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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Fall 2011 issue of the *Midwestern Journal of Theology*. In this issue we feature as our central theme the doctrine of Biblical Authority and Inerrancy. Two lectures delivered at Midwestern this past October by Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary's John Douglas Morrison serve as the cornerstone of our theme section. Dr. Morrison speaks with special authority as author of *HAS GOD SAID?: Scripture, the Word of God, and the Crisis of Theological Authority*, which was published as the fifth volume in the Evangelical Theological Society Monograph Series (2006). In this section also we include a contribution from Midwestern's own Radu Gheorghita who has a little fun examining some rather serious and surprisingly numerous textual errors in Bart D. Ehrman's 2005 book, *Misquoting Jesus*, as an amusing way of illustrating the inherent weakness of Ehrman's own text-critical attack on the credibility of the Bible.

Rounding out our theme section is a little-known but excellent article by Old Princeton theologian B. B. Warfield (1851-1921) on the topic of Inerrancy. In this particular article Warfield takes on those who oppose the doctrine of Inerrancy on the grounds that it applies to now long-lost autographs and not to the current text of Scripture. Warfield is especially remembered for the key role he played in the articulation of the doctrine of Inerrancy, in his famous 1881 *Presbyterian Review* article, "Inerrancy," which he wrote with A.A. Hodge.

In this issue we also have the privilege of presenting under one cover contributions from Midwestern's President, R. Philip Roberts, Midwestern's Dean of the Seminary, Jerry Sutton, and Midwestern's Dean of the College, Thor Madsen. Dr. Roberts investigates the Mormon doctrine of salvation by grace "after all we can do," Dr. Sutton, the career and teaching of James Arminius, and Dr. Madsen, the philosophical underpinnings of Postmodern interpretation.

Complementing Dr. Morrison's discussion of Biblical Authority, which includes considerable discussion of "the Father of Theological Liberalism" Friedrich Schleiermacher we have included as well an article on the Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics. This was provided by William Osborne, who, besides being a student in Midwestern's Ph.D. Program, who also adjuncts at Midwestern, serves as managing editor for the newly founded *Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament*.

Readers will also not want to miss the interesting articles as and reviews of several recent significant practical and theological books.



## LECTURE I: The Inerrancy of Scripture: What Do We Mean? Is it Important?<sup>1</sup>



JOHN DOUGLAS MORRISON  
*Professor of Theological Studies*  
*Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary*  
*Liberty University*  
*Lynchburg, VA*  
*Montkidsinva@verizon.net*

Herein we continue to celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the finalization of the numerous historical, political, sociological as well as spiritual and theological processes that led to the “Authorized Version,” or as it is more commonly known, the “King James Version,” because of the particular king of England who had ordered its production in 1604. The two greatest influences on the shaping of the English language, and hence so much of English and Western culture are the works of William Shakespeare and the Authorized Version that appeared in 1611. The KJV is not only an obvious Christian spiritual classic; it is universally regarded as a literary classic. Literary scholars continue to heap praises upon it. Nineteenth century literary critics declared it to be the “noblest monument of English prose.” More recently, in a series of lectures at Cambridge University, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch acclaimed the KJ translation the ‘very greatest’ literary achievement in the English language. The only possible challenger being, again, the complete works of William Shakespeare. The audience acknowledged the propriety of that statement. It has become the accepted wisdom of the recent centuries.<sup>2</sup>

The King James Bible has been and continues to be not only a landmark, a beautifully authoritative unifier, former and portrayer of the Eng-

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<sup>1</sup> This lecture and the following one were originally presented in Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Chapel on October 4-5, 2011, as part of our King James Version Anniversary Celebration.

<sup>2</sup> Alister McGrath, *In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How It Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2001), 1.

lish language as such, the effects being much like that of Luther's translation for the unification and nationalization of the German language. But, it has also been an inspiration to poets, artists, dramatists, and politicians. Indeed, the cultural influence of this work of English translation in almost every sphere is incalculable. While the King James Bible was not the first English vernacular translation, it was the translation that broke from "the pack" of other translations in the late eighteenth century, and for many years it was the only English translation of the Bible available. Many families could afford only one book, a KJ Bible. Therein innumerable persons met the gospel truth, the exhortation and the comfort of Jesus Christ. Many learned to read by it and many memorized its passages, its gospel message, and found their written and spoken English shaped by the language and imagery of the KJV. Had there been no KJ Bible there would have been no *Paradise Lost*, no *Pilgrim's Progress*, no Handel's *Messiah*, no African-American spirituals, no "Gettysburg Address"; and that is but the tip of the huge iceberg. These and almost numberless other works were directly and indirectly given form, content and, indeed, life by the language and the message given in that fresh 1611 translation. Without this English translation, the culture of the English-speaking world, and thereby Western culture more broadly, would have been incalculably impoverished.<sup>3</sup>

Yet the KJ is obviously far, far more than a work of literature. For Christians it has long told us the truth of God's redemptive-kingdom message, the story of God's personal action for, in and on behalf of the world—of God's creation of the world; his sustenance, active relation to and redemption of the world by the incarnate life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These were issues of concern for King James himself and for those scholars chosen to engage in the translation process. The KJ has, for four hundred years, declared to us the words of hope in the midst of human suffering and death, and of the New Jerusalem in which pain, sorrow and death will be no more. The KJ allowed Christians to read for themselves about that message and truth of God, and this gave distinctive shape to the elements of English-speaking Christianity in a period that has come to be recognized as one of amazing, even unprecedented growth, as the exceedingly fruitful missionary endeavors of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries advanced throughout much of the world. In significant measure, many of the ideas, language and vision for ministry of the churches of, e.g., African nations and people groups throughout the continent, and likewise across Australia have been and are strongly shaped by that 1611 English translation of the Bible. Clearly it should be

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See remark by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, cited in McGrath, *In the Beginning*, 1.

added here that refugees fleeing religious persecution in England in the seventeenth century brought copies of the KJ with them, giving them encouragement on the dangerous voyage, wisdom and guidance as they settled in the New World and, centrally, the divinely authoritative gospel message for all new contexts of ministry—the gospel of the love and truth of God for that New World.<sup>4</sup>

## II. PLACE AND CURRENCY OF THE ISSUE OF “INERRANCY”

But now, as we come to our primary issue for today, I must assert at the outset that, in terms of proper order, the divine *authority* of Holy Scripture ought to *precede* the affirmation and discussion of biblical “inerrancy,” rightly understood, defined and applied. There are undoubtedly many “inerrant” books, e.g., mathematics textbooks, etc., but these do not have divine authority, they are not the written Word of God. And, with brothers and sisters in Christ who perhaps have various perceived problems with “inerrancy” or complete biblical truthfulness, one gets nowhere arguing with them directly from inerrancy. There are, as is well known, problem passages about which none have a completely sure and final solution that they can point to and discussion goes nowhere—except to unsanctified outcomes. No! No! Rather, as the late Carl F. H. Henry, whose real claim to fame was that he loved my wife’s lasagna, pointed out repeatedly, one must start with the divine authority of the Scriptures, a position, however nuanced, that all evangelicals all but surely hold, if they claim in any way or shape to be orthodox.<sup>5</sup> That foundation of authority has levels of implications that follow from it, which these brethren can, perhaps, slowly, lovingly be led to see.

One of those implications is, to use a modern term, “inerrancy.” According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the English term “inerrancy” is of very recent origin and, as applied to Scripture, the term has a history of usage of about one hundred and fifty years. I don’t doctrinally live and die with *the term*, but I am committed to what the term means and intends, when carefully and properly understood.

It is probably contextually and autobiographically noteworthy that the first “theological” book I ever read was *The Battle for the Bible* by the late Harold Lindsell.<sup>6</sup> As a new Christian, toward the end of my un-

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<sup>4</sup> McGrath, “Introduction,” in *In the Beginning*, 1–4, and especially chapters 7, 8, 11.

<sup>5</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority: God Who Speaks and Shows* (Vol. 4; Word: Waco, TX, 1976), Thesis eleven.

<sup>6</sup> Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976).

dergraduate studies at a state university out West, I was not aware of the issue as an issue within Christian circles. At that state university, various assertions regarding problems with the Scriptures, within a larger frame and culture of anti-Christian sentiment, was everywhere, directly and indirectly. I assumed it and put up with it as a matter of course. But as a young Christian I unconsciously assumed that the truthfulness of Scripture, properly understood, was the position of all Christians. While I didn't (and still don't) like some elements of what Lindsell said—or the way he said it—it was an “eye-opener” at multiple levels. The title of that book embodied, for many Christians, the heart of the controversy and struggle in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s for the sound bases of “the faith once for all delivered to the saints,” and so of Jesus Christ and hence the gospel message and the necessity and the viability of our mission to a lost world—a world bound in “untruth.”

It is noteworthy, then that Dr. Gregory Beale, professor of NT and Biblical Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, recently wrote *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism*. Beale is responding, on the one hand, to recent postmodern efforts to challenge and redefine traditional Protestant orthodox or evangelical doctrines, especially with regard to the truthfulness or inerrancy of Scripture, and also to prevalent contemporary unconcern regarding that issue among evangelicals who are often weary of the earlier “battles.”<sup>7</sup>

### III. PRESENTING INERRANCY TO HESITANT BRETHERN

Herein today, I am presenting and asserting afresh the nature and importance of the doctrine of biblical inerrancy because it is a doctrine that has suffered much at the hands not only of its challengers and opponents but, too often as well, at the hands of its ill-prepared, uninformed, but well-meaning, friends. Too often we wrongly attempt to answer questions without first clarifying what the precise question is that needs to be answered. And, further, at the center of clear understanding herein is the need for a careful definition, and hence understanding of that definition, including the crucial terms and elements that make up the question/issue.

First, just to remind all here of just a few representative affirmations of Scripture about itself and its truthfulness, directly and indirectly—and, of course, these reflect but the tip of the tip of the tip . . . of the many and varied ways in which Scripture affirms the truthfulness of its own teaching, its message, its gospel.

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<sup>7</sup> Gregory Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008).

- A. The Nature of God.
  - “...and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and *true* God...” 1 Thess 1:9
  - “Let God be true though everyone were a liar.” Rom 3:4
- B. God speaks the Truth.
  - “The Word of the Lord proves true” 2 Sam 22:31
  - “Your commandments are true.” Ps 119:151
  - “The sum of your word is true.” Ps 119:160
  - “I the Lord speak the truth.” Isa 45:19
  - “God, who cannot lie...” Titus 1:2
  - “Thy Word is Truth” John 17:17
- C. Scripture is God’s Word written (including as message)
  - “I have stored up your Word in my heart that I may not sin against you” Ps 119:11
  - “My soul longs for your salvation, I hope in your Word” Ps 119:81
  - “Your Word is a lamp to my feet” Ps 119:105
  - “Sweet are your Words to my taste.” Ps 119:103
- D. And to Satan Jesus three times responded to temptation with the authority of Scripture.
  - “It is written”... “It is written”... “It is written,” including “It is written” – “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that comes from the mouth of God.” Matt 4:4

I must stop there, for direct and indirect references to Scripture as God’s authoritative and truthful Word are so numerous we would be here for days, and still we would not have exhausted the topic and the teaching of Scripture about itself.

Before seeking in my next section to unpack what I believe to be a faithful, helpful, and instructive definition of “biblical inerrancy,” let me very briefly add here two ways or approaches I have learned from others to coherently present biblical evidence for its own truthfulness or inerrancy that may beneficially enable brothers and sisters in Christ who are hesitant in this area to more effectively think through the issues beyond mere surface claims or questions. The first approach, in its barest of bones form, has five elements:

### *1. The implications of the Biblical Teaching on Inspiration.*

“All Scripture (*graphe*) is breathed out by God (*theopneustos*) and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness.” 2 Tim 3:16 “...knowing this first of all that no prophecy of Scripture (*graphe*) is the result of someone’s own interpretation (or private human thoughts, *epiluseos*, ‘unloosing’), for no (true) prophecy (i.e., prophecy of Scripture”) was ever produced by the will of man (i.e., humans and human ideas are not the ultimate source) but rather men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Pet 1:20–21

Herein it is so important to note well that inspiration refers especially to the *text* of Holy Scripture and not only, merely, or primarily to the Spirit’s “confluent” relationship and enablement, guidance and superintendence of the human writers, prophets and apostles, et al.

### *2. Scripture’s Emphasis on the Spirit’s “Accreditation” of Both God’s Message and Messenger.*

Scripture says much to distinguish the true prophet from the false prophet, the true apostle from the false apostle. There is a good parallel between the true prophet and Scripture. The prophet’s message, while first oral, was often then written down, and in both cases not only the divine element but also the human element is an essential ingredient. But I would here point especially to Deut 13 and Deut 18 where essentially three criteria for “accreditation” are stated: the true prophet will not speak in the name of another god, the true prophet will not speak a word that is not true, i.e., not in accord with what God has already revealed. Finally the true prophet must not speak what does not actually occur (this reflects the element of a predictive word of the prophet). Hence the prophet (and later apostles) is *accredited* by the *truthfulness* of their words.

### *3. Scripture’s Emphasis on Its Own Authority*

Those who align themselves within Protestant orthodoxy generally, and so evangelicals of all brands and forms, must and do, one way or another, affirm the real and substantial authority of Scripture, an authority which goes beyond any mere human authority, whatever their position on inerrancy. This is a point I will return to later. In each case, evangelicals are invariably quick to strongly acknowledge that this is an important consideration both theologically and in terms of ministry, at the very least. Again, obviously, many OT and NT contexts could be cited, but here are two well-known examples, both from the teaching of Jesus. In

referring to the enduring character and divine authority of Scripture, in the face of questions about the nature of true righteousness, he says, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away not the smallest letter or stroke of the pen (jot or tittle) shall pass away from the Law until all is accomplished” (Matt 5:17–18).

And in another context of typically heated disputation, Jesus says, in reference to Ps 82:6 and thereby to all of Scripture . . . “Jesus answered them, ‘Is it not written in your Law, “I said, you are gods” (referring, if I recall to the Judges)? If he called them gods to whom the Word of God came – *and Scripture cannot be broken* – do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the World, “You are blaspheming” because I said, “I am the Son of God”?’ ” (John 10:34–36).

Here, too, the Lord Jesus Christ speaks of the absolutely binding and divinely authoritative character of Scripture, thereby affirming that from which any proper recognition of inerrancy must arise and that which any definition of inerrancy must include.

*4. The Method and Significance of the Way in Which Scripture is Used by or Referred to Authoritatively by Scripture itself.*<sup>8</sup>

It is important, I believe, to carefully observe the way in which many Scripture passages make use of other Scriptures in authoritative argumentation. Clearly, this is intertwined with the crucial hermeneutical issue of the use of the OT in/by the NT. As B. B. Warfield has helpfully pointed out not too long ago, and others have advanced yet further, there are basically three groupings or forms of such authoritative usage in Scripture: where the entire argument of the context rests on the truth of a single quoted biblical word, where the argument depends on the truth of the tense of a verb, and third where the whole point of the passage rests on, e.g., the singular or plural form of the word. For example, in Matt. 22:43–45, Jesus’ argument rests on the one word “Lord” from Ps 110:1 in support of his deity. “(Jesus) said to them, ‘How is it then that David, in the Spirit, called him Lord, saying,

“The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.” If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?’ ”

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<sup>8</sup> Still very profitable with regard to this and other elements of these “arguments” are the classical essays by B. B. Warfield, “*The Biblical Idea of Revelation*” and “*The Biblical Idea of Inspiration*,” published and re-published in the earlier and later ISBE and, too, in *The Words of Benjamin B. Warfield*, volume 1.

In the same context as our previous passage, the same thing occurs via the word “god.” In Matt 22:32, we see an example of the second usage, i.e., Jesus’ argument depending on the tense of the verb in defending the truth of the biblical teaching of the resurrection. “...have you not read what was said to you by God: ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.”

And in Gal 3:16, we find an example of the third form of authoritative usage of one passage by another, i.e., dependence on the singular or plural form. In this case, where Paul’s point depends on this *singular* form of the word “seed.” “Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as referring to many, but rather to one, ‘And to your seed,’ that is (to) Christ.”

And in fact, contrary to the allegations of some, study of these NT uses of the OT show that the writers here do not overly freely use the passages but, indeed, with care, thus directly and indirectly affirming the truthfulness, the inerrancy of Scripture.

##### *5. Biblical Teaching with regard to the Character of God.*

I have alluded to this before, so I will refer to this crucial matter with even greater brevity. We are told in many passages of Scripture that God cannot lie, that God is true and that his truthfulness cannot be altered by the unfaithfulness of humans. Such assertions must refer to actual “speech acts” by God, oral by a prophet or written in Scripture, otherwise the problematic human response here make no sense. Jesus said to the Father, “Your Word is true.” If, via revelation and inspiration, the Scriptures are God’s written word, that they are ultimately and intimately from God, and if then God’s character is behind them—and this, coupled with all God’s attributes—then it all points toward biblical truthfulness, the inerrancy of Scripture.

But I want to add to this form of argumentation, taken primarily from internal evidence, a very brief overview of the apologetic approach to this question developed by my longtime friend and colleague, Dr. Gary Habermas. Dr. Habermas argues from the historical, probable verifiability, and thus historicity, of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the clear fact that Jesus repeatedly affirmed the truthfulness and divine authority of Scripture, finally to the inerrancy of Scripture. I am sure some of you have studied Gary’s method.

In his earlier work, *The Resurrection: An Apologetic* (1980)<sup>9</sup> and recently in his revision of that work, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope* (2003),<sup>10</sup> interacting with more recent discussions, Habermas focuses especially on the question of the historicity of Christ's resurrection in the face of those, since the Enlightenment, who critically question the historicity, the actual "event" nature of these claims at the very heart of the Christian faith and gospel. Thus, methodologically (and given our concerns here), Habermas first focuses on reasons for taking the historicity of this miracle seriously. Then he very naturally moves on from this historical question to the foundational question of the reality of God. Can it be argued that God raised Jesus from the dead? What is God's connection to this event? Herein Habermas first carefully shows why a theistic, rather than a naturalistic, universe is more probable. Then Jesus' resurrection, by God's power, is shown to be inextricably linked to Jesus' claims about his own divine authority, and hence the nature of his own incarnate person and, thereby, the divine authority of his teachings. Jesus' resurrection, as probable historical event, confirms not only a theistic universe in which God personally and directly acts, but also the relationship of this event *as God's act* to Jesus' own divine power and authority for his miracles, message, and teaching. Not only did Jesus' many miracles confirm his person, ministry, and his message *as true*, but Jesus himself connected all he taught to his own coming death and resurrection. Given the probable historicity of the resurrection, Habermas consequently points not only to Jesus' many authoritative teachings about God, God's relation to the world and humanity and to the redemptive-kingdom purposes of God the Father through the incarnate life, death, and resurrection of the God-man, his Son, Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, *but* Jesus also taught much, directly and indirectly, about the divine authority and full truthfulness/inerrancy of Holy Scripture as God's written Word. I cannot give more details here but along with Habermas' own details, other books on this topic by John Wenham, Paul Barnett, William Lane Craig and Craig Blomberg go into great detail on this topic of Christ and Scripture as well, and I commend them to you.

#### IV: UNPACKING A CONSTRUCTIVE DEFINITION OF INERRANCY

But what does the term "inerrancy" mean when applied to Scripture? The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *inerrancy* as "the quality or con-

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<sup>9</sup> Gary Habermas, *The Resurrection: An Apologetic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980).

<sup>10</sup> Gary Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), see especially chapters 1, 2, 3, 10.

dition of being inerrant or unerring; freedom from error.” For *inerrant*, it says “does not err, free from error; unerring.” *Errant* is defined as “the action or state of erring; the condition of erring in opinions; the holding of mistaken notions or beliefs; something incorrectly done through ignorance or inadvertence; a mistake.” It is easy to see, then, why some equate *biblical inerrancy* with “absolute/precise errorlessness,” but I am sorry, that is *not* what the doctrine of “biblical inerrancy” means or intends. Because such problematic notions are often attached by some to biblical inerrancy, some (even many) do not like the *term* “inerrancy.” For example, “(some) who defend ‘inerrancy of the Bible’ mean by that word that the Bible contains *no error of any kind*.” Anything in any realm that can be construed to be an error, short of precise, exact correctness, is excluded. But this doesn’t fit at all with what we obviously and actually find in Scripture. Note or recall the following from “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,” “Affirmations and Denials”:

We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to that complete truthfulness of Scripture. We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to modern standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage and purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature (e.g., the sun “rising”), the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parable accounts, or the use of free citations.<sup>11</sup>

Others point out that *inerrancy* as a term is problematic because it is essentially the negation of a negative concept, i.e., a “double-negative,” others because it is not a biblical term, or that the word needs major qualifications, or it focuses one’s attention on minutiae and minor questions rather than on the primary and central truth Scripture intends to declare. And it is true that while scholarship has, over time, been able to alleviate many of the claims of critics regarding alleged biblical difficulties or problems, scholarship has not *yet* been able legitimately, and with complete historical and/or linguistic cogency, to clarify all of them.

Therefore, given all this, which must be honestly recognized, what do we properly mean by the controversial term “inerrancy”? It seems that what is properly intended by the term *inerrancy* is that the Bible is

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<sup>11</sup> Article XIII, “Articles of Affirmation and Denial,” *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* (October, 1978).

“wholly true.” But then what does it mean to say that the Bible is “true?” It would be better to say that the Scriptures are “truthful,” or that they have the quality of “truthfulness.” Thus, the properly positive side or force of the negative term “inerrant” is that Scripture is wholly true or truthful. As a result, we can continue to make use of the term “inerrant,” while making clear that the term is always meant to be associated with truth, truth telling. In that light, I want to remind some and introduce others to the succinct but packed definition of inerrancy formulated by my late friend, my dearly missed colleague, Dr. Paul Feinberg, long-time professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. This, I think, is necessary because, as I pointed out earlier, people so often heatedly debate this issue without first clarifying the question involved and properly defining the crucial term. After stating and repeating Feinberg’s dense one sentence definition, I will briefly “exegete” it portion by portion. As Dr. Feinberg concluded,

Inerrancy means that when all the facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in all that they affirm, whether that has to do with doctrine, or morality (ethics), or with the social, physical, or life sciences.<sup>12</sup>

Before examining much of this definition step by step, let me call preliminary attention to what, in some respects, is the core or heart of the definition, i.e., “...will be shown to be wholly *true in all that they affirm*...”. We will shortly examine at some length what is meant here, and some of the difficulties surrounding the complex issue of truth/truthfulness as used here. With that said, let us consider the first part of the definition: “Inerrancy means that *when all the facts are known*...”. Do we now have all the facts—with regard to Scripture or in any other domain of human investigation and processes of discovery and knowledge? Clearly not! This is an eschatological claim. Note again the following phrase, “*will be shown to be wholly true*.” Again, this is an eschatological affirmation. It reflects in particular a relation to God’s revealed, inspired Word, inscribed or written in and as Holy Scripture, that is found often throughout Scripture generally, i.e., that God and God’s redemptive Kingdom purposes *are true*, are actual; are effective, and *will be shown to be so in the eschaton*—God and God’s purposes in all the world *will be vindicated* “all in all.”

Important, then, Feinberg’s definition here emphasizes the clear reality that the present state of human knowledge is very limited and fallible.

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Feinberg, “The Meaning of Inerrancy,” in *Inerrancy* (ed. Norman Geisler; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), 294.

As a result, inerrancy is not something that we can totally demonstrate now with regard to all the phenomena of Scripture. Either we trust Yahweh, the triune God, the living God, the loving God, omniscient and omnipotent who says that he effectively guides the human agents (*phenomenoi*, 2 Pet 1:21), and who has shown himself faithful to his Word, or we claim infallibility for ourselves and our assessments, while significantly claiming to curtail God's revealed capacities and promises. All that is asserted by this first "eschatological" element in our definition of "inerrancy" is that in Scripture's teachings or affirmations there will be *no final* opposition to the truth.

Some will object that a link between truth and the eschaton makes the inerrancy claim unfalsifiable and so meaningless. But that is not true, as pluralist John Hick has shown, contra "logical positivism," regarding potential verification of the existence of God in the afterlife. But, as previously mentioned, Scripture itself repeatedly links the *present truth* of God's Word and promises to his eschatological justification when, too, for us faith shall become sight—*now* we see in a glass darkly but *then* "face to face." But in addition, logically speaking, this assertion is not unfalsifiable *in principle*, i.e., there is no logical reason for our present limitation regarding "all the facts." And we can coherently conceive of a world like ours in which "all the facts" are known. In such a world, Scripture could be demonstrated to be wholly true or inerrant. But, again, such a reality will be realized in the *eschaton*. In God's good time, we will actually have "all the facts" and there will be "no final conflict."

"*The Scriptures in their original autographs...*". Inerrancy in the full sense applies in a unique way to the *autographs*, not in the *direct* sense to any particular copy or translation. Some object here that, first, we are not in possession of the "autographs" and, with that, that this is simply a useful way to avoid any disproofs of biblical truthfulness by reference to extant copies that can be checked. But this need not be so. This simply recognizes that any copy will, because of the processes of transmission, contain some errors. Beyond this, I believe, given the great advances over the decades in the science of textual criticism, that we are approaching, step-by-step, the original text. Also 2 Pet 1:21, at least implicitly, directs our attention to the original texts when it says that no prophecy, et al. of Scripture (cf. 1:20) was "even produced by the will of man, but men (the *prophets* and *apostles*) spoke from God as *they* were (*originally*) carried along by the Holy Spirit."

But let me add here a personal note of concern with those brethren who so emphasize "the originals" to the near exclusion from real importance of copies and translations that are obviously so crucial to the Kingdom purposes of God. Contra some religions for which there is an ideal,

even necessary, “holy language,” the Judeo-Christian faith has almost always been the faith spread in the vernacular—the Word is meant to be ever available in the languages of the peoples. It all started with the LXX, even the Koine Greek—the lingua franca of the Mediterranean—of the NT (in a sense) reflected this directive, Syriac, Latin, Luther’s German translation, Tyndale’s translation into English...and, of course, the KJV (1611), whose publication we rightly celebrate, all mark out this Spirit-given impetus within the faith “once for all delivered to the saints,” whereby the Word, the gospel, is intended for all the peoples of the world. When 2 Tim 3:16 refers to Scripture (*graphē*), “all Scripture is God-breathed,” what, in the context, is Paul referring to, or at least *including*, in the purview of his teaching here? Recall that in 3:15 Paul had just referred to the “Scriptures” or “sacred texts” from which Timothy had been taught since childhood. As the son of a *diaspora* Jewish mother, what form of the Scriptures would this take? The LXX! The Greek translation of the OT. Therefore, I am at least willing to say that good biblical translations (given, I know, all the *issues* surrounding translation theory, etc.), to the extent that they reflect well the intention of the original (human *and divine*) that we can properly refer to these, too, as the Word of God.

Further, Feinberg adds, “...and properly interpreted...”. Yes, inevitably, the inerrancy of Scripture is bound to the issue of hermeneutics, the science of proper and faithful biblical interpretation. Here several things must be said. First, we must acknowledge the necessary *distinction* between the truthful *text* of Scripture and our checkered interpretations of such. This seems obvious, but in practice it is often forgotten. Too often we oddly and wrongly link biblical inerrancy with our own interpretations of the Bible. No equation exists there, at least not until we see Him “face to face.” As an example, and with a touch of irony, I would ask is Liberty University’s doctrinal statement, and specifically as it affirms biblical inerrancy, inerrant? *In principle*, No. Scripture is inerrant, not our statements about it. No doubt Midwestern’s statement is an exception. This is not to say that the Church has gotten nothing essentially correct within our human limitations. Not at all. The Holy Spirit has been “leading us” more and more...“into all truth.” But even with core truths, the trinity of God, the full deity and humanity of Christ, Christ’s saving accomplishment on our behalf, etc., still much of that, for all that we, to an extent, “know,” is still (if I may borrow from Paul) *mysterion*, “mystery.” Second, there is a real sense in which the precondition of the full aims of biblical inerrancy includes the proper use of hermeneutics. If someone does not grasp what a passage means, they can never be warranted in declaring that it is false. Third, I would also remind us of the “analogy of the faith” (*analogia fidei*), which though previously used

since the Fathers, at least implicitly, was given explicit, developed clarity by the Reformers. The *analogia* includes the call to seek proper harmony between apparently conflicting biblical passages. If there is a legitimate means of interpreting a biblical text that is in harmony with the rest of Scripture, and one that contradicts it, then the way of unity is correct. Analogy is often needed because of the progress of revelation, as later revelation builds on (not falsifies) the earlier Word. Therefore, Scripture is true or truthful in the whole and its parts. This, by the way, is one of the hermeneutical implications of inspiration. Because “all Scripture is God-breathed,” then “author-ized intent” must include reference to the intention of the Holy Spirit. As an example, Matt 2:15, regarding the flight of Jesus’ family to Egypt, says “This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, ‘Out of Egypt I called my Son,’ ” from Hosea 11:1. The authorized intent of the prophet Hosea was contextually a reference to Israel, but clearly in Matt 2 the Holy Spirit’s intention, while including Hosea’s Israel, is found to be much wider and Christologically complete.

## V. SCRIPTURE AND THE QUESTION OF “TRUTH”

Let me close this unpacking of Feinberg’s definition with his core point “...will be shown to be wholly true in everything that they affirm....” The last part of Feinberg’s definition, the reference to “doctrine, morality, or with the social, physical or life sciences,” is crucial in solidifying and expansively specifying the complete domains of biblical truthfulness, i.e., not only “faith and practice.” But I must give all remaining discussion of the definition to the remaining difficult question: What do we mean here by “truth or truthfulness” as a proper quality of Holy Scripture? This is not the skeptical question of Pontius Pilate, “What is truth?” probably the most tragically ironic question ever posed! No! There is truth and, specifically, God, and so Scripture, speaks truthfully. And I would agree with Feinberg and others that defining *inerrancy* in terms of truth or truthfulness is faithful to the biblical data, as we noted earlier. In Ps 119, the longest continuous biblical statement on the Word of God, “truth” or “true” is used three times as predicate to God’s “law,” God’s “commands,” God’s “words.” “Every Word of God has proven true” (Prov 30:5), and recall Jesus’ assertion, “Your Word is truth” (John 17:17). These, as you know, are typical of like affirmations throughout Scripture. Thus, again, *truth or truthfulness* is reflective of our proper intention and usage of the term and the meaning of inerrancy.

But this is not enough. And Scripture does not give us a precise theological definition of its usage of the term and concept of truth. What we *can* perceive is, obviously, how the Bible often uses the term. Still,

“truth,” as such, is an abstract and often ambiguous term. Clarifying what we mean by truth here is, then, a complex issue. In terms of preliminary simplicity, we note that Aristotle defined true and false by stating, “To say what is, is and what is not, is not, is true. And to say what is, is not, and what is not, is, is false.”<sup>13</sup> In recent years, noted Polish philosopher and logician Alfred Tarski has given much clarity to “truth” by bringing it to the following essentials: (1) Truth is to be defined in terms of *language*; (2) Truth is further defined in terms of *sentences* (i.e., truth is a property of sentences), but not of individual words; and (3) more controversially, truth ought to be defined in terms of *correspondence*, essential agreement or conformity of the statement to the “object.”<sup>14</sup> Still one need not press Tarski beyond these basic elements in our concern for the relation of truth and God’s use of human language in his revelation, and so, consequently, in Scripture.

It seems evident to me, allowing for contextual distinctions, that Tarski’s “semantic theory of truth” compares most favorably to the substantial analytical essay on the biblical concept of “Truth” (especially *‘emet*, OT; *aletheia*, NT) by renowned NT and hermeutical scholar Anthony Thiselton.<sup>15</sup> Initially Thiselton exposes the limits, prejudices and problems with much 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century biblical scholarship (Rudolph Bultmann is a classical example) which has falsely and dualistically tended to separate or contrast the so-called OT Hebrew notion of truth as “stability and faithfulness” from the so-called Greek notion of truth as something set “in contrast to mere appearance.” Thiselton makes clear that while there may be some limited validity here and there to this portrayal of distinction, in fact both OT *‘emet* and NT *aletheia* are regularly found to operate in both of these ways—notably with regard to the truth of the Word of God.

Hence regarding *‘emet* and so the OT notion of Truth, Thiselton says, “the truth of God proves itself ever anew...The God of Israel reveals his truth not only by words but also by deeds, and this truth (of God) is proved in practice.” So the truth of God in the OT means not only truth in contrast to the falsehood of mere appearance, but also that God keeps his Word; He *speaks* and *acts* faithfully/truly/reliably. God’s true word can be relied upon because it accords with reality. For the God of truth, his words and his actions are finally one, a unity, i.e., there is *agreement* between the sayings and doings of Yahweh. The clear point is

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<sup>13</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1011b, 26ff.

<sup>14</sup> Alfred Tarski, “The Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages,” in *Logic, Semantics and Metamathematics* (trans. J. H. Woodgen; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1956).

<sup>15</sup> Anthony Thiselton, “alētheia (truth),” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* 4: 874–901.

that there is, properly reckoned, *correspondence* between God's Words and deeds, between God's words then and reality, and that this is not only the claim formed in Scripture but, also (as we have observed) *about Scripture*.

Thiselton advances his argument to point out that this agreement or correspondence, between God's Word and deed has special significance in the NT. In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus' statements attacked hypocrisy, or any *discrepancy* between word and deed or word and reality. "Positively, Jesus' own words *always accord* with his deeds, and so with reality. He is Messiah in word, proclaiming the advent of the Kingdom of God; therefore he is also Messiah in deed, demonstrating the advent of the Kingdom by words of power." This correspondence, the truth, the integrity of Jesus' life, and more culminated in the cross and resurrection. Hence Jesus confirmed that God's Word, which he is, and God's OT and NT Word, which he always confirmed, is Yea and Amen. God's Word is true. But even more than the Synoptics, *aletheia*/"truth" is especially prominent in NT writings of Paul and John. In Paul, the gospel is true, God's revelation is true, and hence the OT Scripture as law is true. Indeed, Scripture is the written embodiment of God's truth. For Paul, as for all such testimony in Scripture (note for example the Hebrew prophets) the divine truth reflected in God's Word stands over against all lying, all deception, falsehood and idolatry. But again, bottom line, *aletheia*/truth, is a matter of *correspondence*, and so *faithfulness*, throughout the NT, between God's Word and deed. In bringing this argument to conclusion, Thiselton focuses our attention again on John 17:17, "Thy Word is Truth," reminding us that the contextual emphases here are on the distinctiveness of the Christian community as holy and as founded on and ever dependent on God's Word, which is also a word of commission sending the church out into the World (17:18). In these and all ways, God's Word is effective, faithful, accords with reality and is in no way false. Thus, Thiselton reinforces his point, as typical of both testaments, that God's "Word" is connected with the Scriptures, and the Scriptures are thus linked with the God of truth and the truth of God, whose written Word therefore corresponds with his deeds. It is faithful, its affirmations are in accord with reality at all levels to which it speaks, and it is, because of revelation and inspiration, itself God's true deed, God's true speech act, the written Word of God.

Yet as Thiselton and so many others, who have worked closely and carefully with the phenomena of Holy Scripture inevitably emphasize, the issue of the full truthfulness of Scripture is again a highly complex

one.<sup>16</sup> While the Bible contains what are said contextually to be the direct words of God, Scripture as a whole is not the result of divine dictation. Yet at the same time, we can in no way biblically affirm that Scripture is the final result of mere human religious opinion. Nor does Scripture merely witness to God's acts of revelation. Rather, as Scripture variously teaches and shows, the very text of Holy Scripture is simultaneously or "concurisvely" the work of the Spirit at one level and the work of human authors at another. As a result, the writers of Scripture, above all Christ himself, and the Church historically, have regarded the Scriptures as infallible, inerrant, i.e., truthful in all that they affirm. But if the Bible is a matter of language/sentences, and uses language in a multitudinous variety of ways then, again, the Bible's inerrancy is a highly complex issue. The amazing variety of ways, in which Scripture uses language, is well discussed in G. B. Caird's *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*.<sup>17</sup> In Scripture we find narrative, apocalyptic, poetry, wisdom, didactic, parabolic, religious ritual, legislative, and metaphoric forms of literature, and that is but a few of the many types of biblical genres. Is a narrative passage true in the same way or sense in which poetry is true? What of didactic and parabolic biblical contexts? In John 11:18 it says, "Bethany is fifteen stadia from Jerusalem." This is a statement of mere fact that can be readily verified geographically. In 11:39, Jesus says, "Take away the stone." This is a command. In what sense is a command true or false? Statements, not commands or questions, are, in the strict sense, true or false. It probably makes better sense to inquire whether the whole sentence, "Jesus said, 'Take away the stone,' " is true or false in the sense that it *historically* occurred, though that is something we cannot now wholly verify. No ancient recording devices in Palestine.

Further, Jesus told many illustrative stories or parables, for example, one that begins, "A certain man had two sons," thus uttering an invented story. If the story was not accurately based on an historical event, was Jesus lying to his audience, and so to us? Are parables then false, wrong by definition? If the story is not factually true, if it did not happen, how can it be true? But yes, the story, in terms of *genre*, is a parable, and the right question to ask about a parable is not whether the actions and words described actually occurred, but whether the core point made by the story is *truthful* in the sense of *valid*, i.e., that God the Father will deal with us in the way that the Father in the parable treated his sons.

Perhaps all this so far regarding the many genres in Scripture is obvious, and generally accepted at one level. Yet, as my friend Kevin Van-

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<sup>16</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 49–59, especially 54–57.

<sup>17</sup> G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1988).

hoozer puts it, most interpretive mistakes in relation to Scripture are *genre* mistakes. And far less properly recognized is the fact that the question and nature of truth is usually somewhat different for each genre. Factual truth statements are assessed one way, parables another way, apocalyptic literature another, etc. Parables do not need to be factually, historically true to be truthful, and this situation or literary condition is likewise the case for other non-factual, non-historical biblical genres or ways of stating or teaching. Surely we find no problem with metaphor, simile, analogy or other literary forms or imagery, as when we read that a sharp two-edged sword proceeded from the mouth of the Lord (Rev 1:16). We probably recognize the literary context of Revelation and so we do not take the description as literally true. But in what sense, then, is it truthful?<sup>18</sup>

A further related question regarding biblical truthfulness, rooted in particular literary forms and portions of Scripture, is “truthful for whom”? In portions of Exodus, and especially throughout much of Leviticus and Deuteronomy there is much religious legislation, e.g., discussing the distinction between clean and unclean foods, and so much more, which was true, authoritative and binding on the Israelites at the time when it was given by God through Moses. Yet Jesus through Mark (7:19) in the Gospels and God through Peter’s experience in Acts 10:15 declared these OT laws invalid or no longer true and binding for Christians now. They no longer give God’s commands to Christians; and in *that* sense they are *not* “true”, i.e., not valid for him/her. In fact, if anyone were to require that Christians keep these regulations now, he/she would be disobeying God’s command *now* for his people. If one now looks for a “deeper meaning” or sense in the OT food laws, they are implicitly recognizing that these laws can no longer be interpreted in the way their original readers were meant to take them. The same should be said regarding the laws for sacrificial ritual. They *were* God’s commands and *were* true and valid for their own time, and they may be interpreted also as “types” pointing to the one true sacrifice of Jesus, but the writer of Hebrews is clear about any present continuation of such by Christians. Hence, some passages of Scripture which once were God’s authoritative commands are no longer, in that sense, binding and valid for us—in *that* sense they are not true for us, though they were the true Word of God. The point is that they remain *true* as *records* of what God *did* say, but *not* as conveying God’s will for us *today*.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Marshall, *Inspiration*, 57–59.

<sup>19</sup> Marshall, *Inspiration*, 57–59.

To gather together this portion of our discussion of the nature of truth/truthfulness, and specifically inerrancy as the truth/truthfulness of Scripture in all that it actually affirms, we have been able to show just a part of the complexity of the topic, and that truth's proper application is necessarily to be recognized as distinctive to each portion, especially each genre, in Scripture—truthful in the way appropriate to the distinctive communication form of each genre and its contextual usage. All of this also clarifies the broad and many-sided character of the Scriptures, which contain not only God's direct revelation, e.g., "Thus says the LORD!" but in addition the record of the historical setting in which revelation came to the human situation or condition, without which the direct revelation cannot be properly understood. And also that the truthful, inerrant Scriptures also present a *progressive* revelation, elements of which, though true when given by God, are now true as records of past revelation, which have now been superseded by what followed and fulfilled them.

Let us all more faithfully and properly hear, heed, and live out God's written and inerrant Word to the Glory of the triune God and the outworking of his redemptive-Kingdom purposes in all the world, in Jesus Christ's great and mighty Name and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



**Figure 1: Dr. Morrison with an original Bishop's Bible and Chained Bible, two precursors to the KJV**

## LECTURE II: “By What Authority Do We Say These Things?” Dualism and the Modern Rejection of Biblical Authority



JOHN DOUGLAS MORRISON  
*Professor of Theological Studies*  
*Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary*  
*Liberty University*  
*Lynchburg, VA*  
*Montkidsinva@verizon.net*

### I. INTRODUCTION

“Hath God Said?” Did God actually say these things to you? Cloaked in the forms of inquiry, this deceptive attack by the Tempter, early in the Genesis narrative of human creation and fall, has real and destructive power. Matthew and Luke parallel the Genesis passage by describing how the Second Adam, Jesus, faced the Tempter, not in the garden but in the arid, desolate wilderness, and there the question was essentially the same, “Hath God Said?” The Christian faith has always faced, and continues to face, many and highly varied forms of attack, but in most cases, one way or another, the force and edge of such has been the antagonistic and often vehement denial of any notion of the absolute lordship of the triune God, and so of any assertion of the authoritative self-revelation of the covenant God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of Yahweh, supremely revealed in Jesus Christ, and, thereby, by the Holy Spirit, in Holy Scripture.

The authority, yes the divine authority of Holy Scripture is *a*, if not *the* “first order” issue in any proper doctrine of Scripture, yes, even before inerrancy, about which I made a presentation yesterday. This no doubt surprises some and concerns others—is he denying or playing down the importance of the truthfulness of Scripture? Not at all. I am simply putting inerrancy in its proper place and order within God’s redemptive-Kingdom purposes, and so within the *larger* “faith once for all delivered to the saints.” As the late and much missed Carl Henry— and

many others—have pointed out repeatedly and correctly, biblical authority is *the* central issue here for it is *that* which distinguishes Scripture, and the gospel message therein, as the Word of God, the Word written, which will not return to God void. Under Christ, the Word made flesh, the written Word which derivatively results from God’s self-revelation and “inspiration,” and so, by the dynamic, powerful and personal, effective guidance and superintendence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>20</sup> As noted before, there are surely many works, e.g., textbooks in arithmetic, mathematics, which are literally “inerrant” but do not as such set before us the authoritative Word of God. And often brothers or sisters in Christ who do in fact hold a high view of biblical authority, but who, for one reason or another, hold back from affirming full biblical truthfulness, can be best won to a proper inerrancy position, not by “beating” them with the inerrancy issue, but by means of the biblical authority which they already espouse, but whose apparent implications they have not, perhaps, thought through thoroughly.

By taking this further, much of my argument herein is my deep concern that Christians understand, first, the clear fact that Western culture’s zealous pursuit and worship of self, subjectivism, is a devastating result grounded in the destructive effects of false dualisms that were re-injected into Western thinking. This has often led to strong, even violent, rejection of the authority of the God self-revealed in Jesus Christ, and so the divine authority of Holy Scripture, as the written Word of God. I must quickly prepare you for the fact that much of my discussion will be negative, i.e., showing where, some three centuries ago, Western culture in certain crucial domains was wrong, thinking contrary to the nature of things, etc. These shifts in Western thinking, before and since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, have created, again, a supreme crisis for the classical or historical orthodox Christian understanding of divine authority—divine authority that is not only faithful but also historical, and even textual. The reason for these shifts and the resulting crises are obviously manifold, but the late Thomas Torrance is surely correct when he emphasized especially the widespread and deep negative effects of the modern re-introduction, and the so-called “postmodern” extension, of cosmological and epistemological dualisms into Western culture as a whole, notably in the physical sciences, philosophy and, thereby, into Christian theology.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority: God Who Speaks and Shows* (vol. 4; Waco, TX: 1976), thesis eleven.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example the following titles wherein Thomas Forsythe Torrance developed his critical and constructive engagement with modern and early postmodern dualisms, cosmological and epistemological: *Space, Time and Incarnation*; *Space, Time and Resurrection*; *The Ground and Grammar of Theolo-*

In what immediately follows I will attempt, succinctly, to lay bare the profoundly influential dualisms of René Descartes and his pantheistic disciple Baruch Spinoza, but due to time limitation I will focus especially on the potent cosmological dualism of Isaac Newton, which conceptually “cut God off” from the world, and so from all direct spatio-temporal action and objective self-disclosure or revelation, and the epistemological dualism of Immanuel Kant (“Newton’s philosopher”) whereby real knowledge of reality in itself, and especially of God, became impossible for “pure reason.”<sup>22</sup>

The effects of these two thinkers, a mathematician and a philosopher (who was very concerned for science), have variously and pervasively permeated and distorted modern and postmodern Christian theology and its understanding of the God-world, God-human relationships. Ever since “the Enlightenment,” the destructive effects of this dualism, this disjunctive thinking, this “thinking apart” what ought to be thought unitarily together, has negatively affected every Christian doctrine, but most notably the classic Judeo-Christian or historical orthodox Christian doctrine of God’s gracious self-disclosure, God’s revelation in and for the world. This rampant dualism has led and still leads to what Jewish philosopher Martin Buber has called “the conceptual letting go of God.”<sup>23</sup>

## II. THE DUALISM OF DESCARTES AND SPINOZA

With acknowledged over-brevity, I must yet point out that René Descartes’ over-developed need for certainty, led, via his methodological doubt, to his well-known “Cogito, ergo sum” (I think, therefore I am).<sup>24</sup> Thereby his portrayal of the solitary sovereign subject rules early modern thinking about the human being. It led to several very problematic, dualistic emphases—subject over against object, mind over against body, and thought over against language—all of which pulled apart what ought to have remained unitarily together, and which eventually invited “deconstruction” via Jacques Derrida, et al.

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*gy; God and Rationality; Christian Theology and Scientific Culture; Reality and Scientific Theology; Divine and Contingent Order.*

<sup>22</sup> John Douglas Morrison, *Has God Said? Scripture, the Word of God, and the Crisis of Theological Authority* (The Evangelical Theological Society Monograph Series 5; Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2006), especially chapters one and three.

<sup>23</sup> Martin Buber, *The Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relation Between Religion and Philosophy* (New York, NY: Harper Brothers, 1952).

<sup>24</sup> See René Descartes, *Discourse on Method: Meditations and Principles* (London: Everyman’s Library, 1912, 2004).

One of Descartes' multitudinous "disciples," the Jewish philosopher Spinoza, took this dualism in ways of which his mentor would not have approved, but which, in a sense, were unpacked naturally from Cartesian bases. For his own socio-political purposes, and so to extricate himself and European culture as a whole from the significant continued impact of any and all religious authority, both Christian and Jewish, that limited human freedom—especially his own philosophical freedom, Spinoza deceptively undercut the scriptural-revelational bases of both Judaism and Christianity, and thereby their authority in European culture.<sup>25</sup> In his *Theologico-Political Treatise*, Spinoza took the "disguise" of a pious believer in the Judeo-Christian tradition, but one who "humbly" wanted to "improve" or "correct" and make right and righteous that tradition—to re-form it to faithful propriety, notably also in relation to philosophy. According to Spinoza, true religion and true philosophy never overlap. Religion deals only with morality and piety; philosophy deals with the truth. And both are conducive to an ordered peaceful state. But in fact Spinoza was thereby waging an aggressive attack on Christian and Jewish orthodoxy, which he equated with "superstition," while thereby actually pursuing radical freedom for his philosophical goals. "Religion" must change its foundations, nature and aims. Religion must be devalued, shown to be inferior and only for the ignorant and simple folk—all the while claiming for himself the role of champion for "true piety" and "religion." Spinoza's central targets are the authoritative bases of Jewish and Christian orthodoxy. Hence, the nature of miracles, revelation, and so especially Holy Scripture, and the relation of each of these to the "Word" or "Truth of God," as viewed by orthodoxy, are of special negative concern for Spinoza. While carefully mocking the "multitudes" for their "superstitious" homage to Scripture, "the shreds of antiquity," "rather than to the Word of God," Spinoza thereby strips Scripture of all divine authority. Spinoza reduces Holy Scripture to merely and only human writings given to the imagination, evocative and pictorial, and so meant to stir the piety of the ignorant masses. The apostolic writings, he says, are ad hoc teachings with no claim to authority. It is philosophy, he says, that deals in Truth. And the "Word of God" cannot be tainted by history, nor can it be verbal, and certainly never textual or written. The "Word," as thus "transcendentalized," stands only outside history, dualistically separated from all things historical and human.

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<sup>25</sup> Baruch Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise* (trans. R. H. M. Elwes New York, NY: Dover, 1951), see esp. 157–190.

### III. DUALISM IN NEWTON'S PHYSICS AND KANT'S PHILOSOPHY

But now we enter the real core of the modern and postmodern problem of dualism. Spinoza gave form and example to others who would further separate Scripture from an utterly transcendent "Word of God," but the most potent bases lay in the physics of Isaac Newton and the philosophy/epistemology of Immanuel Kant.

Clearly one's view of God, the God-world relation, and so God's providence, is highly formative on how one will then regard and/or limit what can be called "revelation," and especially whether God can truly and literally give discourse, speak, declare himself content-fully, including in *written* form. The real basis of the post-Enlightenment disputes regarding the Church's historic "Scripture Principle," and so its "Identity Thesis," i.e., that Scripture is literally (and here *is* means *is*) the written and divinely authoritative Word of God, is essentially a theological one. What is at stake in the movement of thought, especially from Newton through and beyond Kant, right to the present debates about revelation and Scripture, is ultimately our doctrine of God, and thereby God's relation or non-relation to us here within the four dimensional space-time continuum. What is the manner of God's involvement and activity here, and so in and with the wording/text of Scripture? Clearly, one's view of the nature and authority of Scripture is dynamically related to one's view of God. Holy Scripture as the written Word of God is affirmed as a result of affirmation of God's lordly, active and personal relationship to the world as Creator, active and caring Sustainer and Redeemer of the world. As we will observe, the modern re-introduction of cosmological and epistemological dualisms into Western thinking from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, especially via Newton and Kant, effected a false "construal" of God and the God-world relation which led first toward *deism* for some and toward *panentheism* for others. And for all these it meant the rejection of the historic Christian affirmation of both the Incarnation and that Scripture is the written and divinely authoritative Word of God.

To a large extent, the "modern" (pre-Einsteinian) approach to knowledge of the world arose in the West through Newton and, via Descartes, through Immanuel Kant. Consequently, alien disjunctions were clamped down on modern thought resulting in the loss of true objectivity. While I must leave out crucial details of Newton's system here, note that Newton's rigid, mechanical, deterministic system of cause and effect (the universe as a "big machine") separated absolute space and time (which he equated with the mind of God) from the more relative space and time

that we ordinarily experience.<sup>26</sup> In this way, Newton made God (for his cosmological system) what he called the *divinum sensorium*, the infinite “containing mind,” which statically impresses rationality on the mechanistic universe, but only and always from the outside. God must remain deistically separate from the universe and from what occurs therein. But of special concern for us, Newton’s dualistic separation of absolute space and time from our empirical time and space conceptually cut God off from the world. This meant that God has no direct relation to anything or anyone therein, and so the negation of all theological objectivity, and all self-revelatory relations from God to, in and for the world. Newton’s projection of an unbridgeable “chasm” that separates the wholly other Deity from all ordinary empirical realities, in order to meet his need for mechanistic uniformity, meant the *a priori* impossibility of miracles, the incarnation of the Son, and of all actual divine revelation. Newton’s “universe” meant no “Thus says the Lord”! Reflecting the early church heresy, Newton was an “Arian” Christian, the direct result imposed by his absolute-relative, God-world dualism.

Later, in the aftermath of the excellent advances of, e.g., J. Clerk Maxwell and Einstein, it is recognized that apart from some narrow, quite limited usefulness, Newton’s physics had harmful effects on the sciences, scientific methodology, upon Western epistemology and, for our purposes, upon modern theology’s understanding of the God-world relation, and so upon the redemptive knowledge of God in the world. In Newton’s universe there can be no divine revelation in the classical Christian sense, *ergo* no written, divinely authoritative Word of God.

Kant was destructively central to the re-entrenchment of modern dualisms in the West. He took Newton’s separation of absolute and relative space and time, and so God from the world, and applied that separation directly to the human mind and its knowing processes. “Waked” from his “dogmatic slumbers” (as he put it) by reading Hume’s apparently skeptical empiricism, Kant re-worked his previous rationalism, and by his consequent and monumental *Critique of Pure Reason*, ushered in his “Copernican revolution” (or “reversal”) in philosophy and, thereby, also in theology.<sup>27</sup> Empiricism had assigned a *passive* role to the human mental processes, i.e., no innate ideas, no constructive role for the mind, just an empty vessel receiving “impressions” from the external world. Kant concluded that such claims to mental passivity alone were faulty. Human

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<sup>26</sup> See Albert Einstein’s criticism of Newton’s problematic, mechanistic and dualistic views of the universe and its effects on Western thinking in his *Ideas and Opinions* (London: Souvenir, 1973). Note also, again, the above-mentioned works by Torrance.

<sup>27</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (trans. Norman Kerrys Smith; New York, NY: Macmillan, 1929, 2003), 27–29, 74, 87, 149, etc.

knowledge needed firmer ground. Therefore, Kant postulated that the human mind was both *passive* at one level and *active* at another in order to more adequately deal with the varied elements of the human knowing processes, and to overcome the errors of both rationalism and empiricism. While affirming the need for sense data from outside, Kant “reverses” the knowing relation by conceiving that the object to be known must rather conform to and be molded by the *active* mental capacities. But this means that we cannot know objects or the world as they really are. Thus Kant separated the sense data of our experience (*phenomena*) from objects in the world as they truly are, essences, and all non-physical realities beyond any direct knowledge by human experience, including God, the “self” or immortal soul (*noumena*).

By this dualistic separation of *phenomena* from *noumena*, unknowable by “pure reason,” including God, Kant thereby applied Newton’s dualistic cosmology, his deistic separation of God from the world, to the human mind. For over 200 years the effects of that split have been vast in every sphere of human pursuit of knowledge, notably in Christian theology. All claims to knowledge of the truth of God or of the reality of God by, e.g., direct revelation, and so via Scripture, were thereby ruled out of court *a priori*. If Kant’s view is affirmed, can Christian theology exist? Can content-ful revelation from God be affirmed? Can Holy Scripture *be* the Word of God? No! not in the historical orthodox sense of the term. As Martin Buber also put it, God has been “eclipsed” for Western culture.

#### IV. DUALISM IN THE THEOLOGY OF SCHLEIERMACHER AND TILlich

Again, if Kant’s dualistic conclusions are affirmed, one cannot do theology in any way akin to historical orthodoxy, which assumes the reality and scriptural availability of the Word of God. If one accepts Kant’s dualistic severance of God from human knowing, one must take another methodological road. And that is precisely what F. D. E. Schleiermacher did. Schleiermacher, “the Father of Theological Liberalism” grudgingly accepted Kant’s conclusion, but sought to make an “end run” around Kant to God by a different path. Under the influence of his pietist upbringing, Romanticism, as well as Kant, Schleiermacher aimed for a way of doing theology that escaped Kant’s epistemology and dry moralism via “God-consciousness” or the “feeling of dependence on God.” If God cannot be known directly and as he is, if content-ful divine revelation and Scripture as the written Word of God have been “ruled out of court,” Schleiermacher took the Enlightenment route of subjectivism, making the human religious subject central (rather than the properly objective

Word of God). Specifically he made the religious feelings that result when we consciously choose to depend wholly upon the unknowable God, or “the All,” central to the theological task. Everything here is grounded in and from subjective human piety.<sup>28</sup> Thereby, Kant’s “Copernican revolution (reversal)” in philosophy led to Schleiermacher’s reversal in theology. Rather than focusing on the graciously given objective self-revelation of God, as found especially in Scripture, for doing theology, Schleiermacher reversed that by making our human “religious feelings” or “piety” the data for doing theology. Assuming that God is the indirect “Source” of these “feelings,” the Kantian theologian or religious community must look within the self to analyze what these feelings indirectly tell us about their “God” source. Hence, theology and the methodological bases for liberal, neo-liberal, existentialist, et al. . . . theology ever since. Therein Scripture is clearly not regarded as the “Word of God”—a role claimed only for subjective pious feelings. But does Scripture have any role in this schema? Obviously, after Kant, revelatory noumena cannot partake of or be identified with written phenomena. For Schleiermacher, Scripture is merely a human record of religious feeling or experience, a record which can potentially enhance one’s own experience. No divine authority.

The pervasive negative effects of these dualisms have continued to permeate culture and theology, and about 100 years later a second prominent and influential example of the Newtonian-Kantian paradigm arose via the late Rudolf Bultmann. Bultmann was known first as both a NT scholar and prominent theologian. While Bultmann was ironically critical of late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century liberal (or “Ritschilian”) theology for its divine immanentism, its “culture Christianity,” he retained much of the liberal theological foundations, methods and Schleiermacher-like religious subjectivism in “existentialist” form. He was widely known for “demythologizing” of the NT, for his radical form-criticism and for historical skepticism in relation to Scripture, all of it the result of these destructive dualisms upon his thinking—as upon so many in Western culture. If God is “deistically” shut out from any direct relation to the world, and if the “noumenal” God conceptually is cut off from all human knowledge, i.e., unknowable as he really is, how can we reckon or affirm any kind of God-human connection at all? Bultmann

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<sup>28</sup> Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, *The Christian faith* (trans. H. R. MacKintosh and James S. Stewart Edinburgh; T&T Clark, 1928, 1960), 10–12, 69–76, 87–88. See also the important criticisms by Klaus Bockmühl, *The Unreal God of Modern Theology: Bultmann, Barth, and the Theology of Atheism: A Call to Recovering the Truth of God’s Reality*, translated by Geoffrey Bromiley (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers and Howard, 1988).

strongly emphasized God's transcendence, to the extent that he was in fact a "deist."<sup>29</sup> According to Bultmann, the universe is a closed system of cause and effect. Hence, no miracles, no incarnation, no contentful Word of God, no "Thus says the Lord." He also emphasizes that people are hopeless and helpless in their sin, which he describes for 20<sup>th</sup> century culture, in terms of Martin Heidegger's notion of "inauthenticity," as utterly estranged from God, world and our true selfhood ("authenticity"). Though desperately needing redemption to authenticity, we can do nothing. But *paradoxically* the "wholly other" God, though shut out from direct relation to us, somehow indirectly meets or "encounters" us through the gospel telling of Jesus' existential courage to and on the cross. Through that human declaration of "good news," God is said to encounter us existentially and to empower us to freely choose for authenticity. We are thereby transformed to true selfhood, etc. Clearly, the focus is not God, not Jesus, but the subjective, existing human "I." It's all about "me"! Where, then, is Scripture and scriptural authority in this highly influential theological approach? Does Bultmann have any authoritative role for Scripture in relation to "the Word of God's personal address to me"? Here the message of the NT biblical documents can be the *human* textual *occasion* for God's paradoxical, existential, but utterly empty, content-less "Word," which encounters the individual, calling him/her to choose authentic faith. This transcendent, transformative but empty "Word" somehow addresses one through the NT Kerygma. But then, as one true to Newton and Kant, Bultmann must then regard Scripture as necessarily without divine authority. His dualistic commitments mean that God can be "known," i.e., "experienced," only subjectively as he existentially "acts in me."

Also standing most prominently in Newtonian-Kantian dualistic tradition, specifically as a philosophical theologian, is the late Paul Tillich. Tillich said that he ever worked "on the boundary," e.g., between theology and philosophy, between Christianity and humanism. His numerous works, notably his three volume *Systematic Theology*, have had monumental influence throughout modern and many strains of postmodern theology, notably in neo-liberal and existentialist schools of thought. His work reflects the influence not only of Newton and Kant, but also of Neo-Platonism (mysticism), German Idealism (Hegel, Schelling), Friedrich Nietzsche and (like Bultmann) Heidegger. In contrast to Bult-

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<sup>29</sup> See Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Scribners, 1958), especially chapters two and three; and his article "How Does God Speak Through the Bible" in *Existence and Faith* (ed. Schubert Ogden; New York: Meridian Books, 1960).

mann's "deism," Tillich's theological work was meant to reflect what he regarded as the panentheistic relation of the "Ground of Being," "Ultimate," "Depth Dimension," or in terms of theological symbol, "God," in and through all human culture (and religions). But especially, given his existential analysis of estranged and anxious human beings, alienated from "God" because of "fallenness," he says, "my whole theological work has been directed to the interpretation of (revelatory) religious *symbols* in a way that the secular man—and we are all secular—can understand and be (transformed) by them."<sup>30</sup> How does that relate to the problem of dualism and so the question of the authority of Scripture? While Schleiermacher claimed that "the feeling of dependence" and Bultmann God's non-historical, "existential encounter" through the gospel, bridged the dualistic chasm between the otherwise totally unknowable God and persons in the here and now, for Tillich this is accomplished especially by Christian religious symbols. While true "symbols" are found in all domains, e.g., perhaps the American flag or the British Union Jack and the nation, religious symbols (which can potentially be any finite thing, e.g., the word "God," the Cross, Jesus as the Christ) uniquely answer the most basic human existential questions by bringing the healing/saving power of "Essence"/the "Ground of Being" (God) across the Kantian "divide" to our anxious, estranged existence apart from God, with the goal being redemptive re-essentialization/salvation. Despite our existential fallenness, finite things can "miraculously" take on the second capacity of being to us the channel for the healing presence of "God." Through this process of "revelation," according to Tillich, the "Power of Being" or, symbolically, "God" breaks in "to us." Well, if such a "revelation" supposedly crosses the Kantian chasm, what of Scripture for Tillich and the many who follow his influential lead? As a modern dualist, Tillich rejects the classical Judeo-Christian claim that God reveals himself personally, lovingly, truthfully, content-fully, and so verbally and even textually. Tillich regards any such connection between "Word of God" and Scripture, then, to be a serious error. Rather, he says Scripture is a human text which "God" can potentially use "symbolically." In that way,

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<sup>30</sup> Paul Tillich's "systematic" presentation of his views on the human existential condition, his view of "God" as the "Ground of Being," et al., as "answering" that anxious condition and the role of religious symbols mediating the divine to the historical and human realm, especially observable in his symbol "Jesus as the Christ," one best portrayed in his *Systematic Theology* (3 vols.; Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1951–1957), 1:12–14, 23, 64–66, 80, 94, 108–126, 157–159, 2:29–44, 97–99, 113, 117–124, 130–136, 145–146. For a more semi-popular introduction see Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper, 1957).

Scripture, like a man-made conduit/pipe, can mediate the transforming power of “Being Itself” to us.

## V. THE INFLUENCE OF DUALISM AMONG EVANGELICAL THEOLOGIANS

Perhaps you have noticed that, because of the effects of these modern dualisms upon theology, and especially on views of revelation and Scripture, that the result has been the modern (and postmodern) rejection of the classical “identity thesis,” the historical Christian claim that, under Christ the Word, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Scripture *is* the divinely authoritative written Word of God. Any such claim that God can only “use” the human text of Scripture is herein a case of what we can call “bibliological adoptionism” (from the early Church heresy). But still, these are prominent theological liberals and existential neo-liberals. Surely such dualism, such disjunctive separation, is not found among theologians claiming the stamp “evangelical,” and so connection to historical orthodoxy. Unfortunately, in recent years, this is too often not the case. The historic, evangelical, orthodox affirmation that, under Christ the Word and by the working of the Spirit, Holy Scripture is a crucial element/aspect in and of the economy of God’s gracious self-revelation in order to be known objectively and adequately as he is in himself by we space-time human beings, has too often been giving way among confessed “evangelicals.” It has been a subtle and nuanced move away from actual *identification* of the Word of God and the text of Scripture at any level except, perhaps, in terms, again, of a formal “adoptionist” or, perhaps, an “Arian” sense. I will mention three who have been among the most influential in this way: Donald Bloesch, Gabriel Fackre and the late Clark Pinnock.

For many years, Donald Bloesch has been a prominent evangelical theologian teaching within mainline protestant theological circles. In his much used *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration, and Interpretation*, he seeks a dialectical middle way between historical orthodoxy and classical evangelicalism on the one hand, at which he hurls numerous names (e.g., static, rationalistic neo-fundamentalism) in *ad hominem* fashion, and modern liberalism, on the other, so that whatever is in his own middle ground is necessarily the “high ground” of *real* “evangelicalism.”<sup>31</sup> Bloesch is subtle and careful and given often to speaking of Scripture in glowing terms, even “Word of God” for a while. But against the claims to what he calls “frozen truth” and the “Docetism” of historical ortho-

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<sup>31</sup> Donald G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1944).

doxy, Bloesch takes a so-called “Barthian” path, to the left of even Barth, by distinguishing and dualistically separating the “transcendent content” of divine revelation and its one real historical form in Jesus Christ, on the one hand, from Scripture as the actual historical written Word of God, on the other. Rather, he says, Scripture is finally only a special human witness to the one Word which is only Christ. Yet, Bloesch piously says that this human text can “become the Word” when, by the Spirit, it is made to communicate the truth and power of Christ to us. But it is *not* the written Word of God as such. It is notable that, except for a few minimal citations in notes, Bloesch all but passes by any biblical discussion of inspiration, e.g., 2 Tim 3; 2 Peter 1—a *very* telling reflection on Bloesch’s agenda. For Bloesch, inspiration is not a past action and illumination of Scripture by the Spirit a present act; rather, for him “inspiration” occurs in the existential “moment” when the Spirit makes the human text of Scripture now, “adoptionistically,” God’s Word to me. But the true “Word” transcends all language and all human witness, which is reflective of Bloesch’s Neo-Platonic fear, that should God’s “Word” ever become truly historical, even textual, i.e., Scripture, it would be thereby sullied, dirtied, stained, tarnished. What then of the Incarnation?

Gabriel Fackre has also long labored theologically in mainline Reformed circles, teaching at Andover-Newton Theological School in Massachusetts. There he has purposed to do what he terms a “properly evangelical” theology in the midst of other much more diverse theological currents. A commendable and surely difficult goal. In his work, *The Doctrine of Revelation: A Narrative Interpretation*, Fackre seeks to reformulate an “evangelical” approach to revelation and Scripture, with much formative influence from Catholic scholar Avery Dulles’ (now cardinal Dulles) *Models of Revelation* and, too, his own interpretation and use of Karl Barth. Hence, Fackre wants to revise what Dulles calls the “Revelation as Doctrine” model, i.e., the view of historical Christian orthodoxy, by means of the particular “Barthian” emphasis on revelation as emphatically “Christocentric”—which, by the way, if properly balanced, is correct, i.e., Jesus Christ is surely the *center* and *ultimate* basis of all revelation, but he is not the only revelation.<sup>32</sup> Despite Fackre’s initial criticism of Tillich’s claim of non-cognitive “revelation” via symbols and much of so-called “Barthian” existential Christocentrism that seems to make Jesus, “the Word made flesh,” the one and only Word of God, he finally falls in step with that very same conclusion. For Fackre, too, Jesus Christ is the *one and only* true Word of God, while Scripture is (again) merely the human “witness to that Word.” Thus Scripture, for Fackre, while mightily used by the Spirit, at last stands *outside* of what can be rightly

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<sup>32</sup> Gabriel Fackre, *The Doctrine of Revelation: A Narrative Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977).

regarded as divine revelation, the Word of God. Again, we find expressed herein a continuity or fear that any claim to historical and textual identity or real God-given relation between the Incarnate Word and Scripture imperils the proper centrality of Christ. Of course, that is not true, but that is the motivating fear. Yet it must be acknowledged that Fackre seems to sense that the problem of dualism must be faced and dealt with, that he wants to close the Kantian “chasm” between God and a “transcendentalized” divine Word and historical human existence and our great need for a coherent, content-ful “Thus says the Lord.” For that reason he actually tries to approach the issue of “inspiration” as Bloesch does not. But unfortunately he does so by trying to dialectically contrast his own view from that of historical Christian orthodoxy (as recently reflected in Carl Henry and J. I. Packer, et al.), thereby finally placing “the Word,” again, outside of history, beyond Scripture and (via Jürgen Moltmann) only at the end of history in the *eschaton*. The real “Word,” then, is non-historical, non-linguistic, non-textual. Fackre, too, finally submits to false dualism and so wrongly denies that Scripture is the written Word of God.

My third example of theological and bibliological dualism within evangelicalism is the late Clark Pinnock. Clark was a friend with whom, from time to time, I agreed to disagree agreeably. Each of us knew where the other stood. Clark completed his long teaching career at McMaster Divinity School, within McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. Years after his notable work *Biblical Revelation*, Pinnock reflected his changed views on the nature of Scripture in his controversial work, *The Scripture Principle*.<sup>33</sup> Of the three evangelical works we’ve examined, this is in some ways the best. Pinnock is usually more candid, honest, openly grappling with issues which Bloesch and Fackre handle with calculated ambiguity. Pinnock takes the classic Protestant affirmation, “the Scripture Principle” and defines it in two parts: first, he says there is a place where the Word of God is accessible in human form, the text of Scripture as God’s written Word, and so a place that reveals God’s mind authoritatively for us to heed; second, the need for a defense of biblical authority and trustworthiness against the present crisis regarding “the Scripture Principle.” All of this sounds excellent and most commendable. How then does he unpack this stated intention? Like the Christian theological tradition, and like the distinctive directions of Bloesch and

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<sup>33</sup> Clark H. Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1984), see esp. 32–40, 43–54, 57–62, 95–101, 188–191. See also Pinnock’s book length dialogue with process and neo-liberal theologian, Delwin Brown entitled *Theological Crossfire*. Therein, note especially Section one, part two.

Fackre, Pinnock, too, rightly emphasizes that all of God's self-revelation is ultimately *Christocentric* in pattern and *salvational* in purpose. But does Pinnock use the centrality of Christ to affirm Scripture's divine authority or, like Bloesch and Fackre, to finally deny that authority? From his own initial use and definition of "the Scripture Principle" as the affirmation that in Scripture the Word of God has taken human *and* textual form, that therefore Scripture is not only a human text (by Isaiah, Paul, et al.) but at the same time also God's own written Word, and with that his explanation and assertion of "inspiration" as the divinely effected process whereby this occurred, it would seem that Pinnock is espousing that "Holy Scripture is the inspired Word of God," divinely authoritative in the classic Christian sense. Alas no. Throughout Pinnock's argument he repeatedly makes what turns out to be telling descriptive terms, e.g., Scripture as mere "medium," "vehicle" or "conveyor" of God's revelation, revelation then being something *other*, different, beyond the text of Scripture, having then only formal or functional relation to Scripture. Yes, Scripture is obviously given in human language. Yes, orthodoxy has always recognized divine "accommodation"—that God condescended to speak "down" on our level. But does this require disjunction, dualistic separation from the revelation of God? Hardly! Quite the opposite. Yet for Pinnock, finally, this dualism becomes dominant. Two vivid and picturesque images or metaphors become formative for Pinnock: first, Scripture as a freight train carrying the freight, the transcendent Word of God which is then not the train, and second, Scripture as a product not *of* revelation but *for* revelation, i.e., the Scripture as the "switch track" by which the transcendent Word beyond Scripture is mediated (as through a pipe) into the human situation. Again, problematic dualistic conceptualities have falsely gripped such evangelical thinking to its loss, "thinking apart" what ought to be thought together, i.e., Scripture *is* the written, and so divinely authoritative, Word of God.

## VI. THE PROBLEM OF UNDERSTANDING GOD'S SPEECH

So how are we to respond to this modern dualistic impact, these destructive effects, upon how we regard God's relation to us, upon what we perceive that God can, or rather cannot, enact in our midst, and hence upon our understanding of the nature and authority of Holy Scripture? Is such a disjunctive cutting off of Scripture from the Word of God in fact a long needed corrective to the historical orthodox position of the Church and its "Identity Thesis"? Ought we at last to recognize that the real, *ideal* Word of God is utterly other, beyond our space-time continuum and so beyond any humiliating written and textual form, beyond any debasing relation to inadequate human languages? *No!* In the Name of the

Incarnate Word, the risen Savior, who ever affirmed the divine authority of Scripture, *No!*

Before restating, reaffirming, reconfessing, Scripture's divine authority, let me, with radical and (probably) injudicious brevity point to three crucial, interrelated clarifications or reminders, among others, that direct us properly to conclusions emphatically contrary to all of these false and debilitating conclusions: the adequacy of human language, that God is a human language user, and Scripture as God's illocutionary "speech act."

First, can human linguistic forms, human language, even written human language ever be properly reckoned as written the Word of God? Again, historically the Church has answered, "Yes." The writers of Scripture themselves clearly and often asserted variously that Yahweh, the covenant God of Sinai, the triune God, is the speaking God who declares himself and his ways to, in and through, his prophets and apostles. But, for reasons we've observed, Western culture as given in to the spurious modern and postmodern assumption that all language is an inadequate means of personal communication, thus effecting human isolation. And if that is so, how much more is that true of God. In fact, the opposite is true. And alongside a resurgent, dualistic Neo-Platonic mysticism there has, in recent decades, been added "eastern" religious notions, both of which stress the "ineffability" and "inexpressibility" of the utterly remote, amorphous or undifferentiated "divine." In all, then, there has occurred our contemporary doubt that human language can communicate the reality of God at all—even if God were endeavoring thus to act and speak to us. Rather, as John Frame well states the biblical corrective:

God's transcendence (so understood) implies that God cannot be clearly revealed or represented to us in human words . . . (But) Scripture never deduces from God's transcendence the inadequacy and fallibility (let alone the impossibility) of all verbal revelation. Quite the contrary . . . verbal revelation is to be obeyed (as authoritative) *because* of the divine transcendence.<sup>34</sup>

Rather, like the Reformers, we ought to emphasize God's gracious condescension, the "humility" of God whereby he powerfully and lo-

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<sup>34</sup> John M. Fame, "God and Biblical Language" in *God's Inerrant Word* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany, 1977). See also J. I. Packer, "The Adequacy of Human Language" in *Inerrancy* (ed. Norman Geisler; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980). One ought also to examine carefully John Frame's subsequent and excellent book-length development of this and related issues in his *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God: A Theology of Lordship* (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987).

vingly identifies with that which is beneath him. Indeed, in the text of Scripture God willingly and actively became “undignified” for our redemption.

Let me take that a step further with the help of evangelical Christian philosopher, Nicholas Wolterstorff, recently retired from Yale. In his influential Wilde Lectures at Oxford University, published as *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks*, Wolterstorff examines the “strange but riveting” declaration, introduced to humanity by Judaism, that “God speaks to us on our way, and that our calling as human beings is to listen to that speech from beyond and hear.”<sup>35</sup> As we have strongly acknowledged and evidenced previously in our argument herein, the idea of God speaking—historical divine disclosure or discourse—has faced much hostility in modernity. Wolterstorff calls this antagonism “ill-advised” and “self-defeating.” Since the Enlightenment especially, any religious reference to “God speaking” is in mainline religious contexts regarded only as non-literal, metaphorical, symbolic of something else, usually a vacuous subjective experience (recall Schleiermacher and the others after Kant). Yet, as we also saw, even Bloesch, et al., finally balk at the radical historicity required for God to be a *literal* human language user, whether at Mount Sinai or the text of Holy Scripture, and so the proper identity between Scripture and the Word of God.

What of Wolterstorff? Wolterstorff does not balk. Rather, beginning from his detailed opening analysis of the incident in Augustine’s *Confessions* of the child’s voice saying, “*Tolle lege, tolle lege*,” “take up and read, take up and read,” which Augustine took to be God’s command there and then to take and read the text from Romans, which changed his life in an instant, and altered the course of much of Western culture through him, Wolterstorff asserts that somehow, against all such modern opposition, God is capable of using human language to speak to us historically, and he has in fact done so. It is the answering of that “somehow,” seeking possible coherent and partial explanation of how God discourses with us, that generates the development of Wolterstorff’s argument. Notably for us here, Wolterstorff helpfully develops at length the notion of “deputized discourse,” e.g., God speaking through a divinely “deputized” prophet or apostle whereby, then, the prophet’s/apostle’s speaking becomes also God’s speaking, and, to be more particular, the prophet’s (or apostle’s) specifically prophetic/apostolic writing, too, is also included therein as *God’s own* authorized, hence *authoritative*, “deputized” discourse. He concludes that there is good reason to regard

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<sup>35</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), see esp. ix, 27–28, 70–73, 186, 281–283, 298–299.

Christian Scripture, the canon, as the God-given medium of divine discourse, the written Word of God, and, as described, God can rightly be regarded thereby the “author of the Bible.”

Finally, it is the conclusion of numerous contemporary evangelical theologians, myself included, that the analogical, carefully principled application of influential “Speech-Act Theory” to what Scripture itself says about the way God reveals himself to us, has significantly clarified a proper “trinitarian theology of Holy Scripture.”<sup>36</sup> Two of those at the forefront of developing these insights are Wolterstorff and especially Kevin Vanhoozer. Vanhoozer, too, reflects constructively on prominent recent developments in the philosophy of language from the later Wittgenstein and especially through J. L. Austin and John Searle. Crucial for our purposes is Austin’s breakthrough recognition of and Searle’s clarification of the fact that every human “speech act,” e.g., assertion, command, promise, etc., renders the speaker or author a “communicative agent,” a *doer* of a speech-action. All proper saying or writing is a verbal “doing” and has within itself three more distinctive linguistic acts that effect the larger Speech Act. These are: (1) the locutionary act, i.e., the actual uttering or saying or expression of something; (2) the illocutionary act, i.e., *what* it is we *do* in saying something (e.g., commanding); (3) the perlocutionary act, i.e., what we *effect* in others by our saying something (e.g., persuading). But it is especially the recognition of the *illocutionary* act that enables distinction between the content of what is said (sense and reference) and its force (what a sentence *does*). Illocutions are all-important to the speaker’s/author’s role as an *intentional* communicative agent. This can be applied almost directly over to God’s act of speaking or revelation, the recognition of God as a “Trinitarian” communicative Agent. Reflecting the biblical data, God the Father is the “utterer,” his action is “locution,” the begetter and upholder of words (Heb 1:1–2), who “spoke to the prophets.” The Logos-Son corresponds to the speaking Father’s act of illocution, what the Father *does* by thus speaking. The Son-Word as illocution is the content, reference and intention of the Father’s uttering, making him “count as” what the Father intended for us. The Holy Spirit corresponds to the third active element of a divine speech-act, the *perlocution* or the *effect* of an illocutionary act on the actions or beliefs of the hearer or reader. Hence, the triune God, in and by his communicative act, is the Lordly paradigm of all inherently covenan-

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<sup>36</sup> Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in this Text? The Bible, the Reader and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998); and Kevin Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2002). In *Meaning* see especially 19–28, 43–148; in *First Theology* see especially 20, 34–35, 148–157.

tal and missional communication. And therein, according to this Trinitarian theology of Scripture, i.e., God's speaking from the Father, in and through the Son, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, Vanhoozer explains how Holy Scripture is itself "God's illocutionary speech action," the written Word of God, and that as a *result* of God's mighty Speech Acts. And his Word will not return to him void (Isa. 55:11).

## VII. CONCLUSION: SCRIPTURE AS THE AUTHORITATIVE WORD OF GOD

Obviously, given the limitations required here, I could give but a "taste," but "the hem of the garment" of these developments, which perhaps, some here have or will be able to examine. I also cannot take time now to elaborate on the overthrow of much of Newtonian determinism, mechanism and dualism that has occurred in the last century plus, via Christian physicist J. Clerk Maxwell, Einstein, and others, who have helped to move significant portions of Western science back toward a proper objectivity, not only in the physical sciences but also in epistemology, and so our ability to know not everything (potentially) and not nothing, but by the gift and grace of God to know *adequately*. What I will do now is to tie together a few interrelated elements toward a fresh statement and affirmation that Holy Scripture *is* the divinely authoritative, written Word of God.

First, the so-called "Barthian" understanding (often rather different from Barth's own later, mature position) of the Word of God as finally other than and dualistically separated from or beyond Holy Scripture, a view too often influential upon sectors of broader evangelicalism, including Bloesch, Fackre and Pinnock, is both wrong and right at different levels. Barth's *christocentricity*, his point that *the* ultimate Word of God is Jesus Christ is surely biblical. The openings of John, Colossians and Hebrews et al., tell us, e.g., that the Word (*logos*) who is God became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus of Nazareth *is* the Word of God in an eternally pre-eminent way. He is, we may say, the ontological Word of God. But does this fact negate the biblical necessity of affirming that Holy Scripture, too, is the *written* Word of God? Certainly not. While it is, indeed, also biblical to refer to Scripture as a primary "witness to Christ," as Jesus himself teaches in John 5:39, this distinction of Christ the Word from Scripture's Spirit-inspired testimony to him does not thereby negate Scripture's continuity with and nuanced identity with and under Christ the Word as the written, and so divinely authoritative, Word of God. Indeed, the Father and the Holy Spirit also bear witness to Christ, and that hardly negates their divine authority. How then should these interrelated elements be brought together in a way faithful to Scripture's teaching,

and so to “the faith once for all delivered to the saints”? If Jesus is the unique incarnate Word, and if OT and NT Scriptures repeatedly speak of their own status as divine revelation and/or the written Word of God, a status to which Jesus himself constantly testified, and yet Scripture also “testifies” to Christ as distinct (but not dualistically separate) from itself, then we must avoid a flat and undifferentiated identity between Jesus Christ (the divine-human *person*) and Scripture (the divine-human *product*). But at the same time, *contra* Bloesch, et al., we must strenuously reject all dualistic, disjunctive thinking that finally separates Christ the ultimate Word from the “inscripturated” or “in-scribed” Word, as though Scripture were a mere human word after all, which is somehow occasionally, “adoptionistically” and temporarily “made” the Word if and when used by the Holy Spirit. Faith-ful, unitary biblical thinking here will “think after” the “identity-in-distinction” inherent in this relationship, relations also similarly observable in the crucial *homoousion* term of the “Nicene Creed,” and so the “oneness-in-distinction” of the Trinity. Therefore, in, under, of and from the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, and by the effective, powerful working of the Holy Spirit via the Spirit’s operations of revelation and inspiration (*Theopneustos*, 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20–21, etc.), Holy Scripture *is*, again *is*, the divinely authoritative, written and truthful Word of God, its authority and truthfulness grounded not only in itself, but ultimately, by the Spirit, in Christ the Son, and God the Father, and so finally in and of the perichoretic or coherent relations within the eternal, triune Godhead.<sup>37</sup> Praise God for his unspeakably wonderful gift, the written Word of God and the Gospel therein. To God alone be the glory. Amen.

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<sup>37</sup> In relation to all these crucial issues in Revelation and Holy Scripture and, therein, especially the relation of Scripture as Word of God and Jesus Christ the Word made flesh, and all in relation to the triune Godhead, I must point the reader to my book on these matters: John Douglas Morrison, *Has God Said? Scripture, the Word of God and the Crisis of Theological Authority* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2006), especially my new “model” of Revelation and Holy Scripture in chapter eight, “Einstein, Torrance and Calvin: A Christocentric, Multileveled, Interactive Model of Scripture as the Written Word of God.”

## Misquoting Bart: The Story Behind Who Changed *Misquoting Jesus* and Why



RADU GHEORGHITA

Associate Professor of Biblical Studies  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Kansas City, MO 64118  
rgheorghita@mbts.edu

During the preliminary stages, the title envisioned for this essay has been the venerable saying “Physician, heal thyself!” (cf. Luke 4:23). It was intended to remind the reader of the embarrassing blunder made by those who want to do for others what they cannot or would not do for themselves. It became obvious, however, that since the NT verse incorporating the saying was preserved with textual variants, Professor Bart D. Ehrman might be offended if anyone would use in reference to him a maxim from a NT passage tarnished by text-critical issues. After all, as he himself would argue, since the verse has been preserved in an array of textual variants, the original form and meaning of the verse is now lost, and for all practical purposes so also its applicability. Therefore, the initial plan had to be abandoned, leaving behind the present title, which proved to be a more adequate alternative. The new choice, of course, mimics the title of Prof. Ehrman’s best sellers, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why*,<sup>1</sup> (henceforth *MJ*) and, as a parody, captures the essence of my intentions for this article even better than the first proposal.

The questions posed in this exposition are rather simple: what would the results be if the guiding principles used by Prof. Ehrman in analyzing and assessing the manuscripts of the NT would be applied to his own writings? How would his writings measure up to the stringencies of the careful and exigent scrutiny with which he assesses the value and the reliability of the NT documents? What would be the lasting impact of his arguments and proofs regarding the NT documents if his own writings prove to be affected by the same sort of mistakes he exposes in the NT manuscripts? Should his arguments and conclu-

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<sup>1</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2005).

sions be rejected with the same pontificating tone with which he dismisses the text and the message of the NT?

Two points of clarification are in order at this juncture, especially for the readers concerned with the rationale for choosing Prof. Ehrman as the target of this essay, or, alternatively, for those uncertain about the need or, indeed, the usefulness of yet another response to his writings.

First, then, why Prof. Ehrman and not another NT scholar? There are several reasons for this choice. At the outset, there is a personal dimension. The decision to write this piece came in the wake of the debate hosted by Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City on April 1, 2010, an occasion that brought face to face Prof. Bart Ehrman and Prof. Craig Evans to discuss the historical reliability of the Gospel accounts of the bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>2</sup> This was the second time Prof. Ehrman participated in a public debate on our campus.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, just as it happened on the previous occasion, the opportunity to ask questions from the floor was very limited. My questions had to find a different venue from the inflexible format of the debate. Consequently, I decided to ask them in writing.

Evidently, there are more important reasons to engage with Prof. Ehrman's ideas than this personal anecdotal one. To begin with, Prof. Ehrman is a well known NT scholar, with a track record of scholarly activity admired by his peers and unquestioned by any serious inquirer. From his lectern as well as through his writings he has influenced and will continue to influence many generations of students in the halls of academia and readers in the pews of the ecclesia.

Among them, there is a particular group targeted by his multifarious efforts: the readers of (Evangelical) conservative persuasion, whether students signing up for his classes at the University of North Carolina or honest intellectual inquirers engaging with his books. It is no surprise to hear Prof. Ehrman taking pride in the number of his victims or in the extent of the damage he intends to incur among the members of this segment of his readership.<sup>4</sup> Not only a gifted teacher and speaker, he is also a captivating author who knows how to harness the power of media to disseminate his ideas. It would be wrong to label him an opportunist on a quest to make a name for himself through his best-sellers; rather, he is a militant academician who takes the loss of his own faith to its most natural and logical conclusion.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the transition from being a believer to being a "happy agnostic," as he would describe himself,<sup>6</sup> is the experience that he wants to duplicate in his readers. This has become the virtual battle cry for his life and career.

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<sup>2</sup> The debate is posted as a link on the webpage of the MBTS, [www.mbts.edu](http://www.mbts.edu).

<sup>3</sup> The first debate took place in the Spring of 2009 between Prof. Ehrman and Mike Licona on the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus.

<sup>4</sup> In the interview on NPR, *Fresh Air* with Terry Gross (aired Dec. 14, 2005 on KCUR 89.3 FM).

<sup>5</sup> *Misquoting Jesus*, pp. 1–15; the autobiographical account forms the substance of the introduction in *MJ*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

Moreover, Prof. Ehrman was once on the evangelical side of the front where many of the Biblical battles are fought today. In the autobiographical chapter in *MJ* he shares the story of his genuine experience of new birth followed by the intense desire to become the voice of evangelicals in the respectable halls of academia.<sup>7</sup> While his youthful plan ended up being derailed, it is important to realize that in the process Prof. Ehrman acquired a firsthand knowledge of the conservative position on these matters; he knows intimately the weak links and attacks them with ferocity. Consequently, he has become such a formidable antagonist of the conservative side that it would be no exaggeration to conjecture that whoever can answer Prof. Ehrman can withstand any other opponent. He thus became not only the ultimate foe, but also the ultimate summit to conquer for the evangelical apologist defending the reliability of the NT documents: one only needs to find counter-arguments to Prof. Ehrman to successfully debunk any other attacks on the matter.

Second, why the need for yet another answer to Prof. Ehrman? The primary target of this analysis, *MJ* was published in 2005 and it has already received its share of praise and criticism. While on the list of New York Times bestsellers, the book received the most scintillating reviews and accolades. The book was an event in itself, not least for the novelty of thrusting a book on textual criticism on the list of bestsellers. In the furor of excitement generated by yet another book seeking to demolish the foundations of Christian faith, one written by a former believer and an expert in the subject matter, somehow the content of the book, primarily the solidity of its arguments and its proofs were less seriously scrutinized. It seems that it was again the duty of the Evangelical scholars to look more carefully into the substance of Prof. Ehrman's book and assess its main argument and expose its superficiality and bias. Indeed, this has been done by a series of responses both at the scholarly level as well as the layman's. Notable among them are the rebuttals of Prof. D. Wallace of Dallas Theological Seminary, in an article-long review of *MJ* in *JETS*,<sup>8</sup> and in one chapter of *Dethroning Jesus*, a book co-authored with Prof. D. Bock.<sup>9</sup> Equally damaging review articles were written by Prof. C. Blomberg of Denver Seminary and Prof. Ben Witherington of Asbury Seminary.<sup>10</sup> While not answering directly to Ehrman's charges on the validity of the NT documents, Craig Evans' *Fabricating Jesus*

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Wallace, "The Gospel According to Bart: A Review Article of *Misquoting Jesus* by Bart Ehrman." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49.2 (2006): 327–350.

<sup>9</sup> Darrel Bock and Daniel Wallace, *Dethroning Jesus: Exposing Popular Culture's Quest to Unseat the Biblical Christ* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007). The book exposes a variety of popular attempts to undermine the historicity of the biblical portrait of Jesus Christ. The first chapter, taking on the allegation that "the original New Testament has been corrupted by copyists so badly that it can't be recovered" is primarily a refutation of *MJ*.

<sup>10</sup> The two reviews can be found at the following internet addresses: Craig Blomberg at <http://www.denverseminary.edu/article/misquoting-jesus-the-story-behind-who-changed-the-bible-and-why/>, and Ben Witherington at <http://benwitherington.blogspot.com/2006/03/misanalyzing-text-criticism-bart.html>.

brings also invaluable insights into the faddish interest of some NT scholars, Prof. Ehrman included, in giving the non-canonical writings an equal voice in shaping our understanding of the historical Jesus.<sup>11</sup> The layman reader is served very well also by Timothy Paul Jones' book size response in *Misquoting Truth: A Guide to the Fallacies of Bart Ehrman's 'Misquoting Jesus'*.<sup>12</sup>

I believe each one of these publications exposes the inadequacy of the arguments adduced by Prof. Ehrman, the spin with which he handles the data, the repeated offence of leaving aspects not mentioned when they go against his theory, and, ultimately, the straw man argument that he endeavored to transform into a real and substantial debate. This article will not rehearse the responses therein. Strictly speaking, most of the core facts marshaled by Prof. Ehrman are true: no original documents of the NT have been preserved; the text of the NT is the result of a critical collation of readings preserved in manuscripts; the manuscripts that survived, either complete or fragmentary, differ from one another; scribes did make changes unintentional or otherwise. However, the implications of these data are nowhere as radical or as incriminating as Prof. Ehrman makes them to be.

In what follows, the response to Prof. Ehrman comes from a novel angle that has not yet been brought into the dialogue; in fact, it is a surprising one, as the following story will underscore. I believe it can add a new dimension to the battery of counter-arguments to Prof. Ehrman's case against the reliability of the NT documents. Here is the background to the story, to put things in perspective.

### I. A STORY OF EDITORIAL MISTAKES

In the summer of 2009, I was preparing notes for a seminar on the reliability of the NT documents to be presented at an apologetics conference in Romania, my native country. Since most of the work was to be accomplished away from my desk, I made a copy of the relevant pages from Prof. Ehrman's *MJ*, whom I have chosen, for the aforementioned reasons, as the main opponent in my presentation. Working through the material I spotted an editorial mistake. At first I did not give it any thought; it was the kind of mistake that careful reviewers would undoubtedly detect and alert the editorial team so that the subsequent editions would fix it. In time, however, I realized the importance of this mistake in building a counter argument to Prof. Ehrman's position. By then, however, the copies have already been discarded, and I had to embark on the tedious process of finding again a defective copy of *MJ*. Once I was able to document the blunder again, I realized that, ironically, the editorial mistake could be used to create an argument with boomerang effect on the main thesis of Prof. Ehrman's book. That indeed is the case if the measuring stick designed by Prof.

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<sup>11</sup> Craig A. Evans, *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, *Misquoting Truth: A Guide to the Fallacies of Bart Ehrman's "Misquoting Jesus"* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007).

Ehrman to evaluate the reliability of the NT documents is applied to his own writings.

At the outset, however, it might be useful to summarize Prof. Ehrman's position on such matters. While his position surfaces frequently throughout most of his books, there are two titles in particular that set it forth in most clear and direct way.

The first, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, (henceforth *OCS*) is a scholarly work of the highest caliber, a quintessentially academic book.<sup>13</sup> It is not a study intended for the reader at large. The title and especially the subtitle divulge his thesis, namely, theological controversies—especially the Christological controversies—have altered and shaped the content of the earliest Christian documents of the emerging NT canon. According to Prof. Ehrman, in the historian's quest for the original Christianity, the NT manuscripts that survived can no longer be considered a reliable guide in reconstructing the original documents, the autographs, since they are full of theological alterations that show a bias toward a particular form of Christianity. They are the results of innumerable interferences of well intentioned scribes ever so eager to alter the text in front of them to correspond to the ideas of the emerging orthodox Christianity.

Prof. Ehrman's thesis is not new: it goes back to at least W. Bauer's epochal study,<sup>14</sup> acknowledged, augmented, and refined in *OCS*. The approach of his inquiry, however, is quite novel. Prof. Ehrman focuses on the scribal additions to, subtractions from, and alterations of the NT text. He contends that the scribal activity responsible for the preservation and transmission of the NT did more than just preserve the documents; it *orthodox*-ised them, relentlessly purging them of unorthodox ideas, and adjusting their readings to the theology of what would eventually emerge as the orthodox Christianity. The textual footprints of anti-adoptionist, anti-separationist, anti-docetic, and anti-patristic positions, the more important of early Christological debates, are traced down in the variant readings of NT key passages. According to Prof. Ehrman, these textual variants are the result of scribal activity designed to promote the orthodox view.

Given the quintessentially academic nature of the first volume, a work with such an intriguing subject matter and indeed such a provocative title could not have been kept away from the public. As a result the best-seller *MJ* was born, a layman's alternative to *OCS*. In it Prof. Ehrman, the scholar, sets aside the academic jargon, the footnotes and the scholarly pedantry, and morphs into Ehrman the entertainer. The conclusions of the second volume, while substantially similar to the ones in the former work, were formulated in ever more radical terms.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>14</sup> Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (trans. Robert Kraft, et al.; ed. Robert Kraft and Gerhard Krodel; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1971).

<sup>15</sup> See a similar conclusion in *Dethroning Jesus*, 40–41.

Here then is Prof. Ehrman's main thesis with regard to the reliability of the NT documents.<sup>16</sup> It will be stated first in its logical, sequential segments and then will be restated as the main argument developed in *MJ*. Afterwards, instead of answering it in the fashion it has been in the titles mentioned above, it will be put under the scrutiny of the same logical instrumentarium used by Prof. Ehrman in assessing the reliability of the NT documents.

The original NT documents have not been preserved. The NT we now possess is the result of a selective reading based on copies of preserved manuscripts. These copies differ significantly from one another. The differences are the result of scribal activity, some unintentional and inevitable, but others done with full knowledge and intention by scribes who wanted to protect the emerging orthodox form of Christianity. The number of divergencies is so great, compared with the number of words in the NT, that in many cases it is impossible to reconstruct the original. Since we do not know the original text, the message of the original text was likewise lost.

When the inbetween steps are glossed over, the essence of the argument can be reduced to the following: since we do not possess the NT original documents, and since the copies we do have diverge so much from each other, it is safe to conclude that we are oblivious with regard to the very words of the original text and hence we cannot know its original meaning. It is as if we would not have the NT in the first place.

If this is the position taken by Prof. Ehrman on the text of the NT, known to have an unrivaled wealth of manuscript attestation, what would happen if the same arguments would be applied to his own writings, and specifically to *MJ*? This constitutes the essence of the remainder of this article. Prof. Ehrman's syllogism will be used on his own writings, forging an argument of similarity based on the intrinsic correspondence between the two writings: the NT on the one hand, and *MJ* on the other. Obviously, there are important differences between these writings, not least their authors and the time and circumstances in which they were written. These differences will be taken into consideration at a later stage, without significantly affecting the substance of the counter-argument. Here are, in parallel alignment, a sequence of the most important aspects singled out by Prof. Ehrman against the reliability of the NT documents, applied respectively to his own writing.

### **Phase One:**

**Prof. Ehrman on the NT:** The NT that we now possess is the result of conflating readings based on the manuscripts preserved, none of them being the original manuscript.

**Radu Gheorghita on *MJ*:** The *MJ* is preserved in a variety of editions, none of them being the original manuscript.

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<sup>16</sup> Comparable summaries can be found in the aforementioned books; see also the summary in *Misquoting Jesus*, 260–261.

We will return to the issue of original manuscript at a later stage in the argument. Suffice it for now to acknowledge that *MJ* was published in several installments. The first edition was published by Harper-Collins as hardback, with a copyright of the year 2005. Due to its market success, presumably, the hardback edition was printed several times before the volume phased into the paperback edition. Indeed, the same first edition was published later as a paperback, having the same copyright mark of the year 2005. This paperback edition is the latest one that was consulted for this article.

The four copies of *Misquoting Jesus* on which the following analysis and argument will be built are:

**Copy I:** First Impression 2005 (True First Edition)

**Copy II:** An edition of the same work published in 2006 by Continuum International Publishing Group under the title *Whose Word Is It?*

**Copy III:** Tenth Impression 2006

**Copy IV:** Third Impression 2007

The focus of our discussion will be on pages 12–14 of Prof. Ehrman’s *Misquoting Jesus*.

### **Phase Two:**

**Prof. Ehrman on the NT:** The NT manuscripts that survived have many textual differences between them and differ significantly from one another.

**RG on MJ:** There are various copies/impressions of *MJ*, and the copies (impressions) differ from each other.

One of the main causes of variants in *MJ* is caused by a mistake in formatting of a sort that introduces errors at the beginning and ending of pages. In Copy I, a quotation from Matt 24:32–34 straddles the end of page 12 and beginning of page 13 (Fig. 1). Then, the end of page 13 and beginning of page 14 are straddled by the familiar quotation: “God said it, I believe it, and that settles it” (Fig. 2).

come, and Jesus replies:

*From the fig tree learn this parable. When its branch becomes tender and it puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also you, when you see all these things you know that he [the Son of Man] is*

INTRODUCTION 13

*near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away before all these things take place. (Matt. 24:32–34)*

**Fig. 2: Copy I (Bottom of 12, top of 13 [Matt 24:32–34])**

them such a view might seem completely one-sided and unnuanced (not to mention bizarre and unrelated to matters of faith). There are, however, plenty of people around who still see the Bible this way. Occasionally I see a bumper sticker that reads: “God said it, I believe it,

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and that settles it.” My response is always, What if God *didn't* say it?

- o What if the book you take as giving you God's words instead contains human words? What if the Bible doesn't give a foolproof answer to

**Fig. 3: Copy I (Bottom of 13, top of 14 [God said it...])**

But then, in Copy II, we see that the format has been changed so that the Matt 24:32–34 passage appears in its entirety at the bottom of page 12 (Fig. 3).

*From the fig tree learn this parable. When its branch becomes tender and it puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also you, when you see all these things you know that he [the Son of Man] is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away before all these things take place. (Matt. 24:32–34)*

INTRODUCTION 13

What does this parable mean? Lindsay, thinking that it is an inerrant word from God himself, unpacks its message by pointing out that in the Bible the “fig tree” is often used as an image of the nation of Israel. What would it mean for it to put forth its leaves? It would

**Fig. 4: Copy II (Bottom of 12, top of 13[Matt 24:32-34])**

So far so good. The adjustment in placing the full quotation from Matt 24 at the bottom of page 12 in Copy II caused no problems in that edition, because the surrounding material was adjusted to accommodate the change as well. What happened next however resulted in a problem. Somewhere, somehow, someone, created Copy III by combining the page 12 of Copy I with page 13 of Copy II. The result is a hybrid in which the Matthew 24:32–34 quotation is cropped off right near the end of verse 33, with the rest of the passage not appearing at all (Fig. 4).

parable of the fig tree as an indication of when we could expect the future Armageddon. Jesus's disciples want to know when the "end" will come, and Jesus replies:

*From the fig tree learn this parable. When its branch becomes tender and it puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also you, when you see all these things you know that he [the Son of Man] is*

INTRODUCTION 13

What does this parable mean? Lindsay, thinking that it is an inerrant word from God himself, unpacks its message by pointing out that in the Bible the "fig tree" is often used as an image of the nation of Israel. What would it mean for it to put forth its leaves? It would

**Fig. 5: Copy III (Bottom of 12, top of 13 [quote cropped off]).**

### Phase Three:

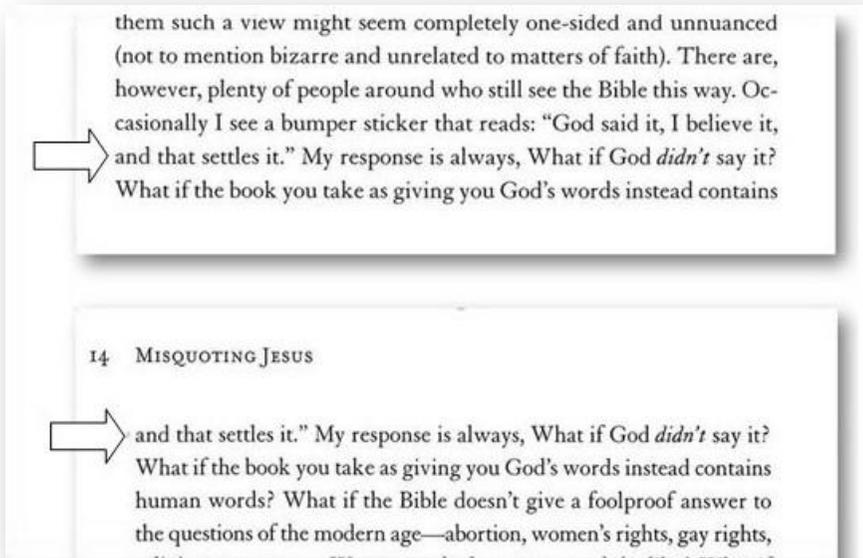
**Prof. Ehrman on the NT:** If there is one divergence between the NT manuscripts, then there could be more than one. To put it in perspective, there are three times more divergences between manuscripts than there are words in the NT.<sup>17</sup>

**RG on MJ:** If there is one divergence between two printed editions of MJ, then there could be more than one. To put it in perspective, quantitatively their number is not as high as in the case of the NT manuscripts but there are several, none the less.

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<sup>17</sup> *Misquoting Jesus*, 90: "There are more variations among our manuscripts than there are words in the New Testament," will be remembered for a long time as a formidable Ehrmanism.

As one would expect, the divergence at the top of page 13 signaled above might not be the only one. Indeed, it is not; there are several others, the most obvious being the one at the bottom of page 13. Since Copy III formats pages 12 and 14 identically to what Copy I had, reading the top of page 14 in Copy III gave me the sense of a *déjà vu* and alerted me first to another editorial mistake. Now words “and that settles it” from the phrase “God said it, I believe it, and that settles it,” appear twice! (Fig. 5).



**Fig. 6: Copy III (Bottom of 13, top of 14 [“that settles it”])**

Happily someone noticed the editorial blunder so that we find it has been corrected in Copy IV so that now it is just the way it first appeared in Copy I. We may find it surprising, but in the same three pages we have been discussing a number of other interesting blunders occurred as well. On page 13 of Copy I, for example, the famous *Left Behind* Series is credited to Timothy LeHaye and Philip Jenkins. Problem is, Prof. Ehrman has misspelled the name of the first author of that series—it’s *Lahaye*, not *LeHaye*—and confused the second author with someone else. Philip Jenkins, who is the Edwin Earle Sparks Professor of the Humanities in history and religious studies at Penn State University as well as Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University, has written many interesting books, none of which, however, were part of the *Left Behind* series. LaHaye’s co-author’s name was Jerry Jenkins,

not Philip Jenkins. Happily, this error got fixed by the time our Copy II appeared (Fig 6).<sup>18</sup>

we know it to a close. Witness the current craze for the Timothy LaHaye and Philip Jenkins series *Left Behind*, another apocalyptic vi-

we know it to a close. Witness the current craze for the Timothy LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins series *Left Behind*, another apocalyptic vi-

**Fig. 7: Page 13 (Copy I [above], Copy II [below])**

A similar situation exists in relation to the spelling of prophecy teacher Hal Lindsey's name. In Copies I-III, Hal's last name is consistently misspelled as *Lindsay* instead of *Lindsey*. By the time Copy IV appeared the mistake was caught and corrected (Fig. 7).

was Hal Lindsay's apocalyptic blueprint for our future, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Lindsay's book was popular not only at Moody; it was, in

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**Fig. 8 Copy I (above) Copy IV (below)**

#### Phase Four:

**Prof. Ehrman on the NT:** The divergences between various NT manuscripts are the result of scribal activity. While some of them are inevitable

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<sup>18</sup> In terms of the ongoing misspellings relating to Tim LaHaye's name, on page 110 of Copy I, we read how "the Hal Lindsays...and Tim LaHays...have had their prediccisors...". Both names are misspelled. *Lindsays* was later corrected to *Lindseys* and an attempt to correct *LaHays* was made by changing it to read *Lahaye*, which is correct enough on its own, but in the context it must read instead as a plural *LaHayes*. The latter misspelling was found in the most recent copies of *MJ* available at the 2011 San Francisco meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) and American Association of Religion (AAR). When the person minding the bookstall was asked whether corrections discovered would be passed on to authors or editors, the answer came back: "Probably not, unless they are *really* serious."

and unintentional, some changes were made intentionally and reflect the theological biases of the scribes.

**RG on MJ:** The divergence between the various printed editions of *MJ* are the result of editorial activity. While some of them are inevitable and unintentional, some changes *could have been made* intentionally to reflect the theological biases of the editors.

The formatting mistake relating to pages 12–13 in Copy III can be reasonably labeled as unintentional. However, this would be the case only if the readers assessing the mistake are willing to extend a level of common sense in processing the data, which is exactly the kind of courtesy Prof. Ehrman is unwilling to grant to the majority of mistakes made by the NT copyists. According to most tallies, that volume amounts to roughly 95% to 98% of all the scribal mistakes or differences between the manuscripts.

In the absence of such courtesy, one can easily fabricate various hypothetical scenarios in an attempt to prove that the changes to *MJ* were intentional. Here are several possibilities. Perhaps an editor, reading the last part of the quotation that did not make it on the top of p. 13, “[T]ruly I tell you, this generation will not pass away before all these things take place,” wanted to avoid any embarrassment by including a quotation from Jesus that, to his knowledge, was not fulfilled as predicted. He simply cropped the last part out of the text. Alternatively, the end of quotation and, primarily, the NT reference (Matt 24:32–34) were not included because the editor knew that Prof. Ehrman does not consider the NT to be a historically reliable source. As editor, he read the manuscript carefully, and saw no reason to include an explicit quotation from the NT, which would make the book’s argument vulnerable to the same accusations leveled by the author against the NT.

#### Phase Five:

**Prof. Ehrman on the NT:** Due to the differences between various manuscripts, we do not know the original wording of the NT and hence we cannot be sure of its message.

**RG on MJ:** Due to the differences between the various editions of *MJ*, we do not know *with full certainty* the original wording of *MJ*, and we cannot be sure of its message.

Several reviewers of Prof. Ehrman’s work have signaled the inadmissible jump he made from the indeterminate meaning of a single verse—due to insurmountable text critical issues—to the indeterminate meaning of the whole passage, and implicitly of the entire NT. If that is an extrapolation allowed in the case of the NT, then it ought to be viable for the *MJ* as well. This will simply be the logical conclusion when one applies Prof. Ehrman’s argument on the unreliability of the NT documents to his own work. When measured with the same yard-stick the same arguments used by Prof. Ehrman to dismiss the reliability of

the NT documents and its message would necessarily dismiss the reliability of Prof. Ehrman's message in *MJ*.

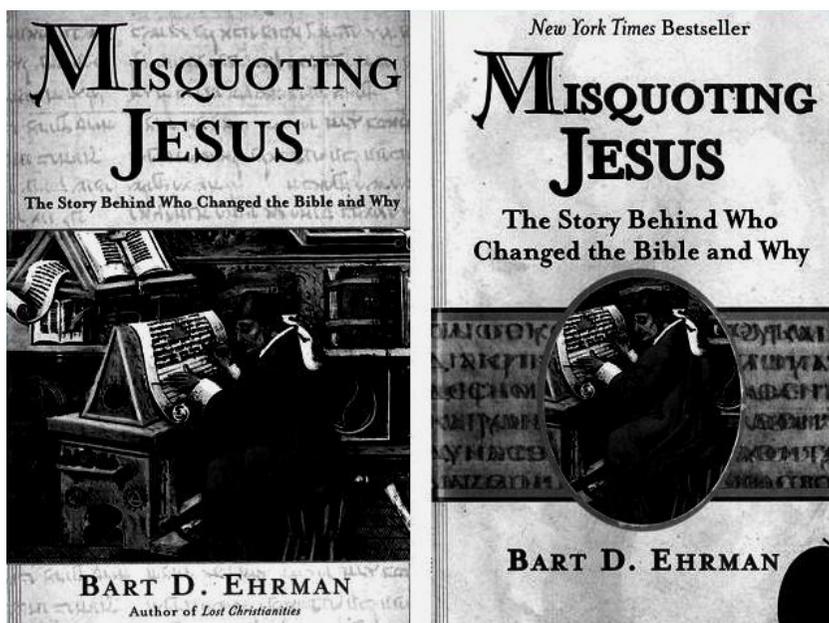
The readers of this article will undoubtedly realize that the above parallels between Prof. Ehrman's perspective on the NT documents and his own writings cannot be exploited too rigidly. There are indeed at least two important impediments before these similarities are endorsed.

First, it was evident throughout each phase that there is an enormous quantitative difference between the divergences found in the NT documents and the ones found between various editions of the *MJ*. There are only a couple or so in *MJ* whereas the NT has, according to Prof. Ehrman's estimate, 400,000 instances, roughly three times the number of words in the NT. Fair enough. Yet, when the quantitative aspects are pondered, consideration must be given also to the fact that *MJ* was written and published in the age of computers and digital processing, a time when an author is helped by an army of professional editors and proofreaders, all ensuring that the book goes from manuscript to publication without any mistakes. In this context one would expect to find only very few mistakes. The fact that even in this age of computerization mistakes still happen, only makes it reasonable to expect a considerably higher number of mistakes in the NT documents transmitted manually over centuries. As high as the number 400,000 appears to be, it is actually quite reasonable when one takes in consideration the time when they were produced, the kind of activity they reflect, and, foremost, how insignificant and inconsequential to the meaning of the text the greatest majority of them are.

Second, there is an even greater difference between the NT documents and *MJ* than just the quantitative dimension, as alluded to earlier. Of course, the reader might reject the above argument of similarity on grounds that the two writings are substantially dissimilar in several essential aspects. Unlike the NT, the author of the *MJ* is still alive and the original manuscript is, most likely, retrievable from his computer. Thus, any reader of *MJ* could theoretically get in touch with Prof. Ehrman and sort out the mistakes that eluded the editors, an endeavor impossible in the case of the NT documents. Fair enough, again. But what would happen if we would fast-forward to a time when both the author and the autograph of *MJ* would no longer be available? Would these not be two completely congruent situations? In 500 years, in the absence of the author and of *MJ*'s autograph, an anti-Ehrmanian would be able to make a case against *MJ* following the same logic as the one used today by Prof. Ehrman to dismiss the reliability of the NT documents. If the NT documents could be discarded on the basis of the differences between various copies, how could *MJ* withstand the test of time when it is vulnerable to the same accusations as the one it raises against the NT documents? To prove that the situations are actually quite similar, one only needs to reverse the clock and go back to NT times. If a time traveler would want to clarify any divergences between the NT manuscripts, he would only need to find the author and the writing's autograph, both available at that time.

## II. IN PLACE OF A CONCLUSION

There could be no better way to conclude than to highlight another blunder made by the editors of *MJ*. I owe this observation to my colleague, Dr. Ron Huggins, who first pointed it out to me. I was unaware of the mistake since throughout the earliest stages of this investigation I had access only to the paperback edition of *MJ*. Dr. Huggins, however, was in possession of the hardback edition, and he observed that the Hebrew text on the cover was printed upside down. Here are the front covers of the two volumes:



Dr. Huggins wanted to hear Prof. Ehrman's take on this *faux pas* and inquired in an email whether the upside down printing of the Hebrew text on the cover was intentional or merely a printing lapse. Prof. Ehrman's answer came back promptly: "it's a blunder: but a terrific one, given the topic of the book!"<sup>19</sup> A terrific one! While this incident might indeed amuse Prof. Ehrman, it seems to be the most revealing reason why the adage "Physician, heal thyself!" would apply so fittingly to this case. In other words, blunders and mistakes can happen in his books, without altering their message, but when they emerge in the NT documents, they significantly affect the ability to recover its original meaning. A more obvious case of double standards could hardly be found.

This study focused on the editorial blunders in *MJ* and concluded that, as far as the physical evidence is concerned, parallels can be drawn between the NT manuscripts and the differences between them, on the one hand, and the

<sup>19</sup> Ehrman to Huggins (Nov 3, 2006).

various editions of *MJ* and their dissimilarities, on the other. While quantitatively there is an indisputable disparity in volume, qualitatively they are strikingly similar. As far as *MJ* is concerned, two editions have been identified and compared: the correct one and the defective one. Yet the divergence between them is not the only aspect that makes *MJ* comparable with NT manuscripts: there are also other minor imperfections in the book, both authorial and editorial. Here are some of them. The transliteration of the Greek text is inconsistent: sometimes the author opts for the corresponding Latin characters, but other times he makes use of the Latin characters that physically resembles the shapes of the Greek letters, but are not their rightful equivalents.<sup>20</sup> Mistakes crept in also in the Latin phrases employed, such as the typographical error in spelling *scriptuo continua* instead of the correct form *scriptio continua*.<sup>21</sup> Beside these inaccuracies, there is the blunder with the Hebrew text on the front jacket.

What would the implications of all these editorial inadvertences be? How severe should the readers lambaste the author or the editor for them? Should the readers conclude on this basis that Prof. Ehrman's command of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew is inadequate, contrary to his own claim?<sup>22</sup> Of course, not! But, if the readers were as unforgiving and averse in their assessment of *MJ* as Prof. Ehrman himself is in assessing the same phenomena in the NT documents, then these would be not only the legitimate conclusions but also the sole conclusions. Furthermore, just as Prof. Ehrman exaggerates the nature and the implications of the variations among the NT manuscripts, one can magnify the importance of the variations between various editions of Prof. Ehrman's book. The reader may conclude that *MJ* is a book full of mistakes; it has been published in many editions but there are enormous differences between them.

It becomes clear that, given the imperfections of the printed editions of *MJ*, every single argument used by Prof. Ehrman against the reliability of the NT can be turned around against his own writings. To assert that it is impossible to reconstruct with any certainty the original wording of the NT, and more importantly, that the original meaning of the NT has been lost because of imperfectly transmitted manuscripts has no scientific or historical justification; only an ideological one.

Silencing the voice of the NT on the basis of allegedly dubious manuscript support comes with a high price. If the author of *MJ* disallows the possibility of reconstructing the text and the message of NT from divergent manuscripts, then the NT is not the only writing affected; his books will be as well. Because of divergent NT manuscripts Prof. Ehrman does not grant the possibility of reconstructing the original text of the NT and recapturing its original meaning; by the same logic, the mistakes found in *MJ* would obliterate the main message of *MJ*, without the slightest chance of regaining it. It is as if *MJ* had not been written at all.

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<sup>20</sup> *Misquoting Jesus*, 90–91.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

## Theme Classic: “The Inerrancy of the Original Autographs” (1893)<sup>1</sup>



BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD  
Professor of Theology  
Princeton Theological Seminary

OUR Lord and his Apostles looked upon the entire truthfulness and utter trustworthiness of that body of writings which they called “Scripture,” as so fully guaranteed by the inspiration of God, that they could appeal to them confidently in all their statements of whatever kind as absolutely true; adduce their deliverances on whatever subject with a simple “It is written,” as the end of all strife; and treat them generally in a manner which clearly exhibits that in their view “Scripture says” was equivalent to “God says.”

Following this example and teaching, the Westminster Confession of Faith calls “all the books of the Old and New Testament,” in their entirety, “Holy Scripture or the Word of God written” (I, 2), “all which,” it affirms, “are given by inspiration of God,” who is “the author thereof,” being himself “truth itself” (I, 4). Accordingly, it declares all these “books of the Old and New Testament,” in their entirety, to be “of infallible truth and divine authority” (I, 5), and asserts that “a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein” (XIV, 2). For the further clearing of difficulties, the Confession distinguishes between translations of Scripture and the originals, and with reference to the originals between the transmitted and the original text (I, 8). Of translations, it declares that they competently transmit the Word of God for all practical purposes. Of the transmitted text, it affirms that it has been providentially kept so pure as to retain full authoritativeness in all controversies of religion. Of the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Independent* 45.2312 (March 23, 1893): 2-3. Original style and spelling retained.

original text, it asserts that it was “immediately inspired of God”— a technical term in common theological use at the time, by which the idea of divine authorship, in the highest sense of the word, is conveyed. To this original text alone, therefore, it is to be understood, are attributed, in their fullest sense, the various “qualities” of Scripture which are ascribed to it in the Confession, on the ground of its being the Word of God— such as divine authority, perfection, perspicuity, entire trustworthiness, and the like.

Efforts are at present being made to undermine the historical truthfulness of the scriptural history, in the interests of a school of criticism whose view of the historical development of religious usages and doctrines in Israel is not accordant with that of the biblical writers. The Presbyterian Church has thus been forced, under the constitutional provision of its Form of Government (XII, 5), to remind the churches of its communion of their confessional doctrine of Scripture, which is being attacked and endangered by this advocacy of a historically untrustworthy Bible. In the course of the controversy which has arisen, the phrase which has been placed at the head of this article has somehow been forced to the front, and a strong effort is being made to make it appear the sole “bone of contention.” This is not at all the case. The present controversy concerns something much more vital than the bare “inerrancy” of the Scriptures, whether in the copies or in the “autographs.” It concerns the trustworthiness of the Bible in its express declarations, and in the fundamental conceptions of its writers as to the course of the history of God’s dealings with his people. It concerns, in a word, the authority of the biblical representations concerning the nature of revealed religion, and the mode and course of its revelation. The issue raised is whether we are to look upon the Bible as containing a divinely guaranteed and wholly trustworthy account of God’s redemptive revelation, and the course of his gracious dealings with his people; or as merely a mass of more or less trustworthy materials, out of which we are to sift the facts in order to put together a trustworthy account of God’s redemptive revelation and the course of his dealings with his people. It is of the greatest importance that the Presbyterian Church should not permit its attention to be distracted from this serious issue.

Nevertheless, altho the phrase “the inerrancy of the original autographs” is not an altogether happy one to express the doctrine of the Scriptures and of the Westminster Confession as to the entire truthfulness of the Scriptures as given by God, yet it is intended to express this doctrine, and does, in its own way, sharply affirm it; and the strenuous opposition to it which has arisen, has its roots in doubt or denial of this scriptural and confessional doctrine. It is important here too, therefore, that

the true issue should not be permitted to be confused by the skillful manipulation of a mere phrase. It has therefore seemed proper to call attention to some of the curiosities of the recent controversial use of this phrase with a view to keeping the real issue clear.

It is certainly a curiosity of the controversial use of a phrase, to see the Church's *limitation* of her affirmation of the absolute truth and trustworthiness of the Scriptures in all their declarations, to those Scriptures "as they came from God," represented as an additional strain upon faith. Would these controversialists have the Church affirm the absolute truth of scribes' slips and printers' errors? If we were to take some of them "at the foot of the letter," they would seem to represent it as easier to believe in the infallibility of compositors and proof readers than in the infallibility of God. Everybody knows that no book ever was printed, much less hand-copied, into which some errors did not intrude in the process; and as we do not hold the author responsible for these in an ordinary book, neither ought we to hold God responsible for them in this extraordinary book which we call the Bible. It is *the Bible* that we declare to be "of infallible truth"—the Bible that God gave us, not the corruptions and slips which scribes and printers have given us, some of which are in every copy. Yet a recent writer, with a great show of solemnity, calls upon the Presbyterian Church for "a frank and full disavowal," "of any intention to make the Inerrancy of the Original Autographs (as distinguished from *the Bible as it is*) a test of orthodoxy." But what is it that distinguishes "the Bible as it is" from the Original Autographs? Just scribes' corruptions and printers' errors; nothing else. And so this controversialist would have the Church "frankly and fully" disavow attaching more inerrancy to the Word of God, given by inspiration to men, than to the errors and corruptions of careless or bungling scribes and printers! Taken literally, this demand would amount to a strong asseveration of the utter untrustworthiness of the Bible.

It is another curiosity of the controversial use of a phrase, to find the Church's careful definition of the complete truth and trustworthiness of the Scriptures as belonging, as a matter of course, only to the genuine text [p. 3]<sup>2</sup> of Scripture, represented as an appeal from the actually existing texts of Scripture to a lost autograph—as if it were the autographic *codex* and not the autographic *text* that is in question. Thus, we have heard a vast deal, of late, of "the first manuscripts of the Bible which no living man has ever seen," of "Scriptures that have disappeared forever," of "original autographs which have vanished"; concerning the contents of which these controversialists are willing to declare, with the emphasis of italics, that they know nothing, that no man knows anything, and that they are perfectly contented with their ignorance. Now, again, if this

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<sup>2</sup> Page number in the original article.

were to be taken literally, it would amount to a strong asseveration that the Bible, as God gave it to men, is lost beyond recovery; and that men are shut up, therefore, to the use of Bibles so hopelessly corrupted that it is impossible now to say what was in the original autographs and what not! In proportion as we draw back from this contention—which is fortunately as absurd as it is extreme—in that proportion do we affirm that we have the autographic text; that not only we but all men may see it if they will; and that God has not permitted the Bible to become so hopelessly corrupt that its restoration to its original text is impossible. As a matter of fact, the great body of the Bible is, in its autographic text, in the worst copies of the original texts in circulation; practically the whole of it is in its autographic text in the best texts in circulation; and he who will may to-day read the autographic text in large stretches of Scripture without legitimate doubt, and, in the New Testament at least, may know precisely at what rarely occurring points, and to what not very great extent, doubts as to the genuineness of the text are still possible. If our controversial brethren could only disabuse their minds of the phantom of an autographic *codex*, which their excitement has raised (and which, apart from their excited vision “no living man has ever seen”), they might possibly see with the Church that genuine text of Scripture which is “by the singular care and providence of God” still preserved to us, and might agree with the Church that it is to it alone that authority and trustworthiness and utter truthfulness are to be ascribed.

Another curiosity of controversy is found in the representation that the Church, in affirming the entire truthfulness and trustworthiness of the genuine text of Scripture, asserts that this text is wholly free from all those difficulties and apparent discrepancies which we find in “the Scriptures as we have them.” Of course the Church has never made such an assertion. That some of the difficulties and apparent discrepancies in current texts, disappear on the restoration of the true text of Scripture is undoubtedly true. That all the difficulties and apparent discrepancies in current texts of Scripture are matters of textual corruption, and not, rather, often of historical or other ignorance on our own part, no sane man ever asserted. We must not, indeed, confuse *real* discrepancies and *apparent* discrepancies, quoting Dr. Charles Hodge’s confession (Syst. Theol., I, 170), of his inability “to account for” some of the difficulties of the Bible, to justify our implication that they may very easily be accounted for—viz., as natural human errors in the genuine text of Scripture. The Church does indeed affirm that the genuine text of Scripture is free from real discrepancies and errors; but she does not assert that the genuine text of Scripture is free from those apparent discrepancies and other difficulties, on the ground of which, imperfectly investigated, the errancy of the

Bible is usually affirmed. The Church recognizes her duty to preserve the text of "the Scriptures of truth" committed to her keeping pure, and to transmit it pure to future generations; it is only that text that she trusts, and only on it will she hang the credit of her teachings. But she does not expect to be freed from the duty of studying this text, or from the duty of defending it against the assaults of unbelief. It would be a miraculously perfect text indeed with which imperfectly informed men could not find fault.

Still another curiosity of the present controversy is found in the constant asseveration which we hear about us, that the distinction drawn by the Presbyterian Church between the genuine text of Scripture and the current and more or less corrupt texts in general circulation, is something new. This is a rather serious arraignment of the common sense of the whole series of preceding generations. What! Are we to believe that no man until our wonderful nineteenth century, ever had acumen enough to detect a printer's error or to realize the liability of hand-copied manuscripts to occasional corruption? Are we really to believe that the happy possessors of "the Wicked Bible" held "Thou shalt commit adultery" to be as divinely "inerrant" as the genuine text of the Seventh Commandment—on the ground that the "inerrancy of the original autographs of the Holy Scriptures" must not be asserted "as distinguished from the Holy Scriptures which we now possess"? Or, that those who read in their copies at 1 Cor. 15:51 (as the possessors of one edition did), "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be hanged," would violently defend "the Bible as it is" against the claims of the genuine text? Of course, every man of common sense from the beginning of the world, has recognized the difference between the genuine text and the errors of transmission, and has attached his confidence to the former in rejection of the latter.

Richard Baxter was speaking no more for himself than for his whole age, and all the ages before him, when he defended the present position of the Presbyterian Church with such direct statements as these: "All that the holy writers have recorded is true (and no falsehood in the Scriptures but what is from the error of scribes and translators)"; "No error or contradiction is in it, but what is in some copies, by the failure of preservers, transcribers, printers and translators"; and many more passages of the same purport. In exactly similar manner Calvin and Luther repeatedly assign special difficulties to the corrupt form of transmitted Scripture as distinguished from the genuine text—no doubt sometimes without sufficient warrant; but that is so far from being the question that it is an additional evidence of their full recognition of the distinction in discussion. The fathers, because they were dependent on manuscript (as distinct from printed) texts, in which corruption was unavoidably greater, were even more free in assuming that difficulties which they could not explain

were due to corruption of text, rather than to lack of insight, on their part, and much more rather than to aboriginal error in Scripture. Augustine's statement fairly represents the judgment of the patristic age:

"I have learned to defer this respect and honor to the canonical books of Scripture alone, that I most firmly believe that no one of their authors has committed any error in writing. And if in their writings I am perplexed by anything which seems to me contrary to truth, I do not doubt that it is nothing else than either that the manuscript is corrupt, or that the translator has not followed what was said, or that I have myself failed to understand it."

From these facts alone, it is already apparent how seriously erroneous it is to say, as has been recently said, that the Westminster divines never "thought of the original manuscripts of the Bible as distinct from the copies in their possession." They could not help thinking of them. I fancy I see John Lightfoot's face, on some one making that remark to *him*, just after he had risen from the composition—say of his "Harmony, Chronicle and Order of the New Testament." And I should vastly like to read his account of the remark and of his answer to it, as he might write it to one of his friends—say to "the great Mr. Selden, the learnedest man upon the earth," or to "the all-learned Mr. Wheelocke, to whom nothing is too difficult or unattainable," or to "the admirable Dr. Usher, the magazine of all manner of literature and knowledge"—who was just then helping Walton in the preparation of his great polyglott. I should like to see how such a remark would affect Samuel Rutherford, while the ink was still wet on the pages of his controversy with John Goodwin on the very point of the relation of the inspired autographs to the uninspired but providentially cared-for transmission. Why, this was the burning question as to the Scriptures in the Westminster age. Nobody in that circle doubted the plenary inspiration and absolute errorlessness of the genuine text; the question in discussion was in what sense and to what extent could there be posited a divine superintendence of the transmission, and how far could the current copies and translations be depended on as vehicles of the Word of God. The Westminster men took high ground in the controversy; and their writings are full of the echoes of it.

It is, therefore, thoroughly misleading to represent the distinction made in the Westminster Confession between the "*immediate inspiration*" of the original text of Scripture and the "*providential supervision* of the transmission as either accidental or meaningless. The historical doubt really is not whether it may not mean less than is now attributed to it, but whether it must not mean more. And the declaration of the Presbyterian Church that her Standards teach that "the inspired Word as it came from God is without error," is a simple affirmation of the obvious meaning of

those Standards, and certainly is accordant with the teachings of the Bible and within the limits of common sense.

Princeton, N. J.

## Paradigm Shifts: The Philosophical Hermeneutics of Friedrich Schleiermacher



WILLIAM R. OSBORNE\*

*Ph. D. Candidate (Old Testament)*

*Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary*

*Kansas City, MO 64118*

*rosborne@mbts.edu*

Hailed the “father of modern hermeneutics,”<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher’s influence on the school of biblical hermeneutics cannot be overestimated. Schleiermacher lived his life as a devotee of the Lutheran Church, serving as Reformed preacher at Trinity Church in Berlin for 25 years.<sup>2</sup> Amidst his career of prolific philosophical and ethical writing, he never deserted his passion to interpret and preach the Bible. Studying Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics, according to Karl Barth, is to “have the chance to get know Schleiermacher at his best and most brilliant, in his natural strength, on his home ground, for, to use his own expression, he was a virtuoso in the field whose method hermeneutics describes.”<sup>3</sup> The result of Schleiermacher’s study was nothing less than a paradigm shift for the field of hermeneutics.

This paper seeks to understand Schleiermacher “at his best,” while recognizing that significant shortcomings remain. To do so, the work will examine and explain: (1) the historical context that shaped Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics, (2) the philosophical system that undergirded his hermeneutics, (3) Schleiermacher’s hermeneutical method, and (4) his

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<sup>1</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, rev. and enl. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 468.

<sup>2</sup> Berend Oberdorfer, “Schleiermacher, Friedrich Daniel Ernst,” in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (ed. Erwin Fahlbusch *et al.*; trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; 5 vols.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 4:852.

<sup>3</sup> Karl Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher: Lectures at Göttingen, Winter Semester of 1923/24* (ed. Dietrich Ritschl; trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 178.

legacy. The study will conclude by briefly examining Schleiermacher's place within evangelical biblical interpretation.

## I. SCHLEIERMACHER'S CONTEXT

Born on November 21, 1768 in Breslau, Prussia, Schleiermacher entered into a long family history of Reformed pastors.<sup>4</sup> He was educated by the Moravian Brethren (lit. *Herrnhuter*) and, at the age of fourteen, experienced a dramatic conversion experience.<sup>5</sup> The penetrating influences of the Brethren are seen in a letter Schleiermacher wrote 20 years later while visiting his former place of education. He writes: "Here it was that for the first time I awoke to the consciousness of the relations of man to a higher world... Here it was that that mystic tendency developed itself, which has been of so much importance to me, and has supported and carried me through all the storms of skepticism."<sup>6</sup> During his two years studying at Niesky, Schleiermacher embraced the Pietism and experientialism that characterized the Moravian Brethren. These notions reverberate through Schleiermacher's *On Religion*: "[T]he true nature of religion is... immediate consciousness of the Deity as He is found in ourselves and in the world."<sup>7</sup>

In 1785 Schleiermacher traveled to Barby and enrolled in the theological academy of the Moravian Brethren. It was here that Schleiermacher's burning Pietism crashed into biblical criticism and Enlightenment theology.<sup>8</sup> The humanistic tendencies of the Enlightenment directly confronted Pietism's devotion to Jesus, namely his divinity and atoning sacrifice. Doubt descended, and Schleiermacher's Pietism fell on the hard concrete of enlightenment interpretations. He writes to his father in 1787: "I cannot believe that He, that called Himself the Son of Man, was the true, eternal God: I cannot believe that his death was a vicarious atonement."<sup>9</sup> This response served as the foundation to Schleiermacher's "understanding of Christianity centering not on atonement but on incarnation: Christ as mediator."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought* (trans. John Wall-hausser; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1973), 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Friedrich Daniel E. Schleiermacher, *The Life of Schleiermacher as Unfolded in His Autobiography and Letters* (trans. Frederica Rowan; London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1860), 1:284.

<sup>7</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (trans. John Oman (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 101.

<sup>8</sup> Redeker, *Life and Thought*, 12.

<sup>9</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Life of Schleiermacher*, 1:46.

<sup>10</sup> Walter E. Wyman Jr., "Schleiermacher's Theology," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 4:856.

That same year, no longer finding support among the Brethren, Schleiermacher began studying at Halle University. There he was introduced to the biblical criticism of Johann Semler and devoted himself to the study of Greek philosophy and Emmanuel Kant under the tutelage of Johann Eberhard.<sup>11</sup> Schleiermacher was enamored with Kantian philosophy, and was thereby reluctant to succumb to the pressure of his father and uncle to take his first theology examination in 1790.<sup>12</sup> During the next few years Schleiermacher began publishing sermons. Martin Redeker comments that:

Although the dogmatic content and the form of speech still remained grounded in the Enlightenment and although Schleiermacher was seeking to follow the model of the Enlightenment preacher...the sermons nonetheless contain a deeper tone which suggests that the author was inwardly at the point of going beyond the Enlightenment.<sup>13</sup>

Schleiermacher finished his second theology examination, and in 1796 began preaching at a hospital in Berlin called the Charité.<sup>14</sup>

While in Berlin, Schleiermacher associated with young Romantic poets and authors, and he authored two monumental volumes around the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century—*Speeches on Religion to Its Cultured Despisers* and the *Soliloquies*.<sup>15</sup> Bernd Oberdorfer states that these works “reflected his earlier influences (Moravian Brethren, Eberhard, Kant, Spinoza, Jacobi) and interests (religion, sociality, individuality), fusing all these areas into a dense, multifaceted combination of religion and modernity.”<sup>16</sup> The extent to which German Romanticism influenced these early works has been debated,<sup>17</sup> but there is no doubt “he believed in the creative power of human feeling and in the importance of lived experience, in contrast to the more cerebral rationalism of the Enlightenment.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> J. Arundel Chapman, *An Introduction to Schleiermacher* (London: Epworth, 1932), 21.

<sup>12</sup> Redeker, *Life and Thought*, 18.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>14</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Life of Schleiermacher*, 133.

<sup>15</sup> Redeker, *Life and Thought*, 33.

<sup>16</sup> Oberdorfer, “Schleiermacher, Friedrich Daniel Ernst,” 4:851.

<sup>17</sup> See Jack Forstman, *A Romantic Triangle: Schleiermacher and Early German Romanticism* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1977); cf. Redeker, *Life and Thought*, 61.

<sup>18</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 210.

Schleiermacher's skepticism and tension captured the *Zeitgeist* ("spirit of the times") and produced both immediate recognition and reservation within the Lutheran Church. In 1804 he left to lecture as professor of theology at Halle, but returned to Berlin in 1807 and stepped into the pulpit at Trinity Church.<sup>19</sup>

Schleiermacher spent the rest of his life preaching regularly and lecturing at the Berlin University. His lectures at the University covered a broad range of topics, including: ethics, politics, history of philosophy, hermeneutics, theology, pedagogy, and aesthetics. Many of these lectures grew into published works like *Kurze Darstellung des theologischen Studiums* (1811; Eng. *Brief Outline on the Study of Theology*), and *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhang dargestellt* (1831, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed; Eng. *The Christian Faith*). Like any great thinker, Schleiermacher progressed and developed new ideas during his career, but throughout his work (especially in hermeneutics), Schleiermacher's North Star was his desire to navigate a transcendental path between the two poles of Pietism and Enlightenment criticism.

## II. SCHLEIERMACHER'S PHILOSOPHY

Schleiermacher does not embrace any one particular philosophical system, but draws from others when necessary. Perhaps this is why Richard Brandt is quick to deny "that Schleiermacher was a first-rate philosopher."<sup>20</sup> However, three philosophical influences dominate Schleiermacher's thinking: Immanuel Kant, Romanticism, and Baruch Spinoza.

To understand Schleiermacher, one must encounter Kant. Immanuel Kant shook the foundations of the European academy with his opus *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1788; Eng. *The Critique of Pure Reason*). In this work, Kant called into question the assumptions of *a priori* truths and humanity's ability to objectively know a "thing in itself" (*Ding an sich*) outside oneself.<sup>21</sup> Kant argued that a gap existed between what is knowable or perceivable (i.e. *phenomena*) and the "thing in itself," which he referred to as *noumena*. We can only know that which comes to us in the form of *phenomena*. Schleiermacher states:

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<sup>19</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 148.

<sup>20</sup> Richard B. Brandt, *The Philosophy of Schleiermacher: The Development of His Theory of Scientific and Religious Knowledge* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941), 201.

<sup>21</sup> Jean Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics* (trans. Joel Weinsheimer; New Haven, CT: Yale, 1994), 64.

A thing is something that can affect the sense organs and can subsist through a manifold of sense impressions... In every thought some object outside thought is assumed. To think means not only that there is determinate thought, but that there is a relation of it to something assumed to be outside it.<sup>22</sup>

While acknowledging Kant's distinction, Schleiermacher did not, however, dispel all sense of correspondence between thought and being. He writes:

Finally, some will argue that there cannot be any relation of thought to being, for the two are absolutely separated. But in self-consciousness we experience the reciprocal change of each through the other in reflection and volition, and no one can really believe that the two move along without any connection.<sup>23</sup>

Schleiermacher's example of self-awareness as proof of the connection between thought and being is not coincidental. If a chasm exists between the thoughts of a reader and the phenomena of a text, where might one find correspondence between the two? The *verstand* ("understanding" or Kant's "thoughts of judgement") of the individual. Thus, he is sometimes charged with reducing theology to anthropology.<sup>24</sup> Jean Grondin astutely captures this development:

In the distinction between phenomena and things in themselves lies one of the secret roots of Romanticism and the emergence of hermeneutics. If every approach to the world (or, say, to a text) involves a subjective interpretation or viewpoint, a philosophical investigation trying to be fundamental must begin with the interpreting subject.<sup>25</sup>

It is here, in the subjective viewpoint of the individual, that the influences of Romanticism emerge. Schleiermacher "shares with the spirit of

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<sup>22</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Schleiermacher's Dialektik: Unterstützung der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (ed. I. Haipern; Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1903), 491, translated and quoted in Brandt, *Philosophy of Schleiermacher*, 202.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>24</sup> J. B. Webster, "Schleiermacher, Friedrich Daniel Ernst," in *New Theological Dictionary of Theology* (ed. S. B. Ferguson, D. F. Wright, and J. I. Packer; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 620.

<sup>25</sup> Grondin, *Introduction*, 64.

Romanticism a distrust of how much can be achieved by rational argument and reflection alone,<sup>26</sup> but he does not fully commit to the wholesale-transcendentalism popularized by the Romantic writers like Friedrich Schelling. Understanding is possible, but never complete. Schleiermacher believed that understanding required both sensory experience and deductive categories—a higher-level synthesis of the parts to the whole. Therefore, understanding could not be obtained solely in the common-sense realm of scientific knowledge and individual particulars. However, neither could it be separated from empirical data and reason. The result for Schleiermacher was a dialogic exchange between the individual and the perceived outside world.

Baruch Spinoza, a Jewish philosopher in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, greatly influenced Schleiermacher's concept of the universal and the individual. Spinoza proposed a monistic, pantheistic metaphysical system that is perhaps suggested in Schleiermacher's theology of a fully immanent deity. Brandt writes, "The central conception of Schleiermacher's whole system is his idea of the 'universe,'"<sup>27</sup> and he followed Spinoza's idea of the universe as an infinite system, or Infinite Being. The fundamental metaphysical and psychological reality is the tension between the finite and the Infinite (infinite being capitalizes to represent some ethereal concept of deity). Consequently, Schleiermacher denied the existence of noumenal individuality. "The upshot of his discussion is that there can be no inference from phenomenal individuality to noumenal individual substance."<sup>28</sup> This notion corresponds with what we have seen so far. The individual stands in the gap between the phenomenal world constrained by individual sense experience and the transcendent realm of infinite unity. Schleiermacher writes:

The contemplation of the pious is the immediate consciousness of the universal existence of all finite things, in and through the Infinite, and of all temporal things in and through the Eternal. Religion is to seek this and find it in all that lives and moves, in all growth and change, in all doing and suffering. It is to have life and to know life in immediate feeling, only as such as existence in the Infinite and Eternal... Yet, religion is not knowledge and science, either of the world or of God. Without being knowledge, it recognizes knowledge and science. In itself it is an affection, a revelation of the Infinite in the finite, God being seen in it and it in God.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 210.

<sup>27</sup> Brandt, *Philosophy of Schleiermacher*, 71.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>29</sup> Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 36.

Consequently, true piety has nothing to do with dogma. One can powerfully “feel” his or her dependence upon the Infinite and know nothing of the doctrines of creation, providence, or inspiration.

### III. SCHLEIERMACHER’S HERMENEUTICS

Unsatisfied with the prior scientific and philological focus of hermeneutics, Schleiermacher sought to systematize a universal method of hermeneutics. If, as Schleiermacher states, “Hermeneutics is a part of the art of thinking, and is therefore philosophical,”<sup>30</sup> why should different types of writing require different hermeneutics? He goes on to say:

Hermeneutics does not apply exclusively to classical studies, nor is it merely a part of this restricted philological organon; rather, it is to be applied to the works of every author. Therefore, its principles must be sufficiently general, and they are not to be derived solely from the nature of classical literature.<sup>31</sup>

Schleiermacher makes no distinction between reading Plato and the Apostle Paul.<sup>32</sup>

In seeking to create a universal hermeneutic, Schleiermacher builds upon the same dialectic forces that shaped his metaphysics—piety and rationalism. Hermeneutics that are scientifically driven, and focused only on grammatical and philological aspects of the text, Schleiermacher called “grammatical interpretation.” The canons of grammatical interpretation seek to root the text into a context, i.e. historical, literary, or cultural. The first canon gives primacy to the language of the original author and original audience, and the second states “every word in a given location must be determined according to it being-together with those surrounding it.”<sup>33</sup> This method of interpretation is necessary and good, but insufficient by itself. Schleiermacher believes that grammatical interpretation alone will lead to “quantitative misunderstanding” when the inter-

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<sup>30</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts* (ed. Heinz Kimmerle; trans. James Duke and Jack Forstman; Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1977), 97.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>32</sup> “Inspiration, as an infusion into the mind, should not influence the work of interpretation. If in the case of the Bible, as in every other case, the goal of hermeneutics is to understand the texts as their original readers understood them, the fact they are inspired does not affect the interpretation at all,” *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

preter is presented with concepts like poetry or allegory. This type of language requires a greater knowledge of the "personality" behind the text, or the author's "style" (style being a technical term that includes thought, language, and organization).

Schleiermacher used the phrase "psychological interpretation" (or also technical interpretation) to describe holistic interpretations that seek out the personality and style of the author. Psychological interpretation seeks "to understand the discourse as a presentation of thought. Composed by a human being and so understood in terms of a human being."<sup>34</sup>

Schleiermacher holds that both methods must be employed, and one must not replace the other. "These two hermeneutical tasks are completely equal, and it would be incorrect to label grammatical interpretation the 'lower' and psychological interpretation the 'higher' task."<sup>35</sup> The goal of hermeneutics, for Schleiermacher, is to enter into the world of the author. However, even when these hermeneutical principles are followed, the interpreter will never attain complete understanding of a text. Both grammatical and psychological interpretation involve "construct[ing] something finite and definite from something that is infinite and indefinite."<sup>36</sup> Since the interpreter can never attain complete knowledge using either form, "it is necessary to move back and forth between the grammatical and psychological sides, and no rules can stipulate how to do this."<sup>37</sup> This back-and-forth relationship between the whole and its parts is Schleiermacher's hermeneutical circle.

The interpreter must enter the circle through psychological interpretation. "By its very nature the hermeneutical operation dictates that the interpreter begin by considering the overall organization of the work. Hermeneutics must begin with an overview of the whole."<sup>38</sup> The interpreter must have some basic shared understanding with the text (e.g., know the language, basic grammar and syntax, and provenance). Anthony Thiselton equates this preliminary psychological interpretation with the hermeneutical concept of pre-understanding.<sup>39</sup>

In working through this hermeneutical circle of grammatical and psychological interpretation, the interpreter must employ what Schleiermacher calls divinatory knowledge and comparative knowledge. Comparative knowledge ("masculine principle") analyzes and compares information, and divinatory knowledge ("feminine principle") understands

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>39</sup> Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 155.

through intuition and relationship.<sup>40</sup> It is important to understand that both comparison and “divination” are used in *both* grammatical and psychological interpretation. In psychological interpretation the reader compares the parts of a work in an effort to discover the author’s theme or train of thought. The same reader must also “divine” how the individual theme and style of the author fits within the historical and cultural setting of the work. The role of comparison is self-evident in grammatical analysis, but the more illusive role of divination, Schleiermacher describes stating: “Whenever we come upon a gifted author [*genialer Autor*] who has for the first time in the history of the language expressed a given phrase or combination of terms, what do we want to do? In such instances only a divinatory method enables us rightly to reconstruct the creative act.”<sup>41</sup>

Schleiermacher holds that the interpreter must seek out the world of the author. He writes: “Before the art of hermeneutics can be practiced, the interpreter must put himself both objectively and subjectively in the position of the author.”<sup>42</sup> Once fully engaged in the world and context of the author, the interpreter may “understand the text at first as well as and then even better than its author.”<sup>43</sup> Unless the interpreter enters into the world and mind of the author through a subjective rapport—as one might have in other relationships—misunderstanding is unavoidable. Lawrence Schmidt comments: “So, although one cannot actually place oneself in the thinking of the author, one can guess or intuit how the author thought by comparison to how one thinks oneself since human beings are similar.”<sup>44</sup>

Clear similarities exist between Schleiermacher’s metaphysics and his hermeneutics. True piety, as mentioned above, is the subjective experience of the finite depending upon the Infinite. That individual’s self-awareness of the Infinite bridges the gap between particular sense experience and the transcendent whole. “Schleiermacher believed thinking truly exhibits the moral, historical character of human existence because it is an activity that always involves an awareness of the relatedness of

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<sup>40</sup> Thisleton, *Hermeneutics*, 156.

<sup>41</sup> Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics*, 192. See Thisleton, *New Horizons*, 225 for a helpful illustration of the distinction between comparison and divination verses grammatical and psychological.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>44</sup> Lawrence K. Schmidt, *Understanding Hermeneutics* (Stocksfield Hall, England: Acumen, 2006), 24.

the individual to the community of consciousness.”<sup>45</sup> In like manner, hermeneutics represents the dependence of the finite upon the infinite. The interpreter is bound by the particular expressions presented by a text or dialogue, and is therefore dependent upon the infinite possibilities that lie within the constructs of grammar and the author's contextualized intentions. Hermeneutics, like true piety, bridges this gap by subjectively projecting the finite into the world of the infinite.

#### IV. SCHLEIERMACHER'S LEGACY

It is sometimes difficult to witness the direct effect of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics because they have been so deeply integrated into modern methodologies. Indeed, his discussion of the hermeneutical circle—groundbreaking at the time—almost seems rudimentary to modern day hermeneutics students. However, Schleiermacher's universal hermeneutics radically shifted the direction of theories of interpretation that would follow.

Schleiermacher's student and biographer, Wilhelm Dilthey, followed his hermeneutical methods by highlighting the human individual and “lived experiences” as the main hermeneutical category.<sup>46</sup> Similar to Schleiermacher's notion of the Infinite, or community of consciousness, Dilthey believed that human existence was characterized by a “connectedness” that is expressed through language, culture, and institutions.<sup>47</sup> Dilthey carries Schleiermacher's psychological interpretation to its logical conclusion. Grant Osborne writes: “Interpretation for [Dilthey] involves the union of the subject and object in a historical act of understanding. Dilthey called this the ‘rediscovery of the I in the Thou,’ by which he meant that a person discovers his or her self in the act of reading.”<sup>48</sup> Schleiermacher and Dilthey's focus on the significance of the individual interpreter within an infinite nexus of consciousness continues to be seen in intertextual studies. Literary scholars like Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes argue that every text is infinitely related to other texts. Consequently, for Kristeva and Barthes, the notion of intertextuality refers not to a hermeneutical method but to a hermeneutical *reality* of existential connectedness. Anthony Thiselton argues that in Schleiermacher's notion of infinite features of language, one can see the early development of the Ferdinand de Saussure's “distinction between *la langue* (or the

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<sup>45</sup> Richard R. Niebuhr, *Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion: A New Introduction* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), 80.

<sup>46</sup> Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 247.

<sup>47</sup> Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 162.

<sup>48</sup> Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 468.

potential reservoir of language as a system) and *la parole*, word-use or language-in-action.”<sup>49</sup>

Schleiermacher’s emphasis on subjectively entering into the world of the author prepared the way for later existential, anthropocentric interpreters like Rudolph Bultmann. However, even those not willing to go the extremes of Dilthey and Bultmann have still found benefit in Schleiermacher’s seminal notion of the implied author. Studying a text is not the same as studying a biography about the author. Rather, it is examining a persona created by the author in the text.<sup>50</sup> This persona may be the same or different from a narrator.

Moving away from existential interpretations, Hans Gadamer criticized Schleiermacher’s subjectivity, but employed his idea of the hermeneutical circle in a more historically grounded fashion. Gadamer supported a similar notion of pre-understanding (or “prejudice”) on the part of the interpreter, and that “horizon” pre-understanding was constantly being confronted by the “horizon” of the text.<sup>51</sup>

E. D. Hirsch Jr., in his work *Validity in Interpretation*, lauds Schleiermacher’s distinction and articulation of the comparative and divinatory methods. He writes:

Despite his metaphorical imprecision Schleiermacher is worth quoting for another reason. He suggests that the female divinatory function and the male comparative function are the two principal forces not only in interpretation but in human knowledge generally. The implications of that insight stretch beyond the currently fashionable discussion of the opposition between scientific and humanistic cultures and their respective “methods.” What is at stake is...the right of interpretation (and implicitly all humanistic disciplines) to claim as its object genuine knowledge.<sup>52</sup>

These two categories provide interpreters and thinkers with a critical process of validation that can process judgments. This process cannot be defined in detail, but it is important to understand that every act of interpretation “comprises the having of ideas and the testing of them.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 157.

<sup>50</sup> Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 204.

<sup>51</sup> Schmidt, *Understanding Hermeneutics*, 106.

<sup>52</sup> E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 1967), 205.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 206

## V. SCHLEIERMACHER EVALUATED

Schleiermacher's methods mark a sharp turn in the philosophies of Enlightenment-driven interpretation. It was not that his positions differed greatly from common anti-supernatural interpretations, but the change is witnessed in his questioning the over-confident claims of modernity. According to Schleiermacher, the school of hermeneutics could not build upon the shaky assumptions of common sense when trying to grasp the essence of human understanding. Hermeneutics and epistemology are intimately related, and thanks to Schleiermacher, presently no thoughtful treatment of the former can ignore the latter. His emphasis on objectively and subjectively entering into the world of the text or "behind" the text is helpful. Some, like Gadamer, rightly argue that Schleiermacher overemphasized psychological interpretation. However, Schleiermacher did not believe that psychological interpretation was sufficient without a historically rooted grammatical interpretation. Schleiermacher's canons of grammatical interpretation are still seen in variant forms in modern hermeneutical discussions of context, grammar, and syntax.<sup>54</sup> It is commonly accepted that biblical interpretation is both an art and a science, and Schleiermacher played a critical role in moving the discussion in that direction.

Despite these contributions, Schleiermacher's philosophical convictions present problems. The denial of a transcendent God has obvious ramifications on Schleiermacher's view of inspiration. Karl Barth comments on this issue: "Whether inspiration is present is a result and not a presupposition of exposition...Grammatically and psychologically, then, we are to deal with everything at a purely human level, and here, too, everything must be according to the universal rules."<sup>55</sup> Therefore, since inspiration is a *product* of interpretation, one may encounter more of it at an art museum than in reading the Old and New Testaments. Schleiermacher believed that hermeneutics begins with, and always includes, the possibility of misunderstanding.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, why should one assume that the words of God are any different? Indeed, no such assumption should be made *if* Schleiermacher's view of God as entirely immanent is correct. Unfortunately, Schleiermacher's philosophy shaped his view of God more than the biblical texts he so carefully studied.

Schleiermacher's zeal for the church is to be commended, and his apologetic tone appreciated. His commitment to epistemology and experientialism led him to ask the right questions of his contemporary sys-

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<sup>54</sup> Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 35 – 93.

<sup>55</sup> Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher*, 182 – 83.

<sup>56</sup> Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics*, 110.

tems, but too often they proved to be false guides in providing him with answers.

## Two Strategies in Biblical Interpretation



THOR MADSEN

*Associate Professor of New Testament,  
Ethics and Philosophy of Religion  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Kansas City, MO 64118  
tmadsen@mbts.edu*

This essay explores two strategies for biblical interpretation, one old and one new. The old approach (call it “originalism”) accepts four propositions concerning any text: (a) The text means now what it meant to its target-audience; (b) We can establish what the text meant to its target-audience by discovering that audience’s history and language; (c) What the text meant to its target-audience is what we should assume that the author intended to say; and (d) What the author intended to say is the normative meaning of any text. Therefore, on the originalist model, a text can never mean what the author never meant; and while several *interpretations* of any text might be defensible, only one interpretation could be correct. The new approach (call it “postmodernism”) rejects the four claims given above and offers these alternatives: (e) All interpretations are subjective; (f) There is no “right” way to read a text; and (g) The text becomes meaningful only when someone reads it. Thus, we face an either/or: choose originalism or postmodernism. One cannot choose both.

Of course, originalism gets the vote of common sense. Suppose, for example, that Mary runs a stop sign on her way to English 101 and gets pulled over. The officer asks for her license, but Mary says, “Not so fast.” She remembers now what the English department has said about use of texts, even simple ones like S-T-O-P. “I don’t deserve a ticket, because I read the sign differently. You see an order from the state police; I see the whole sign as a work of art, like Warhol’s soup can; and my reading is no worse off than yours.” But Mary loses the argument, as well she should. Her methods are gimmicks adopted to avoid unwelcome consequences. Yet many scholars would argue that we must accept her

excuse, as judged from a pure, philosophical standpoint. Objectivity has collapsed, leaving behind only perspectives. Consider the following two lines of argument.

## I. THE PHILOSOPHICAL ROUTE TO POSTMODERNISM

Ever since Socrates (ca. 470–399 BC), philosophers have sought to define the concepts of knowledge, rationality, and intellectual duty. What is the difference between knowledge and opinion? On what basis can we say that someone is rational or irrational? Do we have *intellectual* duties, along with standard ones like “being just” or “being honest”? If so, what are they?<sup>1</sup> Plato (ca. 428–348 BC) answered such questions with his Theory of Ideas or Forms. Knowledge applies only to unchanging, abstract objects—as seen with the mind’s eye—and not to the hyperactive stream of 5-sense experience.<sup>2</sup> Aristotle (384–322 BC) grounded knowledge in experience, but he held its claims to a high standard. To know an object X is to explain X on four levels, i.e., what X is made of, what forces constructed X, what the essence of X is, and also what the niche of X might be in the grand scheme of things. Plato said, “Look up at the forms.” Aristotle replied, “No, look down at the world of experience, but look very carefully”; and their disagreement continues to this day, more or less, in the struggle between the rationalist and empiricist traditions.<sup>3</sup> But as time went on, the concerns of philosophy changed, and this shift prepared the way for postmodernism.

Plato and Aristotle searched for the correct objects of knowledge—either the *abstracta* or the natural world. But in 1637, Rene Descartes published *Discourse on the Method*, which changed epistemology’s basic question. Instead of asking *what* we can know, Descartes asked *how* we can know, which translates into two subordinate questions. First, would any of our beliefs resist all conceivable doubt? Secondly, could someone

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<sup>1</sup> These questions belong to the branch of philosophy called “epistemology,” i.e., the theory of knowledge. We will have occasion to use this term later in the essay.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Plato, *Republic*, Book 6; A. H. Armstrong, *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1981 [1947]), 37; Samuel E. Stumpf and James Fieser, *Socrates to Sartre and Beyond: A History of Philosophy* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.; New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 45–52.

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps their differences are ones of emphasis more than absolute distinction—we need not say, either way (cf. Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy, Volume 1: Greece and Rome* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1993 [1946], 275). For Aristotle’s causes, see the “Metaphysics,” book 1, chapter 3, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (ed. Richard McKeon; New York, NY: Random House, 1941), 693.

construct an absolutely secure philosophical system based on those indubitable, basic beliefs? Descartes answered “yes” to both questions, and thus resolved, in the first instance:

never to accept anything as true if I did not have evident knowledge of its truth: that is, carefully to avoid precipitate conclusions and preconceptions, and to include nothing more in my judgments than what presented itself to my mind so clearly and so distinctly that I had no occasion to doubt it.

With those basic beliefs established, Descartes would then construct upon them whatever else he knows with mathematically secure deduction. The second step of his process would be:

. . . to direct my thoughts in an orderly manner, by beginning with the simplest and most easily known objects in order to ascend little by little, step by step, to knowledge of the most complex . . .

Ultimately, Descartes’ program rested on an optimistic hunch, inspired by his progress in analytical geometry:

Those long chains composed of very simple and easy reasonings, which geometers customarily use to arrive at their most difficult demonstrations, had given me occasion to suppose that all the things which can fall under human knowledge are interconnected in the same way.<sup>4</sup>

In particular, Descartes’ based all knowledge on the *cogito*: “I think” is certain; and that implies “I am.”<sup>5</sup> The first statement, in his view, would survive all skeptical hypotheses, because it is *incorrigible*. It forces itself upon anyone who considers it, excluding all possible doubt.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Rene Descartes, “Discourse on the Method,” in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (vol. 1; trans. John Cottingham, et al; Cambridge: University Press, 1985), 120. Most readers of this essay will have become familiar with Descartes through his development of the “Cartesian Coordinate System,” studied in high school mathematics.

<sup>5</sup> Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (vol. 2; trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch; Cambridge: University Press, 1984), 16–17. Meditation II is cited here, though RD repeats the same argument subsequently.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ronald H. Nash, *Faith and Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), 83; Alvin Plantinga, “Reason and Belief in God,” in *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (ed. by Alvin Plan-

“I am” then follows directly from “I think,” and the metaphysical journey is under way. Descartes starts to think about God and finds this concept too grand for human invention. So it comes from without—from God himself, necessarily—and if God exists, he would underwrite the deliverances of 5-sense experience. What we see is what we get.<sup>7</sup>

By using this new method, Descartes sought to transcend the esoteric debates of medieval philosophy. Rather than building upon insecure foundations, he would doubt every claim that one could possibly doubt, using various skeptical hypotheses, until he reached a proposition that survives not just all reasonable doubt, but even all conceivable doubt. Then he would admit additional beliefs only if they could be justified as inferences from that foundation. But notice the where his own systematic doubt leads us. I can get from “I think” to “I am” only if I assume that my own powers of reason are reliable; and why should the radical skeptic give Descartes even that much? Why should we just presuppose, without argument, that human reason can safely connect these dots? What allows the individual to do so? If we follow Descartes’s method to the end, we find ourselves unable to trust even the deliverances of pure reason; and thus his own theory of knowledge raises questions that it leaves unresolved.

The Cartesian challenge is to overcome skepticism through proper mental hygiene. Each of us has to protect our own thought-life by flossing and brushing daily, following the protocols of the *Discourse*. In practice, however, this regime takes us further into skepticism, rather than out of it. Now we have to treat not only our sense experience as guilty until proven innocent, but pure reason itself. Consider the case of insanity, which illustrates the problem of rational self-vindication. How do we prove to ourselves that we are not insane or, if you will, not systematically deceived in our perceptions and thoughts? Insane people process information not just atypically, but also pathologically. Or so we neurotypicals say; but the shoe *could* be on the other foot, after all. It is conceivable that all of us have gone insane, and the lunatics see things as they really are. How do we prove otherwise? One answer goes this way: Perhaps we can end the stalemate by exposing the mechanics of pure reason. Maybe we can vindicate human reason by observing *how* we think in

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tinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 58.

<sup>7</sup> The inference to God’s existence occurs in Meditation III of the same volume, p. 31; the inference from (i) *I derive my faculties of perception from God* and then (ii) *God would not allow these faculties to deceive me*, to the conclusion, (iii) *My experience of the external world tends to be veridical*, occurs in Meditation IV, pp. 37–38.

order to set limits on what we *can* think. This project began in earnest with the work of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804).

Suppose that Schizophrenic Sally discovers that her mind plays tricks on her constantly. Suppose further that she eventually notices patterns in the way it misleads her. When jets fly overhead, she always thinks that the authorities are spying on her; and she knows that her mind will form this belief, regardless of what the jets are doing. She tends to avoid men carrying briefcases, because she thinks that they are assassins sent to kill her; but one day, Sally has a breakthrough. It dawns on her that she would fear such men in any case, regardless of how they actually treat her. If she discovers what her own mind does with ordinary experience, she may one day recover. She has become self-critical in a healthy sense and is no longer doomed to act out in destructive ways. She can say to herself, “Here comes a man holding a briefcase, and I tend to fear men with briefcases. But I know that this fear arises from my own mind, not from some actual danger.” Instead of thinking, “The world is a dangerous place, populated by sinister men,” she now tends to think, “I make the world a dangerous place, populated by sinister men.” She knows what to expect when she confronts the world each day and what the parameters of her experience will be, because she now understands her own rational and perceptual tendencies. Likewise, the defense of human reason may consist in our becoming self-aware and thus self-critical. We can examine our own thoughts and perceptions and discover how they affect belief-formation.

Something like this move appears to have been made by Kant in his attempt to justify scientific knowledge. Suppose that all human knowledge had to come from experience alone. In that case, Kant reasoned, we could have no scientific knowledge, since we have no external guarantees—out there in the world—that the past will be like the present, and that the reality confronted by us will have a certain, consistent structure.<sup>8</sup> Everything could change from moment to moment. Each day could be brand new across the board, since past experience guarantees no future results. In fact, experience alone cannot even tell us whether our streams of consciousness—e.g., of this table in front of me, of that bird chirping outside—are occasioned by external causes acting upon an enduring self. But we do have scientific knowledge. Matters usually go as our theories predict that they will, and the idea of causation turns out to be useful. So, Kant asks, how can these things be so? How can we have scientific knowledge about the world of experience, when the world of experience itself provides no ground for its own structural consistency? How can we employ the idea of causation, when we do not observe causation itself,

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<sup>8</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (trans. J. M. D. Meiklejohn, (London: Bohn, 1855), 3.

but rather only the succession of events, one followed consistently by another?

His answer constitutes what he calls a “Copernican Revolution” in epistemology.<sup>9</sup> Everyone else had assumed that the mind must conform to the objects of experience. But if all knowledge arises from experience, scientific knowledge would be impossible. After all, science is the attempt to do more than reconstruct natural history. We want more from our theories than summaries to the effect, “Thus far, the world has operated as such.” We want to know how things work as a matter of natural law. But experience itself cannot take us all the way there. On the contrary, Kant argues, experience alone can justify natural history, but not natural law. We can say how things have happened, but not how they *must* happen. For the latter, we need to grasp how the human mind contributes to the synthesis of reason and experience that we call “knowledge.”<sup>10</sup> The challenge for Kant, therefore, is not to establish that we do have scientific knowledge. We do.<sup>11</sup> Rather, the present task is to justify philosophically what everyone knows. We have scientific knowledge; and its defense will consist in discovering how our minds work or how they play tricks on us.

Describing the details of Kant’s theory would take us far afield, but we can summarize how it inclines toward postmodernism. Kant’s theory puts glasses in front of our eyes and insists that we cannot remove them. We have to see the world humanly or else not at all. Nevertheless, he tries to make this fact work for us, so that we use it to escape skepticism. If I know what human beings like me do with sense-perception, I can know how the world will behave. Likewise, if I understand how we think, I would know what human beings actually can figure out with pure reason. Such, at any rate, is the promise made by Kantian epistemology. But Kant’s theory separates us from reality itself by denying us the ability to see things objectively or from the outside looking in. He gives us “the way things are for us,” when we really wanted “the way things are,” if we can get to it.

In fact, Kant *intensifies* the problem of skepticism in two ways, if not more. First, Kant throws pure empiricism out the front door, only to let it slip back in through a basement window.<sup>12</sup> He says that experience alone

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<sup>9</sup> Kant, *Critique*, xxix.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Empiricism is the view that traces all knowledge back to 5-sense experience, one summary of which is, “Nothing is in the mind which was not first in the senses.” A pure empiricism, therefore, would not merely emphasize the im-

cannot justify all knowledge. We need a synthesis of sense-perception and something else added to it. But Kant's own search for that other "something" is self-defeating. To get airborne, he must rely on unstructured experience or just assume that everyone else thinks the way he does; and in that case, pure skepticism results. You have your point of view; I have mine, and who can judge between us? One person insists that we must see the world *humanly*, if at all; but nothing would stop his successor from moving down the scale to "Americanly," "Islamically," "Smithly," or "Mondayly." To be sure, we do not find ourselves worrying much about this danger: we tend to think that our cognitive faculties are reliable. But this whole debate started when someone asked whether we could ward off skeptical attacks upon common sense.

Kant's theory encourages skepticism in a second, related way. The problem here is partly exegetical, now referring to the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Every beginner in philosophy learns that Kant distinguished the "world-for-us" from the "world-in-itself." After that, the novice discovers what Kant said about the world-in-itself: we cannot know anything about it, save for the fact that it causes the world as it is for us.<sup>13</sup> But this distinction is almost too pedestrian for Kant's own good. He is supposed to be the greatest philosopher since Aristotle; but even *we* can see that experience is shaped by preconceived ideas. Pure objectivity is beyond anyone's reach. We already knew that, even if we had not seen how much this concession implies. Therefore, we suspect, Kant must have said something more explosive and challenging than, say, "Beauty (and everything else) is in the eye of the beholder." He is the Colossus of modern philosophy, and he describes the *Critique* as marking a Copernican revolution in philosophy.<sup>14</sup> We need something more here.

Perhaps Kant's theory postulates two actual worlds, with the one causing the other to exist for us; and if so, the earthquake strikes at last. Only now, Kant's theory has become implausible; for it rests on two incompatible claims, viz., (i) the *noumenal* world is out there, but (ii) the only thing that we can know about it is that it causes the *phenomenal* world to exist for us. Yet the stopping point implied by (ii) is arbitrary. What keeps us from simplifying the two-worlds picture by embracing pure idealism? Bishop George Berkeley (1685–1753) argued long before Kant that we can do without a mind-independent, physical world. And if we cannot locate the ideal world in the mind of God, at the very least, complete skepticism follows as to what is really "out there."

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portance of experience, but also the rootedness of all knowledge in experience, including (say) mathematical necessities.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Kant, *Critique*, xxxiv, 40.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: University Press, 2000), 10–13.

This result is essentially what postmodernism not only concedes but celebrates. From now on, we must suspect all “metanarratives” which describe how the world works and our place in it.<sup>15</sup> Truth itself becomes socially constructed, so that it really means “what our peers will, *ceteris paribus*, let us get away with saying.”<sup>16</sup> Instead of searching for an ideal language or the exact words to picture or “mirror” reality, we would now content ourselves with the study of “language-games” that are bounded by specific “forms of life.”<sup>17</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche outlines the basic argument that leads to postmodern “perspectivism.” There are many kinds of eyes and thus many kinds of truth; but where many kinds of truth exist, the truth (as an objective idea) no longer exists.<sup>18</sup> What replaces it, therefore, will be determined by the winners, understood as those who sovereignly construct human reality.<sup>19</sup> But then, if we cannot know *anything* objectively, we cannot know what any text means objectively. The one conclusion implies the other; so that is one way of becoming a post-modern reader of Scripture, if the latter’s content remains (somehow) of interest. However, one can reach postmodernist conclusions by another route, this one related to the elusiveness of texts and their authors.

## II. THE HERMENEUTICAL ROUTE TO POSTMODERNIST

“Writer’s block” happens when our ideas are unclear. We do not know exactly what we want to say, and thus we search for words before we have hammered out their assigned duties. In this sense, the blocked writer knows—or seems to know—more than he can say; and he gets frustrated. A vague worry surfaces, and he resists it far longer than he should: alas, he has to get his thoughts organized. But sometimes we know more than we can say for reasons beyond anyone’s control. No

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<sup>15</sup> Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), xxiv.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 175.

<sup>17</sup> This shift from a “picture-theory” of language to an emphasis upon social uses of language and constructions of reality marks the transition from the “early Wittgenstein” of the *Tractatus* to the “later Wittgenstein” of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Cf. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (trans. D. F. Pears & B. F. McGuinness; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961 [1922]), 3, 74, and *passim*; and *Philosophical Investigations* (trans. G. E. M. Anscombe; New York, NY: Macmillan, 1958), 19, 88.

<sup>18</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (ed. Walter Kaufmann; New York, NY: Vintage, 1967), 291.

<sup>19</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (trans. R. J. Hollingdale; New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1969), 136–139.

amount of work would solve the problem, because language itself cannot do the whole job. Consider, for example, the taste of coffee. We can try to communicate this idea to other people who have not tasted coffee, but the correct words escape us because they actually do not exist. We go with “slightly bitter” and “nutty”—as opposed to “round” and “electrochemical”—but words alone fail to transmit the sensation. In fact, it gets worse.

Someone could press the matter and ask, “Well, what do you mean by ‘bitter’ and ‘nutty’?” And off we go again, searching for more words to fill the holes left by the original ones. Finally, we have to resort to non-verbal communication, but even that expedient cannot deliver us. We give someone coffee to drink; but he experiences not the dark, wonderful goodness that coffee aficionados do, but rather a nasty, bitter, oily fluid that makes him ill. Thus, when both of us say “coffee,” we mean different things. Thus, an infinite regress has begun, each word defining and then begging for definition; and we get nothing but definitions, all the way down. In this sense, the postmodernist could argue that texts have to mean what their readers say they do, because they always get the last word anyway. When the writer or speaker has done his work, the rest of us take over.<sup>20</sup>

If we have problems with single words, whole sentences should give us even more trouble; and they do. Consider the debacle of Senator Gaffe, who has stumbled again. At a campaign stop, he says something “incorrect” because he is tired and speaking extemporaneously. He makes a joke, referring to a protected subgroup; but it fails, and now he must do penance. Never mind his purity of heart and professed love for *every single voter*. The press wants an offering, so Gaffe sends up this blemished lamb: “If I have offended anyone, I’m deeply sorry.” And suddenly, all is well, at least for most of the citizens, who thought they heard Gaffe apologize. But a few of them missed the part where he said, “I said an offensive thing.” What they heard was, “My words shouldn’t have been hurtful to anyone, really; but now that someone has chosen to be hurt by them, I regret saying what I did.” So they keep after Senator Gaffe; and he eventually gets schooled on a familiar lesson. What we say objectively and what we intend sometimes differ, and we cannot control the fallout of our words.

We struggle to communicate, and words forsake their authors, once they go out in public. But in that case, the reader must increase, and the author must decrease. As the postmodernist sees it, we have no choice here. To insist on the sovereignty of the author over his words, once he

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<sup>20</sup> This worry appears to underlie Jacques Derrida’s maxim that one cannot get outside of a text, because there is no “outside.” Cf. *Of Grammatology*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 158.

has released them into cultures, is to ask for the impossible; and doubly so, if the author himself is dead and gone. He cannot clarify his own words now: we must decipher them on our own. Thus, one could challenge the entire originalist project by suggesting that it attempts to do what no one can do, given these unpleasant facts. When the reader interprets, he creates yet another text needing interpretation, and we cannot see his own intentions directly. We can see what he presents, as a phenomenon, but never what he means.<sup>21</sup>

If we cannot recover the author's own intent, or if we may legitimately pursue other ends, what should those ends be? Perhaps the following analogy will show us what value this reader-response approach might have. In 1921, a Swiss psychiatrist presented a new measurement tool for psychoanalysis, another way to X-ray people's minds, especially troubled ones. The test required clients to interpret ten images shown in sequence, moving from black-and-white to color, and from simple to more complex. Herman Rorschach (1884–1922) created his cards with a two-step process. That is, he dripped ink on one side of a white card and then quickly folded the card in half, thus producing a bilaterally symmetrical image. Rorschach thought that we could learn a lot about people from what they see in these pictures, even about the societies in which they live. We know this test today as the Rorschach Psychodiagnostic Inkblot Test, and its reputation precedes it.<sup>22</sup> If the average person knows *anything* about psychology, he knows about Rorschach and his inkblots.

Before Rorschach, *Klecksographie* (= making inkblots) was just a children's pastime. People would play games with these images, and one can see why. Any answer could be taken to reveal someone's deepest secrets and oddities; and one can hardly err in reading an inkblot: the reader gets out of it exactly what he puts into it.<sup>23</sup> Because these images form randomly—having no arranged symbols or letters—they demand nothing of the viewer and convey no meanings. On the contrary, the viewer himself becomes the 'text' in the children's game; and likewise

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<sup>21</sup> So, e.g., Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 13.

<sup>22</sup> Cf., Test Developer Profiles, "Hermann Rorschach, M.D.," *The McGraw-Hill Companies*, 2001, [www.mhhe.com/mayfieldpub/psychtesting/profiles/rorschach.htm](http://www.mhhe.com/mayfieldpub/psychtesting/profiles/rorschach.htm); Ronald Jay Cohen and Mark E. Swerdlik, *Psychological Testing and Assessment* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.; New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 368–372; and Raymond J. Corsini and Anthony J. Marsella, *Personality Theories, Research, and Assessment* (Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock, 1983), 159.

<sup>23</sup> Of course, as the images change, each viewer's response will change, but none of them come with a prescribed interpretation written on the back.

for the uses of these images in Rorschachian diagnosis. We investigate the perceiver himself based on his responses. Eisegesis leads to personal exegesis, which counts for something, if the process works as advertised.<sup>24</sup> And the same principle might apply to a different set of images, i.e., letters.

Suppose that we were to put all *texts* on a level with inkblots, thus ignoring the author's designs and letting the reader see in them what he will. Or we could do the same thing with interpretive communities, so that "good interpretations" turn out to be ones that our colleagues will let us get away with saying. In that case, we would measure the value of any interpretation by different standards than the originalist. The virtue of an originalist reading would be its power to recapture what the author meant to say to his target-audience, no more and no less. The postmodernist would look for virtues like "being thought-provoking," "having the tendency to reveal the interpreter's own agendas," "having the tendency to unmask the author's prejudices," or perhaps, "having the tendency to ripristinate an old, neglected text." If one recalls the objectives of an inkblot test, such analogies come easily to mind. But what should a Christian say about such a change?

### III. A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO POSTMODERNISM

In the first instance, we can admit that our preachers operate as postmodernists all the time, even as they decry the loss of expository preaching. They use Scripture rather than trying to explain it. They read ideas into the biblical text, rather than trying to discover what the author himself attempted to say to his target-audience. The questions brought to the text are modern questions, reflecting secondary and tertiary concerns. The preacher takes from Scripture what he has brought to it, not what the author himself presents. Certainly this technique works for the busy pastor, and he may have his own excuses for it. Perhaps he lacks the desire or ability to recapture what the author meant to say. He does not know how to analyze a text and ask the right questions. But he is good at seeing how established doctrines apply to everyday life, and he can speak fluently to the public about them. So he avoids the challenge of real exegesis.

On the other hand, he may think that what he has to share about theology and ethics is actually more important than anything the biblical

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<sup>24</sup> Exegesis is the attempt to discover what a text means objectively, i.e., to "read out" what the author intended to say. Thus, *eisegesis* is the error of reading ideas into a text that deviate from the author's intent. In the case of inkblots, however, the only kind of reading one can do is eisegetical since—for all practical purposes—they have no "author" in the formal sense.

writers said to their own people, in dead languages, thousands of years ago. Perhaps he only thinks that there is—after all and in general—so much that we do not know. Why risk bold statements about what the text says for 30 minutes on Sunday, when we cannot solve lesser puzzles? If his own heart is in the right place, all is well and all is forgiven. In any case, we get the same result: he decapitates the biblical authors and replaces their judgments with his own regarding God’s word for us today. But if we admit this procedure in our own circles, if we let ourselves put alien constructs on Scripture—giving Moses or John a good “reading” every Sunday—we can hardly censure feminists or socialists for doing likewise. Or we cannot censure them quite as strongly. In the end, however, postmodernist theory suffers from grave defects. Against it, one might advance the following 4 propositions.

*a. Postmodernist theory cannot last*

When I was a child, I once tried to play table-tennis undogmatically, tolerating my own creative shots as well as my neighbor’s. The latter had received a table for Christmas, and I had come over to try it out for the first time. We were incompetent, of course. Neither of us could keep the ball in play, and one of us tried to “fix” the problem by removing the net. Now we could not go wrong as often, and that change was a relief to us beginners. But then again, we soon quit playing; and every reader of this article knows why. Without the concept of success and failure, the activity itself becomes uninteresting. We stopped even trying to keep the ball in play, as we once defined “being in play,” before the revolution. Likewise, we cannot reject the correspondence theory of truth without ceasing to do philosophy. We cannot reject a search for the original meaning of texts without ceasing to be interpreters. If “true” does not mean “how things really are,” and if “correct” exegesis does not recover “what the text first meant,” then “true” and “correct” mean nothing of interest. We will soon give up thinking and reading. Therefore, we can expect postmodernism—as a synthetic, trendy phase—will take care of itself soon enough anyway, even if we do not give it the polite shoves that are coming next.

*b. Postmodernist theory is self-referentially absurd*

Postmodernism reduces to an enlightened skepticism regarding the nature of the world and the meaning of texts, but that skepticism quickly backfires. Their theory puts lenses in front of everyone else’s eyes and implies that we all suffer from devastating subjectivity. But who says A

must say B: if *we* suffer from incurable subjectivity, so do they. No flights of objectivity are allowed. Thus, the postmodernist cannot know the truth about us—as if he has seen our *noumenal* minds themselves—if none of us can see the unvarnished truth about anything or even approximate objective knowledge. This critique of skepticism goes back a long way in philosophical history, and we wonder why postmodernists (as skeptics) do not regard it as touching their own theory. Then again, perhaps they see well enough how this debate must end (i.e., badly for them) but have amplified their claims for theatrical effect. After all, milder forms of skepticism are not half as interesting; and no one would show up for a seminar to discuss a proverb like, “Let us all be careful not to overindulge the modernist impulse.” In any case, the double-standard at work here dooms their theory from the outset.

*c. Postmodernist theory separates human beings further from God*

If God does not exist, everything is hermeneutically permitted. We may interpret as we please or follow present conventions of reason and interpretation, but the so-called “right way” of doing anything would essentially disappear. This conclusion follows from the fact that without God, nothing is objectively sacred. There are just material objects left behind, and any value that one attaches to an object would be entirely subjective. We prefer to save human lives and do justice to human beings; but we could as easily favor eagles and tulips in the same way. Likewise, if God does not exist, and if nothing is sacred, none of us enjoys the right to a fair hearing. The author can expect nothing of his readers, and the perceiver has no epistemic duties. The “correct” way to form beliefs and retain them has no place to land. Positive law merely acclaims and denounces: it binds no one apart from sheer coercion. And if God does not exist, even these results do not finally matter. Postmodernism is no worse off, in this case, than pushpin or poetry.

But if God exists, postmodern games must end. We can no longer afford them, since this God will get through to us one way or another, and whether we like it or not. In that day, it will make no difference at all how cleverly Foucault or Derrida have defended their skepticism. It will make no difference whether one can make freshman undergraduates doubt whether they have a text in their class. The God’s eye-view of things will be the way things are, and our skeptical hypotheses will cease. More specifically yet, if the Bible is the word of God, we had better start caring what the Apostles and Prophets meant to say to their target-audiences, notwithstanding our own trendy theories. For in this universe, you can still “do things” with the words of Scripture. No one will stop you. But if the Son of Man should return in power and glory, we

will discover together—as a worldwide interpretive community—just how unfashionable he really is.

## “Justified by Faith – After All That We Can Do!”: Mormon Soteriology and the Doctrine of Justifi- cation by Faith<sup>1</sup>



R. PHILIP ROBERTS  
*President*

*Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary*  
Kansas City, MO 64118  
PRoberts@mbts.edu

Winston Churchill once said that the Soviet Union was “a riddle wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma.”<sup>2</sup> Confusing, complex, bewildering—yes—and the same might be said of the confusing, intricate, and complex system of soteriology found in the doctrine of the Church of Latter-Day-Saints. It is perhaps best represented by the verse found in the Book of Mormon—2 Nephi 25:23 which states—“for we know that it is by grace that we are saved *after all we can do*.” In these few words lies a world of complex elements in terms of what it means to be “justified”, “saved”, “redeemed”, and to know the realities of salvation in its *fullness*! Fullness is a very important code word for LDS conversation on soteriology because it reflects the highest level of salvation—the level towards which LDS membership should lead you!

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to provide a quick panorama of the LDS Church’s doctrine of salvation—with particular reference to justification—and to do so in order to clearly distinguish it from the ge-

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<sup>1</sup> This article originated as a paper delivered by President Roberts on November 17, 2010 at the 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>2</sup> Churchill made this comment in a 1 October 1939 radio broadcast in London (see *Never Give In!: The Best of Winston Churchill's Speeches: Selected by His Grandson Winston Spencer Churchill* (ed. Winston Spencer Churchill; New York: Hyperion, 2003), 199.

neric evangelical doctrine of *Christ alone, faith alone, grace alone*. Our main concern here is with the official church teaching conveyed through its documents, resources, and its presidency. Some attention will be given to a few of its various spokesmen who do not necessarily reflect official views but who are adept at encouraging church members and interfacing with evangelicals in particular.

## I. MORMONISM AND THE AFTERLIFE

In order to understand the LDS doctrine of salvation, we must begin with an overview of its four-tiered, two-dimensional understanding of the afterlife and salvation. The two dimensions of LDS salvation involve what is called by Mormons unconditional and conditional salvation. Unconditional salvation is exactly what it means—salvation without any conditions, or almost none, at least.

The lowest level of salvation is labeled the Telestial realm. In this lowest realm will be consigned people who are unrighteous, immoral, and without faith in Christ. Nothing in LDS scripture or teaching indicates that anything, including faith, is necessary to receive the “blessings” of the Telestial Kingdom. On the Terrestrial level, one up from the Telestial, good and righteous people are welcome there along with nominal Mormons—those who are not “temple worthy.” Continued existence in these two realms is made possible by the atonement of Christ for original sin. This atonement makes it possible for virtually all people to have a continued form of existence with few, if any, conditions applying—hence the term “unconditional” salvation. Christ’s atonement made “life after death” in the happier realms of the Telestial or Terrestrial levels possible. They are in some sense “saved” and Jesus is, according to LDS belief, the savior of the world.

It is at the highest level of eternal rewards, the Celestial Kingdom, where faith is expected and necessary. In the doctrinal catechism *Gospel Principles*, faith is required as a first prerequisite for “exaltation” as the Celestial realm is termed. A list of what is essential for “Exaltation” (also termed the “fullness of salvation” or “eternal life” in the LDS tradition), provided in a chapter by the same name in *Gospel Principles*, duly notes that “we first must place our faith in Jesus Christ and then endure in that faith to the end of our lives. Our faith in Him must be such that we repent of our sins and obey His commandments.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Gospel Principles* (hereafter *GP*), (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2009), 278.

## II. FAITH EQUALS GOOD WORK

It is not clarified that obeying “His commandments” is done as a fruit or result of faith, but rather the intention is that these “commandments” are an explicit and exact expression of what faith is! And so, as not to leave a new church member guessing, they are explicitly listed, preceded by the words: “He commands us all to receive certain ordinances.” They are five as listed in *Gospel Principles*.

It should be noted that baptism, as mentioned above, is not *any* baptism by *anyone* or any *church* but by the “proper authority,” which is a member of the Aaronic priesthood in the LDS church. Apart from the “required ordinances,” there are other duties “the Lord commands all of us to”:

- (1) Love God and our neighbors.
- (2) Keep the commandments (not just any commandments—teachings and directions of the LDS church).
- (3) Repent of our wrongdoings.
- (4) Search out our kindred dead and receive the saving ordinances of the gospel for them.
- (5) Attend our Church meetings as regularly as possible so we can renew our baptismal covenants by partaking of the sacrament.
- (6) Love our family members and strengthen them in the ways of the Lord.
- (7) Have family and individual prayers every day.
- (8) Teach the gospel to others by word and example.
- (9) Study the scriptures.
- (10) Listen to and obey the inspired words of the prophets of the Lord.

## III. JUSTIFICATION: NOT EASY BUT POSSIBLE

It becomes obvious to the observer and student of Mormon thought, despite the protestations of some Mormon apologists, that what is set forth in Mormon soteriology is a clear form of LDS sacerdotalism and sacramentalism. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in a Mormon parable contained in *Gospel Principles* in its chapter entitled “Atonement.”<sup>4</sup> This parable presents the story of a man who owes a great debt. With clear and noticeable parallels to a similar biblical parable, the debtor finds himself unable to repay his obligation. Doom appears eminent. Suddenly, help appears in the form of an intercessor who offers to pay

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<sup>4</sup> *GP*, 1997, 63–5.

the debt for the hapless indebted soul. Once the judge is satisfied that the obligation can be met, the financial savior and mediator turns to the debtor and states, "If I pay your debt, will you accept me as your creditor?" "Oh, yes, yes," cried the debtor, "you save me from prison and show mercy to me." Here is where the LDS parable turns even more significantly and obviously from the biblical account. The story continues, "Then," said the benefactor, "you will pay the *debt to me and I will set the terms. It will not be easy, but it will be possible. I will provide a way. You need not go to prison.*" LDS interpretation is followed in the story. "Our sins are our spiritual debts. Without Jesus Christ, who is our Savior and Mediator, we would all pay for our sins by suffering spiritual death. But because of Him, if we will keep His terms, which are to repent and *keep His commandments*, we may return to live with our Heavenly Father."<sup>5</sup>

#### IV. JUSTIFICATION MIXED WITH SANCTIFICATION

Similar statements are replete in LDS doctrinal literature. "Salvation" begins with faith in Jesus, the Jesus of LDS Latter-Day revelation, but "eternal life" (synonymous with the attainment of the Celestial Kingdom) is something that must be achieved through hard work. One might see it as faith to begin with, but it is only by works—Mormon sanctioned works—that salvation is actually attained. This is seen in the comments on *real* repentance in *Gospel Principles*. It is stated, "We are not fully repentant if we do not pay tithes or keep the Sabbath day holy or obey the Word of Wisdom."<sup>6</sup> Sanctification is certainly mixed with justification in LDS thinking, and repentance, in the LDS definition of the word, is a necessary work for that justification. Consequently, the doctrine of infused righteousness is emphasized and the doctrine of imputation is placed on the back-bench. Hear elder and former president Spencer Kimball:

Repentance means not only to convict yourselves of the horror of the sin, but to confess it, abandon it, and restore to all who have been damaged to the total extent possible; then spend the balance of your lives trying to live the commandments of the Lord so *he can eventually pardon you and cleanse you.*<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *GP*, 1997, 65.

<sup>6</sup> *GP*, 2009, 111.

<sup>7</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1969), 200. See also *GS*, 1997, 126.

In his oft-quoted book *Miracle of Forgiveness*, Kimball speaks to the conditional nature of forgiveness and comments on 2 Nephi 25:23.

[E]ven though forgiveness is so abundantly promised there is no promise nor indication of forgiveness to any soul who does not totally repent.

To every forgiveness there is a condition. The plaster must be as wide as the sore. The fasting, prayers, the humility must be equal to or greater than the sin.<sup>8</sup>

One of the most fallacious doctrines originated by Satan and propounded by man is that man is saved alone by the grace of God; that belief in Jesus Christ alone is all that is needed for salvation . . . [2 Nephi 25:23] makes clear the two facets, neither of which alone would bring the individual salvation—the grace of Christ . . . and individual effort. However good a person's works, he could not be saved had Jesus not died for his and everyone else's sins. And however powerful the saving grace of Christ, it brings exaltation to no man who does not comply with the works of the gospel.<sup>9</sup>

Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie writes:

What then is the law of justification? It is simply this: 'All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations' (D. & C. 132:7), in which men must abide to be saved and exalted, must be entered into and performed in righteousness so that the Holy Spirit can justify the candidate for salvation in what he has done . . . Justification is available because of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, but it becomes operative in the life of an individual only on conditions of personal righteousness.<sup>10</sup>

Though some have tried to distance themselves from Kimball and McConkie, they are both frequently quoted in church publications and their doctrine remains unrefuted by official sources. The following statements found in official LDS church publications reveal the confusing synergistic concept of justification retained in Mormon soteriology.

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 353.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 206–7.

<sup>10</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1966), 408. Cited in Bill McKeever, *In Their Own Words: A Collection of Mormon Quotations* (Draper, UT: Mormon Research Ministry, 2010), 184.

Since the Savior paid for our sins and satisfied justice for us, we become debtors to Him rather than to justice. We must therefore meet the stipulations He has established for forgiveness and cleansing. Otherwise, He withdraws His proffered mediation, and we are left to deal alone with the demands of justice, lacking the means to become pure. One must choose Christ to receive what Christ offers.<sup>11</sup>

Coming to Christ, in LDS thinking, makes keeping the “commandments” possible, or nearly possible, in order to complete the meriting of “eternal life” or the “Celestial Kingdom.” General Authority Dallin Oaks states:

Believers who have had this required rebirth at the hands of those having authority have already been saved from sin *conditionally*, but they will not be saved *finally* until they have completed their mortal probation with the required continuing repentance, faithfulness, service, and enduring to the end.<sup>12</sup>

Some Christians accuse Latter-day Saints . . . of denying the grace of God through claiming they can earn their own salvation. We answer this accusation with the words of two Book [*sic*] of Mormon prophets. Nephi taught, “For we labor diligently . . . to persuade our children . . . to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Ne. 25:23). And what is “all we can do”? It surely includes repentance (see Alma 24:11) and baptism, keeping the commandments, and enduring to the end.<sup>13</sup>

Another authority states:

Being born again, unlike our physical birth, is more a process than an event. And engaging in that process is the central purpose of mortality.<sup>14</sup>

Ezra Taft Benson underscores:

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<sup>11</sup> D. Todd Christofferson, “Justification and Sanctification,” *Ensign* (June 2001): 23.

<sup>12</sup> Dallin H. Oaks, “Have You Been Saved?,” *Ensign* (May 1998): 55.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>14</sup> D. Todd Christofferson, “Born Again,” *Ensign* (May 2008): 79.

As a Church, we are in accord with Nephi, who said, “It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Ne. 25:23). Grace consists of God’s gift to his children wherein he gave his Only Begotten Son that whosoever would believe in him and comply with his laws and ordinances would have everlasting life. By grace, the Savior accomplished his atoning sacrifice so that all mankind will attain immortality. By his grace, and by our faith in his atonement and repentance of our sins, we receive the strength to do the works necessary that we otherwise could not do by our own power. By his grace we receive an endowment of blessing and spiritual strength that may eventually lead us to eternal life if we endure to the end. By his grace we become more like his divine personality.

Yes, it is “by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.” (2 Ne. 25:23).<sup>15</sup>

S. Michael Wilcox notes:

Ultimately, our justification before God *is* a product of faith in the grace of Christ. As Nephi said, “It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.” (2 Ne. 25:23). But the Lord does expect us to do all we can—to repent of our sins, to covenant with him in the waters of baptism, to keep his commandments, and to follow his example of love. (See 3 Ne. 27:16, 21–22). After all, he gave everything—his blood, his body—to remove our sins from us; is it too much to ask that we give him in return our hearts, minds, and strength?<sup>16</sup>

## V. MOVING TOWARD EVANGELICALISM?

Current LDS apologists, perhaps in an attempt to mollify concerns of their own constituents, seem to show some evidence of moving closer to a classical understanding of justification. Robert Millet, a professor at BYU and enthusiastic proponent of the “Standing Together” Movement, an evangelical-LDS dialogue venture, is a noted spokesman for Mormon thinking—especially to the evangelical world. His 2003 book, *After All We Can Do...Grace Works*, addresses 2 Nephi 25:23 in the context of salvation by grace through faith. While Millet is an employee of the church and, in some sense, a spokesman, it must be remembered that he

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<sup>15</sup> Ezra Taft Benson, “First Presidency Message Redemption Through Jesus Christ After All We Can Do,” *Tambuli* (December 1998): 3.

<sup>16</sup> S. Michael Wilcox, “I Have A Question,” *Ensign* (June 1991): 53.

is not a General Authority. He does not speak or write with the authority of the LDS presidency or its council. Whatever is said by him, therefore, may be considered “unofficial” by the church or at least understood as not having the authority of an inspired “spokesman of the Lord” as the President of the Church. Being an “unofficial” publication, not church or LDS published, all that is printed in it has the aura of “plausible deniability.” Nonetheless, it is a widely circulated piece and is sold and distributed by several bookstores.

As a Christian apologist and student of Mormonism, Bill McKeever, in his review of this work, states:

As I read Dr. Millet’s book, I honestly didn’t know whether to rejoice or grieve. Could it be that an educated Mormon was actually setting aside the works-based theology that has long separated Mormonism from the Christian fold? Or was this merely an attempt to use Christian terminology to superficially make it appear that Mormonism was moving towards an orthodox position?<sup>17</sup>

But McKeever goes on:

Where Dr. Millet really stands on this issue depends on what page you are reading. On page 70 he says “faith is complete trust, confidence in, and reliance upon the merits, mercy, and grace of Jesus Christ for salvation.” Then he turns around and says that only by a person’s “continued observance of the requirements of God” can a person have the confidence that he is “acquitted,” “righteous,” and “in divine favor” (page 72). On page 128 he rhetorically asks, “If I rely **wholly** upon the merits of Christ, how much do I **rely** upon myself to be saved? If I rely alone upon the merits of Christ, how much do I rely upon myself to be saved? The answer to both questions is a resounding ‘None’ ” (emphasis his). None?

He correctly notes that “justification is a legal term” and insists that justification establishes his righteous standing before God. But he adds that when Paul says a believer is justified by faith, he merely means it is “the starting point.” “In short, as we have faith, repent, and are baptized, we are justified before God” (page 75). Paul says no such thing. The apostle emphatically declares that a believer is justified by faith and that no man is

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<sup>17</sup> Bill McKeever, “After All We Can Do—Grace Works,” <http://mrm.org/grace-works> (Accessed September 15, 2010).

justified by works of the law (Romans 3:28; 5:1; Galatians 2:16; 3:11; 3:24). Paul does say we are saved “unto good works,” but his writings make a clear distinction between what justifies the believer before an all-Holy God, and what separates the believer unto God.

If, as he says, “Christ’s own infinite merit thus becomes the ground on which the believer stands before God” (p. 77), how can an individual’s sin-stained merit add to this? If I am justified by Christ’s merit, how can I become more justified by including my own?

Dr. Millet’s beliefs regarding salvation by grace alone are nothing new to Mormon thought. ‘The works and deeds of man, though insufficient of themselves for salvation, are necessary . . . Man cannot be saved by grace alone; as the Lord lives, he must keep the commandments; he must work the works of righteousness; he must work out his salvation with fear and trembling before the Lord’ (pp. 118–119).<sup>18</sup>

And McKeever concludes:

Like many LDS authors, Dr. Millet demonstrates his lack of understanding when it comes to the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. Like many of his colleagues and leaders, he continues to confuse sanctification with justification. Because of this, I have an increased concern that many Christians will give this book only a superficial read and, without understanding the necessary Mormon definitions of crucial terms, assume that Dr. Millet is abandoning his old Mormonism and coming closer to a New Testament consensus. If he wrote *Grace Works* with traditional Mormon definitions in mind, then he is really offering nothing new on this important topic.

There are some who do not share my skepticism and, in turn, feel Dr. Millet is leading his church to a more orthodox position. If that is the case, then I don’t think this view is shared by the leadership in Salt Lake City. In a conference address titled ‘The Atonement: All for All,’ Mormon Seventy Bruce Hafen quenched such high hopes when he commented on how some people “mistakenly think our Church is moving toward an understanding of the relationship between grace and works that draws on Protestant teaching.” Such “misconceptions,” he said, prompted him to address this topic on his conference message (*Ensign* magazine, May 2004, p. 91). He then proceeded to warn

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

LDS members that “If we must give all that we have then our giving **almost** everything is not enough. If we almost keep the commandments, we **almost** receive the blessings.” (p. 98, emphasis his).<sup>19</sup>

I must confirm that I agree completely with McKeever’s view.

A notable number of Mormon apologists have continued to make the case that Mormonism really does teach justification by faith. They have always carefully alluded to the fact that this does not necessarily mean justification by faith alone. At the same time, the emphasis is put upon the need for perseverance and godliness. This type of approach can be seen clearly in the work of Stephen Robinson, particularly in his book, *How Wide the Divide*. Clearly this is a minimalist approach to the understanding of Mormon thought and theology and does not, at least in my mind, represent a clear demarcation from traditional church teaching. What it does tend to indicate is that one is brought into a relationship with Christ, but then is to be kept in that relationship and brought on to experience the fullness of the Gospel or exultation by continued works. These works were not mere human righteousness such as keeping the Ten Commandments, but it is obvious from Mormon teaching and the direct instruction of the church that temple worship and other issues are the essential matters of concern here. As well, the church documents themselves do not reflect any serious change or alteration of views. While *Gospel Principles* itself, being the primary discipling manual for the LDS church, does present as attractive and fine-tuned an approach to understanding Mormon soteriology as possible, the necessity of good works to maintain one’s “saved status” are obvious. And these works are clearly essential for a Mormon adherent to move on in the process of being and maintaining Temple-worthiness.

Former LDS President Ezra Taft Benson’s comments demonstrate the insufficiency of grace alone for salvation:

“After all we can do” includes extending our best effort. *It includes living his commandments . . .* We must become pure and holy as Jesus Christ and his Father are pure and holy—for “Man of Holiness” is the name of God. We become pure only as we subscribe to the laws and ordinances the Savior has prescribed in his gospel.

This means we acknowledge the name of Christ as the only name under heaven by which salvation may come to us. It means we fully repent and forsake all that has been evil in our past

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

lives. It means we receive the ordinances of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost so that we are cleansed from sin “every whit,” as the scriptures teach. It means thereafter a life committed to practicing his teachings. Then we truly are his disciples. But all of this is not sufficient to make us worthy to come unto the glorified presence of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

As a Church we are in accord with Nephi, who said “It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Ne. 25:23). Grace consists of God’s gift to his children wherein he gave his Only Begotten Son that whosoever would believe in him *and* comply with his laws and ordinances would have everlasting life.<sup>20</sup>

## VI. THE DANGER OF MORMON CONVERSION

Mormon theology clearly is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma. In fact, it is the case that if Mormonism is true, converts to the truth should never consider conversion into the LDS community. The risks are too great! First, a convert who has received a witness that Mormonism is true, been baptized, and received the Holy Ghost is immediately put into jeopardy regarding outer darkness or perdition. For in the Mormon teaching, those who have received the witness of the Spirit, been baptized, and assimilated into the family of Mormons, if they should ever apostatize they are condemned in the afterlife to outer darkness. You may be as guilty and as foul and evil as Adolf Hitler, and yet miss this tragic destination. If you are, however, a Mormon convert who is apostate, you, along with Lucifer and his angels, are doomed for certain and sure eternal death. Just consider that the possibility of not converting provides and guarantees a destiny far more attractive and vital in a place called the Telestial kingdom. Additionally, conversion into the Mormon Church probably will involve a nominal church commitment. This eliminates the possibility of the celestial kingdom for those who have been unable bring themselves up to temple-worthy status. If one remains unconverted to the church, they certainly and more likely than not will experience proxy baptism in the course of the millennium. This guarantees the opportunity to accept the benefits of such baptism and to ensure entrance into the celestial kingdom. Isn’t this much better than hoping you can do all the work necessary to maintain temple-worthy status here and now? Wouldn’t you certainly accept this as an alternative if it were offered to you? Mormon missionaries who have committed themselves to diligent door-to-door work will actually, more likely than not,

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<sup>20</sup> Benson, “First Presidency Message: Redemption Through Jesus Christ After All We Can Do,” *Liahona* (Dec 1988). (Unpaginated online edition at [lds.org](http://lds.org)).

lower the number of people who qualify for the celestial kingdom by making them or encouraging them to join the LDS church. They'll miss the opportunity for a sure way of getting there through proxy baptism. In actual fact, the number of folks destined for exaltation will be decreased instead of increased. My encouragement to our Mormon missionary friends is not to make converts to the Mormon Church because they will in fact lower the numbers of exalted beings headed for the celestial kingdom.

In such a convoluted, discombobulated system of soteriology, where the benefits and attractions of joining are actually lessened by the mere system itself, it would appear to the more than casual observer or the serious student that Mormonism is obviously a man-concocted system. It was devised under the influence of Joseph Smith, who was not necessarily looking for reasons to believe, but rather a belief system to fit his lifestyle. He devised one that is grossly inappropriate and counterproductive to true godliness and Gospel-worthiness. With this in mind, it's obvious why 2 Nephi 25:23 is a confusing statement, for we are saved by grace *after all we can do*. How can grace be grace if it is after all that we might do? It becomes rather a self-help scheme that falls far short of the biblical concept of God's *charis* and *agape*. For us to understand and embrace the true Gospel, it is a warning and encouragement for us to be busy about the work of sharing with our Mormon friends and acquaintances the truth as we know it in Jesus Christ.

## Another Look at James Arminius and the Dutch Reformation<sup>1</sup>



JERRY SUTTON

Academic Dean

*Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary*

*Kansas City, MO 64118*

JSutton@mbts.edu

James Arminius was a Dutch Reformed minister (Amsterdam) and theological professor (Leiden) in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. To many he is an enigma on the scene of the Dutch Reformation. All too often historians have done Arminius and history an injustice by over simplifying the complex political, social, economic and religious milieu of his day and age. This oversimplified explanation of the Dutch Reformation appears in three states—“Calvinism came in, Arminius nearly ruined it, the Synod of Dort restored it.”<sup>2</sup>

However, this dismisses the dynamic interplay of manifold forces in the Dutch Reformation. Another historian furthering the misconceptions concerning the place and significance of Arminius role in the Dutch Reformation says that,

...after an active pastoral and intellectual life as minister in the church, he became Professor of Theology in Leiden University. Little by little tradition tells that he was led into anti-Calvinist error by the writings of the Dutch libertine pietist Dirck Volckertsz Coornhert—Arminius fell away from total acceptance of the Calvinist theology, balking particularly at the ‘horrible decretum’ of election. Against that decree he laid his theological emphasis upon man’s free will and God’s mercy, until he finally denied

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on research while Dr. Sutton was studying with William R. Estep, noted historian of the Reformation and the Anabaptist movement.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1971), 21.

the doctrine outright and asserted a church polity in conformity with his idea of man's relation to God.<sup>3</sup>

For many, these analyses constitute the sum total of "the facts" concerning Arminius. The contention of this article is that these two assessments, of the Dutch Reformation in general and Arminius in particular, are both superficial and inadequate.

Our purpose, therefore, is to examine the Dutch Reformation with an eye to clarifying the issues surrounding the polarizations within the Reformed church. What were the issues which brought Arminius into conflict with the "high Calvinists" and eventually led (after his death), to the polarization of the Remonstrant and Contra-Remonstrant factions consummating in the Synod of Dort (1618–1619)? What was the context and background of the conflicts emerging in the Dutch Reformation? How did the political, theological and ecclesiastical issues fit into the socio-economic matrix? This article, while not attempting to be a mini-biography of Arminius, will nonetheless seek to present the different issues in their chronological setting. It will maintain a bifocal approach; first, by presenting a brief overview of the Dutch Reformation and secondly, by concentrating on the issues which separated Arminius and his disciples from the "orthodox" Calvinists in the Dutch Reformed Church.

## I. OVERVIEW OF THE DUTCH REFORMATION

The religious reformation in the Netherlands was cradled in the arms of the political fight for freedom. The political revolution was basically a revolt from the oppression of Catholic Spain. The two great antagonists in this struggle were Philip II of Spain and William the Silent. Philip's objective, keeping in mind that the Netherlands comprised part of his domain, was the supremacy of Spain and the extirpation of heresy, especially of the Anabaptist and Reformed varieties. On the other hand, William's twin ideals were love of freedom and hatred of oppression.<sup>4</sup> "It was not patriotism, but pity, not love of what he was defending, but hatred of what he was attacking that made him a liberator."<sup>5</sup> As a man of tolerance he allowed liberty of conscience to every man.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> R. L. Colie, *Light and Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 8.

<sup>4</sup> W. Stevenson, *The Story of the Reformation* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959), 115.

<sup>5</sup> J. M. Thompson, *Lectures On Foreign History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1947), 112.

<sup>6</sup> Stevenson, 116.

As for the Netherlands, there were three grounds for discontent. First, they bitterly resented the continued presence of Spanish troops on Dutch soil. Second, they were strongly opposed to the suggested formation of new bishoprics—a tactic of Philip's to further entrench Catholicism and hence Spanish rule. Third, they were appalled at the barbarous decrees against heretics and the savage treatment of the victims.

In 1566 a milestone on the way to the war for freedom against Spain occurred. A document written by William's brother, Louis of Nassau, and supported by religious leaders Philip of Marnix and Viscount Brederode (A Roman Catholic), accompanied by two thousand signatures was presented to Philip's representative in Brussels. It requested the withdrawal of the Inquisition and the lifting of placards or decrees against heretics.<sup>7</sup> At the sight of approximately 200 petitioners, Margaret of Parma, Philip's regent, was apprehensive. In response to the regent's apprehension, Barlaymont, one of her advisors, retorted, "What, Madam! is your Highness afraid of these beggars?" Said Brederode in response to the insult, "They call us beggars, we accept the name."<sup>8</sup> The beggar's sack appearing all over the country became the symbol of resistance to Spain.

The outbreak of iconoclasm by angry mobs climaxing with the pilaging of Antwerp's cathedral in August of 1566, precipitated Philip's response. He sent the Duke of Alva to crush the rebellion. Alva arrived on August 8, 1567. Thus began the slow but brutal war with Spain which was to last until 1609.

What was the religious side of the Reformation? In 1523 the first martyrs for the cause had been burned at the stake in Brussels, the capital city of the Netherlands at that time. Soon afterwards, several Protestant trends manifested themselves, variously inspired by Luther, Erasmus, and the Anabaptists.<sup>9</sup> Carl Bangs suggests that the Reformation came in three stages. First, around 1520 the Sacramentarians emerged. Basically, this was a loose designation for a number of people who preached against abuses in the church. One Sacramentarian, Pistorius, taught that the decrees and canons of the church were to be taken seriously so long "as they agreed with the word of God." Arminius was to be in this sturdy tradition.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 119

<sup>9</sup> Gerrit J. Hoenderdaal, "The Life and Struggle of Arminius in the Dutch Republic," in *Man's Faith and Freedom* (ed. G. O. McCulloh; New York and Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 11.

<sup>10</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 21.

The Sacramentarians gave way to the Anabaptists—probably many of them became Anabaptists in the 1530s.<sup>11</sup> This “heresy” had come out of Zurich where Zwingli had expelled these “radicals.” The common people and some of the magistrates heard them gladly. Because the Munster fiasco gave Anabaptists a bad name and due to a number of other organizational problems and oppressive measures, in addition to internal friction, Anabaptism was unable to become a dominant force in Dutch Protestantism.<sup>12</sup>

The third stage sees the rise of the Reformed church. Bangs points out that the earliest Dutch Reformed leaders do not seem to be Calvinists at all; instead, they appear to be indigenous individuals nurtured on biblical piety. They are not seized by dogmatic insights but steadily press toward a purified faith according to Scripture.<sup>13</sup> This indigenous movement was sustained by such writings as Veluanus’s *Layman’s Guide* and Bullinger’s *Housebook*. History records a continuation of thought from Veluanus to Arminius. Nonetheless, many forerunners of Arminius emerged, such as Caspar Coolhaes in Leiden.

As Calvinist clergy and people fled northward from the attack by Spain and the Catholics the plot thickened. These Calvinists brought with them their talents, energy, money and theology which was precise and intolerant. Then, as the Remonstrant historian Gerard Brandt comments, the term “Reformed” came to have two meanings. It meant one thing to the old Hollanders, yet something quite different to the new preachers.<sup>14</sup>

In the later 1500s Calvinism began to make heavy inroads into the Netherlands. Its appearance in organized form can hardly be said to antedate the year 1544. Usually its introduction has been traced to influences which spread from Geneva through France to the southern provinces where the French language was widely spoken. Here the first Calvinist churches were organized. Yet, its coming was more complex.<sup>15</sup>

DeJong traces its infiltration along three avenues. First is in the writings of Calvin, Zwingli, Oecolampadius and Bullinger. Second, many leaders from the Netherlands found themselves exiles from time to time. Some went to Geneva, others fled to places where Reformed churches in

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<sup>11</sup>Bangs, *Arminius*, 21. See also C. Krahn, *Dutch Anabaptism* (The Hague, Netherlands: M. Nijhoff, 1968), and Wm. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story* (Nashville: Broadman, 1963, repr. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975).

<sup>12</sup>Estep, 108-29.

<sup>13</sup>Bangs, *Arminius*, 21.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>15</sup>Peter DeJong, “The Rise of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands,” in *Crisis in the Reformed Churches* (ed. P. DeJong; Grand Rapids, MI: Reformed Fellowship, 1968), 9.

exile were organized, i.e. Emden and Heidelberg after 1550. A third avenue was found in the vigorous labors of those who returned to the southern provinces to organize and lead Reformed congregations and then fled North due to Spanish persecution, i.e., Plancius.<sup>16</sup>

In the course of time, the Netherlands, while yet at war with Spain, was able to prosper under the political leadership of Jan van Oldenbarnevelt and the military leadership of William and later Maurice of Orange, William's son.<sup>17</sup> With the war, the center of commerce shifted to Amsterdam. The "Alteration," as the official Reformation of Amsterdam was called, occurred in 1578. The Alteration saw the Roman Catholic clergy and monastics leave Amsterdam in early May of 1578, with Reformed Church services beginning on May 11, 1578. This was a victory for the Reformers of 1566 who had endured and survived.<sup>18</sup>

With the Alteration a new town government was constructed, or should we say reconstructed, to reflect the new distribution of power.<sup>19</sup> The reconstructed city government centralized power in the City Council, a group of 36 community leaders. The Council, reflecting the new distribution of power consisted of three groups: (1) thirteen were among the "Old Beggars," the militant reformers forced into exile in 1566; (2) thirteen were mild reformers, less revolutionary in their actions; and (3) the final ten consisted of Roman Catholics who were members of the old town government. Needless to say, the balance of power shifted to the returning exiles, four of whom became burgomasters, the highest position in the political structure.<sup>20</sup>

The immediate result of the Alteration saw several changes. First was a revival of trade. Coupled with this was the beginning of rapid population growth, including many refugees from the south, a key factor in the religious turmoil to come. The Alteration brought new regimes in both city and church.

By 1592, the machinery of radical change was in motion. The war for independence changed the picture with respect to trade; many even managed to trade with the enemy. At this time, the decline of Antwerp due to Parma's invasion,<sup>21</sup> brought Amsterdam into a position of leadership. Parma offered a two-year period of grace in which inhabitants were al-

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> William the Silent had been assassinated in 1584 at Delft.

<sup>18</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 104.

<sup>19</sup> For a concise overview of the Amsterdam hierarchy, see John Murray, *Amsterdam in the Age of Rembrandt* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 20-26.

<sup>20</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 105.

<sup>21</sup> J. P. Blok, *History of the People of the Netherlands (1559-1621)* (trans. Ruth Putnam; New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900), 202-05.

lowed to leave Antwerp. As many as 60,000 left taking with them their skills, their international trade connections, their capital and their theology (which for Reformed was strict Calvinism). Meanwhile in the North two interconnected inventions were significant. The Dutch had improved the style of their ships to develop the *Fluit* or “fly-boat,” a long, narrow craft of great speed and capacity; and they had adapted the windmill, first used to pump water out of the holders to saw lumber. The quick production of lumber in standard sizes made possible a massive production of fly-boats.<sup>22</sup> Amsterdam in 1592, was exploding with manpower, capital, technology, and capability of trade. With little vacant land in which to invest and old trade patterns thwarted by war, an interest in new trade routes and expanded commerce was in view. East Indian trade in the form of trading companies would shortly appear. With successful espionage, secret Portugese trade routes were made available to the Dutch with the resultant explosion of foreign trade. With the change and expansion wrought by trade southern personnel and capital were playing a large role in the North—this was to have a profound impact on Amsterdam’s and the Netherlands’ religious life.

In the course of history, a polarity was to develop in the Dutch Reformed Church. The antagonists were to be Arminius and his disciples, and on the other side, the “orthodox” Calvinists. It culminated ten years after Arminius’s death. On April 24, 1619, the “Synod of Dort” (Dordrecht) sat for the 154th, and last time. Ostensibly summoned to resolve differences between Dutch Remonstrants (Arminians) and Contra-Remonstrants within a context of Calvinist theology, in reality it pronounced predetermined decrees on Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Total depravity, Irresistible Grace, and the Perseverance of the Saints.<sup>23</sup> In connection with the proceedings of the Synod of Dort, Jan Oldenbarnevelt, the Arminians’ protector, was found beheaded on trumped-up charges. Remonstrants were denounced as heretics and banished.<sup>24</sup> Some two hundred Remonstrant ministers were imprisoned. Hugo Grotius, one of them, managed to escape. As Peter DeJong, a Reformed historian, summarizes, “the Synod of Dort marks the close of the

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<sup>22</sup> Carl Bangs, “Dutch Theology, Trade, and War: 1590-1610,” *Church History* 39 (December 1970): 470-482.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Peters, “John Hale and the Synod of Dort,” in *Councils and Assemblies* (ed. G. J. Cummings and D. Baker; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 277.

<sup>24</sup> H. A. Slaate, *The Arminian Arm of Theology* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1977), 16.

first period in the history of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.”<sup>25</sup>

With the overview complete, the next segment of this paper will address the issues involved in creating the polarity within the Dutch Reformed Church. The approach will be twofold, dealing first with Arminius’s pastoral years in Amsterdam (1587–1603) and then second, his professorial years in Leiden (1603–1609). This paper is making this dichotomy because the contexts differ to the extent that the issues are clarified and conflict becomes more intense in the latter episode. In our discussion of each issue the format will be to (1) define the issue, (2) give its background, and (3) delineate the two sides’ views.

## II. ARMINIUS IN AMSTERDAM (1587-1603)

In Arminius’s pastoral years he found himself in conflict over a number of issues within the Reformed Church. For brevity’s sake these will be considered under three headings. First, Arminius clashed with the “orthodox” Calvinists over the issue of toleration—he was in favor of it. Secondly, there was the doctrinal-theological conflict in which Arminius did not conform to Calvinist doctrine (and particularly to Beza’s form of Calvinism). A third issue of conflict was over church polity and government. Arminius’s ecclesiology evidently differed from the “high” Calvinists.

The question to raise at this point is this: was Arminius an innovator or was there a precedent for the views which he espoused? The contention of this paper is that Arminius reflects an indigenous Reformed Church<sup>26</sup> which is progressively assaulted and infiltrated by Calvinism to the point that it loses its grasp on the reins of power and hence is displaced by an alien religious form, i.e. Calvinism. Therefore, the sociological aspect accounts for a portion of the ensuing conflict. How is this manifested in the conflicts which crystallized into the polarities of Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants?

## III. TOLERATION

The basic issues in respect to toleration were whether or not differing religious opinions would be tolerated, and where would the line be drawn with respect to tolerance and intolerance. Needless to say, formal Catholicism was not tolerated by the Reformed Churches. But what was the attitude toward others who dissented and even those Catholics who were not vocal? In respect to toleration or the lack of it, there were two

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<sup>25</sup> DeJong, 17.

<sup>26</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 54.

sides. Both wanted to present a united front against the onslaught of the Catholic Counter-reformation. However, the means were different. One side, which would be Arminius's position, advocated tolerance both as a conviction and as the key to unity against Catholicism. The other side, comprised of Calvinists, asserted doctrinal conformity as the means for achieving unity. Two events in Arminius's youth would bring him to stand against Spanish-Catholicism and intolerance. The first was the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572. It was here that one of Arminius's intellectual models, Petrus Ramus (Pierre de la Ramée), was murdered.<sup>27</sup> This would have been adequate to establish an anti-Catholic bent in Arminius's personality. However a second event was to prove much more tragic. On August 6, 1575, Arminius's mother and siblings were murdered by Spanish troops in the Oudewater massacre. Carl Bangs, summarizing primary sources, says:

It is not a nice story. First the defending soldiers on the walls were shot or stabbed to death. Those who fled into the town were pursued and killed. Then the massacre spread to noncombatants. Mothers were killed in front of their children, children in front of their mothers. Girls and women were raped in view of their fathers and husbands, and then all were killed. No place, no person, was exempt from the pillaging invaders. When the nuns in the cloisters were discovered, they pleaded that they were faithful Roman Catholics. So much the better for your souls, said the soldiers, as they raped and murdered them.<sup>28</sup>

When news reached Arminius he was crushed. "After two weeks of lamentation, almost without intermission" Arminius left Marburg (one of four locations of study) and returned to Holland, "to look once more upon his native town, though in ruins, or to meet death in the attempt."<sup>29</sup> This was one of the tragedies in Arminius life and provides ample justification for his stand against intolerance.

Two other reasons for Arminius belief in toleration may be cited. Bangs points out that while he was in Geneva, besides studying under

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<sup>27</sup> Hoenderdaal, 11-13.

<sup>28</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 42. Note that some managed to escape or hide successfully.

<sup>29</sup> James Arminius, *The Works of James Arminius, D.D.* (vols. 1 and 2, trans. James Nichols; London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1825-1828); (vol. 3, trans. William Nichols; London: Thomas Baker, 1875), 19-20. For a collection of Anabaptist source material, see *Anabaptist Beginnings (1523-1533)* (ed. Wm. R. Estep, Nieuwkoop: B. DeGraaf, 1976).

Beza, Arminius also studied with Charles Perrot who was more tolerant and liberal than many of his colleagues. In the preface to his book, *De Extremis in Religione Vitandis*, Perrot said, "I desire and approve beyond all things, that every man should enjoy his own opinion freely and entirely."<sup>30</sup> Needless to say, the book was suppressed in Geneva, but his views appear to have left a lasting impression on the young Arminius.

A final impression towards toleration was made on Arminius during his trip to Italy in 1586. The pope at the time was the newly chosen Sixtus V, who had begun his reign with a campaign against lawlessness in Rome. It was a reign of terror. Soon after it began, according to one report, there were "more bandits' heads on the Bridge of St. Angelo than there were melons in the market."<sup>31</sup> This evidently contributed to Arminius's desire for toleration, or at least his distaste for intolerance.

Two men who set precedents for toleration in Arminius's day were Gaspar Coolhaes and Guilielmus Feuguereus. As a student at Leiden, Arminius had first-hand knowledge with the split in the church at Leiden. The rift was over the relation of church and state but the issue of tolerance surfaced as one among many. Coolhaes was the advocate of toleration, a conviction that had its roots in the indigenous North Netherlands Reformation with its distaste for extremism. In a publication, Coolhaes urged toleration of Lutherans and Mennonites, then pointed out that toleration was a two way street, urging toleration of high Calvinists also. His views were condemned and he was deposed from the ministry in 1581.<sup>32</sup> Earlier, in 1570, Feuguereus had written a book dedicated to William of Orange, advocating tolerance.<sup>33</sup> But were there any precedents for toleration for the city in which Arminius was to pastor for fifteen years? The answer is yes.

What were Arminius's roots in Amsterdam? How might his relation to this city contribute to his stand for toleration? Arminius was a "Son of Amsterdam" in two distinct ways. First, this is true in terms of his vocation as a minister. The city's Merchants' Guild functioned as his benefactor, paying for his education. At the completion of his education, he returned to Amsterdam where he became a leading minister. A second means of identity with Amsterdam was in his marriage to Lijsbet, the daughter of Laurens Jacobsz Reael, one of the "Old Beggars," and a leading man in the community. Therefore, Arminius was content and

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<sup>30</sup> Gerardt Brandt, *Historie der Reformatie en andre Kerkelyke Geschiedenissen: in en ontrent de Nederlanden Vol. 2* (Amsterdam: Jan Rieuwertsz. Hendrik en Dirk Boom, 1671-1704), 124.

<sup>31</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 79.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

even committed to support Amsterdam's standards. One historical standard since the 1520s was the ideal of tolerance.

What was the background of toleration in Amsterdam? The roots of toleration ran deep. Even prior to the Alteration, reform sentiment and the spirit of toleration were evident.

There were numerous instances in which they looked the other way in order not to see Sacramentarian and Anabaptist activities that were forbidden by placards from higher authorities. When the first Anabaptists had been taken away from Amsterdam and condemned and executed in the Hague, the magistrates privately resolved to hinder a repetition of the event.<sup>34</sup>

Later, in 1566, with the first uprising of the Reformation (which would only last for four months) in Amsterdam, Lutherans and Zwingli-Calvinists were unable to come to agreement concerning the Reformed Church. Would it be comprehensive or established within strict guidelines? When Jan Arendsz espoused an inclusivist policy, the Calvinists of Antwerp sent Caspar van der Heyden to admonish the Amsterdam community for its lax doctrine and scold them for their inclusiveness and toleration.<sup>35</sup> This was evidently a foreshadowing of storms to come in which Arminius would find himself a major player.<sup>36</sup> When the Alteration occurred in 1598, men of moderate reforming tempers came into the City Council, men who were neither dogmatic nor vindictive, broad in sympathies. Two men who served as burgomasters, Cornelis Pietersz. Hooft and Wilhem Baerdesen were even more tolerant than the moderates, or at least vocalized their espousal of tolerance. Baerdesen, whose wife and sister were Anabaptists, and Hooft, whose wife also was Anabaptist, were strong defenders of liberty of conscience. Hooft later became a strong defender of Arminius and resisted those who attempted to impose narrow doctrinal standards on the Dutch church.<sup>37</sup> In the 1580s hard Calvinism was not "palatable" in Amsterdam. However, in time the composition of the city government was to change.<sup>38</sup> In the 1590s, Burgomaster Hooft, a "Libertine," sided with Calvinism in its opposition to Spain, but against it in its push for doctrinal rigidity. In 1597 the growing polarity was evident as the "heretic" Vogelsangh was taken into custody,

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<sup>34</sup> R. D. Evenhuis, *Ook Dat Was Amsterdam Vol. 2* (Amsterdam: W. ten Have, 1965, 1967), 23–25.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.66.

<sup>36</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 96.

<sup>37</sup> Evenhuis, 2.274.

<sup>38</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 124.

leaving his wife and children without support. Hooft was so enraged over the zeal of the Calvinist clergy against heretics that he made a public statement of protest on October 15, 1597, in the presence of the other burgomasters. Hooft opened by reminding his hearers that the war against Spain had been fought to gain “a shelter for liberty, but not an unbounded power of invading others.” He urged freedom of conscience and then pointed his finger toward the church observing that it had allowed itself to become dominated in the consistory by “outsiders who do not understand the nature of Holland...these imported elders bring with them quarrels of other places.” “It is inconsistent,” said Hooft, “to complain of intolerance under popish government and then to practice the same intolerance.”<sup>39</sup> Bangs comments on Hooft’s role, saying:

Hooft sees the original religious purpose of the Alteration to be the establishment of a comprehensive church, broadly Protestant. He resents the influx of refugees who subvert the church with a coalition of ministers and workers who together dominate the consistory and enforce an intolerant Calvinism on the City.<sup>40</sup>

In this background and setting, Arminius was the theological spokesman for toleration. History records that as a pastor in Amsterdam, Arminius used discretion in the role of enforcing Reformed polity. It appears that Arminius was not so broadly tolerant as he was slow to make a blanket condemnation on opposing views. Written evidence of his toleration is lacking; however it emerges in his actions and in his associations. While serving as pastor, Arminius was frequently called upon to deal with those who would not comply with the teaching of the Reformed Church. Several examples may be adduced.

One group which threatened the Reformed Church were the Brownists, an independent congregation, which had fled from the persecution of England to the toleration of Holland. What offended the Dutch was the Brownists’ uncompromising and total rejection of the polity and practice of the Dutch churches. Arminius, foremost among defenders of the Dutch position, responded with a measure of toleration. Writing a critique of the Brownists, he stopped short of total condemnation. Orthodox Calvinists were not so tolerant.<sup>41</sup> Arminius, who resisted “trouble makers and unorthodox spirits”<sup>42</sup> did not pursue all those considered heretics, as seen with the Anabaptists. The Anabaptists had considerable success in drawing off members of the Reformed church. The minutes of

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<sup>39</sup> G. Brandt, 1.817–24.

<sup>40</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 163.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

the consistory show that Arminius remonstrated with individual Anabaptists in their homes, urging them to return to the Reformed Church. Given an assignment by the Synod of North Holland in 1599, Arminius was asked to write a critique of Anabaptism as an apologetic tool. In his work, he referred extensively to the Anabaptists' own publications. No doubt, he read Hubmaier's tract, "Concerning Heretics and Those Who Burn Them."<sup>43</sup>

Arminius did not actually want to write the refutation.<sup>44</sup> He was reluctant to make a blanket condemnation of all their teaching. The "orthodox" Calvinists, with their doctrinal rigidity were not nearly as tolerant. In summarizing Arminius's pastoral years, Bangs calls him "the emerging leader of a new articulate theological school built on the foundation of Dutch Protestantism...valiant for the truth but not afraid of tolerance."<sup>45</sup> At Leiden, Arminius's view of toleration, nurtured in Amsterdam, was to crystallize. Arminius's early views have a twofold source, the nature of the Dutch people and his own reaction against intolerance. However, closely entwined with the issue of toleration at Amsterdam was the doctrinal issues which serve to separate Arminius from his "high Calvinist" antagonists. What were the doctrinal issues?

The doctrinal and theological issues which divided Arminius from the "high Calvinists in Amsterdam began publicly with Plancius's accusation that Arminius preached heresy. This heresy was found in the fact that Arminius was not preaching the "Bezan" interpretation of Scripture, particularly on the subject of predestination found in Romans 7 and 9. What is the background of the doctrinal differences?

The Dutch church as it convened in 1571 had no problem over predestination. At that time the Belgic Confession which it adopted as a model was sufficiently ambiguous. As Bangs comments, "Article 16 of the Belgic Confession put the matter in a form that was both brief and mild."<sup>46</sup> It did not provide a clear answer to questions which later would be raised about Sub-, Infra-, and Supralapsarianism. At Emden this topic was not even considered. While at Emden, Arminius's future father-in-law, Laurens Jacobsz. Reael, wrote a catechism for the instruction of his children. Some see in the answers of questions 38 and 42 the seed of Arminius's soteriological thought:

The saving deed of Christ is not effective for all men, however, only for those who believe (Q. 38)....

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<sup>43</sup> See Estep, *Beginnings*, for source material.

<sup>44</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 169.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

whose good works in themselves can only be sinful and unavailing for salvation (Q. 42).<sup>47</sup>

Notably silent from the early doctrinal stands is the theory as to how grace works. It became a vocal issue. What is the background of the theological conflict in Arminius's life? What is his theological background? What evidence exists supporting the popular notion that he was a "Bezan Calvinist" until his radical change of heart and mind in his early Amsterdam pastorate? What evidence exists to the contrary?

Arminius received his earliest training amidst a Reformed Church which was becoming increasingly divided over issues which originated in Switzerland. For a time Arminius lived in Marburg. His university education was at Leiden, where the University and church were both free from clerical control. His six years as a student at Leiden, 1578 to 1581, covered the greater part of the Coolhaes episode. The faculty at Leiden included Coolhaes, Feuguereus and Holman, all of whom opposed Beza's Supralapsarianism. Not until 1581 did a rigid Calvinist teach theology there. This is strong support for the notion that Arminius was directed toward a non-Bezan theology before he even matriculated to Geneva or undertook the ministry.<sup>48</sup>

In 1581, Arminius enrolled in Geneva as a theological student during which time he came into open conflict with Beza not on the issue of predestination but logic. Beza's logic was Aristotelian, but Arminius espoused the Peter Ramus model for logic.

For a short period of time Arminius studied at Basel until the conflict could die down returning to Geneva within a year. At Geneva, Beza became Calvin's heir apparent and then his successor. By the time Arminius came to Geneva in 1581, Beza was the aged and honored patriarch of the Reformed churches. Bangs says:

In Beza, Arminius was face to face with a derivative Calvinism, not that of the master himself, but that of an epigone who tries to be faithful to his teacher by imposing a strict internal coherence on what had been a free and creative theology. Perhaps everything that Beza says can be found in Calvin, but the emphasis is different. Beza lifts the doctrine of predestination to a prominence which it did not have for Calvin. Predestination, made an end in itself, became for Beza an utterly inscrutable mystery of

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>48</sup> Carl Bangs, "Arminius and the Dutch Reformation," *Church History* 30 (June 1961): 161.

the divine will. It is a decree preceding the decree of creation (an order of decrees is not to be found explicitly in Calvin).<sup>49</sup>

In studying predestination, Beza posited that God ordered predestination of individuals, decrees of election and damnation to man not yet considered as created. Beza's doctrine of predestination is the fountainhead of what is often labeled "high Calvinism." The precipitation of the so-called Arminianism controversy to a great degree was in the conflict with these who insisted that the details of Beza's system were essential to Reformed orthodoxy. J. C. Godbey points out that by developing a Supralapsarian schema, Beza lifted the doctrine of predestination to a position of theological priority far above that given it by Calvin.<sup>50</sup>

Upon completing his studies at Geneva, Arminius received from Beza a letter of commendation which is often adduced as Beza's acceptance of Arminius's theology. By examining correspondence between Uitenbogaert and Arminius the fact emerges that Beza was rather prone to unexpected tolerance with Dutch students who disagreed with him on predestination.<sup>51</sup>

Except for the questionable evidence of Arminius's funeral oration by Bertius, evidence emerges that Arminius was not in agreement with Beza's doctrine of predestination when he undertook his ministry at Amsterdam, indeed he probably never agreed with it.<sup>52</sup> The issues would not be raised until Plancius challenges him at Amsterdam.

As Arminius began his pastoral duties what theological issues created the polarization between Arminius and the "orthodox" Calvinists? Arminius's antagonist in Amsterdam was Petrus Plancius who was not a mild Calvinist but the first of a new breed of rigid "high Calvinists." Plancius was the first minister to propagate and emphasize the doctrines of predestination. J. Keuning, his biographer, says, "Until Plancius went north, the preaching there was more Bible than dogma, more piety, than theology, with no trace of the doctrine of predestination to be found."<sup>53</sup> Needless to say, it was only a matter of time before he and Arminius clashed.

On November 6, 1588, Arminius began preaching from Romans and Malachi, addressing, early, issues of grace and predestination. It was fol-

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<sup>49</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 66.

<sup>50</sup> John Godbey, "Arminius and Predestination," *Journal of Religion* 53 (October 1973): 491.

<sup>51</sup> Bangs, "Dutch Reformation," 61.

<sup>52</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 141.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

lowing his public exposition of Romans 7 that the first round of strife was to raise its ugly head.<sup>54</sup>

The basis of the conflict was over Arminius's interpretation of Romans 7:14, "I am carnal, sold under sin." Does the Apostle, as Arminius puts it, "treat about a man who is still unregenerate or about one who is already regenerate through the spirit of Christ?" The Calvinist interpretation ascribed Paul's words about difficulty of following the law of God to the man to whom Christian salvation had come; this is a difficulty that would always be with the Christian. Arminius, however, felt that this contradicted Romans 6:14, "ye are not under law, but under grace." Arminius concluded that Paul must be speaking of unregenerate man because "the regenerate obtain the forgiveness of sins through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ and the power of his spirit."<sup>55</sup> Arminius was unwilling to apply the words, "I am carnal, sold under sin," to the life of a believer. In Arminius's words,

He who approves not of that which he does, nor does that which he would is the slave of another, that is, of sin...But the man about whom the apostle is treating approves not of that which he does, nor does what he would, but he does that which he hates. Therefore, the man who is in the place of the subject of discussion is the slave of another, that is, of sin; and therefore the same man is unregenerate and not placed under grace.<sup>56</sup>

This interpretation of Scripture precipitated the first round of theological conflict. Plancius accused Arminius of heresy. The unregenerate man, asserted Plancius, could not have as much godliness as is described in this chapter. Plancius accused Arminius of both Pelagianism and Socinianism. As a result of the accusations, the issue was brought up before the consistory and then the town council. The meeting before the magistrates was held on February 11, 1592. Arminius acknowledged that his exposition of Romans seven differed from some of the Reformed, but he denied that he was outside what was permitted by the Confession and the Catechism.<sup>57</sup> He had supposed that he could exercise the liberty enjoyed by all Christian teachers of expounding Scripture according to the dictates of conscience. The outcome of the meeting saw Plancius implicitly

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<sup>54</sup> For Arminius's development of Romans 7 see James Arminius, *The Writings of James Arminius* (3 vols.; trans. James Nichols; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1956), 2:195–243.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:233.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:253.

<sup>57</sup> Morley Rattenbury, "The Historical Background and Life of Arminius," *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 185 (October 1960): 245.

rebuked for only he had made “declamatory statements.” Arminius was to exercise care in the utterance of “new doctrines,” but was not condemned. Why? It affirmed that there might well be doctrinal matters that were not yet settled in the Reformed Church and which should be proper matters for discussion in a town council. Thus the oligarchy stood firm (1) in its support of toleration, (2) of its adopted son Arminius, and (3) of its own role as the guardian of the peace of the church. Bangs observes that before the burgomasters Arminius was surrounded by friends. When the case was taken to the Town Hall, Bre’r Rabbit was in the briar patch.<sup>58</sup>

For the time being there was peace in the church. However, doctrinal controversy revived early in 1593 as Arminius preached on Romans 9. Pieter Dirksen and Burgomaster Claes Oetgens joined Plancius in complaining of Arminius’s exegesis and exposition of Scripture.

By now it was apparent that there were two parties in the city. One was a high Calvinist party with Plancius its theological leader and Oetgens its political leader. The other was gathered around Jan Egbertsz. Bisschop, a prominent Amsterdam merchant, and looked to Arminius for its theological leadership.<sup>59</sup>

The issue over Romans nine was to be the wedge between the warring factions and the primary theological catalyst toward the polarity in the Dutch Reformed Church. Romans 9 dealt with election and concepts of predestination. The high Calvinists, Plancius, et.al. clung to the Bezan interpretation of Romans 9 through 11, i.e., “Supralapsarianism,” which taught Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace and Unconditional Election of both the saved and the damned.

A precedent for this issue can be found in the case of Snecanus who asserted that “the doctrine of conditional predestination is not only conformable to the word of God but cannot be charged with novelty.” Beza dismissed this view as absurd;<sup>60</sup> he had built upon Romans 9 a doctrine of double predestination.

In his Introduction to the ninth chapter of Romans Snecanus presents arguments very similar to Arminius.<sup>61</sup> Arminius put his analysis of Romans nine (his sermons are no longer extant) in a letter to Snecanus, writing of their “mutual agreement” upon the interpretation of it.<sup>62</sup> What were the major emphases of Arminius’s interpretation?

<sup>58</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 145.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 193–94.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Arminius, *Writings* (American Ed.) 3:527. The entire letter is contained in 527–65.

First, Arminius asserts that the interpretation of Beza is wrong because he asks the wrong question and is looking for an answer about which Paul is not dealing. The false question is, "Will the Word of God fail even if most of the Jews are rejected?" The corresponding answer is: "God determined that only some of the Jews were to be partakers."<sup>63</sup> Hence, Beza's Supralapsarianism. The problem with this is that the question is inadequate. The correct question, says Arminius, is, "Does not the word of God become of no effect if those Jews who seek righteousness not of faith but of the law are rejected by God?" And the answer is, "God, in his word and in the declaration of his promise, signified that he considered in the relation of children only those Jews who should seek righteousness and salvation by faith, but in relation of foreigners those who should seek the same by the law."<sup>64</sup> Arminius grounds his interpretation in Romans 4:9–10 and Galatians 3–4.<sup>65</sup>

Next, Arminius examines Paul's use of types and antitypes. Confusion arises over Isaac and Ishmael, and Esau and Jacob when they are taken as examples in themselves of God's purpose rather than as types of the children of the flesh and children of the promise.<sup>66</sup> The crux of Arminius's argument is found here. He asserts a predestination of classes, those who seek righteousness by works and those who seek it by faith.<sup>67</sup>

Arminius also criticizes Beza in respect to predestination saying "an act which is inevitable, on account of the determination of any decrees does not deserve the name of sin," only those who sin voluntarily and of their own choice can be held blameworthy."<sup>68</sup>

Arminius also takes issue with Beza on the concept of order of decrees with respect to the word translated "lump." Beza in his Supralapsarian interpretation asserts that this is the aggregate of fallen man.<sup>69</sup>

This is a summation of Arminius's arguments for Romans 9. In it is contained the theology which polarizes the Reformed Church. Here, the issue is doctrinal and particularly election. Beza suggests a double-predestination while Arminius teaches a predestination of classes, i.e., for Arminius those in Christ are saved. These treatises on Romans 7 and 9, plus his critique of Perkins and his correspondence with Franciscus Junius (1597), comprise the extant writings of Arminius from the time of his Amsterdam pastorate. Later, his sentiments crystallize.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 3:529.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 3:530–31.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 3:532–33.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 3:533–44.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 3:540.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 3:548.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 3:558.

In summary, Arminius wrote a poem to Snecanus stating his feelings on the theological issues:

If any man will show to me,  
 That I with, Paul do not agree  
 With readiness I will abstain.  
 From my own sense, and his retain:  
 But if, still further, one will show  
 That I've dealt faith a deadly blow  
 With deepest grief my fault I'll own,  
 And try my error to atone.<sup>70</sup>

This is an overview of the theological issues which were to divide the Reformed Church. One more area of conflict which will precipitate the polarity in the Reformed Church is the issue of Ecclesiology. The relation of Church and State, and that of the Creeds to the Church will likewise contribute to the rift.

#### IV. ECCLESIOLOGY

Besides issues of toleration and doctrine, Arminius came into conflict with high Calvinists over issues of an ecclesiological nature. These issues can be subdivided into two distinct points of conflict. One is the relation of Church and State. The other is the place of the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. The two points of contention tie together in the spectrum of authority. Arminius advocated a strong magistracy exercising control of the Church, and wanted to do away with Creeds and catechisms altogether. However, orthodox Calvinists urged strict adherence to the Creeds and lobbied for an autonomous Church with the State having a subservient role. So, at stake in this issue is the nature of the Church: is it confessional or liberal? Was it to be a Church with unity in doctrine or one which allowed freedom for differing views? "Increasingly it became clear that what the Arminians wanted was full doctrinal freedom, while the Calvinists insisted on doctrinal unity and (enforced) stability."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Quoted in Bangs, *Arminius*, 198.

<sup>71</sup> Louis Praama, "The Background of the Arminian Controversy (1586-1618)," in *Crisis in the Reformed Church*, (ed. P. DeJong; Grand Rapids, MI: Reformed Fellowship, 1968), 29.

## V. THE RELATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

The first point of contention in relation to ecclesiological issues concerns the relation of Church and State. Historically, the sides divided along two lines: first, the *rekkelijken*, the loose and comprehensive libertines, or broadminded Reformers; the Amsterdam merchants in the 1570s reflected this persuasion. In tension with them were the *preciezen*, precisionists, who wanted a church that ordered its own affairs without interference from the magistrates. Coornhert called the *preciezen* policy, “the papacy of the presbytery.”<sup>72</sup>

In the Synod of Emden (1571) the *preciezen* won a partial victory with the Belgic Confession being adopted as the formula of doctrinal unity for the Dutch speaking churches; it also adopted a plan of church government, the *Acta*. The *Acta* stated that no church may have authority over any other church (Acta 1). Each church would have a consistory, comprised of ministers, elders and deacons (Acta 6); adjoining churches should send delegates to a “classis” which would meet two to four times per year (Acta 7); it provided for a general meeting for all Dutch churches (Acta 9); and stated that ministers are called by the consistory with consent of the classis (Acta 13).<sup>73</sup> Note that no role is ascribed to the magistrate; the calling of ministers is entirely an ecclesiastical matter. It is a mistake to assume that the Synod of Emden was a victory for Calvinism. Its polity was never universally implemented, particularly not in Leiden or Amsterdam. As a matter of fact, the Amsterdam refugees had originally opposed it, but finally acquiesced.<sup>74</sup> A precedent was set in favor of the *rekketijken* in Leiden in the early 1580s. On March 13, 1581, a young theology professor, Danaeus, came to Leiden to teach:

Danaeus was imbued with the Genevan polity, and in Leiden he came into conflict with another kind of Reformed polity, much less presbyterial. As with many of the early Dutch Reformed churches, the Leiden burgomasters exercised the right of passing on nominations for elder and deacon made by the consistory. In Genevan polity the consistory was a law unto itself. Many early Dutch Reformers had rejected this aspect of Genevan polity, fearing the uncontrolled, literally iconoclastic Calvinist zealots. The Genevans in turn, feared the subjection of the church to the state.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 100.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 101–102.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 51–52.

Controversy erupted with the Leiden pastor Coolhaes, siding with the burgomasters against Danaeus and his colleague, Stumis. With the school in an uproar Danaeus resigned and departed in May, 1582. Note that the polarities are beginning to emerge.

Another factor emerged in 1586 as a National Synod met at the Hague, called by Leicester. The effect of the Synod was the elimination of all functions of the magistrates (burgomasters) in the calling of pastors.<sup>76</sup> This served to further polarize the *rekkelijken* and *preceizen*.

However, in Amsterdam, the burgomasters retained control of the goings on of the Church. In the first Arminian controversy of 1592, the burgomasters saw that dissensions of that kind were nipped in the bud so as to prevent any results disastrous to the church or even the Republic. If the consistory could not settle its differences, they, the burgomasters, “would be obliged to have recourse to other remedies.”<sup>77</sup> In this period, remarks Bangs, there was outward unity between the Libertine magistrates, who were also the elders and deacons in the consistory, and the more orthodox clergy. The polarity represented still only divergent tendencies and not yet mutually exclusive and openly discernable parties.<sup>78</sup>

After the first two conflicts produced by his sermons the only other notable incident produced by Arminius’s sermons arose out of his exposition of the thirteenth chapter of Romans, when there were complaints that he granted the magistrates too much power in the matters of religion.<sup>79</sup> By and large, Arminius and the burgomasters stood together in affirming the right and duty of the magistracy to exercise oversight of the internal affairs of the church.

In the seventeenth century it became customary to label Arminius’s view of the relation of Church and State, “Erastian,” after the views of Thomas Erastus (1555–1584). Erastus had become disturbed over the inordinate use of excommunication after the Genevan polity had been introduced at Heidelberg. He decided after studying the scriptures that excommunication was unwarranted, attributing it to the improper assumption of authority by the church officials. He asserted that all external discipline should be under the general law of the community, administered in Christian lands by magistrates, who oversee the law both as a civil and sacred function. He states the right and authority of rule and

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>77</sup> Casper Brandt, *The Life of James Arminius D. D.* (trans. John Guthrie; Nashville, TN: E. Stevenson and F. A. Owen, 1867), 81–82.

<sup>78</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 109.

<sup>79</sup> Brandt, *Life of James Arminius*, 124–25.

jurisdiction has not been committed to ministers or to any others.<sup>80</sup> Arminius's teaching is similar to Erastus.<sup>81</sup> However, Arminius does not rule out the use of excommunication in the case of external sins.<sup>82</sup> With respect to the magistrate, Arminius does conform to the precedent of many Dutch towns and the teachings of Erastus. In consultation with spiritual leaders the magistrate is to enforce ecclesiastical laws, "preserve and defend" the ministry, appoint ministers who have been examined by a presbytery, see that they perform their ministry, bestow rewards on those who minister well and remove those who are "pertinaciously negligent."<sup>83</sup> Arminius would later assert that "magistrates should call councils and preside over them, or arrange for their presidency, since he alone, if he is performing his duty correctly, is able to bring to a council that impartiality which its presidency requires."<sup>84</sup> Arminius saw the magisterial function as a matter of divine mandate rooted in the Old Testament practice and in the practice of the early church before it became papal.<sup>85</sup> Arminius's teaching on the relation of Church and State proved to be a source of conflict between himself and the "orthodox" Calvinists, particularly while in his post as professor at Leiden. While Arminius was yet at Amsterdam, in 1597, the Synods of North and South Holland petitioned the states for a national synod. The states refused fearing that the Synod, moving in the wrong direction, would place undue limits on the role of the magistrate in the calling of pastors and in other functions of oversight in the Church. "The States General feared that a national synod would give occasion for the Calvinists to introduce a Genevan polity whereby the church ruled itself entirely while still calling on the state to protect and maintain it." This in turn could introduce a reign of religious intolerance which would divide the nation.<sup>86</sup> Bangs summarizes the developing polarity, saying,

The civil and lay interference with church affairs was resented by the Genevan elements. Thus the party lines began to emerge with the lay magistrates and the laity generally on one side and

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<sup>80</sup> Carl Bangs, "All the Best Bishoprics and Deaneries": The Enigma of Arminian Politics," *Church History* 42 (March 1973): 8-9.

<sup>81</sup> An excellent work dealing with the relation of Arminianism and Erastianism is Douglas Nobbs, *Theocracy and Toleration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938).

<sup>82</sup> Arminius, *Writings* (American Ed.), 2:141.

<sup>83</sup> Bangs, "Enigma," 9. Bangs quotes Arminius, *Writings* (American Ed.), 2:508.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, Bangs quotes Arminius, *Writings* (American Ed.), 1:183.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 225-26.

the high Calvinist clergy on the other. The magistrates and laymen, supporting Erastianism, toleration, and mild views of predestination, saw in the other party the seeds of a new papacy in which the clergy could come to dominate the church and dictate its doctrine and policies. The clergy saw in the magistrates a threat to the presbyterian polity in which the church preserves its autonomy against the interference of the state.<sup>87</sup>

## **VI. THE PURPOSE AND PLACE OF THE BELGIC AND HEIDELBERG CONFESSIONS**

Inextricably interwoven into the fabric of the Dutch Reformed polarities was the problem of the purpose and place of the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. What were their places in the short history of the Reformation? How did the early Dutch Reformers view them? What were their functions? How did the axiological opinions toward the Creeds contribute to the polarities within the Reformed Church?

Originally designed as an apology for the new Reformation faith to King Philip of Spain, the Belgic Confession subsequently gained the position of a touchstone for orthodoxy. It had been written by Guy de Bray and was first printed in 1561. At a Synod held in Antwerp in 1566 the Confession was modified, and from 1580 there had been recurrent demands that it be subscribed to by the Reformed clergy. Yet Calvin himself had warned against putting any creedal statement on the same level as the Scriptures. Later on, however, when Calvinism had reached a certain measure of consolidation many sought to make the Belgic Confession the standard for orthodoxy.<sup>88</sup> The Heidelberg Catechism, likewise, was promoted as a standard for orthodoxy. It was compiled in 1562 by Ursinus and Olevian, two Heidelberg theologians, at the behest of Elector Frederick III, and accepted the following year as the standard of doctrine in the Palatinate. Its fundamental theology was Calvinism.<sup>89</sup>

In examining the place of creeds in the early Dutch Reformed Church, keep in mind that early Dutch Reformers from Amsterdam had opposed the Belgic Confession's acceptance (1570) as a requirement for orthodoxy. Even prior to Emden, at the inception of "field preaching" in 1566, with the indigenous Dutch Reformation,<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Bangs, "Dutch Reformation," 159.

<sup>88</sup> Hoenderdaal, 14.

<sup>89</sup> *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (ed. F.L. Cross; London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 629.

<sup>90</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 93.

...the doctrinal basis was a biblical humanism directed against the Roman corruption of the church. The Heidelberg catechism played no official role but was probably regarded as a useful tool of instruction.<sup>91</sup>

In essence the Creeds were viewed as useful by the early Dutch Reformers, however, little evidence is forthcoming to assert that they were ever accepted universally as a strict measure of orthodoxy. Even though the Belgic Confession was signed at Emden (1571), as one writer says, "It was sufficiently ambiguous" so as not to be too restrictive in its function.<sup>92</sup>

At the Alteration, Cuchlinus carried the responsibility of bringing order out of chaos. He was doctrinally loyal to the Heidelberg Catechism as a statement of Calvinism.<sup>93</sup> However, in practice the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession were not held as strict measures of orthodoxy. Of the first nine Reformed ministers in Amsterdam, only one signed the Belgic Confession.<sup>94</sup> This was true even though the Synods of Dordrecht (1578) and Middelburg (1581) required that all ministerial candidates must sign it.<sup>95</sup> Nor is there any evidence that Arminius signed the Belgic Confession or the Heidelberg Catechism.<sup>96</sup>

By the 1590s it was apparent that no earlier Dutch synods, were truly "national" synods, that is, representative of the whole church.<sup>97</sup> Among all parties it was agreed that a genuine national synod must be held at the behest of the States General. Until such a synod was held, it was possible to refer all questions about the authority and interpretation of the Confession and Catechism to the "forthcoming national synod."<sup>98</sup>

The polarities on the place of the Creeds were showing. Those who were lukewarm to them could point out that they were not Dutch documents but imports from foreign churches.<sup>99</sup> The supporters of supralapsarianism wanted the formulas endorsed by a national synod; the opponents wanted them to be "revised in the light of the word of God."<sup>100</sup> The ensuing question which would become even stronger during Arminius's

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>97</sup> Bangs, "Enigma," 10.

<sup>98</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 225.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

professorial years at Leiden was, “Should a national synod meet to enforce the Confession and Catechism, or, to revise them?”<sup>101</sup>

The issues of toleration, doctrine and ecclesiology served to polarize sides in the Dutch Reformation. Issues which initiated polarization in Arminius’s pastoral years crystallized in his years at Leiden as professor of theology.

## VII. CONFLICT AT LEIDEN (1603–1609)

During his years in Amsterdam, Arminius made his views known through both preaching and correspondence. When Franciscus Junius died of the plague in 1602, Arminius was proposed as his successor in the chair of theology at Leiden. However, vigorous opposition came from the supralapsarian clergy. He received the appointment nonetheless, a revealing commentary on the still-fluid theological situation in the Dutch churches in 1603. But now, with the appointment of Arminius, theologico-political forces that had been coexisting somewhat peacefully since the beginnings of the Dutch Reformation came into open conflict. Leiden became a center of contention with Arminius the spokesman for the “toleration” party and Franciscus Gomarus the leader and spokesman for the Supralapsarian faction.

The issues surfacing in open conflict were a continuation of those which Arminius had earlier addressed. They crystallized in controversy over the doctrine of predestination with accompanying debate over grace and free will, and over the nature of the Church. Would it be tolerant and open, and subject to magisterial control, or intolerant reflecting a doctrinally rigid Calvinism? The latter issue would surface in debate over the proposed national synod. Dogmatic theology and the politics of Church and State were intertwined in the six years of Arminius’s life as a professor at Leiden. Consider first the doctrinal issue as it surfaced at Leiden.

### *A. The Doctrinal Issue*

It might be wise at this point to dispel a misconception. Oftentimes Calvin and Arminius are put in tension as having mutually exclusive systems of thought. What was Arminius’s attitude toward Calvin and his writings? The answer is found in a letter he wrote to Sebastion Egbertsz.,

...after the reading of the Scripture...I recommend that the Commentaries of Calvin be read.

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<sup>101</sup> Hoenderdaal, 114–15.

...For I affirm that in the interpretation of Scripture Calvin is incomparable...so much so that I concede to him a certain spirit of prophecy in which he stands distinguished above others, above most, yea, above all.<sup>102</sup>

However, Arminius is not as enthusiastic over Calvin's *Institutes*:

His *Institutes*...I give out to be read after the Catechism, as a more extended explanation. But here I add—with discrimination, as the writings of all men ought to be read.<sup>103</sup>

Likewise, Arminius verbalizes his loyalty to the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. What Arminius quarreled with was a Supralapsarian interpretation of Scripture, not so much with Calvin or even Creeds.

What events contributed to the ever widening polarities? What issues were at stake? The key issue at stake was the issue of predestination as taught by Beza and his followers, Plancius, Gomarus, and the multitude of other high Calvinists. Was their doctrine true to Scripture? Arminius thought not. At Leiden, Arminius immediately set about teaching theology, including the doctrine of Predestination, as he viewed it from his indigenous Dutch Reformed background. In his public disputation given for his doctorate on July 10, 1603, Arminius said,

...though the understanding of God be certain and infallible, it does not impose of necessity in things, nay rather it establishes in them a contingency.<sup>104</sup>

Translated, this means that the fall was not decreed, but based upon man's choice, a position contrary to Beza. In another disputation (15), on February 7, 1604, Arminius, speaking on "Divine Predestination," says:

One caution ought to be strictly observed, that nothing be taught concerning [predestination] beyond what the Scriptures say, that it be propounded in the manner which the Scriptures have adopted, and that it be referred to the same end as that which the Scriptures propose when they deliver it.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> This quote contained in a letter to Sebastien Egbertsz, May 3, 1607. It is recorded in Brandt, *Life of James Arminius*, 299–301.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Arminius, *Writings* (American Ed.), 1:447,

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 1:569.

By this, Arminius is implying that those teaching “Supralapsarian Predestination” are going beyond Scripture into speculation. Later, on May 29, 1604, Arminius again pressed hard that the “first sin was contingent and not necessary,”<sup>106</sup> further exposing his polarity with Supralapsarianism. On October 31, 1604, the theological battle at Leiden commenced. Gomarus started it by holding a public disputation, but one that was out of turn and out of step with the established schedule. He excused his speaking out of turn because error was abroad (speaking of Arminius). At the disputation he expounded Beza’s predestination theories.<sup>107</sup>

In his public disputations, Arminius challenged many of Gomarus’s and Beza’s theories. Arminius taught that predestination was “the decree of the good pleasure of God in Christ, by which he resolved from all eternity, to justify, adopt and endow with everlasting life...believers on whom he had decreed to bestow faith.”<sup>108</sup> In this definition believers are the elect, and therefore, faith precedes election.

When accused of teaching a Pelagian concept of free will, Arminius responded [speaking of man as a sinner]:

In this state, the free will of man towards the true good is not only wounded, maimed, infirm, bent, and weakened; but it is also imprisoned, destroyed, and lost. And its powers are not only debilitated and useless unless they be assisted by grace, but it has no powers whatsoever except such as are excited by divine grace. For Christ said, without me ye can do nothing.<sup>109</sup>

Arminius later says “free will is unable to begin or to perfect any true and spiritual good without, grace.”<sup>110</sup> [The regenerate] are “made capable in Christ, cooperating now with, God...this cooperation whatever it may be of knowledge, holiness, and power, is all begotten within him by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>111</sup> Arminius does not deny predestination. However, he does define it differently from Beza, developing his own Biblical Theology. Of fundamental importance is the fact that for Arminius the doctrine of sin and inability, in which he agrees with Calvin, is explicitly presupposed as the problem to which predestination is the answer. This disagrees with Beza and his followers, who made the decree of election refer

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<sup>106</sup> Casper Brandt, *Life of James Arminius*, 195–97.

<sup>107</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 263–64.

<sup>108</sup> Arminius, *Writings* (American Ed.), 1:565.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.526

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

to man as yet uncreated. Beza's position makes it necessary that there be sin in order that God may carry out His prior decree—which is to make God the author of sin.<sup>112</sup>

As theological tensions increased, complicated by political issues, Arminius was asked to state his theological position before the States of Holland. On October 8, 1608, he delivered his understanding of predestination and other theological points of conflict. After a scathing attack against Supralapsarianism, Arminius delineated his own understanding of predestination. For Arminius,

The first decree of God concerning the salvation of sinful men is that by which he decreed to appoint His Son, Jesus Christ, for a Mediator, Redeemer, Savior, Priest and King, who might destroy sin by his own death, and by his obedience might obtain the salvation which has been lost, and might communicate it by his own virtue.<sup>113</sup>

The second decree extends election to those who repent and believe in Christ, i.e., the Church. The third decree is the administration of “sufficient and efficient means” necessary for the repentance and faith by which one is in Christ. The result is that Christ is the elect One, that all are elect who are in Christ, and that no one is in Christ except the come by faith. Election in its primary sense, therefore, refers to Christ. In its legitimate extension it includes believers. The fourth and final decree specifies particular persons, sinful men, whom God elects and saves because of their foreknown repentance and faith.<sup>114</sup>

Arminius asserted that God's predestination is “in Christ.” By affirming a Christological understanding of predestination, Arminius departed in a number of particulars from high Calvinist Reformed theology.<sup>115</sup> Here are a few of the major departures. First, predestination does not determine who shall believe, only that those in Christ, believers, are elect. Second, salvation being in Christ, it not dependent on free will, but free will is active in salvation. Third, the will can resist grace. Fourth, the resistibility of grace leads to the possibility of falling from grace. The possibility that a believer may cease believing is at least an open question. Finally, all this implies a general atonement.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Bangs, “Dutch Reformation,” 166.

<sup>113</sup> Arminius, *Writings* (American Ed.), 1:247.

<sup>114</sup> Bangs, “Dutch Reformation,” 167–68.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>116</sup> Adapted from *Ibid.*, 169–70.

Arminius's view, then, definitely is different from a Supralapsarian understanding of Predestination. The question arises, why is the Predestination issue so important? Why the rage over it? It was not merely a disagreement in the realm of ideas, neither was it just an historical accident. The issue over predestination has its roots in the polarity in Dutch religious and national life going back to the refugee flights of 1566. Polarity existed in Arminius's Amsterdam days. In the seventeenth century the polarity was taking new forms and intensifying.<sup>117</sup> With the Catholic Counter-Reformation, Cardinal Bellarmine attacked the Reformed doctrine of predestination. "Here he found the soft underbelly of the Protestant enemy, and his jabs hit home."<sup>118</sup> When someone else, especially a Reformed professor of theology, took his own jabs at this soft underbelly, it was reckoned a defection in the direction of Roman Catholicism. Just such a jab was made of Arminius. All of this served to make predestination a touchy issue, for it seemed to strike at the very foundation of both the Reformed religion and the national struggle for independence. In the socio-economic matrix these ideas stood for political realities which further complicated and polarized the two sides.<sup>119</sup>

### *B. The Ecclesiological Issue*

The various facets in the ecclesiological struggle were manifested in the strife over the proposed national synod. At the heart of the polarity was the definition of the Church's nature. Was it broad, tolerant and free of doctrinal restrictions, or was it exclusive, intolerant and doctrinally elite? The issue on the nature of the church followed Arminius to Leiden and became an increasing point of contention between himself and his high Calvinist antagonists. Dissent existed in the church. Concluding his term as Rector Magnificus at Leiden on February 8, 1606, Arminius delivered his "Rectoral" oration, "On Reconciling Religious Dissention among Christians."<sup>120</sup> In it Arminius analyzed causes of dissentions and his proposed cures. He called for a national synod and gave some specifications for it. Also, Arminius made one final plea for a degree of toleration and inclusiveness in the Church. He revealed his Erastian sentiments urging that the magistrates exercise control and then urged that the ultimate authority must be the Bible, not decree or dogma. For Arminius, the crucial issue for lack of peace in the Church was the exalted place of the Confession and Catechism.

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<sup>117</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 273.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Arminius, *Writings* (American Ed.), 1:146–92.

...nothing is more obstructive to the investigation of truth than prior commitments to partial truths.<sup>121</sup>

Arminius sentiments further polarized the sides. His suggestion were not acceptable to Supralapsarians.

On March 15, 1606, at the request of the provincial synods the States General granted approval for a “National Synod.” Far from bringing the two parties together, however, it drove them farther apart, for the Supralapsarians were dismayed at the wording of the sanction. The Synod was authorized in terms as those laid down by the States of Holland (1597): that in “the National Synod the Confession and Catechism should be revised.”<sup>122</sup> The Synodical deputies were furious.

In late May of 1607, the Preparatory Council for the National Synod met at the Hague. Their purpose was to establish guidelines for the Synod. Of the eight questions to be settled within the Council the delegates divided on the sixth question—should the delegates be bound only by the Word of God? Thirteen delegates wanted to bind the delegates to the Confession and Catechism as well as to Scripture. Four delegates, Arminius, Uitenbogaert and two Utrecht ministers submitted a minority report with a simple yes. The crux of the matter was one of authority. Was Scripture the supreme authority in terms of which Confession and Catechism could be revised, or were they determined *a priori* to be so conformable to Scripture that not even Scripture could judge them? Arminius and his friends were outvoted.

Professor Hoenderdaal, reflects that the deeper issue involved was the doctrine of the Church.

Arminius and Uitenbogaert wanted a church that would be free from what was already a too-confining confessional authority. They wanted to recognize a plurality of confessions. In this they were not un-Calvinistic, for Calvin himself was willing to recognize more confessions, including the Augsburg.<sup>123</sup>

The Council also disagreed over question eight: how the Synod may contribute to the well being of the Church. Arminius thought the answer was in revising the creeds, however, the majority vote placed no mode of promoting the Synods goal of contributing to the churches’ well being.

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<sup>121</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 278.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.

This was a defeat for Arminius and his followers and soon they would learn that the majority would press for far more restrictive measures than those they had proposed in the Preparatory Convention.<sup>124</sup>

The next year, Arminius, writing to Burgomaster Sebastian Egbertsz., relates how his opponents were pressing to restrict the synod to the “orthodox” party only (who would rise up against any, who wanted to change the Confession and Catechism). Instead of being a peaceful synod it would be controlled by the self-appointed accusers of heretics who would suppress and ban anyone they considered “unorthodox.”<sup>125</sup> Arminius recommendations in his Rectoral Oration were rejected.

In his “Declaration of Sentiments” Arminius made some strong statements relating to the nature of the Church and the place of the Creeds.<sup>126</sup> He urged that Scripture be the sole authority in the church and argued that the doctrine, of Supralapsarian Predestination was not in accord with Scripture, the Church Fathers, or the greater part of the professors of Christianity.<sup>127</sup> Arminius stated that

Of all the difficulties and controversies which have arisen in these our churches since the time of the Reformation, there is not one that has not had its origin in this doctrine, or that has not, at least, been mixed with it.<sup>128</sup>

Arminius cited cases of schism and polarity in the Dutch Church. He listed Coolhaes at Leiden, Herman Herberts of Gouda, Cornelius Wiggerts at Hoorn and Tako Sybrants at Medemblik as examples of orthodox Dutch pastors who had conflict with and suffered by the Confession and Catechisms high Calvinist Supralapsarian interpretation.<sup>129</sup> Arminius desired to clarify and reduce the Catechism and Confession because, “there are certain words and phrases which are capable of being understood in different ways and furnishing occasion for disputes.”<sup>130</sup> His suggestion was, “let it (the Synod) be attempted to make the Confession contain as few articles as possible; and let it propose them in a very brief form, conceived entirely in the expressions of Scripture.”<sup>131</sup> Arminius wanted to remove the ambiguities. When challenged by those who

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 291.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Arminius, *Writings* (American Ed.), 1:264–73.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 1:239.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 1:240.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 1:266.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 1:172.

would not consider revising the Creeds, he responded, “there is nothing wrong with calling into question that which is not unquestionable.”<sup>132</sup> Arminius’s “Declaration of Sentiments” only created further polarization within the Dutch Reformed Church. Gomarus continued his attacks accusing Arminius of being Pelagian, Socinian, and a secret supporter of the papacy. It is fortunate that Arminius did not live to see his worst fears materialize at the Synod of Dort. He died of tuberculosis on October 19, 1609.

### VIII. CONCLUSION

Carl Bangs, the eminent historian and biographer of Arminius, summarizing the life of Arminius, reflects:

The early controversies at Amsterdam had occurred in the tranquil last days of the old order; the later occurred in the turbulent first days of a new order. The theology of Arminius was the same: the receptivity and the pattern of power were different. In the 1590s, Arminius could scarcely lose; in the 1600s, he could scarcely win. Failure to take into account the economic and political changes surrounding the theological discussion leads to a distorted understanding of that discussion. It was the church and the country which had changed in the two decades, not the theology of Arminius, as some have asserted. Arminius was not an innovator who attempted to undermine the official Dutch Reformed doctrine of Predestination. He was a Dutch Reformed pastor and professor who interpreted the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism in the tradition of many of the earliest indigenous Reformed leaders of the Dutch church.<sup>133</sup>

Arminius’s life falls in a period of intense nationalistic and religious struggle. The old pattern of Christendom and Empire was breaking up with the rise of the new national states. The rivalry of Catholic and Protestant played a distinct part in the process; questions of patriotism and religious allegiance were inevitably intertwined.<sup>134</sup>

Well chosen were the words of eulogy spoken at James Arminius funeral: “There lived in Holland a man, whom they that knew him could not sufficiently esteem; whom they who did not esteem him had never sufficiently known.”<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Bangs, *Arminius*, 314,

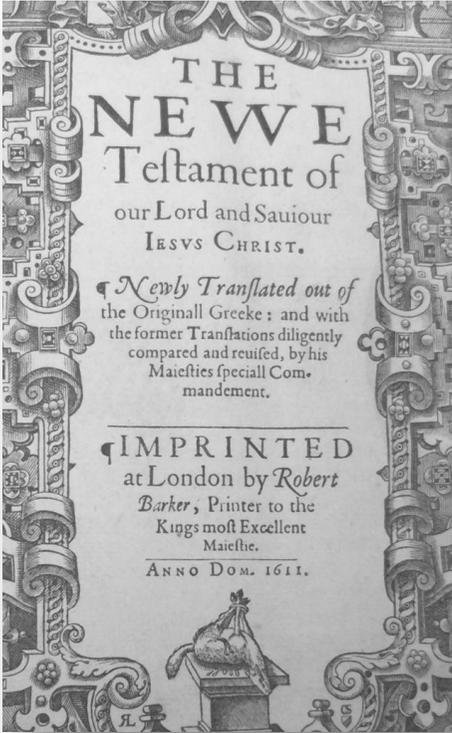
<sup>133</sup> Bangs, “Theology,” 481–82.

<sup>134</sup> Rattenbury, “Historical Background,” 243.

<sup>135</sup> Slaate, *The Arminian Arm of Theology*, 12.

Following Arminius's death Uitenbogaert called a private meeting at Gouda of those who sympathized with the views of Arminius. Held on January 14, 1610, forty-six ministers of the Reformed Church attended the conference. The group drew up a "Remonstrance" of five articles against (1) the Supralapsarian decree, (2) the Sublapsarian decree, (3) the idea that Christ died only for the elect, and (4) the question whether the saints could fall from grace was still uncertain. The "Remonstrance" though unsigned was sent to Oldenbarnevelt, who circulated it among the different classes. It was met with a storm of opposition, a storm that culminated at the Synod of Dort.

## The Art of the New Testament Front-Piece Of the 1611 King James Bible



RONALD V. HUGGINS  
*Associate Professor  
NT and Greek  
Midwestern Baptist  
Theological Seminary  
Kansas City, MO  
64118  
rhuggins@mbts.edu*

**Figure 1: From the 1611 King James Bible  
New Testament Title**

This year we celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of one of the most remarkable and influential books ever published, the King James Version of the Bible. As is appropriate to such an occasion a number of new books and articles have appeared about the King James. Relatively few of these touch however on the question of the art and illustration of the King James Bible. The present article attempts to fill that gap a little by taking a look at the engraved Title Page (hereafter TP) included at the beginning of the New Testament portion of the 1611 first edition of the King James.

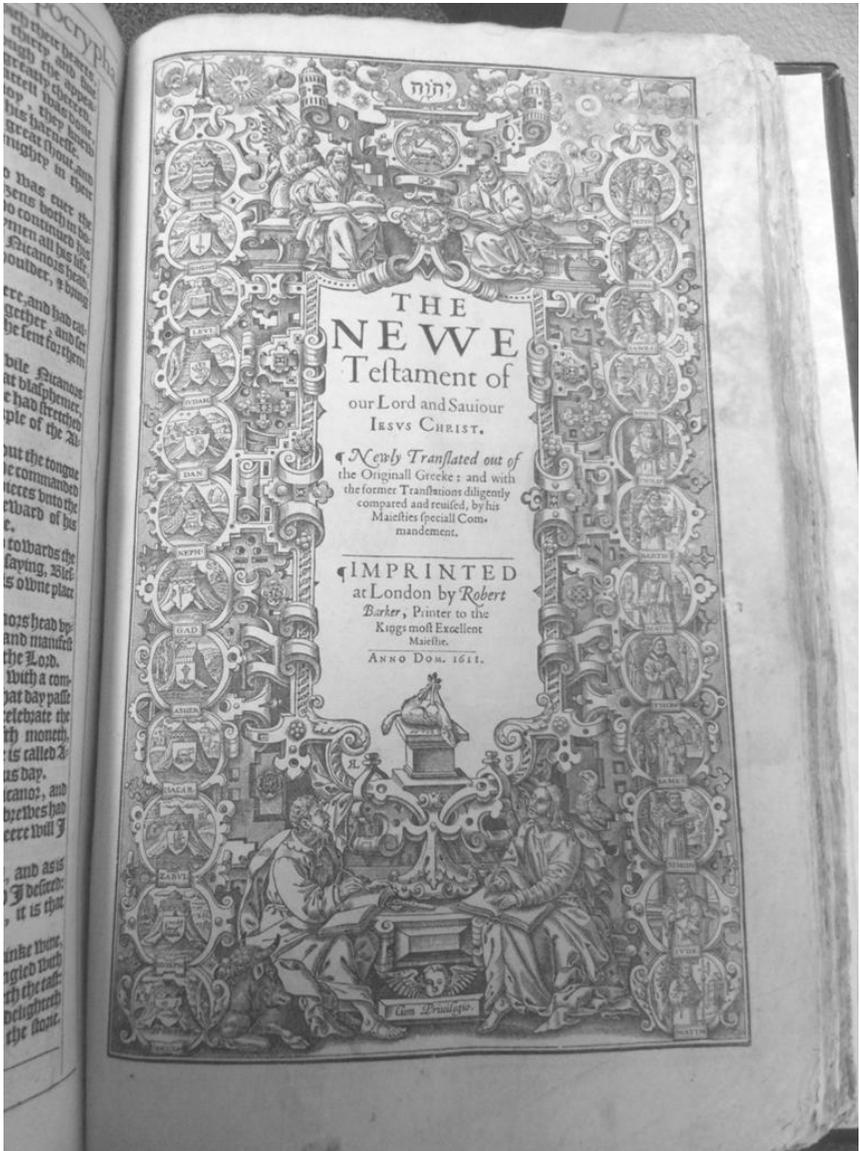


Figure 2: Title Page of the 1611 King James Version New Testament. This photo is from the copy of the original edition belonging to Harold Rawlings, long-time Midwestern friend and grand story teller of the history of the English Bible.

To be sure the New Testament TP is not the only piece of illustration of any interest in the King James Bible, indeed the front-piece at the beginning of the Old Testament is better known, and it even includes a piece of symbolic imagery that has special interest to me, and to which I dedicated an article in an earlier issue of this journal (fig. 3).<sup>1</sup> I refer to pelican with her children as a symbol of Christ. The ancient belief being illustrated was described in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century Aberdeen Bestiary as follows:

It is devoted to its young. When it gives birth and the young begin to grow, they strike their parents in the face. But their parents, striking back, kill them. On the third day, however, the mother-bird, with a blow to her flank, opens up her side and lies on her young and lets her blood pour over the bodies of the dead, and so raises them from the dead.<sup>2</sup>

This symbolism of the pelican as representative of Christ and our redemption, although extremely popular in the middle ages, is not well known to most Protestants, who have avoided Roman Catholicism's and Eastern Orthodoxy's enthusiasm for religious images out of a (quite justifiable) desire to avoid idolatry.

In the Old Testament front-piece to the KJV this traditional symbolic depiction of the pelican and her children appears at the center of the bottom of the page between the evangelist Luke (on the left) and John (on the right) and just beneath the publication date 1611.

As with the symbolism of the pelican and her children, much of the other imagery found in the original King James will be unfamiliar and even surprising to many modern Christians. In some of the decorated capital letters that grace the beginning of chapters we even find imagery from pagan mythology, such as the figures of Pan (1 Pet 3 & Ps 141), Neptune (Matt 1 & Rev 1), and Daphne (Rom 1) (Fig. 4). The presence of these figures has resulted in some speculation as to why they were included. Gordon Campbell, Professor of Renaissance Studies at the



**Figure 3: The Pelican and her children from the 1611 KJV OT front-piece.**

<sup>1</sup> Ronald V. Huggins, "The Sign of the Pelican on the Cross of Christ," *MJT* 9.1 (2010): 119–32.

<sup>2</sup> Aberdeen University Library MS 24, Folio 34v-35r; ET: Colin McLaren & Aberdeen University Library.

University of Leicester, opines that they appear not simply as themselves but as “pagan foreshadowings” of Christian truth.<sup>3</sup> Thus, according to Campbell, Pan foreshadows “Jesus as the Good shepherd, and his name, which means ‘all’ in Greek [hints] . . . at Christ as ‘all’.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, suggests Campbell, Neptune foreshadows resurrection and Daphne transfiguration.<sup>5</sup>



**Figure 9: Capital initials from the original King James featuring images from Greek and Roman Mythology.**

There is, to be sure, some truth to what Campbell says in general. We may think for example of the line calling the new-born Jesus Pan in Milton’s *On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity* (1629):

The Shepherds on the Lawn,  
Or ere the point of dawn,  
Sate simply chatting in a rustick row;  
Full little thought they than,  
That the mighty Pan  
Was kindly com to live with them below;  
Perhaps their loves, or els their sheep,  
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busie keep.<sup>6</sup>

Still, it is scarcely obvious from their actual placement in the original King James that that is why they were included. If Pan foreshadows Christ as the Good Shepherd, why not place him next to the Good Shepherd discourse in John 10, or at least 1 Peter 5 instead of 1 Peter 3, since it is

<sup>3</sup> Gordon Campbell, *Bible: The Story of the King James Version, 1611-2011* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 101.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 101, 103.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>6</sup> John Milton, *On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity* VIII, 85–92.

in 5:2 that Peter exhorts the elders among his readers to “shepherd the flock of God”?

And Daphne, if she is supposed to remind us of transfiguration, why not place her next to one of the transfiguration accounts (Matt 17, Mark 9, Luke 9)? So, also, Neptune? If he is supposed to make us think of resurrection why not place him next to, say, 1 Corinthians 15?

A simpler explanation seems to lie in the fact that the printers simply needed the capital letters to start out the chapters these figures accompanied (L for Pan, T for Neptune, and P for Daphne), so they simply included them as they always did when printing books. This is the view, for example, of Peter Stallybrass, who argues that at the time “The reuse of decorative initials, irrespective of context, was the norm.”<sup>7</sup> The norm, yes, but not the universal rule. So, for example, the Gospels of Luke and John in the original KJV open with decorated capitals accompanied by depictions of Luke with an ox and John with an eagle (both traditional symbols, see later on).

In any case, given there were so many versions of the printed Bible prior to 1611 it is scarcely surprising that printers had prepared decorative initials to introduce the Gospels that included images of the respective apostles. What *is* a little surprising is that the King James includes only images of Luke and John, and not of Matthew (which opens instead with Neptune), and Mark (which opens with a design incorporating a bird with dragon or bat wings). In the King James, Matthew and Mark have as the first letter of both of their Gospels the letter T, whereas Luke has F and John, I. This was also the case with earlier English translations such, for example, as the Tyndale New Testament (1526), Matthew’s Bible (1537), Coverdale’s Bible (1535), Taverner’s Bible (1539), the Geneva Bible (1560), and the Bishops’ Bible (1568). All began with T in Matthew and Mark, F in Luke, I in John. One would have thought that by the time the King James went to press printed decorative initial T’s depicting the evangelists Matthew and Mark would have become standard. But interestingly they did not.

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Stallybrass, “Visible and Invisible Letters: Text Versus Image in Renaissance England and Europe,” in *Visible Writings: Cultures, Forms, Readings* (eds. Marija Dalbello and Mary Shaw; New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 91.

## I. THE NEW TESTAMENT TITLE PAGE

When we come to the TP of the original King James New Testament, the symbolism, even if unfamiliar, is less mysterious because most of its representations derive from Christian rather than pagan iconography. But before delving into that we must first say a few words by way of introduction.

The New Testament TP was engraved by the Swiss artist Christopher

Switzer and (possibly) Rowland Lockey. Their monograms appear in the niches on either side of the image of the sacrificed lamb on the altar (fig. 5). One thing that we should have clearly in view from the beginning is that the main front-piece at the beginning of the Old Testament in most first editions of the KJV was executed by another artist, named Cornelis Boel.

Furthermore, the New Testament TP was not produced in conjunction with Boel's front-piece. In fact it was not produced for use in the King James Bible at all, but had already appeared as a title page in the last edition of the earlier Bishops' Bible, which appeared in 1602 (fig. 6).

Besides being used as the TP in the original King James New Testament, it also replaces Boel's Old Testament title-page in some first edition KJVs as well.<sup>8</sup>

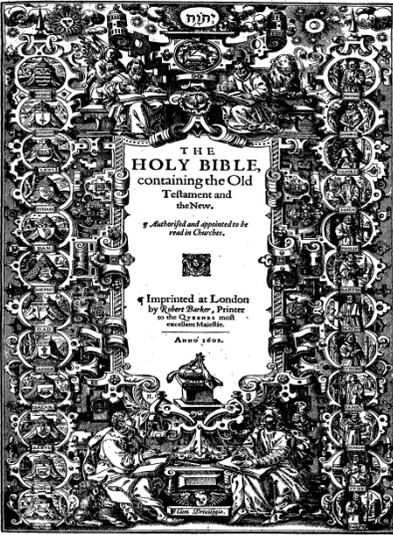


Figure 10: Title page of the 1602 Bishops' Bible.



Figure 5: Monograms of artists Rowland Lockey (?) and Christopher Switzer

<sup>8</sup> David Norton, *The King James Bible: A Short History from Tyndale to Today* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 120–21. Thanks are due to Professor Norton for pointing me to his work and providing me with a scan of the 1602 Bishops' Bible title page reproduced here.

We begin, then, with an overview of the TP image as a whole (fig. 7), after which we will focus our discussion in a more detailed way on the various elements of the picture. Running down the left side of the page in twelve joined circular frames are pictures of the tents and shields of the twelve tribes of Israel. Paralleling these on the right in identical but mirrored frames are the twelve Apostles. At the center top, we see the Trinity represented with the divine Tetragrammaton (YHWH) representing the Father, and then, under that, a Lamb carrying a banner, representing the Son, and finally, below that, a Dove, representing the Holy Spirit.

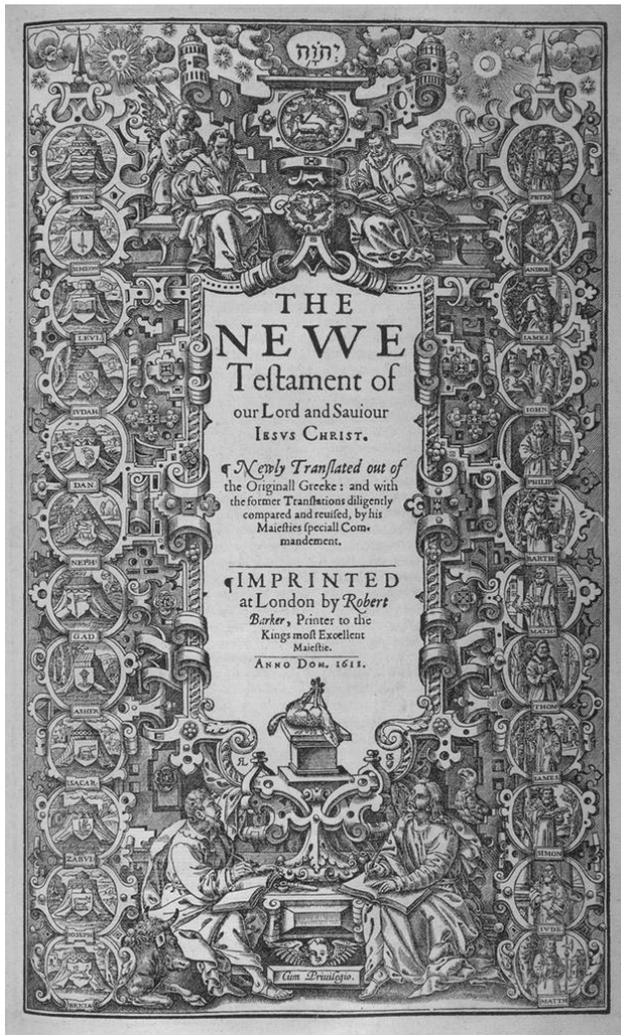


Figure 11: The 1611 King James New Testament Title Page.

To the left of the images of the Lamb and the Dove sits the evangelist Matthew, writing his Gospel. To their right, the evangelist Mark does the same. These are mirrored at the bottom of the page with the evangelists Luke (left) and John (right), also depicted in the process of writing their gospels. In between and above these two lower figures is an altar

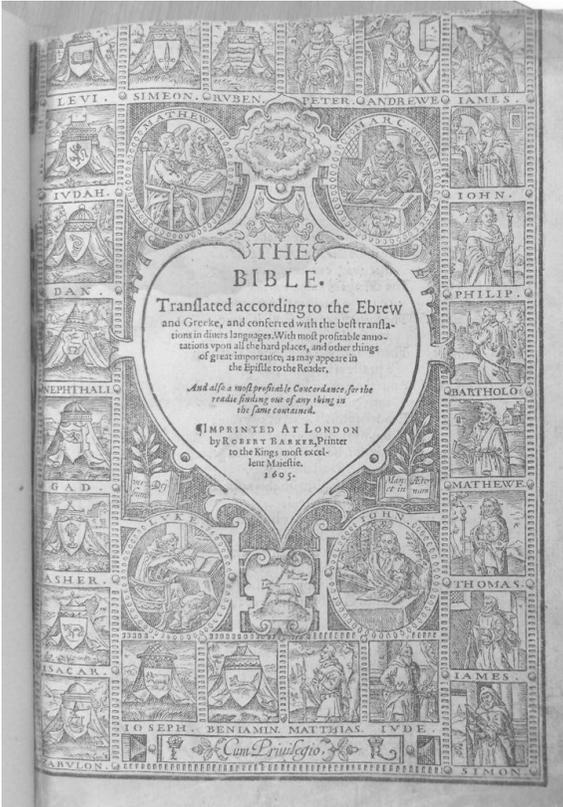


Figure 12: A 1605 Geneva Bible with elements similar to the 1611 KJV New Testament Title Page.

(both in the same order with the same symbolic representations), and the four gospel writers (again in the same order) (Fig. 8).<sup>9</sup> Just how close the relationship is between this earlier front-piece and the KJV New Testa-

ment intruding into the empty space in the center where the title and other publication information is given. On the altar is a lamb that has been slain, as is evidence by its bound feet, the blood pouring out beneath it, and its downward hanging head.

In several of the details this image follows the examples of earlier models. Thus, for example, another front-piece used in earlier Geneva Bibles from the same publisher (Robert Barker) had a design that was quite similar in that it also had the shields of the

twelve tribes of Israel on the left, the twelve apostles on the right

<sup>9</sup> This front-piece appears in a number of Bibles of the period, including in a Geneva Bible New Testament published by Christopher Barker in 1599, then also others by Robert Barker in 1606, 1611, 1615. Nor was it used exclusively for the Geneva Bible, as is seen by its use as both Old and New Testament front pieces for a King James published in London in 1649 and 1672. Examples are easily multiplied.

ment TP will become clear as we discuss particular parallels of the individual features.

## II. THE SHIELDS OF ISRAEL

In order to get a better picture of the twelve shields of Israel and their tents I extract them, placing them in the order in which they appear in the TP (left to right/top to bottom) (fig. 9). The theme of the banners or standards of Israel hearkens back to Numbers 2, which reads in the KJV, “Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house.”



Figure 13: The Shields (Standards) of Israel (Num 2:2).

In the seventeenth century, Sylvanus Morgan reported a poetic description of the heraldry of the traditional shields of Israel that agrees at most points with what we find in the TP of the original KJV New Testament:

JUDAH bare Gules, a Lyon couchant, or,  
 ZABULUN'S black *Ship's* like to a man of warr.  
 ISSACHAR'S *Asse* between two burthens girt,  
 As DAN'S *Sly Snake* lies in a field of vert.  
 ASHUR with azure a *Cup of Gold* sustains,  
 And NEPHTALI'S *Hind* trips o'er the flowry plains.  
 EPHRAIMS strong *Ox* lyes with the couchant *Hart*,  
 MANNASEH'S *Tree* its branches doth impart.  
 BENJAMIN'S *Wolfe* in field gules resides,  
 REUBEN'S field argent and blew *Barrs Waved* glides.  
 SIMEON doth beare the *Sword: and in that manner*  
 GAD having pitched his Tent sets up his *Banner*.<sup>10</sup>

For the most part the devices on the shields in the TP agree with Morgan's poem, except that Manasseh and Ephriam in the poem are replaced by Joseph and Benjamin in the TP. The imagery originates for the most part from the prophetic blessings of Jacob of his sons in Genesis 49 and the blessing of the tribes by Moses in Deuteronomy 33.

Here, then, are the devices appearing on the shields of the tribes in the order in which they appear on the TP, along with the biblical passages upon which they are based:

Reuben (water): he is "unstable as water" (Gen 49:4)  
 Simeon (sword): "instruments of cruelty... in [his] habitations. (Gen 49:5)  
 Levi (book): "They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law" (Deut 33:10).  
 Judah (lion): "is a lion's welp." (Gen 49:9)  
 Dan (snake): "a serpent by the way." (Gen 49:17)  
 Neph[thali] (hind): "a hind let loose" (Gen 49:21)  
 Beni[amin] (wolf): "shall ravin as a wolf" (Gen 49: 27)  
 Gad (lion on a banner): "he dwelleth as a lion" (Deut 33:20)  
 Asher (cup): "he shall yield royal dainties" (Gen 49:20)

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted here in Sir Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* 5.10 ("Of the Scutcheons of the Twelve Tribes," in Sir Thomas Browne's Works: Including his life and Correspondence III (ed. Simon Wilkins; London: William Pickering, 1835), 121.

Isacar (ox/cow): We would expect an ass, as in Morgan’s poem and in Gen 49:14: “Issachar is a strong ass,” but the animal on Isacar’s shield here looks much more like an ox or cow. Interestingly, in the earlier depiction of Issachar’s shield in the Geneva Bible front-piece, the animal in question looks much more like an ass, yet in the Boel front-piece to the original edition Old Testament of the KJV, insofar as we can see it under the cross-hatching, it looks even more like an ox than like a donkey (fig. 10)

Zebul[un] (ship): “Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships” (Gen 49:13), and “[Zebulun and Issachar] shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand” (Deut 33:3)

Joseph (bullock): “His glory is like the firstling of his bullock” (Deut 33:17).

Beni[amin] (wolf): “shall ravin as a wolf” (49: 27)

An interesting point in relation to the shields has to do with their sequence. They do not perfectly adhere to the sequence given in Morgan’s poem, nor that of Genesis 49, Deuteronomy 33, or Numbers 2. However in the front-pieces we have discussed, the two in the original King James for the Old and New Testaments, and the one from the later-edition Geneva Bible, all agree in both sequence and in heraldic symbolism.<sup>11</sup>



**Figure 10:** the device for Issachar from (left to right, top to bottom) Speed’s 1592 *Genealogies*, a 1605 Geneva Bible, Switzer’s 1611 KJV NT front piece, Boel’s 1611 KJV OT front-piece.

Significantly, they agree as well for the most part with the genealogical tables of John Speed, which were originally published in 1592<sup>12</sup> and were incorporated into the original edition of the King James Bible. The only point at which the sequence of Speed differs

<sup>11</sup> Except that the devices are sometimes turned around in the different front-pieces.

<sup>12</sup> Publication date of Speed’s *Genealogies Recorded in the Sacred Scripture* given by Norton, David Norton, *King James from Tyndale to Today*, 94.

from that of the three front-pieces mentioned is in the inclusion of Joseph in the front-pieces, where Speed had instead (and after Benjamin) Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Another interesting feature of Speed's genealogical table, as it appeared in the original KJV and a number of other Bibles of the period, is that there can be no doubt as to his intending to represent Issachar's shield as having an ass as its device, not a cow or ox (fig. 10).

### III. THE TWELVE APOSTLES



Figure 14: The twelve Apostles from the right hand column of the 1611 KJV NT Title Page (left to right, top to bottom).

The depiction of the Apostles on the right-hand side of the TP derives for the most part from medieval iconographical norms rather than from biblical history. Let's take a moment to discuss each figure.



**Peter** appears holding a key,<sup>13</sup> a reference to the famous “keys of the kingdom” passage of Matthew 16:19. The front-piece at the beginning of the 1611 KJV also presented Peter in this aspect. Keys were the identifying symbol of Peter’s (and by extension the pope’s) alleged papal authority throughout the Middle Ages. This makes it significant that the front-piece of the Coverdale Bible (1535) had depicted all the apostles with the keys of authority not just Peter (Fig. 12).



Figure 12: Peter alone with his keys (1) in a typical Late-Gothic portrayal of Peter from the Eggenberg Altarpiece (prior to 1470, Schloss Eggenberg, Graz, Austria) (left), (2) in the 1611 KJV OT Front-Piece (middle), (3) all of the Apostles holding the keys in the 1535 Coverdale Bible (right).

<sup>13</sup> Not “keys” as stated in Gordon Campbell, *Bible: The Story of the King James Version, 1611-2011* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 96.



**Andrew** appears as he always does with the X-shaped “Saint Andrew’s Cross” upon which he was allegedly crucified. The tradition that Andrew was crucified is an ancient one, though perhaps not ancient enough to be credited, but the traditional X-shape of the cross came only later. It makes its first appearance on a tenth-century troparium from Autun.<sup>14</sup>



**James the Great:** In Acts 12:2–3 we read that Herod “killed James the brother of John with the sword, and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also.” So we might have expected to find James depicted holding a sword. Instead we see him with pilgrim’s hat and staff, looking as though he is on the move. The symbolism dates to the Middle Ages and derives from the fact that his bones were thought to have resided at Santiago de Compostela in Spain, the Western terminus of the great pilgrim road from the East, which is still known as the Way of Saint James. Santiago de Compostela, Rome and Jerusalem were the three most popular pilgrimage destinations in the Middle Ages. James is depicted here as the ideal pilgrim coming back from viewing his own bones in Spain. Usually when this symbolism is used, the scalloped-shell pilgrim badge, or *concha venera*, which was given out to visitors of the Compostela shrine, is also shown attached to his hat, staff, cloak, or satchel.<sup>15</sup> In the original KJV Old Testament front-piece, we see the shell attached to his hat (fig. 13). In the picture of this James from the 1605 edition of the Geneva Bible we see it on his cloak (fig. 8 and 13).

<sup>14</sup> Peter M. Peterson, *Andrew, Brother of Simon Peter: His Story and His Legends* (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 45.

<sup>15</sup> William Melczer, *The Pilgrim’s Guide to Santiago de Compostela: First English Translation, with Introduction, Commentaries, and Notes* (New York: Italica, 1993), 58.



Figure 13: James wearing Compostela Pilgrim Badge (*concha venera*) in (1) a statue Seckau Abbey, Austria (left), (2) the Old Testament front-piece from the 1611 KJV (middle), and (3) from the frontpiece of a 1605 Geneva Bible (on shoulder) (right).



**John**, son of Zebedee, is shown with the cup of poison tradition said he drank in the presence of the wicked Ephesian priest Aristidemus to persuade him of the truth of Christianity (fig. 14). As the story goes John was unaffected, though two criminals who drank from the same elixir died.<sup>16</sup>



**Philip** holds a spear, which is not really traditional for him. Campbell is incorrect when he describes Philip here as holding a “book and staff.”<sup>17</sup> There is no book and what Campbell calls a staff is clear-



Figure 15: John with his cup of poison (with serpents) c. 1380–1410 (Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, Missouri).

<sup>16</sup> (*Acts of John XX–XXI*) Note that the sections identified by Roman numerals in M. R. James’s edition are placed between sec. 105 and 106 near the end of his translation. This same passage is also sometimes referenced as *Virtutes Iohannis VIII* (Montague Rhodes James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1924), 263–4.

<sup>17</sup> Campbell, *Bible*, 96.

ly a spear. Tradition held that Philip was either crucified (e.g., the *Golden Legend* [1275]<sup>18</sup>), stoned (e.g., the *Martyr's Mirror* [1660]<sup>19</sup>) or crucified and stoned (e.g., Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* [1563]<sup>20</sup>). Hence he was usually depicted with a cross or stones. Curiously the only other example I have found where Philip holds a spear is in the front-piece to the Old Testament in this same volume and the front-piece used earlier in Geneva Bibles.



**Figure 16: Saint Bartholomew with his skin draped over his right arm (St. Xaver Church, Leoben, Austria).**



**Barth[olomew]** holds a book and the traditional knife with which he was supposedly skinned alive. Sometimes Bartholomew is depicted with his own skin as well (fig. 15), but Switzer here has spared us that detail.

<sup>18</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend, or Lives of the Saints* (7 vols.; trans. William Caxton; ed. F. S. Ellis; London: J. M. Dent, 1900), 3.72.

<sup>19</sup> Thieleman J. van Braght, *The Bloody Theater of Martyrs' Mirror of the Defenseless Christians* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.; trans. Joseph F. Sohm; Scottsdale, PA/ Kitchener, ON: Herald Press, 1950 [orig. Dutch ed. 1660]), 73.

<sup>20</sup> *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe: A New and Complete Edition* (8 vols.; preliminary dissertation George Townsend; ed. Stephen Reed Cattley, 1837–39), 1.97. This book is more popularly referred to as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*.



**Mat[hew]** holds a builder's square, which presents us with a very interesting puzzle, because that symbol goes not with Matthew, but with Thomas in connection with an apocryphal story where the king of India commissions Thomas to build him a palace.<sup>21</sup> The 1611 Old Testament front-piece at the beginning of the same volume in fact depicts Thomas that way (fig. 16). So what happened? One possible explanation is that the artist went wrong in drawing the picture as a result of forgetting which apostolic list he was supposed to be following. The names given under each picture follows the order given in Luke 6:14–16, except that Judas Iscariot is replaced here by Matthias, as per Acts 1:23. In Luke's list Matthew follows Bartholomew and Thomas follows Matthew. In the list of the twelve given in Matthew 10:2–4, however, Matthew and Thomas are switched so that the order runs instead Bartholomew, Thomas, and Matthew, with the result that an artist may have engraved Thomas, when he was really supposed to be engraving Matthew. Then, when he realized his mistake (he does get back in sync after that), he simply let it stand. Normally Matthew appears holding a sword, as he does in fact in the Old Testament front-piece of the original King James.



**Figure 16: Thomas with his builders' square lurking in the shadow of doubt on the 1611 OT front-piece.**



**Thomas**, like Philip, is shown with a spear. He also holds a book. Unlike Philip the spear is traditional for Thomas. Campbell is again mistaken when he described Thomas as holding a staff here (as he had been in saying Philip held a staff).<sup>22</sup>



**James** son of Alphaeus, also referred to as James the Less, is shown holding a fuller's club, the traditional implement of his martyrdom in Western iconography. The ultimate source for the symbolism is a second-century tradition which held that after being thrown down from the temple, James

<sup>21</sup> *Golden Legend*, 2.141–43.

<sup>22</sup> Campbell, *Bible*, 96.

the brother of Jesus, was finished off with a fuller's club.<sup>23</sup> The transfer of the fuller's club from the brother of Jesus to the son of Alphaeus derives from Jerome's attempt to identify the two James in his late-fourth century treatise, *Against Helvidius*, as part of his larger argument that Jesus had no actual brothers or sisters but only cousins. Jerome's argument served the picture he wanted to paint of Mary and Joseph based upon his own unbiblical belief that "all sexual intercourse is unclean."<sup>24</sup> From his perspective, it did not seem fitting to admit that only Mary was "ever-virgin," Joseph had to be as well. Thus Jerome insists in *Against Helvidius* 21 that "He who was thought worthy to be called father of the Lord, remained a virgin."<sup>25</sup>

Scripturally, Jerome's identification of the brother of Jesus with the son of Alphaeus simply doesn't work. What evidence there is suggests that Jesus' brothers (cousins on Jerome's reading) did not believe in him during his lifetime (John 7:5). Why then would Jesus need to entrust his mother into John's care at the cross (John 19:26), if she was already in the care of his cousins, the believing apostle James son of Alphaeus (and the apostle Jude Thaddeus as well, according to Jerome and Roman Catholic tradition).

In fact, however, the mother and brothers of Jesus are clearly distinguished from the apostles in the Gospels and Acts. In Mark 3:18 Jesus chooses the twelve, including James the son of Alphaeus and Jude Thaddeus, but then a few verses later, in verse 21, we read that "when his relatives heard of this they set out to seize him, for they said, 'He is out of his mind,' " and in verse 31, "His mother and his brothers arrived. Standing outside they sent word to him and called him."

In Acts 1 we find the Apostles mentioned as being in the upper room *with* the mother and brothers of Jesus. In the context James son of Alphaeus and Jude's names are listed as apostles *not* as brothers of Christ: "they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, *James the son of Alphaeus* and Simon the Zealot and *Judas the son of James*." But then it goes on immediately to say: "All these [Apostles] with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, *and his brothers*" (Acts 1:13–14, italics mine).

Since the identification of the two figures was an innovation of a Western father as late as the end of the fourth century, it is scarcely sur-

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<sup>23</sup> Clement of Alexandria in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.1.4; Hegesippus in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.23.18.

<sup>24</sup> Jerome, *Against Jovianus* 1.20 (ET: *NPNF*<sup>2</sup> 6.3651).

<sup>25</sup> ET: *NPNF*<sup>2</sup> 6. 344.

prising that the Eastern Church—which correctly regards the brother of Jesus and the son of Alphaeus as two different individuals—does not endorse it. Yet notwithstanding its clearly unhistorical and unbiblical character, the Roman Catholic melding of the son of Alphaeus and the brother of Jesus still exercises considerable influence in the West, reaching even into such remote quarters as the world of country music. I refer to the line from the song in Johnny Cash’s 1973 film *Gospel Road*, where Johnny sings in Jesus’ voice at the Last Supper: “Have a little bread Simon, give a little wine to James my brother.”<sup>26</sup>



**Simon:** Foxe tells us that Simon the Zealot (also called the Cananaean in Mark 3:18 and Matthew 10:4), was crucified.<sup>27</sup> The *Golden Legend* said that he and Jude were “hewed” to death.<sup>28</sup> Right through the Middle Ages and up to the present time, Simon is usually depicted as here with the saw (behind him) with which he was supposedly dismembered.



**Jude** son of James (also called Thaddaeus in Mark 3:18 and Matthew 10:3), is only very infrequently depicted holding a sword. Most often he appears with a club similar to the one James son of Alphaeus holds (above). Another example in which Jude holds a sword (one of very few), comes from the mid-fifteenth century, and may be seen in the Church of Our Lady in the Bavarian town of Memmingen, Germany (fig. 17).

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<sup>26</sup> The son of Alphaeus was there, the brother of Jesus was not! Dictionaries of the Saints often fail to bring clarity to this issue of the distinction between the two James. See for example the very vague and inadequate entry on James the Less in David Farmer’s *Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (5<sup>th</sup> rev. ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 228. Much better is the entry “Philip and James (the Less), Apostles,” in Richard P. McBrien, *Lives of the Saints from Mary to Saint Francis of Assisi to John XXIII and Mother Teresa* (New York: HarperOne, 2003), 189, which actually informs its readers of the difficulties of simply equating the two figures.

<sup>27</sup> Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* 1, 95.

<sup>28</sup> *Golden Legend*, 6.80.



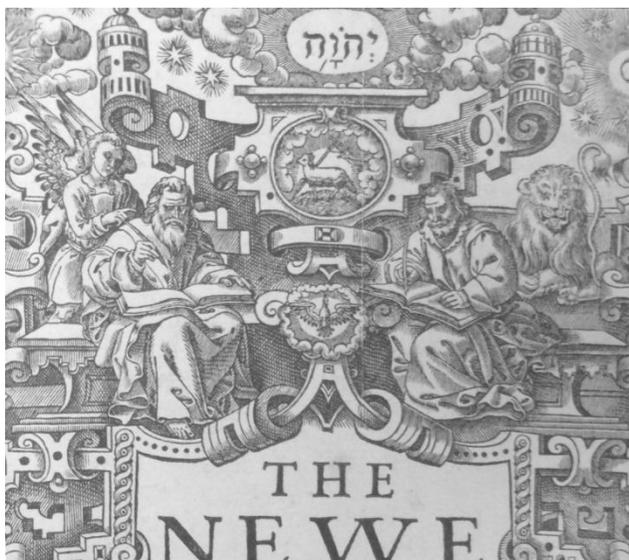
**Matt[hias]**, who was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:23), appears holding a halbert, or axe with an extended handle, as is usual for him.



**Figure 17: the Apostle Jude with a sword, Hans Strigel the Elder (15th century).**

#### **IV. THE FOUR APOSTLES, THE TRINITY AND THE SACRIFICIAL LAMB**

As the parallel sets of twelve tribes and twelve apostles provide balance to the left and right sides of the picture, so also two compositional triangles create a symmetrical relationship between its top and bottom halves. In the four bottom corners of the two triangles are the four evangelists, each identified by their traditional symbols, an angel with Matthew, a lion with Mark, an ox with Luke and an eagle with John. The derivation of these symbols for the evangelist is very ancient and ultimately derive from the descriptions of the four animals around the throne in Rev 4:7: “And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.” The explicit identification of these animals with the four evangelists goes at least as far back as the late second century writer Irenaeus. According to Irenaeus, however, the lion went with John, the ox with Luke, the eagle with Mark and the man with Matthew (*Against Heresies* 3.11.8). Mark and John traded symbols and Matthew’s symbol was graduated from a man to an angel centuries before the appearance of the King James.



**Figure 18: Upper triangular composition on the 1611 KJV NT Title Page.**

In the upper triangle (fig. 18) three elements that had already commonly appeared separately in other Bible front-pieces, are brought together to represent the Trinity. The first of these is the Tetragrammaton, the divine name Yahweh. We have already seen this symbol standing alone as representing God in other Bible front-pieces of the period, as for example in the Coverdale Bible of 1535 and the New Testament front-piece of the 1611 smaller “HE” edition King James Bible. Next comes the symbol of the Agnus Dei, the Lamb of God, bearing a staff topped with a cross with banner attached. The expected marking on the banner would also be a cross, and that is indeed what we find here if we look closely. In some traditional depictions, the Lamb appears without the cross banner, and instead a cross appears standing beside him. The most famous and majestic of these is Jan van Eyke’s *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* (1432) from the Ghent Altarpiece. One element that is missing from the TP that is often seen in more traditional depictions of the Lamb of God with a banner is a spring of blood flowing from the lamb’s breast into a cup (fig. 19). The TP image also appears standing in combination with the Dove but not the Tetragrammaton in the 1605 Geneva front-piece shown earlier.



**Figure 19: Detail, from the Crucifixion panel of Matthias Grünewald’s *Isenheim Altarpiece* (early 16<sup>th</sup> cent.).**

Finally, the Spirit appears below in the form of a Dove, a symbolism based on the Spirit’s descent upon Jesus in the form of a dove at his baptism (Matt 3:16, Mark 1:10, Luke

3:22, John 1:32). This figure also appears independently or semi-independently in other Bible front-pieces of the time. A case in point is in the later Geneva Bible front-piece where the Dove appears above the printed title, and the Lamb with his banner below it.

Between the images of the Lamb and the Dove in the TP, the viewer will note a sort of band emerging from the background. Gordon Campbell intriguingly suggests that this represents a “diamond wedding ring” representing “the marriage of Christ and the Church.”<sup>29</sup>

When we turn to Boel’s Old Testament KJV front-piece we notice that he has depicted the Trinity in the same manner, except that he switched the position of the Lamb and Dove, so that the Lamb is at the bottom with the Dove in the middle between it and the Tetragrammaton.

The way in which the Trinity is depicted in the two original KJV front-pieces in a certain sense represents a variation of a very common and traditional way of depicting the Trinity, a way in fact that is still common, for example, among more recent Roman Catholic iconographers (fig. 20).



**Figure 20: Three depictions of the Trinity (1) Altarpiece (c. 1250), State Museums of Berlin, Gemäldegalerie; (2) Johann Michael Rottmayr (1721), Abbey Church of Melk Monastery (Lower Austria), Felix Liefert (1918), Cathedral of the Madaleine, Salt Lake City, Utah.**

<sup>29</sup> Campbell, *Bible*, 95.



Figure 21: The lower triangular composition from the 1611 KJV NT title page.

In the bottom triangle (fig. 21) we see Luke on the left and a mustachioed John on the right with the sacrificed lamb between and above them, its bound feet creating the topmost point of the triangle. The triangular form of this group is strengthened by the upward focus of both evangelists, each of which is gazing up at the sacrificed Lamb, the central theme of what they are writing about. This is markedly at odds with the two evangelists at the top of the page, who do not gaze upward (or even sideways) to view the triumphant Lamb of God, or the Tetragrammaton. It is in fact quite difficult to determine just exactly where these upper two evangelists are looking.

An attractive suggestion would be that they as well are actually gazing *over* their respective volumes down toward the sacrificial Lamb. If that were the case, then all four of the evangelist would be focusing on the sacrificed Lamb, calling to mind pictorially what Paul said to the Corinthians about determining “not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2), and Martin Kähler, about the Gospels representing “passion narratives with extended introductions.”<sup>30</sup>

Certainly the downward cast of their gaze lowers the composition’s center of gravity in that direction in any case. But when we blow up the

<sup>30</sup> Martin Kähler, *The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ* (trans., ed., intro., Carl E. Braaten; forward Paul J. Tillich; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1964), 80, nt. 11.

image of the two upper evangelists it looks rather like they are both focused on what they are writing in their respective books.

Finally, at the bottom of the page between Luke and John, under the shared surface supporting the books they are writing in, we see a cherub (represented as a child's head with wings) under which appear the words *cum priuiegio*, "with privilege," providing the notice that that the work was published with authorization or permission.

## V. CONCLUSION

It is certainly arguable that the New Testament front-piece of the original 1611 King James Version is not great art. One of the standard criticisms of it has been that it is too busy, that is to say, too cram-packed with details, making it a bit overwhelming to the viewer. Its importance and interest for us, however, does not rest in its surpassing artistic merit, but rather in the fact that it was fortuitously attached to the very first edition of the English translation that has meant so much to the advance of the gospel and development of the English language. And in any case, while we might fault it as well for carrying over from the Middle Ages some of the non-historical and non-biblical stories about the apostles, yet we can be thankful that most of the pictorial elements portrayed biblical themes. In other words, Switzer and Boel happily spare us yet another Bible decorated with flattering portraits of the Kings and Queens of England, of the sort that can be seen, for example, in the front-pieces of the Coverdale Bible (1535), the Great Bible (1539), and the Bishops Bible (1558). If the egos of self-important monarchs must be stroked in order to get the Word of God out, then by all means do it. But if there is any way possible, at least spare us having to be confronted with royal mugs every time we open our Bibles. Better discreetly restrict your gushing flattery to a brief preface, if at all possible. And that is what the King James translators did in a dedicatory epistle addressed "To the most High and Majestie Prince James, by the Grace of God King of Britain, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, &c."

The real thanks for the King James Bible, goes not to James with all his pretensions and titles, but to the martyrs who struggled to get the Bible into English, believing scholars who translated this wonderful translation of the Bible, most importantly to God, who gave us His Word, and who has caused it to continue to bear good fruit through this and other translations right down to the present day. So then in conclusion I say, Hooray for the King James Bible, and God bless it! (But then, of course, he already has!)

***Recovering the Real Lost Gospel: Reclaiming the Gospel as Good News.* By Darrell L. Bock. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010, 146 pp., \$16.99 paperback. ISBN 978-08054-6465-8.**

Darrell Bock brings his considerable knowledge and skill as a New Testament scholar to bear on what he correctly views as an urgent need for the church today. As Research Professor of New Testament Studies and Professor of Spiritual Development and Culture at Dallas Theological Seminary, Bock embarks on a needed “mission of rediscovery” as he challenges readers to examine key biblical texts in light of a simple but critically important question: What does the Bible say about the gospel?

All too often, Bock asserts, the gospel is portrayed as something less than the amazing good news that calls believers into a dynamic relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

[W]hen I hear some people preach the gospel today, I am not sure I hear its presentation as good news. Sometimes, I hear a therapeutic call – that God will make us feel better or prosper more. Other times, I hear so much about Jesus paying for sin that the gospel seems limited to a transaction – the removal of debt. Or perhaps I hear it as a kind of spiritual root canal. Still other times, I hear a presentation that makes the gospel seem more about avoiding something from God versus experiencing something with Him. Other presentations make me think Jesus came to change politics in the world. Such political presentations make me wonder why God did not send Jesus to Rome rather than Jerusalem. None of these is the gospel I see in the Scripture, though some are closer than others (2).

When the gospel has “gone missing” in these ways, the “church suffers, God’s people lose their way, and the world lacks what it so desperately needs – an experience of God’s presence” (2). Worse yet, people who enter the church “lose sight of why they really are there and what it is they should be doing for God” (2). Only the real gospel as revealed in the pages of the New Testament provides a sufficient *raison d’être* for the church.

Bock begins his quest to recover the lost elements of the gospel by noting that when the Apostle Paul refers to the cross in 1 Corinthians, “the term cross functions as a hub and a synecdoche for all that Jesus’ work brings” (3). Consequently, the message of the cross involves much more than a single salvific transaction. “The gospel is not about a death but about a death that leads many to life. It is not about avoiding something but gaining someone precious, a new vibrant relationship with the

gracious and self-sacrificing God who created us to know and follow Him” (17). Receiving the gospel results in experiencing the promise of God’s Spirit and entering into a new relationship with God and other believers in the community of faith. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper celebrate these realities as good news in the fullest sense of the phrase – “an entry into communion with God and His people” (38).

Chapter three describes how Christ’s redemptive work on the cross was a unique action that meets a comprehensive need. Jesus’ death was much more than a transaction that redeems us and takes care of our debt and guilt. It “restored us into a new way, bringing new relationship, new power, and new access to the living God” (54). Furthermore, the gospel is “inaugurated as a gift of God’s grace” (chapter 4), revealing who Jesus is through the scriptural testimony of the early church (chapter 5). In chapter six Bock explores what it means to embrace the gospel through repentance and faith, noting that “faith, by its very nature, underscores the fact that the gospel is not fundamentally about a transaction but about a sustained relationship” (89). This relationship enables believers to experience the life-changing power of the gospel (chapter 7). Bock writes, “The good news is that God indwells us to show us we are His children. His Spirit enables us to be His children and to live like it” (122).

Bock underscores the point of *Recovering the Real Lost Gospel* by titling the concluding chapter of the book, “Getting the Gospel Clear: A Relationship Rooted in God’s love, Not Just a Transaction.” He writes powerfully and passionately about the new relationship with God that is available to all who discover and receive the great news of the gospel:

We are invited to sit at the table in God’s house with His love, power, and protection surrounding us. That offer of new life and relationship is the gospel. That relationship, rooted in God’s love and everlasting in duration, is what Christianity is all about. That gospel is what the church is called to preach – and to live. It is a message we need to recover and share with a tone that reflects the love and reconciliation that motivates it because it is a testimony to the wonderful and deep love of God for us. Embrace it in faith and share it with others. It is a story of good news worth telling (132).

*Recovering the Real Lost Gospel* accomplishes the task delineated in the subtitle of the book: *Reclaiming the Gospel as Good News*. While the casual reader might get lost occasionally in the details of Bock’s scholarly explanations of key scriptural texts, the serious Bible student will discover many gems worth mining. The book offers pastors an excellent

biblical theology for reflection and action as they seek to proclaim faithfully the good news of the gospel.

David Noble  
First Baptist Church, Harrisonville, MO

***Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed.* By Marc Cortez. Guide for the Perplexed Series. London: T. & T. Clark, 2010, 179 pp., \$24.95 paperback. ISBN: 978-0-567-03432-8**

T. & T. Clark's *Guide for the Perplexed* series is designed to introduce subjects that students find particularly challenging. Marc Cortez, Assistant Professor of Theology at Western Seminary, Portland, Oregon, has taken on the challenging subject of theological anthropology, variously called Christian anthropology and the doctrine of humanity. This important subject has been the source of many debates and controversies since the dawn of Christianity. With a mind to orient his readers to the landscape rather than to offer a particular path, Cortez presents this book as "a way of thinking theologically about the human person" (13).

Recognizing that the doctrine of humanity consists of numerous debates, Cortez selects four areas for discussion: "the *imago Dei*, human sexuality, human constitution (i.e., the body/soul relationship), and free will" (12). Astute readers might notice that he omits one of the traditional pillars of anthropology, "sin." His omission is not egregious; he merely subsumed it within his discussion on the *imago Dei*. These four areas were selected carefully for they best demonstrate the focus of the book: the key to understanding anthropology is through the person of Christ (7), an idea that flows from his dissertation (published as *Embodied Souls, Ensouled Bodies*, London: T. & T. Clark, 2008).

He connects the *imago Dei* to Christ by critiquing the traditional perspectives and suggesting three relational ways to understand the image: representational, personal, and covenantal (30-37). From this, he concludes that "Jesus Christ is the revelation of true humanity" (38). In this way, Cortez claims that unless we begin with the *imago Dei*, we will never be able to understand what it means to be human.

Building on his presentation of the image of God, Cortez discusses human sexuality. He critiques traditional understandings, then brings in an alternate way based on relationality: fulfilling our incompleteness through relationship (66). From this, he is able to connect human sexuality with the image of God. He, therefore, concludes: "The reproductive and fecund nature of sexuality can be understood as expressions of this

drive toward community” (67). Thus, sex becomes all about relationships with one another and with God.

In order to understand how we relate to our surroundings, we have to understand the way we are constituted. Cortez spends the majority of the chapter that tackles the mind and body debate giving a detailed account of the differences between substance dualism and physicalism, the two most prominent opponents in the debate today. He goes into some depth with his discussion, which may leave novices a bit overwhelmed. For example, Cortez presents an excellent comparison between *epiphenomenalism*, *supervenience*, and *emergence* (81-82), a discussion hardly suited to newcomers.

The last chapter before the conclusion deals with human free will. Cortez points out that free will is central to relationality: “Most obviously it shapes fundamental moral concepts such as responsibility, accountability, personal development, and interpersonal relationality” (98). He deftly walks his readers through the subtleties that make up the various sides and evenly presents their strengths and weaknesses, concluding that both compatibilism and libertarianism are born out of logic and a biblical foundation. As with the previous chapter, the subject of this chapter proves to be forever an enigma. Philosophy, psychology, theology, and the Bible provide no definitive answers. He presents both sides of the issue and emphasizes that, while these issues are not resolved easily, they are worth discussing because they are foundational to who we are and how we relate to God and creation (136-37). In summary, he concludes that anthropology must be rooted in Christology: “Ultimately, then, we see that the *who* of humanity resides in the *who* of Christology. Who is the human person? The human person is the one called into existence, summoned into partnership, and drawn into relationship in and through Jesus Christ” (136).

While Cortez does a wonderful job presenting the various perspectives with fairness and insight, his Christological emphasis is weak. Like Stanley Grenz’s systematic theology that tries to connect all areas of theology to “community,” Cortez seems to stretch his point a little too far at times. To accomplish his goal of filtering the entire doctrine of humanity through a Christocentric grid, he is forced to redefine some of the central tenets of humanity. For example, he expands human sexuality to encompass all aspects of relationality in order to incorporate sexuality into the divine/human relationship: “To this extent, then, we can say that the divine being is ‘sexual’—that is, in God we see the three persons who are both ‘other’ and ‘same’ eternally bonded in intimate community” (67). He adds that our drive to reproduce is grounded in community, thus our desire to commune with God is an expression of sexuality. In this way,

he stretches our understanding of *sex* to the breaking point. He based much of the section about bonding on the seventh chapter of Grenz's *The Social God and the Relational Self* (Louisville: WJK, 2001, 267-303, esp. 274-80), so his ideas are not novel, though maybe a bit under explained. Where he, along with Grenz, places sex as the overarching umbrella under which relationship lay, I think the inverse is true. If he approached human sexuality in the context of relationship rather than relationship in the context of human sexuality, he could have made the same point without all the linguistical calisthenics.

Cortez does an admirable job of spelling out the various positions of each of the issues while demonstrating little bias for any particular side. At times he becomes caught up in the jargon of the debate and loses sight of the mandate to inform the uninformed, thus making it difficult for the truly uninitiated; but, for the diligent student, this book can be a outstanding introduction to the debates that continue to rage. As an attempt to connect humanity to God in each of the areas discussed, Cortez has mixed success. But even with these minor imperfections, this book would make a wonderful addition to an advanced course on theological anthropology, where the students come already with a foundation of understanding.

Christopher J. Black

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

***Revisiting the Days of Genesis: A Study of the Use of Time in Genesis 1-11 in Light of Its Ancient Near Eastern and Literary Context.* By B.C. Hodge. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011, xxxvii + 172 pp., \$23.00 paperback. ISBN 13: 978-1-60899-597-4.**

Modern scientific theory, particularly the theory of evolution, has so permeated the culture that its influence can be seen in areas of study beyond biology. In few places is this more evident than in the interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis. A literal, seven-day creation stands at odds with what is considered modern scientific understanding of the origin and age of the earth. Many who hold a high view of the Scripture have long struggled with how to reconcile the text with the conclusions of science, while others simply ignore the controversy, rejecting either science or the text completely. In *Revisiting the Days of Genesis: A Study of the Use of Time in Genesis 1-11 in Light of Its Ancient Near Eastern and Literary Context*, B.C. Hodge weighs in on the debate by examining the literary and theological function of time within the primeval history of Genesis. Hodge seeks to move past what he considers a false dichotomy between a natural and supernatural understanding of the text, which he believes misses the intended point of the narrative.

In chapter 1, Hodge gives a more detailed explanation as to how Genesis 1-11 may express mythical events and still be considered true. He does not insist that the book is completely mythological. In fact, he shies away from the term *myth* because of the negative connotations associated with the word. He prefers instead the phrase *cultural symbolism* to express those literary elements that are present in the text and represent a symbolic expression of a theological truth. This is an important distinction, since Hodge never denies the truth of the text. While the stories may not be portrayed in a historical manner, *per se*, they are tools the author uses to express theology. Hodge likens this to “historical fiction” movies, such as *Braveheart*, which take artistic liberties with the events “to give greater meaning and significance to the director’s contemporary audience” (5). If the text has been written to artistically and symbolically express a greater truth, then the use of time within the narrative may be used to the same effect. This is an important element to Hodge’s argument, and he insists that to read the Scripture in a different way is to do injustice to the text.

In the rest of the book, Hodge discusses specific issues related to temporal language in Genesis: the days of creation (Chapter 3); the use of “day” in Genesis 2:4b (Chapter 4); the death sentence given to the first couple (Chapter 5); the genealogies of Genesis (Chapter 6); and the days of the Flood (Chapter 7). In each of these, his conclusions are based on an interpretation of the language of Genesis from a cultural-symbolic perspective. That is, Genesis was written utilizing images and symbols intended to portray a certain theology that ancient readers would have understood.

Hodge is a graduate from the Moody Bible Institute and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Currently he is studying at Westminster Theological Seminary, pursuing a Th.M. in Biblical Hermeneutics. His underlying argument that the book of Genesis should be read in light of its intended meaning and purpose is well taken. His chapter on the history of interpretation (Chapter 2) is particularly useful in putting the discussion in perspective. He demonstrates that the history of orthodoxy has allowed a non-literal view of the time portrayed in Genesis 1-11. This is a noteworthy corrective against those who would condemn a believer who might not hold a literal view. Further, the way Hodge reconciles his understanding of the days of Genesis with the authority of the text is valid and instructive. If nothing else, it allows the reader who may not have considered anything but an absolutely literal view of the days of Genesis insight into another method of hermeneutics.

Hodge is correct to insist that the text of Genesis is a product of an ancient mind with ancient concerns and should be read accordingly. In

supporting his argument, Hodge utilizes ANE texts to demonstrate parallels in thought and usage of temporal language, and the texts are generally well used. Of particular help is his argument concerning sanctuary language in the creation and garden account. While this is not a new view, Hodge is to be commended for providing a well-organized explanation. The only negative in his use of ANE texts is his decision to provide a transliteration of the sources within the text of the book's text itself. While he does provide a translation immediately after each section, the inclusion of the transliteration is distracting.

The absence of a discussion of the New Testament understanding of the days of Genesis (or temporal language in the Old Testament) is disappointing. In his treatment of the history of interpretation, Hodge moves from the Second Temple period (i.e. Philo and Jubilees) to the Patristic writers. Is the New Testament silent on this topic? If so, the silence could be instructive—the lack of silence would be even more instructive, and Hodge gives no explanation why he overlooks it.

Further, there are several questions he leaves unanswered. For instance, if the death promised to the first couple is simply expulsion from the land (as he argues in Chapter 5), why the repetition of the phrase “and he died” throughout chapter five; if the line of Seth was to represent the seed of the woman against the seed of the serpent (in Cain), what are the implications of the sin of Ham after the flood, particularly since Cain's line is cut off? While these questions are not decisive flaws in his argument, they are weaknesses that need to be addressed. Of further note is his reading of Genesis 2-3 in view of God's struggle over chaos. While there is some evidence for this, Hodge tends to read too much implication into the evidence.

While Hodge argues that the days of Genesis 1-11 are better read literally and theologically, he goes too far at times in assigning figurative meaning to time in the Old Testament. For example, he reads the various occurrences of forty and seven (whether days or years) within the Old Testament as figurative, and not literal time. This applies to several examples of seven days of cleansing and forty days of trial throughout the corpus. So also the forty days that Jonah waited to view Nineveh's destruction are not literal. As he writes, “Are we really to believe that he sits there for forty days in the scorching hot sun until he realizes that God is not going to destroy it?” (137) This seems to betray an interpretive factor behind Hodge's argument that is not necessarily germane: believability.

These weaknesses are noteworthy, but they do not ultimately detract from the overall work. This writer recommends the book to anyone who is grappling with providing a relevant and contextual interpretation of Genesis. Whether one agrees with his conclusions or not, Hodge's inter-

pretation seeks to ask the correct questions of the text. In so doing, he well-illustrates how Genesis is a product of its own time and culture and how it may be read accordingly. While he might not change the mind of anyone who would argue vehemently for a literal understanding of the days of Genesis, he does provide a calming voice in what is often a harsh debate.

William K. Bechtold III

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***God Behaving Badly: Is the God of the Old Testament Angry, Sexist and Racist?* By David T. Lamb. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011, 205 pp., \$15.00 paperback. ISBN-13: 978-0830838264**

David Lamb begins his book with this provocative question: “How does one reconcile the loving God of the Old Testament with the harsh God of the New Testament?” As unexpected as it may be to most readers, this demonstrates a common misunderstanding about how God is portrayed in both the Old and New Testaments. Many consider the Old Testament’s portrayal of God as a harsh, vengeful deity, while the New Testament emphasizes a loving, forgiving God in the life of Jesus Christ. This is not an accurate assessment. Lamb reminds us, “God in the Old Testament is consistently described as slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, but Jesus speaks about hell more than anyone else in Scripture” (9). In *God Behaving Badly*, Lamb seeks to correct the misconceptions that many readers bring to and carry from a reading of the Scriptures, particularly the Old Testament. This is also a response to critics such as Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, who attempt to impeach God (as He is depicted in the Old Testament) because of actions and commands they insist show the God of the Old Testament is an evil, vindictive, petty God. Lamb does not shy away from such accusations—indeed, he freely admits that a surface reading of the Old Testament text does indeed seem to portray a God who is anything but abounding in steadfast love. However, he insists that any reading that pits the two Testaments against one another is a gross misreading of the text.

David Lamb is associate professor of Old Testament at Biblical Theological Seminary, and is the author of *Righteous Jehu and His Evil Heirs: The Deuteronomist’s Negative Perspective on Dynastic Succession* (Oxford, 2007). Those who have avoided works of theology and exegesis for fear of dry prose and difficult jargon need not hesitate to dive into *God Behaving Badly*. This work is aimed at the laity, and as such it is highly readable and easy to understand; his tone is light and, at

times, playful. He flavors his arguments with illustrations taken from popular culture, such as (to name only a few) *The Simpsons*, Gary Larson comics, Monty Python, and *Ocean's Eleven*. His prose (and even his footnotes) is marked with humorous asides, often times taken from his personal experiences. Lamb is a teacher, and he writes as one, boiling his chapters down to the essentials and pacing his lessons for all students.

Each chapter is dedicated to a different question. He examines accusations against God, such as that He is angry, sexist, racist, violent, legalistic, rigid, and distant. In each case, Lamb states the problem and examines the evidence based on a careful and contextual reading of relevant passages. It is unfortunate that he is not more exhaustive in his selection of passages to examine, but this cannot be avoided in a work of limited scope and purpose. He himself admits that he has been selective in his use of passages. That being said, Lamb has been fair and judicial in his selection, and the evidence he examines is appropriate. For example, in his chapter, "Racist or Hospitable?" Lamb examines the curse of Ham (Gen. 9:24-27), and the "Canaanite genocide" (Josh 10:40, *et. al.*). By examining the context of these passages, Lamb is able to show that these are not cases of racism, but rather judgment. He notes that God shows mercy on Canaanites (e.g. Rahab) and other non-Israelites (e.g. Namaan), and God punishes His own people for their sin. He writes, "If Yahweh were racist, he would punish only other nations, not his own" (79). Further, he shows that Yahweh demands justice for the "sojourners" within Israel's borders, which again demonstrates not the racism of God, but His justice. Lamb then goes on to show that Jesus shared this interest in justice for all, regardless of race, as illustrated by his parable of the Good Samaritan. This is a pattern he follows throughout the book: the statement of the problem, examination of relevant Old Testament context, and a comparison of a New Testament parallel. He concludes each chapter with a discussion on the implications of each principle in the life of the church. He does not simply demonstrate that God is not racist, but challenges Christ's church to emulate their Lord.

There are a few (minor) weaknesses in *God Behaving Badly*. Lamb's lighthearted tone (though perhaps appropriate for his intended audience) may strike some as flippant, and some of his section headings might be deemed inappropriate by others (e.g. "Jesus and the Female 'Dog' [p. 147]; "I Had Never Picked Up a Prostitute Before" [174]). Further, while Lamb does not like the dichotomy between the "God of the Old Testament," and the "God of the New Testament," he does use that same terminology himself, especially when says he will use *Yahweh* to refer to the former and *Jesus* to refer to the latter (18-19). This writer's greatest disappointment with the book was that Lamb is too apologetic for God's behavior. The book would have been well served with a discussion of

Job, especially God's answer to Job's complaint. Job is never given a reason for his suffering—he is simply faced with the power and sovereignty of God. As uncomfortable as that answer might make us, sometimes that may be the only answer we may receive for God's behavior.

The great strength of *God Behaving Badly* is its constant emphasis on an honest approach to many tough questions. This honesty means that we cannot avoid those accusations against God that make us uncomfortable; it also means that those accusations must be examined in light of the inspired word. Lamb does not shy away from the tough questions. He wants the reader to be uncomfortable, to wrestle with the real problems and real questions that many honest people bring to the God of the Bible, but he also forces the reader to examine each question within the pages of the whole of Scripture. Because of this, the book (though in spirit, apologetic) is one of good exegesis and sound theology. This writer highly recommends *God Behaving Badly: Is the God of the Old Testament Angry, Sexist and Racist?* for any person (believer or not) who would better understand who God is and how we can be sure that He is the same in the Old Testament as He is in the New.

William K. Bechtold III

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Hipster Christianity: When Church and Cool Collide.* By Brett McCracken. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010, 256 pp., \$15.99 paperback. ISBN: 978-0-8010-7222-2.**

I am relatively young, but when I first stepped into one of the churches mentioned in *Hipster Christianity*, I felt utterly and completely uncool. I was surrounded by good-looking young(er) people who know how to dress and communicate in a language that was all but foreign to me. I thought, "How did I get so old and out of touch so fast?" According to McCracken, these are the same sorts of questions that have caused much of Evangelical Christianity to try to woo the young, hip demographic. The question posed by McCracken is can and should the church be cool?

Brett McCracken, a self-proclaimed hipster, holds degrees from Wheaton College and UCLA. He is a regular contributor to *Christianity Today* and *Relevant*, primarily in the area of film, and writes a blog (still-searching.wordpress.com). This is his first book.

*Hipster Christianity* is divided into three parts. Part one, "The History and Collision of Cool and Christianity," outlines the history of *cool* or *hip* in general and *cool/hip* Christianity in particular. He begins by asking if Christianity is cool, but withholds his answer until the end of the book.

He traces the beginnings of cool to the end of the feudal system in Europe, but maintains that the concept fully took hold in the 18th century with the political philosopher Rousseau and the demise of the landed classes. The desire to be cool, he argues, goes hand in hand with the desire to be free. Hip Christianity has a much shorter history, beginning with the Jesus Movement of the 1960s-1970s. The hallmark of Christian hipsters today is much the same as their secular counterparts: rebellion against societal norms, social activism, fashion, music, and a propensity to indulge in such things as alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and premarital sex.

Part two, "Hipster Christianity in Practice," discusses, not surprisingly, what Hipster Christianity looks like in practice. McCracken profiles seven *communities*, including Jacob's Well in Kansas City. He also discusses the Emergent/Emerging Church and its relationship to Hipster Christianity, arguing that much of its theology informs hipster Christians. Finally, he discusses Hipster Christianity's interest in living *missional* lives, being *green*, working for social justice, and its leftward leaning politics.

Part three, "Problems and Solutions," gives a hard look at Evangelical Christianity's desire to be cool, the shortcomings of Hipster Christianity, and argues that Christianity can be cool, so long as it maintains a passionate dependence on the Gospel of Jesus Christ and a commitment to preach that Gospel to the world. He points out seven problems with being cool: individualism, alienation, competition, pride and vanity, a focus on the now, rebellion, and a reduction of identity to the visual. After this, he gives a picture of cool Christianity that will work: one that is sincerely interested in music, art, and film, one that is Christ-centered, one that is distinct from the world, and one that abstains from sin.

*Hipster Christianity* is a well-written, engaging look at the implications of the idea of cool for the church. It captures the oft elusive trifecta of great scholarship—it is thought-provoking, funny, and filled with good research. The book's primary problem is its tendency to generalize. McCracken prefers to speak in terms of *wanna-be* hipster churches and *organic, authentic* hipster churches, painting each group with broad strokes. In doing so, he tends to be suspicious of the *wanna-be* churches without conceding that they may also be trying to fulfill Christ's command to make disciples of all nations. In the final analysis, McCracken asks many questions that need to be considered by Christians and churches throughout the United States. What is cool? Why do we want to be cool? Can the church be cool? What is the essence of the Gospel? The book offers a corrective both to those congregations that attempt to harness culture (i.e. be cool) in order to gain converts and to those congregations that really are *hip*. He warns the first group that they will never be able to keep up with culture and that it is a futile endeavor anyway. He

warns the second group that the defining factor in their personal and corporate lives must be Christ, not their own coolness. All in all, this book is recommended to every believer who wants to understand the implications and dangers of courting culture for the sake of Christ.

Russell Meek  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Fundamentals of New Testament Greek.* By Stanley E. Porter, Jeffrey T. Reed, and Matthew Brook O'Donnell. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010, 466 pp., hardcover, \$40.00. ISBN-978-0-8028-2827-9. Plus workbook, \$20.00. ISBN-978-0-8028-2826-2.**

Fundamentals of New Testament Greek (further, FNTG) presents systemic-functional linguistics in a first-year Greek grammar written for analytical learners. Skimming the FNTG table of contents dispels any notion that Greek grammar pedagogy is a neutral endeavor. Porter's paradigm regarding the significance of verbal aspect guides the organization and emphases of FNTG. This volume is but the beginning of an ambitious, larger scope of works the authors wish to produce, including: 1) an intermediate-level text which advances students in their understanding of Greek, 2) a reader of extra-biblical Greek texts, including vocabulary and commentary, 3) a book on textual criticism, and 4) a handbook to exegesis (x).

The authors recognize a deficiency in how traditional first-year grammars develop students' vocabulary acquisition and grammatical competence. They write, "We have tried to make this a grammar that provides all that a first-year student should gain—including exposure to enough vocabulary (over 950 words); all forms of Greek verbs, nouns, and adjectives, with explanations of their derivation to aid in memorization; clear and helpful paradigms that consolidate all of this information into memorizable form; and basic comments on syntax and word order and their significance" (ix). The authors try to minimize incompleteness in FNTG by providing fuller discussions on points of grammar than one finds in other first-year texts, and including all vocabulary used twelve times or more in the New Testament (presented through the chapters in roughly their order of frequency).

The authors acknowledge that, "students may initially find this approach daunting, though we are convinced that, in the long run, it will serve them better" (xii). The authors structure each chapter with a view to making FNTG accessible for students and teachers with varying degrees of aptitude or availability, stating, "The thoroughness of this textbook allows teachers to use it in the way that they see best" (xii). One

can use FNTG comprehensively or more narrowly because each chapter: 1) begins with key objectives to be covered therein, 2) lists vocabulary which must be memorized with that chapter in order to cover all 950 words presented in the textbook, 3) explains key concepts in normal type, and less immediately essential material in other type styles and fonts, and 4) presents concluding formulae and paradigms for memorization. Besides the pedagogical structure of each chapter, several other components of FNTG facilitate its usefulness for those who may be intimidated by the authors' lofty aims: 1) comprehensive review exercises at the end of every five chapters, 2) a drill rubric for retaining grammatical, lexical, and reading competence during semester/holiday breaks, and 3) a corresponding comprehensive workbook.

At points this review will compare FNTG with William D. Mounce's *Basics of Biblical Greek* (Zondervan, 2009). Porter and Mounce discussed their approaches in the Program Unit, "New Testament Greek Language and Exegesis," at the 2010 ETS Annual Meeting in Atlanta. After providing introductory material in *Basics of Biblical Greek* (further, *BBG*), Mounce presents in order the noun system (with the inclusion of εἰμί, and adjectives), then indicative verbs, participles, and non-indicative verbs. Mounce, like most grammarians, organizes *BBG* according to parts of speech. Looking at the table of contents for FNTG, one notices that its authors employ a different philosophy; its thirty chapters are not grouped according to parts of any designation. Rather, as one might expect from the authors, after describing some basic elements of nouns, adjectives, and the article, verbs are presented as early as chapter four.

Though not designated as such in the table of contents, one can see that FNTG is organized according to the authors' understanding of the importance of designating between perfective, imperfective, and stative verbal aspect, following specially Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament with Reference to Tense and Mood* (Peter Lang, 1993). Generally speaking, in FNTG the indicative and infinitive are examined together, beginning with the aorist tense-form, then the imperfect, present, and future tense-forms respectively. Chapters five through nine alternate between lessons on the aforementioned verbal tense-forms and instruction regarding nouns and adjectives. By chapter 10, just one-fourth the way into the textbook, the authors present first and second aorist, present, and future active participles, and the genitive absolute. In the course of a normal academic calendar year, all major parts of speech (save the subjunctive and imperative) are introduced before the November winds begin to howl!

The first half of FNTG also includes chapters focusing on aorist, future, present, and imperfect middle and passive voice indicatives and

infinitives, prepositions, and the aorist and present subjunctives. Filling in the frame established in the first half of FNTG, chapters on  $\mu$ -verbs, aspectually vague verbs, the perfect tense-form (indicative, infinitive, and participle), and adjectives and adverbs dominate chapters 15-30. The back matter includes lists of verb formulas, endings, and accents, as well as over 40 pages of noun, pronoun, adjective, participle, and verb paradigms. These are followed by a table listing principle parts of 121 verbs, and an alphabetized list of the 950 vocabulary introduced in the chapters (compared with 319 vocabulary in BBG, words used 50 times or more in the New Testament). All of the elements of back matter in the textbook are reproduced at the end of the workbook.

The authors concede that the scope of FNTG reaches beyond what students (and many teachers) have come to expect for elementary Greek. In what rings of a confession, they state, "We know that this is a very full, comprehensive, and perhaps even challenging grammar. We also believe that there is no substitute for serious and rigorous study of the Greek of the New Testament. We know that this book works and will take students to a level not often achieved through other beginning textbooks" (x). The authors of FNTG thus envision a future aspect to their work, seeing its impact on students (and teachers) in both intermediate Greek and exegesis courses. They write, "We hope that we have provided enough so that, with the aid of a lexicon, they (students) can begin to read entire chapters and even books of the Greek New Testament with profit and delight" (x).

This reviewer questions whether at times FNTG provides enough. It lacks any attraction for visual or creative learners, a concern BBG addressed in the 3rd ed. In the vocabulary section of the back matter of FNTG, words are alphabetically listed with reference to the chapter to which they correspond in FNTG, but without reference to frequency of use in the New Testament. This hinders students from making connections from the vocabulary list and their NT; it would not have been difficult to list frequency of use in the New Testament, as BBG, which follows Bruce M. Metzger's *Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek* (Baker, 1997). Perhaps most concerning is the fact that FNTG provides far fewer exegetical insights than BBG.

On the whole though, it seems that FNTG provides too much. While the authors claim that the varying type-size and styles assist the reader in differentiating between less immediately essential material and prominently necessary concepts, this is not the case. Because all Greek text is bold, everything seems immediately essential. How necessary is it to bold font the Greek text in every paradigm, when there is no immediately surrounding English? This is simply not pleasant to the eye. Despite the

authors' claims (and hopes), the quantity of what seems to be immediately essential material could be overwhelming for some students.

Nevertheless, FNTG remains an attractive option because of the speed with which it prepares students to engage the Greek New Testament. Arranging FNTG according to verbal aspect theory, without neglecting essential elements of nouns, adjectives and other parts of speech, helps students to recognize the critical role verbal aspect plays in New Testament Greek. Additionally, presenting all major parts of speech in the first ten weeks of the academic year provides students using FNTG a framework into which the teacher can build individual concepts throughout the year. This more quickly opportunes students to open their Greek New Testament and recognize the roles various grammatical forms play within the matrix of a sentence, paragraph, and book. Finally, the amount of vocabulary integrated into the 30 chapters of FNTG equips students to recognize words in the Greek New Testament much more quickly than the approach of BBG.

Todd R. Chipman

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament.* By Steven E. Runge. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010, 404 pp. hardcover, \$49.95. ISBN-978-1-59856-583-6.**

Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament (further, DGGNT) expands Runge's *The Lexham Discourse Greek New Testament: Introduction* (Logos Bible Software, 2008), presenting the fruit of Runge's research for *The Lexham Discourse Greek New Testament* (Logos Bible Software, 2007; further, LDGNT). The LDGNT database annotates all occurrences of devices in DGGNT. Though Hendrickson's first printing of DGGNT (December, 2010) does not include Modern Author, Subject, and Ancient Sources indices, which are included in Hendrickson's second printing (July, 2011), and in DGGNT (Logos, 2010).

Discourse Analysis identifies units within the whole of a text. The four parts of DGGNT: "Foundations" (3-57), "Forward-Pointing Devices" (61-177), "Information Structuring Devices" (181-313), and "Thematic Highlighting Devices" (317-384), demonstrate how various linguistic devices cohere the parts and provide distinction within the whole. Runge aims to "provide a unified description of these devices that complements traditional grammatical approaches" (7), and arranges chapters accordingly. Most chapters present Conventional (traditional) and Discourse Grammar Explanations of various linguistic devices, followed by application of methodology (i.e., noting how these devices operate in a text), and titles for suggested reading. Runge functions as a teacher, taking the reader from known, to unknown, to exempla. He states, "I will

not ask you to throw out all that you have known to be true about Koiné in favor of a brand new linguistic analysis" (xviii), and, "I want to get you interested and then get out of your way" (xx).

Runge calls his methodology cross-linguistic and function-based (xviii). By the former he means taking readers beyond the syntax of New Testament Koiné to comparisons with how languages operate in general (viii). DGGNT recognizes that authors arrange their ideas within a specific linguistic framework, and proposes that grasping an author's meaning holistically requires analyzing his linguistic choices in light of the choices available within his specific linguistic system. Runge argues that "defining the meaning associated with the choice is different from assigning a syntactic force or from determining an appropriate translation" (6).

By function-based, Runge attempts to illustrate the conceptual tasks various grammatical phenomena accomplish in the Greek New Testament. DGGNT proposes that, like other languages, Koiné is a linguistic system comprised of sets. Within these sets one finds more basic or 'default' phenomena, and more 'marked' elements which emphasize a specific quality. Though quantitative analysis helps to define default/marked tendencies of a linguistic system, genre, content, and contextual factors require special consideration. Since Runge seeks to demonstrate how linguistic elements function, he is concerned not only with semantic meaning but also pragmatic effect. Distinguishing between the two "is critical to providing a coherent and accurate description of the device and its function with the discourse" (9).

What of all this data? Runge proposes that identifying an author's default/marked linguistic choices equips the interpreter to identify the portions of the discourse which the author makes prominent, and provides contrast with other units of the discourse. Three presuppositions found Runge's methodology: 1) an author's choice implies meaning, 2) semantic or inherent meaning should be differentiated from pragmatic effect, and 3) default patterns of usage should be distinguished from marked ones (5). He writes, "Since prominence is fundamentally about making something stand out in its context, marking prominence typically involves creating contrast with other things in the context. Contrast, in turn, presupposes that a person recognizes the underlying pattern" (16).

While syntax grammars present categories for various parts of speech, DGGNT demonstrates how various grammatical phenomena function at the discourse level. Syntax grammars explain a language; DGGNT explains how linguistic elements function in units of text. Thus, when Runge describes the role of Connecting Propositions, "the objective is not to know how to translate the connective, but to understand

how each one uniquely differs from another based on the function that it accomplishes in Greek” (19). While syntax grammars list *καί*, *δέ*, *οὖν*, *γάρ*, and *ἀλλά* with categories like connective, contrastive, correlative, explanatory, and inferential, DGGNT notes their role in providing continuity and development of the discourse, or some form of semantic constraint (e.g., temporal, causal, support, expectation, correction) (17-57).

Discourse Analysis recognizes that authors arrange discourse in progressive units. Runge proposes that authors use specific linguistic devices to move the reader forward in the text, often marking prominence in subsequent units. He argues that since these devices are not necessary to understand the author’s message, which could be communicated more simply without them, their presence in the discourse plays a role in moving the reader along to important information. While traditional grammars present nouns, conjunctions, indicative verbs, and participles as separate parts of speech, DGGNT describes how authors use these as devices to point the reader forward in the text.

Runge proposes that while interrogatives, demonstratives, and adverbs default to anaphoric reference, authors purposely employ them as forward-pointing references directing the reader to a subsequent ‘target’ in the text. This Reference-Target combination coheres units of discourse and marks prominent subsequent material. While syntax grammars note the correlative and contrastive use of conjunctions like *μέν* and *ἀλλά*, DGGNT notes how these function in the discourse to move the reader forward in the nuances of an author’s argument, often marking prominence in what follows.

Runge attempts to purify the muddied-waters of verbal aspect and the Historical Present by arguing that “the present form is the most viable option for marking prominence in a past-time setting” (130). Since past-time is normally communicated by perfective aspect tense-forms, marking prominence in the midst of perfectives requires the author to interrupt with an imperfective form. Why choose the present tense form instead of the imperfect tense form? Since the imperfect yet references past-time, the present is used as a device for more dramatically highlighting what follows.

Though it might appear that Forward-Pointing Devices accelerate the pace of the discourse, Runge notes that authors heighten reader anticipation by slowing the discourse flow. Devices like Tail-Head Linkage, repeating an action in an immediately preceding clause (often using an adverbial circumstantial participle) which was stated at the conclusion of the previous clause, point forward more slowly (163).

Runge’s concern for semantics and pragmatics surfaces in his presentation of Information Structure Devices and Framing (chs 10-11). He recognizes that Koiné word order defaults to verb-subject-object, and

proposes that authors provide a frame of reference for subsequent material by interrupting this default pattern and placing framing devices in the initial position. Runge states that authors produce scene-setting effect by placing topical, temporal, spatial, conditional, comparative, and reason/result frames before the verb in a subordinate clause. Where traditional syntax grammars list exegetical categories for particular parts of speech, Runge lists categories recognized as framing devices across various parts of speech: noun clauses, relative clauses, the content of substantival conjunctions, and prepositional phrases can each function as Topical Frames (210-16); both prepositional phrases and adverbial conjunctions establish a Comparative Frame (233-37). Runge lists the prepositional phrase *χωρὶς αὐτοῦ* in John 1:3 (*πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν. ὃ γέγονεν*) as a Topical Frame, and comments, "My approach is more functional than formal...Since the prepositional phrase conveys topical information in the context, I construe it as a topical frame of reference" (211-12, n. 12).

While most devices described in DGGNT cohere a text by pointing forward, Runge notes that interpreters should heed linguistic elements which "draw attention to the extra information" (315). These "Thematic Highlighting Devices" (317-84) include combinations of participial phrases, prepositional phrases, personal pronouns, and other linguistic elements which "make you think about the right thing in the right way at the right time" (315). For example, syntax grammars note the ascensive use of the conjunction *καὶ*, but DGGNT describes its use in John 12:9-10 as a device for Thematic Addition, helping the reader to connect the discourse from John 11 to John 12.

One who looks for DGGNT to offer scientific breakthroughs for grammatical difficulties identified in syntax grammars (e.g., the verbal aspect and the Historical Present) may be left wanting. Runge has a different aim: DGGNT explains how various parts of speech function at the discourse level, not how Discourse Analysis solves various points of exegetical tension (though at times DGGNT offers robust explanations for these). Nonetheless, this reviewer is concerned that DGGNT attends primarily to narrative literature. Of Runge's 283 application examples, roughly one-third are from Matthew, one-third from the other Gospels and Acts, and one-third from the Epistles. One investigating epistolary or apocalyptic would need to interact with DGGNT and LDGNT in order to follow Runge's rationale more closely. Though in the summary section Runge notes briefly that devices frequent in reported speech in narrative also surface in epistles, this reviewer proposes that either DGGNT offers less insight into non-narrative genres, or that discourse devices outside of narrative have not been adequately analyzed. The latter is probably the

case, and considering that Runge's LDGNT and DGGNT date within the last five years, one can understand why there might be a deficiency here or there.

These concerns aside, DGGNT blazes a new trail in the burgeoning field of linguistics and the Greek New Testament. But, in light of the number of resources available to those teaching Greek and exegesis courses, where does DGGNT fit? This reviewer suggests using it for second-year Greek grammar classes (along with LDGNT), preliminarily to something like D. Wallace's *The Basics of New Testament Syntax* (Zondervan, 2000). DGGNT helps students appreciate the forest of Greek linguistics in the New Testament, and prepares them to interact more carefully in identifying the trees.

Todd R. Chipman

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Wisdom of Torah: Epistemology in Deuteronomy and the Wisdom Literature.* By Ryan O'Dowd. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009, 213 pp. hardback. \$101.00. ISBN: 978-3525530894.**

Since the Enlightenment, epistemology in western culture has been construed primarily in terms of cognition. Ryan O'Dowd argues that epistemology in Deuteronomy and the Wisdom Literature offers a better way of knowing, one that consists of cognition and obedience and is rooted in humanity's creation by God. O'Dowd is currently a fellow at the Paideia Centre for Public Theology and Assistant Professor for Religion and Theology at Redeemer University College in Canada. He has written articles on the epistemology of Deuteronomy and Wisdom Literature and *Old Testament Wisdom Literature: A Theological Introduction*, a collaboration with Craig Bartholomew, will be released later this year. *The Wisdom of Torah* is a revision of his doctoral dissertation, which he completed at the University of Liverpool under the supervision of Craig Bartholomew.

The book's primary purpose is "to explore the conditions and contexts for knowing in the Hebrew world, focused particularly on [...] wisdom and torah [sic]" (ix). A secondary purpose is "to provide a 'meta-critique' of modern epistemology" (ix). The work is descriptive and multi-disciplinary, combining hermeneutics, exegesis, and philosophy to make its case. It boasts a significant bibliography reflective of its multi-disciplinary approach, as well as an index of Scripture citations. A subject index would have been helpful as well, though the table of contents provides a thorough description of each chapter.

Chapter 1 gives a brief history of the epistemology of religion—how people know God and the world (2). Here O'Dowd points out the prima-

ry distinction between Hebraic and Western epistemology of religion. The latter is rather atomistic in its approach to knowledge while the former approaches it holistically, refusing to separate ethics, history, and worship, which he argues is “grounded in a narrative, mythical framework” (3), namely Genesis.

Chapter 2 examines the “epistemological worldview” (12) of Genesis 1-11 and shows how the “stories” (12) relate to Deuteronomy’s epistemology, which he explores in the following three chapters. He argues that knowing is a matter of imitating God, such that knowledge and obedience are synonymous.

Chapters 3-5 examine Deuteronomy’s epistemological worldview, paying special attention both to its relationship with the cosmic creation narrative in Genesis and its importance for Israel’s liminality as she prepares to cross geographical and ideological boundaries. Chapter 3 focuses on Israel’s actualization of the knowledge of Yahweh in Deut 1-11. O’Dowd argues that the purpose of these chapters is to show Israel the way to know Yahweh without the mediation of Moses, which is through internalizing the Torah. Knowing God is thus “cosmically rooted in the eternal designs for humanity (Deut 1-4, 8), historically transmitted by the community (Deut 6:4-9; 8:1-20), divinely initiated in a covenant, and ethically conditioned by Israel’s response” (52). Chapter 4 examines Deut 12-26 to show that its purpose is “to preserve and protect Israel in future contexts” (80). The laws, in effect, ensure the possibility for Israel to know and have relationship with Yahweh. Chapter 5 examines Deut 27-34, arguing that the purpose of these chapters is to transform Moses’ speech to a written document that future generations will use to renew and protect their covenant relationship with Yahweh.

Chapter 6 marks the beginning of the second portion of the book, which examines epistemology in the Wisdom Literature. It begins by looking at Proverbs. Here O’Dowd calls for a nuanced reading of Proverbs that acknowledges the tension inherent in retribution theology, thus linking Proverbs’ epistemology with that of Job and Ecclesiastes. Chapter 7 discusses the epistemology of Ecclesiastes and Job. Concerning Ecclesiastes, O’Dowd posits that it makes significant use of irony and rhetoric to show the reader that fear of God, not perfect knowledge, provides the answer to the ambiguities between received theology and experience (161). Likewise, Job struggles with traditional wisdom’s conflict with his experience of life. Each book presents a “bi-polar” worldview that “confirms the existence of a divine reality (and wisdom), but also the inability for humanity to see that reality as God sees it” (160).

Chapter 8, the book’s conclusion, synthesizes the work O’Dowd has done and makes comments regarding its importance and where scholar-

ship can go from there. He reiterates the grounding of both Wisdom and Torah in the cosmological narrative of Genesis 1-11, but distinguishes the two, stating that “Torah goes *through Israel* to the world while wisdom precedes Israel and embraces the covenant with humanity *in creation*” (165, emphasis original). He concludes by stating that Hebraic epistemology, if applied today, will provide the opportunity for academia to offer a fuller, more nuanced critique of western epistemology that will influence the way it interacts with the world at large.

*The Wisdom of Torah* provides a thorough analysis of the epistemology of the Torah and Wisdom Literature. The presentation of Deuteronomy is especially helpful. O’Dowd shows that it was intended to provide Israel with a way to know Yahweh after its mediator, Moses, died. Furthermore, his analysis of the liminal nature of the book is intriguing—Israel received Deuteronomy on the border of the Promised Land, and it marked out the borders of life that would enable them to have a living relationship with Yahweh through obedience to and knowledge of Him. The book also conclusively shows that Deuteronomy’s epistemology is grounded in the worldview of creation presented in Genesis 1-11. This is important for a theology of the Pentateuch, as well as a theology of the entire Bible. His view of the internalization of Torah is also helpful because it highlights the similarities between the Old and New Testaments—the goal of each is for people to enter into relationship with God.

While O’Dowd’s analysis of Deuteronomy is exceptional, the same cannot be said of his examination of the Wisdom Literature, with one important exception. His argument for a nuanced reading of Proverbs accounts for the contradictory statements in the book while showing that they also wrestle with apparent inconsistencies between traditional wisdom theology and lived experience. This closes the epistemological divide between Proverbs on the one hand, and Job and Ecclesiastes on the other.

O’Dowd demonstrates the reliance of Proverbs and Job on creation theology, an important step toward developing a coherent biblical theology. He fails, however, to do the same for Ecclesiastes, though many authors have pointed out its relationship to Genesis. His examination of Ecclesiastes instead focuses on rhetoric and irony, which are important, but his purpose was to show that wisdom literature is grounded in the cosmology of Genesis 1-11, which he did not do. Furthermore, he adopts the frame-narrative view of the structure of Ecclesiastes without supplying sufficient evidence for doing so, other than to point to previous authors, such as Tremper Longman.

Overall, *The Wisdom of Torah* largely succeeds in both its primary and secondary goals. Readers would do well to heed O’Dowd’s call to appropriate the epistemology of Wisdom and Torah, rather than separat-

ing the knowledge of God from obedience to Him. The book is heartily recommended to those with basic knowledge of Hebrew who want to understand the epistemology of the Old Testament and its relationship to God's created order.

Russell Meek  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

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