubt be stimulated by what has been offered in this volume. Parents of high school students, who are considering a Christian college, having read the book, will be well-informed for the process. Campus ministers and deans of student life may also want to consider the vision that *Shaping A Christian Worldview* casts for the Christian university. I also think this collection of essays serves as a model for other Christian universities who want to work together (faculty and administration) to engage in the intentional task of shaping their students to think *Christianly*.

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*A Text-Linguistic Investigation into the Discourse Structure of James.* By Mark Edward Taylor. London: T & T Clark, 2006, viii + 146 pp., \$110.00.

A majority of last-century's discussion of James was dominated by the influential conclusions of Martin Dibelius who in his commentary concluded, "*the entire document lacks continuity in thought*" (p. 2, emphasis original). In this revised dissertation considering the discourse structure of the Letter of James Mark Taylor adds his voice to a growing chorus heralding the structural continuity of the text. Taylor takes his place among a number of recent investigations which seriously consider what kind of coherence and structure may be found in this neglected letter.

The opening chapter offers a comprehensive description of the various attempts at structuring James along with a brief assessment of each approach. Here Taylor lays the foundation for his particular investigation noting that: 1)

Dibelius' atomistic (and form-critical) approach has been abandoned; 2) there is an emerging consensus that James is a coherent literary composition; 3) chapter one plays a particular role in introducing the rest of the text; and finally 4) 2:1-13, 2:14-26, and 3:1-12 constitute discernible units developing sustained topics (p. 33). Each of these conclusions provides an accurate and helpful new platform for fresh research in this text.

Chapter two describes the methodology used to gauge James' structure and coherence. Largely following in the foot steps of George Guthrie, Taylor uses a form of discourse analysis called "text-linguistics." Specifically drawing upon several applications of discourse analysis in the NT along with sensitivity to ancient literary conventions, this approach seeks to discern macro-level cohesion within a discourse by identifying unit boundaries, inclusions, cohesion indicators, and other connectives clearly present in the text.

In chapters three and four Taylor applies his method to the text by analyzing cohesion shifts and *inclusio* structures. His cohesion shift analysis results in what many studies of James have already discovered, namely that the letter characteristically shifts rapidly from unit to unit--even at times leaving particular texts isolated from their surrounding contexts. More importantly, Taylor provides the most comprehensive study of inclusions in James. Of the numerous inclusions outlined here, several have been noted before (*viz.*, 1:2-4/1:12; 4:7/4:10; 4:6/5:6); however, this analysis draws attention to two significant inclusions that have gone unnoticed. Taylor sees an *inclusio* between 1:12 and 1:25 marked by the repetition of the term "blessed" and eschatological focus of both verses. He goes on to argue that there is a double opening *inclusio* in chapter one (1:2-4/1:12 and 1:12/1:25). This analysis leads Taylor to identify 1:12 as a key passage in the letter opening (more about this below). Likewise, he detects another significant *inclusio* between 2:12-13 and 4:11-12 centered around the themes of "law," "judgment," and "speech." He asserts regarding this large-scale *inclusio* that both passages of the inclusion function as "key summary/transition units relating to their immediate contexts" (p. 71). Finally, Taylor offers evidence of a "grand *inclusio*," between 1:2-25 and 5:7-20, which frames the composition as a whole.

The final two chapters of the work attempt to draw out the significance of the cohesion shifts and inclusions identified earlier. While Taylor's close observations from the text are helpful, it is at this point of the study that some of the connections seem less than evident. In chapter four Taylor attempts to demonstrate how structural features noted in the text were intentionally used by the author to establish "cohesion for the whole" and to effect "movement from one unit to the next" (p. 96). These observations include: 1) thematic and lexical "strings" that are pulled through the entire text (namely, "references to deity and the community," "perfection," "double-minded," "law," and references to speech) and 2) various intentional transition markers (among which include "hook words," "distant hook words," "overlapping constituents," "proverbial transition/summary statements"). Now, that there are several key terms/themes developed throughout the text is apparent, but that this constitutes clear progression of thought is not. With respect to the "transition" markers, it is on one hand clear that "hook words," "overlapping constituents," "proverbial transition/summary statements" are used to connect material; however, Taylor

has not satisfactorily demonstrated how such devices were used intentionally to mark thematic movement (or provide logical development) from one unit to another.

For example, an “overlapping constituent” for Taylor is a “passage used simultaneously as the conclusion of one block of material and the introduction to the next” (p. 82). His prime example is 1:12 which serves as both conclusion to the *inclusio* consisting of 1:2-4/1:12 and the introduction of the next *inclusio* consisting of 1:12/1:25. From this observation Taylor concludes (in chapter 6) that 1:12 is “the central proposition of the chapter; the one who endures the test manifests a love for God and will be ‘blessed’ with the crown of life” (p. 100). Structurally one can see the pivotal position of 1:12, but it is difficult to see how this verse is the “central proposition” of chapter one. How does one collapse themes of “perfection” versus “double-mindedness” (1:2-8) and human anger versus God’s righteousness (1:19-20) into 1:12? Further, building upon the structure of this double *inclusio* in chapter one, Taylor understands that the smaller units in 1:2-11 and 1:13-27 are parallel in arraignment. Yet it is difficult to see how “wise attitudes for rich and poor” (1:9-11) and “don’t be deceived regarding religious practice” (1:26-27) are at all parallel (let alone how this is a fitting description of 1:9-11, unless extremely ironic).

Another example of viewing clear thematic progression from unit to unit where there it may not be so clear may be seen in Taylor’s understanding of proverbial material in James. In chapter five he identifies the function of proverbial material in James as “transition/summary statements” (p. 83). It seems that the absence of any discussion regarding the literary form of a proverb specifically or the genre of James in general renders such a conclusion on the function of proverbial material in James rather questionable. Do the proverbs in James serve merely to close out discrete units of text by slowing the reader down and inviting reflection (see Richard Bauckham), or do they constitute a transition marker indicating a clear, thematic connection between adjacent units? Do they function the same way in every instance? Though some proverbs seem to summarize and offer transition (1:26-27 and 3:18), others do not (especially in chapter one).

Far from reading James as a randomly constructed, “string-of-pearls” list of exhortations, this reviewer does see cohesion and thematic development in James; however, the logical progression between units expressed in Taylor’s study are not sufficiently supported by the structural elements alone. Interestingly Taylor himself states the following: “These dynamics indicate a complex rhetorical strategy that resists a neat, step-by-step outline. Nevertheless, close analysis reveals that a balanced and symmetrical strategy seems to be at work in the letter” (p. 107). James is a richly complex text which resists our best efforts to neatly outline a linear progression of units. Often in the history of research in James outlining the epistle has proved to be an activity with few clear exegetical rewards. Despite this critique, Mark Taylor has put us in his debt in offering a careful textual analysis of this often neglected letter. His insights regarding structural shifts, especially his analysis of inclusions embedded in the text, will aid future students of James.

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*Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader*. Edited by Suzanne Richard, Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003. 486 pp. \$47.50.

At the beginning of her introduction Richard states, "This volume is intended as a basic reference work for students, scholars, and the general public alike." And, "This Reader serves as the perfect companion reference textbook for college classes in archaeology, history, and biblical studies" (xiii). Does this sixty-two article book deliver as a reference volume for a wide range of readers? And, does it live up to its claims for students of biblical studies?

Originally the *Reader* was to be a one-volume encyclopedia of Syrian-Palestinian archeology in a larger work on Near Eastern archaeology. With the help of William Dever, however, the editor was able to rework this proposed encyclopedia into a reader using only select topical essays (xiii-xiv). These essays are well written, they do cover a broad variety of topics within the arena of archeology, and there is an abundance of information related to biblical studies throughout the work.

In his forward to the book, Dever briefly discusses the history of American archaeology in the Holy Land, which had its roots in biblical studies. After noting that in the 1970s and '80s American archeology became its own secular discipline, he explains a few of the difficulties involved in labeling this branch of archeology that is so closely related to the Bible and Israel. He then closes by mentioning the value of archaeology for biblical studies as an illuminator of the biblical text.

The contributions of the fifty-two scholars are divided into two parts. Part one is devoted to "Theory, Method, and Context." Some of the articles that are of special interest for biblical studies students include: "Bible and Archaeology" by Rast, "Writing and Scripts" by Rendsburg, "Roads and Highways" by Dorsey, "Nautical Archaeology in the Eastern Mediterranean" by Carlson, "Women in the Ancient Near East" by Ackerman, and "Everyday Life" by Matthews. Part two covers "Cultural Phases and Associated Topics." Here some of the more helpful articles for students of biblical studies include: "Canaanite Religion" by Nakhai, "El-Amarna Texts" by Matthews, "The Iron Age in the Southern Levant" by Younker, "Religion and Cult in the Levant" by Dever, "Goddesses" by Ackerman, "Syria-Palestine in the Persian Period" by Carter, "The Samaritans" by Giles, and "The Hellenistic Period" by Berlin.

The Reader is missing at least two important pieces. First, it should have included an index. As a reference work this book needs an index. As a textbook it needs an index. Richard does offer some help in her introduction for those desiring to read about topics not covered as separate essays, but her information is limited, and people do not normally look to an introduction for index information. Second, because the intended audience for this work does include those whose primary discipline is either history or biblical studies, and because its "focus is primarily the Levant" (xv), this volume should have included a survey article on the Roman period. It is true that other essays in the Reader

discuss or otherwise make reference to this period, but it should have been in the ranks.

On the positive side, several items are worth mentioning. First, the scholarly approach and clear writing do make this work especially well suited for supplemental reading at the college level. Second, each article does include a bibliography for further study. Third, 122 continuously numbered figures significantly add to the Reader's overall appeal (curiously without a list of figures at either end of the book). Fourth, many of the essays with similar topics are clustered together and often expand on related topics. Fifth, several articles on specialized fields such as paleoethnobotany and archaeozoology help introduce readers to some of the less well known areas of archaeology.

Does this book deliver as a reference volume for a wide range of readers? And, does it live up to its claims for students of biblical studies? With strong scholarship behind readable essays, numerous figures to help along the way, a generous amount of biblical discussion in the articles, and essay bibliographies included for further study, the answer to both questions is yes.

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*Women, Ministry and the Gospel: Exploring New Paradigms.* Edited by Mark Husbands and Timothy Larsen, Downers Grove, Il.: InterVarsity Press, 2007, 304 pp. \$24.00.

*Women, Ministry and the Gospel* is a compilation of thirteen essays written by thirteen different authors on subjects related to the scriptures, questions and issues surrounding the role(s) of women in ministry. A wide variety of topics and viewpoints are represented in this book – which is actually a collection of papers that were presented at the 2005 Wheaton Theology Conference. The stated goal of this book is to “present new paradigms and fresh perspectives for evangelicals on an issue that often is prematurely settled with reference to well-entrenched set-piece arguments. In this book evangelical scholars think aloud about softer, more nuanced or less rigid ways to articulate viewpoints on an issue of contemporary significance” (9).

The book is comprised of five sections: 1) New Perspectives on the Biblical Evidence; 2) New Perspectives on the Body of Christ; 3) New Theological Perspectives on Identity and Ministry; 4) New Perspectives from the Humanities and the Social Sciences; 5) Beyond the Impasse: Toward New Paradigms. The book includes essays on a wide variety of topics such as “Deborah: A Role Model for Christian Public Ministry;” “Opposite Sexes or Neighboring Sexes? What do the Social Sciences Really Tell Us?;” “Identity and Ministry in the Light of the Gospel: A View from the Kitchen;” and “Forging a Middle Way Between Complementarians and Egalitarians.” Given the wide-ranging nature of the essays, it is not feasible to provide a summary of their contents in this review, other than to note that they provide snapshots of specific pieces of the theological puzzle of women in ministry.

The content and helpfulness of the essays vary. While all of the essays do address various aspects and questions related to *Women, Ministry and the Gospel*, the essays are not tidily tied together. They are, rather, stand-alone compositions and do not comprise a neatly formulated address to the questions related to the role of women in ministry. The lack of cohesiveness is understandable once the reader understands that the book is actually a collection of papers presented at a theology conference. The editors acknowledge that “each piece (essay) is far too incomplete to ‘prove’ that one side or the other is the right one on its own” (11). There are some significant holes in the book, if one is looking for a complete perspective on women in ministry. The editors recognize that proponents on each of the two main positions – egalitarian and complementarian – might be frustrated by the lack of essays on some of their primary supporting passages and points. For instance, there is “no essay offering a comprehensive biblical and theological case for an egalitarian position, while a faithful and able attempt at a comprehensive view of the complementarian position is presented” and “complementarians might well be frustrated that so many of the essays in this volume, although they only address individual pieces of the puzzle, have an egalitarian drift to them” (10).

This book would likely be most useful as a supplementary text for the reader desiring to seriously investigate the issues surrounding the topic of women in ministry, but not as a starting point for someone unfamiliar with many of the questions and issues. A reader unfamiliar with the topic might flounder in their reading of *Women, Ministry and the Gospel* – many of the authors appear to assume that the reader has an understanding of some of the questions surrounding the subject of women in ministry – again understandable given that the essays were presented at a theological conference. A better starting point for investigating the topic of women in ministry is *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, edited by James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg, which lays out the primary points of the egalitarian and complementarian views on women in ministry.

The reader who is unfamiliar with some of the questions surrounding women in ministry might want to begin reading at the last section of *Women, Ministry and the Gospel*– “Beyond the Impasse: An Attempt at New Paradigms.” This final section of the book summarizes some of the broad-ranging questions surrounding women in ministry – while some of the earlier sections focus on more narrow aspects of the topic. For example, the first essay in the book discusses the ministry of Deborah. Another essay surveys the role of women in the Holiness Movement begun in the late 19th century by Phoebe Palmer. While interesting, these essays do not address many of the questions surrounding the larger subject.

Once the reader understands that this book is not a comprehensive tome on women in ministry, a strength of this book is, in fact, its variety of viewpoints and topics, covering a wide range of topics and facets of the questions related to women’s roles in ministry. The book provides an overview – albeit incomplete – of *some* of the hot topics related to the questions of women’s roles. The stated intent of the book is to continue the discussion regarding this important issue, a noble goal. As with other theological issues, it important that Christians strive to educate themselves regarding the questions, the issues and the biblical

interpretations oft cited in support of a particular position on women in ministry. As one writer in this collection stated, the issue of women's roles "is not a debate between conservative and liberals. It's a debate between conservatives and *conservatives*. Those who are *not* conservative typically have never even heard of the conservative in-house terms of complementarian and egalitarian" (258). The goal of continuing the conversation between evangelical Christians with opposing positions on this topic is to be lauded.

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